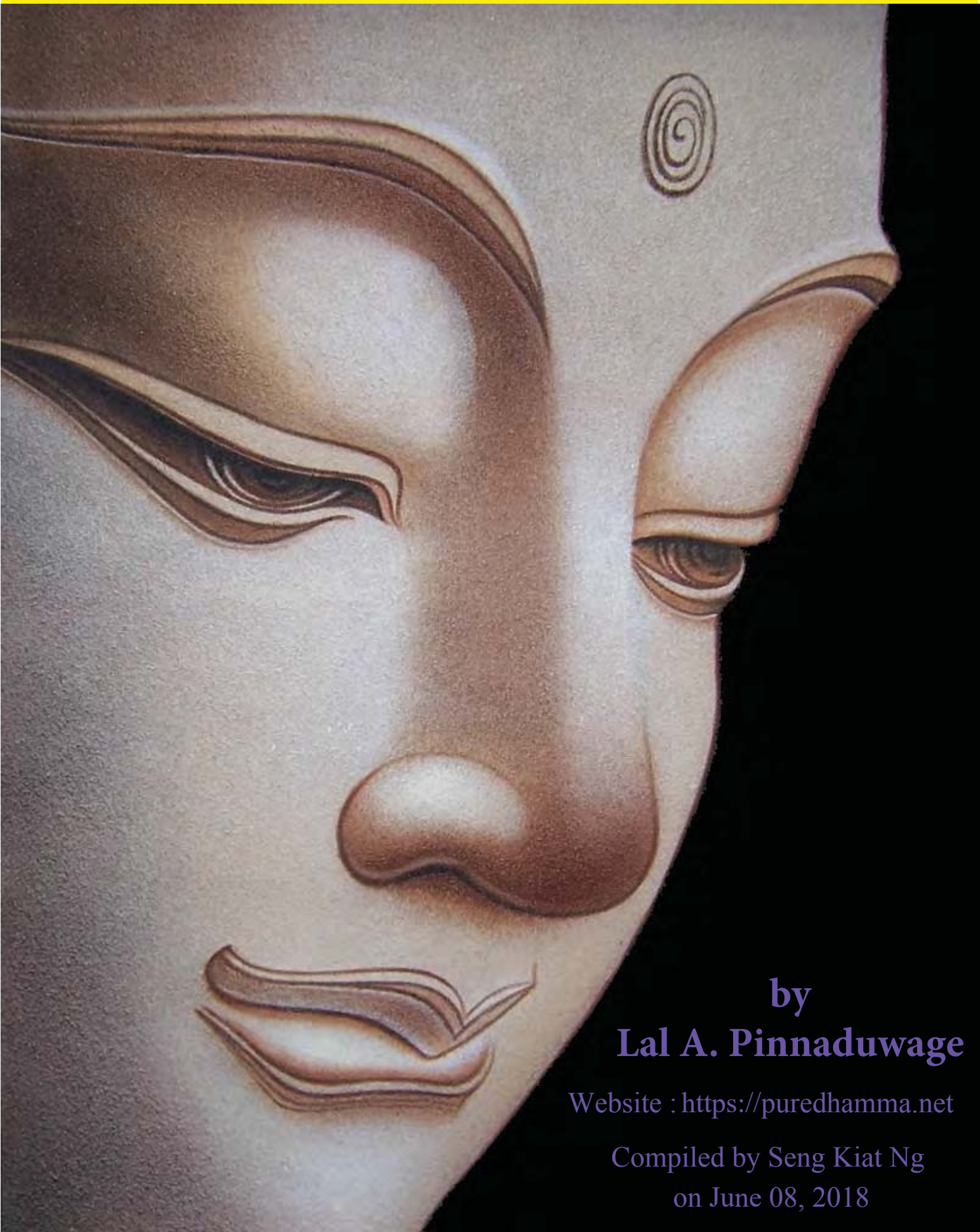


Pure Dhamma

A Quest to Recover Buddha's True Teachings



by
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Website : <https://puredhamma.net>

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I Home

Pure Dhamma

A Quest to Recover Buddha's True Teachings

Website: <https://www.puredhamma.net/>

- [Buddha Dhamma](#)
- [Key Dhamma Concepts](#)
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- [Dhamma and Science](#)
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Welcome!

This is a site dedicated to explore the Buddha Dhamma (Buddhism) or the “laws of nature” as discovered by the Buddha 2500 years ago. Even though I am a Buddhist by birth, I never bothered to look into the question of why I was a Buddhist. When I retired several years ago, I first started reading widely on many subjects, including science, philosophy, and religion.

- When I started to glean the deep message of the Buddha, I realized that I had not known much about my own “religion”, and that it had been “contaminated” over its long history. For the past several years, I have been working exclusively on trying to find the essence of the message of the Buddha. This is the result of that effort, which I wanted to share with the rest of the world.

- You can read about me at , [“About”](#).

There seem to be three types of people who become interested in “Buddhism”:

1. Those who have gone through hardships see that there is suffering “in this world”, and seeking solutions.
2. Those who are getting to the old age and are beginning to see that despite a lot of struggles, there are signs that whatever that has been achieved so far is masked by possible problems looming in the future (aging, various ailments, not been able to get satisfaction from those things that provided satisfaction before, etc).
3. Those who are intellectually motivated. They have been exposed to Dhammapada verses or some other types of sayings by the Buddha which appear to provide a glimpse of a broader world view.

And some of those have been to meditation retreats and have realized that there is indeed a second option compared to seeking material wealth and indulging in sense pleasures. Especially for those people in categories 1 and 2, it becomes clear that indulging in sense pleasures does not have staying power. On the other hand, the sense of well-being achieved via meditation has the staying power, and does not go down as one gets old.

- I believe that for people in any category, it is a good idea to first understand what the Buddha’s message was. Those who are intellectually motivated will be able to get a more complete picture, and thus a better intellectual satisfaction. For those in categories 1 and 2, a much better idea of how to focus their efforts will become clear with an insight into why focusing efforts on purifying the mind will be beneficial.

My belief is that anyone could benefit in some way by first getting a more complete overview of the Buddha Dhamma, which is about a “world” that is much more expansive and complex than the one we perceive with our senses. Mind is the precursor to everything in this world: [“Manōpubbangamā Dhammā.”](#)

This website got started in early January 2014. It may take several months just to publish the “essential material”. I am still thinking about how best to present the material, so I may have to change this layout.

- Even though I discuss many “scientific aspects” (especially in the Dhamma and Science section) to illustrate that Buddha Dhamma is really a complete world view that has withstood all scrutiny for 2500 years, my main goal is to convey the benefits of actual practice.

I have experienced much of what is discussed here, and the reason that I started this website is to share that experience with anyone who is interested. The “practice” part will come out as I lay down the basic ideas. To practice something, one needs to know what to practice. **(Note added 5/29/14: I have posted the first few essays on meditation under [“Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)”](#); 11/6/14: The first 12 posts are completed in providing a meditation program that one could follow systematically; my own experience is briefly discussed in the 10th and 11th posts).**

- Buddha Dhamma is NOT a religion to be followed by following rituals or even blindly following precepts. It describes laws of nature that need to be “grasped” and “lived”. Dhamma means “to bear”, to bear something it needs to be grasped (understood); then it becomes clear WHY one’s life needs to be lived in a certain way.
- This is not a blog, but a Content Management System (CMS). The material does not belong to me, but to the Buddha. What I try to do is to keep the information accurate to the best of my ability. I will be making changes to the format and even the contents either to revise as needed or to present better. So, please make sure to go back and read “old topics” once-in-a-while.
- Also, **one really needs to contemplate on the ideas presented; just quickly going through may not yield much benefit.**

Another aspect that I try to highlight is the CONSISTENCY of Buddha Dhamma. You will see links from any given area to many other areas. The Buddha is called “Bhaghavath” because he analyzed

the same thing in many different ways; AND they are all consistent internally as well as with the main axioms such as the 31 realms of existence, concept of kamma, and rebirth.

- As science has progressed, mainly over the past hundred or so years, the consistency with science is becoming apparent as well; but science has not grasped the importance of the mind (over matter) yet. In some of the posts I am making predictions on what will be discovered by science in the future. In order to have a timestamp, I started putting the date of publication of new posts starting late October, 2015.
- Please send your suggestions/comments/questions and also let me know of any technical issues with the site using the “Comments” tab. I do not plan to have a discussion forum, so your comments will not be published.
- I normally write four to five essays a month and they are listed in the “New/Revised Posts” in the menu on the right. Interesting/relevant news articles are also added to that menu.
- I started posting the date of publication in new posts starting on October 23, 2015. Thus if a post is not dated, it must have been published before that date.

The Buddha said, “*Sabba dānan Dhamma dānan jināti*”, or “Gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts”. Please inform others about this site if you benefit from it.

- However, we should only inform others. Mankind has suffered enough from those who have tried to force their views on others. As the Buddha said, “Come and see for yourself!”.

The Buddha also said, “*Sabba rathin Dhamma rathin jināti*”, or “Taste of Dhamma excels all other tastes (pleasures)”. I hope you will have the patience to look around the site to learn enough pure Dhamma to start enjoying its taste.

Note added/revised December 7, 2016: I have added a “Font Size Selector” on the top right so that any reader can control the font size, if the font is too small for comfortable reading.

- There are two other possible solutions as well: 1. Each post can be printed using the PRINT button below that post. 2. All the posts at the site can be downloaded using three eBook formats and can be either printed or read on electronic readers like Amazon Kindle: [Pure Dhamma Essays in Book Format](#).

Note added June 8, 2017 : As of today, there are over 450 posts at the website. Recently, I have been getting inquiries on “where to start?”. I just added the following post to summarize various sections and how to locate posts of interest: “[User’s Guide to Pure Dhamma Website](#)”.

April 14, 2018: Discussion forum was initiated in December of 2017: “[Forum](#)”. Updates and new posts are posted at “[1- General Information and Updates](#)”.

Also, a new section on “[Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma](#)” initiated in March 2018.

Continue to, “[What is Buddha Dhamma?](#)“.....

II Buddha Dhamma

- [User's Guide to Pure Dhamma Website](#)
- [What is Buddha Dhamma?](#)
- [Foundation of Dhamma](#)
- [The Importance of Purifying the Mind](#)
- **Subsection:** [The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)
 - [The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma – Introduction](#)
 - [Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)
 - [31 Realms Associated with the Earth](#)
 - [Gandhabba – Only in Human and Animal Realms](#)
 - [Body Types in Different Realms – Importance of Manomaya Kaya](#)
 - [Gandhabba Sensing the World – With and Without a Physical Body](#)
 - [Nibbāna in the Big Picture](#)
- [Buddha Dhamma: Non-Perceivability and Self-Consistency](#)
- [Sansaric Time Scale](#)
- [Evidence for Rebirth](#)
- **Subsection:** [Power of the Human Mind](#)
 - [Power of the Human Mind – Introduction](#)
 - [Difference Between Jhāna and Stages of Nibbāna](#)
 - [Power of the Human Mind – Anariya or Mundane Jhānas](#)
 - [Power of the Human Mind – Ariya Jhānas](#)
 - [Are There Procedures for Attaining Magga Phala, Jhāna and Abhiññā?](#)
- [Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\) – How Does it Happen?](#)
- [First Noble Truth is Suffering? Myths about Suffering](#)
- [Vinaya – The Nature Likes to be in Equilibrium](#)

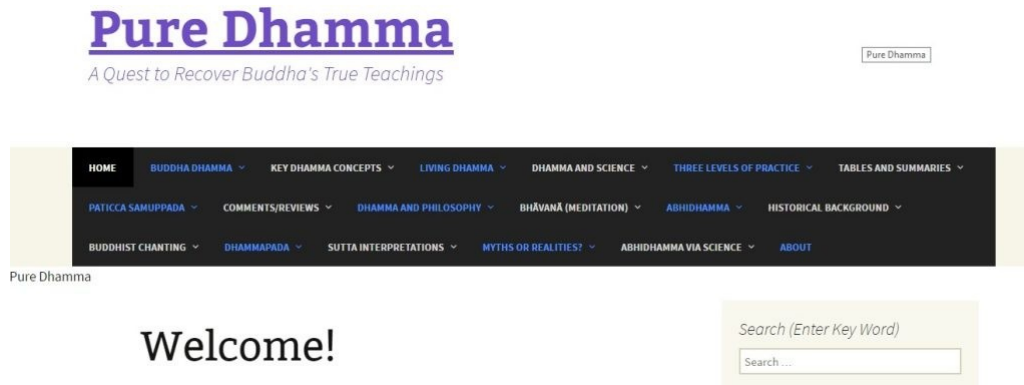
2.1 User's Guide to Pure Dhamma Website

June 8, 2017; revised October 1, 2017 (added #2).

As of today, there are over 450 posts at the website. Recently, I have been getting inquiries on “where to start?” when one first comes to the website.

1. First, there are a few general tools that can be used to navigate the website:

- Following is how the home page of the site should look like.



- If you do not see it like that with the menu system, you should update your browser (Google Chrome, Microsoft Explorer, Firefox, etc) so that you would be able to see the menu as shown above.
- Another way to look at the whole menu is “[Pure Dhamma – Sitemap](#)“. All posts are categorized under sections and subsections there. One could scan through it to locate relevant posts of interest.
- The “Search” button at top right is also good at extracting relevant posts for a given key word or key words.
- I have added a “bread crumbs” link at the top of each page, so that you can see which section/subsection the page belongs to. You can go to that section/subsection and read more on that topic.

2. First, for those who are familiar with Buddha Dhamma (Buddhism), I like to point out that three main misconceptions are prevalent today. They not only block the path to *Nibbāna*, but are *micca diṭṭhi* that could be responsible for rebirth in the *apāyas*. I am not trying to scare anyone, but “making *adhamma* to be *dhamma* is a serious offense”.

- Misinterpretation of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*: “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)“.
- Misinterpretation of breath meditation as *Ānāpānasati*: “[Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?](#)“.
- Insisting that the *gandhabba* (*manomaya kaya*) is a Mahayana concept: “[Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka](#)“.
- These misconceptions are not the fault of current *Theravadins*; they have been handed down for many hundreds of years as explained in the “[Historical Background](#)“. **However, it makes no sense to adhere to them when solid evidence is presented, per above posts and many others at this website.**
- Of course, no one should be able to insist, “this is the only truth, and nothing else is the truth”, but the truth can be verified to one’s satisfaction by critically examining the evidence. I am open to discuss any valid contrary evidence. We need to sort out the truth for the benefit of all.

3. Now, let us discuss which sections could be of interest to people with different backgrounds on their exposure to Buddha Dhamma.

- The “[Moral Living and Fundamentals](#)” section is a good start for anyone, since the fundamentals of Buddha Dhamma are discussed. In particular, the subsections, “[Buddha Dhamma and Buddhism](#)” and “[Dhamma Concepts](#)” could be informative.
 - The subsection on “[Working Towards Good Rebirths](#)” broadens the concepts discussed in the above subsection, to indicate how one’s actions need to be tailored to seek rebirths in higher realms, and to avoid births in the lower realms (*apāyas*), in case one is unable to attain any stages of *Nibbāna* in this life.
 - Even those who have had exposure to “Buddhism” may realize that some fundamental aspects have been misrepresented in many text books as well as in various websites.
4. The “[Buddha Dhamma](#)” section is a bit more advanced version of the above mentioned section. It discusses the basis of the Buddha Dhamma, i.e., the importance of purifying one’s mind in the first few posts.
- The Buddha described a wider world of 31 realms of which we are aware of only two: the animal and human realms: “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.
 - Then it discusses how the Buddha was able to see that “bigger picture” in the post, “[Buddha Dhamma: Non-Perceivability and Self-Consistency](#)”.
 - The two posts “[Samsaric Time Scale](#)” and “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)” discuss how we have been going through birth/death/rebirth process from a beginning-less time.
5. Those who have had exposure mainly to “*Mahayana Buddhism*”, the following two posts will provide an idea of why *Mahayana sūtrās* are very different from the *suttās* that the Buddha delivered: “[Saddharma Pundarika Sutra \(Lotus Sutra\) – A Focused Analysis](#)” and “[What is Sunyata or Sunyata \(Emptiness\)?](#)”.
- Further details on how various “schools of Buddhism” — like *Mahayana*, *Vajrayana* (Tibetan), *Zen*, etc — evolved within the first 1000 years after the Buddha, can be found in the “[Historical Background](#)” section.
6. Even *Theravāda Buddhism* — which is supposed to be closest to the original teachings of the Buddha — has been contaminated over the years, mainly due to three key reasons. We will first list those three and discuss a bit more. **First reason** is to do with losing the true interpretations of ten types of *miccā diṭṭhi* (wrong views).
- There are two types of Eightfold Paths: mundane and transcendental (*lokottara*). One needs to first get into the mundane Path by getting rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi*; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)” and “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)”.
 - One of the ten *miccā diṭṭhi* is “*paralowa* or the world of *gandhabba* does not exist”. Many people think that *gandhabba* is a Mahayana concept, but that is a big mistake; see below.
 - One cannot even get into the mundane Eightfold Path if one believes that *paralowa* and *gandhabba* are not real.
7. **Second**, various Hindu meditation techniques — including *kasina* and breath meditation — were incorporated into *Theravāda* teachings especially after Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*; see, “[Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#)”, and the posts referred to there.
8. **Third and most important reason** is the incorrect translation of key Pāli words like *anicca* and *anatta* by the Early European scholars in the 1800’s, see, “[Misinterpretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)”.
- Let us discuss each of those three briefly next, and point to a few more relevant posts.
9. Many people don’t realize that the concept of *gandhabba* (mental body) is a critical component in explaining how life functions in human and animal realms.
- First, it is a misconception that *gandhabba* is a Mahayana concept; see, “[Antarabhava and Gandhabba](#)” and “[Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka](#)”.

- Without the concepts of *gandhabba*, it is not possible to explain so many rebirth stories and out-of-body experiences that have been widely reported in recent years; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)” and “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)”.
- The main opposition to the concept of *gandhabba* in current *Theravāda* circles is the misconception that it is an “*antarābhava*”, i.e., in between two *bhava*. But a human *gandhabba* is in the same “human *bhava*”. This is clarified in, “[Antarabhava and gandhabba](#)”.
- The critical role of the mental body (*gandhabba*) in giving rise to multiple births (*jāti*) within human and animal existences (*bhava*) has been disregarded. However, not believing in the existence of *gandhabba* is a *miccā diṭṭhi*, and is a hindrance to attain the *Sōtāpanna* stage; see, “[Miccā Diṭṭhi, Gandhabba, and Sōtāpanna Stage](#)”.
- Because of the high importance, *gandhabba* is discussed in two main sections: “[Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)” and “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)”.

10. Regarding the problems with Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* — published 1500 years ago — the two issues mentioned above are:

- Regarding *kasina* meditations discussed in the *Visuddhimagga*, there is not a single *sutta* in the *Tipitaka* that discusses *kasina* meditation.
- Regarding the breath meditation discussed in the *Visuddhimagga*, there are no *suttās* in the *Tipitaka* that discusses BREATH MEDITATION. Those *suttās* have been mistranslated. Furthermore, there is a *sutta* in the *Tipitaka* that specifically says breath meditation is not *Ānāpānasati* meditation, see, “[Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?](#)”.

11. The critical problem of incorrect translation of *anicca* and *anatta* has prevented so many people from making progress over the past 200 years. I strongly recommend the post, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.

- More posts on that can be found in the section, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”. Correct interpretation of many relevant key *suttās* are discussed in that section.
- The introductory timeline on those historical developments is given in “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)”, and all relevant posts are in the “[Historical Background](#)” section.

12. Now let us turn to an issue of relevance to many who are new to Buddha Dhamma. Many people — especially in Western countries — have a hard time in believing in rebirth; see, “[Buddhism without Rebirth and Nibbāna?](#)”.

- The section, “[Living Dhamma](#)”, is especially designed for one to start following Buddha Dhamma even without believing in the concept of rebirth.
- The first two subsections there are good to be read by everyone. One can experience a real “cooling down” even without having belief in rebirth.
- The latter subsections gradually take one to advanced concepts, and latter sections are appropriate even for people with advanced background on Buddha Dhamma. One would be able to clarify advanced concepts in latter subsections.

13. Once one start looking into Buddha Dhamma seriously, it is a good idea to learn a few basic things about the *Pāli* language. The *Pāli* Canon, which was first transmitted orally and then was written down 2000 years ago, still has all the *suttās* as composed by the Buddha and memorized by Ven. Ananda.

- See, “[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)” and other relevant posts in the “[Historical Background](#)”.
- While the Buddha encouraged delivering Dhamma to others in their native language, there are some advantages in learning at least some key *Pāli* words, see, “[Why is it Necessary to Learn Key Pāli Words?](#)”.
- In particular, learning the meanings behind some key roots like “*san*” makes a huge difference in gaining understanding of key words like *saṃsāra* and *sammā*, see, the subsection on “[San](#)”.

14. Learning the correct meanings of the *suttās* in the *Tipitaka* is an essential part of learning Buddha Dhamma. Most existing literature, even on *Theravāda*, have incorrect translations.

- The section “[Sutta Interpretations](#)” discusses some key *suttās* in the *Tipitaka*.
- It is a good idea to first read two important posts in that section, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)” and “[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#)”.
- Short and succinct sayings of the Buddha in the *Dhammapada* provide deep insights in short verses. Some of these are discussed in the “[Dhammapada](#)” section.

15. Meditation (both formal and informal) is an essential part of following the Path of the Buddha. The “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” provides a series of posts on the fundamentals of meditation and also on advanced topics.

- A critical misconception that is prevalent today is *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā* is breath meditation. There are several posts that discuss the correct version and the post, “[Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?](#)” discusses evidence from the *Tipitaka* that breath meditation is not *Ānāpāna*.
- The *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā* is discussed in the subsection, “[Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta](#)”.

16. Buddha Dhamma is based on the principle of causation (cause and effect), which in *Pāli* is *Paticca Samuppāda*. The principles are discussed in the section, “[Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.

- While the meaning of *Paticca Samuppāda* is clear from its name itself, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)”, the main concepts are discussed in plain English at: “[Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English](#)”.
- Just because causes exist, does not necessarily mean that effects (results) will follow. There must be suitable conditions present to about those results (also called *vipāka*). This is discussed in detail in the subsection “[Pattana Dhamma](#)”.

17. Chanting of *suttās* and reciting the virtues of Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha can prepare one’s mind to be receptive to learn Dhamma, and thus could be an important part of the practice, see, “[Buddhist Chanting](#)”.

- The section on “[Myths or Realities?](#)” is also important, since it discusses many concepts and practices that are considered by some to not belong to Buddha Dhamma.

18. Those who would like to see how compatible Buddha Dhamma is with modern science, “[Dhamma and Science](#)” section is a good resource.

- That section points out both consistencies and inconsistencies with modern science.
- Modern science has had to revise or come up new theories to explain many phenomena over the past 500 years, but Buddha Dhamma (in the *Tipitaka*) has remained the same over 2500 years.
- My prediction is that in the end the remaining inconsistencies will also be resolved in favor of Buddha Dhamma.

19. The section on “[Tables and Summaries](#)” is an important collection of posts summarizing bits of information or “data” that are not necessary to be memorized, but could be needed to explain things in detail.

- There are several posts with listings of types of *citta*, *cetasika*, 28 types *rūpa*, etc. in this section.
- There is also a *Pāli* glossary with pronunciation: “[Pāli Glossary – \(A-K\)](#)” and “[Pāli Glossary – \(L-Z\)](#)”.
- The section on “[Comments/Reviews](#)” has two subsections on “[Discussion of Comments](#)” and “[Book Reviews](#)”.

20. There are some who either have already learned *Abhidhamma*, or would like to learn. For them, the “[Abhidhamma](#)” section could be useful. There are several subsections in this section on various topics.

- The section on “[Inconsistencies with Science](#)” highlights some overlaps between *Abhidhamma* Science.
- One of my favorite subjects is *Abhidhamma*. When one has proceeded along the Path to some extent, it could be useful to learn *Abhidhamma*, which will help gain a deeper understanding.

21. Finally, **but most importantly**, there are three important subsections that discusses issues involved in attaining *magga phala* (stages of *Nibbāna*). The primary goal of this website is to provide enough material for one to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*.

- **First**, the concept of *Nibbāna* is a puzzle to many. It is discussed in several posts in the subsection: “[Nibbāna](#)”.
- **Some critical points to consider** by those who are making effort in that direction are discussed in the subsection: “[Seeking Nibbāna](#)”.
- **The first goal of those who seek *Nibbāna* is the *Sotāpanna* stage.** Many concepts are requirements for achieving that goal are discussed in the subsection: “[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)”.
- The section, “[Living Dhamma](#)”, is especially designed for one to start following Buddha Dhamma even without believing in the concept of rebirth, all the way to the *Sotāpanna* stage. People with more advanced background can start at later subsections, skipping the early ones.

What is Buddha Dhamma?

Revised on January 16, 2016 (item #4)

Introduction

1. Newton discovered the three laws of motion which helped describe gravity. Instead of re-discovering them, we learn them at school. We have to learn them from a teacher, who in turn had earlier learnt them from someone else. (Please excuse me for using “science examples”. You really do not need to know any science here; a science background may be helpful mainly in the “Dhamma and Science” section, but even there it is not necessary).

2. If we learn the laws of motion from someone who does not really understand them, it is harder to learn, and in some cases we may learn it incorrectly. This is definitely true for a bit harder subject, say, relativity. If the person who explains does not have a good understanding of the theory of relativity, then it is likely that the person who learns it will not learn much.

3. As I build up this site anyone will be able to see that Buddha Dhamma is the ultimate Grand Unified Theory. It explains everything not only that we can see, but also the existence of infinite number of worlds with living beings in 29 other realms of existence (other than the human and animal realms) that we cannot see.

- Thus Buddha Dhamma is not a religion in the sense of providing salvation. The Buddha was not a God, a prophet or a messenger. He was a human being who purified his mind to perfection so that he could see the whole of existence. He was the perfect scientist, who investigated the problem of existence and found the complete solution. We all need to find our salvation by following the Path that he prescribed to purify our minds.

4. Thus Buddha Dhamma is the most complex theory of “this world”. It is called “*pubbe anunussetu dhammesu*” or a Dhamma (or a theory on nature) that is not known to the world before a Buddha comes along. This is emphasized in his first *sutta*, where the Buddha uttered this phrase multiple times; see, “[Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta – Introduction](#)”.

- However, it has “evolved” in to many different versions since the Buddha Gotama revealed it to the world over 2500 years ago.
- During the past 2500 years many different versions of “Buddhism” have emerged; see, “[Historical Background – Introduction](#)”. It is not possible for anyone to claim, “this is the original version that was delivered by the Buddha”. It is up to each individual to examine different versions and decide which version makes sense.
- Thus it pays to spend some time and try to find the version(s) closest to the original. This is not an easy task these days. My goal is to present the closest version that I found. It is up to you to examine it and see whether you agree.
- My version of Dhamma is that is in the Pāli *Tipitaka*, not Sanskrit *sutras*, and not in Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*. I have pointed out the inconsistencies in both Mahayana version and also in the current Theravāda version where *Visuddhimagga* is used as the basis; see the relevant posts in the “[Historical Background](#)” section.

5. No matter which version (or a combination) you settle on, make sure to settle on some kind of a clear path. Many people try to follow many different paths (all labeled Dhamma or “Buddhism”), afraid that they may “miss out something”, or just follow whatever is recommended by a trusted person. That would be a waste of time. The way I handled this situation was to discard those versions that have contradictions; see, “[Dhamma and Science](#)”.

6. It is first necessary to find out what the main message of the Buddha was. Why did he say “this world is *dukkha*?”; see, “[Anatta and Dukkha – True Meanings](#)”. It is important to realize that *dukkha* is not the **feeling** of suffering; that is *dukkha*.

- If one did not know that he was talking about a much “bigger world” than the world we directly experience, one would think of that statement as nonsensical. The laws of *kamma* do not make

sense unless one at least knows that the Buddha was talking about a rebirth process that has no beginning.

7. Thus one cannot even begin to follow Buddha Dhamma unless one learns about the basic concepts that are summarized in this column (see the other sections below) and “[Key Dhamma Concepts](#)”.

- It will be quite beneficial to at least scan through the other sections, especially the “[Moral Living and Fundamentals](#)” section as well. In fact, the first stage of *Nibbāna* (*Sotāpanna* stage) is attained just by fully comprehending the “world view of the Buddha”, because then one clearly sees the fruitlessness of seeking lasting happiness in “this world” of 31 realms.

8. Many people, who have been exposed to a bit of Buddha Dhamma, see that there is something good about it. So, they just go to a meditation center and try to get a dose of Dhamma in a meditation retreat over several days. It is good to do that initially, but if one sees there is much more to Dhamma than to attain some temporary relief from the stresses of this life, then one needs to spend a bit more time and learn the full message of the Buddha.

9. For those who have not had much exposure to Buddha Dhamma, it is better to spend some time in the “[Moral Living](#)” and “[Working Towards Good Rebirths](#)” sections, while contemplating on the material in the other top level menus.

Overview

1. Before one embarks on a journey, one needs to know what the journey is about, and what the destination is, and whether it is worthwhile to undertake the journey. Please be patient and first find out what Buddha Dhamma is about, the big picture, first. Please spend some time learning about the key message of the Buddha, before undertaking the journey. If one does not know where one is going (or the terrain), how can one reach the destination?

- Buddha Dhamma describes the true nature of “this world”. But “this world” does not just mean our life as a human. “This world” is unimaginably complex. Scientists admit that they are aware of only 4% of the things in this universe; see, “[The 4 Percent Universe: Dark Matter, Dark Energy, and the Race to Discover the Rest of Reality](#)”, by Richard Panek (2011). Also see, “[Dhamma and science](#)” section for details.
- Please be patient and read through the following sections to get a brief idea first. Getting the “whole picture” will take time.

2. The next question (especially when one sees that it is indeed a complex picture) that comes to one’s mind is that “How do I know this picture is right?”. One makes that decision based on one’s own experience. But even before that, one could get an good idea by treating Buddha Dhamma as a scientific theory. This is why the section on “[Dhamma and Science](#)” is important. So, please go back and forth between that section and the current section until you get an idea of what I am talking about.

- Please pay special attention to the rebirth process. This is the key idea in Dhamma. Many people say that rebirth is not bad, but they do not realize that the chance of rebirth as a human is extremely rare; see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)”. One must also realize that *jathi* (birth) and *bhava* (existence in a given realm) are two different things; see, “[Bhava and Jathi – State of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.
- As we will discuss below, there are 31 realms (or different kinds of existence); we can see only the human realm and the animal realm. Most are reborn in realms below the human realm where suffering is much worse. Scientists estimate that at any given time, there are 1 quadrillion (1000 trillion) ants living on Earth; this means for each human, there are million ants. Compared to about 7 billion of human population, unimaginable number of other living species live on this planet.
- Even on our bodies we carry a large number of sentient beings: see, “[There are as many creatures on your body as there are people on Earth!](#)”.

- Human population is insignificantly small compared to the animal population. Statistically, that gives an idea of “probability of a human birth”. We do not see the much higher populations in the other lower three realms because our minds are covered by defilements; if one develops *jhānas* and acquires *abhiññā* powers, one can see beings in some of those realms.

3. Thus there are other beings, especially below the human realm, that we cannot see: “[Consciousness – A Dhamma Perspective](#)”. The Buddha said that most beings are trapped in realms below the human realm. That is why he said “this world is filled with suffering”, and we need to strive diligently to stop the rebirth process, and to attain *Nibbāna*.

- This is also why he said it is rare to be born a human. He once told the *Bhikkhus* that if we compare all the beings to the volume of the Earth, the human population corresponds to only the amount soil one can pick with a thumb. And only a human possesses a mind that can be used to attain *Nibbāna*. Therefore, we should not let this opportunity to attain *Nibbāna* (at least the *Sotāpanna* stage) in this very life pass by.

4. Many people think Buddha Dhamma is pessimistic. The Buddha just revealed the suffering in “this world”; that is the true nature of the world. More importantly, he showed that there is a better type of happiness, called *niramisa sukha*, that one gains as one moves away from “this world” towards *Nibbāna*; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”.

- This *niramisa sukha* increases gradually as one starts on the Noble Eightfold Path, and makes quantum jump at the first stage of *Nibbāna*, the Stream Entry (*Sotāpanna*) stage. There are three more levels and at the final level, *Arahant*, one becomes totally free from “this world” (no more rebirths) and attains *Nibbāna*.
- Thus *Nibbāna* is not just a promise to be fulfilled at death; it can be experienced in this very life. Please take this journey with me for a while and see for yourself. As the Buddha said, “Come and see for yourself” [Dhamma quality: *ehi-passiko*].

5. My goal is to provide at least some details of the complex world view that was provided by the Buddha, which has been muddled and distorted within the past 2500 years.

- “Our world” is much more complex than what is grasped by our senses; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.
- And our lives do not end with this one; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”.
- Those two facts constitute the basis of the true nature of existence, and need to be thought about critically; one cannot comprehend the message of the Buddha until one at least has some idea about this “big picture”.
- Many questions people have on concepts like *kamma*, morality, *Nibbāna*, etc, as well as philosophical questions like “why I am here?”, or “why is the world the way it is?”, will have answers within this big picture. It is a complete world view, but it is up to each individual to determine whether it makes sense. As the Buddha pointed out, the stakes are very high and it is a good idea to take time and critically evaluate this big picture.

For a more comprehensive “bottom up” approach, see the new post of April 12, 2018: “[Buddha Dhamma for an Inquiring Mind – Part I](#)”.

Next, “[Foundation of Dhamma](#)”,.....

2.3 Foundation of Dhamma

If you have not read the introductory post, "[What is Buddha Dhamma?](#)", please read that first. It describes the unique aspects of Buddha Dhamma, in the sense that it is not a religion by some definitions and the Buddha was not a savior.

1. There are two co-existing facets of Buddha Dhamma:

- The Buddha said, "This Dhamma is unlike anything that the world has ever seen". **It really needs a paradigm change to get into the "new perspective about this world view of the Buddha"**. One needs to be able to put aside all preconceived notions to understand the core message.
- However, the Buddha also said, "My Dhamma is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good at the end". **There is something to be gained from Buddha Dhamma for people who just come to know about it to those who have really grasped the core concepts**. This is why I have separated posts into three categories on the site.
- Many important terms, even whole *suttas*, can be interpreted at several levels, ranging from superficial to very deep meanings. As I build the site, I will try to give some examples. For example, the five precepts have much deeper meanings than the ones that are apparent. It is gratifying, and exhilarating, to see deeper meanings as one progresses. Thus, there is something to be gained at any level.

2. There are three basic ways to practice Dhamma:

- At the very basic level (see, "[Moral Living and Fundamentals](#)"), one can find happiness or misery in this life itself according to the way one lives one's life. One whose actions are harmful to oneself or the others will be living in misery. Someone may seem to be living in luxury, but could be living in misery. We know about many wealthy/famous people who even committed suicide.
- At the next level, one leads a moral life and accumulates good *kamma* that could lead to a good life in the next birth. However, we need to keep in mind that even if one does not commit a single bad *kamma*, the next birth could be a bad one due to "bad *kamma* seeds" from previous lives; see, "[Working Towards Good Rebirths](#)".
- At the highest level, one will act to remove all defilements from one's mind so that the mind becomes liberated from the body which causes all suffering. Thus one will be working to achieve *Nibbāna*, the unconditioned, permanent happiness; see, "[Seeking Nibbāna](#)".

3. The site is organized at those three levels:

- Most people intuitively know the benefit of a moral life. Dhamma will help understand why, and even point to some possible improvements.
- When one lives a moral life and EXPERIENCES the benefit of that, one will be automatically drawn to think about whether there is a life after death. One reads about the evidence for/against this possibility. If the answer is "yes", then one can find possible ways to work towards a better life in the next birth. This is not much different from the moral behavior in above. It is just that one will learn a lot about "the world" that we live in.
- Once the second stage is achieved, some may want to at least explore the third stage. This is THE message of the Buddha, that no matter where one is born in the next life, there are NO guarantees that the lives after that will be suffering free. This is the path to *Nibbāna*, to cease suffering permanently.

4. Going straight to the third level will be like trying to get into high school without finishing the primary and secondary schooling.

- However, even if one has not even heard anything about Buddha Dhamma before, some may be already at the second stage, and few may even be ready for the third stage. This life did not start at this birth. Each of us have come a long way and have molded our character through countless

lives in the past. Thus, even if one is unaware of it, one may already be mentally prepared to tackle the third stage. So, please look around and find a starting point that you are comfortable with; see, [“Where to Start on the Path?”](#). Only you know about yourself!

5. It is critical to realize that “knowledge” is not perfect at any level as long as one remains “in this world”. Even though he was not talking about that, the famous physicist Richard Feynman illustrates this point well in this video:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Feynman Magnets and Why questions](#)

Let us take his example of someone slipping on ice. A drunk person stepping onto ice-covered surface does not even realize that it is icy and slippery. At the next level, an alert person knows that the surface is slippery, and thus will be careful. But if one needs to know why the icy-surface is slippery, then a bit of basic physics is needed to understand “why ice is slippery”. It is not necessary to understand “why ice is slippery” if one has an uncontaminated mind; a sober person with a calm mind will take precautions when stepping on a icy surface. More complex situations require the cleansing of an “average mind” further. This is where Buddha Dhamma makes a difference.

6. Even though humans have an innate sense of what is right and what is wrong, human mind is polluted by the five hindrances (see, [“Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances”](#)).

- Once Dhamma Theory is understood, just that understanding leads to the clearing up of some of these hindrances; furthermore, the logic of a moral life comes naturally out the Dhamma Theory. This understanding of the Dhamma Theory or at least some idea of what the basic foundations of Buddha Dhamma is CRITICAL and should be done before one starts “practicing” Dhamma.
- If one living a moral life reads about the Dhamma Theory, he/she may be motivated to explore the second stage, i.e., to think about the validity of the process of rebirth, which is a major axiom of Buddha Dhamma.
- When one LIVES a life with the belief that what one does in this life will affect how one will fare after this life, then one may realize the danger in this traversing this endless cycles of rebirths. That will lead to exploring the third stage, which is THE real message of the Buddha.

7. [No one can take anyone else to any meaningful mundane happiness with *niramisa sukha* \(in this life or next\) or to *Nibbāna*.](#)

- The Buddha said, “*Attā hi attano nātho, ko hi nātho paro siyā*”, or , “*One indeed is one’s own refuge; how can others be a refuge to one?*” .
- Each one has one’s own mind. And that is what is needed to be purified in order to attain a peaceful life now, a better life in the next, or even *Nibbāna*. But others CAN help.
- It is entirely up to the individual. This site will help one find the right path.

Next, [“The Importance of Purifying the Mind”](#),

2.4 The Importance of Purifying the Mind

Analysis of a given situation always needs to be taken in the proper context. Let us again listen to Dr. Feynman's video that was in the previous post.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Feynman Magnets and Why questions](#)

It is worthwhile to discuss the case of an icy surface to look a bit deeper than even Dr. Feynman did. He merely pointed out that there is no end to the sort of questions especially when a child keeps asking: "what is the reason for that?" at every step: "Why is Aunt Mimi in the hospital?" leads to the answer, "She fell on ice". Then, "Why did she fall on ice?" leads to "Because ice is slippery", which leads to, "Why is ice (and not concrete) slippery?"

Up to this point, the child (or an average adult) can understand each answer, BECAUSE based on their life experiences all those answers make sense. But the last question cannot be answered to the complete satisfaction of a child or an average adult, who does not have a background in physics: Unlike most other solids, ice has this peculiar property that when water is cooled, it expands when turning into ice. So, when Aunt Mimi stepped on ice, the pressure of her weight caused ice to shrink (i.e., become water), and thus a thin layer of water was formed between her shoes and ice, which causes her to slide and fall. Other solids tend to get more hardened under pressure, so there no slipping due to that particular cause.

- Now one DOES NOT need to know that bit of physics to avoid falling on ice. What was needed to avoid falling was to have a keen sense of knowing that ice is slippery and needed to take necessary precautions.
- May be Aunt Mimi was in an agitated state of mind and hurried out of the door without realizing that there was a thin sheet of ice on the driveway. If she was drunk, that would have also lead to the same result. If she was in a calm, relaxed state of mind, she would have been more careful.
- An agitated mind can be caused by excess greed and hate too. Most people do not realize this, but if we think back each of us can remember instances where we made bad decisions because of greedy or hateful state of mind. This is why getting into heated arguments can be risky, and people even kill in a moment of rage.

What the Buddha tried to convey was that we can truly understand the real nature of "this world" by "clearing up our minds". There are five things called hindrances that cause our minds to be clouded; see, "[Key to Calming the Mind – Five Hindrances](#)". These have accumulated via bad habits that we have developed over countless lives; see, for example, "[The Law of Attraction, Habits \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)".

- Each one has a different set of bad habits, but we all have them. Yet we can function "in this world" with that "baseline"(for example not fall while walking on ice), if we do not make it worse by substance abuse, making the mind agitated (by getting angry or overly greedy), etc.

Thus what all of us would normally do is to live our lives in this "baseline state of the mind" which does not allow us to see the true nature of "this world". We are just carried by the tide without us trying to examine whether it is good idea to "just go with the flow", do our best to make our lives better, and eventually die without knowing that all those life struggles were in vain at the end.

The worse thing is that the story does not end at death, but just moves on to another phase (rebirth), where we will be doing exactly the same again.

- We have gone through this unending process for innumerable lives, and most those have been much worse than our current human life. When one "sees" the fruitlessness of our struggles to seek happiness in a "world" that is inherently not able to provide that, then one will seek to get out of "this world" by following the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha, and achieve permanent happiness.
- **This is the crux of the message of the Buddha.**

We will be able to “see” the truth of what was said in the above paragraph (i.e., the true nature of “this world”), if we start cleaning our minds to get rid of the five hindrances (see, “[Key to Calming the Mind - The five Hindrances](#)”).

But to do that, first we need to be able to look at the wider view of “this world” of the Buddha. Many people plunge into “practicing Dhamma” without even having an idea of the “world view” of the Buddha. **How can one practice, if one does not know what the goal of the practice is?** The goal could be three fold:

- i. to gain some kind of a peaceful state of mind in this life
- ii. looking at a more longer range, to make sure one will have a better life also in the upcoming births,
- iii. to be released from this cycle of rebirths filled with dissatisfaction, and to seek permanent happiness, Nibbāna.

If the goal is one of the above three (and especially if (ii) and (iii)), then one needs to know what the complete “world view” of the Buddha was: This is the Buddha Dhamma.

It has been over 2500 years since the Buddha declared his message about the previously unknown wider world view. This has been distorted over these intervening time, and my goal is to provide a more sensible, logical view that is based on *Theravāda* version.

Since many are “just looking”, and have no reason to believe the truth of this world view, I am going to present it as a theory. We will be continually testing this theory to see whether it meets the established scientific standards, because that is what I am used to as a scientist.

- Many people, especially in the earlier times, made that decision on the enhanced EXPERIENCE as they followed the Path; as one moves along the Path, this EXPERIENCE starts to transcend the sensory experience. There is crucial difference between the empiricism based on the sensory experience (which was the philosophical doctrine promoted by John Locke and others in the early days of scientific revolution), and the **vastly enhanced experience of a purified mind.**

Now, once one understands what this wider world view is, then one can see that the solution to our problem existence does not depend on trying to probe deeper into “What is the reason for that?” at each step in an endless loop. We just do not have enough time in this life to learn all that.

- **Rather it is just a matter of purifying our minds**, so that the mind can “see” through one’s own **refined experience as one follows the Path.**

Put succinctly, the Buddha discovered that the solution to the problem of the existence is to “see” the true nature of “this world”; this is even more complex than what the science is finding out.

- But one only needs to see that “whole picture” and to realize that no matter where we are born, we will never find long lasting happiness “in this world”, because “this world” is inherently of the nature of ever-changing.
- Everything “in this world” is in a constant flux, but we cannot “see” that because our minds are cluttered with the five hindrances.

Now let us take look at the other approach for “finding out all about this world”. This is the scientific approach (There are other religious approaches too, but I am going to stay away from that subject). This scientific approach started with the ancient Greeks, about at the same time that the Buddha lived.

- So, we have two approaches: the Buddha’s is totally mind-based; the scientific method is matter-based.
- Currently, most scientists are trying to figure out how the mind works in terms of the workings of brain, thought of as a very sophisticated computer. **The Buddha Dhamma is completely consistent with the material aspects of science (as we will discuss), but in Buddha Dhamma, mind actually precedes matter; matter is secondary.**

Let us go back to the case of slipping on ice that was discussed in Dr. Feynman's video. In order to cope with an icy surface, all we need to know is to have prior EXPERIENCE with such a surface, and an alert mind (that is not distracted by alcohol, anger, lust, etc) to use that experience to cope with the situation. This is the mind approach.

- When one carefully examines the “world view” within the Buddha Dhamma, one will be able to see that the problem of the existence is reduced to understanding the ever-changing nature of the world, without examining each part in minute detail. ALL PARTS of this world are of impermanent nature, and thus one can never maintain anything to one's liking for long times.
- **That is all one needs to perceive, to really understand, not just to read about. This simple task is the hardest; that is what requires an effort. But first one needs to read about this “world view”.**

On the other hand, one could keep going down the line of questions probing deeper to the causes as to why ice is slippery, why does water expand when it is cooled, the nature of chemical bonds, about electrons and protons, about quarks that make up those protons, etc.

- It is quite true that this probing has led to many technological advances that we all enjoy today. I can write something on this site and get it to you within minutes; it is amazing and very beneficial. But my point is that all this “probing deeper” has not gotten us any closer to the questions on the existence. **Right now science is approaching the limits of this probing, because now we know that all matter is just energy.**
- And even though we may benefit from the technological advances, such benefits can be enjoyed only for a brief moment (about 100 years) in the *samsaric* time scale. Buddha Dhamma provides a long-term solution.

What the Buddha stated 2500 years ago was that, in the end, there is no benefit in probing deeper into material properties as far as one's existence is concerned. All one needs to realize is that no matter what we achieve, they are all transitory, not stable. This cannot be done without purifying one's mind.

- When one truly comprehends the three characteristics of existence (see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – True Meanings](#)”), and thus the unsatisfactory nature of this existence, one will not seek to gain “material things” but will endeavor to achieve Nibbāna. **This only requires purification of one's mind. It does not require examining the outside material world in detail.**
- **When one goes deeper into the Buddha Dhamma, it becomes clear that mind energy is the basis of all existence.** But that is a long story. We first need to get started and see whether the “broader world view” of the Buddha makes sense.

Next, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”,.....

2.5 The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma

Expanded May 20, 2016

- [The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma – Introduction](#)
- [Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)
- [31 Realms Associated with the Earth](#)
- [Gandhabba – Only in Human and Animal Realms](#)
- [Body Types in Different Realms – Importance of Manomaya Kaya](#)
- [Gandhabba Sensing the World – With and Without a Physical Body](#)
- [Nibbāna in the Big Picture](#)

2.5.1 The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma – Introduction

Revised May 20, 2016

1. According to Buddha Dhamma EVERYTHING in existence can be put into four ultimate realities (*paramatthatho*):

- Thoughts (*citta*)
- Thought qualities or mental factors (*cetasika*)
- Matter (*rūpa*)
- *Nibbāna*

These entities will be described in detail in the [Tables and Summaries](#) and *Abhidhamma* sections; see, “[Abhidhamma – Introduction](#)”.

- All existence “in this world” can be described in terms of the first three. And they are all conditional, i.e., each is born due to the existence of a cause. If there is no cause, none of these three will arise. This is a fundamental cause and effect (*paticca samuppāda*) in Buddha Dhamma.
- Causes are numerous, but the root causes are six: greed, hate, ignorance, non-greed, non-hate, and non-ignorance.
- When all such causes are removed, *Nibbāna* results. Since it does not arise due to causes, *Nibbāna* is permanent.
- One actually strives to remove greed, hate, and ignorance, which are “*san*”; see, “[What is ‘San’?](#)”. When this is done, other three causes are automatically removed. This is the key to *Nibbāna*, as laid out in the Noble Eightfold Path.

2. The *citta* arise and decay at a very fast rate: billions of *citta* can arise and pass away each second. But as we will see in the *Abhidhamma* section, such “active thoughts” occur relatively infrequently in “fast bursts” or *citta vithi*. *Cetasika* are “embedded” in each *citta*. There are 89 types of *cittas* in all, and 52 types of *cetasikas*; see, “[Tables and Summaries](#)”. Thus the mental realm is very complex.

- For an introduction to the mind, see “[Consciousness – A Dhamma Perspective](#)” and “[Mind and Consciousness](#)”.

3. Matter (*rūpa*) is constituted of 28 basic units, of which only four are truly fundamental. However, the smallest indivisible unit that anything in this world is made out of is called a “*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]”; see, “[Rūpa – Generation Mechanisms](#)”. These *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] have very long lifetimes of a *mahā kalpa* (basically the age of the universe). Any “tangible thing” in the

universe is made out of these *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], and those “composite things” are called *sankata*.

- All *sankata* in “this world” are subject to change. Each *sankata* (basically material things) has a lifetime which could be shorter than a second or as long as billions of years (for a star, for example).

4. Many people confuse “*udayavaya*” or formation and breakup of *sankata* means anything, including *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], is incessantly in flux; they try to tie this with “impermanence” which they incorrectly translate *anicca* to be. In the contrary, *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] have very long lifetimes.

- It is only those “composites” such as humans, animals, trees, etc, that undergo decay and death at time scales that are discernible to us; a gold bar, does not decay for a very long time; see, “[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#)”.

5. The “end result” of this *udayavaya* nature of all *sankata* was summarized by the Buddha as the Three Characteristics of “this world”: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. But *anicca* is NOT impermanence, and *anatta* is NOT “no-self”; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.

- Briefly, (i) it is not possible to find AND maintain happiness in anything in “this world”, (ii) because of that we become distraught and suffer, and (iii) thus one becomes helpless (not in control). It is important to realize that these characterize not just this life, but our beginning-less rebirth process in “this wider world” of 31 realms described below.
- Even though gold bars are virtually permanent relative to our lifetimes, we still cannot “maintain it to our satisfaction” since we have to leave it (and anything else) behind when we die.
- And all this is due to “*udayavaya*” of *sankata*, all that we experience; see, “[Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata](#)”.

6. Therefore, there is NOTHING “in this world” that is permanent (except “*nama gotta*”; see below). Everything is constantly changing. This is the fundamental reason why nothing in “this world” can be maintained to one’s expectations; see, “[Second Law of Thermodynamics is Part of Anicca!](#)”.

- Some things can last longer than others, but nothing is permanent. Everything is CONDITIONAL, i.e., arises due to causes. When the causes are removed, it does not arise. Thus it is said that everything “in this world” is CONDITIONED.
- The only exception is “*nama gotta*” which are the permanent records of a given “lifestream”; see, “[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)”. This is how one with *abhiññā* powers can go back and look at one’s past lives; some children can recall their past lives too. That record is permanent.

7. This world that is made of *citta*, *cetasika*, and *rūpa* is very complex, and beings can be born in 31 realms out of which we can “see” only two realms: human and animal.

- **Think about the fact that all biological matter is constituted from just four bases of DNA, and all computer codes are based on two units, 0 and 1.** Thus, one could see how complex the mind is when there are 89 types of *cittas* and 52 types of *cetasikas* are involved!

8. *Nibbāna*, in contrast to *citta*, *cetasika*, and *rūpa*, is UNCONDITIONED. *Nibbāna* is attained when all the causes are eliminated; thus is it permanent.

- *Nibbāna* is attained at four steps or stages: Stream Entry (*Sotāpanna*), Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmi*), Non-Returner (*Anāgāmi*), *Arahant*.
- At each stage, the causes (or “*gathi*”) that could result in births in some realms are “removed”; see, “[Gathi, Bhava, and Jati](#)”. For example, at the *Sotāpanna* stage, those *hateful gathi* suitable for beings in *niraya*, *greedy gathi* suitable for *petas* (hungry ghosts), etc are removed.

- All causes (and all “*gathi*”) are totally removed at the *Arahant* stage. However, an *Arahant* lives as a normal human being until death, and is not reborn anywhere in “this world” at death. We will discuss these in depth later, but let us first examine what the Buddha meant by “this world” in the next section.

Thirty One Planes of Existence

Here is a video from Carl Sagan to get an idea how vast our “detectable universe” is:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Carl Sagan "100 Billion Galaxies each W/100 Billion Stars"](#)

The “worldview” of the Buddha is not merely about the living beings on this planet. Our Solar system is one of an infinite number of “world systems” (planetary systems). In EACH planetary system with life (scientists have not found even one yet; but they are out there!), there are 31 “planes of existence”. As we find out below, we can “see” only two of these realms: our human realm and the animal realm. Thus our “world” is much more complex than even the present-day science believes.

As some of you may already know, **science cannot account for 95% of the mass of the universe**, which they label “dark energy” and “dark matter”; see, “The 4 Percent Universe” by Richard Panek (2011), or do a Google search on “dark energy and dark matter”. This is why I say that the Buddha transcended “this world”; see, “[Power of the Human mind – Introduction](#)”. He was able to “see” the whole of existence: see “[Godel’s Incompleteness Theorem](#)” under “[Dhamma and Science](#)”.

- A being in a given plane of existence is reborn in any of the 31 realms at death; this happens instantaneously and evidence for such a mechanism is slowly emerging from quantum mechanics; see, “[Quantum Entanglement – We are all Connected](#)”.

The Buddha has described these different realms of existence in many *suttas*, and a convenient summary has been presented at: “[The Thirty-one Planes of Existence](#)”. It is not easy to describe in detail the 31 planes of existence in a short essay, and I will describe their various characteristics as needed in other posts. In the following I will use a visual to simplify things a bit and to provide a simple description of *Nibbāna* with respect to this “wider world of existence”.

Imagine a sphere with 31 shells, with a small sphere in the middle. Thus the total volume of the big sphere is completely filled by the center sphere and surrounding shells. The 31 sections represent the 31 planes of existence. I emphasize that this is just a visual. The reality is different. For example, animal and human realms co-exist in reality. Also, both time and space are infinite in reality.

1. The innermost 11 shells represent the *kamaloka*, where all five physical sense faculties are present.
 - The innermost sphere represent the *niraya* (hell) where there is non-stop suffering; next is the animal realm. Going outward there are two more realms where suffering is higher than at the human realm.
 - Human realm is the fifth shell. This is the last realm where greed, hate, and ignorance all prevail. However, this is unique in the sense that humans can also get rid of all those three and attain *Nibbāna*.
 - The sixth through eleventh shells represent the realms of the *devas* (wrongly translated as gods by many). *Devas* do not have dense bodies with flesh and blood, and thus they do not have the physical ailments. They do not generate greedy thoughts.
2. The next 16 shells represent realms where only two physical sense faculties (eye and ear) are active, in addition to mind. These beings have very fine bodies, even less dense than *devas*. These are called *rūpa lokas*.
3. The last 4 shells represent the *arūpa lokas*, where beings have ultra fine bodies and only the mind faculty; no physical senses.
4. In *rūpa* and *arūpa lokas*, the beings are in *jhānic* states, and those beings do not have either greed or hate; but they still have ignorance.

- These states can be attained by humans and thus a humans can “temporarily live” in those *lokas* by attaining *jhānas*; see, “[Power of the Human Mind – Anariya or Mundane Jhānas](#)”.
- The 16 realms in the *rūpa loka* correspond to the four lower *jhānas*, and the 4 realms in the *arūpa loka* correspond to the four higher *jhānas*.

5. Now, a lot of you may be thinking “How do I know all this is true? Is there any evidence?”. There are a lot of things we do not know about “this world”. We cannot rely on our senses or even science to verify/confirm these; see, “[Wrong Views \(Micca Ditthi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#)” and “[Dhamma and Science](#)”.

- Only within the last 50 years or so that science has accepted that our world is bigger than a few galaxies (now science has confirmed that there are billions of galaxies!).
- Furthermore, the newest findings (yet unconfirmed) in string theory indicate that we live in a 10-dimensional world (of course we cannot see the other spatial dimensions), not a 3-dimensional world. For a fun look at different dimensions, see, “[Consciousness Dependence on Number of Dimensions](#)”.

6. Any living being (including each of us) has been in all realms in this beginningless *samsāra*. We have been in the *niraya* (hell) and we have been at the highest (except the five pure abodes in *rūpa loka* which can be accessed only by *Anāgāmīs* or Non-Returners). One time the Buddha pointed to a bunch of ants on the ground and told *bhikkhus* that each of those ants had lived in a *brahma loka*. The *samsāra* is that long; there is no discernible beginning.

7. Above the human realm, there is relatively less suffering (except at death, which is inevitable). However, unless one has achieved at least the Stream Entry (*Sotāpanna*) stage, even a being at the highest level can fall to any lower level, and thus will end up in the *niraya* (hell) at some point; once there one will spend a long agonizing time there and eventually come out. Each of us have done this many times over. The cause of births in different realms can be explained in terms of “*kamma* seeds”; see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”.

8. So, each living being just moves from one realm to another, **but spends most time in the four lower worlds**, mainly because once fallen there it is hard to come out. **This “samsaric wandering” is the critical point to think about and comprehend.**

9. As one moves away from the center the level of suffering decreases, and level of mundane pleasure increases up to the 11th realm. After that in the *rūpa* and *arūpa lokas* it is mainly the *jhānic* pleasures, not the sense pleasures; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”.

10. The human realm and the animal realm are the only ones where a being is born to parents. In all other realms, beings are born instantaneously, formed fully, within an instant (*cittakkhana*) of dying in the previous life. *This is an opapatika birth*. This is why the Buddha said, “*mano pubbangama dhamma.....*”. The mind is the root cause, not matter.

- As discussed in the Abhidhamma section, even the humans and animals start off their “*bhava*” *opapatically* as *gandhabbas*; see, “[Manomaya Kaya](#)”. They start building a “dense physical body” after getting into a womb.

11. A person who becomes an *Arahant* or attains *Nibbāna*, will not be reborn in any of these 31 realms. Thus, *Nibbāna* is not difficult to understand, and it can be looked at from different angles; see, “[Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#)”, and “[What are Rūpa? Relation to Nibbāna](#)”, and other posts (by the way, you can just type a keyword in the “Search box” at top right to get a list of relevant posts).

- *Nibbāna*, in the present model, corresponds to getting out of all 31 shells, out of the big sphere; no more rebirth in any of the 31 realms. *Nibbāna* is where the permanent *sukha* or *niramisa sukha*, is.
- When one attains *Nibbāna* or *Arahanthood*, he/she looks just like any other human, but has no attachments to any worldly things. He still has some *kamma vipāka* to pay off from the *kamma* seed that he was born with. When that *kammic* power is used up, he dies and is not reborn because he/she will not “willingly grasp” (or “*upādāna*”) any of the possible births.

12. Why are we trapped in the 31 realms? Because we perceive that there is happiness to be had in “this world”. We are not aware that there is much suffering in the lower four realms; many people look at their lives and say, “where is this suffering the Buddha was talking about?”. It is the hidden suffering that is there not only in this world, but mostly in the lowest four realms. The problem is that once fallen there, it is hard to come back up, since in those realms – animal realm included – beings are more like robots; they do not have developed minds like humans and it is too late then.

- No one or no external force is keeping us in “this world” of 31 realms; we are content with sense pleasures, do not see the suffering “in the long term” (even in this life as we get old), thus **we are clinging to everything in this world like an octopus grabbing its prey with all eight legs**. And we are not aware that there is a better kind of pleasure in Nibbāna, in detaching from “this world”; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”. (Also, unless a Buddha comes along, we do not know about the 31 realms and are not aware of the suffering in the lower four realms).

13. Can we taste *Nibbānic* “pleasure”? Yes. We can taste it in increments, even below the Stream Entry (*Sotāpanna*) stage; see, “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)”. This is *niramisa sukha*, the “pleasure of giving up worldly things”.

- This *niramisa sukha* has “quantum jumps” (large instantaneous changes) at the four stages of *Nibbāna*: Stream Entry, Once-Returner, Non-Returner, *Arahant*. Thus when one is on the Path, one can experience *niramisa sukha* at varying degrees, all the way to *Nibbānic* bliss, during this very lifetime; see, at the end of “[The Four Stages in Attaining Nibbāna](#)”.

14. All these 31 realms are located in our solar system (*Chakkawata* or *Chakrawata*), and are associated with the Earth. There are a great number of such *Chakkawata* (planetary systems) in existence at all times with living beings.

- These are in clusters of small, medium, and large “world systems” (galaxies, galaxy clusters, and superclusters?). But none is permanent. They come into being and eventually perish. Within the past 100 years or so, scientists have confirmed the existence of billions of planetary systems within each galaxy and billions of such galaxies in our universe.

The other big factor to take into account is that we have been born in almost all of these realms in our *sansaric* journey that has no traceable beginning. All of us have been bouncing around “inside the sphere” (mainly in the inner ones) from a beginning that is not even discernible to a Buddha.

Continues discussion in , “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)“,

2.5.2 Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental

May 14, 2016; Revised November 25, 2016 (#3)

1. *Rūpa* in Buddha Dhamma cannot be translated to English as “matter”. Our minds can make very fine *rūpa* (energy in our thoughts or *mano rūpa*); the mind can also detect such *mano rūpa* that are in the mind plane or the mental world.

- In Buddha Dhamma, those very fine *rūpa* are called “*dhamma*” (of course the word “*dhamma*” is used in other contexts too, like in Buddha Dhamma). They are called “*anidassanan, appatighan*”, meaning they cannot be seen or detected by our five physical senses; see, “[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)”.
- Those *rūpa* that can be detected with the five physical senses are made of the smallest “unit of matter” in Buddha Dhamma, called *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*]. (A *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*] is a billion times smaller than an atom in present day science). The 28 types of *rūpa* consist of these “dense types of *rūpa*”; see, “[Rūpa \(Material Form\)](#)” and “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatthaka\]](#)”.
- In fact, the fine *rūpas* (*dhamma*) are normally not called *rūpa* but are called *mano rūpa* to make the distinction; they are the *rūpa* that are grasped only by the *mana indriya* or *dhammayatana*:

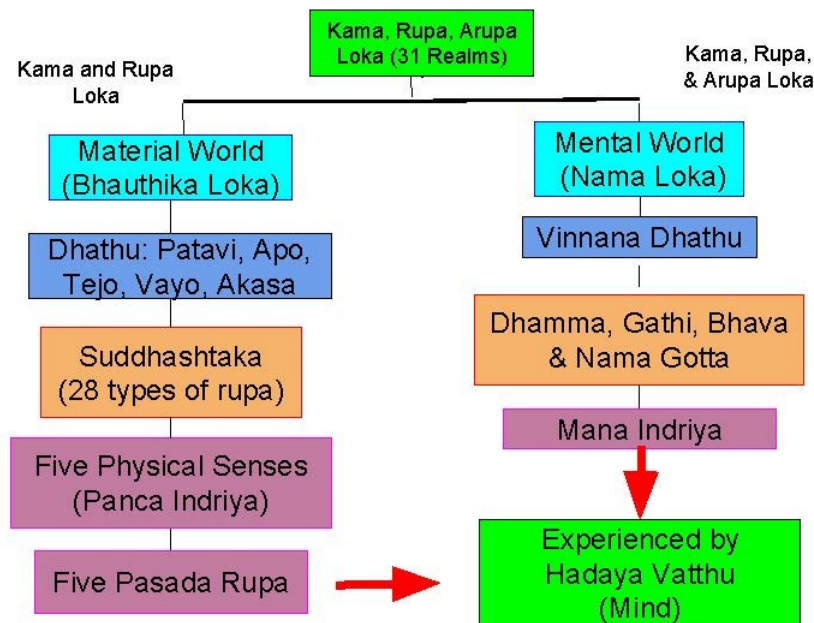
“*anidassanan, appatighan, dhammayatana pariyapanna rūpan*“. Thus, they can also be called *nāmarūpa* as well.

2. It is also important to note that *nāmarūpa* come in at least two varieties:

- When written as two words, *nāma rūpa*, *nāma* refers to mental attributes and *rūpa* refers to matter. There, *nāma rūpa* refers to mind AND matter.
- With our *viññana*, *nāma* combines with *rūpa* and creates *nāmarūpa* — imprints for future rebirths — which eventually lead to fully-formed living beings (This will be discussed in the near future). *Nāmarūpa* are very fine *rūpa* which are below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage, and are part of *dhamma*. Thus they are distinct from the *rūpa* that we experience with the five physical senses.
- But here we talk about *nāmarūpa* referring to visuals in our minds; these are of course related to above *nāmarūpa*.

3. Our “human world” is made of two types of worlds: Material world (living beings and inert objects, sounds, smells, tastes, and body touches) that we experience with the five physical senses and the mental world (*dhamma*, which includes concepts, memories, etc in addition to *kamma beeja* with energy) that we experience with our minds.

- These two worlds co-exist; all 31 realms share the mental world. The mental world is like a fine fabric that connects all living beings. It is just that we cannot “see” the mental world, while we can see most of the material world. There are many things that we cannot “see” but we know exist. For example, we know that radio and television signals are all around us, but we cannot “see” them. Mental world is just like that.
- In the four realms of the *Arūpa Lōka*, matter formed by *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] are absent (except for the *hadaya vatthu* of the *arūpa brahmas*). Beings in the *arūpa lōka* experience only *nāma dhammā* (or simply *dhamma*); they do not have any of the five physical senses and have only the mind (*hadaya vatthu*).



Click to open in pdf format: [WebLink: Two Types of Lōka](#)

- Thus the “material world” is accessible only to living beings in the *kāma lōka* and *rūpa lōka*.
- *Arūpa lōka* means there are no “condensed *rūpa*” (like those in *kāma lōka* and *rūpa lōka*), but of course *dhamma* are there (those *arūpa* beings can think and recall past events just like us).

4. Let us briefly discuss the main points depicted in the above chart. Everything in this world is made of 6 *dhātu*: *patavi*, *āpo*, *thejo*, *vāyo*, *akāsa*, and *viññāṇa*. Five of them constitute the “material world” and the *viññāṇa dhātu* represents the “mental world”.

- By the way, *akāsa* is not merely “empty space”. We will discuss this later.
- The basic building block for the material world is *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]. Not long ago, scientists thought that atoms were the building blocks, but now they say that even those elementary particles have structure. A *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] is much more finer than any elementary particle.
- In the mental world (or the mental plane), there are the mental precursors to *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]: *dhmma*, *gathi*, and *bhava*. Based on our *gathi*, we make *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] in our *javana citta*; see, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhaṭṭhaka\]](#)”.

5. We have five sense faculties to experience the material world: eyes, ears, tongue, nose, and the body. They pass down the sense inputs to the five *pasada rūpa* located in the *gandhabba* or the *monomaya kaya*, that overlaps our physical body); see, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)”. By the way, *gandhabba* is not a Mahayana concept: “[Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka](#)”.

- On the mental side, we have a *mana indriya* in the brain to sense the mental world; see, “[Brain – Interface between Mind and Body](#)”.
- Based on those five physical sense contacts with the material world and the contacts of the *mana indriya* with the mental world, our thoughts arise in the *hadaya vatthu* (also located in the *gandhabba* or the *monomaya kaya*); see, “[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#)”.
- That is a very brief description of the chart above. One could gain more information by clicking on the links provided and by using the “Search” button. Don’t worry too much if all this does not make complete sense yet. They will, with time, if one is interested in spending time reading the relevant posts.

6. Thus it is important to understand that there are two types of *rūpa* in our human world:

- Tangible matter in the material world that we experience with the help of the five physical senses.
- Unseen, intangible (*anidassana*, *appatigha*) thoughts, perceptions, plans, memories (which can be categorized as *dhmma*, *mano rūpa*, *gathi*, *bhava*, *nāma gatta*, depending on the case). These are experienced with the help of the *mana indriya* in the brain.
- Both types of *rūpa* are eventually detected and experienced by the mind (*hadaya vatthu*). The *hadaya vatthu* is not located in the brain but in the body of *gandhabba* and **overlaps** the physical heart region of the physical body; see, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)”.
- Comprehending this “wider picture” may need a little bit of effort. The world is complex and most of the complexity is associated with the mind which not in the brain but in the fine body (*manomaya kaya*) of the *gandhabba*.

7. Another part of our *nāma lōka* or the mental world is the dream world.

- When we dream, we “see” people and material objects. But we cannot say where those are located. They do not have a physical location; they are in the *mano lōka* or the mind plane. **And we do not “see” those dreams with our eyes, but with the *mana indriya*.**
- When we sleep, our five physical senses do not function. But the *mana indriya* in the brain does. Scientists do confirm that our brains are active during sleep.
- What is experienced in *Arūpa Loka* is said to be somewhat similar to seeing dreams. Of course, one has the ability to contemplate in the *arūpa lōka*. However, since one is unable to learn *Tilakkhana* (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) from a Noble Person (in *kāma lōka* and *rūpa lōka* this is done by using eyes and ears), one is unable to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna* in the *arūpa lōka*. But if one had attained the *Sotāpanna* stage prior to being born there, one is able to meditate and attain higher stages of *Nibbāna*.

8. There is another way to look at our sense experiences. Living beings are attached to this world because they expect to gain pleasures from this world. These pleasures are obtained by making contact with *rūpa*. Those *rūpa* come at various densities.
- Bodily pleasures are achieved by the strongest contacts (touch). Then come taste, smell, vision, sounds, becoming less dense in that order.
 - The softest contact is via *dhamma*. This is our mental world; we think, plan for the future, remember things from the past, etc: We do this all the time, and we can do it anywhere. Another way to say this is to say that we engage in *mano*, *vacī*, and *kaya saṅkhāra*.
 - Thus, contacts by the *mana indriya* with *dhamma* in the *mano loka* constitute a significant portion of sense experience. That involve *mano rūpa* (*dhamma*, *gathi*, *bhava*, *nāma gotta*) in the mind plane or the mental world.
9. The way a living being experiences and enjoys (or suffers) sense contacts is different in the three main categories of existence: *kāma loka*, *rūpa loka*, and *arūpa loka*.
- Most “rough” or “*olarika*” sense contacts are available only in the *kāma loka*. Even here, they are roughest in the *niraya* (the lowest realm) and in general reduces in “roughness” as moving up to the human realm, the fifth. The 6 *deva* realms are significantly “softer” than the human realm; *deva* bodies are much more fine (like that of a *gandhabba*) and a normal human cannot see them.
 - The roughest sense contacts (touch, taste, and smell) are absent in the *rūpa loka*. Only visual and sound contacts are available for the *brahmas* in the 16 *rūpa loka* realms, in addition to the mind.
 - Those *arupi brahmas* in the 4 *arūpa loka* realms have only the mind, with which they experience only the finest *rūpa* (*dhamma*) that are below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage.
 - Those *brahmas* in both *rupi* and *arupi loka* have seen the perils of “*kāma āsvada*” that are available in the *kāma loka* (at least temporarily), because prior to being born there, they had enjoyed *jhānic* pleasures and value those more than the “rough” sense pleasures. **They have — at least temporarily — given up the craving for those “rough” sense pleasures that are available via touch, taste, and smell.**
10. We can get an idea of such “soft” and “rough” sense contacts with the following example. Suppose someone (a grand mother is a good example) watching her grandchild laughing and dancing around having good time.
- At first she may be watching from a distance and enjoying the sight of the little baby having fun.
 - Then she goes and hugs the child. It is not enough to just watch from a distance; she needs to touch the child.
 - If the child keeps on wiggling and having a good time, the grandmother may start kissing the child. In some cases, the grand mother may start tightening the hold on the child, even without realizing it, and may make the child cry out in pain.
 - This last scenario is an example of how craving for extreme sense pleasures can instead lead to suffering. Of course, it is the **craving for *olārika* sense pleasures** that leads to most suffering.
 - But suffering is there even in the *rupi* and *arupi* realms. Even at the level of *arupi brahmas* — where the attachment is only to pleasures of the softest of the *rūpa* (*dhamma*) — there is inevitable suffering at the end when they have to give up that existence and come back down to the human realm.
11. Therefore, the level of inevitable suffering goes hand in hand with the “denseness” of the sense contact.

- Pains, aches, and illnesses are there only in the lowest 5 realms (including the human realm) where there are dense physical bodies. In the higher realms those are absent. This is the price even the humans pay for being able to experience “rough contact pleasures” such as a body massage, sex, eating, and smelling.
- We humans in the *kāma lōka* like to enjoy close and “rough” sense pleasures. In addition, most times, just enjoying sense pleasures is not enough; we like to “own” those things that provide sense pleasures. For example, people like to “own” vacation homes; it is not enough to rent a house in that location just for the visit.
- This tendency to “own” pleasurable things also go down in higher realms. There are less material things to “own” in *brahma lōkas*, especially in the *arupi brahma* realms.

12. As one attains higher stages of *Nibbāna*, craving for “rough” sense pleasures, as well as the desire to “own” things go down.

- A *Sotāpanna* has only “seen” the perils of *kāma āsvāda*; he/she still enjoys them.
- A *Sakadāgāmi* may still enjoy “*kāma āsvāda*“, but has no desire to “own” those things that provide pleasures. It is enough to live in a nice rented house, and there is no desire to own a nice house. In fact, a *Sakadāgāmi* can clearly see the burden of “owning things”.
- An *Anāgāmi* has no special interest in enjoying *kāma āsvāda*. He/she eats to quench the hunger (but will eat delicious foods when offered), and will never give priority to any sense pleasure over the “pleasure of Dhamma” (of course, Dhamma here means Buddha Dhamma). He/she also likes *jhānic* pleasures, and thus will be born in the *rūpa* realms reserved for the *Anāgāmi*s upon death.
- An *Arahant* has no desire for even *jhānic* pleasures, and will not be born anywhere in the 31 realms upon death.

Each habitable planetary system (*chakrāvāta*) has all 31 realms of existence, even though we can only see two realms (human and animal) in ours.

This is discussed next: “[31 Realms Associated with the Earth](#)“,

2.5.3 31 Realms Associated with the Earth

May 20, 2016

1. There are many things in “this world” that we cannot see, hear, etc (i.e., perceive with our six senses). Scientists admit that they cannot account for 96% of the “stuff” that makes our universe; read the book, “The 4 Percent Universe: Dark Matter, Dark Energy, and the Race to Discover the Rest of Reality”, by Richard Panek (2011), or Google “dark energy, dark matter” for more information.

- There are also many energy forms that apparently do not have significant mass (or weight) but exist out there in the world.
- A good example is the fact that we are totally unaware of the huge amounts of “information” that surrounds us. There are hundreds and thousands of radio and television signals in a major city. **Yet, without having a radio or a television “tuned” to the correct frequency, we cannot see or hear any of those programs, i.e., we are unaware of their existence.**
- In the same way, we are totally unaware of the existence of the 31 realms that are centered around the Earth. Living beings in some of those realms live side-by-side by us, but we are unaware of them. **These beings are “more like energy forms than solid matter” that we are used to.**
- With better detection technologies we may be able to communicate with some of these living beings with fine bodies in the future. Of course, those who develop *abhiññā* powers can also see some of them. We will get back to this issue below, but let us first discuss the relative locations of the 31 realms.

2. Buddha Dhamma says there are 31 realms associated with each habitable planetary system (*chakrawata*), and there are infinite number of them in the universe (this latter fact has been confirmed by science).

- Modern science is gradually confirming this wider world view explained by the Buddha 2500 years ago; see, “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)“. Only a few hundred years ago, Western world accepted a universe that centered around the Earth with stars “embedded in a celestial sphere”; see, “[WebLink: WIKI: Celestial spheres](#)“.

3. In the post, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“, we described a model that consisted of 31 concentric “shells”. The actuality is pretty much close to that analogy, with some additional features. I have compiled a summary of the 31 realms in the table “[31 Realms of Existence](#)“.

- The sphere with 31 concentric shells overlaps the Earth. The lowest realm, *niraya* (or hell) is located deep inside the Earth.
- The next four realms (*preta*, *asura*, animal, and human) are located closer to the Earth’s surface. There are some *preta apāyas* deep inside the Earth, but some *pretas* live on the surface. *Asuras* also live on the surface, but mostly in remote locations such as the ocean and isolated mountains. Both *pretas* and *asuras* cannot be seen by the humans.
- There are many *suttas* in the *Tipitaka* that describe those three realms (*niraya*, *preta*, *asura*) in detail. We will discuss in the future. The *Peta Vatthu* in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Tipitaka* describes *pretas* as well as *gandhabbas*.

4. It must be noted that *gandhabbas* really belong to the human and animal realms. They belong to either the human or animal *bhava*. Those *gandhabbas* are waiting for a suitable womb to be born with human (or animal) bodies; see the section: [Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#).

- Thus we say that those *gandhabbas* are in *paralowa* (nether world), even though they live alongside us with very fine bodies that we cannot see: “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)“.
- So, our world is much more complex than we think.

5. Then come the 6 realms for the *devas*. The lowest of the 6 realms are again located on the surface of the Earth; those *devas* are called *Bhummattha devas*, and they belong to the *Chathurmaharajika deva* realm; see, “[31 Realms of Existence](#)“. They live mostly in their residences (*deva vimāna*) based on trees. Of course, we cannot see them or their “residences”.

- The higher *deva* realms extend out from the Earth.
- The 16 *rūpa* realms extend even higher above the Earth.
- The 4 *arūpa loka* realms are located even further from the Earth.
- All these realms are concentric with Earth’s center. As the Earth spins around its axis and rotates around the Sun, all 31 realms move along with the Earth, just like the human realm does.
- Buddha has named these various realms in several key suttas, for example, in [WebLink: suttacentral: Dhammacappavattana Sutta \(SN 56.11\)](#) and [WebLink: suttacentral: Mahā Samaya Sutta \(DN 20\)](#).

6. In general, beings in higher realms can “see” or “perceive” those in the lower realms, but not the other way around. For example, *devas* can see us, but cannot see the *rupi* or *arupi brahmas*. *Rupi brahmas* can see *devas*, but cannot see the *arupi brahmas*.

- From the previous post, “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)“, and other relevant posts at the site, we know that there are only traces of “real matter” (*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*]) in the *arūpa* realms. Thus beings in the other 27 realms cannot “see” or “perceive” those *arupi brahmas*.
- When one develops *abhiññā* powers, one is said to be able “see” successively higher realms. Of course, one needs to be able to get into the fourth *jhāna* in order to develop such *abhiññā*.

powers. Eventually, when one develops the eighth *jhāna* (and able to get into *ashta samapatti*), one could be able to see many of the 31 realms.

7. Now let us look at “things” in this world from a different perspective. A key premise of Buddha Dhamma is that “energy” is embedded in spin (*bramana*) and rotation (*paribramana*).

- The smallest unit of matter, a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], does not stay still. Depending on its rotation or spin (*bramana*) and its rotation around something else (*paribramana*), other “modes of energy” and “types of *rūpa*” arise.
- It is easy to visualize by considering the motions of the Earth. We all know that the Earth rotates (*paribramana*) around the Sun, and it takes a year to complete one revolution around the Sun.
- While doing that the Earth rotates around its own North-South axis; this is the spinning (*bramana*). It takes a day for the Earth to complete one such spin.
- Here is a nice video that discusses this universal feature:
[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Rotation in Space - Professor Carolin Crawford](#)
- By the way, the word *chakrāwāta* comes from “*chakra*” for rotation and “*āwāta*” for an area in space. There are infinite number of such *chakrāwāta* in our universe. This has been confirmed by science within the past hundred years.
- Each of those *chakrāwāta* could have its own 31 realms.

8. Scientists have also confirmed that all elementary particles (the smallest particles scientists can detect) have spin. Furthermore, in an atom the electrons can be said to “rotate” around the nucleus, in a crude analogy with the Earth rotating around the Sun.

- Then our Solar system rotates too. The next higher conglomerates (for example galaxies) also undergo rotation. Because of these rotations, all these structures tend to flatten out. For example, in our Solar system, all the planets are on a plane. In the same way, all galaxies in a galaxy cluster in a flattened disk.
- Therefore, even though we see a very calm starry night sky, things out there are in constant motion, not to mention very violent explosions of stars (supernova) that occur a billion times a year in the visible universe.
- This is why the realities out there are much more different than what we perceive with our very crude sense faculties. All the atoms and molecules in our bodies are in constant motion, not to mention the spins and rotations of uncountable *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] that constitute them.
- Thus everything around us is in constant flux. Our senses are just not capable of detecting them.

9. Modern science has also enabled us to see more and more of living beings around us. For example, the Western world was not aware of the existence of microscopic living beings until the advent of the microscope by Leeuwenhoek in the late 17th century: [WebLink: WIKI: Antonie van Leeuwenhoek](#).

- Now we know that there are billions of living beings on or in the body of a human being: [“There are as many creatures on your body as there are people on Earth!”](#).
- Hopefully, new technologies will enable us to “see” many living beings belonging to the *preta*, *asura*, and *deva* realms — as well as *gandhabbas* — in the future.
- Even though there are some claims of detection of horrible sounds from the *niraya* deep inside the Earth, they have not been confirmed; see, [“Does the Hell \(Niraya\) Exist?”](#).

10. It needs to be emphasized that as one moves up to higher realms, it is easy to that attachments to the material aspects decreases, and correspondingly, number of sense faculties is reduced.

- In the *kāma loka*, one has all six sense faculties. Even there, the higher *deva* realms have “less strong sense contacts” with less dense bodies that we cannot see.

- The bodies of *rupi brahmas* are much more fine compared to *kāma loka devas*, and of course they do not have touch, taste, and smell sensations.
- The density of “matter” becomes so fine in higher *rūpa loka* realms that even in the final destruction of a *chakrawata* (in a supernova explosion), the realms above the *Abhassara* realm (realm #17) are not destroyed. Of course the four *arūpa* realms are also not destroyed. This is why the lifetimes of those realms are much longer than a single *mahā kalpa*; see, “[31 Realms of Existence](#)”.

11. Let us discuss the reasons as to why we cannot see the other 29 realms, and how it would be possible to “see them”. Also, we will discuss the relative locations of these other realms as described by the Buddha.

- The main reason that we are not aware of most other realms is that most living beings (and their realms) are not made of “dense” matter that our world (with humans and animals) is made of.
- *Arūpa loka* are mostly devoid of even the smallest unit of matter (*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*]); Realms in the *rūpa loka* and even in the *deva* realms of the *kāma loka* are made of very fine matter that we cannot see.
- The beings in the *niraya* (hell) have very dense bodies that can be subjected to various forms of torture; of course that realm is located deep inside the Earth.

12. Even though we are used to the “*ghana saññā*” or the perception of “solid tangible physical bodies” of humans and animals, those physical bodies are actually inert.

- They all start with a single cell (zygote) in a mother’s womb that we cannot even be seen. As we discussed in the section, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)”, a *gandhabba* merges with that zygote that was formed by the union of a mother and a father.
- Before entering the womb, that *gandhabba* had a fine body similar to that of a *rupi brahma*. Then that cell grows by taking in food first from the mother and then by eating once coming out of the womb. What we are enamored with “my body” is just the accumulation of inert matter.
- And as we discussed in “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births](#)”, a human *bhava* may not end at the physical death of the solid body that lives about 100 years. A human *bhava* may last thousands of years, and that life stream continues its existence in many “physical bodies” with the *gandhabba* as the basis.

13. For example, in rebirth stories, the physical bodies in successive births are different, even though there may be some similarities; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”. In between successive lives, the life stream continues just in the form its core, the *gandhabba*.

- The solid body of a few hundred pounds that we consider to be “me”, is just a shell. When the *gandhabba* leaves the body — either at death or sometimes during a heart operation (see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)”), it has no attributes of life.
- This is a good way to contemplate on the “*ghana saññā*” or to really realize that our physical bodies are mostly dead matter; **a shell that the *gandhabba* resides in**. If a person of 300 pound loses 100 pounds of weight, really that person “lose” one third of his/her identity? It is the same person, because the *gandhabba* is the same.
- All beings in the 31 realms eventually have “mental bodies” that are very fine comparable to that of a *gandhabba*; that cannot be seen even with the finest microscope.

14. Finally, this overall picture gives us a perspective on how foolish we are to focus on the material wealth, titles, etc. for at most 100 years in this life. By living a moral life, and by doing meritorious deeds we can make a much bigger “investment” on the future by accruing merits that could lead to rebirths in *deva* or *brahma deva* worlds where there is much less suffering with no physical illnesses.

- But even in those higher realms, there is the inevitability of death no matter how long the lifetimes are. Most of all, there is no escape from the possibility of future births in the lowest four realms with so much suffering. Thus *Nibbāna* is the only permanent solution.

Next in the series, “[Gandhabba – Only in Human and Animal Realms](#)”,

2.5.4 Gandhabba – Only in Human and Animal Realms

June 4, 2016

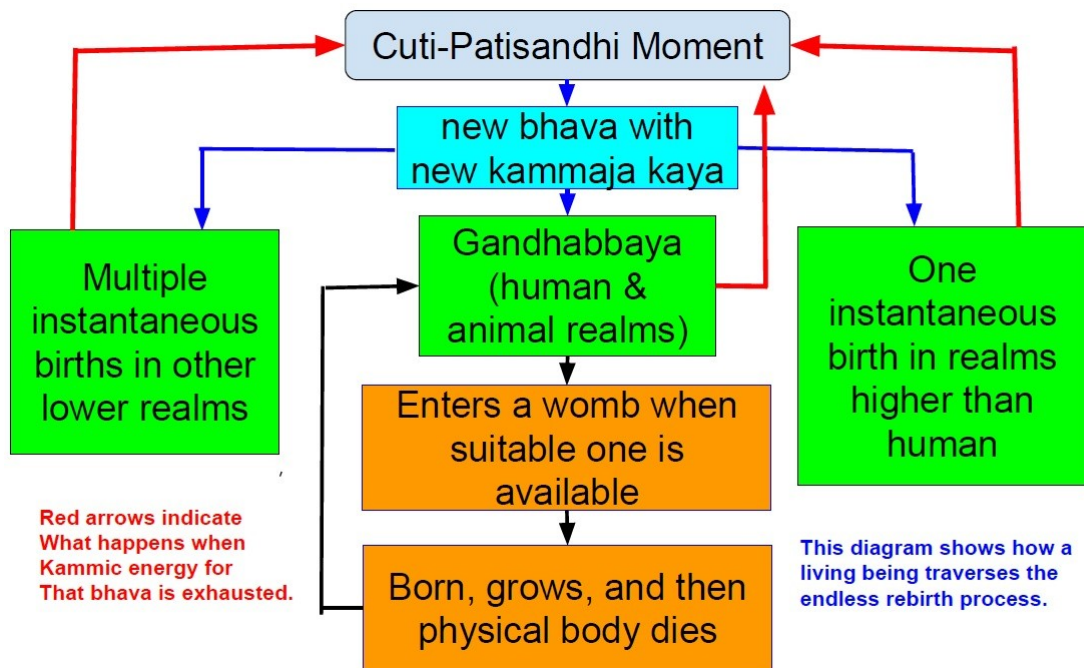
1. There are many posts on the important concept of *gandhabba* not only in this series, but scattered throughout the site, and especially in the section, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)”. These posts discuss the details on how a living being goes through the rebirth process without having an unchanging “soul”, but still maintaining (ever-changing) personal characteristics or *gathi*.

- It all started with a post on this basic concept over two years ago: “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.
- While it is good to get an idea of the nature of all living beings in the 31 realms, it is not necessary to learn those in detail. I just want to provide a complete and inter-consistent picture per original teachings of the Buddha in this section.
- However, the concept of the *gandhabba* is important in order to understand **how we are reborn with physically different bodies multiple times in a single human existence (human *bhava*) which may last hundreds or thousands of years**; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”. Unlike *devas* and *brahmas* who are born just once, we live and die to be reborn human multiple times before switching to another realm.

2. We will first review two major aspects about the 31 realms and how to grasp some salient distinguishing features among different realms. Then we will discuss the concept of a *gandhabba* (which is applicable only to human and animal realms) in more detail.

- **First is that the transition from one existence (*bhava*) to another is ALWAYS instantaneous**; it happens at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment (“*cuti*” pronounced “chuthi”); see, “[Patisandhi Citta – How the Next Life is Determined According to Gathi](#)” and “[Cuti-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”.
- **The second aspect is that in the 20 higher-lying realms, those beings (*brahmas*) weigh less than a billionth of an atom in modern science!**
- All beings with dense bodies are in the 11 realms of the *kāma loka* and even there, the 6 *deva* realms have very fine bodies.

3. The following chart shows the major features of what happens at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment (when a living being makes a transition from one *bhava* (existence) to another, say from being a human to a *brahma*).



Click to open the pdf file: [Weblink: Births in Different Realms](#)

- Without an exception, at each and every such *cuti-patisandhi* moment, a new *kammaja kaya* is generated by the *kammic* energy fueling a new existence. This *kammaja kaya* ALWAYS has a *hadaya vatthu*, which is the seat of the mind (the quality of which depends on the realm).

4. Thus it is important to realize that the critical thing that happens at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment is the generation of the unbelievably small *kammaja kaya* which contains the blueprint for the new existence. At that point, the mechanism of “birth” can be roughly divided into three categories as shown in the chart.

- The *brahmas* in the *rupi* and *arupi* realms (top 20 realms) are instantaneously born with very little else other than several *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]-size “material elements”. Their body features are discussed below, but the main feature here is that they are instantaneously born in those realms and live very long times there until death. Then another *cuti-patisandhi* moment takes that being to a new *bhava*.
- The only difference in the 6 *deva* realms (in *kāma loka*) compared to the *brahmas* is that they do have well-defined physical bodies (*karaja kaya*) like us. However, those bodies are much less dense, and we are not able to see them even if they stand right in front of us.
- It is said that a *deva* is born with the body equivalent of a 16-year-old and their food is a drink called *amurtha*; they have all five sense faculties like us and are said to the optimum sense pleasures available in *kāma loka*. They also live that one life until death and then switch to a new existence (*bhava*) at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment.
- That completes the discussion on the green box to the right.

5. What happens in the green box to the left is a bit more complex, because each realm in the *apāyas* (lowest four realms) is somewhat different. We will discuss the animal realm together with the human realm (middle box) below, so let us discuss briefly the lowest three realms indicated by the green box on the left.

- The lowest is the *niraya* (hell), where beings are born with full dense bodies like ours instantaneously. They undergo ceaseless cutting, burning, and various other forms of torture and may die innumerable times, just to be reborn instantaneously. Only when the *kammic* energy for that existence is exhausted (normally after millions of years) that they encounter the next *cuti-patisandhi* moment.
- Beings in the *pretha* (*peta*) realm also are born instantaneously and can have fine or dense bodies. The distinguishing feature there is suffering due to hunger.

- Beings in the *asura* realm are beings with huge, very inactive bodies. They are also born instantaneously and live those miserable lives until the next *cuti-patisandhi* moment.

6. That brings us to the middle green box which represents the human and animal realms. A little bit more complicated process takes place here. Here also, a being with a very fine body is produced at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment just like in the *rūpa loka* realms; it is called a *gandhabba*.

- A *gandhabba* has the basic *thrija kaya* of a *rupi brahma*: *kammaja kaya*, *cittaja kaya*, and *utuja kaya*, which we will discuss in detail below. In addition, a *gandhabba* may acquire a very fine *karaja kaya* (physical body) by inhaling aroma. Thus a *gandhabba* is more dense than a *rupi brahma*; it has a body more like that of a *deva* in density.
- A *gandhabba* could be in that state for many years until a suitable womb becomes available, i.e., a womb (more precisely the mental state of the mother at that time) that matches the *gathi* of the *gandhabba*. The evolution of the *gandhabba* in the womb is discussed in, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”. Then it is born as a new baby, grows and eventually that physical body also dies. If there is more *kammic* energy left for the *bhava*, then the *gandhabba* leaves that dead body and waits for another womb. This process continues until the *bhava* energy is exhausted and then it goes through the *cuti-patisandhi* moment to receive a new *bhava*; see the chart above.
- In addition to going into a womb, (in some animal species) *gandhabba* enters an egg inside a female animal. Upon growing to a full animal and death, *gandhabba* comes out and waits for another egg. It is the same procedure as above.

7. One of the main benefits of learning about the *gandhabba* is in helping remove the wrong view that “I am my physical body”.

- In contrary, a physical body is a temporary shelter that the *gandhabba* uses to experience the much coveted “sense pleasures”, in particular smelling, eating, and touch (most of all sex). Unfortunately, a human body can last only about 100 years, and after 50-60 years it is in the “decay mode” and those sense pleasures diminish, and eventually that body dies.
- Then the *gandhabba* comes out of that dead body and waits for a suitable womb. If and when it is pulled into a womb, the new physical body results is influenced also by the new parents and thus can be very different from the previous body. Even during this same “human *bhava*” our human bodies may look very different from one birth to another (as confirmed by rebirth stories).
- Of course, the *gandhabba* does not stay the same either. The only things that can be called “personal” to that *gandhabba* are its *gathi*, and those evolve too.
- That is basically a brief explanation of the above chart.

8. As we mentioned in #4 above, most lifeforms in the 31 realms have unbelievably tiny physical bodies. In fact, any individual being in the 16 *rūpa loka* realms and the 4 *arūpa loka* realms weighs less than a billionth of an atom! They may be visualized more as energy packets.

- In case it was not clear from previous posts, we recall that an *arūpa loka brahma* has a *kammaja kaya* consisting of just a *vatthu dasaka*.
- *Rūpa loka brahmas* have *kaya dasaka* and *bhava dasaka* in addition to *vatthu dasaka*, and two *pasada rūpa* for seeing and hearing; thus their *kammaja kaya* has five *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]-size elements. A *rūpa loka brahma* also has a *cittaja kaya* (thought stream) and a *utuja kaya* (very fine).
- Thus any of these *brahmas* cannot be seen with the most sophisticated microscope we have today.
- These details are discussed in, “[Body Types in 31 Realms – Importance of Manomaya Kaya](#)”. It must be noted that *manomaya kaya*, when referred to the human and animal realms, is the same as *gandhabba*.

9. Let us again summarize the make up of a *kammaja kaya* of a human *gandhabba*. It has a *hadaya vatthu* (consisting of a *vatthu dasaka*), *bhava dasaka*, and *kaya dasaka*, and four *pasada rūpa* (*cakkhu dasaka*, *sota dasaka*, *gandha dasaka*, *jivaha dasaka*).

- This *kammaja kaya* basically consists of 7 *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] in different *bramana* (spin) and *paribramana* (rotation) modes. That is how they become *dasakas* (units of ten or decads); see, “[31 Realms Associated with the Earth](#)”.
- Six of these define the sense faculties of the *gandhabba*: *vatthu dasaka* is the mind, and *kaya*, *cakkhu*, *sota*, *gandha*, and *jivaha dasaka* are the “fine senses” that correspond to body, eyes, ears, nose, and tongue in the physical body. *Gandhabba can interact with the external world directly via them when outside the physical body*. It can smell and inhale aroma giving rise to a very fine physical body. However, that body is not solid enough to physically touch anything or to eat.
- The seventh *dasaka* is *bhava dasaka*, which — together with the *kaya dasaka* — defines what kind of a physical body it will start building once inside a womb. For example, the sex is determined by the *bhava dasaka*, but that is not its only role.

10. As soon as the *kammaja kaya* is formed at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment, the mind becomes active and thoughts stream (*cittaja kaya*) starts; initial thoughts are just due to *kamma vipāka*, and the mind is mostly in the *bhavanga* state. Simultaneously, an *utuja kaya* is also formed by the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] generated by both the *kammaja kaya* and *cittaja kaya*.

- Thus immediately after the *cuti-patisandhi* moment, *gandhabba* has three “bodies” or *thrija kaya*. However, the *cittaja kaya* is all mental and both the *kammaja kaya* and *utuja kaya* are very fine, with much less combined “weight” compared to an atom in science.
- Soon after this “initial formation”, the *gandhabba* can build a very fine physical body (*karaja kaya*) by inhaling aroma (from fruits, trees, etc). Still it is too fine to be seen with the naked eye, but some people (especially those with *abhiññā* powers) can see some “sufficiently solidified” *gandhabbas*.

11. But this *gandhabba* is constantly under stress, because it is unable to enjoy the most coveted sense pleasures of normal humans: eating and sex. It can see people enjoying these sense pleasures and is very much frustrated not being able to acquire a “real physical body”. Some can stay in this state for many, many years if a suitable womb does not become available (animal *gandhabbas* are in the same situation).

- In some cases they may spend the *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* and undergo another *cuti-patisandhi* moment without inheriting a human body. This is why one is indebted to one’s parents, no matter how bad they may be.

12. The story of the *gandhabba* gets more interesting (and complicated) after going through the first birth as a normal human and dying. The *gandhabba* that comes out of that dead body is of course different from the original *gandhabba*. Its *kammaja kaya* has changed due to whatever *abhisankhāra* that the human cultivated. But the *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* does not change; if it had 1000 years worth of *kammic* energy at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment, that will deplete with time.

- Of course, there is no *cuti-patisandhi* moment when a human dies with left over *kammic* energy. The death is the death of the physical body. The *gandhabba* just comes out of that dead body awaits a new womb; see the above chart. Thus all three components of the *thrija kaya* just continue after the “death of the human”.

13. Let us consider some important features of this *gandhabba* that comes out of that dead body after its birth as a human.

- The *kammaja kaya* still has a copy of the previous physical body. However, when it starts a new physical body in the new womb, it takes some features from the new parents too (and also may reflect any strong *kamma vipāka* accrued in the previous life). Thus the new physical body is a trade-off between those three influences. It may keep some distinguishing features (birth

marks or gun shot wounds, for example, as we have encountered in rebirth accounts), but will acquire new features also from the new parents (skin color, size, etc).

- In fact, the *gandhabba* that comes of the dead body is just a “misty, fine version” of the person at death. Most times they come out with imprints of the clothes they were wearing at death, and will look just like that (in a ghostly, misty form) until going into a new womb. My teacher *Thero* has seen *gandhabbas* of people who died hundreds of years ago “wearing” those old costumes. Of course they are not real physical clothes.

14. Since the *cittaja kaya* also continues, their thought streams just continue. So, if someone dies in an accident, he may not realize that he is dead for a little while. If he died from a gun shot instantly, the *gandhabba* just comes out of and will be looking at the dead body trying to figure out what happened. He may wish to go home and finds himself instantly at home. And he will try to shout to others but of course they don’t hear. He may try to touch them, but he cannot. It is said that it takes seven days for a *gandhabba* to fully comprehend what happened and to resign to his/her new life.

- This is also why children can recall their past life. But just like we start forgetting things from years ago, those children start forgetting about the previous life when they grow older. Furthermore, it is more harder to remember from the past life compared to this life.
- Another point is that most such rebirth accounts are from people who died while young in accidents. Those who grow to old age, die, become a *gandhabba*, and reborn are not likely to remember their past life, because their minds were not as sharp at death.

Next in the series, “[Body Types in 31 Realms – Importance of Manomaya Kaya](#)”,

2.5.5 Body Types in 31 Realms – Importance of Manomaya Kaya

Published before October 23, 2015. Revised May 31, 2016

1. In the post, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“, we briefly discussed the 31 realms of existence. Except for the realms reserved for the *Anāgāmīs*, we all have existed in all other realms in our deep past; see, “[Samsaric Time Scale](#)” to get an idea about the length of the rebirth process.

- It is helpful to have some idea about the types of physical bodies in different realms, especially to get an idea about the concept of a “*manomaya kaya*“, and to realize how our physical bodies are really a liability to us.
- Furthermore, it will also help us understand how our physical body, and specifically the brain in it, can help us get release from the suffering-filled rebirth process.
- This material could be new to most. One may need to read through slowly and refer back to other sections for clarification. It is important to understand the basics before it becomes possible to understand the role played by the brain.

2. A rough rule is that the bodies are dense in the lower realms and lighter and fine in the higher realms, even though there are exceptions (some *petas* have fine bodies, for example).

- In the lowest realm of the *niraya* (hell), beings have dense bodies that can be subjected to various forms of torture.
- We can see that the bodies in the human and animal realms are dense. In the *deva* realm (consisting of 6 *deva* worlds), the bodies are fine and a normal human cannot see them even if a *deva* is standing right in front. However, people with *abhiññā* powers can see them.
- Therefore, we can say that beings in the *kāmaloka* in general have dense bodies and all five physical senses eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and physical touch. But the bodies in the *deva* realm (and for some *petas*) are much less dense than in the other realms. Even the *devas* have all six sense faculties (including the mind) even though the bodies are less dense.

3. Next higher are the realms in the *rūpa loka*. Here the beings (called *rupi brahmas* or *brahmas* with fine bodies) have only three sense faculties of eyes, ears, and the mind (only two physical senses of

eyes and ears). Their bodies are much less dense than even those of the *devas*. And even *devas* are unable to see the fine bodies of the “*rūpa brahmas*“, i.e., those *brahmas* in the *rūpa lokas*.

- Then, in the highest realms belonging to the *arūpa loka*, there are “*arūpa brahmas*” who have only the mind (*hadaya vatthu*), and none of the five physical sense faculties. The term “*arupi brahma*” or “*brahma* without a physical body” came from ancient *yogis* who could not “see” the very fine matter (*hadaya vatthu*) associated with such *brahmas*.

4. With this background in mind, now we can look at how *Abhidhamma* describes the formation of different body types in various realms.

- The “*arupi brahmas*” in the *arūpa realms* have only the “*hadaya vatthu*“, which is the base of the mind; it has what is called a “*vatthu dasaka*“, which effectively is of the same size as the smallest material unit in Buddha Dhamma, called a “*suddhashtaka*”; it is called a “*vatthu dasaka*” (where a *dasaka* is “ten units”) because of spin/rotation (“*bramana*“/“*paribramana*“) of the “*suddhashtaka*”. By the way, modes of rotation and spin were introduced by the Buddha 2500 years ago.
- We will discuss that later, but a *hadaya vatthu* is much, much smaller than an atom in modern science. This is why it is thought (erroneously) that there is no matter in *arūpa lokas*. There is matter, but it is insignificantly small. The Buddha said that *viññāṇa* cannot exist without a *pancakkhandha*, and the *pancakkhandha* in the *arūpa loka* has a *rūpa* component, even though negligibly small.
- The *hadaya vatthu* of an *arupi brahma* is formed by the *kammic* energy giving rise to that existence; it is formed at the moment of birth of that *brahma*.
- All living beings have the *hadaya vatthu*, because all have minds.

5. For *brahmas* in the *rūpa loka*, three units of matter are formed by *kammic* energy at the moment of birth; because it has three units of matter such an initial “body” formed at the moment of *patisandhi* is called a “*thrija kaya*“. The three units are *kammaja kaya*, *cittaja kaya*, and the *utuja kaya*. The *utuja kaya* is a very fine physical body, and those “*rupi brahmas*” can “see” and “hear”.

- Those *rupi brahmas* have a *kammaja kaya* consisting of *kaya dasaka*, *vatthu dasaka*, *bhava dasaka*, and also two *pasada rūpa* for seeing and hearing: *cakkhu pasada* and *sota pasada*. These *pasada rūpa* are also essentially *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], with different modes of spin/rotation (“*bramana*“/“*paribramana*“).
- Even though “*kaya*” is translated as “body”, the only “physical body” of a *rupi brahma* is the “*utuja kaya*“. Thus a “*kaya*” does not mean a “physical body”.
- The physical bodies (*utuja kaya*) of those *rupi brahmas* are much finer compared to those of the *devas*, and thus *devas* cannot see those *rupi brahmas* just like we cannot see the *devas*.
- The *brahmas* (and also *devas*) can “see” without the aid of light and “hear” without the having air to transmit sound waves; their “physical bodies” do not have “eyes” and “ears” like ours. Thus they can “see” and “hear” over great distances. And they can be anywhere they wish within a short time.
- The closest analogy of how their “vision” works is how we “see” dreams; we don’t need eyes to see dreams. The *brahmas* just “see” (perceive may be a better word). These things will become clear in the future, as we get into details.

6. A basic rule of thumb is that beings in lower realms, in general, cannot see the beings in the higher realms; humans of course have the capability to develop *abhiññā* powers and “see” those beings in higher realms.

- In the *kamaloka*, the highest realms are of course the *deva* realms. *Devas* are also born instantaneously (*opapatika* births) just like the two kinds of *brahmas*. However, *devas* have a fourth types of a body called the “*karaja kaya*“, which is like of our physical body. And just like us they need to consume food (“*amurtha*“) regularly to sustain their “*karaja kaya*” which is also called the “*aharaja kaya*” since it requires food (“*āhāra*“) for sustenance.

- Thus *devas* have “four bodies” or “*chatuja kaya*“, i.e., the four bodies of “*kammaja kaya*“, *cittaja kaya*, *utuja kaya*, and the “*karaja kaya*“.are collectively called a “*chatuja kaya*“.
- But *devas* (and *brahmas*) do not get sick. They just die and disappear when the *kammic* energy for that existence runs out.

7. When humans and animals are first “born” into that existence, they are also instantly formed in a form close to that of a *deva*, but with finer bodies than *devas*; this is the *gandhabba* state (or the *gandhabba* state) that we have talked about in previous essays; see, “[Manomaya Kaya – Introduction](#)” and follow-up posts.

- For example, if a man dies and if he still has *kammic* energy for the “human *bhava*” left, then he will be reborn as human; otherwise, he will latch onto another “*bhava*” depending on his past strong *kamma vipāka*. For example, his next “*bhava*” could be as a deer.
- If he is reborn a human, a “human *gandhabba*” will emerge from the dead body; if he is to be born a deer, then a “deer *gandhabba*” will emerge from the dead body.

8. The body of a human or animal *gandhabba* is also a “*chatuja kaya*” like that of a *deva*; but it is finer than the body of a *deva*. A *gandhabba* can only inhale odours (“*gandha*” + “*abba*”) as food, and thus the name. A *gandhabba* is so “diffused” and fine that it can enter the womb through mother’s solid body and collapses to the size of the zygote in the womb, taking hold of it as its “base”; see, “[Manomaya Kaya – Introduction](#)”.

- Just like *brahmas* or *devas*, a *gandhabba* can “see” and “hear” over great distances. A *gandhabba* does not have a solid body to support physical eyes or ears. (Of course we have hard time imagining that. But it can be compared to what happens when we see a dream. There is no need for light to see dreams; we see dreams when it is pitch black at night; we do not “see” dreams with our eyes).
- Even though one could think that it would be nice to be a *gandhabba*, a human *gandhabba* is in perpetual stress (agony may be a better word). A *gandhabba* cannot enjoy any kind of “contact” sense pleasure since the body is so fine; cannot taste food, or grasp anything. **Most of all, a *gandhabba* suffers mentally because he/she can “see” normal humans “enjoying life” eating tasty foods, enjoying sex, etc.**
- Of course, *brahmas* and *devas* can also “see” humans engaging in those activities (if they want to), but they do not have any liking (*upādāna*) for such “coarse pleasures”. Their mental state is much higher, just like a human who has developed *abhiññā* powers. They are actually said to be repulsed by human bodies. Just like we do not “miss out” on the activities of worms, they are not interested in human activities. It all depends on the mindset associated with the particular *bhava*.
- But a *gandhabba* has received the human or animal “*bhava*” because he/she very much DESIRES “coarse sense pleasures”: “*upādāna paccaya bhava*”.

9. When a human (or animal) *gandhabba* is finally pulled into a suitable womb, it merges with the zygote that was recently formed by the union of mother and father; see, “[Manomaya Kaya – Introduction](#)”.

- Now it has “acquired” a base for his/her physical body, and the *gandhabba* grows first inside the womb and then is “born” to be on his/her own.
- The “real human” now has the dense body that he/she wanted so much to have.

10. Thus we can see that we get these solid, dense bodies BECAUSE that is what we so eagerly desired. As long as we have craving for these “coarse sense pleasures” we will be born in the *kamaloka*. Even though the *devas* are also in the *kamaloka*, their desires are not as “coarse”. They do not need to “tightly grab things” to get the enjoyment.

- *Brahmas* in *rūpa loka* are even further removed from “coarse sense pleasures”; they do not have a desire for tastes, smells, or body touches. Seeing and hearing is enough for them.

- *Brahmas* in *arūpa loka* do not even have a desire for sights and sounds. Mind pleasures are enough for them, and the presence of matter is minimal in the *arūpa loka*.

11. What we do not realize is that having “dense body” also leads to various ailments, and also subject to decay as it gets old.

- Furthermore, now the ability to “see” and “hear” over great distances is gone. Now the *gandhabba* is trapped inside a heavy, solid, body shell and has to “see” and “hear” through the “physical doors” that are attached to that body. That is the sacrifice made to be able to have the “grabbing experience”, to be able to enjoy coarse foods and sexual pleasures, etc.
- The Buddha called the physical body (“*karaja kaya*” or “*aharaja kaya*”) a “cave” or a “shell” that a *gandhabba* uses temporarily. It has a certain lifetime and during that time it grows, decays, and finally dies. Then the *gandhabba* needs to find another body. Especially in the *kāma loka*, we just build a “new shell” when the old one dies, but also spend a lot of time as a frustrated *gandhabba* waiting for a suitable womb to start building a new body.
- Thus it should be clear now that it is only the “physical body” that decays and finally dies; a human *gandhabba* will keep evolving and will find a “new body” similar to the old one IF the *kammic* energy for that *bhava* is not exhausted. Otherwise, the human *gandhabba* will just disappear (like a *deva* or *brahma* does at death), and a new animal *gandhabba* will emerge if the new *bhava* is that of an animal; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.
- Thus we can see now that even for the humans and animals, “the basis” is a fine body of a *gandhabba* that has a fine body like a *rupi brahma* (and less dense than the body of a *deva*). The “solid body” starts growing inside the mother’s womb and continues after the “birth” as a baby by eating food.

12. The nature uses this physical body or the “shell” to impart *kamma vipāka* as well. We need to constantly clean this body all the time, and also need to take care of vital body parts. These are part of the “physical suffering” that we do not think twice about.

- And of course, we can come down with not only minor colds and headaches, but also major ailments like heart problems or cancer; this is also part of the “physical suffering”. Both kinds of “physical suffering” arise due to the physical body.
- However, these hardships are “masked” by our sense of “anticipated future happiness” by acquiring such and such “pleasurable things”.
- When some of those “hopes and dreams” do not materialize, we get severely distraught. Most of the suicides are committed under such circumstances, and this “mental suffering” could be worse than the “physical suffering” discussed above. It helps to read about WHY even famous, rich people commit suicide; that is also a form of meditation. We need to understand how suffering arises, in order to feel the full impact and be motivated to stop FUTURE suffering from arising.

13. However, the main goal of this essay is to point out the true nature of the physical body. Even though we are enamored (especially at young age) about the appearance of our bodies, as we get old we can see and experience the suffering that we endure because of this temporary “shell” that we value so much. It is there only for about 100 years, and then we will move onto another one; this is what we have been doing for countless aeons.

14. The other point, which is even more important, is the special nature of the human body that has a well-developed brain. That is what makes a human life special, because that is what allows us to understand the message of the Buddha and be able to get release from the suffering-filled round of rebirth.

- How the bodies of the hell beings are prepared by *kammic* energy to just impart *kamma vipāka* (they are unable to do *abhisankhāra*, especially *punnabhisankhara*) is discussed in “[Does the Hell \(Niraya\) Exist?](#)”.

Next in the series: [Gandhabba Sensing the World – With and Without a Physical Body](#)

2.5.6 Gandhabba Sensing the World – With and Without a Physical Body

June 10, 2016

1. Physical bodies are just temporary shelters for the *gandhabba*. In a single “human *bhava*” or the “existence as a human”, *gandhabba* could be using one to hundreds of different physical bodies; see, [“Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein”](#) and [“Gandhabba – Only in Human and Animal Realms”](#). In between two consecutive “physical lives”, the *gandhabba* is in the nether world or “*paralowa*”; see, [“Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)”](#).

- Thus all racial and cultural divisions that people fight daily are meaningless; those identities change as the *gandhabba* “switches physical bodies” from life to life. In principle, a Chinese may be born as a “black person” in Africa or as a “white person” in Europe in the next life. However, adjacent lives are normally in similar geographic locations, because of the condition for matching “*gathi*”. Still, in the next “human *bhava*” — which may come after billions of years — one’s *gathi* would have changed drastically.
- As more and more people start grasping the Buddha Dhamma, most of the violence in the world could reduce. Along that line, one who may be born to poverty in this life may be born a wealthy person in the very next life (if enough merits accrued), and vice versa. All these struggles we go through are only for an insignificantly short time in the scale of *samsāra* (cycle of rebirths) or even compared to the duration of a single human *bhava* (which could last many hundreds of years). Thus it is wise to “invest in the long term”.

2. When inside a physical body, the *gandhabba*’s sensory system is shielded, and that is where our physical sense faculties (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and *mana indriya* in the brain) are used as intermediaries; see below.

- When outside a physical body (and waiting for a suitable womb), the *gandhabba* cannot eat or physically touch tangible things, because it does not have a dense body. But it can see, hear and smell (very fine odors). Furthermore, it uses a very sophisticated sensory system (not light or sound waves) to see and hear, which we will also discuss briefly below.

3. The Buddha analyzed the world in many different ways. Here we discuss another such analysis, since it can provide different insights about the *gandhabba*.

- **We have six sense faculties (*indriya* or *āyatana*) in order to sense six different types of “matter” (*rūpa*) in our world.** There is a subtle connection between our six sense faculties and the types of “matter” in our world. We will discuss this connection.
- By the way, *indriya* and *āyatana* have totally different meanings. For example, eyes are *indriya* when we just happen to see things, but they BECOME *āyatana* when they are used for pleasure, i.e., to deliberately look at sensual things to enjoy them. Only an *Arahant* uses his/her sense faculties are *indriya* all the time. We will use just *āyatana* hereafter since *indriya* are included there.
- This is another way to define and analyze our world. Everything in our world belongs to those 12 *āyatana*. Sometimes they are called 6 *ajjhata āyatana* (or internal *āyatana* or sense faculties) and 6 *bahiddha āyatana* (things in the external world that we sense).

4. These are listed in *Pāli* in #6 of the post, [“What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis”](#). In English:

- We touch the densest material (*pottabba*) out there with our bodies (*kaya*).
- We taste next less dense tastes (*rasa*) with our tongues (*jivha*).
- We smell with next less dense minute particles with smell (*gandha*) with our noses (*ghana*).
- We hear using vibrations propagating through air (*sadda*) with our ears (*sota*).
- We see using photons propagating through space (*varna*) with our eyes (*cakkhu*).

- Our consciousness arises via *dhamma* in the mind plane with our minds (*mano*).
5. The last type of *rūpa* (*dhamma*) are not solid matter, but just energy; see, “[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)“. They are not yet condensed to the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage.
- Thus *dhamma* do not occupy space (*ākasa*) and are in the mind plane or the mental world.
 - All other five types of *rūpa* occupy space, and are in the material world.
 - **So *rūpa* cannot be translated as “matter”**. This is discussed in “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)“. This is why sometimes it is better use the *Pāli* words.
6. It is actually through a complicated process that a *gadhābaya* sees, hears, etc while being inside a physical body (*karaja kaya*) such as ours. I have explained the basics in “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāna \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)“, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)- Introduction](#)“, and many other posts.
- **However, it is much easier to grasp how a *gandhabba* sees and hears while being outside the physical body**. Even though most of us may not have had such “out-of-body experiences”, it can happen especially during heart operations; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)“. Some people have a natural ability to do that on their own, as discussed in that post.
 - Thus, let us discuss how a stand-alone *gandhabba* sees and hears, while being outside a physical body; **this is not only simpler, but provides us with some insights**.
7. The actual sense faculties produced by *kammic* energy at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment are in the *kammaja kaya* of the *gandhabba*. The fine body of the *gandhabba* has three components as we have discussed and will again discuss below. **The sense faculties are all in the *kammaja kaya***.
- The *kammaja kaya* of the *gandhabba* has seven basic elements called *dasaka*, meaning entities with ten items (decads). They arise from *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], which is composed of eight “items” as we have discussed; see, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhaṭṭhaka\]](#)“. Different types of *dasaka* are formed just by incorporating one mode of spin (*braṃana*) and one mode of rotation (*paribramana*); see, “[31 Realms Associated with the Earth](#)“.
 - One added component gives rise to *jivita rūpa* (pronounced “jeevitha roopa”); this is likely to come from the spin (*braṃana*) mode, but I cannot be certain. This *jivita rūpa* is in all these other types of *dasaka*, because that is what “maintains life”. Thus different types of *dasaka* (see below) arise due to different modes of rotation (*paribramana*).
8. Now we can list the different types of 7 *dasaka* (or decads) that are in the *kammaja kaya* of the *gandhabba*.
- *Vatthu dasaka* (mind; also called *hadaya vatthu*): *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] + *jivita rūpa* + *hadaya rūpa*
 - *Kaya dasaka* (body plan): *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] + *jivita rūpa* + *kaya pasada rūpa*
 - *Cakkhu dasaka* (eye *indriya*): *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] + *jivita rūpa* + *cakkhu pasada rūpa*
 - *Sota dasaka* (ear *indriya*): *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] + *jivita rūpa* + *sota pasada rūpa*
 - *Ghana dasaka* (nose *indriya*): *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] + *jivita rūpa* + *ghana pasada rūpa*
 - *Jivha dasaka* (ear *indriya*): *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] + *jivita rūpa* + *jivha pasada rūpa*
 - *Bhava dasaka* (*bhava*): *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] + *jivita rūpa* + *itthi or purisa rūpa* (determines female/male nature of the body)

Again, it is to be noted that *jivita rūpa*, *itthi and purisa rūpa*, and the five *pasada rūpa* are not “physical matter”, but modes of energy in spin and vibration of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*].

- This is analogous to different electron orbitals giving rise to different types of molecules in chemistry.

9. A *gandhabba* is born with those 7 *dasakas* (i.e., *kammaja kaya*) and **immediately the mind starts generating *citta* (thoughts)**, which are *vipāka citta* and for the most part in the *bhavanga*. Thus now the *gandhabba* has a *cittaja kaya* as well. **Note that *cittaja kaya* is all MENTAL.**

- Almost at the same time, both the *kammaja kaya* and the *cittaja kaya* start producing more *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] giving rise to the *utuja kaya*. This *utuja kaya* is similar to the “aura” that surrounds our own bodies; **in fact, that aura is part of our own (i.e., *gandhabba*’s) *utuja kaya*.** Some people claim to be able to see aura; those with *abhiññā* powers can see them.
- Thus the best way to visualize a *gandhabba* is to imagine a human with just the aura (without the physical body). Since *kammaja kaya* consists of only a few *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], and the *cittaja kaya* is just thoughts, something like an “aura body” is all a *gandhabba* has.
- Right now, this fine body of my *gandhabba* overlaps my own physical body. All parts of my physical body are in the fine body of my *gandhabba* (which is a blueprint for my physical body).
- While waiting for a physical body, this *gandhabba* can inhale aroma from fruits, vegetables etc and acquire a fine physical body (*karaja kaya*) too. Then it expands to the grown size of a human, but of course is too fine to be seen by us.
- Thus a free-standing *gandhabba* may have four types of “bodies”: *kammaja kaya*, *cittaja kaya*, *utuja kaya*, and *karaja kaya*.

10. **This *gandhabba* can actually see over large distances and hear over large distances and travel instantly to far destinations. Sight does not need light and sound is not carried through vibrations in the air.** It is equivalent to seeing and hearing with *abhiññā* powers. In fact, this is how those with *abhiññā* powers can see through walls and hear over large distances; they have control over their *gandhabba kaya* or the *manomaya kaya*.

- However, since it has only a very fine body (like air), it cannot taste food or touch solid things. In order to use those sense faculties, the *gandhabba* needs to be inside a solid human body, i.e., it has to take possession of a zygote in a womb and build a physical body. This process is described in “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”.

11. It is hard to believe, but when a *gandhabba* builds a physical body (inside a womb), those seven *dasakas* — each of which are the “size of a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]” — determine all critical functions as well as the blueprint for that physical body.

- The physical body (*karaja kaya*) of the human is built according to *kaya dasaka* and *bhava dasaka*, but also takes into account physical qualities mother and father (eye and skin color, as well as size are good examples).
- When inside a physical body, the external signals that come to the physical body via eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body touches, are converted in the brain into the form that can be sensed by the 5 *pasada rūpa* (they are really the 5 *dasakas* with corresponding *pasada rūpa*). This somewhat complicated process is discussed in “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)”, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)- Introduction](#)”, among others.

12. In fact, the blueprint in the *kammaja kaya* of the *gandhabba* has all the details of physical organs as well; when the *utuja kaya* is formed, it has this blueprint. Some people are born without limbs because past *kamma vipāka* taken into account by the *kammaja kaya*.

- Some are born with physical eyes, but without the *cakkhu pasada* in the *kammaja kaya*, so they will never be able to see; they are the ones who are born blind. Similarly, there are those who are born deaf, and sometimes both. That is because the *gandhabba* does not have the *cakkhu pasada* and/or *sota pasada*.
- However, in some cases the *gandhabba* may have the *cakkhu pasada*, but during birth the optical nerves in the brain may get damaged; in such cases, it may be possible to have vision restored.

13. It is in fact the *gandhabba* that controls the otherwise inert physical body. There is a carbon copy of all parts of the physical body (including the nervous system) in the fine *utuja kaya* of the *gandhabba*.

- What is the mechanism used by the *gandhabba* to control the inert physical body? The easiest way to visualize this is to consider the following: If we put some iron dust on a piece of paper and move a magnet below the paper, we can see that those dust particles move along as one moves the magnet. If we move the magnet in a circle, dust particles move along that circle. In the same way, when the *gandhabba* moves its *utuja kaya*, the physical body follows that motion.
- Thus, what the *gandhabba* does is similar to what the magnet did in the above analogy. But it is bit more complicated, because moving heavy body parts need much more energy. This is where the physical nervous system comes into play. The brain, in synchronization with the mind (*hadaya vatthu*), send signals to muscles to move. **Energy to move those muscles come from the food we eat.**
- Both the “magnetic nervous system” or the “ray system” of the *gandhabba* AND the physical nervous system based on the brain are needed to move the physical body.

14. Thus, there are two nervous systems in the body: one is the physical nervous system known to modern science. The other is the very fine nervous system (ray system) of the *gandhabba*.

- When they go “out-of-sync” our physical bodies start aching. Even in a perfectly healthy human, it is not possible to maintain a given posture for too long.
- This is used to impart *kamma vipāka* by shifting the nervous system (ray system) of the *gandhabba* away from that of the physical body; then body muscles need to move to the new equilibrium position, causing us discomfort or even pain.
- We will discuss more important consequences that can be experienced during meditation in future posts.

15. Physical body is actually used to impart various other forms of suffering as well: It can develop major diseases such as cancer in various parts of the body; body parts can break or injured.

- The effects that we have discussed above may be the reason that we humans (and animals) have this complicated mechanism involving repeated births in a single *bhava* using a *gandhabba* and multiple physical bodies.
- The *brahmas* and even *devas* do not suffer physical ailments; their fine bodies can also last longer times, and do not need to be “regenerated” via this mechanism using an intermediary *gandhabba*.
- Another important aspect is that our physical brain slows down the generation of *javana citta* in a given time. The “signal processing” in the brain is much slower than the very fast generation of *cittas* in the *hadaya vatthu*; see, “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāna \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)“. Important implications of this will also be discussed later.

2.5.7 Nibbāna in the Big Picture

July 8, 2016

Here we will discuss how one can get an idea about *Nibbāna* within the Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma.

1. In the posts in this series I described the wider world of 31 realms according to the Buddha, and why ALL living beings have been just meandering through these 31 realms from beginning-less time. We can summarize the results succinctly as follows:

- The lowest four realms (*apāyas*) are where all beings suffer the most during the beginning-less rebirth process. Unfortunately, this is where each and every living being spends the most time in the long run. **This is the real suffering that the Buddha tried to convey.**

- The fifth realm or the human realm is where one is most likely to be able to grasp Buddha Dhamma and become a *Sotāpanna*. This is the only realm where one can experience (or at least see) both suffering and sense enjoyments.
- A *deva* in the next six realms is also capable of becoming a *Sotāpanna*, but due to the absence of much visible suffering, incentive to strive for the *Sotāpanna* stage is almost non-existent (think about a healthy, wealthy teenager!).
- The same is true for *rupi* and *arupi brahmas*, who enjoy *jhānic* pleasures in the higher realms.

2. Thus one can clearly see that as one proceeds to higher realms, suffering is reduced in stages. The worst sufferings are in the lowest 4 realms (*apāyas*), and we can see animal suffering if we pay attention and think especially about the animals in the wild. **There are no “old animals” in the wild.** As soon as they get a bit slow due to old age they are killed for food by stronger animals.

- **One could try to stay away from the *apāyas* (in future births) by avoiding from immoral acts. But the problem with just that approach is that we have almost certainly done such immoral acts in our previous lives,** and thus are likely to have accumulated enough *kamma* seeds to be born many times over in the *apāyas*.
- **Thus the key is to cleanse our minds of the worst defilements, which will prevent *apayagami citta* from arising at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment;** see, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)“. Such thoughts cannot just be suppressed; they arise in a billionth of a second. Thus the practical way to do that is to reduce cravings (*āsavas*) in STAGES; see, “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)“, and “[Gathi \(Character\), Anusaya \(Latent Defilements\), and Āsava \(Cravings\)](#)“.
- As mentioned above, the first stage of the cleansing process is possible mainly in the human and *deva* realms, but the incentive to do that is virtually non-existent in the *deva* realms.

2. Another subtle reason for the uniqueness of the human realm is that one’s future destiny is MOSTLY determined while in the human realm. Humans are the unique species who can access all 89 types of *citta* that are present in all 31 realms. Moreover, they are the ones who can generate the all important *javana citta* that can produce *kamma beeja* (seeds) for future existences (*bhava*).

- Here is a simile that hopefully will convey this idea: **Human realm can be compared to a training school, and the other realms can be compared to where one gets employment depending on one’s qualifications upon completing the training.**
- Those who did not make progress and caused problems for others are born in the *apāyas* and will have to suffer the consequences. Another way to say this is to say that they cultivated *saṅkhāra* (or *gathi* or habits) suitable for a being in the *apāyas*: cruel and hateful *gathi* correspond to the lowest realm of *niraya* (hell); extreme greed correspond to the *pretha* realm; those who are lazy and depend on others are born in the *asura* realm; those with different combinations of those bad *gathi* are born in the animal realm.
- Once born in the *apāyas*, they are more like programmed machines. They just suffer their fate without having any way to even lessen the suffering (in contrast, humans are capable of devising ways to make their lives better).

3. This last point is worth discussing a bit more.

As we can see, animals just live their lives like robots. They are incapable of sorting out moral from immoral and also from being able to come up with ways to improve their lives. Birds have been building the same kind of nests for billions of years. Ants have been building the same types of anthills, and the dolphins (who are one of the animals with higher intelligence) have been the same way over billions of years.

- In the same way, *rupi* or *arupi brahmas* also just live their serene lives until the lifetime is exhausted. It is like a nice vacation. Then they come back to the human realm and start over.
- It is mostly humans and *devas* who are CAPABLE of forging their own future, but the *devas* enjoy so much sense pleasure, they have no incentive to think about *Nibbāna*.

4. Continuing that analogy, those who do well in the training school can go to one of the 27 higher realms. Those who cultivate *rūpa jhānas* are born in the 16 *rūpa* realms. Those who cultivate higher *jhānas* are born in the 4 *arūpa* realms. The *brahmas* in those 20 realms are like beings who are on a nice, very long vacation. They just live happy lives in *jhānic* bliss.

- Of course there are some *brahmas* who had attained a *magga phala* in either human or a *deva* realm previously and they can proceed to higher stages. And there are a few *rūpa* realms reserved for the *Anāgāmīs* only.
- But in general, the *rupi* and *arupi brahmas* are the ones who graduated with high qualifications and thus get to enjoy the fruits of those efforts for long times. Yet, when they come back to the human realm, they may be born into environments where they could go in a wrong path and fail next time around and thus could be born in the *apāyas*.

5. Those who want to enjoy sense pleasures without causing problems to others work on it by doing meritorious deeds and are qualified to be born in the 6 *deva* realms (according to the level of merits accrued). They may not have even known about Buddha Dhamma, but knew moral from immoral.

- Life in a *deva* realm is more like a vacation to a “pleasure island”. Those who cultivate “*deva gathi*” (high moral character, but with attachment to sense pleasures) are qualified for those realms. *Devas* are more like humans but with fine bodies that do not age (until close to death), and are not subject to diseases. **Thus if one really wants to “enjoy sense pleasures” one should focus more on doing good deeds instead of just focusing on making a lot of money in this life,** because this human life is so short and the human body is subjected to diseases and old age problems.
- However, *devas* can build up extreme attachment to sense pleasures and are capable of tailoring their future lives down to the animal realm. After their “pleasurable vacation” they could even come back to the animal realm instead of the human realm.

6. Finally, those who cultivate “human *gathi*” are born in the human realm. They are more like *deva gathi*, but generally have more attachment to sense pleasures at close contact.

- However, those humans who may have cultivated high moral values AND had some inkling of the *samsaric* suffering (via exposure to Buddha Dhamma) are like to come back to the human realm to “complete their training”. That is because that is what they desired (*upādāna*).
- That is a very simple outline of the existence in the 31 realms.

7. Now, if one has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage in the human realm, then his/her number of possible destinations become less and better. In #7 and #8, we will discuss how a *Sotāpanna* goes through higher realms as he/she approaches *Arahanthood*.

- Of course that person will never be born in the *apāyas*, because those “*apāya gathi*” have been permanently removed via *Sammā Ditṭhi* with a grasp of the *anicca* nature.
- A *Sotāpanna* starts to comprehend the futility and even dangers of sense pleasures (*kāma rāga*).
- Then one first loses the desire to “own” sense objects (“*vatthu kāma*”) that provide sense pleasures; one is merely satisfied with enjoying them. Thus one has not given up all *kāma rāga*, just “*vatthu kāma*”. Now one is at that *Sakadāgāmī* stage, and will not be born again below the *deva* realms. Thus one is freed from rebirth where diseases are possible (including the human realm) and one is said to be “healthy forever”.

8. When a *Sakadāgāmī* contemplates on the *anicca* nature more (while in the human or *deva* realms) he/she can remove *klesha kāma* and also *patigha* from their minds and become free of all *kāma loka* realms. Then one becomes an *Anāgāmī*, i.e., not coming back to the *kāma loka* ever again.

- But an *Angami* has not removed the liking for Dhamma, and thus will be born in one of the five *rūpa* realms reserved for the *Anāgāmīs*. He/she will attain *Nibbāna* from there.
- An *Anāgāmī* becomes an Arahant by removing *rūpa rāga*, *arūpa rāga*, *māna*, *uddacca*, and remaining *avijjā*.

- Of course one can proceed all the way to the *Arahanthood* while in the human realm. An Arahant will not be born anywhere in the 31 realms at death. His/her mind becomes free of even a trace of matter that is subject to decay and destruction; see, “[What Are Rūpa? \(Relation to Nibbāna\)](#)”.

9. This gives a brief summary of how a living being goes from realm to realm in the rebirth process, until the *Arahanthood* is attained. It is NOT a random process. Everything happens due to causes. The following are two (related) ways to analyze that process.

- The key point to comprehend is that a birth in a given realm occurs because one has developed *gathi* suitable for that realm; see, “[Patisandhi Citta – How the Next Life is Determined According to Gathi](#)”.
- One develops any kind of *gathi* by cultivating corresponding *saṅkhāra*, i.e., one tends to think, speak, and act in ways suitable for that realm. This is what is described in detail in *Paticca Samuppāda*; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda](#)”.

10. It is also clear why it is futile to seek happiness anywhere in the 31 realms.

- One could live for millions of years in *deva* realm with much higher sense pleasures than in the human realm (and without being subjected to diseases), but then one has to come back to human realm or even a lower realm.
- Even if one is born in the highest *brahma* world (31st realm) and lives 84,000 aeons in *jhānic* bliss there (**each aeon is roughly 30 billion years!**), one has to eventually come back to the human realm and start over. Then at some point after that, birth in the *apāyas* is unavoidable. This is why infinite time (or beginning-less time) is a concept that is hard to wrap one’s mind around; see, “[Infinity – How Big Is It?](#)” and “[Sansaric Time Scale](#)”.
- Thus one needs to contemplate whether it is worthwhile to seek happiness in a 100-year human life! I know by experience that this is not easy to fully grasp, even when logically proven, because our minds are enamored and blinded with sense pleasures. **That truth starts to sink in when the mind loses more and more defilements (greed, hate, and ignorance) and start seeing the perils of sense pleasures to some extent.**

2.6 Buddha Dhamma: Non-Perceivability and Self-Consistency

1. Many people try to analyze and interpret Buddha Dhamma in terms of what is readily perceivable through our six senses.

- The Buddha said his Dhamma “had never been known to the world”. But many people try to explain the core teachings of the Buddha using conventional concepts. This has happened ever since Nagarjuana and other forefathers of “Mahayana Buddhism” tried to explain *Nibbāna* in terms of various concepts such as “*sunyata*” or “emptiness”; see, “[Saddharma Pundarika Sutra \(Lotus Sutra\) – A Focused Analysis](#)” and “[What is Sunyata or Sunyata \(Emptiness\)?](#)”.
- The same thing happened to “Theravada Buddhism” too. Buddhaghosa, like Nagarjuana and others, was not even a *Sotāpanna* and a *Vedic brahmin* before converting to “Buddhism” molded and twisted Buddha Dhamma to fit his *Vedic* concepts; see, “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)”. Buddha’s *ānāpāna bhāvanā* was replaced by the *Vedic pranayama* breath meditation, for example.
- **It is quite possible that Buddhaghosa, Nagarjuna, and others did not intentionally try to distort Buddha Dhamma, but just described Buddha Dhamma as they understood it with their background in *vedic* concepts. Even today, when people write books explaining what “Buddhism” is, they are also explaining it in terms of their own mundane frames of reference.**
- This is why, when you look at most of the books written today about Buddha Dhamma, it seems that there is not much difference between Buddha Dhamma and any other religion. They all teach “how to live a moral life”. There is very little discussion, if at all, on the foundational concepts such *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, *paticca samuppāda*, *Ānāpānasati*, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, and whatever discussed is mostly incorrect.
- I think this single fact is the biggest obstacle for most people in embarking on the “correct Path” or even to get an idea of what real Buddha Dhamma is.
- We really need to contemplate what the Buddha meant by when he said, “my Dhamma has never been known to the world before”. It is not something one can grasp within the “conventional framework”, what is readily perceivable to a normal human with a defiled mind.

2. First let me clarify what I mean by “perceivable” or “comprehensible” to us as normal humans. Our six senses can “detect” only a tiny sliver of the “world”.

- At a base level, science today can account for only 4 percent of the mass of our universe; see, “The 4 Percent Universe: Dark Matter, Dark Energy, and the Race to Discover the Rest of Reality”, by Richard Panek (2011).
- There are many, many things that have not been “discovered” by science (or philosophy) yet, and basically nothing significant about the MIND has been discovered yet.
- Therefore, trying to gauge the validity of Buddha Dhamma **using only the known facts from science** is like a blind man trying to figure out what an elephant looks like by touching a leg of the elephant; see, “[How do we Decide which View is Wrong View \(Ditthi\)?](#)”.
- A frog living in a well does not know anything about the wider world. Similarly, a normal human, including all the scientists, face the problem of trying to figure out the “reality” by only using data available through our limited six senses. Thus it is impossible for a scientific theory to be ever “complete” as proven by the mathematician Kurt Gödel; see, “[Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorem](#)”.

3. Most people think and believe that the only way to confirm what the Buddha taught is to see whether those teachings are compatible with science. However, it is not any different from believing that one can get an idea of what an elephant looks like by asking a blind man who has touched the leg of an elephant. OR asking a frog what the world outside the well looks like.

- This may sound ridiculous to many, but let us think back a few hundred years. Just 400 years ago, “science” believed in the geocentric model of the universe, i.e., that the Earth was at the

universe and that the stars were embedded in a celestial sphere far above; see: [WebLink: WIKI: Geocentric model](#)

- Not only science, but all other major religions tried to attune their religions to this model at that time, and most religions still adhere to those concepts; see the same Wikipedia article above.

4. But 2500 years ago, the Buddha clearly described our Solar system as a “*Chakkawata*” or “*Chakrawata*“, a planetary system. Not only that, he also said there are uncountable such systems in the universe and that it is a waste of time trying to find all the details about it.

- Through the years, and especially since the beginning of the 20th century, science has “re-discovered” some aspects of the Buddha’s wider world, including the existence of billions of galaxies EACH OF WHICH contains billions of planetary systems like our Solar system.
- But someone living in the 19th century was likely to ridicule the idea of innumerable world systems (*cakkawata*) and could have said, “where is the evidence from science?”. That aspect of Buddha Dhamma was not amenable to “science” at that time.
- **Just like that many aspects of Buddha Dhamma are not amenable to science at the current time. But with time, more and more will be shown to be correct as science advances.**

5. If one is going to wait for the full confirmation of Buddha Dhamma by science, one is as foolish as that person who lived five hundred years ago, and embraced the geocentric model and dismissed Buddha Dhamma as “exotic” or “mystical”.

- We are fortunate to live in a time where science had made impressive progress and has confirmed many aspects of the Buddha’s world view.
- Just as the invention of the telescope led to the discovery of a much bigger cosmos, the discovery of the microscope (and its sophisticated versions) led to a previously unknown “microscopic world” teeming with innumerable microscopic living beings. There are billions of such beings in a single human body; see, “[There are as many creatures on your body as there are people on Earth!](#)“.

6. Science can accept only those phenomena that can be observed and measured with scientific instruments. Such scientific instruments are basically “extensions” for our six senses; see, “[Expanding “Consciousness” by Using Technology](#)“.

- For example, while we cannot see the moons of the Jupiter with our naked eyes, we can see them with telescopes. While we cannot see those microscopic creatures in our bodies with our naked eyes, we can see them with sophisticated microscopes. These are just two examples of many.
- When the Buddha said there are innumerable beings in this world, people looked around and laughed. The Mahayanists are still under the impression that one could wait to attain the Buddhahood itself (not merely *Nibbāna*) until “everyone” (presumably including all those billions of microscopic creatures on one’s body) is ready to attain the Buddhahood!
- **This is just the tip of the iceberg. While science has confirmed that there are uncountable planetary systems, it has not been able to find life on a single other planetary system yet. When that happens, the “wait for the Buddhahood” for the Mahayanists will become much longer.**
- **Similarly, the job of any “Creator” who looks after each and every being (even if just humans), will also become unbearably burdensome, since there are uncountable world systems with human beings as well.**
- I am not trying to make fun at the expense of others, but merely trying to get the point across that, for those who can think for themselves, it is time to get rid of all such nonsensical beliefs and wrong views; these are all *ditṭhis*.

- Getting rid of such wrong views comes way before starting any fruitful meditation. Purification through “correct views” comes before “purification through formal meditation”. *Sammā dīṭṭhi* or “correct views of this world” comes first in eightfold Path.

7. By the time I cover enough of Abhidhamma material it will become more clear, but I want to point out another significant issue. In Abhidhamma, it is described in detail how all types of energies in the universe are “stored” in orbital motions (“*braṃana*” in Pāli or Sinhala).

- For example, planetary systems are planets orbiting stars. Those planetary systems combine to make galaxies and those galaxies also undergo circular motion in shape of disks. see: [WebLink: WIKI: Formation of celestial systems](#)
- Scientists discovered that atoms are basically electrons orbiting the tiny nucleus made out of protons and neutrons.
- But the Buddha taught all this and more 2500 years ago (of course not using the same terms): the smallest unit of matter is not an atom but a “*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]”. It is much smaller than an atom, and is “almost all energy”.
- This is basically what the scientists are finding out. They recently found evidence for the Higgs boson, which is believed to be the smallest mass unit ever detected.
- However, a “*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]” is even smaller. According to Buddha Dhamma, it is the motion of those “*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]” in various motion patterns (“*braṃana*”) that give rise to other material units, such as the “*kaya dasaka*”, “*bhava dasaka*”, etc. We will get to this later in the Abhidhamma section.

8. When we hear about something that cannot be explained with the CURRENT SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, we ascribe those to “esoteric” or “mystical”. But while there are many such “made up theories” that are out there without any substance, what is described in Buddha Dhamma can be SHOWN TO BE CONSISTENT with all our knowledge of the world.

- If we can bring back someone who had died before the 20th century, and tell him that we can “see” an event going on in a distant country in real time, he will not believe it. If we turn on a television and show him the actual event taking place, he will be flabbergasted; he will refuse to believe it saying it is some sort of a magic trick.
- But now we know that the visuals and sounds of that event can be transformed and transmitted over long distances almost instantaneously, and can retrieve those signals by “tuning a television set” to the correct frequency.
- Working of *kamma vipāka* (energy stored) or rebirth taking place at a distant location work the same way. Even though we cannot “see” or perceive, that energy can materialize when the conditions become right; see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”. It will take some time to really sink in these concepts, but the more you read, the more you will understand.

9. There are two key methods used in science to verify a given scientific theory: They have some basic axioms that appear to be inviolable, AND all other currently accepted scientific theories must be CONSISTENT with that theory.

- If a currently accepted scientific theory is proven to be inconsistent with a newly discovered phenomenon, then that scientific theory is discarded and a new theory is adopted.
- No scientific finding up-to-date has shown to be inconsistent with pure Buddha Dhamma as given in the *Tipitaka*. If anyone can find any such instance, I would appreciate hearing about it.
- However, there are many things in Buddha Dhamma that have not been confirmed by science. More are being confirmed as new findings emerge.
- And, Buddha Dhamma is self consistent. Thus my obsession with making sure all my posts are inter-consistent.
- **Therefore, compatibility with “new findings” by science and self-consistency within the foundational concepts, such as *tilakkhana*, Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path,**

Paticca Samuppāda, etc are the two ways to test the validity of Buddha Dhamma. Here “new findings by science” does not necessarily mean the explanations given by science, because scientific explanations can change with time (for example, the geocentric model had to be changed). If science finds evidence for life in outer space, that will be consistent with Buddha Dhamma, but what science proposes as how such life arose may not be the correct one.

10. One needs to contemplate on the implications of these points (and there are many as I will mention in other posts). How can a human being who lived 2500 years ago can come up with such an elaborate way of describing material phenomena that are just beginning to be “re-discovered” by the efforts of thousands of scientists over many generations?

- It is quite clear that the Buddha was able to transcend all “normal human capabilities” by purifying his mind. Thus Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorem does not apply to Buddha Dhamma.
- Thus his Dhamma may not to “amenable” to the basic frame of reference that we all have as normal human beings. Concepts like rebirth and *kamma vipāka* may sound mysterious. The only way to see the truth in such concepts is to put them to the standard scientific method as discussed above.

11. The fact remains that the Buddha was able to see those and much more just by purifying his mind. And science has not yet figured out the “power of the human mind”.

- Even though a human can purify the mind to the level of a Buddha only once in many aeons on the average, it is possible for each of us to purify our minds to enough extent to see many facts about the nature that science is unaware of.
- **When that happens to a certain extent, then it becomes obvious that all these materialistic advances (and any type of sense indulgence that can be brought about by such advances) are insignificant compared to the sense of relief and well-being that one can achieve by purifying one’s mind.**

12. For example, while one can enjoy even the best food on Earth only while eating that food, even the *jhānic* experiences (*Ariya* or even *anariya jhānas*) can be long term. One could stay in a *jhāna* for hours and enjoy that sense of relief.

- The “base level” of “cooling down” or *Nibbāna* or “*niveema*” or “*nivana*” that comes at the *Sotāpanna* stage is forever, and cannot be compared to any briefly-lived sense pleasure.
- If one can get to the fourth *jhāna*, then one could develop *abhiññā* powers to look back at one’s own past rebirths and CONFIRM that the rebirth process is real. At that time one could even “see” many beings in other realms and also confirm their existence.
- Thus even though none of us will be able to “experience the complete reality” of this world like a Buddha can, with mental effort (purification of the mind), we could verify many aspects of the Buddha’s wider world, and also be able to see what kind of suffering we had gone through in previous lives. Whatever suffering felt by a human under the worst conditions is nothing compared to the suffering encountered in the lowest four realms.
- And all that start with the correct understanding of *Lokottara Sammā Diṭṭhi* of comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* which is **beyond** the mundane *Sammā Diṭṭhi* of “how to live a moral life”; see, “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)”.
- The uniqueness of Buddha Dhamma is depicted in “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)“, and discussed in “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma](#)“.

Sansaric Time Scale, Buddhist Cosmology, and the Big Bang Theory

Revised May 22, 2018

1. In order to really understand the Buddha's message, one needs to grasp the unimaginable length of the *samsāra* (the rebirth process). The Buddha said that there is no discernible beginning to life. It always existed, and it will exist until one attain *Nibbāna*.

- Infinity is a mind-boggling concept; see, "[The Infinity Problem in Buddhism](#)".

2. This a bit difficult concept for many, because many cultures/religions have the concept of a set time of Creation. If there is a First Cause (such as Creation), then there must be a time that everything got started. But if there is no Creation, then there cannot be a set time for a beginning.

- Even as recently as at beginning of the 1900's, Lord Kelvin, one of the top scientists of the day, estimated that the age of the Sun was < 40 million years based on gravitational contraction (atomic structure was not known at that time), and our knowledge of the universe was pretty much limited to the Solar system.

3. Vindication of the Buddha's teachings on the long *samsāra* started at the beginning of the 1900's with the advent of quantum mechanics and relativity: Discovery of radioactivity in 1898 by Becquerel and Einstein's explanation of the photoelectric effect in 1905 led to the quantum theory of atomic structure, which in turn led to the correct picture of atomic fusion as the source of solar energy.

- So, by 1956, the age of the solar system was known to be > 4 billion years. Yet, even billions of years is hardly the same as "beginning-less time"!

4. But there was more to be discovered. By 1929, Edwin Hubble proved that the distant galaxies are moving away from each other and from our galaxy, and that our galaxy is but just one of many galaxies. This was a vast understatement since now we know that there are billions of galaxies in our observable universe! And they are flying away from each other, i.e, the universe is expanding.

- The discovery of the microwave background radiation in the 1960's led to the conclusion that our universe started off with the "Big Bang" about 14 billion ago.
- However, it is just a theory.

5. The mostly accepted explanation for such "big bang origin of the universe" is the inflationary theory of Alan Guth (see, "The Inflationary Universe" by Alan Guth, 1997). In the inflation theory, if one "Big Bang" is possible, then it is a given that many other "Big Bangs" are possible. The total energy of our universe is completely consistent with adding up to zero.

- If a universe requires a sum total of zero energy to produce, then "the universe is the ultimate free lunch", as Guth explains in his book (pp. 247-248). Thus, implied in the inflation theory is the existence of multiple universes.
- According to the "cyclic theory" model, which is an alternate theory, the same universe comes to a "Big Crunch" which leads to another Big Bang, and whole process keeps repeating. So, there is no beginning to time either; time is infinite.

6. There are several theories currently being explored in quantum mechanics that are related to cosmology. There is one theory that requires a universe being existing for each possible event! So, there may be infinite number of parallel universes. For example, see "The Beginning of Infinity" by David Deutsch (2011). In all these theories there are multiple universes that always exist.

- If that is not enough to boggle one's mind, there is another theory in quantum mechanics called the "Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics". It speculates that multiple universes are created at each time a quantum event takes place!

7. Buddha's explanation of how the universe operates is detailed in the *Agganna Sutta*. However, all English translations available today are not correct. A good translation of the *sutta* with details would need to good background in Buddha Dhamma.

- I provided a summary of that “Buddhist Cosmology” in a recent discussion at the discussion forum: “[WebLink: Multiverse: Different Physical Laws and Different Dhamma?](#)”.
- Also see, “[Infinity – How Big Is It?](#)”.

8. I would like to close this essay with a simile from the Buddha that he used to describe the unimaginable length of *saṃsāra*, and to point out that our time in this life is less than a blink of an eye compared to the length of *saṃsāra*. The Buddha used a great aeon as the measurement unit to help his followers visualize the enormous length of *saṃsāra*.

- The length of a great aeon (*mahā kalpa*) is said by the Buddha to be longer than the time it would take a man to wear away a mountain of solid granite one *yojanā* (about 7 miles) around and one *yojanā* high, by stroking it once every hundred years with a silk cloth. These days scientists use the word “aeon” to denote the duration of a universe (from the “big bang” either to a “big crunch” or just fading away).

9. Just for fun, I estimated the mass of the material that needs to be removed by the silk cloth each time (this happens every 100 years). Using a 7 mile cube of stone with a density of 2515 kg per cubic meter, I calculate the mass of the mountain to be 3.5×10^6 kg.

- Assuming the lifetime of our Solar system to be 10 billion years, I calculate the mass removed by each stroke is about 36 grams or about 1.2 ounces. This appears to be a reasonable number!
- So, a *mahā kalpa* in Buddha Dhamma turns out to be approximately an aeon as perceived by the scientists. When we try to visualize the wearing off a mountain we can imagine how long a time period that is.

10. Yet, that is still nothing compared to the length of the *saṃsāra*. Infinity is a concept that is hard to wrap one’s mind around; see, “[Infinity – How Big Is It?](#)”.

- One day the *bhikkhus* asked the Buddha how many great aeons had already passed and gone by. The Buddha told them, “Suppose, *bhikkhus*, there were four disciples here each with a lifespan of hundred years, and each day they were each to recollect a hundred thousand great aeons. There would still be great aeons not yet recollected by them when those four disciples pass away at the end of hundred years. Because, *bhikkhus*, this *saṃsāra* is without discoverable beginning”.
- Another simile given by the Buddha to indicate the length of *saṃsāra* is the following: Each and every living being has been one’s mother, father, or a close relative in this unimaginably long *saṃsāra*.
- One could get an idea of why infinity is so hard to fathom by reading about what scientists say about infinity; a very entertaining book is “The Beginning of Infinity” (2011) by the physicist David Deutsch.

Next, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”,

2.8 Evidence for Rebirth

One needs to look at the mounting evidence without any preconceived ideas. There is no plausible way to explain these accounts from a purely “materialistic” point of view, i.e., that consciousness arises from inert matter.

4/25/17: Here is a video of a recent discussion on Western research on children’s past lives, Near Death Experiences, etc:

[WebLink: Youtube: Is There Life after Death? Fifty Years of Research at UVA](#)

Rebirth Accounts

The late Professor Ian Stevenson at the University of Virginia conducted over 20 years of research on the authenticity of rebirth accounts, which is being continued by Professor Jim Tucker. Several books about rebirth have been written by these two professors. A good book is “Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation” by Ian Stevenson. By the way, Professor Stevenson became a Buddhist later on in his life presumably because of his studies (see, “Rebirth as Doctrine and Experience” by Francis Story (2003); first edition 1975). He mentions this in the Introduction he wrote to this book by Francis Story; I have scanned that introduction: “[Introduction to “Rebirth by Francis Story – Ian Stevenson”](#)”.

Here is a video that discusses the work of the late Dr. Ian Stevenson, Dr. Jim Tucker, and colleagues at the University of Virginia:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Evidence of Reincarnation](#)

In their book, “Soul Survivor: The Reincarnation of a World War II Fighter Pilot”, by Bruce and Andrea Leininger detail the amazing story of their son’s recount of a past life, mentioned in the above video. Here is a ABC News report on the story:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Reincarnation - Airplane Boy](#)

Here is another story of the rebirth of a Civil War General:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Reincarnation, BORN AGAIN?](#)

Here is a three-year old chanting Buddhist suttas (and doing a very good job). Can a three-year old memorize such complex lines of suttas?

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: 3-year-old boy in Isan chants in Pāli](#)

Child Prodigies

Another piece of evidence comes from child prodigies. Here is the story about Jake Barnett from a 60 Minutes report:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Jacob \(Jake\) Barnett "Math and Science Prodigy" on 60 Minutes](#)

1. Many people say that direct “proof” for rebirth cannot be given; it is actually the other way around: If someone can convince oneself that just one of those rebirth accounts MUST BE TRUE, then there is no way to explain it by any other way.

- If there is a connection between two lives that lived in two geographical locations (also separated by time), there is no explanation for that in current science, i.e., no way to make a connection between the DNA of those two “persons”. A purely materialistic view cannot explain it.
- Recent findings in science show that matter in different locations are entangled at a fundamental level; see, “[Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected](#)”. Also, “a living being just goes from one physical body to another”; see, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.

2. There is a way one could actually recollect one's own past lives going back to many lives. This is possible by developing the fourth *jhāna* and then cultivating extrasensory powers; see, "[Power of the Human Mind – Anariya or Mundane Jhānas](#)".
3. However, when one attains the *Arahant* stage, certain "extrasensory powers" are gained; **the ability to "see" previous lives (*pubbe nivasanussati ñāṇa*) is one of them.**
4. Also, it is by having this presumption of rebirth that all of the seeming anomalies and inequalities of life can be explained; see, "[Vagaries of Life and the Way to Seek Good Rebirths](#)".
 - And how could we ever explain the birth of such prodigies as Jeremy Bentham, who already in his fourth year could read and write Latin and Greek; or John Stuart Mill, who at the age of three read Greek and at the age of six wrote a history of Rome; or Babington Macaulay, who in his sixth year wrote a compendium of world history; or Beethoven, who gave public concerts when he was seven; or Mozart, who already before his sixth year had written musical compositions; or Voltaire, who read the fables of Lafontaine when he was three years old.
 - Does it not seem infinitely more probable that all these prodigies and geniuses, who in many cases came from illiterate parents, had already in previous births laid the foundations for their extraordinary faculties?

Here is a list of child prodigies from Wikipedia. You will recognize many of the names:

[List of Child Prodigies](#)

Here is the link to Wikipedia article on child prodigies:

[Child Prodigy](#)

Healing with Hypnosys

The late Dr. Richard Feynman was sceptical about the claims in hypnosis studies until he subjected himself to hypnosis in two different occasions. In both instances, he verified for himself that if done correctly hypnosis works. He describes these two cases in his book, "Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!" (1985), pp. 66-68.

Hypnosis provides yet another set of "supporting material". There are many cases of people remembering past lives when hypnotized. It is hard to evaluate the validity of most such cases. However, there is a branch of hypnosis that uses it as therapy. Some people seem to have "phobias" based on a horrific event from a past life. They cannot figure out why they have these phobias, but when a hypnotist brings out that experience, they become cured. Here is a 20/20 documentary of three such cases, where they vouch for the authenticity of the therapy sessions:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Past Lives](#)

There are hundreds of youtube videos on rebirth stories and also many on child prodigies and hypnosis-based curing of certain ailments.

Following books are also good reads:

- "Many Lives, Many Masters", by Brian Weiss (1988).
- "Many Mansions: The Edgar Cayce Story on Reincarnation", by Gina Cerminara (1988).
- "Children's Past Lives: How Past Life Memories Affect Your Child" by Carol Bowman (1998)
- "Return to Life: Extraordinary Cases of Children Who Remember Past Lives", Jim B. Tucker (2013).

OBE and NDE Studies

There is an ever-growing reports on Out-of-Body Experiences (OBE) and Near-Death Experiences (NDE) that not only support rebirth, but also are consistent with the concept of a “manomaya kaya”; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)” and other related posts.

There are many youtube videos, but here are three recent books on these two subjects:

- “Consciousness Beyond Life”, by Pim van Lommel (2010) gives detailed accounts of case studies by a renowned cardiologist.
- “Brain Wars” by Mario Beauregard (2012) is a book by scientist on NDE, OBE, and the mind-body problem in general.
- “Dying to be Me: My Journey from Cancer, to Near Death, to True Healing”, by Anita Moorjani (2012) is a personal story of a cancer survivor who had been diagnosed to die within a few weeks but had an “unexplainable recovery” within days during which time she had an out-of-body experience.“.

Discussion

1. Some of you may be wondering whether there is a inconsistency here. I have repeatedly mentioned that the Buddha clearly stated that it is extremely rare to be born a human. Yet, from the above rebirth case studies it appears that people have been born in human realm in successive lives. If it is so hard to attain a human birth, how can this be?

2. There is nothing inconsistent. The key problem here is another misinterpretation. “*Bhava*” or an existence is not the same as a “*jathi*” or a birth; see, “[Patipicca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppada”](#)“, and subsequent posts. A living being, upon exhausting the kammic energy for one existence, grabs hold of another strong kammic potential for the next existence. If the energy of that *kammic* potential is large, the being may be reborn many times in that existence until that *kammic* energy is exhausted (life span of a certain existence is limited; maximum of 120 years for a human, about 20 years for dog, etc.).

3. Thus, if one has done a highly meritorious deed, and at some point in *saṃsāra* latches on to that “*kamma* seed” (see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)“), that energy may be able to sustain that existence for many rebirths.

- In these cases, when physical death occurs BEFORE exhausting the energy of the *kamma* seed, the *manomaya kaya* (also called *gandhabba*) leaves the dead body and waits until a suitable womb is ready; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)“. In this case, the *gandhabba* may carry the physical resemblance to the next life, including scars of any significant wounds, birth marks, etc.
- When rebirth takes place there, the new physical body could have many resemblances to the old body. In many rebirth cases, such physical resemblances have been confirmed (as in the case of the civil war general in one of the above videos).

4. In summary, it is important to remember that in *Patipicca Samuppāda*, it is “*upādāna paccaya bhavo*”; “, i.e., grasping or craving (*upādāna*) that leads to existence (*bhava*); for example, existence as a dog. That existence (*bhava*) may have enough *kammic* energy to support several repeated births as a dog. Therefore, once a given *bhava* or existence is grasped, the next step of “*bhava paccaya jati*”; “, will lead to repeated births as a dog until that *kammic* energy is exhausted; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of existence and Births Therein](#)“.

5. On the other hand, if the *kammic* energy for that “*bhava*” has run out by the time death occurs, then a new “*bhava*” will be grasped at the death moment, and the resulting *gandhabba* that comes out will be quite different. For example, if a human has exhausted the *kammic* energy for that human existence (*bhava*) and a *kammic* seed for a *bhava* (existence) of an elephant is grasped, then the *gandhabba* that results will have the “imprint” for an elephant, and will find an elephant womb to be born in the next life.

6. It may be difficult to grasp these concepts initially. One needs to look up the links given and may need to go back several layers to grasp these ideas. It is not possible to explain everything in one post. Buddha Dhamma can be very deep, if one wants to really comprehend how the nature works.

Next, “[The Four Stages in Attaining Nibbāna](#)“,

2.9 Power of the Human Mind

- [Power of the Human Mind – Introduction](#)
- [Difference Between Jhāna and Stages of Nibbāna](#)
- [Power of the Human Mind – Anariya or Mundane Jhānas](#)
- [Power of the Human Mind – Ariya Jhānas](#)
- [Are There Procedures for Attaining Magga Phala, Jhāna and Abhiññā?](#)

2.9.1 Power of the Human Mind – Introduction

1. Most people know about Buddha Gotama as a very intelligent and compassionate human being. In “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)“, I pointed out the similarities and differences between a scientist and a Buddha. Here I want to discuss in detail the incomprehensible complexity of a human mind, and how a Buddha achieves the peak performance of that complex entity.

- As I pointed out in “[Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorem](#)“, a normal human mind works within the sense sphere of a normal human and thus inherently incapable of providing a complete theory about our world; but the mind of a Buddha can transcend our sensory experience and see the whole of existence.
- Here I point out, in a systematic way in a series of posts, the progression of the human mind to higher levels achieved **by purifying the mind (not by merely learning)**, and why a Buddha is at the very pinnacle. At the end of this series you will see why no other human being, no matter how intelligent, can even remotely approach the mind of a Buddha.

2. In the “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“, we discussed the 31 realms of existence as laid out by the Buddha.

- Out of these, the human realm is at the fifth level (and our knowledge base is limited to our sensory experience within it, and Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorem applies to any theory derived within it). There are four realms below the human realm, AND 26 realms above.
- Out of the 31 realms, we can see only the human realm and the animal realm (which is one of the four lower realms or the *apāyas*). But we can access the thoughts enjoyed by the beings in the higher realms, AND we can access the transcendental (*lokottara*) *cittas* too. **Please do not put too much significance initially to the number of *cittas* in each realm, etc. Be patient with me as I need to lay out the “big picture” first.**
- As we proceed systematically in a few posts, you will see various connections to other concepts discussed in other parts on the site, and eventually all fit together. This is why I keep saying that it is a complete and self-consistent world view on a scale unimaginable to a normal (unpurified) human mind.

3. The types of thoughts (*cittas*) that can be experienced in the whole of existence (31 realms) is 89 (or 121 depending on the scheme); see, “[The 89 \(or 121\) Types of Cittas](#)“. In the three main *lokas* (or planes) of *kamaloka*, *rupaloka*, and *arupaloka*, different types of *cittas* are of common occurrence. **While most of the 89 *cittas* are possible in all three *lokas*, normally a subset of *cittas* operate mostly in a given realm.**

- For example, in the *kamaloka*, only 54 *cittas* are mainly experienced. The *kamaloka* consists of the lower eleven realms, with sixth through eleventh shells representing the realms of the *devas*. Beings in these 11 realms have all six sense bases, and in the *deva* realms the sense pleasures are higher than in the human realm.

4. Out of all 89 types of thoughts, only 12 are immoral or *akusala cittas* and these are experienced only in *kamaloka*; see, “[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#)“.

- **In the higher 20 realms belonging to the *rupaloka* and *arupaloka*, only *jhānic cittas* are mostly present, and *akusala cittas* normally do not arise.**

- So, as one can imagine, the beings in the lower realms entertain more immoral *cittas*, and with higher frequency too. It is said that the beings in the lowest realm, *niraya* (hell) experience mostly the two immoral *cittas* based on hate, because of the high degree of suffering there.

5. The human realm is unique in that the human mind can access not only the *cittas* in the *rūpa* and *arūpa* lokas, but also the eight types of *cittas* that transcend the 31 realms. These *cittas* are the four path (*magga*) *cittas* for the four levels of *Nibbāna* (*Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī*, *Arahant*), and the corresponding resultant (*phala*) *cittas*. **Thus all 89 types of *cittas* are possible for a human.**

- Furthermore, the most potent *cittas*, those with highest *javana* (impulse) power in “*mahā kusala citta*“. They are accessible only by humans; see, “[Javana of a Citta – Root of Mental Power](#)“. More posts will follow in the future.
- **This is the basis of the power of the human mind.** It is possible for a human to attain the mindset of a being in the lowest realm (*niraya*) and it is possible also to go all the way up to the mindset of a Buddha.

6. The *cittas* in the *rupaloka* and *arupaloka* are easily categorized according to the *jhānic* states. These are the same *jhānic* states attained by people via meditation.

- A human can attain all eight *jhānic* states, and the lower four correspond to the *rupaloka* and the higher four to the *arupaloka*.
- Each *jhānic* state correspond to three types of *cittas*: wholesome (*kusala*) *citta* and the corresponding *vipāka* (resultant) *citta* are two; when the same *jhānic kusala citta* experienced by an *Arahant* it is called a *kriya* (functional) *citta*, because it does not lead to a *vipāka citta*.

7. In the 16 realms belong to the *rupaloka*, where only two physical sense faculties (eye and ear) are active. These beings have very fine (less dense) bodies.

- In *rupaloka* 15 types of thoughts (*citta*) are mostly experienced corresponding to the five *jhānic* factors: *vitakka*, *vicara*, *pīti*, *sukha*, *ekaggata*; see, “[Power of the Human Mind – Anariya or Mundane Jhānas](#)“. These are the lower five *jhānic kusala cittas*, corresponding five *vipāka cittas* and five *kriya cittas* (the last five are effective only for the *Arahants* who get into these *jhānic* states).
- The highest four realms represent the *arūpa lokas*, where beings have ultra fine bodies and only the mind faculty; no physical senses. Here there are only 12 types of *jhānic citta* mainly present. These are the higher four (fifth through eighth) *jhānic kusala cittas*, corresponding four *vipāka citta*, and corresponding four *kriya citta* (which are effective only for the *Arahants* who get into these *jhānic* states, which do not have corresponding *vipāka citta*).

8. The *rupaloka* and *arupaloka* are collectively known as *Brahma* realms, which comprise the higher 20 realms. In the *Brahma* realms, beings are mostly devoid of both greed and hate, but they have dormant ignorance (*mōha*) in their kamma seeds; see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)“. In the deva worlds (which belong to *kamaloka*), those beings are mostly devoid of hate-rooted *cittas*, but have greed-rooted *cittas* since they enjoy sensual pleasures.

- It is possible for a human to attain any of those *jhānic* states via *samatha* meditation, and one does not have to be a Buddhist to attain those mundane or *anariya jhānic* states.
- Those *anariya jhānic* states are temporary; a *yogi* in a *jhānic* state can be “taken out” of the *jhāna*; see the next post. They may be lost if one does not keep practicing, and the ability to enter such *jhānas* is lost when one dies, i.e., he/she may not have the ability to get into *jhānas* in the next life, even if they are born human.
- **However, if one dies while in even an *anariya jhānic* state, he/she will be born in the corresponding *rupaloka* or *arupaloka*.** Yet, a being who gets into even the highest *arupaloka* via *anariya jhānas* will end up eventually in the four lower realms (*apāyas*).
- However, *Ariya jhānas* are permanent. Once one gets into an *Ariya jhāna*, it cannot be shaken by any external disturbance.

Next, “[Power of the Human Mind – Anariya or Mundane Jhānas](#)“,

2.9.2 Difference Between Jhana and Stages of Nibbana

March 24, 2017; revised April 28, 2018

1. There are many misconceptions on the relationship between *jhāna* and *magga phala* (the four stages of *Nibbāna*). Some view that *jhāna* are necessary to attain *magga phala*, and others believe that being able to get into *jhāna* means one has attained *magga phala*.

- The first assumption is wrong, and the second is true if one has attained an *Ariya jhāna*.
- We can resolve these issues by looking into what are meant by *jhāna* and *magga phala*, and also the difference between *anariya* and *Ariya jhāna*.

2. One attains *magga phala* (various stages of *Nibbāna*) by permanently removing greed, hate, and ignorance (about the nature of this world or *Tilakkhana*): “*Ragakkhayo Nibbanan, Dosakkhayo Nibbanan, Mohakkhayo Nibbanan*“.

- This can also be stated as, “one needs to remove 7 *anusaya*” or equivalently “10 *samyojana*” to attain *Nibbāna*. At the *Sotāpanna* stage one removes 2 *anusaya* and 3 *samyojana*; see, “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)“.
- The most commonly used evaluation is that a *Sotāpanna* has removed the three *samyojana* of *sakkaya diṭṭhi*, *vicikicca*, and *silabbata paramasa*.
- Therefore, a **critical first step** for attaining *magga phala* is to be exposed to the correct interpretations of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)“.
- The **second step** is of course to grasp the *anicca* (and *dukkha* and *anatta*) *saññā* to some extent; see, “[What is Sañña \(Perception\)?](#)“.

3. *Jhāna* (sometimes written as “*dyāna*“) can provide blissful bodily sensations. These arise due to the “cleansing of the physical body and the nervous system” induced by “defilement-free” thoughts.

- ***Jhāna* are mental states corresponding to *rupavacara* and *arupavacara* realms; they still belong to “this world” of 31 realms.** Just like the human realm is “more peaceful in general” than the animal realm, *jhānic* states are “more peaceful in general” than the human realm.
- We all have been born in most of the 31 realms (except for the realms reserved for the *Anāgāmis*) an uncountable times, and thus had attained those *jhānic* states uncountable times in previous lives.
- Even this second phenomenon of *jhāna* is completely outside the realm of modern science. Scientists cannot explain *jhānic* phenomena, but soon they will not be able to ignore these as “hallucinations”, because more and more people are attaining *jhāna*.

4. There are two main factors that come into play in cultivating *jhānas*.

- Some people have cultivated *jhānas* in their recent previous lives and are able to get into *anariya jhānas* very quickly. For a few it comes without any effort, just lying on the bed (by the way this can be any person who lives a moral life, whether exposed to Buddha Dhamma or not).
- The second factor involves the “cleansing of the physical body”, as we discuss below.

5. My late Noble teacher, Waharaka Thero, has given the following simile to explain the main difference between a *jhāna* and *magga phala*. I hope you have at least heard about — preferably seen — an old oil lantern with a glass enclosure where the wick is soaked in oil or gasoline that comes up through the wick from a built-in reservoir.

- If gasoline is contaminated, the glass enclosure gets dirty quickly. In the same way, our defiled thoughts leads to a “contamination effect” in our physical body.

- Many body ailments, including bodily pains and even diseases COULD BE reduced by cleansing one's mind. Of course, those initially arise due to *kamma vipāka*, and the stronger ones may not be overcome by this process; see, "[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)".

6. Our thoughts can be compared to the burning wick and the physical body to the glass enclosure, in the above simile. When the thoughts become defiled, the body will be "contaminated" giving rise to discomforts and even diseases. We will discuss the causes below.

- The glass enclosure of the lamp needs to be taken out and cleaned in order to get the lamp to shine bright again, i.e., to make the "body of the lamp" clean again.
- **In contrast, there is a built-in mechanism for our bodies to be cleansed.**
- This built-in mechanism is our *cittaja kaya* or our thoughts. We can state the basic mechanism this way: The *javana citta* in our thoughts (*cittaja kaya*) produce good or bad energy fields called *utuja kaya*. These are actually *rūpa* at the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage (very fine), which are analogous to electromagnetic waves in physics.
- Bad thoughts associated with *dasa akusala* lead to the contamination of the body, and good thoughts generate *utuja kaya* that can clean-up such contamination.
- The "Search box" on the top right can be used to find more relevant posts, if one needs more information on these terms.

7. This *utuja kaya* can and does affect our physical body. This is why people who are depressed, or have high levels of anger or greed, are more likely to be subjected to ailments and diseases, and people with joyful mindsets have relatively healthy bodies.

- This effect can be enhanced via *niramisa sukha* that arises due to "moral living". The more one stays away from the *dasa akusala*, the more happier one becomes, and starts feeling "*sukha*" in the body itself. It may not be fast, but it definitely happens over time.
- It can be much more enhanced by comprehending *Tilakkhana*. **The difference here is that one will then stay away from *dasa akusala* mainly because one would have realized the fruitlessness and danger of seeking sensual pleasures by committing *dasa akusala*.**

8. I have discussed — starting with basics — how our thoughts can affect our well-being in the "[Living Dhamma](#)" section. Understanding those basic concepts is crucial in order to understand deeper concepts and to do *Ānāpāna* and *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā* effectively as discussed later in that section.

- When defiled thoughts are suppressed at least for short times (during a *desanā* or while reading Dhamma), one's mind becomes joyful and one will be able to get *samādhi* for a short time (*tadanga pahāna*).
- If one spends more and more time doing such activities, the length of this calm mindset (*samādhi*) can be lengthened, even up to weeks (*vishkambana pahāna*).
- That may not be *jhāna* yet, but it is possible to get into *jhāna* by increasing one's efforts by either *sama*
- For some people, it is easier to get *jhāna*, because they had cultivated *jhānas* in recent previous births.

9. The power of the *javana citta* are increased when one is in *samādhi* and is even more when one gets to a *jhāna*. The "body cleansing effect" is enhanced and one starts feeling joy in the face, *sukha* in the body.

- This can be compared to the wick in the oil lamp generating a "high-power laser light" that automatically cleans the dirty glass enclosure.
- That bright "*utujaya kaya*", which are also called "*kirana*" (or electromagnetic waves in physics), can burn those long-accumulated "bad deposits" in our bodies and also "straighten out" the nervous system.

- This is the first confirmation of the effect of the mind on the body for someone starting on the Path. One can actually convince oneself that the body CAN BE affected by one's thoughts.

10. All this can be done by just SUPPRESSING the *pancanivarana* for long times, see, "[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)".

- Even before the Buddha, ancient *yogis* were able to get to *jhāna* by SUPPRESSING defiled thoughts or *pancanivarana*. They did this mainly by staying away from sensual objects (usually in a forest or in an isolated place).
- In fact, they were able to cultivate powerful *abhiññā* and even travel through the air. Therefore, it is possible that those who get into the fourth *anariya jhāna* will also experience the "white light" surrounding them.
- As long as one's mind can be kept away from greedy and hateful thoughts such states of *samādhi* and *jhāna* can be maintained for long times (*vishkambana pahāna*).
- This is related to the fact how people can go to even *anariya* meditation retreats (breath meditation) and attain a sense of peace for many days at a stretch. However, when they come back and get back into the regular lifestyle, it slowly fades.

11. The problem is that those effects, no matter how powerful, are only temporary with *anariya jhāna*. They have not removed the root cause for getting attached to greed and hate. **They remain hidden deep down as *anusaya/samyojana*.**

- This is discussed in detail in "[Power of the Human Mind – Anariya or Mundane Jhāna](#)".
- *Anariya jhana* belong to the 31 realms: "[sīla, Samādhi, Paññā to Paññā, sīla, Samādhi](#)".

12. Now we are getting closer to see the difference between *anariya* and *Ariya jhāna*.

- **The main difference difference between them is that *Ariya jhāna* are permanent, since they are attained via REMOVING and not just SUPPRESSING some of those *anusaya/samyojana*.**
- Once removed via wisdom (*paññā*) when attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*, some of those *anusaya/samyojana* are permanently removed from one's mind (*ucceda pahāna*).
- After that, no matter how strong an attractive/hateful sense input comes in, strong defiled thoughts CANNOT arise in a *Sotāpanna*; see, "[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)", and other relevant posts in the "[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)".

13. The remaining key to the puzzle is that it is possible to attain *magga phala* just by getting into *samādhi* and not necessarily to *jhāna*.

- There are many types of people based on their *gathi* (personalities) and capabilities: *saddhā*, *virīya*, *samādhi*, *sati*, *paññā*. In fact, the *suttas* in the *Tipitaka* are separated to five *Nikayas* based on that so that people can study appropriate *suttas* for them, see, "[Nikāya in the Sutta Pitaka](#)".
- Without getting into details, people with predominantly *paññā indriya* can attain *magga phala* without going through *jhāna*.
- Others normally go through *jhānas* to attain *magga phala*. This is not clear-cut, but just to get an idea.

14. The bottom line is that *jhānas* can be quite helpful in getting to *magga phala*. **Furthermore, one may attain both within reasonably short times.** But *magga phala* (at least the *Sotāpanna* stage) comes before *Ariya jhāna* are attained.

- The reason is that *ucceda pahana* mentioned in #11 that is necessary for the *Ariya jhāna*, cannot take place unless one has "seen" the *Tilakkhana* and attained the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- One normally attains *Ariya jhāna* by recalling the (stage of) *Nibbāna* that one has seen, and the "cooling down" that one has thus experienced; see, "[Power of the Human Mind – Ariya Jhānas](#)".

15. For people with high levels of *paññā*, even brief state of *samādhi*, called *tadanga pahana* (see #7 above) is enough to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage. A famous example is Bahiya Daruchiriya who attained the *Arahantship* upon hearing just a single verse.

- Then there are accounts of many people who attained the *Sotāpanna* stage via *vishkambana pahāna* (see #7 and #9 above), mainly while listening to a *desanā* by the Buddha.
- For example, Alavaka yaksa (not a *niraya yaksa* but a *deva yaksa*) threatened the Buddha just before sitting down to listen to a *desanā* and attained the *Sotāpanna* stage during the *desanā*. Angulimala chased the Buddha with the intention of killing him, but attained the *Sotāpanna* stage immediately afterwards.
- More information on the three kinds of *pahāna* can be found at, “[What Are Kilesa \(Mental Impurities\)? – Connection to Cetasika](#)”.

16. Therefore, there can be people with *magga phala* without any *anariya* or *Ariya jhāna*.

- If there are people with *magga phala* without *jhāna*, they cannot not experience the “*jhānic sukha*” in the body. Even though they do not generate “bad thoughts” to further contaminate their bodies, they have not cleansed the old contaminants. *Jhānic javana citta* (that can run continuously for long times, compared to just 7 *javana citta* in a normal *citta vithi*) are like laser beams that can clean contaminants in the body even in an *anariya jhāna*; see, #4 of “[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)”.
- In the simile of #4 above, this is like a wick not emitting any more smoke, but the glass enclosure not yet cleaned.
- Of course, it would be easier for a person with *magga phala* to attain *Ariya jhāna*, and they will not attain *anariya jhāna*.

17. Finally, from the above discussion it appears that the only way to confirm the attainment of the *Sotāpanna* stage is to see whether one has removed the three *samyojana* (*sanyojana*) of *sakkaya diṭṭhi*, *vicikicca*, and *silabbata paramasa*; see, “[Sakkaya Diṭṭhi is Personality \(Me\) View?](#)”.

- And that cannot be determined by anyone else, but oneself.

This is a critical post that is of importance to many people on the Path. If I have made any mistakes I need to correct them. So, please don’t hesitate to comment if you see anything inconsistent or wrong.

18. April 28, 2018: I found a *desana* by Waharaka Thero where he present clear evidence that *jhāna* are not necessary to attain *magga phala*:

[WebLink: Download “Are Jhāna Required for Magga-Phala”](#)

- The main point the Thero makes is that we know that there are *jāti Sotāpannas* born in the human realm. But if a *jhāna* was REQUIRED to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, then that person WOULD NOT be born in the human realm, but in a *brahma* realm corresponding that *jhāna*.

2.9.3 Power of the Human Mind – Anariya or Mundane Jhanas

1. The 54 types of *cittas* (thoughts) belonging to the *kamaloka* (called *kamavacara cittas*) are not very strong; they can just have enough power to grasp the thought object (*arammana* in Pāli or *aramuna* in Sinhala).

- The power of a thought comes from *javana*; see, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)” for an analysis based on *Abhidhamma*.
- But the *jhānic cittas* belonging to the *rupaloka* and *arupaloka* have much more power and have a firm grasp of the object. This is why it is possible for someone who can get to the fourth *jhānic* state to acquire some capabilities that exceed the “normal” human potential, like telekinetic (move things with the mind) or the ability to see or hear from long distances; see below.

- The Pāli word “*jhāna*” has two roots: “to concentrate” and also “to burn up”.
2. The *Anariya* or mundane *jhānas* are attained simply by SUPPRESSING the five hindrances. One simply focuses the mind forcefully onto one thought object, not letting those five hindrances come to surface.
- Since there is only one *citta* at a time (even though there are billions of *cittas* a second), when one forces the mind to one thought object, the five hindrances are kept at bay, and one feels the serenity of a mind unpolluted by the hindrances. **This is called *samatha* meditation.**
3. Thus attaining mundane *jhānas* is purely a mechanistic process. While some Buddhists use them to calm the mind before getting into insight (*vipassana*) meditation, it is used widely by the Hindus. Even before the Buddha, there were many Hindu *yogis* who could attain the highest *jhānas*.
- There are many reports of people of other faiths also attaining such *jhānic* states (see, for example, “Interior Castle” by the Christian nun St. Teresa of Avila; edited by E. Allison Peers, 1946, for a fascinating description of “seven mansions” which seem to correspond to these *jhānic* states).
 - But such *jhānic* states are not permanent; one could lose them in an instant, if the moral conduct is broken and defiled thoughts (*anusaya*) come to the surface (*anusaya*).
4. There are many techniques for conducting such *samatha* meditation. The popular ones are breath (whether focusing the mind on the breath at the nostrils or on the rising/falling of the stomach) and *kasina* meditation (where a certain object, for example a colored disk is used to focus the attention on). As one’s mind gets absorbed in that object, the five hindrances are suppressed, and the mind advances to higher and higher calm states.
- Obviously, it is easier to attain *jhānic* states via *samatha* meditation if one follows at least the five precepts (not killing, stealing, sexually misbehaving, lying, or taking drugs or alcohol). This is because the greedy and hateful thoughts are at a lower baseline state for a person observing the five precepts.
 - If one abstains from all ten immoral acts (*dasa akusala*), then it is even easier to calm the mind and to attain these *jhānic* states; see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”.
5. The five *jhānic* states corresponding to the *cittas* in the *rupaloka* themselves are related to the five hindrances. To get to the first *jhānic* state, one needs to suppress the five hindrances; this is done by developing five *sobhana* [beautiful qualities of consciousness] mental factors (*sobhana cetasika*) to counter the five hindrances:
- *Vitakka* inhibits the hindrance of sloth and torpor (*thina middha*). This is how one trains to direct the mind to one thought object, say the breath. *Vitakka* is normally translated as “initial application”, but it comes from “*tharka*” or going back and forth among many *arammana* (thought objects); when this is stopped one has “*vitharka*” or *vitakka*, i.e., staying on one thought object, for example, breath or a *kasina* object.
 - Sustained application (*vicara*; pronounced “vichāra”) is the continued presence of the mind on that object, i.e., maintaining concentration on that object; *vicara* comes from stopping “*chara*” or moving around. *Vitakka* and *vicara* are compared to a bee flying towards a flower and then buzzing and hanging around the flower while extracting honey from it. *Vicara* serves to temporarily inhibit the hindrance of *vicikicca*.
 - As the mind gets absorbed in the object, thoughts of ill will are suppressed and zest or mental happiness (*pīti* or “*preethi*”) arises in the mind. This is the *jhānic* factor of *pīti*, and it suppresses the hindrance of ill will (*vyāpāda*). This happiness is felt mainly on the face.
 - The body becomes light due to physical happiness (*sukha*). This *jhānic* factor counters the hindrance of restlessness and worry (*uddhacca kukkucça*).
 - Thus the mind now becomes totally absorbed in the thought object, and one has one-pointedness (*ekaggata*). This is the primary *jhānic* factor in all *rupaloka jhānic* states and the

essence of concentration (*samādhi*). This one-pointedness temporarily inhibits sensual desire (*kamachanda*).

When all five *jhānic* factors are present, the five hindrances are temporarily suppressed, and one is in the first *jhānic* state.

6. The higher *jhānas* are attained by **successively eliminating** the grosser *jhāna* factors and by refining the subtler *jhāna* factors through sustained concentration.

- Thus in the *Abhidhamma* it is stated that there are five *jhānic* states, where the last four are attained by the elimination of a *jhāna* factor at each stage; thus in that method, the second *jhāna* is attained by removing *vitakka*. But in the *suttas*, the Buddha expounds the *jhānas* as fourfold, where both *vitakka* and *vicāra* are removed to get to the second *jhāna*. Therefore the difference comes in at the second *jhāna*.
- For someone cultivating *jhāna*, this is not of any practical concern. In practice, it is not easy to distinguish between two steps of removing *vittakka*, *vicāra*; they seem to go away together. That is probably why the Buddha just combine them into one *jhāna* in the *suttas*.

Possible Perils of Mundane Jhānas

First of all, the *anariya* (mundane) *jhānas* are not stable as *Ariya jhānas*. A *yogi* can be taken out of the *jhāna* by the *anusaya* (temptations) triggered by an external stimulus, for example seeing an attractive woman or hearing a seductive voice; see, “[Gathi \(Character\), Anusaya \(Latent Defilements\), and Āsava \(Cravings\)](#)”.

- There is this story about a *yogi* who was travelling by air with *abhiññā* powers and saw a flower in the shape of a woman (called “*nārilathā*”) and lost the *jhānic* state and came down; there is another such story where the *yogi* heard the singing of a woman and had to face the same fate.
- In contrast, when someone gets into an *Ariya jhāna*, that *jhāna* cannot be broken by any such influence even though the *yogi* may see or hear such external stimuli; see, “[Power of the Human Mind - Ariya Jhānas](#)”, and “[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)”.
- Thus even though the *yogi* may have not removed some *āsavas*, the *anusaya* are PREVENTED from arising in an *Ariya jhāna*; this is because the object of concentration (*arammana*) in an *Ariya jhāna* is not a mundane object, but *Nibbāna*.

1. There are many people even today, who can get into these mundane *jhānas*. **But it is not a good idea to attain such mundane *jhānas* at or above the fifth *jhāna*.**

- This is because, if someone dies while in such an *arūpa jhānic* state, he/she will be born in the *arūpa loka*: it is not possible to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage in the *arūpa loka* because the eye and ear faculties are not present (so one could not learn Dhamma), and thus cannot become a *Sotāpanna*. Thus one would spend a very long time there, and has to start all over when one returns to the human world. Once in the human world, it is possible that one could accumulate bad *kamma vipāka* and be destined to the *apāyas*.
- Thus it is better to make the effort to become a *Sotāpanna*, rather than seeking any *jhāna*. A *Sotāpanna* will never be born in the *apāyas* (lowest four realms).

2. There is yet another danger in attaining these mundane *jhānas*. Even before the *jhānas*, one could start seeing objects of one’s liking (such as religious figures of any religion, religious symbols, colorful lights, etc).

- Thus many people tend to believe that they have attained some of sort of advancement in meditation or in their belief system; some Buddhists may believe they have attained *Nibbāna* or something close to it. It could be dangerous to play with such illusions. **When such lights or other images appear, one should completely ignore them.** I used to see them too, but luckily I found my teachers before getting heavily involved with these illusions.

3. It is said that in some rare instances, lowly spirits try to convince meditators that they are *devas* or *brahmas* (beings in the realms higher than the human realm). It is dangerous to get involved with them too. It is possible that some of the horror stories we hear from time to time about people killing their own families were committed under such influences.

Extrasensory Perceptions and Powers (*Abhiññā*)

1. When one attains and perfects the fourth *jhāna*, one could start developing several extra sensory perceptions and powers, which could take considerable effort. No reports are available on anyone with ALL these abilities at the present time. However, when one attains the *Arahant* stage, certain extra sensory powers can be attained if cultivated, including the last one on the following list, the ability to “see” the past lives:

- Psychokinesis (*iddhividha*) or various manifestations of the “power of will”.
- Clairaudience (*dibbasota*), the faculty of perceiving sounds even at long distances, far beyond the range of ordinary auditory faculties.
- Clairvoyance (*dibbacakkhu*), which enables one to see far events as well as heavenly worlds (i.e., other beings that are not visible to normal human eye).
- Telepathy (*cetopariya ñāna*), which enables one to comprehend the general state as well as the functioning of another’s mind.
- Ability to recollect one’s own past lives (*pubbenivasanussatinana*).

2. It is possible for a *yogi* to develop the *abhiññā* to the extent that he/she can see past lives through half of a *Mahā Kalpa* (which can be taken to be roughly 15 billion years). The ancient *yogis* with such power saw that the *Mahā Brahma* has been there all through that time period. Therefore, they came to the wrong conclusion that the *Mahā Brahma* was the one who created the world at that time in the past.

- Those yogis who are born in the *asanna* realm spend 500 *Mahā Kalpas* there like a lifeless log (no thinking, that is what *asanna* means). When they exhaust that lifetime, they normally are reborn in the human realm, and because of this past “*gathi*” to cultivate *jhānas*, they may again develop *abhiññā* powers. Now they look back at past lives, but do not see any because they can look back only half of a *Mahā Kalpa*, which is only a thousandth of the duration of the past life. Thus, they also conclude erroneously that they are “new” beings, who did not have any past lives.
- The Buddha, upon his Enlightenment, could see thousands of *Mahā Kalpas* in the blink of eye. This is why he said there is no discernible beginning to life.
- An *Arahant* with *abhiññā* powers can see back through numerous *Mahā Kalpas* since *Ariya jhānas* are much more powerful.

3. Further details can be found in:

- “The Manuals of Dhamma”, by Ven. Ledi Sayadaw (2006), p. 105.
- “Abhidhammattha Sangaha – Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma” by Bhikkhu Bodhi (1999), p. 344.

4. These kinds of direct knowledge are all mundane and are dependent on the mastery of the fourth *jhāna* and focusing attention on these tasks. The Buddha discouraged *bhikkhus* from pursuing these mundane powers, and also prohibited *bhikkhus* from public display of such powers, calling them “childish”. That is because all these powers are temporary. Since one has not removed *avijjā* (ignorance) and has only suppressed greed (*lōbha*) and hate or ill will (*dōsa*), they can resurface any time and remove all those achievements.

- One good example from the Buddha’s time was Devadatta, who was a brother of princess Yasodhara. Devadatta became a monk and developed the mundane *jhānas* and attained those direct knowledges described above. He could perform many “miracles”, and one time he appeared in the bedroom of Prince Ajasattu to impress him. But when Devadatta went against

the Buddha and at one time injured the Buddha, he lost all his mundane powers and ended up in the lowest realm (*avici niraya*) because of those offenses.

By now one should be able to get a sense of the potential of the mind. With even these mundane *jhānas*, a human can access the higher realms of existence and also attain super normal powers, but these mundane *jhānas* are at a much lower level than *Ariya jhānas*.

Next, “[Power of the Human Mind - Ariya Jhānas](#)“,

2.9.4 Power of the Human Mind – Ariya Jhanas

Revised February 12, 2018

1. We saw in the previous post that *Anariya jhānas* are attained via focusing the mind on ANY thought object (*vitakka*), whether it is breath, a *kasina* object, or any other religious symbol of any religion, and then keeping the mind there (*vicara* or sustained application).

2. Whereas the *Anariya* or mundane *jhānas* are attained by SUPPRESSING the five hindrances via concentrating on mundane objects (breath, a *kasina* object, etc) , *Ariya jhānas* are attained via using *Nibbāna* as the *arammana* (thought object); actually, *Nibbāna* is not “an object” in this world, so what is meant here is to recall some “cooling down” that one has experienced.

- One can start “cooling down” first by living a moral life and by staying away from [dasa akusala](#); see, “Living Dhamma”.
- When one comprehends the Three Characteristics (*Tilakkhana*) of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* at least to some extent, there is definitely more permanent “cooling down” over time. One can look back and notice such a “cooling down”. For example, one may not “flare up” at the slightest provocation as one used to, or one may have lost cravings to some extent, etc. That is what needs to be recalled while cultivating *Ariya jhāna*; see #4 below for the *kammatthana*.

3. Thus the key is to first experience some “cooling down” by comprehending the Three Characteristics of “this world” of 31 realms. One examines the real life situations and understands that no lasting happiness is possible, either in this life or anywhere in these 31 realms; see. “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)“, and “[Why is Correct Interpretation of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta so Important?](#)“. This gives rise to *niramisa sukha* (see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)“) of *Nibbāna*, i.e., some sort of a “cooling down”, over time. How long it takes to experience some “cooling down” will depend on the person.

4. When one has experienced some “cooling down” that one can recall, then one can use it in a *kammatthana* to cultivate *jhāna*. This procedure is more effective for those who have attained the *Sotāpanna* stage. One can sit in a quiet place and recite the following *kammatthana*:

- “*Ethan santhan ethan paneethan, sabba saṅkhāra samatho, Sabbhupathi patinissaggo, tanhakkhayo, virago, nirodho, Nibbanan ti*“, which means, “It is the only peace, the only happiness: prevent *saṅkhāra* from arising (via) eliminating *tanhā* and excess greed, and thus stopping the arising of defilements, which is *Nibbāna*“. This needs to be done while recalling an instance of one’s own “cooling down”; see #3 above.
- However, the above procedure is not much effective unless one has at least some understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* and has experienced some “cooling down”; it can be used to quickly enter a *jhāna* that had been cultivated.

5. Thus the difference between the mundane and *Ariya* versions of *samatha* meditation is the meditation object, and this is the reason that *asanna jhānas* are avoided in the *Ariya* meditation. In the former, one can focus on ANY object; in the latter one focuses on *Nibbāna*. **Thus, *vitakka*, *vicara* for *Anariya samatha* meditation becomes *savitakka*, *savicara*, emphasizing the focus on *Nibbāna*, with the prefix “sa”.**

- “*Ethan santhan ethan paneethan,*” cannot be used just as a chanting without understanding what is meant by heart. Thus the chant (one does not chant out loud; one could just say it in the mind to oneself or say it very quietly meaningfully) will become more and

more effective as one starts feeling the *niramisa sukha* at least to a certain extent. One could also start with any *Anariya samatha* meditation (the breath meditation is easy to do), and once starts feeling the calmness and early stages of *niramisa sukha*, one could permanently switch over to the *Ariya* version, by contemplating on *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* and recalling one's own "cooling down".

6. Another thing to remember is that *niramisa sukha* has no equivalent sensation in any type of *amisa sukha* or sense pleasures that are available with the five physical senses. It is more like a relief sensation. When one has a headache and it goes away, one feels a relief, a calmness, a peace of mind. The *niramisa sukha* is something like that. The more *niramisa sukha* one feels one becomes calm inwardly AND outwardly.

- When one gets into *jhānas*, *jhānic* pleasure can be felt in the body.
- In the post, "[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)", I have explained how a *Sotāpanna* automatically removes the five types of *citta* that are responsible for rebirth in the *apāyas* (the lowest four realms). In that discussion, it was also shown how *vicikicca* is responsible for such bad *kamma*, and how contemplation on *Tilakkhana* (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) can remove *vicikicca*, and also four other greed-rooted *cittas* that arise because of the wrong views.

7. Thus as one contemplates on *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, one automatically starts **reducing, not just suppressing the hindrances**. By the time one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, these five hindrances are reduced to a level that is sufficient to attain the first *Ariya jhāna* with the *jhāna* factors of *savitakka*, *savicara*, *pīti*, *sukha*, *ekaggata* fairly easily.

- As pointed out above, the hindrance of *vicikicca* is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage. The other four hindrances are removed in stages as one moves to higher *Nibbānic* states.
- For example, as one progresses from the *Sotāpanna* stage to higher *Nibbānic* states, all *jhānic* factors are automatically fulfilled: The two hindrances of *kamachanda* and *vyāpāda* were reduced to *kamaraga* and *patigha* levels at the *Sotāpanna* stage. *Kamaraga* and *patigha* are reduced further at the *Sakadāgāmī* stage, are removed at the *Anāgāmī* stage. Thus an *Anāgāmī* is left with *rūpa rāga* and *arūpa rāga*, and thus one has only attachment for *rūpa loka* and *arūpa loka*.
- On the other hand, the hindrance of *thina middha* is easily overcome by *savitakka*, i.e., when the mind is focused on *Nibbāna* (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*). Thus any sleepiness or lethargic feeling cannot survive and one feels energetic. A *Sotāpanna* is at the entry level of comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and the understanding gets progressively better as one moves to higher stages and becomes complete only at the Arahant stage.
- The hindrance of *Uddacca* also decreases by stages and is completely removed only at the Arahant stage.
- Thus we can see that even without cultivating *jhānas*, an *Arahant* automatically removes all five hindrances. As one moves to higher stages of *Nibbāna*, it should become easier to attain *jhānas*.

8. In summary, *Ariya jhānas* are permanent in nature compared to *Anariya jhānas*. Thus a *Sotāpanna* will be able to easily get to the first *Ariya jhāna* in any of the future lives, because some of the five hindrances have been permanently reduced, and *vicikicca* permanently removed. Even in a noisy environment, *Ariya jhānas* (especially second or higher) can be summoned at will.

- The clearest distinction of an *Ariya jhāna* is that once in the *jhāna*, the *jhāna* cannot be interrupted by *anusaya* or a lustful or a hateful thought. Even if one forcefully tries to think about such a thought, it does not "stick"; the mind rejects it; see, "[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)".
- One can contemplate Dhamma concepts (*savitakka*, *savicara*) while in a *jhāna*. Only *vitakka* and *vicara* are reduced at the first *Ariya jhāna*, and completely eliminated at higher *jhānas*.

Doing insight meditation (contemplating on *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* or any Dhamma concept) can be done with a clear, bright mind.

- All *jhānas* are mundane in the sense that they provide the *jhānic* experience in the *rupaloka* and *arupaloka*, which still belong to the 31 realms of existence. The *Nibbānic* bliss is the ultimate bliss.
- It is said that the *nirodha sammāpatti* that can be attained by an *Arahant* is incomparably better compared to any *jhāna*. It is said that an *Arahant* can enjoy the sensation of *Nibbānic* bliss continually for up to seven days in *nirodha sammāpatti*.
- Thus ultimately what is most important is the purification of one's own mind; see, "[The Importance of Purifying the Mind](#)".

9. One gets to the first *Ariya jhāna* by removing (*uccēda pahāna*) *kāma rāga*, whereas one can get to the first *anariya jhāna* by suppressing (*vikkhambana pahāna*) *kāma rāga*. **Therefore, one will be an *Anāgāmī* by the time one gets to the first *Ariya jhāna*.**

- This is discussed in detail and evidence from the *Tipitaka* provided in the post: "[Mundane versus Supramundane Jhāna](#)".
- Even some followers of Waharaka *Thēro* in Sri Lanka do not seem to understand this point. However, Waharaka *Thēro* has clearly explained this in the following short *dēsana* (in Sinhala): "[WebLink: Ariya and Anariya Jhana \(Audio\)](#)".

Next, "[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\) – How Does it Happen?](#)",

2.9.5 Are There Procedures for Attaining Magga Phala, Jhana and Abhinna?

April 23, 2017

1. Learning Dhamma (or following the Path) is very different from learning mundane subjects like history, economics, or even science and mathematics.

- *Ariya jhāna* and subsequent *abhiññā* powers are realized as “by products” after one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- Even attaining *magga phala* does not have set procedures, other than following the Eightfold Path. However, *kammattana* based on one's personality can be helpful.
- The most important thing is to cleanse one's mind. **Things just become clear with a purified mind.**

2. There is an excellent example described in the *Tipitaka*. There were two *bhikkhus* at the time of the Buddha called Mahapanthaka and Culapanthaka. They were brothers and Ven. Mahapanthaka was the elder. Ven. Mahapanthaka had been trying to teach a certain verse (*gāthā*) to Ven. Culapanthaka for **six months**, but Ven. Culapanthaka was unable to memorize it.

- Ven. Mahapanthaka got frustrated and asked Ven. Culapanthaka to disrobe and he left crying. The Buddha saw this incident and realized that Ven. Culapanthaka had very unique hidden capabilities.
- He gave proper instructions to Ven. Culapanthaka, and Ven. Culapanthaka was able to attain not only the *Arahantship* but also attain vast super-normal (*abhiññā*) powers within the same day. The trick for Ven. Culapanthaka was to go beyond a certain sticking point that had been blocking his mind.
- **He recited not one but 500 *gāthā* that day.** There are many reports of his *abhiññā* powers. One time he made 999 copies of himself and they were all engaged in various activities at the temple.
- The point is that none of that was gained via “book knowledge”. Once the breakthrough came with the instructions from the Buddha, the rest of it came gushing through immediately.

- **No one taught him how to memorize all those 500 verses or how to cultivate *abhiññā* powers.** A decent version of this story can be found at [WebLink: Dhammapada Verse 25 – Culapanthaka Vatthu](#).

3. Another example is how Ven. Ananda attained the *Arahanthood* and many *abhiññā* powers overnight. Three months after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha, the first Buddhist Council (*Sangayana*) was set to take place, and the day before that Ven. Ananda had not attained the *Arahantship*. He had been a *Sotāpanna* while the Buddha was alive.

- Since only “*sivpilisimbiya*” *Arahants* (those with *patisambhida ñāṇa* [‘analytical knowledge’ or ‘discrimination’]) were allowed to attend the *Sangayana*, Ven. Ananda was under pressure to attain the *Arahanthood*. Despite his efforts, he had not attained the *Arahantood* the night before, and he decided to lie down to take a rest. As he was getting into bed while thinking about a *Dhamma* concept, he attained the *Arahantship* while not in any of the four postures (was not on the bed yet, but was off the ground).
- Simultaneous with that he acquired many *abhiññā* powers too. The next day, when he went to the *Sangayana* hall, everyone was inside. He stood by the door and announced that he had attained the *Arahantship* and requested the door to be opened. One of the *Arahant* asked Ven. Ananda to remove doubts of everyone present about his attainment.
- So, Ven. Ananda went inside through the closed door, traveled through air and took his seat. Then it was clear to everyone that he had not only attained the *Arahantship*, but also had cultivated *abhiññā* powers overnight; see, “[WebLink: Ananda -The Guardian of the Dhamma](#)”.

4. Waharaka Thero has given the following simile to understand what happens when one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, and WHY it takes only a fraction of second.

- Suppose person X is running back and forth past a sign that has written on it some information in small letters. It is not possible to read the sign while running, no matter how many times you run past it.
- But suppose X stops for a few seconds to read the sign, then resumes running back and forth again. Now that he has read the message that is on the post, he KNOWS what is written on the post, even though he again cannot read it while running.
- In the same way, it takes only a fraction of a second to the mind to grasp the true nature of this world (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*) when the mind is calm AND if one has learned enough background material (in the simile, he must know the language the sign was written in).
- While one is gathering this supporting material one is a *Sotāpanna Anugami*. Then the *Sotāpanna phala* moment can come at any time. It comes and goes even without one realizing it. Only weeks or months later, one will start realizing the permanent change in oneself.

5. This is why I said in #1 above, that there are no set procedures for making progress on the Path or developing *abhiññā* powers (of course *anariya* techniques are different). **As one makes progress, one will AUTOMATICALLY receive the results based on one’s progress.**

- One will automatically attain *magga phala*.
- One may also attain *Ariya jhānic* states subsequently, if one had cultivated them in recent previous lives. For others, it may take some time to cultivate *Ariya jhāna*. As I described in a previous post, *jhāna* are very different from *magga phala* and it may not be easy to verify whether one has attained *Ariya* or *anariya jhāna*; see, “[Difference Between Jhāna and Stages of Nibbāna](#)”.
- While certain meditation techniques COULD be helpful, the two main factors are *kusala sila* (moral living) and comprehending the real nature of this world, i.e., *Tilakkhana*.

6. **Our goal should be to eliminate future suffering by cultivating wisdom (*paññā*), and thereby getting rid of *micca diṭṭhi*.**

- Of course, learning correct *Dhamma* is a joyful experience which can motivate one to learn further and thereby help comprehending the true message of the Buddha.

- The key is to not confuse “learning” with just “memorization”. One needs to get the key idea or *saññā* of a given concept. When one gets the *saññā* of a concept, one will never lose it: “[What is Sañña \(Perception\)?](#)”.

7. This website with hundreds of posts could discourage people, thinking that one needs to memorize all these different things to learn *Dhamma*.

- It is not necessary to MEMORIZE ANYTHING. Most of the material at the website is for REFERENCE. If one forgets some details about a concept it is easy to use the menu system, “Search” button on the top right, or the [Pure Dhamma – Sitemap](#) to locate relevant posts.
- However, listening to *desanā* or reading *Dhamma* (and then grasping concepts, not memorizing) is an essential part of learning (grasping concepts).
- Getting into *jhānas* or attaining *magga phala* do not have set procedures. They will AUTOMATICALLY be realized as one follows the Path and one’s wisdom grows.
- The key is to stay away from *dasa akusala*, live a moral life, and comprehend the key message embedded in *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* by learning *Dhamma* and contemplating.
- By the way, there is a connection between *dasa akusala* and *anatta* as we discussed last week; see, “[Dasa Akusala and Anatta – The Critical Link](#)”. So, *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* are related to *dasa akusala*.

8. Memory and wisdom are two different things, even though somewhat related. In order to comprehend the message of the Buddha, one should cultivate wisdom (*paññā*) instead of memorizing verses. Let us take a simple example to explain this.

- A child can learn addition by just memorizing. Then he/she would be able to give the right answer to the addition of two numbers that has been memorized, but will not be able to add two randomly chosen numbers.
- However, if the child is taught HOW TO add two numbers, using a technique like using the fingers in the hand to represent numbers. it will be possible to “see” WHY two plus three equal to five. Then the child will be able to add any two numbers.
- Once that is grasped, it would be easy for the child to then learn subtraction, multiplication, and division.
- However, it will be an impossible task to MEMORIZE the addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of ANY two numbers.

9. There is a basic difference between “real learning” (grasping concepts) and memorization (just blindly following rules/instructions).

- This is a concept that is hard to grasp for many these days, because we are so much used to “book learning”. There are many people who can repeat certain tasks mechanically without even bothering to think through. And then when the situation changes somewhat they do not know how to handle the “new situation”.

10. The message of the Buddha is unique. It goes far beyond moral living. Some people think that by living a moral life one would be able to get an afterlife in heaven forever.

- On the other end of the spectrum, another set of people believe that killing those who are unfaithful to their God can also lead to a heavenly life, which should be beyond belief for any reasonable person.
- However, if a mind is contaminated from the early age, such dangerous ideas sink into the mind and is very hard to change.
- Both those extremes are faith based.
- Hopefully, one would be able to see that there is a key element of reasoning, not faith, involved in Buddha Dhamma. It can be grasped by a reasonably moral person. It can be followed to a very deep level if desired.

11. Buddha Dhamma cannot be learnt by books or with this website. But they can help by providing (correct) information; if it is incorrect information, then it would be just a waste of time.

- Since Buddha Dhamma is really different from any other religion or philosophy, one first needs to get that basic information from someone who really knows the fundamentals (*kamma/vipāka*, *dasa akusala*, *paticca samuppāda*, etc) and then the deeper aspects like *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* once the basics are absorbed.
- It is not possible to even absorb the fundamentals, unless one is already living a moral life. It may sound hard to believe, but a defiled mind CANNOT absorb Buddha Dhamma.
- **A defiled mind is like a dirty cloth, which cannot be made colorful by soaking in a dye. The cloth needs to be cleaned in order to absorb the dye and to become bright.**
- Therefore, the first step is to stay away from the worst of the *dasa akusala*, which are also called “*panca dushcharitha*” or “five immoral qualities”: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and alcoholism/drug use.

12. **What is discussed in the *Kalama Sutta* is this very first step:** Understanding that what one does not like to be done to oneself, another wouldn't like either. No one likes to be hurt and to put to misery. **Any normal human should be able to comprehend that simple concept.**

- That step needs to happen before one starts on the five precepts or moral conduct (*panca sila*) which are deeper; see “[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#)”.
- Only then one can start comprehending the **deeper concepts like *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, the Four Noble Truths, and start on the Noble Eightfold Path; see, “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)”.**
- The ability to understand deeper concepts gets easier as one purifies one's mind.

13. Even though this website will be a useful resource, one should not start memorizing key concepts. First of all, it is not possible to do that. There is so much material that it is impossible to remember everything. But it is essential to read various aspects and try to “fill in gaps” in the “big picture”.

- Of course, I myself do not remember all the details. But I do know where to refer to get any needed information. **It is all in the *Tipitaka*, and the late Waharaka Thero has clarified the key terms for us, so that we can find our own way gradually.**
- It becomes easier to analyze a given concept as one progresses. The more one grasps about a concept (not merely memorize the wording), the meanings (and how to use them in other situations) start to come flowing through.
- At some point, when one starts comprehending key concepts, one will be able to see connections among different aspects and start seeing the big picture or to make that big picture even more clear. **That is when a *Sotāpanna Anugami* becomes a *Sotāpanna*.**

2.10 Transfer of Merits (Pattidana) – How Does it Happen?

1. Even some Buddhists are skeptical that merits can be “transferred” to other beings: It does not appear to be “scientific”. However, Buddha Dhamma is far ahead of science, and this is another example. Even though the vocabulary is different, mechanisms of “energy transfer” (mental energy) has been described in Dhamma.

- Not only the merits of a good deed, but also many other versions of “mental energy” can be transferred, as we discuss below.
- **The basic idea can be thought of as follows:** If one has an oil lamp that is lit, and if others have oil lamps that are not lit and they do not have a way to light them, wouldn’t it be better for everyone to let others use one’s lamp’s flame to light their lamps?
- Thus while it is not possible to “create” many oil lamps starting with one, it is possible to make thousand other lamps to become useful by sharing the light. In the same way, the receiving person needs to have a basic ingredients to reap the benefits, as explained below. But since all those lamps will be useless without a way to light them, the person providing the light is doing a great service.

2. First of all transfer of merits is the correct phrase, but “*punna anumodana*” is not. *Anumodana* means the receiving mind becoming joyful with the merits it received (“*anu*” + “*mödanā*”). The giver is giving (“*dāna*”) the “*paccayā*” or the auxiliary causes. (The common word is “*pratyaya*” but that is the incorrect Sanskrit word; the correct Pāli word is *paccaya*). It is *paccaya* that represents “*patti*” in “*pattidana*” (pronounced, “*paththidāna*”).

- Other than in direct giving (see below) the giver cannot make the receiving party “receive what is intended” unless the person receiving has a mindset that is attuned to receiving.
- It is the receiving person that is doing the “*punna anumödanā*”, i.e., gladly receiving the *pattidana* of the giver and becoming joyful with the merits received. This is also called “*pattanumodana*”.

3. Giving and receiving can be done in many ways:

- The direct way of giving/receiving is when one gives money or something material. It is deducted from the giver’s ledger and is added to the receiver’s: it is fully transferred.
- When a teacher teaches a classroom full of kids, he/she is teaching the same way to all the kids. But how much a particular kid “receives” or comprehends depends on that particular kid’s ability to receive.
- A radio/television station is broadcasting a program. But the reception of the program by a radio/TV depends on the quality of that device and also whether it has been “tuned” to the correct station.
- This transfer can happen instantaneously or with a time lag, because that mental energy is in the “*nama loka*” and is accessible at any time; see, “[Memory, Brain, Mind, Nama Loka, Kamma Bhava, Kamma Vipāka](#)”, “[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)”, and “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)”.

4. Therefore, only in “direct giving”, the amount received is the same as given. The amount received in the other other two “indirect giving” methods depends on the receiver. A similar mechanism is at work when one does a good deed and “transfers merits” to another person who may be far away.

- All intentions have *kammic* energy. You may remember that the Buddha said, “*Cetana ham bhikkave kamman vadami*”, or “Bhikkhus, I say intention is *kamma*”. **And kamma is the fundamental potential energy for everything in this world.**
- People very much underestimate the power of the human mind. Those who have experienced at least anariya jhānas can sense at least a little bit about the power of the mind; see, “[Power of the Human Mind – Introduction](#)” and the two follow-up posts.

- Direct giving is “*dāna*”; indirect giving is “*pattidāna*”. These are two of the ten meritorious deeds (*punna kamma*); see, “[Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā](#)”.

5. One such mechanism is the *annantara-samanantara paccaya*; see “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”. This is a universal law governing the *kamma niyama*. Many people pronounce “*niyama*” as “*niyaama*”, but “*niyama*” is the Pāli or Sinhala word for “principle”. Thus *kamma niyama* is the universal principle of *kamma* (like the law of gravitation).

6. When one is “transferring merits” by sincerely saying that “May so and so receive merits from this good deed that I have done”, or doing *metta bhāvanā* by saying, “May all beings be free from the suffering in the *apāyas*” or some version of it, one is BROADCASTING one’s intention.

- However, just because one is doing such a “giving”, the intended recipient may not receive the benefits UNLESS the receiver has a matching mindset; it is just like the case of a radio/TV, where the receiving device need to be set to the “right frequency” to receive the signal.
- This is explained in the post, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”. Don’t be discouraged by those Pāli words; sometimes, as in the case of *paticca samuppāda*, it is best to use the Pāli words, because it is not possible to find an English word that can convey the same meaning.

7. Transfer of merits is efficient when the giver and the receiver are together and each is aware of the other’s intention. For example, in Asian countries it is customary to transfer merits to deceased relatives. Alms giving to the *Sangha* or similar meritorious deed is done and *pattidana* is offered to the deceased relative. If the deceased party is in a state where it can receive merits (such as a *gandhabba* state), then that *gandhabba* will be there anxiously awaiting to receive such merits.

8. It is possible to “give Dhamma” or to “give *kusala*” too. In fact the Buddha said, “*sabba danan Dhamma danan jinati*” or, “from all kinds of giving, Dhamma giving is the most meritorious”.

- When the Buddha gave a discourse, those who were listening “received” Dhamma or *kusala* in varying degrees. Some became *Arahants*, some attained *Sotāpanna* stage, etc during the discourse itself and there were others who did not attain any stage but possibly still accumulated *kusala*. *Kusala* (“*ku*” or “*kun*” or “dirty”+“*sala*” or “remove”, and thus shedding impure things from the mind) thus means absorbing wisdom, non-greed, non-hate AND discarding greed, hate, and delusion.
- During such a discourse it is mainly the delusion that is removed (and wisdom that is gained), which in turn results in discarding greed and hate to the extent of how much delusion was removed.

9. How much a given person receives in such an occasion depends of course on the intellectual level (and the state of mind) of the person. But it is not possible to quantify the intellectual level using modern standards of “book knowledge”. For example, it is not directly related to one’s formal education. It is easier to give some examples.

- Ven. Ananda was highly literate, a former prince, and had an amazing memory power. He had the whole *sutta pitaka* in his memory. And he was with the Buddha for many years, but attained the *Arahanthood* only after the *Parinibbāna* (passing away) of the Buddha.
- Suneetha was of low-caste, and was carrying buckets of feces when the Buddha met him. The Buddha with his supernormal powers, saw that Suneetha was capable of comprehending Dhamma and asked Suneetha to become a *bhikkhu*. Ven. Suneetha became an *Arahant* within seven days.

10. Even the same person may be receptive to “receiving Dhamma” at times when his mind is in a calm state, but may not comprehend anything when his mind is excited, or is distracted. This is the same as saying that the five hindrances are active; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – Five Hindrances](#)”. Therefore, it is IMPORTANT to have a correct mindset when learning Dhamma, whether by listening or reading.

- Therefore, try to read these posts at quiet times, when the mind is receptive, and NOT during the brief breaks at work when the mind is occupied with other matters.

- In Asian countries, this is a major reason for going to the temple and making offering of flowers to a statue of the Buddha or the *Bo* tree at the temple. Such activities get the mind into a calm, peaceful state suitable for listening to a Dhamma discourse afterwards; see, “[Buddhist Chanting](#)” and “[Tisarana Vandana and Its Effects on One’s Gathi](#)”.

11. Therefore, it is important that both *annantara* and *samanantara* are optimized in order to make all these activities efficient.

- Of course if one is not learning the true Dhamma, *annantara* is not good and one is wasting one’s time. However, even if the Dhamma is good, if *samanantara* is not good, i.e., if the receiver’s mind is not receptive, then again it is a waste of time.
- This concept is easily grasped with the following example; A seed is the *anantara* or what is given. The mind state of the receiving party is like the field that the seed is planted. Unless that field is moist, has nutrients, and is exposed to sunlight, the seed cannot grow. Just like that the mindset of the person receiving merits (or Dhamma in the case of learning) needs to be in a receptive state. On the other hand, the giver (one doing *pattidana* or delivering Dhamma) needs to “give” potent seeds.
- It is only when both *anantara* and *samanantara* are optimized and matched that full benefits result. i.e., optimum transfer takes place. For those whose are familiar with the “resonance effect” in physics, it is quite similar to that: the absorption of a photon by an atom is optimized when the photon energy is matching an energy gap in the atom.

12. There is a type of “*anumodana*” that happens in day-to-day life too. Suppose X starts a project to feed the hungry. Many poor people benefit from it. When Y sees that Y may become joyful seeing the hungry getting fed, and may thank X for doing it. This joy of heart, even if Y did not contribute, counts as “merits”; it becomes a good *kamma vipāka* for Y. That does not take any merits away from X.

- It is not possible for something to come out of nothing. So, where do those kinds of merits come from? It comes from the mental energy of Y who became joyful upon seeing the good act. This is part of the mental energy (*javana*) that a human possesses; see, “[Power of the Human Mind](#)”.
- It is also possible for the effects of immoral acts to be transferred too. Suppose X is beating up Y. Person Z may be glad to see that and may encourage X to beat up Y. Now, suppose Y dies as a result of the beating. Then not only X, but Z also gets bad *kamma vipāka* for that immoral act.
- In our societies also, the same principle applies. If the police investigating the death of Y has evidence that Z also encouraged the killing, Z as well as X could be prosecuted.
- Thus our feelings (good or bad) play an important role in accumulating good and bad *kamma vipāka*.

2.11 First Noble Truth is Suffering? Myths about Suffering

Most people believe that the First Noble Truth just says there is suffering. Some also think that it is possible to “remove” this existing suffering IN THIS LIFE by following extensive and elaborate meditation techniques.

1. The Buddha said, “My Dhamma has not been known in this world. It is something people have never heard of previously”. So we should carefully examine to see what is really new about the suffering that he talked about.

- What is new about knowing that there is suffering around us? Everybody knows that there is suffering with old age, diseases, poverty, etc.
- And it is possible to REMOVE existing suffering by doing meditation? For example, if one has come down with a disease, can one overcome that by doing meditation? If someone is getting old and is feeling the pains and aches of old age, can that be PERMANENTLY removed by doing meditation? Even though some issues can be handled due to special reasons, in most cases we CANNOT change such EFFECTS or end results.

2. Let us discuss these two points one at a time.

3. Let us first see whether it is possible to REMOVE the existing suffering.

- For example, if someone has aches and pains due to old age, it is not possible to get rid of them other than to use medications or therapy to lessen the pain and manage it. If someone gets cancer, it is normally not possible to get rid of it by meditation. It may be handled by medication. Even the Buddha had pains and aches due to old age, and had a severe stomach ache at the end.
- In the context of that last sentence, It must be noted that there are two types of *vedanā* (feelings): those due to *kamma vipāka* and those due to *saṅkhāra* (attachment to sensual pleasures), and an *Arahant* gets rid of only the second kind until the *Parinibbāna* (death); see, [“Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways”](#).
- In fact, it may not even be possible to do meditation under any of such conditions. Even someone who has developed *jhānas*, may not be able to get into *jhānas* if the pains are too distracting.
- The purpose behind Buddhist meditation is to contemplate on the true nature of the world and find the CAUSES of such suffering, so that those causes can be stopped and FUTURE suffering can be stopped.
- It is true that one can get a relief from day-to-day stresses by doing different kinds of meditation. And it is good to do them. But such practices were there even before the Buddha. There was no need for a Buddha to reveal to the world that one could get some “calming down” by doing breath meditation or *kasina* meditation.
- In a way, such “*samatha*” meditations are comparable to taking an aspirin for a headache. One can get relief in the short term but it is temporary. But the problem that the Buddha addressed involved a much longer time scale, and will lead to a *nirāmisa sukha* that is permanent.

4. So, what was the “never heard truth about suffering” that the Buddha revealed to the world? In short it is the “suffering that is hidden in sense pleasures; the suffering that WILL ARISE in future lives”.

- Let us take an example to get a simple version of this “new idea”.
- When a fish bites the bait, it does not see the suffering hidden in that action. Looking from the ground we can see the whole picture and we know what is going to happen to the fish if it bites the bait. But the fish is unable to see that whole picture, and thus does not see the hidden suffering. It only sees a delicious bit of food.

- In the same way, if we do not know about the wider world of 31 realms (with the suffering-laden four lowest realms), and that we have gone through unimaginable suffering in those realms in the past, we only focus on what is easily accessible to our six senses.
- In order to really comprehend suffering through repeated rebirths, one needs to comprehend that most suffering is encountered in the 4 lowest realms (*apāyas*); see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.
- Thus, stopping suffering requires one to first stop the causes for rebirths in the *apāyas* by attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage of Nibbāna; see, “[Nibbāna in the Big Picture](#)”.

5. **Seeing this hidden suffering is indeed difficult.** It is not possible to convey the whole message in one essay, but I will try to get across the main idea. One really needs to spend some time thinking through these issues. When the Buddha attained the Buddhahood, it said that he was worried whether he could convey this deep ideas to most people.

- Everything happens due to one or (usually) many causes. The famous Third Law of motion in physics says that every action has a reaction; and the First Law says that an object will not change its status unless a force acts on it. It is easy to see these “cause and effect” principles at work in mechanical objects. If something needs to be moved, it needs to be pushed or pulled. If a stone is thrown up, it must come down if there is gravity pulling it down.
- We seek pleasures that are highly visible. But if we gain such pleasures with immoral acts, the consequences of such immoral acts are not apparent. We can see a stone thrown up coming down, but we cannot see any bad consequences to the drug dealer who seems to be enjoying life.

6. **The main problem in clearly seeing the “cause and effect of mind actions” is that the results of those actions have a time delay and that time delay itself is not predictable.** In contrast, it is easy to predict what is going to happen with material things (moving an object, a vehicle, a rocket, etc). The success of physical sciences is due to this reason. Once the underlying laws are found (laws of gravity, laws of motion, electromagnetism, nuclear forces, quantum mechanics, etc), one has complete control.

- But the mind is very different. To begin with, no two minds work the same way. Under a given set of conditions, each mind will chose to act differently. With physical objects, that is not so; under a given set of conditions, what will happen can be predicted accurately.
- Effects of some actions (*kamma*) may not materialize in this life and sometimes it may come to fruition only in many lives down the road (but with accumulated interest).
- Even in this life, mind phenomena are complex: This is why economics is not a “real science”. It involves how people act sometimes “irrationally” for perceived gains. No economic theory can precisely predict how a given stock market will perform.

7. **When mechanical systems have time lags, those are predictable. We can set off a device to work in a certain way AT A CERTAIN TIME, and we know that it will happen at that time if all mechanical components work properly. Not so with the mind. When we act in a certain way, the RESULTS of those actions may not be manifested for many lives. This is a key point to contemplate on.**

- But cause and effect is a nature’s basic principle. **When something is done, it will lead to one or more effects.** In mind-related causes, the effects may take time, sometime a long time over many lives, to trigger the “corresponding effect”.
- Thus it should be clear that “action and reaction” associated with mind effects REQUIRE the rebirth process. It is not readily apparent and is an essential part of the “previously unheard Dhamma” that the Buddha revealed to the world.
- **This “cause and effect” that involves the mind is the principle of *kamma* and *kamma vipāka* in Buddha Dhamma.**

- But unlike in Hinduism, *Kamma* is not deterministic, i.e., not all *kamma vipāka* have to come to fruition; see, “[What is Kamma? Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)“. All unspent *kamma vipāka* become null and void when an *Arahant* passes away.

8. The life we have as a human is a RESULT of a past good deed. The life of a dog or an ant is the result of a past deed by that sentient being.

- And what happens to us in this life is a COMBINATION of what we have done in the past (*kamma vipāka*) AND what we do in this life.
- What happens to an animal is MOSTLY due to *kamma vipāka* from the past.
- The difference between a human and an animal is that the animal does not have much control over what is going to happen to it. But human birth is a special one: We have a higher level mind that CAN change the future to some extent, and with possible enormous consequences.

9. What can we change and what cannot be changed?

- We are born with a certain *kamma vipāka* built in. Our body features, major illnesses (such as cancer) are mostly, not completely, built-in. We can avoid many *kamma vipāka* by acting with mindfulness, i.e., by planning well, taking precautions, etc.
- But we CANNOT change the fact that we are going to get old and eventually die, no matter what we do. Our life a RESULT.
- What we CAN change are the CAUSES for future lives.
- Even though meditation cannot relieve us of most of the pre-determined suffering, proper meditation CAN provide temporary relief, as well as PERMANENTLY removing future suffering.

10. The second Noble Truth is describes those CAUSES that we need to work on. The root causes are greed, hate, and ignorance, but they need to be removed mainly via understanding the Three Characteristics (see #12 below) and also via removing our bad *sansaric* habits; see a series of posts starting with, “[Habits, Goals, Character \(Gathi\)](#)” to “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)“.

11. The Third Noble Truth is about what can be achieved by systematically removing those causes. *Nirāmisa sukha* increases from the point of embarking on the Path, and has four levels of PERMANENT increases starting at the *Sotāpanna* stage and culminating at the *Arahant* stage; there are several posts starting with, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Nirāmisa Sukha?](#)“.

12. And then Fourth Noble Truth is the way to attain *nirāmisa sukha* and then various stages of *Nibbāna*. *Nirāmisa sukha* starts when one lives a moral life (see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)” and follow-up posts). The root causes of immoral behavior are greed, hate, and ignorance. Ignorance can be reduced to the extent of attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage just via comprehending the Three Characteristics of “this world of 31 realms”, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)“, and the follow-up posts. It is that powerful.

- Once one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, one can find the rest of the way by oneself.

13. There are many different ways to describe and analyze what I summarized above. Different people can grasp Dhamma by looking at it from different angles. That is what I try to cover with sections like “Dhamma and Science”, “Dhamma and Philosophy”, and for those who like to dig deeper into Dhamma, the section on “Abhidhamma” which means “Higher or Deeper Dhamma”.

- My goal is to provide a “wide view” that accommodates most people. Even though I cannot even begin to cover even a significant fraction of Buddha Dhamma, one does not need to understand “everything” even to attain the *Arahanthood*. The Buddha has said that one could attain all four stages of *Nibbāna* just via comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* at deeper and deeper levels. This is because with deeper understanding, one’s mind automatically directs one in the right direction.
- Another reason that I try to cover many topics is to illustrate the point that Buddha Dhamma is a complete description of nature.

2.12 Vinaya – The Nature Likes to be in Equilibrium

Our lives and existence are based on constantly getting into debt and then paying off debts. This latter is done by Nature whether we like it or not. When we steal, kill, lie, or do any of the *dasa akusala*, we get into debt, and the nature keeps track of that via *kammic* energy.

- We are reborn to pay debts. This is another way of looking at the cycle of rebirths. Nature will automatically make sure that the largest debts are paid off first; this is how the next existence (*bhava*) is determined.
- During a given lifetime, debts are paid off when suitable conditions appear; see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”.
- Nature is the final arbitrator. A criminal may be able to get away with a crime by hiring a good lawyer, but will have to pay for the crimes in the nature’s court. Similarly, when we do something good, we will get the rewards regardless of whether we wish for anything in return or not. Most people do not realize this because of the time delay between the act (*kamma*) and its result (*kamma vipāka*).

1. When we do either a moral or an immoral act, that is done with an intention and has some energy associated with it. This is called *kammic* energy. That energy resides in the universe until spent or otherwise reduced by some means (this is related to quantum entanglement; see, “[Quantum Entanglement – We are All Connected](#)”). It is really the principle of energy conservation in physics.

- We can become indebted to a living being or to the “world as a whole”.
- There were no *vinaya* rules in Buddha *sāsana* for about 20 years after the Buddha attained Enlightenment. When Buddha Dhamma started flourishing, unscrupulous people started becoming monks to live a comfortable life depending on the kindness of the devotees. The Buddha admonished them about the consequences of becoming indebted and started setting up the *vinaya* (“vi” + “naya”, where “naya” in Pāli or Sinhala means debt) rules to rein in those people.

2. When there is an energy imbalance, nature tries to bring it to balance. For a given individual (in the conventional sense), i.e., a life stream (absolute sense), the biggest imbalances are settled first.

- Thus at death when *patisandhi* takes place, the biggest *kamma* seed with highest imbalance come into play, and releases that energy by initiating the next birth in the corresponding “*bhava*”; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”. Thus the next “*bhava*” is determined by the biggest *kammic* seed at the end of the current “*bhava*” (this is really a simple interpretation of a complex process).
- During a lifetime (*pavutti vipāka*), in addition to the energy content, the prevailing conditions also come into play for delivering *kamma vipāka* or the release of *kamma* seeds. This is why we can prevent many bad *kamma vipāka* from come to fruition by acting with *yoniso manasikara* or by “being mindful”; see, “[What is Kamma? Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”.
- In both cases (*patisandhi* and *pavutti vipāka*), “matching conditions” plays a big role; see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”. For example, a seed does not germinate if it is in a dry place; it needs to be in the ground with water and sunlight in order to germinate.

3. Getting back to the issue of coming to equilibrium, a stone is in equilibrium when it stays on the ground. If we pick it up and throw it up it goes up because we gave it some energy. But now it is not in equilibrium, and it will fall down to find its equilibrium position on the ground. The only difference with *kammic* energy is that the *kammic* energy could be released much later; **it has to find suitable conditions to release that energy**; see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”, and “[Paticca Samuppāda – Overview](#)”; Thus the release of *kammic* energy is more akin to the process of germination of a seed; there is a time lag until suitable conditions appear.

- A seed, when placed in the ground, germinates and becomes a tree by releasing the energy that is trapped in the seed. When the energy is all spent, the tree will die. Unless the tree itself made more seeds during its lifetime, that tree is the only “result” of that original seed.

4. Through numerous lives in the past we have accumulated innumerable number of both good and bad *kammic* energy packets, or *kamma beeja*, or *kamma* seeds and we keep producing them in this lifetime too; some are big and some are small (actually, those done beyond 91 *mahā kalpas* have lost their energy; like everything else in this world, *kammic* energy is not permanent either). The small *kammic* seeds bring in results (*vipāka*) during any lifetime, and the really big ones (*kamma patha*) are the ones that determine “*bhava*” for a new life at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment.

- Does that mean we have to remove all *kamma* seeds to stop rebirth, i.e., to attain Nibbāna? No. A new “*bhava*” is grasped at the “*upādāna paccaya bhavo*” step in the *paticca samuppāda* cycle; see “[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”. If one has removed ignorance (*avijjā*) and understood the true nature of the world, then there is no “*taṇhā*” and thus there is no *upādāna* at the “*taṇhā paccaya upādāna*” step, and thus no “*bhava*”, and no “*jāti*” or rebirth.
- However, in order to remove ignorance (*avijjā*), we have to purify our minds. For that we need to understand the true nature of “this world”, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. For that we need to get rid of the five hindrances (*panca nivarana*) that are covering our minds and not letting the mind comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. That is where the removal of bad *kamma* seeds and accumulation of good *kamma* seeds (i.e., doing good deeds and avoiding bad deeds) become important; of course “deeds” here include actions, speech, and thoughts.

5. The point is that every time we do a moral or an immoral act we generate a *kamma* seed that embeds the “*javana* power” of the thought that led to the act; see, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)”. The *kammic* power associated with a moral act can be considered surplus in one’s “account” that can be used to enjoy things in life; an immoral act leads to a debt, i.e., it appears on the negative side of the ledger. If one does an immoral act against another living being, then one be in debt to that being until it is paid off; see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”.

6. The nature tries to keep things in balance: the good *kamma* bring good results and bad *kamma* brings bad results when the nature implements this balancing act. In both cases, we can take advantage of this by arranging conditions for good *kamma* seeds to germinate and not letting bad *kamma* seeds to germinate; see, “[What is Kamma? Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”. The development of good habits and getting rid of bad habits go along with this process; see, “[Habits and Goals](#)”, and “[Sansaric Habits and Āsavas](#)”. Please review these links carefully. All these tie up together.

7. Thus we are bound to this *samsāra* or the cycle of rebirths because we do things to make an “imbalance” either via moral or immoral deeds: good deeds lead to good rebirths and bad one to bad rebirths. They both extend the *sansaric* journey. However, it is essential to engage in moral deeds in order to avoid birth in the four lowest realms (*apāyas*), where the suffering is great AND also there is no opportunity to moral deeds. Thus one MUST do moral deeds until one attains Nibbāna.

- Moral deeds WILL have their consequences (they add up in the “plus side of the ledger”), whether or not one wishes for anything in return, i.e., the nature will pay back. However, if one does a moral deed AND wishes for something other than Nibbāna, then that is done with greed, and thus one is simultaneously doing an immoral act.
- Only an *Arahant* does not do any moral or immoral deeds that have *kammic* consequences that are potent enough to bring rebirth. All an *Arahant* does is low-level *saṅkhāra* or “*kriya*” (like walking and talking), and is “in equilibrium” with nature.

8. When one goes “off the equilibrium”, greed and hate intensify and one is likely do immoral acts to become indebted. On the other hand, when one is in some kind of a *samādhi*, the mind is close to equilibrium, and thus greed and hate are under control. If one attains *rupavacara* and then *arupavacara jhānas* then the mind gets even more closer to equilibrium. *Samādhi* attains perfection when one becomes an *Arahant*.

- This is why one needs to stay away from doing immoral acts, if one wants to get results in meditation. A purified mind can easily get to *samādhi*; see, “[The Basics in Meditation](#)”.

- One becomes indebted via greed, hate, or ignorance (here ignorance means not knowing the true nature of the world or *anicca, dukkha, anatta*); thus there is *lōbha vinaya*, *dōsa vinaya*, and *mōha vinaya*.

III Key Dhamma Concepts

Within thousand years of the Buddha's *Parinibbāna* (passing away), certain key concepts became distorted. For many years, I had nagging questions on the compatibility of certain concepts that are widely published in "Buddhist literature", including Theravāda literature. For example, explanations of *anicca*, *anatta*, *sunyata*, did not make sense to me. Furthermore, I got lost in a myriad of explanations for terms like *saṅkhāra*; there are three different meanings for that word in standard Theravāda texts.

When I started listening to the *desanas* by Waharaka Thero in Sri Lanka, it became immediately apparent to me that "this was the true Dhamma"; see, "[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thero](#)". Furthermore, concepts like *saṃsāra*, *sammā*, *saṅkhāra* became crystal clear while I was just listening. I hope I will be able to convey this information as clearly below.

This main section has the following sub-sections:

- **Subsection: [San](#)** (Explanation of many key Pāli words)
 - [What is "San"? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Saṃsāra\)](#)
 - [Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)
 - [Saṅkhāra – Life is a Bundle of Saṅkhāra](#)
 - [Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra](#)
 - [Saṅkhāra and Kammā, Viññāna and Kamma Beeja](#)
- **Subsection: [Nibbāna](#)**
 - [Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#)
 - [The Four Stages in Attaining Nibbāna](#)
 - [What Are Rūpa? \(Relation to Nibbāna\)](#)
 - [Niramisa Sukha](#)
 - [Does the First Noble Truth Describe only Suffering?](#)
 - [Nirōdha and Vaya – Two Different Concepts](#)
 - [Nibbāna "Exists", but Not in This World](#)
- **Subsection: [Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)**
 - [Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)
 - [Anicca – True Meaning](#)
 - [Anicca – Inability to Maintain Anything](#)
 - [Anicca – Repeated Arising/Destruction](#)
 - [Anicca – Worthlessness of Worldly Things](#)
 - [Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses](#)
 - [Anatta and Dukkha – True Meanings](#)
 - [Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?](#)
 - [Dasa Akusala and Anatta – The Critical Link](#)
 - [How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#)
 - [How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā – II](#)
 - [Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – According to Some Key Suttas](#)
 - [If Everything is Anicca Should We Just give up Everything?](#)

- [Why are Tilakkhana not Included in 37 Factors of Enlightenment?](#)
- [Two Versions of 37 Factors of Enlightenment](#)
- [The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#)
- Also see, “[Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata](#)” that is in a different section.

○ **Subsection:** [Gathi, Bhava, and Jati](#)

- [Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya \(Mind Plane\)](#)
- [Gathi and Bhava – Many Varieties](#)
- [Gathi to Bhava to Jathi – Ours to Control](#)
- [Memory, Brain, Mind, Nama Loka, Kamma Bhava, Kamma Vipāka](#)
- [Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)

○ **Subsection:** [Sorting out Some Key Pāli Terms \(Taṇhā, Lobha, Dosa, Moha, etc\)](#)

- [Kāma Taṇhā, Bhava Taṇhā, Vibhava Taṇhā](#)
- [Taṇhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)
- [Lobha, Raga and Kamaccanda, Kamaraga](#)
- [Lobha, Dosa, Moha Versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)
- [Ditṭhi \(Wrong Views\), Sammā Ditṭhi \(Good/Correct Views\)](#)
- [Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)
- [What is Avijja \(Ignorance\)?](#)
- [Indriya and Āyatana – Big Difference](#)
- [Hetu-Phala, Paccuppanna, and Paticca Samuppāda](#)
- [Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra](#)

○ **Subsection:** [The Five Aggregates \(Pancakkhandha\)](#)

- [Five Aggregates – Introduction](#)
- [Saññā \(Perception\)](#)
- [Vedanā \(Feelings\)](#)
- [Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)
- Saṅkhāra is discussed at, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”.
- [Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\)](#)
- [Rūpa \(Material Form \)](#)

Deeper Analyses:

- [Pancakkhandha or Five Aggregates – A Misinterpreted Concept](#)
- [Pancaupadanakkhandha – It is All Mental](#)

3.1 San

- [What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)
- [Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)
- [Saṅkhāra – Life is a Bundle of Saṅkhāra](#)
- [Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra](#)
- [Saṅkhāra and Kammā, Viññāṇa and Kamma Beeja](#)

3.1.1 What is “San”? Meaning of Sansara (or Samsara)

Revised May 17, 2018

1. A key word, the meaning of which has been hidden for thousands of years, is “*san*” (pronounced like son). “*San*” is basically the term for “good and bad things we acquire” while we exist anywhere in the 31 realms; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.

2. There is also a reason for calling what we “pile up” as “*san*”. In Pāli and Sinhala, the word for numbers is “*sankhyā*”, and *sankhyā* = “*san*” + “*khyā*”, meaning (add & multiply) + (subtract & divide), i.e., *sankhya* is what is used for addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division. From this, “*san*” gives the idea of “piling up” (addition and multiplication); “*khyā*” gives the idea of “removal” (subtraction and division).

- Therefore “*san*” is used to indicate things we do in the *sansaric* journey; see below for examples.
- These “*san*” are nothing else but *dasa akusala*.
- “*Khyā*” or “*Khaya*” is used to indicate removal. *Nibbāna* is attained via removal of defilements (*rāga*, *dōsa*, *mōha*), and thus *Nibbāna* is “*rāgakkhaya*”, “*dōsakkhaya*”, and “*mōhakkhaya*”.
- One is bound to this world of 31 realms because one has not removed the tendency to do *dasa akusala*. This can be stated in various ways: one’s *gati*, *āsava*, *anusaya*, *samyojana*, etc; see, “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)”. As long as one has any types of *gati*, *āsava*, *anusaya*, *samyojana*, one has the ability to pile up more “*san*” or to do *dasa akusala*.
- When all *gati*, *āsava*, *anusaya*, *samyojana* are removed via the four stages *Nibbāna*, one becomes *atta* or in full control; see, “[Dasa Akusala and Anatta – The Critical Link](#)”.

Just by grasping these key ideas, it is possible to understand the roots of many common words, such as *saṅkhāra*, *saṃsāra*, *saññā*, *sammā*, etc. Let us analyze some of these words.

3. However, a distinction needs to be made between *saṅkhāra* and *abhisankhāra*. *Saṅkhāra* includes EVERYTHING that we do to live in “this world” of 31 realms; these include breathing, walking, eating, pretty much everything. Even an *Arahant* has to be engaged in *saṅkhāra* until *Parinibbāna* or death.

- Some *saṅkhāra* arise from with *alōbha*, *adōsa*, or *amōha* as a root cause; see, “[Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”. The other types of *saṅkhāra* arise from *avijjā* (ignorance), and have *lōbha* (greed), *dōsa* (hatred), or *mōha* (delusion) as a root cause; see, “[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.
- The prefix “*abhi*” means “stronger” or “coarse”. *Saṅkhāra* become *abhisankhāra* by engaging in the “wheeling process”; see, “[Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#)”. The *sansaric* process or the rebirth process is fueled by *abhisankhāra*.
- The bad things we acquire – with *lōbha* (greed), *dōsa* (hate), *mōha* (delusion) – contribute to rebirth in lower four realm; these are *apunnabhi saṅkhāra*. The good things we acquire via *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha* help gain rebirth in human realm and above; these are *punnabhi saṅkhāra*. Thus, both kinds contribute to lengthening the rebirth process, but we DO need to

acquire good things for two reasons: (i) it prevents us from doing bad things, (ii) done with right intention, it will help purify our minds.

4. Another important term is “*sammā*” which comes from “*san*” + “*mā*”, which means “to become free of *san*”. For example:

- “*Mā hoti jati, jati*”, means “may I be free of repeated birth”.
- “*Mā mé bāla samāgamō*” means “may I be free of association with those who are ignorant of Dhamma”.

5. Knowing the correct meaning of such terms, leads to clear understanding of many terms:

- *Saṅkhāra* = *san* + *kāra* = actions done while in existence anywhere in the 31 realms. All actions are ceased only at *Parinibbāna*, i.e., when an Arahant dies.
- *Abhi saṅkhāra* = “*Abhi*” + *sankāra* = strong/repeated actions for prolonging rebirth process. Please note that even meritorious actions are included here.
- *Samsāra* (or *sansāra*) = *san* + *sāra* (meaning fruitful) = perception that “*san*” are good, fruitful. Thus one continues in the long rebirth process with the wrong perception that it is fruitful.
- *Sammā* = *san* + *mā* (meaning eliminate) = eliminate or route out “*san*”. Thus *Sammā* *Diṭṭhi* is routing out the wrong views that keeps one bound to *samsāra*.
- *Saññā* = *san* + *nā* (meaning knowing) = knowing or understanding “*san*”. This actually happens when one attains *Nibbāna*. Until then the *saññā* is clouded or distorted. When we identify some object, say a rose, we just identify it in a conventional way as a flower. We do not “see” the true nature of anything until *Nibbāna* is attained. Thus it is said that until we attain *Nibbāna*, we have distorted (*vipallāsa*, *vipareetha* is in Sinhala) *saññā*.
- *Sandittiko* = *san* + *diṭṭhi* (meaning vision) = **ability to see “*san*”**; one becomes *sandittiko* at the *Sotāpanna* stage. Most texts define *sandittiko* with inconsistent words like, self-evident, immediately apparent, visible here and now, etc.
- *Sangayānā* = *san* + *gāyanā* (meaning recite) = recite and categorize “*san*” (and ways to remove them) in organizing Dhamma for passing down to future generations. The first *Sangayana* was held to systematize his teachings, just 3 months after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha.
- *Sanvara* = *san* + *vara* (meaning behavior) = Eliminate “*san*” via moral behavior. “*Sanvarattena seelan*” means *sila* is moral behavior. It is to be cultivated 24 hours a day, not just on specific days. “*Yam samadanan tam vathan*”, means observing the five precepts or eight precepts on specific days is just a ritual, or “*vatha*”. Such rituals are good starting points, but need to be discarded as one gains wisdom.
- *Sanvēga* (or “*samvega*”) = *san* + *vēga* (meaning speed) = forceful, strong impulses due to “*san*” [**vega**: [m.] force; speed; velocity; impulse.]
- *Sanyōga* (or “*samyoga*”) = *san* + *yōga* (meaning bond) = bound together via “*san*” [**yoga**: [m.] connection; bond; endeavour; conjunction; attachment; effort; mixture.]
- *Sansindheema* = *san* + *sindheema* (meaning evaporate, remove) = removing *san*, for example, via the seven steps described in the *Sabbasava Sutta*. This leads to *niramisa sukha* or *Nibbānic bliss*.
- *Sansun* = *san* + *sún* (meaning destroy) = when “*san*” is removed (“*sún*” rhymes like soup) one’s mind becomes calm and serene.
- *Sancetana* = *san* + *cetana* = defiled intentions
- *Samphassa* = *san* + *phassa* = defiled sense contact

6. A nice example to illustrate the significance of “*san*”, is to examine the verse that Ven. Assaji delivered to Upatissa (the lay name of Ven. Sariputta, who was a chief disciple of the Buddha):

“*Ye dhammā hetu pabbavā, te san hetun Thathagatho āha, Te san ca yō nirodhō, evan vadi mātā Samānō*”

Te = three, *hetu* = cause, *pabbava* = *pa* + *bhava* or “repeated birth” (see, “[Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#)”, *nirodha* = *nir* + *uda* = stop from arising.

- The translation is now crystal clear:

“All *dhamma* that give rise to the rebirth process arise due to causes arising from the three “*san*”s: *rāga*, *dōsa*, *mōha*. The Buddha has shown how to eliminate those “*san*”s and thus stop such *dhamma* from arising”

- It must be noted that “*dhamma*” here does not mean Buddha Dhamma, but *dhamma* in general; see, “[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)”.

7. We will encounter many such instances, where just by knowing what “*san*” is, one could immediately grasp the meaning of a certain verse. Most of these terms are easily understood in Sinhala language. **Contrary to popular belief, it is NOT Sanskrit that is closely related to the Maghadhi language that the Buddha spoke, it is Sinhala (or Sinhalese) that is closely related to Maghadhi (Maghadhi= “*maga*” + “*adhi*” = Noble path).**

- *Tipitaka* was written in Pāli with Sinhala script; Pāli is a version of *Maghadhi* suitable for writing down oral discourses in summary form suitable for transmission.
- Each Pāli word is packed with lot of information, and thus commentaries were written to expound the meaning of important Pāli words.
- A good example is the key Pāli word “*anicca*”. In Sanskrit it is “*anitya*”, and this is what normally translated to English as “impermanence”. But the actual meaning of *anicca* is very clear in Sinhala: The Pāli word “*icca*” (pronounced “*ichcha*”) is the same in Sinhala, with the idea of “this is what I like”. Thus *anicca* has the meaning “cannot keep it the way I like”; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”.

Over 70 Pāli words with the “*san*” root are given at “[List of “San” Words and Other Pāli Roots](#)”.

3.1.2 Sankhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipaka

Revised May 12, 2016

There is much confusion about these words. These are key Dhamma concepts, and one needs to sort them out in order to really understand other key concepts like rebirth and *Paticca Samuppāda*. Please read the post, “[What is “San”? – Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)” before reading this post.

Saṅkhāra (what we accumulate)

1. “*Punnābhi saṅkhāra, apunnābhi saṅkhāra, ānenjābhi saṅkhāra ayan vuccathī avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra*”. This is how the short verse of “*avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra*” in *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* is explained in detail.

- Thus only *abhisankhāra* (“*abhi*” means higher or stronger), those *saṅkhāra* done with *avijjā*, lead to the rebirth process.
- Note that *punnābhi saṅkhāra* is *punna*+*abhisankhāra*, and similarly the other two are also *abhisankhāra*. Also, “*apunna*” means immoral,” *punna*” means moral, and “*ānenja*” means “higher *jhānic*”. All three modes lead to rebirth in one of the 31 realms (lowest 4 realms with *apunnābhi saṅkhāra*, realms 5 through 11 with *punnābhi saṅkhāra*, and realms 12 through 31 with *ānejabhi saṅkhāra*, respectively).
- Thus any kind of *abhisankhāra* is done with ignorance (*avijjā* or not knowing the real characteristics of this world of 31 realms: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*).
- However, we will see below that we do need to accumulate *punnābhi saṅkhāra* in a strategical way, mainly to avoid rebirth in the *apāyas* (lowest four realms) until we attain *Nibbāna*.

2. As we saw above, “*san*” is what one acquires when one does anything with *sancetana* (“*san*” + “*cetana*”). *Saṅkhāra* (*san+kāra*) is simply actions that lead to acquiring “*san*”. However, it is only “*abhisankhāra*” or *saṅkhāra* that arise through *avijjā* that can lead to rebirth. There is a difference between *saṅkhāra* and *abhisankhāra*: [*kāra*, (m.), deed; service; act of homage]

- When deeds are done to live in this world, one has to do *saṅkhāra*. They become *abhisankhāra* when those are done with greed, hate, and/or ignorance. *Saṅkhāra* become *abhisankhāra* when one starts generating further thoughts (“wheeling process”) about the sense experiences (pictures, sounds, tastes, etc) ; see #9 on “[Nibbāna – Is It Difficult to Understand?](#)”.
- Thus an *Arahant* does *saṅkhāra* to live; even breathing is *kāya saṅkhāra*. But an *Arahant* has stopped the “wheeling process” or form an attachment to what is seen, heard, etc. It is that “wheeling process”, which is detailed in the *Paticca Samuppāda* section that leads to *abhisankhāra*.

3. *Abhisankhāra* are three kinds as mentioned above:

- There are actions that lead to bad consequences during life and also to bad rebirths in the four lowest realms (*apāyas*). These are “*apunnābhi saṅkhāra*” or immoral deeds.
- Actions that lead to good consequences in life and also to good rebirths are called “*punnābhi saṅkhāra*” or meritorious deeds; these lead to birth in good realms (human, *deva*, and the *rūpa lokas*), thus avoiding rebirth in bad realms where one could get trapped for many aeons. Thus it is important to accumulate *punnābhi saṅkhāra*; more on this below.
- When one cultivates “*lōkiya jhānas*” or mundane higher meditative states (*arūpa jhāna* leading to rebirth in the highest four *arūpa lōka* realms), via breath meditation for example, one is able to be reborn in the four higher Brahma worlds. These also prolong *samsāra*, and are called “*ānenjābhi saṅkhāra*”.
- It is interesting to note that “*ānenjābhi*” means “no more rebirths”: the ancient *yogis* (including Alara Kalama and Uddakarama Putta) thought these realms have infinite lifetimes and equated the births there to the “ultimate release”. Of course, the Buddha found out that those also have finite lifetimes, even though extremely long lasting aeons (billions of years).

Therefore, it is easy to remember *abhisankhāra* as those actions that lead to prolonging *samsāra* (or *samsāra*), the cycle of rebirths. There is a “latent energy” that is produced by each such action (*abhisankhāra*) that will give fruits at a later time.

4. Such “actions” can be done via the mind, speech, or the body; these lead to *mano saṅkhāra*, *vacī saṅkhāra*, and *kāya saṅkhāra* respectively. The “defiled actions” are *abhisankhāra*.

5. Does this mean one should not do meritorious deeds (with *punnabhisankhara*) because those also prolong *samsāra*? No. The Buddha emphasized that one should not shy away from doing meritorious deeds.

- There is a way to do meritorious deeds without prolonging *samsāra*, and that is detailed in the “[Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”, an important part of the Buddha’s *Paticca samuppāda* doctrine that has been hidden for thousands of years. But one needs to stay away from wishing for “things in return” for such meritorious deeds as much as possible, because such thoughts are based on greed.
- In the Abhidhamma language, one should generate “*ñāṇa sampayutta, somamnassa saḥagata citta*” (thoughts generated with wisdom and joy), which is the highest moral (*sobhana*) *citta*. Here wisdom means comprehension of the true nature; it starts with getting rid of 10 *miccā ditthi* and then further grows as one understands *anicca, dukkha, anatta* to higher levels. Wisdom culminates at the *Arahant* stage.
- Any good deed will have its good consequences whether one wishes or not. By wishing for “material things” or “*jhānic* pleasures” one turns a meritorious action to either a less potent “*ñāṇa vippayutta*” (devoid of wisdom) moral *citta* or even an *apunnābhi saṅkhāra*. We will discuss that below.

Kamma (Actions to Prolong Saṃsāra)

Kammic energy is generated when one turns *saṅkhāra* to *abhisankhāra* by the “wheeling process”; see above. For example, when one sees an object, that is just *saṅkhāra* due to a *kamma vipāka*. However, if one then starts thinking about how good it is, or think about how to acquire it, then it becomes *abhisankhāra*; **here one now has INTENTIONS about that object, one is hoping to get something.**

- That is why the Buddha said, “*cetanaṃ ham Bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*“, i.e., “I say that intention is *kamma*“.
- So it is important to remember that *kamma* is intention, and even though it can be done by the mind, speech, or the body, all those have their root in the mind. We cannot say anything or do anything without a thought in the mind to do so (see the Abhidhamma section for details).
- For example, the intention to go for a walk is a *kamma* that does not have any power to generate a good or bad *vipāka* in the future. That *kamma* will only get that task done.

Thus the key to *Nibbāna* is to stop valuing and thinking about *kāma āsvada* [*kāma assāda*] (sense pleasures; *āsvada* in Sinhala). This cannot happen until one sees the fruitlessness of sense pleasures in the long run (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*); see, the section “[Assāda, Ādinava, Nissarana](#)” under *Paticca Samuppāda*. [*assāda*: [m.] “mind-made pleasures”; taste; enjoyment; satisfaction.]

Kamma Beeja (Kamma Seeds) or Kamma Bhava

When a *kamma* (*abhisankhāra*) is committed, the *kammic* potential of that *kamma* is deposited in a *kamma beeja* (*kamma* seed); *kamma* seed is NOT a physical entity, it is an “energy” or “potential” to bring about an effect in the future. It can also be called a “*kamma bhava*“.

- A *kamma* seed can be compared to a normal seed, say for example, a seed of an apple tree. The potential to bring about a fully grown apple tree is in the apple seed. However, if the seed is kept in a dry place with no contact with soil, it does not get to germinate. It will germinate if placed under soil and fed with water and nutrients. Then it can grow to an apple tree which can yield thousand more seeds.
- Similarly, a *kamma* seed has the POTENTIAL to germinate or come to fruition if suitable conditions appear; but a *kamma* seed is an energy lying below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage. It can then yield results with an impact that is many times the impact of the original deed (this holds true for both good and bad); the results are the *kamma vipāka*; see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)“.
- It is also possible to remove many of one’s bad *kamma* seeds. When we acquire a “bad *kamma* seed” we get indebted to another being. Just like one can be debt-free by paying off existing loans, one can “pay back” old debts that have been accumulated in the cycle of rebirths by “transferring merits” when one does good deeds, and also by doing the *Ariya metta bhāvanā*; see, “[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\)- How Does that Happen?](#)” and “[5. Ariya Metta Bhāvanā \(Loving Kindness Meditation\)](#)“.

Nothing in this world is permanent (but that impermanence is not *anicca*); *kammic* energy in a *kamma* seed also eventually loses its power, and the “staying power” depends on the strength of the particular *kamma*. For example, those seed corresponding to “*anantariya akusala kamma*” such as killing one’s parents or an *Arahant*, will bring fruits without delay (i.e., in the very next birth) before they lose their power.

Kamma Vipāka (Results of a Kamma Seed or Kamma Bhava)

So it is important to distinguish between *kamma* and *kamma vipāka*: the first is the action, second is the consequence. When someone laments “this is my *kamma*” when he/she faces a bad situation, what is really meant is that this happens “because of what I had done in the past”. It is a *kamma vipāka*.

When one does something good or bad that *kammic* energy is deposited as a *kamma beeja* (seed), which is also called a *kamma bhava*. Then that *kammic* energy can give rise to *kamma vipāka* in the future when suitable conditions materialize. There are two ways to avoid *kamma vipāka*:

- Just like a seed will not germinate until the right conditions appear (soil, water, sunlight), *kamma vipāka* cannot materialize until suitable conditions appear. Thus by acting mindfully (not getting into “bad situations”) one can avoid them; see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”.
- Most importantly, we can remove many *kamma* seeds by doing *metta bhāvanā*. When we acquire a bad *kamma* seed we become indebted to another being; we can get rid of that *kamma* seed by paying off that debt. The best way to do that is to ask for forgiveness and transfer merits of one’s good deeds to all beings (since we have become indebted to uncountable number of beings); see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”.

Kamma vipāka (from the germination of seeds) lead to two main consequences:

- They can lead to consequences during a lifetime (either the present or a future life). These are called “*pavutti kamma bhava*”.
- Some strong *kamma vipāka* give rise to new existence (in the rebirth process). These are called “*uppatthi kamma bhava*”.

In either case, *kamma vipāka* are NOT deterministic. Both types can be reduced in strength or even be made ineffective. This can be done via several ways:

- When one becomes an *Arahant*, since there is no more rebirth, all *kamma* seeds that do not get to come to fruition before the death of an *Arahant* become ineffective in producing a rebirth: Because an *Arahant* has removed *avijjā*, the “*akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* cycle” becomes ineffective and thus “*bhava paccayā jati*” does not get to initiate a new birth.
- However, even an *Arahant* is subjected to any *kamma vipāka* that get a chance to emerge during the current life, especially the strong ones. Even the Buddha suffered from physical pains during the last years of his life. Even if one transfers merits to other beings (as *Arahants* do), **if the other being cannot accept those merits, then those debts do not get paid off; see, “[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\) – How Does it Happen?](#)”**. Thus even the Buddha had a few “unpaid debts” left.
- We all have done innumerable *kamma* in this long *samsāra*. Thus many *kamma* seeds are waiting to “bear fruit” under right conditions. This is a key point one really needs to digest. Just like a seed can lay dormant for long times, and start germinating only under the right conditions (soil, water), a *kamma vipāka* bears fruit only when the conditions become right.
- Thus most *kamma vipāka* can be suppressed and avoided (not letting them germinate) by acting with mindfulness (*yoniso manasikara*). This is where a calm mind helps. An agitated mind is not able to make rational decisions. See, “[Key to Calming the Mind](#)”. As mentioned there, working on the Five Hindrances (*panca nivarana*), that covers a mind, is important.

How to do Meritorious Deeds without Accumulating *Abhisankhāra*

Most people, even born Buddhists, do not get this right. They think *Nibbāna* can be attained by just doing meritorious deeds. Here are some key points to consider:

1. One definitely needs to avoid *apunnābhi saṅkhāra* (unmeritorious deeds) that will lead to bad life events and/or bad rebirths, i.e., the four lower realms; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of the Dhamma](#)”. They are “*akusala*” by definition, but ones of the worst kind; these are called “*pāpa*” in Pāli and Sinhala and “*paw*” (rhymes like “cow”) in Sinhala. This is what one needs to avoid in leading a moral life; see, “[Moral Living and Fundamentals](#)”.
2. *Punnābhi saṅkhāra* (meritorious deeds) may be accompanied by *apunnābhi saṅkhāra* if one’s intention is not good. If one does a good deed AND wishes for something in return, that wishing is done with greed. Any good deed WILL produced good results whether one wishes or not. They actually lead to good life events and good rebirths (at or above human realm). Thus *punnābhi*

saṅkhāra can help in pursuing *Nibbāna*, and should be done without greedy intentions. A *Sotāpanna* automatically does meritorious deeds with such understanding; we will discuss this in the “[Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)“. Thus the *Aryan* way is to do a good deed and share the merits of that deed with all beings, instead of wishing for something in return.

- Thus one needs to be careful here because one may be acquiring *apunnābhi saṅkhāra* at the same time. This is a bit complex and is best illustrated with an example. Suppose one donates a meal to a hungry person. That act is inherently one that will produce a good outcome. However, if the person “makes a wish” such as “may I get delicious foods in the future because of this good deed”, that is a greedy thought, a greedy intention (*cetana*). Thus while this does not negate the good deed, it also could produce ANOTHER *kamma vipāka* leading to bad life events.
- This pitfall can be avoided by doing the good deed with a pure intention, that is not associated with greed, hate, or ignorance. One gives a meal to hungry person out of compassion; to quench the hunger. That is all. Here one does not lose any possible benefits of the act.
- When one starts comprehending *anicca* (that one cannot maintain anything to one’s satisfaction over the long run), one AUTOMATICALLY stops wishing for “good things”.
- Furthermore, one can reap more benefits by additionally doing a mental act to quench the potential of previous bad *kamma* seeds. This is called “giving of merits” or “*pattidana*” which is mislabelled as “*punna anumodana*” frequently; see, “[Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā](#)“. One could wish that the merits of this good deed be shared with all other beings. We have built-up debts with all the beings in this long *samsāra*, that needs to be paid off (see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)“). Thus, sharing the merits actually becomes a “*visankhara*” or “unwinding the power of previous *saṅkhāra*“. This is thus one way to lessen the impact of previous bad *kamma vipāka*.
- **The Buddha said that one always need to do good, meritorious, deeds.** Giving is especially encouraged. One could turn these deeds to *visankhara* by sharing the merits. **By the way, sharing merits does not remove any possible good outcomes to oneself. Those were already acquired in the original act itself.** The key here is not to wish for “profits in return”, because such thoughts are associated with greed (of course this cannot be stopped by sheer will power until one comprehends *anicca*).

3. The third kind of *abhisankhāra*, “*ānenjābhi saṅkhāra*” are associated with higher (*arupavacara*) *jhānic* states attained via *samatha bhāvanā*, such as breathing meditation or *kasina* meditation. They are pursued in order to achieve higher meditative states, and thus are pursued with a greedy thought (pleasure).

- These meditation techniques do not help with the cleansing of the *āsavas*; see, “[Samsaric Habits, Character \(Gathi\) and Cravings \(Āsava\)](#)“, and “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)“.

4. *Jhānic* states are achieved automatically when pursuing *Nibbāna* (not *anāriya jhānas* but *Ariya jhānas*). The goal here was to achieve *Nibbāna*, and thus no *saṅkhāra* are accumulated in this process. This brings up another question: Is seeking *Nibbāna* another type of craving (*āsava*)?

- *Nibbāna* is attained via removing craving for **everything in this world**: “*ragakkhayo Nibbanan, Dosakkhayo Nibbanan, Mohakkhayo Nibbanan*”.
- “Craving” for *Nibbāna* is called *chanda* (one of the [The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)). This “liking for *Nibbāna*” is the key factor that fuels the other three: *virīya* (effort), *citta* (thoughts), and *vimansa* (investigations).
- Thus in seeking *Nibbāna*, one is not craving for anything **in this world**. One is thinking and working diligently to comprehend the true nature of the world (*vimansa*), and with that wisdom gained, the mind automatically gives up craving for anything.

Kāya, Vacī, and Mano Saṅkhāra

1. *Saṅkhāra* can lead to body movements, speech, and thoughts; they are respectively called *Kāya*, *Vacī*, and *Mano Saṅkhāra*. If those are not done with greed, hate, or ignorance, they are merely *saṅkhāra*. But if they are done with greed, hate, or ignorance, they become *abhisankhāra*.

- The recent post, “[Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means](#)” for a detailed description.

2. Briefly, *manō saṅkhāra* are automatically generated based on our *gathi*. All our thoughts that make body parts move (except for speech) are *kāya saṅkhāra*. *Vaci saṅkhāra* are generated when we move our mouth, lips, tongue, etc to speak.

- When we are thinking about doing something we “play it out” in the mind (for example reciting something silently in the mind). That is mostly *vacī saṅkhāra* and are also called *vitakka* and *vicara*; when we are thinking and contemplating Dhamma concepts, they are called *savitakka* and *savicara*, with the prefix “*sa*” denoting “good”.
- Thus “talking to oneself” is done with *vaci saṅkhāra*; see, “[Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra](#)”.
- *Mano saṅkhāra* are just feelings (*vedanā*) and perceptions (*saññā*) that arise automatically due to a sense input that comes via a *kamma vipāka*.

3. Thus it is clear that most enjoyments that we experience come through *vacī saṅkhāra*. We can be sitting at one place quietly and generating enormous amounts of *vacī saṅkhāra*, thoroughly enjoying the experience. Most people do this when they go to bed at night while waiting to fall asleep.

- It is a good idea to try to keep the mind away from defiled thoughts while falling asleep; this can be done getting to habit of thinking about a Dhamma concept, or to listen to chanting of *sutta* (*pirith*), keeping the volume low (like playing background music); see, “[Sutta Chanting \(with Pāli Text\)](#)”. It will be easier to fall asleep and one will have a restful sleep too.

For more details, see, “[Saṅkhāra and Kammā, Viññāna and Kamma Beeja](#)”.

3.1.3 Sankhara – Life is a Bundle of Sankhāra

Revised November 26, 2017

In the previous introductory post, “[What is “San”?](#)”, we introduced the term “*saṅkhāra*”, and in the next post *saṅkhāra* was discussed in somewhat technical terms. Since it is such an important term, in this post I will discuss it in a bit more detail.

1. Buddha Dhamma is based on the fact that all “*saṅkhāra*” are done in vain: “*sabbe saṅkhāra anicca*”.

- As we saw in the previous post, *saṅkhāra* (“*san*” + “*kara*” or actions; සන් + කර in Sinhala) are anything (thought, speech, bodily actions) done while living in “this world” of 31 realms. This includes breathing, walking, or thinking about the chores for the day.
- All *saṅkhāra* arise in the mind. We cannot utter a word or lift a finger without generating *saṅkhāra* in the mind. It happens very fast, so it feels like we just speak or do things; see, “[Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means](#)” and “[Difference Between Dhammā and Saṅkhāra](#)”.

2. So, all *saṅkhāra* involve thinking (some could be manifested as speech or bodily actions), but some actions like breathing happens without CONSCIOUS thinking. Those are just *saṅkhāra* that do not have *kammic* consequences.

- However, *saṅkhāra* become *abhisankhāra* when they involve conscious thinking with *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* (or *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*) coming to play roles. Those *abhisankhāra* have bad (or good) *kammic* consequences.
- Thus even an *Arahant* keeps doing *saṅkhāra* until death. But an *Arahant* does not do *abhisankhāra*, a “stronger version” of *saṅkhāra* that will lead to accumulating mental energy (*kamma*) for future repercussions (*kamma vipāka*) until that *kammic* energy is exhausted.

- In order for a *saṅkhāra* to become an *abhisankhāra*, one of the six root causes (greed, hate, ignorance, generosity, kindness, wisdom) need to be involved.

3. If the “bad roots” of greed, hate, and ignorance are involved, then those thoughts, speech, actions will create *kamma beeja* (or energy seeds) that either lead to bad outcomes during a life or to rebirth in the lowest four realms (*apāyas*). These are *apunnabhisankhara* (“*apunna*” + “*abhisankhāra*” where “*apunna*” means non-meritorious).

- On the other hand, *abhisankhāra* done with the “good roots” of generosity, kindness, wisdom either lead to good outcomes during a life or to rebirth in the realms at or above the human realm. These are *punnabhisankhara* (“*punna*” + “*abhisankhāra*” where “*punna*” means meritorious).
- If no roots are involved, they are just *saṅkhāra*, and their *kamma* seeds are duds; there is no energy in them. Basically one can say, *saṅkhāra* (that are not *abhisankhāra*) do not generate *kamma* seeds.

4. Let us take some examples. When we see someone is walking with a knife in hand, we cannot come to a conclusion about what kind of *saṅkhāra* is that person is generating.

- He may be just taking the knife from one place to another, in which case, it is just *saṅkhāra*.
- If he is planning to stab someone, then he is generating *apunnabhisankhara*.
- If he is planning to rescue an animal who got entangled in a trap, then he is generating *punnabhisankhara*.
- In any type of speech or bodily action, what really matters is the INTENTION behind the speech or action.

5. In another example, we may see two people have built and donated two hospitals for the poor. Even though both seem to be “good actions”, we cannot say both had *punnabhisankhara*. One could have had an ulterior motive of getting elected in an upcoming election, rather than thoughts of loving kindness for poor people. In that case, he would be generating mostly *apunnabhisankhara*, even though there may be some *punnabhisankhara* involved too.

- This is why sorting out *kamma* is impossible for anyone but a Buddha. Some of our actions could involve both kinds of *abhisankhāra*. For example, if we see a bird digging up a worm and chase the bird away, we would have done both kinds of *abhisankhāra*: Saving the life of the worm is a *punnabhisankhara*, but we also did an *apunnabhisankhara* because we denied the bird of its meal. Both types of *abhisankhāra* can bear fruits (*vipāka*) in the future.

6. There is this famous “trolley problem” in ethics, where one could save five people from death by sacrificing the life of a single person; see, [WebLink: WIKI: Trolley problem](#)

This “thought experiment” has been debated for many years. We can make the following observations based on Buddha Dhamma:

- If one decides to take action (i.e., save five by sacrificing one), then one will acquire “good *kamma*” for saving the five lives, and “bad *kamma*” for killing the other person. Both types can bear fruits in the future.
- But it goes even deeper. What if the person that we sacrificed was an *Arahant* or at least a *Sotāpanna*, and the other five were normal people or even criminals? Then we would have acquired much more bad *kamma* than good *kamma*.

7. When someone is talking or doing some bodily action, we can at least try to guess what kind of *saṅkhāra* are involved. But if a person is just sitting down quietly, he/she could be generating any kind of *saṅkhāra* ranging from just thinking about whether or not to go out for a walk (just *saṅkhāra*) to planning a murder (worst kind of *apunnabhisankhara*).

- We generate more *abhisankhāra* via thinking than via speech or actions.
- When we have disagreement with other people, we normally do not hit the person or even refrain from saying anything. But depending on the purity of our minds, we may be generating

a little to unimaginable amounts of *apunnabhisankhara*. This is a key factors that most people tend to disregard.

- If someone's outward actions/speech seem to be "disciplined", we automatically assume that he/she is a good person; and the person may be trying to fool himself/herself by displaying that outward appearance. But if the mind is impure, there could be a lot of hateful/greedy thoughts in that mind. Whether or not any verbal or bodily actions are committed, those thoughts still accumulate *kamma* seeds.

8. Therefore, it is utterly useless to judge other people. Each person has true awareness AND control only over one's own thoughts, speech, actions, which are ultimately based on the intentions.

- **But we know exactly what our own intentions are.** And that is what really matters. We may be able to fool a court of law by hiring a good lawyer, but we will have to reap the results of what we sow in the future at some point.

9. This is the basis of *ānāpāna* meditation, to be aware of the types of *saṅkhāra* involved in a given action; see, "[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)". If someone asks us to join in fishing trip, we need to think what kind of *kamma* will be associated with killing fish for our pleasure; this is the basic form of "*kayanupassana*". Contemplate on any bodily action one is about to do and abstain from doing it if it involves *apunnabhisankhara* (in this case taking the lives of several fish for our pleasure).

- Bodily actions are easier to prevent, because they take time and we have time to contemplate.
- Speech is a bit more tricky, because speech comes out faster than carrying out bodily action. Still one can stop oneself even after uttering a few sentences.
- Thoughts are the hardest, and that is why "*cittanupassana*" comes after one has practiced "*kayanupassana*".

10. If one wants to start doing *ānāpāna* meditation, one should first control one's bodily actions, and the more one does it, the easier it becomes. And then it also becomes easier to control one speech. When both actions and speech are brought under control, one's thoughts will be easier to control too.

- Furthermore, willfully engaging in *punnabhisankhara* also helps to keep *apunnabhisankhara* at bay. By concentrating on meritorious deeds, one's mind is automatically turned away from thinking about unmeritorious deeds.
- This is why real Buddhist meditation is much more than just formal sitting meditation. **The key is to purify the mind, and avoid defiling the mind at anytime. One could be doing the breath meditation for a lifetime, but may not get anywhere in purifying the mind.**
- This is explained in detail and how to start practice in the "[Living Dhamma](#)" section. One does not even need to believe in rebirth in the beginning.

11. *Nibbāna* is attained not by abstaining from both *punnabhisankhara* and *apunnabhisankhara* as some suggest. On the way to *Nibbāna*, one needs to do *punnabhisankhara* AND also engage in learning Dhamma so that one could comprehend the true nature of all types of *saṅkhāra*, i.e., that all *saṅkhāra* are *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. This leads to the purification of the mind; just by doing *punnabhisankhara* is not enough to purify the mind.

- Ultimately, just by doing *punnābhisankhāra* is not enough to purify the mind. However, one MUST start there before being able to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*; see, "[Living Dhamma](#)".

Next, "[Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra \(Sankata\)](#)",

3.1.4 Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra

Revised March 22, 2017; April 17, 2017; re-written November 5, 2017

We will discuss the difference between *saṅkhāra*, *sankata*, and *dhammā*. Some of the descriptions given here are not compatible with meanings given in many current *Theravāda* texts. However, they

are fully compatible with the *Tipitaka*. Please send me a comment if you find evidence to the contrary.

- First, it is important to remember that the word “*dhamma*” can mean somewhat different things in different contexts. In “Buddha Dhamma”, it means the “Buddha’s teachings”.
- *Dhammā* (with a long “a” at the end) is mostly used to indicate an energy created by the mind; it is also called a *kamma beeja*.
- But “*sabbe dhammā*” in “*sabbe dhammā anattā*” seems to include everything, all phenomena belonging to this world of 31 realms. *Nibbāna* is not included.
- I always give links to other posts. It is not necessary to read them, but if one needs more information or clarification, one should read them. That will make the concept to “really sink in”.

1. There is confusion about the terms *saṅkhāra* and *dhammā* in the Dhammapada verses 277, 278, and 279; the first lines in those three verses are:

- “*Sabbē saṅkhāra aniccā*” or “all *saṅkhāra* are *anicca* (cannot be maintained to one’s satisfaction)”.
- “*Sabbē saṅkhāra dukkhā*” or “all *saṅkhāra* eventually lead to *dukkha* (suffering)”.
- “*Sabbē dhammā anattā*” or “all *dhammā* are without substance (not fruitful) at the end”.

2. *Saṅkhāra* are our intentions, hopes, and dreams, followed by our speech and actions to fulfill them.

- It must be noted that “*saṅkhāra*” mean all three types (*manō saṅkhāra*, *vaci saṅkhāra*, *kāya saṅkhāra*) that lead to any action, speech, or just thought; however, they all arise in *citta* (our thoughts).
- If we say “Hello” to someone that is done with *vaci saṅkhāra*. If we walk from the living room to kitchen to get a drink, that is done with *kāya saṅkhāra*. But those do not initiate *kamma vipāka*; they are *kammically* neutral. But if we verbally abuse someone, that is done with strong *vaci saṅkhāra* (*abhisankhāra*) and that will have *kamma vipāka*.
- More on *saṅkhāra* at, “[Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means](#)”.

3. If those *saṅkhāra* (or *abhisankhāra*) that we generate lead to the arising of an inert object or a living form, it is said to lead to the arising of a *sankata*.

- If one comes up with the idea of building a house, he will carefully think about it (*manō saṅkhāra*, *vaci saṅkhāra*), talk about it with others (*vaci saṅkhāra*), and take actions to make it happen (*kāya saṅkhāra*). In this case, our *saṅkhāra* gave rise to a house, and that house is a *sankata*.

4. When we do something with the body (i.e., body movement), that is controlled by *kāya saṅkhāra* that arise in our minds.

- We are not robots (most lower animals are like robots). We can control our thoughts, speech, and actions. Sometimes it may appear that we just do things (some actions are initiated as *kamma vipāka*), but if we want to we can change our actions. Just try it out.
- When we speak or just talk to ourselves, that involves *vaci saṅkhāra*; those also arise in our minds; see, “[Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra](#)”.
- *Mano saṅkhāra* are thoughts that arise **automatically** (due to *kamma vipāka*).

5. Building a house in #3 above, may not involve moral/immoral intentions, and thus one may not generate strong *saṅkhāra* (called *abhisankhāra*) that can create *kamma beeja* (*dhammā*), that can bring *kamma vipāka* in the future. Building a house is just a *kammically*-neutral action.

- However, planning to kill a human, for example, involves *manō saṅkhāra* and *vaci saṅkhāra* (in the planning stage) and then doing it with *kāya saṅkhāra*.

- In this case, all those *saṅkhāra* are *abhisankhāra*, that can bring future bad *kamma vipāka*, in the form of rebirth in the *apāyas*, which includes the animal realm.

6. *Abhisankhāra* (potent or strong *saṅkhāra*) give rise to *kamma beeja*, which are also called *dhammā*. **These are energies that were created by *javana citta***; see, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)”. They can bring *kamma vipāka*.

- At the moment of death, such a strong *kamma beeja* or a *dhammā* comes to the mind via “*mananca paticca dhammēca uppaddati manō viññāna*”. That new *viññāna* is the *patisandhi viññāna* for the new life; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!](#)”.
- Therefore, now a new life is formed as a result of that *abhisankhāra*. **This new lifeform is also called a *sankata* because it was based on those *saṅkhāra***.

7. That *sankata* came to existence because of those immoral *abhisankhāra* during that immoral act. **It came to existence at a later time via *kamma vipāka***.

- **This is basically the link between mind and matter.** In this case the *sankata* is a *rūpa* (made of matter) that is created by an *abhisankhāra* that arose in the mind.
- That house was just put together by using existing *rūpa*. But it is also possible to “create” new matter if one has *abhiññā* powers. Both are called *sankata*.

8. Any *rūpa* (including visible objects, sounds, smells, tastes, and body touches) that we experience in this world is a *sankata*, and they all undergo unpredictable change and eventually are destroyed; see, “[Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata](#)”.

- The point is that we make our own future via our actions, speech, and thoughts. Moral actions lead good *kamma beeja/dhammā* that will lead to good rebirths (in human, *dēva*, and *brahma* realms).
- However, any of these new *sankata* will not last; even if born in *dēva* or *brahma* realms, that *kammic* energy will run out one day, and then one could be directed to the next birth depending on the most potent *kamma beeja/dhammā* present at that time.
- The only difference is that one will be subjected to much suffering in the *apāyas*, while one will get to enjoy a “good life” in a higher realm. We all have been going through this “unending journey through most of the 31 realms” which does not have a traceable beginning.

9. Another important point is that the net result of all these “journeys through various realms” is suffering. **This is because we tend to do more immoral things in “seeking pleasure” and are born mostly in the *apāyas***.

- Basically, any *sankata* that we make for ourselves (whether it is a house or a new life in the *dēva* realm), that cannot be maintained to our satisfaction in the long run. A house will need repairs, and may even get burned down or flooded. A new life in the *dēva* realm will end one day, and one will back to square one.
- This is why it is said that “*Sabbē saṅkhāra aniccā*”. It is there because any *sankata* has a finite lifetime, and moreover, is subjected unexpected changes (*viparināma*) during that existence.

10. When we don’t get to maintain things to our satisfaction we suffer. Even if one makes a billion dollars and has a nice family, one will have to leave all that behind when one dies. But even before that there could many other instances where one suffers (deaths of friends/family, diseases, loss of property, etc). That is the *viparināma* nature that arise due to *anicca* nature.

- And the root cause of that suffering is *saṅkhāra* (more correctly *abhisankhāra*). This is why it is said that, “*Sabbē saṅkhāra dukkhā*”.

11. The only thing that is not destroyed is *nāma gotta*, which are just **records** of “all events” (*saṅkhāra* and *abhisankhāra*) of any given lifestream; see, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.

- All these different terms could be confusing at first. But they will all make sense eventually. They are all pieces of a big puzzle.

12. Ven. Walpola Rahula *Thero*, in his popular and otherwise excellent book, “What the Buddha Taught” did not get it right when he interpreted those verses; he included *Nibbāna* in *dhammā* (p. 57 of 1974 edition). **He took the difference between *dhammā* and *saṅkhāra* to be *Nibbāna*.**
- But as you can see, *saṅkhāra* and *dhammā* are two different entities. *Saṅkhāra* are what we generate in minds.
 - Strong *saṅkhāra* or *abhisankhāra* lead to the creation of *kammic* energy, and that is a *dhammā* or a *kamma beeja*.
13. Furthermore, *Nibbāna* does not belong to this world. Therefore, to say *Nibbāna* is *anatta* is an extremely bad mistake. This error resulted because, as with millions of people over hundreds of years, he had been misled by the wrong interpretations of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- The problems with the traditional interpretation of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* are discussed in, [“Anicca, Dukka, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations”](#), and [“Anicca, Dukka, Anatta – True Meanings”](#).
 - Furthermore, *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* are characteristics of “this world of 31 realms”; *Nibbāna* is not included.
14. When we do *abhisankhāra* (strong types of *saṅkhāra*), that lead to the formation of good or bad *kamma beeja*, or *dhammā*. Those strong *kamma beeja* can lead to the arising of *sankata* (living beings and even inert things).
- And *nāma gotta* (pronounced “nāma goththā”) are just records of what happened.
15. Unlike *saṅkhāra*, *kamma beeja*, and *sankata*, *nāma gotta* are PERMANENT (they are just records). This is why someone with *abhiññā* powers can go back at any point in time to recall past events; also see, [“Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)”](#).
- Whenever we do something (a *saṅkhāra*) an “imprint” (“*nāma satahana*”) is made. Thus for a given sentient being, a record of all activities from the beginning-less time survives, and is one’s *nāma gotta*. All previous lives and all activities of previous lives are in that “record stream”, like a movie reel (not physical of course).
 - Someone who has developed *abhiññā* through *anariya jhanas* can trace back the *nāma gotta* for a limited time; but if the *abhiññā* powers were developed with *Ariya jhānas*, a much deeper history can be probed. A Buddha can trace back as far back as he pleases with astonishing speed (and yet he could not see “a beginning” to any sentient being’s *nāma gotta*); this is why it is said that there is no traceable beginning to the rebirth process.
16. It is easier to explain this “*nāma gotta*” with an example. Let us take two popular US presidents, John Kennedy and Ronald Reagan. Their “physical bodies” are no longer with us, i.e., their “*rūpa*” or physical bodies (**which were *sankata***) decayed long ago. But their *nāma gotta* are with us to a certain extent. How much of their memories or “*nāma gotta*” remains with a given person depends on how closely that person associated with them. The moment we say, “John Kennedy” or “Ronald Reagan”, their picture comes to our mind. Not only that, those who met them may remember that vividly and probably can recall that event just like watching a movie.
- Similarly, we can recall many of the “events” of our lives or parts of our “*nāma gotta*”; some young children can recall some events in their “*nāma gotta*” in their previous lives.
 - What can be done with *abhiññā* powers is very similar. The *abhiññā* powers enormously stretch the memory or the ability to “look back” at past events in one’s *nāma gotta*.
17. **Since *nāma gotta* do not decay, the definitions of *anicca* (“cannot be maintained to one’s satisfaction”) or *dukkha* (“eventually leads to suffering”) do not apply.**
- Therefore, *nāma gotta* do not have the characteristics of *anicca* and *dukkha*.
 - But there is nothing substantial to be had with *nāma gotta* too. **Thus they are also *anatta*.**
 - The word *dhammā* is used in other contexts than *kamma beeja*. Basically, anything that belongs to this world (including Buddha Dhamma) is called *dhammā*.

18. The Buddha's last words were, “*vaya dhammā saṅkhāra, appamādena sampādēta*“, or “*saṅkhāra* are *vaya dhammā*, i.e., those that lead to one's demise (i.e., lead to bad outcomes); therefore, sort out such “*san*” without delay” (“*san*” “*pādēta*“, which rhymes as “*sampādēta*“).

- “*Vaya*” means destruction or decay; here it specifically means destruction of morality.
- *Saṅkhāra* are those these three types (*manō, vaci,* and *kāya saṅkhāra*) that lead to “*san*” for extending *sansara*; see, “[What is “San”? – Meaning of Sansara \(or Samsara\)](#)“.
- Thus the Buddha was admonishing the *bhikkhus* that all *saṅkhāra* are “*vaya dhamma*” (those leading to bad outcomes), and thus to clearly comprehend what *saṅkhāra* are.

19. In the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Najirati Sutta \(SN 1.76\)](#)“, the nature of *nāma gotta* is clearly stated:

- “*Rūpaṃ jīrati maccānaṃ, nāmagottaṃ na jīrati*“, or, “material things are subject to decay or *jirati* (pronounced “*jeerathi*“) and death or destruction (*maccanam*; pronounced “*machchānam*”), but *nāma gotta* do not decay.
- The “*rūpa*” of those two US presidents we mentioned earlier have decayed and gone. But their *nāma gotta* remain with us, because they are mixed in with our *nāma gotta* at some points and we can access our *nāma gotta* with memory. Someone with *abhiññā* powers can look at a complete *nāma gotta* not only spanning a complete life, but also going back to many lives. All of our *nāma gotta*, back to beginning-less time, are there whether accessed or not.
- *Dhammā* — in the general sense — are **basically anything in this world** (including *nāma gotta* and *paññāti* or concepts) and are without any substance too; they are all *anatta*. There is no point in “hanging on to them”.
- Even Buddha Dhamma, which enables us to attain *Nibbāna* should ultimately be abandoned (once the *Arahanthood* is attained). The Buddha compared Buddha Dhamma to a raft that one uses to cross river; once the river is crossed, there is no point in carrying the raft on one's back. So, even Buddha Dhamma is of value only until one reaches *Nibbāna*.
- Only *Nibbāna*, which is attained by “giving up EVERYTHING in this material world” is *atta* or “of value”; see, “[Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?](#)” and “[Dasa Akusala and Anatta – The Critical Link](#)“.

3.1.5 Sankhāra and Kammā, Viññāna and Kamma Beeja

June 16, 2017

The key concepts of *saṅkhāra, kammā, viññāna,* and *kamma beeja* are all associated with our mental body or *manōmaya kāya* or *gandhabba*. They are all closely inter-related, as we will see below.

1. As we saw in the post on “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)“, *saṅkhāra* involves EVERYTHING that we do, to live in “this world” of 31 realms. These include breathing, walking, eating, pretty much everything we do. Even an *Arahant* has to be engaged in *saṅkhāra* until *Parinibbāna* or death.

- Anything anyone does, need to start as a thought in one's mind. For example, to lift a leg, one's mind needs to decide on that first, even though it appears automatic. Anything one does, starts with a thought of “*san*“, i.e., something to do with “this world”.
- *Saṅkhāra* (“*san*” + “*kāra*” or action) become *abhisankhāra* by engaging in the “wheeling process” by acting with greed, hate, and ignorance; see, “[Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#)“. The *sansaric* process or the rebirth process is fueled by *abhisankhāra*. The prefix “*abhi*” means “stronger”.

2. *Kammā* is any action by us via body, speech, and thoughts (*kāya, vacī,* and *manō kammā*).

- So, you can see that *kammā* and *saṅkhāra* are closely related.

- The Buddha said, “*cetana ham Bhikkhave kammām vadami*”, i.e., “*Bhikkhus, I say kammā is intention*”. That intention is in *saṅkhāra*, embedded in the types of *cetasika* (mental factors) as we will see below.
- “Intention” depends on the types of *cetasika* in a thought (*citta*). For example, in a thought with “greedy intention”, will have the *lōbha cetasika*, but it may also have *issa* (jealousy) *cetasika*.

3. Therefore, *saṅkhāra* can be understood in a deeper sense by realizing that types of *saṅkhāra* generated are defined by the types of *cetasika* in those thoughts.

- Some *citta* (thoughts) do not have either good (*sōbhana*) *cetasika* or bad (*asōbhana*) *cetasika*. Such *citta* are said to have *kammically* neutral *saṅkhāra*. These *kammically* neutral *saṅkhāra* involve only the types of *cetasika* like *vedanā*, *saññā*, *virīya* that do not belong to either *sōbhana* or *asōbhana* categories.
- *Kammically* relevant *saṅkhāra* (or *abhisankhāra*) involve either *sōbhana cetasika* (for *kusala kammā*) or *asōbhana cetasika* (for *akusala kammā*).
- Therefore, it is easy to see that *abhisankhāra* that involve *sōbhana cetasika* are *punna abhisankhāra* or *punnābhisankhāra*. Those that involve *asōbhana cetasika* are *apunnābhisankhāra*; see, “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)”.

4. Let us take some examples to illustrate this relationship. If you swing your arm, that is a *kāya kammā*, i.e., that action involved moving a body part. That corresponded to *kāya saṅkhāra* generated in the mind.

- Now, if you swung your arm to get hold of a cup, that is a *kammically* neutral action (*kammā*) or a just a *saṅkhāra*. You did not do either a moral or immoral act. The intention was to grab a cup, and that did not involve any *sōbhana* or *asōbhana cetasika*.
- On the other hand, if you swung your arm to hit someone, then it was done with anger. So, the *dōsa cetasika* (an *asōbhana cetasika*) was in your thoughts. So, it was an *apunnābhi saṅkhāra*. It can also be called a *apunna kammā*.
- If you put your arms together to pay respects to the Buddha at a temple, that was done with *saddhā cetasika* (a *sōbhana cetasika*) and thus it was a *punnābhisankhāra*. It can be also called a *punna kammā*.

5. Therefore, knowing a bit of *Abhidhamma* can be helpful in clarifying certain key *dhamma* concepts. It is not hard to learn. Since *Abhidhamma* was finalized after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha (see, “[Abhidhamma – Introduction](#)”), these details are not in the *Suttās*.

- Now we can get a new perspective for *cetasika*, in terms of “*san*”. As we know, “*san*” is what keep us in the rebirth process or *samsāra*; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”.
- We can see that those *asōbhana cetasika* are what give rise to “*san*” in *apunnābhi saṅkhāra*, that lead to rebirth in the bad realms.
- On the other hand, *sōbhana cetasika* are what give rise to “*san*” in *punnābhi saṅkhāra*, that lead to rebirth in the good realms.

6. However, this does not mean we should stay away from *punnābhi saṅkhāra*. In fact, we MUST engage in *punnābhi saṅkhāra*, in order to avoid rebirth in the bad realms and also to cultivate morality and also to prepare the necessary environment (especially to be healthy and to avoid poverty).

- The Buddha has emphasized the need to engage in *punna kammā* (*punnābhi saṅkhāra*) in many *Suttās*; see, for example, “[WebLink: suttacentral: Sumana Sutta \(AN 5.31\)](#)”.
- *Nibbāna* is attained via realizing the fruitlessness in rebirth anywhere in the 31 realms, and for that one needs to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and for that one needs to attain the correct mindset by engaging in *punna kammā* (*punnābhi saṅkhāra*).

7. There is a special category of *citta* that generate *kammic* power, that can give rise to future *kammā vipāka*. These are called *javana citta*; see, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)”.

- It is only in these *javana citta* that we make *kammā beeja* that can give rise to future *kammā vipāka*; see, “[Saṅkhāra, kammā, kammā Beeja, kammā Vipāka](#)”.
- It is only in these *javana citta* that we incorporate either *sōbhana* or *asōbhana cetasika*. In other words, either *punnābhi saṅkhāra* or *apunnābhi saṅkhāra* are present only in those *javana citta*.
- What kind of *cetasika* that arise (automatically) in our thoughts is determined by our *gathi*. While we don’t have direct control over these *cetasika* (because they arise automatically), we CAN change our *gathi*, and that is the key to *Nibbāna* or “cooling down”; see, “[Living Dhamma – Fundamentals](#)”.
- Various concepts that we discuss in different sections all come together to make a consistent picture. It is like putting a jigsaw puzzle together; if you have the interest and determination, it will all come together and will be immensely satisfying.

8. Now we can also see the connection to *Paticca Samuppāda* step, “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*”.

- It is the presence of those *sōbhana* and *asōbhana cetasika* in *javana citta* that lead to *viññāṇa* with *kammic* energy. If we have strong hate or greed in those *javana citta*, then that lead to a strong *viññāṇa*. This is also the same as saying strong *kammā beeja* will be generated in those *javana citta*.
- So, when one gets angry with someone, we first generate strong *manō saṅkhāra* AUTOMATICALLY, because one still has “angry *gathi*”. But it does not stop there. One starts generating more hateful CONSCIOUS thoughts; these are *vacī saṅkhāra*. This is the “wheeling process” that we mentioned in #1 above. Then if not stopped, one could generate *kāya saṅkhāra* to move the body and speak out badly (getting the words out is a *kāya saṅkhāra*) or even hit that person; see, “[How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?](#)”.
- On the other hand, when we are looking out of a car while travelling, we see the scenery passing by, but we don’t pay much attention to most things that we see. Those thoughts do not have *javana citta*, and those *viññāṇa* do not generate *kammā beeja*.

9. Therefore, *viññāṇa* can be strong (generating strong *kammā beeja*), or weak (just becoming aware of the environment).

- Some strong *viññāṇa* can be *kammically* neutral, or at least not *kammically* strong. For example, a student may be working hard to pass an examination. In that case, the dominant *cetasika* is the *virīya* (effort) *cetasika*, and that does not belong to either *sōbhana* or *asōbhana* categories.
- A master thief planning a robbery will also have the *virīya cetasika* in those thoughts, but will also have at least the *lōbha cetasika*.
- A person striving for *magga pahala* will also have the *virīya cetasika* in his /her thoughts, but will have many *sōbhana cetasika* too.
- Various types of *viññāṇa* are discussed in “[2. Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) can be of Many Different Types and Forms](#)”.

10. Now we can see that all these mainly involve the mind. *Manō saṅkhāra* are thoughts that comes automatically to the mind when a sense object is experienced. Then if that object is of interest, we start generating conscious thoughts (speaking to ourselves) without talking and then we may speak out; both these are *vacī saṅkhāra*. If we then start moving body parts to respond, the those are done with *kāya saṅkhāra*.

- But it is important to note that *kāya saṅkhāra* are also thoughts. They are responsible for body movements, i.e., *kāya kammā*.

- In other words, all *saṅkhāra* are generated by the mental body (*gandhabba*). It gives commands to the brain to move body parts or to move lips and tongue to speak; see, “[Our Mental Body – gandhabba](#)” and other posts on *gandhabba*.
- Furthermore, *kāya kammā*, *vacī kammā*, and *manō kammā* are all done by the respective types of *saṅkhāra*.
- More information on these terms can be found at, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”.

11. As we discussed above, all those *saṅkhāra* that have *kammic* consequences (i.e., that lead to *kammā vipāka*) are called *abhisankhāra* and they are generated only in the *javana citta*.

- When such *javana citta* generate *abhisankhāra*, they give rise to *kammā beeja* and they are also called strong *viññāṇa*. In order to distinguish such strong *viññāṇa* from “weak *viññāṇa*” that are associated with just *saṅkhāra*, we could call them “*abhi viññāṇa*”.
- Such an *abhi viññāṇa* can lead to *kammā vipāka* during a lifetime (*pavutti viññāṇa*), and strongest ones can give rise to rebirth (*uppatti viññāṇa* or *patisandhi viññāṇa*). When the Buddha mentioned how a “*viññāṇa* of a boy or girl descending to a womb”, it is such a *patisandhi viññāṇa*.
- Whenever such a strong *viññāṇa* (or a *kamma beeja*) is created by a strong *saṅkhāra* (i.e., strong *kamma*), it is said to establish in the *kamma bhava*. This *kamma bhava* is around us, but of course we cannot see because these *kamma beeja* are below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*] stage. It is like we know that we are surrounded by all kinds of radio and television signals, but cannot see them.
- When that *patisandhi viññāṇa* (which can also be called *patisandhi kamma beeja*) is selected for the next existence (*bhava*) at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment, it gives rise to the *gandhabba*. So, it can be called either *patisandhi viññāṇa* or *gandhabba*.

12. As we saw above all our actions, speech, and thoughts originate as THOUGHTS in our mental body or *gandhabba*. And they can create more *kamma beeja* for future rebirths. We are responsible for our future rebirths! Not anyone else or a Creator.

- A human or animal *gandhabba* is created by a strong *kammā beeja* at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment at the end of the previous *bhava*. For example, if a *deva* dies and is reborn a human, then a human *gandhabba* will leave the body of the dead *deva*, and will wait for a suitable womb. This waiting period is spent in “*paralowa*”.
- That human *gandhabba* arises due to a past strong *uppatti viññāṇa* (a strong *kammā beeja*) that was with the *deva*. That is the *viññāṇa* that “would descend to a womb”, and starts the growth of a baby; see, “[Gandhabba \(manōmaya kāya\)- Introduction](#)”.

13. It must be kept in mind that this *gandhabba* is extremely small initially, much smaller than the smallest atom in modern science. But if it lives for several years in the *paralowa* before entering a womb, it may become a bit more dense (but still cannot be seen by a normal human). Details are given in the two sections: “[Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)” and “[Gandhabba \(Manōmaya Kāya\)](#)”.

- Since not believing in the existence of a *paralowa* is one of the 10 types of *micca diṭṭhi*, it is important to learn about the *gandhabba* and *paralowa*; see, “[Micca Diṭṭhi, gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.

3.2 Nibbāna

- [Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#)
- [The Four Stages in Attaining Nibbāna](#)
- [What Are Rūpa? \(Relation to Nibbāna\)](#)
- [Niramisa Sukha](#)
- [Does the First Noble Truth Describe only Suffering?](#)
- [Nirōdha and Vaya – Two Different Concepts](#)
- [Nibbāna “Exists”, but Not in This World](#)

3.2.1 Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?

Revised December 6, 2016 (#9); Re-revised December 20, 2016 (#1)

Our distresses and sufferings are due to our defiled minds. As one purifies one’s mind, one starts experiencing *Nibbāna*.

- I advise reading through any post one time without clicking on the links first; once you get the main concept, then the links can be used to clarify the other related key concepts.
- *Nibbāna* may not be easy to attain, but it is easy to figure out what it is. You don’t need complex concepts like emptiness (*sunyata*) and *Bodhi citta* to describe or to understand *Nibbāna*.

1. The Buddha said we suffer because of the defilements we have in our minds: greed, hate, ignorance, and other mental qualities that arise from them. *Nibbāna* has many synonyms, and “*Nivana*” (“cooling down”) is one that conveys the above idea better; *Nivana*, which is also called “*niveema*”, conveys the same idea as *niramisa sukha*.

- As one moves away from hate, greed, and ignorance, one can feel oneself “cooling down” INSIDE. *Nibbāna* (“*Nib*+“*bāna*”, where “*bāna*” means bonds) and thus *Nibbāna* means break free of bonds that makes one bound to the 31 realms.
- I like the word *Nivana* or *niveema*, because it conveys the benefits of the Path as one experiences gradual “cooling down” until it becomes complete at *Nibbāna*; see, “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)”.
- In order to “cool down”, we first need to know what is “burning” (“*thāpa*” in Pāli); our minds are constantly burning due to greed, hate, and ignorance, and we don’t even realize this; see the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section and specifically the post, “[Satipatthāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)”.
- This “burning” is really worse in the lowest four realms or the “*apāyas*”. Thus one really needs to understand the first Noble Truth about suffering, in order to realize the value of *Nibbāna*. There are several posts at various levels on the real, deeper meaning of what the Buddha meant by “suffering in this world of 31 realms”.
- Our sufferings are masked by the apparent sense pleasures, which do not last. A *Sotāpanna* understands suffering better than a normal person, and as one gets to higher stages of *Nibbāna* one will be able to see the meaning of the First Noble Truth even more clearly.

2. The key point is that one CAN start feeling “*nivana*” RIGHT NOW. *Nivana* is experienced by giving up the ten defilements (see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”). One does not have to get rid of all of them at once, and that is not advised either. One should get rid of the BIGGEST ones that can be easily gotten rid of.

- Killing, stealing, lying (and gossiping, slandering, verbally abusing), engaging in sexual misconduct, and being intoxicated (not just with alcohol or drugs, but also with wealth, power, etc.) are the first to be considered.
- Just abandon the relatively easy ones first for a few weeks and experience the “*nivana*“, the ease of mind, the “inner peace“, that comes from that. That is the biggest incentive to continue on the Path.
- One needs to understand the relative weights associated with dealing with animals and humans, and also there are different levels among the humans. For example, it is very difficult to be born human; thus even saying a hurtful thing to a human (especially to an *Ariya* or a Noble One), could have thousand-fold *kammic* weight compared to killing an animal; see, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)“.
- Another key concept is that one does NOT need to worry about the past *kamma*. The role of *kamma* has been exaggerated; see, “[What is Kamma? Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)“. *Nibbāna* is not attained via removal of *kamma*, but removal of *āsavas* or cravings; see, “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)“.
- The main thing is not to repeat the same mistakes. The more one stays away from the ten defilements, it automatically BECOMES easier. It is like pushing a stalled car: initially hard, but becomes easier when it starts moving.

3. ***Nibbāna* is NOT removing everything from the mind, just removing the defilements:** *Nibbāna* is *rāgakkhaya* (greed elimination), *Nibbāna* is *dōsakkhaya* (hate elimination), *Nibbāna* is *mōhakkhaya* (delusion elimination); those three are more synonyms for *Nibbāna*.

- **Thus one sees *Nibbāna* with a thought** (*citta*, pronounced *chittha*; see, “[Pāli Glossary \(A-K\)](#) and [Pāli Glossary \(L-Z\)](#)“) **that is devoid of *rāga* (greed), *dōsa* (hate), *mōha* (delusion).** This PURE MIND does not want to be burdened with a “material existence” anywhere in the 31 realms; see, “[What are Rūpa? Relation to Nibbāna](#)“.

4. The suffering is a direct result of having a “material aspect” associated with the mind: **that material body is subject to decay and death. The mind gets associated with a body that it gets “attached” to with greed, hate, and ignorance.** If you look at the 31 realms of “this world” (see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“):

- It is clear that suffering is there in the lowest five realms — including the human realm — where all three (greed, hate, ignorance) can be present; the bodies of beings in these realms are, in general, dense and are subject to decay and diseases. Of course there is unimaginable suffering in the lowest four realms.
- However, human realm (#5) is unique, because one COULD attain *Nibbāna* as a human, even though they are also subject to bodily pains, decay, and diseases.
- In the *Deva lokas* (realms 6-11), hate is not there and suffering is less. And the bodies of *devas* are less dense and not subject to physical ailments (until death of course).
- In the *Brahma lokas* (realms 12-31), both hate and greed are absent, and suffering is even less; they have very fine bodies and no physical ailments.
- **However, since ignorance is there in all 31 realms, complete, absolute state of happiness is absent anywhere in the 31 realms.** Even if one is born in a *deva* or *Brahma* world, one will eventually end up in the lowest four realms (unless one has attained the *Sotāpanna* or a higher stage of *Nibbāna*).
- This is the key message of the Buddha: He said that suffering never ends as long as one keeps coming back to “this world of 31 realms” when one dies (i.e., unless one attains *Nibbāna*); and the suffering could be unimaginably intense in the lower realms.

5. Therefore, one could visualize a gradual decrease of suffering as one gets rid of hate, greed, and ignorance in that order. And one CAN experience this happiness called *niramisa sukha* in this human

life itself, all the way up to *Nibbāna*; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha](#)“. That is the uniqueness of a human birth.

6. When the mind “starts thinking” about a given thought object (*arammana*), say a visual object, it starts as “just seeing”; this is the *citta* stage. But within a fraction of a second, the mind starts adding defilements (based on greed, hate, ignorance), if that object is “of interest”.

- It develops further thoughts defiled by greed, hate, ignorance (possibly a combination) by going around and around that thought object and ends up in the “defiled thought” (*viññāṇa*) stage even before one realizes it; this is described in *paticca samuppāda*; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati + ichcha” + “Sama + uppada”](#)“, and the links below that. *Viññāṇa is a citta that is defiled by rāga (greed), dōsa (hatred), mōha (ignorance)*.
- *Paticca samuppāda*, which is Buddha Dhamma, is discussed in detail in the series, “[Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English](#)“.

7. When *rāga*, *dōsa*, and *mōha* are removed from the mind, *cittas* become *pabhasvara* (bright); there is no more defilements there clouding the *cittas*. **At this stage, it is said that the pure *citta* “sees *Nibbāna*”.**

- After one attains *Nibbāna* with one *citta*, the *cittas* fall back to the “normal state” and the person lives like a normal human (but without doing anything with greed, hate, and ignorance) until the *kammic* energy of the *kamma* seed that started the present life is exhausted.
- At death (called *Parinibbāna*), the mind of an Arahant does not grab (*upādāna*) another *kamma* seed (even if there may be many *kamma* seeds), and thus there is no further rebirth. **The mind becomes free of a “body” that can be subjected to decay and death. That is *Nibbāna* or “complete *Nivana*” or “complete cooling down”.**

8. We are bound to this rebirth process basically due to two causes: *avijjā* and *taṇhā*. First version of *taṇhā* is *lōbha*, the strong greed, which could easily turn to *dōsa* (strong hate) when someone else gets in the way. Thus those two causes of *avijjā* and *taṇhā* effectively become three: *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*.

- Even though *dōsa* arises due to *lōbha*, *dōsa* brings about the worst *vipāka*: rebirth in the *niraya* (hell), where the suffering is optimum. Thus *dōsa* actually has origins in the 4 greed-based “*somanassa saḥagata, diṭṭhi sampayutta citta*“. When *diṭṭhi* is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage, all four of these greed-based *citta* stop arising. Thus at that stage, *lōbha* and *dōsa* become *rāga* and *patigha*, which are removed successively at the *Sakadāgāmī* and *Anāgāmī* stages. *Avijjā* keeps reducing at each stage of *Nibbāna*, and is removed at the *Arahant* stage.
- When the mind is devoid of *rāga*, *dōsa*, and *mōha*, the mind (and thus *cittas*) become devoid (*sunya*) of them; that is the purified state of a *citta*, ***anidassana viññāṇa (consciousness devoid of defilements) or paññā (wisdom)***.
- The forefathers of *Mahayana* Buddhism could not grasp the concept of *Nibbāna*, so they came up with misleading descriptions including that of *Sunyata*: see, “[What is Sunyata or Sunyata \(Emptiness\)?](#)“.

9. When *rāga*, *dōsa*, *mōha* are removed, a *citta* stops going around and around a given thought object (*arammana*). **This “wheeling” is what fuels the sansaric journey.** Thus stopping this process is called “taking off the wheels of the sansaric vehicle”.

- The Pāli (and Sinhala) word for vehicle is “*riya*”, and stopping of the “*riya*” is called “*Ariya*”; one who has taken the wheels off the vehicle for the *sansaric* journey is called an “*Ariya*”. Thus contrary to popular usage, “*Arya*” is not the word for a Noble Person, it is *Ariya*.
- **Therefore, it is clear that “*Ariya*” has nothing to do with a race, “*Arya*”.**
- Furthermore, “*viriya*” (“*vi*” + “*riya*”) means staying away from the “wheeling process” (and the effort to do so). Therefore, *viriya* really means actively engaging in *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Ānāpānasati*; see, “[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)“.

10. Anyone who has at least attained the first stage of *Nibbāna*, i.e., *Sotāpanna*, can be called an *Ariya*, or a Noble Person. This is because the “*āsavas*” or deep-seated cravings that a *Sotāpanna* has removed stay permanently removed even in any future lives.

- All the *āsavas* are removed at *Nibbāna*; thus “*Āsavakkhaya*” (elimination of *āsavas*) is another synonym for *Nibbāna*. People who had been in the lowest social ladder or lowest caste at the time of the Buddha were able to become *Ariyas* or Noble Persons.

11. When one sees *Nibbāna*, one’s mind does not crave for anything “in this world” of 31 realms. There is nothing for the last *citta* (*cuti citta*, pronounced “chuthi chittha”) of this life (at death) to grab (nothing to *upādāna*) and to start a new birth in “this world”, and the mind becomes totally free.

Thus an Arahant will not be reborn in “this material world” of 31 realms (see “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”), i.e., one attains *Parinibbāna*. He/she is simply “gone” from “this world” of 31 realms. The suffering stops permanently. **The mind become PERMANENTLY pure and be detached permanently from any type of physical body, dense or fine.**

- Thus it is quite clear WHAT *Nibbāna* is: it is the stopping of the rebirth process in the material world. What is hard to understand is WHY stopping the rebirth process can relieve one of all suffering.
- No matter how much hardship one has endured, one likes to live. This is true for a human or a lowly worm. For any living being, the most precious thing is life. When one starts understanding the “big picture of the Buddha”, one will slowly start seeing the dangers of staying in this endless rebirth process.

Other analyses of *Nibbāna* can be found at, “[Nirodha and Vaya – Two Different Concepts](#)” and “[Difference Between Giving up Valuables and Losing Interest in Worthless](#)“,

Continue to “[What is San?](#)“.....

3.2.2 The Four Stages in Attaining Nibbāna

**Revised February 4, 2016 (section on “The Four Stages of Attaining Nibbana”);
revised October 25, 2017**

1. The 31 realms discussed in “[31 Realms Associated with the Earth](#)” are divided into three main categories based on the sense faculties and the level of suffering:

- The lowest eleven realms belong to the “*kāma loka*”, where all five physical sense faculties are present; “*kāma*” is the indulging in the five sense faculties.
- Beings in the next sixteen realms have only two physical senses: vision and hearing. They have less-dense bodies, and this subset of realms is called the *rūpa loka*. In *rūpa loka* there is mainly *jhānic* pleasures corresponding to the first four mundane *jhānas* that are achievable by humans. There is relatively less suffering in the *rūpa lokas*.
- The highest four realms correspond to the higher *arūpa jhānic* states (*jhānic* levels five through eight) that are also attainable in the human realm. Thus there is mainly *jhānic* bliss in these realms, and relatively less suffering. These realms are commonly known as *arūpa loka*, because the beings have very fine bodies with no physical senses and only the mind.

2. The lifetimes of the beings in the *rūpa loka* are very long, and those in the *arūpa loka* are even longer. Lifetime in the highest *arūpa lokas* are so long (84,000 aeons or *mahā kalpas*), that it is beyond comprehension to us.

- This is why the ancient yogis mistakenly thought that such realms correspond to *Nibbāna*. But the Buddha (or rather Sidharata Gotama), who attained the eighth *jhāna* within months after leaving the palace to become an ascetic, realized that this realm is also subjected to the transient existence, i.e., does not correspond to permanent happiness. Also, even this long time is insignificant in the *samsāric* time scale (see, “[Samsāric Time Scale](#)“), which is infinite (see, “[Infinity – How Big Is It?](#)“).

3. One in the human realm can experience the *jhānic* pleasure of both *rūpa* and *arūpa* lokas by attaining such *jhānic* states via *samatha* meditation.

- Furthermore, it is possible to gain access to both *rūpa lokas* and *arūpa lokas* in the next birth by developing the corresponding *jhānas* and by being in a *jhānic* state at death. As I understand, this is the goal of most Hindu practices.

4. What the Buddha pointed out was that even the highest *jhānic* state is impermanent, and once that *kammic* energy is exhausted, it is possible to be born in any of the 31 realms. **In fact, unless the being had not attained at least the *Sotāpanna* stage, it is guaranteed that at some point in the future rebirth in one of the lowest realms is inevitable.**

- He said that many of the beings still in the rebirth process (*saṃsāra*), i.e., we all, are likely to have been born in the higher *arūpa lokas*, as well as the lowest realm (*niraya*) in the past. The *saṃsāra* is that long.

5. From this discussion it is clear that the actual suffering is mostly in the *kamalokas*. But the problem is that beings spend most time in *kāma lokas* in their beginning-less journey in the *saṃsāra*.

- The Buddha gave a simile to describe this situation. We leave home only to go on short, or may be even extended, trips; but we always come back home. **The Buddha said that the four lowest realms (the *apāyas*) are the home base for most living beings.**

Suffering in the Kāma loka

1. Suffering in the *kāma loka* ranges from unfathomable suffering in the lowest realm, the *niraya* (hell), to relatively little suffering and highest sense pleasures in the Deva lokas (the highest six realms in the *kāma loka*).

- Just below the *deva lokas*, there is the human realm with both suffering and sense pleasures at about equal levels.
- Below the human realm, there is *preta* loka (hungry ghosts), *asuras*, animal realm, and the *nirayas*, and the level of suffering generally increases in that order.

2. The lowest four levels in the *kāma loka* are collectively called the *apāyas* (the undesirable realms). **More than 99% of the beings are trapped in these four realms.** The problem is that once born in any of those four realms, it is virtually impossible to get out.

- This is because these realms are such that one is forced to commit *apunnabhi saṅkhāra* or evil actions (see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”) by the very nature of that existence. For example, in the animal realm, most animals have to kill others for survival. In the *niraya*, virtually every thought is of hate, because of the incessant suffering.
- **Still, when we analyze *Abhidhamma*, we will be able to see that the *javana* of the *cittas* are much less potent for animals, and thus the *kammic* power of those actions are relatively small compared to *kammic* power of such actions by humans. This is an important point that I wish to discuss in the future.**

3. Just as it is likely that we have been born in the higher *rūpa lokas* in the past, it is even more certain that we ALL have been in the *apāyas*. Luckily we do not remember those past lives.

- But in certain realms (particular the *preta realm*) beings do remember their past lives and that increases the level of suffering.

Why We Need to Strive Now

1. From the above discussion it is clear that most suffering is in the four lowest realms, below the human realm which is the fifth realm. Essentially, there is relatively less suffering above the human realm, starting with the *deva loka* which is the highest realm in the *kāma loka*.

2. Even though the suffering is highest in the lower four realms, the beings there are helpless to do anything about the suffering. Their limited minds are not capable of grasping the causes that lead to suffering.

- Many people wrongly believe that one needs to feel suffering in order to understand it, and to get an incentive to seek *Nibbāna*. But when one really suffers (say, when one gets too old) it is NOT possible to clearly contemplate the deep concepts of Dhamma.
- The Noble truth on suffering needs to be seen with wisdom (*paññā*), not via feelings (*vedanā*), i.e., by understanding the complete world view AND the Three Characteristics of this “wider world”: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

3. Beings in the realms above the human realm, the 26 realms starting with the *deva* realms, do not even feel much suffering. **This is the other extreme; there is no incentive for them to be concerned about suffering.** The only real suffering there is that when their lifetimes get near to the end, they do realize that and become distraught.

4. Thus it is only at the human realm that one is at least exposed to the suffering, even if one may not be subjected to much suffering. Furthermore, the human mind is the best suited for grasping the true nature of “this world of 31 realms”, i.e., the Three Characteristics (see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”). **This is why the Buddha said that a human should not miss this opportunity to attain *Nibbāna*.**

The Four Stages of Attaining Nibbāna

1. The first stage of *Nibbāna*, is attained by “seeing” (not just reading about, but actually grasping) the true nature of the existence: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

- Thus one needs to first learn from someone (like from this website), the nature of existence with the 31 realms, the aimless wandering of a being through endless rebirths (*samsāra*), the reasons for the rebirths, etc.
- Thus the key areas to understand are the Three Characteristics, the Four Noble Truths, and the Noble Eightfold Path. No one but a Buddha is capable of finding these and this is why it is important to have exposure to the PURE DHAMMA.

2. At the first stage (*Sotāpanna* or Stream Enterer), one partially comprehends the validity of the Buddha’s world view. This is called attaining *Sammā Ditṭhi* (elimination of defilements through clear vision) to a significant extent. He/she understands the “true nature” of existence: significance and true meaning of the Three Characteristics of Existence (see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”).

3. The realization that it is not worthwhile or fruitful to stay in any of the 31 realms in the long run, makes one to conduct oneself in a moral fashion; one’s mind makes the decision that it is not worthwhile or beneficial to do those actions that destine oneself to birth in the lower four realms.

- This realization leads to a *Sotāpanna phala citta* (one thought moment of realizing the *Sotāpanna* stage). When that is achieved, one will never again be reborn in the lower four realms (“free of suffering in the *apāyas* forever”); why this is so is explained in, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)”.

4. At this stage one has realized the First Noble Truth of suffering (*dukkha*), and one earnestly starts on the Noble Eightfold Path. At this stage he still has greed and hate left in him to some extent, but at the next stage (*Sakadāgāmī*), he loses more of the strength of such greedy or hateful thoughts.

- A *Sakadāgāmī* is not fully released from the *kāma loka* since he/she will be born in the *deva loka* (but not in the human realm).
- In the *deva loka* (and in the *brahma* realms above that where a *Sakadāgāmī* can be born subsequently), the bodies are not subjected to diseases. Thus a *Sakadāgāmī* is said to be “healthy forever”.

5. When the third stage of *Anāgāmī* (Non-Returner) is attained, the mind loses any desire to be born in the *kāma loka*. One is not capable of generating any greedy or hateful thoughts belonging to the *kāma loka* (one is said to be “happy and peaceful forever”) and he will be born only one time more in a higher *Brahma* world reserved for the *Anāgāmīs*.

6. All through these three stages, *avijjā* or ignorance gradually diminish. But it is completely removed only at the *Arahant* stage.

- Once the *Arahant* stage is reached, the mind becomes totally pure (*anidassana viññāṇa* or *paññā* is attained), and is incapable of desiring anything “in this world of 31 realms”. Thus there is no more rebirth, and one attains the perfect happiness the peak of *niramisa sukha*.

Also, see “[Nibbāna - Is it Difficult to Understand](#)” and “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of āsavas](#)”.

Why Living a Moral Life Would Not Prevent a Birth in the Four Lower Realms

1. We desperately cling to “things in this world” because we have the perception that lasting happiness can be achieved. We crave the sense pleasures. As mentioned before, there is nothing or no one holding us in this world of 31 realms. We cling to existence in these realms like an octopus grabbing its prey with all eight legs.

2. Even some Buddhists would, in the back of their minds, like to stay in this world a bit more. They do not realize the level of happiness associated with the *Nibbānic* bliss; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”.

- A popular blessing given by some Buddhist monks even today goes like, “May you be reborn in prosperous (*deva* or human) realms AND THEN attain *Nibbāna*”. Even they do not understand the permanent happiness associated with *Nibbāna* or the possibility of much suffering even in the next birth.

3. The danger in such thinking is due to the following reason: We all have done both good and bad deeds in the lives before and have acquired uncountable *kamma* seeds both good and bad; see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”. **At death it is possible for any one of those seeds to bear fruit: if it is a good *kamma* seed, one will get a good birth, but if it is a bad *kamma* seed one will get a bad birth.**

4. Our future births are not necessarily determined by how we live this life, because we have done uncountable number of both good and bad *kamma* in previous lives.

- This is why the Buddha said that even if one lives a perfectly moral life he cannot say that one will get a good rebirth, UNLESS one has attained at least the *Sotāpanna* stage: A *Sotāpanna* has made ineffective all those bad *kamma* seeds that could give a birth in the lower four realms.
- The Buddha also said that even if one lives immorally that also does not necessarily lead to a bad life in the next birth unless a *anantariya kamma* (an extremely bad *kamma* like killing one’s parents) was committed; however those bad acts will bear fruit at some point in the future. It is just that there are many good seed as well as bad seeds with any life stream; see, “[What is Kamma? Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)” .
- Thus the goal of this life should be to attain at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*.

A different analysis on *Nibbāna* can be found at, “[Difference Between Giving up Valuables and Losing Interest in Worthless](#)”,

Next, “[Niramisa Sukha \(Happiness Arising from Dissociating from the 31 realms\)](#)”,

3.2.3 What Are Rupa? (Relation to Nibbāna)

Revised May 25, 2018

1. In Buddha Dhamma, everything in “this world” of 31 realms can be put into two categories: *manasa* or *mano* (mind) and *rūpa* (material form).

- Mind is *citta* (thoughts) and the mental properties in the thoughts, *cetasika*.
- Everything else is *rūpa* (material forms).

2. Now let us look at *rūpa*: Many people think *rūpa* is just the body or “material things”. A better translation for *rūpa* is “matter and energy”. As stated in #1 above, everything else in the 31 realms that is not *citta* or *cetasika* is *rūpa*.

- There are five types of *rūpa* that we experience with our five senses: with eye (*cakkhu*), we experience *vanna rūpa* (whatever that is visible); with ear (*sota*), we experience sounds (*sadda*); with nose (*ghana*), we experience smells (*gandha*); with tongue (*jivha*), we experience taste (*rasa*); with body (*kaya*), we experience touch (*pottabba*).

3. We can see that smells are due to tiny material particles that enter the nose; taste is also due to food and drinks that touch the tongue; touch is also contact between “material things”.

- But what about visible objects? We need light to see any objects; without light we cannot see. Thus “seeing” involves matter and energy. Same for sound. Thus *vanna rūpa* (or *varna rūpa*) are really “matter and energy”, which in the end is just energy. Since the turn of the 20th century, **science has confirmed that matter is just energy**: they are related by Einstein’s famous formula of $E = mc^2$.
- It is important to realize that what is meant by “*cakkhunca paticca rupēca uppaddati cakkhu viññāna*”, is the light impinging on the eye *indriya* to give us the sensation of vision. Thus, in *vanna* (also called *varna* or *rūpa rūpa*), *sadda*, *gandha*, *rasa*, and *pottabba* (the five senses), *rūpa* are really types of energy or particles.
- Modern science now agrees that there is no distinction between matter and energy. However, matter/energy is created by the mind (as “*dhammā*”) and will eventually be destroyed in the “*lōka vinasaya*” in a supernova type explosion. Therefore, the even the conservation of matter/energy holds only within the time scales of a *Maha kappa*; see, “[WebLink: Sansaric Time Scale, Buddhist Cosmology, and the Big Bang Theory](#)”.

4. Thus the *rūpa* can vary in “density” from almost pure energy to the solid objects that we can see with our eyes.

- They go through three stages: At the “*gathi*” stage, they overlap with energy; in the “*bhuta*” stage, they are more solidified but the human eye still cannot see (this is why some beings that the humans cannot see are called “*bhūta*” in Pāli or Sinhala); it is only in the “*dhathu*” stage that the human eye can see; see, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatthaka\]](#)”.
- At Parinibbāna (death) of an Arahant, the mind is not attached to a *rūpa* in any of the three forms: *dhathu*, *bhūta*, or *gathi*.

5. When one is born anywhere in the 31 realms, it is the *viññāṇa* (impure consciousness) that keeps the mind bound to a material body. As the purity level of the mind goes higher one moves up from the lower realms with dense bodies to higher realms with less dense bodies.

- In the lower realms, the mind is normally attached to a dense body that the human eye can see (at or below the human realm, which is the fifth realm). This is **dense *dhātu* form**.
- In the *deva lokas* (realms 6-11), the bodies are finer; their minds are devoid of hate and thus are more pure. In the realms 1-11, the bodies are made of *rūpa* still in the “*dhātu*” form, but less dense.
- In the *rūpa loka* and *arūpa loka*, the mind is devoid of both hate and greed, and are thus even more pure. In the *rupaloka* (realms 12-27), the bodies of the beings are much more less dense than the *devas*, and are in the “*bhūta*” form.
- In *Arūpa lokas* (realms 28-31) there are no *rūpa* even in the sense of *bhūta*. But the **four *mahā bhūta* are still associated with those being’s “gathi”** (Kevaddha Sutta in Digha Nikāya); there *rūpa* can be thought of as indistinguishable from energy.
- When the mind becomes purified, *viññāṇa* becomes “*anidassana viññāṇa*”, which is the *viññāṇa* of an Arahant (also called *paññā*). **Here there is no association of the mind with even fine *rūpa* associated with “gathi”**; the mind is completely detached from *rūpa*. The mind becomes pure and free. When one attains Arahthood, one still lives with the “solid body” of a human being until death. At *Parinibbāna*, the mind becomes completely free of *rūpa*.

6. At a deeper level, the *anicca* nature, i.e., our inability to maintain anything to our satisfaction, is based on the fact that any *rūpa* is subjected to not only decay (impermanence), but also to unexpected change (*viparināma* nature).

- This fact is embodied in the Second Law of Thermodynamics; see, “[Second Law of Thermodynamics is Part of Anicca!](#)”.

7. **Thus to attain *Nibbāna* is to attain the perfectly purified mind, which refuses to be burden with a physical body that leads to decay and rebirth repeatedly (and thus to *dukkha*).**

8. In the 31 realms, one is born with a dense body (*kāma loka*), fine-material body (*rūpa loka*), or only a trace of “matter” in the form of “*gathī*” (*arūpa loka*). *Nibbāna* is attained when the mind becomes free of a body anywhere in the 31 realms. **This is another way to understand *Nibbāna*.**

9. In Buddha Dhamma, any given thing or concept can be looked at from many different angles. They are all consistent. It is a complete “world view”. Some people think, why do we have to worry about 31 realms, etc., but the world is very complex. Scientists are just beginning to appreciate this complexity.

- The amazing fact is that the Buddha discerned all this with his mind, and was able to present it all in a coherent manner.

10. Please re-read and contemplate on the above. In the long run, it will be very helpful. If you do not really understand it now, you may be able to understand it later, when you get familiar with other concepts discussed in other posts. Everything at this site is inter-connected, and it may take some time to “fill-in-the-blanks”.

More details at, “[Nāma & Rūpa to Nāmarūpa](#)”.

3.2.4 Niramisa Sukha

Revised September 15, 2017 to add bullet #9.

1. Another critically important aspect of Buddha’s teachings that has been lost, is the importance of the *nirāmisā sukha*. **There is happiness in giving up sense pleasures, giving up hate, and giving up ignorance (by learning Dhamma), and that is called *nirāmisā sukha*.** This is a part of Dhamma that many people do not realize.

2. Contrary to another misguided perception we have today, the Buddha never said that there is no *āmisā sukha* (sense pleasure) to be had. The only reason why people cling to this world is BECAUSE of the sense pleasures that are available.

- What the Buddha said is that such sense pleasures are transient, not lasting. Even if one inherits a fortune and lives in luxury the whole life, the suffering is inevitable in the next life or next lives. The real suffering (*dukkha*) is in the four lowest realms (*apāyas*).
- *Nirāmisā sukha* is present where there is no suffering.
- It can be compared to the relief one gets if one had been suffering from a chronic headache all through one’s life if it went away at some point.
- In a way, we are all living with a baseline “chronic headache” that we don’t even realize. We have gotten used to it, and don’t even realize that there is a “better state”. Only when one starts feeling the “reduced stress” of *nirāmisā sukha*, one realizes that. That is the real inspiration for trying to attain the higher stages of *Nibbāna*.

3. The *nirāmisā sukha* has a different quality compared to *āmisā sukha* or the pleasures from the senses that we all enjoy. It is also different from the *jhānic* pleasures in quality. *Jhānic* pleasure is better than the sense pleasures (as the meditators know), and *nirāmisā sukha* is of even better quality.

- Both *āmisā sukha* and *jhānic* pleasures are transient, not lasting.
- The *nirāmisā sukha* starts increasing as soon as one starts on the Noble Eightfold Path, and becomes permanent at the *Arahant* stage. Furthermore this whole progression up to the *Arahant* stage can be attained in this very life.

4. It is important to realize that *nirāmisā sukha* cannot be attained by “just giving up things” or by leaving everything behind and going to seclusion. This is another misconception that many people have.

- The Buddha never asked anyone to give up their lifestyle. There were wealthy people and even kings who attained the *Sotāpanna* stage and up to the *Anāgāmi* stage while living a “householder life”.
- There is no point in giving up everything; even when one gives to charity, one needs to make sure one has enough left for oneself and one’s family. Fulfilling one’s responsibilities is as important as being charitable.

5. The “giving up worldly things” needs to come through true understanding of the real nature of “this world”. Many people did give up worldly things and became *bhikkhus*, but only after they saw the fruitless of craving for worldly things.

6. It is the nature of the mind that it has to see the benefit or pleasure of something before embracing it.

- One may force the mind to “give up” some sense pleasures, but that cannot be sustained. Most people who try to do that out of ignorance (misunderstanding of Dhamma) actually end up becoming dissatisfied and giving up the effort.
- The mind has to “see” that there is a better option compared to the *āmisā sukha* or sense pleasures. When one starts on the Path and start living a moral life one will gradually see the *nirāmisā sukha* emerge.

7. The Buddha gave a simile to explain this effect. In the old days, when people took to the oceans to look for new lands, they took caged birds with them. When they were lost or wanted to find whether they were close to land, they released a bird. The bird would fly around and come back to ship if no land is found.

- The same is true for the mind. It will not latch on to something new (*nirāmisā sukha*) unless it is better than the one it already has (*āmisā sukha*).

8. Yet, in the beginning it takes some time for the *nirāmisā sukha* to be noticeable. We have lived with clouded minds for so long, that it takes a little while to “clean things up”.

- It is like developing a new technology these days. Initially it is difficult to get started; one has to make a concerted effort just to “stay in”. But once the benefits of the technology is realized by the public, it starts to take off: [WebLink: WIKI: Technology life cycle](#)
- But unlike a new technology, once the *nirāmisā sukha* starts increasing it never comes down ever (after the *Sotāpanna* stage is reached).
- It makes “quantum jumps” (instantaneous big changes) at the *Sotāpanna* stage and other three subsequent stages, and becomes complete and permanent at the *Arahant* stage. However, even an *Arahant* will experience the results of previous *kamma vipāka* and will have PHYSICAL ailments that will still cause suffering until the life comes to an end.

9. The difference between *āmisā* and *nirāmisā sukha* is explained in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Nirāmisā Sutta \(Samyutta Nikāya 36.31\)](#)”.

- The “[WebLink: suttacentral: English translation](#)” and the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Sinhala translation](#)” — as well as translations in several other languages — are also available at the Sutta Central site. That is the case for most *suttas*, so it is a useful resource.
- However, one needs to keep in mind that many key Pāli words are translated incorrectly there, including *anicca* as impermanence and *anatta* as “no-self”.

Next, “[What are Rūpa? Relation to Nibbāna](#)“,

3.2.5 Does the First Noble Truth Describe only Suffering?

I advise reading through any post one time without clicking on the links first; once you get the main concept, then the links can be used to clarify the other related key concepts.

Buddha Dhamma describes nature's laws. **Many people think that *dukkha sacca* (the first Noble Truth, pronounced “*dukkha sachchā*”) says everything is suffering.** That is not true; there is a lot of apparent happiness which makes people unaware of the hidden suffering until it is too late. The key is to develop *paññā* or wisdom to see the *dukkha* that is hidden. And one does not necessarily need to feel suffering in order to understand the *dukkha sacca*, even though it may motivate one to investigate. **There is a difference between suffering (the feeling or *vedanā*) and the ability to understand the causes for it (*paññā* or wisdom).**

- It is obvious that there are bouts of happiness everywhere. If everything FELT LIKE suffering, everyone will be seeking *Nibbāna*. The reality is otherwise. It is hard for people to even see the real suffering out there.
- Whatever suffering is out there, it is hidden. In the HUMAN REALM, suffering and happiness are mixed together; one can see both.
- In the realms higher than the human realm, suffering is relatively much less, and that is why it is hard for Devas to even think about *Nibbāna*. However, even those *Devas* and *Brahmas* end up eventually in the lowest four realms, and will be subjected to suffering.
- Beings in the lowest four realms are the ones who really feel *dukkha*. Of course they have no idea about the *dukkha sacca*. Only at the *Sotāpanna* stage one is able to comprehend *dukkha sacca* at least partially.

In the human realm (what we experience), is both suffering and happiness; some people are happier than others (and that is due to *kamma vipāka*). Thus we have the ABILITY to see AND examine (i.e., spend some time investigating), because we CAN see there is suffering out there even if we may not be experiencing it at the moment. But EVERYONE experiences it as they get old; decay and death are inevitable.

Let us see how the Buddha described the First Noble Truth on suffering in the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta*:

Idam kho pana, bhikkhave, dukkham ariyasaccam:

Jati’pi dukkha, jara’pi dukkha, vyadhi’pi dukkha, maranam’pi dukkham, appiyehi sampayogo dukkho, piyehi vippayogo dukkho, yamp’iccham na labhati tam’pi dukkham, sankhittena pancupadanakkhandha dukkha.

What is the Noble Truth of *Dukkha*?

1. In the first part it says, “*jathi pi dukkha, jara pi dukkha, vyadhi’pi dukkha, maranan pi dukkha.....*.”. **Most people translate this incorrectly as, “birth is suffering, getting old is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering”.**

- Does one suffer when a baby is born to the family? Do we not celebrate births (of loved ones), and even celebrate birthdays? So it is incorrect to interpret “*jathi pi dukkha*” literally as “birth is suffering”.
- When person A gets old or sick or die, that causes suffering for A’s friends and family, but may cause happiness among A’s enemies. Thus, such literal interpretation is NOT correct.
- **Another important thing to remember is that the *suttas* are CONDENSED versions, formulated for easy recitation and transmission. A *sutta* that was delivered over many hours is condensed into a few pages of text; see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”.**

2. “*Jathi pi dukkha*” is shortened for the verse; it is “*jathi api dukkha*”; the other two “*jara pi dukkha, maranan pi dukkha*” are meant to have the “*pi*” suffix. Be patient and read through carefully:

“*pī*” in Pāli or “*priya*” in Sinhala is “like”, and “*api*” in Pāli or “*apriya*” in Sinhala is dislike. Thus, “*jathī api dukkha*” means “birth of something that is not liked by one causes suffering”. “*Jara pi dukkha*” means, “decay of something that is liked causes suffering”, and “*maranan pi dukkha*” means, “Death of a liked causes suffering”. One can look at each case and easily see which one to use; see #5 below.

- The reverse is true too: “Birth of something that one likes causes happiness”, “decay of something that is hated brings happiness” and “death of a hated person brings happiness”. *You can think of any example and this is ALWAYS true. It brings happiness to many people to hear about the destruction of a property of an enemy.*
- In a war, one is happy about the loss of lives on the other side but heartbroken by the deaths on one’s own side.

3. The Buddha further clarified “*pī*” and “*api*” in the next verse, where he explicitly said: “*piyehi vippayogo dukkho, appiyehi sampayogo dukkho*” means “it brings sorrow when a loved one has to depart, and it also brings sorrow to be with a hated person” (“*piya*” is same as “*pī*”, and “*apiya*” is same as “*api*”). We all know the truth of this first hand. When a man dies of in a plane crash, it causes great suffering to his family; less to his distant relatives; even less to those who just know him informally; and for someone at the other end of country who has had no association with him, it is “just some news”.

- Of course the reverse of those are true too: “it brings happiness when a hated person has to depart, and it also brings happiness to be with a loved one”.

4. Then comes, “*yamp’iccham na labhati tam’pi dukkham*”. Here we see, “*ichcha*” that we encountered in both *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* and also in *paticca samuppāda* (“*pati+ichcha*” “*sama+uppada*”). And “*labhati*” means “get”, and “*na labhati*” means “not get”. Thus, “If one does not get one likes, that leads to suffering”.

- Again, the reverse is true too: “If one gets one likes, that leads to happiness”.

5. The Buddha never said there is only suffering in this world. It is these bouts of “apparent happiness” that keeps the real suffering hidden. We always try to look at the bright side, and our societies also try to “cover up” most of the suffering that is out there.

- Therefore, there is both suffering and happiness out there. **The key is to see the suffering that is hidden in apparent happiness.**
- When a fish bites the bait, it sees only a bit of delicious food and does not see the hook, the string, and the man holding the fishing pole. It is not capable of seeing that “whole picture”, with the suffering hidden (the hook). In the same way, humans cannot see the suffering hidden in apparent sense pleasures until a Buddha comes to the world and reveals it.
- On television we see mostly the glamorous people. Yet, look at what happens to such glamorous people when they get old: [WebLink: RANKER: Celebrities Who Have Aged the Worst.](#)
- We need to realize that we all will go through such inevitable changes as we get old; no matter how hard we try, it is not possible to maintain ANYTHING to our satisfaction in the LONG-TERM.
- Furthermore, there is both suffering and happiness in the wider world of 31 realms. There is actually much more happiness in the realms above the human realm. And there is unimaginable suffering in the lower four, especially in the lowest. We can see some of this suffering in the animal world, but even then the television programs highlight the “beauty” of wild life. We do not think how much suffering is in the animal world; may be not in domesticated animals, but in the wild.

6. The verses discussed in #4 and #5 above describes *anicca*. In the long run “we cannot maintain things to our satisfaction and that leads to suffering”; This is “*ya da niccam tan dukkahan*” that was discussed in, [“Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations”](#).

- Later in the *sutta* it says, “.....*dukkho anariyo anatta sanhitho*“. One becomes *anatta* or helpless because of that. That is, “*tan dukkam ta da natta*” that was discussed in, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)“.
- In the second *sutta* that was delivered after the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana sutta*, the *Anatta Lakkhana sutta*, these concepts were further detailed.
- *Anicca, dukkha, anatta* are thus the foundational “vision” that can be achieved only by a Buddha. It is “*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu...*” as emphasized at the beginning of the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana sutta*.

7. This is why it is imperative to understand the “big picture” of “this world” with 31 realms, the process of rebirth, laws of kamma, and most importantly, *paticca samuppāda*. Then we realize that most beings, due to their ignorance, are trapped in the lower four realms.

- There are only 7 billion or so people on Earth, but each of us carry in/on our bodies millions of living beings; see, “[There are as many creatures on your body as there are people on Earth!](#)“
- A household may have 4-6 people, but how many living beings are there in that house and in the yard? Millions, possibly billions. In a single scoop of dirt there are thousands of tiny creatures.

8. Finally, **the end result is suffering (even though there may be bouts of happiness in between)** from the things one craves (*upādāna*) for. This is the last line: “*sankhittena pancupadanakkhandha dukkha*”.

- Here, “*sankhittena*” (“*san*” + “*kitta*” or “*kruthya*” or “*kriya*”) means acts of accumulating “*san*” via the three defilements; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)“. Because of that, people crave *rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa* (*pancakkhandha* or “five heaps”), and get bound to “this world” by doing things to accumulate “*san*“. And that inevitably leads to suffering IN THE LONG TERM, especially in the *sansaric* time scale.
- We stay in “this world” of 31 realms not because anyone or anything is forcing us, but because we cling to things (*pancupadanakkhandha* = *panca upadanakkhandha* = “five heaps that we cling to”) like an octopus clinging to its prey with all eight legs. This is done because of the ignorance of the true characteristics of “this world”: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.
- Therefore, ***dukkha*** (suffering or *vedanā*) arises BECAUSE we crave for things in this world and do “*san*” to acquire such things and that is condensed in the phrase: *sankhittena pancupadanakkhandha*. Thus the truth of how *dukkha* arises out of “*sankhittena pancupadanakkhandha*” is stated as, “*sankhittena pancupadanakkhandha dukkha*”. This truth (***dukkha scacca***) is realized by cultivating wisdom (*paññā*) by comprehending *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. Please re-read this until you get the idea. This is the “*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu...*” or the message only a Buddha can discover.
- We do that because we do not see the suffering hidden in anything in this world. Just like the fish does not see the danger in the “tasty worm”, we do not see the suffering hidden in the apparent pleasures. **There is suffering hidden in ALL sense pleasures**; but that is realized via stages. At the *Sotāpanna stage* one willingly gives up only the strong greed and strong hate; ALL cravings are removed only at the *Arahant stage*.
- The realization of the true characteristics leads to giving up craving (*upādāna*), which in turn leads to the release from the 31 realms, i.e., *Nibbāna*. The *pancupadanakkhandha* becomes just *pancakkhandha* (i.e., no attachments even if the “world exists as before”) when “*sankittena*” is not there.
- Don’t worry too much if you don’t quite understand what is meant by some statements in this post and especially in this bullet; come back and re-read the post after reading other posts and the comprehension will grow.
- But it is important to realize that this craving cannot be removed by force. The mind needs to see the benefits of that through the cultivation of wisdom via comprehending *anicca, dukkha, anatta*; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – True Meanings](#)“.

- Another key concept to understand is the benefits one gets by the removal of craving for worldly things; see , [“Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?”](#).

3.2.6 Nirodha and Vaya – Two Different Concepts

1. I know of several “Buddhist” groups who try to “stop” thoughts, believing that is what happens at the *Arahant* stage of *Nibbāna*, i.e., they believe that the Buddha spent 45 years of his life trying to teach people how to stop thoughts, which is an even worse interpretation of *Nibbāna* than the Mahayanists.

- When we are in deep sleep or are unconscious, we do not “think thoughts”. Does that mean we attain *Arahanthood* during such times?
- **What the Buddha advised was to stop immoral thoughts, and to ENCOURAGE moral thoughts; that is how one purifies the mind. This is what one does in the correct *ānāpāna* meditation too;** see, [“7. What is Ānāpāna?”](#).
- The reality is that an *Arahant*’s thoughts are crystal clear (and pure), because they are devoid of defilements. Their memory is actually enhanced.
- Stopping all thoughts can lead to loss of perception and memory.

2. Many misconceptions about *Nibbāna* arise because the true meanings of some key Pāli words that the Buddha used are misunderstood. We have discussed how Mahayana forefathers twisted the concept of *sunyata* (emptiness) because they could not understand the concept of *Nibbāna*; see, [“What is Sunyata or Sunnata \(Emptiness\)?”](#).

3. There are several key words in Buddha Dhamma that need to be comprehended without even the slightest change. Most of these misconceptions arise because such key Pāli words are misinterpreted and also mis-translated. Buddha’s teachings were delivered in *Maghadhi* language and made to a form suitable for verbal transmission in the Pāli language (“Pali” means “lined up”). Many times problems arise when people try to use Sanskrit translations as originals and try to interpret those Sanskrit words.

4. Three such words are *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*: see, [“Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations”](#). Three more such words are *nirodha*, *khaya*, and *vaya*. In this case the three words have apparently similar, but very different meanings. Let us look at the origins of these words:

- ***Nirōdha*** comes from “*nir*”+“*udaya*”, where “*nir*” means stop and “*udaya*” means “arise”. Thus *nirodha* means stop something from arising. In Buddha Dhamma anything happens due to one or more causes. Thus if one does not want something to happen, one should remove the causes for it, and thus stop it from arising.
- **“*San*” causes anything in this world to arise** via “*saṅkhāra*”; see, [“What is “San”? – Meaning of Samsāra”](#). However, anything that arises is subjected to the natural law of decay; **this “*khaya*”**.
- “*San*” and “*khaya*” go together: As explained in [“What is “San”? – Meaning of Samsāra”](#), “*sankhya*” in Pāli or Sinhala means numbers, and “*san*” means adding (or multiplying) thus contributing to “building or arising” and “*khaya*” means subtracting (or dividing) and thus leading to “decay or destruction”.
- Things that undergo this “arising” and “destruction” are called “*sankata*”. Everything in this world is a *sankata*.

5. Anything that arises in this world (a *sankata*) starts decaying (“*khaya*”) from the moment it starts arising. For example, when a baby is born, all the cells in the baby’s body would have died in a couple of months, but more cells are born than those died; until that baby becomes a young person of around twenty years of age, more cells arise in a given time than decayed. Thus the baby “grows” into a young person, and then things are sort of in balance until about forty years of age, and then the “*khaya*” process starts dominating and person slowly starts to get weaker. Eventually, that person dies or destroyed; **this is “*vaya*”**.

- Once starts arising, a *sankata* cannot be stopped; it needs to undergo its natural process of growing, come to an apparent stationary state (but not stationary even momentarily), and eventually is destroyed. If someone commits suicide, this life may end, but that unspent energy starts a new life right away. **Thus all one can do is to stop something from arising. This stopping of a sankata via removing its causes is called “*nirōdha*”.**

6. A “*sankata*” is anything in this world that arises due to “*san*” and decayed inevitably (*khaya*), and is eventually destroyed (*vaya*). Any living being is a *sankata* and arises due to “*san*”. We acquire “*san*” via “*saṅkhāra*” because we do not comprehend the true nature of the world (*avijjā* or ignorance) and thus cling to things in this world with “*taṇhā*”; see, “[Tanhā - How we Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.

- We can begin to see with clarity when we get rid of *taṇhā* and *avijjā* via removing *lōbha* (greed), *dōsa* (hatred), and *mōha* (delusion) from our minds gradually; this is also a “*khaya*” process for such defilements (“*āsava*”), where we gradually remove these three defilements (*āsava*) from our minds; see, “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)”. When a mind is pure (i.e., all *āsava* are removed), it does not do any *saṅkhāra* and thus no “*sankata*” can arise. At that stage, one has attained “*nirōdha*” of any future “arising”, i.e., one has attained *Nibbāna*.

7. Now let us take some famous verses from the *Tipitaka* and see how the meanings come out naturally, without effort:

- The third Noble truth is “*dukkha nirodha sacca*” (here “*sacca*” is pronounced “*sachcha*”; *sacca* is truth), i.e., that suffering can be stopped from arising. Most people misinterpret “*dukkha nirodha sacca*” as “existing suffering can be stopped”. Our current life is a *sankata* that was caused by PREVIOUS causes; this life and any associated suffering CANNOT be stopped, and need to undergo its natural cause until death. That is why an *Arahant* (or even a Buddha) feels suffering due to past *kamma* (old causes).
- However, an *Arahant* has stopped FUTURE suffering from arising. This is indicated by another meaning of *nirodha*: “*nī*” + “*rōda*”, where “*rōda*” means wheels; this *nirodha* also means “taking the wheels off of the *sansaric* (rebirth) process”. There is no rebirth with a physical body that could result in old age, sickness, and death. Thus *Nibbāna* is removal of the causes that could lead to future suffering.

8. This is why the *Nibbāna* is of two kinds: “*saupadisesa Nibbāna*” and “*anupadisesa Nibbāna*”.

- When a person attains *Nibbāna*, it is called *saupadisesa Nibbāna* because that person is still “in this world of 31 realms”; he/she still has a body that needs to undergo its natural destruction; but one can still experience the *Nibbānic* bliss by getting into *nirodha samapatti* for up to 7 days at a time.
- When that person dies, there is no rebirth and *Nibbāna* is “complete”; this is called *anupadisesa Nibbāna*. Suffering ends permanently.

9. Finally, not absolutely everything in this world of 31 realms is *sankata* or *saṅkhāra*. Absolutely everything is denoted by “*dhamma*”, which includes *sankata* (*saṅkhāra*) AND *nama gotta*. Here *nama gotta* are the “records” of all events of all beings in the mental plane that are truly permanent; see, “[Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra \(Sankata\)](#)”.

- This is why the Buddha’s last words were, “*vaya Dhamma saṅkhāra, appamadena sampadetha*”, or “All perishable Dhamma are *saṅkhāra* (or *sankata*); thus strive diligently and identify “*san*” (“*san*” + “*pā*” “*détha*”).
- From beginningless time, we all built a new *sankata* each time the old *sankata* got destroyed. We do this uncountable times DURING each lifetime and also at death: we have been *brahmas*, *devas*, and humans countless times, but we have spent much more time in the four lowest realms. Thus in his last words the Buddha advised us to stop this senseless rebirth process which is filled with so much suffering, and to attain the permanent happiness of *niramisa sukha* in *Nibbāna*.

- By the way, *Nibbāna* is the only “entity” that does not ARISE due to causes; it is “*asankata*” (“*a*” + “*sankata*” or “not sankata” or “not conditioned”) because it does not have causes. It is reached via ELIMINATING THE CAUSES for everything that arise due to causes, i.e., *nirodha* of *sankata* automatically leads to *Nibbāna*.

3.2.7 Nibbāna “Exists”, but Not in This World

September 2, 2016; Revised November 24, 2016 (#9); Revised April 17, 2017

1. Misconceptions about *Nibbāna* arise because the true meaning of it had been hidden for many hundreds of years. In the previous posts in this series, I have described what *Nibbāna* is.

- The question many people have is, “what happens to an *Arahant* upon death?”. One simply is not reborn anywhere in the 31 realms of this world. It is called *Parinibbāna* (“*pari*” + *Nibbāna*”; meaning “full *Nibbāna*”).
- Until *Parinibbāna*, an *Arahant* lives like a normal person, and is subjected to *kamma vipāka*; during that time it is called *saupadisesa Nibbāna*, i.e., *Nibbāna* is not complete.

2. It is not possible “describe” *Nibbāna* (or more precisely what happens after *Parinibbāna*) in terms of the terminology rooted in “this world”. **Not a single word that we use can be used to describe what *Nibbāna* is like.**

- We simply do not have any “data” or “concepts” or “terminology” that pertain to *Nibbāna* because those would be totally foreign to us living in “this world”.
- One crude analogy would be trying to explain to a fish what life is like outside the water: how one needs to breathe air instead of water. Another would be like trying to explain to a person who has time-traveled from thousand years ago, how a radio or a television works. He would not have sufficient “data” to be able to comprehend how a radio or a TV works.

3. **But *Nibbāna* “exists” because one can attain it.** But it does not exist in this world of 31 realms.

- There are four *sutta* in the *Udana* section of the *Anguttara Nikāya* that explain *Nibbāna* (*Udana* 8.1 through 8.4); see, “[WebLink: Pāli Suttas: Khuddaka Nikāya \(KN\): Udāna](#)”
- Once you open a *sutta*, click on the left-most drop down to choose one of several languages. This is good resource; consider making a donation if you find it useful. **Note: I am not associated with them in any way.**
- Of source, the translations are incorrect frequently for key Pāli words, as is the case at many sites. But at least one can see the correct Pāli version.

4. Let us look at the first one, *Paṭhama Nibbāna Paṭisaṃyutta sutta*. It says, ““*Atthi, bhikkhave, tadāyatanaṃ, yattha neva pathavi, na āpo, na tējo, na vāyo, na ākāśānañcāyatanaṃ, na viññāṇaṃcāyatanaṃ, na ākiñcaṇṇāyatanaṃ, na nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ, nāyaṃ loko, na paraloko, na ubho candimasūriyā..*”.

- Let us consider the first part: “*atthi, bhikkhave, tadāyatanaṃ*”. Here “*atthi*” means “exists”, and “*tadāyatana*” is another word for *Nibbāna*. *Tadāyatana* comes from “*tath*” + “*āyatana*”, where “*tath*” (pronounced “thath”) means “perfect” and “*āyatana*” means “faculties”. Phonetically, the combined word is “*tadāyatana*” (pronounced “thadayathana”).
- Thus the translation is, “*Bhikkhus, Nibbāna exists (where everything is perfect)*”.

5. The rest of the verse is, “there is not *patavi, āpo, tējo, vāyo* (*satara mahā bhūta*) there; there is no *ākāśānañcāyatana*, no *viññāṇaṃcāyatana*, no *ākiñcaṇṇāyatana*, no *nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*; furthermore, there is no “this world (that we experience), there is no *paralowa* (where *gandhabba* live: see, “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)); and the Moon or the Sun would not arise there (*canidimasuriya* is for “*chandra*” or the Moon and *sūriya* is the Sun).

- So, aa that we experience (including *jhāna*), are not there after *Parinibbāna*, as discussed in #2 above). Our terminology simply does not apply there.

6. One time, the inquisitor Vaccagotta (there is a whole series of *suttas* in the *Vaccagottavagga* of the *Samyutta Nikāya* about his probing questions put forth to the Buddha), asked the Buddha what happens to an *Arahant* upon death: “Where would he/she go?”.

- The Buddha showed him a burning fire, and asked him, “when this fire is extinguished, can you say where it went?”. Vaccagotta understood. When the fire is extinguished, it simply is not there anymore. That is all one can say. In the same way, when an *Arahant* dies, he/she is not reborn and thus cannot be “found” anywhere in the 31 realms.
- On the other hand, someone with *abhiññā* powers (with the *cutūpapāda ñāṇa*) can see where a normal person is reborn upon death. That life stream exists somewhere in the 31 realms.

7. The Buddha could only explain to us the way to attain *Nibbāna*, by relinquishing our desire for worldly things based on the unsatisfactory nature (or the *anicca* nature) of this world.

- He said, “*rāgakkhaya Nibbānan, dosakkhaya Nibbānan, Mohakkhaya Nibbānan*“, i.e., one attains *Nibbāna* via getting rid of *rāga*, *dōsa*, *mōha* in our minds. **Thus cleansing our minds is the only way to *Nibbāna*.**
- However, it is not possible to even start on “*rāgakkhaya*” until one gets to the *Sotāpanna* stage. “*Rāgakkhaya*” is attained partially at the *Anāgāmī* stage (via removal of *kāma rāga*) and fully at the *Arahant* stage (via removal of *rūpa rāga* and *arūpa rāga*). A *Sotāpanna* would have reduced *dōsa* to *patigha* level (which is removed at the *Anāgāmī* stage), and *mōha* to *avijja* level (which is removed at the *Arahant* stage).
- In the new section, “**Living Dhamma**“, we discuss these points and start from a basic level, even without referring to deeper concepts like rebirth.

8. The point is that *Nibbāna* is to be comprehended in stages.

- The very first stage is to experience the first stages of *Nibbāna* or “*Niveema*” or “cooling down” that can be experienced even before getting to the *Sotāpanna* stage. In fact, it is not possible to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage by skipping this step.
- In order to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage one MUST comprehend the *anicca* nature of this world to some extent. In order for the mind to grasp that concept, it must be free of the “coarse defilements” or “*pancanivārana*” or “five hindrances” that cover one’s mind.
- For that one MUST live a moral life, start contemplating Buddha Dhamma, and experience the “cooling down” that results.

9. Many people try to attain or comprehend *Nibbāna* by reading about deep concepts about what it is. There are so many books out there on explaining what *Nibbāna* is, by people who may not have experienced even the basic “cooling down” or “*nirāmisa sukha*“.

- They try to explain concepts like *sunyata* or “emptiness” and *bodhicitta*; see, “**What is Sunyata or Sunyata (Emptiness)?**“. That is a complete waste of time, because as we saw above, it is not possible to describe *Nibbāna* with words that we know.
- **Rather, one starts experiencing *Nibbāna* in stages.** One can start experiencing the RELIEF or COOLING DOWN that results when one starts living a moral life and start discarding *dasa akusala* in STAGES.
- **Furthermore, it is important to understand that one does not start on the Path by first comprehending the *anicca* nature; the *anicca* nature will gradually become clear.**
- The Buddha clearly stated the importance of following a gradual Path in the “**Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta (Discourse on the Great Forty)**“. Also, see, “**Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart**“.
- Even a person who does not believe in rebirth can start from this level: “**Living Dhamma**“.

10. In the post, “**The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma – Introduction**“, we saw that everything that EXISTS, can be put into four ultimate constituents (*paramatta dhamma*):

- Thoughts (*citta*)

- Thought qualities or mental factors (*cetasika*)
- Matter (*rūpa*)
- *Nibbāna*

The first three exist in “this world” of 31 realms; *Nibbāna* does not exist within the 31 realms, but it “exists”, i.e., it can be attained.

12. Finally, let us discuss some relevant characteristics of an *Arahant*, i.e., one who has attained *Nibbāna*. He/she cannot experience *Nibbānic* bliss (experience of *Nibbāna*) unless getting into *Nirodha Samāpatti* for a maximum of 7 days at a time.

- When an *Arahant* is in *Nirodha Samāpatti*, there are no *citta* or thoughts flowing through his/her mind. There is no breathing and is not very different from a dead body. The point is, that *Arahant* will not be explain to us “the experience of *Nibbāna*“. In our terminology, all he/she can say is that he/she did not experience any “worldly thoughts”.
- At other times, an *Arahant* will be experiencing “this world” just like another human: he/she will recognize people/things, sounds, smells, etc. The only exception is that thoughts burdened with *rāga*, *dōsa*, *mōha* cannot arise: Either *sobhana* (beautiful) or *asobhana* (non-beautiful) *cetasika* will not be associated with those thoughts; see, “[What Are Kilesa \(Mental Impurities\)? – Connection to Cetasika](#)“.
- But he/she will be engaged in *punna kriya* (meritorious deeds like delivering discourses), just like the Buddha did; they are just “actions”, and are not *punnabhisankhāra* or *punna abhisankhāra*.

13. Here is another interesting point: Some *Arahants* may have *kammic* energy for the “human *bhava*” left when he/she dies; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)“. But still there will not be another rebirth for any *Arahant* **in this world**.

- The reason is that the “status of the *Arahanthood*” could not be borne (or sustained) by any other body than a dense human body. For example, if he/she were to be reborn human, then a human *gandhabba* need to come out of the dead human body; see, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)“. But the fine body (*trija kaya*) of the *gandhabba* cannot “bear” the energy associated with an *Arahant*. In the same way, the fine bodies of a *deva* or a *brahma* also cannot.
- We can consider the following analogy to make clear what happens. When a heater coil is immersed in water, it can “bear” the current that passes through it, even when the water is boiling. But if we take a coil out of the water, it will burn. The heater coil cannot “bear” the current passing through it, unless it is immersed in water.
- In the same way, the “*Arahanthood*” can be “borne” or be “sustained” only with a solid human body; once the *gandhabba* comes out of that body –upon the death of that physical body — the “*Arahanthood*” cannot be “borne” by that very fine body. In fact, the “*Arahanthood*” cannot be “borne” by a even a lay person for more than 7 days; once attaining the “*Arahanthood*“, one must become a *Bhikkhu* within 7 days, or one will die, because a lay person cannot “bear” the “*Arahanthood*“.
- This is why it is called “*parinibbāna*” at the death of an *Arahant*: “the *Nibbāna* is complete”. The Sinhala word is “*pirinivana*“, where “*nivana*” is *Nibbāna* and “*pirinu*” means “full” or “complete”.

3.3 Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta

- [Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)
- [Anicca – True Meaning](#)
 - [Anicca – Inability to Maintain Anything](#)
 - [Anicca – Repeated Arising/Destruction](#)
 - [Anicca – Worthlessness of Worldly Things](#)
 - [Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses](#)
- [Anatta and Dukkha – True Meanings](#)
- [Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?](#)
- [Dasa Akusala and Anatta – The Critical Link](#)
- [Anicca – Repeated Arising/Destruction](#)
- [How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#)
- [How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā – II](#)
- [Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – According to Some Key Suttas](#)
- [If Everything is Anicca Should We Just give up Everything?](#)
- [Why are Tilakkhana not Included in 37 Factors of Enlightenment?](#)
- [Two Versions of 37 Factors of Enlightenment](#)
- [The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#)

Also see, “[Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata](#)” that is in a different section.

3.3.1 Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations

One of the early posts; revised October 25, 2016 to give the reference in the second bullet below; Revised again on April 11, 2017 to add a new sub section at the end. September 13, 2017; November 25, 2017; January 26, 2018.

No other factor has contributed to help keep *Nibbāna* hidden in the past many hundreds of years than the incorrect interpretations of *anicca* as just “impermanence” and *anatta* as “no-self”. If one can find even a single instance in the *Pāli Tipitaka* (not translations) that describe *anicca* and *anatta* that way, please let me know at lal54@hotmail.com. There is NONE. Also, before quoting English translations of the *Tipitaka*, please read the post, “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)”.

- I consider this series of posts on “*anicca, dukkha, anatta*” to be the most important at the website. Reading the posts in the given order could be very beneficial.
- It is said that a Buddha comes to this world to reveal three words and eight letters (in Pāli): “*Attakkarā thīnapadā Sambuddhena pakāsithā, na hī sīla vatan hotu uppajjati Tathāgata*”, which means, “a Buddha (*Tathāgata*) is born NOT just to show how to live a moral life, but to reveal 3 words with 8 letters to the world” (from the *Udāna* section in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*).
- These three words with eight letters are: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. (when written in Sinhala/Pāli: අනිච්ච දුක්ඛ අනත්ත but with last two letters in each term in the “old script” combined to become one, so the number of letters become 8 instead of 11. I was able to find only අනත්ත for අනත්ත but you can see how 4 letters become 3 there).

- That is how important these three words are. A Buddha comes to the world to reveal the true nature of the world. Any moral person instinctively knows (and most religions teach) how to live a moral life; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.
- This is why these “three characteristics of this world” were clarified in the very first suttas delivered by the Buddha; see, “[Does the First Noble Truth Describe only Suffering?](#)”.
- *Anicca* is pronounced “anichcha”, rhymes with “picture”:

[WebLink: Listen to pronunciation of : anicca](#)

Dukkha is pronounced similarly, duk+kha:

[WebLink: Listen to pronunciation of : dukkha](#)

Anatta is pronounced “anaththa”:

[WebLink: Listen to pronunciation of : anatta](#)

See, “[Pāli Glossary and Pronunciation](#)”, “[Pāli Glossary \(A-K\)](#) and [Pāli Glossary \(L-Z\)](#)” for more meanings of Pāli terms and sound files on pronunciations.

1. These are the three characteristics of “this world”. The Buddha stated that if one really comprehends the true nature of “this world”, as codified in these three words, then one would attain the Stream Entry (*Sotāpanna*) stage of *Nibbāna*; see, “[Why is Correct Interpretation of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta so Important?](#)”.

2. Therefore, a good understanding of the words *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* is critical. If one sticks to incorrect interpretation of these three words, no matter how much effort one exerts, there is no possibility of attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage. These three words are commonly interpreted as impermanence, suffering, and “no-soul” or “no-self” even in most *Theravāda* texts.

- However, as we will see, the correct meanings are, respectively: there is nothing in this world that can be maintained to one’s satisfaction, (therefore) suffering arises, and (therefore) one is truly helpless in this world. Permanent happiness is reached via stopping the rebirth process.

3. The Pāli word for impermanence is NOT *anicca*, it is *adduwan* or *aniyatam*. For example, “*Jeevitam aniyatam, maranam niyatam*” means, “life is not permanent, death is”.

“*adduwan jeevitam, duwan maranam*” means the same thing.

- Therefore, the key mistake was in translating the original Pāli word *anicca* to *Sanskrit* as “*anitya*”, which does mean impermanence.
- This term, “*dhuva*” comes in the *Brahmanimantanika Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikaya* 49), where the Baka Brahman says his existence is permanent; see #12 of “[Anidassana Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#)”.

4. Now let us see the damage done by translating the original Pāli word *anatta* to *Sanskrit* as “*anātma*”.

- Just as these days, there were two opposing views on the idea of a “soul” in the time of the Buddha. One camp insisted that there is an unchanging “soul” (*ātma*) associated with a being. This camp thus corresponds to the major religions of the world today with the concept that when one dies one’s soul goes to heaven or hell.
- The opposing camp argued that there is “no-soul” (*anātma*), and that when one dies, there is nothing that survives the death. This camp thus corresponds to the materialistic scientists today, who believe that our minds arise from matter and thus when we die, there is nothing that survives the death.
- The Buddha said it was neither. There is NOTHING that is permanent associated with a living being: both the mind and the body are in constant flux (see the Section on “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”), and thus there is no “soul” or an “unchanging self”. On the other hand, there is continuity at death based on cause-and-effect (*paticca samuppāda*; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – Introduction](#)”). Thus it is ALSO incorrect to say that there is “no-soul” and that

death is the end of that living being. The new being is a continuation of the old being, just as an old man is a continuation of the process from the baby stage. There is change at every MOMENT, but it is based on cause-and-effect; the “new” is dependent on the “old”. Also see, [“What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream”](#).

5. In the *Samyutta Nikāya (Anicca Vagga)*, many *suttas* including *Ajjhattanica Sutta* and the *Bāhiranica Sutta*, and *Yadnicca sutta*, the Buddha stated that the three characteristics of “this world” are RELATED to each other:

“*yadaniccā tan dukkham, yaṁ dukkham tadanattā*” (“*yad aniccā tan dukkham, yaṁ dukkham tad anattā*”), i.e.,

“if something is *anicca*, *dukkha* arises, therefore *anatta*”.

6. Now let us see what happens if we take *anicca* to be impermanent and *anatta* to be “no-soul”. Then the above verse reads, “if something is not permanent, suffering arises, and because of that one becomes “no-self””.

- Many people just take a human body as “it”, and say that since the body is impermanent, suffering arises. But the *suttas* mentioned above describe this for all six **internal** senses (in the *Ajjhattanica Sutta* — *Ajjhatta Anicca — Sutta*) and for everything **external** that are by the six senses (in the *Bāhiranica Sutta* — *Bāhira Anicca — Sutta*), i.e., that phrase holds for anything and everything “in this world”.
- Thus if a headache does not become permanent, it is meaningless to say it has no self.
- But there are many things in the world, if become permanent, would lead to happiness: health, wealth, association with someone liked, moving away from someone disliked, etc.
- As we will show in the next post ([“Anicca – True Meaning”](#)), the correct translation holds true for any case.

7. Now the opposite of the above statement must be true too (in mathematical logic, this is not correct generally, but in this particular case it can be shown to be correct. Basically, it is due to the assumption that “*dukkha*” depends only on “*nicca*” or “*anicca*” and no other factor; see, [“Logical Proof that Impermanence is Incorrect Translation of Anicca”](#)).

If we take the incorrect interpretations, that says:

“if something is permanent, suffering does not arise, and because of that it implies a “self”.

- If one has a permanent headache or a sickness, how can that prevent suffering from not arising? And in what sense a “self” arise?
- There are many things in this world, if become permanent, would lead to suffering: a disease, poverty, association with someone disliked, moving away from someone liked, etc.

Thus we can clearly see that *anicca* and *anatta* cannot be translated as impermanence and “no-self”.

- However, if we take the correct translation, we can show that reverse statement also holds as we discuss in the next post: [“Anicca – Inability to Maintain Anything”](#).

8. Permanence/Impermanence are PROPERTIES of “things” (living beings and physical things) or “events”. On the other hand, *nicca/anicca* are PERCEPTIONS IN ONE’S MIND about those “things” and “events” in this world of 31 realms.

- We cannot maintain anything to our satisfaction (including “our” own body) in the long run and that is *anicca*. And because of that we become distraught and that is *dukkha*. And since we are truly helpless in preventing this sequence of events, we are truly helpless in the long run, and nothing is with any real substance in the end; that is *anatta*.
- Here is a video that illustrates the concept of *anicca* clearly:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Aging Stars of the Golden Age](#)

- We need to realize that we all will go through this inevitable change as we get old; no matter how hard we try, it is not possible to maintain ANYTHING to our satisfaction. It is the nature of “this world”: *anicca*.
- Now, of course any of these celebrities (or their fans) will be saddened to see the comparison; they have not been able to maintain their bodies to their satisfaction. However, a person who is in bad terms with any of these celebrities could be happy to see the picture, because that person’s wish is to see something bad to happen to the celebrity (in this case to lose their “looks”).
- Thus “impermanence” is something that is inevitable; it is a property of anything in this world. **But “*anicca*” is a perception in someone’s mind; and that perception CAN be changed; that is how one gets rid of suffering.**
- In the above case, celebrities bodies ARE impermanent; but that did not necessarily cause suffering to ALL. It caused suffering to only those who did not like them getting old; if they had any enemies, they would be happy to see them losing their “good looks”.
- Impermanence is a fact; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“. But impermanence is NOT the MEANING of *anicca*.
- These pictures provide the visual impact that we do not normally get. We don’t see changes in ourselves because the change is gradual.

9. A Buddha is not needed to show that impermanence is an inherent characteristic of our universe. Scientists are well aware of that, but they have not attained *Nibbāna*. *Anicca* is a deep concept that can be described in many different ways, and they are all related. Here are three more ways to look at it:

- “[Anicca – Inability to Maintain Anything](#)” (listed above also).
- “[Anicca – Repeated Arising/Destruction](#)“.
- “[Anicca – Worthlessness of Worldly Things](#)“

10. Finally, the Buddha has said, “*Sabbe Dhamma anatta*“. **So, what does “all *dhamma* are “no-self”” mean?** *Dhamma* includes everything, that means inert things too. Does it make sense to say, “a tree has “no-self”” or “a mountain has “no-self””?? On the other hand, nothing in this world is of any real substance in the end; they all come into being and are destroyed in the end: and that is *anatta*.

- Another key word that had lost its true meaning is “*san*“; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)“.

Possible Historical Reasons for Mistranslations

1. By looking at how Buddha Dhamma was transmitted from the time of the Buddha, it is possible to see the origins of some of these incorrect translations. Details of historical events are discussed in the section “[Historical Background](#)“.

- For about 500 years after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha, the Pāli *Tipitaka* was transmitted orally, from generation to generation of *bhikkhus*, who faithfully passed down the Pāli Canon. Of course it had been DESIGNED for easy oral transmission.
- See, “[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)” for a discussion on this aspect, and why we can be assured that the original teachings of the Buddha are still intact.

2. Then it was written down for the first time in 29 BCE in Sri Lanka with **Sinhala script. Pāli is a phonetic language which does not pay much attention to grammar and does not have its own alphabet.**

- The *Tipitaka* was never translated to any other language until the Europeans discovered “Buddhsim” in the late 1600’s; see, “[Background on the Current Revival of Buddha Dhamma](#)“.

- *Tipitaka* was not translated to even Sinhala language until 2005.

3. When Rhys Davis and others started doing those English translations, they were heavily influenced by Sanskrit *Mahayana sutras*, as well by *Vedic* literature. Think about it: when the Europeans first started discovering all these different Pāli and Sanskrit documents, they must have been overwhelmed by the complexities.

- It took them some time to separate Buddhism from Hinduism, and in the process some concepts got mixed up; see, “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)”.
- For example, They ASSUMED that “*anatta*” was the same as “*anātma*” which is a Sanskrit word, with a totally different meaning of “no-self”. Similarly, they took “*anicca*” to mean the same as Sanskrit “*anitya*”, which means “impermanent”.

4. The worst was that even contemporary Sinhala scholars like Malasekara (who was a doctoral student of Rhys Davis), “learned” Buddhism from the Europeans, and thus started using wrong interpretations. Other Sinhala scholars like Kalupahana and Jayatilake also learned “Buddhism” at universities in United Kingdom.

- Following the original translations by Rhys Davis, Eugene Burnouf, Olcott, and others, those Sinhala scholars also write books in both English and Sinhala. Of course, scholars in other Buddhist countries did the same in their languages and the incorrect interpretations spread through the whole world.
- In order to correct this grave problem, we need to go back to the *Tipitaka* in Pāli and start the process there.
- Pāli *suttas* are not meant to be translated word-to-word; most of the *suttas* are condensed and written in style conducive for easy oral transmission. In order to explain key concepts in the *Tipitaka*, commentaries were written in Sinhala, and only three of those original commentaries have survived. We need to rely heavily on those three: *Patisambhidamagga*, *Petakopadesa*, and *Nettipakarana*.
- Instead most people rely on incorrect commentaries written in more recent years, especially Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*. For details, see, “[Buddhaghosa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background](#)”. It must be noted that Buddhaghosa did not change the meanings of the words *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* (that is likely to have happened in even more recent times as I explained above). But he incorporated many other Hindu concepts like breath meditation and *kasina* meditation, as I will discuss in the future post.

5. It is also important to note that mass printing was not available until recent years, and became common only in the 1800’s; see, “[WebLink: New World Encyclopedia: Printing press](#)”.

- In the early days, *Tipitaka* was written on specially prepared leaves, and needed to be re-written by hand every 100-200 years before they degraded. So, we must be grateful to the *bhikkhus* in Sri Lanka who did this dutifully over almost 2000 years.
- Thus mass production of books became possible only with the new printing presses that came out in the 1800’s. By that time, key concepts had been mistranslated.

6. Furthermore, if one is interested in experiencing the “cooling down”, one needs to learn Buddha Dhamma from either a Buddha or a true disciple of the Buddha, i.e., one with at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna* (one who has already experienced the “cooling down”), see: “[Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala](#)”.

7. I came across another problem in a recent online forum. People are debating on the meanings of words “*anatta*” and “*anattha*” (which could also be written as “*anaththa*”). the key is to pronounce as given in the sound file at the beginning of this post; in that sense, it really should be written as “*anaththa*”, but that takes a lot of letters.

- So, most people write it as “*anatta*”. It does not really matter how one writes it, as long as one understands the meaning as “with no refuge” or “without essence”, and **NOT** “no-self”.

8. The key to resolve this non-issue is to understand how these words originated. As we discussed above, the *Tipitaka* was written down in Pāli, but with Sinhala script. The above word “*anatta*” was written as අනත්ත. Sometimes it is also written as අනත්ථ, but both mean the same.

- Similarly, when the Pāli word written in Sinhala as අනත්ත is written with the English alphabet, it can be written as *anatta*, *anatta*, or *anaththa*. All three mean the same thing, just as අනත්ත or අනත්ථ mean the same.
- This is an important point to think about. Today, many people get stuck with this non-issue.

9. There are two more main misconceptions are prevalent today. They not only block the path to *Nibbāna*, but are *micca diṭṭhi* that could be responsible for rebirth in the *apāyas*. I am not trying to scare anyone, but “making *adhamma* to be *dhamma* is a serious offense”.

- Misinterpretation of breath meditation as *Ānāpānasati*: “[Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?](#)”.
- Insisting that the *gandhabba* (*manomaya kaya*) is a Mahayana concept: “[Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka](#)”.
- All these misconceptions are not the fault of current *Theravadins*; they have been handed down for many hundreds of years as explained in the “[Historical Background](#)”. **However, it makes no sense to adhere to them when solid evidence is presented, per above posts and many others at this website.**
- Of course, no one should be able to insist, “this is the only truth, and nothing else is the truth”, but the truth can be verified to one’s satisfaction by critically examining the evidence. I am open to discuss any valid contrary evidence. We need to sort out the truth for the benefit of all.

10. Finally, it is not recommended that one takes on comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* straight away. One must first follow the mundane path before comprehending those Three Characteristics of nature and embarking on the Noble Eightfold Path.

- This is discussed in “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.
- A systematic approach is discussed at, “[Living Dhamma](#)”.

Next, “[Anicca – True Meaning](#)”,

3.3.2 Anicca – True Meaning

Anicca is commonly translated as “impermanence”. But it is a fundamental concept in Buddha Dhamma, which has many related — but somewhat different — meanings. Some are discussed in the following posts:

- [Anicca – Inability to Maintain Anything](#)
- [Anicca – Repeated Arising/Destruction](#)
- [Anicca – Worthlessness of Worldly Things](#)
- [Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses](#)

3.3.2.1 Anicca – Inability to Maintain Anything

1. It is best to start with the opposites: *nicca*, *sukha*, *atta*.

- The Pāli word “*icca*” (pronounced *ichchā*), means “liking”. We encounter this word also in the correct explanation of *paticca samuppāda*, the causal theory of Buddha Dhamma; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – Introduction](#)”.
- *Nicca* (pronounced *nichchā*) is the PERCEPTION that one can maintain things that one likes to one’s satisfaction. If this is indeed the case, then one is happy, i.e., *sukha* arises, or at least suffering does not arise. In that case one is in control, and there is something fruitful to be had, i.e., *atta*. Thus even if one needs to work hard to get something that can be maintained to one’s

satisfaction, at the end one can find permanent happiness, and one is in control of one's own destiny.

- If something is not to one's liking it is "*anicca*" (pronounced anichchā).

2. The reality is that EVERYTHING in "this world" is in constant flux. There is nothing in "this world" that can be maintained in a stable state in the LONG TERM. Of course, we can maintain a car for a long time (with constant repairs), but there comes a point when that car dies. Even if some things appear to last long, say a valuable gem, the owner has to give it up when he/she dies. Thus the reality of this world is *anicca*.

- In the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattaana Sutta*, The Buddha said, "*yam piccham na labathi thampi dukkham*", or "if one does not get what one likes or wants, then that leads to *dukkha*". If the "want" is not there, there will be no suffering.

3. Thus the cause of suffering is NOT impermanence, but the inability to perceive the consequence of that in one's mind. In a world that IS inherently impermanent (see, "[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)"), one CAN avoid suffering by comprehending *anicca*, and by not struggling to achieve the impossible.

- Impermanence by itself does not lead to suffering. If that is the case, since no one can change that fact, no one will be able to end the suffering (and to attain Nibbāna). But it is the wrong perception of *nicca* that leads to suffering. The correct perception of *anicca* (once accepted by the mind), will lead to cessation of suffering.

Also see, "[Does Impermanence Lead to Suffering?](#)",

4. When one realizes that one cannot maintain something that desired after a long struggle, one becomes distraught, depressed, unsatisfied. Thus the wrong perception of *nicca* (or a sense of possible fulfilment of one's desires) ALWAYS leads to *dukkha* or suffering at the end.

- The mindset is that even if something is not permanent and breaks down, one can always replace it with a new one and get the sense fulfilment one desires. It is not the impermanence that gives sense of invincibility but the mindset that one can always find a replacement for it and maintain one's happiness.
- But if one carefully examines the wider world view of the Buddha, one can easily see that this mindset of the possibility of "long lasting happiness in this world" is an illusion.
- No matter what we achieve in this life, we HAVE TO leave it all behind when we die.
- And in the new life, we start all over; this is what we have been doing from beginningless time.
- And of course we make it worse by doing immoral things "trying to maintain things to our satisfaction" and thus generating bad *kamma vipāka*.

5. When one realizes that one is not in control of one's own affairs in "this world", i.e., one realizes that one is truly helpless. This is *anatta*. Thus the perception of *atta* is an illusion, the reality is *anatta*.

- The Buddha said, "*asarattena anatta*", or, "*anatta* means there is nothing substantial, nothing fruitful to be had", meaning all life struggles within "this world" are in vain at the end. Then we start a new life and do it all over again, and so on...

6. Now let us go back to the relationship among *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* with the correct interpretations:

"*yadaniccam tan dukkham, tan dukkham tadanatta*", or,

– "if something cannot be maintained (or managed depending on the case) to one's satisfaction, suffering arises, therefore one is helpless in the end".

– And the reverse of it:

"if something can be maintained (managed) to one's satisfaction, suffering does not arise, therefore one is in control".

7. Let us consider the same examples that we considered in bullet #6 of previous post “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.

- If we take a “headache” as the “something”, the first statement now reads: **“if a headache cannot be maintained (managed is a better word here) to one’s satisfaction (i.e., if one cannot get rid of the headache), suffering arises, therefore one is helpless”**.
- Similarly, you can substitute anything that we considered in the previous post and see that it will hold.

8. Now let us consider the second statement: **“if something can be maintained to one’s satisfaction, suffering does not arise, therefore one is in control”**.

- Then it reads: “if a headache can be maintained to one’s satisfaction (i.e., one can get rid of the headache), suffering does not arise, therefore one is in control”.
- Anything in this world, if can be maintained to one’s satisfaction, will not lead to suffering: a disease, poverty, association with someone disliked, moving away from someone liked, etc.
- **However, in the long run, NOTHING can be maintained to one’s satisfaction. Thus the net result of the rebirth process (or *samsāra*) is stated by the first statement.**

9. In some cases, which statement holds true depends on who is doing the evaluation. For example, when Bin Laden was killed, second statement held true for many people and they were happy; but for the followers of Bin Laden, the first statement was true.

10. Permanence/Impermanence are PROPERTIES of “things” (living beings and physical things) or “events”. On the other hand, *nicca/anicca* are PERCEPTIONS IN ONE’S MIND about those “things” and “events”.

- Here is an interesting set of pictures that describe the concept of *anicca* clearly : [WebLink: RANKER: Celebrities Who Have Aged the Worst](#)
- We need to realize that we all will go through this inevitable changes as we get old; no matter how hard we try, it is not possible to maintain ANYTHING to our satisfaction. It is the nature of “this world”.
- Now, of course any of these celebrities (or their fans) will be saddened to see the comparison; they have not been able to maintain their bodies to their satisfaction. However, a person who is in bad terms with any of these celebrities could be happy to see the picture, because that person’s wish is to see something bad to happen to the celebrity (in this case to lose their “looks”).
- Thus “impermanence” is something that is inevitable; it is a property of anything in this world. But “*anicca*” is in someone’s mind. In the above case, celebrities bodies ARE impermanent; but that did not necessarily cause suffering to ALL.
- These pictures provide the visual impact that we do not normally get. We don’t see changes in ourselves because the change is gradual.

11. The key to attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage is to contemplate on these concepts, using real life examples. This is true meditation. When one’s mind accepts that there is no lasting happiness anywhere in the 31 realms of “this world”, one loses the desire to crave for “things”. One becomes determined to get out of “this world” as soon as possible, and to attain permanent happiness, *Nibbāna*.

- This point is analyzed further in simpler terms in, “[Difference Between Giving up Valuables and Losing Interest in Worthless](#)”.
- The Buddha gave us various different methods of analyzing a given concept. A discussion of the origin of *anicca* based on *sankata* is presented at, “[Root Cause of Anicca – Nature of Sankata](#)”.

12. No one in “this world” is exempt from these three characteristics. Even though one may be able to find happiness at certain times, nothing we do can get us out of the realities of getting old, sick, and finally dying. Then the cycle repeats in the next life, and next,

- Furthermore, any such “happy times” are insignificantly small in the *sansaric* time scale; see, “[The Four Stages in Attaining Nibbāna](#)“, and “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)“.

13. But the good news is that we can gain a kind of happiness that will not go away, especially if one attains at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)“, and “[Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#)“.

14. In the *Tipitaka*, *Anicca* has been explained in many different ways. Another way is discussed in, “[Anicca – Repeated Arising/Destruction](#)“.

Next, “[Anicca – Repeated Arising/Destruction](#)“,

3.3.2.2 **Anicca – Repeated Arising/Destruction**

1. *Anicca* has been analyzed in several different ways in the *Tipitaka*. In the *Patisambhidhā Magga Prakarana* in the *Tipitaka*, it is explained as,

“*uppāda vayattena anicca*”,

which means “(this world is) *anicca* because we just keep going through the birth (arising)/ death (destruction) process”.

- Of course, in between birth and death there is mostly suffering (in the realms at and below the human realm, where most beings spend time). This is the *dukkha* characteristic.
2. This is what we have been doing for an unimaginably long time (beginning-less), there is no break from it until one attains *Nibbāna*.
- We see some people committing suicide hoping to end it all; but ending this life does not solve the “problem”. In fact, it may lead to a birth in a lower realm, which will only increase the suffering.
 - Thus continuing this ceaseless birth/death process is *anatta*, i.e., it is fruitless, burdened with suffering, and thus one is truly helpless.
3. We can see the Three Characteristics (*Tilakkhana*) of this world by carefully examining the fate of anything that arises in this world, which goes by the name *sankata*.
- Whether it is a living being or an inert thing any *sankata* arises, lasts for a certain time, and then perishes.
 - For an inert object, the process stops at the destruction step, and it does not feel anything as it goes through the process.
 - But for a living being, there is (mostly) suffering during arising/living/death, even though there may be spurts of “happiness” if one is fortunate enough to be born in human realms or the realms above it.
 - And the process does not stop at death unlike for an inert object. It just keep repeating.

The arising/destruction of a *sankata* is described in, “[Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata](#)“, and in “[Nirōdha and Vaya – Two Different Concepts](#)“.

4. A living being’s suffering is also enhanced by the “*sankata* characteristics of inert objects” too. We work hard to acquire “things” but either they get run down/destroyed (houses, cars, furniture,...) or we die leaving them behind. Then if we are lucky to be born human in the next birth we just start this “accumulation process” and get distraught at death again....

- If we think through logically (and this is real meditation), we should be able to grasp this main concept of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

- Through the ages, philosophers (as well as most people) have wondered, “What is the meaning of life?”. And they normally think about just this present life; see, [“Why Does the World Exist?” by Jim Holt](#)“

5. Someone who has accomplished something significant may think otherwise at the moment of that accomplishment. But it lasts only a short time; at death, it is all gone. If he/she wanted to accomplish something significant in the next life (provided one is lucky to be reborn human), then one has to start all over.

- This point becomes poignantly clear, if one takes a little time and think about the life of any famous personality (emperors, kings, politicians, movie stars,...from times past to the present). Most of them are bound to be born in lower realms because of the heinous acts they did to get some of those positions.
- If one knows the “big picture” about the wider world and the beginning-less journey we have made, it becomes clear that all through uncountable number of lives we have struggled in vain “seeking an elusive happiness”. There is no meaning to life in the long run, AND it makes one suffer, and this is the nature of this world: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

6. If there is a birth, there MUST be a death. There is no exception, other than *Nibbāna*.

This is the “*akālika*” or “timeless” quality of *Nibbāna*.

- All *sankata* operate on the basis of *kamma vipāka*, which normally take time to bring their fruits. This is why people are unable to “see” the working of *kamma*. There may be drug dealers who live like kings, but they will be paying with interest in the future.
- *Nibbāna* brings fruits instantaneously, there is no time gap involved (it is “*akalika*”), unlike a *sankata*. Furthermore, once attained there is no time duration after which it is destroyed; it is forever.
- The *magga phala* (*Sotāpanna, Skadagami, Anāgāmi, Arahant*) are attained in one *citta* (lasting less than a billionth of a second). And since they were attained via ELIMINATION OF CAUSES, there is no destruction associated with them. i.e., they are forever.
- In comparison, a living being arises DUE TO CAUSES, and when the underlying cause or the fuel is spent, the living being dies. But the process does not stop, because the being had acquired NEW CAUSES (new *kamma*) during that life or in the previous lives.

7. In the *Dhamma Vandana*:

“*Svākkhatō Bhagavatā Dhammō Sanditthikō Akālikō Ehi-passikō Opanāyikō Paccattam veditabbō vinnuhitī*”,

the quality of *Dhamma* that is described by “*akālika*” is that it leads to effects that do not depend on time.

- And that is achieved via the quality listed before that: “*sanditthikō*” (“*san*” + “*ditthikō*”). *Dhamma* explains and clarifies “*san*” that are the causes (*avijjā* and *taṇhā*) for arising of *sankata* (whether they are living or inert); see, [“What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)”](#)“.
- “*Bhagavatā Dhammō*” can be taken as “*Buddha’s Dhamma*“, but it has a deeper meaning too (This *Dhamma* was only DISCOVERED by the *Buddha Gotama*, as had countless other Buddhas before him. “*Bhagavatā*” (“*bhaga*” + “*vata*” where “*bhaga*” means divide and “*vata*” means “the process” that looks like a “living being”) means this *Dhamma*, by analyzing a “person” in terms of “actions”, illustrates that there is no enduring entity in a “living being”.
- And this process leads to “*svakkhata*” (“*sva*” for “self” and “+ “*akkata*” or “*akrutha*” or “*akriya*” means putting out of action) meaning it leads to getting rid of the concept of a “me” (*asmai māna*) — which happens at the *Arahant* stage. It is not about whether a “self” exists or not; it is rather to realize that nothing in this world is worth to be considered “mine”.

8. Some people erroneously interpret “*uppāda vayattena anicca*” as “things are IMPERMANENT because EVERYTHING is formed and destroyed within 17 thought moments”.

- This serious misconception is discussed in the post, “[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#)”.
- Each *sankata* that arises has its own lifetime: a fly lives only for a few days, a human lives for about 100 years.

Next, “[Anicca – Worthlessness of Worldly Things](#)”,

3.3.2.3 **Anicca – Worthlessness of Worldly Things**

August 20, 2017

1. *Anicca* (pronounced “*anichcha*”) is a deep concept that can be comprehended in many ways (impermanence is only a small part of it). We discussed one interpretation as “it is not possible to maintain anything in this world to one’s satisfaction”; see, “[Anicca – Inability to Maintain Anything](#)”.

- Another interpretation: whatever that we believe to provide lasting happiness arises and destroyed, and also is subjected to unpredictable changes (*viparināma*) while it lasts; see, “[Anicca – Repeated Arising/Destruction](#)”.
- Here we discuss another: **There is nothing in this world that is valuable and can provide lasting happiness.** Not only that, but more craving can only lead to more suffering!

2. The desire (*iccā*; pronounced “*ichchā*”) for any object depends on the value that one places for that object. If one’s mind comes to the realization that the object really does not have any significant value, then one would not have any desire for that object.

- One has *iccā* for a given object which one perceives it to be of “*nicca*” (pronounced “*nichcha*”) nature, i.e., that one thinks has value and can provide happiness.
- If one realizes that a given object really does not have a true value, one loses craving for that and sees the *anicca* nature of that object.

3. Suppose you give the following choices for a five-year old: a large chocolate bar or the title to a brand new house (written to his/her name so that the child will be the owner of the house).

- What will the child choose? Of course, the child will want the chocolate, and he/she will have no idea how a piece of paper can be more valuable than a tasty chocolate! Thus the child has the perception of *nicca* for the chocolate, i.e., that it can bring happiness whereas the happiness from the house is hard to be grasped by the child.
- However, when that same child grows up and becomes an adult, he/she will choose the title to the house without hesitation. By that time, he/she would have come to the realization that a house is much more valuable than a chocolate. The adult will realize the “*anicca* nature” of the chocolate: it can only bring happiness only for a few minutes!
- Did anyone have to specifically tell that adult that the title to the house is much more worth than a chocolate? No. One would realize that when one learns more about the world.
- Just the same way, when one learns Dhamma, one will AUTOMATICALLY realize that nothing in this world has real value. But that realization comes gradually.

4. All immoral deeds (*dasa akusala*) are done because of the “value” one places on worldly things. A child may hit another over that chocolate. An adult may be willing to lie, steal, or even kill to get possession of a house.

- When that adult grasps the key message of the Buddha (“*anicca* nature”), he/she will realize that even just craving for a house is not worth compared to the “cooling down” one can gain by getting rid of the **cravings** associated with the house; of course, one does not need to get rid of the house.

- He/she would realize that collecting “valuables” like houses, cars, etc. or making a lot of money (**much more than one needs**) can bring only suffering at the end (and lose precious time one could have spent on learning Dhamma and making progress towards *Nibbāna*).

5. Craving for sense objects can have bad consequences in a wide range. At a lower level, just enjoying sense pleasures without harming others will make one bound to the *kāma lōka* (via “*patī iccā sama uppada*” or “what one likes is what one gets”); see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)”.

- However, if one does immoral deeds (*dasa akusala*) in order to get such “valuables”, then one will be subjected to *dukkha dukkha* (direct suffering) in the *apāyas* in future lives; see, “[Introduction -2 – The Three Characteristics of Nature](#)”. This is the worst kind of future suffering and one would not be able to comprehend that if one does not believe in rebirth or that *kammā vipāka*, i.e., if one has *miccā diṭṭhi*.
- Once one gets rid of *miccā diṭṭhi*, it will be easier to see one aspect of the *anicca* nature: “*aniccan khayattena*”, which means “*anicca nature leads to one to the downside*”, i.e., to do immoral acts and to end up experiencing unimaginable suffering (*dukkha dukkha*) in the *apāyas*.
- Thus *anicca* nature not only means that one cannot maintain things to one’s satisfaction in the long run, but ALSO it can lead to much suffering in the future.

6. One can basically get to the *Sotāpanna* stage by comprehending the above harsh consequences of *anicca* nature.

- Buddha also said, “*dukkham bhayattena*” or “one should be fearful of the *dukkha* nature”, when describing the characteristic of *dukkha*. At the *Sotāpanna* stage, one can see that *anicca* nature directly leads to suffering (*dukkha*) in the *apāyas*, but may not realize that **much suffering (even though less than in the *apāyas*) can also arise due to just being attached to sense pleasures, i.e., *kāma rāga*.**
- The full impact of “*dukkham bhayattena*” is realized only at the *Anāgāmī* stage (having seen a glimpse of it at the *Sakadāgāmi* stage). **This is when one realizes the *dukkha* associated with just the craving for sensual pleasures.**
- Craving for sense pleasures lead to *saṅkhāra dukkha* and *viparināma dukkha*, as explained in detail in the post, “[Introduction – What is Suffering?](#)”. Even though I wrote that post a couple of years ago, I did not truly grasp the truth of it until recently.

7. At the *Sotāpanna* stage one comprehends the “*anicca* nature”, and one implication of in the second characteristics of *dukkha*: the *dukkha dukkha*. Even though one can see the truth of the other two types of *dukkha* (*saṅkhāra dukkha* and *viparināma dukkha*), one does not “truly grasp their effects”. Those two aspects of *dukkha* are present in the higher realms of *kāma lōka* (human and *deva* realms).

- One truly starts comprehending *saṅkhāra dukkha* and *viparināma dukkha* at the *Sakadāgāmi* stage, and it will be completed only at the *Anāgāmī* stage. This leads to further strengthening of “*dukkham bhayattena*”. One can see the danger in the types of ***dukkha* arising from attachment to sense pleasures (even without engaging in immoral acts).**
- Comprehending that is much harder than seeing the dangers associated with immoral deeds (leading to *dukkha dukkha*) that is grasped at the *Sotāpanna* stage.

8. By the time one gets to *Anāgāmī* stage, one would have removed the lower 5 types of bonds (*ōrambhagiya samyōjana*) that bind one to the realms in the *kāma lōka*; see, “[Dasa Samyōjana – Bonds in Rebirth Process](#)”.

- There are five higher *samyōjana* associated with higher *rūpa* and *arupa* realms. First one removes *rūpa rāga* (attachment to *rūpa jhāna*) and then *arupa rāga* (attachment to *arupa jhāna*).
- *Rūpa* and *arupa jhānic* pleasures are basically what is mostly experienced in the *rūpa* and *arupa* realms (highest 20 realms). In those realms *dukkha dukkha* and *saṅkhāra dukkha* are

absent and only the *viparināma dukkha* is present. **One lives with *jhānic* pleasure until the end, when one becomes helpless and could end up even in the *apāyas*.**

9. In comprehending the Three Characteristics of nature, the key step is in realizing that collecting “valuables” (houses, money, etc) as an adult is as foolish as collecting candy wrappers as a child.

- In order to make that step of “higher wisdom” per Buddha Dhamma, one needs to first understand the “world view of the Buddha”, that the world is of *anicca* nature, i.e., **CRAVING for those “valuables” only lead to suffering in the long run.** By “long run” what is meant is not only this life, but over future lives.
- This is why belief in rebirth is a major requirement to even start on the mundane Path.

10. What the Buddha said was that it is an illusion to believe that ANY object in this world will have the “*nicca*” nature, i.e., **that there are things in this world has real, lasting value; the reality is the opposite and is expressed by the word, “*anicca*”.** The word “*anicca*” means there is nothing in this world of value that can bring lasting happiness.

- **However, it is very difficult for one to comprehend this “*anicca* nature”, unless one believes in the laws of *kammā* (i.e., that one’s actions will have consequences). A natural extension of the laws of *kammā* is the validity of the rebirth process.**
- Many actions committed in this life do not bring fruits (their results) in this life; but they will in future lives. Therefore, laws of *kammā* necessarily REQUIRE the rebirth process.
- In Pāli terminology, one has more “*iccā*” or more attachment for an object that one perceives to be of high value. One will have *iccā* for an object which one perceives to provide happiness, i.e., one has the perception of “*nicca*” nature for that object. One thinks that it can provide happiness.
- **But the reality is that either that object loses its value OR one dies, making any perceived value zero at the end. One of those two outcomes cannot be avoided.**

11. If one does not believe in the rebirth process (i.e., that this is only life that one has), then one could be compelled to do whatever necessary to get possession of those valuable objects, since there may not be any serious consequences.

- For example, one could steal million dollars and hope to live the rest of life with all the comforts one can hope for (if one is lucky to not get caught by the police).
- Or, a drug addict could say, “I am just going to enjoy inhaling drugs until I die from it”, thinking that there will not be any consequences after the physical body dies.
- However, one’s outlook on such things will change dramatically if one can see the reality of the rebirth process. Most people just believe what “science says” and do not even bother to look at the ever increasing evidence for the rebirth process.
- Science agrees that causes lead to corresponding effects: each action has a reaction. Nothing happens without a reason, a cause. However, since science does not know much about how the mind works, it is unable to provide answers to issues that involve the mind. ***kammā* and *kammā vipāka* are causes and corresponding effects.**

12. *Lōbha* (*abhijjā*) is the greed generated in a mind which puts a “very high value” for an object. One is willing to do immoral acts to get possession.

- One with *kāma rāga* has desire to enjoy sensual objects, but is not willing to hurt others to get them. Most “moral people” belong to this category. Even a *Sotāpanna* starts at this stage. A *Sakadāgāmi* has lost the desire to “own” such sensual objects, but still likes to enjoy them.
- Thus the desire for sensual pleasures is gradually decreased as one makes progress through the *Sakadāgāmi* stage, and loses all such desires for sensual pleasures at the *Anāgāmi* stage.

13. In other words, one starts losing value that one places for sensual objects (cars, houses, partners, etc) as one progresses to higher stages of *Nibbāna*.

- But the critical point to understand is that one **LOSES** such desires **AUTOMATICALLY**. One does not need to, and one **CANNOT**, lose such desires by sheer will power. **One needs to “see” the dangers of such desires by developing the “dhamma eye”, or *paññā* (wisdom) by learning and contemplating on the *Tilakkhana*.**
- Even if one forcefully keeps such desires **SUPPRESSED** (as *yogis* even before the Buddha used to do), such desires will just stay dormant (remain as *anusaya*), and **WILL** resurface later in this life or in future lives. Those *anusaya* can only be removed by comprehending *Tilakkhana*.

Also see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – According to Some Key Suttas](#)”.

Next, “[Anatta and Dukkha – True Meanings](#)”,

3.3.2.4 Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses

February 3, 2018

Three Marks of Existence or Three Characteristics of Nature (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*) are discussed in detail in a series of four discourses. These are based on the first two *suttas* (*Dhammacakka Pavattana Sutta* and the *Anatta Lakkhana Sutta*) that the Buddha delivered to the five ascetics right after attaining Enlightenment.

- Only an essential outline is provided in these discourses. There will be five topics (for each discourse) in the the “[discussion forum](#)” under the forum **Three Marks of Existence Discourses**, where one can ask any questions/ express opinions.
- No question is too simple or too hard. We can find more details in other *suttas* or in *Abhidhamma*.
- However, these discourses are not recommended for those who are not familiar with basic concepts in Buddha Dhamma. They might get discouraged. They may want to first get familiar with the basic concepts in “[Moral Living and Fundamentals](#)”, “[Working Towards Good Rebirths](#)”, and “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” sections.

February 3, 2018

Discourse 1 – Nicca, Sukha, Atta (Before understanding *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, it is necessary to understand the opposites).

[WebLink: Desana 1 – Nicca, Sukha, Atta](#)

Key Relevant Posts:

[What is Karma? – Is Everything Determined by Karma?](#)

[Could Bodily Pain Be Due to Causes Other Than Karma Vipaka?](#)

[Saṅkhā – What It Really Means](#)

[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+”Sama+uppāda](#)

[Bhava and Bhavanga – Simply Explained!](#)

February 10, 2018

Discourse 2 – Iccha, Nicca, Anicca

[WebLink: Desana 2 – Iccha, Nicca, Anicca](#)

Key Relevant Posts:

[How to Cultivate the Anicca Saṅkhā – II](#)

[Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra](#)

[Viññāna – What It Really Means](#)

[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)

[What is Intention in Kamma?](#)

February 19, 2018

Discourse 3 – Distorted Perceptions or Saññā Vipallāsa

[WebLink: Desana 3 – Distorted Perceptions or Saññā Vipallāsa](#)

Key Relevant Posts:

[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotapanna Stage](#)

February 27, 2018

Discourse 4 – Sakkaya Ditthi – What is “a Person”?

[WebLink: Desana 4 – Sakkaya Ditthi – What is “a Person”?](#)

Key Relevant Posts:

[Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta](#)

[Udayavaya Nana](#)

[San](#)

[Bhūta and Yathābhūta – What Do They Really Mean](#)

March 02, 2018

Discourse 5 – Tilakkhana and Micca Ditthi

[WebLink: Desana 5 – Tilakkhana and Micca Ditthi](#)

Key Relevant Posts:

[Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)

[What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!](#)

[Anidassana Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#)

[Sankhāra – What It Really Means](#)

[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)

[Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#)

[Nāma & Rūpa to Nāmarūpa](#)

This concludes the series of discourses on Tilakkhana.

3.3.3 Anatta and Dukkha – True Meanings

What really matters in the end is one comprehends, not words. The way different people interpret “no-self” could be different, even though the concept of a “self” is very clear.

- If *anatta* means “no-self”, then there is nothing that can distinguish person A from person B. So, if A takes something belongs to B, he can say, “there is no “me” and there is no “you”; what is wrong in me using “your” stuff?”. If B believes in “no-self” can he argue with A?
- Similarly, there are many other contradictions: If there is “no-self”, (i) who attains Nibbāna?, (ii) who does moral or immoral acts?, etc.

- Instead one needs to comprehend that “one is really helpless in this rebirth process” or “one is not in control over the long run”; that is the concept of *anatta*, as we discuss below.

1. Let us look at the two words the Buddha used: “*āthma*” and “*anāthma*”. In the *Brahmajala sutta*, the Buddha definitely said both those are not correct. The best translation of those two terms to present day, I believe, are “soul” and “no-soul”:

- “Soul” in the sense of an unchanging entity; for example, most religions believe one’s soul goes to hell or heaven and then that “soul” is forever in that state.
- “No-soul” in the sense interpreted by a materialist, i.e., “a person” is just the body (with thoughts arising from the material brain), and when one dies that is end of story; nothing survives physical death.
- Those were the two extremes rejected by the Buddha as “*athma*” and “*anathma*”.

2. The real confusion arose when the Pāli word “*anatta*” was translated to Sanskrit as “*anathma*”. Subsequently, the Sanskrit word “*anathma*” was translated to English as “no-self”. This was done at the same time when “*athma*” was translated as “soul”.

3. The real question is when one says, “there is “no-self””, does one imply that there is no “soul”, i.e., no “*athma*”? There are two possibilities. Let us look at them carefully:

- If one means by “no-self” that when one dies that is the end of story, i.e., there is no rebirth process, then this is same as “no-soul”.
- Or, it is possible that some people may have the idea of a “changing personality” rather than the above materialistic view of nothing surviving the death, i.e., one believes that a human can be reborn an animal. Then one has the right concept of “no-self” or what I call a “ever-changing personality”.
- One needs to contemplate on this and clearly distinguish between the two possible interpretations.

4. But I have seen many people just use the phrase “no-self” in the wrong way.

- Some say, ‘The Buddha told us that there is “no-self”. So, what is the point of going through learning Dhamma etc., because there is no “me”’.
- Others say, “Even if I die and get reborn as an animal, it will be not “me”, because there is “no-self”.
- They are both wrong by talking about a “no-soul”. What I ask them is, “If there is no “me”, would it be OK if someone hits you hard with a stick or worse?”. Then of course they realize that there is a “me”. **That is the “me” who learns Dhamma or who could be reborn an animal.**

5. We can take a simple simile to get an idea of these two extremes of “soul” and “no-soul”. We have all seen shapes and colors created by water fountains. Here I have trimmed a video for just 10 seconds to show a couple of such shapes.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Beautiful Fountain Water Show in Singapore](#)

- We all know those structures created by water are not real. But we cannot say it did not exist.
- In the same way, since we cannot say that a person does not exist. However, there is nothing that exists permanently, it is just transitory. Thus both “self” and “no-self” are wrong perceptions.
- Just like we can create different shapes and figures using that water fountain, we all go through various lifeforms in the rebirth process.
- However, the suffering (or the intermittent happiness) is real.

6. This is a deep concept. We cannot deny that we have the inner perception (*saññā*) of a “me” (unless one is an *Arahant*). That is also THE reason that we go through this rebirth process. But that *saññā* CANNOT be gotten rid by forcing the mind to accept that there is no “me”. THAT DOES

NOT WORK. When one starts learning the true nature of the world by understanding the real meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, the mind gradually realizes that there is no real “me”, but just an ever-changing “lifestream”.

- Thus one could meditate for thousand years muttering to oneself, “it is *anāthma*” or “there is no-self”, or anything equivalent with the meaning “there is no “me””, and would not get anywhere close to the *Sotāpanna* stage or even any *niramisa sukha*, because deep inside one does not really believe in that.
- Instead one needs to comprehend that “there is nothing fruitful to be had in this world in the long run”, or “one is really helpless in this rebirth process”; that is the concept of *anatta*.
- Another word for *anatta* is “*anātha*” (this is the Sinhala word), which means “utterly helpless”. That is the status of a human being who is unaware of the perils of the rebirth process. The opposite is “*nātha*”, which is actually also used in Pāli to refer to the Buddha (as in one becomes “*nātha*” when one embraces the message of the Buddha).

7. In other words, “there is a ‘me’ as long as one craves for things in this world”. Denying that perception is not the solution. One craves for things in this world because one believes there is happiness to be had by seeking “things” in this world. That tendency to seek things will not reduce until one understands that it is fruitless to strive for such things in the long term; even though one may not know it, one is truly helpless. And that is a real meaning of *anatta*.

- But that cannot be grasped just by reading about it. One needs to contemplate (meditate) using real examples from one’s life. One will know that one is starting to get the concept when one starts realizing that one’s cravings for things in this world is gradually waning.

Why Dukkha is not Merely Suffering?

1. There is confusion about what the Buddha said about suffering because most cannot distinguish between *dukha* and *dukkha*. But the Pāli word for suffering is *dukha*. *Dukkha* (*dukha+khya*) means there is hidden suffering AND that suffering can be eliminated (*khyā* is removal); see, “[What is San? – Meaning of Samsāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”.

- And *dukkha sacca* (the first Noble Truth) is the knowledge on seeing that those things we value as “sense pleasures” are in fact the CAUSE of this “hidden suffering”.

2. *Dukha* is a *vedanā* (feeling). Anyone, and even animals feel *dukha*. No one has to convince anyone there is *dukha* in this world. If anyone can attain *Nibbāna* by realizing *dukha* in this world, then animals would attain *Nibbāna* first, because they know *dukha* very well.

- However, *dukkha* (or the *dukkha sacca*) is the First Noble Truth. It says there is “hidden suffering” behind all this apparent happiness or the illusion of a future happiness that can be achieved by “working hard”.
- *Dukkha Sacca* is comprehended not by contemplating on suffering, but contemplating on the causes for suffering, i.e., the immoral things we tend to do because of the lack of understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- In order to comprehend *dukkha*, one needs to understand the wider world view of the Buddha and see that most suffering will be in future rebirths unless one attains at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*.
- That is why it takes a lot of time and effort to gain wisdom (*paññā*) and truly start on the Path. Since our senses cannot sense other realms, including the suffering-filled lowest 4 realms (except the animal realm), it is not a trivial matter to understand and truly believe the message of the Buddha.

3. This wrong conception has also led to the popularity of “breath meditation” (the incorrect *ānāpāna* meditation) as a way to remove “suffering”.

- It is true that one could get “temporary relief” and even *jhānic* experiences using the breath meditation. But that does not solve the problem of “long-term *sansaric* suffering” emphasized by the Buddha.
- When one cultivates the true “*ānāpāna* meditation” (see, “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)”), one can achieve temporary relief AND work towards “long-term happiness” of *Nibbāna*.

4. Most people have the perception that Buddha Dhamma is pessimistic, because it emphasizes suffering. Actually, it is quite the opposite.

- The Buddha was just the messenger of the bad news. He DISCOVERED the true nature of this world: No matter where we are reborn within the 31 realms, we will not find happiness and in the LONG RUN, suffering prevails; see, “[The Four Stages in Attaining Nibbāna](#)”.
- A world which is based on constant change, or more correctly constant disorder, (impermanence) is inherently incapable of providing stability (thus *anicca* is not impermanence, but *anicca* arises out of impermanence); see, “[Second Law of Thermodynamics is Part of Anicca](#)”.
- Yet, we have the PERCEPTION that we can somehow “beat the system” and find happiness. That is the wrong perception of *nicca*. Once we truly realize *dukkha*, we will see that anything in this world has the *anicca* nature; nothing in this world can provide long-lasting happiness in the long term.

5. The Buddha not only discovered that “this world” cannot provide us with stable and lasting happiness. He also found the way to get out of this inherently unstable, and thus unsatisfactory nature of existence. This is the Noble Eightfold Path.

6. **Thus it is important to realize that *dukkha* has embedded in it the only optimistic message anyone can deliver: That we can overcome this inevitable suffering.**

- When one truly realizes the true nature of “this world”, one voluntarily gives up struggling in vain to achieve the impossible, and that automatically leads to a state of happiness in one’s mind even before the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- This particular happiness, *niramisa sukha*, is different from the sense pleasures and one can experience it more and more as one follows the Path, and culminates in *Arahantship* or unconditioned happiness; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”. One can experience this *niramisa sukha* all the way up to its peak at *Nibbāna* during this very life.

7. Another important thing to realize is that there are only two ways that anyone’s destiny works out:

- One waits until one gets really old to EXPERIENCE the suffering even in this life itself. It does not matter how much money one has: One will NOT be able to enjoy the sensual pleasures as one used to in the younger ages: all sense faculties degrade including culinary pleasures, visual, auditory, sex, etc. And if one gets a major illness it will be worse. The absolutely worse thing is that by that time it will be too late, because even the mind starts to degrade (it is actually the brain that degrades), and one will not be able to make any spiritual progress.
- The other and the ONLY reasonable option is to develop insight NOW. The Buddha had revealed the true nature of “this world” of 31 realms. At least one should examine the big picture laid out by the Buddha to see whether that picture makes sense, and if it does to work towards getting out of “this world”.
- People commit suicide thinking that it will end the suffering. It does not. The only way to stop suffering is to stop rebirth. There is nowhere to be found in the 31 realms that will end the suffering. One may find relatively long periods of happiness in the higher realms, but in the *sansaric* time scale that will only be a blip; see, “[Sansaric Time Scale](#)” and “[Infinity – How Big Is It?](#)”.
- And one can test the path prescribed by the Buddha. As one experiences the *niramisa sukha* by removing greed, hate, and ignorance, one can start feeling the “cooling down”, the early stages

of *Nibbāna*; see, “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)“. This will accentuate one’s liking of Dhamma (*chanda*), enhance one’s determination (*citta*) and effort (*virīya*) to seek insight (*vimansa*); see, “[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)“.

Next, “[Anicca – Repeated Arising/Destruction](#)“,

3.3.4 Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?

March 17, 2017; revised November 4, 2017

We can see how the word “*anatta*” got translated incorrectly as “no-self” by carefully examining the different usages of the word “*attā*”.

- There is “*atta*” which is different from “*attā*” (with a “long a at the end”). *Anatta* is the opposite of “*atta*” not of “*attā*”.
- *Anātma* (which is a Sanskrit word not used by the Buddha and could be translated as “no-self”), has been misinterpreted as *anatta*.
- We will discuss these in detail below.

1. In the previous post, “[Sakkaya Ditthi is Personality \(Me\) View?](#)“, we discussed how the term *sakkaya ditthi* gets incorrectly translated when the word “*atta*” in a key verse in the *Culavedalla Sutta* is misinterpreted. ***Atta* has two meanings:**

- One meaning is “I” or “myself” as in the first verse of “*attā hi attano nātho*” (“only I can be of salvation to myself”), and that is the meaning implied in the above verse.
- The other meaning of “*atta*” is “in control” or “has essence”, and the opposite of that is the *anatta* in *Tilakkhāna*: “one is helpless in this rebirth process”.
- Those two meanings are explained in “[Attā Hi Attano Nātho](#)” and in detail in, “[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#)“.

2. Comprehension of a concept is very different from memorization of the definition of a word. All one needs to do is to understand what is MEANT by a word; that is *saññā*; see, “[Sañña – What It Really Means](#)“.

- *Atta/anatta* are key Pāli words in relation to the *Tilakkhāna*, so it is essential to get the correct *saññā* or the idea. In future posts, we will discuss several other critical usages of *atta/anatta*.

A. Atta as “a Person” versus “Essence” or “Truth”

3. Many of the misconceptions about “self” and “no-self” can be understood by taking a systematic look at how the Pāli word “*atta*” is used in the conventional sense and in the deeper sense (to give different meanings in different places).

First, “*atta*” is pronounced “*aththā*” or “*aththa*” depending on where it is used:

- **“*aththā*” (pronounced with a “long a at the end”) is used to denote a person:** There is no word for negation of that *attā*.
- In Sinhala, it is written as “අත්තා”. That is how it appears in the Pāli *Tipitaka* that is written in Sinhala.
- Even though *attā* has this meaning as a “person”, *anatta* is never used as the opposite of **that** *attā*.
- Pronunciation:

[WebLink: Pronunciation - atta](#)

4. The word “*atta*” (pronounced with a “short a at the end”) is “the essence” or “the truth that is timeless”. The negation is “*anatta*”.

- In Sinhala they are written as “අත්ත” and “අත්තං”. That is how they appear in the Pāli *Tipitaka* that is written in Sinhala.

- Pronunciation of the two words:

[WebLink: Pronunciation - atta and anatta](#)

- **There is a third meaning too**, which is closely related to the second meaning above:
- The Sinhala word for *atta* is “*artha*” which means “truth” or “that which makes sense”. The opposite word in Sinhala is “*anartha*”, which emphasizes that what is “*anartha*” is not worth doing.
- In Sinhala they are written as “අර්ථ” and “අනර්ථ”.
- Pronunciation of the two words:

[WebLink: Pronunciation - artha and anartha](#)

I hope you can catch the differences in the pronunciations.

- *Anatta* is the negation of the latter two meanings: “na” + *atta*” (which rhymes as “*anatta*”): there is no substance/ does not hold any ultimate truth.

5. One who is engaged in things that are “*anatta*” or “*anartha*” will become “*anātha*” (helpless), the opposite of “*nātha*”. As was mentioned in the post “”[\[Attā\] Hi Attano Nātho](#)“, “*nātha*” is another word for *Nibbāna*.

- One who is trying to find refuge in this world will become truly helpless in the long run. On the other hand, the only refuge (“*nātha*”) is *Nibbāna*, i.e., overcoming the rebirth process.
- Therefore, *atta/anatta* in Pāli can be translated to Sinhala as *artha/anartha*, and both usages convey the deeper meaning that convey the following ideas: “essence/no essence”, “truth/false”, “useful/useless”, etc.

6. On the other hand, the word “*|attā|*” (pronounced with a “long a at the end”) is used as “me” only in the conventional sense. In order to communicate with others, we have to say things like, “one needs to defend oneself”. Here “one” exists only in the conventional sense.

- **There is no single Pāli word to express the negation of that, i.e., “not *|attā|*”**; If there were to be such a word that would be “non-person”. It just cannot be used that way.
- **As we see below in #11 and #12, other words to denote “me” or “self” are “*mama*”, “*asmī*” or “*mé*”.**

7. Therefore, the critical mistake was made by trying to translate *anatta* as the opposite of “*|attā|*” with the conventional meaning of “a person” or “self”.

- The word *anatta* was ALWAYS used with the deep meaning of “no truth or no essence”. ***Anatta* is a fact** indicating there is no essence or truth to be had in this world of 31 realms.
- ***|Attā|* (in the conventional sense) is used to indicate “a person”. There is no single Pāli word to give the opposite meaning to that.**

8. In relation to *anatta* in *Tilakkhana*, “*atta*” can also be described as “ultimate truth” (“*sathya*” in Sinhala and Sanskrit). **That truth is *anicca* nature**: “this world cannot bring happiness anywhere in the 31 realms”.

- Therefore, this whole world is of *anatta* nature, having no “essence” and thus lacking anything is worthwhile pursuing. Therefore, if one tries to do that impossible task, one will only get exhausted, i.e., subjected to suffering.
- Anyone who is struggling to achieve this impossible task is truly helpless.
- All the above statements convey the meaning of the word, “*anatta*”; **that is the *saññā* that one needs to absorb.**

9. When one pursues “pleasurable things in this world” assuming that the nature is *nicca* (i.e., can lead to happiness), one will be subject to suffering or *dukkha* and thus one is *anatta* (becomes helpless). This is explained in the key post, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.

- When one pursues worldly things assuming that the world is of “*nicca*” and “*atta*” nature, one tends to do *dasa akusala*.
- When one realizes that the nature is *anicca* and *anatta*, one will try to stay away from *dasa akusala* even when pursuing worldly things. It is fairly easy to see potential problems with the three types of *akusala* done with the body and the four types done with speech. This is the first stage in the path (**mundane path**).
- When one follows the mundane path (i.e., live a moral life), one starts to cleanse one’s mind and discard many *micca diṭṭhi*, i.e., start cleansing the mind.
- At that stage, when one is exposed to the true meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, one is able to comprehend them and start on the **lokottara (Noble) Path**.
- One seriously starts tackling the *akusala* done by the mind when one becomes a *Sotāpanna* and starts on the Noble Path. **All *dasa akusala* are removed only at the *Arahant* stage. That is the “*atta*” or the “*nātha*” state; one is no longer *anatta*.**

10. One will be subjected to much suffering (*dukkha*) until one realizes that it is fruitless to pursue “valuable things” by engaging in *dasa akusala*.

- The Noble truth of *dukkha sacca* (or *dukkha sathya*) is to see that relief from suffering comes only by rejecting *dasa akusala* and by engaging in “good and moral activities”, i.e., *dasa kusala*.
- When one reaches *Nibbāna*, that is the state of *nicca*, *sukha*, *atta*, the opposites of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* that are characteristics of this world of 31 realms.

B. Discussion of the Anatta Lakkhana Sutta

11. There are several Pāli (and Sinhala) words (*mama*, *asmi*, and *mē*) that are used to indicate “me”, “I”, “myself”. *Attā* is also used to indicate “self” in the conventional sense, and “having no essence” in the deeper sense. It is important to note the difference in all those usages.

- All these terms are in the *Anatta Lakkhana Sutta*, which is the key *sutta* that discussed the concepts of *atta* and the opposite, *anatta* in the deeper sense. Here are the key verses that are relevant to our discussion here:

“*Tam kim mannata, bhikkhave: rupam niccam va aniccam va ti? “Bhikkhus: is any rūpa (material entity) nicca or anicca?” or “Bhikkhus: can any rūpa be kept to one’s satisfaction or it cannot be kept to one’s satisfaction?”*”

– *Aniccam*, *Bhante* “*It cannot be kept to one’s satisfaction, Venerable Sir*”.

Yam pan aniccam dukham va sukham va ti? “Will such an entity lead to suffering or happiness?”

– *Dukham*, *Bhante*. “*Suffering, Venerable Sir*”.

Yam pan aniccam dukham viparinama dhamman, kalam nu tam samanupassitum: ‘etan mama, éso hamasmi, éso mé atta ‘ti? “Will such an entity that cannot be kept to one’s satisfaction, that leads to suffering, and is a viparinama dhamma, should be considered as “myself or mine, or can taken as my atta?””

– *N’ hetum*, *Bhante*. “*No reason to think so, Venerable Sir*”.

12. Now, that last verse also clearly states what words were used by the Buddha to mean “me”, “I”, “myself”.

- This key verse with these words is, “*Etam mama, eso ’ham asmi, eso mé attāti*”, which means, “That is **me**, it is **mine**, or **my being**”.
- It is interesting to note that even today, the Sinhala word for “me” or “myself” is “*mama*”, and “*asmai*” is the sense of “me” or “mine” as in *asmi māna*, which is one of the last *samyojana* removed at the *Arahant* stage; see, “[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#)”.

13. The first type of “wrong *saññā*” that “I am my physical body” is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage by removing *Sakkaya Ditthi*. The much deeper-embedded *saññā* of “a me” is removed only at the *Arahant* stage; see, “[Sakkaya Ditthi is Personality \(Me\) View?](#)”.

- *Anatta* — on the other hand — is the correct *saññā* that, (i) this world of 31 realms cannot offer any “essence” or “true happiness” and, (ii) therefore, one who is struggling to find such “ultimate truth in this world” is helpless.
- This is why a qualified person explaining Dhamma must have the *patisambhidā ñāṇa* to at least some extent, in order to figure out the correct meaning of key words in the *suttas*. We discussed another important example in last week’s post: “[Sakkaya Ditthi is Personality \(Me\) View?](#)”.
- One cannot just consult a Pāli dictionary and use the meaning given there; see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)” and “[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#)”.
- Of course, that seems to be origin of the incorrect translation of *anatta* as “no-self”, i.e., choosing the wrong (conventional) meaning of “|*attā*” (with a long “a” at the end).

C. What About Athma/Anathma?

14. The final piece of this puzzle are the words *āthma/anāthma*. These are Sanskrit words and NOT Pāli words. Pronunciation:

[WebLink: Pronunciation - athma and anathma](#)

- The confusion came when people started translating *atta/anatta* as *āthma/anāthma* in both Sanskrit and Sinhala (many Sanskrit words have been adopted as Sinhala words, which is unfortunate because that makes things more confusing).
- In Sinhala they are written as “ආත්ම” and “අනාත්ම”.
- In Sanskrit *āthma* basically means “soul”, an indestructible entity that survives death and eventually merges with the “*Mahā Brahma*” equivalent of the “Creator God” in Abrahamic religions. **This is different from both Pāli words of *atta* and |*attā*| that we discussed above.**
- Obviously, *atta* has nothing to do with *āthma*. Even |*attā*| is not about an unchanging entity; it just means “a person” not “a soul”. Even those who don’t believe in rebirth think there a “|*attā*” (“I am my body”) until death.
- The word *anāthma* is used only in referring to theories saying that there is no *āthma*, i.e., “no-soul” or “no-self”.
- **So it is quite clear that “no-self” has nothing to do with *anatta*.**

15. Please print this post and keep as a reference. It is easy to get confused among all these different words in different languages (Pāli, Sinhala, Sanskrit). It is good to settle on exact meanings of these words.

- The connection between *dasa akusala* and *anatta* is discussed at, “[Dasa Akusala and Anatta – The Critical Link](#)”. That will complete this discussion, and will help cultivating the “*anatta saññā*”.

3.3.5 Dasa Akusala and Anatta – The Critical Link

April 2, 2017; revised November 10, 2017

1. This important post will help make the connection between **deeper teaching of the Buddha Dhamma (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*)** and **the practice**, i.e., cleansing one’s mind via abstaining from *dasa akusala* and cultivating *dasa kusala*.

- The *Tilakkhana* represent the “theory side” or the “nature of this world” and *dasa akusala* are associated with the practice. Thus the connection between the two is important.
- I have not seen this addressed directly, outside of the *Tipitaka*.

2. We discussed in the previous post, “[Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?](#)“, why the Pāli words “*atta/anatta*” do not convey “self/no-self” but rather “with essence/no essence” or “truth/untruth” or “useful/not useful” or “protected/helpless”.

- We also discussed how “*atta/anatta*” are closely related to Sinhala/Sanskrit words “*artha/anartha*” also giving the meanings “truth/untruth” or “useful/not useful”.
- Finally, we touched on the fact that the *anatta* (and thus *dukkha* and *anatta*) nature is a manifestation of engaging in *dasa akusala*.

3. Recently I realized that many *suttas* in the *Anguttara Nikāya* (AN) express various concepts in brief. Many *suttas* are just a paragraph, providing the key idea.

- Here we will discuss three short *suttas* in the *Anguttara Nikāya* that can be used to clarify the connection between *dasa akusala* and *Tilakkhana*.

4. First, the *Kusala Sutta* ([WebLink: AN 180; in the *Sadhuvagga*](#)) is just one paragraph providing the definition of ***dasa akusala***:

- “..*katamanca bhikkhave, **akusalam?** pānātipātō, adinnādānaṃ, kāmesumicchācārō, musāvādō, pisunā vācā, parusā vācā, samphappalāpō, abhijjhā, vyāpādō, micchādīṭṭhi akusalam..*”
- Conventionally translated: “killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slandering, harsh talk, empty talk, greed, hate, and wrong views”. These are discussed in “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”.
- In the next and last paragraph of the *sutta*, *dasa kusala* are defined as the opposites of *dasa akusala* (*veramani* means “abstain from”): “..*katamanca bhikkhave, **kusalam?** pānātipātā veramani, adinnādānā veramani, kāmesumicchācārā veramani, musāvādā veramani, pisunā vācā veramani, parusā vācā veramani, samphappalāpā veramani, abhijjhā veramani, vyāpāda veramani, sammādiṭṭhi **kusalam** ‘ti.*”
- Therefore, *kusala* and *akusala* are stated clearly and succinctly in that *sutta*.

5. Then in the very next *sutta*, *Attha Sutta* ([WebLink: AN 181; in the *Sadhuvagga*](#)) ***anattō*** (a person who has become helpless) is **defined in terms of *dasa akusala***:

- “..*katamo ca bhikkhave, **anattō?** pānātipātō, adinnādānaṃ, kāmesumicchācārō, musāvādō, pisunā vācā, parusā vācā, samphappalāpō, abhijjhā, vyāpādō, micchādīṭṭhi – ayam vuccati, bhikkhave, **anattō..***”
- **Thus one becomes helpless (i.e., one is now an *anattō*) by engaging in *dasa akusala*.**
- In the next and last paragraph of the *sutta*, *attō* defined as the opposite of that: *panatipatā veramani, adinnādānā veramani, kāmesumicchācārā veramani, musāvādā veramani, pisunā vācā veramani, parusā vacā veramani, samphappalāpā veramani, abhijjhā veramani, vyāpāda veramani, sammādiṭṭhi – ayam vuccati, bhikkhave, attō. ‘ti.*
- **Thus one becomes *attō* (leading to refuge in *Nibbāna*) by engaging in *dasa kusala*.**

6. Those two short *suttas* make it crystal clear the following important facts:

- ***Anatta* has nothing to do with a “self”.**
- ***Anatta* is all about being helpless in the rebirth process due to one’s engagements with *dasa akusala*.**
- **Therefore, getting to *Nibbāna* is all about avoiding *dasa akusala*, i.e., cleansing one’s mind.**

7. Now, there are several *suttas* in the *Anguttara Nikāya* that put it all together. The first verse in the *Patama Adhamma Sutta* states ([WebLink: AN 10.113 in the *Paccorohanivagga*](#)) it nicely:

- “*Adhammo ca, bhikkhave, veditabbo anatto ca; dhammo ca veditabbo attho ca*”.
- I will write another post explaining other verses in that *sutta*, but we can easily translate that verse: “*Bhikkhus*, it is to be comprehended that *adhamma* leads to *|anattā|* (helplessness), and *dhamma* leads to *|attā|* (refuge in *Nibbāna*)”.

- Furthermore, those who are still clinging to the incorrect interpretation of “*anatta*” as “**no self**”, should be able to clearly see that it leads to the foolish statement: “*Bhikkhus*, it is to be comprehended that *adhamma* leads to **no-self**, and *dhamma* leads to **self**”.
- The root cause of this misinterpretation is explained in, “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)”.

8. *Dhammā* is what one bears, i.e., what principles one lives by. But it is normally used in the sense of “good *dhamma*”.

- *Adhamma* (or *adhammā*) is the opposite: immoral living. If one engages in *dasa akusala*, then one is engaging in *adhamma*, i.e., one bears *adhammā*.
- This can be compared to the following: We use the word “smell” normally to mean “bad smell”. We specifically say “good smell” to indicate an actual good smell.
- In the same way, *dhammā* can be good or bad (“what one bears”). However, we normally use the word *dhammā* to indicate good *dhammā*. Bad *dhammā* are *adhammā*.

9. Normally the word *dhamma* is used to indicate a teaching or a principle, as in Buddha Dhamma. The word *dhammā* (with a long “a”) is used to indicate what one bears as a result of past *kamma*; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!](#)”. *Dhammā* are the same as *kamma beeja*.

- We need to be able to figure out meaning depending on the context, how the word is used in a given verse.

10. When one examines carefully ANY *sutta* in the *Tipitaka* they will be consistent with the above explanation.

- It is clear that those three *suttas* make the key connection between the deeper *Tilakkhana* (“theory”) and the practice (cleansing the mind via *sila*, i.e., staying away from *dasa akusala*). We don’t need to analyze hundreds of *suttas* to see the connection.
- When I go to online discussion boards, I get totally confused. People just quote *suttas* from different sites, and normally they have incorrect meanings of key Pāli words. It is a waste of time to read all those long posts providing “evidence” from different places, and of course there are usually inconsistencies among them.
- This was a major reason that I decided to start this website, because I can show that everything is consistent if one uses the true meanings of key Pāli words.

11. It is also good to keep in mind that a major problem with many texts is that they take conventional meanings of key words and apply them in the wrong places.

- Unless one is clear about the true meanings of such key words, and know where to use a given meaning, it is easy to veer-off in a totally wrong direction; see, “[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#)”. Also see, “[Buddha Dhamma: Non-Perceivability and Self-Consistency](#)”.

12. In the previous post, “[Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?](#)”, we briefly mentioned that *anatta* is closely related to *dasa akusala*. I hope the connection is much more clear now.

- Engaging in *dasa akusala* can only lead to suffering and thus helplessness in the long run. Therefore, engaging in actions, speech, thoughts associated with *dasa akusala* are not only pointless but also dangerous.
- This idea is quite clear in the Sinhala word for *|anattā|*: “*anārtha*” that we discussed in that previous post. It literally means “doing things that are totally useless and can only bring harm”.

13. Those who believe that doing *dasa akusala* can bring “bad *vipāka*” only in future lives are mistaken. Many people do not realize that even having immoral thoughts can bring us stress in this life itself.

This was discussed in detail in the beginning posts in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section. That section is important in two aspects:

- a. When one starts abstaining from *dasa akusala*, one can experience a definite sense of relief — also called *niramisa sukha* — and that should be the initial focus.
 - b. When one starts experiencing this *niramisa sukha*, one also starts comprehending deeper aspects of *Dhamma* like the *anicca* and *anatta* nature. Only with those insights that one can actually start to “see” the long-term *kamma vipāka* due to *dasa akusala* — like those leading to births in the *apāyas* (lowest four realms).
14. Finally, note that *atta* is sometimes spelled out as “*attha*” (with an “h”) in many texts and each may imply mundane or deeper meaning. For example, the old Sinhala commentaries are called “*atthakathā*”. It means “accounts about the truth” (“*kathā*” means “story”).
- Those are the reliable commentaries in the *Tipitaka*: *Patisambhidamagga*, *Petakopadesa*, and *Nettipakarana*. Out of many Sinhala *atthakathā*, those three are the only ones that survived.
 - On the other hand, commentaries by Buddhaghosa and others do not belong to *atthakathā*. *Visuddhimagga* is one such popular but erroneous commentary; see, “[Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#)”.
15. Finally, we can now see the truth in the verse, “*Dhammō ca yathā Dhammō, yathā attō*” that is also in the *Patama Adhamma Sutta* of #7 above.
- That means, “when one bears true (*yathā*) *Dhamma*, one comprehends the truth (and avoids being helpless in future)”.
 - If one bears *dhammā* and stays away from *adhammā*, that will help one grasp the *Tilakkhana*. Then one will not become *|anattā|* or helpless in this rebirth process. One will have “*|attā|*” or refuge.
 - This is an important post which provides a simple but critical link between “theory and practice”. It is good idea to read those relevant other posts and come back and re-read this post, until this connection is grasped.
 - This basic idea can go a long way in comprehending *Tilakkhana*.

3.3.6 How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā

Revised November 26, 2017

1. Many people tell me, “I think I understand what *anicca* means. But then what?”
 - That statement itself says that person has not yet understood *anicca* at least to some extent. I am not saying this in a derogatory manner. Even a *Sotāpanna* is supposed to have comprehended *anicca* only to a certain extent. Thus if one gets at least a glimpse of what is meant by *anicca*, that goes a long way. And that is not hard, if one can just contemplate on it.
 - Reading and learning about *anicca* and experiencing *anicca saññā* are two different things. First, it is a good idea to figure out what *saññā* is; see, “[Saññā – What It Really Means](#)”.
 - One really needs to contemplate on the *anicca* nature with real examples from one’s own life to get that *anicca saññā* to sink in one’s mind.
2. It is true that a Buddha is needed to first point out the basic truth about this world, i.e., “that we cannot maintain anything in this world to our satisfaction”. But once told, it is not difficult to see the truth of it by just critically evaluating that statement.
 - If one CAN maintain ANYTHING to one’s satisfaction, that HAS TO BE one’s own body and mind: “This is my body and these are my thoughts”. Therefore, one should start by contemplating on one’s own body and mind.
3. Close your eyes and try to fix your mind on something, your wife, husband, friend, house, anything at all. Can you keep your thoughts on that one subject for any significant time?
 - It is not possible to do that. Our minds like to wander off, seeking “more enticing thought objects”. You will notice that it is even harder when one’s mind is excited, for example, when

one has seen an attractive object or when one has done something strenuous and one is breathing hard (in the first case, *kamachanda nivarana* is strong and in the second case *uddacca nivarana* or the “excitability” is high).

- Thus when one’s mind is calm it is a bit easier to keep the mind on something, but still not for too long.

4. It is important to verify for oneself about these examples. Buddha Dhamma is to be experienced, not just to read about.

- One can cultivate wisdom only by “verifying for oneself that what the Buddha said is indeed true”. Blind faith will not get anyone close to the truth. **Thus true meditation is to learn the true and pure Dhamma and critically evaluate it based on one’s own experiences.**

5. Once we confirm that indeed one is unable to even keep one’s own mind to the way one wants, the next step is to think about whether one can maintain one’s own body the way one likes.

- It is quite obvious that we cannot change our basic body features like height, the color of the skin or the hair, etc. Furthermore, if one is born blind or without a limb, there is nothing much one can do about that either. Thus to a major extent, we just have to live with the body that we were born with.

6. Next, consider the body that we have at the present time, and see whether we will be able to maintain it like that, if we like that appearance.

- Of course we can do that for a while, especially if one is young. But it is inevitable that there comes a time when one will not be able to do that. One can verify that by looking at one’s own parents and grandparents: look at their old pictures and see how young and vibrant they were back when they were at your age.
- Therefore, we need to contemplate on the fact that we cannot even maintain things that we consider as “our own” to our satisfaction in the long run. This is to help cultivate the “*anicca saññā*” to a large extent.

7. Contrary to those who believe that thinking along these lines is “depressing”, it can be actually liberating to realize the truth. It is those who just keep on trying to “patching up one’s losing body assets” by artificial means end up “highly depressed” at the end, and then even commit suicide. It is better to have thought about “inevabilities of life” ahead of the time.

- If one contemplates deep enough, one realizes that no matter how much money one can throw at such problems, in the end one will become helpless. Just think about any of the old movie stars, beauty queens, bodybuilders, politicians, kings, emperors, etc and see how they died helplessly at the end.
- Each person dies helplessly at old age or die unexpectedly of an accident or a major illness. There is nothing that can be called “graceful death”. It may seem to outsiders that “one is aging gracefully”, but that person knows how hard it is, even if at normal health. One simply cannot do things the way once one did them and one cannot enjoy any sense pleasure at the same level. All our sense faculties degrade with time.

8. This was the basic message of the Buddha, and it is not something he made up. **He just revealed that truth about the nature of this world**, of which any normal person would not think about on himself/herself. We are too busy enjoying sense pleasures (or trying to get possession of enjoyable objects), even to take time to think about it.

- **The Buddha also showed that unless we do something about it, this is what we will be doing forever in the future. We will be reborn and will go through the same cycle over and over.** It is actually much worse, since most births in this cycle of rebirths is in the lower four realms where the hardships and sufferings are much higher.
- More importantly, he revealed a way to get rid of this cycle of births wrought with suffering.

9. **The Buddha explained that the reason that we keep coming back to this world is the fact that we don’t realize “this unsatisfactory nature”.** No matter how much suffering we go through, we always

think we can overcome them (and sometimes we do, but at the end we all die). We have the wrong perception that somehow we can “beat the system”, i.e., **attain happiness and MAINTAIN that happiness**. We have the incorrect “*nicca saññā*”.

- He said as long as we have this “*nicca saññā*” we can never escape future suffering. The solution is embedded in that first truth about suffering (*Dukkha Sacca*, the suffering that can be eliminated): What we need to do is to fully realize the “*anicca* nature” of this world, that “**we cannot maintain anything to our satisfaction in the long run**”.
- **The fact that most people do not realize is that the mere change of perception can lift a heavy load that one has been carrying.** This is the basis of “*niramisa sukha*”.
- That does not mean one will give up trying to give up everything and go to a forest; see, “**If Everything is Anicca Should We Just give up Everything?**”.

10. When we have this wrong “*nicca saññā*”, we willingly embrace this world, and that is “*paticca*” (“*pati*” + “*icca*”, where “*pati*” is bind and “*icca*” means willingly). When that happens, “*sama uppada*” (where “*sama*” is similar and “*uppada*” means birth) follows inevitably; see, “**Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”**”.

- Thus, we will be born in whatever the type of existence that we craved for.
- But that does not mean if we crave for a human rebirth we will get that. Rather the birth is according to “*gathi*”, the key aspects of one’s mindset. If one is excessively greedy, one may be born in the realm of “hungry ghosts”; if one is excessively angry or hateful, one will be born where that mindset prevails, i.e, in the *niraya* (hell).
- To put it another way, when one has the wrong “*nicca saññā*” one tends to do immoral things to get what one perceives to provide sense pleasures. Then those *kamma vipāka* will lead to worse existences in the future both in this life and more importantly in future lives.

11. As one cultivates the “*anicca saññā*”, one begins to stay away from the ten immoral actions more and more due to clear comprehension **that such actions are unfruitful**.

- What is the point of stealing money at the expense of others and acquiring a “good lifestyle” that will last only 100 years at most? And one will have to pay that with interest?
- What is the point of verbally abusing someone for a momentary satisfaction, if that will only hurt oneself at the end (even just by leaving oneself agitated, let alone those *kamma vipāka* that will come down later)? If one can stop with effort such an incident, then one can look back and see the “cooling down” that resulted from that effort. This is what “*ānāpāna*” or “*satipaṭṭhāna*” is all about.
- Even if someone physically hurt you, what is the point in hitting back? Will you feel PHYSICALLY better by hurting that person? Will your bodily pain go away? By the way, that also did not happen without a cause; it was a result of a bad *kamma* done sometime back (a *kamma vipāka*).
- By the way, *kamma vipāka* are not guaranteed. One can avoid many *kamma vipāka* by not allowing conditions for them to take place; see, “**What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?**”. Thus when one lives life with “*sati*”, many such *kamma vipāka* can be avoided.

12. It may take some contemplation to sort these out, but one always has to look at the broader picture. **Ignorance is not being aware of the “whole picture”**. We tend to act impulsively with what is discerned at that moment. But that tendency will diminish when one cultivates the “*anicca saññā*”.

- Acting with “*sati*” or “being mindful” is being mindful of the “*anicca* nature of this world”. This is the basis of both “*ānāpāna*” and “*satipaṭṭhāna*”.
- *Nibbāna* or “cooling down” can be experienced in this very life by cultivating the “*anicca saññā*” and thus be motivated to strive harder; see, “**Living Dhamma**”.

Next, “**How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā – II**”,.....

3.3.7 How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā – II

Revised November 26, 2017

1. *Saññā* is normally translated as “perception”, but it has a much deeper meaning; see, “[Saññā – What It Really Means](#)” and the first part of the current post, “[How to Cultivate Anicca Sanna](#)”. *Anicca saññā* has many different aspects, and in this and the next post we will discuss some of these deeper aspects.

- When reading about it, it may make sense that *anicca* means, “that we cannot maintain anything to our satisfaction”. And from the examples given, one can see that truth of that statement. **But that is just the start.** One just has just been informed of what *anicca* is. **Now one has to “see it with wisdom”**, in order to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage. This is what is called “*dassanena pahathabba*” or “start seeing things as they are”.
- One needs to develop the “*anicca saññā*”; the mind needs to grasp the essence or the correct perception of what *anicca* implies. Book knowledge is one thing, and “grasping it with the mind” is much more deeper.
- In the previous post we determined that it is not possible to keep to our satisfaction what we think of as ours, our bodies and our thoughts; see, “[How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#)”.

2. When contemplating on external objects, there are many “levels of *saññā*”: the more one KNOWS about a given object, one tends to cultivate a “better *saññā*” about it.

- Let us take an example to illustrate this important difference. Suppose a person from a remote region in the Amazon forest, who has never seen an apple, is shown an apple. He would not know what it is. If we give him the apple to hold and teach him the word “apple”, now he knows what an apple is, but only in the sense that if he is shown an apple again, he will say “that is an apple”. But he would still not know how it tastes. He will have to eat some apples to get an idea of its flavor. He may still not know how to identify a “ripened apple” that will taste better, etc. All that comes when he gets to experience apples at various stages of “ripeness” and even different varieties.
- All those different aspects of an apple needs to be experienced in order to really get the *saññā* about an apple. Only then that one can picture an apple, know what it feels like to hold it, how it tastes, etc. At the mention of the word “apple” all that instantly comes to that person’s mind.

3. In another example, if we see someone at work regularly at a distance, we can recognize him as X if we meet him at the market. But we would not know much ABOUT him. However, if we get to associate with him and start doing things together, pretty soon we will know much more about him.

- At that point, when we even catch a glimpse of him, everything about him comes to our mind. If we wanted, we can recall how many kids he has, where he went school, etc.
- Thus “*saññā*” can be at different levels. The more one gets to associate with someone or something, then our “*saññā*” on that person or concept will grow.
- **However, it is possible that our “*saññā*” about person X may not be really correct.** One day, police find video evidence that X is a child molester, and it becomes clear that there is no doubt about it. At that moment, our “*saññā*” or perception about X is altered permanently. We will no longer let him even come close to our children.

4. The Buddha said our “*saññā*” about “this world” — that it can provide happiness — is a “*vipareetha saññā*”, i.e., **it is a distorted or wrong perception**. If one carefully examines the rebirth process in the 31 realms, that wrong perception has provided us with mostly suffering in the long run.

- When we realize the “*anicca* nature” of this world to some extent, our wrong perception will change. That is when one really sees “*Sammā Diṭṭhi*” or “correct vision” about this world. One becomes a *Sotāpanna*.
- Just like a fish does not see the “hidden hook” and that it will undergo unbearable suffering by biting the tasty worm, we normally do not “see” the suffering hidden in the “tasty materialistic

things”. **A fish will never be able to figure that out, and as normal human beings we cannot figure it out ON OUR OWN either.** Only a Buddha can figure it out, and a Buddha can TEACH us, and we can figure it out by spending some time contemplating on it.

5. Therefore, one should not be discouraged if one does not even realize “what the big deal is” about *anicca*. Like everything else, understanding comes with repeated application and by thinking about it. If one can see that “it makes sense” to say, “*anicca* describes the inability for us to maintain anything to our satisfaction in the long term” that is a good start. Then one should start checking the validity of that concept at every opportunity in real life.

- Also, *anicca* is not merely, “the inability for us to maintain anything to our satisfaction in the long term”. **There are many other implications that arise because of this characteristic of *anicca*. Another way the Buddha described *anicca* was to use the term “*atteeyathi*”; i.e., “it is like a dog chewing on a meatless bone”.** The dog thinks very highly of the bone, and values its “taste”. But there is not even any real taste in that bone. It is taste that is made up by the mind, but sometimes, its gums start bleeding and it may taste its own blood.
- Various aspects of *anicca* are discussed at: “[Anicca – True Meaning](#)”.

6. Just like a dog will spend hours and hours chewing its “highly valued” bone, we also give much value to sense pleasures that are fleeting in nature. We do get brief instances of real pleasure, **but we do not realize the effort and suffering that we go through to get that brief sense of pleasure.** Most of the time, the pleasure is a “pleasure of anticipation”. We trudge through hard work with the mind cheering on showing the “possible pleasures to be had”.

- The Buddha likened this to a cow (in the old days) who drags a heavy cart with eagerness to get to the pile of straw being held in front of it by a pole. It does not realize the futility of its efforts because it is only thinking about the “prize” being held in front of its eyes. It does not even feel the burden of the heavy load, or even if feeling it, just disregards that pain in anticipation of the “reward” that it thinks can be had by “just taking a few more steps”.
- Most of our pleasures are short lived and arise just out of putting down the “fires” or distresses. The water tastes best when we are thirsty. Think about how you felt when you were very thirsty; the first sip of water was heavenly. But as the thirst went down with drinking more water, the “sense of pleasure” went down as well. After at most two glasses, the “feeling of pleasure” turns to a discomfort.

7. Same thing applies in any of the sense pleasures. We are constantly under pressure from the mind to “provide relief to one or another sense faculty”; this is *dukkha dukkha* that we discussed elsewhere. If we have not eaten anything for a while, we get the urge to eat something tasty. If we have not listened to some good music for a while, that urge kicks in. If you think about any sense pleasure, this is true.

- Many people value sex very highly. But how long can one keep that pleasure going? Most of the sexual pleasure is gained by just thinking about it; it is mostly mind-made. One needs to think about this carefully. How much time does one spend “fantasizing” versus “actually having sex”?
- Even if we eat the most delicious food in the whole world, it will not taste good after the stomach gets full. But we keep thinking about that “great experience” of eating that meal many times afterwards. Then we form an urge to do it again.
- This “feeling of unsatisfactoriness” or even feeling of “something is missing” is “*atteeyathi*”. The dog may get tired of chewing the bone and may leave it alone, but after a while the urge comes back and he is at it again.

8. Even if we are fully content and lying on a comfortable couch, we may get a “feeling of unfulfillment”, that something is “missing”. We then get the idea, “to go and watch a movie” or to “drop by a friend’s place to chat”. Then we have to get in the car and drive there. We do not even feel the burden associated with getting dressed and driving because our minds are focused on the pleasure of “watching the movie” or “having a good time with the friend”. And after that session, we have to drive back and if it was a bad movie we might even get a bit depressed.

- This is “*atteeyathi*”. Just like a dog that incessantly is chewing on a dry bone to get a mental satisfaction and eventually gets tired doing it, this is what we have been doing life after life (if born in the human realm). Many people eventually realize this at old age, but then it could be too late to do anything about it.
- As one gets old, the ability to derive pleasure from such activities goes down. If you have friends, relatives, parents, or grandparents who had enjoyed life at younger age, but now are in distressful situations it is easy to see what happened to them over the years. Now they do not have the energy to try to do all those activities and even if they do to some extent, their sense faculties have degraded to the point of not providing much sense pleasures.
- But most people still keep thinking back about the pleasures they had when they were young. This may even prompt them to seek ways to “somehow get those experiences back”. And when that fails depression sets in.

9. As the mind realizes the burdens of the “incessant distress”, and that one has endured all that for no real benefit, it will gladly give up those burdens and the mind will start losing those cravings automatically. This is the key to “giving up unnecessary attachments”; see, “[The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#)”.

- That post discusses how we encounter suffering when *anicca* inevitably leads to unexpected “changes” in things we value; this is *viparinama dukkha*. We encounter more suffering by trying to overcome the effects due to *viparinama dukkha* by doing more *saṅkhāra*, and that is *saṅkhāra dukkha*. And if we do “bad types of *saṅkhāra*” or *apunnabhi saṅkhāra*, they lead to rebirths in realms where direct suffering or *dukkha dukkha* is unbearable. Thus all types of sufferings eventually arise due to *anicca*.

10. Those are key concept to meditate (or contemplate) on. This is real *vipassana bhāvanā*.

- However, it is important to make sure one starts abstaining from at the least the conventional five precepts and possibly the “BIG EIGHT” discussed in the “[2. The Basics in Meditation](#)”. Otherwise, the mind will not be calm enough to grasp these concepts. The difference between “book knowledge” and “developing *anicca saññā*” will become slowly clear as one proceeds.
- That is why reading, listening, and contemplating on Dhamma concepts is so crucial. This is one component of the *Saptha Bojjanga (dhamma vicaya)* and one of the *Satara Iddhipada (vimansa)*. **When concepts become clear, one will automatically develop *anicca saññā*.**
- And with time, one will be able to grasp it better. One will “start feeling” things in one’s own body; see, “[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)”.
- This is a process that goes all the way to the *Arahanthood*. It is said that one truly understands *anicca* only at the *Arahant* stage. But our goal here is to at least to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage. And that CAN BE DONE in this very life, as I discussed my own experience in the above post.

11. Finally, if anyone has spent long times — may be years — meditating on “impermanence” without results, it would be worthwhile to spend some time meditating on the “*anicca*” nature. I know by experience that will make a big difference if one does it right.

- I spent 4-5 years contemplating on wrong *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anatta* (and a few other things like the wrong *ānāpāna sati bhāvanā*). I really believe that the very first *desanā* that exposed me to correct interpretation of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* changed my progress instantaneously. It was a profound effect.
- It is also important to realize that what ultimately matters is not just a “good feeling” or even getting to *jhānās*, but whether one has removed “*gathi*” suitable to be born in the *apāyas*. Thus one should be able to look back at one’s life and see significant improvements in getting rid of greed, hate, ignorance; see, “[Transition to Noble Eightfold Path](#)”.

Next, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – According to Some Key Suttas](#)”

3.3.8 Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – According to Some Key Suttas

Revised: January 20, 2016; December 3, 2017; January 26, 2018

The key to understanding the First Noble Truth (*Dukkha Sacca*; pronounced “dukkha sachcha”) is to understand the Three Characteristics of “this wider world of 31 realms”, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. Let us discuss how these concepts are presented in some key *suttas*.

Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta

1. How suffering arises from *Anicca* is explicitly described in the very first *sutta*, [WebLink: suttacentral: Dhamma Cakka Pavattāna Sutta \(SN 56.11\)](#). Here is the text from the *sutta*:

Idam kho pana, bhikkhave, dukkham ariyasaccam:

jātipi dukkhā, jarāpi dukkhā, byādhipi dukkho, maraṇampi dukkhāṃ, appiyehi sampayogo dukkho, piyehi vippayogo dukkho, yampicchaṃ na labhati tampi dukkhāṃ—saṃkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā.

2. Bhikkhus, What is the Noble Truth of Suffering?

- “*jati api dukkha*” means “birth of something that is not liked by one causes suffering”. “*Jara pi dukkha*” means, “decay of something that is liked causes suffering”, and “*maranan pi dukkha*” means, “Death of a liked causes suffering”.
- Then comes, “*..appiyehi sampayogo dukkho, piyehi vippayogo dukkho*” meaning, “it brings sorrow when a loved one has to depart, and it also brings sorrow to be with a hated person”.

3. And then the summary of all that: “*yamp’icchaṃ (yam pi icchaṃ) na labhati tam’pi dukkham*”. Here we see, “*iccha*” that we encountered in both *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* and also in *paticca samuppāda* (“*pati+iccha*” “*sama+uppada*”). And “*labhati*” means “get”.

- Thus, “If one does not get what one likes, that leads to suffering”. This phrase has everything condensed. This is *anicca*. It does not say suffering arises because of impermanence.
- This is explained in more detail in “[Does the First Noble Truth Describe only Suffering?](#)”.
- It should be noted that *icca* and *iccha* (ඉච්ච and ඉච්ඡ in Sinhala) are used interchangeably in the *Tipitaka* under different *suttas*, as you can see below. The word “*iccha*” with the emphasis on the last syllable is used to indicate “strong *icca*” or “strong attachment”.

Anatta Lakkhana Sutta

1. In the second *sutta*, the [WebLink: suttacentral: Anatta Lakkhana Sutta \(SN 22.59\)](#) (which was also delivered to the five ascetics within a fortnight of the first *sutta*), the questions that the Buddha was asking the ascetics and their responses are given:

“*Taṃ kiṃ maññatha, bhikkhave, rūpaṃ niccaṃ vā aniccaṃ vā*”ti?

- “*Aniccaṃ, bhante*”.

“*Yaṃ panāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vā taṃ sukhaṃ vā*”ti?

- “*Dukkhaṃ, bhante*”.

“*Yaṃ panāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariṇāmadhammaṃ, kallaṃ nu taṃ samanupassitum: ‘etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā’*”ti?

- “*No hetam, bhante*”.

2. The first question was, “*Bhikkhus: is any rūpa nicca or anicca?*” or “*Bhikkhus: can any rūpa (material entity) be kept to one’s satisfaction or it cannot be kept to one’s satisfaction?*”

And the *bhikkhus* answer: “It cannot be kept to one’s satisfaction, Venerable Sir”.

- Here it is to be noted that “*rūpa*” can be either internal or external. There are many *rūpa* in this world that are “permanent” at least compared to our lifetimes. For example, an item made of gold or a diamond can last millions of years. But neither can be kept to “our satisfaction” since we will have to give them up when we die.
3. The second question is: “Will such an entity lead to suffering or happiness?” And the *bhikkhus* answer: “Suffering, Venerable Sir”.
- Here it is important to see that if an entity is not permanent, whether that will lead to suffering: How many people suffered when Bin Laden got killed? Only those who liked him to live! Many people rejoiced in his demise; this is also discussed in detail in “[Does the First Noble Truth Describe only Suffering?](#)”.
4. The third question is: “Will such an entity that cannot be kept to one’s satisfaction, that leads to suffering, and is a *viparināma dhamma*, should be considered as “myself or mine, or has any **substance**?” And the *bhikkhus* answer: “No reason to think so, Venerable Sir”.
5. Here we need to pay attention to the sequence of the three questions. The Buddha was pointing out that no “*rūpa*” can be kept to our satisfaction, therefore that (**i.e., forming attachment to such *rūpa***) will lead to suffering, and therefore there is no reason to consider of them having any substance. ***Anicca leads to [dukkhā] and to [anattā], because we have nicca saññā about such (anicca) rūpa.***
- This was pointed out as “*Yadaniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ; yaṃ dukkhaṃ tadanattā.*” in the *Ajjhattanica Sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya* as was pointed out in “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.
6. The Buddha was talking about “*rūpa*” in general, which could be external objects or one’s own body (which are included in the *pañcakkhandha* or the twelve *āyatanas*, i.e., anything in the “whole world”).
- The second question is, “any such entity, whether in one’s own body or in the outside world will eventually lead to suffering or happiness?”, and the *bhikkhus* answer “Suffering”.
 - Then the third question is “If my body is such an entity, is it suitable to call it mine? if an external object is such entity, is it suitable to be called mine? and is there any **substance** in any of those?”
 - Thus “[*attā*]” at the end meant “**substantial or fruitful or worthy**”. Thus what is meant is EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD is without substance, i.e., [*anattā*], which is the opposite of [*attā*]. This is why it is “*sabbe dhamma anattā*”, even the *nama gotta* that do not decay do not have any substance; see, “[Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra \(Sankata\)](#)”
7. Thus it is important to realize that the Buddha was not referring to just one’s body; *anicca* applies to all *saṅkhāra* and *sankata*. Nothing in this world can be kept to our satisfaction: “*Sabbe saṅkhāra anicca*”.
- This becomes clear when we think about it in depth. There are many external objects in this world that do not decay within our lifetimes: gold or diamonds are two good examples.
 - We may not be able to keep a gold necklace to “our liking”, for example if have to sell it to raise money if we go bankrupt. But the point is that even if we do not lose it due to such an event, we WILL lose it when we die. Either the desired object or our body WILL BE lost, i.e., we do not have the ability to maintain ANYTHING to our satisfaction.
 - Thus *nicca/anicca* is not “permanent/impermanent”, rather “can be /cannot be kept our satisfaction”. If suffering arises because of impermanence, then suffering cannot be stopped from arising, because impermanence is a fact of nature and CANNOT be altered.
 - The “*anicca*” character does not reside in the object or the *rūpa*. It is in our mind. We CAN remove the wrong perception of *nicca* from our minds and CAN stop suffering from arising in future rebirths.
 - **Then the same set of questions are repeated for *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa*.** None of those can be maintained to our satisfaction, i.e., they all are *anicca*. Thus we

eventually suffer, and thus all struggles to keep them to our satisfaction are in vain and therefore, we are helpless in this rebirth process. This is *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

8. We strive to accumulate “good stuff” but will have to leave them all behind at death. When we go through the rebirth process, we just repeat this process in each life.

- In most rebirths the suffering is great, and in some there is happiness (human, *deva* and *brahma* realms), but such “good rebirths” are encountered very rarely. The Buddha said that the lowest four realms are the “home base” for the living beings; they may visit other realms once-in-a-while, but always have to come back and spend most time in the home base.
- This is why the Buddha said this never-ending process of the cycle of rebirths, where we suffer so much, is fruitless and one is truly helpless. This is *anatta*.
- It does not make sense to say because of *anicca* and *dukkha*, we have “no-self” or “no-soul”. Rather, as long as we have the wrong perception of *anicca* about anything in “this world”, we are subject to suffering and thus we are truly helpless, *anatta*.

Girimananda Sutta

1. [WebLink: suttacentral: Girimananda Sutta \(AN 10.60\)](#) is another key *sutta* in the *Tipitaka* that describes *anicca* in the deepest sense. The Buddha delivered this *sutta* to Ven. Ananda (for him to recite to Ven. Girimananda who was in pain due to an ailment). Here is a key phrase (in the middle of the *sutta*):

Katamā cānanda (ca Ananda), sabbasaṅkhāresu anicchā saññā?

Idhānanda (Idha Ananda) bhikkhu sabbasaṅkhāresu aṭṭiyati harāyati jigucchati.

Ayaṃ vuccatānanda (vuccati Ananda), sabbasaṅkhāresu anicchā saññā.

Translated:

“Ananda, What is the (correct) perception of all *saṅkhāra*?

Ananda, all *saṅkhāra* are like meatless bones, without substance, to be rejected like urine and feces

That is Ananda, how one should perceive all *saṅkhāra*“

2. Here the Buddha is describing the characteristics of any and all *saṅkhāra* (“*sabba*” is “all”).

- “*Attī*” is “bone”. A dog really enjoys chewing a bone. But a bone has no nutrition or taste. Most of the time, the dog’s gum starts bleeding and that is what it tastes. But the dog does not realize that and values a bone very highly.
- “*Hara*” is “substance”, and “*harayati*” is without substance.
- “*Jee*” and “*goo*” are the Pāli and Sinhala words for “urine” and “feces”. As we already know, “*icca*” (Pronounced “*ichcha*”) means “like”. Thus “*jigucchati*” (pronounced “*jiguchchathi*”) means “it is no different than liking urine or feces”. All (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra* should be treated as such things.

3. Another key point here is to note that the Buddha was talking about the “*anicca saññā*“, where *saññā* or perception is one of the main mental factors or *cetasika*. *Anicca* is a **perception** in our minds as we pointed out in the discussion on the *Anatta Lakkhana Sutta* above.

- Impermanence is a physical reality of anything in the universe. Scientists know quite well that **nothing** in our universe, including the universe itself, is permanent; but that does not provide them with the perception of *anicca*. No scientist can attain *Nibbāna* via comprehending impermanence.

4. **Thus it is quite clear that *anicca* has nothing to do with “impermanence”.** Once one understands the true nature of the world, one will realize that any *saṅkhāra* (thought, speech, and

action that is focused on attaining pleasurable things) is not to be valued, because none can be maintained to one's satisfaction and will only lead to suffering at the end.

- Actually, the fruitlessness of ALL *SANKHARA* is perceived only at the *Arahant* stage. We cannot even beginning to comprehend that yet. This is why an *Arahant* is said to see the burden associated with even breathing (which is a *kaya saṅkhāra*). Anything we do to live in this world is a *saṅkhāra*.
- **Initially, we should try to comprehend the unsuitability of *apunnabhi abhisankhāra*, those associated with immoral actions. Since we can grasp the consequences of such immoral actions, we CAN get our minds to reject them. This is enough to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage.**
- Once we do that, our cleansed minds can begin to see the fruitlessness of *punnabhi abhisankhāra*, and then even the pleasures of *jhānic* states (*anenjhabhi abhisankhāra*).

Icca Sutta (Samyutta Nikāya)

It should be “[WebLink: Suttacentral: Icca Sutta](#)” (pronounced “ichchā sutta”) according to the convention we have used. This *sutta* clearly describes what “*icca*” (and thus what *anicca*) is:

“*Kenassu bajjhatī loko, kissa vinayāya muccati;*

Kissassu vippahānena, sabbaṃ chindati bandhanan”*ti.*

“*Ichchāya bajjhatī loko, icchāvinayāya muccati;*

Ichchāya vippahānena, sabbaṃ chindati bandhanan”*ti.*

Translated:

“What binds the world together? How does one get released? How can one gain release?

The world is bound by *iccha*, one becomes free by losing *iccha*, one becomes free of all bonds by losing *iccha*“

The word “*icca*” means “liking” and is closely related to “*nicca*”. Of course “*nicca*” means the perception that one can maintain those things to one's satisfaction (and “*anicca*” means the opposite). The perception of *nicca* leads to *icca*, i.e., one believes that worldly things can provide everlasting happiness and thus one likes to hold on to them. Just like an octopus grabs things with all its eight legs and will not let go, humans (and other beings too) grab onto worldly things with the hope of enjoying them.

- It should be noted that in this *sutta*, the word “***iccha***” is used instead of “*icca*” to emphasize that “**strong attachment**” as in the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta* discussed above.

The Key Problem with Sutta Interpretations

There are many, many *suttas* in the *Tipitaka* that describe *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. But if one starts off with the wrong interpretations, some of those *suttas* can be interpreted the wrong way, because the *suttas* themselves are not designed to describe the concepts in detail. Rather the *suttas* provide brief descriptions or the *niddesa* version, and commentaries (Sinhala *atthakatha*) were supposed to provide the detailed (*patiniddesa*) descriptions; see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)“.

- The root cause for the confusion has been the acceptance of the *Visuddhimagga* by Buddhaghosa as THE key commentary by the *Theravāda* tradition.
- Nowadays, most *bhikkhus* do not read the *Tipitaka* or the remaining three original commentaries that are in the *Tipitaka*; they just follow what is in the *Visuddhimagga*. This has been the single-most obstacle for people attaining *Nibbāna* for the past many hundreds of years.
- Luckily, we have three of the original commentaries (Sinhala *atthakatha*) preserved in the *Tipitaka*; see, “[Misinterpretations of Buddha Dhamma](#)” and “[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)“.

However, there is a *sutta* which clearly states that the Buddha rejected both “self” and “no-self”, even according to conventional translations.

The “[WebLink: suttacentral: Channa Sutta \(SN 22.90\)](#)” clearly says *anatta* does not mean “no-self”, even in a “traditional” English translation: “[WebLink: accesstoinsight: Channa Sutta: To Channa \(SN 22.90\)](#)”: “Everything exists”: That is one extreme. “Everything doesn’t exist”: That is a second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathagata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness. From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form. From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media. From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

- “Everything doesn’t exist” in the above translates to “no-self” when applied to a “living being”. As far as a “person” is concerned, “self” is one extreme and “no-self” is the other extreme: it is wrong to say either “a person exists” or “a person does not exist”.
- So, even though most *Theravada* websites (including the above sites) translate “*anatta*” as “no-self”, it is clear from their own translation above that the Buddha rejected this “no-self” view.

Next, “[If Everything is Anicca Should We Just give up Everything?](#)“,

3.3.9 If Everything is Anicca Should We Just give up Everything?

1. Anicca means “we cannot maintain anything to our satisfaction in the LONG RUN”. The time scale of existence is an important factor when we contemplate the significance and implications of this fundamental characteristic of nature.

- So, the question is, “if nothing can be maintained to our satisfaction, what is the point in spending so much time in learning, getting a decent job, making plans for businesses, etc.?”. The question seems to be reasonable until we look at the “big picture”.

2. During the life, we do see many instances where we can attain certain things (pass exams, get jobs, initiate successful businesses, have a comfortable life, etc) and be happy about such achievements; of course there are many times we encounter unexpected things too (coming down with health problems, traffic accidents, floods, hurricanes, loss of jobs, etc).

- That is the nature of existence as a human. It is a mixed bag, at least until we get to the old age; then it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain things (especially our bodies) to our satisfaction, and of course at death we have to leave everything behind whether we like it or not.
- In the realms above the human in fact, life is even more predictable and enjoyable, that is of course until death comes calling.
- But the real problems encountered in the four realms below the human realm. It is increasingly difficult to “maintain things to one’s satisfaction” in lower realms. Animals are truly helpless, especially the vast majority that lives in the wild. There are no “old animals” in the wild; they either get sick and die or even worse: they get eaten up as soon as they slow down a bit.
- There is no happiness at all in the lowest realm, the *niraya* (“*ni*”+“*ra*” means without ANY happiness).

3. Thus the main reason why “we cannot maintain things to our satisfaction in the LONG RUN” is because all beings spend most of their lives in the lower four realms; see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)”.

4. Now we can examine the question in terms of this “big picture”. If we do give up everything, we will probably die a miserable death (because we will be poor, unhealthy, etc because we would not be

able to even support ourselves), and be born most likely in a lower realm. That it will make the situation much worse.

- We do need to contemplate on this situation. If one thinks through this line of thoughts, one can see that one is really helpless in this cycle of rebirths, which is the third characteristic of existence, *anatta*. Until a Buddha comes to this world and shows humans this “big picture”, AND shows how to get out of it, no one is able to escape this trap.
- The only solution is to at least attain the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna* in this life. We MAY have some *kammic* energy left for one or more human lives (see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”), but this COULD BE the last for a long while, which could be billions of years. Even if we get another human birth, we do not know under what circumstances; it could be somewhere Buddha Dhamma is not readily accessible.

5. There is another point that we need to consider regarding this question. We have become indebted to numerous beings in this journey of rebirths, and thus we have debts to pay back. Having all these debts is a hindrance to attain any stage of *Nibbāna*; see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”.

6. Therefore, instead of abandoning our families (to whom we owe the most), we need to do our utmost to make sure they are well-off. We also need to make sure that we do not become dependent on the society (and thus accumulate more debt). Even in this life, we depend on others for so many things: we are indebted to our teachers, friends, as well to many unknown people who contribute to providing us with essentials to sustain life; we all are interconnected, and have responsibilities for each other. We have “to do our part” to live in a society.

- Therefore, part of the solution is to first prepare oneself (or one’s children if one is a parent) with a good education so that supporting oneself (and a family) is possible. Furthermore, a good education helps with understanding Dhamma too. And if one can make a lot of money (by honest means) then one can do many meritorious deeds too, thereby helping oneself spiritually as well.
- In any case, giving up everything and hiding in a forest will not solve the problem of existence. But there are some who have a *sansaric* tendency to abandon the “householder life”. What I am saying here is for the majority of people, not for everyone: Of course we need to sustain the *bhikkhus* who spend all their time for the benefit of others as well as themselves.

7. Therefore, what needs to be done is to understand the true nature of existence and realize that the ONLY solution is to try the best to attain at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. Then one becomes free of rebirths in the lower four realms forever. This is THE solution to the problem.

In order to do that we need to,

1. Fulfil our obligations to our families, friends, and the society in general,
2. Make our best effort to learn pure Dhamma and attain the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*.

When one does this, one will become happy, not depressed, about the outlook. One has understood the problem and knows what to do about it. And when one starts working on it, one’s confidence will grow because one can feel the difference in oneself. One will become even more determined AND energetic, not just to save oneself, but also to help out the others.

Next, “[The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#)“,

3.3.10 Why are Tilakkhana not Included in 37 Factors of Enlightenment?

April 1, 2016

1. It is possible that one may ask, “If *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* are so important, why are they not included in the 37 Factors of Enlightenment?”. After all, one attains *Nibbāna* via cultivating the 37 Factors of Enlightenment (also called 37 *Bōdhipākshika Dhamma*, or the Dhamma concepts that takes one to *Bōdhi* or “*bhava*” + “*uddha*“, i.e., to *Nibbāna*; “*pākshika*” means “on the side of”).

- The key to the answer is that there are two 37 Factors of Enlightenment, one is mundane (*lokiya*) and one is transcendental (*lokottara*). We have previously discussed that there are two eightfold paths as well: one mundane and one transcendental; see, “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)”.
- The mundane versions are followed by those who do not comprehend the *Tilakkhana* (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*). Thus *Tilakkhana* are preconditions (prerequisites) in order to be able to follow the Noble Path.

2. This is related to the fact that the 37 Factors of Enlightenment were there when Prince Siddhartha was born. The existence of the mundane version of the 37 Factors of Enlightenment or eightfold paths is possible only if there has been a previous Buddha in the same *mahā kalpa*, where a *mahā kalpa* is the time span of an “Earth system” or more precisely a solar system with an Earth-like planet supporting human life (an aeon).

- All Buddhas discover the *Tilakkhana*, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, etc by their own efforts. But since these Dhamma concepts encompass Nature’s laws, all Buddhas keep re-discovering the same Dhamma.
- However, like anything else in this world, a “Buddha *sāsana*” or the “original Dhamma preached by a Buddha” lasts only for a certain time. For Buddha Gotama, his *Sāsana* is supposed to last only 5000 years (when the human lifespan is about 100 years), and we are half-way through.
- There have been four Buddhas on this Earth (which formed about 4.6 billion years ago), and Buddha Gotama was the fourth. The three Buddhas preceding him were: Kakusandha, Konagama, and Kassapa; one more Buddha, Buddha Maitreya, is supposed to appear long after the Gotama Buddha *Sāsana* disappears.

3. It is said that a Buddha comes to this world to reveal three words and eight letters (in Pāli): “*Attakkara theenapada Sambuddhena pakasitha, na hi sila vatan hotu uppajjatthi Tathagata*”, which means, “a Buddha (*Tathagata*) is born NOT just to show how to live a moral life, but to reveal three words to the world”.

- These three words are: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

4. When a given Buddha *Sāsana* fades away, it does not disappear abruptly. What happens is that the true meanings gradually get lost, and are replaced by easier to grasp, mundane meanings; **the first to lose the true meanings are *anicca, dukkha, anatta***. Without them, all other concepts remain there with mundane meanings.

- When the Kassapa Buddha *Sāsana* faded away, most of the concepts survived only with mundane meanings and that is why most terms like *kamma* and even *saptha bojjanga* survived up to the time of Prince Siddhartha’s birth.
- In fact, even during a given Buddha *Sāsana*, the true meanings of *Tilakkhana* get lost for periods of time, but are revived by *Jati Sotapannas* (when one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, it is not lost in future lives; so, if one is reborn human, he/she will be a *Jati Sotāpanna*). Thus during a given Buddha *Sāsana*, such *Jati Sotapannas* keep bringing back the true Dhamma until the end of that Buddha *Sāsana*.
- After that no more *Jati Sotapannas* are born and true Dhamma disappears from this world (or more correctly from this Earth). Again, the mundane versions may survive for long times.
- Then the world has to await the appearance of a new Buddha to reveal the true meanings of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. But a *mahā kalpa* with five Buddhas (like ours) is a very rare event and it is called *Mahā Badda Kalpa*.
- More common is to have no Buddhas or just a single Buddha in a given *mahā kalpa*. **For example, there were 30 *mahā kalpas* before this *mahā kalpa* where there was not even a single Buddha present.**

5. This is why the Buddha emphasized that there is a very brief window of time to attain *Nibbāna* (at least to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage).

- Time span of each Buddha *Sāsana* is different because the average lifetime of humans keep changing. Gotama Buddha *Sāsana* is supposed to be 5000 years long, with the average lifetime of a human being about 100 years. The human lifetime during the Buddha *Sāsana* of Buddha Kassapa was about 20, 000 years; thus we can guess that *Sāsana* lasted about $20,000 \times 50 =$ about a million years.
- Therefore, even though there will be one more Buddha appearing in this *mahā kalpa*, the total time during which one could be potentially exposed to Buddha Dhamma would be only a few million years.
- Our Earth (i.e., the Solar system) may last a few more billion years, so we can say that the lifetime of this *mahā kalpa* is roughly 8-10 billion years or 8000 to 10,000 million years. Only a few million years, at most, is the “short window” that is available to work towards *Nibbāna*.
- Of course, one needs to be fortunate enough to be born human on this Earth during the Maitreya Buddha *Sāsana* to get the next opportunity to work towards *Nibbāna*. This is an extremely unlikely event for any given person.
- Also see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)“. Even when one is born human, most *mahā kalpas* (aeons) will have no Buddhas present to teach the way to *Nibbāna*.

6. Going back to our main discussion, when Buddha Kakusandha appeared first in this world (i.e., on this Earth), there had not been a previous Buddha on this Earth. Therefore, concepts like eightfold path, *saptha bojjanga*, 37 Factors of Enlightenment (or terms like *kamma* and rebirth) **were not there even by name**.

- Now it is clear why those concepts were there before Buddha Gotama (i.e., when Prince Siddhartha was born). After Buddha Kassapa’s *Sāsana* faded away, mundane interpretations of key concepts passed down through generations (initially through *vedic* traditions which then transitioned to the Hindu religion; of course most concepts survived only by the name).
- Therefore, not only concepts like *kamma*, rebirth, the five (and eight) precepts were there when Prince Siddhartha was born, but also *saptha bojjanga* and ways to attain *jhānas*. Of course, those meanings were mundane and the *jhānas* were *anariya jhānas*. Without *Tilakkhana*, it is not possible to attain *Ariya jhānas*.

7. The difference that the Buddha Gotama made was to bring back the true Dhamma that is based on the true nature of this world, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. But even during a given Buddha *Sāsana*, the true Dhamma starts to fade away from time to time (**people have tendency to embrace the easy and mundane version**) and needs to be revived by a *jāti Sotāpanna*.

- And that is what is happening even at the present time. The true Dhamma of Buddha Gotama had again started to fade away, and a *jāti Sotāpanna* in Sri Lanka is bringing back the correct or *lokottara* version now. Within the past 2500 years, it had happened at least one time before, and we will discuss that when the time is appropriate.

8. The difference between the two versions of the 37 Factors of Enlightenment or the eightfold paths is that the Noble versions are based on *Tilakkhana*: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. Their true meaning is that it is fruitless, tiring, and often dangerous, to keep struggling to attain happiness in this world; that is the real meaning of *dukkha* or suffering. And *Dukkha Sacca* (First Noble Truth) is that this *dukkha* (suffering) can be overcome; see the second part of the following post: “[Anatta and Dukkha – True Meanings](#)“.

- The mundane versions can be grasped by a normal human who is unaware of the true *Tilakkhana* or the true nature of this world. The transcendental or *lokottara* versions can be comprehended only with an understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

- Without an understanding of the *anicca* nature, we perceive that sense pleasures are good, and are worth striving for. But when one starts comprehending the *anicca* nature, one realizes that suffering is actually rooted in sense pleasures; see, “[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana](#)”.

9. But the *Tilakkhana* (starting with *anicca* nature) are hard to comprehend. It helps to understand and follow the mundane versions of Dhamma concepts first; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)” and the post “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)” referred to in that chart.

- Not everyone can grasp the deeper meanings of the *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* right way. It takes a significant effort. After all, a *Sotāpanna* is better off than an Emperor or a King (see, “[Why a Sotāpanna is Better off than any King, Emperor, or a Billionaire](#)”), and one should not think it can be done easily (even though it may be easier for those who happen to have cultivated the Path in recent previous births).

10. To summarize, the critical difference between the two types of 37 Factors of Enlightenment is the following:

- The mundane (*lokiya*) 37 Factors of Enlightenment are cultivated with the goal of leading a “moral life” and to seek “good rebirths” in future lives.
- The transcendental (*lokottara*) 37 Factors of Enlightenment are cultivated with the goal of attaining *Nibbāna*, AFTER one realizes that this world of 31 realms has nothing but suffering to offer in the long run.
- The 37 factors are named the same in both versions, but each term has a deeper meaning in the *lokottara* version, since it has *Nibbāna* as the goal.
- **As one starts to grasp the meanings of *Tilakkhana*, one will automatically transition over to the *lokottara* version.** There is no need to worry about which version one is cultivating. **The difference is not in the terms, but in grasping the *anicca* (and thus *dukkha* and *anatta*) nature.**
- Furthermore, it is not necessary to cultivate (or even to memorize) all 37 factors. **When one cultivates even one factor, all 37 grow together; but it is good to know what those factors and how they work together.** The 37 factors are listed in “[37 Factors of Enlightenment](#)”.

11. There are a lot of things to contemplate about in the above material, so I will continue this discussion on the 37 factors in a follow-up post. Some of the ideas discussed above may seem surprising (but also illuminating to those who may have been wondering about how terms like *kamma* and *saptha bojjanga* were in usage before Buddha Gotama). They will turn out to be supported by future evidence and also by the inter-consistency that I always try to emphasize.

- Even though we may not have all the evidence of historical facts (they keep emerging slowly), there is no need to wait for fool-proof archaeological evidence.
- One can analyze and examine the “bigger picture” of the Buddha, the soundness of Abhidhamma, and the solid inter-consistency of Buddha Dhamma to realize that the above explanation must be correct. Of course, we will discuss much more details in future posts.
- In many areas, I have been able to publish only a small fraction of material due to time limitations, and because I also keep learning things. I will not publish anything that I have doubts about. It is immensely satisfying to be able to figure out a “missing piece” and to be able to “see the bigger picture” with more clarity. It is also amazing how deep, consistent, and wonderful Buddha Dhamma is.

3.3.11 Two Versions of 37 Factors of Enlightenment

April 8, 2016

1. In the previous post, we discussed the fact that there are two versions of 37 Factors of Enlightenment as well as two versions of eightfold paths. Here we continue that discussion.

2. Throughout the website, I have tried to make the case that there are three broad categories that people can be divided into :

- Those who have one or more of the ten types of *micca diṭṭhi*; see, “[Three Kinds of Diṭṭhi, Eightfold Paths, and Samādhī](#)“.
- Those who have been exposed to some form of Buddha Dhamma, have removed *micca diṭṭhi* and thereby have the **mundane (*lokiya*) version of *sammā diṭṭhi***.
- Then there are those who have **transcendental (*lokottara*) *Sammā Diṭṭhi***, i.e., they truly comprehend the true nature of this of 31 realms (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*), i.e., that there is hidden suffering in what we perceive to be enjoyment.

3. When one is exposed to Buddha Dhamma, one can understand the need for the wider world view with 31 realms, and that beings are born in all those realms due to their actions (*kamma*). This leads to getting rid of *micca diṭṭhi*; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)” and “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)”.

- When one gets rid of *micca diṭṭhi*, one has the mundane *sammā diṭṭhi*: One knows that in order to avoid future births in the *apāyas* (four lowest realms) one needs to avoid immoral deeds (*akusala kamma*) and to cultivate moral deeds.
- With mundane *sammā diṭṭhi*, one also strives to accumulate *kusala* by doing *punna kriya* or good deeds; **this leads to gaining *āyusa* (long life), *vanna* (healthiness) , *sukha* (mundane happiness), *bala* (wealth) and , *paññā* (wisdom) in future lives. That enables one to grasp *Tilakkhana* in future lives, if one fails to do so in this life.** Normally, those who are born with *tihetuka patisandhi* will have those qualities in this life. I will discuss this in the future post.

4. Now let us talk specifically about the **mundane 37 Factors of Enlightenment**, which is tied to the mundane *sammā diṭṭhi*. There is no specific order because they are all inter-related. But for convenience, we could use the following guide:

When one knows what is right (moral or *kusala*) and what is not (immoral or *akusala*), there are four obvious things to do. These are called **satara Sammappadhāna**, which is conventionally translated as **Four Supreme Efforts**. One exerts to:

- **00 prevent immoral qualities that have not yet arisen from arising**
- **01 abandon immoral qualities that have arisen**
- **10 initiate moral qualities that have not yet arisen to arise**
- **11 maintain and cultivate moral qualities that have arisen**

[compare [37 Factors of Enlightenment](#) item 4]

-
1. Not to let an unwholesome thought arise which has not yet arisen.
 2. Not to let an unwholesome thought continue which has already arisen.
 3. To make a wholesome thought arise which has not yet arisen.
 4. To make a wholesome thought continue which has already arisen.

They can briefly be expressed as "avoiding," "overcoming," "developing," and "maintaining," and are called the four supreme efforts.

By the way, these are intimately related to *virīya* in some other categories in the 37 factors: *Satara Iddhipada*, *Panca Indriya*, *Panca Bala*, *Saptha Bojjanga*, and the Noble Eightfold Path.

5. In a way, one could make a whole lot of progress (whether mundane or *lokottara*) by focusing on the *Satara Sammappadhāna*. The word *sammappadhana* comes from “*san*” + “*ma*” + “*padhāna*“. We

have previously discussed “*sammā*” or “*san*” + “*ma*” means getting rid of defilements; see, “[What is “San”?](#)”. In Pāli or Sinhala, “*padhāna*” or “*pradhāna*” means dominant or leading. *Satara* is of course four.

- Therefore, *Satara Sammappadhāna* means four key methods for getting rid of defilements, i.e., for cleansing the mind.
- If we can get to the habit of following the four guidelines listed in #4, then we will be cleansing our minds with time.

6. *Satara Satipaṭṭhāna* (Four Foundations of Mindfulness) helps one with the four tasks listed in #4 by being vigilant. These are discussed in detail in several posts in the “[Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta](#)”.

- Basically, one keeps vigilant about committing immoral deeds with the body (*kāyanupassana*), and becomes good at not reacting automatically to feelings (*vedānāupassana*) or thoughts (*cittānupassana*), and when in doubt about the suitability of a given action one is about to do, compare with what is in the Dhamma (*dhammānupassana*).
- We have not discussed *dhammānupassana* in the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* yet, and we can go to great depths. But we can get a simple idea from what “dhamma” means: **Dhamma is what one bears**. If one engages in activities that lead to great suffering to another (say, rape or murder), then one has accumulated a “bad Dhamma” that will yield to corresponding results (*paticca samuppāda*) in future lives in the four lowest realms. Similarly, if one acts with kindness one grows Dhamma suitable to be born in human or higher realms.
- Thus one should think about the consequences of bad actions one is about to do and stop such an action; on the other hand one can be joyful about a good act that one is about to do or has done, and acquire much merits that will lead to *ayusa*, *vanna*, *sukha*, *bala* and *paññā* as discussed in #3 above.

7. Then there are *Satara Iddhipada* or the Four Bases of Mental Power; see, “[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)”. When someone has a firm goal, one develops *chanda* (liking for it), *citta* (think about it always), *virīya* (make efforts on it), and *vimansa* (finds out all relevant information).

- That completes the “three sets of fours” in the 37 Factors of Enlightenment. Next there are “two sets of fives”.

8. The *Panca Indriya* (Five Mental Faculties) are: *saddhā* (faith based on knowledge), *virīya* (effort), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhi* (calming of the mind), and *paññā* (wisdom).

- These five factors helps one move forward on the Dhamma path. It is like a vehicle with two sets of wheels with a driver: *Sati* is in front and can be compared to the driver; *saddhā* and *paññā* are the two front wheels, and *virīya* and *samādhi* are like the back wheels.
- All five needs to be cultivated together, in particular those sets need to be balanced: one cannot move forward with *saddhā* without *paññā*, or just by sheer effort (*virīya*) without feeling the benefits in *samādhi*.

9. When the *Panca Indriya* are cultivated, they grow and become *Panca Bala* or the Five Powers.

- These “two sets of five” are discussed in detail in “[Panca Indriya and Panca Bala – Five Faculties and Five Powers](#)”.

10. Next, there is *Saptha Bojjanga* or the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

- These seven factors are: *dhammavicaya* (which is closely related to *vimansa* and *paññā*), *virīya* (effort), *pīti* (joy), *passaddhi* (tranquility), *samādhi* (one-pointedness), and *upekkha* (equanimity).
- Here again, *sati* should be in front and the other six are better cultivated in two sets; see, “[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)”. In that post, the *Saptha Bojjanga* are those for the *lokottara* Path, but as I mentioned before, the procedures are the same with deeper meanings.

11. Finally, there is the **Ariya Attangika Magga** or the **Noble Eightfold Path**.

- Of course it has been discussed in many posts throughout the site. One could enter “Noble Eightfold Path” in the Search box on top right and get a list of relevant posts.
- A table in the post, “[37 Factors of Enlightenment](#)” shows how many of the factors in different categories overlap.
- Therefore, there is no need to try to cultivate each factor. It is much better to concentrate on one category: *Satara Samppadhana* or *Satara Satipaṭṭhāna* are common ones. When further along the Path, one could cultivate *Saptha Bojjanga*. Of course, the Noble Eightfold Path encompasses all.

12. The cultivation of the **mundane sammā diṭṭhi** together with contemplation of “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)” gradually moves one to **transcendental (lokottara) sammā diṭṭhi**.

- Then one will gradually switch over to the **lokottara 37 Factors of Enlightenment**. **Like a train smoothly switching railway tracks at a railroad switch, one will move over to the lokottara track at some point; it happens in one citta vithi and one may not even realize it for a while.** There is no need to worry about which one to be followed. As the meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* sink in, one will start seeing the deeper aspects of the 37 Factors of Enlightenment.

13. In fact, one will truly comprehend the Four Noble Truths starting from that point. One truly start grasping the First Noble Truth (*Dukkha Sacca*), only when one comprehends *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

- **Again, this is why the first three Noble Truths are also not listed under the 37 Factors of Enlightenment. In the previous post we discussed why the Tilakkhana are not included; see, “[Why are Tilakkhana not Included in 37 Factors of Enlightenment?](#)”.**
- Comprehension of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, at least to some extent, at the *Sotāpanna* stage helps one grasp the first Noble Truth, i.e., that this world is filled with suffering and that it can be overcome.
- The *lokottara* version of the 37 Factors of Enlightenment — which describes ways to get to *Nibbāna* or Enlightenment — requires the comprehension of the *Tilakkhana* and the first three Noble Truths first.
- Even before grasping *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, one can clearly see the dangers of a defiled mind, and be motivated to follow the mundane Path with mundane *sammā diṭṭhi*.

14. Therefore, it is better not to think much about which version of the 37 Factors of Enlightenment one is following. In fact, there is no need to think in terms of those factors.

- The key is to gradually purify one’s mind: “*ragakkhaya Nibbanan, dosakkhaya Nibbanan, Mohakkhaya Nibbanan*“, i.e., *Nibbāna* or *Niveema* or “cooling down” is achieved by getting rid of greed, hate, and ignorance in steps.
- It happens with even the mundane Path, but accelerates when switching over to the *lokottara* Path.
- The “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” section could be useful in following a systematic path. But it is essential to read different posts on varying subjects, starting at the “[Moral Living and Fundamentals](#)” section. It could be harder to grasp advanced topics, say, on “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)“, without grasping the fundamentals.

3.3.12 The Incessant Distress (“Peleema”) – Key to Dukkha Sacca

This post may not be suitable for those who are starting out. It could be really helpful to someone who has some level of understanding on *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

Most people think that the first Noble Truth on suffering is the physical suffering itself, i.e., they associate it with the *vedanā cetasika*. However, the Buddha said, “This Dhamma is unlike anything

that the world has ever seen”. **The real truth on suffering is the suffering that is hidden in what everyone perceives to be happiness.** It needs to be seen with the *paññā* (wisdom) *cetasika*.

- In fact it is difficult to understand the first Noble Truth on suffering for someone who is feeling the suffering. When someone is hurting with an ailment or when someone’s mind is too weak at old age, it is not possible to contemplate on the deep message of the Buddha, as we will see below.

Dukkha sacca (**pronounced, “sachcha”**) is the Truth of Suffering; *sacca* is truth.

- “*Peleeema*” is the Pāli (and Sinhala) word for distress, or hardship, where the first part “pe” rhymes like “pen”. This is part of the suffering we undergo even without realizing.

This is the kind of meditation (contemplation) one needs to do initially, even before starting on the *Ariya Ānāpānasati bhāvanā*. I cannot emphasize enough the importance in understanding the real message of the Buddha first.

1. Even though we do not realize it, we are stressed out ALL THE TIME, due to our desire to keep our six senses satisfied. Anyone who has had temporary relief from this incessant distress via a good meditation program knows this; it is called *niramisa sukha*. It is even more apparent if one can have a *jhānic* experience. Only when one gets into a *jhānic* state (where the focus is held on a single object) that one realizes that one had been under incessant stress all life.

- We do not realize this because this is the “baseline” for existence (our “comfort zone”); this is what we have done over innumerable rebirths.
- In order to get some relief from this incessant distress, we constantly think about ways to bring about periods of happiness. We are constantly thinking of ways to get a better house, car, or zillions of other “things” that are supposed to provide us with happiness, i.e., we are ALWAYS stressing out in order to adjust this “baseline comfort zone”. We move to a bigger house, buy a set of new furniture, work harder to get a better job etc.
- Furthermore, when we go a little bit below the current “comfort level”, we need to do work (*saṅkhāra*) to remedy that. For example, when we get hungry, we may have to prepare a meal or walk/drive to a restaurant to get a meal.
- Or, we may be sitting at home, satisfied after a meal, but then all of a sudden we again go “below the comfort level” for no apparent reason; we just become “bored” sitting at home, and think about going to movie. So, we get in the car drive to a movie theater.
- I am sure you can think about zillion other things we do all day long.

2. **This unending “urges” we constantly get is one type of *dukkha*: *dukkha dukkha*.** This is the repeated, unending bouts of suffering due to our desire to satisfy the six senses:

- Our senses are constantly asking for enjoyment: the eye wants to see beautiful things, the ear wants to listen to pleasurable sounds, the nose wants to smell nice fragrances, the tongue wants to taste sumptuous foods, the body wants luxurious touch, and the mind likes to think about pleasing thoughts. We have to WORK (*saṅkhāra*) to satisfy these needs. **This is a second type of *dukkha*: *saṅkhāra dukkha*.**
- In addition to doing work going to restaurant, travelling to a cinema, etc, we also need to do a job to make money for all those activities. This is doing constant work (*saṅkhāra*) to keep afloat.
- Most times, we get one urge on top another: we may want to eat and drink, we may want to watch a movie, but also may want company (gather friends).
- **We do not realize this suffering because our minds are focused on the end result, the pleasure we get after doing all that work.**
- You may be thinking, “What is he talking about? Isn’t this what the life is supposed to be?”. Exactly! We do not even realize this, because this is our “baseline” of existence. We have done this over and over extending to beginning-less time, and we PERCEIVE this to be “normal”.

3. What we perceive as happiness actually comes from the relief we get when the distress level is subdued via our efforts. All we do is to suppress the incessant “imbalances”. This is illustrated by the following example:

- Suppose a person has his hands bound behind him. Then someone hits him hard with a stick. He feels the pain. This is analogous to *dukkha dukkha*, the incessant battering imparted by nature.
- If someone starts massaging the place that was hit, the person feels good, and asks to be massaged more. But work must be done to impart this happiness. This is compared to the *saṅkhāra dukkha*. In this example, someone else is doing this work, but in real life each person is doing this extra work for himself. For example, when one is hungry, one needs to prepare food. Then he becomes happy after eating the food.
- Now if we ask this person if we should hit him again so that he can get the pleasure of the massage again, of course he will refuse. This is because he KNOWS the pain associated with the hit.
- On the other hand, we seek pleasure by working to satisfy our senses because we DO NOT know that there is a root cause for the baseline distress, and we DO NOT even realize that there is such a “baseline suffering” until a Buddha discovers it. This can be compared directly to the above example, if we can impart a hit on the person while he is under anesthetics. In that case, when he comes out of anesthesia, he feels the pain, but does not know what caused it.

4. The reality is that no matter what we do to please the senses, those pleasing moments are limited. Even if we can maintain that sense input for long times, the senses get tired after a while, and ask for a different kind of experience. Let us look at some examples:

- We can be lying in the most comfortable bed, but sooner or later, we start shifting and rolling trying to find a better posture, and eventually cannot stay in bed anymore.
- Even the most delicious food, we can eat only so much at a time. Not only that, if we eat the same kinds of foods for a week, we get tired of it regardless of how good they are, and want to try a different type of food.
- **This is called *viparināma dukkha*, another kind of *dukkha*.** This arises because NOTHING we do can maintain the status quo, anything that brings us pleasure is destroyed eventually.
- Many people think *viparināma dukkha* arises due to change or “*anitya*”. But “**change**” is “*parināma*”; “*viparināma*” is the “**unexpected change**”. If something changes as expected, that is easier to handle mentally; but due to “*anicca* nature” things happen unexpectedly and that causes “*viparināma dukkha*”.

5. In summary, (i) we are under constant stress due to ever-present demands to satisfy the six senses (*dukkha dukkha*) mainly due to *kamma vipāka*, (ii) we suffer more by working to get relief from such demands (*saṅkhāra dukkha*), and (iii) whatever satisfaction we get ends, either due to that “sense fulfilling process” breaking down unexpectedly OR us getting bored with it (*viparināma dukkha*).

- However, the longing for such temporary bouts of happiness keeps all three types of suffering hidden. The Buddha gave the following simile: if you attach a pile of straw in front of an ox is pulling a cart, the ox will keep moving forward eagerly trying to get to the straw; it does not even feel its effort, because it is only thinking about the reward that it thinks it is hoping to get very soon.
- This is our ignorance. We do not realize that no matter what we do, it is not possible to maintain anything to our satisfaction for long times. This is the characteristic of *anicca*.

6. The worse part is that in the lowest four realms, beings become truly helpless. There is very little a being can do (*saṅkhāra*) in order to make amends for the incessant *dukkha dukkha* in those realms. For example, a wild animal has very few choices when it gets hungry. If food is not found, it will go hungry for days with much suffering and eventually become prey to a stronger animal when it gets weak. In the wild, you do not see any old, sick animals; just as they

get weak, they are eaten by bigger, stronger animals. This is the true meaning of *anatta*; one becomes truly helpless, especially in those lower realms.

7. There is nowhere in the 31 realms where *dukkha* is absent. The three types of *dukkha* are present in the 31 realms in varying degrees:

- In the lowest realm, the *nirayas*, *dukkha dukkha* is predominant; there is only suffering, and no way to get relief by doing *saṅkhāra*. Even in the animal realm there is relative little *saṅkhāra dukkha*; they just suffer directly as pointed out above.
- In the higher realms (above the human realm), there is very little *dukkha dukkha* because those are “good births” that originated due to meritorious *kamma*. In these higher realms, it is the *viparināma dukkha* that ends the life there. Also, any *Brahma* has not overcome suffering in the lowest four realms in the future, unless the *Sotāpanna* stage has been attained.
- It is in the human realm that all three types of *dukkha* are present at significant levels; also, the *saṅkhāra dukkha* is highest compared to all the realms.

8. This is the First Noble Truth, *Dukkha Sacca*, that there is hidden *dukkha* even in bouts of apparent happiness, and that there is no place within the 31 realms where *dukkha* can be overcome permanently.

3.4 Gathi, Bhava, and Jati

- [Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya \(Mind Plane\)](#)
- [Gathi and Bhava – Many Varieties](#)
- [Gathi to Bhava to Jathi – Ours to Control](#)
- [Memory, Brain, Mind, Nama Loka, Kamma Bhava, Kamma Vipāka](#)
- [Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)

3.4.1 Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya (Mind Plane)

1. Many people have questions about exactly where *bhava* and *kamma beeja* are “located” or “stored”. This is a bit hard to explain simply because we have no “feel” for mind phenomena. We have a hard time connecting with anything that is not discernible to our five physical senses; we need to see, hear, taste, smell, or touch to feel confident that “something is real”.

- Yet, if one makes an effort, it is quite possible to get a good idea what these are. Actually, modern science helps here too.
- If someone is serious about figuring this out, I would really recommend reading the posts, [“Difference between a Wish and a Determination \(Paramita\)”](#) and, especially, [“Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)”](#) first.

2. From the second post above, It is clear that complete records of ALL our past activities during even just this life will be impossible to be “stored” in the neurons in the brain. There are people who can remember EVERYTHING that happened to them over many years, in minute detail.

- The Buddha said those memories are in the “*nāma thalaya*” or the “mind plane”. It is not storage in a physical device like a tape. Mind plane is devoid of any material things, it is all “*nāma*”. It can be thought of as in a “different dimension”; new theories in physics say our universe has dimensions that we cannot “see”.
- The closest analogy we have to the mind plane is the “dream world”. When we dream, we can “hear”, “see” and “do” things but it is all “*nāma*”. When we “play back” memories, it is somewhat like seeing a dream.
- We can recall our memories (whatever we can remember) very quickly. If we have a strong memory of some event, even from many years ago, we can recall it in our mind instantaneously. We just think about it and we can “see” it play back with sounds and the background just like it happened. Our minds can connect to the “mind plane” and recall things without a delay.
- In this “recall process”, the brain acts the intermediary; brain acts like a “transmitter” and a “receiver” in communications with the mind plane. As we get old, the brain gets weaker and thus the “recall power” gets diminished. Meditation (especially *dhamma vicaya* or contemplation on dhamma concepts) helps keep the brain healthy.
- It is just that some (few) people are born with the ability to recall ANYTHING from this life, as that post on memory records (HSAM) described. This ability can be also cultivated by developing *abhiññā* powers as I discussed in another post.

3. When we “wish or hope for something” that thought will have a record of that in the mind plane too; later, we can recall that we made such a “wish”.

- While a “*nama gotta*” (pronounced “*nāma goththā*”) is just a record, a wish has certain energy in it, but if not cultivated by further thinking and doing things relevant to that wish, that energy will soon fade away.
- When we make a “determination” that has more “*javana* power” than just a “wish” and such records are stronger, i.e., they do not fade away quickly.

- Our wishes, determinations, cravings for things, future plans, etc are all *saṅkhāra* (moral and immoral). Some of them are strong and become *abhisankhāra*. They all lead to “*kamma beeja* (seeds)” or varying strengths. Some are strong enough to lead to rebirths; others bring *vipāka* during a lifetime. They can be good or bad.
- Thus “*dhammo ha vé rakkati dhammacari*” or “dhamma will guide those who live according to dhamma” applies to both “good” and “bad” dhamma: Moral people will be guided upwards, and immoral people will be guided downward. **Mother nature is neutral; each one chooses which way to proceed. However, the results are ALWAYS according to *kamma* or actions;** see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)”.

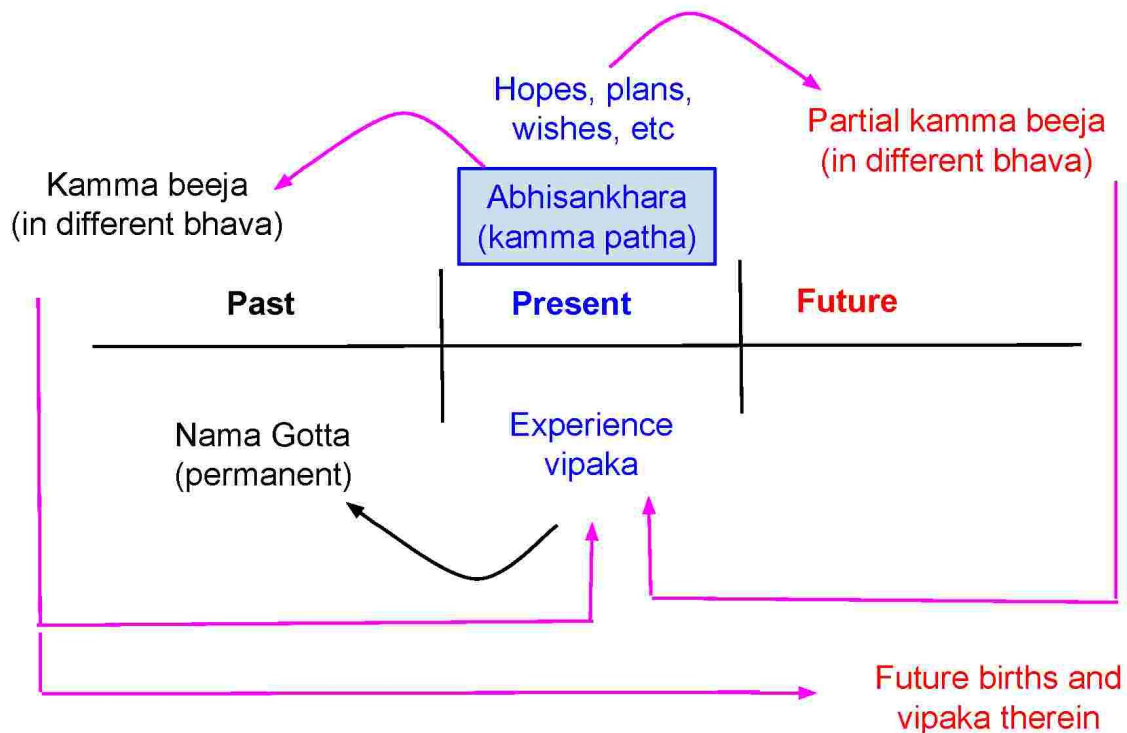
4. Therefore, records of both past “*nama gotta*” and our mind activities associated with “future plans” (which are same as “*kamma beeja*”) are in the mind plane. **The difference is that past “*nama gotta*” are permanent and have no energy to do anything, while the records of “future plans” are in flux and can get stronger or fade away.**

- However, the record for even a determination (whether or not fulfilled yet) will be recorded in the mind plane, because just after passing away it is in the past and **that thought becomes a record in “*nama gotta*”**. For example, if one makes a determination to kill another person, that thought will be recorded in the mind plane as a *nama gotta*. In addition, there will be a tentative record of a “*kamma beeja*” associated with the future too. The more he thinks and plans, the stronger the “*kamma beeja*” gets. If, somehow he comes to his senses and discard that thought the “future” imprint (and associated energy) will fade away, and there will not be a “*kamma beeja*” associated with it anymore.
- When one is thinking about a good or a bad act, it has not acquired the “full *kammic* potential”, i.e., it is said that the “*kamma patha*” is not complete. If that person ended up killing the other person, then the “*kamma patha*” is complete and there will be a “*kamma beeja*” established that will be there up to 91 *mahā kalpas* (a *mahā kalpa* is the lifetime of a universe, roughly 30 billion years).
- If that strong “*kamma beeja*” brings about a bad rebirth thus depleting its energy, at that point that result (new birth) now becomes a “*nama gotta*” or just a record.
- This is a simple overview of what happens; if one contemplates on it, one should be able to get an idea of the concept.

5. Depending on the nature of the deed, a “*kamma beeja*” may be in different types of “bins”, called “*kamma bhava*”.

- For example, if someone cultivates *rūpa jhānas*, then the associated *kamma beeja* will be in the “*rupaloka bhava*” or simply, “*rūpa bhava*”. If another cultivates *arūpa jhānas* (one of the highest four *jhānas*), then the associated *kamma beeja* will be in “*arūpa bhava*” and when that *kamma beeja* releases its energy, he/she will be born in the *arūpa loka*.
- **All other (abhi)saṅkhāra** will bring about *vipāka* in the *kāma loka* (*deva*, human realms and the four lowest realms). We will discuss this in more detail in the next post.
- **To summarize:** When we do a *kamma* (*abhisankhāra*), we generate a certain energy called a *kamma beeja* that will be “stored” in the appropriate “*bhava*” in the mind plane. When the *vipāka* associated with a *kamma beeja* is experienced, that energy is spent and only a record of that (*nama gotta*) survives in the mind plane.

6. Here is a chart that summarizes the above:



We have been trapped perpetually in the cycles indicated by the pink arrows.

Mind Plane Drawing

Click to open and print the above chart: [WebLink: Mind Plane Drawing](#)

- As the chart shows, we make “*kamma beeja*” of varying strengths in various “*bhava*” during a lifetime that will lead to more rebirths as well as uncountable *kamma vipāka* during those rebirths.

6. Another important point is that there are two ways to “bypass” a strong “*kamma beeja*” associated with such a “*kamma patha*” of, say, killing of a human.

- He could realize the enormity of the deed, ask for forgiveness in his mind (genuinely), and start engaging in moral deeds, then he may be able to “wear out” some of the energy of that “*kamma beeja*”. **More importantly, if he can cultivate *Ariya metta bhāvanā*, he may be able to wear it out completely** (unless it is one of the *anantariya kamma*, like killing a parent); see, “[5. Ariya Metta Bhāvanā](#)”.
- The other way is of course to attain the *Arahanthood*. Unless that particular “*kamma seed*” brings about the *vipāka* before that *Arahant* passes away, it will become null at the death of the *Arahant*.
- Furthermore, if that “*kamma seed*” is not that strong and does not bring *vipāka* within 91 *mahā kalpas*, then it will become null and void too. Only the “*nama gotta*” are permanent, “*kamma beeja*” are waiting for appropriate conditions to bring *vipāka* and are changing with time. However, “*nama gotta*” are just records, but “*kamma beeja*” have energy to bring about results (*vipāka*).

7. There are special cases where a “*kamma beeja*” (and associated “*kamma bhava*”) WILL NOT change. An *anantariya kamma* establishes a “*kamma beeja*” (and “*kamma bhava*”) that WILL bring about *vipāka* without exception: “*Bhava paccaya jathi*” WILL happen in that case; see, “[What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?](#)”.

- On the “moral side”, all stages of *Nibbāna* can be thought of as “*anatariya kamma*“. For example, when one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, he/she WILL be born only according to that “*Ariya bhava*” or that special *kammic* energy; thus a rebirth in the lowest four realms WILL NOT happen.
- Another interesting point is that when a *Bodhisattva* cultivates “*paramita*” to become a Buddha, what he is doing is to establish a very strong “*kamma beeja*” over innumerable lives. But at some point that “*kamma beeja*” gets fully established and at that point the *Bodhisattva* gets “*niyata vivarana*” (confirmation of attaining the Buddhahood or “*Buddha bhava*”) from a Buddha at that time.

The above concepts are looked at from a bit different perspective in, “[Memory, Brain, Mind, Nama Loka, Kamma Bhava, Kamma Vipāka](#)“. Of course, they are consistent!

In the next post we will discuss how different types of “*bhava*” are fueled by our actions: “[Gathi and Bhava – Many Varieties](#)“,

3.4.2 Gathi and Bhava – Many Varieties

1. In the previous post, “[Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya \(Mind Plane\)](#)“, we discussed how both *nama gotta* and *kamma beeja* (and *bhava*) are “located” in the mind plane. *Nama gotta* are just records without any embedded energy; when one thinks, speaks, and bodily acts, a trace of those thoughts, speech, and actions are recorded (like a tape) in the mind plane.

- On the other hand, the *kammic* energies associated with those activities are also recorded in the mind plane as *kamma beeja*, and those have *kammic* energies associated with them. Those *kamma beeja* are in different “bins” or “categories” called *bhava*.
- In this post, we will try to get a better understanding of these “*bhava*” and how they are related to one’s “*gathi*”.

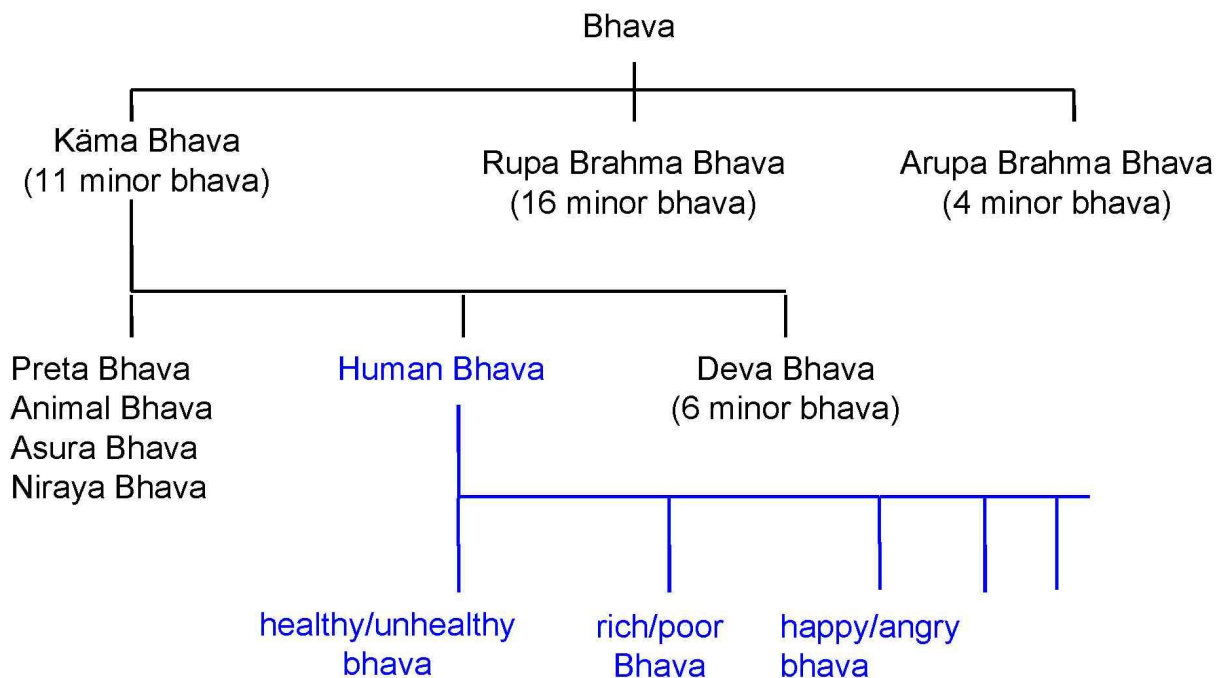
2. In general, as we have referred to before, “*bhava*” means existence somewhere in “this world”. It is even better to say that “*bhava*” means the “potential for existence” somewhere “in this world of 31 realms”.

- When someone cultivates “*rūpa loka*” *jhānas*, one generates a *kammic* energy in a *kamma beeja* that can lead to “existence in the *rūpa loka*“. That means, even while in the human realm, he/she can get into a *jhāna* and “effectively live in the *rūpa loka*“, because that is what a being (a *Brahma*) in the *rūpa loka* experiences; **this is called “*pavutti kamma bhava*”** (NOT “*kāma bhava*“, which we will discuss below).
- Furthermore, the more one practices that *jhāna*, one makes that *kamma beeja* strong, and when one dies one will be born in that *rūpa loka* if died while in the *jhāna*, because that *kamma beeja* will be the one he/she will “*upādāna*” or grasp at the moment of death; **this is “*uppatti kamma bhava*”**.
- Thus, that *kamma beeja* is said to be in “*rūpa loka bhava*”.
- Similarly, another person practising *arūpa jhānas* will be cultivating a *kamma beeja* in “*arūpa loka bhava*“. Furthermore, he/she is likely to display qualities or “*gathi*” of a “*arūpa Brahma*” even while leading a human life.
- **Therefore, when one has a certain *bhava*, one has the potential to be born in that *bhava* for a short time during the current life (called *pavutti kamma bhava*) or to be born in that realm at death (*uppatti kamma bhava*).**

3. Most of the activities of humans are associated with the enjoyment of sensual pleasures in the *kāma loka*. Instead of enjoying *jhānic* pleasures like a few of us (#2 above), most of us normally enjoy sensual pleasures associated with the five physical senses: we like to see eye-pleasing views, hear ear-pleasing sounds, taste tongue-pleasing flavors, smell nose-pleasing odors, and touch body-pleasing objects. All five sense faculties are there only in the *kāma loka* (*rūpa loka Brahmas* do not have noses or tongues, and in *arūpa loka* there is only the mind).

- If you think about it for a minute you will realize that most of the *abhisankhāra* that we do, are done targeting one or more of those sense-pleasing activities (and they are normally not even immoral, i.e, they may not be *apunnabhisankhara*). Since we crave those things, we are attached to those things, and according to “*pati+ichcha*” (or bonding with liking or desire) leading to “*sama + uppada*” (births accordingly). Thus the more we engage in these activities with zest (an *Arahant* does some of these too, but without any cravings), we make *kamma beeja* in the *kāma bhava*; we keep strengthening “*kāma gathi*”.
- On the other hand, some people get dissatisfied with the sense pleasures, and cultivate *jhānas* to enjoy “mind pleasures” either in the *rūpa loka* or *arūpa loka*.
- Thus, those who have *kāma rāga* will generate *kāma bhava*; *rūpa rāga* and *arūpa rāga* (in #2 above) lead respectively to *rūpa bhava* and *arūpa bhava*.
- Thus we can see that how “*bhava*” are prepared and strengthened by habitually doing things that one likes according to one’s *gathi*.

4. We see that there are three major “*bhava*” or existence corresponding to the three major levels of existence that the 31 realms can be divided into: *kāma loka*, *rūpa loka*, and *arūpa loka*:



1. Ultimately there are infinite number of “*bhava*” according to one’s “*gathi*”.
2. Within each *bhava*, there are numerous *kamma beeja* (seeds). Within “unhealthy *bhava*” there may be a *kamma beeja* for cancer, back pain, etc.
3. Same person may have different *bhava* (e.g., rich/poor) at different times.

Click to open and print the above chart: “[WebLink: Bhava and Gathi Chart](#)”.

- Each of those can be now subdivided into the 31 realms. The chart shows the division of the *kāma bhava* into the four *bhava* for the *apāyas*, the human *bhava* and the *deva bhava* (which in turn can be subdivided into seven realms).
- The human *bhava* can now be subdivided into an infinite number of smaller subdivisions, corresponding to the vast number of varieties that “human *gathi*” can give rise to: healthy/unhealthy, rich/poor, happy/angry, etc as shown in the chart. Now we are getting into personal *gathi*. Most major ones (rich/poor, healthy/unhealthy, etc) we inherit from the *kamma beeja* that was responsible for this birth.

5. When we are unable to satisfy some sense desires, we as humans tend to do immoral things to fulfil such sense desires; these are the *apunnabhisankhara* associated with strong “*kamma patha*” that will generate “bad *kamma beeja*” to bring about bad consequences or *vipāka* that could lead to rebirth in the lowest four realms of *kāma loka*; see the previous post, “[Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya \(Mind Plane\)](#)”.

- For example, a married man, not satisfied with sex with the wife, may have sex with another woman or even worse, with a child. His tendency to do that may even come from previous lives or he may have slowly built up that “*gathi*” over time increasingly engaging in sexual activities outside the marriage. Either way, such acts are done by animals; they engage in sex without any discrimination. Thus such activities will generate *kamma beeja* in the *animal bhava*; see the above chart.
- Or, one may be engaging in fishing or hunting both for the pleasure of it or even to make a living. Either way, it is an “animal *gathi*”; animals kill for food. Thus one is building up *kamma* seeds in *animal bhava*.
- If one is very greedy, one may build up *kamma beeja* appropriate for “hungry ghosts” in the *preta loka*. If one is lazy and depends on others for their livelihood one may build up *kamma* seeds in the *asura bhava*; see the chart. We can thus think about how the desire for sense pleasures can lead to the generation of “bad *kamma beeja*” in three of the four lowest realms.
- “Bad *kamma beeja*” in the lowest realm of *niraya* (hell) are generated by strong hate or *vyāpāda*. As we have discussed before, attachment to sense pleasures (greed) can turn to hate when someone else gets in the way. Most heinous crimes, including killing of other humans, are done with such strong hate.
- As one follows the Path, one will gradually lose animal, *preta*, *asura*, and *niraya gathi*, and one day will attain the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- Thus birth in the lowest realms of the *kāma loka* are not just due to *kāma rāga*, but strong versions of greed (*lōbha*) and hate (*dōsa*); see, “[Sorting out Some Key Pāli Terms \(Tanhā, Lobha, Dosa, Moha, etc\)](#)”.

6. The strength of a *kamma beeja* comes from the *javana* of the *citta* while one is engaging in the activity. The worst consequences and hence strong *kamma beeja* are generated with a mind that enjoys the evil act. This is why the “*somanassa sahaḡata diṭṭhi sampayutta asankharika citta*” or the “thought (act) done with pleasure and with wrong views that arises automatically” is the strongest immoral *citta*. **Such a thought arises automatically when one has “*gathi*” compatible with such acts.**

- For example, when one engages in unlawful and immoral sexual activities, the more one enjoys such acts, and “gets used to such activities” by building up that habit or “*gathi*”; then the likelihood of such a thought to arise automatically will be higher. Then one will have higher and higher levels of *kamachanda* (one of the five *nivarana* that covers the mind), and thus one will not think twice before committing such an act. **The only way to break out of that vicious cycle is to contemplate the consequences (possible rebirth in the animal or worse realms), and make a commitment to stop such activities.**
- The real danger in building up bad habits (*gathi*) is that one could progressively get into worse habits. A teenager who starts drinking could then start using drugs; then it could lead to hanging out with even worse friends and get into drug dealing or even killings. As we saw in the previous post, “*Dhammo ha ve rakkati dhammacari*” or “Dhamma will guide one in the direction of the type of dhamma one associates with”, can work both ways, moral or immoral.
- To break away from bad *gathi*, one needs to make a determination not only to stop such bad activities but also to build up the opposite good *gathi*, and start heading in the right direction. We just have to follow the mundane Eightfold Path and then the Noble Eightfold Path; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.

- Once firmly on the mundane eightfold path, the next steps are to do the correct *Ānāpāna bhāvanā* (“[6. Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā \(Introduction\)](#)”) and the *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā* (“[Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta](#)”).

7. Thus “*bhava*” is an energy that we build up ourselves through our actions. Even if someone does not like to be born a dog, if one keeps doing things that are normally done by dogs, then one is preparing *bhava* to be born in the “*dog bhava*”.

- One time I heard over the radio in the news that a person was arrested for engaging in sex with a female dog. Even though he was still in the human realm, for a while he got “born” in the “*dog bhava*”. Since that is what he is willingly doing, he is very likely be born a dog at death. This is a good example for both “*pavutti kamma bhava*” and “*uppatti kamma bhava*”.
- This is also a good example of how one can become morally blind (*kamachanda nivarana*), when greed or lust rises to a high level.

8. One thing that should have become clear is that even if we do not do any immoral deeds, we are bound to be reborn in the *kāma loka* (sense realms of the four *apāyas* and the human and *Deva* realms) as long as we crave sense pleasures. But such sensual cravings, by themselves, do not lead to the birth in the *apāyas*; birth in the *apāyas* is due to *apunnabhisankhara* or immoral *saṅkhāra* (see #5 above).

- As long as we like sense pleasures (and do not realize the dangers in them), we will have “*kāma gathi*” and thus we will have “*kāma bhava*”, i.e., we will keep generating both good and bad *kamma beeja* that belong to the *kāma bhava*.
- So, what are the dangers in remaining in *kāma loka*? Even though we may not do any immoral deeds in this birth (because of our circumstances of being born in a good family, good country, etc), we are bound to be reborn in a bad environment where we may have to do immoral deeds to survive; and then we will make *kamma beeja* suitable for rebirth in the *apāyas*. In fact, it is very likely that we all already have such bad *kamma beeja*, because we have no idea what kind of deeds we have done in the past lives.
- The mundane way to escape from the *kāma loka* is to cultivate *anariya jhānas* (either *rūpa jhānas* or *arūpa jhānas*), and seek rebirth in *rūpa* or *arūpa loka*. But the problem is even then we will not be “really free” from rebirth in the *kāma loka* in the future. This is because after the energy of those *kamma* seeds in *rūpa bhava* or *arūpa bhava* are worn out, we will be reborn in *kāma loka* again (because we always have *kamma beeja* in *kāma bhava* from previous lives). ==> Reasons why cultivation for Sotāpanna Stage is required.
- This is why the Buddha admonished the *bhikkhus* to strive hard to attain at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. He said if we really knew the dangers of rebirth in the *kāma loka*, we will make haste like a person who will try to find a way to put out a fire that is engulfing oneself.
- Some people think these are depressing thoughts. **But the facts cannot be avoided by not thinking about them.** In fact, when one realizes the true nature of this world and make some progress to be free from that predicament, one will start feeling relieved and happy; this is the *nirāmisa sukha* of *Nibbāna*.

9. Also, it is NOT possible to grasp all this with a mind that is not purified. As I emphasized many times, what matters in making progress is not the “book knowledge”, **but cleansing the mind and grasping the key Dhamma concepts.**

- A mind, no matter whether belonging to one with a Ph.D. or not, cannot grasp the dangers of the rebirth process UNTIL the mind is cleansed of defilements to a certain extent by both staying away from highly immoral acts AND by learning Dhamma.

10. Some people worry about whether they can get rid of certain bad habits they have. They just try to suppress them quickly by sheer will power. That does not work most of the time. One has to be patient and just follow the Path, while learning and grasping the key Dhamma concepts.

- The Buddha gave the following example: When a farmer cultivates his plot, he just needs to make sure to provide enough water, get rid of weeds, fertilize etc. There is no point in worrying

about “when am I going to get the harvest?”. The crop will grow in time and bring a good harvest IF the necessary work is done.

- In the same way, if one follows the Path by leading a moral life and learning Dhamma, one will be guided in the right direction. And just like the farmer could see that the crop is growing well, one will be able to experience the progress, but not the end result in a single step.

3.4.3 Gathi to Bhava to Jathi – Ours to Control

One’s character (*gati*) determines one’s future births. The ability to figure that out is called the “*namarupa parichcheda ñāṇa*” or “*namarupa paricceda ñāṇa*”.

1. We have discussed the background material in the previous two posts: “[Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya \(Mind Plane\)](#)” and “[Gathi and Bhava – Many Varieties](#)”. Now I want to bring it all together and show that “*bhava*” is actually something that we create AND maintain on our own with the way we think, speak, and act with our ingrained habits (*gati*).

- If you have not read the previous two posts, I highly encourage reading them. It is important to get the basic concepts right, and then to rehash them in different (and yet consistent!) ways, so that the ideas sink in.
- We will use those ideas and use the *paticca samuppāda* sequence to trace how we make “*bhava*” OURSELVES, which in turn give rise to *jati* (births) not only in future lives but also during this life.
- There is no one else, or even a “super being”, that can either help or hurt you in the long run. One’s destiny is up to oneself. The Buddha said, “*atta hi attanō nāthō, kō hi nāthō parōsiyā*” or “One is indeed one’s own refuge; how can others be refuge to one?”. Even the Buddha could only teach the way.

2. “*Gati*” is a key word in Buddha Dhamma. There is no perfect English translation but habits, tendencies, and biases convey similar meaning. *Gati* has a deeper meaning because sometimes one’s *sansāric gathi* (habits and tendencies from previous lives) may lie dormant.

- For example, a teenager may not have a “habit” of drinking, but after a few drinks may get “hooked” easier than others if he had a corresponding *gathi* from past lives.
- Also, I get messages from people who never even paid attention to “Buddhism” getting to *samādhi* (state of calmness) just reading these posts; that is also a “*gati*” from past lives. They are likely to have been exposed to Buddha Dhamma in previous lives.
- Most of the time we do inappropriate things (immoral *abhisankhāra*) because we have a *gati* or tendency to do so. This is what is embedded in the “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*” step most of the time. Our *avijjā* in such a case is not knowing that we have such *gati* or knowing about it but does not know why or how to get rid of it.

(As I pointed out in “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”, “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*” is just a condensed or “*uddesa*” version. We need to analyze it (“*niddesa*” and “*patiniddesa*”) to get the idea, depending on the context).

- And when we (repeatedly) do such *abhisankhāra* (thoughts, speech, actions), we build-up a *viññāṇa* for it. For example, if someone likes to watch porn, the more one does it, the more that “*viññāṇa* for watching porn” will grow. It will be in the subconscious ready to “pop up”. In other words, that “*gati*” gets more established.
- Then comes “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*”, i.e., it becomes easier to think about clips from previous views or fantasize about them. Here *namarupa* are the memories (mental pictures) of past activities or “blueprints” for future plans. It is important to realize that *namarupa* for *patisandhi viññāṇa* will be somewhat different; see, “[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.

3. Now the next step is hard to resist: “*namarupa paccaya salāyatana*”. Here *salāyatana* means not all six senses, but the appropriate one(s) for the activity. Here they are *cakkayatana* (based on the eye) and *manayatana* (mind).

- It is important to realize that “*āyatana*” does not mean the sense faculty like the eye; it is rather “using the sense faculty for this purpose”, for doing *abhisankhāra* (for watching porn and enjoying it, in this particular example). An *Arahant* has eyes and can see, but will not use them as “*āyatana*” to “acquire ‘*san*’”.
- Then comes, “*salāyatana paccaya phasso*”. Here of course it is not just “*phassa*” but “*samphassa*”, i.e., generate “*san*” (according to one’s *gati*) in the process; see, “[Difference between Phassa and Samphassa](#)”.
- Because it is not just “*phassa*” but “*samphassa*”, then one generates feelings: “*phassa paccaya vedanā*”. For example, an *Arahant* watching a porn movie will not generate any joyful feelings, because that would only involve “*phassa*” and NOT “*samphassa*”.

4. Now comes the last few steps. Because of the *sukha vedanā* (in this particular example), one will get attached to it: “*vedanā paccaya tanhā*”; see, “[Tanhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.

- And then, “*tanhā paccaya upādāna*”, i.e., one grasps whole heartedly because one really enjoys it, and would like to do it again. “*Upādāna*” means one likes to keep it close.
- Thus one makes “*bhava*” for it; one has plans to do it again, and it is a “reality” or future existence at some point: “*upādāna paccaya bhavo*”.

5. As we can see, all this is going in our minds. The bottom line is that we just keep thinking and doing things that we have become “attached to” or we have formed “*gati*” for. Each time we go through this series of steps we just make that “*bhava*” grow stronger.

- Then it becomes easier to be “born in that *bhava*”, i.e. *jati* (pronounced “*jāti*”). Most people think “*jati*” means rebirth; but it is not restricted to rebirth.
- Just like one can be born in a certain realm (animal, human, etc) at death, one can be born in the “drunken state” when one has “*bhava* to get drunk”. If one makes a “*bhava*” to watch porn, then each time one does it, it becomes easier the next time to be “born in that *bhava*”, i.e., to watch again.
- And it is easy to extend this to any other misdeed. If one forms a habit to drink without control (i.e., “get drunk to the point that one cannot think clearly”), then each time one does it one makes that *bhava* stronger; if not controlled, one day one could be an alcoholic. And it does not stop in this life. If a strong *bhava* is formed it can affect future births. In a new birth, one is born to a mother (and to a lesser extent father) with similar *gati*. Thus an alcoholic in this life is LIKELY to be born to an alcoholic mother if the next birth is in the human realm.
- It must be pointed out that “hateful *bhava*” for certain things or even for a certain person, also can be carried from life-to-life. There are many mentions in the *Tipitaka* of how Devadatta clashed with the Buddha (or rather the *Bodhisattva*) in previous lives.
- One’s physical body will change (most of the time drastically) from life-to-life, but one’s *gati*, *āsava*, and *bhava* are carried from life-to-life; of course those keep changing all the time too, but significant changes happen when one is human with the most ability to change one’s destiny.

6. Thus “*bhava paccaya jati*” applies both in this life and also for future rebirths. This is the difference between “[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(or Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppāda](#)” and that for *patisandhi* to a new life: “[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.

- As explained in #5 above, one’s future births are due to one’s *gati*. The realization that one’s future births are determined by one’s *gati* — and the ability to figure out the *bhava* and *jāti* (*jāthi*) according one’s *gati* — is called “*namarupa paricceda ñāṇa*” or “*namarupa parichcheda ñāṇa*”. This basically means “*rūpa*” are according “*nama*” (literally, one’s body is according to one’s thinking).

7. To make the final connection to *Nibbāna*, we see that one’s *gati* are intimately connected to one’s *āsavas* (cravings). Just like *gati*, *āsavas* are deep-seated and ingrained in one’s lifestream and most

can be traced back numerous lives in the past; see, “[Gathi \(Character\)](#), [Anusaya \(Latent Defilements\)](#), and [Āsava \(Cravings\)](#)”.

- While there can be an infinite number of *gati*, there are four basic categories of *āsavas*: *dittasava*, *kamasava*, *bhavasava*, *avijjasava*; see below.
- This logical connection is clearly shown in the *Sammā Ditṭhi sutta*. It was Ven. Sariputta who delivered that *sutta* after being asked by the Buddha to explain “*Sammā Ditṭhi*” to other *bhikkhus* on one occasion. He went through the steps of the *paticca samuppāda* backwards and eventually the *bhikkhus* asked, “Is there a cause for *avijjā*?”. He explained that indeed *āsavas* contribute to *avijjā*, and vice versa.
- In fact, as we will see later in the Abhidhamma section, **four of the eight “basic units of matter” in a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] arise due to *avijjā* and the other four due to *taṇhā* (which arise due to *āsava*)**. *Avijja* and *taṇhā* are called “*bhava-mūla*” for this reason.

8. One way to explain *Nibbāna* or “complete cooling down” is to say that it is attained by getting rid of all *āsavas*. When one follows the Noble Eightfold Path, “*āsavakkhaya*” is achieved in steps.

- At the *Sotāpanna* stage, the first component of *āsava* or *dittasava* (craving for various *diṭṭhis* or wrong worldviews) is removed. This all important component of *dittasava* is solely due to not knowing the true nature of this world of 31 realms: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. Most people carry certain *diṭṭhis* all their lives, most even coming from previous lives. The most prevalent *diṭṭhi* is the belief that there is no rebirth process.
- When one truly comprehends that consequences of *immoral* acts can be much harsher than we normally believe (birth in the *apāyas*), that itself removes the causes for rebirth in the *apāyas*.

9. A *Sotāpanna* would still have the other three *āsavas*: *kamasava* (craving for sense pleasures), *bhavasava* (craving for living somewhere in the 31 realms), and *avijjasava* (cravings due to not knowing *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* fully).

- *Kamasava* is reduced at the *Sakadāgāmī* stage and is removed at the *Anāgāmī* stage.
- *Bhavasava* and *avijjasava* are removed only at the *Arahanthood*.
- Of course, all four *āsavas* keep getting reduced at each stage of *Nibbāna*. Thus a *Sotāpanna*, for example, would have reduced the other three *āsavas* to some level.
- It is also clear that comprehension of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* gradually increases at each stage and is complete only at the *Arahant* stage.

10. It is nice to see the self-consistency, and the fact that one can analyze a given situation in different ways.

- One may have a Ph.D. or one may be able to recite the whole of the *Tipitaka*; yet one would not be even able to get to the *Sotāpanna magga* without comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* to some level.
- *Dittasava* cannot be removed until one is well on the way on the mundane eightfold path, because one’s mind needs to be cleared of the strongest defilements. As I keep saying, this is not about “book knowledge”; it is all about cleansing one’s mind.
- Of course, *dittasava* gives rise to various *gathi*, and thus removal of such *gati* is the key to attacking *dittasava*. The foremost is the tendency to “cling to a certain belief” and not even willing to consider the counter arguments.
- If one has the *diṭṭhi* that there is no rebirth, one needs to carefully examine the evidence for and against.
- **Another is the refusal to believe anything “that cannot be proven” by a “scientific method”**. Thus, just over 400 years ago, people looked around and asked “where are those infinite number of universes and infinite number of living beings that the Buddha was talking about?”. Even now, science is only aware of a minute fraction of our physical universe, not to mention pretty much nothing about the mind; see, “[Dhamma and Science](#)” for details.

11. The bottom line is that whether one will be a human, a *deva* or an animal in the next life will depend on what kind of *gati* we develop, and NOT what we wish/pray for. Furthermore, one can become a *Sotāpanna* in this very life by cultivating the “*gati* of a *Sotāpanna*” or “*Ariya gati*”. The key is to develop *Sammā Ditṭhi* by learning and comprehending Dhamma (the correct world view).

Next, “[Memory, Brain, Mind, Nama Loka, Kamma Bhava, Kamma Vipāka](#)”,

3.4.4 Memory, Brain, Mind, Nama Loka, Kamma Bhava, Kamma Vipaka

There are many confusing terms like *citta* and *mano* which have been differently interpreted in different books. In order to clarify these concepts, I am writing a few posts in “Dhamma Concepts” section under “Mind and Consciousness” starting with: “[1. Thoughts \(Citta\), Consciousness \(Viññāna\), and Mind \(Hadaya Vatthu\) – Introduction](#)”.

1. Think about a past event that is still vividly there in your mind. You can visualize the whole “event” just like watching a movie; you can recall what those people looked like, what they said, etc.

- Suppose a 40-year old recalls an event where she was a 10-year old playing with her mother. She will recall the event just as it happened 30 years ago: she was young and her mother was 30 years old; it took place in her parents’ house which does not even exist now. But in the “playback” that exact same time sequence is played back with the 10-year old playing with her 30-year old mother in the same house that they lived in. It is not just a “summary” of what happened, rather an exact playback showing her young mother’s features at that time, what she said, etc.
- Recently, it has been reported that some individuals have an astounding capability to instantly recall past events (during this life) in vivid detail; see, “[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)”.

2. Most scientists and philosophers believe that the memories are kept in the brain. Is this a realistic picture? They do not have any evidence to back this claim.

- How can all those details be “stored” in a biological membrane, ready to be retrieved at a moment’s notice? No one has explained a plausible mechanism yet.

3. Whatever we do with body, speech, and mind, a “record” (*nama gotta*) gets established (“*bhihiwelā pihitanava*” in Sinhala) in the *kamma bhava*: In the word “*bhava*”, “*bha*” means “appear and gets established”; thus the act we did, i.e., *kamma*, gets recorded in the *kamma bhava* exactly the same way it happened. **We cannot “see” *bhava* but we can see the results of *bhava* as “*jathi*”.**

- **Not only potent *kamma*, but ALL memories are stored intact in the *nama loka*.** Basically, the thought stream is recorded continuously like a movie recording and thus can be “played back”; see, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.
- **Thus while the “fruits of *kamma*” are embedded in *kamma beeja* (seeds) in the *nama loka* as *kamma bhava*, the movie like sequence is recorded in the *nama loka* as *nama gotta*.**
- Therefore, while *kamma* seeds in the *kamma bhava* can bring their results in the future, the *nama gotta* are just records without substance: see, “[Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra \(Sankhata\)](#)”. Thus unlike anything else in this world (*saṅkhāra* or *sankata*), *nama gotta* are PERMANENT.
- This is why the Buddha Gotama could recall the exact scene that happened billions of years ago, when he received the first confirmation (“*niyata vivarana*”) of his future Buddhahood by the Buddha Deepankara. At that time he was an ascetic by the name of Sumedha and the Buddha Gotama described the whole event that took place in detail; see, [WebLink: WIKI: Dīpankara Buddha](#).
- In the same way, the *kamma beeja* stored in the *nama loka* are instantly activated when proper conditions are realized; see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”. However, unlike *nama gotta*, *kamma* seeds fade away with time unless brought to bear fruit under right conditions.

4. Thus, memories (whatever the portion that is remembered) are played back in a “movie-like” manner, like in a dream. It is like a segment of a “movie recording”. It is not just a “gist” or a summary; we can recall the whole “sequence of events” like in a movie.

- This is why when someone describes an event by memory he/she always tends to tell the story sequentially: The person listening may not want to hear the whole story and could become impatient waiting for the narrator to “get to the point”, but for the narrator recalling the event, it is easier to go sequentially as the event is “played back” in his/her mind.

5. We cannot say where that memory is “located”, because they are not stored in the “physical space” or the “material world”; they are in the “*nama loka*” or “mental world”. In contrast what we experience through our five senses is the “*rūpa loka*” or the “material world” that consists of 31 realms.

- This is also why scientists will not be able to describe the mind in terms of matter; see, “[The Double Slit Experiment – Correlation between Mind and Matter?](#)”. **Mind and matter belong to two distinct domains.**
- As I will clarify in detail in the future, this is related to the fact that there are six fundamental entities (six *dhatus*): *patavi* (hardness), *āpo* (cohesiveness), *tējo* (vitality), *vāyo* (motion), *akasa* (space), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness). The *viññāṇa* dhatu is associated with the “*nama loka*” and the other five *dhatus* are associated with the “*rūpa loka*” or the “material world”. But we don’t need to worry about that right now. You will see other pieces falling into place in a “big jigsaw puzzle” as all these seemingly unrelated aspects come together to form a cohesive, complete picture of the “wider world”.
- This could be related to the possibility of higher “curled up” dimensions that is being discussed in String Theory in physics; see, “[What Happens in Other Dimensions?](#)”.

6. We can normally access our own “information” from this life but some people, especially some young children, have the ability to recall *nama gatta* from past lives. Those who have *abhiññā* powers can access such “information” or “*nama gatta*” of other people as well; **however, even they cannot read another’s “thoughts” or “*kamma beeja*” or “*kamma bhava*”.**

- We can retrieve this memory by thinking about it. There is a mechanism for that memory to be retrieved; the mind initiates the process, but the brain acts as the “receiver” for the incoming information.
- When we think about something that happened in the past, the mind sends mind rays out and they bounce off that specific target in the “*nama loka*” and the memory is reflected back. That retrieval process does not change the memory record, and the record stays intact. Thus one can go back and recall it again.
- When the retrieved information comes back, that signal is processed by the brain. Our whole body is prepared by the *kamma* seed that led to this human existence to limit/facilitate certain capabilities; thus what we can actually remember depends on the status of our brain. Our human bodies are generally setup (by *kamma vipāka*) to be able to retrieve only the strong memories from the early days of this life and cannot access memories of previous lives. But few people can, and so can some children. Furthermore, if the relevant parts of the brain gets damaged, then the retrieval capability may be lost.
- **Some beings in *preta loka* can remember past lives to impart more suffering on them.** They can remember the bad deeds done by them that led to the birth in the *preta* world, and how long they will have to suffer to “pay back the debt”.

7. How much of that memory one actually recalls depends on two things: the health of the brain and the purity of the mind.

- If the brain is not functioning well, only bits and pieces of the memory will be actually experienced. When people get old, the brain’s efficiency goes down and thus memory will not work well. The brain is like a playback device and if it is defective, the display will be blurry or at worst no display will result.

8. Secondly, even a person with a healthy brain, may not be able to recall memories if the mind is “covered” by the five hindrances (*panca nivarana*); see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)”.

- When there is *kamachanda* or *vyāpāda*, the mind is too much focused on those objects of thought (*arammana*). When there is *thina middha*, the mind is now “stuck” lazily at something (sleepy or just distracted), and will not retrieve the memory. With *uddacca kukkucca*, the mind is normally “intoxicated” with power, money, beauty etc is stuck at a “low level”. With *vicikicca* (which is due to *micca ditṭhi* or not knowing the true characteristics *anicca, dukkha, anatta*), one engages in inappropriate acts and thus the mind is not “sharp”.
- Thus, any, some, or all of these five factors can affect the memory of even a person with a healthy brain. When we purify our minds of the *panca nivarana*, its ability to pinpoint a given “memory location” is improved.
- Furthermore, **when the mind is purified, that can make one’s brain to function better** by changing the conditions for better *kamma vipāka* to come to fruition; see, “[Anantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”. This “mind effect” on the brain and the body in general is being re-discovered by scientists; see, for example, “The Biology of Belief” by Bruce H. Lipton.

9. Most scientists and philosophers believe that our memories are stored in our brains. There are key problems with that assumption:

- If that is the case, then the “state of the mind” should not be a factor in recalling a memory, because then it is like retrieving a sound track from a disc; the playback should be good as long as the “playing device” (i.e., the brain) is in good condition.
- It is astounding how much one can recall from the memory. And it comes out like a video clip; we can visualize and even recall the conversations that took place a long time ago in case of poignant memories. Can all those details be “stored” in a biological membrane?
- Even if it is possible to encode all that information (exact features of the 10-year old child and her 30-year old mother, what they spoke at that time in the same tone, etc. in the hypothetical example of #1 above), how can it be recalled instantaneously?

10. Here is an article which discusses these unresolved scientific issues: [WebLink: VIEWZONE: Are your memories really in your brain?](#)

- Here is a good site if you need to dig in deeper: [WebLink: HUMAN-MEMORY: MEMORY STORAGE](#)

3.4.5 Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein

Revised September 7, 2016; Revised May 7, 2017

There is much confusion about the terms “*bhava*” and “*jati*” (pronounced “*jāthi*”). But that does not need to be the case. Here we will clarify these two important terms in the *paticca samuppāda* (PS) cycles.

1. First, from the [WebLink: suttacentra: Ratana Sutta](#); “..*Na te bhavaṃ aṭṭhamamādiyanti*“, means, “(A *Sotāpanna*) will not be born in an **eighth bhava**“. Then, from *Paticca Samuppāda*, it is “*bhava paccaya jati*” or “existence gives rise to birth”.

- When one gets a “human existence (*bhava*)”, one could be born (*jati*) as a human many times. In between adjacent human births, the lifestream is in the *gandhabba* state; see, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)- Introduction](#)”.
- In rebirth stories, there is always a “time gap” between successive human births (*jati*). They are always separated by several years or at least few years. In between those successive lives, that lifestream lives as a *gandhabba*, without a physical body.
- In most rebirth stories, the previous human life was terminated unexpectedly, like in an accident or a killing. Therefore, the *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* had not been

exhausted, and the *gandhabba* just came out of the dead body and waited for another womb to enter.

- Furthermore, the Buddha has described how difficult it is to get a human existence; see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)“. If “*bhava*” is taken to be “birth”, then all those rebirth stories cannot be true.

2. In both Pāli and Sinhala, *jāti* means birth; *bhava* means “*thibena bava*” in Sinhala, or an state of existence.

- Also, “*bha*” means “establish”. When we have strong feelings about something, say we like something and thoughts “wheel around” in our mind about how to get it, that is very potent *abhisankhāra*; this mental power gets established in the “*kamma bhava*” as a *kamma beeja* (seed).
- This is also why it is easy to make *kamma beeja* or *kamma bhava* based on our *gathi* (habits/character). Each person likes certain kinds of things. So, we keep strengthening existing *kamma beeja/kamma bhava*, which, if strong enough, can lead to a rebirth with such “*gathi*” or “*bhava*”, **because that is what is “gets attached to” or “likely to grasp” or “*upādāna*”**.

3. Let us take some examples.

- An alcoholic drinks habitually, and thus people refer to him as a drunkard. He has a drinking habit (*gathi*) and a craving (*āsava*) for it. But he is not in a state of intoxication all the time, only when he is drunk, i.e., only when he is born in that “*jāti*”. The mindset of liking for a state of intoxication is the “*bhava*” corresponding to his “*gathi*” (habit); he has that *gathi* or *bhava* and thus he can be “born” (*jāti*) in that state easily. **This is the “*bhava paccaya jāti*” step in *paticca samuppāda* (PS) cycles that operates during this life, leading him to get drunk many, many times.**
- On the other hand, someone who does not like to drink may even have an aversion for drinking alcohol. That person does not have “*gathi*” or “*bhava*” for intoxication and thus it is unlikely that he will be “born” in that state; thus it is unlikely that he will get drunk, or “be born” in that condition. The “*bhava paccaya jāti*” step in the PS cycle does not happen here, because the condition or the cause, *bhava*, is not there.
- A person who has a really bad temper has a “*gathi*” or “*bhava*” for that, and thus may be born in that, i.e., may flare up with the slightest provocation. Another may have a less strong “*bhava*”, and a third person who is very calm may have only a trace of that “*bhava*”. The stronger the “*bhava*”, the easier it is to be born (*jāti*) in that “*bhava*”.
- Similarly, a person who may have excess greed will have a “*gathi*” or “*bhava*” for that. And such a “greedy *bhava*” may have focused areas: some are greedy for food, some for power, some for fame, money, etc.

4. ***Bhava* is intimately connected to *gathi* (habits).** One “builds up” a given *bhava* by engaging activities that cultivates that *bhava*; this happens via repeated *paticca samuppāda* cycles during a given life.

- An alcoholic does this by associating with friends who are alcoholics, frequenting places where they all hang out, etc. This is discussed in the “[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(or Pravutti\) Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.
- People with similar habits (“*gathi*”) tend to “hang together” (see, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits \(Gati\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)”), which accelerates that whole process.

5. **The above examples describe how “*pavutti kamma bhava*” are made**, i.e., how one prepares a certain *bhava* in this life via engaging in relevant *saṅkhāra* or *kamma* repeatedly. An alcoholic does this via *mano*, *vacī*, and *kaya saṅkhāra*: he thinks about such activities (*mano saṅkhāra*), plans them (*vacī saṅkhāra*, i.e., engages in *vitakka* and *vicara* that are focused on drinking activities), and then physically engages in such activities (*kaya saṅkhāra*). The more he does those, the stronger the “drinking *bhava*” or “drinking habit” becomes.

- Someone who has cultivated such a *kamma bhava* for drinking can be easily born in that state (getting drunk) many times DURING a life time.
- Someone who has cultivated such *kamma bhava* can be easily born in that state DURING a life time; this is the *pavutti bhava* described in the “[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(or Pravutti\) Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.
- Let us take another example. A child gains pleasure by torturing a cat or a dog. If this habit is not stopped, he may start gaining pleasure by torturing humans too. The “*pati+ichcha sama+uppada*” cycle will take him to an extreme if not disrupted early enough. He will build a habit for doing it (i.e. born in that state) many times during the same lifetime.
- The above two are examples of the *pavutti bhava* described in the “[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(or Pravutti\) Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.

6. **Such *kamma bhava* can get strong enough to become “*uppatti kamma bhava*”.** This is the real danger. At the dying moment one will be drawn (“*upādāna*”) to an environment that is compatible with ones prominent habits (*gathi*) or *bhava*.

- Because one got attached willingly (i.e., *upādāna*), a similar *bhava* will result: i.e., *pati+ichcha* leading to *sama+uppada* or *paticca samuppāda*. This is the “*upādāna paccaya bhava*” step.
- Thus an alcoholic is prone to be born to family where the father or mother (or both) are alcoholics. That is the most suitable environment for his *upādāna* and *bhava*.
- One who enjoys torturing animals/humans may be born in *niraya* (hell) where there is incessant torture. Depending on the nature of the *bhava* one could be born there to impart torture on others or to be subjected to torture.
- One who enjoys torturing animals/humans may be born in *niraya* (hell) where there is incessant torture. Depending on the nature of the *bhava* one could be born there to impart torture on others or to be subjected to torture.
- One who has benevolent qualities of a *deva* (i.e., *deva bhava*) could acquire “*deva bhava*” and be born a *deva*; one who has cultivated compassion for other beings (i.e., *brahma bhava*) may acquire “*brahma bhava*” and be born a *brahma*. Similarly, one who has developed disgraceful qualities of a dog may be acquire a “*dog bhava*”, and be born repeatedly a dog until that *kammic* energy is spent.
- It is the universal principle of “*pati+ichcha sama+uppada*” working to yield an existence that is similar to the actions that one willingly engaged in; see, “[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)” and “[Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.

7. **A *kamma beeja* (seed) is in a related *bhava***; when one develops a habit (*gathi*) by keep doing things related to it, that *bhava* or the *kamma beeja* gets stronger. It leads to “*bhava paccaya jati*” under suitable conditions many times during this life itself.

- An alcoholic with a *kamma bhava* for intoxication is easily germinated; all needed is a suggestion by friend, or even the sight of a bar at a suitable time. This is an example of a *pavutti kamma bhava*. He is likely to be born in a “state of drunkenness” during this lifetime.

8. In the case of the person who developed a *bhava* for torturing other living beings may have that *kamma* seed being the one selected for next *bhava* upon death from a *bhava* that had exhausted all its *kammic* energy.

- In that case, he may be born in the *niraya* repeatedly (many *jati*) until the *kammic* energy for that *kamma bhava* is spent. This is an example of an *uppatti kamma bhava*.

9. Thus it becomes clear that one needs to look at the root cause for having certain habits or behavior patterns. We can go backwards in the PS to find the causes. To be born in a drunken state, one needs to have a *bhava* of an alcoholic; that *bhava* was conditioned via *upādāna* (willing and forceful embracing), which in turn was due to *taṇhā* (getting attached to drinking), which was due to feeling (i.e., he got to like the “drunk” feeling, the state of intoxication), which was due to (*san*)*phassa* or contact, *salāyatana* (using the six senses inappropriately), *namarupa* (associated visuals of names

and activities), *saṅkhāra* (*kaya*, *vacī*, and *mano saṅkhāra* for that activity), and of course the starting point of *avijjā* (ignorance of the consequences). By examining these steps, we can see that the whole cycle can be stopped at any place:

- By contemplating on the adverse consequences of drinking, he could remove ignorance, and make a firm decision to stop.
- If he is mindful, whenever a thought about drinking comes to the mind, he can stop “wheeling around” (stopping *mano/vacī saṅkhāra*) and thus stopping multiple PS cycles.
- The less he goes through such PS cycles, the weaker the *viññāṇa* or the mindset for drinking will get.
- Then he will make less and less associated *namarupa*, less *salāyatana*, less contacts, and thus experience less of that feeling. This will further propagate to less *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, *bhava* or habit formation, and thus will be less likely to be “born” in that state.

10. If one is able to get rid of that drinking habit (*gathi*), one would have removed that *bhava*. Then it is unlikely that one will be born (*jati*) in that intoxicated state.

- The “trigger level” needed to generate a birth will be higher if the *bhava* (or habit) is not strong. Someone who has not had an alcoholic drink may be reluctant to have one.
- When one has a strong habit for drinking (strong *bhava*), all needed could be the sight of a bottle of alcohol.

11. All above is valid for “good *bhava*” or “good habits” too. In order to cultivate that *bhava*, one needs to be engaged in as many PS cycles as possible. The more the cycle gets repeated, the stronger each step becomes (the neural connections in the brain for that habit will strengthen, in term of modern science; see, “[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)”).

- It is easy to see from the above discussion why it is important to instill good habits in children and also to break any bad habits that they start developing. It is much more easier to stop forming a *bhava* or habit (*gathi*) at early stages; once the habit takes hold, it becomes harder to remove. And that is true for adults too.

12. I hope that I was able to convey the distinction between *bhava* and *jati*. For example, if an animal has exhausted *kammic* energy of that “animal *bhava*”, and if it has a dominant *kamma* seed suitable for a human, it may come to forefront at the dying moment. Then, the animal to human transition (*cuti-patisandhi*) takes place in the last *citta vithi* of the animal.

- Now this new “human *bhava*” may have enough *kammic* energy for many human births, say, 1000 years worth. In that case, this “human *bhava*” will last for 1000 years unless he commits a very strong *kamma*, good or bad. So, he could have 10 consecutive births (*jati*) in the human realm each lasting 100 years. At the end of his first *jati*, the last *citta vithi* will not have a *cuti-patisandhi* transition; the *gandhabba* will come out of the dead body and will seek a new human womb to enter; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)”.
- It is not easy to find a suitable womb right away, so the *gandhabba* may have to wait a frustratingly long time, some time many years, before a suitable womb becomes available. This is why there is a gap between consecutive lives in most rebirth accounts.

13. There are several key words associated with “*bhava*”.

- A person who is working to eliminate “*bhava*” and attain *Nibbāna* is a “*Bhauddhaya*”; see, “[A Buddhist or a Bhauddhaya?](#)”.
- “*Bhikkhu*” has a similar meaning: “*bhava*” + “*khaya*”. Normally the word “*bhikkhu*” is a stronger word, and is used to indicate a “dedicated *Bhauddhaya*”. Nowadays, “*bhikkhu*” is used exclusively for Buddhist monks who have given up the “householder life”.
- A “*Buddha*” is someone who has removed “*bhava*”. This can be done via three ways as described in “[Saddharma Pundika Sutra \(Lotus Sutra\) – A Focused Analysis](#)”.

Also see, “[How Character \(Gathi\) Leads to Bhava and Jathi](#)”,

3.5 Sorting out Some Key Pali Terms (Tanha, Lobha, Dosa, Moha, etc)

- [Kāma Tanhā, Bhava Tanhā, Vibhava Tanhā](#)
- [Tanhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)
- [Lobha, Raga and Kamaccanda, Kamaraga](#)
- [Lobha, Dosa, Moha Versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)
- [What is Avijja \(Ignorance\)?](#)
- [Indriya and Āyatana – Big Difference](#)
- [Hetu-Phala, Paccuppanna, and Paticca Samuppāda](#)
- [Ditthi \(Wrong Views\), Sammā Ditthi \(Good/Correct Views\)](#)
- [Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra](#)

3.5.1 Kama Tanha, Bhava Tanha, Vibhava Tanha

Kāma tanhā, bhava tanhā, vibhava tanhā are three key Pāli words that are commonly misunderstood.

1. *Tanhā* is “getting attached to things in this world” via greed, hate, and ignorance.

- The word *tanhā* comes from “*thán*” + “*hā*”, where “*thán*” rhymes like in “thatch” and means “a place; “*hā*” means getting attached or fused; see, “[Tanhā – How we Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”. Note that “*tan*” in *tanhā* is pronounced like in “thunder”.

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2. We attach to things because of the ignorance that they can provide lasting happiness; this attachment first manifests in greed. But when someone or something gets in the way, we generate hate; now we attach to another thing via hate.

- For example, a teenager wants to get a car and generates greed; he is bound to that idea of getting a car. If a parent refuses, then he may generate anger and even hate towards the parent. Now he is bound in two places.

3. In *kāma loka*, where all five physical sense faculties are present. Getting attach to anything that is contacted via the five senses is *kāma tanhā*. However, attachment arising from the desire to enjoy taste, smell, and body touch are exclusively restricted to the *kāma loka*.

- In the *rūpa lokas*, *tanhā* arise only due to eye and ear. Thus an *Anāgāmī*, who will be born in a *rūpa loka* has some *rūpa tanhā* and *sadda tanhā* because he/she may like to see a Buddha statue or listen to a discourse.

4. *Bhava tanhā* arises from attachment to “any existence”. Thus *bhava tanhā* is present in *kāma loka*, *rūpa loka*, and *arūpa loka*, i.e., all 31 realms.

- Even in the *kāma loka* there may be people who do not enjoy the “*kāma*” or sense pleasures; but they still want to live a quiet, peaceful life. They mostly have *bhava tanhā*. They may like to be in a secluded place cultivating *jhāna*; that is their desired “*bhava*”. If they develop *jhānas*, they will be born in *rūpa loka* or *arūpa loka* due to their new “*gathi*”.
- There are other subtle forms of “*bhava*” too. Some like to become famous, earn a title, to hold a certain office or a responsibility, etc. These are not associated with sensual pleasures and are also due to *bhava tanhā*.

5. *Vibhava tanhā* arises from the wrong view of materialism (*ucceda ditthi* in the time of the Buddha; *ucceda* pronounced “*uchchêda*”). One believes that at death one ceases to exist, i.e., one believes that the mind is a byproduct of the body (brain), and thus when the body dies, that is the end of story.

Thus one believes that one needs to just enjoy the pleasures of this life before dying. They obviously have *kāma taṇhā* as well.

- It is easy to have *vibhava taṇhā*, especially when one has not heard about the Buddha's message about a wider and more complex world with 31 realms and a rebirth process. Since our normal human senses cannot access such "hidden" aspects of this world, one just believes what one sees. It takes an effort to verify that indeed the wider world view is needed to EXPLAIN all that we can experience; see, "[Vagaries of Life and the Way to Seek "Good Rebirths"](#)".
- Many immoral acts are done with *ucceda diṭṭhi* (or materialism or nihilism) because one believes that everything in this world is for one's enjoyment. Even though it is obvious that animals cry with pain when being killed, that is not of any consequences in their minds. The logic is that If this birth is the one and the last, there is no possibility that one could face the same fate in the future.
- The connection of *ucceda* (or *uccheda*) *diṭṭhi* to *vibhava taṇhā* is made in Section 3.2.4 *Ucchedavada* in the [WebLink: Suttacentral: Brahmajala Sutta](#).
- The fact that there is a difference between cutting vegetables and killing animals for food should be given some contemplation. Obviously, the animal is feeling the pain. Then how is an animal different from us? They are different only at the intellectual level; but we have a higher intellectual level only because we have been fortunate to get this temporary human life of 100 years or so, because of a previous good deed.
- In the next birth we could be born an animal; it depends on the types of *kamma* that we have accumulated. It takes time to go through such an analysis, and to convince oneself of the ability of the Buddha Dhamma to provide "good explanations", and many just do not take the needed time to do such an investigation.

6. Let us see how each type of *taṇhā* is removed as one progresses on the Path.

- When one just starts on the Path and makes an effort to understand the message of the Buddha, one starts losing all three types of *taṇhā* gradually. With time one can feel that change and the resulting *nirāmisa sukha* that comes from it. It may take a few days, months, or even a year to feel a significant change depending on the individual.
- *Vibhava taṇhā* is removed at *Sotāpanna* stage, since only someone with *micca diṭṭhi* can have *vibhava taṇhā*. It is important to realize that one has *vibhava taṇhā* if one does not believe in the rebirth process.
- *Kāma taṇhā* leads to various levels of attachment that are removed step-by-step in the four stages of Nibbāna. *Kamaccanda* is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage; *Kāma rāga* is reduced at the *Sakadāgāmi* stage and is removed at the *Anāgāmi* stage. This process is discussed in the next post, "[Lobha, Raga and Kamaccanda, Kamaraga](#)".
- As long as one is reborn anywhere in the 31 realms, one has *bhava taṇhā*. Thus, *bhava taṇhā* is completely eliminated only at the *Arahant* stage.

7. Finally, two relevant points:

- It is important to note that these three "tendencies to bind" (*kāma taṇhā*, *bhava taṇhā*, *vibhava taṇhā*) arise due to *kāmasava*, *bhavāsava*, and *vibhavāsava*. *Taṇhā* arise due to *asāva*: One gets "attached" because one has deeply- embedded cravings.
- Sometimes *vibhavasava* is split into two: *ditthasava* (*diṭṭhi āsava*) and *avijjasava* (*avijja āsava*). This is because *vibhavasava* arises due to wrong views and ignorance.

Next, "[Lobha, Raga and Kamaccanda, Kamaraga](#)",

3.5.2 Tanha – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance

Revised October 31, 2015

In the previous post, “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)“, we discussed how feelings arise in two ways, and one type of feelings arise due to our own volition, i.e., due to *taṇhā*.

1. In the post, “[Paticca Samuppāda – Introduction](#)“, we discussed the origin of the term “*taṇhā*” (“*thán*” + “*hā*”, where “*thán*” rhymes like in “thatch” and means a place and “*hā*” means getting fused), as attaching to some place, thing, or a person (anything in this world) via greed and hate (and ignorance). Note that “*tan*” in *taṇhā* is pronounced like in “thunder”.

- Here we will see how that happens according to the natural process of *paticca samuppāda*.

2. This is discussed in the *Cha Chakka Sutta*. But in standard translations, the real meaning does not come out; see, for example: “[WebLink: DHARMAFARER: Cha Chakka Sutta \(MN 148\)](#)“, where one can also find translations in several languages which are not quite correct.

We get to know ANYTHING about the external world via ONLY six ways:

- we see *vanna rūpa* (visual things) with our eyes.
- we hear *sadda rūpa* (sounds) with our ear.
- we smell *gandha rūpa* (odors) with our nose.
- we taste *rasa rūpa* (food) with our tongue.
- we touch *pottabba rūpa* (touchable things) with our body.
- we contemplate or think about *dhamma* (memories, concepts) with our mind.

This is what the Buddha called “*sabba*” or ALL. **Our whole world is what we experience with our six senses.** Take a moment and contemplate on this. Is there anything else “in this world” other than those six listed above?

3. It is important to realize that these INITIAL sense inputs come to us via *kamma vipāka*. **Then based on whether we have *āsava/anusaya* (or corresponding *gati* or habits), WE MAY act with *avijjā* to pursue that sense input.**

- All our greedy, hateful, or ignorant thoughts arise when we make contact with the outside world with one or more of these six senses; these initial sense inputs are generated via *kamma vipāka*. But not all sense inputs lead to acting with *avijjā*. **(Please take time to think and contemplate on these ideas as you go along. It is critical to get these ideas to proceed further).**
- This important fact becomes apparent when we do not think along lines of an “established self” or “no-self”. There is no “person” who has *avijjā* all the time. *Avijjā arises due to āsava/anusaya depending on the sense input*; see, “[‘Self’ and ‘no-self’: A Simple Analysis](#)“.

4. Let us examine how we get “bonded” to something that we experience. Let us take, for example, someone listening to a new song. In this case the sound (*sadda*) impinging on the ear (*sōta*) leads to sound consciousness. There are several things that happen in a fraction of a second. This VERY FAST sequence is stated as:

(i). “*Sōtanca paticca sadda, uppaddati sōta viññānam*“, where, *sōta* is ear; *sadda* is sound (song), *uppaddati* means gives rise to, *sōta viññāna* is sound consciousness, **and *paticca* here means just the fact that sound is captured by the ears, and NOT “pati + icca” or “willingly getting bonded.** Thus,

- “Due to sound of the song being willingly received by the ear, gives rise to sound consciousness”.
- **The mind is not involved in assessing that sound.**

In order to be interested in anything, we need to have some liking for it. Everyday, we are exposed to million pictures, sounds, etc, **but we remember only a selected number, and these are the ones that lead to *taṇhā*.** This “selection of what one is interested in” starts in the next step:

(ii). “*Thinnan san gathi phassa*”;

here, we need to spend a bit of time explaining the terms: “*san*” means defilements or fuel for *sansāric* journey (see, “[What is “San”?](#)”), and “*gati*” (pronounced “gathi”) are *sansāric* habits (see, “[Sansāric Habits and āsavas](#)”); thus “*san gati*” means *sansāric* habits; “*phassa*” means contact, and “*tinnan*” (pronounced “thinnan”) means three. Please go back and read those two links if you do not remember those terms.

- Thus what the above line says is: those three things (sound, ear, and sound consciousness) make contact with one’s *sansāric* habits, and **one’s mind is instantly attracted to the subject (in this case the song) if it is something that matches with his “gathi” or “likings”**. Within a split second of hearing a few lines of the song, the teenager is “hooked”; his mind becomes totally absorbed in it.
- It is really at this step that the teenager gets interested in the song and gets attached to it (via “*pati + icca*”), BECAUSE it matches his *gati*.

Then comes the next line:

(iii). “*Samphassa ja vedanā*” (this comes from “*San phassa ja vedanā*”; it rhymes as “*samphassa*”) means this “contact with *san gati*” leads to feelings.

- **As long as one has matching “gati”, the corresponding feelings arise automatically.** We cannot stop it, at least in the initial *cittas* or thoughts; but we can certainly stop progressing further and uttering bad speech or doing bad acts.
- This is why it is important to get rid of bad “gati”. In the *Satipatthāna sutta*, it is described how one becomes a “*sampajanno*” by figuring out how to get rid of bad “gati”; see, “[Kayanupassana – The Section on Habits \(Sampajanapabba\)](#)”.
- The way to getting rid of such “bad gati” is to be fully aware of our speech and actions and stop such unsuitable speech or actions. That is what *Kayanupassana* is.

This is a VERY IMPORTANT step. The feeling depends on whether someone gets attracted to the subject matter via greed or hate. If it is greed (or liking) as in the case of the teenager listening to a song he likes, he gets a *sukha vedanā* (happy feeling). On the other hand, if it was a heavy metal song and if his grandfather hears it, the grandfather may instantly form a *dukha vedanā* (unhappy feeling) if he has a dislike for heavy metal songs (different *gati* than the teenager). **This is the reason that different people feel differently about the same “event” (a picture, sound, smell, taste, touch, or a thought about something).**

Let us further analyze this example:

The teenage could be walking a noisy street, but if he really likes the song he may not even hear any other sound. He is absorbed in the song; he gets “attached” to the song. Even after the song, he thinks about it in many ways: he may want to find the identity of the singer, may want to see whether the singer has more albums, how he is going to tell his friends about this, etc. This is the “*sansāric* wheeling” process, see, “[Nibbāna – Stopping of the Sansaric Vehicle](#)”, where we discussed how one becomes an *Ariya* by taking the wheels off of the *sansāric* vehicle (*riya*).

Thus the teenager gets attached (forms *taṇhā*) as shown in the next step:

(iv). “*vēdanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādāna, upādāna paccayā bhava, ...*”

The song became his existence or “*bhava*” (i.e., total awareness, existence) while he was listening. He does not just listen, enjoy it while it lasts and move onto something else; RATHER, he wants to hear it again, may be hear more songs like that too. This is *taṇhā*, he gets bound to it. Because of that he starts craving for it again and again, and also crave songs similar to that. May be he would form a liking for anything associated with the song: its composer, singer, and may join the singer’s fan club. His mind spends a lot of time “wheeling around” or “thinking about” things associated with the song; temporarily, his existence or “*bhava*” becomes that song.

(v). Now let us go back to (i) of the sequence:

“*sōtanca paticca sadda uppaddati sōta viññānam*“, or “Due to sound of the song being willingly received by the ear, gives rise to sound consciousness”.

- This is just the ear receiving the sound. The teenage may hear many other sounds on the road. But in order for him to get interested, the next step is the critical one:
- “*Tinnan san gati phassaō*“. Out of all the sounds that come in through the ears, he will be attached only to the one that matches his “*gati*“.

Thus we get attracted to something due to our “old habits” (see, “[Habits and Goals](#)“), which are even likely to be habits formed over many lives (see, “[Samsaric Habits and āsavas](#)“).

(vi). Now at the step #iv above, the sequence ends with further strengthening “his tendency (*gati*)” to listen to this type of music; that is *taṇhā*. **This is a key point.** We get attached to things that we have an ingrained liking for and more and more attachments will strengthen such a liking or habit or “*gati*”; this is the law of attraction (see, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits \(Gati\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)“). Thus it becomes a vicious circle. This is why it is hard to break habits (good or bad).

5. Please spend some time contemplating the above material. It is best if you can take your own situations and analyze those situations and see how *taṇhā* arises via greed (likes) and hate (dislikes) by taking examples of other sense inputs (seeing, tasting, etc). I will discuss more examples before moving on to discuss *paticca samuppāda* in detail. It is VERY IMPORTANT to understand these fundamental ideas that are described in these initial posts.

- In the earlier post, “[Paticca Samuppāda – Overview](#)“, we pointed out that an *Arahant* experiences suffering only due to *kamma vipāka*; An *Arahant* does not generate sorrow or happiness via the mechanism discussed in this post; he/she will not have any “immoral or sense craving” *gati*. Therefore, there will be no *vēdanā* generated via “*Samphassa jā vēdanā*“.
- We, on the other hand, generate “self-induced” suffering and happiness via this mechanism; the problem is that even any happiness generated is not long-lasting. This mechanism is, for example, the main cause for many “sleepless nights” or even depression. Let us discuss this next.

Next, “[What is “Kāma”? It is not Sex](#)“,

3.5.3 Lobha, Raga and Kamaccanda, Kamaraga

Revised April 28, 2018

There are various names for greed in Pāli. Each has a different meaning and the differences are significant.

1. Let us look at the two terms “*lobha*” and “*rāga*” first.

Lobha is the more stronger term of the two. In a deep sense, *lobha* (“*lo*” + “*bha*” where “*lo*” is for the *lokaya* or world and “*bha*” is for “*bihiveema*” (arise or establish) is the main reason how the material world is created and sustained with greed.

Lobha is the extreme form of greed, what is called a “*pāpa kamma*” (see, “[Kusala and Akusala Kamma, Punna and Pāpa Kamma](#)“), that makes one destined to the *apāyas*. When someone has *lobha*, it is exhibited in two ways:

- i. one wishes that all the “riches” should come to oneself and not to others (one may be already “rich”, but wants more for oneself).
- ii. one is not willingly to share some of the “excess” one has with others, and does not share with even the family.

It is hard to quantify these, but the idea is that “*lobha*” is manifestation of the overbearing attachment one has to worldly things.

- It must be noted that *lobha* is one of 52 *cetasika* (mental factors). It is reduced in stages: *kāmaccanda* or “blinded by craving for sense pleasures” (“*kāma*” or sense pleasures + “*icca*” or

liking + “anda” or blinded) removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage, *kāma rāga* removed at the *Anāgāmī* stage, and *rūpa rāga* and *arūpa rāga* removed only at the *Arahant* stage.

- *Kāmaccanda* is pronounced “kāmachchanda”.

3. **Raga** (“rā” means cravings, “ga” means to touch or bind) means one believes there is pleasures to be had in staying in *samsāra* (rebirth process), and thus one likes to stay around and enjoy the worldly pleasures.

- When one is born rich (or acquires wealth), and enjoys life with sense pleasures, that is not *lobha*, that is just *rāga*. Such a person is not doing harm to the others; but such a person COULD have *lobha* too. It is said that no matter how much one has, one wants more.
- When one has *lobha*, one could do things highly immoral acts (even if one is rich). If one is willing to kill, steal, lie, etc. to gain something one desires, then that is when one could acquire “*apayagamī*” *kamma*. One does not necessarily has to carry out these acts or speech; just thinking about it and making *abhisankhāra* (planning or even enjoying such thoughts) itself is *lobha*. Thus even the poorest person can have *lobha*.
- Even the *devas* in *deva loka* have *rāga*; they like to enjoy sense pleasures, but they don’t crave for what others have; they do not have *lobha*.

4. Then there is *kāmaccanda* and *kāma rāga*, another set of decreasing levels (in that order) of attachment to *kāma loka*. *Kāma* means attachment to the sense pleasure available in the *kāma loka*, i.e., those available for the gratification of the five senses.

- **Kamaccanda** is the highest level of that attachment. Here one is willing to do abhorrent acts (killing, raping, etc) to satisfy one’s desires. When one has developed *kāma* to the *kāmaccanda* level, one becomes unaware of the bad consequences of one’s actions; it is said that “one loses one’s mind” when blinded by attachment to sense pleasures, i.e., one cannot think rationally when one has *kamaccanda*.
- Thus, one needs to be mindful not to let one’s *kāma rāga* develop into *kāmaccanda*, which is one of the five hindrances that “cover the mind”.

5. When one has **kāma rāga**, one likes to enjoy sense pleasures, but not at the expense of others. Thus when husband and wife engage in sexual activity, that is due to *kāma rāga*.

- Inappropriate sexual activity (affairs outside marriage and rape) are done with *kāmaccanda*, i.e., when one becomes blind with *kāma*.

6. It is also helpful to see how these different levels of greed are removed at various stages of *Nibbāna*. This will give a better sense of differentiation.

- A *Sotāpanna* has permanently removed *kāmaccanda* and also does not have the worst level of *lobha*. Thus he/she will not engage in “*apayagamī*” acts to gain sense pleasures. A *Sotāpanna* has not given up *kāma rāga*.
- A *Sakadāgāmī* also has *kāma rāga* to a lesser extent; this is why he could be reborn in the *kamaloka* for one more time.
- An *Anāgāmī* has removed *kāma rāga*; he will not return to any of the 11 eleven *kāma loka* realms, including the human and *deva* realms, and will be reborn in the *suddavasa* in the *rūpa loka*, and will attain *Nibbāna* there.
- However, an *Anāgāmī* may still enjoy (but not attach to) sense pleasures, i.e., still has *kāma*; see #3 of, “[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#)”. This is a subtle point, but the point is that an *Anāgāmī* would still have the “4 greed-based *citta* without wrong views”, and that is *kāma*. Those four *akusala citta* are prevented from arising only for an *Arahant*.

7. Some may have given up the desire to enjoy pleasures in *kāma loka*, but like the *jhānic* pleasures. Thus they have **rūpa rāga** and **arūpa rāga** (or the liking to wander about in *rūpa loka* and *arūpa loka*). *Rūpa rāga* and *arūpa rāga* are removed only at the *Arahant* stage, as discussed in “[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#)”.

Next, “[Lobha, Dosa, Moha Versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)“,

3.5.4 Lobha, Dosa, Moha Versus Raga, Patigha, Avijjā

1. It was explained in the previous post that *lōbha* is extreme greed. One is willing to do any immoral act to get what one wants. One can become blind by greed, i.e. *kamachanda* can arise.

- *Dosa* (or *dvesha*) is the hate that arises due to *lōbha* (*dvesha* comes from “*devana*” + “*vesha*” or second manifestation of *lōbha*), especially when someone else is in the way of getting what one wants.
- And acts with *lōbha* and *dōsa* are done with *mōha*. *Moha* comes from “*muva*” + “*hā*” which symbolizes a vessel with its mouth closed; thus one cannot see what is inside. In the same way, one acts with *mōha* because one is totally unaware that such immoral acts will have very bad consequences; one’s mind is totally dark.
- In the *pancanivarana*, *lōbha* and *dōsa* are listed as *abhijjā* [*abhijjhā*] and *vyāpāda*; those are synonymous terms for *lōbha* and *dōsa*; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)“.

2. Acts done with *lōbha*, *dōsa*, and *mōha* are called *pāpa kamma*, strong versions of *akusala kamma*. Such *pāpa kamma* make one eligible to be born in the lower four worlds.

- Specifically, acts done with *dōsa* are the worst with *niraya* (hell) as the possible destination, and *lōbha* is cause for rebirth in the *preta* (*peta*) *loka* of hungry ghosts. Acts done with both *lōbha* and *dōsa* have all three “*san*” (since *mōha* is always there), and thus lead to rebirth in the animal or “*thirisan*” (“*thiri*”+“*san*” or all three “*san*”) realm.
- As one engages in moral actions and gets rid of one’s tendency (“*gathi*”) to do immoral actions, one starts “cooling down” and one’s likelihood of being born in the lower four realms diminish.

3. However, *Lobha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* are **permanently reduced** from one’s mind to *rāga*, *patigha*, *avijjā* levels only when one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage. All *pancanivarana* are permanently removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- Of course one is now able to “see” the real nature of the world (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) to some extent (one is not totally blind) and thus *mōha* is reduced to *avijjā* level.
- As explained in the previous post, *rāga* is the craving for sense pleasures. Of course there are different levels here too, but in general this level of greed makes one eligible only for birth in the human and *deva* worlds. *Patigha* is a lower level of hate, more like “friction”. One may get annoyed when someone and even say something in return, but will never do anything “really bad” that makes one eligible to be born in the lower four realms.

4. At the next level of *Nibbāna* of the *Sakadāgāmī* level, *kāma rāga* and *patigha* are both reduced to the extent that one will not be reborn in the human level, but only *deva* or higher realms.

- *Kāma rāga* is the *rāga* or craving for sense pleasures in the *kamaloka*. There are two levels of *kāma rāga*: *vatthu kāma* (craving for OWNING objects that provide sense pleasures) and *keles* or *klesha kāma* (craving for sense pleasures is there, but not necessary to “OWN THEM”). A *Sakadāgāmī* has lost the *vatthu kāma*, but still has *keles* (or *klesha*) *kāma*, i.e., he/she still craves for sense pleasures, but has no desire to “own them”. For example, a *Sakadāgāmī* may still like to live in a nice house with comforts, but the desire to “own the house” is not there.
- Above the human realm (in *deva* and *brahma* realms) beings have very fine bodies that are not subjected to decay or diseases. Thus they never get sick or visibly old (but of course death is inevitable to anyone anywhere in the 31 realms). This is why a *Sakadāgāmī* is said to be healthy forever (after the human life).

5. When one attains the *Anāgāmī* stage, both *kāma rāga* and *patigha* are eliminated. Thus one will not even be offended by harsh words/acts and will not retaliate. An *Anāgāmī* will never be born anywhere in the *kamaloka* including the *deva* worlds; they are reborn only in *brahma* realms.

- While a *Sotāpanna* may still have some tendency to give priority to sense pleasures at certain times, all such tendencies are reduced at the *Sakadāgāmi* stage, and removed at the *Anāgāmi* stage.

6. For an *Anāgāmi*, what is left of *rāga* is only *rūpa rāga* and *arūpa rāga*, i.e., desire for *jhānic* pleasures in the *rūpa* and *arūpa* loka (the four *rūpa jhānas* and four *arūpa jhānas*). And he/she still has *avijjā* left to a certain extent together with ***māna* (some level of pride) and *uddacca* (some level of sense of superiority)**. [*māna*: ‘conceit’, pride, is one of the 10 fetters binding to existence (s. *samyojana*). It vanishes completely only at the entrance to Arahantship, or Holiness (cf. *asmi-māna*). It is further one of the proclivities (s. *anusaya*) and defilements (s. *kilesa*). “The equality-conceit (*māna*), the inferiority-conceit (*omāna*) and the superiority-conceit (*atimāna*): this threefold conceit should be overcome. For, after overcoming this threefold conceit, the monk, through the full penetration of conceit, is said to have put an end to suffering” (A. VI, 49).]

- All these are eliminated at the ***Arahant*** stage. An *Arahant* is free from even a trace of defilements and will never be reborn in “this world” of *kāma loka*, *rūpa loka*, or *arūpa loka* (anywhere in the 31 realms).
- This is why it is not productive to meditate trying to get rid of the sense of “self” before the *Sotāpanna* stage. Many people incorrectly interpret *anatta* as “no self”. But the feeling of “me” is removed only at the Arahant stage, after the *Anāgāmi* stage. As long as *māna* and *uddacca* are there, the sense of “me” is still there.

7. What needs to be done to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage is to realize the true meaning of *anicca* (that there is no point in hurting others to achieve temporary sense pleasures), and that until one has that mindset one is truly helpless in this round of rebirths (*anatta*).

- Until one realizes that one is prone to act with extreme greed (*lobha*) and can act like a hungry ghost (*peta*), then one has not been released from such a birth.
- Until one grasps the true meaning of *anicca*, one could still act with extreme hate (*dōsa*) in the heat of the moment, and that can lead to a rebirth in the *niraya* (hell).
- Until one realizes the unfruitfulness of depending on others by cheating/stealing (without trying to make an honest living for oneself), one is not released from the *asura* realm.
- Until one gets rid of “animal *gathi*” such as having sex with young children like dogs or being able to kill others for one’s food or pleasure, etc., (i.e., both *lobha* and *dōsa*) one is not released from the animal realm.
- Those are the four lower realms. Thus one will be truly helpless (*anatta*) unless one removes such bad habits (“*gathi*”). Thus until then *dukkha* (suffering) is going to be there in the long-term, if not in this lifetime. Those are the true meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

3.5.5 What is Avijjā (Ignorance)?

1. People engage in immoral actions because they highly value the sense pleasures, and are unaware of a better type of happiness called *niramisa sukha*; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”.

Therefore, they are willing to do even immoral things in order to gain sense pleasures. They do not realize two drawbacks associated with such actions:

- If they hurt others in trying to get what they want, they will have to pay for the consequences with very high interest (law of kamma); these are the immoral acts that could lead to rebirth in the *apāyas* (lowest four realms)
- Whatever enjoyment one gets from such sense pleasures are temporary.

These facts come out naturally from the true nature of the world that include the non-stop rebirth process that involves 31 realms and the law of kamma and the causal principle of *paticca samuppāda*. It is not possible for anyone to realize these facts by oneself. One has to learn those from a Buddha or a true disciple of a Buddha.

2. What is *avijjā*? It is basically the ignorance of those two facts, even though there is a whole framework of a “world view” behind them. The key ingredients of this “wider world view” are:

- “This world” is much more complex than what is readily observed with our five physical senses, i.e., there are 31 realms instead of the just the two (human realm and the animal realm) that are apparent to us; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.
- That the true nature of existence in any of the 31 realms is *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta - Wrong Interpretations](#)”.
- That most suffering is encountered in the lowest four realms (*apāyas*).
- And this perpetual birth/rebirth process has no beginning (see, “[Infinity – How Big Is It?](#)”) and the only way to stop it is to attain the Arahant stage of Nibbāna.
- But by reaching the Sotāpanna stage of Nibbāna, one can be assured that rebirth in the *apāyas* (lowest four realms) is permanently stopped; see, “[Why a Sotāpanna is Better off than Any King, Emperor, or Billionaire](#)”.

3. **The definition of *avijjā* is not understanding the Four Noble Truths.** But to understand the Four Noble Truths one needs to see the “true nature of the world”, the three characteristics of this world: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

4. In brief, *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* mean:

- There is NOTHING in this world that can be maintained to our satisfaction in the long run (*anicca*); thus, after much struggle we only end up with suffering (*dukkha*); thus, all these struggles are in vain and one is helpless (*anatta*).
- The above three characteristics are not just for the human realm: One cannot find any panacea by seeking a better rebirth (even though the realms at and above human realm have less suffering), i.e., none of the 31 realms can provide any lasting happiness, and we are truly helpless (*anatta*).
- **In particular, if one does IMMORAL things (killing, stealing, etc) in seeking this illusory happiness, the more one gets trapped in lower realms filled with suffering.**
- Unfortunately, the true meanings of *anicca* and *anatta* have been wrongly interpreted as “impermanence” and “no-self”; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”, and the follow up posts on the correct interpretations.

5. For anyone willing to dig deeper: *anicca*, *dikkha*, *anatta*, are manifestations of the impermanence nature “of this world” as described in many ways:

- In *Abhidhamma*, it is explained how this world is “mind based”, and how both the mind and the material phenomena CHANGE with incredible speed.
- This “change” is not random, but is dictated by “cause and effect” or *paticca samuppāda*.
- These and others relevant material is discussed at different sections on the site.
- **However, it is NOT necessary to learn all those details to achieve some “cooling down” or ‘niveema’ or even various stages of Nibbāna.** One can grasp the concepts of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* via meditation or contemplation on one’s own life experiences.

6. When one does not comprehend this “big picture”, one makes bad decisions.

- For example, a fish does not see the string or the hook, only sees the worm, and gets into trouble. If it saw the whole picture, with the string and the hook, it may realize that there is something wrong and would not try to grab the worm.
- Just like the fish in the above example, we only see the pleasures to be had in this human life, but do not realize that because of this “apparent pleasures” we are grabbing hold of a world that also include unbearable suffering in the lowest four realms, not to mention the hidden suffering in this life.

- Only a Buddha can see this “bigger picture” and he has shown us not only that bigger picture, but also the reasons why we should believe in that bigger picture. In this website, I hope to provide this evidence in a systematic way.

7. That complex world view (**everything changing moment-to-moment everywhere in those 31 realms**) can be grasped only by a Buddha with a highly-purified mind. Other than a Buddha, a normal human being (no matter how intelligent) is incapable of seeing that whole world view; see, “[Godel’s Incompleteness Theorem](#)”.

- Thus *avijjā* cannot be dispelled by “book knowledge”. One needs to comprehend the “true nature of this complex world”.
- Even when we are told about it, it is not easy to grasp it, because our minds have been covered with defilements that have been accumulating from an untraceable beginning; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind](#)”.

8. Another important factor that keeps many people “in the dark” or “in ignorance” is the wrong impression that Buddha Dhamma is a pessimistic world view. With the pure Dhamma hidden for over a thousand years, several important facts about the Four Noble Truths got distorted:

- When the Buddha said “this world” is filled with suffering he meant the wider world of 31 realms. Also, he did not say, there is suffering ALL THE TIME or in all the realms of existence. In higher realms (realms 6-31), there is actually much more happiness than suffering. Even in the human realm (the 5th realm), there is more happiness than suffering for many people. That is why it is hard for many people to get motivated to examine the message of the Buddha.
- Yet most beings spend most of the time in the lowest four realms (*apāyas*). This is why, ON AVERAGE, the suffering in the *samsāra* (cycle of rebirths; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”) is much higher compared to any kind of happiness that can be experienced in any realm.
- Together with the wider “world view”, the concept of an unimaginably long rebirth process got lost; see, “[Samsaric Time Scale](#)”. The fact that it is not possible to trace a beginning to this rebirth process is not widely known. In the scale of the *samsaric* time scale, this lifetime of a hundred or so years is negligible. Thus whatever “accomplishment” one achieves, it has a very short duration in the *samsaric* time scale.
- Also, Buddha was just the messenger who conveyed these dismaying FACTS about nature. He discovered the nature’s laws, which clearly illustrate that it is not possible to find any LONG-LASTING happiness ANYWHERE in these 31 realms. But he also pointed out how to find a better and permanent kind of happiness.

9. The most important fact that has been lost for hundreds of years is that there is a happiness of a better quality that also is PERMANENT. This is the Nibbānic bliss or the *nirāmisa sukha*; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness](#)”, “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)”, and “[Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#)”. And one can start experiencing this *nirāmisa sukha* even before attaining the Sotāpanna stage of Nibbāna; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind](#)”. For more details, see, “[Nirāmisa Sukha](#)”.

- Not knowing any of those (and related facts) is *avijjā* (ignorance). If one does not know about those facts, then how can one find a solution to the problem of suffering? Also, since only a Buddha can discover these laws, without hearing the message from another person (or a website!), there is no way anyone can learn all this by oneself, no matter how intelligent one is.

10. The Buddha compared *avijjā* to darkness. One cannot remove darkness forcefully. The ONLY WAY to get rid of darkness is to bring in a light. In the same way, the Buddha explained, ignorance can be removed only via cultivating wisdom.

- No matter what else one does, one will not get rid of ignorance; one has to cultivate wisdom by learning Dhamma. First, one cultivates wisdom to distinguish moral from immoral, and then comprehend the true nature of the world, i.e., *anicca, dukkha, anatta*; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”, and “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma](#)”.

Next, “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)“,

3.5.6 Indriya and Ayatana – Big Difference

May 7, 2016; revised December 4, 2017

1. We have lived in this world of 31 realms forever, because we like to enjoy sense contacts. By understanding how we actually experience these sense contacts, we will be able to see their true nature.

- In English language, we speak about the five physical senses of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body. We also talk about the mind that is supposed to “reside” in the physical brain, which is supposed to process signals from the five senses and generate “consciousness” or awareness of the external world.
- Above is the conventionally and scientifically accepted theory, especially in the Western World, but mostly in the Eastern World as well.
- **In Buddha Dhamma, it is important to realize that our sense faculties have two aspects: physical and mental.**

2. Thus there are two versions of sense faculties in Buddha Dhamma: “*indriya*” and “*āyatana*”.

- The physical sense faculties are referred to as *indriya*.
- But those *indriya* CAN BE used as *āyatana* depending on the situation. We will discuss the difference.
- Furthermore, we will also discuss **how we literally “create our own future” by using our sense faculties as not merely as *indriya* but as *āyatana*.**

3. The five physical senses or the “*indriya*” are simply “physical instruments” mounted on our physical bodies to extract information (vision, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches) from the external physical world.

- In addition, per Buddha Dhamma, there is another *indriya* (*manindriya*) to receive *dhamma* (concepts, *gathi*, and *bhava* are synonyms) from the external world. This “*mana indriya*” or *manindriya* is located inside the brain, and has not yet been identified by science.
- This has been discussed in detail in, “[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)”.

4. Now let us see how these *indriya* can become *āyatana*. In simplest terms, *indriya* become *āyatana* when we deliberately use the *indriya* to accumulate *abhisankhāra*.

- **Another way to state the difference is to say that when *kamma vipāka* brings us sense inputs, the sense faculties act as *indriya*. Following that we MAY deliberately use sense faculties to generate new *kamma*; then they work as *āyatana*.**
- Let us consider some examples to illustrate the difference.

5. When we just happen to see a nice house (say, while walking), our eyes were used as *cakkhu indriya*. But if we like that house and stop and keep looking at it (while making an attachment for it), then we are using our eyes as *cakkayatana*.

- If we eat something to quench the hunger, and experience the taste of it, then we are using the tongue as *jivha indriya*. **But if we form an attachment to it** (and thinking about making some more to enjoy the taste again later), then the tongue is used as *jivhayatana*.
- When we walk to the bathroom to take a shower (which is something we need to do to stay clean) that involves using the body as *kāya indriya*. But hitting (or walking to hit) another person involves using the body as an *āyatana* (*kayatana*).
- A teacher speaking to students is using the body as *kāya indriya* (does not involve *abhisankhāra*), but telling a lie or a gossip involves *kayatana* (does involve *abhisankhāra*).

- When we are using the mind to remember a forgotten address, we are using the *mana indriya* (or *manindriya*). But when fantasizing about a sexual encounter, that involves *mana āyatana* (or *manāyatana*).

6. Another simple way to look at this distinction is to consider the *cakkhu indriya* as a totally mechanical device (just like a camera) that just helps to get the image to the brain.

- *Cakkhayatana* could come into play when that information is sent by the brain to the *cakkhu pasada rūpa* and is processed by the *hadaya vatthu* (mind). Based on the personal character (*gathi*) of the person, that person **may** generate greed or hate towards that visual. Then *cakkhayatana* (and possibly more other *āyatana*) may be used to take further actions.
- The *cakkhayatana* never arises in an *Arahant*, because there is no *anusaya* or *āsava* (defilements) remaining that can trigger greed or hate, i.e., there are no *kāma gathi*, *rāga gathi*, *dōsa gathi*, *mōha gathi*, etc left.
- The same kind of analysis can be done on any other sense faculty.

7. Now we can also look at this from a different angle and see that **while *indriya* can be considered as PHYSICAL devices that help “extract sense signals” from the outside world, *āyatana* are MENTAL.**

- The six *āyatana* (the six are collectively called “*salāyatana*”) may be created at a given moment depending on the situation and also depending on the *gathi* of the particular person.
- In the “*Akusala-Mūla Pavutti (or Pravurthi) Paticca Samuppāda*“, *salāyatana* arise via, “*nama rūpa paccaya salāyatana*”. When we trace steps backwards, we see that *nama rūpa* arise via “*viññāṇa paccaya nama rūpa*“. Going further back, “*sankhara paccaya viññāṇa*“, “*avijja paccaya sankhara*”. Thus *salāyatana* arise as a series of mental actions starting with *avijjā*.
- When one of the six *indriya* brings in a sense input, that sense input MAY induce greed or hate due to *avijjā* and through the above series of *paticca samuppāda* steps to CREATE one or more of the *salāyatana* to arise.

8. Thus our *indriya* do not change from moment-to-moment, but *āyatana* do.

- For example, our eyes (*cakkhu indriya*) may not change significantly for years; of course an accident can instantly change them or they can degrade with old age.
- But *cakkhayatana* change from moment-to-moment. We can be instantly attracted to an eye-pleasing object.

9. In another example, suppose an alcoholic is walking around inside an airport waiting for a flight. If he sees a bar, he may decide to stop and take a good look at it, think about for a minute and just go in to have a drink.

- The initial sense input (seeing the bar with *cakkhu indriya*), triggered his deeply-ingrained craving (*āsava*, *anusaya*) for a drink to come to the mind. Then acting with *avijjā*, at least two of the six *āyatana* arose in his mind: thinking about having a drink (*manāyatana*), walking inside and ordering a drink (*kāyātana*).
- Many other people saw the same bar, totally disregarded it and kept walking. The sense input from the *cakkhu indriya* did not lead to the arising of any of the *salāyatana* for them.
- This is why even in a normal human, the sense faculties do not work as *āyatana* all the time.

10. If we live in this world, we have to use the sense faculties in order to live; here we use them as *indriya*.

- But when we use them as *āyatana*, we are in a sense making future *bhava* (especially if those actions are strong).

11. Now we can also figure out what is really meant by the “*indriya bhāvanā*“. It simply means making sure that the *indriya* do not become *āyatana*.

- Of course, we need to focus on the most egregious acts first. For example, when one sees an eye-catching object in a shop, stopping there and thinking about how nice it would be to be able to take it home is making *āyatana*. But that is hard to avoid for a normal human who has not yet attained a *magga phala*.
- However, if the attraction to the object becomes strong, that could lead to *āyatana* other than the *cakkayatana* come into play: one may decide to steal it. This is of course far too dangerous. As soon as that mindset comes to play, one has to think about the consequences and forcefully stop it.
- Thus “*indriya bhāvanā*” is nothing but special application of the *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā*. In fact, “*indriya bhāvanā*” is to be practiced not in a “sitting down” meditation session, but while one is doing normal day-to-day activities.

12. Thus only *Arahants* use their sense faculties as *indriya* ALL THE TIME. They do not form attachments to body touches, tastes, odors, sounds (music), pictures, or any type of concepts (thoughts).

- Even a normal human does not use eyes as *āyatana* all the time. We may see numerous things even during a short walk. Most of the things we see we just ignore, because they don’t interest us. This is another way of saying that those things don’t trigger any *anusaya* or *āsava* in us or we don’t have the *gathi* to form a liking for them.

13. Finally, it must be noted that there are other types of *indriya* that come into play in different contexts.

- For example, “*panca indriya*” in 37 Factors of Enlightenment refer to very different types of *indriya*: *sati*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, *virīya* and *saddhā*; see, “[37 Factors of Enlightenment](#)” and “[Two Versions of 37 Factors of Enlightenment](#)”.
- There are five *indriya* in “*panca indriya*”, whereas there are six *indriya* in reference to sense faculties.

These mind-made pleasures experienced with *āyatana* are called *assāda* (or *āsvāda* in Sinhala). For an in-depth analysis, see, “[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana](#)”.

3.5.7

Hetu-Phala, Paccuppanna, and Paticca Samuppāda

July 2, 2016; Revised July 5, 2016

The existence of anything in this world (i.e., a *sankata*) can be explained in a step-wise process with three “steps”: (i) there must be root causes, (ii) there must be suitable conditions, and (iii) whatever that arises due to those two steps will have characteristics (*gathi*) that can traced back to those causes and conditions.

- The title is pronounced as :

[Weblink: Listen to the Title being pronounced](#)

1. Nothing happens without causes in Buddha Dhamma. This is why there CANNOT be a beginning to the rebirth process. That is a logical impossibility, and is THE main argument against creation by a “Super Being” or a Creator.

- **CAUSE AND EFFECT** is the backbone of science. In order for a scientific theory to be accepted, that theory HAS TO have explanatory power to describe HOW a given effect takes place.

2. It may be hard to fathom initially, but there are only 6 primary causes (roots) that causes anything and everything in this world to arise: *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* (three immoral roots or *hetu*), and *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha* (three moral roots).

- The word “*hetu*” comes from the Sinhala words, “*hayen ethu*” which means “wrapped with six”. Thus all causes are ultimately due to one more of the six roots mentioned above.

- Also, “*phala*” in Pāli and Sinhala (“*pala*”) means “harvest” or the “result”.
- Thus anything and everything in this world arises due to those six root causes.

3. The three immoral roots mainly give rise to the four lowest realms (*apāyas*) and the three moral roots mainly give rise to the other 27 realms.

- When one cultivates the three moral roots, one stays away from the *apāyas* and be able to be born in the higher 24 realms. Furthermore, one also cleanses one’s mind so that one can begin to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* (the true nature of the world); see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.
- However, in most cases, we can see only the “immediate causes”. For example, a wet floor is the immediate cause for someone to slip and fall. But if one was mindful (aware) of the wet floor, the fall could have been avoided.

4. Such immediate causes (that derive from those six) are easier to see or to deduce. The causes for a tree to come to life are embedded in a seed. When the seed is planted that causes a tree (or a plant) to grow.

- What causes an explosion from a bomb is in the explosive material in the bomb. There will not be an explosion unless the bomb has potent explosive material in it.
- How those are connected to the six root causes is a bit more involved, and needs a good knowledge of *Abhidhamma* to fully explain.

5. Now, let us analyze how causes lead to corresponding effects. Just because there are causes, corresponding effects do not necessarily appear. There must be appropriate **CONDITIONS** present to bring out the effects.

- A seed has embedded in it the causes to bring about a full-grown tree. But if that seed is in a cool, dry place, no tree will come to life because of it.
- But if the seed is planted in a good soil with exposure to sunlight, it can germinate and grow to be a healthy tree.
- The bomb will not explode unless it is triggered but a spark. If it is laying somewhere for many, many years, the explosives may degrade and lose their explosive power.

6. This is called “*paccuppanna*” or “*pacca*” + “*uppanna*”, where “*pacca*” is for “*paccaya*” or conditions. “*Uppanna*” means to come to life or birth.

- **Anything in this world (i.e., a *sankata*) is a *paccuppanna***, i.e, is born when suitable conditions become available. But, of course, the root causes **MUST** also be there.
- Thus even if there is a field out there with good soil and sunlight, nothing will grow unless some seeds are planted.
- **Thus *paccuppanna* means “conditional arising”. This term “conditional arising” is used today INCORRECTLY as the translation of *paticca samuppāda*. As we will see below, *paticca samuppāda* also describe the nature of things that arise due to *paccuppanna*.**

7. You can put this “theory” to test by considering anything in this world.

- Any given living being is born due to a *kammic* energy that was created in the past. And that *kammic* energy was created by a good act with moral roots or a bad act with immoral roots.
- Even non-living things (vegetation, mountains, rivers, etc) are also there due to causes and conditions. The analyses are a bit deeper and we will discuss some in the future.

8. The last step (in the three-step process that we started off with) says, whatever that arises due to those two preceding steps will have corresponding **characteristics (*gathi*)**. **This is nothing but *paticca samuppāda***; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)”.

- In the example that we discussed above, a given seed will not give to rise to any tree or a plant. A rice seed will give rise to a rice plant. An apple seed will not give rise to a rice plant but an apple tree, etc.

- The same is true for living beings. A chicken will be born of a chicken egg, not a turtle. Note that the other two conditions are satisfied here too: there was a being with “chicken *saṅkhāra*” who came into that egg as a *gandhabba*, and that egg needs to be incubated correctly to be hatched and for that hatchling to come out.

9. Actually, the steps *paccuppanna* and *paticca samuppāda* are not in a time sequence, but related. The necessary conditions (*paccaya*) in *paccuppanna* are analyzed in detail in the *paticca samuppāda* steps.

- When an animal (say a dog) is born, the conditions that led to that birth can be traced in the “[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)” cycle.
- First, “*bhava paccaya jathī*” step says, that dog was born due to a “dog *bhava*”. The step, “*upādāna paccaya bhava*” says that “dog *bhava*” arose due to a human grasping it at the dying (*cuti-patisandhi*) moment; the step, “*taṇhā paccaya upādāna*” says that grasping was done due to craving for it, and so on.
- Note above that the human did not really crave to be a dog. Rather he/she enjoyed acts that are normally done by dog. And that process started off with “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*”, where due to ignorance of their consequences, he was cultivating “dog *saṅkhāra*”: For example, thinking, speaking, and doing things that are done by dogs, for example, having indiscriminate sex (sometimes with even family members).

10. We will discuss this more depth in future posts, but I hope the main ideas can be grasped from the above description.

3.5.8 Ditthi (Wrong Views), Sammā Ditthi (Good/Correct Views)

Revised April 2, 2016 and August 3, 2016

1. *Diṭṭhi* means dogmatic belief in something(s) in the sense of “this alone is true and everything else is false regardless of the facts”. **Even though *micca diṭṭhi* (pronounced michchā diṭṭhi) is actually the correct term** (“*diṭṭhi*” means “views” and “*micca*” is “wrong”), in Pāli literature “*diṭṭhi*” is used frequently instead of “*micca diṭṭhi*”; **the immoral *cetasika* is *diṭṭhi*.**

- In the Buddha’s time it is said that there were 62 such dogmatic views that were the topics of frequent discussions; they are listed in the *Brahmajala Sutta*.
- The *ditthasava* (*āsava* for the 62 wrong views) is eliminated by *ditthivissuddhi*, i.e., cleansing of the wrong views at the *Sotāpanna* stage.

2. **Some of these dogmatic views that the Buddha had to frequently deal with were: there is a self, there is no self, reincarnation, no reincarnation, things exist, things do not exist, there are no laws of *kamma*, there are laws of *kamma* AND they are deterministic.**

- The Buddha refuted those all. Unfortunately, some of those wrong views are back in most versions of “Buddhism” today, most importantly the “no-self” (*anāthma*) concept.
- We have discussed some (the first four items were discussed in several posts, for example, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”, and “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”), and we will discuss others in detail in the future.

3. *Diṭṭhi* (or *micca diṭṭhi*) is also one of the ten immoral actions (*diṭṭhi* is done by the mind and also leads to immoral speech and deeds; see below), and has already been discussed in, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”.

- You can see that such thoughts arise due to dogmatic beliefs, i.e., when one is not willing to even consider the possibility that one could be wrong and to critically examine the evidence. For example, some people refuse to even examine the existing evidence for rebirth with an open mind and that is *diṭṭhi*.

- And one needs to know the “big picture of the 31 realms”, concepts of *kamma*, *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, etc, to make a decision on rebirth; it is not enough to just to look at the accounts or evidence for rebirth as presented in, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”.

4. There are three layers in which *micca diṭṭhi* is established and accumulates bad *kamma*:

- When one kills one’s parents with the *diṭṭhi* that a parent is not a special being, and that such *kamma* do not have consequences; this is the coarse level. It can be compared to a fire that burns down a house.
- The second level comes to display when one vehemently defends such a wrong view in a debate, and do not even consider the facts presented by the other side. It is possible that one may genuinely believe in that position, BUT that is because one has not been exposed to the whole picture on existence. The problem is that “not knowing the facts” does not help at the end. One could jump off of a building not knowing how gravity operates, but will be subjected to the same outcome. This middle level can be compared to a fire that ignites when the match stick is struck on a hard surface.
- The third level is the *anusaya* level, where these views lay dormant as *āsavas* (*diṭṭhi āsava*). This finer level is likened to a box of matches that has the potential to start a fire.

5. Someone is said to have *micca diṭṭhi* when one has wrong views at any of the three levels in #6 above. **On the other hand, *Sammā Diṭṭhi*, can be two kinds:**

- One knows that bad *kamma* (actions) have bad consequences and can lead to bad rebirths. One wants to live a moral life and strive for a “good rebirth”. This is “**mundane or conventional *Sammā Diṭṭhi***”. Thus these are still defiled views (have “*kilesa*” in them) since they lead to extending *saṃsāra*, and one has not yet eliminated the possibility of a future rebirth in the *apāyas* (four lower realms).
- But when one comprehends to “true nature of this world”, one realizes that there can be no lasting happiness anywhere in the 31 realms of existence. This *Sammā diṭṭhi* is gleaned when one truly comprehends *anicca*; see, “[Why is Correct Interpretation of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta is so Important?](#)”.
- This is the “**transcendental or lokottara *Sammā Diṭṭhi***” that leads to *Nibbāna*; it is free of defilements or “*kilesa*” or “*keles*” (in Sinhala). This view becomes complete at the *Arahant* Stage. *Kilesa* are discussed in, “[What Are Kilesa \(Mental Impurities\)? – Connection to Cetasika](#)”.

6. Thus **conventional *Sammā Diṭṭhi*** means the view to “do good things”; one understand *kamma* and knows the consequences of bad deeds; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.

- As we discussed in “[Foundation of Dhamma](#)”, “doing good things” is better but most of those things are done with the wrong intention of achieving something in return (good rebirth, winning a lottery, pass an examination, etc.). This kind of *Sammā Diṭṭhi* will perpetuate the *samsaric* journey, **but is a required first stage to comprehend *anicca***.
- The danger in stopping at the conventional *sammā diṭṭhi* is of course that we do not know what one will do in a future life (say another human birth): one could be born under circumstances where one is not exposed to Buddha Dhamma, may associate with bad people, and may commit *kamma* that will lead to rebirth in the *apāyas* (lowest four realms). The other danger is that we do not know what kind of *kamma* we have done in previous lives, and we may already have some bad *kamma* seeds that could lead to a birth in the *apāyas*.

7. Thus, by ***lokottara Sammā Diṭṭhi*** is meant the true understanding of the nature of “this world” of 31 realms and the round of rebirths: for example, that “there is a self” and “there is no-self” are both incorrect and things (both animate and inanimate) exist if the conditions for their existence are present (*paticca samuppāda*). Even though one partially comprehends *Sammā Diṭṭhi* at the *Sotāpanna* stage, the understanding becomes complete only at the *Arahant* stage.

8. If one cultivates the “*lokottara*” *Sammā Diṭṭhi* and becomes a *Sotāpanna*, then one will be free from rebirths in the *apāyas*. In a *Sotāpanna*, the four “*diṭṭhi saḥagatha lōbha citta*” (the four greed-

based immoral thoughts that arise due to wrong views) do not arise; see, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)”.

Next, “[How do we Decide which View is Ditthi \(Wrong View\)?](#)”,

3.5.9 Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra

November 8, 2016

Pronunciation of Pāli words like *vacī*, *vitakka*, and *vicara* can be found in “[Pāli Glossary – \(L-Z\)](#)”.

1. Many people believe that **conscious thoughts** are controlled via *vacī saṅkhāra*. However, *vacī saṅkhāra* are defined as “*vitakka vicara vacī saṅkhāra*”, which means “*vacī saṅkhāra are vitakka and vicara*”.

- In the following we will see that *vacī saṅkhāra* are our conscious, deliberate thoughts in addition to speech.
- Furthermore, this post explains how our minds initiate all our actions and speech via *javana citta*.

2. *Vitakka* is the *cetasika* that points the mind to a given thought object (*arammana*). *Vicara cetasika* keeps the mind engaged on that thought object, i.e., generating new thoughts about it. In *Abhidhamma*, this has been compared to a bee flying to a certain flower (*vitakka*) and then buzzing around that flower (*vicara*) while drinking nectar.

- In the same way, when we focus the mind on a certain object, and then keep the mind there, we generate many thoughts about that object; **these are conscious, deliberate thoughts, and not *mano saṅkhāra* that arise automatically.** For example, if we start thinking about an enemy, we could be spending a many minutes or even hours thinking bad thoughts (*vacī saṅkhāra*) about that person. **We do most of that in our minds, just talking to ourselves. But we may also get some of those thoughts out as actual words.**

3. In contrast, when we first thought about that person in the example of #2 above, **only *mano saṅkhāra* were AUTOMATICALLY generated according to our *gathi*.** We don’t have any control over *mano saṅkhāra* other than by changing our *gathi* over time.

- This is a key point to grasp, and is discussed in detail in the posts, “[How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?](#)” and “[Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda](#)” as well as other posts in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.
- My goal in this post is to point out this critical difference between *mano* and *vacī saṅkhāra*, and to clarify why both our non-automatic, conscious thoughts — as well as speech — are included in *vacī saṅkhāra*.

4. *Kaya saṅkhāra* involves *kamma* done with bodily actions. So, it is possible for one to come to the wrong conclusion that speech also is *kaya saṅkhāra*, since body parts (tongue, lips and associated facial muscles) are moved during speech.

- I automatically came to that wrong conclusion when I first analyzed these terms, without contemplating deeply on them. The key is that speech originates via types of *rūpa* that are different from those *rūpa* that lead to other bodily movements (like walking or moving arms).
- In order to understand this, one needs to have some idea of how our body parts move according to our thoughts.

5. Our physical body parts are really mechanical parts. There is no “life” in them unless a *gandhabba* controls that body. *Gandhabba* is an important concept in Buddha Dhamma, but has been neglected simply because it is not discussed in the infamous Visuddhimagga and other literature by Buddhaghosa, who single-handedly distorted Buddha Dhamma; see, “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)”.

- The concept of *Gandhabba* is an essential element in Buddha Dhamma; see, “[Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka](#)”.

- Without the concept of *Gandhabba*, it is not possible to explain the difference between *bhava* and *jāti*: “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)“, and not believing it a micca diṭṭhi: “[Micca Diṭṭhi, Gandhabba, and Sotapanna Stage](#)“.
- *Tirokudda sutta* is a famous *sutta* that describes the *gandhabba* as “*tirokudda*“; see, “[Antarabhava and Gandhabba](#)” and posts referred to there.

6. Let us briefly discuss how the mind of the *gandhabba* controls a physical body. The physical body is composed of 32 body parts just like a robot is made out of its various parts. What gives life to this physical body is the *gandhabba*, a very fine body smaller than an atom that the scientists have discovered.

- Even though the *gandhabba* is negligibly small in “weight”, it has this fine body that spreads over the physical body like a fine mesh; it is more like an energy field. There is a fine nervous system associated with the *gandhabba* that overlaps the physical nervous system consisting of billions of nerve cells.
- *Gandhabba* also has the seat of mind (*hadaya vatthu*) and five *pasada rūpa* (that receive signals from the five physical senses via the brain) located close to the physical heart; see, “[Brain – Interface between Mind and Body](#)” for details.

7. How can such a negligibly small *gandhabba* move a heavy physical body? *Gandhabba* is more like a signal source that gives appropriate commands. It is the brain (which is a very sophisticated computer) that translates those commands into actual signals given to the physical nervous system.

The energy to move those body parts comes from the food that we eat.

- In the post, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)“, and other related posts this is discussed in more detail. But let us discuss the concept using an example, without getting into those details.

8. When someone decides to move his arm, it is actually the mind that resides in the *gandhabba* that makes that decision. Then that signal is sent to the brain and the brain converts that “mental signal” into chemical signals that are transmitted through the nervous system to the muscles in the arm, which in turn move the arm.

- The energy produced by the digestion of our food goes into energize the brain, as well as in moving body parts.
- So, the energy spent by the *gandhabba* is a negligible fraction of the energy that is needed to move body parts and to keep the brain functioning. This can be compared to the tiny amount of energy spent by a computer in controlling a fighter jet. The fighter jet gets its energy from the fuel burned, just like our physical body gets its energy from the food digested.
- We generate that small energy in our thoughts — via *javana citta* — as we discuss below.

9. The commands from the *gandhabba* are signals or tiny amounts of energy, and these come in two varieties: *kaya vinnatti rūpa* and *vacī vinnatti rūpa*. These are two of the 28 types of *rūpa* in *Abhidhamma*.

- **The *kaya vinnatti rūpa* control bodily movements, and *vacī vinnatti rūpa* control speech.**
- These “*rūpa*” or “energy signals” are created in *javana citta* that arise in our thought streams or *citta vithi*. Again, more information can be found in the *Abhidhamma* section.

10. Speech — done with *vacī vinnatti rūpa* — is different from moving body parts. Speech involves complex muscle movements that are not yet understood by science. Moving body parts — done with *kaya vinnatti rūpa* — is simpler.

- What is behind *vacī vinnatti rūpa* are *vitakka* and *vicara cetasika* that are in those *javana citta* responsible for speech. However, when we just “talk to ourselves”, the *javana citta* responsible are weaker than those responsible for actual speech. But those two *cetasika* are in both types of *javana citta*.

- Those *javana citta* that are responsible for physical action (like raising an arm or walking) involve *kaya vinnatti rūpa*, and the *javana citta* that generate those are even stronger.
- Therefore, both *vacī saṅkhāra* (whether talking to oneself or actually speaking) and *kaya saṅkhāra* (bodily actions) involve *javana citta*. All *kamma* that can be controlled directly by us are done via *javana citta*; see, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)”.

11. The initial decision to generate *vacī* or *kaya saṅkhāra* actually happens at the *vottapana citta*, which comes just before the 7 *javana citta* in a *citta vithi*, which has 17 *citta* in total; see, “[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)”, and other related posts in the *Abhidhamma* section.

- That “initial reaction” to a sense input comes AUTOMATICALLY in the *vottapana citta*, and the nature of that reaction depends on one’s *gathi*. Thus, the AUTOMATIC *mano saṅkhāra* are generated in that *vottapana citta*.

12. **If you are not familiar with *Abhidhamma*, don’t be discouraged by these details.** I wrote this post to provide undeniable evidence that *vacī saṅkhāra* are generated not only during speech but also while “talking to oneself”.

- But for those who are familiar with *Abhidhamma*, the relationship between terminology and concepts could become much more clear with this discussion.

13. Now let us take a couple of examples to illustrate this without *Abhidhamma*. When one is doing a *kammattana* (i.e., meditation recital), one could either say the phrase(s) out loud or one could recite in one’s head.

- A *kammattana* can be done in either of those two ways, and both involve *vacī saṅkhāra*.
- **Furthermore, the more one understands the concepts behind the meditation phrase, the more powerful those *javana citta* will be, and thus more effective the meditation session becomes.**
- By the way, when one is starting on meditation, it is better to say the phrases out loud because it is easier to keep the mind on that topic. When one gets better at it, one could just recite it internally, without getting the words out.
- This is an example of a *punnabhi saṅkhāra* (meritorious deed) that involves *vacī saṅkhāra*.

14. Now let us consider an *apunnabhi saṅkhāra* (immoral deed) that involves *vacī saṅkhāra*, where one starts generating bad thoughts about an enemy or a person that one dislikes. **One could be generating a lot of such *vacī saṅkhāra* internally, without saying a single word.** However, when the feelings get strong, the words may just come out because the *javana* power of those *javana citta* could become uncontrollable.

- Even though the *javana* power involved in “silent *vacī saṅkhāra*” are less than those involved in speech, one could be generating much more of those “silent *vacī saṅkhāra*” and thus could be generating more *kamma vipāka*.
- Just like in the earlier example, the “power” behind those *javana citta* with *vacī saṅkhāra* will be higher when the degree of hate associated with that person is higher. That is why it is harder to control oneself, when one is dealing with a person that one really hates.

15. In the Noble Eightfold Path, *Sammā sankappa* deals with only one component of *vacī saṅkhāra*, those conscious thoughts without speech. Getting rid of all *vacī saṅkhāra* involve both *Sammā Sankappa* and *Sammā Vaca*.

- “*Sankappa*” in Pāli or “*sankalpana*” in Sinhala means conscious thoughts that involve “*san*” or things that contribute to the *sansaric* journey (rebirth process). Here “*sankalpanā*” comes from “*san*” + “*kalpana*”, where “*kalpanā*” means conscious thoughts. When one keeps thinking about something, those thoughts are called “*sankalpanā*”.
- Of course “*san*” is a key Pāli term in Buddha Dhamma; see the posts in the subsection, “[San](#)”. *Sammā* means to get rid of, as discussed in the same section.

- Therefore, *sammā sankappa* or *Sammā sankalpanā* means removing bad conscious and deliberate thoughts, and cultivating moral thoughts.
- *Sammā vaca* involves stopping immoral speech and generating moral speech.

16. The main point to be extracted from this discussion is that one needs to be very careful about generating hateful (or greedy) conscious thoughts for long times. When one becomes aware of such thoughts, one CAN stop them. This is the basis of both *Ānāpāna* and *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā*.

- We always think conscious thoughts (*vacī saṅkhāra* of the first kind) before acting on them, either via speech (*vacī saṅkhāra* of the second kind) or via bodily actions (*kāya saṅkhāra*)!
- This is discussed in detail in, “[How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?](#)“, “[Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda](#)“, “[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)“, as well as other posts in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.
- Experiencing pleasing sense objects (called *kāma guna*) is not *kāma*. Generating *vacī saṅkhāra* (or *kāma sankalpanā*) about them is *kāma*; see, “[Kāma Guna, Kāma, Kāma Rāga, Kāmaccanda](#)“.

3.6 The Five Aggregates (Pancakkhandha)

- [Five Aggregates – Introduction](#)
- [“Saññā \(Perception\)”](#)
- [“Vedanā \(Feelings\)”](#)
- [“Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways”](#)
- Saṅkhāra is discussed at, [“Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka”](#).
- [“Viññāna \(Consciousness\)”](#)
- [“Rūpa \(Material Form\)”](#)

Deeper Analysis:

- [Pancakkhandha or Five Aggregates – A Misinterpreted Concept](#)
- [Pancaupadanakkhandha – It is All Mental](#)

3.6.1 Five Aggregates – Introduction

1. The five aggregates (*pancakkhandha*; **pronounced panchakkandhā**) are: *rūpa* (material aspects), *saññā* (perception), *vedanā* (feelings), *saṅkhāra* (immoral/unfruitful activities; see, [“Avijja paccaya Saṅkhāra”](#)), and *viññāna* (consciousness). *Panca* is five and *khandha* is a heap (in Sinhala, a “*khandha*” is a hill); thus *pancakkhandha* is “five heaps”. Sometime it is called *pancaskhandha*, but that is the Sanskrit name and does not give the clear meaning.

- Some people believe *pancakkhandha* means one’s own body since it has a material body and the four mental aspects. **But *pancakkhandha* is another name for “everything in this world of 31 realms”.**
- Everything “in this world” (according to each individual) is included in the five aggregates (*pancakkhandha*). That is everything that anyone CAN EVER experience. *Pancakkhandha* encompasses all material and mental aspects and are all mental.

2. **Each of the five components of *pancakkhandha* can be categorized in eleven ways: past, present, future, near, far, coarse (*olarika*), fine (*sukuma*), internal (*ajjatta*), external (*bahijja*), liked (*paneeta*), disliked (*appaneeta*).** This is what I mean when I say it is unimaginably huge and includes everything in this world.

- For example, one component is the *rūpa skandha* (collection of material forms). It is divided into two parts: internal (*adhyathmika* or *ajjatta*) and external (*bahira* or *bahijja*). Internal *rūpa* are the five physical senses: eye (*cakkhu*), ear (*sota*), nose (*ghana*), tongue (*jivha*), and body (*kaya*). These are actually not the physical eye, ear, etc that we see, but very fine *rūpa*.
- When we die all internal *rūpa* (*cakkhu*, *sota*, *ghana*, *jivha*), and *kaya*) die too, i.e., they are no longer associated with the dead body. The physical body loses the “vitality” and becomes just a “lifeless log” like a piece of wood. While all other four fine internal *rūpa* are located close to the heart (scientists will not be able to detect them), the *kaya rūpa* is spread all over the body; that is why we can “feel” all over the body (except nails and hair); see, [“Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?”](#).
- All other material “things” or *rūpas* “in this world” belongs to the external *rūpa* category: other people, houses, planets, galaxies, etc, i.e., absolutely everything else.
- And we need to remember that *rūpa* include ALL material phenomena: *vanna* (pictures or things we customarily call “*rūpa*”), *sadda* (sounds), *gandha* (smells), *rasa* (taste), and *pottabba* (touch).

3. *Pancaupādānakkhandha* (or *panca upādānakkhandha*) is a VERY SMALL subset of *pancakkhandha*. *Pancaupādānakkhandha* includes only those things and concepts in this world that a given person interacts with or has attachments for. This can be visualized easily as follows:

- If *pancakkhandha* is a huge wall, a fly landing on the wall makes contact or grasps that wall only with its six legs. Thus for that fly, what it touches with its tiny six feet (the contact area is minuscule) can be compared to *pancaupādānakkhandha*; the *pancakkhandha* is the whole huge wall.
- Just like the fly is holding onto the wall with its six legs, we are grasping (*upādāna*) this world with our six senses: we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and think about only a minuscule amount of things the world offers.
- Therefore, we are bound to “this huge world” only via a very few things, and that is all we have to “give up” or discard in order to attain Nibbāna. Please contemplate on this and come back and read this post once-in-a-while. It will sink in as one’s knowledge of Dhamma grows.

4. We experience this outside world by seeing those objects, hearing sounds, smelling odors, tasting foods, touching objects, and also thinking about not only “physical things”, but also concepts. All that experience is included in the other four aggregates: we sense them (*saññā* or perception), we feel them (*vedanā* or feelings), we accumulate *abhisankhāra* (*kamma*) by attaching/rejecting them, and we “know about them” (*viññāṇa* or consciousness).

- Thus it is clear that each of us experiences or grasps only a tiny fraction of *pancakkhandha*.

5. That is a brief summary of *pancaupādānakkhandha*, the five aggregates that is clung to. If we do not generate *saṅkhāra*, then it becomes just *pancakkhandha*.

- Please read the above carefully, until you see the difference between *pancakkhandha* and *pancaupādānakkhandha*. When an *Arahant* experiences any external object he/she does not generate any *abhisankhāra*. Thus an *Arahant* does not have a *pancaupādānakkhandha*.
- Normally we just say *saṅkhāra* in the place of *abhisankhāra*. But it is only *abhisankhāra* that lead to rebirth. Thus an *Arahant* does *saṅkhāra*, but not *abhisankhāra*, i.e., there is no “*upādāna*” or “clinging”. This is discussed in the posts on “*san*” and “*saṅkhāra*”.
- But an ordinary person generates greedy, hateful, or ignorant thoughts and generates (*abhi*) *saṅkhāra* when experiencing external objects, and thus has *pancaupādānakkhandha*.
- Thus, the difference between *pancakkhandha* and *pancaupādānakkhandha* depends on the (*abhi*)*sankharakkhandha*.
- Also, we see that each person has his/her own *pancaupādānakkhandha*, because the *saññā*, *vedanā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa* (as well as the external and internal *rūpa*) are going to be unique to that person.

3.6.2 Sanna (Perception)

Saññā is, at the very fundamental level, the recognition of an external stimulus. But it is more than that. We not only recognize that a given object is, say, a dog. But some people may be able to categorize it as a bull dog. Thus *saññā* about a particular object depends on the person.

Same is true for other four senses. When we hear a sound, we recognize what it is, say a bird singing a song. Some may be able to say which bird it is, some may not be. Any smell, taste, or touch works the same way. Without *saññā* we cannot identify things around us, and also cannot communicate with each other meaningfully.

One of the 31 realms of existence is the “*Asanna* realm”. There, the beings have no *saññā* or perception. Thus in principle, those beings are without any awareness. Nothing registers in the mind. If anyone has attained the 7th *jhāna*, the “*Nevasanna Na’sanna*”, then that person knows what it is like to born in the *Asanna* realm.

Saññā is described in more detail in, “[Saññā – What It Really Means](#)” and “[How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#)”.

Next, “[Vedanā \(Feelings\)](#)”,

3.6.3 Vedana (Feelings)

In this and follow-up posts, we will discuss five types of *vedanā* (feelings) and how they arise. There are other types of *vedanā*, but these are the important ones to understand for the *Sotāpanna* stage. Three of these arise due to *kamma vipāka* and the other two arise due to *saṅkhāra* (defiled thoughts).

- *Vedanā* comes from (“*vē*” + “*danā*”) which means “*veema danaveema*” in Sinhala. Basically, when we sense something via our six senses, we become aware of it; that is *vedanā*.

Vedanā (feelings) **that cannot be avoided in this world are three kinds** : *Sukha vedanā* (pleasant or joyful feeling), *dukkha vedanā* (unpleasant or painful feeling), and *adukkhamā asukha* (without being painful or joyful, just neutral), where we are just aware of it. This *adukkhamā asukha vedanā* is commonly called *upekkha vedanā*.

- It must be pointed out that *upekkha* is better reserved for one of the *Saptha Bojjanga* or Seven Factors of Enlightenment; it is a state of the mind (of neutrality, equanimity), and **needs to be cultivated**. Most times *upekkha* is translated incorrectly as a neutral feeling, but that is not a key problem.

Then there are **two types of other *vedanā* that can be prevented from arising**: *somanassa* (pleasant) and *domanassa* (unpleasant) *vedanā*. They are solely mind-made and are due to defiled thoughts (*saṅkhāra*). The details are discussed below.

Two Ways Vedanā (Feelings) Can Arise

Vedanā (feelings) *can arise in two ways*:

1. As a consequence of a previous *kamma* (i.e., a *kamma vipāka*). The *kamma* or *saṅkhāra* could have been done many lives ago.
2. As a direct consequence of a *saṅkhāra* (one could say an ongoing action or a way of thinking).

Vedanā Arising from *Kamma Vipāka*

Kamma vipāka can happen to everyone, including *Arahants*. While everyone can avoid some *kamma vipāka*, there are others that are too strong to be able to avoid.

- For example, the Buddha himself had physical ailments later in his life as *kamma vipāka*. Moggallāna Thero was beaten to death because of a bad *kamma* that he committed many lives before.
- However, *kamma vipāka* are not certain to happen. Some can be reduced in power (we will discuss this under *Vinaya* and *Metta Bhāvanā*), all are reduced in power with time and some eventually die out if they did not get a chance to come to fruition within 91 *Mahā kalpas*. Many can be avoided by not providing conditions for them to arise (see, the discussion on *kamma beeja* in , “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”).

Vedanā Arising from *Saṅkhāra*

These are the *vedanā* that *Arahants* do not feel. Since they do not commit any *abhisankhāra* (those *saṅkhāra* done with greed, hate, and ignorance), an *Arahant* avoids any kind of feeling arising from *abhisankhāra*. The easiest way to explain this kind of *vedanā* is to give some examples:

1. Three people are walking down the street. One has ultra-right political bias (A), the second has ultra-left bias (B), and the third is an *Arahant* who does not have special feelings for anyone (C). They all see a famous politician hated by the political right coming their way. It is a given that the sight of the politician causes A to have displeasure and B to have a pleasurable feeling. On the other hand, the sight does not cause the *Arahant* to generate any pleasure or displeasure.

Even though all three see the same person, they generate different types of feelings. *It is important to realize that the feelings were created by A and B by themselves.*

2. Two friends go looking for treasure and find a gem. They are both overjoyed. It looks quite valuable and one person kills the other so that he can get all the money. Yet when he tries to sell the “gem”, he finds out that it was not that valuable. His joy turns to sorrow in an instant. *Nothing had changed in the object, the piece of stone. It was the same piece of colored rock. What has changed was the perception of it (saññā).*
3. A loving couple had lived for many years without any problems and were happy to be together. However, the husband slaps his wife during an argument. The physical pain from the slap itself did not last more than a few minutes. But for how long the wife would suffer mentally? Even the husband, who did not feel any physical pain, would suffer for days if he really loved his wife. *In both cases, the real pain was associated with the attachment to each other. The wife could have dropped something on her foot and would have suffered about the same amount of physical pain. But she would not have had any lingering mental pain associated with that.*
4. When the Buddha described *dukha* in the *Dhammacakka Pavattana Sutta*, it went like, “*jathi pi dukkha, jara pi dukkha, maranan pi dukkha.....*”. Most people translate this incorrectly as, “birth is suffering, getting old is suffering, dying is suffering,...”. However, even though the word “pi” is used for the verse, it needs to be taken either as “pi” (liked) or “api” (not liked) depending on the case. Thus, “*jathi pi dukkha*” in the verse means “birth of something that is not liked by one is suffering for one self”. “*Jara pi dukkha*” means, “decay of something that is liked is suffering”, and “*maranan pi dukkha*” means, “Death of a liked is suffering”. The reverse is true too: “decay of something that is hated brings happiness” and “death of a hated person brings happiness”. *You can think of any example and this is ALWAYS true. Many people were happy to hear about the death of Bin Laden, except his people who became sad.*
5. The Buddha further clarified this in the next verse: “*piyehi vippayogo dukkho, appiyehi sampayogo dukkho*” means “it brings sorrow when a loved one has to depart, and it also brings sorrow to be with a hated person”.

Thus all these second kind of feelings arise due to greed, hate, or ignorance; all these are due to (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra*. The feelings reside INSIDE oneself. It does not come from outside. We use external things to CAUSE happiness or suffering by our own volition.

Deeper analyses can be found at: [Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#) and [Feelings: Sukha, Dukha, Somanassa, and Domanassa](#)

Next, “[Viññāna \(Consciousness\)](#)“,

3.6.4 Vedana (Feelings) Arise in Two Ways

Revised September 4, 2016; Revised February 9, 2017; October 17, 2017

Vedanā (feelings/sufferings) can arise in two ways:

1. As a consequence of a previous *kamma* or previous defiled actions, i.e., a *kamma vipāka*. Those *kamma* could have been done many lives ago.
2. As a direct consequence of a generating *mano saṅkhāra* or defiled thoughts (due to our *gati* at the present time).

Both types arise automatically; see, “[How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?](#)” and “[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāna](#)” for details.

Let us discuss these two types separately.

(A) *Vedanā* Arising from *Kamma Vipāka*

1. *Vedanā* (feelings) due to *kamma vipāka* are **three kinds** : *Sukha vedanā* (pleasant or joyful feeling), *dukha vedanā* (unpleasant or painful feeling), and *adhukkhamā asukha* (without being painful or joyful, just neutral), which is commonly called *upekkha*.

- Those *sukha vedanā* and *dukha vedanā* are felt only by the body. All *vedanā* initially coming through other five sense faculties are neutral.
- But based on all those, we can generate more types of “mind-made” *vedanā* called *somanassa* and *domanassa vedanā* as we discuss in the next section below.

2. *Kamma vipāka* leading to *sukha vedanā* and *dukha vedanā* happen to everyone, including *Arahants*. While everyone can live mindfully (taking necessary precautions) to avoid some of those *dukha vedanā*, there are others that are too strong to be able to avoid.

- For example, the *Buddha* himself had physical ailments later in his life as *kamma vipāka*. Moggallāna Thero was beaten to death because of a bad *kamma* that he committed many lives before.
- However, *kamma vipāka* are not certain to happen. Some can be reduced in power (see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”); all are reduced in power with time and some eventually die out if they do not get a chance to come to fruition within 91 *Mahā kalpas*.
- Many can be avoided by not providing conditions for them to arise, i.e., by acting with *yoniso manasikara* or just common sense. For example, going out at night in a bad neighborhood is providing fertile ground for past bad *kamma vipāka* to take place: We all have done innumerable *kamma* (both good and bad) in past lives; if we act with common sense we can suppress bad *kamma vipāka* and make conditions for good *vipāka* to arise.

Also see the discussion on *kamma beeja* in , “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”.

We will discuss how this type of *vedanā* due to *vipāka* (from deeds in the past) arise due to the *kusala-mūla* and *akusala-mūla* PS cycles in following posts. First let us look at the “suffering we are initiating at present moment via *saṅkhāra*”.

(B) *Vedanā* Arising from *Saṅkhāra* (“*Samphassa ja vedanā*”)

We described the PS mechanism that generates this type of *vedanā* in the previous post. The *vedanā* occurs due to attachment via greed or hate, at that moment (i.e., one’s *gati*); see, “[Tanhā – How We Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.

These are the *vedanā* (feelings) that *Arahants* do not feel. Since they do not have any “bad *gati*”, the do not commit any (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra*, an *Arahant* avoids any kind of feeling arising from *sankhāras*. The easiest way to explain this kind of *vedanā* is to give some examples:

1. Three people are walking down the street. One has ultra-right political bias (A), the second has ultra-left bias (B), and the third is an *Arahant* who does not have special feelings for anyone (C). They all see a famous politician hated by the political right coming their way. **It is a given that the sight of the politician causes A to have displeasure and B to have a pleasurable feeling.** On the other hand, the sight does not cause the *Arahant* to generate any pleasure or displeasure. **Even though all three see and identify the person,** they generate different types of feelings. *It is important to realize that the feelings were created in A and B by themselves.*
2. Two friends go looking for treasure and find a gem. They are both overjoyed. It looks quite valuable and one person kills the other so that he can get all the money. Yet when he tries to sell the “gem”, he finds out that it was not that valuable. His joy turns to sorrow in an instant. ***Nothing had changed in the object. It was the same piece of colored rock. What has changed was the perception of it.***
3. What could happen if an *Arahant* found the same gem lying on the road? (he would not have gone looking for one). He might think of donating it to a worthy cause. During the process, if he found that it was not valuable, he would not have worried about it at all.
4. A loving couple had lived for many years without any problems and were happy to be together. However, the husband slaps his wife during an argument (this is a *kamma vipāka*). The physical pain from the slap itself did not last more than a few minutes. But for how long the wife would suffer mentally? Those feelings arise due to *saṅkhāra*, i.e. sadness and of hate. Even the husband, who did not feel any physical pain, would suffer for days if he really loved

his wife. *In both cases, the real mental pain was associated with the attachment to each other. The wife could have dropped something on her foot and would have suffered about the same amount of physical pain. But she would not have had any lingering mental pain associated with that.*

5. In all the above cases, the initial sense contact was due to a *kamma vipāka*; **there are no *kamma* generated at that instant.** However, based on that initial contact, we tend to pursue it with our mind (thinking about good/bad aspects of the politician, the value of the gem, re-assessing the love between husband and wife) and thus **start generating *kamma* automatically, within the same *citta vitti***; see, “[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāna](#)”.

Thus it is clear that in all the above examples, the “extra” happiness or suffering (other than due to *kamma vipāka*) arose from **within one’s own mind**. And *taṇhā* (attachment via greed or hate) was the cause of it.

We will discuss more examples as we proceed, but you should think about how to analyze situations that you face everyday, or have experienced. Let us further analyze the actual words of the Buddha when he described *dukkha* in the *Dhammacakka Pavattana Sutta*:

1. It says, “*jathī ‘pi dukkha, jara ‘pi dukkha, maraṇa ‘pi dukkha.....*”. Most people translate this incorrectly as, “birth is suffering, getting old is suffering, dying is suffering,....”.

2. However, “*jathī ‘pi dukkha*” is shortened for the verse; **it is “*jathī pi dukkha*” or “*jathī api dukkha*” depending on the context**; the other two “*jara ‘pi dukkha, maraṇa ‘pi dukkha*” are the same.

“*pi*” in Pāli or “*priya*” in Sinhala is “like”, and “*api*” in Pāli or “*apriya*” in Sinhala is dislike. Thus, “*jathī api dukkha*” means “birth of something that is not liked by one causes suffering”. “*Jara pi dukkha*” means, “decay of something that is liked causes suffering”, and “*marana pi dukkha*” means, “Death of a liked causes suffering”. One can look at each case and easily see which one to use; see #4 below.

3. The reverse is true too: “Birth of something that one likes causes happiness”, “decay of something that is hated brings happiness” and “death of a hated person brings happiness”. *You can think of any example and this is ALWAYS true. It brings happiness to many people to hear about the destruction of a property of an enemy. Many people were happy to hear about the death of Bin Laden, except his followers who became sad.*

4. The Buddha further clarified “*pi*” and “*api*” in the next verse, where he explicitly said: “*piyehi vippayogo dukkho, appiyehi sampayogo dukkho*” means “it brings sorrow when a loved one has to depart, and it also brings sorrow to be with a hated person” (“*piya*” is same as “*pi*”, and “*apiya*” is same as “*api*”).

- We all know the truth of this first hand. When a man dies of in a plane crash, it causes great suffering to his family; less to his distant relatives; even less to those who just know him informally; and for someone at the other end of country who has had no association with him, it is “just some news”.

5. **Thus all these feelings arise due to *taṇhā*, some form of attachment:** greed (craving, liking) or hate (dislike); all these are due to *mano saṅkhāra*. **The feelings (or rather the perceptions that give rise to feelings) reside INSIDE oneself. It does not come from outside.** We use external things to CAUSE happiness or suffering by our own volition.

- There is no inherent suffering or happiness in ANYTHING external; the sense contact with an external thing CAUSES suffering or happiness depending on our *gathi* and *āsava*s. An Arahant, who has removed all *āsava*s, will be free of such emotional responses.

6. Now this DOES NOT MEAN we should not love our family or friends. These associations did not come without a cause. We cannot eliminate the cause for the current life; it was done long ago. Now we have fulfill the obligations that resulted from the cause in the past, i.e., we cannot give up our

families. We have families, children etc, BECAUSE we have debts to pay to each other; see, "[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)".

- What we need to do is to eliminate NEW causes: stop such relationships from formed in future births, i.e., work to stop the rebirth process, while making sure to fulfill our obligations.

7. Here again, many people freak out: "how can I do that? if I do not reborn what happens to me?" We have this mindset because we do not think life can be much worse than what we have. But it definitely can be much, much worse; see, "[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)".

- **It is not possible to comprehend this fact without fully understanding the "world view" of the Buddha by looking at the wider world of 31 realms and the process of rebirth.**
- However, anyone can start on the Path without getting into the question of where there is a rebirth process or not; see, the section "[Living Dhamma](#)".

8. It is also clear how accumulation of *saṅkhāra* via *paticca samuppāda* leads to such varied feelings: If we attach to something with a "like" or a "dislike", we generate a mindset accordingly. This is *paticca samuppāda* (*pati* + *ichcha* leading to *sama* + *uppada*; see, "[Paticca Samuppāda – Introduction](#)"). In the first case, we generate "positive" mindset towards the object that we liked; thus if everything goes well with the object, we feel happy and if things do not go well, we feel sad. It is the other way for the object that we had a bad impression in the first encounter; we made a negative mindset about the object.

- In either case, the strength of the feeling is also proportional to the strength of the "like" or "dislike": ***Sama uppada or samuppāda means both in quality and quantity***; the higher the strength of "*pati* + *ichcha*", the higher the strength in "*sama* + *uppada*".
- This is how we form habits ("*gathi*") too. A teenager tasting alcohol with a bunch of friends gets attached to that setting and looks forward to have the same experience again; the more he repeats, the more he gets "bonded", and thus forms a drinking habit. See, "[Habits and Goals](#)" and "[Sansaric Habits and Āsavās](#)".

9. Thus all what we experience arise in a complex web of inter-related multiple factors. Only a Buddha can "see this whole picture" and condense it down to a form that can be comprehended by only a motivated human being. If one really wants to understand Buddha Dhamma, one needs to spend time contemplating on these multiple but impressively self-consistent key ideas of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and *paticca samuppāda*.

The *vipāka* cycles of PS are described in, "[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)".

Also see, "[Taṇhā – How We Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)",

The sequel to this post is at, "[Feelings: Sukha, Dukha, Somanassa, and Domanassa](#)".

A deeper discussion on *vedana* at: "[Does Bodily Pain Arise Only Due to Kamma Vipāka?](#)".

3.6.5 Viññāṇa (Consciousness)

A. Base-Level of Viññāṇa

1. *Viññāṇa* is awareness: how one "sees" the world at a given moment; thus it is one's experience at that moment. It also has some "expectation(s)" built in based on the experience.

- *Viññāṇa* is "colored" by the mental factors, such as *vedanā*, *saññā*, *cetana* (52 factors in all; see, "[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)"). **When a number of people look at a given object, they perceive it in many different ways, and thus may generate different feelings, perceptions and intentions (*saṅkhāra*).** We will discuss the major mental factors in this section.
- Like everything else, *viññāṇa* changes from moment to moment.

2. **There are different "base levels" of *viññāṇa*** according to the being's existence (*bhava*). Thus the level of *viññāṇa* of a human being is much higher compared to that of an animal.

- Among humans, there are sub-levels too: *Viññāṇa* is not directly correlated to one's "book knowledge"; it relates to the level of understanding of the "true nature of the world".
- There are four definite levels of *Viññāṇa* according to the *magga phala*: *Viññāṇa* begins to ascend to higher levels starting at the *Sotāpanna* stage, followed by the *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi* levels, and culminating at the *Arahant* level.
- At the *Arahant* level one has totally purified *viññāṇa* (*pabhassara citta*); see, "[Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#)".
- Thus, as one comprehends the true nature of this world (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*), one's *viññāṇa* becomes more and more purified. Then, when one sees an object, for example, one's perception of that object will be different. Whereas an immoral person may even kill another to get hold of a valuable object, an *Arahant* will have no desire to own anything — no matter how valuable it is.

3. Thus it is apparent why "base level of *viññāṇa*" does not transfer from life-to-life. If a human dies and is reborn as a deer, that human level of *viññāṇa* (which was a result of the *kammic* potential of the *kamma* seed that led to that birth; see, "[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, and Kamma Vipāka](#)") dies and a lower level *viññāṇa* associated with a deer becomes effective.

4. As long as one has not attained at least the *Sotāpanna* stage, the "base level" of *viññāṇa* can be anywhere from that corresponding to the lowest realm (*niraya*) to the highest *Brahma* level. It is completely determined by the particular *kamma beeja* grasped at the moment of death.

5. The value of a life can be roughly categorized by the "base level" of *viññāṇa*:

- An *Arahant* is the highest since there are no defilements left. *Anāgāmi*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Sotāpanna* levels are successively lower. Those four are the highest any being can have.
- Beings in the four *arūpa loka* and the 16 *rūpa loka* have *viññāṇa* not contaminated by both greed and hate. Those are *jhānic* states. However, other than those who have attained *magga phala* (one of the four stages of *Nibbāna*), beings in those realms have "*viññāṇa* levels" lower than that of even a *Sotāpanna* (living in any of the realms).
- *Viññāṇa* of a *deva* in any of the six *deva lokas* do not have hate.
- *Viññāṇa* of a being in any of the four lowest realms (*apāyas*) have all three kinds of defilements: greed, hate, and ignorance.
- A human being presents a special case. A human can have all three (greed, hate, and ignorance) or can get rid of all three and become an *Arahant*.

6. The *kamma vipāka* associated with the killing of a being will be different depending on the "level of *viññāṇa*" of the being. Thus killing of an *Arahant* is the worst, and then the severity of the *kamma* decreases through *Anāgāmi*, *Sakadāgāmi*, and *Sotāpanna* stages.

7. It is important to realize that hurting the feelings of a human being could have worse consequences than killing an animal. This does not mean it is OK to kill animals. Even among animals the level changes, but we do not have capability to assess such variations.

8. We need to be aware that our higher level of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is limited to this life. In the next life, we could be at the same level, higher, or even as low as one in the *niraya*. Until *Nibbāna* is attained, all beings just wander around all 31 realms.

B. *Viññāṇa* During a Lifetime

1. What we described above is only one way to look at *viññāṇa*, mainly referring to the "base level" for different realms of existence. The "*uppatti paticca samuppāda*" cycle describes how this base level of *viññāṇa* changes from life-to-life; see, "[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)".

2. But within a given lifetime, say the human life, *viññāṇa* is normally used to convey the ever-changing "awareness" or "experience" as one goes through living. There are two types of *viññāṇa* possible:

- *Viññāṇa* that arise due to past *kamma* (and the accumulated *avijjā*) within a given lifetime. This is described in, “[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppda](#)“. For example, when one SEES a eye-catching object, that is due to a *kamma vipāka*. Even an *Arahant* will see that it is a eye-pleasing object.
- This is also described under the sub-heading “*Vedanā* Arising from *Kamma Vipāka*” in “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)“. So, there are multiple ways to describe the same phenomenon; this is an example of the wonderful self-consistency of Buddha Dhamma.
- The other type of *viññāṇa* arises during a given lifetime when one is engaged in “making *saṅkhāra*” via getting attached through greed and hate. In the above example of “seeing a eye-catching object”, one may generate feelings of attachment to that object and that would be making new *viññāṇa* via GENERATING *saṅkhāra*. While we may generate such new *viññāṇa* based on the “seeing event”, an *Arahant* will not.
- This is described in, “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)“, under the sub-heading, “*Vedanā* Arising from *Saṅkhāra* (“*San phassa ja vedanā*)”.

C. Many Varieties of *Viññāṇa* During a Lifetime

1. The above discussion points out major attributes of *viññāṇa*. But *viññāṇa* can have many varieties depending on the situation. The Buddha gave the following example: regardless of whether it was started with wood, straw, paper, etc, a fire is a fire.
2. A major classification of *viññāṇa* (awareness) is according to which sense door was used: *cakkhu viññāṇa* (visual awareness) arises when one uses eyes to get information about an object. Similarly for *sota*, *jivha*, *gandha*, *kāya*, and *manō viññāṇa*.
 - Another classification is according to whether the experience is pleasant (*sukha*), unpleasant (*dukha*), or neutral (*upekkha*). It is clear that this classification is very personal. Three people can look at a given person and generate these three types of *viññāṇa*.
 - Then there are *kusala*, *akusala*, or neutral (*upekkha*) *viññāṇa*. For example, one gives a meal to a hungry person with *kusala viññāṇa*; one steals with an *akusala viññāṇa*. One takes a bath with a (*kammically*) neutral *viññāṇa*. And based on those there will be *vipāka viññāṇa*.

Next, “[Rūpa \(Material Form\)](#)“,

3.6.6 Rupa (Material Form)

Revised February 3, 2018

Please see, “[What are Rūpa? Relation to Nibbāna](#)” for an introduction.

Most people have many misconceptions about *rūpa*. So, we will systematically look at different kinds of *rūpa*. *Rūpa* are basically everything that the five physical senses sense: we see *vanna rūpa* (physical objects that bounce light off; also called “*rūpa rūpa*“), we hear *sadda rūpa* (sounds), we smell *gandha rūpa* (odors), we taste *rasa rūpa* (food), and we touch *pottabba rūpa* (physical objects). Our internal senses that sense those external *rūpa* are also fine *rūpa* that are controlled by the mind. Those that are sensed by the mind are *dhamma* (concepts), and mind is not a *rūpa*.

- Here is a simple way to figure out the five types of *rūpa*: If we take a toasted slice of bread that is *rūpa rūpa* or a *vanna rūpa*; if it is freshly toasted, when we break it, it will make a sound, which is a *sadda rūpa*; the smell of that bread is a *gandha rūpa*; when we taste it, we taste the *rasa rūpa* in the bread; when we touch it, we touch the *pottabba rūpa* in the bread.

There are many ways that *rūpa* can be analyzed. The basic “building blocks” of all *rūpa* are the four great elements (*mahā bhūta*): *patavi* (element of extension with the characteristic of hardness), *āpo* (The element of cohesion with the characteristics of cohesiveness and fluidity), *tējo* (the element of heat or heat energy with the characteristics of hotness and coldness), and *vāyo* (the element of motion or kinetic energy with the characteristics of pushing and supporting).

- It must be noted that in many cases, the Buddha took existing terms and redefined them to be consistent with Buddha Dhamma. The terms *patavi* (earth), *āpo* (water), *tējo* (fire), and *vāyo* (wind) were thought to be the basic building blocks for matter in the pre-Buddha era, including the Greeks.
- But those names have deeper meanings too; for an in depth discussion see, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatthaka\]](#)”.

There are 28 types of basic *rūpa*, and the other 24 are derivatives (*upadaya rūpa*) of the four *mahā bhūta*.

1. *Rūpa* can be put into two categories regarding whether they are internal (*ajjhattika*) and external (*bahira*). **The internal *rūpa* are the five *pasada rūpa* associated with the physical body: eye (*cakkhu*), ear (*sota*), nose (*ghana*), tongue (*jivha*), and body (*kaya*).** Internal *rūpa* also include our physical body (including the physical eyes, ears, etc). Here are a few things to note:

- These five internal or *pasada rūpa* are essential for experiencing the outside world. Without them, people will not be different from inanimate logs. Those internal *rūpa* associated with the physical body become inert (and external) when the *gandhabba* leaves the body.
- It must be emphasized that *pasada rūpa* are NOT the physical organs that we see. These are fine *rūpa* (matter) that stop being regenerated at death. Thus *cakkhu* is NOT the physical eye.
- From the moment of death of the physical body, *cakkhu* is not there anymore; it is gone with the *gandhabba*. However, the physical eye is there and can be even used in another person’s body within 24 hours or so.
- Therefore, those physical senses are internal only as long as the *gandhabba* is associated with the physical body. As soon as *gandhabba* leaves at the death of the physical body, they become external *rūpa*.

2. Out of all the external (*bahira*) *rūpa*, seven are called *gocara rūpa* or objective *rūpa* because those are the ones that can be sensed by the five internal (*pasada*) *rūpa*.

- These are: visible (*vanna*) *rūpa*, sound (*sadda*) *rūpa*, smell (*gandha*) *rūpa*, taste (*rasa*) *rūpa*, and tangible *rūpa* (*pottabbha*). There are no separate *rūpas* called *pottabbha rūpa*; they are *patavi*, *tējo*, and *vāyo*, three of the four great elements (*mahā bhūta*). Thus things we see with our eyes are the visible (*vanna*) *rūpas*; they are only part of the class of *rūpa*.
- It is important to note that the *gocara rūpa* or objective *rūpa* are the only *rūpa* that we EXPERIENCE with our five physical senses. For example the remaining great essential, *āpo*, is not experienced by our senses.
- The five *pasada rūpa* and the seven *gocara rūpa* that are sensed by them are collectively called the *olarika* (gross or coarse) *rūpas* because they can touch (strike) each other. The other 16 *rūpas* are subtle or fine (*sukhuma*) *rūpa*.

3. There are several fine *rūpas* that are associated with our body.

- *Hadaya vatthu* (heart base) – together with the five *pasada rūpa* — are located close to the heart.
- *Jivitindriya rūpa* (vital force of *kammaja rūpa*) is spread throughout the body.
- There are two *bhava rūpas* that determine whether it is a male or a female: *itthi bhava* (femininity) and *purisa bhava* (masculinity). One kind is spread throughout a body.
- *Āhāra rūpa* (*oja*) are nutritive essence that sustains the body. It is extracted from the food we eat.

4. So far we have discussed five *pasada rūpas*, seven *rūpas* that constitute the external *rūpa* (*vanna*, *sadda*, *rasa*, *gandha*, *patavi*, *tējo*, *vāyo*) that are sensed by the *pasada rūpa*, and the five other *rūpa* (*hadaya*, *jivitindriya*, two *bhava rūpa*, and *oja*) in #3.

5. The remaining *mahā bhūta* or the great element is *āpo*. It is the *rūpa* that holds any structure together, but it is not sensed by the body (*kaya*) *rūpa*. With the *āpo rūpa*, up to this point we have discussed 18 types of *rūpa*. **These 18 types of *rūpa* are called *nippanna rūpa* (concretely produced *rūpa*) because they are caused and conditioned by one or more of four things: *kamma*, *citta*, *utu* (*tējo*) and *āhāra* (food);** thus they are suitable for contemplation by insight.

- The five *pasada rūpa*, two *bhava rūpa*, *hadaya vatthu* and *jivitindriya rūpa* (9 in all) are produced by *kamma* and *kamma* alone.
- *Sadda* (sound) *rūpa* are produced by *citta* and *utu* (*tējo*). Vocal sounds such as speech, laughter, whistling, etc are produced by *citta*. Non-vocal sounds, such as thunder and music from instruments are produced by *utu*.
- The different ways that *kamma*, *citta*, *utu*, and *āhāra* produce the 24 types of *rūpa* is summarized in the Tables and Summaries Section; see, “[Rūpa – Generation Mechanisms](#)”.

6. **The remaining 10 *rūpa* are more abstract in nature. They are called *anippanna rūpa* (non-concretely produced *rūpa*).**

- *Akasa dhathu* (space element) is not so much “space”, but more like the inter-atomic space or intra-atomic space. It occupies whatever is not occupied by any other *rūpa*. Thus it is everywhere, even in the deep inter-galactic space where there is no “detectable matter”. Scientists are beginning to suspect that there is much more energy in the vacuum (zero point energy) than the energy that we experience. It is like the deep ocean and what we see are only the ripples.
- We communicate using two fine *rūpas*: *vinnatti rūpa* or material qualities of communication. We use both the mouth and the body to communicate with each other. *Kaya vinnatti* (bodily intimation) is gestures by hand, head, physical eye, leg, etc, to indicate one’s intentions to another. *Vacī vinnatti* (vocal intimation) is the movement of the mouth to produce vocal speech.
- There are three *vikara* (mutable) *rūpa* that helps with the movements of the body. The *lahuta* (lightness or buoyancy) *rūpa* suppresses the heaviness of a body. This make it possible for up jump, for example. Imagine trying to toss up an equivalent weight! *Muduta* (elasticity) removes the stiffness in the body. *Kammannata* (weildiness) gives strength to hold up body parts. All these make possible our body movements.
- Finally, there are four *lakkhana* (material qualities) *rūpa* that are common characteristics of all *rūpas*: *Upacaya* and *santati rūpa* are associated with the arising of a *rūpa*, *jarata rūpa* is associated with the decay, and *aniccata rūpa* is the dissolving stage. See the lifetime discussed below.

7. The four great elements (*mahā bhūta*) are the primary *rūpa*. Each of the four has its own character: *patavi* element of hardness; the *āpo* element of fluidity and cohesion; *tējo* of heat; *vāyo* of motion and pressure.

8. The *mahā bhūta* can never be detected separately. The eight *rūpa* of *patavi*, *āpo*, *tējo*, *vāyo*, are always found together with *vanna*, *gandha*, *rasa*, *oja* in inseparable units called **pure octads or *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*]**, which are the fundamental units of matter. These eight *rūpas* are inseparable and indivisible, and thus are known as *avinibbhoga rūpa*; for an in-depth discussion see, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[*Suddhatthaka*\]](#)”

9. It is not necessary to memorize all these details about different *rūpa*. But it is good to have reference base to look up if needed. Abhidhamma goes to much more detail, and shows how the mind energy can form different kinds of *rūpa*.

If you have not read about *saṅkhāra* (the remaining one of the five aggregates):

“[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Vipāka, Kamma Beeja](#)“,

3.6.7

Pancakkhandha or Five Aggregates – A Misinterpreted Concept

December 25, 2015

This post has a new format for breaking up a given post into sections, using a Table of Contents. This is a different approach compared to breaking a post into several pages that I used in the post, “[Does the Hell \(Niraya\) Exist?](#)”. Please let me know (comment below) which format is better if you have a preference.

Introduction

1. Contrary to popular belief, *pancakkhandha* or *panca khandha* (five aggregates) is all mental, and realizing this fact can help get rid of the “*ghana saññā*”, the perception that the world around us is “solid and permanent”“ I will write more on this later.

- It is sometimes erroneously called *pancaskhandha*, and I will explain why that is not correct.

2. For example, there is a huge difference between *rūpa* (material form) and *rūpa khandha*, the aggregate of material form. *Rūpa khandha* is commonly written as *rupakkhandha* by connecting the two terms to one word, by adding an extra “k”. The same is true for other four aggregates. The correct interpretation makes many other concepts easier to understand.

- *Rūpa* is matter (and energy) and is made of the *satara mahā bhūta* (*patavi, āpo, tējo, vāyo*) and their derivatives.
- *Rūpa khandha* is all MENTAL.
- Similarly, there is a difference between *vedanā* (feelings) and *vedanakkhandha* (the aggregate of feelings), even though here both kinds are mental; we will discuss the difference below. The other three *khandha* of *saññā, saṅkhāra, and viññāṇa* are similar to that of *vedanā*.
- This is very important to understand, and I will proceed slowly to make the concepts clear.

3. The key in clarifying what *rupakkhandha* is to examine why the Buddha added “*khandha*” to *rūpa*. He could have labelled past *rūpa*, future *rūpa*, *sukuma rūpa*, *olarika rūpa*, etc. to describe the 11 types of them (see #1 under “Eleven Types of Rūpa in the Rupakkhandha” section below). What was the need to add “*khandha*”? That is because *rupakkhandha* is all MENTAL, and to see how it comes about we need to examine how each of us experience “the world”. Each of us does it differently.

- Each person has his/her own *rupakkhandha* or the way he/she perceives the material *rūpa* in the world. That *rupakkhandha* has associated with it other four *khandhas* and thus comprise the *pancakkhandha*. And *panca upadanakkhandha*, or what one has cravings for, is a small part of that.
- Just like the concept of *anicca*, this again is a very important concept to understand, so please try to read through slowly at a quiet time and grasp the concepts. As the Buddha said, “at the end what matters is understanding a concept, not memorizing words”.
- When I first grasped this concept, it was like turning the lights on in a previously dark area that I did not even know existed! This is a good example of what the Buddha meant by “*alōkō udapadi*”.

What is a Khandha?

1. One of the main problems we have today is that many key terms in use are in Sanskrit rather than original Pāli. The meanings get distorted. A good example is *paticca samuppāda*, for which the Sanskrit term is *pratityasamutpada*, which does not convey the meaning; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda](#)”.

2. Similarly, the Sanskrit term “*skandha*” is commonly used in the place of *khandha*, the original Pāli term. *Khandha* is a heap and the Sinhala term is *kanda*, which is even used today to denote a heap or a pile.

- When we experience the world, we do that with our six senses, and that experience is registered as thoughts (*citta*). But a single *citta* is born and gone in a small fraction of a second. What we EXPERIENCE are the **aggregates of numerous *citta*** that go through our minds even in a fraction of a second.
- We experience a *rūpa* (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, *dhamma*) with a *citta* AND based on that generate mental qualities of *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa*. In each *citta*, the mind analyzes all these, and that *citta* is gone in a fraction of a second.
- The *manasikara cetasika* that is in each *citta* puts together the contents in all these “packets” — including our past impressions — and provides us with an overall experience that includes a “sketch of what we see, hear, ..”, and those feelings, perceptions etc that arise due to that sense impression.
- This can be compared to the process of connecting individual links in a metal chain. In the old days, blacksmiths used to make chains by manually connecting one link to the next by hand. He can only see himself linking two of them at a time, but if he looked back he could see the whole chain that is being made. **In the same way, the five aggregates or heaps keep building up with each passing second.**

3. In another example, it is like a movie recording that keeps recording non-stop from our birth to death. And when we die it does not stop, it just start recording the new life. And these five heaps or aggregates that have accumulated over ALL previous lives are in the *namagotta*, a permanent record.

- Of course, we remember only a fraction of it, even for the present life. But some people remember more things than others; see, “[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)“.
- But we also make plans about the future. And those heaps about the future are also in the *pancakkhandha*, but not in the *namagotta*, which only has records of what has already happened. As soon as the present moment goes by, more of the five heaps are added to the *namagotta*.
- Thus *pancakkhandha* includes past, present, and future, whereas *namagotta* includes only that portion of the *pancakkhandha* that has gone to the past.
- Even though I have discussed these concepts in the introductory posts in the *Abhidhamma* section, here I will go through a simpler version to get the ideas across. Those who are interested, can then review the posts in *Abhidhamma* section as well.

What We Experience Comes in “Packets” or “Heaps” or “Khandha”

1. A simple view of how we sense the outside world is as follows: The five physical senses receive images, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches from the outside. Those sense inputs are sent to the brain via the nervous system. The brain analyzes such “signals” and helps the mind (*hadaya vatthu*) to extract the “meanings” conveyed by those images, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches.

- Let us take an example of looking at a cake. The eye is like a camera; it captures an image of the cake just like a camera does. That image is sent to the brain and the brain analyzes that picture, and sends to the mind (*hadaya vatthu*), which matches it with previous experiences (*manasikara cetasika* does this) and identifies it as a chocolate cake made by grandma. The brain and mind working together this way can analyze many such pictures in a fraction of a second.
- This is basically what scientists believe what happens too; but the difference is that scientists believe that the brain compares the current image of the cake with zillions of images “stored in the brain”, which I say is an impossibility. The brain needs to scan through “its depository of images” and not only identify that it is not a loaf of bread or a piece of wood, but also what kind of a cake it is, and whether it is made by grandma or bought from a store. And this is done within a fraction of a second. Think about it! This is real *vipassana* meditation! What we are trying to do is to understand how nature works.

2. In Buddha Dhamma, the brain is in constant communication with the “*hadaya vatthu*” which is the seat of the mind. All our past experiences are “stored” in the mental plane (*manothalaya*) and *hadaya vatthu* can access that information; these are what we called “*namagotta*”. How the brain is in constant communication with the *hadaya vatthu* and other details are discussed in the *Abhidhamma* section. Those details are not important as long as one can picture this process in one’s mind.

- This image sent by the eyes (and the brain) to the *hadaya vatthu* generates an imprint of **that image** and it goes into memory. **That image is the *rupakkhandha* generated by that object**, the cake in our example; **it is not material, it is a record**.
- If it was a smell that was analyzed, then a record of that smell is made. Thus the *rupakkhandha* here is a **record** of that particular smell. **In this way, *rupakkhandha* are just records or imprints**. All five physical senses help generate *rupakkhandha*; **remember that sight, sound, smell, taste, touch are all *rūpa***.
- What the mind receives is a set of static frames in a given second. Many such records for various sense inputs go through our minds in a second. The mind is able to make this appear to us as a continuous movie, with pictures, sounds, tastes, etc flowing smoothly.

Animation Video

1. Just to give the flavor of what happens, we can look at what happens when we watch a movie. The movie is a series of static pictures or frames. When making a movie, what is actually done is to take many static pictures and then play them back at fast enough speed. If the playback speed is too slow, we can see individual pictures, but above a certain “projection rate”, it looks like real motion. Here is a video that illustrates this well:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Animation basics: The optical illusion of motion](#)

2. When we experience (see, hear,...) the outside world, what happens is very similar to the above. At the end of the video it is stated that the “movie” we see is an illusion, **and as the Buddha explained, that holds for real life as well**. In real life when we see someone coming towards us, what we actually see is a series of “static pictures” or *citta* projected at a very fast rate in our minds, giving us the illusion of a “movie like experience”.

- Even though in the above video it is suggested that all the information from the “previous static frames” were put together by the brain, that is true only to a certain extent.
- The brain does put together the individual frames, but without actual “memories” it is not possible to get the deep details about what is seen.
- **We not only “see” the video, but we also RECOGNIZE what is seen (we identify a given actor, we can even remember previous movies with that actor, we KNOW all about the scenes in the background, etc); to have all that information instantly available to the brain is not possible. This is a point that needs a lot of thought.**
- What happens according to *Abhidhamma*, is that the brain periodically sends packets of acquired data put together by the cortex in the brain to the *hadaya vatthu*, which is basically the seat of the mind. There *citta vithi* arise in accepting that information from the brain, and it is the mind that does all the compiling (with the help of the *manasikara* and *cetana cetasika*) and that is how we EXPERIENCE any sense input.
- For those who are interested in more details, see, “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)”.

3. When the mind analyzes those packets of information sent by the brain with *cittas*, it generates feelings (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), and follow-up thoughts (*viññāṇa*); if the mind likes/dislikes that sense input it may decide to act on it by generating *saṅkhāra*.

- Thus we can see that depending on the nature of the sense input, the mind will generate a “packet” of *vedanā* (i.e., *vadanakkhandha*), a “packet” of *saññā* (*sannakkhandha*), a “packet” of *saṅkhāra* (*sankharakkhandha*), a “packet” of *viññāṇa* (*vinnanakkhandha*), in addition to the

rupakkhandha that was involved in the sense input. Actually all these five *khandhas* are generated within the same series of *citta*.

Our Experience is Stored in Those Khandhas

1. Thus our experiences are stored in five type of “heaps” (*rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*) in the mental plane (*manothalaya*). Some of these “clips” or “packets” from those five heaps or aggregates can be recalled and played back in our minds just like a movie is played back on a screen. When we do that we can recall that particular experience with sights, sounds, etc.

- It is the sum of all such packets of a given kind that is called a *khandha*, for example, a *rupakkhandha*. All these are our **memory records** of what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and also think.
- The ability to recall past experiences, we call memory. Some have better memories than others. There are some people who can “playback” basically one’s life day-by-day for many years into the past; see, “[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)“. It is amazing to see how much they can recall.
- Yet, one can recall not only memories from this life, but also from past lives by developing *abhiññā* powers. Thus the Buddha Gotama was able to describe in vivid detail the scene, aeons ago, when the Buddha Deepankara stated that he was to become a Buddha in the future.
- But let us get back to the main discussion.

2. The brain analyzes multiple sense inputs of different kinds in a second. When we watch a movie, we see the picture, hear the sounds, and if we are eating popcorn we can smell and taste popcorn too; see, “[What is a Thought?](#)“. Even if you are not familiar with *Abhidhamma*, you can get a good idea of what happens by reading that post. Just try to get the overall picture of what happens instead of trying to analyze in detail.

- Thus our perception of an object is due to the sum of many thoughts (*cittas*) that arise per second. And **each *citta*** has “embedded in it”, our feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), our decisions on how to act (*saṅkhāra*), and our overall sense experience (*viññāṇa*). In the case of a visual, auditory, ... event, we also have the corresponding “imprints of them” in our mind.
- **In other words, all our sense experiences can be described by five heaps or *khandhas*. The totality of our experience or “our world” is *panca khandha* (*pancakkhandha*). And it has nothing to do with our physical bodies.**
- **Thus it is important to understand that “*rūpa*” can used in the sense of “matter” and also in the sense of “records of those material *rūpa*”.**

3. **These mental components are what the Buddha called *khandhas*.** *Rupakkhandha* does not include actual material objects, sounds, smells, tastes, or touches. **Rather *rūpa khandha* includes only the mental records or imprints of those sense inputs.**

- During our life, we continuously accumulate such *khandhas* or bundles of heaps of sense imprints. Thus a *rūpa khandha* or *rupakkhandha* (note how the two words were connected by inserting an additional “k”) is not actual *rūpa*, but our mental images of such *rūpa*.
- Similarly, we keep accumulating bundles of *vedanā* (*vedanakkhandha*), *saññā* (*sannakkhandha*), *saṅkhāra* (*sankharakkhandha*), and *viññāṇa* (*vinnanakkhandha*).

4. **In fact, these *khandhas* are all that we have ever experienced, and would like to experience in the future.** The five *khandhas* encompass our (changing) identity, and our sense of the whole world out there. They have embedded in them all our past experiences and also future hopes.

- This is what was meant by saying that *pancakkhadha* (the five aggregates) is our whole world.
- And these records can go back to beginningless time! Some people can recall more past records than others, but by gradually developing *abhiññā* powers, one can recall more and more past lives.

Eleven Types of Rūpa in the Rupakkhandha (Same for Other Khandhas)

1. This is clearly described in many *suttas*, even though the true meaning has been hidden all these years. In particular, the *Khandha sutta* summarizes what is included in each aggregate.

- Eleven types of *rūpa* (mental impressions) are in the *rupakkhandha*: past, present, future, near, far, fine (*sukuma*), coarse (*olarika*), likes (*paneeta*), dislikes (*appaneeta*), internal (*ajjatta*), and external (*bahidda*). Here internal *rūpa* means (impressions) of one's own body parts, and external *rūpa* are (impressions) of external objects.
- Thus, it is quite clear that *rupakkhandha* encompasses anything that we ever saw (including previous births), we are seeing now, and hope to see in the future. The record of what belongs to the past is permanent and is called *namagotta*. Any *rūpa* about the future (for example, a sketch of the type of house one is thinking about building) can change with time.
- Other four *khandhas* have the same 11 types.
- A short version of the *Khandha sutta* is available online: [WebLink: accesstosight.org: Khandha Sutta: Aggregates](http://www.accesstosight.org/Khandha-Sutta-Aggregates)
- Even though it does not explain the concept as discussed above, one can see the 11 components of each *khandha* are clearly there. Also, note that it is NOT *Skandha sutta*; it is *Khandha sutta*. This is why I say that *skandha* is a WRONG TERM.

2. Now we can see yet again that Buddha Dhamma has become so contaminated over the past thousands of years. Fortunately, we still have the *Tipitaka* in close to original form. The Buddha stated that his *Buddha Sāsana* will last for 5000 years, and the way he made sure that will happen, was to compose the *suttas* as I described in the post, "[Sutta – Introduction](#)".

- Furthermore, *abhidhamma* and *vinaya* sections, as well as three original commentaries, are still intact in the *Tipitaka*; see, "[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)" and other posts in "[Historical Background](#)".
- The main problem even with the *Theravāda* version of "Buddhism" is that instead of using the *Tipitaka* as the basis, the tendency is to use the *Visuddhimagga* written by Buddhaghosa, who had not attained any *magga phala* and stated that his "wish" was to become a *deva* in the next life from the merits he gained by writing *Visuddhimagga*!
- Even when using the *Tipitaka*, most people use the wrong interpretations of key words such as *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, as well as *khandha*, and *paticca samuppāda*. This problem is apparent in the Sinhala translation of the *Tipitaka*, that was done with the sponsorship of the Sri Lankan government several years ago.

3.6.8 Pancaupadanakkhandha – It is All Mental

January 1, 2016; revised November 2, 2017

Rūpa and *Rupakkhandha* are two different things. There are *rūpa* made up of "physical matter" (*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]) in the *rūpa loka*. ***Rupakkhandha* consists of each person's memories, hopes, and desires for some of the *rūpa* in the *rūpa loka*.** Since the other four *khandha* (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*) are all mental anyway, all five are MENTAL.

1. In the previous post, "[Pancakkhandha or Five Aggregates – A Misinterpreted Concept](#)", we discussed a deeper meaning of the *panca khandha* or the five heaps or the five aggregates that define a given living being. Each person's *panca khandha* or the "world" is different from another's.

- Of course, in the 31 realms of existence there are *rūpa*, or material (and energy). But our experiences are all mental (which also has energy). Please read the previous post again if you think *rupakkhandha* is material. ***Rupakkhandha* consists of our thoughts, memories, perceptions, desires, etc. on *rūpa* that we have experienced, are experiencing now, and hope to experience in the future. We have those "imprints of *rūpa*" in our minds even if we cannot recall all of them.**

- We experience the “material world” only at the “present time” (in a *citta vithi*), then it is gone. We actually experience not a single *citta* — or even a single *citta vithi* — but the overall effect of many *citta vithi* that run in the blink of an eye.

2. This “overall experience of seeing” within a short time is what we actually call seeing (*ditta*).

Same for hearing (*suta*). For the other three physical senses (*muta*), it can be there as long as we are actually experiencing them.

- For example, when we are eating a meal, the sense contact is there until we finish eating. When we have a headache (an actual *dukkha vedanā*) or while getting a massage (an actual *sukha vedanā*), the sense experience is there for a while.
- But thinking about them (*vinñāta*) — via the sixth sense, the mind — can be experienced at any time; we can recall a past experience or conjure up an enticing future experience.
- *Ditta*, *suta*, *muta*, *vinñata* include everything that we experience. They are re-categorized as *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa* or the five heaps.
- It is not necessary to memorize terms like *ditta*, *suta*, *muta*, *vinñata*. I am merely naming them to avoid any confusion, since those terms are in the *suttas*. With time, one will remember.

3. *Upādāna* (“upa” + “ādāna” where “upa” means “close” and “ādāna” means “pull”) means “pull and keep close”. **One tries to pull and keep close only things that one really desires: *panca upādāna khandha* or *pancaupadanakkhandha*.** We can translate the term, *pancaupadanakkhandha*, as “five clinging aggregates”.

- Thus out of an infinite variety of “things” one has experienced (not only in this life, but in all of existence countless rebirths) — *pancakkhandha* —, the “things” that one really have bonding with, and have the desire to “keep close” are *panca upādāna khandha* or *pancaupadanakkhandha*. Same for the other four *khandhas*.
- Thus *pancaupadanakkhandha* is what we desire, and is ALL MENTAL too. It is a small fraction of *pancakkhandha*.

4. First, let us dig a bit deeper into the concept of *panca khandha* (five heaps) or *pancakkhandha*. Then one can see connections to other concepts at a deeper level.

- As we recall, the five heaps include everything that one has experienced (*rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*) in the past, one is experiencing right now, and one hopes to experience in the future and in each of these three categories, they can be subdivided into other categories like *paneeta* (likes) and *appaneeta* (dislikes); see the previous post.
- Since each person’s experience is unique, one’s *pancakkhandha* is unique, and is different from that of another living being. That is because even if the **external *rūpa* are the same**, the mental impressions are different.

5. A new born baby, does not have much of an experience in this life (other than some while in the womb). But he/she still have an infinite things from the past in those five heaps or aggregates.

- As the baby grows, its *pancakkhandha* grows each day, adding to the five heaps not only with what is experienced, but also expectations and desires about the future.
- We, of course, remember only a fraction of what is in our *pancakkhadha* even from our present life. Each day, we experience many things and forget most of it by the next day.

6. However, some of deeper desires and habits and character remain, sometimes even unknown to us, beneath the surface as our *gathi* and *āsavas* (by the way, those will be reflected in the *cetasika* that automatically arise with our *citta*). As that baby grows, depending on its parents, friends, and other environmental factors, some of those (good and bad) *gathi* resurface and even grow.

- This is why each person is good at some things. If one has musical talent from the past lives, that child can flourish in an environment that provides suitable conditions. If that baby grows in a family that does not provide “a musical environment”, then that *gathi* is kept hidden.

- Similarly, one who had the tendency to like alcohol, may be kept out of that habit in a family environment that looks down upon drinking. We can think about zillion other character features that can be suppressed or brought to surface to flourish depending on the environment.
- This is why some people, who have not shown any talent for anything for many years, suddenly “take off and thrive” in a new venture. Stated in another way, one may not realize that “one has *upādāna*” for certain things, unless exposed to it.
- We all have good and bad things that we have “*upādāna*” for. We should stay away from bad ones (forcibly if needed to) and find and cultivate good ones. This is why parent and teachers can play a big role in a child’s future.
- Eventually, we need to lose “*upādāna*” for everything, but that comes much later in the Path when one has attained the *Anāgāmi* stage, or at least the *Sokadagami* stage of *Nibbāna*. First we need to lose “*upādāna*” for the highly immoral activities. At the *Sotāpanna* stage, one realizes the perils of “*upādāna*” for only the worst habits that makes one eligible to be born in the *apāyas*. It is a gradual process.

7. The tendency to recreate past experiences and future desires need to be clearly distinguished from the ABILITY TO RECALL past experiences. The Buddha was able to recall things that happened trillions of years ago, but did not either enjoy them or had a revulsion to them.

- As we discussed in the section, “[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana](#)“, *kāma* (or more precisely *kāma rāga*) is the tendency to enjoy such mind-made pleasures from the past or future.
- Each person’s set of *panca updana khandha* has embedded in them the certain types of things and events they give priority to, i.e., one’s *gathi* and *anusaya*. They **automatically** come out as particular set of *cetasika* (hate and fearlessness of doing immoral things, for example) in our *citta* or thoughts.
- Those *kāma rāga* that correspond to *gathi* in the *apāyas* can lead to rebirth in the *apāyas*.
- *Rūpa rāga* and *arūpa rāga* are the tendencies to enjoy *jhānic* pleasures corresponding to *rūpa* and *arupa* realms.

8. Thus now we can see *Nibbāna* in terms of *pancaupadanakkhandha*. As one sheds “*upādāna*” for *gathi* corresponding to the *apāyas*, higher *kāma loka*, and *rūpa* or *arupa loka* successively, one attains the *Sotāpanna*, *Anāgāmi* (via *Sakadāgāmi* stage), and the *Arahant* stage respectively.

- As one keeps shedding layers of *pancaupadanakkhandha*, one proceeds to higher stages of *Nibbāna*, and upon attaining the *Arahant* stage loses all “*upādāna*” and thus *pancaupadanakkhandha*. However, the *pancakkhadha* remains, and upon the death all of it will stay in the *nama loka* as *nama gotta*.
- Thus anyone with sufficient *abhiññā* powers can examine those *nama gotta*. That is how the Buddha Gotama described the lives of many previous Buddhas, and we learn about them today.

9. Unless one has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage, it is possible for “*apāya gathi*” to come to the surface (as *cetasika* like greed, shamelessness in doing immoral things, etc in our *citta* or thoughts), especially under extreme conditions. We all have been in the *apāyas* uncountable times, so it is not something to be speculated; we have had those *gathi*, and it is possible that they can resurface. This is the danger that we need to realize.

- Even if we manage to avoid such “extreme conditions” in this life because we have been fortunate to be born under good conditions, we have no idea where we will be born in the future. This is why the Buddha said, “*..appamadena sampadeta*” or “make haste and sort out ‘*san*’ or what to do and what not to do”.

10. As we mentioned in the beginning, each one’s *pancakkhandha* is unique. Each has his/her own feelings, perceptions, mental attributes (good and bad), and *viññāṇa* regarding any sense event. We make our decisions accordingly. **Our character (*gathi*) is in *pancakkhandha* (the way we see and comprehend the world) and even more so in our *pancaupadanakkhandha* (our desires for the worldly things).**

- And *diṭṭhi* (our world views) is a critical part of both *pancakkhandha* and *pancaupadanakkhandha*. Our decisions depend critically on our *diṭṭhi*. There are many posts at the site on the importance of *diṭṭhi*. The first step to *Nibbāna* (the *Sotāpanna* stage) is *sammā diṭṭhi*.
- Unless one comprehends the true nature of this world of 31 realms (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*), one cannot attain *sammā diṭṭhi* at least to some extent.

11. When one acts with *avijja* (due to not comprehending the true nature of the world), one does (*abhi*) *saṅkhāra*, and keeps adding to the *pancaupadanakkhandha*.

- When we start with the “*avijja paccaya sankhara*” step, it leads to “*upādāna paccaya bhava*”. Thus according the types of (*abhi*) *saṅkhāra* one does, one makes “bonding” or “attaches to” certain types of “*bhava*” or existence.
- *Paticca samuppāda* explains how we make *bhava* according to the level of *avijja* (as indicated by our *gathi, anusaya*, etc) that is embedded in our *pancaupadanakkhandha*.
- Thus, one’s *pancaupadanakkhandha* has embedded in it the “cravings and desires” of oneself, and where one is destined to have rebirths.

12. Therefore, we can see that no matter how we analyze things, they all converge to the same fundamentals. Before we embark on the journey to safety (*Nibbāna*, or at least the *Sotāpanna* stage), we need to figure out the “lay of the land”. That is *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, the nature of this world.

- Only then that our minds will willingly give up the *diṭṭhis* or wrong views.
- Only then that our minds will see the dangers of sense pleasures, starting at the excess levels of *kāma chanda* and *vyāpāda*, which could lead to rebirth in the *apāyas*.
- If you could not grasp everything, that is fine. Come back and read the post again later, especially after reading other relevant posts. Each time you read, you may be able to grasp something that was not unclear. It happens to me all the time. When the minds starts grasping at least partly, it will become much easier.

13. It is very important to see the difference between the “physical world” which is made of “*satara mahā bhūta*” and the *pancakkhandha* which is all mental.

- **The physical world out there is the same for all of us. But our mental impressions of it (*pancakkhandha*) are different for each of us.** It is easy to see that our feelings, perceptions, and *saṅkhāra* that we create upon seeing the same person are different.
- Our *pancupādanakkhandha*, or the fraction of the *pancakkhandha* that we have attachment for, is even more personal, unique for each person.

IV Living Dhamma

August 26, 2016

An experience-based process of practicing Buddha Dhamma (Buddhism) is discussed with English discourses. Belief in rebirth process is not needed at beginning.

○ Subsection: Living Dhamma – Overview

- Living Dhamma – Introduction
- Peace of Mind to Nibbāna – The Key Step
- Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth (with first *Desana* “The Hidden Suffering that We All Can Understand”; *desanā* title different from post title)

○ Subsection: Dhamma with Less Pāli

- Buddha Dhamma for an Inquiring Mind – Part I
- Root of All Suffering – Ten Immoral Actions (with the *dēšana* “Ten Immoral Actions (Dasa Akusala)”).
- Is Suffering the Same as the First Noble Truth on Suffering?
- Bhava and Bhavanga – Simply Explained!
- Citta, Manō, Viññāṇa – Stages of a Thought

○ Subsection: Living Dhamma – Fundamentals

- What Are Kilesa (Mental Impurities)? – Connection to Cetasika
- Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities (with *Desana* 2)
- Satipatthāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life (with *Desana* 3)
- How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts? (with *Desana* 4; in two parts)
- Noble Eightfold Path – Role of Sobhana Cetasika
- Getting to Samādhi (with *Desana* 5)
- Sexual Orientation – Effects of Kamma and Gathi (Saṅkhāra)

○ Subsection: Mundane Sammā Samādhi

- Micca Dittṭhi – Connection to Hethu Phala (Cause and Effect) (with *Desana* 6)
- Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda (with *Desana* 7)
- Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda II (with *Desana* 8)

○ Subsection: Transition to Noble Eightfold Path

- Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā to Paññā, Sīla, Samādhi

○ Subsection: Samādhi, Jhāna (Dhyāna), Magga Phala

- Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala – Introduction
- Ascendance to Nibbāna via Jhāna (Dhyāna)
- Mundane versus Supramundane Jhāna
- Nirōdha Samāpatti, Phala Samāpatti, Jhāna, and Jhāna Samāpatti

○ Subsection: Mental Body – Gandhabba

- Our Mental Body – Gandhabba
- Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka
- Antarabhava and Gandhabba

- [Ānantariya Kamma – Connection to Gandhabba](#)
- [Mental Body \(Gandhabba\) – Personal Accounts](#)
- [Abnormal Births Due to Gandhabba Transformations](#)
- [Satara Āhāra for Mental Body or Gandhabba](#)
- [Micca Dittī, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)
- [Working of Kammā – Critical Role of Conditions](#)

○ **Subsection:** [Nāma & Rūpa to Nāmarūpa](#)

- [Mental Aggregates](#)
 - [What is Sañña \(Perception\)?](#)
 - ❖ [Sañña – What It Really Means](#)
 - ❖ [Future Suffering – Why It Arises](#)
 - ❖ [Dittī, Sañña, and Saṅkhāra – How They Relate](#)
 - [What Is Vedanā \(Feelings\)?](#)
 - ❖ [Vedanā – What It Really Means](#)
 - ❖ [Does Bodily Pain Arise Only Due to Kamma Vipāka?](#)
 - What is Saṅkhāra (Mental Formations)?
 - ❖ [Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means](#)
 - [Rūpa Aggregate](#)
 - ❖ [What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)
 - ❖ [Bhūta and Yathābhūta – What Do They Really Mean](#)
 - [Viññāna Aggregate](#)
 - ❖ [Viññāna – What It Really Means](#)
 - ❖ [Kamma Viññāna – Link Between Mind and Matter](#)
 - ❖ [Anidassana Viññāna – What It Really Means](#)
 - [Nāmarūpa Formation](#)
 - ❖ [Kamma Viññāna and Nāmarūpa Paricceda Ñāna](#)

4.1 Living Dhamma – Overview

October 27, 2016

- [Living Dhamma – Introduction](#)
- [Peace of Mind to Nibbāna – The Key Step](#)
- [Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#) (with first *Desana* “[The Hidden Suffering that We All Can Understand](#)”; *desanā* title different from post title)

4.1.1 Living Dhamma – Introduction

August 5, 2016; Revised August 26, 2016 (This replaces the deleted post, “Introduction to a New Approach to Meditation”).

1. This series started as a subsection in the “*Bhāvanā* (Meditation)” section. But I think it can be the “step-by-step” by process of “learning and living” Dhamma starting from a very fundamental level. One does not need to be bothered about too many Pāli words or deeper concepts at the beginning.

- From many comments that I get, it is clear that many people have “road blocks” at concepts like “*kamma vipāka*” and “rebirth”. When we start at a fundamental level, one does not need to worry about them. **One’s own change in experience** — as we proceed — will hopefully help clarify those concepts as we proceed.
- All other sections at the website can be used to investigate and learn different aspects from different angles. Buddha Dhamma is a self-consistent theory of nature. There are no contradictions.

2. About a month ago, I started thinking about this approach based on emails from a few people about their experiences. Many people feel the positive effect of meditation, but seem to be “stuck” without being able to go past a certain point.

- I must hasten to add that this “new approach” is fully consistent with Buddha Dhamma and not an invention of mine. It is just another way and — hopefully a refreshing way — to look at how to practice Buddha Dhamma (Buddhism) with a clear understanding.

3. What got me started thinking was the following email from a person (X) who has been doing mostly *anariya* meditation, including conventional *metta bhāvanā* (I am withholding the name for obvious reasons); highlights are mine. *Anariya* meditation basically means doing meditation without comprehending *anicca* nature, so most people start that way:

“..The other issue I wanted to ask you about was that I sometimes start wondering if meditation is just dulling my mind, making me less sensitive to what others are doing around me, like a sedative almost. Am I getting addicted to meditation that I need a constant dose, and when I stop I feel I am missing something. for example when I was meditating regularly I no longer felt like reading books or listening to music which I loved earlier so I felt like it was changing my core personality.

To experiment I stopped my formal meditation for a few weeks and I found that I began to get agitated and anxious as before. I was also able to enjoy songs as before. I know that is consistent with what you say about *anariya* meditations – that the effects are temporary.

So I am curious to ask you, have you experimented with stopping your meditation practice for a few weeks? I am asking because I understand that you are doing the *Ariya* meditation and that those effects should be more permanent. **Or are you so used to your meditation practice that it would be a torture to ask you to stop even for a few days let alone a few weeks. But the trouble is – if you never stop how will you know if the effects are permanent or not...**”

4. I am grateful to X for sharing this beautifully written description. I believe many people have experienced such thoughts at various times. Our tendency to always go back to sense pleasures is very strong, because that is what we have been doing through uncountable rebirths in the *kāma loka* in the past.

- Whether it is *Ariya* or *anariya* meditation (including even breath meditation), the tranquility of mind (peace of mind) that comes during a meditation session is due to the suppression of the five hindrances (*pancanivarana*); see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)”.
- In simple terms, the five hindrances are: sense cravings, tendency to be angry, sleepy or dull mind, scattered mind, and the inability to decide the right action. They are always in the background, “covering the mind” and constantly making the mind “agitated and anxious” as X described above.
- What happens during a meditation session (or even if one is fully focused on some task that does not involve sense pleasures), is that the mind is taken off of all such hindrances temporarily. This is actually the first stage where one could experience the “cooling down” or “*nivana*” or “*niveema*”. It can be called a mundane version of *Nibbāna*. This is also called “*niramisa sukha*”; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”.
- When one is on a regular meditation program (or in a meditation retreat), that “cooling down” can last during that whole time — days or weeks — outside the meditation sessions.

5. Another person (Y) asked the following related question: “*Niramisa sukha* is felt by which *citta*?”.

- *Niramisa sukha* is not experienced by a specific *citta*. Rather, *niramisa sukha* APPEARS when *cittas* BECOME free of defilements, i.e., when the mind becomes (at least temporarily) free of hindrances; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)”. We will go into details in upcoming posts, but this is a CRITICAL point.
- More examples: Water becomes clear and pleasant when all the dirt is removed. One feels good when a headache goes away; that relief was not gained by adding something, but by removing the headache.
- Similarly, *niramisa sukha* is felt when hindrances and defilements are SUPPRESSED temporarily. When those are removed PERMANENTLY in four stages, one feels more permanent happiness of *Nibbāna*. At the *Sotāpanna* stage, a big junk of stresses associated with defilements are PERMANENTLY removed. At the *Arahant* stage, ALL defilements are PERMANENTLY removed, and the “cooling down” is complete.
- Thus it is going to be a gradual process. It is a mistake to try to go all the way all at once. Don’t even think about the *Arahant* stage (let alone the *Anāgāmi* stage where one has removed *kāma rāga* or attachment to sense pleasures), but concentrate on attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- For many, even before that one needs to experience the *niramisa sukha*. That is what we focus on initially.
- It is when *kamachanda* and other *nivarana* are suppressed that one is able to experience the *niramisa sukha*, grasp the *anicca* nature, and become a *Sotāpanna*. This is easier when one abstain from *dasa akusala* too.
- Thus, in order to grasp the *anicca* nature (i.e., to suppress the *nivarana*), the mind needs to be purified to some extent. Person X above is almost there, but you can see how hard for X to be not be tempted by sense pleasures.

6. I will go into details in the upcoming posts in this section, but through countless rebirths we have cultivated a craving for sense pleasures that inevitably lead to the five hindrances, that cover our minds and not letting us see the real nature of this world. **Sense pleasures have the following key characteristics:**

- They are definitely “pleasurable”, i.e., the sense experience is palpable and enjoyable. The Buddha himself said that beings will not be trapped in this suffering-filled rebirth process unless they are seduced by these pleasurable sense contacts.
- The price we pay for that “happy feeling” is that the mind gets excited and restless. Furthermore, that pleasurable feeling cannot be maintained for long times; we get tired of it no matter what it is. Think about anything (food, sex, watching movies, etc), and you will realize

that soon we would have had enough of it and we just move onto some other pleasurable activity or “just take a rest”.

- But that experience is addictive. The urge to do it again comes back very strong at later times. If we cannot experience it at that time, we at least tend to recall the past experience and try to enjoy that. **This is due to the fact that we have a reservoir of mental impurities (*kilesa*) in our minds, as we discuss in an upcoming post.**
- Until one can realize the dangers in at least excessive sense pleasures (*anicca, dukkha, anatta* nature), one’s mind is easily tempted by those sense pleasures; **one is afraid that one will “miss out” on the sense pleasures. This is what X was trying to convey above.**

7. The meditation experience is the totally opposite of sense pleasures. *Niramisa sukha* can be maintained as long as one stays in the “meditation mindset”. **But it is not an “enjoyment” in the sense of a sense pleasure. It is really a “peace of mind” (one could actually feel a bodily *sukha* sensation in a *jhāna*, but we will discuss that later).** This is why X is tempted by them, even though they lead to general agitation of the mind (see the first highlighted sentences in #3 above).

- *Niramisa sukha* BECOMES addictive (i.e., preferable over sense pleasures) only AFTER getting to the *Sotāpanna* stage (at which time it can be called beginning of the “*Nibbāna sukha*” or “*nivan suva*”). At that time, even though one may still be tempted by sense pleasures until the *Anāgāmī* stage, one will ALWAYS go back to meditation for relief. Until then it is always a battle that is so eloquently expressed by X in #3 above.
- Furthermore, at that stage one will have voluntarily given up some of more excessive sense pleasures. This is something that just happens. **One needs to forcefully give up only those things that are directly harmful to oneself or to others.** For example, sexual MISCONDUCT needs to be forcefully given up, but not sex (We recall that one of the main *upāsikā* of the Buddha, lady Visaka, attained the *Sotāpannastage* at age 7, but got married and had 22 children). The urge for sexual pleasure will AUTOMATICALLY go away only at the *Anāgāmī* stage.
- Of course, one could start discarding some “conventionally pleasurable” but not directly harmful things like watching TV or going to concerts etc. (as X stated in #3 above). I also experienced the same kind of things in early practice. I would rather learn Dhamma than watch TV even in the early days. “pleasure of Dhamma” is different.
- However, I still get pulled into a limited number of sense pleasures occasionally, so I know how hard it is to resist especially those activities that one has gotten used to. Getting rid of all *kāma rāga* (i.e., reaching the *Anāgāmī* stage) is the hardest. But once the *anicca* nature is comprehended to some extent, it becomes easy to discard most things as a waste of time.

8. Therefore, in the beginning it could be a “tug of war” between those addictive sense pleasures that we are used to enjoy and the long-lasting but not so addictive *niramisa sukha* of meditation. Here, meditation also includes listening, reading, and contemplation of Dhamma.

- As one’s mind gets more and more cleansed, the “joy of Dhamma” WILL increase. One WILL BE able to grasp deeper and deeper meanings even from the same discourse or a post.
- The time to contemplate on *anicca* (and *Tilakkhana* in general) is when one starts “liking Dhamma”, with the *pancanivarana* temporarily lifted. If one starts forcing the mind to accept the *anicca* nature, that may not be successful, and one may get discouraged. Of course, each person is different and some may be able to do it.

9. Finally, in X’s last (highlighted) statement in #3 above, the question was: If I stopped meditating for two weeks, would I be able to “switch back to enjoying sense pleasures” as X did?

- I am quite sure I could abstain from meditating for two weeks if I really wanted to. But, such an abstinence would not change “my core”. It just cannot. Sometimes when I go on a trip with my family, I do not get to meditate for several days. For example, last month there was a break of about 7-8 days during such a trip. But when I get back, I automatically get back to my normal schedule of meditation.

- In addition, most of my “mediation” is not formal. I think about Dhamma concepts whenever there is time, sitting in a car, just before falling asleep, first thing when I wake up, etc.
- Furthermore, I don’t feel “missed out” on those cravings that I have lost, even though I can still experience that “sense pleasure”. For example, while I was working I used to have an alcoholic beverage daily for over 30 years, even though I did not really get “drunk”; it was just a habit. Nowadays, that habit has automatically disappeared. Still, If I am out with an old friend (who does not know that I have changed) and he has a drink, I may have one just to keep him company. But the “urge” to have a drink at the end of the day is never coming back. A big chunk of “mental impurities” (or *kilesa*) have permanently been removed from my mind.

10. What we are going to do is to look closely at what these defilements are that needs to be removed in order to purify the mind, so that those *pancanivarana* will be permanently lifted and the mind can grasp deeper and deeper concepts easily.

- It is easier to solve a problem when one figures out what the problem is, and the root causes that lead to the problem.
- Our problem here is the defiled mind. The root causes are the mental impurities (or *kilesa*, *keles*, or *klesha* in Pāli, Sinhala, and Sanskrit respectively) that have accumulated in our minds over the beginning-less rebirth process. These are ultimately responsible for the five hindrances (*pancanivarana*) that cover our minds.
- We will discuss these *kilesa* in future posts. They provide a simple way to identify and quantify mental impurities, and how they are to be discarded step-by-step.

Next in the series, “[Peace of Mind to Nibbāna – The Key Step](#)”.

4.1.2 Peace of Mind to Nibbāna – The Key Step

August 12, 2016; Revised December 21, 2016

I have changed the title of this post from “Peace of Mind to Nibbāna – The Key Step”.

One needs to experience a “peace of mind” or “cooling down” (*Niramisa sukha*) before starting on the Noble Path to *Nibbāna*; the transition to the *Sotāpanna* stage happens when one comprehends the *anicca* nature while experiencing *niramisa sukha*.

- After that transition, *niramisa sukha* becomes permanent with the removal of the *pancanivarana*. The full explanation will take more posts, but we start here.
- Many people start meditating without understanding what to meditate on. One needs to learn basics of pure Buddha Dhamma first. One can start with conventional meditation techniques that are out there, but in order to grasp deeper Dhamma, one needs to seriously start staying away from the ten defilements (*dasa akusala*) as much as possible.

1. In the previous post “[Living Dhamma – Introduction](#)“, we discussed the experience of X. Please read it before reading this post.

- X had experienced *niramisa sukha* by engaging in a regular *anariya metta bhāvanā*. Even though it led to a relaxed and calm state of mind, X realized that at the same time the desire to engage in some types of sensual pleasures (reading books or listening to music) went away.
- Then X stopped meditating for two weeks and the ability of enjoy books or music came back. However, the *niramisa sukha* also went away and X’s mind was again burdened and agitated.
- Some people may not even have had experienced such a temporary “cooling down” or *niramisa sukha*, so I thought of discussing this a bit more before discussing the technical term “*kilesa*“. It is important to figure out one’s current status before trying to get to the next stage. It is a step-by-step process.
- One needs to get to that stage (where X was) to at least to experience difference between the *niramisa sukha* and sense pleasures in order to start comprehending *anicca* nature. It is at that stage that *pancanivarana* are temporarily lifted and the mind becomes calm enough to

comprehend *anicca* nature. However, that can happen momentarily during listening to a discourse too.

2. When one is fully immersed in sense pleasures, the mental burden that inevitably comes with it is not apparent to that person. We have gotten used to the “mental agitation in the background” and don’t feel it most of the time. Only when one somehow gets into a “calmed state of mind” by some way, that one can begin to appreciate the burden of this “constant agitation or incessant distress” that is in the background.

- Through the mediation program, X has begun to appreciate the relief from this “incessant distress” effect due to *pancanivarana*, and the relief is called *niramisa sukha*.
- However, the conundrum is that there is a price to pay (if one does not comprehend the *anicca* nature)! To the dismay of X, the ability to enjoy some favorite sense pleasures went away.

3. In very simple terms, this problem arises because X has not comprehended the *anicca* nature (what we will be doing in this new section is to discuss a step-by-step process that could help comprehend the *anicca* nature).

- In X’s mind, those sense pleasures are worth hanging on to. And that feeling is VERY POWERFUL. Even though I have lost the craving for SOME sense pleasures, I still have more left. So, I know how hard it is to get rid of that “nagging feeling” of needing to go back to old ways.
- The only difference is that those desires that I lost are not coming back. There is no “nagging feeling” or an urge of needing to go back to those “lost cravings”.

4. This is why comprehending the *anicca* nature is so important at X’s stage. When one comprehends the *anicca* nature to SOME EXTENT, one loses the “nagging feeling” to go back to SOME OF THE sense pleasures.

- Only when one truly realizes the dangers (or at least the worthlessness) of a given sense pleasure, that one automatically gave up that sense pleasure. For example, if one likes to go hunting, one will not give it up voluntarily until one starts seeing the bad consequences of that activity. Same for fishing, being an alcoholic or a drug user, etc.
- Comprehension of the *anicca* nature comes gradually. One first sees the dangers in immoral sense pleasures. Then one sees the worthlessness in extreme sense pleasures that are not harmful to others, but to oneself. One sees the worthlessness of any sense pleasure in the *kāma loka* only at the *Anāgāmī* stage. This why it is a step-by-step process.

5. It is like holding onto a gold necklace that was thought to be very valuable. But if it was proven without any doubt that the necklace was an imitation, then one would lose the attachment to it INSTANTLY.

- Attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage via comprehending the *anicca* nature to some extent is like that, i.e., realizing the dangers (and/or worthlessness) of SOME extreme sense pleasures. Even though one may not realize that one has lost the craving for SOME sense attractions, one will realize that within weeks or months.
- Then, the more one meditates on the *anicca* nature, the more one starts seeing the perils of other (less harmful) sense pleasures too. That is why one HAS TO proceed step-by-step. Getting rid of ALL *kāma rāga* (attachment to sense inputs via the body touches, smells, and tastes) happens only at the *Anāgāmī* stage.

6. However, I must say that X is a bit unusual in the sense of losing the desire to read books and listen to music. Those are not really “extreme sense pleasures”. Before that one will lose the desire to go fishing, mistreating animals, etc. and also getting a pleasure from lying, gossiping, slandering, stealing, sexual misconduct, etc. I am quite sure X never had a tendency for those anyway.

- I also do not want people to get the idea that one needs to lose sense pleasures such as reading books or listening to music in order to become a *Sotāpanna*, or to experience *niramisa sukha*. That is not the case. One could even be a *Sotāpanna* and still have those two tendencies. I have

mentioned a person in the time of the Buddha who became a *Sotāpanna* but could not get rid of the urge to have a drink (however, he did not live that long after attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage). This is why no one can say whether another person has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- A *Sotāpanna* absolutely would not do only those deeds that could make him/her suitable for rebirth in the *apāyas*. That means, he/she has removed high levels of greed, hate, and ignorance to the levels of *kāma rāga*, *patigha*, and *avijjā*; see, “[Lobha, Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)”.
- My belief is that X had cultivated *anariya jhānas* in previous but recent rebirths, and is carrying that “*gathi*” to this life. X has described some bodily sensations that are associated with *jhānas*. This is why it is easy for X to at least temporarily lose attachment to even fairly harmless things like reading books or listening to music.

7. Each person loses a set of individual characteristics (*gathi*) upon attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage. One should be able to look back and see what those are, just like X did. And, of course, whether those changes are permanent.

- As I mentioned I have lost the urge to have a drink at the end of the day, which I had been doing for over 30 years. I did not force that, even though I contemplated the bad possible consequences of keeping that habit.
- When one follows the Path, one does not forcefully give up sense pleasures, only immoral actions that can hurt other living beings; even X did not forcefully give up books or music, it just happened. Losing the desire for sense pleasures happens gradually, starting with extremes.
- I have only lost interest in reading fiction books. I used to read all types of books, but now I am not interested in reading fiction, because to me it is a waste of time just like watching TV. On the other hand, I am now reading more non-fiction books.
- I have also been more productive in my science interests over the past two years too. I have learned the subtleties of quantum mechanics that were not apparent to me even two years ago. Mind becomes much more clear as one gets rid of *kilesa*.
- So, it is important to realize that one is not supposed to lose all interests. **One loses interest in only those activities related to greed, hate, and ignorance. That is a must, and that should be fairly obvious when one looks back. One loses interest in all worldly affairs only upon attaining the Arahant hood.**

8. My point is that it is desirable for one to first get into this stage of X, where X can see the difference between sensual pleasures (*amisa sukha*) and the *niramisa sukha* that arise by at least temporarily suppressing the desire for sensual pleasures via a meditation program.

- **Even more critical than a meditation program is living a moral life, staying away from *dasa akusala* as much as possible.**

9. Many people try to attain “*Nibbānic* pleasure” just because they tend to think in terms of sensual pleasures, i.e., that *Nibbānic* pleasure is like the pleasure of music, good food, etc. This is why the account of X is so a good an example in pointing out the difference between the two.

- Actually, this is good place to discuss the differences in *amisa*, *niramisa*, and *jhāna sukha* and the *Nibbānic suva*.
- I reserved the name “*suva*” for *Nibbāna* because it is even different from the *niramisa sukha*. It is an overall state of “well-being”. I have no idea what that is like at higher stages, but right now it is an ever-present calming effect on the body and mind.
- **Sense pleasures lead to *āmisa* (or *sāmisa*) *sukha*.** So, we are all familiar with *amisa sukha*.

10. ***Niramisa sukha* can arise due to a few different causes.** They are all beneficial for the Path and to comprehend the *anicca* nature.

- Those *citta* that bring us *amisa sukha* are burdened with *kilesa* or *akusala cetasika* (which we will discuss in the next post). **These give rise to an agitated mind that is under incessant**

distress; see, “[The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#)”. This is what X described in the previous post as, “.. **I stopped my formal meditation for a few weeks and I found that I began to get agitated and anxious as before**“. When one gets rid of this incessant distress, one feels the *niramisa sukha*.

- One can also feel the *niramisa sukha* for short times when engaged in moral activities, for example, helping others or giving food to hungry people or animals. Again, this feeling comes because those *kilesa* are not present in *citta* (thoughts) that arise during such activities.
- Another is engaging in *Ariya* or *anariya* meditations. Here also one’s mind is mostly devoid of *kilesa* (depending on the strength of the *samādhi*).

11. There is also a higher *niramisa sukha* that was recommended by the Buddha. That is the *sukha* arising due to *jhānas*. When one is in a *jhāna*, one has *citta* running through one’s mind that belong to *rūpa* or *arūpa loka*.

- By definition, those *citta* are also devoid of *kilesa* or mental impurities.
- *Jhānas* arise when *samādhi* is intensified (cultivated) to a certain level.

12. “***Nivana suva*” or “*Nibbānic suva*” or “*Nibbānic bliss*” is due to *citta* that are even more pure.** There is not a trace of incessant agitation or stress left in those *citta*.

- These *citta* are also called *pabhasvara* (bright) *citta*; see, “**[Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#)**“.
- Also, *Sotāpanna* will not be able to experience the *Nivana suva* for that stage, unless he/she can get into *Sotāpanna phala samapatti* via cultivating *jhānas*. Still, he/she will not have the *niramisa sukha* going away. Whatever relief gained from the “incessant distress” is permanent.

13. We will discuss the *kilesa* (*akusala cetasika*) that give rise not only to incessant agitation and stress — but eventually to all *sansaric* suffering — soon in this series.

- The incessant distress can be considered as “immediate *kamma vipāka*” due to *citta* burdened with *kilesa* or *akusala cetasika*. The “delayed effects” of such *citta* will bring more *kamma vipāka* at later times, and the more potent ones can bring rebirth in the *apāyas*.
- Thus the key step to the *Sotāpanna* stage is in experiencing *niramisa sukha* by cleansing the mind via moral behavior (*sila*) and a good meditation program. Then the mind is open to grasping the *anicca* nature, i.e., *pancanivara* could be suppressed for days.
- However, when one is living a moral life and is engaged in contemplating pure Dhamma, that transition may happen quickly and may be even followed by the *Sotāpanna phala* moment even without one noticing it at that time. Different people get there in different ways.
- But there is much to discuss before discussing the *Sotāpanna* stage.

Next in the series, “**[Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#)**“,

4.1.3 **Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth**

August 19, 2016

1. After publishing two posts in a subsection entitled “New Approach to Meditation”, I started realizing more aspects of the importance of this approach. So, I have started a whole new section, “**[Living Dhamma](#)**” which lays out a step-by-step Path from fundamentals. Please read the first two posts there before reading this post.

- There are many people, including some Buddhists, who have a difficulty in connecting with the idea of rebirth.
- Rather than making the idea of rebirth as a prerequisite to start the practice, one can start practicing by comprehending another type of suffering that the Buddha revealed to the world.

2. The Buddha revealed at least two types of suffering that are unknown to the world (and taught how to get rid of both PERMANENTLY).

- Even though the future suffering associated with the rebirth process is the one that is mostly highlighted in literature, there is a suffering that we all experience in this life, without even knowing about it.
- That first type of suffering that we all experience is the incessant distress that we all feel (but may not be even aware of). One starts feeling the *niramisa sukha*, when one temporarily suppresses this incessant distress.
- In a way, it is necessary to first to realize the existence of this **first type of suffering**, at least suppress it, and experience the *niramisa sukha* that results from it (like X did).
- That will provide the initial faith in Buddha Dhamma, and also enable the mind to get to *samādhi*, and help comprehend the *anicca* nature. That will lead to the next step of comprehending the **second type of suffering** associated with the rebirth process.

3. Rather than writing a few more posts on this, I decided to present this idea in the audio format. I have never delivered a “*desanā*” previously, but hopefully you will be able to grasp the concept. You need to adjust volume control on your computer:

“**The Hidden Suffering that We All Can Understand**”

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 1 - The Hidden Suffering That We All Can Understand](#)

4. Here are the links to the posts mentioned in the above *desanā*:

Posts on the fundamentals of meditation:

1. [Introduction to Buddhist Meditation](#)
2. [The Basics in Meditation](#)
3. [The Second Level](#)

Posts on the “incessant distress”:

[The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#)

[Need to Experience Suffering in Order to Understand it?](#)

Post on the five hindrances (*pancanivarana*):

[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)

***Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā*:**

[6. Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā \(Introduction\)](#)

***Satipaṭṭhāna Bhāvanā*:**

[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Structure](#)

Step-by-Step Progression in the Path:

[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)

[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)

Next in the series, “[What Are Kilesa \(Mental Impurities\)? – Connection to Cetasika](#)”.

4.2 Dhamma with Less Pāli

November 14, 2017

This new subsection is now the second subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.

- Initially, I had “[Living Dhamma – Fundamentals](#)” as the second subsection after the “[Living Dhamma – Overview](#)” subsection.
- Now I realize that it was too much of a jump, even for many who have had exposure to Buddha Dhamma, but are not familiar with *cētasika* and other key Pāli words. So, in this new subsection, I plan to close that gap.

Posts:

- [Buddha Dhamma for an Inquiring Mind – Part I](#)
- “[Root of All Suffering – Ten Immoral Actions](#)” (with the dēsaṇa “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”).
- [Is Suffering the Same as the First Noble Truth on Suffering?](#)
- [Bhava and Bhavanga – Simply Explained!](#)
- [Citta, Manō, Viññāṇa – Stages of a Thought](#)

4.2.1 Buddha Dhamma for an Inquiring Mind – Part I

April 12, 2018

This is going to be a series of posts that looks at Buddha Dhamma from a “bottoms up” approach. Today, Dhamma is hidden under a lot of incomprehensible Pāli words. I can see that many people just use Pāli words without knowing their true meanings. If one has a good understanding of the “basics” or the “framework”, it is easier to understand and remember the meanings of key Pāli words.

- This will be in summary form, since it is not possible to describe even the outline in several posts. One can find relevant posts by using the “Search” box at top right. Furthermore, one can ask questions at the discussion forum (“[Forum](#)”) where opinions of others can be seen too. I encourage any opposing to views, as long as one is providing evidence from the *Tipitaka*.
- This website is based solely on the *Tipitaka* and only the three Commentaries included with it. The reasons for that are discussed in the section “[Historical Background](#)”.

Buddhism (Buddha Dhamma) – What Happens After Death?

1. The majority of people in the world today belong to one of the following two camps:
 - The next life is going to be forever, in the heaven or hell.
 - This life is all one has. When one dies, it is over. No rebirth or hell or heaven.
2. The first theory has been handed down from generation to generation for many, and there are obviously many “holes” in that theory. It seems illogical in many ways (it is one thing to create the Earth, but to create billions of galaxies with billions of planets like Earth? And how did the Creator come about?), but just think about this:
 - If a baby dies within a few months will it go to heaven or hell (it has not done anything good or bad)?
 - Furthermore, how come some people are born wealthy and thus have a better chance to go to heaven than one who is born poor and thus may be tempted to do immoral things to survive (and thus go to hell)?
3. The second theory appears more logical to many “scientifically-oriented” people with a “materialistic” view.

- But even if just one of the rebirth stories is believable or proven to the satisfaction of someone, then that person has to throw away that theory.
- More importantly, there is no explanation available for how consciousness arises from inert matter. Our bodies are made of the “same stuff” that a tree or a house is made of.

4. In contrast, Buddha Dhamma says that there will be future lives as long as there are causes for future lives to arise.

- We can learn a lot about Buddha Dhamma by looking at what those causes are. **Those causes arise in one's mind.**
- One's Creator is oneself. And, as long as one perceives that ultimate happiness can be found in this world, **one will be** reborn in this world.

The Four Noble Truths

1. In simple terms, Buddha Dhamma is based on the following four truths about this world, called the Four Noble Truths:

- The Noble Truth about suffering.
- The causes for such suffering.
- Those causes can be eliminated and thus it is possible to stop future suffering from arising.
- The way to eliminate those causes and to attain ultimate happiness (*Nibbāna*).

2. The Buddha said that when one understands the First Truth, one will automatically understand the other three as well. Therefore, let us discuss the First Noble Truth.

- The key and critical issue here is to understand what is meant by “suffering” in Buddha Dhamma.
- It is important to realize that “suffering” and “the Truth about suffering” are two different things.

3. Suffering as a feeling everyone knows very well. One does not have to be a Noble Person or even a Buddhist to know what suffering is. Actually, even animals know what suffering is, and they don't like that either. We all have seen dogs cry with pain when hit.

- So, what is the Noble Truth about suffering? **The Buddha said that this Truth is unknown and is hidden from the humans until a Buddha teaches what it is.**

4. Understanding the truth about suffering requires an understanding of the wider world of 31 realms, and that **most of that future suffering** would be in the four realms or the *apāyas* (of which animal realm is one). But suffering is associated with all realms.

- There are causes for that suffering, i.e., causes for leading to rebirth in the *apāyas* or in any realm in general. The worst suffering can be stopped from arising by eliminating the causes for births in the *apāyas*, and that is where one should first focus on.
- There is a Noble Eightfold Path that one can follow to achieve that goal (a procedure to remove those causes). So, now we can begin to see why one will know all four Truths, when one understands the First Truth.

Mind – Where Root Causes for Suffering Arise

1. We know that we are conscious because we can think. We think via thoughts. We can think about many types of things.

- When we are very sleepy, we are just aware that we are alive.

- On the other hand, if one is about to be run over by a car, one will generate enough power to jump a long distance away from that car or, if being chased by a lion, can probably beat a world record for sprinting.
2. One's actions and speech are also controlled by one's mind via thoughts or *citta* that arise in the mind.
- We cannot even lift a finger without a *citta* or a thought arising in the mind. We may not even think about lifting that finger, but we do. It is easy to figure out this way: We can fold that finger any time we want to.
 - You may not realize that speech comes via thinking or *citta*. Again, it is easy to see that we can stop that speech any time we want to.
3. One's actions, speech, and thoughts have consequences. In fact, one's conscious thoughts determine the level of future suffering.
- **Future suffering arises due to our conscious thoughts or *citta*, and they are also called *saṅkhāra* in some contexts.**
4. There is a difference between *citta* and *saṅkhāra* (the English word "thought" does not translate exactly as either).
- Normally, the word *citta* is used in *Abhidhamma* to denote the smallest mental activity that lasts only a fraction of a billionth of a second.
 - The word *saṅkhāra* is used to represent the overall effect of billions of *citta*.
 - In that sense the word thought is more closer to *saṅkhāra*.
5. Those thoughts that are used to move the body (lifting that finger) are called *kāya saṅkhāra*, because those *saṅkhāra* control the body or *kaya*.
- Those that lead to speech are called *vaci saṅkhāra*, which are two types: We can speak out loudly or just "talk to ourselves" (thinking consciously); both are *vaci saṅkhāra*.
 - However, the word "*vācā*" is used only for speaking out loud.
 - Other thoughts that arise are called *manō saṅkhāra*, which are those thoughts that arise without us even thinking about it consciously.
 - So, I hope it is clear what those three types of *saṅkhāra* are. It is important to be able see the differences. But they all arise in the mind.
6. Those *manō saṅkhāra* arise automatically even without us being aware of it until they arise. They arise based on our *gati* (or character or habits).
- Immediately after *manō saṅkhāra* arise, we become aware of them and if we are not paying attention we may just keep generating *vaci saṅkhāra* along the same lines.
 - For example, when an alcoholic sees a bottle of alcohol at a party, his/her first reaction is to have a drink. But if that person has will power, he/she can think about the bad consequences and forcefully move the mind to some other matter.
 - Both *Satipatṭhāna* and *Ānāpāna bhāvanā* are based on understanding how *vaci saṅkhāra* arise based on *manō saṅkhāra* that arise according to one's *gati* (and that we have control over *vaci saṅkhāra*).
7. Another important observation from the above discussion is that our physical bodies are "inert shells". It is controlled by a mental body (called "*gandhabba*") where all thoughts (and thus *saṅkhāra*) arise.
- This is why in many confirmed Out of Body Experiences (OBE), the body becomes lifeless when the *gandhabba* comes out of the body.
 - These are all key concepts that we have discussed in detail at the website. One can use the "Search" box to find details as needed.

Importance of Javana Citta

Not all thoughts are the same. In order to get a better idea about thoughts or *saṅkhāra*, it is good to know some basic facts about *citta*.

1. *Citta* can be of 89 types and that analysis is very complex. We don't need to know all those. **We just need to know that some of those 89 types is called a “*javana citta*” and those are very powerful *citta*.**

- The word “*javana*” comes from the root “*ja*” meaning “birth”. Thus *javana citta* are the root for all births. *Javana* can also mean “running”, or “spear” that can penetrate, to indicate the power.
- The opposite of *javana citta* would be “*ati parittārammana citta*” that we don't really even feel. Those *citta* arise when we are asleep and are responsible for breathing.
- Breathing involves movement of body parts (lungs), and is thus a “*kāya saṅkhāra*”. This is an excellent example of a *saṅkhāra* that is not defiled. It is an essential action to maintain life.

2. On the other side of the spectrum, we have powerful *javana citta*, which CAN lead to strong *saṅkhāra* called *abhisankhāra*.

- *Javana citta* generate energies that is the root cause of future *vipāka* (results) that can give rise to various types of *vipāka* during a lifetime. Strong ones can lead to future rebirths. **Thus, the key to future suffering is hidden in *javana citta*.**
- However, not all *javana citta* lead to *abhisankhāra*. For example, *kusala kamma* (wholesome deeds) done by *Arahants* are not called *abhisankhāra*. They are called *kriya*. They don't have *kammic* energy to fuel rebirths or bring *pavutti vipāka*.

3. A very strong *kāya saṅkhāra* would be to kill a human, say by stabbing. That requires a very strong impulse, a high *javana* power. One can do that only when one's mind is very agitated and is full of hate. These are called *apunnabhi saṅkhāra* (*apunna abhi saṅkhāra*, meaning “bad strong *saṅkhāra*”).

- However, high *javana* power does not necessarily mean a bad action. When someone does good deeds (*kusala kamma*), they are done with *punnabhi saṅkhāra* (*punna abhi saṅkhāra*, meaning “good strong *saṅkhāra*”).
- High *javana* power may involve neutral actions too. For example, lifting a heavy object requires high *javana* power. But if that is done while cleaning house, for example, that is a neutral action (no *kammically* good or bad intention), therefore is not called good or bad (*punna* or *apunna*). Such *javana citta* are not included in *Abhidhamma* because they do not have *kammic* consequences.

4. There are 12 types of *javana citta* corresponding to the 12 types of *akusala citta* and 8 types of *javana citta* corresponding to the 8 types of *kusala citta*.

- These are the *javana citta* of importance to us.
- The 12 types of *akusala citta* with *akusala javana* can bring bad *vipāka* during a lifetime or rebirth in “bad realms”.
- The 8 types of *kusala citta* with *kusala javana* can bring good *vipāka* during a lifetime or rebirth in “good realms”. We need to do *kusala kamma* in order to avoid rebirth in the *apāyas* and to attain *Nibbāna*.
- However, “good” and “bad” in the above are relative. It is just that “bad realms” have obviously harsh suffering. But no realm out of the possible 31 realms is free of suffering.

5. Now we are beginning to see why *dasa akusala kamma* or the ten immoral deeds (that are done with those 12 types of *akusala citta*) are at the heart of Buddha Dhamma.

- When one is engaged in such immoral deeds, they generate “energies” called “*bhava shakti*” to fuel future *kamma vipāka* (bad results), including rebirths in the *apāyas*.

- Thus it is unfruitful and dangerous to engage in *dasa akusala*; this is why such activities are of *anicca* nature (do not lead to what one expects and only lead to more stress and suffering), one of the three characteristics of this world (*Tilakkhana*).
- Obviously, such activities leads to suffering or *dukkha*, the second of the *Tilakkhana*.
- Once one gets a rebirth in the *apāyas*, it is very hard to get out and thus one becomes “helpless”. Furthermore, clearly such actions are fruitless in the long run even if born in “good realms”. This is the key to understand “*anatta*“, the third characteristic of this world.

So, that is the first part of a highly-condensed outline of Buddha Dhamma. We will continue this outline in the next post.

Ongoing discussion on this topic at the discussion forum: “[Buddha Dhamma for an Inquiring Mind](#)“.

4.2.2 Root of All Suffering – Ten Immoral Actions

November 14, 2017

1. This new subsection of “[Dhamma with Less Pāli](#)” is now the second subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.

- In the first *dēśana* of the “[Living Dhamma – Overview](#)” subsection, we talked about how one’s mind get agitated when one is engaged in *dasa akusala* or the ten immoral actions.

2. After that “[Living Dhamma – Overview](#)” subsection, I had “[Living Dhamma – Fundamentals](#)” as the next subsection, where I started discussing the connection between those *dasa akusala* and *cētasika* or mental factors in our thoughts.

- Now I realize that it was to much of a jump, even for many who have had exposure to Buddha Dhamma but are not familiar with *cētasika*.
- So, in this new subsection — “[Dhamma with Less Pāli](#)” — I plan to close that gap. This subsection will have much less Pāli words, and I will try to introduce only the essential Pāli words as I proceed.

3. Here is the first *dēśana*: “**Ten Immoral Actions (Dasa Akusala)**”. Here we discuss the ten immoral actions (*dasa akusala*) and how avoiding them helps calm the mind; in fact, this is the key to avoid depression.

[WebLink: Download “Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)”](#)

4. Posts relevant to the *dēśanā*:

[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)

[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)

[Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra](#)

[Truine Brain: How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#)

[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Asavas\)](#)

[Habits, Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)](#)

[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)

[Wrong Views \(Micca Ditthi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#)

[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotapanna Stage](#)

[Origin of Morality \(and Immorality\) in Buddhism](#)

- In the first *dēśana* of the “[Living Dhamma – Overview](#)” subsection, I talked about how one’s mind get agitated when one is engaged in *dasa akusala* or the ten immoral actions. Here is that *dēśana*:

“The Hidden Suffering that We All Can Understand“

[WebLink: Download “The Hidden Suffering that We All Can Understand”](#)

I recommend reading the three posts in that [“Living Dhamma – Overview”](#) subsection.

4.2.3 Is Suffering the Same as the First Noble Truth on Suffering?

The main goal of meditation before the *Sotāpanna* stage is to understand the message of the Buddha. Before following the Path, one needs to comprehend what it is about. It is better to get into *satipattāna bhāvanā* after one fully understands what is going to be done in *satipattāna bhāvanā*. Many people waste a lot of time doing what they perceive to be *satipattāna bhāvanā*, and do not get much benefit.

I will have several posts here that one could use for contemplation in meditation. When the mind calms down some, one should think about validity of what is discussed; understanding itself lead to getting rid of defilements. One can even reach the *Sotāpanna* stage just via “*dassanena pahatabba*” or “removal via clear vision”.

1. Many people have misconceptions about the First Noble Truth on Suffering or *Dukkha Sacca* (pronounced “sachchā”). In one of the internet forums, I was asked two questions that embody many of such misconceptions about Buddha’s message.

- “I understand what the Buddha meant by suffering because I came down with this ailment. How do other people understand Buddha’s message and how do they find out about his message?”
- Then there was this question from apparently by a young person, “With so many pleasurable things around us with the innovations from science and technology, why do people need to think about suffering? Isn’t Buddha’s message kind of outdated?”

2. Before discussing them, it is clear that they both have good and bad implications.

- People at least search the internet and find out about Buddha Dhamma because of the first, and those who are “enjoying life to the fullest” may not even hear about Buddha Dhamma at all because of the second.
- On the other hand, the assertion is wrong in the first question, and is correct in the second at least on the surface.

3. **The Buddha never said** that “there are no sense pleasures to be had in this world”. On the contrary, he said people are unable to SEE the hidden suffering BECAUSE of the apparent sense pleasures they are enjoying OR those that are within reach even if not available to one right away.

- Even a poor person can see all the sense-fulfilling offers all around; even if he cannot access them at the moment, his thinking is “if I work hard, I can access all these pleasures at some point”. Thus whether rich or poor, all are “under the illusion of a sea of apparent pleasures” to be had.

4. Buddha Dhamma needs to be understood with wisdom. Wisdom (*paññā*) is a mental factor (*cetasika*) that needs to be cultivated mostly by reading (or listening) about the Buddha’s world view first.

- Most people just PERCEIVE suffering through the mental factor (*cetasika*) of feeling (*vedanā*), like the person who asked the first question above. One can experience suffering, but that is NOT the Noble Truth ON suffering.
- The second questioner had not EXPERIENCED much of suffering, and does not think he needs to pay any attention.
- **Both need to look at world with wisdom within the worldview of the Buddha to see the HIDDEN suffering.** This CANNOT be done without understanding what the Buddha was saying about a more expansive and more complex world than what we experience with our six

senses (of course one will not BELIEVE it unless one is convinced; the real conviction will come only if one gets familiar with the whole message).

5. In his first sermon, *Dhamma Cakka Pavatta Sutta*, the Buddha said this about his new message to the world: “*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu*” or “a Dhamma that has never been known to the world”.

6. Everyone can and will experience suffering during this life; there is nothing NEW in that.

What is new in the message of the Buddha can be briefly stated as:

- There is a wider world out there with many more beings living in 29 more realms than the human and animal realms that we experience, AND the real suffering is in the lower four realms.
- This life is only a brief stop in our long journey through the cycle of rebirths called *samsāra*.
- Even in this life, there is hidden suffering even when one seems to be enjoying life, AND there is real suffering at old age and death that is inevitable for everyone. This last part of course is apparent to anyone, but is not thought about much at all. As one gets old, when the real suffering starts the mind could be too weak to learn Dhamma.
- MOST IMPORTANT part of the Buddha’s message is the one that is least heard about; That there is permanent happiness to be had, and that CAN be attained during this very life.

7. I have several posts on the “bigger worldview of the Buddha” and also on rebirth, nature of *kamma*, etc. Also, there are several posts on the *niramisa sukha* which is a happiness of permanent nature to be had during this very life by following the Path advised by the Buddha.

- Let us take a brief look at the third point on the ‘hidden suffering’ with a couple of examples next.

8. **Example 1:** When a fish bites the bait, it does not see the suffering hidden in that action. Looking from the ground we can see the whole picture and we know what is going to happen to the fish if it bites the bait. But the fish is unable to see that whole picture, and thus does not see the hidden suffering. It only sees a delicious bit of food.

- In the same way, if we do not know about the wider world of 31 realms (with the suffering-laden four lowest realms), and that we have gone through unimaginable suffering in those realms in the past, we only focus on what is easily accessible to our six senses.

9. **Example 2:** Suppose someone makes you an offer. He says, “I will put you in one of the best resorts with all amenities paid for a month. But there is a catch. The food will taste great but will have traces of poison that will become effective in a few months and will lead to death within the year”.

Will anyone take the offer, knowing that it will lead to suffering and death? Of course not.

- But if the host did not tell them, they would not know, and will have a good time, but will have the same consequences.
- In the same way, we are enjoying the sense pleasures without knowing the consequences of them, especially if we did immoral things to get those pleasures.

10. Here is another thing to contemplate: We all have seen how a parent, a grandparent, or even an unrelated celebrity from past years transforms from a dynamic, self-confident, and sometimes imposing character to a feeble, helpless person in the latter years. Sometimes they die under pathetic conditions that would have been unimaginable for them when they were young. **But this change is gradual, and even they do not realize it until it is too late.**

- When one becomes too old, it may be too late to start thinking about these facts; one needs to spend even a little time contemplating on these “facts of life” now. Not to get depressed about this inevitability, but to DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT; this will enable one to enjoy the latter days of life with *niramisa sukha*, even if no stage of Nibbāna is attained.

11. Now, this DOES NOT MEAN one should get away from all sense pleasures even if one becomes convinced of the core message of the Buddha. Abandoning everything may have even worse consequences if it is not done with true understanding. And it takes time to digest the whole message. It has taken me several years to come to the stage where I am now. I have not given up anything with remorse; I do not “miss” anything that I have given up. The only things one may want to “forcefully give up” are things that directly hurt other beings like killing, stealing, etc which most people don’t do anyway.

- Giving up sense pleasures comes gradually with understanding, when one sees the benefits of giving up.
- There is no need to rush into taking drastic actions. The urgent task is to GET STARTED. Allocate a little time each each day to learn Dhamma, preferably when the mind is a bit calmer so that one can focus and contemplate. As the Buddha said, this Dhamma is really different from what we are used to.

12. As one begins to understand the message of the Buddha, the learning process will become easier. What I hope to do with this site is to basically present all the background material that I have gone through, so others do not have to repeat it all. Of course you may want to do additional research; each one may be looking at things a bit differently. I will be happy to address any issues that are not discussed on the site yet.

13. In summary, the First Noble Truth on suffering is NOT to be EXPERIENCED as a feeling (*vedanā*), but needs to be UNDERSTOOD with wisdom (*paññā*). Actually, when one is experiencing any form of suffering that makes it HARDER to grasp the meaning of the First Noble Truth. One needs a clear, calm, and healthy mind to grasp it.

A not-so-deep analysis of Dukkha Sacca is given in the post, “[Does the First Noble Truth Describe only Suffering?](#)”

A deeper analysis of the Dukkha Sacca is given in the next post, [The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#).

4.2.4 Bhava and Bhavanga – Simply Explained!

January 19, 2018; revised February 5, 2018

1. There is much confusion about these two key Pāli words: *bhava* and *bhavanga*. By clarifying what is meant by them, it would be much easier to comprehend many concepts in Buddha Dhamma; for example, how laws of *kamma* are enforced by nature via *Paticca Samuppāda*.

- Even in current Theravada texts, there is confusion about the difference between *bhava* and *jāti*. If you have not read the post, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”, I recommend reading that first.
- Please do not be discouraged by the Pāli terms. There are no suitable English terms for some of them, and it is better to learn them. Read through first even if you don’t get the full meaning. It will become clear. I will make it simple in this post.
- I will make one or two more posts on this subject to include references from the *Tipitaka*.

2. Basically, *bhava* means “the potential for existence” in EITHER **one of the 31 realms of possible existence** (we can see just the human and animal realms) OR as **some specific state of mind within the current life**.

- **In the first category**, there is human *bhava*, animal *bhava*, *Tusita deva bhava*, *peta bhava*, *abhassara brahma bhava*, etc.: existence in one of the 31 possible realms. As we will see below, many such “potential *bhava*” exists for each living being, and at the end of the current *bhava*, a new one will grasped based on the relative energies for various *bhava* (*kamma beeja*) that one has cultivated in one’s past.
- Even during this lifetime, we “live under different existences” based on significant life events. **This is the second category**. For example, a normally “good person” may become violent for a

short time upon seeing his wife in bed with another man, or one will live in a “state of sorrow” for many days upon the death of a loved one.

- Both those are “*bhava*”, states of existence.

3. *Bhavanga* (“*bhava*” + “*anga*”, where *anga* means “part”) therefore means a “state of the mind” that is inseparable for a period of existence.

- When not disturbed by a strong external sense input (via the five physical senses or the *mana indriya*), a human mind is in its natural *bhavanga* state received at the beginning of this human *bhava*. Each person’s *bhavanga* state is different (it is based on the sense object taken in at the *patisandhi* moment), and it feels kind of “neutral” to each person. For example, when one is in deep sleep or “just staring out into space”, one’s mind is likely to be in **one’s natural *bhavanga* state, which we can denote by B.**
- On the other hand, when one’s mind is deeply affected by some event like in the examples we mentioned above, then the mind goes into a “**temporary *bhavanga* state**” corresponding to that event (“state of rage” when really angry or “state of sadness” upon the death of a loved one). **We can denote this by B_T.**

4. Now, this “state of mind” (whether it B or B_T) could be interrupted by a *citta vithi* triggered by an external sense input coming through one of the the five physical senses or the *mana indriya*.

- For example, when another loved comes to pay respects to the dead loved one (who is in a “sad B_T”), one’s mind may become happy just for a few minutes upon seeing that person. Then they may recall a past event about the dead person and both may get sad again. That “sad temporary *bhavanga* state” (B_T) may not go away for several days. And then the mind will gradually fall back to the natural *bhavanga* state, B.
- For less strong life events, that temporary state mind may last only minutes or hours.
- For example, if one sees an old friend on the street, one’s mind may become happy while they talk excitedly, and when the friend departs after talking for a while, that B_T state may linger for a little while more, but then could be suppressed when another thought process based on remembering a task that one needed to get done urgently.

5. Therefore, within a given day, one’s mind could get into several B_T states. But unless a B_T state is triggered by a significant life event like the lost of a loved one, the mind would fall back to the natural B state by the time one wakes up next morning.

- For the reasons discussed above, the natural *bhavanga* state, B, could be called the “*uppatti bhavanga*”, and those temporary *bhavanga* states, B_T, could be called “*pavutti bhavanga*”.
- However, such labels are not used either in the *suttas* or in *Abhidhamma*. I just mention that to make the connection better.

6. Please read the above discussion again. That should help one get the basic ideas about what *bhava* and *bhavanga* are. **It is important to note that *bhavanga* is a state of the mind, not *citta vithi* (thoughts).**

- Another way to describe a *bhavanga* state is to say that while the mind is in that state, one has corresponding *gati* (*gathi*). This is also an important aspect.
- For example, when one gets into a B_T state of anger, then one of course has predominantly “angry *gati*” during that time. Furthermore, one who generally has cultivated “angry *gati*” is also likely to get into B_T state easily.
- By the way, the Sinhala word for *bhava* is just *bava* (බව). For example, when one sees an eye-catching thing and generates a “*lōbha bhava*” at that moment: ලෞභ බව ආවංචි ලෞභයකේ වනෙවා

7. Another important aspect is the when one is in an “angry B_T state”, it is easier to generate more angry thoughts. This is due to the “[Annantatra and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”: That “state of the mind” is receptive to more angry thoughts. This is why it is important to try to get the mind away from the angry state to focus on something entirely different.

- It is a good idea to contemplate on the above basic ideas with examples from one’s own life. For example, when one is angry at someone, it is easier to recall more such bad past experiences with that person, and to suppress any past good experiences coming to the mind.

8. When one is having a calm state of the mind when reading/listening to Dhamma, it is easier to generate compassionate thoughts about others. Therefore, it is important to “set the background” when one is starting on an important task.

- This is why in the old days people went to a temple and offered flowers, etc and chanted *gāthā*, before sitting down to listen to a *desana* by a *bhikkhu*. The state of mind is very important. One cannot comprehend deep *Dhamma* if the mind is in an angry state or even in an excited state (like thinking about a sick child at home, for example).
- This is why it is a good idea to at least recite the qualities of the Triple Gem (Buddha, *Dhamma*, *Sangha*) before starting a formal meditation session; see, “[Buddhist Chanting](#)”.

9. Another important application of the “[Annantatra and Samanantara Paccaya](#)” relevant to this case is that while in a human *bhava*, only *kamma vipāka* that are “compatible” with the human *bhava* and human *gati* (and thus human body) can bring in *vipāka*.

- Even if one has *kamma beeja* suitable to bring harsh *vipāka* experienced in the *apāyas*, they will not be able to bring *vipāka* as long as one is with a human body. In the same way, any highly pleasurable *vipāka* have to wait until one is born in a *deva bhava* with a fine body suitable to experience such good *vipāka*.
- An animal always lives with fear for its life; that is part of *bhavanga*. Similarly, a *tihetuka* human has a natural pleasant demeanor; an *ahetuka* human (handicapped, etc) has a weakened mindset. A *dvihetuka* is in between.

10. Yet another is the state of the mind at the dying moment, when the grasping of a new *bhava* is getting close (if *bhava* energy is to run out at death, i.e., if there are no more *jati* left in the current *bhava*).

- Here the *kammic* power will start bringing various thoughts to the mind via the *mana indriya* that are compatible with the strongest *kamma beeja*. For example, one who is about to grasp a new life in the hell (*niraya*) may start recalling some fear-generating events (even from previous lives), and one’s mind could be bent to a “fearful temporary *bhavanga* state (B_T)”. Then more and more such fearful events will start coming in to the mind.
- This is why some dying people’s fear can be seen in their eyes, even if their bodies have become non-responding.
- Some people start to yell with fear when they see an especially unpleasant *bhava* coming their way. Flashes of the existence awaiting will come to their minds, for example, burning in hell, or being cut by sharp weapons, or just seeing others engulfed in flames.
- On the good side, some people will remain calm with a pleasant look on their face, even if the body is becoming non-responding. Some smile when they see a scenery of the happy environment that they are going to.
- There are many things like that, which can be explained this basic knowledge.

11. For those who are familiar with *Abhidhamma*, *bhavanga citta* are called “*dāvāramutta citta*” or *citta* that arise without needing a sense door. Let me clarify this in simple terms.

- When we hear something, what happens is that the sound comes through our ears, and many *citta vithi* will be generated at the *manodvara* (mind-door) after that initiating *sotadvara citta vithi*. Then a seeing event may be started by a picture seen with eyes, etc.

- This is a very fast process. For example, when we watch a movie we get sense inputs to the ears and eyes very rapidly. But *citta vithi* flow so fast that the mind will fall to a *bhavanga* state (B or B_T) even in between those rapidly incoming *citta vithi*.
- Therefore, what we see, hear, taste, smell, or body touches are all due to *citta vithi*. Even our thoughts generated by the mind (coming through the *mana indriya*), are due to *citta vithi*.

12. In contrast, a *bhavanga* state (B or B_T) DOES NOT come through any of the five physical senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body) or the *mana indriya* in the brain. That is why it is called “*dvāramutta citta*” or “*citta* that arise without the need for a sense door”.

- Therefore, *bhavanga* is sort of a “stationary state of the mind” that it falls back to when there are no running *citta vithi*.
- Note that the *mana indriya* — where concepts and memories come to the mind — is unknown to scientists; see, “[Brain – Interface between Mind and Body](#)”.
- *Bhavanga* (B or B_T) is just a state of the mind with a corresponding *gati*. There are no associated *citta vithi*. But of course, some *bhavanga citta* can appear in a *citta vithi*; see, “[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)”.

13. It is also important to note that *citta* do not run without break. It is the kammic energy that runs without a break during *samsara*.

- For example, when one is born in the *asanna* realm, there will be no *citta* generated for 500 *maha kalpa*. Remember that a *maha kalpa* is the age of our Solar system, which lasts about 15 billions years!
- During that whole time, the body of that being in the *asanna* realm is kept alive by the *kammic* energy for that *bhava*, and the *bhavanga* is active during that time. As we emphasized above, *bhavanga* is a state of mind.

14. Please keep in mind that it is not necessary to learn the material in #11 and #12 above. If one can grasp the basic idea of what is meant by *bhava* and *bhavanga* that is enough to grasp important concepts at a bit deeper level.

- We will continue this discussion in one or more upcoming posts.

4.2.5 Citta, Manō, Viññāṇa – Stages of a Thought

January 24, 2018

1. *Citta*, *manō*, *viññāṇa* are common words that have not been clarified in current texts on Buddhism (Buddha Dhamma). **They are all related, yet different.**

- This may come as a surprise to many, but a *citta* is “contaminated” in eight steps to become *viññāṇa* (and in another step to become part of the *viññākkhanda*. and that is completed in an unbelievably short time.
- I hope this post will clarify some fundamental concepts and that will be invaluable in understanding other concepts.
- I cringe when I see some online comments even say *viññāṇa* is *Nibbāna*. It is exactly the opposite: **One attains *Nibbāna* when one gets rid of *viññāṇa***, or more precisely when one purifies one’s mind to the extent that a thought does not contaminate to the *viññāṇa* stage.
- *Viññāṇa* is discussed at “[Viññāṇa Aggregate](#)”.

2. The generic term in English thought cannot even begin to explain the complex process that happens within a fraction of a billionth of a second when a *citta* arises, goes through three stages (*uppada*, *tithi*, *bhūga*; I am giving this Pāli terms so that those who know them can make the connection), and is terminated.

- When we see, hear, smell, taste, or touch, 17 such *citta* flow uninterrupted; that is called a *pancadvāra citta vithi* (“*cakkhunca paticca rupēca uppadatī cakkhu viññānam*“, and similarly for the other four). In fact, many such *citta vithi* flow even before we consciously become aware of that “thought”.
- If the thought object comes through the *māna indriya* (“*manaca paticca dhammeca uppaddatī manō viññānam*“), that *citta vithi* is called a *manōdvāra citta vithi*, and it has 10-12 *citta*. Again, many such *citta vithi* flow even before we consciously become aware of that “thought”.

3. Another important point to remember is that the word “*citta*” is used loosely even in Buddha Dhamma. Most times, it gives the same impression as the word “thought”. We just say “a *citta* comes to the mind”.

- The word “*citta*” has that “conventional” meaning, but the initial stage of a “thought” is also called a *citta*.

4. For example, when fill a glass with water from a tap in the kitchen, we call it water. But of course it is not pure water. If that water is analyzed in a laboratory, we will see that it has trace amounts of contaminants. So, that glass water does not have pure water. If we fill the glass from a river, we still call it water, but it will have even more contaminants. If we fill the glass from a stagnant pond, contamination could be visible. But we still call it water.

- In the same way, even though technically it is the first stage that is really can be called a *citta*, we call what we consciously feel to be a *citta* too.

5. The initial stage of a *citta* is contaminated within an unbelievable short time. It evolves through nine stages in the following sequence: *citta, manō, mānasam, hadayam, paṇḍaram, manō manāyatanaṃ, māna indriyaṃ, viññāṇa, viññāṇakkhandō*.

- By the time it gets to the *viññāṇa* stage, it is a totally contaminated *citta*. **How contaminated it gets, depends on the thought object and one’s *gathi***, as we will discuss below.
- What we experience or what are aware is that last stage.

6. Before we proceed with the discussion, let me provide a reference to the above verse, which is in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Patīcasamuppāda Vibhaṅga](#)“, in Section [WebLink: suttacentral: 2.5.1. Akusalacitta](#) : “*Tattha katamaṃ saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṃ? Yaṃ cittam mano mānasam hadayam paṇḍaram mano manāyatanaṃ manindriyaṃ viññāṇaṃ viññāṇakkhandho tajjāmanoviññāṇadhātu—idaṃ vuccati “saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ”*”.

- It should be noted that “*saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṃ*” can be defined in different ways, and this way it clarifies how a *citta* is contaminated to the *viññāṇa* stage.

7. By the way, this process can be seen only by a Buddha. It is perceptible and discernible (*gōcara*) only to the highest purified mind.

- The Buddha explained that first to Ven. Sāriputta, when he first explained the key ideas of *Abhidhamma* to Ven. Sāriputta and it took several hundred years of effort by “the *bhikkhus* of the Sāriputta lineage” to do a systematic compilation of all mind phenomena.
- That is why the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* was finished only at the third *Sangāyanā* (Buddhist Council); see, “[Abhidhamma – Introduction](#)“.

8. It is best to describe the actual process to understand these steps. Going back to the process of the nine steps in the evolution of a single *citta*:

- It starts with the *citta* stage, which is the purest stage for a given person (it has only the seven universal *cētasika*, or mental factors). However, that is still inherently contaminated because the universal *cētasika* of *saññā* is already contaminated due to one’s *avijjā*. We will discuss this later in detail.
- That first *citta* stage is “pure” or “*pabhassara*” only for an *Arahant*.
- These deeper aspects are discussed in “[Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#)“.

9. Now that we have stated that technical point (which is not critical for this discussion), we can proceed to the next stages.

- At the first stage of *citta*, the mind just knows that the world exists; that there is a sense impression coming through either of the five physical senses (*cakkhu*, *sōta*, *jivhā*, *ghāna*, or *kāya indriya*) or the *māna indriya*.

10. Let us take a specific event: Suppose it is a seeing one's mother.

As we said above, at the first *citta* stage, one is just aware that a thought object came to the mind via the eyes (*cakkhu indriya*).

- Then in the *manō* stage, the mind “measures” or “compares” (that is why it is called the “*manō*” stage) with past experiences to decide whether the object is a tree, a car, a man, a woman, etc. In this case it decides that it is woman.
- The next “*mānasam*” stage is to decide specific connection to him/herself, and in this case it is recognized that it is one's mother.

11. Now, those steps occur for any human, including an *Arahant* or even the Buddha. One cannot live without getting to this stage. The Buddha was able to differentiate between *Ven. Ananda*, *Ven. Sāriputta*, *Visaka*, or *King Kosala*, and addressed them accordingly.

- In fact, in the *Karaniyamatta Sutta*, what is emphasized by “*mānasambhāva yē aparimānam..*”, is to cultivate “*mānasam*” to the optimum level. That way, one can easily figure out how deal with a given situation.

12. At the next step, a normal human will generate the “*saññā* of one's mother” and gets attached, i.e., forms loving feelings; see, “[Saññā – What It Really Means](#)”. This is called the “*hadayam*” stage. Remember that all nine steps happen in a very short time, and do not involve conscious thinking.

- However, in the case of an *Arahant*, the process does not come to this stage, and thus not evolve any further. Decisions are made by the mind just based on recognizing a given person, regardless of the connection between oneself and that person. Even if it is someone who is trying to kill oneself, feelings towards that person will be no different from feelings towards one's own mother. This is why I say that we cannot even imagine the mind of an *Arahant*.

13. Proceeding to the next stage of “*pandaram*”, that feeling established at the “*hadayam*” stage is strengthened in the case of an especially close person like one's mother. It is like allocating more “energy” for a closer person. If it was a distant relative, for example, it may do little at the “*pandaram*” stage.

- It is also important to note that it may go the totally opposite way for an arch enemy; here one will make very strong bad feelings about such a person.

14. Now comes the next stage of “*manō manāyatana*”. Here one's mind becomes an “*āyatana*” or “be receptive” (or hateful) to that person depending on the level of attachment (revulsion) formed at the *hadayam* and *pandaram* stages.

- That is strengthened (to a level based on the feelings generated in the previous steps) at the “*mana indriyam*” stage.
- It is also important to note that this “*mana indriyam*” stage is different from the *mana indriya* involved in “*manaca paticca dhammeca uppaddati manō viññānam*”.

15. At the *viññāṇa* stage, one's mind is totally removed from “*ñāṇa*” or wisdom or “the reality of nature”. As long as one has worldly desires (i.e., cravings), one has not stopped the *viññāṇa* stage (i.e., until one becomes an *Arahant*).

- Then at the last stage of *viññāṇakkhandha*, the mind strengthens attachments cultivated in the past, evaluates the current situation, and makes new hopes and plans for the future. That is the last stage.

- That last stage is what we actually experience. In fact, we don't even experience that last stage of a single *citta* as an entity on its own, or even the cumulative effect of 17 *cittas* in a *citta vithi*. Thousands of *citta vithi* may flow within a fraction of second before we become aware of it.

16. **Aṅguttara Nikāya 1; Accharāsaṅghātavagga; Sutta #51** is a very short *sutta*. Here is the complete *sutta*: “*Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ. Tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ. Taṃ assutavā puthujjano yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. Tasmā 'assutavato puthujjanassa cittabhāvanā natthī'ti vadāmī'ti.*”

Translated: “*Bhikkhus, a (pure) citta has pabhassara nature. That citta is contaminated by defilements (keles or klesha). A normal human who has not heard my Dhamma (assutavā puthujjano) is not aware of this true nature. I do not recommend citta bhāvanā to them.*”

- This *sutta* clearly states the importance of knowing that a pure *citta* becomes contaminated to the level of *viññāṇa*.

17. Once we have those basics, now we can build on that and try to make the picture even more clear.

- For example, when seeing an attractive object, the mind may become greedy by incorporating *lōbha*, *issa*, etc. (*asōbhana cētasika*) that bends the mind in an immoral way.
- Upon seeing a helpless person, one may generate compassionate thoughts by incorporating *metta*, *karuna*, etc. (some *sōbhana cētasika*).

18. Therefore, we can now see why two factors are play important roles in which way the thought process would evolve. One is one's *gati*, and the other is how strong the thought object is.

- One with “*lōbha gati*” can be easily influenced even by a slightly attractive object. One with much less “*lōbha gati*” may not be perturbed by such an object, but could be attracted by a highly attractive object. Possible situations are endless, depending on the sense object and one's *gati*. This is a good *vipassana* subject to contemplate on.

19. Another important thing is that when one repeatedly accesses a given thought object, then one's *viññāṇa* for such objects will be cultivated. That in turn will cultivate one's *gati* in that direction, and thus it becomes a self-feeding cyclic process in that direction. A good example is how an innocent teenager gets addicted to alcohol or drugs.

- If we thought a bit more on the above case, we can see the involvement of “*saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇa*”. When one starts thinking consciously (generating *vaci saṅkhāra*) about drinking and then also do it frequently (*kāya saṅkhāra*), then one's “drinking *viññāṇa*” will grow in strength.
- One should really think about one's own bad habits, or “bad *viññāṇa*” that keep popping up to the mind regularly. By being mindful, we can suppress such thoughts (by thinking about their bad consequences or *ādinava*), we can reduce such bad *gathi*. Similarly, one can strengthen one's “good *gati*” by engaging more in corresponding activities.
- That is the basis of *Ānāpāna* and *Satipaṭṭhāna*.

4.3 Living Dhamma – Fundamentals

October 27, 2016

- [What Are Kilesa \(Mental Impurities\)? – Connection to Cetasika](#)
- [Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities \(with Desana 2\)](#)
- [Satipatthāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life \(with Desana 3\)](#)
- [How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts? \(with Desana 4; in two parts\)](#)
- [Noble Eightfold Path – Role of Sobhana Cetasika](#)
- [Getting to Samādhi \(with Desana 5\)](#)
- [Sexual Orientation – Effects of Kamma and Gathi \(Saṅkhāra\)](#)

4.3.1 What Are Kilesa (Mental Impurities)? – Connection to Cetasika

August 26, 2016

1. First on a different issue, I hope everyone will understand my reasons for emphasizing Pāli words. In many cases, it is difficult or even impossible to find a single English word to convey the meaning of a Pāli word (e.g., *anicca*); **these are powerful words that pack a lot of content**. Here, there is no equivalent word in English for *kilesa*.

- It is best to use Pāli words (and some Sinhala words like “*niveema*” or “*suva*”), but with an understanding of what they mean; see, “[Why is it Necessary to Learn Key Pāli Words?](#)”. So, don’t be discouraged by these Pāli terms; keep reading to the end and you will see it start making sense. You can “fill-in-the-gaps” by reading relevant posts afterwards.
- Furthermore, this post is mainly on introducing some key concepts involving many Pāli words. In the upcoming weeks, I will be discussing them and simplifying these concepts in the new “[Living Dhamma](#)” section, which used to be called “New Approach to Meditation”. This post is going to be our reference.

2. **Kilesa in Pāli or Keles in Sinhala** (where “*kelesanava*” means “make something impure”) are related to *gathi* and *āsava* (in both Pāli and Sinhala) and are the main reasons why we do things (*saṅkhāra*) to perpetuate the *samsaric* journey; **the closest English translation for *kilesa* is “accumulated impurities in the mind”**.

- **Kilesa give rise to immoral thoughts or *akusala citta* via *asobhana cetasika*, as we discuss below.** *Asobhana cetasika* are listed in “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)”.
- *Sobhana* or *asobhana cetasika* (moral or immoral mental factors) are what makes a given *citta* a moral (*kusala*) or immoral (*akusala*); for details, see, “[Citta and Cetasika](#)”.
- As you can guess, *sobhana* and *asobhana* mean “beautiful” and “non-beautiful” respectively, in Pāli and Sinhala.

3. There are several posts on related key concepts of *san*, *saṅkhāra*, *saṃsāra*, etc. Also *gathi* (habits) and *āsava* (cravings) are cultivated via repeated bad habits; all these are related to *kilesa* and lead to a set of unique *kilesa* for each living being; of course they keep changing even for a given person.

- When one removes all these mental impurities or *kilesa* (or *keles*), one attains ***kilesa parinibbana***. This is also called *saupadisesa Nibbāna* because that person is still “in this world of 31 realms”. This is the state of a living *Arahant*; he/she has removed all mental impurities from the mind.
- When that *Arahant* dies, there is no rebirth and *Nibbāna* is “complete”; that is called *anupadisesa Nibbāna*.

4. *Kilesa* are of different types:

- *Lobha* (excess greed), *dōsa* (ill will), and *mōha* (delusion), are of course the main mental impurities or *kilesa* or *asobhana cetasika*.
- **The others arise because of the main three, and are called *upakilesa*** (“*upa*” means “close to”). The [WebLink: suttacentral: Upakkilesa Sutta](#) lists them and these can be identified as the remaining *asobhana cetasika*. Also in *Vibhanghapakarana-II* of the *Tipitaka*, *kilesa* are listed as the *asobhana cetasika*.
- **Thus *kilesa* and *upakilesa* are included in the 14 immoral mental factors (*asobhana cetasika*). This is an important observation that will help us “quantify” these *kilesa* or mental impurities.**
- The other 11 *asobhana cetasika* are : *diṭṭhi* (wrong views), *vicikicca* (inability to sort out moral from immoral), *thina* (dullness of mind), *middha* (trapping of the mind somewhere and losing focus), *issa* (jealousy), *maccariya* (tendency to hide wealth), *kukkucca* (do lowly acts), *ahirika* (shamelessness in doing immoral), *anatoppa* (fearlessness in doing immoral), *uddacca* (tendency to become offended), *māna* (self-importance).

5. With the identification of *kilesa* as *asobhana cetasika*, it becomes easier to see how *kilesa* (mental impurities) are systematically reduced and removed at each stage of *Nibbāna*.

- It must be noted that *Abhidhamma Pitaka* of the *Tipitaka* was not fully developed during the time of the Buddha. So, in the *Sutta pitaka*, mostly the term *kilesa* was used. The Buddha succinctly described *Abhidhamma* to Ven. Sariputta, and it took several generations of *Bhikkhus* of “Sariputta lineage” to fully assemble the *Abhidhamma* structure. It was finalized only at the third Buddhist Council; see, “[Abhidhamma – Introduction](#)”.

6. There are 4 universal *asobhana cetasika* that are in ALL *akusala citta*. They are: *mōha* (delusion), *uddacca* (restlessness), *ahirika* (shameless of wrong doings), and *anottappa* (fearlessness of wrong doings). Since all *akusala citta* are prevented from arising only at the *Arahant* stage, it is easy to see that these 4 *asobhana cetasika* or mental impurities are completely removed only at the *Arahant* stage. However, all *akusala cetasika* reduce in strength at each stage of *Nibbāna*.

[Universal *akusala cetasika* (4) : *mōha*⇒*avijjā*, *ahirika*, *anatoppa*, *uddacca*

Particular *akusala cetasika* (10) : *lōbha*⇒*rāga*, *diṭṭhi*, *māna*, *dōsa*⇒*patigha*, *issa*, *maccariya*, *kukkucca*, *thina*, *middha*, *vicikicca*]

- The following *asobhana cetasika* are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage: *diṭṭhi*, *vicikicca*, *thina*, *middha*, *issa*, *maccariya*, *kukkucca*. Furthermore, *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* are reduced in strength to *rāga*, *patigha*, *avijjā*.
- The above clarification could help one decide whether one has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage (see the meanings of those Pāli terms in #4 above): for example, one should have lost jealousy, tendency to hide wealth from others, etc). What this really means is that one has realized the worthlessness of material things to a significant extent; that comes with comprehending the *anicca* nature to some extent.
- At the *Sakadāgāmi* stage, *kāma rāga* (which is a part of *rāga*) and *patigha* are reduced in strength (they still keep the same names). At the *Anāgāmi* stage, both *kāma rāga* and *patigha* are completely removed.
- The remaining *asobhana cetasika* (*avijjā*, *ahirika*, *anatoppa*, *uddacca*, *māna*) are completely removed at the *Arahant* stage.

7. Thus, we can see that many “mental impurities” or *kilesa* or *asobhana cetasika* are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage, even though a *Sotāpanna* completely abstain from only one *akusala kamma* as discussed in “[What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)”.

- The Buddha said that a *Sotāpanna* has equivalent of a thumb-full of *kilesa* left compared to that of the volume of the Earth for a normal human. Now we can see this is because many *akusala cetasika* are removed and others are reduced in strength at the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- Note that *akusala kamma* (immoral deeds) are different from *akusala citta* (immoral thoughts). There are ten *akusala kamma* and 12 *akusala citta*. An *akusala kamma* is done with an

asobhana citta. Mind is a very complex entity, and all these different parameters are needed to fully describe what happens in a mind. But they are all inter-consistent. With time, one will be able to grasp many different aspects of the mind with these parameters.

- All different types of defilements removed or reduced at each stage of *Nibbāna* are listed in “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)“. That table provides a complete summary in one place.

8. Now that we have taken care of the technicalities, let us discuss some practical things that are of use when figuring out how different types of *cetasika* influence our thoughts.

- As we can see from #6, *mōha* (or the reduced form of *avijjā*) is in all *akusala citta*. There are only 12 types of *akusala citta*, and 8 of them have *lōbha* (or a reduced form of *kāma rāga*, *rūpa rāga*, or *arūpa rāga*). **When one is attracted to a sense object, one of these 8 *akusala citta* arise.**
- *Lobha* and *dōsa* do not arise together. There are only two *akusala citta* with the *dōsa cetasika*. **When one is repulsed by a sense object, one of these 2 *akusala citta* arise.**
- The other two *akusala citta* do not have either *lōbha* or *dōsa*, but only the *mōha* as a root. **These two *cittas* arise not due to greed or hate, but purely due to *mōha* (or the reduced form of *avijjā*).**
- I hope this helps in getting a sense of the types of *akusala citta* that we generate each day. More details can be found in the post, “[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#)“.

9. Each person’s *kilesa* are thus some combination of the 14 *asobhana cetasika*, but keep changing. The goal is to remove them gradually. **In practice, this is done by changing one’s *gathi* (habits) and *āsava* (cravings);** see, “[9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#)“.

- Up until the *Sotāpanna* stage, none of the *asobhana cetasika* is removed in the *citta* (thoughts) that arise in a person. **They may be temporarily subdued or even lessened in strength temporarily, but never removed.**
- Of course, these *kilesas* (or *asobhana cetasika*) do not show up all the time. **When they are triggered by an external stimulus** (like when seeing an attractive person or an enemy), **they can come to surface. This “bubbling up to the surface” is called *anusaya*.**
- When one is engaged in a comprehensive *anariya* meditation program (like those 7-day or 14-day meditation retreats), these *kilesas* (or *asobhana cetasika*) do not get a chance to come to the surface. The environment at a retreat is such that “temptations” would be minimal. Thus one could be enjoying *niramisa sukha* at such a retreat.
- However, when one comes back from the retreat, one is exposed to all kinds of sense inputs and those WILL re-awaken same old *akusala citta* burdened with *asobhana cetasika*.

10. However, when one removes a set of *kilesa* (*asobhana cetasika*) at each stage of *Nibbāna*, they are PERMANENTLY removed or reduced per #6 above. At that point, no external stimulus can trigger those *asobhana cetasika* that have been permanently removed.

- **This is the difference between the temporary relief many have experienced at meditation retreats and the permanent relief upon becoming a *Sotāpanna*, i.e., between the *anariya* and *Ariya* Paths.**

11. Since all these Pāli words could make you somewhat confused at the first read, let us take an analogy to clear up what *kilesa* (*asobhana cetasika*) do to our thoughts. **Here we compare *citta* (or thoughts) to a glass of pure water.** Most of our thoughts are like clear water: they are not immoral or moral, just neutral. We see, hear, etc. millions of things a day, but generate moral or immoral thoughts only in a relatively few cases.

- In this analogy, immoral thoughts are like dirty water. Just like added dirt makes water dirty, when *asobhana cetasika* gets incorporated to a *citta*, that *citta* becomes immoral. But how do these *asobhana cetasika* get incorporated into a *citta*?

- Since a *citta* arises in a billionth of a second, **there is no way for us to control** what kind of *cetasika* get incorporated into a *citta*. It happens automatically!
- We can get an idea of how that happens by looking at a glass water with some dirt in it.

12. Even though the glass of water has dirt in it, if the water is left undisturbed for a while, the dirt gets settled at the bottom and the water becomes relatively clear. Our minds are like that too. **Most of the dirt (mental impurities, *kilesa*, or *asobhana cetasika*) remain hidden most of the time.**

- However, if the water is stirred with a straw, the dirt comes up to the top and the water becomes dirty.
- **In the case of the mind, the stirrer is a desired (attractive) or an undesired (repulsive) sense event.** Mainly the *asobhana cetasika* of greed and hate come to the surface (always accompanied by the four universal *cetasika* mentioned in #6 , but could be accompanied by a few more of the other 11 *asobhana cetasika*, depending on the situation.
- The other two related parameters of *gathi* and *āsavas* contribute in setting up the exact *asobhana cetasika* that will arise based on a given sense input. For example, an alcoholic only has to see a bottle of whiskey to get the urge to have a drink; only a person with ingrained habits of a thief will be tempted to steal an item from a shop just on impulse.

13. **Another related point is that a glass with dirt in it ALWAYS has some dirt in the water**, even though most of the “heavy stuff” goes to the bottom. **This “ever present” muddy color can be compared to the *pancanivarana* (five hindrances)**, that makes our minds “covered” almost at all times.

- Just like the dirty water prevents us from seeing what is in the water, a mind covered with *pancanivarana* is unable “see through”.
- These “ever-present” *pancanivarana* are responsible for the “sense of agitation” or “sense of unfulfillment” that is there with us most of the time. This is what X experienced when she got into a regular meditation schedule: “[Living Dhamma – Introduction](#)”.
- It was like getting rid of the dark color of the water (while the dirt still remains at the bottom). The mind can become relatively more pure for a considerable amount of time when engaged in a meditation program. This is called *vishkambana pahāna* (or *prahāna*), in contrast to *tadanga pahāna* (suppressing only for a short time) and *ucceda pahāna* (permanent removal). We will discuss this in upcoming discussions.
- By the way, while listening to a discourse or reading a Dhamma post, one could get into *tadanga pahāna* and the content may become easily understood, and one could momentarily feel the *nirāmisa sukha* too. This is why one should read these posts at a time when the mind is relatively calm, in order to make conditions for *tadanga pahāna* optimum, and even extend to *vishkambana pahāna*, i.e, for a day or longer.

14. Now we can see how *nirāmisa sukha* comes during meditation sessions (especially in regular meditation sessions like at a meditation retreat), per question raised by Y in a previous post, i.e., “*Nirāmisa sukha* is felt by which *citta*?”.

- ***Nirāmisa sukha* appears when the *asobhana cetasika* (or *kilesa*) AND the *pancanivarana* are SUPPRESSED.**
- In the next post, we will address the issue of how a *Sotāpanna*’s mind automatically blocks certain types *asobhana cetasika* arising, via PERMANENTLY removing *pancanivara* and also by completely removing some of the *kilesa* or *asobhana cetasika*.

15. Above is a self-consistent, condensed summary. In the upcoming discussions, we will go into details and discuss the two types of hidden suffering in simple terms.

Next in the series, “[Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities](#)”.

4.3.2 Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities

September 2, 2016

1. In the post, “[Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#)” in this series (“[Living Dhamma](#)”), we introduced two types of hidden suffering revealed to the world by the Buddha, and discussed the first type of suffering that we experience in this life.

- Here we continue that discussion, and figure out ways to relieve that suffering.

2. In the previous post, “[What Are Kilesa \(Mental Impurities\)? – Connection to Cetasika](#)”, we discussed how *asobhana cetasika* represent the mental impurities or *kilesas*.

- In this and a few more *desanas*, we will discuss that highly condensed post, in order to simplify and clarify the main ideas relevant to practice.

3. Here is the *desanā* (You may need to adjust volume control on your computer):

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 2 - Suffering in This Life - Role of Mental Impurities](#)

Relevant posts mentioned in the *desanā*:

[2. The Basics in Meditation](#)

[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)

[Citta and Cetasika](#)

Next in the series, “[Satipatthāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)”.

4.3.3 Satipattana Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life

September 10, 2016

1. This is the sixth post in this series. It is important to follow the series from the beginning. All posts are at: “[Living Dhamma](#)”.

- Here I want show that what we have been discussing in this section is exactly what is recommended in the beginning of the *Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta*.
- Here we will discuss the key verse, “*ātāpī sampajānō, satimā vineyya lōke abhijjhā dōmanassam*” that appears in the *sutta* numerous times. It is also the basis of the *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā*.

2. Many people believe that the *Sutta* is basically a *kammattana* that one recites or “meditate on”. But it is much more than a *kammattana*. I will provide more evidence in future posts, but here is the audio on the basics of the *Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta* (you may need to control the volume in your computer):

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 3 - Satipatthāna Sutta - Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)

3. Links relevant to the *desanā*:

[Satipatthāna Sutta – Structure](#)

[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)

More posts on “*san*”: [San](#)

[1. Introduction to Buddhist Meditation](#)

[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)

[Prerequisites for the Satipatthāna Bhāvanā](#)

Next post in the series, “[How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?](#)”.

4.3.4 How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?

September 22, 2016

In this post, we will discuss why *mano saṅkhāra* are different from *kāya* and *vacī saṅkhāra*. Understanding this will help one to realize how our *gathi* can AUTOMATICALLY give rise to immoral thoughts.

- It will also help one understand how such initial immoral thoughts can be overcome by purposefully generating moral thoughts. This is actually the basis of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā*.
- Furthermore, we will discuss the issue of where our *gathi*, *kilesa*, or *cetasika* are “stored”.

This is the seventh post in this section: “[Living Dhamma](#)“. To get full benefits, one should start from the first post. I am using a combination of text and audio files to convey a lot of information in this section.

Here are the audio files (in two parts):

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 4 - How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts? Part 1](#)

The second audio — which is more important — has lower volume. So, you may need to turn up volume at your computer:

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 4 - How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts? Part 2](#)

October 22, 2017: I just listened to the above two audios after one year. They are good and provide solid basis for understanding *gati* and how they can be changed by controlling *vacī* and *kāya saṅkhāra* that we have control over.

- It is important to realize that many *citta vīthi* flow in a second. But each subsequent *citta vīthi* is influenced by the previous one. So, they can take one on a downward path very quickly unless we intervene by being mindful.
- It is very important to realize that: *manō saṅkhāra* are generated AUTOMATICALLY based on our *gati*. *Vacī saṅkhāra* are generated when we “talk to ourselves, without getting the words out”. Both such “internal speech” and actual speech are associated with *vacī saṅkhāra*; bodily actions are *kāya saṅkhāra*.
- We become CONSCIOUS about both *vacī* and *kāya saṅkhāra* quickly and thus have control over them; see, “[Correct Meaning of Vacī saṅkhāra](#)“.

Posts mentioned in the *desanā*

1. Suicide statistics: [WebLink: Suicide and Depression](#)

- I know that most readers of this site do not have suicide tendencies. But the point is that we underestimate the severity of mental suffering compared to our physical suffering.

2. If one has a hard time comprehending the *Tilakkhana*, starting with *anicca*, one needs to first follow the mundane Eightfold Path, remove the first type of suffering, and experience the *nirāmisa sukha* as explained in the previous posts in this section.

- This is also pointed out in the “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)” and “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)“.

3. More details on how our minds control our physical bodies are in the sections: “[Citta and Cetasika](#)” and “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)“.

- In particular, the following post illustrates how we perceive our external world: “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)“.

- *Citta Vithi* are discussed in “[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)”.

4. How thoughts can affect other people: “[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\) – How Does it Happen?](#)”.

5. The brain architecture of humans and animals: “[Truine Brain: How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#)”.

6. The post mentioned in the discussion on the question “Where are these *gati* or *kilesa* or *cetasika* are maintained or stored?”: “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)”.

Next in the series, “[Noble Eightfold Path – Role of Sobhana Cetasika](#)”.

4.3.5 Noble Eightfold Path – Role of Sobhana Cetasika

September 30, 2016; revised December 5, 2017 (#5)

1. In previous posts in this section, we have discussed how *niramisa sukha* or “peace of mind” arises due to both removal of *asobhana cetasika* (non-beautiful mental factors) or *kilesa* AND cultivation of *sobhana cetasika* (beautiful mental factors).

- In this post, I will point out that 7 of the 8 factors in the Noble Eightfold Path are in the set of *sobhana cetasika*.

2. The most important fact that one needs to comprehend from the posts in this series up to this point, is that our minds are heated/agitated by the presence of *asobhana cetasika* or *kilesa* or defilements.

- On the other hand, our minds are soothed and comforted and made joyful by the presence of *sobhana cetasika*.
- One may not realize this until one comprehends this fact and actually practice cultivating *sobhana cetasika* while suppressing/removing *asobhana cetasika*.

3. As explained elsewhere at the site, *Abhidhamma* with its methodical analysis of *citta* and *cetasika* was not finalized for a few hundred years after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha at the Third Buddhist Council. This enlarged Canon completed at the Third Council was committed to writing in Sri Lanka in the first century BCE (29 BCE) at the Aluvihara Monastery at the Fourth Buddhist Council. This was the last Buddhist Council attended by *Arahants*.

- Soon after that the decline of the pure Dhamma of the Buddha started its decline with the simultaneous rise of the Mahayana; see, the section “[Historical Background](#)”.
- When Buddhaghosa wrote the *Visuddhimagga*, which was presumed to be a summary of the *Tipitaka*, even *Theravadins* stopped using the *Tipitaka* for convenience.
- Therefore, no one seemed to have realized some important possible usages of *cetasika*: First, *kilesa* are the same as *asobhana cetasika*. Second, components of the Noble Eightfold Path are in the set of *sobhana cetasika*. This makes it easier to comprehend how one could systematically follow the Path, and that is focus of this post.
- I will discuss the details in upcoming *desanas*, but here I would like to provide a summary that we can use for that discussion. Another such summary post that will used in these *desanas* is a summary given in one of the previous posts: “[What Are Kilesa \(Mental Impurities\)? – Connection to Cetasika](#)”.

4. Let us start by continuing from the last *desanā*, where we discussed how **INITIAL thoughts in response to a sense event arises without us even being conscious about it**. These initial thoughts arise AUTOMATICALLY due to the set of *sobhana/asobhana cetasika* or *gathi* that we have. Any *akusala* thoughts arise due to our *kilesa* which are the same as *asobhana cetasika*.

- However, because our speech and bodily actions are much slower than the rising of those initial thoughts, it is possible for us to keep vigilant and reverse any such reactive *akusala* thoughts that are AUTOMATICALLY generated.
- This is the basis of both *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā*. Please listen to that previous *desanā* on “[How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?](#)” and fully comprehend this

important concept. Here is the link to that *desanā* in two parts (there is volume control on the right, but for the second *desanā*, you may need to turn up volume in your computer):

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 4 - How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts? Part 1](#)

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 4 - How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts? Part 2](#)

- We also discussed the evidence for such *gathi* to be associated with any given person, and addressed the question of where they are “stored”.

5. We also saw in the above *desanas* that those initial thoughts that arise in response to a sense event are called *mano saṅkhāra*. Therefore, we do not have conscious control over *mano saṅkhāra*, AND they arise within a fraction of a second DUE TO our *gathi* (set of *sobhana/asobhana cetasika*).

- **December 5, 2017:** Such *akusala mano saṅkhāra* CAN then lead to the generation of *vacī saṅkhāra* (silent speech in our heads and speech), and *kaya saṅkhāra* (speech and bodily actions). This is different from the *desana*, and I have discussed the reasons for this revision in “[Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra](#)”.
- But, if we are mindful (*sati*), we can catch any such *akusala mano saṅkhāra* and make sure they do not lead to *akusala vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra*.
- In the Eightfold Path, such deliberately generated *vacī saṅkhāra* are called ***sammā sankappa or sammā sankalpa***.
- And those *sammā sankappa* were generated because one acted with ***sammā sati***.

6. In the above *desanas*, we discussed an example of a person X finding a lost ring. If X had strong greedy *gathi*, The initial thoughts (*mano saṅkhāra*) could be to keep the ring for himself. However, if X knows about being mindful, X has time to evaluate the situation with *vacī saṅkhāra* (in his head), and to come to conclusion that it is immoral to keep the ring for himself.

- If he made that correct decision, even after thinking about it, he can prevent an *akusala kamma* of stealing. Not only that, he can do a *kusala kamma* by making sure to get that ring returned to the rightful owner.
- So, now we can see the critical roles of *sammā sati* and *sammā sankappa* in the Eightfold Path. We have the opportunity (unlike animals) to rationally think about our initial REACTIVE decisions, and to reverse them if they are immoral.

7. If X acted with *sammā sati* and realized the problem with the initial reaction and made the right decision with *sammā sankappa*, then he can take next steps to ***sammā vacā*** (moral speech) and ***sammā kammanta*** (moral actions) to implement that decision. He can walk over to the counter, hand over the ring, and tell the office personnel to return the ring to the owner.

- This is just one possible example. We come across many such instances during a day. In another example, one may get annoyed by someone accidentally stepping on one’s foot in a crowded place, and start yelling at that person without thinking about the consequences. That person obviously did not intentionally do that, especially since it is likely to be a stranger.
- Even if one started getting the words out, one could quickly stop oneself and smile at the person indicating that it is no big deal. That would make that person to be relieved, because most likely he/she felt bad about it.
- This simple act of kindness would lead to a “cooling down” on both sides. The other person will feel a relief and will thank for the kindness. Furthermore, it could have escalated into a shouting match and could have led to “heated minds” on both sides.

8. When one sees the benefits of such mindful behavior, one will start doing more. One will start living a moral life. This is ***sammā ajīva*** or moral livelihood.

- Not only that, one will make an extra effort to be mindful and catch any reactive thoughts that could lead to such *akusala kamma*. This is ***sammā vāyama***, or moral effort.

- In a few weeks or months, this will start changing one's ingrained *gathi*. When one stops using those *asobhana cetasika*, their power will diminish with time. At the same time, one is cultivating *sobhana cetasika* (i.e., *sammā sati*, *sammā sankappa*, *sammā vaca*, *sammā kammanata*, *sammā ajiva*, *sammā vayama*). Thus bad *gathi* will diminish and good *gathi* will grow.

9. Now, X was able to think rationally about the bad consequences of his initial decision (*mano saṅkhāra*) to keep the ring, because he had **sammā diṭṭhi** or **moral vision**, to some extent. Deep down he knew that such an act of stealing is immoral, and was able to fight off the tendency to keep it.

- *Sammā diṭṭhi* is related to the *sobhana cetasika* of *paññā*, which is loosely translated as “wisdom”. This “wisdom” cannot be cultivated by reading books, even just by reading Dhamma. The *paññā cetasika* is cultivated by both learning Dhamma and by living it (i.e., by following the Eightfold Path), thereby getting rid of *mōha*.

10. Now let us examine the connection between the other factors in the Eightfold Path (here the mundane version) and some of the *sobhana cetasika*.

- First, three factors in the Eightfold Path have exactly the same names in the list of *sobhana cetasika*: *sammā vaca*, *sammā kammanata*, *sammā ajiva*; see, “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)”.

11. *Sammā sankalpa* are the *vacī saṅkhāra* that we deliberately generate even if we have *akusala mano saṅkhāra* arising due to sense inputs. *Vacī saṅkhāra* are described in the *suttas* as *vitakka* (pronounced “vithakka”) and *vicara* (pronounced “vichaara”). *Vitakka* is turning the mind towards a thought object and *vicara* is keeping the mind around that thought object.

- Those who are familiar with *jhānas* know that, *vitakka* and *vicara* are two *jhāna* factors in *anariya jhānas*. In the first *anariya jhāna*, one can for example turn the mind to a *kasina* object (*vitakka*) and keep it there (*vicara*). In *Ariya jhānas*, they are called *saṁvitakka* and *saṁvicara* because one is focused on *Nibbāna*.
- So, you can see that maintaining *sammā sankalpa* is the same as generating “moral” *vitakka* and *vicara* or *kusala vacī saṅkhāra*. Remember that these are generated in the head, not spoken out. They are called “*sankalpana*” in Sinhala.
- Also, we note that *vitakka* and *vicara* could be used in immoral path too. A master thief planning a robbery will focus on that task and spend many hours thinking about the plan. So, those two *cetasika* fall under the category called particulars or *pakinnaka*; they can appear in *kusala* or *akusala* thoughts as needed.

12. Now, *sammā vayama* arises from another of these particulars or *pakinnaka cetasika*, the *virīya cetasika*.

- When one is making an effort to live a moral life, that *sammā vayama*. If one is making an effort towards an immoral life, like that master thief, then he is making *micca vayama*.
- Of course the *sati cetasika*, which is a *sobhana cetasika*, is *sammā sati*.

13. Now we are left with **sammā samādhi**. This is the only factor that is not related to a *cetasika* directly. Most people have the idea that *samādhi* is *jhāna* or at least is attained only in formal meditation. But it is much more deeper. In the next *desanā*, I will discuss *samādhi*, together with the implications of what is summarized in this post.

- We are trying to comprehend and reinforce the FOUNDATION of Buddha Dhamma: How one can remove the “*thaapa*” or “heat” from the mind by getting rid of *asobhana cetasika* (*kilesa*) and SIMULTANEOUSLY “cool down” the mind and bring joy to it, by cultivating *sobhana cetasika*.

This was discussed in the first *desanā* in this series:

“The Hidden Suffering that We All Can Understand”

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 1 - The Hidden Suffering That We All Can Understand](#)

- More details were given in the following two *desanas*:

“Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities”

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 2 - Suffering in This Life - Role of Mental Impurities](#)

“Satipattana Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life”

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 3 - Satipatthāna Sutta - Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)

14. As discussed in the above *desanas*, *akusala* thoughts that arise with *asobhana cetasika* make our minds clouded and keep us in the dark. *Moha* is darkness; it leads to *lōbha* and *dōsa*. That darkness can be temporarily lifted (*tandanga pahana*) during listening or reading Dhamma.

- The next step is to keep that “light on” for days and weeks by being mindful and stopping *akusala* thoughts that lead to *akusala kamma* for an extended time. This is *vikkhambana pahana*, and that is what we are trying to achieve now. It is done by being mindful, i.e., with *sammā sati*.
- The ultimate goal is to permanently remove those *asobhana cetasika*, and to make that “cooling down” permanent (*ucceda pahana*), even for future lives. We will get to that in future posts. But we need to establish a good foundation and actually experience the *niramisa sukha* for extended time periods (*vikkhambana pahana*) first.

15. In order to get rid darkness (*mōha*) one has to bring light in. Light is *paññā* or “wisdom”, a *sobhana cetasika*. The Noble Eightfold Path is designed to optimize the *paññā cetasika* — via *sammā samādhi* — and to eliminate the *mōha cetasika*.

- Other *sobhana cetasika*, like *karuna* and *mudita* (or *mudutā*) also help with this process.
- In the end one will be able to see how different pieces of the puzzle (including *paticca samuppāda*) all fit together to make an easy-to-see picture of the whole process. That will make it easier to grasp the *Tilakkhana*, and advance to the next stage.
- All these can be shown be consistent with the scheme of *silā, samādhi, paññā*. In the *Cetana Karaneeya Sutta*, the Buddha has detailed how *silā* (moral conduct) leads to *niramisa sukha*, and *niramisa sukha* leads to *samādhi*, and *samādhi* in turn leads to *paññā*. We will discuss all these in the upcoming *desanas*.

Next in the series, “[Getting to Samādhi](#)”.

4.3.6 Getting to Samadhi

October 7, 2016

1. In the post “[Noble Eightfold Path – Role of Sobhana Cetasika](#)”, it was discussed how 7 of the 8 factors in the Noble Eightfold Path are related to some of the *sobhana cetasika* or moral mental factors.

2. In the following *desanā*, we discuss how the cultivation of those 7 factors lead to the 8th factor in the Noble Path, *Sammā Samādhi*, or at least the mundane version of it first (volume control will appear on right when you start playing):

“Getting to Samādhi”

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 5 - Getting to Samādhi](#)

Links mentioned in the *desanā*:

3. Before one can comprehend the *Tilakkhana* (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*), one needs to get to mundane *Sammā Samādhi*. There are two kinds of *Sammā Samādhi* and also a *micca samādhi*:

- [What is Samādhi? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness](#)
- [Three Kinds of Ditthi, Eightfold Paths, and Samādhi](#)

4. The role of the brain in changing one's *gathi*:

- [Brain – Interface between Mind and Body](#)

5. Two types of suffering discussed in:

- [Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#)

6. Suppressing and eliminating the *pancanivarana* in stages:

- [Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities](#)

Next in the series, “[Micca Ditthi – Connection to Hethu Phala \(Cause and Effect\)](#)“, ...

4.3.7 Sexual Orientation – Effects of Kamma and Gathi (Sankhāra)

January 14, 2017

This post will be helpful in not only clarifying Buddha's teachings on sexual orientation, but also that there can be many varieties of *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*, and corresponding *bhava* and *jāti* arising according to *paticca samuppāda*.

1. In this beginning-less rebirth process, it is likely that we all had switched between male or female many times, just as we are likely to have been born in most of the 31 realms in the past.

- It is said that the *Bodhisattva* — before becoming Buddha Gotama — was a female when the *paramita* process to become a Buddha was initiated.
- However, once the *paramita* process progressed, and the *Bodhisattva* became a male, it never switched back to female.
- Only a male can actually be a Buddha.

2. Whether one is male or female is predominantly determined by one's *saṅkhāra*, and not due to a past *kamma*.

- But in some cases, *kamma* could be the direct cause. For example, if one intentionally severed or mutilated another's sexual organs, it is possible that one may be born without a sexual organ. Such a person is called a “*napunsaka*” in Sinhala (*pandaka* in Pāli), but I am not aware of a corresponding English word.
- An eunuch is a person who is castrated, so that also could be due to a *kamma vipāka* of a past *kamma*.

3. Male/female distinction is there only in the *kāma loka*. In the *brahma* realms (higher 20 realms), there is no such distinction. *Brahmas* do not have dense physical bodies or sexual organs.

- One is born in either the 16 *rūpa loka* realms or the 4 *arūpa loka* realms (*brahma* realms) because one has given up all desires for bodily pleasures, including sex, because one has seen the value of *nirāmisa sukha* (and *jhānic* pleasures) that can be achieved by giving up bodily pleasures.

4. One is born in *kāma loka* because one likes bodily pleasures, especially those associated with taste, smell, and sex. Of course, vision and sound that help satisfy those three bodily pleasures also come into play here.

- One is born in human or *deva* realms in the *kāma loka* because one has done meritorious deeds (*punna kamma*). There are female *devas*, who have attained those births because of their *punna kamma* just like male *devas*. One is born a female *deva*, because one has cultivated “*iththi saṅkhāra*”; see #5 below.
- One is born in the four *apāya* realms in the *kāma loka* because one has done immoral deeds (*pāpa kamma*). Here the corresponding *saṅkhāra* are *apunnabhi saṅkhāra*.

5. One is born male or female due to whether one cultivates “*purisa saṅkhāra*” or “*iththi saṅkhāra*” by thinking, speaking, and doing things accordingly. One does not do either *punna abhisankhāra* or *apunna abhisankhāra* here.

- Such *saṅkhāra* (*kaya*, *vacī*, and *mano*) are not necessarily meritorious (*punnabhi saṅkhāra*) or immoral (*apunnabhi saṅkhāra*). Those are in line with pure habits based on “*purisa gathi*” and “*iththi gathi*”.
- This can be compared to cultivating habits for playing a certain musical instrument. They are called “*vāsana keles*”, *keles* that do not have good or bad *kamma vipāka*, but more like ingrained habits.

6. *Purisa* is the Pāli or Sinhala word for a male and the word comes from “*piri*” or “full”. A male is likely to give more (especially to the wife) than to take from the wife. *Iththi* is the Pāli (and old Sinhala) word for female, and means “*ithiri*” or “left over space to be filled”. For example, if a cup is full that is “*piri*”; if it is not full, it needs more to become full, it has “*ithiri*”.

- So, a male is likely to willingly buy things for the wife, but does not care much about his appearance. Most wives expect gifts and sustenance.
- However, these “*purisa gathi*” and “*iththi gathi*” can have large variations. A male has more “*purisa gathi*” than “*iththi gathi*”. But we do see “alpha males” with close to 100% “*purisa gathi*” as well as females with very high “*iththi gathi*”.
- On the other hand, we also see females who like to act and dress more like males, and also males who like to act and dress more feminine. If they cultivate those *gathi* more, a sex change is possible in future lives (in rare cases even in this life).

7. In most families, if one examines the wardrobes of the husband and wife, one is likely to find many more items in the wife’s wardrobe (in particular, the man may have a couple of pairs of shoes but the wife will have many!). Females wear much more jewellery too.

- Furthermore, a female is more concerned about the appearance of her (and her husband). A guy usually grabs something to wear, but a woman is likely to pay much more attention. I know by experience that I have been “instructed politely” to change into something better many times when going out.
- Thus females constantly think about theirs (and their spouses and children’s) appearance. This is not necessarily due to greed, but mainly due to *sansaric* habits.

8. Therefore, as far as attaining *Nibbāna*, it does not matter whether one is a male, female, or somewhere in between (with mixed *gathi*).

- One is born in the *deva* realms due to good *kamma vipāka*, and there are male and female *devas*, just like in the human and animal realms. The type of sex is not determined by *kamma vipāka*.
- All *brahma* realms are “*unisex*”. They do not have *bhava dasaka*, which determine the sex type. Brahmas do not have dense bodies to experience touch, taste of foods, or smells. **They have very fine bodies with just the *hadaya vatthu*, *kaya dasaka*, *cakkhu dasaka*, and *sota dasaka*.**
- Therefore, a *brahma* “body” has only a few *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], and is much much smaller than an atom in modern science. So, it is clear why sense pleasures are absent in *brahma loka*.

9. It is important to realize that there are moral *gathi* due to *punnabhisankhara* (*punna abhisankhāra*), immoral *gathi* due to *apunnabhisankhara* (*apunna abhisankhāra*), and “kammically neutral” *gathi* due to *saṅkhāra* that are not *abhisankhāra*.

- While one is born in the human *bhava*, one would also have a “*iththi bhava*” (as a female) or “*purisa bhava*” (as a male).

- Not only that, one could be born in an “angry *bhava*” for a given period of time that would be triggered by a sense event such as seeing an enemy — if one has cultivated angry *gathi* by thinking, speaking, and acting with an angry mindset.
- One could be born in a “greedy *bhava*” the same way. If we start acting mindfully to think, speak, and act with less greed, those greedy *gathi* will reduce over time.
- The more one thinks, speaks, and acts in a “female way”, one will be cultivating “female *gathi*”; but these are not moral or immoral *saṅkhāra* as we discussed above.

10. In any of these cases, the more *saṅkhāra* one makes, one builds up the corresponding *viññāṇa* (*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*) and so on until it gets to strengthening *upādāna* and thus strengthening *bhava* (*upādāna paccaya bhava*).

- Therefore, *paticca samuppāda* explains not only how *bhava* in the rebirth process, but also in *bhava* that last only for short periods of time, like getting into an “angry state of mind” or “angry *bhava*”.

11. Another possibility that may come into play in a transgender person (a person whose sex is changed during the lifetime) can be understood if one understands the role of the *gandhabba* (mental body) that dictates the functioning of the physical body. *Gandhabba* is not a Mahayana concept: “[Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka](#)”.

- When a *gandhabba* goes into a womb, it is not firmly attached to the zygote (the cell formed by the union of the father and the mother) during the first several weeks.
- Sometimes, the *gandhabba* just leaves the womb if it turns out to be not a good match with the parents. This is the reason for a miscarriage.
- If a *gandhabba* leaves the womb within such a short time period, in some cases another *gandhabba* can enter the womb and take possession of the partially formed physical body that was abandoned by the previous *gandhabba*. Now, it may happen that the second *gandhabba* is of opposite sex.
- For example, suppose the first *gandhabba* was a male and the second a female. So, this female is thus taking hold of a physical body that was taking shape to be a male and thus continue to form a male body. Once born as a male baby, and while growing the female character may start to convert the physical body to that of a female. This is what happens to a transgender person.

12. One is bound to the *kāma loka* because one has craving for bodily pleasures, whether it is tasting good food, watching movies, listening to music, smelling nice fragrances, or in engaging in sexual activities. **If one does those activities without engaging in immoral activities, then the only harm done is to be eligible to be born in the *kāma loka*.**

- One cannot be freed from even the higher realms in the *kāma loka* (human and *deva* realms), if one has desires for such bodily pleasures. However, it becomes relevant only at the *Anāgāmī* stage. A *Sotāpanna* or a *Sakadāgāmī* has not given up desires for sensual pleasures.
- **I have not seen anything in the *Tipitaka* that distinguishes between sexual activities based on who the partners are. So, it seems to me that homosexual or bisexual activities are not that different from heterosexual activities as far as *kammic* consequences are concerned. They are all done to achieve bodily pleasures.**
- However, if one engages in any immoral activities — in particular breaking the five precepts — then one would be eligible to be born in the lowest four realms of the *kāma loka*, the *apāyas*.
- I specifically made the comment on the homosexuality in answering a specific question by a reader. The main point is to make sure that **any pleasurable activity at the expense of hurting someone** will have bad consequences, and depending on the nature, could make one eligible to be born in the *apāyas*.

13. One way to understand the *anicca* nature is to take a good look at the transient nature of our physical body and that it can provide only temporary bodily pleasures, even though they are enjoyable.

- The *gandhabba* is the more long-lasting entity; a human *bhava* can last many hundreds to many thousands of years; a physical body is a temporary shell used by the *gandhabba* for about 100 years.
- The bodily pleasures that one experiences with this “physical shell” can last only part of that maximum 100 years. As one gets old, those pleasures go away, and there is no way to keep them the same.
- On the other hand, the *jhānic* pleasures — or at least *niramisa sukha* — can be enjoyed even at old age, as long as one keeps steps to maintain the brain in good condition. The *gandhabba* — since it is trapped inside the physical body — needs the brain to in order to be mindful and to cultivate good *vacī* and *mano saṅkhāra*; this is what is emphasized in the earlier posts in this section, and analyzed in detail (for those who need to go deeper) in the *Abhidhamma* section.

14. Finally, it is important to emphasize the point that it will take a concerted effort to understand these concepts fully. The more one reads, the more one will understand. It is not possible to gain insight by reading a few posts. One has to spend time and read relevant posts in order to “fill in the gaps”.

- A simple introduction to the concept of *gandhabbaya* is given in this section: “[Our Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)”.
- A section in the *Abhidhamma* is devoted to the concept of *gandhabbaya*: “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)”. There are posts in other sections too, in relation to the material in those sections.

4.4 Mundane Sammā Samadhi

October 27, 2016

- [Micca Ditthi – Connection to Hethu Phala \(Cause and Effect\)](#) (with *Desana* 6)
- [Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda](#) (with *Desana* 7)
- [Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda II](#) (with *Desana* 8)

4.4.1 Micca Ditthi – Connection to Hethu Phala (Cause and Effect)

October 18, 2016

1. The main reason for many people having various types of *micca ditthi* (or wrong views) can be traced back to the fact that the workings of cause and effect involving living beings — and in particular the mind of the sentient beings — is complex.

- Science has been able to have much success in the material realm, simply because it is easier to see how cause and effect work in the material realm.

2. In the discourse (*desanā*) below, we will talk about cause and effect (*hethu-pala*) in Buddha Dhamma, and how **conditions** (*paccaya*) play a critical role in mental phenomena. **The complex relationship between causes and effects in relation to the mind is the reason why it is hard for many to comprehend how and why kamma lead to kamma vipāka.** As we discuss in the *desanā*:

- Nothing in this world can come to existence without suitable causes AND conditions,
- Rebirth process must be valid, in order to fully implement the principle of causality (cause and effect).

3. The critical link between *hethu-pala* and *paticca samuppāda* is *Pattana Dhamma*, which describe the conditions under which causes (*hethu*) bring about effects or results (*phala*).

- In the near future, I will start a new section on *Pattana Dhamma*. It is a deep subject, but it can be simplified to easily understand the relationship between *hethu-pala* and *paticca samuppāda*.

4. Here is the *desanā* ([volume control on the right](#)):

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 6 - Micca Ditthi Connection to Hethu Phala Cause and Effect](#)

Related Posts

1. – [Getting to Samādhi](#)
 - [How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?](#)
 2. [Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)
 3. [Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)
 4. – [Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)
 - [Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya \(Mind Plane\)](#)
 - Another post I forgot to mention in the *desanā* is on the question of “Where are those kamma seeds stored?”. It is discussed in, [“How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?”](#).
 5. [What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?](#)
 6. [Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)
 7. [How Character \(Gathi\) Leads to Bhava and Jathi](#)
- Next in the series, [“Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda”](#), ..

4.4.2 Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda

October 28, 2016

In a previous *desanā* in this section, we discussed how suffering in this life is described in the beginning of the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. In this *desanā*, we will discuss how it is described by *Paticca Samuppāda*.

“Suffering in This Life – According to Paticca Samuppāda”

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 7 - Suffering in This Life According to Paticca Samuppāda](#)

Links mentioned in the *desanā*:

1. Posts in the “[Paticca Samuppāda](#)” can be consulted for details on *Paticca Samuppāda* cycles.
2. *Taṇhā*: [Taṇhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)
3. *Mano saṅkhāra* arise automatically, without conscious thoughts. And conscious thoughts — **even without speech** — are *vacī saṅkhāra*:

[How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?](#)

- In this *desanā*, I incorrectly said that speech is *vacī saṅkhāra* because the mouth and the tongue are moved during speech. However, whether one talks to oneself or actually get the words out loud, both are *vacī saṅkhāra*. There is a difference between moving body parts in general (as in walking) and moving the lips and tongues during speech: They are done with two types of *rūpa*: *kaya vinnatti* and *vacī vinnatti* respectively. I will discuss this in detail later.
 - My thanks to the reader who pointed out my mistake in categorizing speech as *kaya saṅkhāra*. I had to dig deeper in *Abhidhamma* to find the explanation. I can and do make mistakes, and that is why I welcome your input. My goal is to have this website to be fully self-consistent.
4. Suffering in this life due to *vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra* done in this life:

[Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities](#)

[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)

5. Role of *asobhana cetasika* in immoral thoughts:

[What Are Kilesa \(Mental Impurities\)? – Connection to Cetasika](#)

6. *Phassa* and *samphassa*:

[Difference between Phassa and Samphassa](#)

[Kāma Āsvada Start with Phassa Paccaya Vedanā or Samphassa Ja Vedanā](#)

4.4.3 Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda II

December 7, 2016

1. In the previous *desanā*, “[Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda](#)“, we discussed one application of *Paticca Samuppāda* (PS).

- Here, we will continue that discussion to gain more insights and discuss the importance in controlling *vacī saṅkhāra* during *Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā*.

2. I have posted three new essays in other sections at the website since that time.

- [Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra](#)
- [Asevana and Annamanna Paccaya](#)
- [Sutta Learning Sequence for the Present Day](#)

They are relevant to the discussions in this section.

3. Here are the PS sequences for reference, as you go through the discussion. You may want to make a printout of this post or have this post open while listening.

- *Avijja paccaya saṅkhāra, saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa, viññāṇa paccaya namarupa, namarupa paccaya salāyatana, salāyatana paccaya phassa, phassa paccaya vedanā, vedanā paccaya taṇhā, taṇhā paccaya upādāna, upādāna paccaya bhava, bhava paccaya jati, jati paccaya jara, marana, soka, parideva, dukkha, domanassa, upasaya sambhavan ti*“.

The cycle ends with *marana* or death and describes the time evolution of how a *sankata* (whether it is a thought process or a living being or an inert entity) arises and eventually dies.

New *desanā*: “Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda II”

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 8 - Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda II](#)

Links mentioned in the *desanā*:

1. Posts in the “[Paticca Samuppāda](#)” section can be consulted for details on *Paticca Samuppāda* cycles.

2. Time evolution of a *sankata*:

[Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata](#)

- Difference between and *Vaya* (destruction of *sankata* that has arisen) and *Nirodha* (stopping of the arising of a *sankata*).

[Nirōdha and Vaya – Two Different Concepts](#)

3. How “random thoughts” come to our minds:

[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)

[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)

4. Two types of *vedanā*:

- [Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)

True meaning of *taṇhā*:

- [Taṇhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)

Why suitable conditions are **necessary** to bring *kamma vipāka*:

- [Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)

Cultivating good *gathi* and removing bad *gathi* through *Ānāpānasati* (and *Satipaṭṭhāna*):

- [9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#)

4.5 Transition to Noble Eightfold Path

September 2, 2017

○ [Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā to Paññā, Sīla, Samādhi](#)

4.5.1 Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā to Paññā, Sīla, Samādhi

September 2, 2017

1. These days, it is customary to state that the Noble Eightfold Path is followed in three steps: *sīla* (moral conduct), *samādhi* (Concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom). What needs to be emphasized is that this sequence holds only for the **mundane Eightfold Path**. It does not lead to *Nibbāna*, but only sets up the conditions to get into the Noble Eightfold Path.

- In this initial stage, one cultivates *sīla* by living a moral life by **making a determined effort** not to violate the five precepts; see, “[2. The Basics in Meditation](#)”.
- *Samādhi* is much more than just concentration; see, “[What is samādhi? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness](#)”. When one lives a moral life, one’s mindset will gradually change to a calm state (“*sama*” + “*adhi*”) as explained in that post.
- With this calm mindset, one will be able to get rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi* (“[Miccā Diṭṭhi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)”). Then one gets to **mundane Sammā Diṭṭhi** or the first level of wisdom.

2. One must first follow the mundane Path before one can understand *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and get into the Noble Path; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)” and “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)”. **Thus, there are three necessary steps to Nibbāna:**

- Follow the mundane Eightfold Path by living a moral life (*sīla*) to remove the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi* (not believing in *kamma vipāka*, rebirth, etc) about this world, get to mundane *samādhi*, and gain the first level of wisdom (*paññā*): *sīla, samādhi, paññā*.
- Then start removing a DEEPER layer of *miccā diṭṭhi* (that this world can offer lasting happiness) by learning the CORRECT versions of *anicca, dukkha, anatta* (*Tilakkhana*).
- Once one grasps the basics of *Tilakkhana* one becomes a *Sotāpanna Anugami*, one then starts living with this an **unbreakable sīla** to attain *Sammā samādhi* and the four stages of *Nibbāna* by following: *paññā, sīla, samādhi*.

3. The first level of wisdom, attained in the mundane path, is called **kammasakata Sammā diṭṭhi**: understanding that one’s actions, speech, and thoughts (*kāya, vacī, and manō saṅkhāra*) — one’s *kamma* — WILL have consequences in the future, both in this life and in future lives.

- With *kammasakata sammā diṭṭhi*, one understands and accepts the fact that what we experience (*kamma vipāka*, good and bad) are due to our past *kamma*.
- One understands that in order to encounter good *kamma vipāka* in the future (including future lives), one needs to **cultivate** GOOD *kamma* (i.e., good *manō*, *vacī*, and *kāya saṅkhāra*).
- Even more importantly, one starts **avoiding** BAD *kamma* (i.e., getting rid of the coarse levels of *lobha, dōsa, mōha*, which is the same as avoiding *dasa akusala*).
- When one follows this “*sīla* step”, one will start experiencing the early stages of *Nibbāna* of “cooling down”; see, “[Niramisa Sukha](#)” and “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)”.

4. Some people think that if one kills animals without knowing that will have consequences, that will not lead to *kamma vipāka*. That is not correct.

- There is no superhuman being that keeps track of what one is doing. **But when one intentionally kills an animal, one’s mind knows that, and one’s viññāṇa will adjust accordingly**; see, “[Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#)”.

- The more one kills animals, that **viññāna** capable of killing will only grow and will lead to a corresponding *bhava* in the *niraya* realm (hell) where one will be subjected to similar suffering.
- Therefore, being ignorant of nature's laws is not an excuse, just like when one gets caught doing an illegal act, one will not be excused for not knowing that it was an illegal action.
- There is another type of actions, where one kills animals unintentionally. For example, we kill many insects every time we take a walk. That does not lead to any *kamma vipāka*.
- So, only those *saṅkhāra* (or more correctly *abhisankhāra*) **that are done with intention** lead to *viññāna* (via “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*”), and subsequently lead to births in different realms via “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*”, etc to ...”*bhava paccaya jāti*”.

5. Most people also think that *kamma* are only bodily actions (done via *kāya saṅkhāra*). But bodily actions, speech, and thoughts all contribute to *kamma*: it is the *cetana* (intention) involved in thoughts, speech, and actions (i.e., *manō*, *vacī*, and *kāya saṅkhāra*), that is *kamma*. This is explained in the subsection, “[Living Dhamma – Fundamentals](#)”.

- When one starts comprehending how the laws of *kamma* work (causes lead to corresponding effects IF suitable conditions are present), one will gradually get to mundane *sammā samādhi*, and one's ability to grasp deeper Dhamma concepts (*paññā*) will grow; see, “[Mundane Sammā Samādhi](#)”.
- Suffering can only be stopped by stopping those *abhisankhāra* (“*saṅkhāra nirōdhō bhava* (and *jāti*) *nirōdhō*”). But ***saṅkhāra can be only stopped by removing avijjā*** since *saṅkhāra* are unavoidable as long as *avijjā* is there: “*avijjā paccayā sankhārā*”. **This is why *Sammā Ditṭhi* (understanding *Tilakkhana*) is so important.**
- One will have a good idea of how births in different realms are associated with different types of suffering, and how one's actions (*saṅkhāra*) lead to such births. I have summarized them in the table below.

Realm(s)	Level of Suffering	Causes	Generation/Stopping of Saṅkhāra
Niraya (Hell)	Incessant suffering	Dōsa : Killing (especially humans), torture, rapes, etc	
Peta (Hungry Ghosts)	Starvation	Excess greed (may I get all, not others)	
Vinipatha Asura ('demons', titans, evil ghosts)	Spend time aimlessly; mostly heavy bodies not movable	Moha : Tina middha, vicikicca (lazy, lacking wisdom).	
Animal (Tirisan : “tiri” + “san” or with all 3 causes)	Combinations of above three types	Combinations of <i>lōbha</i> , <i>dōsa</i> , <i>mōha</i>	
Human (Manussa : “mana” + “ussa” or with advanced mind)	In between lower and higher realms	In between lower and higher realms	Almost all saṅkhāra responsible births in all realms occur here.
Deva (similar to human bodies, but much less dense)	Mostly no physical suffering and abundant sense pleasures (<i>kāma</i>). But there is mental stress.	Good <i>kamma vipāka</i> (done with <i>alōbha</i> , <i>adōsa</i> , <i>amōha</i>). Mental stress arises due to <i>kāma rāga</i> .	
Rupavacara Brahma (only <i>manomaya kaya</i> ; cannot be even seen with a microscope)	Mental stress is much reduced. Mainly <i>jhānic</i> pleasures. <i>Viparinama</i>	Suppression of <i>kāma rāga</i> and cultivation of <i>rupavacara jhāna</i> (while in the human realm)	

Realm(s)	Level of Suffering	Causes	Generation/Stopping of Saṅkhāra
	dukha when close death.		
Arupavacara Brahma (only hadaya vatthu and mind)	Only arupavacara jhānic pleasures. Viparinama dukha when close death.	Cultivation of arupavacara jhāna (while in the human realm)	
Nibbāna	Permanent release from all suffering.	Elimination of all causes for existence, i.e., rāgakkhaya, dōsakkhaya, mōhakkhaya.	Mostly attained in the human realm, but possible in higher realms, especially after the Sotāpanna stage.

6. Now it is clear how future suffering arises via one's own actions, speech, and thoughts (*saṅkhāra*). It is also clear that suffering decreases and “*niramisa sukha*” grows at successively higher realms.

- When one engages in extreme *kāya*, *vacī*, and *manō saṅkhāra* that involve *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* (i.e., immoral living and engaging in *dasa akusala* like killing, raping, etc.), one is likely to be reborn in the lowest four realms (*apāyas*), and to face much suffering.
- When one cultivates *jhānas* by even abandoning *kāma rāga* (at least temporarily), one is likely to be born in *rūpa* or *arupa Brahma lōka*.
- When one has reduced *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* to *rāga*, *patigha*, *avijjā* (see, “[Lōbha, Dōsa, Mōha versus Rāga, Patigha, Avijjā](#)”) by following the mundane eightfold path, one is likely to be reborn in the human or *deva* realms. In these realms suffering is much less, and especially in the *deva* realms most remaining suffering is mental.

7. However, especially as humans, there is suffering that has been covered by our willingness to disregard *saṅkhāra dukha* and *viparinama dukha*; see, “[Introduction – What is Suffering?](#)” and the follow-up post.

- That suffering arises due to *kāma rāga*, i.e., craving (*upādāna*) for sense pleasures. Thus even if one is not engaged in *dasa akusala*, one cannot be released from *kāma lōka* as long as one has *kāma rāga*.
- At the next higher level in the *rūpa* and *arupa* realms, *kāma rāga* is absent and thus one enjoys *jhānic* pleasures.
- Unlike sense pleasures, *jhānic* pleasures can be sustained for longer times, and are of much refined nature. However, that is still not permanent as the *Nibbānic* bliss arrived at by eliminating all suffering.

8. As humans, we can overcome suffering in the *kāma lōka* during this life itself, by cultivating *jhānas*. This essentially means being able to “temporarily live” in *rupavacara* or *arupāvacara* realms.

- This can be done via either REMOVAL or SUPPRESSION of *kāma rāga* and *patigha* (of course this is not possible if one is engaging in *dasa akusala*).
- There are Buddhist and non-Buddhist meditation techniques to achieve this. We will discuss this in detail in an upcoming series on *jhāna*.
- If one develops *jhānas*, one will be born in *rūpa* or *arupa* realms in the next birth. However, as we can see from the above table, any future births in those *rūpa* and *arupa* realms are temporary. One could later be reborn in the *apāyas*.
- The only permanent solution to end all future suffering is to attain *Nibbāna*, as shown in the above table.

9. When one gets to mundane *sammā samādhi* cultivating *sīla*, one will be able to see the truth of the overall picture shown in the table above. It is at this stage –with this wider world picture — **one can take the second important step towards Nibbāna by comprehending the Tilakkhana**. However, one needs to be exposed to the correct versions of *Tilakkhana*; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”.

- This is the *paññā* (wisdom) associated with the first path factor (*Sammā Diṭṭhi*) in the Noble Eightfold Path.
- It is then one will be able to really comprehend the First Noble Truth about the suffering in this world, the *Dukkha Sacca*.

10. The key message of the Buddha is that nowhere in this world one can find happiness in the long run; any such temporary happiness would be miniscule compared to suffering in the *apāyas*, and in *kāma lōka*. This is very hard to be grasped by a normal human (no matter how well educated).

- This fundamental fact of nature — that NOTHING in this world can bring happiness (and WILL only bring suffering) in the long run — is called the *anicca* nature.
- When one has the opposite perception of *nicca*, and focuses on seeking a long-term happiness in this world, one WILL BE subjected to suffering (*dukkha*) in the long run.
- Thus, eventually one will become helpless in this rebirth process and that is called anatta nature.
- Those are the Three Characteristics of nature. **Therefore, the second key step towards Nibbāna (permanent happiness) is to learn these key characteristics of nature from a true disciple of the Buddha.**

11. When one starts comprehending the *Tilakkhana* to some extent, one becomes a *Sotāpanna Anugami* and enters the Noble Path; see, “[Sotāpanna Magga Anugami and a Sotāpanna](#)”.

- In this third and last step towards *Nibbāna*, one starts with a NEW concept about the real nature of this world, i.e., that one can only expect to face unimaginable suffering in the future if one does immoral things in seeking sense pleasures.
- **Thus one starts to understand the First Noble Truth or *Dukkha Sacca*:** That there is unimaginable suffering in this world of 31 realms. At this initial stage, it is hard to see the dangers/suffering in the human and deva realms; but if one has comprehended the fact that *apāyas* (four lower realms) must exist in order for the laws of *kamma* to work, then one can clearly see the unimaginable suffering in the *apāyas*.
- **The Buddha said that when one understands the First Noble Truth, one will simultaneously understand the other three:** one will be able to see that *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* are the origins of that suffering (*Samudaya Sacca*), that one needs to remove those causes (*Nirōdha Sacca*), and the way to accomplish that is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path (*Magga Sacca*).

12. **This understanding becomes permanent forever (through future lives) when one attains the Sotāpanna stage.** From that point onward, one will not be CAPABLE of doing a *kamma* that could make one eligible for rebirth in the *apāyas*, i.e., one will be free from the worst suffering in the future.

- How this is automatically enforced by nature is explained in the post, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids apāyagami Citta](#)”.
- Thus any thoughts that are automatically generated with this unshakeable understanding belong to *Sammā Sankappa*. One will be **prevented** from an *apāyagami* act even on a sudden impulse.

13. **One will also starts understanding *paticca samuppāda*:** that future *bhava* (existences) arise due to causes that one is willingly grasping (*upādāna*) now.

- If one is capable of hurting and killing others, then one will be subjected similar conditions in the *niraya*.
- If one has excessive greed where one is willing to hurt others to get pleasures, then one could be born a *peta* (hungry ghost).

- If one is lazy and depends on others, one is cultivating *asura saṅkhāra* that could lead to asura *viññāṇa* and thus give rise to an *asura* existence.
- And if one is capable of thinking, speaking, and acting like an animal, one is then cultivating animal *saṅkhāra*, and thus one could be born in an animal existence.

14. At this stage, one starts living by the ***ariyakānta sīla***. This *sīla* is different from the *sīla* that was followed in the first step.

- In the first type of *sīla*, one forcefully avoided doing *pāpa kamma* or immoral acts. But there could have been occasions where one “could not help breaking the *sīla*“, because the temptations were too strong.
- However, this new ***ariyakānta sīla* is unbreakable**, no matter how strong the temptation is. One’s mind has grasped the fact that it is NOT WORTH to commit *apāyagami* actions, no matter how much wealth or pleasures they could possibly bring.
- For example, is it worthwhile to make a lot of money by killing animals or fish, selling drugs that can harm others, by lying, bribing, etc?
- It is important to realize that at this stage, one could still be attached to sense pleasures that can be enjoyed WITHOUT hurting others. Thus one could live a normal married life, which is “moral living”.

15. This *Sotāpanna* stage can be arrived at without getting into any type of *jhāna*. These days there is too much emphasize on *jhāna*.

- **One needs to realize that *rupavacara* and *arupāvacara jhāna* are the sense experiences of the beings in the *rūpa* and *arupa* realms**, and are thus still experiences belonging to “this world” of 31 realms.
- The Buddha stated that any of his lay disciples with the *Sotāpanna* stage is million times well-off than a *yōgi* who had attained all *jhānas* and all *abhiññā* powers.
- That is because, while those *jhānas* and *abhiññā* powers last only during this life (they can make one’s next birth in *rūpa* or *arupa* realms, but could be born in the *apāyas* in subsequent births), a *Sotāpanna* is freed from the *apāyas* FOREVER.
- However, understanding *jhānas* is important since it confirms the wider world view of the Buddha in the above table: there are many in the world today who have experienced *jhānas*.
- But some mistakenly believe that *jhānas* are intrinsically connected to *magga phala*, because of the relief felt. But as the above table shows, *jhānas* are still part of “this world” and can be attained even by following “non-Buddhist meditations”. I will write a series of posts on *jhāna* to further clarify this issue.

4.6 Samādhi, Jhāna (Dhyāna), Magga Phala

- [Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala – Introduction](#)
- [Ascendance to Nibbāna via Jhāna \(Dhyāna\)](#)
- [Mundane versus Supramundane Jhāna](#)
- [Nirōdha Samāpatti, Phala Samāpatti, Jhāna, and Jhāna Samāpatti](#)

4.6.1 Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala – Introduction

October 12, 2017; revised April 28, 2018

1. Apparently, there are a considerable number of people who have attained *magga phala* (with or without *jhāna*) recently all over the world. We are indebted to the late Waharaka Thēro for this great awakening by clarifying the correct interpretations of Buddha's teachings; now many are working tirelessly to make those interpretations available to others; see, "[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thēro](#)".

- Over the years, I have seen some key issues related to *jhāna* and *magga phala* discussed at many online forums, without reaching a definitive conclusion. I hope this series of posts will be of use to settle this matter.
- I will try to put together a consistent picture solely based on material from the *Tipitaka*. One common problem that I see in online forums is that many people put *Tipitaka* on the same footing as commentaries (such as *Visuddhimagga*) written much later by people (non-*Ariyas*) like Buddhaghosa or Nagarjuna. That leads to confusion because those accounts have many contradictions with the *Tipitaka*.
- Please let me know (lal54@hotmail.com) if I have made any mistakes (or have any suggestions), because this is of great importance to everyone.
- These posts are supposed to be read in the given sequence. Please read carefully at a quiet time.

3. *Samādhi* is essential to attain *Magga phala*. *Jhāna* are a special category *samādhi*, and are not essential to attain *magga phala*.

- *Samādhi* ("sama"+"adhi" where "sama" means "same" and "adhi" means "dominance") means turning the mind towards a certain goal or a state; see, "[What is samādhi? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness](#)".
- There can be thousands of different types of *samādhi*. There can be *micca samādhi* (turning the mind towards immoral or unfruitful goals), as well as *Sammā samādhi*. For example, a master thief concentrating on making a detailed plan of a robbery will get into a state of *samādhi* when he is focusing on it intently.

4. *What is essential to attain magga phala is Sammā Samādhi*. As we have discussed before, there is mundane *sammā samādhi* that is reached by getting rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi*. Then there is *lokōttara Sammā Samādhi* that is reached by comprehending *Tilakkhana* to some extent; see, "[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)".

- As discussed in the previous post, "[Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā to Paññā, Sīla, Samādhi](#)", one gets to mundane *Sammā Samādhi* via "[Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā](#)". Then one can comprehend the *Tilakkhana* and follow the Noble Path via "[Paññā, Sīla, Samādhi](#)", with *Sammā Diṭṭhi* taking the lead.
- There is nowhere in the *Tipitaka* that says one needs *jhāna* to attain *magga phala* or *Nibbāna*.
- *Magga phala* means one is starting break the bonds (*dasa samyōjana*) to this world; see, "[Dasa Samyōjana – Bonds in Rebirth Process](#)". One attains *magga phala* by getting into *lokōttara Sammā Samādhi* (*samādhi* to remove "san": "san" + "mā"; see, "[What is "San"? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)".

5. April 28, 2018: I found a *desana* by Waharaka Thero where he present clear evidence that *jhāna* are not necessary to attain *magga phala* (It is of course in Sinhala language):

[WebLink: Download “Are Jhāna Required for Magga-Phala”](#)

- The main point the Thero makes is that we know that there are *jāti Sotāpannas* born in the human realm. But if a *jhāna* was REQUIRED to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, then that person WOULD NOT be born in the human realm, but in a *brahma* realm corresponding that *jhāna*.

6. In simple terms, *jhāna* are mental states existing in the 16 *rūpa* realms and the 4 *arūpa* realms. Thus by definition, attaining *jhāna* has nothing to do with *Nibbāna*. *Jhāna* fall into two categories (*Ariya* and *anariya*) and — depending on the category — could be an asset or **hindrance**, as we will discuss in this section.

- As discussed in “[31 Realms Associated with the Earth](#)” those 20 realms lie above the realms of *kāma lōka*. Those *rūpi* and *arūpi brahmas* enjoy only **jhānic pleasures**, which are better than **sensual pleasures**.
- We all have been born in most of the 31 realms (except for the realms reserved for the *Anāgāmis*) an uncountable times, **and thus had attained those jhānic states uncountable times in previous lives**.
- As we know, **sensual pleasures** are present only in *kāma lōka* (4 *apāyas* including the animal realm, human realm, and the six *dēva* realms).
- Humans can cultivate *jhāna* by **suppressing (*anariya*) or removing (*Ariya*) the craving for sensual pleasures (*kāma rāga*)**.
- One could approach *Nibbāna* via *Ariya* or *anariya jhāna*; see, “[Ascendancy to Nibbāna via Jhāna \(Dhyāna\)](#)”.

7. If those *brahmas* are born there by cultivating mundane *jhāna*, then *kāma rāga* remain with them as *anusaya* (which means deeply hidden). So, when they die and are reborn in the lower realms, those *kāma rāga* re-surface. The suppression is only during the time they live as *brahmas* in those higher realms.

- In the same way, those humans who get into *jhānas* SUPPRESSING *kāma rāga* can lose the ability to get into *jhānas* even in this life. **The best example from the Tipitaka is Devadatta, who developed not only *anāriya* (mundane) *jhānas* but also *abhiññā* powers, and then lost all that and ended up in an *apāya*. Even though Devadatta was obviously exposed to correct *Tilakkhana* (he was ordained by the Buddha himself), he had apparently not grasped them.**
- The ability to get into *jhāna* is also related to our *gati* (pronounced “gathi”; our habits from past lives). Those who have cultivated mundane *jhānas* in relatively recent past lives can easily get into mundane *jhāna*.
- However, if one gets into supramundane *jhāna*, one has essentially attained the *Anāgāmī* stage by removing *kāma rāga*; see, “[Mundane versus Supramundane Jhāna](#)”.

8. We will discuss these feature in detail (with *Tipitaka* references) in several posts in this section.

- There are a series of posts on *jhāna* (in simpler terms, without too many Pali words) in an older section: “[Power of the Human Mind](#)”.
- This page could be used as the “landing page” for this section. I will keep updating it as I incorporate more issues relevant to this topic.

4.6.2 Ascendancy to Nibbana via Jhāna (Dhyāna)

October 4, 2017; #14 revised on October 5, 2017; November 15, 2017

1. There are three categories: One can attain *magga phala* without *jhāna*; one can attain *jhāna* and not have *magga phala*; one can attain *magga phala* and then cultivate *jhāna*. In order to sort these

out, one needs to understand the difference between *Ariya* (supramundane) and *anariya* (mundane) *jhāna*, and whether (and how) they are related to *magga phala*.

- In a series of posts based on material from the *Tipitaka*, I will try to put together a consistent picture. Please let me know (lal54@hotmail.com) if I make any mistakes, because this is of great importance to everyone.
- Even before the Buddha, ancient *yōgis* cultivated *jhāna* and attained what they believed to be *cetōvimutti* (liberation via calming the mind). But the Buddha showed that such *cetōvimutti* is temporary; one would not attain *akuppā cetōvimutti* (true and unshakable liberation) until *Nibbāna* is realized.

2. *Nibbāna* can be approached two ways via *jhāna*: (i) through any of the *rūpavacara anāriya* (mundane) *jhāna*, (ii) first attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage and then through *Ariya* (supramundane) *jhāna*.

- Of course there is another way attain *Nibbāna*, without any *jhāna*, in *paññāvimutti* (liberation with wisdom); see below.
- If one takes the path via *Ariya jhāna*., then one would attain *cetovimutti* and *paññāvimutti* at the same time, and is said to be an *ubhatovimutti Arahant*. This is also called *akuppā cetovimutti* or unshakable/unbreakable *cetovimutti*. That is what the Buddha attained on the night of the Enlightenment.
- Those *yogis* who attain *cetovimutti* via *anāriya jhāna* have not removed *avijja anusaya*; that is why they are not liberated. They can be reborn in the *kāma loka*; see #4 below.

3. As the table below shows, the level of suffering decreases AND levels of both mundane and *nirāmisa sukha* increases as one moves successively to higher realms.

- In the post, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma – Introduction](#)“, we described a model that consisted of 31 concentric “shells”. The actuality is pretty much close to that analogy, with some additional features. I have compiled a summary of the 31 realms in the table “[31 Realms of Existence](#)“.
- From those posts, it is clear that as one goes from the *apāyas* through higher *kāma loka* to *rūpa loka*, and finally to *arūpa loka*, attachments to “this world” get weaker AND actual suffering decreases too.
- **It seems that the highest *arūpa* realm is quite close to *Nibbāna*. In a way it is — but technically it is far away too.**

4. *Yōgis* like Alāra Kālāma and Uddakarāmaputta, who had attained highest *arūpa jhānas* at the time of the Buddha, believed that the highest *arūpavacara* state was *Nibbāna* (or final release, *vimutti*). Indeed, at that highest realm of *Ne’va saññā nā saññā*, connection to “this world” is ALMOST cutoff, and one can experience the “highest bliss” that can be attained without realizing *Nibbāna*.

- The Buddha (or rather the *Bōdhisattva*), who learned to attain those highest *jhānas* from those *yōgis*, realized that all living beings had attained those state many times in the rebirth process, and that is not the end of suffering.
- He realized that until one completely removes all ten *saṃsāric* bonds (see, “[Dasa Samyōjana – Bonds in Rebirth Process](#)“), one will never be free of ANY of the 31 realms. As discussed in that post, one SUCCESSIVELY and PERMANENTLY leaves the lowest realms (*apāyas*), higher *kāma loka* realms, and then *rūpa* and *arūpa* realms by breaking those bonds (*samyōjana*) few at a time (by following the Noble Path).

5. However, one can TEMPORARILY enjoy the highest *arūpa* realms existence by cultivating even the corresponding MUNDANE *jhāna*, i.e., those attained without removing ANY *samyōjana*.

- For example, while we live in this human realm we are not subjected to the harsh sufferings in the *apāyas*, and we can enjoy the sense pleasures, mixed in with some suffering.

- In the same way, when one is born in the *rūpa* realms, one will not be subjected to the sufferings in the human realm, and the suffering is even less going from *rūpa* to *arūpa* realms.
- However, since no *samyōjana* are broken, one can be reborn in any of the realms in the future (just like a normal human can be born in the *apāyas* in the future).

6. The easiest way to understand *jhānic* states is to examine the properties of the *rūpa* and *arūpa* realms, in comparison to those of the lower realms. The following table can be useful here.

Realm(s)	Level of Suffering	Causes	Generation/Stopping of Saṅkhāra
Niraya (Hell)	Incessant suffering	Dōsa : Killing (especially humans), torture, rapes, etc	
Peta (Hungry Ghosts)	Starvation	Excess greed (may I get all, not others)	
Vinipatha Asura	Spend time aimlessly; mostly heavy bodies not movable	Moha : Tina middha, vicikicca (lazy, lacking wisdom).	
Animal (Tirisan: "tiri" + "san" or with all 3 causes)	Combinations of above three types	Combinations of lōbha, dōsa, mōha	
Human (Manussa: "mana" + "ussa" or with advanced mind)	In between lower and higher realms	In between lower and higher realms	Almost all saṅkhāra responsible births in all realms occur here.
Deva (similar to human bodies, but much less dense)	Mostly no physical suffering and abundant sense pleasures (kāma). But there is mental stress.	Good kamma vipāka (done with alōbha, adōsa, amōha). Mental stress arises due to kāma rāga.	
Rupavacara Brahma (only manomaya kaya; cannot be even seen with a microscope)	Mental stress is much reduced. Mainly jhānic pleasures. Viparinama dukha when close death.	Suppression of kāma rāga and cultivation of rupavacara jhāna (while in the human realm)	
Arupavacara Brahma (only hadaya vatthu and mind)	Only arupavacara jhānic pleasures. Viparinama dukha when close death.	Cultivation of arupavacara jhāna (while in the human realm)	
Nibbāna	Permanent release from all suffering.	Elimination of all causes for existence, i.e., rāgakkhaya, dōsakkhaya, mōhakkhaya.	Mostly attained in the human realm, but possible in higher realms, especially after the Sotāpanna stage.

7. If you look at any *sutta* describing *Ariya jhāna*, it always starts with verse, “..bhikkhu vivicceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekaṃ pītisukhaṃ paṭthamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati..”

We can see why the above table is helpful in understanding how one gets to *jhānas* by first **abstaining from *akusala kamma* (*vivicca akusalēhi dhammēhi*)** and then ***kāma rāga* (*vivicceva kāmēhi*)**.

- Until one abstains from *akusala kamma*, one has no hope of escaping the *apāyas*. Here abstaining does not mean complete removal.
- Until one overcomes *kāma rāga*, one has no hope of escaping the *kāma loka* and ascending to the *rūpavacara* realms.
- However, one does not need to REMOVE *kāma rāga* (with *anusaya*) in order to attain mundane (*anāriya*) *jhāna*, even up to the highest in the *arūpa loka*. This is why Alara Kalama and Uddaka Rama Putta, who are in the *arūpa* realms right now, could be even reborn in the *apāyas* in future lives.
- All one needs to do is to have the mind focused on a neutral object in order to make it free of *akusala* thoughts and *kāma rāga* while in the *jhāna*.

8. We can summarize the above conclusions in the following way:

- One who is frequently engaged in *akusala kamma* is **LIKELY** to be born in the 4 lowest realms (*apāyas*).
- One who is frequently engaged in *kusala kamma*, AND avoids *akusala kamma*, but has *kāmacanda*, is **LIKELY** to be born in the human or the *deva* realms.
- One who abstains from *akusala kamma* and *kāmacanda*, can cultivate *rūpavacara* or *arūpavacara jhāna*. With those ***mahaggata kusala kamma* (*mahaggata* means higher)**, one WILL be reborn in *rūpa* or *arūpa loka* in the next birth (since it is an *ānantariya* “good” *kamma*). However, one has not been released from the *apāyas*, since one has not removed *avijja* by comprehending *Tilakkhana*.

9. **If one can stay away from *akusala* and also suppress *kāma rāga*, then one’s mind AUTOMATICALLY moves to higher mental states.** In other words, one starts feeling *jhānic* pleasures (“*saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇa*”).

- When one is striving to discard *kāma rāga*, one is said to be cultivating ***mahaggata kusala kamma***. Here one goes beyond mundane moral actions (*punna kamma*) of giving, helping, etc, **and lose (or suppress) craving for *kāma rāga***.
- Therefore, while *kusala kamma* lead to rebirth in higher *kāma loka* (human and *deva* realms), *mahaggata kusala kamma* lead to rebirth in *rūpa* and *arūpa loka*. One of course experiences those *jhānic* states in this life as well.
- The *jhānic* experiences experienced by *yōgis* correspond to various *rūpa* and *arūpa* realms; see, “[31 Realms of Existence](#)”. It is like one is born in the corresponding *brahma* realm for the duration of the *jhānic* experience.

10. *Mahaggata kusala kamma* can be cultivated using ***Ariya* (supramundane) or *anāriya* (mundane) meditation techniques**, and get to the same mental states (**the difference is in how one gets there and how permanent those states are**).

- Now it is easy to see that the key to cultivating the first mundane *jhāna* is to stay away from *akusala* and also to suppress sense cravings. Then one’s mind will automatically pointed to the first *rūpavacara* mental state, i.e., first *jhāna*.

11. One can get to the **first *anāriya jhāna*** by maintaining one’s attention on a fixed **mundane object (breath or a *kasina* object)**.

- When one does this for long periods of time and also abstains from sensual pleasures (like ancient *yōgis* did), one can get in to the first *jhāna*, followed by successively higher *jhāna*, when one practices for longer times.
- The conventional breath meditation is a form of *kasina* mediation, since it focuses on the breath.

12. In fact, this is how all living beings in the lower realms get into the *Abhassara Brahma* realm when our world system (*Cakkavata*) is destroyed in a “*lōka vināsa*”. When the Sun starts heating up, fine sense objects start being destroyed, and with time less and less sensual objects will be there to trigger *kāma rāga*. All humans and animal will move to higher realms (over an *antakkappa* which lasts billions of years).

- When the human and animal realms are destroyed, all those beings would be reborn in the first *rūpa* realms. When that is gradually destroyed, they will be reborn in the next higher realm and so on, until they are all in the *Abhassara* realm.
- Even though all dense material realms are all destroyed at the end of the *lōka vinasaya*, all *rūpa* and *arūpa* realms at or above the *Abhassara* realm remain intact. When the Solar system is “re-formed” after billions of years, they all gradually come down to lower realms. I will discuss this in more detail when I start explaining the *Agganna Sutta*.
- **Just like none of those living beings had removed their *anusaya* (or broken the *samyōjana*), one engaged in mundane *jhānas* has not removed them either.**

13. On the other hand, one gets to the first *Ariya jhāna* by focusing on the “cooling down” (*Nibbāna*) that one has seen. This is normally done by reciting/contemplating the verse “*ētan santan ētan paneetan...*”, and also recalling one’s own experience of *Nibbāna* (cooling down).

The best example from the *Tipitaka* is Ven. Moggallana. We all know that Ven. Moggallana (who was Kolita before becoming a *bhikkhu*), attained the *Sotāpanna* stage upon hearing a single verse uttered by Ven. Assaji and then conveyed to him by Upatissa.

- Then Kolita (and Upatissa) went to see the Buddha and were ordained. It took them a week to two weeks to attain the *Arahanthood*. The [WebLink: suttacentral: Moggallana Samyutta in the Samyutta Nikāya](#) has 9 *suttas* that describe step-by-step how Ven. Moggallana attained *Ariya jhānas* one by one **starting with the first *Ariya jhāna***. Thus it is quite clear that the *Sotāpanna* stage comes before any *Ariya* (supramundane) *jhāna*.
- In particular, the very first *sutta* there describes how the Buddha came to him by *iddhi bala* and encouraged him to cultivate the first *Ariya jhāna* ([WebLink: suttacentral: Pathamajhāna Pañhā Sutta; SN 40.1](#)): “*..Atha kho maṃ, āvuso, bhagavā iddhiyā upasaṅkamitvā etadavoca: ‘moggallāna, moggallāna. Mā, brāhmaṇa, paṭhamam jhānam pamādo, paṭhame jhāne cittaṃ saṇṭhapehi, paṭhame jhāne cittaṃ ekodiṃ karohi, paṭhame jhāne cittaṃ samādahā’ti..’*” OR “*..the Buddha came to me by iddhi bala and told me: Moggallana, Moggallana, Brahmana, do not become delayed, cultivate the first jhāna..*”.
- The subsequent *suttas* in the *Moggallana Samyutta* describe how the Buddha instructed him through each successive *rūpavacara* and *arūpavacara jhāna* all the up to *nirōdha samāpatti*, where Ven. Moggallana developed all *iddhi bala* and became second only to the Buddha in supernatural powers.

14. Thus, one needs to be at least a *Sotāpanna* in order to start cultivating *Ariya jhāna*. However, one will truly be in the first *Ariya jhāna* only when one has REMOVED *kāma rāga*; see, for example, “[WebLink: suttacentral: Jhāna Sutta \(Anguttara Nikāya 9.36\)](#)”. We will discuss this in detail in the next post.

- This means one is essentially an *Anāgāmī* by the time one is fully absorbed in the first *Ariya jhāna*. But a *Sotāpanna* could be in the vicinity of the first *Ariya jhāna*. There are three levels for a given *jhāna*: *hīna* (weak), *majjima* (middle), and *panīta* (strong).
- After that one gets to higher *Ariya jhānas* by doing *vipassana* (insight meditation) on the *anicca* nature of that *jhāna* that one is already in, i.e., by **eliminating successive *jhāna* factors** OR one may be able to attain *Nibbāna* directly from there; see, “[WebLink: suttacentral: Sallekha Sutta \(Majjhima Nikaya 8\)](#)”.
- Since any *jhāna* is associated with either a *rūpa* realm or an *arūpa* realm, those states are subject to the *anicca* nature, just like everything else that belong to this world of 31 realms.

15. Those who have higher wisdom can attain even the *Arahant* stage **before** getting to any *jhāna* or from lower *Ariya* or *anāriya jhāna*; they are called *paññāvimutti Arahants*. They may cultivate (*Ariya*) *jhāna* after the *Arahanthood*, in order to seek relief until the end of the current life. *jhānic* pleasures are the only “pleasures” recommended by the Buddha; of course, they are not sense pleasures belonging to *kāma lōka*.

- It is said that those *Arahants* can cultivate all *Ariya jhāna* (and become *cetōvimutti* as well) and then get into *nirōdha samāpatti*, where full *Nibbānic* bliss can be experienced for up to 7 days at a time.
- Such *Arahants* are called “liberated both ways” or *ubhatovimutti*.

16. A question arises as to whether one can get into *anāriya jhāna* while cultivating *Ariya jhāna*, i.e., while following *kammatthana* that are based on contemplating the *Tilakkhana* and taking *Nibbāna* as the *ārammana*. The unknown factor here is whether the meditator is really focused on those things.

- **Therefore, that is a question that can be answered only by the person in question.** Just because one is reciting *Ariya kammatthana* does not necessarily mean one will get to *Ariya jhāna*. What really matters is whether one has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage first, because one needs to keep *Nibbāna* as the *arammana*, not a worldly object (even light).
- We know that Devadatta, who had cultivated *anāriya jhāna* AND attained *iddhi* powers, finally ended up in an *apāya*. This was despite the fact that he had been exposed to the correct interpretation of *Tilakkhana*; apparently he had not grasped them.
- I will discuss more on this in the next post, where I will present evidence from the *Tipitaka* itself to make things clear.

17. However, *anāriya jhāna* cannot be labelled as “bad”. They are higher mental states, and those who have cultivated *anāriya jhāna* will have an easier time attaining *magga phala*. One needs to contemplate the *anicca* nature of *jhānic* states.

- One can attain any *magga phala* up to full *Nibbāna* (*Arahanthood*) **from the vicinity of ANY of the *anāriya jhāna***. This is how the 89 *citta* become 121 *citta*; see, “[The 89 \(121\) Types of Citta](#)”.
- When it is said, “**from the vicinity of ANY of the *anāriya jhāna***”, that includes the vicinity of the first mundane *jhāna*, i.e., just *upacara samādhi*. This is why *jhāna* are not NECESSARY to attain *magga phala*, and it is “***Sammā Samādhi*” in the Noble Eightfold Path that gets to *Sammā Ñāna* and *Sammā Vimutti* (i.e., *Arahanthood*)**.

18. The key question is “If mundane and supramundane *jhāna* seem to have the same characteristics that one feels, then how does one determine whether one has attained mundane or supramundane *jhāna*?”

- As we saw above, one gets to the first *Ariya jhāna* by REMOVING *kāma rāga*, not just by suppressing as in *anariya jhāna*, i.e., one is essentially an *Anāgāmī* if one can be fully absorbed in the first *Ariya jhāna*.
- While it may not be straight forward to determine whether one is a *Sotāpanna* or not, it is fairly easy to determine whether one is an *Anāgāmī*, who has removed all *kāma rāga*: one’s CRAVING for ALL sense pleasures (food, music, sex, etc) should not be there anymore. This DOES NOT mean, for example, one should not eat tasty foods, or that one will not taste the sweetness of sugar. But one will not have the urge to drink or to engage in sex, for example.

19. Finally, a common problem is that some people get attached to mundane *jhānic* pleasures, and get trapped there (for some people even a state of calmness is enough!). They need to realize that *anāriya* (mundane) *jhānic* states also belong to this world, and until those bonds to a given realm in this world are removed, one would remain in the rebirth process (and thus future suffering in the *apāyas* is not eliminated). **We all have attained highest *anāriya jhānas* numerous times in our deep past.**

- Those who can easily get into *anāriya* (mundane) *jhāna*, can do so most likely because they had cultivated *jhāna* in recent past lives, possibly in the current human *bhava*.

- Furthermore, those who are unable to get into even *anāriya* (mundane) *jhāna*, should not be concerned. It could just be that they had not cultivated *jhāna* in recent births. As discussed above, *jhāna* are not necessary to attain *magga phala*. **Thus there could be some people who have even attained the *Sotāpanna* stage, but may be stressed unnecessarily because of their inability to get in to *jhāna*.**

The basic layout was presented in this post. We will get into details in the upcoming posts.

4.6.3 Mundane versus Supramundane Jhāna

October 12, 2017; revised February 9, 2018

Here we will discuss three key *suttas* from the *Tipitaka* to resolve some controversial arguments about mundane (*anariya*) and supramundane (*Ariya*) *jhāna*. I would appreciate any comments (lal54@hotmail.com) pointing out any errors in my analysis or any suggestions.

- **October 14, 2017:** I have found several *Tipitaka* references so far to *anariya jhāna*, and a short one is discussed at the end. I hope to discuss in detail the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Tapussa Sutta \(AN 9.41\)](#)” as an example.
- It is interesting to note that *suttas* do not specifically label *jhāna* as *Ariya* or *anariya*. **One has to read a given *sutta* carefully to figure out which *jhāna* are discussed, but the conclusion always is that *anariya jhāna* are worthless by themselves, unless used as a platform to attain *magga phala*; see, “[Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala – Introduction](#)”.**

1. The main characteristics and purposes of *Ariya* (supramundane) *jhāna* are described in detail in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Jhāna Sutta \(Anguttara Nikaya 9.36\)](#)”. The English translation ([WebLink: suttacentral: Mental Absorption](#)) at that site is not good, so I will translate most of the *sutta* here. However, the Sinhala Translation ([WebLink: suttacentral: කොතථිසංඝාන ඥානේ](#)) is much better; of course *anicca* and *anatta* are translated incorrectly there too.

- I will use key Pāli terms without translating, since anyone who is reading post is likely to understand them. I think that would make it easier to read.

2. Now, I will translate the *sutta*, and the **numbers below** correspond to the paragraphs in the Pāli version: “[WebLink: suttacentral: Jhāna Sutta \(Anguttara Nikaya 9.36\)](#)”.

#1. Bhikkhus, I will state the removal of *āsava* (mental fermentations) via the first *jhāna*, second *jhāna*, third *jhāna*, fourth *jhāna*, *ākāśānañcāyatana*, *viññāṇañcāyatana*, *ākīṇcaññāyatana*, *nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*, *saññāvedayitanirodha* (the last four are the *arūpavacara jhānic* states). Also, I have minimized wording to keep the paragraph short, just giving the meaning. [*āsava*: mental effluent, pollutant, or fermentation, (lit: influxes), ‘cankers’, taints, corruption's, intoxicant biases. There is a list of four (as in D. 16, Pts. M., Vibh.): the canker of (wrong) views (*diṭṭhāsava*), of sense-desire (*kāmāsava*), of (desiring eternal) existence (*bhavāsava*), and of ignorance (*avijjāsava*).]

- Thus **the main purpose of *jhānic* states is to do insight meditation and remove *āsava***, not to enjoy that *jhānic* “pleasure” or relief. *Nibbāna* is attained via the removal of *āsava*: “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)”.
- There is a lot of important information in the next paragraph.

#2. Bhikkhus, I surely declare removal of *āsava* (mental fermentations) via the first *jhāna*. On account of what do I say that? A *bhikkhu* abstaining from sense pleasures (*viviceva kāmehi*), abstaining from *akusala*, arrives in the vicinity of the first *jhāna* and dispels cravings (*upasampajja viharati*). He thus contemplates on the ***anicca nature (aniccatō)*, *dukkha nature (dukkhatō)*, disease-ridden nature (*rogatō*), cancer-like nature (*gandatō*), arrow-like nature (*sallatō*), painful (*aghatō*), danger-ridden (*ābādhatō*), alien (*paratō*), subject to destruction (*palokatō*), an empty (*suññatō*), **not-fruitful and leading to helplessness (anattō)**** OF *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa* (*rūpagataṃ vedanāgataṃ saññāgataṃ saṅkhārāgataṃ viññāṇagataṃ*). He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to *Nibbāna*: ‘*etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhākkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbāna*’*ti*. [“It is

peaceful, it is serene, the expelling of all *saṅkhāra*, breaking of bonds, removing greed and hate; *Nibbāna*”] Thus he gets rid of *āsava*. If he does not complete the removal of *āsava*, he would remove the first five *samyōjana* and thus will be born *opapatika* (in *brahma loka*) and attain *parinibbāna* there, and will not return to this world (*No ce āsavānaṃ khayāṃ pāpuṇāti, teneva dhammarāgena tāya dhammanandiyā pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā opapātiko hoti tattha parinibbāyī anāvattidhammo tasmā lokā*).

- Thus one cannot attain *Ariya jhāna* without comprehending *anicca, dukkha, anatta* nature of the *pancakkhandha*.
- The common verse, “..(pathamam) *jhānam upasampajja viharati*..” is commonly translated as, “..enters and remains in the (first) *jhāna*..”. However, “*upasampajja viharati*” (“*upa*” + “*san*” + “*pajja*”) means “abiding in the vicinity of clarifying and removing ‘*san*’”; of course ‘*san*’ are *lōbha, dōsa, mōha* or *āsava*. The prefix “*upa*” means “near or close”. For example, “*upasampadā*” (“*upa*” + “*san*” + “*padā*”) means a *bhikkhu* has advanced and is getting close to “sorting out ‘*san*’” and thus to *magga phala*.
- **Now, let us recapture the three important steps in the above paragraph:** First, one gets to the *jhāna* by contemplating on a long list of faults (*ādīnava*) of the five aggregates *rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa* that make up one’s world; see, “[The Five Aggregates \(Pancakkhandha\)](#)”. [*ādīnava*: m. 過患, 患難, 過失, 危難. bad consequences (suffering), difficult and dangerous situation (trouble), fault (inadvertent [not resulting from or achieved through deliberate planning] mistakes), danger and disaster (distress)]
- **Once one gets to the vicinity of the first *jhāna*, one could intensify it and be fully absorbed in it, by contemplating on the relief that is already seen:** ‘*etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhākkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānan’ti*. **This is the extra effort involved in cultivating *jhāna*, versus *pañnāvimutti* path. [It is peaceful, it is serene, the expelling of all *saṅkhāra*, breaking of bonds, removing greed and hate; *Nibbāna*]**
- Thirdly, one can get to the higher *jhāna* by again contemplating the faults (*ādīnava*) of the five aggregates.

#3. “*Bhikkhus*, an archer or archer’s apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses; in the same way, a *bhikkhu* abstaining from sensuality, abstaining from *akusala*, arrives in the vicinity (*upasampajja*) of the first *jhāna*”.

- The rest is essentially the same as in #2 above from that point onward about how *āsava* are removed by contemplating on those faults (*ādīnava*) of the five aggregates, to the following confirmation statement at the end of paragraph to emphasize the following: “*Bhikkhus*, I surely declare removal of *āsava* (mental fermentations) via the first *jhāna*”.

#4. This paragraph essentially repeats the same paragraph of #2 above, for the second, third, and fourth *jhāna*. It is interesting that even at the fourth *jhāna*, one could only be guaranteed to become an *Anāgāmī*. However, as mentioned in #2, one could attain the *Arahanthood* even from the first *jhāna*, if all *āsava* are removed, and that of course will apply to any *jhāna* through the fourth.

#5. Same verse as #3 repeated for the second, third, and fourth *jhāna*, with the paragraph ending, “..*Bhikkhus*, I surely declare removal of *āsava* (mental fermentations) via the fourth *jhāna*”.

#6 , #7. The paragraphs in #2 and #3 for the first *jhāna* are now repeated for the first *arūpavacara jhāna*: *ākāsānañcāyatana*.

#8 , #9. The paragraphs in #2 and #3 for the first *jhāna* are now repeated for the second and third *arūpavacara jhāna*: *viññāṇañcāyatana* and *ākīṇcaññāyatana*. Again, it is interesting that even at these higher *arūpavacara jhāna*, one could only be guaranteed to become an *Anāgāmī*.

#10. “As for the two *saññāsamāpatti āyatana* – *nevasaññā nā saññāyatana samāpatti* and *saññāvedayitanirodho* – they remove *āsava* and will lead to the faultless state of *Nibbāna*.”

- Thus if one gets to the highest *arūpavacara Ariya jhāna*, one will definitely attain the Arahantship, and also will be able to get to *nirodha samāpatti* (*saññāvedayitanirodho*).
3. That is, in essence, the complete *sutta*, which provides many key insights that have been hidden surprisingly. I almost fell off my chair when I first read it. I am not sure how and why modern translators failed to understand the importance of this *sutta*.
- Then I started reading more *suttas*, and realized that these key pieces of information are in many other *suttas* as well. See, for example, “[WebLink: suttacentral: Cūla Vvedalla Sutta \(MN 44\)](#)” AND “[WebLink: suttacentral: Kāyagatāsati Sutta \(MN 119\)](#)”.
4. We can learn a lot of key aspects of *Ariya jhāna* from this important *sutta*. Let us begin with the fact that one gets to the vicinity (*upasampajja*) of the first *jhāna* **by contemplating the faults (*ādinava*) of *pancakkhandha* (*rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa*); once getting there, one further removes *āsava* by the same process.**
- Thus, one gets to *jhāna* with insight meditation (*vipassana*) on the unsuitability (faults of) *kāmavacara* states, and then once getting to *jhāna*, starts doing *vipassana* on the unsuitability of any *jhānic* state in order to transcend that state.
 - There is a long list of such faults (*ādinava*) (**from #1**): *anicca* nature (*aniccatō*), *dukkha* nature (*dukkhatō*), disease-ridden nature (*rogatō*), cancer-like nature (*gandatō*), arrow-like nature (*sallatō*), painful (*aghatō*), danger-ridden (*ābādhātō*), alien (*paratō*), subject to destruction (*palokatō*), an empty (*suññatō*), not-fruitful and leading to helplessness (*anattō*).
5. Therefore, the main goal at any given *Ariya jhāna* is to contemplate on all those faults (*ādinava*) of that state — thus move to the next higher state — and to finally arrive at *Nibbāna* at the last (8th) *jhāna*. Of course, one could completely remove all *āsava* and attain *Nibbāna* from any lower *jhāna*.
- If one attains *Nibbāna* from a lower *jhānic* state (below the highest *arūpavacara jhāna*), one is said to attain *pañnāvimutti*. If one goes through to that highest *jhāna* and attains *Nibbāna*, one is said to have attained *akuppā cetovimutti*. I will have separate post on this.
 - While the word “*jhāna*” has come to common use, a better word is “*dhyāna*” (ධ්‍යාන in Pāli and ද්‍යාන in Sinhala, meaning “burning”).
 - We will stick with the word “*jhāna*” instead of “*dhyana*“, since it is in common use. It is just useful to know where the meaning comes from.
6. It is obvious that one can think clearly in any *jhāna*. Even intermittent *vitakka/vicara* (“wheeling around” with stray thoughts) will be absent after the second *jhāna*, i.e., one is in the *avitakka/avicara* (free of *vitakka/vicara*) mode after the second *jhāna*; I will discuss *jhānanga* or *jhāna* factors in a future post.
- This is why *Ariya jhāna* are helpful in insight (*vipassana*) meditation. The mind becomes clear when more and more *saṅkhāra* are removed as one proceeds to higher *jhāna* states.
7. Even though the relief experienced in *Ariya jhāna* is the only “enjoyment” recommended by the Buddha, that is not the main purpose of *Ariya jhāna*. That is because if one gets attached to a *jhāna*, one is not able to move up to the higher one. In any case, it is mainly those who get to *anariya jhāna*, get attached to them. If one has seen the *anicca* nature, one would not get attached to a *jhāna*.
- In that context, in a previous post it was discussed that any *jhānic* state is a mental state corresponding “this world”; see, “[Ascendancy to Nibbāna via Jhāna \(Dhyāna\)](#)”.
8. *Pancanīvarana* are also completely removed at the first *Ariya jhāna*. From the [WebLink: suttacentral: Mahāvedalla Sutta \(Majjhima Nikaya 43\)](#): “.. *Idhāvuso, paṭhamañ jhānaṃ samāpannāssa bhikkhuno kāmaccando pahīno hoti, byāpādo pahīno hoti, thinamiddhaṃ pahīnaṃ hoti, uddhaccakukkuccaṃ pahīnaṃ hoti, vicikicchā pahīnā hoti..*”.
- There are many *suttas* that clearly state such conditions for the first **supramundane** *jhāna*.

- In contrast, neither the five *samyōjana* nor the *pancanīvarana* are removed in any **mundane** *jhāna*. The reasons are obvious: none of the *keles* (*klēsha*/defilements) can be removed by taking a neutral object as the *ārammana*.

9. This is why the Buddha told Ven. Saddhā: “..“*Ājānīyajhāyitaṃ kho, saddhā, jhāya; mā khaḷuṅkajhāyitaṃ..*”, OR “Saddha, cultivate the *ajānīya* (thoroughbred horse) *jhāna*, not the *khalunka* (mule) *jhāna*”: [WebLink: suttacentral: Saddhā Sutta \(Anguttara Nikaya 11.9\)](#).

- In the [WebLink: suttacentral: Sutta Central translation](#), *khalunka* is translated as colt (a young horse). But the correct translation is mule. As described in the *sutta*, a mule is lazy and useless, compared to a thoroughbred horse.
- As described in the *sutta*, one who cultivates mundane *jhāna* takes a worldly objects (*kasina*, breath) as *ārammana*, and even though can attain *jhāna*, will not have the respect of the *devas* who can see the *ārammana*.
- On the other hand, *devas* cannot see the *ārammana* (*Nibbāna*) of those who have cultivated *Ariya jhāna*, and they pay to him from a distance.

10. Therefore, there is a HUGE difference in HOW one arrives at a given *jhāna*.

- One using the *anariya* path gets to *jhānas* by focusing one’s mind on a mundane object, i.e., an object belonging to this world (for example, one’s own breath or a *kasina* object) and/or by contemplating on mundane moral thoughts (benevolent, kind, etc); we will discuss this in the next post.
- One on the Noble Path, on the other hand, arrives there by contemplating on *Nibbāna*, i.e., the *anicca, dukkha, anatta* nature of this world of 31 realms. One may or may not get to *Ariya jhāna* that one can get into *samāpatti* (meaning uninterrupted *jhāna*, where the *jhāna citta* runs continuously without break), before getting to the *Arahanthood*.
- However, *jhāna sukha* is the only *sukha* recommended by the Buddha, since sense pleasures will bind one to the *kāma loka*. It is said that some *pañnāvimutta Arahants* cultivate *jhāna* after attaining *Arahanthood*.

11. Also see the previous post where it is discussed how Ven. Moggallāna cultivated the first *jhāna* after attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage: “[Ascendancy to Nibbāna via Jhāna \(Dhyāna\)](#)”.

- One who can get fully absorbed in the first *Ariya jhāna* will be born in the *Suddhavasa* realms of the ***rūpa loka***, and will not come back to the *kāma loka*, i.e., one is an *Anāgāmī*, as clearly stated in the *Jhāna Sutta* and several other *sutta* (REF).
- On the other hand, one who cultivates **mundane first *jhāna*** will be born in the **first *rūpavacara Brahma* realm in the next birth**, but in later rebirths could be even born in the *apāyas* (since *kāma rāga* was only suppressed, not removed).

12. Now let us discuss another argument put forth by some: that one first gets into *jhāna* with *samatha* meditation (breath or *kasina*) and then should do *vipassana* meditation.

- But as the *sutta* clearly states, one must be removing the first five *samyōjana* to even get to the first *Ariya jhāna*. Obviously, one cannot do that by *samatha* meditation, even though it can be used to calm the mind.
- One can get into mundane (*anariya*) *jhāna* via such via such breath or *kasina* meditation, and one could do *vipassana* from such mundane *jhānic* states.
- But the problem is, in many cases, people get addicted to those states and are unable to see the *anicca* nature of them.

13. In contrast to the above *suttas* (and more that I found) on *Ariya jhāna*, I found other *suttas* that discussed *anariya jhāna*. **In none of these *suttas*, there was specific label saying *Ariya jhāna* or *anariya jhāna***. However, one can clearly see which is which when reading text.

- In the following reference, it is clearly stated that *kāma raga* is only suppressed (**vikkhambhanato**) in all *rupavacara* and *arupavacara jhāna*. On the other hand it states that *kāma raga* is removed (**samucchedato**) in stages via *magga phala*.
- The difference between **vikkhambhana pahāna** and **samuccheda pahāna** is discussed in, “[Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities](#)”.

The following are the two relevant passages from the *Khuddaka Nikaya*, *Mahāniddesa*, *Aṭṭhakavagga*: [WebLink: suttacentral: 1. Kāmasuttaniddesa](#). There is no English translation there, but the Sinhala translation is given: [WebLink: suttacentral: කාම සුක්ඛනිර්දේශය](#).

Paṭhamam jhānam bhāventopi vikkhambhanato kāme parivajjeti ... pe ... dutiyam jhānam bhāventopi ... tatiyam jhānam bhāventopi ... catuttham jhānam bhāventopi ... ākāsaññāyatanasamāpattiṃ bhāventopi ... viññāṇaṇcāyatanasamāpattiṃ bhāventopi ... ākiñcaññāyatanasamāpattiṃ bhāventopi ... nevaññānāsaññāyatanasamāpattiṃ bhāventopi vikkhambhanato kāme parivajjeti. Evaṃ vikkhambhanato kāme parivajjeti.

- Translated: “**kāma**” is **suppressed (vikkhambhanato)** in the first *jhāna*, ...to *nevaññānāsaññāyatana* (highest *arupavacara jhāna*). As we saw above, *kāma* is removed even before getting to *Ariya jhāna*. Thus, only *anariya* (mundane) *jhāna* are meant here.
- I hope to discuss in detail the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Tapussa Sutta \(AN 9.41\)](#)” as another example.

Katham samucchedato kāme parivajjeti? Sotāpattimaggaṃ bhāventopi apāyagamanīye kāme samucchedato parivajjeti, sakadāgāmiimaggaṃ bhāventopi oḷārike kāme samucchedato parivajjeti, anāgāmiimaggaṃ bhāventopi anusahagata kāme samucchedato parivajjeti, arahattamaggaṃ bhāventopi sabbena sabbaṃ sabbathā sabbaṃ asesam nissesaṃ samucchedato kāme parivajjeti. Evaṃ samucchedato kāme parivajjeti—yo kāme parivajjeti.

- Translated: “**kāma**” is **removed (samucchedato)** in stages via the *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāmi* stages and is removed at the *Anāgāmi* stage; it is removed without a trace at the *Arahant* stage.

14. The following *sutta* clearly state the difference between *Ariya* and *anariya jhanas*.

[WebLink: suttacentral: Pathamanānākarana Sutta \(AN 4. 123\)](#): “*Idha, bhikkhave, ekacco puggalo vivicceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajam pītisukham paṭhamam jhānam upasampajja viharati. So tadassādeti, tam nikāmeti, tena ca vittiṃ āpajjati. Tattha tthito tadadhimutto tabbahula-vihārī aparihīno kalam kurumāno brahmakāyikānam devānam saḥabyataṃ upapajjati. Brahmakāyikānam, bhikkhave, devānam kappo āyupamānam. Tattha puthujjano yāvatāyukaṃ thatvā yāvatakaṃ tesam devānam āyupamānam tam sabbaṃ khepetvā nirayampi gacchati tiracchānāyonimpi gacchati pettivisayampi gacchati. Bhagavato pana sāvako tattha yāvatāyukaṃ thatvā yāvatakaṃ tesam devānam āyupamānam tam sabbaṃ khepetvā tasmimyeva bhavē parinibbāyati. Ayaṃ kho, bhikkhave, viseso ayaṃ adhippayāso idaṃ nānākaraṇam sutavato ariyasāvakaṃ assutavatā puthujjanena, yadidaṃ gatiyā upapattiyā sati.*”

Translated: “There is the case where an individual, withdrawn from sensuality (*kāma*), withdrawn from *akusala*, enters & remains in the first *jhana*: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not losing the *jhana*—then when he dies he is born with the *devas* of Brahma’s retinue. The *devas* of Brahma’s retinue, monks, have a life-span of an eon. **A run-of-the-mill person having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those *devas*, goes to hell, to the animal realm, or to the state of the hungry ghosts. But a disciple of the Blessed One, having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those *devas*, attains *Parinibbana*.** This, monks, is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor, between a Noble disciple and a normal person who had not heard the Noble Truths (*assutavatā puthujjanena*), in regards to the *gati* and birth.”

- When one attains the first *Ariya jhana*, one has become an *Anāgāmi*. He/she will be born in that *brahma* realm and will attain *Parinibbana* there, as clearly stated in the above *sutta*.
- In other words, *kama raga* is to be completely REMOVED to get to the first *Ariya Jhana*. It is only temporarily suppressed (*vikkhambhana pahana*) for the *anariya jhana*.

- Even some followers of Waharaka *Thēro* in Sri Lanka do not seem to understand this point. However, Waharaka *Thēro* has clearly explained this in the following short *dēsana* (in Sinhala): “[WebLink: Ariya and Anariya Jhana \(Audio\)](#)”.

4.6.4 Nirōdha Samāpatti, Phala Samāpatti, Jhāna, and Jhāna Samāpatti

February 13, 2018

1. *Nirōdha samāpatti* and various *phala samāpatti* are different, and they are very different from *jhāna* and *jhāna samāpatti*.
 - The first two are related to *Nibbāna*. *Jhāna* belong to “this world”. *Jhānas* are basically the mindsets that *rūpāvacara* and *arūpāvacara brahmas* enjoy.
2. Before starting the discussion, I would like to emphasize the following. Concepts that deals with in this post, as well as that of *Nibbāna* (*Arahanthood*, in particular), are virtually impossible to imagine for most people. However, there could be a few people who have studied these concepts in detail and have some “nagging questions”, and hopefully this information will be helpful.
 - These concepts are contrary to ideas that normal humans are familiar with. Normal humans crave for things in the material world so much, it is almost impossible to rationalize why one would want to stop the rebirth process (i.e, to attain the *Arahanthood*). Therefore, it is a waste of time to spend too much time thinking about such abstract concepts, at least until one gets to the *Sotāpanna* stage; these concepts really start making sense only when one gets closer to the *Anāgāmi* stage.
 - In the same way, it is hard to imagine for a normal human how *nirōdha samāpatti* (where all thoughts are stopped) can provide happiness. This is why I have explained in the “*Nibbāna*” subsection that *Nibbānic* bliss is NOT a feeling of a pleasure (that would involve the *vēdana cētasika*, and thus would belong to this world). It is more like the sense of relief one would feel when a long-lasting migraine headache goes away.
 - With that out of the way, let us start the discussion.
3. First, it is important point to remember is that life is maintained by *kammic* energy, not via *citta vithi*. Therefore, *kammaja kaya* is present at ALL TIMES. *Kammaja* (“*kamma*” + “*ja*”) means “*kamma* created”.
 - The *kammaja kaya* or the *gandhabba* (*hadaya vatthu* plus the five *pasada rūpa*) is created at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment. The blueprint for our physical body is in the *kammaja kaya* (*gandhabba*), and thus the physical body grows according to the *kammaja kaya* (*gandhabba*).
 - When one’s *kammaja kaya* for the present *bhava* runs out of *kammic* energy, a new *kammaja kaya* matching the next *bhava* is initiated by *kammic* energy for the new *bhava*, at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment.
4. Therefore, each of us has had a *kammaja kaya* corresponding to most of the realms in this world from a time that cannot be traced to a beginning!
 - For those who are not familiar with those terms can use the “Search box” to find relevant posts. For example, we have four types of “*kaya*”: *kammaja*, *cittaja*, *utuja*, and *karaja kaya*. That last one is our physical body. Such a physical body is absent in *rūpāvacara* and *arūpāvacara* realms (basically just the *gandhabba*).
5. *Cittaja kaya* means the flow of *citta vithi*. *Citta* arise in the *hadaya vatthu* in the *kammaja kaya*.
 - *Citta* always run in “packets” or *vithi*. Each *pancadvara citta vithi* ALWAYS has 17 *citta*.
 - A *manōdvāra citta vithi* normally has 10-12 *citta*. However, as we mentioned above, when in a *samāpatti*, *manōdvāra citta vithi* can run continuously. Therefore, there is no set upper limit to the number of *manōdvāra citta* running continuously when in a *samāpatti*.
 - The mind could be in different types of *bhavanga* states in between *manōdvāra/pancadvāra citta vithi*.

6. While the *kammaja kaya* is active AT ANY TIME, there CAN BE GAPS in the *cittaja kaya*.
- *Bhavanga* is a “state of mind” other than *bhavanga citta* that sometimes come inside a *citta vithi*; see, “[Bhava and Bhavanga – Simply Explained!](#)”
 - When in a *bhavanga* state, there are no *citta vithi* running, so there are not even universal *cētasika* present. One just knows that one is living, but there is no thought object (*ārammana*).
 - So, when the mind is in a *bhavanga* state, there are no *citta vithi* running. But the mind is “on” and one knows that one is living. It is just that no *citta vithi* running inside a *bhavanga* state.
 - A crude analogy of the *bhavanga* state is a TV set that is not tuned to a station. We can see flickering of white dots on the screen and hear a background “hum”. But there is no picture. So, the mind is “on” but has no thought object.
 - When an *ārammana* comes to the mind, the mind captures that sound, picture, smell, etc. That is like that TV being tuned to a station and one can see the picture.
7. The main difference between any *samāpatti* and *jhāna* is that *jhāna citta* do not run continuously. When one is in a *jhāna*, *jhāna citta vithi* are interrupted by *pancadvāra citta vithi* running in between. *Pancadvāra citta vithi* are those coming through the five physical senses. Therefore, when one is in *jhāna*, one can see, hear, etc.
- But when one is in any type of *samāpatti*, the corresponding *manōdvāra citta vithi* run continuously. Therefore, there is no opportunity for *pancadvāra citta vithi* to run, and thus one in a *samāpatti* is totally unaware of the external environment.
8. One could also be in a *jhāna samāpatti*. In this case also, there are no *pancadvāra citta vithi* interrupting the flow of *jhāna citta vithi*. One in a *jhāna samāpatti* also will not see, hear, smell, etc.
- It is with practice that one who can get into *jhāna* can develop the ability to get into *jhāna samāpatti*. As one cultivates the *jhāna*, there will be less and less *pancadvāra citta vithi* coming in between successive *jhāna citta vithi*. Initially, only 2-3 *jhāna citta vithi* flow before a *pancadvāra citta vithi* comes in. With practice, one could be experiencing *jhāna citta vithi* continuously for hours.
9. However, in the *asaññā* realm, there is no *cittaja kaya* or even a *bhavanga* state. **One does not even know that one is alive.** There is a fine physical body that is kept alive by *kammic* energy. So, the *kammaja kaya* is there.
- This is why the Buddha said it is a waste of time to get a birth in the *asaññā* realm by cultivating *asaññā* meditation techniques. One will live in the *asaññā* realm for 500 *mahā kalpa* (that is trillions of years), and just comes back to the human realm and start all over.
 - In a previous post I provided evidence that *viññāṇa* cannot exist without a *rupakkhandha*. However, *rupakkhandha* can exist without *viññāṇa*.
 - If we become unconscious for some reason, that is like living in the *asaññā* realm during that time. There is no *bhavanga* state there either. Life is maintained by the *kammaja kaya* via an active *rūpa jivitindriya* (not the *jivitindriya cētasika*).
10. When one is in a *phala samāpatti*, that *phala citta* runs continuously.
- For example, if one is in the *Sotāpanna phala samāpatti*, one has the *Sotāpanna phala citta* running continuously. If one is in the *Arahant phala samāpatti*, the *Arahant phala citta* runs continuously.
11. When one is in *nirōdha samāpatti*, there are no *citta vithi* or a *bhavanga* state. It is just like in the *asaññā* realm.
- But of course, there is huge difference between *nirōdha samāpatti* and being in the *asaññā* realm. One who can get to *nirōdha samāpatti* has removed ALL DEFILEMENTS (and thus *avijjā*), but one in the *asaññā* realm has not. So, at the end of the life in the *asaññā* realm, that person would come back to the human realm and can be reborn even in the *apāyās* in later rebirths.

- This point actually explains why it is so peaceful not to have any *citta* running through the mind. That is the closest explanation that can be given to a normal human as to how having no *citta* can be so peaceful. But this is hard even to imagine for a normal human, as I mentioned at the beginning. Those who cultivate *jhāna*, and get to higher *jhānic* states, can start seeing that this is true. That is why they cultivate *jhāna* all the way up to the 8th *jhāna* (*nēva saññā nā saññā*).

12. *Nirōdha samāpatti* is succinctly described in a verse in the [WebLink: suttacentral: Mahāvedalla Sutta \(MN 43\)](#), where the difference between a dead body and the body of one in *nirōdha samāpatti* is described: “Yvāyaṃ, āvuso, mato kālaṅkato tassa kāyasaṅkhārā niruddhā paṭippassaddhā, vacīsaṅkhārā niruddhā paṭippassaddhā, cittasaṅkhārā niruddhā paṭippassaddhā, āyu parikkhīṇo, usmā vūpasantā, indriyāni paribhinnāni. Yo cāyaṃ bhikkhu saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpanno tassapi kāyasaṅkhārā niruddhā paṭippassaddhā, vacīsaṅkhārā niruddhā paṭippassaddhā, cittasaṅkhārā niruddhā paṭippassaddhā, āyu na parikkhīṇo, usmā avūpasantā, indriyāni vipasannāni. Yvāyaṃ, āvuso, mato kālaṅkato, yo cāyaṃ bhikkhu saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpanno—idaṃ nesaṃ nānākaṇaṇa”ti.”

Translated: “āvuso, a dead body does not generate any *kāyasaṅkhārā*, *vacīsaṅkhārā*, or *cittasaṅkhārā*; its lifetime expired and it does not breathe, and the body gets cold with all sense organs dead. But that *bhikkhu* in *saññāvedayita-nirōdha samāpatti*, even though his *kāyasaṅkhārā*, *vacīsaṅkhārā*, and *cittasaṅkhārā* all have ceased, and does not breathe, his body does not get cold and all sense organs are kept alive. This, *āvuso*, is the difference between a dead body and that *bhikkhu* in *nirōdha samāpatti*.”

- Since all *sankhara* are stopped, there are no *citta* with even the universal *cetasika* when in *saññāvedayita nirōdha samāpatti*.
- This also clarifies that *saññāvedayita* means without any *saññā* or *vedana*.

13. Not all *Arahants* can get into *nirōdha samāpatti*. Access to *nirōdha samāpatti* is NOT by taking *Nibbāna* as the thought object, but via the 8th *jhāna*. As one gets to higher *jhāna*, number of *cetasika* in a *citta* get smaller, i.e., *citta* become less and less “burdened”.

- An *Arahant* has to cultivate all the *jhānas*, and get to the 8th *jhāna* (*nēva saññā nā saññā*). **The *nēva saññā nā saññā* state is just a step away from stopping of *citta vithi*.**
- From that state, the *Arahant* can make a determination of how long to stay in *nirōdha samāpatti*, and make the transition from the *nēva saññā nā saññā* state to *nirōdha samāpatti*.
- While *anāriya yōgis* can get to the *nēva saññā nā saññā* state, I am not certain whether they can make the transition to *nirōdha samāpatti*. Furthermore, I vaguely remember hearing in a *dēsaṇa* from Waharaka Thēro that an *Anāgāmi* who has cultivated the eight *jhānas* can get into *nirōdha samāpatti*.

14. The “[WebLink: suttacentral: Pañcakaṅga Sutta \(SN 36.19\)](#)” also clarifies another important point. If there are no *citta* flowing with *saññā* or *vedana*, when one is in *saññāvedayita nirōdha samāpatti*, how can one say that it is the ultimate happiness (*Nibbanic bliss*)?

- *Nibbanic* bliss is not a *cetasika vedana*, which would belong to this world. I have compared it to the relief one feels when a long-experienced migraine headache finally goes away; see, the *Nibbāna* subsection.

The above *sutta*, in the last verse, put it this way: “*Thānaṃ kho panetaṃ, ānanda, vijjati yaṃ aññatitthiyā paribbājakā evaṃ vadeyyuṃ: ‘saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samaṇo gotamo āha, taṇca sukhasmim paññapeti. Tayidaṃ kiṃsu, tayidaṃ kathaṃsū’ti?*”

Evaṃvādino, ānanda, aññatitthiyā paribbājakā evamassu vacanīyā: ‘na kho, āvuso, bhagavā sukhaññeva vedanaṃ sandhāya sukhasmim paññapeti. Yattha yattha, āvuso, sukhaṃ upalabbhati, yaḥim yaḥim taṃ taṃ tathāgato sukhasmim paññapeti’”ti.”

Translated: “It may happen, Ananda, that Wanderers of other sects will be saying this: ‘The recluse Gotama speaks of the *saññāvedayita nirōdha* and describes it as pleasure. What is this pleasure and how is this a pleasure?’

“Those who say so, should be told: ‘The Blessed One describes as pleasure **not only the feeling of pleasure**. But a *Tathagata* describes as pleasure whenever and wherein so ever it is obtained.’”

15. No *citta vithi* run in *nirōdha samāpatti*, and *bhavana* state is not present either. Life in the body is maintained with *kammic* energy. No *vedana*, *saññā*, etc. Maximum time in *nirōdha samāpatti* is 7 days. The *Arahant* can make a determination before getting into *nirōdha samāpatti*, as to how long (up to 7 days) to stay in that state.

- *Parinibbāna* state is just like *nirōdha samāpatti*. The only difference is that there is no “coming back” to this world upon entering *Parinibbāna*.
- Therefore, *Arahants* tend to get to *nirōdha samāpatti* whenever possible, in order to experience the “*Nibbānic* bliss”, and to get away from the “burdensome worldly thoughts”. As I said, it is hard for normal humans to imagine this.

16. In other types of *samāpatti* (other than the *nirōdha samāpatti*), *manōdvāra citta vithi* will flow continuously. There is no falling to *bhavana* or to take an external object with a *pancadvāra citta vithi*. Thus one cannot see, hear, etc. Normally, *samāpatti* will eventually break on its own or (when one gets good at it) one can pre-set the time to be in *samāpatti*.

- *Arahant phala samāpatti* is where an *Arahant* experiences the *pabhassara citta*, a pure *citta* with just the universal *cētasika*, where the *saññā cētasika* is not contaminated. *Nibbāna* is the thought object made contact with *phassa cētasika* and *vēdana* are *saññā* are based on that (we have no idea about that). There, one does not hear, see, anything either, just like in *jhāna samāpatti*.
- When an *Arahant* is not in *nirōdha samāpatti* or *Arahant phala samāpatti*, his/her *citta* get only to the “*manō*” state, in the sequence that normally ends up in the *viññānkkhandha* state for a normal human; see #4 of “[Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#)”.

17. Hopefully, that should cover the questions raised in the discussion forum under the topics:” [WebLink: Nirōdha Samāpatti](#)”, “[WebLink: Difference between “Arahant phala samāpatti” and “Nirōdha samāpatti” ?](#)”, and “[WebLink: Nirōdha Samāpatti and Amoha](#)”.

- If there are more questions on this and related issues, please ask them under the topic “[WebLink: Difference between “Arahant phala samāpatti” and “Nirōdha samāpatti” ?](#)”. I am going to close the other two topics, in order to not have too many parallel and related discussions.
- Please also include any references **from the *Tipitaka***, for above descriptions. This post was put together from what I have heard from Waharaka *Thēro*’s *dēsanas*, and I will also add references as I come across them in the *Tipitaka*.

4.7 Mental Body – Gandhabba

February 11, 2017

- [Our Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)
- [Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka](#)
- [Antarabhava and Gandhabba](#)
- [Ānantariya Kamma – Connection to Gandhabba](#)
- [Mental Body \(Gandhabba\) – Personal Accounts](#)
- [Abnormal Births Due to Gandhabba Transformations](#)
- [Satara Āhāra for Mental Body or Gandhabba](#)
- [Micca Dittṭhi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)
- [Working of Kammā – Critical Role of Conditions](#)

Deeper discussions on *gandhabba* can be found in the *Abhidhamma* subsection:

- [Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)

4.7.1 Our Mental Body – Gandhabba

December 26, 2016

1. Grasping the message of the Buddha requires two essential ingredients, as I have been stressing throughout the site: (i) **It is easier done with a mind that has less defilements** (*kilesa* or *keles* or *klesha*), (ii) **One needs to go beyond learning mundane interpretations of key concepts.**

- If those two conditions are satisfied, grasping deeper Dhamma concepts will not be a difficult task. If one can comprehend — not merely to memorize — the key concepts, it actually becomes easy to avoid getting the “*vipareetha saññā*” or the “incorrect impression” of a given concept.
- This process gradually leads to the comprehension of “*anicca saññā*” that is the key to the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*.
- In this post, we will start a discussion that will lead to a better explanation of “*saññā*” (which is one of the five aggregates) normally translated as “perception”.

2. In this subsection, we will discuss how we grasp a given concept that is explained to us via any one of many human languages that are in use today.

- In order to do that, it is essential to understand why the mental body (*manomaya kaya* or *gandhabba*) is primary — initiating all our thoughts, speech, and actions. The physical body that we value so much is secondary.
- **While our brains help us grasp what is expressed in a given language (and we have to learn a given language), a *gandhabba* can grasp that message directly — without using a brain or eyes, ears, etc. that are associated with the physical body.** The *gandhabba* — when outside the physical body — can see and hear without using eyes and ears, and grasp what is expressed by thoughts of other beings **directly** (where allowed by their *kammic* potential).
- *Gandhabbas* — and most living beings — communicate among themselves via “*saññā*”; there is no language for them in the sense of languages that we use.
- This is somewhat similar to how we experience dreams. We do not use our ears to hear in the dreams; we just “perceive” what others say in our dreams. This is the closest analogy with how a *gandhabba* hears when outside a physical body. Seeing is the same way: in dreams, we don’t use our eyes to see; our eyes are closed when we dream. Both hearing and seeing are done with the mind.

3. We crave ourselves physical bodies because we enjoy sense pleasures associated with smells, tastes, and body touches that are available in the human and *deva loka*.

- However, in order to experience those three types of sense contacts, our mental bodies need to be trapped inside physical bodies. There is a price we pay for those sense enjoyments, because those physical bodies are subject to rapid and unexpected decay and also have relatively short lifetimes around 100 years.
- Furthermore, when the mental body is enclosed or trapped inside a physical body, it loses the ability to **directly** see external objects, hear external sounds, and also grasping *dhamma* (concepts). Therefore, all six sense inputs now need to be processed by the brain and be converted to a form (*“saññā”*) that can be grasped by the trapped mental body (*gandhabba*).
- The sense of smell, taste, or body touches are not available to beings in the higher 24 (*brahma*) realms; those beings just have mental bodies (with just a trace of matter) just like our *gandhabbas*. Just like those *brahmas*, the *gandhabbas* cannot sense smell, taste, or body touches, but can “directly see, hear, and grasp concepts” without the aid of a brain when outside a physical body.
- Please contemplate and grasp what is meant by those statements before proceeding further.

4. Another important factor is the difference between the lifetime of a physical body and that of a mental body (*gandhabba*).

- A human *gandhabba* that is born at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment can possibly live for many hundreds to many thousands of years. Within a given “human *bhava*“, there can be many repeated births as a human with a human body; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)“.
- When a physical body dies (and if more *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* remains), that *gandhabba* comes out of the dead body and waits for a suitable womb to re-enter and make a **new human body**. This process can happen many times during a given human *bhava*. Each time a different physical body is acquired by the *gandhabba* as discussed below.
- Therefore, it makes more sense to focus on the well-being of the mental body (*gandhabba*) than on the short-lived physical body.

5. There are a few exceptions to the above process.

- If one commits an *anantariya papa kamma* (killing a parent, for example), the *gandhabba* that comes out of a dead physical body “cannot sustain” that strong *kamma vipāka* and undergoes a *cuti-patisandhi* moment and will be instantaneously born in an *apāya* suitable for that strong *kamma*.
- If one develops *Ariya* or *anariya jhāna*, then this also become a “good” *anantariya kamma* and one will be born in a *brahma* realm (corresponding to the highest *jhānic* state attained) by skipping the remaining human births. However, those get to *brahma* realms via *anariya jhānas* will come back to human or lower realms. Any *Ariya* (starting with a *Sotāpanna*) who attains *Ariya jhānas* will never come back to *kāma loka*. Of course, a *Sotāpanna* (*Sakadāgāmī*) without *Ariya jhānas* will be reborn human (*deva*) realms.
- This is also why an *Arahant* is not reborn, even if there is *kammic* energy left over for the human *bhava*. The *gandhabba* that comes out “cannot bear” the mindset of an *Arahant*, and will instantaneously undergo a *cuti-patisandhi* moment; but since an *Arahant* will not grasp a new *bhava*, he/she will not be reborn.
- Those above cases — where the human *bhava* is prematurely terminated — can be compared to the burning of a heater coil used in an immersion heater, when the heated coil is taken out of the water: As long as the heater coil is immersed in the water, it can “bear” the heat; but once out of the water, it will quickly burn out. The physical human body has the unique capability of being able to “bear” any of those states discussed above.

6. Even though there is no discussion about the *gandhabba* in Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga, it is a critical concept in Buddha Dhamma. The Buddha compared a *gandhabba* (sometimes also called a *Tirokuddha*) coming out of a physical body to a sword being pulled out of the sheath that it is stored in.

- People with *abhiññā* powers can move the *gandhabba* out of the physical body at will.
- There are also people who had cultivated *abhiññā* powers in recent previous births and are able to do it at will even though they have less control over the mental body; they can float to the ceiling and watch their inter physical body lying on the bed, for example. Furthermore, during heart operations, the *gandhabba* can come out and watch the operation from the above, and provide details about the operations later.

7. The *gandhabba* has only a trace of matter; it cannot be seen or touched, even though it has a trace of matter. It is our mental body or *manomaya kaya*.

- This mental body can be visualized as fine mesh spread throughout the physical body with the seat of the mind (*hadaya vatthu*) overlapping the physical heart.
- If that mental body comes out of the physical body, the physical body becomes as inert as a piece of wood (as a dead body is).

8. Let us start by addressing some key objections that you may have on the concept of a mental body controlling the physical body. First, how can a mental body move a heavy physical body?

- How an almost weightless *gandhabba* can move a heavy physical body can be clarified by comparing it to how a human operator controls a heavy military tank from the inside of that totally enclosed tank. This is a very good analogy, where the human operator plays the role of the *gandhabba*.
- The human operator of course does not have enough energy to move the tank. He merely controls the direction of the movement by instructing the on-board computer; **the energy to actually move the tank comes from the fuel stored in the tank.**
- In the same way, the mental body (*gandhabba*) instructs the brain to generate required bodily movements or speech; here the brain plays the role of the computer in the military tank analogy. The small amount of energy needed for the *gandhabba* comes from the *kammic* energy that led to human *bhava*; **energy for actual bodily movements (including speech) comes from the food we eat.**
- Back in the 17th century, French philosopher Rene Descartes proposed that there is an immaterial mind controlling the material body. But this proposal had a major problem of explaining how an immaterial mind cause a heavy material body to move. The Buddha –2600 years ago — had described how this actually happens, as discussed above. More details will be provided in future posts, and some posts are already in the *Abhidhamma* section.

9. In the above analogy, the operator is totally shielded from the external world. He can monitor the outside environment only via the audio and video equipment mounted on the tank. The video cameras, for example, feed in videos to an on-board computer, which analyzes and displays it on a monitor for the operator to see.

- In the same way, our physical eyes send picture to our brain, which analyzes them, converts to a form (*“saññā”*) that can be “seen” — or comprehended — by the *gandhabba* inside. So, our brain is the computer that conveys the information to the *gandhabba* that is really trapped inside the solid physical body; see, **[“Brain – Interface between Mind and Body”](#)**.
- The *gandhabba* accesses other four physical sense inputs the same way, with the help of ears, tongue, nose, and the body.
- Our memories, future plans, etc (all mental) are also “out there” (in the *mano loka*) but of course cannot be seen. They are collectively called “*dhamma*”; see, **[“What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis”](#)**. *Gandhabba* accesses those with the help of the *mana indriya* in the brain, which is the sixth sense input (like eyes for seeing, ears for hearing, etc), and has not been identified by science yet.

- The *mano loka* co-exists with the *rūpa loka* (material world); see, “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)”.

10. Another possible question is: “How does the *gandhabba* see and hear when outside the human body?”

- It is only in the human (and animal) realms that beings communicate via speech (and bodily gestures). In other realms, beings communicate directly via *saññā*, one of the five aggregates (*pancakkhanadha*). While not all beings can communicate with all other (it depends on each realm), where it is possible, communications takes place via *saññā* generated in one’s thoughts.
- This experience is similar to one’s experience with dreams. **In a dream, we do not “hear” what others say in the same way when we hear speech normally, but we just perceive what they are saying.**
- In fact, this is how those with *abhiññā* powers (even a few of us with *gati* from previous lives where they had such *abhiññā* powers in recent lives) can communicate with beings in other realms.

11. Then another question may arise, “Why do people look different in successive rebirths?”. That is because the physical body in each human life (within the same human *bhava*) arise with contributions from the parents for that life.

- Even though the *gandhabba* brings in his/her *gati* (habits), *āśava* (cravings), *kilesa* (mental impurities), etc from the previous life, the **physical body** for the new life has major contributions from the new parents.
- Therefore, the DNA of the physical bodies of two successive lives could be different due to this reason. The building of a new physical body is described in the post, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”.
- Even then, a *gandhabba* normally is matched with parents that have similar *gati*.

12. Another interesting piece of information comes from how the Buddha (and others with *iddhi bala*) traveled to *deva* or *brahma loka* with the *manomaya kaya* (which is the same as *gandhabba*), leaving the physical body behind (the physical body does not die in this case, and is kept alive by the *rūpa jivitindriya*). Upon returning, the *manomaya kaya* can re-enter the physical body.

- Those who attain the fourth *jhāna* can develop *iddhi* powers to be able to separate the *manomaya kaya* from the physical body and travel far with that *manomaya kaya*. The Buddha stated that just as a sword can be pulled out of its sheath, those with *iddhi* powers can pull the *manomaya kaya* out of the physical body.
- In the *suttas* it is said that the Buddha visited *deva* or *brahma lokas* “within the time that takes a bent arm to be straightened”.
- As an aside, it is also possible for some of those with *iddhi* powers to travel with their physical bodies. That involves a different mechanism which is not relevant to this discussion.

13. Even today, there are some ordinary people who can dissociate their mental body from the physical body and can “astral travel”. That *manomaya kaya* can then go to distant places within very short times (this is what is called astral travel in the present day; see the Wikipedia article, “[WebLink: WIKI: Astral projection](#)”.

- In fact, a *gandhabba* is the same as an “astral body” that is described in such accounts; see, for example, “Journeys Out of the Body: The Classic Work on Out-of-Body Experience”, by Robert Monroe (1992). There are two sequels to that book, as well as books by others; accounts in at least some of those books are consistent with the above mechanism.
- In addition, the *gandhabba* can come out of the physical body under stressful conditions, in particular during heart operations. Many such accounts by a cardiologist have been documented in the book, “Consciousness Beyond Life”, by Pim van Lommel (2010).

14. Many rebirth account features can be explained by the correct interpretation where the *manomaya kaya* (*gandhabba*) inherits many successive (but time separated) physical bodies.

- In rebirth stories, there is always a “time gap” between successive human births (*jati*). They are always separated by several years or at least few years. In between those successive lives, that lifestream lives as a *gandhabba*, without a physical body.
- In most rebirth stories, the previous human life was terminated unexpectedly, like in an accident or a killing. Therefore, the *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* had not been exhausted, and the *gandhabba* just came out of the dead body and waited for another womb to enter.
- The Buddha told Vacchagotta that the *gandhabba* survives that intervening time by using *taṇhā* as *āhāra*. Some *gandhabbas* can “inhale” aroma from plants, fruits, etc, too.

15. If one has been following — and trying to “live” the moral life recommended in the previous posts in this “[Living Dhamma](#)” section — it would be easier to follow the upcoming posts as we will be diving a bit deeper.

- One aspect of realizing the *anicca* nature is to see the futility of expecting to have a “future happy life” by trying to make one’s physical body to be the “main focus”.
- While it is essential to keep one’s body in good condition by eating well and by engaging in a good exercise program, it is even more important to realize that this body will only last about 100 years, and the latter part of that could be burdened with unexpected physical ailments.
- Thus one should try to improve the condition of the mental body (*gandhabba*) by cultivating good *gati* and getting rid of bad *gati*.

Next, “[Saṅña – What It Really Means](#)“, ..

4.7.2 Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka

September 16, 2017; revised September 30, 2107 (#7 added).

Extensive evidence from the *Tipitaka* is presented that the *gandhabba* state is a necessary feature of human (and animal) *bhava*. It is not an *antarabhava* state. One’s inert physical body is controlled by one’s mental body (*gandhabba* or *manomaya kaya*) that is inside the physical body.

- *Gandhabba* state remains through many successive human births within a given human *bhava* (which can last many hundreds of years). When a given physical body dies, the *gandhabba* is directed into another womb, when a matching one becomes available. Rebirth stories confirm this account.
- **First, I need to make a change in terminology:** In the posts up to today, I have used the term “*gandhabbayā*“, but the Pāli term that in the *suttas* is “*gandhabba*“. My teacher Thēro, late Waharaka Thēro, always used the term *gandhabbayā* (which is the Sinhala term). But I think it is better to use the Pāli term for this wider audience.

1. The Buddha has described how three conditions must be satisfied for a conception to occur — including a *gandhabba* (nominative case is *gandhabbō*) descending to the womb — in the [WebLink: suttacentral: Mahā Tanhāsankhaya Sutta \(Majjhima Nikāya 38\)](#): “..*Tiṇṇaṃ kho pana, bhikkhave, sannipātā gabbhassāvakkanti hoti. Idha mātāpitāro ca sannipatitā honti, mātā ca na utunī hoti, gandhabbo ca na paccupaṭṭhito hoti, neva tāva gabbhassāvakkanti hoti. Idha mātāpitāro ca sannipatitā honti, mātā ca utunī hoti, gandhabbo ca na paccupaṭṭhito hoti, neva tāva gabbhassāvakkanti hoti. Yato ca kho, bhikkhave, mātāpitāro ca sannipatitā honti, mātā ca utunī hoti, gandhabbo ca paccupaṭṭhito hoti—evaṃ tiṇṇaṃ sannipātā gabbhassāvakkanti hoti. Tameva, bhikkhave, mātā nava vā dasa vā māse gabbhaṃ kucchinā pariharati mahatā saṃsayena garubhāraṃ..*“.

Here is the [WebLink: suttacentral: English translation from the Sutta Central website](#) (I have slightly modified it): “..*Bhikkhus, the descent to the womb takes place through the union of three things. Here, there is the union of the mother and father, but the mother is not in season, and the *gandhabba**

is not present—in this case no descent of an embryo takes place. Here, there is the union of the mother and father, and the mother is in season, but the ***gandhabba* is not present**—in this case too **no descent of the embryo takes place**. But when there is the union of the mother and father, and the mother is in season, and the ***gandhabba* is present**, through the union of these three things the **descent of the embryo takes place**. The mother then carries the embryo in her womb for nine or ten months with much anxiety, as a heavy burden..”.

- Even though the venerable *Bhikkhus* who manage the Sutta Central website do not believe in the concept of a *gandhabba*, they have at least correctly translated most of the Pāli verse.
- By the way, the Sutta Central site is a good resource, since not only the Pāli version but also translations into several languages is provided. I encourage everyone to make a contribution to that website in order to maintain that valuable database.
- **One just needs to be careful to keep in mind that some key Pāli terms are translated incorrectly there, including *anicca* as impermanence and *anatta* as “no-self”.**

2. In the [WebLink: suttacentral: Assalāyana Sutta \(Majjhima Nikāya 93\)](#), there is more evidence that for conception to occur, a *gandhabba* needs to descend to the mother’s womb at the right time: within a few days of the union of parents, it is the mother’s season.

Here, the Buddha explains to Assalayana how the seer Asita Devala questioned seven brahmana who had the wrong view that they were heirs to *Mahā Brahmā*. Here are the questions that seer Asita Devala asked:

“*Jānanti pana bhonto—yathā gabbhassa avakkanti hotī’ti?* “

- “But do you, sirs, **know how there is conception?**”

“*Jānāma mayaṃ, bho—yathā gabbhassa avakkanti hoti ‘ti. Jānāma mayaṃ, bho – yathā gabbhassa avakkanti hoti. Idha mātāpitāro ca sannipatitā hontī, mātā ca utunī hoti, gandhabbo ca paccupaṭṭhito hoti; evaṃ tiṇṇaṃ sannipātā gabbhassa avakkanti hotī’ti*”.

- ‘We do know, sir, how there is conception. **There is coitus of the parents, it is the mother’s season, and a *gandhabba* is present**; it is on the conjunction of these three things that there is conception.’

“*Jānanti pana bhonto—taggha so gandhabbo khattiyo vā brāhmaṇo vā vesso vā suddo vā’ti?*“.

- “But do you, sirs, know whether that ***gandhabba*** is a noble or brahman or merchant or worker?”

“*Na mayaṃ, bho, jānāma—taggha so gandhabbo khattiyo vā brāhmaṇo vā vesso vā suddo vā’ti*“.

- “We do not know, sir, whether that ***gandhabba*** is a noble or a brahman or a merchant or a worker.”

Therefore, it is clear that the concept of a *gandhabba* was accepted even by other *yōgis* at Buddha’s time.

3. In the [WebLink: suttacentral: Mahā Nidana Sutta \(Digha Nikāya 15\)](#): “*..Viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpan’ti iti kho panetaṃ vuttaṃ, tadānanda, imināpetāṃ pariyāyena vedītabbaṃ, yathā viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ. Viññāṇaṃ hi, ānanda, mātukucchismiṃ na okkamissatha, api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ mātukucchismiṃ samuccissathā’ti? “No hetāṃ, bhante”. “Viññāṇaṃ hi, ānanda, mātukucchismiṃ okkamitvā vokkamissatha, api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ itthattāya abhinibbattissathā’ti? “No hetāṃ, bhante”.*

Translated: “..With consciousness as condition there is mentality-materiality (*namarupa*). How that is so, Ānanda, should be understood in this way: If consciousness were not to **descend** into the mother’s womb, would mentality-materiality (*nama rūpa*) take shape in the womb?” “Certainly not, venerable sir”. “If, the **descended consciousness were to depart**, would mentality-materiality be generated into this present state of being?” “Certainly not, venerable sir.”

- Here, is it clear that by “a *viññāna* descending to the womb”, the Buddha meant the descend of the *manomaya kaya* (*gandhabba*), not the *patibandhi citta*. **A *patibandhi citta* cannot come out**

(depart) of the womb! In #7 below, we will present evidence that *viññāṇa* is always accompanied by other four *khandhas*, including the *rupakkhandha* (and a *gandhabba* has all five *khandhas*).

- The Pāli word “**Okkanti**” is often mistranslated as “rebirth”. But it means the “descend” of an already formed *manōmaya kaya* (*gandhabba*). Rebirth happens (and a *gandhabba* is born) within a thought moment, at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment; see, “[Cuti-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”.

4. In the [WebLink: suttacentral: Kutuhala Sutta \(Samyutta Nikāya 44.9\)](#), Vacca asked the Buddha, “..*Yasmiṇca pana, bho gotama, samaye imaṇca kāyaṃ nikkhipati, satto ca aññataraṃ kāyaṃ anupapanno hoti, imassa pana bhavaṃ gotamo kiṃ upādānasmim paññāpeti*”ti? OR “..“And, Master Gotama, when a being has given up this body but has not yet been reborn in another body, what does Master Gotama declare to be its fuel on that occasion?”

- The Buddha answered, “..*Yasmiṃ kho, vaccha, samaye imaṇca kāyaṃ nikkhipati, satto ca aññataraṃ kāyaṃ anupapanno hoti, tamahaṃ taṇhūpādānaṃ vadāmi*”. OR “..“When, Vaccha, a being has given up this body but has not yet been reborn in another body, I declare that it is fueled by craving”.
- Thus when a *gandhabba* leaves one physical and is not yet reborn in another body, its life is sustained by *taṇhā* (craving), just like a *rupi brahma* lives by making use of *pīti* (mental happiness) as food. Both *gandhabbas* and *rupi brahmas* have very fine bodies (smaller than an atom in modern science; only a few *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*]). However, some *gandhabbas* can inhale *odors* for food and become relatively more dense.

5. In the [WebLink: suttacentral: Sangiti Sutta \(Digha Nikāya 33\)](#), it is described how a *gandhabba* can enter a womb in four ways: “..*Catasso gabbhāvakkantiyo. Idhāvuso, ekacco asampajāno mātukucchiṃ okkamati, asampajāno mātukucchismiṃ ṭhāti, asampajāno mātukucchimiṃ nikkhamati, ayaṃ paṭhamā gabbhāvakkanti. Puna caparaṃ, āvuso, idhekacco sampajāno mātukucchiṃ okkamati, asampajāno mātukucchismiṃ ṭhāti, asampajāno mātukucchimiṃ nikkhamati, ayaṃ duttiyā gabbhāvakkanti. Puna caparaṃ, āvuso, idhekacco sampajāno mātukucchiṃ okkamati, sampajāno mātukucchismiṃ ṭhāti, asampajāno mātukucchimiṃ nikkhamati, ayaṃ tatiyā gabbhāvakkanti. Puna caparaṃ, āvuso, idhekacco sampajāno mātukucchiṃ okkamati, sampajāno mātukucchismiṃ ṭhāti, sampajāno mātukucchimiṃ nikkhamati, ayaṃ catutthā gabbhāvakkanti*”.

Translated: “..Four ways of **entering the womb**. Herein, *bhikkhus*, one descends into the **mother’s womb** unknowing, abides there unknowing, departs thence unknowing. This is the first class of conception. Next, another descends deliberately, but abides and departs unknowing. Next another descends and abides deliberately, but departs unknowing. Lastly, another descends, abides and departs **knowingly**”.

- This is the **okkanti** (descending of the *gandhabba*) into the womb (*gabbha*), as described in the *Mahā Tanhasankhaya Sutta* discussed above.
- Almost the same description is also given in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Sampasādanīya Sutta \(Digha Nikāya 28\)](#)”.

6. It is a *Bodhisattva* in the last birth that, “.. descends, abides and departs the womb knowingly”, the fourth way of entering a womb, mentioned above.

- In the [WebLink: suttacentral: Mahāpadāna Sutta \(Digha Nikāya 14\)](#): “..*Atha kho, bhikkhave, vipassī bodhisatto tusitā kāyā cavitvā sato sampajāno mātukucchiṃ okkami. Ayamettha dhammatā*”.
- Translated: “..Now Vipassī *bodhisattva*, *bhikkhus*, left the *Tusita* realm and **descended** into his mother’s womb mindful and knowingly. That is the **rule**.”
- At the *cuti-patisandhi* moment in the *Tusita* realm, the *deva* died and a human *gandhabba* was born, who entered the mother’s womb on Earth.
- By the way, this *sutta* describes in detail the last 7 Buddhas including Buddha Gotama, who have appeared in our *cakkavata* within the past 31 *mahā kappā* (great aeons). the [WebLink:](#)

[suttacentral: English translation of the Sutta at Sutta Central](#) provides a useful summary in a table.

- However, in this *sutta*, *gabbhāvakkantiyo* and *okkami* are translated incorrectly at Sutta Central.

7. In the Bija Sutta (Smayutta Nikaya 22.54), it is clearly stated that *viññāṇa* cannot “travel” without the other four aggregates, including the *rupakkhandha*: “..Yo, bhikkhave, evaṃ vadeyya: ‘*ahamaññatra rūpā aññatra vedanāya aññatra saññāya aññatra saṅkhārehi viññāṇassa āgatiṃ vā gatiṃ vā cutiṃ vā upapattiṃ vā vuddhiṃ vā virūhiṃ vā vepullaṃ vā paññāpessāmi*’ti, *netam̐ thānam vijjati*”.

“Bhikkhus, **Apart from form, apart from feeling, apart from perception, apart from volitional formations, I will make known the coming and going of consciousness, its passing away and rebirth**, its growth, increase, and expansion’—that is impossible”.

- Therefore, the descending of a *patisandhi viññāṇa* to a womb, MUST be accompanied by all five *khanddhas*, which is the *kammaja kaya* of the *gandhabba*. *Viññāṇa* can never be supported without a *rūpa*; even the *brahmas* in *arupa* realms have *hadaya vatthu*, a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] made of *satara mahā bhūta*.

8. When a person removes the first seven *samyōjana*, but the last three *samyōjana* are still left with him when he dies, then the *gandhabba* comes out of the dead body, but cannot be born in anywhere in the 31 realms. For a discussion on *samyōjana*, see, “[Dasa Samyōjana – Bonds in Rebirth Process](#)”.

- Those first 7 *samyōjana* include *kāma rāga*, *rūpa rāga*, and *arūpa rāga*. When those three *samyōjana* are removed, one cannot be reborn in any of the 31 realms in the *kāma*, *rūpa*, and *arūpa loka*. However, since the last three *samyōjana* of *māna*, *uddacca*, *avijjā* are not completely removed, that person will not be able to attain *Parinibbāna* either.
- Then “that person” will remain in the *gandhabba* state until his *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* runs out. This is called the “*Anatarāpainaibbiyāni*” state.
- This is described in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Samyojana Sutta \(Anguttara Nikāya 4:131\)](#): “..Katamassa, bhikkhave, puggalassa orambhāgiyāni saṃyojanāni *pahīnāni*, upapattiṭṭhābhīyāni saṃyojanāni *pahīnāni*, bhavapaṭilābhīyāni saṃyojanāni *appahīnāni*? *Antarāparinibbāyissa*”.
- It is to be noted that the first 5 *samyōjanā* are called *orambhāgiyā saṃyojanā*; *rūpa rāga* and *arūpa rāga* are collectively called *upapattiṭṭhābhīyā saṃyojanā*, and *māna*, *uddacca*, *avijjā* are collectively called *bhavapaṭilābhīyā saṃyojana*.

9. At the Third Buddhist Council, Moggaliputta tissa *Thēro* proved that there is no *antarābhava* in a debate with the Mahayanists. That correct interpretation is in the *Kathavatthu* of the *Tipitaka*.

- Most current Theravadins erroneously believe that *gandhabba* state is an “*antarābhava*” state. That is not correct; see, “[Antarabhava and Gandhabba](#)” and “[Cutī-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”.

10. A critical factor that contributes to this erroneous belief that the *gandhabba* state is an “*antarābhava*” is the inability to distinguish between *bhava* and *jāti*. **They erroneously believe that patisandhi takes place in the womb.** But it is very clear in the *sutta* passages above, that the word *patisandhi* is not used; rather it is *okkanti* (of the *gandhabba*).

- A human existence (*bhava*) could be many hundreds or even thousands of years and many human births (*jāti*) can take place during that time; see, “[Bhava and jāti – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.
- In rebirth stories, there is always a “time gap” between successive human births (*jāti*). They are always separated by several years or at least few years. In between those successive lives, that lifestream lives as a *gandhabba*, without a physical body.
- Even during a given human life (*jāti*), the *gandhabba* may come out of the physical body under certain conditions, see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)”.

- It is the human *bhava* that is hard to attain (“[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)”), but within a given human *bhava*, there can be many births until the *kammic* energy for that human *bhava* runs out. Otherwise, how can one explain all these rebirth stories, where a human is reborn only a few years after dying in the previous human life?

11. I understand the reluctance of many to discard the deeply embedded idea that *gandhabba* is a Mahāyāna concept. I used to have that wrong view too. But as I have discussed above, many things will be left unexplained and there will be many inconsistencies without it.

- Most importantly, rejecting the idea of a *gandhabba* (i.e., the existence of a *paralowa*) is a *micca diṭṭhi* and thus one cannot even become a *Sotāpanna Anugami* with that *micca diṭṭhi*; see, “[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)” and “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)”. So, I would urge everyone to examine the evidence carefully and make an informed decision.
- More evidence is in many other posts at the site. There are two subsections on *gandhabba*: “[Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)” and “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)”.
- One can also use the “Search” box on top right to locate all relevant posts by typing “gandhabba”.

4.7.3 Antarabhava and Gandhabba

July 29, 2016

Title pronunciation:

[WebLink: Listen to Pronunciation: Antarabhava and Gandhabba](#)

1. There are many misinterpretations about the term “*antarabhava*”. Just two to three hundred years after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha, Mahayanists started saying that there is an *antarabhava*, because they thought *gandhabba* belonged to an *antarabhava*.

- At the Third Buddhist Council, Moggaliputta tissa *Thero* proved that there is no *antarabhava* in a debate with the Mahayanists. That correct interpretation is in the *Kathavatthu* of the *Tipitaka*.

2. *Antarabhava* (“*antara*” + “*bhava*”, where *antara* is “in between”) means in between *bhava* or existences. For example, when a living being in the human *bhava* exhausts its *kammic* energy for that human existence, it grasps a new existence (*bhava*) at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment. Suppose the next existence or *bhava* is existence as a deer, for this example.

- The transition from a human existence to an existence as a deer happens in a billionth of a second from the *cuti citta* (dying moment in the human *bhava*) to the *patisandhi citta* (first thought moment in the existence as a deer).
- **Therefore, indeed there is no *antarabhava*.** The time lapse from the *cuti citta* to the *patisandhi citta* is negligibly small; see, “[Cuti-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”. **This was the point made by Moggaliputta tissa Thero at the Third Buddhist Council:** there is no “*antarabhava*” between the “human *bhava*” and the “deer *bhava*” in the above example.
- *Gandhabba* is in the same “human *bhava*” until the *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* runs out (which could be many hundreds of years, compared to about 100 years of lifetime for a human). In between successive human births within that human *bhava*, it is the *gandhabba* that lives in “*paralowa*”; see, “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)”.

3. **The important point is that *bhava* and *jati* are two different things.** That is why in *paticca samupada* there is a step, “*bhava paccaya jati*”. There can be many “*jati*” or births as a human within a single human *bhava*; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births](#)”.

- Living beings in human and animal realms are not born with fully-formed physical bodies. In all other 29 realms, beings are born with full-formed bodies, which are called *opapatika* or instantaneous births. Thus a *deva* or *brahma* is born with fully-formed bodies.

- This means a *deva* or *brahma* will have basically the same body during that *bhava*, even though that body will undergo changes.
4. In our example above, a human could have *kammic* energy supporting that human existence (*bhava*) for even thousands of years. However, a physical human body can last only for about 100 years.
- The *kammic* energy of a human *bhava* is not in the physical body (*karaja kaya*), but is in the “mental body” or the *manomaya kaya* or the *gandhabba*. There is a whole section on the *gandhabba* at this site; see, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)”.
 - As explained in the post, “[Manomaya Kaya \(Gandhabba\) and the Physical Body](#)”, a *gandhabba* will inherit “many physical bodies” during a given human existence.
 - As discussed in the post, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)”, the physical body is inert, and it is the *gandhabba* that “gives life” to that inert body.
5. This is why the death of the physical body does not necessarily mean that there is a *cuti citta* at that dying moment of a human; that is true only if it is a “*kammakkhaya marana*” or death where the *kammic* energy is exhausted (“*marana*” in Pali or Sinhala is for death).
- But most human deaths are “*āyukkhaya marana*”, i.e., the end of life for the physical body (here “*āyu*” means lifetime); there is still more *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* left. **There is no *cuti citta* at that time.** There is no change in the *gandhabba* at the moment of death of the physical body.
6. Thus if it is an “*āyukkhaya marana*”, the *gandhabba* comes out of that dead body and waits for another womb. It is extremely unlikely that there will be a matching womb appearing exactly at the death of a human physical body. In most cases, the *gandhabba* has to wait months and more likely years before a matching womb becomes available (*gati* of the *gandhabba* have to match those of the parents).
- Most deaths due to accidents are not due to “*kammakkhaya marana*”, i.e., the physical body is destroyed in an unforeseen way. Such deaths are caused by strong *kamma vipāka* or via natural disasters like floods. Then the person in question will be reborn with a new human body. This is why many rebirths accounts describe death in a previous life due to an accident, murder, etc.
 - Of course one could die with *āyukkhaya marana* even at old age.
7. Now, the reason that the Mahayanists say that there is an *antarabhava* is that they believe that the *gandhabba* is not human and is a “in between state”.
- The irony is that many current Theravadins even refuse to believe the EXISTENCE of a *gandhabba*, simply because they do not want to be classified as taking the side of the Mahayanists. They simply believe that when a human dies — and is going to be reborn human — the second human life is initiated INSTANTANEOUSLY. In other words, the previous human dies at the *cuti* moment, and a billionth of a second later appears as a new baby in a human womb (*patisandhi*).
 - However, that approach leads to many inconsistencies: (i) That kind of timing is an impossibility. (ii) The step “*bhava paccaya jati*” in *paticca samuppāda* does not make sense: Is that new human birth a new *bhava*?. (iii) *Patisandhi* or grasping a new *bhava* happens within a thought moment, while birth in the human realm happens via a series of steps described in #8 below. (iv) As discussed in #9 – #11 below, rebirth accounts are also not compatible with rebirth occurring in the womb. (v) There is more evidence from the *Tipitaka* as discussed in #12, #13 below.
8. According to the *Tipitaka*, a full-pledged human appears via a series of steps: *Jāti, sanjāthi, okkanthi, abhinibbanthi, khandhānan pātilabho, ayatanan pātilabho*. This process is described in detail in “[Manomaya Kaya \(Gandhabba\) and the Physical Body](#)”.
- Here, *jati* is the *patisandhi* moment, when the *kammaja kaya* for the new *bhava* is produced in a thought moment. Moments later, that *kammaja kaya* is augmented by the *cittaja kaya* and a *utuja*

kaya and a *manomaya kaya* (*gandhabba*) is formed; this is the *sanjathi* moment. This *gandhabba* comes out of the dead body of the previous life (*bhava*).

- When that *gandhabba* goes into a suitable womb, that is the *okkanthi* moment. This is what is described as “*viññāṇa* of a prince or princess descending into a womb” in the *suttas*. Note that by the time descending into a womb, the sex is already determined. It is a *gandhabba* that descends into the womb.
- There is no place in the *Tipitaka* that says *patisandhi* happens in a womb. Rather it says, “... *gandhabba okkanthi hoti*”.

9. Many rebirth account features can be explained by the correct interpretation where the *manomaya kaya* (*gandhabba*) inherits many successive (but time separated) physical bodies.

- In rebirth stories, there is always a “time gap” between successive human births (*jati*). They are always separated by several years or at least few years. In between those successive lives, that lifestream survives as a *gandhabba*. The Buddha told Vacchagotta that the *gandhabba* survives that intervening time by using *taṇhā* as *āhāra*. Some *gandhabbas* can “inhale” aroma from plants, too.
- We all know that human existence is extremely difficult to attain; see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)”. If each human birth is categorized as a “brand new human existence or *bhava*”, that would be inconsistent since human existence is a rare event.

10. Then another question may arise, “Why do people look different in successive rebirths?”. That is because the physical body in each human life (within the same human *bhava*) arise with contributions from the parents for that life.

- Even though the *gandhabba* brings in his/her *gati* (habits), *āsava* (cravings), *keles* (mental impurities), etc from the previous life, the physical body for the new life has major contributions from the parents. In fact, the DNA of the physical bodies of two successive lives will be very different due to this reason. The building of a new physical body is described in the post, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”.

11. Furthermore, even the mental body of the *gandhabba* WILL change in the next life and thus *gathi* (habits), *āsava* (cravings), *keles* (mental impurities), etc will also change as one grows up in a new environment under a different set of influences.

- For example, one could have lived a moral life in the previous birth, but may be born into a family of drug addicts due to a bad *kamma vipāka*. In that case, the new life could drastically change to an immoral life.
- However, in most cases, the successive lives are not that drastically different, unless one makes drastic changes during the life: If one could attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, then one will not be born into an immoral family; if one attains the *Anāgāmi* stage of *Nibbāna*, then one will never be born human and will be born in the *brahma* realm.
- On the other hand, even if one is born in a moral family but under the influence of bad friends becomes a drug addict and commits crimes, one is likely to be born into an immoral family in the next birth. If one commits an *ānantariya pāpa kammā* (say by killing a parent), then one will definitely be born in the *apāyas* at death, even if there is more *kammic* energy left in the human *bhava*.

12. Now, let us discuss more evidence from the *Tipitaka*. During the night of his Enlightenment, the Buddha (or more accurately the ascetic Siddhartha) first attained the “*pubbe nivasanussati ñāṇa*”, before attaining the “*cutupapada ñāṇa*” and finally the “*āsavakkhaya ñāṇa*”. It is the *āsavakkhaya ñāṇa* that led to the Buddhahood; see, “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)”.

- The first two knowledges (*ñāṇa*; pronounced “*gnana*”;) can be attained even with *anariya jhānas* (with limited capabilities). Both those deal with the ability to look back at previous lives. But with the first one, *pubbe nivasanussati ñāṇa*, one could only look at **previous human births**.

- Here, “*pubbe*” means “previous”, “*nivasa*” means “house”, and “*anussati*” means “recall”, i.e., the knowledge to recall successive residences of a given *gandhabba*. In a given human *bhava*, a *gandhabba* could have many different “houses”, i.e., physical bodies. Thus with this *ñāṇa*, one could look at human births in the past, in multiple human *bhava* going back to very long times, depending on the capability of the *yogi*.
- The second one, *cutupapada ñāṇa*, extends the capability to see **all previous rebirths in any realm**. Here *cutupapada* (*cuti* means death and *upapada* means birth) refers to all types of rebirths in various realms (*niraya*, animal, *deva*, etc.) in the past.

13. Furthermore, the Buddha described how he saw human *gandhabbas* moving from one physical body to the next (in a single human *bhava*) with the *pubbe nivasanussati ñāṇa*. He described that with the following simile: If one is situated in an upper level of a multi-story building (yes, there were multi-storied buildings at the time of the Buddha) located at a busy junction, one could see people meandering in the streets below.

- Some people just stay on the street, sometimes sitting in a bench or standing by the road, etc; this is analogous to *gandhabbas* just waiting for a physical body (i.e., a womb).
- Sometimes, a person enter a house and stays there for a long time; this is comparable to a *gandhabba* staying in a physical body for a long time, i.e., until old age.
- Other times, a person may enter a house and come out after a few hours; this can be compared to a death at young age.
- Also, a person could enter a house and immediately come out; this is compared to an abortion or an unsuccessful pregnancy.

Thus the *pubbe nivasanussati ñāṇa* is limited to looking at past human lives. This is a good example that the Buddha clearly stated the concept of the *gandhabba*. The *cutupapada ñāṇa*, extends the capability to see all previous rebirths in any realm.

- In the *Tirokudda sutta*, the *gandhabba* is referred to as a “*tirokudda*”; see, “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)”.

14. Now, if a human dies at end of the *kammic* energy for the human *bhava*, then the *cuti-patisandhi* transition does happen at the moment of the death of the physical body. In the specific example of a human to deer transition, now a “deer *gandhabba*” comes out of that dead body and has to wait for a matching “deer womb” to become available.

- However, if the human was destined to become a *deva*, then a fully formed *deva* will appear instantaneously in a *deva* realm the moment the human dies in a *kammakkhaya marana*. A *gandhabba* is involved only in human and animal realms; see, “[Gandhabba – Only in Human and Animal Realms](#)”.

15. Another interesting piece of information comes from how the Buddha (and others with *iddhi bala*) traveled to *deva* or *brahma loka* with the *manomaya kaya* (which is the same as *gandhabba*), leaving the physical body behind (the physical body does not die in this case, and is kept alive by the *rūpa jivitindriya*). Upon returning, the *manomaya kaya* can re-enter the physical body.

- Those who attain the fourth *jhāna* can develop *iddhi* powers to be able to separate the *manomaya kaya* from the physical body and travel far with that *manomaya kaya*. The Buddha stated that just as a sword can be pulled out of its sheath, those with *iddhi* powers can pull the *manomaya kaya* out of the physical body.
- That *manomaya kaya* can then go to distant places within very short times (this is what is called “astral travel” in the present day; see the Wikipedia article, “[WebLink: Wiki: Astral projection](#)”. **In fact, a *gandhabba* is the same as an “astral body”**).
- In the *suttas* it is said that the Buddha visited *deva* or *brahma lokas* “within the time that takes a bent arm to be straightened”.
- As an aside, it is also possible for some of those with *iddhi* powers to travel with the physical body. That involves a different mechanism which is not relevant to this discussion.

16. If you have any other questions or unresolved issues pertaining to this discussion, please send me a comment. I can add to the post to address such questions.

4.7.4 Ānantariya Kamma – Connection to Gandhabba

June 2, 2018

1. *Ānantariya* or *ānantarika* comes from “*na*” + “*an*” + “*antara*”. That rhymes as “*ānantara*”. There are many words like this, meanings of which remain unclear to many. Pāli is a phonetic language, where some meanings can never be found grammatically.

- *Anatta* is the negation of “*atta*” or having refuge/having substance: “*na*” + “*atta*” (which rhymes as “*anatta*”): there is no substance/does not hold any ultimate truth; see, “[Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?](#)”.
- The word *Anāgāmī* comes from “*na*” + “*āgāmī*” or “not coming back”: “*na*” + “*āgāmī*” rhymes as “*anāgāmī*”. It means “not coming back to the *kāma loka*”. He/she will attain *Nibbāna* from those *brahma* realms.
- Words like this cannot be analyzed grammatically. This is why current Pāli experts are wrong in interpreting such words (and are unable to interpret many key words).
- By the way, *annantara* means the opposite of *ānantara*; see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”.

2. Going back to the word “*ānantariya*”: “*An*” or “*anu*” means “food” or “*kamma* seed” depending on where it is used. “*na*” means “not”. “*antara*” means stored somewhere away. Therefore, *ānantariya* means “not stored away to come back when conditions are right”, i.e., it will bring *vipāka* “right away”.

- When one does a *kamma* that is NOT *ānantariya*, its *kammic* energy is “stored away” at “*antara*” and can bring suitable *kamma vipāka*, when suitable CONDITIONS appear. Some *kamma vipāka* may not be realized for many lives simply because suitable conditions had not appeared.
- However, an *ānantariya kamma vipāka* SHOULD override any existing other *kamma vipāka*. Our life experiences (*citta vithi*) ALWAYS start with a *kamma vipāka* (see, “[How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?](#)”). Therefore, an *ānantariya kamma vipāka* SHOULD BE enforced right after the *kamma* is done, even before any other *pavutti kamma vipāka* (like a seeing, hearing event) is initiated, i.e., **instantaneously**. There should be no need for a delay until the death of the human. [*pavutti* : happening, proceeding, fate, event]

3. However, an *ānantariya kamma* will bring *vipāka* “right away” **ONLY in realms other than human realm** (*ānantariya kamma* are not relevant in the animal realm). In order to see why that is, let us first look at what types of *kamma* belong to *ānantariya kamma*.

- The BAD *ānantariya kamma* are five: killing one’s mother, killing one’s father, killing an *Arahant*, shedding the blood of a Buddha, creating *Sangha bheda*. [*bheda* : [m.] breach; disunion; dissension.]
- Then, there are several GOOD *ānantariya kamma*: *magga phala* (stages of *Nibbāna*) and attainment of (*Ariya* or *anāriya*) *jhānās*.
- Any of these, by definition, should lead to their *vipāka* right away. However, there is another factor that comes into play for humans, which we will discuss now.

4. All of the five bad *ānantariya kamma* are done by humans. Therefore, we need look at the good *ānantariya kamma* in order to see how they work in other realms.

- For example, if a *deva* attains the *Anāgāmī* stage, that *deva* will instantaneously be born in a *rūpāvacara brahma* realm. [*deva* : (lit:the Radiant Ones; related to Lat. deus): heavenly beings, deities, celestials, are beings who live in happy worlds, and who, as a rule, are invisible to the human eye. They are subject, however, just like all human and other beings, to ever-

repeated rebirth, old age and death, and thus are not freed from the cycle of existence and from misery.]

- If a *rūpāvacara brahma* attains the *Arahant* stage, that *brahma* will instantaneously attain *Parinibbāna*, i.e., will cease to exist in the 31 realms.
- In both those cases, the true meaning of the term *ānantariya kamma* will be enforced, i.e., the *vipāka* will take place without a delay, instantaneously.

5. In the human realm, the enforcement of an *ānantariya kamma* will be DELAYED due to the following reason.

- The primary “body” that is directly subjected to *ānantariya kamma vipāka* is the *kammaja kaya*, the “primary body” created by *kamma* for that *bhava* at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment. All living beings are born with a “mental body” (called “*trija kaya*” or three bodies) consisting of the *kammaja kaya*, *cittaja kaya*, and *utuja kaya*.
- *Brahmas* only have *trija kaya*. Even though *devas* in the six *deva* realms have a fourth “physical body” or a “*karaja kaya*”, that is very fine. Thus, the *trija kaya* (specifically the *kammaja kaya*) of a *deva* is not shielded sufficiently and any *ānantariya kamma vipāka* will take place without a delay.
- This *trija kaya* in human and animal realms it is given a special name “*gandhabba*”.

6. **The *trija kaya* or the *gandhabba* of a human is shielded by the “dense human physical body”.**

Therefore, the instantaneous enforcement of the *ānantariya kamma vipāka* on the *kammaja kaya* cannot take place. It will have to wait until the death of the physical body.

- When the physical body of a human dies, the *trija kaya* (which is given the special name *gandhabba*) comes out and is no longer shielded by the physical body. **At that time, the *ānantariya kamma vipāka* will be enforced instantaneously.**
- This is the reason that the term *ānantariya kamma vipāka* does not apply to a human in the true sense of *ānantariya* (no delay).
- **Therefore, the working of *ānantariya kamma vipāka* cannot be explained without the concept of *gandhabba*.**

7. Now we can explain many applications of the *ānantariya kamma vipāka* for humans.

- On the “bad side”, for example, one can kill a parent or cause *Sangha bheda* and can live a full life. However, at the death of the physical body, one would be instantaneously born in the *apāyās* (even if there is more *kammic* energy for the current human *bhava* left).
- On the “good side”, one attaining a *jhāna* will be born in the appropriate *brahma* realm only after death. One attaining the *Anāgāmī* stage will be born in the appropriate *brahma* realm only after death, and one attaining the *Arahant* stage would undergo *Parinibbāna* (i.e., cease to exist in the 31 realms and immediately get to *Nibbāna*) only at death.

8. Now, another question may come up regarding the following situation: an *Arahant*’s or an *Anāgāmī*’s *gandhabba* may have to come out of the physical body when performing a supernormal action (*abhiññā*). Wouldn’t that *gandhabba* undergo instantaneous transformation at that time?

- The answer is no. The reason is that the *gandhabba* is still firmly connected to the living physical body (that is they can re-enter that body any time). It is as if the *gandhabba* is still protected by the physical body; the shielding is still active.
- This explanation holds also in the cases of astral projection and out-of-body experiences (OBE); see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)”. In the case of astral projection or astral travel, it is said that the astral body is kept “attached” to the physical body by “silver cord”.

9. Now we can address another related issue. There seems to be two issues that may be difficult to grasp.

- A LIVING *Arahant* is subjected to *kamma vipāka* DURING his/her life.
- No *kamma vipāka* will come to an *Arahant* AFTER his/her death.

10. As we discussed above, a **human *Arahant*** will not attain *Parinibbāna* at the moment of attaining the *Arahanthood*, because of the presence of human physical body. Thus, a human *Arahant* has to wait until the death of the physical body to attain *Parinibbāna*.

- Now, attaining a *magga phala* does NOT mean the removal of *kammic* energies for previous *kamma* (see below). Therefore, those *kamma vipāka* will be still effective for the *Arahant* until death.
- This is why even the Buddha had to suffer from an injury to his toe, had back problems, and also had pains after the last meal.

11. There could many more *kamma vipāka* left for an *Arahant* at the time of death. However, at death, the *gandhabba* comes of the dead body and will instantaneously disappear from the 31 realms of this world, i.e., attain *Parinibbāna*.

- Therefore, any remaining *kamma vipāka* will NEVER be able to materialize. They are said to have become “*ahosi kamma*“, or “ineffective *kamma*“.
- So, now we have answers to the two questions raised in #9 above.

12. However, **some *kamma vipāka*** other than an *ānantariya kamma vipāka* **will be overcome** by attaining a *magga phala* (at least the *Sotāpanna* stage), i.e., some *kamma vipāka* will become *ahosi kamma*. Of course, **all *kamma vipāka*** will become *ahosi kamma* at *Parinibbāna*.

- Let us discuss how some *kamma vipāka* can become *ahosi kamma* upon attaining stages of *magga phala*.
- In order to do that we need first to discuss what happens at the *Arahant* stage.

13. One attains the final stage of *Nibbāna* (*Arahanthood*), not by removing or exhausting all *kamma vipāka* from the past.

- One attains the *Arahanthood* by cultivating one’s *paññā* (wisdom) to the level where one truly understands the real nature of this world. **At that point one’s mind will not be tempted by ANY desire (*taṇhā*) to be born ANYWHERE in the 31 realms.** That is a CRITICAL POINT to understand.
- Now when the *gandhabba* comes out of the dead body of an *Arahant*, it immediately undergoes the ***cuti* (separation from the human *bhava*)**, due to the *ānantariya kamma vipāka* associated with the *Arahant phala*.
- But now, that lifestream CANNOT grasp a new ***bhava* (*patisandhi*)** anywhere in the 31 realms since there is no “*upādāna*” in the step of “*upādāna paccayā bhava*” in the *Paticca Samuppada* process. This is because there is no *taṇhā* left for any existence in the 31 realms and thus “*taṇhā paccayā upādāna*” step will not happen.

14. Therefore, even though there are many good and bad *kamma vipāka* may be associated with that *Arahant*, all those will have become “*ahosi kamma*” (are not able to bring out *vipāka*), simply because one has lost ALL cravings (*taṇhā*).

- This is why Angulimala became free of the *apāyās*, even though he killed 999 people. That was not an *ānantariya kamma*. Only those *kamma* listed in #3 above are *ānantariya kamma*.

15. However, in the case of the death of an *Anāgāmī*, the *gandhabba* comes out, undergoes *cuti*, but can grasp a *bhava* in the *rūpāvacara brahma* realms reserved for the *Anāgāmīs*. Therefore, a *cuti-patisandhi* transition takes place leading to the rebirth in such a realm.

- But an *Anāgāmī*’s mind would not grasp a *bhava* anywhere in the *kāmāvacara* realms, since he/she has lost all “*upādāna*” (tied to cravings via *taṇhā*) for such realms. Therefore, any previous *kamma vipāka* that could have led to a rebirth in the lower realms will have become *ahosi kamma*.

16. In the same way, a *Sotāpanna*'s mind would not grasp a *bhava* in the *apāyās*. Any “*apāyagami kamma*” he/she had done have now become “*ahosi kamma*”. If one has “*apāyagami kamma vipāka*” waiting to bear fruit (as almost all normal humans do), attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage will OVERRIDE those *kamma vipāka*.

- To put it in another way: at the dying moment, a *Sotāpanna* WILL NOT grasp (*upādāna*) a birth in the *apāyās*. His/her mindset has PERMANENTLY changed. Therefore, such *kamma vipāka* will NEVER materialize even in future lives for a *Sotāpanna*.
- His/her *diṭṭhi anusaya* and *ditthāsava* have been permanently removed, and the three *samyojanā* that binds one to the *apāyās* have been cut off; these terms describe the *Sotāpanna* attainment in different ways; see below.

17. Even though one who attained an *anāriya jhāna* would grasp a *bhava* in the appropriate *brahma* realm, that is just for that particular *cuti-patisandhi* transition.

- Since he/she had not attained a *magga phala* (and thus has not “seen” the futility/danger of “*apāyagami* actions”), a birth in the *apāyās* can happen in the future.
- One with an *anāriya jhāna* has only SUPPRESSED cravings for *kāma loka*, **but such cravings remain as *anusaya***: One has not removed *avijjā* to the level of truly realizing the dangers of *kāma rāga*, by comprehending *Tilakkhana*. Thus, *kāma rāga anusaya* remains together with *kāmāsava*, and one has not broken through the *kāma rāga samyojanā*. These terms are explained in, “[Gathi \(Gati\), Anusaya, and Āsava](#)” and “[Dasa Samyojana – Bonds in Rebirth Process](#)”.

18. Therefore, ultimately it is the true understanding of *Tilakkhana* at various levels that lead to various *magga phala*.

- However, understanding of *Tilakkhana* is possible only for one who has cultivated the mundane eightfold path, via discarding ALL 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi*. [See the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi* at [Mahā Chattārisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#), [Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotapanna Stage](#), [Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#), and [Three Kinds of Ditthi, Eightfold Paths, and Samadhi](#)] [[WebLink: suttacentral: 62 views](#) at [WebLink: suttacentral: Brahmajala Sutta](#)]
- To put it another way, attaining *magga phala* at various stages is associated with getting rid of *dasa akusala* at various levels.
- *Miccā diṭṭhi* is the worst of the *dasa akusala*, and at the root of *miccā diṭṭhi* is are the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi*. The second level of *miccā diṭṭhi* is removed with the comprehension of *Tilakkhana* (that is when one starts on the Noble Eightfold Path).
- All wrong views (*diṭṭhi*) are removed when one attains the *Arahanthood*. When all wrong views are removed, all other nine *akusala* are prevented. However, abstaining from other *dasa akusala* is necessary to remove wrong views, so they are all inter-connected.
- **I keep repeating this, but I am not sure how many pay attention to these basic facts. Many people seem to waste time trying to comprehend *Tilakkhana*, before getting rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi*.**

Discussion at: “[Anantariya Kamma, Euthanasia and Assisted Suicides](#)”.

4.7.5 Mental Body (Gandhabba) – Personal Accounts

February 5, 2017

1. The idea of a mental body controlling the physical body was discussed in the previous post in this section (“[Our Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)”), and the details are discussed in many other posts; see, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)”.

By the way, mental body is not all mental. It has a fine material component at *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*] level; see, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)- Introduction](#)”.

- There are many reported instances of this mental body coming out of the physical body, and I have mentioned some of those in other posts. But I would like to have some of that evidence in one place, so that one can get an idea of why it is not an alien concept.
- But there are many made-up stories too. **So, my advice is not to get carried away too much about watching these youtube videos. That is a waste of time.** I just wanted to provide some idea that mental body (*gandhabba*) is real.
- The evidence come in three general types of accounts, as we discuss below.

2. Many people have at least briefly experienced an “out-of-body experience” (OBE), where the mental body just comes out the physical body, and one see one’s own physical body from above.

- In his book, “Travels”, famous author of the Jurassic Park, Michael Crichton (1988, p. 307) mentions his ability to “shift my awareness out of my body and move it around the bedroom”, and he says, “..I didn’t think anything about it... I assumed that anybody could do it..”.
- A similar account has been given by a woman recently who also thought that “everybody could do it”: [WebLink: ABCNews: Woman Has ‘Out of Body’ Experiences Whenever She Wants](#)
- Robert Monroe (see #6 below) says mental bodies of most of us come out and wander around even without us realizing it. Sometimes, we are in a dream state (we believe) and then feel a “sudden fall” and wake up. He says this “dream state” is actually the mental body wandering around and we feel the “sudden fall” when the mental body re-enters the physical body.
- **So it is not correct to assume that a *gandhabba* or the mental body as a “ghost”. In a sense, it is a better representation of us than our physical bodies that are discarded after about 100 years, because it may live for many hundreds of years until the *kammic* energy for this human *bhava* is exhausted.**

3. There are other — more dramatic — reported cases of OBE and some of them involve “near death experiences” (NDE), where the person was presumed to be dead but revived later on. During that time, the mental body usually “went through a tunnel” to another dimension, but then came back to re-enter the body.

- Of course there are many books written on OBE and NDE. “Consciousness Beyond Life”, by Pim van Lommel (2010) gives detailed accounts of case studies of OBE and NDE experienced by people undergoing heart operations, some of whom were declared dead, but came back to life.
- A third category involves the rebirth accounts from children, who were killed in an accident in the previous life. They can recall that incident from the previous life, where the mental body came out of a physical body and they watched the accident scene from above. They have provided accurate accounts of that scene. I will discuss one such account at the end of the post.

4. The experiences described in the accounts below need to be evaluated with the following nuances (subtle aspects) in mind. Once the mental body comes out, first it can be an exhilarating experience to be free of the heavy physical body. So, most people describe it as a “liberating experience”.

- However, without the physical body, one cannot enjoy smells (in many cases), taste of food, and also bodily pleasures. Thus, if one had to live without a physical body for a long-time, one could become frustrated, and one could suffer. This is the status of a *gandhabba* in between two consecutive human births.
- Therefore, even though it could be an “liberating experience” to come out from the shackles of the physical body for a short time as in OBE and NDE, **it may not be that pleasant to stay in that state state if one has not given up the desire for sensual pleasures, since one cannot “enjoy” sense pleasures without a physical body.**

5. The other point to keep in mind is that many experiences (especially those from the Western world) are from people who have other religious backgrounds. In a way, this is good because we can get an unbiased opinion. But, unfortunately they have a different bias due to their own religious

beliefs. For example, many people say they visited heaven, which in reality could be a “good locality” of the *gandhabbas*.

- It must be kept in mind that *gandhabba* world is not just “one place”, even though physical locations cannot be assigned. It is much better to say that “good *gandhabbas*” with higher moral values hang out together (such localities may be referred to as “heaven”), and “bad *gandhabbas*” segregate away from those. And there can be many varieties in between.
- It is similar to the case of people with similar *gathi* hanging together.
- So, it can be thought of as there being many “*gandhabbas* worlds” in the nether world or *paralowa*.
- Some of the *gandhabbas* have very fine bodies, but others may have more dense bodies (still much less dense than our bodies). Some may “look” like humans, but some may have started already transforming to animal forms (due to types *saṅkhāra* they cultivate) and may look half human and half animal. It is a very complex world.

6. Robert Monroe has written several books about the OBE experiences of himself and others. Two of his books are: “Journeys Out of the Body: The Classic Work on Out-of-Body Experience” and “Far Journeys”.

- Here is how he describes his first OBE experience (there are many other youtube videos on his accounts):

[WebLink: Youtube: Robert Monroe explains his first OBE](#)

7. The following video is on a case of OBE during brain surgery. Even though the *gandhabba* or the mental body normally comes out during heart operations and not during brain operations, in this case the heart was stressed because this particular operation involved cooling the heart to extremely low temperatures.

[WebLink: YouTube: Pam Reynolds: NBC interview about her Near-Death Experience](#)

8. Here is an interesting documentary, “Beyond Our Sight – documentary”. Thanks to Mr. Johnny Lim from Singapore for sending me this video.

[WebLink: YouTube: Beyond Our Sight - documentary \(52'\)](#)

9. In their book, “Soul Survivor: The Reincarnation of a World War II Fighter Pilot”, by Bruce and Andrea Leininger detail the amazing story of their son’s recount of a past life, mentioned in the above video. There the little boy vividly describes how he died in his previous life. This falls into the third category that I mentioned in #1 above. Here is a ABC News report on the story:

[WebLink: YouTube: Reincarnation - Airplane Boy \(abc Primetime\)](#)

- Another youtube video link was sent to me by a reader from Sri Lanka who did not want to be identified. This video is in Sinhala, and is the account of a boy. This boy was an adult in the previous life and was killed in an accident. He describes how his mental body came out of the dead body and how he watched from above the scene of the accident.
- The actual account starts at 3 minutes into the video.

[WebLink: YouTube: wenasa](#)

Several years later (during which time he was in the *gandhabba* world or *paralowa*), he was born to a family in a different village in Sri Lanka.

- As is evident from the above two stories, successive births within a given *bhava* are likely to be— but not always — in similar geographic regions because of the tendency to match one’s *gathi*.

10. Some scientists believe that these are mind-made hallucinations. Here is a researcher’s account of his investigations into that possibility. He started the project to prove that it is a hallucination, but ended up convincing himself otherwise.

[WebLink: YouTube: Larry King Interview with Melvin Morse](#)

11. Finally, there are some trying to make money saying they can teach how to do “astral projection”. Astral projection is another name for OBE.

- This is not something that can be taught. So, don’t waste money.
- The only way to do it systematically is to cultivate *Ariya* or *anariya jhānas* to the fourth *jhāna*. Then one can practice further and learn how to remove the mental body from the physical. The Buddha compared this to removing a sword from its sheath.
- However, most people who can naturally do it get it as a *sansaric* habit. They are likely to have cultivated *jhānas* and developed *abhiññā* powers in recent past lives.
- The most common situation is when the mental body just pops out of the physical body in highly stressful situations where the stress is affecting the heart. The *hadaya vatthu* of the *gandhabba* overlaps the physical heart, and thus when the heart is stressed out, *gandhabba* may just pop out of the physical body.

4.7.6 Abnormal Births Due to Gandhabba Transformations

September 30, 2017

1. Modern science and technology, especially the internet, is a very useful resource to understand and confirm some concepts in Buddha Dhamma. All of us can now access rare events in remote places, that we would never have known without the internet.

- I started thinking about this post when I received a youtube video of a “strange looking animal” sent to me by Mr. Tobias Große from Germany. Then I did a Google search and found that there are many such “abnormal” human and animal birth reports from all over the world.
- Such observations can be explained with the concept of *gandhabba*, which is an essential concept for describing the life in the human and animal realms. I have two sub-sections at the website devoted to the important concept of *gandhabba*: “[Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)” and “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)”.
- Of course, *gandhabba* is NOT a Mahayana concept, see, “[Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka](#)”, and without that there will be many inconsistencies, including the observed fact that there are gaps of several years in between successive human rebirths; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.

2. As we have discussed in those posts, a human *bhava* (existence) could last for many hundreds or even thousand of years. Within that time, one could be born with a human body many times. When one is born with a human body and when that “physical body” dies, the “mental body” or the *gandhabba* state could have many hundreds of years of life left.

- Thus, unless the kammic energy for that “human *bhava*” has been exhausted, the mental body (*gandhabba*) comes of the dead physical body unharmed. Since we cannot see that very fine body, it is said that the *gandhabba* lives in “*paralowa*” (other world, sometime called nether world), compared to “this world” that we can see.
- That *gandhabba* has to wait for a suitable womb to become available, and at that time it is pulled into that “matching womb”. This is why there is normally a gap of several years exists in between successive rebirths per rebirth stories; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”.

3. During one’s lifetime, the *kammaja kaya* of the *gandhabba* changes, and sometimes those changes can be drastic. If one kills a parent, that *kammaja kaya* does not change instantly only because it is “enclosed” in the dense physical body.

- But when the physical body dies, the *gandhabba* is automatically kicked out of that body, and will instantly transform to a *kamma kaya* suitable for a being in an *apāya*. Therefore, even if the original *gandhabba* had more *kammic* energy left for the human *bhava*, a *cuti-patisandhi* to a “hell being” will occur, and he/she will be instantly born in an *apāya*.

- There are such *anantariya kamma* that can instantly lead to births in *rūpa* and *arūpa lōka*: If one had cultivated *jhāna*, then when the *gandhabba* comes out of the dead body, it will instantly undergo a *cuti-patisandhi* transition to a *brahma* and will be born instantly in the corresponding *brahma* realm.

4. Sometimes, a human *gandhabba* starts making the transformation to another *bhava* while in the *gandhabba* state after coming out of a dead body. This happens especially for those who are engaged in highly immoral deeds.

- For example, if one is cultivating “animal *gati*” (thinking and behaving like an animal), then the *gandhabba* will continue to generate such “animal *saṅkhāra*” after coming out of the dead body, and may gradually transform to an animal while in the *gandhabba* state. Then, if a matching animal womb comes available, that half-human creature will be pulled into that womb.
- Now, by “matching womb” what is meant is the mental state of the mother at that time. She could be a “good moral person”, but if for some reason her mental state at that time became “abnormal”, then it could become a matching womb for that creature, who could be half human, half animal.
- Depending on how far that transformation had taken place, that *gandhabba* could be pulled into a human womb or an animal womb, i.e., be born to a human or animal mother. Here is the video sent to me by Mr. Tobias Große from an animal birth that looks partly human:

[WebLink: gmx.net: Halb Mensch, halb Tier: Kuh sieht aus wie Fabelwesen](http://gmx.net: Halb Mensch, halb Tier: Kuh sieht aus wie Fabelwesen)

5. The following are some more examples of (both abnormal human and animal births) available as youtube videos (of course, in some cases “photoshop” may have been used; there are many on the internet and I have picked a couple that appear to be genuine):

[WebLink: Youtube: Half Animal Half Human Found In Real Life](#)

[WebLink: Youtube: South African Sheep Births Half Human Half Beast](#)

- Here is more information on the above “beast”:

[WebLink: Youtube: HALF HUMAN-HALF BEAST CREATURE SENT BY THE DEVIL](#)

- Thanks to Mr. C. Saket from India for the following video. Some abnormalities shown there could also be due to *gandhabba* transformation together with bad *kamma vipāka*:

[WebLink: Youtube: 10 REAL People With Shocking Genetic Mutations](#)

- Please send me any good videos that you come across, so that I can add them to this collection.

6. Anything and everything in this world happens due to a cause, or more correctly due to multiple causes. The foundation of science is causes and effects. If things happen arbitrarily, then there is no way to predict the outcome of a scientific experiment.

- But modern science deals mainly with the properties of material objects. Also, material objects only have a short “history”; a building or a car is assembled and eventually destroyed. Thus it is easier to see the link between causes and effects.
- But living beings have minds and each living being has a past that extends to the deep past (due to rebirth). So, the causes that bring about results now, may have been done in the deep past. That is why it is hard to see the connection between causes and effects for living beings.

7. My late Noble teacher, Waharaka Thero, has mentioned in several *dēsanās* how he saw such “*gandhabba* transformations” while in *samādhi*.

- When an immoral human dies, the *gandhabba* that comes out will keep cultivating those “bad *saṅkhāra*”, and if they get strong enough the fine body of the *gandhabba* will start changing to match those “*saṅkhāra*” and thus “*gati*”; see, “[Gathi and Bhava – Many Varieties](#)” and “[Gati to Bhava to Jati – Ours to Control](#)”.

- For example, he had seen how a human *gandhabba* transforms to a bird. It started with the head getting longer and forming a beak. The rest of the body then changed gradually from top to bottom. When I heard that, those Egyptian pictures seen on pyramids of “bird men” with bird heads immediately came to my mind.

8. By the way, even some normal people can see those *gandhabbas* with fine bodies; this is due to “*punna iddhi*” due to some past good *kamma*.

- There are different types of “*punna iddhi*”. Surviving without food and water is known as “breatharianism” and has been documented or claimed by many. an extreme case of a Hindu *yogi*, Prahlad Jani, is baffling to many modern scientists:

[WebLink: Youtube: Snippet from "IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS LIGHT" - Yogi Prahlad Jani](#)

- Thanks again to Mr. C. Saket for sending this video and the related comments above.
- The ability to have very detailed memories from this life is also such a “*punna iddhi*”, see, “[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)”, where a woman describes her memories from this life going back to many years. The level of detail she can remember is amazing.
- In fact, I am beginning to believe that in those early Buddhist Councils (*Sangāyana*), where *Arahants* recited the whole *Tipitaka*, they were likely to have VERIFIED then by actually re-visiting each *sutta*’s delivery by *iddhi* power. When you listen to the woman describing past events in such detail, it is as if she is re-visiting that event.
- The ability of some people to see *gandhabbas* with fine bodies could be responsible for the misty “ghost figures” like the ones that we see in popular culture (in books, movies and on the internet).

9. A human *gandhabba* is a finer version of a human. When a human, say a middle aged person dies, the *gandhabba* that comes out looks very similar to that person (if one can see it). Then with time it will show normal changes that could be expected of a human: His hair and fingernails will grow, for example. In a few years, that *gandhabba* WILL look like ghost with long hair and long finger nails. **Imagine what will happen to one’s human body if one doesn’t cut one’s hair, finger nails, or shave. One will look like a ghost. That is why some *gandhabbas* look like ghosts, according to Waharaka Thero.**

- Some of them get a bit denser by inhaling aroma and may become easier to see for those people with “*punna iddhi*” that we mentioned earlier. However, when that *gandhabba* is pulled into a womb, it will shed all “added” mass (*utuja kaya*), and only the basic “*kammaja kaya*” with the *hadaya vatthu* and the *pasāda rūpa* (combined to be smaller than an atom in modern science) will merge with the zygote (the single cell formed by the union of mother and father) that is in the womb.
- Now that “new baby” will have a different body than the body in the previous life, because it have many features inherited from the parents (via DNA) in the zygote.
- But it is essentially the evolved *kammaja kaya* formed at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment that is still there for that next “birth” in the human world. **Thus while the *gandhabba* keep its *kammaja kaya*, but the physical body will be influenced by the parents.**
- This is discussed in detail in, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”.

This world is much more complex than we realize, and the “*paralowa*” of the *gandhabbas* is even more complex; see “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)”.

4.7.7

Satara Āhāra for Mental Body or Gandhabba

February 11, 2017

1. As we have discussed in this subsection and elsewhere at the site, we have two bodies: the physical body (*karaja kāya*) and mental body (*gandhabba*). Both these bodies need food to survive.

- The food we eat to sustain the physical body is called *kabalinkā āhāra*.
- Our mental body consumes three more types of food: *phassa*, *mano sancetana*, and *viññāṇa*.
- The four types of food are called “*satara āhāra*“. We will see that all four can be food for the mental body (*gandhabba*).

2. Food is essential for all living beings. If one stops taking *kabalinkā āhāra* (which includes water) for about seven days or so, one’s physical body will die.

- However, unless one is an *Arahant*, one will be reborn somewhere in the 31 realms upon death, because one’s mental body (*gandhabba*) will not die.
- We cannot stop suffering by committing suicide, i.e., via the death of the physical body. **The mental body needs to die in order to stop the rebirth process.**

3. If one can stop giving food to the mental body for seven days, **it will die**, and one will never be reborn anywhere in the 31 realms, i.e., one will attain *Nibbāna*; then that *Arahant* will not be reborn upon death of the physical body. Thus the unimaginable suffering associated with the rebirth process will be over (as I discussed in the beginning of this section on “[Living Dhamma](#)“, stopping the rebirth process seems scary and it should not be contemplated when one is starting on the Path).

- This is why in the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha said that if one can practice the *sutta* without making any mistakes, one will attain *Nibbāna* in seven days.
- Let us discuss how this is possible.

4. There are two conditions that must be satisfied to generate a new mental body at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment: (i) **There must be a *kamma beeja* available to grasp, and (ii) one’s mind must willingly grasp that *kamma beeja*.**

- We all have accumulated numerous *kamma beeja*, so the first condition is always satisfied for anyone. Therefore, it is the second condition — grasping a new existence (*bhava*) at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment that can stop the rebirth process.
- At the beginning, we need to just focus on not grasping a *bhava* in the four lowest realms (*apāyas*).
- As we have discussed before, this grasping of a new *bhava* is not done consciously, but automatically.
- For example, a *Sotāpanna*’s mind will not grasp a *bhava* in the *apāyas*; A *Sakadāgāmī*’s mind will not grasp a human *bhava* in addition, an *Anāgāmī* will not grasp a *bhava* in the *kāma loka*, and an *Arahant* will not grasp any.

5. There is another way to look at this mechanism of grasping a new *bhava* at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment. In the *uppatti Paticca Samuppāda* (PS) cycle, a certain *bhava* is grasped at “*upādāna paccaya bhava*“.

- When we trace the cycle backwards, we see that it starts at “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*” and “*saṅkhāra paccaya vinanna*“.
- **The grasping (*upādāna*) happens only if that PS starts with *avijjā* and generates an appropriate *viññāṇa* for grasping that *bhava*.**

6. Therefore, it is important to realize the two roles that *viññāṇa* play. We can understand this by examining how a *Sotāpanna* avoids birth in the *apāyas*.

(i) If one cultivates “*apayagami viññāṇa*” by doing extremely hateful/greedy actions, *viññāṇa* will keep GENERATING *kamma beeja* (energy) that fuel a new *bhava* in the *apāyas*. When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, one will automatically stop generating any more such *kamma beeja*, but those ones that had been created will be there.

(ii) However, after someone attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, his/her mind will not start a *uppatti* PS cycle with an *apayagami viññāṇa*, because that level of *avijjā* has been removed. **That type of *viññāṇa* has been “killed” or removed from her mind and is no longer able to grasp a new *bhava* in the *apāyas*, even though *apayagami kamma beeja* will still be there.**

7. A good example from the *Tipitaka* is Ven. Angulimala. He killed almost 1000 people and definitely had accumulated enough strong *kamma beeja* to be born in the *apāyas*.

- But at death his mind was devoid of that kind of bad *viññāṇa* to grasp any type of *bhava* in the 31 realms. Therefore, he was not reborn anywhere in the 31 realms.

8. Therefore, the word *viññāṇa* represents much more than just consciousness: It can be “food” for accumulating new *kamma beeja* AND also “food” or “fuel” that leads to grasping a new *bhava*.

- *Viññāṇa* is opposite of *ñāṇa* (pronounced “gnana”) or wisdom. When one cultivates *ñāṇa*, one’s *avijjā* is reduced and certain types of *viññāṇa* are concomitantly reduced.
- Pronunciation of *viññāṇa*:
[WebLink: Pronunciation of Viññāṇa](#)
- Pronunciation of *ñāṇa*:
[WebLink: Pronunciation of ñāṇa](#)
- There are many types of *viññāṇa*; see, “[2. Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) can be of Many Different Types and Forms](#)”.
- As one attains the four stages of *Nibbāna*, *avijjā* is removed in four stages and the strength of all types of *viññāṇa* are accordingly reduced (removed) and all are eventually removed at the *Arahant* stage.
- This pure level of consciousness — without any defilements and thus any cravings — is called *pabhasvara citta*; see, “[Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#)”.
- In other words, an *Arahant* can experience the world with a purified mind that is not blemished by even a trace of greed, hate, or ignorance. Therefore, at death, his purified mind will not grasp any existence (*bhava*).

9. As long as one has *viññāṇa*, one will be born somewhere in the 31 realms. **This is why *viññāṇa* is called a type of food for the mental body.**

- As one proceeds at successive stages of *Nibbāna*, one will crave for less and less things in this world. For example, at the *Anāgāmi* stage, one would have lost all cravings (and hopes) — or *viññāṇa* — for any type of sensual pleasures.
- **It must be noted that the birth in the *apāyas* is not due to cravings to be willingly born there (no one has such cravings), but due to immoral deeds one had done to enjoy sensual pleasures AND has not yet removed that mentality (desire to enjoy sense pleasures at any cost) or bad *viññāṇa*.**

10. Any type of *viññāṇa* is cultivated by thinking, speaking, and acting in such a manner. Thinking, speaking, and acting is done based on *mano*, *vacī*, and *kāya saṅkhāra* which arise due to *sancetana* (“*san*” + “*cetana*” or defiled intentions; *cetana* is pronounced “chethanā”).

- For example, an alcoholic regularly thinks about drinking, likes to speak about it and likes to drink. The more he does those, the more that *viññāṇa* will grow.
- It is easy to see how a gambler, smoker, etc grow their corresponding *viññāṇa* the same way.
- Having such *viññāṇa* can lead to other immoral activities and corresponding *viññāṇa*, say tendency to lie, steal, and even murder.

- Therefore, all activities done in cultivating such *viññāṇa* are based on *mano sancetana*. **That is why *mano sancetana* are also food for the mental body.**

11. The triggers for such *sancetana* are sense contacts or *phassa*. These are not mere sense contacts, but those that give rise to “*samphassa ja vedanā*”.

- *Phassa* is a sense contact. When one just looks at something that is *phassa*. But if one looks at it with greed or hate (and ignorance) in mind, that is *samphassa* (“*san*” + “*phassa*”); see, “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)”.
- **This is why sense contacts or *phassa* (more precisely *samphassa*) are food for the mental body.** Such sense contacts can lead to thoughts about bad actions and can give rise to future *kammaja kāya*.
- Therefore, one needs to avoid sense contacts with sense objects that one has *taṇhā* for. We need to remember that *taṇhā* is attachment to something via greed or hate; see, “[Taṇhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.
- So, it is a bad idea for a gambler to visit casinos, an alcoholic to make visits to bars, etc. **Furthermore, one needs to avoid friends who encourage such activities too.**
- It is best to avoid any type of contacts that can lead to sense exposures that provide “food” for the mental body, i.e., get us started thinking about those bad activities.

12. Now we can see how those three types of food act in sequence to feed the mental body: Sense contacts (*phassa*) can lead to *mano sancetana*, which in turn cultivate *viññāṇa*.

- Such sense contacts (*samphassa*) automatically start *mano saṅkhāra*; then we start thinking and speaking about those favorite activities, i.e., we start *vacī saṅkhāra* (consciously think about them and even speaking about them). Then when the feelings get strong, we will start doing them (using *kāya saṅkhāra*).
- It is important to realize that *mano saṅkhāra*, *vacī saṅkhāra*, and *kāya saṅkhāra* are all **generated in the mind**: *Vacī saṅkhāra* are conscious thoughts that can lead to speech; *kāya saṅkhāra* are conscious thoughts that move the physical body.
- All three types of *saṅkhāra* arise due to *mano sancetana*. We cannot think, speak or do things without generating appropriate *mano sancetana*.

13. As we discussed before, the physical body is just a shell; it is controlled by the mental body (*gandhabba*).

- Sense contacts come through the physical body. When we get attached to them, we generate *mano sancetana* and think, speak, and act accordingly, generating various types of *viññāṇa*.
- *Kabalinka āhāra* or the food that we eat are experienced through one of the six sense contacts (tongue or *jivha pasada*). If we eat food with greed, that also lead to *mano sancetana* and corresponding “greedy *viññāṇa*”. Therefore, *kabalinkā āhāra* can also be a food for the mental body. More details can be found at “[Āhāra \(Food\) in Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#)”.
- That is why all four types can be food for the mental body.

A deeper discussion on the four types of food (*āhāra*) is in the post, “[Āhāra \(Food\) in Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#)”.

Next, “[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)”,...

4.7.8 Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotapanna Stage

May 6, 2017

1. The 10 types of *micca ditthi* or wrong views must be removed before one can even start on the **mundane Eightfold Path**; see, “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)”, which discusses that there are two Eightfold Paths: mundane and Noble.

- It is only then one's mind is able to see the "bigger picture" and one could comprehend the Three Characteristics or *Tilakkhanana* (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*) of this world of 31 realms.
- Once one comprehends *Tilakkhanana* to some extent, one becomes a *Sotāpanna*, gets in to the **Noble Eightfold Path**, and subsequently attains higher stages of *Nibbāna*.

2. But there are many people today who have at least some of the 10 types of *micca diṭṭhi* and believe that they are on the **Noble Path**. But it is clear from above that some may not even be on the **mundane Path**.

- **Those 10 types of *micca diṭṭhi* cannot be given up just by saying to oneself that one believes in them. One's mind must be convinced of it, and that conviction comes by learning Dhamma, true nature of this world.**
- In this post we focus on the *paralowa* and *gandhabba*, because many *Theravadins* incorrectly assume that *gandhabba* is a *Mahayana* concept.

3. The 10 types of *micca diṭṭhi* are listed in many *suttas*, including the [WebLink: suttacentral: Mahā Cattarisaka Sutta](#) and *Pathama Niraya Sagga Sutta* ([WebLink: suttacentral: Anguttara Nikāya: AN 10.211](#)): "*Natthi dinnam, natthi yiṭṭham, natthi hutaṃ, natthi sukatadukkaṭānaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāko, natthi ayaṃ loko, natthi paro loko, natthi mātā, natthi pitā, natthi sattā opapātikā, natthi loka samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggaṭā sammāpaṭipannā ye imaṇca lokam paraṇca lokam sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedentī'ti*". Translated, the wrong views are:

- Giving (*dāna*) has no merits
- being grateful and responding in kind (for what others have done for oneself) has no merits
- respecting and making offerings to those with higher virtues has no merits
- what we enjoy/suffer in this life is not due to *kamma vipāka* but they "just happen"
- this world does not exist
- ***paralowa* or the world of *gandhabba* does not exist**
- there is no special person as a mother
- there is no special person as a father
- **there are no *opapatika* (instantaneous) births**
- **there are no *samana brahmana* (basically *Ariyas* or *yogis*) with *abhiññā* powers who can see both this world (*imanca lokam*) and *paralowa* (*paranca lokam*)**

3. I have highlighted three types of *micca diṭṭhi* that are common (they are somewhat inter-related), but the one about the *gandhabba* is a *micca diṭṭhi* that even those who believe themselves to be "devout Buddhists" seem to have. They believe that the Buddha did not teach about *gandhabba* or the *paralowa*.

- There is [WebLink: suttacentral: Tirokutta petavatthu](#) in the *Petavatthu* in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* (KN). This has been translated to English (not very good), but one can get in idea: [WebLink: accesstoinight: Tirokudda Kanda: Hungry Shades Outside the Walls](#).
- Also see, "[Antarabhava and Gandhabba](#)".

4. In many *suttas*, including [WebLink: suttacentral: Mahāsaccaka Sutta](#) and [WebLink: suttacentral: Bodhirājakumāra Sutta](#) the Buddha described how he saw human *gandhabbas* moving from one physical body to the next (in a single human *bhava*) with the *Pubbenivasanussati Ñāna* on the night he attained the *Buddhahood*.

- While *Ariyas* with *jhānas* can attain both the *Pubbenivasanussati Ñāna* (about previous human rebirths) and the *Cutupapada Ñāna* (about past births in all realms), other *yogis* can mostly acquire only the first one, i.e., they can see only their previous human births. **Note that this is related to the last type of *micca diṭṭhi*, i.e., to believe that no such *Ariyas* or *yogis* exist.**
- In the *sutta* links above, the Pāli version is correct but English and Sinhala translations are not correct, because there is no distinction made between the *Pubbenivasanussati Ñāna* and the

Cutupapada Ñāna. With the first *Ñāna*, one can see previous human births and the with the second, one can see previous births in all 31 realms.

- By the way, hereafter I will try to provide *sutta* references at the [WebLink: suttcentral: SuttaCentral site](#). They have not only the Pāli version, but also translations in different languages. **However, it must be kept in mind that some translations are incorrect, as mentioned above and also with the translations of *anicca* and *anatta*.**

5. We also need to realize that *paralowa* or the world of *gandhabba* (of both humans and animals) is NOT a separate realm.

- In all other 29 realms, beings are born fully-formed instantaneously (*opapatika*) contrary to the 9th *micca diṭṭhi* on the list above. Those instantaneous births of course do not involve a mother's womb, and one *bhava* means just one *jati* (birth). For example, a *deva* or a *brahma* is born once instantaneously and then death occurs only when the *kammic* energy for the *bhava* is exhausted.
- The difference in the human and animal realms is that those dense physical bodies have lifetimes much smaller than the *kammic* energies for the two *bhava*; see, "[Gandhabba – Only in Human and Animal Realms](#)".
- When a human or an animal dies — and if there is leftover *kammic* energy for the human or animal *bhava* — then a *gandhabba* comes out of the dead body and waits for suitable womb to be born (*jati*) again in the same *bhava* (same realm).
- Thus, contrary to the widespread belief, *gandhabba* is not an "*antarabhava*" (in between *bhava*; "*antara*" means "in between"), but rather is in the same *bhava*. The confusion arises with not knowing the difference between *bhava* and *jati*.

6. Until they find a suitable womb, those *gandhabba* are in "*paralowa*" or the netherworld, which co-exists with our world (but normally we cannot see those fine bodies of *gandhabbas*).

- Thus a human may be reborn many times before switching to another existence (*deva*, *brahma*, animal, *preta*, etc).
- This is why rebirth stories are common. It is the "human *bhava*" that is extremely hard to get as the Buddha explained. But once in the human *bhava*, one could be born many times as human; see, "[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)".
- The difference between *bhava* and *jati* is explained in, "[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)".

7. So, I hope one can understand the fact that one still has *micca diṭṭhi* if one adamantly rejects the concept of *gandhabba*, or the concept of *opapathika* births.

- If one has any one of the ten *micca diṭṭhi*, one is not yet on even the mundane Eightfold Path; see, "[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)" and the post referred to in that chart, "[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)".
- The Buddha discussed this clearly in the, "[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)".

8. In order to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage, the first step is to make sure that one learns *Dhamma* and clear up any remaining doubts about those ten types of *micca diṭṭhi*.

- When one gets rid of all ten *micca diṭṭhi*, then one is truly on the **mundane Eightfold Path**.
- Then, at that point, one's mind been cleansed to a stage where one can comprehend the Three Characteristics of Nature (*Tilakkhana*): *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. This is a deeper *micca diṭṭhi*, the second type described in the *Mahā Cattarisaka Sutta*.
- When one comprehends the *Tilakkhana* to some extent, one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. **That is when one gets to the *Lokottara* (Noble) Eightfold Path.**

- Then, by following the Noble Eightfold Path one reaches the higher stages of *Nibbāna*, culminating at the *Arahant* stage.

9. The Path to *Nibbāna* has been covered for hundreds of years due to fact that the above steps have not been clear, and also the meanings of those key words, *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* have been distorted.

- That slow process of degradation of Buddha Dhamma took place over about 1500 years, but the most damage was done in the late 1800's when the Europeans discovered the ancient Sanskrit and Pāli documents.
- They first discovered Sanskrit Hindu *Vedic* literature in India (Buddhism had disappeared from India long before that), and later came across the Pāli *Tipitaka* in Sri Lanka, Burma, and other Asian countries.
- The key problem arose when they ASSUMED that Sanskrit words “*anitya*” and “*anathma*” are the same as the Pāli words “*anicca*” and “*anatta*”. **The Sanskrit words “*anitya*” and “*anathma*” do mean “impermanent” and “no self”, but the Pāli words “*anicca*” and “*anatta*” have totally different meanings.**

10. That historical background is fully explained in many posts at the “[Historical Background](#)” section. But at least read the posts starting with “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)”.

- The correct meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* have been discussed in the section, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”.

11. As for the instantaneous births, instances of such *opapatika* births occur in many *suttas*. For example, in the [WebLink: suttcentral: Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta](#), the Buddha told Ven. Ananda about *opapatika* births of many people who died in a certain village: “..*Nandā, ānanda, bhikkhunī pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā opapātikā tattha parinibbāyīnī anāvattidhammā tasmā lokā*..”

- As I mentioned, the translations are available in several languages in the above SuttaCentral link for the *sutta*. For example, the above verse is translated to English as: “..The nun Nandā, Ānanda, through the complete destruction of the five lower fetters has arisen spontaneously in the Brahmā worlds, and will attain Final Emancipation there, without returning from that world..”.
- In Sinhala as: “..ආනන්දය, නන්දා නම් භික්ෂුණිය පසු ආකාර මරණභවය (සන්වයන් කාමලකෙයෙහි රඳවන) සංයෝජනයන් නැතිකිරීම නිසා මපපාතිකව (බිණිමලකෙයෙහි) උපන්නිය. ඒ (බිණිම) ලකෙයෙන් වනෙසින් වෙන ස්වභාව ඇත්ත බවින්දීම පිරිනිවන් පාන්නිය..”.
- However, please keep in mind that those SuttaCentral translations also can have errors (as is the case at most online sites as well as books), as I pointed out in #4 above.

12. Finally, it must be noted that there may be people who attain *magga phala*, but had never even heard about *gandhabba* in this life. If one comprehends the *Tilakkhana*, that is all needed.

- In such cases, they had not rejected the concept of a *gandhabba*. If someone explained the concept to them, they would accept it since they can see that it must be true.
- However, if one has heard about the concept of a *gandhabba* (and *paralowa*), instantaneous births, existence of other realms, and the existence of *Ariyas* or *yogis* who have the abilities to see such realms as well as *paralowa*, and one rejects them as “nonsense”, that is *micca diṭṭhi*.
- The only way to get rid of such *micca diṭṭhi* is to examine those concepts and convince oneself that those must be true.

13. In that process, it is also necessary that one lives a moral life staying away from *dasa akusala* as much as possible, as explained in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section. It is important for anyone to experience the mental clarity (and the “peace of mind” or “*niveema*”) that comes with staying away from *dasa akusala*.

- By the way, the strongest of the *dasa akusala* is *micca diṭṭhi*, which includes not only the 10 types, but also ignorance about *Tilakkhana*. This is why a *Sotāpanna* removes 99% or more of the defilements by getting rid of the BOTH types of *micca diṭṭhi*; see, “[What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)”.
- The first type of *micca diṭṭhi* is about the 10 types discussed in #3 above, which includes believing that nothing happens without a cause, bad causes (*dasa akusala*) lead to bad consequences, etc. The second type is about not knowing the true nature of this world of 31 realms, i.e., that it is not possible to maintain anything to one's satisfaction (*anicca*), one is subjected to suffering because of that (*dukkha*), and thus one is truly helpless in this rebirth process (*anatta*).
- However, it is difficult to “see” those *Tilakkhana* until one believes in that bigger picture — which includes the 31 realms and the rebirth process — where the existence of *paralowa* with *gandhabbas* is an important component.

4.7.9 Working of kammā – Critical Role of Conditions

May 21, 2017

1. We can see various levels of human happiness/suffering around us. We see some people live with relatively higher levels of health, wealth, and happiness, while others live in poverty, ill-health, and misery.

- We become distraught upon hearing that a child died prematurely, or someone was brutally murdered. Of course, we should generate empathy and sympathy, and also do our utmost to prevent such horrible occurrences.
- However, we also need to look at the CAUSES for such things to happen. Once we understand the underlying causes, we will be able to prevent such things happening to us in the future, if not in this life, in future lives.
- Nothing happens in this world without a reason or without a cause (normally multiple causes). In order to prevent tragic outcomes, we need to locate the causes and eliminate them.
- This is the key message of the Buddha: It is not possible to eliminate the suffering that has arisen (we can minimize it), but we can eliminate FUTURE suffering from arising.

2. The principle of cause and effect (*hetu/phala*) is a key principle in Buddha Dhamma, as in modern science.

- Science is all about finding out HOW things HAPPEN around us due to CAUSES. A pebble on the ground will not go up by itself unless some energy is given to it, i.e., we have to pick it up and throw it up.
- We receive sunlight because of the Sun is putting out a vast amount of energy every second. And science has figured out how that happens: That energy comes from nuclear reactions in it; Sun is a giant fusion reactor.
- With the development of modern science we have figured out that nothing happens without a cause; normally there are more than one cause that lead to an effect.

3. However, science has not yet figured out that what happen to humans or any living being are also due to causes.

- Does it just happens that X is born healthy and wealthy, Y is born healthy but poor, and Z is born handicapped and poor?
- There must be REASONS why X, Y, and Z are born that way.
- Not only that, many times a person born rich can become poor, and vice versa. Or a person in good health can die suddenly in an accident or by a heart attack. There must be reasons for such “turnarounds” too!

- The laws of *kammā* can explain all the above. But the laws of *kammā* are not just based causes and effects, they **DEPEND** on **CONDITIONS**. **That is what prevents laws of *kammā* being deterministic, i.e., one's future is NOT determined by one's past actions or *kammā*.**

4. Science has been unable to come up with explanations for the effects discussed above. There are two key reasons for this lack of progress in science.

- **First**, unlike with inert objects like a pebble, **a living being has a mind**. When a person moves, the cause for that movement originates in that person's mind, i.e., the person decides to move. Your hand will not move until you decide to move it. **And you have the power to STOP its movement too!**
- **The second difference** is that for living beings **there is a rebirth process**. The laws of *kammā* cannot be explained without accepting the rebirth process. This is why not believing in rebirth is a strong *micca diṭṭhi*. With that wrong vision, one will never be able to figure out the true nature of the world and explain why there are so many variations of happiness/misery in living beings; see, "[Vagaries of Life and the Way to Seek "Good Rebirths"](#)" and "[Micca Diṭṭhi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)".
- The present life of about 100 years is only an extremely short time in our *sansāric* journey (rebirth process). As we go from life to life, our mental states as well as our physical appearances change; see, "[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)".

5. So, anything and everything in this world happen due to reasons or causes. However, just because there is a cause, it is not guaranteed that it will give rise to the corresponding effect.

- **In the terminology of Buddha Dhamma, past *kammā* do not necessarily lead to *kammā vipāka*.**
- We can grasp this key idea with an example.

6. A seed CAN give rise to a tree. It has the **POTENTIAL** to bring a tree to existence. However, for that to happen, suitable **CONDITIONS** must be present.

- If we keep a seed in a cool, dry place it will not give rise to a tree, and will remain a seed with that **POTENTIAL** for hundreds of years.
- Eventually, that potential to bring about a tree will go away and the seed will be "dead".

7. When a strong *kammā* is done, that creates a *kammā beeja*, or a *kammā* seed, that works pretty much like a normal seed that we discussed above.

- For that *kammā beeja* to bring about its result, i.e., *kammā vipāka*, suitable **CONDITIONS** must exist.
- If suitable conditions do not materialize for long times, then that *kammā beeja* will lose its energy and it is said that it will become an *ahōsi kammā*, i.e., that *kammā* will not bring about any *kammā vipāka*.

8. As we mentioned above, the other important factor in this complex process is that a given living being has gone through a rebirth process that has no discoverable beginning.

- **In this unimaginably long rebirth process, we all have accumulated uncountable *kammā* seeds, both good and bad.**
- Those good *kammā* seeds can bring about good results (health, wealth, beauty, etc), and bad *kammā* seeds bad results (ailments, handicaps, poverty, etc).
- But either kind can run out of energy without giving results (*vipāka*), if suitable **CONDITIONS** do not appear within a period of time.

9. A seed cannot germinate unless required **CONDITIONS** are provided (i.e., it should be placed in the ground and water, sunlight, and nutrients need to be provided).

- In the same way, we can avoid many possible bad *kammā vipāka* by being mindful and not providing conditions for them to appear. We can also **MAKE** conditions for good *kammā vipāka* to bring about good results.

- For example, if one goes into a bad neighborhood at night, that is providing conditions for any suitable bad *kammā* seeds waiting to bring about their bad *vipāka*. On the other hand, we cannot be successful in any project unless we are willing to provide right conditions: to pass an examination, we must prepare for it by studying.
- Even if one is born poor, one could work hard and come out of poverty. If one is prone to catching diseases, one could eat healthy, exercise, and overcome at least some of the recurring ailments. *Kammā* is not deterministic, see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”.

10. But of course it will be difficult to overcome the results of very strong *kammā* seeds. One may be born handicapped due to a strong *kammā* seed that was generated in a previous birth.

- In the same way, strong good *kammā* seeds can bring about good results without much effort. Some are born rich, healthy, and wealthy due to a past strong good *kammā* seed coming to fruition.

11. So, I hope it is clear that one's happiness in this life could be determined by several different factors.

- In relatively few cases, one could automatically (without much effort) receive health, wealth, and RELATIVE happiness due to strong *kammā* seeds. In the same way, some others could be facing miserable lives.
- However, on the average, one's happiness in this life is to a large extent is determined by one's willingness to make right CONDITIONS for good *vipāka* to take place and prevent bad *vipāka* from appearing.
- Even more importantly, one could make conditions for health, wealth, etc in future lives by living moral lives and doing good deeds.

12. Now let us look at what happens when a result materializes due to a *kammā vipāka*. Once a bad *vipāka* materializes, we can certainly manage it to minimize its effects, and in some cases even get rid of it by working to making conditions for a good *kammā* seed to overcome it.

- For example, if one comes down with cancer, in some cases it can be overcome by good medical treatment, i.e., making conditions to counter the initial effect.
- If one is born tall or short, there is nothing much one can do about it. If one is born handicapped, one will have to live the whole life that way.
- As we can see, we can improve some of those *kammā vipāka*, while we cannot do much about some others.
- Even the Buddha could not avoid certain *vipāka*. He had back aches and Devadatta was able to injure his foot. Ven. Moggallana was beaten to death.

13. Another observation we can make from the above discussion is that when one becomes an *Arahant* (or even a Buddha), his suffering is not completely ended at the *Arahanthood*. He still had to suffer due to the physical body that had already “started”.

- So, what was meant by “removal of suffering” when one attains *Nibbāna*? It is the future suffering (i.e., suffering in future lives) that is ended. When an *Arahant* attains *Parinibbāna* (i.e., physical death), he/she will not be reborn in this suffering-filled world of 31 realms, and that is when the suffering completely ends.
- However, as we have discussed, part of suffering ends with the attainment of *Arahanthood*: suffering associated with “*saṅkhāra dukkhā*” or what is called “*samphassa jā vedanā*”; see, “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)”.

14. Of course, IN THE LONG RUN (in the rebirth process), no matter how hard one strives, it will be IMPOSSIBLE to attain PERMANENT happiness **anywhere in this world**. This is called *anicca* nature. That is why we need to strive to attain *Nibbāna* to avoid future suffering.

- However, it is not an easy task to even to beginning to comprehend the *anicca* nature, until one enters the **mundane Eightfold Path** by getting rid of the 10 types of *micca diṭṭhi*, which include not believing in rebirth or the concept of a *gandhabba*; see, “[Micca Diṭṭhi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.
- Only when one enters the **mundane Eightfold Path** that one will be able to grasp the Three Characteristics of Nature (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*), and start on the **Noble Eightfold Path** to attain *Nibbāna*.
- The two types of Eightfold Paths were discussed by the Buddha in the “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)”. Also see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.

15. Finally, the role of conditions in the laws of *kammā* are inherent in the *Paticca Samuppāda*; see, “[What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?](#)” and “[Pattana Dhamma – Connection to Cause and Effect \(Hethu Phala\)](#)”.

- *Paticca Samuppāda* is discussed in the section: “[Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.

4.8 Nāma & Rūpa to Nāmarūpa

May 26, 2017

In this important subsection, we will discuss the link between mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*).

○ Mental Aggregates

▪ What is Sañña (Perception)?

- Sañña – What It Really Means
- Future Suffering – Why It Arises
- Ditthi, Sañña, and Saṅkhāra – How They Relate

▪ What Is Vedanā (Feelings)?

- Vedanā – What It Really Means
- Does Bodily Pain Arise Only Due to Kamma Vipāka?

▪ What is Saṅkhāra (Mental Formations)?

- Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means

○ Rūpa Aggregate

▪ What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!

▪ Bhūta and Yathābhūta – What Do They Really Mean

○ Viññāna Aggregate

▪ Viññāna – What It Really Means

▪ Kamma Viññāna – Link Between Mind and Matter

▪ Anidassana Viññāna – What It Really Means

○ Nāmarūpa Formation

▪ Kamma Viññāna and Nāmarūpa Paricceda Ñāṇa

4.8.1 Mental Aggregates

What is Sañña (Perception)?

- Sañña – What It Really Means
- Future Suffering – Why It Arises
- Ditthi, Sañña, and Saṅkhāra – How They Relate

What Is Vedanā (Feelings)?

- Vedanā – What It Really Means

What Are Saṅkhāra (Mental Formations)?

- Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means

4.8.1.1 What is Sañña (Perception)?

Sañña – What It Really Means

Future Suffering – Why It Arises

Ditthi, Sañña, and Saṅkhāra – How They Relate

4.8.1.1. Sañña – What It Really Means

1

December 31, 2017

1. *Sañña* is normally translated to English as “perception” and sometimes as “recognition”; it is both and more! *Sañña* has a much deeper and at the same time a simpler meaning.

- *Sañña* is pronounced “sangnā” and actually gives an encoded meaning in Pāli and Sinhala with that pronunciation ([click to play the audio](#)):

[WebLink: Listen to the Pāli word “sanna”](#)

▪ It means “sign” or even closer, “the embedded message”. That latter expresses it well, since it is how one “instantaneously gets the idea of what is meant by an external signal”.

2. When we understand what is meant by *saññā*, we can clarify many things including how humans can communicate with beings in other realms via *saññā*.

- *Sañña* is the “universal language”. To give an analogy: if there is a sign that reads, “winding road ahead”, only those who know English can understand what that sign says.
- But those universal signs — showing a picture of a winding road — provide the “*sañña*” that a road ahead is going to be curvy.



- A second example (on the right above) is holding one’s hand up instead of verbally saying stop; that gives the “*sañña*” to anyone that one is being asked to stop.

3. At the very basic level, *sañña* means “recognition” of an object or a person or a concept; **getting “full comprehension” of what it is AND what it means.**

- Whether one says fire in English or “*ginna*” in Sinhala, or “*fue*” in French, if a person knows how to associate any of those words with “fire”, that is the *sañña* that comes to one’s mind when one hears either the word “fire”, “*ginna*”, or “*fue*”.
- But if one does not speak any of those three languages, those words do not mean anything to that person. However, if the following picture is shown, anyone will have the idea that it is about a fire or a flame:



4. Therefore, *sañña* is the “full picture that comes to the mind instantaneously”.

- When we think about a fire, that “sense of what a fire is”, is conveyed to the *hadaya vatthu* (seat of the mind) by the brain.

- Therefore, regardless of the language one speaks in, everyone who has seen a fire generates the same feeling about a fire in one's mind. **This is a key point to contemplate on, and will be valuable in comprehending the “*anicca sañña*”.**

5. Our mental body (*gandhabba*) can register only pure *sañña*. When two *gandhabbas* are communicating, they cannot use words OR pictures. So, the process is even more simpler: What one *gandhabba* X thinks about what to say to *gandhabba* Y, that message or *sañña* is automatically transmitted to Y, **if Y is pointing attention to X.**

- When *gandhabba* X wants to see what is happening at a given location, it just needs to point to that direction and can see that location. We will not discuss the details here, but essential point is that a *gandhabba* does not “see” things using light as we do.
- In the same way, a *gandhabba* does not hear using an ear. Sound waves propagating through the air are not needed.
- This is how most beings — who don't have physical bodies like us — communicate and interact with the external world, as emphasized briefly in the previous post, “[Our Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)”.
- When someone gets to the fourth *jhāna* and attains *abhiññā* powers, he/she will be able to see (*dibba cakkhu* or “divine eye”) and hear (*dibba sota* or “divine ear”) by separating his/her own mental body (*gandhabba*) from the physical body and using the above methods. Then seeing and hearing is not limited to short distances.

6. However, when a *gandhabba* is trapped inside a physical body (as in a normal human), it does not have that capability any more. It needs to rely on the sense faculties located in the physical body (eyes, ear, etc) to capture information that comes via pictures, sounds, etc and also on the brain to convert those signals to “*sañña*” and to transmit them to it.

- If you are not clear on this point, please re-read the previous post, “[Our Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)”.
- In that post, we compared how a *gandhabba* trapped in a physical body to a human operator totally enclosed in a military tank. That is a good analogy.

7. At conception, the *gandhabba* takes hold of a single cell formed by the union of a mother and a father and basically builds a “cocoon” to be trapped inside to enjoy the sense pleasures made available through that cocoon or solid shell: smells, tastes, and body pleasures.

- Inside that physical body, the *gandhabba* is shielded from receiving direct *sañña*. Pictures and sounds come through the openings in the cocoon not as *sañña* but as video and audio signals, and those need to be converted to *sañña* that can be grasped by the *gandhabba*.
- First, the eyes and ears (as well as nose, tongue, and body) need to develop to capture those sense inputs and the brain needs to develop to analyze those signals.
- The brain also needs to develop circuitry for converting that information to a “*sañña*” that can be transferred to the *gandhabba* so that it can grasp what object, person, or concept it is.
- This transmission goes from the brain to the *hadaya vatthu* located close to the heart via “*kirana*” or in the language of modern science electromagnetic waves. This was discussed briefly in the post, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)- Introduction](#)”.

8. When a baby is growing up, it learns to associate words and pictures with each object, person, concept that it experiences. This requires many parts of the brain. This is why it takes a newborn baby several years to become fully functional in the world.

- So, when a person hears someone yelling “fire”, the brain matches that with a visual of a fire, converts it to the correct “*sañña*” of a fire, and transmits that signal to the *gandhabba*.
- The association of a word with its meaning is done in the brain (which is acting like a computer), and then only the meaning is conveyed to the *gandhabba*, where our thoughts are generated.

- As I have discussed in the posts on the *gandhabba*, a human *gandhabba* is born at a *cuti-patisandhi* moment and could live to thousands of years in age, and during that time could be born many times as a human (of course with different bodies).

9. If the relevant parts of the brain are damaged later in one's life, one may not be able to recognize one's surroundings. This is what happens to people with alzheimer's disease.

- When a person gets old, the brain starts degrading and then again, one's ability to interact with the external world could become limited.
- If that person dies and the *gandhabba* is reborn a human again (due to leftover *kammic* energy of the same human *bhava*), he/she will not have those limitations any more.

10. Now we move to next level of *sañña* where it is more than just recognition. For example, when two people hear the name of a person X, they will have the picture of that person (or "*sañña*") coming to their mind automatically. But not only that, they would register some qualities that they had attached to that person through their interactions with X. One may say, "It is my Dad. I love him so much". Another would say, "Oh, he is a crook".

- Then based on that *sañña*, each will generate different feelings (*vedanā*) about X. That could lead to generating good or bad thoughts (*mano saṅkhāra*) automatically. If one keeps thinking about X some more, then one will be consciously generating more thoughts (talking to oneself) about X and may even speak out loud (*vacī saṅkhāra*). If the feelings get strong, one may generate *kaya saṅkhāra* (thoughts leading to actions), and, for example run to Dad and give him a hug (or avoid the person perceived to be a crook).
- Therefore, based on the same thought object, different people can get different *sañña* and thus can respond differently.

11. In general, how we make decisions about interacting with others or respond to external stimuli depends on our "world views". This is what is called "*diṭṭhi*" in Buddha Dhamma.

- When one has wrong world views or *diṭṭhis*, one could make wrong decisions based on "distorted *sañña*".
- When one's mind is free of greed, hate, and ignorance, it is easier to sort out wrong *diṭṭhis*. What is meant by greed and hate is obvious. Ignorance here is the ignorance about the message of the Buddha. That message, of course, can be grasped only in stages.
- First is to realize is that one MUST live a moral life and follow that mundane Eightfold Path by abstaining from *dasa akusala* as much as possible.
- Then it will become easier to cultivate the "*anicca sañña*", start grasping the *Tilakkhana*, and become a *Sotāpanna*. We will discuss the *anicca sañña* in upcoming posts.

4.8.1.1. Future Suffering – Why It Arises

2

January 22, 2017

In the subsection "[Living Dhamma – Fundamentals](#)", we mentioned that there are two types of suffering that can be eliminated according to Buddha Dhamma. In that subsection, we discussed and explained how **some suffering in this life** can be stopped from arising. With this post, we will start a discussion on the **second type suffering associated with future rebirths — which is even more important** — can be stopped from arising.

1. Let us first review the existing ideas from other religions and philosophies. First, let us discuss the dominant religious view.

- Most major religions have a world view that is based on three "realms" of existence: human realm, heavenly realm, and hell. If one lives according to the religious teachings, one will live in happiness in the heaven forever; if not, one will suffer in the hell forever.

- It is not explained how one is born in the human realm to start off. It could be that the Creator created Adam and Eve and their descendants are just born. In this view, the sentient beings in this world started off at just two and will grow with time; see below.
 - In Hinduism, the “eternal realm of happiness” is not the heaven, but the *brahma* realm (there is only one, where one merges with *Mahā Brahma*). Also, there is no permanent hell, as I understand.
2. Based on whether one lives according to the “particular religious teachings” or not, one will be born either in heaven or hell FOREVER.
- Of course, these religious teachings will vary from one religion to another.
 - Furthermore, even within one religion, they can be changed by a decree from the “head of the Church”.
 - Since all those who are making those decision are human, It seems illogical that they can decide on basically their own fate.
3. Turning to philosophy, many people today — especially those who believe that the above religious reasoning is illogical — take the materialistic view, that one is born out of inert matter only to die and to be recycled back to the Earth. They are the so-called atheists.
- In this case, the logic would say that one could live immorally, since any immoral actions to benefit oneself would not have any consequences.
 - Still, most who belong to this category live moral lives. They have an innate feeling that morality must be adhered to, but cannot quite explain why.
4. I have discussed the above points in several posts:
- On religion, see, [“The Language of God” by Francis Collins](#) and [“What Does Buddha Dhamma Say about Creator, Satan, Angels, and Demons?”](#).
 - On the belief in a materialistic view, see, [“Why Does the World Exist?” by Jim Holt](#) and [“Waking Up” by Sam Harris](#).
 - In the commonly-used sense of the word “religion”, Buddha Dhamma is not a religion; see, [“Is Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) a Religion?”](#) and [“What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?”](#).
 - I would welcome any comments/criticisms on my points above. I can go to more details if needed, and I believe that the above points cannot be logically refuted.
5. Buddha Dhamma (true and pure Buddhism) does not belong to either of the above two categories.
- The complex world view of Buddha Dhamma is explained in the subsection [“The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma”](#), but a brief introduction is in the post, [“What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream”](#).
 - Briefly, one is born in one of 31 realms of existence. From beginning-less time, we all have been undergoing this rebirth process. **But most times we are born in the lower four realms filled with suffering, and thus the long-term solution is to stop the rebirth process.** This is done in four steps, and at the *Arahant* stage one stops the rebirth process.
 - This is not a nihilistic or pessimistic view, see, [“Nibbāna “Exists”, but Not in This World”](#).
6. So, that is the background for our discussion. Now, let us discuss how one can get to *Nibbāna*, or to stop future suffering.
- Some Buddhists believe that *Nibbāna* can be attained by living a moral life and doing meritorious deeds (*punna kamma*).
 - We will now discuss why just living a moral life and doing *punna kamma* will not lead to *Nibbāna*, even though they are necessary parts of the process.
7. We are born in one of the 31 realms due to six root causes (*hethu*): *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* and *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*. This categorization can be used to look at births in different realms in another way.

- Deeds (*kamma*) done with *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* lead to rebirth in the *apāyas* (lowest 4 realms). For these deeds, *mōha* is always present with either *lōbha* (*pretha* and *asura* realms births) and or with *dōsa* (*niraya* or the lowest realm). Births in the animal realms can be due to either.
- Those deeds done with one or more of *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha* lead to rebirth in the higher realms, starting with the human realm.

8. A key *gāthā* or a verse that summarizes the results of meritorious deeds and immoral deeds is: “*Kallan kalla vipakan, suddhan suddha vipakan*”

Kalla suddhan, kalla suddha vipakan“

Here the word *kalla* means bad or dark. *Suddha* means pure or white.

- So, the word “*kallan*” in the above verse refers to immoral deeds done with *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* and other *asobhana cetasika*. “*Suddhan*” implies meritorious deeds done with *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*, and other *sobhana cetasika*.
- How different types of *cetasika* contribute to either defile or purify our minds is discussed in the subsection, “[Living Dhamma – Fundamentals](#)“.

9. In this beginning-less rebirth process, this is how we have been born in almost all of the 31 realms due to the fact that we keep accumulating both *kalla vipāka* and *suddha vipāka*.

- Furthermore, we have accumulated enough of both kinds to bring about many, many future births in all those realms.
- Even if we do not commit a single *kalla vipāka* in this life, we have done enough of them in the past to bring about births in the *apāyas* in the future. This is a point that not many people understand. I have heard many people say, “I don’t harm anyone, so I hope to get a good rebirth”. Unfortunately, they are wrong.

10. *Punna kamma* with “*suddha vipāka*” leads to two important results in this and future lives that **makes suitable conditions** for attaining *Nibbāna*:

- Rebirth in the “good realms” (human realm and above). Attaining *Nibbāna* — or even working towards it — is possible only in the good realms and especially in the human realm.
- If done correctly, merits acquired through *punna kamma* can lead to a long life (*āyusa*), flawless sense faculties (*vanna*), healthy life without much physical suffering (*sukha*), and necessary resources to live without hardships (*bala*). These benefits make suitable conditions for one to focus on attaining *Nibbāna*. For example, if one is sick or is very poor, it is not easy to follow the Path.

11. On the other hand, “*kalla vipāka*” or results of immoral deeds lead to births in the *apāyas* where the suffering is intense.

- We have been born in the human realm due to a good *uppatthi suddha vipāka*.
- But in this unique human realm one is subject to both *kalla vipāka* and *suddha vipāka* as *pavutti kamma vipāka* that bring results during the lifetime.

12. Births in the human realm could be a *tihethuka* (“*tī*” + *hethu*“, meaning all three of *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*), *dviethuka* (“*dvi*” + *hethu*“, meaning *alōbha* and *adōsa*), or *ahethuka*.

- Those humans with *tihethuka* births can attain *magga phala* in this life if they strive enough.
- Those humans with *dviethuka* births cannot attain *magga phala* in this life. Since they do not have the *amōha* root cause, their wisdom level (*paññā*) cannot grow beyond a certain point. However, they can do *punna kamma* and be eligible to be reborn a human with a *tihethuka* birth in future lives.
- Even though the word *ahethuka* literally means “without causes”, here it means weak version of *dviethuka*. Here *ahethuka* means “without sufficiently good *hethu*” to be able to follow the Path. They are born with mental deficiencies that are obvious.

13. It is very important to realize that no one (at the present) can distinguish between *tihethuka* and *dviethuka* births. On the surface, both types appear the same. For example, there could be people with higher education, who are *dviethuka*, and some with no education who are *tihethuka*.

- So, the thing to do is to strive to the best of one's ability. No matter whether one is *tihethuka* or *dviethuka*, the efforts will pay off in the long run. Furthermore, being *tihethuka* does not take one automatically to *Nibbāna*; one has to strive.
- Furthermore, no one should be discouraged and believe they are *dviethuka*, if the efforts are not paying off quickly. One prominent example in the *Tipitaka* is the story about the Culapanthaka Thero. He almost disrobed because he could not even memorize a single *gāthā* after trying hard for months. But with Buddha's help, he was able to attain the *Arahanthood* in a day, and even developed *abhiññā* powers.

14. Therefore, by thinking good thoughts, doing good deeds and by living a moral life, we can improve our chances (but not guarantee) of a good future rebirth. **In fact, this is the goal of all major religions (to be born in heaven and live there forever).**

- However, nothing in this world of 31 realms is everlasting — and moreover — we do not have control over where we will be born in the next life, regardless of how well we live this life.
- It is important to realize that one or more of past bad deeds (*kamma vipāka*) may still lead to a bad rebirth, and then it will be very difficult to again get a good rebirth.
- This is one aspect of the **anicca nature**, the futility of believing that there is happiness to be achieved somewhere in this world.
- The opposite belief that somehow happiness to be achieved somewhere in this world gives rise to deeply-embedded **nicca sañña** (a sense of hope) in our minds.
- One cannot avoid future suffering until one comprehends first that immoral deeds done with the *nicca sañña* lead to *kalla vipāka* and will bring much suffering. Even though moral deeds done with the *nicca sañña* lead to *suddha vipāka* with happiness, **one cannot avoid immoral deeds in the long run, BECAUSE OF this nicca sañña.**

15. Therefore, until we change our wrong view (and the corresponding wrong perception or *sañña*) that there is happiness to be had in this world, we will never be released from future suffering.

- This is the unique message of the Buddha. We will discuss how we can get rid of this *nicca sañña* and cultivate the *anicca sañña* in the next post.

4.8.1.1. **Diṭṭhi, Sañña, and Sankhāra – How They Relate**

3

January 28, 2017

You may want to read the previous posts on *sañña* in this section — especially the post, “[Sañña – What It Really Means](#)” — before reading this post.

1. One's perceptions (*sañña*) are closely associated with one's own views (*diṭṭhi*), and both of those affect how we think (*citta*), and generate *sankhāra*.

Since most of our world views are based on ideas from our families, friends, and religions that we are born into, those inputs play a major role in our views and therefore our perceptions and how we think — and thus generate *sankhāra*.

- It is not possible to get rid of the wrong perceptions (*vipareetha sañña*) without getting rid of the wrong views (*micca diṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*).
- There are some major world views which must be removed before one can even hope to get an idea about *anicca sañña*. We will discuss some of these key factors first.

2. Most people believe in an everlasting heaven after death, and that perception is based on the world view that says our world can be divided into three “major categories or realms”: hell, human world,

and heaven. This world view and the corresponding perception or *sañña* comes from families who have been taught that world view through generations via religious teachings.

- This world view is also based on the idea that the Earth was created by a Creator and the heavens are in the sky where the Creator resides and where one will go after death if one has lived according to those teachings. Those who disobey those teachings are supposed to be born in the hell for eternity.
- Even though this cosmic world view is rejected by modern science (the heavens actually comprise of trillions of planetary systems just like our Solar system), most people still go by that wrong view.
- It is astonishing to see that even some prominent scientists are willing to disregard scientific facts and believe (i.e., have the perception) that the Earth — and thus the whole universe — was created by a Creator. I am not sure where they think the heavens are located among those trillions of star systems.

3. Another example is killing animals for sport, which includes fishing. This is based on the view that animals are not sentient and — in most religions — were created by the Creator for human consumption.

This is such an ingrained *diṭṭhi*, that many people who live otherwise moral lives fail to see the suffering endured by these animals.

- While fish cannot cry out, the severe pain felt by a wriggling fish caught on a hook is quite apparent. It is feeling both the pain in mouth due to hook, and also is suffering due to lack of oxygen, since it cannot breath like we do.
- Higher animals are capable of showing their pain, among other emotions. Anyone who has a pet dog or cat knows that they do have emotions like we do.
- But we tend to totally disregards such easy-to-see things, because of our *diṭṭhis*. The underlying reason is the religious view that animals are here for our consumption.
- **However, we all have had animal births, as well as *deva* and *brahma* births. Comprehension of this fact can help change one's perception about animals.**
- Still, we cannot equate animal lives to human lives as some animal right activists believe. When one comprehends Buddha Dhamma, one can avoid going to either extreme.
- In other words, one can remove distorted perceptions (*vipareetha sañña*) by removing wrong views (*micca diṭṭhi*). The latter is done by learning pure Buddha Dhamma.

4. Those are a couple of obvious examples of major *micca diṭṭhi*. The key reason that those *diṭṭhi* propagate through generations is the inability to “break through” such ingrained beliefs by contemplating on facts.

- For example, even in Buddhist countries, there are fishing villages where fishing is the livelihood of many, who have done it for many generations.
- Some may say that those people need to make a living to sustain their families. But that argument is no better than the argument that a drug addict needs to inhale another dose just to get through the day: the long-term consequences are infinitely worse.
- It is customary for the older generations in many countries to teach their children or grand children how to fish or hunt animals for sport. That custom passes through generations.

5. Another wrong view (and hence the perception) that we have is about the high value placed on our physical bodies and also on sense pleasures. This perception is predominant in Western countries, but is growing in other countries as well.

- People spend billions of dollars a year in trying to make their physical bodies “more beautiful”. This is mainly because they don’t realize — or don’t even contemplate — on the fact that no matter how much money one can spend, one’s body CANNOT be maintained at peak condition for too long.

- In fact, this wrong perception leads to an enhanced level of suffering at old age, when despite any amount of money one can spend, one's body becomes frail and not so appealing. This can lead to severe depression.
- On the other hand, for those who have comprehended the *anicca* nature, the old age is a fact of life. One needs to spend one's "peak years" not trying to beautify one's body, but to make progress on the Path while the brain is working optimally. When the body starts degrading at old age, the brain goes down too. So, one must exercise and eat healthy to keep both the body and the brain in good condition as long as possible.
- This happens to everyone, regardless of how powerful or wealthy they are. At President Trump's inauguration, this was quite obvious by looking at the ex-Presidents.
- Think about any famous, beautiful or wealthy person that has grown old, to convince of the truth of this *anicca* nature.

6. Anything in this world — living or inert — has this characteristic. It is born, goes through the formation process, reaches the peak condition, starts to decay, and becomes dead or destroyed at some point; see, "[Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata](#)".

- Somethings last short times: for example, a fly or a flower. Other things can last for tens of years: for example, humans or a car. Then there are things that live much longer: for example, a *brahma* or a star system like our Solar system.
- But eventually anything in this world — a *sankata* — decays and is destroyed at some point.
- Even though those things that reach the peak condition can provide/enjoy sense pleasures, they do not last long.
- The overall effect or the net effect is suffering, when one considers the rebirths in the 31 realms in the long term.

7. In the *Vipallasa Sutta* (*Anguttara Nikāya*), The Buddha stated that there are three types of *vipallasa* or distortions about *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and *asubha*. We have discussed the first three in detail at this website. *Asubha* (not fruitful) is the opposite of *subha* (fruitful or beneficial).

- No matter how appealing those sense pleasures or sense objects can be, they all make one get trapped in the rebirth process. That is why they are *asubha*.
- The three types of *vipallasa* are *diṭṭhi vipallasa*, *sañña vipallasa*, and *citta vipallasa*.
- They are the distortions associated with views, perceptions, and the way we think (and thus make *saṅkhāra*, and especially *punna abhisankhāra* and *apunna abhisankhāra*).

8. Let us consider the *diṭṭhi*, *sañña*, and *citta vipallasa* about the *anicca* nature as an example.

- We have the **wrong view that things in this world have *nicca* nature**, i.e., that they can provide with happiness. This is the *diṭṭhi vipallasa* about the actual *anicca* nature.
- Because of this wrong view, we develop the *sañña vipallasa* about the *anicca* nature of things: We tend to **perceive (*sañña*)** that things in this world can provide happiness.
- Because of the wrong perception, we tend to **think (*citta*)** that things in this world can provide us with happiness. Thus we do (*abhi*) *saṅkhāra* that prolong the rebirth process for *punna abhisankhāra* and, even worse, make one suffer mightily in the future rebirths through *apunna abhisankhāra*.
- Therefore, we constantly generate *mano saṅkhāra* (automatic thoughts about worldly sense objects), *vacī saṅkhāra* (conscious thoughts or speech), and act accordingly (*kaya saṅkhāra*).

9. All three types of such *saṅkhāra* leads to suffering in this world AND also in future rebirths. These are the *saṅkhāra* that arise due to *avijjā* (not realizing the true nature of this world): "*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*".

Those *saṅkhāra* eventually lead to *bhava* and *jati* via *paticca samuppāda*. Here *jati* means both future rebirths AND also "births during this life", see, "[Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda](#)".

- This is why it is important to first learn Dhamma and first grasp the fact that suffering in this life can arise due to our conscious thoughts and actions. Not only that, but that suffering CAN BE stopped from arising IN THIS LIFE.
- Once one comprehends this fact and lives accordingly, one can actually experience the *nirāmisa sukha* when one removes this type of suffering.
- Furthermore, this helps one build true faith (*saddhā*) in Buddha Dhamma, and will convince one of the truth in the much worse type of suffering in future rebirths.
- This was explained in the first few subsections in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.

10. At that stage, one may be able to comprehend the *anicca* nature of the rebirth process: The truth of the rebirth process that nowhere in the 31 realms can one find happiness.

- Moreover, one will “see” that unimaginable levels of suffering is present in the lowest four realms (*apāyas*). Therefore, one will get rid of the *diṭṭhi vipallasa* about *dukkha*: instead of the wrong view that there is happiness in human, *deva*, or *brahma* realms, one will “see” that any happiness to be had is only temporary, and much more suffering inevitable if one stays in the rebirth process.
- Then one will also “see” that one is truly helpless if stayed in this rebirth process (*saṃsāra*). Thus one will get rid of *diṭṭhi vipallasa* about that this world is of *atta* nature, and truly “see” the “*anatta* nature”.
- One will also “see” that — in the long run — things in this world are not *subha*, i.e., they are not good or fruitful. Attachment to anything in this world will lead to suffering in the long run. Thus a *Sotāpanna* will have removed the *diṭṭhi vipallasa* “distorted views” about *subha* nature as well.
- That is how one gets rid of *diṭṭhi vipallasa*, and realizes that liberation or relief from this long term suffering can be achieved only via *Nibbāna* — by stopping the rebirth process and by dissociating from the material world, see, “[Nibbāna](#)”.

11. *Sañña* (pronounced “sangna”) comes from “*san*” + “*gnana*”, which means “wisdom” about “*san*”. But normal humans have only *vipareetha sangna* or *sañña vipallasa*: they do not see “*san*” as bad.

- *Sañña vipallasa* can be removed only by first attaining *sammā diṭṭhi*, i.e., by getting rid of *diṭṭhi vipallasa*. Then one will be able to perceive the benefits or the harm in each speech or action that one is about to make.
- When one has right vision and perceives things as they really are, then one will start thinking along those lines, i.e., one will start removing *citta vipallasa*.

12. For completion, we will end with the following technical details: It is stated that the *diṭṭhi vipallasa* about *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and *asubha* are all removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- *Sañña vipallasa* about *anicca* and *anatta* is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage, but *sañña vipallasa* about *dukkha* and *asubha* are removed in stages and is completely removed only at the *Arahant* stage.
- Same is true for the *citta vipallasa*: *citta vipallasa* about *anicca* and *anatta* is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage, but *citta vipallasa* about *dukkha* and *asubha* are removed in stages and is completely removed only at the *Arahant* stage.
- This is why even though a *Sotāpanna* can “see” that things in this world can eventually lead to only suffering, he/she will still tend to enjoy sense pleasures — those that can be experienced without doing *apayagami* deeds.
- Even though an *Anāgāmi* has removed the desire for sense pleasures in the *kāma loka*, he/she will still tend to enjoy *jhānic* pleasures and those sense inputs available via eyes and ears (for example, the desire to listen or read Dhamma concepts).
- All *vipallasa* are completely removed only at the *Arahant* stage. An *Arahant* does not make *apunna abhisankhāra* that lead to heat (or *thāpa*) in the mind that lead to suffering in this life or

makes one eligible to be born in the *apāyas*. He does not make *punna abhisankhāra* that make one eligible to be born in the “good realms” either. He just makes only *kammically* neutral *sāṅkhāra* or *kriya* that allows to maintain life until *parinibbana* or death.

4.8.1.2 What Is Vedanā (Feelings)?

February 18, 2017

[Vedanā – What It Really Means](#)

[Does Bodily Pain Arise Only Due to Kamma Vipāka?](#)

4.8.1.2.1 Vedanā – What It Really Means

1

February 18, 2017

1. *Vedanā* is conventionally translated as “feelings”, but it is much more than just feelings. The Buddha said that *vedanā* can be analyzed in many ways, with simple or deeper meanings. Here we will analyze *vedanā* in a way that will be most helpful at this stage (for those who have been following the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section from the beginning.

- In this analysis we will discuss 9 types of *vedanā* (highlighted in ***bold italic red***).
- By understanding these 9 types of *vedanā*, we can understand how to correctly do *vedananupassana* in the *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā*.

2. At the very fundamental level *vedanā* means “*veema danaveema*” in Sinhala, which means “one becomes aware (of a sense input)” and experience the corresponding good, bad, or neutral *kamma vipāka*.

- That is the *vedanā* experienced by an *Arahant*. He/she simply is aware of a sense input, and does not ADD anymore *vedanā* in his/her mind to that sense input.
- A *vedanā* can be a ***dukha vedanā*** (due to a past bad *kamma*), a ***sukha vedanā*** (due to a past good *kamma*), or a neutral sensation — like feeling the wind on the body — called an ***upekkha vedanā***.
- An *Arahant* will bear them all with a neutral mind even though the *dukha* or *sukha* sensation cannot be avoided.
- However, normal humans go far beyond that and generate **three additional types** of their own mind-made “*samphassa ja vedanā*“, as we will discuss below.

3. It is important to realize that *sukha* and *dukha vedanā* due to *kamma vipāka* are felt by the physical body. They result due to past good or bad *kamma vipāka*. This can be verified by referring to *Abhidhamma*:

- *Akusala kamma vipāka* coming through the body are listed as, “*dukkha saḥagatham kāya vinnanam*“, and *kusala kamma vipāka* coming through the body are listed as, “*sukha saḥagatham kāya vinnanam*“.
- **Neutral (*upekkha*) *vedanā* can arise via all five physical senses; see #7 below.**

4. A normal human being will **mentally generate** three more type of *vedanā* due to those *sukha*, *dukha*, and neutral *vedanā* that initially arise due to *kamma vipāka* via all five physical senses.

- If it is *dukha vedanā* (due to a headache, getting injured, etc.), one is likely to start worrying about it and **add more suffering. Those are *domanassa vedanā* or *amisa dukha vedanā*.**
- If it is *sukha vedanā* (getting a massage, lying in a luxurious bed, etc.), one is likely to start generating thoughts about how good it is and how one can enjoy similar *sukha vedanā* in the future. Those are ***somanassa vedanā* or *amisa sukha vedanā*** ; one could also be generating them by remembering past such *sukha vedanā*. These are also added in by the mind.

- *Somanassa* means “mind-made joyful”. *Domanassa* means “mind-made misery”, which is basically a depressed mindset.
- If a *vedanā* due to a *kamma vipāka* is not that strong one may just generate neutral feelings about it; that is ***amisa upekkha vedanā***.

5. Let us take some examples to illustrate how those additional types of *vedanā* can arise due to initial *dukha vedanā* and *sukha vedanā*.

- Suppose someone comes down with an illness. Any pain (*dukha vedanā*) due to that illness CANNOT be avoided by anyone once the illness takes hold: It is the RESULT (*vipāka*) of a previous CAUSE (*kamma*).
- Of course, it is possible that one could have avoided the *kamma vipāka* to materialize by trying to minimize CONDITIONS (*paccaya*); see, “[What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?](#)”. That is why *kamma vipāka* can be avoided by being mindful and taking precautions.
- Once an illness starts, all one can do is to take medicines and also take any possible actions to reduce the pain.
- However, people tend to make the situation worse by starting to generate negative feelings about the situation. This gives rise to *domanassa vedanā*.

6. In the same way, one can start generating *somanassa vedanā* based on a *sukha vedanā* that was brought by a good *kamma vipāka*.

- For example, when one is eating a delicious meal, one could be generating joyful thoughts about how delicious it is and how one can eat it again in the future. Such joyful thoughts (*somanassa vedanā*) may be generated even long after the meal.

7. ***Kamma vipāka* also lead to sense inputs at the other four physical senses. They are all neutral.** Thus neutral *vedanā* can arise via all five physical senses.

- *Kusala* and *akusala vipāka* coming through those four sense doors are listed as, “*upekkha saḥagatham cakkhu vinnanam*“, “*upekkha saḥagatham sota vinnanam*“, “*upekkha saḥagatham ghana vinnanam*“, and “*upekkha saḥagatham jivha vinnanam*“.
- For example, when we see an “eye-pleasing picture”, the initial *vedanā* felt by the mind is neutral.

8. But if one has cravings or repulsion to such pictures, one will start generating “*samphassa ja vedanā*“, or feelings that arise due to “*samphassa*” (“*san*” + “*phassa*” or contacts with “*san*” that is in one’s mind); see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)“.

- It is easy to understand this when one contemplates on some examples. Upon seeing person X, an enemy of X will generate what are called “*domanassa vedanā*” or bad feelings, whereas a friend of X will generate “*somanassa vedanā*” or good feelings.
- The same is true for sounds, tastes, and smells. Even though there appear to be “universally good” tastes, that is not true for an *Arahant*. We just cannot comprehend it at this stage. But we know that some foods enjoyed by some could be repulsive to others, for example.

9. Three more types of **mentally generated** *vedanā* can arise in those who are on the Noble Eightfold Path. These arise by **suppressing or eliminating** those *amisa vedanā* or “*samphassa ja vedanā*” discussed above.

- In the beginning of this section we discussed how heat or *tāpa* in the mind arise due to “*san*” which are greed (*lōbha*), hate (*dōsa*), and ignorance (*mōha*); see, “[Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities](#)” and “[Satipatthāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)“.

10. When one constantly is attached or repulsed by all those sense inputs that one experiences in a given day, one’s mind can get really stressed out. A normal human being may even not be aware of this heat (*tāpa*) in the mind; see those two posts mentioned above, and other posts in the beginning of the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.

- Even if one is generating *somanassa vedanā*, those inevitably lead to the stress in the mind. However, the effect is easily seen with *domanassa vedanā*.
- This is very important to grasp. You may want to go back and read those posts.

11. When one stays away from generating too many “*samphassa ja vedanā*” of both kinds, one will start feeling three more types of *vedanā*. These are called *niramisa vedanā*, because they arise due to staying away from cravings (and repulsion) to worldly objects.

- When one prevents the mind from heating up by comprehending the adverse effects of “san” and staying away from them, one’s mind starts “cooling down”. This is the ***niramisa sukha vedanā*** that we have discussed in many posts.
- This is what is emphasized by “*ātāpi sampajāno*” in the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*; it means “remove the fire or heat from one’s mind by being aware of the ‘san’ or “immoral tendencies”; see, “[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Structure](#)”.
- The pleasant feelings one feels during *jhānas* are also *niramisa sukha vedanā*. They are devoid of *tāpa* or heat.
- Such feelings can also be experienced when one is doing a meritorious deed, such as giving or helping out someone in need. Those are also devoid of *thāpa* or heat, and are *niramisa sukha vedanā*.
- *Niramisa sukha* can of course be experienced while engaging in meditation, especially *metta bhāvanā*. This is optimized when one does those *bhāvanā* with comprehension of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, i.e., when one does it with full comprehension of “*ātāpi sampajāno*”.

12. There are two more types of *vedanā* that one experiences when proceeding on the Noble Eightfold Path.

- Sometimes, one gets a bit discouraged by not advancing “fast enough” on the Path. One thinks about “why am I not getting to the *Sotāpanna* stage?” or “Is there anything that I am missing in order to make progress?”, etc.
- Those are not *domanassa vedanā* (because they are devoid of *patigha anusaya*); they are ***niramisa dukha vedanā***. It is common for one to experience such *vedanā*.
- If a *vēdanā* is not that strong one may just generate neutral feelings about it; that is ***nirāmisā upekkha vedanā***.

13. The key to *vedananupassana* in the *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā* is to be able to recognize which type of *vedanā* one feels.

- If it is a *dukha (vipāka) vedanā*, one understands that one needs to bear it (after reducing it as much as possible with medicines, etc). One needs to understand why such a *vipāka vedanā* arise, and remedy it as much as possible. After all, our goal is to stop any type of suffering.
- A good example is the pain one feels when sitting cross-legged at meditation retreats. Just by saying “I feel this *vedanā*” will not of any use. That *vedanā* can be removed by shifting one’s posture. I have seen some instructors advice people to just bear the pain saying that it will go away. It may go away because the nerves may become numb. That is not good in the long term.
- Also, one needs to understand why one should stop generating *domanassa* and *somanassa vedanā*, per above discussion.
- And one should of course cultivate *niramisa sukha vedanā* that arise when one starts on the Path (especially upon comprehending *Tilakkhana* to some extent) and reduces the tendency to generate *domanassa* and *somanassa vedanā*.

14. *Vedananupassana* is all about first identifying the types of *vedanā* one is experiencing, and then deciding what to do about them. Getting rid of all *vedanā* — as some believe — is the wrong thing to try to do.

Vipāka vedanā do not have *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*, but *vipāka vedanā* **can lead to** *samphassa ja vedanā* which will have *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*.

- *Vipāka vedanā* needs to be experienced with *upekkha*.
- *Samphassa ja vedanā* are the ones to be stopped. [*ja*, (-°) [adj. -suffix from *jan*, see *janati*; cp. °ga; *gacchati*] born, produced, sprung or arisen from]
- *Niramisa vedanā* are the ones to be cultivated.

15. In summary, try to avoid *vipāka dukha vedanā* by trying not to make conditions for them to appear; see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)“. Do not indulge in *vipāka sukha vedanā* when those arise. Suppress and gradually eliminate *samphassa ja vedanā* and cultivate *niramisa vedanā*, which is what the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section is all about.

- That is — in brief — what *vedananupassana* is all about.

More details on *vedanā* can be found at: “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)” and “[Feelings: Sukha, Dukha, Somanassa, and Domanassa](#)“.

4.8.1.2. Does Bodily Pain Arise Only Due to Kamma Vipāka?

2

January 12, 2018

1. *Vēdanā* can be categorized into five types ([WebLink: suttacentral: Pathama Vibhaṅga Sutta; SN 48.4](#)):

- **Two are generated by the mind** (called *cetasikam sukham* and *cetasikam dukkham* in the above *Sutta*) due to one’s *gathi*: *somanassa* (joy) and *domanassa* (depression).
- **Two felt by the body** (called *kāyikaṃ sukham* and *kāyikaṃ dukkham* in the above *Sutta*) and are “real”, not mind-made: *sukha* (bodily pleasure) and *dukkha* (bodily pain).
- **Neutral**: *adukkhamā sukha* (without pain or pleasure) or *upekkha* (without *somanassa* or *domanassa*). In the *Sutta* stated as : “*Katamañca, bhikkhave, upekkhindriyaṃ? Yaṃ kho, bhikkhave, kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā nevasātaṃ nāsātaṃ vedayitaṃ—idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, upekkhindriyaṃ*“.
- *Kāyika sukha* and *dukkha* are also experienced by the mind, but they come through the body as direct results of previous *kammā*, as we discuss below.

2. As clearly stated in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Nakulapitu Sutta \(SN 22.1\)](#)“:

- The two types of *vēdanā* generated by the mind do not arise in *Arahants*. They are called “*samphassa jā vēdanā*“; see, “[Vēdanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)“, and at a deeper level “[Vēdanā – What It Really Means](#)“.
- Those two felt by the body due to *kammā vipāka* are experienced also by the *Arahants*.
- This is also explained in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Salla Sutta \(SN 36.6\)](#)“, saying that while a normal human experiences both types of *vēdanā* when pierced by a spear (including “*samphassa jā vēdanā*“), an *Arahant* experiences only the “direct *vēdanā*” caused by the wound.

3. This is why In *Abhidhamma*, all sense inputs via the other five sense inputs (other than physical body) are initially felt as *upekkha* (neutral) *vēdanā*. Only the bodily sense inputs could lead to *dukkha vēdanā* (getting injured, headaches, cancer, etc) or *sukha vēdanā* (good massage, lying on a comfortable bed, etc).

- When we generate joy upon seeing something that we like, for example, it comes in as a neutral *vēdanā*. We generate joy via “*samphassa jā vēdanā*” based on our *gathi*.
- A good example is seeing a well-known politician. Some people generate good feelings and others may generate bad feelings; **but it is the same person they were all looking at. The joy or disgust was not in the politician, it was within the observer.** One may need to contemplate on

this and let the idea sink in. It is an important point. It holds true for any sense input other than the bodily sense inputs (*except kāma guna, discussed in #6 below*).

4. Regarding *Abhidhamma*, most people use the book “A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma”, by Bhikkhu Bodhi (First Edition 2000). [[Download free from pariyatti.org](#)] This is the English translation of the “*Abhidhammattha Sangaha*”, a commentary to the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* in the *Tipitaka*, by *Acariya Anuruddha*, who lived around the same time as *Acariya Buddhaghōsa*, who wrote the commentary *Visuddhimagga*.

- Both these recent commentaries have material inconsistent with the *Tipitaka*; see, “[Incorrect Thēravada Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)”.
- I have stated a discussion focused on the book “A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma”, by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000) at the discussion forum: “[Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma \(Bhikkhu Bodhi\) – Grave Error on p. 164](#)”. [[Download free from pariyatti.org](#)]

5. Going back to our original discussion, the key point from *Abhidhamma* is that only bodily sense inputs (experienced via the physical body) can bring in *sukha* (pleasant) or *dukkha* (unpleasant or painful) **bodily** sensations.

- In other words, when we experience joy (upon seeing a loved one) and dislike (upon seeing an enemy) are both mind-made; same is true for taste, sounds, smell. Same is also true for *dhammā* that come to the mind (recalling past events or future plans).
- However, *kāyika sukha* or *kāyika dukkha* arises due to injuries and sicknesses (headaches, cancer, etc), and are thus “real”.
- We have discussed these in various posts, but I wanted to find a couple of *Suttas*, where this is clearly stated concisely. Those are given in #1 and #2 above.

6. It must also be stated that the Buddha has described *vēdanā* as two types to 108 types depending on the analysis; see, for example, “[WebLink: suttacentral: Bahuvedanīya Sutta \(MN 59\)](#)”. For this discussion, the five types are appropriate.

- Another complexity involved is due to sense experiences that arise as part of a being’s *bhava* (yet at the root still determined by *kammā*), which are called “*kāma guna*”; see, “[Kāma Guna, Kāma, Kāma Rāga, Kāmaccanda](#)”. This is also mentioned in the above *Sutta*.
- For example, dogs and pigs eat feces because they taste such things as tasty. Humans, in general, taste sugar as sweet and salty as salty, etc. Those are *kāma guna* associated with each *bhava*; An *Arahant* would taste them the same way.

7. *Everything in this world arise with mind as the root cause*. That is what is meant by the *Dhammapada gāthā* : “*manō pubbangamā dhammā, manō setta manōmayā..*”.

- At the very fundamental level, those ‘*kammā beeja*’ or “*kammic energy*” has its root in *javana citta* with one or more of the six root causes: *lōbha*, *dosa*, *mōha*, and *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*.
- It is also important to realize is that the three types of *kammā* are done by *mano*, *vaci*, and *kāya saṅkhāra*: “[Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means](#)”.

8. This vicious cycle of “*vipāka*” leading to new “*kammā*” (via acting with *avijjā*), which in turn lead to more “*vipāka*”, is the process that binds us to the *samsāra* of endless rebirths, or perpetuate our “world” of suffering; see, “[How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?](#)”.

- The Buddha described this as, “*kammā vipākā vaddanti, vipākō kammā sambhavō, tasmā punabbhavō hōti, evan lokō pavattati*”.
- That means, “*kammā* lead to *vipāka*, *vipāka* in turn lead to *kammā* and thus to rebirth (*punabbhavō*), and that is how the world (existence) is maintained”. Here “*sambhava*” is “*san*” + “*bhava*”, or “adding more existences”. Also, “*lōka*” is world, and “*pavatta*” means “maintain”.

9. However, the working of *kammā/kammā vipāka* is NOT deterministic, i.e., just because one has done a bad (good) deed in the past, that DOES NOT mean one would get the corresponding result (bad or good); see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”.
- This is because “conditions” are a key aspect of *Paticca Samuppāda* (cause and effect) in Buddha Dhamma. Just because there are causes (*kammā beeja*), corresponding *vipāka* do not take place unless suitable conditions come into play; see, “[How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?](#)” and “[Pattana Dhamma](#)”.
10. **On the other hand, things DO NOT just happen.** One or more causes MUST act as the root cause for a good (or bad) effect. Therefore, a past *kammā*, is ALWAYS needed to act as the cause.
- The above is an important point, so let me give an example. When someone gets a headache or cancer that is a bodily *vēdanā* arising solely due to a *kammā vipāka* **and one’s action at that time does not come into play. Of course, one can take subsequent actions to either alleviate that problem or even to get rid of it.**
 - On the other hand, one may encounter sufferings that seem to be not directly due to *kammā vipāka*. For example, one may have breathing problems because one’s body has excess phlegm (*semha*). **So, it appears that the cause of breathing problems is excess phlegm. But there is a root cause for phlegm to be present at high levels in one’s body**, and that is a past *kammā*. The same is true for bile (*pīta*), gas (*vāta*), body fluids (*sannipāta*), change in climate (*utu*), careless behavior (*visama*), others’ harmful actions (*opakkama*).
11. There are three *Suttas* (SN 36.21, AN 5.104, and AN 10.60) that the reader Siebe mentioned in the discussion forum (“[Could Bodily Pain be due Causes Other Than Kamma Vipaka?](#)”, that list 8 such possible “secondary causes” for bodily pain:
- One should read that discussion topic to get a good understanding of how this discussion evolved, but let me briefly describe the background.
12. **Those other seven “causes” (except *kammā*) are not root causes.** They all have past *kammā* as the root cause. **Nothing in this world happens without a connection somewhere to the six root causes: *lōbha*, *dosa*, *mōha*, and *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*.**
- One may get an idea to stand on one’s leg. But if one is mindful, one can see the bodily pain associated with that action and decide not to go through with it. Note that the *kammā vipāka* in this case came initially as a mental input (through *mana indriya*). But one has the CHOICE not to go along with that. Therefore, a second *kammā* **of actually standing on one leg (one’s willingness to go along with it) is needed for the *kāya vēdanā* to arise.**
 - The first case above in #10 (cancer etc) illustrates the *vipāka* solely attributed to past *kammā*. Pain due to standing on a leg is also an immediate *kammā vipāka*. Other cases involve those *vipāka* arising due to the seven other types of causes that are discussed in the *Suttas* mentioned in #11.
13. **Therefore, sometimes it may not be easy to figure out what is cause and what is effect, because result of a past action itself can act as a (new) cause.**
- The above example of standing on one’s leg is a good example. The *kāya vēdanā* WOULD NOT arise, unless one let the initial *kammā vipāka* (came through the *mana indriya*) to proceed. One has the ability to stop that *kāya vēdanā* from arising.
 - On the other hand, one cannot stop the cancer by will. One could take actions (called *upakkama* or *prayōga*) to alleviate a bodily *vēdanā* due to a *kammā vipāka*. By the way, *upakkama* is one of the eight mentioned loosely as causes in those *Suttas* that mention possible eight causes for *kammā vipāka*.
14. Those *upakkama* or *prayōga* can work in the following way too. An *upakkama* by person A, may cause harm to person B. For example, when person B detonate a suicide bomb, person A may die as a result of that action.

- But here again, person A MUST have a pending *kammā vipāka* for that action by person B to cause harm for him. As I have mentioned many times, we have collected innumerable *kammā vipāka* and they are waiting for such conditions to appear to give *vipāka*.
- (Twenty four such conditions are listed and discussed in “[Pattana Dhamma](#)“. So far, I have discussed only a few).
- Some people escape such attacks “miraculously”. There is no miracle, just the fact the there may not have been a suitable *kammā vipāka* waiting to be ripened, OR, a past good *kammā* could overcome even some pending bad *vipāka*.
- This is why the Buddha said that it is impossible for a human to figure out the causes for *kammā vipāka*.
- Another such special case is the demise of all living beings in the realms BELOW the *abhassara brahma* realm at the destruction of the “material world” (*lōka vināsaya*); over a long time period all being in the lower realms are reborn in higher realms above the *abhassara brahma* realm until a new world (new Earth in our case) is formed over billions of years. We will not get to discuss this for a while, since more background material is needed.

15. One would think that the Buddha’s good *kammā* done in his last life would be more than enough to override any *kammā vipāka* from the past. However, remnants of *vipāka* of an *anantariya kammā* were there, and also there could have been other strong *kammā*. That is the only exception, and that is the *kammā vipāka* listed among the eight other possible causes. **The other seven are really not the root causes, but actually effects that appear as causes.**

- The Buddha is said to had to face 12 *kammā vipāka* (“[WebLink: suttacentral: Pubbakammapilotikabuddhaapadāna ; Therāpadāna](#)“; only Pāli and Sinhala versions can be found there, but an English translation is at: “[WebLink: ancient-buddhist-texts.net: The Connection with Previous Deeds – Pubbakammapilotika-Buddhāpadānam](#)“). Much merits to the two readers who sent me the reference!).
- Five of those 12 were due to **remnants** of *anantariya papa kammā* involving verbally or physically hurting Buddhas in past lives. Two were for killings, two for abusing sages, one for breaking the back of a wrestler, one for giving wrong medication intentionally, and another for watching others engaged in fishing and enjoying it.
- By the way, Moggallana *Thero* was beaten to death due to remnants of a *kammā* of killing his parents in a past life. He paid for most of his *kammā* in a *niraya* (worst realms in *apāyas*).

16. Finally, I would caution that material in the *Milindapanha* are based on conversations that took place between Ven. Nagasena and King Milinda more than 100 years after the Buddha’s *Parinibbana*. Even though most of the material in *Milindapanha* seems to be compatible with the *Suttas*, it is possible that Ven. Nagasena referred to those extra seven causes as “root causes” just because those three *Suttas* in #11 above (SN 36.21, AN 5.104, and AN 10.60) did not elaborate on the deeper explanation that we discussed above.

- Furthermore, as reader Akvan pointed out in the discussion forum, Ven. Nagasena’s statement about Buddha not having to face *kammā vipāka* is not correct (I have not personally read that account in *Milindapanaha*, if it is there).

17. One’s understanding in how *kammā/kammā vipāka* operate will grow only with understanding of basic concepts. Until then, one’s ingrained belief systems will be operating based on the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi*. **There are actually two levels of *miccā diṭṭhi*.** First one needs to remove the **ten types of *miccā diṭṭhi*.**

- Then one can start on the Noble Eightfold Path AFTER learning about the deeper level of *miccā diṭṭhi*. That is to realize that it is a wrong view to believe that things in this world can bring long-term happiness. **This second level** of wrong views are dispelled when one comprehends *Tilakkhana*, the Three Characteristics of this world: ***anicca, dukkha, anatta*.**
- The strongest immoral deeds are done by the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi*. They inevitably lead to suffering and can lead to rebirth in the *apāyas*.

18. One can attain *Nibbāna* only by getting rid of the second level of *miccā diṭṭhi*, i.e., only by comprehending *Tilakkhana*. **Thus ultimate and permanent happiness can be attained only by getting rid of second level of *miccā diṭṭhi*.**

- Both types of *miccā diṭṭhi* are discussed in the post: “[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.

4.8.1.3 Sankhāra – What It Really Means

February 25, 2017; revised January 3, 2018

1. *Saṅkhāra* is conventionally translated as “formations” and “mental formations”. Certainly the latter is a better translation. But it is much better to grasp the idea of *saṅkhāra* and just use that word.

- It comes from “san” + “kāra” or actions that involve “san”. We know that “san” means anything that is associated with the world of 31 realms, either by giving rise to future births (as in *abhisankhāra*) or just helps in living the current life (*saṅkhāra*).
- Thinking about going to the bathroom is a *saṅkhāra* (*kammically* neutral).
- Thinking about killing a human being and carrying it out is a *saṅkhāra* with high *kammic* consequences or an *abhisankhāra*. It can lead to a birth in the *apāyas*, and is an *apunna abhisankhāra* (or *apunnābhisankhāra*).
- On the other hand, *punna abhisankhāra* (or *punnābhisankhāra*) have good *kammic* consequences and can lead to “good births”. Even more importantly, they are essential for making progress on the Path.
- Good or bad *kammā* are done via those types of *sankhāra*. They can bring results (*kamma vipāka*) immediately, in this life, or in future lives. However, not all *kammā* lead to *kamma vipāka*; see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”.

2. However, the word *saṅkhāra* is commonly used to indicate those with *kammic* consequences, as in “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*”, where it really means, “*avijjā paccaya apunnabhi saṅkhāra*”. So, one really needs to pay attention to exactly what meaning need to be taken in a given case.

- By the way, it would have been better to spell the word as *sankāra*, instead of *saṅkhāra*, but it is too late to change since that could cause problems with, for example, Google searches.

3. **All our thoughts, speech, and bodily actions are based on *saṅkhāra* that arise in the mind.** Therefore, it is important to realize that *vacī saṅkhāra* and *kaya saṅkhāra* also arise in the mind.

- ***Kaya saṅkhāra*** are in “conscious thoughts” that make our bodies move. Killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct are *apunnabhi kaya saṅkhāra*.
- ***Vacī saṅkhāra*** are in “conscious thoughts that we silently generate” and also those thoughts that lead to speech by moving the lips, tongue etc. Thinking about a *Dhamma* concept is a *punnabhi vacī saṅkhāra*. Hate speech is due to *apunnabhi vacī saṅkhāra*.
- On the other hand, ***mano saṅkhāra*** are in “unconscious thoughts” that arise automatically. We are not aware when they arise. They arise due to our *gathi* and can indicate our level of *mōha* or *avijjā*. Since they arise unconsciously, *mano saṅkhāra* are unlikely to be *abhisankhāra* that have strong *kammic* consequences.
- The fact that *cetana* plays a key role is clear when we look at the following definitions: “*kaya sancetana kaya saṅkhāra*”, “*vacī sancetana vacī saṅkhāra*”, and “*mano sancetana mano saṅkhāra*”.

4. Let us take some examples to illustrate these three types of *saṅkhāra*.

- In order to move the body, the mind in the *gandhabba* must first generate thoughts about moving the body. Then that thought is executed with the help of the brain that sends necessary signals to the leg muscles, say, to move the legs.

- So, those *kaya saṅkhāra* are responsible for moving the legs. Now, if the purpose to move the body was to go somewhere to commit a bad deed, then it becomes an *apunna abhisankhāra*. **These thoughts would have *asobhana cetasika* (like greed or hate) in them.**
- If the purpose was to go somewhere to do a good deed, then it would become a *punnabhi saṅkhāra*. **These thoughts would have *sobhana cetasika* (like faith and compassion) in them.**
- If the purpose was to go the bathroom (*kammically* neutral), then it would be just a *kaya saṅkhāra*, not an *abhisankhāra*. In fact, breathing involves moving body parts (lungs), which is done without conscious thinking, but they are *kaya saṅkhāra* too. **Those thoughts would not have *sobhana* or *asobhana cetasika* in them.**
- This is why the *kammic* nature of an act is decided by the intention that is in the mind, i.e., type of *cetasika* that arise with those thoughts.

5. Now, if person X gets angry at another person, X may not move any body parts, but may be generating very bad thoughts (saying to himself “I wish I could hit this person right now”); those are *vacī saṅkhāra*.

- When those *vacī saṅkhāra* get strong, one may actually say those words out; then *kaya saṅkhāra* are also generated to move the mouth, lips, etc. They are still called *vacī saṅkhāra*.
- Whether one is just talking to oneself or actually speaks out such bad words, they are both *apunna abhisankhāra*.
- Of course *vacī saṅkhāra* can be *punna abhisankhāra* too. Person X watching a good deed by person Y, may be generating good thoughts about Y; those are *punna vacī saṅkhāra*.
- Those also will be distinguished by the type of *cetasika* as in *kaya saṅkhāra* above.

6. Whether they are *vacī* or *kaya saṅkhāra*, if they have *asobhana cetasika* in them, they have the tendency to “heat up” or “stress” the mind (Pāli word is “*thāpa*”).

- On the other hand, if *sobhana cetasika* arise as *vacī* or *kaya saṅkhāra*, they have the tendency to “cool” a mind.
- In the earlier post, “[What Are Kilesa \(Mental Impurities\)? – Connection to Cetasika](#)“, it was discussed in detail why understanding this fact is the pre-requisite for the *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā*; see, “[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)“. Just by comprehending this fact, one can start cultivating *niramisa sukha*.

7. All other thoughts that arise in the mind **without conscious thinking** are *mano saṅkhāra*.

- For example, when one gets hit by a cane, say, one feels the pain associated with it, and one realizes that the pain was caused by another person hitting with a cane. So, the *mano saṅkhāra* that are involved at the beginning have two *cetasika* of *saññā* (recognition of what happened) and *vedanā* (pain caused). **Another way to say it: *mano saṅkhāra* are involved in the *vipāka stage*.**
- **However, based on that “sense input” of getting hit, now one could start generating *vacī saṅkhāra* and even *kaya saṅkhāra*.** Those *vacī saṅkhāra* may involve just generating bad thoughts about that person (talking to oneself) or actually saying bad things to him. If the pain was strong, one may start generating bad *kaya saṅkhāra* and hit that person.

8. So, it is important to realize that whether one is just thinking (*mano saṅkhāra* and early stages of *vacī saṅkhāra*), or speaking out (*vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra*), or using the body movements (*kaya saṅkhāra*), they all involve thoughts (*citta*).

- Those thoughts arise in the *gandhabba*, and become the commands to the brain to carry out the tasks of speaking and body movement. That is how the mental body (*gandhabba*) controls the physical body; see, “[Our Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)“.

9. As I will explain in a future post in the *Abhidhamma* section, initial *mano saṅkhāra* and subsequent *vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra* start arising in the same initial thought process called a *citta vithi*.

- So, the seeds for thinking, speaking, and acting start at the instant of the first sense input, say, seeing something or hearing something that gets one's attention.
- If the sense input is strong (and one gets interested in it via like or dislike), one will start many such *citta vithi* in a short time, and generate corresponding *vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra* to “talk to oneself”, speak out, or to do bodily actions.

10. Without getting into details, conscious thinking that could lead to speaking and bodily actions occur in the seven *javana citta* in a *citta vithi*.

- *Vacī* or *kaya saṅkhāra* arise due to many *citta vithi* running one after another.
- Another key point is that the *javana citta* in subsequent *citta vithi* get stronger and stronger. This is why when we start thinking about a person that we really like or really dislike, we can keep generating increasingly stronger feelings about the situation.
- Sometimes, we can see people getting angry by the minute. They are generating a lot of *vacī saṅkhāra* even without getting a word out. But one can see the person getting highly agitated: the face gets red and facial expression can show how angry he/she has become.

11. Therefore, even if we may start generating *vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra*, we may not become aware of it for a short time. If one gets really angry one may lose control and may not even realize that one is getting into a bad situation.

- “Catching oneself early” in the process of becoming angry is the key to control anger management. When one understands how this process happens and that it can escalate quickly into a bad situation, one can make a determination to catch it earlier next time.
- We can prevent a lot of suffering in this life by catching such *vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra* early.
- As we discussed in the *desanā* in the post, “[Satipatthāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)“, this is the key to *ānāpāna* and *satipatthāna bhāvanā*.

12. In the previous post, “[Vedanā – What It Really Means](#)“, we discussed how “*samphassa ja vedanā*” can arise in our minds subsequent to initial *vipāka vedanā*.

- Those “*samphassa ja vedanā*” arise when we generate *vacī saṅkhāra* and *kaya saṅkhāra* as a result of the initial *vipāka vedanā*.
- Those “*samphassa ja vedanā*” are all made by us consciously. However, for someone who has not cultivated *satipatthāna* or *ānāpāna* (the correct versions), this may not be obvious.

13. If one is mindful, one could see for oneself when one starts consciously having good or bad thoughts about a sense input. With practice, one can “catch oneself” before generating too many “*samphassa ja vedanā*” or — to say the same thing differently — before generating a lot of *vacī* or *kaya saṅkhāra*.

- This may need a bit of thinking, but let us take some examples to clarify.

14. We first need to pay attention to those “*samphassa ja vedanā*” that arise due to immoral thoughts, i.e., due to immoral *vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra*.

- Suppose person X is verbally abused by enemy Y, and starts generating bad *vacī saṅkhāra*. Those *vacī saṅkhāra* give rise to *domanassa* “*samphassa ja vedanā*“. If the situation escalates, stronger *vacī saṅkhāra*, i.e., thoughts of hitting Y, may arise and may actually lead to *kaya saṅkhāra* of hitting Y. This is an example of a situation to be avoided.

15. On the other hand, when one is eating a delicious food, one will taste it as delicious, whether one is a normal human or an *Arahant*. It is a “*kama guna*” associated with the human realm; see, “[Kāma Guna, Kāma, Kāma Rāga, Kāmaccanda](#)“. **That is not an immoral thought.**

- The difference is that while a normal human will have craving for that food, an *Arahant* will not.

16. We will be able to put all this together when we discuss *viññāṇa*. So, far we have discussed *saññā*, *vedanā*, *saṅkhāra*. The discussion on *viññāṇa* will complete our simplified discussion on the four aggregates that are associated with the mind or the mental body, *gandhabba*.

- Furthermore, we will see that *vedanā* (excluding “*samphassa ja vedanā*”) and *saññā* are associated with *mano saṅkhāra*, which arise automatically due to *kamma vipāka*.
- Starting with those *mano saṅkhāra*, we then consciously generate *vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra* initiating new *kamma*. Furthermore, “*samphassa ja vedanā*” arise during that process.
- When *kamma vipāka* in turn lead to making new *kamma* (thus giving rise to more *kamma vipāka*), the whole process repeats itself over and over. This is how the rebirth process rolls on forever, unless one makes a determination to stop initiating new *kamma*, especially strong immoral *kamma* via *apunnabhi vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra*.

Later, we will discuss how the fifth aggregate of *rūpa* actually arise due to those four mental aggregates.

Difference between *saṅkhāra* and *dhammā* at, “[Difference Between Dhammā and Saṅkhāra](#)”.

4.8.2 Rupa Aggregate

[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)

[Bhūta and Yathābhūta – What Do They Really Mean](#)

4.8.2.1 What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!

May 13, 2017; revised November 4, 2017

Any and all our conscious thoughts start with one of the **six** senses getting an input from the external world that is made up of *rūpa*.

1. Many people think *rūpa* mean just “material things” that we can see out in the world. **But EVERYTHING that we sense through our six senses are rūpa.** I will explain this in a systematic way.

- Those things that we detect with our five physical senses are what we can call “dense *rūpa*”; they are made of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], i.e., they are made of *satara mahā bhūta* (*patavi, āpo, tējo, vāyo*).; see, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhaṭṭhaka\]](#)”.
- Those *rūpa* that we detect with the *mana indriya* are called “*dhammā*”. These are **just energies** and have not condensed to the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] level, i.e., **they are below** the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage.
- It is good to remember that *dhamma* refers to a doctrine (like in Buddha Dhamma) and *dhammā* refers to those very fine *rupā*.
- Let us discuss those two types of *rūpa* in detail first.

2. **All things that we experience through our SIX senses are rūpa, but the first FIVE types of sense inputs come through five “sensors” obvious to everyone (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body). The SIXTH one called *mana indriya* (located in the brain) is not known to science. This is clearly stated in the *Cha Chakka Sutta*, as discussed below.**

- **All six types are eventually EXPERIENCED by the mind, i.e., with *citta* (thoughts) with *cetasika* (mental factors) in them.**
- For details how the sense inputs that come through the six “sense doors” are experienced by the mind, see, “[Brain – Interface between Mind and Body](#)”.

3. Those that we experience through our FIVE physical senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and the body) are “dense *rūpa*”, meaning they are made of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], which are made of the four great elements or the “*satara mahā bhūta*”.

- Those five kinds of *rūpa* are all in our “*rūpa loka*”, which is what we are quite used to seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and making bodily contacts with.

- What we touch with our **body** or see with our **eyes** are the *rūpa* that are familiar to everyone; they are sometimes called “*rūpa rūpa*” or “*vanna rūpa*” (*varna rūpa* in Sinhala or Sanskrit) to distinguish from other four types.
- However, we need light to “see” those “*rūpa rūpa*”. Light consists of tiny particles called photons; they have very small masses due to their energies.

4. Now, let us look at the other four types of *rūpa* that we detect with our ears, noses, tongues.

- It is easy to see that what we taste are also “*rūpa rūpa*”, i.e., solid food or liquids.
- What we detect with the nose are scents, which are really very small particulates. So, they are also “*rūpa rūpa*”.
- When we hear sounds, our ears detect disturbances in air due to that sound. Sound therefore involves energy, just like light. Sometimes sound energy is attributed to energy packets called “phonons”.

5. Therefore, detection of *rūpa* in the “*rūpa loka*” involve matter or energy, and all those are above the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage.

- Yes. The light particles or photons are also made of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*].
- They are above the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage, so one can see how minute a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] is; it is much, much smaller than an atom in modern science.
- For example, a photon in the visible range (which is a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]) is a billion times less massive than an hydrogen atom, the smallest atom. That is like the mass difference between a grain of sand and an average airplane.
- A *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] could be a billion times smaller than that photon.

6. This is actually another example of how Buddha was ahead of modern science 2500 years ago. He had categorized all five “objects” sensed by the five physical senses as “*rūpa*” made up of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]. It was only about 100 years ago that science identified photons as particles, with the advent of quantum mechanics.

- Even many physicists did not accept the particle nature of light until the single photon detection experiments of Grainger, Roger, and Aspect in 1986: [WebLink: PDF file: Grainger et al-Experimental Evidence for a Photon Anticorrelation Effect-1986](#)
- Now it is accepted that light is made up of particles called photons.

7. Now let us think about what else we experience, other than those detected with the five physical senses. Imagine someone trapped in a cell with soundproof walls with no light inside, and nothing in that room except its walls.

- That person can only touch the walls. He cannot see, hear, smell, or taste anything.
- But touch is not the only sense experience he has. He can think about anything he wants to. He can think about past events and he can think about what can take place in the future.
- Those thoughts do not come at random, but due to *kamma vipāka*. Of course one can willingly recall them too. They are his memories and future hopes, among others. This is the part that most people don’t even consider.

8. As we discussed above, those are the finer *rūpa* detected by the mind lie below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage. They are detected by the *mana indriya* in the brain (another fact unknown to science), and subsequently sensed by the mind.

- *Kamma beeja* — that are generated by our minds (via our thoughts) — are also part of *dhammā*. They bring *kamma vipāka* back to from time to time. These are what we think of as “random thoughts” that come to us about things and people.
- Those *dhammā* are not coarse enough to be “seeing” even with *abhiññā* powers, and do not make contact with other five coarse senses. Thus they are called, “*anidassan appatighan dhammayatana pariyapanna rūpan*”.

- Here, “*anidassana*” means “cannot be seen” and “*appatigha*” means “cannot be touched or sensed with even the finest instrument”. And, “*dhammayatana pariyapanna rūpan*” means “can make contact only with the *dhammayatana* or *mana indriya*”; see, “[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)”.

9. We see a person when light reflected off of that person comes to our eyes. We hear a sound when the air disturbances due to that sound reach our ears. We smell a scent when tiny particulates of scent reach our noses. We taste food when food particles make contact with our tongues.

- So, we have five physical “sensors” on our bodies to detect those five sense inputs. They are **eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and our bodies**. They are called *cakkhu, sota, ghana, jivha*, and *kaya indriya*.
- The sixth sense that we have is called the *mana indriya*. It is located in the brain, but I have not yet been able to identify it with the known components in the brain. Of course, scientists do not think about it that way. This is how the Buddha described it.

10. We detect “*dhammā*” with the *mana indriya*, just like we detect pictures with *cakkhu indriya* or sounds with *sōta indriya* (ears). But all these sense inputs are “felt” by the mind (*hadaya vatthu*) located close to the physical heart; see, “[Brain – Interface between Mind and Body](#)”.

- *These dhammā are also rūpa in Buddha Dhamma*, but they are even more fine than those light particles or photons.
- “*Dhammā*” are just energies that lie BELOW the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage. They cannot be detected with even the finest scientific instrument.
- *That person locked up in an isolated room generates thoughts about his past or future, when dhammā that represent such past events or future hopes make contact with the mana indriya.*

11. Just like the dense *rūpa* that we detect with our five physical senses are in our “*rūpa loka*”, these *dhammā* (which are the same as *kamma beeja*) are in our “*mano loka*”; see, “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)”.

- This *mano loka* is also called “*bhava*”, because that is where one’s *kamma beeja* are, as we mentioned above in #8. We all have numerous *kamma beeja* that can give rise to a variety of *bhava* at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment, when a new *bhava* is grasped (the strongest *kamma beeja* corresponding to an appropriate *bhava* is selected).
- Of course, *kamma vipāka* during a given life also arise due to smaller *kamma beeja*, as mentioned above.
- When these *kamma beeja* lose their energy over long times, they become just “records”, i.e., they cannot bring any more *vipāka*, but become just “memories”.

12. So, these *dhammā* (or *kamma beeja*) are *rūpa* that are below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage, and are in our “*mano loka*” or “mental world”, as opposed to those dense *rūpa* that are in our “material world” or “*rūpa loka*”.

- The “mental world” is all around us, just like the “material world”, but of course we cannot “see it”, just like we cannot “see” all those radio, television, and cell phone signals that are all around us.
- But we do know that those radio, television, and cell phone signals are there, because we can receive them with our radios, TVs, and cell phones. Just the same way, we receive those “*dhammā*” with our *mana indriya*.
- One may be engaged in some task, say washing dishes in the kitchen, but all of a sudden a thought may come to mind about a friend far away, or some incident at work. That is due to “*dhammā*” impinging on *mana indriya* due to *kamma vipāka*.
- In addition, we can recall such memories at our will too.

13. Those who are familiar with *Abhidhamma* know that a “seeing event” is a sense input through the eyes: “*cakkunca paticca rupeca uppaddati cakkhu vinnanan*“, i.e., “eye consciousness arises when a *rūpa rūpā* (with the aid of light) impinges on the eyes”.

- Similarly, hearing is due to: “*sotanca paticca saddeca uppaddati sota vinnanan*“, etc. for other physical senses of *ghana* (smell), *jivha* (taste), and *kaya* (body).
- Finally, detection of *dhammā* with the *mana indriya* is stated as, “*mananca paticca dhammeca uppaddati mano vinnanan*“.

14. We also need to realize that “*dhammā*” can have somewhat different meaning too, depending on the where used.

- Buddha Dhamma means a teachings of the Buddha. Here it is normally written as “Dhamma”, but some do write it as Buddha Dhammā.
- So, we need to take the appropriate meaning of a given word depending on the context.

15. We can state the above with *Abhidhamma* language as follows, for those of who are familiar with *Abhidhamma*: According to Buddha Dhamma EVERYTHING in existence can be put into four ultimate realities (*paramatthatha*):

- Thoughts (*citta*)
- Thought qualities or mental factors (*cetasika*)
- Matter (*rūpa*) which includes energy and *dhammā*
- *Nibbāna*

16. As we will see later, it is these *dhammā* that eventually lead to the formation of those dense *rūpa* that we enjoy with our five physical senses.

These **dense rūpa** have finite lifetimes (impermanent), **but in addition, change unpredictably during their existence; this is called *viparinama lakkhana*.**

- But no matter how hard one tries, one is unable to maintain those **dense rūpa** to one’s satisfaction (*anicca*). Thus, one ends up being subjected to **suffering** much more than any pleasure one can gain from **enjoying** those **dense rūpa**.
- Five types of **dense rūpa** are in our “*rūpa loka*“, the less dense *dhammā* are in our “*mano loka*“; see, “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)“.
- A living being exists to experience those **dense rūpa** and hopes to enjoy them with the mind (with *citta* and *cetasika*). That is the basis of existence in a sentence.

17. The Buddha said, “*sabbe dhammā |anattā|*“, i.e., “all *dhammā* are without essence at the end” and must be given up in order to attain *Nibbāna*. But that cannot be done by sheer will power: One has to comprehend the true nature — *Tilakkhanna* — in order to see the real nature of all *rūpa*, including *dhammā*.

- We make our own world, starting with making our own *dhammā*. This is a critical point that I will try to explain in future posts in this “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.
- The basis for making *dhammā* are our thoughts with *javana*. Those *javana* generate “*kamma beeja*” and they give rise to future *kamma vipāka*. So, those *kamma beeja* are really *dhammā*. They are very tiny packets of energy below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage.
- But some *javana* (especially in *jhāna samapatti*) can create energies above the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage, i.e., they can create tangible *rūpa*. That is how one with *abhiññā* powers can “create” physical objects.

18. Any *rūpa* (including those *kamma beeja*) that one makes for oneself, cannot be maintained to one’s satisfaction.

- Any type of *rūpa* with energy will eventually be destroyed or that energy will wear out. Furthermore, they can and will change unexpectedly while in existence too; that is the *viparināma* characteristic and is a root cause of suffering.
- The only *dhammās* that are “permanent” are *nama gotta*, **records** of our *saṅkhāra*, which do not have energy in them; “[Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya \(Mind Plane\)](#)”.

19. When one sees the perils of this rebirth process (after one grasps the *Tilakkhana*), one stops making those causes via *abhisankhāra*, and also gives up the craving (*taṇhā*) for them, which leads to *Nibbāna*.

- **Nibbāna** results when all those causes are removed and no *rūpa* can arise, and hence it is permanent. One will be permanently removed from the suffering-filled world.

20. Finally, our six sense inputs (*āyatana*) and the six types of *rūpa* that we experience with them are discussed in several *suttas*. For example, in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Cha Chakka Sutta \(MN 148\)](#)”:

“*Cha ajjhāttikāni āyatanāni veditabbānī’ti—iti kho panetaṃ vuttaṃ. Kiñcetaṃ paṭicca vuttaṃ? Cakkhāyatanaṃ, sotāyatanaṃ, ghāṇāyatanaṃ, jivhāyatanaṃ, kāyāyatanaṃ, manāyatanaṃ. ‘Cha ajjhāttikāni āyatanāni veditabbānī’ti—iti yaṃ taṃ vuttaṃ, idameṭaṃ paṭicca vuttaṃ. Idaṃ paṭhamam chakkaṃ. (1)’*”

“*Cha bāhirāni āyatanāni veditabbānī’ti—iti kho panetaṃ vuttaṃ. Kiñcetaṃ paṭicca vuttaṃ? Rūpāyatanaṃ, saddāyatanaṃ, gandhāyatanaṃ, rasāyatanaṃ, phoṭṭhabbāyatanaṃ, dhammāyatanaṃ. ‘Cha bāhirāni āyatanāni veditabbānī’ti—iti yaṃ taṃ vuttaṃ, idameṭaṃ paṭicca vuttaṃ. Idaṃ dutiyam chakkaṃ. (2)’*”

- Thus, there are six (*Cha*) internal *āyatana* (*ajjhāttikāni āyatanāni*) and six external (*bāhirāni āyatanāni*).
- The sixth internal *āyatana* is *manāyatana* and it detects *dhamma* (called *manāyatana*, just like *sadda* or sound is called *saddāyatana*).

A deeper analysis of *dhammā* is at, “[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)”.

4.8.2.2 Bhūta and Yathābhūta – What Do They Really Mean

December 28, 2017

1. *Yathābhūta* is normally translated as “true nature” (which is a bit close to the true meaning). From that, it seems, *bhūta* is translated as “nature”; sometimes *bhūta* is translated as “becoming”. Both are wrong.

- These words are also associated with *yathābhūta ñāṇa*. By the end of this discussion one will know what that *ñāṇa* or wisdom is about.

2. *Bhūta* is a Sinhala word as well as a Pāli word. **It literally means a “ghost”**. The deeper meaning is associated with the “*satara mahā bhūta*”: *patavi, āpo, tējo, vāyo*.

- One cannot ever see those *satara mahā bhūta* individually. The smallest unit containing any of them is a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*], which consists of those four (*patavi, āpo, tējo, vāyo*) AND *varna, gandha, rasa, ōja*. Thus a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*] (“*suddha*” + “*ashta*” where “*suddha*” is pure or fundamental and “*ashta*” is eight) means “pure octad” or “pure unit of eight”. How a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*] is formed is discussed in “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatṭhaka\]](#)”.
- It should also be noted that *satara mahā bhūta* are the primary *rūpa*. All others, including *varna, gandha, rasa, ōja*, are derived from them and are called *upādaya rūpa*.

3. As mentioned in that post, *bhūta* have their origins in “*gathi*”. When one cultivates a certain *gathi* and when they become strong, they can lead to the creation of *bhūta* (*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*]) produced via their *javana citta*.

- So, in order to get a good understanding of these key words, one needs to know about *gathi* (I have sometimes spelled as *gati*), which is discussed in many posts at the site. For example, see, “[Gati, Bhava, and Jāti](#)”.

4. Scientists have now verified the illusive nature of matter at very small scale. Atoms were thought to be the smallest possible division of matter until 1897 when J.J. Thomson discovered the electron. Then it was realized that an atom is made of smaller units (protons, neutrons, and electrons), and then those were found to have structure too, but they sub-units (quarks, etc) cannot be detected individually).

- With the advent of quantum mechanics, the distinction between matter and energy has become blurred. The mass of a particle depends on its speed, and its mass when it is at rest is the smallest. Photons or “particles of light” have zero mass at rest, i.e., zero rest mass. It is now typical to state the mass of an elementary particle in terms of energy units.
- It has become clear that matter has an illusive nature when tried to figure out the “smallest units” from which all matter is composed of.

5. Furthermore, it is not possible to determine the exact position of an elementary particle at a given time. For example, it is only possible to say that an electron can be within a certain region of space. Thus, an electron is like a ghost. It cannot be pinned down to be at a certain location.

- The situation is even worse for a photon, a particle of light. When a photon is released, one can only find it at a later time by stopping it at a detector. It is IMPOSSIBLE to state the exact path of the photon from the source to the detector. It could have been anywhere in between. The same applies to an electron too, even though it has a non-zero rest mass.
- This has been referred to as “quantum weirdness”. Those small particles are as elusive as ghosts.

6. That is exactly what the Buddha said. A *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] is much smaller than even a photon, and the Buddha said that *satara mahā bhūta* are the true “smallest units of matter”. **This is why he called them *bhūta***. One can NEVER see them or detect them individually. As we mentioned above, the smallest unit of *rūpa*, or a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] consists of eight sub units.

- Furthermore, these *bhūta* arise from *gathi* of living beings (mostly human and above); see, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhaṭṭhaka\]](#)”. A person with rough character qualities is likely to create *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] with higher proportion of *patavi*, etc.

7. No one will be able to “see” or figure out how *gathi* are transformed to *bhūta* or *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage. Only a Buddha can discern that.

- **Billions of billions of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] are combined to lead to the *mahā bhūta* stage of *rūpa***. *Brahmas* have bodies made of *mahā bhūta*. Only *brahmas* can see such fine *rūpa*.
- **When large number of *mahā bhūta* combine, that leads to the *dhātu* stage of *rūpa***. Bodies of *devas* are at fine *dhātu* stage. Our human bodies are made of much denser *dhātu* stage of *rūpa*.

8. All matter that we see are made of such dense *dhātu*. Rocks have *dhātu* that have mostly *patavi*. Water mostly has *āpo*. Fire mostly has *tējo*, Wind mostly has *vāyo*. That is why earth, water, fire, wind are loosely referred to as *patavi*, *āpo*, *tējo*, *vāyo*.

9. When someone comprehends what we discussed above about the true nature of matter that exists in this world, **one is said to have the *yathābhūta ñāṇa***. However, just reading about them is just the start. That *ñāṇa* grows as one comprehends the finer details.

- *Yathā* means the true nature. *Yathābhūta* means the true nature of matter or true nature of *bhūta*, which arise via the MIND. Of course, more finer details need a good understanding of *Abhidhamma*.
- However, for most purposes, it is sufficient to have the above discussed rough idea. As one learns more, the details will be automatically filled in.

10. This is also why the Buddha said, “*manō pubbangamā dhammā, manō settā manōmayā*” in the famous *Dhammapada gāthā*.

- It means “everything in this world has its origins in the mind, all are set by the mind and prepared by the mind”.

11. *Suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] by themselves are inert. They acquire “life” when energized by the mind in the formation of “*kammaja rūpa*”. This energy is embedded as rotation (*paribramana*) and spin (*bramana*). When that embedded energy runs out, rotation and spin stop and they again become inert.

- For example, a *hadaya vatthu* for a new existence comes into being as a *kammaja rūpa* at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment. During its lifetime, the *hadaya vatthu* maintains its spin and rotation. When the *kammic* energy embedded is exhausted, its motion stops and the *bhava* ends. At that time, a new *hadaya vatthu* for a new *bhava* is formed by *kammic* energy.

12. The *hadaya vatthu* is also called “*vatthu dasaka*” where *dasaka* means ten. This is because the *hadaya vatthu* or *vatthu dasaka* has two modes of energy (spin and rotation) in addition to the 8 parts in the inert *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]. That why it is called a *dasaka* (made of ten units).

- This added spin and rotation is what gives life to an inert *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]. That power of energy is given by *javana citta* (mind). The more energy given to a *kamma beeja*, it will sustain a *bhava* (*hadaya vatthu*) that arises from it for a longer time.
- Same is true for the five *pasāda rūpa* (*cakkhu, sōta, ghana, jivha, kāya*) formed at the moment of *cuti-patisandhi*. There are two *bhava rūpa* which are also *dasaka*, and *jivitindriya rūpa* which is a *navaka* (just spin or *bramana*). How different modes of rotation and spin give rise to these nine “life forming” basic units is discussed in the post: “[Gandhabba Sensing the World – With and Without a Physical Body](#)”.
- By the way, the word *kammaja* comes from “*kamma*” + “*ja*” where “*ja*” means birth. Therefore, those nine *kammaja rūpa* are created by *kammic* energy.

13. Now we can clearly see that our heavy physical body, by itself, is totally inert. The real life is in the *gandhabba* with the *hadaya vatthu* and the five *pasāda rūpa*. Our body movements are controlled by the *kāya dasaka* of the *gandhabba* and it is spread like a very fine mesh over the whole body.

- At the death of the physical body, this life-carrying *gandhabba* leaves the body and the body becomes inert and starts decaying.
- In the case of an out-of-body experience (OBE), even though the *gandhabba* leaves the physical body, it is still connected to the physical body (by a “silver cord” in the terminology of astral projection) and that is why the body does not start to decay: “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)”.

14. Therefore, in all life forms in the 31 realms the real life is in the ultra-fine life form of a *hadaya vatthu* accompanied by up to five *pasāda rūpa*. In *arupavaccara brahma* realms, there is only the *hadaya vatthu*. In *rupavacara brahma* realms, *hadaya vatthu* is accompanied by *cakkhu* and *sōta pasāda rūpa*. In all other realms, five *pasāda rūpa* exist with the *hadaya vatthu*.

- The only exception is *asañña* realm, where only the *kāya dasaka* is maintained by the *jivitindriya* (no *hadaya vatthu*, since thoughts are not generated).
- This is another critical factor in the *yathābhūta ñāṇa*: All life forms are like *bhūta* (ghosts); in essence, life is maintained by a ultra-fine body that is impossible to see and have temporary existence. Any life in any realm is short-lived in the *samsāric* scale. In the *samsāric* scale trillion years is like a drop of water in the ocean.

15. This *yathābhūta ñāṇa* about the real nature of our body also helps to get rid of the “*ghana saññā*” about our bodies. One values one’s dense body so much because one believes that there is a “self” in the physical body.

- Those with *uccēda diṭṭhi* (like most current scientists and philosophers) believe that our physical body (and its brain) is all that is there.

- Those with *sāssata diṭṭhi* believe that there is a mental body that lives forever.

16. Buddha discovered that both those are wrong views. There is a mental body, but it drastically changes from *bhava* to *bhava*. One could be a *deva* or a human for a time being, but the next *bhava* could be in the *apāyas*.

- There is nothing in our physical body worth to be taken as “mine”.
- When one comprehends this fact, *sakkāya diṭṭhi* (which is one of four conditions to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage) is removed. However, it is just one way to remove *sakkāya diṭṭhi*.
- This aspect is discussed in “[WebLink: suttacentral: Mūlapariyāya Sutta \(MN 1\)](#)“, “[WebLink: suttacentral: Kaccānagotta Sutta \(SN 12.15\)](#)“, AND “[WebLink: suttacentral: Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta \(MN 28\)](#)“, among others.

17. Now we see that the precursors for all matter in this world, *satara mahā bhūta*, are mind-made and have a transient existence. They are “*bhūta*” or “ghosts”. And since everything else is made of them, what we consider to be “solid, tangible things” in this world are really “ghost-like”.

- The knowledge of this real “ghost-like” nature is called “*yathābhūta ñāṇa*“. When one has that knowledge, one looks at the world according that correct view, which is called “*anu bhūtam*“.
- When one is not aware of this true nature, it is called “*na anu bhūtam*” which rhymes as “*ananubhūtam*”. It is to noted that many key Pāli words are composed that way: *anatta* is “*na*” + “*atta*”; see, “[Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?](#)“.
- *Anantariya* is “*na*” + “*an*” + “*antara*“. Words like this cannot be analyzed grammatically. This is why current Pāli experts are wrong in interpreting such words (and are unable to interpret many key words).
- This word “*ananubhūtam*” comes in several key *suttas*, including the ones mentioned above in #16.

18. One good example is the famous [WebLink: suttacentral: Brahmanimantanika Sutta \(Majjhima Nikaya 49\)](#): “*Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbaṃ pabhaṃ, taṃ pathaviyā pathavattena ananubhūtaṃ, āpassa āpattena ananubhūtaṃ, tejassa tejattena ananubhūtaṃ, vāyassavāyattena ananubhūtaṃ, bhūtānaṃ bhūtattena ananubhūtaṃ, devānaṃ devattena ananubhūtaṃ, pajāpatissa pajāpatittena ananubhūtaṃ, brahmānaṃ brahmattena ananubhūtaṃ, ābhassarānaṃ ābhassarattena ananubhūtaṃ, subhakiṇhānaṃ subhakiṇhānaṃ subhakiṇhattena ananubhūtaṃ, vehapphalānaṃ vehapphalattena ananubhūtaṃ, abhibhussa abhibhuttena ananubhūtaṃ, sabbassa sabbattena ananubhūtaṃ..*”

Translated: “*Viññāṇa* is unseen, infinite, and leads to the rebirth process for all. With *viññāṇa* one cannot comprehend the real nature of *patavi*, *āpo*, *tējo*, *vāyo*, *bhūta*, *deva*, *pajāpti brahma*, *abhassara brahma*, *subhakinha brahma*, *vehapphala brahma*, etc. and everything in this world (*sabba*)”.

- One has a **defiled consciousness or *viññāṇa*** until one attains the *Arahantship*. Until then one cannot fully comprehend the real “ghost-like” nature of everything in this world, i.e., one’s *yathābhūta ñāṇa* is not complete.
- We will discuss the first part of the verse “*Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbatō pabhaṃ..*” in the next post. **This short phrase is commonly mistranslated.**

19. Another major sutta where it appears is “[WebLink: suttacentral: Salāyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta \(MN 137\)](#)“: “*Rūpānaṃ tveva aniccatāṃ viditvā vipariṇāṃavirāgaṇirodham, ‘pubbe ceva rūpā etarahi ca sabbe te rūpā aniccā dukkhā vipariṇāmadhammā’ti evametaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya passato uppajjati somanassaṃ*“.

Loosely Translated: Any *rūpa* that has existed or in existence now, has the “ghost-like transient nature”. That is the reason why they change unexpectedly (*viparinama*) and **have the *anicca* nature. When one comprehends this true nature, it leads to joy in one’s mind (*somanassa*)**“.

4.8.3 Viññāṇa Aggregate

November 30, 2017

[Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#)

[Kamma Viññāṇa – Link Between Mind and Matter](#)

[Anidassana Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#)

4.8.3.1 Viññāṇa – What It Really Means

May 26, 2017

1. **Viññāṇa is the link between mind and matter**, even though it is in the “*nāma* or mind category” sometimes.

- However, in the [WebLink: suttacentral: Paticcasamuppāda Vibhaṅga](#), *nāma* is defined as only the first three *khandha*: “*Tattha katamaṃ nāmaṃ? Vedanākkhandho, saññākkhandho, saṅkhārakkhandho—idaṃ vuccati “nāmaṃ”*. This is a clear indication that *viññāṇa khandha* does not really belong in the “*nāma* or mind category”.
- Information in these posts on *viññāṇa* could be new to many readers, but are critically important. If one can grasp them, one will have the “*nāmarūpa paricceda ñāna*” (knowledge into mind and matter).
- We will have a couple of more posts before making that critical connection.

2. So far in this subsection on the mental aggregates we have discussed *sañña*, *védanā*, and *saṅkhāra* in simple terms, mainly focusing on their relevance to stay on the Path. My main goal is to provide the key and essential aspects of these terms so that one can clearly see “how to cool down the mind” and progress towards *Nibbāna*.

- *Viññāṇa* can be said to **encompass (include)** all those three mental categories: *sañña*, *védanā*, and *saṅkhāra*. **So, we can say that *viññāṇa* is the overall effect our awareness** encompassing our perceptions (*sañña*), feelings (*védanā*), and our likes and dislikes (*saṅkhāra*).
- **But *viññāṇa* represents a bit more** — mainly “our hopes and desires that we want to from this world”. This is the more important aspect — which makes the connection with *rūpa* — that we really need to understand, **but first we need to know that there are two types of *viññāṇa***.

3. When we see something, a *cakkhu viññāṇa* arises. A split second later we may hear something and *sōta viññāṇa* arises. When we watch a movie, it seems like we are seeing and hearing at the same time, but it only appears that way because our mind is so fast.

- Basically six types of *viññāṇa* can arise via our six senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and the mind, called *cakkhu*, *sōta*, *ghāna*, *jivhā*, *kāya*, and *manō viññāṇa*. They are all ***vipāka viññāṇa***.
- Therefore, ***vipāka viññāṇa* can be six types** and they will bring *vipāka* even for an *Arahant* until the death of the physical body.
- We don’t have control over them once they arise. But we can of course avoid some. For example, if we don’t want to watch a movie, we can decide not to watch it.

4. Then, based on that ***vipāka viññāṇa*, *kamma viññāṇa* CAN arise**, IF we get attached to that *vipāka viññāṇa* via greed, hate, or ignorance.

- For example, person X may see a person Y that X dislikes. That seeing event is a *vipāka*, and thus the *viññāṇa* generated is a ***vipāka viññāṇa***.
- But as soon as X sees Y, hateful thoughts may come to X’s mind, with which X can generate NEW *KAMMA*. Those thoughts have ***kamma viññāṇa***.
- Those *kamma viññāṇa* are ALWAYS generated in the MIND, i.e., ***kamma viññāṇa* are ALWAYS *manō viññāṇa***, in contrast to *vipāka viññāṇa* which can be of all six varieties.

5. So, a *vipāka viññāṇa* can arise due to any of the six senses: by seeing a *rūpa* with eyes (“*cakkhunca paticca rupeca uppaddati cakkhu viññāṇam*”), hearing a sound with ears (“*sōtanca paticca saddeca uppaddati cakkhu viññāṇam*”),...*dhamma* with *mana indriya* (“*manaca paticca dhammecca uppaddati cakkhu viññāṇam*”).

- Note that these *vipāka viññāṇa* are NOT generated via “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*“. They are ALWAYS generated via eyes seeing a *rūpa*, ears hearing sound, etc.
- We are all familiar with how “visual awareness” or *cakkhu viññāṇa* arise due to seeing a *rūpa*, auditory awareness arises due to hearing a sound, etc, but most of our *vipāka viññāṇa* arise due to “mental awareness” or *manō viññāṇa* arising via *dhamma* impinging on the *mana indriya*; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)“.
- Note that those *rūpa* that we see with our eyes are really *rūpa rūpa* (or *varna rūpa*); they are normally just called *rūpa*, but this can lead to confusion if someone is not aware of this detail.

6. In general, all we experience in this world are *rūpa*: *rūpa rūpa*, *sadda rūpa*, *gandha rūpa*, *rasa rūpa*, *pottabbha rūpa*, and ALSO *dhamma*.

- *Dhamma* are not called *rūpa*, simply because they are below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*] stage. They have not yet “condensed” to the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*] stage; see, “[The Origin of Matter – suddhāshtaka \[suddhatṭhaka\]](#)“.
- They are very fine *rūpa* that cannot be seen or touched: “*anidassanan appatighan*“; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)“.

7. To summarize: *vipāka viññāṇa* can arise at any of the six senses, and thus can be *cakkhu*, *sōta*, *jivhā*, *ghāna*, *kāya*, or *manō viññāṇa*.

- If the *vipāka viññāṇa* is strong (i.e., if really like or really dislike what was experienced), then because of *avijjā*, we start generating *saṅkhāra* about it, which lead to a *viññāṇa* that we create on our own, a *kamma viññāṇa*.
- Therefore, in contrast to *vipāka viññāṇa*, *kamma viññāṇa* arise via “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*“.
- They start automatically as *manō viññāṇa*, via *manō saṅkhāra*. But then we consciously start generating more via *vacī* and *kāya saṅkhāra*, and that will strengthen those *kamma viññāṇa*.
- We have discussed how *manō saṅkhāra* arise automatically due to our *gathi*, and then we consciously generate *vacī* and *kāya saṅkhāra*: “[How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?](#)“.

8. Let us first consider a couple of examples of *vipāka viññāṇa*.

- We may get to eat a tasty food item. The experience of that food on the tongue generates taste (*jivhā viññāṇa*), which is a *vipāka viññāṇa*. We got to taste that as a result of a previous good *kamma vipāka*. That experience includes identifying what food it is (*sañña*), and the taste it gives (*védanā*).
- If we get a headache, that is bad *kāya viññāṇa* that arose due to a past bad *kamma*, i.e., a *kamma vipāka*. We know it is a headache (*sañña*), and we feel the pain (*védanā*).
- When the sense input first comes, we just become aware of it. There are no *kamma* done with *vipāka viññāṇa*.

9. Based on those 6 types of *vipāka viññāṇa* that arise, we generate new mental states on our own. These are called *kamma viññāṇa*.

- In the above first example, if we like the taste we immediately start getting attached to it and start generating *saṅkhāra* about that food. We start to generate *vacī saṅkhāra* (talking to ourselves) about how good the food is. That is a different mental state that we make on our own. Of course, we are likely to generate *kāya saṅkhāra* also when eat that food again. We have discussed the three types of *saṅkhāra* in “[Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means](#)“.

- A *kamma viññāṇa* arises within a fraction of a second after the *vipāka viññāṇa*, so that normally we cannot differentiate between the two mental states. (For those who are familiar with *Abhidhamma*, this is discussed at the end of this post).
 - Of course, *vipāka vinanna* lasts while we eat the food. A large number of *jivhādvāra citta vīthi* run while we eat. *Kamma viññāṇa* also arise later in the same *citta vīthi*, but they also arise well after the meal. We can recall eating that food later at night (with a *manō viññāṇa*) and generate more *kamma viññāṇa* (mainly via *vacī saṅkhāra*) by consciously thinking how good it was.
 - In the second example above, a split second after we start experiencing the headache (*vipāka viññāṇa* and the associated feeling of pain), we start getting depressed and generating *vacī saṅkhāra* about how this going to ruin the day and mess up all our plans.
10. In both those examples, our first mental state (*vipāka viññāṇa*) was so strong that we — on our own — generated a *kamma viññāṇa* which also gives rise to a *kamma beeja*.
- That *kamma beeja* can come back to our mind later as a *vipāka viññāṇa* (this is a *manō viññāṇa*). That is how we recalled our experience with the tasty food later at night.
 - If that headache was really bad, we may be able to recall it days or weeks later.
11. Thus an important point is that a *kamma beeja* is the same as a “*dhammā*” that makes contact with the mind to give rise to a “mind sense event”; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)”.
- Just as a seeing event arises when the *cakkhu indriya* makes contact with a *rūpa* (“*cakkhunca paticca rupeca uppaddathi cakkhu viññāṇan*”), a “mind event” arises when a *dhammā* makes contact with the *mana indriya* (“*mananca paticca dhammeca uppaddathi manō viññāṇan*”).
 - When that delicious food was eaten, one got really attached to it, and during the *javana* stages of those *citta vīthi* generated many strong *javana citta* with high *kammic* potential that led to a *kamma beeja* or a “*dhammā*” to be created.
 - **Don’t be put off by those Pāli words.** Once you get to know the meanings behind these words, it will become easy to see what happens.
12. The strength of a given *kamma beeja* determines how likely would it be come back and make contact with the mind later on. For example, if it was a regular sandwich, one would not make a craving for that and thus would not create strong *kamma beeja* or a “*dhammā*”. Then it is likely that one would have forgotten that meal in a few hours.
- However, if the meal was really tasty, one would be thinking about it many days after leaving the restaurant and each time one generates *javana citta* one will be making that *kamma beeja* or a “*dhammā*” a little stronger. The more one thinks about it (i.e., generates *vacī saṅkhāra*) about it, the more strong it gets.
13. In fact, this is how one becomes an alcoholic gradually. One starts remembering past “drinking events” and generate a lot of *manō* and *vacī saṅkhāra* even when not drinking.
- By the way, drinking is a *kāya saṅkhāra*, since it involves moving body parts.
 - *Manō saṅkhāra* arise automatically when one first think about a past drinking event (due to “*mananca paticca dhammeca uppaddati manō viññāṇan*”). Then when one starts consciously thinking about that past event one starts generating *vacī saṅkhāra*; see, “[How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?](#)”.
 - All three types of *saṅkhāra* contribute to “feed the *viññāṇa* for alcohol” via “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*” *paticca samuppāda* step. While we do not have control over *manō saṅkhāra* that arise AUTOMATICALLY, we do have control over *vacī* and *kāya saṅkhāra* that are CONSCIOUSLY generated, as discussed in the above post. That is the key to *Ānāpāna* and *Satipattāna bhāvanā*.
14. Let us look at the timeline of how these two types of *viññāṇa* arise. *viññāṇa* is not an “entity” that is always there. As with *sañña*, *védanā*, and *saṅkhāra*, a given *viññāṇa* arises with a thought.

- When thoughts are not there, the mind is in the *bhavāṅga* state. Sometimes we see people — usually when they are not alert — staring out in to space. Unless they are in deep thought (which is also possible), their minds are likely to be in the inactive *bhavāṅga* state.
- Our minds are moved away from the dormant *bhavāṅga* state to conscious thoughts first via a *vipāka viññāṇa*. Then if get attached (*taṇhā*) to that, we start generating *kamma vipāka*, which will bring future *kamma vipāka*.
- It is important to recognize this time line. We start with a *vipāka viññāṇa* and then start generating *kamma viññāṇa*. Of course, these *kamma* lead to more *vipāka* later, and the whole process continues without end. That is how we go through the rebirth process.
- In order to stop this, we need to be mindful and stop generating *kamma viññāṇa*, especially those that lead to bad *kamma vipāka*. This is the key to *Ānāpāna* and *Satipattāna bhāvanā*.
- That is a lot of information to grasp. One may need to re-read and also read relevant posts in order to fully understand.

15. Finally, the time delay between *vipāka viññāṇa* and *kamma viññāṇa* is unimaginably small.

- In *pancadvāra citta vīthi* with 17 thought moments, the *vipāka viññāṇa* arise at the beginning of the *citta vīthi* with the *pancadvaravajjana citta*. *Kamma viññāṇa* are generated in *javana citta* that arise towards the end of the *citta vīthi*. Of course, many more *pancadvāra* and *manōdvāra citta vīthi* run if one gets attached to that object (*ārammana*).
- When *dhamma* impinge on the *mana indriya* to start a *manōdvāra vipāka* event, a *manōdvāra citta vīthi* with around 10 *citta* runs, with the initial *vipāka viññāṇa* arising at the mind door adverting thought moment. Again, *kamma viññāṇa* is generated at *javana citta* at the end of the *citta vīthi*.
- Those who are into *Abhidhamma* can consult, “[Citta vīthi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)” for details.

4.8.3.2 Kamma Viññāṇa – Link Between Mind and Matter

November 30, 2017

1. In the previous post in this series, we discussed that there are two types of *viññāṇa*: *vipāka viññāṇa* and *kamma viññāṇa*; see, “[Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#)”.

- We don’t have control over *vipāka viññāṇa*, but we do have control over *kamma viññāṇa* (via controlling our *saṅkhāra*), and that is why it is possible to attain *Nibbāna*.
- We cannot do anything about the *vipāka viññāṇa*. Even in an *Arahant* they arise as *kamma vipāka*; he/she will also see, hear, etc like anyone else.
- *Vipāka viññāṇa* can arise via any of the six sense doors, i.e., as *cakkhu*, *sōta*, *ghāṇa*, *jivhā*, *kāya*, or *manō viññāṇa*. Based on those, WE initiate new *kamma viññāṇa*, as we discussed in the above mentioned post. This process is analyzed in detail in, “[How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?](#)”.
- What we can — and need to do — is to stop “*saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇa*” — **specifically strong *vaci* and *kāya abhisankhāra*** — leading to new strong *kamma viññāṇa*. *Kamma viññāṇa* ALWAYS arise first as *manō viññāṇa*.

2. *Ānāpāna* and *Satipathāna bhāvanā* involve controlling *kamma viññāṇa* by being mindful of the *manō saṅkhāra* that AUTOMATICALLY arise and controlling them with *vaci* and *kāya saṅkhāra* that we consciously generate. The basis of this critical fact is discussed at, “[Root of All Suffering – Ten Immoral Actions](#)”.

- In formal sitting-down meditation, this means just controlling our *vaci saṅkhāra* (conscious thoughts), since we do not move our bodies or speak.

- However, during all waking hours we need to control both *vaci* and *kāya saṅkhāra* (i.e., our conscious thoughts, speech, and bodily actions); see, “[Root of All Suffering – Ten Immoral Actions](#)”.
- By the way, please do not ignore the initial posts in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section, such as the above mentioned post. **It is not possible to grasp complex posts like this one without that basic knowledge.**

3. In *Paticca Samuppāda* **it is the *kamma viññāṇa*** that comes into play in, “*saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇa*”, NOT the ***vipāka viññāṇa***.

- All *saṅkhāra* are generated in our minds. While *manō saṅkhāra* arise automatically, we CONSCIOUSLY generate *vaci* and *kāya saṅkhāra*, leading to *kamma viññāṇa*; see, “[Root of All Suffering – Ten Immoral Actions](#)”.
- This is why *saṅkhāra* are food for the *viññāṇa*, specifically for the *kamma viññāṇa*.

3. Furthermore, the next step in *Paticca Samuppāda* is “*viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpa*”. As you can see, this is where the connection to *rūpa* is made; we will discuss in detail below.

The KEY POINT is that *kamma viññāṇa* is not totally mental: The mind — when attached to something — will create an energy (i.e., a *kamma beeja* or a *dhammā*) that will be recorded in the *kamma bhava*.

- Then in the future, that *dhammā* can come back to the *mana indriya* and trigger a mind-sense event via “*manaca paticca dhammeca uppaddati cakkhu viññāṇam*”. that we discussed in “[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)”.
- Then, in the latter part of that *citta vithi*, more *kamma viññāṇa* are created; see, “[How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?](#)”.
- Thus it is a feedback process that gets strengthened with time.

4. That *kamma viññāṇa* can be building up a *kamma beeja* (or a *dhammā*) in the *kamma bhava* over time via the *Paticca Samuppāda* process: “*viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpa*”, “*nāmarūpa paccayā salāyatana*”, “*salāyatana paccayā phassa*”, “*phassa paccayā vēdanā*”, “*vēdanā paccayā taṇhā*”, “*taṇhā paccayā upādāna*”, and “*upādāna paccayā bhava*”.

- Then under suitable conditions (see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”), that *kamma beeja* (or a *dhammā*) can come back — as a *vipāka* — and start that process all over again; see, “[How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?](#)”.
- A *dhammā* with energy or a *kamma beeja* created previously can come back to the mind as a *vipāka viññāṇa* via “*manaca paticca dhammeca uppaddati manō viññāṇam*”.
- Every time one generates *vaci* or *kaya saṅkhāra* relevant to that *viññāṇa*, that makes *viññāṇa* stronger.

5. As *viññāṇa* gets stronger, “*viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpa*” makes *nāmarūpa* stronger. This *nāmarūpa* is the first stage of a *rūpa* that is created by the mind, with the *viññāṇa* acting as the intermediary.

- It is also important to remember that *dhammā* includes not only *kamma beeja*, but also any record of anything that has been done by a given person. So, we can also recall events that have nothing to do with *kammic* energy, for example, remembering talking to someone or seeing something or solving a math problem; see, “[Difference Between Dhammā and Saṅkhāra](#)”.

6. For example, an alcoholic has a “*viññāṇa* for drinking”. He (she) constantly thinks about drinking, and will build up a “drunk existence (*bhava*)”, which comes back to his mind as a *dhammā* to trigger more thoughts about drinking.

- Until he breaks that loop by willfully controlling his thoughts and actions involving drinking, that *viññāṇa* will grow with time.

- The only way to break that habit of drinking is to be mindful about the bad consequences of drinking and to forcefully suppress any thoughts about drinking (*vaci saṅkhāra*) and abstain from drinking (*kāya saṅkhāra*).

7. What we discussed above is quite important. ***Kamma viññāṇa* is the link between mind and matter; it is an energy made by the mind; it creates tiny amounts of matter (*rūpa*) below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage.** It is important to fully understand this point for one to fully grasp the meaning of “*manō pubbangama dhammā...*”. This is in fact how the mind (*manō*) is creating *dhammā* via *viññāṇa*.

- This is confirmed in the [WebLink: suttacentral: Majjhe Sutta \(AN 6.61\)](#), where it is stated that ***nama* is at one end, *rūpa* is at the other end, with *viññāṇa* in the middle: “*nāmaṃ kho, āvuso, eko anto, rūpaṃ dutiyo anto, viññāṇaṃ majjhe*”**. [“Name (*nāma*), friends, is one end; form (*rūpa*) is the second end; consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is in the middle; and craving is the seamstress. For craving sews one to the production of this or that state of existence. It is in this way that a *bhikkhu* directly knows what should be directly known; fully understands what should be fully understood; and by doing so, in this very life he makes an end of suffering.”]
- It would be helpful if one had followed the preceding posts in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.

8. The goal of a given mind is to extract sense pleasures from the outside world, which is made of *rūpa* both above and below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage; see, “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)”.

- We all are familiar with sense enjoyment via the five physical senses. But the most enjoyment we experience is through the sixth sense, the mind.
- The five physical senses only bring in imprints of the five types of “solidified *rūpa*”: *rūpa rūpa*, *sadda rūpa*, *gandha rūpa*, *rasa rūpa*, and *pottabbha rūpa* (in other words, sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and body touches).
- All those sense imprints that come in are enjoyed by the mind. In addition, the mind can also enjoy thinking about such past sense experiences AND also any planned future events. The “fine *rūpa*” involved here are “*dhammā*”; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!](#)”.

9. How does the mind enjoy past sense experiences or future expected experiences? The answer to this question leads us to the concept of ***dhammā***, those *rūpa* that are below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], and thus are really energies.

- Just like we “bring in” external *rūpa* (or *rūpa rūpa* or *varna rūpa*) with our eyes, external sounds with our ears, etc, we bring in external *dhammā* through the *mana indriya*, as explained in “[What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!](#)”.
- **Some of those *dhammā*** are made by the mind via *kamma viññāṇa*! That *kamma viññāṇa* had created a *dhammā* that got deposited in the *kamma bhava* as *kamma beeja* or ***dhammā with energy***. This is the connecting piece of the puzzle. We discuss this in different ways, in order to grasp this key idea.
- All *dhammās*, including *nāma gotta* and *kamma viññāṇa* (also called *kamma beeja*) are in the *nāma loka*; see, “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)”.

10. The point is that “*saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇa*” starts the “*rūpa* generation process” the “*viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpa*” completes it.

- In *Paticca Samuppāda* cycles leading to rebirth, this *nāmarūpa* is the blueprint for the new existence via “*nāmarūpa paccayā salāyatana*”, a new set of *indriya* are formed. In the case of a human birth, this is the single cell (zygote); see, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”.
- In *Paticca Samuppāda* cycles operating during a lifetime, this *nāmarūpa* just gives rise to new sense events via “*nāmarūpa paccayā salāyatana*”, where existing *indriya* become *āyatana* for a new sense event.

- Note that our *indriya* (*cakkhu*, *sota*, *ghana*, etc) do not always act as *āyatana*. Only when we act with *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha* that they act as *āyatana* to lead to new *kamma*.

11. In many posts at the site, we have discussed how our *gathi* lead to the creation of *viññāṇa* for certain things we crave (and dislike); see, for example, “[2. Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) can be of Many Different Types and Forms](#)” and “[3. Viññāṇa, Thoughts, and the Subconscious](#)”.

- We have also discussed how such *viññāṇa* arise due to our *gathi*, see, for example, “[Gathi to Bhava to Jathi – Ours to Control](#)”, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Asavas\)](#)”.
- So, *gathi* and *kamma viññāṇa* are related to each other, feed on each other, and enhance each other.

11. *Vipāka viññāṇa* are results of previous *kamma*, and cannot be stopped. What we need to stop is *kamma viññāṇa* that AUTOMATICALLY arise due to our *gathi*; see, “[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāṇa](#)”.

- Now we are essentially putting together the pieces of a puzzle to come up with the Buddha’s world view to illustrate how the mind creates the world. Key pieces to the puzzle are in various sections of the website. In the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section all those components are put together starting from the basic components.
- The picture will become more clear with the next post in the series, “[Kamma Viññāṇa and Nāmarūpa Paricceda Ñāna](#)”.

4.8.3.3 Anidassana Viññāṇa – What It Really Means

January 6, 2018

1. I have seen several discussion forums discuss the verse, “*viññāṇāṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabham.*”. Many times I have seen it to be referred to as, “there is controversy as to the precise meaning of this enigmatic phrase”.

- Most common translations say something like, ““Consciousness non-manifest (sometimes as consciousness without surface) , infinite, radiant all around”.
- Such incorrect translations have then led to another drastic error by saying that “*anidassana viññāṇa*” is the same as the “*pabhassara citta*” and even as *bhavaṅga*. All these are astonishingly wrong!

2. *Viññāṇa* is a central and key concept to understand. I have started an in-depth discussion of *viññāṇa* in an advanced subsection of the “Living Dhamma” section: “[Viññāṇa Aggregate](#)”.

- In this post, I describe a meaningful translation to the verse, “*viññāṇāṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabham.*” that is consistent with all the *suttas* in the *Tipitaka*. I would welcome any evidence to the contrary.
- This is getting into deep concepts. I would urge reading other related posts mentioned above first. Depending on one’s background, it may take time to grasp these concepts.
- In fact, one really needs to read the posts in the subsection “[Nāma & Rūpa to Nāmarūpa](#)” of which “[Viññāṇa Aggregate](#)” is a part. If one does not understand those concepts, one could keep going back to earlier sections in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section. It is designed to go from simple to deep.

3. First, let us find the meaning of “*anidassana*” from the *Tipitaka*. The meaning of the word *anidassana* means an ‘illustration’ that can be seen. *Anidassana* means something that cannot be seen.

- For example, *dhamma* that impinge on the *mana indriya* and gives rise to *mano viññāṇa* via “*manaca paticca dhammecca uppaddati cakkhu viññāṇam*” also cannot be seen; *dhamma* are just energies lying below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage.

- These dhamma are described as, “*anidassan appatighan dhammāyatana pariyāpanna rūpan*” or “**cannot be seen**, cannot be touched, and can make contact only with the *dhammāyatana*”; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)”.

4. In the [WebLink: suttacentral: Kakacūpama Sutta \(MN 21\)](#): “..Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, puriso āgaccheyya lākhāṃ vā haliddiṃ vā nīlaṃ vā maññiṭṭhaṃ vā ādāya. So evaṃ vadeyya: ‘ahaṃ imasmiṃ ākāse rūpaṃ likhissāmi, rūpapātubhāvaṃ karissāmī’ti. Taṃ kiṃ maññatha, bhikkhave, api nu so puriso imasmiṃ ākāse rūpaṃ likheyya, rūpapātubhāvaṃ kareyyā”ti? “No hetam, bhante”. “Taṃ kissa hetu”? “*Ayañhi, bhante, ākāso arūpī anidassano.*.”

Translated: “..Bhikkhus, a man may come along bringing off white or yellow or dark green or crimson colors, and may say: ‘I will draw shapes in the sky, I will make material shapes appear. What do you think about this, monks? Could that man draw pictures in the sky with those colors?’” “No, Bhante. **It is not possible to draw shapes in the empty sky that can be seen**, that can manifest as figures”.

5. In the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Nibbāna-The Mind Stilled](#)” series, Venerable Katukurunde Ñāṇananda has provided more evidence that “*anidassana*” means “something that cannot be seen” or ‘something that does not manifest’; see, Sermons 7 and 8 in Volume II, which is provided as a pdf in the above link. [[WebLink: seeingthroughthenet.net: PDF Books by Venerable Katukurunde Ñāṇananda](#)]

- However, his explanation of *viññāṇa* is critically wrong, as I explain below. This is a common mistake that I see in many current interpretations.

6. *Viññāṇa* is loosely translated as “consciousness” or “awareness”. But it is much more than that. ***Viññāṇa* represents much more: “our hopes and desires that we want from this world”**. This is the more important aspect — which makes the connection with *rūpa*.

- We believe that things in this world will provide us with long lasting happiness. Thus we do *vaci* and *kaya saṅkhāra* to achieve them. Then, “*saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇa*” leads to the cultivation of a corresponding *viññāṇa*.
- ***Viññāṇa* means without *ñāṇa***. When we follow the Noble Path, we will comprehend the Three Characteristics of nature (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*) and realize the unfruitfulness of having such false hopes, **i.e., we cultivate *paññā***.

7. This is quite clear from *Paticca Samuppada*: “*avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra; saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇa; viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpa, nāmarūpa paccayā salāyatana, salāyatana paccayā phassō, phassa paccayā vēdanā, vēdanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādāna, upādāna paccayā bhavō, bhava paccayā jātī, jātī paccayā jarā, maraṇa, sōka-paridēva-dukkha-dōmanassupāyasā sambhavan’ti*”.

- **All future suffering** arises because we act with *avijjā* (i.e., generate *abhisankhāra*) to achieve pleasurable worldly things and thereby generate ***viññāṇa***.

8. Each individual *citta* of a normal human— during its existence for a billionth of a second — is contaminated in 9 stages and is added to the *viññāṇakkhandha*! See; “[Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#)”

- ***Viññāṇa* is a contaminated *citta***.
- The contamination of a *citta* is manifested in *saññā* and *vēdanā*.
- These are discussed in detail in “[Nāma & Rūpa to Nāmarūpa](#)”.

9. It is stated in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Saṅgīti Sutta \(Digha Nikaya 33\)](#)”: “*Tividhena rūpasāṅgaho—sanidassanasappaṭiḡhaṃ rūpaṃ, anidassanasappaṭiḡhaṃ rūpaṃ, anidassanaappaṭiḡhaṃ rūpaṃ*”.

Translated: “Threefold classification of *rūpa* (matter) – visible and graspable, invisible and graspable, **invisible and ungraspable**”.

- Three types of *rūpa* are sensed with the six sense faculties -five physical senses and the *mana indriya*.
- Those *rūpa* that are sensed with the *mana indriya* are *dhamma*: “*mananca paticca dhammēca uppaddati manō viññāna*”; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!](#)”.
- These are the *rūpa* of the third kind: **invisible and ungraspable** (*anidassan aappaṭighaṃ*): “*anidassan appatighan dhammāyatana pariyāpanna rūpan*”; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!](#)”.
- Those *rūpa* of the third kind are same as *namarupa* that arise due to *viññāṇa*: “[Kamma Viññāṇa and Nāmarūpa Paricceda Ñana](#)”.
- This is explained systematically in the subsection: “[Nāma & Rūpa to Nāmarūpa](#)”.

10. *Viññāṇa* is also the link between mind and matter, even though it is in the “*nāma*” or mind category” most of the time.

- In the [WebLink: suttacentral: Paticcasamuppāda Vibhaṅga](#), *nāma* is defined as only the first three *khandha*: “*Tattha katamaṃ nāmaṃ? Vedanākkhandho, saññākkhandho, saṅkhārakkhandho—idaṃ vuccati “nāmaṃ”*. This is a clear indication that *viññāṇa khandha* does not really belong in the “*nāma* or mind category”.
- Even though *vipaka viññāṇa* is conclusively in the “*nama*” category, *kamma viññāṇa* have intrinsic energies, and thus fall into the *rūpa* category. This why sometimes it is not included in the “*nama*” category.
- This was pointed out in the post, “[Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#)”. You may want to read that first. As pointed out in that post, *kamma viññāṇa* are different from *vipaka viññāṇa* in that *kamma viññāṇa* have energies embedded in them.
- This is confirmed in the [WebLink: suttacentral: Majje Sutta \(AN 6.61\)](#), where the Buddha stated that *nama* is at one end, *rūpa* is at the other end, with *viññāṇa* in the middle: “*nāmaṃ kho, āvuso, eko anto, rūpaṃ dutiyo anto, viññāṇaṃ majjhe*”.

11. The real nature of *viññāṇa* as cause for suffering is clearly stated in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Dvayatānupassanāsutta \(Sutta Nipata 3.12\)](#)”:

“*Yaṃ kiñci dukkhaṃ sambhoti,*

Sabbaṃ viññāṇapaccayā;

Viññāṇassa nirodhena,

Natthi dukkhassa sambhavo”.

Translated: “Whatever suffering that arises, all that arises due to *viññāṇa*; With the not arising of *viññāṇa*, there is no existence with suffering”.

- That should lay to rest any arguments about *viññāṇa* being equated to *Nibbāna* or even *pabhassara citta*, or *bhavanga*.
- A critical point that I have been trying to make is that when one sees such dramatic contradiction somewhere, one should be skeptical about the trustworthiness of that source. This is the only way to make progress.

12. The phrase “*“viññāṇāṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbaṃ pabhaṃ..”*” appears in the [WebLink: suttacentral: Brahmanimantanika Sutta \(Majjhima Nikaya 49\)](#), and I will first provide the essential parts of the Sutta that are relevant to discuss the meaning of this verse.

Here is the essence of the Sutta in plain English:

At one time, The Buddha saw that the following wrong view came to the mind of the Baka Brahmā (who is the leader of the Maha Brahma realm; see, “[31 Realms of Existence](#)”): “My existence is permanent, it is stable, it is eternal, and is not liable to passing away”.

In order to correct the wrong view of the Maha Brahma, vanishing from near the great sāl-tree in the Subhaga Grove at Ukkatthā, the Buddha appeared in that Brahma-world.

Baka Brahmā saw the Buddha coming, welcomed him, and told him: “*Idaṇhi, mārisa, niccam, idam dhuvam, idam sassatam, idam kevalam, idam acavanadhammam, idaṇhi na jāyati na jīyati na mīyati na cavati na upapajjati. Ito ca panaññaṃ uttari nissaraṇaṃ natthi*’ti.”

Translated: “This existence, good sir, **can be maintained to my liking, it is stable, it is eternal**, it encompasses all, this is not liable to passing away, this is not born, nor does it age or die or to pass away or uprise, and there is not another further release from this existence”.

The Buddha replied: “You are steeped in ignorance. You say your existence can be maintained to your liking, but that is not so, it is not permanent as you say...” (*yatra hi nāma aniccaṃyeva samānaṃ niccanti vakkhati, addhuvamyeva samānaṃ dhuvanti vakkhati*,...).

- By the way, here it is important to note that the Pali word for “permanent” is “dhuva”, and not “nicca”.

The Buddha added, “..although you say there is no further release that can be attained, there is indeed a permanent release” (*“santaṇca panaññaṃ uttari nissaraṇaṃ “natthaññaṃ uttari nissaraṇaṃ”ti vakkhati*’ti.”

- Then there is an account of how Māra the deva, having entered a certain company of Brahmas, spoke to encourage the Brahma. I will skip that account, in order to get to the crux of the matter.

Baka the Brahmā then replied to the Buddha: ‘But, good sir, I say “nicca” because it is so, I say “stable” because it is stable, I say “eternal” because it is eternal. There is no more suffering,...I have escaped from the cravings for *patavi, apo, tejo, vayo dhatu*..’ (meaning he has overcome *taṇhā* for the sensual pleasures available in the *kāma loka* comprised from the *satara maha dhatu*).

The Buddha told the Baka Brahma that indeed he knew that the Baka Brhama had transcended the *kāma loka*, and was fully aware of his powers. The Buddha added that there were things in this world that the Brahma was not aware of: (1) There are higher Brahma realms, (2) Maha Brahma himself was in the Abhassara Brahma realm, died there and was now reborn in this lower Brahma realm. The Buddha told the Baka Brahma: “you neither know nor see those higher realms, but I know and see them”.

Here is the really relevant part of the Sutta where the Buddha tells Maha Brahama: “*Pathaviṃ kho aham, brahme, pathavito abhiññāya yāvatā pathaviyā pathavattena ananubhūtaṃ tadabhiññāya pathaviṃ nāpahosiṃ, pathaviyā nāpahosiṃ, pathavito nāpahosiṃ, pathaviṃ meti nāpahosiṃ, pathaviṃ nābhivadiṃ*...”

Translated: I, Brahma, knowing *patavi* to be just *patavi* (devoid of life), knowing the true nature of *patavi*, I do not take *patavi* to be me (no attachment to things in the *kāma loka* made out of the *satara maha bhuta*)”.

- Then he repeated the same verse for the other three *maha bhuta* of which the bodies of beings in *kāma loka* are made of: *apo, tejo, vayo*.

Finally, he summarized it all in the following verse, which we discussed in the last post: “*Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ, taṃ pathaviyā pathavattena ananubhūtaṃ, āpassa āpattena ananubhūtaṃ, tejassa tejattena ananubhūtaṃ, vāyassavāyattena ananubhūtaṃ, bhūtānaṃ bhūtattena ananubhūtaṃ, devānaṃ devattena ananubhūtaṃ, pajāpatissa pajāpatittena ananubhūtaṃ, brahmānaṃ brahmattena ananubhūtaṃ, ābhassarānaṃ ābhassarattena ananubhūtaṃ, subhakiṇhānaṃ subhakiṇhānaṃ subhakiṇhattena ananubhūtaṃ, vehapphalānaṃ vehapphalattena ananubhūtaṃ, abhibhussa abhibhuttana ananubhūtaṃ, sabbassa sabbattena ananubhūtaṃ*.”

Translated: “*Viññāṇa* is unseen, infinite, and leads to the rebirth process for all. With *viññāṇa* one cannot comprehend the real nature of *patavi, āpo, tējo, vāyo, bhūta, deva, pajāpti brahma, abhassara brahma, subhakinha brahma, vehapphala brahma*, etc. and everything in this world (*sabba*)”.

- See, “[Bhūta and Yathābhūta – What Do They Really Mean](#)”.

Then, the Buddha concluded: “Thus Brahmā, I am not merely on an exact equality with you as regards super-knowledge; I am indeed higher in knowledge”.

Then the Brhama challenged the Buddha saying that he is going to disappear and If the Buddha is indeed of higher knowledge, try to find him. But he was unable to hide from the Buddha.

Then the Buddha said, “Now I am vanishing from you, Brahmā. Find me if you can”. Of course the Brhama was unable to find the Buddha and thus had to concede defeat.

That is the essence of that long Sutta, that is relevant for this discussion.

13. We have to realize that indeed the *Maha Brahmas* has a very long lifetime of a quarter of the age of our universe (several billion years).

- Furthermore, since *brahmas* do not have solid bodies like ours they are not subject to diseases or bodily pains. So, they live a peaceful life until their *bhava* is ended. So it is no surprise that the Baka *Brahma* thought that he had overcome all suffering by getting rid of the human body. See the post on “[Body Types in 31 Realms – Importance of Manomaya Kaya](#)” for details on bodies of beings in other realms.
- But of course, the *brahmas* are not released from the *apāyas*, since they have only suppressed *kāma rāga* and have not removed any of the ten *samyojana* that bind one to the rebirth process (unless they had attained at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*).
- This should give us a lot to think about our suffering-causing body that lasts only about 100 years! There is absolutely nothing to be proud of one’s physical body or to think that it is worthwhile to take this foul body to be “mine”. *That is one way to get rid of sakkaya ditthi.*
- **The question is not whether there is a “self” or not. The question is whether it is wise to think that it is worthwhile to have the idea of a “self” which lasts less than a blink of eye in the *samsāric* scale, and gives so much suffering (and could lead to unimaginable suffering in future lives).**

14. I hope this post — together with the other posts in this subsection — makes it clear what *viññāṇa* really is, and what is meant by the famous verse, ” *“viññāṇāṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ.”* that has been mistranslated so many times.

- Please make any comments/suggestions/criticisms in the discussion forum, so that everyone can benefit from the discussion.

4.8.4 Nāmarūpa Formation

Dec 12, 2017

[Kamma Viññāṇa and Nāmarūpa Paricceda Ñāṇa](#)

4.8.4.1 Kamma Viññāṇa and Nāmarūpa Paricceda Ñāṇa

December 12, 2017

1. *Nāmarūpa* can have few different meanings depending on the context, i.e., where it is used. But the most important meaning is associated with the “*nāmarūpa pariccēda ñāṇa*”.

- *When one has the nāmarūpa pariccēda ñāṇa, one understands how the mind is related to matter, i.e., how viññāṇa acts as the critical link between mind and matter.*
- Here “*pari*” means “complete” or “comprehensive”; “*uccēda*” means to “cut off” or “irradiate”. Thus *nāmarūpa pariccēda ñāṇa*, means the knowledge or understanding how *nāmarūpa* via *kamma viññāṇa* at the “*viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpa*” step in *Paticca Samuppāda* (PS).
- The two previous posts in this series provided more related information. This post wraps up that discussion; see, “[Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#)” and “[Kamma Viññāṇa – Link Between Mind and Matter](#)”.

2. It is also important to note that *nāmarūpa* can be of several varieties:

- When written as two words — *nāma rūpa* — *nāma* refers to mental attributes and *rūpa* refers to matter. There, *nāma rūpa* refer to mind AND matter.
- **With *viññāṇa*, *nāma* COMBINES with *rūpa* and creates *nāmarūpa*** — imprints for future rebirths — which eventually lead to fully-formed living beings. This happens at the “*viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpa*” step in PS.
- These are very fine *rūpa* which are below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage created by *viññāṇa*, and are **part of *dharmā***. Thus *nāmarūpa* are distinct from the more dense *rūpa* that we experience with the five physical senses; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!](#)”.
- We also talk about *nāmarūpa* referring to visuals in our minds; these are also related to the fine *rūpa*. For example, an alcoholic will be visualizing scenes of a drinking party that he/she is planning to attend. That comes in *Pavutti* PS; see, “[Akusala-Mula Pavutti \(or Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppada](#)”.

3. Here, it is significant to note that in PS, it is the “*viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpa*” step that separates the previous steps involving the mind to those involving *rūpa*. Now we have “*nāmarūpa paccayā salāyatana*”, leading to internal *rūpa*.

- Then those *salāyatana* making contact (*phassa*) with with external *rūpa*: “*salāyatana paccayā phassa*”.
- Note that *phassa* means contact of internal *rūpa* (*salāyatana*) with external *rūpa*, and giving rise to *vēdanā*: “*phassa paccayā vēdanā*”. Now we are back to just *nāma*, i.e., *vēdanā*.
- So, we can clearly see that *kamma viññāṇa* plays a key role in bridging *nāma* with *rūpa*.

4. *Kamma viññāṇa* with *kammic* energy are created in *javana citta*. That *kammic* energy may start small but can grow with repeated generation of *abhisankhāra* and can grow to be a *kamma beeja* that can give rise to a new *bhava*. That *kamma beeja* then gives rise to a very fine mental body (*gandhabba*) which will provide the “seed” for the dense physical body.

- This happens at “*upādāna paccayā bhava*” step giving rise to a *gandhabba*, which is a very tiny *rūpa* which is really a “packet of energy”.
- Then at the “*bhava paccayā jāti*” step, *gandhabba* enters a womb and starts a new physical body.
- Just like a tiny seed can grow to a huge tree by taking in water and nutrients from the soil, an unimaginably small *gandhabba* gives rise to the heavy human body by taking in food. **The only difference is that while a *gandhabba* or a human has a mind, a seed or a tree does not.**

5. Our solid physical body starts with a *gandhabba* — smaller than the first cell made by the reunion of mother and father (zygote) — descending to a womb and taking hold of that zygote in the womb. We recall that the Buddha also called this event as “a *viññāṇa* descending to the womb”; see, “[Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka](#)”, and below. From the posts in this series, now we know why the “*gandhabba* descending” can also be called “*viññāṇa* descending”.

- The complex process of of this single zygote growing into a adult human is discussed in, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”.
- Therefore, the “seed” to bring up this physical body of several hundred pounds (tens of kg), was the *kammic* energy created in the *patibandhi viññāṇa* which gave rise to a *gandhabba* consisting of just a few *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*].

6. This basic mechanism of how a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] — the smallest unit of matter (billion times smaller than an atom in modern science) — is created with the mind was discussed in the post, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhaṭṭhaka\]](#)” in the *Abhidhamma* section. **But in this subsection on *nāmarūpa*, we are discussing it with a more simple, fundamental analysis that everyone can understand (if the fundamentals are grasped).**

- Furthermore, those with *abhiññā* powers can intensify the *kammic* power in *javana citta* in *jhānas* (specifically in *jhāna samāpatti*), and create matter directly too. This enhancement can be compared to the difference between a regular lamp that puts out a bit of light, and a laser which puts out of intense light that can cut through metal; see, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)”.
- When we dive deeper into Buddha Dhamma we will be able to see that some phenomena that seem “supernatural” (like creating a flower using mind energy) are indeed possible. But that ability to create matter requires purifying the mind to very high levels.

7. The Buddha described how the *patisandhi viññāṇa* (which is the same as the *gandhabba*) “descends” to the womb of the mother and starting the process in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Maha Nidana Sutta \(Digha Nikaya 15\)](#)” where he has the following exchange with Ven. Ananda:

‘*Viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpan’ti iti kho panetaṃ vuttaṃ, tadānanda, imināpetam pariyāyena veditabbaṃ, yathā viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ. Viññāṇaṇca hi, ānanda, mātukucchismiṃ na okkamissatha, api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ mātukucchismiṃ samuccissathā*’ti? “No hetam, bhante”. “*Viññāṇaṇca hi, ānanda, mātukucchismiṃ okkamitvā vokkamissatha, api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ itthattāya abhinibbattissathā*’ti? “No hetam, bhante”. “*Viññāṇaṇca hi, ānanda, daharasseva sato vocchijjissatha kumārakassa vā kumārikāya vā, api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ vuddhiṃ virūḷhiṃ vepullaṃ āpajjissathā*’ti? “No hetam, bhante”. “*Tasmātiḥānanda, eseṃva hetu etaṃ nidānaṃ esa samudayo esa paccayo nāmarūpassa—yadidaṃ viññāṇaṃ.*”

Here is the English translation:

“It was said: ‘With consciousness as condition there is *nāmarūpa* (normally translated as **mentality-materiality; which in this case is the *gandhabba***).’

How that is so, Ānanda, should be understood in this way: If **consciousness (*Viññāṇaṇca*) were not to descend (*na okkamissatha*)** into the mother’s womb, would that *nāmarūpa* take shape in the womb?”

“Certainly not, venerable sir.”

“If, after **descending (*okkamitvā*)** into the womb, consciousness were to **depart (*vokkamissatha*)**, would that *nāmarūpa* be generated into this present state of being?”

(**Note:** this happens in the case of a natural termination of pregnancy, where the *gandhabba* comes out of the womb on its own, because it is not a suitable match).

“Certainly not, venerable sir.”

“If the consciousness of a **young boy or girl (*kumārakassa vā kumārikāya vā*)** were to be come out, would that *nāmarūpa* grow up, develop, and reach maturity?”

“Certainly not, venerable sir.”

“Therefore, Ānanda, this is the **cause, source, origin, and condition (*eseṃva hetu etaṃ nidānaṃ esa samudayo*)** for *nāmarūpa*, **namely, consciousness (*yadidaṃ viññāṇaṃ*)**.

8. Therefore, it is quite clear that it is the *kammic* energy of the *patisandhi viññāṇa* that “descends” to the womb and gives rise to the physical body. *gandhabba* is another term for *patisandhi viññāṇa* descending to the womb; it is also called “*manōmaya kaya*”.

- Sometimes the *gandhabba* in a human body can come out in a stressful situation; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)”. The Buddha compared a *gandhabba* (sometimes also called a *Tirokutta* or a *Tirokuddha*) coming out of a physical body to a sword being pulled out of the sheath that it is stored in.

9. The erroneous concept of a *patisandhi* taking place in a womb is nowhere to be found in the *Tipitaka*. Note that in the above verse in #7, the term *okkanti* is used to describes the descent of the *patisandhi viññāṇa* to the womb, and the word “*patisandhi*” is not there. *Patisandhi* took place in the previous life, at the end of that *bhava*, see, “[Cutī-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”.

- Furthermore, if *patisandhi* took place in the womb, then a human *bhava* would last only until the death. Then, since human *bhava* is so rare (see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of](#)”

[Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)“), all those rebirth stories cannot be accounted for (where children recall their previous human lives only several years before).

- The concept of a *gandhabba* is criticized by some saying that it is a Mahāyāna concept about an “*antarā bhava*“. Of course there is no *antarā bhava*, i.e., there is no gap between two adjacent “*bhava*“: *cuti* (end of one *bhava*) is followed by the grasping of the next *bhava* in the next thought moment, see, “[Cutī-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)“.

10. A human *gandhabba* may be born with a human body many times before the *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* runs out and he/she is born in another existence (as a *deva*, animal, etc); see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)“.

- During that whole time, the human *gandhabba* lives moving from one body to another and spending the time “in between successive human bodies” in *paralowa*; see, “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)“.
- I keep repeating things, because these are important points. In case there are still questions, the “Search” box on top right is a good resource to find relevant posts. The [Pure Dhamma – Sitemap](#) is another good resource.
- You can also use the “Comments” box to send a comment or ask a question. I will be opening the discussion forum soon too.

11. [This connection between mind and matter \(*nāma* and *rūpa*\) — combined via *viññāṇa* to create *nāmarūpa* —](#) is what the Buddha meant when said that, “*manō pubbangamā dhammā*“, i.e., “the mind is the precursor to all *dhamma*“.

- When one understands that point one is said to have the “*nāmarūpa pariccēda ñāṇa*“.
- We have essentially all the major components in place now, and there may be some who can see the “whole picture” at least vaguely. But there are still more minor pieces that needs to be added to make the picture much clearer.
- However, if a key piece cannot be understood, the picture may not become clear. Please do not hesitate to comment if you have questions. Even if it is clear to me, I may not be conveying it in a optimum way, and I can make it better with your input.

12. I must emphasize that one could be a *Sotāpanna* and may not even know about these details; I do not want to discourage those who are not really into *Abhidhamma*.

- What is needed for the *Sotāpanna* stage is a grasp of *Tilakkhana*, the *anicca* nature of this world.
- The details discussed in this subsection are to dispel any doubts about the consistency of Buddha Dhamma, and to illustrate that it can explain mind phenomena to profoundly deep levels. Furthermore, it can give confidence to those who have any remaining doubts about the validity of key concepts in Buddha Dhamma (laws of *kamma*, rebirth, *gandhabba*, etc).

V Dhamma and Science

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5.1 Dhamma and Science – Introduction

1. Whether it is a scientist or a Buddha, each is “discovering” the way the nature works, i.e., reveal to the world what the fundamental laws of nature are. To appreciate what a Buddha does in comparison to a scientist, contemplate on the following: The scientific knowledge we have today is the CUMULATIVE effort of thousands of scientists, each one taking the knowledge a little further. As Newton said, “I was fortunate to stand on the shoulders of giants to see further”.

- Not all scientists make similar contributions. Galileo, Newton, and Einstein made “giant leaps” in comparison to the smaller steps taken by other scientists.
- Now with cumulative effort over many hundreds of years, science has made significant advance concerning understanding the some of the fundamental laws relevant to INERT MATTER. On the other hand, there is virtually no progress in understanding how the mind works; see, [“Cosciousness – A Dhamma Perspective”](#).

2. As I build up this site anyone will be able to see that Buddha Dhamma is the ultimate Grand Unified Theory. It explains everything not only the behavior of inert matter and living beings that we can see, but also the existence of infinite number of worlds with living beings in 29 other realms of existence (other than the human and animal realms) that we cannot see; see, [“The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma”](#).

- Buddha Dhamma is not a religion in the sense of providing salvation. The Buddha was not a God, a prophet or a messenger. He was a human being who purified his mind to perfection so that he could see the whole of existence.
- The Buddha was the greatest scientist, who investigated the problem of existence and found the complete solution. We all need to find our salvation by following the Path that he prescribed to purify our minds.

3. Newton could not have discovered the laws of gravity if it were not for the efforts of scientists like Brahe and Copernicus. Similarly, Einstein could not have discovered relativity without the knowledge passed down by other scientists. Quantum mechanics would not have been possible without the efforts of multiple scientists who moved forward with the evidence gathered by hundreds of other scientists.

- The Buddha in comparison, discovered the complete set of laws about the WHOLE EXISTENCE by his own efforts. This includes not only the way inert matter behave on this Earth, but all of existence in the 31 realms that science is not even aware of; this includes the way inert matter behaves in all 31 realms AND the minds of beings in those 31 realms.

4. We could say that minds of the caliber of Newton and Einstein appear roughly every 100 years. Mind of a Buddha is infinitely more advanced and appears once in many thousands of years if beings are lucky. Normally, the gaps are much more wider.

- There have been four Buddhas in this Mahā kalpa (basically during the lifespan of the universe we live in, which was born about 14 billion years ago), but the last Buddha before them was born 30 Mahā Kalpas ago, i.e., there was a gap of 30 Mahā Kalpas (roughly a trillion years) without a Buddha appearing in this world.
- The Buddhas use a method that is totally different from the “scientific method” used by the scientists. Instead of conducting experiments on inert matter, they conduct mind experiments. Answers to ultimate questions on the existence of living beings who have complex minds can be found only by PURIFYING a human mind to the ultimate level; that is what a Buddha does.

5. I will try to provide at least some details of the complex world view that was provided by the Buddha, which has been been muddled and distorted within the past 2500 years.

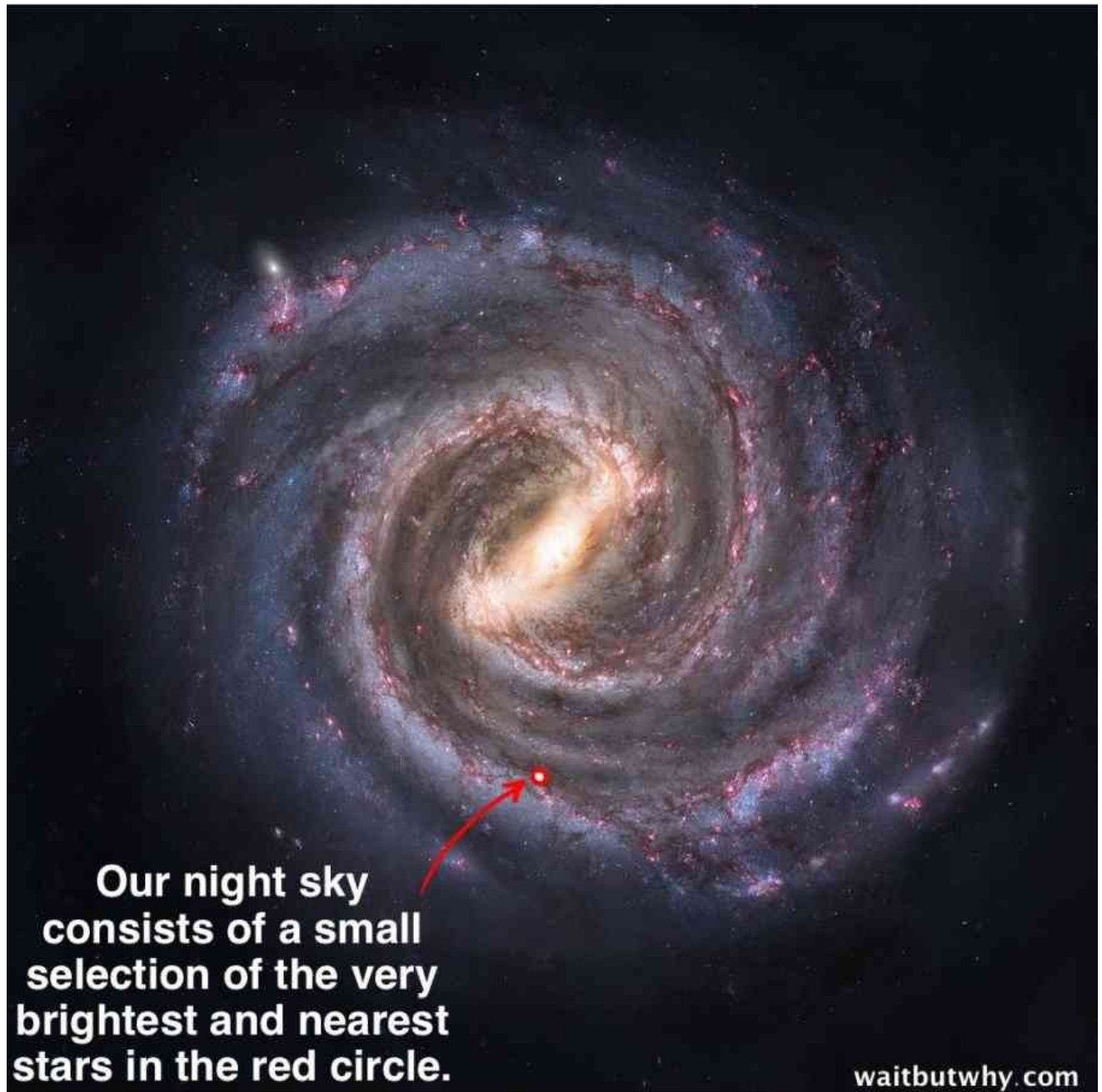
- “Our world” is much more complex than what is grasped by our senses; see, [“The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma”](#).
- And our lives do not end with this one; see, [“Evidence for Rebirth”](#).

- Those two facts constitute the basis of the true nature of existence, and need to be thought about critically; one cannot comprehend the message of the Buddha until one at least has some idea about this “big picture”.

Now let us examine one case where it took 2500 years for science to come to be consistent with one part of Buddha Dhamma's world view.

It Took 2500 Years.....

Here is a picture of our Milky Way galaxy. We can see only a couple of thousand stars, but there are hundreds of BILLIONS of stars in our galaxy, and there are about an equal number of GALAXIES in our universe. Thus for each star in our galaxy, there is a whole galaxy out there. It is truly mind boggling.



Milky Way

1. Even a few hundred years ago, even scientists believed our Earth was at the center of the universe:
[WebLink: WIKI: Geocentric model](#)

- Therefore, Buddha's view of the universe as consisting of innumerable "world systems" was not looked at favorably even a few hundred years ago. Of course that has changed now. His statement that "there is no discernible beginning to life" is also becoming vindicated with each new scientific discovery. With any of the scientific theories that are being evaluated now, the only difficulty lies in trying to comprehend how any Creator can keep up with the cosmic activity that is truly beyond comprehension.

2. In Buddha Dhamma, there is no First Cause (no Creator): Life always existed, and it will always exist. Each living being has gone through innumerable birth-rebirth processes without a conceivable beginning. However, everything in the "world around us" is impermanent, including our own universe (a "major world system" in Buddha Dhamma).

- Everything is born, has a transient existence, and finally decays. And this includes our universe as well; universes, like everything else, are born and eventually fade away.

3. if there is no beginning to life, then where did life exist before the "big bang", i.e., before our universe came into existence? (actually, life is believed to have evolved on Earth very much later). People who lived even a hundred years ago had to take Buddha's words on this point solely on faith (or based on the overall picture – as described by the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path – one could believe that it must be true). But we are lucky to be assured by the fact that modern science to give us some rather persuasive reasons to believe that life existed forever. Let us look at the emerging evidence.

- Even as recently as at beginning of the 1900's, Lord Kelvin, one of the top scientists of the day, estimated that the age of the Sun was < 40 million years based on gravitational contraction (atomic structure was not known at that time), and our knowledge of the universe was pretty much limited to the Solar system. So, this meant the age of our "known universe" was very short and thus the Buddha's teachings on a beginning-less *saṃsāra* seemed like a myth.
- Vindication of the Buddha's teachings started at the beginning of the 1900's with the advent of quantum mechanics and relativity: Discovery of radioactivity in 1898 by Becquerel and Einstein's explanation of the photoelectric effect in 1905 led to the quantum theory of atomic structure, which in turn led to the correct picture of atomic fusion as the source of solar energy. So, by 1956, the age of the solar system was known to be > 4 billion years, and the age of the universe was estimated to be around 14 billion years. Yet, even billions of years is hardly the same as "beginning-less time"!

4. By 1929, Edwin Hubble proved that the distant galaxies are moving away from each other and from our galaxy, and that our galaxy is but just one of many galaxies. This was a vast understatement since now we know that there are 400 billion galaxies in our observable universe!

The real breakthroughs came close to the beginning of the 21st century, with a credible explanation to the beginning of our universe. The currently accepted theory on the "big bang" is the inflationary theory of Alan Guth (see, "The Inflationary Universe" by Alan Guth, 1997), which is a fascinating read. I will give but a single quotation from this book to drive home my point (pp.247-248):

- "Thus a region of false vacuum does not merely produce one universe, but instead produces an infinite number of universes! In the cosmic shopping mall, an infinity of pocket universes can be purchased for the price of one. Each pocket universe undergoes a big bang history, just as we believe that the observed universe is doing. Since each pocket universe goes through the process of inflation, it will become almost exactly flat. For a period far longer than 10 to 15 billion year history of our universe since the big bang, the evolution of each pocket universe will be indistinguishable from that of a flat universe. Ultimately, however, the deviations from the flatness will grow. Parts of each pocket universe will re-collapse into a crunch, while other parts dwindle off toward negligible mass density. On the very

large scale, however, from a view that shows all the pocket universes, the evolution will strongly resemble the old steady state model of the universe. As the pocket universes live out their lives and re-collapse and dwindle away, new universes are generated to take their place. Although the ultimate fate our pocket universe is more appealing in the inflationary scenario than in a simple big bang theory, the universe as a whole will regenerate eternally, forever producing new pocket universes. While life in our pocket universe will presumably die out, life in the universe as a whole will thrive for eternity.”

(Just recently, more evidence emerged to support the inflation theory: see, [WebLink: NYTIMES: Space Ripples Reveal Big Bang's Smoking Gun](#), and “[WebLink: CFA.HARVARD: First Direct Evidence of Cosmic Inflation](#)”).

5. This is a stunning example of scientific verification for the Buddha Dhamma. Life always existed in universes that are long gone, and will exist forever in future universes.

- By the way, there are several theories currently being explored in quantum mechanics that are related to cosmology. There is one theory that requires a universe being existing for each possible event! So, there may be infinite number of parallel universes. For example, see “The Beginning of Infinity” by David Deutsch (2011). In all these theories there are multiple universes that always exist.
- In any case, the Buddha of course did not say which of these theories is correct. He just said life always existed, and it always will. But he did say that universes come into being, exist for long times, and are destroyed at the end.

Now, let us analyze a set of recent experiments that some researchers erroneously interpreted to conclude that there is no free will:

Next, “[Neuroscience says there is no Free Will? – That is a Misinterpretation!](#)“,

5.2

Good Explanations – Key to Weeding Out Bad Versions of Dhamma

1. Today, we have many different religions, world views, cults, and even different versions of the Buddha Dhamma: *Theravāda*, *Mahayana*, *Zen*, *Vajrayana* (Tibetan), etc. Actually, *Zen* and *Vajrayana* both originated from *Mahayana* (see, “[Historical Timeline of Edward Conze](#)”); thus *Theravāda* and *Mahayana* are the two main categories. How could one decide which one to choose?

2. Here is a good example of an obvious inconsistency:

In *Mahayana* Buddhism, one is supposed to take a vow as to not to attain Enlightenment (*Nibbāna*) until ALL BEINGS are ready to attain *Nibbāna*. Whoever came up with this idea did not understand that there are an infinite number of beings.

- On this Earth alone, scientists estimate that there are 10 trillion of just ants (million ants for each human being!). It also displays a lack of understanding that most beings are incapable of attaining *Nibbāna*, until a human or *deva* birth is attained, which are rare events; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.
- As the Buddha advised in the *Kalama Sutta*, everyone needs to examine the different options and choose the one that is without any contradictions.

3. In Buddha’s time, there was of course no “science” that educated the masses about the physical world. Even though the Buddha referred to the innumerable world systems and innumerable beings in them, people just had to believe those only based on faith. Today we are fortunate to have a well-established scientific method to rule out “bad theories” and to focus on “good theories”.

- This method cannot match the Buddha’s method of deciding by EXPERIENCE that he advised in the *Kalama Sutta* as mentioned above, but it gives a filtering mechanism to weed out the stuff that is clearly not worth pursuing. Thus the scientific method can be used as “pre-screening” to get rid of obviously unsuitable paths or “theories”.

4. What is the “scientific method”?

An acceptable “theory” must have,

- power (ability) to explain as many things that we experience in this world,
- consistency, i.e., not one explanation can be inconsistent with another within the same theory,
- the power to predict, i.e., point out things that are still unknown but could be verified in the future.

5. If one would want to read more about the scientific method, I can recommend two books: “The structure of scientific Revolutions” by Thomas Kuhn is a classic; “The Beginning of Infinity” by David Deutsch is a recent and more easy-to-read book which also discusses infinity which is a key concept in Dhamma.

6. Thus explanatory power, consistency, and the power of prediction are the three measures of the validity of a scientific theory. Buddha Dhamma is a theory about existence for someone who has not yet “seen” its validity.

- My goal with this website is to present the Dhamma as a scientific theory. I will try to point out the explanatory power of the Dhamma, that there are no inconsistencies in Dhamma, and that many things in the Dhamma that were so far ahead of the times and only now are being confirmed by science.
- In the following video Dr. Deutsch explains the start of the scientific revolution on a few hundred years ago.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE David Deutsch: A new way to explain explanation](#)

- As explained above, science proceeds via conjectures (theories) that are continually tested. There are no conjectures in Buddha Dhamma. The truths revealed in Dhamma are still being re-discovered by science. The vagaries of life can only be explained in terms of Buddha Dhamma; see, “[Vagaries of Life and the Way to Seek Good Rebirths](#)”.

7. Buddha Dhamma is not a religion in the normally accepted sense of the word “religion”. The Buddha never said that he can take someone to “salvation” if someone believed in him. **One attains *Nibbāna* by purifying ONE’S OWN mind.** The Buddha just showed WHY one should strive for *Nibbāna* and HOW to purify one’s mind by following the Noble Eightfold Path.

- Buddha Dhamma is a complete description of existence, or nature. A Buddha discovers the laws of nature appears by his own mental efforts. It is for us to decide whether that world view makes sense to us, and then to use the Path he showed to attain *Nibbāna*, the state of unconditioned, permanent happiness.
- One could start on the Path of the Buddha in a gradual manner, verifying for oneself the benefits at each step; see, “[Living Dhamma](#)”.

Next, “[Godel’s Incompleteness Theorem](#)“,

5.2.1 Consciousness and the Brain

I think Professor John Searle is one of the great philosophers of today who have the right ideas about consciousness. If he comes to learn about pure Dhamma, he may be able to articulate his points even better. Here is one of his presentations:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Consciousness & the Brain](#)

5.2.2 Matter Creates Mind or Mind Creates Matter?

The deep meaning of “*Manopubbangama Dhamma, mano setta manomaya*”, is that mind is the origin of everything. This is unfathomably a strange statement at first, but when one studies Abhidhamma, it becomes clear why this is true.

Before I get into the details, it is important to know that some scientists are beginning to realize this. Even though they cannot yet make the right connection, they can see that the reality has to be that way. It will be interesting to see whether how much progress they can make, without really approaching the problem other than from Buddha Dhamma.

Anyway, let us listen to these “new ideas” from a special group of scientists. They are indeed new from their perspective, since they have not been exposed to Buddha Dhamma, which is at the moment is hidden for most people.

In the following video a group of scientists discuss why the time has come to change the paradigm:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Consciousness & Quantum Physics](#)

Here is a presentation by Dr. Robert Lanza who’s book “Biocentrism” basically says that life did not arise from matter (universe), but the universe arose from life (pretty much agreeing with the Buddha Dhamma):

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Robert Lanza on theory of Biocentrism](#)

Cloning and Gandhabba

March 5, 2018

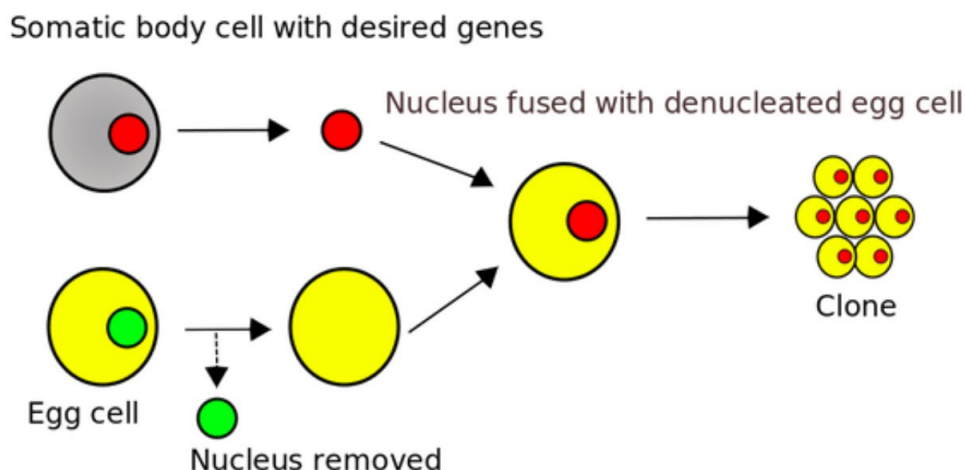
1. Cloning of various types of animals has become common since Dolly was cloned in 1996. Three sheep contributed to the birth of Dolly: one provided the egg, another the DNA (donor), and a third (surrogate mother) carried the cloned embryo to term.

- Obviously, the clone has most similarities with the donor and there is no “father” involved (no sperm is needed). Are these consistent with the buddha Dhamma, and how does a *gandhabba* play a role?
- Also there are some myths associated with cloning, such as whether totally unexpected “creatures” can result from cloning.
- Therefore, it is good to review the key steps in the cloning process and to clarify these issues.

2. The basic procedure involved in the conception or the fertilization of a female egg by a sperm from a male, and the subsequent incorporation of a *gandhabba* is discussed in the post, [“What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?”](#).

- However, in the case of cloning, a sperm from a father is not involved. So, we need to examine the steps involved in the cloning process in order to see where a *gandhabba* would fit in. **A new animal or human life cannot be initiated without a *gandhabba*.**

3. The basic process involved in **cloning** is nicely represented by the following diagram:



- By the way, if you really need to understand this process, you need to print the post and read. **At least print this figure and have it ready while you read the material below.**

This figure is from the article, [“WebLink: 20 years after Dolly: Everything you always wanted to know about the cloned sheep and what came next”](#).

- You may want to read that article too. But let us go through the basic steps involved in natural conception and in cloning process first, in order to see the commonalities and differences.

4. The main thing from the above figure on cloning for our discussion is that the yellow cell is the egg from the mother. The cell on the top is from the “donor”; it is not a sperm.

- **The unique feature of the egg** from the mother is that it allows the growth of a whole animal **with many body parts for doing very different things just starting with that single cell.**
- When an egg starts cell division, it splits — first into 2, then 4, then 8, 16, 32, 64, and so on — it is not merely splitting. It is a complex process that produces descendant cells with a huge variety of shapes and functions: bone cells, nerve cells, red and white blood cells; the cells of the eyes, fingernails, stomach, skin, etc.

5. Eggs are the most remarkable of animal cells: **once activated**, they can give rise to a complete new individual within a matter of days or weeks in some animals. No other cell in a higher animal has this capacity; see #4 above. Egg cells also contain many mitochondria which supply the energy required for cell replication and division.

- **The activation** (or start of the cell division) is initiated differently in cloning compared to the natural conception, as we will discuss below.
- So, it is important to realize the vital role played by the yellow egg in the above diagram.
- You can read more about the role of the egg at, “[WebLink: How Does a Single Cell Become a Whole Body?](#)”.

But, first we need to look at what happens in a “normal conception” where an egg and a sperm combine to form the unique cell called zygote, see also “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”.

6. **I could not find a figure like the above for the normal formation of a zygote by the combination of an egg and sperm.** So, let us use that above figure **first to see what happens in a natural conception.**

- In the case of a normal conception, the top cell in the figure (with the red nucleus) would be the sperm and of course the lower yellow cell with the green nucleus would still be the mother’s egg.
- Instead of the removal of the green and incorporation of the red nucleus shown in the figure, **in this case of a normal conception, those two nuclei from mother and father will combine to form a single nucleus in the yellow cell.**
- When that process is complete, the zygote is formed and the cell division is activated.
- **The only difference in Buddha Dhamma is that the cell division starts when a *gandhabba* descends to the womb and merges with that zygote.**

7. This is a key point. A cell whether animal, human, or of a plant, has no “sentient life”. The zygote that results from the merger of the egg and the sperm is not a “new life”.

- It is only when the *gandhabba* descends to the womb and take possession of that zygote that it “becomes alive”.
- And it is not a new life. The *gandhabba* already existed!

8. Most cells in a body have **23 pairs** of chromosomes, **for a total of 46**. The egg and sperm are different. **Each egg and each sperm has only one set of 23 chromosomes, not a pair.** When fertilization occurs, the 23 chromosomes from the egg combine with the 23 from the sperm to create a zygote or a *fertilized egg* with the full complement of **23 pairs** of chromosomes.

- In the case of a natural conception, the matching *gandhabba* will descend to the womb and will be merged with that fertilized egg to complete the conception.
- So, we see that in a normal conception, the nucleus of the zygote — or the result of the merger of the egg with the sperm — will be a cell with a nucleus that has half chromosomes from the mother and other **other** half from the father.
- Therefore, a matching *gandhabba* would have *gati* that are a mix of *gati* of mother and father.

9. It is therefore clear that in a natural conception, the offspring will have bodily features and also mental features resembling those of mother/father, since half the chromosomes comes from the mother and other half from the father.

- There is a small added contribution from the mother via the mitochondrial DNA that is in the egg outside the nucleus. That is like a 1% contribution.

10. **Now let us see what happens in cloning, which is the process shown in the above figure.**

- Here the nucleus of the egg is REMOVED, and the nucleus of the “donor cell” with the full set of 46 chromosomes is INSERTED in the egg. That is the key difference in cloning. So, now the nucleus of the egg has the full set of chromosomes needed to start cell division.
- However, it seems that is not enough to initiate the cell division. An electric shock is required to activate the process or to initiate cell division of this artificially created zygote. This is the second difference compared to the natural process.
- The artificially modified egg is placed in the womb of the surrogate mother, and an electrical shock is applied to start the cell division.
- Therefore, once the cell division starts with the application of the electric shock, which eventually gives rise to an animal body made according to the DNA from the donor.

11. Even though that is the whole picture according to science, Buddha Dhamma says, there **MUST** be a *gandhabba* merging with that cell in order to “give it life”. **It is likely that the *gandhabba* enters the womb and merges with the zygote at the time the electric shock is applied to initiate cell division.**

- Just like in the case of natural conception we discussed above, there is no “new life” created with cloning. It just created a suitable “temporary home” for the *gandhabba*.
- When that physical body dies, the *gandhabba* would come out and wait for another womb to be ready, if still has more *kammic* energy left for that existence (as a sheep in the case of Dolly). Dolly actually died and it is possible that she was reborn as another sheep somewhere.

12. Now, in the case of cloning, the following should be clear, according to science:

- Mother that provides the egg, provides the all important platform for cell division that leads to the formation of the new offspring.
- However, 99% of the DNA comes from the donor. Therefore, the physical resemblance of the offspring would be to the donor, as is the case with Dolly the sheep.
- The surrogate mother who carries the embryo to term would provide no real contribution to the physical appearance of the offspring, according to science.

13. That is pretty much the picture in Buddha Dhamma too, but with the following exceptions:

- All three would contribute to some extent to the “mental qualities” in selecting a matching *gandhabba* (which happens automatically), even though the major contribution is likely to come from the donor.
- Of course, we can only make a guess, since the Buddha never had to explain this particular case. The Buddha specifically mentioned that the “mental state of the mother” at the time of *gandhabba* descending to the womb is a factor. This is why even the most moral mother may, in a few cases, end up with a baby who turns out to have immoral *gati*.
- Therefore, the surrogate mother — within whose womb the actual descending of the *gandhabba* would occur — could play some minor role in determining the behavior of the baby, but not the physical appearance, i.e., the developing embryo would be affected by the mood and health of the surrogate mother.

14. Studies done over the past 20 years with different types of animals show that:

- The success rate is low, around 10%.
- No monstrous creatures can be expected to form due to cloning. This is because the source of DNA is the donor. Therefore, the clone will look like the donor.
- It is not possible to clone an animal that is identical to the donor. Even if they look similar, their character traits are different.
- That observation from the cloning studies over the past 20 years, is consistent with our picture of the *gandhabba* having *gati* close to that of the donor. No two animals can be the same. In the case of a natural birth, *gandhabba*’s *gati* will be close to those of both parents.

15. The main point from Buddha Dhamma is that a new life cannot be created by any means, whether in a laboratory or anywhere in the universe. This is the only inconsistency with science here, and it is a major inconsistency; the actual cloning process is compatible.

- All living beings in existence now have been in the rebirth process forever. The Buddha said that there is no discernible beginning to any living being.
- Living beings just keep switching from realm to realm, but most are trapped in the lower realms. While in the human or animal realms, they spend a lot of time as *gandhabbas*; see, [“Gandhabba – Only in Human and Animal Realms”](#).
- So, an animal like Dolly would be switching from a “sheep *gandhabba*” to a sheep to a “sheep *gandhabba*” to a sheep...until the *kammic* energy for the “sheep *bhava*” or “sheep existence” runs out. When a matching womb becomes available either due to natural conception or via cloning, the “sheep *gandhabba*” will descend to the womb and be born with the body of a sheep.

16. So, I hope it is clear that cloning itself is consistent with Buddha Dhamma and specifically with the concept of *gandhabba*.

- I wrote this post in response to a question at the discussion forum: [“WebLink: Gandhabba and Cloning”](#). If there are more questions or comments, we can discuss them there.

5.4 Consciousness – A Dhamma Perspective

- [What is Consciousness?](#)
- [Consciousness Dependence on Number of Dimensions](#)
- [Six Kinds of Consciousness in Our 3-D World](#)
- [Expanding “Consciousness” by Using Technology](#)
- [Expanding “Consciousness” by Purifying the Mind](#)
- [What is Mind? How do we Experience the Outside World?](#)

5.4.1 Consciousness Dependence on Number of Dimensions

For an introduction to consciousness, see, “[What is Consciousness?](#)”.

1. When we look deeply into the issue of consciousness, we come to realize the unimaginable possible varieties of life. Let us start with the issue of dimensionality. Humans live in a four dimensional world; in other words, humans are aware of four dimensions -three dimensions of space plus time.

- Even though we used to think time being different from spatial dimensions, with his Theory of General Relativity, Einstein demonstrated that space and time are interrelated. He showed that the force of gravity can be explained as perturbations in the space-time fabric due to mass.
- Can there be beings existing in higher dimensions that we are not aware of?

2. Of course, we cannot even begin to imagine more than four dimensions (or more than three spatial dimensions). However, it is easier to think of, and visualize, lower number of dimensions.

- Imagine a two-dimensional creature living on your kitchen table. An ant would be the closest real example, if we imagine that the ant cannot see above the table (a real two-dimensional creature would have only a length and width and no height). Now if we put a hand on the table, the 2D creature could see part of the projection of the hand on the table. Now if we take the hand off the table, as far as the 2D creature is concerned, the “hand” disappeared; it cannot “see” any part of the hand if it is off the table, and thus it has no “awareness” of that hand existing anywhere. It does not exist in its “2-D universe”
- For an amusing story of a 2D creature, see “Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions” by Edwin A. Abbott (2002). It was written in 1884 by Abbott, a mathematician.
- Here is a “fun video” from Dr Quantum which illustrates the idea:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE Dr. Quantum in Flatland](#)

3. Therefore, the “awareness” of the 2D creature on the kitchen table surface is limited to its 2D world. It is not aware of anything outside the surface of the table (if it is a “2D world” the surface can extend to infinity and as far as our 2D creature is concerned it would not have “an end”). Furthermore, a 1-D world embedded in that 2D world would be a line on that surface. A 1-D creature in that 1-D world will not see anything that lies outside the line. Thus, the 2-D creatures can go in out of the 1-D world by crossing that line!

- It is clear that the consciousness of a 1-D creature is very limited, not necessarily by its mental capabilities, but just by the dimensions of the “world” that it is in. A 2-D creature has an expanded consciousness compared to the 1-D creature. We in the 3-D world have even farther expanded consciousness. (It must be kept in mind that one needs to incorporate the time dimension in all the above cases where only the space dimensionality was considered).

4. Therefore, if our world has more than three spatial dimensions, there may be other worlds that we are not aware of, since our consciousness is limited to the three spatial dimensions.

- Thus, there may be beings in different dimensions that we are not aware of. We may be able to see “projections” of them if there is some overlap in 1, 2, or 3 dimensions. If there is no overlap

at all, then we will not be able to see them at all, i.e., we will not be “conscious” of the presence of them.

- For example, in the low dimensionality case we considered above, if a 2-D creature crosses over the “1-D line world”, the 1-D creature will see a “dot” during the time when there is an overlap of the 2-D creature with the line. Yet, if the “1D world” lies above the table top, there is no overlap and the both creatures will not be conscious of the presence of each other’s worlds.

5. It is possible the “see” beings other than humans and animals by developing certain *jhānic* (*abhiññā*) powers. There were many yogis even before the Buddha who could access and interact with such beings. One does not have to attain *Nibbāna* to do that, and there are *Arahants* who have not developed such powers. In fact, the Buddha discouraged people from interacting with such beings, particularly with those in the lower realms.

- “Our world” is much more complex than what is grasped by our senses, even though technology has enabled us to expand our consciousness; see, “[Expanding Consciousness using Technology](#)”. Yet, we can expand consciousness even more by purifying our minds; see, “[Expanding Consciousness by Purifying the Mind](#)”. A purified mind can see the truth in the Buddha’s wider world; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.
- And our lives do not end with this one; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”.
- Those two facts constitute the basis of the true nature of existence, and need to be thought about critically; one cannot comprehend the message of the Buddha until one at least has some idea about this “big picture”.

Next, “[Six Kinds of Consciousness in our 3-D World](#)”,

5.4.2 Six Kinds of Consciousness in Our 3-D World

Having looked into the issue of the “awareness” or consciousness issue related to dimensions, now we turn to our familiar 3-D space. Even here the possibilities are endless, as we see below.

1. We become aware of our surrounding “objects” (i.e., visual objects, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects) using the five “external senses” of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and the body. We see visual objects with our eyes, sounds with our ears, smell with our nose, taste with the tongue, and touch or feel with our body.

- Correspondingly, the Buddha stated that there is eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, and body-consciousness. The cognitive processes that involve those “five physical doors” are called five-door processes.
- In addition to the above mentioned five traditional physical senses, in Buddha Dhamma there is mind and the associated mind-consciousness, since we are also conscious about mind objects such as thoughts and visual images. The mind-consciousness is also involved in each of the five-physical-door processes.

2. Note that the Buddha did not mention brain in the mind-consciousness, and he used the term “mind element” without mentioning the brain. This is because the mind belongs to the “*manomaya kaya*” and the brain belongs to the “physical body”; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)”.

- Also note that five “*indriyas*”: “eye”, “ear”, etc are not the physical eye, physical ear, etc. The five *indriyas* are called internal *rūpa* or *pasada rūpa* that are extremely fine and cannot be seen. The physical eye is different from the *pasada eye rūpa*; but the physical eye is needed for seeing for normal humans.
- When one develops the mind, it is possible to see without the physical eye, and also much more (like beings in other realms). **Similarly, the mind is not the brain, but the brain is needed for a normal human for the mind to work.**

3. Therefore, our consciousness is limited by our six senses; we perceive the “world” as we sense it with our six senses.

- The “world” or “the universe” is much more complex than we perceive. This is one reason that we think everything around us is permanent, and is why it is so hard for us to understand the true nature of “this world”, i.e., *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.
- With our “enhanced consciousness” from our scientific and technological advances, recently we have realized that even our universe is not permanent; it came into being some 14 billions years ago and will eventually re-collapse or disintegrate.
- Furthermore, as I mentioned elsewhere, we can still “see” only 4%-6%% of the “stuff” in the universe. The other 96% or so is termed “dark energy” and “dark matter” by the scientists because we do not know what that 96% consists of; see, “The 4% Universe”, by Richard Panek (2011). Thus, even though we have vastly expanded our awareness, we are far from being conscious of the “world as it really is”.

4. In Buddha Dhamma, the above discussion with six sense bases applies specifically to humans, but in general applies to many but not all animals as well as other beings in the “sense sphere” (*kamaloka*).

- The Buddha categorized all the living beings that are subject to the rebirth process in the *samsāra*, and the categorization is according to the consciousness. Beings in the other planes of existence have totally different kind of consciousness compared to humans or animals.
- For example, beings in the *Arupaloka* (“form-less sphere”) have only the mind consciousness, since they do not have physical bodies. Before getting into that discussion, let us first discuss different aspects of consciousness that we see around us.

5. Even though the “beings” in the “sense-sphere” that includes humans and animals in general have five external sense-doors (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body), there are many exceptions.

- For example, some animals do not have fully-developed five external senses. Others have different types of sense doors; a jellyfish has eyes, but no brain for information processing, so its visual consciousness is still very limited. It can distinguish between dark and illuminated areas, and that is about all. On the other hand, a dog has visual consciousness comparable to humans, and it can possibly catch a rabbit by chasing it.
- A bat does not have visual consciousness, so it cannot hunt during the day time, but has different consciousness using radar that enables it to hunt at night. So, it is clear that the “consciousness” or “awareness” has many different “avenues” (for example, humans become aware of their surroundings by using sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and thoughts).
- Lower life forms may have less avenues of consciousness, and the degree of consciousness can vary too (a jellyfish has minimal visual consciousness). In a few cases, we may be less conscious than an animal. For example, a bat would be much more conscious about surroundings in the dark, compared to a human.

6. Even though most of the animals have the same five physical senses as humans, they are “aware” of only their immediate environment.

- But the contemporary humans are aware of the existence of a huge Black hole at the center of our Milky Way universe that is millions of light years away.
- Humans used to have much limited awareness even a few hundreds years ago, before the advent of the telescope and the microscope. Since then humans have slowly built up our awareness by using technology; see, [“Expanding Consciousness by Using Technology”](#).
- However, we need to keep in mind that a complete theory of consciousness (Buddha Dhamma) was described by the Buddha 2500 years ago. It had been hidden for possibly close to 2000 years, at least in its pure form.

7. Therefore, it is clear that “the awareness” or the “consciousness” can come in different flavors as well as different levels of intensity, even within the “sense sphere” (*kamaloka*):

- The humans and *devas* in the *kamaloka* have the highest levels of consciousness (especially mind-consciousness).

- In the “form-sphere” (*rupaloka*), the consciousness level in general is higher, even though they have only visual, auditory, and mind-consciousness; their minds are at a much higher level.
- The beings in the “form-less sphere” (*arupaloka*) do not have physical bodies at all, and have highly developed minds and thus have even higher levels of consciousness.
- Those three levels of consciousness are called *lokiya* (mundane).
- Beings in the three mundane levels have finite lifetimes, and a given “being” wanders through possibly all these different planes in the unfathomably-long *saṃsāra* (rebirth process). Even a sentient being born in the *arupaloka* may end up in the lowest level (*apāya*) in the *kamaloka*, depending on the unspent *kamma*.

8. The higher levels of consciousness are supermundane or “beyond mundane” (*lokuttara*), and there are four levels of supermundane consciousness with *Nibbāna* achieved by the *Arahants* being the highest.

- The first three levels of supermundane consciousness are Stream Enterer (*Sotāpanna*), Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmi*), and Non-Returner (*Anāgāmi*).
- As one progresses on the Path, the consciousness starts to clear up, first by removing the five hindrances (*pañca nivarana*) at the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- Consciousness is totally purified by the *Arahant* stage; the pure mind becomes totally separated from any trace of matter (four great elements or *sātara mahā butha*) at the death of the *Arahant*, and thus the *Arahant* is not reborn anywhere in the 31 realms and his/her mind becomes free, *Nibbāna*.
- All the suffering we experience is due to trying to satisfy the “body” that is attached to the mind. When attachment to that body (which is subjected to decay and death) is severed, the worldly bonds are broken (*Nibbāna*) and the mind attains the complete “cooled down” (*Nivana*); see, “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)“, and “[Nibbāna – Is It Difficult to Understand?](#)“.

Next, “[Expanding Consciousness by Using Technology](#)“,

5.4.3 Expanding “Consciousness” by Using Technology

1. Focusing on the human world, we can expand our “awareness” or consciousness in two ways so that we can be more “aware” of the “world” around us.

- One is using the scientific approach and by developing new techniques that enable us to “see” or “be aware” of things that are not directly accessible to our senses.
- For example, we have infrared sensors that allow us to see in the dark; we have constructed particle accelerators that allow us to “see” elementary particles; we can even “see” supernova explosions that happen millions of light years away using our sophisticated instruments. In the latter two cases, we do not actually see with our eyes, but we are aware of the existence of these events.

2. However, it must be noted that we can “see” only about 6% of the “stuff” that our universe is made of. Scientists don’t know what the rest of the “stuff” is made of and have labelled it as “dark matter” and “dark energy”.

- This means we are “not aware” of 94% of our own universe! For those interested, you can also do a Google search on dark energy and dark matter and learn more.

3. The scientific methods which have been developed over only the past few hundred years are still at a very early stage; even though science and technology has greatly expanded our “awareness” of the external world, according to Buddhism there is much more to be explored, i.e., our consciousness is still very limited.

- We have not been able to contact any life form outside the Earth, even though scientists now accept the existence of life outside the earth to be a certainty.

- Possible existence of life forms that exist in the “form-sphere” and the “form-less sphere” are not even contemplated at this time.

Next, “[Expanding Consciousness by Purifying the Mind](#)“,

Also see, “[Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma](#)“.

5.4.4 Expanding “Consciousness” by Purifying the Mind

The other approach to expand our consciousness is by following Buddha Dhamma so that we can “see things as they really are”.

1. Twenty five hundred years ago, the Buddha achieved the ultimate state of the mind and became “all knowing” (or “perfectly conscious”). He came to know about the boundless universe, the endless cycle of rebirths, and about the complex process of cause and effect (*paticca samuppāda*) which sustains everything in the universe.

2. By developing scientific instruments (starting with simple telescopes and microscopes we have now developed very sophisticated instruments), we have been able to expand our “awareness”.

- For example, within the past century, we have expanded our awareness of the vast space around us, and now we know not only that our universe is possibly infinite in extent, but there may be other parallel universes as well. Yet, what the science has achieved so far is nowhere close to the level achieved by the Buddha.

3. As humans, we may get close to the ultimate knowledge using the scientific approach some day well into the future (especially if we are able to take into account the consciousness, and mind in general, into science), but we can get there in a lifetime by developing our minds following the path laid out by the Buddha.

- Today’s Science and technology, for all their impressive “material achievements”, are still at very early stages with respect to the mind phenomena.

4. According to Buddha Dhamma, one is said to achieve full and clear consciousness (*anidassana viññāṇa*), i.e., that person will be able to “see the whole world as it is”, when he/she achieves *Nibbāna*. This does not mean that a person who achieves *Nibbāna* will be an expert on relativity or quantum mechanics. Relativity and quantum mechanics provide only partial explanations, and even then just for materials aspects of the world.

- When one achieves the ultimate knowledge (*Nibbāna*), by definition, relativity or quantum mechanics become irrelevant, since they account for only some of the behavior of impermanent and transient matter. Matter is secondary to mind.

5. Furthermore, even for people with good meditative skills, it is possible to expand their consciousness by accessing higher planes of existence for brief times using meditative states (*jhāna*), i.e., by controlling and focusing the mind.

- Even before the Buddha, ancient Yogis were able to access such meditative states via concentration meditation (*samatha bhāvanā*). For example, when Prince Sidharatha became an ascetic on the way to the Buddhahood, he first followed two well-known *yogis* at that time, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, who were able to achieve very high states of *jhāna* (that belong in the *rupaloka* and *arupaloka*) via concentration meditation.
- However, it will be explained in the future that these *jhānic* achievements of such *yogis* can be traced back to Buddha Kassapa who lived before Buddha Gotama.

6. Even today, people from other religions also could experience such states when they get deeply absorbed in prayer or any type of deep mental concentration; this has nothing to do with a particular religion. However, like everything else, such states are transitory; none of these states is permanent other than *Nibbāna*.

- And *Nibbāna* is not possible to attain via concentration meditation alone, and for that the unique Buddhist system of insight meditation (*vipassana bhāvanā*) is needed whereby *anicca*,

dukkha, *anatta*, *Paticca Samuppāda* (Dependent Origination or “cause and effect”) and the Four Noble Truths (that the existence in *samsāra* is *dukkha*, attachment or craving as the origin of the *dukkha*, *Nibbāna* is the cessation of *dukkha*, and the Eightfold Path is the path to cessation of *dukkha*) are understood.

7. To recap, according to Buddha Dhamma, “beings” exist in different planes of existence with different levels of consciousness; different planes can exist in different dimensions as well as in different physical locations (such as planetary systems in this or other universes, for example). Beings are categorized according to their level of consciousness, and the humans lie somewhere in the middle (but still at a very unique place, as is discussed in “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”)

8. Being “aware” or having consciousness is only one aspect of a living being’s mental composition; in Pāli, consciousness is *viññāṇa*. The other mental constituents that makes up a living being are feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), and mental volitions (*saṅkhāra*). Consciousness is nothing more than “being aware”. Based on consciousness, the other three, collectively called mental factors (*cetasika*), arise.

- For example, when we “see” an object that is pure visual consciousness. Based on the visual, we next recognize the object based on our familiarity with the object. This is perception (*saññā*). These are discussed more in, “[The Five Aggregates \(Pancakkhandha\)](#)”.

9. The chief characteristic of perception is the cognition of an object by the way of a previous acquaintance. It is perception that enables one to recognize an object that has been perceived by the mind through the senses. According to Abhidhamma, “Its procedure is likened to the carpenter’s recognition of certain kinds of wood by the mark he had made on each; to the treasurer’s specifying certain articles of jewelry by the ticket on each..”.

- It happens automatically since the mind compares the observed image with the stored images of people we know and quickly makes the “match”. (I was happy to see that scientist Jeff Hawkins has described this very well in scientific terms in his book “On Intelligence”; this book is a worthwhile read to see how scientists are slowly making progress!). Of course, the more frequently the memory is refreshed of the image, the easier it is to recognize.
- Sometimes people, especially young children, are able to recognize people and material objects from their past lives.

10. Modern neuroscientists and philosophers are struggling with how to even define these “mental characteristics”. They have come up with the term “qualia” to represent the subjective aspect of sense experience.

- In his book “Second Nature: Brain Science and Human Knowledge” (2006), Gerald M. Edelman, a neuroscientist, states (p. 14): “..The property most often described as particularly mysterious is the phenomenological aspect of consciousness, the experience of qualia. Qualia are, for example, the greenness of green and the warmth of warmth. But several students of the subject, myself included, go beyond these simple qualities and consider the whole ensemble of conscious senses or experiences to be qualia. Many consider explaining qualia to be acid test of a consciousness theory. How can we explain not only qualia but all the other features of consciousness? The answer I propose is to look into how the brain works, formulating a global brain theory that can be extended to explain consciousness...”
- **In Buddha Dhamma, the qualia are the mental factors (*cetasika*), and they are built-in to a sentient being and are strictly individualistic, so by definition they cannot arise just from inert matter; but the scientists are trying to derive them from matter.**

11. An interesting read on various ideas of different philosophers’ and scientists’ reasoning on how to explain consciousness and associated mental aspects such as qualia is given in the book, “Conversations on Consciousness” by Susan Blackmore (2006).

12. Let us consider, for example, the visual recognition of a person, say Joe Smith. With the recognition of Joe Smith “feelings” arise together with a whole host of mental volitions, which are fifty two in number in total, and we immediately feel a certain way about Joe Smith based on our past

experience. For example, if hatred, one of the possible 52 mental volitions, arise when we see Joe Smith then we could be acquiring bad *kamma* as well if we let our mind cultivate those feelings further.

13. It needs to be emphasized that pure consciousness does not entail recognition of an object. It is only a sort of awareness – awareness of the presence of an object. When the eye comes in contact with a color, for instance blue, visual consciousness arises which simply is awareness of the presence of a color; but it does not recognize that it is blue. There is no recognition at this stage. It is perception (*saññā*) that recognizes that it is blue. The term “visual consciousness” is a philosophical expression denoting the same idea as is conveyed by the ordinary word “seeing”. Seeing does not mean recognizing. The same is true for other forms of consciousness.

- *Viññāṇa*, which incorporates all mental factors including *saññā*, *vedanā*, etc. has all these mental factors in addition to the pure awareness.

14. Using a somewhat different nomenclature, a “being” in the sense sphere can also be represented by just five “heaps of things” or aggregates (*kandha*), i.e., *pancakkandha* (pronounced as “panchakkandha”, *panca* meaning five and *kandha* means a “heap”): consciousness (*viññāṇa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitions (*saṅkhāra*), and form or materiality (*rūpa*); see, “[The Five Aggregates \(Pancakkhandha\)](#)”.

- These five components co-exist; they are born together at conception. It is not possible to separate *nama* from *rūpa* or the four mental aggregates from each other. Therefore, *nama* does not arise from *rūpa* as scientists believe today; ***nama* and *rūpa* arise together from the moment of conception in the mother’s womb.**

15. The Buddha did tell his disciples that what he taught them was just a minute fraction of his knowledge about “this world”, and what he has taught is sufficient to achieve *Nibbāna* and cut short the *samsaric* journey filled with *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness and suffering). He did not want people to spend their precious time in this human life studying things like the origin of the universe or the origin of life which would serve no purpose in achieving *Nibbāna*. The following passages are from the *Simsapa Sutta*:

- Once the Buddha was staying at Kosambi in the *Simsapa* forest. Then, picking up a few *simsapa* leaves with his hand, he asked the monks, “What do you think, monks: Which are more numerous, the few *simsapa* leaves in my hand or those overhead in the *simsapa* forest?”
- “The leaves in the hand of the Blessed One are few in number, Lord. Those overhead in the *simsapa* forest are much more numerous.”
- “In the same way, monks, those things that I have known with direct knowledge but have not taught are far more numerous [than what I have taught]. And why haven’t I taught them? Because they are not connected with the goal, do not relate to the rudiments of the holy life, and do not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding. That is why I have not taught them”.
- “And what have I taught? ‘This is *dukkha*... This is the origination of *dukkha*... This is the cessation of *dukkha*... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of *dukkha*’: This is what I have taught. And why have I taught these things? Because they are connected with the goal, relate to the rudiments of the holy life, and lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, and to Unbinding. This is why I have taught them”.

16. But nowadays one may be justified to spend a little time to convince oneself that Buddha Dhamma is indeed compatible with the contemporary “scientific knowledge”, because that will enable one to build faith in Buddha Dhamma.

- **However, when one probes deeper into understanding the key concepts in Dhamma one realizes that it is not a matter of science proving Buddha Dhamma to be correct, but rather science is at a very early stage of discovering the true nature of the world as described by Dhamma.**

17. Let me close with an example on the difference between technological progress on expanding consciousness versus that by the purification of the mind. The modern world was not aware of the existence of microscopic living beings until the advent of the microscope by Leeuwenhoek in the late 17th century: [WebLink: WIKI: Antonie van Leeuwenhoek](#).

- However, a person who has developed meditation and attained higher *jhānas* can “see” such microscopic beings. There is this story in the *Tipitaka* about a *bhikkhu* who had developed *abhiññā* powers, but not yet had attained *Arahanthood*. One day he was about to drink a glass of water, when he realized that there were numerous microscopic living beings in the water. He tried to filter them out in vain and got depressed. The Buddha saw this and told him that, “it is not possible to live “in this world” without hurting other beings; the only thing we can do is to attain Nibbāna as soon as possible and get out of this world”.
- Thus one can attain much more “knowledge” about this world by developing the mind. We can probe deeper into the microscopic world by using the scientific knowledge achieved over hundreds of years, but we can “see” much more by just purifying the mind in a lifetime.

Also see, “[Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma](#)”.

5.4.5 What is Mind? How do we Experience the Outside World?

1. This world of 31 realms is very complex. But many versions of “Buddhism” that we have today make it much more complex than it really is. The Buddha had given us only the essential knowledge base that is required to attain *Nibbāna* (actually, one does not need to understand all these minute details: if one can feel the enhanced *nirāmisa sukha* from getting rid of greed, hate, and ignorance, one can just follow the Noble Eightfold Path without knowing any details of how the mind works, etc).

- People who could not understand Buddha Dhamma kept inventing terms/concepts like *bodhicitta* and emptiness to try to make sense of what they could not comprehend. And many people in the old days “fell for” those fancy terms. But now, with science clarifying many concepts independently of Dhamma, those concepts are showing their true colors, i.e., they are just a lot of empty words.
2. Please take time and read the following (or any post) very carefully. There is a lot of basic information that could be useful in “putting the whole picture together”. Most posts are supposed to be read again (after reading other related posts), because sometimes a little bit of information gleaned from one post can “fill in the blanks” in another post.
- Dhamma has to be complex to describe a complex world, and even though the Buddha has made it as simple as possible, it takes time to see how all the pieces of the puzzle fit in. And they do. If anyone can find any inconsistencies, anywhere on the website, please send me a comment.
3. Everything that we experience comes through six “doors” or “*āyatana*” we have to the outside worlds: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and the mind. Through those six doors we can see pictures, hear sounds, smell odors, taste food, feel things physically by touch, and be aware of concepts (say, mundane things like remembering past events or make plans about future events, or think about a black hole in the middle of the universe or a mathematical concept).
- The six sense faculties (and the corresponding six external “*āyatana*” which are *rūpa*, *sadda*, *gandha*, *rasa*, *pottabba*, *dhamma* or visuals, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and concepts) are what the Buddha called “*sabba*”, or “everything”. These are 12 *ayatanas* (6 internal and 6 external).
4. All those sense experiences are done with *citta* or thoughts. But this is probably not a good translation. We normally associate a “thought” with an idea or one visual event, etc., a moment of “experience”. But *citta* is very fast and no one can experience a single *citta* which lasts a billionth of a second or less; see, “[What is a Thought?](#)”.

5. When we look at an object, the “eye” generates visual consciousness (*cakkhu viññāṇa*): Comprehending what is seen is accomplished via a series of very fast thought processes. **There are billions of thoughts per second, so each citta or thought moment is billionth of a second**; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“. Let us see how the mind “sees” an object in a series of very fast “snapshots” alternating between the “eye” and the “mind”:

- The “eye” captures a snapshot of the object and the brain transfers that captured information to mind: that process takes 17 thought moments or *cittas* (let us abbreviate it as TM); this series of TM is called a “**sense input citta vithi**” (or *pancadvara citta vithi*). Next the mind analyzes that “imprint” with three *citta vithi* that involve only the mind. These latter “**mind-only citta vithi**” (*manodvara citta vithi*) are shorter, around ten TM, and try to discern what the object is. It may first try to discern the color of the object for example.
- Then the “eye” takes another snapshot and transfers that “imprint” to the mind, which in turn receives it in a *pancadvara citta vithi* containing 17 TM, analyzes that in 3 more *manodvara citta vithi* containing about 10 TM, and makes better sense of the color. This “back and forth” process goes on until the object is determined.
- This process is slowed down only due to the time needed for the brain to put together the information captured by one of the five sense faculties (*pancadvara*), for example, the eyes. This time is of the order of 10 milliseconds; see, “[What is a Thought?](#)“. Thus there can only be about 100 (600 if they are processed in parallel) or so “sense events” per second; since science show that the brain has different regions for processing different sense inputs, the latter number (600) is probably right.

6. Since these *citta vithi* run very fast, once the brain sends an “information packet” to the mind it is processed very quickly, within billionth of a second. Thus the process is slowed down only by the brain. **Still, everything about the object is grasped in a small fraction of a second.**

- Now, many of you may be thinking, “this looks like some far off theory made up by someone”. The Buddha said he experienced everything that he taught. Phenomena in this fast time scale are discernible only to a Buddha.
- Once the Buddha explained the key aspects to Ven. Sariputta, it was Ven. Sariputta and his group of *Bhikkhus* that developed the Abhidhamma, where all these details were worked out. It took generations of *bhikkhus* to develop the Abhidhamma to the final form that was recited at the Third *Sangayana* (Buddhist Council) and was written down in the *Tipitaka* in 29 BCE (we know that there were many *Arahants* before 100-200 CE; see the timeline in “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)“). For us, the truth of these minute details become apparent as all observable phenomena are EXPLAINED using all three forms of Dhamma in the *Tipitaka*: *Sutta*, *Vinaya*, and *Abhidhamma*).

7. As all this information comes in, the mind recognizes the object; this is ***saññā* or perception**. Based on that recognition **feelings (*vedanā*)** are generated (for example when we see a friend we generate a happy feeling; if it is someone we don’t like, it is a unhappy feeling, etc).

- Once everything about the object is grasped, then if it is an “interesting object”, the mind may start its own “wheeling around” process: the “*pati + iccha sama+uppada*” or *paticca samuppāda* process leading to the **accumulation of *saṅkhāra***: see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – Introduction](#)“, “[Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand](#)“, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)“, and other related posts. All these tie up together, but one needs to be a bit patient since there are many inter-coupled concepts.

8. Thus experiencing a visual object in the above example generates all kinds of mental phenomena: *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and during this whole process we have the *viññāṇa* or *citta* flowing. *Viññāṇa* is the momentary consciousness, a *citta*. In the above example, it alternates between visual consciousness (*cakkhu viññāṇa*) and the mind consciousness (*mano viññāṇa*).

- The baseline state of a *citta*, i.e., when the mind is not looking at an external object or thinking about it, is called “*bhavanga*“. Here we do not “feel” anything, for example when we are in deep sleep. The mind falls back to the *bhavanga* state even in between *pancadvara citta vithi*.

9. Same kind of process happens with any of the five physical senses (the “back and forth switching” between the sense faculty and the mind). **When someone is just remembering a past event or planning something, those are exclusively mind processes (only *manodvara citta vithi* take place).**

Now let us look at some details on how the mind processes all the “signals” from the real world where multiple “signals” come in.

- When we watch a movie, what happens is the projector projects about 30-50 static pictures per second on the screen; a movie is a series of static pictures. When the projection rate is above 30 frames a second or so, our eyes see a continuous movie, not individual frames. **Thus even though *cittas* run at billions per second, we do not “experience” them individually, not even close.**
- This fast rate of *citta vithis* (which, as we saw above run at about 100 *citta vithis* per second) also make it possible to perceive all six inputs from the outside world “simultaneously”; at least we experience them as “simultaneous”. For example, we can be watching a movie and enjoying some popcorn; so we see and hear the movie, and taste popcorn and feel the popcorn cup, and also may be thinking about something related to the scene on the screen; all at the “same time”.
- *Citta vithi* just alternate among the six sense inputs; it is possible only because there are hundreds of *citta vithi* per second. Since it happens so fast, we experience them all as “simultaneous”, just like the static pictures projected at a fast rate on a movie screen are perceived as a continuous “movie”.
- Not only that, but the mind can ignore a multitude of “signals” that are of no interest to one’s own habits (“*gathi*”) or cravings (“*āsavas*”). And those depend on the individual. Two friends could be walking on the street, and one (woman) stops abruptly and starts looking at a dress on a shop window. The other (man) looks at it, shrugs, and wants to move on; he would not have even noticed it.

10. As we saw, information to the mind comes via the brain. All five physical sense inputs (vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch) come through the brain. Thinking about concepts involves the brain too (those involve only the *manodvara citta vithi*), and that happens much faster compared to the processes associated with the five physical senses; we will discuss that later.

- When someone gets old, the brain starts functioning less efficiently; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)“. Or, the brain may get damaged due to a *kamma vipāka*; for example, getting Alzheimer’s disease is a *kamma vipāka*.
- As the body gets old, various other body parts also start functioning less efficiently and are also vulnerable for many *kamma vipāka* to come to fruition. *Kamma vipāka* are not deterministic; they come to bear fruit only when conditions become suitable (see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)“). Thus meditation and regular exercise help keep both the body and the mind (through an efficiently working brain) in good condition.

11. In any case, the mind goes to the “baseline or dormant state” called “*bhavanga*” even in between these *citta vithi*. When the mind is fairly inactive, say when someone is dozing off, the mind is mostly in the *bhavanga* state. When someone is unconscious or in deep sleep, it is in the *bhavanga* state for the whole duration. When seeing a dream, the mind is active.

- Even when *citta vithis* run at a fast rate of about 600 per second (say, while watching a movie or while playing a competitive sport), the mind drops to the *bhavanga* state while the brain is processing those “10 millisecond information packets”, as discussed above.
- The above discussion is all about receiving information from the outside world and then getting attached to “things” (“*taṇhā*”), generating *mano saṅkhāra*, etc.

12. Based on that process, we may decide to take further action too, either verbally or bodily, thus generating *vacī saṅkhāra* and *kaya saṅkhāra*: We may speak or do some physical activity. All those are done with the mind too, and each action done with thought process or *citta vithi*.

- This is why the Buddha said, “*mano pubbangama dhamma*, ,,,”, i.e., “mind precedes everything that we do...”. **We cannot even lift a finger without generating a *citta vithi*, i.e., without the initiation by the mind.** The physical body, with the brain acting as a “sophisticated control center”, helps the mind to achieve whatever physical activity it wishes; see, “[Neuroscience says there is no Free Will? – That is a Misinterpretation!](#)”.

Further reading: “A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma”, by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2010). [[Download free from pariyatti.org](#)] This book has summarized *citta* and *cetasika* very well. But discussions on *paticca samuppāda* or *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* are not correct.

Next, “[What is Consciousness?](#)“,

5.5 Consistencies with Science

▪ [Second Law of Thermodynamics is Part of Anicca!](#)

The following posts discuss cases where current theories of science are consistent with Buddha Dhamma.

- [Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected](#)
- [Infinity – How Big Is It?](#)
- [Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem](#)
- [Truine Brain: How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#)
- [How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)

5.5.1 Second Law of Thermodynamics is Part of Anicca!

1. As we saw in the post, "[Anicca – Inability to Maintain Anything](#)", *anicca* describes one of the three basic characteristics of "this world", namely no matter how hard we try, "we cannot maintain things to our satisfaction in the long term".

2. What does the Second Law of Thermodynamics say? It basically says, "things in a closed system go from order to disorder, unless energy is put into the system to keep the order". Thus we can maintain a sort of stability (or "keep things the way we like them to be") by striving or working hard.

- But as we get old, our ability to do this wanes, and ultimately we becomes too weak to do anything or just die. It does not matter how much money we have accumulated. All sense pleasures lose their vigor as the body gets old, and money or will power cannot maintain them.
- A successful business person could say, "look at all the wealth that I created. I have achieved what I wanted". It is actually a good accomplishment, but can he really enjoy all that in the long term? Even all that money cannot maintain a simple thing like taste of food when he gets really old, not to mention the fact that all that wealth will be left behind at death.
- However, when we are young, it SEEMS that we CAN maintain things to our satisfaction. This is why it is hard to explain *anicca* to a young person. A young boy will say, "look at the muscles I built over the past year by working out at the gym! I am invincible". A young woman will say, "I look much more beautiful now than I was a year ago".
- Yet, blossoming at around twenty or so years is just the beginning of a slippery slope. In the end all those strong muscles will fade, and the beautiful figure will sag and decay. That is the reality.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Done Got Old](#)

3. We can see the effects of the Second Law of Thermodynamics at different levels. A nice hot cup of coffee will cool down with time and we will have to re-heat to enjoy it again. An ice cream bowl will melt if not kept cold by putting it in the refrigerator which uses energy to run.

- Mom will come and clean a child's room, only to find the next day that it is back to the chaotic state; she will need to go through all that work again to get it back to presentable condition.
- We build a house with a nice garden, only to find that we will have to do repairs to the house and much work is needed to keep the weeds out of the garden and grass cut, etc.
- The Sun will power our planet for another few billion years, and then it will die. Long before the Sun dies, the Earth will get destroyed.
- Even our universe will "run down" in 15 billion or so more years.

4. Thus we can see that the concept of *anicca* is a universal characteristic of “anything that belong to this world”, which includes 29 more realms than the two realms that we can actually experience (the human and animal realms): Things can be maintained EVEN WITH EFFORT only up to a certain time, and NOT forever.

- The Second Law of Thermodynamics describe the impermanence or the “root cause” for *anicca*. Even though the scientists understand this impermanence, they do not necessarily PERCEIVE that in their minds with regards to themselves. This is the difference between “impermanence” and *anicca*.
- **Just like a scientist who has contemplated on the Second Law of Thermodynamics, anyone who is trying to cultivate “*anicca saññā*” by contemplating on impermanence is nowhere close to *Nibbāna*; see, “[How to cultivate the Anicca Saññā?](#)”.**
- Thus, like those young people mentioned above, we all have the wrong PERCEPTION that “we can maintain things to our satisfaction”, i.e., we have the wrong perception of *nicca*, not the actual reality of *anicca*.

5. Even when our universe die, there are many that come into existence. This process has been going on for eternity, and so have we. We have been in the rebirth process for ever.

- The problem is that most of those lives were not as good as this one; we have suffered unimaginably, and unless we get out of this predicament, such future suffering is not avoidable.

6. **But the good news is that our minds can become free of this non-stop rebirth process by decoupling from this unstable material base.** We are reborn in this “material world” because of our perception of “*nicca*”, i.e., we believe that we CAN find some suitable place with permanent happiness in this world.

- Once we grasp the reality of “*anicca*”, our minds will automatically start becoming free and we will start feeling the *nirāmisa sukha* arising from this detachment from the material world; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Nirāmisa Sukha?](#)”.
- This is another way to look at the reality and our choices.

5.5.2 Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected

Revised January 21, 2016 (#6); March 13, 2018

1. When we get deep into Buddha Dhamma we will see that EVERYTHING in this world is created by the mind. This is why the Buddha said, “*mano pubbangama dhamma.....*”, i.e., mind is the precursor to everything. But let us proceed at a slow pace.

- By the way, dhamma is “what we bear” in this world (“*darana deya*” in Sinhala); this means absolutely everything in this world. And all dhamma are *anatta*, i.e., fruitless, or there is nothing substantial in any dhamma (it does not mean “no-self” or “*anathma*”); see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”, and “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – True Meanings](#)”.

2. There are five *niyama Dhamma* that control how anything and everything happens; see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”. Also, this world is not four dimensional (3 space dimensions and time) as we experience, but is multi-dimensional; see, “[Consciousness Dependence on Number of Dimensions](#)”. This is why we see only two realms (human and animal) out of the 31 realms of existence; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”. Just because we cannot experience directly or is not proven by science YET is not reason to discard them (**but the current string theories do predict a 10 or 11-dimensional world**), because that complex model can explain EVERYTHING in this world.

- What can be explained with Buddha Dhamma? everything in this world. See, “[Vagaries of Life and the Way to seek “Good Rebirths”](#)”, for some examples.

3. Furthermore, science has been confirming many things that ordinary people rejected as “impossible” over the past few hundred years; and that activity started increasing over the past

hundred years since the advent of quantum mechanics and relativity; see, “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)“. This should give us more confidence on Buddha Dhamma. **This is *saddhā*, or faith based on evidence.**

4. Here we will discuss yet another recent finding in science that makes the process of rebirth more easily “explainable”. **Please note that I am not trying to verify Buddha Dhamma by science. It is the other way around; I am saying that science is far behind Buddha Dhamma**, and is now trying to catch up just the material aspects of how this world works; science has not made any significant progress on how the mind works.

- In the essay, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)“, we saw that a person who dies in one geographical location is reborn in another. Even though the consciousness is NOT transmigrated as is believed in some other religions, some form of energy must be leaving one place is instantly appearing at another.
- What about the speed of light barrier for anything or any information to travel, based on Einstein’s special theory of relativity? It turns out that again we are in a unique time in history, where the Buddha’s teachings are beginning to be, even if not absolutely confirmed, at least elevated to the level of possibility by Western science. For millennia, numerous people had strong enough faith to believe Buddha’s words and to commit their entire lives to pursue *Nibbāna*. (Actually it is not blind faith, since if one studied the Dhamma/ Abhidhamma carefully, one could be convinced that it must be true).

5. In 1935, Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen published a paper which showed that if quantum mechanics is correct, then a particle can somehow “know” what another particle, even if separated from it by a large distance, is doing. Einstein derisively called this “spooky action at a distance” and dismissed the prediction (despite the fact that his theories led to the foundation of quantum mechanics, Einstein was firmly opposed to quantum mechanics throughout his lifetime).

- However, in 1964, physicist John Bell proposed an experiment to actually test this concept; it is referred to by violation of Bell’s inequality. In a number of experiments carried out since 1997, it has been shown that Einstein was wrong. The experimenters created “entangled particles” which shared a wave function. In 1997 Nicholas Gisin did the first experiment with entangled photons, in which they were sent seven miles apart via optical fibers. Reaching the ends of these fibers, the two photons were forced to make random choices between alternative, equally possible pathways.
- Since there was no way for the photons to communicate with each other, “classical” physics would predict that their independent choices would bear no relationship to each other. But when the paths of the two photons were properly adjusted and the results compared, the independent decisions by the paired photons always matched, even though there was no physical way for them to communicate with each other. The responses were instantaneous, even though at the speed of light the two events were separated by about 26 milliseconds.

6. Since then that same experiment has been repeated with electrons and ions as well. This effect is called the “quantum entanglement”, and leads directly to other related concepts such as “holographic universe” and “interconnectedness”. **The conclusion seems to be that entangled particles can be interconnected even if they are situated across the universe!**

- In late 2015, “nonlocality of nature” or the violation of Bell’s inequality was confirmed in three “loophole-free” experiments; see the pdf, “[WebLink: Wiseman-Death by experiment for local realism-Nature-2015](#)“.
- And the first of those experiments is: “[WebLink: Hensen-Loophole-free Bell Inequality-Nature-2015](#)“.
- By the way, we need to remember that our universe began its life with the “Big Bang” when everything in the universe sprang out of an unimaginably dense “point”; thus in a way we are all connected to each other and also to “everything” in this universe at a very fundamental level.

7. The following fun video by Dr Quantum illustrates the basic idea of quantum entanglement:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Dr Quantum - Entanglement](#)

8. Quantum entanglement could be intimately connected (and can be “explained” easier) with a universe that is multi-dimensional (like the proposed 11-dimensional string theory). If you have read the post on “[Consciousness Dependence on Number of Dimensions](#)“, it will be easier to follow my simple (and crude) illustration:

- Think about a two-dimensional “world”, say, the kitchen floor and consider an ant on the floor as a “two-dimensional being”; which means we assume that the ant can see only those things that make direct contact with the floor. If a chair is there, the ant can see only four “impenetrable circles” where the legs of the chair touch the floor. For the ant, those four “circles” are disconnected; they lie far apart from each other. However, if we lift that chair, all four “circles” will be removed simultaneously. For the ant, this means that the four “circles” were “entangled” or connected to each other; of course we can see that there were connected via the rest of the chair in the third dimension, above the floor.
- Same way, things that appear to us as “far apart” (say New York and Houston) may be connected via a dimension that we cannot see. A person dying in New York may be born instantaneously in Houston, because those two “places” may have a direct path via a hidden dimension.
- Those “entangled particles” in #5 above may travel far apart from each other, but may be connected via a hidden dimension. Just like the ant in the above example is not aware of the rest of chair, we are not aware of the existence of such hidden dimensions.

9. It must be noted that quantum mechanics is not restricted to working on “intellectual” problems such as above, i.e., what the man-on-the-street calls “abstract stuff”. Most of the “things” that we grow accustomed to, or which are familiar to us, varying from computers and cell phones to lasers and nuclear bombs, happen to be byproducts of quantum mechanics.

So, these new observations do indeed make more plausible the concept of a connection across the universe. As the Buddha admonished his followers, there is no point in wasting valuable time on trying to find answers to questions such as the end of the universe or beginning of life. He kept emphasizing that one is fortunate to be born in the human world (a very rare event; see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)“), and thus one should diligently work towards achieving liberation (Nibbāna). In realms below the human world life is too painful and life in heavenly worlds is too blissful for one to focus on working toward Nibbāna.

Is the Universe Multi-Dimensional? – Another Emerging Possibility

It was Einstein’s dream to work out such a Grand Unified Theory, but he was unable to do so. Many scientists are trying to accomplish this goal, and the newest theories are called string theories. No Grand Unified Theory exists yet, but the closest is a version of string theory called the M-theory. M-theory says that ours is a 11-dimensional universe, even though we can see only four dimensions (including time). So, could there be life existing in other dimensions that we cannot observe? That is another possibility in addition to the possibility of life in other star systems in our Universe or other Universes. I briefly discuss this possibility under the heading, “[Consciousness Dependence on Number of Dimensions](#)“.

Consciousness and Quantum Mechanics

March 13, 2018: I have started a new section “[Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma](#)“, where a new interpretation of quantum mechanics is presented, and it is discussed why a connection between quantum theory and consciousness **will not be** possible.

Following is an interesting video (very long) on the history and science of consciousness:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: What the bleep do we know - Ultra-Extended Quantum Rabbit Hole](#)

Here is a short version of it:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Consciousness & Quantum Physics ~ Reality is an illusion](#)

Next, “[What is Mind? - How do we Experience the Outside World?](#)“,

5.5.3 Infinity – How Big Is It?

Revised June 3, 2018

1. What is the largest number you can think of? Well, just add one and you have a larger number! There are some large numbers that we are aware of. With record budget deficits of the developed nations in trillions of dollars (and the total nominal value of all the derivatives traded around the world approaching a thousand trillion dollars, or a quadrillion dollars), trillion and quadrillions are indeed large numbers.

- Even though a trillion rolls off the tongue not very different from a billion, a trillion is much bigger than a billion. If you spend a billion dollars a day, it will take a thousand days to spend a trillion dollars.

2. The number of molecules in a cubic centimeter of gas is 2.7×10^{18} (this a simple way to express big numbers; instead of writing 10000, we write 10^4). Since electrons are even smaller, you would think there would be a humongous number of electrons in the observable universe; the estimated number is around 10^{87} . This is of course a very large number, but is not infinity by any means.

- This should give you an idea of the power of an exponent. Each time the exponent goes up by one, the number becomes 10 times bigger. So, even though 10^{87} may not look that big compared to 10^{18} , it is a humongous increase. Another large number should be the distance from the Earth to the edge of the observable universe, and it is estimated to be about 46 billion light years or around 10^{23} miles. Even though such large numbers are hard to be contemplated in our minds, they are all finite.

3. There are some famous large numbers. A Googol is 10^{100} , which is unimaginably large compared to even the number of electrons in the universe (10^{87}). As an aside, the internet company Google was to be named Googol, but someone made a mistake and Google was the name that was given. A Googolplex is a whopper; it is 10^{Googol} or $10^{(10^{100})}$. There are many such “famous large numbers”.

- Yet, you can add one to any of these large numbers and always get a bigger number. Therefore, no number, however large, is still finite.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Googol and Googolplex by Carl Sagan](#)

4. So, the mathematicians coined the term “infinity” to denote an indefinitely great number; The word comes from the Latin infinitas or “unboundedness”. Since infinity is uncountable, it has some strange characteristics: whatever you add to (or multiply by) an infinity (even if it is another infinity), you still end up with infinity.

- The famous German mathematician David Hilbert illustrated the “abnormal” properties associated with infinity using the idea of a “infinity hotel”, which has an infinite number of rooms. The “infinity hotel” always has a vacancy: the management can always ask the person occupying the Nth room to move to the (N+1)th room, (N+1)th room to move to the (N+2)th room, and so on, and thus give the Nth room to the new guest. In fact, even if an infinite number of new guests arrive, the hotel can accommodate all of them!

5. This is not to say that infinity is a useless or bogus concept. The arguments described above are totally valid. Mathematicians cannot do many integrations without infinity. Physicists use infinity all the time (but they try to end up with finite physical values).

- The concept of infinity is real (and weird). For example, a line of any finite length has an infinite number of points, whether it is an inch in length or thousand miles in length. Invention of calculus by Newton and Leibniz helped handling some of the problems arising from such situations.

6. In the physical sense, infinity is a rather vague concept meaning, “larger than anything that could in principle be encompassed by experience”. For example, space is infinite, and as far as our sophisticated instruments allow us to “see”, there is no end.

- Our universe is possibly infinite in extent, since the scientists can “see” only to a finite extent. Besides there are possibly infinite numbers of universes as well. So, the space is infinite.
- What about time? If our universe started at the Big Bang, that inflationary theory says there are multiple, parallel universes. According to the “cyclic theory” model, which is an alternate theory, the same universe comes to a “Big Crunch” which leads to another Big Bang, and whole process keeps repeating. So, there is no beginning to time either; time is infinite.
- According to the “cyclic theory” model, which is an alternate theory, the same universe comes to a “Big Crunch” which leads to another Big Bang, and whole process keeps repeating. So, there is no beginning to time either; time is infinite.
- By the way, both those theories are not correct according to Buddha Dhamma. It is individual star systems (called “*Cakkāvāta*”) that undergo birth-destruction cyclic process.
- I will write more in the future, but see the discussion: “[WebLink: Multiverse: Different Physical Laws and Different Dhamma?](#)”. It is the lifetime of a *Cakkāvāta* (like our Solar system) that is called a *Maha Kappa* (great aeon) in Buddha Dhamma.

7. The Buddha used a great aeon as the measurement unit to help his followers visualize the enormous length of *saṃsāra*. The length of a great aeon (*mahā kalpa* or *mahā kappa*) is said by the Buddha to be longer than the time it would take a man to wear away a mountain of solid granite one *yojana* (about 7 miles) around and one *yojana* high, by stroking it once every hundred years with a silk cloth. These days scientists use the word “aeon” to denote the duration of a universe (from the “big bang” either to a “big crunch” or just fading away).

- These days scientists use the word “aeon” to denote the duration of a universe (from the “big bang” either to a “big crunch” or just fading away). But a *Maha Kappa* just means the lifetime of our Solar system; our universe has “no beginning”. In the future it will be shown that the “Big Bang theory” is not correct (which says that our universe came to existence from nowhere in a “Big Bang”); see the discussion: “[WebLink: Multiverse: Different Physical Laws and Different Dhamma?](#)”.

8. Just for fun, I estimated the mass of the material that needs to be removed by the silk cloth each time (this happens every 100 years). Using a 7 mile cube of stone with a density of 2515 kg per cubic meter, I calculate the mass of the mountain to be 3.5×10^6 kg.

- Assuming the lifetime of our universe to be 30 billion years, I calculate the mass removed by each stroke is about 12 grams or about 0.4 ounces. This appears to be a reasonable number! So, a *kalpa* in Buddhism turns out to be approximately an aeon as perceived by the scientists.
- When we try to visualize the wearing off a mountain we can imagine how long a time period that is. Yet, that is still nothing compared to the length of the *saṃsāra*. As I said, infinity is a concept that is hard to wrap one’s mind around!

9. One day the *Bhikkhus* asked the Buddha how many great aeons had already passed and gone by. The Buddha told them, “Suppose, *Bhikkhus*, there were four disciples here each with a lifespan of hundred years, and each day they were each to recollect a hundred thousand great aeons. There would still be great aeons not yet recollected by them when those four disciples pass away at the end of hundred years. Because, *Bhikkhus*, this *saṃsāra* is without discoverable beginning”.

- An interesting book that talks about such hard to grasp ideas (in science) involving infinity is, “The Beginning of Infinity: Explanations That Transform the World” by David Deutsch.
- Infinity is a mind-boggling concept; see, “[The Infinity Problem in Buddhism](#)”.

10. Here is a bit longer video on why it is not possible to discover either spatial boundaries of our universe or find a “beginning” to time, because universes come into existence all the time.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: How Large is the Universe?](#)

5.5.4 Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem

1. Mathematician Kurt Gödel, in his Incompleteness Theorem, proved that it is impossible to find complete “truth” or “complete explanations” of a system from WITHIN a system.

- No theory that any scientist discovers is, thus, cannot be proven to be the “ultimate truth”. This is another way of saying that by examining the parts one cannot get the complete picture of the system, IF one is within the system.

2. The Buddha transcended “this world” by developing his mind; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)” for a description of the 31 realms of existence.

- This is again something that cannot be proven by a human being. One accepts, as I have, of the truth of that by examining the evidence: that the Buddha was able to explain so much about “this world” 2500 years ago. By “this world” it is meant not only the Earth or even this universe, but total existence.

3. The only way to disprove what I stated above is to find inconsistencies within the Buddha Dhamma (this is the same method used by the scientists in assessing scientific theories). I have not found any.

- If you find anything inconsistent about the Buddha Dhamma, that is because there have been numerous “alterations” over the past 2500 years. But if you find any inconsistencies at this site, please let me know. If there are any, that is due to my possible carelessness or ignorance and I should be able to fix them.
- In fact, this is the only way to get rid of any inconsistent “bits and pieces”. Just like if you have a piece of a puzzle at the wrong place that will only hinder the progress of solving the puzzle, having wrong information somewhere will only slow down our progress in “figuring out the pure version of the Buddha Dhamma”.
- However, I do believe that the “big pieces of the puzzle” are in correct places here.

4. Kurt Gödel would have really enjoyed Buddha Dhamma. It would have been tremendous if he was alive to go through the material here and point out any inconsistencies. Many of the scientists that I admire, including Einstein, Feynman, Gödel, Heisenberg, de Broglie, Sagan, and many more would have been able to easily grasp the message of the Buddha, but unfortunately they never came across the pure Dhamma; David Bohm came close.

- I hope the current generation of scientists and philosophers will get an opportunity to examine the pure Dhamma.

5. I do not want wrong impressions to come out of this post. I love science and physics in particular. Before discovering the pure Dhamma, physics was my passion and I still try to keep up with new findings.

- Yet I have realized that discovering how inert matter behave is a minute fraction of the knowledge about the whole existence. We cannot even discover everything about matter, until we start finding out more about the mind. The Buddha said, “*mano pubbangama Dhamma...*“, or “the mind precedes everything in this world...”.

6. Let me give some examples. Albert Einstein introduced his Special Theory of Relativity in 1905 and his General Theory of Relativity in 1915. The first showed that Newton's Three Laws of Motion were only approximately correct, breaking down when velocities approached that of light. The second showed that Newton's Law of Gravitation was also only approximately correct, breaking down when gravitation became very strong.

- We could not see anything wrong with Newton's laws of motion until we developed technologies that transcended our “level of consciousness”; see, “[Expanding ‘Consciousness’ by Using Technology](#)“. They worked well within our “probing sensitivities”. Even today,

scientists do not use relativity equations to map out rocket trajectories to the Moon; Newton's equations are good enough to that.

- In the same way, everything that science discovers just expands our horizons, but never will provide the “ultimate answers”. We can find “everything about this world” just by purifying our minds; see, “[Expanding ‘Consciousness’ by Purifying the Mind](#)”.
- The above statements may not mean much right now. However, I ask you to be patient and go through the material at the website, and gradually you may realize what I am trying to say.

7. A “good theory” is all about “testable predictions”. As I stated on the home page, I try to present material on Buddha Dhamma as a “theory on how the nature works”. As I pointed out in many essays, many of the “predictions” or “statements” about the nature of this world have proven to be correct by science over the years, especially during the past few hundred years.

- I can make another prediction just for the records. Darwin's theory of evolution will be proven to be only partly correct, and only for limited spans of time. The theory of evolution is correct only over the recent past of this planet, where we can trace the past events using techniques such as radiocarbon dating; the oldest dates that can be reliably measured by radiocarbon dating go back to around 50,000 years ago. Even if we put the limit at a million years, that is only a tiny fraction of over four billion year lifespan of the planet.
- What is correctly stated in the theory of evolution is that species arise when conditions become suitable for them to arise AND for them to survive.

8. However, it is dangerous to talk about concepts that are not amenable to our minds. That will lead only to “loss of faith”. It would be impossible to explain to someone who time traveled to the present time from several hundred years ago, how a light bulb can light up just by flipping a switch. There is no way for that person to “grasp” the concept of an electric current; he/she would believe it to be a “magic trick”.

- The Buddha never revealed any details of the nature that were not discernible to at least his top disciples at that time. Let me give an example from the *Tipitaka*. One time Ven. Moggallana, who was only second to the Buddha in *Abhiññā* (supernormal) powers, saw a large number of beings in the *peta* realm near the Gijjakuta mountain. Beings in the *peta* realm have very fine bodies that can be seen by those with *abhiññā* powers, and some varieties have such fine bodies that only a few people with highly-developed *abhiññā* powers can see them.
- So, none of the *Arahants* that were there who had *abhiññā* powers, could see them and they told Ven. Moggallana, “how come we cannot see them?”. Ven. Moggallana told them to ask the Buddha. The Buddha told those *Arahants* that he had actually seen them previously. When the *bhikkhus* asked why the Buddha did not mention it to them, he told them that, “If I tell you something that you cannot verify by yourselves, that will only lead to doubts. That is why I did not mention it. But now that Moggallana has seen them, there is at least one person there to confirm it”.

9. Even today there are people with *abhiññā* powers that can see some of these beings in other realms. My teacher *Theros* say they can see them and I have no reason to doubt them. Developing *abhiññā* powers requires being able to get to the fourth *jhāna* AND then working to develop those powers. So, it is not an easy task. If I ever get to that stage, I will mention that here.

- Developing *abhiññā* powers or even *jhānas* is not necessary to attain *Nibbāna*. One can even attain the *Arahanthood* without developing any *jhāna* ahead of the time.
- What is important is to experience the “cooling down” of *Nibbāna* even without getting to the *Sotāpanna* stage. That itself provide incentive to continue with the practice; see, “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)”.

References

For those who would like to read more on this subject, the following references could be useful. However, I do not encourage anyone to “go off the track”. I included this section to make the point

that all existing scientific theories are incomplete, because they all were generated within the system. The Buddha was able to transcend “this world” and thus was able to provide a complete world view.

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“Gödel – A Life of Logic”, by John L. Casti and Werner DePauli (2000).

“Incompleteness: The Proof and Paradox of Kurt Gödel”, Rebecca Goldstein (2005).

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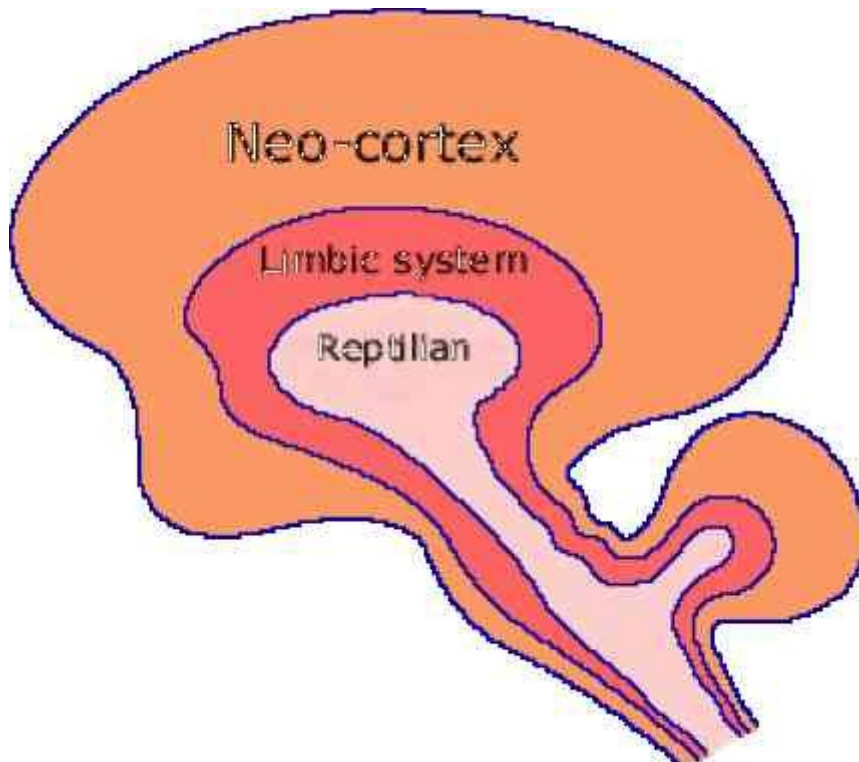
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Next, “[Consciousness – A Dhamma Perspective](#)“,

5.5.5 **Truine Brain: How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits**

Revised December 20, 2016

Human brain, which is the most advanced for all animals, shows how different animals have “different levels” of consciousness. It has three distinctive regions (see the figure below): (1) brain stem (labelled “reptilian” in the figure), (2) limbic system, (3) cerebral cortex or just cortex (labelled “neo-cortex” in the figure).



1. The brain stem (lizard or reptilian brain) is the most primitive and all developed animals have it. It governs automatic physiological functions such as the heart rate, respiration, digestion, etc.

- And that is all lowest-ranked animals can do (automatically). They are almost like fully-automated robots.

2. The limbic system (sometimes called the midbrain) is the emotional command center; that evolved in the next “intellectual phase” in animals with somewhat higher intelligence.

- It coordinates sensory reception, memory, and unconscious emotional reactions. These animals with limbic system — like snakes and lizards — just react spontaneously to external influences.
- Humans tend to do that too. In case of a threat, the “fight or flight” decision is made instantaneously by the limbic system. Very loosely, we could say that automatic *mano saṅkhāra* arise via the limbic system; see the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.
- It is quite clear from the definition of an *Arahant* that even this instantaneous response can be completely tamed by meditation.

3. The cerebral cortex (learning brain; neo-cortex in the figure) is the most advanced part of the brain; it can make “rational decisions” by contemplation but it is time delayed. Therefore, it is called the “thinking brain”. The cortex is responsible for language capability, logic, reasoning, learning and critical thinking, the good stuff. All primates have it, but of course the humans have the largest.

- The cortex is responsible for language capability, logic, reasoning, learning and critical thinking, the good stuff. All primates have it, but of course the humans have the largest.
- The cortex is involved in generating *vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra* that arise with a time delay. By controlling our *vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra*, we have the ability to change our *gathi*. This is the “modern scientific rationale” behind the basis of Buddha Dhamma; see the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.

4. All our sense inputs are processed in the cortex before they are sent to the *hadaya vatthu* or the “seat of the mind” that is located in the *gandhabba* close to our physical heart.

- Since it takes time for our brains to analyze the “incoming data”, normally there is about 100th of a second time delay between incoming sense inputs and our mind generating thoughts about that sense input.
- The brain can handle only one sense input at a time. This means it can handle only about 100 sense inputs in a second. So, even though our minds generate an initial response quickly, the follow-up “thoughts” are delayed due to this “processing delay” in the brain.
- I will discuss this in more detail (and it has been discussed in bits and pieces in the posts on the *gandhabba*, but the key point is that our actions and thoughts are “slowed down” by this pre-processing in the cortex.
- That pre-processing is minimal in even in “higher animals” with small cortexes, like dogs and apes. This is why humans are unique. We have a large cortex that not only slows down the response time, but also helps us “analyze the situation” rationally.

5. One aspect of the role has been illustrated in the following case. A developed left brain (of the neo-cortex) indicates compassion for others and enhanced happiness for oneself, and a relatively larger right side indicates aggressive character.

- Here is the link to a video showing the results of brain scans of an advanced meditator who had done loving kindness meditation for a long period of time compared to 150 non-meditators.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Matthieu Ricard: The habits of happiness](#)

The discussion on the brain scan data is from about 17:00 to about 18:20 minutes, if you don’t want to watch the full video.

- We must also keep in mind that Tibetan loving kindness meditation is an *anariya* version of the *metta bhāvanā*; see below.

6. Until about late 1980’s there was wide belief that one had just to live with the brain that one was born with. But since then the ability of the brain to change (neuroplasticity of the brain) has been demonstrated and studies on the effects of meditation on the brain has become an active research field.

- Of course, 2500 years ago the Buddha said that mind is the precursor to everything, and that any body part (including the brain) is controlled by the mind. The mind does not arise from the brain; the mind controls the brain.
- The key is that insight meditation should DRASTICALLY change neural wirings; no studies have been done on the brain of someone who has cultivated the “correct versions” of *satipatthāna* and *ānāpānasati* meditation.
- There are other posts at the site which describe this “re-wiring” of the cortex that leads to change in our *gathi*.

7. As shown in the references below, there is compelling scientific evidence that even mundane versions of meditation improves both the cortex AND the limbic system.

- Those studies show that basic *samatha* meditation helps, but *metta Bhāvanā* (compassion meditation) is particularly effective.
- It must be noted that Tibetan *samatha* (breath meditation) or *metta bhāvanā* (mundane version) are *anariya* versions. For the *Ariya* versions, see, “[6. Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā \(Introduction\)](#)” and “[5. Ariya Metta Bhāvanā \(Loving Kindness Meditation\)](#)“. I am quite positive that brain scan of an *Ariya* (Noble person) will yield more interesting results.
- For example, we also know that meditation affects breathing patterns (thus the brain stem). so the overall brain function is affected by meditation. An *Arahant* can stop breathing for up to 7 days in *Nirodha Samapatthi*. It will be extremely interesting to see a brain scan of an *Arahant*.

8. Neural pathways in the brain are strengthened by:

- Repeated application (meditation included). Repeated activity forms both good and bad habits as we discussed in several posts, and is the key in molding the character (*gathi*); see, “[The Law of Attraction – Habits, Character \(Gathi\), Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)“, and other related posts.
- Dopamine (and other good chemical) production is enhanced by omega 3 and other good foods, and exercise, including interval running.
- Exercise and meditate! It will keep you healthy and alert; see, “[‘Spark’ by John Ratey](#)” for information on the value of a good exercise program.

9. Furthermore, it is clear that we are not programmed by our genes, environment, or even our past *kamma*, even though all these can affect our destiny. The most powerful is our mind, i.e., *citta niyama* can even dominate *kamma niyama*.

- As the saying goes, “you can do anything that you put your mind to”. This is the true basis of free will.

10. Even though the scientists are making some progress regarding the mind, brain is not the mind, just as the physical eye is not the *cakku pasada rūpa*; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)“, and other related posts. Yet it is essential to keep the physical eye (and other physical sense faculties) as well as the brain in good condition for the whole body and the mind to work properly.

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“The emotional life of your brain” by Richard Davidson (2012).

“You are the Placebo – Making Your Mind Matter”, by Joe Dispenza (2014).

You can open the following documents by clicking on them:

[WebLink: Effects of meditation on Amygdala-G. Desbordes et al., – 2012](#)

[WebLink: Psychological effects of meditation-P. Sedlmeir et al., – 2012](#)

[WebLink: How does mindful meditation work-B. K. Holzel et al., – 2011](#)

[WebLink: Alterations in Brain..by Mindful Meditation-R. J. Davidson et al., – 2003](#)

Next, “[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)“,

5.5.6 How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View

1. We are lucky to be in an age when many of the Buddha’s teachings are not only confirmed but also strongly supported with additional evidence that were not possible during the time of the Buddha. Here is another instance where the evidence is coming from research on the workings of the brain.

2. The Buddha basically said to follow the following procedure to break a bad habit and to instill a good habit:

- i. understand the reasons why a certain habit is bad,
- ii. stop engaging in activities that enhances the habit,
- iii. deviate the mind from such bad activities by focusing on opposing good activities,
- iv. contemplate on the “release” or “cooling down” that has already resulted by following the above procedure, strengthen the resolve to stay on course, and keep doing (i) through (iii).

With time, the bad habit(s) will go away and the good habit(s) will take hold. There comes a time when one will automatically follow this procedure; it becomes a “way of life”.

3. The reasoning behind is based on the key factors that we discussed in the previous posts:

- We do many things automatically (i.e., without being mindful or without deliberate thinking); these are done via our habits that we formed during this life or even coming from previous lives.
- There are both good and bad habits. We want to keep and cultivate good habits and discard bad habits.
- Changing (cultivating) habits first require some “external adjustments” like one’s physical environment, friends, etc and, more importantly, the four steps listed above.

4. Beginning in the early 1990’s or so, scientific investigations in several fields (effects of meditation on the brain, behavioral studies on animals and humans, neurology, etc) have come to similar conclusions. We will discuss these in detail in the future, but here I want to just point out the main similarities. Furthermore, discussing how the mechanism takes place in the brain provides an alternative way to visualize these changes. We are indeed fortunate to live at a time when we have evidence from science to provide additional evidence.

5. As I pointed out in the posts on the *manomaya kaya* and physical body, our physical body is “prepared” by the *kamma* seed that was the cause for this life. But the *manomaya kaya* is constantly making “adjustments” to the physical body based on the current status of the mind.

- Many *kamma vipāka* are “built-in” even at the conception; some may be avoidable by taking care of the body (exercise, food, etc), and the mind (contemplation, meditation, etc), but some may not be avoidable because they are so strong: We will never know when a cancer, an accident, or even a natural calamity can drastically change our lives; this is *anicca*, “the inability to maintain our lives the way we would like to”.
- Thus we need to spend at least sometime to work towards a meaningful solution to the “problem of existence”.
- Another factor we need to remember is that our “*sansaric* habits” are built-in to our brain. We keep changing/adding such habits as we grow up, influenced by our family, friends, and the society in general. Thus one’s “character” (*gathi*) are in constant flux, either by choice or influenced by the environment.

6. This is a key point: We need to make sure that we do not “go with the flow”, i.e., let past *kamma* or our environment determine our future.

- As humans, we have the capability to change our destiny. We DO HAVE free will, unlike an animal. Since we do not know what our next existence is going to be, we need to make sure to get on the “right path” as soon as possible.
- This may sound like a broken record, but 100 years of this life is NOTHING compared to millions and billions of years life in “unknown territory” in the future; thus we need to make use of this opportunity.

7. As we discussed in the [“Truine Brain – How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits”](#), only the humans have a developed neocortex, that makes possible ‘thinking, and decision making’. The animals either do not have it, or have a primitive version of it.

- Therefore, the animals basically only use the “mid brain” or the “limbic system”, where decisions are made FOR THEM according to their ingrained habits that have evolved over many, many lives (as we discussed, the physical body is formed based on the *manomaya kaya*). The response from the limbic system is instantaneous, and the animals can only REACT to external stimuli.
- All *sansaric* habits are built-in to the limbic system, and the animals react according to the way the limbic system is wired up; this may change some during growing up due to external environment, but the main “character qualities” (*gathi*) do not change very much. That is why you see adorable dogs as well as vicious dogs. Even our pets have “a personality”.
- We can change their personalities by teaching them things, but they are unable to do it on their own. It is easier to “teach” more evolved animals like monkeys because they have a bit of a neocortex.

8. But we humans have a neocortex that is well-developed and is capable of much more than we normally believe it to be capable of. **It is this neocortex that makes us, humans, different from animals (actually, it is more accurate to say that “our current *bhava*” is superior to an “animal *bhava*”).**

- Even though we also REACT first, especially to a threatening stimuli, our “thinking brain” starts to kick in quickly, especially with training. Many people get into trouble because they are “REACTIVE”, i.e., they do not try to develop the habit of using the “thinking brain”.
- But we can be PROACTIVE. We can teach ourselves to “take corrective actions” even if we do some things on impulse. Even if the initial reaction to a sudden temptation is to “take it and enjoy it” or “hit him” or “kill that annoying dog”, we can always take a breath, stop ourselves, and think about the consequences of such actions. This is what we call “mindfulness”.
- Some people are more proactive than others even at birth (via *sansaric* habits). Some people change from being reactive to proactive or other way around even without knowing due to the particular environment they grow up in.
- The key point is that we can WILLFULLY change from being reactive to proactive; we all are reactive at least to some stimuli: the one’s we have “*taṇhā*” for! In other words, we like to get attached to certain things and like to dislike other things with PASSION; see, [“*Taṇhā* – How we Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.

9. In terms of science the key is in the neurons in the brain, and how we can train our neocortex to fire the right sets of neurons more frequently. The “frontal lobes” of the neocortex is the command center for brain activities.

- The frontal lobes can be visualized as the boss. If it is a lazy boss, it will just assign duties to the limbic system to carry out things “as usual”.
- But if the boss is energetic and always looking for ways to “improve things”, then it will start investigating new approaches. And once better approaches are found, it will get them “hard wired” and they will essentially become the “new limbic system”.
- This is the key to “developing a new you” by discarding bad habits and developing good habits. Essentially you need to get the frontal lobes to be an active, energetic boss for the brain.

10. Dr. Jeffrey Schwartz is a psychiatrist specializing in treating Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD), and has pioneered in using “habit makeovers” to treat OCD. He has written several books, but I highly recommend the two books, “The Mind and the Brain” and “You are not Your Brain”.

He has developed a “Four Step” method to change one’s habits that give rise to OCD:

1. Identify the problem area.

2. Recognize the need to change.
 3. Deviate from automatically “going along” with old ways and re-direct attention to “new paths”.
 4. Re-assess the situation, and keep working on accelerating the process.
11. He has kept records of brain scans of his patients which clearly show the improvements in the brain with time, and of course most patients are able to get rid of their compulsive behavior.
- The key is to slow down the “firing of neurons” associated with a bad habit and to increase the firing of neurons associated with an opposing good habit.
 - There is a rule called Hebb’s rule that says, ‘neurons that fire together, wire together’. The more one keeps doing a certain activity, a set of neurons start to fire together and that neural connection gets stronger by the day. It is just like strengthening one’s arm by “doing more liftings” with it.
 - In the same way, when one is decreasing the use of a certain activity, the set of neurons allocated for that activity gets weaker, fewer neurons participate, and eventually it loses being a habitual act.
12. Here is a figure from Dr. Schwartz’s book, “The Mind and the Brain” (p. 362), that illustrates the “re-wiring” of a new network in the brain and the concomitant weakening of a network for an undesirable habit :



4 The quantum rules allow both states—“release” and “don’t release”—to co-exist. Early in therapy, however, the wave representing “release neurotransmitter” in the OCD circuit has a higher probability than the wave representing “release neurotransmitter” in the garden circuit. The patient is much more likely to go to the sink.

probability that neurotransmitter will be released in that circuit, not the “wash” circuit.

5 By expending mental effort and thus unleashing mental force, however, the OCD patient is able, by virtue of the laws of quantum mechanics, to change the odds. Focusing attention on the “garden” thought increases the



6 The OCD patient can now act on this thought and go to the garden. This increases the chance that, in the future, the “garden” circuit will prevail over the “wash” circuit.



7 If the patient regularly goes to the garden instead of the sink, neuroplasticity kicks in: brain metabolism changes in a way that strengthens the therapeutic circuit. As a result, future OCD urges are easier to overcome.



[WebLink: Habit Formation Figure \(PDF file\)](#)

This figure explains how a patient who had an obsessive disorder to constantly wash his hand, got rid of that habit by WILLFULLY stepping outside to the garden when he got the urge to wash hands. As he kept doing it, the wiring to “wash hands” got weakened, and instead wiring for “stepping outside” got stronger, and eventually he lost the compulsive urge to wash his hands too often.

13. The same principle has been used to get rid of such annoying habits as well as serious disorders. We can use the same procedure to stay away from immoral habits and cultivating moral habits; this is the basis of “*ānāpāna*”, see, “[9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Character and Habits \(Gathi\)](#)”.

Next, “[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)”,

5.6 Inconsistencies with Science

Revised March 4, 2018

1. We all are impressed by the scientific advances made during the past 100 years or so making our lives easier and more productive. I am actually a cheerleader for scientific and technological advances.

- Physics had been my passion since high school days, and that changed when I started learning Buddha Dhamma several years ago. I still love and work on topics of interest in physics (and science in general). Fortunately, I am finding that those two interests are not mutually exclusive, and there is significant overlap. In fact, this section is the result of my two overlapping interests.

2. The following posts discuss cases where current theories of science are not consistent with Buddha Dhamma. I believe that science will recognize the primary nature of the mind in the future, and will discard the current notion that the mind (consciousness) arises out of inert matter.

- [Neuroscience says there is no Free Will? – That is a Misinterpretation!](#)
- [The Double Slit Experiment – Correlation between Mind and Matter?](#)
- [Vision \(Cakkhu Vinnana\) is Not Just Seeing](#)

3. Despite the advances in science and technology, there is much about the human mind that science does not understand, and has not even begun to understand. **Western science is based on the five physical senses, leaving out the most important one, the mind.**

- At the present time, in 2016, scientists have the wrong view that consciousness originates in the brain.
- All scientific theories relating to the mind are based on this wrong hypothesis. However, Buddha Dhamma says not only that mind is a sense of its own, but it is the most powerful of all six senses.

Here is a post from the Abhidhamma section that has a deeper analysis on the brain-mind connection:

[Brain – Interface between Mind and Body](#)

5.6.1 **Neuroscience says there is no Free Will? – That is a Misinterpretation!**

Revised April 22, 2016

1. In 1983, Benjamin Libet conducted an experiment that **apparently showed** that our brain makes decisions before we become aware of it. When a person moves a finger, the brain activity appears to start before the person actually makes that decision.

- There have been numerous experiments conducted since then, and all experiments seem to confirm this observation, even though the time delays vary.
- People are quite puzzled and some are very worried that we are just zombies run by a program in our brain.

2. Here is a video clip that illustrates the basic experiment:

[WebLink: VIMEO: Neuroscience and Free Will](#)

Here is a recent youtube video on the same subject:

[WebLink: Youtube: Do humans truly have Free Will?](#)

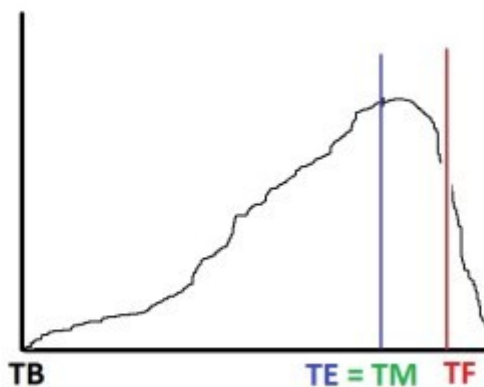
3. Scientists and philosophers have been debating whether these experiments show that man has no free will:

[WebLink: WIKI: Neuroscience of free will](#)

4. The second recent experiment is a bit more refined. Let us summarize that experiment:

- The person randomly decides (no pre-planning) press a button at some time (let us take this time to be TM -M for the mind- making the decision)
- He presses the button, the time of which is recorded electronically: TF (F for using the finger to press the button).
- At the same time that he decides to press the button, he is watching the clock and makes a mental note of the “time” and after hitting the button, records that time too: TE (E for using the eye to see the time on the clock. It is important to note that TE is the time that the MIND says it saw the clock).
- Finally, his brain activity is recorded by the sensors attached to his head, and let us take the recorded start of brain activity to be TB.

Here is a summary from the researchers (you can click on the figure to expand and then hit the back button on the browser to get back):



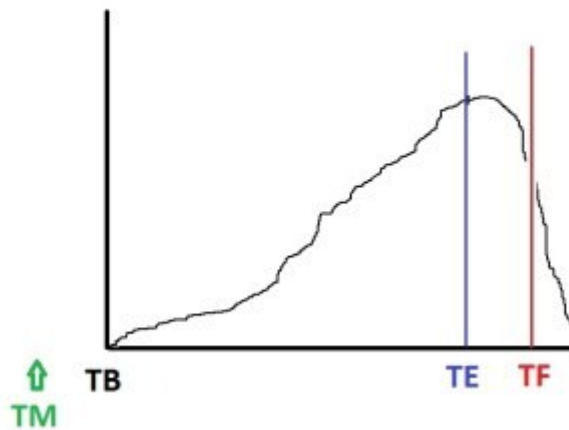
So, the researchers conclude that since brain activity started at TB before, either (i) him pressing the button (at time TF) , or (ii) him recording the “clock” **at the time TE when he made the decision**, the brain activity started before he made the decision.

- The problem is that **they ASSUME that the time, TE, that one gets off the clock is the same as the time, TM, that the mind makes the decision to press the button.**

5. In Buddha Dhamma, mind is the precursor to every action that we do with the body, and gets the brain to it. The brain is the control center for the mechanical body to carry out both these tasks **ASSIGNED BY THE MIND**. The brain gets the finger to push the button and the physical eye to look at the watch.

- **Now the mind is in the *manomaya kaya* and is lined up with the heart of the physical body; the mind and the brain are connected by signal system that is analogous to how television or radio signals are transmitted (possibly electromagnetic; that is very fast). The brain communicates with the five senses via the nervous system, and those communications are slower.**
- **Thus the brain gets the message from the mind to “press the button” and to “watch the clock”. Thus TB is ALWAYS later than TM.**
- Modern science has shown that, “It normally takes 0.4 – 0.6 seconds for the nervous system to activate available muscle motor units to contract,.....”. (see, at the very end of the article: [WebLink: WIKI: Motor control](#)). The finger movement involves muscles in the arm, and the eye movement involves muscles in the head and the eye).
- Both actions of “watch the clock” and “press the button” are initiated by the brain per mind’s instructions via the central nervous system: The eye function circuitry can be logically thought

to be a bit faster than the mechanical finger moving. Thus “watching clock” gets done first with the eye, and a little time later the finger has pushed the button. So, here is the time sequence per Buddha Dhamma (you can click on the figure to expand and then hit the back button on the browser to get back):



6. Any function of the body is controlled by the mind; here it is the mind that starts off the brain activity, i.e., TB is later than TM (the brain activity starts after the mind decides to take action because the brain needs to get the signal from the mind – located close to the heart- via the central nervous system).

- Now the brain needs to carry out those two functions of pressing the button and look at the clock: since the vision circuitry is faster it gets done first; the mechanical movement of the fingers is slower and that gets done a bit later.

7. **Now, let us go back to the first experiment.** The only difference there is that the person is not recording the time. He just presses the left or right button. So, there are just two events recorded now instead of three events. All we have to do is to remove TE from the above two graphs.

- It is simpler: His mind decides to push the button; the mind directs the brain to push either the left or right finger; and it takes some time for the brain to mobilize the muscles to move the finger. So, the time sequence is the same as in the same figure: mind decides (TM), brain starts working on it (TB) and the sensors attached to his head record that brain activity (wiggly line), and finally the finger pushes the button (TF).
- As in the other experiment, **the mistake is to assume that finger pushing happens SIMULTANEOUS with the mind’s decision.** But the mind only gets the brain (the computer) to initiate the complex sequence of events to work the muscles in the arm and hand to move the finger, and that is the lag time.

8. The body is like a mechanical instrument, say, a sophisticated tank that is used to fire at the distant object. The operator is like the mind. He aims the gun barrel using sophisticated circuitry, and then fires the gun. He can drive the tank where ever he wants. But things do not, **and cannot**, happen simultaneous with the operators decision; the gun needs to be moved into position before firing.

- The mind is controlling the body just like that. The finger (and the eye) in the above case(s) are just two instruments helping with the two tasks of pressing the button (and reading the clock), and the brain is the “control center” that oversees both those activities on the command of the mind.
- The connection between the body and the mind is explained in the post, [“Brain – Interface between Mind and Body”](#) and other posts on the *gandhabba*.

9. The mind is in the *manomaya kaya* (also called *gandhabba*); the brain is “computer-like” and controls the physical body on the instructions given by the mind. At death, the *manomaya kaya* with the mind leaves the body and both the body and the brain become lifeless; see, [“Ghost in the Machine”](#)

– [Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)“, [“Manomaya Kaya and the Physical Body](#)“, and [“Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body \(OBE\) Experience](#)“.

- Therefore, it is clear that we are not robots controlled by a program running in our brain. The brain is just a sophisticated mechanical instrument that helps the mind with coordinating the tasks (like the computer in the tank in the above example that is helping the tank operator). But there are certain functions like breathing that the brain carries out without an input from the mind. We will discuss those in an upcoming post soon.
- Any person has the POTENTIAL to do things in a scale that is unimaginable to us. We just do not realize the power of our minds; see, [“Power of the Human Mind – Introduction](#)“, and the follow-up posts.

Next, [“Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected](#)“,

5.6.2 The Double Slit Experiment – Correlation between Mind and Matter?

Revised March 13, 2018

1. The failure of a materialistic approach to explain consciousness (i.e., attempts to explain mental phenomena arising from a brain that is composed of inert matter) is becoming ever more apparent; see Refs. 1 and 2 below.
2. A number of scientists/philosophers are hoping that quantum mechanics can come to the rescue (Ref. 3,4). They say that even though deterministic Newtonian mechanics is unable to explain consciousness, quantum mechanics can, because quantum mechanics does not have such an apparent deterministic nature.
3. Quantum mechanics (QM) is different from other branches of physics where one can get the intuitive idea of what is taking place. What we do with QM can be called a “black box” approach: when we apply the correct equations, we get the right results. Einstein did not like this at all. Yet, to his frustration, all his predictions of the inadequacy of QM did not materialize AND the predictions of QM have been correct to an amazing accuracy.
4. Those experiments, the results of which can only be explained by QM, APPEAR to be non-deterministic in nature; this has compelled some scientists to investigate whether there is a connection between QM and the mind, which IS non-deterministic. Two experiments in particular have been at the forefront of these discussions: the “double-slit experiment” and the “Schrödinger’s cat experiment”.
5. My intent in this essay is to challenge the two prominent assumptions on this postulated relationship between QM and the mind:
 - i. Even if QM and the mind are non-deterministic in their own rights, there is no special reason to believe that there is an apparent connection between them, and
 - ii. There is nothing really “non-deterministic” about QM, other than the indeterminacy depicted by the Heisenberg uncertainty principle; that is just on the accuracy of a given measurement.
6. Let us look into (i) first. Henry Stapp is a leading physicist who argues that quantum theory will ultimately provide an explanation for consciousness. In his book, “Mindful Universe” he says (p.2), “... quantum theory itself is intrinsically psychophysical as designed by its founders, and as used in actual scientific practice, it is ultimately a theory about the structure of our experience that is erected upon a radical mathematical generalization of the laws of classical physics”.
 - My basic point is that quantum theory is NOT psychophysical; there is no way to accommodate “subjectivity” in QM. Where is the “mind connection” in the theory of QM?
 - There are others who work on theories that try to explain consciousness as arising from quantum effects in the brain; see, for example, “Conversations on Consciousness”, by Susan Blackmore (2006). No one has clarified how these theories make the connection between “psyche” and “physical” in “psychophysical”.

7. Let us review one experiment that has become the main demonstration for the “observer effect” in QM, the “double-slit experiment”. Here is a short video by Dr Quantum to illustrate the “paradox” of the double slit experiment:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Dr Quantum Double Slit Experiment](#)

8. The two main points of this experiment are:

- a. the particles behave like waves when both slits are open, and
- b. this “wave nature” goes away when the path of the particle is “observed” or monitored.

9. There is a version of QM called the Bohmian theory or the Pilot Wave theory that was developed by the late David Bohm. It does use the Schrodinger’s equation which is used to track the propagation of a “pilot wave”, and the theory is explicitly nonlocal, i.e., quantum entanglement is built-in. With this theory, each solution of the wave equation describes a DETERMINISTIC path for the particle, and statistical average agrees with the experiments and the results of the standard QM calculations.

- The actual trajectories have been harder to measure not because of a “mind effect”, but because an observation can disturb the particle trajectory itself. Recent experiments have been conducted to “weakly” measure a system without appreciably disturbing the trajectories, and have been shown to be consistent with the predictions of Bohmian theory (Ref. 5).

Thus the role played by Bohmian mechanics in these “QM experiments” is just like role statistical mechanics played in thermodynamics.

Here is a very short video of the INDIVIDUAL trajectories for a double-slit experiment calculated using the Bohmian theory. There is nothing “mysterious”: each particle has a definite trajectory; quantum aspects comes via the “guiding wave”:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Bohmian Trajectories in the Double-Slit Experiment](#)

- When it is attempted to observe the path of an individual particle, the coherence of the system or the pilot wave is disturbed and the interference pattern goes away. Thus there is no “observer effect”, in the sense of bringing “subjectivity” in.

10. Another famous experiment that has been the subject of much discussion is the “Schrödinger’s cat” thought experiment. This experiment suggested by Schrödinger back in 1935, involves a cat in a closed chamber. A radioactive sample in the chamber, if undergoes decay within a given period of time, triggers the release of a hammer that breaks a vial of a toxic gas that kills the cat. If conscious observation is required to collapse the wave function, then the fate of the cat is not known until the box is opened. Unfortunately, both the consciousness-based and consciousness-free interpretations of quantum measurement are indistinguishable to the observer outside the box.

- In 2006, an actual experiment was conducted to simulate this experiment. It was reported that, “...measurement alone, rather than conscious observation of a measurement, is sufficient”; see Ref. 6.

11. Thus there is no real “observer effect” in the double slit experiments or in the Schrödinger cat experiment.

- In the double-slit experiment, what an “observer” does is to disturb the coherence of the system, if the disturbance is strong. It does not matter whether the “observer” is human or a mechanical device (in most cases it is non-human); one ALWAYS gets the same result. This is in contrast to real subjective situations, like in the stock market, where complex subjective decisions are made by thousands of people.
- So, where does the “objectivity” or “intention” – in the sense of the mind affecting the experimental result – comes from? “Intent to monitor” is not really a significant subjective decision; just a simple “yes” or “no”.

12. Therefore, it is clear that there was no evidence for “subjectivity” in those experiments even before Bohmian mechanics or the Schrödinger’s cat experiment; those two pieces of evidence really

make that point undeniable. There is no evidence of the mind affecting the outcomes of those experiments.

13. Even though mind affects matter and even CREATE matter, science has not advanced enough yet to confirm that. There has to be a paradigm change: **any theory based on matter and attempt to treat mental phenomena as a byproduct will not succeed. Mind is the more fundamental entity; mind takes precedence over matter.**

- Some philosophers are beginning to sense this reality. Even though he does not appear to know anything about Buddha Dhamma, philosopher Thomas Nagel says: “The great advances in the physical and biological sciences were made possible by excluding the mind from the physical world.....But at some point it will be necessary to make a new start on a more comprehensive understanding that includes the mind”. (Ref 1, p.8). Then on p. 15, “...The possibility opens up of a persuasive conception of the natural order very different from materialism – one that makes mind central, rather than a side effect of physical law”.

Consciousness and Quantum Mechanics

March 13, 2018: I have started a new section “[Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma](#)“, where a new interpretation of quantum mechanics is presented, and it is discussed why a connection between quantum theory and consciousness **will not be possible**.

References

1. Thomas Nagel, “Mind and Cosmos” (2012).
2. Colin McGinn, “[WebLink: All machine and no ghost- McGinn-2012](#)”, New Statesman p. 40, February 20, 2012. (click on the link to open the pdf file)
3. Henry P. Stapp, “Mindful Universe” (2011).
4. B. Rosenblum and F. Kuttner, “Quantum Enigma – Physics Encounters Consciousness”, (2006); there are many other recent books.
5. S. Kocsis et al., “[WebLink: Observing the Average Trajectories of Single Photons in a Two-Slit Interferometer](#)“, Science, vol. 332, 1170 (2011). (click on the link to open)
6. R. H. S. Carpenter and A. J. Anderson, “[WebLink: The Death of Schrodinger’s Cat and of Consciousness-based Quantum Wavefunction Collapse](#)“, Annales de la Fondation Louis de Broglie, vol. 31, 45 (2006). (click on the link to open)

5.6.3 Vision (Cakkhu Vinnana) is Not Just Seeing

July 15, 2016

1. In 1988, Dee Fletcher almost died due to carbon monoxide poisoning. Her husband found her unconscious just in time to save her life. However, when she recovered, she had lost “sight” in the normal sense of word.

- She could not see and recognize someone standing right in front or read a book.

2. But soon it was realized that she had some peculiar abilities. She could grab a pencil from the hand of a person who held it in front of her, even though she could not actually “see” the pencil or the person.

- Her vision is good enough for picking something up, but not good enough for seeing it!

Since then researchers have done numerous experiments on her, that have led to some astonishing findings about how vision works.

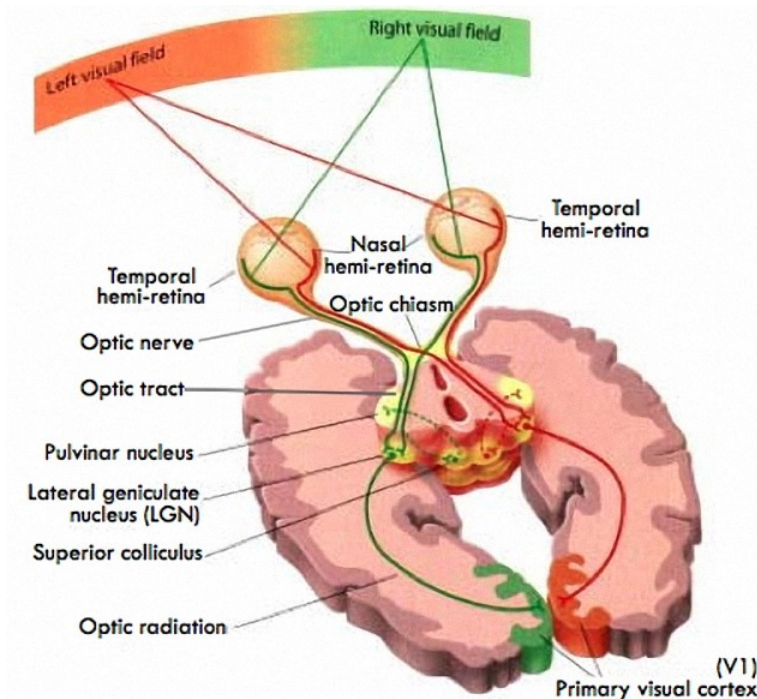
- For example, they tested her with a mailbox with a narrow slit for inserting letters. Even though she could not see the mailbox — let alone the slit or the envelope — she could insert the letter

in the slot without any effort. Even when they tilted the slit, she did not have a problem at all! It was as if a phantom inside her was doing that task for her.

3. Another ability of Dee was to be able to walk around the house without bumping into furniture or walls. Since that ability could be due to her familiarity with the house, they took her to an unfamiliar trail and she did not have any problem walking there without tripping over rocks or bumping into trees.

- This disorder is known as **visual agnosia**.
- It turns out that there are two relatively independent visual systems in the brain: One for conscious perception (**visual cortex**), which was severely damaged in Dee. The other was for unconscious control of action (**superior colliculus**), which is largely preserved.

4. A figure of the optical nerve splitting into those two areas in the brain is shown below.



You can download the figure [here](#).

5. The presence of two streams of visual processing in the brain had been known only since 1982. Even though the role of the **visual cortex** in the brain (in producing a “picture in the mind”) had been known before that, the role of a second processing area in the brain (**superior colliculus**) that helps with figuring out the “depth of vision” or how far a given object was proposed in 1982 by Leslie Ungerleider and Mort Mishkin.

- Of course, their model helped explain the symptoms experienced by Dee Fletcher. She had parts of her visual cortex damaged by the carbon monoxide poisoning, while her superior colliculus was left mostly intact. Her eyes were sending the signals to the visual cortex, but the damaged visual cortex could not process that signal.
- By the way, you do not need to know the details of visual cortex, superior colliculus, or any other technical term to get the idea that I plan to convey. I do not know details about them either.

6. Of course, scientists are only aware that those two areas in the brain **contribute** to those two functions. They do not know exactly how the visual cortex gleans information about what the object is (i.e., its visual characteristics) OR how the superior colliculus figures out the dimensions of the object and how far it is at (in order to correctly grab an item both types of information are needed).

- We need to realize that there is “no light” going to the visual cortex and there is no screen at the back of the head that displays the object in question. The optical nerve only transmits a

chemical (and electrical) signal. **The visual cortex somehow generates a “picture” for our mind to see.**

- Even more mysterious is how the **superior colliculus figures out the depth of vision** just from that chemical signal coming through the optical nerve.
- We will come back to these issues in upcoming posts, but first let us continue with our discussion on what the scientists know at this time and how they found them.

7. There are many research papers that describe experiments involving Dee Fletcher, and the two principal researchers have written a book on this research: “Sight Unseen – An Exploration of Conscious and Unconscious Vision” by M. A. Goodale and A. D. Milner (2004).

- The above book is a bit expensive. A less detailed account is given in Chapter 4 of V. S. Ramachandran’s popular book, “Phantoms in the Brain” (1998), which is relatively inexpensive. He is a neurosurgeon and has discovered some other interesting findings about the brain that are also described in this book. We will discuss a couple of those observations (particularly his and others’ work on “phantom limbs”) in future posts.
- There is also a Wikipedia article on the [WebLink: WIKI: Two-streams hypothesis](#) on vision.

8. The visual problem that is the opposite of that of Ms. Fletcher has also been observed, as described in the book by Goodale and Milner. This syndrome is called the “**optic ataxia**“, and those who have it can “see” and recognize objects very well; but they have difficulty in actions involving objects.

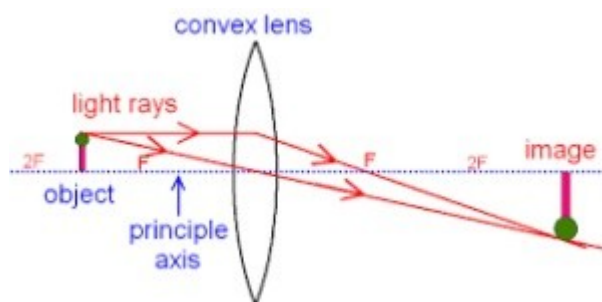
- Those who suffer from optic ataxia, for example, can see the mail box and the slit described in #2 above. However, they have much difficulty in putting a letter through the slit.
- It turns out that these people have their superior colliculus damaged, but the visual cortex works fine.

9. Have you thought about how we can move around without bumping into each other and other objects like trees on the ground and cars on the road? The presence of the two processing streams can **BEGIN TO** explain how the brain figures out not only “what is in front of us (a human, tree, or a car)” but also “how far is it at and how big it is”.

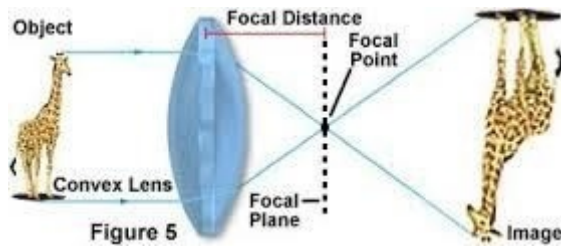
- As mentioned above, part of the signal going through the optical nerve to visual cortex deals with the first task and the other part going to the superior colliculus deals with the “how far and how big” issue.

10. Even though scientists have figured out that those two areas in the brain (visual cortex and the superior colliculus) somehow extract the two kinds of information, **they have absolutely no idea how those areas extract that information from the chemical signal that comes through the optical nerve.**

- Scientists do know that the lens in an eye projects an image of the object to the back of the eye (retina); see the figure above. It is pretty much the same as an image you can see with a lens:



This is pretty much how a camera captures an image:



11. Of course, the film in an old camera undergoes some chemical changes when the image falls on it. Then that film is chemically processed to reveal the picture.

- In the same way, when the image of an object falls on the retina of an eye, the cells on the retina generate a chemical (and electrical) signal. This signal is the one that is transmitted by the optical nerve to the visual cortex and the superior colliculus in the brain. There is no picture transmitted to the brain.
- So, how does the visual cortex generate a visual of the object starting with the chemical signal that comes from the eye?
- Even more puzzling is how the superior colliculus figures out the distance to the object (and the dimensions of the object), solely based on that same signal.

12. Even within the visual cortex itself, there are 30 different areas specialized to carry out different tasks in order to make a “comprehensive picture” of the object.

- For example, the area called V4 deals with the color of the object, but does not care about the direction of motion.
- On the other hand area MT (also called V5) responds to targets in the visual field based on their direction of motion, but does not care about the color of the object. Thus there are multiple tasks done even within the visual cortex by specialized sub-areas.

13. Thus it is clear that the brain is indeed a very sophisticated machine! However, as we will find out in upcoming posts, it is not a typical machine like a computer. **It can change on its own!**

- **While a computer cannot get rid of parts that go bad, the brain can indeed replace or repair bad parts and even make new parts in some cases** (however, when a whole section is damaged, like in the case of visual cortex or superior colliculus such a rejuvenation is not possible). This is what is puzzling the neuroscientists right now. **They have confirmed that these things happen (I will discuss examples in future posts), but have no idea HOW the brain does that.**
- The key to this puzzle is that the physical body is actually controlled by our “mental body” or the *gandhabba*. The *gandhabba* has three components: *kammaja kaya*, *cittaja kaya*, and the *utuja kaya*. **It is actually the *cittaja kaya* that plays the dominant role in CHANGING brain functions.** In other words, it is OUR THOUGHTS that can change the brain!
- Ultimately, one attains *Nibbāna* by gradually transforming one’s own brain. **In other words, getting rid of greed, hate, and ignorance can change one’s brain!** However, even a Buddha can only show how it is done, and one has to make the effort.
- The four types of bodies that we have and the *gandhabba* are discussed in the section “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)“. The key functions of the *cittaja kaya* are also discussed in the post, “[Udayavaya Ñāna – Importance of the Cittaja Kaya](#)“.

14. We live in a truly opportune time to comprehend the value of Buddha Dhamma. Modern science is providing clues that can be used with Buddha Dhamma to clarify many issues. I believe that Buddha Dhamma is able to guide scientists (and philosophers) in their quest to answer many issues.

- In this series of posts, I hope to suggest some such avenues for scientists to explore, based on Buddha Dhamma, which can also explain many of these “new findings”.

- As I have mentioned many times, these details are not needed to attain *Nibbāna*. However, for most people, future confirmation of such “predictions” hopefully will help build confidence in Buddha Dhamma, and to appreciate its value.
- Of course the real value of Buddha Dhamma is not in exposing such mundane things, but showing the path to liberation from suffering (*Nibbāna*). But it is good to have faith in Buddha Dhamma, so that one can feel confident that one is not wasting one’s precious time in learning Buddha Dhamma.

VI Three Levels of Practice

It is a good idea for anybody to read the first section, because the basic ideas and fundamentals are described in that section.

○ First Section: Moral Living and Fundamentals

▪ Subsection: The Basics

- “The Pale Blue Dot.....”
- “The Law of Attraction, Habits (Gathi), and Cravings (Āsavas)”
- “Habits, Goals, and Character (Gathi)”
- “Wrong Views (Micca Ditthi) – A Simpler Analysis”
- “First Noble Truth – A Simple Explanation of One Aspect”

▪ Subsection: Calming the Mind

- “Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances”
- “Solution to a Wandering Mind – Abandon Everything?”
- “Right Speech – How to avoid Accumulating Bad Kamma”
- “Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?”
- “Need to Experience Suffering in Order to Understand It?”
- “Does Impermanence Lead to Suffering?”

▪ Subsection: Buddha Dhamma and Buddhism

- “A Buddhist or a Bhuddhaya?”
- “Where to Start on the Path?”
- “What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream”
- “Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records (HSAM)”
- “Buddhism without Rebirth and Nibbāna?”

▪ Subsection: Dhamma Concepts

- “Ten Immoral Actions (Dasa Akusala)”
- “Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā”
- “The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them”
- “How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma”
- “What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?”
- “The Four Bases of Mental Power (Satara Iddhipada)”
- “Why is it Necessary to Learn Key Pāli Words?”

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6.1 Moral Living and Fundamentals

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6.1.1 The Basics

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6.1.1.1 The Pale Blue Dot.....

Even if some of us are not thinking about a “wider world view” or “what happens after death”, all of us want a better world for all of us.

I thought of sharing this marvelous video from the late Dr. Carl Sagan:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Carl Sagan - Pale Blue Dot](#)

When I read the writings of all those past scientists like Sagan, Feynman, Einstein, Bohm, Heisenberg, etc, I wonder how much more they could have accomplished spiritually if they were exposed to pure Buddha Dhamma. Yet, I am still impressed by their pure reasoning and compassion for the humanity; they were not just scientists with a narrow focus. They thought deeply about the “purpose of existence”.

Even though science has revealed the unimaginable vastness of space, it has not yet even approached the “depth of time for existence”. Not only is our place in the vast cosmos insignificantly small, our individual existence of about 100 years (in this life) is insignificantly small too.

- Yet, out of countless beings that live on this Earth, we are the only species that is capable of forging our own destiny.
- We need to be mindful not only of the welfare of family and friends, but for all other people and beings (seen and unseen).

Do you know why some actions are good and others bad? We may quote some ethical maxims or juggle with philosophical abstractions, but there is a very simple explanation that is called nature: “Good is good because it leads to happiness and freedom of the heart. Bad is bad because it leads to suffering, and it feels bad”. The Buddha said a moral deed (*punna kamma*) is one that makes one’s heart “pulsating with joy”; an immoral deed leads to a burdened heart.

Nature encourages morality and punishes immorality via its built-in reward-punishment system, which is none other than the laws of *kamma*. But the punishment is not immediate, and that is why it is hard for people to make the connection. Even if the punishment in question comes a few lives later, this “time lag” is really not that long since *samsāra* is “beginning-less” and “endless”.

Humans innately know what is right and what wrong. Most bad actions are committed with a mind that is not calm, but is agitated. Therefore, we need to learn how to calm our minds: [“Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances”](#).

By the way, Dr. Sagan’s books like “Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space”, “The Varieties of Scientific Experience”, and “Billions & Billions: Thoughts on Life and Death at the Brink of the Millennium” are very informative. These are likely to be available in local public libraries.

Next, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)“,

6.1.1.2 The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character (Gathi), and Cravings (Asavas)

1. The saying, “Birds of a feather flock together”, is true and we can see that all around us.
 - We can put people into various categories: sportsmen/sportswomen, thieves, politicians, murderers, church goers, environmentalists, liberals, conservatives, etc.
 - In a school, kids tend to get in to different groups too: those who play sports, like partying, nerds, geeks, etc.
 - Of course, there may be some overlaps, but we can clearly see people tend to socialize with those who have common interests, likings, etc.
2. This is a universal principle. A basic rule in chemistry is that “like molecules” stay together. We all know that oil and water do not mix together; the two molecules are very different. On the other hand, water molecules (or oil molecules) stay together happily.
3. Buddha Dhamma describes laws of nature. So it is not surprising that the law of attraction comes naturally out of Dhamma. There are three key words in Dhamma that are relevant: habits, character (*gathi*), and cravings (*āsavas*); see, “[Habits and Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)](#)“. Actually, some of the habits we take from life-to-life, see, “[Samsaric Habits, Character \(Gathi\) and Cravings \(Āsava\)](#)”.
4. The law of attraction can be explained with Paticca Samuppāda, the principle of cause and effect in Dhamma; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – Introduction](#)“.
 - “Pati + ichcha” means associate or bind with something one likes. “*sama + uppada*” means what results from that is something similar in kind; i.e., that association leads to an outcome of the same kind.
 - If a child hangs out willingly and enthusiastically with others who like to work hard and enjoy getting good grades, then the child will continue on that path to success. The more a child willingly hangs out with a criminal gang, his mentality becomes more attuned to criminal behavior, and becomes a criminal capable of doing atrocious crimes.
 - **Thus, in Dhamma it says, “*gathi* (character) attracts a similar *gathi*”.** We will see this developed into a very deep meaning.
5. However, Dhamma says this law of attraction does not need to be fatalistic, i.e., one with a set of bad habits/cravings does not have to go down a slippery slope. One CAN change those habits/cravings GRADUALLY and thus change one’s character (*gathi*).

However, a child is not capable of doing this on his/her own. That is why it is parents’ responsibility to direct the child:

- Parents can make a HUGE contribution in setting up good habits/cravings in a child starting from the point of conception. The love and care the parent feel towards each other IS FELT by the fetus. That is as important, perhaps more important, than the food consumed by the mother. A child born into an environment of abuse or violence may develop life-long problems.
- As the child grows, child’s behavior and habits are influenced HUGELY by the parents, friends, and the school environment. It is the responsibility of the parents and teachers to guide the child.

The reason is that the *manomaya kaya* of the child is aware of the surroundings even from the very early stages, even though it does not have any control over the situation; thus it is affected by the “environment”; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)”.

6. When one becomes an adult, one has full control. Even if the child years were not good, and even if one has acquired a set of bad habits (or even *samsaric* habits that have molded one’s character in fundamental ways), it is POSSIBLE to change them.

- One can use the same Paticca Samuppāda principle to change direction.
- All one needs to do is to change the “*pati+ichcha*” part, i.e., to change one’s likings or habits. Then “*sama+uppada*” will happen automatically. That is nature’s law.

7. First, though, one needs to convince one’s own mind that the current path will lead to a bad destiny; one needs to contemplate the bad consequences of staying on the same wrong path. AND one also needs to contemplate the benefits of cultivating good habits.

For example, a smoker cannot just make a New Year resolution and stop smoking (a few can, but most cannot). Instead, it is better first to look at all the medical evidence out there that show strong evidence that one could die early, and also may be burdened in old age with lung problems if one continued smoking. One could talk to someone who has given up smoking and listen to that person’s “success story”, or think about not having to see the annoyance of those who are around when one lights a cigarette, etc.

8. When one acquires “good habits” (initially slowly and with effort), one is attracted to people, settings, work places, environments that further nurture and grow those habits, which in turn change one’s character; thus the process becomes self-feeding once started. This is the law of attraction as embedded in *Paticca Samuppāda*: “*pati+ichcha*” leading to “*sama+uppada*”. Thus it is critical to develop a liking (*chanda*) and desire (*citta*) for what one wants to accomplish, and to critically analyze the situation (*vimansa*), and make an effort (*virīya*); see, “[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)”.

- When one embraces certain ways and activities (good or bad), those become habits. In Sinhala, it is said that, “*ganna deya gathi venava*”. When one keeps doing this over and over and possibly over numerous rebirths, they get deeply embedded as deep-seated cravings (*āsavas*). Those *gathi* (character) also become “*bhava*” as well; whatever that is liked becomes one’s existence (*bhava*) or reality; in Sinhala, “*thibena bhava*”.
- When one has certain character (*gathi*) it becomes easy to get into the corresponding “state” or existence; this is one meaning of *bhava*. For example, one with a “drinking habit” is easy to be “born” in that state, i.e., just the sight of a bar may cause that person to get drunk. **This is the concept extended in Buddha Dhamma: It is easy to be “born” with those characteristics in a new birth (*uppatti bhava*) or even in daily activities (*pavutti bhava*).** This a bit deeper concept discussed in the *paticca samuppāda* section; see, for example, “[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.

9. The problem many people run into is that they would like to change quickly and that does not normally happen. Initial progress could be slow. However, when one gets traction, the process speeds up. It is like trying to reverse the direction of a moving car: one needs stop going in the wrong direction first. Then when one starts the car facing the right direction, it takes a little while to accelerate and ramp up the speed. See, “[Habits, Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)](#)”, and the links there. Let us consider two examples:

- If one wants to be a successful businessman, then one should try to “build up” habits that business people have: knowledge of the particular business, learning relevant skills, hard work, etc. THEN the law of attraction starts working and will pull one to others with similar interests and environments or conditions automatically.
- If a high-school kid wants to go to college, then he/she should make an effort to get into that mindset: Spending more time deciding what kinds of subjects to study, and then get “immersed” in it. The parent and teachers can make a big difference by encouragement and guiding in the correct path.
- If someone wants to attain “*niramisa sukha*” (see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”), one needs to spend some time and first learn the true Dhamma. **As one learns, one gets motivated to learn more, because one starts feeling the change in one’s character (*gathi*).**

In all cases, one will be attracting external influences (friends, other interests, etc.) conducive to that effort automatically. AND one will lose some of the old influences too. Obviously, the ideal settings

for the above examples could be different from each other, but not contradictory. Before trying to attain Nibbāna, a person with family responsibilities will need to fulfill those by making an income to support the family; a child needs to study well and find good employment. If one does not have the necessities of life (food, housing, clothing, and medicine) it is not possible to contemplate, let alone meditate.

10. Finally, the law of attraction works in the *sansaric* rebirth process too.

- Many are reborn to the same families, same geographic locations, etc.
- At the moment of death, one is automatically “pulled” to a “matching birth” according to one’s *kamma vipāka* and also one’s habits and tendencies. One who has lived an immoral life is likely get a similar outcome in the next life: one who “lives like an animal” is likely to become an animal. One who lives like a “Deva” (a being devoid of hate) or a “*Brahma*” (a being devoid of greed and hate), is likely to reborn a *Deva*, *Brahma*.
- Thus by cultivating good habits and getting rid of bad habits, one CAN change the direction of one’s current life (character) AND future lives too.
- The best way to do this is to be mindful all the time. See the bad consequences of bad actions and bad habits and avoid them; see the good consequences of good actions and good habits and embrace them. At the very basic level this is what is stated in the *Ānāpānasati*, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, and *Sabbasava suttas* (taking in what is good and getting rid of what is bad).

11. Currently, there are several books written on the subject of the law of attraction and how one can use certain procedures to attain goals, build relationships, etc. The Buddha described those and more 2500 years ago.

12. Many people think kamma is deterministic, for example if one is born to poverty that is one’s destiny, but that is NOT the case. *Kamma* is not deterministic; see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”) The human mind is very powerful, and if used right (by purifying it and then using it mindfully), the possibilities are endless: see, “[Power of the Human Mind – Introduction](#)” and the two posts following that for more details.

Next, “[Habits, Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)](#)“, ...

6.1.1.3 Habits, Goals, and Character (Gathi)

1. As I mentioned before, Buddha Dhamma can be interpreted at three levels; see, “[Foundation of Dhamma](#)“. But the key to making progress at ANY LEVEL is to get rid of bad habits and instill good habits, **because they mold one’s character even through the rebirth process.**

- The Pāli (and Sinhala) word for character is “*gathi*“. One’s character can be changed (for good or bad) via changing one’s habits. These habits take deep roots when practiced over many lives, and becomes deep-seated cravings (“*āsavas*“) that forms one’s character.
- Some habits are harmless. For example, some people have the habit of shaking their legs while sitting. It could be annoying to some, but it is not “morally wrong”, i.e., it is not one of the ten defilements; see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)“.
- But there are other habits, such as drinking, stealing, sexual misconduct, etc that are morally wrong and do belong to the ten defilements. Generating greedy or hateful thoughts can be a bad habit too. Some have a tendency to easily “flare up”.
- Then there could some, like gambling, that could lead to immoral actions.
- There are good habits too: giving, helping others, teaching, and being compassionate in general.

2. For someone at the highest level, the *Sabbasava Sutta* explains how one can work towards Nibbāna in a systematic way by developing good habits (“*gathi*“) and removing *āsavas*; see “Key Points from the *Sabbasava Sutta*” under “[The Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.

3. Here we are going to look at it to see how those recommended steps can be used in the day-to-day life, i.e., for a moral life. Those steps can be used to remove any bad habits, for example, from alcohol or drug use, smoking, to eating too much.

- They can also be used in achieving goals, say lose weight, getting rid of depression, or starting a new business. Achieving goals require building good habits.

4. A habit is something one gets used to by repeating it over and over. Good habits make a life easier to live with, and bad habits lead to bad results. Scientific studies have confirmed that our brains “can rewire its connections” (plasticity of the brain), thus getting rid of bad habits and instilling good ones. The trick is to “stick to a set procedure”. Many people give up before giving their brains enough time to “rewire”; this is why many “New Year resolutions” go unfulfilled.

One way to remove bad habits is to look at the bad consequences of such habits; see, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)”.

5. The seven steps in the Sabbasava Sutta can be helpful for developing good habits for a moral life. These steps basically convince the mind of the benefits of good habits/downside of bad habits and set up a conducive environment.

The 7 steps in the *Sabbasava Sutta* (interpreted conventionally or “*padaparama*” interpretation):

1. **Develop an understanding** (learn all about the direct and indirect benefits, what is involved, the best way to go about achieving the goal, etc)
2. **Discipline** (Avoid getting distracted by things that provide “temporary pleasures”, like a drug addict thinking it is OK to “take a small puff” while working to be free of drugs).
3. **Association** (associate with knowledgeable people who can help and get to know other helpful resources)
4. **Patience and tolerance** (being thoughtful and not being agitated or “shaken off” by small inconveniences; having perseverance)
5. **Avoidance** (dissociating with people who have negative attitudes and avoiding unsafe places, practices, etc.)
6. **Removal** (suppressing discouraging thoughts by contemplating on the long-term benefits of the project)
7. **Bhāvanā** or “immersing in the project” (bhāvanā or meditation is constantly thinking about the main objective; getting the mind to focus on it).

6. A careful overview of what one has in mind (the goal) is needed first. Just like one should not undertake a journey without learning about the destination, the path, and the reason for the journey, one needs a clear vision of the goal, how it can be beneficial to oneself and others (family, friends, and even to the society), and the way to achieve it.

- However, the steps are not to be followed sequentially. Once the overview is done and the decision to undertake the project is made, all steps should be used as appropriate. For example, the first and last items on the list (understanding and meditating) go hand-in-hand.

7. Those steps can be used by anyone to enhance the quality of life in general, a moral life with a “peace-of-mind”. They are the sensible things to do. For example, an important decision for anyone should be to live in a good area not prone to crime, floods, etc. Associating with immoral or people with negative attitudes is always to be avoided. Going out at inappropriate times, in inappropriate places, is just ‘asking for trouble’. If one carefully goes through the list, it will be clear why all those steps make common sense.

If you would like to read about how these habits develop into deep-seated *sansaric* habits or *āsavas*, see, “[Sansaric Habits, Character \(Gathi\) and Cravings \(Āsava\)](#)”. Also, “[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)”, can be helpful in achieving goals .

Next, “[Wrong Views \(Micca Ditthi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#)”,

6.1.1.4 Wrong Views (Micca Ditthi) – A Simpler Analysis

Revised November 27, 2017

Miccā means wrong or incorrect and *ditthi* means views. Pronunciation:

[WebLink: Listen to the pronunciation of ditthi](#)

Here it is about the wrong views about our world or our existence. It is the most basic reason why people cannot grasp the message of the Buddha, and that is unfortunate. We all are looking at the world through “colored glasses”; each one has his/her own set of beliefs or “*ditthis*“, so we cannot see the real nature.

- Some facts about nature are hard to believe, and it took the efforts of many scientists to change two common wrong views (*ditthis*) that had been with the humans up to recently: that the Earth is flat and it is at the center of the universe.

1. These days, most of us believe that the Earth moves around the Sun. But it is quite clear that it goes against our experience, and the accepted views were the opposites even a few hundred years ago. We do not have any direct experience of the motion of the Earth, either its rotation around its own axis or in its orbit around the Sun. And we see ample evidence to the contrary, i.e., for the Sun rotating around the Earth, because we experience a sunrise and a sunset everyday!

- If one looks at the speeds involved it becomes even more harder to believe that the Earth is moving: The Earth moves around its axis at a speed of about **1,040.4 miles/hour (1,674.4 kilometer/hour or 465.1 meter/second)** at the equator (and zero at the North and South Poles) and it moves along its orbit around the Sun at an average speed of about **67,062 miles/hour (107,300 kilometer/hour)**. Thus it is surprising that we have no direct perception of such movements.
- Of course, we do not feel it because everything around us is also doing exactly the same thing. When we travel in a car, we “feel the ride” because we can see the scenery passing by (and because the ride may not be smooth; luckily, the Earth is very smooth in its motions). It is the “relative motion” that we perceive. If two cars are moving in parallel with the same speed, passengers in each car see the other car to be stationary.
- However, after Galileo invented the telescope, people made more precision measurements of the planets and the heliocentric model was needed to explain all those new findings.

2. But there are many people who still believe that the Sun goes around the Earth! To quote a passage from the Wikipedia article, [WebLink: WIKI: Geocentric model](#)

- “..Morris Berman quotes survey results that show currently some 20% of the U.S. population believes that the sun goes around the Earth (geocentricism) rather than the Earth goes around the sun (heliocentricism), while a further 9% claimed not to know. Polls conducted by Gallup in the 1990s found that 16% of Germans, 18% of Americans and 19% of Britons hold that the Sun revolves around the Earth. A study conducted in 2005 by Jon D. Miller of Northwestern University, an expert in the public understanding of science and technology, found that about 20%, or one in five, of American adults believe that the Sun orbits the Earth. According to 2011 VTSIOM poll, 32% of Russians believe that the Sun orbits the Earth”.
- And, there are even some who believe that the Earth is flat: [WebLink: WIKI: Modern flat Earth societies](#)

3. Thus sometimes it is very hard to get rid of certain “wrong views” because of our “experiences” and “gut feelings”. Yet, if one hangs onto such wrong views (in the face of contrary evidence) one cannot get a correct world view. This is why we always need to “look at the big picture”; the “bigger the picture”, the better it is. It is hard to see much details while walking on the ground, but one see a whole lot better looking down from a helicopter.

- Luckily, nowadays, we have the advantage of technology to confirm that the Earth is not flat and that it moves around the Sun.

4. Similarly, it is very hard for many people to believe that humans could be reborn as animals. One argument that was given in a book that refuted rebirth was that “..in that case, the human population should not be changing, but we see an increase of the human population over the past centuries”. Apparently, the author did not even consider that a human could be born an animal. Again, it is matter of a very narrow world view. There are innumerable beings in this world and they can be born in not only in the animal and human realms, but 29 other realms that we cannot see!

- When Darwin presented his theory of evolution, it made a huge psychological impact on the society, which was not ready to accept that humans evolved from animals. It is said that Darwin did not publish his now-famous volume, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, until 1859, more than 20 years after he had first formulated his theory because he knew that it would create an uproar.
- The theory of evolution is only partially correct according to Buddha Dhamma; we will discuss this in detail in the future. When conditions for a birth in certain realm are satisfied, the nature has come up with many ways to make that birth take place.
- Accepting the fact that human can be BORN in the animal realm is an even more shocking thing to contemplate for many people. But we should not just go by our instincts, because the world is much more complex than we perceive with our limited senses.
- Even though we consider the life of an animal as “useless”, life is the most important thing in the world even for the lowest worm. All living beings have craving to continue the life they have, regardless of how pathetic it appears to us. Our “smelly bodies” are said to be repulsive to the *devas* who have fine bodies that are free of diseases as well.

5. When the Buddha said, “..those who depart from the human realm, those will be reborn as humans or *devas* can be compared to the few grains of sand that I pick up on my fingernail. Those who are reborn in the lower four realms are exceedingly many, compared to the sand on this great Earth”, it appears to most people as an exaggeration.

- But as described in the post, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)“, modern science is slowly proving that indeed the number of living beings, just in the animal realm, is unimaginably large, and that human population of about 7 billion is negligibly small. There are more living beings in your backyard soil.
- Of course we cannot see the beings in the other three lower realms. But, just because they are not amenable to our senses, we cannot say they do not exist. Human vision is restricted to an almost infinitesimal sliver of 400 to 700 nanometers in the wavelength spectrum. Our ears can detect only 20 to 20,000 Hertz audio frequencies. Other animals use their own “bands” above and below that. Human beings have one of the poorest senses of smell of all the organisms on Earth., etc; see the book, “[The Meaning of Human Existence](#)” by Edward O. Wilson, who is a leading biologist.
- Another way to think about this is to contemplate on the fact that there are hundreds of TV or radios broadcasts that can be “tapped into” by having a TV or a radio set to the right channel. Just because we cannot “see” those electromagnetic waves with our eyes, we cannot say they are not all around us. There are other living beings all around us with such fine bodies, we just cannot see them.
- We have only begun “see” other hidden parts of “our world” with the aid of science; see, “[Expanding “Consciousness” by Using Technology](#)“.

6. Even though scientific progress has been impressive, it takes generations to move the “knowledge base” forward; see, “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)“.

- On the other hand, by PURIFYING the mind, one can discern EVERYTHING that is of importance **within a lifetime**; see, “[Expanding “Consciousness” by Purifying the Mind](#)“, and the power of the mind in the posts starting with, “[Power of the Human Mind – Introduction](#)“.

- That is how the Buddha knew about not only the existence of innumerable planetary systems in the universe (many other examples are discussed in other posts), but also about the fact that this life of about 100 years is insignificant in the rebirth process.
- And there is compelling evidence for rebirth; see, "[Evidence for Rebirth](#)".

7. Without the "correct view" of this world, we will be simply "groping in the dark". When one has only a narrow and blurred vision, one cannot move forward. If one believes that this is the only life we have, then one could be making bad decisions, that could affect one's future for billions of years to come.

- That is why it is worthwhile at least to examine the evidence of the "wider world view" of the Buddha, where both space and time are infinite. While modern science has confirmed the infinite extent of space, it has not yet "discovered" the fact that life does not end at physical death; it is just the end of one insignificantly small sliver of the time span of a sentient being.

8. Most people think the First Noble Truth is about suffering in the sense of just physical or mental suffering IN THIS LIFE; that is wrong. Those are RESULTS of past actions (*kamma*). But that suffering is NOT what the First Noble Truth is about; it is about the FUTURE suffering that CAN BE stopped.

- **The First Noble Truth is about the suffering that is hidden.** It is the unavoidable suffering for anyone in this cycle of rebirths, until one grasps the "correct world view".
- This is why the Buddha said, "my Dhamma has never been heard before". It is hard to grasp until one is willing to spend some time and examine the "bigger picture". One should not just go by one's instincts, but rather by the facts.

9. This is also why "*sammā diṭṭhi*" or "correct view" comes first in both versions of the Eightfold Path. Yes. There are two versions of the path: One is mundane (*lokiya*) and is easier to grasp. The other is transcendental (*lokottara*) and requires the comprehension of *Tilakkhana* or the Three Characteristics of this world, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

- **Before trying to comprehend the *Tilakkhana*, it is imperative that one follows the mundane eightfold path and removes all ten types of *micca diṭṭhi*; they are discussed in "[Maha Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)".**
- When one starts understanding the validity of laws of *kamma* (i.e., deeds have consequences), rebirth must be true, and there are other realms that we cannot see, one begins to embrace the mundane version of *sammā diṭṭhi*.
- With that *sammā diṭṭhi*, one realizes that it is not fruitful to: think immoral thoughts (*micca sankappa*), utter inappropriate speech (*micca vaca*), do inappropriate things (*micca kammanta*), live an immoral life (*micca ajiva*), to strive to achieve unfruitful things (*micca vayama*), have an immoral mindfulness (*micca sati*), and thus get into an immoral state (*micca samādhi*). **Even if we can "get away" from paying for misdeeds in this life, we will have to pay with interest in the future lives. Similarly, any good deeds will be rewarded in future lives, if not within this life itself.**
- Thus, with correct views or *Sammā Diṭṭhi*, one will be automatically following the mundane eightfold path: *sammā sankappa*, *sammā vaca*, *sammā kammanta*, *sammā ajiva*, *sammā vayama*, *sammā sati*, and thus get to *sammā samādhi*. It all starts with *sammā diṭṭhi*, or the "correct views".
- It is not a world view that is amenable to our "experience", because our sense faculties are limited as we discussed above. But as we make progress, our minds will become clear and we WILL be able to see for ourselves the true nature of this world.
- There is a lot of evidence that what the Buddha said about "the wider world" 2500 years ago are indeed true. We are lucky to be born at the time when efforts of many generations of scientists have confirmed many of his world views, and that should give us confidence (*saddhā*) to take those views serious enough to spend some time examining the evidence. My goal is to present evidence from many aspects, because different people comprehend different aspects.

- Such a critical evaluation itself could be enough to dispel any wrong views. It is like lifting of a fog and being able to see clearly. When the mind becomes pure, one does not need “evidence from science” to confirm the worldview of the Buddha.
- The *lokottara* version of *Sammā Ditṭhi* (which requires the comprehension of *Tilakkhana* to some extent) and the corresponding Noble Eightfold Path is discussed in other posts in the “[Seeking Nibbāna](#)” section. Also, see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)” and the post referred to in that chart: “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)”.

6.1.1.5 Four Noble Truths: Recipe for Problem Solving

1. When solving any problem, there are four steps:

- One needs to know **what the problem is**, or even realize there is a problem.
- The reason or the **cause for that problem** (some may be superficial causes but there are **root causes**).
- **Knowing what kind of end result can be expected by solving the problem** (there may be many possible outcomes depending on the approach).
- **A procedure to systematically solve the problem** based on the superficial or root causes.

2. Let us discuss several examples. If a car would not start, the cause may not be clear to someone who does not have a technical background in automobiles, but a qualified technician will be able to find the cause quickly.

- He may find that it is a simple problem of some wires becoming loose in the ignition circuit, or it could be as bad as a problem with the engine itself.
- The solution of the problem will lead to being able to start the car.
- And the way to get there depends on the actual problem and going through the standard procedures to solve the problem. If the problem is with a loose wire, one could re-connect the loose wires or just replace that circuit box. If it is a failed engine, one could either replace the engine or if it is a minor problem with the engine, just fix that.

3. Sometimes figuring out the cause or **even figuring out that there is a problem**, may not be obvious. If we get a headache, in most cases we would just take an aspirin or tylenol and that would “fix it”.

- But if the headache keeps coming back, then we may realize that there could be a more serious **root cause**. Now we need to figure out why we are getting headaches frequently. First we look at easy solutions. For example, if we can tie up the timing of the headaches to eating some kind of specific food, we can stop eating that and see whether it goes away.
- If we cannot figure it out, and if the problem persists, then we go to a specialist again, in this case a physician. The physician will ask a series of questions and may do a series of tests. The goal is to figure out what causes the headaches, the root cause.
- The end result of solving the problem again is simple: to be free of headaches. But in the case of recurring headaches, taking an aspirin is not a permanent solution.
- Depending on results of the diagnostic tests, the physician may find the root cause to be a cancer. Then that cancer needs to be treated, etc. He will prescribe a method of treatment. If that root cause is removed, then we would have removed the recurring headaches.
- Thus the correct way to solve a problem has four steps: correctly identifying the problem, find its root causes, determine the outcome if the root causes are removed, and finding the best procedure to handle the root causes.

4. But sometimes, when a problem arises we tend to do the most expedient thing to get it out of the way and just move on. If the headache goes away until one gets through the day, then one may decide to just take an aspirin and handle it day to day like that.

- Even when the wife (or husband) says, “You have been taking aspirins almost every day for this many days. Why don’t you see a doctor and see whether there is something else going on?”, we may just continue with the “temporary fix” especially if we are busy.
- If that person was starting to develop a cancer, then postponing the diagnosis of the “root cause” could be a grave mistake. A cancer cell multiplies very rapidly, and could spread to other areas of the body.
- Even though one could get temporary relief by taking an aspirin daily (may be with gradually increasing the dose too), that is NOT the solution. **The end result in the short term could be temporary relief, but one is moving into a much more dangerous outcome.**
- The ideal solution to the problem is not to be free from the headache temporarily, but to free from the cancer!

5. We can solve many problems by ourselves by following the four step process. We may need a qualified technician to find roots causes of car problems or may need the help of a physician to diagnose the root causes for the recurring headaches as cancer.

6. The Four Noble Truths handle the most critical problem of all: the suffering associated with existence.

- **First, most of us are not even aware that there is a problem.** Unless one can see that there is a rebirth process and that most of these rebirths are filled with unimaginable suffering, there is no way to even know that there is a problem.
- This problem of existence can be seen only by the highly-purified mind of a Buddha.
- And he found the root causes, that permanent happiness (*Nibbāna*) results from removing the root causes, and the procedure to do that.
- However, one can find temporary solutions but just fixing the superficial causes. Just like fixing the headache by taking an aspirin, one could find temporary happiness in this life by “trouble shooting” each problem as it arises or even take precautionary measures to avoid problems. One could even find a bit longer-term solution by working towards a better rebirth. But both those are temporary solutions, achieved by fixing superficial causes, that are easily seen by any intelligent human being.

7. Thus there is an important difference between **superficial causes and root causes**.

- It is interesting to note that root causes gives the exact meaning as the Pāli term “*mūlika hetu*”; “*mūla*” is the root of a tree. If a tree is cut down or even the if the roots close to the surface are removed, the tree may not be killed; it may still sprout new limbs and finally grow to a full fledged tree.
- However, removing the deep roots of a tree will permanently kill the tree. Similarly, removing root causes will eradicate the problem completely.

8. In complex situations, the root causes of a given problem may not be obvious. **And that means the ideal solution may not be obvious.**

- When that happens, the problem leads to ever-increasing severity, and may not be solvable after some point, as in the above case of ignoring the headaches for longer time will only lead to the spread of the cancer and after some point, the cancer may not be treatable.

9. In the case of some possible problems that we can foresee, we do not need to wait until they materialize. For example, all parents tell their kids to get a good education and then a good job, so that those kids will not fall into hardships when they grow up. In that case, the solution is to get a good job and the way to get there is to get a good education.

- But getting a good job does not solve all possible problems: a young person getting a job knows that one could come down with a deadly disease or lose the job in an unpredictable situation. Here again, in terms of mundane reality, there are no perfect solutions. One could eat healthy

foods, engage in an exercise program, etc and also purchase health insurance and life insurance, etc.

10. We should play out these scenarios in our heads. We can easily see that the four-step process can solve any problem to varying degrees of success.

- In all these situations, our goal is to “maintain things to our satisfaction”. We want our bodies, and the bodies of our spouses and children, to function well and avoid any ailments or discomfort. And we want our physical belongings (houses, cars, clothes, etc) to function well.
- By following the above four-step process we can fulfil our desires to some extent. We can evade certain problems by eating healthy, exercising, etc. We can get a car to last a long time by doing the required maintenance. Still all these activities require effort, and this is a part of the suffering that is not apparent (these are associated with *saṅkhāra dukkha* and *viparinama dukkha*; see, “[Introduction – What is Suffering?](#)”).
- This is because all we can do in those cases is to try to address some superficial causes.
- But eventually, we WILL NOT be able to maintain our bodies to our satisfaction. No matter how well we plan, there comes a time when our bodies start to degrade, even if we do not encounter any major issues like cancer or alzheimer’s disease; this is part of the *dukkha dukkha*; see, “[Introduction -2 – The Three Characteristics of Nature](#)”.
- Yet, if we do not follow the four-step process in those mundane tasks, we will have much more problems. Therefore, the first thing to do is to make sure one analyzes one’s day-to-day activities and make sure to carefully analyze the problems one encounters (or even better to anticipate future problems) and take necessary precautions.

11. However, tackling superficial causes that we can readily see or discern is what we have been doing since the beginningless time. Life after life, we just strive to “maintain things to our satisfaction”, and at ALL TIMES fail at least at the end.

- Most times we suffer trying to “**get things going** in the way we want”, and by the time we achieve at least some success, our bodies start falling apart, so that we will not be enjoying what we have gained with so much effort.
- **Think carefully about any famous personality, whom we believe had achieved their life goals.** They all had to leave behind their achievements in many instance with tragic death, and in their new life those things would not mean anything anyway; they have to start all over. The only things that are carried over to the new life are any good/bad habits or deeds they had cultivated, and not any material gains.

12. **The key point that the Buddha was trying to make was that we do not realize that there is a “problem of existence”**, the first step in the four step process involving our existence. But since we cannot readily see the rebirth process most of us focus on just this life.

- All we have been doing is to “take aspirins” as headaches resurfaced, instead of finding a permanent solution to the “problem of never-ending headaches”.
- In each and every life so far, what we have done has been to “take aspirins” to try to solve problems temporarily as they inevitably come our way.
- This is the First Noble Truth of “*dukkha sacca*” (pronounced “dukkha sachcha”). That “existence in this world of 31 realms is filled with suffering, and it is never-ending process; but that can be overcome permanently”.

13. If we understand how this never-ending process gets the required fuel from (or the root cause for rebirths), then by ELIMINATING those causes we can solve the problem of perpetual suffering permanently.

- This cause of suffering is the second Noble Truth: “*dukkha samudaya* (where “*samudaya*” is “*san*” + “*udaya*” where “*udaya*” means “to arise”) or how rebirth-fuelling “*san*” is the cause for *dukkha*. The Buddha analyzed this cause in detail and found that it is our attachment (*taṇhā*) to “things in this world” due to our ignorance to fact that “anything in this world cannot be

maintained to our satisfaction” or *anicca*. **Thus stated succinctly, the root cause for our suffering is not realizing *anicca*.**

- *Anicca* leads to *dukkha* (suffering), and thus one becomes *anatta* (helpless). Since this *dukkha* can be overcome, it is called *dukkha*, and thus we have the Three Characteristics of “this world of 31 realms”; see, “[Anatta and Dukkha – True Meanings](#)”.
- Not understanding these three characteristics is called *avijjā* or ignorance.

14. Now the third step is to see that the successful solution to this problem is the attainment of *Nibbāna* or stopping of the rebirth process. This is probably the hardest step to latch on to.

- Our minds are setup not to “see” the suffering one is undergoing, but to contemplate on “possible future happiness”. The Buddha likened this to the case of a cow dragging a fully-loaded cart eagerly, when its owner is holding a stack of hay on a pole in front of it. The cow has its mind set on reaching the stack of hay, and does not even realize the heavy load it is pulling.
- Even the lowest worm wants to live. It does not see the suffering that it goes through. This is where one needs to spend a lot of time trying to comprehend the message of the Buddha.
- It is only when one truly comprehends that “it is fruitless to struggle to find happiness in this world of 31 realms” that one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage. This is when one sees the truth in the Third Noble Truth, the *nirodha sacca*: *nirodha* means “*nir*” + “*uda*” or stop the arising.

15. The Buddha said that when one sees one Noble Truth, one sees all four. Thus at the attainment of the *Sotāpanna* stage, the way to *Nibbāna* also becomes clear.

- The process to remove the root causes of *avijjā* and *taṇhā* is the Fourth Noble Truth, the *magga sacca* or the Truth of the Path, where “*magga*” is a path. And this path is eightfold and it is the Noble Eightfold Path.
- The Path has to be followed systematically, and *Sammā Ditṭhi* or the vision to eliminate “*san*” is the first step. A *Sotāpanna* has achieved this to a significant extent by comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* to a certain extent.

16. Therefore, the four step process stated in #1 above is a basic principle that can be used to solve any problem (any mundane problem temporarily and the ultimate problem of existence permanently), because it is based on the core principles of cause and effect that Nature is based on.

17. ***Nibbāna* does not have a cause. It is reached via eliminating all causes.** There are six root causes that maintain this world for anyone: greed, hate, ignorance, non-greed, non-hate, non-ignorance. All these are removed via *paññā* or wisdom. It is important to realize that wisdom is NOT non-ignorance. Explanation of that requires another essay.

- But for now, it is suffice to say that the four lowest realms of this world are maintained via the “bad roots” of greed, hate, and ignorance. The rest of the 31 realms are maintained via non-greed, non-hate, and non-ignorance, the so-called “good roots”. The real wisdom is attained when one realizes that all those roots lead to attachment to “this material world”. But until one develops wisdom to a certain extent by first removing the “bad roots”, it is not possible even to grasp the meaning of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- This is why the Noble Eightfold Path is two-fold: the mundane (*lokiya*) Noble Eightfold Path is to be followed first to avoid birth in the lowest four realms and to cleanse the mind to a certain extent.
- Then one follows the transcendental (*lokottara*) Noble Eightfold Path to attain *Nibbāna* by fully cleansing the mind of all six roots; see, “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)”.

Next, “[First Noble Truth – A Simple Explanation of One Aspect](#)”,

6.1.1.6 First Noble Truth – A Simple Explanation of One Aspect

1. One does not need to be a Buddhist or even heard about the Buddha to know what conventional “suffering” is. Anyone knows that getting sick, getting old, and dying is cause for suffering.

- But then the Buddha said, “these four Noble Truths are not known to the world until a Buddha describes them”.
- Thus the Buddha was talking about a kind of suffering that ANYONE in this world is destined to have either now or in the future. He was mainly concerned with the LONG TERM suffering, in the future rebirths and how to STOP that from taking place.

2. However, there are some sufferings in this very life that arise due to our current way of life, or what we do or think right now. In this post I want to address such “SHORT TERM” sufferings that also can be AVOIDED.

- A significant part of our suffering comes from the mind. Whether one lives in a grand mansion or in a hut, this part of suffering is common to us all.
- And even some famous and rich people that we know could not bear this mental pain to such an extent that they committed suicide. From Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe to Whitney Houston and Robin Williams, there are many well-known cases; see, [WebLink: WIKI: List of suicides](#) for a long list that extends to the past.
- Suicide Prevention, see : [WebLink: HELPGUIDE: Suicide Prevention](#)

3. Obviously, one can have mostly everything that any one of us can only wish for (health, wealth, beauty, fame, etc), but still suffer. One could get a glimpse of what the Buddha meant by suffering if one could contemplate on this issue, and that revelation itself could lead to the avoidance of *that kind of suffering*.

- We can get rid of a big part of suffering in the near future by controlling hate or displeasure towards other people. Even though the other party may have done something wrong to us, most of the suffering is inflicted by ourselves. This needs some contemplation to clarify.

4. Suppose I come to know that someone said a bad (and untrue) thing about me to others. The moment I hear this my mind gets agitated. And I could be spending the next hour or two or even the next day or two saying to myself and friends, “I cannot believe that so and so said this about me. Why would he do that?”, and may be even be thinking about how to retaliate. All this time spent on such activity was a burden to the mind. I caused more suffering to myself by just dwelling on it, and by generating more hateful thoughts.

- I could have handled the situation better as following: If I know from past experience that he would not have said it without a reason, I need to talk to him and clarify the situation. If that failed or if I knew that he was “just that type of a person” I just need to stay away from him. We cannot control the behavior of other people. The best thing is to stay away from such people.
- Staying away from “bad company” is critical especially for children. It is imperative for the parents to make sure that their children stay away from bad friends.

5. Another thing that is related is not to try to spend too much of your time and energy to convince other people to see “things your way”. For valid or invalid reasons, each person has a set of beliefs and convictions. I have realized that it causes unnecessary mental suffering to myself and others if I try hard to convince the other party of my own views. I have no right to say my views are better than the views of the others; I just explain things the way I see them.

- Even the Buddha did not try to even advice certain people, because they could have caused long-term harm for themselves by generating hateful thoughts of the Buddha.
- One has to realize that getting rid of *ditthi* or wrong views is the first step in getting some “cooling down”. It is true that palpable “cooling down” can be attained by getting rid of the worst wrong views; see, [“Wrong Views \(Micca Ditthi\) – A Simpler Analysis”](#).

6. Then there is extreme greed, that could also lead to unnecessary suffering. Here one needs to make a distinction between two extremes: It is really necessary to avoid physical discomfort on one extreme. But trying to “acquire fancy things” for the sake of pride is the other extreme.

- We do need food, clothes, shelter, and medicine to avoid living a miserable life. Therefore, we need to make a decent living to provide such necessities for ourselves and our families.
- However, if we try to acquire, for example a “bigger and fancy house”, that could cause anxiety and even suffering especially one is stretching one’s resources to achieve that “extra bit of happiness”. That “extra bit of happiness” could become a nightmare in some cases, for example if one loses employment or encounters an unexpected expense.

7. One does not need to feel bad about the wealth one has acquired legitimately and to use that wealth for one’s comfort. One has already paid for that in the past (a good *kamma vipāka*). In the same way, if one is poor, one needs to understand two things per Buddha Dhamma: First, one is in that situation because of a past cause (bad *kamma vipāka*). Second, and more importantly, one can work oneself out of that situation, because *kamma vipāka* are not deterministic; see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”.

8. The key is to live within one’s means, and strive for a better living condition if one actually does not have enough for a comfortable living. There is so much of “peace of mind” in a simple life, even if one has a lot of wealth. Most people ruin their lives by trying to seek sense pleasures using money. That only gets one on a track that leads to seeking more and more such pleasures and eventually running out options.

- The sad thing is that they do not know there is so much “peace of mind” to be had just by living a simple life with less greed and less hate.

9. It is hard to fathom, but it is true that craving for valuable material things makes one’s mind temporarily happy at times but perpetually burdened. This statement needs a lot of thought for clarification.

- The perceived happiness comes from the perceived “value” of the item by one’s mind, and if that item is lost or damaged that can lead to much more suffering. Here is a hypothetical situation: A mother dies and her two daughters inherit a supposedly highly valued necklace. Each daughter wants it, and they get into arguments and both come to much mental suffering. Eventually, a wise elder suggests to sell the item and share the money. When they try to sell it, they find that it is of low quality and is really worthless. They had each inflicted so much suffering because of a “perceived value” for that necklace.

10. The real happiness is not having anything to worry about. That does not mean one needs to give away everything one has.

- Using things that are available to oneself and having a greedy mindset are two different things.
- One could be living in a mansion with a peace of mind knowing that all his/her wealth is not forever, and another could be living with a burdened mind in a hut with so much attachment to whatever little he/she has or with jealousy/hatred for what others have.
- On the other hand, one could be living in a mansion with a burdened mind and could even commit suicide, while a poor person who has learned Dhamma could be living in a hut with a peace of mind content with what he/she has and knowing that any hardship is just for a short time (in this life).
- The bottom line is that things happen due to causes, and by controlling our minds we have the power to initiate good causes (moral deeds) and to suppress bad causes (immoral deeds). Some will be effective for the short term and all will be effective for the long term.

Also see, “[First Noble Truth is Suffering? Myths about Suffering](#)”.

Next, “[Difference between a Wish and a Determination \(Paramita\)](#)”,

6.1.1.7 Difference between a Wish and a Determination (Paramita)

1. It is easy to just wish for things, but a real determination has a firm commitment attached to it. A determination is a wish accompanied by a plan to make the wish come true.

- One can drop a stone in water and can wish for it to come back up. That is NOT going to happen.
- Some goals (wishes) can be attained in this life: quitting smoking, passing an exam, getting a good job, etc. But still one has to make an effort, i.e., one has to act with determination to achieve the wish.

2. Other goals can take many lifetimes to attain. These are called “*pāramitā*” (pronounced “*pāramithā*”). Depending on the goal, a *paramita* can take many, many lifetimes. It is said that to become a Buddha, one needs to have a firm commitment carried over billions of lives; that is a *paramita*. And it is not like that someone just makes a wish to become a Buddha; that “*gathi*” or the “tendency” has to develop first over many lifetimes, initially starting with the habit of helping others and generally living a moral life.

- Buddha Dhamma is all about causes and effects. If one can understand the causes for something to happen, and then work to make such cause to materialize, the effects WILL follow.

3. We can see that there are many people — some even may not have heard about Buddha Dhamma — making great efforts to help others even at the risk of their own lives. Those people have such *sansaric* habits and they do have goals, even if it may not be clear to them at all times. They are just driven by that *sansaric* habit. If they come across pure Dhamma by any chance, they may be able to focus their efforts accordingly.

- To become an *Arahant* one needs to make a commitment and maintain it over many, many lives. We all are likely to have made that commitment in one or more lives; of course we do not know. And if we had made such a commitment and have worked on it over many lives, it may be possible to fulfill it in this very life. Even otherwise, we can make a real effort to maintain that “*paramita*” and strengthen it.
- Some make firm determinations to become a *deva*, a *brahma*, an emperor, or just to be rich; there are millions of things that people wish for, and sometimes make firm determinations on. Some of them can come true in this lifetime itself, especially if that is a firm commitment coming from previous lives. Normally the word “*paramita*” is reserved for those commitments that target *Nibbāna*.

4. In physics, there is a simple law that says, “every action has a reaction”. In Buddha Dhamma, there is an even more generalized law: when one keeps doing something, an invisible energy buildup occurs that will result in a *kamma bhava* (a potential energy) that will bring about a result (even a birth) of similar kind.

- During a lifetime, the brain will help achieve goals by rewiring neural connections in the brain when someone keeps trying to develop habits; see, “[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)”.
- And such habits may be carried over future lives by embedding in one’s *kamma* seeds (beeja); see, “[Sansaric Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsava\)](#)”.

5. For example, if one keeps drinking heavily, it WILL become a habit; the brain’s neural connections will get wired-up for it. If done long enough, it will get embedded in one’s psyche (i.e., in *kamma* seeds), and one is likely to be matched up with a mother who has similar drinking habits, and then it is likely that habit to continue in that life too. It takes a determined effort to “unwire” those neural connections, more than just a wish.

- If one keeps doing activities that are suitable for a dog, one will increasingly act like a dog with such habits, and if that is kept up, eventually will be born a dog. It does not matter whether that person wished to be rich or powerful, what matters is what one habitually does. In his/her mind, one made that determination indirectly by acting accordingly.

6. In the same way, when one makes a determination to be “good”, and starts helping out others, and start learning and living by Dhamma, one will be heading to “good births” whether one wishes or not. Then they become deeply-ingrained habits that are taken from birth to birth, and become “*paramitas*”.

- Such dominant *paramitas* may manifest as one’s character (“*gathi*”). As I mentioned previously, we can see such visible “*gathi*” in many people, regardless of their official religion or culture.

7. Thus habits cultivate character (“*gathi*”), and persistence of such strong character qualities or “*gathi*” through many rebirths develop into “*paramitas*”.

- Especially in young children such “*gathi*” may manifest and then it will be easier to cultivate them. For example, in the post on “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)” there is a video of a child reciting complex *suttas*; if he was encouraged to follow that path, he could be able to attain a stage of *Nibbāna* in this very life. Similarly, a child with any kind of natural talent can be encouraged to cultivate it easily, because those are *sansaric* habits.

8. Breaking a bad habit takes time too. It is best to cultivate an opposing good habit, or at least a neutral one so that one has an option of doing something when the urge comes. For example, if one wants to quit smoking, one could start chewing a gum instead.

- Both in developing a good habit or breaking a bad habit, one is bound to break the trend once in a while. A child learning to walk will fall many times. That is why one needs to have the perseverance to get back up with a renewed determination.

Whether one is making a determination on a mundane goal or to attain a stage of *Nibbāna*, the posts “[The Four Bases of Mental Power](#)”, “[The Law Attraction](#)”, and “[Habits, Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)](#)” could provide helpful information.

Next, “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)”, ...

6.1.2 Calming the Mind

“[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)”

“[Solution to a Wandering Mind – Abandon Everything?](#)”

“[Right Speech – How to avoid Accumulating Bad Kamma](#)”

“[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”

“[Learning Buddha Dhamma Leads to Niramisa Sukha](#)”

“[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)”

“[Need to Experience Suffering in Order to Understand It?](#)”

“[Does Impermanence Lead to Suffering?](#)”

6.1.2.1 Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances

Revised August 2, 2016

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Buddha's Thoughts](#)

A wandering mind is an unhappy mind! The conclusion of an article in the prestigious journal “Science” which, using real time input from 5000 people all over the world, confirmed what the Buddha said 2500 years ago; see, [WebLink: A wandering mind is an unhappy mind-Science-Killingsworth-2010](#).

1. Let us think about a few practical examples that we all have experienced.

- When a child is crying due to any number of reasons, a mother uses a variety of “tricks” to soothe the child. If the child has a fever or headache, simply hugging the child and stroking

child's head makes the child fall asleep. If the child is throwing a tantrum just because he is unhappy with something, just by giving his favorite toy could calm him down.

2. Therefore, the easiest way to calm the mind is to deviate the attention to focus the mind on a different object. **This is based on the fact that there is only one thought arising at a time; if one keeps the thoughts focused on something neutral, then other bad thoughts do not have an opportunity to arise.** This can be done in many ways. Let us discuss a few below.

- Especially when one gets angry, just by stopping and counting to ten at least slows down the *javana* (or the impulse) from running wildly. Do not let the bad thoughts to take over. They multiply very quickly, and then things get out-of-control; for a deeper discussion, see, "[Javana of a Citta – Root of Mental Power](#)".
- Taking few deep breaths helps too. Or, in an angry situation, visualizing a Buddha statue and thinking about its serenity helps too.

3. A popular meditation technique to calm the mind is the "breath meditation": Go to a quiet place (less bright and less noisy place), sit in a chair comfortably and concentrate on the in-and-out breath. Most people can feel the breath at the tip of nose or on the lips. If not, one can be aware of the falling of the chest or abdomen. Just fix the mind on any of these and do not let it get away. Initially it may be hard, but with practice it becomes easy. This is called *samatha* meditation and people can even get to meditative *jhānic* states with a lot of practice.

- However, just like with the child's examples mentioned above, these are just "tricks" to get a temporary solution. Just like the child is bound to throw a tantrum again, the relief from "breath meditation" is temporary.

3. Even *samatha* meditation becomes easier if one at least obeys the conventional five precepts of not killing other beings, stealing, lying, engaging in sexual misconduct, or using excessive amounts of alcohol. If one can further abstain from harsh speech slandering, and vain talk, that makes it even better; see, "[Ten Immoral Actions – Dasa Akusala](#)", and "[Ten Moral Actions – Dasa Kusala](#)".

- **These precepts are to be followed 24 hours a day; these are not rituals to be obeyed. One follows them to purify one's mind. Don't worry if a precept is broken once-in-a while. Such occurrences will become less and less with time.**

4. The reason that the mind becomes agitated easily is because of the "bad stuff" that we have in our minds (they are called *kilesa* or *keles* or mental impurities): all these "bad stuff" arise due to greed, hate, and ignorance. If a mind is free from greed, hate, and ignorance (that is easily said than done), then the mind will be very calm and nothing in the outside world can perturb that mind; see "[2. The Basics in Meditation](#)" and "[3. The Second Level - Key to Purify the Mind](#)" for details.

5. In a simile, the Buddha compared a calm mind to a clear, calm, lake that made the surroundings serene. This lake could become undesirable, an eyesore, if one or more of the following takes place: (i) add a dark-colored dye, (ii) if the lake has boiling water, (iii) if the water is covered with moss, (iv) if the water is perturbed by wind, (v) if the water is turbid and muddy.

6. Similarly, a peaceful mind will become polluted due to five hindrances (*nivarana*). They are called "*nivarana*" because they cover the mind from seeing the right from wrong. Just like one cannot see the bottom of a lake if any of the above five factors are present, the mind loses its capacity for clear vision by these hindrances.

- Extreme sense desire (*kamachanda*) is compared to the dark dye. *Kamachanda* ("*kāma*"+"*ichcha*"+"*anda*" means blinded by sense desires). Here "*kāma*" means the five sense faculties that belong to the *kamaloka*: eye, ear, nose, tongue, and the body; "*ichcha*" is desire, and "*anda*" is for blind. The attraction for something becomes so strong that one's complete attention is given to that object. The mind can lose any control over what is sensible and what is not sensible (or immoral).
- Extreme hate (*vayapada*) is compared to boiling water. You probably have seen someone so enraged that he/she is totally out-of-control. One could become "animal-like", and actually one

who develops such character (“*gathi*”) could end up in the hells (*apāyas*). *Vayapada* (“*vayā*+”*pāda*”) means travelling downward (in the 31 realms).

- *Thina middha* (“frozen mind”) is compared to moss covering the water. Sleepiness is just a symptom of it; it is the dull mind that has not been exposed to Dhamma. When one learns Dhamma, one’s mind gets energized. Those meditators who fall asleep during meditation can get rid of that problem by learning pure Dhamma.
- *Uddacca-kukkucca* (normally translated as restlessness and brooding), arise because of high-mindedness (*uddacca*) and low-mindedness (*kukkucca*); in most cases, because of the high-mindedness, one tends to DO lowly things. When one has *uddacca*, one is “drunk” with power, money, etc and when one has *kukkucca* one is willing to do “lowly things” suitable even for an animal. Both these characteristics lead to a scattered mind that is incapable of seeing right from wrong; **as a *nivarana*, they arise together**. After the *Sotāpanna* stage is attained, only *uddacca* remains as a *cetasika* and is removed only at the *Arahant* stage.
- *Vicikicca* (“*vi*” is twisted, “*cī*” is thoughts, and “*icca*” is action done with “*icca*” or cravings) is the tendency to do unwise things because of the ignorance of the true nature of this world. For example, tendency to do any kind of immoral act to get one wants comes from *vicikicca*; one does not know, or does not care, about the bad consequences of such actions. Thus *vicikicca* is compared to muddy water. [*icca* : [nt.] duty; work; service; that which should be done.]

7. In another simile, the Buddha compared the five hindrances to darkness that keeps one from seeing the true nature. For example, one who is extremely angry is not aware of the damage that is being done to the other person and for oneself; he/she is blinded by hate, at least for that moment.

- A mind “blinded” by the five hindrances can keep on adding “more bad stuff” even without realizing it. If you take a glass of muddy water, and add more mud to it, you cannot see much difference. On the other hand, if you take a glass of clean water, you can see even if only a drop of muddy water is added.
- Thus when the mind is free of the five hindrances, one can easily see if any bad thoughts comes to the mind. Then it is easy to contemplate the possible bad consequences of such thoughts and to remove them. That will keep the mind from becoming perturbed. A mind free of the five hindrances is calm and peaceful.
- **This is why one should listen to discourses or read Dhamma posts preferably at a time when the mind is calm.** Then one is able to absorb more.

8. **It is important to note that while *samatha* meditation is good to be practiced on a temporary basis and allows one to have a peaceful state of mind, it does not remove any defilements.** Gradual removal of defilements is done with *Ariya* meditation; see, “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)”.

- The reason for these hindrances to be present is the bad habits (“*gathi*”) we have developed over many lives and have become deep-seated cravings (“*āsavas*”) which remain with us as mental impurities (*kilesa*). When one starts on *Ariya* meditation, such habits, cravings and mental impurities are gradually removed; this is like removing the dye, boiling water, moss, wind, and the mud from the lake in the simile we talked about in the beginning. When those ROOT CAUSES ARE REMOVED, the lake becomes calm and serene again.
- The hindrances of *thina middha* and *vicikicca* are completely removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage, and those of *kamachanda*, *vyāpāda*, and *uddacca-kukkucca* are reduced to *kāma rāga*, *patigha*, and *uddacca*. At this stage, the remaining three are not called *nivarana*. *Kāma rāga* and *patigha* are lessened at the *Sakadāgāmī* stage and removed at the *Anāgāmī* stage; *uddacca* is removed only at the *Arahant* stage.
- Lessening of five hindrances gradually can bring the mind to a stable peaceful state over time — even before the *Sotāpanna* stage — and one could feel the increase of the *niramisa sukha* that it brings; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”.

Next, “[Solution to a Wandering Mind – Abandon Everything?](#)”,

6.1.2.2 Solution to a Wandering Mind – Abandon Everything?

Our minds become agitated when we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or just think about something that we really like or really dislike. Those are called thought objects (*arammana/aramuna* in Pāli or Sinhala). If the thought object is to our liking, our mind starts the “wheeling process” on how to own it or at least to enjoy it for a while; if the thought object is something we dislike, the same “wheeling process” takes off on trying to figure out how to get rid of it; see, “[Nibbāna – Is It Difficult to Understand?](#)”.

Living in a busy society, we are bombarded with multiple thought objects continuously. Of course it can be reduced by going to a quiet place, where there are less EXTERNAL objects that could give rise to multiple thoughts; many people do that to find a “bit of peace”. Better yet, we can go to a meditation retreat where we focus the mind on breath for example, and get a wonderful calmness.

But the problem is that peacefulness, calmness of the mind goes away when we get back to the “normal life” with normal distractions (multiple thought objects). Is it possible to have a “peace of mind” without going to seclusion?

To understand what actually happens in our minds, let us think about the following case:

1. If you go to a stream, disturb the sediment at the bottom until the water gets dirty, you can fill a glass with that dirty water. It looks brown when stirred well.
2. Now if you set the glass on a table and let it sit there undisturbed, in a little while the dirt will drop to the bottom and the water will become clear.
3. If you stir it again with a stick, the water will be brown again; this is analogous to a thought object that is of great interest to us. **BUT if you try to stir it with a thread**, it will not get stirred; the thread is too weak to stir it. Similarly, we are not disturbed by a thought object that is of no interest to us.
4. If you now take a fine strainer, remove the dirt from that water, and put it back in the same glass, it will now be clear. **Now, if you stir it as much as you want even with a stick**, the water will never become brown.
5. We all have “sediments” (or deep-seated cravings or “*āsavas*”) in our minds that have been brewing/accumulating due to *sansaric* habits (“*gathi*”); see, “[Habits and Goals](#)”. Each one has a set of different “sediments” or different habits, i.e., one tends to like certain things AND also dislikes certain other things.
6. So, what happens is when we see something that we like OR dislike, our “sediments” get disturbed. How much it gets disturbed depends on how strongly we like OR dislike it.
 - A strong disturbance may be the sight of a person you really like OR really dislike. But if it is something that does not interest you, it will be like stirring with a thread.
7. During the day, we have innumerable “inputs” coming in through the six senses; these stir up the sediments (“*āsavas*”) inside us and bring out the five hindrances.
 - Our minds are constantly agitated, but we may not even realize it because this is the “baseline state” that we have been used to. But we can at least suppress these five hindrances and make the mind calm; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)”.
8. What you are doing in *samatha* meditation (focusing the mind on the breath) is to let those sediments settle down. You feel peaceful. This is why you don’t get the same results consistently. Some days your mind may be especially perturbed by something.
9. This is why people feel great at the end of a long meditation retreat. All the sediments are well-settled.
 - But after coming back and getting back to regular routine, all external disturbances are back and the quality of that experience slowly wears out; may be not completely, if one keeps practicing at home.
10. However, an Arahant has removed all the sediments. Even if an Arahant is exposed to any type of sensual/hateful situation, his/her mind will not be disturbed:

- A male Arahant will not be seduced by the most beautiful woman in the world; he will not have any hateful feelings towards a person who just cut off his arm.
- So, an Arahant is like a pure glass of water that does not have any sediments at the bottom.

11. We don't have to become Arahants to improve the quality of our lives. What we can do is to try to get rid of some of the bad habits that are not good in the long term anyway:

- For example, if we really dislike someone, we can start cultivating *metta* (loving kindness) for that person in our mind first. Whenever angry thoughts about the person comes to the mind, try to counter that; think about something wonderful or peaceful instead.
- If we have a craving for alcohol, tasty but unhealthy food, etc, think about the possible bad results, and again try to steer the mind to something else, some other activity.

Of course this needs to be done gradually. People who make New Year resolutions sometimes abandon them because they try to just “give up” something in one big step. The mind does not like that; **it likes to change only when it actually experiences the benefits of changing the habit.**

12. Finally, **living a simple, moral life (following the five precepts), goes a long way to reduce such bad habits**, and to have a peaceful mind in the midst of all “possible distractions”.

- Simple yet powerful guidelines to achieve a peaceful state of mind is discussed in a step-by-step process in: “[Living Dhamma](#)”.

Thus it is all about cleaning up one's defilements (bad habits) INSIDE, i.e., in one's mind; see, “[1. Introduction to Buddhist Meditation](#)”. Once that is done for all defilements, no outside influence can affect one's composure (see #10 above). One CAN even attain that ultimate stage while staying in the real world.

Next, “[Right Speech – How to Avoid Accumulating Kamma](#)”

6.1.2.3 Right Speech – How to Avoid Accumulating Kamma

Revised May 27, 2018

1. The fourth precept of the five precepts for a moral life is right speech. Most people literally take it to mean “not lying”. But since we know that intention (*cetana*) is at the root of deciding whether an action is right or wrong, we always need to be careful about what we intend to achieve by what we say.

2. If one does a wrong deed, one may be able to deny it in a statement worded in such way as to conform to legality. Yet it is registered as false speech in one's own mind, and thus one is not able to escape the kammic consequences.

3. Ven. Ayya Khema, in her book, “Visible Here and Now” (p. 53), has nicely summarized what right speech is NOT:

- If you know something that is not helpful and is untrue, then do not say it
- If you know something that might be helpful, but is untrue, do not say it
- If you know something that is not helpful and is true, do not speak about it
- If you know something that is helpful and is true, then find the right time to say it

4. If you carefully examine the above four statements, they say to prevent from lying, gossiping, and hate or vain speech; these are the four ways one can accumulate immoral kamma with speech (see, “[Ten Immoral Actions – Dasa Akusala](#)”). Let us look at some of the examples from the *Tipitaka* on how the Buddha himself handled some situations.

5. When the Buddha was at the Jetavanaramaya for many years, there lived a “pig killer” Cunda right next door. When some monks suggested to the Buddha that he should preach the Dhamma to Cunda and get him to understand the consequences of his actions, the Buddha explained that if he were to go there and try to do that Cunda would only generate hateful thoughts (*patigha*) about the Buddha, and thus will commit an even worse *kamma*.

6. On the other hand, the Buddha walked a long distance to get to Angulimāla just before he was to kill his own mother. Angulimāla had killed almost thousand people, but that was on the prompting of his teacher, who was trying to get Angulimāla into trouble. That morning, the Buddha saw what was about to happen and knew that he would be able to convince Angulimāla of the bad consequences of his actions. Angulimāla became an Arahant in a few weeks.

7. In the case of the wanderer Vaccagotta asking the Buddha about whether there is a “self” or “no-self”, the Buddha just remained silent.

- After Vaccagotta left, Buddha’s personal attendant, Ven. Ananda, asked him why Buddha did not explain the concept that it is not correct to say “there is no soul” or “there is a soul” (because there is only an ever-changing lifestream) to Vaccagotta. The Buddha told Ananda that he did not think Vaccagotta was mentally capable at that time to understand the concept, and that he did not want to confuse him. See the post, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)” for the correct explanation.

8. The Buddha was endowed with that capability to see other people’s mental status. We do not have that capability. So, we need to use our own judgement.

9. Lying to another human being may have even worse consequences (depending on the particular case) than killing a being of a lower realm. The kammic effects of such offenses depends on the status of the being in question and the consequences of the particular action. For example, killing an Arahant or one’s own parents is a much worse crime than killing a normal human, and killing any human is much worse than killing any animal; see, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kammās](#)”.

10. During the Nazi terror in Germany, many Germans “lied” to the Nazi’s that they were not hiding Jews in their houses; of course the intention was to save human lives and thus it was the right thing to do. They acquired good *kamma* for protecting lives.

- We need to realize that “lying” — as meant in as “*musāvāda*” in the five precepts — really means the “intention” involved: “*Musā*” means “wrong or incompatible with morals” and “*vāda*” means “speech”; see, “[What is Intention in Kamma?](#)”.
- Therefore, even though they were literally lying, their intention was not a “*musāvāda*”, but actually a “good deed”.

Next, “[Learning Buddha Dhamma Leads to Niramisa Sukha](#)”,

6.1.2.4 Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?

1. There are three kinds of happiness:

- Sense pleasures (*āmisa sukha*)
- Mundane meditative (*jhānic*) pleasures
- *Nibbānic (nirāmisa) sukha*

2. *Āmisa* means material; “*āmisa dāna*” is offering of material things. Thus *āmisa sukha* is the pleasures that arise from material things. Sense pleasures are the ones all of us are familiar with. We like to indulge in sense pleasures. We like to see beautiful pictures or people; hear soothing music; taste good food, etc.

- The drawback with sense pleasures is that the pleasure lasts only while one is satisfying the particular sense faculty; as soon as we finish eating, for example, the pleasure goes away. Also, we cannot keep eating either, even if we wanted to; we will get sick of it soon enough no matter how good the food is.
- Same is true for any other sense pleasure. One cannot keep listening to music or watch movies for too long at a stretch.
- However, the craving for any sense pleasure comes back after a while. It is never permanently satisfied.

3. People who have been doing *samatha* meditation (for example, breath or *kasina*) know that it gives a pleasure that is different from any sense pleasure.

- One could meditate for hours (especially if one gets into a *jhānic* state), and can enjoy it as long as one wants. Furthermore, even after the session, the calming effect is there for a while. It gives a sense of peacefulness that can last for hours.
- If one dies while in a *jhānic* state, then one will be born in the corresponding *Brahma* world (either in the *rūpa loka* or in the *arūpa loka* depending on the *jhānic* state). However, a birth in one of the lowest four realms is not ruled out for births after that.
- The ability to get into *jhānic* states could be lost even in this lifetime if one commits a really bad *kamma*, or start indulging heavily in sense pleasures.
- *Jhānic* states are attained via TEMPORARY blocking of the defilements of greed and hate from the mind by focusing the mind on a neutral object such as breath, rising and falling of stomach, or a *kasina* object, for example.

4. The *niramisa sukha* is of more permanent nature even compared to *jhānic* pleasures, especially if one has attained at least the first stage of *Nibbāna*, the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- *Niramisa* is opposite of *amisa* that we mentioned earlier; thus *niramisa sukha* does not arise due to material things. It is totally mental, it is in fact the happiness due to release or dissociation from material things. It is more of a relief sensation rather than an enjoyment. It is like the feeling when a pulsating headache goes away; a sense of calm and peacefulness.
- Stated in another way, *niramisa sukha* is present when where there is no suffering.
- The *niramisa sukha* of a *Sotāpanna* (or above) is never lost. If *Ariya jhānas* are cultivated, that can be summoned at any time. The *Sotāpanna* status is never lost even through future lives.
- Once the final stage of *Nibbāna* is attained, there is nothing else to do. An *Arahant* who has developed higher *jhānas* can even experience the full *Nibbānic* pleasure (*saññā vedayita nirodha sammāpatti*) can be summoned at will any time during the lifetime for up to seven days at a time. At death, permanent *Nibbāna* is attained.
- The four *Nibbānic* states are attained via PERMANENT removal of greed, hate, and ignorance in four stages. This involves insight (*vipassana*) meditation, most importantly on the three characteristics of existence: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- Even before the *Sotāpanna* stage, one can start feeling the *niramisa sukha* by systematically removing greed, hate, and ignorance; see, “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)”.

More information on *niramisa sukha* can be found at “[Niramisa Sukha](#)”.

Also see: [Learning Buddha Dhamma Leads to Niramisa Sukha](#)

6.1.2.5 Learning Buddha Dhamma Leads to Niramisa Sukha

1. It is good hear from those who have been able to “get to a peaceful state of mind” by reading posts at this site. This is nothing but early stages of *Nibbāna* or “*niveema*” or “cooling down”, and is also called the “*niramisa sukha*”. That is a characteristic of “pure Dhamma” and I cannot take any credit for it. This post explains how it happens.

- In other posts I have discussed why “formal meditation” is not required to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage; see, for example, “[What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)”. Here would like to discuss how this “*niramisa sukha*” arises when one reads (or listens) to the true Dhamma, and how that can take one all the way to the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- Before that, I need to point out that the “Search” box on the top right can be very useful in navigating the site when one is looking for specific information. Avoid writing sentences or even phrases, but just enter keywords. One could narrow down the number of posts that come up by adding more relevant keywords.

- By the way, one could read earlier posts on *niramisa sukha* by just typing “niramisa sukha” in the Search box.
- On the issue of writing to me, it is best to make a comment on a web page if you have not sent me any emails before. My hotmail account (lal54@hotmail.com) puts emails from unknown addresses to the junk folder most of the time. If you have previously received an email from me, it is OK to write directly; but if it regarding a particular post, it is better to make the comment under that web page. If you have written to me and did not get a response from me, please try sending it as a comment under a web page.

2. Our minds are under stress constantly due to its tendency to know everything that is going on not only at the physical vicinity, but also things that happened in the past or one’s hopes for the future.

- That tendency intensifies when we have excessively greedy or hateful thoughts; these two are called *kamachanda* (strong greed) and *vyāpāda* (strong hate), the two key elements of the five hindrances that “cover our minds”. The other three hindrances are basically due to those and also due to our ignorance how nature operates.
- Think about how “you were on fire” when you got either excessively angry or excessively greedy or lustful.
- When one reads (or listens) attentively to anything of interest, all those hindrances are REDUCED. However, depending on what type of material it is, this suppression may not be very effective. For example, if one is reading a scientific or geography paper, they may be reduced, but if one reading a pornographic novel or listening to rap music, they may actually increase.
- If one is reading Dhamma that is not true Dhamma (or for that matter, any type of religious material), it will still reduce those five hindrances because that material will not induce any greedy or hateful thoughts.

3. However, there is a big difference in reading (or listening to) true Buddha Dhamma. This is of course something one can verify for oneself (as many have).

- Listening or reading true Dhamma elevates the “*preethi*” (or “*pīti*”) *cetasika* making one joyful, which in turn makes the body “light”, causes physical calmness, and lead to *samādhi*: “*pīti manassa kayo passadati, passadi kayo sukhantiyati, sukhino samadhiyati*”.
- We will discuss this at a deeper level, in *Abhidhamma*, where we will discuss how various “mind made *rūpa*” like *lahuta* (lightness), *Muduta* (Elasticity), and *Kammannata* (wieldiness) can make one’s body “light” or “heavy” depending on the mental status; see, “[Rūpa \(Material Form\) – Table](#)”. For example, they are related to the *cetasika* like *kayapassaddhi* (tranquility of mental body); *cittapassaddhi* (tranquility of consciousness); see, #6 of “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)”.
- And this *samādhi* is attained via the suppression of ALL FIVE hindrances; **it is commonly called “*samatha*”**. One does not need to do a special “*samatha bhāvanā*” (like the breath meditation) to calm the mind. If one pays enough attention and gets absorbed in the subject matter while listening to a *desanā* or reading Dhamma, one could even attain the *Sotāpanna* stage.

4. This is the *samādhi* (or feeling of well-being) one feels when reading (or listening) to true Dhamma. It is also called early stages of “*niramisa sukha*”; see the chart, “[Niramisa Sukha – In a Chart](#)”. It can be printed for reference while reading this post.

- “*Niramisa sukha*”, by definition, can be experienced only after one hears the true message of the Buddha: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, even though some sense of calm can also be experienced when focusing on any religious activity in general where the difference between what is moral and what is immoral is taught.
- True *niramisa sukha* can be experienced only when one starts seeing a glimpse of the “true nature of this world” and becomes a “*Sotāpanna Anugami*”, i.e., one on the way to become a

Sotāpanna. This means one is exposed to the true meaning of existence in this world of 31 realms: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. **Now one has the POTENTIAL to become a *Sotāpanna*.**

- When one strives and comprehends the key message of the Buddha that seeking lasting happiness cannot be realized by staying in this beginningless rebirth process, one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage. Then one can “see” the path to *Nibbāna* and proceed on one’s own. One has removed an “Earth-equivalent of defilements” through *Sammā Diṭṭhi*; this is called “*dassanena pahathabba*”, i.e., “removing defilements via true vision or wisdom”; see, “[What is the Only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)”.
- Higher stages of *Nibbāna* normally need formal meditation techniques. The most comprehensive is given in the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. However, the early parts of the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, especially the *Kayanupassana* section, is geared towards help attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage.

5. The key difference between a person following the mundane Eightfold path and the Noble Eightfold Path is the following: **One on the mundane path avoids immoral activities because one is afraid of their consequences. However, a *Sotāpanna* avoids *dasa akusala* because he/she has seen the FRUITLESSNESS of such immoral activities.**

- For example, “What is the point of lying to make money, if that cannot provide one with lasting happiness?” That can be applied to any of the 7 immoral activities done by speech and the body. And that is due to the cleansing of the mind and reduction of the 3 *akusala* done by the mind, where the one of them (*niyata micca diṭṭhi*) has now been permanently REMOVED; see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”.
- **Thus the moral behavior (“*sila*” or “*seela*”) of a *Sotāpanna* comes from within, and it is called the “*Ariyakāntha Seela*”.** It is unshakeable, and remains through future lives.
- Just like someone who has really learned algebra instinctively knows how to solve a previously-unsolved algebra problem, a *Sotāpanna* instinctively avoids doing *dasa akusala* of “*apayagami* strength”, i.e., those actions that lead to birth in the *apāyas*. (On the other hand, a person who has only memorized how to solve a few algebra problems can only solve those; he/she is likely to make mistakes in dealing with previously unencountered problems).
- Once one sees a glimpse of *Sammā Diṭṭhi*, one can cultivate it further; also the other seven components of the Noble Eightfold Path (*Sammā Sankappa*, *Sammā Vaca*, etc) automatically follow.

6. During the time of the Buddha, many people attained the *Sotāpanna* stage during the first discourse they listened to. Attaining higher stages of *Nibbāna* could take more formal meditation by cultivating the basics that one has just grasped.

- Visaka attained the *Sotāpanna* stage at 7 years of age, and could not attain any higher stages until death. King Bimbisara also died as a *Sotāpanna*. Yet they are guaranteed to attain full *Nibbāna* within 7 *bhava*.
- Upatissa and Kolita attained the *Sotāpanna* stage while listening to a single verse; it took them a few days to attain the *Arahant* stage. They of course became the two chief disciples of the Buddha, Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana.
- Thus, formal meditation is normally needed to attain the higher stages of *Nibbāna* above the *Sotāpanna* stage. Of course, there are exceptions, like Bahiya Daruchiriya, who attained the *Arahantship* straightaway while listening to a verse uttered by the Buddha.

7. When one really feels that one has experienced significant level of *niramisa sukha*, one could use that experience to build-up on that *samādhi*.

- One can use the phrase, “*etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasāṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhākkhaya virāgo nirodho Nibbāna’ti*”. [[AN 9.36 : Jhānasutta](#), [AN 10.6 : Samādhisutta](#), [AN 3.32 : Ānandasutta](#), [AN 11.8 : Manasikārasutta](#), [AN 11.7 : Saññāsutta](#), [AN 10.60 : Girimānandasutta](#)] [*It is peaceful, it is serene, the expelling of all *sankhāra*, breaking of bonds, removing greed and hate; Nibbāna*]

- Here is a recording of the *Pāli* verse by the Venerable *Thero* (recited 7 times; note the volume control on the right):

[WebLink: Listen to verse of : Ethan santhang ethan panithang](#)

- One could say in English, “This is peaceful, this is ecstasy, that is achieved by calming down *saṅkhāra*, by breaking all bonds, by quenching of *taṇhā*, overcoming *rāga*, and eliminating all causes, which is *Nibbāna*”.
- What matters is not the actual words, but the understanding one has in one’s mind, even though it may be best to recite in *Pāli* with the understanding. One should be recalling the “cooling down” that one has achieved.
- **However, one should not spend too much time on this, as that will take time away from learning Dhamma.** Learning Dhamma could make attaining *samādhi* faster.

8. Whenever one become restless (the *uddhacca kukkucca* hindrance becoming strong) and get the urge to “go watch a movie” or “stop by a friend’s house”, one could try reading (listening to) Dhamma. Similarly, if one gets bored and lethargic (*thina middha* hindrance becoming strong), try the same; ditto for when one is struggling to figure out “how to proceed on a key decision” due to the *vicikicca* hindrance.

- The “*preethi*” or joyfulness that arises with *samādhi* WILL keep all those hindrances down, especially the *thina middha*. This is the real test of one’s ability to get to *samādhi*. If the state of *samādhi* is at a significant level, one should be able to follow the procedure in #7 above and “not fall asleep” even right after a good meal when one usually gets sleepy.

9. Even though learning Dhamma in general will lead to the above discussed effects, comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* WILL make a big difference. However, that may take more reading and comprehension of the wider world view of the Buddha: how *kamma* operates, 31 realms of existence, the rebirth process, *paticca samuppāda*, etc.

- It is not possible even to suggest which order of topics to choose, because each person is different. And it is imperative that one should not rush through them. **Gradual, steady progress is better than getting the hopes high and feeling depressed if things do not proceed fast enough.**
- What I would suggest, in general, is to first focus on the concepts that one starts understanding easily and slowly expand the “knowledge base” by reading on other relevant links.
- Also, it is good idea to go back and read some key posts that one has not read for a while. One may grasp more content from the same post when read at a later time, because what is learnt in the mean time could expose deeper meanings. I know this by experience. This is the uniqueness of Buddha Dhamma; the learning never ends, rather it just intensifies with added evidence.
- It will stop being a “chore” and will become joyful as one learns more and more. The more one learns, the more energized one will become.

10. Even though it may not seem to be a “big deal”, understanding *anicca* (or cultivating the *anicca saññā*) will make a huge change in one’s progress, after one gains some understanding of the basic concepts like rebirth and *kamma*.

- I had struggled intensely for 3-4 years and made an enormous advance in listening to one discourse on *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. But of course I had learned a lot of background material by that time, and had given a lot of thought to various concepts.
- Still, by knowing what things are really important could make things easier for someone just starting out, or has been “on the wrong path”.
- My hope is that many will be able to attain at least the first stage of *Nibbāna* much more quickly than I did.

6.1.2.6 Need to Experience Suffering in Order to Understand it?

Revised August 18, 2016; Revised February 4, 2017

1. It is a common misconception that one needs to experience **harsh suffering** in order to understand what the Buddha meant by the First Noble Truth, that there is “suffering in this world”.

- Thus, especially in the days of the Buddha, some people deliberately lived a miserable life, thinking that it will help understand suffering. They subjected their bodies to various forms of discomfort and even torture.
- This is actually one extreme that the Buddha said NOT to follow: “*atta kilamatanu yoga*“, or subjecting oneself to unnecessary suffering. Closest English translations would be “an ascetic life”, where one forcefully abstains from any comforts.

2. The Buddha never encouraged anyone to deliberately undergo suffering. The **suffering** that the Buddha talked about **is hidden and is about future suffering in this life and in future lives**. There are two kinds of “hidden suffering” that the Buddha revealed to the world:

- One is the very harsh suffering in the rebirth process (when one is born in the lowest four realms or the *apāyas*).
- The other is the “incessant distress” that we all undergo even without realizing it: “[The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#)“.
- **Anyone, rich or poor, undergoes this latter type of suffering in this life.** The Buddha pointed out that one could discover this type of hidden suffering and remove it too: “[Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#)“ and other posts in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.

3. If one needs to suffer more to attain *Nibbāna*, then those who are in the *apāyas* would be the first attain *Nibbāna*! Most of the suffering is experienced when one is born in the *apāyas* or the lower four realms, see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“.

- In order to actually realize the true suffering, whether in this life or in the lower four realms, **one needs to contemplate (*bhāvanā*) with a healthy body and a clear mind.**
- If one is hungry, one CANNOT understand the causes of suffering; rather one will be generating hateful thoughts. Same is true for all four necessities of life: food, shelter, clothing, and medicine. We NEED those things to survive.
- What we should NOT do is to over-indulge in any of the above four necessities of life. That is the other extreme that the Buddha said to avoid: “*kāma sukallikanu yoga*“, or to over-indulge in sense pleasures, i.e., to live a hedonistic life.

4. It is commonly said that the Buddha advocated the “middle ground”, i.e., to avoid both an ascetic life (with self-induced suffering) or a hedonistic (over-indulgent) life. That is true, but there is more to it.

There is a deeper meaning to “*majjima patipada*“. The way to a peaceful existence (or to *Nibbāna*) is to get rid of greed, hate, AND ignorance. The two extremes that we talked about above do involve hate or at least *patigha* or “friction” (when subjecting oneself to suffering) and greed (indulging in excessive sense pleasures).

- Just because one stays away from those two extremes does not necessarily mean one is on the “correct path”. The Path is not just a “middle ground” between those two extremes.
- **The key is to learn Dhamma and to systematically reduce greed, hate, and ignorance.**
- Of course, living a life away from the two extremes is conducive — even necessary — to learn Dhamma and to gradually remove defilements from the mind.

5. In between those two extremes, one needs to avoid being influenced by an “intoxicated mind”. In between the above two extremes, people also act in improper ways intoxicated by power, beauty, position, (book) knowledge, lineage, etc as well as by alcohol and drugs. This is due to *avijjā* or ignorance.

- Thus, “*majjima patipada*” really means to follow a lifestyle without corrupting the mind with such things that can corrupt a mind and makes it unsuitable for contemplation on the deeper truth of suffering in “this world of 31 realms”.
- To clarify: “*majji*” is intoxication, and “*mā*” is to get rid of. Thus *majjima patipada* is to follow a lifestyle that avoids the corruption of the mind by excess attachments to sense pleasures.

6. In summary, the Buddha recommended a “common sense” comfortable, but simple, life that is conducive to meditation. Here meditation (*bhāvanā*) is not necessarily “formal meditation”. The Buddha said, “*bhavanaya bahuleekathaya*”, or “contemplate as often as possible”. [*bahulīkata*: [pp. of *bahulīkaroti*] took up seriously; increased. (adj.), practised frequently.]

- One also needs to be avoiding immoral actions, speech, or thoughts as much as possible, and actually cultivate moral actions, speech, and thoughts. That helps suppress the five hindrances (*pancanivarana*) and have a peaceful state of mind, i.e., one could start experiencing the *niramisa sukha* that arises due to a “more pure state of mind”.

7. One can be contemplating the nature of the world as one goes through daily chores. Another aspect of this is the ability to calm the mind; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind](#)”.

- A bigger picture implied here is that we need to educate our children so that they can find good employment and thus be able to live without having to worry about those four necessities of life. As they grow up, we need to educate them in Dhamma (how to live a moral life) too, but not at the expense of them getting a good education.

8. **Suffering is NOT the Noble truth on Suffering, i.e., *Dukha* (feeling of suffering) is NOT *dukkha sacca* (the Noble Truth that suffering can be stopped from arising);** *sacca* pronounced “sachcha” and means “truth”.

- The Noble truth of *dukkha sacca* is about comprehending how suffering ARISES due to greed, hate, and ignorance (of this fact). One can understand that –and take steps to avoid future suffering — by learning Dhamma: *anicca, dukkha, anatta, paticca samuppāda*, etc.
- The Buddha said “This Dhamma is unlike anything that the world has ever seen”. The actual suffering is hidden WITHIN the apparent enjoyments. Also see, “[The Incessant Distress \(Peleema\)](#)” – [Key to Dukkha Sacca](#)“.
- For another description of *majjima patipada*, see, “[Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta](#)“.

Next, “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)“,

6.1.2.7 How to Taste Nibbāna

1. Elsewhere on the site, I have described *Nibbāna* in a deeper sense. But we can look at early stages of *Nibbāna* in a simple way.

- In Sinhala language (spoken in Sri Lanka), *Nibbāna* is also called “*nivana*” or “*niveema*”. This means “cooling down”. As one move towards *Nibbāna* one feels cooling down, a sense of well-being.

2. Do you remember the last time when you got really mad? How did that feel? You get hot. Whole body becomes hot and agitated; blood pressure goes up; face becomes dark, because the blood becomes dark.

- This “burning up” is called “*tāpa*” in Pāli, and is due to greed, hate, and ignorance. “*Ātāpi*” means the opposite, “cooling down via getting rid of those defilements”. This is what is meant by “*ātāpi sampajāno*” in the *Satipatṭhāna sutta*; see the *sutta* section for details.
- When someone can get to the “*ātāpi sampajāno*” state, one feels calm and “cooled down”.

3. Do you remember how you felt when you made someone happy, either via a good deed or word? You cooled down; felt good. Didn’t you feel the opposite of when you got mad?

- When one acts with greed, “heating up” still happens, may be to a lesser extent than when one is angry. As a kid, when I was stealing something, I felt heated and uncomfortable.
- Same is true when one acts with ignorance too. One is not certain whether that is the right thing to do; the mind goes back and forth: is this right or wrong? should I do it or not? This is called “*vicikicca*” in Pāli. Because one does not really know, one is not certain, one becomes anxious, and the body gets heated up.

4. Thus, when one gives up acting with hate, greed, or ignorance, one becomes less agitated, at ease, with a sense of peacefulness. This is an early sense of what *Nibbāna* is.

- As one can see the benefits of cooling down, one will avoid actions done with hate, greed, and ignorance. And one will be looking forward to do actions of goodwill, generosity, and with mindfulness.

5. Also note the state of thoughts (*citta*) in the two opposing situations. When one acts with the defilements, thoughts run wildly; they come fast and they are energetic. The “*javana*” (impulsive power) of a thought is high when acting with a defilement.

- On the other hand, thoughts run more smoothly and the *javana* (impulsive power) of a given thought is calm when acting benevolently, with kindness, with generosity, and with mindfulness; they are powerful too, but only in making one calm. Thus one can experience a taste of *Nibbāna* or “cooling down” even at the very early stages of the Path.

6. Now, one could get to TEMPORARY cooling down by not letting thoughts run wildly. The easiest to do is to keep the mind on a single focus. This can be done by focusing the mind on a religious symbol or just on the breath. Thus this “temporary relief” is felt by people of any religion when they contemplate on a religious symbol with faith, or by doing “breath meditation” or mundane “*ānāpāna sati*” meditation.

- However, the only way to achieve permanent sense relief is to REMOVE greed, hate, and ignorance gradually by cleansing one’s mind. This is done by “taking in” (*āna*) of good thoughts, speech, and actions and “getting rid of” (*pāna*) defiled thoughts, speech, and actions. **This is the Buddha’s *ānāpāna* meditation that can lead to PERMANENT happiness.**
- When one does this correct “*ānāpāna*” consistently, one’s bad habits (“*gathi*”) will be gradually removed and good habits (“*gathi*”) will be cultivated.
- When one has removed the defilements to a significant extent, then this relief becomes permanent and will not reduce from that state even in future births. **This first stage of *Nibbāna* is called the *Sotāpanna* stage.** A *Sotāpanna* is guaranteed not to be reborn in the *apāyas* or the four lowest realms; he/she has removed all “*gathi*” suitable for beings in the *apāyas*.

7. **However, it is impossible to remove greed and hate just by sheer will power**, i.e., forcefully. For example, one cannot get rid of greed even by giving away one’s wealth; if that is done without understanding, then it could lead to remorse and hate.

- Rather, getting rid of greed and hate comes AUTOMATICALLY as one understands the worldview of the Buddha: that we cannot maintain anything to our satisfaction in the LONG RUN. This worldview is embedded in the Three Characteristics of “this world” or *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- Not knowing the Three Characteristics is the ignorance or *avijjā*.
- This is why *Sammā Ditṭhi* or “correct world view” comes first in the Noble Eightfold Path. When one comprehends the true nature of “this world”, one’s mind will AUTOMATICALLY start rejecting thoughts, words, and actions through greed and hate. Thus *Sammā Ditṭhi* (correct vision) will automatically lead to *Sammā Sankappa* (fruitful thoughts), *Sammā Vaca* (fruitful speech), *Sammā Kammanta* (fruitful actions), *Sammā Ajiva* (livelihood), *Sammā Vayama* (efforts in those), *Sammā Sati* (moral mindset) and then will culminate in *Sammā Samādhi* (peaceful state of mind). This *Sammā Samādhi* is permanent for a *Sotāpanna*.

- Thus it is clear that such a *samādhī* cannot be attained with breath meditation or any other way of “focusing attention” on one thought object.
- Purification of the mind is the key, and that comes first through reading, listening, and comprehending the true and pure Dhamma.

8. As one follows the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha, one can EXPERIENCE a sense of well-being called *niramisa sukha* which is different from the sense pleasures; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”.

- If you did experience a sense of well-being just by reading this post, that is a good start. That sense of well being will only grow as the understanding gets deeper. I have gone through this process myself and that is what I am trying to convey to others.

9. **September 22, 2016:** I have started a new section: “[Living Dhamma](#)“, where an experience-based process of practicing Buddha Dhamma (Buddhism) is discussed with English discourses (*desanā*). *Nibbāna* can be experienced at various levels, one needs to experience the earlier stages of *niramisa sukha* first.

Next, “[Need to Experience Suffering in Order to Understand it?](#)“, ..

6.1.2.8 Does Impermanence Lead to Suffering?

The following statements are in frequent use in most books in both Mahayana and Theravāda:

1. “We suffer because our bodies is impermanent; they are subject to decay and death”
2. “We suffer because those things we get attached to are impermanent”
3. “If something is impermanent, that leads to suffering”
4. “Since everything in this world is impermanent, everything is suffering”, etc.

So, is there a direct correlation between impermanence and suffering? Let us examine those statements.

1. “We suffer because our bodies is impermanent; they are subject to decay and death”

- It is true that WE suffer because OUR bodies are impermanent and are subject to decay and death. But if it is an enemy, do we suffer when that enemy gets sick or die? We suffer if someone we LIKE gets sick or die, but it is cause for celebration for most people when someone they dislike gets sick or dies.
- Actually the suffering/happiness is directly proportional to the attachment/dislike we have for that person. Suffering due to a loss of one’s child is more compared to the loss of a distant relative. Happiness due to Bin Laden’s death was higher compared to the death of an unknown terrorist. (For a follower of Bin Laden, his death would have led to suffering).

Suffering arises only when things do not proceed as we like. It is the human nature to want the loved ones to be unharmed, and the enemies to come to harm. When either does not happen, that leads to suffering. That is what *anicca* means: the inability to maintain things to our liking.

2. “We suffer because those things we get attached to are impermanent”

- There are many things in this world that cause us suffering because they will not stay in the same condition or are destroyed; that is true. BUT there are many other “permanent” things in this world (at least relative to our lifetime of 100 years), AND if they cause us suffering that is NOT because they decay or are destroyed; rather it is because we cannot maintain them to our satisfaction.
- If a woman has a gold necklace it is not impermanent, i.e, it will last for thousands of years. But the woman could become distressed if the necklace is lost or if she has to sell it to raise money for food or some such necessity.

If ANYTHING causes US suffering, that is because we cannot maintain it to OUR satisfaction, OUR liking.

3. “If something is impermanent, that leads to suffering”

This is the direct (incorrect) translation of Buddha's words: “*yadaniccā tan dukkham*“, i.e., “if something is not permanent, that leads to suffering”. But the correct translation is, “if something cannot be maintained to our liking, that leads to suffering”. Let us consider some examples:

- If we have a headache, and if it is not permanent (i.e, it goes away), does that cause suffering? No. However, if the headache becomes permanent, that will cause a lot of suffering.
- If we get cancer, wouldn't it cause happiness if it becomes impermanent?, i.e., if it goes away?
- If a relative that we do not like come to stay with us, would it lead to happiness if the stay becomes permanent or impermanent? Of course it will cause us happiness if the stay is not permanent and the person leaves.

4. “Since everything in this world is impermanent, everything is suffering”

The Buddha never said everything in this world leads to suffering. If everything is suffering then everyone will be looking to attain *Nibbāna* as soon as possible. The reality is that there are sense pleasures to be had in this world. Most people do not understand why one should go to all this trouble to “give up all these sense pleasures and seek *Nibbāna*“.

- Taking the “big picture”, out of the 31 realms in this world, there are actually many realms where suffering is much less than even the human realm; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“.
- But there is unimaginable suffering in the lowest four realms, AND that is what we need to avoid. Even though there are 31 realms, MOST LIVING BEINGS (99.99%+) are trapped in the lowest four realms.
- Thus what is true is that this *sansaric* journey is filled with UNIMAGINABLE suffering. However, one cannot see that unless one learns true Dhamma.
- Even in this life there is much suffering, especially as one gets old, and the suffering is highest close to death if the death is due to an ailment. If one enjoys sex, that ability to enjoy sex will fade away as one gets old; it does not matter how much money one has. Even our taste buds will not give us the same enjoyment from foods as we get old. All our sense faculties will start performing less and less as we get old. This is *anicca*; we cannot maintain things to our satisfaction in the long run.
- Even if we are born in a higher realm where there is much happiness, that also cannot be maintained. One day, that life will be over and one WILL end up in a lower realm at some point, and then it will be very hard to get out of there. That is *anicca*.
- Furthermore, if the cause of suffering is impermanence, then it cannot be eliminated, see, “[Would Nibbāna be Possible if Impermanence is the Cause of Suffering?](#)“.

In Pāli (or in Sinhala), the word “*icca*” (pronounced “*ichchā*”) means liking. Thus *anicca* (pronounced “*anichchā*”) means not to liking.

Therefore, the correct translation of “*yadaniccā tan dukkham*” is “if something cannot be maintained to our satisfaction, that leads to suffering”. You can take any example you like and verify for yourself that it is a universal principle, an unchanging characteristic of this world, as the Buddha stated.

Without understanding the three characteristics of “this world”, it is not possible to grasp the message of the Buddha. Those three characteristics are: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. These are the words in the *Tipitaka*, that was written down more than 2000 years ago, in 29 BCE.

- The problem started when these words were translated to Sanskrit as *anitya*, *dukkha*, *anatma*; this started probably as far back as in the first or second century CE.
- Then those Sanskrit words were translated to English as impermanence, suffering, and “no-self”. The two worst translations are impermanence and “no-self”.

- Those two Sanskrit words, *anitya* and *anatma*, are being used by many in Sri Lanka today as Sinhala words representing the translations of the “Pali words”, *anicca* and *anatta*.
- However, *anicca* and *anatta* are “old Sinhala” words (i.e., not in use today, but when explained one can see the meaning) with completely different meanings than *anitya* and *anatma*.

The Buddha stated that those three characteristics, *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anatta* are related:

“*yadaniccā tan dukkham, tan dukkham tadanatta*”, or,

“if something is not *nicca*, *dukkha* arises, and because of that one becomes helpless, i.e., *anatta*”.

As mentioned above, as one gets old or gets disabled, these three characteristics will be easier to see for oneself; but then it would be too late, because the mind gets weaker as we get old. One needs to learn Dhamma BEFORE the mind (and the body) become weak. Here is a set of pictures that show this clearly : [RANKER: Celebrities Who Have Aged the Worst](#)

Also, see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta - Wrong Interpretations](#)“, and “[Why is Correct Interpretation of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta so Important?](#)” for more details.

Next, “[What is Mind – How do we Experience the Outside World?](#)“,

6.1.3 Buddha Dhamma and Buddhism

“[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)”

“[A Buddhist or a Bhoudhaya?](#)”

“[Where to Start on the Path?](#)”

“[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”

“[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)”

“[Buddhism without Rebirth and Nibbāna?](#)”

6.1.3.1 What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?

1. When I hear the common statement, “all religions are the same, they teach you how to live a MORAL LIFE”, I cringe. That is because I think about all those people who are unaware of the actual message of the Buddha.

- It is true that most religions teach how to live a moral life. And there is also evidence that atheists may be as moral as religious people are; see, “[WebLink: Morality in everyday life-Science-2014-Hofmann](#)“.
- However, Buddha Dhamma goes beyond that. The Buddha said, no matter how well we live this life that will not help one in the LONG TERM.
- Yet, even to understand that message of the Buddha, one needs to live a moral life first.

2. I have made a one-pager, which should be referenced here.

[Niramisa Sukha – In a Chart](#)

This chart can be viewed in a separate panel by clicking on “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)” and printed for reference. There are a few key things that need explanation first:

- The “mundane Eightfold Path” is depicted by the set of boxes in red starting with “mundane *sammā diṭṭhi*“. The next box depicts mundane versions of *sammā sankappa*, *sammā vaca*, and *sammā kammanta* (“think, speak, and act morally to avoid bad outcomes/seek good outcomes”) and so on until “mundane *sammā samādhi*“.
- Most of these steps (not all) are in other religions as well as in conventional “Buddhism”, i.e., how to live a moral life. The goal of most other religions is to gain a (permanent) heavenly life at death. In the current versions of distorted “Buddhism”, the joys of heavenly lives are valued

and often one is sometimes even encouraged to “enjoy such heavenly lives” before attaining *Nibbāna*.

- This misconception in “Buddhism” arises because the rarity of a “good rebirth” has not been comprehended; see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)”. This is why the Buddha said, “no happiness can be found anywhere in the 31 realms” (which is the true meaning of *anicca*).
- **Even if a heavenly rebirth is attained in the next life, a future rebirth in the four lowest realms (*apāyas*) cannot be avoided without attaining the Sotāpanna stage of *Nibbāna*.** A phrase used by some *bhikkhus* in Sri Lanka goes as, “May you attain *Nibbāna* at the time of the Buddha Maithree (next Buddha)”. Why not attain *Nibbāna* in this life? *Who is going to give guarantees that one will be born human during the time of the Buddha Maithree?* Everyone should make use of this rare opportunity to be human, *to strive now!*
- Until one comprehends *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, one always values future happiness in a permanent heaven (most religions) OR temporary happiness in heavenly worlds (traditional “Buddhists”). The difference between a traditional “Buddhist” and a *Bhauddhaya* is discussed in “[A Buddhist or a Bhauddhaya?](#)”.
- One actually starts on the transcendental (*lokottara*) or the Noble Eightfold Path when one comprehends the dangers of the rebirth process and BECOMES a *Sotāpanna*.
- When one is trying to attain that understanding, one is called a *Sotāpanna magga anugāmi*; see, “[Sotāpanna Magga Anugami and a Sotāpanna](#)”.

3. Thus one starts on the Noble Eightfold Path starting with *lokottara* (transcendental) *sammā diṭṭhi* of a *Sotāpanna* (set of blue boxes). One has seen a “glimpse of *Nibbāna*”, i.e., one KNOWS that permanent happiness is not possible anywhere in the 31 realms and that whatever effort one makes to achieve such a happiness is like chasing a mirage.

- Note the difference in the box next to “*sammā diṭṭhi*” in the two cases. In the mundane path, “*sammā sankappa*, *sammā vaca*, *sammā kammanta*” are “moral thoughts, speech, and actions” intended to avoid bad outcomes and to seek good outcomes.
- In the Noble path, “*sammā sankappa*, *sammā vaca*, *sammā kammanta*” are “thoughts, speech, and actions” intended to stop the rebirth process. **One does not do immoral things because there is “no point” in doing such things.** One knows that such things are not only unfruitful, but also dangerous, in the long run.
- And one becomes more compassionate towards all living beings (not just humans), because one can see that each living being is suffering because of ignorance of the Buddha’s key message. One also realizes that one needs to fulfil obligations to others in order to “pay back old debts”; one is bound to the rebirth process not only via cravings for worldly things, but also via unpaid debts from previous lives.

4. The decision to become a *Sotāpanna magga anugami* (the path to the *Sotāpanna* stage) can be made anytime after getting to the “red boxes”, i.e., while one is on the mundane Eightfold Path.

- In a way, a *Sotāpanna magga anugami* is a [A Buddhist or a Bhauddhaya?](#) in the real sense. Even though not in the *Tipitaka*, sometimes the word “*Cula Sotāpanna*” (pronounced “chūla sōtapanna”) is also used to describe the same person.
- The key is to comprehend the “true nature of this world of 31 realms” that the Buddha described, i.e., that it is not possible to achieve/maintain anything that can be kept to one’s satisfaction (*anicca*), thus one gets to suffer (*dukkha*), and thus one is truly helpless in the rebirth process (*anatta*). This realization itself is like lifting a heavy load that one has been carrying, the first true taste of *Nibbāna*.

5. This “change of mindset” for a *Sotāpanna* is PERMANENT, i.e., it will not change even in future rebirths. One has attained an “unbreakable” level of confidence (*saddhā*) in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha.

- And a *Sotāpanna* can follow the rest of the 7 steps in the Noble Eightfold Path even without help from others. Thus one will attain the next three stages of *Nibbāna* (*Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi*, *Arahant*) successively by following those steps.

6. In the *Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta*, the Buddha outlined how one needs to first follow the mundane (“*lokiya*”) Eightfold Path; see, “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)“. This is a first NECESSARY step in order to get rid of the worse kinds “gunk” that have been built up over countless lives.

- With the unique message of the Buddha has been hidden for hundreds of years, what is conventionally practised today is just this mundane Eightfold Path. This is what we call “Buddhism” today.
- Since “Buddhism” not that different from what is advised by most other religions, it is easier for people to resonate with the mundane concepts in “Buddhism”, where *Sammā Diṭṭhi* , for example, is considered to be the “correct vision” of “how to live a moral life”.
- Of course that is a first necessary step. That will help one to be able to experience the benefits of moral behavior (even in this life as a “*niramisa sukha*“; see “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)“) and then to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and to embark on the Noble Eightfold Path to seek permanent happiness or *Nibbāna*.

Next, “[Is Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) a Religion?](#)“,

6.1.3.2 A Buddhist or a Bhauddhaya?

Revised August 18, 2016

1. The terms “Buddhism” and “Buddhist” were invented by the English, French, and German historians in the nineteenth century when they first came across Buddha Dhamma in India and Sri Lanka.

- The discovery of the “Asoka pillars” in India was followed by the discovery of the Pāli literature on Buddha Dhamma in Sri Lanka and other countries such as Burma and Thailand (together with translated Chinese scripts); of course there were no practicing “Buddhists” or any Buddhist literature in India.

2. Here are two key points that should be the basis of defining the terms:

- Up to that time it was “Buddha Dhamma” or the “Dhamma or Teachings of the Buddha”.
- And a person who diligently followed the Path advised by the Buddha was called a “*Bhauddhayā*” (= *bhava* + *uddha* + *yā* = one who strives to stop the rebirth process, i.e., to stop suffering).

3. However, many people today have been exposed to bits and pieces of Buddha Dhamma. Many people are just happy to follow the precepts of moral conduct, do some *samatha* meditation (breath meditation) to relieve the stresses of modern life, and to see where that leads them. And that is a perfectly good approach, at least to start off.

4. Each person understands Buddha Dhamma differently, mainly based on the level of exposure to “correct Dhamma”.

- Thus most people have the following misconceptions: (1) that Buddha Dhamma will help alleviate suffering from physical ailments, (2) that it provides only temporary relief (also called *niramisa sukha*) from mental stress (as in breath meditation).

5. However, the Buddha pointed out two forms of hidden suffering that humans are not aware of:

- That incessant distress or agitation that we all feel (but mostly are unaware of) arises due to greed, hate, and ignorance.
- Immoral deeds that we commit due to these greedy, hateful, or ignorant mindset will lead to much higher forms of suffering in future rebirths (especially in animal and other lower realms).

6. Some do not believe in the rebirth process, so they cannot really “get traction” with the second type suffering associated with the rebirth process.

- However, many have experienced the *nirāmisa sukha* while participating in meditation retreats or regular meditation programs at home. However, they do not realize that such *nirāmisa sukha* can be made permanent, by learning pure Dhamma and by comprehending the *anicca* nature of this world; see, “[Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#)”.
- It is only when one starts realizing the *anicca* nature, that one becomes a true *Bhauddhaya* in the sense of its meaning in #2 above.

7. A *Bhauddhaya* starts to realize the futility of staying anywhere in the 31 realms, and at some point will attain the first stage of *Nibbāna*, i.e., become a *Sotāpanna*.

- At that stage one would have made that *nirāmisa sukha* permanent, i.e., if one did not do any meditation for the rest of the life, he/she will retain that *nirāmisa sukha*.
- A *Sotāpanna* would also be automatically be released from future births in the apāyas or the four lowest realms.
- How that happens is described in other sections of the site, especially in the section, “[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)”.

8. Many people initially become Buddhists because of either a desire to learn more about the “wider world”, contemplate on the “long-term existence”, i.e., the never ending rebirth process, or because they are interested in living a moral life that provides a sense of happiness.

- But in the very strict sense, if one really wants to follow the Path prescribed by the Buddha and become a “*Bhauddhaya*”, one needs to first understand what the rebirth process is, and why it is important to stop the rebirth process, i.e., they need to understand *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

9. There are no rituals to become either a Buddhist or a *Bhauddhaya*. As one becomes convinced of the Buddha’s world view and starts seeing that it is fruitless to HARM ONESELF OR OTHERS to gain anything “in this world”, he/she starts becoming a better Buddhist or a *Bhauddhaya*.

- As one becomes a Buddhist/*Bhauddhaya*, his/her personality may start changing without forcefully changing it. That is because one starts seeing the world differently and reacting to outside events differently. It is all about changing perceptions about “this world”, i.e., it is all mental.
- Because of this, one cannot become a *Bhauddhaya* or even a good Buddhist by just following rituals. One becomes a good Buddhist/*Bhauddhaya* by attempting to comprehend the message of the Buddha, and by experiencing the benefits as one progresses.

”*Dhammo ha ve rakkati Dhammacari*”, i.e., “Dhamma will guide and protect one who lives by Dhamma”. If one really starts becoming a Buddhist/*Bhauddhaya*, one will be able to see the changes in oneself as time goes by (others will start noticing after a bit longer). One’s likings and associations are the first to change.

Next, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”,

6.1.3.3 Where to Start on the Path?

This is a very important post. Please read the post through without clicking on any link first, in order to get the main idea that I am trying to convey. You may want to re-read the post several times, clicking on the links to find out more as you digest the key points. **Actually, this is true of all the posts: It is better to read through a given post first to get the main idea, and then to look into the details provided by the links as needed.**

- Anyone reading this website has been exposed to Buddha Dhamma in the past; by “past” I mean beginning-less time. Each of us have been “living” and “dying” innumerable times, in most of the 31 realms of existence; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”. Even though

a Buddha appears in the world after very long times, there have been innumerable Buddhas too. Some of you may not believe this, and that is fine. It may make sense later on.

Each of us has listened to a Buddha delivering a discourse, attained the highest *jhānas*, and also been born in the animal and *niraya* (the lowest realm) too. Our character and habits may have changed from “good” to “bad” many times over. Infinite time is very hard to grasp with the mind; see, “[Samsaric Time Scale](#)“, and “[Infinity – How Big is it?](#)“. Also, you may want to read the excellent book, “The Beginning of Infinity” by David Deutsch (2011) IF you are interested in a “scientific opinion”; actually, the descriptions are very similar in both cases in the sense that many things that sound implausible are not scientifically implausible, and in fact are necessary to explain the scientific data.

- As in this life, it is easy to remember relatively recent events in the *samsaric* journey. Those who can remember past lives, remember only the past one or few lives; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)“. The ‘habits’ and ‘tendencies’ that we have are the ones that we have had in the recent rebirths.
- Therefore, for some people, it may be easier to get into a *jhāna* (or to have a good meditative experience) just because they have had that experience in more recent lives; for another person, it may be harder just because that person may not have had that experience for very many births in the recent past.

One should not be discouraged if one’s understanding of Dhamma or “meditation experience” seems to be different from what one hears from others. The important thing is to first determine where one is in the relative scale of things and start at the right place. Most times there is no correlation between this evaluation and one’s “book knowledge” either.

One could use the basic guidelines provided by the Buddha. There are five stages starting with *dana* and ending with *nekkhamma*:

- *Dana* (giving, generosity, caring for others’ well being).
- *Sila* (moral conduct).
- *Sagga* (literally heaven, but meaning calm and peaceful mind).
- *Ādeenava* (seeing the fruitlessness and the danger of the 31 realms or the rebirth process).
- *Nekkhamma* (losing attachment to “things” in the 31 realms, and working diligently towards *Nibbāna*), which in turn leads to *nissarana* (stop this suffering-filled rebirth process) and thus *Nibbāna*.

These are not clear-cut steps, but are guidelines.

1. Most people, irrespective of the religion, are generous and enjoy giving. Just like *sila* below, *dana* induces happiness in oneself.

2. In Pāli it is *sila* (pronounced “seela”); in Sinhala it is “*seelaya*” (“*sisil*” means cooling down and “*laya*” means heart, so cooled heart), and thus is a bit more explanatory.

- Any act that makes one’s heart to cool down is an act of *sila*, i.e., it is moral conduct.
- When we act with compassion, say give a meal to someone hungry or help out an elderly person to cross the street, it makes our heart cool down. On the other hand, when we do something immoral or inappropriate, our heart gets agitated and the heart rate goes up, and the whole body heats up; also see, “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)“.
- It is the same compassion, extended to other living beings as well, that makes up the basis of the five precepts: avoiding any act that is harmful to any living being; see, “[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#)“.
- The humans are at a much higher “consciousness level” compared to animals, so we need to pay special attention not to even hurt the feelings of another human being; see, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)“. It is a good habit also to cultivate *metta* (loving kindness) to all beings; see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)“.

3. When one gets to the *Sagga* stage, it is relatively easy to calm the mind. One starts feeling the *niramisa sukha* (see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”) or the happiness of “cooling down” by voluntarily “giving up” (and sharing with others) things that one used to be quite possessive of. It is very subtle. One cannot just start giving everything that one owns; that will only lead to *patigha* or internal friction. In addition, one has responsibilities and debts to pay; see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”.

- Different people get “agitated” due to different “triggers”. This is because we have very different *sansaric* habits: things we really like and things we really dislike; there are several posts on these habits and “*āsavas*”. It is a good idea to make a self-assessment, figure out the “bad triggers” and make an effort to remove them.
- For example, if one has an “explosive temper” it is a good idea to make an effort to restraint oneself and also to do *metta bhāvanā*. It is important to realize that the anger is within oneself; it is not in an outside person or thing. I could get mad by thinking about person A, but there are many other people who have loving thoughts about the same person A. Same with greed, it is inside of us, not outside. These all originate from our *sansaric* likes and dislikes.

4. While it is hard for some to even start thinking about the ‘bigger picture’ of the 31 realms, and the possible suffering in future rebirths, some others may have thought about this “in the recent past in the *sansaric* rebirths”, and thus may be motivated to explore more.

5. The last stage is for those who have “seen the big picture” and the dangers of staying “in this world of 31 realms”, or at least have some inkling of it. When one starts feeling the *niramisa sukha* strongly, and also start seeing the suffering to come in the lower realms, giving up the rebirth process becomes an urgent need, instead of being anxious about “giving up rebirth”. Again, this cannot be forced. One will feel it when one’s mind is ready.

- This website has posts that could be helpful in any of the above categories. One needs to look around and find the suitable topics; **even though I have tried to put posts into different categories, there may be posts suitable for anyone in any category.**
- My intention is to add material at all different levels, mainly up to the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. I hope that will help a wide spectrum of people and also illustrate that Buddha Dhamma describes the ultimate natural laws not only about our human world, but of all existence. Buddha Dhamma is not just a philosophical theory; one can actually experience the improvement in one’s quality of life as one follows the Path.

September 13, 2016: I recently started a new section, “[Living Dhamma](#)” detailing a step-by-step process on how to get started on the Path. One could get started even without belief in rebirth or the existence of 31 realms. There we start by looking at the (hidden) suffering experienced in this life and how to eliminate it.

6.1.3.4 What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream

Revised August 3, 2016; revised March 27, 2018 (especially #12)

First, reincarnation is a Hindu concept, where the “*āthma*” or the soul remains the same but just takes a different form. In the *Rigveda* it is compared to a person discarding an old suit and wearing a new suit.

- In Buddha Dhamma it is **rebirth**, since there is no soul to reincarnate. In our long journey through *saṃsāra*, we have accumulated many “*kamma* seeds” (*kamma beeja*) which contain various “habits” and “character” (called “*gathi*”); see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”.
- At death, the *kammic* energy of the *kamma* seed for the present life is exhausted, and a new life starts off with a potent *kamma* seed (the selection of a new seed itself is a complicated process and depends on the potency of the available *kamma* seeds, but it happens within a thought moment).

1. The *pancakkhandha* (see, “[The Five Aggregates \(Pancakkhandha\)](#)” for a details) or the five heaps (*khandas*) that makes a being and “its world” can be thought of as two inter-dependent entities: one is *rūpa* (form) and the other is *citta* (pronounced chiththa).
 - *Citta* can be crudely called thoughts, but a thought that we experience has billions of *cittas* in it; see, “[What is a Thought?](#)”.
 - *Rūpa* can be divided into two main categories of internal and external. The external *rūpa* constitutes one’s external world. The **internal *rūpa*** are not the physical body, but the very fine *pasada rūpa* (*cakkhu*, *sota*, *ghana*, *jivha*, and *kaya*) which actually do the “sensing” are located in the “mental body” or the *gandhabba*: “[Manomaya Kaya \(Gandhabba\) and the Physical Body](#)”. The physical eye, ear, etc are like physical instruments that help gather data from outside; see, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)” section for details.
2. The combination of the two streams of *citta* and internal *rūpa* can be called a “lifestream”; a lifestream is in constant re-generation moment-to-moment: The *cittas* re-generate very fast (billions in a second), and each *citta* has the other four heaps (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*) associated with it. So *rūpa* and *citta* basically represent the *pancakkhandha* (*rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*). I am simplifying this a bit to make it not too complicated.
 - In simpler terms, both internal *rūpa* (which are very fine; all external *rūpa* change only gradually) and *citta* are re-generated billion times a second, but of course visually appreciable “changes” occur over months or even years.
 - All external *rūpa* are “one’s whole world”. They arise and decay according to their nature, and not at a fast rate like *citta* or internal *rūpa*; see, “[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#)”.
 - A *citta* rises and disappears in less than a billionth of a second; but there is a mental factor in each *citta* called *manasikara* that “remembers the contents in previous *citta*”. The two mental factors of *manasikara* and *cetana* are responsible for providing a sense of a “person” who remembers the past; see, “[Memory, Brain, Mind, Nama Loka, Kamma Bhava, Kamma Vipāka](#)”.
 - Our memories have been kept intact from the beginning-less time; recently, evidence has started emerging that some people can remember astoundingly detailed accounts of their memories from many years back; see, “[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)”.
 - It is not possible to “store” all that information in the brain.
3. *Citta* flow like a river (many billions a second), and are in discrete packets (like quanta in quantum theory; in fact, these are the smallest quanta anywhere in this world). Our internal *rūpa* also change rapidly; this is why it is said that we change moment-to-moment.
 - But the external *rūpa* change at different rates, some lasting very long times (a gold bar, for example), while some change very fast.
 - But NOTHING in the world remains the same over long times; even our universe came into existence some 14 billion years ago and will fade away at some point in the future. Our Solar system has a lifetime of less than five billion years.
4. As mentioned in #1, internal *pasada rūpa* and *thoughts* for the present life run non-stop until the death (with some exceptions, like in the *asañña* realm). At the last thought-moment (called *cuti citta*, pronounced “chuthi chiththa”), a new *kamma* seed comes into play; see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”. **Now both the *rūpa* and *citta* for the new life contain brand new *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa* (i.e., a new *pancakkhandha*);** it is a “being” that may look different, with its own “world”. For example, a “*deva* world” is very different from what we experience.
 - The only things that are carried over to the new life are those *kamma* seeds, which contain the “character” or “*gathi*” of that lifestream, and even those are in constant re-generation; at any moment they could significantly change if the underlying conditions change.

5. Thus, at the moment of death, *pancakkhandha* makes a quantum jump (meaning an instantaneous large change).

- Let us take an example: A man has a physical body, which is part of his *rupakkandha* (we will make this as simple as possible); other four *skhandha* determine his mental state (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*), where *viññāṇa* is roughly consciousness. Suppose he dies and is born as an elephant. Now all five *kandhas* die and the lifestream gets a new set of *kandhas*: the “new” physical body is different (external *rūpa* are different too in the sense that it has a more restricted “world” which is only a part of the human world), and his “new” consciousness level is much lower than a human’s, now at the base level of an elephant.
- But the set of *kamma* seeds (*kamma beeja*) all got transferred to this new existence (*bhava*). Thus if there are many “good *kamma* seeds” there, there could later be a birth in a human or even higher realm.
- Normally, the rebirth takes place in a physically different location (New scientific evidence for such “actions at a distance” are discussed in [“Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected”](#)).

6. Sometimes a lifestream changes its *rūpa kandha* while in the same physical location. One example is the evolution of a butterfly from a caterpillar. A butterfly egg is laid by a female butterfly. The egg hatches and a caterpillar is born. It eats leaves and metamorphosis into a pupa that hangs like a small sack. The final stage is a butterfly that emerges from the sack.

- Now this butterfly is definitely not the pupa or the caterpillar or the egg; but it is not different from any of the above either. It is the same life stream. This is why both “soul” and “no-soul” (or “self” and “no-self”) are wrong views. Many people incorrectly translate “*anatta*” as “no-self” with the meaning of “no-soul” which is WRONG; see, [“Anatta and Dukkha – True Meanings”](#).

7. Let us look at the caterpillar and the butterfly. The *rūpa kandhas* defining their physical bodies are obviously different. Their *cittas* are different too. One thinks about eating leaves and the other thinks about drinking nectar. The only commonality between the two lies in the *kamma* seeds (which also keep evolving in a given life).

- Now that lifestream may have *kamma* seeds for a human, *deva*, or a *brahma* too. But none of those got “selected”, probably because they were less potent. So, a butterfly is likely to be born in lower realms for very, very long times, before a less probable “human seed” being picked for a new life in a rare statistical event.

8. If there is anything that is carried from life-to-life that is one’s habits (*gathi*) that mold one’s character and the mental impurities (*kilesa*); of course these also keep changing even during a lifetime. I call this the “dynamic personality” of a lifestream in the sense that it is in constant flux. This is another reason why the Buddha rejected “no-self” as well as “self” or “soul”.

- There is nothing that remains the same (i.e., not “self”), but we cannot say “no-self” either, because there is an “identity” in the form of one’s *gathi* (and *āsava* and *kilesa*) that survives in the next life; see, [“Habits, Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)”](#), [“Samsaric Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsava\)”](#), and “Kilesa (Mental Impurities), Diṭṭhi (Wrong Views), Sammā Diṭṭhi (Good/Correct Views)”.

9. The *kamma* seeds (and associated *gathi*) of a given lifestream can be changed significantly during a human life. A human can change his/her destiny, but an animal cannot.

- Out of the 31 realms of existence (see, [“The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma”](#)), in most other realms (especially those below the human realm), the mind has much less capability, if at all, and thus it is very difficult to get rid of bad *kamma* seeds and cultivate good ones. Thus one should make the utmost effort to get rid of the bad seeds and to cultivate good seeds during this short life span of 100 years or so.
- Also, physical death does not necessarily mean the end of human rebirth. If the *kamma* seed that led to his human life has left more *kammic* potential, a human can be reborn a human again

and again until that *kammic* potential is exhausted; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.

- It is a rare event to get a human existence (*bhava*) for a living being; see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)”. But during a given human *bhava*, there could be many rebirths. This is why some can recall recent past lives: “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”.

10. Rebirth process is filled with suffering mainly because a given living being is mostly born in the lowest four realms (*apāyas*); thus is the need to get out of the rebirth process by attaining *Nibbāna*.

- *Nibbāna* is attained NOT by getting rid of all *kamma* seeds; that is not necessary. *Nibbāna* is approached by removing the “the tendency to grab things in this world (*upādāna*)” by following the Noble Eightfold Path, and by lessening of this grabbing power in four stages.
- Thus an *Arahant* will have many good and less potent bad *kamma* seeds left, but his/her mind WILL NOT hold onto any of those at the dying moment (this happens when one truly comprehends the futility of staying in this world or craving for anything in this world; see, “[Anicca- True Meaning](#)”, and “[Why is Correct Interpretation of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta so Important?](#)”). Thus, he/she will not be reborn “in this world”.

11. Still one would want to remove as many “bad seeds” as possible, and to cultivate as many “good seeds” as possible, since that will make it more probable of NOT getting a bad birth when we die; it will also make easier to attain *Nibbāna* in a future life without being born in a bad realm (in case we do not make it in this life). See the “[Moral Living and Fundamentals](#)” section on how to get started.

- I have made this complex process probably too simple. But I think it will help one to get the basic idea.
- The concept of a ever-changing lifestream is also discussed in “[“Self” and “no-self”: A Simple Analysis](#)”.

12. It is also important to realize that any lifestream does not have a “discernible beginning” as the Buddha said. Thus each one of us has been going through this process from “beginning-less time”.

- In Buddha Dhamma — unlike in the “Big Bang theory” of current science — our whole universe did not come to existence some 14 billion years ago. This requires a detailed explanation, but let me just give a brief summary.
- Only “star systems” like our Solar system (Sun is our star), are destroyed in several billion years; these are called supernova in modern science. Even then, higher lying *rupa* realms and *arupa* realms are not destroyed, and all living beings are “pushed up” into those higher realms as the “material Earth” (and other planets as well as the Sun) is destroyed.
- After many billions of years, the “material Solar system” is reborn, and most of those living beings come back to the Earth as humans with very fine bodies like *brahmas*. With time, they evolve into humans with “denser bodies” as well animals. This is actually a reverse evolution process compared to the Darwin’s theory.
- Those details are in the *Agganna Sutta* and of course current translations are way off. At some point, we will discuss it in detail. What is important for now is that the beginning of any life stream has “no discernible beginning”.

13. In Buddha Dhamma (as well as in science) nothing happens without a cause: cause and effect. If there was a beginning, who or what gave rise to that beginning? And then what caused “that”? This is why “there is no discernible beginning”.

- Thoughts are more complex than described above; see, “[Viññāna, Thoughts, and the Subconscious](#)”.
- It is not possible to provide the “whole picture” in an a post or even several. You can use the “Search” box on the top right to locate posts on key words.
- For a more detailed discussion, see, “[Manomaya Kaya – Introduction](#)”, and the follow-up posts.

- See, also, “[What is Mind? How do we Experience the Outside World?](#)”
- One may wonder where one’s memory is stored: see, “[Memory, Brain, Mind, Nama Loka, Kamma Bhava, Kamma Vipāka](#)”.

Next, “[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)”,

6.1.3.5 Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records (HSAM)

1. A normal human being can remember some “significant events” even from very early day’s of this life. And these memories are not just a “summary”, but we recall a significant event in detail; it is like playing back a video tape. We recall the whole scene with pictures sounds, the background, everything. Just recall some past events and one can verify that for oneself.

- There are many cases of “memories from past lives” reported mostly by children, but also by some adults under hypnosis; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”.
- Now there is scientific evidence that our memory records (called “*nama gotta*” in Buddha Dhamma) are kept in minute detail somewhere and can be accessed at moment’s notice.

2. Strong evidence is beginning to emerge that there is indeed a “complete record” of one’s past (in this life) just like a video tape. These studies started with Jill Price, who contacted a team of scientists in early 2000’s about her ability to recall anything from 1974 onwards. Here is a video of her with Diane Sawyer on an ABC News program:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: The woman that never forgets](#)

3. Note that she says she can “see” what happened that day. It is not like she is recalling a “summary” or the gist of what happened. She can actually “see” the whole episode. And the day and date comes out effortlessly.

- A team of scientists has studied her for five years and published a paper providing their findings: [A Case of Unusual Autobiographical Remembering-Parker-2006](#)
- She has written a book about her experience: “The Woman Who Can’t Forget”, by Jill Price (2009).
- Jill Price’s story led more people to come forward with their experiences, and ten more such individuals have been studied in detail recently: [WebLink: Behavioral and neuroanatomical investigation-LePort-2012](#).

4. These individuals have “highly superior autobiographical memory” or HSAM. They are not any smarter than average people, according to those two papers above. They are just able to recall their past much more extensively; they can focus their minds to any date in the past and “watch” what happened: they can say what the weather was like, who they were with, whether any significant world event took place that day, etc.

- This phenomenon is also known as Hyperthymesia; see, [WebLink: WIKI: Hyperthymesia](#). Several other cases of HSAM are mentioned here.

5. Scientists believe that our memories are “stored” in the brain, in the synapses between neurons. I firmly believe that they will be proven wrong. This research is still in infancy, but there has been an explosion of activity within the past 15 years.

- While it is true that synaptic wiring are responsible for habit formation (see, “[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)”), it is a stretch to assume that “video-like recordings” of all past events are somehow embedded in neural connections!
- It is true that people without HSAM do have false memories (or have no memories) of past incidents that were not significant for them. But their memories about significant/traumatic memories are astoundingly accurate.

6. There are a couple of key significant facts that come out of these studies on HSAM subjects:

- They can instantly access a “time slot” from many years back that is arbitrarily chosen by someone else. They “re-visit” that time slot and describe, in real time, what took place with details.
- Since it has been confirmed in 11 subjects, it is not a “random event”.
- It is a stretch to assume that all such details for a period of over 20 years can be stored in biological membranes that regenerate undergo changes continuously.
- It is not a matter of being able to remember. Jill Price describes extensively that it is hard for her to remember any “learning material”; she was an average student.
- Rather, it is a matter of just having a brain that is “wired” to be able to access the “video recorder like” memory stream. It is not something one can develop by studying hard.

7. In Buddha Dhamma, a life of a sentient being is not restricted to the current life. As described in the previous post ([“What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream”](#)), any given sentient being has been born an uncountable number of times, with no “traceable beginning”.

- And a record of each of those lives is kept intact in the “mind plane”, and can be accessed to different degrees by different people.
- And people who develop *abhiññā* powers via *jhānas* (need to get to at least the fourth *jhāna*) can develop Jill Price’s capabilities and more; they can go back hundreds to thousands to billions of years depending on the level achieved.

8. According to Buddha Dhamma, the brain is just like a computer that helps extract these memory records from the “mind plane”. The mechanism is similar to a television extracting a broadcast signal; I will write a post on this later.

- These memory records are called “*nama gotta*” (pronounced “*nāma goththā*”) and they go back for aeons and aeons and even a Buddha cannot see a beginning; see, [“Memory, Brain, Mind, Nama Loka, Kamma Bhava, Kamma Vipāka”](#).
- We can recall only bits and pieces even during this lifetime; this is because our minds are covered by the five hindrances (*panca nivarana*); see, [“Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances”](#).
- Ancient *yogis* who could get to the *eighth jhāna* could see all past lives in the present aeon or *kalpa*. But the Buddha could see numerous aeons within a short time.
- This is why it is mostly children who can remember past lives. As they grow up their minds get “contaminated” more and more and these memories are lost. And those cases are different from the HSAM subjects.
- It appears that those individuals with HSAM have some of the capabilities of those who have developed *abhiññā* powers. Since those with HSAM have been reported to have somewhat different brain structure, it will be interesting to see whether those with *abhiññā* powers have similar brain structures as people with HSAM. I believe that it is a matter of the brain wiring to be able to “receive” more information from the “mind plane”.

Next, [“Buddhism without Rebirth and Nibbāna?”](#),

6.1.3.6 Buddhism without Rebirth and Nibbana?

Revised August 18, 2016

I participated in several internet forums on “Buddhism” over 2013 and a part of 2014. One thing that clearly stands out is the fact that there are many people who like Buddhism, but they cannot understand what the big deal is about rebirth, and they cannot comprehend what *Nibbāna* is. Thinking is: Why can’t we have Buddhism without rebirth (because I do not believe in rebirth) and *Nibbāna* (because that seems to be too complicated)?

They are turned off by the concept of rebirth and are mystified by the concept of *Nibbāna*.

- **Rebirth.** I think that the first issue lies in the fact that most major religions are based on three levels of existence: This life, and one of two eternal stages of life thereafter; committed to either heaven or hell for eternity based on what one does in this life. That model is very simple. Buddha's 31 realms of existence with many "unseen beings" seems to be far fetched. Also, the possibility of being reborn as an animal is an abhorrent thought similar to the one people had about "evolving from the monkeys" before the theory of evolution.
- **Nibbāna.** The second issue has become a problem mainly because of Mahayana doctrines. Mahayana sect arose basically out of the philosophical analyses of *Nibbāna* by Nagarjuna, Asanga and other Mahayana forefathers. They could not understand the concept of *Nibbāna* or what happens to an *Arahant* when the *Arahant* dies. So, they came up with concepts like *sunyata* (*sunyata*) or emptiness; see, "[What is Sunyata or Sunyata \(Emptiness\)](#)".

1. There are two co-existing facets of Buddha Dhamma:

- The Buddha said, "This Dhamma is unlike anything that the world has ever seen". **It really needs a paradigm change to get into the "new perspective about this world view of the Buddha"**. One needs to be able to put aside all preconceived notions to understand the core message.
- However, the Buddha also said, "My Dhamma is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good at the end". **There is something to be gained from Buddha Dhamma for people who just came to know about it.** This is why I have separated posts into three categories on the site.
- In Bhikkhu Bodhi's book, "In the Buddha's Words", there is a chapter on "The Happiness Visible in this Present Life", where Buddha's discourses to those who did not have aspiration to attain *Nibbāna*, but were interested in pursuing moral lives, are described.
- The concepts such as rebirth and *Nibbāna* are paradigm-changing concepts. But as one follows what one understands, these concepts will become clear; I have summarized these two concepts below. But it will take much more effort and reading many more posts if one is really interested in understanding Buddha Dhamma.

2. For those who do not believe in rebirth, there is a simple way to get started without having to believe in the rebirth process. I strongly suggest the following post: "[Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#)".

3. However, at the end — If one is to benefit fully from Buddha Dhamma — one needs to understand its core message. And that core message is that this life is only but an insignificant time in the cycle of rebirths that we have been on from eternity, and that "our world" is much more complex than we see with 31 realms instead of the two (human and animal realms) that we see. Even more significantly, the suffering in many of the lower realms of existence is much worse than that in the human or even the animal realm.

- That is a LOT of things to accept as a basis. But we are fortunate compared to those who lived even a hundred years ago. Because now we have EVIDENCE to back up this wider world view of the Buddha; see, "[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)".
- And both major Mahayana sects as well as Theravāda Buddhism believe in rebirth and the concept of *Nibbāna*. All Buddhists (except the type of Stephen Batchelor, who has written some popular books on Buddhism) believe in rebirth and *Nibbāna*. I have seen the label "secular Buddhism" being used to describe those who like other aspects of Buddhism (basically moral living and meditation), but not necessarily rebirth and/or *Nibbāna*.
- **Thus a Buddhist not believing in rebirth/Nibbāna is an oxymoron.** The Pāli or Sinhala word for Buddhist is "*Bhauddhaya*" meaning "a person trying to stop the rebirth process" ("*Bhava+uddha*"). One meaning of Buddha Dhamma is "path or method of removing *bhava* and thus stopping the rebirth process". Buddha means, "one who has removed *bhava* (and attained *Nibbāna*)".
- However, There is no need to forcefully accept rebirth, which gives rise to *sansaric* suffering. **One can start at a point where one can actually experience the other type of hidden suffering**

in this life that most people can locate and remove: “[Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#)”.

4. Therefore, one can be a “secular Buddhist”; that could be an intermediate state before becoming a Buddhist. **We just need to get the concepts clear.** Since there is no formal established way to declare oneself a “Buddhist” (or a need to do that), it is really in one’s own mind whether one is a Buddhist or not. The Buddha clearly stated that each person is at his/her own level of understanding. And there is no need to pretend; what one believes is what it is. **The critical thing is to make sure one is fully informed.**

- One does not become a Buddhist by reciting the precepts. **One becomes a Buddhist gradually as the mind embraces the world view of the Buddha and realizes that the real happiness is attained by comprehending the true nature of this world: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, and eventually by stopping the rebirth process.**

5. In the mean time, it is important to realize that certain wrong views are bound to have adverse consequences according to Buddha Dhamma. Established (firm) view that there is no rebirth process is one included in *micca dīṭṭhi*, which is one of the (strong) *dasa akusala*, that makes a birth in the *apāyas* (four lowest realms of existence) possible. It is not necessary to firmly believe in rebirth, one should at least leave that as a possibility. What is critical is not to have *niyata* (established) *micca dīṭṭhi*.

- Faith in Buddha Dhamma is different from that in other religions; belief in rebirth or *Nibbāna* are not tenets. One either believes in them or one does not; see, “[Is Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) a Religion?](#)”. One MAY change one’s view after looking at the facts, and especially if one can experience the release from one kind of suffering; see, “[Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#)”.

6. Finally, it will take a real effort to sort through all different versions of “Buddhism” that are out there. Over two thousand five hundred years, just like now, people have tried to “mold” Buddha Dhamma to a form to their liking, and that is why we have so many versions. **But when that is done, the uniqueness, the real message, gets lost.** We need to keep intact this unique message, with the understanding that not everyone comprehends it right away.

- The key is to discard any version or aspect that does not provide a consistent picture. Buddha Dhamma describe the laws of nature, and there cannot be any inconsistencies. That is what I try to do with this website. If you see something inconsistent on the website, please let me know.
- I use the *Tipitaka* (Pāli Canon) as the basis. It was written down over two thousand years ago (by *Arahants who had experienced Nibbāna*), and is the oldest document encompassing the three main teachings: *suttas*, *vinaya*, and *abhidhamma*.
- I have documented the flaws in both Mahayana and (to a lesser extent) in current Theravāda books by pointing out the inconsistencies with the *Tipitaka*. Also, I show that everything is self-consistent, which is the scientific basis to illustrate the validity of a theory. Newton’s theory on gravity had to be modified because they were not consistent with finer measurements.
- It does not matter what we believe personally. We need to find the true laws of nature that the Buddha discovered. **Laws of nature, like gravity or laws of motion, do not care about what we believe;** see, “[Why it is Critical to Find the Pure Buddha Dhamma](#)”.
- Buddha Dhamma (in its pure form) has withstood all tests to date; see, “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)”. Both current Mahayana and Theravāda teachings need to be revised back to the original. It can be proven that there are self-contradictions within both sects in addition to contradictions with the teachings of the Buddha. I have a series of posts that point out these “problem areas” starting with, “[Key Problems with Mahayana Teachings](#)”.

Having established that rebirth and *Nibbāna* are the “lifeblood” of Buddha Dhamma, now we can turn to the next question: What evidence is there to “prove” rebirth? What is the big deal about *Nibbāna*, which sounds so esoteric?

A. REBIRTH

I have summarized some of the existing evidence for rebirth; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”. I am not sure what will qualify for “proof”, but one thing is very clear: A strong case can be made for it. There is evidence from many different areas, and that are consistent with the Buddha’s other teachings, for example, the existence of a *manomaya kaya*; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)”.

- If a person can believe even a SINGLE piece of evidence presented there, it is not possible to explain that without accepting that there is a link between such two lives. Since there is no physical connection between the two lives (that existed many miles apart), the connection must be outside the physical realm, i.e., the mental energy. There is new evidence from “quantum entanglement” that is consistent with the presumption that everything in this world is inter-connected; see, “[Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected](#)”.
- However, one can actually verify the rebirth process by developing *abhiññā* powers via developing the fourth *jhāna*. One can then “see” one’s previous lives; see, “[Power of the Human Mind – Introduction](#)” and the follow up posts. And there are some who have developed such *abhiññā* powers, and this number can be expected to grow. When a significant number of people can verify the rebirth process, it will be accepted. Today, not everyone has traveled outside one’s own country. But everyone accepts that all those countries exist, because they believe the accounts of those who have made visits.
- And recent evidence confirm that there is indeed an unbroken memory record, at least in this life; see, “[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)”.

B. NIBBANA

1. “*Bāna*” in Pāli and Sinhala means “bondage”; thus *Nibbāna* means becoming free of bondage (to this world). We are bound to the unending cycle of rebirths via ten fetters called “*sanyōjana* = “san+yōjana”; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”; *yojana* means bond. *Sanyojana* is sometimes called *samyojana*.

- The ten *sanyojana* (or *samyojana*) are removed via the four stages of *Nibbāna*: three at the *Sotāpanna* stage, two reduced at the *Sakadāgāmi* stage and removed at the *Anāgāmi* stage, and the remaining five removed at the *Arahant* stage.
- Removal of the ten *sanyojana* also removes greed, hate, and ignorance from our minds; the *niramisa sukha* increases step-wise at each of the four stages, and the “cooling down” or “*nivana*” becomes complete; see, “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)”. There are many synonyms for *Nibbāna*, and *nivana* (or *niveema*) is one of them. The Sanskrit name “*nirvana*” does not convey any of these meanings.

2. When the mind becomes pure, a being is simply not reborn anywhere in the 31 realms. The mind has attained full release, and unconditioned happiness called *niramisa sukha*. **Thus *Nibbāna* is stopping the rebirth process; the suffering stops. it is as simple as that. That mind cannot grasp even a fine form of a material body (which is subject to decay and death) anywhere in “the 31 realms”. The mind becomes free of a body that is subject to decay and death (suffering). That is *Nibbāna*.**

- The *Nibbānic* experience cannot be described by the terminology of “this world”; it is transcendental or “*lokottara*”, beyond “this world”; see, “[Nibbāna “Exists”, but Not in This World](#)”.
- Also, all we can say about what happens to an *Arahant* at his/her death is that he/she will not be reborn in “this world” of 31 realms. There is no more suffering. The mind is free of bondage to a physical body that leads to so much suffering.
- Many people say, “What suffering? I do not feel that much suffering”. But the real suffering is in the lowest four realms; that is why the complete picture of 31 realms of existence is important. Furthermore, there is much suffering that is masked, especially when one is young. As one gets old, it is inevitable that one will start experience suffering at a higher degree, and then face death. Here is a video that illustrates this point:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Aging Stars of the Golden Age](#)

3. However, the point is NOT to get depressed about this inevitability. Some people get depressed thinking about old age, and try to “give up” everything to follow the Path of the Buddha.

- It is not even possible for someone who is not familiar with Buddha Dhamma to start working on attaining *Arahanthood* straight away, and it is not advised either. It needs to be done with understanding. As one follows the Path, and learns Dhamma, one could start feeling early stages of *Nibbānic* pleasure (*niramisa sukha*) and thus will start having fact-based faith on concepts like rebirth and *Nibbāna*: see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”.
- Have you seen any depressed Buddhist monks? They have given up the worldly pleasures voluntarily, NOT with the mindset of a depressed person. Depression leads to hate; true “giving up” is done with wisdom.

This is only a summary. All these are described in detail with supporting evidence at this website. The key point is that EVERYTHING we observe, all we experience CAN be explained with the complete “world view” of the Buddha of which rebirth and *Nibbāna* are essential foundations.

One does not need to know all that if all one needs is a peace of mind. One could follow the basic guidelines for a moral life that the Buddha provided. However, his key message was that this 100-year life can be only be compared to a “drop of water in a huge ocean” that is the cycle of rebirths filled with suffering. Thus one should at least critically examine the evidence to see whether that message needs to be taken seriously.

Next, “[Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#)”,

6.1.4 Dhamma Concepts

“[Kusala and Akusala Kamma, Punna and Pāpa Kamma](#)”

“[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”

“[Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā](#)”

“[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#)”

“[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”

“[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)”

“[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)”

“[Why is it Necessary to Learn Key Pāli Words?](#)”

6.1.4.1 Kusala and Akusala Kamma, Punna and Pāpa Kamma

April 27, 2018

1. There is a big difference between *kusala kamma* and *punna kamma*. The following question came up in the discussion forum: “Does circumambulation (walking around) a stupa or Buddhist relic brings merits to oneself? Does it matter whether one goes clockwise or counter-clockwise?”.

- The short answer is that it can be beneficial if done with correct mindset, but it cannot remove defilements (i.e., it is not a *kusala kamma*) by itself. It could be a *punna kamma* that can setup conditions that will enable oneself to do *kusala kamma*.
- It is always good to know how the key Pāli terms originated (“*pada nirukti*”).

2. **Kusala** comes from “*ku*” + “*sala*”, where “*ku*” refers to “*kunu*” or *keles* or defilements, and “*sala*” means “to get rid of”. “**akusala**” is the opposite of “*kusala*”. **Kamma** is an action.

- Therefore, an **akusala kamma** is an action that defiles or contaminates one’s mind (one of *dasa akusala*). Any **kusala kamma** involves an action that involves removal of defilements or *dasa akusala* from one’s mind; see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”.

- Now it must be clear that circumambulation (walking) around a stupa or Buddhist relic is neither a *kusala* or an *akusala kamma*.

3. The word “***punna***” is related to joy; the Sinhala word “*pina*” or “*pin*” is associated with “*pinaveema*” or “making one’s heart joyful.”

[***puñña*** : merit, meritorious, is a popular term for kammically wholesome (*kusala*) action. Opposite terms: *apuñña*, ‘demerit’; *pāpa*, ‘bad’, ‘evil’. The value of meritorious action is often stressed.]

- Therefore, a ***punna kamma*** is an action that makes one’s heart filled with joy. It is usually an action out of *saddhā* (faith in the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, *Sangha*). Such actions may not necessarily be *kusala kamma*, **but some *punna kamma* are *kusala kamma* too.**
- For example, when one offers food to the *bhikkhus* (or even to a hungry person) with joy in heart, that is both a *kusala kamma* (giving which is the opposite of stealing), and also a *punna kamma* because one does with joy.
- Ten types of *punna kamma* are discussed in, “[**Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā**](#)”.

4. Circumambulation around a *stupa* or Buddhist relic (usually while reciting a *gatha* or *Tisarana Vandana*) is a *punna kamma*. In fact, it belongs to the same category as offering flowers and reciting *pirith* (*paritta*).

- **The key reason is that one’s mind becomes temporarily free of *pancanivara*** (*kamaccandha*, *vyāpāda*, *thina middha*, *uddacca kukkucca*, and *vicikiccā*) when doing a *punna kamma*. All those actions make one’s mind joyful and be receptive to deep Dhamma. It is good to do them before sitting down to listen to a *dēsanā*.
- Whether there is an effect for clockwise or counter-clockwise, I am not sure. If there is, it must be a small effect.

5. In fact, when one does mundane *ānāpāna* (breath meditation), that **could be a *punna kamma*, but NOT a *kusala kamma*.**

- That is because it helps keep the mind focused on the breath and thus suppress *pancanivarana* temporarily. But, by itself, it does not remove any defilements.

6. *Punna kamma* are meritorious actions that CAN lead to rebirth in the higher realms. However, when one without any comprehension of *Tilakkhana* does *punna kamma*, there could be *asobhana cetasika* involved (especially greed at lower levels, possibly involving desire for something in return for those actions), and such actions would not count as *kusala kamma*; but they are still *punna kamma*.

- *Kusala kamma* are actions that lead to cleansing of the mind and help stopping the rebirth process.

7. This may get some people to think that *punna kamma* are bad and lead to extending the rebirth process. **But that is NOT the case.** *Punna kamma* are REQUIRED to setting up CONDITIONS suitable to cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to *Nibbāna* (stopping the rebirth process).

- One may also think doing *punna kamma* may be actions that are part of *silabbata parāmāsa*. That is not necessarily correct. ***Silabbata parāmāsa* means one believes that one can ATTAIN *Nibbāna* by doing *punna kamma*.**
- Anyone with a *magga phala* (all the way up to the *Arahant*) would do meritorious deeds or *punna kamma*.

8. Another way to state the difference is: All *kusala kamma* are *punna kamma* too. But some *punna kamma* may be a mixture of *kusala* and *akusala kamma*. How is that possible, especially since we know that both *sobhana* and *asobhana cetasika* CANNOT arise together in a given *citta* (thought)?

- The key here is that billions of *citta* are involved in a *punna kamma*. For example, if one is offering food to *bhikkhus*, both *kusala* and *akusala citta* can arise while preparing for the event, during the event, and even after the event (recalling the event).

- At times, *kusala citta* with *sobhana cetasika* (*saddhā, alōbha, adōsa, amōha*) may be running through one's mind. But at other times one may be thinking about possible future good *vipāka*, and at such times *akusala citta* (with *lōbha* and *mōha*) could be running through one's mind.
- But the overall event is called a *punna kamma*, offering food for the *bhikkhus*. Therefore, such a *punna kamma* could have mostly good *vipāka*, but some bad *vipāka* too depending on the mindset of the person.

9. This is why the Path is two-fold. When one starts, one will be on the mundane eightfold path and could be doing *punna kamma* (some of which are *kusala kamma*).

- As one progresses on the mundane path, one's actions will have more and more *kusala* component.
- A big jump will be made when one attains the *Sōtapanna* stage, but any trace of *akusala* component due to remaining *avijja* will be completely removed only at the *Arahant* stage. At that point (for an *Arahant*) such actions are called "kriya" or just actions.

10. We talked about *kusala/akusala kamma* and *punna kamma*, but did not discuss the opposite of *punna kamma*. The opposite of *punna kamma* is *pāpa kamma*.

- *Pāpa* in Pāli and Sinhala means "evil" or "sinful" actions, that are obvious: Killing of a human or habitual killing of animals, raping, and *niyata micca ditthi* are some examples of *pāpa kamma*. [*pāpa* : (adj. nt.) suffering, evil; 1. (adj.) evil, bad, wicked, sinful 2. unfertile (of soil) 3. (nt.) evil, wrong doing]
- So, what is the difference between *akusala kamma* and *pāpa kamma*?

11. The simplest way to state the difference is to say that *pāpa kamma* are the worst of *akusala kamma*.

- Usually, *pāpa kamma* lead to rebirth in the *apāyās*. *Anantara pāpa kamma* are the strongest, and will even break the "*bhava shakthi*" in a human *bhava* and lead to rebirth in the *apāyās* when the current physical body dies (even if more *kammic* energy is left in the current human *bhava*).
- Mild *akusala kamma* can only bring *pavutti vipāka*, i.e., those can bring difficulties and sufferings during even a "good *bhava*" like a human *bhava*.

Discussion of this post is at, "[Is circumambulation a mere rite or ritual?](#)".

6.1.4.2 Ten Immoral Actions (Dasa Akusala)

Revised October 6, 2016; revised November 24, 2017

1. One can do immoral acts with the body, speech, and mind (leading to *kaya, vacī, and mano saṅkhāra*); see, "[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)". Actually, one starts committing *mano saṅkhāra* first, some of which lead to *vacī* and *kaya saṅkhāra*. These are called ten immoral acts (*dasa akusala*). The ten immoral acts are divided into the three categories as follows:

Three *mano saṅkhāra* (immoral acts done with the mind):

1. *Abhijjā* [*Abhijjhā*] (covetousness; greed for other's belongings)
2. *Vyāpāda* (ill-will, hatred)
3. *Micca Diṭṭhi* (wrong views)

Four *vacī saṅkhāra* (immoral acts done with speech):

4. *Musāvāda* (Lying)
5. *Pisunāvācā* (slandering)
6. *Parusāvācā* [*Pharusāvācā*] (harsh speech)
7. *Sampappalāpa* (frivolous talk)

Three *kaya saṅkhāra* (immoral acts done with the body):

8. *Pāṇātipātā* (killing)

9. *Adinnādāna* (taking what is not given)

10. *Kāmesu miccācāra* (not just sexual misconduct, but also excessive of sense pleasures)

2. In Buddha Dhamma (i.e., in nature) it is always one's intention that really matters. **Based on that, each of those *dasa akusala* can be expanded to 40.** For example, it is not only stealing by oneself that matters. In addition, getting someone else to steal, helping another's act of stealing, and praising such an action by another also are included.

- In another example, propagating *miccā diṭṭhi* to others, encouraging another to cultivate *miccā diṭṭhi* (say, for example, that the rebirth process is not valid), or praising such practices are also included. Similarly for all ten *dasa akusala*.
- As one starts avoiding more and more of these forty actions, one will start feeling early stages of *Nibbāna* or “*nivana*”, i.e., cooling down of the mind. The constant stress, excitedness of the mind will gradually ease. Also see, “[Root of All Suffering – Ten Immoral Actions](#)”.

3. First of all, it is important to realize that only an *Arahant* is totally free from doing any of these; even a *Sotāpanna* may commit some of these at least once-in-a-while. There are six things that a *Sotāpanna* is incapable of: killing mother or father, killing an *Arahant*, injuring a Buddha, knowingly causing schism in *Saṅgha*, and having *micca diṭṭhi* or **wrong views**.

- Thus it is inevitable that *dasa akusala* could be broken by anyone below the *Sotāpanna* stage. Even a *Sotāpanna* has **completely removed only *micca diṭṭhi***. A *Sotāpanna* would not WILLINGLY commit any of the *dasa akusala*, but some COULD happen, except for those six mentioned above; see, “[Key to Sotāpanna Stage – Ditthi and Vicikicca](#)”.
- What is important is to realize that these are to be AVOIDED if at all possible. It becomes easier as one learns Dhamma and see the benefits of avoiding them.
- However, it must be noted that a *Sotāpanna* has reduced *lōbha* (extreme greed, especially for other's belongings) and *dōsa* (hate) to reduced levels of *rāga* (craving for sense pleasures) and *patigha* (friction or tendency to get upset or angry); see, “[Lobha, Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)”.

4. Most terms above are clear, but many people may not be aware of what *micca diṭṭhi* (wrong views) is. *Micca diṭṭhi* is basically not comprehending the basic characteristics of “this world” of 31 realms; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)” and “[Wrong Views \(Micca Diṭṭhi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#)”.

- Because of the ignorance of the complete world view, one is likely to have three main wrong world views: (i) everything has sprung without a cause (*ahetuka diṭṭhi*), (ii) good and bad produce no effect (*akiriya diṭṭhi*), and (iii) there is no after-life (*natthika diṭṭhi*).
- A common form of *micca diṭṭhi* is to assume that if one obeys the five precepts, then one will be exempt from birth in the *apāyas*. That belief itself can lead to the birth in the *apāyas*; see, “[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#)”.

5. If someone has these world views, one is likely to carry out immoral acts and acquire *kamma vipāka* that will lead to rebirth in the *apāyas* (the lowest four realms) at some point in the future, i.e., in future rebirths. **There are ten such specific wrong views or *micca diṭṭhi* (sometimes just called *diṭṭhi*):**

- View that no such thing as: (1) *kammic* benefits in giving, (2) paying back debts (for what others have done for you), (3) benefits of respecting Noble Ones and also *yogis* with *abhiññā* powers, (4) *kamma vipāka* or *kammic* benefits of taking care of (5) mother and (6) father, (7) this world does not exist (“*natthi ayaṃ loko*”), (8) *Paralowa* does not exist (“*natthi paro loko*”), (9) *opapatika* birth (instant full-formed birth) in realms other than the human and animal realms, (10) Noble ones and *yogis* who can see past lives. [[WebLink: suttacentral: AN 3.117. Vipattisampadāsutta - Distress and Attainment Sutta](#) ‘(1) *natthi dinnam*, (2) *natthi*

yiṭṭhaṃ, (3) natthi hutam, (4) natthi sukata dukkaṭāṇam, kammāṇam phalaṃ vipāko, (7) natthi ayaṃ loko, (8) natthi paro loko, (5) natthi mātā, (6) natthi pitā, (9) natthi sattā opapātikā, (10) natthi loka samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggaṭā sammāpaṭipannā ye imaṇca lokam paraṇca lokam sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedentī”]

- For explanations on (7)-(10), see, “[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotapanna Stage](#)”.
- In particular, *paralowa* is where a human lives in between consecutive human births as a *gandhabba*; see, “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)”.

6. What is *akusala* is to hold “*niyata micca diṭṭhi*” or “established wrong views”, i.e., one is not even prepared to consider, say, that there is a rebirth process. Thus if one has **unwavering** doubts about any one of the ten categories in the above paragraph, then one is said to have **established** wrong views (*niyata micca diṭṭhi*), which is said to lead to birth in the *apāyas*.

- The key point is that when one has established wrong views, one looks at the world differently without realizing that there are consequences for one’s actions. Without a Buddha explaining the true nature of the world (rebirth process, life in other realms, uncountable number of planetary systems like the Earth, etc), one would not be aware of that fact.
- As scientists are finding out, there are many things in nature that we do not experience/understand. For example, scientists can only account for 4% of the mass of the universe; they cannot account for the rest (Google “dark matter” or “dark energy”). Thus one needs to keep an open mind and learn more Dhamma to see whether all these make sense.

7. The only *akusala* completely removed by a *Sotāpanna* is the *micca diṭṭhi*; see, “[What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)”. As explained there, an unimaginably huge amount of defilements is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage, just via getting rid of *micca diṭṭhi*, mainly through the comprehension of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

8. A lot of you may be thinking “How do I know all this is true? Is there any evidence for the existence of *rūpa/arūpa lokas, apāyas* (hell), or spontaneous birth?”.

- There are a lot of things we do not know about “this world”. We cannot rely on just science to verify/confirm these. Only within the last 50 years or so that science has accepted that our world is bigger than a few galaxies (now science has confirmed that there are billions of galaxies). Whereas the Buddha stated that *chakrawata* (star systems or planetary systems) come into existence all the time, science has confirmed that only within the past 100 years; see, “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)”.
- Furthermore, the newest findings (yet unconfirmed) in string theory indicate that we live in a 11-dimension world, not the 4-dimension world that we experience. For a look at different dimensions, see, “[Consciousness Dependence on Number of Dimensions](#)”. Thus, more of Buddha’s teachings will be confirmed with time.

9. It is easy to see that all immoral deeds start as *mano saṅkhāra* (bad thoughts) in the mind. Any of the *vacī saṅkhāra* (speech) or *kaya saṅkhāra* (bodily actions) are done with greed, hate, or not knowing the true nature of the world (ignorance). In particular, the basis for moral behavior comes out of the correct world view. Let us examine this below:

- The fact that there is no discernible beginning to life (see, “[Sansaric Time Scale](#)”) means all of us have been going through this rebirth process for an unimaginably long time. Thus we have been born in most of the 31 realms of existence. Not only that, we have been born innumerable times in EACH of those realms (except the realm that is reserved for the *Anāgāmis*).
- The above fact means each sentient being had been related to any other sentient being at some point in this long *saṃsāra* (rebirth process). **The Buddha said, “it is difficult to find ANY sentient being that was not you father, mother, or a sibling at some point in this long saṃsāra”**. Infinity is a concept that is hard to grasp; see, “[Infinity – How Big Is It?](#)”.
- An interesting book that talks about such hard to grasp ideas (in science) involving infinity is, “The Beginning of Infinity: Explanations That Transform the World” by David Deutsch.

- Therefore, we, meaning not only us humans but ALL sentient beings, are connected/related to each other. This is why it is wrong to kill any living being, steal from anyone, verbally abuse anyone, etc. **This is the basis for morality. This is WHY it is not good to do any of the ten immoral acts.**

Intention is An Important Factor

1. The Buddha said, “*Cetana ham Bhikkhave kamman vadami*“, i.e., “Bhikkhus, I say that *kamma* is intention”. We always need to look at the intention to pinpoint whether or what kind of *kamma* was committed.

- Let us take an example: if someone shoots a dog that is attacking a child, one’s intention there is to save the child. On the other hand, if someone is shooting a dog for “target practice”, then there is no excuse. The life of a human is million-fold more precious than that of an animal; see, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)“.
- Sometimes it is not possible to judge the *kammic* consequences just by looking at the particular act. Only the person committing the act will know whether it is a good or bad intention. Thus normally it is not wise to judge other people’s actions.
- If it is a *mano saṅkhāra* (bad thoughts), the only person who even knows about that is the one who is committing it.

2. In many cases, it is possible for others to “see” when one is committing *vacī* or *kaya saṅkhāra*. But not always. Disciplinary actions against a child by a parent may appear to be *kaya saṅkhāra* (spanking) or *vacī saṅkhāra* (verbal threats) , but the parent is likely to have good intentions for the child in most cases.

Also, in many cases, it is not possible for any person to advice another on what to do when conflicting issues are involved. Is it OK to steal some food to feed one’s own kids when they are crying in hunger? Is it OK to spank a child when the child is misbehaving? Only the parent can make that decision based on the circumstances.

Also see, “[What is Intention in Kamma?](#)“. This post has been updated on February 21, 2018, and provides a simple two-step process to evaluate a given situation.

Relative Weights of *Kamma*

1. **One critical problem many people have is that they try hard to avoid actions with relatively small *kammic* consequences, while unknowingly doing things that have stronger *kammic* consequences. Let us take an example: Suppose we have a large tank of water which is losing water due to many holes at the bottom. Some holes are pin holes, some are a little larger, and there are a few holes that are big and losing water fast. Obviously, one would want to plug those large holes first. Then one would fix the medium-size holes and those pin holes are the last to be fixed.**

- Relative weights of ten immoral acts are not easy to quantify. However, we can clearly see that *kaya saṅkhāra* have higher “*kammic* potential” compared to *vacī saṅkhāra* if they are directed to the same living being; hurting someone physically is worse than verbal abuse.
- Another example: Say someone has hateful thoughts of a particular person all day long. That could be worse than just saying something to that person and “getting the load off the mind”. However, even that is not necessary. The best solution is to develop *metta* (loving kindness) towards that person, and get rid of those hateful thoughts. We always need to realize that we all are trapped in this constant struggle to find happiness in a world that is not setup to provide lasting happiness; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta - Wrong Interpretations](#)“.

2. *Kammic* consequences also depend strongly on the “consciousness level” of the living being against whom the immoral act was committed.

- Killing a human will have far more stronger consequences compared to killing an animal. This is discussed in the essay, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)”.

3. *Dasa akusala* and relative weights of different *kamma* are discussed in the following *desana*:

[WebLink: Download “Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)”](#)

- This *desana* is in the post, “[Root of All Suffering – Ten Immoral Actions](#)”, where you can find the relevant posts mentioned.

Related post: [Origin of Morality \(and Immorality\) in Buddhism](#)

Next, “[Ten Moral Actions \(Dasa Kusala\)](#)”,

6.1.4.3 Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā

Revised March 24, 2016; September 14, 2017; major revision with title change April 27, 2018

1. Here we discuss the 10 types of *punna kamma* (doing meritorious deeds). These can be divided into three groups: *dāna*, *sīla*, *bhāvanā*.

- Those are essential for progress in one’s mundane eightfold path.
- One must cultivate the mundane path and remove the 10 types of *micca ditthi* before being able to comprehend the *Tilakkhana* and start on the Noble Eightfold Path; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.

2. The differences between *kusala/akusala kamma* and *punna/pāpa kamma* were discussed in a previous post: “[Kusala and Akusala Kamma, Punna and Pāpa Kamma](#)”.

- The ten types of *akusala kamma* were discussed in “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”. The ten types of *kusala kamma* are just the avoidance of *akusala kamma*.

3. As discussed in the above two posts, *kusala kamma* (getting rid of *raga*, *dosa*, *moha*) eventually lead to *Nibbāna*. However, *punna kamma* (meritorious actions) help set the background to attain *Nibbāna*, and thus are also critically important.

- One needs to do both. However, the ability do *kusala kamma* is vastly improved when one starts comprehending *Tilakkhana*; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”.
- One not only will be born in “good realms” with *punna kamma*, but also one will be born with good longevity, health, comfort, and wealth (*ayu*, *vanna*, *sapa*, *bala*) to be able to comprehend *Tilakkhana* and pursue *Nibbāna* with ease.

These ten meritorious actions (*punna kamma*) are divided into three groups: *dāna* (generosity), *sīla* (moral behavior), and *bhāvanā* (meditation).

Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā

***Dāna* (Generosity) group includes:**

1. *Dāna* (giving)
2. Transfer of merits to others (*pattidāna*)
3. Rejoicing (accepting or participating) in other’s merits (*pattanumodana*)

***Sīla* (Morality) group includes:**

1. *Sīla* (morality), i.e., observing 5, 8, or 10 precepts
2. Reverence to elders and holy persons (*apacayana*)
3. Pay homage to religious places, take care of such places, etc (*veyyavacca*)

***Bhāvanā* (meditation) group includes:**

1. Meditation (*bhāvanā*)

2. Listening to Dhamma discourses (*Dhamma savana*)
3. Teaching Dhamma (*Dhamma desana*)
4. Correcting one's wrong views, especially on *kamma* (*ditthijukamma*)

On the last one, see, "[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)".

6. Therefore, *dāna*, *sīla*, *bhāvanā* constitute the "base" of a life of a moral person.

- The "*dāna* group" helps one overcome one's greed (*lobha*).
- The "*sīla* group" helps removing hate (*dosa*) from one's mind.
- The "*bhāvanā* group" helps removing ignorance (*moha*) from the mind by learning Dhamma and getting rid of the wrong views (*micca ditthi*).

7. Since *Nibbāna* is removing greed, hate, and ignorance from one's mind, it is clear how these ten actions pave the way for *Nibbāna*. As one engages in these activities more and more, the "cooling down" or "*niveema*" can be experienced; see, "[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)".

- In the *sīla* group of activities, one starts by observing the five precepts, i.e., abstaining from killing living beings intentionally, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and getting intoxicated. This last one is normally taken to be intoxication with alcohol or drugs, but it also includes intoxication with money, beauty, power, position, etc.

8. It is always a good idea to keep in mind why these are to be moral actions: Because they help purify one's mind:

- Most people, in order to avoid breaking the five precepts abstain from drinking, but do not hesitate to show off their wealth, beauty, power, etc.; they are "drunk" too.
- Others pay a lot of attention not to lie, but do not hesitate to gossip, slander, or verbally abuse others.
- Also one should realize that a human life has much more weight compared to an animal life; see, "[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)".
- Most of all, the tenth one is the most potent one that most people neglect to consider. Having established wrong views (*niyata micca ditthi*) is a very potent immoral action, and thus one needs to understand this clearly; see, "[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)".

9. This is why learning Dhamma has a prominent place in the *bhāvanā* section. As one learns the deeper concepts of Dhamma gradually, wrong views are gradually removed. It is not enough to just say, "I will not have these views anymore", even though making such a determination is good. The mind needs to see evidence to get rid of the wrong views it has. The feeling of the *niramisa sukha* when one starts on the Path will make it easier to remove wrong views; see, "[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)".

The High Value of *Punna Kamma* Done with Understanding

1. If one performs a wholesome deed with the knowledge of *kamma* and its effects and also of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, then the wholesome roots will be associated with understanding. The volition is accompanied with all three wholesome roots: non-greed, non-hate, non-delusion. So three-root (*tihétuka* or "*ti*" + "*hetu*") wholesome *kamma* is acquired.

- On the other hand, if one performs a wholesome deed without any knowledge of *Kamma* and its effects or the basic unfruitful nature of this world, he is doing it without any understanding. Then the volition will not be accompanied by non-delusion, but only the two roots of non-greed and non-hate. So two-root (*dvihétuka* = "*dvi*" + "*hetu*") *kamma* is acquired. These are less meritorious compared to the three-root (*tihetuka*) *kamma*.

2. A detailed discussion can be found at, "[A Simple Way to Enhance Merits \(Kusala\) and Avoid Demerits \(Akusala\)](#)". We will discuss these effects in detail in the Abhidhamma section too.

- But it is important to realize that the strength of the *kamma vipaka* for a given meritorious act will vary depending on the level of understanding. For example, while just writing check for charity will have its results, much more stronger results will be gained by someone who spends the same amount of money but involves more with giving by thinking about it before and afterwards, and “getting involved” in the process, for example preparing meals for the hungry etc.

3. To acquire this type of superior *kamma*, one should think of the moral action in advance and feel glad for having the chance to do it. Again after performing the action, one should reflect on it and be full of joy thinking about the good aspects of the deed. Furthermore, one can gain more merits by doing a *punna anumodana* or *pattidana* (transfer of merits to others, #2 *kusala kamma* above) because this amounts to paying off *sansaric* debts; see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”.

- On the other hand, if one feels lazy or reluctant or jealous or stingy before a moral action such as giving charity, and regrets doing the moral action afterwards, then the moral volition of giving to charity will be surrounded by other unwholesome intentions (*cetana*) and consequently its potentiality will be weakened. The wholesome *kamma* acquired in this case is inferior.

Thus is the importance of learning Dhamma in order to grasp such details and to realize the full benefits one’s meritorious actions. Plus, it is interesting to see how all these details “fit into the big picture”; see, “[The Importance of Purifying the Mind](#)”.

Next, “[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#)”, ...

6.1.4.4 The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them

1. The five or eight precepts, of course with different meanings, were there before the Buddha. It is said that on the day the future Buddha, Prince Siddhartha, was born his mother had observed the eight precepts.

- The ancient kings banned the so-called five immoral acts in order to maintain a peaceful society. These were: killing (of probably other people), stealing, sexual misbehavior, lying, and getting intoxicated.
- The *vedic Brahmins* expanded these to include killing of animals. They also expanded to eight precepts which enabled them to attain mundane *jhānas*.
- By the way, except those referring to the God, the Ten Commandments also identify many of these “immoral acts”.

2. Just like he did with many existing terminology at that time (*kamma*, the four great elements of *patavi*, *āpo*, *tējo*, *vāyo*, etc), **the Buddha adopted these precepts, but re-defined what he meant by them.**

- In Buddha Dhamma, all possible immoral acts are included in the *dasa akusala*; see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”.
- Therefore, all those are in the five precepts too. When one truly understands Buddha Dhamma, i.e., the nature of this world as embodied in *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, one sees that these precepts come out naturally from the nature’s laws. At that stage, one’s mind automatically rejects all *dasa akusala* and thus the five precepts are automatically obeyed; one does not even have to think about them.

3. **For one embarking on the Path prescribed by the Buddha, the conventional five precepts (killing other beings intentionally, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxication) are a good start.**

- Furthermore, one needs to recite the five precepts with the understanding that it is not a promise but one’s intention is to do the utmost (otherwise the act will itself be a *musāvāda* or a lie). **This is because anyone other than an *Arahant* is bound to break some of them per their true meanings.**

- But as one proceeds on the Path and experiences the benefits (peace of mind or the early stages of *niramisa sukha*), one should try to expand the scope of those five precepts from the conventional meanings. This can be done systematically: when one truly understand the meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* AND that our existence does not end with this life, one begins to have a more deeper insight.
- **When that happens, the precepts are not followed as a ritual or a set of rules. Rather, one realizes that there is no other moral way to live.**

4. For example, when one realizes that one has been an animal or worse in previous lives, one stops thinking of animals as “mere things” that exist for our pleasure. Furthermore, understanding the laws of *kamma* i.e., taking any life has consequences will make one re-think of just wantonly taking another life.

- But some people go to extremes. They start treating an animal life on the same level as a human life, and then freak out when they have to clear a spider web in cleaning their house. It is inevitable that we will unintentionally kill many small creatures while walking on the ground or even boiling some water. So, one need to get a sense of the relative weights of *kamma*; see, [“How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma?”](#).
- What needs to be avoided first is those “pleasure killings” like fishing, hunting, etc.

5. Stealing is not merely acts like shop lifting, but also includes gains by immoral means. In order to live a functional society, we have to do transactions with each other. We just need to make sure we do not take advantage of another person and becoming “morally indebted” to that person.

- *Vinaya* rules (“*vi*” + “*naya*” where “*naya*” is debt and *vinaya* is becoming free debts) in Buddha Dhamma setup for the monks show how to live their lives by properly paying back for the sustenance they get from the lay people.
- When the Buddha said to test any act or concept with “*Dhamma* and *Vinaya*“, he meant that the concept needs to be consistent with *paticca samuppāda* (cause and effect) and also consistent with “*rāga vinaya*, *dōsa vinaya*, and *mōha vinaya*“, i.e., not getting into debt via greed, hate, and ignorance.
- If we gain from someone by unjust means, we will have to pay that debt if not in this life, but in future lives; see, [“Kamma, Debt, and Meditation”](#).

6. The third precept, “*kamesu miccacara veramani sikkha padan samadiyami*”, is commonly translated as “avoiding sexual misconduct”. But “*kāma*” is not just sexual activity; “*kāma*” includes all sense pleasures that are available in the *kāma loka*. And “*miccacara*” (pronounced “*michchāchāra*”) means “misbehavior” in the sense of “going to extremes”. Thus the real meaning is to not to over-indulge in sense pleasures.

- In fact, excessive drinking, gambling etc are included in this precept.
- We have to use all our five physical senses to live in this world. But we need to have restraints so that we do not abuse them to the extent that we will hurt ourselves or others. Even a simple example of over-eating leads to health problems, which will hurt not only oneself but the whole family.
- **The first three precepts include all three *akusala kamma* done with the body.**

7. The fourth precept on *musāvāda* (lying) in Buddha Dhamma includes all abuses done my speech, including harsh speech, slandering, and gossip which WILL harm oneself and others.

- **Thus the fourth precept encompasses all four *akusala kamma* done with speech.**

8. The fifth is a big one that is almost always misinterpreted. If it included just drinking, it would have been, “*surameraya veramani.....*”. That was probably the original verse.

But in Buddha Dhamma it is, “*surameraya majjapama dattana veramani.....*”.

In the word, “*sura*”, “*ra*” means “*rāga*” or excess greed, thus “*sura*” means with excess greed; “*meraya*” is delicious. “*Majja*” means intoxication and “*majjapama*” is getting delayed via

intoxication. “*Dattana*” means that mindset. Of course, “*veramani sikkha padan samadiyami*” means “I make a determination to avoid doing such things willingly”.

Thus it should be interpreted as, “avoid the mindset of getting intoxicated by alcohol, drugs, money, power, etc”, anything that can make you “fall behind”:

- All this happen in one’s mind. **One gets intoxicated with greedy thoughts and when one does not get one’s way with them, one generates hate.** And all this happens because one does not understand the true nature of this world, i.e., one has *micca diṭṭhi* or wrong views.
- To put it another way, one should be careful not to get intoxicated by the five sense inputs or “*kāma āsvada*”; see, “[What is “Kāma”? – It is not Sex](#)”
- One believes that either, (i) one’s actions will not have future consequences, and (ii) therefore, one just needs to think about how to get what one wants (because there are so many tempting things out there to be had!); one does not realize all that is temporary.
- **Thus in order to really obey the fifth precept one needs to start working on one’s mind. All three *akusala kamma* done with mind are included in this fifth precept; see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”.**

9. The following scenario is given as an example to illustrate the futility of blindly following precepts: There are many people who live their entire lives without intentionally killing, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, lying, or getting intoxicated. But their minds are burdened with greed, hate, or ignorance. Depending on the state of their minds, they may not even get a human birth next time around.

- There is this story about an old woman who followed those conventional five precepts to the letter. Even though she was poor, she was greedy and kept all her money under her pillow. It is said that she was reborn a louse (plural lice) on that pillow, because of her attachment to that money in the pillow.
- And if keeping those precepts will take one to *Nibbāna*, then a cow or a horse living in isolation will be certain to attain *Nibbāna*. They do not kill, steal, lie, or get intoxicated, and if their owners do not have any other animal of that kind, then there is no chance of sexually misbehaving either.
- It is all about purifying one’s mind. A pure mind gains wisdom, and will not allow any harmful action by speech or by deed. Such a mind is not burdened, but has “cooled down”; that is the happiness of *Nibbāna*.

10. Another good example (which also clarifies an aspect of *micca diṭṭhi*) is described in the *Mahā Kammavibhanga sutta* in *Majjima Nikāya*.

- A brahmin by the name of Nigantanathaputta in the days of the Buddha was preaching that everything happens due to *kamma*. He advised his followers to refrain from breaking the five precepts, because that would INEVITABLY lead to the birth in the *apāyas*. He also preached that if someone did not break even a single precept, that person WILL NOT be born in the *apāyas* in the next birth.
- The Buddha said that both were wrong. We have done both good and bad *kamma* in our previous lives and the next birth will be determined by the relative strengths of those and what we do in this life. For example, Angulimala, who killed nearly 1000 people, was able to attain the *Arahantship* in a week. And Buddha gave examples of those lived a perfectly moral life, but were born in the *apāyas*, because they had bad *kamma vipāka* from previous lives.
- Furthermore, the Buddha said that if someone dies with such misconceptions, that is *micca diṭṭhi* and one WILL BE born in the *apāyas* just BECAUSE OF that *micca diṭṭhi*. It is critically important to figure out this point. I meet many people (even Buddhists) who say, “I have not done anything bad to anyone; therefore, I do not think anything bad will happen to me”. That is a *micca diṭṭhi*. The only way to guarantee that one will be exempt from birth in the *apāyas* is to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*.

Next, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)“,

6.1.4.5 What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?

1. A key concept in Buddha Dhamma is cause and effect; nothing happens without a cause or a reason.

- But even if root causes are there, we can stop them from bringing their results by blocking the CONDITIONS for them to come to fruition (a seed has the potential to bring about a tree, but for that to happen the seed must be given a fertile soil, water, and sunlight).
- This is explained with simple terms in, “[Working of Kammā – Critical Role of Conditions](#)“.
- This is why in *paticca samuppāda*, “*paccaya*” does NOT mean “it will happen”; see, “[What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?](#)“.

2. Nature enforces this cause and effect via five main absolutely unshakable laws (*niyama dhamma* or sometimes called *dhammata*): *kamma niyama*, *citta niyama*, *utu niyama*, *beeja* (also called *bija niyama*; but it is pronounced “*beeja*”), and *dhamma niyama*. We will discuss these in detail in another post, but the point here is that kamma is NOT deterministic, other than for *anantariya kamma* (killing one’s parents or an *Arahant*, injuring a Buddha, etc); everything plays out due to a complex process involving all five *niyama dhamma*.

- First of all, there are actions by individuals that lead to bad consequences right away: if one jumps from a tall building, one is bound to get hurt or worse. This is a consequence of *dhamma niyama* (law of gravitation is a *dhamma niyama*); here cause and effect can be easily seen. *Paticca samuppāda* is the ultimate *dhamma niyama*; it explains **how and under what conditions** *kamma vipāka* produces results.
- When something appears in this world, it does not stay the same. It undergoes change (*viparināma*) and is eventually destroyed. Thus anything in the world (a *sankata*) is subjected to the *utu niyama*. Whatever results that *kamma vipāka* may bring in, they will also eventually go away.
- *Beeja* (or *bija*) *niyama* is not relevant to the workings of the plant seeds as some books explain. It dictates how *kamma beeja* (seeds) lead to their fruits (*vipāka*): a “*punna kamma seed*” or a “good seed” will always produce good results; and a “*pāpa kamma seed*” or a “bad seed” will always produce a bad result. A *Sotāpanna* would have made all those *kamma* seeds, that make it possible to have births in the *apāyas*, to be ineffective; thus a *Sotāpanna* will NEVER be born in the *apāyas*.
- *Citta niyama* involves laws associated with the working of the complex mind and that can affect *kamma vipāka* in a major way; for example, by purifying the mind, one can attain the *Sotāpanna* stage and thus make INEFFECTIVE all those *kamma* seeds that could lead to birth in the *apāyas*.
- *Kamma vipāka* are the root causes for all that happen in this world, **but their effects can be altered and even stopped** by exploiting the other laws of nature. This is what a Buddha discovers when he attains Enlightenment. All *kamma vipāka* are made ineffective by attaining full *Nibbāna* or the *Arahanthood*.

The main point here is that most bad consequences can be avoided by understanding Dhamma, living a moral life, and being mindful (*yoniso manasikara*).

3. In this beginning-less long journey of rebirths called *samsāra*, each of us have done an uncountable number of both good and bad things. When we do a good or a bad act, the *kammic* energy associated with that act gives rise to a seed, called a *kamma* seed. It is an energy (not a physical thing) that stays with our minds until it gets a chance to come to fruition. Just like an apple seed will not germinate and grow into an apple tree until the right conditions (soil, water, sunlight, etc) appear, all our *kamma* seeds lie in waiting for the right conditions to appear, and at that time we have to experience the result of that *kamma* or *kamma vipāka*.

- Our *kamma* seeds (*kamma beeja*) are subjected to the *beeja niyama* mentioned above. In either case, a seed gives rise to a plant or a *vipāka* **according to the type of seed**. Someone, who did something bad that only an animal would do, will pay for that may be with a birth in the animal realm; someone who did an act of generosity may get rewarded accordingly.
- We can keep an apple seed (for example) in a dry, cool place for a long time; some seeds have been kept for thousands of years. It will not germinate until we plant it in a fertile soil and provide water and sunlight. In the same way, a *kamma* seed (good or bad) can lay dormant for a long time until conditions becomes right for it to germinate. We all have accumulated numerous *kamma* seeds over these repeated rebirths, and **what we need to do is to provide conditions for the good *kamma* seeds to germinate and NOT provide conditions for bad ones to germinate.**
- Thus *kamma* is the act AND *kamma vipāka* is the result of that act. **But since the right conditions need to appear for a *kamma* seed to “germinate”, the *vipāka* may not come until later in the same life, next life, or even many lives later.**
- This is why it is not easy for people to see that their actions will have consequences. *Kamma niyama* is not the only law that is in effect; there are four more as mentioned above and they all work together. It is a very intricate network. In particular, because there is a *citta niyama* (principle of thoughts), we also have some control over these *kamma vipāka*. **We cannot change any of the five *niyama*, but we can OVERCOME a cause (a power) due to a *niyama* by building an opposing power.**

4. We can take many steps to suppress the bad *kamma vipāka* coming to fruition and ALSO to get those good *kamma vipāka* to come to fruition. **As emphasized above, we all have basically unlimited number of both good and bad *kamma vipāka* waiting to bear fruit. Rather than giving in to bad *vipāka* and saying “what to do, this is my *kamma*“, we can find ways to suppress those. And rather than saying “I must not have done any good *kamma*, and this is my fate”, we can probe and locate those hidden good *kamma* seeds and cultivate them.** Let us consider some examples:

- If one does not take care of one’s physical body, it may become fertile ground for many bad *kamma vipāka* to come to fruition. If we eat healthy and exercise, the body will not be vulnerable to ailments or injuries.
- The brain needs good food and exercise too. A healthy body and mind exercises such as solving problems, even word puzzles, keeps the brain in good condition. But the best is meditation, and *vipassana* or insight meditation is better than *samatha* meditation. For example, even if one’s family has a history of Alzheimer’s disease, one can possibly avoid getting by keeping the brain active and healthy.
- One may be born to poverty because of a past *kamma vipāka* that came to fruition at the death of the previous life. But this is NOT a reason to give up. Any person has an unlimited number of good *kamma vipāka* waiting to come to fruition. It is true that a birth into a poor family did not set up optimum conditions. But one has control over the *citta niyama* that was mentioned at the beginning (see, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)“). One could use one’s mind to overcome this condition, and cultivate the background to achieve success.
- This is why the environment is critical to anyone. One needs to surround oneself with optimistic, moral people, who will help cultivate the good qualities that lie dormant. At the same time, one needs to avoid “bad company” that could pull one in the wrong directions. It is not that any person is intrinsically good or bad; rather, at any given phase of life or even through most of this life, some people may be displaying their “bad habits” that have come to the forefront. Associating with such people, one will be affected in the negative way, bring up one’s own bad habits (or “*gathi*” in Pāli or Sinhala).
- The environment is CRITICAL for young children starting from the time when they are just conceived in the mother’s womb. Even the fetus in the womb is affected by, say a loving mother and father showing affection to each other or when the mother is being abused by the father. It is critical to have a nurturing environment within the family and also in the school and

in any other activity. A significant part of an individual's character could be molded by the first 10-15 years of life. That is the time they can acquire habits and once acquired, it takes a lot of effort to change them. It is the duty of the parents to instill good habits: moral behavior, eating well, exercise, associate with good friends, avoid bad friends, study well, etc.

5. It is also possible to remove many of one's bad *kamma* seeds. When we acquire a "bad *kamma* seed" we get indebted to another being. Just like one can be debt-free by paying off existing loans, one can "pay back" old debts that have been accumulated in the cycle of rebirths by "transferring merits" when one does good deeds, and also by doing the *Ariya metta bhāvanā*; see, "[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\)- How Does that Happen?](#)" and "[5. Ariya Metta Bhāvanā \(Loving Kindness Meditation\)](#)".

6. The world is VERY complex. Because all those five *niyamas* are acting simultaneously to enforce the "cause and effect", it is not possible to sort through each and every event in isolation and say, "this is THE reason for this particular event". There could be a dominant cause in some cases, but most times it is a combination of several, and most those are from the past.

- The main thing we have remember is that EACH and EVERY action by us will have consequences (law of *kamma*). There is nowhere to hide; even if we can fool the law enforcement sometimes, the nature cannot be fooled.
- We need to make a concerted effort to get rid of bad habits and to acquire and cultivate good habits. A habit can snowball into a *sansaric* habit, good or bad (related to law of citta and law of *beeja*). Environment is an important factor in getting rid of bad habits and acquiring/cultivating good habits.
- We need to be constantly aware that there are zillions of *kamma beeja* (good and bad) waiting to be germinated. We should not provide conditions for "bad seeds" to germinate (i.e., avoid bad company, bad environment, etc), and provide conditions for "good seeds" to germinate (i.e., study well, provide the necessary conditions to get a promotion or a job, and learn and practice Dhamma so that whatever good thing that is forgotten comes to the forefront of the mind). I am sure you can apply these principles to your own life; each one is different.
- Then there are things that happen due to apparently random events: floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc. These come under *utu niyama*: events that occur due to physical causes in the environment. When those happen, thousands of apparently "unconnected" people may be affected the same way. Again, this is partly due to the unimaginable number of *kamma* we have accumulated in this beginning-less rebirth process. There is ALWAYS something from the deep past that is going to MATCH any circumstance.

7. Finally, there is a misconception out there that one needs to get rid of all *kamma* (more accurately *kamma vipāka*) in order to attain *Nibbāna*. This is completely false. One attains *Nibbāna* via removing deep-seated defilements, called *āsavas*; see, "[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)". However, one could remove most of one's bad *kamma vipāka* via cultivating *Ariya metta bhāvanā*; see, #5 above.

Some of the main concepts are discussed further in the "[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)", "[Habits and Goals](#)", "[Sansaric Habits and Āsavas](#)", "[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)", and other related posts.

Next, "[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)",

6.1.4.6 How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma

Revised February 21, 2018

In the previous essay, "[Ten Immoral Acts \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)", we looked at the ten different types of acts that will have bad *kammic* consequences.

1. First of all, the most potent of all is *micca diṭṭhi*. **The only *akusala* completely removed by a *Sotāpanna* is the *micca diṭṭhi* and in doing that he/she removes an unimaginably huge amount of defilements;** see, "[What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)".

- One critical problem many people have is that they try hard to avoid actions with relatively small *kammic* consequences, while unknowingly doing things that have stronger *kammic* consequences. Let us take an example: Suppose we have a large tank of water which is losing water due to many holes at the bottom. Some holes are pin holes, some are a little larger, and there are a few holes that are big and losing water fast. Obviously, one would want to plug those large holes first. Then one would fix the medium-size holes and those pin holes are the last to be fixed.

2. We can see that many *akusala* are with “acts” that are directed towards other beings, whether it is done bodily, verbally, or just by thought. In principle, a being could be in any one of the 31 realms (see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”).

3. The severity of the consequence of any misdeed (ie., *kamma vipāka*) involving another living being depends strongly on the “level of existence” of the living being from lowest level of realm 1 (*niraya*) to the highest at the 31st realm (fourth *arūpa loka*); Any “*Ariya*” or a Noble Person (who has attained one of the four stages of *Nibbāna*), are at the highest levels regardless of the realm. A hurtful word against an *Ariya* carries thousand-fold bad *kamma vipāka* compared to killing thousand ants.

- See, “[What is Intention in Kamma?](#)“. This post has been updated on February 21, 2018, and provides a simple two-step process to evaluate a given situation.

4. It is difficult to identify whether a given human is just an immoral human or an *Arahant* by just looking at that person. Human realm is unique in many ways.

Thus, we can try to sort out the *kammic* consequences of a given immoral act on the “level of consciousness” of the being that act was directed to:

- **Regardless of the realm**, the highest four levels are *Arahant*, *Anāgāmī*, *Sakadāgāmī*, and *Sotāpanna*. Humans can attain all four levels.
- Out of the 31 realms we can directly experience only the human and animal realms. Thus, normally we need only to evaluate how our actions affect other humans AND animals.
- Since any animal is inferior to any human, we need to pay special attention to how we interact with other human beings.
- In particular, it is not possible to judge whether a given human has attained a *Nibbānic* state. Even by directing hurtful words to an *Ariya* (one who has attained at least the *Sotāpanna* stage), one could be acquiring thousand-fold more bad *kammic* potential compared to doing the same to a normal human.
- In some cases, even the person in question may not know that he/she is a *Sotāpanna*. There may be “*jati Sotapannas*“, i.e., those who had attained the *Sotāpanna* stage in a previous life and thus born as a *Sotāpanna*, and may not realize it.
- Thus we need to be very careful with dealing with fellow humans in particular.

5. When we say killing is immoral it is implicit that killing is taking the life of any living being. But killing a human has a *kammic* consequence that is much higher compared to killing an animal. Killing a *Sotāpanna* has a even more drastic consequences, *Sakadāgāmī* even higher, *Anāgāmī* even higher, and killing an *Arahant* will have the highest, and is of the strongest kind at par with killing a parent (an *anantariya kamma* that will cause the very next birth in an *apāya*).

6. Similarly other immoral acts will have consequences depending on the “consciousness level” of the living being. It is not a matter of one particular living being is “better” than another.

- Rather it is a matter of how valuable that “level” is, and how difficult it is to attain that “level”. One has been born a human because of the merits one has acquired in previous lives; it is extremely difficult to get a human birth as we will discuss in a separate post; see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)“.
- One becomes a *Sotāpanna* by cultivating moral behavior and by purifying one’s mind; thus a life of a *Sotāpanna* is much more valuable compared to a normal human being.

7. Even among humans who have not attained any *Nibbānic* state, there are “different levels of consciousness”: One who has more wisdom (*paññā*) is at a higher level than one with less wisdom.

- Here wisdom does not mean book knowledge, but knowledge of Dhamma; understanding of the true nature of “this world”, or *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. Thus the possibility of that person attaining a *Nibbānic* stage is more likely, compared to one who has less wisdom.

8. Another important thing is not to worry about things that one does not have any control over. Everyday, we kill so many small animals unintentionally: stepping on them while walking, cleaning the yard, cleaning the house, and even while boiling water.

- We need to remember that “*kamma* is intention”. We are not boiling water to kill any unseen life forms, rather we boil water to make sure we do not get sick by drinking contaminated water.

9. It is not even possible to live “in this world” without harming other beings unintentionally, even though we may be aware that our acts may lead to the destruction of many life forms.

- Once a *bhikkhu* who had developed *abhiññā* powers was getting ready to drink a glass of water, and with his ability to “see” finer things saw that there were numerous microscopic beings in the water glass. He tried to filter them out, but they were too small. The Buddha then explained to him that it is not possible to live without doing things that are necessary to sustain one’s life.
- In another example, suppose one has a wound; if left alone it could lead to one’s death. Thus one needs to apply medication to the wound. However, that wound is infested with numerous microscopic living beings, and they will be killed by the medication.
- Walking on the ground (especially grass) kills many insects; but we cannot live our lives without going places. What matters is our INTENTION. When one is walking, there is no intention of killing living beings.

10. What we need to do is to be careful not to do any harm to even the smallest of the creatures with a hateful or greedy mind. It is the intention, or the state of the mind, that counts.

- There is this story about an old woman who was very careful about not breaking the five precepts. But she was extremely greedy; she was quite stingy, did not give much to charity, and kept all her money under her pillow. Because of that greed, she was born a *peta* (a hungry ghost).
- It is relatively easy to keep the five precepts. What is harder is to purify one’s mind of greedy, hateful, and ignorant thoughts. This is what needs to be accomplished in true “*ānāpānasati bhāvanā*”; see, “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)”.
- Even though we may not be greedy or hateful in this life, we may have acquired such bad *kamma* in previous lives. This is why the Buddha said even if one lives morally in this life that does not guarantee a good rebirth unless one has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*; see, “[Why a Sotāpanna is Better off than any King, Emperor, or a Billionaire](#)”.
- Buddha Dhamma is all about the mind. **Purifying the mind is the key, not just to follow set rules. Just following precepts will not be enough.**

11. Finally, it is important to remember that hate is worse than greed. Excessive hateful actions lead to rebirth in the lowest realm, the *niraya*. Excess greed lead to rebirth mainly as *petas* (hungry ghosts).

- Mixture of hate and greed lead to rebirth in all four lowest realms, the *apāyas*. Even if one does not carry over the hateful or greedy thoughts to speech or bodily actions, they still count especially if one thinks about them most of the time.
- This is why it is important to develop good meditation habits; see, “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)”. A mind free of hate and greed becomes less agitated and peaceful; then it leads to wisdom (*paññā*).

More details on weights of different *kamma* at: [12. Key Factors to be Considered when “Meditating” for the Sotāpanna Stage](#). Also see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”.

Next, “[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)”, ..

6.1.4.7 The Four Bases of Mental Power (Satara Iddhipada)

I used to have this post titled, “The Four Factors of Accomplishment”. I changed it because those words do not do justice to these four mental qualities. They are called *satara Iddhipada* in Pāli or Sinhala, meaning factors that are critical to accomplishing any goal, whether mundane or transcendental.

- *Iddhi* is conventionally taken to mean “magical” powers. Those *yogis* who could see things that are far away, hear sounds that are far away, read minds of others, etc., were supposed to have *iddhi* powers. They acquired those powers by harnessing the power of these four factors to KEEP THEIR DEFILEMENTS SUPPRESSED.
- When one works towards attaining *Nibbāna*, one can use the same factors to REMOVE defilements from the mind.
- One could use the same factors to attain mundane goals, such as achieving financial independence, excelling in academics or a sport, improving health, etc.

They are *chanda* (liking, but close to an obsession), *citta* (thoughts), *virīya* (effort), and *vimansa* (analysis). *Chanda* is NOT greed, it is the determination to attain a goal.

- Any innovator, business person, scientist, architect, in fact anyone who is an expert at his/her occupation, knows these factors are critical, even though they may not have thought about them.

1. One needs to have an liking (more like an obsessed liking) for the project; this is called ***chanda*** which we can translate as liking. It is not greed, but pure in quality and grows to become a life goal.

2. When one has this “obsession”, one keeps thinking about it all the time. When one gets up at night to go to the bathroom, one thinks about it; it is the first thing that comes to mind when one wakes up. This is called ***citta***; we will call it thought or contemplation.

3. Thus one makes one’s best efforts (***virīya***) to achieve the goal. This is what makes swimmers get up early morning to do laps, a scientist/innovator forgets about his/her meal, an innovator stays awake thinking about how to make improvements to his products, etc.

4. One is always on the lookout for any faults or possible improvements in current efforts. If the concepts involved do not make sense, one is always looking for a better explanation, a better way to make something, etc. This is reasoning/investigating (***vimansa***).

- These factors are mutually supportive of each other. Because of this, once getting started (slowly), **they can lead to explosive growth**; these factors feed on each other, and the project becomes self-sustaining. This is called exponential growth. Thus it is hard to calculate the time taken to finish the project by linear extrapolation.
- The same is true for someone starting on the Path. Initially, it takes time to absorb the concepts. But IF THE CONCEPTS ARE CORRECT (i.e., no contradictions), then progress is made very quickly. The principle of *paticca samuppāda* starts working and one will be attracting resources that will help in ways one would not have even thought about; see, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)”.

I know this by experience both as a scientist and now as a follower of the Path. After working for over four years, up until 2013, I had made only slow, steady progress on the Path. But I progressed enough that I kept looking for better explanations, discarding many things on the way. Since the middle of 2013, the growth exploded. That is when, just by the law of attraction (see, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)”) I came across the pure Dhamma.

- By the way, this is process the Buddha called *bhāvanā* (meditation). One keeps contemplating, clarifying, investigating, etc. it all the time, i.e., “*Asevitaya, bhavithaya, bahuleekathaya,.....*”.
- One can be meditating in all four postures: sitting, standing, walking, and lying down (on a bed). Of course one can concentrate better sitting down in one of the more formal sitting postures.

Deeper Meanings when Cultivating the Noble Eightfold Path

See, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)” for an analysis based on Abhidhamma.

1. *Chanda* (cha + anda, where “*cha*” is mind and “*anda*” is “*anduma*” or clothes) means wrapping one’s mind with appropriate “attire”, which here means *sammā vaca*, *sammā kammanta*, and *sammā ajiva*. This is what fuels the “liking” for *Nibbāna* with increased *nirāmisa sukha*.

- By the way, a different meaning of “*anda*” (blind) is implied when *chanda* is used in “*kāmachanda*” (= “*kāma*” + “*cha*” + “*anda*”), i.e., mind blinded by *kāma* or sense pleasures.

2. *Citta* here means the mindset to attain *Nibbāna*.

3. However, even if one has liking and mindset on attaining *Nibbāna*, one needs to make an effort or *virīya*.

4. Even if one is exerting effort, it needs to be directed in the right direction. Thus one needs *vimansa* (investigation/reasoning) to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and to get to *sammā diṭṭhi*.

5. “*Iddhi*” means “grow”, and “*pada*” means “headed direction”. Thus with *iddhipada* one is accelerating in the direction that one sets one’s mind. Thus all four factors of *chanda*, *citta*, *virīya*, *vimansa* need to be there.

Next, “[Why is it Necessary to Learn Key Pāli Words?](#)”, ...

6.1.4.8 Why is it Necessary to Learn Key Pāli Words?

Original written before October 23, 2015; Revised March 4, 2017

I had not given this issue much thought until someone at an online forum pointed out in 2014 that I was using some Pāli words and it was difficult to understand the meaning of those terms. This is an important point that has two aspects:

- In the *Arana Vibhanga sutta*, the Buddha advised *bhikkhus* to explain the Dhamma by providing the MEANINGS and not to emphasize a given language. As long as one comprehends the concept, it does not matter what language is used.
- However, on the other hand, we need to have a way to transmit the key foundational words for future generations without distorting the meaning of such words. And it is difficult to find suitable words in other languages for key words like *anicca*, *anatta*, and *paticca samuppāda*.
- I have explained the meaning of any Pāli term I use. But for a first time reader, this could be a legitimate issue. Please use the “Search” button on the top right to locate relevant posts for any key word. There is a “[Pāli Glossary \(A-K\)](#)” and [Pāli Glossary \(L-Z\)](#)” too.

1. Buddha Dhamma is the most complex theory in the world; it encompasses all of nature’s laws. Even though its basic premises are not hard to grasp, if one needs to dig deeper, one needs to spend some time “learning the basics”, or the “fundamental ideas involved”.

- Think about it this way: Can one learn algebra without knowing arithmetic?
- The key is to learn the basic ideas well, words like *anicca*, *anatta*, *bhava*, etc. It is said that one could understand the Buddha’s message about existence just by comprehending *anicca* (which will lead to understanding of *dukkha* and *anatta*), and that is true.

2. There is another aspect too. If one learns the basic concepts in addition/subtraction or even quantum mechanics, it does not matter what language one uses to learn it. The key is to get the IDEA,

not just learn the words. One can learn addition/subtraction or quantum mechanics in ANY language, not by memorizing words but by understanding the key concepts.

- When a child learns how to add/subtract, he/she has to learn the basic multiplication table and the procedures on how to use that knowledge in handling big numbers. After that he/she can solve any arbitrary problem involving big numbers.
- In the same way, one needs to get the IDEAS embodied in some key Pāli words, because many of those Pāli words CANNOT be directly translated into other languages: They are highly condensed, each word packed with deep meanings.
- In quantum mechanics, the word “quantum” embodies the subject; regardless of the language one uses, one knows what a quantum is. In the same way, one needs to know what “*anicca*” is. There is no other word for it in English.
- **Once one UNDERSTANDS the meaning of a certain key Pāli word, then one may even be able to find a suitable word in any language to keep it in mind. There is no need to memorize Pāli words for the sake of memorizing. It is similar to learning any concept.**
- We just should not change the original Pāli words in the *Tipitaka*. That is the “blueprint” that need to be transmitted intact so that Buddha’s original message will be kept intact.

3. Let us first examine the reasons why Pāli is a special language.

- The Buddha delivered his discourses in *Maghadhi* language; a version of that language suitable for memorization (Pāli) was used to SUMMARIZE those *suttas*. For example, *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta* was delivered to the five ascetics overnight. How many pages would it take to write all that down? Yet, it was condensed into a few pages.
- In the old days *suttas* were orally transmitted generation-to-generation, and that was the other reason to condense it into a special form like a poem that is easy to remember and recite. The origin of the word “Pali” comes from that particular way of organization of the words.

4. Therefore, it may take several words in a different language to express the meaning of some Pāli words like *anicca*, *anatta*, *bhava*, etc. *Paticca samuppāda* is another whole phrase that is best kept intact and just learn what is meant by that phrase; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)”.

- Thus most Pāli words are impossible to be translated word-by-word to other languages. **There is a system to glean the true meanings of the *suttas* as well as the deep subject of *paticca samuppāda***; see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”.
- This is the reason that many commentaries were written in the old days to explain the meaning of key words and phrases; see, “[Preservation of Dhamma](#)” for details.
- Unfortunately, most of those original commentaries (*Sinhala Attakatha*) cannot be found today, except for three; see the above post.

5. Most of the problems we have today are due to such “word by word” translation of *suttas* into other languages.

- **The most visible and disastrous translations are the translation of the words *anicca* and *anatta* into Sanskrit as *anitya* and *anathma***; these words were then ADOPTED in Sinhala language to express the meaning of *anicca* and *anatta*. Then within the last two hundred or so years, those Sanskrit words were directly translated to English and now have become established to mean “impermanence” and “no-self”.
- **Incorrect translation of just those words have kept the message of the Buddha hidden for over fifteen hundred years. It is not an accident that there have not been that many *Arahants* during that time.**
- For the correct meanings of these words, see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)” and the follow-up post.

6. In fact it is said that one can reach the *Sotāpanna* stage by just comprehending the true meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, the three characteristics of the world. These three words have embodied in them a very broad message. Whole suttas were delivered to describe what was meant by those words! **It is WRONG and DISASTROUS to just translate them as impermanence, suffering, and “no-self”.**

- **But if one wishes**, and knows the correct interpretations, one can dig much deeper to unimaginable depths. For example, there is a process involving 9 steps where a given *citta* starts off as a pure (*pabhasvara*) *citta* and gets “contaminated” before dying as a *viññāṇa citta* within a billionth of a second!
- Even though I will eventually dig more deeper into Buddha Dhamma at the website, there is no need to go to that depth for most people (and many will not have enough time to do that anyway; but there could be a few who would really enjoy it).
- I just want everyone to appreciate Buddha Dhamma for what it is, and to help remove many misconceptions that are out there today.

7. To summarize, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of UNDERSTANDING the meanings of key Pāli words. It may take some time to truly grasp those meanings. I keep revising those key posts, whenever a better way to express an idea comes to mind or when someone else points out a better way to express it. Please do not hesitate to send comments/suggestions.

- **Experience is a key factor in understanding.** The word “elephant” may not mean anything to someone who does not understand English. But if it is shown to him what an elephant looks like, then he can associate the word “elephant” with the big animal.
- In the same way, it is important to UNDERSTAND what *anicca* means, by using one’s experience: for example, we cannot maintain even our body the way we would like for the LONG TERM, etc. Then you look at others, especially those who are even older than us, or those who died of old age, and realize that it is true. Then you think about anything in this world, and realize that it is true, i.e., we cannot maintain ANYTHING in this world to our satisfaction, and that is *anicca*.
- Also see, “[Saṅgā – What It Really Means](#)”.

8. The following is a table with some key Pāli words and links to a few posts that describe what those words mean. More posts probably can be found by using the “Search” button on the top right.

Next, “[Origin of Morality \(and Immorality\) in Buddhism](#)”, ..

Word	Links
Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta	Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta
Gathi, Bhava, jati	Gathi, Bhava, and Jati
Āsava	Habits, Goals, and Character (Gathi), The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character (Gathi), and Cravings (Āsavas), Sansaric Habits, Character (Gathi), and Cravings (Āsava)
Nibbāna	Nibbāna
Niramisa sukha	Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?, How to Taste Nibbāna, Niramisa Sukha (Happiness Arising from Dissociating from the 31 realms)
Paticca Samuppāda	Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda, Paticca Samuppāda – Introduction

Word	Links
San	San
Saṅkhāra	Saṅkhāra , Kamma , Kamma Beeja , Kamma Vipāka

6.1.5 Buddha Dhamma and Morality

[“Origin of Morality \(and Immorality\) in Buddhism”](#)

[“What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Contraception?”](#)

[“Is Eating Meat an Akusala Kamma \(Immoral Deed\)?”](#)

[“Do Things Just Happen? – The Hidden Causes”](#)

6.1.5.1 Origin of Morality (and Immorality) in Buddhism

1. Morality and immorality are both built-in to nature. A human can choose to become moral or immoral. This is because a human has a mind that can grasp right from wrong; on the other hand, an animal does not have a developed mind that can sort out good deeds from the bad most of the time.

2. In Buddha Dhamma, which describes nature’s laws, the foundation of the moral code is the set of ten moral actions (*dasa kusala*), which are to avoid the ten immoral actions (*dasa akusala*); see, [“Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)”](#) and the follow-up post.

3. **If one does not follow this fundamental moral code, one becomes indebted to other humans and also to the nature (which means all living beings, from which we “see” only a small fraction) in general.** In this life as well as in previous lives, we have become indebted to other beings.

- Thus getting out of that debt, as well not to get into new debts, is also a part of the moral code in Buddha Dhamma; see, [“Kamma, Debt, and Meditation”](#) for more details.
- This is in the “*vinaya pitaka*” of the *Tipitaka*; it is also described in the *suttas* in the *sutta pitaka*. The third section of the *Tipitaka*, *Abhidhamma*, describes the ten moral/immoral actions in depth.

4. Now let us see how most of our conventional moral code(s), comes from these two foundational aspects of Buddha Dhamma.

- Of the ten immoral actions three are done with body: killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. The basic difference with “conventional code” is that killing of animals is not considered immoral in many societies.
- There are four immoral actions done with speech: lying, slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous talk, of which the latter is not taken seriously as immoral in most cases; but one can experience the benefits of avoiding it for oneself.
- Those seven immoral actions and speech ARISE due to **the three kinds of immoral thoughts: greed for other’s belongings, ill will or hatred, and established wrong views (*lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*)**. In a way the last one is the root cause for all other nine, because one would not violate any of them if one knew the true nature of the “wider world” (of 31 realms of existence and the rebirth process therein): that it is unfruitful to engage in any of those nine immoral actions (called “*avijjā*” or ignorance).

5. Then there is the other aspects of morality that comes from abstaining from getting into new debt and paying off old debts (from the *vinaya*).

- As one can easily see, giving (*dana*) in general is an excellent way of “paying off debt”. Since we do not know who we have becomes indebted to in this long cycle of rebirths, giving can be

to anyone, including animals. For animals, the best giving is of course abstain from killing; not to take their lives. Even though they cannot think like us, they do have feelings.

- This point of “being debt free” incorporate many of our “conventional moral actions”: helping out others, being considerate to others, etc.
- A big part of this is also making sure to fulfil one’s responsibilities. All our associations have, at the root, “long term debts” in play even though we do not realize it. The biggest debts are those to our families and especially to children (and parents in return).
- We constantly benefit from the actions of innumerable others living in this complex society; we depend on each other for survival. Our food, energy needs, infrastructure needs, are hard to sort out. The best way to pay off such debts is to do “one’s own part”, honestly doing one’s own job and being a “good citizen”.

6. But the most important thing is to understand the true nature of this “wider world”. When one has that understanding it will become automatic to follow the moral code. One does not have to make an effort, because one’s mind clearly sees what is right and what is wrong. There are then such meritorious actions (*punna kriya*), which cultivate the “moral code behavior” and also purifies the mind; see, “[Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā](#)”.

- The goal of this website is to clarify how people engage in immoral actions because their inability to REALLY understand the true nature of this “wider world” (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*) and thus to help get rid of such wrong views.
- If one understood the “long term consequences” (and unfruitfulness) of acting with extreme greed and hate, then one becomes automatically moral.

7. Finally, morality is not a one street. Unfortunately, the nature has both morality and immorality built-in. Even though we think, “how one can do a highly immoral act like killing another human and have a peace of mind?”, there are some who do ENJOY such acts. People like Hitler and Pol pot, as well as serial killers, are good examples. They PLAN and carry out such vicious deeds with pleasure.

- Thus the nature, at least on the surface (**because the consequences are hidden and time-delayed**), is neutral on the matter of morality and immorality. One can go the moral route or the immoral route. Humans have the ability to sort out which route is the correct one. However, it is not easy for children to figure that out. This is why the guidance of the parents and teachers is CRITICAL to point a child in the right direction.

Related Post: [What Does Buddha Dhamma Say about Creator, Satan, Angels, and Demons?](#)

Next, “[What does Buddha Dhamma say About Birth Control?](#)”,

6.1.5.2 What does Buddha Dhamma (Buddhism) say about Birth Control?

Moral issues regarding birth control and abortion have very clear answers in Buddha Dhamma. In particular, at what stage of pregnancy does a living human exist in a womb, but at the dying moments of the previous life.

- A critical point to first understand is that a human will be born in existence (human “bhava”) multiple times before that kammic energy is exhausted and one will be born in a higher or a lower realm; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.

1. Our bodies are just “shells” that are discarded at death. We are born human in this life due to a past good *kamma*, and until that *kammic* energy is exhausted we will remain in the “human *bhava*” or the “human existence”. Our physical bodies last only about 100 years or so, and if the *kammic* energy for the “human *bhava*” is not exhausted at the time of the death, a “human *gandhabba*” will leave the body and wait until a new womb becomes available; see, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)”

- This “human *gandhabba*” has a very fine body and thus cannot be seen.

- The *gandhabba* may have to wait for a few days or even a many years until a suitable womb becomes available; at that time, it will be pulled into the womb by the *kammic* energy, and the *gandhabba* takes hold of the zygote in the womb that was created by a sperm fertilizing an egg. This is what the modern science calls a “conception”, and in Buddha Dhamma it is called “*okkanthi*” of a *gandhabba* in a womb.
- However, if the “kammic energy for the present human *bhava*” is exhausted at the time of death, then the transition to the next “*bhava*” or existence happens at the dying moment, and if that new existence is that of a cat, a “cat *gandhabba*” will emerge from the dead body; of course this *gandhabba* has a very fine body that cannot be seen.
- Here again the “cat *gandhabba*” will have to wait until a suitable “cat womb” is ready, and that time it will get of the newly formed “cat zygote” in the womb of the “cat mother”. And a baby cat will be born later on.

2. Thus in either case, what happens in a womb at the time of conception is just to provide the “material basis” for the *gandhabba* to form a physical body. The “blueprint” for that physical body or the *gandhabba* was created at the dying moment in the previous life; this formation of a new *gandhabba* is the “real birth” or “*jati*” in Buddha Dhamma.

- All this is discussed in more detail in several posts, including “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)”, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)”, and a more technical description in “[Cutī-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”.

3. Now let us see what is the procedure of contraception does. **Whether it is done via either the use of a condom or by the mother taking birth control pills, the outcome is that a zygote will not be formed for a *gandhabba* to start a new life. Thus it is clear that there are no moral issues involved here; terminating a life is not involved at this stage.**

4. On the other hand, once the *gandhabba* “is in the womb” and has taken possession of the zygote, then there is a living being in the womb. Any procedure done after this “real conception” is equivalent to taking a human life; it does not matter whether the procedure was done a month before birth of the baby or just a day after the *gandhabba* came into the womb.

- Thus any procedure done to abort the birth after the “actual conception”, i.e., *gandhabba* taking possession of the zygote, involves the termination of a human life.
- The only uncertainty is when the *gandhabba* takes hold of the zygote after it is formed; this could happen immediately after intercourse or a few days after intercourse. By the time the zygote arrives at the womb, it is done; see #6 below.

5. Thus Buddha Dhamma provides a fairly unambiguous picture of the moral issues involved in the birth control process.

- Of course, there are other moral issues that could be discussed. For example, on the use of birth control procedures, there are thorny questions associated with whether it is a good idea to make those available to school children.

6. It is important to note that science does not have an answer to the question of why all zygotes do not result in pregnancies, and some couples who could not have babies for many years all of a sudden have success. The actual conception time is also controversial; [WebLink: WIKI: Beginning of pregnancy controversy](#)

- The steps in the conception process can be summarized as follows: During mother’s menstrual cycle, one **egg (ovum)** is usually released from one of the ovaries and is swept into the funnel-shaped end of one of the fallopian tubes. If a **sperm** penetrates the egg there, fertilization results and the **fertilized egg (zygote)** moves down the fallopian tube toward the uterus. The cells of the zygote divide repeatedly as the zygote moves down the fallopian tube. The zygote enters the uterus in 3 to 5 days. In the uterus, the cells continue to divide, becoming a hollow ball of cells called a **blastocyst**. Inside the uterus, the blastocyst implants in the wall of the uterus, where it develops into an **embryo** attached to a placenta and surrounded by fluid-filled membranes; see, [MERCKMANUAL: Stages of Development of the Fetus](#)

- Thus conception happens during the time the life-less zygote transforms to the “live” blastocyst. It is during this time that a *gandhabba* enters the zygote. However, a *gandhabba* with “*gathi*” matching that of the mother (and father) must be “pulled in” by the kammic energy, for the conception to occur (do a search for “*gathi*” on the top right search box to find about “*gathi*”).
- What matters most is the “*gathi*” of the mother at the time a *gandhabba* moves in to the womb. This is why in some cases, a child may have very different character (“*gathi*”) compared to the parents; furthermore, this is also why mothers who could not get pregnant for years, get pregnant during a time period when the mother most likely had a “personality shift” or a significant change in her mental state.
- Furthermore, if the mother (and father) are prevented from having a child due to a previous *kamma vipāka*, the resulting zygote will be a “dud” and thus no *gandhabba* can “descend to the womb”, i.e., pregnancy is not possible.

A deeper analysis of how the next existence is grasped at death is given in, “[Cuti-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”

Next, “[Is Eating Meat an Akusala Kamma \(Immoral Deed\)?](#)“, ..

6.1.5.3 Is Eating Meat an Akusala Kamma (Immoral Deed)?

Published before October 23, 2015; revised October 19, 2016; February 16, 2018

Note added **June 2, 2016**: I decided to revise this post because I received comments from a few people who thought it could encourage people to eat meat. My intention was not that, but merely to point out that there are much worse things people ordinarily do even without thinking twice. It is best to avoid eating meat out of compassion for animals.

1. The Buddha spent a lot of his time dispelling “*bamunu matha*” or “superficial concepts about morality” adhered to by the *vedic brahmins* of that day.

- It is unfortunate to see that many current “Buddhists” are practicing the same “*bamunu matha*“. We have gone a full circle and are back to status that the Buddha tried very hard to change.
- The reason is that we humans have the tendency to judge everything by how we perceive them with our five physical senses, on outward appearances. There is more to nature than what we see (*ditta*), hear (*suta*), taste (*rasa*) and smell (*muta*), and perceive (*vinna*). The whole point of the appearance of a Buddha in this world is to show us that the truth is much deeper, and we need to “see” with *paññā* (wisdom). This will become clear as one learns Dhamma.
- Thus the Buddha advised us to go beyond that and to “see the reality” by always paying attention to his “*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu...*”, or “dhamma that has never been heard before...”. Therefore, let us analyze this matter using his “cause and effect” doctrine, and not the absolute, fatalistic doctrine of *kamma*; see, “[What is Kamma? Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)“.
- Thus, sometimes, the outward appearance of morality could be nothing but *micca diṭṭhi*. Some people try to attain *Nibbāna* by following rituals, and this is actually one *micca diṭṭhi* one needs to get rid of (*silabbata paramasa*) before attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- Misconception of categorizing “eating meat” as an *akusala kamma* is a *micca diṭṭhi* too. Since there is ample evidence in the *Tipitaka* that the Buddha himself accepted meat prepared under certain conditions (see #9 below), are these people saying that the Buddha himself committed an *akusala kamma*?

2. In the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Āmagandha Sutta \(Sutta Nipata 2.2\)](#)”, the Buddha explained to a *brahmin* why engaging in *dasa akusala*, and NOT eating “properly prepared” meat is a *duccarita* (immoral deed). If one kills an animal to get the meat, then it is not “properly prepared”.

Pāli verse:

“*Pāṇātipāto vadhachedabandhanam,*

*Theyyaṃ musāvādo nikativañcanāni ca;
Ajjhenakuttaṃ paradārasevanā,
Esāmagandho na hi maṃsabhojanam.*

Here is one verse from the [WebLink: suttacentral: English translation](#):

“Taking life, torture, mutilation too,
binding, stealing, telling lies, and fraud;
deceit, adultery, and studying crooked views:
this is carrion-stench, not the eating of meat”.

3. Devadatta, who tried to kill the Buddha and thereby to “become a Buddha”, first tried to split the *Buddha Sāsana* by proposing “five strict conditions for the *bhikkhus* to obey”. His intent was to show that he was “more moral” than the Buddha.

- Devadatta demanded that the Buddha accede to the following five rules for the monks: they should dwell all their lives in the forest, live entirely on alms obtained by begging, wear only robes made of discarded rags, dwell at the foot of a tree, and **abstain from eating meat**.
- The Buddha replied that Buddha Dhamma does not advocate a “path of rituals” (*vatha*). Instead one attains *Nibbāna* by cleansing one’s mind and moral behavior follows automatically. This is what is meant by, “*sanvarattena silan*”, or “when one sees the futility of ‘*san*’ via comprehension of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, moral behavior or ‘*sila*’ is realized automatically”; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”.
- On the other hand, there are people who are genuinely repulsed by the thoughts of animals living under harsh conditions and being killed in animal farms and have voluntarily given up meat eating, and that is good. In fact, as one gains *paññā* (wisdom), one’s craving for many sensually pleasurable things, not just meat, automatically diminishes.
- The craving for excess sense pleasures diminish automatically when one starts feeling the *nirāmisa sukha* and realizes that that is much more calming and long lasting to the mind than any sense pleasure that is brief; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”.
- But the point is that *paññā* (wisdom) comes through understanding the true nature, and not being persuaded via untruths.

4. In the *Jivaka sutta*, the Buddha states that *bhikkhus* can accept meat, ” when it is not seen or heard or suspected that a living being has been **purposely slaughtered for that offering**“. I also found out recently that the custom those days was to use “*pavatta māṃsa*” for *bhikkhus* which means the meat was from animals killed by other animals in the forest (lions and tigers normally eat only parts of an animal and leave the rest which people then recover for food).

- However, the Buddha prohibited *bhikkhus* from eating the flesh of human, elephant, horse, dog, cat, lion, tiger, leopard, bear, hyenas. This was done for various reasons and the chief among them is that they are not suitable for human consumption.
- Just like some vegetations are toxic, some meats can have harmful effects. Other than that, meat of a dead animal is no different from corn or wheat; they are all made out of *satara mahā bhūta: patavi, āpo, tējo, vāyo*.
- Once the mind leaves the physical body, the body becomes inert like a log. **What is immoral is to end the life of a living being willfully or to aid in such acts**; once that deed is done, what is left is no different than a log of wood.
- However, this is not to say that the Buddha advocated eating meat. It is actually better for the body to eat less meat and more vegetables and fruits. In general, we eat much more food than necessary, and that leads to many health problems starting with obesity.

5. The key point is that EATING MEAT or ANYTHING ELSE **if done with greed**, then that is an *akusala kamma* done with the mind: *abhijjā* [*abhijjhā*] or strong greed.

6. Then there are people who say, “if we all eat meat, that encourages other people to operate animal farms and kill animals; therefore, we should not eat meat”. For those who are bothered by such thoughts, it is better not to eat meat for the peace of mind. I actually have cut down a lot just out of

compassion. But we also need to examine the REASONS for some acts to be categorized as *akusala kamma*.

- Don't farmers use pesticides to kill uncountable number of living beings when they cultivate rice, wheat, vegetables, for our consumption? With the above logic, aren't we encouraging farmers to kill all those insects by eating basically any food that we buy at the supermarket?
- These are the true "*musavāda*" ("*musa*" means "incorrect" and "*vāda*" means "debate"), i.e., trying to win an argument by using false premises. They appear to make sense on the surface, but when you examine carefully, they have no substance.
- We have to be really careful about having such "*micca diṭṭhi*", because *niyata micca diṭṭhi* can lead to rebirth in the *apāyas*. There are many such false beliefs that appear "harmless" but count as *micca diṭṭhi* (not knowing the true nature of things), and that is another reason why it has been hard for people to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- The bottom line is that it is better not to eat meat especially if that bothers one's conscience. But for those who don't have that problem, there are probably other bad acts one needs to worry about first; see, "[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)".

7. There will always be people who engage in immoral acts and make a livelihood from that. We cannot force others to be moral; we can only point out what is moral and what is immoral. It is up to each person to decide, and understand that, "what one sows, one will reap".

- As I mentioned before, there was a "pig butcher" Chunda Sukara, who ran his butcher shop right next to *Veluvanaramaya*, where the Buddha resided for many years. Even at the time of the Buddha some questioned why the Buddha did not try to "save him". If he did that, Chunda Sukara would have generated hateful thoughts about the Buddha and would have ended up in an even worse *apāya*, as explained by the Buddha. Thus one needs to think deeper than just go by "outward appearances".
- On the other hand, **we should point out the bad consequences of raising animals under unfathomably harsh conditions in animal farms, and killing animals with unimaginably cruel ways (see #10 below).** Even though animals have much lower levels of "consciousness", **they feel pain same as us.** Still, we need to get rid of the "wrong *saññā*" that eating meat (which is like any other food made of the *satara mahā bhūta*), is equivalent to eating "an animal". Once the animal is dead, the dead body is inert; the *gandhabba* has left that "inert shell"; see, "[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya](#)".
- In Sri Lanka, and probably in many Buddhist countries, there are many movements to "rescue cows and other animals from the butcher". They consider this act as an "*abhaya dana*", which they interpret as "giving back the life or saving the life of that animal".

8. First, let us examine WHY a cow is born a cow in the first place. A cow is called a "harakā" in Sinhala, which comes from "hara" meaning "the essence or what is good", and "kā" meaning "eat or destroy". Thus one is born a cow due to a "cow sankhara", i.e., one had done acts that led to hardships for people. We know many people who do immoral acts that destroy other human lives or at least lead to hardships for other people; those people are bound to be born cows, pigs, and other animals and "pay back those debts".

- Even though we may save the life of a cow by paying off the butcher, that cow will go through many such "cow lives" until the *kammic* energy of that "cow *bhava*" is spent and during that time will be subjected to numerous killings. This may sound harsh, but that is the reality.
- Instead of "trying to save existing cows", which is a futile task as we saw above, what we **SHOULD** do is to try to prevent even a single HUMAN from **becoming a cow** in future lives. Once one gets a "cow *bhava*" one will be born in that *bhava* multiple times; see, "[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)". What we can do is to try get as many people as possible to be EXPOSED to true Dhamma.

- Thus even though we should not try to prevent people from rescuing such animals (saving a life is always good), we need to educate people about the misconceptions on relative merits of different deeds.

9. In that context, let us see what is really meant by “*abhaya dana*“. “*Bhaya*” means “fear” and “*abhaya*” means preventing one from a dreadful outcome; of course “*dāna*” means “giving”. Thus “*abhaya dana*” means giving the gift of removing one’s fright.

- One should be dreadful about the suffering one could undergo in the four *apāyas* (four lowest realms of existence), animal realm being one. If one can motivate a single human to contemplate on that, that itself will be much more meritorious than “saving” millions cows; of course, as we saw above a “saved cow” is not truly saved; it will pay its debts somehow or other.
- Yet, imagine the number of cow, pig, ... lives that one could save if one can point another human being toward becoming a *Sotāpanna*: that person will NEVER be born in any of the four *apāyas*. That could be an uncountable number of lives saved by “saving a SINGLE human”. That is the true “*abhaya dana*“, and that may not even cost any money.

10. The key point here is that a cow (or any other animal) cannot be “saved” by making it comprehend Dhamma. And, there is no way to “shorten the time of existence” or in this case the duration of the “cow *bhava*“. It just has to wait until the *kammic* energy for that existence to run out through however many “cow lives”.

- But a human can comprehend Dhamma and could change the type of existence, and say for example become a *brahma*. Furthermore, one could attain the *Sotāpanna* stage and be freed from the *apāyas*, and may even attain the *Arahanthood* stage.
- So, there is a HUGE difference in saving an animal life versus a human life.
- Still I am not discouraging anyone from saving an animal. I am just saying that there are better ways to utilize resources and try to help out humans. We never kill a bug or a fly that occasionally gets in our house. We have a “bug catcher cup” that we use to catch it and throw outside; trap the thing in the cup, slide a cardboard piece underneath slowly and carry to the door.

11. I need to also point out that the Buddha himself ate meat when offered under the conditions given in #3 above. In fact, the last meal of the Buddha was a “pork dish” which was especially made to alleviate the pain that the Buddha had with ulcer-like ailment.

- In this context, let us discuss another misconception about that “last meal”. After the meal, the Buddha asked the remainder of the meal not be consumed by any human, and to be buried. Some say this was because of a “contamination problem with that meal” which led to a discomfort of the Buddha. If there was a problem with the dish, the Buddha would have seen it beforehand.
- The reason that the Buddha asked the remainder of the meal to be thrown away was simply because that meal was a special meal just like the first meal of milk rice offered to him at the time of the attainment of the Buddhahood. Such meals can be digested only by a Buddha. *Devas* and *brahmas* infuse highly potent nutrients into such meals; the Buddha was sustained for 7 weeks with that single meal of milk rice.

12. **Finally, the suffering of the animals is real, and this is one form of *sansaric* suffering that the Buddha referred to.** If you have nerves made out of steel, you can watch the gruesome acts that occur in some animal farms, see the full movie “Earthlings” at the following site (**Warning:** These scenes are highly disturbing to the mind, especially after about 10-15 minutes): “Nationearth.com“

- We should not hesitate to point out the bad consequences of raising animals under unfathomably harsh conditions in animal farms, and killing animals in unimaginably cruel ways.

- As I pointed out above, animals are bound to “reap what they already sowed in their past lives”. Nature always finds a way to impart *kamma vipāka*. But the problem is that humans volunteer to carry out those punishments, and in turn, generate much future suffering for themselves.
- Thus the only tragic that CAN BE AVOIDED is the creation of similar outcomes (in future births) for current humans who engage in such activities.
- In any case, we cannot force morality on others. We can only point out the dangers and help enact and enforce laws to forbid such unconscionable activities; such efforts have led to making cockfighting illegal in the United States.

Next, “[Do Things Just Happen? – The Hidden Causes](#)“, ..

6.1.5.4 Do Things Just Happen? – The Hidden Causes

October 30, 2015

Just like in science, Buddha Dhamma is based on cause and effect. Nothing happens without a cause (or more accurately multiple causes). But some of the causes are hidden and can be revealed only a Buddha with the perfect mind. By learning his Dhamma, we can figure out many such important and relevant causes that affect us.

1. There are many instances when we face a traumatic situation, and the first thing comes to our mind is “Why is this happening to me? What have I done to deserve this?”.

- And when we encounter good fortune (say landing a good job or winning a lottery), we are overjoyed: “my luck has finally turned around”.
- Both those conclusions are wrong. Nothing happens in this world without a cause (usually there are multiple causes). Things DO NOT just happen. Nature does not work that way. In science, we always look at the underlying causes to explain material phenomena.
- A scientific theory is not even taken seriously unless it can provide evidence to support the theory, i.e., to illustrate “cause and effect”. Buddha Dhamma is based on “cause and effect”.

2. The “cause and effect” of inert objects is easy to see and verify. Scientists can accurately land a spaceship on the Moon because they can take into account all the causes and effects that would be relevant to the flight of the spaceship. All scientific progress is made due to the “apparent” causes and effects.

- We can even predict/control the behavior of plants. By making suitable conditions for their growth, farmers can reap good harvests. Even when things do not work out with farming, we know the reasons (drought, too much rain, etc).
- Thus we can verify the applicability of “cause and effect” when dealing with inert matter and vegetation. The causes are not hidden.
- This principle is also known as “action and reaction” in physics. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Laws of *kamma* are more complex, but it is the same basic principle. You cannot expect to do something and assume that it has no consequences.

3. Unlike material phenomena that involve dead and inert matter, each sentient living being has a “history that goes back into the deep past” (a tree is living, but not sentient, i.e., it cannot think).

- Therefore, for each sentient being, there could be causes that lie in the deep past. We just cannot see them (if we develop *abhiññā* powers, we could see some).
- This is why it is hard for many people to grasp the concept of *kamma*. When we look around us, we may not see the “law of *kamma*” working. While a pious peasant may be living in a hut, a drug lord seems to be enjoying life. Yet, in the long run, the laws of *kamma* work: that pious peasant may be reborn to enjoy a good life, while the drug lord may suffer for a long time to come in future births.

- **The present birth started due to past causes. It will proceed until that *kammic* power is exhausted. What we should be mainly worried about is the next life.**
- All deeds have their consequences. As Nietzsche (1882) said, “..Lightening and thunder require time, the light of the stars require time, deeds require time even after they are done, before they can be seen and heard..”.

4. Then people ask: “But where is the evidence for that?”. The (indirect) evidence is all around us. We just do not take time to analyze what we see. Our tendency is to take things at the face value, without bothering to analyze a bit deeper; see, “[Wrong Views \(Micca Ditt̥hi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#)”.

- When we look around we see that some people are rich, some are poor; some die within a few months, but there are others live to old age; some are healthy and vibrant, others are sick most of the time, etc. All these happen now due to causes from past lives.
- What are the causes for all those and much more varieties of life that we see all around us? Many more are discussed in, “[Vagaries of Life and the Way to Seek Good Rebirths](#)”.

5. Laws of *kamma* are nothing but “causes and effects”. Moral behavior leads to good results either in this life OR in future lives. Immoral behavior leads to bad results, including bad rebirths.

- However, *kamma* is nondeterministic, i.e., a cause does not inevitably lead to a result; see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”. By acting with mindfulness, one can avoid many possible bad *kamma vipāka*, and also make conditions for good *kamma vipāka* to come to fruition.
- Actually, without a Buddha in the world, a normal human cannot figure out these things on his/her own. But luckily, some evidence is coming from modern science due to the efforts of thousands of scientists over the past few hundred years.
- Many “wrong views” that people used to have in the old days have been corrected by science. Actually, those helped confirm what the Buddha taught 2500 years ago; see, “[Dhamma and Science](#)”.

6. Our ancestors could not explain many natural phenomena like earthquakes, volcano eruptions, floods, etc and attributed those to “the fury of the Gods”. Even to date, whenever we don’t understand something, our tendency is to attribute that to a supernatural being and “fill that gap”; this tendency is called, “God of the gaps”.

- But advances in science are slowly but surely closing those gaps, that exist with regard to the workings of the MATERIAL WORLD. Those are due to natural causes.

7. However, there ARE gaps in our knowledge base that CANNOT be closed by the current approach of science. These are to explain the workings of the human mind or consciousness.

- Most theologians of today are correct in saying that mind cannot arise from matter; it does not make sense to say that a human with feelings and perceptions can just “arise” out of inert matter.
- However, there is no need to “fill that gap” with God either. The Buddha described in detail the workings of the human mind, which is separate from the working of the material world; see, “[Is Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) a Religion?](#)”.
- The “cause and effect” for the mind to arise is described by *paticca samuppāda*, but before that can start making sense, one needs to understand the basics of Buddha Dhamma discussed in the “[Key Dhamma Concepts](#)” section on the top menu.

8. Another effect that cannot be explained by current science is the “sense of fulfilment” one gets by giving to the poor. If one takes a totally materialistic view, it is not possible to see ANY benefits in giving.

- There was a wealthy brahmin at the time of the Buddha, who was very much against giving. He explained to others why giving can only lead to a loss by actually doing a demonstration: He

took a sack of rice and started giving portions to those who gathered. At the end the sack was empty and he said, “look, this is what happens when you give. You lose what you have”.

- The Buddha explained that the brahmin was unable to see the benefits in giving even in this life (sense of joy), because of his wrong views, and thus there was no way he could see the benefits in future lives. The brahmin died and was born a dog at the same house. It is a long story and I may get to it in a future post.
- The key point here is that there are many things that cannot be explained by just what we see with our eyes. Cause and effect is not readily apparent when it involves the mind. Furthermore, benefits of giving are not proportional to the value of the things given, but the state of the mind of the giver.

9. But more than anything else, the truth of what the Buddha taught can be experienced. When one follows the path recommended by the Buddha one can feel and experience the results in this life itself.

- Just by reading and understanding Dhamma concepts one's mind can become calm and peaceful; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)“. I encourage everyone to peruse through different sections at the site and read first whatever seem to make sense or relevant to what one is looking for.
- For example, one of the key issues that led people to believe in a supernatural being was how morality can be there without such a being. But the Buddha taught that morality and immorality are both built into nature; see, “[Origin of Morality \(and Immorality\) in Buddhism](#)“.
- It could be surprising to many. But Buddha Dhamma can explain ANY phenomenon, whether material or mind-based. Everything happens due to causes, even though some may be hidden from a normal human's sense faculties. By purifying one's mind, one can have a better understanding of how the nature operates; see, “[The Importance of Purifying the Mind](#)“.
- October 18, 2016: A new post explains this in more detail: “Micca Diṭṭhi – Connection to Hethu Phala (Cause and Effect)“.

6.2 Working Towards Good Rebirths

[“Sansaric Habits and āsavas”](#)

[“Vagaries of Life and the Way to Seek Good Rebirths”](#)

[“How to Avoid Birth in the Apayas”](#)

[“How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm”](#)

[“Kamma, Debt, and Meditation”](#)

[“How do we Decide which View is Wrong View \(Ditthi\)?”](#)

[“Three Kinds of Ditthi, Eightfold Paths, and Samādhī”](#)

[“Implications of the Rebirth Process in Daily Life and in Society”](#)

[“What Does Buddha Dhamma Say about Creator, Satan, Angels, and Demons?”](#)

[“Patisandhi Citta – How the Next Life is Determined According to Gathi”](#)

“Kilesa (Mental Impurities), Ditthi (Wrong Views), Sammā Ditthi (Good/Correct Views)”

6.2.1 Sansaric Habits, Character (Gathi), and Cravings (Asava)

Revised December 7, 2016

Our character (*gathi*), behavior, and cravings (*āsava*) sometimes have causes from past lives. It is easier to break bad habits when one understands causes and consequences.

- In the “Moral Living” section, we discussed how to get rid of bad habits, incorporate good habits, and thus achieve goals; see, [“Habits, Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)”](#). We saw that one’s behavioral patterns or habits can form one’s character (*gathi*). Here we will see that some of these habits are not formed in this life, but may have origins in previous lives. In a way, these are only “discernible things” we carry from life-to-life; see, [“What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream”](#).

1. **Habits (“*gathi*” in Pāli and Sinhala)** are acquired by the repeated use. Habits can be neutral (one can make a habit of start brushing teeth on the top left), good (exercising at a scheduled time), bad (smoking).

- The more one can stick to a set habit, that habit becomes more ingrained in the mind. Riding a bike or learning to drive is a habit to learn. Initially it is hard, but once the habit is formed it is done almost automatically; it becomes an ingrained “*gathi*”.

2. Bad habits can be stopped by making a conscious effort to disrupt the habit. Initially this takes a lot of effort, and that is why assessing the consequences and convincing the mind of the dangers of a bad habit is important at the very beginning.

- Replacing a bad habit with a good (at least less harmful) habit is also important. Instead of smoking, one could chew on a chewing gum when one gets the urge.

3. Habits also help mold the character (*gathi*) of a person. We see very different qualities of character among people: kind and malicious, calm and agitated, thoughtful and easily-excitabile, etc. It is easy to see that people with “bad character qualities” are those with one or more prominent bad habits.

- But the good news is that no one is “inherently bad”. There are causes (reasons) for a person to have bad habits/character, and once those causes are removed one becomes a person with good habits/character.
- The best example is Angulimala, who lived during the time of the Buddha and killed close to thousand people. The Buddha was able to show him the consequences of his behavior and he was able to attain the *Arahantship* within a few weeks!

5. It is not only humans that display such personal characteristics; animals have them too. Some dogs are vicious while others are adorable; some are more loyal than others, etc.

- These are habits/character (*gathi*) that have been molded over multiple lives; but most character (*gathi*) CHANGES happen only during a human life, because human mind is the most capable of CHANGING habits. Animals, for example, are more like robots (not completely).

6. Bad habits are formed via bad judgements arising from a defiled mind that is covered by the five hindrances. And bad habits lead to actions that further strengthen those same habits.

- Once a certain bad “*gathi*” becomes established it can even lead to a birth with that “*gathi*”, i.e., will be destined for “*dugathi*” (du + *gathi*) which is another name for the *apāyas* (the four lowest realms). for example, someone who behaves and acts like an animal could well be reborn an animal.
- The cycle needs to be broken to stop this self-feeding process. But as long as the hindrances are there, it is likely that sooner or later new bad habits will be formed.

7. Those beings that are in the *apāyas* can be put in to four major categories according to the proportions of greed and hate that are in their sansaric “*gathi*” (of course ignorance is in all of them) :

- *Pretas* [Sanskrit], *petas* [Pāli], i.e., hungry ghosts, have “greedy” *gathi*.
- Those in the lowest realm, *niraya* (hell), have *gathi* dominated by hate.
- Animals have “*gathi*” with both greed and hate. Therefore, the Pāli (or Sinhala) word for animals is “*thirisan*” (=“thiri”+“san” or three defilements). Remember that ignorance is there always.
- Those in the *asura* (“a”+“sūra”, where “a” means “not” and “sūra” means proficient or capable; thus *asura* means those who depend on others, and are lazy) realm have the habit of doing as least as possible and exploit others’ hard work.

8. Similarly, one who cultivates good habits is destined for a “good” rebirth (*sugathi* = su + *gathi*), i.e., human realm or above. For example, one who does not indulge in sense pleasures and cultivates compassion and loving kindness could be reborn in the Brahma realms where there is relatively less suffering, and mostly *jhānic* pleasures.

- *Devas* (realms 6-11) are full of compassion and do not have hateful thoughts. But they like to enjoy sense pleasures.
- *Brahmas* (realms 12-31) do not have either greed or hate.
- Humans (realms 5) COULD have all three. However, the unique aspect of the human realm is the ability to purify one’s own mind and REMOVE all three, and become an *Arahant* (attain *Nibbāna*). This is done by following the Noble Eightfold Path and removing all “bad habits” one has.

Of course, *Devas* and *Brahmas* both have ignorance, and thus could be reborn in any realm when they die (unless they had attained the *Sotāpanna* stage).

9. Once ingrained in the mind, habits can be carried over repeated rebirths, from life to life. One who is easily tempted by alcohol is likely to have had that habit in the previous lives.

- One who forms that habit in this life (even if he did not have it before), is likely to carry it over to the next life. Similarly, one who cultivates generosity in this life is likely to have that habit in the next life as well.

10. If those bad habits keep building up life after life, they get fermented and solidified and thus will become deeply embedded in one’s psyche. We all carry deeply ingrained *sansaric* habits associated with one or more of defilements. **These are called mental fermentations or deeply embedded cravings (“*āsava*” in Pāli or Sinhala).**

- Some *gathi* and *āsava* lay hidden (sleeping), and are called “*anusaya*”. With a strong enough “trigger” an ingrained *anusaya* can be brought to the surface. *Anusaya* are the hardest to get rid of.

- When one continually acts in ways to strengthen one's *gathi* (character), that makes the corresponding *āsava* and *anusaya* even stronger.

11. Thus it is clear why breaking bad habits is critically important, not only for the benefit of this life, but also for future lives.

Next, "[Vagaries of Life and the Way to Seek "Good Rebirths"](#)",

If you would like to read about how these *āsavas* can be removed, see, "[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)".

6.2.2 Vagaries of Life and the Way to Seek "Good Rebirths"

Revised May 18, 2017

1. Everything that we see around us can be roughly put into three categories: lifeless matter, plant life, and sentient beings (i.e., life with consciousness). Scientists have been mostly successful in explaining the behavior of inter matter, at least in the macroscopic scale.

- For example, a rocket can be launched with high precision to land on a given spot on the Moon. Complexity increases somewhat when going to biological matter without consciousness (plants).

2. However, the behavior of a sentient being is almost impossible to predict with any kind of precision. This is because the working of a mind with 89 types of *cittas* (thoughts) and 52 types of *cetasikas* (mental properties) is very complex; see, "[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)" and the posts in the "Abhidhamma" section.

- However, the Buddha has taught us how to understand why different types of living beings are born that way, and why people are born with wide-ranging levels of health, wealth, beauty, etc.

3. When we look around, we see that animals, in general, encounter more suffering than humans. Even among people, the range of suffering is enormous, and some people even seem to be enjoying life without any apparent signs of suffering.

- Also, some are born rich, healthy, beautiful, etc. others are born to poverty, handicapped, ugly, etc.
- The character of people also lies in a very broad spectrum, as we discussed above.
- Furthermore, the "fortunes" of a given person could change drastically in a relatively short time. One could go from being penniless to a riches or other way around quickly.
- When we look at animals too, some pets get treated even better than some humans, while others live under horrible conditions. They also have a wide range of personal characteristics.

4. Such apparent vagaries of life have perfectly good explanations in Buddha Dhamma. However, there are no simple one-to-one correspondences compared to the comparatively simpler rules that are available for tracking the behavior of macroscopic inert objects.

5. The behavior of (macroscopic) inert matter can be explained in terms of simpler cause and effect. If one knows the current conditions, one can predict the future outcome using scientifically-found natural laws (law of gravitation or laws of relativity).

- However, even this is beginning to change with the advent of quantum mechanics; we are now beginning to probe the realm where matter merges with the mind. We will discuss such instance in the future.

6. Similarly, the behavior of life can be explained in terms of *kamma vipāka* (results of one's actions) together with habits ("*gathi*") and *āsavas*; see, "[Samsaric Habits and Āsavas](#)". However, unlike cause and effect regarding inter matter, the behavior of life is much more complex, because the MIND IS COMPLEX, see "[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)".

- There are many causes (innumerable *kamma vipāka* and numerous types of habits and *āsavas*) leading to many effects, versus just one or few causes leading one effect or a few effects.

- This is discussed in many *suttas*, but a good start is the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Cula Kamma Vibhanga Sutta \(MN 135\)](#)“. That site gives translations in several languages, but as with almost all internet sites, translations of some key Pāli words may not be accurate.

7. In general, good habits and good *kamma vipāka* lead rebirth in realms at or above the human realm. We need to make sure not to commit any *akusala* (unwholesome) *kamma* that could lead to rebirth in the four lower realms, and to engage in meritorious actions.

- Another is to realize that *āsavas* (mental fermentations or deeply embedded cravings) could lead to spontaneous actions (in a rage or a sudden mental weakness). Maintaining good habits, removing bad habits, and acting with generosity, kindness, and wisdom help cleanup the deeply embedded *āsavas*, thus preventing such actions on sudden impulses as well as being able to be mindful.

8. Any type of meditation (*samatha*, *metta*, and *vipassana*) will also be quite helpful. Just contemplating on good thoughts and suppressing bad thoughts as they arise throughout the day is also meditation (this was the original definition of *bhāvanā*).

Next, “[How to Avoid Births in the Apayas](#)“,

6.2.3 How to Avoid Birth in the Apayas

1. There are five heinous *kamma* (acts) that GUARANTEE a rebirth in the lowest four realms in the *very next birth*. These are called the *panca anantariya kamma* or five acts that will bring a bad birth without “a gap” (unlike many *kamma vipāka* can come to fruition in later lives, i.e., their results are seen only later in *samsāra*). These five are:

- Killing one’s mother
- Killing one’s father
- Killing an Arahant
- Causing an injury to a Buddha
- Causing schism in the Sangha (the monastic order)

2. The next level is “*niyatha micca diṭṭhi*” or “an established wrong world view” (which means one is not even willing to consider the possibility that one could be wrong in holding onto such views) that will cause one to be born in the *apāyas* at some point in *samsāra*. This means that one with these false views could be reborn in the *apāyas* in the next life or any future life. There are eight such views:

- No such thing as, (1) mother, (2) father, (3) Buddha, (4) rebirth, (5) *kamma vipāka*, (6) *opapatika* birth (instant full-formed birth), (7) *apāyas*, and (8) *rūpa loka/arūpa loka*. For explanations on (6)-(8), see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“.

It must be noted that Even a Sotāpanna may not be fully convinced of the truth of some of the above. But a Sotāpanna has not ruled out any of the above and is not adamant on holding onto a wrong view.

3. Thus the possibility of a birth in the *apāyas* in any future birth is there until all **established (unshakable) wrong views (*niyata micca diṭṭhi*) are rejected by one’s mind. We all have committed both good and bad *kamma* in the past lives that we are not aware of; thus any of those could cause a birth anywhere in the 31 realms.**

4. It is important to remember that those false views cannot be just memorized and pretended to be discarded. The mind needs to be convinced that those are indeed false views. This is why it is important to examine the world view of the Buddha. These are the key concepts discussed in the top menus, especially, “[What is Buddha Dhamma?](#)” and “[Key Dhamma Concepts](#)“.

5. The only guaranteed way to stay out of the *apāyas* (the four lowest realms) in ANY future life is to become a Sotāpanna.

What Happens at the Sotāpanna Stage?

1. As I keep repeating, the Buddha is just the messenger; he discovered the true nature of this world. First of all, this world is much more complex than we perceive. In order to understand how to remove suffering, one has to understand the causes, and that requires the complete picture of “this world” (see, “[What is Buddha Dhamma?](#)” and in particular, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”) and also why it is not possible to remove suffering without understanding the Three Characteristics of “this world” (see, “[Key Dhamma Concepts](#)” and in particular, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta - Wrong Interpretations](#)”).
2. When one “sees” the true nature of “this world”, the mind will automatically give up those false views mentioned in the above section (#2). **This is why it is first important to learn Dhamma first.** No one, regardless of one’s high intellect, can discover the complete set of nature’s laws other than a Buddha.
3. From the discussion so far, it is clear what needs to be done to reach the Sotāpanna stage. All that is needed is to carefully examine the world view of the Buddha as mentioned in #1 in this section. One needs to understand the “vision”, and to become “*dassanena sampanno*” or “one with clear vision”. This is why “*dassanena pahatabba*” or “removal by vision” is listed as #1 item in the seven items required to attain Nibbāna in the Sabbasava Sutta; see, “Key Points in the Sabbasava Sutta” in “[The Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.
4. Thus essentially all that happens at reaching the Sotāpanna stage is to get a clear world view. Now one has understood the true nature of this world, and thus “knows” that it is not possible to achieve lasting happiness anywhere in the 31 realms. One may not have removed any *āsavas* other than the *diṭṭhi āsava*. Thus one still may have *kamasava*, *bhavasava*, and *avijjasava*, i.e., one still may have greed, hatred, and ignorance even though parts of all three have been permanently been removed by the clear vision. How the *āsavas* are formed starting with habits is discussed in the “[Habits and Goals](#)”, “[Samsaric Habits and Āsavas](#)”, and “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)” sections in that order.
5. Therefore, even though one may have greed, hate, and ignorance left, one knows what they are. And one knows how to remove them. After attaining the Sotāpanna stage one does not need a teacher. One knows what needs to be done. As one gets rid of the remaining *āsavas*, the vision becomes even more clear and full and complete *Sammā Diṭṭhi* is attained at the Arahant hood.

Next, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)”,

6.2.4 How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm

Revised May 5, 2017, August 24, 2017

Many people believe that if we live a “good, moral life”, a rebirth in the human or even higher *deva* worlds is guaranteed. This is a misconception because even if we do not accumulate any bad *kamma* in this life, we do not know what kinds of bad *kamma* we have accumulated in past lives and we have. **This is why it is very hard to even get a human existence (*bhava*) let alone a *deva* or a *brahma* rebirth.**

- Evidence for rebirth is presented in, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”. Rebirth can occur not only in as a human, but in any of the 31 realms. Most suffering in the cycle of rebirth occurs in the lowest four realms: *niraya* (hell), *asura*, animal, and *peta* realms. Of those four, only the animal realm is visible to us. They are collectively called the *apāyas*.
- Even though a “human existence (*bhava*)” is rare, once one grasps a human *bhava*, one could be born many times as a human until the *kammic* energy for that human *bhava* is exhausted. That is why children can recall past lives. In between consecutive human births, that life stream exists in the nether world or “*paralowa*” as a *gandhabba* with a fine body; see, “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)”
- The 31 realms of existence are described in “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.

1. Nakhasikha Sutta

From the [WebLink: suttacentral: Nakhasikha Sutta](#):

Here is a translation from “[WebLink: wisdomlib.org: Nakhasikha Sutta](#)” (the above link does not have the English translation):

“*Bhikkhus*, those who depart from the human realm, those will be reborn as humans or *devas* can be compared to the few grains of sand that I pickup on my fingernail. Those who are reborn in the lower four realms are exceedingly many, compared to the sand on this great Earth”.

“From those who have expired their *kamma* in the lower four world, and are reborn in the human or *deva* worlds can be compared to the few grains of sand that I pickup on my fingernail. Those who are repeatedly reborn in the lower four realms are exceedingly many, compared to the sand on this great Earth” (This is because one can accrue only bad *kamma* while they are in the lower four world).

Let us make two points clear regarding the above simile of the Buddha:

1. When a being gets a human life, that “human *bhava*” has a certain *kammic* energy associated with it, say 1000 years worth. In that case, the person may be born 10 times consecutively with 100 years in each birth (this is the difference between “*bhava*” and “*jati*”). The *cuti-patisandhi* transition to a new “*bhava*” happens at the end of 1000 years; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”, and “[Cuti-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”.

- What the Buddha refers to above is concerned with that new *patisandhi* at the end of the “human *bhava*”.
- It is extremely difficult to attain a human *bhava*, but once in a human *bhava*, one can be born hundreds of times as human. In the animal realm, a given animal may be reborn thousands or even millions of times to exhaust that *kammic* energy.

2. Even though the above simile seems to be out-of-proportion with the realities, it is not. This is why I am saying that modern science has given a boost to Buddha Dhamma, by making many things clear. Ordinary humans were not aware of the existence of innumerable microscopic living beings until the microscope was invented in the 1500’s. In 1676, Van Leeuwenhoek reported the discovery of micro-organisms: He observed numerous beings in a glass of water; see, [WebLink: WIKI: Microscope](#)

Here is a short video showing numerous such microscopic beings:

[WebLink: Live in a water drop @TSRlab](#)

- If you go out and dig a bit of dirt, there could be millions of living organisms there. In a household there may be a few humans, but possibly billions or even trillions of living beings. The oceans cover two-thirds of the Earth’s surface, and the living beings there are much more densely-packed. And there are beings in other 29 realms that we cannot see. Seven billion or so humans in this world are indeed a thumbful compared to innumerable beings that live associated with the Earth. Thus, as in many cases, modern science has helped verify Buddha’s words.
- Some of these realms could be in other dimensions; see, “[Consciousness Dependence on Number of Dimensions](#)”. In the string theory, scientists say there could be 10 dimensions instead of the three that we experience.
- However, one can actually “see” beings in other dimensions as well as microscopic beings in a glass of water if one develops *abhiññā* powers; see, “[Power of the Human Mind – Introduction](#)” and the follow up posts. One time, a *bhikkhu* who had developed *abhiññā* powers but had not become an *Arahant*, saw the presence of a large number of microscopic beings in a glass of water. He tried to filter them out but was unsuccessful, and became distraught. The Buddha told him that “it is not possible to live in this world without harming other beings. It is necessary to live this life to attain *Nibbāna*”, and to drink the water. The INTENTION there is to quench the thirst; see, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)”.

- With more sophisticated instruments, science is finding out that there are millions of living beings on a single human body (as well as on any other large animal); see, “[There are as Many Creatures on your Body as there are People on Earth!](#)”.

Thus modern science has indeed shown that the human population is negligible compared to just the animal populations (including microscopic beings). And we can experience only 2 realms (animal and human) compared to the 31 realms that the Buddha described.

2. [Kanakacchapa Sutta](#)

Reference: “[Kanakacchapa Sutta](#)”

“*Bhikkhus*, there is a blind turtle in the depths of the ocean. There is also a yoke of a cart that is floating on the ocean surface which is carried in away in all directions by tide, current, and wind. Thus these two go on throughout an incalculable space of time. One day when the turtle comes up to the surface, the yoke arrives at the same precise place and time when the turtle puts up his head, and yokes on to it. Now, *Bhikkhus*, is it possible that such a time might come as is said?”

“In ordinary truth, O Lord,” replied the *Bhikkhus*, “it is impossible; but time being so spacious [my comment: see, “[Samsaric Time Scale](#)”], and an aeon lasting so long, it may be admitted that perhaps at some time or other it might be possible for the two to yoke together, as said; if the blind tortoise lives long enough, and the yoke does not tend to rot and break up before such a coincidence comes to pass”

Then the Buddha said, “*Bhikkhus*, the occurrence of such a strange thing is not to be counted a difficult one; for there is still a greater, a harder, a hundred times, a thousand times more difficult than this lying hidden from your knowledge. And what is this? It is, *Bhikkhus*, the obtaining of the opportunity of becoming a man again by a man who has expired and is reborn once in any of the four realms of misery. The occurrence of the yoking of the blind tortoise is not worth thinking of as a difficult occurrence in comparison therewith. Because those who perform good deeds and abstain from doing bad alone can obtain the existence of men and *Devas*. The beings in the four miserable worlds cannot discern what is virtuous and what vicious, what good and what bad, what moral and what immoral, what meritorious and what de-meritorious, and consequently they live a life of immorality and demerit, tormenting one another with all their power. Those creatures of the *Niraya* and *Peta* abide in particular, live a very miserable life on account of punishments and torments, which they experience with sorrow, pain and distress. Therefore, *Bhikkhus*, the opportunity of being reborn in the abode of men is a hundred times, a thousand times harder to obtain than the encountering of the blind turtle with the yoke.”

- Many of these “hard to fathom” ideas about infinity are now being discussed by scientists who are unaware of the Buddha’s teachings. See, for example, “The Beginning of Infinity” by David Deutsch (2011).
- Most human beings head to the *apāyas* because they are not even aware of the ten immoral actions; see, “[Ten Immoral Actions – Dasa Akusala](#)”, and “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)”. It is also important to know the baseline procedure to avoid such immoral actions and to cultivate moral behavior; see, “[Ten Moral Actions – Dasa Kusala](#)”.

However, it must be emphasized that when a living being acquires a human *bhava* or human existence, that can last a long time (many hundreds to many thousands of years). Within that human *bhava*, there will be multiple human births; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.

3. [Timsamatta Sutta](#)

Pāli version in full: [WebLink: hk.buddhadust.net: Timsamatta Suttam \(SN 15.13\)](#)

Sinhala translation: [WebLink: suttacentral: නිසංසරය \(SN 15.13\)](#)

- Here the Buddha made the famous statement: “*Anamataggoyam bhikkhave, samsarō pubbā kōti na pannāyati avijja nivārananam sattānam taṇhā-samyōjananam sandhāvatam samsāratam*”

- Translated: “*Bhikkhus*, this rebirth process, where beings whose minds are covered by ignorance and are bound to it by bonds of craving, has no discernible (*na pannāyati*) beginning”.

He also gave many similes to describe how long the rebirth process is. He said that the blood from uncountable times where one is killed when born a specific animal (deer or cow, for example) is more than the water in the four oceans.

- In fact, there are many *suttas* in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Anamatagga Samyutta](#)” in the *Samyutta Nikāya* that provide many more similes to illustrate the beginning-less rebirth process.

Next, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)“,

6.2.4.1 Nakhasikha Sutta

"At one time the Buddha, showing them some dust which he had taken upon the tip of his finger-nail, addressed the disciples thus: 'If, O Bhikkhus, these few grains of dust upon my finger-nail and all the dust in the universe were compared in quantity, which would you say was less, and which more?' The disciples replied: 'Lord, the dust on your finger-nail is less, and that of the universe is more. Surely, Lord, the dust on your finger-nail is not worthy of mention in comparison with the dust of the universe.' Then the Buddha continued; 'Even so, Bhikkhus, those who are reborn in the abodes of men and Devas whence they have expired, are very few even as the few grains of dust on my finger-nail; and those who are reborn in the four realms of misery are exceedingly many, even as the dust of the great universe. Again, those who have expired from the four miserable worlds and are reborn in the abodes of men and Devas are few even as the grains of dust on my finger-nail; and those who are repeatedly reborn in the four miserable worlds are innumerable, even as the grains of dust of the great universe.'"

What has just been said is the substance of the Nakhasikha Sutta. But, to say nothing of the beings of all the four realms of misery, the creatures that inhabit the four great oceans alone will suffice to make evident how great is the evil of Vinipātana-gati, that is, the dispersion, the variety of possible kinds of existence after death.

Samyutta Nikāya 22

10. Pupphavagga

97. Nakhasikhāsutta

Sāvattthinidānaṃ. Ekamantaṃ nisinno kho so bhikkhu bhagavantaṃ etadavoca: “atthi nu kho, bhante, kiñci rūpaṃ yaṃ rūpaṃ niccaṃ dhuvāṃ sassataṃ avipariṇāmadhammaṃ sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassati? Atthi nu kho, bhante, kāci vedanā yā vedanā niccā dhuvā sassatā avipariṇāmadhammā sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassati? Atthi nu kho, bhante, kāci saññā ... pe ... keci saṅkhārā, ye saṅkhārā niccā dhuvā sassatā avipariṇāmadhammā sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassanti? Atthi nu kho, bhante, kiñci viññāṇaṃ, yaṃ viññāṇaṃ niccaṃ dhuvāṃ sassataṃ avipariṇāmadhammaṃ sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassatī”ti? “Natthi kho, bhikkhu, kiñci rūpaṃ, yaṃ rūpaṃ niccaṃ dhuvāṃ sassataṃ avipariṇāmadhammaṃ sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassati. Natthi kho, bhikkhu, kāci vedanā ... kāci saññā ... keci saṅkhārā ... pe ... kiñci viññāṇaṃ, yaṃ viññāṇaṃ niccaṃ dhuvāṃ sassataṃ avipariṇāmadhammaṃ sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassatī”ti.

Atha kho bhagavā parittaṃ nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsum āropetvā taṃ bhikkhuṃ etadavoca: “ettakampi kho, bhikkhu, rūpaṃ natthi niccaṃ dhuvāṃ sassataṃ avipariṇāmadhammaṃ sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassati. Ettakañcepi, bhikkhu, rūpaṃ abhaviṣṣa niccaṃ dhuvāṃ sassataṃ avipariṇāmadhammaṃ, nayidaṃ brahmacariyavāso paññāyetha sammā dukkhakkhayāya. Yasmā ca kho, bhikkhu, ettakampi

rūpaṃ natthi niccaṃ dhuvāṃ sassataṃ avipariṇāmadhammaṃ, tasmā brahmacariyavāso paññāyati sammā dukkhakkhayāya”.

Ettakāpi kho, bhikkhu, vedanā natthi niccā dhuvā sassatā avipariṇāmadhammā sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassati. Ettakā cepi, bhikkhu, vedanā abhavissa niccā dhuvā sassatā avipariṇāmadhammā, na yidaṃ brahmacariyavāso paññāyetha sammā dukkhakkhayāya. Yasmā ca kho, bhikkhu, ettakāpi vedanā natthi niccā dhuvā sassatā avipariṇāmadhammā, tasmā brahmacariyavāso paññāyati sammā dukkhakkhayāya.

Ettakāpi kho, bhikkhu, saññā natthi ... pe ... ettakāpi kho, bhikkhu, sañkhārā natthi niccā dhuvā sassatā avipariṇāmadhammā sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassanti. Ettakā cepi, bhikkhu, sañkhārā abhavissaṃsu niccā dhuvā sassatā avipariṇāmadhammā, na yidaṃ brahmacariyavāso paññāyetha sammā dukkhakkhayāya. Yasmā ca kho, bhikkhu, ettakāpi sañkhārā natthi niccā dhuvā sassatā avipariṇāmadhammā, tasmā brahmacariyavāso paññāyati sammā dukkhakkhayāya.

Ettakampi kho, bhikkhu, viññāṇaṃ natthi niccaṃ dhuvāṃ sassataṃ avipariṇāmadhammaṃ sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassati. Ettakampi kho, bhikkhu, viññāṇaṃ abhavissa niccaṃ dhuvāṃ sassataṃ avipariṇāmadhammaṃ, na yidaṃ brahmacariyavāso paññāyetha sammā dukkhakkhayāya. Yasmā ca kho, bhikkhu, ettakampi viññāṇaṃ natthi niccaṃ dhuvāṃ sassataṃ avipariṇāmadhammaṃ, tasmā brahmacariyavāso paññāyati sammā dukkhakkhayāya.

Taṃ kiṃ maññasi, bhikkhu, rūpaṃ niccaṃ vā aniccaṃ vā”ti? “Aniccaṃ, bhante”. “Vedanā ... saññā ... sañkhārā ... viññāṇaṃ niccaṃ vā aniccaṃ vā”ti? “Aniccaṃ, bhante” ... pe ... “tasmātiha ... pe ... evaṃ passaṃ ... pe ... nāparaṃ itthattāyāti pajānātī”ti.

Pañcamaṃ.

Samyutta Nikāya 56

6. Abhisamayavagga

51. Nakhasikhāsutta

Atha kho bhagavā parittaṃ nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsuṃ āropetvā bhikkhū āmantesi: “taṃ kiṃ maññatha, bhikkhave, katamaṃ nu kho bahutaraṃ—yo vāyaṃ mayā paritto nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsu āropito, ayaṃ vā mahāpathavī”ti? “Etadeva, bhante, bahutaraṃ yadidaṃ—mahāpathavī; appamattakāyaṃ bhagavatā paritto nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsu āropito. Saṅkhampi na upeti, upanidhampi na upeti, kalabhāgampi na upeti mahāpathaviṃ upanidhāya bhagavatā paritto nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsu āropito”ti. “Evameva kho, bhikkhave, ariyasāvakassa diṭṭhisampannassa puggalassa abhisametāvino etadeva bahutaraṃ dukkhaṃ yadidaṃ parikkhīṇaṃ pariyādinnaṃ; appamattakaṃ avasiṭṭhaṃ. Saṅkhampi na upeti, upanidhampi na upeti, kalabhāgampi na upeti purimaṃ dukkhakkhandhaṃ parikkhīṇaṃ pariyādinnaṃ upanidhāya yadidaṃ sattakkhattuparamatā; yo ‘idaṃ dukkhaṃ’ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti ... pe ... ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā’ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.

Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, ‘idaṃ dukkhaṃ’ti yogo karaṇīyo ... pe ... ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā’ti yogo karaṇīyo”ti.

Paṭhamaṃ.

Samyutta Nikāya 13

1. Abhisamayavagga

1. Nakhasikhāsutta

Evaṃ me sutam— ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā sāvatthiyaṃ viharati jetavane anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme. Atha kho bhagavā parittaṃ nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsum āropetvā bhikkhū āmantesi: “taṃ kiṃ maññaṭha, bhikkhave, katamaṃ nu kho bahutaraṃ, yo vāyaṃ mayā paritto nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsu āropito, ayaṃ vā mahāpathavī”ti?

“Etadeva, bhante, bahutaraṃ, yadidaṃ mahāpathavī. Appamattako bhagavatā paritto nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsu āropito. Neva satimaṃ kalam upeti na sahasimaṃ kalam upeti na satahasimaṃ kalam upeti mahāpathaviṃ upanidhāya bhagavatā paritto nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsu āropito”ti. “Evameva kho, bhikkhave, ariyasāvakassa diṭṭhisampannassa puggalassa abhisametāvino etadeva bahutaraṃ dukkhaṃ yadidaṃ parikkhīṇaṃ pariyādiṇṇaṃ; appamattakaṃ avasiṭṭhaṃ. Neva satimaṃ kalam upeti na sahasimaṃ kalam upeti na satahasimaṃ kalam upeti purimaṃ dukkhakkhandhaṃ parikkhīṇaṃ pariyādiṇṇaṃ upanidhāya yadidaṃ sattakkhattuparamatā. Evaṃ mahatthiyo kho, bhikkhave, dhammābhisamayo; evaṃ mahatthiyo dhammacakkhupāṭilābho”ti.

Paṭhamam.

Samyutta Nikāya 20

1. Opammavagga

2. Nakhasikhasutta

Sāvatthiyaṃ viharati. Atha kho bhagavā parittaṃ nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsum āropetvā bhikkhū āmantesi: “taṃ kiṃ maññaṭha, bhikkhave, katamaṃ nu kho bahutaraṃ, yo cāyaṃ mayā paritto nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsu āropito yā cāyaṃ mahāpathavī”ti? “Etadeva, bhante, bahutaraṃ yadidaṃ mahāpathavī. Appamattakoyaṃ bhagavatā paritto nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsu āropito. Saṅkhampi na upeti upanidhimpī na upeti kalabhāgampi na upeti mahāpathaviṃ upanidhāya bhagavatā paritto nakhasikhāyaṃ paṃsu āropito”ti. “Evameva kho, bhikkhave, appakā te sattā ye manussesu paccājāyanti; atha kho eteaya bahutarā sattā ye aññaṭṭha manussehi paccājāyanti. Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ: ‘appamattā viharissāmā’ti. Evañhi vo, bhikkhave, sikkhitabbaṃ”ti.

Dutiyam.

6.2.4.2 Kanakacchapa-sutta

"At one time, the Buddha addressed the disciples thus: 'there is, O Bhikkhus, in the ocean a turtle, both of whose eyes are blind. He plunges into the water of the unfathomable ocean and swims about incessantly in any direction wherever his head may lead. There is also in the ocean the yoke of a cart, which is ceaselessly floating about on the surface of the water, and is carried away in all directions by tide, current and wind. Thus these two go on throughout an incalculable space of time: perchance it happens that in the course of time the yoke arrives at the precise place and time where and when the turtle puts up his head, and yokes on to it. Now, O Bhikkhus, is it possible that such a time might come as is said?' 'In ordinary truth, O Lord,' replied the Bhikkhus 'it is impossible; but time being so spacious, and an aeon lasting so long, it may be admitted that perhaps at some time or other it might

be possible for the two to yoke together, as said; if the blind tortoise lives long enough, and the yoke does not tend to rot and break up before such a coincidence comes to pass.'

Then the Buddha said, 'O Bhikkhus, the occurrence of such a strange thing is not to be counted a difficult one; for there is still a greater, a harder, a hundred times, a thousand times more difficult than this lying hidden from your knowledge. And what is this? It is, O Bhikkhus, the obtaining of the opportunity of becoming a man again by a man who has expired and is reborn once in any of the four realms of misery. The occurrence of the yoking of the blind tortoise is not worth thinking of as a difficult occurrence in comparison therewith. Because those who perform good deeds and abstain from doing bad alone can obtain the existence of men and Devas. The beings in the four miserable worlds cannot discern what is virtuous and what vicious, what good and what bad, what moral and what immoral, what meritorious and what de-meritorious, and consequently they live a life of immorality and demerit, tormenting one another with all their power. Those creatures of the Niraya and Peta abide in particular, live a very miserable life on account of punishments and torments, which they experience with sorrow, pain and distress. Therefore, O Bhikkhus, the opportunity of being reborn in the abode of men is a hundred times, a thousand times harder to obtain than the encountering of the blind turtle with the yoke."

According to this Sutta, why those creatures who are born in the miserable planes are far from human existence is because they never look up but always look down. And what is meant by looking down? The ignorance in them by degrees becomes greater and stronger from one existence to another; and as the water of a river always flows down to the lower plains, so also they are always tending towards the lower existences; for the ways towards the higher existences are closed to them, while those towards the lower existences are freely open. This is the meaning of "looking down". Hence, from this story of the blind turtle, the wise apprehend how great, how fearful, how terribly perilous are the evils of the -- Puthujjana-gati, i.e. "the dispersion of existence."

What has been said is concerning the Puthujjana-gati. Now what is Ariya-gati? It is deliverance from the dispersion of existence after death. Or it is the disappearance of that "dispersion of existence" which is conjoined with the destiny of inevitable death in every existence". It is also the potentiality of being reborn in higher existences or in existences according to one's choice. It is also not like the fall of coconuts from trees; but it is to be compared to birds, which fly through the air to whatsoever place or tree on which they may wish to perch. Those men, Devas and Brahmas who have attained the Aryan state, can get to whatever better existence, i.e., as men, Devas, Brahmas, they may wish to be reborn into, when they expire from the particular existence in which they have attained such Aryan state. Though they expire unexpectedly without aiming to be reborn in any particular existence, they are destined to be reborn in a better or higher existence, and at the same time are entirely free from rebirth into lower and miserable existences. Moreover, if they are reborn again in the abode of men, they never become of the lower or poorer classes, nor are they fools or heretics, but become quite otherwise. It is the same in the abodes of Devas and Brahmas. They are entirely set free from the Puthujjana-gati.

What has been said is concerning the course of Ariyas. Now we will explain the two Gatis side by side. When a man falls from a tree he falls like a coconut because he has no wings with which to fly in the air. In precisely the same way when men, Devas and Brahmas who are Putthujjana, riveted to the hallucination of wrong views and having no wings of the Noble Eightfold Path to make the sky their resting-place, transmigrate after the dissolution of their present bodies into new ones, they fall tumbling into the bonds of the evils of dispersion. In this world ordinary men who climb up very high trees fall tumbling to the ground when the branches which they clutch or try to make their resting place break down. They suffer much pain from the fall, and sometimes death ensues because they have no other resting-places but the branches, neither have they wings to fly in the air. It is the same with men, Devas and Brahmas who have their hallucination of Wrong Views, when their resting-place of Wrong Views as regards self is broken down, they fall tumbling into the dispersion existence. For their resting-places are only their bodies; and they have neither such a resting place as Nibbāna, nor such strong wings as the Noble Eightfold Path to support them. As for the birds, though the branches they rest on may break, they never fall, but easily fly through the air to any other tree. For the branches are not their permanent resting places but only temporary ones. They entirely rely

on their wings and the air. In the same way, men, Devas and Brahmas who have become Ariya and are freed from the hallucination of Wrong Views, neither regard their bodies as their Attá or Self, nor rely upon them. They have in their possession permanent resting places, such as Nibbána, which is the entire cessation of all tumbling existence. They also possess the very mighty wings of the Noble Eightfold Path, which are able to bear them to better existences.

What has been said is concerning the distinction between the two Gatis, i.e., the Putthujjana-gati and the Ariya-gati.

Samyutta Nikāya 56

5. Papātavagga

47. Paṭhamachiggaḷayugasutta

“Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, puriso mahāsamudde ekacchiggaḷaṃ yugaṃ pakkhipeyya. Tatrāpissa kāṇo kacchapo. So vassasatassa vassasatassa accayena sakiṃ sakiṃ ummujjeyya. Taṃ kiṃ maññatha, bhikkhave, api nu kho kāṇo kacchapo vassasatassa vassasatassa accayena sakiṃ sakiṃ ummujjanto amusmiṃ ekacchiggaḷe yuge gīvaṃ paveseyyā”ti? “Yadi nūna, bhante, kadāci karahaci dīghassa addhuno accayenā”ti.

“Khippataraṃ kho so, bhikkhave, kāṇo kacchapo vassasatassa vassasatassa accayena sakiṃ sakiṃ ummujjanto amusmiṃ ekacchiggaḷe yuge gīvaṃ paveseyya, na ttevāhaṃ, bhikkhave, sakiṃ vinipātagatena bālena manussattaṃ vadāmi.

Taṃ kissa hetu? Na hettha, bhikkhave, atthi dhammacariyā, samacariyā, kusalakiriyā, puññakiriyā. Aññaṃaññakhādikā ettha, bhikkhave, vattati dubbalakhādikā. Taṃ kissa hetu? Aditṭhattā, bhikkhave, catunnaṃ ariyasaccānaṃ. Katamesaṃ catunnaṃ? Dukkassa ariyasaccassa ... pe ... dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya ariyasaccassa.

Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, ‘idaṃ dukkhaṇ’ti yogo karaṇīyo ... pe ... ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā’ti yogo karaṇīyo”ti.

Sattamaṃ.

Samyutta Nikāya 56

5. Papātavagga

48. Dutiyachiggaḷayugasutta

“Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, ayaṃ mahāpathavī ekodakā assa. Tatra puriso ekacchiggaḷaṃ yugaṃ pakkhipeyya. Tameṇaṃ puratthimo vāto pacchimeṇa saṃhareyya, pacchimo vāto puratthimeṇa saṃhareyya, uttaro vāto dakkhiṇeṇa saṃhareyya, dakkhiṇo vāto uttareṇa saṃhareyya. Tatrassa kāṇo kacchapo. So vassasatassa vassasatassa accayena sakiṃ sakiṃ ummujjeyya. Taṃ kiṃ maññatha, bhikkhave, api nu kho kāṇo kacchapo vassasatassa vassasatassa accayena sakiṃ sakiṃ ummujjanto amusmiṃ ekacchiggaḷe yuge gīvaṃ paveseyyā”ti? “Adhiccamidaṃ, bhante, yaṃ so kāṇo kacchapo vassasatassa vassasatassa accayena sakiṃ sakiṃ ummujjanto amusmiṃ ekacchiggaḷe yuge gīvaṃ paveseyyā”ti.

“Evaṃ adhiccamidaṃ, bhikkhave, yaṃ manussattaṃ labhati. Evaṃ adhiccamidaṃ, bhikkhave, yaṃ tathāgato loke uppajjati araham sammāsambuddho. Evaṃ adhiccamidaṃ, bhikkhave, yaṃ tathāgatappavedito dhammavinayo loke dibbati. Tassidaṃ, bhikkhave, manussattaṃ laddhaṃ, tathāgato loke uppanno araham sammāsambuddho, tathāgatappavedito ca dhammavinayo loke dibbati.

Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, ‘idaṃ dukkhan’ti yogo karaṇīyo ... pe ... ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā’ti yogo karaṇīyo”ti.

Atthamaṃ.

Samyutta Nikāya 56

Connected Discourses on the Truths

47. Yoke with a Hole (1)

“Bhikkhus, suppose a man would throw a yoke with a single hole into the great ocean, and there was a blind turtle which would come to the surface once every hundred years. What do you think, bhikkhus, would that blind turtle, coming to the surface once every hundred years, insert its neck into that yoke with a single hole?”

“If it would ever do so, venerable sir, it would be only after a very long time.”

“Sooner, I say, would that blind turtle, coming to the surface once every hundred years, insert its neck into that yoke with a single hole than the fool who has gone once to the nether world would regain the human state. For what reason? Because here, bhikkhus, there is no conduct guided by the Dhamma, no righteous conduct, no wholesome activity, no meritorious activity. Here there prevails mutual devouring, the devouring of the weak. For what reason? Because, bhikkhus, they have not seen the Four Noble Truths. What four? The noble truth of suffering ... the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

“Therefore, bhikkhus, an exertion should be made to understand: ‘This is suffering.’ ... An exertion should be made to understand: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’”

Samyutta Nikāya 56

Connected Discourses on the Truths

48. Yoke with a Hole (2)

“Bhikkhus, suppose that this great earth had become one mass of water, and a man would throw a yoke with a single hole upon it. An easterly wind would drive it westward; a westerly wind would drive it eastward; a northerly wind would drive it southward; a southerly wind would drive it northward. There was a blind turtle which would come to the surface once every hundred years. What do you think, bhikkhus, would that blind turtle, coming to the surface once every hundred years, insert its neck into that yoke with a single hole?”

“It would be by chance, venerable sir, that that blind turtle, coming to the surface once every hundred years, would insert its neck into that yoke with a single hole.”

“So too, bhikkhus, it is by chance that one obtains the human state; by chance that a Tathagata, an Arahant, a Perfectly Enlightened One arises in the world; by chance that the Dhamma and Discipline proclaimed by the Tathagata shines in the world.

“You have obtained that human state, bhikkhus; a Tathagata, an Arahant, a Perfectly Enlightened One has arisen in the world; the Dhamma and Discipline proclaimed by the Tathagata shines in the world.

“Therefore, bhikkhus, an exertion should be made to understand: ‘This is suffering.’ ... An exertion should be made to understand: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’”

6.2.4.3 **Tiṇṣamatta Sutta - About Thirty Monks**

1. I heard thus. At one time the Blessed One was living in the squirrels' sanctuary in the bamboo grove in Rajagaha.
2. Then about thirty monks from Pava, all of them forest dwellers, dependants on morsel food, wearers of rag robes limited to three and all with bonds approached the Blessed One, worshipped and sat on a side.
3. Then it occurred to the Blessed One: “These thirty monks from Pava, are all forest dwellers, dependants on morsel food, wearers of rag robes limited to three and all with bonds. What if I teach them, so that their minds would be released from desires without holdings while sitting in these same seats?”
4. Then the Blessed One addressed them: “Monks.” And those monks said:-”Yes, venerable sir.”
5. The Blessed One said: “Monks, without an end is the train of existence, a beginning cannot be pointed out of beings enveloped in ignorance and bound by craving, running from one existence to another.
6. “Monks, what is more, the blood you have shed on account of the neck being severed from the body in this long journey in existences running from one existence to another, or the water in the four great oceans?”
7. “Venerable sir, as the Blessed One has taught us the blood we have shed on account of the neck being severed from the body in this long journey in existences running from one existence to another, is more than the water in the four great oceans.”
8. “Excellent! Monks, you know the Teaching as taught by me.
9. “Indeed monks, the blood you have shed on account of the neck being severed from the body in this long journey in existences running from one existence to another, is more than the water in the four great oceans.
10. “Monks, you have long experienced the severing of the neck from the body and the shedding of blood when you were born as cattle, that blood is more than the water in the four great oceans.
11. “Monks, you have long experienced the severing of the neck from the body and the shedding of blood when you were born as buffaloes, that blood is more than the water in the four great oceans.
12. “Monks, you have long experienced the severing of the neck from the body and the shedding of blood when you were born as sheep, that blood is more than the water in the four great oceans.
13. “Monks, ... re ... born as goats ... re ...
14. “Monks, ... re ... born as deer... re ...
15. “Monks, ... re ... born as fowl ... re ...

16. “Monks, ... re ... born as pigs..... re ...

17. “Monks, you have long experienced the severing of the neck from the body and the shedding of blood when you were taken as robbers who destroy villages, that blood is more than the water in the four great oceans ...

18. “Monks, you have long experienced the severing of the neck from the body and the shedding of blood when you were taken as robbers who wait in ambush, that blood is more than the water in the four great oceans ...

19. “Monks, you have long experienced the severing of the neck from the body and the shedding of blood when you were taken as robbers who went to other wives that blood is more than the water in the four great oceans ...

20. “What is the reason? Monks, without an end is the train of existence, a beginning cannot be pointed out, of beings enveloped in ignorance and bound by craving, running from one existence to another.

“Monks, it is suitable that you should turn away from all determinations, fade and be released from them.”

21. The Blessed One said thus and those monks delighted in the words of the Blessed One.

22. When this discourse was given the thirty monks of Pava experienced the release of their minds from desires without holdings.

6.2.5 Kamma, Debt, and Meditation

Revised April 7, 2016

1. “This world” of 31 realms is very complex; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“. Nothing happens due to a single cause and nothing happens just by itself: Multiple causes lead to multiple effects.

2. In a perfect world, everyone will share everything equally, and everyone will be happy. But people are born with different levels of not only wealth, but also different levels of health, physical appearance, capabilities, etc. These are the results of *kamma* (good and bad) accrued over very long periods in the past.

3. No one has everything “just right”. So, we try to get what we don’t have or like to have. **Every time we crave for something, and try to acquire those things by immoral means, knowingly or unknowingly we get into debt.**

- When those *akusala kamma* (immoral deeds) involves another living being, we get into some kind of a “*sansaric* relationship” with that being; this is how we have friends, family, AND enemies. These things do not happen by chance.

4. NOTHING in this world happens by chance; everything happens due to a cause, a reason; **but since results (*vipāka*) can materialize later, even in future lives, we cannot see this “cause and effect” in most cases.** **When we do something harmful to another being we become indebted to that being; that debt will have to be paid with interest that is many many times over.** Thinks about the following:

- When we get a loan, we have to pay back the loan with interest. If we promise to pay back and do not fulfill that commitment, we will have to pay it with interest sometime in the future. Imagine how much interest we would have to pay on a \$1000 loan at 6% interest over, say just 200 years, which is insignificant in the *sansaric* time scale. You can use the “72 rule” that says if you do not make any monthly payments, the amount you have to pay will double every (72/interest rate) years, i.e., every 12 years in this case. It will double again in another 12 years, i.e., after 24 years you will have to pay \$4000. After only 40 years, the amount will be \$10,000. Only after 200 years it will a billion dollars!

- Can you imagine how much money we may have to pay to settle even small amounts that we neglected to pay a long, long time ago?
- We have to pay back not only monetary transactions. Imagine how much would it cost to bring up a child, as a mother does? It is unimaginable over long times.
- When we have such debts, the nature has set up many ways to pay off such debts. Many times same group of people are born to same families, paying back “old debts”. Or one may become a servant for another.
- Many relationships that we have in this life arise from “long-term debt” from many lives in the past. For example, people are born in the same family, same community, or same geographical locations, for many, many lives just paying back debts and claiming old debts. In Sinhala, relationships are called “*sanbandha*” (= “*san*” + “*bandha*” where “*san*” is defilement (*saṅkhāra*), and “*bandha*” is connection; thus connection due to *saṅkhāra*). Sometimes old creditors come back even in the form of annoying mosquitoes, ants, bugs, etc.
- Now if one takes another’s life, one may have to sacrifice one’s own life many times over. This is scary stuff, but we need to know that our actions will have consequences.

5. Instead of paying off such “old debts” that way, there is another way to pay back old debts. When one does a good deed, one could transfer merits of that good deed to old creditors called “*pattidana*” (this is commonly called “*punna anumodana*”; see, “[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\)- How Does It Happen?](#)”).

6. In this beginning-less *samsāra*, we have been indebted to unbelievably many beings. Thus we just transfer the merits to all beings. We just think in our mind, “May the merits of this good deed be shared by all beings”.

- If one does this genuinely, it will be quite beneficial in the long term. The Buddha said that this is the most efficient way to pay back old debts. However, one needs to do this with sincerity, truly understanding the suffering caused by one’s actions to others.

7. One could accrue good merits not only by good deeds, but also with insight meditation. **The Buddha stated that if one cultivates *vipassana* meditation on *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, that leads much more merits compared to even donations or giving.** After the meditation session, one simply transfers the merits to all beings.

- The nice thing is that one does not “lose any merits” either. Giving merits itself is meritorious. Also, one should forgive old debts from other beings. The mind is very powerful. If done with right intention, also these thoughts will have beneficial consequences for oneself and other beings.

8. Even though we must try to alleviate the *kamma vipāka* from past *kamma* by using the above mentioned methods, **the main purpose of such methods is actually to purify one’s mind.**

- We can pay off past debts this way, but bigger chunks are paid off by attaining *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi*, and *Arahant* stages of *Nibbāna* (Actually, the Buddha has said that if one does the *Ariya metta* meditation frequently, one could pay off the debts associated with the *kamalo* (first 11 realms); more on that in a future post).
- When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, all those *kamma vipāka* that could have given rebirth in the lowest four realms (*apāyas*) become nullified. When one attains the *Arahanthood*, only those *kamma vipāka* that get a chance to come to fruition during the remaining time in that life will be paid off. Since there is no more rebirth, all remaining *kamma vipāka* just do not get a chance to come to fruition.

9. The first step in purifying one’s mind is to avoid *dasa akusala*; see, “[Ten Immoral Action \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”. One does not need to try to do all at once (especially for those who are new to Buddha Dhamma).

- It is a life journey, and one can start slowly, first trying to avoid the obviously bad actions, and then just doing things that can be done without much stress; see the posts in the “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” section and in particular, “[2. The Basics in Meditation](#)”.
- There is no one watching, and only you know what your intentions are: whether they are moral or immoral.
- You will feel the benefits in terms of a less-stressed mind over time. It takes time, especially in the beginning. Then it will accelerate when one starts seeing the benefits and also start understanding that *micca ditthi* (wrong views) play a big role in one’s tendency to do some immoral acts even without realizing; see, “[Wrong Views \(Micca Ditthi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#)”.

10. The Buddha said one can become indebted in four ways:

- Engaging in *dasa akusala* (10 unwholesome actions).
- Getting someone else to do such acts.
- Helping another in carrying out such acts.
- Praising someone who is doing such acts.

Thus one can become indebted in 40 ways. Avoiding all that will make one joyful (*adhimokko* or sense of well being). This will give impetus to accelerate one’s efforts. Also, see, “[Habits and Goals](#)”, and “[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)”.

Another deeper analysis can be found at, “[Difference Between Giving up Valuables and Losing Interest in Worthless](#)”,

6.2.6 How do we Decide which View is Wrong View (Ditthi)?

More than 99% of one’s immoral acts have their causes in *micca ditthi* (wrong views); see, “[What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)”. Thus it is critical to understand what wrong views are.

- A simpler, yet a fundamental, analysis on wrong views can be found at, “[Wrong Views \(Micca Ditthi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#)”.

1. We all have our views about different things: politics, religions, sports, lifestyles, etc. And most times it is fun to talk about and debate whose views are the correct ones. But each one of us have views based on a limited knowledge about only a fraction of “this world”.

- A good way to figure out whether one view is better than another is to see whether that view provides more insight AND has more explanatory power about the world.
- In fact, that is the only way. Because anybody can just say, “my view is better than yours”.

2. When I refer to “*ditthi*” or wrong views, these are the wrong views per Buddha. **It must be noted that “*ditthi*” means views, but in Pāli literature it has been common to call “*micca ditthi*” (pronounced “*michcha*”) or wrong views as just “*ditthi*”.** It is critical to have the “right views” because otherwise we may be taking wrong decisions, and that could have very bad outcomes for billions of years to come. In order to make right decisions we need to “see the whole picture” or the world view of the Buddha.

- Of course, one is entitled to have his own views. It is just that according to Buddha Dhamma certain views are not only wrong, **but could lead to disastrous outcomes**, and those are called *ditthi*. One either accepts this fact, or rejects it. It is a good idea to look at the “big picture” of the Buddha and THEN decide whether it makes sense or not. First let us see why one should even go through this exercise of looking at the big picture.

3. When one does not have a clear overall picture, one makes bad decisions. For example, a fish does not see the string or the hook, only sees the worm, and gets into trouble. If it saw the whole picture, with the string and the hook, it may realize that there is something wrong and would not try to grab the worm. If it saw the man standing on land holding the pole, that would have been another clue; but

the fish can only see its “domain”. Just like that we can only see “our domain” within the wider 31 realms, and we do not see the level of suffering in other lower realms.

- We are inherently incapable of seeing the “whole picture” because our sense faculties are formed by our *kamma* to be aware of only a part of whole existence; you may get an idea of what I am referring to in the post, “[Consciousness Dependence on Number of Dimensions](#)“. Therefore, no matter how smart each of us is, we cannot even imagine this whole picture by ourselves. It takes a very special, very pure mind to see the whole picture, the mind of a Buddha; see, “[Power of the Human Mind – Introduction](#)“, and follow-up posts.

4. The Buddha described this in the parable of the “elephant and the six blind men”. Each blind man is feeling or exploring a different part of the elephant, and comes up with his view of what an elephant is: The one examines the tail says the elephant is like a rope, one examining a leg says the elephant is like a pillar, etc.

- The person holding the tail is certain that the elephant is like a rope “because I know what I experience; you cannot tell me it is not like a rope”. He just does not realize that he is experiencing only part of the whole elephant.

5. Until a Buddha comes to this world, any human can only see a very small part of the whole picture. Like the little girl in the video being able to see the whole elephant, only a Buddha can see the whole picture about our true existence.

- Mathematician Kurt Gödel proved this mathematically in his Incompleteness Theorem, which says that it is not possible to discover complete truth of a closed system within that system; see, “[Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorem](#)“. Thus science will NEVER be able to discover a COMPLETE set of laws about the nature. It can only uncover parts and the parts that have been discovered are totally consistent with Buddha Dhamma.

6. According to the Buddha, *diṭṭhis* are like that: some people say there is a rebirth process, and some say not. Some say when we die we will either go to hell or heaven. Some say, things really exist in a permanent way, and others say it is all a mirage. **All these are *diṭṭhis*, because none of these fit the WHOLE PICTURE.** None of these can explain the vagaries of life; see, “[Vagaries of Life and the Way to Seek “Good Rebirths”](#)“.

- For example, we can only see two of the 31 realms of existence: animal and human realms. We are not aware that most beings are trapped in the lowest four realms where there is much more suffering than we can see in the human and animal realms. We do not realize that our immoral actions from this life, AND from our past lives (that we are not aware of) could give us rebirth in those lower four realms; **this is “law of *kamma*” another part of the “big picture”.** There is evidence for rebirth; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)“.

7. Buddha Dhamma cannot be fully understood without having learned of that “big picture” from a Buddha or from a person who has learnt the correct version of it. Now, since the Buddha is not here and there are many versions of Buddha Dhamma, the question is how do we figure out which version to believe. The Buddha gave a solution to this problem: Find the version that satisfy the following conditions:

- All aspects should be consistent with the *Suttas* and *Vinaya* (and thus *Abhidhamma*); these were transmitted orally for about 500 years and then written down in the Pāli *Tipitaka* about 2000 years ago (Pāli *Tipitaka*).
- And all three descriptions in the *Tipitaka* (*sutta*, *vinaya*, *abhidhamma*) must be consistent with each other.

8. This second requirement is there to catch any mistakes made in the (especially oral) transmission from the time of the Buddha. It must be kept in mind that all three sets were formulated for easy oral transmission. I know several *suttas* by heart which I learned when I was little; they have been formulated to be easily remembered. And there were different groups of *Bhikkus* assigned the responsibility for different sections during the time of oral transmission. Also see, “[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)“.

9. In a series of posts I have provided evidence that many versions of “Buddhism” being practiced today do not pass the above tests. All Mahayana versions are in blatant contradiction to the teachings in the *Tipitaka*, and some key concepts taught in Theravāda are also inconsistent with *Tipitaka*; see, “[Why is it Critical to Find the Pure Buddha Dhamma?](#)”, and the follow-up posts.

- Once one finds the key Dhamma concepts that are self-consistent, then one can easily figure out what is *diṭṭhi* and what is not. If anyone can point out anything on this website that is not internally consistent, I would appreciate it. Because my goal is genuine: to find and document the original teachings of the Buddha.

10. Thus it is important to realize that *diṭṭhi* is an **established view (a view one is not even willing to rethink)** about the world, that is inconsistent with Buddha Dhamma. Let us take a few examples:

- Two good examples are the two views of “there is a self” and “there is no self”; see, “[Ditthi \(Wrong Views\), Sammā Ditthi \(Good/Correct Views\)](#)”. Both are wrong views according to the Buddha: there is only an ever-changing lifestream that progresses according to cause and effect (*paticca samuppāda*); see, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.
- Another *diṭṭhi* many people have is that there is no rebirth process, or that there is a rebirth process but we will never be born as an animal because we have not done anything bad in this life. It is just a belief, there are no supporting evidence to back that up. On the other hand, the rebirth process involving all 31 realms and the natural law of *kamma*, together with *paticca samuppāda*, and other key concepts like *Tilakkhana* can explain EVERYTHING that we experience. **What needs to be understood is that ALL THOSE PIECES MUST BE THERE to complete the whole picture.**

11. Just like a blind man holding onto a leg of the elephant and saying “This is what I experience and the elephant is like a pillar. I know what I experience, and I am right”, we hold onto *diṭṭhis* that are inconsistent with the nature’s laws. Once one hears the message of a Buddha, one should at least examine the credibility of that message by looking at the evidence he presented. Ultimately, one has to make the decision to accept Buddha’s message or not. **This is why no one can lead anyone else to salvation. It is all in one’s own mind.**

- Let me give an example how limited our world view had been even two hundred years ago. People believed that Earth was the only planet with the Sun going around the Earth. So, when the Buddha said there are innumerable world systems with other Suns and Moons, people thought that was a loony idea. There are many such *diṭṭhis* that have been proven to be wrong by science over the past hundred years or so; see, “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)”.

12. Some of the views we have are deeply ingrained, and not easy to get rid of. The main thing is NOT to take a firm stand on things that the Buddha called *diṭṭhi* and say, “I know this to be true, and only this to be true” and to cling to them. **Even a Sotāpanna may not be fully convinced that, for example, there is a arupaloka, but he/she has not ruled that out, i.e., does not have a diṭṭhi.** Only an *Arahant* has “complete” *Sammā Ditthi*.

- As one learns pure Dhamma, one will have more and more confidence on the world view of the Buddha and will get rid of the wrong views. Since the mind cannot be forced to accept anything, this “change of vision” comes only through learning the pure Dhamma and through the enhanced life experience, which means purifying the mind; see, “[The Importance of Purifying the Mind](#)”.
- **We cannot pick and choose parts of Buddha Dhamma that we like if we want to reap the full benefits.** Of course one could decide to “live with” parts of Dhamma that one is comfortable with. The Buddha said to accept his teachings only if they make sense. To make sense though, one needs to look at the whole picture too. Otherwise, it will be like a blind man examining only the leg of an elephant and saying it really feels like a pillar.

13. *Diṭṭhi* is one of 14 *akusala cetasika* and one of the ten *kilesa*; see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”, and “[Ditthi \(Wrong Views\), Sammā Ditthi \(Good/Correct Views\)](#)”. *Diṭṭhi* have been described in many ways by the Buddha. At the Sotāpanna stage, those *diṭṭhis* that could lead to

rebirth in the *apāyas* (*sathkaya diṭṭhi*, *vicikicca*, *silabbata paramasa*) are permanently removed; see, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Cittas](#)”.

- Thus it is important to realize that the Sotāpanna stage CANNOT be reached until *niyata micca diṭṭhi* or ESTABLISHED wrong views are removed. For example, one should not hold on to a firm belief that there is no rebirth process; one should at least keep an open mind.
- Stated most succinctly, *micca diṭṭhi* is the wrong perception of *nicca*, *sukha*, *atta*, i.e., things can be maintained to one's satisfaction, thus lasting happiness is possible, and thus it is fruitful to stay in this world of 31 realms. One attains the first stage of *Sammā diṭṭhi* when one comprehends *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* to a certain extent at the *Sotāpanna* stage.

14. The Buddha said his Dhamma is hard to understand, and it is not like anything that anyone taught before, except for another Buddha: It is “*Pubbe anūnussetu Dhammesu*”, “A Dhamma that has not been heard before”. This is why the Buddha worried just after the Enlightenment whether he will be able to teach this difficult Dhamma to normal human beings. It takes a real effort to glean the message of the Buddha.

- Most of us have different types of *diṭṭhis*; see, “[Why Do People Enjoy Immoral Deeds? – Diṭṭhi Is Key](#)”
- For a description of the ten *micca diṭṭhi*, see, “[Three Kinds of Diṭṭhi, Eightfold Paths, and Samādhi](#)”.

6.2.7 Three Kinds of Diṭṭhi, Eightfold Paths, and Samādhi

Buddha Dhamma explains how three kinds of worldviews lead to three types of *samādhi* (basically mindset) via three different paths. All these are discussed in detail in other posts, but here we summarize them. You can use the Search box on top right to find relevant posts.

1. Have you ever wondered how some people have any “peace of mind” while engaging in abominable actions day in and day out? It is easier to excuse someone who commits a bad act in a “moment of fury”, i.e., when such action was not pre-planned (and the common law accommodates for that).

- But some people (think Hitler, Pol Pot in Cambodia) plan evil acts for years, and they seem to thrive doing it; they do not feel any remorse; rather they enjoy what they do. This is because just like facilitating a journey towards Nibbāna for someone who embarks on the Noble Eightfold Path, the nature also lets someone go in the opposite direction too. “*Dhammo ha ve rakkati dhammacari*” applies to both kinds of “Dhamma”.
- Dhamma is what one “bears”. If one “carries good Dhamma”, one will be guided in the “good direction” by nature. In the same way, one who “carries bad Dhamma” will be guided in the opposite direction. Both can get into “*samādhi*” doing it.

2. *Samādhi* (“*sama*”+“*adhi*” where “*sama*” means “same” and “*adhi*” means “dominance”) means the object becomes the priority and the mind gets focused on it; as we discussed in many posts, when the mind becomes focused on one object (*arammana*), no matter what the object is, the *ekaggata cetasika* takes over and make the mind latched “on to it”.

- When the minds gets to *samādhi*, the mind feels calm because it is stopped from jumping back and forth among many thought objects (*arammana*).
- This is how one gets to not only *samādhi* but also *anariya jhāna* (a *jhāna* is a deeper state of absorption or *samādhi*) using breath meditation, just by focusing the mind on the breath.
- Thus, a master thief gets to *micca samādhi* when intently focusing on the plan of a grand robbery in minute details. Not only does he get a joy out of it, his mind helps him work out the fine details; but someone with *micca samādhi* can never get into a *jhāna*.
- It does not matter what the focus is, nature helps get it done if one really sets his/her mind to it. This is why “*Dhammo ha ve rakkati dhammacari*” can work in any situation. The human mind is very powerful, but it can be used in all three directions.

3. However, that does not change the fact that outcomes of “bad actions” will ALWAYS be bad in the long run. This is a universal law called “*beeja niyama*” which is one of five natures’ primary laws called “*niyama*” (“*niyama*” in Pāli or Sinhala means “fixed”, “unchangeable”); even though most times it is pronounced “*niyāma*”, the correct pronunciation is “*niyama*”.

- Bad kamma result in “bad *kamma beeja*” which will ONLY bear “bad fruits”; also, the consequences will be proportional to the “size” of the *kamma beeja* (*kamma* seed). And the same holds true for good *kamma* seeds.

4. Now, when someone gets on the “wrong track” mostly through bad associates or bad environment, one has the “ten types of *micca diṭṭhi*”, and one could get into the “*micca* eightfold path”. **The ten types of *micca diṭṭhi* are:**

1. giving (*dana*) has no merits,
2. being grateful and responding in kind (for what others have done for oneself) has no merits,
3. respecting and making offerings to those with higher virtues has no merits,
4. what we enjoy/suffer in this life is not due to *kamma vipāka* but they “just happen”,
5. this world does not exist, there are no other worlds than the one we can experience,
6. when one dies it is not possible to be born in paralowa (netherworld),
7. mother is not a special person,
8. father is not a special person,
9. there are no instantaneous (*opapathika*) births,
10. there are no *samanabrahmana* (basically *Ariyas* or *yogis*) who have cultivated their minds to be free of defilements and thus can see other realms and previous births.

- See, “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)” for a discussion on *paralowa*.

5. When one has **unshakeable** or *niyata micca diṭṭhi* one gets on the ***micca* eightfold path**; now one’s mind is

- Since these factors feed on each other, once one gets into *micca* eightfold path, it is difficult to break out of it. The key is *micca diṭṭhi*: “Wrong vision” is hard to break, when it is continually being reinforced by wrong speech, actions, etc. Thus it is inevitable that one keeps strengthening one’s “bad *gathi*” or behavior. Then it is increasingly easier to get to “*micca samādhī*”.

6. The Buddha said that ***Sammā Diṭṭhi* is two-fold**: there is a **mundane (*lokiya*) *Sammā Diṭṭhi*** and an ***Ariya Sammā Diṭṭhi***. When one has mundane *Sammā Diṭṭhi*, one rejects the ten types of *micca diṭṭhi* mentioned above, and one strives to be born in human or higher realms. One knows that bad actions will lead to birth in the *apāyas* (lowest four realms).

- Thus one with mundane *sammā diṭṭhi* will develop **mundane versions of *sammā sankalpa*** (good thoughts), *sammā vaca* (abstain from lying, gossiping, etc), *sammā kammanta* (engages only in moral acts), and so on and then it is easier for one to get to mundane *sammā samādhī*. This is the **mundane *sammā* eightfold path**.
- However, while someone following the ***micca* eightfold path cannot attain any *jhāna***, one on the mundane *sammā* eightfold path can attain *anariya jhāna*; see, “[Power of the Human Mind – Anariya Jhāna](#)”.

7. The critical difference between mundane *sammā diṭṭhi* and *Ariya Sammā Diṭṭhi* is that while one with mundane *sammā diṭṭhi* rejects immoral behavior based on one’s fear of rebirth in the *apāyas* and one’s hope for rebirth in comfort-filled *deva* or *brahma* worlds (or even because it makes one feels good about the act), one **ATTAINS *Ariya Sammā Diṭṭhi*** when one comprehends *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* at least to a significant extent, i.e., one becomes a *Sotāpanna*.

- Thus one starts on the Path by following the mundane *sammā* eightfold path, and at some point enters the *Ariya Sammā* Eightfold Path when attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- At that stage, one's mind **automatically rejects** immoral acts because **one's mind sees the futility** as well as the danger of such acts. What is the point of having some sense pleasure if it lasts only a short time AND could lead to much misery in the future for long times?

8. The critical point is that when one becomes a *Sotāpanna*, **one's mind (and the brain) will be changed** so that one will not act even impulsively, let alone capable of pre-planning an act that could yield rebirth in the *apāyas*.

- Scientists do confirm that there are significant changes in the brain just due to breath meditation alone; see, "[True Brain: How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#)".
- Such future brain studies on people engaged in the correct *ānāpāna* meditation can be expected to yield profound changes in a brain when a person attains the *Sotāpanna* stage.

9. Thus one becomes a *Sotāpanna* (enter the stream) from the mundane *sammā diṭṭhi* stage by comprehending the true nature of the world (i.e., it is fruitless to be born ANYWHERE in the 31 realms) by learning the meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* from a Buddha (who discovers them), or from a true disciple of the Buddha.

- Once one becomes a *Sotāpanna*, the Path to *Nibbāna* becomes clear, and one does not need any more help. One will cultivate the next six steps and get to *Ariya Sammā Samādhi* and to the *Arahant* stage of *Nibbāna*.

10. I need to re-emphasize the difference between "living a moral life" which is promoted by most of world's major religions, and the emphasize on "purifying the mind" and "comprehending the true nature of the wider world of 31 realms" in Buddha Dhamma.

- One needs to approach this extra step first by being "moral", i.e., by following the mundane *sammā* eightfold path and getting rid of some of the five hindrances. Then one's mind is purified to an extent to be able to "see through the fog of ignorance" and comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- Buddha's message about the "suffering hidden in the midst of apparent sense pleasures" is indeed a "Dhamma that has never been known". It could be contrary to one's instincts, because all we have known from the beginningless time is about enjoying the sense pleasures.

Note: The three kinds of eightfold paths, *micca diṭṭhi*, and *micca samādhi* are described in the *Mahā Chattareesaka Sutta*; see, "[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)".

6.2.8 Implications of the Rebirth Process in Daily Life and in Society

1. Unless one develops *abhiññā* powers via meditation, the rebirth process cannot be "proven" with certainty. Yet, there is mounting evidence for it that cannot be ignored either; see, "[Evidence for Rebirth](#)".

- Putting that question aside, let us look at some mundane implications IF indeed the rebirth process, as described by the Buddha, is correct.

2. The first thing to realize is how short this life of 100 years or so is. It is unimaginably small. Our universe has been there for about 14 BILLION years and that is just a blip in the cosmic time scale.

3. Looking at the world history, most calamities of war could have been prevented if people understood how short this life is. Where are those emperors and kings today, who sacrificed so many human lives to capture another country or to maintain their powers?

- Because of the atrocities they committed, they are most likely to be in the lowest of the *apāyas*.
- For the briefest time of enjoyment and power, they accumulated so much bad kamma to spend billions of years in total misery.

4. What significance would race, color, ethnicity, religion, beauty, money, etc would have in one's actions if one really understood that all those are not only temporary, but one could be on the other side in the very next life? This is a topic that is worth contemplating a lot.

5. Let us take the struggle between the Palestinians and the Israelis, because it is making headlines these days; one could take any other conflict. According to Buddha Dhamma, there are two effects that come to play here.

- One in either camp will develop a mindset to hate the other side, take revenge for some action, etc. If they have any kammic energy for the human “*bhava*” they will come back to the same place with matching “*gathi*”, looking for revenge; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati + ichcha” + “Sama + uppada”](#)”.
- The other aspect is for any bad action one does in such a conflict is going to have consequences RELATED to that act. When person A kills or harms another person B, A becomes indebted to B. One way to “pay back this debt” is for B to be born as a child to A; see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”. Isn’t that the biggest irony of all? A Palestinian (Israeli) becoming the child of an Israeli (Palestinian)?
- Either way, the conflict will continue for a long time, unless both sides realize the folly of it all.
- This is true for many other conflicts that have been going-on for generations. It is likely that most of the characters involved have been the same. They are too much “involved” in the conflict and are unable to free their minds from it.

6. Let us take another example of a slave owner in the old days. That person made a lot of wealth by exploiting those slaves, but for how long? At most 100 years. Where are those slave owners now? They would either be in one of the lowest four realms OR could be a slave himself somewhere, possibly to a former slave.

- It is easy to extend this analysis to many other cases; it is good idea to contemplate on such things. It makes one understand the true meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. That is unfruitful to do immoral things to achieve a brief moment of sense pleasure, where the consequences can play out for much longer time in a future birth.

7. Yet we strive for a quarter of our lives to go through the basic educational process (which is the only part that makes any sense in the long term), and basically most of the rest of the life to “accumulate things and prestige”.

- We do not stop and think about how the last years of the life are going to be, let alone about future lives. By the time we have made much of those accomplishments, our senses start degrading, and no matter how much money we have, we will never be able to maintain our physical appearance or the level of sense pleasure to our liking.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Done Got Old](#)

- The problem is that we are too busy to contemplate on such issues because we are in a frantic struggle to “make money for survival”, and whatever vacation time we get we would not want to spend that time for contemplation, but to go on trip or do some such activity to “enjoy ourselves”. But when one gets back from a vacation, it feels like one needs another to recover from those hectic activities.

8. There is another reason that people do not want to even think about such things; it could be depressing. But I can say with conviction that once one understands the “true nature of this world”, it WILL lead to a peaceful state of mind. It will also be easier to get into *samādhi* and *jhānas*.

- The reason is that as one understands *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* (the futility of doing immoral things to gain sense satisfaction in world that is INHERENTLY not setup for that), one GRADUALLY loses attachment to worldly things and this makes the mind peaceful; this is the root cause of *niramisa sukha*; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”.
- *Nibbāna* or “Nivana” or “cooling down” is not like any sense pleasure. Rather, it is a relief. A good analogy is the following: suppose someone has a migraine headache; then the day that headache disappears, that person will get a HUGE sense of relief. It is not a sense pleasure, but rather a feeling of well-being that is hard to express.

9. I can give one example to make this point. Many people who start understanding *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, realize that they do not watch TV or go to entertainment events as much as they used to. This is not something they do deliberately, it just happens. They would rather enjoy a meditation session at home or read/listen to Dhamma. It may be already happening to some of you.

- The mind cannot be forced. It just takes the better path; **but the mind has to be exposed to the better, correct path.** This is why giving true Dhamma is the best giving.

6.2.9 What Does Buddha Dhamma Say about Creator, Satan, Angels, and Demons?

While the concept of a Creator God is absent in Buddha Dhamma, there are beings who fulfill some conventional ideas on satan, angels, and demons, such as Seth and Ramtha.

1. In my early stages of learning about other religions, I read a variety of books ranging from those by C. S. Lewis (“Mere Christianity” is a good introduction) to “The Language of God” by Francis Collins (2007) to understand the “case for a Creator”. From all those books, the books by these two authors better focus on the issue to provide a rational basis for believing in a creator God.

2. To briefly summarize the views of those two authors (as I understood), the most fundamental reason for believing in a Creator is the existence of Moral law: How can we know and feel the truth of the Moral laws unless God instilled those in us?

- On the other side, both authors struggled with issue of Satan (or Devil), and why there is suffering.
- Why would the God allow the existence of a Satan, and the associated immoral behavior by people? The main conclusion was that the God chose to give the man free will, and the man abused it.
- Lewis in particular worried about the existence of suffering. Why would the God allow that?

3. Let us see what Buddha Dhamma says about those issues.

- Of course, in Buddha Dhamma, there is no Creator. Everything happens due to (multiple) causes and by definition there is no first cause (i.e., a Creator). The “world” has existed as far as one (with supernormal powers or *abhiññā*) can see; for details, see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.
- Actually, even people without *abhiññā* powers can remember one or a few past lives; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”. In some special cases, some can recall multiple past lives under hypnosis; see, the book “Many Lives, Many Masters” by Brian Weiss, who is a psychotherapist.

4. In Buddha Dhamma “the good” and “the bad” in this world are all built into the nature’s laws. Any sentient being experiences “the world” with its sense faculties, and that experience comes in the form of thoughts (*citta*).

- Based on those sense inputs, one generates various “good” and “bad” responses. These responses are first manifested in the mind as mere thoughts, but we may act on them further by speech and bodily actions.
- There are 52 mental factors (*cetasika*) that include both “good” characteristics (such as kindness, generosity, fear of wrong, shame of wrong, etc), and “bad” characteristics (such as greed, hate, shamelessness, fearlessness of wrong, etc). In the “[Abhidhamma](#)” and “[Tables and Summaries](#)” sections these are discussed, even though we are only at the early stage of such discussions at this site.

5. Thus there is no “God” or a “Satan”. It is each person acting on his/her own free will that is committing good or bad acts. But it is a complex issue, because what we are today is the kind of “cumulative result” of all our actions in the deep past through our previous lives. These can be condensed as our character (or “*gathi*”) or sansaric habits (or “*āsavas*”). There are many posts on this issue at the site, starting with “[Habits, Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)](#)”.

- And these *gathi* and *āsavas* are in constant flux; thus one could be a murderer one day, but then through sheer willpower can decide to be a “better person”. There is no “soul” or a fixed “self”. One cannot say there is “no-self” either, because one’s “*gathi*” or “*āsava*” are unique characteristics and are “one’s own”; see, “[What Reincarnates? – The Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.

6. And no one else can make that change but oneself. Even the Buddha can only show the way to change: how to change these “*gathi*” and the “*āsavas*” for the better. When one does that one can feel the “cooling down” or “*niveema*” or the *niramisa sukha*. This is the real goal in Buddhist meditation; see, “[1. Introduction to Buddhist Meditation](#)”.

- The “moral code” comes naturally out of this big picture. One can lead a peaceful life by practicing “*dasa kusala*” (ten moral acts), and avoiding “*dasa akusala*” (ten immoral acts); see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)” and the follow up post.

7. Let us also discuss briefly about “demons” and “angels” (or other gods). Most Creator-based religions have such entities. And they are supposed to be able to influence humans. Are there beings like that according to Buddha Dhamma?

- Yes. In Buddha Dhamma, the world is much more complex than with just demons and angels. We can see and experience only two realms (human and animal) out of 31 possible realms in this world; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.
- If someone develops *abhiññā* powers (see, “[Power of the Human Mind](#)” and follow-up posts), depending on the level attained one could “see” some or many of these other beings. There are people who can do this at the present time.
- However, even the majority of people with *abhiññā* power can “see” mainly some beings in the lowest 11 realms which comprise the “sense world” or the “*kāma loka*”: mainly the beings with less dense bodies than ours that are in the 6 *deva loka* and some of the beings in the realms below the human realm.
- The beings in the *rūpa loka* and the *arūpa loka* have “bodies” even less dense than those in the *deva* realms, and it is even more difficult to “see” them.
- The 6 realms in the *deva loka* are the closest thing to a “heaven” according to the Buddha Dhamma. Those beings have bodies that are free from physical illnesses, and there is much more happiness there than in the human world. And they have long lifetimes. However, any being in any higher realm can end up in the lowest four realms (*apāyas*) in the future unless they reach at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*.

8. Some of these beings can communicate with humans with or without *abhiññā* powers. There are beings who are benevolent and there are others who are malevolent. As pointed out in the posts on “*gathi*”, a being normally communicates with a human with similar “*gathi*” or character.

- Thus a malevolent being (we could say “a demon”) normally tries to communicate with a human with similar bad character. They may try to impress the human and try to get their own agenda fulfilled.
- A benevolent being (we could say “an angel” or “a god”) is usually a *deva* from the 6 *deva* realms. They like to help out people with good character, but usually do not try to communicate directly. Normally, the person may not even know that he/she is being helped in certain ways.

9. I will mention two prominent cases in the West to illustrate these points.

- Jane Roberts wrote a series of books based on “Seth”, a being who could “possess” her body with her permission, and spoke to her husband about various things about the world; see, for example, “Seth Speaks” by Jane Roberts (1994). Seth commented on various issues and made many predictions too. I am not sure how those “predictions” worked out, but I am sure the success rate must be no better than any human making such predictions.
- Then there is more popular “Ramtha”, who speaks through J. Z. knight; see, for example, “Ramtha -The White Book” by J. Z. Knight (2005). He is a very benevolent being, proving moral advice on how to live a better life. As I understand, there is a large following for Ramtha.

- There are many such beings who like to “show off” and also try to genuinely help people live a better life. But those beings themselves are “travelers of *samsāra*” who just happen to have a good birth for a longer time period.
- Then there are beings that are malevolent. Even though I am not aware of any prominent cases like the two above, there are many reports on “hearing voices” and even committing crimes based on the instructions through such voices.

10. This world is very complex and we perceive only a tiny part of it. But the point is that there is no place anywhere in the 31 realms that can provide permanent happiness.

- There is no point in pursuing such demons or even angels. They themselves are in the same predicament, or worse, compared to us. Those benevolent beings will help us, even without seeking help, if they see the good in us.
- As humans, we have the unique advantage of learning the truth about the dangers of this rebirth process (*samsāra*) and work towards getting out of it by seeking *Nibbāna* or “cooling down”. That was THE message of the Buddha.

6.2.10 Patisandhi Citta – How the Next Life is Determined According to Gathi

Revised September 7, 2016; revised #2 on March 15, 2018

1. The transition of a life stream from one existence (*bhava*) to another takes place during the last *citta vithi* of the present *bhava*, for example from a human to an animal or a *deva*. For a fundamental description of this process, see, “[Cutī-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”.

- But here let us look at how different types of kamma as well as one’s “*gathi*” lead to corresponding rebirths in different realms.

2. As discussed in “[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#)”, all 10 types of *akusala kamma* are done with 12 types of *akusala citta*.

- Only those five *akusala citta* with wrong views (*micca ditthi*) or *vicikicca* can lead to rebirth in the *apayas* (four lower realms). Those *akusala citta* lead to just one *patisandhi vipaka citta* and it is called the “*akusala vipaka upekkha santirana citta*”. This is the type of *citta* that comes to the mind of the dying person destined for the *apayas*.
- The two dislike-rooted (*patigha*) *citta* are stopped from arising at the *Anāgāmi* stage, and the remaining five *akusala citta* do not arise only in Arahants; see, “[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipaka Citta](#)”.

3. Yet, that one *patisandhi citta* can lead to rebirth in an uncountable number of “*bhava*” in the four lowest realms. In the animal realm itself there are an uncountable number of varieties.

- Thus what really determines the actual “place of birth” in the four lowest realms is one’s “*gathi*”. Once the fate is determined by to be born in one of the four lowest realms due to an *akusala kamma*, the next step for nature is to match “*gathi* to *gathi*”. A greedy person is likely to be matched with a birth in the *peta realm* (hungry ghosts), and really vicious person is likely to head to the hell (*niraya*); see, “[How Character \(Gathi\) Leads to Bhava and Jati](#)”.

4. Now let us look at how rebirth takes place according to one’s *kusala kamma*. As we discussed in the post, “[A Simple way to Enhance Merits \(Kusala\) and Avoid Demerits \(Akusala\)](#)”, the merits of a *kusala kamma* is ENHANCED when it is done without *mōha*, i.e., without *micca diṭṭhi* (or with at least mundane *sammā diṭṭhi*).

- Thus out of the 8 *mahā kusala kamma* (great meritorious actions), 4 are done with knowledge (in addition to *alōbha* and *adōsa*, i.e., generosity and loving kindness). Since they have all three *kusala* roots, they are called “*tihetuka*” (“*thi*” means three and “*hethu*” means roots). They lead to the best kind of rebirths, called “*tihetuka patisandhi*” or “rebirth with three roots”.

- The other four *mahā kusala kamma* are done with generosity and loving kindness, but without mundane or *lokottara sammā diṭṭhi*. Thus the resulting *kamma vipāka* lead to “*dvihetuka patisandhi*” or “rebirth with two roots”. They also lead to birth in the realms 5 through 11 (i.e., in human and *deva* realms), but they will have less *kammic* power for that birth.

5. It is only those with *tihetuka patisandhi* can attain *magga phala* and attain *Ariya jhānas* in this life. Those with “*dvihetuka patisandhi*” lack in necessary wisdom (but this is NOT book knowledge); they can make progress and acquire necessary merits to have a future *tihetuka patisandhi*. But it is impossible to say who has a *tihetuka* or *dvihetuka patisandhi*; only a Buddha is capable of that.

- There is one more *patisandhi citta* that is possible from a lower grade *mahā kusala kamma*. This is also a *kamma* done without knowledge, but also with less enthusiasm. This is called a *kusala vipāka upekkha santirana citta* and is a “rebirth with no good roots” or an “*ahetuka patisandhi*”. Note that here even though there are two roots present technically, they are very weak due to absence of enthusiasm (for example, some people participate in meritorious work just because others do it or they did not have a choice).
- Such an “*ahetuka patisandhi*” can lead to births only in the human or the lowest *deva* realm. Such a birth is comparatively easy to recognize (but not always): people with *ahetuka patisandhi* have low IQ, could be blind or deaf at birth, or be severely handicapped. However, such deficiencies COULD occur due to problems encountered in the womb (if the mother is a drug addict or had an ailment during the pregnancy); that is why in some cases you encounter people with above characteristics, but are smart. They are not really born with an *ahetuka patisandhi*, and could learn Dhamma and/or attain *jhānas*.

6. Thus we see that there is only **one *patisandhi citta* due to the 10 *akusala kamma* (from 12 *akusala citta*), and 9 possible *patisandhi citta* due to the 8 *mahā kusala kamma*.**

- The remaining *patisandhi citta* lead to rebirth in the *Brahma loka* (16 *rūpa loka* and 4 *arūpa loka*). These rise due to *jhānic* states: rebirth in the *arūpa loka* are due to the 5 *rūpa jhānas* and rebirth in the 4 *arūpa loka* are due to the 4 *arūpa jhānas*.

7. Therefore, **only 19 *patisandhi citta* that lead to rebirth anywhere in the 31 realms.** As we have discussed, there are uncountable number of species (we ourselves can see numerous animal species). What differentiates different species are the “*gathi*”. You can see that each species has its own “character”: Even within a given species, there are differences in “*gathi*”. If you look at dogs, there are some who are vicious and then there are ones that are cuddly (poodles).

- In the days of the Buddha, it is said that when someone dies, relatives of the deceased usually ask the Buddha “what is the *jathi* and what is the *gathi*” of the new birth. These days we don’t have the Buddha to tell us, but we ourselves can sort of guess what “*gathi*” we have and make sure to change them for the better.
- When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, any “*gathi*” matching those in the *apāyas* are permanently removed (hate, greed, ignorance at the highest levels).
- At the *Sakadāgāmi* stage, one’s liking to a “dense body” to enjoy sense pleasures is removed; such a “dense body” is one that can get diseases, and thus a *Sakadāgāmi* is never born in human or lower realms where sickness and body aches are a fact of life.
- Then at the *Anāgāmi* stage, one loses craving for enjoying pleasures with the nose and tongue, and thus one can find matching “*gathi*” only in the *rūpa* and *arūpa loka*.
- Once the *Arahant* stage is reached one loses craving for any sense pleasure with even a trace of matter or any connection to matter, and the mind attains the true freedom; no more “*gathi*” left.

6.3 Seeking Nibbāna

1. This section is for those who are interested not merely in pursuing a good life or seeking better lives in future births. Other religions can also provide guidance for those goals to a certain extent. The uniqueness in the Buddha's message is that there is perpetual suffering in the unending cycle of rebirths in "this world", the root causes for that suffering, that there is possible release from that suffering (Nibbāna), and there is a way to attain *Nibbāna*.
2. The first stage of attaining Nibbāna is the *Sotāpanna* (Stream Entry) stage. In order to reach this stage, one needs to have a complete understanding of Buddha Dhamma (or the laws of nature). Since only a Buddha can discover these laws, it is not possible for anyone (no matter how intelligent) to discover these laws by oneself.
3. Once the *Sotāpanna* stage is attained, one knows what to do next. Thus there is no need to get further information from anywhere else. My goal with this site is to provide necessary information to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage.

[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#) subsection has a number of posts describing the *Sotāpanna* stage.

Posts in this section:

- [Gathi \(Gati\), Anusaya, and Āsava](#)
- [The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of āsavas](#)
- [Dasa Samyōjana – Bonds in Rebirth Process](#)
- [The Cooling Down Process \(Nibbāna\) – How the Root Causes are Removed](#)
- [Why is Correct Interpretation of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta so Important?](#)
- [How to Cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path Starting with Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)
- [Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)
- [Difference Between Giving Up Valuables and Losing Interest in Worthless](#)
- [Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata](#)

6.3.1 Gathi (Gati), Anusaya, and Āsava

Revised March 31, 2017; Re-revised August 26, 2017; October 27, 2017

We are going to tie up a series of posts that I have posted on *gathi* and *āsava* with this post. See, "[Habits and Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)](#)", "[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsava\)](#)", "[Sansaric Habits, Character \(Gathi\), Cravings \(Āsava\)](#)".

It is difficult to find English translations for some of the Pāli words that the Buddha used. But the key is to grasp what is meant by those terms. Once the idea is grasped, that is all that matters; one could even just use the Pāli term, and KNOW what is meant by it. It is like learning the meaning of the word "dollar" or "car". The exact same words are used in different languages, but everybody understands what is meant by those words.

- *Anusaya* is sometimes translated as "latent tendencies" and *āsava* as "mental fermentations" and those are also correct and related to the above definitions.

1. *Anusaya* is normally translated as "latent tendencies" and *āsava* as "mental fermentations". The word "gathi" is hardly mentioned in current texts, but is a key concept in Buddha Dhamma.

- *Āsava* are indeed "mental fermentations" that lie deep down in us. That can be compared to mud sitting at the bottom of a glass of water.
- If that glass of water is disturbed with a straw, then some of that mud comes to the surface; that is like *anusaya* bubbling up when we are disturbed by a strong sense event. When that happens we display our real character/habits or *gathi (gati)*.

2. As a given sentient being traverses the “*saṃsāra*” or the “rebirth process”, one makes transitions from “*bhava* to *bhava*”, but within a given human (or animal) *bhava*, one may be born numerous times as a human (or the same animal); see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.

- Through all these, the physical appearance will change drastically, especially when *bhava* is changed. Thus when it makes a transition from being a *deva* to human, or from a human to a dog, there is no resemblance of a “personality”.
- However, our *āsava* remain with us through the *saṃsāric* journey. Of course they can change during a given *bhava*. Most changes in *āsava* occur during human *bhava*, which is a topic we will discuss later.

3. *Āsava* are four main types: *ditthasava* (*diṭṭhi āsava*), *kamasava* (*kama āsava*), *bhavasava* (*bhava āsava*), and *avijjasava* (*avijja āsava*).

- *Ditthasava* are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage, and *kamasava* removed at the *Anāgāmī* stage. All *āsava* are removed at the *Arahant* stage.
- What type of *āsava* “can be triggered to come up”, depends on the *bhava* one is in. In *kama loka*, all *āsava* are “in play”, i.e., can be triggered by a sense event. In *rūpa* or *arupa brahma loka*, *kamasava* are not triggered. But unless one is an *Anāgāmī*, one still has *kamasava*, and that will “come into play” when one reborn in *kama loka*.
- **Thus, one will not have *kama anusaya* bubbling up when one is in *rūpa* or *arūpa* realms. Therefore, one will also not display any “*kama gathi*” that one have, while in *rūpa/arūpa* realms.**

4. This is another reason why the Buddha rejected both “self” and “no-self”. What character or any other quality displayed in a given *bhava* could be very different from a another *bhava*. On the other hand, the set of *āsavas* remain with one (even though changing all the time).

- This is what I call a “dynamic self”: “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.
- Now let us examine the roots of the words *anusaya* and *āsava* (*asaya*); “*āsava*” is a synonym for “*āsaya*”.

5. In both Pāli and Sinhala, “*saya*” means a storage place: “*jalāsaya*” means a water reservoir; “*āmāsaya*” means the stomach where the food we eat goes to; “*gabbāsaya*” is the womb where the unborn baby is kept and nurtured until it is ready to come out, etc.

- “*Saya*” also means “sleeping” as in “*sayanaya*”.
- Therefore, “*asaya*” means “sleeping” or “in storage” with some dominant characteristics. **It is commonly termed “*āsava*”.**
- As mentioned above, *āsava* are four main types. Within each type, there can be an infinite variety. For example, “*kamasava*” will include *āsava* for sense inputs coming through five physical senses with an infinite variety.
- “*Ani*” is food or defilements depending on the context. When a strong sense input comes, a defilements that are “sleeping” or “lying dormant” can be released and can come to surface; **hence the name “*anusaya*”.**

6. When an “*āsava*” is awakened by such a trigger then it is out as an “*anusaya*” and one will displayed it through one’s actions. Then we also say, one has that type of cravings or “*gathi*”.

- For example, a calm person with hidden *kamasava* could be triggered by seeing a beautiful woman Z matching “his *gathi*”. He may get agitated upon seeing Z. But he may not be “triggered” by seeing another woman, even if beautiful. This is a bit complex, but I am sure we all know this to be true.
- And if he keeps thinking about that woman, that *āsava* will ferment and grow (condense). This is why it is sometimes translated as “mental fermentations”.

- How much one gets “agitated” depends on one’s *āsava* and the strength of the sense input. Rapes, for example, occur when both are strong.

7. *Āsava* can be compared to the active gun powder in a matchstick. The matchstick is harmless by itself and will cause no fire. But the POTENTIAL to create a fire is there.

- When it is rubbed against a rough surface (exposed to a sense input), the heat generated causes gun powder to ignite and generate fire (*anusaya* coming up).
- In the same way, a strong sense input can “awaken” and “fire-up” the sleeping *anusaya*.
- One’s *gathi* are cultivated by repeated use, and one’s *anusaya* is dependent on both *āsava* and *gathi*.
- An *Arahant* has removed all types of *āsava*; thus no matter how strong a sense input comes in, he/she will not be “triggered” by it. A matchstick with no active gun powder cannot be ignited, no matter how hard a match strikes.
- An *Arahant* may still have *gathi* that are **devoid of defilements**, like one young *Arahant* had a tendency to jump over mud puddles.

8. “*Asaya*” or “*āsava*” are the things we have liked for long, long times through uncountable lives in the *samsāra* or the rebirth process. They are the deep-seated cravings we have for certain things.

- “Immoral *gathi*” due to *āsavas* is what makes the *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* to take place and create “*bhava*” for the *sansaric* process. These “immoral *gathi*” are the “*san gathi*” in “*thinnaṇaṇa san gathi phassa*”; see, “[Tanhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.

9. There are 7 types of *anusaya*: *ditthanusaya* (wrong views), *vicikicchānusaya* (tendency to do the unwise), *kāmarāganusaya* (temptation for sense pleasures), *patighānusaya* (temptation for hatred), *bhavarāganusaya* (craving for existence), *manānusaya* (sense of “me”) , and *avijjānusaya* (ignorance); see, for example, “[WebLink: suttacentral: Dutiya Anusaya Sutta \(AN 7.12\)](#)”.

- There are four broad categories of *āsava*: *Ditthiasava*, *Kamasava*, *Bhavasava*, and *Avijjasava*; see, “[WebLink: suttacentral: Āsava Sutta \(AN 6.58\)](#)”.

10. Those *āsava* (*asaya*) can arise due to the *anusaya*.

- *Ditthānusaya* and *vicikiccānusaya* arise from *ditthāsava*.
- *Kāmarāganusaya* and *patighānusaya* arise from *kamāsava*.
- *Bhavarāganusaya* arise from *bhavāsava*.
- *Avijjānusaya* and *mānanusaya* arise from *avijjāsava*.
- **One cannot REMOVE other three *āsava* until one removes *ditthasava* at the *Sotāpanna* stage.**

11. *Ditthasava* is the craving or attachment to certain views. This is why sometimes it is hard to accept or even consider other views. Again, there are views on numerous topics: religion, philosophy, politics, and many combinations thereof.

- Comprehension of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* automatically leads to getting rid of *ditthasava*.
- *Kamasava* is craving for indulging in sense pleasures via the five physical senses. Within this broad category. each person will have own set of cravings: some like music more than food, and food more than reading, etc. The combinations are endless.
- *Bhavasava* is a craving for existence. No matter where in the 31 realms one is born, one always wants to live. Again there are many possibilities: most like the *kāmaloka* with all five senses, some who enjoy *jhānic* pleasures may prefer birth in an *arupaloka* with just the mind, etc.
- *Avijjasava* is of course the root cause for all *āsavas*: not knowing the real nature of this world, i.e., not comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and thus not comprehending the Four Noble Truths.

12. These four *āsava*s are removed as one goes through the four stages of *Nibbāna*: *Ditthasava* is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage; *Kamasava* is lessened at the *Sakadāgāmī* stage and removed at the *Anāgāmī* stage. The other two are reduced at each stage also, but removed only at the *Arahant* stage.

- When *asaya* (*āsava*) are removed then of course *anusaya* are removed without a trace. One will never be perturbed by anything; that is the ultimate state of “cooling” or *Nibbāna*.

13. It should be obvious by now how our character (*gathi*) is defined by our *ansaya* and ultimately by our *āsava*.

- All three, *āsava*, *anusaya*, and *gathi* are reinforced by each other. One has a certain character because of the set of *āsava* and *anusaya* he/she has. On the other hand, unless the character is changed WILLFULLY, none of the three is going to change.
- And there is the fourth parameter of habits (called “*gathi purudu*” in Sinhala), that lies at the very bottom of the hierarchy. Some people talk rough, even when they are not mad. It is just a habit.
- Getting rid of bad habits and cultivating good habits is the first step in controlling one’s *āsava* first and eventually getting rid of *anusaya*.

14. There are two key aspects in dealing with changing one’s habits:

- One needs to be mindful the negative consequences of the bad habits and positive consequences of good habits. **This is *satipaṭṭhāna*.**
- And, one needs to WILLFULLY avoid the bad habits, and WILLFULLY engage in good habits. **This is *ānāpāna*.**
- One would actually be engaged in all those activities in *satipaṭṭhāna/ānāpāna*.
- One can use the “search” box on top right to find relevant posts on *satipaṭṭhāna* and *ānāpāna*. A practical, systematic way to do both is discussed in the “**[Living Dhamma](#)**” section.

15. This is the Path advocated by the Buddha. One could proceed a little on the Path and achieve a “sense of peace”; one could go further to make the future lives better, or one could go all the way and remove all four *āsava* thus attaining the *Arahantship*.

- This is why “*āsavakkhaya gnana*” or the “way to remove *āsava*” is the critical knowledge that the Buddha developed on attaining the Buddhahood. And that knowledge is in the Four Noble Truths, and the way to achieve “*āsavakkhaya*” is the Noble Eightfold Path.

16. We are fortunate to live in a time when science is providing further evidence and ways to understand this process. There is a series of posts in the “Dhamma and Science” section starting with, “**[Truine Brain – How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#)**” and in the “Meditation” section starting with, “**[9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#)**”.

17. Finally, where are these *asaya* are in storage? They are in the *kamma bhava* or our *nama loka*.

- We have two “worlds”: one is the *rūpa loka* that we can see with our eyes.
- The other is the *nama loka* that has energies below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage and also *nama gotta* that do not have any energy but are just memory records. This *nama loka* is accessed with the *mana indriya*; see, “**[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)**”.
- For those who need to dig deeper, this is discussed in “**[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)**” and “**[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)**”.
- Saying that one has *anusaya* is also the same as saying that a *viññāṇa* has been established in the *kamma bhava*, i.e., in the *nama loka*.

Next, “**[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsava](#)**”,

6.3.2 The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Asavas

1. The night the Buddha attained the Buddhahood, three special knowledges (*tivijja*) arose in him, namely:

- the special vision with which he was able to recollect innumerable former human existences (*pubbenivasanussati ñāṇa*).
- the special vision with which he was able to see beings passing away and being reborn according to their *kamma* (*cutupapada ñāṇa*); and
- the special vision with which he was able to destroy all cankers or defilements (*āsavakkhaya ñāṇa*).

2. With the attainment of the *āsavakkhaya ñāṇa*, Sidharata Gotama became Buddha Gotama. This was the final step in purifying the mind. This was the fruit of all his efforts, the path to attaining *Nibbāna* for any being. *Āsavakkhaya* (*āsava+khaya* = cutting off all the *āsavas* or mental fermentations). Thus *Āsavakkhaya ñāṇa* means the knowledge of cutting off *āsavas* and thus freeing the mind from the ability to generate any defilement.

- The term *āsava* comes from “*āsrayayata āva*” in Sinhala or Pāli, which means “came to association with”. Thus those habits (“*gathi*”) that one keep associating with come even closer. As one continues and feeds those habits through successive rebirths, they become *āsavas*.
- *Āsava* (in Pāli, Sinhala, and Sanskrit) also means a distillation to get an extract or essence. Some medicinal concoctions are fermented by keeping a mixture of ingredients underground for many months.
- Some habits (“*gathi*”) we have cultivated (or fermented) over innumerable lives and that is why they are hard to remove. Only through learning pure Dhamma and persistence in one's efforts, one can break such bad habits and thus eventually *āsava*. There are four types of *āsava* and each may be associated with many bad habits.

3. The doctrine of *Paticcasamuppada*, which is made up of twelve factors, namely, *avijjā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*, *nama rūpa*, *salāyatana*, *phassa*, *vedanā*, *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, *bhava*, *jati*, *jara*, *marana* became clear to him. Going over this Doctrine of *Paticcasamuppada* in forward and reverse order repeatedly, he attained the Eightfold Noble Path, *Ariya Magga*, which is also known as *Yathabhuta Nanadassana*.

4. *Paticcasamuppada* clarifies how ignorant beings accumulate defilements (and *āsavas*), and get trapped in the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*); these *āsavas* are fermented via repeated use of bad habits (“*gathi*”). And the Noble Eightfold Path is the way to remove those “*gathi*” (and thus *āsavas*) from the mind.

How Four Stages of Nibbāna are Connected to the Four Āsavas

1. We all have four major types of *āsavas*, even though there are uncountable minor varieties:

- *Ditthasava* is the category that is due to all kinds of false beliefs (*micca diṭṭhi*): for example, if someone does not believe in rebirth, there may be cravings such as “I need to enjoy everything before I die”.
- *Kamasava* are associated with sense pleasures.
- *Bhavasava* is the craving for particular kind of existence, say as a human, deva, or a brahma; any living being, in any realm, craves for existence.
- *Avijjasava* is all cravings that arise due to ignorance; ignorance of the Noble Truth of Suffering (which is NOT merely suffering itself), and the other Noble Truths.

2. The four types of major *āsavas* are removed in a step-by-step process as one proceeds on the Path. Even before the *Sotāpanna* stage, one will be reducing them, but those reductions do not hold to future lives.

- When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, all four types of *āsavas* that could trigger “*apayagami*” actions are permanently removed from one's mind, i.e., one will never be reborn in the four lowest realms. *Ditthasava* (those due to wrong views) are completely removed.

- At the *Sakadāgāmi* stage, *kamasava* and *bhavasava* are reduced, and a *Sakadāgāmi* will be born only as a *deva* or above in future lives; *avijjasava* is also reduced.
- *Kamasava* are completely removed at the *Anāgāmi* stage, and thus one will never be reborn in the *kamaloka* (including the *deva* realm) again. *Bhavasava* and *avijjasava* are also reduced.
- *Bhavasava* and *avijjasava* are removed without a trace at the *Arahant* stage. Thus *āsavakkhaya* becomes complete.

Removal of *āsavas* start with the removal of bad habits and cultivating good habits; see, “[Habits and Goals](#)“, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)“, and, “[Sansaric Habits and Āsavas](#)“.

Is there a Connection Between Nibbāna and Kamma?

1. Many people have the misconception that, “one needs to deplete all *kamma*” to attain *Nibbāna*. First of all, *kamma* (or *saṅkhāra*) are actions and that have been done (either in this life or in previous lives); while some of the *kammic* power associated with them can be removed by *metta bhāvanā*, for example, some *kamma beeja* (both good and bad) due to those *kamma* may still be there at the time of the attainment of *Nibbāna*.

- Even the Buddha had eleven *kamma vipāka* left that resulted in backaches and an ulcer-like ailment close to *Parinibbāna*, among others. Because in order to get rid of *kamma* seeds associated with a given *kamma*, the other being associated with that *kamma* seed need to be able to receive the merits of *metta bhāvanā*, i.e., that being need to have a state of mind with *alōbha*, *adōsa*, and *amōha*. But some of those beings may be trapped in the *niraya* for long times and may not even have a moment of “relief” to receive such merits. I will discuss this in a separate post, but the key idea is discussed in, “[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\) – How Does it Happen?](#)“.

2. What really happens is that when *āsavas* are removed, the *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* at “*vedanā paccaya tanhā*” step changes to “*vedanā paccaya adhimokko*” (in a *kusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* cycle) and there is no “*upādāna paccaya bhavo*” step in the cycle. Thus when the *Arahant* dies, there is no “*bhava*” grasped by the mind, and thus there is no “*jathī*” or birth.

3. Thus an *Arahant* could have many unspent *kamma beeja* (both good and bad) left, but his/her mind has lost the craving (*āsava*) to grasp any of them.

4. “Everything happens due to *kamma*” is a misconception. That is a *Vedic* concept, and is not in Buddha Dhamma; see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)“. The *āsavakkhaya ñāṇa* is the key to *Nibbāna*.

Next, “[Why is Correct Interpretation of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta so Important?](#)“,

6.3.3 Dasa Samyōjana – Bonds in Rebirth Process

August 6, 2017; revised February 14, 2018

1. *Samyōjana* (or *sanyōjana*) is translated to English as “fettters”, which is not a bad translation. Even though “fetter” is not a commonly used word, it means “a chain that is used to restrain or bind someone”.

- *Dasa samyōjana* are the ten “chains” or “bonds” that bind one to the rebirth process and force one to go through unimaginable suffering in the long run.

2. *samyōjana* comes from the three roots (“*san*“, “*yō*“, and “*ja*” respectively meaning “defilements”, “bind”, and “birth”). It can be pronounced either as “*sanyōjanā*” or — as is the common practice with many words involving “*san*” —, as “*samyōjana*”.

- Therefore, *samyōjana* means “bonds that bind one to “*san*” and thus keep one in the rebirth process; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)“.

- When one breaks these bonds in a systematic way — in three steps and four stages — at each stage, one makes irreversible progress to *Nibbāna* (release from all suffering).
- For explanation of many words with the root “*san*“, see, “[List of “San” Words and Other Pāli Roots](#)“.

3. The “[WebLink: suttacentral: Samyojana Sutta \(SN 41.1\)](#)” clearly states that there is “*san*” or “craving (*chanda raga*)” MUST be involved in *samyōjana*: “*Evameva kho, bhante, na cakkhu rūpānaṃ saṃyojanaṃ, na rūpā cakkhussa saṃyojanaṃ; yañca tattha tadubhayaṃ paṭicca uppajjati chandarāgo taṃ tattha saṃyojanaṃ..*”.

Translated: “*samyōjana* arise not due to eyes just seeing objects (*rūpa*) , but due to craving that arises due that seeing..”.

4. Many people do not realize that there is an important step BEFORE one can start tackling *dasa samyōjana*. This step must be taken to enter the Noble Path and start breaking those bonds to the rebirth process. **This is to get rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi* (wrong views) about the world that we live in;** see, “[Miccā Diṭṭhi, gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.

- This important pre-requisite or the pre-condition to “enter the Noble Path” was specifically discussed by the Buddha in the “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)”.
- The reason is that unless one believes in the laws of *kamma* and the rebirth process, there is no way one can start working towards *Nibbāna* (which is to be released from the suffering-filled rebirth process).
- Striving to attain *Nibbāna* without belief in the rebirth process is a useless thing, because by definition, *Nibbāna* is the release from the rebirth process. Most people confuse *Nibbāna* with a temporary relief from “day-to-day stresses of life”.
- *Nibbāna* can be described in simple or deeper levels; see, “[Nibbāna](#)“.

5. Buddha Dhamma is different from any other religion or philosophy. One first needs to understand the message of the Buddha before one can start on the Path prescribed by him. **Many people waste time blindly pursuing things that have nothing to do with the Noble Path to *Nibbāna*.**

- In order to understand the key message of the Buddha, one needs to understand that our world is much more complex than seen by our eyes. One needs to ‘see’ with wisdom. This wisdom or “*paññā*” can be cultivated only in steps, with an increasingly pure mind (i.e., with less greed, hate, and ignorance of the true nature of this world).
- In the early stage, when one is trying to get rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi*, one may need to stay away from *dasa akusala* with determination, i.e., even going to the extent of sticking to a set of rituals (saying I will not break the five precepts).
- However, when one becomes free of those basic immoral acts and speech (*pāpa kamma*), which are named the “big eight” in “[3. The Second Level – Key to Purify the Mind](#)“, in the Meditation section, one should be able to get rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi* mentioned above.
- At this stage, one’s mind is purified enough (i.e., *paññā* has grown enough) to start grasping the *Tilakkhana* (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*) to some extent. Of course it is necessary to grasp the correct interpretations: “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)“.

6. The first step in the Noble Eightfold Path is “*Sammā Diṭṭhi*“, which is not “something to be done”. It is a **vision** or a “new way of **looking** at how our world works”.

- This new way of looking at the world is through the world view that emerges from what is embedded in *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. This is how one breaks the **first three *samyōjana* of *sakkāya diṭṭhi, vicikicca, and sīlabata parāmasa*.**

7. **One has to break those bonds in one’s own mind.** One gains *sammā diṭṭhi* — right view to become free of ‘*san*’ — by comprehending the true nature of this world of 31 realms.

Anicca – that nothing in this world can bring a permanent happiness in the long run.

Dukkha – despite our struggles, we will be subjected to much more suffering than pleasures if we remain in the rebirth process.

Anatta – therefore, one is truly helpless in this struggle to attain “something of essence in this world”. That is just an illusion.

8. When one values a certain object, one can spend extraordinary amount of effort to get it. A normal human has many things in this world (a beautiful/handsome partner, nice house, nice car, etc) that are very valuable.

- Many people are willing to commit murder, robbery, lying, cheating, etc to get those. Then they get into trouble in two ways: If the society catches them, they will pay consequences like going to jail. Even if they manage to avoid “getting caught”, there is no way to avoid *kamma vipāka*, i.e., those actions will bring much harsher punishments in this life or in future lives.
- By comprehending the 10 types *miccā diṭṭhi*, one will be able to see that one will have to pay for immoral actions without exception, and one that depending on the severity of the actions, one may suffer for millions of years in the four lower realms (*apāyas*). This very first step of getting rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi* will be quite beneficial in preventing one from getting into trouble in the future.

9. However, grasping the *Tilakkhana* will lead to getting rid of even stronger type of wrong vision or *miccā diṭṭhi* about this world, i.e., that there is NOTHING in this world that will bring a level of permanent happiness.

- When one first starts comprehending *anicca*, and realizes a glimpse of this truth, one may still not be quite certain of the truth of that. But one will be compelled to believe that “it is not WORTH to commit those strong bad *kamma* that COULD lead to rebirth in the *apāyas* (strong greed and strong hate).
- At this beginning stage on the Noble Path, one could see the dangers in being born in the *apāyas* and one’s mind will AUTOMATICALLY start rejecting such actions. This does not happen by sheer will power, but it will be programmed into the mind. In the *Abhidhamma* language, the “*vottapana citta*” in a *citta vīthi* will make that decision in a billionth of a second.

10. So, it is quite important to understand that getting rid of the first three samyōjana involves NOTHING ELSE but just comprehending **a bit about the true nature** of this world, the *anicca* nature.

- In other words, at this stage one will lose a significant fraction of HOW MUCH VALUE one will place on ANY MATERIAL THING in this world. There is NOTHING in this world that is worth killing another human being via pre-planning with hate in the mind, for example.
- At this stage, one is a *Sotāpanna Anugāmi*, and one will get to the *Sotāpanna* stage without doubt. One has become one of the eight types of Nobles (*Ariyās*); see, “[Sotāpanna Magga Anugāmi and a Sotāpanna](#)”.

11. Therefore, getting release from rebirth in the *apāyas* depends on grasping the dangers of certain highly-immoral actions that are not worth doing because NOTHING in this world can be that valuable. Put in another way, nothing in this world is worth taking a risk of paying back with a rebirth in the *apāyas*.

- The Buddha characterized *dukkha* as “*dukkhan bhayattēna*“, i.e., “*dukkha* is another name for danger”. This *dukkha* is not the suffering that one is feeling at the moment (which has arisen due to a past *kamma*), but this *dukkha* is the one that **can be stopped from arising** by comprehending the dangers of such actions.

12. The next step towards *Nibbāna* involves getting rid of **two more bonds or samyōjana, i.e., *kāma rāga* and *patigha***. This is done in two stages: *Sakadāgāmi* stage and the *Anāgāmi* stage.

- In a way, these two bonds are harder to break because all through this beginning-less rebirth process we have spent probably 99% of the time in the *kāma lōka*. We are so attached to sense

pleasures (*kāma rāga*), that it is almost impossible for a normal human to grasp the ***anicca nature in kāma lōka***.

- As we discussed above, it is easier to see the bad consequences of highly-immoral actions that could lead to rebirth in the *apāyas*. And it is also easier to see the dangers of birth in the *apāyas* (the Buddha has described such unimaginable suffering in many *suttas*; see, for example, “[WebLink: suttacentral: dēvaduta Sutta \(Majjhima Nikāya 130\)](#)“.

13. It is harder for a normal human to see that those things that we value so highly are not only worthless, but are in fact can lead to suffering and are thus dangerous (even though not to the extent of the dangers of *apāyagāmi* actions).

- Most “moral people” believe that if one lives a moral life without harming others, then one will not be subjected to suffering in the future. **Even if one had comprehended *Tilakkhana* to a level of a *Sotāpanna*, that could still be the impression.**
- This is why Buddha’s foremost female lay disciple Visākā attained the *Sotāpanna* stage at age 7 and went on to marry and have 22 children. If Visākā thought that the *kāma lōka* was also filled with suffering, she would not have done that.

14. Therefore, getting rid of the *samyōjana* of *kāma rāga* (attachment to sensual pleasures) — and thus to be freed also from *patigha samyōjana* — is a much harder thing. This is why it took me over three years to truly START comprehending the worthlessness of sense pleasures AND the dangers of being attracted to sense pleasures.

- Even though I knew the criteria for one to become an *Anāgāmī*, I did not realize that I would actually have to “see the dangers” in staying in the *kāma lōka*, in order to strive for it.
- **I had been doing meditation on getting rid of *kāma rāga* all these years, but the mind has grasped the urgency to do that only in the last month.**
- I had written about the importance of removing *kāma rāga* in the following section: “*Āsvada* (Mind-Made Pleasures), *Ādeenava* (Bad Outcomes), *Nissarana* (Relinquish)“. These posts were written before October, 2015.

15. So, I had known the “theory” part of it. But my *paññā* or wisdom had not been cultivated enough to see the possible dangers of sense pleasures!

- It needed a trigger for my mind to finally realize the “worthlessness” and “dangers” of REMAINING in the *kāma lōka*. I will write more about how it actually got triggered, but I am still working on trying to see the dangers of sense pleasures and thereby making a convincing case that all we perceive as “pleasures” in the human and *dēva* realms are in fact CAUSES for future suffering.
- The point here is that one needs to keep on striving as long as it takes for the mind to come to a stage to be “triggered” by some event (mine was not a major event). As long as one keeps striving, it is bound to happen. It came as a shock to me. But I will discuss those details in another post (I am not there yet anyway).

16. By the way, it is becoming more clear to me about the difference between *magga phala* and *jhāna*. While *jhāna* can help, *jhāna* are not NEEDED to attain *magga phala*. It is *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, and NOT *sīla*, *jhāna*, *paññā*. I will write about this in detail, but I see that many people seem to get discouraged that they cannot get to *jhāna*.

- There may be people: with *magga phala* and without any type of *jhāna*; with *anāriya jhāna* and without *magga phala*; and also with *anāriya jhāna* and with *magga phala*. Those with *Ariya jhāna* MUST be at least an *Anāgāmī*, i.e., one who has REMOVED *kāma rāga* completely.
- The problem is that it is virtually impossible to distinguish between *Ariya* and *anāriya jhāna*. One thing is quite clear: One cannot attain *Ariya* first *jhāna* without REMOVING (*ucceda pahāna*, not just *vishakambana pahāna*) of *kāma rāga*, i.e., *kāma anusaya* must be removed, not just suppressed.

- But the “*jhānic* effect” is the same in both cases. The body and the mind have very similar sensations.
- If a *Sotāpanna* can get into the first *Ariya jhāna*, then he/she will never be born in the human world again; but we know that a *Sotāpanna* can be reborn in the human realm; thus a *Sotāpanna* would not have the first *Ariya jhāna*. **Whatever *jhānas* that I had were not *Ariya jhāna*.** I have started revising my old posts on *jhāna*. Please let me know any post that you see need revision.
- I was slowly coming to this conclusion over time; see, “[Difference Between *jhāna* and Stages of *Nibbāna*](#)“. Information in that fairly recent post is correct. I had forgotten to update the old posts. Another point is that it is *Sammā Samādhi* (not necessarily *jhāna*) that takes one to *Sammā Ñāṇa* and *Sammā Vimukti* to become an *Arahant* in the Noble Path.

17. Getting back to the main discussion: Once one overcomes those two *samyōjana* of *kāma rāga* and *patigha*, one will be free of rebirths anywhere in the *kāma lōka* (lowest 11 realms including the human and *dēva* realms).

- It is only then one can be said to become healthy (not subject to illnesses) and also will be free of the three sets of senses of smell, taste, and body touches. Actually, it is only the human bodies that are subject to illnesses and that is first overcome at the *Sakadāgāmī* stage.
- When one attains the *Sakadāgāmī* stage by REDUCING *kāma rāga* and *patigha*, one will be forever released from the human realm and one could be born only in *dēva* realms of the *kāma lōka*. At this stage, one would have lost the desire to OWN objects that bring sense pleasures (*vatthu kāma*), but has not yet lost the URGE TO ENJOY sense pleasures.
- As one progresses more, the two bonds of *kāma rāga* and *patigha* will be completely broken and one will attain the *Anāgāmī* stage, never to be born in any realm of *kāma lōka*.

18. An *Anāgāmī* would be still bound to the rebirth process via **five more bonds or *samyōjana*: *rūpa rāga*, *arūpa rāga*, *māna*, *uddacca*, *avijjā*.**

- The first five types of *samyōjana* are called *ōrambhāgiya-samyōjana* or “lower bonds”. The higher five are called *uddhambhāgiya-samyōjana* or “higher bonds”.
- If a person has removed the first seven *samyōjana* but still has the last three of *māna*, *uddacca*, *avijjā*, then if one dies at that time, one’s mental body (*gandhabba*) would come out of the dead body and will be in that state until the *kammic energy* for the human *bhava* is exhausted. *Parinibbāna* will happen at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment since one has lost *upādāna* for all 31 realms and thus cannot be born anywhere. So, the *gandhabba* would be in the ***antara Parinibbāna* state** during that time. This is what is presumed to have happened to *Waharaka Thero*; see, “[Parinibbāna of *Waharaka Thero*](#)“.
- As one progresses to higher stages, it becomes harder to remove the higher bonds (from the perspective of lower levels). **As we saw, it is easier for a normal human to see the dangers of the *apāyas*, but harder to see the dangers of *kāma lōka*.** I cannot even begin to imagine the dangers of *rūpa* and *arūpa lōka*. One has to proceed step-by-step.
- When an *Anāgāmī* removes *rūpa rāga*, he/she would be never again born in any realm in the *rūpa lōka*. Similarly, removing the *samyōjana* of *arūpa rāga* would make one free of birth in the *arūpa lōka*.

19. Once the Buddha saw that a *Bhikkhu* had started “taking it easy” after attaining the *Anāgāmī* stage, and asked him why he was not striving hard as he used to. The *Bhikkhu* replied that he had attained the *Anāgāmī* stage and thus thought that he was out of real danger.

- The Buddha asked him to consider the following: If one had touched feces and had just wiped it off, one may not see it anymore. But wouldn’t that remaining traces still smell bad? The *Bhikkhu* realized that one will not be really free of ALL suffering until one is released fully from all 31 realms. It is harder to see the dangers at higher levels, until something happens to make one aware of such “hard-to-see” dangers.

- What I learned from my experience is that even though I was not fully focused on attaining the next stage, I had been conditioning my mind through meditation. So, when the trigger came, my mind “got triggered”; I saw the dangers in the *kāma lōka* virtually “in a flash”. Just several months before, last December, I had an even stronger life event (severe back pains), but that did not act “as a trigger” presumably because my mind was not purified enough at that time (i.e., my *paññā* had not been cultivated enough).
- **Whichever stage we are “stuck at”, we should continue the effort without getting complacent.** Results will follow (possibly triggered by some unexpected event).
- Sometimes such triggers lead to moments of “insights” (“ahā” moments) directly leading to *magga phala*. There are many such examples in the *Tipitaka*.

20. Finally, the ten *samyōjana* are removed via different methods:

- *Sakkāya diṭṭhi*, *vicikiccā*, and *sīlabbata parāmasa* are removed via “correct vision” or “correct understanding” that happens when one is listening to a *dēsanā* by an *Ariya* or a Noble Person.
- *Kama raga* and *patigha* are removed via meditation.
- The five higher *samyōjana* are removed with wisdom (*paññā*).

6.3.4 The Cooling Down Process (Nibbāna) – How the Root Causes are Removed

1. One’s material world exists because of the six roots causes: *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*, *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*. Even though we may have bouts of happiness, we suffer much more than imaginable in the rebirth process because of these six causes.

- If there are six root causes, why did the Buddha say, “*ragakkhayo Nibbanan, dosakkhayo Nibbanan, Mohakkhayo Nibbanan*”? i.e., why are there only three causes to be removed to attain Nibbāna? (By the way, *lōbha* is a stronger form of *rāga*, thus *rāgakkhaya* means removing *lōbha*).
- In fact, one needs to cultivate *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha* in order to remove *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*.
- As *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* are removed gradually, the wisdom (*paññā*) gained in that process automatically reduces *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha* as needed. An Arahant has removed all six; *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha* must be cultivated all the way up to the Arahant stage.

2. *Lobha* is the extreme of greed. (“lo” + “bha” where “lo” is for the *lokaya* or world and “bha” is for “*bihiveema*” (arise or establish) is the main reason how the material world is created and sustained with greed.

- Because of *lōbha*, *kamachanda* (one of the five hindrances) arises. It is said that “one loses one’s mind” when one acts with *kamachanda* (*kāmachanda* = “*kāma*” + “*ichcha*” + “*anda*” where “*ichcha*” is liking and “*anda*” is becomes blind; thus *kamachanda* means blinded by attachment to sense pleasures).
- When one blinded by *kamachanda* and when obstacles arise in the way, one develops *dōsa* or *dvesa* (“*dvi*” + “*vēsa*” or second manifestation of greed; see,
- “[Pāli Glossary \(A-K\)](#) and [Pāli Glossary \(L-Z\)](#)” for the pronunciation key), i.e., hate for whatever gets in one’s way.
- And one has *lōbha* because one cannot see the truth about this world, i.e., because one has *mōha*: *Moha* comes from “*muva*” + “*hā*” or literally “closed mouth”. Here what is meant is that if there is a vessel and if its mouth or opening is closed, then one cannot see what is inside. Thus when one has *mōha*, one is ignorant about the true nature of this world, and thus acts blindly and foolishly, just based on the outward appearances.

3. One who has not heard about the Buddha’s world view is likely to act with *mōha* and thus in turn has both *lōbha* and *dōsa*.

- However, many people do not have strong versions of *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* because they may have been exposed to Buddha Dhamma in recent previous lives and thus may be carrying over such habits (*gathi*) compatible with *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*. In fact, ANYONE is likely to have been exposed to Buddha Dhamma somewhere, sometime in the deep past; but the more time lag there is, one is likely to lose those qualities.
- In any case, it is clear that if and when one has *kamachanda*, one gets blinded by the urge to get possession of whatever the sense object in question at the time. We all have had instances of *kamachanda* taking over; anyone can possibly remember instances where “the ability to reason out” got lost, at least for a brief time. It is good to contemplate on such a past situation and verify this fact.

4. Long-lasting hateful situations (*dōsa*) arise because of *kamachanda*. Again one can go back and remember such situations. This is why *dōsa* (or *dvesa*) is called the second manifestation of greed. At the extreme, *dōsa* brings out the second of the five hindrances, *vyāpāda*. This word comes from “*vaya*”+“*pada*”, where “*vaya*” means decline and “*pada*” means walk towards; thus *vyāpāda* means one is on a (morally) declining path.

- When one gets extremely angry, one again loses control and this could be even worse than *kamachanda*; it is possible for one to kill another human being in a moment of rage. And when one habitually gets angry, one could be in a state of *vyāpāda* for longer times, and that could become “normal” state of affairs if one is not stopped, i.e., become a “*gathi*”. We can see people get into the “*vyāpāda* mode” during (political) debates on television, or during arguments.
- All five hindrances arise because of not seeing the futility of craving or hating. This “getting attached to this world” via greed and hate is called *taṇhā*; see, “[Tanhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”

5. *Avijja* (ignorance) and *taṇhā* feed off each other, but it is *avijjā* that one needs to tackle first. This is because unless one’s mind sees the dangers hidden behind *taṇhā*, it is not possible to reduce *taṇhā*.

- When one starts learning Dhamma one begins to understand the nature of the wider world of 31 realms where beings move around birth to birth, how beings suffer mostly in the lowest four realms, that all actions have consequences, and why it does not make sense in the long run to act immorally to satisfy one’s immediate urges (the concept of *anicca*); see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”, and follow-up posts.
- When one truly understands *anicca*, one’s *avijjā* starts to reduce first from the strong *mōha* stage which contributes to *vicikicca* (acting without mindfulness); this in turn reduces greed and hate.
- Most people make the mistake of trying to get rid of greed and hate (via breath meditation), and that is NOT POSSIBLE; one needs to engage in the correct version of “*ānāpāna*” meditation; see, “[6. Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā \(Introduction\)](#)”.
- As long as one has a wrong world view and does not see the danger in having thoughts of excess greed and hate, it is not possible to FORCIBLY get rid of greed and hate; see, “[Difference Between Giving Up Valuables and Losing Interest in Worthless](#)”.
- This is why *Sammā Diṭṭhi* or the correct world view comes first in the Noble Eightfold Path.
- When one does the breath meditation, what one is doing is to forcibly SUPPRESS *kamachanda* and *vyāpāda*, and other hindrances.

6. When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, one’s *lōbha* is reduced to the *kāma rāga* level and one’s *dōsa* reduced to the *patigha* level PERMANENTLY; The fifth hindrance of *vicikicca* is removed, and the other two hindrances reduced. *Patigha* is a lower strength of *vyāpāda*: “*pati*” + “*gha*” means bonding via friction or dislike; thus *patigha* is included in *taṇhā*.

- One can see now why a *Sotāpanna* is incapable of doing extremely immoral acts that can result in a birth in the four lowest realms (*apāyās*); one has removed *vicikicca* hindrance permanently, and one always acts with mindfulness. This higher level of *Sammā Diṭṭhi* or the correct world

view is deeply ingrained in his/her mind, and even in a future birth that will not change. But one is still capable of acting with greed and hate to a certain extent.

7. When one attains the next level of *Nibbāna*, the *Sakadāgāmī* level, one permanently REDUCES *kāma rāga* and *patigha*. Because of this advancement, one will never be reborn in a realm where the physical body can be subjected to ailments, diseases, and old age, i.e., one will be reborn above the human realm, which is the fifth realm.

8. At the *Anāgāmī* stage *kāma rāga* and *patigha* are permanently REMOVED. Thus by the *Anāgāmī* stage, one has completely removed any form of *dōsa*, the second root cause; one does not get angry or hateful under any circumstance, and the *dōsa cetasika* is permanently removed. Since *kāma rāga* is also removed now one has no desire to be born in any realm in the *kāma loka*, including the *deva* worlds.

- Thus an *Anāgāmī* has only *rūpa rāga* and *arūpa rāga*. This is mainly due to the desire of an *Anāgāmī* to listen (and read) and contemplate on Dhamma concepts; there is no desire left for sense pleasures. Thus the *lōbha cetasika* is reduced to a very low level.
- As for the *mōha cetasika*, only a low strength remains as *avijjā*.

9. Thus out of the ten *sanyojana* or *sanyoga* (“*san*” + “*yoga*” or bound via “*san*”), *satkaya ditṭhi*, *vicikicca*, *silabbata paramasa* (all due to strong *avijjā*) are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- This is an important point: One just needs to comprehend the true nature of this world via understanding *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* in order to become a *Sotāpanna*.
- Just with this understanding, one removes *kamachanda*, *vyāpāda*, and *vicikicca*. This is why a *Sotāpanna* is said to be “one with the vision” or “*dassanena sampanno*”.
- Once the Buddha took a bit of soil on his fingernail and told the *bhikkhus*, “if all the soil in this Earth can be compared to the defilements one needs to get rid of, a *Sotāpanna* has left in him/her only an amount compared to this bit of soil on my fingernail”.
- This may sound astounding to some. But it is critical to understand that most heinous immoral acts are done because of one not having *Sammā Ditṭhi* at least to a significant level.
- Of the remaining *sanyojana* (*sanyoga*), *kāma rāga* and *patigha* are reduced at the *Sakadāgāmī* stage, and at the *Anāgāmī* stage they are removed. The rest of the *sanyoga* (*rūpa rāga*, *arūpa rāga*, *māna*, *uddacca*, and *avijjā*) are removed at the *Arahant* stage.

10. In the *kāma loka*, we experience a form of *olarika sukha* (or primitive form of coarse sensations), where sense faculties and corresponding sense objects are dense. As attachment to pleasures from “dense matter” decreases, rebirth in the “denser worlds” is progressively eliminated (one exception is the *peta* realm where the bodies are fine, but that is done to impart an enhanced mental suffering).

- At the *Sotāpanna* stage one is permanently released from the coarse forms of suffering in the lowest four realms. After the *Sakadāgāmī* stage, rebirths do not occur even in the human realm where the relatively dense bodies still are subjected to physical pains and diseases. An *Anāgāmī* is born only in the *suddhavasa rūpa loka*, where there are only fine bodies with vision, hearing, and mind only. An *Arahant* will never be reborn anywhere in the 31 realms which have “some connection to matter”; see, “[What Are Rūpa? \(Relation to Nibbāna\)](#)”.
- Thus at the passing away of an *Arahant*, the mind is released from any attachment to the material world consisting of the 31 realms; no more suffering from physical pains, mental pains, or death. One has attained the state of *amaraneeya* (no death).

11. Another way to analyze the steps to *Nibbāna* is to look at how the 12 *akusala citta* are removed stage by stage; see, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)”.

12. Therefore, the four stages of *Nibbāna* can be characterized via different ways, in terms of hindrances, *sanyoga* (or *samyojana*), “density of matter”, *akusala citta*, and many other ways. They are all inter-consistent.

13. Even before the *Sotāpanna* stage one can start feeling the *niramisa sukha*; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”, and “[Niramisa Sukha](#)”.

- *Niramisa sukha* can increase considerably if one can get to the *Ariya jhānas*.
- It is not necessary to attain *Ariya jhānas* to become a *Sotāpanna*, but *Ariya jhānas* can be attained only if one is already a *Sotāpanna*; see, “[How does one know whether the Sotāpanna Stage is Reached?](#)” (this became clear to me only recently and I have verified it in a *desanā* from the Thero).
- Thus, if one can get to *Ariya jhānas* one can confirm the attainment of the *Sotāpanna* stage. And it is possible to distinguish *Ariya jhānas* from *Anariya jhānas* easily since *Ariya jhānas* are immune to external influences or even forced defiled thoughts; see, “[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)”.

6.3.5 Why is Correct Interpretation of Anicca, Dukkha, Anattā so Important?

The correct meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* are explained under the top menu “[Key Dhamma Concepts](#)”.

1. *Anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* describe the true nature of “this world” of 31 realms; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”. Nowhere in the 31 realms can one maintain anything to one’s satisfaction over the long term (*anicca*); thus one gets depressed, unfulfilled, and distraught (suffering or *dukkha* is the net result). Thus one becomes helpless (*anatta*).

2. A good analogy is someone attempting to fill a leaky vessel at home by carrying water to it from a nearby river. He makes a trip back from the river, fills the vessel and is glad to see that it got filled halfway. But soon enough he sees that water is running out and thus needs to make another trip to the river to bring more water.

- If he spent a bit of time examining the vessel, he would have discovered the leak, and could have fixed it. We are too much involved in the struggle to maintain an illusory happiness, and we do not take enough time to contemplate whether it makes sense to struggle against a system that is INHERENTLY unsuitable to provide lasting happiness.

3. Before the retirement, I was basically working seven days a week. I had deadlines to meet and responsibilities to fulfil and there was no time to even think whether I should take some time off and contemplate the sensibility of such a hectic life.

- Whatever vacation time that I had, I wanted to plan a “relaxing vacation”. But I did not realize that I was spending more time planning the vacation and then spent whatever the energy that I had on sightseeing etc. When I got back from the vacation, I was exhausted from the trip itself. The early retirement decision was the best decision that I ever made in my life.

4. If this existence is inherently flawed in the sense that it is not capable of sustaining stability at all, then all the struggles that we make are in vain. The Buddha discovered that everything in “this world” undergoes change (see “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”). It is INHERENTLY impossible to achieve a lasting happiness.

- Now the question is how do we know whether this axiom in Dhamma is correct? This is where it takes a bit of time to look at the evidence. I have done a lot of work within the past several years and hopefully this website will help you cut down on that research.
- Actually scientists also now acknowledge that the universe is “running down”, and we need to constantly spend energy to keep chaos and instability out of the way to maintain some sort of stability (in Buddha Dhamma this is called “*saṅkhāra dukkha*”); see, “[Second Law of Thermodynamics is Part of Anicca!](#)”.

5. After looking at the evidence, if one decides to spend a bit more time to carefully examine the three characteristics (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*), one may see that there is some truth to it. This will set one off on the Dhamma Path.

- If there is nothing substantial or long lasting to be had by harming other living beings, stealing from them, lying to them, indulging in excess sense pleasures, or not being intoxicated with power, money or position, one's life will automatically change for the better.
- The five precepts or eight precepts are NOT to be just mechanically followed. The mind needs to SEE the benefit of following them.

6. This is why one MUST spend some time examining the evidence for the validity of Buddha Dhamma. The first stage of *Nibbāna*, *Sotāpanna* stage, is attained just with the clear understanding of the true nature of “this world”, i.e., *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

- When one realizes the futility of the struggle for long lasting happiness in a world that is inherently not capable of providing it, one will automatically start moving away from clinging to “things in this world”. For example, one will say to oneself, “what is the point of stealing this from another person? What long lasting happiness can be gained from it? Rather my mind will be in an agitated state if I do that”.
- There is no need to force oneself to obey the precepts. Moral behavior (*sila*) will automatically follow the true understanding of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. Then, when one starts feeling a bit of *nirāmisa sukha*, there is no turning back, because one can see for oneself the benefits of a moral life.

7. Thus *Sammā Diṭṭhi* (*san + ma + diṭṭhi* = vision to get rid of defilements) is none other than the true comprehension of the three characteristics: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

- When one gains a bit of *Sammā Diṭṭhi* (vision), it will try to prevent one from having defiled thoughts (*Sammā Sankappa*), uttering false speech (*Sammā Vaca*), doing wrong things (*Sammā Kammanta*), pursuing wrong lifestyles (*Sammā Ajiva*). One will also make efforts (*Sammā Vayama*) to be on the Path, which will lead to be constantly be mindful (*Sammā Sati*), thus leading to *Sammā Samādhi* (peaceful and focused state of mind).
- But the important distinction between, say “good speech” and *sammā vaca* must be understood in the context of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. **One abstains from “wrong speech” not merely because one does not want to face bad consequences; one abstains from it because one can ALSO see the futility in it. Same holds for all eight. This is worth a lot of contemplation.**
- This is why the Buddha said, “*Dhammo ha ve rakkati dhamma carī*”, or, “once one sees the Dhamma, Dhamma will guide, protect, and direct”.
- Thus, gaining *Sammā Diṭṭhi* via contemplating on *anicca, dukkha, anatta* will automatically direct one on the Noble Eightfold Path. This is why removing *micca diṭṭhi* via true understanding of *anicca, dukkha, anatta* is so important.

7. When one proceeds in this manner, one will attain the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*, as these three basic concepts take hold in the mind. At that point, the mind will automatically reject doing things that will result in rebirth in lower four realms.

- Those are the four greed-based *cittas* that arise due to *micca diṭṭhi* (wrong vision), and the delusion-based *citta* that arises due to defiled *viññāṇa* (*vicikicca*). This is why a *Sotāpanna* is prevented from a rebirth in the lower four realms forever; see, “[Akusala Citta- How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)”.

8. When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, one may still have greed, hate, and delusion left in him/her. But a *Sotāpanna* KNOWS about them, and KNOWS how to get rid of them. Then it is just a matter of time before getting rid of those defilements and attaining the other three stages, culminating in ultimate peace and permanent happiness, *Nibbāna*.

Next, “[The Sotāpanna Stage](#)“,

6.3.6 How to Cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path starting with Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta

Anicca, dukkha, anatta describe the true nature of this world with 31 realms. Thus one needs to comprehend these “three characteristics of nature” in order to “see” the path to *Nibbāna* before starting to follow it.

1. Before one starts on a journey one needs to decide why one should take the journey, exactly where one is going to, and the correct path towards that destination. Thus it is worthwhile to examine why the Buddha said our goal should be to move away from this world towards *Nibbāna*, why he said that, why one should believe that to be true, and what the correct path towards that goal is. The Buddha himself recommended that approach:

- One starts on the Noble Eightfold Path with *Sammā Diṭṭhi*, which means the needed “vision” on why, what to expect at the end, and an idea about the path to achieve it.
- Out of the twelve *akusala cittas*, five are permanently removed when one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage: the four greedy *cittas* that arise with wrong view (“*diṭṭhi saḥagatha*”), and the delusion *citta* based on *vicikicca*. All five of these *cittas* arise because one does not know the true nature of the world; all *kamma* that lead one to rebirth in the *apāyas* are done with these five *cittas*. Thus when they are removed by partially completing *Sammā Diṭṭhi* at the *Sotāpanna* stage, one is permanently prevented from accumulating *kamma* that destines one to a rebirth in the lowest four realms (*apāyas*).
- Furthermore, any such *apayagami kamma* seeds previously accumulated are prevented from proving a potent enough *nimitta* at the moment of death; thus birth in the *apāyas* is automatically prevented.
- Looking at it from another angle, out of the 10 *samyojanas* (those that binds one to *samsāra*), three are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage: *sathkaya diṭṭhi* (the idea that all actions one does with the six sense bases to achieve *amisa sukha* are beneficial), *vicikicca* (distorted mindset), and *silabbata paramasa* (the idea that *Nibbāna* can be attained just by following precepts, without purifying one’s mind). All three are due to not having *Sammā Diṭṭhi*, or not knowing the true nature of the world: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.
- In the *Sabbasava Sutta*, there are seven recommended methods for removing defilements for anyone starting on the Path. The first item on the list describes how one can get rid of a bulk of defilements just with correct vision of “this world”, i.e., “*dassanena pahathabba*”; this is what was discussed above.
- Once one understands the true nature of “this world” and understands how to remove the rest of the defilements, then the other six steps are taken, of which “*bhavanaya pahathabba*” (i.e., removal by meditation) comes last. Today, most people start meditating without clearly understanding what to meditate about.

2. Thus, first one needs to understand why we need to escape from “this world”.

- The three characteristics of “this world” (see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”) tell us that we can NEVER achieve AND maintain whatever we desire (characteristic of *anicca*), thus we mostly end up with suffering (*dukkha*), and thus one is not in control and becomes helpless (*anatta*). The Buddha merely DISCOVERED this true nature of the world. Many people take Buddha Dhamma to be pessimistic, but Buddha was just a messenger.
- Moreover, the Buddha gave us an optimistic message too. For those who are willing to examine the true nature of the world, there is a better version of happiness that comes from moving away from “this world”, i.e., by voluntarily giving up craving for things in this world. This is the *nirāmisa sukha* of *Nibbāna* (see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Nirāmisa Sukha?](#)”), which increases as one starts on the Path and becomes complete and PERMANENT at the Arahant stage. Even if one does not get to the first stage of *Nibbāna*, the *Sotāpanna* stage, one could experience this *nirāmisa sukha*, and may help shorten the path to *Nibbāna* in the upcoming lives.

3. Therefore it is CRITICAL to understand *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, before we proceed further here. If you have not done so, please spend some time critically examining and contemplating on these concepts described under many posts on this website, in particular, [“Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta”](#), [“The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma”](#) and the links following that on [“Samsaric Time Scale”](#), and [“Evidence for Rebirth”](#), and [“Why is Correct Interpretation of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta so Important?”](#). It may be even helpful for many to scan through many other posts before reading those posts.

- That is a lot of reading. But “this world” of 31 realms is very complex. Please keep re-reading all posts until you understand the message. Most of these concepts have been hidden for thousand years, and have been badly distorted, especially *anicca* and *anatta*. **Think about the fact that all biological matter is constituted from just four bases of DNA, and all computer codes are based on two units, 0 and 1.** Thus, one could see how complex the “whole existence” with 31 realms is when there are 28 types of *rūpa*, 89 types of *cittas* and 52 types of *cetasikas* are involved!

4. The main conclusion from *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* is “*asarattena anatta*”, i.e., “*anatta* in the sense of it is fruitless to crave for anything in this world”. Thus the Buddha said, “*anissitoca viharathi, na ca kinci loke upadiyathi*”, i.e., “There is nothing in this world that is fruitful, there is nothing to be craved”.

- People “behave badly” in order to “get what they perceive to be valuable”. All immoral acts are done to “get what we want”. We crave for something and greed arise, and then when we don’t get what we wish for, we get angry and hate arises. We first think bad thoughts (*mano saṅkhāra*), then follow through with bad words (*vacī saṅkhāra*), and bodily action (*kaya saṅkhāra*). We do all this because we do not have an understanding of the true nature of the world, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and related facts: knowledge of the rebirth in a wider world of 31 realms with suffering. Thus we do all other bad acts with established wrong views (*niyata micca diṭṭhi*); see, [“Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)”](#).

5. Now let us see what happens when one starts learning the true nature of the world including *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and ALSO the consequences of immoral actions: Then one thinks, “Is it worthwhile to steal from someone to get what I want, which in the end will do me more harm than good (because those will not provide any permanent happiness, AND one has to pay the price of an immoral action if not in this life but in upcoming lives?)”.

- Same for any other immoral act: to hurt someone by, uttering false, slandering, harsh, or frivolous speech; stealing, killing, or engaging in sexual misconduct (hurting other parties involved). AND all those start with covetousness, ill-will, and all those are done because of established false views that fruitful things can be had in this world by hurting others without any bad consequences for oneself.

6. Thus when one is about to think of doing such a bad deed or having bad thoughts, this “clear vision” or *sammā diṭṭhi* will help get rid of such thoughts and instead think, “this person is in the same boat, struggling to survive in a world setup for failure”. Thus instead of bad thoughts one will have thoughts of fellowship and compassion for other beings.

- Also one will be working to learn more Dhamma and will be constantly thinking about Dhamma concepts like *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*; the joy from deeper understanding will provide incentive to dig deeper on concepts that are not clear. Thus *Sammā Diṭṭhi* leads to the next step in the Noble Eightfold Path: *Sammā Sankappa*.

7. With such a mindset one will avoid the four forms of bad speech (lying, slandering, vicious talk, vain talk), because one realizes that such acts will only lead to loss of peace of mind as well as hurting others. Thus one will start living with *Sammā Vaca*; also see, [“Right Speech – How to Avoid Accumulating Kamma”](#).

8. Similarly, one will clearly see that there is no point in engaging in immoral bodily acts (killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct) in order to get some temporary satisfaction, which in the end will

come back to haunt oneself with magnified bad consequences. This will AUTOMATICALLY guide one to act in a moral fashion, i.e., one will have *Sammā Kammanta*.

9. In standard texts, it says one will not undertake the five lifestyles that are to be avoided:

- (a) Dealing and killing animals for meat trade.
 - (b) Dealing in poisons.
 - (c) Dealing in weapons and arms.
 - (d) Dealing in slave trade and prostitution.
 - (e) Dealing in intoxicants or liquors and drugs.
- *Sammā ajiva* is more than that. Thus one's lifestyle will automatically change to not only moral living, but also to avoid any kind of act which will be harmful to oneself and/or others. One will take care of one's responsibilities towards one's family and the society, because otherwise one will get in deeper debt, and will not have the mindset to contemplate; see, "[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)".
 - **Following the Path is much more than just abandoning everything and becoming a bhikkhu or just following some guidelines or precepts. It needs to be done with wisdom gained through learning Dhamma.** This is *Sammā Ajiva*.

10. As one feels the benefits of such a lifestyle, one will start feeling the *niramisa sukha* (see, "[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)"). Then one will be motivated to stay on that Path, and also to learn more about the Buddha Dhamma and to contemplate more on the Three Characteristics (one is said to have a complete understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* only when one reaches the *Arahanthood* or full *Nibbana*). This renewed effort is *Sammā Vayama*.

11. The above six factors will make one's mind purified and one will start "seeing" better. One will start working with "*yoniso manasikara*" (clear vision). It is more than clear thinking; even a master thief plans his work with clear thinking (on the wrong side).

- Here what it means is one always looks at any issue with *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* in the mind: that it is not possible to maintain things to our satisfaction in the long run; that the more we attach either via greed or hate, the more we will suffer; that it is unwise to do immoral things for temporary happiness to become helpless at the end. This is *Sammā Sati*.

12. When one starts meditating (and this does not have to be last; one can start slowly from the beginning), **one will be easily able to get to *Sammā Samādhi***, focused attention (*ekaggata*). The more one proceeds on the Path (i.e., the more the mind becomes purified), easier *samādhi* starts to grow in oneself.; one starts feeling a "lightness" even when not doing formal meditation.

- If one works on developing *jhānas*, one will be able to get to *Ariya jhānas*. Whether one will be using meditation on the Three Characteristics, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, or any other other type of mediation, that will eventually lead to the four levels of *Nibbāna*.

13. It is important to realize that "*Sammā*" in all these eight steps means "*san*" (adding things to perpetuate the suffering/rebirth process) + "*ma*" (remove or get rid of). Thus *Sammā Dīṭṭhi* is the vision (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) that helps removing "*san*"; *Sammā Sankappa* are the thoughts that help remove '*san*'; *Sammā Vaca* is the kind of speech that helps remove '*san*', etc.

- Thus, one adheres to the eight steps through the UNDERSTANDING of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and not merely for the sake of following some guidelines or precepts. One understands the futility of continuing this rebirth process.

Next, "[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)",

6.3.7 Difference Between Giving Up Valuables and Losing Interest in Worthless

1. As long as one considers something to be valuable, it is not easy to give it up, It does not matter what ANYONE ELSE says. One will go to much effort and expense to make sure it stays with oneself.

- But if one's own mind sees that something is useless and worthless, then what is the point of keeping it? One will gladly get rid of it.
- One's perception of the "world out there" and "what is valuable and what is not" depends on one's mind. Even though we look at a pile of feces with disgust, a dog or a pig may eat it with relish. And a dog does not have any cravings for gold or money.
- While some people gain pleasure by torturing animals, most are disgusted by such acts. It depends on the level of understanding. A purified mind will see things in a better perspective.

2. The common thinking about Buddhism goes like this: "The Buddha said that this rebirth process is full of suffering, and to stop the rebirth process we need to give up everything in this world to detach from it. But that is not easy to do. I like the stuff that I have and I enjoy life. May be I can attain *Nibbāna* in a future life".

- That is not a correct interpretation of what the Buddha said. The Buddha did say that "this rebirth process is full of suffering". He never asked anyone to give up anything that they had. His only advice was "learn the true nature of this wider world of 31 realms that is characterized by *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* and realize the dangers in staying in it".
- If one truly understood the true nature of the world one's own mind will see the futility of hanging onto worldly things. *Nekkhamma* or "giving up" is not done forcibly, IT JUST HAPPENS when one comprehends the true nature of "this world".

3. If one understands the above few paragraphs, then one knows more about Buddha Dhamma compared to 90% of the "Buddhists". Even many *Theravāda bhikkhus* say, "May you attain *Nibbāna* after enjoying future lives in *Deva* realms", or "May you have much worldly pleasures and attain *Nibbāna* when the next Buddha [*Maitreya* (Sanskrit), *Metteyya* (Pāli), *Maithree* (Sinhala)] appears in the world". They apparently do not comprehend the dangers in staying in the rebirth process.

- This is in sharp contrast with Buddha Gotama's last words, "*appamadena sampadeta*" or "strive diligently and comprehend *san*" (and attain *Nibbāna*)", because this rebirth process is wrought with unimaginable dangers. Even if we live perfectly moral lives, we do not know what kind of kamma that we have done in past lives, and thus there is no way to guarantee a good rebirth unless one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage and makes those worst *kamma beeja* ineffective.
- This life of about 100 years is just a "blink of an eye" compared to trillions of years in future lives (unless one attains *Nibbāna*); but it is also **unimaginably precious** because we very rarely get a chance to be born human and most living beings are in the lowest four realms; see, "[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)".

4. Buddha Dhamma is all about PURIFYING one's mind so that the mind can grasp the true nature of this world. The only actions one needs to take are to live a moral life, gradually adhere to a lifestyle that avoids the ten defilements (*dasa akusala*), AND learn Dhamma, in particular truly understand *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. Everything else will fall into place.

- When one purifies one's mind, it becomes clear that the things that one believes to be valuable are not valuable at all, AND such cravings can bring so much suffering in the future. But one cannot take that advice coming from even a Buddha and act on it forcibly; ONE'S MIND HAS TO SEE IT.
- One may take many precautions to safeguard a "gem" that one thinks has much value. But if the gem is assessed by an expert and is found to be worthless, then one will no longer have the

same “attachment” for the “gem” and may throw it away. But until the perception is there in the mind that the “gem” is valuable, one will not part with it.

5. There is another aspect of this forcibly giving up. In addition to the fact that one will be under stress if one tries to do that, one may be accumulating bad *kamma vipāka* if one acts irresponsibly. For example, if one decides that he needs to become a *bhikkhu* and abandons his kids and wife, that is an unwise thing to do.

- We have to act mindfully and with wisdom, making sure that we do not hurt ourselves, our families, or anyone else. Buddha Dhamma is all about the mind, and not about mechanically doing meaningless rituals. As we discussed in several posts, it is the intention and the enthusiasm for doing good, that really matters.
- One can progress all the way up to the *Anāgāmi* stage of *Nibbāna* as a “householder”, i.e., while fulfilling one’s responsibilities as a husband/wife, parent, etc. While one should certainly give to charity, one needs to make sure that there is enough left to support one’s family. And it is not possible to contemplate or meditate if one has to worry about the next meal or a place to stay.

6. As one makes progress, giving up will happen automatically **at the level of one’s understanding**, and as needed. One does not have to make plans in advance about what to give up or anything like that: “*Dhammo ha ve rakkati dhamma cari*”, or “Dhamma will guide and protect those who follow the Path”. As the mind becomes clear of the hindrances, one will make better decisions, and will not hurt anyone in the process.

7. About 20 years after the Buddha attained Enlightenment, he had to start adding “*vinaya* rules” for the *bhikkhus*. When Buddha Dhamma started flourishing, many unscrupulous people started to enroll as *bhikkhus* to enjoy “a good life”. The Buddha admonished that such *bhikkhus* accumulate much bad *kamma* by getting indebted to those people who make offerings out of *saddhā*.

- *Vinaya* (“*vi*”+“*naya*” where “*naya*” means debt) means stay free of debts. The *bhikkhus* can do that by diligently pursuing *Nibbāna* and also by explaining Dhamma to those people, while making sure not to abuse their privileged life where they are honored for these very acts.

8. Getting to debt is bad for lay people too. All our current responsibilities have their origins in the past where we became indebted to others. It may take a while to comprehend this, but we are really paying off debts to even our kids. And if we do not do a good job of it, we WILL have to do it in future lives. Any other relationship is the same way; see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”.

- One time a *bhikkhu* started sharing his food from the alms round with his parents, and other *bhikkhus* complained to the Buddha. The Buddha asked why he did that he said his parents had become beggars and that is why he did that. The Buddha praised that *Bhikkhu* and officially endorsed it as a *vinaya* rule, that *bhikkhus* can take care of their parents if the need arose. Even as a *Bhikkhu*, one is obliged to take care of one’s parents.

9. When someone gets help from another, it is the obligation of the receiver to show his/her gratitude for that kindly act, by doing a *pattidana* or “giving merits” to that person; see, “[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\) – How does it Happen?](#)”. If the receiver becomes able to pay back in kind, that should be done too.

- When we deal with people in everyday life, we are engaged in paying back debts even unknowingly. Thus it is a good idea to fulfil one’s responsibilities to the best of one’s ability. This applies to most everyday things we do. Our employment responsibilities needs to be done to the best of our ability. When we do not fulfil our responsibilities anywhere, we stay indebted and accumulate more debt with interest.
- When doing transactions, we need to make sure that everyone is compensated adequately; otherwise, such debts will have to be paid in the future. Again, intention and the “state of mind” are key factors: We may be able to fool other people, but we cannot fool our own minds.

- We have enemies because we have had conflicts with them before. And someone has to break that vicious cycle. This is why the *Dhammapada* verse, “*na hi verena verani....*” says: “Hatred never ceases through hatred, but through love alone they cease”. This is an eternal law.

10. Beings in the lower four realms DO NOT HAVE an advanced mental state to affect their future even short term, i.e., in this life; they are simply paying off debts and paying for their immoral acts in the past. They just “go with the flow” spending *kammic* energy that has been accumulated; unless they are fortunate to receive the benefits of a “good kamma beeja” from the past (when they were in higher worlds) at the time of death, they are stuck in the lower realms.

- On the other hand, HUMANS CAN totally change their future, within this lifetime (mundane progress), but also affect the future lives: If one wants to avoid the *niraya* (hell) one needs to remove the causes that could cause rebirth in *niraya*, i.e., deep hate. If one wants to avoid rebirth as a hungry ghost (*peta loka*), then one need to remove causes for that, i.e., excessive greed. If one does not want to be reborn an animal one needs to remove both greed and hate. To avoid birth as an *asura*, one needs to take care of oneself, and not depend on others.

11. Buddha Dhamma is a complete theory on existence. EVERYTHING can be explained in a systematic way. If everyone can grasp the basic message of the Buddha, our world will be much safer place.

- When a tree is growing all we need to do is to water it, provide nutrients, and generally take care of it; the fruits from the tree will come out naturally. No amount of praying or wishing is going to get the tree to give more fruits. In the same way, when we follow the Path correctly, everything else will “fall into place”. There is no need to pray or to make wishes or do anything else.
- This world, for all its drawbacks, plays by the rules. Things just do not happen; they happen due to causes. When one understands the causes for bad outcomes, one can work to stop such causes and make sure bad outcomes NOT TO ARISE in the future; this is the meaning of the “*nirōdha*” (=“*nir*” + “*udā*”, where “*nir*” is stop and “*udā*” is arising; thus “stop from arising”).

12. The real message of the Buddha is that spending one’s whole life in making mundane progress is really insignificant in the *sansaric* time scale; **why spend all that time to achieve a high status, earn a billion dollars, or anything else mundane if one has to leave all that behind within 100 years?** We have done this over and over countless times. This rebirth process can run into many more trillions of years into the future and this larger world of 31 realms is wrought with unimaginable dangers.

- The ultimate solution is to stop the rebirth process (eliminate causes for future rebirths), and to release the mind from the material body that leads to much suffering.
- Thus the key message of the Buddha was to “attain the suffering-free *Nibbāna* by eliminating the causes for rebirth: greed, hate, and ignorance”.
- But that message itself can only be grasped via purifying one’s mind to a certain extent by learning about the true nature of the wider world of existence: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

Also see, “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)”, “[Nibbāna – Is It Difficult to Understand?](#)”, and “[What are Rūpa? \(Relation to Nibbana\)](#)”.

6.3.8 Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata

1. *Anicca* is the key to the *Sotāpanna* stage. Once one comprehends *anicca*, one can see how *dukkha* arises, and thus why one is totally helpless (*anatta*) in this rebirth process; then one “sees” that the only permanent happiness is attained via seeking *Nibbāna*.

- “*Uppada vayattena anicca*”, or “*anicca* because everything that arises in this world cannot be maintained the way we like”
- Thus in order to understand *anicca* better, we need to realize that everything that we EXPERIENCE in this world has causes for its arising and when those causes (*kammic* energy)

are depleted they are destroyed too. Not only that, during the time they are in existence, many of them change unpredictably (this is called *viparināma* versus *parināma* if things change orderly). Anything that arises in this world is called a “*sankata*”; see, “[Difference between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra \(Sankata\)](#)”.

- Thus a *sankata* can be defined as something that arises due to causes, since nothing arise without causes. **Thus the only entity that is not a *sankata* is *Nibbāna*, which is attained via removing all causes.**

2. A *sankata* (pronounced “sankatha”) is an entity arising due to a *saṅkhāra*; a *saṅkhāra* is also a *sankata*, because just like any other *sankata*, any *saṅkhāra* arises and falls; thus *saṅkhāra* is sometimes used to include both; see below. However, a *sankata* is normally something that arises due to *saṅkhāra* (a living being, house, nest, a thought, hopes and dreams, etc) and eventually is destroyed. Nothing in this world lasts forever.

- At the deepest level, anything in this world arises due to the mind. It will take us some more time to get to that, but that is what was meant by the Buddha when he said, “*manopubbangama dhamma.....*” or “mind precedes everything else...”.
- This was described in detail in the *Agganna sutta*, but please do not bother to look it up on the internet, because ALL existing translations are embarrassingly erroneous. In order to discuss the *Agganna sutta*, we need more background material.

3. In “*sabbe saṅkhāra anicca.....*”, by *saṅkhāra* what is meant is *saṅkhāra* AND *sankata*, everything in this world except “*namagotta*”, which are just records of events.

- Thus all we experience are *sankata*. Anything that experience lasts only momentarily; then it goes to “the past” and gets incorporated into *pancakkhandha*. Thus anything included in *pancakkhandha* is born as a *sankata*.
- It is easy to see that all *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa* are *sankata*.

4. However, here we pay special attention to material things, because those are ones that give us a perception of “valuable things worth taking possession of”, sometimes via “any means possible”. Until we get this perception out of our minds, intentionally or unintentionally we will be doing immoral things that will force us to be reborn in the lowest four realms.

- Any *sankata* has a lifetime: a fly with a lifetime of a few days, a human with a lifetime of about 100 years, the Chinese Great Wall lasting tens of thousands of years, or a whole universe lasting billions of years, are all *sankata* (of course none of them made directly by *saṅkhāra*; they are the end result. This cannot be explained even with many essays, and will take a while to get to). But we will take a few simple examples to explain the fundamental idea in this post.

5. What is the difference between a “material *sankata*” that is inert and another that is “alive”?

- For example, a tree is a *sankata*; it grows starting from a seed and eventually dies; that IS the end of the tree. The causes to form the tree that were embedded in the seed led to the growth of the tree, but as the causes got depleted the tree died.
- But when a human dies, of course the physical body decomposes, but death is not the end of that being. Because a living being grasps a new existence with a new *abhisankhāra* (strong strong forms of *saṅkhāra* that can give rise to rebirth) at the moment of death. Even though an *Arahant*, may have *kamma beeja* due to old *abhisankhāra*, any of those **will not be grasped** at death.
- All inert things in this world came into existence a long time ago, and how they come about ORIGINALLY from *saṅkhāra* involves Dhamma that is very deep. But they all, and the whole physical universe will come to an end when the universe dies in billions of years.
- Yet the sentient beings have been in existence from beginningless time. Each time we die, we come back with a new existence (new *bhava*).

6. During the lifetime of a *sankata*, it goes through five loosely-defined stages; there are no clear-cut delineations in between adjacent stages. This is because a *sankata* is changing every moment.

- A good simile is the rising of the Sun and its disappearance at the end of a day. Since the cycle remains virtually unchanged through the year, let us consider this cycle in a country close to the equator. There from about 4 am to about 7 am it is called a sunrise; from that time to Noon the sunshine grows and is peaked around Noon. The “full Sun” is there from about 11 am to about 4 pm, where the power of the Sun is optimum. Then it starts going down and around 7 pm it starts to get dark; then the last part of the night takes over. Yet at each moment, the Sun is moving and the status keep changing.

7. In the same way, a *sankata* goes through five stages: *udayangama* (rising), *asthangama* (growing), *asvada* (optimum), *adeenava* (decay starts), and *nissarana* (last stages leading to death, destruction). [*udayangama*, *attangama*, *assada*, *adinava*, *nissarana* (see “[WebLink: suttracentral: SN48.2-3](#)” where last three are mentioned)]

- **Understanding these five stages of a *sankata* is the key to the *anuloma ñāṇa*, without which one cannot get to the *sammatta ñāṇa*, and eventually to *Nibbāna*.**
- For example, a seed germinates and starts a bud; this is the arising (*udayangama*) stage. Then it grows to a healthy young tree; this is the growing (*asthangama*) stage where there are no flowers or fruits yet. Then comes the *asvada* (optimum) stage where the tree is flourishing and is full of flowers and fruits. But then with time, the tree will give less fruits and is on the way down; this is the *adeenava* (decaying) stage where it can come down with various diseases too. This process continues as the *nissarana* stage until it dies.
- A human or animal (the only realms we can see) will go through the same process. A human life starts not as a baby but a single cell in the womb; from there to a baby of couple of years is the arising (*udayangama*) stage. Then comes the growth (*asthangama*) stage until about 15 years or so. Life peaks from there to about 30-35 years, and that is the time one really enjoys life, the *asvada* (optimum) stage. But then inevitably, the decay process starts and one starts feeling aches and pains, diseases, etc in the *adeenava* stage. This stage is continued in the final stage (somewhere starting from 50-100 years depending on individual) of *nissarana* leading to death.
- Here is a video produced for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. Someone has taken a lot of time to put together this video, and it shows four stages of her life. Each of us can do the same (but we of course don’t have enough pictures taken to put together a video like this):

“[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II](#)”

- Even an inert object like a house, a star, or even a whole universe goes through the same process.

8. This is the underlying nature of this anything in this world, and that is why it is *anicca*: no matter how much we try, we will not be able to maintain anything to our satisfaction over long times.

- **And the reason that this process does not stop for a living being is that during a life, a living being makes more than enough causes for this process to start all over.**
- Some of these causes are good and will lead to “good existences”, where there is relatively more happiness, but more often the causes are bad (due to ignorance of this basic fact), and will lead to existences where the suffering is very great.
- Thus we can see how *dukkha* (suffering) arises due to the transient nature of *sankata*, which in turn leads to the conclusion that one is truly helpless (*anatta*) in this *sansaric* process. If one truly understands this fact, that itself leads to the *Sotāpanna magga* stage of *Nibbāna* (one of the “*atta purisa puggala*”).

9. These five stages in between the arising and perishing can be seen in anything or any event, and in order to understand the ever-changing nature of everything, we need to see this in everything/every action around us.

- Let us take an example of eating a meal. Sitting down to eat is the *udayangama* stage; then with a few bites one is into the *attangama* stage, and then one really starts enjoying the meal in

the *asvada* stage. But then the hunger goes away, and one starts feeling full and getting tired of eating; this is the *adeenava* stage. Finally, one stops eating and that is *nissarana*.

- One develops an urge to listen to music, and start the playing device (*uadayangama*); one starts listening (*asthangama*), and starts to enjoy the music (*asvada*). But after a while, the satisfaction wares away, and the enjoyment kind of fades away (*adeenava*), and finally one had enough of it and stops (*nissarana*).
- The more we start seeing this we can get rid of the two extremes of “something is there with a sense of long-lasting” and “there is nothing there at all”. Things have a transient existence; they exist for finite durations as long as the underlying causes are there, changing every moment.

10. This above analysis was given by the Buddha to help us realize that there are no “permanent” or “existing” entities “in this world”. But we cannot say “nothing exists” either. The Buddha rejected both “exists” and ‘does not exist’ extremes, just as he rejected “self” and ‘no-self’ extremes. **Things and living beings exist, not as enduring entities but as ever-changing entities; AND the suffering is real.**

- People who do not comprehend the message of the Buddha try to come up with “sophisticated looking” statements about the existence, suffering, and *Nibbāna*.
- The message of the Buddha was profound (because it had never been known), but simple once explained: There is no reason to be arrogant because we are born human (may be with lot of wealth) or to be depressed if one is born to poverty; this life lasts only a fleeting moment in the *sansaric* scale. We should try to end this suffering-filled rebirth process without delay, because no one knows when the death comes, and in the next life we could be in a REALLY helpless existence.

11. There are CAUSES for *sankata* to arise: that knowledge embedded in the “*udayavaya ñāṇa*”; see, “[Udayavaya Ñāṇa – Introduction](#)”.

- The relevant basics for that are discussed in the series of posts starting with “[Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya \(Mind Plane\)](#)”,
- Also, related, “[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#)”,

6.4 Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna

The first stage of Nibbāna — the Sotāpanna stage — is also called the Stream Enterer in English and Sōvān in Sinhala.

- [The Sotāpanna Stage](#)
- [Why a Sotāpanna is Better off than any King, Emperor, or a Billionaire](#)
- [Myths about the Sotāpanna Stage](#)
- [Sotāpanna Magga Anugami and a Sotāpanna](#)
- [Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala](#)
- [Sammā Ditthi – Realization, Not Memorization](#)
- [How Does One Know whether the Sotāpanna Stage is Reached?](#)
- [Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana](#)
 - [Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana – Introduction](#)
 - [How Perceived Pleasures \(Assāda\) lead to Dukkha](#)
 - [Kāma Guna, Kāma, Kāma Rāga, Kāmaccanda](#)
 - [Vēdanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)
 - [Feelings: Sukha, Dukha, Somanassa, and Domanassa](#)
 - [What is “Kāma”? It is not Just Sex](#)
 - [Kāma Āsvada Start with Phassa Paccaya Vedana or Samphassa Ja Vedana](#)
- [Sakkaya Ditthi is Personality \(Me\) View?](#)
- [Akusala Citta – How Does a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)
- [What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)
- [Udayavaya Ñāna](#)
 - [Udayavaya Ñāna – Introduction](#)
 - [Nibbatti Lakkhana in Udayavaya Ñāna](#)
 - [Āhāra \(Food\) in Udayavaya Ñāna](#)
 - [Udayavaya Ñāna – Importance of the Cittaja Kaya](#)

Topics belonging to other section:

- [Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotapanna Stage](#) – (in the “[Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)” section).
- [12. Key Factors to be Considered when “Meditating” for the Sotapanna Stage](#) (in the “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” section).

Also, see the following posts in the Abhidhamma section for more details (these could be helpful even if you have not studied Abhidhamma):

- [Why do People Enjoy Immoral Deeds? – Ditthi is Key](#)
- [Key to Sotapanna Stage – Ditthi and Vicikicca](#)

6.4.1 The Sotāpanna Stage

It is imperative to learn the correct Dhamma from an *Ariya* in order to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage (one of the four requirements); see, “[Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala](#)”. We will

discuss a simile for attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage in that regard. The *Sabbasava Sutta* is briefly discussed to show the importance of removing wrong views first.

A Simile for Sammā Ditṭhi (attaining the Sotāpanna Stage)

1. Suppose a man lives in an area that is normally full of sense pleasures. But there are occasional flooding, droughts, and also Earthquakes. When such calamities occur, he gets distraught and thus his mind is not at ease most of the time.

- Yet, he has accumulated some wealth and in the back of his mind, he believes that “everything will be OK” in the long run.

2. Then one day, an old friend (who has been on travel for many years) comes back and tells him that the reason he left was to find a better place to live. The friend says that he did some research and found out that this land is inherently unstable and within several years is going to be destroyed in an Earthquake.

- Furthermore, he says that he found a place that is very prosperous and that there are no worries about flooding, drought, or Earthquakes there. But it is a long journey to that place.

3. The man tells the friend that he had heard about such wonderful places from other people before. He had followed them at times, but everytime came back after trekking for some time, because he could not see any benefit. Plus, he says, “how do I know what you say is right? I know that everything is not perfect here, but can you show evidence for your theory that there is going to be a big Earthquake? Also, how can I believe you that this place you found is so wonderful?”

4. The friend shows him all the evidence that he had gathered why this area is unsuitable for living in the long run. He also shows evidence about the prosperity of the new place and also describes to him the travel path.

- The evidence is compelling, and the man decides to follow the advice of the friend and see where that leads to. This is analogous to becoming a *Sotāpanna magga anugami*.

5. The man spends a lot of time reading about and contemplating on all the evidence that he received. Then he begins to realize that what the friend is saying is true. He decides to take an exploratory trip on that path, and makes suitable preparations as suggested by the friend.

- Once in a while he wonders whether all these preparations are going to be a waste of time. But as he keeps on assessing the evidence he becomes more and more convinced that he needs to take that trip.

6. He starts on the trip and is encouraged by seeing some “landmarks” that the friend told him about. Even though once in a while he thinks about all the “pleasures” he could have had if he stayed home, these “landmarks” give him encouragement to go further and then reaches one of the four “major stopovers” that the friend told about.

- Once he gets to that destination, he becomes totally convinced about the truth of his friend’s conclusions. Now there is no going back for him. This is the *Sotāpanna* stage.

7. Thus it is very important to first find out all about what the goal is (*Nibbāna*), correct instructions to get there (the Path), and most of all why it is not profitable or wise to stay home (i.e., to stay in “this world”). The last one is the critical one to comprehend first, because unless one sees the dangers of the status quo, one will not be motivated to take action (to start on the Path).

8. Realizing the inherent instability of “this world” is the true understanding of the Three Characteristics: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. He realizes that there is no point in the current struggle in trying to make permanent peace in a place (“this world”) which is inherently not set up to provide that relief (see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”). And that *Nibbāna* means ultimate, permanent peace of mind. Just this realization leads to the “point-of-no-return”, the *Sotāpanna* stage.

9. One day the Buddha asked Ven. Sariputta to clarify what is meant by “*sota*” and “*Sotāpanna*”. Ven. Sariputta said, “*sota*” is the Noble Eightfold Path, and a “*Sotāpanna*” is one who follows the Path correctly. To follow the Path, first one needs to have a map or the layout of “our existence”.

- What we observe with our limited sense faculties is only a very small part of a much more complex world; we are beginning to see a bit more of that wider world with the technological advances made by science. But it is still an insignificant fraction of the whole picture.
- The whole picture is very complex, but we do not need to learn all about it (but if one has time one could learn *Abhidhamma* and learn minute details). The Buddha has condensed the very essence of the existence in this wider world by its Three Characteristics (*Tilakkhana*): *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. When one comprehends those characteristics, one can “see” what lies ahead, and what to do about it.
- **Thus one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage with just *Sammā Diṭṭhi*, which is the correct view of the wider world.**

10. After attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage, he KNOWS what needs to be done and HOW it is to be done. Then he diligently follows the Path and attains the next three stages, culminating in *Nibbāna*.

The Way to the Sotāpanna Stage

The key here is that without knowing about the Buddha’s world view (31 realms of existence and the suffering in the four lower realms, see “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”), one does not comprehend the “*sansaric* suffering”; **most suffering is incurred when one is born in any of the four lowest realms**. This is important because it is possible that (especially young and wealthy people) may not experience that much physical and mental suffering in this life. And in order to have faith in the Buddha’s world view, one needs to spend some time examining the evidence for it.

1. When one clearly sees why it is not fruitful to stay in “this world” of 31 realms, he/she has understood the true nature, the three characteristics *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, of “this world”.

- This clear vision or *Sammā Diṭṭhi* itself (the realization that there is nothing “substantial” to be had by staying in “this world”), makes the mind to determine that there is no point in doing immoral things (those that cause rebirth in the four lower realms).

2. We strive to gain or own “things” in this world because we perceive that we can achieve happiness eventually; this is *sakkāya diṭṭhi* or *sathkāya diṭṭhi* (both “*sakka*” and “*sath*” mean “good” or fruitful, and “*kāya*” means “*kriya*” or actions; *diṭṭhi* means wrong view: thus both these mean our wrong view that our actions to acquire “things” or to “seek happiness” are good and fruitful).

- When one truly understands *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, this wrong view is removed. One realizes that nothing we do can lead to permanent happiness “in this world”.

3. Furthermore, for one who has clearly seen *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, the mind does not allow serious wrong doings (*vici + ki+ichcha* = liking for wrong actions or things) that could lead to birth in the lower four realms; there is no doubt regarding the “world vision” that he/she realized. Thus *vicikicca*, or the liking for unfruitful and harmful actions, is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage.

4. It is clear that all that is needed to be done is to contemplate on the true nature of the world. It is done by purifying the mind, and cannot be done just by following certain rituals, such as just obeying precepts on certain days.

- Thus the idea of “*silabbata paramasa*” or “Nibbana can be attained by following rituals” is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage. One realizes what the Buddha said by “*sanvarattena seelan*”, i.e., “*sila*” or moral behavior is achieved by constraint of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, at ALL TIMES, not by “observing precepts” for a day or even several days.

5. For one who has become “*dassanena sampanno*” (one with true and clear vision), the mindset changes not by following formal procedures, but by understanding the futility of breaking any precepts or wrong doings. Even if one does a wrong act, the mistake is realized and one takes care to avoid it.

6. Please keep in mind that this is not to discourage people from observing precepts as a formality. This is a good thing to do for those who are starting on the Path, and also a good habit to create in children. It is customary in Buddhist countries for whole families to go the temple and observe “*panca sila*” or “*attangika sila*” on *Poya* (Full Moon) days.

Key Points from the Sabbasava Sutta

The key to attaining *Nibbāna* is to remove the *Āsavas* (residue from fermentation of bad thoughts/habits over many *sansaric* births). This will be discussed under the key Dhamma Concepts.

In the *Sabbasava Sutta*, the Buddha listed seven steps to remove the *āsavas* and to purify the mind thus paving the way to *Nibbāna*. These seven steps are listed below:

1. **Removal by clear vision** (“*dassanena pahathabba*”, where *dassana* is vision and *pahathabba* is removal). This is clear understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
2. **Removal by the restrained use of the senses** (“*sanvarena pahathabba*”, where *sanvara* is disciplined use of the sense faculties: not to over-indulge in the senses).
3. **Removal by good and frequent associations** (“*patisevana pahathabba*”, where *sevana* is association: for example, with good friends and good deeds).
4. **Removal by tolerance and patience** (“*adhivasana pahathabba*”). For example, even if one is tempted to steal because one is hungry, one should contemplate the consequences and bear the hunger.
5. **Removal by staying clear of “bad influences and environments”** (“*parivajjana pahathabba*”). One needs to avoid bad friends, bad locations for living (due to floods, bad neighbors, etc), avoiding unsuitable times to go out, etc.
6. **Removal by getting rid of certain things** (“*vinodana pahathabba*”). One needs to get rid of bad thoughts that come to mind, for example, for excessive sense pleasure, hate, etc.
7. **Removal by meditation** (“*bhāvanā pahathabba*”). When one has the clear vision in #1, it becomes apparent what to contemplate on.

The clear vision is the first on the list. Just like one should not undertake a journey without learning about the destination, the path, and the reason for the journey, one needs to start getting rid of *āsavas* by first having a clear vision of the Buddha’s world view (see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”) and understanding what these *āsavas* are and how they arise. More on this topic will be discussed in the “[Key Dhamma Concepts](#)” section.

- There are four *āsavas*: *kamasava* (craving for sense pleasures), *ditthasava* (cravings due to wrong views), *bhavasava* (craving for existence), and *avijjasava* (cravings due to ignorance).

The *ditthasava* is removed by the *Sotāpanna* through clear vision. Once one understood the true nature of “this world” by contemplating on *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, one would not commit any immoral acts to gain anything in “this world”; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta - Wrong Interpretations](#)”. This alone saves one from future rebirths in the lower four realms.

- A *Sotāpanna* still has the other three *āsavas* left. Those are removed mainly by the meditation on the *Saptha Bojjanga*.

The other five steps listed in the *Sabbasava Sutta*, as one can clearly see, are common sense things to do. They need to be followed at any stage. Actually those steps can be used by anyone to enhance the quality of life and to remove any bad habits that they have, for example, alcohol or drug use, to eating too much. A clear vision of why those are bad, and why they need to be stopped is an important step.

- The *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* covers all seven steps in a somewhat different fashion. The *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā* (not the breath meditation version) plays a major role here.

Next, “[How to Cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path Starting with Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”,

6.4.2 Why a Sotāpanna is Better off than any King, Emperor, or a Billionaire

Attaining the first stage of *Nibbāna* (*Sotāpanna* stage) will remove suffering in the *apāyas* forever, which could be more than billions or even trillions of years. This is not an exaggeration since we

have been in this rebirth process from an untraceable beginning; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)“. Thus any achievement in this life of 100 years is no match.

- Most people think that Buddha Dhamma is a pessimistic “religion”. It is neither a religion nor is pessimistic. Let us discuss these two issues a bit first.

1. Buddha Dhamma describes the true nature of “this world”, which is far more complex than most people think.

- A religion makes a promise that if one abides by its tenets/doctrine and lives this life accordingly, then one will be rewarded accordingly. In most religions, one is promised birth in heaven for eternity if this is kept.
- But a basic tenet in Buddha Dhamma is that this life of about 100 years is just a blip compared to the countless lives one has had in the past. **Even if we live a perfect life during these 100 years, that does not guarantee one anything about the future lives**, because we may have done *kamma* in PREVIOUS LIVES that could give rebirth in even the lowest four realms, the *apāyas*, including the *niraya* (hell).
- **The only way to GUARANTEE that one will NOT be reborn in the *apāyas* is to negate the causes (*lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*) that could give opportunities for all such bad *kamma vipāka* to come to fruition.** And that is possible only via attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage. Even though attaining the *Arahant* stage of *Nibbāna* via complete removal of *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* (and thus the ten *sanyojana* or fetters) will do that too, attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage does not require all that. It just requires one to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* to the extent that only three *sanyojana* (fetters) are removed.
- Removal of three (or ten) *sanyojana* cannot be achieved via following set rules/precepts. **One needs to purify one’s mind so that the true nature (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) of this complex world of 31 realms is understood.** That is why Buddha Dhamma is not a religion per standard definition.
- On the other hand, if one just wants to take what is helpful to lead to moral life and use Buddha Dhamma as a religion, there is nothing wrong with that. That would be much better than living an immoral life. As one proceeds, it is possible that Dhamma will become more clear, and that may provide the incentive to “dig deeper”.

2. Now to the second issue: Because the Buddha emphasized the “suffering in this world”, many think that Buddha Dhamma is pessimistic. The Buddha did not say that this current life is necessarily filled with suffering (even though it has more suffering than people realize); rather, most suffering is encountered in the lowest four realms of the 31 realms. **Thus, this reality of suffering is to be understood in the context of this wider world view.** The Buddha just discovered this true nature of the (more complex) world.

- Furthermore, he showed how to be free from this inevitable suffering in future births, and to attain permanent happiness, *Nibbāna*.

3. Please re-read the above material on those two key points. It is important to look at this “wider world view” when trying to make an assessment of what we should strive for in this life. This analysis leads to a whole new perspective if there is evidence to believe the “wider world view” of the Buddha with repeated rebirths in 31 realms that include the four *apāyas* with unimaginable suffering.

- Does it make sense to spend 60 years of a 80-100 year life to accumulate wealth and fame, if one is to lose most of one’s sensory enjoyments over the last few decades (and possibly have a major disease or memory loss)?
- Does it make sense to accrue unimaginable suffering in the *apāyas* in future births by committing any of the *dasa akusala* (ten defilements) to make money, get a promotion, to live in a big house, get a prestigious position, etc (for less than 100 years)?
- The realities of old age, disease, and death hold true for a king, emperor, a billionaire, or a famous film star just the same as for an average person. At the old age, all these achievements

actually become a mental burden because one constantly thinks about the “good old days” and become depressed of not being able to enjoy the sensory pleasures just because the whole sensory system is breaking down.

- Here is a video that summarizes what I tried to explain the above paragraph :

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Aging Stars of the Golden Age](#)

4. And this predicament is true for ANY being in ANY realm, unless at least the Sotāpanna stage is attained. A *deva* or a *brahma* could enjoy millions of years of pleasurable lives, but WILL end up in the *apāyas* at some point in the future unless at least the Sotāpanna stage of *Nibbāna* is attained. There are several incidents mentioned in the *Tipitaka* where the Buddha emphasized how important is the Sotāpanna stage compared to any existence in the 31 realms:

- One time the Buddha was crossing a paddy field with 500 *bhikkhus* where many cattle were grazing, and smiled. A Buddha (or an *Arahant*) does not smile frequently, so Ven. Ananda asked the Buddha why he smiled. The Buddha said, “each one of these has been the king of the *devas* at some in the past”. Ven. Ananda asked why that is a reason to smile. Then the Buddha said, “All these 500 *bhikkhus*, who are *Sotapannas* or above, will never be born an animal. That is why I smiled”.
- Another time the Buddha and Ven. Ananda were walking and saw a piglet by the roadside, and the Buddha again smiled. Asked why, he said, “This piglet had been a princess in a life way back; she cultivated *anariya jhānas*, attained the highest (eighth) *jhāna* and had *abhiññā* powers. She was born in the highest *brahma* world, but now she is just an animal. On the other hand, those who have attained the Sotāpanna stage in my *sāsana* will never be born in the *apāyas*”.

5. Many people do not believe in rebirth. But having a belief is not going to help if it is a wrong view. Considering the possible dire consequences IF one gets this world view wrong, it makes a lot of sense to spend some time and to critically examine the evidence for rebirth in particular (see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”), and the wider world view of the 31 realms in general (see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”).

6. The *niyata micca diṭṭhi* (established wrong views) is one of the stronger ones of the *dasa akusala* that could lead to birth in the *apāyas*; the key word there is “*niyata*“, or “established”, i.e., one firmly believes, for example, that there is no rebirth process. One could avoid this by at least having an open mind, and NOT rule out those possibilities. Even a Sotāpanna may not be truly convinced of some aspects of the wider world view (but not rebirth): for example, he/she may not have any strong conviction on the existence of *deva* worlds, or may not even think about such matters.

- Another point to consider is how the standard world views have changed over time since the Buddha revealed his Dhamma about a very complex world with no discernible beginning. Philosophers since that time (Socrates was a contemporary of the Buddha) put forth many world views that have been discarded one by one: [WebLink: WIKI: Astronomy and cosmology](#)
- Within the past 100 years, the Buddha’s world view has gained much support from science and that pace is accelerating with the new string theories as well as quantum mechanics. With all this impressive advances science has made, it cannot account for 96% of the mass of the universe; see, [WebLink: NASA: Dark Energy, Dark Matter](#) and [WebLink: WIKI: Dark matter](#). This is because there is so much that we cannot “see” with our eyes or even with the current scientific instruments; see, “[Consciousness Dependence on Number of Dimensions](#)”.
- There are good reasons to believe that more of these currently hidden aspects of the universe will be revealed in the future by science. Just imagine that even a hundred years ago, scientists believed that the universe had only a few galaxies and that it was stable. Now we know that there are billions of galaxies in our universe, that there could be numerous universes, and all those universes are not stable, i.e., they are born and will perish in the future.
- Until recently, the humans also had the wrong impression that the Earth is at a special place in the universe. But now we know that it is an insignificant “speck of dust” in a vast universe; see the video in “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.

7. Please spend some quiet time contemplating on these issues. These posts are not for reading pleasure; these are issues that have far more serious consequences than making a billion dollars. Some of my friends tell me that I should “tone down” the content because many people are turned off by the “realities of the world”.

But my goal is not to have a huge readership. Rather, if I can convey the true message of the Buddha for even a few people I would have accomplished my goal. There is ONLY ONE set of natural laws and we cannot alter them, just like we cannot alter the laws of motion: If a car is headed to a brick wall, the car needs to be stopped or the consequences will not be good. Let me give a few examples of how the Buddha assessed this situation:

- Some *brahmins* complained to the Buddha that he was not spending enough time on debating them, but would spend a lot of time with even a few of his disciples. The Buddha asked this question: “Suppose a farmer has three paddy fields: one is extremely productive, another is OK but requires considerably more time to yield a good harvest, and the third field is of such a poor condition it is impossible to get any harvest. Which field would the farmer put his efforts on? He will first take care of the most productive field, totally disregard the third field, and spend whatever extra time he has on the second field. It is the same way with me. I want to help those who are interested and capable of learning my Dhamma. Debating with those who have closed minds is a waste of time”.
- One day the Buddha and Ven. Ananda walked for many miles to a village to deliver a discourse. Everybody gathered and the Buddha was sitting there for a couple of hours without starting the discourse. Finally, a farmer who had lost a cow and was out in the forest looking for it found the cow, went home, took a bath, ate, and came hurrying to the event. The Buddha started the discourse right after he came in. When they were walking back after the discourse, Ven. Ananda asked the Buddha why he kept everyone waiting until that one farmer came in. The Buddha said, “Ananda, I walked all this way to give the discourse because of that farmer. I saw that he was capable of grasping the Dhamma, and he did attain the *Sotāpanna* stage”.

8. The Buddha said, “This Dhamma is different from anything the world has ever seen”. And that is true. It takes time to grasp the complexity of this world, much of which is hidden from us (and only a Buddha is capable of finding them; see, “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)”). There is no need to rush and embrace everything; one needs to spend time contemplating on the validity of Buddha Dhamma.

- There are many introductory but critical posts in the section, “[Moral Living and Fundamentals](#)”. **That section is actually more about the basic concepts of Buddha Dhamma.** I would encourage even those who are familiar with “Buddhism” to peruse that section, because without the correct basics one cannot grasp more advanced concepts. **And I am certain that 90% of “Buddhists” are not even aware of some of these basic concepts.** Please comment on anything at this site and don’t hesitate to point out any incorrect concepts.

9. We can, in a way, compare this situation with the situation a parent faces with a teenager. The teenager wants to go out and have a good time with the friends. But the parent says, “do not just think about the immediate pleasures. If you do not study well and get good grades at school, you will not have a good job when you grow up”.

- It is the same here. We are trapped in a “rat race” to just keep up with day-to-day pleasures and activities. The Buddha’s message is that there is a much longer time frame to think about.
- This life is just a drop of water compared to the huge ocean that is the *sansaric* journey of rebirths. It is imperative to take some time and contemplate on the “bigger picture”. We may not get another chance of a human birth for millions or billions of years; this is NOT an exaggeration.

10. But the best part of the Buddha’s message, which has been lost for over thousand years, is that the *nirāmisa sukha* is better than any sense pleasures. We are under the illusion that sense pleasures are to be pursued. If one can taste the happiness from staying away from sense pleasures, one will

NEVER value the sense pleasures. Those who have experienced even *anariya jhānic* experiences, will have some idea of such *niramisa sukha*.

- It is a feeling of huge release more than a pleasure in the sense of consuming a tasty food, for example. And it is not temporary, especially if one can get to the *Sotāpanna* stage. Then that “base level” of relief is never lost, even in future births.
- When one starts on the Path by comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, the sense of peacefulness, the release from stresses, is clearly felt; and that gives an incentive to stay on the Path even before attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- The best part is the realization that one will never be born in the *apāyas*. Any king, emperor, billionaire, is not assured of that; on the contrary, the efforts to attain such temporary status may CAUSE one be born in the *apāyas*, if one engaged in *dasa akusala* to attain them.
- As Carl Sagan pointed out in the video in “[The Pale Blue Dot.....](#)“, it is worth while to contemplate “where are all those kings and emperors who gained fame through the suffering of so many people?”. They are likely to be in the *apāyas* suffering for millions of years to come.

Next, “[Myths about the Sotāpanna Stage](#)“,

6.4.3 Myths about the Sotāpanna Stage

Revised September 7, 2016; #6 revised on December 2, 2016

There are many myths and misconceptions on who a *Sotāpanna* is, and what needs to be done to become a *Sotāpanna*. Here we discuss some of these misconceptions.

1. When I was growing up in Sri Lanka, I was under the impression that a *Sotāpanna* could fly through the air, and an *Arahant* could vanish and reappear as he/she wished. These were the “mythical” status assigned to *Sotapannas* and *Arahants*. I guess that is due to the fact that such attainments are perceived these days to be impossible to be attained on the one hand and also a clear idea of what those attainments mean has been lost.

- One is unlikely to identify a *Sotāpanna* or even an *Arahant* if one has even been associating with that person.
- It is true that the attainment of even the *Sotāpanna* stage is not a trivial matter. And one cannot expect it to be trivial; see, “[Why a Sotāpanna is Better off than any King, Emperor, or a Billionaire](#)“.

2. The attainment of supernormal powers such as flying through the air or to vanish and reappear is possible even by developing *anariya jhānas*. Most of such attainments are lost at death (even though the ability to get them back will be easier if one is reborn human again).

- Attainment of various stages of *Nibbāna* are accomplished by cleansing one’s mind and it has nothing to do with developing supernormal powers. Even though it will be much easier for an *Arahant* or a *Sotāpanna* to develop such powers, by the time one attains such levels of purity of the mind they are not enamored anymore with such supernormal powers. Most of the *Arahants* who had supernormal powers at the time of the Buddha had developed those before encountering Buddha Dhamma. For example, Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana were *vedic brahmins* who had developed all *anariya jhānas* and already possessed such powers before they met the Buddha.

3. Various stages of *Nibbāna* are attained by systematically removing the 12 types of *akusala citta* (immoral thoughts) or, put it in a different way, by removing the ten *samyojana*. There are other ways to describe those conditions too; see, “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)“.

- The *Sotāpanna* stage is reached via removing the four *lōbha citta* that are based on *micca diṭṭhi* (wrong vision), and the *mōha citta* of *vicikicca*. It is important to note that the remaining 7 *akusala citta* including the two *dōsa-mūla citta* are still with a *Sotāpanna*.

- The four *lōbha cittas* that a *Sotāpanna* removes are the ones that are responsible for *vyāpāda*, which is the strong version of anger that makes one eligible for rebirth in the *apāyas*; see, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)”. The two *dōsa-mūla citta*, which gives rise to milder versions of anger, are removed only at the *Anāgāmī* stage.
- Furthermore, *kāma rāga* (craving for sensual pleasures) is included in the other four *lōbha-mūla citta* that are “*diṭṭhi vippayutta*” or “not associated with wrong views”. Thus craving for sensual pleasures is also removed only at the *Anāgāmī* stage.
- Therefore, attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage — while not trivial — is not as hard as many people think if one has a *tihetuke uppatti*. However, it is not possible to determine who has *tihetuka* or *dvihetuka patisandhi*; most people belong to those two categories. One with *dvihetuka patisandhi* cannot attain *magga phala* or *Ariya jhāna* in this life, but still can make progress towards *Nibbāna*; see, “[Patisandhi Citta – How the Next Life is Determined According to Gathi](#)”.
- On the other hand, many people are focused on trying to get rid of the perception of “self”. That is not something that can be forced; it just HAPPENS at the *Arahant* stage. It is not possible to make that perception go away before that.

4. Turning to another myth, NO ONE ELSE can discern what *magga phala* one has attained: *Sotāpanna* or a higher stage of *Nibbāna*. Only a Buddha has that capability. Let me give an example to illustrate this point:

- One time, Ven. Sariputta was giving instructions to a *bhikkhu*. The Buddha came along and told Ven. Sariputta that the *bhikkhu* had already attained the *Arahantship* and thus there is no need to give instructions to him. It turned out that the *bhikkhu* in question did not say anything to Ven. Sariputta out of respect for him.
- Now, Ven. Sariputta is only second to the Buddha in this *Buddha Sāsana*. He and Ven. Moggallāna were the two chief disciples: Ven. Sariputta was second in knowledge to the Buddha and Ven. Moggallāna was second in psychic powers to the Buddha.
- Thus, if Ven. Sariputta was not able to discern whether that *bhikkhu* was an *Arahant*, it is NOT possible for anyone living today to determine the stage of *Nibbāna* (*Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī*, *Arahant*) of any other person.
- One could be of any race or even religion and still be a *jāti Sotāpanna* (and, even that person may not be aware of it). If one had attained the *Sotāpanna* stage in previous life, he could in principle, be born anywhere in human or *deva* realms. Buddha Dhamma describes nature’s laws; it applies to everyone the same way.
- Those people who attained various stages of *Nibbāna* during the early years had different religious beliefs. They sat down to listen to the Buddha and by the time the discourse was over, they had attained various stages of *Nibbāna*. Some people came to debate the Buddha and left as *Sotāpannas*. One does not need to formally become a “Buddhist” to realize the true nature of “this world”.

5. This is why one has to be very careful when dealing with other humans, and not to offend anyone intentionally. It is very important to have at least some knowledge of the different weights of *kamma*; see, “[How to Evaluate Different Weights of Kamma](#)”.

- Some people worry about inadvertently killing insects while cleaning the house, but do not think twice about saying a lie or a hurtful thing to a human. That is getting things backwards.
- The severity of the *kamma* depends on the “level of the being” that it is directed at. It is EXTREMELY difficult to get a human life; thus a human life could be millions of times worth compared to any animal life. A *Sotāpanna* is at a more than thousand-fold higher level compared to a normal human, and the subsequent levels are even higher.
- There is no being in the 31 realms that is at a higher level compared to an *Arahant*. That is why killing an *Arahant* is a *Anantariya pāpa kamma*, i.e., it will bring extremely bad *vipāka* in the

very next life. And it is not possible to say whether a given person is an *Arahant* by looking at that person, or even associating with him/her for a short time.

6. How does one discern whether one has attained, say, the *Sotāpanna* stage?

- A *Sotāpanna* does not attain *Ariya jhānas* coincident with the *phala* moment. There one's "lineage" (*gotra*) is changed from a normal human to a *Sotāpanna* at the *gotrabu citta*. A similar *citta vithi* runs in attaining a *jhāna*, but in a *jhāna* one's lineage is changed only to a *jhānic* state at the *gotrabu* moment.
- However, if one who just became a *Sotāpanna* had developed any *anariya jhāna* previously, then that *jhāna* could be easily converted to an *Ariya jhāna* with some practice. Unlike an *anariya jhāna*, an *Ariya jhāna* cannot be broken even if one forcefully tries to generate a sensual/hateful thought. Thus, for someone who has had *jhānic* experiences this may be a clue.
- Also, if one can get into the fourth *Ariya jhāna*, that means one is at least a *Sotāpanna*; probably an *Anāgāmi*.
- Another way is to contemplate whether one is capable of doing any acts that could destine oneself to the *apāyas* (the four lowest realms). If one has ingrained characteristics or habits (*gathi*) of an animal, then it is likely that person will be born animal of that character. If one has extreme hate, and is capable of plotting to bring harm to other people, then that person may be destined to the *niraya*. If one does not have any of such extreme greed, hate, and ignorance, then one may be free of the *apāyas*, i.e., one is likely to be a *Sotāpanna*.
- However, unless one is subjected to extreme pressures, it may not be possible to discern whether one has removed such "*apayagami gathi*". It is easier to live a moral life when one has enough resources and when nothing unexpected happens. But there are instances when perfectly "moral people" commit murders in a moment of rage.
- The *Sotāpanna* stage is attained purely via attaining *Sammā Ditṭhi*, and removing 5 of the 12 possible *akusala cittas*: 4 *lōbha cittas* associated with *micca ditṭhi* and the *vicikicca citta* that arises out of ignorance of the true nature of "this world". All these 5 *citta* are removed via just comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* to a certain extent; see, "[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Cittas](#)".
- Thus if one has any ESTABLISHED (*niyata*) wrong views (see, "[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)"), then it is unlikely that one is a *Sotāpanna*. Attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage is not possible until one sees the "unfruitful nature" of existence anywhere in the 31 realms; and that is not possible if one has **ruled out** rebirth or the existence of other realms; see, "[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)".
- Also see, "[How Does One Know whether the Sotāpanna Stage is Reached?](#)" for more details.

7. Many people believe it is necessary to meditate a lot to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage. While it is beneficial to meditate, one can in principle be a *Sotāpanna* without doing any FORMAL meditation. I have given some examples from the time of the Buddha in #4 above; however, such cases are rare these days.

- There are basically two steps to get rid of *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* or to attain *Nibbāna*: "*Dassanena pahathabba*" (removal by vision or the "ability to see") comes first; that is what is necessary to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- However, in order to accomplish "*Dassanena pahathabba*" or "to see clearly", one needs to realize what the Buddha meant by "suffering", which comes in two types. This is described in detail — starting with the first type of suffering that can be eliminated in THIS LIFE — in the "[Living Dhamma](#)" section.
- Various stages of *Nibbāna* are attained as *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* are removed in stages. One attains the *Sotāpanna* stage via "*dassanena pahathabba*" i.e., one removes those 5 *akusala cittas* associated with "wrong views" via discerning the true nature of "this world of 31 realms", i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

- Then, a *Sotāpanna* can remove the remaining 7 *akusala citta* in three stages via meditation, i.e., “*bhavanaya pahathabba*” and attain the higher stages *Nibbāna*.
- Of course, it is good to meditate before the *Sotāpanna* stage; it will be beneficial to calm the mind and to contemplate on *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. But the “*bhāvanā*” or meditation that is needed for the *Sotāpanna* stage cannot be restricted to formal meditation because moral conduct or “*sila*” sets the necessary environment for the mind to “clearly see” by reducing *pancanivarana*; see, “[Living Dhamma](#)”.

Next, “[Why a Sotāpanna is better off than any King, Emperor, or a Billionaire](#)”,

6.4.4 Sotāpanna Magga Anugami and a Sotāpanna

Revised July 27, 2017; January 15, 2018

Here we discuss the difference between a *Sotāpanna* and one who is striving for the *Sotāpanna* stage and is on the right path (a *Sotāpanna Anugami*).

1. The word *sangha* is used nowadays to refer to the *bhikkhus*. Yet *sangha* is “*san*” + “*gha*”, or those who have either gotten rid or are successfully getting rid of “*san*”, and by this definition, one does not have to be a *bhikkhu* to belong to the *sangha*; see, “[What is “San”?](#)”.

In the salutation to the *sangha*, they are referred to as “*atta purisa puggala*” (“*atta*” is eight, “*purisa*” here does not mean male, but with higher virtues, and “*puggala*” means person) or a person with higher virtues. Thus there are eight types of people belonging to the *sangha*. Who are the eight?

- There are four who have fulfilled the conditions for the four stages of *Nibbāna*: *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi*, and *Arahant*. They are said to be in the *magga* stage for respective stage. And there are four who have received the fruits (*phala*).
- **A special case of *kamma* and *kamma vipāka* happens for these Noble *kamma*: once “what needs to be done” is fulfilled, the *vipāka* follow in the very next *citta* within a billionth of a second.** Thus when one gets into the *Sotāpanna magga* stage, for example, one receives the *Sotāpanna phala* in the very next *citta*, and thus one becomes a *Sotāpanna* virtually at the same time.
- However, when one starts grasping the *Tilakkhana* (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*), one becomes a *Sotāpanna Anugami* (one on the way to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage), and thus one becomes free of the *apāyas*. In later commentaries, they are also called “*Chula Sotāpanna*” or a “junior *Sotāpanna*”.

2. Thus it is clear that “*atta purisa puggala*” consist of the eight *Ariyas* (Noble Persons): *Sotāpanna Anugami*, *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmi Anugami*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi Anugami*, *Anāgāmi*, *Arahant Anugami*, and *Arahant*.

- The types of *āsavas* eliminated at each stage is discussed at, “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)”.
- How *lōbha, dōsa, mōha*, and also the ten fetters (*sanyojana*) are removed at each stage is discussed at, “[Relinquishing Defilements via Three Rounds and Four Stages](#)”.

3. A *Sotāpanna* is someone who has seen *Nibbāna*, not the full *Nibbāna*, but a glimpse of it. One becomes a *Sotāpanna* when one removes *avijjā* (ignorance) about the true status of affairs in “this world of 31 realms”; with that understanding his/her mind is purified to an extent that will not allow him/her to do an immoral act that could lead to a birth in the four lower worlds (*apāyas*); not only that, one will also not “latch onto” a *kamma vipāka* resulting from such a strong immoral act in the past. Thus a *Sotāpanna* will never be born in an *apāya* again.

The other three stages have similar “demarcation thresholds”.

- A *Sakadāgāmi* will be never again be born in the human or lower four realms. He/she can still be born in the *deva* worlds (i.e., still could be born in *kāma loka*), but those *devas* do not have “flesh and blood” bodies that lead to physical discomforts and diseases. In the *deva lokas*, beings only have fine bodies that are not subject to old age and diseases.

- An *Anāgāmi* has overcome any desire to be born anywhere in the *kāmaloka*, i.e., the 11 lowest realms. He/she has no *kāma rāga* (desire for sense pleasures) or *paṭigha* (hate).
- An *Arahant* has no desire to be born anywhere in the 31 realms, and thus will never be reborn “in this world”. He/she has attained full *Nibbāna*, full release.

4. One has to first hear the true message of the Buddha before one can fulfill the conditions to attain the *Sotāpanna magga* stage, i.e., he/she needs to go beyond the mundane eightfold path; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.

- One on the way to become a *Sotāpanna* is called *Sotāpanna magga anugāmi* (or *Sotāpanna magga anugāmika*). In particular, a *Sotāpanna magga anugāmi* has heard about *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* (*Tilakkhana*), or the “true nature of this world with 31 realms” from a Noble person.
- This is why association with a “*kalana mitta*” or “*Kalyana Mitra*” (basically a “Noble friend”, i.e., an *Ariya*) is a pre-condition for attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage; see, “[Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala](#)”.
- The eight Noble Persons (*Ariyas*) are listed in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Pathama Puggala Sutta \(AN 8.59\)](#)” and in “[WebLink: suttacentral: Puggala Sutta \(AN 9.9\)](#)”. In both *suttas*, *Sotāpanna Anugami* is listed as “*sotāpatti phala sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*”. In the same way, one on the way to become an *Anāgāmi* is listed as “*anāgāmi phala sacchikiriyāya paṭipanno*”, etc. In the second *sutta*, a normal human is listed as “*puthujjano*”.

5. Let us take a simile to see what this “demarcation” between *Sotāpanna magga anugami* and a *Sotāpanna*.

- Suppose it is known that a very valuable treasure is at the peak of a mountain, but it is not generally known where that mountain is. This is pretty much the status of Buddha Dhamma today; most people know that it is valuable, but they do not know what the right version is, and there are a lot of different versions.
- As the Buddha said in his first sermon, “my Dhamma has not been known to the world before”. Thus one needs a Buddha or a true disciple of Buddha to show him/her what *Nibbāna* is and how to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage. This is an important and a critical point.
- Suppose someone gets directions to the correct mountain with the treasure; then he/she knows exactly which country to go to and which geographic location in that country the mountain is located. **This person is like one who is on the path to become a *Sotāpanna*, i.e., a *Sotāpanna magga anugami*.** He/she knows exactly where to go and has a detailed map. And he/she has to get it from a Buddha or a true disciple of a Buddha who has at least seen the mountain (a *Sotāpanna*), if not been to the top (an *Arahant*).
- Now he/she makes the journey to country and to the region where the mountain is located. On the way to there he/she can verify the landmarks given by the “friend” (an *Ariya*). Similarly, a *Sotāpanna magga anugami* spends time contemplating the newly learned concepts of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, *paticca samuppāda*, etc.
- Thus with confidence the person gets closer and closer to the mountain and some point starts seeing the mountain. **At that point, the person has “crossed the boundary” to become a *Sotāpanna*.** He/she has seen a glimpse of *Nibbāna* for the first time. Now he/she can complete the journey without any help, even if the map is lost (i.e., even in a future life).

6. Going back to the simile of the mountain with treasure, different versions of “Buddhism” correspond to identifying the mountain to be in different geographic locations, all over the world. So different groups of people are making trips over long distances and with much effort to get to different mountains. All these are in remote places and the journey is hard.

- Obviously, a lot of people are wasting their time and effort by targeting a “wrong mountain”. So, how does one know which “mountain” or version to pick? This is why it takes some effort to weed out the wrong/inconsistent versions Buddha Dhamma; see, “[Why is it Critical to Find the Pure Buddha Dhamma?](#)”.

7. In technical terms, one gets to the *Sotāpanna magga/phala* when one grasps *anicca, dukkha, anatta* (the three characteristics of this world or *Tilakkhana*) to a minimum level, where one begins to realize that there is nothing in “this world” that can provide meaningful and unconditioned happiness.

- When one comprehends *anicca, dukkha, anatta* to the extent that one can “see” this concept, **one is said to have the “*anulōma ñāṇa*”**; here, “*anu*” means “through the understanding of *Tilakkhana*”, “*lo*” means “craving for worldly things”, and “*ma*” means “removal”, and thus “*anuloma*” means “removal of craving for worldly things to some extent via the comprehension of *Tilakkhana*”.
- We came across “*anu*” also in “*anupassana*”; see, “[4. What do all these Different Meditation Techniques Mean?](#)”. In a previous post I also discussed how “*lōbha*” comes from “*lo*” + “*bha*” or “immersed in craving for worldly things”.
- Thus it makes a huge difference if one incorrectly interprets *anicca* as “impermanence” and *anatta* as “no-self”; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.

8. Let us discuss one way to contemplate on *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, using an example from this life itself; it is easier to see it in lower four realms (*apāyas*) that are filled with suffering.

- When one is young it seems like one can get anything one wants by working hard. But we all have seen how our parents or grandparents or even famous people spent the old age suffering with various ailments, and finally dying helplessly.
- They may have “accomplished” many things. But they spent their whole lives working hard to achieve those and then they have to leave it all behind.
- One may have a beautiful body when young, but for how long? We can see how those old movie stars age now. Some of them commit suicide because it is depressing to remember the “good old days” when one had all the attention in the world, but now it all seem to be slipping away.
- This is *anicca* and *anatta*: no matter how much we try, whatever we gain in this world last only a short time (in the *sansaric* time scale), and one becomes helpless in the long run. At some point one realizes this and becomes distraught.

9. When one comprehends the true nature of this world, such sad thoughts do not arise. People who follow the Path, and even those who have wisdom from previous lives (*gathi*) can take things in stride and realize that “all things in this world” undergo this arising/destruction process without an exception. That understanding itself leads to an ease of mind. A stronger version of this “ease of mind” is the “*anuloma shanthi*” that one experiences when attaining the “*anuloma ñāṇa*” (pronounced “*anulōma gnana*”).

- The key to attaining the “*anuloma ñāṇa*” is to realize the fleeting nature of anything in this world, i.e., a *sankata*. This is discussed in the next post.

10. With the “*anuloma ñāṇa*”, one realizes that getting rid of suffering permanently is not possible anywhere in the 31 realms. The next step is to realize that it can be realized only by attaining *Nibbāna*; by this time one has felt the *niramisa sukha* and thus one needs to cultivate, “*etan santan etan paneetan...*”, the release one has felt, and the value of *Nibbāna*. Then one truly embarks on the Noble Eightfold Path and is said to get to “*sammatta niyama*”, and to *Sotāpanna phala*.

- Thus it is critical to understand that *Nibbāna* is “*nicca, sukha, atta*”, after realizing that this world is “*anicca, dukkha, anatta*”. A *Sotāpanna* has understood both.
- Anything in this world (except *nama gotta*) is a *sankata*, i.e., **it comes into being due to causes**, stays in existence for a time, and then inevitably is destroyed. This arising of a *sankata* is called “*udaya*” in Pāli, and the destruction is called “*vaya*”; thus “*udayavaya ñāṇa*” is the knowledge about that process.
- *Nibbāna* is the only *asankata*; **it is attained by removing all causes**.

- Many people have even attained the *Arahanthood* without actually having heard about these terms like “*udayavaya*” or “*anuloma*”. Thus it is imperative to realize that just having read about these concepts does not get one anywhere. One needs to “see” the *Tilakkhana* or the unfruitfulness of craving for *sankata* (through *saṅkhāra*) by true meditation or contemplation.
- Thus a *Sotāpanna* has the *udayavaya* (sometimes called *udayabbaya*) *ñāṇa*. I will discuss that in a future post.

Next, “[Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala](#)“,

6.4.5 Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala

Revised March 22, 2016; Important revision on September 22, 2017.

1. In the *suttas*, especially the [WebLink: suttacentral: Dwitiya Sariputta Sutta \(Samyutta Nikāya 55.5\)](#) (which was a discussion between the Buddha and Ven. Sariputta), the Buddha has stated four requirements for someone to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna* are stated:

- Listening to Dhamma discourses (while reading is enough to get to *Sotāpanna Anugāmi* stage, listening is necessary to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, see #3 below).
- Association with “*Kalyana Mitra*” (basically a “Noble friend”, i.e., an *Ariya*).
- Act with *Yōniso manasikāra* (basic idea of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* and *paticca samuppāda*).
- *Dhammanudhamma patipadā* (following the Noble Path, which is beyond the mundane path; see, “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)“).

When someone starts fulfilling the above conditions one becomes a *Sotāpanna magga anugāmi* (or *Sotāpanna magga anugāmika*); see, “[Sotāpanna Magga Anugāmi and a Sotāpanna](#)“.

- During this process, one removes three of the ten *sanyōjana* (or *samyōjana* or fetters). The ten fetters are those that bind one to the cycle of rebirth; see, “[Relinquishing Defilements via Three Rounds and Four Stages](#)“.

2. First it is imperative to understand what was meant by the Buddha when he said, “my Dhamma has not been known to the world” (other than during the time of another Buddha). Most people follow what they deem to be “Buddhism”. In most cases, this is the version passed down from the previous generation or the version that one read about in a book. I strongly advise reading the following posts and spending some time thinking about this issue:

“[What is Buddha Dhamma?](#)“

“[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)” and the discussion at, “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)“.

- As discussed in those posts, one becomes a *Sotāpanna magga anugāmi* after making progress on the mundane (*lōkiya*) eightfold path. That is when one really embarks on the Noble Eightfold Path.
- As I tried to point out in many posts, when one is on the mundane path, one abstains from immoral deeds out of fear of bad outcomes. **But when one starts comprehending *Tilakkhana* (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*), one starts avoiding immoral deeds because one sees the futility of such deeds: What is the point in hurting others in order to acquire sense pleasures that in the end do not provide any lasting happiness?**

3. **September 22, 2017:** Previously, I had stated that one could learn about *Tilakkhana* by reading these days. That is still true and one could become a *Sotāpanna anugāmi* by reading.

- However, recently I came upon a *dēsanā* by the Waharaka Thero which stated that a *Sotāpanna anugāmi* attains the *Sotāpanna* stage only while listening to a *dēsanā* by an *Ariya* (Noble person, i.e., one with at least the *Sotāpanna* stage).
- Apparently, a *Sotadvāra citta vithi* of an *Ariya* (during a *dēsanā*) has the necessary *javana* power to act as a trigger. I am trying to find a *Tipitaka* reference, and I would appreciate

receiving it from anyone who has that information. I will edit this post to include that reference when I find it.

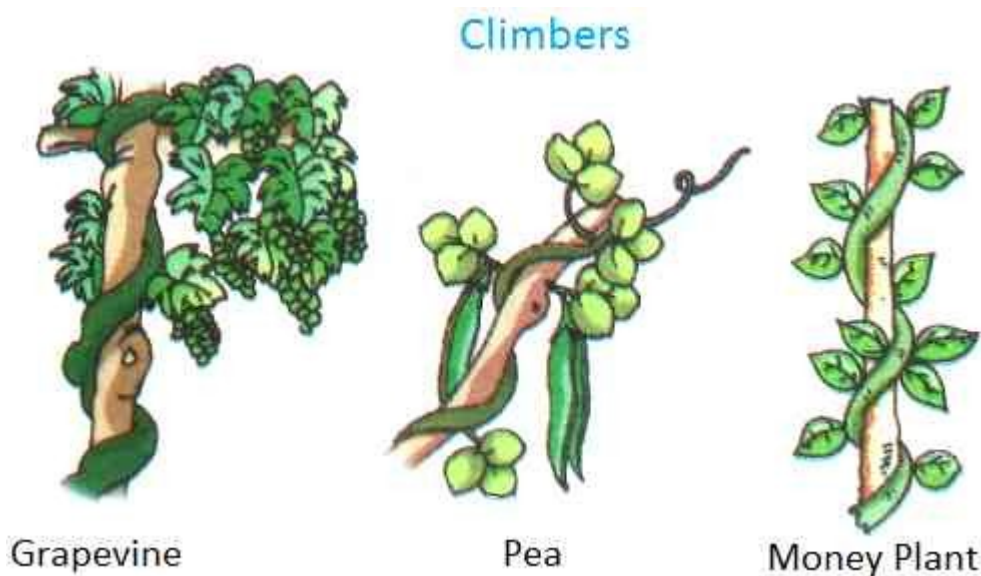
- However, Waharaka *Thero* has mentioned that listening to a recorded *dēsanā* should count, per his opinion.

4. When one contemplates about the above, one realizes that one first needs to find out WHY the Buddha said “this wider world of 31 realms” or “our existence (not only in this life but in the 31 realms)” is filled with suffering; what we perceive as sense pleasures keep us bound mostly to the *kāma loka* and very often to the four *apāyas*. That is the First Noble Truth.

- The Buddha also said that **if one really comprehends the First Noble Truth, then one will automatically comprehend the other three**. Thus it is the basic vision or the first inkling of “*Sammā Diṭṭhi*” that is most critical.
- One gets on the Noble Eightfold Path with a very rough idea about this vision, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. Now one is a *Sotāpanna Magga Anugāmi*. As one comprehends these basic characteristics of our world **while listening to a *desana* by an *Ariya***, one will get to the *Sotāpanna* stage by attaining the *Sotāpanna magga* and *Sotāpanna phala* virtually simultaneously (in the same *citta vithi*); see, “[Sotāpanna Magga Anugami and a Sotāpanna](#)”.
- When one gets to *Sotāpanna* stage, one comprehends the First Noble Truth, and thus all four Noble Truths to some extent; one has “seen” *Nibbāna*. Now, one does not need any help to get to *Nibbāna* (to “fully experience it”), because one sees the whole Path, and knows how to get there.

5. With that in mind, it is easier to grasp why the Buddha emphasized the importance of those four conditions. **First, since Buddha’s message is unique, the true message has to come from a Buddha or someone “who can be traced back to the Buddha”**. The following is an analogy given in the *suttas*.

6. The Buddha can be compared to a great tree, standing tall and firm. All other humans can be compared to “climbers” that need a tree to “climb up”. Such climbers do not have strong enough stems so they cannot stand erect on their own. They need the support of another plant or a stick to stand. Those plants are called climbers. Climbers have tendrils to hold the supporting plant or stick. Following are some examples.



- Let us think of a forest where there are numerous climbers but only one tree and no other supports such as sticks. The only way for a climber to “climb up”, and thus not destined to its demise on the ground, is to get hold of that tree.

- Only those climbers that are close to the tree can get hold of it and climb. But now others can get hold of them and climb too. Thus, as more and more climbers start climbing, the “access area” grows.
- Therefore, if we can find a climber that is climbing up, we can ALWAYS trace it back to the original tree. **In the same way, an Ariya or a Noble person (a Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmī, Anāgāmī, or Arahant) can ALWAYS be traced back in lineage to the Buddha.**
- Because the message is unique, it has to come from the Buddha himself or someone who can be traced back to the Buddha. One cannot attain even the Sotāpanna stage without hearing the true message; if one has attained it, then he/she knows the message. Someone aspiring to become an Ariya MUST hear the message from another Ariya; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.

7. **Now we can see the logic of the first two conditions.** One has to learn Dhamma (the correct version), AND thus it has to come from an Ariya (Noble) person.

- The phrase “*Kalyāṇa Mitra*” is actually Sanskrit; in Pāli it is “*kalana mittā*” (pronounced “miththā”), for “a friend who helps to remove defilements” (“*kāla*” is for “dirty” or “blackish” as in “dirty water” and “*na*” is for “removing”).
- Many people take “*Kalyāṇa Mitra*” to be a “good friend” in the conventional sense. But it is being more than just “good”; *one needs to know the message of the Buddha in order to convey it to others.*
- And of course one has listen to this correct message or read about it, and then GRASP it.

8. One time Ven. Ananda, who was the personal assistant to the Buddha for many years at the end, approached the Buddha and said, “*Bhante* (Venerable Sir), I have been thinking that the future of the Buddha *Sāsana* (doctrine) must be dependent at least 50% on the *kalana mittās*”.

- **The Buddha replied, “Ananda, do not say that. The Buddha *Sāsana* will be dependent 100% on the *kalana miththās*”.** Now we can see why.
- If that lineage is broken, then that is the end of the Buddha *Sāsana*. The words may still be there, but there will be no one to explain the true meanings of the key words, including *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- However, the Buddha has stated that his Buddha *Sāsana* will be there for 5000 years, so we are only half-way through. Within that time there would be periods of “famine” where *Ariyas* will be few in numbers. But there will also be times when Buddha *Sāsana* will shine with numerous *Ariyas* in the world.
- The key here is once-in-a-while, a “*jāti Sotāpanna*” is born who has fulfilled his *pāramitas* to bring back the message of the Buddha, like Venerable Mahinda did about 600 years after the Buddha. They are not only *jāti Sotāpannas*, but have the “*patisambhidā ñāṇa*” to figure out the true meanings of key Pāli words, such as *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and *paticca samuppāda*.
- I believe this is such a time. It is still too early to discuss the details, but there many *Ariyas* in Sri Lanka and even in other countries, thanks in large part to Waharaka Thero: “[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thēro](#)”.
- And there are many “climbers” all over the world who have already started “climbing up” with the help of that established “climber”. I am encouraged by emails from many who are reading this site, on the joy they feel in comprehending the “pure Dhamma”.

9. **The third condition is to “act with *yōniso manasikāra*”.** Here “*yōni*” means “origin”, “*so*” means “oneself”, and “*manasikāra*” here means “with this in mind”.

- In the *Vibhaṅgapakarana* (Book 2, p. 234), *ayōniso manasikāra* has been described as “perceiving *anicca* as *nicca*, *dukkha* as *sukha*, and *anatta* as *atta*”. Thus acting with *yōniso manasikāra* requires comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- To state that very briefly, if one believes that there are things in this world that can provide happiness in the long run, then one is acting with *ayōniso manasikāra*. To act with *yōniso*

manasikāra is to see the unfruitfulness of these struggles to attain something that is not attainable, and thus to work diligently towards at least the *Sotāpanna* stage because this life is so short.

- But a more direct can be seen when one can see the “origins of various births or *jathi*” (i.e., rebirths). “*Yoni*” in Pāli and Sinhala means the birth canal; thus *yōniso manasikāra* means the “understanding of origins”: One with *yōniso manasikāra* knows the causes that lead to births in various realms, i.e., “*bhava*” and “*jathi*” are according to one’s *gathi*; see, “[Gathi to Bhava to Jathi – Ours to Control](#)”.
- With that understanding, one will be motivated to cultivate “*gathi*” to be able to make good decisions, either automatically, or at least by contemplating on it. In other words, one will be able to make better judgements about morality, and to act with *paññā* (wisdom).
- Even more importantly, one will be able to automatically avoid those deeds that can lead to rebirth in the *apāyas*.
- Thus “*yōniso manasikāra*” has a more deeper meaning than just “appropriate attention”. In particular, a *Sotāpanna* comprehends “*pati + icca*” leads to “*sama+uppada*”; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda](#)”.

10. When one is meeting the first three conditions, one is set to fulfill the fourth, “*dhammanudhamma patipadā*”. Here “*dhammanudhamma*” is “*dhamma + anu + Dhamma*” where “*anu*” means “according to”. The second “*Dhamma*” is the Buddha Dhamma; the first is the “*dhamma*” that one follows. “*Patipadā*” is “procedure”. Thus it means following the procedures laid out in the true and pure Buddha Dhamma.

- When one learns the true Dhamma from an *Ariya* (Noble) person, one begins to comprehend:
 - (i). what is really meant by suffering (*dukkha*),
 - (ii). that suffering arises due to the *anicca* nature, and thus
 - (iii). one does not have any refuge anywhere in the 31 realms (*anatta*).
- Then one realizes that in order to seek the only refuge (*atta*) of *Nibbāna*, one needs to act with *yōniso manasikāra* and follow the “*dhammanudhamma patipadā*”.
- In the series of four [WebLink: suttacentral: Anudhamma Sutta \(Samyutta Nikāya\)](#) (use the arrows at the bottom to navigate to next 3 *suttas*), *dhammanudhamma patipadā* is described as living with a clear vision of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* nature of the *pancakkhandha* (*rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*).

11. As pointed out in “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma](#)”, *dhammanudhamma patipadā* or the “Dhamma Path” starts with mundane *sammā diṭṭhi*, or how to sort out immoral from moral. Then one gets rid of the *mōha* (deep delusion) that covers the mind, and the mind will be ready to grasp *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

- When a “moral mind” is exposed to the true Dhamma, the second stage or the *Sotāpanna magga/phala* results at some point.

12. Let us take an example to illustrate this concept.

One does not intentionally cut oneself, because one can see the dangers in that. In the same way, moral people stay away from immoral acts because they can see the consequences of such immoral acts.

- But there are people who enjoy cutting themselves up (even though rare); they can be compared to those who commit highly immoral acts because of their *mōha*.
- We can thus see why it is comparatively easy to get on the mundane eightfold path.

13. The *lokottara* eightfold Path is harder to see. This is why a Buddha or someone who has learned the message of the Buddha is needed to convey that.

- If there is a party and people are enjoying good food and drinks that laced with poison. The poison is deadly but it takes time to digest and bring out its bad effects. So everyone is enjoying the food and having a good time.
- And then someone comes and says, “this food is laced with poison, the more delicious the food is more poisonous it is”.
- Most people just ignore that message. They cannot comprehend why this person is “trying to ruin the party”. But a few people ask for more information and try to find out whether what this person is saying is true or not.
- Like that it is hard for most people to take the “long term perspective” and investigate whether it is really true that “it is not only fruitless, but also dangerous” to be attached to the sense pleasures of this world.

14. It is hard in the beginning to grasp this message. Even when one starts seeing the message (as one gets to the *Sotāpanna magga anugāmi* stage), initially it is hard to instill discipline. A good analogy here is it is harder to resist scratching an itch, even though one may realize that it is not a good idea because one will then make that a wound. The tendency is to “enjoy the scratching”. In the same way, even when one starts seeing the dangers of the rebirth process, initially it is still hard to resist the sense pleasures.

- The solution is to “put some ointment in the itch to calm it down”; in the same way, one can calm down the strong urges by reading/listening and contemplating Dhamma (thinking about consequences).
- And one should initially focus on the “big itches”, and not try to take care of all “minor itches”. As one gets relief from the “major itches” one can see the benefits and is motivated to follow the same procedure for other “itches” as well. Similarly, following the Path (especially the *Sotāpanna magga anugāmi* stage) is a gradual process. One needs to tackle the “bigger offenses” or get rid of the “worst habits (*gathi*)” first.

Of course, one needs to have removed *miccā diṭṭhi* in order to even become a *Sotāpanna Anugāmi*: “[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.

Next, “[How Does One Know whether the Sotāpanna Stage is Reached?](#)”,

6.4.6 **Sammā Diṭṭhi – Realization, Not Memorization**

May 13, 2018

1. *Sammā Diṭṭhi* (or comprehension of *Tilakkhana*) is the necessary first step to start on the Noble Eightfold Path. If one has gained *Sammā Diṭṭhi* (i.e., if one is a *Sotāpanna/Sotāpanna Anugāmi*), one would have understood the Four Noble Truths and can “see” (not with eyes, but with *paññā*) the path to *Nibbāna*:

- One has “seen” that there would be much suffering in future lives (especially in the *apāyās*), if one gets too much attached to worldly things by assuming that they can provide lasting happiness (this is the comprehension of the *anicca* nature).
- The reason for such future suffering is immoral actions, speech, and conscious thinking (*kāya* and *vaci sankhāra* done with ignorance or *avijjā*). This is why the first step in *Paticca Samuppāda* is “*avijjā paccayā sankhāra*”.
- That one can stop future suffering from arising by controlling one’s *kāya* and *vaci sankhāra* or to stay away from *dasa akusala*.
- And the way or path to accomplish that is the Noble Eightfold Path.

Those are the Four Noble Truths.

2. We can analyze it in a different way by first discussing what is meant by *Nibbāna* and also *Sotāpanna*.

- The *Nibbāna Sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya* clearly describes *Nibbāna* as, “..*ragakkhayo, dosakkhayo, mohakkhayo, idan vuccathi Nibbānanthi*“. That means *Nibbāna* is attained via removing greed, hate/anger, and ignorance from one’s mind.
- However, the step-by-step procedure to attain *Nibbāna* involves four steps, which remove four types of *āsavas* or **mental fermentations** that contaminate a mind; see, “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)“: *Ditthāsava, kāmāsava, bhavāsava, and avijjāsava*.

3. It is important to understand what *āsavas* or **mental fermentations** are, how they accumulate, and how they lead to grasping of a new *bhava* at the moment of death.

- Let us take an example. When one keeps doing immoral things based on greed (hurt others, steal, sexually misbehave, etc in order to satisfy that greed), then one’s mind accumulates “*āsavas* of greedy type”. “Mental fermentations” is a good translation for *āsava*; **it implies that the longer that one keeps them, they get more rotten.**
- Another way to say that is to say one is cultivating “greedy *gati*“.
- This can be compared to adding rotten things to a pool of water. Contamination gets worse with time. Still, the dirt may settle down at the bottom of the pool, and the water may look relatively clean.
- However, when the water is disturbed, say by stirring with a long stick, some contaminants will come to the surface; that is *anusaya*. How much comes to the surface (*anusaya*) depends on how hard the water is stirred, i.e., how strong the sense input is. Furthermore, if there is a lot of dirt there, even the slight stirring can bring dirt up to the surface.

4. **Āsavas or mental fermentations are like mud at the bottom of the pool.** When a mind has built up lot of *āsavas* accumulating deep inside, it is easier for them to come to the surface (i.e., for cravings to come to the mind) when one gets a corresponding sense input (seeing an attractive person, for example). This is called *anusaya*. So, how one responds in a given situation depends on those three parameters (*gati, āsava, anusaya*), which are inter-connected : “[Gathi \(Gati\), Anusaya, and Āsava](#)“.

- Removal of these four types of *āsavas* (which is the same as removing corresponding *gati*) leads to the removal of 7 types of *anusaya*: *diṭṭhi, vicikiccā, kāma rāga, patigha, bhava rāga, māna, avijjā*; see, “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)“.

5. **The most important of the four *āsavas* is the *ditthāsava*.** All other *āsavas* are influenced by the wrong views one has. When *ditthāsava* is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage, 99+% of all “mental junk” or “mental fermentations” are removed from the mind.

- **This is why the Buddha said that a *Sotāpanna* has removed an amount of defilements comparable to the soil in the whole Earth, and what is left in all three other types of *āsavas* can be compared to the amount of soil picked up by one’s thumb.**
- Therefore, the hardest part is to get a clear idea of what is meant by *Nibbāna*, and see why that necessarily means getting out of the rebirth process, that is filled with so much suffering in the *apāyās*. The Buddha said that any given living being spends most of the rebirth process in the *apāyās*.

6. Therefore, the first, and most important step towards attaining *Nibbāna* is to remove *ditthāsava*, at which time the 2 types of *anusaya* and the 3 types of *samyojana* are also removed; see, “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)“:

- With the removal of *ditthāsava* leads to the removal of *diṭṭhi anusaya* and *vicikiccā anusaya*.
- Simultaneously, the 3 *samyojana* (*sakkāya diṭṭhi, vicikiccā, silabbata parāmāsa*) are also removed.
- We will discuss these in the next post.
- They are all removed by the “right vision” and that removal is called “*dassanēna pahātabbā*” or “removal via right vision”.

7. The hardest part to understand is what is meant by “right vision”. We have discussed at length at this website that it involves the comprehension of *Tilakkhana* (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*): That one cannot achieve long-lasting happiness by pursuing enticing things in this world, that one will be subjected to suffering in the long run if one does that, and therefore, such an approach will lead to one becoming helpless (especially when one is reborn in the *apāyās*).

- That is the basic “right vision” that must REGISTER in one’s mind. The truth of that needs to be accepted by the mind.
- Just reading about this, and memorizing it is not enough.

8. Let us take an example to illustrate this point. There are people who do not believe in rebirth. That is a “wrong *diṭṭhi*” or “wrong vision” according to the Buddha. But if one’s mind does not see that rebirth must be valid, just by reading about it is not going to change that impression in that mind.

- One should look at the evidence for rebirth with an open mind; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”. One should contemplate on the fact that nothing happens without causes, i.e., *kammā* will have *vipaka*. That in turn leads to the conclusion that rebirth must be valid.
- This is why getting rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi* MUST happen before one can comprehend *Tilakkhana* and become *Sotāpanna*. This was discussed by the Buddha in the “[Mahā Chattārisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)”.

9. One issue that I do not quite understand is there are some of those people who do not believe in rebirth, but want to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage and even the *Arahant* stage! They don’t realize the contradiction?

- By definition, one wants to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage in order to avoid births in the *apāyās*. So, if one does not believe in rebirth, why does one believe that it is possible to be born in the *apāyās*?
- We must also remember that even those of us who believe in rebirth, have been in this rebirth for a time which has no traceable beginning. Therefore, we must have also held such wrong views in the past. It is not easy to get rid of these 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi*.

10. In any case, we still need to have more clarification on what happens when one truly comprehends *Tilakkhana*.

- I think one good analogy is if one is wearing — say a blue-tinted glasses — all the time, then no matter how hard one tries, one WILL see the world see white objects as blue and other objects also distorted to appear with different colors.
- Removing a *diṭṭhi* (or wrong vision) is like taking off those tinted glasses. It happens when one’s mind comes to a certain stage of understanding. This is cultivating *paññā* (wisdom).
- The only way to remove those “tinted glasses” is to contemplate on the teachings of the Buddha, and also to engage in *puñña/kusala kammā* that provide the conditions for the mind to comprehend those teachings.

11. A key factor that most people disregard is how much of a difference it can make in one’s mindset when one stays away from *dasa akusala* and engages actively in *kusala/puñña kammā*. One’s mind becomes clear and sharp, one will be able to comprehend deeper concepts easily; see, “[Kusala and Akusala Kamma, Punna and Pāpa Kamma](#)”.

- Then one will be able to get to get rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi* and then make the transition to the Noble Path by starting to comprehend *Tilakkhana*; see, “[Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā to Paññā, sīla, Samādhi](#)”.
- Comprehending *Tilakkhana* is different than learning mundane subjects like geometry or even mathematics. It can be difficult or relatively easier depending on how much “preparations” (*dana, sīla, bhāvanā*) one has made in this life and also in previous lives; see, “[Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā](#)” and “[Kusala and Akusala Kamma, Punna and Pāpa Kamma](#)”.

12. As we discussed above, the key step in getting to the “right view” is for one’s mind to see the truth in the world view of the Buddha: **That our world is much more complex than what we experience with our senses. That there are more realms of existence, that suffering is worst in those *apāyās*, and that unless we get rid of “*apāyagāmi gati*” one can end up in the *apāyās*.**

- Those “*apāyagāmi gati*” are closely related to *ditthāsava*, which arise and accumulate due to ignorance of the Buddha’s world view or the real nature of the world (*Tilakkhana*).
- Furthermore, at the dying moment the mind can grasp such an *apāyagāmi* sense input (*arammana*).
- As we have discussed before, those things happen AUTOMATICALLY, based on one’s *gati* (*āsava*). That is the important point to understand. Unless one is a *Sotāpanna*, those possibilities cannot be ruled out.

13. Another related key issue is not how many bad *kammā beeja* one has accumulated (some of which accumulated in previous lives and we are not even aware of them). Rather what is important is whether one’s mind will grasp a *bhava* (*upādāna*) in a given realm. That depends only on the level of *paññā* (wisdom) that one has cultivated and THEREFORE what kind of *gati* one has removed.

- **It DOES NOT matter how many *kammā beeja* suitable to give rebirth in the *apāyās* are there. If one has removed “*apāyagāmi gati*” by cultivating *paññā* to the *Sotāpanna* stage, then one’s mind would not grasp such *bhava*.**
- If one’s mind has removed all *gati* that can lead to rebirth in any realm, then one’s mind would not be able to grasp any *bhava*, and thus one would attain *Parinibbāna* at the dying moment.
- For example, Angulimāla killed 999 people, but was able to attain the *Arahanthood* within a week or so. Those bad *kammā beeja* were still there, but his mind would not grasp (*upādāna*) them.

14. When one gets to *Sammā Ditthi* (i.e., when one becomes at least a *Sotāpanna Anugāmi*), one’s *gati* have changed permanently. Since the next birth is according to one’s *gati*, one will not be born into a family with *miccā ditthi*. This is how it is guaranteed that one will have only 7 more *bhava* left.

- One may grasp *Tilakkhana* by focusing on one of them. But that will lead to comprehension of all three, and even more characteristics like the *asubha* (unfruitful) nature. They are all inter-related.
- Of course, there are different levels of *Sammā Ditthi* and it will be completed only at the *Arahant* stage.

15. Finally, there is no need to worry about whether one has attained a certain stage of *Nibbāna*. One should concentrate on following the Path. The Buddha said that if one follows *Satipaṭṭhāna*, one would attain at the least *Anāgāmi* stage within seven years (some earlier), if one has a *tihetuka patisandhi*.

- If one does not have a *tihetuka patisandhi*, the effort will not go waste, but will help attain *Nibbāna* in a future life.
- He said that if a farmer plants seeds and takes good care of those plants, they will provide a good harvest. It is pointless to check each and every day to see whether the harvest is ready. It will happen in due time.

6.4.7 How Does One Know whether the Sotāpanna Stage is Reached?

Revised March 23, 2017; May 15, 2018

One basically realizes (with time) that one has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage, because it becomes clear to oneself that one has removed the characteristics (*gathi*) suitable to be born in the four lowest realms (*apāyās*).

1. The most precious thing sought by a *Bhauddhaya* (or a practicing Buddhist) is the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*; see, “[Why a Sotāpanna is better off than any King, Emperor, or a Billionaire](#)”.

- It is really the *Arahanthood* that is the ultimate goal, but when one has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage, *Arahanthood* is guaranteed to follow within 7 *bhava* (which can lead to many more than 7 births; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”).
- Thus it is important to know how to figure out whether one has attained that stage. As we discussed in another post, other than that person him/her self, only a Buddha can say whether a given person has attained *magga phala*; see, “[Myths about the Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.
- As we discussed in that post, even Ven. Sariputta (who is only second to the Buddha in Dhamma knowledge) could not do that even though some people today claim they know whether another person has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage (and make money doing that).

2. A *Sotāpanna* is one who has seen the way to *Nibbāna* (or a glimpse of *Nibbāna*). He/she still has more work to be do, but can see a glimpse of *Nibbāna* from far. The way to *Nibbāna* has become clear, and one does not need further guidance from anyone else.

- In another post I described how this can be compared to a traveller who, looking for certain mountain to get to the top of it, can finally see an outline of the mountain at a distance. He/she still has to travel to the base of the mountain and climb up. But most of the hard work was to find the location of that mountain and make it to the vicinity of the mountain; see, “[The Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.

3. In terms of Buddha Dhamma (where the ultimate goal is to stop the rebirth process anywhere in the 31 realms of this world), this corresponds to realizing that there is only suffering to be had by staying in this rebirth process. In particular, one has to comprehend the dangers of the rebirths in the lowest four realms.

- The ONLY WAY to come to this realization is to comprehend the true nature of this world of 31 realms: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. And that is NOT impermanence, suffering, and “no-self”; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.
- Rather it is to realize the unfruitfulness, suffering that one undergoes in striving to reach the mirage of happiness in this world of 31 realms, and thus convince oneself that one is truly helpless in this cycle of rebirths.
- Thus one realizes that the only fruitful thing to do is to work diligently to stop the suffering by “giving up the cravings for anything in this world” and strive to reach the only oasis in this desert of *samsāra* (cycle of rebirths) or *Nibbāna*. To release the mind from the burdens of the material world.

4. Once that idea sinks in, one’s attitude, behavior, and outlook on life will change forever.

- Let us take an example. Once a child really learns the way to add two numbers, there is no way that the child will ever forget that. There will be no second guessing. If an adult, even a teacher, tells that child that “two plus three is six”, there is no way that that child will ever agree to that.
- Attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage is like that. Deep down one will KNOW the dangers of the rebirth process, and that any type of happiness whether due to health, wealth, or fame that can be had in this life is of NO VALUE in the long term; he /she has truly understood the value of the Buddha Dhamma, and that **faith based on understanding** will prevail through future rebirths.
- This is not a “magical effect”. A living being is a continuous flow of *cittas* that started at an untraceable time in the past; see, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”. Thus what happens at the *Sotāpanna phala* moment is to change the “*gathi*” of that lifestream irrevocably. **One would have permanently shed any “*gathi*” suitable for a hell-being (with *gathi* of strong hate), a *peta* (strong greed), an *asura* (freeloading mentality), or an animal (a mixture all those; “*thirisan*” or all three “*san*”).**
- Thus one way to assess is to see for oneself how much of such “*gathi*” have changed over the time period that one has started working towards the *Sotāpanna* stage. One should be able to see **significant** changes.

5. Let us take another example. When we look in a mirror and see our reflection we KNOW that it is not another person or oneself, but merely a reflection. We don't need to think twice to realize that it is just a reflection.

- But have you seen a dog barking at its reflection in a mirror or in water? A dog thinks it is another dog, and barks at it. A dog would not know the reality of a reflection.
- In the same way, a normal human thinks very highly of the material wealth, and is willing to “do whatever it takes” to achieve such material things, titles, recognitions, etc.
- But a *Sotāpanna* instinctively knows the unfruitfulness of such struggles and desires. Even though he/she may still be tempted by material things (and thus may still likes to eat tasty food or engage in sexual activity, for example), he/she will not willingly go to extremes such as engaging in sexual misconduct having affairs outside the marriage or being excessively greedy.
- At the *Sotāpanna* stage *lōbha* is reduced to *kāma rāga* and *dōsa* (or *dvesha*) is reduced to *patigha*. In other words, greed or hate that was due to total covering of mind by the five hindrances would be reduced to less strong “attachments” and “dislikes”; see, “[Lobha, Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)”.
- The most important thing is that he/she will NEVER do any act that is immoral enough to lead to rebirth in the lowest four realms. Just like we all KNOW that our reflection in a mirror is not real and thus will not try to talk to that reflection, a *Sotāpanna* INSTINCTIVELY avoids doing anything that is highly immoral. He/she does not need to think about consequences of such acts, etc.

6. One could be a *Sotāpanna* (or even an *Arahant*) without being able to get to any *jhāna* beforehand; there were many people in the time of the Buddha who attained the *Arahanthood* upon listening to a *desanā*. *Upacara* and *anuloma samādhī* are sufficient for one to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage, even though one attains the first *Ariya jhāna* automatically at the *Arahanthood*. This is a technical detail that will be discussed in the *Abhidhamma* section.

- This becomes clear when we look at the possible rebirths of a *Sotāpanna*. A *Sotāpanna* could be reborn at or above the human realm.
- But if one has attained the first *anariya jhāna* then one WILL be born in the *Brahma* realm; thus a *Sotāpanna* with even any *anariya jhānas* WILL NOT be reborn human.
- A *Sotāpanna* can attain *Ariya jhānas* with practice.
- By the way, if one is not a *Sotāpanna* but has attained *anariya jhānas* and had not lost that *jhāna* at the time of death he/she will also be born in a *Brahma* realm. But the difference is that he/she is not free from rebirths in even the lowest four realms in the rebirths after that.
- What I described above is consistent with the extension of 89 *cittas* to 121. The “additional 40 *cittas*” come about when attaining the four stages of *Nibbāna* for people at various (*anariya*) *jhāna* levels; see, “[The 89 \(121\) Types of Citta](#)”. However, these are technical details that may not concern most people. I just wanted to show the consistency.

7. We also need to keep in mind that *Anariya jhānas* could have many of the “experience” as for *Ariya jhānas*. We need to keep in mind that *jhānas* are mental states of the *rupavacara* and *arupavacara* realms; they still belong to this world of 31 realms.

- We need to remember that there were *yogis* even before the Buddha who could attain *anariya jhānas* all the way to the eighth, and also cultivated powerful *abhiññā* powers. *Ceto vimutti* (or *ceto vimukthi*) with *anariya jhānas* is not the same as *magga phala* with *paññā vimutti*, where some *anusaya* (and *sanyojana*) are permanently removed.
- Of course, having even *anariya jhānas* makes it easier to do *vipassana* (comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) and attain *magga phala*.
- Here is a *desanā* from the Waharaka Thero describing the difference between *jhāna* and *magga phala* (it is in Sinhala, but I have extracted the essence in this post for others):

[WebLink: Waharaka Thero - Difference between Magga Phala and Jhāna in Sinhala](#)

- The only concrete way to be convinced of the *Sotāpanna* stage is to make sure that the three *sanyojana* of *sakkaya diṭṭhi*, *vicikicca*, and *silabbata paramasa* have been removed; see, “[Sakkaya Ditthi is Personality \(Me\) View?](#)”.

8. Even before reaching the *Sotāpanna* stage, one will notice changes in one’s behavior, attitude, and how one treats not only other humans but all living beings: all those will gradually change as one starts following the Path.

- But there will be significant changes after attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage. That change may not be noticeable in a day; it could take weeks or a few months to see some key differences in one’s lifestyle when one looks back.
- The tendency to get together with a lot of people will be reduced. One will be spending more and more time learning Dhamma and contemplating on concepts that are still not quite clear. One will start to enjoy finding more about the real nature of this world.
- One will also start noticing things that one had not noticed before. One will see clear instances of people’s “self-induced” suffering as they try to enjoy life by “partying harder”, but only getting exhausted in the process.

9. Then there is this question of whether it is appropriate or even allowed by the Buddha for someone to declare the *magga phala* one has attained.

- What is stated in the *Tipitaka* is that if one declares that one has certain *magga phala* falsely with the intention of gaining respect, money, publicity, etc., that is a very bad *kamma*. A conventional *bhikkhu* becomes “*pārājika*”, loses the priesthood automatically, and thus could be born in the *niraya* for doing that.
- Even though declaration of a *magga phala* is not encouraged, it is specifically stated that, “a person attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage may declare it if he/she wishes to do so” in particular for the benefit of others.
- Most people who attain *magga phala* do not declare it; it is no longer anything to boast about. It is the same with *jhānas*. Many people start off developing *jhānas* with the intention of attaining supermundane (*abhiññā*) powers, but once they attain them they have already seen the fruitlessness of even those powers.
- In particular, it is said that when one develops *abhiññā* powers to be able to see previous lives (this needs at least reaching the fourth *jhāna*), they become so disgusted with what they (and others) had gone through in previous lives, that they do not seek to look back much further.

10. Now let us discuss some episodes from the *Tipitaka* to clarify some of the points made above.

- Even though Visaka (one of the chief female lay disciples of the Buddha) had attained the *Sotāpanna* stage at a young age, she remained at that stage even without developing any *jhānas* or higher *magga phala* until death at age 120. The Buddha stated that she will be reborn many times (as I remember 11 times) as human.
- Similarly, the wealthy businessman Anathapindika, who built the very elegant and expensive monastery *Jetavanaramaya*, attained the *Sotāpanna* stage upon hearing his first *desanā* from the Buddha. He died and was reborn in the Tusita realm (one of the six *deva* worlds). Since those *deva* worlds also belong to the *kāma loka*, it is clear that he never attained an *Ariya jhāna*.
- Mahanama was a wealthy person who was related to Prince Siddhartha’s family. He was told by the Buddha that he had attained the *Sotāpanna* stage. However, when he was engaging in his business activities he often got frustrated and angry with his servants and often yelled at them. After such an episode of outburst, he would think, “if I am still able to become angry like this, I must not have attained the *Sotāpanna* stage yet”. So, he would go to see the Buddha, explained what happened and ask whether the Buddha was certain about the declaration. He still had doubts about his attainment of the *Sotāpanna* stage until the Buddha confirmed it for a third time; see, “[WebLink: suttacentral: Pathama Mahānāma Sutta \(SN 55.21\)](#)”.

- The key is that there is a difference between hate (*dvesha*) and getting angry (*patigha*); *patigha* is removed only at the *Anāgāmī* stage.
- Then there was the Sarakani *brahmin*, who also belonged to a “high caste”. He used to consume alcohol and get drunk on a regular basis. His relatives, who were *vedic brahmins*, disowned him from their lot, saying that he was unworthy to be one of them. He also attained the *Sotāpanna* stage, but could not give up the habit of drinking even after attaining that. When he died, Mahanama (mentioned above) asked the Buddha where Sarakani was reborn. The Buddha said Sarakani had attained the *Sotāpanna* stage and has been reborn a *deva*. Sarakani’s relatives laughed out loud contemptuously upon hearing this and declared, “if Sarakani was a *Sotāpanna*, then we all should be *Arahants*”. When Mahanama reported this back to the Buddha, the Buddha said those ignorant *brahmins* would just go by outward appearances. **This is described in the *Sarakani sutta* (several descriptions of the *sutta* can be found by doing a Google search).**
- Of course that episode does not imply that one could keep doing immoral activities and still attain the *Sotāpanna* stage. What we need to understand is that drinking alcohol by itself is not one of the *dasa akusala* (ten defilements), but heavy consumption could lead to it. Sarakani probably continued with his long time habit to some extent, but was unlikely to have “got drunk”. **Only strong greed (*lōbha*) is removed by a *Sotāpanna*; *kāma rāga* or attachment to sense pleasures is removed only at the *Anāgāmī* stage.**
- In the *Mahanama sutta* (delivered to Mahanama mentioned above), the Buddha described the *sila* (moral conduct) of a *Sotāpanna*: “*panatipata pativirato hoti, adinnādāna pativirato hoti, kamesu miccacara pativirato hoti, musāvāda pativirato hoti, surameraya majjapama dattana pativirato hoti*”. It is important to realize the deep meanings of “five precepts”; see, “[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#)”.
- In the above “*pativiratō hōti*” does not mean “will not” but rather “will not do with liking”. After all, a *Sotāpanna* (unless had attained *Ariya jhānas*) is not yet released from the 6 realms of the *kāma loka*, only from the lowest four realms.

11. Some people try to remove the sense of “me” or sense of “self” to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage, but that is removed only at the *Arahant* stage.

- As long as one is bound to the 31 realms, there is a “life stream” with certain “*gathi*” that gives a sense of “self”. **These “*gathi*” are removed in stages, starting with “*gathi*” suitable for rebirth in the *apāyas* as discussed in #4 above.** Even an *Anāgāmī* has a sense of “self” left, even though most of his/her attachments have been removed. One cannot pass a college exam without having graduated from high school.
- One has to advance systematically through stages. These are discussed in “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)” and “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)”.
- As long as one is bound to the 31 realms or “this material world”, it is not correct to say there is a “self” or there is “no-self”; they are both wrong and extreme views. The incorrect interpretation of *anatta* as “no-self” has been a huge obstacle to attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”.
- Any meditation with the wrong concepts of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* “will not grow”. One should be able to “feel” one’s meditation “grow” if one is doing correct types of meditation; see, “[13. Kammattana \(Recitations\) for the Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.

12. Finally, since only a Buddha could discern whether another person has attained *magga phala*, we have many instances of people declaring their attainments by themselves when that declaration helped a noble purpose.

- In the *Tipitaka* it is stated that all those who participated in the first four Buddhist Councils (*Dhamma Sangayana*) were *Arahants*. Even the very first *Sangayana* was held after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha. Thus all those many thousands of *Arahants* who attended those four *Sangayana* must have declared the *Arahantship* by themselves.

- It is stated that Ven. Ananda attained the *Arahantship* just the night before the first *Sangayana*. It is also stated that he came to the Council by air (with *abhiññā* powers) just to dispel any doubts from the minds of the other *Arahants* of his attainment.
- There are only a relatively few instances of *Arahants* or even the Buddha performing such supernormal acts. It was important to remove any doubts of others about the *Arahantship* of Ven. Ananda because of the key role he played at the First *Sangayana*.

Also see, “[Difference Between Jhāna and Stages of Nibbāna](#)”.

Next, “[Akusala Citta – How Does a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)”,

6.4.8 Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana

October 1, 2017

- [Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana – Introduction](#)
- [How Perceived Pleasures \(Assāda\) lead to Dukkha](#)
- [Kāma Guna, Kāma, Kāma Rāga, Kāmaccanda](#)
- [Vēdanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)
- [Feelings: Sukha, Dukha, Somanassa, and Domanassa](#)
- [What is “Kāma”? It is not Just Sex](#)
- [Kāma Āsvada Start with Phassa Paccaya Vedana or Samphassa Ja Vedana](#)

6.4.8.1 Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana – Introduction

November 1, 2017

1. This subsection replaces the old subsection, “Āsvāda (Mind-Made Pleasures), Ādeenava [ādīnava] (Bad Outcomes), Nissarana (Relinquish)”. I had used Sinhala terms in that series, without realizing it. Also, I have basically re-written some of the posts — including the Introduction — to have a logical flow.

- Furthermore, this subsection was under “*Paticca Samuppāda*”. I have now moved it to the “*Sotāpanna* Stage” where it is more appropriate.
- Here is the pronunciation of the three words: “[WebLink: Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana](#)”.

2. There are two main categories of “pleasures” that one experiences: (i) Those arising **due to *kamma vipāka***, and (ii) mind-made “pleasures” where we keep generating more *vacī saṅkhāra* (**thinking/talking to ourselves in our minds**) **recalling such an experience of the first kind**.

- For example, eating a piece of cake that was given by a friend generates a “good feeling” via the taste itself. That belongs to the first category. This is a *kamma vipāka* and there are “no new *kamma* generated”; see, “[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāna](#)”.
- But if we get “attached to that taste” and start thinking how good it is and crave for more, now we are generating *vacī saṅkhāra* (thinking/talking to ourselves about how good it is), then we are generating “new *kamma*”. This second type is called ***assāda*** (*āsvāda* in Sinhala). [*assāda* : [m.] taste; enjoyment; satisfaction.]

3. Therefore, ***assāda*** are basically “mind-made pleasures”, i.e., **only those in the second category**.

- Those of the first type arise AUTOMATICALLY due to sense inputs. They arise due to our *kamma vipāka/gathi* via *manō saṅkhāra*. *Manō saṅkhāra* **are defined** as *vēdanā, saññā* which arise in each and every *citta*.
- Based on those initial feelings, we are also likely to start generating *vacī saṅkhāra* (talking to ourselves, which is defined as *vitakka/vicāra*, then actual speech) and then even generate *kāya*

saṅkhāra (bodily actions). We HAVE CONTROL over *vacī* and *kāya saṅkhāra*, and that is the key to changing our defiled *gathi*.

- It is important to realize that *vacī saṅkhāra* are associated with speech and also “talking to ourselves”: [“Correct Meaning of Vaci Sankhara”](#).

4. There is nothing we can do to stop the first kind. For example, even an *Arahant* WILL feel the “tastiness” of sugar or a nice meal (or saltiness of salt or unpleasantness of some medications/foods, etc). But he/she WILL NOT become attached to that taste and crave for more.

- It is this **craving** and the subsequent conscious thinking about it (*vacī saṅkhāra*) that is called *assāda*, and that is what is bad because **that will extend the *samsāric* journey filled with suffering** as we will discuss in detail in this subsection.
- So, it is important to distinguish between AUTOMATIC generation of *manō saṅkhāra* (due to *vipāka*) and CONSCIOUS generation of *vacī* and *kāya saṅkhāra*: [“How Are Gati and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?”](#).

5. It is those CONSCIOUS generation of *vacī* and *kāya saṅkhāra* that contribute to future suffering (and also lead to *tāpa* or “heat” in the mind right now): [“Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities”](#).

- We “get addicted” to things like drugs, alcohol, and even over-eating by constantly thinking about them. We tend to recall past experiences and create in our minds such future experiences. This is generating *vacī saṅkhāra* (talking to ourselves). Then we start talking and doing things accordingly.
- This is how we strengthen “old bad habits” and even develop “new bad habits” or *gathi*. These habits or *gathi* could be *samsāric gathi* or new ones.
- There are many posts at the site on “*gathi*” (or habits/character). A simple explanation is at [“The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Asavas\)”](#), and there is a scientific explanation too: [“How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View”](#).
- This important concept of *gathi* is not discussed in current Theravāda literature, but it can explain many other concepts.

6. The more we enjoy such “mind-made pleasures” or *assāda*, the more established those associated *gathi* become. For example, a drug user/alcoholic is constantly thinking about either past experiences or the next, and is “building up” that *gathi*. Then it will become increasingly difficult to be drug/alcohol free.

- There is an even worse consequence too: that *gathi* becomes what one craves/thinks about and will become operational in *paticca samuppāda* via “*upādāna paccayā bhava*“. One can start a PS cycle just in the mind by thinking about getting drunk via initiating *vacī saṅkhāra* and generating “*bhava* or existence of a drunkard”. Then of course one will follow-up with actual drinking, which is done via *kāya saṅkhāra*. Soon enough one will end up an alcoholic.
- Therefore, *ādīnava* means “bad consequences or dangers”. In this case, what we perceive as “mental pleasures” (*assāda*) WILL have bad consequences both in this life **and in future lives**: In the above example, one is likely to be matched with an “alcoholic mother” in the next birth, and be born an alcoholic. [*ādīnava*: [m.] disadvantage. 過患 (danger), 患難 (trials and tribulations), 過失 (negligence), 危難 (distress).]

7. This is another way to express the First Noble Truth. What a normal person thinks as “*sōmanassa*” (“*suva*” + “*manasa*” or “good feelings in the mind”) CAN actually be the cause for FUTURE suffering, **but ONLY IF one gets attached, as discussed above.**

- Note the difference between consuming a tasty food and getting attached to it; seeing a nice picture and getting attached to it; hearing a nice music and getting attached to it, etc.
- **Getting to that point of being able to experience “taste things” without getting attached to them is not easy**; that is not attained fully until the *Anāgāmi* stage. It requires more learning and contemplation (*Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā*).

- However, to first get to the *Sotāpanna* stage, one needs at least to “see with wisdom” that *assāda* do lead to *ādīnava*; when that understanding sinks in, that will prevent one from committing *apāyagāmi kamma*, i.e., one’s mind will get rid of the coarse level of *assāda*. This subsection can help gain that “vision”.

8. When one fully understands the bad consequences (*ādīnava*) of these mind-made pleasures (*assāda*), that means one has understood the First Noble Truth as well as the causes for it, how to eliminate those causes, and the way to do it, i.e., all four Noble Truths.

- That leads to the cessation of *samsāric* journey and that is called *nissarana* (end of “*carana*” or journey (“nis” + “charana”, which rhymes as “nissarana”). [*nissaraṇa* : (nt.) 1. going out; departure; 2. escape.]
- But it is a step-by-step process that starts with the *Sotāpanna Anugāmi* stage and culminates at the *Arahant* stage.

9. It will take several posts to explain the above in detail. However, understanding them will help with *paticca samuppāda* cycles and also with *Satipaṭṭhāna/Ānāpāna bhāvanā*.

- The first few subsections of the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section has all the fundamentals that are needed to help understand this subsection. The posts mentioned in #3 and #4 are especially important ones.
- *Assāda* are related to *āsava* and *anusaya* too, as well as *gati* (or *gathi*) as we mentioned above. There are many posts at the site on those key concepts, and a couple were listed in #4 above. One could use the “Search” button on top right to locate relevant posts.
- In the following we will discuss a couple of more examples of *assāda*, *ādīnava* and *nissarana* in simple terms.

10. There are many things that we know which provide instant gratification, but are harmful in the long term. A good example is smoking. A smoker gets an enjoyment with smoking. Furthermore, he/she wants it to be repeated again and again, and that is *assāda*. But it has been proven without a doubt that long-term smoking causes many health problems including cancer.

- Even though smoking has decreased over the years, there are still many people who smoke. I had a older friend who smoked heavily; I asked him why he would keep doing it since he knew about the bad consequences. He said the habit had been ingrained and it was hard to break it. This was many years ago, and he died because of his bad habit. The last several years of life were spent in hospitals, with parts of his lungs removed piece-by-piece and eventually he was on oxygen most of the time.
- Of course he finally gave up smoking when he was about to be hospitalized. By the time he clearly saw the “*ādīnava*” (when he actually experienced the bad consequences), it was too late. The damage had been done.

11. However, his children clearly saw what he went through, and understood that smoking may provide temporary enjoyment (*assāda*), but is bound to bring about bad consequences (*ādīnava*). Thus they stayed away from smoking (*nissarana*).

- This is the key point that we will prove to be valid for ANY sense pleasure at the end. But do not worry; we do not have to (and cannot effectively) give up anything without understanding. In fact such forced “giving up” will only lead to more stress. Our minds will automatically avoid more and more “bad things” as we keep learning Dhamma.
- There are few more “relatively easy to see” examples of “*assāda*, *ādīnava*, *nissarana*”, even before we get to the deeper analysis in the next post.
- Craving for tasty foods is another very clear example. Most of us cannot “see” the bad consequences of overindulging in eating and as a consequence we have a obesity problem in most countries. This has resulted in many health problems for each person who is engaging in it, and also has led to increased health-care costs for all. Still many people are beginning to see the truth of “*assāda*, *ādīnava*, *nissarana*” of overeating.

- Heavy drinking, use of drugs, association with bad friends, are more such relatively “easy to see” examples.

12. However, we can systematically understand the “root causes” for ALL such problems by using the guidelines provided by the Buddha. Once we understand the actual root causes, at least some of us can think through and avoid not only such “mundane problems”, but start seeing even more long-term benefits: It is the same line of reasoning that eventually leads to the four stages of *Nibbāna*.

- Thus even though Buddha Dhamma is focused on “eliminating the long-term suffering”, it can also help reduce some of the “short-term suffering” too.
- As a clear example of this, one can always examine the health of Buddhist monks. On average they are much more healthier than the “householders” in any of the Buddhist countries. They do not smoke and do not overeat.
- And one can clearly see their “joy in heart” and the calmness of their minds even though they have very few possessions and do not seek gratification in many sense pleasures that others value so highly.

13. This last point is worth thinking about some more. If one thinks deep enough, one can see that even some common “sense pleasures” are not that different from the pleasure one gets by inhaling a drug. They give a highly enjoyable “burst of pleasure”, but inevitably lead to bad outcomes even short term. One can get a hangover with a bad headache due to excess drinking, and in the case of overeating one can feel the “discomfort” right away.

- We seek such sense pleasures because we don’t realize the value of just having a calm, peaceful state of mind. One does not understand the value of a “neutral mind” (which is called *upekkhā*), unless one can experience it. It is like getting rid of a headache that one had for a long time. We do not realize the “incessant stress” that is with us, until we reduce it.
- Our minds are constantly under stress seeking sense pleasures. That is what we all had been doing in countless previous births too. That is why it is hard to recognize any negative consequences.

14. In the *Sambhōdhi Vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, there are several *suttas* on *assāda*, *ādinava*, *nissarana*. The “[WebLink: suttacentral: Pubbeva Sambodha Sutta \(AN 3.103\)](#)” provides a succinct statement on what they are:

“..ko nu kho loke *assādo*, ko *ādinavo*, kiṃ *nissaraṇan*’ti? Tassa mayhaṃ, bhikkhave, etadahosi: ‘yaṃ kho lokam paṭicca uppajjati sukhaṃ sōmanassaṃ, ayaṃ loke *assādo*. Yaṃ loko anicco dukkha vipariṇāmadhammo, ayaṃ loke *ādinavo*. Yo loke chandarāgavinayo chandarāgappahānaṃ, idaṃ loke *nissaraṇan*’ti..”.

Translated: “..What are *assāda*, *ādinava*, and *nissarana* in this world? If one gets attached (*paṭicca*) to *sukha/sōmanassa* that is *assāda*. That gives rise to *dhamma* (which are the seeds for future suffering, because these are really “*kamma* seeds”) with *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *viparināma* nature, and that is called *ādinava*. Arising of such *dhamma* can be stopped by constraining the tendency to indulge in sense pleasures (*chandarāgavinayo*), and thus getting rid of craving for sense pleasures (*chandarāgappahānaṃ*)..”.

- It is to be noted that *sukha* is “bodily pleasure” and *sōmanassa* is “mind pleasure”. We will discuss this highly condensed verse in the upcoming posts.
- In that *sutta* the Buddha says that he was unable to attain the *Buddhahood* until he realized the need to see the dangers in sense attachments, and to work diligently to get rid of such cravings for sense pleasures.
- It is important to note that *dhammā* are really *kamma* seeds that lead to future *vipāka*; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)” and “[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)”.

12. There are many other *suttas* that discuss these three key concepts. In particular, “[WebLink: suttacentral: Assada Sutta \(AN 6.112\)](#)” is notable since it ties *assāda diṭṭhi* to *anicca saññā*:

“‘Tayome, bhikkhave, dhammā. Katame tayo? **Assāda**diṭṭhi, attānudiṭṭhi, micchādiṭṭhi. Ime kho, bhikkhave, tayo dhammā. Imesaṃ kho, bhikkhave, tiṇṇaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya tayo dhammā bhāvetabbā. Katame tayo? **Assāda**diṭṭhiyā **pahānāya anicca**saññā **bhāvetabbā**, attānudiṭṭhiyā **pahānāya anattasaññā** bhāvetabbā, micchādiṭṭhiyā **pahānāya sammā**diṭṭhi bhāvetabbā. Imesaṃ kho, bhikkhave, tiṇṇaṃ dhammānaṃ pahānāya ime tayo dhammā bhāvetabbā”ti”.

- Or, contemplation of *anicca* *saññā* leads to the removal of *assāda* *diṭṭhi*.
- This is because the mind-made pleasures (*assāda*) are based on the wrong perception of *nicca* *saññā*, i.e., that those sense experiences are real and fruitful.

6.4.8.2 How Perceived Pleasures (Assāda) lead to Dukkha

March 11, 2016

1. The essence of the Buddha Dhamma is that what we PERCEIVE to be enjoyment (*āsvada*) (*Assāda* in Pāli) is actually the CAUSE of FUTURE SUFFERING; but that understanding comes in stages. This is a subtle point to understand, and requires some cleansing of the mind to “see”. Grasping the essence of Buddha Dhamma requires a concentrated mind.

- At minimum one should read these posts when the mind is calm. That will make a huge difference in comprehending Dhamma. Most people (especially those who come to this site) are not “immoral”, but the state of mind can change. Even an excited mind cannot grasp deep Dhamma. I discussed this in a few of my very first posts two years ago; see, for example, “[The Importance of Purifying the Mind](#)”.
- This is why I highly recommend everyone to read the first several posts in the meditation section starting with “[1. Introduction to Buddhist Meditation](#)”.
- Most people new to Buddha Dhamma (Buddhism), start at the wrong place: “Do I really need to give up all these sense pleasures?”. The answer is no. One will **voluntarily** give up things **that one will be convinced to be dangerous or at least unfruitful**. *Niramisa sukha* comes from this understanding.

2. The key here is to understand that “bhava” and “jathī” are according to one’s gathi. That is because “bhava” arises via “upādāna” and upādāna means what one likes or enjoys; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda](#)”.

- *Bhava* means “potential to bring about existence” and that existence is according what **one craves for** (*upādāna*), not what one wishes for. *Upādāna* means things that one is **AUTOMATICALLY** attracted to. At least the initial reaction is automatic, and that is what counts at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment; see below.
- If one craves for sensual pleasures in the *kāma loka*, then it is hard to avoid a *bhava* and *jathī* in the *kāma loka*.
- More importantly, if one is seeking sense pleasures and is willing to do things that can be done only with “animal *gathi*”, “pretha *gathi*”, “asura *gathi*”, or “niraya *gathi*”, then no matter how much one wishes, one cannot avoid birth in those realms.
- One cannot fool one’s mind. One has to see the dangers in the lowest four realms to cultivate the desire and drive to be free of them.

3. The four lowest realms are collectively called the “apāyas”. Those who are destined to go to apāya have “dugathi”. The word “dugathi” comes from “du” + “gathi” or immoral habits (character).

- On the other hand, those who have moral character have “*sugathi*”, which means good (“su”) *gathi*.
- Sometimes the *apāyas* themselves are also called *dugathi*, and the higher realms are called *sugathi*.
- A given person could have both *sugathi* as well as *dugathi*. One becomes the *Sotāpanna* when the possibility for *dugathi* to surface (i.e., *anusaya*) is permanently removed.

4. It is hard to see the true *anicca* nature of the higher realms, i.e., in *sugathi* (for example in the *deva* realm), until one is free of the lowest four realms. Most of us perceive *deva* realms to be full of happiness. Until one's mind is purified to at least the level of a *Sotāpanna* it is hard to comprehend the futility of a birth in the *deva* realms.

- But the animal and human realms have enough visible suffering for us to be motivated.
- One cannot even imagine to comprehend the *anicca* nature of *rūpa loka* or *arūpa loka* until one is free of *kāma loka*.
- This is why COMPREHENDING Dhamma **at each level** is the essential. It is a step-by-step process.

5. In the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta*, the Buddha described three rounds of bondage (*tiprivattaya*); see, "[Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta](#)". Getting through those three walls is done via four stages of *Nibbāna* (*Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī*, *Arahant*).

- At each stage, one gains wisdom (*ñāṇa*) to "see further", i.e., the *anicca* nature of higher realms. Thus one has to make progress systematically. This process is analogous to the following example. Let us visualize a person wearing glasses that have been covered with four layers of a dark, but see-through, film. One could see through a single layer of the film, but when all four layers are on, one is virtually blind.
- A normal human without exposure to pure Dhamma is like a person wearing those glasses covered with all four layers. He/she could just barely see the immediate surroundings, but not much else. Such a person would only be concerned with the immediate surrounding, and will not be able to see any dangers existing not too far away.

6. When exposed to Buddha Dhamma for the first time, it is like bringing in more light. Even with the dark glasses, one can see a bit more clearly, and that is enough for most people to get interested and learn more.

- When one learns about the various aspects of Dhamma, one can see evidence that there is a much bigger hidden world out there, and at some point one could comprehend the dangers of rebirth in the *apāyas*. That stage can be compared to one layer of those dark films coming off. It is the attainment of the *Sotāpanna* stage. **This is a big step since *pancanivarana* (those five factors that cover the mind) are permanently removed.**
- Now, one can see much better, and thus has the ability to start comprehending the dangers of the higher realms in the *kāma loka*, i.e., the human realm and the *deva* realms. First one comprehends the dangers of sense pleasures associated with the human realm and when that happens one attains the *Sakadāgāmī* stage (one will never again be born in the human realm), and the second film comes off.
- In two more stages (*Anāgāmī* and *Arahant*), the remaining two films come off and one will be able to clearly see the true nature of this world only at the *Arahant* stage.
- Thus, it is useless to try to grasp everything at once or to try to give up "normal" sense pleasures forcefully. However, it is imperative to give up those extreme (immoral) behaviors (*gathi*) to be free from *dugathi* (*apāyas*).

7. The main problem is that some people go to extremes in seeking sense pleasures. They are willing to steal, lie, and even commit murder to acquire wealth, status, or titles. All those are perceived to lead to higher sense pleasures.

- But in doing so, one will be cultivating *gathi* suitable for rebirth in the *apāyas*, i.e., *dugathi*.
- One may enjoy such sense pleasures for maximum of 100 years or so. But when one is born in the *apāyas* it is very difficult to get out. One could be trapped there for billions of years to come. This is the danger that many do not see.
- This is the difference a Buddha makes. In the absence of a Buddha in the world, humans are unaware of the existence of these other 29 realms, and in particular, the four lowest realms.

8. Those *akusala kamma* that makes one to be eligible to be born in the *apāyas* have a special name: *pāpa kamma*. I guess the closest English translation would be “*akusala kamma* of the worst kinds”.

- As I have discussed in a previous post, there is a huge difference between *lōbha* and *rāga*, *dōsa* and *patigha*, and *mōha* and *avijjā*: “[Lobha, Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)”.
- *Pāpa kamma* are done with *lōbha*, *dōsa*, and *mōha*, the stronger versions of greed, hate, and ignorance.
- When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage one is left with the milder versions of *rāga*, *patigha*, and *avijjā*. It basically means a *Sotāpanna* still likes to enjoy sense pleasures, but not at the expense of others.
- A *Sotāpanna* is inherently incapable of doing anything that normally would qualify one to be born in the *apāyas*. Even under extreme pressure, a *Sotāpanna* would not be compelled to such *pāpa kamma*.

9. I have done analyses to show that such *pāpa kamma* are done because one has *micca diṭṭhi*. When one has *micca diṭṭhi*, one has the hidden ability (*anusaya*) to generate “*diṭṭhi sampayutta citta*” and those are strongest of the 8 *lōbha citta*; see, for example, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)”.

- Thus it is very important to understand what *micca diṭṭhi* is. One can use the Search box to find many relevant posts, but here is a simple explanation: “[Wrong Views \(Micca Ditthi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#)”.

10. Another issue to think about is which factor dominates the determination of the next *bhava* and thus *jathi* (birth): *kamma vipāka* (seeds) from the past OR one’s *gathi* right now.

- We all have done both highly meritorious deeds and highly immoral deeds in the past. Those cannot be eliminated easily. But the critical point is that unless one “willingly grasp” any one of those *kamma* seeds at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment at the end of the current *bhava*, those *kamma* seeds cannot bring about a new *bhava*.
- When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, one permanently loses “*gathi* suitable for the *apāyas*”, i.e., one loses “*upādāna*” for *bhava* in the lowest four realms. Thus even though we may have potent *kamma* seeds for such *bhava*, they CANNOT be grasped at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment.
- At the *Arahant* stage, one loses “*upādāna*” for *bhava* in all 31 realms, even though he/she may have even an uncountable number of *kamma* seeds from the past.
- This is why Angulimala, who killed 999 people, was able to attain the *Arahanthood* within 7 days. He lost craving for rebirth anywhere in the 31 realms.
- We just need to get rid of *gathi* suitable to be reborn in the lowest four realms to become a *Sotāpanna*. That is the critical and first step.

11. To repeat: Avoiding immoral behavior and actively engaging in moral behavior is not only for the prevention of creating bad *kamma* seeds or for creating good *kamma* seeds. In fact, we may have uncountable number of both kinds of *kamma* seeds already from our past lives.

- The more critical end result we are looking for is to change our mindset, our *gathi*. That starts with first getting rid of *dugathi*. For most people, it is easy to see the dangers of the *apāyas*.
- When we lose *dugathi* suitable for rebirth in the *apāyas*, we will not grasp such a *bhava* at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment.
- Until we lose both kinds of *gathi* at the *Arahant* stage, we NEED TO cultivate *sugathi* so that we will grasp only such a “good *bhava*” at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment.

12. Once one gets rid of *dugathi*, one advances to the next stage automatically. It is hard to see the bad consequences of “*kāma gathi*” (sense pleasures that keep one bound to *kāma loka*), until one is free of the “*apāya gathi*” or *dugathi*.

- In the same way, it is hard to see the *anicca* nature of “*rūpa* and *arūpa loka gathi*” (*jhānic* pleasures that keep one bound to *rūpa* and *arūpa loka*), until one is free of the “*kāma gathi*”.
- This is why it is totally useless to meditate on things like “there is no self” or “there is no ‘me’”. The feeling of a self (or more correctly the *sanyojana* of “*māna*”) is removed only at the *Arahant* stage, which is infinitely far away compared to losing *dugathi*.
- The perception of a “self” is going to be there as long as one craves for at least a trace of anything in the 31 realms. This is another point that needs a lot of contemplation.

13. I may have given a somewhat wrong impression by saying that there is no point in meditating until one learns *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. What I meant was that there is no point in meditating based on the wrong concepts of *anicca* as “impermanence” and *anatta* as “no-self”.

- Once one accepts the true meanings of *anicca* and *anatta*, one NEEDS TO start meditating on those concepts in order to really grasp them. This is why the meditation section is important. To get to that mindset, the Buddhist Chanting section could be helpful.
- As I explained in the posts in the Meditation section, meditation should not be restricted to formal, sitting down meditation. For example, one can contemplate on what we discussed above during any free time (but not while driving!).

6.4.8.3 Kāma Guna, Kāma, Kāma Rāga, Kāmaccanda

November 9, 2017

1. It is very important to understand the meaning of each term. The “defilement level” increases in the given order from *kāma guna* to *kāmaccanda*.

- Pronunciation of the terms: [WebLink: Pronunciation of kāma guna to kāmaccanda](#)

2. In *kāma loka*, we experience **five types of physical sense inputs**: pictures (*rūpa rūpa*), sounds, smells, tastes, and body touches. There are inherent “qualities” for each of these called “*kāma guna*”, and those are common to all of us in *kāma loka* (actually they also depend on “*bhava*” and thus differ from humans to each type of animal, as we will discuss below).

[*kāma* : may denote: 1. subjective sensuality, ‘sense-desire’; 2. objective sensuality, the five sense-objects.

kāma-guṇa : ‘characteristics {cords (or strands)} of sensuality’.]

- For example, all of us experience the sourness of lemon or sweetness of sugar (there may be defects in some people due to *kamma vipāka*).
- We all experience the unpleasantness of thunder or the pleasantness of music.
- While there could be minor differences, all humans experience the same basic “qualities” or ‘*kāma guna*’ through the five physical senses. **Even when one becomes an *Arahant* that will not change.**

3. The 31 realms naturally exist to provide different levels of *kamma vipāka* according to the (*abhi*) *saṅkhāra* done in previous lives (mainly in the human realm; this is another topic that needs more background).

- The lowest four realms in *kāma loka* (*apāyas*) have conditions that induce excessive suffering. Higher two realms in *kāma loka* have *rūpa rūpa*, *sadda*, *gandha*, *rasa*, and *pottabba* that provide increasingly higher levels of “pleasures”.
- The *rūpavācāra brahma* realms have *rūpavācāra jhānic* pleasures; those *brahmas* had given up *kāma rāga* and had cultivated *rūpavācāra jhānas* in previous human lives.
- Those in *arūpavācāra brahma* realms had given up both *kāma rāga* and *rūpa rāga*, and had cultivated *arūpavācāra jhāna* in previous human lives.
- This is why *kāma guna* are absent in both *rūpavācāra* and *arūpavācāra brahma* realms. Those who are born in those realms had given up sense pleasures for *jhānic* pleasures.

4. Therefore, there are pleasing things in our *kāma lōka* (human realm) that naturally arise to provide sense pleasures according to *abhisankhāra* that led to births there; we all had craved sense pleasures in our previous lives, but had only cultivated *punna abhisankhāra*; those who cultivated *apunna abhisankhāra* (i.e., did immoral deeds to get such sense pleasures) are now in the *apāyas*.

- **Thus, as humans, we are naturally exposed to those “*kāma guna*”.** We are naturally “exposed to” sense objects that are “pleasing” to the five physical senses.
- Thus, if one has not comprehended the *Tilakkhana* — that things in this world, including those things with *kāma guna* — cannot provide long-term happiness, but actually lead to suffering — **then it is natural for one to get attached to such “pleasurable things”.**

5. Now, if a person gets attached to those sense inputs with *kāma guna*, and **starts thinking about them in one’s mind** (generating *vaci saṅkhāra*) that is “*kāma*”; this is also called *sankalpita rāga* (generating *sankalpanā* that lead to *saṃsāric* journey).

- When one engages in *sankalpita rāga* (i.e., thinking about it, generating *vaci saṅkhāra*), one is likely to initiate *kāya saṅkhāra* (start engaging in related physical activities) too.
- This is possible for any normal human, including a *Sotāpanna*. This next step of **intentionally** engaging in those sense experience **to generate pleasure** is done with *kāma rāga*. [*kāma-rāga* : ‘sensuous lust’, one of the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*, q. v.)]

6. On the other hand, if one has *kāma rāga* intensified to the point that one is capable of committing immoral deeds (hurting others or oneself), then *kāma rāga* is **elevated** to *kāmaccanda* level, the highest. [*kāma-cchanda* : ‘sensuous desire’, one of the 5 hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*, q. v.)]

- This can happen to anyone below the *Sotāpanna* stage, i.e., one can be “blinded” by *kāma* and be elevated to *kāmaccanda* (“*kāma*” + “*icca*” + “*anda*”, where *icca* is liking and *anda* is blind, and thus “blinded by the craving for *kāma*”).
- **Whether a normal human will generate *kāma*, *kāma rāga*, or *kāmaccanda* depends on the strength of the sense input and also on prevalent conditions.** For example, if one’s mindset becomes degraded due to alcohol consumption, and one sees an attractive woman in an isolated setting, things could get out-of-control with *kāmaccanda*.

7. An *Anāgāmī* has removed *kāma rāga*, but still has *kāma*, i.e., likes them somewhat.

- However, *kāma* of an *Anāgāmī* is not strong enough to lead to rebirth in the *kāma lōka*, i.e., an *Anāgāmī* will not generate *abhisankhāra* (strong *saṅkhāra*) for things with *kāma guna* (for example would have no desire to engage in sex).
- In the *Abhidhammic* language, an *Anāgāmī* has removed four greed-based *cittas* associated with wrong views. Even in the “four greed-based *cittas* dissociated with wrong views” that are still left, have lost much of the potency to bring down from the *kāma rāga* to *kāma* level; see #3 of, [“Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta”](#).
- Even that trace of *kāma* is removed only at the *Arahant* stage.

8. To clarify with another example, sugar has a “*kāma guna*” of sweetness; that holds for everyone from a normal person to an *Arahant*.

- A beautiful woman will be seen as such by anyone from a normal person to an *Arahant*.
- A normal person may generate *kāma* to *kāmaccanda* for that woman.
- A *Sotāpanna* may generate *kāma* to *kāma rāga*.
- An *Anāgāmī* may generate just *kāma*. But there is no “*kāma rāga anusaya*” left in him to go beyond that.
- But an *Arahant* will not generate *kāma* either.

9. The sight of such a woman is a *kamma vipāka*; for anyone (a normal person to an *Arahant*) still living in the human realm will see that she is beautiful.

- If one gets “interested” one generates *kāma sankalpanā* or *vaci saṅkhāra*; see, “[Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra](#)”. Then it could lead to *kāya saṅkhāra*, i.e., turn one’s head to look at her again with *kāma rāga* or *kāmaccanda*, that is a new *kamma*.
- A *Sotāpanna* still has “*kāma rāga anusaya*” left in him, and that is why he is not released from the *kāma loka*. He can be born as a human or *dēva* in the future.
- A *Sakadāgāmi* is in between the *Sotāpanna* and *Anāgāmi* stages, and he/she will be reborn only in the *dēva* realms; of course, an *Anāgāmi* will not be reborn anywhere in the *kāma loka*.

10. Immoral actions done with *kāmaccanda* could lead to rebirth in the *apāyas*.

- Only *kāma rāga* — not *kāmaccanda* — can be generated in a *Sotāpanna*. Thus he/she is released from the *apāyas*, but not from *kāma loka*. A *Sotāpanna* is incapable of committing an “*apāyagāmi* deed” in order to satisfy any kind of sense pleasure.
- So, I hope you get the basic idea. This can be applied to any of the five physical sense inputs.

11. Anyone born in the human realm will have similar “*kāma guna*” because they had cultivated corresponding “human *saṅkhāra*”. We all basically like similar things, and any variations we do have are due the variations in those main *saṅkhāra* types.

- **However, when it comes to animals, “*kāma guna*” can be much more different compare to humans or compared to other types of animals.**
- Pigs eat very unpleasing things including feces. Tiger or lions like to eat raw meat. Cows don’t like meat but like grass. The variations are quite apparent. Again those can be tied to ***saṅkhāra that they had cultivated as humans***, and each *bhava* (and *jāti*) correspond to such *saṅkhāra* via *paticca samuppāda*. Some of you may be able to see that, but we will discuss this later.
- In *brahma* realms, beings are not exposed to things with *kāma guna*. They were born in those realms because they had preferred and cultivated *jhānic* pleasures, instead of craving for sensual pleasures.

12. In that regard, we just keep in mind for now that (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra* generated by humans have high *javana* power, and thus lead to various “*bhava*” and *jāti*. **Animals cannot generate such *citta* with high *javana* power, and that is what is needed to clarified.** Animals just pay for such past *kamma* until that *kammic* power is exhausted; see, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)”.

- Even *dēvas* or *brahmas* (just “go with the flow”), i.e., enjoy their *kāma* or *jhānic* pleasures that come with their birth, just as animals go through the suffering.
- It is only those *dēvas/brahmas* that had become at least *Sotāpanna Anugāmi* would be motivated to strive for *magga phala*, since they are not exposed to any significant suffering until the very end.

13. Therefore, it is mostly humans who can cultivate *abhisankhāra* (of both types) and thus make conditions for future “good births or bad births”. This is key point in the *Agganna Sutta*.

- All animals that we see, were humans in the beginning. Those with “bad *gathi*” that had been generated via “bad *abhisankhāra*” in their deep past, were reborn as various types of animals as the Earth evolved and conditions for animal life appeared.
- But it is still not the right time to be able to discuss that beginning. I know that many of you have instantly generated doubts about this idea, which is complete opposite of Darwin’s theory of evolution.
- However, I remind you that only 500 years ago, “modern science” believed that the Earth was at the center of not only our planetary system, but the whole universe! See, “[Dhamma and Science](#)”.
- In any case, do not worry too much about those “academic” things, since those are not relevant to “cooling down” or *Nibbāna*. Things will gradually become clear as we get into deeper aspects.

14. Now let us briefly discuss a key *sutta* that is relevant. The “[WebLink: suttacentral: Nibbedhika Sutta \(AN 6.63\)](#)” lists the five *kāma guna*:

“..Pañcime, bhikkhave, kāmaguṇā—cakkhuviññeyyā rūpā iṭṭhā kantā manāpā piyarūpā kāmūpasamhitā rajanīyā, sotaviññeyyā saddā ... ghānaviññeyyā gandhā ... jivhāviññeyyā rasā ... kāyaviññeyyā phoṭṭhabbā iṭṭhā kantā manāpā piyarūpā kāmūpasamhitā rajanīyā. Api ca kho, bhikkhave, **nete kāmā kāmaguṇā**..”

Translated: “..*Bhikkhus*, there are five types with characteristics of sensuality (*kāma guna*). Which five? **Forms** cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, likable, desire-inducing, enticing; **sounds** cognizable via the ear... **aromas** cognizable via the nose... **flavors** cognizable via the tongue... **body sensations** cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, likable, desire-inducing, enticing. But, *Bhikkhus*, **these are not sensuality (*kāma*)**..”.

- I have translated “*guna*” as “characteristics”, but it could be taken as “qualities” too.

15. Then the next verse of the *sutta* says **what kāma is**: “*Saṅkapparāgo purisassa kāmo, Nete kāmā yāni citrāni loke*..”.

Translated: “a person’s *kāma* is **getting attached and thinking about (*sankappa rāga*)** those **pleasing things in this world (*citrāni loke*)**..”

To emphasize: There are many pleasing, desire-inducing, enticing things in the *kāma loka*. Just experiencing them is not *kāma*. One who has understood the real nature, does not get attached to them. But those who do not yet understand the real *anicca* nature of things in the *kāma loka*, value them highly, crave them, and get a satisfaction (*kāma assāda*) by thinking about them (generating *kāma sankalpanā* or *vaci saṅkhāra*).

- It is important to realize that conscious thinking or “talking to oneself” is *vaci saṅkhāra*; see, “[Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra](#)”.
- Of course such *vaci saṅkhāra* can then lead to *kāya saṅkhāra*, whereby one takes actions to fulfill such desires (if one has *kāma rāga anusaya*).
- Some people go one step further and commit *akusala kamma* to fulfill such desires (then it becomes *kāmaccanda*).

16. Therefore, having the tendency to be attracted to sense inputs (i.e., the tendency to think about them and just getting a “good feeling”) is a natural outcome of being born in the *kāma loka*; see, “[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana – Introduction](#)”.

- And giving up that craving comes only with understanding of the true nature (the *anicca, dukkha, anatta* nature), i.e., realize that they have bad consequences; see, “[How Perceived Pleasures \(Assāda\) lead to Dukkha](#)”.
- Getting to the *Sotāpanna* stage means one has understood the dangers of *kāma assāda*. But one has not yet been “liberated” from them, because one still tends to like them. However, a *Sotāpanna* will never do an immoral act to gain those sense pleasures.
- For a *Sotāpanna* to be released from those *kāma assāda*, he/she needs to contemplate the dangers (*ādīnava*) of *kāma assāda* as we discussed in the above two posts. This is what is called the “*asubha bhāvanā*”.

17. Many people misinterpret the *asubha bhāvanā* as to contemplate on disgusting things like rotting dead bodies. **That is quite wrong; such meditations only lead to *patigha* or “friction of the mind”**.

- Instead, one needs to see that **it is getting attached to those pleasing sensual things that actually leads to future suffering**. Thus the real *asubha* (detrimental) things are those eye-pleasing, ear-pleasing, ...body-pleasing things in this *kāma loka*. One needs to contemplate on the bad consequences/dangers of getting attached to them; see, “[How Perceived Pleasures \(Assāda\) lead to Dukkha](#)”.

- Therefore, it is not even possible to do the *asubha bhāvanā* correctly until one gets to the *Sotāpanna* stage, because it is only then one begins to see the dangers **in craving for** sense pleasures.
- However, it is always good to cut down on sense pleasures, even while striving for the *Sotāpanna* stage. It makes one's mind calm and susceptible to grasp deeper concepts.
- Extreme sense pleasures are a burden to the mind, and this is that part of suffering which can be removed right now; see, "[Satipatthāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)". Doing everything in moderation naturally leads to a simpler, healthier, and peaceful life.

6.4.8.4 Vedana (Feelings) Arise in Two Ways

Revised September 4, 2016; Revised February 9, 2017; October 17, 2017

Vedanā (feelings) can **arise in two ways**:

1. As a consequence of a previous *kamma* or previous defiled actions, i.e., a *kamma vipāka*. Those *kamma* could have been done many lives ago.
2. As a direct consequence of a generating *mano saṅkhāra* or defiled thoughts (due to our *gati* at the present time).

Both types arise automatically; see, "[How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?](#)" and "[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāṇa](#)" for details.

Let us discuss these two types separately.

(A) *Vedanā* Arising from *Kamma Vipāka*

1. *Vedanā* (feelings) due to *kamma vipāka* are **three kinds** : *Sukha vedanā* (pleasant or joyful feeling), *dukha vedanā* (unpleasant or painful feeling), and *adhukkhamā asukha* (without being painful or joyful, just neutral), which is commonly called *upekkha*.

- **Those *sukha vedanā* and *dukha vedanā* are felt only by the body. All *vedanā* initially coming through other five sense faculties are neutral.**
- But based on all those, we can generate more types of "mind-made" *vedanā* called *somanassa* and *domanassa vedanā* as we discuss in the next section below.

2. *Kamma vipāka* leading to *sukha vedanā* and *dukha vedanā* happen to everyone, including *Arahants*. While everyone can live mindfully (taking necessary precautions) to avoid some of those *dukha vedanā*, there are others that are too strong to be able to avoid.

- For example, the *Buddha* himself had physical ailments later in his life as *kamma vipāka*. Moggallāna Thero was beaten to death because of a bad *kamma* that he committed many lives before.
- However, *kamma vipāka* are not certain to happen. Some can be reduced in power (see, "[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)"); all are reduced in power with time and some eventually die out if they do not get a chance to come to fruition within 91 *Mahā kalpas*.
- Many can be avoided by not providing conditions for them to arise, i.e., by acting with *yoniso manasikara* or just common sense. For example, going out at night in a bad neighborhood is providing fertile ground for past bad *kamma vipāka* to take place: We all have done innumerable *kamma* (both good and bad) in past lives; if we act with common sense we can suppress bad *kamma vipāka* and make conditions for good *vipāka* to arise.

Also see the discussion on *kamma beeja* in , "[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)".

We will discuss how this type of *vedanā* due to *vipāka* (from deeds in the past) arise due to the *kusala-mūla* and *akusala-mūla* PS cycles in following posts. First let us look at the "suffering we are initiating at present moment via *saṅkhāra*".

(B) *Vedanā* Arising from *Saṅkhāra* ("*Samphassa ja vedanā*")

We described the PS mechanism that generates this type of *vedanā* in the previous post. The *vedanā* occurs due to attachment via greed or hate, at that moment (i.e., one's *gati*); see, "[Tanhā – How We Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)".

These are the *vedanā* (feelings) that *Arahants* do not feel. Since they do not have any "bad *gati*", they do not commit any (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra*, an *Arahant* avoids any kind of feeling arising from *sankhāras*. The easiest way to explain this kind of *vedanā* is to give some examples:

1. Three people are walking down the street. One has ultra-right political bias (A), the second has ultra-left bias (B), and the third is an *Arahant* who does not have special feelings for anyone (C). They all see a famous politician hated by the political right coming their way. **It is a given that the sight of the politician causes A to have displeasure and B to have a pleasurable feeling.** On the other hand, the sight does not cause the *Arahant* to generate any pleasure or displeasure. **Even though all three see and identify the person,** they generate different types of feelings. *It is important to realize that the feelings were created in A and B by themselves.*
2. Two friends go looking for treasure and find a gem. They are both overjoyed. It looks quite valuable and one person kills the other so that he can get all the money. Yet when he tries to sell the "gem", he finds out that it was not that valuable. His joy turns to sorrow in an instant. *Nothing had changed in the object. It was the same piece of colored rock. What has changed was the perception of it.*
3. What could happen if an *Arahant* found the same gem lying on the road? (he would not have gone looking for one). He might think of donating it to a worthy cause. During the process, if he found that it was not valuable, he would not have worried about it at all.
4. A loving couple had lived for many years without any problems and were happy to be together. However, the husband slaps his wife during an argument (this is a *kamma vipāka*). The physical pain from the slap itself did not last more than a few minutes. But for how long the wife would suffer mentally? Those feelings arise due to *saṅkhāra*, i.e. sadness and of hate. Even the husband, who did not feel any physical pain, would suffer for days if he really loved his wife. *In both cases, the real mental pain was associated with the attachment to each other. The wife could have dropped something on her foot and would have suffered about the same amount of physical pain. But she would not have had any lingering mental pain associated with that.*
5. In all the above cases, the initial sense contact was due to a *kamma vipāka*; **there are no *kamma* generated at that instant.** However, based on that initial contact, we tend to pursue it with our mind (thinking about good/bad aspects of the politician, the value of the gem, re-assessing the love between husband and wife) and thus **start generating *kamma* automatically, within the same *citta vitti*;** see, "[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāna](#)".

Thus it is clear that in all the above examples, the "extra" happiness or suffering (other than due to *kamma vipāka*) arose from **within one's own mind**. And *tanhā* (attachment via greed or hate) was the cause of it.

We will discuss more examples as we proceed, but you should think about how to analyze situations that you face everyday, or have experienced. Let us further analyze the actual words of the Buddha when he described *dukha* in the *Dhammacakka Pavattana Sutta*:

1. It says, "*jathi 'pi dukkha, jara 'pi dukkha, maranan 'pi dukkha.....*". Most people translate this incorrectly as, "birth is suffering, getting old is suffering, dying is suffering,....".
2. However, "*jathi 'pi dukkha*" is shortened for the verse; **it is "*jathi pi dukkha*" or "*jathi api dukkha*" depending on the context;** the other two "*jara 'pi dukkha, maranan 'pi dukkha*" are the same.

"*pi*" in Pāli or "*priya*" in Sinhala is "like", and "*api*" in Pāli or "*apriya*" in Sinhala is dislike. Thus, "*jathi api dukkha*" means "birth of something that is not liked by one causes suffering". "*Jara pi dukkha*" means, "decay of something that is liked causes suffering", and "*maranan pi dukkha*"

means, “Death of a liked causes suffering”. One can look at each case and easily see which one to use; see #4 below.

3. The reverse is true too: “Birth of something that one likes causes happiness”, “decay of something that is hated brings happiness” and “death of a hated person brings happiness”. *You can think of any example and this is ALWAYS true. It brings happiness to many people to hear about the destruction of a property of an enemy. Many people were happy to hear about the death of Bin Laden, except his followers who became sad.*

4. The Buddha further clarified “*pī*” and “*apī*” in the next verse, where he explicitly said: “*piyehi vippayogo dukkho, appiyehi sampayogo dukkho*” means “it brings sorrow when a loved one has to depart, and it also brings sorrow to be with a hated person” (“*piya*” is same as “*pī*”, and “*apiya*” is same as “*apī*”).

- We all know the truth of this first hand. When a man dies of in a plane crash, it causes great suffering to his family; less to his distant relatives; even less to those who just know him informally; and for someone at the other end of country who has had no association with him, it is “just some news”.

5. **Thus all these feelings arise due to *taṇhā*, some form of attachment:** greed (craving, liking) or hate (dislike); all these are due to *mano saṅkhāra*. **The feelings (or rather the perceptions that give rise to feelings) reside INSIDE oneself. It does not come from outside.** We use external things to CAUSE happiness or suffering by our own volition.

- There is no inherent suffering or happiness in ANYTHING external; the sense contact with an external thing CAUSES suffering or happiness depending on our gathi and āsavas. An Arahant, who has removed all āsavas, will be free of such emotional responses.

6. Now this DOES NOT MEAN we should not love our family or friends. These associations did not come without a cause. We cannot eliminate the cause for the current life; it was done long ago. Now we have fulfill the obligations that resulted from the cause in the past, i.e., we cannot give up our families. We have families, children etc, BECAUSE we have debts to pay to each other; see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”.

- What we need to do is to eliminate NEW causes: stop such relationships from formed in future births, i.e., work to stop the rebirth process, while making sure to fulfill our obligations.

7. Here again, many people freak out: “how can I do that? if I do not reborn what happens to me?” We have this mindset because we do not think life can be much worse than what we have. But it definitely can be much, much worse; see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)”.

- **It is not possible to comprehend this fact without fully understanding the “world view” of the Buddha by looking at the wider world of 31 realms and the process of rebirth.**
- However, anyone can start on the Path without getting into the question of where there is a rebirth process or not; see, the section “[Living Dhamma](#)”.

8. It is also clear how accumulation of *saṅkhāra* via *paticca samuppāda* leads to such varied feelings: If we attach to something with a “like” or a “dislike”, we generate a mindset accordingly. This is *paticca samuppāda* (*pati* + *ichcha* leading to *sama* + *uppada*; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – Introduction](#)”). In the first case, we generate “positive” mindset towards the object that we liked; thus if everything goes well with the object, we feel happy and if things do not go well, we feel sad. It is the other way for the object that we had a bad impression in the first encounter; we made a negative mindset about the object.

- In either case, the strength of the feeling is also proportional to the strength of the “like” or “dislike”: ***Sama uppada* or *samuppāda* means both in quality and quantity**; the higher the strength of “*pati* + *ichcha*”, the higher the strength in “*sama* + *uppada*”.
- This is how we form habits (“*gathi*”) too. A teenager tasting alcohol with a bunch of friends gets attached to that setting and looks forward to have the same experience again; the more he

repeats, the more he gets “bonded”, and thus forms a drinking habit. See, “[Habits and Goals](#)” and “[Sansaric Habits and Āsavas](#)”.

9. Thus all what we experience arise in a complex web of inter-related multiple factors. Only a Buddha can “see this whole picture” and condense it down to a form that can be comprehended by only a motivated human being. If one really wants to understand Buddha Dhamma, one needs to spend time contemplating on these multiple but impressively self-consistent key ideas of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and *paticca samuppāda*.

The *vipāka* cycles of PS are described in, “[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.

Also see, “[Tanhā – How We Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”,

The sequel to this post is at, “[Feelings: Sukha, Dukha, Somanassa, and Domanassa](#)”.

A deeper discussion on *vedana* at: “[Does Bodily Pain Arise Only Due to Kamma Vipāka?](#)”.

6.4.8.5 Feelings: Sukha, Dukha, Somanassa, and Domanassa

December 11, 2015

In this post, we will discuss an important classification of *vedanā* based on whether they arise due to *kamma vipāka* or our defiled thoughts (*saṅkhāra*).

1. This is a sequel to the previous post, “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)”, where we discussed how feelings arise due to *kamma vipāka* and also due to *mano saṅkhāra*.

- As discussed in several posts, we can avoid certain *kamma vipāka* from actually taking place by not making suitable conditions for them to appear, but some strong ones are hard to avoid; see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”.
- However, feelings (both good and bad) that arise due to *saṅkhāra* are totally avoidable, and *Arahants* are completely free of them. We discussed this in the previous post.
- Now let us discuss in detail **what types of feelings** arise due to those two causes.

2. First, let us discuss the feelings that we feel in **our physical bodies**.

- They include *sukha vedanā* such as bodily comforts one feels sleeping in a luxurious bed, eating tasty food, smelling nice odors, seeing something attractive, etc. They arise via the five physical senses.
- Then there are *dukha vedanā* that are again brought in via the five physical senses: injuries to the body, headaches, eating something untasteful, smelling a bad odor, hearing to an ear-piercing sound, etc.
- **Both those types of *vedanā* are due to *kamma vipāka*, and *Arahants* feel them too.** *Sukha vedanā* arise due to *kusala kamma vipāka* (past good deeds) and *dukha vedanā* arise due to *akusala kamma vipāka* (past bad deeds).
- **These *sukha* and *dukha vedanā* mainly exist in the *kāma loka*, where the dense bodies of the beings are sufficiently dense to impart them.** In fact, it is mainly in the lower five realms (including the human realm, that *dukha vedanā* exists as *kamma vipāka*. However, the worst types of *dukha vedanā* are in the lowest four realms (*apāyas*), and that is why a *Sotāpanna* is said to have overcome the worst of the suffering forever.
- In the *deva lokas*, it is mainly the *sukha vedanā* that results due to good *kamma vipāka*. That is why a *Sakadāgāmī* is never born at or below the human realm, and is said to become “healthy forever”.
- In the *rūpa loka* and *arūpa loka*, beings mainly have *jhānic* pleasures. Thus an *Anāgāmī*, who will never be reborn in the *kāma loka*, is said to become “peaceful forever”.

3. Some *vipāka vedanā* felt by the body are neutral. **Furthermore, all *vipāka vedanā* coming through the other four physical senses are also neutral:** *adhukkhamā asukha* (without being painful or joyful, just neutral) *vedanā*, which are commonly called *upekkha vedanā*.

- It is important to note that these *adhukkhamā asukha* or *upekkhā vedanā* are the true reality of experience. *Vedanā* comes from (“*vé*” + “*danā*”) which means “*veema danaveema*” in Sinhala. Basically, when we sense something via our six senses, we **become aware** that something happened, i.e., seeing a picture, hearing a sound, etc.; that is *vedanā*.
- For example, seeing a person X only leads to an *upekkhā vedanā* for ANYONE initially.

4. However, within a fraction of a second of that seeing event, it COULD LEAD TO pleasant (*somanassa*) or unpleasant (*domanassa*) feelings DEPENDING ON WHO IS SEEING X. Person X's wife or child will generate *somanassa vedanā* upon seeing X. However, an enemy of X will generate *domanassa vedanā* upon seeing X.

- On the other hand, a total stranger (or an *Arahant*) will not generate either *somanassa* or *domanassa vedanā* upon seeing X, and that is the true reality, as mentioned in #3 above.
- Thus both *somanassa* and *domanassa vedanā* are MIND MADE, and arise due to *mano saṅkhāra*. And those *saṅkhāra* are generated based on one's own *gathi* and *āsavas*.
- In another example, if two people who are strong supporters of two opposing political parties see the leader of one political party, one will generate *somanassa vedanā* and the other will generate *domanassa vedanā* upon seeing that politician. **Thus, those feelings could not have resided with the politician, but arose entirely due to the *gathi* of those two people.**
- An *Arahant* will not generate either kind, because there is no attachment (or repulsion) to anything or anyone for an *Arahant*.
- This is a very important point that one could do insight meditation on.

5. We also know that both *sukha* and *dukkha vedanā* can LEAD TO *somanassa* and *domanassa vedanā* too. For example, When one gets a headache due to a *kamma vipāka*, one could be agonizing over how long that will last, whether that will prevent one from going to a party next day, etc. Those are *domanassa vedanā* due to that initial *dukkha vedanā* from the headache.

- On the other side, when one eats a tasty piece of cake (good *vipāka vedanā*), one could be start thinking about buying more of that cake and enjoying it later; that gives rise to *somanassa vedanā*.
- Both the *domanassa vedanā* and the *somanassa vedanā* in the above two examples are totally mind-made, i.e., due to *saṅkhāra*.

6. Therefore, based on the three types of *vedanā* (*sukha vedanā*, *dukkha vedanā*, and *upekkhā vedanā*) that arise due to *kamma vipāka*, ADDITIONAL two types of *vedanā* (*somanassa* and *domanassa vedanā*) COULD arise depending on the *āśava* and *gathi* of the person experiencing them.

- Those feelings that we feel IN THIS LIFE due to *saṅkhāra* are MOSTLY two kinds: *somanassa vedanā* and *domanassa vedanā*. Those *saṅkhāra* also make *bhava* (via thoughts, speech and actions) and those give rise to *kamma vipāka* mostly in future lives but also in this life itself as we discuss below in #11.
- Thus rebirths are also generated via (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra* and that is how the cycle of rebirths is maintained. That is why it is called *saṃsāra* (“*san*” + “*sāra*”, where “*sāra*” means “good”), i.e., one perceives that it is good to keep doing *saṅkhāra* (“*san*” + “*kāra*”, where “*kāra*” or “*kriya*” is action).

7. This is why *Dukkha Sacca* (First Noble Truth) does not mean that we can ELIMINATE the *dukkha vedanā* arising in our present physical body; those are due to *kamma vipāka* (the causes were already done).

- However, by gradually reducing *saṅkhāra* (with increased understanding of Buddha Dhamma), we can stop making new *saṅkhāra* and thus eliminate FUTURE suffering. This is the key to *dukkha sacca*. These *saṅkhāra* are also called *assāda* (*āsvāda* in Sinhala); see, “[Assāda, Ādinava, Nissarana](#)”.

8. Still, we can reduce bad consequences from past *kamma vipāka* using what are called “strategies” (“*upakrama*”) in Buddha Dhamma.

- One is to be mindful and not to let conditions for past *kamma vipāka* to take place. This is discussed in, “[What Is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)” and “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”.
- If the *kamma vipāka* has already started imparting its effects (say, someone finds out that one has cancer), then one can work to alleviate that condition by using another related “strategy”: One can get medical help and adopt a lifestyle that is opposes the spreading of the cancer. Even here what we are doing is to overcome this bad condition by making suitable environment for “opposing good *kamma vipāka*” to bear fruit. Thus, if one does not make an effort, the bad *kamma vipāka* will run its course and one may die in short time.

9. Each living being’s body is designed to impart appropriate good and bad *kamma vipāka* suitable for the *kamma* seed that gave rise to that particular life.

- For example, an animal cannot implement “strategies” (“*upakrama*”) to overcome most of its *kamma vipāka*. For example, it is unable to do anything about a wound (other than licking it) or to think about dragging its cot to a sunny spot (our dog likes to be in the sun but we have to move her cot!).
- Some animals have built-in defenses for their survival, but they cannot make them any better. For example, some birds instinctively know how to build a nest, but that “nest design” has not been improved by them over millions of years. And baby turtles “know” the way to the ocean and start trotting in the right direction minutes after their hatching; see, “[How Character \(Gathi\) Leads to Bhava and Jathi](#)”.
- Animals also are unable to do strong good or bad *kamma*. Even though most animals kill other animals, that is not done with greed or hate, but just for survival. It is just like the instinct for the birds to build nests or the baby turtles to head in the right direction to the sea. In *Abhidhamma* language, they generate mostly, “*upekkha sahagata citta*” and those have much less *javana* power.
- Thus, animals cannot accumulate much good or bad *kamma*. Otherwise, they will never be able to escape that “*bhava*”, since most survive by killing other animals. In the same way, whenever they get a “good life” (say as a human)– which is very rare — that is due to a good *kamma vipāka* done in a previous “good life”.
- But not all animals are the same. Those “higher up” animals like monkeys can accumulate *kamma* than “lower ones” such as worms, and cats and dogs are somewhere in between.

10. The potency of human *saṅkhāra* comes from the ability of humans to generate both “*somanassa sahagata citta*” (thoughts with joy) for *kusala kamma* and *akusala kamma*. The *javana* power of those *citta* are very high.

- Thus when one is doing a good deed with joy, that brings much more merits compared to someone who is doing it just because others are doing it, i.e., with an “*upekkha sahagata citta*”; see, “[A Simple Way to Enhance Merits \(Kusala\) and Decrease Demerits \(Akusala\)](#)”.
- Even more strong *javana* arise when a good deed is done with knowledge that it will lead to good results and why, i.e., one knows right from wrong.
- But the most potent *javana* arise when a good deed is done with understanding of the *anicca* nature, i.e., when one does it with “*somanassa sahagata ñāṇa sampayutta citta*”. Thus, *paññā* (or *ñāṇa*) comes from an understanding that is deeper than just knowing right from wrong.
- It works the other way around for bad deeds: the most potent *javana* (with high *kammic* power that can lead to rebirth in the *apāyas*) are generated with “*somanassa sahagata diṭṭhi sampayutta citta*”, i.e, thoughts with joy and **wrong vision**. A good example is someone who commits murder and enjoys and it is done with the *diṭṭhi* that such an action cannot bring bad consequences.

- But when one commits murder due to anger that is done with aversion and displeasure: “*domanassa saḥagata patigha sampyutta citta*”; see, “[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#)”.

11. Now let us consider the consequences of *saṅkhāra* in this life, that we mentioned in #6 above. Suppose a teenager starts associating with bad friends and start drinking alcohol. Initially, he does not even like the taste of it, i.e., he may be generating a *dukkha vedanā* due to the taste of alcohol. But with the insistence of those friends he continues drinking.

- Then he makes a habit (*gathi*) of it, begins to perceive the taste as a *sukha vedanā*, and starts making *saṅkhāra* about drinking. Even while in the middle of some other task, he starts thinking about the next party where he can drink, and what types of drinks there will be and so on.
- He of course will have *somanassa vedanā* when he is thinking such thoughts (*mano saṅkhāra*). Now “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*” step in the *paticca samuppāda* leads to making a “new *viññāṇa* for drinking”. The more he thinks about such parties and generate those *somanassa vedanā*, the more *viññāṇa*, *nama rūpa*, etc that he makes for such “drinking events”.
- And the stronger that “*viññāṇa* for drinking” gets, the more he will be thinking about it (making more *saṅkhāra*). Then the habit is strengthened; see, “[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)”.

12. Mind phenomena are complex. But with the background that we have accumulated, we can figure out some of the causes and possible effects. There is no need to memorize all these different terms; they will be carved into the memory as one contemplates and sorts out one’s own experiences.

To summarize: *Sukha* and *dukkha vedanā* arise due to *kamma vipāka*. *Somanassa* and *domanassa vedanā* arise due to *saṅkhāra*, which in turn arise due to our *gathi* and *āsavas*. The more *saṅkhāra* we do, the stronger a given *gathi* (habit) becomes, which in turn become *āsavas* (cravings) and fuel the *samsaric* journey (rebirth process). This vicious cycle can be broken only through comprehending the *anicca* nature of this world.

6.4.8.6 What is “Kāma”? It is not Just Sex

Revised October 31, 2017

1. “*Kāma*” comes from “*kā*” meaning “eat or destroy” and “*ama*” means *Nibbāna*. In our human world, which is a part of “*kāmalōka*”, temptations for staying away from *Nibbāna* come from five physical senses.

- Some people believe “*kāma*” is just about engaging in sex. Some others believe attractive sense objects are “*kāma*” objects, and those lead to defilements. Both are not quite correct.
- While “attractive sense objects” can lead to “*kāma assāda*”, the objects themselves don’t have *kāma*. An *Arahant* is not tempted by any such object. [*assāda* : [m.] mind-made pleasures {taste; enjoyment; satisfaction.}]
- While “attractive sense objects” can lead to “*kāma assāda*” or “mind-made pleasures”, the objects themselves don’t have *kāma*. An *Arahant* is not tempted by any such object.
- “*Kāma assāda*” or “sensual pleasures” are ASSOCIATED WITH our experiences through any of the five physical senses. But as we will see below, the Buddha specifically taught that “*kāma*” is a “made up pleasure”.
- The lowest 11 realms are collectively called “*kāma lōka*” because all such made up pleasures are available through all five physical senses in those realms.

2. We experience those external sense inputs in two ways:

- **We experience them directly:** For example, we see a person; hear a song; taste a piece of cake; smell a fragrance; someone we love gives a kiss. Those are actual sense contacts and **are due to *kamma vipāka***.

- You may be surprised, but most of our “sense pleasures” or “*kāma assāda*” are created by our minds. A sense contact comes and goes away relatively quickly; but we keep thinking about it, sometimes for hours. **This “*kāma assāda*” is the one that we CREATE IN OUR MINDS, via *saṅkhāra*.**
- For example, we may just see an attractive item in a store display which provides a sense pleasure while we are looking at it may be for a few seconds.
- But then we start thinking about how nice it would be to be able to buy it, enjoy it, and analyze how to go about paying for it, etc. We may be thinking about for several days. Please take time and contemplate on this. The initial sense contact of several minutes led to hours of thinking about it and making up “additional pleasure”. That is *kāma assāda*.

3. In the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Na Santi Sutta \(SN 1.34\)](#)“, the Buddha defined “*kāma*” as that second kind mentioned above: “*Na te kāmā yāni citrāni loke, Saṅkapparāgo purisassa kāmo..*”.

Translated: “World’s pretty things are not *kāma*, a person creates his/her own *kāma* by generating mind-made pleasures (*rāga sankalpanā*)..”.

- Buddha said that this world has many attractive pictures, sounds, tastes, smells, and touches. But those are not “*kāma*”. The initial sense experience could be pleasant, but it is a *kamma vipāka* (no *saṅkhāra* generated in the initial sense input).
- When one attaches to such a sense experience and **keep thinking about them**, one makes “*sankalpita rāga*” about it (by generating *vaci* and *kāya saṅkhāra*), that is “*kāma*”. Each person generates his/her own *kāma* based on his/her *gathi* or *samsāric* habits/cravings.

4. Let us discuss what is meant by “*sankalpita rāga*”: *Sankalpa* or *sankappa* means thoughts. *Raga* means the craving for pleasures in *samsāra*; see, “[Lobha, Raga and Kamacchanda, Kamaraga](#)”.

- Thus “*sankalpita rāga*” means thinking about such sense pleasures and giving priority to them. We tend to think for hours about an actual sense experience that we enjoyed in the past or one that we are about to experience in the future.
- Sometimes we also think for hours about how to enjoy a certain sense experience that seems out of reach for various reasons. In all these cases, we can spend hours and hours thinking about them and getting *kāma assāda* (or “*āsvāda*” in Sinhala) from it.
- In fact, most times sexual enjoyment comes from just thinking about a past experience or an anticipated one. The actual contact pleasure is relatively short-lived.

5. As we pointed out in #2 above, **some actual sense contacts** arise due to *kamma vipāka* (good *kamma vipāka* lead to good sense experiences, and bad lead to bad). Actual sense contacts are relatively short-lived. Even the tastiest food, we can eat so much. Even if it is the most luxurious chair, you cannot sit there for too long. You can think about all types of sense experiences and they are relatively short-lived.

- Even an *Arahant* experiences such sense experiences due to *kamma vipāka*, both good and bad. He/she may eat tasty food when offered, ride in a luxurious car, or see eye-catching pictures while on the road.
- But he/she will not spend anytime afterwards thinking about such sense experiences, i.e., there is no “*sankalpita rāga*”.

6. It is relatively easy to distinguish between sense pleasures due to *kamma vipāka* and those due to *kāma assāda*.

- When one is offered a tasty meal, for example, that is due to a previous good *kamma*, i.e., it is a *kamma vipāka*. But when one starts thinking how good that meal was and start thinking about how to enjoy another such meal, that is *kāma assāda*.
- In the same way, one may be born to a wealthy family and get all types of luxurious sense contacts, those are *kamma vipāka*.

- Whether rich or poor, when one is thinking about acquiring and enjoying new sense pleasures or reminiscing on past sense pleasures, that is *kāma assāda*.

7. Now we have two questions.

A. Why is it OK to experience direct sense pleasures that **naturally comes** one's way, but not good to enjoy "made-up mental pleasures" by thinking about them? (It is important to realize that even those direct sense pleasures INITIATED by oneself do not count as harmless; when we think about it a bit, we realize that such instances have their beginnings at "*sankalpita rāga*", i.e., one must have thought about to initiate it).

B. How can one experience an enjoyable sense pleasure and not be "tempted by it", i.e., not make "*sankalpita rāga*"?

8. The answers to those two questions can be found in one explanation. But that requires analyzing the situation from a different vantage point than we are used to. This is the "Dhamma that has never been known to the world.." or "*pubbe ananussutesu Dhammesu..*".

- The *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* cycle starts with, "*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*". Those "made-up mental pleasures" or "*kāma assāda*" are precisely what *saṅkhāra* are. These have bad consequences, or *adeenava*, through the rest of the *paticca samuppāda* (PS) cycle: "*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*", "*viññāṇa paccaya namarūpa*,.....up to "*jati paccaya jara, maraṇa, soka, parideva*,...". Thus the end point is suffering.
- When we experience a "direct sense contact" that naturally comes our way, that is not *saṅkhāra* or *kāma assāda*. That is a *kamma vipāka*. They do not lead to future suffering.
- This is a critical point to understand and is explained in detail in "[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāṇa](#)". Please read those again and make sure you understand the difference. If it is not clear, please let me know.

9. Now let us consider some examples to understand how even a sense contact due to *kamma vipāka* can lead to "*kāma assāda*". In a given day, we are bombarded with millions of sense inputs. But not all of them "grab our attention", and make us start thinking about them; more specifically, to start thinking about "getting more of it" or "how to acquire it so that it can be enjoyed at will".

- Why do certain sense inputs attract our attention more than others? A given sense input may tempt one person, but may not affect another at all. For example, one person may like heavy metal music, but another may be annoyed by it. We can think about many cases like that.
- But each person can be tempted by a set of sense inputs that he/she has a liking for. For two people, these sets may overlap to some extent but there will be differences. That is because the *āsava/anusaya* (or cravings) for each person is unique. They can change for a given person, but they define one's character at any given time. One can change one's *āsava/anusaya* by changing one's habits or "*gathi*". You can do a search on "*āsava, anusaya, gathi, habits*" and read the relevant posts.

10. The more *āsava/anusaya* one has, it is more likely that one's mind will be pulled in many different ways. This is the key reason for the scatteredness of our minds. Such a mind can be burdensome. This is called *tāpa* or "heat in the mind"; see, "[Satipattana Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)".

- The *āsava/anusaya* can be compared to dirt at the bottom of a glass of water. If there is a lot of dirt, only a slight disturbance can make the dirt come up and make the water dirty. But if it is only a little bit, most minor disturbances may not make the water dirty.
- Just like that, the more *āsava/anusaya* one has, it will be easier to make the mind restless.
- On the other hand, if there is no dirt at the bottom of the glass, no matter what kind of disturbance it is, the water will remain pure. The mind of an *Arahant* is like that. He/she can live totally unaffected surrounded by the world's most tempting sense objects. There will be no "*sankalpita rāga*" or *kāma assāda*. Of course he/she will experience the good/bad *kamma vipāka* same as others.

11. Now, one could say, “well, the more such *sankalpita rāga* that I make, it is better. I don’t mind if mind gets many such *assāda* in a given time”.

- In order to analyze that, we need to look at the *ādīnava* (bad consequences) of such *asvāda*, other than mind being pushed and pulled in many directions as we discussed in the previous bullet.
- The problem is that each time we enjoy *kāma assāda*, we do (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra*, as we saw in #8 above. They lead to future suffering via the *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* cycle. This is what we have been doing in countless number of births up to now.

12. That future suffering can arise both in this life as well as in future lives. It can materialize at different levels depending on the “strength of the *kāma assāda*”.

- Let us start at the most extreme level. One decides that “I have to have this. I am going to do whatever it takes to get it”. With such a mindset one can kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, lie, or make any number of other immoral acts with a “drunken mind”.
- Of course the bad consequences are many, even during this life. One could get caught and go to jail. Even otherwise, one will be under constant stress of worrying about being caught.
- But stronger consequences will follow in future lives as well, with interest. Thus a normal moral person can see the “*ādīnava*” in such strong *kāma assāda*.
- By contemplating on such “*ādīnava*”, it becomes easier for one’s mind to automatically reject doing such acts; this is “*nissarana*”. Through understanding of the consequences, one avoids such acts.

13. At the next level, we may not do any of the immoral acts by body or speech (*kaya and vacī saṅkhāra*), but may still accumulate *mano saṅkhāra*, which still are included in the *dasa akusala: Abhijjā [Abhijjhā]* (covetousness; greed for other’s belongings), *Vyāpāda* (ill-will, hatred), and *Micca Diṭṭhi* (wrong views); see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”.

- The problem with *mano saṅkhāra* or *kāma assāda* is that they are hard to control by willpower alone. They are thoughts and thoughts rise very fast; see, “[What is a Thought?](#)”. The *kaya* and *vacī saṅkhāra* take time to form. For example, one could be tempted to hit someone, but can think about the consequences and stop. One could start saying a bad thing, but may be able to stop oneself. The ability to control even speech and bodily acts depends on the level of *āsava/anusaya* one has, and also the “trigger”. One could, for example, lose all self-control and kill a person who one catches in a sexual act with one’s spouse.
- And *mano saṅkhāra* or *kāma assāda* appear to be harmless. No one else can know about them. One could spend hours on end generating *kāma assāda* about an object of interest and derive an enjoyment. But they have consequences.
- It must also be remembered that all those *kaya saṅkhāra* and *vacī saṅkhāra* that one suppressed by one’s will power started off as *mano saṅkhāra*. Thus even though *dasa akusala* corresponding to speech and bodily actions were avoided, those due to *mano saṅkhāra* (*kāma assāda*) would still remain.
- This is why keeping the conventional five precepts is not sufficient; the hard part is to purify one’s thoughts or the mind; see, “[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#)”.

14. A key problem with *mano saṅkhāra* or the *kāma assāda* is that they lead to the formation of bad habits (*gathi*), which in turn lead to the formation of new *āsava/anusaya* or in strengthening old *āsava/anusaya*; see, “[Gathi \(Character\), Anusaya \(Latent Defilements\), and Āsava \(Cravings\)](#)”, and other related posts.

- It can become a vicious circle. In a way, this is the “wheeling process” of “*riya*” that sustains the cycle of rebirths; see, “[Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#)”.
- Even though those *mano saṅkhāra* (*abhijjā [abhijjhā]*, *vyāpāda*, *micca diṭṭhi*) seem to be harmless, those can lead to birth in the *apāyas*.

- But now the question is, if *kāma assāda* or *mano saṅkhāra* arise with such rapidity and hence cannot be controlled like *kāya saṅkhāra* and *vacī saṅkhāra*, how can we stop them from arising? This was the second question asked in #7 above. It is done by getting rid of bad habits and cultivating good habits; this leads to changes in our *āsava/anusaya*.
- The best and permanent way to change *āsava/anusaya* is to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. When one realizes that “nothing in this world can be maintained to one’s satisfaction in the long run” (*anicca*), one’s mind automatically stops thinking about such “made up pleasures”. We will discuss this more in upcoming posts.

6.4.8.7 Kāma Assāda Start with Phassa Paccaya Vedana or Samphassa Ja Vedana

In posts with advanced concepts I have to use to many Pāli words. There are no short phrases in English to give the same meanings for phrases like “*samphassa ja vedanā*”. Thus it will be beneficial to learn the meanings of these Pāli words and phrases, and also to be able to pronounce them if that seems to be helpful. I have included some audio files in the post, “[Pāli Glossary \(A-K\)](#) and [Pāli Glossary \(L-Z\)](#)”. Here is how to pronounce the Pāli words in the title of this post:

[WebLink: Listen to pronunciation of : kāma-āsvāda-phassa-paccaya-vedanā-samphassa-ja-vedanā](#)

1. In the previous post, “[What is Kāma? It is not Sex](#)“, we saw that *kāma* is not sex or even attractive sense objects, ear-pleasing sound, tasty food, nice smell, or a sensual body touch as many believe. ***Kāma* is basically *vacī saṅkhāra* about sense-pleasing objects (constantly thinking about those pleasures)**, whether it is an eye-catching object, ear-pleasing sound, tasty food, nice smell, or a body touch.

- We saw that *kāma* (or *kāma assāda*) is *sankalpitha rāga* which means **thinking about** such sense objects and giving priority to them. We also saw that such *kāma assāda* (or *assāda* in Sinhala) are *vacī saṅkhāra* that arise when our deep-seated *āsava/anusaya* (which are related to our habits or “*gati*”) are triggered by certain sense inputs.
- Thus we can see that *kāma assāda*, *sankalpitha rāga*, *vacī saṅkhāra* mean basically the same thing.
- **To re-emphasize: *kāma assāda* are beyond actually experiencing those sense inputs that come our way due to good *kamma vipāka*** (even though one would need to stay away from high-pleasure activities, because one could get used to them and make corresponding habits). *Kāma assāda* are craving and thinking and planning about such sense inputs.
- Some extreme *kāma assāda* (or at least actions and speech initiated by them) can be suppressed by understanding the bad consequences (*ādeenava*) of them.
- Without a Buddha appearing in the world, we would not even realize that even milder *kāma assāda* have bad consequences (*ādeenava*) too. Yet, they do have bad consequences as we saw in the previous post.

2. The critical point that we need to discuss now is how to prevent milder, but still harmful, *kāma āsvāda* from arising in our minds. We basically have to use the same tactic that was discussed both in the previous post and also in the introduction to this series, “[Assāda, Ādinava, Nissarana – Introduction](#)”.

- When a mind comprehends that certain actions are harmful, it avoids such actions. As we discussed in that introductory post, the best way to quit smoking is to fully understand the bad consequences of that habit. Another is to cultivate a good habit (say, listening/reading Dhamma) instead.
- In the previous post we discussed how we avoid immoral actions via speech and bodily actions by comprehending the bad consequences of such actions.
- In other words, the primary way to effectively remove bad habits (*nissarana*) is to comprehend the bad consequences (*ādeenava*) of such *kāma assāda* from arising in our minds.

3. This is where another important aspect of Buddha “previously unheard Dhamma” comes into play. This unique message is that in addition to being harmful, *kāma assāda* are unfruitful in the long run. Even though we normally value them, when analyzed with the way the Buddha taught, we can see that they are just mind-made due to our ignorance of the true nature of this world.

4. It is important to understand the big difference between *vipāka vedanā* and *kāma assāda*. We cannot stop *vipāka vedanā* from arising; but we can stop *kāma assāda* by cleansing our minds.

Kāma assāda are normally triggered by a *vipāka vedanā*. Also, *kāma assāda* are **totally made up in our minds**. Let us take a simple example to gain more insight.

- Husband and wife are walking down the street and the wife stops and looks at a beautiful painting on display in a store window. Husband looks at it, shrugs his shoulders and wants to move on. It is somewhat expensive, so she is thinking about whether they can afford it right now, but she would really like to buy it. Husband has no interest in it, and thinks that it is a waste of money to buy it.
- They both saw the same painting as a *vipāka vedanā*. That was just the “seeing event”, and as we will discuss in *Abhidhamma*, **most *vipāka vedanā* are neutral**, like seeing or hearing. **The exceptions are bodily contacts**, which can be either bodily *dukkha vedanā* (like a cut or a headache) or *sukha vedanā* (like getting a massage or being in an air-conditioned room on a hot day) depending on whether it is bad or a good *vipāka*.
- Now, any “happy feeling” that was generated in the mind of the wife would have been due to *kāma assāda*. Such a “happy feeling” was not generated in the mind of the husband. This is an important point. **The “happy feeling” that was generated in the wife could not have been a property of the painting**; if so, it should have given the same “happy feeling” to the husband!

5. Thus in the above particular case, only the wife started enjoying *kāma assāda* due to seeing the portrait. In other words, a *pavutti kusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* cycle operated only for the wife; it was triggered by her deep-seated craving (*assāda/anusaya*) for such an object, which made her act with *avijjā*.

- We could also state the same process by saying that “*cakkhunca paticca rupeca uppadaṭṭi cakkhu vinnanā*” was followed by “*thinnaṇa saṅgathi phassa*” and “*phassa paccaya vedanā*”; see, “[Tanhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.
- Now she is attached and deliberately looks at the picture, “*avijja paccaya saṅkhāra*” step started and then went through the step, “*(saṇ)phassa paccaya vedanā*” in a fraction of second; see, “[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(or Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.
- However, for the husband, who saw the same portrait, there was no *assāda/anusaya* for such an object to “attach to it” and to act with *avijjā* and to initiate those processes; also see, “[“Self” and “no-self”: A Simple Analysis – Do We Always Act with Avijja?](#)”.
- For some, this may be crystal clear but those who are not very familiar with the concepts may want to review those relevant posts.

6. Now that she is “attached” to the portrait, the wife keep looking at it for a while, which will lead to numerous such *pavutti akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* cycles. Not only that, she will be enjoying “*kāma assāda*” about that picture even after they left that place by thinking back about it. Now she has made a “*viññāṇa*” and a “*bhava*” for it.

- That “*kāma assāda*” can resurface with *paticca samuppāda* cycles that involve only the mind when she is at home: It starts with “*mananā paticca dhammeca uppadaṭṭi mano vinnanā*”, i.e., she just remembers the portrait while washing dishes. How does she start thinking about the portrait when she was busy with some other task?
- One way to explain that is to say that “she had ‘cultivated’ a *viññāṇa*” for that portrait and now it can resurface sometimes even without a prompt. This is sometimes known as the “subconscious”; see, “[3. Viññāṇa, Thoughts, and the Subconscious](#)”.
- Another way to explain it by saying that she had made a “*bhava*” for liking that portrait and it is a *dhamma* that can enter the mind when the conditions are right: “*mananā paticca dhammeca*”

uppaddati mano vinnanan“. However, that particular *dhamma* or concept or thought would never make contact with the mind successfully if she was listening to a discourse or thinking about a key concept like *anicca*. Since she was doing a task that did not motivate her much (washing dishes) that is an opportunity for such “subconscious *viññāṇa*” to come to the surface.

7. Of course, now that “*mananca paticca dhammeca uppaddati mano vinnanan*” step will be followed by, “*thinnaṇa saṇ gathi phasso*” and “(saṇ)phassa paccaya vedanā”; see, “[Difference between Phassa and Samphassa](#)“. Her “*gathi*” for liking such pictures will make her mind “*samphassa*“, which in turn will lead to “*samphassa paccaya vedanā*” or “*samphassa ja vedanā*“.

- This is a *vedanā* that her husband will not get. He did not make a “*viññāṇa*” or a “*bhava*” for that portrait and thus it will not come to his mind.

8. Now, suppose that a week later they are walking by the same store. The wife remembers the portrait, but finds that it is no longer there; someone had bought it. Now, think about what happens to the two of them.

- The wife will be distraught: “I should have bought it; now I may not be able to find such a nice portrait”. But the husband will not have any bad feelings, except may be some bad feelings about his wife not been able to get what she wanted.
- **This is the suffering that we can stop from arising even in this life.** It is not a *vipāka vedanā*, but a “*samphassa ja vedanā*“. The wife got distraught only because she got attached to that portrait, but the husband did not.

9. I just gave a very simple example from real life. Of course it is a relatively insignificant “*taṇhā*” without drastic consequences. I just wanted to use it, because most people can understand it. Of course the consequences can be much harsher if one gets attached to something of more significant, keep thinking about it and make that “*viññāṇa* grow”, and eventually does something bad to acquire it.

- a) For example, X who “falls in love” with Y, may be thinking about it all day and make a “very strong greedy *viññāṇa*” about X. So, X makes all kinds of plans in his/her mind about Y, and the more he/she does it, the more strong that *viññāṇa* gets.
- b) The more strong that *viññāṇa* is it is more likely to “come to his/her mind” because it is a *dhamma* that is constantly hovering around his/her mind (or in the subconscious). It is easy to start more PS process with “*mananca paticca dhammeca uppaddati mano vinnanan*“.

10. Note the difference between a) and b) above. In a), the process starts with “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*” when X first thinks about Y and starts thinking about Y with *avijjā* and gets “bonded to Y” in his/her mind. At this point, a “baby *viññāṇa*” is formed about Y.

- Now, since it is at an early stage, this “baby *viññāṇa* for Y” may not trigger “*mananca paticca dhammeca uppaddati mano vinnanan*” (process b) often. And that *viññāṇa* may start dying out if X does not get to think about Y for a while.
- But if X sees Y again in a few days, then that “baby *viññāṇa* for Y” gets fed again. The sight of Y makes X to go through many PS cycles and strengthen that “*viññāṇa* for Y”.
- If X gets to see Y often and may be even to “hang out with Y”, that “*viññāṇa* for Y” will grow because now X is giving it a lot of food (*āhāra*).
- Now with a “strong *viññāṇa* for Y”, X’s mind will be constantly being with “*dhamma* about Y” and it is more likely that “*mananca paticca dhammeca uppaddati mano vinnanan*” will be triggered even while X is doing something else.

11. Then one day, X hears that Y has got engaged to another person. What will happen to X? He/she will be highly distraught, and depending on the level of attraction (and X’s *gathi*), X may do something bad.

- For example, if the attraction (level of *taṇhā*) was very strong, AND if X has “violent character” (i.e., “violent *gathi*“), then X may hurt Y or the person that Y got engaged to. **Then**

not only will X be suffering due to “loss of Y”, but would also have made causes for FUTURE SUFFERING by committing a bad *kamma*.

12. Now we can see how both *taṇhā* and *gathi* are two critical issues. Both those can be lessened by contemplating on the bad consequences (*adeenava*) of acting foolishly.

- And that can be done on a permanent basis by comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. Then one’s *gathi* will change permanently to the “moral *gathi*” of a *Sotāpanna*, and one will never do anything that will lead to the birth in the *apāyas*. Even though a *Sotāpanna* may still generate “*samphassa ja vedanā*”, due to some sense inputs, those will be milder and thus any suffering incurred would be mild.
- I hope that it is clear from this discussion that it is impossible to forcibly suppress *kāma assāda* or thoughts about sense objects. The only way it can be done is via purifying the mind by learning Dhamma (especially *anicca* nature of this world) and thinking about the bad consequences of such thoughts (*adeenava*). This is what the Buddha realized as the *āsavakkhaya ñāṇa*, the way to get rid of *āsava* (and *anusaya*) via getting rid of bad habits (*gathi*) and cultivating good habits (*gathi*).
- And this is discussed in the meditation (*bhāvanā*) section under, “[9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#)”.

6.4.9 Sakkaya Ditthi is Personality (Me) View?

March 10, 2017; revised January 20, 2018

In this post we will discuss why interpretations of two key concepts — *sakkaya diṭṭhi* and *samyojana* — in many current English publications (including supposedly *Theravāda* texts) are incorrect.

1. Most texts describe *sakkaya diṭṭhi* as “self-illusion” or “personality belief”, i.e., “belief that a self or a me exists” (you can Google “*sakkaya diṭṭhi*” and see).

- But this perception of a “self” or a “permanent soul” which is also called “*āthma*” is NOT *sakkaya diṭṭhi* per *Tipitaka* as we discuss below. This is really a *saññā* (perception) that we have carried from life-to-life. For a discussion on *saññā*, see, “[What is Sañña \(Perception\)?](#)”.
- The deeply-embedded idea of a “self” or an innate sense of “me” is rooted in the *māna cetasika* (conceit or “high-mindedness”).
- If one gets offended if treated with disrespect, that means one still has *māna* left. Even an *Anāgāmī* could be somewhat perturbed if he/she perceives to be treated badly; a component of *māna* — called *asmi māna* — is still left at the *Anāgāmī* stage. *Māna* is removed not at the *Sotāpanna* stage, but at the *Arahant* stage.
- What is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage is the tendency to value one’s physical body so highly, and the view that a permanent happiness can be achieved by living in a certain way, or doing certain (good) things.
- Therefore, the idea that the perception of a “self” can be removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage is not only incorrect but also is dangerous, because one is trying to do something that is not possible to do at that stage. It is like a child in the primary school trying to get a Ph.D.

2. In the post, “[Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala](#)”, we discussed the four conditions that need to be satisfied to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*.

- When those conditions are fulfilled, one will break through *three samyojana* (mental bonds) and be permanently released from rebirths in the *apāyas* (four lowest realms). The Pāli word *samyojana* (or *sanyojana* or *sanyoga*) is normally translated as “fettters”. See, for example, the Wikipedia article: “[WebLink: WIKIPEDIA: Fetter \(Buddhism\)](#)”.
- But as in many English publications (books, internet posts), the above Wikipedia article explains *samyojana* incorrectly.

3. We are bound to the 31 realms in this world by ten “mental tethers” or *samyojana*. It can be visualized as someone bound to a post by a rope, except that there is no one else that forcibly bind us to the 31 realms.

- *sanyojana* or *sanyoga* (“*san*” + “*yoga*” where “*yoga*” means to bind) means bound via “*san*”; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”.
- We voluntarily bind ourselves to this world with our minds, because we believe that somewhere in these 31 realms we can find permanent happiness.
- **In fact, most people think they can find happiness in this life itself!** They don’t even pause to contemplate what happens when one gets old and helpless. If one takes time to contemplate, there are many examples around where famous, wealthy, and powerful, became helpless at old age and died a miserable death.

4. A *Sotāpanna* breaks through 3 of those 10 *sanyojana* — or “bonds” or “tethers” — and gets permanently released from the four lowest realms (*apāyas*). He/she does this by comprehending the true nature of this world, i.e., attaining *sammā diṭṭhi*.

The key word “*sammā*” comes from “*san*” + “*mā*”, which means “to become free of *san*”. For example:

- “*Mā hoti jati, jati*”, means “may I be free of repeated birth”.
- “*Mā mé bāla samāgamō*” means “may I be free of association with those who are ignorant of Dhamma”.
- Thus *sammā diṭṭhi* is to be free of wrong views. One gets some level of *sammā diṭṭhi* at the *Sotāpanna* stage and completes at the *Arahant* stage.

5. One has to break those bonds in one’s own mind. One gains *sammā diṭṭhi* — right view to become free of ‘*san*’ — by comprehending the true nature of this world of 31 realms.

Anicca – that nothing in this world can bring a permanent happiness in the long run.

Dukkha – despite our struggles, we will be subjected to much more suffering than pleasures if we remain in the rebirth process.

Anatta – therefore, one is truly helpless in this struggle to attain “something of essence in this world”. That is just an illusion.

- See, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.

6. It is important to realize that there are two Eightfold Paths with two types of *sammā diṭṭhi*: “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)” and “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)”.

- One first needs to reach a “moral mindset” by staying away from immoral acts embedded in the five precepts. This is attaining “*mundane sammā diṭṭhi*”.
- Then one’s mind is cleansed enough to comprehend the Three Characteristics of this world: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.
- When one gains this “*lokottara sammā diṭṭhi*” to some extent, one will truly start on the Noble Eightfold Path; see, “[How to Cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path starting with Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”.
- This distinction is hard to perceive for many people. I encourage them to read the first few subsections of the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.

7. Now let us discuss how gaining *lokottara sammā diṭṭhi* leads to the removal of three of the ten mental tethers (or fetters) that bind us to the rebirth process and gain release from the worst types of suffering in the *apāyas*.

- Those three *samyojana* are *sakkaya diṭṭhi* (also called *sathkaya diṭṭhi*), *vicikicca*, and *silabbata paramasa*.

8. The Buddha discussed 62 types of *diṭṭhi* that were present during that time in the *Brahmajala Sutta*. We don't need to discuss all of them today, because there are only two of those wrong views that are prevalent today.

- Religious people (Creator-based religions), believe that there is a “permanent soul”, and one will be born in heaven or hell forever after this life. This idea of an “*āthma*” or a “self” was the *sāssata diṭṭhi*.
- Science today believes that our thoughts arise in our brains, i.e., our mental body is the same as the physical body (“I am my body”). So, when we die, that is the end of the story because the physical body becomes dust; so they say “enjoy life while it lasts”. This was the “*ucceda diṭṭhi*” (pronounced “uchcheda”) that the Buddha also rejected: “Life terminating with the death of the physical body”.
- Thus the Buddha rejected both wrong views that “a self exists” and “a self does not exist”. Things can exist due to causes and when the causes are removed they cease to exist. This is the principle of cause and effect explained in *Paticca Samuppāda*. Beings exist due to *avijjā* and *taṇhā*, and cease to exist when those cease to exist and reach permanent happiness (i.e., attain *Nibbāna*).

9. Even those religious people may subconsciously have that part of the *ucceda diṭṭhi* of “I am my physical body”.

- Our increasingly materialistic societies constantly feed this narrative — that it is so important to look beautiful and strong because my body is what I am — via television and movies.
- In other words, *sakkaya diṭṭhi* in the present day is rooted in the view of “I am my physical body” and “I can achieve happiness by providing a lot of pleasurable sense inputs to my body”.

10. “*Sath*” or “*sak*” both mean “good” or “fruitful”.

- And *kaya* can mean either **one's actions** or **one's body**, as we discussed in *Kayanupassana*; see, “[Kayanupassana – Section on Postures \(Iriyapathapabba\)](#)”.
- ***Sakkaya diṭṭhi* encompasses mainly two views:** (i) “I am my body” and I need to keep it beautiful above all, and (ii) I can achieve happiness by diligently pursuing (good) things in this world.

11. Therefore, getting rid of *sakkaya diṭṭhi* in the present day requires one to realize that this physical body is “just a shell” that we have possession of only for about 100 years.

- **This is why it is important to realize the role played by our mental body, *gandhabba***, which could live for thousands of years. But that also will cease to exist when we grasp a new existence (*bhava*) at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment when the *gandhabba* itself dies.
- Our next existence depends not on how well keep our physical bodies (of course we need to be healthy), but how well we “improve” our mental body by learning *Dhamma* and living according to that *Dhamma*.
- I have given a simpler explanation of *gandhabba* at the “Living Dhamma” section: “[Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)”, and there is a separate section in the *Abhidhamma* section that goes into more details.

12. The second view associated with *sakkaya diṭṭhi* in #10 above, i.e., that one can achieve happiness by diligently pursuing things in this world, can only be removed by comprehending the “*anicca* nature”.

- See, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”.
- When one comprehends *anicca*, one realizes that no matter what we do, staying in the rebirth process leads to net suffering: **Even though there are bouts of happiness to be had, those will be insignificant to suffering in the long run, especially when one is (inevitably) born in the *apāyas*.**

13. It should be noted that a full explanation of *sakkaya diṭṭhi* is given in the *Culavedalla Sutta* (*Majjima Nikāya* 44) where Ven. Dhammadinna Thero explains it to her former husband Visakha:

“..Katham panāyye, sakkāyadiṭṭhi hotī”ti? “Idhāvuso visākha, assutavā puthujjano, ariyānaṃ adassāvī ariyadhammassa akovido ariyadhamme avinīto, sappurisānaṃ adassāvī sappurisa-dhammassa akovido sappurisa-dhamme avinīto, **rūpaṃ attato samanupassati, rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ, attani vā rūpaṃ, rūpasmiṃ vā attānaṃ.** Vedanaṃ ... pe ... saññāṃ ... saṅkhāre ... viññāṇaṃ attato samanupassati, viññāṇavantaṃ vā attānaṃ, attani vā viññāṇaṃ, viññāṇasmiṃ vā attānaṃ. Evaṃ kho, āvuso visākha, sakkāyadiṭṭhi hotī”ti.

- First, it is important to realize that “atta” in the above verse used in the conventional sense, to denote “I”.
- What we have discussed regarding “I am my body” is stated in the bold text above that can be translated as: **“I am my body, my body is me, my body is in me, I am in my body”**. Here “rūpa” is one’s body and “atta” is “self” in the conventional sense (just like when the Buddha said “I was given *niyata vivarana* by Buddha Deepankara”). The idea expressed by *sakkaya diṭṭhi* is to take one’s body to be oneself.
- In the same way, some people could take one’s own *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa* to be oneself in four ways as above. All these mental components give rise to the idea that “I remember this and that happened to me a long time ago; so there must be a continuation of me until the body dies”.
- The French Philosopher Rene Descartes famously said, “I think, therefore I am”; he proposed that those thoughts arise in the pineal gland in the brain. So, all these are part of *ucceda diṭṭhi*.

14. When one attains the *Sōtapanna* stage, one just “sees with wisdom” (becomes “*dassanēna sampannō*”) that it does not make sense to take the stand “I am my body”, etc as above.

- However, “just seeing” that it makes sense, and actually verifying and experiencing that to be true, are two different things. One finally verifies that to be true and thereby gets rid of the perception of “me” (called “*asmi māna*”) only at the *Arahant* stage.
- This issue was recently discussed at the discussion forum at length, and I recommend reading it, since it is not possible to put it in a short post like this; see, “[WebLink: Wrong English translations of Anicca, Anatta, Sakkaya diṭṭhi](#)”.

15. The confusion in conventional translations of *sakkaya diṭṭhi* seems to arise when they try to connect “atta” in the above verse (“*rupam attato*”) as opposite of “anatta” in *Tilakkhana*. **Atta has two meanings**: one meaning is “I” or “myself” as in “*atta hi attano natho*” (“only I can be of salvation to myself”), and that is the meaning implied in the above verse.

- The other meaning of “atta” is “in control” or “has essence”, and the opposite of that is the *anatta* in *Tilakkhana*: “one is helpless in this rebirth process”.
- Those two meanings are explained in “[Attā Hi Attano Nātho](#)” and in detail in, “[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#)”.
- This is why Pāli dictionaries need to be used with caution. **One cannot define and fix the meaning of a Pāli word.** One HAS TO KNOW the context in which the word is used; see, “[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#)”.

16. The second *sanyojana* removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage is *vicikicca*, which is conventionally translated as doubts about the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. But it is informative to see how such doubts are related to the *Tilakkhana*.

- *Vicikicca* comes from *vi+chi+ki+ichcha*. Our actions (“*kī*” or “*kriya*”) are based on our likings (“*ichcha*”) for worldly things based on our distorted view, i.e, *diṭṭhi* that those things can lead to happiness. “*Cha*” means *citta* or the way we think, here based on such *diṭṭhi*. And to dissociate (“*vī*”) from such thoughts is *vicikicca*.
- **One dissociates from such wrong views by comprehending “anicca nature”**. When one becomes a *Sotāpanna*, one automatically sees the “fruitlessness” in many immoral or inappropriate actions. One truly knows deep down that most of our actions in pursuing sense

pleasures are in vain. However, until one becomes an *Anāgāmi*, one is still attached to sense pleasures.

- For example, a *Sotāpanna* may still engage in sex, but will not engage in immoral sexual activities outside marriage. While the first can still lead to one's rebirth in the human and *deva* realms, the latter can lead to births in the *apāyas*. A *Sotāpanna* is released only from the *apāyas*.
- In other words, if one has *vicikicca*, one MAY do immoral *apayagami* actions under tempting conditions. But a *Sotāpanna* is INCAPABLE of doing such actions under ANY circumstance. A *Sotāpanna* will not have any doubts about which actions are really immoral.

17. The third *sanyojana*, *silabbata paramasa*, is the wrong view that *Nibbāna* can be attained by following specific precepts/rituals like following five or eight precepts (or just by doing good things).

- Attaining *Nibbāna* REQUIRES *lokottara sammā diṭṭhi*. To attain *lokottara sammā diṭṭhi* one needs to grasp the *Tilakkhana*: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* as discussed in #5 and #6 above.
- When one comprehends *anicca*, one stays away from immoral actions not because one is firmly adhering to a set of precepts or rituals, but one knows deep inside that such actions are fruitless and dangerous in the long run.
- However, following precepts (i.e., staying away from immoral deeds) is necessary to get to mundane *sammā diṭṭhi* and to make one's mind cleansed enough to be able to comprehend *Tilakkhana*.

18. Finally, a *Sotāpanna* needs to break two more *samyojana* or bonds — *kāma rāga* and *patigha* — to become free of the *kāma loka* (lowest 11 realms, including human and 6 *deva* realms) to become an *Anāgāmi* and be free of rebirth anywhere in the *kāma loka*.

- The last five *samyojana* (including the perception of a “self” or *māna*) will be removed only at the *Arahant* stage; see, “[The Cooling Down Process \(Nibbāna\) – How Root Causes are Removed](#)”.

6.4.10 Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta

1. First I need to clarify the title. Of course *citta* (pronounced “chittha”) are thoughts. All *kamma* start as *mano saṅkhāra*, i.e., one starts thinking about something and it escalates into speech and bodily action by the “wheeling” or “*riya*” process; see, “[Nibbāna – Stopping of the Sansaric Vehicle](#)”.

- The complete cessation of doing *saṅkhāra* happens only when one becomes an *Arahant*. But after attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage, this “wheeling process” stops for certain types of initial thoughts or *citta*.

2. We have seen that *apāya* is a common word for the lowest four realms of existence, see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”. *Apāyagāmi* (“*apāya*” + “*gāmi*” means directed towards) *citta* are those that lead to potent *kamma* responsible for rebirth in the lowest four realms.

3. So, what *cittas* or thoughts gets one started on the “wheeling process” or a “thought process” that leads to speech or bodily action of very bad consequences, i.e., birth in the *apāyas*? These are thoughts that arise because one does not have a full understanding of the “nature of this world”, i.e., the *Tilakkhana*, or *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

Out of the 89 possible *citta* (see, “[The 89 Types of Citta](#)”) 12 are immoral *citta*:

- 8 with the *lōbha* (greed) root; *mōha* root is there too.
- 2 with the *dōsa* (hate, ill will) root; *mōha* root is there too.
- 2 with just the *mōha* (ignorance) root.

ALL TEN immoral acts (*dasa akusala*; see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”) are done with these 12 types of *citta*.

4. We generate greedy thoughts because we “want to get possession of things that seem to provide happiness”. When we do not get what we want, we generate hate or ill will towards whoever is in the way.

- And we do both types of actions because we do not realize that it is not possible to achieve lasting happiness with anything in “this world”. Not only that, we do not realize that by doing those bad actions we accumulate bad *kamma* (i.e., accumulate *kammic* energy) that are going to have bad consequences in the future, either in this very life or in future lives.
- Thus ignorance of the true nature of “this world” is the cause of all bad actions done with greed and hate; this is why the *mōha* root is in all of them. We also do certain bad actions just based on ignorance too, like comparing how one is “better” than another, etc.

A. The **two ignorance-rooted citta** are:

- One associated with *vicikicca* (*vichi+ki+ichcha* = liking based on distorted view, i.e., *diṭṭhi*). Commonly *vicikicca* is described as “doubt”, which could be taken as “doubt about the true world view”. Just like a fish biting on a bait due to not “seeing” the hook, we just grab things without “seeing” the consequences, i.e., possible harm to others and the consequences of such harmful actions for ourselves.
- One associated with *uddhacca* (restlessness or agitation of the mind). This is opposite of *samādhi* or ability to concentrate and being able to think through consequences of actions. One could have *uddhacca* even if one knows the “true nature” of this world; it is sort of a cumulative result of all defilements accumulated through beginning-less *samsāra*. This is completely removed only at the *Arahant* stage.

All 12 types of *citta* have ignorance as a root (primary as in the above two types) or as secondary in the other ten *citta*. These ten *citta* can be divided into two categories in another way, i.e., based on whether such *cittas* arise mainly due to *vicikicca* (i.e., due to not knowing the true nature of this world) or *uddhacca* (i.e., the agitation of the mind due to all accumulated defilements).

B. Out of the **eight greed-rooted citta**, four arise with wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), i.e., due to lack of understanding of the “true nature of this world”, and that “this world” is much more complex than we perceive with our senses, and that our life does not end here, but what we do will have consequences for very long times into the future. The other four are done anyway, even with right view, because of the agitation of the mind due to all “gunk” accumulated over the long *sansaric* journey. Thus the eight greed-based *citta* can be divided into two broad categories:

- Four done with wrong views (*diṭṭhi*) are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- Four dissociated from wrong view (i.e., it does not matter whether one has right view if defilements still cloud the mind; for example even one who has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage may do these four)

C. The **two hate-rooted citta** are also done regardless of whether one has right view (at the *Sotāpanna* stage) or not:

- These two hate-rooted *citta* are dissociated with wrong views, but are due to the agitated mind (*uddhacca*). Thus they persist after the *Sotāpanna* stage, up to the *Anāgāmi* stage.

Now we can see the broad view:

5. Five *cittas* (*vicikicca* and the four greed-rooted *citta* associated with wrong view) arise because one does not know the true nature of the world, *Tilakkhana*, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. They contribute to one of the four types of *āsava* called the *diṭṭhi āsava* or *ditthasava*.

These are the same *citta* that could lead to *apayagami kamma*. **Thus when one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, these five *citta* cease to arise forever, and one WILL NOT BE ABLE to do any such grave *kamma*.** Thus, the *Sotāpanna* stage is a very important stage of *Nibbāna* where *āsavakkhaya* happens to a significant level due to the removal of *ditthasava*:

- A *Sotāpanna* attains that stage just by getting rid of *diṭṭhi* or wrong views: *sathkaya* (or *sakkaya*) *diṭṭhi* is the view that lasting happiness can be attained via pursuing things in this

world. *Vicikicca* leads to tendencies and actions associated with wrong worldviews, and *silabbata paramasa* is the view that *Nibbāna* can be attained by following specific precepts/rituals without cleansing the mind.

- The other seven *citta* are the ones that are harder to remove. They arise due to an agitated mind which is a result of other defilements (*āsavas*) that we have accumulated over the long *samsāra*; see. “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of āsavas](#)”.
- Out of these, the two hate-rooted *citta* are lessened in strength at the *Sakadāgāmī* stage and are removed at the *Anāgāmī* stage.
- The remaining four greed-rooted *citta* (those dissociated from wrong views) contribute to *kamaraga* (greed for things in the *kamaloka*). *Kamaraga* is lessened at the *Sakadāgāmī* stage and completely removed at the *Anāgāmī* stage. Thus an *Anāgāmī* is unable to generate hateful thoughts or lustful thoughts, and is free from rebirth anywhere in the *kamaloka*. An *Anāgāmī* has removed *kamasava*, another part of the *āsava*.
- Finally, it is only at the *Arahant* stage that those remaining four greed-rooted *citta* (which still contribute to *bhavasava*) and the *uddhacca citta* (which still contribute to *avijjasava*) are completely removed. This is when all the defilements or *āsavas* are completely removed from one’s mind.

6. It is clear that all five *akusala citta* that are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage arise due to *micca diṭṭhi*, i.e., not comprehending the Three Characteristics of existence: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. Also see, “Kilesa (Mental Impurities), Diṭṭhi (Wrong Views), Sammā Diṭṭhi (Good/Correct Views)”.

7. This realization of correct views CANNOT be attained by following rituals, such as just obeying precepts. It comes naturally when one COMPREHENDS the true nature of this world of 31 realms: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – True Meanings](#)”. That it is unfruitful to involve in any kind of activities to gain mundane pleasures by hurting other beings. Such an understanding makes irrevocable changes in one’s *manomaya kaya*, and thus prevents one from doing such activities even in the future lives.

8. Now it is important to realize that a *Sotāpanna* can be a parent taking care of a family. He/she will be doing a job, driving kids to school, and doing all other daily tasks. But one does all this with the clear understanding that one should NOT do certain things. One could live a moral life suitable for a *Sotāpanna* without giving up ANY responsibilities as a regular “householder”. Actually one could even attain the *Anāgāmī* stage without becoming a *bhikkhu*. And there were many “householders” that had attained *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī* stages at the Buddha’s time; there are some even today.

6.4.11 What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?

Revised May 10, 2017; December 1, 2017

Out of *dasa akusala*, only *micca diṭṭhi* is COMPLETELY removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage. But that itself accounts for more than 99% of *akusala* (defilements) from one’s mind since the “*apayagami* strength” of other nine *akusala kamma* are also removed.

- This illustrates the importance of removing *micca diṭṭhi*, and why I have so many posts on that.
- Some people think a *Sotāpanna* is incapable of breaking the five precepts based on an incorrect translation of the [WebLink: suttacentral: Gihi Sutta \(AN 5.179\)](#). The relevant verse is: “..ariyasāvako pāṇātipātā *paṭivirato* hoti, adinnādānā *paṭivirato* hoti, kāmesumicchācārā *paṭivirato* hoti, musāvādā *paṭivirato* hoti, surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā *paṭivirato* hoti”.
- However, “*paṭivirato hoti*” does not mean “abstains from” as translated at many online sites; it means “does not do with liking”. Thus, a *Sotāpanna* may — under some conditions — break the five precepts. It is only an *Arahant* that will absolutely not break five precepts or engage in any of *dasa akusala*.

1. There is a *sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, called the *Nakhasikha Sutta*, **that describes the unimaginably large amount of defilements** (and thus future suffering and stress) a *Sotāpanna* has removed compared to a normal human being.
 - One time the Buddha picked up a little bit of dust with the tip of his fingernail, and asked the *bhikkhus*, “What do you think, *bhikkhus*? Which is greater: the little bit of dust I have picked up with the tip of my fingernail, or the soil in this great Earth?”.
 - Of course the *bhikkhus* answered that the amount of soil in this Earth is vastly larger than the bit of dust picked up on a fingernail.
 - Then the Buddha told the *bhikkhus* that the amount of defilements that a *Sotāpanna* has removed can be compared to the soil in the whole Earth, while the amount that he/she has left to remove can be compared to the bit of dust on his fingernail.
 - Correspondingly, the amount of suffering a *Sotāpanna* has left to be endured in the coming rebirths (within seven future *bhava*) is insignificantly small.
 - There is a decent online explanation of the *sutta* that one can look up: [WebLink: ACCESSTOINSIGHT: Nakhasikha Sutta: The Tip of the Fingernail](#)
2. Another simile is given in the *Sineru sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*. There it is stated that, “The amount of suffering a *Sotāpanna* has to endure can be compared to **seven grains of sand** on top of mount Sineru, if the amount of suffering a normal human has left to endure is compared to the sand contained in that mountain”.
 - This is logical, of course, since the suffering encountered in the *niraya* is never ceasing, and thus one birth in the *niraya* (hell) would lead to much more suffering than thousands, millions of births in the human realm or above. A *Sotāpanna* will NEVER be reborn in the four lowest realms, AND he/she will have only **seven future *bhava*** left, and those in the human realm or the realms above it.
3. This may be why most people tend to think that attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage requires attaining *jhānas*, all sorts of *abhiññā* powers, getting rid of the perception of “me”, etc. **None of that is a requirement to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage.**
 - But at least half of the ten defilements (*dasa akusala*) must be removed to become a *Sotāpanna*? No. **It turns out that only one of the *dasa akusala* is removed by a *Sotāpanna*; that of *niyata micca diṭṭhi*.** Of course, in achieving that, a *Sotāpanna* would have reduced the “*apayagami* strength” of most of the other *dasa akusala*. This is the key to understand. In particular, *abhijjā* [*abhijjhā*] or *lōbha* is reduced to *rāga* level and *vyāpāda* or *dōsa* is reduced to *patigha* level; see, “[Lobha, Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)”.
 - For a discussion on *dasa akusala*, see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”. As discussed in that post, *Niyata Micca Diṭṭhi* (**established** wrong views) is an *akusala* that is done with the mind.
 - A *Sotāpanna* is said to have achieved “*dassanena pahatabba*” or removal of defilements via correct vision; **he/she has removed an unimaginably large amount of defilements (“*keles*” or “*kilesa*” or “*klesha*”) with the removal of *micca diṭṭhi*, or attaining the first stage of *Sammā Diṭṭhi*: the true nature of this world of 31 realms.**
 - How a *Sotāpanna* reduces *dasa akusala* via getting rid of *micca diṭṭhi* “to overcome *apayagami citta*” is discussed in “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)”. Here is it described how five out of the 12 *akusala citta* are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage; **those are the five that lead to birth in the *apāyas*.**
4. **This is a critical point to understand: an unimaginably huge amount of defilements is removed via removing *micca diṭṭhi*.** Most people worry excessively on the defilements done with the body and speech. They are afraid of even accidentally killing an insect, or telling even a “white lie”. Of course those need to be avoided too, because moral behavior (speech and actions) are a prerequisite for cleansing the mind.

- But if one firmly believes that there is no rebirth or there are no other living beings other than humans and animals, that firm belief is million-fold more weighty. These and other types of *Niyata Micca Diṭṭhi* (**established** wrong views) are discussed in, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)” and “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)”.
- It would be really beneficial to understand the weights of different types of *kamma*; see, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kammās](#)”.
- If one has a vessel that is leaking water, there is no point in trying to plug the smaller holes first. One should plug the biggest hole first, which in this case is getting rid of *micca diṭṭhi* or false views (about this world).
- This may still not convince some. If so, carefully go through the relevant posts at this site (type “Sotapanna” in the Search box on the top right and you will get many posts), as well as any other, and see whether this conclusion is contradictory to anything in the *Tipitaka*. One should carefully examine all the “requirements” that need to be fulfilled in order to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage. It should become clear that indeed this is all one needs to do.

5. So, we have come to the “crux of the matter”: How can one remove *niyata micca diṭṭhi*? This is ALL one has to do to become a *Sotāpanna*.

- However, complete removal of *niyata miccā diṭṭhi* requires understanding of the *Tilakkhana* (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*) to some extent.

One cannot PRETEND to believe in things that one truly does not believe in. Just by saying, “I do believe in rebirth, or, I do believe that there are other realms in this world other than the human and animals realms, for example, WILL NOT WORK.

- This is not like going to courts of law and trying to convince a jury of one’s innocence. One’s own mind need to “see the realities of this world”.
- **And that comes only via learning Dhamma, the correct version**, the version that was discovered by the Buddha and has been passed down through generations of Noble Persons or *Ariyas*. This is what we discussed in detail in the post, “[Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala](#)”.
- This is also why we need to clearly comprehend the term, *saññā*, which is translated to English as “perception”.

6. Of course *Saññā* is one of 52 *cetasika* and one component of *pancakkhandha*. It is actually one of the 7 universal *cetasika* that arise with each and every *citta*.

- *Saññā* works very closely with another universal *cetasika* called *manasikara*. *Manasikara* is the *cetasika* that brings old memories and future hopes into a *citta*. When *cetana* “puts together the *citta*”, the *citta* recognizes the subject (*saññā*) and automatically produces *vedanā* (feelings) about it. Thus we can see the major roles played by those 4 *cetasika* right away.
- But *saññā* is not limited to “recognizing objects”. *Saññā* is sort of the “inner understanding” of any concept.
- For example, when we hear the word, “fire” we immediately recognize what that means. Even a picture of a fire may flash in our minds. But a little baby (or a person who does not understand English) does not have a “*saññā*” for that word; it means nothing to them. But the baby (or that person) can understand what “fire” means if we teach it to them.
- Growing up, we acquire innumerable “*saññā*” mostly by becoming familiar with them. We first recognize who “mother” and “father” are, recognize different colors, different objects, etc.

7. Even though we acquire “*saññā*” for most objects and people, some strong *saññā* may be “passed down” from previous lives. This can take many forms.

- Some people, when visiting a place that one had never previously visited in this life, may already “know” about that place in great detail. Children who remember past lives have been reported to lead investigators to various places in far away cities where they had lived in

previous lives. Even many adults have reported that they can walk a city with complete confidence that they are visiting for the first time.

- Then there is the “ability” to play a piano, recite *suttas*, or just being able to comprehend complex mathematics as a child, etc. Some of these cases are discussed in “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”.

8. We “acquire” most *saññā* through our families first, then through friends, schools, workplaces, etc.

- Thus most of our “world views” or *ditṭhis* are acquired through our families. Our first impressions on moral issues, politics, and religions come from our families.
- Those *sannas* are hard to change, depending on how forcefully and frequently they have been used.
- However, human mind is unique. When given enough solid evidence, one’s *saññā* about something or some concept can PERMANENTLY change. For example, when one learns how to do algebra (addition and subtraction, etc) correctly, one will never forget that. And even if an authority figure (a teacher) insists that one plus two is four, even a child will not accept that. He/she can count with fingers and show the teacher that the correct answer IS three.

9. As we grow up, we acquire *saññā* for more specialized tasks. One could “learn” to become a carpenter, a doctor, engineer, etc.

- **This “learning” is really acquiring “*saññā*” for a particular task. It is not just memorizing how to do things.** When a physician finishes his/her learning, he/she can “troubleshoot” a brand new patient and figure out what is wrong. When an engineer builds a new structure, it could be something that had never been built before. One acquires “skills”.
- Once one learns a “skill” one will never forget that; at least it is easy to “get back to it”. One who had learned to ride a bicycle as a child may never touch a bicycle for 30-40 years, but even at old age will be able to ride one even though he may fall once or twice initially.

10. **A *Sotāpanna* acquires a basic level of understanding about “this world” and that “knowledge” or “comprehension” does not go away even in future lives.** Thus, it is a strong version of “memories from past lives” that some children report.

- Once someone sees a “glimpse” of the Buddha’s core message that there is no permanent happiness to be had by wishing for anything in this world in the long run. The term “in the long run” implies that one believes that at the end of this life one WILL BE reborn, and that rebirth WILL BE determined by not only how one lives this life, but also how one had lived previous lives (of which we do not have any memories unless one develops *abhiññā* powers).
- That kind of a “vision change” does not happen quickly, unless one has “*saññā*” about that from previous lives; that is why it is easier for some people to grasp these concepts.
- And this “*saññā*” cannot be acquired via memorizing *suttas*, how to recite *paticca samuppāda* cycle, etc. Rather, one needs to COMPREHEND the concepts.
- The KEY concept to grasp is the “*anicca saññā*”.

11. The only way to “build up” the correct *saññā* is to make an effort to understand the key message of the Buddha. Humans normally have wrong perception or “*vipareetha saññā*” that one can find happiness in this life by working hard; most people do not even think beyond this life, even if they believe in rebirth. This is also called the “*nicca saññā*” (pronounced “*nichcha sannā*”), i.e., by working hard, or by sheer luck, one can achieve and maintain things in this world to one’s satisfaction.

- **The key teaching of the Buddha is about the “*anicca saññā*”, i.e., it is NOT POSSIBLE to maintain ANYTHING to one’s satisfaction in the long run.** The *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna* is attained when the *anicca saññā* is cultivated to some significant extent.
- When one has developed the *anicca saññā* to this level, one’s mind automatically blocks “*apayagami citta*”. As we discussed in the *Abhidhamma* section, *citta* flow very fast, and we do

not have control over those initial *cittas*, and unless they are prevented from arising via reducing our *āsava*s and *gathi* (by getting rid of *micca diṭṭhi* among other things), we are helpless to stop them in extreme cases like sudden rages or extreme greed.

- It is this *anicca saññā* that grows as one attains higher stages of *Nibbāna* (*Sakadāgāmī* and *Anāgāmī*) and is peaked at the *Arahant* stage. At the *Arahant* stage one can see the “*anicca* nature” of ALL *saṅkhāra*, not only *abhisankhāra*. This is what is expressed by, “*Sabbe saṅkhāra anicca*”, and in the *Girimananda sutta*, the Buddha told Ven. Ananada, “*Ayaṃ vuccati Ananda, sabba saṅkhārēsu anicca sannā*”; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – According to Some Key Suttas](#)”.

12. When one develops the *anicca saññā* via learning Dhamma (listening and reading), the tendency to act immorally, even under extreme pressure, will slowly diminish.

- One would be able to see the corresponding “cooling down” (reduced stress level) when one thinks back after several months (could be sooner for some people). One will gradually feel the *nirāmisa sukha*, and will be drawn to Dhamma. One would automatically start spending more time on learning Dhamma.
- One does not need to force anything, except to make an initial determination to verify the truth of what I have discussed above by reading (and listening) and developing the “*Dhamma vicaya*” *sambojjanga*. Make a habit to critically evaluate relevant posts at this site and from other sources. That is the best and direct meditation technique for attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage. Buddha Dhamma is all about learning the true nature of this world, which WILL automatically lead to purification of the mind; see, “[The Importance of Purifying the Mind](#)”.
- The more one purifies one’s mind, it will become easier to grasp the key Dhamma concepts and cultivate the “*anicca saññā*”. **And developing *anicca saññā* itself leads to the purification of the mind.** This is why learning becomes exponentially fast, once getting some traction.

13. From the above discussion it should be quite clear that the amount of defilements (“*keles*” or “*Klesha*”) removed by just getting rid of *niyata micca diṭṭhi* can be compared to the volume of the Earth.

- This is because cultivating *anicca saññā* purifies one’s mind and one can start seeing the key message of the Buddha. Without the *anicca saññā*, one can struggle for years and years without any benefit.
- Ask anyone who has done “breath meditation” (and believes *anicca* means “impermanence”) for even 20-30 years whether they have made any significant progress. I am not talking about just calmness of the mind (or even mundane *jhānas*) that is only temporary (and can be broken). One will know when one has reduced *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* to the extent that one will never be born in the *apāyas*.

Of course, one needs to have removed *miccā diṭṭhi* in order to even become a *Sotāpanna Anugāmi*: “[Micca Diṭṭhi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.

More on the *anicca saññā* at: [How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#)

6.4.12 Udayavaya Ñāṇa

- [Udayavaya Ñāṇa – Introduction](#)
- [Nibbatti Lakkhana in Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#)
- [Āhāra \(Food\) in Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#)
- [Udayavaya Ñāṇa – Importance of the Cittaja Kaya](#)

These posts can be better understood if one has a good understanding of the *gandhabba* or *manomaya kaya*: “[Manomaya Kaya](#)”.

6.4.12. Udayavaya Ñāṇa – Introduction

February 12, 2016

The *udayavaya ñāṇa* (*ñāṇa* pronounced “ngana”; see the pronunciation guide in “[Pāli Glossary \(A-K\)](#)” and [Pāli Glossary \(L-Z\)](#)”) is sometimes referred to as the *udayabbaya ñāṇa*.

[WebLink: Listen to Pronunciation: Udayavaya ñāṇa](#)

1. Things in this world do not arise without causes. Anything that arises is destroyed sooner or later, **and in the meantime they change in unexpected ways (*viparinama* nature)**. That is another way to look at the *anicca* concept. The suffering arises because we are trying to maintain things the way we want, but that is an impossible task.

- Suffering does not arise merely because things are not permanent; the reason is more deeper. Things also change in unexpected ways. Furthermore, this *viparinama* nature is present anywhere in the 31 realms; there is no refuge anywhere.
- This is the very foundation of Buddha Dhamma. Suffering arises due to causes, and those root causes of *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* lead to the worst kinds of suffering. The other three root causes of *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha* lead to temporary relief (in *deva* and *brahma* realms, but also in the human realm to some extent), but those also do not last long in the *sansaric* time scale.

2. *Udayavaya* describes how anything in one’s world (*pancakkhanadha*) arises due to causes. And whatever arises (*udaya*), it matures with time while changing in unexpected ways, and then inevitably gets destroyed (*vaya*). **Suffering is associated with anything that has the *anicca* nature, and everything in this world of 31 realms has that *anicca* nature.**

- Seeing *anicca* via understanding the *udayavaya* of the *pancakkhandha* (anything in this world) is stated as, “***uppada vayattena anicca*”, i.e., anything in this world is *anicca* because anything that arises is subjected to unexpected change while in existence, and is eventually destroyed.**
- When one truly comprehends “***uppada vayattena anicca*”, one has attained the “*anuloma ñāṇa*” that is a prerequisite for the *Sotāpanna* stage.**

3. For example, we think very highly about our bodies (especially when young). But we do not realize how much effort we put in (*viparinama dukha*) to keep our bodies just in a “presentable form” to others. If we do not brush our teeth, wash or take a shower for a few days, do not comb the hair, do not wash our clothes, etc, we will be able to see the true nature of our bodies.

- If we do not eat well or exercise regularly, not only will our bodies be out-of-shape, but we will also be subjected to diseases. But this life filled with *viparinama dukha* is a result of a past cause, and we just have to cope with it and keep the body in good shape; otherwise, things could get even worse.
- Thus even though we do not realize it (because that is what we have been used to), just maintaining everything in status quo requires a lot of effort; this *viparinama dukha* is normally hidden because we are blinded by the perceived “future pleasures”. Just like a bull is pulling a cart with a heavy load when some straw is dangled in front of it, we trudge through the daily chores with visions of pleasure blinding us.
- Even when we do all this, sometimes “bad things happen out of the blue”: one could get into an accident, come down with cancer or some fatal disease like that, or hear about an unexpected such catastrophe of a loved one.
- And then when we get old, no matter how much we struggle, we cannot stop the body from falling apart and eventually dying. Just think about your parents/grandparents; they were as young and vibrant when they were young too.
- And this is what we have been doing through unimaginable number of births in the past. Always struggling just to keep up. But it gets much worse if and when born in one of four lowest realms (*apāyas*).

4. But the key here is not be depressed about it. Some people believe contemplating on such things and cultivating a depressed mindset is the “*patikula manasikara bhāvanā*”; it is commonly mis-translated as “the contemplation on foulness”. But it is imperative not to get distressed about these things. The idea is to realize that all body parts are subject to *anicca* nature.

- When one realizes this true nature, and then also realizes that there is a way out, that leads to a higher level of *niramisa sukha*. That is when one “sees *Nibbāna*” and attains the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- When one gains the *udayavaya ñāṇa*, one can see the causes that need to be eliminated to overcome otherwise inevitable future suffering.

5. In *udayavaya ñāṇa*, the term “*vaya*” has two meanings:

- Whatever is arisen due to past causes will be subjected to unexpected change and eventually is destroyed. This understanding about how anything that arises and causes a **net suffering** (even though there are pleasures to be had, they are minor compared to the suffering) is a part of the *udayavaya ñāṇa*.
- More importantly, one can stop these things from arising and thus permanently remove suffering. Thus understanding *udayavaya* leads to knowledge about the *dukkha nirodha sacca*, i.e., that by eliminating the causes, one can stop future suffering from arising. This is the second and more important meaning of “*vaya*” in *udayavaya*.
- But let us first discuss the factors associated with “*udaya*” or “arising”.

6. The “*udaya*” part of the *udayavaya ñāṇa* describes five factors that lead to the arising of anything in this world. Anything in this world belongs to one of the five aggregates (*pancakkhandha*): *rūpa khandha*, *vedanā khandha*, *saññā khandha*, *saṅkhāra khandha*, *viññāṇa khandha*.

- Thus our world is not only the *rūpa khandha*. In fact, most people think about material things in the world as THE WORLD. But Buddha Dhamma reveals a more “personal world” which includes how one feels about things in the world (*vedanā*), how one perceives those things (*saññā*), and how one thinks and makes plans (*saṅkhāra*) according to how one feels and perceives. The end result of those three (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*) are the *viññāṇa* that one builds (future hopes and desires) according to one’s *gathi* (character).
- In fact, *pancakkhandha* is even more complex than that because it includes past, present, future,... (11 categories) for each of the aggregates; see, “[The Five Aggregates \(Pancakkhandha\)](#)”.

7. There are four factors that inevitably contribute to the arising any of the five aggregates: We can easily guess the first two: *avijjā* and *taṇhā*. Because of *avijjā* (ignorance) of the true nature, beings tend to attach to things via greed or hate (*taṇhā*). And those two are always in front. Now, because of *avijjā* and *taṇhā*, beings initiate actions (*kamma*) via body, speech, and mind.

- Thus, *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, and *kamma* are common to the arising of any of the five aggregates.
- Then when any one of the five aggregates start arising, it will need another factor that helps in the arising of that aggregate. Let us discuss that next.

8. A *rūpa* (material thing, whether alive or not) needs food (*āhāra*). A human or an animal needs to eat (these are called *kabalinka āhāra*), and a tree needs nutrition from the ground. Even a thing like a rock needs *āhāra* (not in the general sense of food) to be formed, and that is a very deep topic that we will discuss much later.

- Since *rūpa khandha* also includes “future *rūpa*” one may ask how would *āhāra* be associated with a future *rūpa*. In this case, the *āhāra* is a mental *āhāra*; we will discuss four types of food (*āhāra*) in the near future.

9. On the other hand, three of the mental aggregates (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*) arise due to *phassa* (contact), and thus *phassa* is considered a form a mental *āhāra*.

- For any of those to arise, there has to be a contact (*phassa*) with the outside world either via eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or the mind.
- *Viññāṇa* is the end result of a *citta* that includes *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *rūpa*. Thus the corresponding factor for *viññāṇa* is *nama rūpa*. Even though in *paticca samuppāda* it is , “*viññāṇa paccaya nama rūpa*“, it goes the other way too, “*nama rūpa paccaya viññāṇa*“. This is called “*annamanna paccaya*“, and is valid for many such pairs in the *paticca samuppāda*.

10. Finally, the last factor is common to all five aggregates. In the deepest sense, any of the five aggregates is a *sankata*. And each thus has three common features: *uppada* (early stage of arising), *thithi* (change while growing), *bhanga* (destruction). Thus the fifth factor that describes a given aggregate is the *uppada lakkhana* or *nibbatti lakkhana*.

- Note that some *sankata* (especially those belong to the *rūpa khandha*) can have long lifecycles: a human lasts about 100 years, a universe lasts billions of years. But the mental components have relatively short lifecycles, especially *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* are very short-lived. Some *viññāṇa* are brief, but others can last long times.
- Whether it is a human or a building (*rūpa*), a feeling, perception, *saṅkhāra*, or *viññāṇa*, they all have those three characteristics of *uppada*, *thithi*, and *bhanaga* (i.e., *nibbatti lakkhana*).

11. It is easiest to discuss an example with the *rūpa khandha*, and take just a small part of it say a human being (X) and an animal (Y). First let us start with the root causes for the birth of X or Y. Those two beings, in one of their previous lives had acted (done a *kamma*) with *taṇhā* (which itself was caused by *avijjā*).

- That moral act (for X) and an immoral act (for Y) led to the corresponding *bhava* (human *bhava* and animal *bhava*), which at some point led to the birth of a living being with corresponding characteristics (*gathi*).
- That resulted in the conception of a human baby (X) and a baby animal (Y) in a suitable womb. They both grew by consuming food (*āhāra*) inside the womb initially and then outside the womb after the birth.
- *Āhāra* also can be an actual cause and we will discuss that in a future post.

12. The baby X or Y thus born, will now grow according to the blueprint (*manomaya kaya*) that took hold of a single cell in the mother's womb at conception. That *manomaya kaya* has the basic blueprint of that being.

- Growing and maturing of X or Y, now proceeds with the *uppada* (or *nibbatti*) *lakkhana* that was associated with the particular *manomaya kaya*.

13. This same line of reasoning can be applied to other four *khandha*: *Vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa* also arise mainly due to *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, *kamma*, and also *āhāra* (food) for them.

- I will discuss later what it means to say *āhāra* (food) for those mental elements. Actually, those are much more important than the food for the physical body and any other *rūpa*.
- Other four aggregates also arise, stay in existence for a time, and then is destroyed.

14. To summarize, the each of the five aggregates arise with the aid of five factors:

- *Rūpa*: *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, *kamma*, *āhāra*, *nibbatti lakkhana*.
- *Vedanā*: *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, *kamma*, *phassa*, *nibbatti lakkhana*.
- *Saññā*: *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, *kamma*, *phassa*, *nibbatti lakkhana*.
- *Saṅkhāra*: *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, *kamma*, *phassa*, *nibbatti lakkhana*.
- *Viññāṇa*: *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, *kamma*, *nama rūpa*, *nibbatti lakkhana*.

15. Thus those are the 25 factors that describe how anything in this world arise. The *udayavaya ñāṇa* encompasses the comprehension of those 25 factors.

- There are 25 more factors that lead either to the destruction of something that arose **OR** lead to the prevention of something from arising. We will discuss them in a future post.
- Thus the *udayavaya ñāṇa* is said to encompass 50 factors altogether that contain all knowledge about the arising and destruction of anything in this world, AND also the knowledge on how to **stop anything from arising (nirodha)** in this world.
- Thus with *udayavaya ñāṇa* one comprehends how suffering arises and how one can eliminate future suffering. A key point here is that anything that arises (*uppada*) is not just guaranteed to be destroyed (*bhanga*), but also that it changes unexpectedly (*viparinama*) during its existence (*thithi*). It is the *anicca* nature.

Next in the series, “[Nibbatti Lakkhana in Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#)”.

6.4.12. Nibbatti Lakkhana in Udayavaya Ñāṇa

2

February 26, 2016

1. In the previous post, we discussed the first 25 factors that encompass what is involved in the “*udaya*” stage of *udayavaya*: “[Udayavaya Ñāṇa – Introduction](#)”. Each of the five aggregates has five factors associated with it basically leading to its formation; thus there are 25 factors that give rise to **each person’s world**.

- The five aggregates or the *pancakkhandha* is much more complex than most realize. Please read the posts on *pancakkhandha* to familiarize with it if you really want to grasp the *udayavaya ñāṇa*: “[The Five Aggregates \(Pancakkhandha\)](#)”.
- Also note that a given *sankata* is a tiny fraction of *pancakkhandha*. We have discussed the five stages of a *sankata*, and it is related to *udayavaya ñāṇa*: “[Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata](#)”. Buddha Dhamma is so deep, all these different descriptions are well-connected at some level.
- Do not worry if all this seems to be overwhelming (of course some people will be able to see the connections). It will make sense with time. Just keep reading posts that you have already read. They will make more sense each time you go back and read, especially after reading other relevant posts.

2. It is important to grasp the fact that anything that we experience, we experience only for a fraction of a second. Then it is gone to the “past pile” (*atita*; pronounced “atheetha”) of the five aggregates or piles.

- Anything that we are only imagining or hoping to experience has not yet materialized; those are in the “future pile” (*anāgata*; pronounced “anāgatha”) of the five aggregates.
- Only a negligibly small fraction is being experienced at a given moment: the “present pile” (*paccuppanna*; pronounced “pachchuppanna”); see, “[Five Aggregates – Introduction](#)”.

3. All these things arise as a *sankata*, whether it is material (*rūpa*) or mental (*vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa*). A given *sankata* itself (not the experience) may exist for brief moment, or some may last a long time (especially those belonging to *rūpa* aggregate). But even then parts of it are continually being “passed on” to the past.

- Think about a human being X. He/she starts with a single cell and grows by the day, becomes a baby, a child, a young person, an old person, and then is perished. So, when another person Y, is watching X grow, the “*rūpa khandha*” of Y continuously grew, all the while making the “past *rūpa khandha*” bigger each moment. When X is observing himself, that experience goes to his “*rūpa khandha*”.
- At a given time, we can see only a momentary “snapshot” of a *rūpa khandha*. When X dies, all those stages –moment by moment — had gone to the past, and thus now belong to the “past *rūpa khandha*” of X and Y. Note that they are different: each one’s experience of X is different.
- Now we can see why each person’s *pancakkhandha* is unique to that person.

4. Now we will analyze why all five aggregates have their origin in *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, and *kamma*: Because we have the wrong perception (*nicca saññā*) that we can eventually reach happiness by craving for things in this world (*avijjā*), we get attached to somethings or hate other things (*taṇhā*), and then act accordingly (*kamma*).

- After one attains *parinibbana* (i.e., when an *Arahant* dies), there is no world to experience. No more *pancakkhandha*.

5. The other two factors of *āhāra* and *nibbatti lakkhana* describe the “progression” of a *pancakkhandha* that have the origins in *avijjā*, *taṇhā*, and *kamma*.

- If it is a material thing (*rūpa*) it needs *āhāra* (food) to grow; they can be food that living beings eat or nutrients that plants need.
- If it is a mental thing (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*), it needs “mental food”: *phassa* (contact), *mano sancetana*, and *viññāṇa āhāra*. We will discuss these later.

6. Any one of those five aggregates needs a “blueprint” or a set mechanism to arise, grow, mature, decay, and eventually cease to exist. This is what the fifth factor, *nibbatti lakkhana*, is about.

- This “blueprint” is made according to those three causes: it is a complex plan which takes into account many aspects that are formed by the level of *avijjā* (ignorance), kind of *taṇhā* (greed, hate), and *kamma* (kind of acts that were done with body, speech, and mind).
- Those complex factors give rise to *nibbatti lakkhana*, “blueprint” for any one of the five aggregates to rise. It can be called “production characteristics” of that particular *sankata* belonging to one of the five aggregates.
- As we learn more, we will see that all five factors actually become causes, and are inter-related.

7. This is easier to see this with a human (or an animal). When a living being gets a human *bhava*, then based on a specific *kamma vipāka* that came to focus at the time of death in the previous *bhava*, a blueprint for the human *bhava* is automatically generated by *kammic* energy.

- That blueprint is the *manomaya kaya* or the *gandhabba* that we have discussed many times; see, the posts under the section “[Manomaya Kaya](#)”.
- The arising of that human starting from a single cell in mother’s womb happens according to the “blueprint” in that *manomaya kaya*: eventual height, eye color, skin color, etc were determined when a suitable womb was automatically selected according to the “*gathi*” of that being. That “selection process” — which happens automatically and not decided by any superior being — had chosen the matching parents for the *gandhabba*.
- That was the role played by the *nibbatti lakkhana* in this particular case.

8. Thus the particular *bhava* is determined by the particular action (*kamma*): if that action was suitable for a dog *bhava*, then one would get a “dog *bhava*”.

- But other characteristics of that dog are determined by the overall “*gathi*” of that being that it had acquired through uncountable previous births.
- Thus *nibbatti lakkhana* is a complex entity that takes into account numerous things, but two are prominent: the specific *kamma* and overall *gathi*.

9. For example two different beings could get the same “dog *bhava*”. But no two dogs will look and behave alike. Some are vicious and some are loving. Some are big and some are small. The possible varieties are basically infinite. Even two “twin dogs” that look exactly the same will have at least some behaviour differences when they grow. Same thing applies to two humans.

- Thus *nibbatti lakkhana* is a complex mold of multiple factors. But only a Buddha can see why certain features are in a given being. Even a spot on dog is said to be due to some reason.
- Even though the “*bhava*” is determined by a specific strong *kamma* (called a *janaka kamma*), the actual body will reflect numerous *kamma vipāka* from numerous lives in the past.

- But as we have discussed elsewhere, what kinds of *kamma vipāka* can bring fruits will depend to a large extent on having suitable conditions available. If one acts foolishly that will allow some bad *kamma vipāka* from the past to bear fruit. In the same way, by acting with mindfulness one can avoid such bad outcomes and even bring about good outcomes due to past good *kamma vipāka*.
- There are several posts that discuss the above important fact. For example, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)” and “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”.

10. Therefore, it is important to realize that it is *manomaya kaya* does not determine one’s future rigidly; some of the “production characteristics” can change. It is not like making a robot in a factory according to a set blueprint.

- It is easy to see that one’s body structure can change according to one’s lifestyle. If one becomes careless and start eating indiscriminately, one will become obese. Even one’s character can change by one’s motivation and due to external influences.
- Thus *nibbatti lakkhana* are not deterministically set. The overall *gathi* can change and the *manomaya kaya* and the physical body in turn can change.

11. The main reason for this flexibility is that the *manomaya kaya* has three “components”: *kammaja kaya*, *cittaja kaya*, and *utuja kaya*; see previous posts on *manomaya kaya*.

- The *kammaja kaya* is the one that is really pre-set. It had taken into account the reasons (*kamma vipāka*) that led to the particular *bhava*.
- The critical component that is under OUR CONTROL is the *cittaja kaya*. This is basically how we think (that leads to our speech and bodily actions). And how we think depends on our level of ignorance (*avijjā*).
- The third component is the *utuja kaya*, which is basically the fine body of the *gandhabba*. It is being created and changed CONTINUOUSLY due to both the *kammaja kaya* and *cittaja kaya*. The fine matter based on *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*] are being created due to *kammaja kaya* and *cittaja kaya*; see, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatthaka\]](#)”.

12. Thus the evolvement of a human being is a complex process. But one could get a good basic understanding by comprehending the above basic structure. We will go into more details in the future, but let us discuss a few more important aspects.

- Now we can see that the physical body is just a “shell”. There is *gandhabba* inside that physical body and controlling it; see, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)”.

13. Thus, these physical bodies that we value so much are really lifeless shells. The essence — *gandhabba* — is hidden inside that physical body.

- The *utuja kaya* of the *gandhabba* is the one that is spread over the whole physical body gives it a “life”. It is a fine grid that overlaps our nervous system, and that is how we feel body sensations.
- Under some extreme stresses, the *gandhabba* can get out of the physical body. This is what is known as the out-of-body experience (OBE); see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)”. When that happens the physical body is lifeless, and doctors have declared many heart patients undergoing operations to be dead for several minutes only to find out later that the patient is alive (*gandhabba* had returned to the body).

14. The critical point for our present discussion is the fact that once born with a human body, the human *gandhabba* can determine its own *nibbatti lakkhana* to some extent by wisely using the *cittaja kaya*.

- It is this *cittaja kaya* that ultimately makes it possible for a human to attain *Nibbāna*.
- One can change one’s *gathi* (habits/character) by comprehending first moral versus immoral, and then comprehending the *anicca* nature of this world.

- Most people do not realize the importance of the *cittaja kaya*. This is in essence why a Buddha is needed to reveal the true nature of this world, and to teach how to use the *cittaja kaya* (i.e., the way one thinks, and therefore speaks and acts): First to stay away from immoral behavior to cleanse the mind to some extent, and then to comprehend the *anicca* nature.

15. The *nibbatti lakkhana* for any *sankata* associated with any of the five aggregates work similarly. Let us consider a certain *viññāṇa* that we experience when seeing a person X.

- That *viññāṇa* depends on who is looking at X. If it a loving parent for Y, then Y will generate a “loving *viññāṇa*” upon seeing X. That *viññāṇa* will arise, stay there for a certain time, and fade away as the mind is directed to something else. But when that *viññāṇa* arises, it arises with some *nibbatti lakkhana* associated with one’s own past experiences with X. An enemy of X (say, Z) could generate a “hateful *viññāṇa*”.

16. It is easy to see that other three aggregates in the above example will also arise accordingly.

- Y will generate happy feelings (*vedanā*), will recognize (*saññā*) X as a parent, and may generate some kind of action or speech via *saṅkhāra*. On the other hand, Z will generate an entirely different set.
- Thus the four mental aggregates are related to each other.

17. In Buddha Dhamma everything that we learn about is connected to each other at some level. It is the whole fabric of nature. Each and every piece of information is part of a complex puzzle. When one begins to see how it all fits together, one’s mind becomes joyful, and provides incentive and desire to learn more about the true nature of this complex world.

Next in the series, “[Āhāra \(Food\) in Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#)”.

6.4.12. **Āhāra (Food) in Udayavaya Ñāṇa**

3

March 19, 2016

1. First part of the *Udayavaya Ñāṇa* involves the causes for the arising of *sankata* (and hence arising of *pancakkhandha*). Out of the five main factors (*avijjā*, *taṇhā*, *kamma*, *ahāra*, and *nibbatti lakkhana*), we discussed the *nibbatti lakkhana* in the previous post of the series.

- Many posts at the site discuss the first three factors, so will now discuss the remaining factor, *ahāra* (food), that is both a cause and a condition for the arising of *pancakkhandha*.

2. When we think of *ahāra* (which means food in both Pāli and Sinhala), we automatically think about food that we consume to stay alive. However, it is clear from the previous two posts that a physical body is just a shell that is “controlled” by a *gandhabba*. There are many other posts on *gandhabba* in the “[Manomaya Kaya](#)” section. Here is a summary of some concepts discussed there:

- In effect, we have four kinds of bodies (*kaya*): the physical body (*karaja kaya*) is the one people normally associate with the perception of a “me”. But we have three “mental bodies” that are collectively “*manomaya kaya*” or “*gandhabba*”. Those three are *kammaja kaya*, *cittaja kaya*, and *utuja kaya*.
- In a way, the physical body is just a shell that we use for about 100 years or so and discard at death; the *gandhabba* leaves that dead body and waits for a suitable womb to make another physical body, if there is *kammic* energy left in the *human bhava*.
- The foods for the physical body are called *kabalinka āhāra*. There are three other “mental foods” that are consumed by the *gandhabba*.
- The *gandhabba* consumes three kinds of mental food: *phassa āhāra*, *mano sancetana āhāra*, and *viññāṇa āhāra*.

3. A given *Kammaja kaya* was created at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment by a powerful previous *kamma*, and its energy just gets depleted with time. For example, if a particular *human bhava* came into existence with enough *kammic* energy to support a human life for 1000 years, then that energy will be

slowly spent over 1000 years. In other words, *kammaja kaya* does not need any additional energy, i.e., *āhāra*.

- In a way, all three types of mental foods are consumed by the *cittaja kaya*. And some of the energy from the *kammaja* and *cittaja kaya* are converted to *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] (matter), and that is what makes the fine body (*utuja kaya*) of the *gandhabba*, which is too fine for us to see.
- As I mentioned in the previous post is this section, “[Nibbatti Lakkhana in Udayavaya Nāna](#)“, the critical component that is under OUR CONTROL is the *cittaja kaya*. We can overcome our “loosely preset destiny” embedded in the *kammaja kaya* by cultivating our *cittaja kaya*, or basically our thoughts and thereby our behavior (*gathi*). This is what makes it possible to attain *Nibbāna*!

4. Let us first discuss the *kabalinka āhāra*. There are two relevant meanings for this name. The first meaning is associated with what this type of *āhāra* does: to energize the physical body. Here “*kabalinka*” comes from “*kayata bala dena*” in Pāli or Sinhala where “*kaya*” is body, “*bala*” is energy or power, and “*dena*” means provide.

- Therefore, *kabalinka āhāra* here means the food we eat to make our bodies grow and keep energized. Without food, a physical body that starts in the womb of the mother cannot grow to a baby and then once comes out cannot grow to be an adult. Without *kabalinka āhāra* that particular *sankata* cannot survive, and thus is an essential factor contributing to part of the *pancakkhandha*.
- This kind of *kabalinka āhāra* is essential for the survival for humans and animals (and also *devas*). *Devas* consume just one kind of *kabalinka āhāra* called “*amurtha*”; it is a drink that they consume, which leaves no residuals. Thus, they don’t need to worry about sweating, urinating, or defecating.
- Thus *kabalinka āhāra* are needed only in *kāma loka*. As we will see below, when one loses craving for *kabalinka āhāra*, one will never be born again in the *kāma loka*, i.e., one becomes an *Anāgāmī*.
- There are no solid bodies (*karaja kaya*) in either *rūpa loka* or *arūpa loka*. In *rūpa loka* there is only the “*thrīja kaya*” or the three mental bodies of *kammaja kaya*, *cittaja kaya*, and *utuja kaya*. Thus in the *rūpa loka* beings are essentially *gandhabbas* but that term is normally reserved for humans and animals when they are in the *paralowa* waiting for a womb; see, “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)“.
- In the *arūpa loka*, there is no *utuja kaya* either. Except for the *hadaya vatthu*, there is no *rūpa* associated with an *arūpa brahma*.
- It is not essential to know all these details, but these details are needed to complete the “big picture”, especially for those who are interested in finer details.

5. The second meaning of *kabalinka āhāra* has a deeper meaning; here it is a CAUSE for the arising of FUTURE *sankata*. Craving *kabalinka āhāra* means one is hoping for rebirth in the *kāma loka* to enjoy them; see, “[How Perceived Pleasures \(Assāda\) lead to Dukkha](#)“.

- Thus, the stronger the craving is, harder it is to “escape from the *kāma lokas*“.
- This is a good example of how (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra* or strong cravings/hopes/desires lead to corresponding *bhava* and thus corresponding births (*jathi*).
- In *paticca samuppāda*, “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*” is followed by “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*“, and leads to “*upādāna paccaya bhava*” and “*bhava paccaya jathi*“. Thus generating (*abhi*) *saṅkhāra* for *kabalinka āhāra* leads to rebirths in the *kāma loka*, but most times in unexpected way, as we discuss below.

6. One NEEDS to consume *kabalinka āhāra* to provide one’s body with the nutrients it needs to live a healthy life. However, if one craves for tasty foods in excess, *kabalinka āhāra* can become a CAUSE to for the arising (*udaya*) of future births in the *kāma loka*.

- This is why it is NOT actual consumption of tasty foods that contributes to making “*kāma bhava*”. It is the excess greed for tasty foods (*kāma āsvada*); see the section on , “[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana](#)”.
- This second type of “*pada nirukthi*” or the “origin of the phrase” *kabalinka āhāra* comes from “*kaya bali karana*” which means “leading to distorted body”. Here the word “*bali*” or “distort” applies because **the body that one acquires in a future life** is due to such greedy *saṅkhāra* could be much different than expected. **This is the deeper meaning of *kabalinka āhāra* in the *udayavaya ṇāṇa*.**

7. Such excessive greed for food matches the “*gathi*” of *pretha* beings. Thus when one cultivates such greedy (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra*, it leads to corresponding “*pretha bhava*” and thus “*pretha jathī*” in the future.

- When encountering delicious food, some people lose any sense of decency. The greediness shows, and when eating such a meal some display “animal like” behavior, spilling food and getting the food all over their face. That is a display of “greedy animal like” *saṅkhāra*. When they cultivate such *saṅkhāra*, the corresponding birth could be that of a pig.
- And then there are some who do not like to share such food and like to keep others away from enjoying such meals. That could cultivate *saṅkhāra* of a “vicious dog”. We see such dogs all the time; they growl when another dog comes even close to their food.

8. Once one gets the basic idea, it is easy to see various kinds of *pretha* and animal *saṅkhāra* can be cultivated even without realizing it, and can lead to future births corresponding to such “*gathi*”.

- And the cultivation of such extreme *gathi* is a consequence of not knowing or not comprehending Buddha Dhamma, specifically *paticca samuppāda* (“*pati ichcha*” leading to “*sama uppada*”); see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda](#)”.
- And such *saṅkhāra* CANNOT be suppressed by sheer will power alone. One needs to learn Dhamma and realize that they DO LEAD to bad consequences. Again, see the section on “[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana](#)”.

9. There are “good births” in the *kāma loka* too: the human realms and the *deva* realm. *Bhava* (and birth) in those realms also are according to one’s (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra*, which of course are generated according to one’s dominant *gathi*.

- Those who cultivate human and *deva saṅkhāra* like to enjoy sense pleasures, but they are not excessively greedy. They don’t have mentality of “may all good things come to me, AND not to others”. They are content with what they get and willingly share the excess with others.
- One is not released from the *kāma loka* until one’s cravings for sense pleasures completely goes away when one comprehends not only the futility of such sense pleasures but also the possible dangers.

10. At even a deeper level, the tendency to generate such extreme greed goes away AUTOMATICALLY when one starts comprehending the “*anicca* nature”. That it is not possible to achieve and maintain pleasurable worldly things (including food or beautiful bodies that result from eating such foods) as one desires.

- And this change in the mindset and the change in corresponding personal behavior may not reverse in a short time. But as one learns Dhamma, one will be able to see the change over time: Sometimes in a few weeks or even several months.
- The Buddha compared this “gradual transition” to the growth of a tree or a plant. One cannot see the change in the growth of a plant day by day; there is no point in checking it every day to see whether can see the growth. But if one takes care of the plant by providing it with nutrients and keeps the weeds away, one will be able to see the growth over a few weeks or months. And then one day, can reap the benefits of all that work when the plant blossoms and provides the flowers/fruits.

11. Therefore, the key is to LEARN Dhamma and also to comprehend it by contemplating on it, which is MEDITATION. **But it is critical to learn the correct Dhamma.**

- A good example of the wrong way to meditate is what many people are doing with the *patikūla manasikara bhāvanā*. Many translate “*patikūla*” as “*pilikul*” in Sinhala, which means “to be rejected because it is repulsive”. They meditate on contemplating the repulsiveness of the body (sweat, urine, and feces generated by the body) and also the fact that once one chews on even the most delicious food, it becomes “vomit”.
- But the Buddha did not advice that. Just as we should not desire extreme sense pleasures, we also should not be repulsed by the things that we mentioned in the above paragraph. They both generate *taṇhā*, in the first instant by attachment (craving) and in the second by aversion (*patigha*). **The neutral mindset (*upekkha*) comes from understanding the true nature of things.**

12. Now we can see that the connection of *kabalinka āhāra* in the *udayavaya ñāṇa* has two facets:

- One plays a role in taking care of the physical body that we have inherited due to past causes. If we are not mindful of what we eat, it can lead to bad consequences via the body that we already have. If we are mindful, we can make that body to work optimally for achieving our goals, both mundane and transcendental. And of course, if the physical body does not get enough *kabalinka āhāra*, it will die.
- The other is to be aware of the role *kabalinka āhāra* plays in generating physical bodies for us in future births via generating (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra* related to pleasurable foods.
- It is said that one can become an *Anāgāmī* (i.e., stop rebirths in the *kāma loka*) by comprehending the true nature of *kabalinka āhāra*. Then one loses the craving for any sense pleasures in the *kāma loka*. But such a mindset is unfathomable for a normal human who only sees the immediate sense satisfaction. Furthermore, such a mindset CANNOT be achieved by sheer will power; it has to be through understanding the *anicca* nature of *kāma loka*.

Next in the series, “[Udayavaya Ñāṇa – Importance of the Cittaja Kaya](#)”.

6.4.12. Udayavaya Ñāṇa – Importance of the Cittaja Kaya

4

July 22, 2016; December 1, 2017

1. In previous posts in this series we discussed *kabalinka āhāra* for the physical body and three types of *āhāra* for the “mental body” (or *manomaya kaya* or *gandhabba*): *phassa āhāra*, *manosancetana āhāra*, and *viññāṇa āhāra*.

- The *manomaya kaya* or the *gandhabba* consists of three components: *kammaja kaya*, *citta kaya*, and *utuja kaya*. The *kammaja kaya* gets its energy at the beginning of that *bhava*, and does not require any external *āhāra*. The *utuja kaya* is sustained continuously via fine *rūpa* produced by *kammaja kaya* and *cittaja kaya*.
- **Therefore, the three types of *āhāra* for the *manomaya kaya* are all consumed by the *cittaja kaya*. This *cittaja kaya* is nothing else but the stream of thoughts that we generate.**
- An aside: Sometimes the *gandhabba* can inhale “aroma” or *gandha* (*kabalinka āhāra*) and have a fine (misty) physical body too; **thus the name *gandhabba***, where “*abbha*” means “inhale”. Such “more solidified” are the ones that people can sometimes see, and even be captured by a camera.

2. Now we can take a step back and look at the big picture, and it gives a very illuminating view. **This “big picture” could be very helpful in comprehending the *anicca* nature.** Of course, this is not the only way to grasp *anicca* nature.

- The physical body that we value so much and think about as “me” is just a temporary shell. Just like anything material in this world, it grows and peaks and then starts the downhill march ending in decay and eventual death. At the death of physical body, the *gandhabba* that comes out and has to wait for a suitable womb to start building a new body, if the human *bhava* still has more *kammic* energy left; see, for example, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)” and “[Gandhabba – Only in Human and Animal Realms](#)”.

- This is a key factor that contributed to the concept of a “self” (“āthma”) in Hinduism. Hindu *yogis* who cultivated *abhiññā* powers could look back at a finite number of previous lives and could see a *gandhabba* giving rise to repeated rebirths in human form (they likely practiced *jhāna* in those recent previous lives, which made it easier for them to attain *abhiññā* powers in this life).
- However, they could not see far back enough to see that one could be born an animal or even worse too.

3. For humans and animals, we can compare the physical body controlled by the *gandhabba* to a car (or any other vehicle) being driven by a person. The body of the vehicle is like our physical body, and the driver is analogous to the *gandhabba*. Without the *gandhabba*, the physical body cannot do anything; it would be a lifeless, i.e., a dead body. It is the *gandhabba* that “operates” the human body; see, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)”.

- The *gandhabba*, in turn, arises due to the *kammic* energy that was created in a previous life; the *kammaja kaya* represents that energy, and will be slowly depleting with time. The term *kammaja kaya* comes from “*kamma*” and “*ja*” and “*kaya*”. Here “*ja*” means “birth” or “origin” and “*kaya*” is body. Thus *kammaja kaya* means the “body that was created due to *kamma*”.
- Similarly, *cittaja kaya* arises due to *citta* (loosely translated as thoughts).
- “*Utu*” means “change” and the *utuja kaya* is that part of the *gandhabba* body which arises by conversion of *kammic* energy and the energy from *citta* (*javana*).

4. Now, we can see the critical importance of *citta*. *Kammaja kaya* itself arises due to previous *kamma*, i.e., by *citta* in a previous lives. More specifically, *javana* in those *citta* provided the energy for a new *bhava* which lead to the *kammaja kaya*; see, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)”.

- *Kammaja kaya* is just a result, and it will slowly lose its energy over the human existence. We cannot do anything about (but if one does an *anātariya kamma* it will be shortened). Thus it is only the *cittaja kaya* that we have control over. This is critically important. We have finally converged to the essence of a human being.
- This is why the Buddha said “*Mano pubbangama Dhamma...*”. The origin of anything can be traced back to the mind (thoughts).
- Here we see the truth of the above statement for living beings. In the future, it will become clear that ANYTHING in this world has origins that can be traced back to the mind. That is the story in the *Agganna sutta*. But we have to proceed step-by-step.

5. We have the control over our own destiny via our thoughts or *cittaja kaya*. I cannot emphasize enough the critical importance of the *cittaja kaya*.

- Therefore, we have to pay attention to what kind of *āhāra* (conventionally translated as food, but you can see that is not a good translation) that we provide for our thought stream. But we have control over only those thoughts that we initiate.

6. There are two types of thoughts. Some *citta* arise due to *kamma vipāka*. For example, we may get to taste a delicious meal due to a good *kamma vipāka* and while eating it we feel “*jivha viññāṇa*”, i.e., those come through our sense of taste. These do not have *abhisankhāra*. Also see, “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)”.

- There is another set of *citta* that we initiate. For example, based on that tasty meal, we start thinking about coming back to the same restaurant in the future, how to make it at home, etc. These generate *abhisankhāra*. The worst kind is *apunnabhisankhāra*, where we think about ways to get that meal in an immoral way, say, by stealing.
- But if it is just some food that quenches the hunger, we do not generate that type of *citta* subsequent to the *vipāka citta*.

- In another example, we see millions of things in a day (via *vipāka citta*), but generate *abhisankhāra* only in a few.

7. The Buddha said, “*kammā vipākā vaddanthi, vipākā kamma sambhavö, thasmā punabbhavö höthi, évan lökö pavaththathi*”.

- What that means is: “Because of *kamma vipāka* we experience sense inputs; based on those we initiate new *kamma* (*abhisankhāra*), and those in turn will bring *vipāka* in the future; that is how the world evolves (rebirth process continues)”.
- Thus the critical part is where we generate *abhisankhāra*. This is done with *javana citta*. We will discuss this using *citta vithi* in the future, but let us try to get some basic understanding of how these *javana citta* can be controlled. There are many posts in the “[Mind and Consciousness](#)” and “[Citta and Cetasika](#)” sections on *citta* and *citta vithi*.

8. In fact, these *javana citta* run too fast to control at that time. Billions of *citta* run in a second. How can we control them? **We cannot control them *in situ*, as they initially arise.**

- Those *javana citta* arise due to our *gathi*! This is the key.
- For example, an *Arahant* will not be tempted by any attractive sense input. He has removed all *āsavas* (cravings) and there is no *anusaya* to bubble up. He/she has “Noble *gathi* of an *Arahant*”.
- On the other hand, a *Sotāpanna* may be tempted by that attractive sense input. He has not removed all *āsavas* (cravings); but he/she has removed *gathi* suitable for the *apāyas*, so *javana citta* corresponding to highly immoral acts will not arise .
- The *āsava* (or *gathi*) are analogous to the dirt in the bottom of a well. If the well water is perturbed, some dirt can come to the surface (*anusaya*). (i.e., if a sense input matching our *gathi* comes into play, bad thoughts automatically come into the mind). This is discussed in the post, “[3. The Second Level – Key to Purify the Mind](#)” in the Meditation section.
- When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, the worst types of “gunk” will be removed. The rest will be removed in three more stages (*Sakadāgāmī, Anāgāmī, Arahant*).

9. In a normal human, whether or not immoral *javana citta* will be triggered, will depend on his/her set of *āsavas* (or *gathi*). If that particular sense input is attractive (i.e., matches his/her *āsavas*), then he/she may automatically initiate a highly immoral act to pursue that sense input.

- But the key here is that, even if such immoral *javana citta* arise, one can still suppress them if one has learned *Satipaṭṭhāna* (or *ānāpāna*), **before the actual act is done**. For extremely immoral acts, like killing another human, most people will be able to control such thoughts even without knowing about *Satipaṭṭhāna*. But the more one learns Dhamma, and the more one understands the consequences, one will be able to have more control even over minor offenses.
- Furthermore, the more one controls one’s actions this way, the more one’s *gathi* will change for the better. This is the another key! This has been discussed in detail in, “[9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#)”. There are several posts under that topic.

10. A **large chunk** of immoral *gathi* will be removed just via comprehending *anicca, dukkha, anatta* at the *Sotāpanna* stage. In fact those *gathi* that are suitable to be born in the *apāyas* will be removed. This is called “*dassanēna pahāthabbā*”, i.e., “removal via correct vision”.

- Thus highly immoral *javana citta* will not even be triggered in a *Sotāpanna*. Just like a well that has been cleaned of the visible dirt at the bottom can not be muddied by perturbing the water in that well, highly immoral thoughts do not arise in a *Sotāpanna* because “worst gunk” has been removed from his/her mind.
- But to be able to grasp *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, one’s mind needs to be cleansed to some extent. Gradual changing of one’s *gathi* or *āsava* (via removing bad ones and by cultivating good ones) needs to be done with *Ānāpāna bhāvanā* (or *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā*) is needed even before the *Sotāpanna* stage, and that needs to be continued until the *Arahantship*.

11. Thus the key to *Nibbāna* is in the *udayavaya ñāṇa*: future rebirths arise (*uadaya*) due to *abhisankhāra* (or *cetana*) in our *javana citta*. By controlling immoral thoughts via reducing our *āsava* (bad *gathi*), **we can eventually stop them from arising.**

- This is done by always **being vigilant** about the moral or immoral thoughts that come to our minds; **this is *Satipaṭṭhāna***; see, “[Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta](#)“. Then if the **thought is moral, we cultivate it (*āna*)**; if it is immoral, **we stop it (*pāna*)** before it leads to bad speech or actions; **this is *Ānāpāna***; see, “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)“.
- The other key point is that the more cleans one’s mind, the more one will be able to comprehend. **In particular, comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, REQUIRES a mind cleansed to some extent.**
- **I hope you can see that this is a feedback loop:** each time one goes through the loop (**being vigilant or *satipaṭṭhāna* to cleansing the mind or *ānāpāna* to more cleansed mind to grasping deeper Dhamma and back to being vigilant**), one makes progress.

12. **This effect is greatly amplified when one finally grasps *Tilakkhana*: One comprehends the futility of staying in this rebirth process (*anatta*)**, because anything that we acquire through much effort cannot be kept to our satisfaction in the long run (*anicca*) and eventually lead to nothing but suffering (*dukkha*), and one can clearly see the need for urgency to reduce and remove one’s *āsava* (bad *gathi*). This leads to the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- **A huge chunk of *āsava* (bad *gathi*) are removed just via this understanding of the *anicca* nature at the *Sotāpanna* stage. One is permanently released from rebirth in the *apāyas* — the four lowest realms — because highly potent immoral *javana citta* do not arise in the mind of a *Sotāpanna*.**
- Thus with *udayavaya ñāṇa*, one can really clarify the path to the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- Then the remaining *āsava* are removed (*āsavakkhaya*) via three more stages (*Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī*, *Arahant*) **by continuing this process (*Ānāpāna* and *Satipaṭṭhāna*)**, and one attains *Nibbāna*, permanent happiness or the removal of all future suffering.
- **But one also need to do *Ānāpāna* and *Satipaṭṭhāna* before the *Sotāpanna* stage** in order to cleanse the mind to a level that is capable of grasping *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

13. Finally, I would like to close the loop by pointing to the connection to concepts we have discussed in the early posts. The *gandabbhaya* consumes three kinds of mental food: *phassa āhāra*, *mano sancetana āhāra*, and *viññāṇa āhāra*.

- As we saw in the previous post in this series, “[Āhāra \(Food\) in Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#)“, all three types of mental foods are consumed by the *cittaja kaya*. And this confirmed by the above discussion: Our initial sense inputs that COULD trigger *javana citta* come via *phassa*, sense contacts. They are JUST contacts. But based on those, we COULD accumulate new *kamma vipāka* (*abhisankhāra*) by making *samphassa*; also see, “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)“.
- *Manosancetana āhāra* (which are *abhisankhāra*) come into play during those *samphassa*; this simply means we start “making plans”, and also keep going back to that sense input. With repeated triggers for a given sense input (*samphassa*) provides *āhāra* for that *viññāṇa*; for example, see, “[2. Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) can be of Many Different Types and Forms](#)“, and other relevant posts.

By reading the links given (and also using the “Search box” at top right) one should be able to clarify key issues. Please don’t hesitate to comment if you need help in clarifying a given concept.

14. Also, please make sure to enter your email address correctly when making a comment. Recently, one person entered incorrect address, and sent me the same question twice. Unfortunately, I have no way of letting him know that I replied each time.

VII Tables and Summaries

- [“Pāli Glossary – \(A-K\)”](#)
- [“Pāli Glossary – \(L-Z\)”](#)
- [“List of “San” Words and Other Pāli Roots”](#)
- [“The 89 Cittas”](#)
- [“Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)”](#)
- [“Rūpa \(Material Form\) – Table”](#)
- [“Rūpa – Generation Mechanisms”](#)
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- [“Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta”](#)
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- [“Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna”](#)
- [“Ultimate Realities – Table”](#)
- [“Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs”](#)
- [“31 Realms of Existence”](#)

7.1 Pāli Glossary

1/2/16: It seems that the audio files are not loading, so just removed the audio files. We now have a [Popup Pāli Glossary with Pronunciation](#).

Possible Confusion in Pronunciation

It seems that the following conventions were adopted in order to make the text shorter.

In many cases:

1. “c” needs to be pronounced “**ch**” as in “**ch**arm” or “**ch**icago”.
2. “t” needs to be pronounced “**th**” as in “**th**ud” or “**th**row”.
 - For example, *citta* pronounced “chiththa”, *cakkhu* is pronounced “chakkhu”, *anicca* as “anichcha”, *anatta* as “anaththa”, *jati* as “jathi”, *taṇhā* as “thanha”, *tilakkhana* as “thilakkhana”.
3. “d” needs to be pronounced “**th**” as in “**th**is” or “**th**at”. Note the difference in pronouncing “**th**” between 2 and 3.
 - For example, *vedanā* or dāna (as in giving) is pronounced this way.










Pronunciation Key

á rhymes like pat â → care ã → pay ā → father ê → pet ë → bee th → thin dh → this
ö → toe ü → moon ch → chin ng → thing

Common Pāli Words

I will keep adding more words to the glossary. If you would like me to add any missing words to the glossary, please send a comment.

10/6/15: I have added audio files. Please note the volume control below each audio.

Pāli Word	Audio	Pronunciation	Meaning
akusala		akusala	immoral, unwholesome
adōsa		adhōsa	non-hatred
alōbha		alōbha	non-greed
amōha		amōha	non-delusion
Anāgāmī		Anāgāmī	Non-Returner (to the human world)
Anariya		Anāriyā	One who is not yet a Noble One or Ariya
anatta		anaththā	not in-control, helpless
anicca		anichchā	inability to maintain to one's satisfaction
annantara			being in storage until retrieval (kamma vipāka)

Pāli Word	Audio	Pronunciation	Meaning
anupassana		anupassanā	contemplate with anicca, dukkha, anatta
anusaya			defilements arising from latent cravings (āsava)
apāya		apāya	common term for four lowest realms
abhijjā [abhijjhā]		abhijjā	strong greed
Arahant			Never to be born in any of the 31 realms
Ariya		āriyā	noble one (Sotāpanna or above)
arūpa		arūpa	without rūpa (not really correct)
avijjā		avijjā	ignorance
ahirika		ahirikā	shamelessness
ahetuka		ahāthuka	without good roots
akasa		ākāsa	space (the void in between rūpa)
aloka		ālōka	light, dissociating from “this world”
āpo		āpō	cohesive element
arammana		ārammana	object of thought
āsava (asaya)		asāva	deep-seated craving
asevana		āsāvanā	repeated practice
bahiddha		bahidhdhā	external
bala			power
bhanga		bhangā	dissolution
bhava			existence level
Bhaudhdhaya (Buddhist)		Bhaudhdhayā	One striving to stop the rebirth process
bhāvanā		bhāvanā	meditation, constant contemplation & use
Buddha		Budhdha (not “Budhdhā”)	Buddha Gotama
bhavanga		bhavangā	life continuum
bhaya			fear
citta		chiththa	early stage of a thought (pure thought)

Pāli Word	Audio	Pronunciation	Meaning
dana		dāna	giving
dasaka			decad
deva		dāva	a being in 6th-11th realms
dhamma		dhammā	Buddha's teachings, phenomenon, mental object
dhammavicaya		dhammavichaya	investigation of concepts like anicca
dhatu		dhāthu	element
diṭṭhi			view, wrong view unless specified
domanassa		dhomanassa	displeasure
dōsa		dhōsa	hatred
dukha		dhukha	suffering
dukkha		dhukhkha	suffering & it can be overcome
dvara		dhvāra	door (to the outside world)
ekaggata		ekaggathā	one-pointedness (of the mind)
gandha			smell
gathi		gathi	character
hadayavatthu		hadayavaththu	seat of mind
hetu		hāthu	root cause
hiri			shame
iddhipada		iddhipāda	means to accomplishment
kamachanda		kāmachanda	greed for things in kamaloka
kamaloka		kāmalōka	first 11 realms with five physical senses
kamavacara		kāmavachara	belonging to kamaloka
kamma		kammā	action, deed
kasina		kasina	meditation device (usu. a colored disk)
kaya		kāya	sensing (seeing, hearing, etc)
kaya		kaya	body
khaya			cutting off
khana			moment, sub-moment

Pāli Word	Audio	Pronunciation	Meaning
khandha			aggregate, collection, heap
kilesa (keles)		kilāsa	defilement
kukkucca		kukkuchcha	tendency to do lowly things
kusala			removal of defilements
lahuta		lahūta	lightness
lakkhana		lakkhana	characteristic
lōbha		lōbha	greed
loka		lōka	world
lokottara		lōkoththara	beyond this world, transcendental
maccariya		machchariya	extreme greed, hiding wealth
magga		magga	path
mana		māna	conceit
manasikara		manasikāra	memory
mano		manō	mind
manodhatu		manōdhāthu	mind element
manodvara		manōdvāra	mind door
manussa			human being
marana			death
metta		meththā	loving kindness
micca diṭṭhi		michcha diththi	wrong views
middha		midhdhha	lethargic mind
mōha		mōha	delusion
mudita		mudhithā	appreciative joy
muduta		mudhuthā	malleability
mūla		mūla or mūla	root
nama		nāma	name, mental
namarupa		nāmarūpa	name and form
ñāṇa		ngāna	knowledge
nimitta		nimiththa	sign

Pāli Word	Audio	Pronunciation	Meaning
nivarana		neevarana	hindrance
niraya			hell
niyama		niyama (not niyāma)	law of nature
oja		ojā	nutritive essence
paccaya		pachchayā	condition
pahāna		pahāna	abandoning
pancadvara		panchadvāra	five sense doors
pancakkhandha		pancakkhandhā	five aggregates
pancaupadanakkhandha		pancaupādānakkhandhā	grasping/craving of five aggregates
paññā		pangngā	wisdom
pīti		peethi (preethi)	joy
pannindriya			wisdom faculty
paramatta		paramaththā	ultimate reality
pasada rūpa		pasāda rūpa	sensitive matter (internal rūpa)
passaddhi		passaddhi	tranquility
patavi			element of hardness
paticca		patichcha	bind to something willingly
patigha			aversion, dislike
pavutthi		pavutthi	during this life, current
peta (preta)		petā (prétha)	hungry ghost
phala			fruit, fruition
phassa			contact
puggala			individual
purisa			masculine
rāga		rāga	attachment to saṃsāra
rasa			taste
rūpa		rūpa	matter (and energy)
rūpa kalapa		rūpa kalāpa	material group unit
rupavacara		rūpavāchara	belonging to rūpa loka

Pāli Word	Audio	Pronunciation	Meaning
sadda		sadhdha	sound
sadharana		sādhāraṇa	universal, common
saddhā		sadhdhā	faith (through knowledge and understanding)
sahetuka		sahēthuka	with roots
Sakadāgāmī		Sakadagāmi	Once-Returner (one more rebirth as a human)
salāyatana		salāyathana	six sense bases
samādhi		samādhi	high concentration with pure mind
sammā			quench (defilements)
samapatti		samāpaththi	meditative attainment
samanantara		samananthara	contiguity, matching with annantara
samatha		samathā	calming the mind
samauppada		samauppāda	birth of a similar kind
sankappa			ideas
saṅkhāra		saṅkhāra	actions leading to defilements
sankata		sankhatha	conditioned, formed by conditions
saññā		sangngā	perception
saṃsāra (also called saṃsāra)		saṃsāra	beginningless rebirth process
sasava		sāsavā	with craving
sati		sathi	mindful of anicca, dukkha, anatta
satipaṭṭhāna		sathipattāna	establishment of sati
sanyojana		sanyōjana	bind to defilements, fetter
sila		seela	virtue, moral conduct
sekha		sēkha	trainee (the three stages below the Arahant)
somanassa		sōmanassa	with joy
sota		sōtha	ear
Sotāpanna		Sōthapanna	Stream Enterer (first stage of Nibbāna)

Pāli Word	Audio	Pronunciation	Meaning
taṇhā		thanhā	attachment (bondage) due to greed, hate, or delusion
tējo		thājo	heat element
thina		theena	sloth
uddacca		udhdhachchā	tendency to be high-minded (restlessness)
upādāna		upādhāna	clinging, like to hold onto
upekkha			equanimity, neutrality
uppatthi		uppaththi	birth
vacī		vachi	speech
vanna (varna)			color
vayama		vayāma	effort
vāyo		vayō	fluidity
vedanā		vādana	feeling
vicara		vichāra	sustained concentration on an object
vicikicca		vichikicchā	acting without sati
vimansa		vimansā	investigation
vinnati		vingngāthi	intimation
viññāṇa		vingngana	(defiled) consciousness
vipāka		vipāka	result
vipassana		vipassanā	insight (via analysis of parts)
virati		virathi	abstinence from indulgence
viriya			effort
visuddhi		visudhdhi	purification
vitakka		vithakka	initial application of the mind on an object
vithi		veethi	process (sequential)
vottapana		voththapana	determining
vyāpāda		vyāpāda	ill will, stronger than patigha

7.2 **Pāli Glossary – (A-K)****August 12, 2016**

Revised May 27, 2017: I have revised the Pāli words to align with the convention used by most English texts. This convention was apparently adapted by the early European scholars (Rhys Davis and others) in order to keep the length of the word short. I will use this convention in new posts, and try to update old posts gradually.

This glossary is in two posts, because there are a total of over 400 Pāli words included now. This is the first part of the glossary; second part at, “[Pāli Glossary – \(L-Z\)](#)”.

- I have been able to get the audio files incorporated, and also have provided links to key posts whenever possible/needed.
- We also have a [Popup Pāli Glossary with Pronunciation](#), thanks to Mr. Seng Kiat Ng. If that GoldenDict dictionary is installed on your computer, you will be able to access this glossary from each post directly. Furthermore, it could provide translations from other online dictionaries as well.

Possible Confusion in Pronunciation

In most cases, I use the spelling for Pāli words that were adapted hundred years ago (by Rhys Davis and others). For example, “anichcha” is written in English as “anicca”. It seems that this was done in order to make the text shorter. That is a valid point, since otherwise some words could be very long when written in English.






In many cases:

1. “c” needs to be pronounced “**ch**” as in “**charm**” or “**chicago**”.
2. “t” needs to be pronounced “**th**” as in “**thud**” or “**throw**”.
 - For example, *citta* pronounced “chiththa”, *cakkhu* is pronounced “chakkhu”, *aniccaas* “anichcha”, *anatta* as “anaththa”, *jati* as “jathi”, *taṇhā* as “thanha”, *tilakkhana* as “thilakkhana”.
3. “d” needs to be pronounced “**th**” as in “**this**” or “**that**”. Note the difference in pronouncing “**th**” between 2 and 3.
 - For example, *vedanā* or dāna (as in giving) is pronounced this way.

Pronunciation Key

á rhymes like pat â → care ã → pay ā → father ê → pet ë → bee th → **thin** dh → **this**






















ö → toe ü → moon ch → **chin** ng → **thing**

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
abhaya	abhaya	"a" + "bhaya"; doing something to stop someone's fear	
abhaya dāna	abhaya dāna	saving the life of a living being	
abhijjā	abhijjhā	strong greed	
abhiññā	abhiññā	supermundane powers	
abhisankhāra	abhisankhāra	strong saṅkhāra that lead to rebirths and strong vipāka	























Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
ādīnava	ādeenava	bad outcome: Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana – Introduction	
adhimokkha	adhimokkha	arising to the top; reaching a high value	
adhivāsana	adhivāsana	things one gets used to based on sansaric habits; part of gathi	
adinnādāna	adinnādanā	stealing; taking something without permission	
adōsa	adōsa	without hatred	
ajjatta or ajjhatta	ajjhaththa	internal	
ākasa	ākāsa	space (the void in between rūpa)	
ākāsānancāyatana	ākāsānanchāyathana	first arūpa brahma realm	
ākincaññāyatana	ākincaññāyathana	third arūpa brahma realm	
akusala	akusala	immoral act	
āhāra	āhāra	nutrients (for body or mind)	
ahethuka	ahéthuka	without good roots	
ahirika	ahirika	shamelessness	
akālika	akālika	remove defilements or timeless (no birth or death, i.e., Nibbāna)	
alōbha	alōbha	without greed	
āloka	ālōka	light, dissociating from “this world”	
āmisa	āmisa	mundane (belonging to 31 realms)	
amōha	amōha	without delusion; moral mindset	
amurtha	amurtha	fine food (drink) of devas	
Anāgāmī	Anāgāmī	Non-Returner (to the human world)	
anāgata	anāgata	future	
ānāpāna	ānāpāna	7. What is Ānāpāna?	
ānāpānasati	ānāpānasathi	6. Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā (Introduction)	
anāriya	anāriya	not Noble	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
anatoppa	anathoppa	fear of doing immoral deeds	
anatta	anatta	not in-control, helpless	
ānenjābhi saṅkhāra	ānenjābhi saṅkhāra	Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka	
anicca	anichcha	inability to maintain to one's satisfaction	
Aniccata	Anichchathā	tendency to change unexpectedly; characteristic of a rūpa: Rūpa (Material Form) – Table	
anidassana	anidassana	Cannot be seen; can also mean pure as in anidassana viññāṇa	
animisa	animisa	without pausing for even a moment: Animisa Locana Bodhi Poojawa – A Prelude to Acts of Gratitude	
annamanna	aññamañña	depend on each other	
annantara	annantara	being in storage until retrieval (kamma vipāka)	
anumodanā	anumōdanā	accept pattidana (transfer of merits or sharing of merits) with joy	
anupassanā	anupassanā	discard kileasa by contemplating with anicca, dukkha, anatta: see #6 of 4. What do all these Different Meditation Techniques Mean?	
anusaya	anusaya	defilements arising from latent cravings (āsava) and kileasa	
apacayana	apachayana	paying respects to those with higher virtues: Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā	
aparāpariyavedaniya	aparāpariyavedaneeya	kamma vipāka that can materialize at any time in future	
apāya	apāya	common term for four lowest realms	
āpo	āpō	cohesive element	
Appanā samādhi	Appanā samādhi	almost at jhāna: What is Samādhi? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness	
appanīta	appaneeta	not to liking; dislikes	
appatigha	appatigha	cannot be grasped or touched	
apunna	apuñña	immoral	
apuññabhi saṅkhāra	apuññabhi saṅkhāra	highly immoral saṅkhāra	




Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
Arahant	Arahant	never to be born in any of the 31 realms	
ārammana	ārammana	object of thought	
Āriya	Āriyā or Āriya	Noble person (Sotāpanna or above)	
arūpa	arūpa	without rūpa	
asañña	asañña	without perception; without sañña	
āsava =āsaya	āsava	deep-seated craving	
āsavakkhaya ñāṇa	āsavakkhaya ñāṇa	Knowledge of removing āsava: The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas	
asevana	āsāvana	repeated practice; associate	
asobhana	asōbhana	ugly or defiled (used mainly for cetasika)	
asura	asura	one of the four apāyas; beings there have large bodies and are inactive	
āsvāda	āsvāda	enjoyment	
atīta	atheetha	past	
atta	aththa of atta (eight)	opposite of anatta or eight	
attha	aththa	opposite of anatta; perception that one has total control	
avici	avichi	one of the niraya (hell)	
avihinsā	avihinsā	non-aggressive	
avinibbhoga	avinibbhōga	constituents not separable, as in a avinibbhoga rūpa kalapa	
avyāpāda	avyāpāda	not angry, kind	
āyatana	āyatana	an indriya becomes as āyatana: Sorting out Some Key Pāli Terms - Tanhā Lobha Dosa Moha etc	
āyusa	āyusa	lifetime	
avijjā	avijjā	Ignorance of Tilakkhana	
bahiddha	bhadhiddha or bahiddhā	external	
bahijja	bahihha or bahijjā	external	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
bala	bala	power	
bali	bali	distort	
beeja	beeja	seed	
bhanga	bhangā	dissolution; destruction	
bhava	bhava	realm of existence	
Bhaudhdhayā (Buddhist)	Bhaudhdhayā	One striving to stop the rebirth process	
bhāvanā	bhāvanā	meditation, constant contemplation & use	
bhavaṅga	bhavaṅga	life continuum	
bhaya	bhaya	fear	
Bhikkhu	Bhikkhu	Buddhist monk	
bodhicitta	bōdhichitta	a Mahayana term denoting "enlightenment-mind"	
bojjaṅga	bojjaṅga	bodhi anga or facilitating factor for Nibbāna	
brahma	brahma	a being in rūpa or arūpa brahma realms	
Buddha	Budhdha (not "Budhdhā")	Buddha Gotama	
cakkhu	chakkhu	eye or seeing	
chakrāwāta cakrāvāta	chakrāwāta	planetary system like our Solar system	
cetanā	chethanā	intention; but deeper: What is Intention in Kamma?	
cetasika	chetasika	mental factor	
chanda	chanda	liking	
citta	chiththa	thought (pure thought)	
cittānupassanā	chiththānupassanā	doing anupassana via contemplating on thoughts	
citta vithi	chiththa veethi	citta come in packets of a discrete number; a single citta does not arise	
cutūpapāda ñāṇa	chuthūpapāda ñāṇa	ability to see all previous births	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
cuti	chuthi	death	
cuti citta	chuthi chiththa	moment of death	
dana	dāna	giving	
dasa	dasa	ten	
dasaka	dasaka	decad; group of 10	
dassana	dassana	vision; but normally used for "comprehending"	
dassanena pahatabba	dassanena pahāthabbā	removing (kilesa) via comprehension of Dhamma	
desanā	dāsanā	verbal discourse	
deva	dāva	a being in 6th-11th realms	
Dhamma	dhamma	Buddha's teachings, phenomenon, mental object	
dhammavicaya	dhammavichaya	investigation of concepts like anicca	
dhammānudhamma patipadā	dhammānudhamma patipadā	condition for attaining Sotāpanna stage: Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala	
dhammānupassanā	dhammānupassanā	doing anupassana via contemplating on Dhamma	
dhātu	dhāthu	element	
dhyāna (same as jhāna)	dhāyna	meditative state with rūpa loka or arūpa loka consciousness	
ditta	ditta	observation	
diṭṭhi	diṭṭhi	view, wrong view unless specified	
ditthijukamma	ditthijukamma	"diṭṭhi"+"uju"+"kamma" or getting rid of wrong views on kamma: Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā	
domanassa	domanassa	mental agony, displeasure; not bodily suffering	
dōsa	dōsa	hatred	
dōsakkhaya	dōsakkhaya	dōsa + khaya or removal of hate	
dugathi	dugathi	"du" + "gathi" or habits that can lead to bad rebirths	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
dukha	dukha	suffering	
dukkha	dukkha	suffering & it can be stopped from arising	
dvāra	dvāra	door (to the external world)	
ehipassiko	ehipassiko	a quality of Dhamma, removing defilements in real time: Supreme Qualities of Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha	
ekaggathā	ekaggathā	one-pointedness (of the mind)	
gandha	gandha	smell, odor	
gandabbhayā	gandabbhayā	Gandhabbayā (Manomaya Kaya)	
gathi	gathi	character, habits	
ghāna	ghāna	nose or smelling	
gotrabhu	gōtrabhu	change of lineage ("gōtra") when getting close to a jhāna	
hadayavatthu	hadayavaththu	seat of mind (in the gandhabbayā)	
hetu	hāthu	root cause	
hiri	hiri	shamefulness for doing akusala kamma	
iddhi	iddhi	special powers or knowledges	
iddhipāda	iddhipāda	means to special (mental) accomplishment	
indriya	indriya	one of the six sense faculties when used without lōbha, dōsa, mōha	
issa (irisiyā in Sinhala)	issa	jealousy	
Itthi (sthree in Sinhala)	Iththi	feminine	
jarā	jarā	getting old or weak	
Jaratā	Jarathā	one of 28 rūpa: Rūpa (Material Form)	
jāti	jāthi	birth of a living being OR birth of anything	
javana	javana	those citta with which saṅkhāra committed or kamma vipāka generated: Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
jhāna (same as dhyana)	jhāna	meditative state with rūpa loka or arūpa loka consciousness	
jivhā	jivhā	tongue (more accurately jivha indriya) OR taste	
jīvita	jeevitha	life: jivita indriya maintains life	
Jvitindriya	Jeevithindriya	one of the 7 universal cetasika: Cetasika (Mental Factors) OR one of the 28 rūpa: Rūpa (Material Form)	
kabalinkā	kabalinkā	one of the 4 āhāra: Āhāra (Food) in Udayavaya Nāna	
kalpa (same as kappa)	kalpa	time duration of an entity: kalpa of a human is about 100 years; mahā kalpa is lifetime of the universe	
kalyānamittā (or mitrā)	kalyāna mithra	Noble friend: Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala	
kāmachanda	kāmachanda	greed for things in kamaloka	
kāmaloka	kāmalōka	first 11 realms with five physical senses	
kāmarāga	kāmarāga	attachment to sense pleasures in kamaloka	
kāmāvacara	kāmāvachara	belonging to kamaloka	
kāmesu miccācārā	kāmesu michchāchārā	immoral ways of enjoying sense pleasures: The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them	
kamma	kamma	action, deed	
kammanta	kammanthā	actions as in sammā kammanta	
kammattāna	kammaththāna	mediation verses or procedures	
kandha	kandha	heap, pile, or aggregate	
karunā	karunā	compassion in the suffering of others	
kasina	kasina	meditation object in anariya jhāna (eg. a colored disk)	
kāya	kāya	pertaining to the body or action	
kaya	kaya	physical or mental body	
kāyānupassanā	kāyānupassanā	doing anupassana via contemplating on the bodily actions	
khanika (khanika) samādhi	khanika samādhi	What is Samādhi? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
khaya	khaya	cutting off or gradually reduce	
khana	khana	moment, sub-moment	
kriyā	kriyā	action, deed	

7.3 Pāli Glossary – (L-Z)

August 12, 2016

Revised May 27, 2017: I have revised the Pāli words to align with the convention used by most English texts. This convention was apparently adapted by the early European scholars (Rhys Davis and others) in order to keep the length of the word short. I will use this convention in new posts, and try to update old posts gradually.

This glossary in two posts, because there are a total of over 400 Pāli words included now. This is the second part of the glossary; first part at “[Pāli Glossary – \(A-K\)](#)”.

- I have been able to get the audio files incorporated, and also have provided links to key posts whenever possible/needed.
- We also have a “[Popup Pāli Glossary with Pronunciation](#)”, thanks to Mr. Seng Kiat Ng. If that GoldenDict dictionary is installed on your computer, you will be able to access this glossary from each post directly. Furthermore, it could provide translations from other online dictionaries as well.

Possible Confusion in Pronunciation






In most cases, I use the spelling for Pāli words that were adapted hundred years ago (by Rhys Davis and others). For example, “anichcha” is written in English as “anicca”. It seems that this was done in order to make the text shorter. That is a valid point, since otherwise some words could be very long when written in English.

In many cases:























1. “c” needs to be pronounced “**ch**” as in “**ch**arm” or “**ch**icago”.
2. “t” needs to be pronounced “**th**” as in “**th**ud” or “**th**row”.
 - For example, *citta* pronounced “chiththa”, *cakkhu* is pronounced “chakkhu”, *anicca* as “anichcha”, *anatta* as “anaththa”, *jati* as “jathi”, *taṇhā* as “thanha”, *tilakkhana* as “thilakkhana”.
3. “d” needs to be pronounced “**th**” as in “**th**is” or “**th**at”. Note the difference in pronouncing “**th**” between 2 and 3.
 - For example, *vedanā* or dāna (as in giving) is pronounced this way.

Pronunciation Key












á rhymes like pat â → care ã → pay ā → father ê → pet ë → bee th → thin dh → this
ö → toe ü → moon ch → chin ng → thing























Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
lōbha	lōbha	excess greed: Lobha, Raga and Kamaccanda, Kamaraga	
lahuta	lahūtha	lightness (e.g., kaya lahuta is lightness in body)	
lakkhana	lakhkhana	characteristic of	
loka	lōka	realm or world depending on the context	
lokiya	lōkiya	belonging to this world of 31 realms	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
lokottara	lōkoththara	beyond this world of 31 realms, transcendental	
maccariya	machchariya	hiding wealth due to extreme greed	
magga	magga	path; procedure	
mahā	mahā	large or important	
māna	māna	arrogance, self-admiration	
manasikāra	manasikāra	memory. Details at: Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāna (Consciousness) Arises	
mano	manō	mind	
mano sancetana	manō sanchetana	vedanā, saññā that arise due to one's gathi	
manodhatu	manōdhāthu	mind element	
manodvāra	manōdvāra	mind door to namaloka; see, Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental	
manodvāravajjana	manōdvāravajjana	a citta coming to the mind door as in manodvaravajjana citta	
manussa	manussa	human being	
marana	marana	death (death of a physical body is not necessarily the end of human bhava; see, "Antarabhava and Gandhabbayā")	
mettā	meththā	kindness. Has two meanings: " Ariya Metta Bhāvanā "	
miccā diṭṭhi	michchā diththi	wrong views; see. " Wrong Views (Micca Ditthi) – A Simpler Analysis "	
middha	midhdha	lethargic mind	
mōha	mōha	delusion; mind totally covered; see, " Lobha, Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja "	
mōhakkhaya	mōhakkhaya	mōha + khaya, removing delusion	
muditā	mudhithā	joy in the success of others	
mudutā	mudhuthā	malleability; e.g., kaya miduta	
mūla	mūla or mūla	root (usually in root cause)	
musāvāda	musāvāda	lies, trying to deceive: The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
muta	mutha	combined word for smelling, tasting, and touching	
nāma	nāma	name, mental	
nāmarūpa	nāmarūpa	name and form OR mental image of a nama and rūpa	
namaskāraya	namaskāraya	Namaskaraya – Homage to the Buddha	
ñāṇa	ñāṇa	knowledge	
nātha or nāta	nātha	help is there, opposite of anāta	
nekkhamma	nekkhamma	relinquish sense pleasures: Difference Between Giving Up Valuables and Losing Interest in Worthless	
neva saññā nā saññāyatana	neva saññā nā saññāyatana	fourth arūpa brahma realm	
Nibbāna	Nibbāna	stopping the rebirth process: Nibbāna	
nibbatti lakkhana	nibbaththi lakkhana	Nibbatti Lakkhana in Udayavaya Ṇāṇa	
nicca	nichchā	having total control, that ability	
niddesa	niddāsa	short description: Sutta – Introduction	
nimitta	nimiththa	sign; something resembling	
nirāmisa	nirāmisa	neutral thoughts without sense cravings	
nirodha	nirōdha	nir + udā or stop from arising	
nissarana	nissarana	willingly give up asvada: Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana – Introduction	
Nivana	same as Nibbāna		
nīvarana	neevarana	hindrance; covered mind	
niraya	niraya	hell	
niyama	niyama (sometimes called niyāma)	law of nature	
niyata	niyatha	permanent, fixed	
ojā	ōjā	nutritive essence	
olārika	ōlārika	rough, condensed	







Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
opapātika	öpapātika	instantaneous and fully-formed birth as in deva and brahma realms	
pabhassara, pabhasvara, , or prabhasvara (Sanskrit)	pabhassara	devoid of greed, hate, and ignorance; e.g., pabhasvara citta	
paccayā	pachchayā	condition	
paccuppanna	pachchuppanna	conditional arising; present moment arising due to conditions	
pahāna	pahāna	abandon; remove	
pahāthabba	pahāthabbā	removal	
pakinnaka	pakinnaka	particulars or occasionals as in pakinnaka cetasika: Cetasika – Connection to Gathi	
pānātipatā	pānāthipatā	killing a living being: The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them	
panca	pancha	five	
pancadvāra	panchadvāra	five sense doors	
pancadvāravajjana cittā	pancadvāravajjana chiththā	Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs	
pancakkhandha	pancakkhandhā	five aggregates	
pancanīvarana	panchaneevarana	five hindrances that cover the mind	
pancaupadanakkhandha	pancaupādānakkhandhā	grasping/craving of the five aggregates: Pancaupadanakkhandha – It is All Mental	
pañña (paneeta or praneeta)	paneetha (praneetha)	likable or good	
paññā	paññā	wisdom; comprehension of Tilakkhana	
pāpa kammā	pāpa kammā	immoral actions	
paralowa	paralowa	a human or animal gandhabbayā lives in paralowa until a womb becomes available: Hidden World of the Gandhabbayā: Netherworld (Paralowa)	
pāramitā	pāramithā	strive through many rebirths: Paramita and Niyata Vivarana – Myths or Realities?	
paribramana	paribramana	rotating around another body	
perideva	perideva	lamentation, especially upon remembering a past mishap	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
parivajjana	parivajjanā	staying clear of bad influences: The Sotāpanna Stage	
pīti	peethi (preethi)	joy	
pannindriya	pannindriya	wisdom faculty	
parāmattha	paramaththa	ultimate reality	
parusāvācā [pharusāvācā]	parusāvācā [pharusāvācā]	harsh speech: Ten Immoral Actions (Dasa Akusala)	
pasāda rūpā	pasāda rūpā	sensitive matter (five internal senses; not physical senses): Brain – Interface between Mind and Body	
passaddhi	passaddhi	tranquility	
patavi	patavi	element of hardness	
paticca	patichcha	get bonded to something willingly	
patigha	patigha	aversion, dislike	
patikūla manasikāra bhāvanā	patikula manasikāra bhāvanā	4. What do all these Different Meditation Techniques Mean?	
patipadā	patipadā	a procedure; way of living, like in majjima patipada	
patiniddesa	patiniddesa	detailed description: Sutta – Introduction	
patisandhi	patisandhi	Grasping a new existence (bhava)	
patisevana	patisevana	good associations as in patisevana pahathabba: The Sotāpanna Stage	
pattānumodanā	paththanumōdana	Transfer of Merits (Pattidana) – How Does it Happen?	
pattidāna	paththidāna	transfer of merits: Transfer of Merits (Pattidana) – How Does it Happen?	
pavutthi	pavuththi	during this life, current	
peleema	peleema	incessant stress, agitation: The Incessant Distress (“Peleema”) – Key to Dukkha Sacca	
peta (pretha)	petā (prétha)	hungry ghost; one of the four apāyas	
phala	phala	fruit, fruition	
phassa	phassa	sense contact; most times it is defiled or samphassa: Difference between Phassa and Samphassa	





Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
pisuṇāvācā	pisuṇāvācā	slandering: Ten Immoral Actions (Dasa Akusala)	
pottabba	poththabba	"poththa" + "abba", where "poththa" is skin: sense of touch	
pubbe	pubbe	previous	
pubbenivāsānussati ñāṇa	pubbenivāsānussati ñāṇa	see #12 of Antarabhava and Gandhabbayā	
puggala	puggala	individual	
punna kriyā	punna kriyā	deed that makes one's heart joyful	
purisa	purisa	masculine	
rāga	rāga	attachment to the 31 realms: Lobha, Raga and Kamaccanda, Kamaraga	
rāgakkhaya	rāgakkhaya	rāga + khaya: removal of attachment to the 31 realms	
rasa	rasa	taste	
rūpa	rūpa	matter AND energy	
rūpa kalapa	rūpa kalāpa	elementary material group unit: Rūpa Kalapas (Grouping of Matter)	
rupavacara	rūpavāchara	belonging to rūpa loka	
sabba	sabba	all	
sacca	sachcha	truth, as in a Noble Truth	
sadda	sadhdha	sound	
saddhā	sadhdhā	faith (through knowledge and understanding)	
sahajāta	sahajātha	born together	
sahetuka	sahēthuka	with good roots as in dvihetuka and tihetuka; if no good roots it is an ahetuka birth	
Sakadāgāmī	Sakadāgāmi	Once-Returner (one more rebirth in kāma loka)	
salāyatana	salāyathana	six sense bases for a normal human	
samādhi	samādhi	concentration on a good or bad mindset: What is Samādhi? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness	



Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
samanantara	samananthara	matching with annantara: Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya	
samāpatti	samāpaththi	different from jhāna, see: Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs	
sammā	sammā	quench (defilements): What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra (or Samsāra)	
sammappadhāna	sammappadhāna	four main efforts to stop "san" from arising: Two Versions of 37 Factors of Enlightenment	
samatha	samatha	calming the mind	
sāmisa	sāmisa	citta with kilesa or akusala cetasika	
sampajāna	sampajāna	sorting defiled thoughts: Satipatthāna Sutta – Structure	
sampappalāpa	sampappalāpa	frivolous talk: Ten Immoral Actions (Dasa Akusala)	
samphassa	samphassa	"san" + "phassa": Difference between Phassa and Samphassa	
sampaticcana	sampaticchana	where "gathi" are incorporated into a citta vithi: Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs	
sampayutta	sampayuththa	together and inseparable, like a dye dissolved in water	
samudaya	samudaya	arising due to "san": "san" + "udaya"	
samuppāda	samuppāda	birth of a similar kind: sama + uppada	
sanvega or samvega	sanvega or samvega	"san" + "vega": javana power in a citta due to "san": see #9 of Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power	
san	san	San	
sandittiko	sandittikō	"san" + "diṭṭhi" or enable seeing "san": Supreme Qualities of Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha	
sankappa	sankappa	thoughts, ideas	
saṅkhāra	saṅkhāra	actions leading to defilements, habits	
sankata	sankhatha	arisen by conditions	
saññā	sangngā	perception, identification	
saṃsāra or samsāra	saṃsāra or samsāra	beginningless rebirth process: What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra (or Samsāra)	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
sansāric	sansāric	related to the rebirth process	
santati	santhathi	one of the 28 types of rūpa: Rūpa (Material Form)	
sanvara	sanvara	"san" + "vara" or stop "san" by moral behavior: What is "San"? Meaning of Sansāra (or Samsāra)	
sanvarena	sanvarena	via sanvara as in sanvarena pahatabba: The Sotāpanna Stage	
sanvega or samvega	sanvega	"san" + "vega": enhanced javana of a citta due to "san", i.e., highly emotional	
sapta or saptha	saptha	seven	
sāsana	sāsana	Buddha sāsana is Ministry of the Buddha	
sasankhārika	sasankhārika	immoral citta arising due to shrunken mind (thinamiddha)	
sāsava	sāsava	with craving	
satara	sathara	four	
sathkāya diṭṭhi or sakkāya diṭṭhi	sathkāya diṭṭhi	perception that things in this world are worth striving for: How do we Decide which View is Wrong View (Ditthi)?	
sati	sathi	in the mindset of anicca, dukkha, anatta: Satipatthāna – Introduction	
satipattāna	sathipattāna	maintain sati: Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta	
santīrana	santheerana	where a decision is made in a citta vithi: Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs	
sanyojana or samyojana	sanyōjana	bind to defilements or "san"	
sīla	seela	virtue, moral conduct	
silabbata paramasa	silabbatha parāmāsa	perception that Nibbāna can be attained via just obeying set precepts or procedures	
seka	sēka	trainee (the three stages below the Arahant stage)	
sobhana	sōbhana	good, likable, moral	
soka	soka	sorrow due to personal loss	
somanassa	sōmanassa	with joy	
sota	sōtha	Two possible meanings: ear and Noble Eightfold Path	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
Sotāpanna	Sōthapanna	Stream Enterer (first stage of Nibbāna)	
Suddhāshtaka	Sudhdhāshtaka	smallest material element: The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka [Suddhatthaka]	
suddhāvāsa	sudhdhāvāsa	Brahma realms reserved for the Anāgāmīs	
sugathi	sugathi	"su" + "gathi" or moral habits/behavio; also good realms: Samsaric Habits, Character (Gathi), and Cravings (Āsava)	
sukha	sukha	bodily pleasure, like with a massage; somannasa is mental	
sukuma	sukuma	fine; not coarse	
Sunyatā or sunnatā	Sunyatā or sunnatā	emptiness: What is Sunyata or Sunnata (Emptiness)?	
suta	sutha	sound	
sutta	suththa	discourse in the Tipitaka	
suva	suva	as in Nivan suva:	
taṇhā	thanhā	attachment (bondage) due to greed, hate, or delusion	
tatramajjhataṭṭa	thathramajjhaththathā	neutrality of mind; not upekkha: Cetasika – Connection to Gathi	
tējo	thājō	heat element	
Thero	Thero	One who has attained Nibbāna; nowadays it is used for non-Arahants bhikkhus too	
thīna	theena	shrinking of the mind, not alert	
thucca	thuchcha	lowly (behavior)	
tiparivattaya	thiparivattaya	Tiparivattaya and Twelve Types of Ñāna (Knowledge)	
tihetuka	tihethuka	patisandhi with three good roots	
tilakkhana	thilakkhana	Three characteristics of the 31 realms: Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta	
Tipitaka	Thipitaka	three pitaka: sutta, vinaya, abhidhamma: Preservation of the Dhamma	
tisarana	thisarana	refuge in Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha: Tisarana Vandana and Its Effects on One's Gathi	
tivijjā	thivijjā	Three special knowledges of the Buddha: The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
ucceda diṭṭhi	uchcheda diṭṭhi	wrong view that death of the physical body is the end of a living being, i.e., disbelief in rebirth process	
udayavaya	udayavaya	arising and destruction of a sankata: Udayavaya Nāna	
udayavaya or udayabbaya ñāṇa	udayavaya ñāa	Udayavaya Ñāna	
uddacca	udhdhachchā	tendency to be high-minded (restlessness)	
uddesa	uddesa	very short description: Sutta – Introduction	
upacāra	upachāra	close to	
upacāra samādhi	upachāra samādhi	samādhi close to jhānic state	
upādāna	upādāna	clinging, like to hold onto	
upekkha	upekkha	equanimity, neutrality	
uppatti	uppaththi	birth	
utu	uthu	natural change kammaja and cittaja energies to rūpa	
utuja rūpa	uthuja rūpa	rūpa produced via the transformation of kammaja and cittaja rūpa	
vacī	vachee	speech	
vanna (varna)	vanna (varna)	color	
vaya	vaya	destruction or deviating to immorality	
vāyāma	vāyāma	effort	
vāyo	vāyö	element of movement, motion	
vedanā	vādanā	feeling or more precisely "sensing of an event": Vedanā (Feelings)	
vedanānupassanā	vedanānupassanā	anupassana on feelings: Satipatthāna – Introduction	
veyyavacca	veyyavachcha	paying homage to and taking care of Holy places: Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā	
vibhava	vibhava	disbelief in rebirth: Kāma Tanhā, Bhava Tanhā, Vibhava Tanhā	
vicāra	vichāra	sustained concentration on a thought object	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
vicikiccā	vichikichchā	acting without sati; uncertainty of what to do; doing inappropriate things	
vidassanā	vidassanā	insight meditation with and for clear vision: 4. What do all these Different Meditation Techniques Mean?	
vimāna	vimāna	residence, normally of a deva	
vimansā	vimansā	contemplation, investigation	
vimukti	vimukthi	release (from the rebirth process)	
vinaya	vinaya	rules of discipline for bhikkhus: Kamma, Debt, and Meditation	
viññānancāyatana	viññānanchāyathana	second arupi brahma realm: 31 Realms of Existence	
viññāta	viññātha	comprehension via viññāṇa	
viññāti	viññāthi	intimation. For example, kaya vinnati is express intention via body movement.	
viññāṇa	viññāṇa	defiled consciousness	
vinnanancayatana	vignnānagnchāyatan a	second arūpa brahma realm: 31 Realms of Existence	
vinodanā	vinōdanā	in vinodana pahathabba: The Sotāpanna Stage	
vipāka	vipāka	result (of a kamma)	
viparināma	viparināma	unexpected change	
vipassanā	vipassanā	removing defilements via insight of Tilakkhana	
vippayutta	vippayutta	appear together, but separable; like a current in a wire	
virathi	virathi	lose craving for indulgence	
viriya	viriya	effort	
visuddhi	visudhdhi	purification	
vitakka	vithakka	initial application of the mind on an object	
vithi	veethi	street; but in a citta vithi means a "packet of thoughts" with a certain number of citta	
vottapana	voththapana	determining (citta)	
vyāpāda	vyāpāda	ill will, stronger than patigha	

Pāli Word	Pronunciation	Meaning	Audio
yojanā	yōjanā	distance of about 7 miles	
yoniso manasikāra	yōnisō manasikāra	ability to see consequences of one's actions for future rebirths: Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala	

7.4

List of “San” Words and Other Pāli Roots

June 29, 2017

1. Just by knowing what is meant by the root “*san*”, many Pāli words can be understood easily; see, [“What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)”](#).

- Note that some words are written and pronounced with emphasis on “m” rather than “n”, because it rhymes better that way; a good example is *saṃsāra* (*saṃsāra*) which can be written and pronounced either way.
- On the other hand, *sammā* comes from “*san*” + “*mā*”, but always pronounced as “*sammā*”, because it rhymes easier that way; eg., *sammā diṭṭhi*, *sammā sankappa*, etc.
- It must be kept in mind that “*san*” has various levels. First one needs to remove ‘*san*’ that lead to immoral activities that can lead to births in the *apāyas*; after one becomes a *Sotāpanna*, one should strive to eliminate “*san*” involving sense pleasures; after becoming an *Anāgāmī*, the goal is to remove “*san*” associated with *rūpa* and *arupa jhāna*. I only stated “sense pleasures” in the Table.

2. I plan to add another table for Pāli words with a few more key “roots”.

Pāli Words with “San” Root

Pāli Word	Roots	Meaning of added word	Meaning of whole word
Sammā	san + mā	mā means to "remove"	associated with removing "san"
sammāpaṭipatti	san + mā + patipatti	patipatti is a process	method or effort to remove "san"
sammāvimutti	san + mā + vimutti	vimutti is complete release	Arahant phala; Nibbāna
Sammanti	san + mā	like gaccā to gaccanti	attaining peacefulness by removing "san"
samantanō	san + anta; rhymes like samananta	anta is end	a process that gets rid of "san"
Sammā diṭṭhi	Sammā + diṭṭhi	diṭṭhi is vision (here to see Tilakkhana)	clear vision to see danger of (and how to remove) "san"
Sammā sankappa	Sammā + sankappa	sankappa are conscious/unconscious thoughts	thoughts to removing "san"
Sammā vācā	Sammā + vācā	vācā is conscious thoughts/speech	speech to remove "san"
Sammā kammanta	Sammā + kammanta	kammanta is actions	bodily actions to remove "san"
Sammā ajīva	Sammā + ajīva	ajīva is way one lives	living style to remove "san"
Sammā vāyāma	Sammā + vāyāma	vāyāma is effort	effort to remove "san"
Sammā sati	Sammā + sati	sati is mindfulness (about Tilakkhana)	mindfulness to remove "san"
Sammā samādhi	Sammā + samādhi	samādhi is the state of equanimity (sama + adhi)	state of samādhi resulting from removing "san"
Sambhava	san + bhava	bhava is existence	existence due to "san"
Sambuddha	san + bhava + uddha	uddha is rooting out	one who rooted out existence in 31 realms

Pāli Word	Roots	Meaning of added word	Meaning of whole word
Sambōdhi			state attained by a sambuddha; Nibbāna
Sambhūta	san + bhūta	bhūta refers to satara mahā bhūta	creation of bhūta via "san" in the mind; The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka [Suddhatthaka]
Sammapañña	sammā + pañña	pañña is wisdom	wisdom to see the way to remove "san"
Sammā-Sambodhi (Sammā-Sambuddha)		Emphasizing the achievement of sambodhi on one's own	reserved for the Buddhas
Sammatta	san+mā+atta	atta means the "truths leading to sammā"	steps in the Eightfold path
Sambojjanga	san +bodhi+anga; rhymes as sambojjanga	"anga" means factors	Factors that lead to Sambodhi
Sampajāna (Sampajanna)	san + pajāna	pajāna is to comprehend	to figure out defilements (san)
sammappadhāna	san + mā+ padhāna	mā is to remove; padhāna means "first"	first to do to remove "san"
Sambandha	san + bandha	bandha is to bind, associate with	bind with someone/something with "san"
sambhāvitā	san + bhāvitā	bhāvitā is to use	engage in "san" or sense pleasures
Sambhēda	san + bhēda	bhēda means to quarrel	fighting over pleasurable things or "san"
Sambhīta	san + bhīta	bhīta means to terrify	"san" leading to terror (in mind or in future births)
Sambhōga	san + bhōga	bhōga means pleasurable things, especially food	sense pleasures
Sambhunjati	san + bhunja	bhunja means to eat or consume	engage in sense pleasures
sammoha	san + mōha	mōha is delusion	extreme delusion
sampādesi / sampādetā	san + pādēsi	pādēsi is to sort out and see	to clarify what is "san", as in "vaya dhammā saṅkhāra, appamādēna sampādēta".
sampahansēti	san + pahāna	pahāna is to remove	to remove "san"
sampaññō	san + paññō	paññō means with wisdom, possessive of paññā	attained wisdom to see 'san"
Sampajāna	san + pajāna	pajāna is to clarify	sort out or to clarify "san"
sampayōga	san + payōga	payōga is a clever plan to get something done	plan to access a pleasurable thing
Samphassa	san + phassa	contact with san (in the mind)	Vedanā (Feelings) Arise in Two Ways

Pāli Word	Roots	Meaning of added word	Meaning of whole word
Sampassati	san + passati	passati means to comprehend	comprehend "san"
sankiliṭṭha or saṃkiliṭṭha	san + kiliṭṭha	kiliṭṭha is to defile	making mind defiled by adding "san"
sankilesa or saṃkilesa	san + kilesa	kilesa are defilements	things that defile the mind
Samsāra (Saṃsāra)	san + sāra	sāra means "good"	perception that san (things in this world) are good.
Sansēva (Samsēva)	san + sēva	sēva means to "associate"	to indulge in worldly pleasures
Samuccēda (as in samuccēda pahāna)	san + uccēda	uccēda means to "remove from the roots"; pahāna is remove	samuccēda pahāna means to "get rid of permanently"
saṃyōga or sanyōga	san + yōga	yōga is to bind	bound with "san" (to this world)
saṃyōjanā or sanyōjanā	san + yō + ja	"yo" is to bind; "ja" is to produce	factors that leads to bonds to rebirth process
samudaya	san + udaya	udaya is to arise	arising due to "san"
Samutthāna	san + utthāna	utthāna means "where it arises"	Samutthāna citta is same as cittaja; where "san" originates (mind)
samvāsa or sanvāsa	san + vāsa	vāsa live with	live together; sexual intercourse
Samvara (Sanvara)	san + vara	vara means to stop, avoid	moral behavior
Samvaddha	san + vaddha	vaddha is to "grow"	to add "san", i.e., defilements
Samvannanā	san + vannanā	vannanā is to praise	to praise immoral acts
Samvattana (Samvattati)	san + vattana	vattana is to "drop"	aiding in removing "san"
samvēdanā or sanvēdanā	san + vēdanā	vēdanā is to feel	feelings due to "san": samphassa jā vēdanā
saṃvidhāna or sanvidhāna	san + vidhāna	vidhāna means ordering	giving orders, organize (normally used mundanely)
saṃsaraṇa or sansaraṇa	san + saraṇa	saraṇa means move around, travel	wandering in saṃsāra
Samyutta (as in Samyutta Nikāya)	san + yutta	yutta means "contains"	Suttas in the Samyutta Nikāya explain "san" terms
Sancetanā	san + cetanā	cetanā is intention (in a thought)	defiled thoughts
sanditthika	san + diṭṭhi	diṭṭhi is seeing, vision	seeing "san" with Buddha Dhamma
Sangāyanā	san + gāyanā	gāyanā is to recite	Buddhist Council where suttas describing "san" are recited.
Sanga	san + ga	ga is to attach,	attach to "san"

Pāli Word	Roots	Meaning of added word	Meaning of whole word
Sangati	san + gati	gati is character, habit	bad character/habits
Sangha	san + gha	gha is to remove	Those who have removed "san" belong to Sangha; Nobles or Ariyas, but usu. include bhikkhus
Sāṅghika	possessive of Sangha		offered to Sangha
Sangīta (Sangeetha)	san + gīta	gīta is a poem, song	music that bend mind towards sense pleasures
sankalpana or sankappa	san + kalpana	kalpana means conscious thoughts	defiled thoughts
sankhitta	san + kitta	kitta is action (kriya)	anything done with 'san' (defilements) in mind
Sansun	san + sūn (û rhymes like put)	sūn means to destroy	calming the mind via removing "san"
Sanvara	san + vara	vara is to stay away from	discipline via staying away from "san", i.e., moral behavior
sanvēga or samvēga	san + vēga	vēga is speed or rapidity	enhanced javana of a citta due to "san", i.e., highly emotional
saṅkhāra (should really be sankāra)	san + kāra	kāra is action (all actions are initiated via thoughts)	Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means
Sankata	san + kata	kata is a result	produced via saṅkhāra; anything in this world
Sansāra (Saṃsāra)	San + Sāra	Sāra is good, beneficial	What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra (or Saṃsāra)
Santāpa	san + tāpa	tāpa is heat	heating of the mind due to "san"
Santutti (or Santhutti)	san + thutti	thutti is to remove: Arogya Parama Labha..	ease of mind when "san" removed; but commonly used to indicate happiness

7.5 The 89 (121) Types of Citta

Revised: October 29, 2015; August 31, 2017; June 3, 2018

Citta for Kamaloka (in the 11 sense realms) - 54 in all

There are three main types of citta here: The differentiation is based on whether they have immoral roots (*lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*), *kammically* moral roots (*alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*), or are *kammically* neutral, i.e., no roots.

- **12 immoral citta:** 8 with *lōbha* roots; 2 with *dōsa* roots; 2 with *mōha* roots. All ten immoral acts (*dasa akusala*) are done with these 12 types of *cittas*. Because of these 12 types of immoral *cittas*, **7 rootless (*ahetuka*) vipāka citta** can arise in the future. Thus altogether there are **19 citta in this category**.
- **8 moral citta:** 4 with all three moral roots and 4 with two moral roots (lacking in wisdom). They can give rise to two types of *vipāka citta*: **8 vipāka citta with no roots**, and **8 vipāka citta with moral roots** (4 of them have all three moral roots and other 4 are lacking in wisdom). Thus **24 types of citta are mentioned here**, from which 16 have moral roots and 8 are rootless (*ahetuka*).
- When these same **8 moral citta arise in Arahants, they are called *kriya citta*** or functional *citta*. They just have the same moral roots as the 8 moral citta mentioned above, but do not have any *kammic* potential or *kammic* consequences.
- All those citta with moral roots (8 *kriya citta* for *Arahants* and 16 for others) are called *sobhana* (beautiful) citta.
- Finally, there are **3 types of *kiriya citta* that arise in *citta vithi* which are neither *kamma* nor *kamma vipaka***. These are the 3 *kriya citta* without any roots, and thus are rootless (*ahetuka*) *citta*. Two of these perform functions of (i) five-sense-door advertizing consciousness (*pancadvaravajjana citta*) and the *vottapana citta*, and (ii) mind-door-advertizing consciousness (*manodvaravajjana citta*). (iii) The third one arises in only *Arahants* (when they smile about sense-sphere phenomena).
- Note that none of the 7 *akusala vipaka citta* has roots. Also, 8 *kusala vipaka citta* associated with *pavutti vipaka* (i.e, not giving rise to rebirth) also do not have any roots. Those 15 *citta* together with the three *ahetuka kiriya citta* are involved in the *vipaka* phase of a given *citta vithi*. They do not have any *sobhana* or *asobhana cetasika* other than the 7 universal *cetasika* and the 6 *pakinnaka* (particulars) *cetasika*; see, “[Cetasika – Connection to Gathi](#)” for various types of *cetasika*. These 18 *citta* are listed on p. 112 of Ref.1 under the second group below the group of *akusala citta*.

Those **54 kamaloka citta** can be categorized in different ways.

Asobhana (Unbeautiful)		Sobhana (Beautiful)
Immoral- 12	Rootless – 18	Moral -24
<i>Lobha</i> (8)	Immoral <i>Vipāka</i> (7)	<i>Moral</i> (8)
<i>Dosa</i> (2)	Moral <i>Vipāka</i> (8)	Moral <i>Vipāka</i> (8)
<i>Moha</i> (2)	<i>Kriya</i> (3)	<i>Kriya</i> (8)

Citta for Rupaloka (in the 16 Rūpa realms) - 15 in all

1. There are only 15 citta that are predominantly present in the *Rupaloka*. Five are *jhānic* moral *citta* and five are *vipāka citta* due to those.

2. The five *jhānic* moral *citta* can be experienced by humans when they develop *samādhi* and attain these (first through fifth) *jhānas*. However, they can experience the corresponding five *vipāka citta* only when they are born in *Rupalokas*.

3. The five *jhānic* states are characterized by five *jhāna* factors or mental concomitants: *vitakka* (initial application), *vicara* (sustained application), *pīti* (zest), *sukha* (happiness), and *ekaggata* (one-pointedness). All five factors are present in the first *jhāna*, and as one moves to higher *jhānas*, these factors are lost one by one, and in the fifth *jhāna* only *ekaggata* is left.

Pīti (zest) is the happiness in the mind and *sukha* (happiness) is the tranquility of the body.

4. There are five more *jhānic kriya citta* experienced by *Arahants* when they attain these *jhānas*.

Thus there are 15 *citta* in all that predominantly belong to the *Rupaloka*.

Citta for Arupaloka (in the 4 Arūpa realms)- 12 in all

1. There are only 12 *citta* that are predominantly present in the *Arupaloka*. Four are *jhānic* moral *citta* and four are *vipāka citta* due to those.

2. The four *jhānic* moral *citta* can be experienced by humans when they develop *samādhi* and attain these (fifth through eighth) *jhānas*. However, they can experience the corresponding four *vipāka citta* only when they are born in *Arupaloka*.

3. The first of the four *Arupaloka jhānas* is the attainment of the base of infinite space (*Akasanancayatana*). A human needs to master the fourth *jhāna* (*Rupaloka*) in order to be able to attain this *jhāna*.

The second is the base of infinite consciousness (*vinñānancayatana*). The third is the base of nothingness (*akincannayatana*), and the fourth is the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*n' evasanna n' asannayatana*). In this last type of consciousness, the factor of perception (*saññā*) is so subtle that it can no longer perform the function of perception, i.e., one is unaware of the “world”. Yet perception is not altogether absent. This is another reason why the ancient *yogis* erroneously assumed this eighth *jhāna* to be *Nibbāna*.

4. There are four more *Arupaloka jhānic kriya citta* experienced by *Arahants* when they attain these *jhānas*.

Thus there are 12 *citta* in all that predominantly belong to the *Arupaloka*.

Lokottara (Supermundane) Citta – 8 in all

1. These pertain to the four stages of *Nibbānic* attainment: *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī*, and *Arahant*.

2. Each stage involves two types of *citta*: one is path consciousness (*magga citta*), and the other is fruition consciousness (*phala citta*). The *magga citta* has the function of eradicating or permanently attenuating defilements. The *phala citta* has the function of experiencing the degree of liberation made possible by the *magga citta*.

3. Each *magga citta* arises only once, and endures for one thought-moment. It is never repeated. The corresponding *phala citta* (which corresponds to a *vipāka citta*, but is not called a *vipāka citta*) arises immediately after the *magga citta*. This is in contrast to mundane *vipāka citta*s where they can occur even many lifetimes after the corresponding *kusala* or *akusala citta*.

4. The *phala citta* can be repeated any time after one attains it. With practice, it can be sustained for long times, up to 7 days for an *Arahant*.

Thus, there are $54 + 15 + 12 + 8 = 89$ *citta* in all.

How 121 Types of Citta are Possible

1. It is possible to further analyze the types of *citta* by refining the above method by taking into the fact that each *magga phala* can be reached from the vicinity of each *jhānic* state; I will discuss in detail in a future post.

1. It is possible to attain *Nibbānic* states via each of the five *anariya rupaloka jhānic* states. In that case each of the five *jhānic* states can lead to the four *magga cittas* and four *phala cittas*. Thus here there are 40 ways to attain *lokottara cittas*. Therefore, the total number of citta in this case would be 121 (= 89+40-8) instead of 89.

- One can attain *Nibbānic* states via the vicinity of each of the five *rupaloka jhānic* states (here we use the Abhidhamma method of 5 *jhānas*, instead of four mentioned in the *suttas*, where the first two *jhāna* in Abhidhamma categorization are taken to be one *jhāna*). In that case each of the five *jhānic* states can lead to the four *magga cittas* and four *phala cittas*.
- Thus here there are 40 ways to attain *lokottara cittas*. Therefore, the total number of citta in this case would be 121 (= 54 + 15 + 12 +40) instead of 89.

2. It must be noted that the 8 citta counted in the previous method are the same as getting to magga phala via the vicinity of the first *jhāna*.

REFERENCE

1. “A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma”, by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000). [[Download free from pariyatti.org](http://pariyatti.org)]

7.6

Cetasika (Mental Factors)

Cetasika (mental factors; pronounced “chethasikā”) appear concomitantly with *citta* (thoughts; pronounced “chiththā”), and they cease together with *citta*. They define the character (good or bad or neutral) of the *citta*.

- The way to “[Lead a Moral Life](#)“, or to “[Seek Good Rebirths](#)“, or to “[Seek Nibbāna](#)“, is to get rid of the bad (un-beautiful) *cetasikas* and to cultivate good (beautiful) *cetasikas*. This is done by changing one’s habits via learning Dhamma and practicing it: see, “[Habits and Goals](#)“, “[Samsaric Habits and āsavas](#)“, and “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of āsavas](#)“, in that order.

1. There are 7 *cetasikas* that are in each and every *citta*. These are called **universals** or *sabbacittasādharaṇa*:

- *Phassa* (contact); *vedanā* (feeling); *saññā* (perception); *cetana* (volition); *Ekaggata* (One-pointedness) can become *sammā samādhī*; *jivitindriya* (life faculty) *manasikara* (memory).

2. Since they are universals, the above *cetasikas* appear in both *kusala* and *akusala citta*. All are important mental factors:

- *Saññā* and *vedanā* are in *pancakkhandha*.
- *Cetana* determines *kamma*; it is the *cetasika* that “puts together a *citta*” by automatically incorporating other relevant *cetasikas* according to one’s “*gathi*”.
- *Ekaggata* is the salient factor in *samādhī*.
- Consciousness cannot arise without *phassa*. Note that *samphassa* is different from *phassa*; see, “[Difference between Phassa and Samphassa](#)”.
- *Jivitindriya* maintains life, and
- *Manasikara* can be either *yoniso manasikara* (important in attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage), and *ayoniso manasikara* can lead to accumulation of *akusala kamma*.

3. There are six *cetasikas* that also CAN appear in both types of *cittas*: *kusala* and *akusala*. However, they are found in only particular types of *cittas*. They are called **particulars** or *pakinnaka*:

- *vitakka* (focused application) can become *sammā sankappa*; *vicara* (sustained application); *adhimokkha* (dominate). *Adhimokkha* is the *cetasika* that makes another *cetasika* in the *citta* to dominate; for example, to get *uddacca*, *vicikicca*, or *patigha* to strengthen.
- *virīya* (effort) can become *sammā vayama*; *pīti* (joy); *chanda* (desire, not greed).
- **These are important *cetasika* and play key roles in morality/immorality since they can appear in both *kusala* and *akusala citta*.** For example, when one’s mind is covered with deep ignorance (*mōha*), one may enjoy immoral deeds (*pīti*), makes a liking for them (*chanda*), and strive more (*virīya*) to do such acts.

4. Just like universals, these particulars can appear in either type of *cittas*, *kusala* or *akusala*. *Vitakka*, *vicara*, and *pīti* are *jhāna* factors as well.

- *Virīya* and *chanda* are two factors in the four bases of mental power; see, “[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)”.
- *Adhimokkha* is important in decision making by making another *cetasika* dominant. All these factors can go in the *immoral* direction too.

5. There are 14 *asobhana cetasikas* (**non-beautiful mental factors**) that appear only in *akusala citta*. Out of these, there are four universals that appear in ALL *akusala citta*:

- *Moha* (delusion); *Ahirika* (shamelessness); *Anottapa* (fearlessness in wrong); *uddhacca* (restlessness or agitation).
- Both shamelessness and fearlessness of wrong encourage doing immoral acts. Restlessness causes unwise decision making.

The other 10 are occasionals that appear in only particular types of *akusala citta*:

- *Lobha* (greed); *diṭṭhi* (wrong view); *māna* (conceit); *dōsa* (hatred); *issa* (envy); *maccariya* (avarice, also pretending one does not have wealth); *kukkucca* (worry, also feeling low); *Thina* (sloth, sluggishness); *middha* (torpor); *vicikicca* (doubt arising from temptations).
- *Lobha* and *dōsa* are two of the three immoral roots. Sloth and torpor normally rise together and are opposite of *virīya*; they are listed as one factor in Five Hindrances; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind](#)”.

6. There are 25 *sobhana cetasika* (**beautiful mental factors**), and 19 of them appear in each and every *kusala citta*, and thus are called beautiful universals:

- *Saddhā* (faith); *sati* (moral mindfulness) can become *sammā sati*; *hiri* (shame of wrong); *ottappa* (fear of wrong); *alōbha* (generosity); *adōsa* (loving kindness); *tatramajjhata* (neutrality of mind); *kayapassaddhi* (tranquility of mental body); *cittapassaddhi* (tranquility of consciousness); *kayalahuta* (lightness of mental body); *cittalahuta* (lightness of consciousness); *kayamuduta* (malleability of mental body); *cittamuduta* (malleability of consciousness); *kayakammanuta* (wieldiness of mental body); *cittakammanuta* (wieldiness of consciousness); *kayapagunnata* (proficiency of mental body); *cittapagunnata* (proficiency of consciousness); *kayujjukata* (rectitude of mental body); *cittujjukata* (rectitude of consciousness).
- There are three abstinences: *sammā vaca* (right speech); *sammā kammanata* (right action); *sammā ajīva* (right livelihood).
- Two Illimitables (limit-less): *karuna* (compassion); *mudita* (appreciative joy; joy at other's moral success).
- *Paññā* or *paññindriya* (wisdom or wisdom faculty). *Sammā diṭṭhi* leads to *paññā*.

7. Mental factors in the **Noble Eightfold Path** are highlighted in green.

8. **Immoral roots** are highlighted in red. **Moral roots** are highlighted in purple.

7.7 Rupa (Material Form) – Table

For discussions on *rūpa*, see:

“[What are Rūpa? \(Relation to Nibbāna\)](#)”

“[Rūpa \(Material Form\)](#)”

Concretely Produced (Nipphanna)	Abstract (Anipphanna) Rūpa
I. Great Elements (Mahā Bhūta)	VII. Limiting Phenomenon
1. Patavi (Extension/Hardness)	19. <i>Akasa dhathu</i> (space element)
2. <i>Apo</i> (Cohesion/Fluidity)	IX. Communicating (Vinnati) Rūpa
3. Tejo (Heat/Hotness)	20. <i>Kaya Vinnati</i>
4. Vayo (Motion/Pushing & Supporting)	21. <i>Vacī Vinnati</i>
II. Internal (Pasada) Rūpa	X. Mutable (Vikara) Rūpa
5. Cakkhu (eye)	22. <i>Lahuta</i> (lightness)
6. Sota (ear)	23. <i>Muduta</i> (Elasticity)
7. Ghana (nose)	24. <i>Kammannata</i> (weildiness)
8. Jivha (tongue)	XI. Material Qualities (Lakkhana Rūpa)
9. Kaya (body)	25. <i>Upacaya</i> (production)
III. Gocara (Objective) Rūpa	26. <i>Santati</i> (continuity)
10. Vanna (visible)	27. <i>Jarata</i> (Decay)
11. Sadda (Sound)	28. <i>Aniccata</i> (Dissolving)
12. Gandha (Smell)	
13. Rasa (Taste)	
* Pottabba (Tangibily) comes from 3 Mahā Bhūta	
IV. Bhava (Sexual) Rūpa	
14. <i>Itthi</i> (Feminine)	
15. <i>Purisa</i> (Masculine)	
V. Hadaya	
16. <i>Hadaya Vatthu</i> (heart base)	
VI. Life	
17. <i>Jivitindriya</i> (Life faculty)	
VII. Nutritional	
18. <i>Oja</i> (Nutriment)	

The 16 rūpa that are highlighted in red are fine (*sukuma*) rūpa; the other 12 are coarse (*olarika*) rūpa.

Types of Rūpas Present in Different Realms

- *Nipphanna rūpa* are caused by *kamma*, *citta*, *utu* (*tējo*), and *āhāra* (*oja*). The other 10 (*anipphanna rūpa*) are not caused or conditioned by *kamma*, *citta*, *utu* (*tējo*), and *āhāra* (*oja*).
- All the 28 *rūpas* arise in the *kāma*-realms. Eight *rūpas* comprising *sadda*, five *vikara-rūpas*, *jaratarupa* and *aniccata-rūpa*, do not arise at the moment of birth (*patibandhā*) whereas, during life time, there is no *rūpa* which is not formed.
- In the 15 *rūpa* realms, with the exception of *Asanna*-realm, 23 *rūpas* arise (*ghana-pasada*, *jivha-pasada*, *kaya-pasada*, *itthi-bhava* and *purisa-bhava* being excluded).
- Only 17 *rūpas* arise in the *Asanna* realm; they are 8 *avinibbhogas* (4 *mahā bhūta*, *vanna*, *gandha*, *rasa*, *oja*), *jivita*, *akasa dhatu*, 3 *lahutadi*, 4 *lakkhana-rūpas*;
- No *rūpa* (except *hadaya vatthu*) arise in the *arūpa*-realms; thus a trace of matter is present anywhere in the 31 realms. Ancient *yogis*, who attained all eight *anariya jhānas*, could not see any *rūpa* in the *arūpa loka* and deduced that was *Nibbāna*. But *rūpa* still have a “foothold” in the *arupaloka* since any being in the *arupaloka* will be reborn in other realms in the future (unless at least the *Sotāpanna* stage is attained); thus linkage to materiality has not been severed.

Rupa – Generation Mechanisms

1. *Rūpa* (or matter) can be generated by four causes: *kamma*, *citta*, *utu*, and *Āhāra* (food). I will discuss these in detail later.

- *Kamma* here refers to volition (*cetana*). The 25 kinds of *kamma* that produce *rūpas* are the volitions of the 12 *akusala cittas*, 8 great *kusala cittas*, and the five *rupaloka kusala cittas*. These *rūpa* are created with a time lag, when *kamma vipāka* bear fruits, like at the *patisandhi* to a new life. The three *rūpa dasaka* of *vattthu*, *kaya*, and *bhava* are created at *patisandhi* by *kamma vipāka*.
- The *rūpa* produced by the *cittas* arise **at the same time as the *citta*** themselves, and only at the rising part of the *cittas*. Out of the 89 possible *cittas*, 75 *cittas* can produce *rūpa* (4 *arupaloka vipāka cittas* and the two sets of fivefold sense consciousness cannot produce *rūpa*).
- Thus both *kammaja* and *cittaja* *rūpa* have mind as the direct cause. Both of these decay rapidly and are converted to *utuja rūpa*. What we normally see are the *utuja rūpa* and *aharaja rūpa*, which have their origins also in the great elements of *tējo* and *oja*.
- The great element *tējo* is responsible for producing *utu samutthana rūpa*: Beginning from the moment of rebirth-linking, the internal *tējo* element found in the *rūpa kalapas* born of *kamma* combines with the external *tējo* and starts producing organic material phenomena originating from *tējo*. Thereafter the *tējo* element in the *rūpa kalapas* born of all four causes produces organic material phenomena born of *tējo* element throughout the life. Externally, *tējo* element also produces inorganic material phenomena, such as climatic and geological transformations.
- The nutritive essence, *oja*, is present in all *rūpa-kalapas* both inside the body (internal) and outside the body (external). The external food, which is eaten, is digested in the stomach and dispersed through blood to all parts of the body. So the internal *oja* and the external *oja* meet in every part of the body. The combination of internal and external *oja* produce *aharaja rūpas*.

2. The 8 *rūpas* of *patavi*, *āpo*, *tējo*, *vāyo*, *vanna*, *gandha*, *rasa*, and *oja* are ALWAYS found together. That unit or *kalapa* is the smallest *rūpa* unit and is called the pure octad (*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]). **Those 8 *rūpas* and the *akasa dhatu* are produced by all four causes.**

3. The four *lakkhana rūpas* of *upacaya*, *santati*, *jarata*, and *aniccata* are not produced by any cause. They represent the nature of *rūpas*.

4. The remaining 15 *rūpa* are produced by different combination of the four possible causes as shown in the table below:

	Kamma Born	Citta Born	Utu Born	Āhāra Born
Cakkhu (eye)	Yes			
Sota (ear)	Yes			
Ghana (nose)	Yes			
Jivha (tongue)	Yes			
Kaya (body)	Yes			
Sadda (sound)		Yes	Yes	
Itthi Bhva (femininity)	Yes			
Purisa (masculine)	Yes			

Hadaya vatthu (heart base)	Yes			
Jivitindriya (life faculty)	Yes			
Kaya vinnati (bodily intimation)		Yes		
Vacī Vinnati (vocal intimation)		Yes		
Lahuta (lightness)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Muduta (malleability)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Kammannanata (wieldiness)		Yes	Yes	Yes

7.9

Rupa Kalapas (Grouping of Matter)

1. The 28 types of *rūpa* are not found separately in nature. They are produced by the four causes in the form of tiny material groups called *kalapas*. *Kalapas* have the following four features:

1. All the *rūpas* in a *kalapa* arise together, i.e. they have a common genesis.
2. They also cease or dissolve together, i.e. they have a common cessation.
3. They all depend on the four great essentials present in the *kalapa* for their arising, i.e. they have a common dependence.
4. They are so thoroughly mixed that they cannot be distinguished, i.e. they co-exist.

2. It should be noted that *kalapas* are so small that they are indistinguishable from pure energy. The ultimate *rūpa* is formless and massless. Science has shown that the smallest “particle” detected, Higgs boson, is indistinguishable from energy.

3. There are 21 types of *kalapas*:

9 *kammaja kalapas* 6 *cittaja kalapas* 4 *utuja kalapas* 2 *aharaja kalapas* as shown below:

	Kamma Born	Citta Born	Utu Born	Āhāra Born
Cakkhu dasaka (eye decad)	Yes			
Sota dasaka (ear decad)	Yes			
Ghana dasaka (nose decad)	Yes			
Jivha dasaka (tongue decad)	Yes			
Kaya dasaka (body decad)	Yes			
Itthi dasaka (female decad)	Yes			
Purisa dasaka (male decad)	Yes			
Vatthu dasaka (base decad)	Yes			
Jivita navaka (vital nonad)	Yes			
Suddhattaka (pure octad)		Yes (cittaja only)	Yes (utuja only)	Yes (aharaja only)
Kayavinnati navaka (body intimation nonad)		Yes		
Vacī vinnati sadda dasaka (vocal intimation decad)		Yes		
Lahutadi eka dasaka (undecad of mutability)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Kayavinnati Lahutadi dva dasaka (undecad of mutability)		Yes	Yes	

Vacivinnati Sadda Lahutadi terasaka (tridecad of mutability)		Yes		
Sadda navaka (sound decad)			Yes	

4. Internal and External *Kalapas*

All the 21 *rūpa kalapas* mentioned above occur internally in living beings. *Itthibhava-dasaka* does not occur in males. Similarly, *pumbhava-dasaka* does not occur in females. For those who are born blind or deaf, *cakkhu-dasaka* or *sota-dasaka* are not present.

In the external (*bahiddha*) world, only the two *utuja-kalapas* are found. All inanimate things such as trees, stones, earth, water, fire, corpses, etc., are made up of *utuja-suddhatthaka kalapas*. The sounds produced by beating two sticks together or by rubbing of branches in the wind or by musical instruments such as violin, piano, radio, cassettes, etc., are *utuja-sadda-navaka kalapas*.

From the internal *rūpas*, *kaya-pasada*, *bhava-rūpa* (femininity and masculinity), *cittaja-rūpa*, *utuja-rūpa* and *aharaja-rūpa* spread all over the body, and so they will be present in the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and in every part of the body.

5. *Rūpa* in *Kamaloka*

All the 28 material qualities occur undiminished, if circumstances permit, in an individual during a lifetime in *kamaloka* (sense-sphere).

In womb-born creatures, only three *kammaja-kalapas* comprising body-decad, sex-decad and heart decad are manifested at the moment of conception (at *patibandhi*).

Here again the sex-decad may not be manifested in some particular individuals. After conception, during life, the eye-decad and the rest are manifested slowly in due order. Of the groups of material qualities which are produced in four ways, *kammaja-rūpa* starts to form at the moment of conception and it goes on forming incessantly at every minor-instant. *Cittaja-rūpa* begins to form from the second moment of consciousness, i.e. from the arising instant of the first *bhavanga* which follows the rebirth-consciousness. *Cittaja-rūpa* continues to be formed at every arising instant of the subsequent *cittas* for the whole life-time.

Utuja-rūpa starts to form from the existing instant of rebirth consciousness. The reason is that the *tējo-dhatu* (*utu*) present in the first *kammaja-kalapas* comes to the static stage (*thithi*) at that instant. From that time onwards, the *tējo-dhatu* then produces *utuja-rūpa* at every minor-instant. Since *tējo-dhatu* is present in every *kalapa*, every *kalapa*, from the time it reaches the static stage, produces new *utuja-kalapas* at every minor instant. And the new *utuja-kalapas*, from the time they reach the static stage, again produce new *utuja-kalapas* at every minor instant. So this process goes on forever.

Every *kalapa* also contains the nutritive essence, *oja*. But *aharaja-rūpa* starts to form when internal *oja* meets external *oja* at the time of diffusion of nutritive essence and the combination of internal and external *oja* comes to the static stage. From that instant, *aharaja-rūpa* is also formed at every minor instant. As new groups of material qualities are incessantly produced, old groups dissolve and disappear when their lifetime of 17 conscious-moments is over. Thus, the material phenomena go on uninterruptedly in the sense-sphere till the end of life like the flame of a lamp, or the stream of a river.

Material Phenomena at Death: At the time of death, psychic life and physical life must cease together. This means that all *kammaja-rūpa* which contains physical life must cease at the time of death. So at the arising instant of the seventeenth *citta* reckoned backward from the death-consciousness (*cuti-citta*), the last *kammaja-rūpa* is formed. This last *kammaja-rūpa* will cease at the dissolving instant of the death-consciousness. *Cittaja-rūpa* is formed till the arising instant of the *cuti-citta*. This last *cittaja-rūpa* will have lasted for a conscious-moment at the dissolution of *cuti-citta*, and thus will perish in another sixteen conscious-moments which happens almost instantly. *Aharaja-rūpa* is formed till the dissolving instant of the *cuti-citta*, because the support required for the formation of *aharaja-rūpa* can be furnished by *citta* up to that time. So at death, that last-formed

aharaja-rūpa has lasted for only one minor-instant. However in another fifty minor instants (*rūpa*-lifespan – 51 minor instants or 17 conscious-moments), that *aharaja-rūpa* also ceases. Thus at the time of death, *kammaja-rūpa*, *cittaja-rūpa* and *aharaja-rūpa* cease almost instantly.

But *utuja-rūpa* goes on forming and dissolving till the corpse is converted into dust. A corpse consists of only *utuja-rūpa*.

So when a person dies and is reborn in another life, material phenomena similarly arise starting from the instant of conception and go on arising till the time of death.

Arising of Material Phenomena in Rūpa-planes In the *rūpa*-plane, nose-decad, tongue-decad, body-decad, sex decad and *aharaja-kalapas* do not arise. At the time of *opapatika* rebirth, there arise four *kammaja-kalapas* namely, eye-decad, eardecad, heart-decad and vital-nonad. During life, however, *cittaja-kalapas* and *utuja-kalapas* also arise. To the Asanna brahmas, eye-decad, heart-decad and sound-nonad (*sadda-navaka*) do not arise. Also, *cittaja-kalapas* do not arise. Therefore, at the time of their *opapatika*-rebirth, only the vital-nonad (*jivita-navaka*) arises. During life, *utuja-kalapas*, with the exception of the sound-nonad, arise in addition.

Thus in *kāma-loka* and *rūpa-loka*, the process of the arising of material phenomena should be understood in two ways, that is (1) at rebirth and (2) during life.

7.10 Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipaka Citta

All ten *akusala kamma* are done with these 12 *akusala citta*. There are 8 greed-rooted, 2 hatred-rooted, and 2 delusion-rooted *citta*. Of course *citta* (pronounced “chiththā”) are thoughts; any speech or bodily action starts with a thought.

- See, “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)” for a list of 12 *akusala citta*.

Both greed-rooted and hatred-rooted also have delusion as a root.

	Root	Assoc. with	Dissoc. with	Feeling	<i>Sasankhārika</i> ?
1	Greed	Wrong view	–	Pleasure	No
2	Greed	Wrong view	–	Pleasure	Yes
3	Greed	–	Wrong view	Pleasure	No
4	Greed	–	Wrong view	Pleasure	Yes
5	Greed	Wrong view	–	Equanimity	No
6	Greed	Wrong view	–	Equanimity	Yes
7	Greed	–	Wrong view	Equanimity	No
8	Greed	–	Wrong view	Equanimity	Yes
9	Dislike	Aversion	–	Displeasure	No
10	Dislike	Aversion	–	Displeasure	Yes
11	Delusion	Vicikicca	–	Equanimity	–
12	Delusion	Uddacca	–	Equanimity	–

1. The first *citta* is described as, “a thought rooted in greed (and delusion), associated with wrong views, accompanied by pleasure, and spontaneous”. The others can be stated the same way.

- Those *citta* that are associated with wrong views are the worst, even though wrong views are listed as #10 on the ten immoral actions, see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”.
- Citta* generated with pleasure means one is enthusiastic about it because of one’s habits (*gathi*) or one starts liking it. For example, one who likes to go fishing has a bad habit; he gets a pleasure by just thinking about it; thus it is stronger than one done with equanimity.
- The hateful *citta* are always done with displeasure, but that displeasure can arise with ignorance. For example, someone who has wrong views may generate displeasure towards a moral person merely because of one’s wrong views. I have encountered some people who got upset with me when I pointed out that rebirth has evidence for it.
- Sasankhārika* means with less *javana* power.
- See, the notes at the end of the post “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)” for details.

2. Since *vicikicca* is also due to wrong views, those five *cittas* marked in red are the strongest *akusala citta* done with “wrong views” or “*diṭṭhi*”. They can condition one’s mind to a “*gathi*” suitable for birth in the *apāyas*; see, “[What is in a Thought? Why Gathi are so Important?](#)”.

- The *vyāpāda* or the strong hate — that makes one eligible for birth in the *apāyas* — actually arises from the first four types of *lōbha citta*. It is also called “*dvesa*” or “*dvesha*” which means “second manifestation” or (“*dvi* +”*vesa*”) of *lōbha*. When one is burdened with extreme greed, it can turn to the second manifestation of extreme hate for anyone in the way.
- Upon attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage, such habits or “*gathi*” are removed, and thus no adverse *kamma vipāka* come to the mind at the dying moment, as we point out below. The “*pati+ichcha sama+uppada*” or what is born is similar to what is grasped, is at play at the dying moment. One automatically grasps things one has a habit of liking; they automatically come to the forefront of the mind at the dying moment.

3. The other 7 *akusala citta* are stopped from arising in stages as a *Sotāpanna* cultivates the Path further.
- The two dislike (*patigha*)-rooted cittas (together with some potency of the remaining 4 greed-based *citta*, i.e., *kāma rāga*) are reduced at the *Sakadāgāmī* stage.
 - Those two dislike-rooted *citta* are stopped from arising at the *Anāgāmī* stage. Also, potency of the remaining 4 greed-based *citta*, i.e., *kāma rāga* are reduced to just *kāma* level.
 - **Finally, the remaining 4 greed-based *citta* and the *uddacca citta* are removed at the *Arahant* stage.** Thus an *Arahant* will never experience an *akusala citta*.
4. These 12 types of *citta* lead to 7 types of *vipāka* (resultant) *citta*.
- None of the *vipāka citta* has any unwholesome roots (greed, hate, delusion); of course they also do not have the wholesome roots. **Thus they are called rootless (*ahétuka*) *citta*.**
5. Five of these *akusala vipāka citta* are the ones that lead to (undesirable) sense events through the five physical senses. Thus they are responsible for eye consciousness (*cakkhu viññāṇa*), ear consciousness (*sota viññāṇa*), nose consciousness (*ghana viññāṇa*), taste consciousness (*jivha viññāṇa*), and body consciousness (*kaya viññāṇa*).
- Except for the body consciousness which is accompanied by pain, the other four are accompanied by equanimity; see, "[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāṇa](#)" and "[How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?](#)"
 - Thus any feelings of displeasure etc due to what is seen, heard, smelled, or tasted, are in the thoughts that follow this "event" experienced through one of the physical senses. We will discuss this in detail in the *Abhidhamma* section.
6. The sixth *akusala vipāka citta* is called receiving consciousness accompanied by equanimity (*upekkha-sahagata sampaticcana citta*). This is a *citta* that accepts the sense impression to the mind (we will discuss in *Abhidhamma* section).
7. The seventh *akusala vipāka citta* is called the investigating consciousness accompanied by equanimity (*upekkha-sahagata santirana citta*). This is the *citta* that is responsible for the birth in the *apāyas* (lowest four realms), i.e., it acts as the *patisandhi citta* for the birth in the *apāyas*.
8. One may wonder how a *Sotāpanna* avoids the *apāyas*, because he/she is still capable of generating the 7 cittas that are not associated with *diṭṭhi* (see the Table above), and thus it is possible to generate this *apayagami-patisandhi citta*.
- The point is that after becoming a *Sotāpanna*, such *vipāka* thoughts do not come to the mind at the last thought processes; **only the good *kamma vipāka* come to the forefront of the mind close to the dying moment because he/she no longer has the "gathi" suitable for a birth in the *apāyas*.**
9. It is hard to give up one's bad habits ("gathi"), mainly because one does not fully comprehend the true nature of the world, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and thus has wrong views about this world with 31 realms. One needs to comprehend that one's actions have consequences not only in this life, but (mainly) in the future lives; also, whatever one gains by such harmful actions is just temporary, AND do not leave one with a peace mind.

7.11 **37 Factors of Enlightenment****Revised January 20, 2016** (added #3)

1. The 37 factors of Enlightenment (*Bodhipakkhiya Dhamma*) are the combined number of individual factors in:

- Four Supreme Efforts (*Satara Sammappadhana*),
- Four Bases of Mental Power (*Satara Iddhipada*),
- Five Faculties (*Panca Indriya*),
- Five Powers (*Panca Bala*),
- Four Factors of Mindfulness (*Satara Satipaṭṭhāna*),
- Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*Saptha Bojjanga*), and
- Factors of the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya Attangika Magga*).

2. These factors are really mental factors (*cetasika*). They are labelled with different names under each category in the Table below to highlight its application.

- For example, the *paññā cetasika* is labelled as *vimansa* in Four Bases of Mental Power, as *dhammavicaya* in *Saptha Bojjanga*, and as *Sammā Diṭṭhi* in the Noble Eightfold Path.
- Under each category, I have listed the term used for that *cetasika* in that category. For example, in the Noble Eightfold Path, *Sammā Vayama* is the *virīya cetasika*.
- Thus even though there are 37 factors of Enlightenment, there are only 14 *cetasika* that will be cultivated while cultivating all seven above categories.
- It is clear that those 7 categories are all inter-related, and thus all 37 factors may be cultivated by focusing only on *Satara Satipaṭṭhāna*, *Saptha Bojjanga*, or the Noble Eightfold Path.

3. It is also important to realize that *cetasika* are related to one's character (*gathi*): "[Cetasika – Connection to Gathi](#)"

4. The Four Supreme Efforts (*Satara Sammappadhana*) are the efforts to purify the mind: (i) **remove** defilements that have arisen, (ii) **prevent** new defilements from arising, (iii) **enhance** wholesome states that have arisen, (iv) **initiate** new wholesome states. AN 4.14 Saṃvarasutta (Restraint)

- Not to let an unwholesome thought arise which has not yet arisen. → **restraint**
- Not to let an unwholesome thought continue which has already arisen. → **abandonment**
- To make a wholesome thought arise which has not yet arisen. → **development**
- To make a wholesome thought continue which has already arisen. → **protection (maintaining)**

5. All 37 factors of enlightenment are fulfilled at the Arahant stage.

Cetasika Involved	Four Supreme Efforts	Iddhipada	Five Faculties	Five Powers	Four Factors of Mindfulness	7 Factors of Enlightenment	Path Factors	Count
Paññā (wisdom)		vimansa	paññā	paññā		dhammavicaya	sammā diṭṭhi	5
Vitakka (initial application)							sammā sankappa	1
Sammā vaca							sammā vaca	1

Sammā kammanata							sammā kammanata	1
Sammā ajiva							sammā ajiva	1
Viriya	four efforts (see #4 above)	viriya	viriya	viriya		viriya	sammā vayama	9
Sati (mindfulness)			sati	sati	kaya, vedanā, citta, dhamma	sati	sammā sati	8
Samādhi (one-pointedness)			samādhi	samādhi		samādhi	sammā samādhi	4
Saddhā (faith)			saddhā	saddhā				2
Chanda (desire)		chanda						1
citta		citta						1
Pīti (joy)						pīti		1
Passaddhi (tranquility)						passaddhi		1
Upekkha (equanimity)						upekkha		1

7.12

Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna

Revised August 3, 2016

The following Table shows the conditions to be fulfilled (i.e., factors to be eliminated) to attain each stage of *Nibbāna*. For example, in order to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, three of the ten *sanyojana* (or the ten fetters) are removed, *akusala citta* #1, 2, 5, 6, and 11 are removed; also the *apayagami* strength in the other *cittas* also removed, etc

	Sanyojana	Akusala Citta	Anusaya	Āsava (Asaya)	Kilesa (Akusala Cetasika)
Sotāpanna	saccaya diṭṭhi vicikicca silabbata paramasa	1,2,5,6,11 Also removes apayagami strength in the rest	diṭṭhi vicikicca	ditthiasava	Removed: diṭṭhi, vicikicca, thina, middha, issa, maccariya, kukkucca Reduced: lōbha, dōsa, mōha to rāga, patigha, avijjā
Sakadāgāmī	kāma rāga (reduced) patigha (reduced)	weakens 9, 10 also weakens kāma rāga in 3,4,7,8	kāma rāga (reduced) patigha (reduced)	kamasava (reduced)	Reduced: kāma rāga and patigha
Anāgāmī	kamaraga patigha	9,10 also removes kāma rāga in 3,4,7,8	kamaraga patigha	kamasava	Removed: kāma rāga and patigha
Arahant	rūpa rāga arūpa rāga māna uddacca avijjā	3,4,7,8,12 (see below for a list of <i>akusala</i> <i>citta</i>)	bhavaraga māna avijjā	bhavasava avijjasava	Removed: avijjā, ahirika, anatoppa, uddacca, māna

The ability to commit *akusala kamma* also is removed in stages as one progresses, and are completely removed only at the *Arahant* stage. It is important to note that a *Sotāpanna* completely removes only one *akusala kamma*, that of having wrong views (*micca diṭṭhi*): “[What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)“. But this leads to the removal of many *kilesa* (mental impurities); see the Table.

Āsava and *anusaya* are discussed in the post, “[Gathi \(Character\), Anusaya \(Latent Defilements\), and Āsava \(Cravings\)](#)“. *Kilesa* are discussed in “*Kilesa (Mental Impurities), Diṭṭhi (Wrong Views), Sammā Diṭṭhi (Good/Correct Views)*“. I hope to write a post on the *Dasa Sanyojana*.

The 12 types of *akusala citta* are listed in, “[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#)“. But I thought it would be more explanatory to list them. The numbers below correspond to the numbers in the Table.

Lobha (Greedy) Citta (Also has the *mōha* root)

1. *Citta* connected with wrong view, accompanied by pleasure, and done with habit.
2. *Citta* connected with wrong view, accompanied by pleasure, and done reluctantly.

3. *Citta* NOT connected with wrong view, accompanied by pleasure, and done with habit.
4. *Citta* NOT connected with wrong view, accompanied by pleasure, and done reluctantly.
5. *Citta* connected with wrong view, accompanied by neutral mind, and done with habit.
6. *Citta* connected with wrong view, accompanied by neutral mind, and done reluctantly.
7. *Citta* NOT connected with wrong view, accompanied by neutral mind, and done with habit.
8. *Citta* NOT connected with wrong view, accompanied by neutral mind, and done reluctantly.

Dosa (Hateful) Citta (Also has the *mōha* root)

9. *Citta* associated with hate, accompanied by displeasure, done with habit.
10. *Citta* associated with hate, accompanied by displeasure, done reluctantly.

Moha Citta (only with the *mōha* root)

11. *Citta* accompanied by neutral mind, associated with *vicikicca* (not aware of bad consequences)
12. *Citta* accompanied by neutral mind, associated with *uddacca* (unfocused).

Notes:

1. Even though recent Abhidhamma literature categorize *lōbha* and *dōsa citta* as *asankharika* (unprompted) and *sasankharika* (prompted), in original Abhidhamma, they were not categorized as such.
2. For example, the two *dōsa-mūla citta*s are:
 - i. *Domanassa sahagata patigha-sampayutta citta*.
 - ii. *Domanassa sahagata sasankharika patigha-sampayutta citta*.
 - The first *citta* arises due to *sansaric* habits and thus are more potent. For example, someone who has a tendency to flare-up, normally generates such potent *citta*.
 - On the other hand, another person without such a habit, may not generate such a *citta* unless “forced hard”; it is done with reluctance, “when pushed to the limit”, or if the perceived “sense pleasures” are enticing. Then he/she is actually “incorporating new “*san*” or initiating a new habit; thus the name “*sasankarika*”.

7.13

Ultimate Realities – Table

1. This Table lists the three kinds of ultimate realities (*paramatta dhamma*) in this world of 31 realms; they are conditioned, i.e., they arise due to causes and perish subsequently on their own; nothing in this world is permanent. They do not arise if there are no causes, and when that happens *Nibbāna* is the result.

- Nibbāna is the unconditioned reality. It is attained when the six causes (*lōbha, dōsa, mōha, alōbha, adōsa, amōha*) are not there. Then the mind cannot get a “foothold” anywhere in the material world.
- Cultivating the three causes of *alōbha, adōsa, amōha* (together with removing *lōbha, dōsa, mōha*) is needed in following the Noble Eightfold Path, and when wisdom grows, all causes will be rejected by the mind automatically at the end.

2. Ultimate realities can be compared to the fundamental particles in physics. Even though it was believed in the early stages that atoms were the fundamental particles, now there are about 32 of such particles; but now the “particle nature” is dissolving into “energy packets” in elementary particle physics. In Buddha Dhamma, the 28 types of rūpa are very fine, and cannot be “seen” even with *abhiññā* powers; they are “energy packets”.

3. The table also shows how “this world of 31 realms” can be described via the five aggregates, the twelve sense bases, or 6 *dhatu*s and how they incorporate the ultimate realities. There are other ways too. They are all compatible and consistent with each other.

- For example, 89 *citta* and 52 *cetasika* are included in the four “mental” aggregates, or in the mind base and mind objects, or just in the *viññāṇa dhatu*.
- Also note that the correct word is *kandha* and NOT *skandha* for the five “aggregates”. The Pāli (and Sinhala) word *kandha* means a “pile” (as in a pile of sand) and is still used to denote a hill in Sinhala. I just look up the meaning of “*skandha*” in Sanskrit and it says “Hindu god of war”. This is how the true meanings of the original words have been lost due to incorporation of “sophisticated sounding” Sanskrit words with no relevance.

Table: Analysis of the “world” and Nibbāna in terms of ultimate realities.

Lokaya (World of 31 Realms)				Nibbāna
Ultimate Realities (4 types)	Citta (89)	Cetasika (52)	Rūpa (28)	Nibbāna
Aggregates (5)		Vedanā skandha Saññā skandha Saṅkhāra skandha Viññāṇa skandha	Rūpa skandha	
Sense Bases (12)	Mind base	Mind Objects (also includes fine matter or sukuma rūpa)	5 internal (pasada) rūpa 5 external rūpa (vanna, sadda, gandha, rasa, pottabba)	
Dhatu (6)		Viññāṇa	patavi, āpo, tējo, vāyo, akasa	
		sankata include everything in this world (sentient beings have all six dhatu; everything else in the world, like inert objects and plants, do not have viññāṇa)		asankata
Notes: 1. Number of citta can be 121 in the alternate scheme; see, The 89 (121) Types of Citta				

- | | |
|--|--|
| 2. Vedanā, saññā are two cetasika; saṅkhāra has the rest of 50 cetasika; for a list of cetasika, see Cetasika (Mental Factors) | |
| 3. For fine (sukuma) rūpa, see Rūpa (Material Form) – Table . | |

7.14

Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs

Revised April 26, 2018; revised May 30, 2018

1. Thoughts (*citta*) do not arise as individual *cittas*. They arise in the mind due to sense inputs from the five physical senses (*cakku*, *sota*, *ghana*, *jivha*, and *kaya indriya* corresponding respectively to eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) and also by the *mana indriya* (located in the brain see, “[Brain – Interface between Mind and Body](#)”).

- As we discussed in the post, “[What is Mind? How do we Experience the Outside World?](#)“, each of our sense inputs coming in through any one of the five physical senses is received and analyzed by the mind in a “*citta vithi*” (series of *cittas*) with 17 *cittas*. These are called *pancadvara citta vithi*. *Pancadvara* (“panca” + “dvara” where “panca” is five and “dvara” is door) means five (physical) doors.
- *Vithi* is pronounced “veethi”; in fact, the actual Pāli (and Sinhala) term is *veethi* (meaning “road”), since like a road, the flow is continuous. But *vithi* has become the established English word, just like “*pīti*” for the actual word “*preethi*”. And, *citta* is pronounced “chiththā”.
- When we THINK ABOUT those external sense inputs, that is done via *manodvara citta vithi*, which involve only the brain and the mind (those are not the same). These *citta vithi* normally have 10-12 *cittas* in them.
- Here we will describe both types of *citta vithi*.

2. According to *citta niyama* (or Law of *Cittas*), a *pancadvara citta vithi* proceeds in a standard way for an object with great intensity (*atimahantarama citta vithi*). That means the object is of high interest and also the conditions for the object to be grasped are optimum; for example, if it is a visual object, that visual object is of high interest and also the light conditions for seeing that object are good.

The sequence of *cittas* in a *pancadvara citta vithi* is as follows:

Pancadvara Citta Vithi

# in the Series	Citta Type	Symbol
1	Añña Bhavanga (Past Bhavanga)	AB
2	Bhavanga Calana (Vibrating Bhavanga)	BC
3	Bhavanga Upaccheda (Arrest Bhavanga)	BU
4	Pancadvaravajjana (Sense-door adverting consciousness)	PD
5	Cakku Viññāṇa (eye-door perceiving consciousness) - for example	CV
6	Sampaticchana (Receiving consciousness)	Sam
7	Santīrana (Investigating consciousness)	San
8	Vottapana (Determining consciousness)	V
9-15	Javana	J
16, 17	Tadarammana (Registering consciousness)	T

3. When the mind is not dealing with a *pancadvara citta vithi* or a *manodvara citta vithi*, it is in a “dormant state” called the *bhavanga*. *Bhavanga* (“bhava” + “anga” where “anga” means “a part”), thus represents the particular “bhava” of the living being, in this case a “human bhava”. The conventional English term is “life continuum”, but we will use *bhavanga*.

- The *bhavanga* state is conventionally represented by the following series as if they are a series of *bhavanga cittas*:

..B B B B B B B

- When the mind is in the *bhavanga* state, we do not “feel” anything. Just like an eye cannot see itself, the mind cannot “see” its own state. This is the “dormant state” in between sense inputs. When one is in deep sleep or unconscious, one is fully in the *bhavanga* state.
- Conventionally, it is said that *bhavanga citta* flow unceasingly, until the mind is diverted to an object of interest, whether through one of the five physical senses (*cakku, sota, ghana, jivha, or kaya indriya*) or an “active thought” that originates in the “*mano indriya*” in the brain.
- As we will see later, the mind is in the *bhavanga* (B) state most of the time even if the mind feels like very active. Even during watching a movie, the mind is mostly in the *bhavanga* state (in between various types of *manodvara* and *pancadvara citta vithi*), even though we feel like our brains are stressed to the limit with the sights and sounds from the movie.

4. We can represent the *pancadvara citta vithi* in the above Table as follows:

B B B B B “AB BC BU PD CV Sam San V J J J J J J T T” B B B B B.....

It must be noted that this is the strongest *citta vithi*. There are many variations WITHIN this *citta vithi* where some do not have T or even J *citta*. Different types of *pancadvara citta vithi* are discussed in detail in “A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma”, by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000). [[Download free from pariyatti.org](http://pariyatti.org)]

- In the above example, we took a “*cakku viññāṇa*” event, i.e., what happens when a picture is presented to the mind via the “*eye indriya*” and the mind investigating that picture.
- First the “mind needs to be released from the “*bhavanga* state”, and that takes three thought moments of AB (*atita bhavanga*), BC (*bhavanga calana*), BU (*bhavanga upacceda*). Here “*atita*” (or “*atheetha*”) means “past”, “*calana*” (or “*chalana*”) means “move” or “vibrate”, and “*upacceda*” (or “*upachcheda*”) means “stopped”.
- Then the mind looks at the “five physical senses or *pancadvara* (PD)” and determines through which of the five sense input is coming through, and then picks the relevant door, which in the present case we assumed to be *cakku viññāṇa* (CV).
- Then it investigates what that “picture” is, with the *Sampaticcana* (Sam) *citta*, decides what type (like, dislike, etc) with the *Santirana* (San) *citta*, and determines what actions to take with the *Vottapana* (V) *citta*.
- The all important 7 *javana citta* arise based on that determination made with the *Vottapana citta* (V). This is where potent *kamma* are done by the mind.
- In the last two *Tadarammana* (T) *cittas*, the mind takes in the “flavor” or the “essence” of the sense object, and then falls back to the *bhavanga* state at the termination of the *pancadvara citta vithi*. Only the very strong (*mahantarammana*) *citta vithi* have them, and it is those strong impressions that are “recorded in memory”.

The Simile of Tasting a Mango

1. A *pancadvara citta vithi* is the procedure by which the mind experiences an external object (sight, sound, taste, etc). In the commentaries to the *Tipitaka*, what happens in a *pancadvara citta vithi* is compared to the case of a man who is sleeping under a mango tree, awakened by the falling of a mango, investigates it and decides to enjoy (experience) the taste of the mango.
2. Suppose a weary traveler is asleep at the foot of a mango tree. This state of being asleep is analogous to the *bhavanga* state. Now a ripe mango drops to the ground near the traveler. This event is similar to the striking of a visible object of very great intensity at the “eye door”.
3. The falling of the mango awakens the traveler and causes him to raise his head. This event is similar to the appearance of the visible object at the eye door causing the *bhavanga* to vibrate twice and become arrested; now he is not asleep anymore.

- The traveler opens his eyes and looks around to enquire what the disturbance was. This is similar to the *pancadv ravajjana* (PD) *citta* adverting the mind towards the sense object.

4. The traveler sees the fallen mango. This is analogous to the eye-consciousness seeing the object (CV). Now the man picks up the mango, which is similar to the *sampaticchana* (Sam) *citta* receiving the *cakku viññāṇa*. **By the way, *sampaticcana* comes from “san”+“paticca”; you can contemplate on this to get the basic idea; see, “[What is “San”?](#)”.**

- Then the man inspects the mango to see whether it is suitable for eating. This is similar to the *santirana citta* (“san” + “tirana” or “theerana”, where “theerana” means “decide on whether the sense object is good or bad”) investigating the sense object.
- Then the man decides that the mango is good and edible. This is similar to the *vottapana* (“votta” + “pana” meaning “deciding on what to do” or in Sinhala, “*pana denava*” or “energize”). *Vottapana* is pronounced “voththapana”. If it was a rotten mango, one would decide to throw it away.
- Most Pāli terms can be understood well if one understands Sinhala. As I have mentioned before, it is the Sinhala language that is close to Pāli and not Sanskrit.

5. The man bites the mango seven times eating and enjoying the taste. This is similar to the occurrence of seven *javana citta*s enjoying the taste of the sense object. These are really the “actions corresponding to the decision made with the *vottapana citta*”; if the mango was bad, here the mind will generate appropriate *javana citta* to throw the mango. We will discuss such complex processes later.

- Then the man gathers the remnants of the fruit and the juice sticking on the teeth with his tongue and swallows twice. This is similar to the two *tadarammana* (T) *citta*s following the *javanas*.
- Task completed, the man falls back to sleep. This is similar to the resumption of the *bhavanga* state.

6. **However, according to the *Tipitaka*, each *pancadvara citta vithi* is immediately followed by three *manodvara citta vithi*.** The *javana citta*s in those three *citta vithi* become increasingly strong, and it is *javana citta*s of the last *manodvara citta vithi* that instructs the brain to get the body to act (and initiate speech).

- We will discuss this in detail in the future posts. But the complete sequence of a thought process initiated by a *pancadvara citta vithi* takes three more *manodvara citta vithi* to be completed. In fact, when one gets “absorbed” (for example, keeps looking at an attractive picture), one may be generating millions of such “one plus three processes” with the mind falling back to the *bhavanga* state repeatedly in between.
- It will be easier to visualize this process by understanding what happens when we look at an object, for example, in scientific terms; see, “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)” (especially starting with #4 of that post).

Now let us look at a typical *manodvara citta vithi*.

Manodvara Citta Vithi

# in the Series	Citta Type	Symbol
1	Bhavanga Calana (Vibrating Bhavanga)	BC
2	Bhavanga Upaccheda (Arrest Bhavanga)	BU
3	Manodvaravajjana (Mind-door adverting consciousness)	MD
4-10	Javana	J

11, 12	Tadarammana (Registering consciousness)	T
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1. We can represent the *manodvara citta vithi* in the above Table as follows:

B B B B B “BC BU MD J J J J J J J T T” B B B B B.....

- Here it takes only two thought moments to be released from the “*bhavanga* state”: BC (*bhavanga calana*), BU (*bhavanga upacceda*).
- The mind already knows the *arammana* (thought object).
- The 7 *javana citta* arise, and then the *citta vithi* ends with the two *Tadarammana* (T) *cittas*.
- Just like in the case of a *pancadvara citta vithi*, here also we considered an object with high intensity as an example. We will discuss the variations when handling signals of lower intensities as the need arises. However, this discussion is sufficient to get an idea about how the two types of *citta vithi* function in the cognitive processes.

2. Now we can write the complete sequence of *citta* for a sense event initiated by a *pancadvara citta vithi* as:

B B B B B “AB BC BU PD CV Sam San V J J J J J J T TBC BU MD J J J J J J J T TBC BU MD J J J J J J T TBC BU MD J J J J J J T TBC BU MD J J J J J J T T” B B B B B.....

- As mentioned above the initial *pancadvara citta vithi* is followed by three *manodvara citta vithi*.

3. On the other hand, *manodvara citta vithi* can arise just by themselves.

- Furthermore, even though the length of a *manodvara citta vithi* is normally 10-12 *cittas* for average people, a single *manodvara citta vithi* can have many *javana cittas* while in a *jhāna*.
- In a *jhāna*, such long *manodvara citta vithi* are interrupted by *pancadvara citta vithi* that arise in between. This is why one could hear external sounds while in a *jhāna*.

4. But in a *jhāna samapatti*, a single *manodvara citta vithi* goes on uninterrupted for long times, with *javana citta* arising unceasingly :

B B B B B “BC BU MD J J J J J J J J J J ”

- Thus there is no way to get back to the *bhavanga* state, or for a *pancadvara citta vithi* or another *manodvara citta vithi* to arise, and one becomes unaware of what happens in the outside world. Before getting into the *samapatti*, one makes a determination on how long to stay in the *samapatti*.
- This is why the real power of *javana citta* can be truly displayed by people who can get into *jhāna samapatti*.
- This can be visualized crudely as follows: Suppose one is trying to light an oil lamp (oil-soaked wick) with the light of a matchstick. If one is not holding the lighted matchstick steady and the light moves in and out of the vicinity of the wick, it will not light. But if one can hold the light steady, it will light up quickly.
- That is probably a too crude an analogy. A better one may be given for those who are familiar with lasers. One can drill holes in a metal plate using a laser beam. But if the laser beam is not held steady, it will not get the metal spot to heat up and evaporate. Being in a *jhāna samapatti* is like holding a laser beam quite steady on one spot for long times.

It is important to realize that a *citta vithi* always starts with an external sense input due to a past *kamma*, i.e., due to a *kamma vipaka*; see, “[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāna](#)”.

Citta Vithi for Attainment of Magga Phala

B B B “BC BU MD P U A G Pa Fr Fr” B B B

B B B “BC BU MD U A G Pa Fr Fr Fr” B B B

First is the *magga phala citta vithi* for a normal person; the second is for one with “higher wisdom”.

- B, BC, BU, MD are as discussed above.
- Then it goes through the *Parikamma* (P), *Upacara* (U), *Anuloma* (A), *Gotrabu* (G), Path (*magga*) (Pa), and Fruit (*phala*) (Fr).
- **As you can see, there is no connection to *jhāna*.** In particular, the *magga phala citta vithi* does not go through a *jhāna citta*. Also, the *Gotrabu* (change of lineage) *citta* for *magga phala* is COMPLETELY DIFFERENT than that in the case of a *jhāna citta vithi*. **Change of lineage here is to become an *Ariya* or a Noble Person.**

Citta Vithi for Attainment of Jhāna

B B B “BC BU MD P U A G Jh” B B B

B B B “BC BU MD U A G Jh” B B B

First is the *jhāna citta vithi* for a normal person; the second is for one with “higher wisdom”.

- B, BC, BU, MD, P, U, A, G are as discussed above.
- Then it goes through a *Jhāna* (Jh) *citta*.

7.15

31 Realms of Existence

May 20, 2016; revised May 30, 2018

Realm	Description	Cause of Birth in Realm	Lifetime
The Apayas (Undesired Realms)			
1. Niraya (Hell)	Unimaginable suffering.	Anantariya papa kamma, Ten akusala kamma with established wrong views.	Variable
2. Thirisan (Animal)	Microscopic to large animals.	Ten akusala kamma with established wrong views.	Variable
3. Peta (Hungry Ghosts)	Some live in our world unseen to us.	Ten akusala kamma with established wrong views.	Variable
4. Vinipatha Asuras (Asuras)	Some live in our world unseen to us.	Ten akusala kamma with established wrong views.	Variable
Sugathi (Desired Kāma Loka Realms)			
5. Manussa (Human)	Most valued birth of all realms.	Eight kusala kamma (thihethuka, dvihethuka, and ahethuka; see Note 1)	Variable
6. Chathurmaharajika Deva	Fine bodies from this realm; no diseases.	Eight kusala kamma.	500 CY 9M HY (Note 2)
7. Thavathinsa deva		Eight kusala kamma.	1000 CY 36 HY
8. Yama deva		Eight kusala kamma.	2000 CY 144M HY
9. Thusitha deva		Eight kusala kamma.	4000 CY 576M HY
10. Nimmanarathi deva		Eight kusala kamma.	8000 CY 2304M HY
11. Paranimmitha Vasavatthi deva		Eight kusala kamma.	16000 CY 9216M HY
Rūpa Loka (Fine Material Realms)			
12. Brahma Parisajja deva	Jhānic bliss in this and higher realms.	First jhāna (minor)	$\frac{1}{3}$ MK (Note 3)
13. Brahma Purohitha deva		First jhāna (medium)	$\frac{1}{2}$ MK
14. Brahmakayika (Maha Brahma)		First jhāna (highest)	1 MK

Realm	Description	Cause of Birth in Realm	Lifetime
15. Paritthaba deva		Second jhāna (minor)	2 MK
16. Appamanabbha deva		Second jhāna (medium)	4 MK
17. Abhassara deva		Second jhāna (highest)	8 MK
18. Paritthasubha deva		Third jhāna (minor)	16MK
19. Appamanasubha deva		Third jhāna (medium)	32 MK
20. Subhkinhaka deva		Third jhāna (highest)	64 MK
21. Vehappala deva		Fourth jhāna various levels from here and above	500 MK
22. Asanna satta	Body only; no mind		500 MK
23. Aviha deva	Only Anāgāmīs		1000MK
24. Athappa deva	Only Anāgāmīs		2000 MK
25. Sudassa deva	Only Anāgāmīs		4000 MK
26. Sudassi deva	Only Anāgāmīs		8000 MK
27. Akanitta deva	Only Anāgāmīs		16000 MK
Arūpa Loka (Immaterial Realms); see Note 3			
28. Akasanancayatana deva		Fifth jhāna	20,000 MK
29. Vinnanancayatana deva		Sixth jhāna	40,000 MK
30. Akincannayatana deva		Seventh jhāna	60,000 MK
31. Neva saññā na saññā deva		Eighth jhāna	84,000 MK

Notes:

1. *Thihetuka* means *kusala kamma* done with *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*.

- *Dviihetuka* means *kusala kamma* done with *alōbha*, *adōsa*.
- *Ahetuka* means *kusala kamma* done with only *alōbha*, *adōsa*, but also without enthusiasm.
- See, “[Patisandhi Citta – How the Next Life is Determined According to Gathi](#)” for details.

2. CE = Celestial Years; M HY = Millions of Human Years.

3. MK = *Mahā Kalpa*, an aeon or the life of the Earth or the Solar system (roughly about 10 billion years). Solar system is born, destroyed, and reborn just like living beings. We will discuss this in the *Agganna Sutta* in the future.

4. The names of the four *arūpa* realms are descriptive of their characteristics.

- *Akāśānancāyatana* comes from “*ākāśa*” + “*ananta*” or infinite + “*āyatana*“, or the realm where the infinite space is the focus of the mind (*ārammana*).
- *Vinnānancāyatana* comes from “*viññāṇa*” + “*ananta*” or infinite + “*āyatana*“, or the realm where the infinite *viññāṇa* is the focus of the mind (*ārammana*).
- *Ākincannāyatana* comes from “*ākin*” + “*ca*” or mind + “*āyatana*“, or the realm where the focus of the mind (*ārammana*) is only the mind.
- *Neva saññā nā saññā* comes from “*nā*” or not + “*asaññā*” or without perception + “*nā*“, or not + “*saññā*” or perception, i.e., the realm where one cannot say whether there is either “no perception” or “there is perception”. One could go on for a short time without perception (just like in the *asaññā* realm), but it comes back since the “*bhava*” is still there.

VIII Paticca Samuppāda

- [“Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+”Sama+uppāda””](#)
- [“Paticca Samuppāda – Overview”](#)
- [“How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?”](#)
- **Subsection:** [“Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English”](#)
 - [“Introduction – What is Suffering?”](#)
 - [“Introduction -2 – The Three Characteristics of Nature”](#)
 - [“Avijja paccaya Saṅkhāra”](#)
 - [“Saṅkhāra paccaya Viññāna – 1”](#)
 - [“Saṅkhāra paccaya Viññāna – 2”](#)
 - [“Viññāna paccaya Namarupa”](#)
 - [“Namarupa paccaya Salāyatana”](#)
 - [“Difference between Phassa and samphassa”](#)
 - [“Phassa paccaya Vedana....to Bhava”](#)
 - [“Bhava paccaya Jati....Jara, Marana,...”](#)
- **Subsection:** [“Paticca Samuppāda Cycles”](#)
 - [“Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāna”](#)
 - [“Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda”](#)
 - [“Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda”](#)
 - [“Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(or Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppāda”](#)
 - [“How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?”](#)
- **Subsection:** [“Pattana Dhamma”](#)
 - [“Pattana Dhamma – Connection to Cause and Effect \(Hethu Phala\)”](#)
 - [“What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?”](#)
 - [“Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya”](#)
 - [“Asevana and Annamanna Paccaya”](#)

8.1 Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+”Sama+uppāda”

“Yō paticcasamuppāda passati,
so Dhammam passati.
Yo Dhammam passati,
so paticcasamuppāda passati” (1)

One who sees paticcasamuppada
sees the Dhamma.

One who sees the Dhamma
sees paticcasamuppāda.

([WebLink: 1. Majjhima-nikaya I, Nal. 241, PTS 191](#))

Thus it is critical to correctly understand what *paticca samuppāda* is. It explains how causes lead to effects. NOTHING in this world happens without a cause; see, the next post for details: “[Paticca Samuppāda – Overview](#)”.

Paticca samuppāda is translated to English as “Dependent Origination” in many instances. This does not convey the true, complete meaning of the phrase. It is better to just keep the same name and understand what it means.

1. *Paticca* (pronounced “patichcha”) = *pati* + *icca*; here “*pati*” is bonding, and “*icca*” (pronounced “*ichcha*”) is liking.

- Thus *paticca* is “bonding to something willingly”. or “get attached to something through a liking for it or something related to it”.
- This bonding depends on one’s *gathi* (habits and likings), which in turn are due to deep-seated *āsavas* (cravings).

2. *Samuppāda* (pronounced “samuppāda”) = “*sama*” (same or similar) + “*uppāda*” (generation), i.e., an existence (*bhava*) of similar quality or kind.

- Thus *samuppāda* means leading to an existence or experience with similar defilements that used to drive the bondage in the first place.
- Everything in this world arises due to six root causes: *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha* and *alobha*, *adosa*, *amoha*. Based on which type of causes are involved, different types of *paticca samuppāda* cycles operate; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda Cycles](#)”.

3. For example, when we generate very powerful hateful thoughts about a person we could be in the mindset of an animal. At that moment, we may even act like an animal, hitting and clawing at that person if things really get out of hand. Even if we may not act physically we will have that mindset. **Thus in that moment we generate a *gathi* corresponding to “*bhava*” or existence similar to an animal in our mind, which in turn leads to grasping a corresponding “*bhava*”. Then “*bhava paccayā jātī*” leads to a corresponding “*jātī*” or birth.**

- Because we got “bonded” to that situation via hateful thoughtful thoughts, we generated a corresponding “*bhava*” in our mind. What is generated is similar to what caused it: cause and affect. As we keep generating same kind of “*bhava*” that leads to forming “*gathi*” or habits. All these are inter-connected.

4. Now if we keep incurring such situations frequently, i.e., get in to fights with that person (or with others) in similar manner, we will be building up that “*bhava*” and this could lead to the formation of very potent *kamma* seeds (“[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”); it becomes a “*gathi*” as well (see, “[Samsaric Habits and Āsavas](#)”). Then it is easier to get into such situations, and a vicious cycle starts.

5. Now we combine the two terms: “*paticca samuppāda*” means “generating similar “*bhava*” (and thus “*gathi*”) that led to the attachment or involvement to something in the first place”, which in turn leads to a corresponding *jathi* or birth (for a short time or for a lifetime; see below):

[WebLink: Listen to pronunciation of : “Pati+ichcha”+”Sama+uppāda”/Paticca Samuppāda](#)

- Stated in a simple way: “when one gets attached, it sets up likelihood of a new birth of similar characteristics”. For example, when someone acts with greed out of habit, he/she is prone to act that way during the lifetime, and then it could manifested in a stronger way in a future birth by being born as a *peta* or *pretha* (hungry ghost).

Thus “existence” (*bhava*) could be two ways:

- During a life when one is exposed to a similar situation: For example, the “*gathi*” formed via the above mentioned “fights” with other people, will tend to draw oneself to a similar outcome even with the slightest provocation; this is a “*pavutthi bhava*” (and *jathi*) that lasts for a short time during an ongoing life.
- If this hateful “*gathi*” becomes deeply ingrained and becomes a potent *kamma* seed, that could be drawn to the mind at the dying moment, and could lead to a hateful “*uppatti bhava*” in the next existence, which could result in a birth (*jathi*) as an animal or even in the *niraya* (hell).
- Here one should also be able to make a distinction between “*bhava*” (existence) and “*jathi*” (birth). For example, the potential of an *uppatti bhava* may give rise to many births until the *kammic* energy in that *kamma* seed is depleted; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.
- That is why, even though the human *bhava* is RARE, one may be reborn a human many times at a stretch; only those who were born in human in previous life (or a few lives) may be able to remember those lives; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”.

It is good to know the correct pronunciation that comes out with the meaning: “*pati ichcha sama uppāda*” becomes, “*patichchasamuppāda*”.

The closest English translation is “Willful bondage generating an outcome/existence of similar kind”.

6. By perceiving an illusory happiness, we get ourselves willingly attach to pleasurable things. We also attach to things via hate, and the root cause for that is an attachment to something that is related. For example, if someone is blocking our access to something that we like, we get “attached” to that person with hate; we keep thinking how bad he is, etc.

- Thus attachment can be done with greed or hate. This is what “*taṇhā*” means.
- *Taṇhā* (pronounced “*thanhā*” where “*tha*” pronounced like thunder). It comes from “*thāna*” (meaning “place”) + “*hā*” (fused, connected). In Sinhala, “තනට හානීම”.
- Thus *taṇhā* means getting connected or bondage to someone or something through either greed or hate.
- One generates greed or hate due to ignorance; thus *taṇhā* arises because of *avijjā* (ignorance) of the three characteristics of this world; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”.

7. Ultimately, both greed and hate arise due to ignorance. Ignorance of: not knowing the unfruitful nature of “this world” of 31 realms, i.e., “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”; that there is unimaginable suffering in the lower four realms (see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)”); that there is a better happiness called *niramisa sukha* compared to sense pleasures: “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)”, etc.

8. There is no one or no external force that is keeping us bound to “this world” of 31 realms; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”. We are in “this world” of 31 realms filled with suffering because we cling to everything in it like an octopus grabbing its prey with all eight legs.

- Unless we see the true unfruitful and even dreadful (in the lower four realms) nature of ‘this world’ by comprehending “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”, we will not let go of it.
- There is much more to discuss. This is just an introduction.

9. It must also be noted that this is a good example of the confusion caused by translating Pāli to Sanskrit and then back to English or Sinhala; see the explanation of *Pratityasamutpada* (the Sanskrit word for *Paticca Samuppāda*) on Wikipedia:

WebLink: WIKI: Pratītyasamutpāda

- I think you agree that it is confusing at best, with multiple possible meanings. On the other hand, for someone knowledgeable in Sinhala the meaning is very clear if the breakdown to pati + ichcha sama+uppada is shown.

10. Please read, “[Habits and Goals](#)“, “[”Sansaric Habits and āsavas](#)“, and “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of āsavas](#)“, before reading further postings as they appear below. One should also analyze one’s own life experiences to see whether they are compatible with this explanation. **This is part of vipassana meditation.** It is really critical to understand *Paticca Samuppāda* if one is truly interested in Buddha Dhamma.

- How our thoughts arise AUTOMATICALLY due to *gathi* is discussed in the post, “[How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?](#)“.

Next, “[Paticca Samuppāda – Overview](#)“,

8.2 Paticca Samuppāda – Overview

1. Nothing can happen without a cause (“*hetu*” in Pāli or Sinhala). Everything happens for reasons, or causes. Normally, many things simultaneously arise due to multiple causes. However, one cause or one effect could dominate and thus sometimes it appears that one thing happened due to one cause.

2. Due to our ignorance of the true nature of this world, we keep initiating new causes. If we do not add fuel to a fire, the fire will extinguish when the fuel runs out. We have been on this *sansaric* journey from the beginning-less time, because we have been adding “fuel to the fire” without any pause.

3. The *paticca samuppāda* (let us shorten it as PS) describes all aspects of life moment-to-moment: how we suffer the consequences of our past deeds, and how we make new causes or add more fuel. When one attains *Arahanthood*, PS switches permanently to the *kusala-mūla* PS (see below), and PS cycle stops when one attains *Parinibbāna*.

- Acariya Buddhaghosa understood only one aspect (the *akusala-mūla* PS) of the innumerable applications of PS, and since the time Theravāda sect adopted Visuddhimagga as the basis of Dhamma, this wonderful knowledge of PS has been hidden.
- It is said that the Buddha described some 70 plus versions of PS in the *suttas*.

4. Here we will mainly focus on how PS operates in two main modes:

- Delivering the fruits of past deeds or *kamma vipāka* (**akusala-mūla PS for bad deeds and kusala-mūla PS for good deeds**).
- When we suffer due to our present actions, i.e., the suffering that is NOT due to *kamma vipāka*, but how we deal with those *vipāka*, i.e., our subsequent actions.

While an *Arahant* experiences that suffering due to the first, he/she does not suffer due to the second mode; see, “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)”.

5. Even if there is a cause, its result (effect) does not manifest until right conditions (“*paccaya*” in Pāli) appear. Let us consider some examples:

- An apple seed has the potential to bring about an apple tree. But the seed does not germinate and grow into a tree unless it is given soil, water, nutrients, and sunlight. Thus even if the cause (seed) is waiting there, those conditions must be present for the effect (tree) to appear.
- A matchstick has the potential to bring about fire. But unless it is heated by striking on a hard surface, fire does not appear.
- A bomb can explode and create much destruction. But it will not go off until triggered.
- We all have bad habits, but they do not manifest until it is triggered by an object (a picture, sound, smell, touch, or a thought).

Therefore, if one acts mindfully, one can PREVENT many *akusala vipāka* and FORCE many *kusala vipāka*. We all have innumerable number of both accumulated in this *samsāra*; see, “[What is Kamma? Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”, and “[The Law of Attraction, Habits \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)”.

6. But the root cause (*hetu*) for any PS cycle to be operative is that we have *āsavas* and *gathi* (cravings and habits). Because of these *āsavas* we have *avijjā* (ignorance), and vice versa: *Avijjā* and *āsavas* are inter-related (“*annamanna paccaya*”). *Paticca Samuppāda* cycle formally starts at *avijjā*, but it is implicit that *avijjā* and *āsavas* cause each other; see the *Sammā Ditṭhi sutta*.

- **However, it is important to realize that we do not act with *avijjā* all the time.** An external sense input usually makes our *āsava* and *anusaya* to act with *avijjā*. For example, we may act with *avijjā* when we generate greedy thoughts upon seeing an eye-catching object or hateful thoughts upon seeing someone whom we dislike, i.e., when we generate *taṇhā*; see, “[‘Self’ and ‘no-self’: A Simple Analysis](#)”.

7. Only a Buddha is capable of discovering the way of removing *āsava* (*āsavakkhaya ñāṇa*), via understanding PS; see, “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)”.

- We have discussed how *āsavas* get started as habits (see, “[Habits and Goals](#)”); how they get fermented through “re-use” via many rebirths (see, “[Samsaric Habits and Āsavas](#)”), and thus become ingrained.

Before we discuss the two PS cycles (*akusala-mūla* and *kusala-mūla*), let us see how we generate fuel for the *samsaric* journey via *taṇhā* (what we mentioned in #6 above):

Next, “[Taṇhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”,

8.3 How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?

November 6, 2015; Major revision October 13, 2017; #12 added November 3, 2017

Paticca samuppāda (PS) cycles have many varieties and can be analyzed in great detail and can reveal subtle aspects as well as clarify our understanding about the world we live in.

1. There are two broad categories of PS cycles.
 - i. The standard *paticca samuppāda* describes how our actions (*saṅkhāra*) lead to the generation of new *kammā*. Thus they could be called “*kammā* generating” PS cycles.
 - ii. The other category of PS cycles is responsible for bringing in *kammā vipāka*, and thus could be called “*vipāka* generating” PS; this type of a PS cycle is labelled in the *Tipitaka* as an *avyākata* PS; *avyākata* means “*kammically neutral*”; not generating new *kammā*. The Pāli word is *avyākata* and the Sinhala word is *avyākṛuta*. But in many places it is written as *abyākata*.
2. Everything that we INITIALLY EXPERIENCE is due to a *kammā vipāka* and is brought in by an *avyākata* PS. That PS process just make us see, hear, smell, taste, experience bodily sensations, and bring in new thoughts to the mind.
 - However, the feelings (*vedanā*) that we experience due to such sense inputs are not the same for different persons, except in the case of bodily sensations. Everyone feels the same if getting hit (pain), or getting a good massage (pleasure).
 - In other five sense inputs, the *vedanā* generated depends on the person. For example, a teenager may like a heavy metal song, but his grandfather may not.
 - In all cases, each person RESPONDS to the sense input in one’s own way. It is this response that may lead to new *kammā* and is described by the “*kammā* generating” PS cycles.
3. We do not have control over the *avyākata* PS — which bring *kammā vipāka* by initiating new sense events; once started, they cannot be stopped. Even *Arahants* cannot avoid *kammā vipāka*.
 - But the “*kammā* generating” PS cycles that arise as our response to such sense events can be controlled by us based on our *gati* (*saṃsāric* habits). This is the basis of *Satipaṭṭhāna/Ānāpāna* meditations.
 - *Avyākata* PS bring *kammā vipāka* when suitable conditions are available; see, “[Annantara Samanantara Paccaya](#)”.
4. Now, depending on what we see, hear, etc due to a *kammā vipāka*, we MAY start making *saṅkhāra* and a new “*kammā* generating” PS cycle may be initiated; then we make more *kammā vipāka*.
 - For example, **when we see** an appealing object, we may generate *lōbha* (greedy) thoughts (*apunnābhi saṅkhāra*); **when we see** a distasteful object we may generate hateful thoughts (*apunnābhi saṅkhāra*). **If we see** a beggar on the street, we may generate *alōbha* thoughts (*punnābhi saṅkhāra*) which may lead to a meritorious act (giving some money to that person).
 - All those “seeing events” arose due to *avyākata* PS cycles. But those different responses, generating *saṅkhāra*, were done by “*kammā* generating” PS cycles, that operate based on one’s *gati* (*saṃsāric* habits), as will discuss below.
5. **ALL our actions are initiated by *avyākata* PS cycles; but not all *avyākata* PS cycles lead to “*kammā* generating” PS cycles generating new *kammā*.** You may want to think about this and see that indeed that is true.
 - Thousands of people see an item on display in a shop. Many just glance at it and don’t give it another thought. Some will stop and take another look since they like it. There could also be someone who really wanted it, but may not have money, and even think about stealing it!
 - There is no “fixed person with *avijjā*”. *Avijjā* can arise in any normal human (without *magga phala*), if the sense input is strong enough! You may also want to read the post on “[“Self” and ‘no-self’: A Simple Analysis – Do We Always Act with *avijjā*?](#)”.

- Whether *avijjā* arises depends on the particular sense input and the person (more correctly person's *gathi*).

6. We normally call a person “moral” when he/she acts morally in most cases.

However, that does not mean that a “moral person” will not generate immoral thoughts at times. If a “tempting sense input comes in” via any of the six senses, he/she may act with *avijjā* and start an *akusala-mūla* PS.

- Similarly, one labelled as a criminal (because of his prior acts) may see someone in danger and act with kindness initiating a meritorious deed.
- This is why the Buddha said that there is no “unchanging self”, but there is no “self” either. What happens at a given moment depends on what kind of PS cycle is “triggered”, and the level of *avijjā* triggered. *avijjā* can range from *mōha* (morally blind) to just not knowing the *anicca* nature.
- A person considered to be “moral” may act with *mōha* and commit a severely immoral act, if the trigger was tempting enough.

7. ALL our sense inputs come to us via *kammā vipāka*. Through the beginning-less *saṃsāra*, we have accumulated “infinite amounts” of *kammā vipāka*, large and small, and each “seeing event”, “hearing event”, etc is due to a *kammā vipāka*.

- We do not even notice most of these sense events. When we travel in a car, we see a million of things, but only a few “catch our attention”. Only those few events lead to the initiation of “*kammā* generating” PS cycles.
- But even one initiation of a “*kammā* generating” PS cycle can, in turn, initiate many “follow-up” PS cycles. For example, while walking we may see a house by the road that we really like (which is due to a *kammā vipāka*). We may get attached to it (form *taṇhā*), and then start thinking about building a house like that. Then we may remember a nice house that belongs a friend, and then start thinking about that friend, which could lead to thinking about a common enemy. All of a sudden now we have started a stronger “*kammā* generating” PS cycle that could lead to a worse *kammā vipāka*.
- This is the “wheeling process” that we discussed in the post, “[Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#)” and many other posts; enter the keywords “wheeling process” in the Search box at top right and you will get many posts. Our *sansaric* journey is fueled by an uncountable “*kammā* generating” PS cycles.

8. This vicious cycle of “*vipāka*” leading to “*kammā*” leading to more “*vipāka*” is the process that binds us to the *sansara* of endless rebirths, or perpetuate our “world” of suffering.

- The Buddha describes this as, “*kammā vipākā vaddanti, vipākō kamma sambhavō, tasmā punabbhavō hōti, evan lokō pavattati*”.
- That means, “*kammā* lead to *vipāka*, *vipāka* in turn lead to *kammā* and thus to rebirth (*punabbhavō*), and that is how the world (existence) is maintained”.
- There “*sambhava*” is “*san*” + “*bhava*”, or “adding more existences”. Also, “*lōka*” is world, and “*pavatta*” means “maintain”.

9. The key point is that unless one has at least attained the *Sotāpanna* stage, one COULD act with *avijjā* at the level of *mōha*, and generate *kammā* (*saṅkhāra*) that COULD generate *kammā bhava* corresponding to possible birth in the four lowest realms (*apāyas*).

- In other words, depending on the trigger it is possible for the *pancanīvarana* to “cover the mind” and initiate strong *akusala-mūla* PS cycles for any human being not yet attained the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- For example, we have heard stories about people with “good moral backgrounds” committing rape, under conditions that led to *kāmacchanda nīvarana* taking over their minds. *Kāmacchanda*

comes from “*kāma + icca + anda*“, where *icca* is liking and *anda* is blind; thus *kāmaccanda* means “blinded by liking for *kāma* or sense pleasures”.

- We have also heard stories about murders that were committed by “moral people” who were enraged by the sight of their spouse in bed with another person. Here the second *nīvarana*, *vyāpāda*, covered their minds.
- Those two are the strongest *nīvarana*, but we can think about cases when the other three also could lead to immoral acts: *thina middha* (frozen or lazy mind), *uddacca kukkuccha* (tendency to do lowly things with high-mindedness), and *vicikiccha* (tendency to do unwise things due to not knowing the *anicca* nature).

10. When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, some of these *pancanīvarana* are permanently removed (some components are reduced below the *nīvarana* state).

- That is why **potent *akusala-mūla* PS cycles** — which could lead to rebirths in the *apāyas* — are not triggered for a *Sotāpanna*; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)”.
- *One’s gati permanently change with magga phala*. More changes happen at higher *magga phala*.

11. Different types of PS cycles are discussed at: “[Paticca Samuppāda Cycles](#)”.

- The “*vipāka* generating” *avyākata* PS is discussed in the post, “[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāna](#)”.
- The “*kammā* generating” PS processes can be divided into two broad categories again: those generating “bad *kammā*” and “good *kammā*”: “[Akusala-mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)” and “[Kusala-mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.
- Those “*kammā* generating” PS processes where one can see the consequences during this life itself are discussed in “[Akusala-mūla Pavutti \(or Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.
- There can be many other types too. But one can get a good idea of how PS works in different situations can be grasped by understanding those key processes.

12. Finally, There is another important way that we get started with generating new *kamma*. This is when we “get random thoughts coming to our minds that get us started on a pleasurable action”.

- For example, we may be doing something and all of a sudden we get a thought about watching a movie or even start thinking about an enemy and what can be done to him/her. These are initiated by “*manaca paticca dhammēca uppadaṭṭhi manō viññānam*“, where *dhammā* coming to our minds; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)”.
- These are also *kamma vipāka*. But these are more common than just seeing an enemy by chance or hearing something that one likes, etc.
- In either case, we need to be mindful always, and catch such “new *kamma* generations”. This is the key to *Ānāpāna/Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā*.

8.4 Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English

[Introduction – What is Suffering?](#)

[Introduction -2 – The Three Characteristics of Nature](#)

[Avijja paccaya Saṅkhāra](#)

[Saṅkhāra paccaya Viññāṇa – 1](#)

[Saṅkhāra paccaya Viññāṇa – 2](#)

[Viññāṇa paccaya Namarupa](#)

[Namarupa paccaya Salāyatana](#)

[Difference between Phassa and samphassa](#)

[Phassa paccaya Vedana....to Bhava](#)

[Bhava paccaya Jati.....Jara, Marana,...](#)

8.4.1 Introduction – What is Suffering?

1. There are two opposing factors to deal with when one is trying to convey the message of the Buddha to others:

- Foremost, the other person needs to be able to comprehend what I write. If I use too many Pāli words some people, especially those in the Western world, may not understand fully and also may get discouraged.
- On the other hand, I need to be careful not to distort the meaning of some key Pāli words. Sometimes there is no English word that truly conveys the meaning of a Pāli word. Providing incorrect information is worse than doing nothing.

2. I would like to test this new approach where I will describe concepts with minimal Pāli words. When one gets the basic idea, one could “dig in deeper” by reading regular posts.

3. **Buddha Dhamma is all about ending suffering and finding permanent happiness IN THIS VERY LIFE.** *Paticca samuppāda* describes how root causes for suffering lead to suffering step by step. If we understand these root causes for suffering, we can avoid such causes and make sure suffering would not arise in the future.

- The Buddha said, we suffer when we cannot maintain things to our satisfaction. Therefore, the main idea is to see whether there is ANYTHING in this WORLD that CAN BE maintained to our satisfaction.
- However, before analyzing the steps in the *Paticca samuppāda*, it is necessary to sort out what suffering is.

Three Categories of Suffering

The three categories of suffering are described in the *Dukkha Sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya*. A short conventional “*padaparama*” description is available at:

[WebLink: Dukkha Sutta: Suffering](#)

Here we will discuss it in detail, so that we can get a good understanding of what the Buddha meant by “suffering”. It is not the feeling (*vedanā*) of suffering.

1. What is our world? Our existence, our lives, are basically what we experience: we sense things through our five physical senses and then think about them using our minds. Thus our world can be summed up by saying that it is what we experience through our INTERNAL six senses (eyes, ears,

nose, tongue, body, mind). If we can have “good experiences” we are happy, otherwise, we get sad and suffer.

- Now what we experience depends on WHAT WE SENSE through our physical senses (visuals, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables) and also WHAT WE THINK ABOUT such experiences (thoughts and concepts).
- Those twelve (six INTERNAL and six EXTERNAL) make up “our world”. Everything is included in those twelve.
- **Mind is complex, so let us first focus on the body and the five physical senses.** Before the end of the essay we will inevitably get to the mind.

2. Let us start our analysis with the simplest ten out of twelve that make up our world:

- Can we keep our internal physical senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and the body) to our satisfaction?
- Can we keep those that we like to experience that are in the outside world (visuals, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables) to our satisfaction?

3. Let us discuss these two issue one by one. First, let us think about whether we can keep our physical bodies and its associated senses to our satisfaction.

- It is true that we can maintain our five physical senses to our satisfaction for many years. And this is why people do not even take time to think about these ideas. There are many temptations out there and we cannot wait to “get back to such senses pleasures”. This is why the Buddha said that the suffering is “hidden behind a veil of apparent pleasures”.
- We start feeling this hidden suffering when we pass the middle age. Our five physical senses start getting weaker. The eyesight start dropping, hearing may start decreasing, our tongues may start losing its ability to taste, our noses becomes less sensitive, and our bodies start sagging, we may start losing hair, teeth, etc.
- So, what do most of us do? We start looking for ways to “prop them up”: We can take temporary measures by wearing glasses, hearing aids, adding more spices/flavor to food, and doing cosmetic procedures to try to maintain the body appearance. There is absolutely nothing wrong with some of these “fixes”; for example, we need to be able to see, so we need to take precautions to protect our eyes and start wearing glasses. Ditto for hearing aids, and even for adding spices to food. Even doing some cosmetic procedures (coloring the hair, for example) may be needed to maintain a level of self-confidence as may be the case.

4. But the point is that no matter what we do, there comes a time when nothing works. The whole body starts falling apart. We may lose all the hair, the skin sagging may no longer be prevented by surgery; we may lose all hearing; the food may become tasteless. The best way to realize this first hand is to visit a home for the elderly.

- We also tend to get sick and come down with diseases easily as we get old.
- But the worst part is that our brains will start getting weaker which will lead to memory loss and most importantly the ability to think.
- If we wait until we get to that stage, it WILL BE TOO LATE. By the time we realize that our minds are weak, then we become really helpless.

5. Some people just die of unexpected causes before getting to old age. But that is also the same thing: they could not maintain things the way they expected. We could have prevented at least some of this suffering if we understood the root causes for suffering, and focused our attention on doing “fruitful things” while doing some of those temporary measures to keep our sense faculties in good shape. We will discuss such ‘fruitful deeds’ after discussing the suffering associated with external things in this world.

- The suffering that we discussed so far arises due to one aspect of *anicca*: things are subjected to decay and destruction, and nothing in this world is exempt from that; this is part of what is called “*viparināma dukkhā*”, suffering that arises due to change and decay.

6. Now let us look at the EXTERNAL things that make up “our physical world”: visuals, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables are experienced with our five physical senses.

- The suffering associated with external things arise NOT necessarily because they are “impermanent” as is incorrectly believed by many. There are many external things that are permanent, at least compared to our lifetime in this life. For example, a gold necklace will last for even millions of years. If there is any suffering arises in anyone due to a gold necklace that is definitely NOT because that necklace is “impermanent”. We will discuss some examples below.

7. Of course there are many truly “impermanent” things that we use. And we do become distraught when they break down. For example, we buy a nice set of dinner plates and if they get broken we become distraught. But we can always buy another, and that is not a problem especially if one is wealthy. Even if a wealthy person’s whole house is burned down, that person can easily buy a better one. So, one would think that wealthy people will be subjected to less suffering.

- But that is not the case. Even though having wealth helps, as far as suffering is concerned, wealth is not a big factor. We hear wealthy and famous people even committing suicide all the time.
- Most of the suffering associated with external things arise due to “unfruitful thoughts” in our minds: Suffering arises mainly due to things we are attached to, and things that we like to hate. This is a KEY POINT and needs a lot of thought.

8. Let us consider some examples to clarify this important point.

- A hurricane lands and destroys a large cultivated area that results in a significant damage. Most people who live close-by would be just glad that their homes were not damaged but they will not become distraught over the loss to that particular land. The only one who suffers is the one who is the owner of that land. **Suffering arises due to a loss or damage or destruction of something one is attached to.** The suffering was not embedded in that land; the only person who suffered was the one who had an attachment to it.

Let us take another example. A wealthy person A hires person B to live in his house and to take care of the house and the gardens. Person A may not even live in that house. Person B lives in the house and takes good care of the house and the gardens. Anyone who does not know the real owner would think that person B is the owner, the way he takes good care of the house. Person B goes out-of-town to visit his family for a few days and an enemy of person A burns down the house. Who is the one that suffers? Person B may feel bad about his employer’s loss, but it is person A who will mostly suffer due to the loss of the house. Even though person B may have lived in that house for many years on his own, he did not have any sense of “ownership” to the house; he may become somewhat distraught because of him having lived there and formed a lesser attachment to the house.

- In the case of the gold necklace that we mentioned earlier, someone may suffer if she lost it. The suffering was not due to an “impermanence” associated with the necklace; rather it was due to the inability of that person to “maintain it to her satisfaction”.

9. Does this mean a person who does not own anything is the happiest? Not at all. **Even though one may not have ownership to anything valuable, that person still has cravings for pleasurable things. Much of his suffering is due to the INABILITY to GET what he wants. He may want a big house, a nice car, tasty foods, etc. He suffers not due to a loss of physical items, but his inability to get such items.**

- Thus whether wealthy or poor does not matter. The real cause of suffering is in our MINDS. A wealthy person may suffer due to a loss of something he had, and a poor person may suffer due to the inability to get what he wants. **Either person becomes distraught due to his/her mind activities: attachment to what one has or craving for what one desires. This is another aspect of**

the Pāli term *anicca*. It is mostly mental and is called “*saṅkhāra dukkhā*”. It arises through the struggles we engage in trying to maintain things to our satisfaction.

- For example, when we buy a nice house there are endless things that need to be done to “maintain it to our satisfaction”; this is also part of *saṅkhāra dukkha*. Sometimes we don’t even realize this suffering. Think about how much work we do to prepare a nice meal; then we enjoy it in 10-15 minutes, and then we need to spend more time cleaning up. We slaved through hours to get a brief sense pleasure.

10. External things also include people. The amount of suffering due to a loss of a person is directly proportional to how close that person was to oneself. When person X dies, those who suffer the most are the closest family; for friends and distant relatives, suffering is less, and for those who do not even know X, there is no suffering.

- But it is important to understand that one CANNOT get rid of this suffering by abandoning one’s family; that would be an immoral act with bad consequences. The attachment becomes less as wisdom grows, when one starts understanding deeper aspects of Dhamma: **Basically, there is a difference between fulfilling responsibilities, paying back debts, and having attachment due to greed.** But this also will become much more clear as we proceed with *paticca samuppāda*.

11. Of course *saṅkhāra dukkha* also arises due to hate. This is a bit deeper, since hate arises as a “second aspect” of greed. Hate arises when something or someone gets in the way of us getting what we crave for. We will examine the root causes for hate in *paticca samuppāda*, but for now we need to keep in mind that someone may be doing something bad (getting in our way), because we may have done something bad to that person in the past. Things ALWAYS happen for one or more reasons, and we may not be able to see the reason (or the cause) in many cases, because the rebirth process keeps things hidden from us.

- In any case, when we start thinking about a hateful person or a thing, it is ourselves that suffer. The mere mention of the name of someone that we despise will immediately make us think about those bad things that the person did, and get “worked up”. We cause this suffering to ourselves. If we retaliate, then things get even worse.
- It is good to analyze some of one’s own experiences.

We discuss “*dukkha dukkha*”, the third and final category of suffering, in the next post: [Introduction 2 – The Three Characteristics of Nature](#).

8.4.2 Introduction 2 – The Three Characteristics of Nature

1. In the previous post, we discussed two of the three main ways that suffering arises, the *viparināma dukkha* (suffering due to our inability to maintain things to one’s satisfaction) and the *saṅkhāra dukkha* (suffering due to our excess attachment for things). **Both these are experienced in this very life**, but unless we take time and contemplate on those, we may not even be aware of those.

- There is nothing much we can do about the *viparināma dukkha*, other than to eat well, exercise regularly, and keep up with healthy habits for maintaining a healthy body and a mind.
- We can lessen the *saṅkhāra dukkha* by gradually losing excess attachment to worldly things. This happens automatically when we start grasping the Three Characteristics of nature, which we will discuss below.

2. The third category of suffering arises directly: getting burned, stabbed/shot, etc. Beings in the *apāyas* encounter this more, and in the *niraya* (lowest realm) that is all one feels. For example, a person who made money by killing another or by stealing from another may live well in this life (at least outwardly), but will be subjected to much suffering in the upcoming births. This is the worst category of *dukkha dukkha*, which arises due to immoral actions of the past. **Until the death of the physical body, even an Arahant is subjected to *dukkha dukkha*.**

- Therefore, the third category of suffering, *dukkha dukkha*, arises basically due to immoral acts; see below. The severity of suffering of course depends on the severity of the violation. We will

discuss this in detail in the *paticca samuppāda* (“*pati+ichcha*” leading to “*sama*”+“*uppada*”) steps in future posts; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda](#)”, where it is briefly discussed how one’s actions lead to effects that are similar “in kind”.

3. All our acts (including speech and thoughts) are *saṅkhāra*, thus *dukkha dukkha* arises due to the worst forms of *saṅkhāra*, which we call immoral acts.

Everything happens due to a reason (cause). If one does a good deed, that will lead to good results, and bad deeds will lead to bad results. This is the basis of science and also how nature works. “Every action has a reaction”; it is guaranteed, sooner or later.

- This is why rebirth is a reality of nature. There are people who live lavishly with money earned by immoral deeds; the consequences will be realized in the future rebirths.
- It also explains why different people are born with different levels of health, wealth, beauty, etc., and also why there are innumerable varieties of animals with different levels of suffering.

The Three Characteristics

4. Most people can distinguish between moral and immoral acts. Immoral acts are killing, stealing, inappropriate sexual behavior, lying, slander, gossiping, harsh speech, and getting “drunk” with not only drugs or alcohol, but also with wealth, fame, power, etc (The BIG EIGHT as discussed in the Meditation section).

- When we also include the wrong views/hate in the mind, there are ten, which are called the ten defilements or “*dasa akusala*” in Pāli. These acts not only are inappropriate but also will have adverse consequences for the well being of everyone. Societies cannot function well if people act immorally.

5. Most religions teach how to live a moral life, may be with some exceptions for example of killing of animals as immoral. Basically all religions encourage “building better societies”. Therefore morality and moral laws are common to all cultures and religions.

- Without having this moral foundation, it is hard to comprehend the deeper aspects that we will discuss next, and analyze in the *paticca samuppāda*.
- However, it is important to realize that one will be free of all ten defilements only upon reaching the *Arahant* stage. Keeping the five conventional precepts is a good start.
- When one starts following the Path, one is bound to break the trend once in a while. A child learning to walk will fall many times. Many people get discouraged when they do an immoral act occasionally; but just to realize that one did a mistake, and that it bothers one’s mind, means one HAS MADE PROGRESS.

6. The uniqueness in Buddha Dhamma is to show that in the wider world view, building better societies (i.e., living a moral life) is NOT ENOUGH in the LONG TERM in the rebirth process. In this wider world view, anyone can be born anywhere in the 31 realms, including those dreaded lower four realms. It is a much bigger world than we normally experience.

- Doing immoral acts makes one eligible to be born in the lower four realms, and be subjected to *dukkha dukkha*. However, even if one does not do a single immoral act in this life, that does not guarantee avoidance of rebirth in the lower four realms, BECAUSE we all have done immoral deeds in our previous lives. What we have in the past remain until that *kammic* power is exhausted OR until one attains *Nibbāna*. Again this is part of the “bigger world view” now spanning time.

7. This was the core message of the Buddha: That no matter how well we live this life (and it is essential to do that), that does not guarantee a “suffering-free” future. Until one attains at the least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*, one is not free from suffering in the four lower worlds.

- We can look at it this way too: Even if we live a good, moral life in this life, we do not know under what conditions we will be born in the next life, even if it is a human life. If we are born

to an immoral family, or be exposed to immoral friends, in the next life we may commit acts that deserves birth in the four lower realms.

- This is why we need to strive to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage in this very life.

8. This is what is embedded in the three characteristics of “this wider world” of 31 realms. We may be born in the highest Brahma world, but one day that life will end and we will inevitably get to the four lowest realms (*apāyas*) at some point. The Buddha said, “there is no refuge” anywhere in these 31 realms.

9. In the previous post we discussed why we “cannot keep any part of our physical body to our satisfaction”. If we think through how *dukkha dukkha* arises, we can see that “we cannot maintain anything to our satisfaction” **anywhere** in these 31 realms in the long term. This is the first characteristic of “this world of 31 realms”: *anicca*. Just one word says it all.

- Because of *anicca*, no matter how much we struggle to achieve sense pleasures, we will eventually encounter suffering, especially in the four lower realms. We always have *viparināma dukkha* and *saṅkhāra dukkha* (both may be hidden in the apparent sense pleasures temporarily), and we cannot avoid *dukkha dukkha* without attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*.
- Thus *anicca* leads to the second characteristic of *dukkha*.
- Therefore, as long as we crave for existence and sense pleasures “in this world”, we are truly helpless in the LONG TERM; this is the third characteristic of *anatta*. There is “no refuge” in this world of 31 realms.

10. At first it is difficult to see why these three characteristics are a such a big deal. They are the KEY to stop the causes for suffering.

- Just the realization that it is **harmful and unfruitful to attach to things in this world leads to the first stage of *Nibbāna*, the *Sotāpanna* stage.** Buddha Dhamma is a complete description of nature. **Just being able to comprehend the unfruitfulness of attachment to worldly things (and aversion, which arises from attachment as we will see), is the first and most important step in the Noble Eightfold Path, *Sammā Dīṭṭhi* or “clear comprehension”.**

11. It is important to realize that detachment to worldly things CANNOT be done by forcing the mind. If someone tries to give away one’s wealth without truly realizing the benefits of that, one will likely to generate friction or remorse later, which could have adverse effects.

- It may be hard to believe, but the real happiness ARISES (and one will be able to donate things with joy, because one will automatically see the fruitless of craving for worldly things) as one starts comprehending the true meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and realize that it is possible to stop all three form of suffering. It is permanent sense of relief, and not like a sense pleasure that lasts only for a short time.
- As we go through the steps in the *paticca samuppāda* cycles, the meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* will become clear. One could and should read other related posts too. At some point, things will start “clicking” into place and then it will become easier. Just a glimpse of the “light” will make it easier to “see”.

12. The lack of this knowledge (or even better stated as wisdom or *paññā*), is called ignorance (*avijjā*). Thus the whole *paticca samuppāda* cycle starts with ignorance (*avijjā*), and explains how *avijjā* gives rise to *dukkha* under different conditions. There is another *paticca samuppāda* cycle that explains how *dukkha* can be stopped from arising. We will discuss both starting with the next post. **Thus *avijjā* leads not only to immoral acts, but also to unfruitful acts; both immoral and unfruitful actions are included in *saṅkhāra*.**

13. I know I am using more and more Pāli words as we proceed. But by now one should be able to grasp the meaning of those key words; one can always go back to earlier posts in this series to refresh memory. It is cumbersome to keep stating “it is not possible to maintain things to one’s satisfaction”; it is much easier to say, “*anicca*”. No other language can succinctly state the nature of the “whole

world” in just three words: *anicca* (pronounced “anichcha”), *dukkha*, *anatta* (pronounced “anaththa”).

- As we saw above, *dukkha* has much deeper meaning than the “feeling of discomfort or pain”.
- Even *avijjā* and *paññā* do not have corresponding words in English to convey the exact meaning. As we discuss further, the meanings will become more clear.
- Thus my goal to is to first describe these key Pāli words in plain English and then use them in the subsequent posts, while staying away from other Pāli words that are not critical for understanding the core message of the Buddha.

Next, “[Avijja paccaya saṅkhāra](#)“,

8.4.3 Avijja paccaya Sankhara

“Avijja paccaya sankhara” (Ignorance as root cause for immoral/unfruitful actions and thoughts).

1. *Avijja*, which is loosely translated as ignorance, is normally defined in many ways: not knowing the Four Noble Truths, not understanding the Noble Eightfold Path, not understanding the Three Characteristics of nature, not understanding *dukkha*, etc.

- All these are correct, but just reading about them is not going to help, until the mind clearly sees how suffering arises due to immoral and unwise actions (and thoughts).
- The *paticca samuppāda* cycle clarifies how the three kinds of suffering arises because one does not comprehend the true nature of the world, and think (and do) immoral/unfruitful things.

2. If you are reading this without reading the first two posts, you may be wondering whether I was being untruthful when I said this series will be in “plain English”. I did describe these three terms in plain English, and there is no easy way to get the same meaning across without using such key Pāli words.

- So, once I clarify them, I have to use these Pāli terms in order to keep a post to a reasonable length, AND readable. One can always go back and read previous introductory posts to refresh memory.

3. The standard interpretation of “*avijjā paccaya sankhara*” reads “ignorance leads to mental formations”, which does not get the underlying ideas across and also misleading. I believe that “ignorance as root cause for immoral/unfruitful actions” is a better translation, and I will explain why.

First let us look at the difference between immoral acts and unfruitful acts.

- We saw that *dukkha dukkha* in the four lower realms is the worst form of suffering. And we saw the cause of that as the immoral acts done with the ten defilements or *dasa akusala*. Thus worst forms of *saṅkhāra* are responsible for *dukkha dukkha* in the lower four realms.
- Why do we do any of such strong immoral acts that give rise to *dukkha dukkha* of the worst kinds in the lower four realms? Because to a very high degree of ignorance of the consequences of such acts. For example, if one does not believe in rebirth, then it is hard to see how such immoral acts can have consequences. After all, there are many people engaged in immoral behavior who seem to be enjoying life.
- Such high level of ignorance is called *mōha* (which means totally covered, totally blind mind), and the closest English word is delusion.
- A murderer who PLANS and kills another human is a good example. He thinks that if he can plan it well, he can avoid “getting caught” by the justice system and then will not have to pay for his act. He does not understand that there are MUCH WORSE consequences waiting for him, regardless of whether he is caught by the police or not. He does not know that he is likely to get killed thousand times in return in future births.

- Thus immoral acts like killing, stealing, etc are responsible for the worst outcomes, the worst kinds of future suffering; these are the worst forms of *saṅkhāra*.

4. On the other side of the spectrum for *saṅkhāra* are the unfruitful actions that lead to lower levels of *saṅkhāra dukkha* in this very life. For example, when we get attached to things/people via strong attachments or strong dislikes, that can lead to mental suffering in this life as we discussed in previous posts.

- However, such unfruitful actions can also form bad habits that can grow into bigger problems with time. Someone acting with greed or dislikes habitually can tend to make those stronger and eventually grow into stronger forms of excess greed and hate, leading to immoral acts. We will discuss how this happens via the *paticca samuppāda* steps.
- Of course the severity of the consequences will be according to the severity and nature of the act: “*pati+ichcha*” leading to “*sama*”+“*uppada*”, as we will discuss in detail later. See, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)” for the meaning of *paticca samuppāda*. When one is even willing to do immoral acts to get what one wants, the consequences will also be stronger and “in kind”. Then there are “unfruitful acts” that can lead to comparatively minor forms of suffering in the near term, but can also add up to bigger effects in the long run.
- Thus one has to think beyond the five precepts to understand the origin of *saṅkhāra dukkha*. I know I am repeating some statements, but I want to make sure to get these important ideas across.

I hope it is clear now why “immoral/unfruitful actions, speech and thoughts” is a better translation for *saṅkhāra* than “mental formations”. In fact, *saṅkhārā* are really all mental; *kāya* and *vacī saṅkhārā* are those thoughts that LEAD TO actions and speech.

5. Now let us discuss the other erroneous aspect of the translation of “*avijjā paccaya sankhara*” as “ignorance leads to mental formations”. For further details, see, “[What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?](#)”.

- Ignorance (*avijjā*) is not there all. Even the worst criminal does not do immoral acts or even unfruitful acts ALL THE TIME. **But when he does**, such actions are done with ignorance as a root cause.
- It applies to all of us: **The more we learn Dhamma, the more we get rid of ignorance, the less will we think or do either immoral or unfruitful things, i.e., any type of *saṅkhāra*.**

6. **A closely related issue to think about is what kind of control we have over *saṅkhāra*.** There are three types of *saṅkhāra*: *kāya saṅkhāra* (those done with body, i.e., physical acts), *vacī saṅkhāra* (those done with speech), and *mano saṅkhāra* (those done with only thoughts).

- If we know right from wrong, we can control MOST of our **physical actions and speech**. We may even start saying something bad and stop ourselves in the middle of the sentence.
- Yet, depending on the emotional state of the mind, it may be not possible to control our actions under extreme stressful situations. For example, even though a person who would not even hurt another’s feelings may get into a rage if he catches his wife is engaging in sex with another man, and may even kill that man in the heat of the moment. We also know “good people” who were tempted to do immoral things if the “payout or the perceived pleasure was big enough”. This is the danger of “not being free of the four lower realms”.

7. The third category, *mano saṅkhāra*, are also hard to control by will power instantly. I think we all can think about situations where it was hard to control greedy/hateful thoughts. We just get to think about something and the mind takes us all over the place thinking about “what we could have”, etc and also fantasize about all kinds of sense pleasures. One really needs to willfully stop such thoughts and think about their consequences.

- **These, and the *kāya* and *vacī saṅkhāra* done on “impulse” or “temptations” discussed above, can only be lessened and ultimately stopped by changing one’s habits (“*gathi*”) and cravings (“*āsavas*”).**

- And that comes about by realizing the unfruitfulness of any type of *saṅkhāra*. This is strongly related to comprehending the Three Characteristics and we will be analyzing this in the upcoming steps of *paticca samuppāda*.

8. Thus the key is to change one's bad habits over time. Then, gradually, even such *mano saṅkhāra* will STOP FROM ARISING.

- It may be hard to believe, but big part of this change of habits and cravings comes from comprehending the Three Characteristics of this world. When one realizes that it does not MAKE SENSE to hurt others (including animals) to get sense pleasure for oneself, that makes a BIG DIFFERENCE in one's outlook about what a "good life is".
- Contrary to what most people believe, a "good, peaceful, life" is not a life filled with sense pleasures. An extravagant life can eventually become a "burdened life", because our body's ability to accommodate sense pleasures goes down as we age. This realization itself leads to "cooling down" of the mind. Anyway, as we discuss further, and if one contemplates more along these ideas, these concepts will slowly become clear.

9. In summary, all three kinds of suffering arise due to *saṅkhāra* that range from highly immoral acts to seemingly innocent unfruitful actions, and all *saṅkhāra* arise due to *avijjā*.

- This is why "*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*" is the first step in the *paticca samuppāda* cycle, which ends with "*jara, maraṇa, soka, parideva, dukkha,*" all kinds of suffering.

Thus we can see in an approximate way how suffering arises with immoral/unfruitful actions as causes, which themselves arise due to ignorance of the true nature of the world: *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. Here we discussed how ignorance gives rise to *saṅkhāra*. In the next post we will discuss how *saṅkhāra* leads to *viññāṇa* or defiled consciousness as the next step leading to *dukkha* (suffering).

Next, "[Saṅkhāra paccaya Viññāṇa – 1](#)",

8.4.4 Sankhara paccaya Vinnana – 1

1. "*Saṅkhāra paccaya Viññāṇa*" is normally translated something like, "with mental formations as condition, consciousness arises". But I will show that a more accurate translation is, "Immoral/unfruitful actions and thoughts as root condition for **defiled consciousness**".

- I will just keep the word *viññāṇa* without translating as "defiled consciousness" (which could become cumbersome to repeat also), because the word "consciousness" cannot fully embody the meaning of *viññāṇa*.
- *Viññāṇa* is a step in the *paticca samuppāda* that describes how suffering arises; thus *viññāṇa* is NOT neutral or innocuous as the word "consciousness" or "awareness" implies; it is **DEFILED** consciousness, contaminated with immoral mental factors such as greed and hate.
- In contrast, an *Arahant* has undefiled, pure consciousness; thus an *Arahant* experiences the world without any defilements. He/she can see, hear, etc without making any type of judgement, attachment, or repulsion to what is seen, heard, etc.

Thus we need to realize that *viññāṇa* is DIFFERENT from "knowing" or "being aware", which is what "consciousness" implies. This is very important.

2. For example, two people with opposing political views (A and B) may encounter a politician C on the street who has views compatible with those of A. Person A will be happy to meet C and may go up to C, shake his hand and talk to him enthusiastically. On the other hand, Person B will automatically have irritable thoughts about C and is likely to avoid C. In this case, A and B generated two very different kinds of *viññāṇa* upon seeing the same person.

- On the other hand, suppose there is a fourth person, D, who also knows the politician C AND suppose D is an *Arahant*. Now, person D will recognize C as that politician but will not generate any likes or dislikes about C. That is what "consciousness" is, just recognizing who or what it is without generating any biases.

3. The other main point is that *viññāṇa* is multi-faceted. **It has embedded in it one's memories as well as one's future hopes and plans**, and those lie under the surface. This is what Sigmund Freud called the subconscious. But there is no separate “subconscious”; there is only one *citta* at a time.

- The mind does this with the help of several mental factors (*cetasika*) like memory (*manasikara*) and perception (*saññā*). We will discuss that in the future.

4. For example, when I am looking at a picture I have what is called *cakku viññāṇa*, i.e., “visual consciousness”. However, if I have been planning a trip overseas that is still in the “back of my mind”; if I have been thinking about calling an old friend about whom I just thought of recently, that is also in the “back of my mind”. Thus at a given time there may be several or even many *viññāṇa* waiting to come to the surface.

- And some of those “subconscious” *viññāṇa* may disappear, if the reason for it to be there goes away for some reason. For example, if civil war breaks out in the country that I was planning to visit, I will abandon that trip and my “*viññāṇa*” for that will go away. If I stop thinking about my old friend, that *viññāṇa* for calling him up may also go away with time. Thus if a given *viññāṇa* stops getting “its food” it will die off gradually.

5. **Now we can see how “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*” works.** The more I think about my old friend, the more *saṅkhāra* I am generating; thus I keep “feeding that *viññāṇa*” and that *viññāṇa* for calling him gets stronger.

- The breaking out of the civil war in that country basically deprived the “*viññāṇa* for making a trip to that country” of any food (i.e., now it is not possible to visit that country), and thus the news effectively killed that *viññāṇa*.
- As always, it is best to think about your own situations and see how “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*” works, and also how one can have many types of *viññāṇa* at the same time, even though only one is at the forefront at any given time.

6. **There is another way that *viññāṇa* can be divided into two main categories.** One is the “base level” of *viññāṇa* for an existence or *bhava*. For example, if a deer is reborn as a human, then that lifestream will now have a “higher base level of *viññāṇa*” suitable for a human. Whereas a deer cannot sort out right from wrong, a human can. Thus at the end of a given “*bhava*” (say as a deer), that lifestream gets new, higher “base level” of *viññāṇa*.

- The other main category of *viññāṇa* is the numerous types of *viññāṇa* that arise in a given existence that we discussed above. What we perceive through the six senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind) gives rise to six types of consciousness: vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and concepts. Based on those, we can have infinite types of *viññāṇa* as we discussed above. These types of *viññāṇa* are now in accordance with the type of existence or “*bhava*”. For example, a deer does not perceive what is seen at the same level of consciousness as a human, even if both are looking at the same thing. Sometimes there may be differences in sense faculties too: a bat cannot see but uses sonar to find its way around. Furthermore, as we discussed above, there are many types of “subconscious” *viññāṇa* as well.
- There are many new concepts introduced in these introductory posts that are critical. One may need to go back to previous posts and re-read in order to grasp these important concepts.

7. Based on those two categories, there are two main *paticca samuppāda* cycles that describe life “in this world of 31 realms”:

- One describes how the “base level” of *viññāṇa* changes at the end of a “*bhava*”, say when a deer is reborn as a human. Here a given lifestream can make a transition from a lower base level of *viññāṇa* to a higher (e.g., deer reborn as a human) or vice versa (e.g., human reborn as a deer). This is the “*patissandhi paticca samuppāda*” cycle.
- The other *paticca samuppāda* cycle describes how a given lifestream accumulates conditions for suffering during a given “*bhava*”. This is where we experience *viññāṇa* through our daily activities. This is the “*pavutti paticca samuppāda*” cycle.

Let us discuss the *viññāṇa* associated with this latter one first.

1. *Saṅkhāra paccaya Pavutti Viññāṇa*

Let us first look at how our consciousness changes basically every moment in an active day. We are being bombarded with pictures, sounds, smells, tastes, body touches, and we think about all sorts of things throughout the day. In each single case, we experience a different *viññāṇa*. This is why *viññāṇa* is very complex and multi-faceted.

1. If we take a simple example of looking at a person, there are multiple events that happens in the mind: the physical eye captures an image of the mind which is processed by the brain and sent to the mind (details of this will be discussed in the *Abhidhamma* section later). The mind instantly compares that image with previous experiences and recognizes that it is a close friend. Happy feelings may arise instantly too. If we had not seen him for a while, some old memories associated with him may also instantly pop into our mind. The sum total of all mental factors (feelings, perception, joy, etc) associated with that “seeing event” is the “eye consciousness” or “*cakkhu viññāṇa*” at that moment.

- And this is an example of a “*vipāka viññāṇa*”. We did not plan to see him, but just bumped into him.

2. But now based on this *vipāka viññāṇa*, we may decide to take some actions. We may run to meet him, give him a hug, and follow-up with even more actions. Most of these could be harmless *saṅkhāra* and our experience, consciousness, or *viññāṇa* is mostly harmless.

- However, if we instead ran into a person with whom we recently had a serious argument, that *vipāka viññāṇa* may lead to a series of “bad *saṅkhāra*” in our minds and thus lead to a totally different *viññāṇa* BASED ON those bad *saṅkhāra*. we may decide to say something bad to that person. Now we are doing *vacī saṅkhāra* that may have adverse consequences. Now our *viññāṇa* is different and we feel differently from the above case. We have an agitated state of mind, and with the slightest provocation from him, we may say or do even more harmful things.

3. When a thought arises in the mind, it has associated with it many mental factors (*cetasika*) which characterize how we feel: joy, sadness, greed, generosity, hate, kindness, etc. *Viññāṇa* encompasses all such relevant mental factors.

- In the previous example of persons A and B meeting the politician C, person A’s thoughts embody happiness while person B’s thoughts embody dislike.
- For a *viññāṇa* to arise, there must be some interest in the sense object. For example, we are bombarded with millions of sense inputs in a day, but we “pay attention to” only a fraction of those. Each mind has a set of “preferred items” in the background or “in the subconscious” based on the person’s habits and cravings.

4. Then, the more we “feed a given *viññāṇa*” by thinking, speaking, doing things related to that, the more strong it gets. Thus we can see how “habit building” is tightly associated with *saṅkhāra*. In the same way, we can “remove a habit” by depriving that associated *viññāṇa* of its food, i.e., by stopping thinking or doing things related to it.

- And that can be done only realizing the benefits of a good habit or adverse consequences of a bad habit, which was the first step in the *paticca samuppāda*, “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*”. A bit of thought should make this clear. **Comprehending Buddha Dhamma takes time to think deeply about how all these things fit together. Just being able to recite the *paticca samuppāda* cycle does not bring any benefits.**

5. A simple example is “building a *viññāṇa* for getting drunk”: A teenager may not like the taste of his first drink, but if he keeps doing it due to “peer pressure”, he is likely to build a new *viññāṇa* for it. As he builds this *viññāṇa*, he will keep accumulating *saṅkhāra* to “feed that *vinnana*”. He will be thinking about it, talking about it, and of course whenever has the chance he will be drinking. The more he does any of those *saṅkhāra*, that *viññāṇa* will grow. AND even when he is doing something else, that *viññāṇa* will be at close to top of the subconscious waiting for an opportunity to come up and induce him to get drunk.

- And it works the same way for any type of activity. A teenager studying for an exam, will have a *viññāṇa* for it. If he is serious about it, he will be thinking about it more, talking about it, and studying hard; all those are *saṅkhāra* too, in this case for his benefit.

The idea is to first not to do any *abhisankhāra* (strong immoral *saṅkhāra*) that could lead to birth in the four lower realms. These kinds of *saṅkhāra* are the immoral acts, speech, and thoughts. We will discuss this in the next post.

8.4.5 Sankhara paccaya Vinnana – 2

If you are reading this without reading the earlier posts, you may be wondering whether I was being untruthful when I said this series will be in “plain English”. I did describe any of the terms used here in plain English in the previous posts. There is no easy way to get the same meaning across without using such key Pāli words.

- So, once I clarify them, I have to use these Pāli terms in order to keep a post to a reasonable length, AND readable. One can always go back and read previous posts to refresh memory.

In the previous post, we discussed how *saṅkhāra* can feed and build different types of *viññāṇa* during our lifetime. The *paticca samuppāda* cycle which describes that process is the *pavutti paticca samuppāda* and we discussed the step “*saṅkhāra paccaya pavutti viññāṇa*” for that *paticca samuppāda*.

- Now we will discuss how such *pavutti viññāṇa* can become strong and be “carried over” to the future lives; not only that, one of such strong *viññāṇa* can even determine the next birth. That is why such strong *viññāṇa* can become “*patisandhi viññāṇa*” by providing the “link” to the next next life (that is what “*patisandhi*” means: “*sandhi*” is connection and “*pati*” is bond or making the connection).

2. Saṅkhāra paccaya Patisandhi Viññāṇa

1. When we build *pavutti viññāṇa* during our lifetime as described in the previous post, such *viññāṇa* can get very strong and even get carry over to the next lives.

- In fact, some of the *viññāṇa* that we easily get “attached to” very well could be coming from previous lives.

2. For example, different people have “natural tendencies” for certain tasks (music, art, science, business, basically any type of activity). Similarly, some people are attracted to gambling, drinking, sports, etc more than others. All these are *sansaric* habits, that have been cultivated by “feeding that *viññāṇa*” over many lives.

- Unless one reduces and eventually gets rid of one’s bad habits, they can lead to bad births in the lower four realms where one can get trapped for long times. Similarly, developing good habits can lead to good births, in case one is unable to attain at least the *Sotāpanna* stage in this life.
- This is why it is very important to get rid of “bad habits” and to cultivate “good habits”. There are many posts at the site on this important topic. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this need to change habits.

3. Following the Noble Eightfold Path is all about changing to a “good person” first; doing “*ānāpānasati bhāvanā*” does the same thing. When one does this, one **develops wisdom** to see through the Three Characteristics: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. And that also leads to the *Sotāpanna* stage, where one is guaranteed to be free of rebirths in the lower four realms.

- By the way, many people are introduced to the wrong concept of “there is no self” (incorrect translation of the term *anatta*). Thus they get stuck, saying the term, “good person”, does not make sense (because there is no “self”); that could become a huge obstacle to any progress. While the Buddha rejected the concept of “self”, he also rejected the concept of “no-self”, because there is definitely some key personal characteristics that “flow” from one life to the next; see, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.

4. Once one is free of the four lower realms (i.e., attains the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*), only then one will truly realize that it is unfruitful even to wish for or work to seek rebirths in higher realms.

- But, until one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, one MUST avoid immoral *abhisankhāra* (strong immoral actions) to avoid immoral *viññāṇa* and also engage in moral *abhisankhāra* in order to cultivate moral *viññāṇa*; this will keep one firmly on the Path and to avoid rebirth in the lower four realms until the *Sotāpanna* stage is attained.

5. If we think deeply about the suffering that we encounter in this life, *dukkha dukkha* has arisen due to whatever immoral *saṅkhāra* done in a previous life. An animal suffers more than a human, because the cause for an animal birth was a stronger immoral action done previously.

- *Dukkha dukkha* associated with higher realms (*deva, brahma*) is less than the *dukkha dukkha* for a human life, because the *saṅkhāra* that led to the *deva/brahma* births were merely unfruitful, they were not immoral.

6. Any birth anywhere in the 31 realms is due to a *abhisankhāra*. If it is due to a worst form of *abhisankhāra* (immoral actions) then that leads to a birth in the lowest four realms via a strong and bad *patisandhi viññāṇa*. Lesser *abhisankhāra* (unfruitful actions) lead to births in higher realms via “moral” *abhisankhāra viññāṇa*.

- Thus cultivating “immoral” *abhisankhāra viññāṇa* must be avoided by not engaging in immoral activities. Otherwise, “*saṅkhāra paccaya patisandhi viññāṇa*” could lead to “bad births”, where *dukkha dukkha* is very intense.

7. *Viparinama dukkha* associated with the current life is also mainly determined by previous action (*abhisankhāra*) that led to this life, and can be analyzed the same way as for *dukkha dukkha*.

- But the *saṅkhāra dukkha* associated with this life is due to actions (*saṅkhāra*) that we do in this life. Also, the same *saṅkhāra* that could cause future *dukkha dukkha* or *viparinama dukkha* can also give rise to *saṅkhāra dukkha* in this life as well. This is an important point to be realized; if not clear, you may want to go back and review the previous posts.
- Therefore, we CAN get rid of part of the *dukkha* (the *saṅkhāra dukkha*) in THIS LIFE by understanding Dhamma and acting and thinking accordingly. We can also stop or reduce ALL types of *dukkha* in FUTURE LIVES by this process.

If you have forgotten what these terms mean, it is a good idea to go back and refresh memory, because otherwise it will be difficult to comprehend the upcoming posts in this series as well. And these terms are critically important for grasping the message of the Buddha. *Avijja*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa* are key terms that must be comprehended; they do not have corresponding English words.

More on *viññāṇa* can be found at, “[3. Viññāṇa, Thoughts, and the Subconscious](#)”.

Next, [Viññāṇa paccaya Namarupa](#),

8.4.6 Vinnana paccaya Namarupa

The *namarupa* involved in the *pavutti paticca samuppāda* cycle has a somewhat different meaning than the *namarupa* in the *patisandhi paticca samuppāda* cycle. Here “*pavutti*” means “during lifetime”. In contrast, the *patisandhi paticca samuppāda* cycle operates when the lifestream makes a transition from one existence to another (say deer to human).

- At the end of an existence (*bhava*), a given lifestream is making a quantum transition (meaning a large instantaneous jump) from one kind of an existence to another; for example, from a deer to a human or vice versa. The basic level of *viññāṇa* changes from that of a deer to a much higher level of a human in the first case.
- That transition happens in the latter part of the last *citta vithi* of the life of the deer. This is discussed in a bit more detail in the post “[Cutī-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”.

Viññāṇa paccaya Namarupa at Patisandhi

1. The key point is that at the end of the last *citta vithi* of the deer, a very fine human body called *gandhabba* emerges from the dead body of the deer. This fine body cannot be seen with the naked eye. This *gandhabba* is formed by the *kamma vipāka* that gave rise to this new human life, and blueprint of the grown human is in that *gandhabba*. This is the new “*namarupa*” of that lifestream.

- This blueprint of the human physical body thus has all the important details of the new life (*jati*); for example, sex type, the height, shape, any major physical disability, etc. Some minor features such a skin color or hair color may depend on the parents, but even those may be influenced by the *kamma vipāka* that gave rise to this new existence.

2. Thus as soon as the *viññāṇa* for the next existence was determined at the last *citta vithi* by the step “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*”, the next step of “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*” gives rise to the *namarupa* for the next life.

- Thus here “*nama*” includes the basic level of *viññāṇa* for the new human existence, which is much different from the “*nama*” of a deer. Obviously, the “*rūpa*” is that of a human form and not of a deer. Thus “*namarupa*” makes a huge transition at the end of the “*bhava*” as a deer.

3. I have discussed previously how a deer could be reborn many times as a deer until the *kammic* energy of the “deer *bhava*” is exhausted; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.

- In such instances, at the death of the deer, another “deer *gandhabba*” emerges from the dead body and waits for a suitable womb for “deer mother” becomes available. Here the new “*namarupa*” may be somewhat different, but still that of a deer, so any change would be minor.
- Therefore, the “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*” gives rise to a new set of “*namarupa*” only at the *patibandhi* to a new existence.

Viññāṇa paccaya Namarupa During a Lifetime

1. Let us now continue with the human *gandhabba* that formed at the death of a deer in the previous discussion.

- Once this human becomes active, he/she could influence his/her “*namarupa*” according to how he/she leads the life. The changes in the “*namarupa*” via the *pavutti paticca samuppāda* cycle can be subtle.
- Once the *gandhabba* is attracted to a suitable womb, that *namarupa* grows in the womb according to the blueprint in the *gandhabba*, and when the baby born that process continues.

2. Here “*namarupa*” mainly refer to those visualized by the person during each activity, and depend on the *nama* or *viññāṇa* for the particular activity. This *viññāṇa* is NOT the *patibandhi viññāṇa*, but the *viññāṇa* associated with the actions, i.e, *viññāṇa* arising from the type of activity or *saṅkhāra*.

- These *pavutti viññāṇa* are basically the six types of *viññāṇa* associated with the six senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind consciousnesses, or *cakkhu*, *sota*, *gandha*, *jivha*, *kaya*, and *mano viññāṇa*.

3. Let us take an example. When a thief plans to steal something, the process starts with “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*”; he starts thinking about the plan because of his ignorance of the consequences, and that gives rise to *viññāṇa* about the theft: “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*”.

- Initially, they are mostly *mano viññāṇa* involved in planning. Here, “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*” means he is visualizing the act: how to break in, how to extract what he wants, and how to flee without getting caught. Thus here, “*namarupa*” are the visuals he has in his mind. The more he thinks about it, the stronger those *viññāṇa* and *namarupa* get. He is solidifying the plan.

4. In another example, a politician may be donating money to build a hospital, but the intent may be to get elected. Thus he starts the process with “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*”; he starts thinking about the plan, and that gives rise to *viññāṇa* about the how and where to build the hospital and also how he may be able to get elected; such thoughts are the corresponding *viññāṇa*: “*saṅkhāra paccaya*

viññāṇa”. Next, “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*” means he is visualizing the hospital buildings, and also visuals of how people will thank him for his generosity.

- The more he thinks about it, the stronger those *viññāṇa* and *namarupa* get.

5. Finally, let us take the case of a teenager who is influenced by his peers to drink alcohol at every opportunity. Because of his ignorance about the consequences, he engages in such activities and also in planning activities: “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*”.

- Now he visualizes pictures of the whole scene, including friends, bottles of his favorite drink, any food that goes with it, etc. All these are *namarupa*: “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*”.
- Here *saṅkhāra* including not only drinking activities but also planning. Even when he is not drinking, he may be thinking about it; it is also in the subconscious. This is “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*”.

6. In all three examples, it is clear that there is a reverse step also occurring”: “*namarupa paccaya viññāṇa*”, can happen, and does happen, together with “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*”. The more one visualizes related *namarupa*, the more strong that *viññāṇa* gets.

- This happens sometimes in other steps too and such is referred to as an “*annamanna paticca samuppāda* step”. Here “*annamanna*” means “inter-dependent”.
- This is especially true also for the “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*”. The more stronger the *viññāṇa* gets, one is more likely to engage in same kind of acts, i.e., *saṅkhāra*, i.e., “*viññāṇa paccaya saṅkhāra*”. They feed on each other. This happens a lot in habit formation.

Viññāṇa is a key concept in Buddha Dhamma. It can be analyzed at various levels, and a deeper analysis is at “[Viññāṇa Aggregate](#)”.

Next, “[Namarupa paccaya Salāyatana](#)”,

8.4.7 Namarupa paccaya Salāyatana

1. First, let us discuss the difference between an *āyatana* and an *indriya*.

- We have six sense faculties: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and the mind. These are the *indriya*. **There is no equivalent English word for *āyatana*, so we will keep using *indriya* and *āyatana* from now on.**
- Depending on how we use those *indriya*, they CAN BECOME *āyatana*. Our initial sense inputs (what we see, hear, etc) are due to *kamma vipāka* and when we experience them, we are using our sense faculties as *indriya*. But based on those initial sense experiences, we may INTENTIONALLY use those *indriya* to do more of those acts. Then those *indriya* become *āyatana*. Since there are six of them, they are called *salāyatana*.

2. For example, I am walking on the road and see a nice house. I just happened to see it due to a *kamma vipāka*, and my eyes were working as *indriya*; they just presented a picture of that house to my mind. It is a neutral event.

- But now if I start looking at it for a while thinking how nice that house is and how nice it would be to live in a house like that, then I am using my eyes and mind as *āyatana*. I have formed greedy thoughts about the house and now I am accumulating new *kamma* (*saṅkhāra*) via my eyes and mind by using them as *āyatana*.

3. In many cases, when we experience a sense event due to one *indriya*, we may start using some or all of the *indriya* as *āyatana*. In another example, someone offers us a piece of a tasty cake (which is a *kamma vipāka*), and like it so much we may use all six *āyatanas* to accumulate more *kamma* (smell and touch it and then ask for the recipe and think about how to make it or where to buy it). But just eating a cake given is not *abhisankhara*; see, “[Kāma Guna, Kāma, Kāma Rāga, Kāmaccanda](#)”.

- Most of the time we use our sense faculties as *indriya*: we see, hear, etc many things in a day but ignore most of them. But when we experience something that have a craving (*anusaya*) for,

then we start using our sense faculties as *āyatana*. The *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* cycle operates only when we use our sense faculties as *āyatana*.

- An *Arahant* ALWAYS uses his/her sense faculties as *indriya*; he/she will see, hear, etc just like us, but will not get “attached to” anything.

4. Just like for *namarupa* that we described in the previous post, *salāyatana* has somewhat different meanings in the *pavutti* and *patisandhi paticca samuppāda* cycles.

- At birth (especially in a new *bhava* or existence), we get a “new set of sense faculties” or *indriya*. For example, if a human is reborn as a *brahma*, that *brahma* will have only eyes, ears and the mind; there will be only three *indriya* (or *āyatana*), instead of six for the human. But we keep the term “*salāyatana*” in the *paticca samuppāda* as a generic term. Thus in *patisandhi paticca samuppāda*, we are concerned with *namarupa* associated with strong built-up *kamma* that define the new existence; these are the *namarupa* that comes to the mind of the dying person at the moment of death.
- Now, when we consider the *pavutti paticca samuppāda* series, we are concerned with how the six *ayatanas* for a human change from even moment to moment depending on the *namarupa* that cultivate in the mind at that moment; you may want to go back and read about the *namarupa* involved in the *pavutti paticca samuppāda* series.

Namarupa paccaya Salāyatana at Patisandhi

5. At the end of an existence (*bhava*), a given lifestream is making a quantum transition (meaning a large instantaneous jump) from one kind of an existence to another. At that time, the base level of *viññāṇa* for the lifestream makes a quantum jump and this is basically the “*nama*” of the *namarupa*. The *namarupa* for the new existence also has the blueprint for the new physical body, which is the “*rūpa*” part.

- As we did in the previous post, let us consider the case of a lifestream making a transition from a deer to a human. The basic level of *viññāṇa* changes from that of a deer to a much higher level of a human; this new level of *viññāṇa* together with the blueprint for the new human shape is in the new *namarupa* of the *gandhabba* that comes out of the body of the dead deer, as we saw before.
- Now when this *gandhabba* descends to the womb of a human mother, the human baby starts to grow. Six sense faculties (*indriya*) suitable for a human grows in the womb, which will become *salāyatana* **at times** in the future after the birth.

6. Let us take another example of a human who exhausted his *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* at death, and becomes a *brahma* in one of the *brahma* realms. At the *cuti-patisandhi* transition in the last *citta vithi* of that human, the human *gandhabba* dies and a *brahma gandhabba* is born.

- Now in the *brahma* realms, all *brahmas* are born fully formed without the help of a mother’s womb. This is what is called an *opapatika* birth. The human dies, his body becomes inert like a log, and at the very instant a fully-formed *brahma* is formed in the appropriate *brahma* world.
- This *brahma* will have sense faculties appropriate for a *brahma*: only eyes, ears, and a mind. These are the *indriya* for the new existence. These *indriya* **can become** *āyatana* at times depending on the activities of that *brahma*.

Namarupa paccaya Salāyatana during a Lifetime

7. During a given lifetime of a deer, human, or a *brahma*, that lifestream will have a basic set of *indriya* (that become *āyatana* at times) appropriate for that existence: the sense faculties for a human are different from that of a deer or a *brahma*.

- But during that lifetime, those *āyatana* will have minor changes (compared to the drastic changes at *patisandhi*) depending on the activity. Such changes are described by the *pavutti paticca samuppāda* cycle.

8. In the previous posts we discussed the case of a thief who is planning a theft. We saw how his *viññāṇa* about the theft leads to him generating *namarupa*, the visuals in his mind of how the theft is carried out.

- When he is planning the theft, he will use his sense faculties as *āyatana* to do the “preparatory work”. He may read about the place to be robbed, ask around for relevant information, etc. Each time he does a specific act (whether thinking, seeing, hearing, etc), a separate *paticca samuppāda* cycle operates, and we will discuss this later, after going through all the steps in a number of more posts.
- Now when he is about to carry out the theft, his *indriya* transform or attune for the task and become *āyatana*: all his sense faculties will be on high alert. He is watching and listening carefully for anything unexpected, and his whole body becomes tense pumped with adrenaline.
- He will use all his *āyatana* to carry out the task, as needed: To run away, if he is about to be caught or after getting what he wanted, using his body, eyes, and ears.
- There are many, many *paticca samuppāda* cycles that were associated with each act at the planning and execution stages, and we will discuss that at the end of the series as mentioned above.

Next, “[Difference between Phassa and Samphassa](#)“,

8.4.8 Difference between Phassa and Samphassa

1. In most current explanations of *paticca samuppāda*, *phassa* is translated as “contact”, and no differentiation is made between “*phassa*” and “*samphassa*“, at least not in a meaningful way.

- However, as we will see below, “*samphassa*” has a very different meaning than “*phassa*” and makes the connection of how our instinctive reactions to external sense experiences arise based on our “*sansaric* habits” or “*gathi*“.

2. When our eyes make contact with an external object, that is not “*phassa*“. That is just like a camera taking a picture; that picture is sent to the brain, which processes and sends that “snapshot” to the mind. The mind then makes contact with this “snapshot” or “image” and this is what “*phassa*” really is: **It is the mental contact.**

- When the mind makes that contact with that image of the external object, a *citta* (actually a series of *citta* called *citta vithi*; see, “[What is a Thought?](#)“) arises and that is what we experience; actually what we experience is the cumulative effect of many such *citta vithis* that arise in a very short time, and this cumulative effect we call a “thought”.
- Some of the seven universal mental factors that arise with the *citta* instantaneously identifies the object and based on our “*gathi*” or “*sansaric* habits” help form an opinion on what is seen. For example, a young lady looking at a dress may form a liking for it. Another person seeing his enemy will form a dislike. A teenager, upon hearing a song may form a liking for it, etc.
- This mental contact happens instantaneously. We do not have any control over it, and it is purely based on our “*gathi*“. But since our actions based on that initial reaction takes some time, we still have time to control our speech or bodily actions. Even if bad thoughts come to our mind, we can stop any speech or bodily actions. This is what is supposed to be done with “*kayanupassana*” in “*satipaṭṭhāna* meditation”.

3. Now, let consider what happens when an *Arahant* sees or hears similar things. He/she will see or hear the same thing as any other person. But since an *Arahant* has removed all such *sansaric* habits or “*gathi*“, he/she will not be attracted to it or repelled by it.

- An *Arahant* has removed all such defiled “*gathi*” which are closely related to cravings or “*āsava*“. An *Arahant* has removed all “*āsava*“; this is what is meant by “*āsavakkhaya*” at the *Arahanthood*. This is a technical detail that may be clear to some; but don’t worry about it if it does not.

4. We can now see the difference between “*phassa*” and “*samphassa*“.

- In the case of an *Arahant*, there is only “*phassa*” or mere contact with the external sense input. An *Arahant* will thus “see” or “hear” or “smell” or “taste” or “feel” the same things as any other person. But an *Arahant* will not be attached or repulsed by that sense experience.
- For example, the Buddha identified different people. But he did not form a special liking for Ven. Ananda (his personal assistant) or had any hateful thoughts about Devadatta who tried to kill him. He treated the poorest person the same way as he treated a king.
- The Buddha ate most delicious food offered by the kings and also ate the meager meals offered by poor people without any preference.
- In all those sense contacts, it was just “*phassa*“, and not “*samphassa*“.

5. On the other hand, an ordinary person will form a like or a dislike for some of the sense inputs (but not for all).

- If a like or dislike is formed, then that sense contact is “*san phassa*“(“*san*” + “*phassa*“, where “*san*” is what we accumulate to extend the *sansaric* journey; see, “[What is “San”?](#)“). It is normally pronounced “*samphassa*“.
- Thus, when we see, hear, smell, taste, touch something, whether there is going to be any likes or dislikes towards that sense experience depends on the person, or more specifically the “*gathi*” of that person.

6. “*Samphassa*” is intimately connected to one’s “*gathi*” or habits most of which come from our past lives, even though some may be strengthened or weakened by what we do in this life. We may even start forming new “*gathi*” in this life.

- There are many posts at this site that discuss “*gathi*“, and at the very basic level both “*ānāpāna*” and “*satipaṭṭhāna*” meditations are all about removing bad “*gathi*” and cultivating good “*gathi*“.
- “*Samphassa*” is also intimately connected to the relationships we have with other people and material things. Any kind of sense input on such people/things will automatically generate “*samphassa*“. On the other hand, an *Arahant* has removed all bonds with people/things, and thus will generate only “*phassa*“.

7. Let us discuss some examples to illustrate how “*samphassa*” arises. First let us look at the connection with those people/things in the world that we have special relationships with or what we “*upādāna*“, i.e., like to either keep close to or like to stay away from.

- Think about the worst “enemy” you have. When you even think about that person X, you generate distasteful feelings. But that person’s family will have loving thoughts about that person. Here, you and X’s child (for example), would have generated very different “*samphassa*” when thinking, seeing, hearing, about X.
- When you travel by car or bus and looking out of the window, you may see zillion things, but those are just “seeing”; you don’t pay much attention to them. They are “*phassa*“. But now if you happen to see a beautiful house, it piques your interest and you may even turn back and take another good look at it, and may be even think about how nice it would be to live in a house like that. That is “*samphassa*“.

8. Our *sansaric* habits (“*gathi*“) play a key role in generating “*samphassa*“.

- Some people enjoy harassing animals; they pay to go see cockfighting. Others are repulsed by that. Those are *sansaric* habits. So, the scene of two animals fighting for life leads to the enjoyment of some and to the disgust of others; both are “*samphassa*“, but one is obviously immoral. The other is moral but still keeps one bound to *saṃsāra*; this latter statement may take time to digest.
- Ladies, in general, like nice clothes, jewellery, etc. and men are more into sports. When a husband is watching sports on TV the whole day, the wife may not have any interest and may even get angry at him for not paying attention to other things that need to be done around the house.

- These and zillion other things come from our *sansaric* habits.

9. Now let us see how one's perception of what is "valuable" can lead to "*samphassa*". Suppose someone inherits a valuable gem from his father. Every time he sees it or even thinks about it, he becomes happy. But his mind is also burdened by it, since he is worried that he may lose it; he is keeping it in a safe and has put burglar alarms in the house just to protect that gem.

- Now, suppose one day he gets to a professional to evaluate the gem and finds out that it is really worthless. He may not even believe that initially, but once it sinks in that it is indeed worthless, he will become "detached" from it. He will no longer keep it in the safe and may even throw it away in disgust.
- Now he may be generating either neutral or hateful thoughts about the SAME OBJECT that he once loved so much. Nothing changed about the "gem"; it is still the same object as before. What has changed is his PERCEPTION of the value of that object. Whereas he generated "*samphassa*" on thinking or seeing that object before, now he may generating just "*phassa*" (neutral feelings) or "*samphassa*" with quite opposite feelings of disgust.

10. Let us take another example that was given by one of my teacher *Theros*. This one clearly shows how transition from "*phassa*" to "*samphassa*" or the other way around can happen very quickly.

This story is based many years ago in Sri Lanka. A mother had to go overseas when her son was less than a year old. She had been overseas for many years and came back to meet her son. Apparently, she had not even seen any pictures of the boy, who was now a teenager. When she gets home, she is told that the boy is visiting a neighbor and she starts walking there. On the way she bumps into a teenager; the teenager apologizes and she resumes walking. But then another person on the street says, "Don't you recognize your son? Well. How can you? You have been away all this time". Hearing that, she says, "Oh, is that my son?" and immediately runs back and hugs him.

- She clearly saw the boy when he bumped into her and apologized. But at that time, he was just a teenager to her. That "seeing" event involved "*phassa*".
- But when someone pointed out that it was her son, the whole perception of the boy took a quantum leap in an instant. Now she looks at the same boy with the whole new set of "mental baggage". Now it is not just a teenager, but her son; there is attachment involved. Now when she looks at him it is "*samphassa*" that is involved.

11. Now we can also see how "*samphassa*" lead to *vedanā* or feelings.

- She had neutral thoughts (may be even some annoyance) when the boy bumped into her apologized. But when she learned that it was her son, her feelings turned instantly to joy.
- To take a bit more further, if that teenager then got hit by car after several minutes, that joy would turn instantly to sorrow.

More details on how "*samphassa*" leads to *vedanā* (feelings) can be found at: "[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)".

Next, "[Phassa paccaya Vedana....to Bhava](#)",

8.4.9 Phassa paccaya Vedana....to Bhava

1. In the previous post, we discussed the difference between "*phassa*" and "*samphassa*". To summarize:

- An *Arahant* will always have "*phassa*", whether it is due to a *kamma vipāka* (i.e., a sense impression comes in due to a *kamma* done in the past) or whether he/she is using the sense faculties for a given purpose. Here "*phassa*" is pure mental contact; it is just seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, or just an arbitrary thought that comes to the mind without one's own likes/dislikes.
- An ordinary person will also have "*phassa*" when sense inputs come in as *kamma vipāka*. For example, one may be walking down the street and happen to see an expensive ring on the road.

That initial “seeing” is due to a *kamma vipāka*. But now he gets interested in it and picks it up and examines it; those follow-up acts may be done with “*samphassa*“, which in turn lead to more *kamma* generating future *kamma vipāka*.

- Thus the *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* involves “*salāyatana paccaya samphassa*“, even though it is normally written as “*salāyatana paccaya phassa*“.

2. “*Phassa*” is the pure mental contact. “*Samphassa*” is the mental contact that has incorporated one’s own likes/dislikes about the sense contact.

- In an earlier post, we also talked about the difference between “*indriya*” and “*āyatana*“, i.e., how our sense faculties can be used in either way. Note: These six *indriya* are different from the *indriya* in *panca indriya*, which are *sati*, *samādhi*, *saddhā*, *virīya*, and *paññā*.
- Our basic sense faculties are the “*indriya*“; when they are used with likes/dislikes they become “*āyatana*“. Since there are six of them there are six “*āyatana*” or “*salāyatana*“.

3. In the *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* series that describe how our actions that start with ignorance (*avijjā*) eventually lead to suffering, what comes to play is “*salāyatana*“, i.e., “*namarupa paccaya salāyatana*“. Thus, we are talking about instances where we use our sense faculties as “*āyatana*“.

- Therefore, it is clear that the next step should be “*salayata paccaya samphassa*” instead of the normally used, “*salāyatana paccaya phassa*“.
- But conventionally “*salāyatana paccaya phassa*” is used because it rhymes better that way. **One is supposed to know that it is really “*samphassa*” that comes into play here.**

4. Let us take an example to go over the steps of the *paticca samuppāda* up to now as a review. Suppose there is a teenager who come to associate friends that belong to a street gang. They tell him that one needs to enjoy life and has to do “whatever it takes” to make money to enjoy life. If the parents do not have close contacts with the teenager, there is no one to explain to him the perils of such a way of life, and he embraces this wrong vision or “*micca diṭṭhi*“.

- Thus due to ignorance (*avijjā*), the teengaer starts doing, speaking, and thinking like those gang members: “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*“.
- Then what occupies his mind most of the time is thoughts related to gang activities and seeking pleasures by using drugs and alcohol: “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*“. During gang activities his thoughts are focused on them, and what is in his subconscious during other times is also related to such activities.
- This leads to “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*“. He thinks about and visualizes various gang activities: How to sell drugs to make money and how he will enjoy rest of the time hanging out with the gang.
- Thus all his six sense faculties become “*āyatana*“: they all are used to find ways to optimize the gang activities and to think about ways to “have to fun”: “*namarupa paccaya salāyatana*“.
- Thus inevitably, the sense contacts he makes are attuned for such activities: “*salāyatana paccaya phassa*” or more explicitly, “*salāyatana paccaya samphassa*“. Most of his sense contacts are defiled with greed, hate, and ignorance.
- Accordingly, most his feelings are associated with such defiled sense contacts: He gets angry dealing with rival gangs, takes pleasure in beating them up, gets pleasure from drinking and using drugs, etc. Thus “*(sam)phassa paccaya vedanā*” ensues.

5. Now we can see how he gets more and more absorbed in gang activities; he gets pleasure from them. Gang activities become regular habits. He gets “stuck”, or “gets attached to gang activities” via both greed and hate. This is “*vedanā paccaya taṇhā*“; see, “[Tanhā – How we attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)“.

- The more he continues such activities, it will become harder to dissociate from them. He thinks about those activities even when not actively doing them. Those start working in his “subconscious”; he dreams about them, etc.

6. Such strong attachments to gang activities this lead to “*upādāna*”: *Upādāna* (“*upa*” + “*adāna*”, where “*upa*” means “close” and “*adāna*” means “pull” or “attract”; thus gang activities becomes very close him. Those are what he thinks, speaks, lives, all day long: “*taṇhā paccaya upādāna*”.

- Among those gang activities, he may especially get attached to certain specific acts: could be alcohol, drugs, or even beating up other people or killing them. And such a specific thing would be his favorite, and that is what he will follow enthusiastically and others will also encourage.
- Within the gang there may be a sub-unit that mostly he hangs with. They will enjoy doing their favorite things together, and the gang may assign specific tasks to them which they are known to do well.

7. This leads to preparation of future “existence” or “*bhava*”. For example, suppose his sub-unit becomes notorious for hurting rival gang members. They take pleasure in beating up someone or in some cases even killing someone. He will acquire the mindset of a violent animal. He will become easily agitated and angry.

This is “*upādāna paccaya bhava*”.

- His “*bhava*” has drastically changed from that of an innocent teenager to that of a violent animal at times.

8. This progression from “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*” to “*upādāna paccaya bhava*” does not happen in a linear sequence.

Some steps go back and forth. For example, “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*” is inevitably also followed by the reverse “*saṅkhāra paccaya avijjā*”, i.e., the more wrong things he does, that also solidifies his ignorance. When he starts enjoying those immoral acts, he will tend to think that is what will provide him happiness in the future. His mind will be more and more covered with *kamachanda* (strong greed) and *vyāpāda* (strong hate), the two main components of the five hindrances.

- His ability to think clearly will be suppressed by the five hindrances, and *avijjā* (ignorance) will grow; thus “*saṅkhāra paccaya avijjā*” will also take place.
- There can be many such “inter-loops” that tend to strengthen the downward progression of that teenager.

9. Let us discuss the concept of a “*bhava*” in more detail. Since many people get confused with the terms “*bhava*” and “*jāti*”, it is important to be able to distinguish between the two.

- **Every time we do a *saṅkhāra* (which can be a bodily act, speech, or a thought) a corresponding *kamma* (basically an action) is done. In Buddha Dhamma too, every action has a reaction just like in physics, but when dealing with mental phenomena the reaction (*kamma vipāka*) can come later, sometimes many lives later.**
- This is why science has not yet realized the way to handle mental phenomena. Since most “reactions” come later in this life, or even in future lives, it is not easy to see these “action/reaction” or “*kamma/kamma vipāka*” relationships.

10. Not all *kamma* are the same. Some *kamma* (and corresponding *saṅkhāra*) are harmless, i.e., they are not potent. Anyone who lives in this world (even an *Arahant* until death) has to do *saṅkhāra* to live: An *Arahant* has to walk, speak, think about things and all these can be considered to be *kamma* (*saṅkhāra*). In some cases, they are put in the category of *kriya* to specifically separate them.

- But what we are concerned with *kamma* that involve greed, hate, and ignorance. Anytime that happens those *kamma* (*saṅkhāra*) are potent. They can bring about **significant** results or *kamma vipāka*.
- The clearly strong *kamma* (*saṅkhāra*) are called *kamma patha* (or *abhisankhāra*). Killing one’s parents is a *kamma patha* or a *abhisankhāra*; since it is immoral, it is called an

apunnabhisankhara (*apunna* + *abhisankhāra*). It will lead to very bad consequences (*kamma vipāka*).

- Saving the life of a human is also a *abhisankhāra*; since it is a moral one, it is called a *punnabhisankhara* (*punna* + *abhisankhāra*). It will lead to very good consequences.
- As we discussed above, those good or bad consequences may not be apparent even in this life; but they are likely to bear fruit in future lives.

11. How the consequences or “reactions” or *kamma vipāka* due to good or bad *kamma* are brought about involves the concept of a “*bhava*” which can also called a “*kamma beeja*” or a “*kamma seed*”.

- Every time one does a good or bad *kamma*, the potential to bring about its results remains with him/her. And the more one does the same, that potential (or energy) grows. It is said that such acts prepare a “*bhava*” or existence appropriate for that *kamma*.
- For example, as the above discussed teenager keeps doing his violent acts, he is making a “*bhava*” or a “*kamma seed*” appropriate for bringing about their consequences.
- During a lifetime, these “*bhava*” mostly bring about environments suitable for conducting similar acts. **It becomes his “state of existence” or “*bhava*”.** He keeps acting violently, and may even act like an animal at times. His “animal-like *gathi*” or “animal-like habits” will grow.
- This “*bhava*” is called a “*kamma bhava*” and he may “born” in that existence many times during the lifetime.

12. It becomes easier to get that state of existence (*bhava*); he can be provoked easily and he can hurt someone without much remorse. Thus whole *akusala-mūla pavutti paticca samuppāda* cycle can run many times during a day as we will discuss in the next post.

- This is why stopping such actions early is important. If one has learned correct “*ānāpāna*” or “*satipaṭṭhāna*”, then one would know not to keep doing such acts.
- This is also why the environment (parents, family, friends, teachers, etc) plays such a huge role in one’s life at young age. We all have both good and bad tendencies (“*gathi*”) coming from previous lives. Which ones get to grow further depends on how one’s life is directed by the environment especially at young age. When one is old enough one could of course make even drastic changes with effort.

13. As a given “*kamma bhava*” gets stronger with repeated actions, it can become a “*uppatti bhava*”, i.e., the *kamma seed* has now become strong enough to provide a *patisandhi* (rebirth) to a new *bhava* or existence at the end of the current existence (*bhava*) as a human; this is the *cuti-patisandhi* transition that happens in the last *citta vithi* of the human existence.

- Details of this have been discussed in other posts and will be discussed in the next post as well, but the important things here is the concept of a strong *kamma seed* that can give rise to a new existence (rebirth) or a “*uppatti bhava*”.
- Such strong *kamma seeds* suitable for *uppatti bhava* can grow over many lifetimes as well.
- It is likely that we all have many such good and bad strong *kamma seeds* that we have acquired in our previous lives. From all those good and bad *kamma seeds* that are potent enough to provide *patisandhi*, the most strong one comes to the forefront of the mind at death (if the *kammic* energy for the present *bhava* as a human is exhausted). We will discuss this in detail in the next post, but the difference between “*bhava*” and “*jati*” has been discussed in, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.

We will discuss more details in the next post that will wrap-up this series: “[Bhava paccaya Jati...Jara, Marana,...](#)”.

8.4.10 Bhava paccaya Jati....Jara, Marana,...

1. In the previous post we discussed how repeated immoral actions of a teenager can bring about a specific type of existence (*bhava*) even during the current life and that this is called a *kamma bhava*.

- We also discussed how such *kamma bhava* can get stronger with time and become strong enough to lead to a whole new existence at death; this is called a *patisandhi bhava*.
- Thus there are two types of “*bhava*”: those that can bring about “experiences” during the current life (*kamma bhava*) and those that become strong enough to power a whole new existence (*uppatti bhava*).

2. Another way to look at the concept of a “*bhava*” is to treat it as a seed. As we discussed in the previous post, when we do any act with ignorance (and greed or hate), that leads to the generation of a *kamma* seed with some energy to bring about results in the future; this is the same as saying that a “*bhava*” was created by that action. The concept of a *kamma* seed is easier to comprehend.

- Just like a normal seed **has the potential** to give rise to a plant, **a *kamma* seed has the potential to bring about a “*jāthi*” or a “birth”,** either during this life or in preparing a new life.
- In most posts, I write it as *jati* (which is the conventional English term used), but it really is pronounced “*jāthi*”.

3. Let us take the example of the teenager that we discussed in the previous post. Because of the influence of his friends, the teenager starts dealing and using drugs and gradually gets drawn into the gang to become a gang member, and eventually starts doing violent acts of beating and killing people.

- When he did the first beating his friends probably had to encourage or even force him to do it. Now let us suppose that he did not have a *sansaric* habit of doing that kind of violent acts. So, when he did the first act, a small *kamma* seed (or a “*bhava*”) was energized.

4. The next time he did something similar, this initial *kamma* seed made it easier for him to do the second act. Once he did that, the seed got bigger, and the next time he may not need much encouraging, and so on. The more he does it, the more easily he can get into that “*bhava*”, i.e., the stronger that *kamma* seed becomes.

- This is another way of expressing “habit formation” that I have discussed in many other posts. The more one does acts suitable for a certain “*bhava*”, the *viññāṇa* for similar behavior grows, and it is easier for one to be “born” in a corresponding state; this is “*pati+ichcha*” leading to “*sama+uppada*” as pointed out in the introductory post, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)”.
- Thus the more the teenager does violent acts, the more easier for him to be “born in that state”, i.e., the more easier for him to do similar acts.
- In other words, repeated *saṅkhāra* leads to strengthening the corresponding mindset or *viññāṇa*, and it propagates down the *paticca samuppāda* series to make “*kamma bhava*”.

5. Now let us consider when that *kamma* seed or “*kamma bhava*” gives rise to a “*jati*” in *pavutti paticca samuppāda*. One day, his drug deal is sabotaged by a rival gang member, and he gets angry. Now he is easily “born” in that “animal-like violent state”. He starts beating up that guy. This is “*jati*” in this case.

- When the beating is almost done, that “*jati*” is almost over with; it is at the “*jara*” (decay) stage and when it is done that is the end or death (“*marana*”) of that “*jati*”.
- Thus when that episode is over, that temporary “*jati*” of “a violent existence” is over.
- The rest of it, “*sōka, parideva, dukkha, dōmanassa*” or many forms of suffering comes later in that life or even in future births. The *kamma* seed that helped him do that act, itself got even stronger.

6. The *kammic* energy of that *kamma* seed was not spent giving rise to that *jati* that happened during that particular instance. That is because that was not a case of *kamma vipāka*. Rather, that *kamma* seed got stronger.

- Now, if during that confrontation with the other rival gang member he himself gets beaten up, then that becomes a *kamma vipāka*, and some of the *kammic* energy is spent on that.

- In either case, that “birth” or *jati*” (the confrontation with the rival gang member) would give him only misery at the end: “*soka, parideva, dukkha, domanassa*”.
- Many such *pavutti samuppāda* cycles can operate during even a day and he may be “born” repeatedly in that confrontational state. Some may be minor, like getting mad at his friends but some could be violent. He has prepared the “*bhava*” and he can get into “*jati*” or be “born in that *bhava*” easily. I am mixing up English and Pāli words in order to make the meanings clear and to get used to those terms.
- Just like when a seed is made it is easy to get that seed to germinate, once we prepare a “*bhava*” it is easy to be born in that type of existence.

7. Now we can see that a “*bhava*” or a “*kamma* seed” is the potentiality for a particular kind of existence or a “state of mind” during the current life itself.

- But the important thing to remember is that “*bhava paccya jati*” **does not mean he is guaranteed to be born in that state.** It is likely that he will be born in that state under suitable conditions, for example with provocation.
- But if he comes to his senses and realizes the perils of such actions, he can make an effort and slowly degrade the potency of that *kamma* seed. The first thing is to stop doing the more violent acts. If the teenager has enough determination and if he has moral support from his family, he may be able to get into the moral path.
- If he makes a determination to change, it will be hard in the beginning. It is like trying to stop a moving car. If the car has a lot of speed, it takes a bigger effort to stop. It is easier to stop a slowly moving car, before it gains speed. In the same way, it is easier to revert back if one realizes that one is on the wrong path early.

8. If the teenager does not change his ways, but only gets involved more and more with the violent activities, then that *kamma* seed (or *kamma bhava*) will grow bigger and can become strong enough to energize a whole new existence (rebirth) or “*uppatti bhava*”. Or he can even make a single huge seed by killing someone.

- We all are likely to have acquired several or even many such large bad *kamma* seeds (i.e., many bad “*uppatti bhava*”) suitable to yield rebirths in the lowest four realms; we have no way of finding out.
- Of course, we are also likely to have many good *kamma* seeds (i.e., many good “*uppatti bhava*”) suitable to yield rebirths in the higher realms.

9. And we do not have any control over which “*uppatti bhava*” is selected at death. The strongest with the most “*upādāna*” associated with it gets to the front automatically. The Buddha gave a simile to explain how this selection of a “*uppatti bhava*” or a strong *kamma* seed happens at the *cuti-patisandhi* transition at death.

- Imagine a barn that keeps the cows in for the night. In the morning, all the cows are anxious to get out and roam around. But when the gate opens, it is the strongest cow that has come to front and is out of the gate when it is opened. The weaker ones don’t even make an effort to be at the front.
- Just like that, it is the strongest “*kamma* seed” or a “*patisandhi bhava*” that wins at the *cuti-patisandhi* transition.
- In the case of the teenager that we discussed above, if the *kamma* seed that he nourished during this life as a violent person with “animal-like” behavior is the strongest one of all his accumulated *kamma* seeds, then it will bring about an animal existence at the *cuti-patisandhi* transition.

10. A Buddha could analyze such a *patisandhi paticca samuppāda* cycle in finer details to pin-point even what type of animal would it be. This is because a Buddha can see not only a person’s whole history in the present life, but going back to many aeons; thus he could see which *kamma* seed will bring the next existence and exactly which kind of “*gathi*” are embedded in that *kamma* seed. We can

only discuss the general trends, and here we have discussed only the main ideas of how these *paticca samuppāda* cycles operate.

- Going back to the teenager, In this case it is the *patisandhi paticca samuppāda* cycle that operates, and “*bhava paccaya jati*” here leads to the birth in a new existence as an animal using that *uppatti bhava*.

11. Once born in such an animal existence, that animal will grow and then start the old age (“*jarā*”), and eventually die (“*marana*”).

- At that death, it is likely that the *kammic* energy of that *kamma* seed has not been depleted. Since most violent animals have shorter lifetimes, only a fraction of that *kammic* energy is likely to have been spent and “he” will keep going through many of similar births (“*jati*”) until the energy of that *kamma* seed is spent. It is said that many animals keep coming back to the same life many hundreds of times.

12. This is the difference between “*bhava*” and “*jati*”. Once one gets a new existence or “*bhava*”, one could have many births (“*jati*”) in that existence until the energy of the *kamma* seed is totally spent.

- Thus we can see that the last step of “*jati paccaya jara, marana, soka, parideva, dukkha, domanassa*” will be with “him” for a long time to come. It is not just one birth but many that will correspond to that existence as that animal.
- For us also, in general, when one is in the human “*bhava*” one could be reborn many times before the energy of that “good *kamma* seed” is depleted. This is why those rebirth memories can be recalled from adjacent lives. However, it is very difficult to get another “human *bhava*”; see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)”.

13. Before closing this section let us discuss another important point. We mentioned earlier that everyone has accumulated numerous good and bad *kamma* seeds strong enough to give rise to good and bad rebirths. Then the question arises: Does a person attain the *Sotāpanna* stage (i.e., make bad rebirths in the lowest four realms void) by eliminating all those corresponding bad *kamma* seeds?

- While it is possible to reduce the potency of *kamma* seeds and maybe even eliminate some, it may not be possible to remove all. Many *kamma* seeds may be removed by the *Ariya metta bhāvanā* discussed in the “*Bhāvanā* (Meditation)” section, but there could be left overs. It is said that the Buddha had 11 instances of bad *kamma vipāka* including a back problem. We will discuss this point in a separate post.
- Therefore, it is very likely that we all have many good and bad *kamma* seeds strong enough to energize many good and bad rebirths.
- What happens at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment involves the “*upādāna paccaya bhava*” step in the *patisandhi paticca samuppāda* cycle. As we recall, this is the step that is responsible for energizing “*uppatti bhava*” as well as “*kamma bhava*”.
- But this same step is involved in grasping the strongest “*uppatti bhava*” at the end of the current “*bhava*”. If a person dies and if that was the last possible human birth for him/her, then at the dying moment, that comes closest and he/she will willingly grasp it because that will match the dominant “*gathi*” of him/her.

14. Let us consider the case of the violent teenager again. Suppose he continued with his violent acts and built up an “*uppatti bhava*” suitable for a violent animal. Then at the dying moment, he could see in his mind (like in a dream), a rival gang member trying to “steal a drug deal”; he will also see a gun closeby. By his natural instincts he will get angry, grab the gun, and shoot that person. This is an example of a “*gathi nimitta*”.

- That is the “*upādāna paccaya bhava*” step for the new existence. He has willingly grasped the mindset of an animal, and he will be born as an animal. His next thought moment is in that animal which comes out of that dead body of the teenager as a “*gandhabba*” with a fine body that cannot be seen.

- This is described in detail in other posts; it needs more background material in “*manomaya kaya*” for understanding the technical details, but that is not critical here. However, now we can get an idea of how a new existence is grasped at the end of a “*bhava*” in the *patisandhi paticca samuppāda* cycle.

15. Let us now go back to the question of how a *Sotāpanna* avoids such bad rebirths even if he/she has many bad *kamma* seeds. Suppose that *Sotāpanna* has the same kind of *kamma* seed as that teenager (could be from a previous life), and that it is the strong enough to come to forefront of his/her mind at the dying moment.

- What happens is that a *Sotāpanna* will not grab the gun and shoot that person even if it is his/her worst enemy doing something that could make him/her mad. His/her mindset or “*gathi*” have been permanently changed. Thus “*upādāna paccaya bhava*” step will not be executed for that *kamma* seed.
- In that case now the next potent *uppatti bhava* will come to the forefront. If that is also a bad one suitable for rebirth in the lowest four realms, that will be rejected too. Eventually, he/she will grasp a rebirth that is compatible with his/her “*gathi*” at that dying moment, which for a *Sotāpanna* will never be the “*gathi*” of a being in one of the four lowest realms. This happens automatically and very quickly. We do not have conscious control over it.
- Thus one’s rebirth will determined by the way one lives (and had lived previous lives). If one lived like an animal, one will be born an animal no matter how much one wishes to have a “good birth”. The real danger, as we discussed above, is that we do not know how we had lived our previous lives.
- This is why *paticca samuppāda* means “*pati + ichcha*” leading to “*sama*” + “*uppada*” or what one grasps willingly and habitually is what one that will operate automatically at the dying moment; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)”.

8.5 Paticca Samuppāda Cycles

[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāna](#)

[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)

[Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)

[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(or Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppāda](#)

8.5.1 Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāna

October 17, 2017

1. First, a word about the nomenclature: The Pāli word is *avyākata* and the Sinhala word is *avyākruta*. But in many places it is written as *abyākata*. No matter how it is written, it means “not designated as *kusala* or *akusala*, i.e., **kammicaly neutral**”: there are no *javana citta* involved that generate *abhisankhāra*.

- *Kamma vipāka* are kammically neutral. But based on those *kamma vipāka*, we initiate new *kamma*; see, “[How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?](#)“. I recommend reading that first, before continuing on this post.
- Both categories — *kamma vipāka* and *kamma* generation — can be described by *paticca samuppāda* (PS).
- Another key point I want to point out is that *avyākata* PS cycles NEVER start with a *pabhassara citta* [Radiant Mind]; see below.

2. Past *kamma vipāka* bring sense inputs via the six senses and IF we get attached — *taṇhā* — to those sense inputs, THEN that leads to new *kamma* by us. That is why it is a never ending process, until one attains *Nibbāna*. After the *Arahanthood*, one will still experience such *kamma vipāka*, but WILL NOT get attached to them, i.e., no new *kamma* will be generated.

This cyclic process can be described in three steps:

- i. One sees, hears, smells, tastes, makes body contacts, or a “*dhamma*” comes to one’s mind. These do not “just happen”; they happen due to reasons (causes). They come about due to *kamma vipāka*, and those thoughts that arise due to them are called ***vipāka citta* OR *avyākata citta***, since they are *kammically* neutral.
 - ii. Then, based on one’s *gati* (pronounced “gathi”), *āsava*, *anusaya*, one’s mind may automatically get interested in a sense input (called an *ārammana*), and may get attached to that sense input. This happens within a billionth of a second and **we DO NOT have control over that initial response either; *manō saṅkhāra* are generated AUTOMATICALLY in one’s mind**. These are also part of the ***avyākata citta* since they arise AUTOMATICALLY within the same *citta vīthi***.
 - iii. **IF we one gets attached, then one starts generating new *kamma* by thinking CONSCIOUSLY about that sense input (generating *vacī saṅkhāra*)**, i.e., one starts “wheeling around” accumulating “*san*” that contribute to new *kamma*; see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)“. That new *kamma* can get stronger if we may also start doing *kāya saṅkhāra* via speech and bodily actions.
3. **All those three steps may start even before our minds register that we have started accumulating new *kamma*. This is because *citta vīthi* are very fast, and all those happen within a single *citta vīthi***; see below. But if we are mindful, we can “catch” such “wheeling around” within a few seconds and stop just the *apunnābhi saṅkhāra* (we should not stop *punnābhi saṅkhāra*).
- But that requires careful monitoring of our “automatic responses” to such sense inputs; this is what is called “being mindful”. With practice, one can “catch” them quickly and stop bad thoughts/speech/actions.

- If we keep doing that, then OVER TIME, our *gati* will change for the better, and our attachments to “bad things” will fade away; see, “[Gathi, Bhava, and Jati](#)” to read about very important concept of *gati*. **It is not correct to say we have a “self” or “no-self”; we just have *gati* that can be changed.**
- That is the basis of *Satipaṭṭhāna/Ānāpāna bhāvanā*. If one can grasp this concept, and implement it diligently over a few months, one will be able to see for oneself the benefits!
- One can try it with “bad habits” (smoking, drugs, over-eating, etc) first to see the power of it, and then extend to other *dasa akusala*. This is also the way to *Sotāpanna* stage, because then one will be able to grasp *Tilakkhana* too.

4. It is very important to understand the above steps, and the post “[Tanhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)” is a necessary first read too. What happens is explained in a bit more detail in “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)“, “[Kāma Āsvada Start with Phassa paccayā vedanā or Samphassa Ja vedanā](#)“, and has been discussed in a more fundamental way in the subsection: [Living Dhamma – Fundamentals](#)“.

- Grasping this cyclic process of how we have traversed this suffering-filled rebirth process can be quite helpful but one must be willing to spend some time on those posts.

5. All PS processes can be broadly divided into three categories:

- i. What we will discuss in this post is how past *kamma vipāka* bring in sense inputs via *avyākata* (Sinhala: *avyākṛta*) PS process, and also automatically generate *manō saṅkhāra*.
- ii. Then *akusala-mūla* PS processes may contribute to generating new *kamma* that extend the rebirth process. These also start within seconds, but as mentioned above, we can catch and stop them if we are mindful (*Satipaṭṭhāna/Ānāpāna*).
- iii. The *kusala-mūla* PS process describes how one can accumulate new “good *kamma*” that will eventually help us attain *Nibbāna* by following the Noble Path. If the *kamma vipāka* generated such a “good PS” process, we should cultivate those. That is also part of *Satipaṭṭhāna/Ānāpāna*.

The *akusala-mūla* and *kusala-mūla* PS processes are discussed in: “[Paticca Samuppāda Cycles](#)“. So, this post on *avyākata* (Sinhala: *avyākṛta*) PS process will complete that subsection. (**re-arrange this section**)

6. Now we can make the connection between the categories in #2 to categories in #5.

- The sense inputs initiation #2 (i), and the initial response to it #2(ii), are generated by the *avyākata* (*avyākṛta*) PS process of #5(i).
- Our CONSCIOUS response to those sense inputs in creating new *kamma* (*apunnābhisaṅkhāra* or *punnābhisaṅkhāra*) in #2(iii), are carried out by the two kinds of PS processes in #5(ii) and #5(iii).

7. This *avyākata* PS process is not discussed in current *Theravāda* texts including *Visuddhimagga*. It is of course in the *Tipitaka*, and only the Pāli version is available at: “[WebLink: suttacentral: Paticca Samuppāda Vibhaṅga](#)” (Section 2.11 on *Abyākata Niddesa* is about three quarters of the way down from the top).

- I have not seen any current texts or internet sites in English that describe the *avyākata* PS process. But is needed to complete the picture of how *kamma vipāka* bring in sense inputs to us AND initiate new *kamma*.

8. Here is the initiation of the *avyākata* PS process per *Tipitaka* reference in #7 above: “..*vipākam cakkhuvīññānam uppannam hoti upekkhā sahaḡataṃ rūpārammaṇam, tasmim samaye saṅkhāra paccayā viññānam, viññāna paccayā nāmaṃ, nāma paccayā chaṭṭhāyatanaṃ, chaṭṭhāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā, vedanā paccayā bhavo, bhava paccayā jāti, jāti paccayā jarāmaraṇam. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti*“. [[Weblink: suttacentral: 2.11. Abyākataniddesa 2.11 Ahetukakusalavipākacitta 2.11.1.1 Ahetukakusalavipākacitta 2.11.1.1.1. Cakkhuvīññānacitta](#)]

- We can translate the initial part of this verse as, “..when a *rupārammana* (seeing an object) gives rise to a *vipāka cakkhu viññāṇa* with **neutral feelings** (i.e., just seeing)..”.
- Thus, “seeing” event is a neutral *vedanā*, as are all *vipāka* that come through all senses except the body: Only *kāya viññāṇa* — coming through the physical body — can directly generate *sukha* or *dukkha vedanā* due to *kamma vipāka* (as in getting hit by something or getting a massage).
- The other five types sense inputs, at the moment of receiving, generate only neutral feelings (*upekkha vedanā*). This is an important point to grasp. All these like seeing, hearing, could generate “good or bad feelings” based on our *gati*, and those secondary feelings arise moments later (even though we cannot perceive that, because it is so quick).
- But we can clearly see that, for example, some may generate “good feelings” and others may generate “bad feelings” upon hearing the same song. Seeing the same politician may cause “good feelings” in his supporters and “bad feelings” in those in the opposite party, and neutral feelings in others.

9. Unless it is pre-planned, a seeing event (any sense event) is initiated by a *kamma vipāka*. (However, going to see a movie is a deliberate action, in which case the real starting point is an idea or a *dhamma* coming to the mind as a *kamma vipāka*; think about it!)

- Again, it is important to grasp that a seeing event itself is a neutral event (*upekkhāsahagatam rūpārammanam*) EVEN IF it is the seeing of a good object or a bad object. “Good or bad” is a relative thing depending not on the object but only on one’s *gati*, as explained in #8 above.
- One way to think about it, **this initial *cakkhu viññāṇa* is just the “seeing”, i.e., it is like taking a picture with a camera.**

10. In the same way, *sota viññāṇa* is just the “hearing”, *ghāṇa viññāṇa* is just the “smelling”, etc. Whether they are “good or bad *vedanā*” depends on the individual.

- When that image is presented to the mind, it instantly matches the image with one’s cravings, likes, dislikes (i.e., *gati*), and *manō saṅkhāra* are generated AUTOMATICALLY, leading to *viññāṇa*.
- Now this second *viññāṇa* is the *viññāṇa* which has incorporated one’s *gati*, not the *cakkhu viññāṇa* captured by the eyes; of course *cakkhu viññāṇa* is also **registered** in the mind.

11. This is explained in the next step in #8 above, “*tasmim samaye* (at that time) ***saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇam, viññāṇa paccayā nāman, nāma paccayā chaṭṭhāyatanaṃ, chaṭṭhāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā, vedanā paccayā bhavo, bhava paccayā jāti, jāti paccayā jarāmaraṇam. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti***”.

This is the *avyākata* PS due to the *kamma vipāka*.

- Note that this PS process is different than the *akusala-mūla* and *kusala-mūla* PS processes; see the highlighted part of the *avyakata* PS above.
- First, **it does not start with “*avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra*”**. There will be no *kamma* done with *avijjā*. This is just a *kamma vipāka*.

12. Without going into this complex process, only the mindset of the person is changed based on the contact (*phassa*) of the *ārammana* with the *gati* of the individual.

- We note here that there are no “*nāmarūpa*” involved here, but just “*nāma*”. This is a deeper point, but generation of “*nāmarūpa*” involves *javana citta* which actually perform *kamma*. In this *vipāka* cycle, no *kamma* is done by the mind; the mind just matches the “picture” that it received against one’s *gati*, and automatically recognizes if it is an object that one likes/dislikes.
- For example, if an alcoholic see a bottle of his favorite alcohol, he will be temporarily be “born” (*jāti*) as an alcoholic at that instant. But if it was a person who has no such *gati*, this process will end right there (just seeing).

- But if it did lead to the person being born in the “alcoholic state”, then a new *akusala-mūla* PS process will run inside that *avyākata* PS process starting at “*bhava paccayā jātī*” step.

13. Therefore, subsequent to that *avyākata* PS, new *akusala-mūla* PS processes may start. That is the “new *kamma* generation”. Even though an *Arahant* will experience a similar *avyākata* PS, that WILL NOT lead to an *akusala-mūla* PS process.

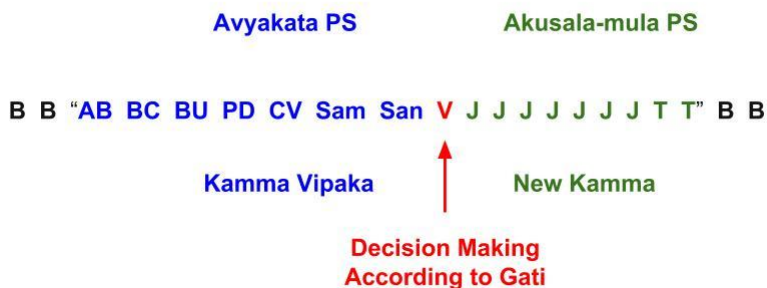
- An *akusala-mūla* PS process MAY NOT be initiated even in a normal human, if he/she did not have *gati* to be attached to that sense input (*ārammana*).
- But that does NOT mean that the *avyākata* PS in that case involved “*pabhassara citta*” [Radiant Mind] or “pure uncontaminated *citta*”. It just means that person did not have *gati* to be interested in that particular sense input.

14. Both the initial *avyākata* PS and the subsequent *akusala-mūla* PS process will take place within the same *citta vīthi* (in the above example a *cakkhudvāra citta vīthi* with 17 *citta*), which lasts only a billionth of a second!

- Such fast processes are not discernible to any human other than a Buddha. But we have the ability to study it and realize that indeed that must be correct. In that we must not focus on just this process, but realize that it fits in nicely with any phenomenon that we experience.
- As one learns deeper concepts, it will be difficult not be amazed by the capabilities of a Buddha. This is how one builds one’s faith (*saddhā*).
- The following discussion will illustrate how the processes that we discussed above fit in nicely with the concept of a *citta vīthi*.

15. The following may not be fully graspable by someone who is not familiar with the details of *citta vīthi*. But just read on and try to get the basic idea without worrying about the details.

- The following figure shows a typical thought process (*citta vīthi*) that is started when eyes capture a “seeing event” (*rūpa aramanna* or *rūpārammana*).



B = bhavanga, AB = atita bhavanga, BC = bhavanga calana,

BU = bhavanga upacceda, PD = pancadvara vajjana, CV = cakkhu vinnana,

Sam = sampticcana, San = santirana, V = vottapana, J = javana, T = tadanga

Click the following link to magnify and download: [WebLink: avyākata PS](#)

- For a discussion on *citta vīthi*, see, “[Citta vīthi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)”.

16. In between *citta vīthi*, the mind is in the “*bhavanga* state”; see, “[Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#)”. That post is also a bit advanced, and I will try to make a new section on “simple *Abhidhamma*” in the future.

- If you see someone not active and just staring into space (not really thinking or concentrating on an idea), then that person’s mind is likely to be in the *bhavanga* state (**B** in the figure). This is also explained in the post, “[Citta vīthi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)”.

- When the mind switches from this *bhavanga* state to a picture that is brought to its attention, it takes three thought moments to “break away” from that *bhavanga* state, and to focus the attention to the new sense input.
- With the **PD** *citta*, the mind sees that it is coming through the “eye door” (*cakkhu dvāra*) and in the next *citta* captures that picture. This is the initiation of the *avyākata* PS process: “..*vipākam cakkhuvīññāṇam uppannam hoti*” in #8 above.

17. Then, during the next two *citta* (“**Sam**” for *sampaticcana*, and “**San**” for *santirana*), the mind matches that picture (sense input) with its own *gati* and may get attached to it. This is what is described in “*tasmiṃ samaye saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇam, viññāṇa paccayā nāmaṃ, nāma paccayā chaṭṭhāyatanaṃ, chaṭṭhāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā, vedanā paccayā bhavo, bhava paccayā jāti*”.

- Then the person is “temporarily born” in a different state (a person with “alcoholic *gati*” will be born instantly as an alcoholic upon seeing his/her favorite drink), and may start a new *akusala-mūla* PS process, as discussed below.
- That decision to acting with *avijjā* based on that “matching” happens at the **all important** *vottapana (V) citta*.

18. Then a new *akusala-mūla* (or *kusala-mūla*) PS process starts and one starts generating *kamma* with *javana citta (J)*, as shown in the above figure. So, this new PS process starts with the standard, “*avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra, saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇa...*”.

- When this initial *citta vīthi* ends, more such *akusala-mūla* PS cycles will follow, if one got “attached”. Even within a second, there could be thousands of such *akusala-mūla* PS cycles running (and each becoming stronger due to the past ones), even before one is fully consciously aware of it.
- But as humans (with the neo cortex that slow down this fast processing; see, “[Truine Brain: How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#)”, we have the ability to stop those *akusala-mūla* PS cycles from building up to doing bad speech and bad actions.
- This is the key to *Satipaṭṭhāna/Ānāpāna bhāvanā*: to be mindful and catch any “impulsive wrong actions” before they get out of hand. With practice, one will be able to “catch oneself” very early in this process.

19. This is also why *Satipaṭṭhāna/Ānāpāna bhāvanā* cannot just be limited to a “sitting meditation session”. One needs to be engaged during all waking hours and be mindful. **Then with time, our *gati* will change for the better, and we will stop doing “foolish and damaging things”.**

- Then our minds will become pure and we will be able to grasp more of Buddha Dhamma. It is a gradual process, especially initially.
- **Now it should also be clear that one will NOT have a “*pabhassara citta*” [Radiant Mind] at any time unless one is an *Arahant*.** It should be clear that one can never stop that initial *avyākata citta vīthi*. It is gone within a billionth of a second.
- However, we do need to stop those *akusala-mūla* PS processes, as soon as we become aware of them. Terminology does not matter, if one is doing the correct procedure.

20. Don’t be discouraged if you find this post too technical. *Paticca samuppāda* can go to very deep levels. Just get the overall idea and things will become clear with time, if you read the other posts referenced.

8.5.2 Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda

This is an early post; revised May 10, 2018

Akusala-mūla version is the only version of *paticca samuppāda* (PS) described in even the current Theravāda texts, even though the other versions are in the *Tipitaka*.

1. One is born in this world due to the **six root causes**.

- One is born in the *apayas* or *dugati* (and also subjected to suffering even when born in good realms) due to bad *gati* arising mainly due to ***lōbha, dōsa, mōha***. The *akusala-mula* PS operates when actions, speech, and thoughts take place with these three root causes.
- One is born in the remaining “good realms” or *sugati* (and also experience mundane sense pleasures) due to good *gati* due to ***alobha, adosa, amoha***. The *kusala-mula* PS operates when actions, speech, and thoughts take place with these three root causes; see, “[Kusala-Mula Paticca Samuppada](#)”.

2. *Akusala-mūla* PS describes the PS process when one acts with *lōbha, dōsa, mōha*, the three root causes that bring “bad outcomes”. It is also two fold:

- The ***uppatti*** PS describes how a “lifestream” or a being makes the *sansaric* journey via repeated births in the 31 realms.
- The ***pavutti (or pravurti)*** PS describes moment-to-moment progression of a “lifestream” or a being. This is discussed at, “[Akusala-Mula Pavutti \(or Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppada](#)”.
- It is important to note that Buddhaghosa (in *Visuddhimagga*) described only the *uppatti* PS. In recent times several *Theros* have pointed out and discussed the *pavutti* PS.

3. Let us first discuss the *uppatti* PS, which describes how the PS cycle goes through a new birth at the end of current life. The steps in this cycle are:

“*avijjā paccayā saṅkhāra; saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇa; viññāṇa paccayā nāmarūpa, nāmarūpa paccayā salāyatana, salāyatana paccayā phassō, phassa paccayā vēdanā, vēdanā paccayā taṇhā, taṇhā paccayā upādāna, upādāna paccayā bhavō, bhava paccayā jāti, jāti paccayā jarā, maraṇa, soka-paridēva-dukkha-dōmanassupāyasā sambhavan’ti*” [[Weblink: suttacentral: Majjhima Nikāya 115 Bahudhātukasutta](#)]

And that is how this whole mass of suffering arises: “*Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti*”

Let us briefly translate them:

4. With ignorance as condition, one accumulates *saṅkhāra*. It must be noted that these are really *abhisankhāra*, i.e., they are done with ignorance.

- When we are born, we are born without ANYTHING material other than our tiny baby body, which actually started as **a single cell** in the mother’s womb. We grow up and start acquiring “stuff” both material and non-material: knowledge, material things, friends, spouse, children, fame, etc.
- While we acquire these “things” we also acquire new habits (*gati*) or strengthen ones that we brought from previous lives; these take place according to the *pavutti* PS at every moment: “*pati+ichcha sama uppada*”, i.e., **we do things that we like and get similar kind of results**.
- When we die, we take with us only the *kamma* seeds (both good and bad) from our actions; the habits (*gati*) and cravings (*āsavas*) are embedded in them. **These are in the *manomaya kaya*, and the *manomaya kaya* leaves the dead physical body with those “updated” *kamma* seeds; see the next post.** This is basically the “net result” of our life here.
- One of existing *kamma* seeds (from this life or from previous lives) gives rise to the next life, where we acquire more of them BASED ON the *gati* and *āsavas*. So the cycle perpetuates.

5. With *saṅkhāra* as condition, a *patibandhi viññāṇa* arises in the new life.

- This *viññāṇa* of the new life arises according to the nature of the *kamma* seed that gave rise to it. If that *kamma* seed was acquired by doing some hateful act(s), then the *viññāṇa* will be matching: “*pati+ichcha sama uppada*”. If it is a seed due to an act of a generosity done with loving kindness, it could be the *viññāṇa* of a Brahma.
- Thus the “base level of *viññāṇa*” for an animal life is VERY DIFFERENT from that of a human life, even for the same “lifestream”, i.e., when a human is reborn as an animal the “base

level of *viññāṇa*” makes a huge downward transition. This is why it is NOT correct to say that “*viññāṇa* is transferred from life to life”.

6. With *viññāṇa* as condition, *namarupa* arise.

- Again, the nature of the “*namarupa*” of the new life is according to “*pati+ichcha sama uppāda*”. In the above mentioned cases, the new life form may be that of an animal or a being in the niraya (hell) or that of a Brahma with a fine body.

7. With *namarupa* as condition, *salāyatana* arise.

- The *salāyatana* (six sense doors) arise accordingly too: In the above mentioned cases, all six sense doors suitable for the kind of animal form or just three sense doors (eye, ear, and mind) suitable for a Brahma.

8. With *salāyatana* as condition, *phassa* arise.

- Here *phassa* is really “*samphassa*” or “*san phassa*”; see step #2 in “[Tanhā -How We Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.
- This is why this “*Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda*” is not applicable for an *Arahant* (and also for other *Ariyas* too at most times). An *Arahant* does not generate “*samphassa*” but just “*phassa*” without “*san*”.

9. With (*san*) *phassa* as condition, *vedanā* arise.

- Such interactions with the external world lead to feelings (*vedanā*) of different kinds. **Here, it is important to realize that NOT all *vedanā* play a role here. Those *vedanā* that arise due to *kamma vipāka* arise just due to *phassa*; only those *vedanā* that arise due to *samphassa* (“*samphassa ja vedanā*”) play a role here.**
- Such “*samphassa ja vedanā*” depend on the *gathi* and *āsavas*: see, “[Vedanā \(Feelings\) Arise in Two Ways](#)”. Also, see step #3 in, “[Tanhā -How We Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.
- We can get rid of this part of *vedanā* (suffering) in this very life by getting rid of “bad habits”, by becoming a “*sampajanno*”; see, “[Kayanupassana – The Section on Habits \(Sampajanapabba\)](#)”.

10. With *vedanā* as condition, *taṇhā* arise.

- *Taṇhā* arise, when one gets “attached” or ‘fused’ into a thing or situation: with *sukha vedanā*, one attaches with greed; with displeasure, one attaches with hate; one also attaches with not knowing what to do (with a highly agitated mind); see, “[Tanhā -How We Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.

11. With *taṇhā* as condition, *upādāna* arise.

- **At the moment of death**, in the last *citta vithi*, the dying person gets a *kamma nimitta*. This is normally a vision or a sound that depicts the nature of the strong *kamma* seed that came to the forefront of the mind. For example, if the *kamma* seed that is about to give the next birth was due to a killing, then the person may see a gun or hear the sound of it, or even see himself as getting ready to shoot; thus the person will have the same hateful thoughts arise and just like at the time the crime was committed, the person embraces that situation automatically (*upādāna*), because one has such “*gathi*” or habits.

12. With *upādāna* as condition, *bhava* arise.

- The next *citta vithi* starts with the new existence or “*bhava*” matching that state of mind: “*pati+ichcha sama uppāda*”. Depending on the *kamma nimitta* that was grasped, a matching existence, a human, animal, *deva*, etc. arise; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)”.

13. With *bhava* as condition, *jati* (new birth) arise.

- Then a birth matching the *bhava* starts. If the *bhava* is human realm, then a human birth will result. Now, here is the difference between *bhava* and *jati*: The duration of the selected “human

bhava” will last until the *kammic* energy associated with that *kamma* seed is exhausted. Thus if the *kamma* seed has potential for thousand years of life, when the current life ends the next birth will be still in the human realm. This is UNLESS one commits a *anantariya kamma* or even a very strong other type of *kamma*. For example, if one attains *Anāgāmī* or *Arahant* stages, the person will not be reborn in the human realm; or if one kills a parent, for example; all these are *anantariya kamma*.

14. With *jati* as condition, “*jara, maranan, soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassupayasa sambhavan’ti*” arise.

- *Jati* inevitably results in decay and eventual death, and this is how *dukkha* originates.
- No matter where one is born in the 31 realms, one ages and eventually dies; in between one goes through all kinds of suffering, in particular at human realm and below. Aging and death are certainties. And at death the whole cycle re-starts.

15. The above steps describe the *uppatti* PS. The other aspect, i.e., what happens during a given lifetime, is described in, “[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.

All the steps in the *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* are described in detail in the series: “[Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English](#)”.

Next, “[Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”,

8.5.3 Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda

This is an early post; revised May 10, 2018

1. *Kusala-mūla* version of *paticca samuppāda* (PS) is not described in even the current Theravāda texts, even though it is in the *Tipitaka*. This is because since the time Buddhghosa wrote *Visuddhimagga*, all Theravāda texts followed that and his other books instead of *Tipitaka*.

- That means the PS process for attaining *Nibbāna* has NOT been described for over 1500 years. No wonder the *Nibbāna* has been hidden for all these years.
- *Kusala-mūla* (pronounced *kusala- mūla*) PS describes the PS process for acting with *alobha, adosa, and amoha* (which is the same as saying staying away from *dasa akusala* or acting without *lobha, dosa, and moha*).

2. One is born in this world due to the **six root causes**.

- One is born in the *apayas* or *dugati* (and also subjected to suffering even when born in good realms) due to bad *gati* arising mainly due to *lōbha, dōsa, mōha*. The *akusala-mula* PS operates when actions, speech, and thoughts take place with these three root causes; see, “[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.
- One is born in the “good realms” or *sugati* (and also experience mundane sense pleasures) due to “good *gati*” developed by acting with *alobha, adosa, amoha*. *Kusala-mula* PS cycles operate when actions, speech, and thoughts take place with these three root causes that bring “good outcomes”.
- *Kusala-mūla* PS describes the PS process when one acts with *alōbha, adōsa, amōha*, the three root causes that bring “good outcomes”.

3. The steps in this *kusala-mūla* cycle are:

“*kusala-mūla paccaya saṅkhāra; saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa; viññāṇa paccaya namarupa, namarupa paccaya salāyatana, salāyatana paccaya phasso, phassa paccaya vedanā, vedanā paccaya cittapasado, cittapasada paccaya adhimokkha, adhimokkha paccaya bhavo, bhava paccaya jati, jati paccaya jara, maranan, eva me tassa dhammanan samudhaya hoti*” [Weblink: suttacentral: 2.10.1 Kāmāvacarakusalacitta 2.10.1.1. Mahākusalacitta](#)

Here I have marked in red the terms that are different from the terms in the *akusala-mūla* PS. Let us briefly translate the terms. **Here I am describing both *pavutti* and *uppatti* PS together.**

4. With *kusala-mūla* as condition, one accumulates *punnabhi saṅkhāra*.
 - Here *kusala-mūla* are deeds done with *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*, AND one does not wish for anything because one's mind is automatically rejecting anything within the 31 realms.
5. With *punnabhi saṅkhāra* as condition, a *punnabhi viññāṇa* arises. This *punnabhi viññāṇa* is accumulated as *kamma bhava* and could lead to corresponding “good” *namarupa* in *pavutti paticca samuppāda* or a new “good birth” in *uppatti paticca samuppāda*.
 - Because the *saṅkhāra* was generated with a *kusala-mūla* deed, **only a *kusala-mūla viññāṇa* arises: “*pati +ichcha sama uppada*”**. The characteristic of this *kusala-mūla viññāṇa* is the desire (*chanda*, not *kamachanda*) for *Nibbāna*.
6. With *punnabhi viññāṇa* as condition, *namarupa* arise.
 - The *namarupa* are generated accordingly: one thinks accordingly and one's mind and body are attuned for meritorious deeds. At death, the *patibandhi viññāṇa* is again according to the *kusala-mūla viññāṇa* and thus a birth in the lower four realms is avoided for a *Sotāpanna*, and a birth in the lower 11 realms (*kamaloka*) is avoided for an *Anāgāmī*, for example.
7. With *namarupa* as condition, *salāyatana* arise.
 - The *salāyatana* (six sense doors) arise accordingly too: they are attuned for only meritorious deeds. At a new birth, the sense faculties arise accordingly.
8. With *salāyatana* as condition, *phassa* arise.
 - **Note that this is just “*phassa*” and NOT “*san phassa*” or “*samphassa*” as in “*Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda*”**.
 - The contacts with the outside world are attuned for seeking *Nibbāna*: learning dhamma and practicing dhamma.
9. With *phassa* as condition, *vedanā* arise.
 - Through such interactions, one enjoys the contact with dhamma, true knowledge and understanding.
10. With *vedanā* as condition, *cittapasadi* arises.
 - Tranquility of consciousness is the standard translation for *cittapasadi*; it is a type of joyous feeling, lightness of heart.
11. With *cittapasadi* as condition, *adhimokkho* arises.
 - *Adhimokko* is normally translated as “decision” or “resolve” where *saddhā* becomes peaked; here it means the mind is decisively attracted towards *Nibbāna*. The mind cools down.
12. With *adhimokkho* as condition, *bhava* arises.
 - The resulting existence or “*bhava*” matching that state of mind: “*pati+ichcha sama uppada*”; one “lives” that experience. If it is rebirth at *patibandhi*, an appropriate “*bhava*” is selected according to the *kamma nimitta*. Here any “*apayagami*” *kamma* seeds that may have been acquired in the distant past do not get a chance to come to forefront, and thus a rebirth in the lower four realms is prevented.
13. With *bhava* as condition, *jati* arise.
 - The appropriate *jati* (*Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī*) will result in an appropriate realm.
14. With *jati* as condition, *jara*, *maranan*, *eva me tassa dhammanan samudhaya hoti*“.

Next, “*Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body*“,

8.5.4 Akusala-Mūla Pavutti (or Pravurthi) Paticca Samuppāda

1. As mentioned in earlier posts (see, “[Paticca Samuppada](#)”), *paticca samuppāda* (PS) or “cause and effect” can describe various stages of life in multiple ways: from a very fast 16 PS cycles operating **inside a thought moment** to a **long-term PS process** that describes how a “living being” is born in one of an uncountable number of species in the 31 realms in the rebirth process.

- The Buddha said that the PS is deep as a deep ocean and it can be applied to any situation, because everything “in this world” obeys the basic principle of cause and effect. It is no wonder that only one PS has been studied for over thousand years while the true Dhamma remained hidden.
- In the previous post we discussed the **uppatti PS** which describes that latter process, i.e., how the PS cycle operates between lives.
- The other extreme of a very fast PS process involved within a thought moment is very complex and we do not need to examine it right now.
- In this post we will discuss the **pavutti PS** cycle, which describes phenomena in between those two extremes: **phenomena that occur within a lifespan**.

2. As mentioned in the introduction to PS, whenever we willingly grasp something, whatever results from that action has a corresponding nature. Because one got attached willingly, a similar *bhava* will result: i.e., *pati+ichcha* leading to *sama+uppada* or *paticca samuppāda* (PS).

- In the most fundamental sense, a “greedy state of mind” will result when we get attach with greed, i.e., one develops a **habit or gathi or bhava** corresponding to that state of mind; a “hateful state” (*habit/gathi/bhava*) results via hateful attachment; acts of greed and/or hate are always done with ignorance.
- Three examples of *uppatti bhava* for those three cases illustrate the principle: An excessively greedy person is likely to get a “*peta bhava*” and be born as a *peta* (hungry ghost); a person who is often engaged in hateful actions towards other beings is likely to develop a “hateful *bhava*” and is likely to be born in the *niraya* (hell) where there is lot of hate due to extreme suffering; an animal *bhava* is developed with both greed and hate. Since ignorance is always there, an animal *bhava* is cultivated with all three “*sans*”; this is the root of the word “*tirisan* = three sans” for an animal in Sinhala.

3. Now let us look at the *pavutti* PS, which describes how we develop certain habits or *bhava* or *gathi* during a given lifetime. It is often easier to use an example to illustrate these PS cycles. Let us examine how a teenager becomes an alcoholic.

4. The teenager become friendly with a group of other teenagers who are into drinking. Initially, he may be reluctant to join in, but due to ignorance he joins them and starts drinking. If a good friend or a family member came to know about the situation they could have prevented the teenager from associating with such bad company, i.e., ignorance could have been dispelled by explaining to him the adverse effects of not only drinking, but also of associating with such a group.

5. The PS cycle thus starts with “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*”; due to ignorance of the adverse results, the teenager starts drinking with that group (*saṅkhāra* = “*san +kāra*” or actions of accumulating, in this case bad *kamma*).

6. The more he is involved with such drinking activities, the more he thinks about it and develops a “mindset” or *viññāṇa* for that activity. This is “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*”.

7. When he really begins to like drinking, he starts thinking about it even while doing other things. This is “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*”. In this case, *namarupa* are the mental images associated with that *viññāṇa*, i.e., the names and shape of particular alcohol bottles, the places where he normally drinks, the friends who drink with him, etc. He thinks about the next “event” and visualizes the scene, **all these are associated *namarupa*. Thus, here *namarupa* are the mental images of “things” and “concepts” that one would like to enjoy.**

8. Now his six senses become “involved” to provide a reality to those *namarupa*; to provide the desired sense pleasures. In Pāli terms, the six *indriya* (senses) become “*āyatana*”. For a lack of a single English word, I will call an “*āyatana*” an “import/export facility”, and really get involved in the actions associated with drinking events. His mind is often thinking about the next “event” (where, when, with whom, etc), he makes necessary preparations for the “event” using all six senses (now *ayatanas*), that are in accordance with the *namarupa* in the previous step, i.e., “*namarupa paccaya salāyatana*”, where **salāyatana means the six āyatana**: the eye is now not merely for seeing, it has become an assistant in the lookout for a “good drink” or a “good friend to chat with”, etc.

9. Thus we have “*salāyatana paccaya phassa*”, i.e., all six *āyatana* become actively engaged making contact with relevant sense objects. His eyes are on the lookout for a favorite drink or a favorite person to chat with, etc. Here instead of *phassa*, it is (more appropriately) called “*samphassa*” (= “*san*” + “*phassa*”), where “*san*” implies it not just contact, but a “*san*” contact; see, “[What is “San”? – Meaning of Samsāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”.

10. Such “*samphassa*” lead to *vedanā* (feelings), i.e., “*(san)phassa paccaya vedanā*”. He experiences “good (but immoral) feelings” with all those sense contacts.

11. Because of such “good feelings”, he gets further attached: “*vedanā paccaya tanhā*”; see, “[Tanhā – How We Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.

12. Now comes, “*tanhā paccaya upādāna*”. *Upādāna* means “grabbing or getting hold of something automatically” like an octopus grabbing its prey with all its eight legs. In the present case, the teenager wants very much to re-live this experience, and he gets immersed in it; when he is experiencing the event his mind is totally absorbed in it; he does not think, and does not have the mindset to think about, any adverse consequences. This is the critical “habit forming” or “*bhava* forming” step.

13. So, the next inevitable step is, “*upādāna paccaya bhava*”; this particular state of getting drunk becomes more and more ingrained in his mind. It becomes “a *bhava*” or “existence” or habit that is of importance to him. He very much wants to re-live that experience.

14. And that is exactly what he gets: “*bhava paccaya jati*”. This “*bhava*” or the *kamma* seed is now well established, and he can be born in that state quite easily. All he needs is an invitation from a friend, or even a sight of a bar while travelling, for example. It is natural to get into that state, or be “born” in that state. So, he gets drunk at every opportunity. See, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and \(Repeated\) Births Therein](#)” for more details.

15. However, like everything else, any birth is subjected to decay and suffering: “*jati paccaya jara, maraṇa, eva me tassa dukkhaṇaṇa samudhaya hoti*”. This happens in many stages as we describe below. But in the case of a single drinking event, that state of intoxication comes to an end, possibly with a big headache and a huge hangover. That episode ends with nothing to show for it, but a hangover. Even worse, now he is “hooked”; he has formed a bad habit, which only strengthens even more if he does it again and again. Because each time, the PS runs, the *viññāṇa* for that habit gets more fuel, and the *bhava* gets stronger.

16. It is important to realize that the above PS cycle does not run to its conclusion when the drinking “event” is over. Rather the cycle can occur repeatedly unless it is stopped willfully, deliberately. And the way to do that is to develop good habits and become a “*sampajannō*”; see, “[Kayanupassana – The Section on Habits \(Sampajanapabba\)](#)”.

- The more the teenager gets trapped in that *bhava*, the more *jati* that occurs, i.e., more frequently he will be drunk.

And it is not even necessary to participate in a “drinking event” to run another PS cycle. He may be sitting at a desk trying to study, and may start going through the PS cycle MENTALLY. He can start right at “*avijja paccaya sankhara*” and be generating *mano saṅkhāra* and *vacī saṅkhāra* (*vitakka/vicara* or planning), thus generating (and strengthening) the *viññāṇa* for drinking, generating *namarupa* (visuals of places, friends, alcohol bottles, etc), and thus going through the rest of the cycle: *salāyatana*, *samphassa*, *vedanā*, *tanhā*, *upādāna*, *bhava*, *jati* (“living it”), repeatedly until he has to be occupied with some other task, at which point it will end.

- Thus numerous such PS cycles can run at any time, probably increasing its frequency as the *bhava* or the habit builds up.
- The stronger the *bhava* or habit is, it will be harder to break it. This is why meditation together with another good habit to work on should be undertaken to replace a bad habit. While in meditation, one can contemplate the adverse consequences of the bad habit. Developing a good habit will keep the mind away from the bad habit. See, “[Habits and Goals](#)” and also “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)”.

8.6 Pattana Dhamma

October 22, 2016

[Pattana Dhamma – Connection to Cause and Effect \(Hethu Phala\)](#)

[What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?](#)

[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)

[Asevana and Annamanna Paccaya](#)

8.6.1 Pattana Dhamma – Connection to Cause and Effect (Hethu Phala)

October 22, 2016; revised October 25, 2016

1. *Pattana Dhamma* is also cited as *Patthana Dhamma* in English. However, the correct word should be *pattana*, since it is pronounced “pattāna”; there is no “th” sound.

- The word “pattāna” comes from “patta” + “āna”. I have previously mentioned that “āna” means “bringing in” as in “ānapāna” in *Ānāpāna bhāvanā*. “Patta” in Pāli or Sinhala means the layer of a tree trunk underneath the outermost layer or bark — *consisting of phloem cells* — which carry food between roots and leaves. (The outer layer or bark is called “*poththa*” in Sinhala).
- So, the word “*pattāna*” here conveys the idea that while the roots (*mūlika hethu*) are critical for the tree’s survival, the “*patta*” also plays an important role for the tree’s growth. In the case of *Pattana Dhamma*, they play an important role of describing the conditions under which *hethu* or causes can bring in effects, as we will see below.
- By the way, the “*patta*” are essential for the tree’s survival, just as the roots of the tree are. One could kill a tree simply by a process called “girdling” where those phloem cells are removed; see the Wikipedia article: “[WebLink: WIKI: Girdling](#)”.
- The Buddha frequently used analogies with the workings of a tree. We also need to remember that “*mūla*” is a root in Pāli or Sinhala, so that “*mūlika hēthu*” means “root causes”. So, the tree’s survival depends on not only its roots, but also its “*patta*” containing those critical phloem cells.
- This is the same as saying *Pattana Dhamma* describing CONDITIONS are as important as ROOT CAUSES, which are *lōbha*, *dōsa*, and, *mōha* (for *akusala kamma*), and *alōbha*, *adōsa*, and *amōha* (for *kusala kamma*).

2. It is also to be noted that “*pattana*” in “*satipattana*” can be interpreted to mean “providing food” or “*patta*” + “*āna*” to cultivate *sati* or mindfulness. Furthermore, “*satipattana*” is pronounced like that too, without “th” sound at the end.

- However, “*satipatthāna*” with a “h” is the common way it is spelled in English. So, I decided to go with that when I wrote the posts on the *Satipatthāna Sutta* in the “Sutta Interpretations” section. The meaning given there is also compatible, regardless of how it is spelled.
- The word “*pattana dhamma*” has not been discussed that much in English. Therefore, it is good to get started the right way. Buddhaghosa did not discuss it because he did not comprehend *paticca samuppāda*, and as a result even many people who follow even Theravāda Buddhism are not familiar with *pattana dhamma*. Ven. Ledi Sayadaw in Burma and Ven. Rerukane Chandawimala in Sri Lanka are clear exceptions. They have discussed *pattana dhamma*; see the references below.
- However, their interpretations of *Tilakkhana* (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) are not correct.

3. In the **workings of living things (including plants) — and in mental processes in particular** — the mechanism of how causes lead to effects is much more complex compared to material phenomena involving inert objects.

- In these cases, many conditions need to be satisfied, in addition to having sufficient causes.

- In many cases, such critical conditions are not satisfied long after the causes were generated, so there is normally a TIME DELAY between causes and effects, i.e., between *kamma* and *kamma vipāka*.
- This is why it is hard for people to see the validity of cause and effect (*hethu phala*) involving living things and especially the mind.
- This is what is explained in *paticca samuppāda*, with the help of *pattana dhamma*.
- Let us discuss some examples to understand the role of conditions or *paccaya*.

4. All necessary causes to bring about a tree are embedded in a seed. A seed is the CAUSE for subsequent appearance of a tree. **Yet, a seed cannot germinate unless suitable conditions are present.** If one keeps a seed in a cool dry place, it will just sit there for even thousands of years without giving rise to a tree.

- However, if one plants the seed in the ground where sunlight is available and provides water and nutrients, it will germinate and grow to be a tree.
- The root condition to bring into existence a tree is embedded in a seed; this is called *annantara paccaya*. But suitable conditions for that seed to germinate are in fertile soil with adequate sunlight and water; this is called *samanantara paccaya*. Therefore, both *annantara* AND *samanantara paccaya* MUST be satisfied to bring a tree to existence; see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)” for details.
- So, AT WHAT TIME the seed will germinate, will depend on at what time the *samanantara* condition (fertile soil) will be satisfied. *Anantara* condition (presence a seed) is not enough.

5. Another important condition of *paccaya* comes into play for the germinated seed to grow into a tree: The *āhāra paccaya* (food condition) must be satisfied. If water, sunlight, and nutrients are not available after the seed is germinated, it cannot grow to be a tree.

- A very important type of *āhāra* is the “food for *viññāṇa*“. When one is having bad thoughts about another person, that *viññāṇa* grows as long as one keeps thinking about that person and how bad he/she is. *Viññāṇa āhāra* are *mano sancetana*.

6. Another example of such a condition or *paccaya* is “*āsevana paccaya*“. *Asevana* means to “associate with”.

- An important example is the association with bad friends. Whether it is a child or an adult, one’s behavior will be influenced by who one associates with; see, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)“.
- I have discussed several such important conditions or *paccaya* in the post, “[Micca Ditthi – Connection to Hethu Phala \(Cause and Effect\)](#)“. Here is that discourse:

[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 6 - Micca Ditthi Connection to Hethu Phala Cause and Effect](#)

There are 24 such conditions in *Pattana Dhamma*. I will discuss them in detail in this subsection on “Pattana Dhamma” in a series of posts.

- This is why mental phenomena are so complex. In many cases, a number of such conditions need to be satisfied for a cause (*hethu*) to lead to a corresponding effect (*phala*).

7. In the same way, the *kammic* energies created by our actions do not disappear. A given action creates a *kamma* seed with energy to bring in its fruits. It is just like a seed waiting for right conditions to germinate and to bring in a tree to existence.

- Those *kamma* seeds or *kamma beeja* are out there waiting for suitable conditions to bring in their effect.
- **Whether they will bring *vipāka*, AND at what strength, AND when, will depend on the conditions or *paccaya*.** This is what is described by *paticca samuppāda* with the help of *pattana dhamma*.

- See, “[What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?](#)”, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)” and “[Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya \(Mind Plane\)](#)” for more details.

8. But there are some strong *kamma* that WILL bring in *vipāka* without exceptions. Those include *anantariya pāpa kamma*. They are so strong that they do not require conditions to be just right. They bring *vipāka* mostly at the dying moment, i.e., death of the physical body, and will not be delayed until the *cuti-patisandhi* moment; so the delay is only until death.

- Some people inherit wealth unexpectedly and some people die of accidents. These are also strong *kamma vipāka*, though as not strong as *anantariya pāpa kamma*.
- But in most cases, conditions or *paccaya* play major roles, sometimes many conditions need to be satisfied for *vipāka* to bear fruit.

9. This knowledge — or rather this understanding of — how *kamma* and *kamma vipāka* work — is called *kammassagatha sammā diṭṭhi*, and is a REQUIREMENT to attain **mundane sammā samādhi**. When one fully understands this, it will be easier to see that rebirth process has a logical foundation.

- This is because one can now clearly see that most of *kamma* or one’s actions are going to have corresponding *vipāka* or results when suitable CONDITIONS appear.
- So, if one does actions suitable to be born in the *apāyas*, one COULD BE born in the *apāyas*, until one REMOVES the ability to for such CONDITIONS to appear.
- When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, the conditions suitable for a birth in the *apāyas* will never be realized. This requires another step BEYOND *kammassagatha sammā diṭṭhi*, which is the comprehension of *Tilakkhana*.
- Therefore, getting to the *Sotāpanna* stage is a two-step process: first to get to *kammassagatha sammā diṭṭhi* and then the comprehension of *Tilakkhana*.
- This is discussed in detail in the *desanā* in #6 above.

10. We see people doing immoral things without them being subjected to corresponding punishments, but that does not mean they are getting away with it. Those actions can bring their fruits in future lives if they are not realized in this life.

- There are two ways to overcome *kamma vipāka*. The first is: those *kamma* seeds will lose their energy with time; they can last at most 91 aeons. They are like regular seeds, which lose their power over time.
- The other way is to attain all four stages of *Nibbāna* and remove the possibility of making conditions for ANY *kamma* seed to germinate.

11. These conditions or *paccaya*, play a critical role in *paticca samuppāda*. When we say “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*“, it means, “we do *saṅkhāra* with ignorance when necessary CONDITIONS are present”.

- For example, we do not do immoral acts or *apunnabhi saṅkhāra* all the time. When we are attracted to, or repulsed by something that we see (this is an example of *arammana paccaya*), we may generate craving or dislike, and then it can lead to an immoral actions or *apunnabhi saṅkhāra*; see, “[What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?](#)”.
- This is the reason why *kamma* itself is not deterministic. Just because one has *avijjā* does not mean one will necessarily do an immoral thing, generating (*apunnabhi*) *saṅkhāra*. If we cultivate *Satipaṭṭhāna*, even if we get the urge to do something immoral, we can contemplate on the bad consequences and stop that action, speech, or thoughts.
- When one keeps doing *Satipaṭṭhāna* — and keep avoiding immoral acts — one’s *gathi* will change for the better, **and then even the automatic urge to do something immoral will gradually fade**. In other words, one’s *avijjā* will reduce. This is why *Satipaṭṭhāna* is so important.

References

1. *The Manuals of Dhamma* by Ven. Ledi Syadaw (1999), pp. 31-57.

2. *Abhidharma Margaya* (in Sinhala) by Ven. Rerukane Chandawimala (2010), pp. 247-278.

Next in the series, “[What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?](#)”, ..

8.6.2 What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?

Revised April 27, 2016

Before we start discussing the various forms of *paticca samuppāda* (let us abbreviate it as PS), it is important to be clear about what is meant by “*paccaya*” (pronounced “pachchayā”). This is fully explained in *Pattāna Dhamma*, and we will introduce the concept here.

1. The PS cycle starts as: “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra, saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa, viññāṇa paccaya nama rūpa, nama rūpa paccaya salāyatana,....*”.

- And since PS describes the “cause and effect” in Buddha Dhamma, most people think “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*” means “*avijjā* causes *saṅkhāra*” or “ignorance causes one to acts that generate bad *kamma*”.
- Even an ordinary person has *avijjā*, he/she will not ALWAYS act accordingly; most of the time, people act appropriately or morally. However, as long as *avijjā* is there, it is LIKELY that at times one WILL act with *avijjā* and do inappropriate or immoral things.
- Similarly, many people think that “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*” means “*saṅkhāra* causes *viññāṇa*” or “bad *kamma* lead to corresponding consciousness”, and so on down the whole PS cycle.

2. It will clarify a lot of things down the line if one understood that PS does not refer to a “direct link”: Just because we have done many bad *kamma* (*saṅkhāra*) DOES NOT mean they ALL lead to *kamma vipāka* causing either a rebirth *viññāṇa* or a “*pavutti viññāṇa*” during a lifetime.

- This was pointed out in item #5 in the previous post “[Paticca Samuppāda – Overview](#)”. But in case the point was missed, I wanted to emphasize the point in this post.
- Any effect **must have** a cause. But there can be possible causes without leading to any effects. Otherwise, *Nibbāna* would not be possible. This needs some contemplation, and I will give some examples below.

3. The easiest way is to consider the following example: The causes for bringing up a new tree are embedded in a seed. But just because a seed is there, a tree is not going to appear. If the seed is kept in a cool, dry place, one could keep it that way for a long time. Or one could burn or crush the seed, and it will not bring up a tree.

- In order for causes to bring about corresponding effects, SUIABLE CONDITIONS must be present. That is what *paccaya* means.
- When such suitable conditions are present, causes WILL bring about corresponding effects. Thus when some effect is brought about, it is called “*paccuppanna*”, i.e., born (“*uppanna*”) via suitable conditions (“*paccaya*”); of course if the root causes must be there to begin with).
- In the above example, if one plants that seed (cause) in the ground and provides water, nutrients, and sun light (suitable conditions), then the seed could germinate and grow to a tree (effect or the result).

4. When causes are there, corresponding effects (results) are LIKELY if suitable conditions for the effects to take place. This is why *kamma* is not deterministic; see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”.

- However, the key point in PS is that the effect – IF AND WHEN IT HAPPENS – is in accordance with the cause, and also the cause was one’s own choosing: “*pati ichcha*” leading to “*sama uppāda*” or stated in a simple way: “when one gets attached, that leads to a new birth of

similar characteristics”. **If and when the causes bring forth the consequences, they will be of the corresponding nature.**

5. It is not necessary to get into further details unless one is interested in “digging deeper”, but there are 24 “*paccaya*” or “conditions” that can actually cause the effect to materialize.

- Let us briefly discuss three such *paccaya*, “*hetu paccaya*”, “*annantara samanantara paccaya*”, and “*annamanna paccaya*” to see what happens.

6. Nothing happens without a root cause or a *hetu* (pronounced “*hāthu*”; see the pronunciation key in “[Pāli Glossary \(A-K\)](#) and [Pāli Glossary \(L-Z\)](#)”).

- For example, a bomb causes damage because of the explosives in it; but someone has to trigger it to go off. If the bomb sits somewhere for a long time, its explosives may degrade and then the “cause” may disappear; most *kamma* seeds are like that too.
- Thus, without the root cause there will not be an explosion. **This is “*hetu paccaya*”.**

7. My favorite example of the “*annantara samanantara paccaya*” is the germination of a seed that I discussed above in #3. Just because there is an apple seed, it will not cause an apple tree to appear.

- An apple seed can be kept for many years without germinating in a cool, dry place; but if it is planted in the ground with water and sunlight present, it will germinate and give rise to an apple tree; see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)” for details.
- Of course, just like with the bomb, if the apple seed sits there for too long it may lose its potency and may not yield an apple tree at all; thus the *hetu paccaya* must always be satisfied.

8. Third one, “*Annamanna paccaya*”, means dependent on each other: For example, *Viññāṇa* and *namarūpa* depend on each other:

- Normally it is stated that “*viññāṇa paccaya nama rūpa*” or ‘depending on the *viññāṇa*, *nama rūpa* arise’. For example, *viññāṇa* of the *cuti citta* at the moment of death causes a matching *nama rūpa* to rise in the next birth: a hateful thought could lead to birth in the *niraya* or the animal realm.
- However, *viññāṇa* in turn depends on the type of *nama rūpa*: with the *nama rūpa* of an animal, it is not possible to get into *jhāna*. Only certain types of *nama rūpa* can “support” certain types of *viññāṇa*.
- Depending on the situations one or more of 24 *paccaya* (or conditions) can simultaneously come into play. We will discuss this in future posts.

9. I just wanted to give a brief introduction to the complex “*Pattāna Dhamma*” which describes 24 such “*paccaya*” involved in *paticca samuppāda*. In other words, the relationship between cause(s) and effect(s) can be complex. We can only discern the major relationships. Only a Buddha can sort out all such complexities.

- But there is no need to analyze everything in great detail in order to understand the message of the Buddha. One can become a Sotāpanna just by comprehending the *Tilakkhana*: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

10. So why am I also providing information on these complex topics? It is for three reasons:

- One is that it helps build *saddhā* (faith) in Buddha Dhamma, because anyone who takes time to examine these concepts can see that it provides a COMPLETE explanation for everything that we experience and more.
- Secondly, it is intellectually satisfying to see how all pieces nicely fit into the “big picture”: I hope I have been able to give the sense of joy that I have experienced in “seeing how these pieces fall into place”.
- Also, this “self-consistency” is critical in the process of sorting out which version of Buddha Dhamma is the correct one. As the Buddha himself pointed out, any version that is not self-

consistent should be discarded; see, "[Saddharma Pundarika Sutra \(Lotus Sutra\) – A Focused Analysis](#)".

Next in the series, "[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)", ..

8.6.3 Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya

1. These are two important "*paccaya*" or relations in Buddha Dhamma. Anything in this world happens due to a reason (*hetu*, pronounced "héthu"). But just because there is a *hetu* (cause), the appropriate result (or the effect) may not occur until suitable conditions are realized.

2. This is the reason why *kamma* is not deterministic. In the post, "[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)", I stated this fact and here we will see the reason for it.

- When we commit a good or a bad deed, the *kammic* potential or energy associated with that deed is deposited in a *kamma beeja* or a *kamma* seed. We will eventually get to the question of "where it is stored", but we just need to keep in mind that a *kamma* seed is not a physical seed, but is an energy or a potential. This concept is described in the post, "[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)".
- The germination of a *kamma* seed, though, has some similarities to the germination of a physical seed, for example, an apple seed. The apple seed has the potential to bring about an apple tree, but the seed will not germinate until suitable conditions for germination are realized: the seed needs to be in soil, and water and sunlight are also needed to be provided for germination to take place.
- In the same way, *kamma vipāka* (result of a past *kamma*) can come to fruition only when right conditions for the corresponding *kamma* seed to germinate are realized.

3. Let us look at the *annantara* and *samanantara* relations as discussed in the *Patthāna* Dhamma (book on "Conditional Relations" in Abhidhamma):

- "*An*" means food or in this case the *kamma* seed; "*antara*" means in storage, waiting to bear fruit.
- Thus, *annantara* means basically a *kamma* seed waiting to be germinated.
- "*Sama*" means equal or similar. Thus *samanantara* ("*sama*" + "*annantara*") means "matching conditions" with the *annantara*.
- Therefore, *annantara* and *samanantara* go together. There must be an *annantara* (basically a cause or an stored energy in a seed) for a *samanantara* to be effective. On the other hand, if *samanantara* (right conditions for that cause to take effect or for the seed to germinate) is not there, a *kamma* seed at *annantara* cannot bear fruit.
- By the way, *ānantara* (as in *ānantariya kamma*) means something entirely different; see, "[Ānantariya Kamma – Connection to Gandhabba](#)".

4. Here is one example the Buddha gave: If one prepares a plot by preparing the soil, providing water, and if sunlight is also available, the *samanantara* for a seed to germinate is there. However, unless one starts off with an apple seed (*annantara* condition not met), an apple tree will not grow.

- On the other hand, if one keeps the apple seed in a cool, dry place, it will not germinate, i.e., the *samanantara* condition is not met
- When both *annantara* and *samanantara* conditions are met, i.e., when one plants an apple seed in a suitable plot, it will germinate and become an apple tree.
- However, when an apple seed is planted a mango tree will not result from that but only an apple tree: thus *samanantara* will give rise to an effect that matches the "seed" that was in *annantara*.

5. More examples can be given these days that are related to modern technology. If a radio station is broadcasting a radio program, that can be taken as the *annantara*: the seed energy is available anywhere within a certain range. But one cannot listen to the program without a radio; even if someone has a radio, one cannot listen to the program unless the radio is "tuned" to the correct

frequency. When those conditions are met, one could hear the program even many miles away. The delay between the broadcast and reception is a very short time.

- *Kamma vipāka* can be thought of bringing fruit via “instant communication” when the conditions become right. All kammic potentials are in “instant contact” with us via a concept similar to that described in quantum entanglement: see, “[Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected](#)”. **Thus all potential kamma seeds are waiting in *annantara* and can bring about instant results when right conditions (*samanantara*) appear.**

6. **By being mindful, we can avoid many past bad *kamma* seeds from coming to fruition.** We just make sure that *samanantara* conditions are not present. If one goes out at night in a bad neighborhood that is providing fertile ground for a past bad *kamma* seed to germinate and the *kamma vipāka* to take place.

- In the same way, we can force good *kamma* seeds to germinate by providing the right conditions. For example, even if we have enough merits (a good *kamma* seeds) that could make us pass a test or get a job, unless we make right conditions (i.e., prepare in advance), we may not get the results.
- But sometimes one gets an unexpected promotion or get better results than anticipated in a test if the *kamma* seeds are strong.

7. From our past innumerable lives we have accumulated innumerable *kamma* seeds both good and bad. Some of the stronger ones bear fruit no matter what we do, especially the *anantariya kamma vipāka*.

- But in general, by being mindful (i.e., by NOT providing appropriate conditions), we can avoid many bad *kamma vipāka*; by making right preparations (i.e., by optimizing *samanantara* conditions), we can exploit those good *kamma* seeds.
- A particularly important case is the bringing up a child. The parents and teachers have a huge responsibility for providing right conditions for that young mind to develop. In particular, association with bad friends can direct a young life in the wrong direction; in the same way, association with good friends, a nurturing environment, can bring about a productive, responsible adult.

8. One important cross-connection is matching “*gathi*” with similar “*gathi*” that we have discussed before; see, “[Habits and Goals](#)”, and “[Samsaric Habits and Āsavas](#)”.

- For example, when a *gandhabba* is waiting for a suitable womb, the *annantara-samanantara paccaya* come into play. A *gandhabba*, who in the previous lives had developed a certain habit, say heavy drinking, is attracted to a womb of a woman with similar habits, possibly an alcoholic or a drug user. The concept of a *gandhabba* is described in, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)”, and “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)”.
- Similarly, a *gandhabba*, who in previous lives led moral lives, is bound to be attracted to a womb of the mother in a moral family. Just like in the above case, here also the *samanantara* for the *gandhabba* (where it can establish itself) is an environment that matches its own “*gathi*”.
- However, no matter how one is born, one can still change one’s own destiny by making conditions for other good *kamma vipāka* to come to fruition and also by making sure not to make conditions for bad *kamma vipāka* to come to fruition.

In other posts we will discuss further applications of *annantara-samanantara* relations. One important application is in, “[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\)- How does it Happen?](#)”.

Next, “[Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra](#)”,

8.6.4 **Asevana and Annamanna Paccaya**

November 20, 2016

1. As mentioned in the “[Pattana Dhamma – Connection to Cause and Effect \(Hethu Phala\)](#)“, there are 24 *paccaya* or conditions that contribute to various steps in the *Paticca Samuppāda* (PS) cycles.

- As we have discussed in the post “[What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda?](#)” and in the above mentioned post, a given step in a PS cycle **cannot proceed** until one or more conditions are satisfied. **And we have control over most of these conditions.** Therein lies the value of *Pattana Dhamma*; **we can see how to stop *akusala-mūla* PS cycles from proceeding, and to maintain *kusala-mūla* PS cycles.**
- In this post we will discuss two of those 24 *paccaya* or conditions. They are somewhat related to each other and thus are suitable to be discussed together.

2. *Āsevana paccaya* — which can be loosely translated as the “condition of association” — is an important condition that fuels various steps in PS at different times.

- I see that in most cases, *āsevana paccaya* has been translated as “condition of repetition”. Even though repetition is relevant, repetition comes via close associations, so association is primary.
- The word “*āsevana*” comes from “*ā*” and “*sevana*” or “came to the shade”; when one is staying close to a tree in the hot sun, one is “hanging around” the tree and is benefited from its cool shade.
- Of course, when one is associating bad friends, one can be influenced in the wrong direction too, as we will see below. Therefore, *āsevana paccaya* comes into play in both *kusala-mūla* and *akusala-mūla* PS.
- When one likes the experience, one tends to keep that association. Sometimes that eventually leads to bad consequences, but because of the ignorance of such bad outcomes, one still tends to keep bad associations.

3. An important role of *āsevana paccaya* is played in the “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*” step in PS, whether it is *kusala-mūla* PS or *akusala-mūla* PS.

- For example, a teenager who is (unknowingly) cultivating a *viññāṇa* for drinking is heavily influenced by the association with bad friends. He likes to “hang out” with such bad friends and tends to generate a lot of *sankalapanā* or *vacī saṅkhāra* (conscious thinking about how he/she will be having a good time with those friends in parties with lot of alcohol). The *namarupa* generated in his mind are such “party scenes”, visualizing those friends as well as various favorite drinks.
- On the other hand, when one is on the right path, one is constantly thinking about Dhamma Concepts, having Dhamma discussions with good friends, and visualizing such gatherings. Or one could be visualizing some meritorious deeds, like giving or helping out at an orphanage; these are good *namarupa* generated with such a good *viññāṇa*.
- These *namarupa* are different from the *namarupa* that descends to a womb at the *okkanti* moment, i.e., when a *gandhabba* enters a womb. We will discuss that later. **So, *namarupa* come in two main categories.**

4. *Āsevana paccaya* can play a role under different types of situations. Let us consider two such examples.

- One such situation is the teenager mentioned above, who cultivates bad *namarupa* by associating with bad friends. The more he/she associates with such bad friends, the more he/she will be generating bad *namarupa* of party scenes with lot of alcohol and/or drugs. Not only that, there will be other associated *namarupa*: He/she will be constantly visualizing favorite friends, gathering places, appropriate music, etc. too.
- In such an environment, it is also easy to cultivate other types of “bad *namarupa*” such as gambling, illicit sex, stealing (to sustain those activities), violence and even killings.

- Such *namarupa* and more could be cultivated by the teenager over time.
5. On the other hand, when one is on either mundane or *lokottara* Eightfold Path, one will be cultivating “good *viññāṇa*” and one tends to visualize exactly opposite types *namarupa*.
- One could be planning a Dhamma discussion and could be thinking and visualizing who will be there and what kind of topics will be discussed. One could be organizing a charity event and making arrangements.
 - One could be planning to attend a meditation retreat and visualizing what kind of activities one could be engaging in. One could be even thinking about and trying to visualize the suffering endured by poor children in a situation one is familiar with and generating compassion-filled thoughts and *namarupa*.
6. In either case, “*namarupa paccaya salāyatana*” step will then point one’s all six *āyatana* or *salāyatana* (five physical senses and the mind) towards such thoughts, visuals, and actions.
- Then those associations will become even stronger. When one gets totally absorbed in relevant activities, when one’s mind is occupied with such thoughts, and when one is constantly visualizing related activities, people, and objects, those *namarupa* will “grow” in one’s mind. Those *namarupa* will be closely associated with one’s *gathi*.
 - This is also discussed in the post: “[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)”.
7. Another important application of the *asevana paccaya* occurs in a *citta vithi* itself. When we are generating *sankalpana* (or *sankappa*), we are generating an enormous number of *citta vithi* in a short time. Each *citta vithi* will make the next *citta vithi* stronger (actually make the *javana citta* in the subsequent *citta vithi* stronger) by association.
- The best example is one we have talked about several times in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section. When we start thinking about an enemy, we start visualizing more and more bad situations that we encountered with that person; we tend to pull out all “past associations” from memory, as well as conjure up “many possible future scenarios” in our minds.
 - All these “bad *sankalpana*” or “conscious bad thoughts” will strengthen the PS steps.
 - Our minds can run wild if not controlled with *Satipaṭṭhāna* or *Ānāpāna*; see, “[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)”.
8. Even in a given *citta vithi*, each *javana citta* is strengthened by the previous *javana citta*, via *asevana paccaya*. this happens in the time scale of billionth of a second and is driven by our *gathi*.
- The first *javana citta* is weak. But the second *javana citta* gets fuel from the first one, and is inevitably generating strength via association. One meaning of the name *javana* is “to run with”. The series of 7 *javanas* “run with the object in mind”, initially getting stronger until the fifth *javana*. Then the fuel runs out and the sixth and seventh *javana* become weaker and weaker.
 - *Kamma* generated by the first *javana citta* can only bring *vipāka* in this life. But *kamma* done by the second through the sixth *javana citta* (which get stronger by association), are potent enough to bring *kamma vipāka* in many future lives. When the *javana* get weaker, the seventh *javana* can bring *vipāka* only in the next life, and will become null if it did not bring *vipāka* in the next life.
 - It is not necessary to learn the complexities of *citta vithi*, but it is good to have some idea.
9. The association then moves to the next *citta vithi*. Thus the subsequent *citta vithi* (and thus the *javana citta* in that *citta vithi*) will be stronger. And thus it propagates and this is why one can get “really worked up” even thinking about a hated person.
- This is why *Satipaṭṭhāna* (and being mindful of bad thoughts) is so important. The start of such a hateful mindset is AUTOMATIC (and is due to our *gathi*) as discussed in the “[Living](#)

[Dhamma](#)” section. But we have the ability to stop those initial thoughts BEFORE they get strong and become out of control.

- This can be compared to a seed giving rise to a mighty tree, unless one destroys it when it is just a little bud. When a seed germinates and becomes visible as a little plant, it can be easily broken. But if one waits and allows it to grow, it COULD grow to be a strong tree that is hard to take down.

10. As we can see, *pattana dhamma* can go to very fine details. This is why *paticca samuppāda* has been compared to an ocean. It is vast, and can explain the arising of ANY *SANKATA* (whether live or inert) in this world.

- However, if we start digging deeper, that could become a waste of time since there is no ending as to how much finer detail one wants to examine.
- Still, it is good to see the depth of Buddha Dhamma. It gives one confidence in following the Path. Unshakable faith comes by realizing that Buddha Dhamma describes our world as it is.

11. Now let us briefly discuss the *annamanna paccaya*, usually translated as “mutuality condition”. This is not a bad translation, but it could be also translated as “forward and backward condition”.

- Many of the steps in the PS cycle, go backward as well as forward. For example, the step we have discussed, “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*” runs backwards (in the same PS cycle) too.
- Therefore, while *namarupa* are generated AND get stronger by a given *viññāṇa*, the *viññāṇa* itself gets stronger by the cultivation of *namarupa*, i.e., “*namarupa paccaya viññāṇa*” step runs simultaneously too. This is the “mutual strengthening”.
- In the example of the teenager, cultivation of those bad *namarupa* (visuals of party scenes, bad friends etc) leads to the strengthening of that bad *viññāṇa* (desire to drink or take drugs), even though the bad *viññāṇa* first led to corresponding *namarupa*.

12. The *annamanna paccaya* — just like the *asevana paccaya* — is highly effective in the first several steps in PS. While “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*” step initiates bad actions (or *saṅkhāra*), the continued actions in the same direction then lead to strengthening *avijjā* (or ignorance of the consequences of such actions), i.e., “*saṅkhāra paccaya avijjā*”.

- This is why it is very important to stop such conscious *saṅkhāra* (especially *sankalapanā* or the first part of *vacī saṅkhāra*), when one realizes that one is getting into the wrong track. Otherwise, one’s *avijjā* will grow and one’s bad *gathi* will only grow.
- Such immoral *saṅkhāra* — in the form of *vacī saṅkhāra* — appear to provide us with a sense of satisfaction at that time. For example, when one gets “really worked up” thinking about a bad deed done by an enemy, it gives one pleasure to say bad things about that person to others, or even retaliate directly to that person.
- However, such actions actually lead to a “heat” or “*thāpa*” in us in the longer term. Long after that “initial satisfaction” of putting down that person, one will be “burning inside” for long times, even if one does not realize that. One will be prone to frequent outbursts even with other people.
- Removal of this *thāpa* or “fire” in us is what is meant by the phrase “*athāpi sampajano*” in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. That will help reduce our tendency to get “worked up” at the slightest provocation, i.e., to change our *gathi* in the right direction.
- This is the first type of suffering that many of us don’t even realize; see, “[Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities](#)” and other posts in “[Living Dhamma](#)”.

IX Comments/Reviews

○ Subsection: Discussion of Comments

- What is Intention in Kamma?
- Would Nibbāna be Possible if Impermanence is the Cause of Suffering?
- Logical Proof that Impermanence is Incorrect Translation of Anicca
- “Self” and “no-self”: A Simple Analysis
- Craving for Pornography – How to Reduce the Tendency

○ Subsection: Book Reviews

- ““Why Does the World Exist?” by Jim Holt”
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9.1 Discussion of Comments

[What is Intention in Kamma?](#)

[Would Nibbāna be Possible if Impermanence is the Cause of Suffering?](#)

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[“Self” and “no-self”: A Simple Analysis](#)

[Craving for Pornography – How to Reduce the Tendency](#)

9.1.1 What is Intention in Kamma?

This is an old post; revised February 21, 2018

1. Here is an email that I received in early September, 2015 (I am just showing the relevant part of the email):

“You mention several times that one should be very careful not to offend anyone as one could insult a *Sotāpanna* and gather a big amount of bad *Kamma*. *Kamma* it is created based on ones mind. Act and speak with a pure mind and no bad *Kamma* will arise. Act and speak with an evil mind and bad *Kamma* will arise.

Offending a *Sotāpanna* is no more an evil act than offending an ant if your mind state is the same, thus if one does not know that a human being is enlightened it will not result in a different *Kamma*.

What makes offending an enlightened being so much worse is the fact that it requires a very perverted mind state to act evil towards some like that. I like to compare it with being angry at kittens : –)

I had the feeling that you might have a misunderstanding regarding this topic. **It sounded as if you can ‘accidentally’ gather bad *Kamma***, which is not correct in my opinion”.

- In the above comment, emphasize in bold is mine to indicate each key point. I think what is meant by that first statement is that having adverse thoughts is the bad thing and it does not matter to whom it was directed.
- The second point is that if one doesn’t know the status of the person (or being) it was directed to, then one must not be responsible for the *kamma*.

2. I am sure many others had similar thoughts on this or somewhat related issues, so I wanted to share the reply with everyone. By the way, we have a new discussion forum (since December 2017) to discuss such questions; see, “[WebLink: Forum](#)”.

- **Figuring out how *kamma* works (with certainty) can be done by only a Buddha.** This is one of those things that are discernible only to a Buddha. But as I have pointed out before, we can figure out some general trends that are compatible with the laws that the Buddha has clearly stated; see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)”. Here we analyze in a bit more depth.

3. **There are two key factors to be remembered in evaluating how to assess a *kamma vipaka*:**

1. **Which of the *dasa akusala* is the intention?** For example, it could be taking a life, stealing, or harsh speech. Who is affected is not involved in this step. That is the “*cetana*” in “*cetana ham bhikkhave kamman vadami*”, is just which *dasa akusala* is in one’s mind; that is all.
2. Then the **strength of the *kamma vipaka* is based on the “level of consciousness” or “qualities” of the living beings affected** by that *kamma*. For example, killing a human will bring stronger *kamma vipaka* than killing an animal.
 - That is the clearest way to analyze any given situation.

4. For example, in the recent second *desana* on *Tilakkhana*, I discussed the case of a person killing a bunch of people with a bomb; see Discourse 2 in “[Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses](#)”.

- His intention (*cetana*) was to kill. Thus the *dasa akusala* involved is “*panatipata*”, that of taking a life.
- Now to the second step. He may not even know who was killed. By some coincidence if a parent of the killer was killed by the bomb, then he would have done an *anantariya papa kamma*. If an *Arahant* was killed, the same. If a *Sotapanna* was killed, then it would not be a *anantariya kamma*, but still equivalent to killing thousands of normal humans.
- So, it is important to understand that “*cetana*” is which of *dasa sakusala* are in one’s mind when a *kamma* is committed. It could be more than one. In the case of the bomber, there is *micca ditthi*, and likely greed also, in addition to “*panatipata*”.
- One can analyze various situations with the above two steps.

5. We know that there are five *anantariya kamma*, which are so grave that one will be subjected to their *vipāka* in the very next life in the *niraya* (lowest realm): Killing one’s mother, Killing one’s father, Killing an *Arahant*, and injuring a Buddha (it is not possible for anyone to take the life of a Buddha), and causing schism in the *Sangha* (which really means trying to propagate a wrong version of the Buddha Dhamma).

- Since killing a normal human is not an *anantariya kamma*, it is clear that the “strength of the *kamma*” depends on who is being killed.
- *Kamma vipāka* for committing any other offense, is similar. Hurting an *Arahant* would be million -fold grave compared to hurting a normal human. Thus, logically, hurting an *Anāgāmī*, a *Sakadāgāmī*, a *Sotāpanna* would have corresponding levels of consequences.
- The “value of a life” depends on the “mental status” of that lifeform. Any life is not the same. This is why it is not possible to compare the life of an animal with that of a human; even among animals there are huge variations, and we can easily see that a gorilla or a dog is “more sentient” than a worm.
- However, we must keep in mind that we all had been born a lowly worm; so even though we need to keep in mind that there is a variation, we should never take the life of ANY sentient being intentionally (unnecessarily).

6. Regarding the issue of “how would one know” the status of the living being who is affected by one’s actions, the “nature” would know.

- This point of “we are all inter-connected” is now proven by quantum mechanics: “[Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected](#)”.
- This is a key factor in understanding *kamma/vipāka*, and is my next project. I believe that quantum mechanics can show this at an even deeper level.

7. Let us consider some prominent examples from the *Tipitaka*.

- It is clearly stated that the reason ascetic Siddhartha had to strive for 6 years and undergo such hardships to attain the Buddhahood is that he had said some insulting things regarding the Buddha Kassapa in a previous life. At that time, Siddhartha was a wealthy person by the name Jotipala, and had a friend called Gatikara who listened to *desanas* from Buddha Kassapa and became an *Anāgāmī*. Gatikara tried to persuade Jotipala to go and listen to Buddha Kassapa, but Jotipala kept refusing, saying “I do not want to go and listen to the bald-headed monk”.
- That was the *kamma* that forced ascetic Siddhartha to undergo such hardships before attaining the Buddhahood. This is a very clear example that one DOES NOT NEED TO KNOW that one is insulting a Buddha to accumulate the corresponding *kamma vipāka*.
- In fact, there are 11 more such *kamma vipāka* that brought about adverse effects to the Buddha Gotama even after attaining the Buddhahood. Three of those were for bad *kamma* committed against **Pacceka Buddhas**. It is especially not possible to recognize a **Pacceka Buddha** as such, because they appear during times when a **Sammā Sambuddha** (like Buddha Gotama) is not present, and they cannot teach Dhamma to others.

- Therefore, NOT KNOWING the status of the person (or the being) against whom the wrong act was done DOES NOT come into play. These are not rules made up by the Buddha; Buddha himself was not immune from those laws. *Kammic* laws are natural laws, just like laws of gravity; a Buddha just discovers them.

8. So, I hope the questions of the reader were addressed in the above. Another important thing to realize is that any *akusala kamma* involves **just one or more of the ten defilements (*dasa akusala*)**. **That is all**. And the severity of the *kamma vipāka* depends on the “status of the victim” and not knowing that status is not an excuse. We will discuss this in a bit more detail below.

9. To do that, let us look at the “intention” part a bit more carefully. First let us see the key factors involved in committing an *akusala kamma*.

- Any *akusala kamma* results from INTENDING TO DO one or more of the *dasa akusala*.
- A given *akusala kamma* has several stages (each has a different number of steps). For example, in the case of taking a life, the following are the four steps: there must be a living being, one must know that it is alive and one must have the intention to kill that being, one plans and carries out the necessary actions to kill, and finally the living being ends up dead. If all necessary steps are completed, then it is called a ***kamma patha***.
- As the number of completed steps keep increasing, the severity of the *vipāka* will increase; when all are complete and a *kamma patha* is done, the *kamma vipāka* will be strongest possible.

10. Let us take as example the case of killing a human being. Now we have to combine the two effects in #3 and #4 above in order to assess the strength of the *kamma vipāka*.

- The human being in question could be a normal human or a Noble person, say an *Arahant*. **There is no way for the killer to know whether the victim is an *Arahant***. Thus the resulting *kamma vipāka* could be quite different depending on the “status of the victim” and the killer may even not know the severity of the crime committed.
- Now, suppose the killer went through the first four steps, but the victim survived. Now the killer will not face an *anantariya kamma* because he/she merely injured an *Arahant* even though the intention was to kill. Still, the strength of the *kamma vipāka* will be much higher compared to injuring a normal human.
- *Kamma vipāka* are based on natural laws. Their enforcement is automatic. Just like gravity operates regardless of the person involved, so do *kamma vipāka*.

11. **Therefore, the above analysis can be used in any given case to get an idea of the strength of the *kamma vipāka* for a given offense.** To summarize:

- The “intention” is one (or more) of the *dasa akusala*.
- The weight of *kamma* depends on the “mental status” of the victim, REGARDLESS of whether the person committing the *kamma* knew about that “mental status”.
- The weight of the *kamma* also depends on how many of the necessary steps were actually completed. **Just having an intention is not enough to yield the full impact.**

12. To further clarify the mechanisms, let us consider another example. Suppose person X detects a person moving around in X’s house at night. Thinking it is an intruder, and INTENDING TO KILL the intruder, X shoots and kills ” the intruder”. And then X finds out that it is X’s own father.

- The intention was to kill (one of the *dasa akusala*), and the victim turned out to be X’s own father. Thus even though X did not intend to kill his father, X has now acquired an *anantariya kamma*.

13. In another twist, let us say that X was on the roof of his house repairing it, and he threw something heavy from the roof without realizing that his father was right below the roof on the ground. And the father got hit and was killed.

- **Here, there was no intention of killing a living being.** Thus even though the action resulted in the father’s death, not even an *akusala kamma* was committed let alone an *anantariya kamma*.

14. This is why we have to be careful in analyzing some cases.

- When we encounter someone anywhere, just by looking at him/her, we cannot say whether he/she is a Noble person or not.
- But we can definitely see the difference between an animal and a human being. A human life has much more worth than any animal life; it is extremely difficult to get a “human *bhava*”.
- Even among the animals, we can see that some animals are “more sentient” than others, even though there are no clear guidelines.
- However, one definitely does not need to worry about “accidental killings” of insects, for example, who may get crushed under one’s feet as one walks around.

15. Going back to another statement in the comment of the reader: “..What makes offending an enlightened being so much worse is the fact that it requires a very perverted mind state to act evil towards someone like that”.

- The problem is that most times we do not know whether a given person is a *Sotāpanna* or not. **And most people may not have even heard “who a *Sotāpanna* is”.**
- Yet, the consequences will be the same whether one knew or not.

16. Please let me know if anyone has further questions related to this issue, or any other relevant specific case that is still not resolved. I can revise the post to add more details or try to address any other “tricky cases” if needed. **In the following I am going to discuss the “intention” issue in a bit more depth for the benefit of those who like to dig deeper.**

- The Buddha said, “*cetana ham Bhikkave kamman vadami*”. Thus, what determines the type of *kamma* is the *cetana*. So, we need to look at the *cetana cetasika* carefully.
- *Cetana* is translated sometimes as “intention” and other times as “volition”. It is hard to distinguish the difference between the two; volition seems to incorporate “more personal attributes” and thus may be better. **But neither is really a correct translation for *cetana*.**
- As I point out below, *cetana* is not “intention” in the sense that it is not the *cetana cetasika* that determines the nature of a *citta*. ***Cetana* combines the cumulative effect of many *cetasika* that come into play.** This is why sometimes it is best to keep the Pāli terms and understand their meanings.

17. I have introduced *cetasika* in “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)”, and have discussed some aspects of them in the “[Citta and Cetasika](#)” section.

- Thus *cetana*, which is one of the seven universal *cetasika*, is in each and every *citta*, even though we do not “intend to do something” with all *citta*. As briefly pointed in “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)”, *cetana* is the *cetasika* that “puts together the relevant *cetasika* into a given *citta*”. This is also discussed in “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāna \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)”.
- **The “intention” is one of the *dasa akusala* in the case of an *akusala kamma*. That intention arises BECAUSE OF one’s *gathi* with certain set of *cetasika* being dominant.**
- For *akusala kamma*, *mōha* (ignorance) and three other *cetasika*, *Ahiraika* (shamelessness), *Anottapa* (fearlessness in wrong), and *uddhacca* (restlessness or agitation) are always there, because they are the “four universals” for any *akusala citta*.
- But the presence of other “*akusala cetasika*” like *lōbha*, *diṭṭhi*, *vicikicca*, etc depends on the situation and the person committing the act; see, “[Cetasika – Connection to Gathi](#)”. **For example, one may lie about something because of greed (*lōbha*); another person may tell the same lie because of hate (*dōsa*); the consequences are worse for the latter.**
- Intention is to commit one (or more) of the *dasa akusala*. Thus *cetana* is not “intention” per se; it is deeper. It also depends on how that determination came about. When the Buddha said, “*cetana ham Bhikkave kamman vadami*”, that is what he meant: **How that particular intention came about depends on the set of relevant bad *cetasika*.**

- For *kusala kamma* it works the same way. Here the “intention” is to commit one or more *kusala kamma*, and here a set of moral (or *sobhana*) *cetasika* come into play.

18. Thus we can keep digging deeper to get a more deeper understanding. But please do not get discouraged if you do not understand all the details. It takes time, as I know by experience.

- The more one thinks about a concept, one realizes that there could be multiple ways to look at it. That does not lead to confusion, but to more clarity. This is the power of pure Dhamma.
- There are many things to contemplate on this issue, even without getting into *Abhidhamma*. This is what real “*bhāvanā*” is, especially leading to the *Sotāpanna* stage.

This issue is being discussed at the discussion forum at, “[WebLink: Adding Kamma vs. Receiving Vipaka](#)” and “[WebLink: Clarification of definition – “Anantariya”](#)”.

9.1.2 Would Nibbana be Possible if Impermanence is the Cause of Suffering?

1. I recently received a very insightful email from Mr. Lance Potter. Before getting to his email, let me provide some background (Of course I would give the name of the commenter only with his/her consent).

- He was commenting about the post, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”. In that post, I discussed briefly a phrase from the *Ajhattanica Sutta*:

“*yadaniccā tan dukkham, tan dukkham tadanatta*”

- This phrase is translated in most current Theravāda literature (including the Sinhala translation of the *Tipitaka*; see, *Samyutta Nikāya* – 3, p. 3 of the Pāli/Sinhala *Tipitaka*) as:

“if something is impermanent, suffering arises, therefore ‘no-self’”

- In that post, I discussed some inconsistencies arising due to such a translation. I also pointed out that the phrase is consistent if one takes the correct interpretations of *anicca* and *anatta*, i.e., “that one cannot maintain anything to one’s satisfaction in the long run” and “(therefore) one is truly helpless in this rebirth process”.

2. Let me quote the relevant text from his email:

“The line of reasoning that says that *anicca* means simply impermanence and that impermanence leads to *dukkha* seems weak to me. The weakness lies in an apparent missing link. Logically, there must be an intervening link, a necessary link, between impermanence and *dukkha*. That link would be the actual cause of *dukkha*. **If the cause of *dukkha* were simply impermanence, then no one who awakened, not even Buddha himself, would experience a reduction of *dukkha*.** This is because the condition of impermanence in *saṃsāra* remains unchanged whether one is awakened or not. In awakening, what changes is attachment to impermanent conditions of *saṃsāra*, not impermanent conditions themselves.

Put another way, one could say that if *anicca* means simply impermanence while ignoring the link between them, then Buddha’s awakening and his subsequent reduction of *dukkha* would mean that impermanence as a condition of *saṃsāra* was reduced. Everyone would have experienced simultaneously a sudden change in the condition of impermanence affecting them.

It was only Buddha’s relationship to impermanence that changed, not impermanence itself. Or, as you say, **his perception of the consequences of seeking happiness in impermanent things.**“

(Highlighting is mine).

3. That is a very insightful comment and I wanted to share that reasoning with others. This is what happens when one does the correct “*vipassana*” or “insight meditation”. As one thinks deeply about the Buddha Dhamma, one can start seeing any problems in the interpretations.

- What Lance was pointing out was that since modern science has clearly illustrated that “impermanence” is an INHERENT CHARACTERISTIC of the universe that we live in, there is

no possible way to “get rid of impermanence” in order to remove suffering and thus attain *Nibbāna* (that is, if one takes “impermanence” as the translation of *anicca*).

4. To emphasize that point, we need to remember that whole worlds like our Solar system are completely destroyed and re-formed every few billion years. Furthermore, “impermanence” and incessant change are inherent in anything in our universe as stated by the Second Law of Thermodynamics; see, “[Second Law of Thermodynamics is Part of Anicca!](#)”.

- Therefore, if *dukha* arises because of the “impermanence”, AND since we need to remove that root cause of “impermanence” in order to avoid future suffering (*dukha*) from arising, that would be an impossible task. **Impermanence associated with anything material CANNOT be avoided, let alone removed, according to modern science.**

5. I would like to again emphasize that impermanence is a word associated with PHYSICAL OBJECTS. Such physical objects CANNOT give us suffering. What gives us suffering is OUR CRAVING (or “icca”) for such objects; this is called *nicca saññā*. In a world that is “*anicca*”, we have the wrong PERCEPTION of *nicca saññā*; see, “[Anicca – Inability to Maintain Anything](#)”.

- Note that *icca* is pronounced “ichchā”, *nicca* is pronounced “nichchā” and *anicca* is pronounced “anichchā”.
- If a house is destroyed by fire, who suffers? Only the owner of the house, who has an attachment to it; it does not cause suffering to others. If it was a run down house, even the owner may not suffer much because his/her attachment to that house would be less. The more attachment we have for something, our suffering would be greater if it is lost or damaged. **This is a simple observation, but has profound implications.**

6. *Dukkha Sacca* means that *dukha* can be removed. ***Dukkha*** in “*Dukkha Sacca*” means “there is *dukha* (suffering) in this world, AND it can be eliminated” ; see, “[Does the First Noble Truth Describe only Suffering?](#)”.

- As explained in that *sutta* with that phrase, the “three characteristics” of this world are interrelated. **Not only that, the key characteristic is “*anicca*”, i.e., nothing in this world can be maintained to our satisfaction in the long run. The *sutta* says that *Dukha* (suffering) arises BECAUSE of the *nicca saññā* we have for things that have *anicca* nature, and thus the third characteristic (*anatta*) becomes self-evident, i.e., one is truly helpless since one cannot get rid of *dukha* (unless one gets rid of the *nicca saññā*).**

7. Thus *nicca* is a PERCEPTION in one’s mind. Through endless rebirths we thought that we can achieve happiness by acquiring sense objects that provide us with sense pleasures. Thus we keep “craving for such objects”, and believe that they will provide us with happiness; this is the **wrong perception** of *nicca*. **It is called the *nicca saññā*.**

- Thus the four stages of *Nibbāna* are attained when one develops the opposite *saññā*, i.e., ***anicca saññā*** in stages, and is complete only at the *Arahanthood*.
- If one did not crave for anything in this world, there is NOTHING in this world that one willingly binds to (*paticca* = “pati + “icca”). If we can stop this *paticca* process (or willingly bind to things in this world), then there will be no “*samuppāda* (“sama” + “uppada”) or births corresponding such cravings. Thus according to *paticca samuppāda*, there will be no more rebirths; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+”Sama+uppāda](#)”. And that is *rāgakkhaya* or *Nibbāna*.

8. Therefore, now we have a possible way to prevent *dukha* from arising: we need to remove all types of cravings for impermanent material objects from our MINDS.

- Of course that is easy to be said than done. We attach to things in this world because they provide tangible sense pleasures. No one can deny that, and it is very hard to resist many sense pleasures for which we have had attachments from beginningless time.
- Thus we have to do it in stages. No one (except a few who have developed required mindset over many past births) can do it quickly.

- The critical first step to *Nibbāna* is the *Sotāpanna* stage. And that is gained just by gaining the first understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- It is hard to believe, but an enormous fraction of our craving for worldly things will be removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage when the realization hits that certain immoral things are NOT WORTH doing for the sake of long-term benefit. That is something that will be ingrained in the mind and one does not need to think about it.

9. It is stated in the *Nakhasikha Sutta* (*Samyutta Nikāya* – 2, p. 212 of the Pāli/Sinhala *Tipitaka*) that the amount of defilements that a *Sotāpanna* has left to remove can be compared to the soil one can pick up on one's fingernail, if the amount of defilements a normal human has is comparable to the soil in the whole Earth; see, "[What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)".

- A short but correct translation of the essence of the *sutta* is also available online:

[WebLink: ACCESSTOINSIGHT: Nakhasikha Sutta: The Tip of the Fingernail](#)

- Since such a large amount of defilements are removed just by getting rid of *micca diṭṭhi*, it is CRITICAL to get rid of *micca diṭṭhi* by comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. And the key to all three characteristics is to comprehend the "*anicca* nature" of this world. This is why I keep emphasizing this point at every opportunity.
- However, it is not possible to grasp the "*anicca* nature" until one has purified one's mind to some extent; see, "[Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#)" and other posts in the "[Living Dhamma](#)" section.

Also, see, "[Logical Proof that Impermanence is Incorrect Translation of Anicca](#)".

9.1.3 Logical Proof that Impermanence is Incorrect Translation of Anicca

This post was written in response to a comment made by Mr. Alexander Ausweger, on the basis of which I slightly revised the post "[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)" to make it more precise. I would like to get feedback from anyone interested, especially those who are experts on mathematical logic.

1. Using mathematical logic, it is possible to point out the flaw in translating *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* as impermanence, suffering, and no-self. It does not require advanced mathematical concepts, but basic logical structure that is explained in the following Wikipedia article:

[WebLink: WIKI: Tautology \(logic\)](#)

2. As explained in the post, "[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)", in the *Ajjhattanica Sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, the Buddha stated that the three characteristics of "this world" are RELATED to each other:

"yadaniccā tan dukkham, tan dukkham tadanatta"

OR, (*anicca* → *dukkha*) and (*dukkha* → *anatta*)

Here, there are two logical statements, which can be written as (with incorrect translations with *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* translated as impermanence, suffering, and no-self respectively):

(impermanence → suffering) and (suffering → no-self)

- There are an infinite physical things in this vast universe and ALL are impermanent. **But not all of them cause anyone's suffering. One's suffering is caused only by those things that one willingly attaches to with the *nicca saññā***, as we will see below.

3. First let us consider just the part: (impermanence → suffering)

When we use the **law of contraposition**,

$(A \rightarrow B) \Leftrightarrow (\neg B \rightarrow \neg A)$ ("if *A* implies *B*, then not-*B* implies not-*A*"),

we get:

no suffering → **permanence**, i.e., if one is not suffering that implies something (the object in question) is permanent.

- But we can take many examples where “not suffering” does not imply a permanency. For example, when we hear a death of a rival there is no suffering associated with that.
- In another example if we get rid of a non-curable disease, that is associated with no-suffering. Thus, in both examples, the “no-suffering” condition did not imply a “permanence”.

Therefore, the original statement, (impermanence → suffering) DOES NOT HOLD.

4. **Now let us look at another way to analyze.** Normally, the statement $A \rightarrow B$ **does not lead** to $\neg A \rightarrow \neg B$ (i.e., not $A \rightarrow$ not B does not automatically follow).

However, if B is dependent only on A and no other factor, then the statement $\neg A \rightarrow \neg B$ would be valid.

- For an example, $(\text{rain} \rightarrow \text{wet street})$, does not automatically lead to $(\text{no rain} \rightarrow \text{dry street})$, because the street could get wet due to a garden hose being left open.
- However, **if the only cause for wetness of the street is rain**, then $(\text{no rain} \rightarrow \text{dry street})$ is CORRECT.

5. In the case of the three characteristics, the nature of this world is either *nicca* or *anicca*. There is no “in between”, i.e., it is either “*nicca*” or “*anicca*”.

The *nicca* or *anicca* nature can lead *dukha*, *sukha*, AND also neutral feeling. Thus here we will consider just *dukha* or “no-*dukha*” for this analysis. Then, there is nothing in between those two.

The third characteristic is either “*atta*” or “*anatta*”.

Thus, for this proof, we CAN rewrite the original statement,

(*anicca* → *dukkha*) and (*dukkha* → *anatta*) as,

(*nicca* → no-*dukkha*) and (no-*dukkha* → *natta*),

and those two statements are identical.

6. Therefore, if we translate *nicca* and *anicca* as permanent and impermanent, then the statement, (impermanence → suffering) also implies, (permanence → no-suffering), because in our premise that suffering depends only on whether something is permanent or impermanent.

- **Thus, we have, for our particular case: (permanence → no-suffering)**
- **Therefore, in our special case for the three characteristics of nature**, we have: (permanence → no-suffering) AND (no suffering → permanence).

In the mathematical language of logic, this is written as:

(no suffering iff permanence), i.e., (no suffering if and only if permanence)

This is a strong statement than the one in #3.

However, we have many instances of no-suffering without having permanency associated with, as we discussed in #3.

- **Furthermore, This implies that one can never attain *Nibbāna* (no suffering), since there is nothing in this world that is permanent LONG TERM. This is yet another contradiction.**

7. However, if we take the correct interpretation of *anicca* as “nothing can be maintained to one’s satisfaction in the long run”, then the above statement reads:

(no suffering) if and only if (everything can be maintained to our satisfaction in the long run).

- Since we know that “**everything can be maintained to our satisfaction in the long run**” is not correct, it is impossible to attain a state of “no suffering” as long as one is in this world, i.e., in the cycle of rebirths.

- We can analyze any situation and see that “nothing in this world can be maintained to one’s satisfaction in the long run”. Thus everything experienced in this world eventually lead to suffering. The only way to get rid of suffering is to realize this critical point; that realization itself leads to the end of suffering.
- Thus “*avijjā*” is nothing but not realizing this fundamental characteristic of nature.
- The realization of the truth of “*anicca* nature of this world” is beyond “just understanding”. The mind has to accept that without any doubt. One needs to analyze as many cases as one encounters in real life and convince oneself that this is the case. If you can think about an exception, please let me know.

8. Now we can also derive a similar strong relationship between *anicca* and *anatta* as between *anicca* and *dukkha* that we derived in #6 above. Here we use the principle of syllogism:

$$((A \rightarrow B) \wedge (B \rightarrow C)) \rightarrow (A \rightarrow C)$$

Thus the original relationship, (*anicca* \rightarrow *dukkha*) and (*dukkha* \rightarrow *anatta*) lead to:

anicca \rightarrow *anatta*

- Now using the same derivation of #4 and #5, we get, *anatta* \rightarrow *anicca*.

Thus we again have the strong statement,

- *anatta* if and only if *anicca*

That means *anatta* is inevitable if the nature (this world) is of *anicca* nature.

9. Now, again **if we take the wrong translations** of impermanence and no-self for *anicca* and *anatta* respectively, **what we derived above means: whatever is impermanent does not have a “self”.** **This is a meaningless statement for inert objects in this world.**

On the other hand, with the **correct interpretations**, it means:

Nothing in this world can be maintained to one’s satisfaction and therefore one is helpless in this world (i.e., will be subjected to suffering).

- However, that holds only as long as one TRYING TO maintain things to one’s satisfaction with the wrong perception that it is achievable. When one realizes the true nature, one will stop from attaching to things in this world, and eventually will not be born in this material world. The mind will be released from the “material base” that is the cause of our long-term suffering.
- Thus, the only way to get out of the “helplessness in this cycle of rebirths” is to get rid of the *nicca saññā* (the perception that one CAN maintain things to one’s satisfaction), and cultivate the *anicca saññā*, the correct perception about anything in this world. That is the way to *Nibbāna*, which it is attained via steps.

10. Thus, it is important to realize that the “loophole” that the Buddha discovered in order to gain release from the inevitable suffering in this world, is to comprehend its “*anicca nature*” and stop craving for worldly things that “seem to provide sense pleasures”.

- In other words, the solution is “to realize that seeking happiness in this world is not only unachievable, but it also leads to suffering”. One is subjected to suffering ONLY BECAUSE one is WILLINGLY ATTACHING to worldly things that are intrinsically not setup to provide happiness in the long run.
- This act of “willingly attaching to things in this world” is called “*paticca*” (“*pati*” means bonding and “*ichcha*” means with liking). And this of course leads to “*sama uppāda*” (“*sama*” means same or similar and “*uppāda*” means another existence in this world). This is the fundamental reason why we can never remove the suffering in this cycle of rebirths as long as we have “*avijjā*”, the principle of “*paticca samuppāda*”; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)”.

- Thus now we can see why the *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* cycle starts with “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*”: that is because we have the “*nicca saññā*”, the perception that we can maintain things to our satisfaction.

11. If the “*anicca* nature of this world” is a FACT, then the other two logically follow: **nothing in this world** can be logically expected to provide “no-suffering” (i.e., either happiness or neutral state of mind), and thus one is truly helpless (*anatta*) and is struggling to achieve something that logically impossible to achieve.

- The key point is that we normally ACT with “*nicca saññā*” or with the perception that we can maintain things to our satisfaction. **Thus we go against the nature** and will be subjected to suffering in the long run. This is a subtle point to contemplate and comprehend. The “*anicca* nature” will lead us to suffering ONLY IF we take the opposite view of “*nicca saññā*”.
- There are two things to sort out: *anicca nature* (of the world) and “*nicca saññā*” (in our MINDS). The way to be released from this world of *anicca* nature is to comprehend that (i.e., cultivate the *anicca saññā*) and thereby not attach (*paticca*) to things in this world.
- Of course it is not an easy task. The realization is achieved in stages. Even at the *Sotāpanna* stage one realizes this at a basic level.
- This is the basis of Buddha Dhamma, and that is explained via many different ways, *paticca samuppāda* being the key. The *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* cycle starts with “*avijjā paccaya (abhi)saṅkhāra*”, which arises due to the “*nicca saññā*”, and ends up with “*jara, maraṇa, soka, perideva, dukkha, domanassa.....*”. We generate our own future suffering by doing *abhisankhāra* (actions, speech, thoughts generated by greed, hate, and ignorance) due to our *nicca saññā*.
- This is also why we cannot get rid of greedy, hateful, and foolish thoughts until we comprehend the true *anicca* nature of this world and cultivate the *anicca saññā*. Such thoughts arise AUTOMATICALLY in a mind that has the *nicca saññā*.

9.1.4 “Self” and “no-self”: A Simple Analysis

October 23, 2015

I like to address two comments that I recently received. Questions such as these bring out very important issues that help clarify fundamental concepts.

First comment (by Mr. Alexander Ausweger):

Premises:

- (1) The number of rebirths of a single sentient being before now is infinite.
- (2) The probability to become an *Arahant* in one life-phase (from birth to death) is very small but greater than 0. (The possible probability-values range from 0 to 1 as usual in probability theory).

Conclusion: In an infinite number of rebirths the probability to reach *arahantship* would be 1 which means that everyone would already has left *samsāra*.

Conclusion: Since we are still here, one of the premises must be wrong.

Second comment (by Mr. Chamila Wickramasinghe):

“...in *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda*, since “*avijjā anusaya*” is still remaining for a person below the *Arahant* stage, is there not a single “*chitta-kshana*” (or *citta*) that arises without *avijjā*? ..”

Embedded in both above comments, there is connotation of a “self”, i.e., there is “a well-defined sentient being” that goes through a cycle of rebirths. Since we use names to label a person, that

automatically gives the impression of a non-changing “self”. Thus it is a bit hard to remove this “sense of a self” from our minds.

- The other side of this issue is the common misconception that “*anatta*” means “no-self”. We can resolve many issues if we can understand that neither view is correct.
- The Buddha said it is wrong to believe that there is a “self” and it is also wrong to believe that “there is no-self”. This is a bit difficult to comprehend first; **that is why the Buddha said, “My Dhamma has never been known to the world...”**. So we will discuss some examples to clarify why both these views are not correct.

Let us first discuss the **First comment**. The answer to the second comment will become clear during that discussion.

1. The key issue brought out by the first comment is the first premise itself: By assuming that “there is a single sentient being...” we are distorting the actual reality. This is basically saying that there is a “soul” or “self”. To give an **absolute identity** to an entity (a life form), there must be something unchanging in it.

- Now, let us discuss HOW the Buddha explained that the above premise is not correct.
- At the time of the Buddha, there were many who believed in an “*āthma*” or a “soul” or a “self”. When asked what is a “person” is unique to give that absolute identity, some said it was one’s body (*rūpa*), others said either one’s feelings (*vedanā*), one’s perceptions (*saññā*), one’s actions (*saṅkhāra*), one’s thoughts (*viññāṇa*), or some combinations of the above five. **However, we are not talking about *pancakkhandha* here, i.e., not *rupakkhandha* etc. I will write a series of posts later to clarify the difference.**
- There is nothing else that can be assigned as “one’s own”.

2. So, the Buddha explained in detail why none of the above remains the same in a “given person”. Let us take a simple example to understand the basic idea. Let us consider person A when entering the high school and when leaving the high school.

- Did any of the five categories (*rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*) remain the same at those two instances of time, several years apart? Person A would have grown and will not have the same body. At the time of his leaving high school, most his primary thoughts (*viññāṇa*) may be focused on getting a job or entering a university, and thus would be very different from the time he entered high school.

3. Now we can reduce the time interval to the end of his first year at the high school. All of the above arguments still hold. “He” would have changed in all five of the above characteristics that define “him”.

- We can keep reducing the time interval. When we think about this carefully, we can see that even his physical body would have changed some by the time he got to the school from home. Of course all his “metal properties” keep changing moment-to-moment.
- In order to see a “significant change” over a long period of time we don’t even have to think too much about, we need to look at time intervals several months apart, but when we keep narrowing down the time interval, we can see that all five characteristics about him keep changing.
- Even when a person enters a room walks to the other side and leaves the room through a back door, is it the “same person” who left? Which of the above five characteristics would have remained the same?
- Once we start contemplating on it, it is easy to see that all four of our metal characteristics keep changing moment-to-moment. It is a bit harder to “see” that our bodies change moment-to-moment, but the above argument logically extends to smaller and smaller time intervals. **This is why it is called “seeing with wisdom”.**
- Furthermore, modern science indeed show how fast our bodies change. Most of the cells in our bodies are REPLACED every few months. We essentially have a “new body” every year.

- Still this is NOT the same as saying EVERY SINGLE SUDDHASHTAKA (smallest material unit) in a body is re-made moment-to-moment; see, “[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#)“. What is correct is that at least SOME OF THE CELLS in a body of trillions of cells will change even moment-to-moment. Please re-read and understand the huge difference.
- This way of “seeing” with wisdom (instead of going by what is just seen with the eyes) is what the Buddha called “*cakkhun udapādi..*” or “seeing with dhamma eye..”. Unless we do this, when we look at a person we automatically get the perception (*saññā*) of a “non-changing self”, say John Smith.

4. Thus even though we assign a name to a person and talks about a “John Smith” whether it is a new born baby, a young grown person, or an old man on his deathbed, we can clearly see that there was nothing at all common about John Smith at various points in his life.

- However, we also should not go to the other extreme and say that “there is no such person called John Smith”. How can we say that either? We can talk to John Smith, we can see him actively engaging in various activities, etc. This is the other extreme of “no-soul” or “no-self”.
- This is why the Buddha rejected both “self” and “no-self” as the reality.
- We need to use the terminology of a person named John Smith, to be able to communicate. Even the Buddha talked about “his previous lives”. But we must keep in mind that there is nothing to be called an “unchanging person”.
- Yet, a “person” can acquire a “new identity” within moments. We have talked about several people who attained *Arahanthood* within a few minutes. Even these days, we have heard about people who have made drastic changes in their character within few months. Of course we can gain or lose significant weight in a month and change our appearance.

5. The absolute truth (*paramatta*) is that all our mental phenomena CAN change moment-to-moment. Some of these mental activity arise due to *avijjā* and can lead to significant changes even in real time; see, “[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(or Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppāda](#)“.

- While using conventional terminology (*vohara*), we need to keep in mind that the absolute reality (*paramatta*) is that the “state of existence” changes moment-to-moment.
- Our physical bodies (and any material form or a *sankata*) change according to their lifetimes; some change fast (a fruit fly lives a few days; thus its body goes from birth to ripe age to being dead in a few days), but others change slower (a tortoise lives about 200 years).

6. Thus “a person”, in absolute reality, CAN change for better or worse even moment-to-moment, according to *paticca samuppāda*.

- A *kusala paticca samuppāda* cycle starts with “*kusala-mūla paccaya saṅkhāra*“; see, “[Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)“.
- An *akusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* cycle starts with “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*“; see, “[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)” and “[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(or Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppāda](#)“.
- But most of the time, we do things that are neither *kusala* or *akusala*.
- Thus *avijjā* is not there ALL THE TIME, even for a normal human being. *Avijja* is triggered when one is tempted by a desirable/undesirable sense input.

7. Now we can address the **second comment**. Yes, the *avijjā anusaya* is there with anyone who has not attained the *Arahant* stage of *Nibbāna*. But not all thoughts (*citta*) arise due to *avijjā*, and there are many levels of *avijjā* when it arises.

- *Anusaya* basically means our cravings and habits (that we have acquired through *avijjā*) that lie underneath the surface waiting for a trigger to surface.

- Thus *avijjā* itself is not something that is there all the time. A normal human being acts without *avijjā* most of the time. Only when one does something with a greed, dislike, or without fully understanding of the situation, one acts with *avijjā*.
- *Avijja* is **triggered by a sense input** that is either pleasing or displeasing to our mind, and whether a given “trigger” will set off *avijjā* will depend on one’s *gathi* and *anusaya*; see, [“Gathi \(Character\), Anusaya \(Latent Defilements\), and Āsava \(Cravings\)”](#), [“Samsaric Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsava\)”](#), and [“Gathi to Bhava to Jathi – Ours to Control”](#).
- Thus it is not correct say that a normal human is an entity with *avijjā*. There is no such “fixed living being”, i.e., one with “self”. **The only things that can be associated with “a person” are his/her *gathi* and *anusaya*; these keep changing too.**

8. Even when *avijjā* arises, it can arise at many different levels ranging from *mōha* (totally covered mind) to just not knowing the Four Noble Truths. In that latter case, one may do moral acts (*punnabhi saṅkhāra*) but expecting meritorious results. Here also the *akusala-mūla* PS cycle operates, but will lead to meritorious results within the 31 realms.

- Only when one does meritorious acts without any expectations (because one has realized that it is unfruitful to strive for anything in this world), one does not act with *avijjā*, and the *kusala-mūla* PS cycle operates. Of course this is possible only for an *Ariya*. An *Ariya* below the *Arahant* stage may act with *avijjā* at lower levels (i.e., would not act with *mōha*).
- But in most cases, we just disregard what was seen, heard, etc. and *avijjā* does not arise.
- Thus *avijjā* is something that is not there all the time for any person. The *avijjā anusaya* CAN BE triggered by a sense input.

9. Getting back to the **first comment**, instead of saying either “a person exists” or “a person does not exist”, the Buddha said a living being exists moment-to-moment. We cannot deny that people exist; but there is nothing absolute about “a person”. Rather, “a person” continually changes.

- Another way to say the same thing is to say that “a living being” exists in a given state until the cause (and conditions) that give rise to that existence exist. Once the cause is depleted that existence changes over to a new existence IF THERE IS A CAUSE FOR THAT NEW EXISTENCE.

10. We can get more insight on **both comments** by considering what happens when one attains the *Arahanthood*.

- **One attains the *Arahanthood* when one loses *avijjā anusaya***; see the links in #7. When that happens, *avijjā* is not triggered by ANY sense input. There is no “*upādāna*” for any type of likes/dislikes. Thus at death, there is no “*sama uppada*” (birth of similar characteristics) corresponding to “*paticca*” (whatever one willingly attach to).
- But the *kammic* energy that fueled the present life is still there. So, just a rock thrown by someone will stay up until the energy given to it is exhausted, the *Arahant* will live until the *kammic* energy for his/her life is exhausted. Still he/she will not be tempted by any sense input, since there is no *āsava/anusaya* left.
- An *Arahant* will experience all sense inputs just like any other human being, but will not generate any likes/dislikes. And since he/she is likely to have many *kamma vipāka* left, he/she could also experience pains and aches or even worse. We need to remember that the Buddha himself suffered from some ailments, and Ven. Moggallāna was beaten to death.
- It is the FUTURE SUFFERING that is removed completely at the *Arahant* stage. Since there is no rebirth, there is no future suffering. The mind is forever released from the material body that CAN AND WILL impart suffering to those who remain in the *samsāra*, the cycle of rebirths.

9.1.5 Craving for Pornography – How to Reduce the Tendency

March 4, 2016

This post is not based on questions put to me directly. But I get a list of key search words, and it seems that many people would like to know how to suppress sexual urges and to reduce the tendency to visit pornographic sites.

1. Of course engaging in sexual activities with one's spouse is not a problem for even a *Sotāpanna*. It is only when one gets to the *Anāgāmī* stage that one AUTOMATICALLY loses the sexual urge; see, "[The Cooling Down Process \(Nibbāna\) – How Root Causes are Removed](#)".

- Cravings for **normal sense pleasures** (sexual or otherwise) CANNOT be removed by sheer will power, just like darkness cannot be removed by willing for light. Darkness can be gotten rid of only by bringing in light.
- In the same way, sense desires can be cleansed only by "cleansing the mind", i.e., by contemplating on the true (*anicca*) nature of the world. Even a *Sotāpanna* has only "seen" the futility of sense pleasures; he/she has not "experienced" the benefits of NOT DESIRING sense pleasures; see the posts in the "[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)".
- We have had an uncountable number of rebirths so far simply because we cannot comprehend the consequences of attaching to sense pleasures and also because we become angry when we don't get what we desire.
- Those objects that we desire so much will lose their appeal over time. Sense pleasures, sexual or otherwise, are short-lived. Even if one can have access to sense pleasures, the ABILITY to enjoy them WILL decrease with time. This is something that people normally do not think about.
- The attitude of most people is "I need to enjoy them to the fullest while I can". But one needs to at least stay away from extreme behaviors and learn Dhamma while relatively young **to avoid future suffering**. **When we get really old, we lose not only the ability to enjoy such pleasures, but also the ability to comprehend Dhamma (because our brains degrade with time).**

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Changes: Young to Old](#)

2. Fundamentally, craving sex-related activities is not any different from craving other sense pleasures. Each person has *sansaric* habits (*gathi*) for some specific set of sense pleasure(s).

- Some have excess craving to eat tasty foods, some like gossiping about others, some like to go hunting, etc., and some may have the cravings for sexual pleasures, and it is usually a combination of several. Each person has a unique set, and that changes with time too.
- The danger with such habits is that under extreme conditions, they could lead to worse actions. Sexual tendencies could especially become problematic. We all have heard about cases where "good citizens" committing rape, when prevailing conditions led them to "lose control".

3. **The critical and first thing to do is to get rid of those habits or cravings that bring harm to others. A *Sotāpanna* is inherently incapable** of doing such extreme acts because his/her mind has grasped the consequences of such acts without a doubt. Focusing on the sexual urges, one MUST NOT DO certain things: rape and having relationships with children or others' spouses are obvious examples.

- Learning Dhamma helps through all stages of "rehabilitation". Learning the bad consequences of extreme habits such as those mentioned above is one way to convince the mind (i.e., subconscious *viññāṇa*) to voluntarily give up those habits.
- The Buddha said, "don't do things to others that one would not like to be done to oneself". Always try to pause a moment and contemplate on the consequences of any harsh act. This is the basis of "*kayanupassana*" in *Satipatthāna* meditation; see, "[Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta](#)".

4. It is also important to realize that one cannot remove the basic tendencies for normal sense pleasures by sheer willpower alone. Trying to do that could bring more harm (stress) than benefits.

- The key is to train the mind to grasp the bad future consequences of **extreme** habits and desires (*gathi*), whether it is due to excess craving for sex or the tendency to get mad at the slightest provocation. These are all habits that most likely originated in many lives back.
- We either develop new habits via repeated use or more likely re-energize and further cultivate old habits from previous lives.
- The following links discuss how to change one's *gathi*: "[9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#)" and "[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)", among others. One could just type *gathi* or habits in the Search button on the top right and get a list of relevant posts.

5. The other important thing to realize is that one does not NEED TO get rid of less-severe cravings for sense pleasures (sexual or otherwise) at once. The key is to do it gradually. Actually, it is more correct to say, "it will happen gradually as one learns Dhamma or the true nature of this world".

- The Buddha gave the following simile: When one is cultivating a field, all one needs to do is to follow the procedures that will optimize bringing a good harvest. One needs to prepare the soil, plant good seeds, and then make sure that weeds are kept out, and water and nutrients are provided on a regular basis. There is no point in watching the plants throughout the day to see whether they are growing or to worry about them. They will grow and yield a good harvest if one does one's part.
- In the same way, one needs first to understand the basic wider world view, i.e., that we are spending a relatively short time in this life and move from life-to-life based on causes that we ourselves create (based on how we live). The post on *dasa akusala* (ten defilements) is a guide on which actions are to be reduced and eventually stopped.

6. Here is a list of key things that is comparable to making the soil ready for seeds to be planted:

- One needs to first understand, at least to some extent, the long-term nature of our lives far beyond our deaths. **Many people believe that it all ends with this life. What if that is not correct? One needs to be make sure, because the answer to that question may have consequences for billions and trillions of years to come.**
- Also, do things just happen, or do they happen due to CAUSES? Science is based on cause and effect: things ALWAYS happen due to (multiple) causes. People just don't get born out of nothing. There are causes that led to the birth of a human being (or any other living being). The Buddha said these causes are the *kamma*, what we have done in the past.
- There are certain principles or laws that the Nature follows. Scientists can explain most of the things that happen to inert objects: If one throws up a stone, we can even calculate its path on the way back to ground. The reason that it falls to the ground is that the Earth is pulling it down; that is the cause for it to fall down. Like that EACH AND EVERY EVENT has a cause. Events based on mental causes normally are complex and have multiple causes (and hard to sort out).

7. One needs to contemplate on the consequences of over-indulgences: (1) They are short-lived, and when one's ability to enjoy them goes away, one gets depressed, (2) Such over-indulgences build corresponding character or "*gathi*", and one's future births are according to one's *gathi*.

- Another *sansaric gathi* is the tendency to get angry at the slightest provocation. Here also one needs to think about the bad consequences of that behavior.
- In both cases, the bad consequences are two-fold: The short-term consequence is that one gets stressed out shortly after responding to the "urge" (even though one may briefly enjoy responding to the urge). The more adverse long-term consequences are worse, i.e., each time one does it the habit gets strengthened AND **depending on the act** one may cultivate animal *gathi* (when blinded by extreme sense pleasures) or *niraya gathi* (when blinded by rage).

8. There is a reason that one is born human and another is born an animal. One who was born human had done a good *kamma* that deserved being born human; and that *kamma* was done because that

being had tendency to do that type of deeds. This tendency to do certain things depends on one's "gathi".

- If a human displays "animal *gathi*" or does things that animals do (do whatever one feels like doing without any consideration for others, have sex indiscriminately, etc), then it is likely that he/she will be born an animal in the future.
- On the other hand, if a human displays kindness, can even tolerate others' bad behavior, etc., then he/she has *deva* or *brahma* "gathi", then he/she is likely to be born a *deva*, *brahma*, or a human, in future lives.
- In the language of *paticca samuppāda*, "*jathi*" is according to "*bhava*", "*bhava*" according to "*upadāna*", "*upadāna*" according to "*taṇhā*", i.e., "what one likes to do or has craving for". Thus if one likes to do what dogs normally do, then a future "*jathi*" or birth as a dog is hard to avoid. This is true for any other kind of birth.

9. Thus whether it is a sexual craving or any other craving for sense pleasure, we need to be careful first to avoid any extreme behavior. One cannot jump from the bottom of the ladder to the top; one has to climb step-by-step. Get rid of the worst habits first and move up on the ladder.

- The one who was born an animal, was likely to have engaged in activities suitable for an animal; some of the sexual activities shown in pornographic movies are suitable only for animals. And such bad deeds were done due to a reason: that being had tendencies or *gathi* to do such deeds. They do not change much unless one willfully tries to change them. Getting rid of such extreme behavior is the first step. The sooner done is better.
- Then one can tackle less severe problems. Always thinking about tasty foods and eating excessively is as bad as the tendency to watch adult movies habitually. They are both bad habits that need to be broken gradually, with understanding of the consequences. Of course pornography has different categories; one tends to watch "extreme" pornography when one has extreme habits.
- **A living being can significantly change its "gathi" only as a human.** An animal is not capable of any significant change, even though some of its habits can be changed if trained by a human. Even for *devas* and *brahmas* it is hard to change their *gathi* unless they had attained the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna* as a human. We will discuss this more later.

10. In summary, one MUST stop the most harmful acts (which could lead to rebirth in the lowest four realms or the *apāyas*) by any means possible using sheer will power. However, other less harmful acts can be reduced over time and one needs to follow a systematic procedure as outlined in the links given in # 3 and #4 above.

- Learning Dhamma can reduce the tendency to engage in any type of immoral or unwise activities over the long run. In this regard it is important to understand the different levels of greed and hate; see, "[Sorting out Some Key Pāli Terms \(Taṇhā, Lobha, Dosa, Moha, etc\)](#)" and, in particular the post, "[Lobha, Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)".
- The section on "[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana](#)" provides more advanced analyses, especially for those who are at least on the way to become a *Sotāpanna*, i.e., a *Sotāpanna magga anugami*.

9.2 Book Reviews

[““Why Does the World Exist?” by Jim Holt”](#)

[““Waking Up” by Sam Harris”](#)

[““The Language of God” by Francis Collins”](#)

[““Spark” by John Ratey”](#)

9.2.1 “Why Does the World Exist?” by Jim Holt

1. I started writing this post while I was reading the popular book, “Why Does the World Exist? – An Existential Detective Story” by Jim Holt (2012). It is a good book with many thought-provoking questions. Here I would like to point out that most of those questions have answers in Buddha Dhamma.

- On p. 269, equating the *Nibbānic* bliss to annihilation of a person, he asks, “...But how can you enjoy something if you do not exist?”. I initially started the post with the title, “Does Nibbāna Mean Annihilation of a “Person”?”, to address this question, but then I started addressing other issues in the book and eventually changed the title to be the same as the book title.
- Even many Buddhists are terrified of the idea of *Nibbāna*, thinking that it means annihilation. This is why even many *Bhikkhus* like to give “blessings” to the effect, “May you attain *Nibbāna* at the end of much pleasures in the heavenly worlds”. This illustrates a total lack of understanding of the deep message of the Buddha.

2. The problem is in the question itself. If a person is to be annihilated, a “person” need to exist in the first place. Now this is a very deep issue that needs some knowledge of Buddha Dhamma to understand. As the Buddha said in his first sermon, his Dhamma is, “*pubbe anumussutesu dhammesu.....*” or “a concept that has not been known to the world before..”.

- In order to annihilate, there must be something “concrete”, what the Brahmins of the day of the Buddha called “*āthma*”, or what the major religions of today call the “soul”. It is very difficult for all of us to get rid of the perception of “me” or “myself”. **In fact, that perception is totally removed only at the Arahant stage of Nibbāna; it keeps decreasing as one advances on the Path.**
- Thus as long as one “belongs to this world of 31 realms”, one always thinks in terms of “me” and “the external world”. This is why the Buddha rejected the concept of “no-self” even though most people incorrectly translate *anatta* as “no-self”; see, [“The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma”](#).
- On the other hand, the Buddha said that it is also incorrect to say there is “self”. This is because any “person” changes even moment-to-moment; see, [“What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream”](#).
- In rejecting both “self” and “no-self” extremes, the Buddha said “this changing being” or “a lifestream” changes moment-to-moment due to changes in the causes that support that lifestream. This is not something that I can explain in one essay, and is explained via many posts at the site, including the important section on *Paticca Samuppāda*.
- In the book there is a separate chapter on, “The Self – Do I Really Exist?”. I will discuss that chapter below, and point out a few more related facts.

3. The book’s main theme is “why is there something rather than nothing?” or “how did the world got started?”. It summarizes most of the arguments that have accumulated over thousands of years, and of course come to the inevitable question on “the nature of the Creator God who would not need a cause for being there”.

- However, regarding the two questions on existence as expressed above, the Buddha’s answer is the simplest: The world has existed forever and it is not possible to pinpoint to a specific first cause. The proof is very simple: Suppose there is a first cause; then what caused that? QED.

- Thus in the scientific basis of cause and effect, the absence of a first cause is built in.
- On p. 82 of the book, Jim Holt did point out, “*..Scientific thinkers by and large, have not shared such qualms about eternity. Neither Galileo nor Newton nor Einstein had any problem conceiving of a universe that was infinite in time. Indeed, Einstein added to his field equations a fudge factor – the infamous “cosmological constant” – to ensure that they would yield a universe that was static and eternal*”.
- And a few philosophers have discussed the problem with “first cause” arguments, as Jim Holt noted. Talking about the late philosopher John Mackie on p. 206, “*..Obviously, as Mackie observed, no explanation in terms of a “first cause” could answer the ultimate question of existence, for such an explanation would merely raise the further question of why that first cause -whether it be God, an unstable chunk of false vacuum, or some still more exotic entity-itself existed*”.

4. If one accepts that the world has existed forever, then many other questions discussed in the book do not even arise. Thus 100% of the questions discussed are answered if we start off with the premise that the world has existed forever AND the root causes (greed, hate, and ignorance) for the existence of the world given by the Buddha.

- For example, on p. 7, Leibniz’s Principle of Sufficient Reason is discussed: For every truth, there must be a reason why it is so and not otherwise; and for every thing, there must be a reason for that thing’s existence. This is basically “cause and effect”. The Buddha said that the world exists because of the greed, hate, and ignorance; and those causes have no beginning.
- This is related to the issue of the mind taking precedence over matter, and I am slowly building evidence for that in the website. There are some introductory posts in the “Abhidhamma” and “Dhamma and Philosophy” sections.
- On p. 188, Jim Holt discusses the fact that all science says about the “stuff that makes up our world” is that mass is equivalent to energy, “*...but it gives us no idea of what energy really is.*”. This is exactly what is explained in Abhidhamma, and I will get to it eventually. He goes on to say, “*...As Bertrand Russell noted in his 1927 book, The Analysis of Matter, when it comes to the intrinsic nature of the entities making up the world, science is silent*”.
- He also briefly discuss another big issue in philosophy on p. 192: “*The conclusion of the philosophersthat there is more to consciousness than the mere processing of information. If this is true, then science, insofar as it describes the world as a play of information states, would seem to leave out a part of reality: the subjective, irreducibly qualitative part*”. Actually, as we will see, Buddha’s answer solves both this and the issue above in one fell swoop.
- A world without a beginning also gives an answer to the question of “why do I exist” (p. 18). We all have “existed” forever; there is no beginning so the question has no meaning. Another frequently asked question is, “what is the meaning of life?”. There is no meaning to life: The bottom line is that we all suffer in this existence ON THE AVERAGE, IN THE LONG TERM while we meander aimlessly among the 31 realms of existence; see, “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)”.

5. Now the only critical question is how do we know that the Buddha’s world view is correct? The answer is that it can explain the complex world around us; it has the “explanatory power”. Also see, “[Vagaries of Life and the Way to Seek Good Births](#)” and “[Good Explanations – Key to Weeding out Bad Versions of Dhamma](#)”, among many other posts.

- Furthermore, one can EXPERIENCE the truth of Buddha’s teachings and the results for oneself. I have described part of my experience in following the Path in, “[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)”. Do not be discouraged by the title of the post.

6. Now let me briefly discuss the 2nd last chapter on, “The Self – Do I Really Exist?”. Here Jim Holt comes across the answer himself (p. 256): Talking about the Descartes’ famous phrase, “I think, therefore I exist”, he says, “*... ..Did Descartes here infer more than he was entitled to? As many commentators have pointed out (beginning with Georg Lichtenberg in the eighteenth century), the*

“I” in his ultimate premise is not quite legitimate. All Descartes could assert with certainty was “there are thoughts”. He never proved that thoughts require a thinker.....” (bold face mine).

7. This is exactly what the Buddha said. There are thoughts, but no REAL thinker; there is the PERCEPTION of a thinker in “one’s mind” until one’s mind is purified to the level of an *Arahant* and it becomes clear that there is no “thinker”. However, the irony is that until that wisdom is gained, “one’s suffering” is real. The suffering is there simply because one thinks there is a real thinker!

- But one cannot honestly say, “there is no-self” as most people try to do, unless one is an *Arahant*; one is just trying to fool oneself in saying that. When something bad happens to “anything that belongs to oneself” one INEVITABLY feels the pain associated with it; see, [“Anatta and Dukkha – True Meanings”](#).
- When the mind is purified (i.e., is absent of greed, hate, and ignorance) perception of “self” goes away at the *Arahant* stage, then the suffering associated with “one’s stuff” is not there anymore. When one comprehends the concept of *anicca* to some extent, this will become clear to some extent. In other words, *Nibbānic* bliss or *niramisa sukha* increases as one advances on the Path, with the mind being purified at each step; see, [“Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?”](#), and [“Niramisa Sukha”](#).
- Thus we cannot forcibly get rid of the sense of “I”. Only through the true understanding of the Three Characteristics of this world, *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, that one can slowly start getting rid of that sense of “I” or “self”. Until then there is neither a “self” nor “no-self”, but just a stream of thoughts; see, [“What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream”](#). Only at the death of an *Arahant* that stream of thoughts is ended and the mind becomes free of any attachment to the material world of the 31 realms; see, [“Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?”](#), and [“What are Rūpa? Relation to Nibbāna”](#).

9.2.2 “Waking Up” by Sam Harris

Sam Harris, “Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion” (2014).

1. I am quite encouraged by the fact that many people are beginning to see through something that is contrary to the basic human instincts: That it is possible to find a different and more permanent form of happiness that is not related to material things.

- Right at the start of the book, when he talks about his first “meditation retreat” at the age of 16 under harsh conditions in wilderness, the author says he was puzzled by the positive reaction of the older people in the group, *“...How could someone’s happiness increase when all the material sources of pleasure and distraction had been removed?”* (p.2).
- But now with many years of experience in meditation and studies on human nature as a neuroscientist, he can understand it: *“..Unlike many atheists, I have spent much of my life seeking experiences of the kind that gave rise to world’s religions. Despite the painful results of my first few days alone in the mountains of Colorado, I later studied with a wide range of monks, lamas, yogis, and other contemplatives, some of whom had lived for decades in seclusion doing nothing but meditating. In the process, I spent two years on silent retreat myself (in increments of one week to three months), practicing various techniques of meditation for twelve to eighteen hours a day”* (pp. 13-14).

2. Harris, like many others, has found that there is something about human life that cannot be explained away just in terms of the workings of the material world, but cannot quite pinpoint to the source of that “something extra”.

- Modern science has obliterated the concept of a “divine influence” as has been put forth by various religions, as Harris explains. So I was quite interested to see what his conclusion would be as to the “source of this extra something”.

3. On p.8, he makes a very valid statement: *“Spirituality must be distinguished from religion – because of people of every faith, and of none, have had the same sorts of spiritual experiences... Nothing that a Christian, a Muslim, and a Hindu can experience – self-transcending love, ecstasy,*

bliss, inner light – constitutes evidence in support of their traditional beliefs, because their beliefs are logically incompatible with one another. A deeper principle must be at work". (my highlighting).

- This is exactly what I have been trying to emphasize at this website.
- In the next very paragraph, he says what he found that deeper principle to be: *"That principle is the subject of this book: The feeling that we call "I" is an illusion"* (p. 9). This is probably the "no-self" theory that is erroneously presented as Buddha's concept of "*anatta*"; see, "[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)".
- However, on that same page, he also summarizes most of my own conclusions about religions in general, including "Buddhism" the way as it is practiced by most in both Theravāda and Mahayana sects.

4. I am just going to quote the relevant sentences from pp. 9-10: *"I am often asked what will replace religion. The answer, I believe, is nothing and everything. Nothing need replace its ludicrous and divisive doctrines....But what about love, compassion, moral goodness, and self-transcendence? Many people will imagine that religion is the true repository of their virtues. To change this we must talk about the full range of human experience in a way that is as free as the best science already is"*.

- And through the rest of the book he does go through that process. I agree with most of it, except of course that while "Buddhism" may be a religion, Buddha Dhamma is certainly not (if religion is defined as one providing salvation via following set rituals or having blind faith in an entity or a supreme being).

5. The key to Mr. Harris not understanding of Buddha Dhamma becomes apparent on p. 28: *"We can also grant that Eastern wisdom has not produced societies or political institutions that are any better than their Western counterparts. In fact, one could argue that India has survived as the world's largest democracy only because of institutions that were built under British rule. Nor has the East led the world in scientific discovery. Nevertheless, there is something to the notion of uniquely Eastern wisdom, and most of it has been concentrated in or derived from the tradition of Buddhism"*.

- The problem here is that Mr. Harris has not had exposure to Buddha Dhamma, the "non-religious" original teachings.
- The focus of Buddha Dhamma, as delivered by the Buddha, was not on enhancing the mundane life and on building a better society. It was focused on the fact that it is in fact a "waste of time" to try to build large cities, develop technology, and in general to spend too much time on "making things better for this life", because this life is only a brief stop-over in a much longer journey.

6. If one really understood the key message of the Buddha, one would see that this life is too short to be "wasted" on such things. This is due to three key foundational aspects of Buddha Dhamma:

- Human life, even though wrought with some suffering, is the best in all of 31 realms of this world for attaining Nibbāna; see, the description of the wider world of 31 realms in, "[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)".
- In the process of rebirth we spend only a tiny amount of time in this life of about 100 years; see, "[Evidence for Rebirth](#)".
- And immersing in mundane sense pleasures becomes only a hindrance to attain the "true and permanent happiness" of Nibbāna; see, "[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha](#)", and "[Niramisa Sukha?](#)".
- Of course, especially the Mahayana version of "Buddhism", or even the Theravāda version, has veered away from this key message of the Buddha.

7. Yet, I must hasten to point out two additional points:

- The Buddha stated that not everyone is able to comprehend this key message. Thus, for those who did not wish to pursue Nibbāna, and asked for advice on how to live a moral and fulfilling family life while enjoying sensual pleasures, he did provide advice. In Chapter IV of Bhikkhu Bodhi's popular book, *"In the Buddha's Words"* (2005), such advice from different *sutta* have

been extracted to one place; this book also has other categories separated out like good rebirths, mind etc.

- The Buddha never tried to change or influence the political systems that were in place, even though he praised the democratic system that was in place in the small autonomous region of *Vajji*, which was really a republic similar to the one we have now in the United States. Other than openly criticizing the caste system, he stayed away from politics.

8. I am impressed that Mr. Harris has been able to catch at least a glimmer of the uniqueness in Buddha Dhamma despite the fact that he has not been exposed to the true teachings of the Buddha: *“Buddhism in particular possesses a literature on the nature of the mind that has no peer in Western religion or Western science. Some of these teachings are cluttered with metaphysical assumptions that should provoke our doubts, but many aren’t. And when engaged as a set of hypotheses by which to investigate the mind and deepen one’s ethical life, Buddhism can be an entirely rational enterprise”* (p. 29).

- The author is highly impressed with the Buddhist “*vipassana*” meditation. However, what he describes is just breath meditation or “*samatha* meditation”; see, “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)”.

9. And he has the concept of Enlightenment (*Nibbāna*) all wrong (this says a lot about the *Mahayana* “Buddhism” that he has been exposed to): *“...the state of “full enlightenment” – is generally described as “omniscient”. Just what this means is open to a fair bit of caviling. But however narrowly defined, the claim is absurd”* (p. 43).

- To understand the concept of *Nibbāna*, one must understand the world view of the Buddha as described in the above mentioned posts, and then one needs to read other posts at this site on describing *Nibbāna* (just do a search with the key word *Nibbāna* at the top right box on Keyword Search).

10. Interestingly, there is no mention at all about purifying the mind of defilements, which is key to true Buddhist meditation; see, “[The Importance of Purifying the Mind](#)”.

- I do not blame the author of course, but it is sad to see how far “Buddhism” has veered off from the original message of the Buddha.
- It is these three root causes greed, hate, and ignorance (and the counterparts of non-greed, non-hate, and wisdom) that clarifies the basis of morality that he has puzzled over in two other books, “*The Moral Landscape*” (2011) and “*Free Will*” (2012).
- As Mr. Harris correctly points out in “*The Moral Landscape*”, *“there is no such thing as Christian or Muslim morality”*. There is no “Buddhist morality” either. Morality is universal and comes out naturally on the basis of benevolence, compassion, and wisdom having precedence over greed, hate, and ignorance; see, “[Origin of Morality \(and Immorality\) in Buddhism](#)”.

11. Chapter 2 is on consciousness. The author has a good introduction and his own thinking about consciousness may be expressed here: *“I am sympathetic with those who, like the philosopher Colin McGinn and the psychologist Steven Pinker, have suggested that perhaps the emergence of consciousness is simply incomprehensible in human terms”* (p. 57).

- Consciousness has also been fully explained by the Buddha. Consciousness is NOT an emergent property, it is a fundamental entity. I have several introductory posts on consciousness at the site; see, “[What is Consciousness?](#)” and follow-up posts.
- I hope those who are interested would read the comprehensive description of the mind provided by the Buddha in the *Abhidhamma* section of this site, which may not be ready for an comprehensive analysis for several more months. But there are a few introductory posts there.

12. The rest of the book is about the author’s experience with trying out different types of meditations. It is too bad that he was not exposed to real Buddhist meditation. On the other hand, even in countries where the *Theravāda* Buddhism is practiced, it is the breath meditation that is widely taught.

- Overall, I am impressed by the fact that even with the minimum exposure Mr. Harris had to Buddha Dhamma, he has been able to see there “there is something hidden there”. I am glad to say that the Buddha did teach a much more deeper doctrine, and I am sure he and many others in the West will be enthusiastic about finding the true message of the Buddha.
- The author knows that as an atheist, he was treading into unknown territory in talking about spiritual experiences: “.....*many of my fellow atheists consider all talk of spirituality to be a sign of mental illness, conscious imposture, or self-deception. This is a problem, because millions of people have had experiences for which spiritual and mystical seem the only terms available*” (p.11).
- However, once one understands the true message of the Buddha, one can clearly see that there is nothing in his doctrine that goes against the beliefs and convictions of most atheists; Buddha Dhamma describes the Nature’s laws at a fundamental level.
- The only difference between science and Buddha Dhamma is that science assumes that mind phenomena can be derived from material phenomena, while in Buddha Dhamma mind is at the forefront; see, “[Philosophy of the Mind](#)”.

13. I encourage those who are interested to read the book because the author has not only contemplated deeply about the subjects of morality, questions on existence, world religions, etc, but also has tried to experience different meditation techniques. I only wish he had been exposed to the true teachings of the Buddha, so that he could perhaps make more stronger statements about the value of the Buddha Dhamma in addition to finding much more benefits for himself.

9.2.3 “The Language of God” by Francis Collins

This is a very popular book (published in 2007), as apparent from the large number of reviews on Amazon. The author is a respected scientist, and is director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This post is based on a review that I posted at the Amazon site back in 2012.

- I have read numerous books trying to find solid arguments for believing in a Creator. The author has put together the best case he could also using previous ideas of C. S. Lewis and others. The main points in the book can be summarized as follows (not in the order presented in the book):

1. God is responsible for the “Big Bang”, i.e., the creation of the universe, and for creating the just right physical parameters (fine tuning) for the ultimate formation of planet Earth which is suitable for human evolution.
2. The “Intelligent Design” theory needs to be abandoned, since it may actually damage the case for the existence of God.
3. Darwin’s theory of evolution does account for leading to the appearance of a “human-like” creature, even though the evolution of more complex animals is explained by the theory.
 - Whether this creature further evolved by itself to be human or whether at some point God directly instilled human conscience to this creature, he leaves it open.
 - Either way, God is responsible for the existence of morality in humans. This is the theory of “Theistic Evolution”, which he prefers to call “BioLogos”.
4. The existence of “Moral Law” (the ability to differentiate right from wrong) is the fundamental basis for his belief in God.
5. The issue of “pain and suffering” was a difficult issue for C. S. Lewis, and the present author also runs into difficulties in addressing it.

My comments are as follows:

1. Credible evidence is emerging that Big Bang was not just one event, but such events are of common occurrence, and there is no need to invoke a higher power.

- Stephen Hawking, whose book “A Brief History of Time” that the author quoted to make a case for God’s role, has since come out with a new book “The Grand Design” (2010) where he clearly states that the need for a Creator God is no longer there based on new evidence.
- Also, in the inflationary theory, there are Big Bangs occurring all the time, and there is no need to invoke a fine-tuning of physical parameters; see, “The Beginning of Infinity” by David Deutsch.

2. Actually “Intelligent Design” is a somewhat better theory than the hypothesis of a God, in the sense that the proponents of that theory have actually put forth some formidable arguments for it.

- Of course I do not subscribe to that theory (which some say is making the case for a Creator God without admitting it), but Collins does not make a better case for the Creator God hypothesis.
- The problem with the “Intelligent Design” theory is that of course the question arises as to how that designer came into being! This is why many people say it is the same as the God hypothesis.
- If anyone is interested in learning about the “Intelligent Design” theory, a good book is “Signature in the Cell” by Stephen Meyer (2009).

3. The big question here is “where in this sequence did the God instill moral values in the evolving creature?”. Is there a clear-cut transition from a robotic animal to a human with moral values?

- The “uniqueness of a human” according to the author is the ability to know right from wrong. It is true that humans have this quality more stronger than in animals. Yet some animals also have at least a glimpse of this quality. If you have a pet, especially a dog, you know that it has feelings and also its own mind to do things, i.e., it is not like a robot.
- While people sometimes sacrifice their own life to save others, there are also people like Hitler and Pol Pot who have committed unmentionable atrocities over long times (not just on impulse).
- In Buddha Dhamma, both moral and immoral choices are built into “human psyche”; based on many complex factors (*sansaric* habits or “*gathi*”, family, friends, and associates, etc) people choose to be moral or immoral at different times depending on the situation. Of course, greed, hate, and ignorance play a big role; see, “[Living Dhamma](#)”.

4. Now on the existence of “moral law”: From #3 it is clear that even though morality is built into human psyche, it does not have a “binding effect” on humans. Humans are, in general, more “moral” than animals but within the wider world described by the Buddha Dhamma, there are other sentient beings (*devas* and *brahmas*) who are more “moral” than humans.

- If man is to be judged by just one life, why is it that everyone not given the same chance (including “same morality”)? People are born poor, rich, healthy, unhealthy, etc., and some die even before getting a chance to prove their worthiness.
- This quite apparent “vagaries of life” are a strong argument for the case that this life is only one of many, and the diversity that we observe is due to effects of past actions (*kamma vipāka*); see, “[Vagaries of Life and the Way to seek “Good Rebirths”](#)”.
- The basis of morality (as well as immorality) comes out naturally in Buddha Dhamma; see, “[Origin of Morality \(and Immorality\) in Buddhism](#)”.

5. Of course, the issue of “pain and suffering” — not only in this life but in the cycle of rebirths — is the basic problem of existence according to Buddha Dhamma.

- Again, the issue of “pain and suffering” cannot be explained by any approach that is based on just one life. Just like modern science, Buddha Dhamma is based on “causes and effects”. Suffering — as well as happiness — arises due to past causes, and since most of these effects (e.g., disability at birth, poverty) are even apparent at birth, “past” means past lives.

9.2.4 “Spark” by John Ratey

1. There is a good book, “Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain” by John J. Ratey (2013), which discusses new findings on the effects of regular exercise on the brain as well as the body. (Most of the books I discuss are likely to be available at public libraries).
2. The book discusses how exercise can keep the brain working at a higher efficiency, lower stress and anxiety, get rid of addictions, and even Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, ADHD. It also talks about women’s hormonal changes and aging too.
3. The key is to do moderate exercises up to 6 days a week and to ratchet it up to high intensity once-in-a-while, even for a minute at a time. For example, if you jog, try to run fast for 30s to 1 min once-in-awhile. This is called “interval running”.
 - Max heart rate for a person is 220-AGE.
 - low-intensity exercise: 55%-65% of max rate
 - moderate: 65%-75%
 - high intensity: 75%-90%
4. There are “wrist watch type” heart rate monitors available. But you basically “know” when you are at low intensity (walking), moderate (jogging/slow running), and high (dashing to catch a bus or running a 100 meter race).
 - Should not do high intensity unless you have been active for a while.
 - In the anaerobic range (high intensity), the brain releases human growth hormones (HGH). **This is a natural way to “get high”.**
 - Many other beneficial chemicals are released even at low-intensity, but all get a boost at high-intensity. All these are good for the sustenance/growth of neurons so that your memory can be improved.
 - But should not do high-intensity on a regular basis unless one is in great shape.
 - He also mentions yoga as a good activity. Any exercise, i.e., just walking, is better than none.
 - He discusses how children in a school district in PA are avoiding obesity and health problems and getting good grades because the schools have good exercise programs.
 - I find that the best time to meditate is after a good workout and a shower. The body and the mind are refreshed and alert.
5. We are born with a body and a mind that is a result of a specific *kamma vipāka* in the past. But we are not bound by either; we can improve both. This does not mean we should try to “beautify” the body; we should make it healthy. The physical body is a “temporary shell” that will be with us for about 100 years, and if we do not take care of it, that will lead to much discomfort.
 - We can make conditions conducive to get “good *kamma* seeds” and to prevent “bad *kamma* seeds” from bearing fruits; see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)”. Do not be discouraged by those Pāli words. The post is easy to understand.
6. Exercise and meditate! That is key to a long healthy life as well for “cooling down” in the sense of getting some long-lasting peace-of-mind or attaining one of the four stages of *Nibbāna*.
 - As we get old, it is imperative to keep both body and mind in good condition. It is hard to concentrate, let alone meditate, with an aching body or a defiled mind.
 - At least walking a mile or two a day can keep one fairly healthy, and at least solving word puzzles or reading a book is better than watching television for the mind.

X Dhamma and Philosophy

- [Dhamma and Philosophy – Introduction](#)
- [Philosophy of the Mind](#)
- [Is Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) a Religion?](#)
- [The Infinity Problem in Buddhism](#)

10.1 Dhamma and Philosophy – Introduction

1. One may ask the question: “What does Buddhism have to do with philosophy?”.

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines philosophy as:

- the study of ideas about knowledge, truth, the nature and meaning of life, etc.
- a particular set of ideas about knowledge, truth, the nature and meaning of life, etc.
- a set of ideas about how to do something or how to live

Other dictionaries and books define philosophy in a similar manner.

2. The origin of the word “philosophy” comes from the Greek words “phila” (meaning love) and “sophia” (meaning wisdom). Thus philosophy is “love of wisdom”. It is said that Pythagoras (570 BCE) coined the term, and that is the basically the time the Western philosophers started looking for “natural explanations” instead of accepting that a Creator needed to be invoked to explain phenomena that we see around us.

- This method of “acquiring knowledge” was supposed to be based on reason, argument, and observation. **But as we discuss at this website, any knowledge gained by that method is necessarily limited, because we have senses faculties that are very limited, and whatever deductions we make with unpurified minds are faulty and incomplete;** see, “[Dhamma and Science](#)” section for an introduction. Science actually branched off from philosophy, first as “natural philosophy”.
- Therefore, Buddha Dhamma has a lot to say about philosophy, even though there is no such thing as “Buddhist philosophy”; there is only “Buddha Dhamma” which describes the nature. The Buddha did not speculate on anything like philosophers. He said he experienced everything that he taught. One time a *Brahmin* asked the Buddha whether he believed *devas* and hell beings exist. The Buddha said he KNOWS they exist and could see those beings.
- Buddha Dhamma can sort out the philosophical arguments that have gone back to the Buddha’s time (in the Western world); philosophical views have evolved over the intervening time, but Buddha Dhamma has not. Ironically, “the pure form of Dhamma” had been left out of the discussion mainly because “Mahayana forefathers” like Nagarjuna, Asanga, and Vasabandhu made up a “Buddhist philosophy”.

3. **Since Buddha Dhamma is a complete set of nature laws only for its faithful followers, it is logical to present it as a philosophy to those who are not familiar with it or who have not seen enough evidence to believe that claim.** In presenting Buddha Dhamma as a philosophy the second definition is a more valid one, because these are not evolving ideas; rather, they were laid down 2500 years ago, and have been documented in the *Tipitaka*, the Pāli Canon.

- It is a set of ideas about knowledge and truth not only about human existence, but ALL that exists in the seen and unseen parts of “this world”, which also encompasses not only the Solar system, but an infinite number of such planetary systems.
- This may sound as an arrogant claim, but it is not. One could scan different sections of this site and see that there is a complete theory about the whole existence; it may take another year or more to get even the “basics” of the Dhamma published. As of mid-2015, I have not yet been able to present even a fraction of the Abhidhamma material.

4. My basic incentive for creating this section is to make a request to the philosophy community: It is time to take a close look at Buddha’s world view, and see how it compares with existing philosophical arguments on various topics. No one has done a serious study on the worldview of the Buddha.

- It has been difficult to make a true assessment of what the “real Buddha Dhamma” is, because there are so many different versions out there.
- I hope to make a logical presentation to convince the philosophy community. Please make any comments/requests, and I will try to address any serious request.

5. Perhaps as important, I want anyone reading the site to appreciate the significance of what the Buddha told us 2500 years ago. Compared to the pure Dhamma, all philosophical theories are at very early stages. Any interested reader can learn about the current philosophical arguments (and those going back to the early Greek philosophers) and then compare with Buddha Dhamma presented at this site.

6. Within the framework of the Buddha Dhamma all standard philosophical questions have been answered.

- These include, “the relation between the brain and mind”, “the nature of death”, “whether we have free will”, etc. Thomas Nagel’s short book listed below gives an introduction to some of such topics.
- Most existing literature on Buddhist philosophy says some of these questions are in the category of “questions that the Buddha refused to answer”, which itself is an incorrect statement; see, “[Misconceptions on the Topics the Buddha “Refused to Answer”](#)”. The Buddha refused to answer questions posed by a person who was not capable of comprehending the answers. But he has given the answers in other places.
- We will discuss how Buddha Dhamma provides answers to these philosophical questions one by one, as sufficient background material is added to site.

REFERENCES

For those who are interested on the subject, here are some references (both for philosophy in general and also on “Buddhist philosophy”; not in any particular order). Among those on “Buddhist philosophy”, I have not read a single book that provides a true description of the Buddha’s world view.

For those who are not familiar with the subject, I would recommend the first two introductory books on philosophy:

“What does it all mean?” by Thomas Nagel (1987) – Excellent introductory book and only 100 pages.

“The Making of a Philosopher”, by Colin McGill (2003) – Another excellent introductory book.

“Buddhist Philosophy – Essential Readings”, ed. by William Edelglass and Jay L. Garfield (2009).

“Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations”, by Paul Williams (2009)

“Buddhism as Philosophy”, by Mark Siderits (2007).

“Buddhist Philosophy – A Historical Analysis”, by David J. Kalupahana (1976).

“Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism”, by David J. Kalupahana (1975).

“A History of Buddhist Philosophy”, by David J. Kalupahana (1992).

“Nagarjuna – The Philosophy of the Middle way”, by David J. Kalupahana (1986).

“Causality and Chance in Modern Physics”, by David Bohm (1957).

“Conversations on Consciousness”, by Susan Blackmore (2006) – input from a number of philosophers.

“Mind – A Brief Introduction”, by John R. Searle (2004).

“The Character of Consciousness”, by David J. Chalmers (2010).

“Consciousness Explained”, by D. C. Dennett (1991).

“The Quest for Consciousness: A Neuroscientific Approach”, by C. Koch (2004).

“Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion” by Stephen Jay Gould (2002).

“The Self and Its Brain”, by Karl R. Popper and John C. Eccles (1977).

Next, “[Philosophy of the Mind](#)“,

10.2 Philosophy of the Mind

1. One nice thing about Buddha Dhamma is that there are no separate theories for the mind, meaning of existence, the physical world, or ANYTHING in this world. Thus I can refer to the section on [“Buddha Dhamma”](#) when I talk about the mind, the same way I refer to that section when I discuss [“Dhamma and Science”](#).

2. There seems to be three basic problems that the philosophers are trying to tackle regarding the mind (there are many others, but let us start with these):

- How does the mental experience arise in a physical body? Most scientists and philosophers say that it originates in the brain, but they have not been able to make the connection. This is the “mind-body problem”.
- How can non-physical mental states of consciousness cause something in the physical world? For example, how can your intention ever cause a movement of your hand? This is the “problem of mental causation”. Yet, the case for “physicalism” — that everything in this world is matter-based — is made with this as a premise.
- Finally, how your thoughts refer to something that is happening (or happened) in a distant city? This is called the “problem of intentionality”. If you are thousand miles away from home, you can take “tour” of the home, room by room, in your mind.

3. The philosophers are divided into two camps in addressing the above problems:

- One camp says the “physical” and “mental” are two distinct realms. They do not think “mental” can arise from ‘physical’; This camp is mostly religious and attribute the “mental” to the concept of a “soul”. They are “dualists”.
- The other camp is ‘materialistic’: they say the ‘mental’ arises from “physical”. In the worst case, some materialists deny even the existence of a mental reality, even though I cannot quite understand what that means. Because they are obviously thinking about these concepts, which is “mental”.

4. Let us look at the current status of these two camps:

- Following the extreme dualism of Rene Descartes, there have been many dualists, including Stephen Jay Gould whose “non-overlapping magisteria” in the late 1990’s put matter and mind into non-overlapping disciplines: matter can be handled by science and morality and mind can be left to religion. However, these days only dualists left seem to be those who hold a dualist view for religious reasons, i.e., a soul.
- These days most philosophers are materialists. With the amazing progress of science and technology, it is hard for most people to believe anything that is not “confirmed” by science. And they think science, based on a purely materialistic approach, should be able to explain everything about ‘this world’. They believe that it is only a matter of time before brain activity will be able to explain the workings of the mind; see the reference list in [“Dhamma and Philosophy – Introduction”](#).
- The inadequacy of the materialist approach is detailed in a comprehensive manner by Thomas Nagel in his recent book, “Mind and Cosmos” (2012); it is an easy read with no fluff and only 128 pages. I was impressed by how close he came to advocating a “mind first” approach, just like in Buddha Dhamma (apparently he does not know anything about Buddha Dhamma and does not even mention it).

5. Mind is the ultimate cause of everything in this world. The Buddha said, “*mano pubbangama dhamma, mano setta manomaya...*”. “Mind precedes all dhamma, all dhamma are mind made...”. But Buddha’s is not a dualist world view. Mind and matter are intimately connected.

- This is in sharp contrast to both the “dualistic” and “materialistic” views.
- Most people translate the above Pāli verse as, “mind precedes all mental phenomena....”. So, we need to examine what “dhamma” means here.

- Dhamma explains how anything and everything in this world comes about “dhamma” means “to bear” or “to explain” or “how anything “comes about”. Nothing happens without (multiple) causes.
- In the *Sabba Sutta*, the Buddha clearly defines what “*sabba*” or “all” that in “in this world”: It is everything that can be experienced via the five physical senses and the mind. Specifically, eye and visible objects, ear and sound, nose and smells, tongue and tastes, body and touch, and the mind and concepts (these are the six internal and corresponding six external “*ayatanas*”), this is “the all”.
- Is there anything that is not included within those 12 *ayatanas*? There is nothing else in the whole world that is not included in those 12 *ayatanas*. Six of those are “internal”; eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, and the other six are external, they exist “out there”.
- Therefore, it is NOT correct to say that “dhamma” in the above verse includes only mental phenomena, as many translators of the *suttas* have done. This is why I keep saying that we need to check consistency all the time. If one thing is not defined properly, then that error propagates and lead to contradictions.
- This “all” can also be expressed as the 31 realms of existence; of those 31 realms, normal humans experience only two realms (human and animal); see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”. But it is possible to experience other realms via developing mental power, i.e., *jhānas*: see, “[Power of the Human Mind – Introduction](#)” and the follow-up posts. Thus, the Buddha’s world view is much more expansive than the ones that are subjected to current scientific and philosophical investigations.

6. According to Buddha Dhamma, the ultimate realities in this world are just 28 types of *rūpa* (matter), *citta*, and 52 types of *cetasika*. Then different combinations of the *cetasika* in *citta* gives rise to 89 (121) types of *citta*.

- Of course *citta* and *cetasika* constitute the mind, and 28 types of *rūpa* constitute matter.
- Another way to state the same thing is in terms of the 6 *dhatu*s: *patavi*, *āpo*, *tējo*, *vāyo*, *akasa* (space), and *viññāṇa*. The 28 types of *rūpa* mentioned above (including *akasa dhatu*) are derived from the *sātara mahā bhūta*: *patavi*, *āpo*, *tējo*, *vāyo*. *Viññāṇa* constitutes of *citta* and *cetasika*.
- All inert things and plants in this world (31 realms) are made of *rūpa*. All sentient beings “are made of” *rūpa* and have *viññāṇa* (*citta* and *cetasika*), i.e, a mind.
- As I will explain in a separate post, *rūpa* are ultimately caused by the mind; see, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatṭhaka\]](#)”. But *rūpa* are inherently unstable (this is basically the root cause for suffering in the material world), and there is a fundamental law in physics which states the fact that matter is unstable and the universe itself “runs down”; see, “[Second Law of Thermodynamics is Part of Anicca!](#)”.
- When the mind is released from the material body, one attains *Nibbāna*, i.e., one is never reborn “in this world”. It is the material body that is subject to decay and death, and lead to suffering.

7. The reason that I started this website is that it is not possible to provide a reasonable explanation of the Buddha’s world view in an essay or even in several essays. At the website, I can make references to related posts. I hope it would be a rewarding experience for anyone who is willing to allocate some time to read AND contemplate.

- Another reason to start the website is that I want to have it all out in the open, so anyone can challenge any inconsistency. I want to find the truth myself, and the only way to do that is to get as many as possible to look at the emerging picture and make corrections to any errors anyone can find.
- Therefore, I would appreciate any comments pointing to any errors or inconsistencies anywhere on the site, in addition to suggestions for relevant topics to discuss.
- There is more to follow. This is an introduction.

- How “physical” arises from “mental” in the most fundamental sense is really complex and we may not get to that for a while. First we will concentrate on how physical bodies of the living beings arise *with causes from* the “mental”. I will be building up the Abhidhamma section and then will refer frequently to that section as we proceed.

8. It is time to make a paradigm change: Consciousness is not only ontologically fundamental, it takes precedence over matter. Mind can create matter. Right now we have evidence that the mind can change the brain; see, “[Truine Brain – How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#)“. **If the brain creates the mind, how can the mind alter the brain?**

9. Here are a couple of papers on the subject related to the “mind body problem” for those who are interested (click on them to open):

[WebLink: What is it Like to be a Bat – Nagel \(1974\)](#)

[WebLink: All machine and no ghost- McGinn-2012](#)

Next, “[Buddha Dhamma: Non-Perceivability and Self-Consistency](#)“,

10.3 Is Buddha Dhamma (Buddhism) a Religion?

October 21, 2015; revised November 8, 2015

It is best to learn (or even investigate) Buddha Dhamma with a mindset pretty much the same as when one is trying to learn about a new concept, say in mathematics or science. There are some key assumptions (axioms) involved, which cannot be proven, but do make sense especially if one takes time to contemplate. This is contrary to conventional religions.

1. Merriam-Webster defines “religion” as:

- the belief in a god or in a group of gods
- an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods
- an interest, a belief, or an activity that is very important to a person or group

The Oxford dictionary has the following definitions:

- The belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods
- A particular system of faith and worship
- A pursuit or interest to which someone ascribes supreme importance

2. The word “religion” invokes the idea of a Creator God in most people’s minds. Even though this is correct for most major religions of the world, it is definitely not correct for Buddha Dhamma.

- The foundation of Buddha Dhamma is that the world has been in existence “forever” (no First Cause and thus it was not created). Universes come and go, but there have been living beings at all times.
- It may first appear to be inconsistent with the current “Big Bang theory” that says our universe started some 14 billions years ago in a “Big Bang”. In fact, major religions embraced the idea of a Big Bang when it was first proposed, since it had connotations of creation. However, when the inflationary theory that describes the Big Bang (proposed in the 1990’s) says there are multiple, parallel universes. Thus, the hope for a unique “event of creation” fizzled out.
- Of course “Big Bang theory” is just that, a theory. There are some scientists who do not believe everything “popped up” all of a sudden in a Big Bang. They believe that universes are cyclic, i.e., they transform and evolve; see, for example, “Endless Universe – Beyond the Big Bang”, by P. J. Steinhardt and N. Turok (2007).

3. So, Buddha Dhamma does not count as a religion if one takes the first two definitions from either Merriam-Webster or Oxford dictionary. Yet, it can be included in the third category.

- **One could say that most major religions are theistic**, i.e., based on the belief of a Creator.
- Buddha Dhamma can be categorized as an **atheistic religion**, in the sense that there is no assumption of a Creator. It must be noted that in Buddha Dhamma there are beings called “*devas*” (sometimes translated as “gods”) in other realms; they cannot affect our lives in a significant way, much less than creating universes.

4. However, I prefer to label Buddha Dhamma as the “ultimate science”. It encompasses all of nature’s laws not only pertaining to matter, but also pertaining to the mind. It is the Grand Unified Theory that the scientists are striving to discover, but they are only focusing on the material side.

- Scientists are beginning to realize the importance of the mind. In fact, many scientists are attempting to make a connection between quantum theory and the mind. This is NOT going to work, because any “matter-based theory” cannot explain the mind. Mind is the forerunner: [“Manōpubbangamā Dhammā..”](#).
- As I build the Abhidhamma section, it will become clear why the mind takes precedence over matter. And it will also become clear why the Buddha is the top-most scientist. He was only concerned with sharing what he discovered with the others.

- The “new found knowledge” about innumerable planetary systems existing in our universe was known to the Buddha and is described in the *Tipitaka*; see, “[Dhamma and Science](#)”.
- The Buddha was not interested in “starting a religion” so that he could be worshipped by the masses. Instead of residing in many luxurious residences like the *Jetavanaramaya* in his last days, he chose to travel by foot to Kusinara enduring many hardships on the way. He wanted to show that his body was not exempt from suffering.

5. When I listen to current debates between those who believe in a Creator and those who don’t (atheists), I think the following summarizes the key ideas from each group:

- Atheists correctly point out that there is no evidence supporting the idea of a Creator God. Our ancestors could not fathom the workings of our complex world, and envisioned a Creator, who was supposed to have created the humans and a suitable habitat for them. But many “mysteries” of our world have been resolved with the advance of science, and in fact, these findings contradict key ideas in major religions.
- Those on the other side do not have any “winning points” or scientific evidence, but they insist that the idea of a “totally physical world” goes against our experiences and innate feelings that cannot be denied. That there must be something in addition to a physical body, i.e., there is a “conscious experience” that cannot be attributed to atoms and molecules in our bodies.

6. Buddha Dhamma encompasses both these key points. First, on the side of the atheists, there is no need for a Creator. Natural processes can account for not only what happens on Earth, but an uncountable number of habitable planetary systems in a vast universe.

- On the other hand, science can account for only how the material world evolves. There is something other than inert matter in this world as the theologians argue, and that is consciousness. Consciousness cannot be derived from inert matter. There are six elemental entity types in this world: *patavi*, *āpo*, *tējo*, *vāyo*, *akasa* (space), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness). Consciousness thus cannot be derived from other five. The first four have deeper meanings than just earth, water, fire, and wind; we will discuss this in a future post.
- However, consciousness was not imparted by a Creator. Furthermore, contrary to what most theologians believe, animals are conscious too (even though their consciousness is at a lower level compared to humans).
- This is why one could say Buddha Dhamma is an “atheistic religion”, within a narrow context.

7. Some people tell me that Buddha Dhamma is not that different from other religions because there are certain “assumptions” that need to be believed “on faith”, for example, that there is a rebirth process. In fact, it is true that “not believing in the possibility of a rebirth process” is a wrong view that could make one eligible to be born in the lower four realms or the *apāyas* where suffering is much more compared to in the human realm; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.

- However, the axiom of a rebirth process is not to be taken as a tenet, like in the case of the Ten Commandments; it is up to oneself to examine and accept or reject that concept. Even a Buddha cannot make anyone be “forced to believe” in anything.
- Thus, there is a difference in what is meant by “faith” in Buddha Dhamma, compared to that in theistic religions. In any theistic religion, one has to accept the idea of a Creator without question; it is THE basis of any major theistic religion.
- Buddha Dhamma just describes the nature of this world; this [The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#) has some basic axioms just like geometry or the theory of relativity. These “assumptions” can be verified to be correct if one takes time to examine the evidence.
- One could start off by not embracing these basic assumptions, but not rejecting them outright either. One could keep an open mind and explore the key ideas in Buddha Dhamma and decide for oneself whether those assumptions start to make sense as one proceeds.

- In fact, accepting such assumptions on blind faith will not do any good for anyone. One has to comprehend WHY those HAVE TO BE correct in order to make sense of this world that we live in. One has to spend time and critically evaluate the key concepts in Buddha Dhamma.

8. Buddha dhamma based on some key axioms like the rebirth process and the existence of other types of beings in 29 more realms (other than the human and animal realms), has the explanatory power to explain anything in this world, ranging from the existence of innumerable planetary systems (which was only accepted within the past few hundred years by science) to how morality comes about without a Creator; see, "[Dhamma and Science](#)" and "[Origin of Morality \(and Immorality\) in Buddhism](#)".

- It may take me another year or two to get the more deeper concepts explained, but I think there is enough material at the site to see that the knowledge of the Buddha (who was a human being just like us) cannot be matched by any other human. It took us the workings of many brilliant scientists from Galileo to Newton to Einstein to realize the vastness of this universe, which the Buddha described 2500 years ago.
- But the even more astounding fact is that the Buddha described in detail how the consciousness arises in a living being, in addition to describing the material world. Science is still under the "wrong view" that consciousness can arise in the brain out of inert matter. I am just beginning to layout the basics of *Abhidhamma* that have been hidden in the past several hundred years, and have been revealed by a very special *Thero* in Sri Lanka.
- Whenever possible, I try make connections to current findings in science, and to show the new confirmations as well the wrong concepts still embraced by science. Time will reveal that Buddha Dhamma, in its pure form, cannot be refuted. I have started to add the date of posting of essays, so that we can keep track of these predictions over the coming years.
- And there are no "mysteries" in Buddha Dhamma, even though some concepts are still not amenable to science.

9. I just read the recently published book, "Life on the Edge" by Johnjoe McFadden and Jim Al-Khalili (2014) which describes how scientists are slowly, but surely, revealing many "mysteries of nature". These are all consistent with Buddha Dhamma, and I can point out a couple of "possible future breakthroughs".

- Scientists will be able to extend the lifespans of humans. There is no set limit to human lifetime in Buddha Dhamma, with lifetimes extending to thousands of years at times.
- It may even be possible to make conditions in a laboratory (chemical concoctions) that allows a lifeform to arise. This does NOT mean that scientists will be able to CREATE LIFE. Buddha Dhamma describes how animals and humans can exist in the "*gandhabba* state" until a suitable conditions for it to start building a physical body become available; see, "[Manomaya Kaya](#)". When a human baby is conceived, for example, what happens is that a matching "*gandhabba*" taking possession of the zygote in the womb or even out in the laboratory; see, "[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)".
- If careful experiments are designed, it will be possible to demonstrate even now that small insects "can be born" out of decaying leaves; what happens is that decaying leaves lead to the formation of the "seed" (right chemical concoction) necessary for a "*gandhabba*" of that insect species to start a new physical body.

10. For those who would like to look into arguments on why theistic religions do not make sense, below is a compilation of arguments by Sam Harris, a prominent atheist.

- By the way, Buddha Dhamma does not agree with some of the positions of Mr. Harris (issues on how consciousness arises, as we discussed in #9 above). For example, at the end of the video (last several minutes) he talks about human embryos not being qualified as "human", i.e., there is no life there. There Mr. Harris says a zygote is the same as any other trillions of cells in a body. That is not even consistent with modern science.

- Modern science has not pinpointed when life begins in a zygote; see, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)“. This is why I am saying that science is incomplete; it does not know about the “*gandhabba* state” of a human discussed in #9 above. By the way, a “*gandhabba*” is not a soul; see, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)“. I have other posts at the site that provide more details, but it may not be for another year or so until all the details are presented.
- With regard to the mind, science is still at the same stage that it was 500 years ago regarding the material world, i.e., when most people thought stars were embedded in a celestial sphere around the Earth; see, “[Dhamma and Science](#)“.

Please note : The video seems to start around 43 minutes into the presentation. You may need to manually reset to the start of the video.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Best Sam Harris Arguments - 2 Hour Compilation! - Debate, Interview, and Lecture Footage](#)

10.4 The Infinity Problem in Buddhism

July 15, 2017; Revised February 5, 2018 (link at the end of the post)

This question was posed to me by Mr. C. Saket from India, who also sent along his ideas too. Apparently, this question has been discussed in several online forums, without reaching a satisfactory answer.

1. The question is: “The Buddha has said that there is no discernible beginning to the rebirth process (see the *suttas* in [WebLink: suttacentral: Anamatagga Samyutta, Samyutta Nikāya](#)). In other words, we have had infinite number of attempts at attaining *Nibbāna*. So, why have we not attained *Nibbāna* yet?”

- This question seems to have its origin in the [WebLink: WIKI: infinite monkey theorem](#), which states that a monkey hitting keys at random on a typewriter keyboard for an infinite amount of time will almost surely type a given text, such as the complete works of William Shakespeare.
- By the way, this infinite monkey theorem is another evidence of how unimaginably large infinity is: “[Infinity – How Big Is It?](#)”.

2. First of all, the proof of the monkey theorem is based on a monkey generating random characters using a keyboard. The following example is given in the above link to the monkey theorem:

- Suppose the typewriter has 50 keys, and the word to be typed is *banana*. If the keys are pressed randomly and independently, it means that each key has an equal chance of being pressed. Then, the chance that the first letter typed is ‘b’ is 1/50, and the chance that the second letter typed is *a* is also 1/50, and so on. Therefore, the chance of the first six letters spelling *banana* is $(1/50) \times (1/50) \times (1/50) \times (1/50) \times (1/50) \times (1/50) = (1/50)^6 = 1/15\,625\,000\,000$, less than one in 15 billion, but not zero, hence a possible outcome.
- Let us first discuss the differences between the infinite monkey theorem and the current problem. However, at the end it will be shown that the conclusion of the infinite monkey theorem does apply to the present case too, and there is no contradiction even though infinite number of beings have not yet attained *Nibbāna*.
- The key point is that an infinite number of beings have attained *Nibbāna*. This is why infinity is such a complex concept.

3. Attaining *Nibbāna* is NOT a random process. First of all, one needs to hear or read about the *Tilakkhana* (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*) in order to even start on the process.

- No matter how hard one tries, one will never be able to attain *Nibbāna* if one has not heard the TRUE VERSION of the *Tilakkhana*. In some aeons (*mahā kalpa*, lasting roughly 10 billions years), there is not even a single Buddha, and the probability of attaining *Nibbāna* during that aeon is ZERO.
- Even during a given *Buddha Sāsana*, the true meanings of the *Tilakkhana* get distorted from time to time and thus the probability goes to zero. For example, at present time, most people interpret *anicca* as impermanent and *anatta* as “no-self”.

4. There have been only 7 Buddhas within the past 91 *mahā kalpas*. This timeline is discussed in the “[WebLink: WIKI: suttacentral: Mahapadana Sutta \(DN 14\)](#)”.

- There was only a single Buddha (Vipassī) in the *mahā kalpa* that was 91 *mahā kalpa* earlier. There were no Buddhas in the next 60 *mahā kalpas*, and then two Buddhas (Siki and Vessabhu) appeared. Then there were 30 *mahā kalpas* without a single Buddha, and so far in the current *mahā kalpa* there have been four Buddhas (Kakusanda, Konagama, Kassapa, Gotama), and one more Buddha (Maithree) is expected to appear before this aeon ends.
- Even during a given *Buddha Sāsana*, only a fraction of HUMANS will get to hear/read about the true *Tilakkhana*. Today, the percentage of Buddhists worldwide is roughly 5%-10%, and much less than 1% have heard about the true *Tilakkhana*.

- Furthermore, the human population is negligible compared to the population of beings in the *apāyas*, who have zero probability of comprehending *Tilakkhana*. So, we can see that there are many zero probabilities for a given LIVING BEING, compared to a relatively few non-zero probabilities.

5. We can refine the progress to *Nibbāna* a bit more. The key to *Nibbāna* is first to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage; once that is reached, *Arahanthood* is guaranteed. It is mostly only in the human realm that one will be able to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- In order to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, one first needs get rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi*; see, “[Miccā Diṭṭhi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)“. Only then one will be able to comprehend the *Tilakkhana* and start on the Noble Eightfold Path to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- Suppose one is born human during the time of a Buddha, having gotten rid of the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi*, makes good progress towards the *Sotāpanna* stage. But if, for some reason, he/she is unable to reach the *Sotāpanna* stage (i.e., without grasping *Tilakkhana*) and dies, then even if the next birth is in the human realm, one could be born to a family with *miccā diṭṭhi* and thus may have to start over.
- We do carry our “*gathi*” from life-to-life. “Good *gathi*” can grow in the next life under conducive conditions, but they can also be reversed or changed under adverse conditions.
- We can call such an occurrence an “event with significant probability”.

6. Therefore, reaching *Nibbāna* cannot be considered a mechanical process, and thus cannot be compared to a monkey hitting arbitrary keys on a keyboard to generate Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

- One has to make a concerted effort — via several intermediate stages — to reach *Nibbāna*.
- However, a mathematician could still say that one could consider an infinite number of such “events with significant probability” by a living being per #5 above.
- One such “event with significant probability” can be equated to a monkey hitting a key stroke on the keyboard.
- Even though such “events with significant probability” may be separated by huge time spans, given infinite time, **an infinite number of them can accumulate**. Therefore, the infinite monkey theorem should still hold.

7. It is indeed true that an infinite number of living beings HAVE ATTAINED *Nibbāna* in the past.

- Not only that, infinite number of living beings have attained the *Buddhahood* in the past. Of course, attaining the *Buddhahood* is infinitely more difficult than attaining *Arahanthood*.
- Therefore, the infinite set of living beings who have attained *Nibbāna* is “much larger” than the infinite set of living beings who have attained the *Buddhahood*.

8. Infinity is a very complex concept. There are many levels of infinity. Infinity minus infinity is still infinity. So, even as there have been an infinite number of Buddhas, and even higher infinity of those who attained the *Arahanthood*, there are still an infinite number of living beings (including us) who have not yet attained *Nibbāna*.

- Therefore, while the infinite monkey theorem does apply here, there is no contradiction.
- Of course, several other questions now arise: Where do all these infinite number of living beings live? Do they all live in our Solar system? Have all these infinite number of Buddhas appeared in our Solar system? It will take many more future posts to fully explain these, but we can summarize as follows.

9. There are 31 realms that are associated with our Earth or the Solar system (*Cakkāvāta* or *Cakrāvāta*), see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma – Introduction](#)“. So, there are many more living beings in our *Cakkāvāta* other than the humans and animals that we can actually see; most living beings are in the other three realms of the *apāyas*; animal realm is the fourth.

- Furthermore, there are an infinite number of such *Cakkāvāta* (planetary systems) in existence at all times with living beings. Buddhas can appear in some of them.
- These *Cakkāvāta* are in clusters of small, medium, and large “world systems” (galaxies, galaxy clusters, and superclusters in terms of modern science). But none is permanent. They come into being and eventually perish, only to be reborn again. Just like us, these world systems also undergo death and rebirth; it is a cyclic process. We will discuss this at a later time.
- Within the past 100 years or so, scientists have confirmed the existence of billions of planetary systems within each galaxy and billions of such galaxies in our universe. As far as science is concerned, the number of *Cakkāvāta* (planetary systems) is likely to be infinite — as stated by the Buddha 2500 years ago.

10. If there are infinite number of planetary systems with life (just like ours), how come that scientists have not detected life outside our Solar system?

- The distance between adjacent *Cakkāvāta* is enormous. The star closest to us, Proxima Centauri, is 4.2 light years away from us. This means, if we travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles/second), it will take 4.2 years to get there! Of course, we can only travel at a small fraction of the speed of light.
- For comparison, our own Sun is only 8 “light minutes” away from the Earth, i.e., it takes only 8 minutes to get to the Sun if we travel at the speed of light. The moon is about 1.3 light-seconds away from the Earth (240,000 miles). We have been able to only land on the Moon so far!
- So, it is fair to say that we may not be able to communicate with living beings in another planetary system in the near future, if ever. Even if we find that our closest star has a habitable planet like Earth, it will take over 8 years to even send a light signal and get a reply back.

11. This is why the Buddha said not to waste time on thinking about these questions. In the [WebLink WIKI: suttacentral: Acinteyya Sutta \(AN 4.77\)](#), he listed four things that are inconceivable (*acinteyya*) by a human, and if one persists on that path one may become insane (may lose one’s mind, because these issues are so complex):

- *Buddha Visaya* (things that are discernible to a Buddha), *Jhāna Visaya* (powers that can be accessed by one in *jhānās*), *Kamma Vipāka* (how the laws of *kamma* work), and *Loka Cintā* (comprehending the real nature of the world).
- The issue that we just discussed belongs to the fourth category. We will never be able to figure out or comprehend everything about the unimaginably large and complex world (the universe). But from the above discussion, hopefully we all can at least get a glimpse of the complexity of the universe with infinite number of *Cakkāvāta* like ours.

February 5, 2018: An update on this subject can be found at the Discussion Forum topic, “[The Infinity problem – BIG Doubt](#)”.

XI Bhāvanā (Meditation)

Even for those who are practicing Buddhists, I recommend starting at the Introduction, and going down the list of topics at least the first time.

I am starting this section at the end of May, 2014. It has been almost 6 months since starting the website, and even though I am not anywhere close to getting the “base material” published, I think there is enough background material to get started discussing the actual practice.

- At this point there are just over 100 posts on the site, and it should be possible to refer back to those posts to clarify anything that is not clear in this section (of course you may send me a comment). I am going to avoid putting links in this section, because that could distract the flow.
- I have tried to make the titles self-descriptive, but you can also use the “search” button on top right to look for relevant posts on any keyword.
- I will start off with the basics so that even a person not much familiar with Buddha Dhamma can follow.
- After the 10th post, there are posts that I will keep adding which can be used as meditation topics. Of course one should be familiar with the basic Dhamma concepts first, in particular, *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- On the 10th post, I describe my own meditation procedures and my experience.

The numbered posts are to be read in that order. Even for those who are practicing Buddhists, I recommend starting at the Introduction (#1), and going down the list of topics at least the first time.

- [Possible Outcomes of Meditation – Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala](#)
- [Getting to Samādhi via Formal Meditation Sessions](#)
- [Are you not getting expected results from meditation?](#)
- 1. [Introduction to Buddhist Meditation](#)
- 2. [The Basics in Meditation](#)
- 3. [The Second Level](#)
- 4. [What do all these Different Meditation Techniques Mean?](#)
- 5. [Ariya Metta Bhāvanā \(Loving Kindness Meditation\)](#)
- 6. [Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā \(Introduction\)](#)
- 7. [What is Ānāpāna?](#)
- [Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?](#)
- 8. [The Basic Formal Ānāpānasati Meditation](#)
- [Possible Effects in Meditation – Kundalini Awakening](#)
- 9. [Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#)
 - [Introduction to Character or Personality \(Gathi\)](#)
 - [A Broad View of the “Person” Trying to be a “Better Person”](#)
 - [How Character \(Gathi\) Leads to Bhava and Jathi](#)
 - [How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)
- 10. [Attaining the Sotāpanna Stage via Removing Ditthasava](#)
- 11. [Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)
- 12. [Key Factors to be Considered when “Meditating” for the Sotāpanna Stage](#)
- 13. [Kammattana \(Recitations\) for the Sotāpanna Stage](#)

- [Anussati and Anupassanā – Being Mindful and Removing Defilements](#)

Meditation Topics

- [Myths about Meditation](#)
- [How to Attain Samādhi via “Vipassana Pabbanga Samatha” Bhāvanā](#)
- [A Simple Way to Enhance Merits \(Kusala\) and Avoid Demerits \(Akusala\)](#)
- [The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#)
- [What is Samādhi? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness](#)
- [Panca Indriya and Panca Bala – Five Faculties and Five Powers](#)

11.1 Possible Outcomes of Meditation – Samadhi, Jhana, Magga Phala

Revised May 30, 2018

1. As we discuss in the following posts, meditation is of two types: one is done at all times, being “morally mindful”, and then the other type is the formal meditation where one contemplates on a given “procedure” while sitting down or walking.

- In Buddhist meditation, the first is more important than the second.

2. Then there are three possible outcomes of meditation: *samādhi*, *jhāna*, and *magga phala*.

3. One gets to *samādhi* by focusing the mind on one thing. Normally a mind jumps incessantly from one thing to another: a sound pulls the mind one way, a sight another way, smell, etc., and the mind itself likes to jump around. Regardless of the cause, this makes the mind tired, but unless one has experienced *samādhi*, or especially *jhāna*, one may not even realize that one’s mind is constantly under stress; of course we do realize it when a deadline approaches and the mind goes to overdrive. One can truly appreciate this only after experiencing the tranquility of a focused mind. The mind gets “sensitized” as one gets to *samādhi*.

- Most people do not realize how “inherently stressed” our minds are. We get used to things, and do not feel even hardships. Only when we get to a “better state” we feel the difference, and then it is hard to go back to the “lower state”. For example, one who has lived a life of poverty has gotten used to it. Even though once in a while one thinks about the “better life” enjoyed by some others, one does not think about that all the time. However, if one is able to upgrade the lifestyle to a higher level, then one can FEEL the difference and now it will be very difficult to go back. One becomes “sensitized”. We will encounter this word “sensitized” in many cases when we discuss the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*.
- Most people meditate to get some “peace of mind”, to get some relief from the pressures of hectic life. That is a form of *samādhi*. When one focuses on a neutral object, like breath, one gets to such a “neutral kind of *samādhi*”.
- There are three kinds of *samādhi* when categorized according to morality, i.e., what the focus is on: *micca samādhi* and two types of *sammā samādhi*, one mundane (for living a better life) and one supermundane (focusing on *Nibbāna*).
- There is a post on different types of *samādhi*: “[What is Samādhi? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness](#)”.

4. *Jhāna* is a deeper level of *samādhi*, where the mind really gets absorbed in the object (*arammana*). Then the tranquility is optimized, and there are eight levels of *jhānas*: the first four are the ones experienced by beings in the 16 realms of the *rūpa loka*, and the last four in the 4 realms of the *arūpa loka*.

- *Jhānas* CANNOT be attained via *micca samādhi*.
- The *jhānas* attained via *sammā samādhi* are two types, corresponding to *Ariya jhānas* and *anariya jhānas*; see, “[Power of the Human Mind – Anariya or Mundane Jhānas](#)” and “[Power of the Human Mind- Ariya Jhānas](#)”.
- Even though one can get to *anariya jhānas* by just focusing on the breath, it does require one to live a moral life. One who is not at least following the conventional five precepts will not be able to cultivate them.
- Of course the uniqueness of Buddhist meditation is the supermundane *sammā samādhi*, leading to *Ariya jhānas*, and the four stages of *Nibbāna*.

5. Thus the highest levels of “peace of mind” are at the four stages of *Nibbāna* or *magga phala*: *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi*, and *Arahant*. However, it is not necessary to PRACTICE *Ariya jhānas* in order to attain *magga phala*.

- For example, one could attain the *Sotāpanna* stage without practicing *jhānās*. What is needed to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage is *upacāra/anulōma samādhi*; see, “[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)”.
- Furthermore, unless one has practiced it before, a *Sotāpanna* cannot automatically get into a *jhāna*. However, it will be easy for a *Sotāpanna* to attain *jhānas* with practice.
- We need to remember that *jhānās* are mental states of higher lying *brahma* realms. They still belong to the 31 realms of “this world”. One needs to lose cravings for *jhanic* pleasures in order to attain the *Arahanthood*.

6. To get to *Ariya jhānas*, one focuses on *Nibbāna* (or more precisely recall one’s own “cooling down”): see, “[Power of the Human Mind- Ariya Jhānas](#)”. **But before one can use this technique to attain *Ariya jhānas*, one needs to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage; see #7 below.** This is a point that I have clarified only recently.

- Basically, one sits down in a quiet place, and first contemplates on *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, for a little while, and then keep repeating the following (or the English translation; what matters is one has to have the understanding): “*Ethan santhan ethan paneethan, yadidan sabba saṅkhāra samatho, Sabbhupathi patinissaggo, tanhkkhayo, virago, nirodho, Nibbanan ti*”, [‘*etaṃ santam etaṃ paṇītam yadidaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhākkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānan*’*ti.*] which means, “It is the only peace, the only happiness: prevent *saṅkhāra* from arising (via) eliminating *taṇhā* and excess greed, and thus stopping the arising of defilements, which is *Nibbāna*”.
- The reciting of a certain phrase (meaningfully, with understanding) is called a “*kammatthāna*”. A given meditation technique is also called a *kammatthāna*.
- Two important points to keep in mind: (1). One can either say it out quietly, or say it in one’s mind, (2) This is not chanting; just saying the words will be just a waste of time. One needs to comprehend, to some extent, what is meant by *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, i.e., some idea of what *Nibbāna* (or “cooling down” is).
- If one has experienced any kind of “cooling down” it is best to recall that while saying the above phrase. For example, if one does not flare up like one used to, or if one has less attachment to things, that is the best to recall.

7. Since one cannot focus the mind on *Nibbāna* without first experiencing it at least at the *Sotāpanna phala* moment, one cannot get to *Ariya jhānas* without first reaching the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- Even though the *Sotāpanna phala* moment comes and goes without one really noticing it like getting a message of the sort, “OK. You have reached the *Sotāpanna* stage”, one starts feeling the “cooling down” afterwards. This is a hard thing to explain and actually it takes a while before one truly realizes that one has attained it.
- The bottom line is that one needs to reach the *Sotāpanna* stage before getting to *Ariya jhānas*. If one suspects that one has reached the *Sotāpanna* stage, one can use the procedure in #6 above to cultivate the first *jhāna*.
- Unlike the *Sotāpanna* stage, it is relatively easy to confirm the attainment of the *jhāna*, because one’s *Ariya jhāna* cannot be disturbed by even forcefully thinking immoral thoughts. So, if one can confirm that one has reached even the first *Ariya jhāna*, that means one is also a *Sotāpanna*.

8. Thus reaching *magga phala* and *Ariya jhānas* REQUIRE the understanding of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, the Three Characteristics of existence. Without the “correct vision” or *sammā dīṭṭhi* at some level, the mind does not see the unfruitful nature of sense pleasures or the “superiority” of *nirāmisa sukha*.

Next, “[Are you not getting expected results from meditation?](#) “,

11.2 Getting to Samadhi via Formal Meditation Sessions

March 25, 2016; revised December 1, 2017

1. It does make sense to do formal meditation even at the very beginning when one decides to follow the Path of the Buddha, but AFTER one has at least read about the correct interpretation of “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”. In the following I will discuss the importance of a daily (or few days a week) formal meditation session.

- When one starts seeing the dangers of staying “in this world” (*anicca* nature), one needs to reassure the mind that there is an alternative, i.e., *Nibbāna* or *Niveema*. Thus, simultaneously with contemplating *anicca* nature, one needs to encourage the mind to taste the *niramisa sukha* that results from it by cultivating *samādhi*. A formal meditation session provides that.
- The Buddha gave a simile to explain this effect. In the old days, when people took to the oceans to look for new lands, they took caged birds with them. When they were lost and wanted to find whether they were close to land, they released a bird and shooed it away frightening it. The bird would fly around looking for safety (i.e., land) but will be forced to come back to the ship if no land is found; but if it can see land, it will not come back to the ship. When the mind starts seeing the dangers of *amisa sukha* or “worldly pleasures”, we need to encourage it to enjoy the *niramisa sukha*, i.e., that there is a better alternative.

2. Even before one gets to *jhānas*, one can experience “cooling down” when one engages in regular formal meditation. Looking back to my early days, I remember getting to some sort of *samādhi* while sitting at the desk and contemplating on a Dhamma concept. The body became light and breathing became slow due to the calmness of the mind.

- It is hard to feel “*samatha*” or “*samādhi*” if one is not sitting down or lying down.
- Furthermore, it gives one confidence that one is making progress if one can see the “improvement” in being able to stay in “*samādhi*” for longer times with practice. To emphasize, this *samādhi* does not need be a *jhāna*. It is just being able to stay in one place with a focused mind and with palpable lightness in the body and the mind.

3. Many people who do breath meditation say that it is a *samatha bhāvanā* to calm the mind BEFORE doing *vidassana* (insight) meditation. But that is a waste of time. One can get to *samatha* by doing *vidassana* (*vipassana*) or insight meditation.

- As I have discussed in other posts, one should find a quiet place and sit comfortably. One could start the session with *Tiratana vandana* to calm the mind; see, “[Buddhist Chanting](#)”. One could make the room dark and light a candle and/or incense to “set the background”. Those activities help some people to get into the proper mindset.
- Then one could just start contemplating on a Dhamma concept. One could either listen to part of a *desanā* or read part of an essay and then start contemplating on that. This is insight meditation.
- Some people who do breath meditation have difficulty in maintaining their focus on the breath; other random thoughts start creeping in. However, if one starts seeing the value of Dhamma and becomes truly interested in learning Dhamma, it will become easier to concentrate on a Dhamma concept. **Thus one initially should pick a topic of interest to oneself.**

4. With time, it becomes easier to get to *samādhi* by gradually purifying the mind. But it is important to figure out which areas to focus on in order to gain maximum benefits.

- First, it is important to realize that there are two main categories of “bad deeds” that can have negative consequences; see, “[Lobha, Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)” for details.
- Those done with *lōbha* (excess greed), *dōsa* (hate), and *mōha* (covered mind) can lead to birth in the *apāyas* (four lowest realms). Permanent reduction of *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* to *rāga*, *patigha*, *avijjā* happens when one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- Those done with *rāga* (craving for sense pleasures), *patigha* (friction), and *avijjā* (ignorance) can only lead to rebirth in the higher realms in the *kāma loka* (human and *deva* realms), and in *rūpi* and *arūpi brahma loka*. Thus one can concentrate on those after getting to the *Sotāpanna* stage, but one can start thinking about them too in order to help comprehend the *anicca* nature as discussed further below.

5. Therefore, our main goal should be to avoid those actions that can lead to rebirth in the *apāyas*, i.e., avoid those actions done with *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*.

- In simplest terms, this means getting rid of *micca diṭṭhi* and comprehending *anicca* nature. One of the strongest kind of *micca diṭṭhi* prevalent today is materialism: One believes that at death one ceases to exist, i.e., one believes that the mind is a byproduct of the body (brain), and thus when the body dies, that is the end of story. This is also called *vibhava taṇhā*.
- It is a good idea to review the relevant posts on *micca diṭṭhi* to make sure one understands them. The ten types of *micca diṭṭhi* are discussed in “[Three Kinds of Diṭṭhi, Eightfold Paths, and Samādhi](#)“. There are also many posts on “[anicca, dukkha, anatta](#)“.
- Starting on the Eightfold Path for a *Sotāpanna Anugami* begins with getting rid of *micca diṭṭhi*, comprehending *anicca*, and thereby comprehending first stage of *sammā diṭṭhi*; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)” and the post in there.

6. By sorting out priorities (the order of things to be done), we can save a lot of time in getting to the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- One has the potential to be born in the *apāyas* if one has remnants of *gathi* suitable for those four realms; there are many posts on *gathi*, *bhava*, and *jathi* at the site to read and contemplate on.
- It is imperative to be mindful and avoid actions compatible with “*apāya gathi*“. In the meditation sessions, one could think back to the previous few days and see whether there were any such instances and make a determination to not to repeat such acts. Once it becomes a habit, one can even catch oneself doing it and stop right then.
- For example, if someone does something bad to you, and if you start thinking about “how to get back” in retaliation, that is done with hate and need to be stopped. However, it is OK if one “gets mad” momentarily at such an unprovoked, harsh act by someone. It is only at the *Anāgāmī* stage that one will automatically stop “getting mad”. Even then there may be some annoyance at that person. Only an *Arahant* has perfect *upekkha* and will not be bothered to the slightest by ANY provocation.
- Another example is extreme greed (*lōbha*) where one tends to do “whatever it takes” to get what one wants, and also wishing that others should not get those things. Enjoying sense pleasures (*kāma rāga*) that are acquired through legitimate means is not a hindrance to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage. Thus engaging in sex with a spouse is done with *kāma rāga*, but that with another’s spouse or a child, for example, is done with *lōbha*.
- A successful meditation program goes hand in hand with a moral lifestyle. They feed on each other.

7. It is also very important to be aware of the *dasa kusala*, *dasa akusala*, and also *punna kriya*; see, “[Kusala and Akusala Kamma, Punna and Pāpa Kamma](#)“, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)” and “[Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā](#)“.

- *Punna kriya* help one attain the right mindset for meditation. Also, *punna kriya* increasingly become stronger *kusala kriya* as one’s understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* grows.
- A *Sotāpanna* has COMPLETELY removed only *micca diṭṭhi* from the *dasa akusala*. Only an *Arahant* is completely free from *dasa akusala*; see, “[What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)“.

- Of course, the tendency to do *dasa akusala* start decreasing from the time one starts on the mundane eightfold path, even before the Noble Eightfold Path; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.
- In terms of Abhidhamma, the *apayagami* strength of all *dasa akusala* will be removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage due to the removal of the 4 *diṭṭhi sampayutta lōbha citta* and the *vicikicca sampayutta mōha citta*; see, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)”. Thus if a *Sotāpanna* commits any of the remaining 9 *akusala kamma* their strength would be much reduced, because one has removed *gathi* suitable to be born in the *apāyas*, mainly by getting rid of *micca diṭṭhi*.

8. Many people worry about sense pleasures way too early. It is not necessary to forcefully suppress normal sense desires before the *Sotāpanna* stage, even though it may happen to some extent automatically. *Kāma rāga* (and *patigha*) are removed via the *Sakadāgāmi* and *Anāgāmi* stages.

- If a vessel is leaking due to multiple holes, one needs to fix the bigger holes first. Trying to plug small holes which are leaking slowly, while water is draining rapidly through gaping big holes, is a waste of time.

9. On the other hand, contemplating on the bad consequences of sense pleasures can lead to a better understanding of *anicca* (unfruitfulness of worldly things) and the First Noble Truth. In addition to the suffering due to obvious causes such as an ailment or a headache, we are not even aware of most of the suffering that we endure.

- In fact, in a twisted way, **we perceive most of our sufferings as enjoyments**. It is a “made-up” enjoyment and is called “*assāda*” (***āsvāda* in Sinhala**).
- This is also a good “meditation topic”, and could help one to get to *samādhi*. However, this should be done when one can come to a stage where one starts to comprehend such concepts. Each person is different, so one should keep trying different options.

10. For example, we enjoy eating, especially if the food is tasty. But why do we have to eat? This seems like a foolish question, but there are beings (*brahmas*) who do not need to eat anything. They are sustained by their *kammic* power (previous good *kamma*). *Devas* have to consume *amurtha* to sustain themselves, but that is a very fine food and there is no residue (i.e., they do not defecate or even sweat).

- On the other hand, we have to work hard to make money to buy food, spend time and energy to cook, and then “enjoy a meal” that lasts may be half an hour.
- But all that suffering (working to make money, going to grocery store, cooking, etc) is masked by “made-up mind pleasures” or *assāda*: We look forward to that meal and forget about all that suffering!
- On the way back from work we may start getting hungry, but that will be masked because we will be thinking only about the meal that is waiting for us.
- Is this any different from a cow who pulls a heavy cart, but forgets about all that suffering because it is focusing on a bundle of hay dangling in front of it?

11. Let us consider another type of hidden suffering that is associated with cleaning ourselves. In the morning, we brush our teeth, take a shower, shave, apply all kinds of fragrances and go to work very happily. We don’t even notice the hidden suffering associated with all that work!

- One could experience another facet of that suffering if one can skip a day or two of doing those things. It will be very uncomfortable even for ourselves let alone for the others.

12. In fact, most of the things that we do in a given day are done to just maintain our bodies, our houses, our environment in a presentable condition. Yet, we do not see the suffering associated with all those activities. That is another way to comprehend *anicca* nature.

- **One may think that thinking about such things could make one depressed. That is certainly possible if one did not know about the *anicca* nature, and also that by following the 37 Factors of Enlightenment one can be released from that suffering.**

- The comprehension of the true (*anicca*) nature of this world, and the hidden sufferings associated with it gives one “*anuloma shanthi*“. This is the joy that comes from grasping the true nature of this world.
- Then by realizing that there is a way to REMOVE future suffering (by following the 37 Factors of Enlightenment), provides one with “*sammatta niyama*“.
- Thus as one makes progress, it is a good idea to think about specific cases where one has gained a “peace of mind”. That itself can lead to *samādhī*. One needs to realize BOTH the dangers of the rebirths process (*anicca* nature) AND the benefits of following the Path (*Niveema* or cooling down).
- When one starts experiencing BOTH *anuloma shanthi* and *sammatta niyama*, one becomes a *Sotāpanna Anugami*, which inevitably leads to the *Sotāpanna* stage; see, “[Sotāpanna Magga Anugami and a Sotāpanna](#)“.

13. Finally, I want to emphasize the importance of trying to extend the duration of the formal meditation session gradually.

- At some point one will start feeling body sensations. And then the mind will “switch over” to a different state. When that first happened to me a few years ago, I was startled. At that point one could let the mind “take over”, i.e., stop contemplating and let the *samādhī* “grow” and possibly lead to *jhānas* (it is easier for those who have the *sansaric* habit; but *jhānas* are not necessary for *magga phala*). Now one has attained a higher level of *samādhī*. One could of course continue with insight mediation.
- This is when one starts feeling enhanced *niramisa sukha*. It is not really a “pleasurable feeling” in the sense of what you experience in eating a nice meal, listening to a favorite song, etc. It is rather a calmness of an unburdened mind. **Until one experiences it, one is not aware of the real stress that our minds are normally under. One comes out of the meditation session refreshed and alert.**
- I would say it is possible that one could start experiencing some kind of benefit when the session is naturally lengthened to half an hour or may be an hour. I am just basing this on my own experience. If people are willing to share their experiences, I can update this post in the future (or even present someone’s experience in a separate post). That could help motivate others.

11.3 Are you not getting expected results from meditation?

Revised December 1, 2017

Some people try to attain Nibbānic bliss by trying to “give up all attachment to this world” in their minds during meditation. However, until the mind truly realizes the dangers of this world (the rebirth process), it is unable to give up those attachments.

- One has to attain at least the *Sotāpanna* stage by “seeing the true nature of this world” before one’s mindset becomes amenable to “giving up”. This is the hardest part to understand.
- Even before that one needs to get rid the 10 types of *miccā ditthi* as discussed below.

1. During the time of the Buddha there was a *bhikkhu* named Pōtila, who was well-versed with deep Dhamma concepts and was a well known teacher; he had developed *abhiññā* powers as well, but had not attained even the *Sotāpanna* stage. His *desanas* (discourses) were deep and only those at the *Anāgāmi* stage (at least *Sotāpanna* stage) could follow them and get to *Arahanthood*. One day he went to see the Buddha, paid respects, and told the Buddha that he had been a Dhamma teacher during the times of several earlier Buddhas too, and helped many to attain *Nibbāna* (*Arahantship*).

- The Buddha asked him whether he has attained any *magga phala* and Bhikkhu Potila admitted that he had not. The Buddha just commented: “*Thucca* Potila” and turned his attention to other matters; *thucca* (pronounced “thuchcha”) in Pāli means despicable or “lowly”.

2. So, *bhikkhu* Potila, who had expected praise from the Buddha for helping others, realized that he needs to work on his own salvation before helping others. He strived by himself and could not make any progress; he was trying very hard to “give up all attachments”, following the same instructions he was giving others. But no matter how hard he tried, he could not succeed.

- When he sought help from other *bhikkhus*, they were reluctant to become his teacher because everyone knew he was very knowledgeable in Dhamma. Eventually, he went to this very young *Arahant*, who was well-known for his teaching abilities, and sought help. The young *Arahant* agreed to help, only if *bhikkhu* Potila agreed to carry out everything as instructed, and Potila agreed.
- The young *Arahant* decided to use an unusual *kammatthana* (instructions). He took Potila to a large area covered by mud, and asked him to wade into the mud and keep going until told to stop. Potila started wading in mud and kept going until he was told to stop when the mud was all the way up to his chin; he was barely able to move at this point because mud was heavy.

3. The *Arahant* told him that, “if someone is stuck in mud like that any knowledge about cleaning oneself by taking a bath is not going to help. One needs to get out of the mud first”.

- Then he asked Potila to come back. Potila had great difficulty in moving forward initially, since he was all the way up to the chin in thick and heavy mud. While dragging himself out of the mud with great difficulty, Potila realized what the young *Arahant* was talking about. It is not possible to get out of mud until one realizes that one is stuck there, and getting out of mud required sheer will power. Similarly, he had not realized that he was stuck at a much lower moral level; he needed to cleanse his mind first.
- The “giving up” part comes with a mind that has removed the wrong visions (*miccā ditthi*) and also excessive greed for sensual pleasures. These cannot be removed **just by** reading or listening about that.

4. Of course one can remove some of it by reading, listening, **and contemplating** on the validity of the reasons that the Buddha has given, especially on *miccā ditthi*. One has to realize that *kamma* (or one’s actions) are likely to have their results either in this life or the next, and thus the rebirth process must be valid. Remaining types of *miccā ditthi* are also related to *kamma* and rebirth. The 10 types of *miccā ditthi* are discussed in “[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotapanna Stage](#)”.

- The second level of removal of *miccā ditthi* comes via comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*; ; see, “[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotapanna Stage](#)”.

5. The simile can be made even better by looking at what happens to ants who get stuck in honey. Here unlike mud, the sense pleasures are appealing and there is no incentive to get out either. Those ants who get stuck in honey, would not even try to get out because they are too busy enjoying the honey. **Even when they are barely stuck, and can move out of honey, they would not because they like the taste of honey.** Just like that, any living being, whether a human or even the lowly worm, likes to indulge in the sense pleasures, and thus gets stuck.

- **And even when one realizes that one needs to get out of “the honey pot” it is hard, at least initially.**
- For that one needs to see the perils of staying in this rebirth process, where birth in lower four realms will lead to unimaginable suffering. Even if one can strive to be born in higher realms, that will not last long. **This is “*anicca*”: no matter how hard we try to find refuge in the 31 realms it is not possible to do so in the long run.**

6. With much effort, Potila slowly made his way up to the waist level, and started feeling the lightness of being free of mud. He could now move faster too. He felt the relief when he was out of the mud, and was asked to go and take a shower. Now, cleaning up with soap could be done; but while stuck in mud, there was no use of soap and water. Just like that the deep Dhamma that he had memorized was of no use to him while he was still stuck in mud.

- Eventually, when one comes out of the mud that is like the *Sotāpanna* level. One is still covered with mud, i.e., one still likes to enjoy sense pleasure. But now one KNOWS that one needs to take a shower, use soap and shampoo, and remove all that mud.

7. What Potila was doing was to give discourses on deep Dhamma that could help an *Anāgāmi* attain the *Arahanthood*. Most of those who benefited from *bhikkhu* Potila's discourses were, ironically, *Anāgāmis*. Potila was just reciting the Dhamma without real comprehension but those who benefited were capable of comprehending the true meanings. After that *kammatthana*, Potila was able to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage and soon became an *Arahant*.

(By the way, one cannot attain the *Sotāpanna* stage by taking instructions from an *Anariya*, i.e., one who had not attained at least the *Sotāpanna* stage. But once one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, one can learn by himself or from anyone else and get to the higher stages. This is why it was only *Sotāpannas* or above (mostly *Anāgāmis*) who could benefit from *bhikkhu* Potila's discourses).

- I believe this actual incident involving *bhikkhu* Potila highlights a very important point. No matter how much one reads on deep concepts of Dhamma, it is hard to get the idea to sink in unless one's mind is purified to a certain extent. It is critical first to break through the heavy fog of being covered by many wrong concepts and strong attachments. When one breaks through that initial “wall of resistance”, then it is easier to comprehend deeper concepts; see “[Lobha, Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)”.

8. One needs to make progress in a systematic way. Just like it is not possible to learn high school math without learning basic addition/subtraction, one MUST understand the basic concepts first. If one is engaged in killing, stealing, sexual misbehavior, lying, gossiping, getting “drunk” with alcohol, drugs, power, beauty, money, etc, it is not possible to calm the mind to a basic level. **And this is the hard part.** One is stuck in mud (more like honey, because it feels good to be stuck there).

- And while stuck in mud (or honey), no matter how much meditation one does, it is not possible to get LONG TERM relief. One may be able to go to a meditation retreat and be away from all those “honey-filled” attractions and enjoy some sense of calmness; but that goes away soon after coming back to “real life” with all those temptations.
- One needs to slowly work one's way through the mud (or honey, because that is how it seems initially first). This is the HARDEST part. No matter how much one READS, that is not going to make much difference until one sets up the stage for the mind to see the reality.
- By the way, this is also why those who meditate on “there is no self” (there is no ‘me’) cannot make any progress either. One needs to comprehend the “pointlessness in striving to

accumulate material things for oneself” first. If one could tell a full blown lie, hurt someone else, sexually misbehave, etc, then isn’t that done to gain something for “me”?

9. Here is a rough step-by-step I would recommend (this is of course not for everyone; just for those who know they are stuck in honey):

A. If one is hurting others to get sense pleasure, that should be stopped first. It is double jeopardy; one is not only “getting stuck” due to excess greed, but also going to suffer consequences of harming others. One is not only getting attached to “pleasurable things” but also accumulating bad *kamma* by hurting others.

- For example, if one is killing animals for fun (sport), stealing valuables from others, having sexual relationships with other married people or young children, planning to hurt someone (even for retaliation), or spreading rumors about someone just to get some pleasure out of it, getting drunk and verbally/physically abusing others, all those would be included here.
- **Such immoral activities are the worst, and are called “*pāpa kamma*”. Both *lōbha* and *dōsa* (*dvesha*) are involved here and one’s mind is said to totally covered with ignorance (*mōha*);** see, “[Lobha, Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)”.
- Thus someone in this stage is deeply in mud all the way up to the chin.

B. One notch lower is being capable to do things (of course not always) with EXTREME greed, even if it does not hurt others directly; here one is only up to waist to shoulder level in mud. These are normally the things one does to seek “perceived happiness” by going to extremes.

- When one cannot get “high enough” with alcohol one tends to try drugs, because one has been “de-sensitized”. We all know of many movies stars etc. who get into this trend and end up committing suicide because nothing at the end can bring more pleasure to a highly “de-sensitized” mind.
- Another indication of extreme behavior is living beyond one’s means. This is of course relative. If one is living a small (but comfortable) house and wants to move in to a bigger house just for the sake of that **by stretching one’s resources**, that is a sign of extreme greed. If one is already living in a mansion that one has inherited or earned, and there is no financial burden, then there is nothing wrong with that since that will not burden the mind. However, in general, the more fancier the item is, whether a house or a car or anything else, it normally takes more time and effort to “maintain”, and inevitably there is a degree of attachment because of the perceived value.
- Such extreme greed could also lead to actions of hate, when someone else gets in the way. Then one may do “*pāpa kamma*” here as well; it is possible that actions of hate gets one to the higher level.

It is not possible to discuss all possibilities, but one should be able to figure out many such cases. No one else can decide these for anyone. Only each person knows about one’s own status of mind. However, any sensible person can make some kind of a judgement for oneself, but not for others.

C. If one is at stage A or B above, one should read those posts in the “[Moral Living and Fundamentals](#)” section. It could be helpful to go back and read those as one makes progress, and see that one understands more things than previously. This is hard to explain, but is true. A clear mind sees things much more easily.

- For those who are in stage A or B should read posts #1 through #3 below first.

D. Once one gets to the B stage, one should start reading the posts on the “[Key Dhamma Concepts](#)” and in particular learn and comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

This is the real key step, to get started on the next stage. Once one gets some traction, there is nothing there to hold back someone from attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage. It had been hard for hundreds of years only because the correct concepts were hidden. Once one gets some traction, one can start doing any of the *bhāvanā*.

- As Carl Sagan said, “..think about all those emperors and kings who committed unmentionable atrocities just to have a sense of superiority and power for maybe 50 years. They are all gone”; see, “[The Pale Blue Dot.....](#)”. Even though Dr. Sagan did not know, that is another way to state what *anicca* is.
- All those emperors and kings will be stuck in the animal or lower realms for billions of years to come. On the other hand, a peasant who lived within his/her means and led a moral life could be living in a *deva/brahma* realm for billions of years.
- The main point here is that there is no point in trying to seek sense pleasures or accumulate wealth for 80-100 years maximum, because at the end we will not be able to KEEP ANYTHING to our satisfaction. We may have a billion dollars, but if our bodies are worn out, will we be able to get ANY sense pleasures? Will we be able to keep any part of our bodies to our satisfaction? Many people try to “beat the aging process” by using temporary fixes such as botox, but any such effect will also will be temporary.
- It is not possible to really grasp the meaning of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, if one is stuck in mud or honey.

E. When one comes out of the mud and start walking (with mud on the body), that is like the *Sotāpanna* stage. Now one does not even need anyone’s help, even though that can help expedite the process; one can figure things out by oneself.

- There are many who know many *suttas* by heart or abhidhamma concepts, but nowhere close to the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- We need to understand that Buddha Dhamma is not about JUST LEARNING concepts (even though learning plays a big part), **it is all about using what is learned for purifying the mind**. As the mind becomes clear, one will start seeing the reality better. In the Buddha’s days, illiterate people were able learn Dhamma just by listening, and even attained Arahant hood.

E. The final stage is to realize that even birth in such *deva/brahma* worlds will be temporary. At some point in the future, they are all going to commit some bad deed and end up in the four lower realms for long times; that is just the nature of this world, where sense pleasures can lure anyone to commit bad actions. But there is no point in talking about that stage, until one gets above the A and B stages, and become a *Sotāpanna*.

F. The series of posts that I am writing on the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* goes through this process too, from stage A. Therefore, it may be a good idea to read those posts from the beginning as well. The first introductory posts are full of Pāli words, but just go through them briefly even if you do not fully understand. They WILL become clear later, if not now.

- **When one starts following the Path, one is bound to break the trend once in a while. A child learning to walk will fall many times. Many people get discouraged when they do an immoral act occasionally; but just to realize that one did a mistake, and that it bothers one’s mind, means one HAS MADE PROGRESS. That is why one needs to have the perseverance to get back up with a renewed determination. Just like a child WILL learn to walk, one WILL get better with time.**

G. Of course I do not know the level of each person coming to the website. Only each person knows where he/she is relative to the above steps.

- If one truly can purify one’s mind and comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, that is all it takes to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- There is material ranging from the basic level to very advanced levels and even more will be posted in the future. This is for the sake of completeness, and also to make sure that any scholar or interested person can gauge the depth of Buddha’s true teachings.
- There are also people who really start comprehending Dhamma and start enjoying finding about further details; no other type of “pleasure activity” can match the “enjoyment of Dhamma”. Buddha Dhamma is the ultimate “book of nature”.

- Furthermore, reading widely on different topics will help build *saddhā* (faith), which is NOT blind faith but faith built on understanding. When one sees how little modern science knows in comparison to the Buddha, it helps build faith. **And *paññā* (wisdom) and *saddhā* grow together.**

Next, “[1. Introduction to Buddhist Meditation](#)“,

11.4

1. Introduction to Buddhist Meditation

The top 10 posts in this section describe a way of using meditation in following the Noble Path and to attain the *Ariya jhānas* and at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. This series was put together using my own experience, and in the 10th and 11th posts I describe how the process can culminate in attaining *Ariya jhānas* (and possibly *magga phala*). The rest of the posts in this section are on possible meditation subjects and together with other posts at the site can be used to clarify unresolved questions, and to gain *samādhi*. It is recommended that the first 11 posts be followed in that order, at least initially.

1. We can get an idea of what “Buddhist Meditation” is, by looking at the Path described by the Buddha to achieve various stages of *Nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* is not an esoteric concept as many believe. That is why I like the synonyms “*niveema*” or “cooling down” because these terms do convey *Nibbāna* as something that is approached systematically and can be EXPERIENCED in the early stages even before the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- “*Ragakkhayo Nibbanan, dosakkhayo Nibbanan, Mohakkhayo Nibbanan*”, gives the essence of how this “cooling down” is attained.
- The more one gets rid of greed, hate, and ignorance, the more one experiences *Nibbāna* or “*niveema*” or “cooling down”.
- One does not, and one cannot, get rid of greed, hate, and ignorance in a few days. It is a gradual process. One can experience the “cooling down” to the extent one can purify the mind. **And there will be ups and downs, especially in the early days, thus ONE MUST HAVE THE RESOLVE to stay on the Path.**
- **Some people just stay with breath meditation for “stress reduction”, and actually avoid anything to do with *Nibbāna*.** They equate *Nibbāna* with extinction, but there is no need to worry; **the fact that one has that mindset means that one is nowhere close to *Nibbāna*.** I am not saying this in a derogatory way, but just as a fact. Until one experiences some “cooling down”, and get some idea about *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, it is very difficult to get an idea of what *Nibbāna* is.

2. Meditation provides ways to achieve this “cooling down” for the three types of people who are interested in meditation:

- Many people just want to practice some basic meditation that the Buddha advocated for achieving some “inner peace”.
- Some are convinced about the rebirth process, but are mainly concerned about getting a “good birth” in the next life.
- **The main goal of this site is to provide enough material for one to attain the first stage of *Nibbāna*, the *Sotāpanna* stage.** After that, one does not need outside help to complete the rest of the journey. However, there are many people who are either not ready to take that task yet, or are not yet convinced about the existence of 31 realms, process of rebirth, or *Nibbāna*.

3. In several posts I have tried to give an idea of what this “cooling down” is. You may want to read them again. They vary from a basic description to deeper details. Yet, they all deal with reducing greed, hate, and ignorance from our minds.

- The words greed and hate are clear, but many do not understand what is meant by ignorance. The post, “[What is Avijja \(Ignorance\)?](#)” gives a bit deeper description, but since it is really important, I want to say a few words here about ignorance.
- The “traditional method” for achieving some “cooling down” or “calming sensation” is to do “breath meditation” or “*kasina* meditation”. **As I questioned in several posts, how can the greed, hate, or ignorance be removed via concentrating on one’s breath or some *kasina* object? Such meditation techniques DO NOT remove ignorance, and only SUPPRESS greed and hate.**

- We need to start gradually reducing greed and hate from our minds; this called “*sila*” (pronounced “seela”) or moral living. Then one’s mind become clear, one starts feeling the *niramisa sukha*, and it will become easier to grasp Dhamma concepts and get rid of *avijjā*.
- Buddha Dhamma is for the wise; it is not to be followed by blind faith but with understanding. One needs to learn and “see” Dhamma first. A sustained “Cooling down” cannot be attained via following a set procedure like watching the breath.
- In fact, one could go a long way (up to the *Sotāpanna* stage) just by learning Dhamma and comprehending the key concepts. When one grasps the key concepts, it begins dawn on oneself that it does not make sense to be too greedy, or to hate someone with a level of hatred that makes one’s heart to “heat up” to uncomfortable levels.
- Thus through better understanding of Dhamma (i.e., removing ignorance), one automatically “cools down”. **Removing ignorance via learning Dhamma leads automatically to reducing greed and hate.**

4. This is why “*Sammā Diṭṭhi*” or “Correct Vision” comes first in the Noble Eightfold Path. **Actually “*sammā*” means “*san*” + “*ma*” or “removing defilements”; but for brevity we will use the word “correct”. But keep in mind that “*sammā diṭṭhi*” means “removing defilements through correct vision”.** I cannot emphasize enough the importance of learning Dhamma. This is the first BIG step. Without understanding the message of the Buddha, how can one follow his Path?

- When one starts to understand the key Dhamma concepts, one constantly tend to think about such concepts and how they should be kept in mind while going through daily chores. This is “*sammā sankappa*” or “correct concepts”. This automatically lead to “*sammā vaca*” (correct speech), “*sammā kammanta*” (correct action), *sammā ajiva* (correct livelihood).
- When these five steps are followed, one becomes attuned to correct mindfulness (“*sammā sati*”). Yes. There is an “incorrect mindfulness” (“*micca sati*”, pronounced “michchā sathi”) too, like when a master thief plans a robbery. One needs to be “engaged” or fully focused to accomplish any task either good or bad.
- With cultivated “*sammā sati*”, one will be able to “see” the consequences of any action very quickly and decide whether to go ahead with it (since only good can come out of that action) or to abandon it (because it is not good for oneself or to others).
- When one sees the benefits of these steps (i.e., “cooling down”) one will be motivated to work harder on all these steps, i.e., one cultivates “*sammā vayama*” (correct effort).
- The culmination is “*sammā samādhi*” (correct calm state of mind). Yes. There is a “*micca samādhi*” too: When that master thief is planning a big robbery, he gets into a kind of *samādhi* too; he feels a sense of calm too, but that will have very bad consequences down the road.
- Actually the latter three develop at the same time. In fact, one could get into “*sammā samādhi*” just via “*sammā diṭṭhi*”. When one listens attentively to a Dhamma talk or gets absorbed in reading about a key Dhamma concept, it is possible that one could get into “*samādhi*”; a *jhānic* state is a deeper *samādhi* state.

5. This is why I recommend everyone to read these posts during a quiet time. **One will absorb more and just by contemplating on the material while reading one could easily get into *samādhi*.** This is what meditation is all about. “Absorbing the good” will automatically force the “bad” out, and one gets into *samādhi* automatically; we will talk about this “*ānāpāna*” process in the following posts.

- It will get to the point that one can sit down and get into a *jhāna* within a minute or two. But that will take time.
- I hope you will be able to experience the LONG TERM benefits from the procedures we discuss in this post and the followup posts. Initially, it will be a bit slow, but if one sticks with it for a few months, one should be able to see a change in oneself that is not merely a temporary relief. For some it will be faster.

6. In this life we feel two kinds of suffering: bodily pains and aches as well as various diseases and mental suffering (disappointments to depression).

- Bodily ailments take time to recover; even those can be reduced by careful planning and being mindful too. If one engages in physical activity (ranging from walking to rigorous exercise) and be mindful of what one eats, many such ailments can be reduced over time.
- Mental suffering could have direct causes in greed, hate, and ignorance. While some are due to past *kamma*, most can be avoided or reduced by being mindful of what one thinks, speaks, and does. Any thought, speech, or bodily action arising from a greedy, hateful, or ignorant thought is going to cause mental anguish sooner or later.
- The easiest way to determine whether any action is bad is to contemplate on the consequences: if it is going to harm oneself or another being, then that action is rooted in greed, hate, or ignorance.

7. Thus Buddhist meditation is basically to cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.

- By preventing from killing, stealing, verbal abuse, etc, what we are effectively doing is to “put out existing fires” in our minds and also prevent such “future fires” from starting. This is “*niveema*” or “cooling down” or *Nibbāna*.
- We should also do things that will help with such moral behavior: associating with like-minded people and environments, actively engaging in opposite moral behavior that makes the heart joyful, etc.
- The most important thing is to learn Dhamma so that one can “see” how all this will liberate one’s mind on a PERMANENT basis. The change becomes “permanent” only when this step is achieved.

When perfected, one will be doing meditation all day long while doing daily chores; this is what the Buddha described as “*āsevitāya, bhāvithāya, bahuleekathāya*” or “associate and use what is good, and do that as much as possible”.

- In a formal meditation session one does the same. The best is to read a post or two on a given Dhamma concept just before (or during) the session and then contemplate on those ideas. It is important to compare those concepts with one’s life experiences, and things will become clear with time: for example, why it is unfruitful to “live life lavishly, especially if that involves hurting oneself or others”.
- You will be surprised that this process itself will get you to *samādhi*, and even *jhānas* in the long term. But we will discuss some other variations too.
- As I have mentioned in several posts, one could even get to the *Sotāpanna* stage just via comprehending the key Dhamma concepts to some extent.

8. Buddha Dhamma is all about the mind; Anything we say or do also start with a thought. The Buddha said, “*manopubbangama dhamma...*”, “the mind takes precedence over everything else..”.

- It should be clear from the above discussion that Buddha’s meditation techniques are attuned to Nature’s laws. They can be followed by one with a religious background or by an atheist.
- One becomes a “*Bhauddhaya*” or a “Buddhist” in his/her mind. If one understands some basic Dhamma concepts and lives by them, then one is automatically a Buddhist. After one gets started with a firm determination on the Path, “*Dhammo have rakkathi dhammacari*”, or “Dhamma will guide one to be on the right Path”.
- The foremost goal is to live a moral life without causing harm to oneself or others, and to seek some “peace of mind” from the modern hectic life. That is our starting point.

9. I also recommend listening to the following discourse for anyone seriously considering Buddhist meditation (You need to adjust volume control on your computer):

“The Hidden Suffering that We All Can Understand”

[WebLink: The Hidden Suffering that We All Can Understand](#)

This is in the post, “[Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#)” in the “[Living Dhamma Overview](#)” subsection of the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.

Next, “[2. The Basics in Meditation](#)“,

11.5 2. The Basics in Meditation

The top 10 posts in this section describe a way of using meditation in following the Noble Path and to attain the *Ariya jhānas* and at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. This series was put together using my own experience, and in the 10th and 11th posts I describe how the process can culminate in attaining *Ariya jhānas* (and possibly *magga phala*). The rest of the posts in this section are on possible meditation subjects and together with other posts at the site can be used to clarify unresolved questions, and to gain *samādhi*. It is recommended that the first 11 posts be followed in that order, at least initially.

1. Those who are doing breath meditation or “watching the stomach rise and fall” know that it is relatively easy for some to calm the mind compared to others. Some cannot even keep a calm mind for more than few minutes; things start “popping up” in the mind.

- This “popping up” is due to the five hindrances (*panca nivarana*) that I have described in a post; see “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)“. These are the basic “residues” or “gunk” that we have deep inside our minds that start bubbling up to the surface when we sit down to meditate.

2. Let us take the simile of a water well that is contaminated with all the rotten stuff that have fallen into it over many years; our minds have accumulated gunk over repeated births, not just in this life. When we are engaged in stressful day-to-day activities, those activities stir up the ‘gunk’ and the mind gets clouded; it is like taking a long pole and stirring the well water; the “gunk” at the bottom come up.

- The two basic “rotten things” we have are the first two on the list of the five hindrances: *kammachanda* (excessive greed) and *vyāpāda* (deep hate).
- *Vicikicca* is a set of person “likings”, and these can be likings for material things OR things that one likes to “hate”; one does these because of the ignorance of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. *Vicikicca* is sort of like a “favorite list” from the main ingredients of excessive greed and deep hate, the first two hindrances. ***Kanka vicikicca* is a worse form of *vicikicca* that arises due to wanton disregard of correct views.**
- The other two are more like “stirrers”, that stir up these bad habits and bring them up on their own: *thina middha* (“trapped” or “frozen” mind), *uddhacca-kukkucca* (tendency of the mind to be scattered; an excited mind).
- *Thina middha* or inability to concentrate on dhamma concepts can be enhanced after a meal, but it can be a personal characteristic or a habit; we will call this the “lazy mind”. An “unsettled” or “excited” mind (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) is also personal, and arises when one feels “superior” or “inferior” compared to others: it must be noted that a “shrunk mind” associated with inferiority is not to be confused with an “unassuming character”.
- The five hindrances are discussed in detail in the Moral Living section.

3. When we are engaged in day-to-day activities, we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and also think about all sorts of things; all these are “external stirrers” that really make our minds look like whirlpools. All these gang up to get the mind to stress out and “heat up”. This is the tension that we feel in a busy day. We need to “cool down”; we need “*niveema*”.

- One way to “cool down” is to turn off those external stirrers temporarily. This is what some people do in a breath meditation session: one goes to a quiet place and closes eyes; this will turn off mainly the five physical senses (i.e., we do not see, hear, smell, taste, touch). This really helps to calm the mind for some people, especially if they have practiced a lot.
- But it is not possible to turn off the sixth one, the mind itself. This is why it is instructed to try to fix the mind on one object, say the breath or the rising of the stomach.
- Actually, some people try to “turn off the mind”, or try to stop thoughts from arising. This is DANGEROUS. We need to PURIFY the mind, not to turn it off. The Buddha had the perfectly

pure, but very active mind. When one follows the Path, one's mind will become sharper, not inactive.

4. However, if we have too much gunk, then the mind will be contaminated even without the aid of a stirrer. It is like an old well that had been abandoned. It has dirty water, and one needs to REMOVE the existing dirty water first.

- Similarly, if one is engaged in immoral behavior (**the BIG EIGHT**: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, gossiping, slandering, harsh speech, and getting “drunk” with not only drugs or alcohol, but also with wealth, fame, power, etc), then the mind is like a well that has dirty water to begin with. Even if stays undisturbed, the water cannot get any cleaner by sitting in a quiet place and turning off the physical senses.

5. Thus it would be hard to even to achieve calmness with breath meditation if one is actively engaged in the BIG EIGHT (unless one has had a lot of practice, but even then the calmness lasts only until the focus is held).

- This is basically *kayanupassana*, the first step in *Satipatṭhāna*; see, “[Satipatṭhāna – Introduction](#)”.
- Therefore, if someone is engaged in one or more of those eight activities, the first thing to do is to try to get rid of them. First start with the worst, and proceed gradually until all are removed. It is like emptying the well of the dirty water.
- This is a BIG STEP. It may take a little while, depending on how much cleaning to be done. But one thing is not to rush out and try to do much. That could be stressful too. The best thing to do is to abstain from one or two big ones, and experience the “cooling down” that results from it.
- Vain talk is a habit that should be gotten rid of early. It does not do any good to oneself or the others. It is inevitable that one will say something inappropriate (possibly slandering, and lying too, which are also in the BIG EIGHT) when one gets carried away during vain talk. Getting rid of it will help with being able to calm the mind quickly.
- The mind needs to see the benefits of doing something before it really gets on board. This is why initially it may take a lot of determination to stick with the plan.
- **It is important NOT to get used to the breath meditation; if you are used to it, I would urge you to gradually stop and try the procedures described here at least for a couple of months. We want LONG TERM results, and there are many people who get addicted to breath meditation to get temporary relief. THAT IS A MISTAKE.**

6. Getting rid of bad old habits and installing new good habits is a KEY in the meditation practice; we will talk about habits (“*gathi*” which become “*āsavas*” over time) in more detail in the next section. Here are some basic ideas that would be helpful:

- To form a new habit, initially it takes some effort. I tried it out by making a new habit of peeling oranges with my left hand (I am right-handed). Initially it was hard, and the main problem was that I kept forgetting to use the left hand. I had to set an alarm to remind myself first. But after a few days, I started remembering, and after a week or two, the new habit was working. Now I automatically do it, and now it is a bit strange to try to peel oranges with the right hand!
- When we make a new habit, a set of neurons in the brain start to wire together for that task; the more we do it, the stronger the neural connections become. This is what happens when we learn to ride a bike, drive a car, or zillions of other things that we do without even thinking about it; see, “[Truine Brain: How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#)” and “[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)”.
- In breaking a habit one needs to do the reverse. When one starts to smoke less and less, the neural connections for that task will get weaker and weaker. After a while, it will become easier not to smoke; brain will stop giving that signal. So it is critical to have the determination to hold off the urge in the beginning. Try to replace that activity with something else at that time.

Craving for a food item can be removed the same way, and much more, including our bad habits such as lying, gossiping, etc. It is the same principle.

7. The basic formal meditation technique is described in the next section. For those of who need time to get rid of the BIG EIGHT, they can also monitor the progress by doing such formal meditation sessions. It is important to realize that all defilements are removed only at the *Arahant* stage. So, there is no point in getting discouraged if it takes time to stop bad habits; **the key is to make progress, and not to go backward.**

- Sometimes when one starts on the *Ariya Bhāvanā*, things may look worse before getting better. It is like trying to cool a hot iron by sprinkling water on it, when all that smoke comes out and may appear to be getting worse. But one needs to be persistent. One needs to keep in mind that uncountable beings have attained “cooling down” by having faith in the Buddha.

Next, “[3. The Second Level – Key to Purify the Mind](#)“,

11.6 3. The Second Level – Key to Purify the Mind

The top 10 posts in this section describe a way of using meditation in following the Noble Path and to attain the *Ariya jhānas* and at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. This series was put together using my own experience, and in the 10th and 11th posts I describe how the process can culminate in attaining *Ariya jhānas* (and possibly *magga phala*). The rest of the posts in this section are on possible meditation subjects and together with other posts at the site can be used to clarify unresolved questions, and to gain *samādhi*. It is recommended that the first 11 posts be followed in that order, at least initially.

1. Let us go back to the example of the abandoned well. Now we have done a decent job of cleaning the dirty water that had been there for a long time, i.e., we have reduced at least some of the main immoral acts, the BIG EIGHT.

- Now we need to make sure that things do not fall into the well while we try to make the water even more cleaner; if there is no barrier around it, when it rains mud water can fall into the well. As with the well, we need to make sure that we keep those BIG EIGHT out of our minds as much as possible. This is ‘*sila*’ (pronounced “seela”) or moral living.

2. In order to make sure that we will not drift back to the old ways, we need to cultivate moral mindfulness (“*sati*”): we need to be on the “lookout” for any temptations to break the BIG EIGHT. But there is a catch that most people do not comprehend: bad habits and cravings or “*gathi/āsavas*” that we have are not only from this life, but possibly from previous lives as well.

3. Again, we can use the old water well as an example: When we drained the water out of the well, the well starts filling up with water from underground fresh water oozing through cracks (from underground aquifers) which is pure.

- However, if we have lot of rotten stuff at the bottom of the well that had been there for a long time, then that pure water gets contaminated. Our bad habits (*gathi/āsavas*) are like the dirt at the bottom of the well. They give rise to the five hindrances, that we mentioned in the above section.

4. The water in the above well will now look relatively more clear if it is undisturbed, i.e, when we let the water to settle down. This is effectively what we do in breath meditation or any such *samatha* meditation. When someone is abstaining from the BIG EIGHT, it is relatively easy to calm the mind by going to a quiet place, closing the eyes, and then focusing on one object, say the breath.

- Such meditations are *anariya* meditations; they provide only temporary relief. One could also get into *anariya jhānas* this way, with lots of practice, especially if one could live a secluded life. Ancient *yogis* who lived moral lives and stayed away from other humans in forests could attain higher *jhānas*.
- What happens here is that the five hindrances are kept SUPPRESSED. It is like the rotten stuff kept undisturbed at the bottom of the well.
- If one takes a long pole and stir the well, those contaminants start coming up.

5. In the same way, when someone comes out of the quiet place, one gets “disturbed” with external sense stimuli (i.e., when a particularly strong sense object is presented). For someone with a lot of lust, it could be a picture of an attractive person. If someone has a lot of hate towards another, then hateful thoughts can come to the surface just by someone mentioning that person’s name.

- This “bubbling up of bad stuff to the surface” is called “*anusaya*”. To stop such *anusaya*, those *gathi/āsava* need to be removed (gradually).
- These terms are explained in, “Gathi (Gati), Anusaya, and Āsava”.
- This is why people who have a very calm and peaceful experience at a meditation resort come back to regular hectic life and see that experience fade away gradually. That is because it WAS a temporary solution. What we have in mind here is a more permanent solution. But this approach takes a bit more time.

6. So, how do we really clean the well? It is not enough to let the gunk to sink back to the bottom; we need to remove the gunk that has accumulated at the bottom of the well. There could even be toxic things down there. Thus it takes an effort to remove all those. Once those are removed, there is nothing down there that can contaminate the fresh water coming out. When the well fills up we only need to make sure that things do not fall back in to contaminate the well.

- Similarly, what we need to do with our minds is to remove the bad habits (*gathi/āsavas*) that have been accumulated over countless past lives and reinforced in this life. If we have hate in our minds, that hate can triggered easily. This is why some people are prone to “flare-ups” than others. If we have extreme greed, we can be tempted easily to act immorally for sense satisfaction through any of the six senses.
- Even though the main ones are greed and hate, there are uncountable number of combinations (when included with ignorance). That is why we see uncountable number of habits/personalities/tendencies in different people. **No two persons are alike, even identical twins.**

7. Looking at the five hindrances, the main culprits are of course, greed, hate, and *vicikicca* (the particular set of things one has a liking for, which can be things liked or disliked). The other two help bring out these: the “lazy mind” will not take any effort to suppress bad thoughts; the “dispersed mind” is too dispersed to be focused, to think clearly. All these are intimately connected to the habits (*gathi/āsavas*).

- By the way, if one can remove all the *gathi/āsavas*, that is when one attains *Nibbāna*. The Buddha realized the “*āsavakkhaya nana*” just before attaining the Buddhahood. *Āsavakkhaya* is “*āsava*+“*khaya*” or removing the temptations; “*khaya*” is the getting rid of “*san*”; see, [“What is ‘San’? – Meaning of Samsāra \(or Samsāra\)”](#).
- Here we are trying to remove some easily removable less potent habits, and at least try to reduce the big ones. The good news is that we can EXPERIENCE the relief or “cooling down” or “*niveema*” each time we either remove a small bad habit or lessen the severity of bigger ones. We don’t have to remove ALL bad habits/cravings in order to experience the “cooling down”.

8. After making a commitment to abstain from the BIG EIGHT as much as possible, we need to sort out our bad habits.

- Make a list with little things on the top and more serious things towards the bottom. We all have greed and hate; those are the “big ones”; what we need to do here is try to remove easily identifiable smaller bad habits; for example, explosive temper, stinginess, seeking too much sense pleasures (i.e., being addicted to alcohol, drugs, even excess eating).
- It is important to get rid of the ones at the top (the easy ones), and that will provide incentive to continue. If one tries to tackle the big ones straight away, one might get discouraged and give up the whole effort.

9. Of course, focusing on the BIG EIGHT is very important. If one is engaging in killing animals for pleasure (eg., fishing), then that needs to be stopped if one is serious about meditation. If one is making a living by stealing from others, that needs to be stopped. If one is engaged in sexual activities with other married people, that needs to be stopped, etc.

- Those are common sense things too. If one looks at one’s actions and see that it can cause harm for oneself AND/OR others, then one needs to seriously start thinking ways to initially reduce and eventually to stop such actions.

10. There are several posts on habits and *gathi/āsavas*; you may want to find and read them. And contemplate on those ideas. An English discourse on this topic is given in the post, [“How Are Gati and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?”](#).

- As I emphasized at the beginning, one has to make an effort; even the Buddha could only show the way. We need to examine what he suggested, think through to make sure they make sense. Then the mind gets on-board, especially when it starts seeing the benefits, even small benefits.

- The key is to get started; accomplishing things (no matter how small), and that provides the fuel to go further.

11. One could and should use the “four bases of mental power (*satara iddhipada*)” in accomplishing these goals. Tackle one goal at a time. As you accomplish more and more goals, the *iddhipada* (*chanda*, *citta*, *virīya*, *vimansa*) will grow as well. These are the critical factors that the *yogis* used to cultivate mundane (*anariya*) *jhānas* and gain extraordinary mental powers too.

- *Chanda* is the desire to achieve the goal. *Citta* is the determination one makes and the *virīya* is the effort that one puts in to get it done. *Vimansa* is careful examination of the benefits of breaking the habit and the possible repercussions of keeping the habit. As the four *iddhipada* grow (with accomplishment of more and more goals), the *vimansa* faculty grows in particular; this is a facet of wisdom (*paññā*).

12. In trying to remove any bad habit, it is essential to look at the negative repercussions or bad consequences (called *ādeenava*) from that activity. Let us take the bad habit of getting into a rage as an example:

- Think about the unpleasant feeling of getting “heated up” in a moment of rage. Of course, at the moment of rage one may actually enjoy it: In extreme cases, this is why there are people dead with 30-40 stab wounds, when all it takes to kill a person a couple of stabs; such is the danger of getting into a rage. One feels bad about it only later, and then it is too late.
- Even worse are the *sansaric* consequences: If rage becomes a dominant characteristic of one’s personality, it is possible that this is what will be grasped at the moment of death and a birth of a “similar kind” could result, i.e., birth in a burning hell (this is the principle of *paticca samuppāda*: “*pati+ichcha*” leading to “*sama+uppada*”).

13. Let us take a few examples to see how some bad habits can be tackled:

- Many people have bad temper (which could develop into hate) which is a result of *vyāpāda*. Yes. This is a *sansaric* habit, and unlike many other habits, this one is hard to control when triggered. This is one that needs to be dealt with when the anger is absent. The best is do the *metta bhāvanā*. We will use the *Ariya metta bhāvanā* later. For now, one could close the eyes at a quite time, and sincerely say, “May all beings be free of suffering, free of ailments, free of anger, and be happy”. If you have a particular person that you are not in good terms, repeat with his/her name. We cannot remove the anger in the mind of that person. We can only remove the anger within ourselves. Do this a couple of times a day and if you do it sincerely it will give results (for YOU to have a peace of mind).
- If you are a person with cravings for sense pleasures (I do not mean necessities), your mind is likely to be frequently seeking such things. Try to cut down on such activities, and also try to do more giving. Donate to charities, give a few dollars to a homeless person. All these will make you feel better; this is called *pīti* (“*preethi*” in Sinhala or joy).
- Also, when you simplify your life, the burden on your mind will be less, and you will get a different kind of joy than that from sense pleasures; this is “*niveema*” or “cool down”, or *niramisa sukha*; see, “[Nirāmisā Sukha](#)”.
- Alcohol or cigarette addiction is another example. Instead of trying to stop such a habit “cold turkey”, it is better to cut down gradually. But one MUST have the discipline (the importance of cultivating the *iddhipada* comes here) to stick to the plan, and not go back. It also helps to find a replacement activity at that time (taking a less potent drink or chewing a gum, etc). One of the four *iddhipada* that is essential here is *citta* or determination.

14. Now we are at a point where I can introduce the real *ānāpānasati bhāvanā* that was described by the Buddha.

Next, “[4. What do all these Different Meditation Techniques Mean?](#)“,

11.7 4. What do all these Different Meditation Techniques Mean?

The top 10 posts in this section describe a way of using meditation in following the Noble Path and to attain the *Ariya jhānas* and at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. This series was put together using my own experience, and in the 10th and 11th posts I describe how the process can culminate in attaining *Ariya jhānas* (and possibly *magga phala*). The rest of the posts in this section are on possible meditation subjects and together with other posts at the site can be used to clarify unresolved questions, and to gain *samādhi*. It is recommended that the first 11 posts be followed in that order, at least initially.

1. Buddha Dhamma is focused on purifying the mind of greed, hatred, and ignorance. A pure mind does not attach to even a trace of material form and has attained *Nibbāna*. As the mind is purified, it gains *nirāmisa sukha* which can be experienced at various levels from the beginning. If one can “stick to” this program for a couple of months, and then one can look back and see the change in oneself; one should have a more peaceful, quiet mind that has “cooled down”.

- A mind is impure because it attaches to “things in this world” with the misconception that things in this world (31 realms) can be maintained to one’s satisfaction, i.e., with the perception of *nicca*. Thus the prevailing mindset is that happiness (*sukha*) should be attained by employing any means. And once attained it can be maintained and thus one is in total control of one’s affairs (*atta*).
- These three misconceptions of *nicca*, *sukha*, *atta* are the three culprits that keep us bound to “this world” of 31 realms, i.e., bound to the endless rebirth process in *samsāra*. What the Buddha showed was that the actual reality of “this world” is described by the three characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*: No matter how hard we try, we cannot maintain things to our satisfaction in the long term (*anicca*), thus we get distraught (*dukkha*), and thus we are not in control (*anatta*).

2. I am NOT saying that one should not work hard to get educated and get a good job. That MUST be done; one cannot have a peace of mind if one is hungry and homeless. But we also need to be aware of the FACT that all mundane achievements are temporary; even if we get a live this life without a major catastrophe, we have to leave all behind when we die.

- One acts with greed, hate, and ignorance and makes the mind impure because of the wrong perceptions of *nicca*, *sukha*, *atta*. One is willing to do immoral acts to get some temporary satisfaction, because one does not see the bad consequences of such actions. However, when one truly understands the reality, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, one is automatically prevented from doing such immoral acts even compulsively.
- For that stage to be reached, one has to train one’s mind to “take in the good” and “reject the bad”; one needs to change one’s habits and this is done basically with the *ānāpānasati* meditation.

The following is a logical sequence for meditation:

3. First one needs to sort out what is good and what is bad, and the consequences of good and bad actions. This is why the vision, *sammā ditṭhi*, comes first in the Noble Eightfold Path, and this is done by “sorting out the good from the bad”.

- *Vipassana* (*vi+passa* means sort and discard, where “*vi*” is to sort out and “*passa*” is to discard) and *vidassana* (*vi+dassana* means sort out by clear vision, where “*dassana*” means the vision) mean the same thing: understand Buddha Dhamma and acquire the vision needed to be able to sort out the “good” from the “bad”.
- I cannot emphasize enough the importance of *vipassana* (*vidassana*) or insight meditation. **Without the “correct” vision, one could strive for the whole lifetime and not get anywhere:** one has to understand the true nature of this world (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*), the Four Noble Truths, and the Noble Eightfold Path. It is not memorization, but understanding that counts.

4. A huge amount of defilements are removed from one’s mind with this insight meditation: to understand the “*anicca* nature of this world”. It is the first type of meditation that is needed.

One can attain the *Sotāpanna* stage without doing any other types of meditation discussed below. The Buddha once took a bit of soil to a fingertip and told the *bhikkhus* that, “if the amount of defilements a *Sotāpanna* needs to get rid of is comparable to this amount of soil, then a normal human being has to get rid of an equivalent to the soil in the whole Earth”.

- That is not a misprint or an exaggeration. A *Sotāpanna* is bound to attain *Nibbāna* within a maximum of seven “*bhava*”, whereas a normal human being could be trapped in the rebirth process for trillions of years to come. We all have been through the rebirth process for uncountable trillions of years; see, “[Infinity -How Big is It?](#)”.
- Many people say, “I do like my life. Why would I not want to be reborn?”. **The problem is that future rebirths may not be in the human realm.** We have no idea what we have done in past lives. Thus even if we live a perfectly moral life, there are no guarantees that we will get a good rebirth. This is why understanding *kamma*, rebirth, etc via insight meditation is important.

5. How does one do the insight meditation? Listening to discourses and reading Dhamma concepts are the two main forms of getting the correct information. Then one could contemplate on those concepts in a sitting meditation. **But reading up on Dhamma concepts during a quiet time itself is meditation; also see, “[How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#)”** and the follow-up post.

- Once some understanding is reached via *vipassana* (*vidassana*) *bhāvanā* or insight meditation, one can start the next two key steps: *metta bhāvanā* and various forms of *anupassana bhāvanā*.
- Once one understands the true status of affairs in the wider world of 31 realms, one can really comprehend the amount of suffering that has been hidden from us. With that understanding one can engage in the *Ariya metta bhāvanā*, which is an excellent way to pay back our old debts to other beings. **This is the second way to purify our minds too.**
- But I hope I have been able to convey the idea that the bulk of work can be done with just insight meditation, contemplating “*anicca, dukkha, anatta*”. However, doing the other two types of *bhāvanā*, i.e., *metta bhāvanā* and *ānāpānasati*, can be helpful for the insight meditation too.

6. The last and third way to purify the mind is via *anupassana*. *Anupassana* means “discard according to the principles learned” (“*anu*” means according to and “*passana*” means to get rid of; another meaning of “*anu*” is defilements, which is applicable too). *Anupassana* can take various forms: *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā* is the foundation. Once “*ana*” and “*pana*” are sorted out by *vipassana* (*vidassana*), one needs to engage in *ānāpānasati* all the time. This means one needs to be mindful of what one is about to do, and make sure it is a “right thing to do”.

- When one starts understanding *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, one can start doing the *aniccanupassana, dukkhanupassana, and anattanupassana*, and four more related “*anupassana*”. I will elaborate on this later.
- *Satipaṭṭhāna bhāvanā* (with *kayanupassana, vedananupassana, cittanupassana, and dhammanupassana*) includes all the *bhāvanā* techniques that we have discussed so far. It is THE ultimate which encompasses everything that is needed to attain some stress relief all the way to attain the *Arahanthood*. *Ānāpānasati* is a big part of the *satipaṭṭhāna*, and that is all we need to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage.

7. Thus one could make things simpler by just doing insight meditation, *ānāpānasati*, and the *metta bhāvanā*. That is all one needs to do to have a “better state of mind” or even to become a *Sotāpanna*.

8. The problem with meditation techniques taught even in Theravāda schools these days is that they are either breath meditation or chantings. How can one remove defilements by watching the breath? Even though it can calm the mind, there are no long-term benefits, because watching the breath CANNOT reduce defilements from the mind.

- Another popular technique is to just contemplate on the impermanence, a popular form of which is to keep repeating something like, “my body is impermanent, it is subjected to decay and death”. Has anyone achieved any progress doing that for even twenty, thirty years? A

Buddha does not need to tell us that. All people, belonging to any religion, know those are facts of life.

- Yet another popular “chanting” is to contemplate the “foulness of the body”. That is not what the Buddha meant by the “*patikula manasikara bhāvanā*“. Again, everyone knows that our bodies are subject to decay and death; see, “[Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta](#)“.

Next, “[5. Ariya Metta Bhāvanā \(Loving Kindness Meditation\)](#)“,

11.8 5. Ariya Metta Bhavana (Loving Kindness Meditation)

The top 10 posts in this section describe a way of using meditation in following the Noble Path and to attain the *Ariya jhānas* and at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. This series was put together using my own experience, and in the 10th and 11th posts I describe how the process can culminate in attaining *Ariya jhānas* (and possibly *magga phala*). The rest of the posts in this section are on possible meditation subjects and together with other posts at the site can be used to clarify unresolved questions, and to gain *samādhi*. It is recommended that the first 11 posts be followed in that order, at least initially.

1. We all have acquired innumerable “bad *kamma vipāka*” in this cycle of rebirths (*samsāra*) that has no beginning. There is a very simple recipe for stopping many of such “bad *kamma vipāka*” from coming to fruition by “wearing out” and ultimately removing the “*kamma* seeds” associated with them.

- We acquire a bad “*kamma* seed” when we do something wrong to a living being, and we become indebted to that being. Just like we can become “debt-free” by paying off debts, we can pay off that debt. The problem is that we have become indebted to innumerable beings in previous rebirths. In the “*Metta Sutta*” (*haliddavasana sutta*) and other *suttas*, the Buddha has explained how much of this debt can be paid off by doing the *Ariya metta bhāvanā* and also by transferring merits to “all beings” when we do a good deed; see, “[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\) – How Does it Happen?](#)”.
- Here we focus on the *Ariya metta bhāvanā*. First some background material to clarify what this means.

2. The standard *metta bhāvanā* (loving kindness meditation) goes something like, “May myself and all beings be free of suffering, healthy, happy, and be free of all suffering”, or some similar (longer) passages.

- Any type of such meditation is of course good. It makes your own mind calm down, and makes you think about the (mundane) welfare of the other beings.

3. However, the *Ariya metta bhāvanā* has a much more deeper meaning. It is done with at least some idea of the complexity of “this world” with 31 realms and the status of the beings in those realms. In order to cultivate true compassion and loving kindness one NEEDS TO FEEL the possible suffering in all those realms; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”:

- The beings in the lowest four realms (*apāyas*) undergo unimaginable suffering, both physical and mental.
- In the lowest five realms (the *apāyas* and the human realm), beings have physical bodies that are subject to sicknesses, body aches, and getting old before dying.
- The sixth through eleventh realms are that of the *devas*. They have spontaneous births with fully formed (but less dense) bodies that are not subjected to sickness, aches and pains, and visible signs of old age until close to death. But they also have all five physical senses just like the lower five realms, and could be subjected to repulsive touch, distasteful/unpleasant tastes, smells, and sounds, and visuals.
- The higher 20 realms that include *rūpa loka* and *arūpa loka* have even less dense bodies than the *devas*, and do not have the physical sense faculties for taste, smell, and body touch. Thus any suffering they have is all mental, and not as intense as in the lower realms.

4. However, no living being is free of FUTURE suffering in any of the 31 realms, because unless the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna* has been attained, even the beings in the highest realm can end up even in the *apāyas* (lowest four realms) in future rebirths.

- And the only way to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna* is by comprehending the Three Characteristics of this world of 31 realms: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- The first level of understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* leads to the *Sotāpanna* stage; when one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, one becomes free from the *apāyas* FOREVER. This happens

via the inability of the mind of a *Sotāpanna* to generate certain *cittas* with “*apayagami*” *kammic* power; see, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna avoids Apayagami Citta](#)” and “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)”.

- When the next stage of *Nibbāna* (*Sakadāgāmī* stage) is attained, one becomes free of births in the lower five realms where suffering due to physical ailments and diseases are possible. Thus one PERMANENTLY becomes “healthy” by attaining the *Sakadāgāmī* stage.
- At the *Anāgāmī* stage, one removes more *akusala citta* (and other fulfil other conditions; see, “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)”), and will never be born again in *kāma loka* including the *deva* realm. Thus one becomes PERMANENTLY free of any physical suffering.
- Then at the *Arahant* stage, all defilements are removed from the mind and one will never be reborn in any of the 31 realms. The mind truly becomes free and one attains permanent *nirāmisa sukha*; see, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is nirāmisa sukha?](#)” and other posts on *nirāmisa sukha*.
- As you can see, the *Ariya metta bhāvanā* is similar in structure to the conventional one, but the words have deeper meanings. For example, by saying “be healthy” now it is meant to be healthy forever, i.e., not to be born ever with a body that is subject to diseases and old age.

5. Now we can see how the *Ariya metta bhāvanā* is formulated:

- “May myself and all living beings attain the *Sotāpanna* stage and be free from suffering in the *apāyas* forever”
 “May myself and all living beings attain the *Sakadāgāmī* stage and be healthy forever”.
 “May myself and all living beings attain the *Anāgāmī* stage and be content (attain peaceful happiness) forever”.
 “May myself and all living beings attain the *Arahant* stage and be free from all suffering and attain the full *Nibbānic* bliss”.
- All four *Brahma vihara* (*metta, karuna, mudita, upekkha*) are cultivated with this *bhāvanā*.

6. What matters is not the particular set of word used, but what is felt in one’s heart. In order to do that one needs to truly comprehend that there is REAL SUFFERING in this world, not only at the human or animal realms, but in many other realms.

- The impact of the *metta bhāvanā* increases gradually with increased understanding of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, because then one realizes the dangers and suffering that all living beings face in future lives.
- The potential of the *metta bhāvanā* is enormous. The Buddha said one could attain the *Anāgāmī* stage by correctly doing the *metta bhāvanā*. But that entails understanding *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, i.e., attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage or at least embark on the path to *Sotāpanna* stage.
- However, even before attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage, one could reap many benefits by doing this correct *Ariya metta bhāvanā*; see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”.
- It is best to do *Ariya metta bhāvanā* and *vipassana bhāvanā* (meditation on *anicca, dukkha, anatta* and other dhamma concepts) in a sitting meditation session every day; see, “[4. What do all these Different Meditation Techniques Mean?](#)”.
- Initially 10-15 minutes would be good for formal meditation, and can be increased as the *nirāmisa sukha* sets in one starts seeing the benefits; one could stay in meditation for hours. Of course *ānāpānasati* needs to be practiced the whole day, which means being aware of what is “taken in” (*ana*) and what is “discarded” (*pana*); see, “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)” and other related posts in the meditation section.
- Listening to discourses and reading about Dhamma are also forms of meditation, and should be done during quite times so the key concepts can be absorbed.

7. The *Ariya metta bhāvanā* is one of the most POTENT tools that we have. It is simple concept, but the main difficulty is with the “*Ariya*” part; one needs to comprehend *anicca, dukkha, anatta* for the *bhāvanā* to be fully effective.

- Still even the mundane version stated in #2 above is good start. As one follows the Path and understands the concepts better (not the book knowledge), the *javana* power in one's thoughts become strong, and the *bhāvanā* becomes stronger and more effective.
- In the Abhidhamma language, the most potent *kusala citta* is the “*somanassa sahagata ñāṇa sampayutta asankharika citta*“, i.e., the “thought that arises with joy and wisdom automatically”. This thought also gets stronger with increasing wisdom, and gets stronger as one gets to *Sotāpanna magga*, *Sotāpanna phala*, etc and optimum only at the *Arahant* stage.
- Yet even when one is following the mundane eightfold path, this *citta* is there, at a lower strength. It needs to be cultivated; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)“, and “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma](#)“.

Next, “[6. Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā \(Introduction\)](#)“,

11.9

6. Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā (Introduction)

The top 10 posts in this section describe a way of using meditation in following the Noble Path and to attain the *Ariya jhānas* and at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. This series was put together using my own experience, and in the 10th and 11th posts I describe how the process can culminate in attaining *Ariya jhānas* (and possibly *magga phala*). The rest of the posts in this section are on possible meditation subjects and together with other posts at the site can be used to clarify unresolved questions, and to gain *samādhi*. It is recommended that the first 11 posts be followed in that order, at least initially.

1. I hope that several key points are clear from the discussion in the post, “[3. The Second Level – Key to Purify the Mind](#)”:

- Bad habits (*gathi/āsava*) are associated with one more of immoral or unworthy acts, speech, or thoughts. We need to discard those.
- To counter the bad habits one needs to cultivate good habits. For this we need to cultivate moral behavior by engaging in moral activities that bring joy to the heart.
- AND we need to do this all the time; we cannot let bad habits come back, which means we need to be on the lookout for any lapses in our practice. And we need to be on the lookout for opportunities to do moral acts that are beneficial for oneself and others.

2. The Buddha described *bhāvanā* as follows: “*āsevitāya, bhāvitāya, bahuleekathāya,...*” or “keep close association, use often, and use all the time (what is good).....”. **When one is making effort to form a new habit, one should be thinking about it and doing things to support that whenever possible. Trying to do it in a formal meditation session will not be enough.**

- We discussed the current scientific explanation of how repeated acts help form habits by strengthening a set of neural connections in the brain in an earlier post in this series. Same thing works to break bad habits by NOT doing it whenever that comes to the mind; existing neural connections will get weaker.
- **What is to contemplate: To be mindful to “take in good things (*kusala* or moral things), and to “discard bad things (*akusala* or immoral things)”. This is the real meaning of *ānāpānasati bhāvanā*.**
- In the wider sense, “*āna*” includes anything that needs to “taken in” for the betterment of life, and “*pāna*” the opposite. For example, we should eat only foods that are good for the body, and stay away from or discard foods that are bad.
- Nowadays, “*āna*” is taken to be “breath in” and “*āpāna*” is taken to be “breath out”; “*satī*” means mindfulness so, the word “*ānāpānasati*” is interpreted as “mindfully breathing in and mindfully breathing out”. This is the conventional (or “*padaparama*”) interpretation of “*ānāpāna*”, and that is only a very narrow use; see the post below that explains these terms.

3. These aspects are discussed in many *suttas*. I have a couple of posts that discuss the *Sabbāsava sutta* (*sabba+āsava* is all *āsavas*), which point out seven specific steps that will help remove bad habits and develop good habits (*gathi/āsavas*).

- Looking at the same goal from a slightly different viewpoint, five such steps are given in the *Vitakkasanthāna* (*vitakka+san+thāna* = removing defiled thoughts) *sutta*; I hope to write a post on this later.

4. Now, with all the discussion we have had up to this point, how can just a process of “breathing in” and “breathing out” mindfully GET RID OF either the bad habits (*gathi/āsavas*) or the five hindrances?

- Of course that is not possible.
- But it CAN do one thing, as we mentioned before. If we sit in a quiet place with the eyes closed (i.e., turn off the five physical senses in effect), AND fix the mind on the breath, we can get the

five hindrances to settle down and not come up (assuming that we are staying away from committing the BIG EIGHT immoral acts).

- However, this calming down or getting to *samatha* is a TEMPORARY solution. The moment we come back to the real world with all its distractions and temptations, those habits take over.

5. The breath meditation needs to be used appropriately, with the understanding that it can provide only temporary relief. This breath meditation is the same meditation that was used by the Hindu *yogis* to attain mundane (*Anāriya*) *jhānas* even before the Buddha.

- Since the time Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga was accepted as the basis of Theravāda Dhamma (in the fifth century CE), this "literal interpretation" of the *ānāpānasati* has been used.
- The real *ānāpānasati bhāvanā* is not described in the Visuddhimagga, and is not described in any Mahayana or even Theravāda texts today. One needs to go directly to the *Tipitaka* to find it; it is described in many *suttas*, for example the *Assāsa sutta*. I could not find an English translation of this *sutta*. Another one *Arittha Sutta*, and the translation published at the Accesstoinsight site is not complete, even though it does contain Buddha's admonition to Ven. Arittha that in and out breathing is only one version of *ānāpānasati* (in the *sutta* it says it is NOT the *Ariya* or Noble version) : [WebLink: ACCESSTOINSIGHT: Arittha Sutta: To Arittha](#)
- [Arittha Sutta: To Arittha \(On Mindfulness of Breathing\)](#)

6. Thus there are two interpretations of the *ānāpānasati bhāvanā*: one is the conventional "breathing" version and the other is the real version recommended by the Buddha, which has a wider interpretation, including breathing to a minor extent.

- The *Ānāpānasati sutta* is the condensed version of the Buddha's *desana* on *ānāpānasati bhāvanā*. As with most main *suttas*, the discourse was condensed in to the form for easy transmission. Other *suttas*, mostly by Ven. Sariputta, have explained the terms like "*āna*" and "*āpana*" in detail (like the *Assāsa Sutta*).
- See, "[Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?](#)", where I provide a detailed discussion based on the *Tipitaka*.
- Furthermore, Sinhala commentaries (*atthakatha*) were also written to explain the main *suttas*. Unfortunately, these *atthakathas* were burned down shortly after Buddhaghosa wrote his Visuddhimagga and other books. However, three important ones (*Patisambhida Magga Pakarana*, *Pitakopadesa*, and *Netthipakarana*) have survived because they had been included in the *Tipitaka*. What I describe here is from those books in the *Tipitaka*.
- Buddhaghosa was a Hindu before converting to be a Buddhist later on; see, "The Life and Work of Buddhaghosa" by B. C. Law (1927). Some say he became a Buddhist in order to introduce Hindu concepts to Buddha Dhamma. Either that or he just used whatever he understood to be the *ānāpānasati* without any malicious intentions. Either way, the correct interpretation had been hidden for all these years; see, "[Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#)".

7. The key message of the Buddha was that we need to remove the greed, hate, and ignorance that we all have in our minds, and by doing that we can experience the *nirāmisā sukha* that is of better quality and of permanent nature. Let us now discuss the basic meditation technique that will start us on the correct path to achieve lasting happiness.

- More evidence from the *Tipitaka*: "[Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?](#)".

Next, "[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)",

11.9.1 Arittha Sutta - To Arittha (On Mindfulness of Breathing)

SN 54.6

PTS: [S v 314](#)

CDB ii 1768

Arittha Sutta: To Arittha

(On Mindfulness of Breathing)

translated from the Pāli by

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At Savatthi. There the Blessed One said, "Monks, do you develop mindfulness of in-&-out breathing?"

When this was said, Ven. Arittha replied to the Blessed One, "I develop mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, lord."

"But how do you develop mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, Arittha?"

"Having abandoned sensual desire for past sensual pleasures, lord, having done away with sensual desire for future sensual pleasures, and having thoroughly subdued perceptions of irritation with regard to internal & external events, I breathe in mindfully and breathe out mindfully."^[1]

"There is that mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, Arittha. I don't say that there isn't. But as to how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is brought in detail to its culmination, listen and pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," Ven. Arittha responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, "And how, Arittha, is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing brought in detail to its culmination? There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and setting mindfulness to the fore.^[2] Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

"[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' [3] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.'^[3] He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' [4] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.'^[4] He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

"[5] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.' [6] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.' [7] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication.'^[5] He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.' [8] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.'

"[9] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.' [10] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in satisfying the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out satisfying the mind.' [11] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in steadying the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out steadying the mind.' [12] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in releasing the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out releasing the mind.'^[6]

"[13] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.' [14] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on dispassion.'^[7] He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.' [15] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on cessation.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on cessation.' [16] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.'

"This, Arittha, is how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is brought in detail to its culmination."

Notes

1. The Commentary reads this statement as indicating that Arittha has attained the third level of Awakening, non-return, but it is also possible to interpret the statement on a more mundane level: Arittha is simply practicing mindfulness in the present moment, having temporarily subdued desire for past and future sensual pleasures, and having temporarily subdued any thought of irritation with regard to the present.
2. To the fore (*parimukham*): The Abhidhamma takes an etymological approach to this term, defining it as around (*pari-*) the mouth (*mukham*). In the Vinaya, however, it is used in a context (Cv.V.27.4) where it undoubtedly means the front of the chest. There is also the possibility that the term could be used idiomatically as "to the front," which is how I have translated it here.
3. The commentaries insist that "body" here means the breath, but this is unlikely in this context, for the next step — without further explanation — refers to the breath as "bodily fabrication." If the Buddha were using two different terms to refer to the breath in such close proximity, he would have been careful to signal that he was redefining his terms (as he does below, when explaining that the first four steps in breath meditation correspond to the practice of focusing on the body in and of itself as a frame of reference). The step of breathing in and out sensitive to the entire body relates to the many similes in the suttas depicting jhāna as a state of whole-body awareness (see [MN 119](#)).
4. "In-&-out breaths are bodily; these are things tied up with the body. That's why in-&-out breaths are bodily fabrications." — [MN 44](#).
5. "Perceptions & feelings are mental; these are things tied up with the mind. That's why perceptions & feelings are mental fabrications." — [MN 44](#).
6. [AN 9.34](#) shows how the mind, step by step, is temporarily released from burdensome mental states of greater and greater refinement as it advances through the stages of jhāna.
7. Lit., "fading."

See also: [MN 118](#); [SN 54.8](#).

11.10 7. What is Ānāpāna?

The top 10 posts in this section describe a way of using meditation in following the Noble Path and to attain the *Ariya jhānas* and at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. This series was put together using my own experience, and in the 10th and 11th posts I describe how the process can culminate in attaining *Ariya jhānas* (and possibly *magga phala*). The rest of the posts in this section are on possible meditation subjects and together with other posts at the site can be used to clarify unresolved questions, and to gain *samādhi*. It is recommended that the first 11 posts be followed in that order, at least initially.

Revised April 2, 2017 (#4); September 2 (#11)

1. The *Ānāpānasati Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* ([WebLink: suttacentral: Ānāpānasati Sutta, MN 118](#)) starts off with the following, just after the very first verse:

Ānāpānassati, bhikkhave, bhāvithā bahulīkathā mahapphalā hoti mahānisansā. *Ānāpānassati*, bhikkhave, bhāvithā bahulīkathā chattāro *satipatthāna* paripūreti. Chattāro *satipatthānā* bhāvithā bahulīkathā saptha *bojjhaṅga* paripūrenti. Saptha *bojjhaṅgā* bhāvithā bahulīkathā *vijjā vimuttin* paripūrenti.....

That means: “*Ānāpānasati*, *Bhikkhus*, when practiced frequently bears much fruits and leads to much benefits. *Ānāpānasati*, *Bhikkhus*, when cultivated and pursued, brings the four *satipattānas* to their completion. The four *satipattānas*, when cultivated and pursued, bring the seven *bojjangas* to their completion. The seven *bojjangas*, when cultivated and pursued, bring *vijjā* (opposite of *avijjā*) and *vimutti* (or *Nibbāna*) to their completion....”

- Now, if *ānāpāna* means “breathing in and breathing out”, how can that lead to the completion of the four *satipattānas*, the seven *bojjangas*, removal of *avijjā*, and the attainment of *Nibbāna*? Can anyone seriously think that is possible?
- Instead, *ānāpāna* MEANS cultivating *satipattāna*, *saptha bojjanga*, etc., by “taking in morals” and “expelling immoral” as we discuss below.

2. *Satipattāna bhāvanā* is a more detailed version of the *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā*. Thus it is important to learn the correct version of the *Ānāpānasati*. If one does *Ānāpānasati* correctly, it can be easily turned to *Satipattāna bhāvanā*.

3. First let us figure out exactly what the Buddha meant by “āna” and “āpāna” in “āna+āpāna+sati” which rhymes as *ānāpānasati*; of course “sati” is mindfulness.

- “Āna” is taking in; In Sinhala, “*ānayanaya*” is “import”. “*āpāna*” is discarding; In Sinhala, “*apānayānaya*” is “export”. Thus “āna”+“āpāna” or *ānāpāna* is “taking in/discarding” or import/export.
- “Assa” is same as “āna”, and “passa” is the same as “āpāna”. In Sri Lanka, parents tell their child to clean his/her room by saying, “*kāmaraya* (room) *assa passa* (or *aspas*) *karaganna*”.
- When cleaning the room, the child needs to get rid of the clutter (*passa*), but also can take in (*assa*) something like a flower vase to make the room look more pleasant, or to take in a chair that can be useful.

4. During the time of the Buddha itself, auxiliary *suttas* as well as commentaries (“*Atthakatha*”) were written to explain the key words/phrases in the main *suttas* that were abbreviated for easy transmission; see, “[Preservation of Dhamma](#)“. There are two important *suttas*, *Assāsa sutta* and the *Parama Assāsa sutta* that describe how one should “take in” *kusala* thoughts and “discard” *akusala* thoughts; that is “āna”+“āpāna” (*ānāpāna*) or “*assa/passa*”, for cleaning up (the mind).

- In the *Mahasaccaka Sutta*, “*assa/passa*” was also used to indicate “in and out breathing” when the Buddha was describing to Saccaka how he engaged in the “breath meditation” per instructions by Alara Kalama and Uddacaramaputta while he was searching for the truth as Bodhisattva.

- But the very next verses of that *sutta* describes how he gave up on that technique and moved onto the correct path.
- So, we need to be careful about making sure a given phrase is used in the right context, depending on the situation.
- For example, there are several conventional and deeper meanings to the key words “*atta*” and “*anatta*”, and one needs to be able figure out which meaning to use for a given case; see, “[Attā Hi Attano Nātho](#)”, “[Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?](#)”, and links in those posts.

5. When one knows what *kusala/akusala kamma* are, the first thing to do is to prevent from doing *akusala kamma* and to make an effort to do *kusala kamma* by engaging in meritorious actions (*punna kriya*); see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”, and “[Punna Kamma – Dāna, Sīla, Bhāvanā](#)”.

- Thus when one leads a moral life, one is automatically engaging in the basic form of *Ānāpānasati*.
- AND one cannot do a proper formal *Ānāpānasati* meditation and get to even *samādhi*, let alone a *jhāna*, unless one leads a moral life. The five hindrances are too strong to be suppressed; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – Five Hindrances](#)”.

6. Formal *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā* can be done in a formal sitting or walking meditation session, while engaging in the basic version (taking in what is good/discarding what is bad) all the time.

- There is no need to do *samatha bhāvanā* separately. If one does a formal *Ānāpānasati* session with the eyes closed in a quiet place, one will automatically get into *samādhi*. **Let good thoughts grow, and discard bad thoughts. Very simple.**
- Another thing to do in a formal meditation session is to **contemplate on a particular dhamma concept like *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. This is really focusing on “āna”.**
- When one gets to *samādhi*, the mind goes on “auto pilot”; you will feel that your mind is taking charge and you need to exert less effort to keep the focus.

7. When one does the basic version while engaged in other activities, one is only being mindful of what one is engaged in, i.e., the task at hand. That task presumably does not involve any of the BIG EIGHT we discussed previously; see, “[The Basics in Meditation](#)”. It could be a technical task or a daily chore like washing dishes or driving. **Be mindful of just the task (washing, driving, etc).** Here one will NOT get into *samādhi*, so there is no danger in injuring oneself; Many people get into accidents while driving, because they are not being mindful of driving.

- However, if one does not have a specific task (say, when riding a bus or waiting at the doctor’s office), one could be engaged in *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā*. When our minds are not focused on something (like in the above mentioned cases), all sorts of ideas bubble up. As we discussed in “[The Basics in Meditation](#)”. These are due to deeply-ingrained habits or *āsavas* that we have acquired not only in this life but also from previous lives.

8. The more we keep reviving or re-living this habit (i.e., doing *āna/apāna* or *assa/passa*), we strengthen that good habit (*gathi*).

- We have come all this way in the cycle of rebirths that are mostly filled with suffering because of our bad habits (*gathi*) that have been percolated to very dense state of deep-seated cravings (*āsavas*). It may take some time to develop this “*āna/pāna*”, but you will definitely see results in a few weeks to few months.

9. In the *ānāpānāpabbha* of the *Satipattāna sutta*, it says, “...so *sato va assa sati, sato va passa sati. Digham va assasanto digham assasami ti pajānati, digham va passasanto digham passasami ti pajānati,*” Here it DOES NOT mean “take long breaths in, expel long breaths out”; rather it means, “get rid of old bad habits, and cultivate the old good habits”.

- Similarly, the very next sentence (“...*rassam va assasanto...*”) is not about short breaths, but on those good habits that you started to work on recently, and those bad habits that started to creep in to the mind recently (if there is any).

- There is no way that one can purify one's mind by breathing in/out, even though it can get one's mind to calm down (*samatha*). The correct way of doing it does both *samatha* and *vipassāna* together.

10. When we think a bit more about this, we realize that what needs to be discarded are *micca diṭṭhi* (wrong views), *micca sankappa* (wrong thoughts or ideas), *micca vaca* (incorrect, harmful speech), *micca kammanta* (incorrect/harmful actions), *micca ajiva* (incorrect/harmful way of living), *micca vayama* (tendency to strive on immoral activities), *micca sati* (tendency to focus on immoral activities); when one does all that *micca samādhi* (tendency to get absorbed in immoral ideas/actions) is the result.

- In the same way, what we need to “take in” are *sammā diṭṭhi*, *sammā sankappa*, *sammā vaca*, *sammā kammanta*, *sammā ajiva*, *sammā vayama*, *sammā sati*, and when one keeps doing that one automatically gets to *sammā samādhi*.
- Put it in another way, *Ānāpānasati* is nothing but “taking in” the Noble Eightfold Path and “discarding” the opposite.

11. The longer one “takes in” or “lives” the Noble Eightfold Path and “rejects” the opposite, easier it becomes to get to *samādhi* in a formal meditation session. When *samādhi* grows little by little, one day one will automatically get into the first *Ariya jhāna*. However, there is one more thing that is needed before getting to the *Ariya jhānas*: an understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. We will discuss why in a future post.

- Keep practicing “*ānāpāna*” as much as possible throughout the day. With time, you will feel the “cooling down” or “*nivāna*” or “a taste of *Nibbāna*”.
- Buddha Dhamma is NOT about following rituals. It is all about cleansing one's mind and that takes an effort and concentration. Initially it could be hard, but as one gains *samādhi* bit by bit, one gets motivated. In few months one can look back at one's life and see that it has changed for the better.
- Even though one can start with discarding immoral deeds and cultivating or taking in moral, one needs to know the real meanings of “*san*”, *anicca* and *anatta* in order to do the *ānāpānasati bhāvanā* in a deeper sense: (i) One needs to comprehend which “*san*” or defilements to be discarded; see, “[San](#)”. (ii) One needs to know the deeper meanings of *Tilakkhana*; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”.

Next, “[Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?](#)”,

11.10.1 Ānāpānassati-sutta (Majjhima Nikāya 118)

Majjhima Nikāya 118

Ānāpānassati-sutta

Evaṃ me sutaṃ— ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā sāvatthiyaṃ viharati pubbārāme migāramātupāsāde sambahulehi abhiññātehi abhiññātehi therehi sāvakehi saddhiṃ—āyasmata ca sārīputtena āyasmata ca mahāmoggallānena āyasmata ca mahākassapena āyasmata ca mahākaccāyanena āyasmata ca mahākoṭṭhikena āyasmata ca mahākappinena āyasmata ca mahācundena āyasmata ca anuruddhena āyasmata ca revatena āyasmata ca ānandena, aññ ehi ca abhiññātehi abhiññātehi therehi sāvakehi saddhiṃ.

Tena kho pana samayena therā bhikkhū nave bhikkhū ovaḍanti anusāsanti. Appekacce therā bhikkhū dasapi bhikkhū ovaḍanti anusāsanti, appekacce therā bhikkhū vīsampi bhikkhū ovaḍanti anusāsanti, appekacce therā bhikkhū tiṃsampi bhikkhū ovaḍanti anusāsanti, appekacce therā bhikkhū cattārīsampi bhikkhū ovaḍanti anusāsanti. Te ca navā bhikkhū therehi bhikkhūhi ovadiyamānā anusāsiyamānā uḷāraṃ pubbenāparaṃ viśesaṃ jānanti.

Tena kho pana samayena bhagavā tadahuposathe pannarase pavāraṇāya puṇṇāya puṇṇamāya rattiya - bhikkhusaṃghaparivuto abbhokāse nisinno hoti. Atha kho bhagavā tuṇhībhūtaṃ tuṇhībhūtaṃ

bhikkhusaṃghaṃ anuviloketvā bhikkhū āmantesi: “āraddhosmi, bhikkhave, imāya paṭipadāya; ārad-dhacittosmi, bhikkhave, imāya paṭipadāya. Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, bhiiyoso mattāya vīriyaṃ ārabhatha appattassa pattiya, anadhigatassa adhigamāya, asacchikatassa sacchikiriyāya. Idhevāhaṃ sāvattiyaṃ komudiṃ cātumāsiniṃ āgamessāmi”ti. Assosum kho jānapadā bhikkhū: “bhagavā kira tattheva sāvattiyaṃ komudiṃ cātumāsiniṃ āgamessati”ti. Te jānapadā bhikkhū sāvattiṃ osaranti bhagavantaṃ dassanāya. Te ca kho therā bhikkhū bhiiyoso mattāya nave bhikkhū ovasanti anusāsanti. Appekacce therā bhikkhū dasapi bhikkhū ovasanti anusāsanti, appekacce therā bhikkhū vīsampi bhikkhū ovasanti anusāsanti, appekacce therā bhikkhū tiṃsampi bhikkhū ovasanti anusāsanti, appekacce therā bhikkhū cattārisampi bhikkhū ovasanti anusāsanti. Te ca navā bhikkhū therehi bhikkhūhi ovadiyamānā anusāsiyamānā ulāraṃ pubbenāparaṃ viṣesaṃ jānanti.

Tena kho pana samayena bhagavā tadahuposathe pannarase komudiya cātumāsiniya puṇṇāya puṇṇamāya rattiya bhikkhusaṃghaparivuto abbhokāse nisinno hoti. Atha kho bhagavā tuṇhībhūtaṃ tuṇhībhūtaṃ bhikkhusaṃghaṃ anuviloketvā bhikkhū āmantesi:

“Apalāpāyaṃ, bhikkhave, parisā; nippalāpāyaṃ, bhikkhave, parisā; suddhā sāre patiṭṭhitā. Tathārūpo ayaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhusaṃgho; tathārūpā ayaṃ, bhikkhave, parisā yathārūpā parisā āhuneyyā pāhuneyyā dakkhiṇeyyā añjalikaraṇīya anuttaraṃ puññakkhettaṃ lokassa. Tathārūpo ayaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhusaṃgho; tathārūpā ayaṃ, bhikkhave, parisā yathārūpāya parisāya appaṃ dinnāṃ bahu hoti, bahu dinnāṃ bahutaraṃ. Tathārūpo ayaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhusaṃgho; tathārūpā ayaṃ, bhikkhave, parisā yathārūpā parisā dullabhā dassanāya lokassa. Tathārūpo ayaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhusaṃgho; tathārūpā ayaṃ, bhikkhave, parisā yathārūpaṃ parisāṃ alaṃ yojanagaṇaṇāni dassanāya gantuṃ puṭosenāpi.

Santi, bhikkhave, bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe arahanto khīṇāsavā vusitavanto katakaraṇīya ohitabhārā anuppattasadatthā parikkhīṇabhavasamyojanā sammadaññāvimuttā—evarūpāpi, bhikkhave, santi bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe. Santi, bhikkhave, bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ samyojanānaṃ parikkhayā opapātikā tattha parinibbāyino anāvatthidhammā tasmā lokā—evarūpāpi, bhikkhave, santi bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe. Santi, bhikkhave, bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe tiṇṇaṃ samyojanānaṃ parikkhayā rāgadosamohānaṃ tanuttā sakadāgāmino sakideva imaṃ lokaṃ āgantvā dukkhassantaṃ karissanti—evarūpāpi, bhikkhave, santi bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe. Santi, bhikkhave, bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe tiṇṇaṃ samyojanānaṃ parikkhayā sotāpannā avinipātadhammā niyatā sambodhiparāyanā—evarūpāpi, bhikkhave, santi bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe.

Santi, bhikkhave, bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe catunnaṃ satipaṭṭhānānaṃ bhāvanānuyogamanu-yuttā viharanti—evarūpāpi, bhikkhave, santi bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe. Santi, bhikkhave, bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe catunnaṃ sammappadhānānaṃ bhāvanānuyogamanuyuttā viharanti ... pe ... catunnaṃ iddhipādānaṃ ... pañcannaṃ indriyānaṃ ... pañcannaṃ balānaṃ ... sattannaṃ bojjaṅgānaṃ ... ariyassa aṭṭhaṅgikassa maggassa bhāvanānuyogamanuyuttā viharanti—evarūpāpi, bhikkhave, santi bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe. Santi, bhikkhave, bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe mettābhāvanānuyogamanuyuttā viharanti ... karuṇābhāvanānuyogamanuyuttā viharanti ... muditābhāvanānuyogamanuyuttā viharanti ... upekkhābhāvanānuyogamanuyuttā viharanti ... asubhabhāvanānuyogamanuyuttā viharanti ... aniccaaññābhāvanānuyogamanuyuttā viharanti—evarūpāpi, bhikkhave, santi bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe. Santi, bhikkhave, bhikkhū imasmiṃ bhikkhusaṃghe ānāpānassatibhāvanānuyogamanuyuttā viharanti. Ānāpānassati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā mahapphalā hoti mahānisamsā. Ānāpānassati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā cattāro satipaṭṭhāne paripūreti. Cattāro satipaṭṭhānā bhāvitā bahulīkatā satta bojjaṅge paripūrenti. Satta bojjaṅgā bhāvitā bahulīkatā vijjāvimuttiṃ paripūrenti.

Kathaṃ bhāvitā ca, bhikkhave, ānāpānassati kathaṃ bahulīkatā mahapphalā hoti mahānisamsā? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu araṇṇagato vā rukkhamūlagato vā suñṇāgāragato vā nisīdati pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā ujum kāyaṃ paṇidhāya parimukhaṃ satiṃ upaṭṭhapetvā. So satova assasati satova passasati.

Dīghaṃ vā assasanto ‘dīghaṃ assasāmi’ti pajānāti, dīghaṃ vā passasanto ‘dīghaṃ passasāmi’ti pajānāti; rassaṃ vā assasanto ‘rassaṃ assasāmi’ti pajānāti, rassaṃ vā passasanto ‘rassaṃ passasāmi’ti pajānāti; ‘sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmi’ti sikkhati, ‘sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmi’ti sikkhati; ‘passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ assasissāmi’ti sikkhati, ‘passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ passasissāmi’ti sikkhati. (1)

‘Pītipaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘pītipaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘sukhapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘sukhapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘cittasaṅkhārapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘cittasaṅkhārapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘passambhayaṃ cittasaṅkhāraṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘passambhayaṃ cittasaṅkhāraṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati. (2)

‘Cittapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘cittapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘samādahaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘samādahaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘vimocayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘vimocayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati. (3)

‘Aniccānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘aniccānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘virāgānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘virāgānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘nirodhānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘nirodhānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘paṭinissaggānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘paṭinissaggānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.

Evam bhāvitā kho, bhikkhave, ānāpānassati evaṃ bahulīkatā mahapphalā hoti mahānisaṃsā. (4)

Kathaṃ bhāvitā ca, bhikkhave, ānāpānassati kathaṃ bahulīkatā cattāro satipaṭṭhāne paripūreti? Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhu dīghaṃ vā assasanto ‘dīghaṃ assasāmī’ti pajānāti, dīghaṃ vā passasanto ‘dīghaṃ passasāmī’ti pajānāti; rassaṃ vā assasanto ‘rassaṃ assasāmī’ti pajānāti, rassaṃ vā passasanto ‘rassaṃ passasāmī’ti pajānāti; ‘sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; kāye kāyānupassī, bhikkhave, tasmिṃ samaye bhikkhu viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ. Kāyesu kāyāññatarāhaṃ, bhikkhave, evaṃ vadāmi yadidaṃ—assāsapassāsā. Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, kāye kāyānupassī tasmिṃ samaye bhikkhu viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ. (1)

Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhu ‘pītipaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘pītipaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘sukhapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘sukhapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘cittasaṅkhārapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘cittasaṅkhārapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘passambhayaṃ cittasaṅkhāraṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘passambhayaṃ cittasaṅkhāraṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; vedanāsu vedanānupassī, bhikkhave, tasmिṃ samaye bhikkhu viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ. Vedanāsu vedanāññatarāhaṃ, bhikkhave, evaṃ vadāmi yadidaṃ—assāsapassāsānaṃ sādhuṃ manasikāraṃ. Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, vedanāsu vedanānupassī tasmिṃ samaye bhikkhu viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ. (2)

Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhu ‘cittapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘cittapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘samādahaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘samādahaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘vimocayaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘vimocayaṃ cittaṃ passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; citte cittānupassī, bhikkhave, tasmिṃ samaye bhikkhu viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ. Nāhaṃ, bhikkhave, muṭṭhassatissa asampajānassa ānāpānassatiṃ vadāmi. Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, citte cittānupassī tasmिṃ samaye bhikkhu viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ. (3)

Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhu ‘aniccānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘aniccānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘virāgānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘virāgānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘nirodhānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘nirodhānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘paṭinissaggānupassī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati, ‘paṭinissaggānupassī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati; dhammesu dhammānupassī, bhikkhave, tasmिṃ samaye bhikkhu viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ. So yaṃ taṃ abhiijhādomanassānaṃ pahānaṃ taṃ paññāya disvā sādhuṃ ajjupekkhitā hoti. Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, dhammesu dhammānupassī tasmिṃ samaye bhikkhu viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhiijhādomanassaṃ. (4)

Evam bhāvitā kho, bhikkhave, ānāpānassati evaṃ bahulīkatā cattāro satipaṭṭhāne paripūreti.

Kathaṃ bhāvitā ca, bhikkhave, cattāro satipaṭṭhānā kathaṃ bahulīkatā satta bojjhaṅge paripūrenti? Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke

abhijjhādomanassaṃ, upaṭṭhitāssa tasmaṃ samaye sati hoti asammuttā. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno upaṭṭhitā sati hoti asammuttā, satisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti. Satisambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, satisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (1)

So tathāsato viharanto taṃ dhammaṃ paññāya pavicinati pavicayati parivīmaṃsaṃ āpajjati. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhu tathāsato viharanto taṃ dhammaṃ paññāya pavicinati pavicayati parivīmaṃsaṃ āpajjati, dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (2)

Tassa taṃ dhammaṃ paññāya pavicinato pavicayato parivīmaṃsaṃ āpajjato āraddhaṃ hoti vīriyaṃ asallīnaṃ. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno taṃ dhammaṃ paññāya pavicinato pavicayato parivīmaṃsaṃ āpajjato āraddhaṃ hoti vīriyaṃ asallīnaṃ, vīriyasambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, vīriyasambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, vīriyasambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (3)

Āraddhavīriyassa uppajjati pīti nirāmisā. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno āraddhavīriyassa uppajjati pīti nirāmisā, pītisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, pītisambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, pītisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (4)

Pītimanassa kāyopi passambhati, cittampi passambhati. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno pītimanassa kāyopi passambhati, cittampi passambhati, passaddhisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, passaddhisambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, passaddhisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (5)

Passaddhakāyassa sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno passaddhakāyassa sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati, samādhisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, samādhisambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, samādhisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (6)

So tathāsamāhitaṃ cittaṃ sādhuṃ aṃjhupekkhitā hoti. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhu tathāsamāhitaṃ cittaṃ sādhuṃ aṃjhupekkhitā hoti, upekkhāsambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, upekkhāsambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, upekkhāsambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (7)

Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhu vedanāsu ... pe ... citte ... dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ, upaṭṭhitāssa tasmaṃ samaye sati hoti asammuttā. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno upaṭṭhitā sati hoti asammuttā, satisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, satisambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, satisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (1)

So tathāsato viharanto taṃ dhammaṃ paññāya pavicinati pavicayati parivīmaṃsaṃ āpajjati. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhu tathāsato viharanto taṃ dhammaṃ paññāya pavicinati pavicayati parivīmaṃsaṃ āpajjati, dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (2)

Tassa taṃ dhammaṃ paññāya pavicinato pavicayato parivīmaṃsaṃ āpajjato āraddhaṃ hoti vīriyaṃ asallīnaṃ. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno taṃ dhammaṃ paññāya pavicinato pavicayato parivīmaṃsaṃ āpajjato āraddhaṃ hoti vīriyaṃ asallīnaṃ, vīriyasambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, vīriyasambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, vīriyasambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (3)

Āraddhavīriyassa uppajjati pīti nirāmisā. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno āraddhavīriyassa uppajjati pīti nirāmisā, pītisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, pītisambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, pītisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (4)

Pītimanassa kāyopi passambhati, cittampi passambhati. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno pītimanassa kāyopi passambhati, cittampi passambhati, passaddhisambojjhaṅgo tasmaṃ samaye

bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, passaddhisambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmim samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, passaddhisambojjhaṅgo tasmim samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (5)

Passaddhakāyassa sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno passaddhakāyassa sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati, samādhisambojjhaṅgo tasmim samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, samādhisambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmim samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, samādhisambojjhaṅgo tasmim samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. (6)

So tathāsamāhitaṃ cittaṃ sādhuṃ ajjhupekkhitā hoti. Yasmiṃ samaye, bhikkhave, bhikkhu tathāsamāhitaṃ cittaṃ sādhuṃ ajjhupekkhitā hoti, upekkhāsambojjhaṅgo tasmim samaye bhikkhuno āraddho hoti, upekkhāsambojjhaṅgaṃ tasmim samaye bhikkhu bhāveti, upekkhāsambojjhaṅgo tasmim samaye bhikkhuno bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchati. Evaṃ bhāvitā kho, bhikkhave, cattāro satipaṭṭhānā evaṃ bahulīkatā satta sambojjhaṅge paripūrenti. (7)

Kathaṃ bhāvitā ca, bhikkhave, satta bojjhaṅgā kathaṃ bahulīkatā vijjāvimuttiṃ paripūrenti? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu satisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ. Dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti ... pe ... vīriyasambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti ... pītisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti ... passaddhisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti ... samādhisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti ... upekkhāsambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ. Evaṃ bhāvitā kho, bhikkhave, satta bojjhaṅgā evaṃ bahulīkatā vijjāvimuttiṃ paripūrenti”ti.

Idamavoca bhagavā. Attamanā te bhikkhū bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandunti.

Ānāpānassatisuttaṃ niṭṭhitaṃ aṭṭhamam.

11.11 Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?

June 2, 2017; revised September 2, 2017

1. If you Google “Anapanasati”, almost all websites that come up identify it as “Buddhist breath meditation” or “mindfulness of breathing”. But *Tipitaka suttās* clearly lead to the conclusion that breath meditation is not Buddhist *Ānāpāna bhāvanā*.

- Breath meditation was practiced by *yōgis* even at the time of the Buddha. **So, breath meditation predates Buddha’s *Ānāpāna bhāvanā***. Buddha rejected it, because it does not lead to *Nibbāna*, or PERMANENT relief from suffering.
- There are many *suttās* in the *Tipitaka* that clearly state that when *Ānāpāna* is followed correctly, that automatically fulfills *Satipaṭṭhāna*, *Saptha Bojjanga*, and all 37 Factors of Enlightenment, and leads to *Nibbāna*. **Therefore, *Ānāpānasati* is infinitely more deeper than just focusing on one’s breath.**
- I will provide evidence for those two statements below. First, let us see what can be accomplished with Buddhist *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā*.

2. According to the [WebLink: suttacentral: Ānāpānassati Sutta \(MN 118\)](#): “..*Ānāpānassati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā cattāro satipaṭṭhāne paripūreti. Cattāro satipaṭṭhānā bhāvitā bahulīkatā satta bojjhaṅge paripūrenti. Satta bojjhaṅgā bhāvitā bahulīkatā vijjāvimuttiṃ paripūrenti.*”

- Translated, “..*Ānāpānassati*, when used (*bhāvitā*) and used frequently (*bahulīkatā*), completes (*paripūreti*) four types of *Satipaṭṭhāna*. *Cattāro satipaṭṭhāna*, when used and used frequently, completes *Sapta Bojjanga*. *Sapta Bojjanga* when used and used frequently, completes the full release (*Nibbāna* or *Arahanthood*)”.
- Exactly the same statement was made in the [WebLink: suttacentral: Ananda Sutta \(SN 54.13\)](#). In fact, most of the *suttās* in [WebLink: suttacentral: Ānāpāna Saṃyutta \(SN 54\)](#) has that phrase or the phrase: “..*Ānāpānassati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā mahapphalā hoti mahānisaṃsā*“. Here, “*mahappalā*” (“*mahā*” + “*palā*”) means the four Noble stages: *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi*, *Arahant*.
- Therefore, it is quite clear that *ānāpānassati*, **by itself**, can lead to all the way to the *Arahanthood*. Thus, one does not need to do “**separate vipassana (insight) meditation after getting to samatha with ānāpānassati**” as some suggest.

3. **The key question is: “Can breath meditation, by itself, lead to *Arahanthood*?** This is the critical question that needs to be contemplated by those who believe that *Ānāpānassati* means breath meditation.

- *Nibbāna* is removal of greed, hate, ignorance: “*rāgakkhayō dōsakkhayō mōhakkhayō idaṃ vuccati nibbānantī*“. This verse is in many *suttās*, for example, in [WebLink: suttacentral: Nibbāna pañhā Sutta \(SN 38.1\)](#).
- If *Ānāpānassati* means breath meditation, how could keeping the mind on one’s breath **by itself** REMOVE *rāga*, *dōsa*, *mōha* from one’s mind?

4. **The conventional (and erroneous) teaching in many texts today is that one needs to get to *samādhi* with *Ānāpānassati* and then one needs to do *Vipassanā* or insight meditation to attain *magga phala*.**

- However, from the above discussed *suttās* it is quite clear that *Ānāpānassati* **by itself** can lead to even the *Arahanthood*!
- Of course this erroneous interpretation — that breath meditation is Buddhist *Ānāpāna bhāvanā* — is not something that current practitioners came up with. It can be traced back to Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*, see, “[Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#)“.

5. The incorrect version of *Ānāpānassati* was there even before the Buddha. In the [WebLink: suttacentral: Arittha Sutta \(SN 54.06\)](#), the Buddha, upon finding out that *Bhikkhu Arittha* was

practicing the incorrect breath meditation as *Ānāpānassati* told him, “..*Atthesā, ariṭṭha, ānāpānassati, nesā natthī’ti vadāmi. Api ca, ariṭṭha, yathā ānāpānassati vitthārena paripuṇṇā hoti taṃ suṇāhi, sādhukaṃ manasi karohi; bhāsissāmi*”ti.

- Translated, “..**There is that *ānāpānassati*, Arittha**. I don’t say that there isn’t. But I will describe the real (*yathā*) *ānāpānassati*, listen and pay close attention. I will speak.”
- Furthermore, that incorrect version of breath meditation was used by *yōgis* at that time even to attain higher *jhāna*. However, those *anāriya jhāna* are attained by just SUPPRESSING defilements (*keles*), and will not lead to ANY *magga phala*. Those who cultivate such *anāriya jhāna* will also have next birth in *Brahma* realms, but after that they can be reborn even in the *apāyās*.

6. The main reason for the incorrect interpretation of *Ānāpānassati* as breath meditation is that in many *suttās* it is described as *assāsa/passāsa*, which conventionally means taking in/putting out of something, and particularly to breathing in/breathing out.

- In fact, *āna/āpāna* (which rhymes as *ānāpāna*) also mean taking in/putting out, as we discuss below.
- However, in the *suttās* on *Ānāpānassati*, *assāsa/passāsa* or *āna/pāna* specifically mean taking in *kusala*/getting rid of *akusala*, or, equivalently, taking in the Noble Eightfold Path/discarding the *miccā* eightfold path.
- That should be clear to anyone who knows that *Nibbāna* is attained via getting rid of *dasa akusala*.

7. In the [WebLink: suttacentral: Assāsa Sutta \(SN38.5\)](#), it is specifically said what needs to be “taken in” (*assāsa*):

- “*Katamo paṇāvuso, maggo katamā paṭipadā, etassa assāsassa sacchikiriyaṃ* (what needs to be “taken in”). *Ayameva kho, āvuso, ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo etassa assāsassa sacchikiriyaṃ* (it is the Noble Eightfold Path that needs to be “taken in”). *Seyyathidaṃ* (namely): *sammādiṭṭhi sammāsaṅkappo sammāvācā sammākammanto sammāājīvo sammāvāyāmo sammāsatī sammāsamādhi*”. [*paṭipadā* : (f.) line of conduct; mode of progress. *sacchikiriya* : [f.] realisation; experiencing.]
- [WebLink: suttacentral: Parama assāsa Sutta \(AN38.6\)](#) has the same statement, emphasizing with the term “*parama*” or “superior”.
- Therefore, there should not be any confusion about what *assāsa* means.

8. A detailed description of how the cultivation of correct *Ānāpānassati* leads to *Ariya jhānas* as well as *magga phala* is described in the [WebLink: suttacentral: Paṭipopama sutta \(SN 54.8\)](#), also called the *Dīpa Sutta*.

- “*So satōva assāsati, satōva passāsati*” means “He maintains his mind on *dhamma* that should be taken in (*kusala* or moral) and those that should be gotten rid of (*akusala* or immoral)”.
- “*paṭinissaggānupassī assasissāmi’ti sikkhati, ‘paṭinissaggānupassī passasissāmi’ti sikkhati*” means, “one cultivates discipline (*sikkhati*) by removing bonds that binds one to the rebirth process (*patinissaganupassī*) by taking in morals (*assasissāmi*) and getting rid of immorals (*passasissāmi*)”.

9. As is the case with many Pāli words, the meaning of the word *Ānāpāna* is embedded in the word itself. The two words “*āna*” and “*āpāna*” combine to rhyme as *ānāpāna*. When “*sati*” is added for being mindful of that, it becomes *ānāpānassati*.

- “*Āna*” is taking in; In Sinhala, “*ānayanaya*” is “import”. “*Āpāna*” is discarding; In Sinhala, “*apanayanaya*” is “export”. Thus “*āna*”+“*āpāna*” or *ānāpāna* is “taking in/discarding” or import/export.
- “*Assa*” is same as “*āna*”, and “*passa*” is the same as “*āpāna*”. In Sri Lanka, parents tell their child to clean his/her room by saying, “*kāmaraya* (room) *assa passa* (or *aspas*) *karaganna*”.

- When cleaning the room, the child needs to get rid of the clutter (*passa*), but also can take in (*assa*) something like a flower vase to make the room look more pleasant, or to take in a chair that can be useful.
- So, one does not throw away everything or take in everything. One needs to be selective in taking in “good things” and throwing away “bad things”. That is where mindfulness comes in. That cannot be done with breath.

10. Most people are reluctant to give up the wrong practice of “breath meditation” simply because they are attached to the “state of well being” that can be reached with breath meditation. But that relief is only temporary.

- It is even possible to attain *anāriya jhānas* with breath meditation, but those *jhānas* are also temporary, because the defilements are only SUPPRESSED. On the other hand, the *Ariya jhānas* attained via correct *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā* are permanent even in future rebirths because deeply-hidden defilements (*anusaya*) are REMOVED.
- It must also be mentioned that breath mediation can be used to calm down one’s mind. But one should not expect to make much progress towards *Nibbāna* using it. **In fact, if one gets “addicted” to it (as I have seen many people do), it could be a serious distraction to the Noble Path.**

11. As I have emphasized in the “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” and the “[Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta](#)“, one should not restrict either *Ānāpānasati* or *Satipatthāna bhāvanā* to formal sessions conducted sitting down at an isolated place.

- When the Buddha said, “*..Ānāpānassati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā..*” in #2 above, he meant doing it as much as possible, anywhere possible. That means basically all the time! One just needs to be mindful of one’s actions, speech, and thoughts, and stop bad ones and cultivates good ones.
- This is the fundamental approach to practice, see, “[Living Dhamma](#)” section for a step-by-step process that can be used by even those who do not believe in the basic tenets of Buddha Dhamma, like rebirth or *kamma*.

12. Some people believe that *Ānāpānasati* or *Satipatthāna bhāvanā* should be done in formal sessions, because of the verse, “*Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu aranna gato vā rukkhamūla gato vā sunnāgāra gato vā nisidati pallankaṃ ābhujitvā, ujum kāyaṃ paṇidhāya, parimukhaṃ satim upatthapetvā*”, that appears in multiple *suttās* explaining both *Ānāpānassati* and *Satipatthāna bhāvanā*.

- **In most English translations** this verse is written as, “**There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and setting mindfulness to the fore**”.
- But there is a deeper meaning to this verse. For example, in the word “*rukkhamūla*“, “*rukkha*” is “tree” and “*mūla*” is the “root”; even though the top of a tree sways back and forth with the wind, the tree trunk close to the root is very stable. Thus “*rukkhamūla gatō vā*” means getting to a stable mindset. In the conventional interpretation it says, “having gone to the foot of a tree”.
- The **deeper meaning** of that complete verse is discussed in detail in, “[Prerequisites for the Satipatthāna Bhāvanā](#)“. Then the verse can be stated something like, “**get into a calm and stable mindset that is devoid of greed, hate, and ignorance; keep a modest attitude without any sense of superiority; be forthright and honest, and keep the mind on the main object of cooling down the mind**”. That can be done anywhere, a formal session is not needed, even though that could be helpful.
- One could also use the conventional meaning for formal sessions. But of course, it is the deeper meaning that is much more important even in formal sessions.

13. If anyone has any evidence to the contrary **from the Tipitaka**, please make a comment at the “[Discussion Forum](#)“. I will be happy to address any such issues.

- Other than the three commentaries (*Patisambhidamagga*, *Petakopadesa*, and *Nettipakarana*) that are included with the *Tipitaka*, all other commentaries written later have many inconsistencies and outright misinterpretations; see, for example, “[Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#)“.

11.12 8. The Basic Formal Ānāpānasati Meditation

The top 10 posts in this section describe a way of using meditation in following the Noble Path and to attain the *Ariya jhānas* and at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. This series was put together using my own experience, and in the 10th and 11th posts I describe how the process can culminate in attaining *Ariya jhānas* (and possibly *magga phala*). The rest of the posts in this section are on possible meditation subjects and together with other posts at the site can be used to clarify unresolved questions, and to gain *samādhi*. It is recommended that the first 11 posts be followed in that order, at least initially.

1. As we discussed in the previous posts of this series, it is important to live a moral life without engaging in the BIG EIGHT in order to achieve the full benefits of meditation. One could start even while making progress on the BIG EIGHT, and these formal sessions will help with those as well.

2. Now let us talk about how to do the correct *Ānāpānasati* meditation as taught by the Buddha; see, “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)”.

- First pick out a quiet time slot that you can allocate without having to worry about other tasks. Initially, 10-15 minutes a day would be fine and you can extend the time to several hours when the benefits of proper meditation becomes clear and you start feeling the *nirāmisa sukha*.

3. Pick out a room away from external disturbances as much as possible. A room that can be darkened and the door can be closed would be ideal. Sit in a comfortable chair with arm rest, and this becomes important when one start getting into *samādhi*, because the body could become less rigid and tends to slide off (however, some people including myself tend to “freeze” just like in *samādhi* statues).

- Anyway, do not make the chair too comfortable because you may fall asleep. With practice this sleepiness will automatically go away, when the mind starts liking the meditation sessions, i.e., when one of the *pancanivarana*, *thina middha*, is automatically removed. One comes out of *samādhi* energized.

4. Sit in the chair with the hands on the lap and eyes closed. What we will be trying to do is to ward off any thoughts of lust, cravings, etc. (*kamachanda*), any thoughts of hate (*vyāpāda*) in particular, and also any stray thoughts such as on kids or other pending tasks. We want to experience the “cooling down” due to the absence of *kamachanda* and *vyāpāda*, and also to focus the mind on a Dhamma concept. For those who are starting out, it may be good to do the following first:

- In order to keep the mind from running away, keep saying in your mind, “May all beings be happy and healthy”. Or, you could think about some act of generosity that you did recently. But all of a sudden you may drift to a thought of some type of a sensual pleasure (involving any of the senses). Deliberately get rid of that thought and focus the mind back on the original task.
- If a hateful thought (towards someone or something) comes to mind, forcefully stop that thought as well. Here you should deliberately think about good thoughts about that person. It is important to remember that even the most vile person has friends/family that love that person. Sincerely say, “May X be happy and healthy”. Even if you have good reasons to despise that person, it is important to realize that our task is to remove the hateful feelings that WE have. When we do that, in the future we will not generate strong hateful feelings even if someone does something that may appear to be against us.
- Thinking about the serenity of a Buddha statue helps in the case of both *kamachanda* and *vyāpāda* (and any stray thought).

5. Once one gets some practice to sit at one place with a focused mind for a little while, one should start meditating or contemplating on Dhamma concepts. **It may be a good idea to start with the introductory posts (posts above this post).**

- After that, one could read one of the posts from the “Key Dhamma Concepts” on the top menu just before the meditation session and then contemplate on those concepts; for example, one could think about examples on “*anicca*”: We cannot maintain anything to our satisfaction over long term. If you are old enough you have many examples on your own. If you are young, you

can still maintain your body, hair, teeth, etc to your liking but when you get to middle age, you will see that it is an impossible task. The easiest is to think about your parents/grand parents and see how their bodies have changed, how they are unable to keep their bodies the way they would like.

- For this purpose, I have also added new posts on how one can look at the world through Buddha Dhamma in this section. The posts that I have added after the “[Myths about Meditation](#)” are good ones to read before the session and then to meditate on those ideas; for example, “[A Simple Way to Enhance Merits \(Kusala\) and Avoid Demerits \(Akusala\)](#)”. The other three posts below that one may be a bit advanced for some; if so, browse around and find ones that are suitable. Eventually, the key concepts in the “[Key Dhamma Concepts](#)” section need to be grasped. I encourage everyone to read the posts in the “[Moral Living and Fundamentals](#)” section first.
- You could actually read any post from any area of the site and use that as a “focal point” on the meditation session later on. Not all sections are relevant to everyone. **Different people can get to samādhi focusing on different topics. The only posts that is absolutely necessary are the ones on *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. But if they are hard to grasp, one should probably start at the “Moral Living” section. It is a matter of getting used to new concepts. In meditation, one will automatically “drift to *samādhi*” when the concepts become clear; the mind becomes awake and clear.**

6. Inevitably, your mind will try to wander off during the session. **Stopping lustful and hateful thoughts is the main task of this formal meditation session. If any distracting thought comes to the mind, DO NOT let it “run wild”; this is what is called “being mindful”. Keep a sharp eye on such stray thoughts and put a stop soon as they surface.**

- The other three hindrances (*thina midha*, *uddhacca kukkucce*, and *vicikicce*) will automatically come down. You will be surprised how refreshed you feel after a “good meditation session”.
- Initially it may be hard, but if you are persistent you should be able to see the results within a week to a month depending the situation with the BIG EIGHT. Those will also gradually diminish too.
- Once one gets the mind to calm down some, one could start focusing on the good/bad habits that one has, in addition to “taking in” Dhamma concepts.

7. In the *Anapanapabba* of the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*, it says, “*..so sato va assa sati, sato va passa sati. Digham va assasanto digham assasami ti pajanati, digham va passasanto digham passasami ti pajanati,*” Here it DOES NOT mean “take long breaths in, expel long breaths out”; rather it means, “get rid of old bad habits, and cultivate the old good habits”.

- Similarly, the very next sentence (“*..rassam va assasanto...*”) is not about short breaths, but on those good habits that you started to work on recently, and those bad habits that started to creep in to your mind recently (if there is any).
- This is why understanding how habits are formed and becomes āsavas is important; there are several posts on this subject.
- There is no way that one can purify one’s mind by breathing in/out, even though it can get one’s mind to calm down (*samatha*). The correct way of doing it does both *samatha* and *vipassana* together.
- In the above verse, ***sati* is a very important term; it is not mere concentration, but contemplation with an understanding of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*** (actually any form of meditation cannot be done effectively without at least some understanding of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*).

8. The key to success is to do this as often as possible. You do not need to be in a quiet place either, even though it helps especially initially. As you make progress, try to do it while riding the subway or a bus (but not while driving!), while waiting at the doctor’s office, during a lunch break, etc.

9. When one starts on *Ariya Bhāvanā*, sometimes things may look worse before getting better. It is like trying to cool a hot iron by sprinkling water on it, when all that smoke comes out and may appear

to be getting worse. But one needs to be persistent. One needs to keep in mind that uncountable beings have attained “cooling down” by having faith in the Buddha.

- Understanding key Dhamma concepts is key to any type of meditation. Whenever you have time, try to read on different topics. Things will start “falling into place” at some point, if it hasn’t yet. From that point on, one will start feeling the joy of Dhamma, and will be seeking to clarify things with enthusiasm. It is a good addiction to have!

Next, “[Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Character and Habits \(Gathi\)](#)“,

11.13 Possible Effects in Meditation – Kundalini Awakening

June 25, 2016; updated July 19, 2016

In the post, “[Can Buddhist Meditation be Dangerous?](#)” in the Section “[Myths or Realities](#)“, I discussed some possible effects of meditation, both in conventional and in true Buddhist meditations. Here I will focus on just Buddhist meditation, and explain the physical and mental changes that one may experience. However, this does not mean everyone will experience these; these symptoms cannot be generalized, and some may not even feel them.

1. It is possible that one may encounter some soothing physical sensations first and then even some discomforts, when one starts seriously cleansing one’s mind. I did not want to discuss this topic until I had enough background material to explain the origins of such effects.

- Some people may feel such first experiences to be not bad at all, and even get attached to them. I believe that what is known in Hinduism as “*kundalini* awakening” is also a manifestation of this effect. Those are supposed to be encountered in *anariya* meditation techniques, where one stops the cleansing process at this stage. It is the **goal** of most of those non-Buddhist meditators.
- Such effects could also be experienced in genuine Buddhist meditation. Then, they may even turn a bit painful before it gets better. In order to go through such stages and to end up with genuine tranquility, one needs to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and proceed further.
- **Before reading this post, it is advisable to first read the introductory post, “[Can Buddhist Meditation be Dangerous?](#)“,** because some body sensations encountered in early stages of meditation are discussed in that post.

2. Fully understanding the current post requires some background material on the concept of *gandhabba*; Click to hear pronunciation:

[WebLink: Listen to “Gandhabba” pronunciation](#)

The inert physical body is made alive by the *gandhabba* (or “*manomaya kaya*“) that comes out of the physical body in the case of “out-of-body experiences”; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)“.

- There are many posts at the site that explain various aspects of the *gandhabba*; see the sections “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)](#)“, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“, and “[Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#)“.
- While it is not necessary to learn about the *gandhabba* to attain *Nibbāna*, if one needs to understand the mechanisms underlying these “meditation experiences”, it is the bridge between mind and the physical body. **In any case, it is good to know about these possible effects (more of which are discussed below), so that if one gets to experience them, one would not be perplexed.**

3. The *gandhabba* has a very fine body which is really an invisible blueprint of the physical body. And that fine body is the one that controls the heavy physical body according to the commands from the mind, which is also located in the *gandhabba* (at the *hadaya vatthu*).

- **The best way to visualize this is to imagine the *gandhabba* as a fine mesh that overlaps the physical body; its fine body has all the parts of the physical body, and is able to move any part that it wishes to move. For example, when the *gandhabba* moves its fine arm, the physical arm moves with it.**
- This is how we control our physical bodies. Of course, there are more details with the brain acting out as an intermediary; see, “[Brain – Interface between Mind and Body](#)“.
- For example, most of the energy to move the heavy body parts comes from the food that we eat. *Gandhabba*

4. The nervous system of the physical body overlaps the fine nervous system of the *gandhabba*, and tries to maintain that overlap all the time. If one sits down cross-legged, for example, the nervous

system of the physical body may shift from that of the *gandhabba*. Then the physical nervous system will try to adjust for that shift, pulling the attached muscles with it.

- That is why it could become uncomfortable, especially for those who are not used to sit cross-legged (when one gets used to it, the physical system will learn to adjust quickly).
- Therefore, this effect does not give an indication of a progress in the meditation program. Significant effects are discussed below.

5. Our thoughts (i.e., the *cittaja kaya*) can influence the fine body (*utuja kaya*) of the *gandhabba*. In fact, the *utuja kaya* arises out of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] produced by the *cittaja kaya* and the *kammaja kaya*.

- **Thus the fine body of the *gandhabba* can be affected by two methods: by the *kammaja kaya* (i.e. by *kamma vipāka*) AND by the *cittaja kaya* or according to how we think.**
- **The first effect** can bring about aches and pains in the physical body due to *kamma vipāka* (by shifting the *gandhabba*'s body to out-of-balance in a short time, so we can feel the shift). **These are mostly experienced as we get old (e.g., chronic back pains) and are of course not due to meditation.** Some of these may get better with meditation.

6. **In addition to the shifts caused by *kamma vipāka*, we can change the equilibrium position of the *gandhabba*'s fine nervous system with consistent thoughts over long periods of time.** For example, if we think hateful thoughts a lot, the nervous system of the *gandhabba* may twist in a certain way; if we think mostly greedy thoughts, it may shift in a different way.

- Thus, as we think defiled thoughts and act on them on a regular basis, it leads to gradual twisting of nerve bundles in the *gandhabba*, and physical muscles also get twisted accordingly. Since it is a gradual process compared to the first effect, we do not normally feel it (until we get old).
- However, when we start cleansing our minds the fine body of the *gandhabba* tries to come back to its equilibrium position. **During a good meditation session, this can happen fairly quickly and that when one starts feeling such nerve (and muscle) movements.** We are basically trying to “undo” those twists in nerve bundles that occurred over years and years.
- This is why this effect is much less in young children. Their nerves have not yet being shifted too much.

7. **Thus the second effect has its origins in our thoughts.** Normally such effects occur above the waist, along the spine, neck, and in the head. This is related to the fact nerve bundles propagate through the spine and also there are cranial nerves in the brain. Thus *Kundalini* awakening is an example of this category.

- This effect is experienced by different meditators somewhat differently. But the dominant feature is the “pressure waves” that arise above the waist, and normally located around the spine, neck, throat, and the head. These have been attributed to energy centers or “*chakras*” in *Kundalini* awakening; see, “[WebLink: wiki: Kundalini](#)”.
- That is why they say that the *kundalini* energy is “uncoiled” (or “awakened”) during meditation. But this is nothing more than the out-of-balance nervous systems coming back to the equilibrium position. In *anariya* meditations there is not much further cleansing possible, because in order to proceed further, one needs to comprehend the *anicca* nature of this world.

8. In Buddhist or *Ariya* meditations, one should start contemplating on the *anicca* nature when one starts any type of body sensations. **Any type of body sensations means the mind is beginning to affect the body, and that one has made progress in the cleansing process.** Of course those Hindu yogis who got to this stage had prevented from immoral acts and suppressed such thoughts, and thus had gained a tranquility of mind at least temporarily.

- But if one does not cleanse one's mind in a permanent way, with the comprehension of the true nature of this world (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*), such corrections are temporary and can go right back to the twisted positions. Thus such effects can be re-experienced in varying degrees.

9. When one starts comprehending the *anicca* nature, this “unwinding process” can accelerate (and the body sensations too), and this is when one may even start feeling significant discomfort or even mild pain.

- If the body is really “out-of-alignment”, the realignment process can lead to different types sensations; some may be mild, but some could be even a bit painful.

10. To give an example, I started feeling some discomfort in my right ear a couple of years ago. I never thought it could be something to do with meditation, and I went to see an ear specialist. After doing many tests, he could not find anything wrong. After a year or so it went away gradually. I only recently made the connection and figured out that it was really due to this “cleansing process”.

- A few months ago, I started hearing a ringing in my ears, initially during the meditation sessions. These days it is there all the time, even when I am not meditating. However, there is no pain and the ringing does not bother me during or outside meditation sessions; I can go through the day without even noticing it. I have scheduled another visit to the ear specialist, but just a couple of weeks ago I accidentally came across one of the discourses by my teacher Thero which said that such “ear ringing” could also be due to “internal adjustments”.
- **July 19, 2016:** I went to an ear specialist yesterday about this problem. He did some tests and said that my hearing is normal in the “standard frequency range”. But sensitivity has dropped in the high frequency range, and this “ringing noise” is due to that. He says he and many others have it too, and it may appear when people get old. It is a condition called Tinnitus but he said I do not need to do anything unless it becomes distracting. Right now, it does not bother me, so I am just going to leave it.

11. Many people experience sweating, which is definitely part of the “cleansing process”. Our defiled thoughts lead to the generation of “impurities” in various body sites. The pure *citta* generated in meditation can burn them and the body will get rid of the waste via sweat too. Thus sweating is also possible during a good meditation session (in the early stages of progress; of course all these go away eventually).

- Another related symptom is becoming thirsty during a good session; mouth can get dry. It is good to keep a glass of water close-by if that is the case.
- By the way, one can move around even while in a *jhāna*. In fact, when one cultivates the *jhāna*, one can open eyes and not be bothered by it. I can confirm that. In fact, those who have *abhiññā* powers are said to be able to do regular work while using *abhiññā* powers.
- For example, a famous story in the *Tipitaka* describes how Ven. Chullapanthaka had created thousand copies of himself with *abhiññā* powers and how they were all sweeping the temple premises.

12. Here is another experience that I have heard people described according to my teacher Thero’s recorded *desanas*:

- “Something propagated from the neck area to the top of the head and stayed there during the session. This happened during subsequent sessions too”. Such a “propagation” is probably more like a “pressure wave”. This is another “*kundalini* type” effect.
- When these “pressure waves” are strong, it may be a bit painful too. But be rest assured that those effects will gradually go away as one continues when the nervous system comes back to equilibrium. However, if such sensations persist outside the mediation session it may be a good idea to go for a medical examination, since it could be due to a medical condition.

13. There is actually a way to reduce these sensations to some extent. This was suggested by my teacher Thero in a *desanā* that I listened to. Even if one meditates with the eyes closed (as most people should do in early stages), the eye balls inside eyelids are in constant motion; they move around a lot.

- One should try to focus the eyes to the nose area. This is done sort of by one’s mind, but the eye balls then keep steady pointing towards to nose. In my case it stopped most of the sensations in the head. Eventually, of course these sensations go away, once one attains

“equilibrium”. Then one can proceed even with the eyes open, but still focused towards the nose/mouth area.

- Now I do not have any of those “pressure waves” that experienced in the throat area and recently those in the head area also went away.
- By the way, I have not been able to make it past the third *jhāna* for the past year and a half or so, even though I am making progress (*jhānas* have three levels: weak, medium, and strong). Getting to the fourth *Ariya jhāna* means one has reached the *Anāgāmi* stage, where one loses desire for all sense pleasures (i.e, transcend *kāma loka*).

14. Our thoughts or our “*cittaja kaya*” is the most important of the four types of “*kaya*” that we have. For a discussion of those four types of bodies, see, “[Āhāra \(Food\) in Udayavaya Ñāna](#)“, in the Section: [Udayavaya Ñāna](#).

- As discussed there, our physical bodies (*karaja kaya*) that we value so much are there only for about 100 years, while our human *bhava* or human existence can possibly last many hundreds of years. The other three types of bodies of *kaya* that we have are *kammaja kaya*, *cittaja kaya* and *utuja kaya*. All three of these prevail through the whole human *bhava* (of course they undergo constant change); they make a “big transition” when a new *bhava* is grasped at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment).
- And it is this *cittaja kaya* (or basically our thought stream) that is the most important. If we use the *cittaja kaya* wisely we can make progress in our mundane lives as well as in pursuing *Nibbāna*. We will discuss this in detail in the last post in on the [Udayavaya Ñāna](#) in an upcoming post.

15. The key point here is that if one starts feeling these body sensations, one has cleansed the mind to the point of being able to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* (or any other Dhamma concept) with more ease; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)“, and the post discussed there.

- At this stage (i.e., when feeling thirst, sweating, body sensations, etc), one is likely to be somewhere around “[9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#)” in the meditation section.
- Of course it is also possible that one could have already comprehended *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* and has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage without any such symptoms. Each person needs to decide that for him/herself; see, “[How Does One Know whether the Sotāpanna Stage is Reached?](#)“. The fundamental guide is whether one has removed those “*apāyagami gathi*” via cleansing the mind. The physical body may or may not give those clues that we discussed above.
- For attaining *magga phala*, *jhānas* are not necessary. Furthermore, *Ariya jhānas* cannot be attained without attaining at least the *Sotāpanna* stage first; see, “[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)“.
- **Mental (and associated physical) phenomena are highly personal. Thus above discussed symptoms may or may not be experienced by a given person.**

11.14 9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character (Gathi)

The top 10 posts in this section describe a way of using meditation in following the Noble Path and to attain the *Ariya jhānas* and at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. This series was put together using my own experience, and in the 10th and 11th posts I describe how the process can culminate in attaining *Ariya jhānas* (and possibly *magga phala*). The rest of the posts in this section are on possible meditation subjects and together with other posts at the site can be used to clarify unresolved questions, and to gain *samādhi*. It is recommended that the first 11 posts be followed in that order, at least initially.

Meditation is all about purifying one's mind. We all have individualized cravings and habits that we have acquired in our past lives that continue during this life unless we act to change or stop them. We need to build up on good habits and stop bad ones. The only way to do this is to be mindful of our actions and stop bad actions as they start as thoughts in our minds. **Most bad thoughts arise due to bad habits; they just “pop up”.**

- [Introduction to Character or Personality \(Gathi\)](#)
- [A Broad View of the “Person” Trying to be a “Better Person”](#)
- [How Character \(Gathi\) Leads to Bhava and Jathi](#)
- [How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)

11.14.1 Introduction to Character or Personality (Gathi)

1. Here is a good place to see why the Buddha rejected both the concept of a “self” AND a “no-self” (or “soul” AND “no-soul”). We first need to realize that the task of purifying the mind is very personal; only you know about your mind and only you can purify it. The perception of a “no-self” is a bad starting point to do this cleansing.

- We can easily see that “a person” changes over time, both physically and mentally (see the next post). Thus it is easy to see that a concept of a “soul” or “self” does not hold water.
- However, each of us is DIFFERENT, and UNIQUE; no two are the same even at a fixed time. Even though each person changes, the change itself is unique to “that person” and CAN BE initiated by that person. What makes one person different from another is his/her character (*gathi*).
- For those people who say, “there is no-self” or “there is no real me”, I ask: “Then is it OK if someone hits you with a stick or hurt you badly in some way?”. Obviously, that is not fine. Just by denying something that is as real as suffering itself, will not make the problem go away. Just being philosophical is not going to make the problem disappear.
- This is why the Buddha rejected both extremes of “self” and “no-self”.

2. Actually as one increasingly realizes the fruitlessness of struggling to seek sense pleasures, the feeling of “self” starts to decrease. An *Arahant* is the closest to a “self-less person”; but even an *Arahant* has some unique character qualities: nothing to do with greed, hate, and delusion, but more like kammically neutral habits.

- For example, there is this story about a very young *Arahant*. One day a man came to take this *bhikkhu* to his house for a “dāna”, which consists of a lunch followed by a gift (usually things that are needed for a *bhikkhu* like a robe, a towel, etc). On the way, they ran into some puddles on the ground and the young *bhikkhu* jumped over one. The man thought, “Oh, this *bhikkhu* is not even disciplined let alone having any *magga phala*; maybe I should not give him the gift”. They came across a few more puddles and the *bhikkhu* went around them. So, the man asked, “Why did you jump over only that one?”. The *bhikkhu* told him, “If I jumped over anymore puddles, I would probably lose my lunch too”. It turned out that the *bhikkhu* was an *Arahant* with *abhiññā* powers and read the man's mind! Also it is said that the *bhikkhu* was born a

monkey for many lives in the recent past, and he still had that *sansaric* “monkey habit” of jumping over things.

3. Habits are formed via repeated use. The Buddha said, “*yā yan taṇhā pōno bhavitha.....*” or “*bhava* or habits are formed by *taṇhā* for various things, activities. Remember that *Taṇhā* means “getting attached to something via greed, hate, of ignorance”; see, “[Tanhā – How we Attach via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.

4. What we are concerned about is only getting rid of immoral habits and cultivating moral habits. This will make oneself a “better person” long before one even thinks about attaining Nibbāna. This can be done with simple process called “āna-pāna” or “taking in good habits” and “discarding bad habits”.

- The Buddha said, “*bhāvē thabbanha bhavithan, pahee thabbanha paheenan*” or “keep doing what is good, get rid of those that are not good”. The meaning is a bit deeper than that because “*bhāvē*” there refers to making “*bhava*”. The more one does something, it becomes one’s “*bhava*”. And the less one willfully stops doing, that “*bhava*” tends to go away. This is what the neurologists are re-discovering today; see, “[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)”.

5. The bad habits need to be stopped each time it surfaces, right there. The Buddha said, “*etté san uppajjamana uppajati, paheeyamana paheeyathi*” or “each time a “*san*” (a bad habit) resurfaces, it needs to be recognized and stopped right then”.

- Therefore, one must do this not only in sitting meditation sessions, but as much as possible, whenever possible.
- This is what the Buddha also meant by “*asevitaya, bhavithaya, bahuleekathaya*”, or “associate, use, and do as much as possible whenever possible” everything that helps with *Ānāpānasati*. These are described in the post, “[Habits, Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)](#)”.

6. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of understanding what is truly involved in *ānāpānasati*. The recent findings on the workings of the brain really helps clarify and highlight some key points that the Buddha emphasized. I think it will help anyone understand the process much better. But first we will take a brief look at how these character qualities are inherited.

Next, “[A Broad View of the “Person” Trying to be a “Better Person”](#)”,

11.14.2 A Broad View of the “Person” Trying to be a “Better Person”

1. Let us see how and why we act with greed, hate, and ignorance. Stated simply, all we do during a day does not happen by chance. We act based on our “character” AND “our way of thinking about this world”.

- For example, if one does not believe in a rebirth process, or the law of *kamma* (that each action has consequences), then it may be easier to seek enjoyment at the expense of other beings.

2. What our character or world view today is due to a complex combination of many things, but the main factors are: (i) *sansaric* habits (also called *gathi* and *āsavas*), (ii) biological parents who provide parts of the physical body (this is also related to *kamma vipāka*), (iii) the environment that one grew up AND the current environment (i.e., physical environment and people one associates with).

- Even though the complexity of a “person” cannot be reduced to simple things, those are major ones. As the Buddha pointed out in the *Sabbasava sutta* (see, “[Habits, Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)](#)”), the main things that CAN BE changed NOW are “physical environment and people one associates with” which is a part of (iii) above. If we are talking about a child, then (iii) applies in its entirety.
- Once these “external influences” are taken care of, next is to purify the mind by “taking in” good things and “discarding” bad things or “*ānāpāna*”; see, “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)”.

3. When we are conceived in the mother’s womb, a “blueprint” of the new life is in the form of a *manomaya kaya* (which is made of undetectably fine matter) descends to the womb and combines

with the zygote formed by the combination of an egg from the mother and the sperm from the father. The *manomaya kaya* comes with three *rūpa kalapas* called the *kaya dasaka* (blueprint for the physical body), *bhava dasaka* (whether male or female), and *vatthu dasaka* (mind element, which has the “*gathi*” in it) that were determined by the *kamma vipāka* that led to the birth; we will discuss these later in the Abhidhamma section.

- Thus the physical body of the new life is now going to be affected by not only the *kaya dasaka*, but also the genetic material in the egg and the sperm (DNA of the parents). As the fetus grows, it will also be affected by the food intake by the mother as well as her mental state, home environment, etc. After the birth until death, the physical body (as well as the mind) will be affected by many other factors including the diet and the environment.

4. Thus there is no “unchanging self” either mentally or physically; everything is in constant flux. But one cannot say “there is no-self” either because the character qualities (*gathi* and *āsava*) that comes in with the *manomaya kaya* will keep “evolving”; even though they change, there is a continuation of a particular lifestream. Each person or animal that born is unique with a complex set of mental and physical parameters that evolve moment-to-moment like a flowing river; see, “[What Reincarnates? Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.

- We will discuss some of these factors in various sections, but the key point I wanted to get across is the fact that each person has a unique set of character qualities (*gathi* and *āsava*) that have evolved over uncountable number of lives in the past. And those are the key to one’s destiny. **One has the power to change those.**

5. What makes one person different from another is this set of “*gathi* and *āsava*”, which can be loosely translated as, “character qualities and deep-seated cravings”. Some people are calm and quiet while others are rough and boisterous; some like music while other like to watch things or engage in physical activities; the possibilities are endless and there are innumerable combinations of them. That is why each person is different.

- Hidden in these apparently harmless “habits” and “cravings” are the defilements or the tendencies to engage in certain types of activities that are harmful to oneself or the others.
- The key is to focus on the glaring character flaws first: if one engaged in activities such as fishing or hunting, that means willfully taking the life of other beings for one’s pleasure. Does that makes sense within the wider world view of any given being repeatedly born in any of the 31 realms? Within that broader view, we can see that any animal, how small or insignificant, has an attachment to its life; and we could have had that very life in the past.
- Take another example of a transaction between two people. The goal should be to make a decent profit for oneself making sure one covers the cost and make enough profit to “stay in business and provide for the family”, but not to make the transaction too burdensome on the other party. As we discussed in the post, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”, one could get into deep debt to other people and beings by exploiting them in many different ways.

6. The easiest way to deal with this is to look at each action mindfully and decide whether that act is “fair” to everyone involved. Of course one could check to see any of the ten defilements (*dasa akusala*) are committed by that action; see, “[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#)”.

- As I keep saying, one needs to focus on the more extreme violations first. There is no point in worrying about inadvertently killing some insects while gardening if one is engaged in lying and deceit or killing animals for pleasure. It is good to get an idea of the severity of different acts; see, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)”.

7. **This is why it is important to learn Dhamma as much as possible, while engaging in meditation. The Path becomes clear as one learns the subtleties in key Dhamma concepts. I am amazed how much I learn each and every day; it is like a picture becoming clearer by the day. You start to see the even smallest detail, and instead of becoming distraught you get a sense of clarity and peacefulness by cleansing the mind. You realize that no one is perfect until the Arahant hood and the key is to make progress, no matter where you are. Each step in the right direction makes you feel better.**

Next, “[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)“,

11.14.3 How Character (Gathi) Leads to Bhava and Jathi

1. One of the special knowledges that the Buddha gained at the Enlightenment was the āsavakkhaya ñāṇa. This is the key to stop the suffering FROM ARISING via getting rid of the deep-seated cravings (āsava) that we all have. *Āsavakkhaya ñāṇa* (“āsava” + “khaya”, where “khaya” is the opposite of “san”; see, “[What is “San”?](#)”) is the knowledge on how to remove those cravings (āsava).

2. Throughout the site, I keep emphasizing the importance of understanding (not memorizing) the meanings of the key Pāli words like *gathi*, *anusaya*, *āsava*, *bhava*, *jati*, *saṃsāra*, and *dukkha*; they are intimately inter-connected in many ways including *paticca samuppāda*. The way to stop future suffering (*dukkha*) from arising and reach Nibbāna is to break the perpetual cycle that lead to a new *jati* (birth) at each death.

- Our problems do not go away at death (committing suicide is a bad idea); they merely get started in a new phase with a new body, which could be worse than what we have now; see, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.
- The connections among *bhava* and *jati* on one side and *āsava*, *anusaya*, and *gathi* on the other side are intimate, and need to be understood well; see, “[Samsaric Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsava\)](#)”, before reading the rest of this post.

3. **And this understanding is needed even if one is not seriously thinking about Nibbāna. The whole key to suffering in general is embedded in these intricate relationships.**

- *Bhava* and *jati* also happen during this very life; *jati* could mean birth of a new desire; see, “[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(or Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppāda](#)” and “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.
- It may be a bit confusing at first for a new person to this site, but have patience and read the inter-connected posts; I have links everywhere to pertinent posts/material. Once you get an idea of the underlying connections, it will clarify everything, like a fog being lifted.
- I have set up links to open in new windows, so that you can go back forth between posts easily and try to “fill-in-the-gaps”.

4. A perpetual cycle that is ever-present in the sansaric cycle of rebirths is described in the following verse:

“*uppado pavattan, pavatta nimittan*

nimitta patisandhi, patisandhi gathi”

- “*Uppada*” means arising. When *anusaya* (temptations) arise due to *āsava* (cravings), we need to stop that temptation and break the cycle at “*pavattan*” (which means keeping it or go with it).
- If we go along with the temptation (“*pavatta*”), then it becomes a *nimitta* (literally a “sign”). A *nimitta* is a characteristic that is associated with that particular act. For example, for an alcoholic a picture of an alcohol bottle or a bar (or where one normally drinks), or even seeing a friend with whom one drinks often, can be a *nimitta*; when any of such a “symbol” comes to the mind, it reminds of the drinking act and gets one in the “mood”.

5. **Most times, the *patisandhi* (linking of the next rebirth) takes place via a *nimitta*; this is what is meant by “*nimitta patisandhi*” above. At the dying moment, what comes to the mind is likely to be something that one does often, and that could become the link to the next life.**

- A drug addict, if he/she is lucky to be born human again, will be attracted to a mother who is a drug addict.
- For a person with lot of hate, what comes to the mind at the dying moment could be a picture of an arch enemy; then the kammic power shows him a gun or a knife and he will be likely to attack the person with that weapon (in a dream-like state); the next moment he will be in an *apāya* (hell), which is the “matching place”.

6. The worse thing is that the old habits continue and even strengthened in this new life; this is what is meant by “*patisandhi gathi*” above. Suppose that drug addict who was born to an addicted mother is adopted by another family and raised in a drug-free environment. Still, if that child becomes exposed to drugs later in his life, he could be tempted to use drugs because of his sansaric habit.

- This is the danger in the rebirth process or *samsāra*; one keeps going down the slippery slope unless one changes one’s habits with effort. And reversing that trend can be done only in a human life.
- Sentient beings in most realms do not act willfully but according to their *sansaric* habits. We can see only the animal realm and clear that they do things mechanically (**almost like robots, but not quite only because they have FEELINGS**). Only the beings in higher realms have genuine free-will and it is optimum for the humans.
- You can see that many animals have unique characteristics: such characteristics and habits are associated with that particular existence (*bhava*). For example, some types of birds have been building the same type of nests from beginningless time through countless world cycles; **but they are unable to make it any better**. Migrating birds know exactly where to fly. New born turtles head to the sea right after the eggs are hatched; see the video:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: New Born, Baby Sea Turtles Race to the Ocean!](#)

7. However, humans can change their destiny. They have free will and the ability to come up with “new ideas”. We keep building new things, discovering new things, and making progress.

- We need to keep in mind that we can also purify our minds and become free of this unending and suffering-laden rebirth process. If we ever get a birth in one of the lower realms, we will be stuck there for a long time to come.
- The way to purify our minds is to get rid of bad habits. Excessive greed (this include addictions to anything including food, money, property, alcohol, drugs, etc) and anger are the first two things one needs to work on.
- This does not mean one has to give away one’s wealth; just don’t be too attached to them. One has “earned” that wealth from previous good deeds, so one does not need to feel bad about it. But those things last only about 100 years, and who knows what we will inherit in the next life.

8. And the key to be permanently free of the *apāyas* is to get rid of those bad character qualities (*gathi*) that can give us birth in those four realms.

- We can avoid the *niraya* (hell) by getting rid of hate; we can stay away from *peta* (hungry ghost) worlds by getting rid of greed, we can make sure to not get a birth in the *asura* realm by not getting “free rides”, and making our own living honestly (“*a*”+“*sūra*” means “not able” or those who depend on others).
- An animal birth results from *gathi* that have all three roots of greed, hate, and ignorance; animal realm is called “*thirisan*” in Pāli or Sinhala: “*thiri*” is three and “*san*” is greed, hate, and ignorance, thus an animal birth is caused by *gathi* that have all three immoral roots.
- In the same way, we can make it possible to be born a deva by being generous to others; we can make it possible to become a *brahma* by cultivating *metta*, *karuna*, *mudita*, *upekkha*; and we can optimize chances for a human birth by cultivating wisdom as well.

9. But no matter how well we live this life, we do not know what kind of “*kammic* baggage” that we carry from previous lives. Thus the only way to avoid the four lower realms (*apāyas*) with CERTAINTY is to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. And we can do this by comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, the true nature of this world.

- When one truly comprehends *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, one’s mind automatically rejects actions that are bound to maintain and cultivate bad *gathi*, and will encourage actions that will cultivate good *gathi*. If this is done to the level of getting rid of the four greedy citta with wrong vision and the citta with *vicikicca*, then one becomes PERMANENTLY free of the *apāyas*; see, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)”.

10. Finally, here is another interesting video from the animal world which shows how ants build sophisticated cities. But unlike humans, the ability to do that does not come from ingenious minds; ants have been doing the same from eternity. It is a “characteristic” that is naturally associated with the “ant *bhava*“. Each ant “knows” what to do, just like the baby turtles who race to the sea just after being hatched. It is the same with how birds know where to fly in their long migrations.

- There is so much that the Buddha explained to the world, but the world is still unaware of.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Giant Ant Hill Excavated](#)

11. More details on the importance of *gathi* in the rebirth process are discussed in, “[Patisandhi Citta – How the Next Life is Determined According to Gathi](#)“.

11.15 10. Attaining the Sotapanna Stage via Removing Ditthasava

July 30, 2015: I have re-written the two posts #10 and #11 (previously titled, “10. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga” and “11. How to Select and “Grow” Meditation Procedures for Magga Phala”) that were originally written some time back with different titles. Over the past two months, I have been able to clarify some subtle issues in both my own experience and also in the technical details. **Revised August 5, 2017.**

- First the order of things: *samādhi*, *magga phala*, and then *Ariya jhānas* in that order; see, [“Possible Outcomes of Meditation – Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala”](#).
- Thus *jhānas* (*Ariya* or *anariya*) are not necessary to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage; see the posts in the [“Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna”](#) section for details on this and many other aspects.

1. First, it would be very difficult to get to even a state of *samādhi* if one is not keeping up at least the “conventional” five precepts: abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and using drugs or getting intoxicated. Those things make the mind restless, and makes it hard for the mind to focus attention (the five hindrances “cover the mind”). It should also be noted that just strictly obeying the five precepts may not be effective if one’s mind is full of jealousy, extreme greed, hate, etc.; see, [“The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them”](#).

- Just like one cannot see the bottom of a well if it is highly contaminated, the mind (and the body) will not “feel anything” even in a formal meditation session if the mind is “highly contaminated”. And there is no point in trying to take out the “small defilements” (such as abstaining from taking a glass of wine) if one is engaged in immoral activities.
- When the “big defilements” are removed, one starts seeing a little bit further down the well; similarly, one’s mind will become lighter, with less stress, even when not in a formal meditation session. When one sits down in a quiet place, it will become easier to get to some kind of “*samādhi*”, or tranquility.
- The Buddha said that “*kusala sila*” leads to tranquility of the body and mind, which in turn leads to *samādhi*. The “*kusala sila*” accomplished via gaining *Sammā Diṭṭhi* (to some extent) is all that is needed to attain the *upacara samādhi* needed for the *Sotāpanna magga/phala*. All three *sanyojana* that are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage (*sathkaya diṭṭhi*, *vicikicca*, *silabbata paramasa*) are associated with wrong vision or *diṭṭhi*.

2. Many people have the idea that one needs to “get to *samādhi*” using a separate meditation technique such as the conventional breath meditation. Even though one could do that, it would be a waste of time. One can get to *samādhi* just by listening or reading attentively to CORRECT dhamma.

- There is not even a single reference in the *Tipitaka*, where the Buddha asked anyone to do a “*samatha bhāvanā*” first and then to “*vipassana bhāvanā*”. When one comprehends Dhamma, one’s mind get calm and through that *samatha* state, one can get to *magga phala*.
- After attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage, one can get to *Ariya jhānas* by focusing on that “state of cooling down” that one has already attained to some extent, to get to *jhānas*.
- One really needs formal meditation techniques to attain **higher magga phala**, i.e., above the *Sotāpanna* stage; the reason will become clear shortly. However, it is fine to do formal meditation even to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage. In the following, I will describe what I actually went through.

3. To get to *samādhi*, contemplating on Dhamma concepts will make it easier and faster. Also, one will be able to stay in “meditation” for a longer time. This is called by different names: insight meditation (*vipassana*), many forms of “*anupassana*”, and cultivating the “*dhamma vicaya*” *sambojjanga*. Concomitantly, one needs to do the correct version of “*Ānāpānasati*” at all times.

- **In principle, working towards the *Sotāpanna* stage does not require any formal meditation techniques even though meditation can help**; there have been countless people who attained the *Sotāpanna* or even higher stages of *Nibbāna* just by listening to a Dhamma discourse.

- It is quite important to understand this point. Many people have one or more of the following misconceptions about reaching the Sotāpanna stage: (i) one needs to give up all worldly possessions, (ii) one needs to become a *bhikkhu* or live in seclusion, (iii) one needs to do various types of meditation techniques.
- In order to clarify this issue, let us examine what is actually involved in attaining the Sotāpanna stage.

4. *Nibbāna* is reached via removal of *āsavas* (*āsavakkhaya*); see, “[Gathi \(Character\)](#), [Anusaya \(Latent Defilements\)](#), and [Āsava \(Cravings\)](#)”.

- Out of the four *āsavas* that we have, only one is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage: ***dittasava or the craving for wrong worldviews***. In the *Sabbasava Sutta*, this is referred to as removal by clear vision (“*dassanena pahathabba*”, where *dassanena* is vision and *pahathabba* is removal).
- The other three *āsavas* of *kamasava* (craving for sense pleasures), *bhavasava* (craving to live somewhere in the 31 realms of this world), and *avijjasava* (ignorance of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) are removed in the higher stages of *Nibbāna*; see the above post.

5. The key point is that one does “*apayagami apunnabhisankhara*” (or strong immoral deeds that makes one eligible to be born in the lower four realms) only when one has wrong worldviews. Contrary to most people’s beliefs, one does not need to lose craving for sense pleasures to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage. *Kamasava* is reduced in stages in the *Sotāpanna* and *Sakadāgāmī* stages and is removed only at the *Anāgāmī* stage.

- This is why learning dhamma concepts and getting rid of “*dittthis*” or “wrong views” is key in attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage, as I emphasized in several posts; if you enter “dittthi” in the Search box on the top right, you will see many relevant posts.
- We all have many *dittthis*. These can be removed only via learning the true nature of this world, i.e., by learning Dhamma.
- One meaning of *Sotāpanna* (“*sota*” + “*paññā*”) is “one who has cultivated wisdom by listening to Dhamma”; in the days of the Buddha that was how one learned Dhamma, by listening.

6. Even before meeting my teacher *Thero*, I had been thinking about dhamma concepts for 3-4 years and had been trying to get a consistent picture in my mind. Even at that time, I could easily get to *samādhi* because my mind was totally focused.

- When I “got stuck” trying to figure out what a certain concept means in relation to others, I would look through books and also listen to *desanas* (discourses) on the internet. It is at this stage that I realized that most of the explanations did not make sense, and of course were not consistent with other key concepts.
- To give an example, I had a hard time in explaining the rebirth stories by so many children. If “being born human” is so difficult as explained in many *suttas* (see, “[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)”), then how can all those children remember their recent past lives? Furthermore, there were “gaps” from the time they died in the previous life to the time they were born in this life.
- Once I met my teacher *Thero*, I was able to clarify that issue along with numerous others: Birth is different from “human *bhava*”; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”. Also, when one dies and has energy left in the “human *bhava*”, one becomes a *gandhabba* and has to wait until a suitable womb becomes available; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)”. Thus rebirth in the human realm does not happen instantaneously; one could in the *gandhabba* state for years before a suitable womb is found. And one can be born in the human realm many times before the *kammic* energy for that “human *bhava*” is exhausted.

7. However, I was able to get to *samādhi* even before many of these issues were resolved. I was making steady progress with the concepts I could grasp. I would sit at the desk and contemplate and I could feel my body getting lighter and mind becoming calm. I realized that it was better than just wasting time doing the “breath meditation”.

- If I sat in a quiet place and meditated (contemplated about a Dhamma concept), my mind would “latch on to it” and I could get to possibly an *anariya jhānic* experience. That started about a year before I learned the true meanings of “*anicca, dukkha, anatta*”.
- It started with “tingling sensations inside my brain”; I just could feel things happening there. And then I could feel “needle pricks” all over the body and my body would start “freezing” mostly the upper body. These “symptoms” are not common to all.
- Learning Dhamma is a critical part of “*kusala sila*” especially for the *Sotāpanna* stage. *Kusala sila* automatically leads to *samādhi* as discussed in the *Na Karaneeya Sutta*.

8. After I heard the “true meanings of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*”, I made progress very quickly. When I look back now, it is quite possible that I may have attained the *Sotāpanna* stage while listening to that very first *desanā*; however, it took me some time to realize it and to convince myself. One needs to look back at the progress one has made, and see that one is now incapable of committing immoral deeds that would make one eligible for rebirth in the *apāyas*.

- I was so overjoyed with being able to comprehend the “foundation of Buddha Dhamma”, i.e., the fact that it does not make sense to struggle to achieve happiness which is guaranteed to be a failure in the long run. I would call or e-mail my friends and tell them that they simply needed to listen to *desanas* by those *Theros*.
- It took me a little while to realize that most of them could not figure out what I was excited about. Now I realize that their minds were not ready. For me, who had been struggling seriously for a few years, it was a revelation, but most people who just spent a bit of their time reading, it did not “connect”. Reading Dhamma should not be done the same way that one reads a newspaper; one needs to be engaged.
- Anyway, after getting the true meaning of “*anicca, dukkha, anatta*”, I spent the next few months scouring internet for the *desanas* of those two *Theros*; after five months I made a trip to Sri Lanka and brought back more material to listen to. It was so fulfilling and exciting; I was learning at a very rapid pace. At that time I didn’t even think about *jhānas*, but I could feel “*jhānic* effects”, i.e., my *samādhi* was getting intense, even though I was not trying to cultivate them.

9. Even though I had an inkling about reaching the *Sotāpanna* stage soon after listening to that *desanā*, I developed the *jhānas* some months later; **those turned out not to be *Ariya jhānas* though, as discussed in the next post.**

- Once I finished investigating and “filling the gaps”, the *jhānas* came almost automatically. The meditation experience that I described in #7 became much stronger; I could just close my eyes and “feel the change in the head and the body” within minutes (and nowadays within seconds).

10. The above is what I mean when I say, “feel the results of meditation”. **One can feel it in the body as well as in the mind.** Let us first discuss the reasons for the “body effect” and then the “mind effect”.

- We have a very complex nervous system which the brain uses to control various body parts and also to communicate with the five physical senses. There is a “duplicate nervous system” associated with the *manomaya kaya* and as we grow up those two systems get somewhat displaced. The displacement becomes bigger when we start enhancing all types of bad habits; they go “out of sync”.
- When we start learning Dhamma and stay away from most egregious acts, the two nervous systems try to get to the ideal overlap positions and one could feel that. This becomes noticeable during meditation. Some people may feel aches and pains, sweating, etc. This is why I had said in other posts that things MAY look worse before getting better. In a way, such “body signals” are a good sign; it means the body is starting to respond.

11. Now to the “mind effect”. Many people tell me that they cannot keep the mind focused on even the breath for too long. That is a *sansaric* habit that we have; the mind does not like to stay in one

place. It wants to “know” about everything that is happening not only in the vicinity, but it also randomly thinks about past events or future plans too.

- The only way to remove this “bad habit” is to slowly get into the habit of thinking about Dhamma concepts. And this cannot be forced either. Unless and until the mind sees the benefits of learning Dhamma, it can be a “chore” to some people. But once one gets some traction, one starts enjoying the “taste of Dhamma”, and then it is easy to stay focused.
- The key here is that when one learns Dhamma, “*ditthasava*” (or craving for wrong worldviews) start to dissolve, initially slowly, but picks up speed as one starts grasping concepts.
- The two key components of *pancanivarana* (*kamachanda* and *vyāpāda*) are reduced as *ditthasava* is reduced. That in turn lead to the reduction of the other three components of the *pancanivarana* as well. This process goes all the way to the *Sotāpanna* stage.

12. Of course I did not realize until after meeting my teacher *Thero* (online) that what I had been doing all along was a crude version of the *Saptha Bojjanga bhāvanā*, the key part of which is *dhamma vicaya* (contemplating on Dhamma concepts).

- That is how one cultivates the “*anicca saññā*” and that is the key: see, “[What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#)” and “[How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#)”.
- The formal *Saptha Bojjanga bhāvanā* is discussed in the next post, “[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)”.

13. **November 11, 2016:** I get many questions on this topic, i.e., how to verify one is making progress towards the *Sotāpanna* stage. The new section, “[Living Dhamma](#)”, provides a systematic way to achieve that goal, in addition to providing guidelines on how to check one’s progress.

11.16 11. Magga Phala via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga

The top 10 posts in this section describe a way of using meditation in following the Noble Path and to attain at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. This series was put together using my own experience, and in the 10th and 11th posts I describe how the process can culminate in attaining *magga phala* and *Ariya jhānas*. The rest of the posts in this section are on possible meditation subjects and together with other posts at the site can be used to clarify unresolved questions, and to gain *samādhi*. It is recommended that the first 11 posts be followed in that order, at least initially. Revised August 5, 2017.

1. There are many ways to get to *magga phala* and *Ariya jhānas*. What I have followed is *Bojjanga bhāvanā* and *metta bhāvanā*. As explained in the previous post, I first did a crude version of the *Bojjanga bhāvanā* for a few years without even realizing that it was effectively a *Bojjanga bhāvanā*.

- Now I practice *bojjanga bhāvanā*/*Ariya metta bhāvanā* in a sitting meditation and *Ānāpānasati* (and *satipattāna*) during other times, i.e., suppressing any thoughts/speech/actions that should be discarded and cultivating the opposite. Nowadays, It has become a habit and the moment something not appropriate comes to the mind, I become aware of it. **As I keep saying, cultivating good habits (*gathi*) is key to progress.**
- *Ānāpānasati* (and *Satipatṭhāna*) helps one to get rid of bad habits/cultivate good habits, and thus change one's *gathi* and *āsava*s; see, "[9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#)".
- *Bojjanga bhāvanā* helps the mind to get to *samādhi* (and attain *jhānas* with time) while also cultivating the *Bojjanga dhamma*. *Saptha Bojjanga* (Seven Factors of Enlightenment) are listed in the "[37 Factors of Enlightenment](#)"; a brief description is given below.
- The other part of my sitting meditation is *Ariya metta bhāvanā*; see, "[5. Ariya Metta Bhāvanā \(Loving Kindness Meditation\)](#)". This routine works well for me.
- Of course there are many paths to *Nibbāna* (and to the *Sotāpanna* stage), and this is the one I took (almost inadvertently). **Still, it is critical to realize that attaining the Sotāpanna stage ONLY REQUIRES removing wrong world views or *diṭṭhi*, i.e., getting rid of *ditthasava*.** But this may not be an easy step, because one needs to realize the *anicca* nature of this world.

2. The key here is that during the *Bojjanga bhāvanā*, one only does "*āna*" or "taking in good things"; see, "[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)". However, "*pāna*" or "removing the bad" happens automatically via wisdom gained, i.e., via enhanced vision or *sammā diṭṭhi*. One's mind is automatically focused on thinking about a Dhamma concept, and once one gets some traction, the mind will get "latched on to it".

- In the early days, when I started contemplating on a Dhamma concept I automatically got to *samādhi* (not *jhāna*), i.e., the mind became concentrated on that and the body and the mind both became lighter. I also experimented with with breath meditation at that time.
- This habit of contemplating on dhamma concepts naturally got established as cultivating *dhamma vicaya* in *Saptha Bojjanga bhāvanā* once I met my teacher *Thero*.

3. I was able to make real progress only after learning the true meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*; see, "[10. Attaining the Sotāpanna Stage via Removing Ditthasava](#)".

- *Waharaka Thero* has explained how to systematically cultivate the seven *Bojjanga dhamma*: it involves first establishing *sati* (moral mindfulness) based on those correct interpretations of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*; see, "[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)", and the follow-up posts.

4. The seven *Bojjanga Dhamma* are *sati* (mindfulness), *dhammavicaya* (investigation of dhamma concepts; pronounced "dhammavichaya"), *viriya* (effort), *pīti* (joy), *passaddhi* (tranquility), *samādhi* (one-pointedness), and *upekkha* (equanimity). I will have post on this later, but I have discussed most of these terms in other posts.

- It is important to again clarify what *sati* is. Many people think *sati* is “concentration” or just “paying attention”. It is much more than that. It is “paying attention” WITH a frame of mind based on some understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*: One has contemplated on the “big picture” of the Buddha with 31 realms and a rebirth process that has led to much suffering in the long run.
- Even though one may be enjoying life right now, one knows that it will be of negligible duration compared to the *sansaric* time scale. This is the theme of this website, and there are many posts that one can read.

5. During the whole time of the *Bojjanga bhāvanā*, *sati* must be there; that frame of mind must be there. *Dhammavicaya* is critical evaluation of a given dhamma concept. One can choose a topic or two for a given session and then contemplate on it. **One could do this not only in a formal way, but also just while reading a web post or a book on the subject.** Each individual is different, so one needs to figure out which is more suitable.

- One can compare the concept with one’s own life experience, and also others’ that one can see. For example, when contemplating on *anicca*, there are several video clips on various posts giving visuals on the inability of anyone to maintain anything, including one’s own body, to one’s satisfaction in the long run. Also, one can contemplate on the rebirth process and see whether it makes sense, one can contemplate on different applications of *paticca samuppāda*, etc.
- When one comprehends a given concept, that leads to cultivation of the *pīti* (pronounced “peethi” or “preethi” in Sinhala) *sambojjanga*. This is part of *nirāmisa sukha* that I have talked about; one starts feeling a happiness or a “lightness” making the mind serene. I am sure at least some of you have experienced this while reading posts. This gives one confidence that one is on the right path, and thus one will be motivated to make more effort, i.e., it cultivates the *virīya sambojjanga*.

6. Thus *dhammavicaya*, *pīti*, and *virīya sambojjanga* are cultivated together (of course *sati* must be there too). At some point though, the mind and especially the body (head) may get tired. If one is making a lot of progress, one may start to experience some pressures in the head or body; not headaches, but just pressure. Some feel like “ants crawling in the head”; the brain and the body (including the nervous system) are adjusting and there is nothing bad about this.

- When this happens one is making progress; the body feeling the effective meditation. Not only our minds but our bodies have been contaminated too, and the nervous systems have been distorted with respect to that in the *manomaya kaya*. Some of the “pressures” that one feels are due to the “twisting back” of the nervous system to the proper place. **These effects may be minimal for some people; this is what I experienced.**
- And this burning of defilements lead to generation of contaminants that need to be expelled and cleansed, via proper breathing (this is not “*ānāpāna*”). We should not focus on the breath like in the mundane “breath meditation”. We are just getting rid of certain “*utuja rūpa*” that had been in the body due to defilements of greed, hate, and ignorance.
- At this point one should stop the contemplation process and start breathing in and out to cleanse the body; sometimes the body itself automatically gets rid of those things via a long out breath. This will lead to *passaddhi* (tranquility) of both the body and the mind, and one gets to *samādhi* gradually. One needs to think about the lightness of the body and the mind (*passaddhi*) and the *nirāmisa sukha* (from *samādhi*) that results. One also should think about *upekkha* (equanimity) too.
- When the body and the mind calm down enough and when one feels relaxed, one should go back to cultivating the previous three *sambojjanga*, i.e., start on the contemplation process of *dhammavicaya*.

7. Thus one should go back and forth between the two routines with three *sambojjanga* each. The *sati sambojjanga* must be there all the time. This is called the two-step cultivation of *Bojjanga dhamma*.

- The Buddha compared to this process to the washing of a dirty cloth by hand. One needs to apply soap and wring the cloth to release the contaminants. But then one needs to soak it in clean water and remove the dirt that came out. After that, if the cloth is still dirty, one applies soap again, and then again wash it. This process needs to be repeated until all the dirt is gone and the cloth becomes clean. And one needs to do it with mindfulness: if there is a stubborn stain left in one place, one may need to use a different chemical to get rid of that spot (i.e., use the appropriate *bhāvanā*: *asubha bhāvanā* to get rid of sense cravings, *metta bhāvanā* to get rid of hateful thoughts, *dhamma* concepts to get rid of *micca diṭṭhi*, etc) and wash in clean water again. Thus one needs to be mindful (*sati*) during the whole process.
- In the same way, one goes back and forth between the two routines with *sati*. Time taken to get to *magga phala* depends on the individual. *Ariya jhānas* can be attained only after getting to the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- Also, this *bojjanga bhāvanā* cannot be done in isolation. One needs to do *ānāpāna* at all times to get rid of bad habits and to cultivate good habits; cultivating this process itself is good habit too. Once one gains some traction and sees some benefits, one will become motivated.

8. Initially one should focus on *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* as the *dhamma vicaya* subject. Then once some understanding is gained, one's mind attains a certain overall cleanliness. After that, like using different kinds of chemicals to get rid of coffee stains or a tar stain, one needs to choose different types of topics (or even meditation technique) to broaden the understanding/to remove a certain obstacle. Buddha Dhamma is all about cleansing the mind via wisdom, via understanding the true nature of this world.

- Also, it really helps to do the *metta bhāvanā* as a part of daily routine. The Buddha stated that If done properly (i.e., with understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*), the *metta bhāvanā* can lead to the *Anāgāmi* stage; see, “[5. Ariya Metta Bhāvanā \(Loving Kindness Meditation\)](#)”.
- If one has too many cravings, one could use the “*asubha anussati*”; if one tends to procrastinate, one could cultivate the “*maranamussati*”. We will talk about these in the future.
- But first it is important to focus on *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. At the same time, it may be a good idea to get some idea of the “big picture”, i.e., the rebirth process, the 31 realms, etc and then some idea about *kamma*, *saṅkhāra*, *paticca samuppāda*, etc. All these are pieces of a puzzle; even though it may look daunting at the beginning, when the big pieces are in place, one starts to get a better idea as for where small pieces may fit in. *Anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* are the biggest pieces.
- Thus contemplating on *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* is a key topic for *dhamma vicaya*. I still do it every day, at least for a short time. **It is said that one really understands *anicca* nature of this world only at the *Arahant* stage.**

9. The *Sotāpanna* stage (*magga/phala*) is attained in two consecutive *citta*, and it is not noticeable at that time. One realizes that with time, mainly by realizing that one's outlook on life has changed. In particular the tendency to socialize is likely to be reduced, but there may be exceptions; one realizes how important it is to spend the remaining little time in this life on making spiritual progress and to enhance the “cooling down”.

- In trying to attain the first *Ariya jhāna*, one could start with the *Saptha Bojjanga bhāvanā* with the frame of mind of the unfruitfulness of anything in this world in the long run (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*); then all mundane thought objects (based on greed and hate) are suspended from the mind. Then one can think about the peacefulness of *Nibbāna* (the partial effect one experiences upon attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage), i.e., the change in one's state of mind.
- I use the phrase, “*Etan santan etan paneetan, yadidan sabba saṅkhāra samato, sabbupati patinissaggo, tanhakkhayo virago, nirodho Nibbananti*”. I emphasize that I have not yet attained the first *Ariya jhāna* yet, as of August 5, 2017. It is not possible to attain the first *Ariya jhāna* until one completely removes *kāma rāga*, as I have realized recently; see, “[Dasa Samyōjana – Bonds in Rebirth Process](#)”. Whatever *jhāna* that I had must be *anariya jhāna*.

- Here is a recording of the Pāli verse by the Venerable Thero (you need to set volume control at your computer):

[WebLink: Listen to verse on Ethan santhang ethan panithang](#)

- One could say in English, “It is peaceful, it is serene, the expelling of all *saṅkhāra*, breaking of bonds, removing greed and hate; *Nibbāna*”, OR
- “This is peaceful, this is ecstasy, that is achieved by calming down *saṅkhāra*, by breaking all bonds, by quenching of *taṇhā*, by overcoming *rāga*, and eliminating all causes, which is *Nibbāna*”.
- What matters is not the actual words, but the understanding one has in one’s mind.

10. **November 11, 2016:** I get many questions on this topic, i.e., how to verify one is making progress towards the *Sotāpanna* stage. The new section, “[Living Dhamma](#)“, provides a systematic way to achieve that goal, in addition to providing guidelines on how to check one’s progress.

11.17 12. Key Factors to be Considered when “Meditating” for the Sotapanna Stage

November 13, 2015

1. **First**, one needs to understand what is meant by the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. Many people start meditating without any idea of the goal: It is fine to do breath meditation, if one is only needing to calm down. There are others who are doing procedures that are needed to attain the *Arahant* stage, and those will not work either because one needs to understand the concept of *anicca* first, i.e., learning the key concepts comes first (*dassanena pahatabba*).

- If one’s goal is to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, then one should first read the posts in the “[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)” section to get an idea of what is meant by a *Sotāpanna* and what is involved to get there.
- There are many misconceptions about the *Sotāpanna* stage, and those posts could clarify them. I spent a lot of time doing unnecessary things, so I just wanted to make it easier for those who are just starting or who have been doing the wrong things to get there. Of course one should decide for oneself whether what I say is consistent with Buddha Dhamma.

2. I must also point out that there are many who have been “brainwashed” to think that the *Sotāpanna* stage is an impossibility to achieve at this time. It is disheartening to see even some “*mahā Theros*” in Sri Lanka have given up striving for even the *Sotāpanna* stage (presumably because they had used the wrong concepts for many years and could not make any progress). But the Buddha clearly stated that his *Buddha Sāsana* will be there for 5000 years, and we are only halfway through. There will be numerous *Arahants* also in the near future.

- There are many who have attained the *Sotāpanna* stage and beyond within the past few years, and that number is growing. Pure Buddha Dhamma that had been hidden, is out and is beginning to spread. Many who have reaped the benefits are trying their best to get the message out. Most of those efforts are taking place in Sri Lanka or in Sinhala language at this early stage.
- Even though it may not be possible for some (those with *dvihetuka* births) to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage in this lifetime, an all out effort will help at least in the future lives. Those who can make it (with *tihetuka* births) simply have done more in past lives. **By the way, if you come across any unknown Pāli words, just enter that word in the Search box and there will be relevant posts listed.**
- In any case, any efforts will have tangible outcomes in this life itself.
- The Buddha clearly stated that there were no language, race, cultural, caste barriers in attaining *maggā phala*, or the four stages of *Nibbāna*. The critical thing is that one needs to follow the original, pure, Dhamma of the Buddha, and comprehend his message.
- The key message of the Buddha is that nothing in this material world (31 realms) can be maintained to our satisfaction in the long run (*anicca* nature), and thus through uncountable rebirths we mainly encounter suffering. Some of us may not be experiencing suffering in this life right now, but that does not mean it will be the same in future lives (or even at old age in this life).

3. **Secondly**, having a road map is NECESSARY to get to an unknown destination. Starting to meditate without having an idea of what to meditate on like just getting in the car and start driving without having a map showing where the destination is.

- Here again, the posts in the “[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)” section will be useful.
- The “map” to reveal *Nibbāna* is the comprehension of the key concepts like *anicca*. **When one reaches the *Sotāpanna* stage, it is like finding the correct map.** Then only one can start driving (i.e., use *kammattana* or “meditation recitals”) to reach the final destination. **Reciting things without understanding is fruitless.**

- Please contemplate on this aspect; I cannot emphasize it enough. Finding the map is the hardest and most important part.
- I have started a new section where a step-by-step process is described to follow; see, “[Living Dhamma](#)“. It can also help one figure out where one is in the Path, and to clarify many fundamental issues.

4. **Third point** — related to the second point — is that we need to examine what is meant by “*bhāvanā*” (meditation) when striving for the *Sotāpanna* stage. **It is NOT a formal meditation technique (reciting a given *kammattana*) that is mainly needed here.**

- However, the Buddha said that even listening to a discourse is *bhāvanā*. One could attain the *Sotāpanna* stage just by listening to a discourse. When listening attentively, one’s mind gets focused on it, comes to *samādhi*, and can get to *magga phala* via *upacara samādhi*.
- What it is needed to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage is contemplation on the key Dhamma concepts, in particular *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, but also to try to get an understanding of the Buddha’s world view, with 31 realms of existence, beginningless rebirth process, infinite number of planetary systems (*chakkawata*), *paticca samuppāda*, etc. This is the way to “find the correct map” mentioned in #3 above.
- As explained in those posts in the “[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)” section, this meditation (*bhāvanā*) involves mainly the contemplation (*citta*) and examination of dhamma concepts (*dhamma vicaya* and *vimansa*). In fact, the four bases of mental power (*chanda*, *citta*, *virīya*, *vimansa*) are very helpful to be cultivated; see, “[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)“.
- In the above, “*chanda*” is the liking to attain *Nibbāna* and that is cultivated by learning and forming a desire to learn more Dhamma. I can assure that there is no other pleasure like the “pleasure of knowing the truth, the pleasure of discovering true Dhamma”. From the comments I receive, I know that many of you have found that to be true.
- Formal meditation techniques are needed mainly after the *Sotāpanna* stage, as described in the sub-section **Key Points from the Sabbasava Sutta** under the post, “[The Sotāpanna Stage](#)“. **However, it is good to do a few *kammattana* while striving for the *Sotāpanna* stage and I will discuss those in the next post.**

5. **Fourth** is to have a clear idea of the priority items to get done regarding *sīla* (moral behavior). In one of the early posts on meditation I made the point that one needs to sort out the “big problems” to take care of, before tackling smaller problems. If a vessel is leaking due to multiple holes, one needs to seal the big leaks first. It is a waste of time to spend the precious time in trying plug smaller holes, when the water is pouring out through the big holes.

- In the following I will address the fact that many people have misconceptions about the relative weights of *kamma*. Please bear with me and read carefully, because some of these ideas go against some established and common wrong views. I have discussed some in, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)“.

6. For example, many people are afraid of even accidentally killing a mosquito, but do not have any problem making plans to hurt another human or spread rumors about another.

- Then there are other who think taking an occasional alcoholic beverage is immoral, but spend hours thinking about other sense pleasures. **By the way, it is not the sense pleasures that is the problem, it is constantly thinking about them; this is a subtle but important point;** see, “[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana – Introduction](#)“.
- Of course, killing any living being should be avoided, and it is best to avoid drinking alcohol (especially if one tends to get drunk; the problem with drinking is, it makes the mind more exposed to the *panca nivarana*; one’s ability to think clearly is diminished when drunk).
- My point is that hurting another human will have much more potent *kamma vipāka* compared to killing many mosquitos or taking an occasional drink.

7. We can get some ideas on these issues by looking at the *vinaya* rules for the *bhikkhus*. These are the rules of conduct for the *bhikkhus*. There are 227 rules for fully ordained monks (*bhikkhus*) and 311 for nuns (*bhikkhunis*).

- These rules are called *patimokkha* (“*pati*” is getting bonded and “*mokkha*” or “*moksha*” in Sanskrit is “*Nibbāna*”), because they help staying out of trouble and stay on the path to *Nibbāna* for the *bhikkhus*. Remember that in the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*, “*mukha*” in “*mukha nimitta*” also means *Nibbāna*.

These rules are categorized according to their importance (or the severity of consequences for breaking them). **The top four belong to the class called “*parajika*” meaning a *bhikkhu* who breaks any one of the four has been “defeated” and thus needs to leave the monastic order.**

1. **Sexual intercourse:** any voluntary sexual interaction between a *bhikkhu* and a living being, except for mouth-to-mouth kissing which falls under the *sanghadisesa* (next level below the *parajika* level).
2. **Stealing:** the robbery of anything worth more than 1/24 troy ounce of gold (as determined by local law).
3. Intentionally bringing about the **death of a human being**, even if it is still an embryo — whether by killing the person, arranging for an assassin to kill the person, inciting the person to die, or describing the advantages of death.
4. **Deliberately lying to another person that one has attained a superior state**, such as claiming to be an *arahant* when one knows one is not, or claiming to have attained one of the *jhānas* when one knows one has not.

8. The next level is the *sanghadisesa*. The thirteen *sanghadisesa* rules requiring an initial and subsequent meeting of the *sangha* (communal meetings). If the monk breaks any rule here he has to undergo a period of probation or discipline after which, if he shows himself to be repentant, he may be reinstated by a *sangha* of not less than twenty monks.

- Like the *parajikas*, the *sanghadisesas* can only come about through the monk’s own intention and cannot be accidentally invoked. However, if the *bhikkhu* does not go through this absolve him/herself, then the consequences will be even more harsh. These thirteen rules are not relevant to our discussion here, but you can read them at: [WebLink: WIKI: Patimokkha](#)
- There two more layers called *aniyata* and *Nissaggiya pacittiya* that pertain to *bhikkhus* and are again not relevant to our discussion. They are even less potent and can be overcome by just confessing to another *bhikkhu* and making a determination not to repeat.

9. **The last set of rules are the “weakest”, i.e., with the least consequences compared to all others.** They are the 92 “*pacittiya*” rules, which are minor violations and can be overcome by just confessing to another *bhikkhu* and making a determination not to repeat. The ones relevant to our discussion are:

- 10. *Should any bhikkhu dig soil or have it dug, it is to be confessed (to avoid killing small animals/insects).*
- 51. *The drinking of alcohol or fermented liquor is to be confessed.*

10. Many people think “life is a life”, but that is not so. Here digging soil is not allowed for *bhikkhus* because many lifeforms (insects, worms) are killed in that process. But this act is listed under the very last section of the *vinaya* rules (with least consequences).

- We know that killing an *Arahant* or one’s parents is an “*anantariya kamma*“, a very potent *kamma* that will send one to the *apāyas* in the very next birth.
- And as we saw in #7 above, killing or giving advice to kill even a fetus is a *kamma* that makes a *bhikkhu* lose his/her ordination. Killing of small insects (inadvertently) by digging soil is a much less potent *kamma*, as listed in #9 above.
- Human life is precious because only a human can strive and attain *magga phala*, AND it is very difficult to get a “human *bhava*“. But even among humans, there is great variation: an *Arahant*

or one's parents are ranked way higher. The importance of parents is related to the fact that it is extremely hard for a *gandhabba* to find a suitable womb. I will discuss this in detail later.

- We also see that drinking alcohol is also a minor offense even for a *bhikkhu*, as it is listed in #9 above. *Bhikkhus* do not drink alcohol anyway, but this rule came about because of a particular incident at the time of Buddha.

11. It can be also deduced that stealing is a misdeed with harsh consequences, since it is included as a “*parajika*” for the *bhikkhus*.

- We need to realize that stealing has many subtle forms too, in addition to “taking something that belongs to another without permission”. In a society, not doing one's own part is also a form of stealing, for example. One is benefitting from others' work, without contributing to it.
- We also become indebted automatically to our parents, teachers, friends, etc. Even though they may not expect a “payback”, it is our duty to “respond in kind” whenever an opportunity arises.
- More can be found in the post, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”.

12. Finally, I would like to point out that it is difficult to quantify the weight of a given *kamma* in a generic way. For example, “killing an animal” is a very generic statement and such an act has a very broad range of *kamma vipāka*.

- When you slap a mosquito that bit you while reading a book almost without realizing it, has very little *kammic* power associated with it. On the other hand, when one aims a gun at a deer and fires to kill, that will have much more *kammic* power.
- One way to easily figure out the difference between those two acts is to think in terms of “*javana* power” of a *citta*. This goes together with the “intention” and also “how bad one wants to get it done”. You can almost visualize the difference in the mindsets of killing a mosquito verses deer in the above example. For more details, see, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)”, and “[What is Intention in Kamma?](#)”.
- Hitting a person to cause minor pain is done with less *javana* in the *citta*. But hitting a person with an iron rod intending to kill has much more *javana* power, as you can imagine.

13. These are things one needs to contemplate on in order to truly understand the Buddha Dhamma; that is the real *vipassana* or insight meditation. Getting to the *Sotāpanna* stage requires learning about such basic things on one's own, by thinking about real life.

- Buddha Dhamma is not a “set rules and rituals” to be blindly followed. That is exactly the reason that many people have not been able to make any progress and have even given up.
- When one starts thinking critically and attentively one develops the *satara iddhipada* that we discussed in #4 above. Once one gets traction by understanding a few basic things, Dhamma will be the guiding force to generate *chanda* (desire) to investigate more and to find more. It is boring and fruitless to blindly follow precepts and rituals that will not get one anywhere.

14. **November 11, 2016:** I get many questions on this topic, i.e., how to verify one is making progress towards the *Sotāpanna* stage. The new section, “[Living Dhamma](#)“, provides a systematic way to achieve that goal, in addition to providing guidelines on how to check one's progress.

11.18 **13. Kammattana (Recitations) for the Sotapanna Stage****December 5, 2015**

1. There are two ways to look at the effectiveness of recitations. First, one could gain some benefit when LISTENING TO recitations (such as recorded chanting of *sutta*), even without understanding what is said in the *suttas*. However, that benefit will increase if one understood the content.

- The effectiveness of recitations in MEDITATION SESSIONS is somewhat similar. There are many people who have been practicing various types of recitations (*kammattana*) for 10, 20, 30, or more years without significant results (i.e., *magga phala*), even though they are likely to feel some calming effect.
- Reciting phrases (in any language) can be quite beneficial if the meanings of those phrases are understood in either of the above cases. Recitation in Pāli can be a bit more effective, since Pāli words tend to condense a lot of meaning. If one starts off with at least some understanding, recitation on a regular basis will help understand the concept at a deeper level.
- For example, the concept of *anicca* is understood gradually — with a glimpse of it grasped on the way to the *Sotāpanna* stage, getting a firm foothold at the *Sotāpanna* stage, strengthening at the *Sakadāgāmi* and *Anāgāmi* stages — and is fully comprehended at the *Arahant* stage.
- A systematic procedure to get to *sammā samādhi* to be able to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, is described in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section. It can also help one figure out where one is in the Path, and to clarify many fundamental issues. **It is not possible to comprehend *Tilakkhana* until one’s mind is purified to some extent. Then one’s mind can easily grasp concepts rather than just memorizing them.**

2. A mundane example is learning the multiplication table. Some get it easier than others. But with practice anyone can master it. All one needs is to spend some time reciting and memorizing the table, even though only memorization may not be helpful in the final objective, i.e., solving a bit more complex problems.

- We know that this “learning process” can be speeded up by using what one learned in solving some problems. Rather than just memorizing the multiplication table, if one applied it to solve some multiplication problems, the learning time can be drastically reduced and also it is easier to keep in the memory for longer time.
- This is what the Buddha meant by “*bhavanaya bahuleekathaya....*”. *Bhāvanā* (or meditation) is **what one uses frequently: one needs to be thinking about it and examine it in many different situations as much as possible**. Then the concept starts to “sink in”. Formal recitations can be part of this process. [*bahulīkata*: [pp. of bahulīkaroti] took up seriously; increased.(adj.), practised frequently.]
- Reciting a phrase repeatedly while contemplating on it (*kammattana*) is an excellent way to retain and comprehend a given a concept, **once the concept is at least vaguely understood**.

3. Another important benefit of a good recitation session is in subsiding the five hindrances (*pancanivarana*) that makes the mind agitated and not receptive; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)”. When one is focusing on Dhamma — even by just reciting verses— those greedy, hateful, and irrelevant thoughts are at least temporarily subsided and the mind will not be lethargic or agitated.

- In this respect, just listening to *Pāli suttas* could be beneficial too. In many Buddhist countries, many people start off the day with chanting of *suttas* (*pirith*) in the background. When I was little, I used to wake up to the chanting of *pirith* on the radio (my mother used to do turn it on the first thing in the morning).
- If the *suttas* are recited the right way, just listening to them can make the mind calm. I have posted audio files of several *suttas* by my teacher Thero including a 75 minute session in the post: “[Sutta Chanting \(with Pāli Text\)](#)”.

4. Yet another critical benefit is to make the conditions conducive to attract previous “good *kamma*“, and make the mind “tune into” receiving such merits. Each of us has done innumerable good and bad *kamma* in our previous lives, and they are waiting for “right conditions” to bring their results (*vipāka*).

- For example, there may be a good TV (or radio) program being broadcast. But if the television (or the radio) is not “tuned in” to the right station, one would not be able to watch (or listen to) the program.
- “Making the conditions right” can bring about both good and bad *kamma vipāka* too. If one associates with bad friends, that is making conditions for bad *kamma vipāka* to bring fruits. On the other hand associating with good friends and listening/reading Dhamma can make one’s life better. This is discussed in detail in the posts, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)” and “[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\) – How Does it Happen?](#)“.
- I have mentioned in many posts that the effectiveness of absorbing material at this website can be much improved by reading them at a quiet time. In the same way, a meditation session can be made more effective by calming the mind by doing some well-planned recitations. That itself can be a meditation session. What I do is, in the middle of recitations contemplate about relevant Dhamma concepts or my own daily experiences, i.e., do insight meditation in the middle of the recitation itself.

5. One should tailor the recitation session to match one’s own personality and needs. For example, if one has a temper, one should spend more time doing *metta bhāvanā*; if one has excessive greed (for sense pleasures) one could spend more time doing *asubha bhāvanā* (unfruitful nature of things), which is basically to contemplate on the fact that ANY object that is providing sense pleasure is going to decay and destruct at the end.

6. I have thought a lot about how to present a “*kammattana* program”. But it is difficult to decide what *kammattana* to discuss because each individual is different, and has own preferences and needs. I may still do that in pieces in the future, and I have discussed basic features of some in other posts.

- Here, I think it is better to just provide an audio of recitation session that I go through each day. This is just to give an example of how it can be done, and I know that it helps me in calming my mind and making it more receptive and alert.
- This is somewhat modified compared to what I actually do, because I do some parts in Sinhala which most of you will not understand, and I have also tailored this for those who are seeking the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*.

7. It is best to do these recitations in a quiet room, sitting comfortably — but not too comfortably — so that one would not fall asleep initially. Once one gets used to it, one will never fall asleep. Also, it may be better to actually say the words initially to avoid the mind to wander around; one could just recite in the mind later on.

October 13, 2016: I have removed the audio file temporarily until I make a better one. After I started the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section, I realized a way to present material in a better way.

But I leave the pdf of the text file:

[WebLink: Kammattana Example](#)

Notes:

1. I am assuming that anyone who is interested in these *kammattana* (i.e., those who have the desire to strive for the *Sotāpanna* stage) have already read the relevant key posts at [Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#). Now, let us discuss different sections of the [WebLink: Kammattana Example](#).

- Also, the Search button on the top right is very useful for finding relevant posts for any given keyword or a phrase that is not clear.

2. In reciting precepts, instead of the “*Pānātipātā Vēramani Sikkāhāpadam Samādiyāmi*”, which says “I promise not take another life of a living being”, it is more truthful to say, “I promise not to take

another life with any liking for it” (*Pānātipātā pativiratō hōti*), unless one is dedicating a day to strictly observe the precepts.

- For example, if one needs to apply a medication to a wound, that will kill many microscopic living beings; yet, one has to do that in order to heal the wound; **thus in day-to-day life, we may have to take actions like that we would not like to; this is what is meant by “*pativiratō hōti*”, i.e., one would not do it unless necessary.** But if one is observing precepts, one could avoid applying the medication on that day.

- Same for the other four precepts.

3. Note the break in between “*itipi so bhagava...*”. Many people recite it as “*itipiso bhagava...*”, which has a very different and inappropriate meaning.

- I really need to discuss the meanings of these three phrases, and hope to get it done in the “Buddhist Chanting” section in the future.

4. The phrase, “*Natti me sanaran annan Buddhho me saranan varan*” means, “I have no other refuge than that of the Buddha”.

- “*étēna sacca vajjena sotti me hotu sabbada*” means something to the effect of “may the truth in my refuge in Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha lead to my well being and success in my efforts”.
- “*etena sacca vajjena sotti te hotu sabbada*” means something to the effect of “may this truth lead to the well being and success in others’ efforts”.

5. The next phrase (in Sinhala, I am unable to come up with a suitable English or Pāli phrase) means, “I will be truthful to myself, see things as they are, be pure in mind, and endeavor to generate only pure thoughts (*prabhasvara* or *pabasara citta*). I plan to write separate posts discussing some of these *kammattana*. Even a single phrase is so condensed that one could write many posts on each.

- For example, “*avanka*” comes from “*vanka*” or “bent” or “not straightforward”. If someone is not truthful, then that is “*vanka*”; “*avanka*” is the opposite of “*vanka*”.

6. The next three phrases are also very important. I recite it every day. The phrase, “*Kayena vaca cittena pamadena maya katan, accayam khama me Bhante bhuripanna Tathagata*”, means: “If I have done any wrong inadvertently (or due to ignorance) by thoughts, speech, or mind to the Buddha, may I be forgiven for that”.

- And then the same phrase directed to Dhamma and Sangha. For example, I always worry about inadvertently explaining some concept in a way which may not be quite right. Also, when dealing with people, we don’t know whether we inadvertently hurt their feelings or do something that they see as inappropriate (and it is possible that such a person may be a Noble person).

7. The next set of phrases are for cultivating *anicca saññā* and related other factors. The phrase, “*Aniccanupassi viharati, nicca saññā pajahati*” means “I will live my life cultivating the *anicca saññā* and reject that things in this world can be kept to my satisfaction (i.e., reject the *nicca saññā*)”. Similar meaning can be deduced for the following three phrases.

- In the phrase, “*Nibbidanupassi viharati, abhinandana pajahati*”, *nibbida* means “stay away from valuing sense pleasures” and *viharati* means “live accordingly”. *Abhinandana* means “valuing sense pleasures”, and *pajahati* means “avoid”.
- “*Nirodhanupassi viharati, samudayan pajahati*”, means stop the wheeling process and reject generating more “*san*” (“*san*” + “*udaya*” combines to give “*samudaya*”); see, “[What is ‘San’?](#)”.
- “*Patinissagganupassi viharati, sambhavan pajahati*” means “I will endeavor to break all bonds to this world, and stop making new *bhava*”.
- The last three recitals in this section with “*Anissitoca viharati, na ca kinci loke upadiyati*” confirm one’s conviction that “it is unfruitful to stay in this world of 31 realms, there is nothing in this world that worth craving for (*upādāna*)”.

8. The set of three phrases that come next also help cultivate *anicca saññā*, and one could review or do insight meditation on *anicca, dukkha, anatta* right after that.

9. The next section is on *metta bhāvanā*. I normally recite this in Sinhala, but these English phrases give almost the same meaning. This is also discussed in the post, “[5. Ariya Metta Bhāvanā \(Loving Kindness Meditation\)](#)”.

- The relevance to different types of *akusala citta* is discussed in the post, “[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#)”. The 12 types of *akusala citta* are discussed in, “[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#)”.

10. The next phrase is the standard phrase to use when cultivating *jhāna*: see, “[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)”. Even though it is supposed to be fully effective only after attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage, it can be used by anyone who has been exposed to the true meanings of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, and is pursuing the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- One could get into at least some kind of *samādhi* by this time, and do some insight meditation here. Actually, at any of the above *kammattana* sections, one could do insight meditation related to that section. I normally do this and my sessions sometimes last for much longer times.

11. In the subsequent sections, we start giving merits to all living beings. The phrase, “*Idam me nati nan hotu Sukhita hontu natayo*”, means “May all my relatives (which does include all living beings in the through *saṃsāra*) attain peace and happiness due to these merits”.

- The next phrase, “*Idam vo nati nan hotu Sukhita hontu natayo*”, can have multiple meanings. If one is doing a group session, it could mean “relatives of others in the group”. If one is by oneself, it could mean “distant relatives”, who may even be in worlds far away from the Earth.
- Thus when one recites both phrases, it does include all living beings.

12. The next section gives merits to *devas* (which include *brahmas* as well), *bhūta*, and *preta*, and then to all beings (*sabbe satta*). It is another way of giving merits as in #11.

- Then the next phrase in English is straightforward. I specifically included this so that anyone can use this with full understanding. If one had (even inadvertently) done a bad deed to someone that day, one could be thinking about that person and ask for forgiveness. This is a very effective way to calm the mind and reduce tensions, and I hope to write a post on this. If done sincerely, one should be able to see the effects in real life. You may notice that the tensions with that person automatically reduced.
- What happens is that those strong *javana citta* that you generate can produce *cittaja rūpa* that can affect that person even over long distances. It is again related to what we discussed in #4 of the main section (above the current “Notes” section).

13. Then we end the session with the phrase “*Idam mé punnan āsavakkhaya vahan hotu, sabba dukkha nirujjati*” that is recited three times. It means, “May the merits that I have acquired help remove my *āsava* (cravings), and lead to the end of all suffering”.

- It is to be noted here that “*asavakkhaya vahan hotu*” is really, “*asavakkhaya aham hotu*” or “may (these merits) be *hetu* for cleansing of **my** *asava*”. It just rhymes as, “*asavakkhaya vahan hotu*”.

14. Of course the above is an example of what one could do. One could use all the *kammattana* (and add more), or use only the ones that one likes. I don’t use them all in a given session, but do use some of them all the time. I just start the session with the first few and select phrases as I proceed. Sometimes, I get into insight meditation (contemplating relevant ideas, connecting with other concepts, etc) following a given phrase and just do that for the whole session.

15. **November 11, 2016:** I get many questions on this topic, i.e., how to verify one is making progress towards the *Sotāpanna* stage. The new section, “[Living Dhamma](#)”, provides a systematic way to achieve that goal, in addition to providing guidelines on how to check one’s progress.

11.19 Anussati and Anupassanā – Being Mindful and Removing Defilements

April 16, 2018

Anussati and Anupassanā

1. *Anussati* and *anupassanā* are two Pāli words that have related but different meanings. It helps to understand the difference, because many people today incorrectly use various types of *anussati* themselves as *kammattthāna* (meditation subjects).

- If one understands *Ānāpāna* and *Satipaṭṭhāna*, these are basically another way of saying the same thing. They are all different angles of looking at the goal (*Nibbāna*) and how to get there, i.e., how to cultivate the Path.
- It is ALWAYS good to keep in mind that *Nibbāna* is attained via getting rid of greed, hate, ignorance (*lobha, dosa, moha*) from one's mind. The only other thing to remember is that, without comprehending *Tilakkhana* that process cannot be completed. Everything else is just more details to how to get there.
- “*Anu*” can have two different meanings. One is “according to” or “via this process”. The other is “food” for bad *viññāṇa*, which are essentially “*keles*” or “*klesha*” or “defilements” (or *kilesa* in Pāli). But here it is the first meaning that is mainly relevant.

[*kilesa* : ‘defilements’, are mind-defiling, unwholesome qualities. Vis. M. XXII, 49, 65: **There are 10 defilements**, thus called because they are themselves defiled, and because they defile the mental factors associated with them. They are: (1) greed (*lobha*), (2) hate (*dosa*), (3) delusion (*moha*), (4) conceit (*māna*), (5) speculative views (*diṭṭhi*), (6) skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), (7) mental torpor (*thīna*), (8) restlessness (*uddhacca*); (9) shamelessness (*ahirika*), (10) lack of moral dread (fearlessness) or unconscientiousness (*anottappa*). For 1-3, s. *mūla*; 4, s. *māna*; 5, s. *diṭṭhi*; 6-8, s. *nīvaraṇa*; 9 and 10, s. *ahirika - anottappa*.]

[*upakkilesa* : ‘impurities’, corruptions, imperfections (a frequent rendering by ‘defilements’ is better reserved for *kilesa*, q. v.). A list of **16 moral ‘impurities of the mind’** (*cittassa upakkilesa*) is mentioned and explained in M. 7 & 8 (WHEEL. 61/62): 1. covetousness and unrighteous greed (*abhijjhā-visamalobha*), 2. ill will (*byāpāda*), 3. anger (*kodha*), 4. hostility (*upanāha*), 5. denigration (*makkha*), 6. domineering (*palāsa*), 7. envy (*issā*), 8. stinginess (*macchhariya*), 9. hypocrisy (*māyā*), 10. fraud (*sāṭheyya*), 11. obstinacy (*thambha*), 12. presumption (*sārambha*), 13. conceit (*māna*), 14. arrogance (*atimāna*), 15. vanity (*mada*), 16. negligence (*pamāda*).]

- Now we can see the origins of those two words (*pada nirukti*).

Buddhānussati, mettānussati, asubhānussati, maranānussati

2. **First let us first discuss *anussati***, which comes from “*anu*” + “*sati*”. Of course, *sati* is mindset (with the *Tilakkhana* in the background); therefore, *anussati* means the mindset that is focused on attaining *Nibbāna*.

- There are several types of *anussati*, but four are lumped together as “***caturarakkha***” or “**Four Protections**” that one should try to keep with oneself all the time that will help one to stay out of trouble.
- This is expressed in the following verse (I have not found the source in the *Tipitaka*):

“*Buddhānussati metta ca, asubham maranānussati; iti ima caturarakkha, Bhikkhu bhaveyya silava*”

Translated: “*Buddhānussati, mettānussati, asubhānussati, maranānussati*; these are the **Four Protections** for a *Bhikkhu* cultivating *silā* (moral behavior)”.

- These are basically four things that one should ALWAYS keep in mind, in order to protect one's mind from getting defiled.

3. We already know that “*Buddha*” comes from “*bhava*” + “*uddha*”, or uprooting *bhava*, i.e, stopping the rebirth process in order to eliminate future suffering. So, *Buddhānussati* basically means keeping that key message in mind all the time.

- *Asubha* means “unfruitful” and even “harmful”. Getting attached to sense pleasures is harmful in the long run, just like a fish biting on a tasty worm on a hook will be subjected to suffering. So, *asubhānussati* means always to be mindful of the bad consequences of material things that are appealing at the first sight.
- *Mettānussati* is to keep in mind always that all living beings are in the same boat, suffering in the long run, and thus to have compassionate thoughts about all of them. Of course, that can be implemented at various levels depending on one's progress (mundane *mettā* to *Ariya mettā*).
- Especially when one becomes aware of the true meanings of *Tilakkhana*, one realizes not only the fruitlessness of seeking happiness in this world, but one becomes AFRAID of possible future suffering. When that realization comes, one will make an accelerated effort to cultivate the Path, because death can come at any time.

4. Therefore, essentially these four types of *anussati* are basically four types of “mindfulness” that one should always keep in mind. Not only when meditating, but even more importantly when interacting with the society.

- These Four Protections, with practice, will help enormously in maintaining *Satipaṭṭhāna* or *Ānāpāna* while interacting with others.
- For example, if someone says something nasty, instead of getting mad and retaliating, one should immediately recall that one's goal is “*bhava uddha*”, and that requires seeing the *asubha* nature, cultivating *mettā*, and that one may not have much time left to get this done (*maranānussati*).

5. As is the case in many cases, those Four Protections have mundane meanings too. These could also be helpful. Following are the mundane meanings.

- *Buddhānussati* is to contemplate on the nine supreme qualities of the Buddha. This is of course a good thing to do.
- *Asubhānussati* as contemplating the “foulness for the body”. That is a misinterpretation. One could do *asubha bhāvana* to contemplate on the real nature of the body. A given male or female body can be enticing when the body is young, but they will both degrade with time.
- *Mettānussati* as keep repeating ” May all beings be happy and healthy”. Again, not a bad thing to do.
- *Maranānussati* as reciting “*jeevitam aniyatan, marana niyatam*” or “this life is impermanent, death is a certainty”. While the statement is true, that recitation by itself cannot do much to remove defilements and to purify the mind.

Aniccānupassanā, Dukkhānupassanā, Anattānupassanā, Asubhānupassanā

6. **Now let us discuss anupassanā.** In contrast to *anussati*, *anupassanā* is more relevant to formal meditation.

- “*Passa*” means to “get rid of”, as we mentioned while interpreting “*assa passa*”, in discussing *anapāna bhāvana*.; see #3 of “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)”.
- Therefore, *anupassanā* means getting rid of defilements according to whatever the prefix that is used in front.
- While there are four types of *anupassanā* and three are associated directly with *Tilakkhana*: *aniccānupassanā*, *dukkhānupassanā*, *anattānupassanā*, and the fourth is *asubhānupassanā*.

[See; [WebLink: suttacentral: Patisambhidāmagga Paññāvagga 3.9. Vipassanākathā](#) for *aniccānupassanā*, *dukkhānupassanā*, *anattānupassanā* and [WebLink: suttacentral: Itivuttaka 85 Asubhānupassīsutta](#) for *asubhānupassanā*]

- Normal humans take this world to be of *nicca*, *sukha*, *atta*, and *subha* nature. The key to *Nibbāna* is to realize the true nature: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and *asubha*.

7. Thus, *aniccānupassanā* means, getting rid of defilements by contemplating on *anicca* nature.

- Similarly, *dukkhānupassanā* and *anattānupassanā* mean getting rid of defilements by contemplating on *dukkha* and *anatta* nature.
- We have not discussed *asubhānupassanā* up to this point. This becomes more important for a *Sotāpanna* to get to the *Sakādagāmi/Anāgāmi* stages by contemplating on the bad consequences of sense pleasures that appear so enticing.

8. Therefore, for one who is trying to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage, the first three *anupassanā* are more important. However, *asubhānupassanā* cannot hurt (and even could be beneficial) because that helps calm the mind.

- We need to remember that the *tāpa* (or burning or “excitedness of the mind”) comes from *kāmaccanda* and *vyāpāda*: greed and hate. Both arise due excess greed or “blindness due to excess desire for sense pleasures”; see, “[The Cooling Down Process \(Nibbāna\) – How Root Causes are Removed](#)” and “[Kāma Guna, Kāma, Kāma Rāga, Kāmaccanda](#)”.
- For anyone interested in meditation, such basics need to be understood: “[Living Dhamma – Fundamentals](#)“. I can see from the discussion forum that many people worry too much about “deep concepts” WITHOUT having a proper understanding of fundamentals.

Understanding Dhamma: A Step-by-Step Process

9. We also need to keep in mind that one cannot just start doing formal meditations on these *anupassanā*. It is a step-by-step process. Obviously, one needs to have some understanding of *Tilakkhana* (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*): “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)“.

- Even before that, one needs to get rid of the 10 types of *miccā ditthi* by cultivating the mundane eightfold path: “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)“.

The reason for that was discussed in the recent post, “[Buddha Dhamma for an Inquiring Mind – Part I](#)“. **If one has either of the following two views, then it is NOT possible to comprehend *Tilakkhana*:**

- The next life is going to be forever, in the heaven or hell.
- This life is all one has. When one dies, it is over. No rebirth or hell or heaven.

10. There are many reasons why those two views will block the Path to *Nibbāna*. Following are a few key reasons:

- Neither of the above views can accommodate the laws of *kamma*: That one’s actions WILL have consequences, and those consequences are much more complex than just leading to hell or heaven (and then getting stuck there forever).
- It is not possible to have a consistent picture (world view) without getting rid of wrong views like there is no rebirth process, or that *gandhabba* concept is wrong; see, “[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)“.
- If one has above views, then one cannot comprehend the *dukkha* nature. The fact that most future suffering is in the *apāyās*, and that one needs to stay away from *dasa akusala* done with powerful and immoral *javana citta* that “power-up” such births in the *apāyās*.

Conclusions

11. I know that I keep repeating some things. But I can see that many people seem to skipping essentials because of their desire to get there quickly. I admire their enthusiasm, but do not want people to have false hopes. On the other hand, “just learning concepts” is not enough either, so one MUST put all this to practice, i.e., stay away from *dasa akusala* (and keep in mind that *miccā ditthi* is the worst of them; see the post mentioned in #10 above).

- The bottom line is, if one can truly see the *anicca* nature, one will have the *anicca saññā* and will avoid *dasa akusala* with a high degree of fear of the *apāyās*: “*dukkham bhayattena*”.
- Thus one will automatically have *Buddhānussati*, the desire to reach *Nibbāna*.
- Furthermore, it will sink into the mind that those enticing things in the world are in fact of *asubha* nature (*asubhānussati*). One will also realize that all living beings are in the same boat, and thus will have *mettānussati*.

12. Finally, one will also have *maranānussati* established in one’s mind: that one needs to make haste and cultivate the path before death comes, the timing of which is totally unknown.

- If one reads the [WebLink: dhammatalks.net: Maranasati Sutta \(AN 6.19\)](http://dhammatalks.net: Maranasati Sutta (AN 6.19)), it is clear that the Buddha advised *bhikkhus* to be keenly aware that death can come at any time and thus to CULTIVATE THE PATH without delay, and that *maranānussati* was not a specific *kammatthāna*.
- A fairly good English translation of the *sutta* is at: “[WebLink: suttacentral: Mindfulness of Death](http://suttacentral: Mindfulness of Death)”.

Discussion of this post at, “[WebLink: Anussati and Anupassanā – Being Mindful and Removing Defilements](http://Anussati and Anupassanā – Being Mindful and Removing Defilements)”.

11.20 **New Approach to Meditation**

This section has been moved to, “[Living Dhamma](#)“. Please check there for the follow-up posts.

11.21 Myths about Meditation

1. Once I attended a meditation retreat. Everyone was sitting down on the floor with crossed legs, but after a while many people “could not endure the pain” and were stretching their legs out or were fidgeting. It was obvious (to me) that many people could not think about anything else but their pain due to the uncomfortable posture. This went on for two days. Other than those who were long-time meditators and were comfortable with the lotus position, I do not believe the others enjoyed the retreat that much.

- Such nonsensical “rituals” are part of the set of wrong views (this particular one is included in “*silabbata paramasa*”), that one needs to remove before attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- It is helpful to think about the goal of meditation. The ultimate goal is to remove greed, hate, and ignorance from our minds and to attain Nibbāna. But even for those who are just interested in achieving some “cooling down” from everyday stresses, it is the same fundamental idea that is at work: We need to keep greedy, hateful, and ignorant thoughts from arising in our minds; the more we do that the more relaxed our minds will become.
- Purification of the mind is the way to achieve temporary relief to the mind as well as to attain the *Arahantship*. There is no one else monitoring one’s progress; it is one’s own mind that is keeping tabs on the progress.
- When one does a “formal meditation”, one should sit in a comfortable position (it could be the lotus position for those who have practised it), because one could be in that position for several hours when one gets really good at it and starts enjoying the session. For most people, it is just sitting in a chair; one that is not too comfortable that one may fall asleep!

2. Getting rid of bad thoughts can be and should be done ALL THE TIME. The Buddha said, “*bhāvanāya bahuleekathāya*”, or “meditate as much as possible, whenever possible”. And he said it can be done in all possible postures: sitting, standing, walking, and lying down.

- Ven. Ananda is the only known person to attain the *Arahanthood* while not in any of those four postures. He was making an all-out effort to become an *Arahant* before the first *Dhamma Sangayana* (Buddhist Council); only *Arahants* were able to attend and since he was only one who had memorized the whole of the *sutta pitaka*, it was critical that he attained *Arahantship* before that. The night before the *Sangayana*, he had been exhausted by the effort, but he was still thinking about a dhamma concept while getting into the bed. He sat down on the bed and raised his legs, to lie down; but before his head touched the pillow, that particular point came clear to him and the “*Arahant phala citta*” was realized.
- Another story from the *Tipitaka* that is also relevant to #1 above is about a minister of King of Kosala, named *Santati*. He was riding an elephant and the Buddha was walking on the road. The Buddha, with his supernormal powers, saw that *Santati* was capable to attaining the *Arahanthood* and that he was going to die very soon. The Buddha delivered a discourse right there with *Santati* still on the back of the elephant, and he attained *Arahanthood*. What really matters is whether someone can grasp the Dhamma, NOT what one’s posture is.

3. I have seen many meditation programs that describe *Nibbāna* as removing perception or *saññā* from the mind.

- Many people wrongly advise that one needs to remove ALL THOUGHTS from one’s mind to attain *Nibbāna*. One time a *Deva* came to the Buddha and said the same thing: “Isn’t *Nibbāna* attained via removing all thoughts?”. The Buddha said, “No. *Nibbāna* is attained via removing greedy, hateful, and ignorant thoughts”. It is in the *Manonivarana Sutta*. I will discuss this *sutta* in the future.
- Some others say that when a thought comes to the mind about a loved one, a place, or anything material, just to say “that does not really exist”. Just because the Buddha said everything changes at a rapid pace, he did not mean phenomena did not exist. Phenomena do not exist in a concrete sense either, because they are constantly changing. This is the same argument that we discussed in the “Concept of a Lifestream”: the Buddha rejected both “self” and “no-self”. All

phenomena are based on *paticca samuppāda*; they arise due to causes and are not there when the causes are absent.

- If one develops any type of *samatha* meditation (breath, *kasina*, rising of stomach, etc), AND attains an *Anariya jhāna* at or above the fifth, then one may be born in the realm of *asanna brahmas* with no mind for very long times, only to come back to human plane and start the rebirth process all over.
- **All the above meditation techniques are dangerous. As one develops them one may become forgetful; *saññā* or perception is a critical mental factor associated with recognition of external objects. If one starts losing memory, that will be a sign that one is on the wrong path.**

4. An *Arahant* has not removed the capacity to generate thoughts OR perceptions. **An *Arahant* has removed greed, hate, and ignorance from the thoughts that arise.** Thoughts arise in him/her with *saññā*, i.e., he/she can identify people or things. They can experience the whole world just as any other human: they can see, hear, taste, smell, touch, or think about any place. The only difference is that they will not generate any greedy, hateful, or ignorant thoughts about anything that is experienced. The concept of Nibbāna is very simple: “*ragakkhayo Nibbanan, dosakkhayo Nibbanan, mohakkhayo Nibbanan*”. (Extinction of greed (or desire), hatred (or aversion, anger), ignorance (or delusion) gives rise to Nibbāna.)

5. And one CAN experience the “cooling down” as one makes progress on removing greed, hate, and ignorance, even before the *Sotāpanna* stage. Instead of becoming forgetful, one’s mind will actually become more sharp and alert. One will be able to remember things BETTER, not less. One will become happier, not gloomy or depressed. **It is hard for normal people to fathom how much stress is associated with a mind that is burdened with greed, hate, and ignorance.**

- The “baseline” state of a normal human mind is heavily burdened. That is why people seek sense pleasure, basically to get some relief. But the problem is that such relief is temporary AND many people do immoral things to achieve such pleasures. So it can make things much worse: not only that one does not get permanent relief, but one will have to pay for the bad kamma that were accumulated by such immoral acts (lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, etc).
- This is why one can feel the relief right away when one starts living a “clean, simple life”. That should be the “base” for starting meditation. It is not possible to make any progress, no matter how much time one allocated to “meditation”, if one is engaged in immoral behavior; one needs to start reducing the BIG EIGHT.
- What the Buddha prescribed was simple, yet profound. As one clears the mind of the five hindrances (*pancanivarana*) via living a clean life AND start doing the proper *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā*, the progress will accelerate with time, because one’s mind start being able to see more clearly. One will be able easily grasp the real meaning of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

6. Another series of “*desanā*” that I listened to described how an advanced meditator can actually “see” the “formation/breakup” of the material world; that person says that one could see the “impermanence” that is described in the “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)” post. He described how he got so afraid when the “world disappeared” momentarily before re-formation!

- It is true that all material phenomena have a lifetime of 17 thought moments, and that there are many billions of thought moments per second. **However, only a Buddha can actually “see” such a fast time scale.** The Buddha described to Ven. Sariputta such minute details in summary form, and it took Ven. Sariputta and his immediate followers hundreds of years to finalize a detailed description of mental/physical phenomena based on such information provided by the Buddha. This *Abhidhamma* was not finalized until the third *Dhamma Sangayana*; that is when the *Abhidhamma pitaka* of the *Tipitaka* became complete.

7. The problems with Mahayana teachings can be readily seen, since they have such apparent contradictions with the advances made in science and technology. However, some of the “fake teachings” that I mention in this post originated in Theravāda countries, in particular in Sri Lanka. This is why it is critically important to learn pure Dhamma before or, at least while one is doing meditation.

- How can one follow the path of the Buddha without knowing the actual path? “*Bhāvanāya pahāthabbā*” or removal of defilements via meditation comes AFTER “*dassanena pahāthabbā*” or removal of defilements due to wrong views via understanding the true Dhamma. This is also why *Sammā Ditṭhi* is first and *Sammā Samādhi* is last in the Noble Eightfold Path.
- I highly encourage everyone to read as many posts as possible to learn Dhamma. Regardless of one’s familiarity with Buddha Dhamma, one should read those posts in the “[Moral Living and Fundamentals](#)” section at least once, because they provide the foundation. I know from experience that if one does not get the basics right, it is harder to comprehend the related advanced material. Please send me comments if anything does not make sense.

8. In “weeding out” the bad approaches, a key point to understand is that there are many ways to “feel better”. A drug user can instantly get into a “relaxed state of mind” by taking a drug. We don’t do that because, (i) we know it is a temporary solution, AND (ii) it has very bad consequences.

- Getting “addicted to” *anariya* meditations like breath or *kasina* meditation is only somewhat better. There are many who get addicted to them because it does not have any bad consequences in this life; even though that may be true, it does have bad consequences for the long term because one is wasting one’s precious time in this human life on something that does not help in avoiding rebirth in the apāyas.
- Just because one starts feeling better using a certain technique does not mean it is the THE solution. This is why one needs to look at the UNDERLYING BASIS of that approach. I have come across several groups where they are convinced of their “technique” because their experience got better. But as we just discussed, a “experience” does not rule out a “better experience” with the correct approach.
- **The only way to make a good judgement of “any theory” or “approach” is to critically examine it and see whether it can explain the realities that we see around us.** Can it explain why people are born different, why some live relatively better compared to others, why do only some people get horrible diseases, why do animals experience pain but still cannot do anything about it (i.e., why they have limited minds)? Only pure Buddha Dhamma can explain all these and more.

9. Finally, once one looks at the evidence and decides on the Path, meditation can be “formal” or “informal”. In formal meditation, one allocates a time and place and it could be any of the following:

- Conventional sitting or walking meditation session. But this is not the only formal way to meditate.
- Listening to a Dhamma discourse delivered by an *Ariya* (one who has grasped *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) is an excellent formal meditation session.
- **Reading (and contemplating) on a Dhamma concept, say *anicca*, is also formal meditation.** If it can be done when the mind is calm, one will grasp more.

10. Informal meditation can be done at any time, anywhere.

- **Merely thinking about a Dhamma concept or trying to clarify a Dhamma concept is meditation.** This can be done while lying in bed trying to fall asleep, waiting at the doctor’s office, riding a bus or subway, any time one has time that is normally spent day dreaming or generating greedy, hateful, or useless thoughts.

In all these cases, the five hindrances are suppressed and one can experience a calming effect, which can be extended to even *samādhi* if one’s mind becomes focused on the Dhamma concept. One could develop a habit of doing informal meditations. **But avoid doing that while driving or even when concentrating on a task at work! That WILL have very bad consequences. One needs to use wisdom (being mindful of consequences) while cultivating wisdom.**

Next, “[Is Suffering the same as the First Noble Truth on Suffering?](#)“,

11.22 A Simple Way to Enhance Merits (Kusala) and Avoid Demerits (Akusala)

1. This is an important post that should be read carefully. Grasping the basic concept here can prevent many akusala kamma (unmeritorious deed) and also boost the power of a *kusala kamma* (meritorious deed). In addition, it shows the consistency and universality of Buddha Dhamma.

2. The potency of a kamma (good or bad) depends on two key factors. First we need to clarify some basic ideas.

- Any action or speech originates as a “thought”. As described in the Abhidhamma section, a citta is of duration much less than a BILLIONTH of a second. Such fast thoughts do not even register in our minds. Once in a while a burst of cittas on a given object gets latched on and stays long enough to register in our minds. Then we consciously think about it and make a decision.
- For example, when I walked to the kitchen to make a tea this afternoon, it started as what seemed to be a thought of “having a tea”. In reality that “thought” itself was due to billions of citta going through my mind; the initial “vague idea of having a tea” very quickly got built-up by numerous follow-up cittas until I had to get up and walk to the kitchen.

3. Most such “initial thoughts” just do not cascade into strong enough thoughts to make us to move physically or even to speak out. If the “impulse of the thought” (or ‘*javana*’) is not strong enough, we just disregard it.

- If you think about it, you will realize that there are thousands, millions of stray thoughts that pass our minds each day. When we ride a bus just staring out of the window, we see zillion things go by and each thing seen is a thought. We do not remember most of it afterwards.
- On the other hand, some impactful thoughts prompt us to instantaneous action or speech. Sometimes, we just stay on that stream of thoughts: some people laugh out loud just thinking about a happy event. Other times, if a thought about a hated person comes to the mind, one’s face getting dark and muscles get tightened.
- A mother hearing her child cry out is literally lifted out of her seat instantaneously: But what happens there is, she hears the cry in a series of “*citta vithi*” of “thought streams” coming through the ear-door. Subsequently millions of “mind-door” *citta vithi* run within a fraction of second identifying that it is a crying sound, and it is coming from her child. Subsequently, millions more *citta vithi* start running trying to analyze what could be the problem, and then more *citta vithi* will prompt her to get out of the seat and move towards the source of that sound. All this happens within a fraction of second, without her consciously aware of it.

4. Not all thoughts on the same subject have the same kammic power.

- If some insects get killed while someone is walking on the ground or while cleaning the house, that will have no kammic consequences; because the intention associated with those actions was not to kill any living being.
- As we will see below, **several key things contribute to the kammic power: the intention, what kind of knowledge is behind that intention, and whether one does the act enthusiastically are all key factors.**

5. Now let us take an example to see how these different factors contribute to the strength of a kamma. Suppose a person who does not know that stealing is a bad thing to do and that it will have bad consequences, steals something from a shop. Since he does it with wrong vision (*micca diṭṭhi*) he does not have any remorse for it. Thus the kammic strength is very high.

- But if he does it on the urging or prompting by another, then it will have less strong kammic consequences, since he did not think about doing it on his own, and thus the “*javana*” or the “impulse power” of the citta is less strong.
- Now, if he comes up with the idea of stealing by himself, AND enjoys doing it, that is the worst.

6. So, now we can see different levels of kammic strengths associated with the SAME ACT of stealing:

- If done with wrong vision, with pleasure, and without prompting will have the highest strength.
- If done with wrong vision, with pleasure, and with prompting will have the next highest strength.
- If done with wrong vision, with neutral feeling, and without prompting will have the next highest strength.
- If done with wrong vision, with neutral feeling, and with prompting will have the next highest strength.

Now in the next four cases, the same act was done by person who did know that it was a bad act and it will have bad consequences would do it with at least some hesitation, and thus the “*javana*” or the “impulse of the thought” would be less, and consequently the kammic power will be less. So, now we have the last four cases:

- If done WITHOUT wrong vision, with pleasure, and without prompting will have the next highest strength. (the point is that the pleasure will be reduced, and one will be hesitant due to the knowledge that it is a bad act, thus reducing the *javana* power).
- If done WITHOUT wrong vision, with pleasure, and with prompting will have the next highest strength.
- If done WITHOUT wrong vision, with neutral feeling, and without prompting will have the next highest strength.
- If done WITHOUT wrong vision, with neutral feeling, and with prompting will have the least strength.

7. Thus it is clear that just having an understanding of Dhamma (that it is unfruitful to gain anything at the expense of other beings) will automatically make the kammic power less potent; but this “knowledge” is not the “book knowledge”; it is not effective if one has read about it but the mind has not really grasped it. Wisdom and “book knowledge” are two different things.

- If you think about it deeply, it should become clear that **it is the comprehension of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* that leads to true knowledge (*paññā*) and helps get rid of *avijjā* (ignorance).** It is understanding the true nature of this world, and that one’s actions are bound to have consequences.
- It works in the other way too. Good actions will lead to good results.

8. Thus the same kind of reasoning is true for meritorious acts (*kusala kamma*). There are eight levels depending on whether one does meritorious act with/without knowledge, with joy/with neutral feeling, and without/with prompting just like in the case of the greed-based *akusala citta*. Let us take the case of someone making a donation to build a shelter for homeless people.

- This *kusala kamma* (meritorious deed) done with knowledge, with joy, and without prompting has the highest merit.
- And THE SAME *kusala kamma* done WITHOUT knowledge, with neutral feeling, and with prompting has the LEAST effectiveness.
- The intermediate six are just analogous to the ones for the greed-based *akusala kamma*.

9. Let us examine how these categories play out in the real world for the above mentioned meritorious act of building a shelter for the homeless:

- If someone understands the value of giving, does it out of the kindness felt for those homeless people, does it without wishing for anything in return, will be doing it with knowledge. And thus it will be done without prompting and with natural joy in the heart realizing that one is making a difference for many people’s lives. This is the highest merit.

- If a person did the same deed, but initially it took some prompting from others or even him/herself, it was not spontaneous and thus will have somewhat less “*javana*” in the thought process.
- Those two scenarios without joy would have even less “*javana*” in the thought process. Here one may write a check and may not think much about it afterwards. But in the above two cases, the person may stay engaged with the act of building the shelter and gains joyful feeling everytime he/she thinks about it.
- Now, those four cases can be repeated for a person who does not understand the true impact of that act. The kammic power will be reduced accordingly. Thus a person who does not have an understanding of kammic consequences, the true nature of this world (i.e., that we all may go through such hard times or worse in other lives, etc), just writes a check out of necessity, may be even with the intention of getting some votes (i.e., prompting by oneself after seeing the benefits for one’s political career) will have the least benefits.
- Thus understanding Dhamma (true nature of the world) leads to spontaneous meritorious actions done with a joyful heart; this leads to *saddhā* (true faith) , *citta pasada* (joy), and *adhimokkha* (resolve) to get the maximum impact of the impulse kammic power (*javana*). *Adhimokkha* (resolve) is a key factor in the *kusala-mūla paticca samuppāda*, see, “[Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.

Notes:

1. There are two akusala kamma rooted in hate and two rooted in ignorance. The way to sort those are different. I will write another post on them.
2. This above description is a simpler version of a post that I did recently: “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)“. It may be a good idea to read that too.
3. The eight types of akusala citta are also discussed in “[Akusal Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#)“.

11.23 What is Samadhi? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness

1. *Samādhi* (“*sama*”+“*adhi*” where “*sama*” means “same” and “*adhi*” means “dominance”) means the object becomes the priority and the mind gets focused on it; as we discussed in many posts, when the mind becomes focused on one object (*arammana*), no matter what the object is, the *ekaggata cetasika* takes over and make the mind latched “on to it”.

- This is how one gets to not only *samādhi* but also *anariya jhāna* using breath meditation, just by focusing the mind on the breath.
- One gets to *samādhi* on whatever the one gets absorbed, focused, or mindful in.
- Being mindful depends on the situation. The kind of mindfulness one has when driving a car needs to be different from the mindfulness needed to design something (or read a book), and the mindfulness needed to attain a *jhāna* needs to be totally different from those two.

2. There can be numerous kinds of *samādhi*. Here we distinguish three types of *samādhi* or mindfulness:

- Momentary mindfulness (*khanika samādhi*)
- Access mindfulness (*upacara*, pronounced “*upachāra*“, *samādhi*)
- Absorption mindfulness (*appanā samādhi*)

Let us discuss each type separately.

3. We should always have the **momentary mindfulness or *khanika samādhi***. Here we frequently change the focus from one object to another based on the need.

- We can use momentary mindfulness during the day when we are active. When we talk to someone, we should be mindful about what we say. The more one practices, one will be able to control one’s speech by being mindful. It is the same with any bodily act too. When we are about to cross the street, we should be mindful of the traffic, etc.
- Many people take this the wrong way, and use it as a formal meditation. It is kind of silly to do the wrong “walking meditation” by saying “lifting the foot”, “putting it down”, etc like a robot. This is what happens when Buddha’s true teachings get lost due to external influences.
- For example, when driving, we need to pay attention to the road and then to apply brakes if the car in front gets too close; we need to keep an eye on the traffic in general to be prepared to take action. Thus it is important to keep extraneous thoughts from the mind (such as an argument with a co-worker or the tasty food at the party yesterday). Thus focusing the mind on the job at hand here translates to shifting the focus to different tasks in an optimum way to get the job done.

4. **Access concentration (*upacara samādhi*)** is more focused. When we are reading a book we get absorbed in it (if we really need to, or like to, comprehend the material); we cannot be thinking about other things while we read. But we may have to flip the page, or look up a reference while we read.

- On the supermundane (*lokottara*) side, when listening to a Dhamma discourse or reading about a Dhamma concept one can get into access concentration or *upacara samādhi*. **Reading a web post on a Dhamma concept, if done at a quiet time, can calm one down; if read with understanding and focused mind, it is possible to get into a somewhat deeper *samādhi*.**
- Someone writing a computer code, a surgeon doing a surgery, an architect designing a building, a scientist thinking about a new theory, a businessman thinking about a new business plan, all these involve access concentration (mindfulness). These are all mundane *samādhi*. But one can still feel a kind of in a trance if one really gets absorbed in any task.

5. ***Appana samādhi* or absorption in mindfulness** can lead to a *jhānic* state with practice. Here one needs to find a quiet place and need to close one’s eyes and concentrate on just one object.

- In *Ariya* meditations, the focus is something related to Nibbāna; could be a Dhamma concept or Nibbāna itself (focusing on the peacefulness of discarding sense pleasures; this can be done only when one comprehends *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*); *Ariya metta bhāvanā* is another.
- In *anariya* meditations, this object is normally either a *kasina* object or the breath or the falling/rising of the stomach.

6. Now let us look at some general features of the three types.

- It must be noted that for someone with practice, it is possible to get into *appana samādhi* (*jhāna*) very quickly. Thus the difference among the three is not in the time scale, but rather on the goal or the situation at hand.
- Workplace or home accidents happen when one loses momentary mindfulness: one can pull the wrong switch or cut oneself while cutting vegetables, or even tripping while walking, when attention is not paid on the task at hand.
- One can be reading something for hours and not get anything in, if the mind wanders off. One can be sitting in meditation for hours and not get into *samādhi* if the mind wanders off.

7. In all these three types, achieving mindfulness is easier if the five hindrances are not covering the mind; see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)”.

- If one has greedy or hateful thoughts (*kamachanda* and *vyāpāda*), it is very difficult to do any of the three.
- If one’s mind is lethargic (*thina middha*), or feeling agitated by being high-minded or low-minded (*uddacca kukkuccha*), or does not have a clear idea of the task (*vicikicca*), again even a simple task can become aggravating and frustrating.

8. Thus it helps to live a moral life, i.e., avoid the ten immoral acts as much as possible. And it pays off to make preparations ahead of the time.

- Especially for the *upacara* and *appana samādhi*, one could make sure to get other tasks out of the way beforehand, so that meditation does not have to be interrupted in the middle. Simple things like going to the bathroom and making sure one does not have full stomach before sitting down to meditate, can make a difference.
- Preliminary procedures such as reciting precepts or offering flowers or incense to the Buddha before a formal meditation session is also a part of “getting the mind ready”. As we will discuss later, attaining “*citta pasāda*” or a “joyful mind” has a valid reason behind it.

9. *Samādhi* is actually the end point of being mindful (*sati*).

- *Samādhi* is a synonym for the *cetasika* (mental factor) of *ekaggata*, i.e., having a focus. One can cultivate it by being mindful the correct way, i.e., via *sammā sati*.

10. Finally, it is also possible to get into *micca samādhi*, the opposite of *sammā samādhi*. A master thief plotting a grand robbery, or a serial killer planning a killing, can get focused and be absorbed in that immoral plan too.

- Thus there are three kinds of *samādhi* when categorized according to morality: *micca samādhi* and two types of *sammā samādhi*, one mundane (for living a better life) and one supermundane (focusing on *Nibbāna*).

11. If this post is read by paying attention to the material, not just scanning through it, one could get into *upacara samādhi*; one may need to read related posts or other material and/or stop reading and contemplating on a given point, etc. to absorb the material. When the mind gets “absorbed in the issue”, it is in a state of *samādhi*. Of course, that is possible only if the material is interesting for oneself.

- If correctly done, one will have a lower heartbeat, and a calmer and peaceful mind, by the time the reading session is done. People have attained even *magga phala* by attentively listening to Dhamma discourses.

11.24 Panca Indriya and Panca Bala – Five Faculties and Five Powers

1. These are included in the 37 factors of Enlightenment; see, “[37 Factors of Enlightenment](#)”.
2. “*Indriya*” means leader; a leader has power or “*Bala*”. Thus these two sets of five factors each are very important in following the Noble Eightfold Path.
 - The five mental faculties (*indriya*) are *saddhā* (faith), *virīya* (effort), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom), and there are five corresponding powers (*Bala*).
 - Eye, ear, nose, tongue, and the body are the five physical faculties (*indriya*). They are leaders in providing access to seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. The *panca indriya* are the “mental” leaders helping with comprehending Dhamma.
3. Let us first discuss the five faculties.
 - *Saddhā* is foremost; without faith (*saddhā*), one does not have the conviction to follow the Path. However, faith has to be based on wisdom (*paññā*), i.e., one’s faith is built upon seeing the truth of Buddha Dhamma, at least partially.
 - *Saddhā* comes from “*sath*” or truth and “*dhā*” meaning “*dhāranaya*” or “grasp”. Thus one will have *saddhā* when one grasps the true nature of this world (*tilakkhana*) at least to some extent.
 - Blind faith is actually a hindrance to progress, since one will be following the wrong path. Furthermore, blind faith will not last long, since it is on a shaky foundation. *Saddhā* of a *Sotāpanna* is unshakeable, and will never be lost or even reduced.

Thus we can see the *saddhā* and *paññā* need to progress together.

4. When *saddhā* and *paññā* is developed to a certain extent (before the *Sotāpanna* stage), one realizes the fruitlessness and the dangers of the *sansaric* journey. Thus one is motivated to make an effort (*virīya*).

Furthermore, one realizes that one needs to be mindful in one’s actions, and thus *sati* (mindfulness) starts to build. One realizes that one has to act with *yoniso manasikara*.

At the same time, one realizes that when the mind is not calm, one can make bad decisions; thus one starts working on calming the mind and to attain a level of concentration (*samādhi*). Concentration is not really a good translation for *samādhi*; one does not need to force concentration; rather *samādhi* comes about when one takes precautions to not to get into “bad situations”; see, “[What is Samādhi? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness](#)”.

5. Different people have the five faculties developed to different degrees (developed in this life AND also carried from previous lives), and normally one could stand out. The Buddha has shown the following way to identify the predominance of different faculties in a person.

- If someone has a relatively more developed *saddhā*, that person is likely to be peaceful and helpful to others with a kind heart. He/she will have no trouble in following the first precept of not harming any other being.
- Then there are people who can easily bear hardships and are very determined; they have a developed *virīya* (effort) *indriya*. They can easily keep the second precept (not taking what is not given), and be satisfied with one earns by one’s hard work.
- Those who do not pursue sense fulfilment aggressively have less *kamachanda* and are not likely to have any problems with the third precept. They are likely to have a developed mindfulness (*sati*) faculty.
- When the *samādhi* *indriya* is strong, that person is likely to be quiet and does not like to engage in idle chatter; thus keeping the fourth precept on right speech will be easy for them.
- Someone with *paññā* (wisdom) will be able to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* easily and thus to realize the fruitlessness and the dangers of the *sansaric* journey. Such a person will be able to keep the hardest fifth precept on controlling the mind; see, “[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#)”.

6. Once one identifies the strong faculty, one should try to exploit that to move forward; the other faculties always pitch in to help, so they will grow too. It is important to cultivate all five faculties until they become powers (*bala*), but one needs to exploit the predominant one.

- If someone tells a child, “this is not your actual Mom; she is somewhere else”, the child will not only refuse to believe that but will run to the mother and give a hug just to show how confident he is. In the same way, *saddhā* based on *paññā* can only make one’s resolve be strengthened by obstacles.
- For example, when one does not have *saddhā*, one can be influenced to change the course by an outside influence. But if *saddhā*, built on *paññā*, is strong no matter how strong the influence is one’s faith will not be shaken.
- The Buddha gave a simile to understand the how *indriya* can become *bala* to overcome difficulties: When a river runs into an obstacle like a large boulder, it splits and goes around it, and merge together after the obstacle. But the *indriya* needs to be strong enough to do that.
- When *indriya* (faculties) are strengthened, they become *bala* (powers).

7. When the faculties are being cultivated, it is important to try to balance them, while utilizing the predominant faculty’s power.

- Some people have *paññā* and may say, “it is useless to take precepts or chant “*Tisarana*” or chant/listen to *suttas*; it is better to learn Dhamma”. But those activities do help in getting the mind to be receptive to Dhamma; see, “[Buddhist Chanting](#)”.
- On the other hand, just reciting those verses is not enough. In order to recite them with understanding, one needs to learn Dhamma and cultivate *paññā*.
- Normally, *saddhā* and *paññā* go together and needs to be balanced. Similarly, *virīya* (effort) and *samādhi* (concentration) need to be balanced. For example, **when doing formal meditation, too much of an effort can be a drawback for samādhi**. As the Buddha told Sona the musician, the strings on a violin need to be just right, not too tight and not too loose.
- *Sati* (mindfulness) must be leading and must always be there.
- *Sati* can be compared to the steering wheel of a car; *saddhā* and *paññā* can be compared to one set wheels, and *virīya* and *samādhi* can be compared to the other set of wheels. The wheels must be in balance and the steering wheel must be kept at correct position all the time for the car to go forward. If the wheels are not balanced, the car will just go in circles; if the steering wheel is not managed, the car will go off the road.

8. These five (*saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, *paññā*) are *cetasika* (mental factors). They help define one’s character (*gati*) for the better, and these five are important ones to “take in” or “āna” in *ānāpāna sati*.

9. The five faculties exercise control in their respective domains: *saddhā* in the domain of *adhimokkha* (decision or resolve), *virīya* in *paggaha* (exertion), *sati* in *upatthāna* (awareness), *samādhi* in *avikkhepa* (non-distraction), and *paññā* in *dassana* (view or vision). When they become *bala* (powers) , they become unshakable by their opposites – indecision, laziness, negligence, agitation, and delusion or ignorance.

- It is important to realize the value of *citta pasāda* (joy) and *adhimokkha* (resolve) that results from *saddhā* based on true understanding: *adhimokkha* is an intermediate step in *Kusala-mūla paticca samuppāda* on the way to Nibbāna, see, “[Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.
- Also, *citta pasada* and *adhimokkha* that arise in doing meritorious acts with joy in the heart are key to optimizing the merits; see, “[A Simple Way to Enhance Merits \(Kusala\) and Avoid Demerits \(Akusala\)](#)”, and “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)”.

10. The five *indriya* become five *bala* and are well balanced only for an *Arahant*. We can reap many benefits even before reaching that ultimate goal by cultivating them, making sure to try to keep them balanced.

- Even for an *Arahant*, there are some leftover “imperfections” even though they are not defilements; these are some “hard-to-get-rid-of” quirks in personal behavior. For example, there is this story about a very young *Arahant* who had the habit of jumping over puddles instead of going around them; he had been born a monkey for many lives in the recent past and had carried that habit over to this life.
- Only a *Sammā Sambuddha* (like Buddha Gotama) is perfect in every respect. This is why he is called “*tatagatha*” (“*thatha*” for “what should be” or the “real nature”; pronounced “*thathagatha*”).

11.25 How to Attain Samadhi via “Vipassana Pubbanga Samatha” Bhavana

1. *Anariya bhāvanā* methods (which include breath, stomach rising/falling, or just repeated recitation of a passage, such as “May all beings be happy and healthy”) can suppress the five hindrances and can lead to mundane *samādhi*. But the effects are temporary, as anyone participated in meditation retreats knows; it feels really good at the retreat, but after coming back and getting into the normal hectic life, that feeling of calmness fades away with time.

2. The Buddha compared such meditation techniques to riding a mule. His most recommended method was “*vipassana pubbanga samatha*”, which he compared to riding a race horse.

- *Vipassana* means “sort out and get rid of undesired thoughts that come to the mind”, *pubbangama* means precedes, and *samatha* is calming the mind or attain *samādhi*.
- Thus in “*vipassana pubbanga samatha*” meditation, when one does the *vipassana bhāvanā*, it automatically leads to *samatha* or *samādhi* and (*Ariya*) *jhānas*.

3. In the *Ariya bhāvanā* or the “*vipassana pubbanga samatha*”, one’s mind is constantly working to GET RID OF the defiled thoughts, not merely to suppress them as in the *Anariya* version. As one cultivates this *Ariya bhāvanā* over time, the five hindrances are slowly REMOVED from the mind and the mind gradually shifts towards a permanently calm state. Thus, it becomes easier and easier to attain *samādhi*, since the five hindrances are gradually removed.

- We talked about a contaminated water well in “The Basics in Meditation” post above. In *Anariya bhāvanā* what is done is basically let the dirt to settle to the bottom of the well by not further stirring the water. The water eventually becomes relatively clear, but in a new session one needs to do it all over.
- In contrast, in the *Ariya* version, one is constantly REMOVING dirt from the well. Therefore, session after session dirt is removed, and eventually there will be very little dirt to remove and thus the mind will get to *samādhi* very quickly.

4. In the beginning, it is better to do formal meditation sessions. As one gains practice, one could do it while waiting in the doctor’s office or riding a bus.

- First, sit in a quiet place as described in the “The Basic Formal *Ānāpānasati* Meditation” post. Close your eyes and let the mind relax. Thoughts will invariably start popping up. Disregard any neutral thoughts and immediately get rid of any greedy or hateful thoughts as they start coming up.
- It will be helpful to contemplate the negative consequences of such thoughts.
- For example, if thoughts about an unkindly deed someone did to you comes to the mind, think about the bad consequences of “doing tit for tat”: that will only enhance and cultivate defilements in YOUR mind. We do not have control over what others do; but we can control our minds. The more your mind becomes free of any hateful thoughts, the chances of having to face such adversary situations will diminish. You may be surprised, but that is true. Just have perseverance for a few weeks.
- In another example, if you start thinking a greedy thought, say for a tasty, high calorie snack, think about the bad consequences (gaining weight, getting addicted to such impulsive thoughts, etc), and also think about being able to have the confidence of self-control.

5. Do not try to remove all thoughts that come to the mind. This is very dangerous advice that some meditation teachers give. We need to remove ONLY those thoughts that have greed, hate, or ignorance associated with them.

- If any good, meritorious thoughts come to the mind, cultivate them; think further along those good thoughts. It could be a good deed that you did like helping someone, or an alms giving that you participated in, etc.

- If neutral thoughts come to the mind, let them just pass by. Do not cultivate them, but do not try to suppress them either.

6. It could be hard to do this in the beginning. But if you really want to make progress (*chanda*), can have the determination (*citta*), make the effort (*viriya*), and actively engage in looking at the bad consequences of bad thoughts and the possible benefits of good thoughts (*vimansa*), you WILL make progress, AND it will get easier with time. These four *iddhipada* will also be cultivated on the way; see the post on “[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)”.

7. When you actively suppress *kamachanda* (excess greed) and *vyāpāda* (hate) by this procedure, the other three hindrances (*thina middha*, *uddacca kukkuccha*, and *vicikiccha*) will automatically reduce. Thus all five hindrances will be gradually removed and your mind will become “free of gunk”. See the post on “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)”.

8. As you make progress, your mind will gain a calmness, a relief, that is permanent. It will get easier and easier to “get to *samādhi*”. The Buddha compared the relief gained by this *bhāvanā* as follows: paying off a big loan that had been a burden to the mind, being released from jail, recovering from a major disease, gaining freedom from slavery, and reaching safety after crossing a dangerous desert. If someone has all those five experiences at the same time, the Buddha said, that is the kind of relief one gets by removing the five hindrances.

- This is the *niramisa sukha* that one gains, when one approaches *Nibbāna* or *Nivana*; see the post, “[How to Taste Nibbāna](#)”. *Nibbāna* is “cooling down”, it cannot be matched by any sense pleasure, and it is permanent. One can experience it in varying degrees as one cultivates this *Ariya* meditation.

XII Abhidhamma

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12.1 Abhidhamma – Introduction

1. “*Abhi*” means “higher” or “deeper”. Thus *abhidhamma* can be considered a more deeper, fundamental description of Buddha Dhamma.

- The end result is the same when compared with the material in the *suttas*, but *abhidhamma* provides a “bottom up” description of the existence, starting with 82 “most basic units” within the four ultimate entities of *citta*, *cetasika*, *rūpa*, and *Nibbāna*. This is a monumental task and that is why it took almost 250 years to finalize it at the third Buddhist Council.
- The 81 “basic units” that make up this world are 1 **pure *citta***, 52 *cetasika*, and 28 types of *rūpa*. Depending on the combinations of *cetasika* that arise with *citta*, there will be 89 (or 121) types **contaminated *citta*** (or *viññāṇa*) that can arise. This will become clear as we discuss further.

2. In the *suttas*, the Buddha explained the Dhamma concepts using everyday language. **And it is possible for most people to attain *Nibbāna* without knowing anything about *Abhidhamma*.**

- However, if one does not have enough “faith” in Buddha Dhamma, one could study Abhidhamma and see for oneself WHY Buddha Dhamma is not a religion but is the ultimate explanation of nature, the Grand Unified Theory. It has a thousand-fold more explanatory power than modern science. And for those who like to “get to the bottom of understanding something”, Abhidhamma will bring joy to the heart.

Let us take an example of making a cake:

- All one needs to know are the ingredients and how to mix them and proper procedure to bake it. That is what is done with the *suttas*.
- However, *abhidhamma* approach is comparable to starting at the atomic level of the ingredients, and then describing how those fundamental entities can combine to make flour, oil, eggs, etc and WHY those need to be mixed in a certain way, and WHY it all need to be baked at a certain temperature.
- It is truly mind boggling what *abhidhamma* can accomplish.
- **However, instead of being a boring “recipe book” (as *Abhidhamma* is thought these days), if one starts with an understanding of the basics, learning *abhidhamma* can be a delightful experience. Furthermore, one can get a much deeper understanding of the Dhamma concepts.**

3. *Abhidhamma* provides the complete, consistent description of the whole existence (encompassing the 31 realms). With this description there can be no unexplained phenomena at any level. A logician like the late Dr. Kurt Gödel could have a great time with it; see, “[Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorem](#)”.

- The scope of *abhidhamma* can be appreciated to a certain extent by looking at what the scientists are trying to do with a Grand Unified Theory to describe the behavior of inert matter. Einstein devoted the latter part of his life to develop one and failed, and the scientists are still far from achieving it. And even if it is attained, it will be able to describe ONLY the behavior of inert matter, not the behavior of living beings, let alone the 31 realms of existence.

4. *Abhidhamma is the Grand Unified Theory of the Buddha*. I gave an introduction to it in the post, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”. In this *Abhidhamma* section I will try to give further details. My goal to is to describe it in an easy-to-grasp simple manner.

- When I taught physics to undergraduate students, I told them not to memorize anything, but to grasp the essence of the material. Many students (and adults) try to memorize descriptions of a concept, but have no idea how to apply the concept. I used to give them all the complex equations and any other hard-to-memorize material in the tests; what they needed to do was to apply them in solving problems.
- My approach is the same here. For example, all different types of *cittas* are listed in the “[Tables and Summaries](#)”; there is no need to memorize them. What I want to do is for someone to be

able to understand a given Dhamma concept starting from the basics: for example, which *cittas* are immoral and can lead one to rebirth in the *apāyas* and WHY.

- A key concept in Buddha Dhamma is *saññā* (translated to English as “perception”). But it is much more complex than “knowing and identifying an object” as it is described. One of my first goals in the Abhidhamma section is to describe *saññā*, and the key role played by the brain. For that we first need to understand the connection between the brain and the mind (they are NOT the same).
- Abhidhamma can make one addicted to it, as I have become addicted to it. When one starts to grasp how this complex world really works, understanding even a bit more of it can bring joy to the heart.

5. However, I must say that even if one can memorize the whole of the *Abhidhamma* theory, one WILL NOT understand the Buddha’s message **unless one understands the true meanings of *anicca, dukkha, anatta***.

- *Abhidhamma* can solidify and “fill-in-the-blanks” of Buddha Dhamma from the *suttas*, which can be exhilarating.
- On the other hand, I had so many unresolved questions on parts of *abhidhamma* until I listened to the first *desanā* from one of my two teacher *Theros* almost a year ago, on July 30, 2013, on *anicca, dukkha, anatta*. It was like lifting a fog, and by the end of that *desanā* I knew I will be able to ‘fill-in-the-blanks’ to make my understanding much better.

6. Now to give a brief background on how the *abhidhamma pitaka* of the *Tipitaka* was developed over roughly 250 years by the lineage of *bhikkhus* started with Ven. Sariputta: Ven. Sariputta was one of the two chief disciples of the Buddha: While Ven. Moggallana excelled in supernatural powers, Ven. Sariputta excelled in Dhamma. He was only second to the Buddha in Dhamma knowledge.

- The minute details on the structure of a *citta vithi* (a basic thought process) of 17 thought moments, with each *citta* lasting sub-billionth of a second, can be seen only by a Buddha. The Buddha described such minute details to Ven. Sariputta, and it was Ven. Sariputta and his group of *bhikkhus* (and their subsequent lineage) that completed the monumental task of making a complete description of Dhamma theory starting with the fundamental entities.
- As I mentioned earlier, this is a million times more complex task than putting together a Grand Unified Theory to explain the behavior of inert matter, as scientists are attempting to do today. Because a living being has an inert body, but a complex mind which makes that inert body “alive”.
- Only a framework of the theory was recited at the First Buddhist Council just three months after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha. More was added at the second Council, and the task was completed only at the third Council. It was this completed *Tipitaka* that was written down in 29 BCE at the Fourth Buddhist Council.
- A common misconception stated in many books is that Abhidhamma was “invented” by *bhikkhus* after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha. The minute details of the very fast *citta vithi* are discernible only to the mind of a Buddha.
- It is important to realize that even the last part of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* was compiled by *Arahants* at the Third Council, and the whole *Tipitaka* was also written down by *Arahants* at the Fourth Council. **The absence of *Arahants* (in significant numbers) started around the second century CE, and coincided with the rise of Mahayana and the “contamination” of *Theravāda* which culminated in the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhaghosa; see, “[Historical Timeline of Edward Conze](#)”.**
- As we discuss more topics, it will become clear that only *Arahants* with superior mental power can compile such a complex work in the absence of an easy way of recording, let alone having access to computers.

7. I have given a breakdown of the *abhidhamma pitaka* in the post, “[Preservation of Dhamma](#)”.

8. **August 12, 2015:** I have brought the subsections on “[Mind and Consciousness](#)” and “[Manomaya Kaya](#)” from “Dhamma Concepts” to “Abhidhamma” section, since it is imperative to understand those basic concepts first. It is a good idea to read those subsections (and “[Citta and Cetasika](#)”) before reading further in the *Abhidhamma* section.

- It is not necessary to understand the material in all those essays. But the more of those basic concepts one understands, it becomes easier to grasp the material in subsequent essays.
- Also, we all keep increasing our understanding as we learn Dhamma. I learn new things every day, and try to update the posts as much as possible. The more one learns, the more one can “see the inconsistencies” in other versions of “Buddhism” and also possibly in my own essays; some of these posts were written over 18 months ago. Please don’t hesitate to point out any inconsistencies at this website. I would be grateful. There is a “Comments” tab under each post.

REFERENCES

1. “A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma”, by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000); this is a revised and updated version of Ref. 2 below. [[Download free from pariyatti.org](#)]
2. “A Manual of Abhidhamma”, by Narada Thero (1979). [[Free from basicbuddhism.org](#)]
3. “[Buddha Abhidhamma – Ultimate Science](#)“, by Dr. Mehm Tin Mon; this is a very good FREE publication (click the link to open the e-book).

Unfortunately, some concepts in all three references are not correct: in particular the incorrect interpretations of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, come into play as in almost all existing *Theravāda* texts (except the *Pāli Tipitaka* of course). **Also, *anariya jhānas* using *kasinas* and breath meditation are presented as Buddhist meditation in all three.** I will try to point out such problems in relevant posts.

Next, “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)“,

12.2 Mind and Consciousness

What is Mind? How do we Experience the Outside World?

What is Consciousness?

1. Thoughts (Citta), Consciousness (Viññāna), and Mind (Hadaya Vatthu) – Introduction

2. Viññāna (Consciousness) can be of Many Different Types and Forms

3. Viññāna, Thoughts, and the Subconscious

12.2.1 What is Consciousness?

1. Philosophers through the ages have struggled to figure out how consciousness arises in a human being. For “materialists” everything that makes a human being originates in the body, and they have been trying to explain consciousness in terms of something that comes out from the workings of the brain.

- For the “dualists” consciousness is totally distinct from the material body, and falls into the realm of theistic religion (related to a “soul”).
- According to the Buddha, consciousness, together with the body, are two of the five “aggregates” that a human being consists of. **And Consciousness does not arise from the body, but arises with the body at the conception.**

2. First of all, let us define consciousness.

- The Buddha said that being conscious is “being aware”.
- There are several definitions of consciousness in modern science, but the general consensus among the scientists and philosophers is that the state of being conscious is a condition of being aware of one’s surroundings as well as one’s own existence (or self-awareness).
- Therefore, we could say that science and Buddhism are attributing essentially the same meaning to the word “consciousness”. However, the Buddha’s definition of consciousness involves the mind, because the mind, in Buddha Dhamma, is necessarily involved in the six forms of awareness, whether it is visual, auditory, etc.

3. As to the origins of consciousness, we have three “theories”:

- Contemporary science is totally matter-based: the universe started with the “big-bang” which created all existing matter, and all living beings “evolved” from this inert matter, and thus consciousness also evolved by some (yet unknown) manner.
- The theistic religions believe, of course, that humans were created with built-in consciousness by an Almighty-God and animals were also created (sans consciousness).
- The Buddha’s is different from both above: It states that living beings (humans and animals) with built-in consciousness are different from inert matter, but they were not created. Rather, there is no traceable beginning to life; life always existed, and it will exist forever (until *Nibbāna* is attained). Everything has a cause, so does life.

4. Consciousness is more than registration of a visual event, or an auditory event, for example. It has associated a variety of mental factors such as *saññā* (perception) and *vedanā* (feelings).

- A camera captures an image of a cat, but it is not aware of the presence of the cat. On the other hand, a dog sees a cat and becomes aware of its presence. It not only sees the cat, but knows exactly where it is and can try to catch it.
- Have you ever thought about how we can not only see things, but know exactly where they are? Without this ability, we can not even walk without bumping into things. How do we know that the person in front of us is only a few feet away? Consciousness is associated with a sentient being with a MIND. Science cannot yet explain this capability.

5. There is also the issue of the phenomenal quality of the conscious experience: qualia, subjective feelings, the redness of red, the warmth of warmth, etc. How do these arise in a being made up of inert atoms? There are basically two approaches to solve this problem in modern philosophy and science:

- One is that it arises as an emergent property in the neuronal activities in the brain. The other is the proposal of duality by Rene Descartes in the 17th century that persist to the present; see, for example, David Chalmers, “The Character of Consciousness”, (2010).
- A subset of these scientists believe that consciousness is associated with the microtubules in a cell (for example, see “The Emerging Physics of Consciousness” Ed. by Jack A. Tuszynski (2006) and John Smythies, “Brain and Consciousness: The Ghost in the Machines”, Journal of Scientific Exploration, vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 37-50, (2009)). Despite much research, the question of how qualia and subjective feelings arise from dead matter remains a mystery.
- Just because a cell responds that does not necessarily mean it has consciousness; the cell can expand and contract (chemical reactions) in response to environmental stimuli. In a way, something similar happens when a plant turns towards sunlight; of course, plant life is not sentient. Thus, just because an entity responds to outside influence does not necessarily mean the entity is “mentally aware” of the outside influence, i.e., that it is conscious.

6. Therefore, all these scientists and philosophers are long way off of solving the issue of the four mental aggregates of feelings, perceptions, volitional formations, and consciousness that make up the mental aspects of a human being. They are mainly focusing on consciousness and perception at this early stage, and even then are totally disregarding the intrinsic mental nature. It will be interesting to see what progress they can make by just taking a totally materialistic approach.

7. There is evidence, though, that some leading scientists are beginning to suspect that a complete “world view” cannot be achieved without taking into account the mental aspects. This trend started with the invent of quantum mechanics at the beginning of the 20th century, and is gaining traction slowly. Some interesting ideas are discussed in a number of books including “Wholeness and the Implicate Order” (by David Bohm, 1980), “Quantum Enigma” (by Bruce Rosenblum and Fred Kuttner, 2006), “Biocentrism” (by Robert Lanza, 2009).

- However, attempts to explain the mind as a manifestation of quantum phenomena will also fail, because it is the mind that precedes matter; see, “[The Double Slit Experiment – Correlation between Mind and Matter?](#)”.

8. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) discussed in this section does NOT take account the fact that consciousness of any living being (other than an *Arahant*) is contaminated by defilements. This our awareness is not pure; it is like looking through a foggy window. This is discussed in the “[Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\)](#)” and “[Expanding Consciousness by Purifying the Mind](#)”.

Next, “[1. Thoughts \(Citta\), Consciousness \(Viññāṇa\), and Mind \(Hadaya Vatthu\) – Introduction](#)”,
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12.2.2 1. Thoughts (Citta), Consciousness (Viññāṇa), and Mind (Hadaya Vatthu) – Introduction

It will be beneficial to read this post even if one is not interested in learning *Abhidhamma*.

1. After writing a few posts in the *Abhidhamma* section, I realized that it is a good idea to write introductory posts on English meanings of some *Pāli* key words related to the mind. **In the end, words do not matter and what matters is grasping of the concepts involved.** But conveying the concept correctly REQUIRES the use of right words.

- This is a bit of a problem because there are no words in English that truly conveys the meaning of some *Pāli* key words when talking about the mind (like *mano* and *viññāṇa*). Thus what I need to do is to write several introductory posts describing such keywords (like what I did for *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*).

- More details will be given in the *Abhidhamma* section, but the posts that appear in this section provide just the basics.

2. A *Citta* (pronounced “chiththa”) is widely translated as a “thought”, *viññāṇa* as “consciousness” and *mano* as “mind”. **I am going to keep using the former two, but am going to use “*hadaya vatthu*” as the *Pāli* word for mind.** Let us first discuss the reason for using this term for the mind.

- *Hadaya vatthu* is where *citta* (thoughts) arise; thus it is appropriate to call it the mind or even more appropriately “seat of the mind”. ***Hadaya vatthu* is the “link” between the “*mano loka*” (mind plane) and the “material plane” whether it is in *kāma loka*, *rūpa loka* or *arūpa loka* (i.e., anywhere in the 31 realms).** Mind or the *hadaya vatthu* is a very fine *rūpa* (matter); in technical terms, *hadaya vatthu* is formed at *patisandhi* as a *vatthu dasaka*.
- By the way this *hadaya vatthu* is the only trace of matter associated with a living being in the *arūpa loka*. It is much smaller than an atom; only a form of “*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]” in the form of a “*dasaka*”.
- For example, if a *cuti-patisandhi* transition occurs from a cat to a human, then the “cat *hadaya vatthu*” dies and a “human *hadaya vatthu*” is formed and the very next *citta* arises in the “human *hadaya vatthu*” or the “human mind” in the “human *gandhabba*”; see, “[Cutti-Patsandhi Transition – Abhidhamma Description](#)”. With that in mind, let us discuss the ultimate “primary elements”.

3. In the absolute sense (*paramatta*), there are four entities: *citta*, *cetasika* (pronounced “chetasika”), *rūpa* (pronounced “rūpa”), and *Nibbāna*. The last one, *Nibbāna*, does not belong to “this world” of 31 realms. Therefore, there are only *citta*, *cetasika*, and *rūpa* that are in anything and everything in this world.

- *Citta* and *cetasika* are “*nama*” and all tangible things are made of “*rupa*”.
- There are 89 (or 121) types of *citta*; 52 kinds of *cetasika*, and 28 kinds of *rūpa*. These are all listed in the “[Tables and Summaries](#)” section.

4. A *citta* (thought) does not arise by itself, but arises with a number of *cetasika* (mental factors). There are 7 *cetasika* that arise with ANY *citta*, and normally there are other *cetasika* that arise in addition to those seven. This is discussed in “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)”.

- There are “good” and “bad” *cetasika*. The familiar ones are *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* and *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*, but there are many others. These determine whether a given *citta* is a “good” (*kusala*) *citta* or a “bad” (*akusala*) *citta*. There are only good or bad *cetasika* in a given *citta*; they do not mix.

5. Even though a *citta* arises and perishes within less than billionth of a second, it gets contaminated during its lifetime. Starting as a “pure *citta*” (“*pabasvara citta*” which is also called “*prabhasvara citta*” in *Sanskrit*) with those 7 universal *cetasika*, it gradually degrades by incorporating many other *cetasika* into a “contaminated *citta*” or *viññāṇa*. Without going into details, the nine steps are:

- ***citta*, *mano*, *manasan*, *hadayan*, *pandaran*, *mana indriyan*, *manayatan*, *viññāṇa*, *vinñanakkhandhō*.** [*Yaṃ cittaṃ mano mānasam hadayaṃ paṇḍaram mano manāyatanaṃ manindriyaṃ viññāṇaṃ viññāṇakkhandho...*] But this happens during the life of the *citta* itself (in billionth of a second) according to the “*gathi*” that we have. **This is why we cannot control our initial thoughts; but as those initial thoughts turn to speech and bodily actions, we may have time to control them.**
- But we still use the term “*citta*” to denote the final outcome; in order to differentiate the one that the sequences started off, we call it a “pure *citta*” or a “*pabasvara citta*”.
- What we end up is basically what we call *vinñanakkhandha*, and all this happens within a billionth of a second. This “contamination process” cannot be controlled willfully at that early stage; it happens automatically based on one’s “*gathi*”. **The only thing we can do is to change our “*gathi*”.**

6. We can use the following analogy: If we start off with a glass of pure water that can be compared to a pure *citta* with just the 7 universal *cetasika*. If we add a bit of sugar (*mano*), salt (*manasan*) it gets a bit contaminated but we cannot see the contamination. Now we add a bit of brown sugar and we can see the water turning to brown; this is like the *hadayan* stage. Then we keep adding chocolate, milk, etc, the water gets really contaminated; but it is still mostly water. A contaminated *citta* is like at the *viññāṇa* stage; it is a *citta* that is contaminated.

- The *citta* of an *Arahant* does not contaminate beyond the *masanan* stage (While in the “*Arahant phala samapatti*” enjoying *Nibbānic* bliss, an *Arahant* has the *pabhasvara citta* or the pure *citta*). All others get to the *viññāṇa* stage, but of course the “level of contamination” is much lower even by the time one gets to the *Sotāpanna* stage, because one has gotten rid of any “*gathi*” associated with the *apāyas*.
- As we can see, it is not possible to control such a fast process by sheer will power; it is a matter of “cleansing the mind” progressively of the contaminants of greed, hate, and ignorance.
- Now we can see why “*mano*” cannot be the mind. “*Mano*” is just a bit “contaminated” *citta*. It gets progressively contaminated and by the time it comes to the “*viññāṇa*” step it has captured all relevant *cetasika* for that *arammana* or the “thought object”.
- **At the last step, a very profound thing happens.** The *manasikara cetasika* brings in to play all relevant past *viññāṇa* (which are fixed as “*nama gottā*”) as well as one’s “hopes and dreams” for the future that are relevant to the “event in question”. For example, if the thought occurs due to seeing a nice house, one may compare that house with houses like that one has seen before AND one’s “dream house” that one is hoping to build one day. Therefore, in the “final version”, a *citta* is a very complex entity that reflects not only the “nature of the object seen” but also one’s own likes/dislikes for it.
- This last stage of the *citta* or *Viññāṇa* is the “composite awareness” for that particular event, which also has one’s own likings, dislikings, etc for that particular event; see, “[Citta, Manō, Viññāṇa – Stages of a Thought](#)”.

7. And we do not, and cannot, just perceive a single or even a few *vinnanakkandhō*; rather what we “feel” as a “thought” is the sum of many such *vinnanakkandhō*, and we still call that a “*citta*” or a “thought”; see, “[What is a Thought?](#)” and “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)”.

- We also alternatively call such sense experiences “*citta*”, “thoughts”, “consciousness”, and “*viññāṇa*”.
- Thus it is critical to understand that what we mean by *viññāṇa* in general is the sum total of many *cittas*; in *paticca samuppāda*, at the “*avijjā paccaya viññāṇa*”, *viññāṇa* means this sum total of many *cittas* or even more accurately the sum total of many of *vinnanakkhandhō*.

8. Now I would like to point out a few important conventions:

- It is important to remember that a thought can have many meanings even in English: [WebLink: WIKI: Thought](#)
- Normally “*citta*” is used to denote a thought, and “*viññāṇa*” is used to denote the “awareness” associated with a thought. It is fine to do that most of the time, but if a discussion gets technical one could come back to this post and refresh memory as to the details.
- And as you can imagine, such an “average of thoughts” may have many type of cognitions and underlying “awarenesses”, and we will talk about the different types of *viññāṇa* in the next post, “[2. Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) can be of Many Different Types and Forms](#)”.

12.2.3 2. Viññāṇa (Consciousness) can be of Many Different Types and Forms

1. *Viññāṇa* is unique to sentient beings. Plants are alive but have no *viññāṇa*; they respond to the environments but are not capable of “thinking”. Sentient beings are aware that they are alive and just that basic awareness of “being alive” is not really a *viññāṇa*.

- This purest level of *viññāṇa* (the awareness of being alive) is called the “*citta*” (pronounced “chiththa”) stage.
- A *citta* arises with 7 concomitant “mental factors” (*cetasika*, pronounced “chetasika”), and this is described in “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)”. To emphasize, a pure *citta* arises with those universal *cetasika*; a *citta* always has those 7 *cetasika*.

However, the *citta* of a sentient being gets “contaminated” by other *cetasika* as soon as it arises. Within the lifetime of a *citta* (which is less than a billionth of a second), it progressively gets contaminated by “good” or “bad” *cetasika*, and this happens in nine stages! This was discussed in the previous post: “[Thoughts \(Citta\), Consciousness \(Viññāṇa\), and Mind \(Hadaya Vatthu\) – Introduction](#)”.

2. As discussed in “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)”, it is those additional *cetasika* that provide “color” to a *citta*: if a set of “good *cetasika*” arise with the *citta* it becomes a “good thought” or a “good *viññāṇa*”; if it is a set of “bad *cetasika*”, then the thought or the *viññāṇa* is bad (those *cetasika* do not mix). Also, there are neutral thoughts or neutral *viññāṇa* that are neither good nor bad.

- *Viññāṇa* can be experienced in many different ways; since it is hard to come up with different names for each case, they are all bundled together as *viññāṇa*. Words like *citta*, *viññāṇa*, *mano*, as well as *cakkhu viññāṇa*, *sota viññāṇa*, etc and *vipāka viññāṇa* are used in different contexts and that can be confusing to many regardless of whether their native language is English, Chinese, or even Sinhala, which is the closest language to Pāli. But each term has its own “subtle identity” and as we discuss more, those subtle differences will become clear.

3. *Viññāṇa* is often translated as “consciousness” but *viññāṇa* can be used in many different contexts like “subconscious” or “layers of consciousness”.

- The same problem is encountered by those who speak *Sinhala*, because there the word “*sitha*” is used in many occasions to represent the Pāli words *citta*, *mano*, and *viññāṇa*. Similarly, in *Sinhala* “*yati sitha*” is used to denote the subconscious.
- This “subconscious” in English (as introduced by Sigmund Freud) or “*yati sitha*” in *Sinhala* is not a separate *citta* (there can be only one *citta* at a time). But, each *citta* can have “layers of consciousness”; the *manasikara cetasika* plays a big role here.
- For example, at a given time we may have several “subconscious” *viññāṇa*: **we may have plans to buy a certain car, getting ready to go on a trip next week, in the process of building a house, etc; all these are in the subconscious, and in each *citta***. If we see a car on the road that looks like the car we are interested in, the *viññāṇa* alerts you to it, and you take a good look at it.
- As the Buddha advised *bhikkhus*, what really matters is to convey the meaning. Just like in the case of *paticca samuppāda* or *taṇhā*, it is best to use the Pāli words and comprehend their meanings; those key words convey deep meanings that may take several words or even sentences in any other language to get the idea across.

Types of Viññāṇa associated with Kamma and the Sense Doors

Viññāṇa is complex and can be presented in various different types and forms. We will start by looking at “two categories” of *viññāṇa*.

1. First, we can categorize them according to *kamma* (or *saṅkhāra*) associated with the *viññāṇa*: ***Kamma viññāṇa*, *vipāka viññāṇa*, and *kiriya* (or *kriya*) *viññāṇa***.

Let us describe in plain English what these terms mean.

- We can put *viññāṇa* into three categories in relation to *kamma*: Those *viññāṇa* that arise while doing a *kamma* (*saṅkhāra*) is called a *kamma viññāṇa*. For example, when one steals something, one has an awareness of that; that is the “*viññāṇa* that one is stealing”.
- Then there are those that arise as *kamma vipāka*, and thus we do not have much control over them; they just happen to us and are called *avyakata viññāṇa* or *vipāka viññāṇa*. I like the term *vipāka viññāṇa* than *avyakata viññāṇa* because then it is easy to differentiate those two kinds. For example, when one is walking on the road and sees something valuable on the roadside; that is a *cakkhu viññāṇa* (seeing something) and also a *vipāka viññāṇa* (due to a *kamma vipāka*).
- The third type in this category are called *kiriya (kriya) viññāṇa*, and they are not connected to *kamma*. When we think, talk, or do something that does not involve *kammically* “good” or “bad”, those are done with *kiriya viññāṇa*. For example, when we think about the cleaning chores for the day, or ask someone what time it is, or walk to the kitchen to get a drink, all those are done with *kiriya viññāṇa*.

2. When we are travelling by a vehicle and are looking out of a window, we see many different things out there. But most of it we do not pay any attention, even though we are “aware” that we are seeing things. Those are *vipāka viññāṇa*, they are “presented to us”, but most of them may not interest us.

- Then all of a sudden we see something that “piques our interest”, say a nice house by the roadside. Then we fix our attention on that and even may keep looking at until it moves out of our range. That is a *vipāka viññāṇa* that triggered a “*gathi*” in us; it was of interest. And it could put us in a position to acquire more *kamma* by initiating a *kamma viññāṇa*.
- For example, if we really got interested in that house, we may start thinking about how nice would it be if we could build and live in a house like that. Now we are making *saṅkhāra* (i.e., generating *kamma*) based on that “seeing event”. Thus such thoughts (or *viññāṇa*) that followed the initial *vipāka viññāṇa* of “seeing the house” are *kamma viññāṇa*.
- Our life experiences belong to basically one of those three categories.

3. All those *viññāṇa* may also be described in another totally different form; they can be differentiated into six categories, this time based on the sense door: thus we have *cakkhu viññāṇa* (vision consciousness), and *sota* (sound), *ghana* (smell), *jivha* (taste), *kaya* (touch), and *mano* (mind) *viññāṇa* (consciousnesses).

- In the previous example, the three types of *viññāṇa* were all initiated by *cakkhu viññāṇa*, a “seeing event or consciousness”. At the *kamma viññāṇa* stage, they became *mano viññāṇa*, because those thoughts about acquiring a house originated in our minds.
- Then if another passenger touched us, we would turn and look at that person, because now we had a *kaya viññāṇa* (which was also a *vipāka viññāṇa*).
- If that touching turned out to be done by accident, we just let go of it, and it was just a neutral event of seeing someone (*kiriya viññāṇa*).
- However, if it was someone with whom we had a romantic relationship in the past, then we may start generating *kamma viññāṇa* (*mano viññāṇa*). In the same way, if it was someone with whom we have had a bad relationship, we may start generating another type of *kamma viññāṇa* (*mano viññāṇa*).
- Thus if you contemplate a bit on this, you can see that ALL our experiences can be put into either of those two “divisions”, i.e., we can analyze them to be in *vipāka viññāṇa*, *kamma viññāṇa*, and *kiriya viññāṇa* categories or the sense consciousness categories.

4. There are other types of *viññāṇa* that we will talk about later, but for now let us discuss something that is really important to *paticca samuppāda*.

- The *paticca samuppāda* cycle starts with “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*”, and “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*”. This *viññāṇa* is NOT a *vipāka viññāṇa* or a *kiriya viññāṇa*, but only a *kamma viññāṇa*.
- When we see something, hear something, etc., those are things that HAPPEN to us. Thus there is no *avijjā* (or ignorance) initiating that consciousness. There is no *paticca samuppāda* cycle associated with such a consciousness (*viññāṇa*).
- However, if we now decide to act on it (say, take another look at it because we like it), then we may be initiating a *saṅkhāra (kamma)* event: now this new event initiates a (*pavutti*) *paticca samuppāda* cycle with “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*”, which leads to, “*saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa*”, i.e., this *viññāṇa* was initiated by a *saṅkhāra*; thus it is a *kamma viññāṇa*.

5. Usually, what happens in our lives is that we are bombarded with sense inputs via all six senses. We tend to turn our attention to as many as we can because we are afraid that “we may miss out on something”. This is the root cause for the lack of “peace” in our minds, because we are constantly moving our attention among the six senses, going back and forth. If we have too many “likings” our mind will be pulled in all different directions trying to follow all those sense inputs.

- By avoiding busy environments (i.e., by going to a secluded place) we can reduce this effect. **But, we still cannot “turn off the sixth sense input”, i.e., the mind, unless we purify our minds.** This is the key to meditation. It is not possible to have a “peace of mind” if the mind is burdened with greed, hate, and ignorance (wrong vision or *micca diṭṭhi*).

6. Thus an *Arahant* can have a peaceful mind even when in the busiest place. A *Sotāpanna* can do that to a certain extent too.

- Even before any of the “*magga phala*” are attained, one can easily get to *samādhi* and then to *jhānas*, by gradually getting rid of the defilements associated with “wrong vision” just by learning Dhamma (mainly *anicca, dukkha, anatta*).
- Then the number of different types of *viññāṇa* going through the mind will be reduced (“Sounds like my neighbor’s car leaving, I wonder whether she is going to the mall?”, “I wonder what (my enemy) is up to today?”, “I wish I could have a body like that!”, “How come I don’t have a nice house like that?”; these are all types of *viññāṇa* that we burden our minds with unnecessarily).
- And it is important to realize that it is not easy to just turn those off; they WILL BE turned off automatically when we purify our minds first by learning Dhamma (“What is the use of thinking about unnecessary things? There are better things to think about that provide lasting happiness”).

Next, “[3. Viññāṇa, Thoughts, and the Subconscious](#)“,

12.2.4 3. Viññāṇa is not a Thought and What is the Subconscious?

1. A thought (*citta*; pronounced “chiththa”) is on a specific thought object, say thinking about buying a car or going for a walk. There is only one *citta* at a time, but each lasts less than a billionth of a second and what we experience is *vinnanakkhadha* which encompasses multiple *cittas*. One can NEVER experience a single *citta*. Therefore, what we call a “thought” is the result of many of *cittas* or more correctly the result of many *citta vithi*, bundled up as *vinnanakkhadha*.

- Each *citta* has many *cetasika* (mental factors) in it, including the all important *saññā, phassa, manasikara cetasika*. Then there are “good” and “bad” *cetasika* in a *citta* that describe the “mood” of the *citta*.
- When someone is angry most *cittas* **at that time** will have the hate (*patigha* and/or *dōsa cetasika*. When the same person is feeding a hungry person his/her *cittas* **at that time** will have the benevolence and/or loving kindness *cetasikas*. The good and bad *cetasika* do not mix, i.e., one either has a good thought or a bad thought. For discussion on *cetasika*, see, “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)“.

2. The *manasikara* and *saññā cetasika* is in each and every *citta*, and they carry all past memories, habits (*gathi*) and cravings (*āsavas*) in them. The *gathi* and *āsavas* may not be displayed in each *citta*; rather, they lie dormant, waiting for a “trigger” to come up. *Gathi* and *āsavas* are carried from *citta* to *citta* (until they are removed), and new habits and cravings can be added at any time.

3. *Viññāṇa* is not a thought but it is in thoughts. *Viññāṇa* represents the overall experience of *cittas*, and is largely described by the *cetasika* in those *cittas*. Of course no one experience a *viññāṇa* due to a single *citta*; rather what one experiences is the average of millions or billions of *cittas*. A bunch or a heap is called *khandha* in Pāli or Sinhala. Thus what we experience is a *vinanakkhandha*, or the averaged value over a bunch or a heap of *cittas*.

- *Viññāṇa* is complex and multi-faceted. We may have *viññāṇa* of different types at the same time. Even though we are directly aware of one type of *viññāṇa* at a given time, there may be many types hiding beneath the surface. This is what Sigmund Freud called the “sub-conscious”.

4. A thought is what is occupying the mind at a given moment. When I am paying for my groceries, my thoughts are focused on that transaction. But there can be many types of *viññāṇa* working “in the background”. I may be building a house, studying for an exam, planning a trip, planning a birthday party for my child, etc. and all those “*viññāṇa*” are working in the background even though I am not thinking about any of them at the time I am paying for my groceries.

- However, any of those, and even some things that I had not been thinking about for a long time could be there further down in the “subconscious”. But there is no separate “subconscious” as such. All these different types of *viññāṇa* are there in a single thought (*citta*), and there is only one *citta* at a time; see, “[What is a Thought?](#)”. Then how is it possible for many types of *viññāṇa* to be lurking in the background?

5. It is those mental factors (*cetasika*) that makes it all possible. Several key such mental factors play key roles including memory (*manasikara*), contact (*phassa*), and perception (*saññā*). These key “universal *cetasika*” are in all the *citta* and embody all our desires as well as everything that has happened to us in them. Of course things happened recently are “closer to the top” compared to something that had happened a long time ago. And it also depends on how significant a certain event was. Some special events, even if they had happened a long time ago, are easier to remember.

- Memories are fixed even though we may not remember all of them; all our memories are kept intact as our *nama gotta*, in the mind plane; see, “[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)”. Of course what we can recall is limited by many factors including the state of the brain. As we get older the ability to recall gets weaker.

6. *Viññāṇa* is a sort of the “end result” of many memories as well as our *gathi* and *āsavas*.

- The more one does something repeatedly, there starts a *viññāṇa* for that particular event or behavior. For example, when one starts smoking, a *viññāṇa* starts building, and the more one smokes, the stronger the *viññāṇa* gets. This is called “feeding the *viññāṇa*” by doing it again and again. In other words, habits are formed via repeatedly feeding the *viññāṇa* for that habit.
- When a certain *viññāṇa* is pleasing to the mind, that *viññāṇa* tries to get fed frequently. When someone has the habit of smoking the *viññāṇa* for that tries to deviate his/her attention to smoking at every possible opportunity. For example, if a smoker sees an advertisement for smoking, that “triggers” the liking or the *viññāṇa* for smoking that was in the subconscious.

7. But it works the same way for a *viññāṇa* that got initiated with a dislike also. For example, if someone did something really awful to you in the past, the hearing of his/her name will bring back that *viññāṇa*. This is why we get “attached” to things we like as well for things we dislike, and is the meaning of *taṇhā* (get bonded via greed or hate); see, “[Taṇhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)”.

8. Not all *viññāṇa* keep accumulating in the background. Those weaker ones, especially if don’t get fed, diminish and disappear. For example, suppose I had planned an overseas trip, and had been making preparations for it. The more preparations I make and more thoughts I have of the trip, those are “food for that *viññāṇa*”, and it grows. If I see a new article with that country’s name, I would immediately read the article. But suppose, a major war breaks out in that country before my trip; then

I would cancel that trip right away. I will no longer be planning for the trip and my mind will “not be interested” in it anymore. Since that *viññāṇa* for “visiting that country” is not going to get fed anymore, it will be gone in a short time.

- We don’t even need to actually physically do the activity to “feed the *viññāṇa*” or make a habit stronger. There are studies that show that one could improve the game of basketball, for example, by just visualize practising, and getting the ball in mentally. These are called “*mano sancetana*”. Focusing the attention on a given task can be very powerful.

9. This is why *chanda*, *citta*, *virīya*, *vimansa* (*satara iddhipada* or the four bases of mental power) are critical for achieving goals. When one forms a strong liking (*chanda*) for a goal, one starts thinking often about it (*citta*), making effort (*virīya*), and constantly analyzing and trying to find related facts (*vimansa*) about how to accomplish that goal; see, “[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)”.

10. Our minds are very complex and powerful. And there are many different ways to analyze and examine concepts that are closely related. This is why there are so many different ways Buddha Dhamma can analyze a given situation and come to the same conclusion. It is all self-consistent.

- For example, suppose I thought about buying a silver car of model X several weeks ago; I have been thinking about it reading reviews and so on. I may be driving on the road just focusing on the road and driving with my thoughts and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) focused on driving. But now if I see a silver-colored car of model X, then immediately that will trigger my *viññāṇa* about “buying the car” and I may compare the silver-colored car with the car that I had in mind. The mind likes to “feed the *viññāṇa*” that we have and the more it gets fed, it gets stronger. The more I think about the car, the stronger my intentions get about buying one.

11. There could be several such *viññāṇa* “in the background” or “in the subconscious” at any given time. For example, our *viññāṇa* keeps shifting as we keep moving from one task to another. But underneath, there may be several *viññāṇa* waiting for an opportunity to come up to the conscious level. Thus it can be “triggered” by a related event.

12. A built-up *viññāṇa* can form a habit; as the habit gets stronger, it can be carried over to the next life, possibly in two ways: a really strong habit could lead to a “*patisandhi viññāṇa*” at the dying moment and can lead to a corresponding “*bhava*”, and thus one could be born in the corresponding “*jāti*”. For example, an extremely greedy person, may acquire a “*peta bhava*” at the dying moment and be born as a “*peta*” or a hungry ghost.

- On the other hand, if the same person had time left in the “human *bhava*” then that person will be feeding the “*pavutti viññāṇa*” of greed, and will always be looking out to acquire more “stuff” even at the expense of other people. Thus a “greedy *viññāṇa*” will grow as one keeps feeding that *viññāṇa*. He/she will never be satisfied even if what has been acquired is more than enough.

13. Thus *viññāṇa* is very complex; it is not just the “awareness”. It also has one’s “hopes and dreams” as well as “likes, dislikes, and habits”. It is a complex combination of the 52 *cetasikas*; of course not all *cetasikas* are involved in a given *citta* or in our thoughts.

12.3 Citta and Cetasika

[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāna \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)

[What is a Thought?](#)

[What is in a Thought? Why Gathi are so Important?](#)

[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)

[Cetasika – Connection to Gathi](#)

[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)

12.3.1 Citta and Cetasika – How Vinnana (Consciousness) Arises

When one learns *Abhidhamma* one can see why both “self” and “no-self” concepts were rejected by the Buddha. A “living being” is a momentarily changing entity. It is not possible to say “it does not exist”, because it obviously does exist; it is just that it continuously evolves ON ITS OWN PATH determined by “*gathi*” at each stage. Thus until *parinibbana* is attained, there is a “dynamic self” which has its own identity or personality or “*gathi*” which also evolve.

- It may be a good idea to read at least the introductory post on the *manomaya kaya* before reading this post: “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)- Introduction](#)”.

1. A living being experiences the “world out there” in a series of very fast “snapshots”; it grasps the “world” in a snapshot called a *citta* (pronounced “chiththa”) that lasts much less than a billionth of a second. As soon as the mind sees that “snapshot”, it is gone. But the mind gives us an illusory sense of a permanent “world”, **by combining that “snapshot” with our past memories as well as our hopes for the future.** Let us see how this process is described in *Abhidhamma*.

- The mind does this with the help of a *cetasika* (pronounced “chethasika”) in that *citta* called *manasikara*. We will discuss this later, but I am just trying to get across the basic idea.

2. The name *citta* came from “*chitra*”, the name for a painting in *Pāli* or *Sinhala*. A pure *citta* has only 7 mental factors (*cetasika*). *Cetasika* provide “colors for the picture”, so to speak.

- But the 7 *cetasika* that are in each and every *citta* (universal *cetasika* or “*sabba citta sadharana cetasika*”) may be considered “colorless”. A pure *citta* is like a blank sheet of paper on which these “snapshots” are imprinted.
- There are a set of 14 “bad *cetasika*” and a set of 25 “good *cetasika*”. For a rough visual we may think of the “bad *cetasika*” as dark colors (black, brown, etc), and the “good *cetasika*” as pleasant colors such as green or yellow. Then there are 6 other “occasionals” that are also “colorless” and those can arise with either good or bad *cetasika*; see, “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)”.
- *Cetasika* arise with a *citta*, decay with a *citta*, and take the same thought object (*arammana*) as the *citta*. But a given *citta* has either good OR bad *cetasika*; they do not mix.
- And a *citta* is of very short duration; it lasts much less than a billionth of a second; see, “[What is a Thought?](#)” in the next post.

2. Therefore, we can visualize each “moment of awareness” of the outside world by the mind as a very quick snapshot. As soon as it comes, it is gone.

Then how does our mind see the outside world as “permanent”? and also a given situation as ‘good’ or ‘bad’? When we look out we see mountains that have been there for thousands of years. People get old, but they are around for years and years. Also, two people could look at the same thing and perceive it differently (one as “good” and one “bad”).

- This “trick” is done by two of the universal *cetasika*: *manasikara* and *cetana*.

- As we discussed in other posts, a record of the “snapshot” that decays is permanently recorded in the mental plane, and these records are called *nama gotta*; see, “[Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra \(Sankata\)](#)”.
- In the same way, our hopes and visions for the future are also in the mental plane. Of course the past *nama gotta* are permanent while the imprints for the future keep changing. The *manasikara cetasika* brings in memories from the past and hopes for the future into the current *citta*, thus a “permanent like” view of the world is composed by the *cetana cetasika*, which is responsible for “putting together a *citta*”.
- Furthermore, in one person, “good” *cetasika* may arise due to a sense input, but if the “*gathi*” of the other person is opposite, a set of “bad” *cetasika* may arise in the other person. The *cetana cetasika* combines them to form a “good” or a “bad” awareness.

3. It is basically the same kind of process happens when we see, hear, taste, smell, touch, or think; let us explain the concept for vision.

- The basic sequence of events in capturing any “input” via the five physical senses was described in “[Manomaya Kaya – Introduction](#)”.
- If we keep looking at a picture on the wall, nothing changes because it is a static picture.
- Now let us think about what happens when we look at a water fountain. Since there is wind and other disturbances, we can see some changes, but the water fountain looks like a sort of a solid object. But what we see is a composite of trillions of water particles rising and falling each second. We do not “see” that but just the appearance of a “sort of solid object with a certain shape” as formed by the water nozzles. Here the *manasikara* and *cetana cetasika* help the mind put together a “composite” of what happened a few seconds ago and what is happening now to give a more or less solid appearance.
- Same thing happens in seeing a continuous “ring of fire” when one swirls a light in a circular motion. At a given moment, the light is at a fixed position (a “data packet sent by the brain to the mind shows the light at one point on the circle), but if we move the light fast enough, the mind keep seeing the light moving to successive points on the circle and we see a “composite picture” in the shape of a continuous ring of light.

4. Another example is a motion picture. When making a movie, what is actually done is to take many many static pictures and then play them back at fast enough speed. If the playback speed is too slow, we can see individual pictures, but above a certain “projection rate”, it looks like real motion. Here is a video that illustrates this well:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Animation basics: The optical illusion of motion](#)

5. When we see the outside world, what happens is very similar to the above. At the end of the video it is stated that the “movie” we see is an illusion, **and as the Buddha explained, that holds for real life as well.** In real life when we see someone coming towards us, what we actually see is a series of “static pictures” or *citta* projected at a very fast rate in our minds, giving us the illusion of a “movie like experience”.

- Even though in the above video it is suggested that all the information from the “previous static frames” were put together by the brain, that is true only to a certain extent.
- The brain does put together the individual frames, but without actual “memories” it is not possible to get the deep details about what is seen.
- **We not only “see” the video, but we also RECOGNIZE what is seen (we identify a given actor, we can even remember previous movies with that actor, we KNOW all about the scenes in the background, etc); to have all that information instantly available to the brain is not possible. This is a point that needs a lot of thought.**
- What happens according to *Abhidhamma*, is that the brain periodically sends packets of acquired data put together by the cortex in the brain to the *hadaya vatthu*, which is basically the seat of the mind. There *citta vithi* arise in accepting that information from the brain, and it is the

mind that does all the compiling (with the help of the *manasikara* and *cetana cetasika*) and that is how we EXPERIENCE it.

- I will go into more details later, but those are the key points.

6. We need to keep in mind that all animals have this capability too. A dog basically sees its environment just like we do and instantly recognizes the objects in the picture. Even an ant does too, even though its “world” is much more limited. Think about how a tiny ant can process all that information that allows it to move in a reasonable fast pace in hunting for food; it knows its territory, certain smells, and also remembers how to get back to its nest. All that information is NOT in that tiny body of an ant. More things to think about!

7. In the above video, it is shown that the slowest projection rate where the brain seems to processing data is about 20 frames per second; this correspond to a data packet of about 50 millisecond duration. This is consistent with a recent findings from MIT that says the *minimum* time needed is about 20 milliseconds: [WebLink: Detecting Meaning in Rapid Pictures-Potter-2014](#).

- This is consistent with the Abhidhammic picture of the brain capturing segments of visual data and transmitting that information to the *hadaya vatthu*, which is the “mind door”, via the *cakkhu pasada* that is located on the *manomaya kaya* close to the *hadaya vatthu*.
- Even though *Abhidhamma* does not mention how long the brain captures visual data for a “seeing event” before sending to the *hadaya vatthu*, it does say that this information is now converted by the brain to a format suitable for transmission to the *hadaya vatthu*, and is sent there via a “ray system”, which is extremely fast. I assume that this encoded information is sent at the speed of light and thus get to the *hadaya vatthu* (which is located on the *manomaya kaya*, but is close to the heart) almost instantaneously.

8. Of course we not only see things, but we also hear, smell, taste, touch, and think other thoughts all at the SAME TIME, it seems.

- Even though the “sensing rate” is limited by the relatively slow processing speed of the brain (which appear to be in the millisecond time scale according to current scientific studies mentioned above), it is still more than fast enough for us to experience simultaneity in all sense inputs.

9. Since the scientific studies on the “minimum duration of a detectable event” are still at early stages (see #7 above), we may be able to put together a more precise sequence of events in the future. Yet we have enough data to put together a qualitative picture of what happens.

- This is an excellent example of how science can help us “fill in the blanks” of the overall picture that the Buddha provided; of course it was impossible for him to convey the magnitudes of these time scales 2500 years ago.
- Once the Buddha was in a *Simpasa* forest near *Kosambi*, and he took a few leaves into his hand and told the *bhikkhus*, “what I have taught you compared to what I know is like these few leaves compared to the leaves in this forest; but what I have taught you is more than enough for you to attain *Nibbāna*”.
- Thus even though modern science can provide us with details about the “big picture” of the Buddha, and we should be grateful to all those scientists for that knowledge, we should use that knowledge wisely and should not get carried away in spending too much time on such details.

Next, “[What is a Thought?](#)”,

12.3.2 What is a Thought?

There are many confusing terms in *Abhidhamma* like *citta* and *mano* which have been differently interpreted in different books. In order to clarify these concepts, I am writing a few posts in “Dhamma Concepts” section under “Mind and Consciousness” starting with: “[1. Thoughts \(Citta\), Consciousness \(Viññāna\), and Mind \(Hadaya Vatthu\) – Introduction](#)”. I highly recommend reading those, and especially, “[3. Viññāna, Thoughts, and the Subconscious](#)”.

1. In Buddha Dhamma, a thought or a *citta* (pronounced “chiththa”), is the briefest moment of awareness experienced by a sentient being. In *Abhidhamma* it says that there are well over billion of *citta* in the blink of eye.

- Let us keep in mind that a *citta* is much smaller than a billionth of a second.

2. A pure *citta* only has seven *cetasika* (*phassa, saññā, vedanā, cetana, ekaggata, jivitindriya, and manasikara*) in it; see, “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)“. Thus it is the purest form a “thought”, but it is too brief for anyone to experience.

- **The first thing to note is that one will never be able to experience a single thought if we mean by a thought to be a *citta***, even though we say, “I just had a thought”. **The briefest awareness that we actually experience** is probably a fraction of a second; Scientists say it is about 10 milliseconds. But that 10 millisecond time is mostly spent by the brain in processing the sense input; once that is done, a series of *citta* with 17 *cittas* flow in a very brief time (less than a billionth of a second), and that is what is registered in the mind. We will discuss this later in detail.
- This series of *citta* with 17 *cittas* is called a *citta vithi* (pronounced “chiththa veethi”); see below.
- Even a single *citta* has three phases: *uppada* (rising), *thithi* (reached peak but still changes), and *bhanga* (dissolution). Thus a *citta* arises and fades away very fast.
- **Only a Buddha can see such details as I pointed out in the Introduction.** Even people with highest *abhiññā* powers (attained via *jhānas*) cannot even come close to seeing such details.
- This is why *Abhidhamma* is a special section of Buddha Dhamma that needs to taken “as is”, i.e., we just have to believe what the Buddha said. We cannot hope to verify these details by our own experience (for example that there are a certain number of *citta* in a *citta vithi* as discussed below). Yet, *Abhidhamma* is very valuable in clarifying any issue down to the minute detail.

3. A pure *citta* with 7 *cetasika* does not last. Even though it starts as such a pure *citta*, within the duration of the *citta* itself (less than a billionth of a second), it gets contaminated by either a set of bad *cetasika* like *lōbha* (greed), *issa* (envy) or a set of good *cetasika* like *saddhā* (faith) and *sati* (mindfulness).

- Before it starts decaying, it goes through NINE STAGES to become *vinnakkandhō* (this is NOT the aggregate as in the common usage of *vinnakkhandha*; rather, here the mind has coupled the information in the previous stages of this *citta* with past *viññāṇa* and future *viññāṇa* that are in the mind and has made a “composite”).
- **However, the convention is to call this whole process still a *citta*.**
- All this happens in less than a billionth of a second! This process keeps repeating in the *citta* to follow and the process is cumulative, i.e., as more and more *citta* flow by, the *awareness of the event* gets stronger, and we actually begin to feel it.

4. **Thus what we experience is the cumulative effect of numerous of *citta vithis*.** That is why the Buddha talked about *kandhas* (which means “heaps” in Pāli or Sinhala) as in “heaps” of feelings (*vedanakkhandha*), perceptions (*sannakkhandha*), volitions (*sankharakkhandha*), and consciousness (*vinnanakkhandha*); those are the “heaps” that we actually experience in a “thought”.

- If *citta* fly by that fast, and captures six kind of possible “inputs” (through the five physical senses and the mind itself), how do we “experience” seeing, hearing, etc “at the same time” but still sort them out?

5. This is because the mind is the most powerful entity in this world. All five physical senses just provide traces of inputs (“memory imprints”), and billions of them arise and perish each second. The mind keeps a record of all past events and MAKES A COMPOSITE SENSE EXPERIENCE moment-by-moment.

- For example when we hear someone say “apple”, even the letter “a” is comprehended by the mind via billions of *citta*; then “p” is captured, and by that time “a” sound is gone from the ear.

- When it has captured the whole word, “apple”, the mind automatically matches that with all the past memories and instantly produces an awareness or a mental picture of an apple; **past memories as well as hopes for future are recalled by the *mansikara cetasika* and the *citta* is “put together” by the *cetana cetasika*.**
- Now the mind “knows” what that person was referring to, and has a mental image of an apple.
- If someone hears the word, “lemon”, one could even feel the sour taste of lemon; the mind brings it back from the past memories.
- Even if we see just the outline of a familiar person at a distance, the mind “fills in the blanks” and flashes an image of that person in your mind so you know who it is.

6. The mind is capable of processing multiple inputs (received via the five senses), and also carry out its own mental processes (thinking and coming to conclusions about what is perceived through the five senses by comparing it with past memories) such a fast speed, that it appears to be done in “real time”; see the previous post, “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāna \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)”.

7. Actually, one sensory “event” does not happen in one *citta*. A sensory event from one of the five physical senses is captured by a single *citta*, but that information is processed by a string of *cittas* with 17 *cittas* in it; this “string of *cittas*” is called a *citta vithi* (pronounced “chiththa veethi”). A *citta vithi* for ‘seeing’ is referred to as a *citta vithi* at the “eye door” or the eye, one for “hearing” occurs at the “ear door” or the ear, etc.

- When one *citta vithi* provides a sensory input, that information is then processed by three *citta vithis* that involves only the mind; this *citta vithi* “at the mind door” is variable; it has around 12 *citta* normally. But in a *jhāna samapatti*, which is solely a mind door process, there can be a very large number of *citta* without interruption.
- Thus there are two types of *citta vithi* involved in processing a sensory input: a long one with 17 *citta* to CAPTURE an input from one of the five physical senses (*pancadvara*) AND three *manodvara citta vithi* (at the mind door) with about 12 *citta*. Both types are thus involved in cognition (awareness) processes; there are other processes by the mind that we will discuss later.
- Only one *citta vithi* runs at a given time; they do not overlap.

8. Thus it is mind boggling if we try to imagine the frantic pace the mind works at. At this point, it may be a good idea to look at an analogy to simplify things a bit.

- A movie is generated by a series of static pictures. When a movie is projected on a screen, static pictures are projected at a rate of about 30 frames a second, and we see the movie as a continuous progression of events; if the projection rate is low, we can see it frame by frame or as “packets of information” separately. When we watch the movie, we do not perceive those static pictures or “packets of information”, but we perceive a continuous progression without any gaps.
- In the same way, when we perceive that our mind is hearing a word, but in reality that word is the result of many *citta vithi* originated at the ear door; and the scene that appears simultaneous is the composite of many *citta vithi* coming through the eye door and none of it happens “at the same time”.
- Just like the movie projected at 30-50 frames a second, *citta vithi* are generated at many frames a second. (I had previously mentioned billions of *cittas* and that is not correct; the flow of *citta vithi* is subsided by the processing time of about 10 milliseconds needed by the brain to process each each sense input). Thus we feel that we are watching, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, and thinking all at the same time.
- **To repeat for emphasis:** Our minds processes probably less than 100 *citta vithi* per second. However, each *citta vithi* with 17 *citta* (for five sense inputs) or about 10 *citta* (for mind inputs) and each of those *citta vithi* take less than billionth of a second. Even though it takes the brain to process a sense input about 20 milliseconds or so, that information is grasped by the mind in less than a billionth of a second.

9. Just like a movie reel, there is actually a tape (not a physical one) that is recorded in the “mind plane”; this is the origin of the “*nama gotta*” discussed in, “[Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra](#)”. That tape is there forever, and allows one with *abhiññā* powers to look back to any time in the past; see, “[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)”.

- Therefore in order to verify rebirth or to look at really old memories, all one needs to do is to develop *abhiññā* powers! And there are people, including my teacher *Theros*, who can do this today.

10. **And there are different kinds of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), and we will discuss these in another post.** There is only one *citta* at a time. But there is memory, as we just discussed. And that memory is normally hidden because the mind is covered up by the defilements, and when one develops *abhiññā* powers what one is really doing is to clean up the mind so everything becomes clear.

- One who develops *abhiññā* powers through *anariya jhānas* just let the gunk settle at bottom and see just the upper layers; but one who has developed *abhiññā* powers through *Ariya jhānas* is doing that by “cleaning up” the gunk so a much more penetration to deeper past is possible; see, “[Solution to a Wandering Mind – Abandon Everything?](#)”.

11. Thus any of individual sense experiences is VERY BRIEF (the duration of a *citta vithi*). **It is the mind that puts everything together and presents us with a “movie like” experience.** This is what the Buddha meant when he told Bahiya Daruchiriya: “*Ditté ditta manatan, suté suta mantan, muté muta manatan, vinnaté viññāṇa mantan*” or “*seeing is just a trace of seeing, hearing is just a trace of hearing, enjoying is just a trace of enjoyment, experiencing is just a trace of experience*”.

- It is the mind (specifically the *viññāṇa kandha* or the aggregate of consciousness) that put everything together and present it as a smooth movie-like experience.
- Here, *ditta*, *suta muta*, *vinnata* mean “seeing, hearing, enjoying (with smell, taste, and touch), and consciousness respectively; “*mantan*” means “a *mātra*” in Sinhala or “a trace” in English. Thus “seeing” is just trace of a visual event lasting only a billionth of a second, then it passes away and a new one comes in; there is nothing substantial in it. Mind makes everything appear solid, permanent, and stable. This is the deeper meaning of that verse.

12. If all this appear too technical, do not worry about it. It took me a long time to figure it out and I think I got the final details worked out recently by also combining information from recent scientific studies. The Buddha could not use today’s technical terms, but what he said in summary form is completely compatible with science. But science is still way behind in terms of the bigger picture.

Next, “[What is in a Thought? Why Gathi are so Important?](#)”,

12.3.3 What is in a Thought? Why Gathi are so Important?

There are many confusing terms in *Abhidhamma* like *citta* and *mano* which have been differently interpreted in different books. In order to clarify these concepts, I am writing a few posts in “Dhamma Concepts” section under “Mind and Consciousness” starting with: “[Thoughts \(Citta\), Consciousness \(Viññāṇa\), and Mind \(Hadaya Vatthu\) – Introduction](#)”.

1. In the previous post we saw that a thought (*citta*; pronounced “chittha”) lasts much less than a billionth of a second. The more surprising part is that each *citta* has structure! Each *citta* “contains” multiple *cetasika* (mental factors); actually it is more accurate to say that each *citta* rises with a number of *cetasika* and they all perish together within a billionth of a second, only to be followed by another *citta*.

- Of course, here we are only talking about a *citta* in a *citta vithi* that is involved in “sensing the outside world” via the six senses. Such a *citta vithi* has either 17 *citta* (for those sensing events involving the five physical senses) or about 10 *citta* in *citta vithis* that involve only the mind. In between those, the mind is at the “*bhavanga*” state, which is commonly described as “*bhavanga citta*”.
- The *citta* (including those “*bhavanga citta*”) flow CONTINUOUSLY within a life and then start a new stream at the next life; there is no break in between the two lives.

- The stream of thoughts we have, has been running non-stop since the beginning-less time; see, [“What Reincarnates? – The Concept of a Lifestream”](#).
- However, we do not “feel” all the *citta*. There are “gaps” in between *citta vithi* mainly with the mind in the *Bhavanga* state.

2. The *cetasika* (mental factors) provide different qualities to each *citta*. A *citta* is moral (*kusala*), immoral (*akusala*), or neutral (*kiriya*) depending on the what type *cetasika* rise with it.

A complete description of 52 *cetasika* are given in, [“Cetasika \(mental factors\)”](#). A brief summary:

- There are 7 universal *cetasika* that rise with ANY *citta*.
- Six others CAN appear in any *citta*, i.e., only some of them may be in a given *citta*.
- There are 14 *asobhana cetasika* (non-beautiful mental factors) that appear only in *akusala citta*.
- There are 25 *sobhana cetasika* (beautiful mental factors), and 19 of them appear in each and every *kusala citta*, and thus are called beautiful universals.

3. Let us first discuss the 7 universal *cetasika*. These arise with ANY *citta*, and in fact a *citta* with just these is called a “*pabhasvara citta*”, because it is the “purest form” of a *citta*. It gets contaminated to become a “*viññāṇa citta*” as it develops in time within a billionth of a second! We would not get into those details for a while.

- **What we actually experience are “*viññāṇa citta*”, as *viññāṇa khanda* (aggregate of *viññāṇa* or a “heap of *viññāṇa*”).**

The 7 universal *cetasika* that arise with any *citta* are:

- *Phassa* (contact), *saññā* (perception), *vedanā* (feeling), *cetana* (intention), *ekaggata* (one-pointedness), *jīvitindriya* (life faculty), and *manasikara* (memory).

4. The *phassa* (contact) *cetasika* is what makes contact with the “object of the *citta*” whether it is sense input from one of the five physical senses or a concept that makes contact with the mind.

- In *paticca samuppāda*, this is the *phassa* in the step “*salāyatana paccaya phasso*”. Of course *salāyatana* are the six senses. Thus it is *phassa* that makes possible for the mind to make contacts with the world.
- *Saññā* (perception) identifies the object by working with *manasikara* (memory), and *vedanā* (feeling) arises.
- Depending on the object, one will generate good, bad, or neutral feeling, and also different types of *cetasika* (greed, shame, compassion, etc) can arise; *cetana* (intention) puts it all together and “prepares” the *citta*. Based on the types of *cetasika* in the *citta*, it could be a good or bad thought. This is why *cetana* can be good or bad, and the Buddha said “*cetana* is *kamma*”.
- *Ekaggata* is the ability to keep the mind on one object. *Jīvitindriya* maintains life in the current life (keeps the body alive) until death. And *manasikara* is the all-important memory. *Manasikara* has ALL memories (or *nama gotta*) from the beginning-less time; see, [“Difference between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra”](#) for a discussion on *nama gotta*.
- This is why the present *citta* is the precursor to the next *citta* and that next *citta* is NOT totally different from the previous *citta*; *manasikara*, for example, just keeps building up on the past *citta*. “Cause and effect” is at work from *citta* to *citta*, maintaining the “personality” or “*gathi*” of the given lifestream. This is why the Buddha rejected the notion of a “no-self”, as well as a “self”.
- Yet it is important to realize that “*gathi*” can change even in a *citta*, for example one attains the *Arahanthood* with a single *citta* (of course with billions of *citta vithi* making gradual progress towards it).

5. So, we can see the basic working of a *citta* with these 7 universals; they carry out the most fundamental and vital functions of recognizing the object, matching it with old memories and figuring out what it is, and also *sukha*, *dukha*, or neutral feeling arise because of that recognition.

- Yet all that does not happen in a single *citta*. When an “input” comes through one of the six senses, it is captured by a *citta vithi* containing 17 *citta* for a physical sense input and about 10 *citta* for a mind input as we discussed in the previous post. Then that “captured event” is discerned and analyzed by three follow-up “*manodvara citta vithi*”, i.e., by the mind.
- Even then we actually experience only the “net result” of millions of such *citta vithi*, as we mentioned in the previous post. But due to the extreme rapidity of these processes, we feel like we are using all six in real time. We are not. The mind is always analyzing a set of events that have already gone by, thus “*ditte ditta mantan,*”. What we experience NOW is what has already transpired.

6. But invariably other *cetasika* (other than the 7 universal) arise as the *citta* develops in time, and the *citta* becomes *kusala citta*, *akusala citta* or a *kiriya* (neutral) *citta* depending on the *cetasika* that arise with the *citta*.

- *Sobhana cetasika* arise with *kusala citta* and *asobhana cetasika* arise with *akusala citta*.
- These *cetasika* types do not mix, i.e., no *sobhana cetasika* arise with an *akusala citta* etc.

7. Now the question arises: If *citta* arise and fall and go by so rapidly, how do we willfully stop *akusala citta* from arising? Especially when exposed to a tempting external object like a eye-catching figure.

And the answer lies in a very simple concept that I have discussed in many posts:

- This is where one’s character qualities (*gathi*) and *āsava* come into play. **One automatically responds with the “set of values” one has.**
- By changing one’s habits one can change one’s character (*gathi*) and eventually change one’s deep-rooted cravings (*āsavas*). Even though the answer is simple, it takes a long time to get rid of bad habits and cultivate good habits, at least initially.
- The with time, as that *gathi* loses its power, one will be less and less tempted when subjected to the same sense input, say an attractive figure, or a hateful thought.

8. The key to reduce such bad *gathi* is to forcefully suppress that bad thought as soon as you become aware of it. Even though a bad thought arises automatically, one becomes aware of it after a few seconds.

- As soon as you become aware of a bad thought you should think about the bad consequences and forcefully stop that thought stream. Just start thinking about something good or start doing something that needs your full attention.
- When you keep doing this for a while, that tendency will slowly reduce, i.e., that bad *gathi* will lose its power.
- For example, if one needs to quit smoking, as soon as one starts lighting a cigarette one should think about the bad consequences of smoking and throw it away. Keep some mints handy and pop one in your mouth. Finding a “replacement activity” always helps to break a bad habit.
- If it is hateful thought, one could stop it and start thinking about something good. A hateful thought may be replaced by recalling a picture of the Buddha, for example. Always have a “replacement” ready.
- One needs to keep doing this faithfully in order to make the old habit weak.

9. When one gets rid of bad habits and cultivates good habits, the neural connections in one’s brain get rewired. The brain changes gradually and that is how the thoughts change. This is the easy answer using the modern science.

- But there is a deeper analysis. Not only the physical brain changes, but also our *manomaya kaya* is transformed. Eventually that is what controls the brain; see, the couple of posts on *manomaya kaya* and also, “[Neuroscience says there is no Free Will? – That is a Misinterpretation!](#)” for details.
- **This idea of gradually changing one’s habits** holds the KEY in making progress on the Path or even on achieving mundane goals, as I have discussed in other posts.

10. Therefore, initially one responds with one’s current set of values or *gathi*. **But after a few moments, one CAN think about the consequences and make corrections to the initial automatic reaction.**

- This is further explained in terms of the instant reaction coming from the limbic system in the brain and the “reasoned out” corrective action coming from the neo-cortex or “the thinking brain”; see, “[Truine Brain – How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#)”.
- And that is how we slowly change our *gathi*, by willfully making corrections to the initial “auto-response”. This is what makes us different from animals. Animals do not have this ability, at least not to our level.
- **The more you “catch” such “inappropriate auto-responses” and stop them, the more effectively we can get rid of bad habits, cultivate good habits and change our *gathi* (character) in the right direction. This is “*ānāpāna sati*”, i.e., one keeps good thoughts and gets rid of bad thoughts willfully; see, “[What is Ānāpāna?](#)” in the Meditation section.**

11. As mentioned above, *cetasika* present in a given *citta* determine the quality and/or the function of the *citta*.

- An immoral (*akusala*) *citta* have one or more immoral roots; *avijjā* (delusion *cetasika*) is in any immoral *citta*.
- A moral (*kusala*) *citta* will always have non-greed and non-hate *cetasika*. Wisdom (*paññā*) *cetasika* rises only in *citta* with all three roots (*tīhetuka citta*).
- We have come across many of the *cetasika* in the posts on various topics: the five hindrances are of course included in the 14 *asobhana cetasika*.
- The four bases of mental power (*sātara iddhipada*) are four of the *sobhana cetasika*, i.e., *chanda*, *citta*, *virīya*, *vimansa*. Here *citta* means “thinking about the goal” and thus is *sammā sankappa* when fully cultivated. *Vimansa* is another name for *paññā* and becomes *sammā dīṭṭhi* when fully cultivated; see, “[37 Factors of Enlightenment](#)”.
- Some of the factors in the Noble Eightfold Path are directly in the set of *sobhana cetasika*, for example, *sammā vaca*, *sammā kammanta*, and *sammā ajīva*. Other *cetasika* like *sati* and *paññā*, when cultivated become *sammā sati* and *sammā dīṭṭhi*.
- Similarly, *ekaggata* in the universal *cetasika* set becomes *sammā samādhi*, and *virīya* and *vitakka* in the set of particulars become *sammā vayama* and *sammā sankappa* when cultivated.

12. As we noted, we can control a bad series of thoughts like planning a robbery or even making a quick plan to steal an item from a store. **There is enough time to think about the consequences of such a bad action and deliberately stop such thoughts. But one needs to be in a fairly stable “state-of-mind” to be able to do that. When the mind is agitated, the mind cannot see “right from wrong”. The five hindrances are covering the mind.**

- Sometimes people commit horrendous crimes in the spur-of-the-moment. One can get into a rage and shoot someone with a gun that is close by. How do we stop such quick reactions? By being mindful to control that bad *gathi*, which is the tendency to get mad at the slightest provocation. See #10 above.
- When one keeps reducing one’s “bad *gathi*“, those really dangerous *gathi* — which could lead to rebirth in the *apāyas* — will be permanently eliminated when one becomes a *Sotāpanna*. When that is achieved, that mindset is maintained even in future lives. As we saw, a *patīsandhi citta* in the new life arise based on the *cuti citta* of the past life, so it has all the “*gathi*” from the

past life. Changing to a “*gathi*” of a *Sotāpanna* is called a change in lineage (*gotrabhu*); one becomes an *Ariya* or a Noble person forever.

Next, “[Why Do People Enjoy Immoral Deeds? – Ditthi Is Key](#)”,

12.3.4 Cetasika – Connection to Gathi

Abhidhamma can be a very useful tool to clarify various concepts given in the *suttas*, especially if different people try to interpret *suttas* in different ways; see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”. Furthermore, it provides minute details on how the human mind gets the physical body (which is just a “shell” made out of inert matter) to do any and all bodily tasks.

1. In the introductory posts in *Abhidhamma* we saw that there are **seven universal *cetasika* (mental factors)** that arise with each and every *citta* (loosely translated as a thought); *citta* is pronounced “chiththā” and *cetasika* pronounced “chethasikā”.

- Those 7 universal *cetasika* are essential in forming any kind of *citta*, whether it is an immoral (*akusala*) *citta*, a moral (*kusala*) *citta* or a *citta* that does not do any *kamma*. For the moment, let us concentrate on the 54 types of *cittas* in the *kāma loka*.
- The rest of the *cetasika* provide “character” to *cittas*. Whether a given *citta* is good or bad depends on whether a “good” or “bad” set of *cetasika* arise with it; see, “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)”. They are listed in the post “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)” and you may want to print it out for reference when reading this post. There is no need to memorize them. With time, one may even know them by heart.
- Out of the 54 *cittas* in the *kāma loka*, there are 12 *akusala citta* and 8 *kusala citta*. Other 34 are *vipāka citta* and *kriya citta* that do not generate *kammic* power.
- It may sound confusing all these terms, but you will get used to them! Try to get the essence.

2. Then there are six *cetasika* called **particulars (also called occasionals)** or *pakinnaka* that **MAY** appear in any type of *citta*. Therefore they do not determine the PURPOSE of the *citta*, but they HELP with any type of purpose that was intended.

- For example, *virīya cetasika* could be in a *kusala citta* and it can also be in an *akusala citta*. In either case, the *virīya cetasika* will HELP intensify the effort with that *citta*.

3. Out of a total of 52 *cetasika*, the other 39 (= 52-7-6) *cetasika* determine whether a given *citta* will be an *akusala citta* or a *kusala citta*.

- There are 14 *cetasika* (called *asobhana* or immoral or bad *cetasika*) that could be present in an *akusala citta*; out of those, 4 ALWAYS are present in any *akusala citta*; those 4 are *asobhana universals*.
- The other 25 *cetasika* (called *sobhana* or moral or good *cetasika*) can be present only in *kusala citta*, and 19 of those are ALWAYS in any given *kusala citta*; those 19 are *sobhana universals*.
- Therefore, 11 *cetasika* (7 universal plus 4 universal immoral) arise with each and every *akusala citta*. There may be other immoral and particular *cetasika* as well.
- There are 26 *cetasika* (7 universal plus 19 universal moral) arise with each and every *kusala citta*. Thus there are only 6 more moral *cetasika* that do not arise with each and every *kusala citta*.

4. Therefore, it is those *sobhana* and *asobhana cetasika* that determine the *kammic* nature of a *citta*. If we want to get rid of all *akusala citta*, what we need to do is to remove the 14 *asobhana cetasika* from our minds (they come up automatically with our *gathi* and *āsavas*).

- In other words, our *sansaric* habits (“*gathi*”) and cravings (“*āsavas*”) are embedded in those 14 *asobhana* (and *sobhana*) *cetasika*, such as *lōbha* and *dōsa*. For example, one may have dominant “*lōbha gathi*” (excess greed) or “*dōsa gathi*” (strong hate); but normally, we have a mixture of many different inter-mixed *gathi*.

- In the same way, cultivating good “*gathi*” and “*cravings*” (basically for moral deeds) leads to “good *cetasika*”.
- As we follow the Noble Eightfold Path, those 14 *asobhana cetasika* are reduced. When reaching the *Sotāpanna* stage, the two *asobhana cetasika* of *diṭṭhi* and *vicikicca* are REMOVED, and all others are reduced to some extent. In particular, *lobha* is reduced to *rāga* level and *dōsa* is reduced to *patigha*. This why a *Sotāpanna* will never be born in the *apāyas*.
- *Raga* has 3 components: *kāma rāga*, *rūpa rāga*, and *arūpa rāga*, corresponding to attachment to the *kāma loka*, *rūpa loka*, and *arūpa loka* respectively. At the *Sakadāgāmī* stage, *kāma rāga* and *patigha* are REDUCED to the level that one will never be born at or below the human realm.
- At the *Anāgāmī* stage, both those (*kāma rāga* and *patigha*) are REMOVED and thus all bonds to the *kāma loka* are broken and one will never be born again in the *kāma loka*. Of course other remaining *asobhana cetasika* are reduced too.
- All *asobhana cetasika* are removed at the *Arahant* stage.

5. Thus we can see that this is yet another way of looking at what is involved in attaining *Nibbāna*. All these different ways of explaining are fully inter-consistent. There are more, but I am providing links to a few below.

[Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#)

[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)

[Key to Sotāpanna Stage – Ditthi and Vicikicca](#)

[What Are Rūpa? \(Relation to Nibbāna\)](#)

6. We can easily see why **four immoral universal *cetasika*** arise with each and every *akusala citta*. These four are: *mōha* (delusion or moral blindness), *ahirika* (shamelessness of wrong), *anottappa* (fearlessness of wrong), and *uddacca* (restlessness).

- We do not realize, but when we get greedy or hateful enough, we can become morally blind. One loses any sense of decency just for a short time, but that is enough to commit an immoral act.
- Then we lose the fear of doing wrong and the shame of doing wrong because at that instant our minds are covered (it takes only a fraction of second to generate a thought and sometimes even to act on it if the *javana* is strong enough). This inevitably leads to a restless mind (*uddacca*) too.

7. Now let us discuss the 7 pairs in the universal moral *cetasika list*, starting with the pair of *kayapassaddhi* (tranquility of mental body, which in turn lead to tranquility of the physical body itself); *cittapassaddhi* (tranquility of consciousness). All these 7 pairs are states of mind and body that correspond to some “cooling down”. When one is doing a *kusala kamma*, the body and mind both relax and “cool down”. This is the first glimpse of *Nibbāna* as one is already in the mundane eightfold path.

- This is why the Buddha said that the state of the mind does affect the state of the body. When one starts on the *lokottara* eightfold path, these *cetasika* all get stronger, one starts feeling the “*nirāmisa sukha*”, and thus one becomes motivated to follow the Path.
- But it is important to emphasize (as I have stated many times), things COULD get worse before getting better. **When one is depriving the mind of things that it has gotten used to, it does not like that.** Until it clearly sees the benefits of staying in the Path, it may try to pull one strongly in the “wrong direction”. One needs to be persistent, and this is where the *satara iddhipada* (*chanda*, *citta*, *virīya*, *vimansa*) need to be cultivated aggressively.

8. **It is important to realize that the 19 universal moral *cetasika* can arise in ANYONE regardless of one’s religion or any other “label”.** When doing a good deed (or speech or thought), these moral

cetasika ALWAYS arise. They can arise when one is on the mundane eightfold Path (nothing to do with a religion *per se*); see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.

- Also note that *hiri* (shame of immoral deeds) and *ottappa* (fear of the consequences of immoral deeds) are the two that are opposed to the immoral ones of *ahiri* and *anattappa*. This means regardless of the religion, one has been able to sort out right from wrong (moral from immoral) in that instance.
- Then there is *saddhā* (faith) and *sati* (mindfulness), both of which grow even more after embarking on the Path. Here, *saddhā* is not the faith in Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, but the faith that such a moral act will bring about good outcomes.
- And *sati* is NOT *Sammā Sati*, but just the mindfulness of being involved in a moral act. However, once one gets on the *lokottara* eightfold Path, it can become ***Sammā Sati***.
- The other two familiar ones are *alōbha* and *adōsa cetasika*; they are of course opposite to the immoral ones of *lobha* and *dōsa*. *Alobha* is not mere absence of *lobha*, but also embodies generosity. *Adosa* is not mere absence of *dōsa*, but embodies compassion.
- Then there is *tatramajjhata* (neutrality of mind; “*majjhata*” means “in the middle”). This is not *upekkha*, which is one of the *saptha bojjanga*; see, “[37 Factors of Enlightenment](#)”.
- Thus far, we have discussed the 19 universal moral *cetasika* in #7 and #8. Now let us discuss the 6 moral *cetasika* that arise only with some *kusala citta*.

9. It is easier to list those 6 moral *cetasika* that do not necessarily arise with each *kusala citta*. **These are the ones that NEED TO BE CULTIVATED with true comprehension of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.**

- They are: ***Sammā Vaca*** (speech that is conducive to eliminate “*san*”), ***Sammā Kammanta*** (actions that are conducive to eliminate “*san*”), ***Sammā Ajiva*** (life style that is conducive to eliminate “*san*”), ***karuna*** (“*Ariya*” compassion), ***mudita*** (“*Ariya*” appreciative joy), and ***paññā*** (wisdom) which is the same as ***Sammā Dīṭṭhi***.
- Of course those are developed to some extent when someone lives one’s life morally, but they will NEVER grow to higher stages until one understands *anicca, dukkha, anatta* at least to some extent.
- This is why *sammā vaca* is not just “good speech” or *sammā kammanta* is not just “good deeds”. *Sammā* (“*san*” + “*ma*”) means “with the intention of removing “*san*”, i.e., done with an understanding of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*; see, “[Why is Correct Interpretation of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta so Important?](#)”.

10. However, *amōha* does not mean wisdom (*paññā*)! *Amoha* is not a *cetasika*, but is a root cause. It is in all *kusala citta* in the sense that the immoral *cetasika* of *mōha* is not present at that moment, i.e., the mind is not “covered”.

- Some people interpret *amōha* to be *paññā*; not so. *Paññā* (wisdom) or *lokottara Sammā Dīṭṭhi* needs to be cultivated via comprehending *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, and starts when one is on the *Sotāpanna magga*; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)” and “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma](#)”.
- The more *paññā* one has, it is more likely that one would be generating *amōha* thoughts more frequently!
- No matter how intelligent one is, one cannot start cultivating *paññā* until one hears about the correct interpretations of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

11. Now let us briefly revisit the 6 **particulars (also called occasionals)** or *pakinnaka* that we mentioned in #2 above. They are: *vitakka* (focused application), *vicara* (sustained application); *adhimokkha* (dominate), *viriya* (effort), *pīti* (joy); *chanda* (desire).

- As we can readily see, these six can be in *kusala* or *akusala citta* and make them stronger.
- This is why it is said that “*dhammo ha vé rakkati dhammacari*” or “dhamma will guide one in the direction of dhamma that one follows”, applies to both moral AND immoral paths.

- *Vitakka* (focused application of thoughts), when cultivated in the *lokottara* Path, can become **sammā sankappa**. Similarly, *virīya* (effort) can become **sammā vayama**.

12. Therefore, *abhidhamma* helps us understand the connection between *cetasika* and *gathi*, and how “bad *gathi*” are removed at each stage of *Nibbāna* (see #4 above). We can also see from the above discussion how 8 of the *cetasika* (related to “good *gathi*”) turn to components of the Noble Eightfold Path when one starts on the *Sotāpanna magga*. Actually, we discussed only 7 above (they are highlighted in bold red). The eighth one is the universal *cetasika*, *ekaggata* (one-pointedness) that can become **sammā samādhi**.

- However, depending on one’s behavior and understanding, all these eight could be developed in the direction of the immoral (*micca* eightfold path), mundane moral (*lokiya* eightfold path), or the *lokottara* Noble eightfold Path; see, “[Three Kinds of Ditthi, Eightfold Paths, and Samādhi](#)”.
- Looking from different perspectives there could be many types of *samādhi*. For a discussion on three other types of *samādhi*, see, “[What is Samādhi? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness](#)”.

13. This world is very complex. And the Buddha has analyzed it in many different ways. But they are all self-consistent. If one can get some traction, there is no other pleasure better than the pleasure of finding out about this world, pleasure of Dhamma.

- It is said that, “*sabba rathin Dhamma rathin jinathī*”. Here “*rathī*” means “taste”, thus “from all tastes in the world, taste of Dhamma wins”. The “taste of Dhamma” optimizes for an *Anāgāmī*.
- However, when one attains the *Arahanthood*, it is said that one has lost all interest in all worldly things, including that of Dhamma. That is why the Buddha said, “A boat should be used just until one crosses a river; one should not carry it after crossing the river. Just like that even my Dhamma needs to be used only to find the true nature of this world, and then it should be discarded too”.
- When one reaches the *Anāgāmī* stage, one would have lost all cravings for worldly pleasures (in *kāma loka*), but one really likes to learn Dhamma at every opportunity. And there is no end to it. This is why the Buddha gave the above advice, especially for the *Anāgāmīs*.

12.3.5 Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power

1. The power of the human mind has been discussed in several posts starting with “[Power of the Human Mind – Introduction](#)”. There different kinds of *citta* and the powerful ones are called *javana citta* (“*javana*” means an arrow in flight; it can be highly potent).

- Such *javana citta* are responsible for *abhisankhāra*: *sankhāra* that are potent and will lead to (good or bad) consequences. *Punnabhisankhara* are the meritorious *abhisankhāra* that will lead to good consequences and *apunnabhisankhara* are the immoral *abhisankhāra* that lead to bad consequences.
- *Javana citta* arise in both *pancadvara citta vithi* and *manodvara citta vithi* when the object is very clear and strong; see, “[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)”.

2. Out of the 54 types of *citta* in the *kāma loka* (the 11 lower realms including the human realm), 29 are *javana citta*: 12 *akusala citta*, 8 *mahā kusala citta*, 8 *mahā kiriya citta*, and the functional smile-producing *citta* (the latter 9 *cittas* only for an *Arahant*).

- A *kusala citta* generates power for rebirth in human or above realms, AND also helps with progressing towards *Nibbāna* or “cooling down”.
- When one does an *akusala citta*, one is generating power to form *kammic* energy for rebirth in the *apāyās* (lowest 4 realms).
- Thus for normal human beings, there are only 20 *cittas* out of 54 that are *javana citta*: 12 for doing bad deeds and 8 for good deeds (here deeds means thought, speech or bodily action).

- To re-emphasize, *vipāka citta vithi* do not have *javana citta*. Thus in the detection of any sense input (seeing, hearing, etc), *javana citta* are absent; they are called *prittarammana* (slight) and *atiparittarammana* (very slight) *citta vithi*. However, based on these *vipāka citta vithi*, we MAY instantly initiate potent *atimahattarammana* (very great) and *mahattarammana* (great) *citta vithi* that will have *javana citta* in them.
- Thus if we start making plans (buy that picture, re-listen to that song, etc) based on those visuals, sounds, etc, then those subsequent *citta vithi* will have *javana citta* in them, and lead to *abhisankhāra* (GENERATE *kammic* power).

3. Not all ***akusala javana citta*** have same power. Also see, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)” and “[12. Key Factors to be Considered when “Meditating” for the Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.

- Out of the 8 greed-rooted *citta*, those 4 done with pleasure (*somanassa-sahagata*) are stronger than the done with neutral feeling.
- Next those associated with *micca diṭṭhi* (or *diṭṭhi-sahagata*) are more powerful than the 4 generated without wrong vision (or *diṭṭhi-vippayutta*).
- Finally, those greed-rooted *citta* are sorted according to whether they arose spontaneously (sometimes erroneously labelled as *asankharika*) or with the intention of receiving something in return, i.e., *sasankharika*.
- The two hate-rooted *akusala citta* are always done with displeasure and are associated with aversion (dislike), and the one that is spontaneous (unprompted) is stronger than the prompted.
- The two ignorance-rooted *akusala citta* are always done with neutral feeling and the one that is based on *vicikicca* is stronger than the based on *uddhacca*.

4. The above list gives order of strength of the *akusala citta* and they are listed in that order in “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)”.

- Thus the first *lōbha citta* that is “connected with wrong view, accompanied by pleasure” or in Pāli, “*somanassa-sahagata, diṭṭhi-sampayutta citta*” is the strongest *akusala javana citta*.
- The last of the 12 *akusala citta* is “one accompanied by equanimity and associated with high-mindedness” or in Pāli, “*upekkha-sahagata uddhacca-sampayutta citta*”.

5. The power of the human mind can be directed both ways: for the good or the bad. Now let us see how the 8 *mahā kusala* (wholesome) *citta* are sorted according to the *javana* power.

- Here again, there are 4 done with joyous heart (*somanassa-sahagata*) that take precedence over those done with neutral feeling.
- Next, those done with knowledge (understanding of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*) called “*ñāṇa-sampayutta*” have higher power compared to those done without knowledge (*ñāṇa-vippayutta*).
- Finally, they are sorted by whether spontaneous (higher) compared to prompted.

6. Thus the most potent *kusala citta* is “one accompanied by joy, associated with knowledge” or in Pāli, “*somanassa-sahagata, ñāṇa-sampayutta citta*”.

Here one does a good deed with full understanding of its benefits, and thus with a joyous heart, and without any prompting. It is done spontaneously and joyfully, BECAUSE one is fully aware of its benefit. Since it is spontaneous the knowledge must be there in one’s mind.

- The weakest *kusala citta* is, “one accompanied by neutral mind, dissociated with knowledge, and for one’s advantage” or in Pāli, “*upekkha-sahagata, ñāṇa-vippayutta, sasankharika citta*”. Here one may do a good deed without knowledge either on the prompting by others or after some deliberation. Such deeds will bring benefits, but since the *javana* power is reduced, the benefits are less.

7. Let us take some examples for clarification.

- Some people are so deep in the wrong path, that they actually enjoy committing bad deeds. Or, they get into a mindset where such deeds become enjoyable. We have heard of instances where

a person was killed by multiple stabbings or even where the body was mutilated; such an act is worst of the worst.

- It should be easy to imagine why the *javana* for *citta* associated with such “passionate” killings are very intense. The killer is absorbed in that act, and is generating potent mental power to carry out the physical act; by the way any physical act is done with *citta*; see, “[Neuroscience says there is no Free Will? – That is a Misinterpretation](#)”.
- This is also why a *kamma* becomes a “*kamma patha*” or a “strong *kamma*” when a bodily act is committed; one needs strong *javana* to carry out that task. If one is aware of the consequences of such acts (i.e., do not have *micca diṭṭhi* or wrong vision), then even if one started stabbing, it is likely that one may catch oneself and stop.

8. On the other hand, even the smallest act of kindness can bring much benefits if it was done with full understanding and a joyous heart. Here the “mental power” or the *javana* comes from knowledge or understanding. We see these kinds of ‘small acts of kindness’ all the time, and we can even share in those merits when our hearts become joyful too.

- For a well-off person, it is easy to write a check for a lot of money, but if it was done just to get publicity, or due to “outside pressure”, it will not bring much benefit. If someone who is poor sees another person that is in even worse condition, and shares what he/she can with that person with joy, that will bring much more benefit.

9. The *javana* power of a mind is also described by the term “*sanvega*” (*san* + *vega*, where “*vega*” means fast; see, “[What is “San”? – Meaning of Samsāra](#)” for the meaning of “*san*”). Therefore, “*sanvega*” (sometimes called “*samvega*”) depicts a potent emotional condition. If it is to the “good” one will be doing *punnabhi abhisankhāra* (meritorious acts), and a bad act done with “*sanvega*” will be a potent *apunnabhi abhisankhāra* (immoral acts).

- In the literature “*sanvega*” is commonly written as “*samvega*”; as with many other such words, replacing “*san*” with “*sa*” leads to distortion of the meaning of the word. Other such misspelled words are *samsāra*, *samvedana*, *samyoga*, *samvara*; see, “[What is “San”? – Meaning of Samsāra](#)”.
- However, some word like “*sammā*” (“*sa*” + “*ma*”) are correct, because that is phonetically correct.
- In Sinhala language, “*sanvega*” is commonly used to describe emotionally intense situations but mostly for sad situations. However, we can see that it should be applicable for all “potent” emotional situations.

10. The mind and the heart are in close contact. Even that person who derived pleasure by stabbing someone many times, will have a heavy heart until death, no matter how bad a person he/she is. It is in the human nature. Of course, when we do a meritorious act too, we feel the joy in our hearts.

- The reason that we “feel” at the heart is because the *citta* are generated in association with the “*hadaya vatthu*” that is located close to the physical heart. The *hadaya vatthu* is actually in the *manomaya kaya* which is like a “ghost” that is hugging the physical body; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)” and “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)”.

11. Getting back to the issue of mental power, it is clear that it makes a big difference on “how much engaged we are” in our thoughts. Potency of a good or a bad *citta* is critically dependent on our desire to get it done. Three out of four bases of mental power, *chanda*, *citta*, *virīya*, originate due to this; see, “[The Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#)”.

- And the fourth factor of *vimansa* (reasoning/investigation) is important because that is how one gains the all-important *ñāṇa* (wisdom); see #5,#6 above. When one truly comprehends *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, that leads to the cultivation/growing of the *paññā cetasika* reducing ignorance (*avijjā*).

12. Another thing that comes out of this analysis is that it is good to contemplate on the past good deeds and “re-live” that experience to gain *citta pasāda* or a joyful mind.

- Similarly, it is NOT good to do that for past bad deeds; better to forget them and get a new start. If something like that comes to the mind, think of an opposite good deed and focus the mind on the good deed.
- This is part of “*Ānāpāna*“. We need to keep and cultivate “good things” and “discard” bad things; see, “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)“.
- Our thoughts are what ultimately matter, and they arise due to our character (*gathi*); the more we do “*Ānāpāna*” correctly, the more our “*gathi*” will change for the better.

13. Finally, These *javana citta* have the power to produce *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], the fundamental building blocks of *rūpa*; see, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhaṭṭhaka\]](#)“.

Next, “[Cutī-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)“,

12.4 Gandhabba (Manomaya Kaya)

[Gandhabbay \(Manomaya Kaya\) – Introduction](#)

[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#)

[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)

[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)

[Manomaya Kaya \(Gandhabba\) and the Physical Body](#)

[Brain – Interface between Mind and Body](#)

[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)

[Cuti-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)

These posts complement some of the posts in the “[Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#)” section, which is important for the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. All these are pieces of a complex puzzle, but they are all inter-consistent. So, don’t worry if you do not understand it all; with time it will all make sense and will lead to unbreakable faith in Buddha Dhamma even through future lives. Faith comes via true understanding.

12.4.1 Gandhabba (Manomaya Kaya) – Introduction

Revised April 22, 2016

1. In most realms, beings are born full formed (*opapathika* births). But in the human and animal realms, first the blueprint of that life form arises at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment (as a *manomaya kaya* or a *gandhabba*), and once inside a womb the physical body starts growing.

- Once born a *gandhabba*, It can possibly make many new physical bodies in a given *bhava*. For example, a “human *bhava*” may last many hundreds of years. But a human lives only about 80 years, so that “human *gandhabba*” can make many “human bodies” during the existence as a human; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.
- This is why in some cases of rebirth stories, there are resemblances of both mental and physical characteristics between the two lives.

2. Let us take the example of a being that was born many times as a cow making a transition to a human *bhava* at the end of the “cow *bhava*” (which is a very rare event).

- As explained in the post, “[Cuti-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”, the transition from a cow to a human occurs in the last *citta vithi* of the “cow life”. At the end of that *citta vithi*, a *gandhabba* in the form of a human comes out of the dead body of the cow; this is also called the *gandhabba* state. This *gandhabba* has a very fine body that cannot be seen, but it is a “blueprint” of the human body, except for the “gross physical features” that will be partially determined by the parents of the new life.
- This *gandhabba* now awaits a suitable womb to be available. Of course the *gandhabba* cannot decide on a womb; rather, when a suitable womb becomes available (i.e., matching the “*gathi*” of the *gandhabba*), then it will be pulled into the womb by the kammic energy.
- When a sperm fertilizes an egg in a womb, a single cell called a zygote results. But there is no life there until the *gandhabba* enters the womb and is incorporated with that zygote. Now the zygote becomes an embryo, then a fetus, and once out of the womb grows to a full-size human according to that blueprint in the *gandhabba*.
- More details can be found at, see, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”.

3. At the cow-human transition in the last *citta vithi* of the cow life, some very important changes occur in that lifestream. The concept of a lifestream, which is really a very basic introduction, is discussed at, “[What Reincarnates? -Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.

- Of course the biggest change is that now the lifeform has a mind that is at the human level, not at the animal level; the baseline “consciousness level” has shifted. This is expressed in several ways in the *manomaya kaya* or the *gandhabba*.
- At the *cuti-patisandhi* transition, the *kammic* energy creates three very fine *rūpa* called *vatthu dasaka*, *kāya dasaka*, and *bhava dasaka*. **We will discuss these in detail later, but they basically correspond, respectively, to the mind door (or the mind), the blueprint for the human body, and dominant features including male or female character** (it is not just the sex type, since *rupi brahmas* also have *bhava dasaka*, but are gender-neutral).
- As the physical body grows, first inside the womb and then outside the womb, the fine body of the *manomaya kaya* expands with it when the physical body grows from the single cell. Thus overlapping the physical body that we see, there is a very fine body (*manomaya kaya*) of the *gandhabba*. *Gandhabba* means the same as the *manomaya kaya*.
- Therefore, the *gandhabba* is really like a “driver” driving or navigating the physical body; see, [“Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?”](#).

4. The fine body of the *gandhabba* or the *manomaya kaya* basically has all key components as the physical body, but in the form of very fine matter at the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*] level. The five physical sensory inputs of the *gandhabba*, together with the *hadaya vatthu* (mind door), are physically located close to the heart of the physical body; they are not inside the heart, but are sort of overlapping the heart.

This is why the *gandhabba* sometimes comes out of the physical body in traumatic situations like during heart operations; many such “out-of-body experiences” (OBE) have been reported; see, [“Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)”](#).

- The main thing to remember is that *hadaya vatthu* is the mind door, and it is surrounded by the five *pasada rūpa* (*cakkhu*, *sota*, *jivha*, *gandha*, and *kaya*) which correspond respectively to the five physical senses of eye, ear, tongue, nose, and touch.
- The Thus all six sense actions actually take place away from what modern science believe they take place. Physical eye, ear, nose, tongue are of course in the head (those are the physical sensors), and the sense of touch is sensed physically via the nervous system. There is also a “*mana indriya*” located inside the brain, where the mind inputs (*dhamma*) come in. Just like our vision process starts at the eyes, our “external thought inputs” come through the “*mana indriya*” in the brain; see, [“What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!”](#) and [“What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis”](#).

5. The physical body is really a “shell” that is controlled by the mind (*hadaya vatthu*). The physical body is there to be subjected to the *kamma vipāka*; this is especially true for animals, because they do not have much control what happens to them.

- We humans, with the advanced mind, have the ability to avoid bad *kamma vipāka* and steer our lives in the direction we want to. We will get into those details later, but let us see how the *gandhabba* (or the mind associated with the *hadaya vatthu*) uses the physical body to experience the outside world and also to control the body movements.

6. The world is experienced through the physical body, and this basic interaction is slow compared to the fast pace of the *citta*. The sensory data are collected by the five physical senses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and the body. Then they are transmitted to the brain via the central nervous system, which takes times of millisecond scale.

- At the brain, data for a certain time interval (possibly around 10 milliseconds; see, [“Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāna \(Consciousness\) Arises”](#)) are processed and then converted to a format suitable for transmission to the five *pasada rūpa* and the *hadaya vatthu*, via a fast “ray system” (called “*kirana*” in Pāli or Sinhala).
- Individual “packets of information” from each of the five senses are then transmitted to the corresponding *pasada rūpa* and the *hadaya vatthu* are located on the *manomaya kaya*, which overlaps the physical body; information from the *mana indriya* are sent to the *hadaya vatthu*.

7. For example, let us consider a “packet of data” sent from the physical eye to the brain. This information is processed by the brain, converted to a “ray system” and is transmitted to the *cakkhu pasada*. Now the *cakkhu pasada* vibrates and hits the *hadaya vatthu* that is located close to it (*hadaya vatthu* is surrounded by the five *pasada rūpa*); this causes the *hadaya vatthu* to vibrate 17 times, much like a gong hit by an iron rod vibrating for a certain fixed number of times.

- The 17 vibrations of the *hadaya vatthu* correspond to the 17 *citta* in a *citta vithi*. Such a *citta vithi* is called a *pancadvaravajjana citta vithi* because it is initiated by one of the five physical senses or *pancadvara* (“*panca*” or five + “*dvara*” or “door”).
- Imagine a blade clamped at one edge and is hit by an object on the other edge; it vibrates for a certain FIXED number of times per second; that number is called frequency of vibration and is fixed for a given material. And one can see the blade vibrating. Pretty much the same thing happens when the *hadaya vatthu* vibrates when hit by one of the *pasada rūpa*, and this “vibration” is called a *hadaya rūpa*, which thus has a lifetime of 17 *citta*. Thus the *hadaya rūpa* is not a physical *rūpa* but basically is a mode of vibration.
- The misconception that any *rūpa* has a lifetime of 17 thought moments arose because of not understanding that it is the *hadaya rūpa* that has a lifetime of 17 thought moments.
- In other words, this information packet is received and processed by the *hadaya vatthu* within those 17 *citta*. The information is fully received by the fourth *citta* (vibration) and then the rest of the *citta* in that *citta vithi* deal with this information. This “information processing” by the *hadaya vatthu* will not be completed until three more *citta vithi* run by the *hadaya vatthu* itself. Such *citta vithi* initiated by the mind itself is called a *manodvara citta vithi*, where *manodvara* means the “mind door”.
- Information packets from the *mana indriya* are sent directly to the *hadaya vatthu*.

8. Thus we can see that there is a **huge difference** in time between the physical body acquiring senses data (time of the order of 10 milliseconds) and the mind processing that information within a billionth of a second using one *pancadvaravajjana citta vithi* and three *manodvara citta vithi*.

- Even if the five senses keep sending data continuously, the mind is “just sitting there” most of the time. Let us examine this in a bit detail: Suppose the brain keep sending data from the eye non-stop; since each “packet” takes, say 10 milliseconds, then in a second there will be 100 “data packets” of vision coming in. If the brain is going at full speed, it can send at most 500 (=100×5) “data packets” from all 5 physical senses in a second. Then the mind will be spending less than a millionth of a second in processing all that data, since it takes less than a billionth of a second to process one “data packet” (from previous bullet).
- During those gaps, the *hadaya vatthu* also interacts (both ways) with the *mana indriya*. **In particular, it gives instructions to the *mana indriya* on how to control the physical body in response to the sense inputs.**
- Thus most of the time the mind is just sitting there, and this is called the “*bhavanga*” state of the mind. In this state, the mind is actually taking the object that came to the mind at the *patisandhi* (rebirth) moment in that last *citta vithi* of the last life. *Bhavanga* (“*bhava*” + “*anga*” or associated) denotes that this state of the mind is characteristic of this new life, in the present case as a human. Just like the eye cannot see itself, **the mind cannot see this “*bhavanga*”**, it is the present mind itself.

9. In the example that we started with, the “cow mind” has now switched over to a “human mind”, and that has the object taken at the *patisandhi* moment. This could be remembering a past *kamma* that led to this human life (for example, the new life may have started off with the image of a good deed done in a past life that came to the new mind at the *patisandhi* moment). But we do not become aware of what is in the *bhavanga*.

- You may remember that there are times when one just stares blankly “out into the space”, and if someone asked “what were you thinking about?”, we would be hard-pressed to recall anything that we were thinking about. Here the mind was mostly in the *bhavanga* state; we are aware that we were alive, but did not have “actual thoughts” going through the mind.

- In reality, even when we think we are fully engaged, the mind is mostly in the *bhavanga* state. As we discussed in a previous bullet, even if all five physical senses keep sending data about the outside world non-stop, the mind takes less than a millionth of a second to process those data coming in within a second!

10. However, the sixth sense or the mind (*hadaya vatthu*) itself is also initiating *citta vithi* either to process information from the five physical senses, or to “think about those senses inputs”. **Furthermore, it also initiates *citta vithi* to get the physical body to speak and to do any kind of work;** this information is relayed to the *mana indriya*, which in turn works with the brain to carry out those instructions.

- For example, if the mind gets interested in a sound that the ear sent, it may direct the body to walk towards the source of that sound. To do this, it sends the instructions to the *mana indriya* in the brain via the same “ray system” almost instantaneously. The *mana indriya* then decodes that information — and working with other parts of the brain — sends instructions to the muscles in the legs (via the nervous system) to move. These bodily movements take time, because the mechanical motions are comparatively slow.
- Speech is done in the same way: The mind sends the information to the brain and the brain gets the vocal chords to move to produce the sounds. Here is a short video showing how the muscle movements give rise to sounds:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Inside the Voice](#)

11. Thus we can see that the brain is just a very fancy computer, carrying out the instructions given by the mind.

- Now the questions arises, “Why is nature going through all this trouble to give us a physical body that is sort of cumbersome and slow?”. The main answer is that this is to impart *kamma vipāka*.
- For example, a *deva* has a fine body that is not subject to aches and diseases as for humans; that was acquired by a good *kamma vipāka*. On the other hand, there are some *petas* (hungry ghosts) who have large bodies, but a very small mouth to impart suffering from hunger.
- In the human realm, our individual bodies are “pre-designed” by *kamma vipāka* is impart varying degrees of suffering, and that is why some people are relatively healthy, while some have health problems. There are of course ways to reduce or even get rid of such problems by making suitable conditions (eating well, exercise, etc) for other good *kamma vipāka* to materialize.
- We do not realize the constant stresses that we are subjected to (both physical and mental), until we begin to experience at least some kind of *niramisa sukha* achieved by “liberating the mind from the cumbersome body with its aches and pains”. When one gets to *jhāna*, this is further enhanced, and at higher *jhāna* one sees quite significant relief from “dissociating from the body”. And one makes big jump in attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage, and of course the full release at the *Arahant* stage of *Nibbāna*.

It is possible that I may not have clearly explained some concepts. If you send me a comment referring to the corresponding item number, I can try to clarify it. Also, when you read other posts in this section, things will become more clear. This basic description is critical if one is really serious about learning *Abhidhamma*.

Next, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)“,

12.4.2 Does any Object (Rupa) Last only 17 Thought Moments?

Revised October 29, 2015; updated April 5, 2016

1. In August/September 2015, I watched a popular *Abhidhamma* program (in Sinhala) from Sri Lanka on the Youtube. It was very good in many aspects, but it had two fundamental problems:

- First, the incorrect interpretation of *anicca* and *anatta* as “impermanence” and “no-self”. I have many posts on this site explaining why those two interpretations are critically flawed.
- The second main problem that I noticed was the repeated statement that, “Anything in this world lasts only a brief moment. Any object is formed and destroyed within a short time of the order of a thought moment. Then it is re-formed and the process continues ceaselessly. What you see now is not the same thing that was there a thought moment before”.
- This “creation/destruction” process that is supposed to happen in 17 thought-moments was tied to the concept of “impermanence” mentioned above.

Here is a direct quote from another source, which is a popular book on *Abhidhamma*: “**..a rūpa is very short lived – it endures only for 17 conscious moments. What is formed is almost instantly gone**”. Thus it is a widespread misconception.

2. Since I have explained in other posts what the correct interpretations of *anicca* and *anatta*, let us focus on the second point, the claim that “any object lives only for 17 thought moments” in this post.

- Basically, a *sankata* arises due to causes and is destroyed when those causes are depleted. It is a bit more complex, and is discussed in the section, “[Udayavaya Nāna](#)”.
- The arising of a *sankata* can be described with *paticca samuppāda*; that is the “*udaya*” or “arise” part. Once formed, different *sankata* will have different lifetimes, and eventually decay; that is “*vaya*”.
- *Udayavaya* describes the formation and destruction of a *sankata* (“*udaya*” means to arise, and “*vaya*” means destruction). But a *sankata* could last for long times.

3. It seems to me that this misinterpretation comes from taking the lifetime of a “*rūpa*” to be 17 thought moments. But as we discussed in “[Manomaya Kaya – Introduction](#)”, that is the lifetime of a *hadaya rūpa*.

4. Different *sankata* have different lifetimes. A fly may live for a few days, a human about 100 years, a building may last hundreds of years, the Earth will last about 4-5 billion more years, etc.

- An inert object, like a building, will start slowly decaying from the moment it is built. If a building lasts 1000 years, then each day, it will “decay” by a little bit, though the decay can be expected to accelerate towards the end.
- From the present time to the final destruction (or until death in the case of a living being), any given *sankata* will change. If we consider a baby born today, it will first grow to become a young person; then it will gradually start weakening while getting to be an old person and eventually die one day. Therefore, the key aspect is not destruction, but change. While the baby is growing, the cells in the body will multiply; but in an old person’s body, more cells will be dying.

5. This constant change is not discernible to us on a real time basis. A person does not age while we are watching him/her. But we can see the change over several years, especially if they are very young or over the middle age.

- Mayflies have a lifetime of the order of a day (after the larva stage), and some live only several hours; here is a short video by the National Geographic channel:

[WebLink: NATGEOTV: 24-Hour Lifecycle](#)

- **Thus there is a HUGE difference in saying that a given object CHANGES moment-to-moment versus saying that the object is “RECREATED” every 17 thought moments.** During the presentation I mentioned at the beginning, the presenter was showing a pen and said that the pen is “destroyed and recreated” EVERY 17 thought moments! By extending that logic one could say that any entity (say, the Earth) is vanished and “recreated” within 17 thought moments! A complete misunderstanding of the *udayavaya* process of a *sankata*.

6. So, where does this incorrect statement, “**.. rūpa is very short lived – it endures only for 17 conscious moments. What is formed is almost instantly gone**” come from?

- The confusion arises when one does not understand the concept of a *hadaya rūpa*. A *hadaya rūpa* is generated in the *hadaya vatthu* by a sense event through one of the five physical senses. **The lifetime of a *hadaya rūpa* is basically the time taken to experience that external sense event, i.e., 17 thought moments** (during which an impression of the external *rūpa* is made in the mind by a *citta vithi*). **It is wrong to take this time to be the lifetime of the *rūpa* that was sensed; see, “[Manomaya Kaya – Introduction](#)”.**
- Here what is described is how we EXPERIENCE a given *rūpa* or an object. We experience the outside physical things in our world through our five physical senses. We see with eyes, hear with ears, smell with the nose, taste with the tongue, and touch with our body.
- However, our minds only catch a very brief (a thought-moment’s worth) of the seeing, hearing, etc experience at a time. It is not that the object lives a short time, it is just that we sense it only for a brief moment at a time! Let us discuss this in detail.

7. Each of these five sense events is accomplished via a thought, even though we may not perceive it that way. This is described in detail in “[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāna \(Consciousness\) Arises](#)”. **I highly recommend reading that post before proceeding further.**

- When we see an object, our eyes send the image of the object to the brain via the neurons that connect the eyes to the image processing part of the brain. Each image is of the order of 10 milliseconds (Buddha Dhamma does not provide these times; I am using the time period that scientists have discovered).
- *But the brain does not feel anything*; it is the mind that feels sensations.
- The brain processes that information and transmits it to the location of the mind (called *hadaya vatthu*) which overlaps the heart, **but not in the heart**. Now, it takes the mind 17 thought moments (or 17 *citta*) to process that information and identify the object and make decisions about it; this series of *citta* is called a “*citta vithi*”. So, each “snapshot” is processed by a *citta vithi* containing 17 *citta*.

8. By the way, there are many things that happens during that *citta vithi*: the mind recognizes the object, forms a like/dislike about it, decides to what to do, and lastly may do something about it. That is why there are 17 *cittas* in the series. Towards the end of the *citta vithi*, there are seven *javana cittas* that carry out the actions or speech about the object based on the decisions made earlier part of the *citta vithi*. This is a very brief statement of what happens in that *citta vithi*.

- In fact, each *pancadvara citta vithi* is followed by three more *manodvara citta vithi* that make such decisions. Of course, it happens so fast that we are not aware of these details. Only a Buddha can see such fast processes.
- When we are having a conversation with someone, we can see her and hear what she says “at the same time”. But it only appears that we are seeing and hearing at the same time. The sights and sounds are received and processed by the brain in packets (of about 10 ms or so each) as we discussed above. But the mind processes each packet in less than millionth of a second in a *citta vithi*!
- If we are eating popcorn while watching TV, that taste also come in packets: the tongue sends about 10 ms worth of “taste information” to the brain and brain processes that information and transmits to the mind. The same thing happens with sounds and body touches. As such “information packets” continuously come in we PERCEIVE that we are continuously experiencing such sensations. Only one packet is processed at a time, so there is at least a 10 ms delay between adjacent packets.

9. Therefore, we can be using all five senses at the same time, and all that information is processed in “10 ms packets”. Since there are 1000 ms in a second, we can say that maximum of about 100 such “information packets” are received by the mind each second.

- However, that is fast enough for us to PERCEIVE that we are experiencing all these sense inputs continuously. Now, the only part I borrowed from science is the estimated 10 ms duration for each information packet. These studies have been published only recently, and science of course is not aware of the role of the mind; as far as science is concerned brain does

everything, and brain is the mind. However, I believe that in the near future, scientists will have to change that theory.

10. In any case, what happens in the mind is analogous to what happens when we watch a movie. We perceive that we are watching a continuous movie. But in reality what happens is that the movie projector projects static pictures to the screen at a rate of about 30-60 frames a second. Here again each static picture is of 20-30 ms duration. But it is fast enough for us to perceive that we are watching a continuous movie.

- In the same way, our minds **perceive** that we are watching, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching all at the same time. But each sensory event is brief lived. Even though each “information packet” sent by the brain is from a 10 ms “time slice”, the mind processes that information in a *citta vithi* that lasts only 17 cittas, and each citta lasts much less than a billionth of a second. **Thus each “snapshot” processed by the mind takes an unimaginably short time.**

11. Now if one thinks carefully, it is apparent that the mind just sits there most the time waiting for input signals from the brain. In a given second, there are only about 100 such “data packets” coming to the mind as we discussed above, and then the mind spends only 100 *citta vithi* for processing that information, *which takes less than a millionth of a second for the mind!*

- The rest of the time, mind is at what is called the “*bhavanga* state”. Thus the mind is mostly in the “*bhavanga* state”.
- **We can see that the mind is engaged in “experiencing the world” for very short times at a time.** Each perception event lasts only 17 thought moments, an unimaginably short time; see, [**“Manomaya Kava – Introduction”**](#).

12. So, how does the mind keeps the continuity of perceiving continuously, i.e., take into account what happened in the past? It is done by several mental factors (*cetasika*) in each *citta*. In particular, the *manasikara cetasika* brings old memories, *saññā cetasika* recognizes, etc.

- Therefore, we can see that our experience of outside objects is really very, very brief. A snapshot of a picture, sound, etc comes to the mind and is gone in a very brief time. The perception of solid picture, sound, taste, etc is put together by the mind with the help of a set of *cetasika*, especially seven *cetasika* that are in any *citta*.

13. Now it should be clear where the misconception in the statement, “.. *rūpa* is very short lived – it endures only for 17 conscious moments. What is formed is almost instantly gone” comes from.

- It is not that any *rūpa* (or the object) is short-lived. It is just that the duration of experiencing that object is very short. We think we are seeing, hearing, tasting, etc all the time; but we are not. Just like we are only watching a series of static pictures while watching a movie, our mind is only experiencing a series of “snapshots”.
- The “*ghana saññā*” or the “perception of solid and continuous experience” is an illusion created by the mind. This is an important point. If it is not clear, re-read the above.
- You are always welcome to point out inaccuracies or unclear instances. My goal is not to just post essays but to make sure the content is understood. To comprehend Buddha Dhamma requires a lot of thought.

14. Therefore, objects around us do not necessarily change fast and definitely not that fast. **It is just that our experience of seeing it lasts less than a millionth of a second at a time; if we look at an object for a minute or 60 seconds, the mind sees it in about 600 static frames (per #9 above).** Out of those 60 seconds, the mind “sees” the object for less than a millionth of a second in total, but spread over the 60 seconds in “snapshots”; an unbelievably small time.

- For example, a gold bar is virtually unchanged during 17 thought moments. A gold bar lasts millions of years, so the change in the gold bar in a thought moment is insignificantly small. **Even in a mayfly that lasts only a day, the change within 17 cittas is unmeasurably small.** Thus the statement, “.. *rūpa* is very short lived – it endures only for 17 conscious moments. What is formed is almost instantly gone” is **WRONG**.

- It is the “sensing event” or the *hadaya rūpa* that lasts 17 thought moments; see, “[Manomaya Kaya – Introduction](#)”.

15. Buddha Dhamma (i.e., the world) is complex enough; we need to be careful to not to make it anymore complex than necessary. Trying to imagine a person disappearing in a thought moment and reforming back into full form is unrealistic. Trying to imagine the same for the Earth is mind boggling, not to mention all those stars, galaxies, out there. Luckily that is not what really happens.

- That is not what was described by the Buddha when he said, “*ditté ditta mantan bhavissati*”, which can be translated as, “what is seen is only a trace”. *Mantan* is “*mātra*” in Sinhala or Sanskrit or a “trace of something”.

16. Even though we think we see a person all the time while we are looking at him, we really see only several “snapshots” of him.

- What about hearing? We normally speak 100 to 160 words per minute, which means we listen at the same rates. Thus we hear about two words per second. A word normally has less than 10 letters, and thus each letter is comprehended in about 50 ms. Therefore, our rough estimate seems to hold. We indeed hear only one letter at a time, but we think we hear whole words or phrases.

17. Other sense inputs work the same way: The Buddha also said, “*suté suta mattan bhavissati*”, “*muté muta mattana bhavissati*”, and “*vinntaté vinnata mattan bhavissati*”, where “*suta*” means hearing, “*muta*” is a collective word for taste, smell, and touch, and “*vinnata*” is for *viññāṇa*. All our sense inputs and our awareness are really small traces of sensations that flow, which the mind concocts as continuous and solid experiences. Think about the movie analogy again; a movie is a series of static “snapshots”. In the same way, our experiences are a series of “snapshots”.

- In *Brahma* worlds, there is only a “*manomaya kaya*” and no solid body like ours. There the sense experience more or less continuous (and good). There are some “hungry ghosts” (*petas*) who also have only the fine “*manomaya kaya*” that imparts ceaseless suffering. Our physical body is there to impart suffering via various body ailments as well as “physical pleasures”; we will also discuss this important point in the future. Nature has many varieties of “body structures” for imparting different types of suffering/enjoyment according to *kamma vipāka*.
- This will become even more clear when we further discuss how the physical body is controlled by the “*manomaya kaya*”, see, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)”.

18. There is a lot of information to be absorbed in this post. **Our lives are just series of very brief sense experiences.** When the Buddha uttered those four phrases to the ascetic Bahiya Daruciriya, he contemplated on them right there and attained the *Arahantship*. He is considered to be the person spent the least time in attaining the *Arahantship*.

More on the formation and destruction of a *sankata* in, “[Nirōdha and Vaya – Two Different Concepts](#)”.

Next, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)”,

12.4.3 Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld (Paralowa)

February 18, 2016; updated April 5, 2016

1. I have discussed the fact that when a living being gets a “human *bhava*” it does not necessarily mean that it is born with a human body during all that time; see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.

- For example, when a human dies and still has *kammic* energy left for the human *bhava*, then it is very unlikely that it will be conceived as a human baby right away. At death a “human *gandhabba*” with a fine body leaves the dead body and has to wait in that state until a suitable womb becomes available. There are a large (uncountable?) number of such human *gandhabbas* waiting for a suitable womb.

- This is one reason that a mother and father are so revered. No matter how bad they may be in some cases, just the fact that they made it possible for a *gandhabba* to have a human body, makes them invaluable.

2. Beings are born as human because they crave the sense pleasures associated with the human body. The most valued are the tastes and the body pleasures. A *gandhabba* has a very fine body that we cannot see weighing much less than 0.01 g; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)“. A *gandhabba* born at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment is much smaller than an atom in modern science. Some could inhale aroma (*gandha*) and get a bit more dense; thus the name “*gandhabba*” (“*gandha*” + “*abba*”).

- Thus a *gandhabba* is unable to taste solid food or experience physical touch. But they can see and hear very well. Thus their life is miserable, since they can see the normal humans engaging in “pleasurable activities”. That is what they crave too, but they are unable to experience them.
- When a zygote is created in a womb as a result of intercourse (see, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”), there are a huge number of *gandhabbas* waiting to “get hold of that zygote”. But of course, they don’t have a choice; only the *gandhabba* matching the “*gathi*” of the father — and especially the mother — is pulled into the womb.

3. Therefore, even though a human “*bhava*” may last thousands of years, the actual time that one is “born with a human body” (human *jathi*) could be a fraction of that time. This is another reason why a “human birth” is so precious that it should not be wasted.

- The same is true for the “animal *bhava*“. There are an uncountable number of “animal *gandhabbas*” waiting for a suitable womb at any given time.

4. Both the human and animal *gandhabbas* can be said to live in “*paralowa*” or “*paralōka*“. It is a world that a normal human cannot see, even though they can see us. Of course there is no English word for it, but “netherworld” or “the hidden world” seems to convey the idea.

- *Paralowa* is not a distinct realm in the 31 realms. Just like human and animal realms co-exist, the *paralowa* co-exists with the human and animal realms, but we normally cannot see those beings in the *paralowa* (unless one develops *abhiññā* powers). One can imagine there being another world with human and animal *gandhabbas*. Thus *gandhabbas* are not *pretas*.
- [WebLink: Listen to Pronunciation: “paralowa” or “paraloka”](#)
- Those with “human (or animal) *bhava*” spend their time either in “this world that we can see” or in the “*paralowa*” or the “hidden world” (netherworld).
- Many people are not even aware of the existence of “*paralowa*“, because (like the concept of the *gandhabba*), it is not discussed in the *Visuddhimagga*. It is unfortunate that current *Theravāda* relies on *Visuddhimagga* (written by an *Anariya*) rather than the *Tipitaka*.
- *gandhabba* is described in detail the *Tirokudda Sutta* in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, where it is called “*tirokudda*” or “*tirokuddaya*“, instead of *gandhabba*.

5. The idea behind giving a special offerings (“*dāna*“) to the *bhikkhus* after the death of a person is mainly for the benefit of the *gandhabbas* (and also *pretas*). This is a common practice in Buddhist countries. Normally it is done after seven days and after three months etc of death, and I will discuss the reasons for those specific dates in a future post.

- Not all beings can receive merits. Especially those in the *niraya* (hell) are unable to do so because they don’t have the right mindset to receive merits (absence of *samanantara paccaya*). Those who can benefit most are the *gandhabbas* and *pretas*.
- Also, note that *gandhabbas* are totally distinct from *pretas* or hell beings in the *niraya*. Only *gandhabbas* live in “*paralowa*” waiting for suitable wombs. *Pretas* and hell beings have instantaneous (*opapatika*) births, just like *devas* and *brahmas*.

6. It has been described how the Buddha saw human beings wander from life-to-life when he first comprehended the *cutupapada ñāṇa* during the night of his Enlightenment; “*cutupapada*” comes from “*cuti*” for death and “*upapada*” for birth.

- Thus *cutupapada ñāṇa* is the knowledge about the rebirth process. **But this particular description was restricted to births and deaths associated with a single human *bhava*.**
- *Cuti* is pronounced “chuthi”, and “*cutupapāda nāna*” is pronounced “chuthupapāda gnāna”.
- [WebLink: Listen to Pronunciation: “cutupapāda nāna”](#)

7. That description by the Buddha was not about the general wandering among the 31 realms, but is on how a being in a human *bhava* wanders from human birth to human birth with *gandhabba* states in between (i.e., going back and forth between “this world that we can see” and the “other world that we cannot see” or the *paralowa*).

- The description is as follows: If one is situated in the upper level of a building at a four-way junction, he can see the street below. He can see many people wandering in the street (*gandhabbas* wandering around). Sometimes, one goes into a house and stays there for a long time. This is compared to a *gandhabba* entering a womb and making himself a physical body; that house is the analogy of a physical body.
- Then at the death of that physical body, the *gandhabba* comes out and starts wandering again (a person walking on the street); he may be wandering the streets for a long time before entering “another house”, i.e., to get a chance to go into a matching womb.
- Sometimes, he may enter a house and may come right out. This can be compared to an unsuccessful pregnancy. A *gandhabba* taking hold of a zygote, but for some reason cannot stay there and has to come out, mostly because it turns out to be a mis-match of “*gathi*” of the potential mother.
- Thus it describes a human being going back and forth between “this world” and the “other world” or the “netherworld” (“*paralowa*”). Once the *kammic* energy of the human *bhava* is exhausted, a new “*bhava*” is grasped.
- If the new *bhava* is not human or animal, then one would be born instantaneously in another realm (*brahma*, *deva*, *asura*, *preta*, or *niraya*). There are no *gandhabbas* associated with those realms.
- Thus we can see that *bhava* and *jathi* mean the same in all the other realms. In those realms, *bhava* automatically leads to *jathi*. For example, one with *deva bhava* is always a *deva*.

8. When one studies the accounts of people (of mostly children) describing their rebirth stories, there are always “gaps” between births; see, the references (books) cited in “[Evidence of Rebirth](#)”. For example, see, “Children Who Remember Previous Lives: A Question of Reincarnation”, by Ian Stevenson (2000).

- During those “gaps” in between successive human births, they had been in the *gandhabba* state, i.e., they were in *paralowa*.
- When one dies in an accident especially at a younger age, it is more likely that their *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* had not been exhausted. Thus they are more likely to be in the *gandhabba* state, waiting for a suitable womb.
- This is why in most rebirth stories the previous life tends to have been terminated by an unexpected incident (killed by someone, a natural disaster, etc).
- This “memory from the past life” fades away as children grow, and that is why it is mostly children who provide these accounts. As they grow old, these memories disappear gradually.

9. A *gandhabba* changes with time (just like everything else). In fact, it is even possible that if a *gandhabba* properly receives merits from an almsgiving (*dāna*) mentioned in #5 above, he/she can gain a *deva* or *brahma bhava* and be born instantly in such a realm.

- On the other hand, another human *gandhabba*, who had been engaged in behavior appropriate for an animal (say, a dog) in the previous human life, could cultivate those “dog *sāṅkhāra*” as a *gandhabba* and slowly transform into a “dog *gadhābaya*” while in *paralowa*.
- When we think about these possibilities we realize how complex life is, and why we need to be mindful of the consequences of our actions. Not only that, we need to avoid doing things mechanically and understand the reasons behind even meritorious actions like alms-giving. I have seen many almsgivings that are conducted in a “party-like” atmosphere. One needs to do it with the proper mindset with the *gandhabba(s)* in mind.

10. Another interesting bit of deduction is how the concept of a soul or “*athma*” came to be established by the ancient Hindu *yogis*. Even to attain higher *anariya jhānas* (above the fourth *jhāna*) that enables one to acquire the ability to see previous lives, one has to have that “*gathi*” of cultivating *jhānas* through recent human lives. Therefore, such a *yogi* with powerful *abhiññā* powers can be expected to have had many recent human lives.

- Thus it is possible that such *yogis* would have been born human hundreds of times (with *gandhabba* states in between). When they looked at their previous lives, they could see that every time they died a *gandhabba* came out, and sooner or later took hold of another human body. Thus it is this *gandhabba* that they thought was the indestructible “*athma*” or “soul”. They could look back hundreds of lives and always see that they were born as human again and again.
- Thus, in the Hindu scripture *Bhagavad Gita*, getting hold of a new body is compared to discarding an old suit and wearing a new suit. As far as those *yogis* could see, it was the same *gandhabba* that came back in a different physical appearance! Thus for them it appeared that there was an unchanging entity coming back in a different form; this is why it is called “reincarnation”.

11. Our world is much more complex than we can ever imagine. The Buddha said that only a Buddha can truly comprehend the complexity of this world: “*lōka visaya acinteyya*” for a normal human, i.e., a normal human, by himself, cannot grasp the true nature to the full extent.

- Even though we do not need to comprehend everything (and we cannot), it is beneficial to learn these concepts at least to some extent.
- If one can comprehend *anicca*, these in-depth analyses are not needed. But especially these days, humans do not have the ability to grasp *anicca* right away. So, learning Dhamma and appreciating the unmatched knowledge of the Buddha gives one the confidence to persevere in one’s efforts.

12.4.4 Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?

1. The “mind-body problem” has been a central problem of philosophy since Descartes formulated it over 350 years ago. Descartes proposed that while the physical body is subjected to the physical laws, there is a soul associated with a human body which is normally called the “mind” and it is non-material; for him, having a mind amounted to having an immaterial soul, outside the physical space, whose essence consisted in thinking. This is the so-called “Cartesian dualism”.

- Here mind and body are on equal footing, each in its own domain.

2. Philosophers no longer take this “dualism” view seriously. Instead current philosophers have adopted a “material monism” that claim that our world is fundamentally material; this is materialism or physicalism. The only question they are debating on is how the “mental” arises from “material”, i.e., how thoughts arise in a material brain.

- We must note that the Buddha’s worldview is totally different from both the above. **It is “mental monism”, i.e., that our world is fundamentally mental.** This is why he said his Dhamma is “*pubbe anusussetu dhammesu*” or a Dhamma (or a theory on nature) that was not known to the world.
- This world view of the Buddha has been hidden for many centuries.

- This is of course a paradigm shift and a shocking one too at the first glance. But I hope to convince you with evidence gathered from various fields of study and illustrate the consistency across diverse disciplines.
- It must be mentioned that this monism is not the “mental monism” (or “idealism”) that a few philosophers have proposed. They say that material things are mere imagination. **On the contrary, the physical world is very real, it is just that it cannot provide any lasting happiness because of its transient nature.**

3. In 1949 Gilbert Ryle introduced the phrase “ghost in the machine” to ridicule the concept of Cartesian dualism in his book, “The Concept of Mind”. It is said that with that book, he put the final nail in the coffin of Cartesian dualism. Of course, the “ghost” is the soul or the mind and the machine is the body in “ghost in the machine”.

- In Buddha Dhamma, it is not called a “ghost” but a “*gandhabba*”; see, “[Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)”.

4. I think the ghost in machine analog is actually a good one to describe a human or an animal. The body actually plays a secondary role, and the mind is the controlling entity. **But the “ghost” or the *manomaya kaya* is NOT all mental;** it has a fine form of matter even though it would not be detectable by current scientific instruments.

I must emphasize that this concept is NOT a version of dualism. Mind and body are interdependent: “*viññāṇa paccaya namarupa*” and “*namarupa paccaya viññāṇa*”; a *manomaya kaya* has both *namarupa* and mind.

- This *manomaya kaya* is made by the last *citta vithi* of the previous existence (*bhava*), which is called *cuti* (pronounced “chuthi”) *citta*; see, “[What is a Thought?](#)” in the Abhidhamma section. **Thus this fine material form was PRODUCED by the mind.** This is why it is said, “*mano pubbangama dhamma.....*”, i.e., “the mind precedes EVERYTHING...”.
- You probably have seen pictures of a “misty ghostly figure” rising out of a physical body in literature on “astral projection” or “out-of-body experience”. That is a good visual, but of course only people with *abhiññā* powers can see them.
- Many people have, though, experienced this out-of-body experience usually under stressful conditions. Most common is the case when a patient undergoes an operation and is unconscious, but recalls later how he/she was able to see the operation from above. This seems to happen more often to women than to men; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)”.

5. When one has cultivated *abhiññā* powers, one can bring out the *gandhabba* or the *manomaya kaya* out of the physical body. Then the body is lifeless, until the *gandhabba* comes back into the body. The “ghost” or the *manomaya kaya* can now see and hear without the aid of a physical ear or eye. Thus it can “focus” on events happening far away, and can see and hear what is going on at that place.

- All this may sound very esoteric but there is a lot out there that is not “captured” by our five physical senses; see, “The 4 percent Universe : Dark Matter, Dark Energy, and the Race to Discover the Rest of Reality” by Richard Panek (2011).
- Our eyes can see only an infinitesimally small part of the electromagnetic spectrum from 390 nm – 700 nm. The human audible range is commonly given as 20 to 20,000 [Hz](#), though there is considerable variation between individuals. Modern scientific instruments can expand these, for example, to see in the infrared frequencies with infrared cameras, etc.
- The “ghost” does not need light to see or a sound wave to travel to hear.

6. The *manomaya kaya* has all six senses in the sense that all five *pasada rūpa* corresponding to the five physical senses and also the *hadaya vatthu* that is the “seat of consciousness”. **The *hadaya vatthu*, where *citta* (thoughts) are originated, lines up with the physical heart, not the brain. Thus we can say that mind is located close to the heart, and is not in the brain; brain is like a**

computer that helps run the physical body; see, “[Neuroscience Says there is no Free Will – That is a Misinterpretation!](#)“.

- The five *pasada rūpa* in the *manomaya kaya* are also located close to the *hadaya vatthu*. Signals between the five physical sense faculties (eye, ear, etc) — called five *indriya* — and the five *pasada rūpa*, and also between the (frontal cortex of the) brain and the *hadaya vatthu*, occur via a “ray system”, probably electromagnetic, and are thus very fast.
- However, the “eye” is not just the “eye ball” but includes associated processing units in the brain, which is the visual cortex. It is the visual cortex that sends the signal to the “*cakkhu pasada*” located close to the *hadaya vatthu*. When the *cakkhu pasada* receives a signal from the visual cortex (“eye *indriya*“), it hits the *hadaya vatthu* which in turn vibrates 17 times corresponding to a “*citta vithi*“.
- The same process occurs for the other four physical senses. The “motor cortex” sends/receives signals from all body parts using the central nervous system, and sends “ray signals” to the “*kaya pasada*“. I will discuss this in detail later.
- The five *pasada rūpa* are located around the *hadaya vatthu* much like the five small balls (clappers) are situated around the “main clapper” in temple bells in Sri Lanka (I am not sure whether this true in other countries). Such a bell symbolizes the five *pasada rūpa* around the *hadaya vatthu*.
- When the “ghost” is inside the physical body, it cannot see or hear without the aid of the physical senses of eyes and ears. Similarly, the mind cannot “think” without the aid of the brain.
- This is why the efficiency of all six senses degrade with time: Because the physical body degrades. As we get old, all six physical sense faculties of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body (outer skin), and the brain degrade, and lose their effectiveness.

7. Thus in the visualization as a “ghost”, the *manomaya kaya* has all six senses. But it cannot use the *kaya pasada* outside the physical body since not enough “matter” is in the *gandhabba* to “feel” the touching sensation. Similarly, the *manomaya kaya* (“ghost”) cannot taste or smell when it is outside the physical body.

- Thus the *gandhabba* can only see and hear when outside the physical body. And it can do those without any limitations imposed by physical eye or physical ear, i.e. it can see and hear things far away.

8. When a human dies, if there is still *kammic* energy left for the “human *bhava*”, i.e., the potential to be born as a human, then there is no *patibandhi citta* at death. A *patibandhi* (“*pati*” + “*sandhi*” = tie up in a new life) happens when a transition to a “new *bhava*”, for example to a “*deva bhava*” or an “animal *bhava*”, happens. If the “*bhava*” remains the same and the next birth is also human, the *manomaya kaya* (“ghost” in this new terminology) or the *gandhabba* just comes out and waits until a suitable womb becomes available. The old physical body is now lifeless and just decays.

9. If the *kammic* energy for the “human *bhava*” is exhausted at death, then in the last *citta vithi* the transition to a new “*bhava*” takes place. Then a new *manomaya kaya* for the new existence (*bhava*) is formed within that final *citta vithi*, and at the end of that *citta vithi*, the new *manomaya kaya* corresponding to the new life comes out of the dead body. If it is *deva*, then a new *deva* is instantly born in the *deva loka*. If it is an animal, say a dog, then a *manomaya kaya* (or *gandhabba*) that resembles the form of a dog comes out of the dead body and will wait until a suitable “dog womb” becomes available.

- As mentioned in other posts, births in 29 realms happen instantaneously, i.e, a fully formed figure is born at the very instant of death in the previous life. An intermediate “*gandhabba* state” with a *manomaya kaya* (a “ghost” in the current analogy) that needs to wait for a suitable womb is involved only for birth in human and animal realms.

10. There is another interesting facet: The *kammic* energy automatically prepares the “blueprint of the body” to deliver the *kamma vipāka* (consequences of previous actions). Thus the physical body has

“built-in” defects and flaws that may become evident at birth or at different stages of life: for example a cancer may develop at latter stages of life. This is the reason why some people are born handicapped; some have healthy bodies, beautiful bodies, ugly bodies, and a healthy person may die suddenly too; the varieties are endless.

- Furthermore, the nervous system is also setup to induce various effects as kamma vipāka. The incessant “urge to do something” works at different levels for different people. This actually reveals a deeper meaning of the First Noble Truth of Suffering; if you are ready for a deeper analysis, see, “[The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#)”.

11. Therefore, the concept of a “ghost in the machine” may be useful to describe the *gandhabba* state or the separation of the *manomaya kaya* from the physical body in the cases of out-of-body experience (OBE), or with *abhiññā* powers. However, it must be kept in mind that in this case, the “ghost” does not depict an unchanging soul and also it is not totally “mental”; it has very fine material (*rūpa*) associated with it, that is invisible to the naked eye, but is visible to someone with *abhiññā* powers.

- Contrary to the idea of a soul, the *manomaya kaya* will keep changing even during an given existence and will make a huge transition at a new existence, for example when an animal is reborn a human or vice versa.

12. The main usefulness of this “ghost in the machine” concept is to accurately describe the physical body for what it really is: a temporary “residence” for the *gandhabba*. The “residence” decays with time and finally dies and then the *gandhabba* needs to find a new “residence”. The *gandhabba* derives its uniqueness or the “personality” via *sansaric* habits (*gathi* and *āsavas*), and the *gandhabba* has the power to change those habits; see, “[Habits, Goals, and Character \(Gathi\)](#)”.

Further information can be found on several posts on the *manomaya kaya* and *gathi*. You can do a keyword search using the “Search” button on the top right.

13. Here is a recent article by the philosopher Colin McGinn on the current theories on the “mind body problem” (click to open the pdf):

[WebLink: PDF file: All machine and no ghost - McGinn-2012](#)

14. A *gandhabba* with a fine body cannot “seen” with our eyes, because they are “more energy that matter”. It is quite likely that the entities detected by “ghost detectors” are such *gandhabbas*.

- There are “ghost detector” apps made by many software companies that can detect “ghosts”; if you Google, “ghost detector” you can explore more on that. Even though right now this is done mostly for fun, it will be shown to be correct concept in the future. These detectors detect “packets of energy” that we cannot see with our eyes.
- Whether these ghost detectors actually can detect *gandhabbas* or not I am not sure. But the concept matches what is described in the *Tipitaka*.

Next, “[Manomaya Kaya \(Gandhabba\) and the Physical Body](#)“,

12.4.5 Manomaya Kaya (Gandhabba) and the Physical Body

Revised April 20, 2016; Revised July 31, 2017

1. We actually have four types of bodies (*kaya*): *aharaja*, *utuja*, *kammaja*, *cittaja*. The *aharaja kaya* is the physical body. The other three are parts of our “mental body” which is also called the *gandhabba*.

- First, here *kaya* is pronounced “*kaya*” not “*kāya*“. “*Kaya*” means “body”. On the other hand, “*Kāya*” means action or *kriyā*.
- It is easy to visualize a “**person**” to be consisting of two overlapping bodies: The **physical body** that we see and the *gandhabba* with a very fine body that is “immersed in” or “overlapped with” the physical body”.

- This *gandhabba* is described in the *Tirokudda Sutta* in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, where it is called “*tirokudda*” or “*tirokuddaya*”, instead of *gandhabba*.
- The physical body (*karaja kaya*) that we see is built mostly from *aharaja rūpa*; starting with a single cell (zygote) in the womb, it takes in food from the mother. After birth, almost all of the growth is due to the food consumed.
- The *gandhabba* consists of the other three *kaya*: *kammaja*, *cittaja*, *utuja*.
- Under stressful conditions (or with *abhiññā* powers), the misty *gandhabba* can come out of the physical body, and the physical body is no longer under the control of the *gandhabba*. But it is not dead because the *jivitindriya* that maintains life is still there.
- Only at death, both the *gandhabba* and the *jivitindriya* leave, and the body becomes inert like a log.
- Let us follow the time sequence of making a *gandhabba* and a physical body in a new *bhava*. This happens via several steps per *Tipitaka*: *Jati*, *sanjati*, *okkanthi*, *abhinibbanthi*, *khandhānan pātilabho*, *ayatanan pātilabho*.

2. The basis of all other four *kaya* is the *kammaja kaya*; it arises from the *kamma* seed responsible that particular *bhava* or existence at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment. It has the *vatthu dasaka* (*hadaya vatthu* or the seat of mind), *kaya dasaka* (blueprint of the final human body), and the *bhava dasaka* (loosely translated as man/woman nature, but encompasses many other features related to one’s *gati* or *bhava*).

- The formation of the *kammaja kaya* is called “*jati*” moment of birth.
- Immediately, that *kammaja kaya* gives rise to a thought stream (*cittaja kaya*).
- Both *kammaja* and *cittaja kaya* start producing fine *rūpa* and immediately give rise to very fine physical form called the *utuja kaya*. At this stage, *cakkhu*, *sota*, *ghana*, and *jivha dasaka* are also formed. This is called the “*sanjati*” moment of birth.
- This fine body with three *kaya* (*kammaja*, *cittaja*, *utuja*) is called a *gandhabba*. Since all three have their origin in the mind, the *gandhabba* is said to have a *manomaya kaya*. But soon it will acquire a fine physical body by inhaling aroma (*gandha* + *abbha*), thus the name *gandhabba*. Thus a *gandhabba* would have all four bodies (*kammaja*, *cittaja*, *utuja*, *karaja*).
- The five sets of *dasaka* (*kaya*, *cakkhu*, *sota*, *ghana*, and *jivha*) arrange around the *hadaya vatthu* (*vatthu dasaka*) in the fine body of the *gandhabba*. This *gandhabba* may exist in that state for a long time waiting for a suitable womb.

3. When a suitable womb becomes available, this fine *gandhabba* collapses to the size smaller than a single cell, enters the womb, and merges with the single cell (zygote) formed by the union of mother and father. This moment of entering a womb is called the “*okkanti* moment” of birth.

- The physical body (*karaja kaya*) arises from this single cell (zygote) that grows first by extracting food from the mother’s womb and then consuming regular food once born as a baby.
- The physical body grows according to the “blueprint” in the fine body of the *gandhabba* and the fine body of the *gandhabba* expands with it, so that it overlaps the physical body. For example, there is a nervous system in the *gandhabba* that overlaps the physical nervous system.
- The initial growth stage of the fetus inside the womb is called the “*abhinibbanthi* stage” of birth.

4. Then the fetus inside the womb starts developing and forms the physical senses and the brain over many weeks. During this time, the physical sensory systems for the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, as well as the nervous system are developed. Furthermore, the brain develops too, with corresponding processing units to analyze signals from those five physical senses and also with the *mana indriya* (this unit has still not been identified in science, but I have some ideas that I will discuss later).

- In Buddha Dhamma, the *cakkhu indriya* is NOT just eyes, but also includes the associated processing centers in the brain. Similarly for the other four *indriya*: *sota*, *gandha*, *jivha*, and *kaya*.
- Signals generated in these five *indriya* are sent to the five *pasada rūpa* located around the *hadaya vatthu* (seat of the mind) as described in “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\) – Introduction](#)”.
- Once all six *indriya* are formed fully the “*khandhānan pātilabho*” stage of birth is complete.
- When that baby is born (i.e., comes out of the womb), that physical body is able to use all six *āyatana* (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and the mind) to fully interact with the external world. This is the final stage of the birth process: “*āyatanan pātilabho*”.

5. This sequence of events was discussed by Ven. Sariputta when he analyzed the *Dhammacakka Pavattana Sutta* in detail to the *bhikkhus* in the [WebLink: SuttaCentral: Sacca Vibhanga Sutta \(Majjhima Nikāya 141\)](#): “*Katamā cāvuso, jāti? Yā tesam tesam sattānam tamhi tamhi sattanikāye jāti sañjāti okkanti abhinibbatti khandhānam pātubhāvo āyatanānam paṭilābho, ayaṃ vuccatāvuso: ‘jāti’*”.

- For those who do not believe in the *gandhabba* state (i.e., a *gandhabba*), this point needs to be contemplated. This is only valid for *sattanikāye jāti*, which means only for the human and animal realms.
- In other realms, different mechanisms (mainly *opapatika* births) may be valid; see, “[Gandhabba – Only in Human and Animal Realms](#)”.

6. In the post, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”, we mainly talked about the *cittaja kaya*, the stream of thoughts, and the physical body. We saw that, If an animal dies and is reborn a human:

- The physical body in the animal realm is very different from that in the human realm.
- The *cittaja kaya* or the stream of thoughts associated with the animal existence (*bhava*) is also very different from the *cittaja kaya* of the human existence (*bhava*). This is what is meant by “*bhava paccaya jati*” in the *Paticca Samuppāda*: the birth is according to the *bhava* that latched on at the moment of death, i.e., “*upādāna paccaya bhavo*”; see, “[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#)”.

7. Thus it is clear that both the physical body and *manomaya kaya* make “quantum jumps” (instantaneous large change) when switching from one existence (say an animal) to another (say a human).

- The *kammaja kaya* has all the *kammic* potentialities (*kamma* seeds) acquired up to any given time; see, “[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#)”, and “[Sansaric Habits and Āsavas](#)”. But one of those seeds becomes operative for the “new *bhava*”, and becomes the “*bhavanga*” for that life. The remaining *kamma* seeds all “tag along” in the new *bhava*, and one of those will rise to the next *bhava* or existence; same “*gati*” are in all seeds. Thus, whether an animal or a human, the new life will display somewhat similar habits (*gati*) and cravings (*āsavas*).
- This is why “no-self” was not approved or rejected by the Buddha: the new life is not the same as the old life but it is not completely different either, because those *gati* and *āsavas* propagate (but they all keep changing too). And similarly, “self” is not approved or rejected.
- A living being is a “lifestream” that changes even moment-to-moment based on cause and effect: *paticca samuppāda*. Even though there is no “unchanging entity” such as a “soul”, the lifestream has its own characteristics (*gati* and *āsavas*), which also keep evolving.

8. Thus it is helpful to visualize two bodies: the physical body and the *manomaya kaya* of the *gandhabba*.

- The physical body is the “material form” consisting of the *aharaja kaya*. This is the body that we see.

- *Gandhabba* is the “mental body”, consisting of the *cittaja kaya* (stream of thoughts) and the *kammaja kaya* with the *kamma* seeds, habits (*gati*) and *āsavas* (cravings); it also has some fine *utuja rūpa* produced by *kamma* and *citta*. The *monomaya kaya* cannot be seen with a normal human eye.
- At death, if that human *bhava* has more *kammic* energy left, the *gandhabba* just comes out of the dead physical body and waits for a new womb.
- If *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* is exhausted, then a *cuti-patisandhi* transition takes place and the above discussed time sequence again runs through. A brand new *gandhabba* in a new *bhava* emerges from the dead body. For a technical analysis of this process, see, “[Cuti-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#)”.

9. We can get an idea of the fineness of the *manomaya kaya* from the following comparison. The average human weighs about 70 kg (70,000g) and has a body volume about 70 L; Density of a typical fog (that we can barely see) is about 0.1 g per cubic meter. Thus the weight “of the fog of volume equivalent of a human body” is about 0.01g.

- Thus a “human body made of fog” weighs only a tiny fraction of the normal human weight.
- For another comparison, the weight of a mustard seed is about 0.002g.
- A *gandhabba* would have a “misty body” like a human figure made of fog, but will be MUCH SMALLER weight; it is immeasurably small. A *gandhabba* collapses to the size of the zygote (a human cell) that is formed at conception, when it descends to a womb and takes hold of the zygote; see, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”.
- My late Noble teacher, Waharaka Thero, has seen how a *gandhabba* enters a womb. When getting closer to the mother, *gandhabba* rotates rapidly and loses all its body other than the *hadaya vatthu*, *jivitindriya*, and *bhava dasaka*, so it becomes much smaller than an atom in modern science (at the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] level). The that tiny body (which would not be seen even by the most powerful microscope) is pulled into the womb through mother’s body and gets attached to the zygote in the womb. I heard him describe this in a *desanā*.
- So, a human body starts off basically with two cells from the mother and father (which make the zygote) and an even smaller *gandhabba*. Thus virtually all the weight of a human is gained from the nutrients, first from the mother’s body, and once comes out the womb from the food that it consumes.

10. We can easily see the role of the *manomaya kaya* with the actions by its two mental components:

- *Cittaja kaya* is what we EXPERIENCE moment-to-moment. We see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and think about concepts with thoughts: *cakkhu*, *sota*, *gandha*, *rasa*, *pottabba*, and *mano viññāṇa*.
- Those thoughts NORMALLY depend on our habits (*gati*), *āsava* (cravings), and *kamma vipāka*, all in the *kammaja kaya*; see, “[What is Mind? How Do We Experience the Outside World?](#)”.
- If thoughts arise ONLY DUE TO our past *kamma* and the habits and cravings acquired through them, then *kamma* would be deterministic and we will be like robots (and that is the case for many beings, like animals). **LUCKILY, we have the ability to THINK on our own (unlike animals), and to change our individual destinies.**

11. **That last sentence summarizes the message of the Buddha:** Do not lose this opportunity to get out of this *sansaric* suffering when we have this precious human life, which will last only about 100 years. Even if we are reborn human, what guarantees are there that we will get to even listen or read about Buddha Dhamma?

12. Thus if anything is “transferred” from one existence to another those would be the “*gati*” and “*āsavas*” of that lifestream; but they also keep evolving. If we do not act mindfully, if we let our mind to just “go with the flow”, then our actions will be determined by our *sansaric* habits. Then we will be only further strengthening such habits. This is why it is important to identify bad habits and get rid of them, and ALSO to cultivate good habits.

- This is the process of mind purification called [bhāvanā \(meditation\)](#) detailed in such *suttas* as the *Satipaṭṭhāna* (see, “[Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta](#)”), *Ānāpāna sati* (“[6. Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā \(Introduction\)](#)”) and *Sabbasava*. I have also written about the *Sabbasava sutta*: “[Habits and Goals](#)”, and a bit more deeper analysis in “Key Points in the *Sabbasava Sutta*” at the end of the post, “[The Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.
- Also, see the post, “[The Importance of Purifying the Mind](#)”.

More on the *Manomaya kaya* at: “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)”.

Next, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for Manomaya Kaya?](#)”,

12.4.6 Brain – Interface between Mind and Body

April 22, 2016

1. Contrary to what scientists believe, our minds are not located in the brain (**this is another prediction from Buddha Dhamma that will be proven correct in the future**).

- The “mind door” where *citta* (or thoughts) arise is at the *hadaya vatthu*, located not in our physical bodies, but in the *manomaya kaya* of the *gandhabba*; see, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)- Introduction](#)”.
- The *gandhabba* can be thought of as having a very fine body (which weighs much less than a gram) that overlaps the physical body; see, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)”.
- The *hadaya vatthu* overlaps the heart in the physical body. That is why we feel a burning sensation close to the heart when something traumatic happens (like the news of the death of a child or a parent). We don’t say, “Oh, my head felt like burning when I heard the news”. It is the heart area that feels it. (Head may start hurting later, if one keeps thinking about the loss).
- On the other hand, when we overuse our five physical senses or when we think hard about a difficult problem, it is the head that hurts. Because in those situations, the brain has to do a lot of processing. While watching a movie, our brains work overtime to convert those sense inputs from the eyes (*cakkhu indriya*) and the ears (*sota indriya*). When we think about a hard problem, the *mana indriya* in the brain has to work hard; see below.

2. As we discussed in the post, “[Body Types in Different Realms – Importance of Manomaya Kaya](#)”, our physical bodies are temporary shelters or “shells” that are used by our minds (located in the *gandhabba*’s fine body) to experience sense inputs from the outside world.

- Since a given physical body has a lifetime of around 100 years, we have to “build a new physical body” when the current one decays and finally dies (if we have leftover *kammic* energy for the human *bhava*); see, “[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#)”.

3. As we discussed in those and other previous posts, before entering the mother’s womb and starting to “build a new physical body”, the *gandhabba* has a very fine body; thus it cannot experience taste or touch, even though some can “digest odors” and become a bit more dense.

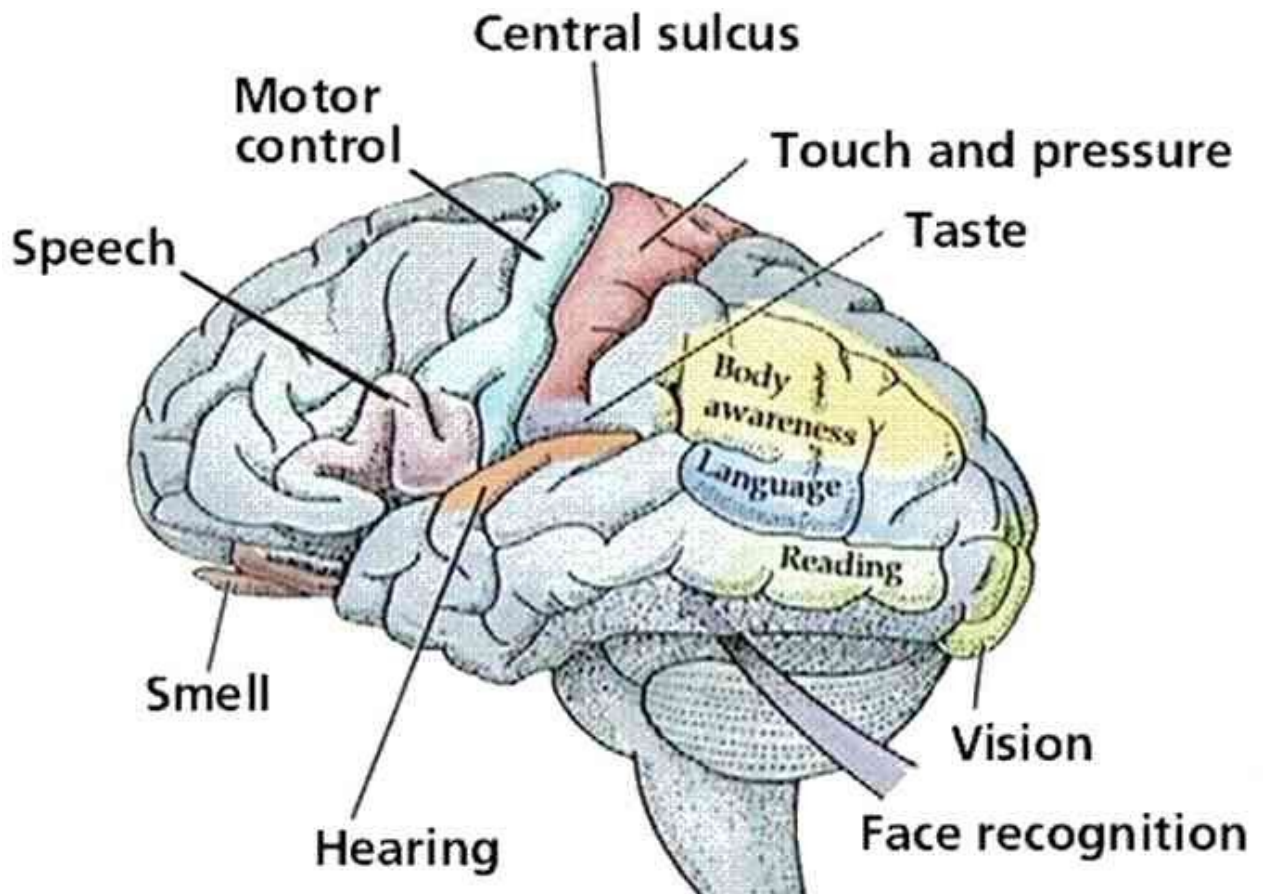
- A *gandhabba* waiting for a womb is normally about the size of the fully-grown human, but is so fine that at the moment of “*okkanthi*” or entering the mother’s womb, he/she will enter THROUGH the mother’s body and collapse to the size of the zygote when taking possession of it; see, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)”.
- Thus a *gandhabba*, when outside waiting for a suitable womb, is just like a ghost shown in the movies; of course a human cannot see it even using technological advances. It is much smaller in mass than the first cell formed by the union of the mother and father, the zygote.
- The physical body grows starting with that single cell (zygote) using nutrition from the mother, and once outside the womb, it grows to the full size by consuming food.
- **Thus it is useful to have this visual, where a physical body of one to a few hundred pounds is controlled by a very fine *gandhabba* trapped inside it.**

4. Once inside a physical body, *gandhabba* **has to** use the physical body to interact with the outside world. It is like being trapped in a solid shell. Initially, its mind will be in the *bhavanga* state (see, “[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)”) and will not be conscious about its environment, except for body sensations until the eyes, ears, tongue, and the nose are developed.

- In a human, the signals coming through the “physical senses” (eyes, ears, etc) are transmitted to the five *pasada rūpa* located in the *gandhabba*; these *pasada rūpa* then pass that information to the *hadaya vatthu* (seat of the mind) also located in the *gandhabba*; see, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)- Introduction](#)”.
- This is how our minds receive information from the external world.
- Now the question arises: “How do the sense inputs coming through the eyes, ears, tongue, nose, and the body, are transmitted to the *pasada rūpa* located close to the *hadaya vatthu*?”. Note that the *hadaya vatthu* is located close to the physical heart.

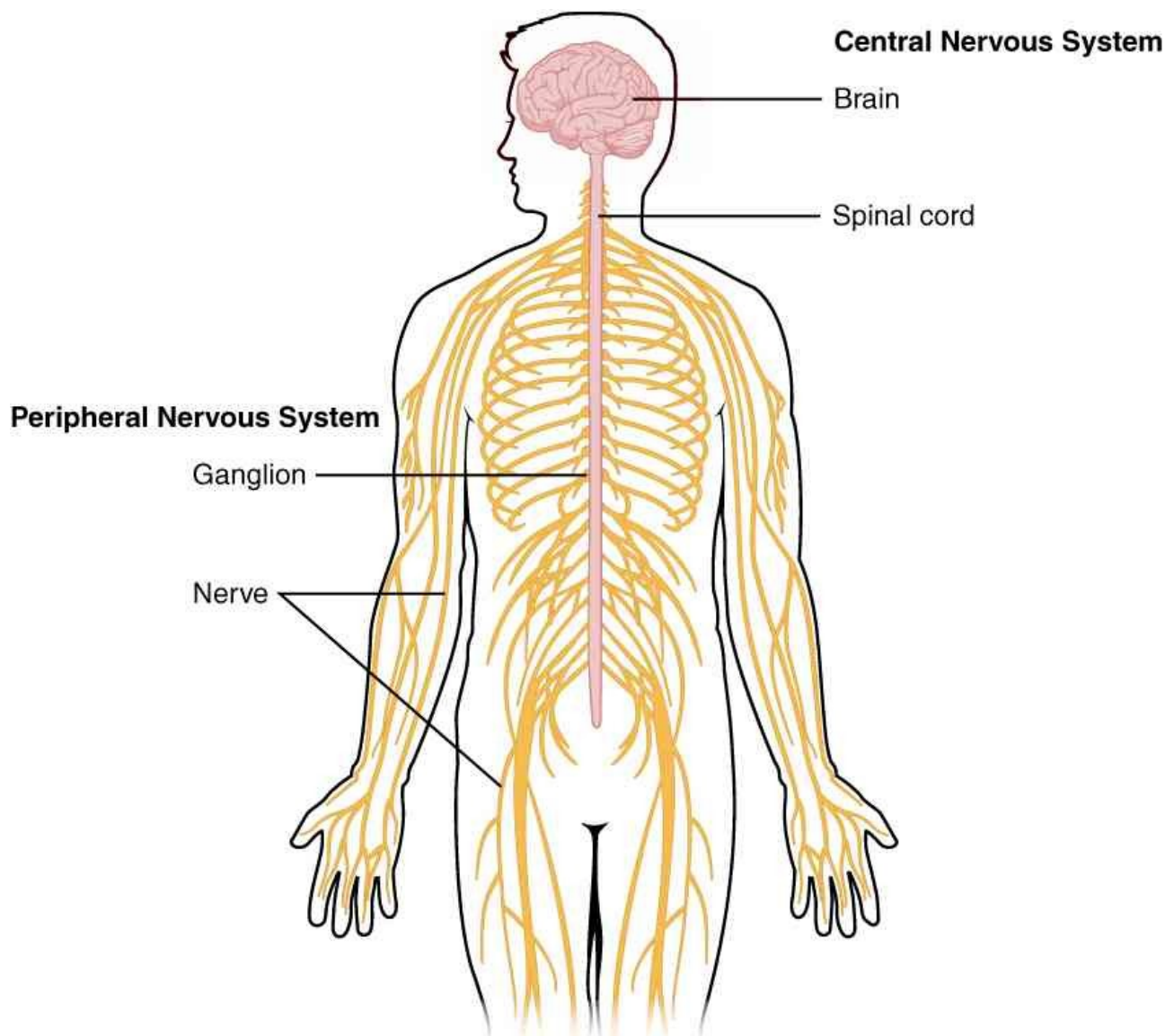
5. It is the brain that acts as the intermediary between those physical sense inputs and the five *pasada rūpa*. It processes the incoming information to a form that can be understood by the mind (*hadaya vatthu*).

- First, the sense inputs coming in to the physical body through the eyes, ears, tongue, nose, and the body, are transmitted to specific regions of the brain. This has been well-researched by the scientists over the past hundred years. The following figure shows the specific areas of the brain that analyze the data from the five senses.



- After this processing is done, science is unable to explain how the mind comprehends the corresponding signals. For example, in vision, there is no “picture” formed in the back of the head; see, “On Intelligence” by Jeff Hawkins (2005) for a nice discussion.

6. The signals for vision, sounds, smells, and taste come into the body through specific body parts. In contrast, the touch sensations can come from anywhere in the body, and is accomplished via an intricate system of nerves:

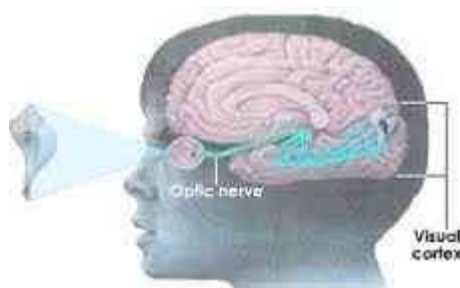


- These nerve signals are sent to the brain for processing (see the “touch and pressure” processing area in the figure in #5 above).

7. By the way, it is important to note that the misty *gandhabba* has a similar “nervous system” that is overlapped with the physical nervous system shown above (Yes. that is extremely fine). This is not quite relevant to the present discussion, but it is there to impart *kamma vipāka* via the physical body:

- The physical nervous system has to align with the nervous system of the *gandhabba* and the latter could change (according to *kamma vipāka*), which makes our body’s nervous system to go out-of-alignment for proper body function leading to aches and pains; see, #6 of “[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#)”.

8. Coming back to our discussion, the signals from the other four senses are also sent to specific brain areas (indicated in the figure in #5 above) via specialized neural pathways. For example, the visual signals from the eyes are transmitted as shown below:



- Once those sense inputs from the five physical senses are processed by the brain, they are “transmitted” to the corresponding five *pasada rūpa* in the *gandhabba* (*manomaya kaya*) overlapping the physical heart, as discussed below.

9. So far we have identified five of *gandhabba*’s “windows to the outside world” from his/her “shell” or the physical body: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and the body.

- What about the “*dhamma*” that are the finest *rūpa* (these are called *mano rūpa*) that interact with the physical body? This is how we think about “random things” out of the blue. For example, we may be washing dishes in the kitchen, and all of a sudden, thoughts about a friend or a relative may come to the mind.
- Just like a picture of a dog sitting in the kitchen comes in through the eyes, the thoughts about a friend — who may be thousand miles away — comes through the *mana indriya* in the head (inside the brain).
- We discussed this in a previous post: “[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)”.

10. So, how do the signals processed in the brain due to incoming vision, sound, smell, taste, touch, and *dhamma* are passed to the five *pasada rūpa* and the *hadaya vatthu*?

- This is described in detail in “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\)- Introduction](#)”. Those signals are transmitted from the brain region to the heart region (where the five *pasada rūpa* and the *hadaya vatthu* are located).
- It is well-known that there are electromagnetic brain waves of different types (alpha, beta, theta, and gamma). I will write a post on this in the future. These waves are called “*kirana*” in the *Tipitaka*.

11. When information comes to one of the five *pasada rūpa*, it passes on that signal to the *hadaya vatthu* by impinging (hitting) the *hadaya vatthu*. That results in the *hadaya vatthu* vibrating 17 times, just like a clamped blade vibrates a certain number of times when hit by an object; see, “[Gandhabba \(Manomaya Kaya\) – Introduction](#)” and “[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)”.

- This is the origin of a *citta vithi* of 17 *citta*; each *citta* in a *citta vithi* correspond to a single vibration of *hadaya vatthu*. This 17 thought moment time period is the lifetime of a *hadaya rūpa* (vibrational energy) of the *hadaya vatthu*.
- It is a common mistake to take this to mean that **any *rūpa*** has a lifetime of 17 thought moments. **That is a very bad mistake**; see, “[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#)”.
- It is not possible to describe these details in one or even several posts. One may need to look through other posts to clarify some concepts. The “Search” button on the top right is a good resource for this task.

12. While the five *pasada rūpa* have to strike the *hadaya vatthu* to pass on their signals, signals from the *mana indriya* can exchange information with the *hadaya vatthu* directly.

- When the *mana indriya* interacts with the *hadaya vatthu*, that also results in *citta vithi*. Those *manodvara citta vithi* are not fixed in length.
- Still only one of the six sense signal can be in contact with the *hadaya vatthu* at a given time. But since the process is very fast, billions of *citta vithi* can run through the *hadaya vatthu* “in the blink of eye”.

13. Therefore, this whole process is best visualized due to the interaction between two overlapping systems: the physical body and the corresponding fine body of the *gandhabba*.

- When the *gandhabba* is expelled from the body under stressful situations, it can float above the physical body, and physical body becomes inert until the *gandhabba* returns to it; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience \(OBE\)](#)”.

14. Thus it is clear that the brain plays a major role in shaping our future. Similarly, the five physical senses play vital roles too.

- If any one of the five physical senses are damaged, we lose the corresponding “window to the external world”. If both eyes are damaged we will not be able to see; if the sensors inside the ears go bad, we will not be able to hear, etc.
- But the most critical is, of course, the brain. If the brain is damaged, signals from other senses will not be processed and we will not be able to interact with the external world, i.e., being brain dead is virtually equivalent to being dead.
- However, if one’s brain becomes totally damaged due to an accident, for example, it will not affect the *gandhabba* inside. It is just that the *gandhabba* will not be able to communicate with the external world. And if damage to the brain results in the death of the physical body, the *gandhabba* will just come out of the dead body and will wait for a suitable womb.

15. This is why it does not really matter if one is killed by an accident or whether one dies due to an illness or old age. The *gandhabba*’s future is determined by his/her *gathi*, past *kamma* (*kamma* seeds), etc.

- If one is killed in an accident, the *gandhabba* will immediately be kicked out of the dead body and will wait for a suitable womb, if there is still more *kammic* energy left for the human *bhava* (in an accident, that is likely).
- But if one gets to old age and dies or dies due to an illness — and if one has exhausted *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* — then the *cuti-patisandhi* will happen at that time. If one is to become a *deva*, a *deva* will appear instantaneously in the corresponding *deva* world. If one is to become an animal, an animal *gandhabba* will emerge from the dead body and will have to wait for a suitable womb to become available.

16. It is also clear why we need to take good care of the body, our sense faculties, and of course our brains. *Gandhabba*’s (our) ability to make decisions depends on all those faculties working in optimum condition.

- We have a very short time of around 100 years to get rid our bad (immoral) *gathi*, cultivate good (moral) *gathi*, and comprehend the real nature of this world (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*), and be free from future suffering.
- We need to try to get to the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna* and be free from the four lowest realms (*apāyas*), or at least make progress towards that goal so that in a future life we will have a *tihetuka* birth that makes it easier to attain *Nibbāna*.
- In order to accomplish those things, we need to eat well, exercise well, and take care of our bodies to perform optimally. We also need to stay away from drugs and alcohol, and also associate with those who have similar goals (and stay away from those with bad habits).

12.4.7 Manomaya Kaya and Out-of-Body Experience (OBE)

If you have not read the post, “[Manomaya Kaya \(Gandhabba\) and the Physical Body](#)“, you may want to read that before reading this post.

1. One could visualize the *manomaya kaya* or the “mental body” as the “life giving energy field” (it has some fine *rūpa* too) overlapping the solid physical body. **The working mind, *cittaja kaya* (thought stream) is in the *manomaya kaya*, and it is associated with a very fine *rūpa* called *hadaya vatthu*, and that is where the thoughts arise.**

2. When the *manomaya kaya* is attached to the physical body, thoughts are generated in a mechanism that involve both the *hadaya vatthu* and the brain (together with the nervous system in the physical body). This is why the “thinking ability” degenerates as one gets old. However, the *hadaya vatthu* does not overlap the brain; it overlaps the physical heart.

- Brain is a part of the physical body and is the interface between the physical body and the mental body (*manomaya kaya*).

3. Not only the mind, but the other five “internal senses” (*pasada rūpa*) are born with the *manomaya kaya* at the time of rebirth (*patisandhi*). And all these are very fine *rūpa*, that our eyes cannot see.

Thus one can visualize the *manomaya kaya* as an “energy field” that overlaps the physical body and provides the vitality to the inert physical body.

- The Buddha compared the situation of a *manomaya kaya* separating from the physical body to a sword pulled out of its sheath, or a snake shedding its skin. Once the *manomaya kaya* comes out, the body is like an inert log. And that is exactly what happens when one dies; the vitality is gone the instant the *manomaya kaya* comes out.

4. This *manomaya kaya* is called “*gandhabba*”. When a person dies, if he/she has more kammic energy left in the human “*bhava*”, then the *gandhabba* just comes out of the dead body.

- Until a suitable womb is found matching its kamma seeds (“*gathi*”), the *gandhabba* may stay in that form for even years.

5. The *gandhabba* also has the ability to see and hear, actually with much more flexibility; the capabilities of the eye and ear *pasada rūpa* are diminished when working with physical eye and physical ear.

- Of course the *gandhabba* does not have touch, taste, and for the most part smell sensations, because its body is so fine.
- When the *manomaya kaya* is separated from the physical body, “seeing” does not need light (one could look at things far away) and “hearing” does not need air as a medium for the sound to propagate (one could hear things far away). Both those are done via “*kirana*” (or “rays” in English; similar to electromagnetic radiation). Furthermore, the *gandhabba* can “travel” very fast; it is not physical travel. For example, the *suttas* talk about the Buddha or *Arahants* with *iddhi* powers travelling to *deva loka* in a time comparable to the time taken to “stretch a bent arm”.

6. When the *manomaya kaya* (*gandhabba*) is merged with the physical body, “seeing” and “hearing” is also done with the help of the physical eye and the physical ear. It is like being inside a military tank and using the sensors mounted on the tank to see and hear what is going on outside.

- Now, “seeing” is done with the help of the physical eye: the “eye” (eye *indriya*) of the *manomaya kaya* is well inside the physical eye, and objects are “seen” through the physical eye. Same with the ear. Thus, eyes and ears can be thought of as those sensors mounted on that military tank.
- Therefore, the ability to see and hear also degrade with old age, as the physical eyes and physical ears age.
- The brain is like the computer in that tank that processes the information coming in through the sensors.
- Therefore, if any of these three “physical instruments” (brain, eyes, ears) gets damaged, the ability to think, see, or hear can be degraded or lost.

7. However, most of the abilities of the eye and ear are still due to the two *pasada rūpa* (internal eye and internal ear) associated with the *manomaya kaya*.

For example, have you ever wondered how we can judge the distances as we move around avoiding bumping in to things and each other? The physical eye does not have the capability to “judge distances”; see, “The Sense of Being Stared At” by Rupert Sheldrake (2003, p.12). Our eyes can see many things at the same time and judge relative distances of all things. This ability is in the *pasada rūpa*, and not in the eyes or the brain.

8. *Gandhabba* cannot smell, taste, or touch, because its body is very fine and thus no physical contact can be made. But it has a way of taking energy form “*gandha*” (aroma) and that is why it is called *gandhabba* (“*gandha*”+ “*abba*”, where “*abba*” means taking in).

9. The *hadaya vatthu* of the *manomaya kaya* (*gandhabba*) overlaps the physical heart when the two bodies are together. However, in some situations the *manomaya kaya* can separate from the physical body, and that is what is called the “out-of-body experience (OBE)”.

- Normally, it happens under stressful conditions (e.g., what people refer to as near death experiences (NDE) or when undergoing operations), but there are some cases, where people seem to be able to do it at will.
- A recent book, “Dying to be me: My Journey from Cancer, to Near Death, to True Healing”, by Anita Moorjani (2012), describes the OBE experience of her in detail.
- In his book, “Travels”, famous author of the Jurassic Park, Michael Crichton (1988, p. 307) mentions his ability to “shift my awareness out of my body and move it around the bedroom”, and he says, “..I didn’t think anything about it... I assumed that anybody could do it..”.
- A similar account has been given by a woman recently who also thought that “everybody could do it”: [WebLink: ABCNEWS: Woman Has 'Out of Body' Experiences Whenever She Wants](#)
- Of course there are many books written on OBE. “Consciousness Beyond Life”, by Pim van Lommel (2010) gives detailed accounts of case studies of OBE experienced by people undergoing heart operations.

Next, “[Gathi \(Character\), Anusaya \(Latent Defilements\), and Āsava \(Cravings\)](#)“,

12.4.8 Cuti-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description

1. Many people believe that *patisandhi* or the linking to a new life happens in a womb (in human and animal realms). But that is not correct. *Patisandhi citta* is experienced in the next very *citta* after the *cuti citta* of the old life in the last *citta vithi* of the dying person.

- The new life form (*gandhabba*) emerges from the dead body right after the last *citta vithi* (However, if the next life is an *opapatika* one, the life form is fully formed right after the last *citta vithi*). This is also called the *gandhabba* state. Here we will discuss the case where the new life is either human or animal and thus a *gandhabba* is formed; see, “[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#)” and “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)”.

2. *Patisandhi* (“*pati*” is bond and “*sandhi*” is joining in Pāli or Sinhala, thus *patisandhi* means joining a new life at the end of the old) happens in a thought moment in the body of the dying person; if the next life is human or animal, then the *gandhabba* for that life comes out of that body at the end of that last *citta vithi*. Of course the *gandhabba* has a very fine body, and it can be seen only by a person with *abhiññā* powers. let us discuss this step carefully.

- I must warn in advance that this analysis is highly technical, and is suitable only for those who are familiar with *citta vithi* processes in *Abhidhamma*. **However, the conclusions are informative, so you may want to go through it.** *Citta vithi* and *cetasika* are discussed in several posts in [Citta and Cetasika](#).

3. The last *citta vithi* of the old life with 17 *citta* run in the standard way: *atita bhavanga*, *bhavanga calana*, *bhavanga upaceda*, *pancadvara vajjana*, *cakkhu viññāṇa*, *sampaticcana*, *santirana*, *vottapana*, and then *javana* sequence (7 *javana citta*) starts. **After the fifth *javana citta*, there are two more *javana citta* left. The sixth is the *cuti citta* and the seventh and last *javana* is the *patisandhi citta*.**

- In the last *citta vithi*, a previous *kamma vipāka* provides an *arammana* (thought object) associated with that *kamma vipāka* through one of the five sense doors: it is normally a visual or a sound associated with the new existence (*bhava*). Even though the person’s physical faculties may be very weak, the person will see or hear very clearly whatever the *nimitta* presented by the *kamma vipāka*. Then at the *vottapana citta*, the mind makes a decision to act on that *arammana* based on the person’s *gathi*. The person has no control of it. It is called, “*kammaja pure jatha; cittaja pacce jatha*”, i.e., *kamma vipāka* comes first, and then accordingly the *javana citta* flow grasping that new *bhava*:

“*kamma vipāka vajjanti, vipako kamma sambhavo*

Tasma punabbhovo hoti, evan loko pavattati”

Or,

“*kamma vipāka* presents a new existence, the ignorant being grasps that existence

Thus the cycle of rebirths repeats, and that is how the world exists”

4. First there is the *vipāka citta*; then it induces *kamma sambhava*. “*Vipako kamma sambhavo*” is initiated at the *vottapana citta*. The *vottapana citta* decides how to proceed with the *arammana* (object) that came from the *kamma vipāka*, and the being normally gets attached to that object via greed/hate and grasps a new existence in the *javana citta* that follow. Thus “*vipako kamma sambhavo*” starts with the first *javana citta*. After 5 *javana citta* *kammic* energy is optimized, with each subsequent *javana* strengthening via *asevana paccaya* from the previous *javana*. The sixth one is called *cuti citta*, and the next *citta* grasps the new *bhava*.

- *Cuti citta* happens in the last *citta vithi* just after the actual *cuti* (death), because it is *pacce jata* to *kammaja cuti* event. The seventh *javana* always is responsible for the next life.
- Now this linking to the next life happens at the 7th *javana citta* or the *patisandhi citta*, which is again *pacce jatha* to the actual *kammaja patisandhi* that starts at the *pancdvaravajjana citta* in this last *citta vithi*.

5. Now let us take a look at the last *citta vithi* of the old life in detail. This *citta vithi* was started by the last bit of *kammic* energy from the old life, and it will run its course of 17 *citta* before it comes to an end. It is like throwing a stone; even though the energy was fully spent by the time the stone was released, the stone will be travelling until its energy is all spent. In the same way, *even though the kammic energy for the old life has ended, the last citta vithi will run its course of 17 citta including the last two bhavanga citta after the 7 javana citta*.

- *Cuti* or death is not a *citta*; it is the end of the *kammic* energy of the old life. *Cuti* happens just at the moment of initiating the last *citta vithi*, and the *cuti citta* is in the last *citta vithi*. *Patisandhi* is not a *citta* either. It is also *kammaja* act.
- Here the old *bhavanga* has ended too; but there are two *bhavanga citta* left in the last *citta vithi*. The new *vatthu rūpa* cannot be formed until this last *citta vithi* is done with, because as soon as one is formed, it will start its *citta vithi*, and no two *vithi* can be there at the same time.

6. In that last *citta vithi*, by the time *atita bhavanga*, *bhavanga calana*, and comes to *bhavanga upacceda*, the *kammic vipāka* from the old life are finished. Now what comes to the *pancdvara* is the *kamma nimitta*, *asanna kamma*, or a *gathi nimitta*; **it is the vipāka citta that powers the new life**: “*kamma vipāka vajjanti*”. It is received by the *sampaticcana*, *santirana citta* and then “*vipāka kamma sambhavo*” happens at the *vottapana citta*, i.e., a decision is made on what to do and this decision depends on the level of *avijjā* (in the form of one’s *gathi* and *āsavas*).

- This “*vipāka kamma sambhavo*” starts with the first *javana citta* and builds up gradually up to the fifth *javana citta*. Now the sixth *javana*, *cuti citta*, had been determined from the beginning of the *citta vithi*. The new *kamma beeja* starts working at the seventh *javana* in the new *bhava*.

7. When this last *citta vithi* ends, the old *hadaya vatthu* is dead too; it had exhausted all its *kammic* power. The next *citta vithi* starts with a new *hadaya vatthu* in the new life that is powered by a new *kamma beeja*. The new *hadaya vatthu* is formed by the new *kamma* seed that was grasped at the 7th *javana* (the *patisandhi citta*), and immediately the first *citta vithi* for the new life starts. The *gandhabba* is formed and comes out of the dead body.

- If a human died and the next life is an animal, the *gandhabba* with the corresponding animal figure comes out fully formed (of course it is very fine); **It is the blueprint for the new physical body**.
- This *gandhabba* now has to wait for a suitable womb. It is not that *gandhabba* decides which womb is good; rather, when a womb that matches the *gathi* of the *gandhabba* becomes available, *gandhabba* will be pulled into it by the *kammic* energy.
- When a sperm fertilizes an egg in a womb, a single cell called a zygote results. But there is no life there until the *gandhabba* enters the womb and is incorporated with that zygote. Now the zygote becomes an embryo, then a fetus, and once out of the womb grows to a full-size human or an animal according to that blueprint.

- Science has been unable to explain how all the complex body parts of a human or animal develops starting from a single cell. This is how it happens. The blueprint for all the complex body parts is in the *gandhabba*, not in that single cell; see, “[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#)“.

12.5 Why Do People Enjoy Immoral Deeds? – Ditthi Is Key

1. Most of us feel uncomfortable when we do something immoral or unethical. For example, I remember how my heart rate went up when I stole a cookie or a candy when I was little. We all know how the heart rate goes up and the whole body gets tense when we get angry. Those are definitely not enjoyable moments.

- Therefore, immoral deeds normally make one uncomfortable and even feel like one is “on fire” in extreme cases. This is called “*tāpa*” (“burning”) in Pāli or Sinhala. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*, “*atāpi sampajānō*” means having a mindset to avoid such deeds; see, “[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Structure](#)”.
- When one stay away from bad deeds, the heart “cools down”; this is *Nibbāna* or “*nivana*” or “*niveema*” (“cooling down”).

2. When a thought comes to our mind (mostly triggered by seeing, hearing something related), the decision to act on it may come automatically based our “*gathi*”. If an “enemy” comes into our view when we are walking down the road, thoughts of anger may arise immediately leading to a “fire” in the heart, depending on how “bad” we perceive that person to be. Here the *cetasika* “*dōsa*” dominates our thoughts. Such thoughts that come automatically to one’s mind are due to one “*gathi*” and are the strongest; sometimes they are labelled as “*asankharika*” *citta*.

- Other times, one may hesitate to do an immoral act, but after deliberation or due to encouragement by others may go ahead and do it; such thoughts are called “*sasankharika*” *citta*.
- When I was thinking about stealing cookies as a child, if I did it with a prompting by a sibling, or I myself did it after not been able to overcome the greed, that would have been a “*sasankharika citta*”.
- In another example, the stronger version of “*lōbha*” may be in our minds when we compete for something valuable. Here the desire is not only to acquire it, but we also do not want others to have it. Here the “fire” in the heart is more noticeable compared to the above case of desiring a cookie, which comes under “*rāga*” category.
- So, there are many shades of strength for both good and bad thoughts.
- Even if we do some of these “bad deeds” once in a while, we feel that it is wrong to do them. The stronger the bad deed, the stronger that we “feel” them.

3. However, some people seem to enjoy doing bad deeds. We have heard about people who got tens or hundreds or stab wounds when they died in knife attacks. The person who did the stabbing seem to have been enjoying it; killing of a person does not need that many stabbings. This is a rare event that we all agree is disgusting; we are horrified by the mere thought of it.

- But there are milder versions that seem “normal” to more of us.
- Some people get enjoyment watching other people suffer, say when engaged in a fight. We have seen pictures of people kicking the opponent while the opponent was down on the ground, even unconscious. This is of more common occurrence in torturing animals. Many people enjoy watching “cock fights”.
- In the even more common occurrence of fishing, most people do not “see” the suffering of a fish as it is writhing in agony hanging by the hook, or convulsing while fighting for “water to breath”. These are not immoral people, but their perception about animals has been cultivated to the point that they do not see animals as living beings.

4. *Ditthi* or “wrong vision” play a key role in generating feelings and desires. If we have been taught that killing animals is not an immoral thing to do, then we do not feel uncomfortable doing such an act. People enjoy fishing or hunting because they do not perceive killing fish or deer as an immoral thing to do.

- Instead of getting a “fire” in the heart, they feel a joy while fishing or hunting.

- And this is not restricted to any particular religion. I know many “Buddhists” who enjoy fishing and hunting. On the other hand, most “Buddhists” consider drinking to be immoral, even though “drinking” *per se* is not one of the *dasa akusala* (of course excessive drinking can induce one to do immoral things). It just depends on what “*diṭṭhi*” one has.
- In parts of India, some people believe that washing in a particular river will help “wash away” bad merits. But then the fish in that river should be completely devoid of any bad merits, since they live their whole lives in water. Even such “apparently harmless” wrong visions still cover the mind, and prevent the mind from seeing the reality.
- The problem is that most such *diṭṭhis* propagate from generation to generation without people actually examining the sense of such beliefs.

5. *Diṭṭhi* is one of the key immoral *cetasika* (mental factors), and the opposite *sammā diṭṭhi* or *paññā* (wisdom) is of course a “moral *cetasika*”.

- A key point about *cetasika* is that moral and immoral *cetasika* DO NOT arise together in a *citta*. A thought is either moral OR immoral. A moral thought has one or more of “moral *cetasika*” such as *alōbha*, *adōsa*, compassion, etc. and an immoral thought has one or more of immoral *cetasika* such as *lōbha*, *dōsa*, shamelessness, fearlessness of wrong, etc.

6. The *cetasika* “*pīti*” (pronounced “peethi” or “preethi”) which means “joy” is one that can be associated with either a *kusala* or *akusala* thought. The same thing is true for the *cetasikas* *chanda* (liking) and *virīya* (effort). **These three *cetasika* are included in the six types of *cetasika* called “particulars” that can be in either type of thought, *kusala* or *akusala*; see, “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)”.**

- Thus if one does not believe that killing fish or other animals is immoral and can lead to bad results in future lives, then a person with that *diṭṭhi* can enjoy fishing/hunting (*pīti*), can form a liking for it (*chanda*), and enthusiastically make preparations for fishing/hunting trips (*virīya*).
- On the other hand, someone with *sammā diṭṭhi* will definitely feel at least uncomfortable in doing such an act, will not like it, and will not strive to do such acts. He/she will gain joy by doing things with thoughts that have only moral *cetasika*, and also may have *chanda* and *virīya* associated with such activities.

7. Thus there are many types of “*micca diṭṭhi*” that tend to make people comfortable with immoral acts.

- It must be noted that the word “*diṭṭhi*” is used in Buddha Dhamma to specifically denote *micca diṭṭhi* or “wrong vision”. The opposite is *sammā diṭṭhi* or *paññā* (wisdom).
- Some people do not have a problem with killing other human beings if those are presumed to be “non-believers”. They have been taught all their lives that it is “good thing to do” and will pave the way to heaven.
- It is amazing how one’s mind can be made to accept certain activities as “acceptable” by conditioning over time, especially if started at young age. This is also called “brain washing”. This is why *diṭṭhis* are very difficult to break. Yet, with a determined mindset, one can break *diṭṭhis*.
- The key is to critically evaluate both sides of the particular issue at hand. Does it make sense to say one can go to heaven by killing people? Other than someone’s promise, is there any truth to that statement? Is there a doctrine that EXPLAINS HOW “killing unbelievers can pave the way to heaven?”.
- The key problem is that human mind likes to “take the easy way”. It is easier to try to justify one’s vision or position rather than trying to spend time looking deeper into the issue to make an informed decision. But one needs to think about the consequences that can last for unimaginably long times.

8. Some people just enjoy killing other people; serial killers are a good example. Such people have extreme version of the *mōha cetasika*; they are totally and completely morally blind.

- While most of us cannot even fathom, “how can such a person go to sleep at night?” after killing another person for fun, they actually sleep well with a content (but perverse) mind.
- People like Pol Pot and Hitler planned systematic killing of millions of people for many years. In their “*diṭṭhi*” that was the right thing to do, and many others started believing in that “*diṭṭhi*” too.

9. This is why getting rid of “*diṭṭhi*” and embracing *sammā diṭṭhi* is the first step in the mundane Eightfold Path first and then in *lokottara* Eightfold Path; see, “[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)”.

- Having wrong kinds of vision (*diṭṭhi*) can be very dangerous, since one may not even realize that one is doing immoral things because of that *diṭṭhi*. Such *diṭṭhis* can only be removed via learning Dhamma. One becomes a *Sotāpanna* just by eliminating such wrong visions and perceptions. The three *sanyojana* (or *samyojana*) that are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage (*sathkaya diṭṭhi*, *vicikicca*, *silabbata paramasa*) all arise due to *micca diṭṭhi*.

10. **When we analyze at the *akusala citta* we can see why.** All immoral acts are done with just 12 types of *akusala citta*: eight based on *lōbha* (greed), two based on *patigha* (dislike), and two based on *mōha* (ignorance).

- All “*apayagami*” deeds (those acts responsible for rebirth in the four lowest realms or *apāyas*) are done with the first four *lōbha citta* and the *vicikicca citta*; see, “[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#)”.
- Those first four *akusala citta* are “*diṭṭhi sampayutta*” or “done with wrong views”. The cetasika *vicikicca* also arises due to not knowing the true nature of the world, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. Thus all five *akusala citta* that are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage arise due to *micca diṭṭhi*, wrong visions about the world.

11. **If one believes one is not doing an immoral act while doing that immoral act**, then he/she is likely to do it with *pīti*, *chanda*, and *virīya*., i.e., with joy, liking, and makes effort joyfully to get it done.

- Of course ignorance of law is not an excuse, as stated in the latin phrase, *Ignorantia juris non excusat*. It holds true for the natural laws stated in Buddha Dhamma as well.
- Even worse, according to Buddha Dhamma, immoral acts done with joy are the worst. That is why out of those first four *lōbha citta*, those two done with joy are the absolutely worst: the “*somanassa saḥagata diṭṭhi sampayutta citta*” and the “*somanassa saḥagata diṭṭhi sampayutta sasankharika citta*”.
- In English, these mean, “**act done with joy and wrong vision** due to *gathi*” and “**act done with joy and wrong vision** prompted by other factors”. The first is the worst since it comes automatically; the second *citta* arises after some deliberation, and thus has less potency, or *javana*.

12. Therefore, now we can see why some people do immoral acts with joy and make them even worse; **they simply have wrong world views or *diṭṭhi***. This is why learning Dhamma is so important.

- As the Buddha said, “My Dhamma has never been known to the world before”. So, none of us will know **precisely** what is moral or immoral, without hearing or reading about them.
- However, as humans we have the innate sense of knowing roughly what is moral/immoral. These come from our previous lives. **But depending on the environment that we grew up, we may have acquired certain “wrong visions” or “*micca diṭṭhi*” or “*diṭṭhi*”.**
- This is why teaching children to be moral and making sure they associate with only “good friends” is critical. Those habits learned at young age can last a lifetime unless changed via a determined effort.
- And since one person’s *diṭṭhi* is different from another’s, it is absolutely critical to spend time and verify which *diṭṭhis* are the wrong to be adhered to in the long term. Many people do not believe in rebirth, but according to Buddha that is a *micca diṭṭhi* that can lead to the adverse

outcomes in the future. One needs to examine the evidence and decide for oneself. In addition to looking at , “[Evidence for Rebirth](#)“, one should also examine, “[Vagaries of Life and the Way to Seek “Good Rebirths”](#)”.

13. Finally, the reverse is true too: Those *moral* acts that are done with joy and knowledge (wisdom) or “correct views” (*sammā diṭṭhi*) will lead to *vipāka* or outcomes with highest merits.

- Getting rid of wrong views is acquiring correct views or cultivating *sammā diṭṭhi*. The more one becomes knowledgeable in what is moral and what is not, one easily BECOMES joyful while doing moral deeds; joy and wisdom feed on each other. Of course, *chanda* and *virīya* will grow simultaneously too.
- Thus the “*somanassa saḥagata ñāṇa sampayutta citta*” or the “**thought with joy and wisdom** that comes out automatically” is the strongest *moral citta* (or *sobhana citta*). The next highest is the “*somanassa saḥagata ñāṇa sampayutta sasankharika citta*” or the “**thought with joy and wisdom** prompted by other factors”.
- Here, wisdom starts at the mundane *sammā diṭṭhi* level, increases as one embarks on the *Sotāpanna magga*, then *Sotāpanna phala*, and so on until becoming “fully enlightened” at the *Arahant* stage; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)“.
- The power or *javana* of a *kusala citta* is enhanced with enhanced wisdom. Thus the power of a *citta* of an *Arahant* is much stronger compared to that of a *Sotāpanna*, and that of a *Sotāpanna* is much stronger compared to a normal person.
- Of course the *javana* of a *citta* with strong ignorance (*mōha*) is strong too, and thus makes the deed even more potent and will bring about unbearably bad outcomes (*vipāka*).

14. Even though many people perceive Abhidhamma to be complex, if started with good basics, Abhidhamma helps clarify many complex issues very clearly. Learning about types of *citta* and how different *cetasika* play roles in one’s habits (“*gathi*“) will help clarify many issues.

Next, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)“,

12.6 Key to Sotāpanna Stage – Ditthi and Vicikicca

1. The attainment of the *Sotāpanna* stage accomplishes the first and foremost goal of a *Bhaddhaya*: to remove the possibility of rebirth in the lowest four realms, where suffering is unbearable.

- Even though I have analyzed different ways one can comprehend the “requirements” to be fulfilled to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage (they are all equivalent), one way to easily remember those requirements is to realize that a *Sotāpanna* has REMOVED two key immoral *cetasika*: *diṭṭhi* and *vicikicca*.
- See, “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)” and “[Ditthi \(Wrong Views\), Sammā Ditthi \(Good/Correct Views\)](#)” for introductions to the types of *cetasika* or “mental factors” that highlight one’s “*gathi*” in one’s thoughts.

2. *Cetasika* are inter-related. A good example is *dōsa* (strong hate), which arises as a result of *lōbha* (strong greed); actually *lōbha* TURNS to *dōsa*, **they do not arise together**. When someone kills another human, that is due to *dōsa*; at the moment of the killing, only *dōsa* was in that person’s mind. But that *dōsa* likely arose due to *lōbha*, strong attachment to something at an earlier time.

- And *lōbha* is strong when *diṭṭhi* is strong. In the above example, one would not have formed such strong *lōbha* if one did not have *diṭṭhi*, and instead would have cultivated the moral *cetasika*, *sammā diṭṭhi*, to some extent (i.e., if one knew the consequences of such a strong attachment that can lead to hate and then killing). **Thus when *diṭṭhi* is removed, *lōbha* gets to weaker strength of *rāga* (attachment to sense pleasures).**
- Removal of *diṭṭhi* also leads to the reduction of *dōsa* (strong hate) to *patigha* (tendency to get angry or irritable).
- *Vicikicca* is related to *mōha*; **when *vicikicca* is removed, *mōha* (morally blind) is reduced to *avijjā* (ignorance of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) level**. As discussed in another post, *vicikicca* is the tendency to do unfruitful and harmful things because of a “covered mind”, i.e., not knowing the true nature.
- Those two points are stated in another way by saying that the four “*diṭṭhi saḥagatha lōbha citta*” and the “*vicikicca citta*” are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage (thus 5 of the 12 akusala citta are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage). This was discussed in the post, “[Why Do People Enjoy Immoral Deeds? – Ditthi Is Key](#)”.

3. In other posts I have discussed how one’s “*gathi*” are intimately linked to the kinds of *cetasika* that dominate in one’s mind. The “*apayagami gathi*” or those habits or tendencies of a person that makes the person eligible to born in the *apāyas* (the lowest four realms) are mainly in several key immoral *cetasika*: *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *diṭṭhi*, *mōha*, and *vicikicca*.

- At the *Sotāpanna* stage, the *cetasika* of *diṭṭhi* and *vicikicca* are REMOVED; then *lōbha* is reduced to *rāga* (which can be separated out as *kāma rāga*, *rūpa rāga*, *arūpa rāga*); *dōsa* is reduced to *patigha*, and *mōha* reduced to *avijjā*.
- At the *Sakadāgāmī* stage, from those remaining above, *kāma rāga* and *patigha* are REDUCED.
- Those two, *kāma rāga* and *patigha*, are REMOVED at the *Anāgāmī* stage.
- It is only at the *Arahant* stage that the remaining strength of those key immoral *cetasika* of *lōbha* and *mōha* (i.e., *rūpa rāga*, *arūpa rāga*, *avijjā*) together with all other immoral *cetasika* are removed.

4. As one sheds these immoral *cetasika* and thus “immoral *gathi*”, one automatically cultivates “moral *gathi*” with moral *cetasika*. We saw above that when *diṭṭhi* diminishes, *sammā diṭṭhi* (which is the same as the *paññā* or wisdom *cetasika*) grows.

- In the same way, as *vicikicca* is reduced, *saddhā* (faith) *cetasika* grows. This is why a *Sotāpanna* has “unbreakable” faith (*saddhā*) in Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha; *vicikicca* has been removed. However, that *saddhā* comes through not via blind faith, but via understanding.

- Still, paying homage to Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, via *Tiratana vanadana* or listening to *pirith* helps build *saddhā*; see, “[Buddhist Chanting – Introduction](#)“. This is why it is said that one needs to cultivate *saddhā* and *paññā* together.
- Another thing to remember is that while *alōbha* (non-greed) and *adōsa* (non-hate) are moral *cetasika* opposing *lōbha* and *dōsa*, *amoha* is NOT actually a *cetasika*. Unlike *alōbha* and *adōsa*, *amōha* is not cultivated; *amōha* is merely the absence of *mōha*.
- Instead, what is cultivated is *paññā* (wisdom) or the *sammā diṭṭhi cetasika*. And that requires understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. This is why *paññā* (wisdom) has nothing to do with “book knowledge”, but is all about comprehending the “true nature of this world of 31 realms”. I will have another post on this important point.

5. Another illuminating way to analyze is to look at the removal of the *āsavas* at each stage. The four types of *āsavas* are: *ditthasava* (*āsava* for *diṭṭhi*), *kamasava* (*āsava* for sense pleasures, almost the same as *kāma rāga*), *bhavasava* (*āsava* for *bhava* or existence, which is almost the same as *rūpa rāga* plus *arūpa rāga*), and *avijjasava* (*āsava* for ignorance). Of course “*āsavakkhaya*” or removal of all *āsavas* is *Nibbāna*.

- As we can see (by comparing with #3 above), *ditthasava* is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage; *kamasava* is reduced at the *Sakadāgāmi* stage and removed at the *Anāgāmi* stage; *bhavasava* and *avijjasava* removed at the *Arahant* stage.
- Thus we can also see that it is the combination of *ditthasava* and *kamasava* that give rise to strong greed (*lōbha*) and strong hate (*dōsa*). When one loses *ditthasava* by comprehending the true nature of this world, *lōbha* and *dōsa* are reduced to *kāma rāga* and *patigha* (which constitute *kamasava*).
- While such different analyses will be helpful for someone who has been studying them, all these different terms could be confusing to those who are new to these terms. But one will get used to these terms with time, and it is important to understand what they mean (not just to memorize) in the long term. With usage, they WILL become familiar.
- In the days of the Buddha, Buddha Dhamma was called “*vibhangavādi*” or “doctrine that systematically analyzes by parts”. Just like medical students learn about the human body by dissecting dead bodies, it is informative to look at the mind by analyzing it in different ways. And all types of analyses are inter-consistent.

6. A *Sotāpanna*, by comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* to a certain extent, REMOVES *diṭṭhi* (i.e., achieves *ditthivisuddhi*) and cultivates *sammā diṭṭhi* to a certain level. And when that happens, the strength of the *mōha cetasika* is reduced to just *avijjā* level, and also the *vicikicca cetasika* is REMOVED. Simultaneously, *lōbha* is REDUCED to *rāga*, which then are removed in stages at higher stages of *Nibbāna* as stated in #3 above.

- The above paragraph briefly summarizes what happens at the *Sotāpanna* stage. It may seem simple, but it requires lot of effort to discipline the mind to get to that stage, mostly via learning and contemplating Dhamma.
- One has reduced the strength of attachment to “worldly things” to the extent that one will NOT do certain immoral actions no matter how much wealth or sense pleasure is at stake. One WILL NOT act with *vicikicca*: there is no hesitation in trying to decide, one KNOWS such an act will lead to the birth in the *apāyas*. It is not something one has to think about at that moment; it comes out AUTOMATICALLY, because of such “*apayagami gathi*” have been PERMANENTLY removed.
- Thus by getting to know some properties of key *cetasika* we can get an idea of how our minds work, and get an idea why different people respond to the same external influences in different ways. It is because their “*gathi*” or dominant *cetasika* are different.

7. Now let us take some examples. *Diṭṭhi* is at the forefront because one’s “views” determines what one has gotten used to or one is comfortable with.

- If we take the *diṭṭhi* (or view) that says if one bathes in a certain river one could wash away one's sins. This does not appear to be a strong *diṭṭhi*, but it is dangerous one: then one can do all sorts of immoral deeds all day along and then take a bath to "wash away" all those sins and thus get rid of any *kamma vipāka*. Yet, this *diṭṭhi* is something that has been carried from generation to generation in parts of India.
- Many people say, "I don't do immoral things and even help out others, therefore, bad things will not happen to me". That is a *diṭṭhi* too, because that person does not realize that he/she most certainly has done innumerable bad things in previous lives. That *diṭṭhi* therefore arises due to not believing in rebirth. **The "cause and effect" is a valid argument, but that argument holds only within the broader world view, that this is not the only life we have had.**

8. There are several key *diṭṭhis* that are common in Buddhist countries.

- Many "Buddhists" believe that taking and obeying the eight precepts on Full Moon days is enough to attain *Nibbāna*. There are old ladies in Sri Lanka who do not miss a single Full Moon day and dutifully take those precepts. But their minds are filled with ignorance and some of them mostly get together and gossip all day.
- While taking those precepts and mindfully disciplining oneself and meditating for a whole day is an excellent way to practice, just nominally taking precepts is not going to do anything to cleanse one's mind.
- Then there is the perception that taking even a glass of wine (or some mild alcoholic beverage) is highly immoral. While it is best to avoid taking any kind of alcohol, drinking a glass of wine or beer is not a "*akusala kamma*". Of course if one gets addicted or intoxicated, then one could be led to do *akusala kamma*. Actually, when one gains wisdom via learning Dhamma, **the tendency to crave for alcohol or anything else gradually diminishes.**
- Rituals are prevalent in most Buddhist countries. People may do all sorts of immoral deeds (gossiping, slandering, using harsh words, fishing, hunting, are a few examples) during the day and at the end of the day, they light a lamp for the Buddha, say a few verses ("*gatha*"), and believe that is all they need to do.
- All these come under one of the three *sanyojana*, "*silabbata paramasa*" (*diṭṭhi* that says following rituals or set guidelines can lead to *Nibbāna*), is removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage.
- But it must be emphasized that most of such procedures CAN BE very effective in calming the mind and building *saddhā* (both of which then help cultivate wisdom by being able to comprehend Dhamma), if done properly while making an effort to cleanse one's mind; see, "[Buddhist Chanting – Introduction](#)".

9. We can also see that *vicikicca* (tendency to do inappropriate/immoral/dangerous deeds) also arises because one is not aware of how *kamma/kamma vipāka* operate and has not comprehended *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

- It is easy for outside influences to change the mind of someone with strong *vicikicca* to do bad things. Since children in general are unaware of what is right and what is wrong, it is easy to manipulate their minds. This is why making sure children grow up in environments that are conducive to moral behavior is very important.
- Even adults, who are not aware of the consequences of immoral behavior have high levels of *vicikicca*. They tend to only look at the immediate gratifications of an act rather than to have a long-term perspective.
- Learning Dhamma is the only guaranteed way to remove *vicikicca*.

10. Some people tend to think that it is better not to even contemplate on bad consequences of bad actions, or to learn WHY bad actions are bound to lead to bad outcomes. The thinking is "as long as I don't think about such depressing things, I will feel fine".

- Just like not knowing that a certain action is unlawful is not a valid argument in a court of law, ignorance of the Nature's laws is not a valid excuse. Sometimes one can get away when a law is broken by telling more lies and changing the decision of a jury. **But in the Nature's court, it is one's mind that makes the decisions and one cannot fool one's own mind.**
- **This is why *ditṭhi* can be broken only by cleansing one's mind.** One cleanses one's mind by first learning about *kamma* and *kamma vipāka* first and THEN reading about *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and THEN comprehending the true meanings of those words, i.e., by comprehending the true nature of this world; see, "[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)" and "[How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#)".
- **One's own mind needs to realize futility of doing immoral deeds, not just because they are bound to bring thousand-fold bad outcomes, but also because there is "no point", "no real benefit" of doing bad things to fulfil one's sense desires or to "own valuable things";** such sense pleasures or valuable things do not last in the long term. But the consequences can linger on for long times.

11. As I pointed out in "[Why do People Enjoy Immoral Deeds? – Ditṭhi is Key](#)", we all have *ditṭhi* that have been cultivated in us by the environment that we grew up in, whether it is cultural, social, or religious. And Buddhists are no exception. We all need to critically evaluate such *ditṭhi* and sort out which ones are bad for oneself. Buddha has clearly stated which *ditṭhi* are bad: "[Three Kinds of Ditṭhi, Eightfold Paths, and Samādhi](#)".

12.7 The Origin of Matter – Suddhashtaka

November 27, 2015; December 17, 2017

I have deliberated for some time whether this post is premature. This post requires understanding of basic concepts that I have discussed so far (as of November, 2015).

- Please don't read it, unless you have thought about the basic concepts of “*san*“, *gathi*, *āsava*, *paticca samuppāda*, etc. It may not make much sense, and thus it could discourage people from proceeding any further thinking, “this stuff does not make sense”.
- On the other hand, for who have some understanding of those concepts, this could help gain more insight.
- As I publish more posts on this issue, the picture will become increasingly clear. Please be patient. The value of the Buddha Dhamma will also become clear, and that is the best way to cultivate *saddhā* (faith based on understanding).
- This topic is discussed in detail in the “[Nāma & Rūpa to Nāmarūpa](#)” subsection of the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.

1. Anything has to be either *sankata* or *asankata*.

- A *sankata* has a beginning, transforms in unpredictable ways during existence (*viparinama*), and eventually ceases to exist; see, for example, “[Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata](#)” and “[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#)”.
- An *asankata* has no beginning, does not change during existence, and has no end point. An *asankata* lasts forever. *Nibbāna* is the only *asankata dhamma*, and it does not belong to “this world of 31 realms”.
- There is nothing in between. Please think carefully of the truth of that.
- **Everything in this world is a *sankata*, i.e., has a beginning and an end.** And this has been confirmed by science during the past 100 years or so. Einstein thought our universe was in a steady state, and if proven that way, could have contradicted Buddha Dhamma. But now it is clear that nothing in this universe will last forever. And everything is changing, in flux.
- All the matter in the universe is thought to have created some 14 billion years ago, in a “Big Bang”. Even though this has not been fully confirmed yet, there is no doubt that any type of matter has a finite lifetime. **Thus Buddha Dhamma has been shown to be correct in this fundamental aspect.**

2. Now, if we accept that all the matter in this world has been created in some way, what caused it to appear?

- Scientists have no clear explanation on this at this point in time (November, 2015). They can calculate the evolution of the universe from a fraction of a second after the Big Bang, but physics is unable to explain what happened before the Big Bang.
- And, of course, the “Big Bang theory” has not yet fully confirmed, even though most scientists believe it. Still, there are some scientists who do not believe everything “popped up” all of a sudden in a Big Bang. They believe that universes are cyclic, i.e., they transform and evolve; see, for example, “[Endless Universe – Beyond the Big Bang](#)”, by P. J. Steinhardt and N. Turok (2007).

3. Buddha Dhamma of course says all living beings living at present have existed forever.

- What is meant here is that “all existing lifestreams” have existed forever. In each life, a given “lifestream” gets a physical body (coarse or fine depending on the realm of existence), and that physical body is, of course, a *sankata*. When that physical body is destroyed, the lifestream takes hold of a new body; see, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)”.
- **What “propagates” from life-to-life (while continually and incessantly changing), are the *āsava*, *anusaya*, and *gathi* (mental properties) that makes up a dynamic (ever-changing) lifestream.**

- Thus, the universe is never completely destroyed and it does not start with a “Big Bang” as many scientists believe right now. Remember that only 100 or so years ago, scientists believed the universe was in a steady state. Scientific theories change to “fit the existing data”. But pure Buddha Dhamma has not changed at all since Buddha Gotama taught it 2500 years ago; see, [“Historical Background”](#).

4. Even though the Buddha discouraged people from investigating the properties of the universe in detail (which would be an impossible task, and would take one’s precious time away from striving for *Nibbāna*), he has talked about uncountable “planetary systems” in the universe like our Solar system, which also has been confirmed by science.

- In any case, whatever the model that science eventually clarifies WILL BE consistent with Buddha Dhamma, i.e., that model will have living beings in existence somewhere in the 31 realms. Actually, this has been discussed in detail in a few *suttas*, especially the *Agganna sutta* (but don’t bother to look it up on the internet, because all current translations are embarrassingly bad).
- In that *sutta*, the Buddha explains how conglomerates of “planetary systems” blow up and are re-formed in time scales of “*mahā kalpas*“. He has given a simile to get an idea of the length of a *mahā kalpa* and it is approximately several billion years; see, [“The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma”](#). And this destruction of a “star system” seems to be what scientists have observed as a supernova. Supernovae are of common occurrence; about three of them can be expected to happen every century in our Milky Way galaxy.
- We will slowly go through the *Agganna sutta* as enough background material is added to the website. And I expect this topic will take us more than a year, and many essays, to complete. However, mind is the precursor: [“Manōpubbangamā Dhammā.”](#)

5. However, now we have enough background material on the website to get an idea about how all the *sankata* in this world originate and die off, AT THE VERY FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL.

- Here we will discuss only the origin of the smallest unit of matter, called a “*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]“. This unit of matter is billion times smaller than “an atom” in modern science. One time, not long ago, science believed that an atom was the smallest unit of matter. Now atoms have been shown to be composites of many “elementary particles” and even many of those “elementary particles” are shown to have more structure! At present, there is no end in sight how smaller a “basic unit of matter” can get. Actually, now science is unable to distinguish between “matter” and “energy”.
- For example, a “Higgs boson” is just a packet of energy.
- Matter and energy are of course related by the famous equation, $E \text{ (energy)} = m \text{ (mass)} \times c^2$, where c is the speed of light. Thus any small unit of matter is indistinguishable from a “packet of energy”. For example, the light we see comes in “packets” called photons. Thus photon is matter in this sense, and thus everything in this world at the basic level can have the label “matter” or “energy”.
- The distinction between “matter” and “energy” is blurred at this fundamental level.

6. A *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] is a “packet of energy” and is THE basic unit that all matter is made out of. It is much smaller than in energy compared to a light photon that we see. A humongous number of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] would have the energy of a light photon.

- A *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], being a *sankata*, is created by the mind. This may be surprising to many of you, but as we progress, I will provide evidence that it is true. This is why the Buddha said, “*mano pubbangamā dhammā...*”, i.e., “everything has mind as the precursor...”.
- However, almost all of the matter around us was created by this “mind process” a very long time ago. That is story in the *Agganna sutta*. At the present time also, *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] are being created by us all the time (via *javana citta*), but in very minute quantities.

- Anyone with higher *abhiññā* powers is supposed to be able to create significant amount of matter, like a flower or even larger entities. Matter (at the level of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]) is created by *javana citta*, and someone with *abhiññā* powers can maintain a *citta vithi* with *javana citta* flowing continuously to generate “significant amounts of matter”, as I briefly discussed at the end of the post, “[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#)”.
- But most of the time what we are doing now is to “remake” different types of *sankata* using the “raw material” (*suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]) that was created billions of years ago. These original *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] have lifetimes of close to 20 *anthakkalpa* (or *antarakalpa*), where 80 such *anthakkalpa* are in a *mahā kalpa*.
- Thus instead of having a lifetime of 17 thought moments, as some people erroneously believe, *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] have very long lifetimes. Again, modern physics has confirmed that some of the elementary particles (e.g., electron) have very long lifetimes. Therefore, this idea of “everything arising and ceasing rapidly” is a misconception; see, “[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#)”. We will discuss this in more detail in the future.
- Please don’t hesitate to ask questions at this early stage. There is a lot of information in this post to digest, and some of them will become clearer as we proceed.

7. *Suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] (“*suddha*” for “pure” or fundamental” + “*ashtaka*” or “eight”) means a unit of matter consisting of eight fundamental entities.

- Four of these are the “*satara mahā bhūta*”: *patavi*, *āpo*, *thejo*, *vāyo*. These are truly the most fundamental units of matter, but they cannot be detected by themselves. It may be hard to believe for many at this stage, but those are created by “*gathi*” that I have discussed in several posts; see, the introductory post: “[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)”. By the way, *Nibbāna* is attained via getting rid of “*āsava*” and “*gathi*” and they go together: “[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#)”. This is why I said one needs to have an understanding of these concepts to grasp the material in this post.
- These *satara mahā bhūta* are first created by the mind with four basic “*gathi*” of humans: “*thada gathiya*” (in Sinhala) means the “coarseness”, corresponding to *patavi*; “*bandena gathiya*” means the “bind together” which leads to liquidity corresponding to *āpo*; “*théjas gathiya*” means the “fiery or energetic”, corresponding to *tējo*; and, “*salena gathiya*” means the “motion”, corresponding to *vāyo*. They are created in *javana citta*.
- Those most fundamental four units (*satara mahā bhūta*) are supposed to be created by the mind due to *avijjā* or ignorance. We like to have possession of things made out of these units, because we do not comprehend the “unfruitful nature” of such impermanent things.
- Now, the craving for these material things lead to four more *gathi* due to *taṇhā*: Due to our tendency to think highly (“*varnanā karanava*” in Sinhala), another *gathi* of “*varna*” is created as different manifestations of the *satara mahā bhūta*. Similarly, three more units called *gandha*, *rasa*, and *oja* are created due to *taṇhā* corresponding to our desire to be in touch with them, keep them close (*rassa*), and to re-generate them. It will take too much space to explain these in detail, but I hope you get the basic idea.

8. Therefore, four basic units of *patavi*, *āpo*, *thejo*, *vāyo* arise due to *avijjā*, and the other four of *varna*, *gandha*, *rasa*, and *oja* arise due to *taṇhā*. The latter four also arise due to *patavi*, *āpo*, *thejo*, *vāyo* (actually they are just different modes of vibration of *patavi*, *āpo*, *thejo*, *vāyo*). We will get into more details in the future, so that even physicists would be able to appreciate the value of Abhidhamma.

- These eight can never be detected in isolation; thus they are called “*avinibbhoga rūpa*”. They always rise together; all eight are there in any *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]. The relative “amounts” of each component can vary and thus some *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] can be dominated by one component, for example. Even then, all eight are present to some extent. **This is tantamount to saying that wherever there is *avijjā* there is *taṇhā*, and vice versa.**
- This very fundamental level is called the “*bhūta*” stage. *Bhūta* is another name for “ghost” and is thus called because of their elusive nature. They can never be detected and can only be

“seen” by a Buddha. The Buddha explained this to *Mahā Brahma*, who thought he knew everything about the world: “[Brahmanimantanika Sutta \(Majjhima Nikaya 49\)](#)“. I will explain this *sutta* in detail later.

- And a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] can never be divided; thus they are called “*avinibbhōga rūpa kalapa*“.
- These eight can never be detected in isolation. They always rise together; all eight are there in any *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]. The relative “amounts” of each component can vary and thus some *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] can be dominated by one component, for example. Even then, all eight are present to some extent. **This is tantamount to saying that wherever there is *avijjā* there is *taṇhā*, and vice versa.**
- This very fundamental level is called the “*bhūta*” stage. *Bhūta* is another name for “ghost” and is thus called because of their elusive nature. They can never be detected and can only be “seen” by a Buddha.
- And a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] can never be divided; thus they are called “*avinibbhōga rūpa kalapa*“.

9. Thus “*gathi*” lead to “*bhūta*“, the first phase of *rūpa* that can be seen (only by Buddha). This is the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage. This is where mental energy is converted to matter at the very fundamental stage. Just keep that in mind as we proceed.

- When enormous numbers of these *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] coalesce together they get to a more condensed state of “*mahā bhūta*“. The fine bodies of *brahmas* and some *gandhabbas* are made of these *mahā bhūta*. *Rūpa of this higher density can be seen by brahmas*. This level of “solidification” can be compared (in energy) to electromagnetic radiation at long wavelength range; thus we cannot “see” those entities with our eyes.
- By the way, there are “ghost detector” apps made by many software companies which can detect “ghosts”. Even though right now this is done mostly for fun, it will be shown to be a correct concept in the near future. These detectors detect “packets of energy” that we cannot see with our eyes.
- Only when huge amounts of these *mahā bhūta* coalesce together to become even more condensed, that we can see them. At this highly condensed state, matter is called “*dhātu*“. Bodies of *devas* are made of finer *dhātu*. This is why we cannot see *devas*, but *brahmas* can see them.
- Thus our bodies are made of more dense *dhātu* that we can see. This is why solid objects are called “*patavi dhātu*“; *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] in such objects have predominantly *patavi*. In liquids, things are bound together and flow together because they mostly have *āpo dhātu*. Not only fire, but also those objects that have “energetic appearance”, have more *tejo*. And not only the wind, but also things that are prone to move, have more *vāyo*.

10. Therefore, we can see that *patavi*, *āpo*, *tējo*, *vāyo* have much deeper meanings than just earth, water, fire, and wind. Why did the ancient Greeks also used the same terms? That is due to the same reason that Hindu religion also uses terms like *karma* (which is the Sanskrit word for *kamma*), *Nirvana* (which is the Sanskrit word for *Nibbāna*), *ānāpāna*, etc.

- There have been three Buddhas in this *mahā kalpa* (i.e., during the existence of our Solar system) before the Buddha Gotama; that is how those terms came to usage before Buddha Gotama. Those concepts by the previous Buddhas were transmitted down through successive generations, but the true meanings got lost.
- **The human history is much longer than tens of thousands of years, as believed by many today.** Whole continents can submerge, wiping out entire populations; this is not being considered seriously yet, but there is evidence: see, [WebLink: WIKI: Submerged continent](#). Anyway, that is a topic to be discussed later when more evidence become available. It will be proven that one region that has definitely not changed since the formation of the Earth is Asia encompassing Sri Lanka, India, and China. **Archeologists should be doing more archeological work in this**

region rather than in Africa; see, “[Ancient teeth found in China challenge modern human migration theory](#)”.

- As I mentioned above, there were three Buddhas before Buddha Gotama, and that is how some of the key terms like *patavi*, *āpo*, *tējo*, *vāyo* and *kamma* and *Nibbāna* (*nirvana*) have been in use even before the Buddha Gotama: They had been transmitted down through generations, but of course their true meanings had been lost.
- Losing the true meanings in the *Tipitaka* happened at least a few times even during this Buddha *sāsana*, within the past 2500 years. The best example is the misinterpretation of *san*, *samsāra*, *anicca* and *anatta* during just the past hundreds of years; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)” and “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.
- **But the Buddha Gotama has said that his *Buddha Sāsana* will last for 5000 years. We are only half way through. That is why it is making a comeback now. And this time it will have staying power due to the presence of the internet. This is one reason why we should all be forever grateful to modern science, much more than for all other technological wonders it has brought about.**

11. Regarding the “ghost detectors” that I mentioned in #8 above, here is a youtube video put out by someone who has played with one of the many versions available (They are nothing but detectors of “packets of electromagnetic energy”. I am not sure how those other apps can determine what the “ghosts” say; they are likely to be fake, but if anyone has more information on that, please let me know):

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Ghost Detector](#)

12.8 **What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis**

April 15, 2016; revised November 5, 2017; February 9, 2018

1. This is an advanced topic (yet, hopefully made easy even for those who are not into Abhidhamma). Please don't hesitate to comment if something is not clear. A simpler version is at: "[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#)".

- In contrast to touching, smelling, and tasting, we do not directly “touch” the external world (matter) with our eyes, ears or the mind.
- While we experience the “outside world” as it is (or objectively) with our five physical senses, what we interact with our minds are our own “perceptions, feelings, plans, and hopes” for that external world.
- We will get into more details on those two aspects in the future, but in this post we will look at what “*dhamma*” are in relation to the mind. That will help us address those other two issues in the future.
- It is to be noted that *dhammā* are *rūpa* below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*] stage; *dhamma* as in Buddha Dhamma or *Abhidhamma* refer to Buddha's teachings.
- As I mentioned in the “[Abhidhamma – Introduction](#)“, I very much want to make Abhidhamma easy to grasp for anyone. I also want to highlight the fact the Buddha Dhamma is well ahead of science (quantum mechanics) in understanding even our material world; science has not even begun to explore the mind.

2. Existence in this world of 31 realms is maintained via our attachments to “things” in this world. These “things” are *rūpa*.

- When our minds contact these external *rūpa*, we generate very brief sense enjoyments called *assāda*; see, “[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana](#)“. Since we perceive these sense contacts to be long-lasting and enjoyable (and ignore the sufferings that we go through to acquire them), we willingly desire such sense pleasures.
- **However, any *rūpa* that arises is subjected to unexpected change (*viparinama*) and eventual decay and destruction, which is the basis of *anicca* nature.**

3. Another factor that we have not discussed much in detail is that *rūpa* have different levels of texture or solidity.

- The *rūpa* that we experience in the human realms (and those realms below us) are the densest form called *dhatu*. The *deva* realms above us have finer *dhatu* that we cannot see. In the *rūpa lokas*, *rupi brahmas* have even finer *rūpa* called *mahā bhūta*. And in the *arūpa loka*, there are just traces of *bhūta* (just the *hadaya vatthu*) made of the smallest unit of matter called *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*], and of course much finer *gati* (or *gathi*).
- You may want to review the concepts discussed in the following posts: “[What Are Rūpa? \(Relation to Nibbāna\)](#)“, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatthaka\]](#)“.

4. It is conventional knowledge is that we experience the external world with our five physical senses: We see with our eyes, hear with the ears, smell with the nose, taste with the tongue, and touch things with our physical bodies.

- Is that all one experiences? Imagine being in a dark chamber totally isolated from the rest of the world. A good example is the punishment by the military called solitary confinement especially in the old days: one is kept in a totally isolated dark cell for many hours at a time.
- Does such a person experience the outside world? Of course. He/she can think about all sorts of things: recall past events, think about the future, recall any place that he has been to, etc.
- In fact, we do this any given day, not only by recalling past experiences, but also by imagining desired future events.

5. Sense contacts other than the five physical senses are due to the sixth sense: the mind. One is totally unaware of the external world only when one is totally unconscious.

- So, what are the *rūpa* that we experience with our minds? These are *dhamma*! As stated in the phrase, “*mananca paticca dhammeca uppaddati mano vinnanan*“, contacts of *dhamma* with the *mana indriya* leads to *mano viññāṇa*.

6. The arising of *viññāṇa* due to different types of sense inputs is described in *abhidhamma* (and also in “[WebLink: suttacentral: Cha Chakka Sutta \(MN 148\)](#)“) as:

“*cakkunca paticca rupeca uppaddati cakkhu vinnanan*”,

“*sotanca paticca sadda uppaddati sota vinnanan*”,

“*jivhanca paticca rasa uppaddati jivha vinnanan*”,

“*ghananca paticca gandha uppaddati ghana vinnanan*”,

“*kayanca paticca pottabba uppaddati kaya vinnanan*“, and

“*mananca paticca dhammeca uppaddati mano vinnanan*”

- Thus it is clear that *mano viññāṇa* arise when *dhamma* make contact with the *mana indriya*, just like *cakku viññāṇa* arise when (*vanna*) *rūpa* or light make contact with the *cakku indriya* (eyes) or *sota viññāṇa* arise when *sadda rūpa* (sound waves) make contact with the *sota indriya* (ears).
- *Kaya viññāṇa* result from contacts which are the most coarse (*pottabba* or touch due to *dhatu*), and *mano viññāṇa* result from the contacts that are extremely fine, *dhamma*.

7. Thus, we can categorize our six types of contacts with the external world according to the “coarseness” of the contacts.

- **The body contacts (touch), taste, and smell are the coarse contacts**; they involve direct touching (*pottabba*), and those involve solid particulates (taste and smell).
- **Vision involves light particles (photons) interacting with the physical eye**. Light was not even considered a particle until Einstein, Compton and others proved that in the early 1920’s.
- In the language of physics, **sound involves phonons which have even less energy than light photons**, i.e., they are “even softer”.

8. We can also see that the **sense elements in the body** also get less and less coarse in that order. It must be noted that the sensing elements in the ear are not the ear that we see, but very sensitive area deep inside the ear.

- According to Buddha Dhamma (and confirmed by science), two things respond to each other and last longer when in heavy usage, if they have similar densities. For example, if a steel rod rubs against a wooden rod, the wooden rod will soon wear out. But two steel rods (or two wooden rods) can be rubbing against each for long times.
- Thus going from touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing, both the external influences — touch, tasty things, smells, light (photons), sound (phonons) — and the sense elements (body, tongue, nose, eyes, ears) become finer in that order.

9. **The finest sensing element is the “*mana indriya*” which is inside the brain**. It is likely to be one of the following: thalamus, amygdala, or hippocampus. I have not had enough time to investigate the functions of these sensitive elements of the brain, but according to Buddha Dhamma, the “*mana indriya*” is inside the brain and is analogous to the eyes or the ears; more details will become clear as we discuss below.

- What come down in the legend as the “third eye” is this “*mana indriya*“. It is supposed to be located behind the forehead.
- **The *rūpa* that come into contact with the *mana indriya* are finer than a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*], and are still in the “*gati*” stage, but they are on the way to become *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*]**. They are not coarse enough to be “seeing” even with *abhiññā*

powers, and do not make contact with other five coarse senses. Thus they are called, “*anidassan appatighan dhammayatana pariyapanna rupan*”.

- Here, “*anidassana*” means “cannot be seen” and “*appatigha*” means “cannot be touched or sensed with even the finest instrument”. And, “*dhammayatana pariyapanna rupan*” means “can make contact only with the *dhammayatana* or *mana indriya*”.

10. In the post, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatthaka\]](#)”, we discussed how the smallest material element, a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*], is created by the mind with origins in four basic “*gati*” of humans that arise due to *avijjā*: “*thada gathiya*” (in Sinhala) means the “coarseness”, corresponding to *patavi*; “*bandena gathiya*” means the “bind together” which leads to liquidity corresponding to *āpo*; “*théjas gathiya*” means the “fiery or energetic”, corresponding to *tējo*; and, “*salena gathiya*” means the “motion”, corresponding to *vāyo*.

- **craving for these material things lead to four more *gati* due to *taṇhā***: Due to our tendency to think highly (“*varnanā karanava*” in Sinhala), another *gati* of “*varna*” is created as different manifestations of the *satara mahā bhūta*. Similarly, three more units called *gandha*, *rasa*, and *oja* are created due to *taṇhā* corresponding to our desire to be in touch with them, keep them close (*rassa*), and to re-generate them. [**rassa**: [adj.] short; dwarfish; stunted]

11. Before these eight inseparable units solidify into what we call matter, there is the precursor stage of *gati*: cultivation of *gati* leads to *bhūta*, which are in the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*] stage. Further solidification of *bhūta* leads to *mahā bhūta*. The fine *rūpa* of *brahmas* are composed of *mahā bhūta*.

- **The *gati* stage of *rūpa* — the origins of *rūpa* — are also called “*mano rūpa*”**: these are really what we visualize in our minds. We can visualize scenes from the past, and those are *mano rūpa*. In the process of making *gati*, we constantly think about associated material things; those are *mano rūpa*.

12. *Mahā bhūta*, upon further condensation, become *dhatu*. The bodies of *devas* are made of finer *dhatu*, and our bodies — as well as all material things we see — are composed of denser *dhatu*.

- Therefore, the origins of all matter is *gati*! But our *gati* (of normal humans) actually do not lead to the formation of significant amounts of even *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*]. So, we still have a long way to go before we can explain how these solid objects in our world were formed as described in the *Agganna Sutta*.

13. Just like the eye is receiving visual information or the ear the sounds, the “*mana indriya*” is receiving “*dhamma*”. And *dhamma* are much finer than light or sound *rūpa*. In fact, all five physical senses deal with signals transmitted via solidified particles made out of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*], but *dhamma* are just energy, below what we call “matter”. Actually, even most physicists do not consider light as matter or “particles”; I will write a post on why light photons are indeed particles according to quantum mechanics.

- As we discussed in the post, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatthaka\]](#)”, even a single light particle (photon) is made of a very large number of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*].
- As we discussed there, a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*] is made by the mind. *Dhamma* can be considered the early stages of a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*]; they are in fact *kammic* energy packets made by the mind in *javana citta*, and arise due to our *gati*. **This is really the link between mind and matter!**

14. Therefore, all six senses allow our minds to interact with the material world. We actually interact with two worlds: **the material world and the mind world or the *mano thalaya***.

- Different types of *rūpa* (*varna*, *gandha*, *rasa*, *ōja*, *pottabba*) in our physical world (*rūpa lōka*) are built with *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatthaka*]. *Dhammā* or *kamma beeja* (in the *manō lōka*) are basically “energy packets” not yet solidified to the state of a *suddhāshtaka*.
- The *pancakkhandha* of a living being has “components” from both worlds. The *rupakkhandha* represents interactions with the material world (as mental records); see, “[Pancakkhandha or](#)

Five Aggregates – A Misinterpreted Concept“. The other four *khandha* (*vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, *viññāṇa*) represent the mind world.

- Each and every living being is associated with a *pancakkhandha*. The Buddha said that one cannot define a living being with less than five *khandhas*.
- To repeat: **One's *pancakkhadha* is not one's body as is commonly described.** It is not even physical. It is all mental: “Pancupādānakkhandha – It is All Mental“.

15. The creation of *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] by the mind in *javana citta*, starts first by enhancing one's *gati*. As we will discuss in a future post on the “*Asevana Paccaya*“, the more one does activities related to a given *gati*, that *gati* grows. [*Āsevana-paccaya*: repetition, is one of the 24 conditional relations paccaya.]

- The growing of a *gati* is really the accumulation of a *kamma beeja* (seed), and that is deposited in the *kamma bhava* in the mind plane. These are really *dhamma* that is in “*mananca paticca dhammeca uppaddati mano vinnanan*“.
- And they (*dhamma* or *kamma beeja*) can come back to one's mind when the mind is in a receptive state for such a *gati*. Thus it is a self-feeding feedback loop.
- This is an important point to contemplate on. This is why a drunkard gets the urge to drink, or a gambler gets the urge to visit a casino. People who don't have such *gati*, do not get such urges because they do not have corresponding *dhamma* repeatedly coming back to impinge on the *mana indriya*.
- By the way, as discussed in the “Living Dhamma” section, any such “bad *gati*” can be reduced and eventually eliminated by a two-step method: (i) forcefully stop **activities** — and **conscious thoughts** about them — that contribute that *gati* when one becomes aware DURING such an act OR a conscious thought, (ii) keep learning Buddha Dhamma to comprehend how that process can actually work (as discussed starting with basic fundamentals of Buddha Dhamma in the “Living Dhamma” section); one key aspect here to contemplate on the bad consequences of such actions/thoughts.

16. To emphasize, *dhamma* arise due to *kamma* that we commit. The more *kamma* we do, the corresponding *dhamma* will grow, and become *gati*.

- *Dhamma* means “to bear”; one bears what one likes and what one engages in.
- When one cultivates “dog *gati*” that is what one bears. And that is what comes back to one's mind at the *cuti-patisandhi* moment and can lead to the next *bhava*, and thus birth (*jati*) as a dog.

17. However, creation of a *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] requires trillions of *citta vithi* running consecutively. Thus it does not happen significantly by a normal human being. It requires not only *jhānas*, but being able to get into *samapatti*. Those with *abhiññā* powers have the ability to get into *samapatti* very quickly.

- When in *jhānas*, *cittas* can still switch back to five physical senses in between. When one is in a *jhāna*, one can hear external sounds, for example.
- However, when one is in a *samapatti*, the *jhānic cittas* can flow unceasingly for long times. Thus, *pancadvara citta vithi* cannot run in between, and thus one is totally unaware of the external environment when in *samapatti*.

18. Furthermore, when in *samapatti*, *jhānic citta* flow unceasingly and make each new *javana citta* stronger than the predecessor with the “*Asevana Paccaya*“. We will discuss this in detail in the future.

- This is how those with *abhiññā* powers (i.e., who can easily get into *samapatti* and have practiced it well) can even make physical objects: One can start off with a picture of a flower in one's mind and then by creating more and more *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] with each new *javana citta*, create an actual flower in a very short time!

19. Finally, *dhamma* in the *nāma lōka* are the same as those *viññāṇa* established in the *kamma bhava*. This is a subtle point; see, “[Viññāṇa Aggregate](#)”.

- *Dhamma* or *viññāṇa* are called *anidassana*, *appatigha rūpa* (*rūpa* that cannot be seen or made contact with) and they are just energies lying below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] stage; see, “[Anidassana Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#)”.
- *Kamma bhava* is the same as the *nāma lōka*; *Dhamma* in the *nāma lōka* are the same as *viññāṇa* that are established in the *kamma bhava*.; see, “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)”.

12.8.1 24 conditional relations Paccaya

From Dhamma Wiki

Paccaya: 'condition', is something on which something else, the so-called 'conditioned thing', is dependent, and without which the latter cannot be. Many are the ways in which one thing, or one occurrence, may be the condition for some other thing, or occurrence. In the Patthāna, the last book of the Abhidhamma Pitaka comprising 6 large vols. in the Siamese edition, these 24 modes of conditionality are enumerated and explained, and then applied to all conceivable mental and physical phenomena and occurrences, and thus their conditioned nature is demonstrated.

The first two volumes of the Patthāna have been translated into English by the Venerable U Nārada mūla patthāna Sayadaw of Burma, under the title Conditional Relations Published by the Pāli Text Society, London 1969, 1981.

The 24 modes of conditionality are:

1. Root condition: *hetu paccaya*
2. Object: *ārammana*
3. Predominance: *adhipati*
4. Proximity: *anantara*
5. Contiguity: *samanantara*
6. Co-nascence: *sahajāta*
7. Mutuality: *aññamañña*
8. Support: *nissaya*
9. Decisive Support: *upanissaya*
10. Pre-nascence: *purejāta*
11. Post-nascence: *pacchājāta*
12. Repetition: *āsevana*
13. Kamma: *kamma*
14. Kamma-result: *vipāka*
15. Nutriment: *āhāra*
16. Ability: *indriya*
17. Jhāna: [jhānas](#)
18. path: [magga](#)
19. Association: *sampayutta*
20. Dissociation: *vippayutta*
21. Presence: *atthi*

22. Absence: *natthi*

23. Disappearance: *vigata*

24. Non-disappearance: *avigata*

1: Root-condition *hetu-paccaya* is that condition that resembles the root of a tree. Just as a tree rests on its root, and remains alive only as long as its root is not destroyed, similarly all kammically advantageous and disadvantageous mental states are entirely dependent on the simultaneity and presence of their respective roots, i.e., of greed *lōbha*, hate *dōsa* confusion *mōha* or greedlessness *alōbha* hatelessness *adōsa* unconfusedness *amōha*. For the definition of these 6 roots, see: *mūla*

The roots are a condition by way of root for the mental phenomena associated with a root, and for the material phenomena produced thereby e.g. for bodily expression; Patth.

2: Object-condition *ārammana-paccaya* is called something which, as object, forms the condition for consciousness and mental phenomena. Thus, the physical object of sight consisting in colour and light 'light-wave', is the necessary condition and the sine qua non for the arising of visual-consciousness *cakkhu-viññāṇa* etc.; sound 'sound wave' for ear-consciousness *sotā-viññāṇa* etc.; further, any object arising in the mind is the condition for mind-consciousness *mano-viññāṇa*. The mental-object may be anything whatever, material or mental, past, present or future, real or imaginary.

3: Predominance-condition *adhipati-paccaya* is the term for 4 things, on the preponderance and predominance of which are dependent the mental phenomena associated with them, namely: concentrated intention *chanda*, energy *virīya*, consciousness *citta* and investigation *vīmaṃsā*. In one and the same state of consciousness, however, only one of these 4 phenomena can be predominant at a time.; Whenever such phenomena as consciousness and mental properties are arising by giving preponderance to one of these 4 things, then this phenomenon is for the other phenomena a condition by way of predominance; Patth.. Cf. *iddhi-pāda*

4-5: Proximity and contiguity or immediacy-condition *anantara* and *samanantara-paccaya* - both being identical - refer to any state of consciousness and mental phenomena associated with them, which are the conditions for the immediately following stage in the process of consciousness. For example, in the visual process, visual-consciousness is for the immediately following mind-element - performing the function of receiving the visible object - a condition by way of contiguity; and so is this mind-element for the next following mind-consciousness element, performing the function of investigating the object, etc. Cf. *viññāṇa-kicca*.

6: Co-nascent condition *sahajāta-paccaya* i.e. condition by way of simultaneous arising, is a phenomenon that for another one forms, a condition in such a way that, simultaneously with its arising, also the other thing must arise. Thus, for instance, in one and the same moment each of the 4 mental groups feeling, perception, mental constructions and consciousness is for the 3 other groups a condition by way of co-nascent or co-arising; or again each of the 4 physical elements solid, liquid, heat, motion is such a condition for the other 3 elements. Only at the moment of conception in the mother's womb does materiality physical base of mind serve for the 4 mental groups as a condition by way of co-nascent.

7: Condition by way of mutuality *aññamañña-paccaya*. All the just mentioned associated and co-nascent mental phenomena, as well as the 4 physical elements, are, of course, at the same time also conditioned by way of mutuality.; just like three sticks propped up one by another.; The 4 mental groups are one for another a condition by way of mutuality. So also are the 4 elements, and also mentality and materiality at the moment of conception.

8: Support-condition *nissaya-paccaya*. This condition refers either to a pre-nascent see: 10 or co-nascent see: 6 phenomenon which is aiding other phenomena in the manner of a foundation or base, just as the trees have the earth as their foundation, or as the oil-painting rests on the canvas. In this way, the 5 sense-organs and the physical base of the mind are for the corresponding 6 kinds of

consciousness a prenascent, i.e. previously arisen, condition by way of support. Further all co-nascent see: 6 phenomena are mutually see: 7 conditioned by each other by way of support.

9: Decisive-support or inducement condition upanissaya-paccaya is threefold, namely a by way of object ārammanūpanissaya-paccaya b by way of proximity anantarūpanissaya c natural decisive support pakatupanissaya These conditions act as strong inducement or cogent reason.

a. Anything past, present or future, material or mental, real or imaginary, may, as object of our thinking, become a decisive support, or strong inducement, to moral, immoral or kammically neutral states of mind. Evil things, by wrong thinking about them, become an inducement to immoral life; by right thinking, an inducement to moral life. But good things may be an inducement not only to similarly good things, but also to bad things, such as self-conceit, vanity, envy, etc.

b. is identical with proximity condition No. 4.

c. Faith, virtue, etc., produced in one's own mind, or the influence of climate, food, etc., on one's body and mind, may act as natural and decisive support-conditions. Faith may be a direct and natural inducement to charity, virtue to mental training, etc.; greed to theft, hate to murder; unsuitable food and climate to ill-health; friends to spiritual progress or deterioration.

10: Pre-nascence-condition purejāta-paccaya refers to something previously arisen, which forms a base for something arising later on. For example, the 5 physical sense-organs and the physical base of mind, having already arisen at the time of birth, form the condition for the consciousness arising later, and for the mental phenomena associated therewith.

11: Post-nascence-condition pacchā-jāta-paccaya refers to consciousness and the phenomena therewith associated, because they are - just as is the feeling of hunger- a necessary condition for the preservation of this already arisen body.

12: Repetition-condition āsevana-paccaya refers to the kammical consciousness, in which each time the preceding impulse moments javana-citta are for all the succeeding ones a condition by way of repetition and frequency, just as in learning by heart, through constant repetition, the later recitation becomes gradually easier and easier.

13: Kamma-condition kamma-paccaya The pre-natal kamma i.e kamma-intentions, kamma-cetanā in a previous birth is the generating condition cause of the 5 sense-organs, the fivefold sense-consciousness, and the other kamma-produced mental and material phenomena in a later birth. - Kammical intention is also a condition by way of kamma for the co-nascent mental phenomena associated therewith, but these phenomena are in no way kamma-results.

14: Kamma-result-condition vipāka-paccaya The kamma-resultant 5 kinds of sense-consciousness are a condition by way of kamma-result for the co-nascent mental and material phenomena.

15: Nutriment-condition āhāra-paccaya For the 4 nutriments, see: āhāra

16: Ability-condition indriya-paccaya This condition applies to 20 abilities indriya, leaving out No. 7 and 8 from the 22 abilities. Of these 20 abilities, the 5 physical sense-organs 1 - 5, in their capacity as abilities, form a condition only for unmaterial phenomena visual-consciousness etc.; physical vitality 6 and all the remaining abilities, for the co-nascent mental and material phenomena.

17: Jhāna-condition jhāna-paccaya is a name for the 7 so-called jhāna-factors, as these form a condition to the co-nascent mental and material phenomena, to wit: 1 thought-conception vitakka 2 discursive thinking vicāra 3 interest pīti 4 joy sukha 5 sadness domanassa 6 indifference upekkhā 7 concentration samādhi For definition s. Pāli terms.

1, 2, 3, 4, 7 are found in 4 classes of greedy consciousness see: Tab. I. 22-25; 1, 2, 5, 7 in hateful consciousness ib. 30, 31; 1, 2, 6, 7 in the classes of confused consciousness ib. 32, 33.

This condition does not only apply to jhāna alone, but also to the general intensifying 'absorbing' impact of these 7 factors.

18 path-condition magga-paccaya refers to the 12 path-factors, as these are for the kammically advantageous and disadvantageous mental phenomena associated with them, a way of escape from this or that mental constitution, namely: 1 knowledge paññā = sammāditthi right understanding, 2 right or wrong thought-conception vitakka 3 right speech sammā-vācā 4 right bodily action sammā-kammanta, 5 right livelihood sammā-ājīva 6 right or wrong energy viriya 7 right or wrong awareness or mindfulness sati 8 right or wrong concentration samādhi 9 wrong views micchāditthi 10 wrong speech micchā-vācā 11 wrong bodily action micchā-kammanta 12 wrong livelihood micchā-ājīva Cf. magga

19: Association-condition sampayutta-paccaya refers to the co-nascent see: 6 and mutually see: 7 conditioned 4 mental groups khandha as they aid each other by their being associated, by having a common physical base, a common object, and by their arising and disappearing simultaneously; Patth. Com..

20: Dissociation-condition vippayutta-paccaya refers to such phenomena as aid other phenomena by not having the same physical base eye, etc. and objects. Thus material phenomena are for mental phenomena, and conversely, a condition by way of dissociation, whether co-nascent or not.

21: Presence-condition atthi-paccaya refers to a phenomenon - being pre-nascent or co-nascent - which through its presence is a condition for other phenomena. This condition applies to the conditions Nos. 6, 7, 8, 10, 11.

22: Absence-condition natthi-paccaya refers to consciousness, etc., which has just passed, and which thus forms the necessary condition for the immediately following stage of consciousness by giving it an opportunity to arise. Cf. No. 4.

23: Disappearance-condition vigata-paccaya is identical with No. 22.

24: Non-disappearance-condition avigata-paccaya is identical with No. 21.

These 24 conditions should be known thoroughly for a detailed understanding of that famous formula of the dependent origination paticcasamuppāda.

Mahā Thera Nyanatiloka. *Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, Buddhist Publication Society, first edition 1952.

12.9 Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga

April 13, 2017; revised January 19, 2018

1. Billions of *citta* flow in a second, and what we experience is the cumulative effect of billions of *citta*, which we call a “thought”. Let us start at the base state of a *citta* (loosely translated as a thought, but it is really not). Each and every *citta* has 7 universal *cetasika* (mental factors); those universal *cetasika* are discussed in, “[What is in a Thought? Why Gathi are so Important?](#)”.

- Those 7 universal *cetasika* are: *Phassa* (contact), *saññā* (perception), *vedanā* (feeling), *cetana* (intention), *ekaggata* (one-pointedness), *jivitindriya* (life faculty), and *manasikara* (memory). This is the “baseline” state of a *citta*, which lasts only a billionth of a second.
- And during that brief time, many other *cetasika* (good or bad) can be incorporated into a *citta*. **But let us consider the simpler case where no other *cetasika* are incorporated.**
- **Even such a simple *citta* is still contaminated or defiled at the end of that brief time. This contamination is manifested in *vedanā* and *saññā cetasika*.**

2. Each INDIVIDUAL *citta* — during its existence for a billionth of a second — undergoes change in 9 stages! Such a fast process cannot be seen by any human other than a Buddha; see, “[Citta, Manō, Viññāṇa – Stages of a Thought](#)”.

- At the end of the 9 stages it has evolved and has become affected by the whole of the *vinṇanakkhandha* (including past *viññāṇa*).
- The contamination of a *citta* is manifested in *saññā* and *vedanā*; **a contaminated *citta* is called *viññāṇa*.**
- *Vedanā* at the base level is “discerning that an event took place” (“*veema*” + “*danaveema*” or “වීම දැනවීම” in Sinhala). Actual “feelings” about the event will be incorporated as the *citta* evolves in 9 stages, as we will discuss below.

3. The other critical universal *cetasika* that evolves in 9 stages is *saññā*. Even though it has become standard to write is as “*saññā*”, that is not how it is pronounced “*sangngā*”:

[WebLink: Play the word “*saññā*”](#)

- Some do indicate the correct pronunciation by writing as *sañña*. Even though it does not really matter how one writes it (“*sanna*” or *sañña* or “*sangnga*”), it is critically important to understand what is meant by it; see, “[What is Saññā \(Perception\)?](#)”.
- *Saññā* provides one’s perception about a given event that led to the arising of the *citta*. For example, if we see an object, the identification of that object proceeds via those 9 stages (and *vedanā* evolves accordingly).
- So, let us briefly go through the 9 stages of the evolution of a *citta* using *saññā* as the basis.

4. Each *citta* gets contaminated in those 9 stages due to *anusaya* that comes to the surface as *āsava* (or *asava*), which are also related to one’s *gathi*. There are many posts at the site with details on those entities.

- Those nine stages of contamination during the lifetime of the *citta* itself (in a billionth of a second) are: *citta*, *manō*, *mānasā*, *hadayan*, *pandaran*, *manō manāyatanam*, *mana indriyam* (or *manindriyam*), *viññāṇa*, *viññāṇakkhandha*. [*Yaṃ cittam mano mānasam hadayam paṇḍaram mano manāyatanaṃ manindriyam viññāṇam viññāṇakkhandho...*] (even after going through the 9 stages it is still called a *citta* for convenience).
- Those 9 stages are stated in the original commentary, *Patisambhidamaggapakarana* (Part I, p. 360): “*..yam cittan mano manasan hadayan pandaran manomanayatanan manindriyan vinnanan vinnakkhandho..*”. I trust only three commentaries and all three are in the *Tipitaka*: *Patisambhidamagga*, *Petakopadesa*, and *Nettipakarana*.
- All other commentaries that are in existence today were written much later and are not reliable; see, “[Buddhaghosa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background](#)”.

5. Let us consider the example of seeing one's mother. At the initial *citta* stage, the only perception is that a person is there. In the next step of “*manō*” (which stands for “calibrating with respect to other persons; “*maneema*” in Sinhala), it is realized that the person is woman.

- In the third stage of “*mānasan*“, “*san*” comes to the picture and extra information (which is personal) is incorporated; see, “[What is “San”?](#)“. Now, one identifies the person as one's mother.
- By the way, we cannot live in this world without at least reaching the “*manasan*” stage of a *citta*. Otherwise, we will not be able to distinguish a given person in a crowd.
- Actual contamination of the *citta* starts at the next stage of “*hadayan*“, which means identifying whether that person is “close one's heart” and then getting attracted or repulsed. In our example, one identifies the person as “one's mother” and of course corresponding *vedanā* of an attachment arises as well.

6. An *Arahant*'s *citta* does not evolve beyond the ‘*manasan*’ stage. So, the Buddha was able to identify different people, but he did not form any attachment/dislike based on that identification.

- This is what is stated in the *Karaniyamatta Sutta*: “..*mānasambhava ye aparimānan*..”. One needs to cultivate “*manasan*” as much as possible (“*aparimāna*” or “*appamāna*” or without limit), but not let the *citta* contaminate beyond that.
- That can be done only via reducing and finally removing one's bad *gathi*, *āsava*, and *anusaya*, as we discuss below.

7. The next step after “*hadayan*” is “*pandaran*“, which means to “add more power”, i.e., one's mind will look back at past events (yes, within a billionth of a second), recall how loving she was, and “attach more”. It is done automatically by the *manasikara cetasika*.

- So, the *citta* gets more and more contaminated and gets to the *viññāṇa* stage. Thus *viññāṇa* is actually a *citta* that is very much contaminated due to one's *anusaya*, *āsava*, and *gathi*.
- Finally, it becomes part of the *viññāṇakkhandha*, which includes 11 types of *viññāṇa*: past, present, future, near, far, fine (*sukuma*), coarse (*olarika*), likes (*paneeta*), dislikes (*appaneeta*), internal (*ajjatta*), and external (*bahidda*).
- A *viññāṇakkhandha* has incorporated not only one's *anusaya*, *āsava*, and *gathi*, but also one's past memories and future hopes, etc.

8. Now we can address the issue of a “*pabhassara citta*“. First, what is meant by “*pabhassara*“?

- The word comes from three sounds at the root: “*pa*” means again and again, “*bha*” is related to “*bhava*“; and “*sara*” or “*chara*” means to “*sarisareema*” in Sinhala or “to participate”. Thus a “*pabhasara citta*” with only one “s” in the word (NOT *pabhassara*) *citta* is a contaminated *citta* that will lead to *sansaric* journey or the rebirth process.
- The opposite of “*pabha sara*” is “*pabha assara*“, where “*assara*” means “not take part in”. It rhymes as “*pabhassara*“.
- This is why I say that Pāli is phonetic language. Meanings come based on sounds. I have given many examples throughout the website.

9. Therefore, a “*pabhassara citta*” is that base state, or the **pure state** of a *citta*, BEFORE it goes through the 9 stages of contamination. It has only the 7 universal *cetasika*.

- Each and every *citta* of a given person starts off as a *pabhassara citta*, but gets contaminated to varying degrees depending one's personality or one's advancement along the Path.
- Even an *Arahant*'s *citta* is not a *pabhassara citta*; it will contaminate to the level of “*mānasan*“, as we discussed above. However, *Arahant phala citta*, which lasts for only one *citta*, is a *pabhassara citta*.

- When an *Arahant* is in *Arahant phala samapatti*, he/she knows that one is alive, but has no awareness of outside events. This is called *animitta*, *appanihita*, *suññata samādhī*. That is different from the *nirōdha samāpatti*, where the flow of *citta* stops.
- In Buddha Dhamma, defilements are associated with “dark”, and pure states are associated with “bright” or “radiant”. So, we could call a *pabhassara citta* a “radiant *citta*”, and **a mind that generates AND maintains *citta* at that state a “radiant mind”**.
- The only time such radiant or pure *citta* flow occur, is when an *Arahant* is in *Arahant phala samapatti*, with the *Arahant phala citta* flowing continuously.

10. This process of contamination of a *citta* is what stated in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Pabhassara Sutta \(AN 1.51\)](#)”: “*Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ. Tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ. Taṃ assutavā puthujjano yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. Tasmā ‘assutavato puthujjanassa cittabhāvanā natthi’ ti vadāmī ti*”.

- First, “*Pabhassaramidaṃ*” is “*Pabhassara idaṃ*”. As I keep saying, words are sometimes combined or even a bit changed to rhyme in *suttas*. So, the first sentence says, “Bhikkus, *citta* (the first stage) is *pabhassara* or does not contribute to rebirth process”.
- The next sentence says how it is defiled: “*agantuka*” (which is also a Sinhala word “ආගන්තුක”) means “introduced”. What is introduced is “*upakilesa*” or defilements (that are in one’s *gathi*, *anusaya*, *āsava*). That leads to “*upakilitta*” or contamination. Again. “*kilīti*” in Pāli and Sinhala means “dirty”.
- The next sentence says, “those *puthujjano* who do not understand this, cannot comprehend the reality (*yathabhūta*)”. Here *puthujjana* means a normal human who has not been exposed to Buddha Dhamma; specifically, one who does not comprehend *Tilakkhana*. Thus the last sentence says, “therefore, I do not recommend *citta bhāvanā* to those who do not comprehend *Tilakkhana*”.

11. Another famous quote from the [WebLink: suttacentral: Kevatta Sutta](#) in the *Digha Nikaya* (DN 11), says, “*Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ..*”. This could be written as “*Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ, anantaṃ, sabbatā pabhaṃ..*” in order to break into three components.

- Here, “*anidassana*” means “cannot be seen”; “*ananta*” is infinite.
- “*sabbato*” is condensed for “*sabba*” + *atto*“, where mundane meaning of “*atta*” is used to denote “people” and thus means “all people”.
- As we discussed above in #8, “*pabha*” means “repeated *bhava*”.
- Therefore, the above verse means, “***viññāṇa* is unseen, infinite and leads to the rebirth process for all**”.
- To emphasize: ***viññāṇa* is a defiled *citta*. We all experience *viññāṇa*, not pure *citta*. Even more accurately, we experience *viññānakkhandha* (*viññāṇa* aggregate). However, we loosely call “a thought” a *citta*.**
- One stops the rebirth process by removing one’s bad *gathi*, *āsava*, and *anusaya* and not letting *citta* contaminate beyond the “*manasan*” stage.

More details at this post: “[Anidassana Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#)”.

12. Some commentaries say that *bhavanga citta* are *pabhassara citta*. **That is absolutely incorrect.** All living beings have *bhavanga citta* that depend on one’s *bhava*; see “[Bhava and Bhavanga – Simply Explained!](#)”.

- *Bhavanga* comes from “*bhava*” + “*anga*“, where “*anga*” is “a part”. So, *bhavanga* means “associated with a given *bhava*“. *Bhavanga* is obviously different for different *bhava*.
- An animal also has *bhavanga citta*. ***Citta vithi* run in all living beings**, and *citta vithi* are separated by the mind falling into *bhavanga* in between *citta vithi*. **Does that mean an animal has a “radiant mind” when it is in the *bhavanga* state?**

- Furthermore, sometimes “*anidassana viññāṇa*” is also incorrectly explained as the base level of *viññāṇa*. Per #11 above, it is clear that *anidassana viññāṇa* just explains that *viññāṇa* cannot be “seen”.

13. So, the point here is that as long as one has bad *gathi* (or *anusaya*, *āsava*, etc., which are all inter-related and can be just called *avijjā*), one’s thoughts **will be contaminated as they arise**.

- Therefore, we cannot control our thoughts as they arise: **a *citta* is contaminated to the *viññāṇa* stage in a billionth of a second, which is unimaginably fast**. This is why the Buddha said a *citta* is the fastest entity in the world (we loosely call “a thought” a *citta*, even though it is really *viññāṇakkhandha* that we experience).
- All we can do is to REDUCE *avijjā* (and thus all those related entities of *gathi*, *āsava*, *anusaya*) by learning *Dhamma* and then practicing *Ānāpāna* (not breath meditation) and *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation.
- As one proceeds in the Path, one’s bad *gathi* (and *āsava* and *anusaya*) will start decreasing, one’s *citta* will tend to be more “cleaner and brighter”.
- Once one gets to a certain level, one can start contemplating on those key concepts like *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, i.e., *vipassana* meditation, and attain *magga phala*.

14. Not all *citta* get contaminated at the same level. A *citta* arises when one of our six sense faculties makes a sense contact, and the level of contamination of the *citta* depends critically on what that sense input is.

- Let us take some examples. When we taste a delicious food or see an attractive object, greedy thoughts may arise. But we know that we all don’t have the same cravings for a given object. Some foods that some people crave can be repulsive to some others. In another example, a given person may be liked by some but disliked by others (think about a famous politician).
- Furthermore, we don’t generate defiled thoughts in many cases. Billions of *citta* flow through our minds as we look at scenery passing by while riding in a car; they are mostly neutral, but still are contaminated to a certain level.
- But the level of contamination will be stronger when one sees an eye-catching object.

15. I have seen some people say *citta* that arise in a baby are *pabhassara citta*. One’s *anusaya* are ALWAYS with oneself, whether it is a baby, animal, *brahma*, or any living being.

- A baby’s brain has not developed so it cannot experience the world as we do, and it also cannot express itself. But a baby’s *citta* are also contaminated to a certain level due to *anusaya* being there.
- **Only when one attains *magga phala* that a part of one’s *anusaya* (and *āsava* and *samyojana*) is removed permanently**; see, “[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#)”.

16. As one starts at the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*, and advance through *Sakadāgāmī*, *Anāgāmī* stages to the *Arahant* stage, one’s *avijjā* (and thus bad *gathi*, *anusaya*, *āsava*, etc) decrease permanently.

- Thus a *Sotāpanna*’s thoughts will not be defiled beyond a certain level of contamination. Certainly, a *Sotāpanna* will not generate strong *akusala citta* that are capable of leading to rebirth in the *apāyas*.
- By the time one gets to the *Anāgāmī* stage, one has removed all *kamasava* (*kāma āsava*), and thus will not be tempted by any sensual object in the *kāma loka*. Thus he/she will not be reborn anywhere in the *kāma loka* (four *apāyas*, human realm, and the six *deva* realms).
- When one gets to the *Arahant* stage, one has removed all *avijjā* (and all bad *gathi*, *anusaya*, *āsava*, etc): One has attained *Nibbāna*, and thus one will not reborn anywhere in the 31 realms at death.

- All above have been discussed in detail in many posts at the site. One can use the site map [“Pure Dhamma – Sitemap”](#) or use the “Search” box on top right to look for posts for given key word(s).

XIII Historical Background

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13.1 Historical Background – Introduction

One of the earliest posts: Revised May 27, 2017

1. Today, we have three main “sects” of “Buddhism” that include the Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and few other South Asian countries, Mahayana Buddhism in the form Zen in Japan, China, and several other Asian countries, and Vajryana Buddhism in Tibet.

- All sects are being practiced in other countries in varying degrees. How the original teachings of the Buddha got branched out over 2500 years is discussed in, “[Historical Timeline of Edward Conze](#)”.

2. The vast literature in Theravāda Buddhism, which is contained in the Tipitaka (three baskets of Sutta, Vinaya, and Abhidhamma) are mostly self-consistent.

- Considering the vastness of the material in these documents, the consistency is amazing, and gives one confidence that any “contamination” would be small indeed.

3. However, even the *Theravāda* literature has been contaminated with incorrect interpretations of the *Tipitaka*.

- The root causes of misinterpretations of key terms are discussed at several posts below in this section, but specifically two major historical events can be pointed out: “[Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#)” and “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)”.
- These inconsistencies were first pointed out by my teacher *Thero* who recently passed away, and my goal with this website is to point out those errors and illustrate that those correct interpretations provide a fully-consistent picture: “[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thero](#)”.

4. It is hard for me to fathom how a normal human being, regardless of how intelligent he is, could teach the doctrine in such different ways over forty five years, yet be so consistent in multiple ways (the discourses range from simple one-to-one question answer sessions with individuals to lengthy discourses delivered to audiences of thousands of people, not to mention the complex Abhidhamma material).

- Even with the help of a computer, it is hard for me to keep track of the intricacy of Abhidhamma. The complex workings of the mind has been analyzed in multiple ways, and they are all consistent within the Abhidhamma and also with the Suttas.

5. Teachings of the Buddha, as given in the Theravāda Tipitaka, are confirmed and solidified with each new scientific discovery (in contrast, the mythical aspects introduced in various forms of Mahayana Buddhism are facing problems in light of scientific progress).

Buddha Dhamma is like a diamond covered in the dirt of ignorance. The more we find about the world through scientific methods (thus removing more dirt from the diamond), the more of the diamond’s luster become apparent. Not too far into the future, Buddha Dhamma will shine brightly and will greatly help the humanity all over the world.

6. It is ironic in a way how the “materialistic science” is helping to clarify and confirm the teachings of the “mind-based” Buddha Dhamma. Yet the humanity is still only enamored with the truly amazing materialistic advances based on scientific discoveries, and is for most part unaware of its primitive stage compared to ultimate knowledge contained in Buddha Dhamma.

- The real breakthrough may come when science will be forced to embrace the mind as yet another fundamental property of nature.
- The discovery of quantum mechanics has clearly laid the foundation for this next breakthrough. It has been more than hundred years since the advent of quantum mechanics, but it is only within the past two to three decades that real progress has been made in this direction. I discuss these developments in detail in the “[Dhamma and Science](#)” section.

Next, “[Methods of Delivery of Dhamma by the Buddha](#)”,

13.2 Methods of Delivery of Dhamma by the Buddha

1. Buddha Dhamma is undoubtedly the most complex “theory” in the world. It is truly amazing that such a deep philosophical doctrine has survived over 2500 years.

- However, we can be confident that the pure Dhamma still survives, because the three baskets of *sutta*, *vinaya*, and *abhidhamma* were written down in 29 BCE when there were still numerous *Arahants* were present.
- After about 100 - 200 CE, people started translating the *Tipitaka* into *Sanskrit* and also the *Mahayana* sect started writing their own *suttas* in *Sanskrit*; see, “[Historical Timeline of Edward Conze](#)”.

2. Another important point to remember is that there is no single discourse in which the Buddha has drawn together all the elements of his teaching and assigned them to their appropriate place within some comprehensive system; see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”.

- Therefore, the same material was delivered in a variety of different ways over the 45-year “ministry” of the Buddha. If some mistakes were made in the transmission of one of the *suttas* or discourses, that would become apparent when compared with the numerous other discourses or the *Abhidhamma*.

3. The Buddha tailored his discourses to his audience at hand. Thus his teachings that have been transmitted encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from one-to-one conversations with people who had particular questions in mind, to long discourses to audiences consisting of groups with wide ranging mental capabilities.

- If the Buddha realized that it was not fruitful to explain a deep concept to an individual, he remained silent. One example cited is Buddha’s silence when a certain wanderer named Vacchagotta asked him whether there was an *atman* or *athma* (permanent soul) or not. Even though Buddha had clearly explained in *Paticca Samuppāda* that the concept of a lifestream with changing “*gathi*”, in this case he remained in silence when Vacchagotta asked him the question twice. Vacchagotta then left.
- After Vacchagotta left, Buddha’s personal attendant, Ven. Ananda, asked him why Buddha did not explain the concept that it is not correct to say “there is no soul” or “there is a soul” (because there is only an ever-changing lifestream) to Vacchagotta. The Buddha told Ananda that he did not think Vacchagotta was mentally capable at that time to understand the concept, and that he did not want to confuse him. See the post, “[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#)” for the correct explanation.
- It turned out that Vacchagotta later became a disciple and even attained *Nibbāna* through his efforts.

4. Other times, he would enunciate invariable principles that stand at the heart of the teaching: for example, *Abhidhamma* is a complete description of the working of the mind. The Buddha delivered this *Abhidhamma* material in summary form to his chief disciple, Ven. Sariputta, and it was Ven. Sariputta and his followers who expanded that summary to the form that we have today in the *Tipitaka*; see, “[Abhidhamma – Introduction](#)”.

- But in most cases, instead of trying to provide most thorough and intellectually deep answers, he tried to find the best way to steer people to the truth according to their mental capabilities. Some recent books have misrepresented such isolated one-to-one correspondence as indications that some fundamental issues have not been addressed by the Buddha. They are probably unaware that such questions have been answered in other *suttas*. I will point such instances as they come up in other posts.

Next, “[Misconceptions on the Topics the Buddha “Refused to Answer”](#)”,

13.3 Misconceptions on the Topics the Buddha “Refused to Answer”

Coming back to the literature on the Theravāda Dhamma, the Buddha seems to have followed four ways of treating questions: (1) Some should be answered directly, (2) others should be answered by way of analyzing them, (3) yet others should be answered by counter-questions, and (4) there are questions that should be put aside. As mentioned in the above section, depending on the audience he chose the method that he deemed was appropriate.

He always told his disciples that they should not waste time worrying about such questions on the universe, since they should be using the precious little time on the Earth in pursuit of Nibbāna. So, questions on the characteristics of the universe was one that Buddha chose to put aside in REGULAR question and answer sessions. A good example is when a monk named Malunkayaputta came to the Buddha and asked a number of questions regarding the universe and stated that he will leave the order if the Buddha refuses to answer them. The Buddha's following answer illustrates the urgency with which he asked the followers to “follow the path” diligently instead of wasting valuable time on metaphysical questions.

The Buddha told Malunkayaputta, “Suppose Malunkayaputta, a man is wounded by a poisoned arrow, and the friends and relatives bring him to a surgeon. Suppose the man should then say: “I will not let this arrow be taken out until I know who shot me; whether he is a Ksatriya or a Brahmana or a Vaisya or a Sudra (i.e., which caste); what his name and family may be; whether he is tall, short, or of medium stature; whether his complexion is black, brown, or golden; from which village, town, or city he comes. I will not let this arrow be taken out until I know the kind of bow with which I was shot; the kind of bowstring used; the type of arrow; what sort of feather was used on the arrow and with what kind of material the point of the arrow was made”. Malunkayaputta, that man would die without knowing any of these things. Even so, Malunkayaputta, if anyone says: “I will not follow the holy life under the Blessed One until he answers these questions such as whether the universe is eternal or not, etc.” he would die with these questions unanswered by the Blessed One”.

We have to look at this from the perspective of the “knowledge base” that existed at the time of the Buddha. Think about the fact that starting with the Greek philosophers at the time of the Buddha (a coincidence), the Western science took over 2500 years to reach the current level of understanding of the universe. Even a mere two hundred years ago, the scientific understanding was limited to the Solar system and basically nothing beyond that. Now we know that there are billions of galaxies, each with billions of stars (most of which have planetary systems like our Solar system), and that all this started with the big bang. This transition was slow and took the genius and courage of people like Galileo who sometimes sacrificed their lives to bring out the truth.

Twenty five hundred years ago, there was no rational way that the Buddha could have “explained” concepts such as the origin of the universe, extent of the universe, etc. Therefore, even though he clearly stated the existence of “innumerable world systems” in order to lay down the basis of consciousness (see “[Consciousness – A Dhamma Perspective](#)”), he refused to discuss such concepts with individuals simply because it would have been a waste of time given the limited base knowledge existed at that time. If the Buddha was teaching his doctrine today, I believe that he would have answered such questions directly, because the vocabulary and background knowledge for doing so is available today.

However, Buddha's perspectives on the universe is apparent in his teachings on Abhidhamma (and also in some main Suttas). This is because the fundamental aspects of the universe (infinite in space and time) are inherent in the doctrine. Those principles are embedded in the teachings, but the Buddha avoided giving answers to specific questions, especially from individuals, because it would have totally confused those people.

Some people used examples as mentioned above to state that the Buddha refused to answer any questions related to the origin of the universe or that his position on the existence of a soul was not very clear. That is not the case at all. The Buddha's main concern at any given instance was to provide an answer that the audience at hand was able to comprehend. If the correct answer would have befuddled the audience, he remained silent on that particular question. He has described the

evolvment of life on this planet in the Agganna Sutta. But please do not read the published translated versions, because the translations are embarrassingly flawed.

Therefore, one should not come to certain conclusions by reading just a few discourses, and needs to pay attention in what context the discourse was delivered. It is always possible to refer to Abhidhamma to clarify issues, since it is written in a methodical way. So, the texts of the oldest Pāli texts contain Buddha's teachings in a variety of forms, ranging from simple interpretations of Dhamma to its very deep philosophical aspects in the Abhidhamma as well as some of the Suttas. Yet the contents in all this vast material remains self-consistent when one examines the contents with the correct perspective. We owe a deep gratitude to the Sangha of Sri Lanka for keeping this material intact.

Next, "[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)"

13.4 Misinterpretations of Buddha Dhamma

Revised October 5, 2016

1. It is said that the Buddha advised not to translate the *Tipitaka* material word-by-word into any other language. Instead, commentaries were written to explain the Pāli material in the *Tipitaka* in condensed form fit for listening, retention, recitation, memorization, and repetition – the five major elements in oral transmission.

- This is a very important point. For example, the Buddha orally delivered the main Suttas over many hours; the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta* was delivered over several days to the five ascetics. For easy transmission, these discourses were SUMMARIZED in *Magadhi* (and that particular format of “lining up” was termed *Pāli*); see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”.
- Each line, sometimes even a word in a *Sutta* needs a further explanation; see, “[Satipatthāna Sutta – Structure](#)” and follow-up posts. Such “explanatory texts” or “commentaries” were originally written in *Sinhala* and were called “*Sinhala Atthakata*”.
- Commentaries in *Sinhala* accumulated for centuries and in the fourth or fifth century CE, these commentaries were translated to Pāli (and edited with his own ideas incorporated) by Buddhaghosa. **Subsequently, most of the original *Sinhala* commentaries were lost, and today we only have the edited summaries of Buddhaghosa where he incorporated his own ideas.**
- Fortunately, three of the original commentaries (“*Sinhala Atthakata*”) have been preserved in the *Tipitaka*; see, “[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)”.

2. Among the commentaries to the *Tipitaka*, those on the Abhidhamma are dominated by the three commentaries of Buddhaghosa: (i) the *atthasālini*, “The Expositor”, the commentary to the *Dhammasaṅgani*, (ii) the *Sammohavinodani*, “The Dispeller of Delusion”, the commentary to the *Vibhaṅga*, and (iii) the *Pācappakarana Atthakathā*, the combined commentary to the other five treatises.

- But it must be remembered that Buddhaghosa wrote those commentaries with his own ideas as a former Hindu Brahmin. **The original *Tipitaka* remains unaltered, including those three original commentaries (“*Sinhala Atthakata*”) mentioned above.**

3. In addition to writing those commentaries on the *Tipitaka* while he was in Sri Lanka, Buddhaghosa also wrote the *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification) around 430 CE, which is considered to be an important treatise on *Theravāda* doctrine. This is wrongly considered to be a comprehensive manual condensing the theoretical and practical teaching of the Buddha, and some consider it to be the most important *Theravāda* text outside of the *Tipitaka* Canon of scriptures.

- I will point out many problems with Buddhaghosa’s writings – including *Visuddhimagga* — at this site.
- The most common problems include: misinterpretation of *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā* as “breath meditation”; see, “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)” and “[Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta](#)”.
- He also incorporated *kasina* meditations, which are *anariya* meditations and are not *Ariya* meditation techniques. In *Ariya* (or true Buddhist) meditations, the object of meditation is *Nibbāna*, not a mundane object like a *kasina* object.

4. This is critical issue since most current *Theravāda* institutions teach mainly the works of Buddhaghosa, since those works are supposed to be reliable summaries of the teachings in the *Tipitaka*. Therefore, it is good to have the works of Buddhaghosa reviewed extensively.

- I will point out the most important misrepresentations on this website, based on what I have learned from my teacher *Thero* in Sri Lanka. The Dhamma that I present here is, in my opinion, the correct interpretation of the *Tipitaka*. I hope you will come to that conclusion on careful examination of the material.
- More details can be found in “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)” and other posts in the “[Historical Background](#)” section.

5. After Emperor Asoka's reign, no further steps were taken to hold back the inevitable *Brahminic* influence on Buddhism in India, and Buddhism went through a gradual decline in India (despite or even because of the resurgent philosophical activity led by Nagarjuna, Asanga, Vasubhanudhu, and others around the beginning of the first millennium) and virtually disappeared from India during the first millennium.

6. The Mahayana version of Buddhism started with the works of Nagarjuna, who, in all likelihood had best intentions for the promotion of Buddhism (even though he was naive enough to assume that Buddha Dhamma can be refined for the "new ages").

- These refinements became major revisions by the time D. T. Suzuki's books were written in the early 1900's, and the original teachings were badly distorted. This is the reason why I am so obsessive about making sure that my essays are compatible with the original teachings of the Buddha.

7. All these distortions in both Mahayana and Theravāda versions have their origins in various philosophers (such as Nagarjuna and Buddhaghosa) trying to interpret Buddha Dhamma in terms of mundane concepts; see, "[Buddha Dhamma: Non-Perceivability and Self-Consistency](#)".

- However, as pointed out in that post, it is easy to point out the inconsistencies with such mundane interpretations by Nagarjuana, Buddhaghosa, and others, especially with the evidence gained by the scientific advances made during the past few hundred years.
- And such scientific evidence and the ones that are yet to be discovered will only confirm the pure Dhamma that stays intact in the *Tipitaka* to the day, as also pointed out in that post.

Next, "[Preservation of Dhamma](#)",

13.5 **Preservation of the Dhamma**

Revised October 28, 2017; November 11, 2017

1. The Buddha's teaching were handed down mostly verbally from one generation to the next over three to four hundred years before it was written down in a comprehensive manner.

- The reason that it survived almost fully in content is due to the way it was composed into a form that is suitable for easy verbal transmission, in SUMMARY form in most cases; see, "[Sutta – Introduction](#)".
- Today, complete record of the Buddha's teachings, the Pāli Canon, is preserved in the *Tipitaka* in 37 volumes, see, "[WebLink: store.pariyatti.org: Tipitaka PTS \(Pali Canon English Translation\)](http://store.pariyatti.org: Tipitaka PTS (Pali Canon English Translation))". According to the above link, 33 volumes are available in English, but in my opinion many translations are not correct.

2. The discourses of the Buddha that were delivered in Magadhi were condensed and written down; this written form was called Pāli. But Pāli does not have its own script, so it was written down with Sinhala script.

- **This provides a clear way of sorting out the Mahayana literature, which was written in Sanskrit, and never written in Pāli; thus all the Sanskrit *suttas* were written by Mahayanic philosophers.**
- Around the turn of the first millennium, translations of the *Tipitaka* to Chinese and subsequently to Tibetan also took place. Thus the original manuscripts in Pāli can be expected to contain most of the original discourses delivered by the Buddha.

3. Today, it is hard to fathom (especially for Westerners) that such level of accuracy could have been maintained in a verbally-transmitted material.

- However, we need to understand the background traditions and also the determination of the monks over thousands of years that helped preserve most of the original teachings.
- Even today, there are people who have memorized large sections of the *Tipitaka*, especially in Myanmar (formerly Burma). In Myanmar, there are special examinations to test these memorizations; see, "[WebLink: myanmarnet.net: TIPITAKADHARA SAYADAW'S OF MYANMAR \(BURMA \) IN FIVE DECADES](http://myanmarnet.net: TIPITAKADHARA SAYADAW'S OF MYANMAR (BURMA) IN FIVE DECADES)". Also see, "[WebLink: dhammadharo: Memorizing the Tipitaka](#)".
- During the period of oral transmission, there were groups of *bhikkhus* who memorized (overlapping) sections of the *Tipitaka*. Then during a *Sangāyana* (Buddhist Council), they all got together and compared each others versions to make sure they were all compatible.
- A major reason for the assembly of the First Buddhist Council within three months of the Buddha's *Parinibbāna* was to organize the vast material. Within the next two hundred years, two more Councils were held to recite and verify the teachings, and to finalize the *Tipitaka* in three broad categories ("ti" + "pitaka" or "three baskets").

4. **A critical point here is that a *sutta* is a CONDENSED version of a discourse in many cases.** For example, the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana sutta* was delivered to the five ascetics overnight. Imagine how many written pages that would be if written verbatim! Yet it was summarized in a few pages. The same is true for all the important *suttas*. Otherwise it would have been impossible to transmit all those thousands of *suttas*;

- **The Buddha delivered most of his discourses in the Maghadhi (*maghadhi* = "maga" + "adhi" or Noble path) language.** *Tipitaka* was written in Pāli with Sinhala script; Pāli is a version of *Maghadhi* suitable for writing down oral discourses in summary form suitable for transmission.
- Each Pāli word is packed with lot of information, and thus commentaries (called "*attha katha*") were written to expound the meaning of important Pāli words, and to explain the key phrases in the *suttas*.

- Thus the *Tipitaka* was meant to be used with the commentaries. Pāli *suttas* are not supposed to be translated word-by-word; see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”.
- Most of those Sinhala commentaries were burned down in the Anuradhapura era; see, “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)”.
- Fortunately, three original commentaries written by the main disciples of the Buddha (Ven. Sariputta, Ven. Kaccayana, etc) during the time of the Buddha had been included in the *Tipitaka* (in the *Khuddhaka Nikāya*), and thus survived. The current revival of pure Dhamma by the two *Theros* in Sri Lanka is partially due to their perusal of these three documents (*Patisambhidamagga*, *Petakopadesa*, and *Nettipakarana*).

5. With the loss of most of the commentaries and the non-prominence of the surviving three commentaries mentioned above, people started translating the *Tipitaka* word by word. The problem was compounded by the increase usage of the Sanskrit language beginning around the first century CE.

- For example, “*anicca*” was translated first to Sanskrit as “*anitya*” and then the same Sanskrit word “*anitya*” was ADOPTED as the Sinhala translation for *anicca*. Similarly, “*anatta*” was translated to Sanskrit as “*anathma*” and again was adopted as the Sinhala word for “*anatta*”. **This itself has been responsible for preventing millions of people attaining *Nibbāna* for all these years;** see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.
- The Buddha had foreseen this and warned not to translate the *Tipitaka* to ANY LANGUAGE, and particularly to Sanskrit. There were two *Brahmins* by the names of Tepula and Yameru who were experts on the *Vedic* Texts; they became *bhikkhus* and asked the Buddha whether they should translate the *suttas* to Sanskrit. That is when the Buddha admonished them that Sanskrit was a language with musical overtones developed by the high-minded *Brahmins* and thus it was not possible to convey the true meanings of *Maghadhi* words in Sanskrit (described in the *Chullavagga Pāli*, *Vinaya Pitaka*).
- Another good example is the translation of *paticca samuppāda* to Sanskrit as *Pratītyasamutpāda*; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda](#)”. I think it is NOT POSSIBLE to translate some key Pāli words to Sanskrit or English or any other language without losing the true meaning. This is the reason that I am going to just keep the original words in some cases and just explain what it is; also see, “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)” or words like *taṇhā* and *Nibbāna*.

6. One grave problem we have today is the many people try to translate a given *sutta* word by word to another language. Thus the Dhamma *Cakka Pavattana sutta* that we mentioned above is translated to a few pages. \

- **That is why most of the existing translations are inadequate at best and erroneous in most cases;** see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”.

7. Another important point is that even up to the 20th century, the whole *Tipitaka* was written on specially prepared ola (palm) leaves. They deteriorate over 100 years or so and needed to re-written. Even though that was a very labor-intensive process (there are about 60 large volumes in the modern printed version of the *Tipitaka*), it served another important purpose.

- Sinhala language (both spoken and written) changed over the past 2000 years. **The need to re-write it every 100 or so years made sure that the changes in Sinhala script was taken into account;** of course Pāli language has not changed at all.
- The following video gives an idea about how those leaves were prepared and what tools were used to write with:

8. Finally, just before the Sinhala commentaries were burned down, Buddhaghosa translated **and edited** those commentaries back to Pāli in his *Visuddhimagga* and other books.

- Even though he had made many errors (like including *kasina* meditation and substituting the *ānāpānasati bhāvanā* with “breath meditation”), he had actually used the words *anicca* and

anatta in the Pāli version of the *Visuddhimagga*; see, “[Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#)”.

- Thus the incorrect translations of the words “*anicca*” and “*anatta*” may have happened long before him probably in the first to second century CE; see, “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)”.

Timeline of Preparation of Dhamma Suitable for Transmission

The following a summary of the technical details that may not be of interest to many. It is for the sake of completeness.

Shortly after the Buddha passed away, Ven. Mahakassapa, the *de facto* head of the Sangha, selected five hundred monks, all Arahants (those who have attained Nibbāna), to meet and compile an authoritative version of the teachings. This first Buddhist council was held three months after the *Parinibbāna* at Rajagaha the capital of Magadha. The *cullavagga*, one of the books of the Pāli *Vinaya Pitaka*, gives an account of how the authorized texts were compiled at the First Buddhist Council: On the basis of Venerable Upali’s recitation of *Vinaya*, the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the compilation on disciplinary matters was compiled. Venerable Ananda then recited “the Dhamma” or the *Sutta Pitaka*, i.e., the discourses, and on the basis of this recitation the *Sutta Pitaka*, the Compilation of Discourses, was compiled (Venerable Ananda was supposed to have an amazing memory and had memorized all the *Suttas* preached by the Buddha). The *Abhidhamma* was rehearsed by all the *Arahants* present at the Council. Although parts of the *Abhidhamma* were recited at these earlier Buddhist Councils, it was not until the Third Council that it became fixed into its present form as the third and final *Pitaka* of the Canon.

- The proceedings of the Third Council compiled by the Moggaliputta-tissa therā in the Kathavatthu, that became part of the *Tipitaka* (Three Baskets). It was during the Third Council that the final version of the *Tipitaka* (as available today) was compiled. It finalized the *Abhidhamma pitaka*, and added several books on the *Khuddhaka Nikāya*, in addition to the *Kathavatthu*.

The composition of the *Tipitaka* is as follows:

1. The *Vinaya Pitaka* is composed of five books: Major Offenses (*Prajika Pāli*), Minor Offenses (*Pacittiya Pāli*), Greater Section (*Mahavagga Pāli*), Smaller Section (*Culavagga Pāli*), and Epitome of the *Vinaya* (*Parivara Pāli*).
2. The *Sutta Pitaka* consists of five *Nikayas*: *Digha Nikāya* (Collection of Long Discourses), *Majjhima Nikāya* (Collection of Middle-Length Courses), *Samutta Nikāya* (Collection of Kindred Sayings), *Anguttara Nikāya* (Collection of Discourses arranged in accordance with number), and *Khuddaka Nikāya* (Smaller Collection).
3. The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* consists of the following categories: *Dhamma Sangani* (Classification of Dharmas), *Vibhanga* (The Book of Divisions), *Kathavatthu* (Points of Controversy) which was actually compiled by venerable Moggaliputta Tissa at the Third Buddhist Council, *Puggala Pannatti* (Description of Individuals), *Dhatukatha* (Discussion with Reference to Elements), *Yamaka* (The Book of the Pairs), and *Patthana* (The Book of Relations).

- Again, all these 37 books are collectively termed the *Tipitaka* (Three Baskets) or the Pāli Canon.

It is this enlarged Canon completed at the Third Council that was committed to writing in Sri Lanka in the first century BCE (29 BCE) at the Aluvihara Monastery at the Fourth Buddhist Council. The material in Pāli was written down in Sinhala language (Pāli does not have its own script). This huge collection was written down on palm leaves with a stilo, a pointed steel dagger-like instrument, which scratched the letters into the soft leaves. An ink made from berries was rubbed over the whole page and then gently removed, so that only the indentations retained the color. It is said that *Tipitaka* was also written down on gold leaves as well.

- It must be mentioned that Theravāda Buddhism was brought to Burma and Thailand from Sri Lanka in the first century CE; over the next two centuries it diffused into adjoining countries of

Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, and survives in its purity in those countries as well to the present day. (In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970's massacred most of the monks, and the Buddha Dhamma is virtually extinct).

- While the *Sangha* (with the aid of most of the kings) in Sri Lanka took pride and honor in keeping the teachings intact, Buddhism went through many changes in India, as well as in China, Japan, and Tibet, and then finally disappeared altogether from India around 1200 CE.

Next, "[Historical Timeline of David Conze](#)",

13.6 Historical Timeline of Edward Conze

Edward Conze was a Mahayana scholar, and translated the Mahayana Prajnaparamita or *Perfection of Wisdom* sutras from original Sanskrit to English. See, [WebLink: WIKI: Edward Conze](#)

(It must be noted that any Sanskrit *suttas* are Mahayana *suttas* that were composed by Mahayana philosophers like Nagarjuna (who were just intellectuals, and not Arahants) and are NOT original *suttas* delivered by the Buddha).

Conze was impressed with those Mahayana *suttas*, and in the book, “On Indian Mahayana Buddhism” (1968) he compiled works of the Mahayana/Zen scholar D. T. Suzuki. Even though his bias towards Mahayana *suttas* are clear, I selected his timeline which clearly shows how Mahayana scholars wrote their own *suttas* and tried later to attribute those to the Buddha.

This historical timeline is discussed in detail by Edward Conze in his book, “A Short History of Buddhism” (1980). According to Conze, the history of Buddhism can be conveniently divided into four periods:

1. The old Buddhism, which largely coincided with what later came to be known as Theravāda
2. Rise of Mahayana,
3. Rise of the Tantra (Vajryana) and Ch’an (Zen),
4. No further divisions.

The first period is roughly 500 years; second and third periods roughly cover the first thousand years of the current era (CE); the last thousand years can be considered as the fourth period. During this whole period the Theravāda Dhamma was kept mostly intact. In the following description, it is also clear some of the differences between the original teachings and the Mahayana ideology.

In the following I will present this story verbatim as told by Conze (starting at p. 45 of his book):

“.....About 100 BCE (roughly 400 years after the Buddha’s Parinibbāna) a number of Buddhists in India felt that the existing statements of the doctrine had become stale and useless. In the conviction that Dhamma required ever new re-formulations so as to meet the needs of new ages, new populations and new social circumstances, they set out to produce new literature which ultimately came to known as Mahayana Buddhism. The creation of this literature is one of the most significant outbursts of creative energy known to human history and it was sustained for about four to five centuries. Repetition alone, they believed, cannot sustain a living religion. Unless counterbalanced by constant innovation, it will become fossilized and lose its life-giving qualities, they believed.

So far the Mahayanistic attitude seems quite logical. What is more difficult to understand is that they insisted in presenting the new writings, manifestly composed centuries after the Buddha’s Parinibbāna, as the very words of the Buddha himself. They followed the Mahasanghikas in minimizing the importance of the historical Gautama Buddha, whom they replaced by the Buddha who is the embodiment of Dhamma (dharmakaya). In the “Lotus of the Good Law”, we are told that the Buddha, far from having reached his enlightenment at Bodhgaya, abides for aeons and aeons, from eternity to eternity, and that He preaches the Law at all times in countless places and innumerable disguises.

.....Not content with this, the Mahayanists tried to link their own writings with the historical Buddha by a number of mythological fictions. They asserted that they had been preached by the Buddha in the course of his life on Earth, that parallel to the (First Buddhist) Council at Rajagaha, which codified the *Suttas* of the Theravāda, the Mahayana *suttas* had been codified by an assembly of Bodhisattvas on the mythical mountain of Vimalasvabhava; that the texts had been miraculously preserved for five centuries and stored away in the subterranean palaces of the Nagas, or with the king of the Gandharvas, or the king of the Gods. Then, as Nagarjuna puts it, “five hundred years after the Buddha’s Nirvana, when the Good Law, after having gradually declined, was in great danger”, these treasures from the past were unearthed, revealed and made known, so as to revivify the doctrine.

What then were the main doctrinal innovations of the Mahayana? They can be summarized under five headings:

1. As concerns the goal there is a shift from the Arhat-ideal to the Bodhisattva-ideal;
2. A new way of salvation is worked out, in which compassion ranks equal with wisdom, and which is marked by the gradual advance through six “perfections” (*paramita*);
3. Faith is given a new range by being provided with a new pantheon of deities, or rather of persons more than divine;
4. “Skill in means” (*upayakausalya*), an entirely new virtue, becomes essential to the saint, and is placed even above wisdom, the highest virtue so far;
5. A coherent ontological doctrine is worked out, dealing with such items as “Emptiness”, “Suchness”, etc”.

We will now consider these one by one.

1. The goal of Arhantship is now relegated to the second place. The Mahayanists strive to be a “Bodhisattva”. A Bodhisattva is distinguished by three features: (a) In his essential being he is actuated by the desire to win the full enlightenment of a Buddha, (b) He is dominated by two forces, in equal proportion, i.e., by compassion and wisdom. From compassion he selflessly postpones his entrance into the bliss of Nirvana so as to help suffering creatures,..... (c) Although intent on ultimate purity, a Bodhisattva remains in touch with ordinary people by having the same passions they have. His passions, however, do not either affect or pollute his mind.

2. A Bodhisattva’s compassion is called “great”, because it is boundless and makes no distinctions... .. This enlightenment does not automatically entail the desire to assist others. Among the enlightened they distinguish three types, two of them “selfish”, one “unselfish”. The “selfish” types are Arhants and Pratyekabuddhas, who are said to represent the idea of the Hinayana, of the “inferior vehicle”. The “unselfish” ones are the Buddhas, and the pursuit of the unselfish quest for enlightenment on the part of a Bodhisattva is called the “Buddha-vehicle”, of the “Great Vehicle” (*mahā-yana*).

A Bodhisattva must be a patient man. He wants to become a Buddha, but his distance from the transcendental perfection of a supreme Buddha, who both knows and is everything, will obviously be infinite. In one life it could not possibly be traversed. Countless lives would be needed and a Bodhisattva must be prepared to wait for aeons and aeons before he can reach his goal. Yet, he is separated from the Buddhahood only by one single obstacle, i.e., his belief in a personal self. To get rid of himself is the Bodhisattva’s supreme task. By two kinds of measures he tries to remove himself – actively by self-sacrifice and selfless service, cognitively by insight into the objective non-existence of a self. The first is due to compassion, the second to wisdom.

The unity of compassion and wisdom is acted out by the six “perfections”, or “paramita”, the six “methods by which we go to the Beyond”. A person turns into a Bodhisattva when he first resolves to win full enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. The six are: the perfections of giving, morality, patience, vigor, meditation, and wisdom”.

This ends the quotation from Edward Conze’s book. (I have not added or edited anything other than to skip some text in order to make it concise).

I agree with Conze’s analysis except for the statement in the very first paragraph: “The creation of this literature is one of the most significant outbursts of creative energy known to human history and it was sustained for about four to five centuries.” This literature, even though voluminous, only made a simple theory much more seemingly confusing, and contradictory. We will discuss this in a follow-up post. The only fortunate thing about is that it is written entirely in Sanskrit, and thus is easy to distinguish from the original teachings written in Pāli Tipitaka.

In addition to the “improvements” that were added in India, further material associated with national customs were added when Mahayana Buddhism spread to China, Japan, and Tibet (and came to known by different names such Zen, Vajrayana, etc.).

So, the premise of the Mahayana re-formulation of the Buddha Dhamma was to “refine and improve” the Dhamma of the Buddha. This is in sharp contradiction with one of the most fundamental concepts in Dhamma that only a Buddha can discover these laws of nature and BY DEFINITION, it is not possible to improve upon them. They themselves admit that a Buddha appears in the world after long times, and **thus their attempt to change Buddha Dhamma is one of the basic contradictions in Mahayana.**

What we need to understand is the basic difference between Buddha Dhamma and any other human endeavor: All other human endeavors involve cumulative effort of many, whether it is science, philosophy, engineering, etc.; see, “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)“. And all those efforts are made within the system, using the knowledge acquired by the experience within the system; see, “[Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorem](#)“. A Buddha transcends the human realm, and discovers the “whole existence” of the 31 realms; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“. The Mahayanists took that world view, which is not accessible to normal human beings but only to a Buddha, **and then added their own theories that only complicates that “already seemingly esoteric” picture.** This is why there are so many apparent contradictions in “Buddhism” today. Adding more “pluff”, which is wrong anyway by definition, only distorts the correct picture. My goal here is to provide a consistent picture using the accepted scientific methods.

Next, “[Background on the Current Revival of Buddha Dhamma](#)“,

13.7

Why is it Critical to Find the Pure Buddha Dhamma?

1. In 2014, I participated in an online discussion group on “Buddhism” for a few days. Couple of things that struck me were:

- There are a lot of people out there who see that there is something valuable in Buddha Dhamma. But there is lot of confusion, because there are so many conflicting ideas brought up and discussed without reaching a conclusion.
- Each person seems to have their own version, their own “theory” what Dhamma really is. In many forums, instead of having a honest discussion about what ideas are right and what are wrong, many people use the forums for “entertainment”. It is their “coffee break” to sit around and show off their “knowledge” and “wisdom”. **(I must say that I regularly participated in a couple of other discussion groups in 2014 where people seemed to be genuinely interested in having an open exchange of ideas; due to lack of time, I don’t participate in such discussions any more).**

2. It is a good idea to first decide what the goal of such a forum is. I think the goal should be to find and confirm the core ideas that the Buddha taught 2500 years ago. Let us get rid of all these different labels, Mahayana, Theravāda, etc.. Since it does not appear to happen any time soon, I have decided to just present what I have found. I call it Buddha Dhamma. And that is what was called until the term “Buddhism” came into vogue in the 19th century.

3. I have two key points to make:

- We can remove many bad ideas that crept into Dhamma by looking at the historical “evolution” of “Buddhism”; The main problem of “evolution” of Dhamma is that it is not a germ idea that needs to be nurtured and refined: **Buddha Dhamma is the set of ultimate natural laws that a Buddha DISCOVERS after long times.** Now, one can be skeptical about that, and that is perfectly fine. Confidence in that belief comes by critically examining the evidence, and it may come later. But let us make that assumption, because that is a key idea in Buddha Dhamma: That it is a rare event that a human being can discover the ultimate laws of nature; see, “[Power of the Human Mind – introduction](#)“, and the follow-up posts.
- Modern science can be another useful tool in finding the truth or fallacy of some concepts involved; the “theories” of science are continually being tested and verified by thousand of independent scientists, so even though they are not infallible, they are better than many speculations by individuals. And there is a key difference in finding the nature’s laws via the scientific method and the way a Buddha finds them; see, “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)“.

I will use both these tools in presenting my case.

4. The goal (and the motivation) in finding true Dhamma (or any kind of true salvation for those who believe in any other religion or belief system) is different compared to a philosophical debate. One could possibly “win an argument” in a philosophical debate especially if “winning” means persuading more people in the audience. One could thus “win a debate”, but deep inside one knows the argument has flaws. It is like winning court case, and freeing a criminal. The criminal (and may be even the lawyer) knows that he/she committed the crime. Even though the consequences will not be paid in a prison, they will be paid according to the Dhamma or the nature’s laws.

5. If we can recover those correct laws that the Buddha taught, then we can gain the benefits of knowing those laws and following them for our benefit. It is not about winning an argument. It is ALL about finding the truth for oneself. If what Buddha said is true, then this world is much more complex than most people think, and there is much more suffering to be had, if one does not use the remaining time in this life wisely.

6. Then there is this naive argument out there that says: “All religions work for the good of the mankind. Do not criticize any religion or any sect within Buddhism”. But some of those people also say, “Our sect of Buddhism is the best version because we are so compassionate that we will not attain Enlightenment until EVERYONE is ready”. As we will see below, this oath itself is against one

of the five precepts in Buddha Dhamma, that of promising not to lie. I am not going to talk about other religions, but I am going to point out the flaws in many existing versions of “Buddhism” today, because **that is the compassionate thing to do.**

7. If one is truly compassionate, one should try to find the true Dhamma (because there is only one set of natural laws), and then SHARE it with anyone who would be interested. Dhamma is not something that anyone can GIVE to anyone else. Even the Buddha could only teach those who would listen to him. Some people even question the compassion of the Buddha when they hear this story from the Tipitaka:

- There was a butcher named Cundasukara who lived right next door to the Jetawanaramaya, where the Buddha resided for a long time. Some may wonder why the Buddha did not try to “save” Cundasukara by teaching him the right path. Actually, there were some *bhikkhus* who could hear the screams of the pigs being slaughtered and asked the Buddha why he would not try to teach Dhamma to Cundasukara. The Buddha told them that Cundasukara would accrue much more bad kamma if he tried to do that. Killing pigs leads to accumulation of much bad kamma, but unimaginable bad kamma could be accumulated by having hateful thoughts towards a Buddha: see, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)“. One could accumulate more bad kamma by hurting the feelings of a human being than by killing an animal, and hateful thoughts towards a Buddha can be infinitely worse than hurting a normal human being. Therefore, sometimes the true compassion can be hidden.
- In my way of thinking, I would not be acting compassionately if I did not point out these flaws in both Mahayana and Theravāda, because I have experienced the benefits of the true and pure Dhamma.
- My goal is not to try to “convert” anyone to anything. The Buddha did not try to convert anybody. It is up to each person to make their own decisions, because one is responsible for one’s own future, and no one else is. Most of us are lucky to live in societies where we can make our own decisions.
- As I keep emphasizing, Buddha Dhamma describes the ultimate laws of nature. Anyone with any religious background, or an atheist, can follow Dhamma and should be able to see that it does describe the laws of nature. However, it is critical to find the true Dhamma. The only way to do that is to check for consistency at ALL TIMES, and to weed out the bad versions.

8. In the following few posts we will examine the problems in many different versions of Mahayana and also in Theravāda. If you see any flaws in my arguments, please send me a comment. **It is possible that I could make a mistake, and if so I will correct them.** I hope all those who read these posts will keep an open mind, because all of us should have the same goal: finding the pure Dhamma which will be beneficial to us all.

Next, “[Key Problems with Mahayana Teachings](#)“,

13.8 Key Problems with Mahayana Teachings

1. The main problem is a conflict with a very basic tenet of Buddha Dhamma: That a Buddha comes to this world after very long times, and **DISCOVERS** the laws of nature by his own efforts. Mahayanists agree that it takes aeons of time to fulfill the “*paramitas*” and to become a Buddha.

- Then they turn around and say that Buddha Dhamma needed to be “refined” for the changing times; see “[Background on the Current Revival of Buddha Dhamma](#)“. How can the ultimate laws of nature discovered by a Buddha be “refined” or “revised”? **No one has answered this basic question.**

2. The first thing one is supposed to do in becoming a “Mahayana Buddhist” is to take the “*Bodhisattva* vow”: They say each being should endeavor to become a Buddha i.e., each person should become a *Bodhisattva*.

- Those who initiated this idea a long time ago probably did not have any idea that there are infinite number of sentient beings in this world. Each human’s body itself has amazingly large number of microscopic beings; see, “[There are as many creatures on your body as there are people on Earth!](#)“.
- There are 1000 trillion of just ants on this Earth: [WebLink: ASK: Q: How many ants are there in the world?](#). Or do they not count other living beings?
- If it is not possible to have a significant number of *Arahants* for 1800 years, is there any realistic way for trillions of beings to attain *Aranhathood*, let alone *Buddhahood*?
- In this aeon (basically the time duration of a universe or about 30 billion years), there have been four Buddhas, and one more is supposed to appear; this is truly an exception. Before this aeon, there were 30 aeons (trillion years!) that did not have a single Buddha appearing. So, how long would one to have wait to become a Buddha, i.e., remain a *Bodhisattva*? **And will all beings (or even the human population today) be able to become Buddhas in the same aeon let alone at the same time? Are they serious?**

3. Within 500 years of the passing away of the Buddha, the Indian Mahayanists started not only refining but incorporating concepts that were alien to Buddha Dhamma. If it needed refining just after 500 years, how come they have not kept up with the updating process? **One would think they would be doing a major revision these days with so much changes in science and technology.** Actually, what has happened is the opposite: Science and technology is consistent with the original Dhamma; what needs to be done is to abandon those alien concepts in Mahayana and embrace the pure Dhamma.

4. Those who started this revision process did not understand the main concept of Nibbāna and the related concepts of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. So, they defined those in their own terms, and then got into a slippery slope in trying to explain those terms by inventing more concepts. It snowballed, and in the words of Edward Conze, who translated many Mahayana texts to English:

- “.....About 100 BCE (roughly 400 years after the Buddha’s Parinibbāna) a number of Buddhists in India felt that the existing statements of the doctrine had become stale and useless. In the conviction that Dhamma required ever new re-formulations so as to meet the needs of new ages, new populations and new social circumstances, they set out to produce new literature which ultimately came to known as Mahayana Buddhism. The creation of this literature is one of the most significant outbursts of creative energy known to human history and it was sustained for about four to five centuries. Repetition alone, they believed, cannot sustain a living religion. Unless counterbalanced by constant innovation, it will become fossilized and lose its life-giving qualities, they believed”.
- (see, “[Historical Timeline of Edward Conze](#)“).

For someone who is not familiar with the original teachings of the Buddha, those philosophical arguments could look impressive, as they did for Edward Conze. We will examine those concepts in detail in upcoming posts. I have discussed the concept of “emptiness”; see the link below.

5. None of the Mahayanist “authors” such as Nagarjuana, Vasubhandhu, Asanga, are documented to be *Arahants* or even *Sotapannas*; they were like philosophers of today putting forth their own theories. Not only that, they had an aversion to the concept of an *Arahant*. In fact, the last *Arahant* (up to now) is supposed to be Ven. Maliyadeva from Sri Lanka, who lived in the second century CE according to some sources:

[WebLink: WIKI: Maliyadeva](#)

- The Mahayana *sutras* are supposed to have their origin with Nagarjuna, who is believed to have lived 150-250 CE in India. Thus it is clear that the pure Dhamma went underground somewhere before 200 CE, within about 700 years of the *Parinibbāna* (passing away) of the Buddha.
- **Thus those Indian intellectuals like Nagarjuana were just like the philosophers from the time of Socrates, who make all kinds of speculations consistent with the “knowledge” about the “world” at any given time.**
- The Buddha did warn of this outcome: He said: “there will be other versions that look like Dhamma and feels like Dhamma. Just like when there are imitations of gold coming to the market, the real gold goes underground” ([WebLink: suttacentral: Saddhamma Patirupaka Sutta \(SN 16.13\)](#)). That has been the case for over 1800 years.
- But the truth comes out eventually. That time could well be now. The correct interpretations of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* have been hidden for all this time, but within the past ten to twenty years, they have been uncovered and been explained in Sri Lanka. The details will come out in due time, but for anyone interested, the correct interpretations are on this website for scrutiny.

6. So what are these revisions that the Mahayana forefathers made?

There are five doctrinal “innovations” of the Mahayanists that have been listed by Edward Conze; see, “[Historical Timeline of Edward Conze](#)“. They are:

- As concerns the goal there is a shift from the Arahant-ideal to the *Bodhisattva*-ideal;
- A new way of salvation is worked out, in which compassion ranks equal with wisdom, and which is marked by the gradual advance through six “perfections” (*paramita*);
- Faith is given a new range by being provided with a new pantheon of deities, or rather of persons more than divine;
- “Skill in means” (*upayakausalya*), an entirely new virtue, becomes essential to the saint, and is placed even above wisdom, the highest virtue so far;
- A coherent ontological doctrine is worked out, dealing with such items as “Emptiness”, “Suchness”, etc”.

We will point out the key contradictions of each of these revisions with the Buddha’s original teachings (see i-v below), and will go into details later on.

- i. The basic idea of Buddha Dhamma is that each human being has a unique mind. It is defiled by greed, hate, and ignorance. Because of that each person commits immoral acts and subsequently “pay for those actions”, suffering is the net result in the cycle of rebirths. One gets out this cycle of rebirths by purifying one’s mind; one who has accomplished this task is an *Arahant*. That can be done only by each person. NO ONE can purify anyone else’s mind. Nibbāna is not an abstract concept: “[Nibbāna](#)“.
- ii. One attains *Nibbāna* when one purifies the mind of ALL defilements. That is when one has ultimate wisdom, or *paññā*. There is no way to equate compassion with *paññā*. One can be as compassionate to the maximum, but that does not mean one has gotten rid of ignorance. In fact, those beings in the Brahma worlds do not generate any hateful thoughts; they have perfected the four *Brahmavihara*: *metta*, *karuna*, *mudita*, *upekkha*. They don’t have a trace of hateful thoughts, yet they have ignorance (*mōha*), and thus will one day be reborn in the four lower realms (unless they attain *Sotāpanna* stage before that). Therefore, this is also a major contradiction. See, “[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)“.

- iii. Buddha said a human life is better than life in any other realm (other than the realm reserved for the *Anāgāmi*s), because the easiest to attain *Nibbāna* is from the human realm. While some beings in higher realms can be helpful to us, and we should share merits with them, a human is not supposed to worship any other being. One has to have faith only in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. No other being can help with our goal of attaining *Nibbāna*.
- iv. “Skill in Means” or whatever other term anyone comes up runs into the same problem as compassion above in (ii). Such ideas run against the core teaching of the Buddha that says, even if one gets rid of greed and hate, but still has ignorance, then one will end up getting back greed and hate DUE TO ignorance. *Nibbāna* is not attained until ignorance is completely removed from the mind.
- v. Mahayana descriptions on all these philosophical concepts like emptiness or *sunyata* are just a lot of empty words. They have much simpler explanations that are consistent with original teachings; see the links below. The Mahayanists had to re-invent alternate descriptions for these terms because the original meanings were in conflict with their “revisions” discussed in i-iv.

7. Those who follow the Mahayana version do that because either, (1) they are born into Mahayana tradition (just like I was born to Theravāda), or (2) that is the version of “Buddhism” that one got introduced to. The problems with Mahayana versions are not due to their making. But it is time at least to start changing those features that are in stark contradiction not only with the original teachings of the Buddha, but also with the enhanced world view of science within the past several hundred years.

- The oath in most Mahayana traditions to, “not to seek Enlightenment until ALL BEINGS ARE READY for Enlightenment” is the most visible contradiction. As I pointed out in #2 above, at least these days we know that this is a outright lie, and is an obvious break of the precept not to lie knowingly.
- This should not be a debate about ideologies of sects; it should be an open discussion about how to weed out the inconsistent material from all sects, and to recover the pure Buddha Dhamma for the benefit of all.

Before discussing the problems with the wrong interpretations in Theravāda, let us discuss the concept of *sunyata*; see, “[What is Sunyata \(Emptiness\)?](#)“. Mahayana Buddhism tries to make a big deal out of *sunyata*, because their forefathers (those who started Mahayana tradition) could not understand the concept of *Nibbāna*. It is unfortunate that many people who are only introduced to Mahayana teachings believe that *Nibbāna* is an abstract concept; see, “[Nibbāna – Is It Difficult to Understand?](#)“

Also see: “[Saddharma Pundarika Sutra \(Lotus Sutra\) – A Focused Analysis](#)“....

13.9 Saddharma Pundarika Sutra (Lotus Sutra) – A Focused Analysis

1. This *sutra* was written by a number of Indian philosophers over hundreds of years, and led to the gradual formation of Mahayana Buddhism over that period. Note that I am NOT referring to it as a *sutta*; *suttas* are the original teachings of the Buddha and were delivered in *Maghadhi* language, were written down in *Pāli*, and are available in the *Tipitaka*.

- In contrast, all Mahayana *sutras* were written after the *Parinibbāna* (passing away) of the Buddha and were written in Sanskrit without an exception.
- Thus at least we have a clear way of distinguishing the original discourses by the Buddha (*suttas*) and those Mahayana *sutras* written by lay people hundreds of years after the Buddha.
- Other than this obvious language indicator, the question often arises as to which of many interpretations that are being given to key concepts even in the Theravāda tradition. As mentioned in the *Tipitaka*, this problem was there even DURING the time of the Buddha.

2. Once Mahā Prajapathi Gotami *bhikkhuni*, who was Prince Siddhartha's step mother, approached the Buddha and pointed out that some *bhikkhus* were providing incorrect interpretations of the Dhamma, and that she fears that the things will really get out of hand long time after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha: "How can the future generations figure out the correct version of Dhamma?" she asked the Buddha.

- The Buddha agreed that it is inevitable that wrong interpretations will always be there, but said that there is a way to clarify identify the correct version. He said always to look for consistency with the Four Noble Truths as explained in the *suttas*, the cause and effect as explained in the *paticca samuppāda dhamma*, and how to stay from getting indebted via *rāga*, *dōsa*, *mōha* as laid out in the *vinaya*; any genuine teaching should lead to *rāgakkhaya*, *dōsakkhaya*, and *mōhakkhaya* (getting rid of *rāga*, *dōsa*, *mōha*).
- If a version of Dhamma does not have this internal consistency and does not lead to *rāgakkhaya* (reduction of greed), *dōsakkhaya* (reduction of hate), and *mōhakkhaya* (reduction of ignorance of the three characteristics of nature *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*), then that should be discarded.

3. A bit of background material before we discuss this *sutra*: According to the Buddha, there are **three ways** to attain *Nibbāna*:

- A **Sammā Sambuddha** (like Buddha Gotama) discovers the Noble Eightfold Path and attains *Nibbāna* through his own efforts, AND he is able to teach the doctrine to others.
- Thus a second way to attain *Nibbāna* is to learn the Dhamma (or the Path) from a *Sammā Sambuddha* or a true disciple of his; this is how **an Arahant** attained *Nibbāna*.
- Then there are **pacceka Buddhas** who discover the Path by themselves but are not capable of explaining it to the other people.

4. Now let us discuss how this *sutra* paved the way for the *Bodhisattva* concept in Mahayana.

This *sutra* starts off by the Buddha saying that even though he had taught that there were three paths to *Nibbāna* but now he is admitting that there is only one; when Ven. Ananda asked why, he says that he did not think people were "ready" for this higher doctrine. Thus instead of there being three vehicles (or paths) one can take, there is only one which is the great vehicle or the Mahayana ("*mahā*" is great and "*yāna*" is vehicle). And this is the path that he himself took by striving for aeons as a *Bodhisattva* to become a Buddha.

- Continuing with this *sutra*, now he (the Buddha) was advising everyone to become a *Bodhisattava* and to attain the Buddhahood. Then he assures all those *Arahants* present there, including Ven. Sariputta, that they themselves will become Buddhas. This is a complete lack of understanding of the concept of an *Arahant* (even though the *sutta* itself says that those *Arahants* had removed all defilements). An *Arahant* is not going to be reborn and thus there is no way for an *Arahant* to become a Buddha.

Now let us go through a few more "obvious inconsistencies" in the *sutra*.

5. It is astonishing to see that the *sutra* opens with, “Thus have I heard...”, a big *musāvāda* (a lie) that Ven. Ananda is providing the details of the *sutra*.

First a brief background: When the Pāli *sutta* in the *Tipitaka* were first summarized for transmission, Ven. Ananda, who knew all the *suttas* by heart, recited them at the First Buddhist Council; thus any given *sutta* in the *Tipitaka* starts off with his clarification, “Thus have I heard...” to indicate that this was what Ven. Ananda had heard himself. Trying to give the impression that this *sutra* was also one delivered by the Buddha, the authors of the *Lotus sutra* obviously tried to deceive the readers.

- As with all the other *sutras* written in Sanskrit, it has been generally accepted by the historians that the *Lotus sutra* was written much later after the passing away (*Parinibbāna*) of the Buddha Gotama.
- The oldest parts of the text (Chapters 1–9 and 17) were probably written down between 100 BCE and 100 CE, and most of the text had appeared by 200 CE; see, for example, [WebLink: WIKI: Lotus Sutra](#). Thus it was written by several authors over 100 years or more. A translation was made from Sanskrit to Chinese in 255 CE, and this is the earliest historical documentation of its existence.

6. The middle of the *sutra* is devoted to describing the “universal accessibility” of the Buddhahood to anyone. Here it reads like a fairytale where astounding stories of accomplishments are described: For example, a daughter of the dragon king Sagara astonishes the assembly by performing various supernatural acts and says she can attain the Buddhahood “in an instant”.

- However, the *sutra* also stresses the importance of faith and devotion as means to realization of enlightenment, and minimizes the need for wisdom. Among other significant points, the stress on faith and devotion makes buddhahood more accessible to laypeople, who do not spend their lives in ascetic monastic practice; thus the Buddhahood is available to anyone.

7. Yet the problem is that since a Mahayana Buddhist agrees in advance to take the *Bodhisattva* vow (see, [WebLink: WIKI: Bodhisattva vow](#)) to wait until “everyone is ready to attain the Buddhahood”, it is not clear how or who can determine WHEN everyone is ready.

- And all current scientific facts point to the possibility of there being an innumerable number of beings, this is a critical question how all these beings can attain the Buddhahood at the same time; see, “[There are as many creatures on your body as there are people on Earth!](#)”.
- Furthermore, it seems contradictory that Buddha Gotama and many other previous Buddhas did not wait for anyone else.

8. The story gets even more fascinating in Chapter 16 (presumably as a different writer of the *sutra* comes up with another idea), when the Buddha Gotama reveals that he is an eternal being: He attained the Buddhahood an incalculably distant time in the past, and even though seems to pass away at times to *nirvana* (Sanskrit word for *Nibbāna*), he periodically makes appearances in the world.

- This declaration makes the Buddha more like a Creator God who has been there at all times! And no mention (as far as I could see) has been made on the issue of whether there was a beginning to this world.
- It seems to me that the philosophers who wrote these Mahayana *sutras* had no idea of the concept of *Nibbāna*! By the very definition, the whole idea of attaining *Nibbāna* is to dissociate from this suffering-filled material world: There are several posts at this site ranging from, “[Three Kinds of Happiness – What is Niramisa Sukha?](#)” to “[What are Rūpa? – Relation to Nibbāna](#)” on the concept of *Nibbāna*.
- Then there is the issue of there being other Buddhas present at that assembly too. And they all seem to be “at the same level”. Thus the question arises as to who was the first Buddha, and then why those other Buddhas “did not wait until everyone else was ready for the Buddhahood”.

9. With most of the sections of the *sutra* dedicated to hyperbolizing the value of the single, great vehicle (Mahayana) to attain the *Nibbāna* versus the three vehicles of *Sammā Sambuddha*, *Pacceka Buddha*, and *Arahant*, **there is no discussion on the actual distinguishing doctrinal concepts of the**

single vehicle, other than just saying that it has the advantage of “easy accessibility of the Buddhahood”. What makes this “single vehicle” approach different from the original approach in terms of details in Dhamma? For example, does it have new way of the describing the Noble Eightfold Path, *paticca samuppāda*, or the Four Noble Truths?

- In fact, the *sutra*, as many other Sanskrit *sutras*, only mention those key foundational concepts of Buddha Dhamma in passing. There is no discussion on them, let alone pointing out the differences from the original doctrine. **I am amazed that no one even refers to this glaringly obvious point. What sets the “single vehicle approach” apart from the original other than the name change?**
- But the real problem is that in changing some key concepts (for example, getting rid of the Arahant concept and making the Buddha effectively a Creator God), this *sutra* paved the way to distort the Buddha Dhamma for generations to come.
- In terms of the basic conditions set forth by the Buddha to see whether any teachings in this *sutra* lead to a reduction in greed, hate, and ignorance, can anyone point to such aspects? Other than the usage of grandiose descriptions, there is nothing substantial in terms of a doctrine, let alone a revised doctrine. In fact, all it does is to gravely distort the foundational concepts like *Nibbāna*, *Buddhahood*, and *Arahanthood* with the concept of “a single vehicle”.

10. There are so many untruths, inconsistencies, and exaggerations in this *sutra* that I have space in this essay to point out only the gross problems that are vividly displayed; that is why the post is labelled as a “focused analysis”.

- Here is a English translation of the *sutra* available online, so that anyone can peruse through and see the apparent difference between this *sutra* and any Pāli *sutta* that is in the Tipitaka: [WebLink: PURIFYMIND: Lotus Sutra](#)
- One could compare this *sutra* with the actual Pāli *suttas* that I started discussing; see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)“, and the posts on the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* below that.
- I must emphasize that one needs to evaluate this *sutra* in the context of the deep and self-consistent Buddha Dhamma. One can get a glimpse of this by examining the “Key Dhamma Concepts”, “Paticca Samuppada”, and “Abhidhamma” sections at this website, where I have only begun to lay out the teachings, especially in the Abhidhamma section.

11. I would be happy to respond (and to correct any legitimate errors in the analysis) if anyone can point out any problems with my analysis; please send me a comment.

- This analysis was done consistent with the main theme of this website, which is to point out problems with both Mahayana and Theravāda versions as being practised today. It is for the benefit of everyone that we should remove (or at least be aware of) all inconsistencies and untruths so that the current and future generations will have a version of Buddha Dhamma that is close to the original version.

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13.10 What is Sunyata or Sunnata (Emptiness)?

Revised (added #6) December 28, 2015; November 26, 2017; December 16, 2017

1. In Mahayana Buddhism, there are books written about *Suñyāta* (actually it is *Suññāta* in Pāli) or emptiness. Mahayana Buddhism tries to make a big deal out of *suñyāta*, because their forefathers (those who started Mahayana tradition) could not understand the concept of *Nibbāna*. It is unfortunate that many people who are only introduced to Mahayana teachings (and are not aware of the original teachings of the Buddha) believe that *Nibbāna* is an abstract concept.

- However, *Nibbāna* is a very simple concept if one understands pure Buddha Dhamma; see, [“Nibbana – Is it Difficult to Understand?”](#).
- But it can be examined at deeper levels too: [“Nibbana “Exists”, but Not in This World“](#).
- See more at [“Nibbana“](#).

2. What is emptiness?

- When an entity A is devoid of entity B, then it can be said that entity A is devoid of B, or empty of B. That is the emptiness or *suñyāta*.
- For example, if we take a water bottle and pour the water out, we say we have an empty bottle. But in reality there is air in the bottle, so the bottle is empty only with regard to water; it is not empty regard to air.
- Emptiness is relative. One has to say what it is empty of. There is no absolute “emptiness”. It is meaningless to say “this is emptiness”, because there may be something there that we are not aware of.
- For example, up until recently scientists thought deep space is “empty”. But now they know that it is full energy. Still, one could say that “deep space is empty of tangible matter” to a good approximation.

3. The Buddha said when the mind becomes empty of greed (*rāga*), hate (*dōsa*), and ignorance (*mōha*) it becomes empty of those defilements: “*ragakkhayo Nibbanan, dosakkhayao Nibbanan, mohakkhayo Nibbanan*“, and that mind has attained *Nibbāna*. **That is emptiness, *suñyāta* with respect to defilements, and also with respect to anything material in this world of 31 realms; see below.** VERY SIMPLE explanation, even though it is not easy to get there.

- When one attains the *Arahant phala*, one’s mind becomes *sunya* of *rāga*, *dōsa*, *mōha*. But one still has *saññā* (perception), *vedanā* (feelings), etc. and lives like a normal human being until death.
- But his/her mind is devoid of greed, hate, and ignorance, so that h/she will not do any immoral act, under any circumstances.
- At the death of an *Arahant*, “this world of 31 realms” becomes devoid of any trace of that lifestream, except for the *Arahant’s nama gotta* (*mano* imprints or memory records, for previous lives; see, [“Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra \(Sankata\)”](#)); there is no rebirth. So that is another *suñyāta*.

4. There is a *sutta* in *Tipitaka* that is about *sunnata* (emptiness), and was delivered by the Buddha, called the *Cula-Suññāta sutta*. I actually wrote the original post before I knew about this *sutta*. When a friend of mine told me about the *sutta*, I was glad to see that the *sutta* described emptiness very similar to the way I described it above. This does show that the Dhamma is internally self-consistent.

- Please click the link below for its translation that I extracted from, [WebLink: ACCESSTOINSIGHT: Cula-suññāta Sutta: The Lesser Discourse on Emptiness](#). Normally, I come across many English translations that are bad and even erroneous, but fortunately this translation is fairly good.

The highlighting in the link below is mine, and I have made some comments:

[WebLink: Cula-Suññāta Sutta](#)

There is no need to write books on emptiness that are full of meaningless words. The above *sutta* says it all.

5. In an online discussion forum in 2014, I saw a comment saying that emptiness describes *paticca samuppāda*. This was really a surprise, because in Mahayana texts it is not explained what *paticca samuppāda* is.

- I have not seen the *paticca samuppāda* explained in even a remotely sensible way in a Mahayana text, Zen, Vajrayana, or any other form. If you know of such a book, please send me a comment giving the name of the book (or any other source), and I would appreciate it.

6. Anything in this world of 31 realms arise due to *avijjā* (ignorance of the real nature of that world): This is the step, “*bhava paccaya jathī*” in *paticca samuppāda*. See the [Paticca Samuppāda](#) section for details.

- When *avijjā* is dispelled through the removal of greed, hate, and ignorance via comprehending Dhamma, NOTHING in this material world can arise, because it all starts with “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhārā*”, i.e., via thinking, speaking, and doing things with *avijjā*.
- At *Arahanthood*, even the slightest bondage to anything material in the 31 realms is discarded, and all causes for anything material (which is the cause of suffering at a deeper level) to arise. This is real emptiness or *Nibbāna*. Also see, “[What Are Rūpa? \(Relation to Nibbāna\)](#)”.

7. The Buddha said, “*Yo paticcasamuppadam passati, so Dhammam passati*” or, “One who understands *paticca samuppāda*, understands Dhamma”

- The Mahayana sects have moved so far away from Buddha Dhamma, I cannot fathom why they still call it Buddha’s Dhamma.
- It is very easy to get the idea behind *paticca samuppāda*, because it is in the words; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppada”](#)”, and follow-up posts. Buddha Dhamma is all about cause and effects, and that is what is described in *paticca samuppāda*.

8. There is a deeper way to analyze *Suññata*. However, one needs to know the meanings of the Three Characteristics of Nature (*Tilakkhana* or *anicca, dukkha, anatta*) first. It is not possible to attain *Nibbāna* without knowing *Tilakkhana* or the real nature of this world; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”.

- One can get to *Nibbāna* (also called *vimokkha*) via contemplating on *anicca, dikkha, or anatta* (of course they are inter-related). Contemplation of *anicca* leads to *animitta vimokkha*. Contemplation of *dukkha* leads to *appanā vimokkha*. Contemplation of *anatta* leads to *suññata vimokkha*. [***vimokkha*** : (m.) liberation, deliverance; release; emancipation.] [The 3 liberations are: 1. the conditionless (or signless) liberation (*animitta-vimokkha*), 2. the desireless liberation (*apanihita-vimokkha*), 3. the emptiness (or voidless) liberation (*suññatā-vimokkha*).]
- However, regardless of the path taken, the end result is the same: one gets to *Nibbāna*, release (or freedom) from this world.

9. Finally, at the very basic level, *Nibbāna* means getting rid of greed, hate, and ignorance. That REQUIRES comprehension of *anicca, dukkha, anatta* or the real nature this world.

- Put in a different way, greed, hate, and ignorance need to be removed via *Ānāpāna* and *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditations; see, “[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Structure](#)”. But those meditations need to be done with the comprehension of *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.
- More details on the correct versions of those meditations can be found at: “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” and “[Maha Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta](#)”.

Next, “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)”,

13.11 Incorrect Theravada Interpretations – Historical Timeline

April 29, 2017

1. Degradation of *Theravāda* Buddha Dhamma occurred gradually over the past 1500 years, but two drastic changes took place during that time: (i) Buddhaghosa's introduction of Hindu meditation techniques 1500 years ago, (ii) misinterpretation of *anicca* and *anatta* by the European scholars when they translated both *Tipitaka* and *Visuddhimagga* to English in the late 1800's.

- In several posts following this post in this section, I will provide evidence for the above (see bullet #7 below).
- In this post I will discuss the historical timeline, which is critical to the discussion. I have combined two previous posts, "Theravada: Problems with Current Interpretations of Key Concepts" and "Historical Timelines of Buddha Dhamma and Sri Lanka – End of Sinhala Commentaries" (and removed them) to come with this more concise post.
- As I explained in earlier posts in this section, much worse distortions to Buddha Dhamma took place with branching out of various sects based on Mahayana, Zen, and Tibetan (*Vajrayana*). It started with the rise of Mahayana in India about 500 years after the Buddha. Here we are focusing only on ***Theravāda* Buddha Dhamma**.

2. Here we look at the timeline of *Theravāda* Buddha Dhamma from the beginning, and see whether we can discern when the pure Dhamma started going underground. There are a few historical facts that most people agree on.

(BCE = Before Current Era, CE = Current Era = AD):

- **563 – 483 BCE:** Buddha Gotama
- **377-307 BCE:** The city of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, was established by King Pandukabhaya. But there is evidence that human colonization in Sri Lanka goes back to at least 30,000 years; see the detailed article on Sri Lanka on Wikipedia : [WebLink: Wikipedia: History of Sri Lanka](#)
- **247 BCE:** Buddha Dhamma was introduced to the Sinhala Kingdom in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka by Ven. Mahinda Thero.
- **161-137 BCE:** For the first time in history, King Dutugemunu united all of Sri Lanka under one kingdom.
- **29 BCE:** *Tipitaka* (the version recited at the Third Buddhist Council —*Dhamma Sangayana* — around 247 BCE), was written down in Sri Lanka at the Fourth *Sangayana*, which was the last *Sangayana* attended by all *Arahants*. This is the Pāli *Tipitaka* that has survived to this date.
- **100-200 CE:** Ven. Maliyadeva, Last *Arahant* by some accounts, lived in Sri Lanka : [WebLink: Wikipedia: Maliyadeva](#) (However, it is likely that there have been "*jathi Sotapannas*" who attained *Arahanthood* since then, but may not be that many).
- **100 BCE:** It is likely that Mahayana Buddhism actually originated when the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras to include the very first versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā* series, along with texts concerning *Akṣobhya* Buddha, which were probably written down in the 1st century BCE in the south of India : [WebLink: Wikipedia: Mahayana](#)
- **150-250 CE:** Life of Nagarjuna; considered to be the founder of Mahayana Buddhism. Nagarjuna's central concept was the "emptiness" (*shunyata*) of all *dhammas*. Most influential work is *Mulamadhyamakakarika* (Fundamental verses on the middle way).

2. It is clear that the Pāli *Tipitaka* that we have today has the original teachings of the Buddha, since it was written down by *Arahants*. However, Buddha Dhamma started to decline within 100-200 after it was written down.

- Still, there was no significant impact on *Theravāda* Buddhism up to the writing of *Visuddhimagga* by Buddhaghosa around 450 CE.

- The other major work that influenced *Theravāda* teachings to date was *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* by *Acariya* Anuruddha, who was there around the same time as *Acariya* Buddhaghosa. However, since not many people are knowledgeable in Abhidhamma, it has not impacted *Theravāda* to the same extent as *Visuddhimagga*.
- The last, and most important misinterpretation took place much later, in the late 1800's when early European scholars started translating the *Tipitaka* to English. That was when the key Pāli terms *anicca* and *anatta* were incorrectly translated as impermanence and "no-self".

3. In order to first discuss the influence of Buddhaghosa, let us look at the timeline of events that led his visit to Sri Lanka roughly 950 years after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha. Here is a timeline compiled by *Bhikkhu* Nyanamoli, taken from his introduction to Ref. 1 (see the references below).

King Devanampiyatissa (307-276 BCE):

- Arrival of Ven. Mahinda in Anuradhapura and establishing Dhamma in the kingdom of King Devanampiyatissa.
- *Mahavihara* monastery founded by Ven. Mahinda.

King Vattagamini (104-88 BCE):

- Abhayagiri monastery founded by the King and becomes separate from Mahavihara monastery.
- Sensing insecurity, Mahavihara monastery writes down *Tipitaka* (away from the royal capital).

King Bhatikabhaya (20 BCE-9 CE):

- Public disputes started to break out between Abhayagiri and Mahavihara monasteries.

King Vasabha (66-110 CE):

- Sinhala commentaries on *Tipitaka* ended being recorded at any time after his reign.

King Voharika-Tissa (215-237 CE):

- King supports both Mahavihara and Abhayagiri monasteries.
- Abhayagiri adopts Vetulya (Mahayana?) *pitaka*.
- King suppresses Vetulya doctrines.

King Gothabhaya (254-267 CE):

- King supports Mahavihara monastery.
- 60 bhikkhus in Abhayagiri banished by King for upholding Vetulya doctrines.
- Indian Bhikkhu Sangamitta supports Abhayagiri monastery.

King Jettha-Tissa (267-277 CE):

- King favors Mahavihara monastery; Sangamitta flees to India.

King Mahasena (277-304 CE):

- King supports Sangamitta, who returns from India.
- Persecution of Mahavihara by King; its Bhikkhus driven from capital for 9 years.
- Mahavihara with its libraries of seven stories burnt to the ground.
- Sangamitta assassinated.
- Rebuilding of Mahavihara.

King Sri Meghavanna (304-332 CE):

- King favors Mahavihara.
- Sinhala monastery established at Buddha Gaya in India.

King Jettha-Tissa II (332-334 CE):

- Dipavamsa composed.
- Some of Buddhaghosa's works.

King Mahanama (412-434 CE):

- Buddhaghosa arrives in Sri Lanka and composes *Visuddhimagga* and other works.

4. I really recommend reading the Introduction to the English translation of *Visuddhimagga* by Ven. Nyanamoli (Ref. 1). To quote Ven. Nyanamoli (starting on p. xxvii of Ref. 1):

“...Now by about the end of first century B.C. E. (dates are very vague), with Sanskrit Buddhist literature just launching out upon its long era of magnificence, Sanskrit was on its way to become a language of international culture. In Ceylon the Great monastery (Mahavihara), already committed by tradition to orthodoxy based on Pāli, had been confirmed in that attitude by the schism of its rival, which now began publicly to study the new ideas from India.In the first century C.E., Sanskrit Buddhism (“Hinayana”, and perhaps by then Mahayana) was growing rapidly and spreading abroad. The Abhayagiri monastery would naturally have been busy studying and advocating some of these weighty developments while the Mahavihara has nothing new to offer.King Vasabha's reign (66-110 CE) seems to be the last mentioned in the Commentaries as we have them now, from which it may lie dormant, nothing further being added. Perhaps the Mahavihara, now living only on its past, was itself getting infected with heresies.in King Mahasena's reign (277-304 CE) things came to a head. With the persecution of Mahavihara with royal assent and the expulsion of its *bhikkhus* from the capital, the Abhayagiri monastery enjoyed nine years of triumph. But the ancient institution rallied its supporters in the Southern provinces and the king repented. The *bhikkhus* returned and the king restored the buildings, which had been stripped to adorn the rival”.

“Still, the Mahavihara must have foreseen, after this affair, that unless it could successfully compete with the “modern” Sanskrit in the field of international Buddhist culture by cultivating Pāli at home and abroad it could assure its position at home. **It was a revolutionary project, involving the displacement of Sinhala by Pāli as the language for the study and discussion of Buddhist teachings, and the founding of a school of Pāli literary composition.**It is not known what was the first original Pāli composition in this period; but the *Dipavamsa* (dealing with historical evidence) belongs here (for it ends with Mahasena's reign and is quoted in the *Samantapasadika*, and quite possibly the *Vimuttimaggā* (dealing with practice), was another early attempt by the Mahavihara in this period (4th century) to reassert its supremacy through original Pāli literary composition”.

5. Here is another account of the destruction of the original Mahavihara during the reign of King Mahasena (277-304 CE) from Ref. 2 (p. 46): “..the Mahā-Vihara, the Brazen Palace, and all such religious edifices, built by generosity of devout kings and pious noblemen for the use of the orthodox Sangha, were razed to the ground. Some three hundred and sixty-four colleges and great temples were uprooted and destroyed, says an ancient chronicle (Nikāya-Sangraha, p.14), ..”.

6. **Thus it is clear that the historical tradition of compiling Sinhala commentaries (on *Tipitaka*) was abandoned somewhere in the 4th century or even before that**, and many of the original Sinhala *Atthakatha* could have been burnt when the original Mahavihara was burned. A concerted effort was initiated by the Mahavihara to compile literature in the Pāli language to counter the onslaught by Sanskrit Mahayana literature in India that was benefiting the Abhayagiri monastery. The appearance of Buddhaghosa on the scene in the early fifth century accelerated this effort to compile Pāli literature.

- More details can be found in the *Mahavamsa*, the Pāli historical account of the history of Sri Lanka compiled in the 5th century (Ref. 3).

7. In the next two posts, “[Buddhaghosa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background](#)” and “[Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#)“, I will discuss the events leading to Buddhaghosa's writing of *Visuddhimagga*, and how it introduced the **first major contamination** of Buddha Dhamma by incorporating Hindu *vedic* meditations — breath mediation and *kasina* mediation.

The second major contamination — which has been even more damaging — was the incorrect translation of *anicca* and *anatta* as impermanence and “no-self”. This is discussed in the last two posts: “[Background on the Current Revival of Buddha Dhamma](#)” and “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)”.

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 2. **Pāli Literature of Ceylon**, by G. P. Malasekara (Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, Delhi, 1928), 2010 edition.
 3. **[WebLink: THE MAHAVAMSA – The Great Chronicle of Lanka](#)**, by Wilhelm Geiger (1912); click on the link to access the English document by Geiger.
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- Next, “[Buddhaghosa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background](#)”.

13.12 **Buddhaghosa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background**

April 8, 2017; Revised April 29, 2017

1. *Acariya* Buddhaghosa has had a strong influence on *Theravāda* Buddhism for the past 1500 years. Before examining his commentaries — especially the *Visuddhimagga* (Path of Purification) — we will discuss some significant events that took place prior to his time, and why he came to Sri Lanka to compose those commentaries.

- The historical timelines up to the arrival of Buddhaghosa in Sri Lanka is given in the previous post in this section: “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)”.
- I have used material from the three references given below in putting together this post.

2. First, we note that only *Arahants* participated in the first four Buddhist Councils (*Sangayana*), and the fourth one was held at the Aluvihara Monastery (a rock temple) near present-day Matale in the Central Province of Sri Lanka in 29 BCE; see, “[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)”.

- The *Tipitaka* was **written down fully** (as exists today) for the first time in this fourth *Sangayana* in Pāli with Sinhala script (**Pāli does not have its own alphabet**).
- So, it is important to keep three things in mind: (i) Genuine *Dhamma* existed in 29 BCE with *Arahants* also completing the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, (ii) What we have in the *Tipitaka* today is this version and therefore we can have confidence that the true teachings of the Buddha are in the *Tipitaka*, (iii) *Tipitaka* was written down in Pāli with Sinhala alphabet.

3. Secondly, many parts of the *Tipitaka* are in a condensed form as discussed in “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”. **Today, there is a tendency to translate *Tipitaka* suttas word-by-word**, and this has led to significant confusion and many contradictions as discussed in that post.

- **Starting at the time of the Buddha, commentaries were written to expand and explain the key concepts that are in a condensed form that was designed for easy oral transmission.** We need to remember that the *Tipitaka* was not written down for around 500 years after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha, **and during that whole time it survived only because it was in a form that was designed for ease of remembering; thus many details were omitted.**
- For example, *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana sutta* took many hours to deliver, but the *sutta* was condensed to just a few pages of verse. It is not possible to condense all that information in a *sutta* for mostly oral transmission that was available at the time. **In those early days, *Bhikkhus* explained the details when they delivered *desanā* or discourses to the public.**
- **Therefore, in addition to the *Tipitaka* being orally transmitted through generations, the details were also orally transmitted. However, when Buddha Dhamma started declining around 100-200 CE, those details stopped being transmitted (there were not enough *Ariyas*, or those who attained *magga phala*, to pass down correct explanations).** Of course, the easy-to-memorize verses of the *Tipitaka* were faithfully transmitted.
- That last bullet explains a key problem that we have today. Even though the *Tipitaka* remains intact, there have not been many *Ariyas* within the past hundreds of years to explain the key concepts in the *Tipitaka*; but thanks to late Waharaka Thero, that has changed; see, “[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thero](#)”.

4. **Even though a few commentaries were composed in the time of the Buddha in Pāli (we have three in the *Tipitaka*; see below), most of them were written later on in Sinhala (especially after the time of Ven. Mahinda), when written language became more common.**

- Up to the time of Buddhaghosa (after about 700 years from the time of Ven. Mahinda), there would have accumulated a vast number of such commentaries called Sinhala *Atthakathā* which means “accounts of the truth” (*attha* + *kathā*). However, it is likely that most of those were destroyed when the *Mahavihara* was burned before Buddhaghosa’s arrival in Sri Lanka; see below.

- **Buddhaghosa's task was to translate those from Sinhala to Pāli, but instead he just made a few of his own commentaries — especially the *Visuddhimagga* — where he incorporated his own *Vedic* concepts in them; see below.**

5. As given in the timeline in the post mentioned in #1, an important event took place before the arrival of Buddhaghosa in Sri Lanka which led to the possible destruction of many original commentaries; this was the establishment of the *Abhayagiri Vihara* in Anuradhapura around 100 BCE. This led to degrading of Buddha Dhamma in Sri Lanka, which then was accelerated by the writing of the *Visuddhismagga*, as we discuss below.

- Over a number of decades, *Abhayagiri Vihara* became a rival to the *Mahavihara*, which had been the center of religious activity since Ven. Mahinda (King Devanampiyatissa).
- The arrival of a body of monks from Pallarama in India, who belonged to the *Vajjiputta Nikāya*, apparently started this schism between the two *Vihara* (p. 29, Ref. 3). This sect descended from those who were expelled from the *Theravāda* by Ven. Moggaliputta Tissa Thero at the Third *Sangayana*.

6. Later, during the reign of King Voharaka Tissa (215-237 CE), *Abhayagiri Vihara* adopted the *Vaitulya Pitaka*. It is no coincidence that by this time *Mahayana* had become dominant in India.

- When the *Mahavihara* raised objections to this new development, King Voharaka Tissa appointed minister Kapila to investigate, and on his recommendation ordered all *Vaitulya* books be burnt.
- A key point to remember is that, “Literary activity in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) declined and, it seems, fell into virtual abeyance between 150 CE and 350 CE, as will appear below” (Ref. 1, p. xxiii).

7. During King Gothabhaya's reign (254-267 CE), the *Vaitulyan* heresy raised its head again, and the King again took action. He not only burnt their books, but branded 60 of their leaders and expelled them.

- Those expelled settled down at Kavira in South India. While they were there, a new recruit by the name of Sangamitta joined them.
- One day, while bathing, Sangamitta saw the branding on the backs of the others and learned what had happened in Sri Lanka. He vowed to take revenge.

8. Sangamitta went to Sri Lanka, and was able to win the confidence of King Gothabhaya, who appointed Sangamitta to be the tutor of his two sons.

- When King Gothabhaya died, his elder son Jettha Tissa became King, but he was not that much attached to Sangamitta, so Sangamitta went back to India. When Jettha Tissa died 14 years later, the younger brother, Mahasena, became King.

9. Mahasena was very much attached to Sangamitta, and Sangamitta decided to come back to Sri Lanka, realizing that his time to take revenge had come.

- On Sangamitta's advice, King Mahasena started a process that was very damaging to the *Mahavihara* and to the Buddha Dhamma in Sri Lanka in general. He prohibited providing alms to Mahavihara, and over time *bhikkhus* at *Mahavihara* migrated to other parts of the country.
- By this time, Buddhism in Sri Lanka was in decline due to other factors too, one being the rise of *Mahayana* in India. *Arahants* were scarce in the Island, and if there were some they would have been in remote regions.

10. For 9 years, Sangamitta lived in glory, plundering the properties of Mahavihara, **and eventually burning down the seven story building with its libraries (p. 47 of Ref. 3)**. People became angry with what happened to *Mahavihara*, and a rebellion was started by a minister of the King named Meghavaranaabhaya.

- However, before a battle took place, the minister was able to meet the King and explain why he needed to make amends to the *Mahavihara* to appease the populace. The King apologized and rebuilt the *Mahavihara*.
- However, people were quite angry at Sangamitta, and he was killed on the orders of a queen of the King, probably without the knowledge of the King.

11. The damage had been done. It is also said that when the King rebuilt the *Mahavihara*, it was mostly those who were at the *Abhayagiri* who took residence at the restored *Mahavihara*. **Therefore, when Buddhaghosa visited the *Mahavihara*, the *bhikkhus* there could have been those originally belonging to the *Abhayagiri* sect.**

- Furthermore, It is possible that many of the original Sinhala *Atthakathā* were destroyed when the *Mahavihara* was burned to the ground. Even though copies of the *Tipitaka* were at many different locations scattered throughout the country, it is not known how many of the *Atthakathā* had copies.
- In any case, none of those original Sinhala commentaries is in existence today.
- *Mahayana* was taking root in India and possibly contributed to the degrading of *Theravāda* in Sri Lanka as well. Sanskrit became the “language of the pundits” (with many new Sanskrit *sutra* written by Nagarjuna, Vasudeava, etc), and Pāli was losing the battle; see, “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)”.

12. By the time of Buddhaghosa arrived in Sri Lanka (during the reign of King Mahanama between 412-434 CE), it is possible that some of those *Atthakathā* were still there.

- Ven. Nyanamoli says (p. xviii of Ref. 1), “..There are references in these works (by Buddhaghosa) to “Ancients (*Porana*) or “Former Teachers (*Pubbacariya*)” as well as to a number of Sinhalese Commentaries additional to the three referred to in the quotation given earlier. The fact is plain enough that a complete body of commentary had been built up during the nine centuries or so that separate Bhandantacariya Buddhaghosa from the Buddha..” and “..This body of material — one may guess that its volume was enormous — Bhandantacariya Buddhaghosa set himself to edit and render into Pāli (the *Tipitaka* itself had been left in the original Pāli)..”
- By the way, “*Porāna*” is a Sinhala word (now *Purāna*), meaning ancient.
- Apparently, the detailed explanations in those *Atthakathā* were held in high esteem among the remaining Buddhists in India, and as we see below, this is where Buddhaghosa came to the picture.
- So, it appears that even though some of the Sinhala *Atthakathā* were burned with the destruction of the *Mahavihara*, some had survived in other locations and brought back to the rebuilt *Mahavihara*.

13. Buddhaghosa was born into a *vedic brahmin* family who lived close to the *Bodhi* Tree in India. He mastered the three *Vedas* and was a well-known *vedic* scholar. He was converted to Buddhism by a *Bhikkhu* Revata who lived in that region in India.

- Law (p. 6 of Ref. 2) writes that Ven. Revata told Buddhaghosa, “..The Sinhalese *Atthakatha* are genuine. They were composed in the Sinhala language by the inspired and profoundly wise Mahinda, who had previously consulted the discourse of the Buddha, authenticated at the three convocations (*Sangayana*), and the dissertations and arguments of Sariputto and others, and they are extant among the Sinhalese. Repairing thither, and studying the same, translate (them) according to the rules of the grammar of the Maghadhas (Pāli). It will be an act conducive to the welfare of the whole world”. Malalasekara (p.66 of Ref 3) gives a very similar account of that request.
- Ven. Nyanamoli also gives a detailed account of how Ven. Revata recruited Buddhaghosa for the project on pp. xxxiv-xxv (Introduction) of Ref. 1. Also see, pp. 31-39 of Ref. 2 and pp. 64-69 of Ref. 3.

14. The important position assigned in the *Theravāda* tradition to the work of Buddhaghosa is evident from the following quote from Ref. 1 (p. xli):

- “..The doctrines (*Dhamma*) of the Theravāda Pāli tradition can be conveniently traced in three main layers. (1) The first of these contains the main books of the Pāli *Sutta Pitaka*. (2) The *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, notably the closely related books, the *Dhammasangayani*, *Vibhanga Patthana*. (3). The system which the author of the *Visuddhimagga* completed, or found completed, and which he set himself to edit and translate back into Pāli ..”.
- Even today, many *Theravadins* just use the *Visuddhimagga* and don’t bother to consult the *Tipitaka*.

15. Sinhala tradition assigns the arrival of Buddhaghosa in Sri Lanka 965 years after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha, according to Malalasekara (p. 66). This is consistent with the above timeline.

- Upon arriving at the Mahavihara in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, Buddhaghosa requested those *Atthakathā* from the authorities. They were reluctant first, but after verifying that he was indeed a scholar, they gave him access to the books (Refs. 1-3).
- Law (p. 8 of Ref 2) says, “..Taking up his residence in the secluded Ganthakaro viharo at Anuradhapura, he translated, according to the rules of the *Maghdhas*, **which is the root of all languages**, the whole of the Sinhalese *Atthakathā* (into Pāli)”.

16. This assertion that Buddhaghosa “**translated** Sinhalese *Atthakathā* into Pali” is obviously not correct.

- It is clear that he incorporated many of his *vedic* concepts (breath meditation, *kasina* meditation, etc) and made his own commentaries, as I will discuss in the next post.
- Furthermore, in the next post, I will point out obvious inconsistencies of the *Visuddhimagga* with the *Tipitaka* and with the remaining three original Pāli commentaries that are still in the *Tipitaka*.

17. Law makes the following interesting statement (p. 38 of Ref. 2): “..Buddhaghosa’s task of translating was finished in three months. Having observed the *Pavarana*, he informed the chief of the congregation of the completion of his task. **The Samgharaja praised him much and set fire to all the works written by Mahinda in Sinhalese..**”. We can make two observations:

- If indeed the work was completed in three months as Law says, Buddhaghosa obviously did not have even time to go through the whole of the Sinhalese *Atthakathā*, even if only a part of it was left.
- It is hard to believe that the chief *Bhikkhu* set fire to the original books. However, it is true that ALL those Sinhalese *Atthakathā* were lost after the time of the Buddhaghosa.

18. In the next post in this section, “[Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#)“, I will discuss the key reasons why *Visuddhimagga* does not represent Buddha Dhamma.

- However, as we discussed above, all of the Sinhala *Atthakathā* were lost soon after the publication of *Visuddhimagga*, and *Visuddhimagga* became the sole source for explaining *Tipitaka* material.
- In fact, it became customary to just use the *Visuddhimagga* and not even consult the *Tipitaka* until recent times, especially until the “discovery of Buddhism” by the Europeans who started translating the *Tipitaka* as well as Buddhaghosa’s works; see detail in the “[Historical Background](#)” section.

19. Furthermore, When Europeans started translating the *Tipitaka* (starting with Rhys Davis and others), they translated *suttas* word-by-word to English, a practice that continues today.

- However, It is not a good idea to translate Pāli *suttas* word-by-word, and those early commentaries were critically important in order to expand on the *Tipitaka* material. This is discussed in “[Sutta – Introduction](#)“.

- In addition, those early European scholars made a huge mistake by incorrectly translating the Pāli words *anicca* and *anatta* as impermanent and “not-self”; see, “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)”.
- This is why the work of late Waharaka Thero is so important. He was able to “re-discover” the meanings of the key Pāli words by perusing through the remaining three original Pāli commentaries of *Patisambhidamagga*, *Petakopadesa*, and *Nettipakarana*; see, “[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)”.

References

1. **The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)**, by Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa (translated by Bhikkhu Nyanamoli), BPS edition, 1999. The Introduction (by Bhikkhu Nyanamoli) provides a historical background.
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Next, “[Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#)”, ..

13.13 **Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis**

April 29, 2017

1. In the previous post in this series, “[Buddhaghosa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background](#)“, we discussed the reason for Buddhaghosa to travel to Sri Lanka. Here is a brief summary of that post:

- Many parts of the *Tipitaka* are in condensed form. Starting from the time of the Buddha, commentaries were written to expand and explain the key concepts in the *Tipitaka*.
- Most of those commentaries — at least from the time of Ven. Mahinda — were written in Sinhala language by Ven. Mahinda himself and many Sinhalese *Arahants* for over 950 years up to the time of Buddhaghosa. These were called Sinhala *Atthakatha* (true accounts).
- A certain *bhikkhu* by the name of Ven. Revata in India recruited Buddhaghosa to travel to Sri Lanka and translate those Sinhala *Atthakatha* to Pāli (This is detailed in Refs. 2-4 below as well).
- In this post, I will point out that instead of translating those Sinhala *Atthakatha*, Buddhaghosa incorporated his own *vedic* ideas into his commentaries in Pāli, especially describing *Ānāpānasati* as breath meditation.

2. Those Sinhalese *Atthakatha* disappeared from existence not long after Buddhaghosa completed his work (it is likely that most of them were burnt with the *Mahavihara* well before Buddhaghosa's time). Regardless of what happened to those original *Atthakatha*, *Theravāda* tradition accepted *Visuddhimagga* to represent those original *Atthakatha* as well as the *Tipitaka*, and to date *Visuddhimagga* is regarded in high esteem.

- When he edited those Sinhala *Atthakatha* and composed the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa — who was a scholar in *Vedic* literature — incorporated Hindu *Vedic* concepts to the *Visuddhimagga*.
- In particular, he replaced real Buddhist *Ānāpāna bhāvanā* with breath meditation and also introduced Hindu *kasina* meditation.
- **Buddhaghosa also disregarded the importance of the *Tilakkhana* (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*), but I will show evidence that he never distorted the meanings of them.** That happened only when the Europeans translated the both the *Tipitaka* and the *Visuddhimagga* to English; see, “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)“.
- He also reportedly wrote other commentaries on *Tipitaka*, but they are not widely used.
- My guess is that Buddhaghosa did not consult the Sinhala *Atthakatha* even for the *Visuddhimagga*. Certainly, *Visuddhimagga* is not compatible with the remaining original three commentaries, as well as the *Tipitaka*, regarding meditation techniques.

3. As I discussed in the post, “[Buddhaghosa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background](#)“, pure Dhamma existed at least up to the fourth Buddhsit Council (*Sangayana*) held in 29 BCE in Matala, Sri Lanka.

- By the time Buddhaghosa arrived in Sri Lanka roughly 450 years later, drastic changes had taken place (with the Buddhist center of Anuradhapura *Mahā Vihara* burnt down once and a Mahayanist sect dominated the landscape for a while; see the above post) among other things.
- **So, the degradation of Theravāda Buddha Dhamma occurred gradually over two thousand years, but two drastic changes took place during that time: (i) Buddhaghosa's introduction of Hindu meditation techniques in the fifth century, (ii) misinterpretation of *anicca* and *anatta* by the European scholars when they translated both *Tipitaka* and *Visuddhimagga* to English in the late 1800's.**
- **Even though there was a resurgence of Buddha Dhamma since late 1800's due to the efforts of those Europeans like Rhys Davids, Eugene Burnouf, and Thomas Huxley, unfortunately it was this “distorted Dhamma” that spread throughout the world in the past 200 years.**

4. Even though those old Sinhala commentaries were lost, three commentaries composed in Pāli (*Patisambhidamagga*, *Petakopadesa*, and *Nettipakarana*) at the time of the Buddha remained intact with the *Tipitaka*; see, “[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)”.
- After Buddhaghosa composed *Visuddhimagga*, *Theravadins* almost exclusively used *Visuddhimagga* instead of the *Tipitaka*, and those original Pāli commentaries were totally neglected.
 - With help of those three original Pāli commentaries, Waharaka Thero was able to “re-discover” the original teachings of the Buddha over the past 25 years or so. Unfortunately, Waharaka Thero attained *Parinibbāna* recently; see, “[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thero](#)”.
 - After the “re-discovery” of the true teachings of the Buddha by Waharaka Thero over the past 25 years or so, it became clear that several key misinterpretations crept into Buddha Dhamma over the past two thousand years. But the actual timeline of contamination was not clear.
 - For example, it was not clear whether Buddhaghosa himself was responsible for the misinterpretations of *anicca* and *anatta*. In this post, I will show that Buddhaghosa was not responsible for that part. In the post, “[Misinterpretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)”, I presented evidence that it was done by the Europeans pioneers when they assumed that the Pāli words *anicca* and *anatta* were derived from *anitya* and *anathma* in Sanskrit.
5. First, I will show evidence that Buddhaghosa did not distort the meanings of the words *anicca* and *anatta*, even though he did not realize the importance of the *Tilakkhana*.
- **We need to remember that what Buddhaghosa was supposed to do was to take material from Sinhala *Atthakatha* and to compose his own commentary, *Visuddhimagga*, in Pāli.** One can purchase that original Pāli version, Ref. 1 below, from Amazon.
 - When comparing the Pāli and English texts below, I will be using the English translation of Ref. 2.
6. On p. 271 of the Pāli *Visuddhimagga* (Ref. 1), for example, it says, “*Catutthacatukke pana aniccanupassi ettha tava aniccama veditabbam. Aniccata veditabba. Aniccanupassana veditabba. Aniccamupassi veditabbo*”.
- This is translated in the book by *Bhikkhu Nyanamoli* (p. 282, vol. I) as, “But in the fourth tetrad, as to contemplating *impermanence*, here firstly, the *impermanent* should be understood, and *impermanence*, and the contemplation of *impermanence*, and one contemplating *impermanence*”.
 - So, in this case Buddhaghosa used the correct Pāli words *anicca*, but *Bhikkhu Nyanamoli* incorrectly translated it as “impermanence” following the misinterpretation by the European pioneers before him, as we discussed above.
7. Buddhaghosa’s original Pāli version also states the relations among the three characteristics, as I discussed in the post, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”. On p. 617 of Ref. 1, “*Yadaniccā tam dukkha’nti (SN 3.15) vacanato pana tadeva khandhapancaṇṇaṃ dukkham. Kasma? Abhinhapatipilāna, abhinnapatipilānakaro dukkhalakkhaṇaṃ.*” AND “*Yam dukkham tadanatta’ti (SN 3.15) pana vacanato tadeva khandhapancaṇṇaṃ anatta. Kasma? Avasavattanato, avasavattanakaro anattalakkhaṇaṃ.*”
- Which, combined to yield, ““if something is *anicca*, *dukkha* arises, therefore *anatta*”, as I explained in my post too.
8. However, *Bhikkhu Nyanamoli*, following the incorrect interpretation by the early European pioneers in the 1800’s, translates those two verses as (p.663 of Ref.2): “Those same five aggregates are painful because of the words, ‘**What is impermanent is painful**’ (S. iii,22). Why? Because of continuous oppression. The mode of being continuously oppressed is the characteristic of pain.”, AND

“Those same five aggregates are not-self because of the words, ‘**What is painful is not-self**’ (S. iii,22). Why? Because there is no exercising of power over them. The mode of insusceptibility to the exercise of power is the characteristic of not-self.”

9. Thus, it is very clear that it was not the Buddhaghosa who interpreted *anicca* as impermanent and *anatta* as not-self, but those early Europeans in the late 1800’s. As explained in those previous posts, subsequent scholars from Sri Lanka and other Asian countries propagated those two incorrect interpretations.

- For example, those early Sinhala scholars like Malalasekara, Jayathilaka, and Kalupahana, learned Buddhism (and received Doctoral degrees on Buddhism!) from those European pioneers at universities in United Kingdom.
- One needs to contemplate on how the authority of those early Europeans on Buddha Dhamma. They were merely translating the *Tipitaka* word-by-word (using perceived etymologies to Sanskrit), as explained in those other posts.
- **We must realize that translating *Tipitaka* is not the same as translating any other book from one language to another. One has to have a deep background in Buddha Dhamma to do that.**
- **The key mistake made by Rhys Davids, Bernouf, and others, was to assume that Pāli *anicca* and *anatta* are the same as Sanskrit *anitya* (which does mean impermanence) and *anathma* (which does mean no-self).**

10. Now we turn to the issue of Buddhaghosa introducing Hindu *Vedic* meditation techniques to Buddha Dhamma in his *Visuddhimagga*.

Here is a key passage from Buddhaghosa’s original Pāli *Visuddhimagga* (p. 254 of Ref. 1): “*Tattha dighama va assasantoti digham va assasam pavattayanto. Assasoti bāhi nikkhamanavato. Passasoti anto pavisanavato vinayatthakathayam vuttam. Suttantatthakathasu pana uppatipatiya agatam. Tattha sabbesampi gabbhaseyyakanam matukucchito nikkhamanakale pathamam abbhantaravato bāhi nikkhamati. Paccha bahiravato sukhumarajam gehetva abbhaantaram pavisanto talum ahacca nibbayati. Evam tava assapassasa veditabba*”.

Bhikkhu Nyanamoli correctly translates this passage to English as follows (p. 265 of Ref. 2): “Herein, breathing in long (*assasanto*) is producing a long in-breath. ‘**assasa is the wind issuing out; passasa is the wind entering in**’ is said in the *Vinaya* Commentary. But in the *Suttanta* Commentaries it is given in the opposite sense. Herein, when any infant comes out from the mother’s womb, first the wind from within goes out and subsequently the wind from without enters in with fine dust, strikes the palate and is extinguished [with the infant’s sneezing]. This, firstly, is how *assasa* and *passasa* should be understood”.

- So, above is concrete evidence that Buddhaghosa himself referred to *Ānāpānasati* as breath meditation. He specifically talked about the inhaling and exhaling air.
- However, actual Buddhist *Ānāpāna bhāvanā* is not breath meditation; see, “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)”.

11. The second problem that Buddhaghosa introduced in his *Visuddhimagga* was to present mundane *kasina* meditation as a viable path to *Nibbāna*. He gives detailed explanations on how to make *kasina* objects in the chapters 4 and 5 in Ref. 1.

- **For example, he goes to minute details in describing how to make an “earth kasina” starting on. 118 of Ref. 1:** “*..Nilapitalohitaodatsambhedavasena hi cattaro pathavikasinadosa. Tasma niladivannam mattikam aggahetva gangavahe mattikasadisaya arunavananaya mattikaya kasinam katabbam..*”.
- **Bhikkhu Nyanamoli translates (p. 123 of Ref. 2):** “..Now the four fruits of the earth *kasina* are due to the intrusion of blue, yellow, red, or white. So instead of using clay of such colours, he should make the *kasina* of clay like that in the stream of Ganga, which is the colour of the dawn..”.

- In the same way, Buddhaghosa goes to great details to describe how to make other types of *kasina* objects.

12. The critical point is that true Buddhist *kasina* meditation does not involve any physical *kasina* objects. If anyone can find a reference in the *Tipitaka* where it is described how to make a physical *kasina* object, I would appreciate receiving that reference.

- The true Buddhist *kasina* meditation was described by the Buddha to Ven. Rahula in the [Mahā Rahulovada Sutta](#) (*Majjhima Nikāya*, MN 62). It was explained to him as a part of *Ānāpānasati bhāvanā*, which can be done in many ways, but here by contemplating on internal body parts made of *satara mahā bhūta* and realizing that external objects are also made with the same *satara mahā bhūta*. Furthermore, that means there is nothing to be considered in one's body as. "me, myself, etc".

“..*Ekamantaṃ nisinno kho āyasmā rāhulo bhagavantaṃ etadavoca: “kathaṃ bhāvitā nu kho, bhante, ānāpānassati, kathaṃ bahulikatā mahapphalā hoti mahānisaṃsā”ti? “Yaṃ kiñci, rāhula, ajjhataṃ paccattaṃ kakkhaḷaṃ kharigataṃ upādinnaṃ, seyyathidaṃ—kesā lomā nakhā dantā taco maṃsaṃ nhāru aṭṭhi aṭṭhimiñjaṃ vakkhaṃ hadayaṃ yakanāṃ kilomakaṃ pihakaṃ papphāsaṃ antaṃ antaṃ udariyaṃ karisaṃ, yaṃ vā panaññampi kiñci ajjhataṃ paccattaṃ kakkhaḷaṃ kharigataṃ upādinnaṃ— ayaṃ vuccati, rāhula, ajjhantikā pathavīdhātu. Ya ceva kho pana ajjhantikā pathavīdhātu yā ca bāhirā pathavīdhātu, pathavīdhātūvesā. Taṃ ‘netam mama, nesohamasmi, na meso attā’ti—evameva yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ. Evameva yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya disvā pathavīdhātuyā nibbindati, pathavīdhātuyā cittaṃ virājeti.”.*

- The other three, *āpo*, *tējo*, *vāyo* are discussed in the same way there. One does not need to make *kasina* objects for true Buddhist *kasina* meditation, and as I said there is nowhere in the *Tipitaka* that discusses preparing *kasina* objects.

13. In the next post, “[Misinterpretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)“, we will wrap up this section on “[Historical Background](#)“. With that post, I would have summarized the historical background starting from the time of the Buddha to the present day. This is probably the only section that can be said to be “finished”, even though I may edit the posts in this section as needed.

References

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Next, “[Background on the Current Revival of Buddha Dhamma](#)“, ..

13.14 Background on the Current Revival of Buddha Dhamma

Revised April 29, 2017

1. It is ironical that the current revival of Buddha Dhamma is also due to the same reason that led to the decline in Buddha Dhamma in most Buddhist countries for hundreds of years in the latter part of the second millenium, i.e., the colonization of Asia by the Western powers starting with the Portuguese and ending with the British.

- The civil servants of the British East India Company came across ancient Buddhist literature in various Asian countries and some of them realized the importance of these documents; some started deciphering the documents themselves (e.g. Thomas W. Rhys Davids, 1843-1922) and to do so, even learned Pāli and Sanskrit languages.
- Others sent documents to Europe where mostly French and English philosophers (e.g., Eugene Burnouf, 1801-1852) studied them and translated them to French and English. A thorough account of the efforts by the British civil servants in India, Sri Lanka, and other Asian countries in uncovering the “lost knowledge” and also in the restoration of historical Buddhist sites in India has been given by Charles Allen in his excellent book, “The Search for the Buddha” (2003).

2. These Westerners realized that there was something profound in this ancient doctrine which exposed them for the first time to a religion that was not based on a Creator.

- Thomas Huxley captured the essence this new religion brilliantly as follows (Thomas H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays*, 1894, pp. 68-69): “A system which knows of no God in the Western sense; which denies a soul to man; which counts the belief in immortality a blunder and the hope of it a sin; which refuses any efficacy to prayer and sacrifice; which bids men look to nothing but their own efforts for salvation; which, in its original purity, knew nothing of vows and obedience, abhorred intolerance, and never sought the aid of the secular arm; yet spread over a considerable moiety of the Old World with marvelous rapidity, and is still, with whatever base admixture of foreign superstitions, the dominant creed of a large fraction of mankind”.
- It is amazing that even at that early stage, when there must have been some confusion about the mythical aspects of especially the Tibetan and Zen Buddhist practices, Huxley was able to express the essence of Buddha Dhamma.

3. Based on their interest in the documents from Asia on Buddhism and Hinduism, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott founded the Theosophical Society in New York City in 1875. They subsequently traveled to India and Sri Lanka, and became Buddhists.

- Olcott published “A Buddhist Catechism” in 1881. This book together with the “Light of Asia” by Edwin Arnold in 1871 (which went through 100 printings), led to much interest in Europe and America about Buddhism. Colonel Olcott opened several Buddhism-oriented schools in Sri Lanka in order to revive the religion. I was fortunate to be able to attend one of those schools.
- These efforts were subsequently augmented by a number of Sri Lankan intellectuals such as Anagarika Dharmapala, G. P. Malasekara, K. N. Jayatilleke, Narada Thera, Walpola Rahula Thera, David Kalupahana, and also by several more Westerners who were impressed by the Buddhist teachings to a point that they came to Sri Lanka, became monks, and wrote many excellent treatises on Theravāda Buddhism; these include Nyanatiloka Thera, Nyanyaponika Thera, and Bhikkhu Bodhi.

4. Even though those early publications by Rhys Davids, Arnold, and Olcott in the late 1800’s were mainly on the Theravāda Buddhism, beginning in the early part of the 1900’s, Zen Buddhism became an object of fascination in the West and continues to be a significant presence in the West.

- In contrast to the earlier introduction of (Theravāda) Buddhism to the West by Westerners, Zen made its way into the Western consciousness via the efforts of an elite group of Japanese intellectuals – most notably D. T. Suzuki. Suzuki, who came to America in 1897, wrote several

books including “An Introduction to Zen Buddhism”; this book emphasized the transcendent and mystical nature of Zen.

5. Here is an excerpt from the above book by Suzuki, which clearly states the belief of the Mahayana thinkers that the original teachings of the Buddha are “primitive” and Mahayana provided the needed improvements (p. 1, footnote 1):

- “..to be accurate, the fundamental ideas of the Mahayana expounded in the Prajnaparamita group of Buddhist literature, the earliest of which must have it appeared at the latest within 300 years off the Buddha’s death. The germs are no doubt in the writings belonging to the so-called primitive Buddhism. Only their development, that is, a conscious grasp of them as most essential in the teachings of the founder, could not be effected without his followers’ actually living the teachings for some time through the variously changing conditions of life. **Thus enriched in experience and matured in reflection, the Indian Buddhists came to have the Mahayana form of Buddhism as distinguished from its primitive or original form.** In India two Mahayana schools are known the Madhyamika, of Nagarjuna and the Vijnaptimatra or Yogacara of Asanga and Vasubandhu. In China more schools developed: the Tendai, the Kegon, the Jodo, the Zen, etc. In Japan we have besides these the Hokke, the Shingon, the Shin, the Ji, etc. All of these schools or sects belong to the Mahayana wing of Buddhism”. (Highlighting is mine).

6. This is in sharp contrast with the basic presumption in Buddha Dhamma that only a Buddha can discover the laws of nature and those teachings CANNOT be improved upon:

- There is only ONE set of natural laws and those were discovered by the Buddha. As one goes through the content in this website, I hope one would be able to see that statement is justified. Also see, “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)”

7. More recently, Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana) has gained prominence in the West. This is no doubt the result of the publicity of the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1953 and the incredible personal charisma of the Dalai Lama.

- It is unfortunate that the Dalai Lama has to state that, “My confidence in venturing into science lies in my basic belief that as in science so in Buddhism, understanding the nature of reality is pursued by means of critical investigation: **if scientific analysis were conclusively to demonstrate certain claims in Buddhism to be false, then we must accept the findings of science and abandon those claims.**”(highlighting mine) – cited from “The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality” (2005).

8. Both the Mahayana and Vajrayana sects are now realizing that some concepts in those forms of “Buddhism” have to change with the new findings of science. The fundamental teachings of the Buddha as stated in the Theravāda Dhamma, in contrast, remain unchallenged because no such “improvements” were incorporated to “keep up with the times and cultures”.

- The **Pāli Tipitaka** has remained the same since it was written down 2000 years ago. The reality is that science is only now beginning to confirm many things that the Buddha stated 2500 years ago; see, “[Dhamma and Science – Introduction](#)” and the subsequent links.
- Regrettably, the **translated and edited versions** of the *Tipitaka*, especially those by Acariya Buddhaghosa, have many misinterpretations.

9. Beginning at the end of the twentieth century, there is a renewed interest in “Buddhism” in the West, based on several books by Western scientists.

- It seems to have started with the publication of “The Tao of Physics” by physicist Fritjof Capra (1975). In the book he describes how, one day quietly sitting by the ocean, he realized that there may be a connection between the subtleties of quantum mechanics and Eastern “mysticism”, in which he included “Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese Thought, Taoism, and Zen”. It appears that he was trying to make a connection between the world of matter described by quantum mechanics and the “mind” that is predominant in “Eastern mysticism”. Even by the time of the 5th edition (2010), he had not realized that Zen was a branch of Buddhism, and had not been

exposed to any Theravāda literature. However, the connection he was trying to establish apparently made an impact on the Western audience and this trend will hopefully continue and be directed in the right direction.

- There are others who have contributed to the recent interest in “Buddhism” in the West: The Art of Happiness” and other books by Dalai Lama, “The Embodied Mind” by Francisco Varela et al., “Confession of a Buddhist Atheist” and other books by Stephen Batchelor, are some examples.
- However, most these books have incorrect interpretations of Buddha Dhamma because they are heavily influenced by Mahayana Buddhism, which has totally veered away from the original teachings of the Buddha, as I have discussed in this section.

10. The books that I mentioned at the beginning of the essay and several other books by Ven. Ledi Sayadaw, Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, Ven. Walpola Rahula, and others (see the References below), are providing the much needed material on *Theravāda* Buddhism to the Western audience, **even though they themselves use some incorrect interpretations due to two main “contamination problems”**.

- One happened 1500 years ago, when Buddhaghosa distorted *Ānāpāna bhāvanā* as “breath meditation” and also introduced Hindu *kasina* meditation to Buddha Dhamma in his commentary, *Visuddhimagga*.
- The other problem of misinterpreting *anicca* and *anatta* as impermanence and “no-self” was done by those early European scholars who translated *Tipitaka* to English; see, “[Why is Correct Interpretation of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta so Important?](#)“. These incorrect interpretations were adopted by the whole world since the late 1800’s.
- **Therefore, all Buddhist literature published in all languages since the late 1800’s have both these problems. This is a critical point, see, “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)“.**
- We need to resort to the Pāli *Tipitaka* that still contains the original teachings of the Buddha, and it is the goal of this website to systematically present those original teachings of the Buddha.

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8. “A History of Buddhist Philosophy” by David J. Kalupahana (1992).
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10. “The Search for the Buddha”, by C. Allen (2003).
11. “The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality” by Dalai Lama (2005).
12. “In the Buddha’s Words” by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2005).

Next, “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)“,

13.15 Misinterpretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars

April 30, 2017; revised next day (#12)

1. This section on the “[Historical Background](#)” comes to a close with this post, and show that the interpretations at the Pure Dhamma site are not new at all. **They are the original teachings of the Buddha that have been hidden over many centuries due to the decline of Buddha Dhamma.**

- I have removed the previous post entitled, “Answers to Criticism of Pure Dhamma Interpretations” and have re-written this post to replace it.
- **Degradation of Theravāda Buddha Dhamma occurred gradually over the past 1500 years, but two drastic changes took place during that time: (i) Buddhaghosa’s introduction of Hindu meditation techniques 1500 years ago, (ii) misinterpretation of *anicca* and *anatta* by the European scholars when they translated both *Tipitaka* and *Visuddhimagga* to English in the late 1800’s.**

2. In order to understand the current situation, one really needs to have an understanding of the historical background in this section, “[Historical Background](#)”, but at least the posts starting with, “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)”.

- As I explained in earlier posts in this section, much worse distortions to Buddha Dhamma took place with branching out of various sects based on Mahayana, Zen, and Tibetan (*Vajrayana*). It started with the rise of Mahayana in India about 500 years after the Buddha.
- Degradation of *Theravāda* Buddha Dhamma occurred gradually over the past 1500 years, but two drastic changes took place during that time: (i) Buddhaghosa’s introduction of Hindu meditation techniques 1500 years ago, (ii) **misinterpretation of *anicca* and *anatta* by the European scholars when they translated both *Tipitaka* and *Visuddhimagga* to English in the late 1800’s.**

3. To setup the background for the present discussion on (ii) above, we also need to know at least the following facts (they are discussed in detail in posts in this section).

- Pāli is a “phonetic language” (sounds give the meanings in most cases, especially for key the words). It comes from *Magadhi* (*Maga Adhi* or Noble Path) language that the Buddha spoke.
- It has no grammar like most other languages, even though people have tried to “force Pāli grammar” over the past two hundreds of years.
- Furthermore, Pāli does not have its own alphabet. When the *Tipitaka* was written down 2000 years ago, it was written in Pāli with Sinhala script.
- For example, we can write any word in another language with the English alphabet: The Pāli word “අත්ථ” that is written with Sinhala script can be written in English as *atta*, *attha*, or *aththa*. **Phonetically, “aththa” is more correct**, but we see it written mostly as “*atta*” or “*attha*”. **To make it short, probably “atta” is better.** We will go with the latter, and thus write as *atta* and *anatta*, for example.

4. Some people believe “*atta*” and “*attha*” have two different meanings. But I have not seen any clear examples given to show that they have different meanings. From the above discussion it is clear why they mean the same.

- This is where we need to pay attention to the issue of how to refer to the *Tipitaka*. Someone may be writing that word as “*atta*” in one *sutta* and another person writing another *sutta* may write it as “*attha*”.
- So, many people at the forum quote different passages from different *suttas* trying to prove that they have different meanings. This practice of just quoting from *suttas* and (mostly incorrect) commentaries is making the discussions incomprehensible.
- Of course “*atta*” can have different meanings depending on where the word is used; see, “[Attā Hi Attano Nātho](#)”.

5. The root problem of writing a given Pāli word (that was originally written with Sinhala script 2000 years ago) in English must have been a critical issue to address for those English, German, and French scholars who took on the daunting task of translating the *Tipitaka* in the late 1800's.

- **Now there are two separate key issues:** First is to just write the Pāli text in English, like writing “අත්ත” as *atta*, *attha*, or *aththa*, for example. We discussed this issue in #3 and #4 above.
- The second issue is even more important: **Actual translation of the Pāli word to English.** In this particular case of the word “අත්ත”, they translated it as “self”. That translation is incorrect, and now let us see why those early translators like Rhys Davids, Eugene Burnouf, and Edward Muller chose that meaning.

6. **Those Europeans first came across Sanskrit *vedic* texts in India.** They found the Pāli texts in Sri Lanka, Burma, and other countries later on. This is very important.

- By the time of the arrival of English, Buddhism in India had totally vanished. There were no Pāli texts in India except those inscribed on the “[WebLink: Wikipedia: Pillars of Ashoka](#)”, the stone columns made by Emperor Ashoka about 300 years after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha.
- So, when they tried to interpret those inscriptions, they were very much confused, because that language (Pāli) was not in existence in India. Furthermore, there were Sanskrit texts which were written well before the Buddha's time.
- This is an important point that I will address in future posts. Pāli was never a widely-used language in India. It appeared in India for a relatively brief time while Buddhism flourished for a few centuries encompassing Emperor Ashoka's reign.

7. Going back to our main discussion, I remind everyone again that the first translations of the *Tipitaka* was in the late 1800's to English language. It was not even TRANSLATED to Sinhala language until 2005. It had remained in Pāli language (written with Sinhala script) since first written down in 29 BCE (2000 years ago).

- Before written down 2000 years ago, the *Tipitaka* was transmitted generation to generation orally for over 500 years. That is why it composed in a special way to make it easier to recite and remember.
- That is another reason why we should not get hangup on whether “*atta*” is different from “*atto*” or “*bhava*” is different from “*bhavo*”. They convey the same meaning. For example, “*upādāna paccaya bhavo*” (which rhymes better) appears in some places instead of “*upādāna paccaya bhava*”. Both give the same meaning.
- Furthermore, Sinhala commentaries (called Sinhala *Atthakatha*) were composed to expand and explain the key concepts in the *Tipitaka*. But all those were lost and we only have commentaries written after about 500 CE (including *Visuddhimagga*) and they have many errors; see, “[Buddhaghosa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background](#)”.

8. In order to get an idea of how those European pioneers struggled with first interpreting the inscriptions on Ashoka pillars and later translating the *Tipitaka* itself, I highly recommend the book “The Search of the Buddha” by Charles Allen (2003). His family had been in India for generations serving in the British governments and he was born in India.

- The book has a lot of information and also pictures of many historical sites in India before they were restored; even though not shown in that book, historical sites in Sri Lanka and other Buddhist countries were in similar bad shape. It is truly fascinating to read about the efforts of those who dedicated their lives to the effort of uncovering Buddha Dhamma.
- All those Asian countries (Sri Lanka, India, Burma, Thailand, etc) were in decline and Buddhism itself was in a much worse shape than today. Those European scholars are really responsible for the current revival of Buddhism.

9. However, the only bad outcome was that they mistranslated most of the key concepts of Buddha Dhamma. We cannot really blame them. They were doing their best and there were no *bhikkhus* (even in Sri Lanka) who were knowledgeable at that time.

- At least in the beginning, those pioneers thought Sanskrit and Pāli were very much related. They are related, but not in a useful way. Sanskrit adapted many Pāli terms, but made them “sound sophisticated”. But the true meanings were not as apparent.
- For example, *pabhassara* in Pāli became *prabhasvara* in Sanskrit. While the meaning of *pabhassara* can be discerned from its Pāli roots (see, “[Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#)”), as far as I know that is not true for the Sanskrit word *prabhasvara*.
- Another example is *paticca samuppāda* (see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)”), which was adapted to Sanskrit as, “*Pratityasamutpada*”, which sounds more sophisticated, but does not convey anything useful.

10. The most significant damage was done with the translation of the two Pāli words of “*anicca*” and “*anatta*” when those pioneers took those two words to be the same as the two Sanskrit words “*anitya*” and “*anathma*”.

- Sanskrit word “*anitya*” does mean “impermanent”, but that is not what is meant by the Pāli word “*anicca*”. Similarly, Sanskrit word “*anathma*” does mean “no-self” but “*anatta*” means something totally different; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.
- This itself has been responsible for preventing millions of people attaining *Nibbāna* for the past 200 years.

11. Let me show just two verses that obviously do not make any sense if “*anatta*” is interpreted as “no self”:

- Many people translate, “*Sabbe dhammā anattā*” as “all things are not self”. How can *dhamma* have a self in any case? For example, it is necessary say that “Buddha Dhamma has no self?”.
- Another example from the [WebLink: Suttacentral: Anatta Sutta](#): “..*Rūpaṃ, bhikkhave, anattā, vedanā anattā, saññā anattā, saṅkhārā anattā, viññāṇaṃ anattā*”.
- If we translate that verse with “*anatta*” as “not self”, it says, “*bhikkhus*, no self in matter, no self in feelings, no self in perceptions, no self in volitional thoughts, no self in consciousness..”.
- How can an inert *rūpa* or *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* can be “self” anyway? Those are nonsensical statements IF we translate “*anatta*” to be “no self”.

12. The Buddha had foreseen this and warned not to TRANSLATE the *Tipitaka* to ANY LANGUAGE, and particularly to Sanskrit. There were two *Brahmins* by the names of Yamela and Kekuta who were experts on the *Vedic* Texts; they became *bhikkhus* and asked the Buddha whether they should translate the Pāli *suttas* to Sanskrit.

- That is when the Buddha admonished them that *Sanskrit* was a language with musical overtones developed by the high-minded *Brahmins* and thus it was not possible to convey the true meanings of *Maghadhi* (Pāli) words in Sanskrit; see, [WebLink: tipitaka: Chulavagga 5.33](#).
- In the SuttaCentral English translation, the Pāli word for *Sanskrit* (*chandasa*) [*chandaso*: Conversant with the Vedas, a brahmin] is translated incorrectly as, “metrical”; see, “[WebLink: suttacentral: 15. Minor matters \(Kuddaka\)](#)” (at [Now at that time Yamela and Tekula were the names of two monks who were brothers]) which is the translation of “[WebLink: suttacentral: 1. Khuddakavatthu](#)”. The relevant Pāli text is located close to the end, and starts as, “*Tena kho pana samayena yamelaṃkekuṭā nāma...*”.
- Thanks to a “devoted reader” who sent me those two references!
- So, the *Tipitaka* was not translated to even Sinhala for 2000 years. Instead, commentaries were written in Sinhala to expand and explain the *Tipitaka*. Unfortunately, ALL those were lost except for three commentaries in Pāli included in the *Tipitaka*; see, “[Buddhaghosa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background](#)”.

13. Recently I participated In two online forums briefly, and one of the criticisms published at the Dhamma Wheel and the SuttaCentral discussion groups was that I was not using “..international standards used by indologists for over a century”.

- I hope now one can understand why those standards established starting in the late 1800’s have actually distorted Buddha Dhamma (not intentionally of course).
- It does not matter whether one writes *gati* or *gathi*, *hethu-phala* or *hetu-phala*, *micca diṭṭhi* or *miccha diṭṭhi*, *satipaṭṭhāna* or *satipatthāna*. In fact, I just Googled *micca diṭṭhi* and *miccha diṭṭhi*; both get hits, because different people just spell them differently; see #3 and #4 above.
- There are a few Pāli words that give different meanings based on how they are written and pronounced, and I will write about them in the future.

14. I cannot emphasize enough that Pāli is unlike any other modern language. Meanings come from how one pronounces words. One cannot use etymology with the way one spell out (in English). Again to emphasize:

- Pāli does not its own alphabet. *Tipitaka* was written in Pāli with Sinhala script.
- Pāli does not have grammar rules, even though those European pioneers tried to invent grammar for Pāli, compose Pāli-English dictionaries, etc.
- Sanskrit words should never be used to interpret Pāli words.
- While a Pāli-English dictionary could be useful in some cases, there are cases where they give wrong interpretations (*anicca*, *anatta*, *pabha*, etc); see, “[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#)”.

15. Another criticism was that my interpretation of *samsāra* as “*san*” + “*sāra*” must be incorrect because *samsāra* is defined in the verse, “*khandhanan ca patipati, dhatu-ayatanana ca, abbhocchinnam vattamana, samsaro’ ti pavuccati ti*”, or “the process of the aggregates, elements and bases, proceeding without interruption is called *samsāra*”.

- There are many ways to describe a given concept and all of them can be inter-consistent. *Samsāra* can also be stated as a “non-stop rebirth process that has no beginning” in addition to the above two descriptions.
- In another example, “*sabba*” or “all” in this world can be stated as, “*pancakkhandha*” or ten *āyatana*, or 18 *dhatu*, etc. There is no fixed definition.
- By the way, the pronunciation of “*san*” + “*sāra*” can be either “*samsāra*” or “*samsāra*”; I prefer the latter, because it shows how it can be derived from “*san*”.
- Furthermore, Buddha Dhamma has many words with “*san*” and they are all consistent. Furthermore, by knowing what “*san*” is, one can easily figure out the meaning of those “*san*” words; see, “[San](#)”.

16. In the *Dhammapada* verse,

“*Aneka jati sansāram
sandā vissan anibbisān
gahakaram gavesan tō
dukkhā jāti punappunam*”

- There are four places in the above where “*san*” comes in. This and another *gāthā* were the expressions of intense joy felt by the Buddha at the moment of attainment of *Buddhahood*. I will write post on this in the future.
- The word “*san*” appears very frequently in the *Tipitaka*, but it is often masked by the fact that in many places it rhymes as “*sam*”, as in “*samsāra*”, “*sampadeta*”, “*sammā*”; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”.

17. In order to complete the historical background relevant to this discussion, I need to point out a couple of more points.

- Following the original translations by Rhys Davis, Eugene Burnouf, and others, contemporary Sinhala scholars like Malalasekara (who was a doctoral student of Rhys Davis), “learned” Buddhism from the Europeans, and thus started using wrong interpretations.
- Other Sinhala scholars like Kalupahana and Jayatilake also learned “Buddhism” at universities in the United Kingdom (received Doctoral degrees on Buddhism), and wrote books in both English and Sinhala.
- Of course, scholars in other Buddhist countries did the same in their languages and the incorrect interpretations spread through the whole world.
- So, I hope I have provided enough information to at least contemplate on why the opinions of “scholars” are likely to be wrong, due to reasons beyond their control. Again, I admire and appreciate what Rhys Davids, Burnouf, Muller, and others did those days, and it was not their intention to distort Buddha Dhamma. It is not the fault of current scholars either.

18. It is also important to note that mass printing was not available until recent years, and became common only in the 1800’s; see, “[WebLink: Printing press](#)”.

- In the early days, *Tipitaka* was written on specially prepared leaves, and needed to be re-written by hand every 100-200 years before they degraded. So, we must be grateful to the *bhikkhus* in Sri Lanka who did this dutifully over almost 2000 years.
- Thus mass production of books became possible only with the new rotary printing presses that came out in the middle of 1800’s. By the time those key concepts had been mistranslated, printing had become widespread.
- [WebLink: Wikipedia: The Pāli Text Society](#) was founded in 1881 by Rhys Davids, and started printing those translations. So, it was just unfortunate that it was those “distorted English translations” that spread throughout the world.
- Luckily, we still have the original Pāli *Tipitaka* and three original commentaries.
- With help of those three original Pāli commentaries, Waharaka Thero was able to “re-discover” the original teachings of the Buddha over the past 25 years or so. Unfortunately, Waharaka Thero attained *Parinibbāna* recently; see, “[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thero](#)”.

19. Now we have come to the conclusion of this “[Historical Background](#)” section. I have summarized the historical background starting from the time of the Buddha to the present day. This is probably the only section that can be said to be “finished”, even though I may edit the posts in this section as needed.

13.16 **Tipitaka Commentaries – Helpful or Misleading?****December 6, 2017**

1. I recently came across the following essay on *Tipitaka* commentaries: “[WebLink: accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org): [Beyond the Tipitaka : A Field Guide to Post-canonical Pāli Literature](http://www.accesstoinsight.org)”. It describes the importance of such commentaries in clarifying key concepts in the *Tipitaka*. I will present evidence to the contrary. In fact, such commentaries have introduced contradictory explanations.

- Over the years, I have also seen heated discussions on key concepts of Buddha Dhamma like *anicca*, *anatta*, and *anidassana viññāṇa*, on internet discussion boards.
- I often wonder about the immense amounts of time people waste on discussing the meaning of key Pāli words in *Tipitaka suttas*. They go back and forth between different interpretations without reaching a conclusion. I hardly see any issue resolved fully in such discussions. Same topic is discussed year after year without much progress.
- One key factor contributing to this confusion is those commentaries themselves; they are not consistent with Buddha’s original teachings in the *Tipitaka*. The other key factor is the incorrect translation of key Pāli words. Both these issues are discussed below.

2. I hope this post would be helpful in thinking about a new approach to finding the “correct teachings of the Buddha”. **By discarding sources of incorrect interpretations once and for all**, one could save a lot of time and really focus on making progress.

- When I seriously started studying different versions of Buddhism several years ago, this was the strategy that I used to eliminate “corrupt” or “contaminated” versions. I eliminated Mahāyāna, Vajrayana (Tibetan), and Zen versions first. After I came across *dēsanas* of Waharaka Thēro, I was able to eliminate Visuddhimagga and other relatively recent commentaries. These steps are discussed in detail below.
- Then I was left out with just the *Tipitaka* and its **three ancient, original commentaries, which were composed during the time of the Buddha; see below**. A consistent picture that is crystal clear has emerged for me.
- I hope others can follow the same procedure. **If everything can be understood within that framework, what is the need for more sources?** As the principle of philosophy “[WebLink: wiki: Occam’s razor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ockham's_razor)” (or Ockham’s razor) says, simplest explanation without any inconsistencies is the best explanation.

3. **My key assertion is that the *Tipitaka*, together with the three original commentaries of *Patisambhidamagga*, *Petakopadesa*, and *Nettipakarana* are sufficient to clarify the original teachings of the Buddha.**

- This was made possible by my Noble teacher Waharaka Thēro, who was able to discern the true meanings of key Pāli words with the help of those three original commentaries; see, “[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thēro](http://www.dhammadownload.com)”.
- At this website I present this self-consistent picture that came out of the efforts of Waharaka Thēro.
- Note that I am not asking anyone to take what I present at this website as the correct version. It is up to each person to look at the evidence and decide. **As far as I can see, everything at this site is consistent with the *Tipitaka* and is also self-consistent**. I encourage all to point out any inconsistencies, because my goal is 100% consistency.
- Self-consistency, i.e., making sure that there are no contradictions is the scientific procedure used also by modern scientists to evaluate the validity of a scientific theory.

4. **There is no need to consult any commentary other than the three original ones mentioned above.** In fact, I have explained at length why the other key commentaries used today provide inaccurate and inconsistent explanations; see, “[Historical Background](http://www.dhammadownload.com)”.

The above mentioned essay (in #1) is a good example of some misconceptions on the importance and validity of *Tipitaka* commentaries. **When I say “commentaries” from now on below, they do not include the original three commentaries included with the *Tipitaka*.**

- In the following, **the statements within quotation marks and highlighted in red** are from the above essay, and are accompanied by my comments pointing out the flaws in those statements.
5. **“The *Tipitaka* (Pāli canon) assumed its final form at the Third Buddhist Council (ca. 250 BCE) and was first committed to writing sometime in the 1st c. BCE. Shortly thereafter Buddhist scholar-monks in Sri Lanka and southern India began to amass a body of secondary literature: commentaries on the *Tipitaka* itself..”.**
 - Not true. The original three commentaries mentioned in #3 above (*Patisambhidamagga*, *Petakopadesa*, and *Nettipakarana*) were compiled during the time of the Buddha, and those still are in the *Tipitaka* itself:
 - Those three original commentaries are in Pāli, but there were many others written in Sinhala language, and all of those have been lost, as discussed below.
 6. **“Most of these texts were written in Sinhala, the language of Sri Lanka, but because Pāli — not Sinhala — was the *lingua franca* of Theravāda, few Buddhist scholars outside Sri Lanka could study them. It wasn’t until the 5th c. CE, when the Indian monk Buddhaghosa began the laborious task of collating the ancient Sinhala commentaries and translating them into Pāli, that these books first became accessible to non-Sinhala speakers around the Buddhist world”.**
 - This statement refers to those early Sinhala commentaries that have since been lost.
 - **It is correct that Buddhaghosa’s** *Visuddhimagga* — as well as other commentaries such as *Vimuttimaggā* — were written in Pāli by Indian scholars.
 - It is also important to note that incorrect translations of those Pāli words led to more problems when those were translated to English; see #7 below.
 7. **“These commentaries (*Atthakatha*) offer meticulously detailed explanations and analyses — phrase-by-phrase and word-by-word — of the corresponding passages in the *Tipitaka*“.**
 - First of all, *Atthakatha* (a Sinhala word meaning “true accounts”) were the ancient commentaries on *Tipitaka* written in Sinhala. **They ALL have been lost**; see, [“Preservation of the Dhamma”](#).
 - **So, it is misleading to refer to those as the commentaries in question.** In contrast, the commentaries in circulation today are NOT those ancient *Atthakatha*, but more recent ones like *Visuddhimagga*.
 - Buddhaghosa’s mission was to translate the material in Sinhala *Atthakatha* to Pāli so that those *bhikkhus* in India could read them. **Unfortunately, he incorporated many *Vedic* concepts**; see, [“Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* – A Focused Analysis”](#).
 - **Further problems were introduced when *Visuddhimagga* was translated to English in recent times.** Today, both the original Pāli version of *Visuddhimagga* and its recent English translation are available on Amazon; see Refs. 1 and 2 below.
 8. **“Almost everything we know today about the early years of Buddhism comes to us from these post-canonical books”.**
 - This is completely false. In fact, those **post canonical commentaries** (such as *Visuddhimagga*) have “muddled the waters” than help.; see, [“Buddhaghōsa and *Visuddhimagga* – Historical Background”](#) and [“Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* – A Focused Analysis”](#).
 - What I am saying is to examine the evidence presented in those posts. **If one agrees, then one can just remove *Visuddhimagga* as a reliable source. That itself will solve half the problem.**

- **The second problem is the incorrect translation of key Pali words in those commentaries as well as in Tipitaka suttas;** see, “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)”.
- As I have presented evidence throughout this website, the *Tipitaka* and the three original commentaries are enough to guide us.

9. “First, the chronicles and commentaries provide a vital thread of temporal continuity that links us, via the persons and historical events of the intervening centuries, to the *Tipitaka*’s world of ancient India. A *Tipitaka* without this accompanying historical thread would forever be an isolated anachronism to us, its message lost in clouds of myth and fable, its pages left to gather dust in museum display cases alongside ancient Egyptian mummies..”.

- **There are no myths or fables in the *Tipitaka*.** I would challenge anyone to show any evidence from the *Tipitaka*. This is an irresponsible and egregious statement.

10. “Second, almost everything we know today about the early years of Buddhism comes to us from these post-canonical books.”.

- There is nothing in these commentaries that provide any significant information about the time of the Buddha. They may provide information about the time at which they were written. For example, Visuddhimagga was written about 800 years after the Buddha.

11. “One might reasonably wonder: how can a collection of texts written a thousand years after the Buddha’s death possibly represent his teachings reliably? How can we be sure they aren’t simply derivative works, colored by a host of irrelevant cultural accretions? First of all, although many of these texts were indeed first written in Pāli a thousand years after the Buddha, most Sinhala versions upon which they were based were written much earlier, having themselves been passed down via an ancient and reliable oral tradition..”.

- This is the point I am making. We do know that, for example, Buddhaghosa distorted Buddhist meditation techniques, *Ānāpāna* meditation was misinterpreted as breath meditation and Hindu *kasina* meditations were also incorporated,
- For details, see, “[Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#)” and “[Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?](#)”.

12. “But what of the credentials of the commentators themselves: can their words be trusted? In addition to living a monastic life immersed in Dhamma, the compilers of the commentaries possessed unimpeachable literary credentials: intimate acquaintance with the *Tipitaka*, mastery of the Pāli and Sinhala languages, and expert skill in the art of careful scholarship. We have no reason to doubt either their abilities or the sincerity of their intentions”.

- This is also a critical issue. As I discussed in those posts mentioned above, Buddhaghosa was a Vedic Brahmin and he distorted *Ānāpāna* to breath meditation and incorporated *kasina* meditations into Visuddhimagga; no such *kasina* meditations are to be found anywhere in the *Tipitaka*.
- Like so many late commentators, Buddhaghosa was just another philosopher like Nagarjuna. By the way, Nagarjuna was also a commentator, and his work led to the rising of Mahāyāna version of Buddhism.
- I have discussed the drawbacks in Mahāyāna; see, for example, “[Key Problems with Mahāyāna Teachings](#)” and “[Saddharma Pundarika Sutra \(Lotus Sutra\) – A Focused Analysis](#)”.
- Same kind of arguments can be applied to Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayāna) and Chinese Zen Buddhism; all these are off-shoots of the original teachings in the *Tipitaka*; see, “[Historical Background](#)”. In fact, it is well-worth the time to read this section before coming to any conclusions.

13. “And what of their first-hand understanding of Dhamma: if the commentators were scholars first and foremost, would they have had sufficient meditative experience to write with authority on the subject of meditation? This is more problematic”.

- This is the only statement that I agree with. They were just “scholars” and philosophers, who had not made any progress in actual practice.
- This is true today as well. Many “scholars” have written books on Buddha Dhamma without having any significant progress in following the Noble Path. In fact, many are not even nominally Buddhists; some are “secular Buddhists” who do not believe in rebirth or *Nibbāna*; see, “[Buddhism without Rebirth and Nibbāna?](#)”.
- I am not trying to put them down. They do serve a meritorious purpose in teaching how to live a moral life. However, those books/journal papers/websites cannot be used to **clarify deeper teachings** in the *Tipitaka*.

14. A key point missing in the current discussion is that it is not possible to comprehend the key concepts like *anicca* and *anatta* without at least attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. However, these days, people tend to gauge the qualifications by checking only whether a given person is an “academic scholar”.

- Just like only a practicing physician can truly understand and diagnose a patient, not one who has just studied medical text books.
- Only an *Ariya* (a Noble person) — who has practiced the true teachings and at least attained the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna* — can comprehend deep concepts like *anicca*, *anatta*, *viññāṇa*, and *saññā*. **One cannot fully understand such deep concepts by just studying or reading about them.** For example, see, “[What is Sañña \(Perception\)?](#)”.

15. The most referred to commentaries (these days) are Buddhaghosa’s [WebLink: wiki: Visuddhimagga](#) and Upatissa’s [WebLink: wiki: Vimuttimagga](#) (to a much less extent). The original Pāli text for the latter was long believed to have been lost; for centuries, discussions about the text therefore relied on a 5th c. Chinese edition.

- As we have established, those later commentaries — including *Visuddhimagga* and *Vimuttimagga* — were written in Pāli.

16. Therefore, those late commentaries lead to confusion in two ways:

- One is the erroneous interpretations by the commentators themselves, as discussed above.
- The other is incorrect translations — initially done by early European scholars — in translating key Pāli terms incorrectly; see, for example, “[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#)”. This has made the situation even worse.

These are two critical points to consider by those who are tempted to refer to those late commentaries. I cannot emphasize the importance of those two points enough.

17. Then there are those who quote from Chinese *Āgama*. Even though those original Chinese documents COULD BE authentic, my point is that they were also derived from the *Tipitaka* and **thus serve no purpose as additional resources.**

- They could be valuable for those who are proficient in Chinese but cannot read Pāli, Sinhala, or English.

18. Finally, to re-emphasize my main point: The *Tipitaka* — together with the three original commentaries included in it — are sufficient to clarify the original teachings of the Buddha. The goal of this website is to have such a consistent clarification of Buddha’s teachings in English at one place.

- Using just the *Tipitaka*, I have also pointed out some current misinterpretations in Theravāda Buddhism, mainly due to the influence of Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*; see, “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)” and posts referred there.
- There still could be some minor inconsistencies at the website, and I am appreciative of those readers who have pointed out some of them that have led to improvements. But I have high confidence in the correctness of key concepts.

- Please do not hesitate to comment on any inconsistency with the *Tipitaka* or within the website. However, for the reasons that I have detailed, please do not quote from any other sources.

References

1. **Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification – Pāli Edition)**, by Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa (Theravāda Tipitaka Press, 2010).
2. **The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)**, by Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa and translated by Bhikkhu Nyanamoli (BPS Edition, 1999). The Introduction (by Bhikkhu Nyanamoli) provides a historical background.

XIV Buddhist Chanting

- “[Buddhist Chanting – Introduction](#)”
- “[Namaskaraya – Homage to the Buddha](#)”
- “[Supreme Qualities of Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha](#)”
- “[The Five Precepts – Panca Sila](#)”
- “[Sutta Chanting \(with Pāli Text\)](#)”
- “[Sadhu – Symbolizes Purified Hadaya Vatthu \(Mind\)](#)”

14.1 Buddhist Chanting – Introduction

1. This section on Chanting may be helpful in cultivating *saddhā* (faith). For those who believe that there is no value in these “ritual-like” procedures, it may be a good idea to read the post, “[Panca Indriya and Panca Bala- Five Faculties and Five Powers](#)”.

- If done with understanding, these are not rituals as in “*silabbata paramasa*”.
- Therefore, as I keep adding items to this section, I will try to provide the deep meanings behind these “seemingly ritualistic” chantings.
- In addition to the aspect on the deeper meanings, there are subtle benefits in listening to chantings, especially those by *Ariyas* or Noble Persons. This is why I decided to add the sound recordings by the Venerable Thero.

2. The Buddha said that the mind takes precedence over everything else. Our speech and bodily actions are controlled by our thoughts. And these thoughts get their moral power from wisdom (*paññā*) and the joyful state (*pīti* or “*preethi*”) of the mind.

- One can make a given meritorious deed much more powerful by doing it with joy and understanding. The most potent *kusala citta* is done with “joy and understanding” (a *somanassa-sahagata, ñāṇa-sampayutta citta*); see, “[Javana of a Citta – Root of Mental Power](#)”.
- Recent scientific studies are beginning to illustrate the power of the focused mind; see, for example, “The Biology of Belief” by Bruce H. Lipton (2008) and “Biocentrism” by Robert Lanza (2009).
- Thus chanting done with understanding can have benefits, especially for those who have a dominant “*saddhā indriya*”, or have a high-degree of faith in the Buddha or Buddha Dhamma.

3. **However, one should not force anything on the mind.** If chanting is not something that appeals to someone, then it should not be forced. Different people start off with different tendencies (i.e., they have a dominant faculty or power, see, “[Panca Indriya and Panca Bala- Five Faculties and Five Powers](#)”). **Out of *sati*, *saddhā*, *viriya*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*, the dominant one should be the focus.** As one cultivates the Path, other four will also grow.

- This is also related to the concept of how one’s character (*gathi*) and habits change as one follows the Path. Then one’s tendencies, associations, etc will also gradually change; see, “[The Law of Attraction – Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)”.
- Thus one may want to concentrate just on the topics on the site that are appealing to oneself. Once in a while, one can take a look at other sections and see whether their opinions on those sections have changed or not.
- The main thing is to stay on the path of least resistance and the topics that can be easily comprehended.

Next, “[Namaskaraya – Homage to the Buddha](#)”,

14.2 Namaskaraya – Homage to the Buddha

1. In the *Theravāda* tradition, it is customary to pay homage to the Buddha (*Namaskaraya*; pronounced “namaskāraya), recite the Three Refuges (*Tisarana*, where “*tī*” is three and “*sarana*” means refuge or protection; pronounced “Thisarana”) and undertake to observe the five precepts (*Panca Sila*; pronounced “pancha seela”) on visiting a place of worship or before starting a meditation session.

- Some people just do the Namaskaraya if they do not have time to recite the Tisarana (Refuge in Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha) or the Panca Sila (five precepts; sometimes eight or ten precepts).

2. One can recite the following stanza three times by oneself or at more formal occasions (e.g., visiting a temple) a Buddhist monk administers them.

“*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa*”

- A brief translation is, “I pay homage to the fully Enlightened One who found the truth about the existence and became free of all defilements”.
- Another conventional translation is, “I pay homage to the Blessed One, the Exalted One, the fully Enlightened One”.
- The deeper meaning is discussed below.

3. **Both interpretations are important.** For someone starting out, without much knowledge of Dhamma (but still sees the value in Dhamma) and thus wishes to pay respects to the Buddha, the conventional meaning itself is the dominant.

- But the Buddha himself said that the best way to pay homage to him is to learn Dhamma and to follow the Path. That is the more deeper meaning of the *Namaskaraya*. But they also have the reverence for the Buddha himself. As the knowledge in Dhamma grows, the second interpretation becomes clear, while not losing the first.

4. Here is a recital of the *Namaskaraya* by a Venerable Thero (volume adjustment on the right). It is normally recited three times:

[WebLink: Listen to verse of : Namaskaraya](#)

Namaskaraya – What Does it Really Mean?

“*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa*”

1. Most Pāli verses have two (or more) meanings: one is the conventional (“*padaparama*”) meaning, and the other is the deeper meaning that helps understand the deeper idea behind the verse. Unfortunately, most times it is the conventional idea that that is brought out when translating even whole *suttas*.

- In the case of *suttas*, a *sutta* that was delivered over an hour (sometimes many hours, like the *Dhamma chakka pavattana sutta*) is normally translated word-to-word in a few pages; see, “[Sutta Interpretations](#)”.
- As I explained in the post, “[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)”, most existing *sutta* translations are incomplete at best, and erroneous most of the time.
- Even the conventional meaning can be useful in some cases, like in *namaskaraya*, *Tisarana*, and the five precepts. For those who do not have a deeper understanding, the deeper meanings may not serve the purpose of bringing “joy to the heart” or “*citta pasāda*” (pronounced “*chittha pasāda*”); for a deeper discussion on *citta pasāda*, see, “[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#)”.
- Thus for those who are new to the deeper meanings in Dhamma, the conventional interpretations may be a good start. As knowledge in Dhamma grows, the second interpretation becomes clear without losing the first, i.e., reverence to the person himself can also only grow as one learns how valuable his Dhamma is.

2. What we have here is a short phrase that can be correctly translated in a short essay. Let us see what is really meant by this verse.

- “*Namo*” means incline as in accepting something with this reverence because of its value; “*tassa*” means “to this”. This is why we bend our heads to signify this.
- “*bhaga*” is to separate and “*vata*” is the usually translated as body, but it has more wider meaning to anything in this world. The Buddha, in trying to show that uselessness of clinging to one’s body, advised to separate the body into 32 parts and see that there is nothing substantial in any of the parts. Even though we highly value our bodies, it will decay with old age, and will eventually give us only sicknesses and ailments. And it will last only about 100 years.
- In the wider sense, anything in this world can be divided into parts and be shown that there is nothing substantial in them.
- Once we see that it is unfruitful to cling our bodies (and anythings in general), we lose the craving (“*raha*” in Pāli or Sinhala) and become “*arahant*”(from “*a*” + “*raha*”). The word Arahant also comes from this meaning, i.e., someone who has given up craving for worldly things, by comprehending the true nature.
- As we saw in the post, “[What is “San?” – the Meaning of Samsāra](#)”, “*san*” means accumulating worldly things. “*ma*” means become free of doing that. Thus “*sammā*” (*san+ma*) means “stop accumulating worldly stuff that will only cause suffering in the end”.
- The accumulation of worldly things lead to preparation of future births or “*bhava*”. *Sambuddhassa* (*san+bhu+uddassa*) means “remove from the root the causes for preparing bhava via accumulating *san*”, i.e., become free of the rebirth process or to work towards *Nibbāna*.

3. Now we can see the whole verse:

“By analyzing my body and other worldly things with wisdom, I have come to understand the unfruitfulness of clinging to such things, and I incline to rout out the rebirth process (i.e., existence in the 31 realms) and attain *Nibbāna*”.

- Here incline means one keeps “bent on attaining that goal”. With deeper understanding of Dhamma one’s resolve will be strengthened. As with most things in Buddha Dhamma, it is always about one’s mind.
- The resolve has to come through understanding. There is no one watching, and no one else monitoring the progress; it is one’s own mind that is doing all that.

4. Finally, the word *namaskaraya* (*nama+as+kāraya*, where “*nama*” is one’s name, “*as*” pronounced like “us” means remove, and “*kāraya*” means doing) conveys the idea that one is making a resolve to get rid of the attachment one has for one’s worldly things. It is a condensed version of the verse.

- Of course the conventional meaning of “*namaskaraya*” is “paying homage”.

14.3 Supreme Qualities of Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha

May 28, 2016

1. It is traditional to start a meditation session with homage to the Buddha (*Namaskaraya*):

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

and then to recite the supreme qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. Recordings are provided at the end of the post.

- The meaning of the above phrase is described in, “[Namaskaraya – Homage to the Buddha](#)”.

2. There are altogether 24 supreme qualities of the *Tiratana* or Three Jewels: Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha. These are called “*suvisi guna*”, where *suvisi* means 24 and *guna* are the qualities. **There are two main ways to interpret and utilize these 24 qualities.**

- **Chanting of these qualities can provide a calming effect for the mind** and is normally done before a formal meditation session; see, “[Tisarana Vandana and Its Effects on One’s Gathi](#)”.
- Meaning of the word “*vandanā*” is “*va*” + “*andha*” + “*nā*”, where “*va*” is for “*vaya*” or destroy, “*andha*” is for blind, and “*nā*” is for “*nyāya*” or the procedure for getting rid of moral blindness and attaining *Nibbāna*. **The path to attaining *Nibbāna* is encoded in the *Tiratana vandanā*.** We will discuss this in detail in a future post.
- Also, this chanting is alternatively called *Tiratana vandanā* (where *Tiratana* means the Three Jewels) OR *Tisarana vandanā* (where *Tisarana* means “guidance from the Three Jewels”). It is imperative to recite them correctly.

3. These qualities can only be stated partially, and can never be fully grasped. If a person with a mathematics Ph.D. teaches addition/subtraction to a first grade student, that student cannot fully appreciate the capabilities or qualifications of the teacher. When the same student grows up and learns higher mathematics later from the same teacher at a university, he can appreciate the capabilities of the teacher more.

- In the same way, the qualities of the Three Jewels can be appreciated only with more learning of Dhamma. In fact, when I first wrote the original post on this subject more than a year ago, my understanding was much less than now. In the mean time, I have understood more and also experienced the power of the recital of these qualities.

Supreme Qualities of the Buddha (*Budu Guna*)

Ithipi sō Bhagavā, Arahā, Sammāsambuddhō, Vijjācharanasampannō, Sugatō, Lokavidū, Anuttarrō purisadamma sārathi, Satthā devamanussānan, Buddhō, Bhagavā ti.

- It is imperative to break the phrase “*ithipi sō*” to two words; “*sō*” means “him”.
- **Most people recite it as a single word “*ithipisō*” and that gives not only an incorrect, but a derogatory meaning: “*pisō*” is for “*pisācha*” or a “lowly being like a *preta*”.**
- “*ithipi sō Bhagavā*” means “because of (the following qualities) he (Buddha) is”.
- The recital should break at places where there is a comma to state each quality separately, and should not break in the middle (e.g., no breaks in *Anuttarrō purisadamma sārathi*); audio recording is given below.

1. There are 9 qualities of the Buddha, and each is said to be impossible for a human being to describe fully.

- As one learns more and more Dhamma, one truly begins to understand the value of a Buddha. It is said that an *Anāgāmi* can better understand the qualities of a Buddha than a *Sotāpanna*, and an *Arahant* even better.

2. Here are the gist of the 9 qualities:

- *Arahan* – “A” + “*rahan*” or not a trace of defilement (attachment for sense pleasures) left.
- *Sammāsambuddhō* – “*San*” + “*mā*” + “*sambhava*” + “*uddha*”, or who discovered the way to dissociate from this suffering-filled world by removing “*san*”; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”.
- *Vijjācharanasampannō* – “*Vijjā*” (science or knowledge) + “*carana*” + “*san*” + “*panno*”, or perfectly knowledgeable about how the world arises (out of “*san*”).
- *Sugatō* – Ultimate in “*su*” + “*gathi*” or “good qualities”.
- *Lōkavidū* – “*Lōka*” + “*vidū*”, or having the ability to examine and explain any of the three worlds that encompass everything: world of mental formations (*Sankharaloka*), world of beings (*Sattaloka*), world of things (*Okasaloka*).
- *Anuttarō purisadammasarathi* – “*Purisa*” here is not a gender: *purisa dhamma* are the highest qualities; “*anuttara*” means unmatched.
- *Satthā devamanussanan* – Teacher of celestial and human beings.
- *Buddhō* – Perfectly Enlightened, uprooted all “*bhava*”.
- *Bhagavā* or *Bhagavath* – “*Bha*” + “*ga*” + “*vatha*” – Able to examine a living being’s origin in many different ways. Here “*Bha*” is *bhava* or existence and “*ga*” means connection or relationship, and “*vatha*” is the form of any being.

3. The above are of course not the only meanings. Since each word describes infinite qualities of the Buddha, there are other meanings as well. Thus it is best not to really get hang-up on the translations above.

- It is best to get an idea of what these qualities and ALWAYS recite them in Pāli. As one’s understanding grows, one will realize the meanings better.
- Pāli is a phonetic language. Meanings come via sounds. Thus what is imperative is to be able to recite the Pāli phrase above to the best to one’s ability. I have provided the recordings at the end of the post, where my teacher *Thero* recites them as they should be recited.

Supreme Qualities of the Dhamma (*Dhaham Guna*)

There are six supreme qualities of Dhamma:

Svakkathō, Bhagavathā dhammō, sanditthikō, akalikō, ehipassikō, opanayikō, paccattam vedittabbō vinnuhi ti.

First, *Bhagavathā dhammō* is the Dhamma taught by the Buddha.

- *Svakkathō* – leads to the removal of *sansaric* suffering via getting out of the 31 realms. Here “*svakkata*” (“*sva*” for “self” and “*akkata*” or “*akrutha*” or “*akriya*” means putting out of action) means getting rid of the concept of a “me” (*asmai māna*). It is not about whether a “self” exists or not; it is rather to realize that nothing in this world is worth to be considered “mine”.
- *Sanditthika* – It allows one to comprehend “*san*” (“*san*” + “*ditthi*”), the key reason for the existence in this world; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”.
- *Akalikō* – This Dhamma does not change over time; it is the same Dhamma that is delivered by all Buddhas (“*a*” + “*kālika*”). Another meaning is that it leads to the removal of darkness (due to *avijjā*); here “*kalu*” means “black” or “darkness”.
- *Ehipassikō* – “*Ehi*” + “*passika*” or defilements can be removed (“*passika*”) when each *ārammana* comes to the mind (“*Ehi*”). One does not wait to remove defilements in a formal meditation session. Rather, one takes care of that at each instant when an immoral thought comes to the mind (with *ānāpāna* or *satipattāna*).

- *Öpanayikö* – “Öpa” + “naikö”, where “Öpa” means “upatha” or “origins” and “nyāya” means the principle or the nature. Thus it means one can comprehend how each existence (*bhava* and *jathi*) arises.
- *Paccattam vedittabbö vinnuhi-* “paccaya” can be understood by looking at the origins (*veda* or *vedic*): *vedittabbö*. “Vinnu” means the hidden can be seen (like something hidden in a vessel by piercing it). Anything in this world arises due to *paticca samuppāda*; thus the *Dhamma* allows one to “see through” how this whole world arises. We will discuss later that the arising of even inert things is due to *paticca samuppāda*.

Supreme Qualities of the Sangha (*Sangha Guna*)

1. Here it must be noted that *Sangha* is not *bhikkhus*. *Sangha* means the Nobles or *Ariyas*, those who have attained one of the *magga phala*. (*Sangha* means one who has removed “san”, i.e., “san” + “gha”).

Supatipannö, Bhagavatö savakasanghō. Ujupatipannö, Bhagavatö savakasanghō. Nayapatipannö, Bhagavatö savakasanghō. Sānichipatipannö, Bhagavatö savakasanghō. Yadidam chattari purisayugāni atta purisapuggalā, esa Bhagavato savakasanghō, Āhuneyyö, pāhuneyyö, dakkhineyyö, anjalikaraneeyö, anuttaram punnakkhetam lokassa ti.

2. *Bhagavatö savakasanghō* means Noble disciples of the Buddha. The first four phrases describe four Noble qualities: *Supatipannö, Ujupatipannö, Nāyapatipannö, and Sānichipatipannö*.

- *Patipannö* means “having such quality”: “Su” means goodness and morality; “uju” means straightforward and not crooked in character; “nāya” means *ñāṇa* or wise; “sānichī” means pleasant to associate. Thus it is easy to what is meant (succinctly) by those phrases. But as with all these qualities, it is not possible to describe them fully in words.

3. “*Yadidam chattari purisayugāni atta purisapuggalā*” means thus described eight types of persons (*attapurisa puggala*) of four Noble (*purisa*) lineages. Eight types comes when each stage is divided into two, for example, *Arahant magga* and *Arahant phala*.

4. Then starting with “*esa Bhagavato savakasanghō*” (i.e., those Noble disciples of the Buddha), five more qualities are stated: *Āhuneyyö, pāhuneyyö, dakkhineyyö, anjalikaraneeyö, anuttaram punnakkhetam lokassa*.

- In those words, “*neyyö*” means *niyama dhamma* or core principle of nature; also called “*nyāma*”. Then “*āhu*” means “grasped”, “*pāhu*” means “inseparable” or “fused together”, “*dakkhī*” means “see”. Thus those disciples have clearly seen the core principles of nature (*paticca samuppāda*), have grasped them and will not be separated from them ever.
- Because of that, they can dissolve and remove the causes (food) that fuel the *sansaric* journey: *anjalikaraneeyö*. Here “*an*” means “*āhāra*” or causes, “*jali*” is water (dissolve), and *karenneya* means “do”. Another meaning of “*an*” is “horn” with sharp tips (as in a bull), which can hurt others; here *anjalikaraneeyö* means dissolving them (by cultivating *metta*) so that they cannot hurt others.
- *anuttaram punnakkhetam*: *anuttara* is unmatched, *punna* is meritorious, and *ketha* is for a field. Thus it means these disciples are like fertile fields, that can provide unlimited resources to others (just like a well-cultivated field can provide food for many).

Here is a recital of the *Namaskaraya* by the Venerable Thero (you need to adjust volume control on your computer). It is normally recited three times:

[WebLink: Listen to the verses of Namaskaraya recital](#)

Here is a recording of the *Tiratana vandana* by the Venerable Thero (You need to control the volume level on your computer)

[WebLink: Listen to the verses of Tiratana Vandana](#)

Pāli text (click to open the pdf file):

[WebLink: Tiratana Vandana](#)

14.4 The Five Precepts – Panca Sila

1. The five precepts (*panca sila*; pronounced “pancha seela”) are normally recited after paying homage to the Buddha (*Namaskaraya*), and then taking the refuge (*Tisarana*), i.e., one says nine times that one takes the refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Sangha. In the following they are combined, as customary; see the previous post for pronunciations and details.

- Even for a Buddhist, it is not necessary to recite the precepts.
- It is important to keep in mind that JUST BY RECITING PRECEPTS does not do anything to purify the mind. The Buddha said, “*yam samadanan tan vathan, sanvarattena seelan*“, or “reciting precepts is a ritual (“*vatha*“), moral behavior is attained by seeing and controlling ‘*san*’”.
- However, it is good to recite *Namaskaraya*, *Tisarana*, and the precepts, to attain *citta pasada* or calmness and joy of mind especially before a formal meditation session. If one does it WITH UNDERSTANDING and RESOLVE, it can bring benefits.
- Furthermore, reciting precepts and suttas is preferred by those with developed *saddhā* (faith) *indriya*; see, “[Panca Indriya and Panca Bala – Five Faculties and Five Powers](#)“. For those who lack *saddhā indriya*, this may be something they want to consider doing.

2. It is important to realize that the five precepts have deep meanings, and thus should not be taken lightly; see, “[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#)“. The true meaning of the five precepts are discussed there.

- Only an *Arahant* is capable of strictly keeping those precepts (abstaining from all ten defilements or *dasa akusala*); **thus one needs to recite with the intention of doing one’s best to keep the precepts. Otherwise, we will be lying from the outset.**

Here a Venerable Thero is reciting the *Namaskaraya*, *Tisarana*, and the five precepts with the audience repeating them (volume adjustment on the right):

[WebLink: Listen to verse of : Pansil](#)

Here is a pdf file with the text and translation:

[WebLink: Panca Sila \(click to open\)](#)

3. To emphasize, these English translations are the conventional (“*padaparama*“) or mundane ones and the real meanings are discussed in “[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#)“. Also, while reciting, one needs to keep in mind that one is promising do one’s best to keep the precepts.

14.5 **Sutta Chanting (with Pali Text)**

Revised August 14, 2016: Added more *suttas* at the end.

Following are recordings of three popular *suttas* by a Venerable Thero and the corresponding Pāli texts. At some point, I will make English translations. Most existing translations provide only the mundane (“*padaparama*”) meanings.

Please note that a few *suttas* are translated and discussed in the section “[Sutta Interpretations](#)”.

1. Karaniya Metta Sutta (volume adjustment on the right):

You can use the below link to open the file. You can play it there or right-click on the screen and choose “save as...” to save to your computer.

[WebLink: Listen to verse of : Karaniya Metta Sutta](#)

Pāli text (click to open):

[WebLink: Karaniya Metta Sutta](#)

2. Ratana Sutta (volume adjustment on the right):

[WebLink: Listen to verse of : Ratana Sutta](#)

Pāli text (click to open):

[WebLink: Ratana Sutta](#)

3. Mahā Mangala Sutta (volume adjustment on the right):

[WebLink: Listen to verse of : Mahā Mangala Sutta](#)

Pāli text (click to open):

[WebLink: Mahā Mangala Sutta](#)

4. Here is a recording of **75 minutes of *pirith* (Sutta chanting)** including the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta*.

[WebLink: 75 minutes of pirith \(Sutta chanting\)](#)

5. Following are more popular *suttas*. Once a given *sutta* is open, you can play it or download from there.

[WebLink: Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta](#)

[WebLink: Sachchavibhanga Sutta](#)

[WebLink: Girimananda Sutta](#)

[WebLink: Bojjanga Piritha \(Mahā Moggallāna\)](#)

[WebLink: Bojjanga Piritha \(Mahā Kassapa\)](#)

[WebLink: Khandha Sutta \(Piritha\)](#)

[WebLink: Mora Sutta](#)

[WebLink: Mettanisansa Sutta](#)

[WebLink: Vasala Sutta](#)

[WebLink: Atanatiya Sutta](#)

[WebLink: Alavaka Sutta](#)

14.6 Sadhu – Symbolizes Purified Hadaya Vatthu (Mind)

1. It is customary to say “Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!” before and after taking precepts, chanting sutta, or a meritorious act (by oneself or another). Since anything is done for a purpose in Buddha Dhamma, it is good to understand why it is done.

- Sādhu comes from “sa” and “hadaya” or a purified heart (not the physical heart, but the *hadaya vatthu* where thoughts arise).

2. It is important to realize that our minds are associated with the *hadaya vatthu*, which is in the manomaya kaya and is aligned close to the physical heart; see, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)” This is why in a traumatic or joyful event we feel it in the heart, and not in the brain. Brain is like a computer, and when it is overworked, it causes headaches. But our feelings of love, hate etc. are felt close to the physical heart, in the *hadaya vatthu*.

How is one’s heart (and mind) purified?

- “*Kāyena sanvarō sādhu, sādhu vācaya sanvarō; manasā sanvarō sādhu, sādhu sabbatta sanvarō*”
- “The heart is purified via moral discipline; one needs to act, speak, and think morally”

Thus when a meritorious deed is done by oneself or another, it is customary to say, “sādhu”. It reinforces the “goodness” of the deed and one makes a determination to do more; the lightness of the heart can be felt if one does it with understanding.

3. Our hearts are darkened with greed, hate, and ignorance of *Tilakkhana*. As we purify the mind, the darkness fades away and the “white light emerges”; it is like lighting a lamp gets rid of the darkness. Heart becomes joyful.

We get rid of greed, hate, and ignorance via staying away from the ten defilements:

- When we abstain from killing, stealing, and inappropriate conduct (including but not limited to sexual conduct), we are cultivating **moral discipline through bodily acts**.
- Abstinence from lying, vain talk, gossiping, and hateful speech leads to **moral discipline through speech**.
- When we forcefully control our bodily acts and speech, the mind will gradually calm down because we thus reduce *abhijjā* [*abhijjhā*] (strong greed) and *vyāpāda* (strong hate). Then we can cultivate *sammā diṭṭhi* via comprehending the *Tilakkhana*; this leads to reduction of *micca diṭṭhi* too (***abhijjā* [*abhijjhā*], *vyāpāda*, and *micca diṭṭhi* are the three *akusala kamma* done with the mind**). This is the step-by-step procedure that is discussed in the Bhāvanā (meditation) section.

4. Thus we can see that by saying “sādhu” mindfully, what we are doing is to make a firm determination to get rid of the ten defilements (*dasa akusala*) and thus to purify the mind and heart. Or, we are agreeing with a good deed done by someone else, and share the merits of that deed.

5. Now, what is the significance of putting the open hands together when saying “Sadhu!”?

- The gesture that we make by opening the hands fully, putting them together, and bringing them close to the heart or top of head also signify this determination. “With all my heart I make a commitment”, or “this commitment stands above everything else”, or “I agree wholeheartedly”.

The strengthening of the fingers versus making a fist embody two basic characteristics of human nature.

- One makes a fist when hitting someone in anger. Also, someone caught doing a misdeed has clenched hands in addition to a bent posture (you have seen pictures of criminals being hauled off to jail in such timid postures).
- In contrast, open hands indicate “I have not aggressive intentions” as when putting up hands indicating one has no desire to fight. Furthermore, as you may have noticed, people when say “Sādhu!” normally have their backs straight too, especially if they are doing with a joyful mind.

6. As mentioned above, one can make a given meritorious deed much more powerful by doing it with joy and knowledge; such thoughts should be there during that act and also when saying “Sādhū!” at the beginning and end. The most potent kusala citta are done with “joy and understanding” (“*a somanassa-sahagata, ñāṇa-sampayutta citta*”; see, “[Javana of a Citta – Root of Mental Power](#)”).

XV Dhammapada

- “[Manōpubbangamā Dhammā..](#)”
- “[Sabba Papassa Akaranan....](#)”
- “[Appamadö Amata Padam....](#)”
- “[Najajja Vasalo Hoti.....](#)”
- “[Arogya Parama Labha..](#)”
- “[Anicca vata Sankhara...](#)”
- “[Attā Hi Attano Nātho](#)”

15.1 **Manōpubbangamā Dhammā..**

May 5, 2018

*Manopubbaṅgammā dhammā,
manoseṭṭhā manomayā;
manasā ce paduṭṭhena,
bhāsatī vā karoti vā;
tato naṃ dukkhamanveti,
cakkam va vahato padaṃ.*

*Manopubbaṅgammā dhammā,
manoseṭṭhā manomayā;
manasā ce pasannena,
bhāsatī vā karoti vā;
tato naṃ sukhamanveti,
chāyā va anapāyini.*

(Dhammapada verses 1 and 2)

1. These two verses encompass the key idea in Buddha Dhamma: That mind is at the forefront. This whole world is made of the mind and has the mind as the basis for everything.

- *Manō* is of course the mind. *Dhammā* are the energies that the mind generates (via *javana power*), and those *dhammā* then give rise everything in this world – whether living or inert. This analysis can go to very deep levels; for the basis of that analysis, see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!](#)”.
- *Pubbaṅgama* (*pubba* + *anga*) means what comes first. The first line (in both verses) says, all *dhammā* that give rise to everything in this world are created by the mind. The second line says, everything is prepared (*settā*) and is a manifestation of the mind (*manōmayā*).

2. Depending on whether one speaks (*bhāsatī*) and acts (*karoti*) with a defiled (*padutta*) or a pleasant (*pasanna*, Sinhala is *prasanna*) mind, those *dhammā* that are generated by the mind lead to (*tato nam*) things that cause suffering (*dukkhamanveti*), or happiness (*sukhamanveti*).

- In the case of a defiled mind (acting with *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*), suffering will follow one just as a wheel of a cart follows the footsteps of the ox pulling it (*cakkamva vahatō padaṃ*).
- In the case of a pleasant, moral mind (acting with *alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*), happiness will follow one just as one's shadow follows oneself (*chāyāva anapāyini*).

3. These two verses can be interpreted in the mundane way, as basically outlined in #2 above. Any given task should be done with an undefiled mind, and that will always lead to a pleasant and joyous state of mind.

- It can also be interpreted in a deeper sense: Thoughts, speech, and actions done with a defiled mind (*lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*) can lead to births in the *apāyās* and thus to much suffering. Those done with a pleasant mind (*alōbha*, *adōsa*, *amōha*) will lead to births in the “good realms”, and will eventually lead to *Nibbāna*, end of all suffering.
- The first several subsections of the “[Living Dhamma](#)”, discuss the mundane aspects, which provide the background needed to go to the deeper aspects discussed in the latter subsections.

4. Now we can loosely translate the two verses as follows:

- All phenomena have mind as their forerunner; they all are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with an evil mind (i.e., engages in *dasa akusala*), suffering (*dukha*) follows one just as the wheels of a cart follow the footsteps of the ox that is pulling the cart.
- All phenomena have mind as their forerunner; they all are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a purified mind (i.e., engages in *dasa kusala* and *punna kamma*), happiness (*sukha*) follows one like the shadow that always follows one. That is the source of “*nirāmisa sukha*”, which eventually leads to *Nibbāna*.

I found a youtube video with the Pāli recital; it may take a minute to download. The two verses start respectively at 0.30 and 2.18 minutes:

[WebLink: Youtube: Dhammapada - Yamaka Vaggo - Part 01](#)

15.2 Sabba Papassa Akaranan....

“*Sabba pāpassa akaranan,
Kusalassa upasampadā,
Sachitta pariyō dapanan,
Etan Buddhānasāsanan*”

(Dhammapada verse 183)

Let us see what is meant by the verse:

- *Sabba* = all; *papassa* = *pāpa* + *passa* = discard immoral; *akaranan* = (*a* + *karana*) = not engaged in
- *kusalassa* = *kusala* + *assa* = “take in” moral, *upasampadā* = *upa* + *san* + *padā* = sort out “*san*”; see, “[What is “San”?](#)”
- *sachitta* = *sa* + *citta* = one’s own thoughts; *pariyodapanan* = *pari* + *yō* + *dapanan* = control at the onset (where “*dapana*” means control and “*yō*” means origin and “*pari*” means around)
- *Buddha āna* = All Buddhas’ *niyama* or principle
- *etan Buddhānasāsanan* = that is Buddha *Sāsana*, where *sāsana* is the doctrine.

Note: “*assa*” and “*passa*” same as “*āna*” and “*pāna*”; see, “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)”. For an explanation on “*san*”, see, “[What is “San”? – Meaning of Samsāra](#)”.

Therefore, we can summarize as follows:

“Discard all that is immoral, what should not be done

Take in what is moral by sorting out “*san*”

Do this by controlling one’s own thoughts (mind)

This is the doctrine of the Buddhas”

Here is a recording of the verse recited by a Venerable *Thero*; it keeps repeating several times:

[WebLink: Listen to verse of : Sabba papassa akaranan](#)

Next, “[Appamadō Amata Padam....](#)”,

15.3 Appamadō Amata Padam....

*Appamadō amata padam
pamadō maccunō padam
appamattā na meeyanthi
ye pamattā yathā matā.*

(Dhammapada verse Verse 21, Samavati Vatthu)

- *Appamāda* is “doing without delay” and *pamāda* is being delayed.
- *Mata* (pronounced “matha”) is death, and *amata* is deathless, another word for *Nibbāna*. *Maccunō* (pronounced “machchunō”) is also death, so is *meeyanthi*.
- *Pada* means “word” (most these words are also Sinhala words).
- *Appamattā* is one who is not delayed, *pamattā* is one who is delayed.
- *Yathā* is “true status”.

Now we can extract the MEANING of the verse as:

Hastening is a “deathless word”

Delay is a “death sentence”

One who makes haste attains the deathless status

One who negligent is like already dead

1. Thus someone who is delayed in seeking *Nibbāna* (either due to not knowing Buddha Dhamma or just procrastinates in following the Path) is like a dead person even while living. He/she will be facing innumerable deaths in the future.

- But someone who strives and attains *Nibbāna* has already reached the “deathless state”. Because after attaining *Nibbāna*, all future deaths are stopped: No more future rebirths and thus no more deaths.

2. There are two reasons for the urgency:

- a. Time of death is unpredictable. Even a young, healthy person may die via an accident or other unforeseeable cause.
- b. As we get old, our brains start to degrade and thus our minds will not be able to grasp the Dhamma.

3. Many Buddhists that I know say they want to “enjoy life while young” and then start focusing on *Nibbāna* at old age long after retirement. But one may not reach the old age, and even if did, the mind may not be able to grasp the deep message of the Buddha.

- Most people come to the conclusion of postponing practice, because they think attaining *Nibbāna* (or the *Sotāpanna* stage) is a mere act of following some rituals that can be done any time. This would be a big mistake. The *Sotāpanna* stage is reached via comprehending the true nature of this world, *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and that needs a sharp mind and a lot of contemplation.

4. The Buddha was once travelling with some *bhikkhus* and they saw an old beggar couple. The Buddha told the *bhikkhus* that the man’s name was Mahādāna (meaning rich), and he was indeed a very rich person, and the woman was his wife; they both were of “tīhētuka birth”, i.e., they were born due to a very potent good kamma (done with all three good roots of non-greed, non-hate, and wisdom) from a previous life.

- Thus, the Buddha said, if they started on the Path when they were very young, the man could have become an *Arahant* and the woman an *Anāgāmī*; if they started when they were young (20’s), they could have become *Anāgāmī/Sakadāgāmī*, and if they started on the Path in the middle age they could have attained *Sakadāgāmī/Sotāpanna* stages. Instead, they lived a very

lavish life, wasted their wealth, and became beggars. Now they were too old to comprehend anything.

- It is unfortunate to see many people today postponing the practice to their “old age”. It is a good idea to start early and at least keep a slow pace.
- However, **it must be noted that four factors contribute to the capability of attaining *Nibbāna*: *Ayusa* (age), *vanna* (lively), *sukha* (comfort), *bala* (ability).** Some people may have sufficient *vanna* and *bala* even at very old age. Thus a normal person cannot look at a given old person and say, “this person seems too old to attain *Nibbana*”. Only a Buddha can determine whether a person is too old to grasp the Dhamma. Yet, in general, as one becomes older the brain gets weaker.

5. Here is a recording of the verse recited by a Venerable *Thero*:

[WebLink: Listen to verse of : Appamado](#)

Next, “[Najajja Vasalo Hoti.](#)“,

15.4 **Najajja Vasalo Hoti.....**

*“Najajjā vasalō hōti, najajjā hōti Brāhmanō
Kammanā vasalō hōti, kammanā hōti Brāhmanō”*

(Vasala Sutta)

When I started writing this post, I erroneously assumed that the above verse is from *Dhammapada*. But it turned out that it is actually from the *Vasala sutta*. However, I decided to put the post in the *Dhammapada* section, as it is a nice verse providing insight to the core message of the Buddha.

Let us look at the meaning of different key terms:

- “Ja” means birth and “jajja” means “by birth” or “related to birth”.
- “Vasala” or “vasalaya” is a derogatory term identifying someone as an “unworthy” person, not merely “useless” but “someone not to be associated with”, as if the person has a communicable disease. Even today, there are such “untouchables” in India even though their conditions have improved since 1995: [WebLink: WIKI: Dalit](#).
- In those days, a *Brahmin* was supposed to be the opposite of a *vasalaya*, having the highest social rank. Of the 31 realms of existence, *Brahmas* occupy the highest 20 realms and are the beings with highest level of mental states (greedy or hateful thoughts normally do not arise in them). Thus a *Brahmin* is supposed to be of highest moral values.
- *Kamma* is of course action, and *kammana* means according to one’s actions.

So, the meaning of the verse is clear:

“It is not the birth that makes a noble person or an ignoble person, but it is one’s actions (the way one lives one’s life) that determines whether one is a noble person or an ignoble person”.

- Here one could substitute noble person with a *Brahmin* and ignoble person with an untouchable, AND that does not come about by birth but by one’s moral values.

We can make the following deductions using Buddha Dhamma:

- One is determined to be a noble person not by birth but by one’s character.
- One change from being an ignoble person to a noble person and even a Noble person (*Ariya*) by changing one’s character (*gathi*). There are several posts on how to change habits; use the “Search” box on right to find the posts (just search for “habit” or “*gathi*”). This search box is a good resource to find relevant posts using a key word.
- Sometimes a noble person can change to an ignoble person too; but a Noble person (*Ariya*) never (even in future lives) changes to an ignoble person.
- Some people are very high-minded because of their birth, wealth, beauty, fame, among many other possibilities. But we need to be always aware of the fact that we have been born much worse than even the lowest human; there is no reason to be high-minded for a span of 100 years (or even few thousand years if one is born with a potent kamma seed making it possible to be reborn human many times in succession), in a rebirth process that has no beginning!
- Contemplating on the “bigger world view” with the 31 realms (with four realms of much suffering) and the hard-to-comprehend time scale of *samsāra*, can make one humble, and be compassionate; see, “[Implications of the Rebirth Process in Daily Life and Society](#)”.
- Also, we need to remember that even a lowly worm may have a potent kamma seed that could make it in its next life a king (even though chances are extremely low; see, “[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)”), and if we do not act with wisdom we could have a rebirth worse than a worm. Actually, high-mindedness (*uddacca*; pronounced uddachcha) can make one be born in a lower realm.

Next, “[Arogya Parama Labha](#)“,

15.5 Arogya Parama Labha..

Revised September 27, 2017

*Arōgya paramā lābhā
 santhutti paramam dhanan
 vissāsa paramā nāthi
 Nibbānan paramam sukhan*

(Dhammapada verse 204)

Here is a recital by the Venerable Thero:

[WebLink: Listen to Venerable Thero recital](#)

1. As with many Dhammapada verses (and *sutta* interpretations), the conventional (or “*pada parama*”) interpretation is the one that is widely known, which goes as: **“Health is the ultimate profit, happiness is the ultimate wealth, a trusted friend is the best relative, Nibbāna is the ultimate bliss”**.

- The more deeper meaning remains hidden for many. In some hospitals in Sri Lanka, the verse, “*Arōgya Parama Lābhā*” is displayed in big letters to emphasize the benefits of being healthy.
- While it is good to abide by those conventional meanings while we live this life, we should also try to grasp the deeper meanings to embark on the Noble Eightfold Path; see, [“Buddha Dhamma in Chart”](#) and [“What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma”](#).

2. First “*parama*” means “ultimate” or “prominent”. By the way, the word “*pada parama*” above means the interpretation that makes the “conventional meaning of a word prominent”; “*pada*” is “word”. Now let us look at the other words in the verse.

3. “*Rōga*” means “disease”, so *arōgya* means not subject to disease. The bodies of all beings below the *Deva lokas* (human and below) are subject to disease. We cannot remove the possibility of disease until we remove causes for us to be reborn in the human realm or the lowest four realms, i.e., attain the *Sakadāgāmī* stage of *Nibbāna*.

- “*Lābha*” is “profit”. **The ultimate profit (better than any amount of wealth) of “disease free” status is attained at the *Sakadāgāmī* stage of *Nibbāna*.**
- Actually “*arōgya*” is a Sanskrit word that has become standard. The actual line is, “*Arōga parama lābhā*”.

4. “*Santhutti*” comes from “*san*” + “*thutti*” or removing “*san*”. *Santhutti* and the more common Sinhala word “*santhosa*” means happy. When one removes “*san*”, one gains the *niramisa sukha* of *Nibbāna* or “cooling down”.

- “*Dhanan*” means “wealth”; Sinhala word is “*dhanaya*”. **Thus ultimate wealth is achieved by getting rid of “*san*” or defilements of greed, hate, and ignorance**; see, [“What is “San”?”](#).

5. “*Vissasa*” comes from “*vis*” + “*āsā*”, where “*āsā*” means “*āsava*” or cravings. Thus it means getting rid of cravings that makes one bound to the *saṃsāra* (round of rebirths).

- “*Nātha*” means “refuge”; the opposite of that is “*anātha*” in Sinhala means “helpless”. “*Nātha*” is also another word for the Buddha. **Thus ultimate refuge is reached via giving up the cravings for worldly things.**

6. The last one, *Nibbanan paramam sukhan*, or “**Nibbāna is the ultimate bliss**” is the only one that has the same meaning as the conventional or “*pada parama*” version in #1 above.

- Therefore, when one embarks on the *Sotāpanna magga*, one should be trying to adhere to the correct version.

7. Furthermore, the correct Pāli version of the *gāthā* is:

*Arōgā paramā lābhā
 san thutti paramam dhanan*

*vis āsa paramā nāthi
Nibbānan paramam sukhan*

- Buddha dhamma has no language, cultural, social barriers. But the Buddha advised never to translate *Tipitaka* to any language, particularly to Sanskrit, because the meanings of certain words can get distorted; see, “[Preservation of the Dhamma](#)”.
- It is ironic that this is exactly what has happened during the past 1500 years or so, at least since Buddhaghosa wrote *Visuddhimagga*, probably even earlier. The most damaging are the replacement of *anicca* by the Sanskrit word *anitya*, and *paticca samuppāda* by *Pratītyasamutpāda*.
- On the other hand, the Buddha also advised that what really matters is to get the “meaning of a given word or phrase across”. He said to use the words and phrases (and examples) appropriate for a given locale to convey the MEANINGS of these key Pāli words. While we should keep the *Tipitaka* intact in Pāli, we should interpret its content in a way that most conducive to get the ideas across depending on the audience.
- The correct way to interpret the *Tipitaka* material is outlined in “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”.

8. It is interesting to note that this *gathā* was a popular one among the vedic brahmins of the day of the Buddha. In the *Magandhiya sutta*, it is described how Magandhiya brahmin tells the Buddha that his teacher also taught him the same verse. When the Buddha asked him to explain the meaning that his teacher taught him, Magandhiya gave the same interpretation that was given in #1 above.

- The Buddha told Magandhiya that this verse came to the vedic literature from Buddha Kassapa, whose Buddha *sāsana* has since disappeared (it is important to note that there had been three Buddhas before Buddha Gotama in this *mahā kalpa*, and there will be another, Maithree Buddha, in the future after the present Buddha *sāsana* disappears in about 2500 years).
- This is why only “conventional meanings” of pure Dhamma survives when *Ariyas* (Noble Persons) who can correctly interpret the deep meanings in the *suttas* and verses like this are absent for long times in this world. Either a Noble Person or a Buddha has to be born to bring back the true meanings.
- This is exactly what has happened during the past hundreds of years, where true meanings of many keywords like *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, *paticca samuppāda*, and *ānāpāna*, have been not known; see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)”.

9. For those who like to dig deeper into *Tipitaka*, the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Santuttha Sutta \(SN 16.1\)](#)” clearly illustrate that “*santuttha*” is with one who lives a simple life, without minimal cravings, as Ven. Kassapa did: “..*Santutthāyaṃ, bhikkhave, kassapo itarītareṇa cīvareṇa, itarītaracīvarasantutthiyā ca vaṇṇavādī; na ca cīvarahetu anesanaṃ appatirūpaṃ āpajjati; aladdhā ca cīvaraṃ na paritassati; laddhā ca cīvaraṃ agadhito amucchito anajjhāpanno ādīnavadassāvī nissaraṇapaṇṇo paribhuñjati.*”.

- The [WebLink: suttacentral: English](#) and [WebLink: suttacentral: Sinhala](#) translations at the Sutta Central site are not too bad.

15.6 **Anicca vata Sankhara...***Aniccā vatha sankhārā**Uppāda vaya dhamminō**Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti**Te san vūpa samō sukhō*

This verse is actually not in the Dhammapada, but it is a very common verse. In Sri Lanka (and possibly in other Buddhist countries), it is displayed at funerals in order to emphasize the “fleeting nature” of life. It actually has a much deeper meaning, and explains why we face sorrow inevitably (because death is inevitable), and how it can be permanently removed to attain the *Nibbānic* bliss.

- This verse is said to have been uttered by Sakka, the King of the *Devas*, just after the *Parinibbāna* (passing away) of the Buddha.

A common translation is:

- All things are impermanent
- They arise and pass away
- Having arisen they come to an end
- Their coming to peace is bliss

Let us examine the correct interpretation of the verse.

1. *Anicca* is of course “cannot be maintained to our satisfaction”. It is NOT just impermanence, because even permanent things (relative to our lifetime) cannot be maintained to our satisfaction; see, [“Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations”](#).

Vata (pronounced as “vatha”) is the combined word for “body (*gatha*) and mind (*sitha*)”. Thus it is about the “person” who has passed away. By the way, these are all Sinhala (as well as Pāli) words.

(There is another meaning for “*vata*”: In the verse, “*yam samadanān tan vatan, sanvarattena seelan*”, or “reciting precepts is a **ritual**, moral behavior is attained by controlling “*san*”. Thus, there “*vata*” means ritual. Another meaning is “action”. One needs to pick the right meaning for the given situation).

Saṅkhāra is “what we think” (what we speak, and do, also come about via thoughts or *saṅkhāra*; we cannot even lift a finger without an associated thought). Here it is specifically meant “*abhisankhāra*”, those that lead to rebirth; see, [“Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka”](#).

- Thus the first line says, “any *vata*” or a “person” (that is a result of past *abhisankhāra*) cannot be maintained to our satisfaction”.

2. *Uppada* means arise and *vaya* means destruction. *Uppajjitvā* means that which arises, and *nirujja* means fading away. *Dhammino* (or *dhammatha*) means the “Nature’s way”.

- Thus the second and third lines say, “whatever arises is bound to fade away” (and thus lead to sorrow). That is a natural process that holds anywhere in the 31 realms.

3. *Te* means “three”, and thus “*te san*” means three “*san*” or *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*; see, [“What is “San”?”](#).

vūpa sama means “remove and get to *samādhī*”. In the *Patisambhidā Magga Pakarana* (jhāna vibhanga section) on p. 55, it explains that, “*vitakka vicara vupa sama*” means “getting rid of *vitakka* *vicara* and attaining *savitakka*, *savicara*”.

Sukha is happiness.

- Thus the fourth line says, “by removing *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* (three bad “*san*”s) from our minds, we can reach (the ultimate) happiness or *Nibbāna*”.

Here is a recording of the verse by the Venerable *Thero* (repeated three times; note the volume control on right):

[WebLink: Listen to verse of : Anichchavatha sankara](#)

- In fact, this is a very good *kammattana* (meditation subject) for cultivating the “*anicca saññā*“. One could recite the verse and contemplate on its meaning. Think about all those loved ones who passed away and led to much suffering. And one’s own death is also inevitable.
- We have been through this process in perpetuity, being distressed as loved ones are lost and also thinking about one’s own demise, at each and every birth.
- But there is a way to stop this suffering, by following the Path.
- Thus, instead of getting depressed about the inevitability of death, one WILL start feeling better if one can really cultivate the “*anicca saññā*“; see, “[How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#)“.
- By the way, this *kammattana* will also cultivate the “*udayavaya ñāṇa*” or “the knowledge about arising and decay of a *sankata*“. I have not written a post specifically on the *udayavaya ñāṇa* yet, but the following post describes what it is NOT: “[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#)“.

15.7 Attā Hi Attano Nātho

March 4, 2017

*“Attā hi attano nāthō
kō hi nāthō parō siyā
attanā hi sudantēna
nāthan labhati dullabhan”*

(Dhammapada verse 160)

This is an important verse where the word “*atta/attā*” (pronounced “aththa”/“aththā”) is used with two very different meanings in two places within the same verse.

- In the conventional sense, “*attā*” means “a person”.
- The deeper meaning of “*atta*” is “in full control”, the opposite of which is *anatta* (“helpless”) as in the *Tilakkhana*.
- When one attains the true “*atta*” state (*Nibbāna*), one has become “*nātha*”, which is still used in Sinhala meaning “found refuge or salvation”. As long as one remains in the 31 realms (this world), one is “*anātha*” (which is the Sinhala word for *anatta*) or “helpless”.
- One becomes *atta* (*attanō*) by cleansing (one’s mind): *sudantena* (*sudda* means “clean”).
- *Labhati* means get and *dullabhan* means rare, and as we saw above “*nātha*” is attaining *Nibbāna*. So, *nāthan labhati dullabhan* means “it is not easy to get to salvation (*Nibbāna*)”.

Therefore, we can translate the verse as follows:

“One indeed is one’s own refuge
how can another be a refuge to one?
one reaches salvation by purifying one’s mind
getting to refuge (*Nibbāna*) is rare”

Here is a recording of the verse recited by me (I could not find a recording by Venerable Waharaka Thero):



[WebLink: Play Dhammapada verse 160](#)

A detailed discussion on “*atta/attā*” is given in the post, “[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#)” that I just published.

XVI Sutta Interpretations

- [“Sutta – Introduction”](#)
- [“Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?”](#)
- [“Nikāya in the Sutta Pitaka”](#)
- [“Sutta Learning Sequence for the Present Day”](#)
- [“Mahā Satipatṭhāna Sutta”](#)
 - [“Satipatṭhāna Sutta – Structure”](#)
 - [“Satipatṭhāna – Introduction”](#)
 - [“Kayanupassana – Section on Postures \(Iriyapathapabba\)”](#)
 - [“Kayanupassana – The Section on Habits \(Sampajanapabba\)”](#)
 - [“Prerequisites for the Satipatṭhāna Bhāvanā”](#)
 - [“What is “Kaya” in Kayanupassana?”](#)
- [“Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)”](#)
- [“Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta”](#)
 - [“Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta – Introduction”](#)
 - [“Majjima Patipada – Way to Relinquish Attachments to this World”](#)
 - [“Tiparivattaya and Twelve Types of Ñāṇa \(Knowledge\)”](#)
 - [“Relinquishing Defilements via Three Rounds and Four Stages”](#)
- [“Na Cetanākaranīya Sutta”](#)
- [“Pathama Mettā Sutta”](#)

16.1 Sutta – Introduction

Revised on January 5, 2016 (#4 added); April 18, 2017

1. Buddha dhamma is structured to be presented via a method called, “*uddesa, niddesa, patiniddesa*”. A fundamental concept is first stated (“*uddesa*” or “utterance”); then it is described in a summarized way (“*niddesa*” or “brief explanation”), and then it is described in detail (“*patiniddesa*” where “*pati*” or “difficult/key” points).

- For example, “*anicca, dukkha, anatta*” is a *uddesa*, where the fundamental characteristics of “this world” are just stated. In the *uddesa* version, *paticca samuppāda* is “*avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra, saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇa,.....*” (all 11 steps).

2. Each concept was described in detail in various *suttas*. For example, “*anicca, dukkha, anatta*” is described in the very first few *suttas* themselves (*Dhamma cakka pavattana sutta*, *Anatta lakkhana sutta* were the first two). However, each *sutta* took many hours to deliver, and it was not possible to condense all that information in a *sutta* for mostly oral transmission that was available at the time. Each *sutta* was made into a condensed form most likely by the Buddha himself; see below.

- Thus the material in each *sutta* as written in the *Tipitaka* is CONDENSED. This is the “*niddesa*” version.

3. During the time of the Buddha, other *bhikkhus* then described in detail each *sutta* to audiences when they delivered discourses. This is the “*patiniddesa*” version. Especially after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha, **many *Arahants* started writing “*attakatha*” or commentaries on important *suttas*, but a few were written during the time of the Buddha.**

- Three of original books with such early commentaries have been preserved in the *Tipitaka*: *Patisambhidhā Magga Prakarana*, *Nettipparakana*, and *Petakopadesa*. Of these, the *Patisambhidhā Magga Prakarana* consists of the analyses by Ven. *Sariputta*, one of the chief disciples of the Buddha, and the *Nettipparakana* by Ven. *Mahā Kaccayana*. Thus we are lucky to have these three original commentaries still with us.
- These three books contain the “*patiniddesa*” versions of many of the important *suttas*, which describe in detail the key words/phrases in a given *sutta*. All other such great commentaries have been lost; see, “[Incorrect Thēravada Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)” and “[Buddhaghōsa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background](#)”.

4. In this section, I will be discussing the *suttas* in the *patiniddesa* mode, providing explanations of the deeper meanings of phrases that have been condensed for easy oral transmission.

- During the time of the Buddha there were some who could comprehend just the *uddesa* version, for example, *Upatissa* and *Kolita* (who became Ven. *Sariputta* and Ven. *Moggallāna* later) became *Sotapannas* just upon hearing the verse, “*ye Dhamma hetuppabbava.....*”. They had done much in their past lives and needed “just a little push” to get there. They are called *uggatitanna* or “persons with high wisdom”.
- And there were many who could understand the *niddesa* version. Those were called *vipatitanna* and they needed a bit more explanation to grasp the concepts.
- However, these days, most people are in the lower category of *neyya*. They need detailed explanations (i.e., *patiniddesa*) to grasp a concept. And they also belong to two categories: those with *tihetuka patisandhi* (optimum births) can attain *magga phala* in this life, whereas those with *dvihetuka patisandhi* (inferior births) cannot attain *magga phala*, but they can accrue merits to attain *magga phala* in future lives. Of course there is no way for anyone to figure out (except for a Buddha) whether one has a *tihetuka* or *dvihetuka patisandhi*.
- It is important to realize that those who are either *uggatitanna* or *vipatitanna* had been *neyyas* with *dvihetuka patisandhi* in previous lives, and had strived to gain more wisdom in this life. Thus there is no point worrying about whether one a *tihetuka* or *dvihetuka*.

5. By the way, there are many erroneous commentaries that are available today, and the best example is the *Visuddhimagga* of *Buddhaghosa*. It was written at a time (around 400 CE; where CE is

“Current Era” or AD) when the “pure Dhamma” was already lost and the conventional meanings were common place, just as now.

- Actually, we have had a long period from about 200 CE up to now that the “pure Dhamma” had been lost; see, “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)“. But the original *suttas* survived because people at least used and preserved them even if they used the “conventional” (“*padaparama*” in Pāli) meanings.
- Thus we can see why people have been translating *suttas* “word for word” and just getting the conventional meanings. They are NOT supposed to be TRANSLATED; they are supposed to be DESCRIBED in detail by bringing out the deep meanings of some of the words/phrases in the *suttas*.

6. From time to time *jāti Sotāpannas* are born; they had attained the *Sotāpanna* stage in a previous life, possibly during the time Buddha was alive, and have had births in the *deva loka* for long times and are reborn human. Some of them have the special capability to interpret the key words/phrases in the *suttas*. This special knowledge is called “*patisambidha ñāṇa*”.

- There has been at least one time previously that the real meanings were brought out by a *Thero* with the *patisambidha ñāṇa*, but this is not the time to discuss that.
- However, we have a few *Theros* at this time who have this ability. I will leave it upto others to decide for themselves whether this is true or not. I have experienced the benefits of these clarifications, and I just want to make them available for anyone who could benefit.

7. Here is my personal belief of what happened: The Buddha knew that Buddha Dhamma will be going through periods of decline where *bhikkhus* capable of interpreting the *suttas* will not be present. Thus the *suttas* were composed in a way that only the “conventional” meaning is apparent. **And that was a necessary step to preserve the *suttas*, especially before writing became common place.**

- It is important to remember that Ven. Ananda had memorized all the *suttas* which he then recited at the First Buddhist Council, just 3 months after the *Parinibbāna* of the Buddha.
- Ven. Ananda was Buddha’s personal assistant over the last few decades of the Buddha’s life. I believe that the Buddha condensed each *sutta* and Ven. Ananda memorized each of them. The Buddha synthesized each *sutta* in a “double meaning” way in order for them to survive the “dark periods”.
- All that was done at the first Buddhist Council was to recite all the *suttas* and to put them into various categories (*nikayas*). This is my theory and I believe that it will be proven to be true in the future.

8. And during the times when *bhikkhus* with the *patisambidha ñāṇa* are not born for long times, it is those conventional interpretations that are adopted by people. **And that serves the purpose of keeping the *suttas* intact, especially before the written form was not common.**

- A very good example is the *Ānāpānasati sutta* (some of which are also part of the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*). As we discussed in “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)”, the conventional meaning is to tie up “*ana*” with breath inhaling and “*pana*” with breath exhaling and that was consistent with the breath meditation that is there in the world at any time (it was practiced by *yogis* at the time of the Buddha, and he actually learned those methods from such *yogis* before attaining the Buddhahood).
- Another phrase is “*majjima patipada*” in the *Dhamma cakka pavattana sutta*. It is easy to interpret it as “middle path” since the *sutta* describes the two extremes of *kamasukallikanu yoga* and the *attakilamatanu yoga*. People just ASSUMED “*majjima*” means middle and it made sense. We have to keep in mind that Pāli was just a spoken language and to date it does not have an alphabet. Thus it was easy to change the meanings of the Pāli words. The Pāli word for middle is not “*majjima*” but “*madhayama*”. We will discuss that *sutta* in the future.

- “*Majji*” is getting intoxicated (with not only alcohol/drugs, but also with power, beauty, wealth, etc) and “*ma*” is to remove that tendency. Thus “*majjima patipada*” is to stay away from the extremes and to maintain a purified mind.

9. Regardless of the validity of my claims about the Buddha purposely synthesizing the *suttas* with “double meanings”, the following are the key points from the above discussion that I wish to emphasize:

- The *suttas* seem to be designed to convey “conventional” meanings while keeping the “deep meanings” embedded in them.
- It is those “deep meanings” that bring out the uniqueness of Buddha Dhamma.
- Word to word translations of the *suttas* (with incorrect interpretations of key Pāli words (like *anicca* and *majjima*) do not convey the message of the Buddha.
- The surviving three original commentaries in the *Tipitaka* can verify the deep meanings of the key words/phrases.

10. I will first discuss the foundation of the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta* in a “bottom-up” approach, starting with the goal of the *sutta* in mind and developing the related concepts. I have discussed many of the concepts in other posts, so it will be a matter of tying them up together.

- I thought that would be a refreshing approach than to start with the Pāli version of the *sutta* and try to discuss each line.
- But at the end I will show how the lines in the *sutta* tally with this description. As the Buddha emphasized, what matters is to get the IDEA across, and NOT to memorize the Pāli *suttas* (other than for transmission purposes).

11. There are some benefits in reciting *suttas*, and that effect is much more amplified if one recites them with understanding and also in an appropriate tune without too much “dragging” (there are some recordings in the [Sutta Chanting](#) section).

April 18, 2017:

A good resource for finding Pāli *sutta* is [WebLink: suttacentral.net](http://suttacentral.net).

- Once you open a *sutta*, click on the left-most drop down to choose on of several languages. This is good resource; consider making a donation if you find it useful. **Note: I am not associated with them in any way.**
- Of source, the translations are incorrect frequently for key Pāli words, as is the case at many sites. But at least one can see the correct Pāli version.

Next, “[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#)“,

16.2 Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?

March 4, 2017; Revised March 5, 2017; Revision March 7, 2017; May 17, 2018

I have received several emails pointing out that my interpretations of certain words are not compatible with those in Pāli dictionaries. I hope I can explain why one must be careful in using a Pāli dictionary, if one's goal is to grasp the true teachings of the Buddha. Of course, I learned this from my Noble teacher, late Waharaka *Thēro*.

1. In Pāli a given word can have very different meanings depending on exactly where it is used. Furthermore, sometimes grammar rules are bypassed.

- Many of the problems with incorrect interpretation of the *Tipitaka* arise mainly because of those two misconceptions.
- Pāli does not have its own alphabet. It was a spoken language, and the Pāli Canon (*Tipitaka*) was first written using Sinhala alphabet around 5 BCE (two thousand years ago); see, "[Historical Background](#)".

2. Even in English language, words can have different meanings depending on where it is used. Following are some examples for three words:

- right: You were right./Make a right turn at the light.
- rose: My favorite flower is a rose./He quickly rose from his seat.
- type: He can type over 100 words per minute. /That dress is really not her type.

3. Pāli is a phonetic language. The *Tipitaka* was transmitted for many hundreds of years faithfully, because the verses were formulated for easy memorization; grammar rules were bypassed in some cases. This can be clearly seen in the verses, "*Buddhan Saranan gachchami*", "*Dhamman Saranan gachchami*", etc.

- There is no subject in those sentences. The first of course means, "I take the refuge in the Buddha", but "I" is missing in "*Buddhan Saranan gachchami*". It is just understood.
- If you look at *suttas*, there is no clear grammatical structure. It is the sound that gives the meaning and most verses have "double meanings": There is an apparently simple meaning, but deeper meanings are hidden most times. I have discussed this to some extent in the post, "[Sutta – Introduction](#)".

4. Let us start with the word "*atta*" (pronounced "aththa" or "aththā" depending on where used). This word can have many meanings depending on the context.

- In the conventional sense, "*attā*" means "a person".
- The deeper meaning of "*atta*" is "in full control" or "the essence" or "the truth that is timeless". Just like the word "*anicca*", it is not possible to translate to English. One has to get the idea by learning how it is used in various situations. The opposite of "*atta*" is *anatta* ("helpless" in case of a living being or "useless" in case of an inert thing) as in the *Tilakkhana*.
- At least in this case, one could see the difference in meaning by the way they are pronounced: *attā* versus *atta*.
- Both these meanings appear in the Dhammapada verse (*gāthā*), "[Attā Hi Attano Nātho](#)" that I am posting concurrently.

5. We can take more examples to illustrate the application of "*atta*" with those two very different meanings.

- In "*atta kilamathanu yoga*" *atta* is used in the conventional sense, to describe "procedures that cause suffering in a person".
- The word *sutta* comes from "*su*" and "*atta*": a *sutta* can make someone moral and good. So, here also *atta* is used in the conventional sense.

- The phrase “*anattan asārakattēna*” means “(anything in this world) is *anatta* because it is devoid of any good or any usefulness”. Something can be called *atta* only if it is ultimate truth or has timeless value. Here, of course, the deeper meaning is used.

6. *Paramatta* comes from “*parama*” + “*atta*”, where “*parama*” means “at the highest level” and “*atta*” means “the truth that is timeless”, the deeper meaning.

- This word was translated to Sinhala as “*artha*” and now is used to also mean “meaning” in Sinhala. So, the Plai word *paramatta* is translated to Sinhala as “*paramārtha*” or “ultimate meaning”.
- Therefore, the four types of *ñāṇa* (pronounced “gnāna”) involved in the *Patisambhidā Ñāṇa* are listed as, “*atta* (*aththa*), *dhamma*, *nirukthi*, *patibhāna*”. These days, they are written in Sinhala as, “*artha*, *dharma*, *nirukthi*, *patibhāna*”. Obviously, the influence of Sanskrit is apparent here.
- I will write a separate post to discuss those four terms in the *Patisambhidā Ñāṇa*. A person qualified to explain Buddha Dhamma to others is supposed to have the *Patisambhidā Ñāṇa*. Otherwise, one could mislead others by providing incorrect explanations. Of course, no one but a Buddha can provide explanations that are completely error-free. Yet, it does not make much sense to learn Dhamma from someone who is at least not a *Sotāpanna* (i.e., an *Ariya*).

7. Of course the most problematic misuse of “*atta*” as “a person” or “a self” is in *Tilakkhana*, the Three Characteristics of Nature, where *anatta* is commonly translated as “no self”.

- We need to realize that “*atta*” is always “truth” and “*attā*” could be “person” in the conventional sense. So, the opposite of “*atta*” is ALWAYS “*anatta*” (pronounced “*anattththa*”), which is NEVER pronounced “*[anattā]*”, i.e., “*anaththaa*”.
- This — together with translating *anicca* as “impermanence” — had kept *Nibbāna* hidden for a thousand years: see, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)”.

8. This is why it is not possible for a dictionary to provide fixed meaning for the word “*atta*”, as well as for *anatta*, *nicca*, *anicca* and many other words.

- Since many words are supposed to have both conventional and deeper meanings, only someone who has the *patisambhidā ñāṇa* can correctly explain the meaning of a verse in the *Tipitaka* regardless of where the word appears.
- Therefore, in most current English literature on Buddha Dhamma, some explanations are correct but many are not. That is because people tend to use one fixed meaning for some key words over and over without paying attention to where they are used.

9. Another such key word is “*pati*”, which is pronounced also as “*pati*”, not as “*pathi*”. I have received emails saying that Pāli dictionaries say “*pati*” means “against”.

- *Pati* is also a Sinhala word that is being used to this day. It means “bonds” or “ties”, just as in Pāli.
- If “*pati*” means “against”, how would that be compatible with many other words with “*pati*”? For example, “*patisanvedī*” (“*pati*” + “*san*” + “*vedī*”) means *vedanā* due to bonds with “*san*” becoming apparent. *Patinissagga* means “getting rid of bonds”. *Patiniddesa* means “detailed instructions on sorting out knotty or difficult points”, etc. The latter is explained in detail in “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”.

10. One could get a better idea of a key word by looking at its application in various situations. The word *patisambhidā* in *patisambhidā ñāṇa* is a good example.

- *Patisambhidā* comes from *pati* + *san* + *bidhā*. “*San*” is of course a key word; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”, and *bidhā* means to separate out or to break apart; “*bindeema*” is the Sinhala word.
- So, *patisambhidā ñāṇa* is the knowledge to be able to sort out the meaning of a word by breaking it down to locate “*san*”, i.e., connection to defilements.

- And that interpretation must be consistent with “*atta (aththa), dhamma, nirukthi, patibhāna*” as will discuss in a future post. By the way, *patibhāna* means the ability to describe in detail with examples. *Nirukthi* means finding the origins of key words, i.e., how complex words are put together using key words like *pati* and *atta*.

11. Other examples come in the *gathā* to pay tribute to the *Sangha*: “*supatipannō bhagavatho savaka sangho, Ujupatipannō...*”.

- Here the “bonding” is to “good things”. *Supatipanno* means “bound to moral things”, *Ujupatipannō* means “bound to be straightforward”, *Nayapatipanno* means “bound with wisdom”, and *Samichipatipanno* means “good to associate with”.
- Another is “*patisandhi*”, which comes from “*pati*” + “*sandhi*”, where *sandhi* (which is also a Sinhala word) means “to join”. At the *cuti-patisandhi* moment, one’s mental body (*gandhabba*) dies (*cuti*, pronounced “chuthi”) and one grasps a new existence. So, this joining of two adjacent existences is called *patisandhi*.
- Of course, the most important is “*pati*” in *Paticca Samuppāda*; see, “[Paticca Samuppāda – “Pati+ichcha”+“Sama+uppāda”](#)”.

12. Here is a table showing conventional and deeper meanings of some key Pāli words. Some meanings given in dictionaries are wrong and they are marked in bold. Whether to use the correct conventional meaning or the deeper meaning depends on where the word is used; a good example is, “[Attā Hi Attano Nātho](#)”.

	Conventional	Deeper Meaning
Atta	Person, self	In control, has essence or ultimate truth
Anatta	no-self (incorrect)	helpless, no essence and devoid of value
Ānāpāna	in and out breathing	take in moral, discard immoral (in the mind)
Majjima	middle	majji + ma (avoid intoxication of mind)
Icca	like	like
Nicca	permanent (incorrect)	can be maintained to liking
Anicca	impermanent (incorrect)	cannot be maintained to liking
Pati	against (incorrect)	bind
Sammā	(i) good (ii) friend (incorrect)	san + ma; removal of "san"

13. Also see, “[Why is it Necessary to Learn Key Pāli Words?](#)”.

- Mostly the deeper meanings of Pāli words can be found at: “[Pāli Glossary – \(A-K\)](#)” and “[Pāli Glossary – \(L-Z\)](#)”.
- Again, one must pay attention to make sure that the meaning given is compatible with where it is used.

16.3 Nikaya in the Sutta Pitaka

January 7, 2016

1. The *Tipitaka* or the Pāli Canon of Buddha Dhamma (Buddhsim) has three major sections or “baskets” called “*pitaka*” (*Tipitaka* is three *pitaka*): *Sutta pitaka*, *Vinaya pitaka*, and the *Abhidhamma pitaka*.

- The *Sutta pitaka* is then subdivided into five sections called “*nikāya*”. The Wikipedia is wrong to say that *nikāya* means “volume” in Pāli (and also what is meant by the five types of *nikāya*); see, [WebLink: Wiki: Nikāya](#)
- *Nikāya* comes from “*ni*” + “*kāya*” where *kāya* means our **volitions and actions** initiated via the six sense inputs, like in “*kāyaṇupassana*” where one is being mindful of how to respond to those sense inputs. Here, “*ni*” means to cease (*nikmeema* in Sinhala means to be freed) and thus *nikāya* means “path to *Nibbana*”. At *Nibbāna*, one has stopped all *kāya*.

2. The *suttas* are categorized in those **five *nikāyas* (*Diga, Kuddhaka, Majjima, Samyutta, and Anguttara*)**, based on the five types of people. All humans can be divided into five general types based on their *sansaric* habits and capabilities, which are also called “*indriya* types”: *saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi*, *paññā*. (Note that “*indriya*” here is different from the sense types such as *cakkhu indriya*, etc., as discussed in #6 and #7 below).

- ***Diga Nikāya*** is mainly for those with predominant *saddhā indriya* who need detailed explanations. These are long (*diga*, pronounced “*dheega*”, which means long in Pāli and Sinhala). For example, the *Mahā Staippatana Sutta* in the *Diga Nikāya* provides detailed instructions on how to be mindful and practice *ānāpāna*.
- *Suttas* in the ***Kuddhaka Nikāya*** (“*ku*” + “*uddaka*” where “*ku*” is *keles* or defilements and “*udda*” means to remove) are short and concise. They provide condensed instructions for those with high wisdom (*paññā indriya*).
- ***Majjima Nikāya*** has “middle length” *suttas* that provide instructions at a level in between those in the *Diga Nikāya* and the *Kuddhaka Nikāya*. It is more suitable for those with dominant *virīya indriya*. Note here that *Majjima* means “middle”, but *Majjimā* — as in *Majjimā patipadā* — has a deeper meaning of “abstaining from getting intoxicated”; see, “[Majjima Patipada – Way to Relinquish Attachments to this World](#)”.

3. The *suttas* in the ***Samyutta Nikāya*** are focused on explaining “*san*”, which is is key word in the foundation of Buddha Dhamma; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”.

- Here *Samyutta* comes from “*san*” + “*yutta*” where *yutta* (pronounced “*yuththa*”) means “consists of”. *Samyutta* is pronounced that way by many, but in Sinhala especially, it is pronounced “*sanyuththa*”. Either way is fine, as long as one knows that it is about “*san*”.
- *Suttas* in the *Samyutta Nikāya* are said to be more suitable for those with dominant *sati indriya*.

4. *Suttas* in the ***Anguttara Nikāya*** are said to be more suitable for those with dominant *samādhi indriya*.

- *Anguttara* comes “*anga*” + “*uttara*” where “*anga*” means parts or components and “*uttara*” means “predominant or principle”. Therefore, the *suttas* in the *Anguttara Nikāya* are focused on key principles and are also relatively short. These *suttas* are more suitable for people who can easily get to *samādhi*.
- These categories help explain why *diga* and *majjima nikaya suttas* are the ones that are more in use today, because most people today fall into the categories of those with the *saddhā* and *virīya indriya* dominant.

5. It is also important to point out a different usage of the term “*nikāya*”: Among the *Theravāda* nations of Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka, *nikāya* is also used as the term for a monastic division, which of course started after the *Theravāda-Mahayana* split.

- For example, in Sri Lanka different temples belong to three types of *nikayas*: *Siam*, *Ramanya*, and *Amarapura*.
- They are all *Thervada* and there is no real difference among them as far as the doctrine is concerned. When one visits a temple, it is not possible to say to which *nikaya* it belongs.

6. To clarify the two contexts in which the word *indriya* is used: “*Indriya*” means “dominant”. In the case of sense inputs to the human body, there are six types dominant *indriya*: *cakkhu*, *sota*, *jivha*, *ghana*, *kaya*, and *mano*.

- The five physical senses of eyes, ears, tongue, nose, and body are the only sense inputs that the modern science deals with.
- Scientists believe our thoughts are randomly generated in the brain. That is not correct, and will be proven to be incorrect in the future.
- *Mana indriya* — located in the brain — is the sixth and most important one according to Buddha Dhamma. That is where sense inputs from the “*mano loka*” are received; see, “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)” and “[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)”.
- *Rūpa* are 11 types, but can be split into two main types (*olarika* or dense and *sukuma* or fine): those above (material world or “*bhauthika loka*”) and below (mental world or “*nama loka*”) the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] level. Those *rūpa* that are condensed above the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] level are detected with the five physical senses and those below the *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhaṭṭhaka*] level are detected with the *mana indriya*; see, “[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#)”.

7. The other use of *indriya* is with categorizing people by their dominant characteristics and capabilities (*gathi*). For some people, it is easy to grasp Dhamma concepts because they have cultivated the Path in their previous lives, and have higher wisdom (*paññā*).

- Some others have also cultivated the Path mainly via just following precepts, but have high confidence in Buddha Dhamma. They are said to have their *saddhā indriya* dominant.
- There are those who have the *sati indriya* dominant; they are able to focus on a given concept than others.
- We all are familiar with some people who have the *viriya indriya* dominant; they are the “never give up” type, who seem to have inexhaustible energy levels.
- Some others have meditated and possibly got into *jhānas* in previous lives and have the *samādhi indriya* dominant.

8. Finally, there is an excellent website that has the full and complete *Sutta Pitaka* with all Pāli *suttas*: [WebLink: Sutta Central](#)

- That site also has the complete *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma Pitaka* as well (in Pāli).
- It also has Sanskrit *sutras*, which are of course *Mahayana*.
- The Chinese *Agama suttas* are also at this site (in Chinese). As I understand, they are very close to *Theravāda suttas*. They had been translated to Chinese from *Theravāda* before the *Mahayana sutras* were written. I would appreciate feedback from persons who are proficient in both Chinese and English, as to whether my understanding is correct.

Next, “[Sutta Learning Sequence for the Present Day](#)”,...

16.4 Sutta Learning Sequence for the Present Day

November 30, 2016

1. In this important post, I point out that it is better to study *suttas* in the order that is the reverse of the time sequence of *sutta* delivery by the Buddha.

- As I discussed in the post, “[Animisa Locana Bodhi Poojawa – A Prelude to Acts of Gratitude](#)“, the Buddha spent the first few years of his ministry “paying back” those those who had helped him attain the *Buddhahood* through numerous previous lives.
- Those — ranging from the five ascetics to whom the Buddha delivered the first *desanā* to King Suddhodana (his father) in the fifth year after attaining the Buddhahood, and others — had fulfilled most of the requirements to attain the *Arahanthood* in previous lives: They were “ready” to attain the *Arahantship* and were able to comprehend the *Tilakkhana* (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*) fairly quickly.

2. Grasping the *Tilakkhana* is not easy for a normal human being. It is completed in many, many lives. In a given *Buddha Sāsana* (ministry), those who have fulfilled most of the requirements in previous lives attain *Arahanthood* first, without much effort. For example, the two chief disciples, Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana, attained the *Sotāpanna* stage just by listening to a single verse, and then attained the *Arahanthood* within two weeks.

- **Therefore, those *desanas* that were delivered in the first several years were “deep” *desanā* that could only be comprehended by those who had the background to do so.**
- The first *desanā*, *Dhammacappavattana Sutta*, was a summary of the “Buddhist doctrine” to put in terms of modern terminology. The second *desanā* was on the *anatta* nature of the world, *Anatta Lakkhana Sutta*. The “fire sermon” (*Adittapariyaya Sutta*) was on the “burning nature” of this world of 31 realms, where “burning” refers to “*thāpa*” or “heat in the mind”. This “*thāpa*” was actually discussed later in the *Mahā Sataipattana Sutta*; see, “[Satipatthāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)“.
- Even during the time of the Buddha, even though a large number of people (who were ready) attained *magga phala* within the first few years, in the latter years it took longer and longer for people to attain *magga phala*. In the latter years, the Buddha delivered more and more discourses that were “less deep” and easier to grasp for those who were “less prepared”.
- For example, [Mahā Cattarisika Sutta](#) and [Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta](#) (which were delivered later) provide detailed accounts of the process, starting with basic concepts. However, those basic concepts are not discussed adequately or have been simply mistranslated.
- There are many *suttas* that clarify even more fundamental aspects.

3. All those “deep *desanas*” that were first delivered by the Buddha, are described in mundane and conventional terms in many modern translations, where the meanings of the *Tilakkhana* have been badly distorted.

- **Furthermore, understanding *Tilakkhana* requires some fundamental — and essential — material that was covered in later *suttas* by the Buddha.**
- I plan to discuss more of the “less deep” *suttas* in this section in the future. I realized this point only recently, while writing posts in the new “[Living Dhamma](#)” section.

4. As pointed out by Buddha, There are three types of people who are able to comprehend *Tilakkhana*, categorized according to their “inherent capabilities”. This has nothing to do with “book knowledge”, but has everything to do with one’s ingrained capabilities accumulated over many, many lives.

- The first category is *uggatitanna* or “persons with high wisdom”; they could grasp concepts very easily. Then there are those that belong to the *vipatitanna* category, and they needed a bit more explanation to grasp the concepts. The third category is *neyya*; they need detailed explanations (i.e., *patiniddesa*) to grasp a concept.

- These categories are discussed in, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”.
- These days — 2600 years into the *Buddha Sāsana* of the Gotama Buddha — most people are in the third category of *neyya*. Therefore, it makes more sense for most people today to start at a more fundamental level and proceed to higher levels.
- Trying to comprehend those “deep” *suttas* — without first grasping the material in the *suttas* that were delivered later in his life by the Buddha — is like trying to pass university entrance examination without having a good primary and high school education.

5. The “[Living Dhamma](#)” section was started to provide a systematic way to proceed to higher levels starting at a fundamental level. I highly recommend to everyone to start there.

- If one is confident of the material in early posts in that section, they can proceed quickly to higher levels (later posts). Furthermore, if someone runs into difficulty at a later post, he/she can go backwards to earlier posts and clarify those points.
- **My goal is make the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section the centerpiece of this website. All other sections at the site will be referred to from that section as needed, and I will add posts to the other sections as the need arises.**
- During the time of the Buddha, he was able to see the capability of each person, and to deliver a *desanā* of “right depth” to those who individually visited him. **No one today has that capability, despite false claims by some.** Therefore, each person needs to realize one’s own capabilities and deficiencies and strive accordingly.

6. There are hundreds of *suttas* in the *Tipitaka* that discuss key concepts at a basic level. It is quite unfortunate that even the *Theravadins* have set aside the *Tipitaka* and are using the *Visuddhimagga* of the Buddhaghosa as the “base”.

- With the current revival of pure Dhamma in Sri Lanka — initiated by Ven. Waharaka Abhayaratanalankara Thero — the value of the *Tipitaka* is becoming clear.

7. In the “[Sutta Interpretations](#)” section, I plan to discuss some of those long-forgotten *suttas* that discuss key Pāli terms that have been mistranslated and have been used blindly (and sparingly) for over thousand years. I will briefly mention some of those *suttas* below.

- The *Nibbāna Sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya* clearly describes *Nibbāna* as, “..ragakkhayo, dosakkhayo, mohakkhayo, idan vuccathi Nibbananthi”.
- One does not need to examine deep concepts like *sunyata*: [What is Sunyata or Sunnata \(Emptiness\)?](#), even though those deeper meanings can be understood once the basic idea is understood.
- That is why I emphasized this at the beginning of the Meditation section: [1. Introduction to Buddhist Meditation](#). One can actually experience the “cooling down” as one gets rid of greed, hate, and ignorance (of the true nature of the world) from one’s mind.

8. Another key word is *anicca*, which has been incorrectly translated as “impermanence”. It is very easy to from the *Icca Sutta* (in the *Samyutta Nikāya*), that *icca* or the opposite of *anicca* has nothing do with “permanence”.

- In the *Sutta* it is stated,

“..iccaya bandathi loko, icca vinayaya muccathi

iccaya vippahanena, sabban jindathi bandananthi”.

- Which means, “the world is bound by *icca* (the perception that one can maintain what one desires to one’s liking), one needs to get rid of *icca* to become disentangled; by realizing *anicca* nature, one becomes free of all entanglements”.
- *Icca* (pronounced ichchā) is a perception in one’s mind.

9. In the *Dasakammapatha Sutta*, it is clearly stated how people with similar *gathi* tend to associate with each other and thus make those *gathi* stronger.

- This is why one needs to dissociate from those who have bad *gathi* and try to make associations with people with “good *gathi*”; see, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)” and, at a deeper level in “[9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#)”.

10. In the *Ginjakavasatha sutta* (in the *Samyutta Nikāya*), Buddha tells Ven. Ananda that one can realize for oneself when one has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage (i.e., that one is now free of the *niraya* (hell), free of the animal realm, free of the *pretha* realm, and free of the *asura* realm), and one can state that (even to others if that is beneficial to others) with confidence.

- The deeper meaning of the five precepts are discussed in the *Sikkapada vibhanaga* in the *Vibhangapakaranaya-2*. This deeper meaning of the fifth precept, “*surameraya majjapama dattana veramani...*” is described as discussed in the post, “[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#)”.

11. Many words associated with “*san*” are discussed in the *Chulla Hasthi Padopama Sutta* (in the *Majjima Nikāya*). Some of these words are discussed in the section on “[san](#)”, and in particular in the post, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”.

- This is the first *sutta* that was delivered to King Denampiyathissa by Ven. Mahinda Thero.
- *Chulla* (sometimes written as *Cula*) is for “small”. *Hasthi* is elephant. *Padöpama* comes from “*pada*” + “*upamā*”, or “from an example or simile”. The simile is about a person who came to the wrong conclusion about the size of an elephant by just focusing on the size of the footprint on the ground left by that elephant.
- This *sutta* explains how people come to wrong conclusions about a given key word by just taking in the “conventional” interpretation (for example, taking *anicca* to mean “impermanence” whereas the actual meaning of *anicca* much deeper).
- I hope to discuss those and other “long forgotten” and/or misinterpreted *suttas* that help us understand basic concepts, before confidently tackling those deeper *suttas* that were delivered very early (right after attaining the Buddhahood) by the Buddha due to reasons discussed above.

16.5 Maha Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

[“Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Structure”](#)

[“Satipaṭṭhāna – Introduction”](#)

[“Kayānupassana – Section on Postures \(Iriyapathapabba\)”](#)

[“Kayānupassana – The Section on Habits \(Sampajanapabba\)”](#)

[“Prerequisites for the Satipaṭṭhāna Bhāvanā”](#)

[“What is “Kaya” in Kayānupassana?”](#)

16.5.1 Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Structure

Revised September 1, 2016; October 29, 2017

This is the most important post on the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. It sets the foundation. This is where 99% of the people should really get started. Please read this and then follow the posts in the [“Living Dhamma”](#) section, before trying to follow the rest of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

1. There are several web pages that provide Pāli version of the *sutta* and/or its English translation. I believe that they all are incorrect translations, and as I proceed I will explain why.

- Here is a website that provides Pāli and English translations of the *sutta* side-by-side: [WebLink: TIPITAKA: Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta \(Pāli-English\)](#)
- It is not the fault of those who took their time with good intentions to write those posts; that is how this *sutta* and others have been interpreted for more than thousand years.
- I will not follow the *sutta* sequentially, but you will be able to follow the relevant sections. Eventually, I hope to cover most of the *sutta*.

2. As I explained in [“Sutta – Introduction”](#), there are three ways of presenting Dhamma: *uddesa*, *niddesa*, *patiniddesa*.

- Most *suttas* don't have the very brief summary, or *uddesa*, but the *Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna sutta* has it in the very beginning; see the above link in #1 which provides the complete *sutta* in Pāli and English.
- Then in the main body of the *sutta*, the concepts are **outlined**. In a verbal discourse (called a *desanā*), the concepts are described in detail and with examples. This is what I will be doing in these series of posts, i.e., to describe the concepts in detail.

3. The *uddesa* (or *uddeso*) starts with, “*Ekāyano ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggō sattānaṃ visuddhiyā, sokaparidevanāṃ samatikkamāya, dukkhadomanassanaṃ atthagamāya, nāyassa adhigamāya, nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya, yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*”

- The translation of that is, “This is **one guaranteed way**, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the extinguishing of suffering and grief, the noble way for gaining wisdom, for the realization of *nibbāna*: that is to say, the fourfold establishing of **moral mindset**”.

The main difference from the translation (conventional interpretation) given in the link in #1 above are the two phrases as highlighted above:

- It is not the only way to *Nibbāna*; people had attained *Nibbāna* before the Buddha delivered this discourse. But it is a systematic, **guaranteed way**, of attaining *Nibbāna* at any level from “just cooling down” to the *Arahant* stage.
- The translation of “*nāyassa adhigamāya*” and “*satipaṭṭhāna*”: “*Nāya*” comes from “*nāna*” or wisdom, and “*adhigama*” is “*adhi*”+“*gama*” or “higher way”. **Translating *satipaṭṭhāna* as “moral mindset”** is not too bad, but I will discuss “*satipaṭṭhāna*” in the next post.
- So, the essence of that verse is that the method described in the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta* provides a guaranteed way to attain *Nibbāna*, **via purification of the being, i.e., via cleansing one's mind**.

4. The next phrase is, “*Katame cattāro? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno, satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassaṃ. Vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno, satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassaṃ. Citte cittānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno, satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassaṃ. Dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno, satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassaṃ*”

- Of course, “*Katame cattāro?*” is, “Which four? (*cattaro* pronounced, “chattharō”).
- And then it lists the four: *kayanupassana*, *vedananupassana*, *cittanupassana*, and *dhammanupassana*. Notice that the phrase, “*ātāpī sampajāno, satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassaṃ*” appears after each of the four.
- This indicates the critical importance of this phrase. This is the beginning of the purification process, by laying out the foundation. The section, “[Satipatthāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)”. **One HAS TO go through this process to reach the *Sotāpanna* stage.**

5. We will discuss “*kāye kāyānupassī viharati*” etc in subsequent posts, but let us look at that all important common phrase, “*ātāpī sampajāno, satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassaṃ*”. This needs to be evaluated in two parts: “*ātāpī sampajāno*” AND “*satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassaṃ*”.

- “*Tāpa*” (pronounced “thāpa”) means heat; when we get really stressful we feel a “fire” in the heart. When it gets really bad, people say, “I could feel my heart burn” when an especially poignant news comes through.
- And “*ātāpī*” is to remove that “fire” from the heart and the stress from the mind, and calm the mind. This is the “cooling down”, “*niveema*”, “*nivana*” or early stages of *Nibbāna*.
- When one cultivates *satipatthāna*, one would not feel that “burning up” even upon hearing tragic news. One will be able to “handle things” appropriately without taking drastic actions on the “spur-of-the-moment”.
- *Sampajana* comes from “*san*” + “*pajana*” or sorting out “*san*” the things that makes a mind stressful; see, “[What is “San”?](#)”. The worst forms of “*san*” are the one’s that we instinctively know to be immoral: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and getting intoxicated.
- *Sampajana* is closely related to “*sampādetā*” as in the Buddha’s last words: “*..appamadena sampadeta*” or “*..make haste and sort out san*”. Here *sampadeta* is “*san*”+“*padeta*” or again sort out “*san*”.
- When one has done “*sampādetā*” one becomes “*sampajanno*”: One knows what is right and what is wrong automatically; it has become a habit.
- This critical verse is discussed in the following *desanā* from the post, “[WebLink: Audio Desana: Episode 3 - Satipatthāna Sutta - Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#)” section (you may need to control the volume at your computer):

6. Therefore, “*ātāpī sampajāno*” means “remove the fire or heat from one’s mind by being aware of the ‘*san*’ or immoral tendencies”. They also go by the names “*kilesa*” and “*asobhana cetasika*”; see, “[What Are Kilesa \(Mental Impurities\)? – Connection to Cetasika](#)”.

- When one starts making progress, one could start to avoid tendencies for extreme sense pleasures as well.

7. Then we have, “*satima vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassaṃ*”. This is a highly condensed statement about the nature of this world. It needs to be analyzed as “*sati ma vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassaṃ*”, i.e., *satima* is really two words: *sati* and *ma*.

- The root cause of all suffering is extreme greed or “*abhijjā* [*abhijjhā*]” (which comes from “*abhi*” + “*iccha*” or strong craving or attachment). When that is not attained (which happens sooner or later), one gets depressed, this is *domanassa*. It is important to remember that one does acts of hate with a *domanassa* mindset, because one is upset and deflated and angry.
- “*Vineyya loke*” refers to this world where we are “bound to each other” via debt to each other; see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”.

- And “*satima*” comes from “*sati*” + “*ma*” where “*ma*” means removal, but not the removal of *sati*. It combines “*sati*” with the rest of the phrase, “*vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassam*”.
- Thus “*sati ma vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassam*” means establishing moral mindset and moral conduct in order to be free from the debt-ridden world and to be relieved from *abhijjhā* [*abhijjhā*] and *domanassa*. This is the key to “cooling down”; see, “[Living Dhamma](#)” for details.

8. Thus the verse, “*ātāpi sampajāno, satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassam*”, mean “get rid of the fire or heat in the mind by being aware of *kilesa* or defilements and by removing extreme greed (*abhijjhā* [*abhijjhā*]) that leads to a depressed mind (*domanassa*)”.

- In the first stage, one needs to focus on abstaining from immoral activities or *dasa akusala*.
- As one makes progress, one can start also on abstaining from extreme sense pleasures that may not hurt others. By that time, it will start becoming clear HOW and WHY extreme sense pleasures also lead to “fire or heat in the mind”.
- Therefore, the phrase, “*ātāpi sampajāno, satimā vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassam*” is the key to both *satipattāna* and *ānāpāna bhāvanā*.
- The rest of the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta* is on the details on how to go about achieving these goals.

9. This “cooling down” is done in four ways: *kayanupassana*, *vedananupassana*, *cittanupassana*, and *dhammanupassana*.

- These are somewhat sequential, in the sense that one needs to start with taking care of major sources of *abhijjhā* [*abhijjhā*] and *domanassa* with *kayanupassana*. This is basically the same as *sila* or moral conduct. One needs to be aware that one’s actions and speech need to be moral, i.e., to abstain from *dasa akusala* as much as possible.
- Once that has been accomplished to a certain extent, moral conduct will be increasingly automatic; one will “feel” when one is about to do something wrong; one will become “sensitized”. But initially, it takes an effort to pause and think of the consequences.
- With the mind clear of the worst hindrances, then it will be easier to learn Dhamma with *dhammanupassana*, be easier not to REACT to feelings (*vedananupassana*) but to take time and evaluate consequences, and to automatically be aware of immoral thoughts that come to the mind (*cittanupassana*).
- Thus it is gradual process. Each advance helps with gaining confidence in one’s actions, helps not to just react to feelings, helps to think with a clear head, which in turn helps with the understanding process.

10. The process of comprehension of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* starts with *kayanupassana* but all four can be cultivated simultaneously. It is said that if one totally focuses, *Arahanthood* can be attained in seven days. If one makes a less commitment, either *Arahant* or at least the *Anāgāmī* stage can be attained within seven years according to the Buddha.

- Getting started on this process is described in detail in the section, “[Living Dhamma](#)”.

11. The phrase “*ātāpi sampajāno, satimā vineyya lōke abhijjhā dōmanassam*” has been analyzed by dividing into four components connected to *virīya indriya*, *paññā indriya*, *sati indriya*, and *samādhi indriya* in the [WebLink: suttacentral: Lakkhanahārāvibhaṅga](#) of the *Nettiprakarana* (or p. 50 of the *Nettiprakana* (Sri Lanka Buddha Jayanthi edition):

“..*Tasmātiha tvaṃ bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharāhi ātāpi sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassam*”. “*Ātāpi*”*ti viriyindriyaṃ*, “*sampajāno*”*ti paññindriyaṃ*, “*satimā*”*ti satindriyaṃ*, “*vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassam*”*ti samādhindriyaṃ*, *evaṃ kāye kāyānupassino viharato cattāro satipaṭṭhānā bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchanti*.”.

- Here “*ātāpi*” is *virīya indriya*, *sampajāno* is *paññā indriya*, *satimā* is *sati indriya*, and “*vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassam*” is *samādhi indriya*.

- One sorts out “*san*” with *paññā*, keep mindfulness with *sati*, and make an effort (*virīya*) to stay away from “bad *san*” or *dasa akusala*, thus getting the mind to be free of *abhijjā* and *dōmanassa* and thus get to *samādhi*. And that should be done whenever possible, not only in formal meditation. The one will be in *samādhi* all the time.

12. Finally, *kāyānupassanā* basically tackles *dasa akusala* done with actions and speech (moving body parts), as we will see in the next section. The harder part comes with those done directly by the mind, especially *micca diṭṭhi*.

- There are two levels of *micca diṭṭhi*: One is the 10 types of *micca diṭṭhi* removed via the mundane Path. Deeper removal comes with the grasping of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- Thus we can see the critical role of the *paññā indriya* (wisdom). One can start on all four types of *anupassanā*, but especially *cittānupassanā* and *dhammānupassanā* begin to be cultivated when one becomes good in *kāyānupassanā*.
- **The key is to get started with *kāyānupassanā*** and make the effort (*virīya*). Then wisdom (*paññā*) will grow together with mindfulness (*sati*), and one will automatically get into other three *anupassanā* with increasing levels of *samādhi*.

Next, “[Satipatṭhāna – Introduction](#)“,

16.5.2 Satipatṭhāna – Introduction

1. First we need to figure out what “*sati*” means. Bear with me as I use some key Pāli words, because it is important to understand them correctly. Things will become clear as we proceed below. Again, first try to read the post through without clicking on links, and then come back and read any relevant other posts as needed.

- *Sati* is a “good” mental factor (*sobhana cetasika*). Therefore, “*sati*” arises only in moral thoughts (*kusala citta*), and DOES NOT arise in *akusala citta*. As discussed in “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)”, “good *cetasika*” do not arise in *akusala citta* (similarly, “bad *cetasika*” do not arise in *kusala citta*).
- This is important to realize at the outset. Many people think “*sati*” is “attention” or “mindfulness”. But a suicide bomber has to be mindful in wiring up the bomb, or a professional thief making plans for a grand robbery in minute detail needs to pay total attention to it; “*sati*” is NOT involved in either case. The *cetasika* involved there, are the two “neutral” *cetasika* (which can appear in both *kusala* and *akusala citta*) of *vitakka* (focused application) and *vicāra* (sustained application); see, “[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#)”.
- There are others who believe “*sati*” is the ability to remember or recall past events, but it is the “*manasikara*” *cetasika* that does that.

When a person stops and contemplates whether an action one is about to take has moral or immoral consequences, and carries out only those actions that have moral consequences, then that person is acting with “*sati*”.

2. *Patthana* can mean establishment, prepare, or “to mold”. Therefore, “*satipatṭhāna*” means establishment of “*sati*”, or train the mind to act with “*sati*” as described in the previous paragraph.

- This training process comes in four steps, and that is why it is also called “*satara satipatṭhāna*” where “*satara*” means four. Even though the four steps are interrelated, there is a sequence. The four steps are *kāyānupassana*, *vedānānupassana*, *cittānupassana*, and *dhammānupassana*.
- The meaning of “*anupassana*” is described in point #4 of “[4. What do all these Different Meditation Techniques Mean?](#)” in the Meditation section.

3. Buddha Dhamma is all about cleansing the mind; that is the key to real and lasting tranquility of the mind. A defiled mind generates defiled thoughts (*citta*). Defiled thoughts lead to defiled speech (with a time lag) and defiled actions (with even longer time lag).

- **The sequence of cleansing the mind is backwards:** First control bodily actions, then (or simultaneously) to control speech, and controlling thoughts (as they arise) is harder. This is important to understand, so let us look into the reasons.

4. As discussed in the *Abhidhamma* section, thoughts (*citta*) arise very fast; there are well over billions of *cittas* per second; but of course we “experience” only “bundles of *citta*” accumulating for at least about 0.05 seconds. **Even then it is not possible to control thoughts by sheer will power.**

- But our thoughts are dictated by our character and habits (“*gathi*”). And, these character qualities (*gathi*) can be changed with concerted effort by controlling one’s speech and actions. We have discussed “*gathi*” in many posts spread over different sections.

5. This is why *kayanupassana* comes first in *Satipaṭṭhāna*. We first discipline ourselves by making sure we speak only moral words, and do only moral actions. Both speech and actions arise from thoughts, but they come with a “time lag”. We first think that “this person has done something bad to me”, and then we start saying something bad to the person. But there is enough of a ‘time lag’ to stop saying it.

- We tend to take “bodily actions” with even longer delay than for speech. So, unless one is in a rage, there is enough time to catch oneself and stop any bad actions. Actually, when we get good at it, and control both speech and actions, such instances of acting with rage will diminish with time, and will go away. This is because the more we act with “*sati*”, the more that we give up bad “*gathi*” and cultivate good “*gathi*”.

6. Thus *Kayanupassana* basically means “catching ourselves before we say or do something wrong”.

- To put it in another way, what we need to accomplish with *kayanupassana* is to be aware of our speech and actions AT ALL TIMES. By now it must be clear why *satipaṭṭhāna* cannot be restricted to a “formal sitting down meditation session”.
- We say or do things in response to what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or think. The speech or actions have time delays from the time we get the “input” from outside or even if generated by the mind itself. Even if we start saying something bad, we can catch ourselves and stop (and apologize if we hurt someone’s feelings). Even if get up to hit someone, we can realize the bad consequences of such an action and immediately stop. That is how one starts.

7. With practice, one’s *gathi* will change, and such awkward instances will occur less and less. There are many posts on “*gathi*” at the site, and there are some in the meditation section under, “[9. Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#)”. *Satipaṭṭhāna* is basically a methodical way of doing *Ānāpānasati*. A scientific view is discussed in, “[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#)”.

8. Therefore, it is easy to see that *kayanupassana* is the first and most important part of the *sāra satipaṭṭhāna*.

- When *kayanupassana* is practised, one’s “*gathi*” will gradually change and one will start to calm down. And one will not REACT to feelings on an impulsive basis, and thus it will be easier to practice the next stage of “*vedanānupassana*”, i.e., “think about how to respond when certain feelings arise”.
- When both those are practised, “*gathi*” will change to an extent that even initial thoughts will have “less venom”, and thus it will be easier to practice “*cittānupassana*” or “think morally” automatically.
- Finally, it will be easier to get into *samādhi* and to contemplate *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* (or any other *Dhamma* concept), which is “*dhammanupassana*”.

9. Thus one starts with *kayanupassana* first and then move on to other three “*anupassana*”. When one completes all four one completes the process and will have “*sammā sati*” in full, which leads to “*sammā samādhi*” in full, i.e., *Arahanthood*.

- Of course, that is normally accomplished in four stages, the first of which is the *Sotāpanna* stage.

- Just like it is not possible to attend middle school without attending the primary school, or to take college courses without passing high school, one needs to go through the four steps methodically. One needs to control one's actions and speech first. That is what "*kayanupassana*" is about. We will discuss that in detail in the next post.
- This does not mean that one should not do the other three while doing *kayanupassana*; it just means there is "not much benefit" in doing the other three unless one is actively engaged in stopping the "BIG EIGHT" done with speech and body; see, "[2. The Basics in Meditation](#)".
- And one does not stop doing *kayanupassana*, ever. It is not something to be done forcefully, it will become a habit. When one sees the benefits, one would want to advance. One just keeps incorporating other three gradually and soon enough will be doing all four. But *kayanupassana* is the FOUNDATION.

Next, "[Kayanupassana – The Section on Postures \(Iriyapathapabba\)](#)",

16.5.3 **Kayanupassana – Section on Postures (Iriyapathapabba)**

1. Let us first clarify what *kayanupassana* means. There are two interchangeably used meanings for "*kaya*": one is the body, the other is whatever is involved in "*kriya*" or "actions". In *kayanupassana* the latter is more general. This section on postures is based on body postures, but is still concerned with all "actions" done via all six senses. This will become clear as we proceed below.

- It is normally written as "*kayanupassana*", but is ALWAYS pronounced as "*kāyanupassana*".
- In interacting with the world, we see visuals (*rūpa*) with eyes, hear sounds with ears, smell odors with nose, taste with the tongue, touch (*pottabba*) with body, and think about concepts (*dhamma*) with the mind.
- Thus there are six internal "*kaya*", and six external "*kaya*" involved in experiencing the world. Thus we are concerned with both the internal sense faculties (*ajjhata*, pronounced "*ajjhaththa*") and the six external entities (*bahiddha*), while we are in any of the four main postures of sitting, standing, walking, or lying down.

2. When one starts on the Path, one does not need to believe in anything that the Buddha (or anybody else) said about the true nature of the world. One can start with a simple goal of "getting some peace of mind" or "get some relief from the day-to-day stresses of this world", i.e., get to the "*atāpi*" stage.

- One can keep an open mind on whether there is rebirth or not, whether the concept of *kamma* is correct or not (of course one should not rule out those either; that would be "*niyata micca ditthi*" and one WILL NOT be able to make any progress); see, "[How do we Decide which View is Wrong View \(Ditthi\)?](#)".

3. The Buddha said that the mind is burdened by greed, hate, and ignorance. It is not easy to see "the truth" (i.e., to remove ignorance) because the mind is normally "covered" by strong versions of greed and hate called "*kamachanda*" (one becomes blind by greed) and "*vyāpāda*" (one keeps going downward with intense hate); **you can do keyword searches to find related posts.**

- And these two, *kamachanda* and *vyāpāda* are the main culprits for making a mind stressful, and for causing "inside fires". Thus by forcibly removing any thoughts of extreme greed and hate as they come to the mind, one can get relief in real time. One does not have to wait for "effects of *kamma* to materialize". Such benefits will be there too, but one WILL be able to experience more immediate benefits.
- This is the beginning of "cooling down" or experiencing *niramisa sukha*, as explained in the post, "[Three Kinds of Happiness](#)".

4. As explained in the previous post, "[Satipatthāna – Introduction](#)", we start by disciplining our actions through speech and bodily actions, because they have a "time lag" and there is enough time to stop them willfully.

- We can start with the conventional five precepts. Without that basic discipline, one CANNOT get any kind of long-lasting peace of mind, no matter how much time one spends in meditation.

- If one is engaged in any of these five (intentional killing of living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and using alcohol excessively or using drugs), and can abstain from them one should be able to experience the benefits of that in the near term.

5. After that one can tackle the BIG EIGHT (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, gossiping, slandering, harsh speech, and getting “drunk” with not only drugs or alcohol, but also with wealth, fame, power, etc); see, “[2. The Basics in Meditation](#)”.

6. The *kayanupassana* of the satipatthāna consists of six sections or “*pabba*”: *Anapanapabba* (section on “*ānāpāna*”), *Iriyapathapabba* (section on postures), *Sampajanapabba* (section on habits), *Patikulamanasikarapabba* (section on contemplation of body parts), *Dhatumanasikara* (section on contemplation of elements), and *Navasivathikapabba* (section on contemplation of the decay of a body). We have already discussed *ānāpāna* in several posts, starting with “[7. What is Ānāpāna?](#)”.

The “*Iriyapathapabba*” section of the *Kayanupassana* in the *Satipatthāna sutta* is all about how to abstain from committing an immoral act AT ANY TIME.

- We have four postures or “*iriya*”: sitting, standing, walking, and sleeping (laying flat).
- In any posture, we need to be vigilant on what we are about to do or speak. This is the beginning of “*satipatthāna*”, being “morally mindful” at all times.
- When a thought comes to mind to say something or to do something (whether sitting, standing, walking, or lying down), we need to get into the habit of contemplating their consequences.

7. For example, we may be walking on the street and see someone, whom we do not like, coming our way. If we get the tendency to say something bad, we have enough time to contemplate the bad consequences and stop saying those words.

- We may be lying in bed and getting bored, and may decide to go and see a friend to do some “gossiping” for fun. We have time to think about it and see whether we can use that time more productively.
- Sometimes we get “nasty e-mails”; someone pointing out an allegedly bad deed that we have done. We get that immediate “*tāpa*” or “heating up” in our heart because we get so perturbed by that false accusation. We tend to fire up an equally nasty e-mail back to that person. But we need to take time and contemplate a better action. Give that person the benefit of the doubt; may be he/she did not do it to aggravate us, or truly was misled. Of course, there are people who do such things purposely to aggravate, but even then it is better to ignore it, rather than letting it develop into a worse situation. Learning to keep away from such troublemakers is a habit that we learn to develop. By responding in kind, it will not help quenching the “fires”.

8. We need to constantly ask ourselves “why am I going to do this? Why am I going to say this?”. **If the outcome of that action could hurt us or someone else, we need to think about a different way, or totally abandon it.**

- It is sad to see that many people waste their time “walking mindfully” one step at a time, just concentrating on taking each step, or “lifting their arm mindfully” This is the “*iriya*” that is being practiced in most places. How can that procedure lead to a long-lasting peace of mind? Of course, just like doing breath meditation, it can make a person calm for the time being; that is the ONLY benefit.
- And it is not enough to do this in a formal session. This needs to become a habit (a keyword search can be done to find more on habits; developing habits is the key to change those all important “*gathi*”). Buddha Dhamma is all about purifying the mind.

9. If one can do this for a week or so, one should be able to see a change in oneself; a sense of tranquility, a “peace of mind”. Of course some of you may be there already. We will discuss how to take the next step in the next post.

- When one is at this stage, it will be easier to get into *samādhi*, even if one is just doing the “breath meditation”. A moral mind is easy to be calmed. Many people do horrible acts on the

spur-of-the-moment because they do not have this mindset or habit. Also see, “[Possible Outcomes of Meditation – Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala](#)”.

Next, “[Kayanupassana – The Section on Habits \(Sampajanapabba\)](#)”,

16.5.4 **Kayanupassana – The Section on Habits (Sampajanapabba)**

This is really an extension of the section on postures (*Iriyapathapabba*) discussed in the previous post, going into finer postures and activities. The key point is ultimately to become “sensitized” to each and every action that we take thus leading to the formation of “good habits”, i.e., to become a “*sampajanno*”.

1. One cannot start on this section until one has acquired discipline with the “bigger activities”. For example, if one is killing animals for fun, then there is no point in worrying about kicking a dog.

- As one gets some practice with abstaining from major offenses, one will become “sensitized”, i.e., one will start seeing minor offenses that one is about to make.

2. The relevant paragraph on the *Sampajanapabba* in the *sutta* reads:

“Puna ca param, bhikkhave, bhikkhu abhikkante patikkante sampajānakāri hōti, ālokité vilokité sampajānakāri hōti, saminjité pasārite sampajānakāri hōti, sanghātipattacivaradhārane sampajānakāri hōti, asite pite khāyite sāyite sampajānakāri hōti, uccārapassāvakamme sampajānakāri hōti, gate thite nisinne sutte jāgarite bhāsīte tunhibhāve sampajānakāri hōti”.

Here is the conventional translation, which is word by word:

- “Again, monks, a monk, while going forward or backward, he does so with constant thorough understanding of impermanence; whether he is looking straight ahead or looking sideways, he does so with constant thorough understanding of impermanence; while he is bending or stretching, he does so with constant thorough understanding of impermanence; whether wearing his robes or carrying his bowl, he does so with constant thorough understanding of impermanence; whether he is eating, drinking, chewing or savouring, he does so with constant thorough understanding of impermanence; while attending to the calls of nature, he does so with constant thorough **understanding of impermanence**; whether he is walking, standing, sitting, sleeping or waking, speaking or in silence, he does so with constant thorough understanding of impermanence”.

3. Thus many possible “finer posture and actions” can be seen in the above direct translation, which are correct. The point is to be “morally mindful” in each and every such action, and not just to do those acts like a robot just in a formal setting as most people do.

- I am not sure where “impermanence” came from, apparently as the translation of the word, “*sampajānakāri*”. But as was explained in the post, “[Satipatthāna Sutta – Structure](#)”, *sampajano* means knowing right from wrong (“*san*”) via enhanced wisdom.
- Thus *sampajankāri* means doing something the right way, and *sampajankāri hōti* means becoming that.

4. When one goes into finer details on “being morally mindful” of one’s actions, one is not just concerned with killing, stealing, etc. One is also concerned about general welfare, that one should act with civility and be courteous to others: one should be wearing proper clothes appropriate for the occasion, when eating one should not be making inappropriate noises, while walking in a crowded street one should be mindful of the others and not throw one’s refuse on the roadside, etc.

- As I pointed out in the post, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”, a *sutta* gives instructions in the “*niddesa*” or as a brief description. It needs to be EXPLAINED rather than doing a direct translation. Any *sutta* was originally delivered over a number of hours, and then summarized in a special way to make it brief and suitable for oral transmission.

5. A case in point is the direct translation of “*..uccārapassāvakamme sampajānakārī hotī*”, as “while attending to the calls of nature, he does so with constant thorough understanding of impermanence!” (from the conventional translation in #2 above).

- What is meant there is to act with decency and not to relieve oneself in an inappropriate place. In all those cases, *sampajānakārī hoti* means acting with diligence and prudence.

6. There are many other aspects too. For example, if one is about to take a nap in the middle of the day, one should be asking oneself why one needs to take nap. Unless one had engaged in some strenuous activity and really needs to get some rest, it is not a good habit to take unnecessary naps. Then it could become a habit, a bad one.

- We should also develop good habits. While walking on the street, it is good to help out those who need help, and to be courteous to others. A small thing like not spitting in a public place or just dropping trash anywhere one pleases can cause discomfort for others.
- Of course with each minor act we should also make sure it does not pan out to immoral activities. A good example is drinking too much. Drinking alcohol is not an *akusala kamma* per se (and there is nothing wrong with taking a drink in a social setting), but there is danger in getting intoxicated. An intoxicated mind can be very dangerous; one could lose any sense of decency, and may get into situations that are immoral and offensive. Both drinking and smoking can be harmful to oneself and also to others.

7. As one develops good habits and gets rid of bad ones, one becomes more and more “sensitized” and catch even minor mistakes. At the same time, one will start seeing a big improvement in one’s “inside fires”, but one also becomes less prone to be aggravated or offended, and one becomes more forgiving to others.

- There are many posts at the site on habits, and how they can lead to *sansaric* habits and *āsavas*; developing good habits and getting rid of bad habits is key to “cooling down” in the short term as well as in the long term.
- Parents, teachers, and friends play key roles in a child’s life, because a child’s mind can be influenced by others in a good or bad ways, and can lead to lifelong habits. If the foundation is set right, then it will be easier for one to become a “*sampajanno*”, one who is capable of “keeping fires under control”.

8. This is what was meant by being a “*sampajanno*”, being able to “quench fires”, i.e., “*atapi sampajano*”, which was a key phrase in the *uddesa* (brief description) of the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*; see, “[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Structure](#)”.

Next, “[Prerequisites for the Satipaṭṭhāna Bhāvanā](#)”,

16.5.5 Prerequisites for the Satipaṭṭhāna Bhāvanā

As you may have noticed, I am not going to follow the *sutta* in the formal order. I would like to present it in a way that is conducive to the present day. However, at the end it will become clear that everything in the *sutta* has been discussed.

1. From the previous two posts it is clear that this meditation is **not just to be practiced in a formal session**, even though formal sessions can and should be done. In particular, *Dhammānupassana* needs to be done in formal sessions, which we will discuss shortly. With that in mind let us look at how the *sutta* begins (after the *uddesa* or the “brief description” section, to which we will get back later):

“*Kathaṃ ca pana, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāye kāyanupassī viharati?*”

- Here and many other other places, “*ca*” is pronounced “cha”.
- Here “*viharati*” means “to live”. Thus what it says is, “Bhikkhus, what is meant by living with *kāyanupassana* of the body (*kāye kāyanupassana*)?”.
- This should make it very clear that the *bhāvanā* is not just to be practised in a formal session; one has to “live it”.

2. Now let us look at the next phrase that describes how to prepare for the *bhāvanā*:

“*Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu aranna gato vā rukkhamūla gato vā sunnāgāra gato vā nisidati pallankaṃ ābhujitvā, ujum kāyaṃ paṇidhāya, parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā*”.

- The conventional translation is something like, “Here a monk, having gone into the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty room, sits down cross-legged, keeps his body upright and fixes his awareness in the area around the mouth”.
- Of course, this is a good thing to do if one is going to do a formal session, except that one should focus the awareness not “around the mouth” but on the object of contemplation as we will discuss later.

3. I pointed out in the introduction how the *sutta* (like most other *suttas*) was apparently designed to convey the above “conventional” meaning while keeping the deeper meaning hidden; see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”. This is a good example of how this was accomplished. Let us describe the above sentence in detail. However, I may not be able to go into such details for the rest of the *sutta*, because it will take up too much space.

Continuing with the interpretation of the phrase in #2, “*gatō va*” means “get in to” or in the deeper sense, “get into the mindset”.

- *Aranna* is a forest (or forest monastery). But the hidden meaning comes from “*rana*” which means “battle” and thus “*aranna*” means staying away from battles. Thus, “*aranna gatō vā*” means “get into a calm mindset leaving behind the everyday battles”. In the conventional interpretation is says, “having gone into the forest”.
- “*rukkha*” is “tree” and “*mūla*” is the “root”; even though the top of a tree sways back and forth with the wind, the tree trunk close to the root is very stable. Thus “*rukkhamūla gato va*” means getting to a stable mindset. In the conventional interpretation is says, “having gone to the foot of a tree”.

4. Next, “*sunṇāgāra*” is an empty building or room. The deeper meaning is that the mind should be empty of greed, hate, and ignorance. One should dispel any such thoughts that comes to the mind.

- Now comes, “*nisidati pallankaṃ ābhujitvā*”, which is translated as, “sits down cross-legged”. The key word here is, “*anka*” or literally “number”; in Pāli or Sinhala, “reduce the number” or “*palla+anka*” means not giving importance. Thus “*nisidati pallankaṃ ābhujitvā*” means, “being modest” and getting rid of any sense of “superiority”.
- And, “*ujum kāyaṃ paṇidhāya*” is translated, “keeps his body upright”. In the deeper meaning, it is about being “straightforward” or forthright and honest.
- The post, “[Kayanupassana – Section on Postures \(Iriyapathapabba\)](#)”, describes how one needs to conduct *satipattāna* in all four postures (sitting, standing, walking, lying down), AND in numerous sub-postures; Therefore, the idea of “keeping the physical body upright” during *satipattāna* is a falsehood.

5. Finally, “*parimukhaṃ satiṃ upaṭṭhapetvā*” is the KEY to *Satipaṭṭhāna*: It is translated literally as “fixes his awareness in the area around the mouth”. What is actually meant is to keep the mind on the main object (called “*mukha nimittā*”), i.e., “*Nibbāna*” or “cooling down”.

- Thus what is described in that sentence is the required mindset for the meditator, whether he/she is going to be “meditating” in any one of the four postures described in the previous post, not just in a sitting down formal meditation session.

6. Thus the “preparation instructions” in that opening phrase can now be stated something like, “get into a calm and stable mindset that is devoid of greed, hate, and ignorance; keep a modest attitude without any sense of superiority; be forthright and honest, and keep the mind on the main object of cooling down”.

- Such a state of mind needs to be cultivated for all times. That is the key to cooling down on a long-term basis.
- Of course the conventional interpretation can also be used for sitting down, formal, sessions **without** “fixing awareness in the area around the mouth”. One ALWAYS focuses on cooling down, and becoming an “*ātāpi sampajannō*”; see, “[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta – Structure](#)”, and “[Kayanupassana – The Section on Habits \(Sampajanapabba\)](#)”.

- Thus the idea is for one to become a “firefighter” (“*ātāpi sampajannō*”), who is always on the lookout not for actual fires, but for those mental events that CAN LEAD TO mental fires in the future. These are basically any immoral acts, speech, or thoughts.

7. There are five sections or “*pabba*” in the *kayanupassana*. The reason that I described the *Iriyapathapabba* (“section on postures”) and the *Sampajanapabba* (“section on habits”) in the previous posts was to emphasize the point that this *bhāvanā* cannot be restricted to a formal session. One could say, “How can I be meditating the whole day?”. This question arises only because of the misconceptions we have on what meditation or “*bhāvanā*” is.

- The Buddha said, “*bhavanaya bahuleekathaya*”, or “*bhāvanā* is what one does all the time”. It is about getting into the habit of developing good habits and getting rid of bad habits. [*bahulīkata*: [pp. of bahulīkaroti] took up seriously; increased. (adj.), practised frequently.]
- One can just make it a “formal session” in order to get into deeper levels of *samādhi* or *jhānas*.

8. Buddha Dhamma is not a religion in the sense of providing “salvation” by following certain rules or procedures. The Buddha said the only way to achieve long-lasting happiness is to purify the mind. It starts with avoiding the worst immoral acts of killing, stealing, etc. When one sees the benefits of that one can go a step further and include gossiping, slandering, etc. and so on.

- The more one purifies one’s mind, the true nature of this world will become increasingly clear. One cannot read about it in one essay or even many essays. One has to put it into action. Even though it is good to read about *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, it is not possible to “get it” until one purifies one’s mind to a certain extent AND experiences the “cooling down” that results from a purified mind; this will be discussed in the *Dhammānupassana*.

9. *Satipatṭhāna sutta* describes a very methodical way of following the Path prescribed by the Buddha. **Initially, one does not even have to worry about whether rebirth is valid or whether there are 31 realms of existence.** One just focuses on realizing that there are “internal fires” (*ātāpi*) that we are not even aware of; see “[Satipatṭhāna Sutta – Structure](#)”.

- As one purifies the mind, one can clearly see and FEEL these fires and how they start. When one clears up the “big fires” one is able to see and feel smaller ones; one becomes more “sensitized”. And then one tackles those smaller fires. It is a gradual, step-by-step process. That is why it is called the Path. The higher one climbs on the Path, the more one can “see” and get rid of, and more happier one becomes.

Next, “[What is “Kaya” in Kayanupassana?](#)”,

16.5.6 What is “Kāya” in Kāyānupassanā?

Revised May 20, 2018

1. There are two meanings to “*kaya*”: one is “*kaya*” for the body, and the other “*kāya*” means “piles” or “aggregates” of anything: *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, or *viññāṇa*.

- “*Sabba*” means all. Therefore, “*sabba kāya*” is the same as “*pañcakkhandha*” ; see, “[Five Aggregates – Introduction](#)”, and follow-up posts.
- In the *Satipatṭhāna Sutta*, one contemplates on the five aggregates via four categories and *kāyānupassanā* deals mostly with the bodily actions (i.e., regarding *kaya*). But “*kaya*” + “*anupassanā*” rhymes as “*kāyānupassanā*”; see, “[Satipatṭhāna – Introduction](#)”.

2. We experience pictures, sounds, smells, tastes, touch (which are all different types of *rūpa*), and *dhammā* (things which we think about).

- Note that *dhammā* are different from *dhamma* (without the long “a” at the end) in Buddha Dhamma; the latter *dhamma* refers to “teachings of the Buddha”.
- Even though “*rūpa*” is commonly used to pictures (which are really “*vanna*”) , *rupa* includes sounds, smells, tastes, and touch. To avoid confusion, I will just use the term “*rūpa*” to include sounds, smells, tastes, and touch as well as pictures for the rest of the post.

- *Dhammā* are a type of *rupa* too; but they are below the *suddhashtaka* stage and “cannot be seen or touched” : “*anidassanan, appatighan, dhammāyatana pariyāpanna rupam*”; see, “[What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!](#)”.

3. Something is a picture or a visual object only when one is seeing it. A moment later it is only a memory, and it is now a “old picture”. If we visualize a house that we are building, that is also a picture in the memory plane, a “future picture”. As we discussed in *pañcakkhandha*, *khandha* can be divided into 11 categories: past, present, future, near, far, likeable, distasteful, fine (not strong), coarse (strong), internal, and external.

- In the [WebLink: Anatta Lakkha Sutta \(SN 22.59\)](#), “all *rupa*” are described as 11 categories: “*Tasmātiha, bhikkhave, yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā, sabbaṃ rūpaṃ..*” . They are: past, present, future, near, far, likeable, distasteful, fine (not strong), coarse (strong), internal, and external; see also, “[Five Aggregates – Introduction](#)”.
- For example, feelings (*vedanā*) *khandha* can be any in the 11 categories. Here, near and far means recent or way back in the past. Internal is one’s own and external is feelings of the others; one needs to be aware of other’s feelings in the sense that “if I do this, it could cause a feeling of grief to so and so”, as an example.

4. It is good to contemplate on these concepts and have a good idea how different representations mean the same things: *Pañcakkhandha* is the same as “*sabba kaya*”, both include “everything in this world”. Please send me a comment if this not clear. Many people think “*kāyānupassanā*” is just about one’s body, and that is not correct.

- But we don’t think about the “whole world” out there either. We think about a tiny fraction of that “world out there”. **AND we get attached to (*taṇhā*) even a smaller fraction.**
- Thus even though *pañcakkhandha* (five aggregates) is unimaginably large, the fraction of *pañcakkhandha* that we interact with or think about is very small. **And we form attachments (via greed or hate) to even smaller fraction**, and this is the *pañcaupādānakkhandha*, the aggregates that we attach to with greed and hate (and ignorance). *Upādāna* means “drawn to”, and that is what one grasps willingly because one thinks there is happiness in them.
- For example, we all know about the zillions of stars out there, or about the other planets in our Solar system; but do not generate any greed or hate about them. We only attach to **some of the** pictures, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch that we interact with daily, which is indeed a tiny, tiny fraction of the “world out there”. The biggest component of our “*pañcaupādānakkhandha*” is the dhamma aggregate, the things we think about. Let us discuss this a bit more.
- **Thus here we are concerned with only a tiny fraction of “*sabba kāya*”: Only those that lead to greed, hate, or ignorance. This is the same as *pañcaupādānakkhandha*, which is a tiny fraction of *pañcakkhandha*.**

5. When we contemplate on this a bit more, we realize that most of pictures, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch we think about belong to the dhamma category; see #2 above..

- A long series of thoughts may start with an “old picture” that is in our memory (say an old friend), and then we start generating more thoughts about that person, and then we get into something altogether different: We may think about the nice neighborhood that person is living in and then start thinking about building a house there. Thus we may end up thinking (generating *saṅkhāra*) about something totally different. Thus it now belongs to the *dhamma* category.
- Later, we need to focus about such thoughts and dhamma in the “*cittānupassanā*” and “*dhammānupassanā*”. What we need to do in “*kāyānupassanā*” is to mainly control our speech and actions first. This way we will be able to slowly change our habits (*gathi*) and start controlling our “automatic actions” that we used to do almost on impulse.

6. We already discussed how we need to be “morally mindful” while we are in any of the four main postures (*Iriyapathapabba*), and also in any of “sub-postures” or basically any movement (*sampajānapabba*).

- For example, we see a likeable picture (a person or an item) we need to immediately think about whether it is appropriate to take the action that automatically comes to our mind with our old habits. We may be waiting at the airport for the next flight and see a bar; instead of going there and have a drink, it may be more productive to get on to the internet and read something useful. If one is really tired, it may be more productive to take a nap.
- In another example, someone may come to you and accuse you of doing something wrong. Instead of just retaliating, it may be a good idea to calm down and listen to that person first to see whether you have indeed done something unknowingly to aggravate that person.

7. As we discussed in the post, “[4. What do all these Different Meditation Techniques Mean?](#)”, *Anupassanā* means “discard according to the principles learned” (“*anu*” means according to and “*passana*” means to get rid of). We need to logically think of what would happen if a certain action is taken; if that seems to lead to a “bad ending” we need to discard it.

- Thus “*kāyānupassanā*” in the *iriyāpatapabba* and the *sampajānapabba* means contemplate on the moral consequences of an act one is about to do and abstain from doing it if it seems to have bad consequences.

8. Now, there are three sections in the *kāyānupassanā* where one specifically contemplate on the physical body. These are, *patikulamanasikarapabba*, *dhatumanasikarapabba*, and *navasivathikapabba*. These sections involve just contemplating on the nature of our physical bodies.

- In the *patikulamanasikarapabba* the 32 parts of the body are discussed. It is amazing how our perception of a hair in the dinner plate is so different from the admiration we have for our own hair that is attached to our head. The hair in the plate could be one of our own, but still we do not like it.
- The nail on the finger is something we admire, take care and sometimes paint too. But as soon as it is cut, it becomes something not appealing.

9. What we form a liking for is the “whole complete package” with all 32 parts that are in “good condition”. We get distraught when hair starts greying, or the skin starts sagging. A beautiful person may become ugly in an instant if the face becomes disfigured due to some mishap.

The reality is that all the above IS GOING TO HAPPEN to us in the future. As long as there is birth, there is decay and death.

10. The section (*pabba*) on *dhatumanasikarapabba* is to contemplate on the fact that all our bodies are composed of just four entities: *patavi* (solidness), *āpo* (liquidness), *tejo* (heat or warmth), *vāyo* (wind). Out of the six *dhatu*s, *ākāsa* (space) is there too, but *viññāṇa* (consciousness) does not belong to the physical body.

- Ours or anyone’s else’s body, whether beautiful or ugly, is composed on these four things. There is nothing special.

11. The third section (*pabba*) of the physical body, *navasivathikapabba*, is to contemplate on what happens to a dead body over the course of many months if left out on the ground to decay (as was commonly done at the time of the Buddha).

- Again, whether it is a body of a homeless person or an emperor, the same decay process will take place, and eventually all body parts will be absorbed to the ground or released to the air.

12. All three of those sections are to help us lose attachments to our physical bodies. The purpose is NOT to get distraught, but to develop wisdom to realize that it is common to us all and will happen.

- A major component of our suffering arises when we eventually realize that we cannot maintain things to our satisfaction. Most people do not like to think about this inevitability. They just want to “whatever it takes” to maintain a beautiful body. The more one does that, the more one will be depressed later.

- Instead what we should do is to try to maintain a healthy body by eating well and sticking to a good exercise program. It is not “eye catching aspect” that matters, but being able to enjoy life to extent possible but not letting it get sick or prematurely decayed.
- Eating healthy foods and exercising regularly (see, [“Spark” by John Ratey](#)) will keep the body and the mind in good condition, so that we will have enough time to at least get to the *Sotāpanna* stage of Nibbāna.

13. It is important to remember that in all these “*anupassanā*”, we need to contemplate on the Three Characteristics of nature (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*) when we contemplate on the unfruitfulness in attaching to “things and concepts”.

- Also, it is important to examine the potentially “bad outcomes” of immoral and unwise actions as well as of the tiring and stressful attempts to try to maintain things in optimum condition forever. The sooner we realize this, the less stressful it will be.

14. Finally, in those three sections on the body, *patikulamanasikarapabba*, *dhatumanasikarapabba*, and *navasivathikapabba*, we need to contemplate on not only our own body (this is what *ajjatta* means in these three sections), but also on the bodies of others (this is what *bahijja* means in these three sections).

- We can not only contemplate on other humans (famous, poor, rich, young, old, etc), but also on animals. It does not matter who or what it is, we all will eventually become dust. But, for many, this realization comes only after going through much effort in vain to keep the body “beautiful” via artificial means; then it could be too late.
- Therefore, *ajjatta* and *bahijja* means somewhat different things in these three sections compared to other sections.

16.6 Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta (Discourse on the Great Forty)

Revised April 3, 2016; Re-revised May 6, 2017; November 27, 2017; December 17, 2017; February 26, 2018

This *sutta* discusses two eightfold paths: A mundane path that leads to rebirth in the “good realms” (at or above the human realm) and the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to *Nibbāna*.

1. All *suttas* in one way or another describe the Path to *Nibbāna*; there are many ways to analyze the Path.

- In this *sutta*, the emphasis is on the 20 “good factors”, 10 leading to “good rebirths” and 10 leading to *Nibbāna* (*Cooling Down of the mind*). The opposing 20 factors direct one away from *Nibbāna* (to be trapped in the four lowest realms or *apāyas*).

2. The Path to *Nibbāna* is normally abbreviated as *silā* (virtue), *samādhi* (moral concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom).

- Without some level of wisdom one will not even start thinking about the Path. There are some people, no matter how much they listen or read about the Buddha’s message, cannot see any benefit from it. Such people have no *sansaric* habit (“*gathi*”) built up from past lives, and their minds are totally covered; this is the strong form of *avijjā* called *mōha*.
- Therefore, without some level of wisdom (or *paññā*, not “book knowledge”) it is not possible to “see the Path”. When we talk about “seeing the Path”, it is not meant seeing with the eyes; it is seeing with wisdom.
- Thus the correct order is *silā*, *samādhi*, *paññā* (in the mundane Eightfold Path), and then start with higher *paññā* (with comprehension of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) again in the Noble or *Lokottara* Eightfold Path, i.e., *paññā*, *silā*, *samādhi* towards *Ariya samādhi*, that leads to *sammā ñāṇa* and *sammā vimutti* (*Arahantship*). These are the 10 factors for *Nibbana*.
- This is discussed in “[Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā to Paññā, Sīla, Samādhi](#)”.
- This is a cyclic process: when one completes the first round, one starts the next round with enhanced *paññā*, and can “see more”. The “seeing” will be complete only at the *Arahant* stage.

3. There are four kinds of “seeing” that is with a person that is improved in the following order:

1. strong *miccā ditthi* and engaging in *pāpa kamma* (people like serial killers), 2. moral people with some types of *miccā ditthi* (most people today belong to this category), 3. not comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* (after getting rid of 10 types of *miccā ditthi*), and 4. transcendental *sammā Ditthi* (comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* or vision for attaining *Nibbāna*).

When one’s mind is totally covered with defilements (when one has *mōha*), one is likely to believe in all or some of the 10 types of *miccā ditthi*:

1. no benefits in giving
2. no benefits in fulfilling one’s responsibilities
3. no benefits in making offerings to *devas* and other beings
4. *kamma* or deeds do not have good and bad *vipāka*
5. this world does not exist
6. *paralowa* or the world of *gandhabba* does not exist
7. father is not a special person
8. mother is not a special person.
9. there are no instantaneous (*opapathika*) births in other realms.
10. there are no *samana brahmana* (basically *Ariyas* or *yogis*) who have cultivated their minds to be free of defilements and thus can see other realms and previous births

[[WebLink: suttacentral: AN 3.117. Vipattisampadāsutta - Distress and Attainment Sutta](#) ‘(1) *natthi dīnnaṃ*, (2) *natthi yīṭṭhaṃ*, (3) *natthi hutaṃ*, (4) *natthi sukata-dukkatānaṃ*, *kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāka*, (5) *natthi ayaṃ loka*, (6) *natthi paro loka*, (7) *natthi mātā*, (8) *natthi pitā*, (9) *natthi sattā opapātikā*, (10) *natthi loke samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggatā sammāpaṭipannā ye imaṇca lokaṃ paraṇca lokaṃ sayama abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedentī*’]

See, “[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotapanna Stage](#)” and “[Hidden World of the Gandhabba: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#)” for a discussion on *paralowa*.

4. The 10 wrong factors that contribute to one’s downfall (*akusala kamma*) RESULT FROM the above 10 types of wrong views.

- One is not likely to see the consequences of immoral thoughts and intentions (*micca sankappa*) in 3 categories: sensual lust (*kāma chanda*), ill-will (*vyapāda*), violence (*hinsā*).
- Thus one will utter 4 types of *micca vaca* or wrong speech: lying (*musāvāda*), slandering (*pisuṇāvācā*), harsh speech (*parusāvācā* [*pharusāvācā*]), and empty speech (*sampappalāpa*).
- And one will engage in 3 types of immoral bodily actions (*micca kammanta*): in killing living beings (*pānātipātā*), taking the not-given (*adinnādānā*), sexual misconduct and other extreme sensual activities (*kāmesu miccācārā*).

5. The more one does those 10 defiled actions by the mind, speech, and body, the stronger one’s conviction of the 10 types of *micca diṭṭhi* will become. Thus one will be trapped in a downward Path.

- Thus one will be engaged in immoral livelihoods (*micca ajiva*), make effort in such activities (*micca vayama*), build-up that mindset (*micca sati*), and solidify that kind of mindset (*micca samādhi*).
- Those in turn will strengthen *micca diṭṭhi*, *micca sankappa*, *micca vaca*, *micca kammanta*.
- And so it goes on and on, pushing one downwards spiral.

6. Therefore, those two sets of 10 factors each will lead one in the wrong way towards unimaginable suffering in future lives, and it will be very difficult to break away from them.

- Sometimes acts of occasional kindness or charity could open one’s mind to the truth. This is probably the reason for the order: *sila*, *samādhi*, *paññā*. Even occasional acts of virtue (*sila*) can get one pointed in the right direction.

7. As one removes more and more types of *micca diṭṭhi*, one will start gaining *sammā diṭṭhi*, which means not having those 10 types of *micca diṭṭhi*.

- Once the 10 types of *micca diṭṭhi* are removed, one starts comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, the correct interpretations. Of course, it will not help at all if *anicca* is interpreted as just “impermanence” and *anatta* as “no-self”.
- It is just like taking a medicine to cure a disease. If one is taking the wrong medicine, then no matter how long one takes it, that will not help.

8. So, the *sutta* explains that there are 2 types of *sammā diṭṭhi*: **mundane (*lokiya*)**, and **transcendental (*lokottara*)**.

Initially, one sees the perils of *micca diṭṭhi* (and associated immoral acts), and starts turning to mundane *sammā diṭṭhi*: One sees that things happen for a reason, and one could get into bad situations and bad births by doing immoral acts. One is motivated to do moral deeds and to seek good rebirths. Now one does not have *mōha*, but just *avijjā*.

- Thus one starts thinking moral thoughts (*sammā sankappa*), uttering moral speech (*sammā vaca*), abstain from immoral deeds (*sammā kammanta*).
- Thus one will be engaged in moral livelihoods (*sammā ajiva*), make effort in such activities (*sammā vayama*), build-up that mindset (*sammā sati*), and solidify that kind of mindset (*sammā samādhi*).
- This eight factors constitute the **mundane Eightfold Path**. One will be making progress towards “good rebirths”.

9. It is important to realize that those *dasa akusala* that are done by the body (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct) and speech (lying, slandering, harsh speech, gossiping) are tackled in the **mundane Eightfold Path**.

- This is specifically stated in the “[WebLink: suttacentral: Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta \(MN 117\)](#)”.
- Even though the English translation there is not good, this fact is clear in the English translation at that website: “[WebLink: suttacentral: The Great Forty](#)”.

10. Then some of those on the mundane Eightfold Path will start seeing the unique message of the Buddha, which says that one can NEVER find permanent happiness in this world (*lokaya*).

- This is because, even if one makes sure to avoid the four lower realms (*apāyas*) in the next birth by following the mundane Noble Eightfold Path, one will not be assured of anything in the births after that. Because we have no idea under what circumstances we will be born in the next life even if it is human.
- Of course, one needs to be exposed the correct version of *Tilakkhana*.

11. As long as one has not not attained the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*, it is inevitable that one is likely to be born in the *apāyas* in (probably distant) future. One may be born in the human or higher realms for a long time to come due to the moral acts done in this life, but once that “good energy” is spent, past bad *kamma vipāka* will inevitably come to the surface.

- Thus, as long as we are born anywhere in these 31 realms, it will eventually lead to *dukkha* (suffering).
- Thus it is unfruitful to strive for such mundane happiness as a human, *deva*, or *brahma*. In the long run, none of those births will provide permanent happiness. We cannot maintain anything to our satisfaction in the long run anywhere. This is the concept of *anicca*.
- This is in fact the concept of *anatta*: that there is no place in the whole wider world of 31 realms that one could find refuge.

12. The realization of these three characteristics (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) of this world (*lokaya*) is the point at which one grasps the *lokottara sammā dīṭṭhi*.

- Then one starts thinking moral thoughts (*sammā sankappa*) on how to remove suffering FOREVER. Now one is not interested in merely seeking “good rebirths” because one realizes the futility of such efforts in the long term. This is *lokottara sammā sankappa*.
- One stops uttering immoral speech (*sammā vaca*) and abstain from immoral deeds (*sammā kammanta*), because one realizes that there is NO POINT in doing those things, not just because they lead to bad births. They are now *lokottara sammā vaca* and *lokottara sammā kammanta*.
- These in turn will lead to *lokottara* types of *sammā ajiva*, *sammā vayama*, *sammā sati*, and *sammā samādhi*.
- These eight factors constitute the **lokottara Noble Eightfold Path** that will take one progressively to stages of “higher cooling down” or *Nibbāna* starting with the *Sotāpanna* stage and ending in the *Arahant* stage.
- *Avijja* is gradually dispelled starting at the *Sotāpanna* stage and completely removed at the *Arahant* stage; simultaneously, wisdom (*paññā*) grows and becomes complete at the *Arahant* stage.

13. The uniqueness of Buddha Dhamma lies in the **lokottara Noble Eightfold Path**. Other religions are focused on “how to live a moral life” (even if that has implications of permanent happiness in heaven), and that and more is embodied in the **mundane Noble Eightfold Path**.

- Buddha Dhamma says living a moral life is not enough to attain permanent happiness (because even heaven is not permanent according to Buddha Dhamma). Ultimately, it requires relinquishing all desires for worldly things. **But the mindset to seek *Nibbāna* via “relinquishing all desires for worldly things” is not even possible until one makes progress on the **mundane Noble Eightfold Path**. The mind needs to be purified to some extent even to realize the futility of existence anywhere in the 31 realms.**

- Through most of the recent past, the genuine **lokottara Noble Eightfold Path** had been hidden together with the true nature of the world as described by the real meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*; most have been practicing the **mundane Noble Eightfold Path**. It is easy for most people to connect with the **mundane Noble Eightfold Path** simply because it is mundane, i.e., concepts that we are already comfortable with.
- But as the Buddha said, his Dhamma “had never been heard before...”, as he emphasized in the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana sutta*: “*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu...*”.

14. In summary, the forty factors are there because there are four pathways each with 10 outcomes: two types of wrong paths (one with 10 types of *micca diṭṭhi* and another with strong *micca diṭṭhi* with immoral behavior) and two types of “good paths” (one after getting rid of 10 types of *micca diṭṭhi* and the next with starting to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*).

- The 10 outcomes in the Noble Path are: *sammā diṭṭhi*, *sammā sankappa*, *sammā vaca*, *sammā kammanta*, *sammā ajiva*, *sammā vayama*, *sammā sati*, *sammā samādhi*, *sammā ñāṇa*, and *sammā vimutti* (Arahantship).
- Towards the end of the Buddha says, “*Iti kho, bhikkhave, aṭṭhaṅgasamannāgato sekkho, dasaṅgasamannāgato arahā hoti.*”. **Translated:** “Thus, *bhikkhus*, the path of the disciple in higher training (*Sōtapanna*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi*) possesses eight factors, and the *Arahant* possesses ten factors”.
- The other three paths have corresponding 10 outcomes, leading to good or bad outcomes, but provide no permanent solution (of course the bad ones lead to unimaginable suffering).

15. The *Pāli* version of the *sutta* — as well as translations in several languages — is available at: [WebLink: *suttacentral: Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta*](#).

- However, that translation is not complete, as mentioned above. **In particular, the distinction between the two types of *sammā diṭṭhi*, etc and two types of eightfold paths is not discussed there because most people today don’t understand the importance or the correct interpretation of *Tilakkhana*.**
- Finally, another way to analyze this step-by-step process is discussed at: “[Micca Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sotāpanna Stage](#)”.

16.6.1 Mahācattārīsaka Sutta

Majjhima Nikāya 117

Mahācattārīsakasutta

Evaṃ me sutaṃ— ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā sāvatthiyaṃ viharati jetavane anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme. Tatra kho bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi: “bhikkhavo”ti. “Bhadante”ti te bhikkhū bhagavato paccassuṃ. Bhagavā etadavoca: “ariyaṃ vo, bhikkhave, sammāsamādhiṃ desessāmi saupanisaṃ saparikkhāraṃ. Taṃ suṇātha, sādhukaṃ manasi karotha, bhāssissāmi”ti. “Evaṃ, bhante”ti kho te bhikkhū bhagavato paccassuṃ. Bhagavā etadavoca:

“Katamo ca, bhikkhave, ariyo sammāsamādhi saupaniso saparikkhāro? Seyyathidaṃ— sammādiṭṭhi, sammāsaṅkappo, sammāvācā, sammākammanto, sammāājīvo, sammāvāyāmo, sammāsati; yā kho, bhikkhave, imehi sattahaṅgehi cittassa ekaggatā parikkhatā—ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, ariyo sammāsamādhi saupaniso itipi, saparikkhāro itipi. Tatra, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti. Kathaṇca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti? Micchādiṭṭhiṃ ‘micchādiṭṭhi’ti pajānāti, sammādiṭṭhiṃ ‘sammādiṭṭhi’ti pajānāti—sāssa hoti sammādiṭṭhi.

Katamā ca, bhikkhave, micchādiṭṭhi? ‘Natthi dinnaṃ, natthi yiṭṭhaṃ, natthi huttaṃ, natthi sukata-dukkatāṇaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāko, natthi ayaṃ loko, natthi paro loko, natthi mātā, natthi pitā, natthi sattā opapātikā, natthi loke samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggaṭā sammāpaṭipannā ye imaṇca lokaṃ paraṇca lokaṃ sayāṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedentī’ti—ayaṃ, bhikkhave, micchādiṭṭhi.

Katamā ca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi? Sammādiṭṭhippaṃ, bhikkhave, dvāyaṃ vadāmi—atthi, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi sāsava puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā; atthi, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi ariyā anāsava lokuttarā maggaṅgā. Katamā ca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi sāsava puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā? ‘Atthi dinnam, atthi yittham, atthi hutam, atthi sukata dukkaṭānam kammānam phalaṃ vipāko, atthi ayam loko, atthi paro loko, atthi mātā, atthi pitā, atthi sattā opapātikā, atthi loka samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggaṭā sammāpaṭipannā ye imaṇca lokaṃ paraṇca lokaṃ sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedenti’ti—ayam, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi sāsava puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā.

Katamā ca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi ariyā anāsava lokuttarā maggaṅgā? Yā kho, bhikkhave, ariyacittassa anāsavacittassa ariyamaggasamaṅgino ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato paññā paññindriyaṃ paññābalaṃ dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo sammādiṭṭhi maggaṅgam—ayam vuccati, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi ariyā anāsava lokuttarā maggaṅgā. So micchādiṭṭhiyā pahānāya vāyamati, sammādiṭṭhiyā, upasampadāya, svāssa hoti sammāvāyāmo. So sato micchādiṭṭhiṃ pajahati, sato sammādiṭṭhiṃ upasampajja viharati, sāssa hoti sammāsati. Itiyime tayo dhammā sammādiṭṭhiṃ anuparidhāvanti anuparivattanti, seyyathidaṃ—sammādiṭṭhi, sammāvāyāmo, sammāsati.

Tatra, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti. Kathaṇca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti? Micchāsaṅkappaṃ ‘micchāsaṅkappo’ti pajānāti, sammāsaṅkappaṃ ‘sammāsaṅkappo’ti pajānāti, sāssa hoti sammādiṭṭhi.

Katamo ca, bhikkhave, micchāsaṅkappo? Kāmasaṅkappo, byāpādasāṅkappo, vihiṃsāsaṅkappo—ayam, bhikkhave, micchāsaṅkappo.

Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammāsaṅkappo? Sammāsaṅkappapaṃ, bhikkhave, dvāyaṃ vadāmi—atthi, bhikkhave, sammāsaṅkappo sāsavo puññabhāgiyo upadhivepakko; atthi, bhikkhave, sammāsaṅkappo ariyo anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo. Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammāsaṅkappo sāsavo puññabhāgiyo upadhivepakko? Nekkhammasaṅkappo, abyāpādasāṅkappo, avihiṃsāsaṅkappo: ‘ayam, bhikkhave, sammāsaṅkappo sāsavo puññabhāgiyo upadhivepakko’.

Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammāsaṅkappo ariyo anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo? Yo kho, bhikkhave, ariyacittassa anāsavacittassa ariyamaggasamaṅgino ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato takko vitakko saṅkappo appanā byappanā cetaso abhiniropānā vacīsaṅkhāro—ayam, bhikkhave, sammāsaṅkappo ariyo anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo. So micchāsaṅkappassa pahānāya vāyamati, sammāsaṅkappassa upasampadāya, svāssa hoti sammāvāyāmo. So sato micchāsaṅkappaṃ pajahati, sato sammāsaṅkappaṃ upasampajja viharati; sāssa hoti sammāsati. Itiyime tayo dhammā sammāsaṅkappaṃ anuparidhāvanti anuparivattanti, seyyathidaṃ—sammādiṭṭhi, sammāvāyāmo, sammāsati.

Tatra, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti. Kathaṇca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti? Micchāvācam ‘micchāvācā’ti pajānāti, sammāvācam ‘sammāvācā’ti pajānāti; sāssa hoti sammādiṭṭhi. Katamā ca, bhikkhave, micchāvācā? Musāvādo, piṣuṇā vācā, pharusā vācā, samphappalāpo—ayam, bhikkhave, micchāvācā. Katamā ca, bhikkhave, sammāvācā? Sammāvācam-paṃ, bhikkhave, dvāyaṃ vadāmi—atthi, bhikkhave, sammāvācā sāsava puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā; atthi, bhikkhave, sammāvācā ariyā anāsava lokuttarā maggaṅgā. Katamā ca, bhikkhave, sammāvācā sāsava puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā? Musāvādā veramaṇī, piṣuṇāya vācāya veramaṇī, pharusāya vācāya veramaṇī, samphappalāpā veramaṇī—ayam, bhikkhave, sammāvācā sāsava puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā. Katamā ca, bhikkhave, sammāvācā ariyā anāsava lokuttarā maggaṅgā? Yā kho, bhikkhave, ariyacittassa anāsavacittassa ariyamaggasamaṅgino ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato catūhi vacīduccaritehi ārati virati paṭivirati veramaṇī—ayam, bhikkhave, sammāvācā ariyā anāsava lokuttarā maggaṅgā. So micchāvācāya pahānāya vāyamati, sammāvācāya upasampadāya; svāssa hoti sammāvāyāmo. So sato micchāvācam pajahati, sato sammāvācam upasampajja viharati; sāssa hoti sammāsati. Itiyime tayo dhammā sammāvācam anuparidhāvanti anuparivattanti, seyyathidaṃ—sammādiṭṭhi, sammāvāyāmo, sammāsati.

Tatra, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti. Kathaṇca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti? Micchākammantaṃ ‘micchākammanto’ti pajānāti, sammākammantaṃ ‘sammākammanto’ti pajānāti; sāssa hoti sammādiṭṭhi. Katamo ca, bhikkhave, micchākammanto? Pāṇātipāto, adinnādānaṃ,

kāmesumicchācāro—ayaṃ, bhikkhave, micchākammanto. Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammākammanto? Sammākammantampahaṃ, bhikkhave, dvāyaṃ vadāmi—atthi, bhikkhave, sammākammanto sāsavo puññabhāgiyo upadhivepakko; atthi, bhikkhave, sammākammanto ariyo anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo. Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammākammanto sāsavo puññabhāgiyo upadhivepakko? Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī, adinnādānā veramaṇī, kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī—ayaṃ, bhikkhave, sammākammanto sāsavo puññabhāgiyo upadhivepakko. Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammākammanto ariyo anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo? Yā kho, bhikkhave, ariyacittassa anāsavacittassa ariyamaggasamaṅgino ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato tīhi kāyaduccaritehi āratī viratī paṭivirati veramaṇī—ayaṃ, bhikkhave, sammākammanto ariyo anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo. So micchākammantassa pahānāya vāyamaṭī, sammākammantassa upasampadāya; svāssa hoti sammāvāyāmo. So sato micchākammantaṃ pajahati, sato sammākammantaṃ upasampajja viharati; sāssa hoti sammāsati. Itiyime tayo dhammā sammākammantaṃ anuparidhāvanti anuparivattanti, seyyathidaṃ—sammādiṭṭhi, sammāvāyāmo, sammāsati.

Tatra, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti. Kathaṇca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti? Micchāājīvaṃ ‘micchāājīvo’ti pajānāti, sammāājīvaṃ ‘sammāājīvo’ti pajānāti; sāssa hoti sammādiṭṭhi. Katamo ca, bhikkhave, micchāājīvo? Kuhanā, lapanā, nemittikatā, nippesikatā, lābhena lābhaṃ nijigīsanatā—ayaṃ, bhikkhave, micchāājīvo. Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammāājīvo? Sammāājīvampahaṃ, bhikkhave, dvāyaṃ vadāmi—atthi, bhikkhave, sammāājīvo sāsavo puññabhāgiyo upadhivepakko; atthi, bhikkhave, sammāājīvo ariyo anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo. Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammāājīvo sāsavo puññabhāgiyo upadhivepakko? Idha, bhikkhave, ariyasāvako micchāājīvaṃ pahāya sammāājīvena jīvikāṃ kappeti—ayaṃ, bhikkhave, sammāājīvo sāsavo puññabhāgiyo upadhivepakko. Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammāājīvo ariyo anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo? Yā kho, bhikkhave, ariyacittassa anāsavacittassa ariyamaggasamaṅgino ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato micchāājīvā āratī viratī paṭivirati veramaṇī—ayaṃ, bhikkhave, sammāājīvo ariyo anāsavo lokuttaro maggaṅgo. So micchāājīvassa pahānāya vāyamaṭī, sammāājīvassa upasampadāya; svāssa hoti sammāvāyāmo. So sato micchāājīvaṃ pajahati, sato sammāājīvaṃ upasampajja viharati; sāssa hoti sammāsati. Itiyime tayo dhammā sammāājīvaṃ anuparidhāvanti anuparivattanti, seyyathidaṃ—sammādiṭṭhi, sammāvāyāmo, sammāsati.

Tatra, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti. Kathaṇca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti? Sammādiṭṭhissa, bhikkhave, sammāsaṅkappo pahoti, sammāsaṅkappassa sammāvācā pahoti, sammāvācassa sammākammanto pahoti, sammākammantassa sammāājīvo pahoti, sammāājīvassa sammāvāyāmo pahoti, sammāvāyāmassa sammāsati pahoti, sammāsatiassa sammāsamādhi pahoti, sammāsamādhissa sammāñāṇaṃ pahoti, sammāñāṇassa sammāvimutti pahoti. Iti kho, bhikkhave, aṭṭhaṅgasamannāgato sekkho, dasaṅgasamannāgato arahā hoti. Tatrapi sammāñāṇena aneke pāpakā akusalā dhammā vigatā bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchanti.

Tatra, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti. Kathaṇca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi pubbaṅgamā hoti? Sammādiṭṭhissa, bhikkhave, micchādiṭṭhi nijjiṇṇā hoti. Ye ca micchādiṭṭhipaccayā aneke pāpakā akusalā dhammā sambhavanti te cassa nijjiṇṇā honti. Sammādiṭṭhipaccayā aneke kusalā dhammā bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchanti. Sammāsaṅkappassa, bhikkhave, micchāsaṅkappo nijjiṇṇo hoti ... pe ... sammāvācassa, bhikkhave, micchāvācā nijjiṇṇā hoti ... sammākammantassa, bhikkhave, micchākammanto nijjiṇṇo hoti ... sammāājīvassa, bhikkhave, micchāājīvo nijjiṇṇo hoti ... sammāvāyāmassa, bhikkhave, micchāvāyāmo nijjiṇṇo hoti ... sammāsatiassa, bhikkhave, micchāsati nijjiṇṇā hoti ... sammāsamādhissa, bhikkhave, micchāsamādhi nijjiṇṇo hoti ... sammāñāṇassa, bhikkhave, micchāñāṇaṃ nijjiṇṇaṃ hoti ... sammāvimuttassa, bhikkhave, micchāvimutti nijjiṇṇā hoti. Ye ca micchāvimuttipaccayā aneke pāpakā akusalā dhammā sambhavanti te cassa nijjiṇṇā honti. Sammāvimuttipaccayā ca aneke kusalā dhammā bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchanti.

Iti kho, bhikkhave, vīsati kusalapakkhā, vīsati akusalapakkhā—mahācattārīsako dhammapariyāyo pavattito appaṭivattiyo samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmiṃ.

Yo hi koci, bhikkhave, samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā imaṃ mahācattārīsakaṃ dhammapariyāyaṃ garahitabbaṃ paṭikkositabbaṃ maññeyya tassa diṭṭheva dhamme dasasahadhammikā vādānuvādā

gārayhaṃ thānaṃ āgacchanti—sammādiṭṭhiṃce bhavaṃ garahati, ye ca micchādiṭṭhī samaṇabrāhmaṇā te bhoto pujjā, te bhoto pāsaṃsā; sammāsaṅkappaṃce bhavaṃ garahati, ye ca micchāsaṅkappā samaṇabrāhmaṇā te bhoto pujjā, te bhoto pāsaṃsā; sammāvācaṃce bhavaṃ garahati ... pe ... sammākammantaṃce bhavaṃ garahati ... sammāājīvaṃce bhavaṃ garahati ... sammāvāyāmaṃce bhavaṃ garahati ... sammāsatiṃce bhavaṃ garahati ... sammāsamādhiṃce bhavaṃ garahati ... sammāñāṇaṃce bhavaṃ garahati ... sammāvimuttiṃce bhavaṃ garahati, ye ca micchāvimuttī samaṇabrāhmaṇā te bhoto pujjā, te bhoto pāsaṃsā. Yo koci, bhikkhave, samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā imaṃ mahācattārīsakaṃ dhammapariyāyaṃ garahitabbaṃ paṭikkositabbaṃ maññeyya tassa diṭṭheva dhamme ime dasasahadhammikā vādānuvādā gārayhaṃ thānaṃ āgacchanti. Yepi te, bhikkhave, ahesuṃ okkalā vassabhaññā ahētuvādā akiriyavādā natthikavādā tepi mahācattārīsakaṃ dhammapariyāyaṃ na garahitabbaṃ nappaṭikkositabbaṃ amaññiṃsu. Taṃ kissa hetu? Nindābyā-rosaupārambhabhayā”ti.

Idamavoca bhagavā. Attamanā te bhikkhū bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandunti.

Mahācattārīsakasuttaṃ niṭṭhitaṃ sattamaṃ.

Majjhima Nikāya 117

The Great Forty

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattṭhī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park. There he addressed the bhikkhus thus: “Bhikkhus.”—“Venerable sir,” they replied. The Blessed One said this:

“Bhikkhus, I shall teach you noble right concentration with its supports and its requisites. Listen and attend closely to what I shall say.”—“Yes, venerable sir,” the bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:

“What, bhikkhus, is noble right concentration with its supports and its requisites, that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness? Unification of mind equipped with these seven factors is called noble right concentration with its supports and its requisites.

View

“Therein, bhikkhus, right view comes first. And how does right view come first? One understands wrong view as wrong view and right view as right view: this is one’s right view.

“And what, bhikkhus, is wrong view? ‘There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed; no fruit or result of good and bad actions; no this world, no other world; no mother, no father; no beings who are reborn spontaneously; no good and virtuous recluses and brahmins in the world who have realised for themselves by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world.’ This is wrong view.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right view? Right view, I say, is twofold: there is right view that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions; and there is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right view that is affected by the taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions? ‘There is what is given and what is offered and what is sacrificed; there is fruit and result of good and bad actions; there is this world and the other world; there is mother and father; there are beings who are reborn spontaneously; there are in the world good and virtuous recluses and

brahmins who have realised for themselves by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world.’ This is right view affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path? The wisdom, the faculty of wisdom, the power of wisdom, the investigation-of-states enlightenment factor, the path factor of right view in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path: this is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path.

“One makes an effort to abandon wrong view and to enter upon right view: this is one’s right effort. Mindfully one abandons wrong view, mindfully one enters upon and abides in right view: this is one’s right mindfulness. Thus these three states run and circle around right view, that is, right view, right effort, and right mindfulness.

Intention

“Therein, bhikkhus, right view comes first. And how does right view come first? One understands wrong intention as wrong intention and right intention as right intention: this is one’s right view.

“And what, bhikkhus, is wrong intention? The intention of sensual desire, the intention of ill will, and the intention of cruelty: this is wrong intention.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right intention? Right intention, I say, is twofold: there is right intention that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions, and there is right intention that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right intention that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions? The intention of renunciation, the intention of non-ill will, and the intention of non-cruelty: this is right intention that is affected by taints...ripening in the acquisitions.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right intention that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path? The thinking, thought, intention, mental absorption, mental fixity, directing of mind, verbal formation in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path: this is right intention that is noble...a factor of the path.

“One makes an effort to abandon wrong intention and to enter upon right intention: this is one’s right effort. Mindfully one abandons wrong intention, mindfully one enters upon and abides in right intention: this is one’s right mindfulness. Thus these three states run and circle around right intention, that is, right view, right effort, and right mindfulness.

Speech

“Therein, bhikkhus, right view comes first. And how does right view come first? One understands wrong speech as wrong speech and right speech as right speech: this is one’s right view.

“And what, bhikkhus, is wrong speech? False speech, malicious speech, harsh speech, and gossip: this is wrong speech.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right speech? Right speech, I say, is twofold: there is right speech that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions; and there is right speech that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right speech that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions? Abstinence from false speech, abstinence from malicious speech, abstinence from harsh speech, abstinence from gossip: this is right speech that is affected by taints...ripening in the acquisitions.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right speech that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path? The desisting from the four kinds of verbal misconduct, the abstaining, refraining, abstinence from them

in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path: this is right speech that is noble...a factor of the path.

“One makes an effort to abandon wrong speech and to enter upon right speech: this is one’s right effort. Mindfully one abandons wrong speech, mindfully one enters upon and abides in right speech: this is one’s right mindfulness. Thus these three states run and circle around right speech, that is, right view, right effort, and right mindfulness.

Action

“Therein, bhikkhus, right view comes first. And how does right view come first? One understands wrong action as wrong action and right action as right action: this is one’s right view.

“And what, bhikkhus, is wrong action? Killing living beings, taking what is not given, and misconduct in sensual pleasures: this is wrong action.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right action? Right action, I say, is twofold: there is right action that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions; and there is right action that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right action that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions? Abstinence from killing living beings, abstinence from taking what is not given, abstinence from misconduct in sensual pleasures: this is right action that is affected by taints... ripening in the acquisitions.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right action that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path? The desisting from the three kinds of bodily misconduct, the abstaining, refraining, abstinence from them in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path: this is right action that is noble...a factor of the path.

“One makes an effort to abandon wrong action and to enter upon right action: this is one’s right effort. Mindfully one abandons wrong action, mindfully one enters upon and dwells in right action: this is one’s right mindfulness. Thus these three states run and circle around right action, that is, right view, right effort, and right mindfulness.

Livelihood

“Therein, bhikkhus, right view comes first. And how does right view come first? One understands wrong livelihood as wrong livelihood and right livelihood as right livelihood: this is one’s right view.

“And what, bhikkhus, is wrong livelihood? Scheming, talking, hinting, belittling, pursuing gain with gain: this is wrong livelihood.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right livelihood? Right livelihood, I say, is twofold: there is right livelihood that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions; and there is right livelihood that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right livelihood that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions? Here, bhikkhus, a noble disciple abandons wrong livelihood and gains his living by right livelihood: this is right livelihood that is affected by taints...ripening in the acquisitions.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right livelihood that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path? The desisting from wrong livelihood, the abstaining, refraining, abstinence from it in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path: this is right livelihood that is noble...a factor of the path.

“One makes an effort to abandon wrong livelihood and to enter upon right livelihood: this is one’s right effort. Mindfully one abandons wrong livelihood, mindfully one enters upon and dwells in right

livelihood: this is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three states run and circle around right livelihood, that is, right view, right effort, and right mindfulness.

The Great Forty

“Therein, bhikkhus, right view comes first. And how does right view come first? In one of right view, right intention comes into being; in one of right intention, right speech comes into being; in one of right speech, right action comes into being; in one of right action, right livelihood comes into being; in one of right livelihood, right effort comes into being; in one of right effort, right mindfulness comes into being; in one of right mindfulness, right concentration comes into being; in one of right concentration, right knowledge comes into being; in one of right knowledge, right deliverance comes into being. Thus, bhikkhus, the path of the disciple in higher training possesses eight factors, the arahant possesses ten factors.

“Therein, bhikkhus, right view comes first. And how does right view come first? In one of right view, wrong view is abolished, and the many evil unwholesome states that originate with wrong view as condition are also abolished, and the many wholesome states that originate with right view as condition come to fulfilment by development.

“In one of right intention, wrong intention is abolished, and the many evil unwholesome states that originate with wrong intention as condition are also abolished, and the many wholesome states that originate with right intention as condition come to fulfilment by development.

“In one of right speech, wrong speech is abolished...In one of right action, wrong action is abolished...In one of right livelihood, wrong livelihood is abolished ...In one of right effort, wrong effort is abolished...In one of right mindfulness, wrong mindfulness is abolished...In one of right concentration, wrong concentration is abolished...In one of right knowledge, wrong knowledge is abolished...In one of right deliverance, wrong deliverance is abolished, and the many evil unwholesome states that originate with wrong deliverance as condition are also abolished, and the many wholesome states that originate with right deliverance as condition come to fulfilment by development.

“Thus, bhikkhus, there are twenty factors on the side of the wholesome, and twenty factors on the side of the unwholesome. This Dhamma discourse on the Great Forty has been set rolling and cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or god or Māra or Brahmā or anyone in the world.

“Bhikkhus, if any recluse or brahmin thinks that this Dhamma discourse on the Great Forty should be censured and rejected, then there are ten legitimate deductions from his assertions that would provide grounds for censuring him here and now. If that worthy one censures right view, then he would honour and praise those recluses and brahmins who are of wrong view. If that worthy one censures right intention, then he would honour and praise those recluses and brahmins who are of wrong intention. If that worthy one censures right speech... right action...right livelihood...right effort... right mindfulness...right concentration...right knowledge...right deliverance, then he would honour and praise those recluses and brahmins who are of wrong deliverance. If any recluse or brahmin thinks that this Dhamma discourse on the Great Forty should be censured and rejected, then these are ten legitimate deductions from his assertions that would provide grounds for censuring him here and now.

“Bhikkhus, even those teachers from Okkala, Vassa and Bhañña, who held the doctrine of non-causality, the doctrine of non-doing, and the doctrine of nihilism, would not think that this Dhamma discourse on the Great Forty should be censured and rejected. Why is that? For fear of blame, attack, and confutation.”

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

16.7 Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

[Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta – Introduction](#)

[Majjima Patipada – Way to Relinquish Attachments to this World](#)

[Tiparivattaya and Twelve Types of Ñāna \(Knowledge\)](#)

[Relinquishing Defilements via Three Rounds and Four Stages](#)

16.7.1 Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta – Introduction

January 16, 2016

Please download and print the pdf of the *sutta* (or open in another window) to refer to, as you follow the discussion. You may need to click the link on the new page again:

[Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta Text](#)

I have divided the *sutta* to 13 sections, and I will go through some sections in this essay, but those that need detailed discussion will be covered in future posts. As explained in the “[Sutta – Introduction](#)” post, a *sutta* gives only a short summary of the original *desanā*. It needs to be explained in detail.

- It may be helpful to listen to the chanting of the *sutta* by the venerable *Thero*, as it gives the correct pronunciations, and also how to chant it without “too much dragging” as done commonly (which will diminish its effects).
- I could not get my normal audio player to work, so the new player below just has a play button. There is no volume control, so you need to adjust volume on your end.

[WebLink: Listen to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta](#)

1. Sutta chanting can be much more effective if one recites it the right way AND also understand the meaning at least to some extent.

- A given *sutta* can provide Dhamma knowledge that one needs to attain *magga phala*, if it is analyzed correctly in detail (*patiniddesa* version); see, “[Sutta – Introduction](#)”. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta is especially important since it lays out the “blueprint” of Buddha Dhamma.

2. Of course this was the first *sutta* delivered by the Buddha, to the five ascetics Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama, and Assaji. The name of the *sutta* comes from the combination of three terms: *Dhamma*, *Cakka*, and *Pavattana*. *Dhamma* here means the Buddha Dhamma or the true nature of existence. *Cakka* here means “seeing” or “to see”. *Pavattana* here means to “set in motion” AND to “maintain”.

- Therefore, the *sutta* is meant to convey the **way to “see” the true nature of existence with wisdom**, not with the physical eye. Only a Buddha can discover the true nature, but a human can comprehend it, once explained.
- As in many Pāli terms, the word “*dhammacakkappavattana*” comes from the combination of three above terms, with an additional “p” just before *pavattana*. As we discussed before, *pancakkhandha* is the combination of *panca* with *khandha* with an additional k in tying up the two words.
- Sometimes it is also called the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta*.

3. Let us address a common mis-translation of the name of the *sutta*. The most common is “Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion”. Here *cakka* (which is pronounced “chakka”), is translated as “wheel”. But the name of the *sutta* becomes quite clear when one looks at section 9.

- In section 9 (see the [text](#)), **dhammacakkhun udapadi** means “eye to see the Dhamma was born” for the ascetic Kondanna (āyasmato Koṇḍañña). There is no way to associate a “wheel” here.
- It is also to be noted that the main summary of the *sutta* is finished with section 8. What is described in the following sections is to note that the ascetic Kondanna attained the *Sotāpanna* stage, and to describe various types of *devas* and *brahmas* who attended the delivery of the *sutta*; see #6 below. It is said that a large number of them attained various stages of *Nibbāna*.

4. This *sutta* lays out the basic structure of Buddha Dhamma and how one attains release from this world of 31 realms via successively attaining four stages of *Nibbāna* by getting through “three rounds” of bondages (*tiparivattaya*) to this world: “*tī*” means “three”, “*vattaya*” means “*vataya*” in Sinhala or “circle” in English.

- In section 8, it says, “..imesu chatūsu ariyasaccesu **evaṃ tiparivaṭṭan dvādasākāraṇ yathābhutan nāṇadassanan..**”. Here “*chatusu*” means “four” and “*ariyasaccesu*” of course means the “Noble Truths”. By comprehending the Four Noble Truths, one can overcome the three rounds of bondage and fulfill the 12 factors (“*dvadasakaran*”); these 12 factors will be discussed in a future post.

5. The three rounds of bondage are collectively called “*tiparivattaya*”. The first is to be released from the *satara apāya* (four lowest realms), via the *Sotāpanna* stage, by removing the wrong views about existence in the 31 realms.

- The second round is to be released from the *kāma loka* (realms 5 through 11, which include the human realm and 6 *deva* realms). This is achieved via two stages: At the *Sakadāgāmī* stage, one is released from births with bodies that are subjected to diseases, i.e., the five lowest realms (*satara apāya* and the human realms). Then, at the *Anāgāmī* stage, *kāma rāga* and *patigha* are completely removed and one is released from births anywhere in the *kāma loka*.
- At the third round, any linkage to anywhere in the 31 realms is removed by dissociating from all 20 *rupi* and *arupi Brahma* realms, and the mind becomes free of attachment to any trace of matter, and the *Arahant* stage is attained.

6. Section 11 is long and takes a significant part of the *sutta*. That section names the 6 *deva* realms and 15 out of 16 *rupi Brahma* realms. Most of this section has been truncated in many published versions of the *sutta*. However, this section is important for a couple of reasons.

- First, it clearly shows that the Buddha indeed described a “wider world” than experienced by us, consisting of 31 realms; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”.
- Second, it says that beings from many those realms were present when the Buddha delivered the *desanā* overnight (over many hours) to the five ascetics. Starting from the 6 *deva* realms, it lists 15 *rupi brahma* realms (except the *asanna* realms, where beings have only a physical body and thus cannot even listen to a *desanā*). It is said that numerous *devas* and *brahmas* attained various stages of *Nibbāna*.
- Section 11 starts with “*Bhummanan devānan saddam sutvā Cātummahārājikā devā sadda manussāvesun..*”. Here “*bhummanan devanan*” means “*bhumatta deva*”. They are part of the *Cātummahārājika deva* realm, but are located at the Earth’s surface with humans (even though we cannot see them). They first became aware of the *desanā* and notified their higher-lying main realm. Section 11 lists how the news progressively propagated to higher-lying realms and eventually *devas* from all those 21 realms came to listen to the *desanā*.
- As you can see those realms match the names listed in the following post on the web (note that all of them are referred to as *devas* in the *sutta*, regardless of whether they belong to the 6 *deva* realms or the *rupi brahma* realms):

[31 Realms of Existence](#)

- Of course, only 5 humans (the five ascetics) were present. Any being in the lowest four realms cannot comprehend Dhamma. Also, the *brahmas* in the 4 *arupi* realms do not have ears to

listen. Thus section 11 lists 21 realms. Not listed are the four lowest realms, *asanna* realm, and the four *arupi brahma* realms; they are named and described in many other *suttas*.

7. As I mentioned above, the *sutta* gives only a brief outline of the *desanā*. It was delivered over many hours, and the *sutta* is just an outline of that delivery.

- The *sutta* starts off with the customary “*Evaṃ me sutaṃ*” (thus I heard) uttered by Ven. Ananda at the *Dhamma Sangayana* where these *suttas* were categorized into sections in the *Tipitaka*.
- Section 1 is about the two extremes to be avoided: **kāmasukhallikānuyogo** (excess sense pleasures) and **attakilamathānuyogo** (engage in useless activities that makes one go through hardships).
- Note that both extremes are labelled “*anattasanhito*”. This means anyone who follows those two extremes are unaware of the “*anatta*” nature. Thus they have *saññā*, or perceptions, that will LEAD TO “*anatta*” or being helpless in the rebirth process.
- And they both are “*dukkho*” and “*anariyo*”: they will be subjected to suffering and thus they are not *Ariyas* or Noble Ones.
- In addition, the extreme of **kāmasukhallikānuyogo** is also labelled *hīno*, *gammo*, *pothujjaniko*. Here, “*hino*” means lowly; *gammo* means “uneducated” or “crass”. “*Pothu*” means bark or the outer shell of a tree trunk, and “*janika*” means to produce; thus a “*pothujjaniko*” means a person who is engaged in useless and unproductive activities. This is how the Buddha described those who value and crave sense pleasures.

8. Most people are in the **kāmasukhallikānuyogo** mode, even if not in extreme. In fact, one gets closer to “middle” as one progressively become a *Sotāpanna anugami*, *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmi*, *Anāgāmi*, and then the “middle” is found only at *Arahanthood*.

- Thus **majjhimā paṭipadā** has a deeper meaning than just “middle path”. One has to realize the dangers of “getting drunk” (“*majji*” or intoxicated with sense pleasures). Here, “*ma*” there means “getting release from”, just like in “*sammā*” means “*san*” + “*ma*”; see, “[What is ‘San?’ Meaning of Samsāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”.
- This is why the **kāmasukhallikānuyogo** mode has the additional “labels” of *hīno*, *gammo*, *pothujjaniko*. When one is “intoxicated” with sense pleasures, one becomes a *hīno*, *gammo*, *pothujjaniko*. And this mindset can be changed only by comprehending the “..Dhamma that has never been known to the world..” or “..**pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu**..”. This phrase is repeated many times in sections 4 through 7 for a reason.
- This is the reason why one cannot comprehend this Dhamma in a conventional way. One has to realize the true nature of the world: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.

Next post on the *sutta*, “[Majjima Patipada – Way to Relinquish Attachments to this World](#)”.

16.7.1. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta Text

Evaṃ me sutaṃ:

Ekaṃ samayaṃ Bhagavā **Bārāṇasiyaṃ viharati Isipatane Migadāye**. Tatra kho Bhagavā **pancavaggiye bhikkhū** āmantesi—

1. Dve me’, bhikkhave, antā pabbajitena **na sevita**bbā :

Katame dve:

i. Yo cāyaṃ kāmesu **kāmasukhallikānuyogo** —*hīno*, *gammo*, *pothujjaniko*, *anariyo*.

anattasanhito

ii. Yo cāyaṃ **attakilamathānuyogo** —*dukkho*, *anariyo* **anattasanhito** ,

ete te, bhikkhave, ubho ante anupagamma **majjhimā paṭipadā** Tathāgatena abhisambuddhā cakkhukaraṇī, ñāṇakaraṇī, upasamāya, abhiññāya, sambodhāya, nibbānāya sanvaṭṭati.

2. Katama ca sā, bhikkhave, majjhimā paṭipadā Tathāgatena abhisambuddhā—cakkhukaraṇī ñāṇakaraṇī, upasamāya, abhiññāya, sambodhāya, nibbānāya sanvaṭṭati?

Ayam’eva **ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo** —seyyathidan:— Sammā diṭṭhi, sammā saṅkappo, sammā vācā, sammā kammanto, sammā ājīvo, sammā vāyāmo, sammā sati, sammā samādhi.

Ayan kho sā, bhikkhave, majjhimā paṭipadā Tathāgatena abhisambuddhā—cakkhukaraṇī, ñāṇakaraṇī, upasamāya, abhiññāya, sambodhāya, nibbānāya sanvaṭṭati.

3. Idan kho pana, bhikkhave, dukkhan ariya saccan: — Jāti’pi dukkhā, jarā’pi dukkhā, vyādhi’pi dukkho, maraṇam’pi dukkhan, appiyehi sampayogo dukkho, piyehi vippayogo dukkho, yamp’icchan na labhati tam’pi dukkhan, saṅkhittena pañcupadānakkhandhā dukkhā.

Idan kho pana, bhikkhave, **dukkhasamudayan ariya saccan:** Yāyan taṇhā ponobhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatratatrābhinandinī—seyyathidan:— kāmataṇhā, bhavataṇhā, vibhavataṇhā.

Idan kho pana, bhikkhave, **dukkhanirodhan ariya saccan:** Yo tassā yeva taṇhāya asesavirāganirodho, chāgo, paṇinissaggo, mutti, anālayo.

Idan kho pana, bhikkhave, **dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā ariya saccan:** — Ayameva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo—seyyathidan:—sammā diṭṭhi, sammā saṅkappo, sammā vācā, sammā kammanto, sammā ājīvo, sammā vāyāmo, sammā sati, sammā samādhi.

4. (i) Idan dukkhan ariyasaccan’ti me, bhikkhave, **pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.**

(ii) Tan kho pan’idan dukkhan ariyasaccan **pariññeyyan’ti me,** bhikkhave, **pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā, udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.**

(iii) Tan kho pan’idaṃ dukkhan ariyasaccan **pariññātan’ti me,** bhikkhave, **pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.**

5. (i) **Idaṃ dukkhasamudayan ariyasaccan'ti me**, bhikkhave, pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.

(ii) Tan kho pan'idan dukkhasamudayan ariya saccan **pahātabban'ti me**, bhikkhave, pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.

(iii) Tan kho pan'idaṃ, dukkhasamudayan ariyasaccan **pahīnan'ti me**, bhikkhave, pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.

6. (i) **Idaṃ dukkhanirodhan ariyasaccan'ti me**, bhikkhave, pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.

(ii) Tan kho pan'idan dukkhanirodhan ariyasaccan **sacchikātabban'ti me**, bhikkhave, pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.

(iii) Tan kho pan'idan dukkhanirodhan ariyasaccan **sacchikatan'ti me**, bhikkhave, pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.

7. (i) **Idaṃ dukkha nirodhagāmini paṭipadā ariyasaccan'ti me**, bhikkhave, pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.

(ii) Tan kho pan'idan dukkha nirodhagāminī paṭipadā ariya saccan **bhāvetabban'ti me**, bhikkhave, pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.

(iii) Tan kho pan'idan, dukkha nirodhagāminī paṭipadā ariyasaccaṃ **bhāvitān'ti me**, bhikkhave, pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi.

8. Yāvakīvaṇca

me, bhikkhave, imesu chatūsu ariyasaccesu **evaṃ tiparivaṭṭan dvādasākāran yathābhūtan ñāṇadassanan na** suvisuddhaṃ ahosi, **neva** tāv'āhan, **bhikkhave**, sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya anuttaran sammā sambodhin abhisambuddho paccaññāsin.

Yato ca kho me, bhikkhave, imesu chatūsu ariyasaccesu **evaṃ tiparivaṭṭan dvādasākāran yathābhūtan ñāṇadassanan** suvisuddhan ahosi, **ath'**āham, bhikkhave, sadevake loke samārake sabrahmaniya pajāya sadevamanussāya anuttaran sammā sambodhin abhisambuddho paccaññāsin.

Nāṇaṇ ca pana me dassanan udapādi, akuppā me chetovimutti a yaṃantimā jāti, natthi' dāni punabbhavo'ti.

Ida ma vo ca Bhagavā. Attamanā pañcavaggiyā bhikkhū Bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandun'ti.

9. Imasmiṇca pana veyyākaraṇasmin bhañṇamāne āyasmato Koṇḍañṇassa virajan vītamalan **dhammacakkhun udapādi** —yan kiñci samudayadhamman sabban tan nirodhadhamman'ti.

10. Pavattite ca pana Bhagavatā dhammacakke bhumṃ devā sadda manussāvesun: **Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan** appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

11. Bhumṃanan devānan saddam sutvā **Cātummahārājikā devā** sadda manussāvesun. Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyaṃ Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

Cātummahārājikānan devānan saddam sutvā **Tāvātinsā** devā sadda manussāvesun Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

Tāvātinsānan devānan saddam sutvā **Yāmā devā** sadda manussāvesun Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

Yamanan devanan saddam sutva **Tusitā devā** sadda manussāvesun. Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

Tusitanan devanan saddam sutva **Nimmānaratī deva** sadda manussāvesun. Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

Nimmanratinan devanan saddam sutva **Paranimmitavasavattī devā** sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Paranimmitavasavattīnan devānan](#) saddam sutva [Brahma Parisajja deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Brahma Parisajjanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Brahma Purohita deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Brahma Purohitanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Mahā Brahma deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Mahā Brahmanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Parittabha deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Parittabhanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Appamanabha deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Appamanabhanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Abhassara deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Abhassaranan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Paritta Subha deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Paritta Subhanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Appamana Subha deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Appamana Subhanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Subha kinhaka deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Subha kinhakanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Vehappala deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Vehappalanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Aviha deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Avihanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Atappa deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Atappanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Sudassa deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Sudassanan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Sudassi deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

[Sudassinan devanan](#) saddam sutva [Akanittakha deva](#) sadda manussāvesun.

Etan Bhagavatā Bārāṇasiyan Isipatane Migadāye anuttaran dhammacakkan pavattitan appativattiyan samaṇena vā brāhmaṇena vā devena vā mārena vā brahmunā vā kenaci vā lokasmin'ti.

12. Itiha tenakkhaṇena tena muhuttana yāva brahmalokā saddo abbhūgañchi. Ayañca dasasahassī lokadhātu saṅkampi sampakampi sampavedhi. Appamāṇo cā ulāro obhāso loke pāturahosi. Atikkamma devānaṃ devānubhāvan ti.

13. Atha kho **Bhagavā udānan udānesi**: — **Aññāsi vata bho Kondañño, aññāsi vata bho Koṇḍañño'ti**. Iti h'idaṃ āyasmato Koṇḍañña Aññā Kondañño tve'va nāman aho'si'ti.

End of Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

16.7.2 Majjima Patipada – Way to Relinquish Attachments to this World

January 22, 2016; Revised January 23, 2016 (#9)

Please read the first post on the Dhammacakkappavattana sutta (also called Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta) before reading this second post: “[Dhammacakkappavatta Sutta – Introduction](#)”.

1. In almost all English translations, *majjima patipada* is termed the “middle path”. This gives the impression that all one needs to do is to avoid extreme sense pleasures and extreme hardships for the body. We will continue our analysis of the *sutta* from the previous post, and see that the Buddha meant something totally different.

- Many Pāli words have two meanings: conventional (mundane) and transcendental (*lokottara*). We saw that the Noble Eightfold Path can be interpreted either way: “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)” or “[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#)”. As I explained in “[Sutta - Introduction](#)”, I believe this was a strategy by the Buddha to facilitate at least the conventional transmission of the *Tipitaka* during times when *Ariyas* (Noble Persons) are few in number to explain the *lokottara* meanings of key Pāli words.
- Thus *majjima patipada* is “middle path” in the conventional sense; and it is a good first step. But the *lokottara* meaning is much different, and this *sutta* lays out the basic structure of how to explain the deeper meanings. Throughout his 45 years of his ministry, Buddha explained the details in various ways.
- One *lokottara* meaning of *majjima patipada* is to “avoid being intoxicated by sense pleasures”; see, “[Need to Experience Suffering in Order to Understand it?](#)”. Here we will examine It in detail to show that it is a gradual process: High levels of intoxication is removed via removing *micca diṭṭhi* when attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage. After that, lower and lower intoxication levels removed as one gains more wisdom in steps.
- We will follow the text of the *sutta* in this text: [Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta Text](#)

2. First, I want to emphasize what is meant by “relinquish” in the title. It means “voluntarily giving up” and NOT to give up attachments to this world by sheer will or force. This is something most people do not comprehend either. **The mind will not give up things that it considers pleasurable, unless there is a good reason.**

- Those reasons are what Buddha Dhamma is all about. One becomes a *Sotāpanna* by truly comprehending why it is not only unfruitful, but also DANGEROUS to attach to things that one perceives to be pleasurable. But even a *Sotāpanna* only has “seen” the truth of the “*anicca* nature” of this world of 31 realms.
- The actual “giving up” comes next, when one slowly start “giving up” voluntarily and progress through the next two stages of *Sakadāgāmī* and *Anāgāmī*, and eventually gives up all attachments at the *Arahant* stage.
- Thus one does not need to worry about giving up ANYTHING until reaching the *Sotāpanna* stage. Giving up happens automatically when one realizes the true nature of this world.

3. In the first phrase of section 2 of the above pdf, it says, “*Bhikkhus*, what is the *majjima patipada* declared by the *Tathagatha* (Buddha) that leads to the vision, wisdom, calming down, special knowledges (*abhiññā*), comprehend “*san*” (*sambodhi*), and to *Nibbāna*?”

- “It is the Noble Eightfold Path: *Sammā diṭṭhi*, *sammā sankappa*, *sammā vaca*, *sammā kammanta*, *sammā ajīva*, *sammā vayama*, *sammā sati*, *sammā samādhi*”.
- In the third phrase he affirms that it is indeed the Path or the *majjima patipada*.

4. In section 3, the Four Noble Truths are **briefly stated** (*uddesa*; see, “[Sutta -Introduction](#)”), and each can be described in detail filling thousands of books, depending on the level of detail.

- First, suffering is: “*Jāti’pi dukkhā, jarā’pi dukkhā,...*”. This phrase we have already analyzed in “[Does the First Noble Truth Describe only Suffering?](#)”, among others.
- The next phrase succinctly states the causes for suffering (*dukkha samudhaya*): “the root cause is *taṇhā*. The tendency to attach to various things (*yayan taṇhā*), make *bhava* (*ponobhavita*) through valuing such things (*nandiraga*) and giving priority to them (*abhinandani*). These things are: craving for sense pleasures (*kāma taṇhā*), *bhava taṇhā*, and *vibhava taṇhā*”. The three types of *taṇhā* are discussed at: “[Kāma Taṇhā, Bhava Taṇhā, Vibhava Taṇhā](#)”.
- The third phrase is the truth about how to eliminate those causes: “By removing *taṇhā* without a trace (*yeva taṇhāya asesa-virāga-nirodho*), by giving without expecting anything back (*chago*), by cutting off all bonds (*paṭinissaggo*), by becoming un-entangled (*mutti*), by removing all attachments (*anālayo*)”.
- And the fourth is the way to do that, i.e., via the Noble Eightfold Path that was stated in #3 above.
- There are other posts that further describe above four Noble Truths in more detail. You can use the “Search” box on top right or scan the “[Pure Dhamma – Sitemap](#)” to locate relevant posts. There are so many ways to present the material.

5. Sections 4 through 7 state how the Buddha attained the Buddhahood via comprehending — through *paticca samuppāda* — the *tiparivattaya* (three walls of bondage to this world) that has never been known to the world (except during the times of previous Buddhas): “*.pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu..*”.

- We discussed the term *tiparivattaya* or the “three rounds of bondage” briefly in the previous post. We will discuss it in more detail in the next post.
- I would like to first discuss the term, “*.pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu cakkhun udapādi, ñāṇan udapādi, paññā udapādi, vijjā udapādi, āloko udapādi..*”.

6. When the Buddha attained the Buddhahood via comprehending this Dhamma that has never been known to world, five special knowledges arose in him at that moment: *cakkhu*, *ñāṇa*, *paññā*, *vijjā*, and *aloka*.

- Here “*cakkhu*” is the “Dhamma eye”, the ability to “see” the true nature of this world. We can loosely translate *ñāṇa* and *paññā* as “knowledge” and “wisdom”.
- The next one is “*vijjā*” (the Sanskrit word is “*vidyā*”). This is the “ultimate science” about the world, what I called the “[Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)”. A Buddha Is the greatest scientist that comes to world very infrequently.
- Simultaneously with the comprehension of *vijjā*, one is totally removed from “this material world” or “*aloka*” (“*a*” + “*lōka*”). The word “*aloka*” has other meanings, including “light”, which we will discuss later.

7. Those five factors arise simultaneously in a Buddha upon attaining the Buddhahood, but all others attain them in stages. For a normal human being:

- “*Cakkhun udapadi*” or “arising of the Dhamma eye” occurs upon attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage, i.e., *sammā diṭṭhi*.

- “*Nanan udapadi*” takes place upon attaining the *Sakadāgāmī* stage.
- “*Paññā udapadi*” takes place upon attaining the *Anāgāmī* stage.
- “*Vijja udapadi*” takes place upon attaining the *Arahant* stage, where “*aloko udapadi*” takes place simultaneously.

8. In section 9, it is stated, “..āyasmato **Koṇḍañña** virajan vītamalan **dhammacakkhun udapādi**—**yan kiñci samudayadhamman sabban tan nirodhadhamman’ti**”.

- Upon hearing this first *desanā*, the ascetic Kondanna became a *Sotāpanna* and , “**dhamma cakkhun udapadi**” or “Dhamma eye arose in him”.
- The next part of the phrase, “**yan kiñci samudayadhamman sabban tan nirodhadhamman’ti**” states what that Dhamma eye grasped: “any Dhamma that gives rise to this world (*samudaya dhamma*), is a Dhamma that can be eliminated (i.e., it is a *nirodha dhamma*)”.
- Thus at the *Sotāpanna* stage, one can “see” how this “*nirodha*” is done. Actually doing it leads to the next stages *Nibbāna*, and eventually to the *Arahanthood*.
- One gets to *Sotāpanna* stage (overcoming the first round of the *tiparivattaya*) by comprehending the wider world view, and by seeing the fruitlessness of “high levels of intoxication” just through that understanding.

9. When a *Sotāpanna* acquires the second knowledge (“*Nanan udapadi*”), that is when he/she really “**STARTS to see the *anicca* nature a bit more by cutting through apparent pleasures of world with the Dhamma eye**”. This process continues through the next phase “*Paññā udapadi*” when one is able to really see the adverse effects and the dangers of any sense pleasures and attains the *Anāgāmī* stage.

- Thus, as you can see, the actual “giving up” happens in a gradual and natural way. One does not need to, and one should not try to, give up sense pleasures by sheer will power (except of course those acts that are called “*pāpa kamma*” i.e., that lead to the suffering of other beings).
- For example, one does not need to feel guilty about eating a nice meal, having a nice house to live in, etc. Those are the results of previous good *kamma vipāka*. But what one needs to do is to reduce the CRAVING for such things by comprehending the *anicca* nature of this world, i.e., by learning Dhamma and by contemplating. Whatever cravings/desires that one had truly seen to be “fruitless” would have disappeared from one’s mind.
- I can give a simple example from my experience. A few years ago, my wife and I noticed that we had not watched television for many weeks. We decided it was pointless to keep paying for the cable service and cancelled the service (We still read news on the internet). Thus we had not deliberately stopped watching television. We had gradually stopped watching even without us noticing it for several weeks. Of course, there have been more changes like that since then. I just wanted to mention this to emphasize that Buddha Dhamma is not just a theory; it can be experienced: “...sanditthiko, akaliko, ehipassiko..”.
- Many of you may wonder why is it a good thing to stop watching TV (“that is something I enjoy after a hard day at work”). But that is a perception we all get used to. I remember being very agitated at night watching TV coverage of the 2008 US presidential election season. We realized that it was “more enjoyable” to listen or read Dhamma.
- **Please note that I am not saying that one needs to stop watching TV to attain *magga phala*, or that one who has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage would necessarily not watch TV.** There was a *Sotāpanna* (named Sarakani) during the time of the Buddha who could not give up his drinking habit as I mentioned in another post. Only at the *Anāgāmī stage that one gives up *kāma rāga* (sense pleasures) as mentioned above*. But each person could reduce or even give up some sense pleasures upon attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage, depending on one’s personality (*gathi*).

10. I also would like to point out that one should not restrict one's time just to learn Dhamma. One should also engage in meritorious deeds and make homage to the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha as well. Those activities help get the mind to a state suitable to receive and comprehend Dhamma.

- This is a subtle aspect that was discussed in the “[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#)“, and a few other posts. Just like a seed needs suitable conditions (soil, water, sunlight, etc) to germinate and grow, one needs to make necessary conditions for the mind to be receptive to deep and subtle concepts by doing meritorious deeds that makes one's mind joyful and calm. Engaging in giving (*dāna*) and living a moral life (*seela*) help enormously with *bhāvanā* (contemplation and comprehension).

16.7.3 Tiparivattaya and Twelve Types of Nana (Knowledge)

January 29, 2016

1. We discussed the *tiparivattaya* (three rounds of bondage) briefly in the post “[Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta – Introduction](#)“. Here we will discuss it in bit more depth.

- We remind ourselves that the Buddha delivered this *sutta* to the five ascetics right after attaining the Buddhahood. It is widely known that the five ascetics were first reluctant to believe that the ascetic Siddhartha had actually attained the Buddhahood.
- If those five ascetics, who were with the ascetic Siddhartha for five years, could not even believe Buddha's own words, then how can any of us figure out whether another person has attained *magga phala*? Some people ask me whether there is a way to know some other person has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage. Unless that person declares it, there is no way to know. Even then, there is no way to verify it. Now let us get back to the *sutta*.

2. There were three types of knowledges (per each of the three rounds in the *tiparivattaya*) that arose in the Buddha per each of the Four Noble Truths, as declared them in sections 4 through 7 of the *sutta*. We will follow the text of the *sutta*: [Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta Text](#)

- Of course the Buddha attained all 12 types of knowledges together upon attaining the Buddhahood, but we (normal humans) attain them in stages.

3. First is the knowledge about the suffering in the wider world of 31 realms, as stated in section 4(i) [**Idan dukkhan ariyasaccan'ti me**]. This was a Dhamma had that never been known to the world. This is what a normal human comprehends when he/she attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, and overcomes the first round of bondage in the three rounds (*tiparivattaya*), i.e., becomes free of rebirths in the *apāyas*.

- Then that knowledge becomes even more clear when one starts to lose attachments to this world. This is the second round of *tiparivattaya* that is grasped at the *sakadāgāmī* stage and is intensified at the *Anāgāmī* stage for a human being. The key word is “**pariññeyyan'ti**“, which means “seeing with less biases for sense cravings” or “*pirisindha*” (“*piri*” or liking + “*sindha*” or removed in Sinhala). Thus with the *Anāgāmī* stage, one is released from rebirths in the *kāma loka* (i.e, overcome the second round of *tiparivattaya*). [**pariññeyya**: [nt.] what should be known accurately]
- The last round is when “seeing” is done with all sense attachments removed, as stated by “**pariññātan'ti**“. This happens to a human when attaining the *Arahant* stage. But here it is stated, “**pariññātan'ti mé**“, as stated by the Buddha, where “**mé**” means “I”. This will become more clear in section 8. [**pariññāta**: [pp. of *parijānāti*] known for certain; comprehended; known accurately.]
- These three types of knowledges are about the First Noble Truth, *dukkha sacca*.

4. Section 5 describes three knowledges for Second Noble Truth, the causes for suffering (*dukkha samudhaya*). By the way, the Four Noble Truths are succinctly stated in Section 3.

- That the root cause for suffering was “*taṇhā*” or attachments was grasped at the first round of the *tiparivattaya*. This is the knowledge a *Sotāpanna* acquires simultaneously with round 1 for

dukkha sacca. See, “[Tanhā – How We Attach Via Greed, Hate, and Ignorance](#)” for a discussion on *tanhā*. [**Idaṃ dukkhasamudayan ariyasaccan’ti me**]

- In the second round, a deeper level of the **root causes** is realized by “seeing with less biases for sense cravings” or “*pirisindha*” (“*piri*” or liking + “*sindha*” or removed in Sinhala): “**pahātabban’ti**”, where “*paha*” means “to remove”. For a normal human, this knowledge comes in two stages of *Sakadāgāmī* and *Anāgāmī*. [**pahātabba**: which must be discarded, to be eliminated.]
- In the third round, when a normal human attains the *Arahant* stage, one realizes without any doubt that any type of *tanhā* is a cause for suffering: “**pahīnan’ti**”. [**pahīna**: [pp. of pajahati] eliminated; abandoned; destroyed.]
- These three types of knowledges are about the Second Noble Truth, *dukkha samudhaya sacca*.

5. Section 6 describes the three knowledges for Third Noble Truth, stopping causes for suffering (*dukkha nirodhaya*).

- That the causes for suffering need to be removed was grasped at the first round of the *tiparivattaya*. As stated in section 3: “..*Yo tassā yeva tanhāya asesavirāga-nirodho, chāgo, paṭinissaggo, mutti, anālayo*..”. This was discussed in the previous post, “[Majjima Patipada – Way to Relinquish Attachments to this World](#)”. At the first round, this is grasped at a preliminary level. [**Idaṃ dukkhanirodhan ariyasaccan’ti me**]
- In the second round, this is seen gradually at deeper levels, i.e., “seeing with less biases for sense cravings” or “*pirisindha*” (“*piri*” or liking + “*sindha*” or removed in Sinhala): “**sacchikātabban’ti**”. For a normal human, this knowledge comes in two stages of *Sakadāgāmī* and *Anāgāmī*, when one actually starts seeing the perils of *kāma rāga*. [**sacchikātabba**: [pt. p. of sacchikaroti] realising.]
- In the third round, one realizes without any doubt that any type of *tanhā* must be removed: “**sacchikatan’ti**”. [**sacchikata**: [pp. of sacchikaroti] realised; experienced for oneself.]

6. The way to accomplish this *nirodhaya* is grasped at the final three rounds, as stated in section 7.

- The Noble Eightfold Path is first grasped at the first round. For a normal human, this knowledge is gained when attaining the *Sotāpanna* stage. One “sees” the Path through the “Dhamma eye”. An enormous amount of defilements are removed just with this “clear vision”. [**Idaṃ dukkha nirodhagāmini paṭipadā ariyasaccan’ti me**] [**dukkha nirodhagāmini paṭipadā** = **magga**] [**nirodha**: [m.] extinction; cessation; the final truth.] [**paṭipadā**, (f.) [fr. *paṭi*+*pad*] means of reaching a goal or destination, path, way, means, method, mode of progress.]
- Then in the second round, it is realized that one must cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path (*bhāvanā*) to remove the root causes: **bhāvetabban’ti** [**bhāvetabba**: [pt. p. of bhāveti] should be cultivated.]
- In the third round, it is realized that one has completed that task, and there is nothing else to be done: **bhāvitān’ti** [**bhāvita**: [pp. of bhāveti] increased; cultivated; developed.]
- However, as I mentioned above, all 12 types of knowledge arose in the Buddha simultaneously, upon attaining the Buddhahood.

7. In section 8, the Buddha says: “I had NOT previously declared the Buddhahood since I had not attained all types of knowledge..”. Here, “**na suvisuddhaṃ ahosi**” means “had **not** accomplished it completely”.

- In the next phrase the Buddha declares that he has now done that (**suvisuddhaṃ ahosi**), and that he is declaring to the “.. world of humans, *devas*, *brahmas*,..” that he has attained the Buddhahood.
- In the next phrase, he declares: “the vision arose in me (**dassanan udapādi**) , unmovable calm mindset arose in me (**akuppā me chetovimutti**), this is my last birth (**ayaṃ antimā jāti**), and there will be no more *bhava* for me (**natthi’ dāni punabbhavo**)”.

- Lastly: “*Ida ma vo ca Bhagavā*”: “Thus declared the Buddha“. Now the next few pages of the *sutta* consist of general statements.

8. In section 9, it is stated that one of the five ascetics, Kondanna, attained the *Sotāpanna* stage at the conclusion of the *desanā*. This section was discussed in the previous post, “[Majjima Patipada – Way to Relinquish Attachments to this World](#)“.

- Then those *devas* and *brahmas* who attended the *desanā* are described in a repetitive manner; see, “[Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta – Introduction](#)“.

9. **The important thing to understand is that one needs to go through these stages sequentially** (only a Buddha goes through them at once). Some people try to get rid “the perception of a self” even before the *Sotāpanna* stage. A “self” is going to be there until any kind of “*gathī*” are still there. When “*apāya gathī*” are removed at the *Sotāpanna* stage, one overcomes the first stage. “*Kāma gathī*” are reduced at the *Sakadāgāmī* stage, and removed at the *Anāgāmī* stage in overcoming the second round of bondage.

- The two *sanyojana* of *māna* (the perception that “I need to be treated well because I am superior in some way”) and *uddacca* (the tendency to get at least irritated when not treated as expected) go away only at the *Arahant* stage together with the other three *sanyojana* of *rūpa rāga*, *arūpa rāga*, and *avijjā*.
- But it is to be noted that the levels of *māna*, *uddacca*, *avijjā* that an *Anāgāmī* has, are at much reduced level. They are gradually decreased through various stages of *Nibbāna* and are eliminated at the *Arahant* stage.
- Thus the critical step is to understand the nature of the wider world of 31 realms and get through the first round of bondage (and be released from rebirths in the *apāyas*) where the dangers are the highest. The only way to do that is to learn and contemplate the true and pure Dhamma. **Relinquishing sense pleasures comes naturally after that.** trying to give up sense pleasures forcefully before the *Sotāpanna* stage will only lead to frustration.

10. A normal human, no matter how intelligent, cannot grasp the dangers of existence in the wider world of 31 realms because of various forms of wrong views or *micca diṭṭhi*. A Buddha discovers the existence of those realms and the unbearable suffering encountered (especially in the *apāyas*).

- Until one gets rid of the those wrong views and attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, it is impossible to “clearly see” the dangers of sense cravings.

11. Now we can also see why a *sutta* cannot be translated word by word. Only the key ideas are listed in a *sutta*, which need to be described in detail to grasp the content. This *sutta* was delivered overnight, but is summarized in a few pages.

- The Buddha must have described what we discussed here plus much more during the several hours of delivery of the *sutta*. In the next post, we will try to discuss some details making connection to concepts that we have already discussed in other sections.
- As we have seen, the same holds for other *suttas* and for *paticca samuppāda*. Just listing the eleven steps in *paticca samuppāda* will have no benefit. The steps in *paticca samuppāda* must be detailed according to each individual *paticca samuppāda* cycle of relevance (*akusala-mūla*, *kusala-mūla*, etc) even though the steps are recited almost the same way.

16.7.4 Relinquishing Defilements via Three Rounds and Four Stages

February 4, 2016

Here we will try to link the concepts like *tiparivattaya* in the *sutta* to other basic concepts that we have discussed in other sections throughout the site. I want to emphasize that “relinquish” means “giving up voluntarily, through acquired wisdom”. When one acquires wisdom, one realizes that defilements arise due to cravings for sense pleasures; the real danger is when cravings for sense pleasures lead to bad *kamma* (such as killing) that makes one eligible for the *apāyas*.

1. First, it should be clear that while the Buddha gained all 12 types of knowledges at once in attaining the Buddhahood, a normal human being will go through the *tiparivattaya* (or the three rounds of bondage) via four stages of *Nibbāna*. We can compare this to building a new complex structure.

- A *Sotāpanna* overcomes the first round by gaining the basic knowledges on the Four Noble Truths: what suffering is, the causes for suffering, stopping the causes from taking place, and the way to stop causes. It is seeing the plan to construct a building. All the details are there.
- The *Sakadāgāmi* stage can be compared to actually starting to build the building. Once the framework of the building is done, the next stage is to complete the basic structure, which can be compared to the efforts of an *Anāgāmi*.
- Then when the building is all finished with the finer details, that is like attaining the *Arahant* stage. There is nothing more to be done.

2. Even though the above analogy gives the basic idea, we need to examine it in more detail. It is actually the *Sotāpanna Anugami* (one who is striving to become a *Sotāpanna*) who does the bulk of the work to learn the necessary background on “how to design and build the building”.

- And he/she cannot do that without learning the key fundamentals from one who has gone through at least one of the three rounds (or the four stages), i.e., a *Sotāpanna Anugami* must learn the true nature of the world from an *Ariya* (at least a *Sotāpanna*). There are several posts on this that one can find by doing a keyword search or by looking through the posts under “[Sotāpanna stage of Nibbāna](#)”.

3. Just by having learned the true nature of this world (*anicca, dikkha, anatta*), a *Sotāpanna Anugami* gradually removes a bulk of defilements and attains the *Sotāpanna* stage; at this stage he/she can clearly see the Path to the *Arahanthood*, i.e., what needs to be done.

- When he/she gets rid of *micca diṭṭhi* by comprehending that it is not possible to achieve AND maintain ANYTHING to one’s satisfaction, he/she attains the *Sotāpanna* stage. It is important to note that he/she did not have to remove any attachments BY FORCE. **All he/she did was to comprehend Dhamma to the level to see not only the unfruitfulness but the dangers of the rebirth process.**
- However, in order for the mind to grasp that it has to be devoid of the extreme levels of greed (*lōbha*), hate (*dōsa*), and that leads to gradual reduction of total ignorance (*mōha*) via learning the true message of the Buddha, i.e., one needs to see the dangers in acting with *lōbha, dōsa, mōha*.
- One cannot grasp the dangers of the rebirth process if one does not believe that the four lowest realms with unimaginable suffering exists. **Those who are striving to become Sotapannas need to carefully read about what constitutes *micca diṭṭhi***, for example, “[Key to Sotāpanna Stage – Diṭṭhi and Vicikicca](#)”.

4. When one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, one reduces *lōbha* (extreme greed), *dōsa* (extreme hate), and *mōha* (extreme ignorance) to the levels of *rāga* (attachment to worldly pleasures), *patigha* (tendency to become irritated when one does not get one wants), and *avijjā* (not fully knowing the true nature of the world). These terms are discussed in “[Lobha, Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#)”.

- By going through this first round of the *tiparivattaya*, a *Sotāpanna* removes the bulk of defilements as described in another post. This illustrates **how one is capable of doing immoral acts that makes one to be eligible for the *apāyas***, just because one has *micca diṭṭhi*.
- It is important to realize that there are many people with *micca diṭṭhi* who go through their lives without doing any such horrible acts. **However, the possibility to do such an act remains with one through future lives until one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage; this is what is meant by *anusaya*, the hidden defilements. They can be removed only via learning and comprehending Dhamma.**

5. What is the reason that a *Sotāpanna* WILL NOT do any highly immoral act that makes him/her eligible to be born in the *apāyas*? It is not something he/she does by thinking through. When one truly comprehends the *anicca* nature, then it sinks into one's mind that no matter what one can gain by doing such an act, it is going to far more dire consequences in the future. Not only that, but “what is the point of harming another being for anything in this world that one will have to eventually give up anyway?”.

- For example, one may kill someone and get a million dollars without getting caught, and may live a luxurious life. But he/she will pay for it by being born in the *apāyas* for millions of years to come.
- When one comprehends the *anicca* nature, one realizes deep down the foolishness (and the dangers) of such acts. The *anusaya* (craving) for such acts will be removed when one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage, and one would have removed such “*gathi*” or character without a trace left. Again, there are many posts on these concepts.

6. The second round of the *tiparivattaya* is tackled in by a *Sotāpanna* to first become a *Sakadāgāmī*, and then to become an *Anāgāmī*. An *Angami* has gone through the second round.

- Remember that a *Sotāpanna* has reduced *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha* to the levels of *rāga*, *patigha*, and *avijjā*; see #4 above. *Raga* means the attachments for things in this world, which are three basic types: (i) *Kāma rāga* means attachment to sense pleasures, i.e., those available in *kāma loka*. (ii) *Rūpa rāga* means attachment to *jhānic* pleasures in *rūpa loka*, and (iii) *Arūpa rāga* means attachment to *jhānic* pleasures in *arūpa loka*.
- *Kāma rāga* is actually of two “strengths”: “*klesha kāma*” means attachment to sense pleasures, and “*vatthu kāma*” (“*vattu*” means “property”) is stronger because one also wants to own such sense objects.
- When a *Sotāpanna* sees the perils of sense pleasures and the tendency to angry (*patigha*), both *kāma rāga* and *patigha* are first reduced to the levels of a *Sakadāgāmī*; here, one actually loses the “*vatthu kāma*” completely. Thus, a *Sakadāgāmī* is said to be “healthy forever” because he will never be born with a body that is subject to diseases, i.e., he will never be born at or below the human realm.
- As one sees the perils of *kāma asvada* starting at the *Sotāpanna* stage, one begins to see the world more clearly; see, “[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana – Introduction](#)”.

7. A *Sakadāgāmī* makes more progress via contemplating the drawbacks or perils (*adeenava*) of sense pleasures, and overcomes the second round of bondage to become an *Anāgāmī*. Thus at this stage one eliminates the “*klesha kāma*” component of the *kāma rāga*, AND remainder of *patigha*.

- Thus an *Anāgāmī* has given up all attachments to the *kāma loka* (those including the human and *deva* realms), and thus will not be born anywhere in *kāma loka*.

8. Now we can see that an *Anāgāmī* has only the *rūpa rāga* and *arūpa rāga* remaining with him/her (which are low levels of greed). There is no trace of hate (*dōsa*) or friction (*patigha*) left, and thus only rebirths in the *brahma realms* are possible. Of course, there is still some of *avijjā* left too.

- When an *Anāgāmī* overcomes those remaining defilements from his/her mind, the mind becomes totally purified and one attains the *Arahant* stage of *Nibbāna* by overcoming the third round of the *tiparivattaya*.

9. We are bound to the unending cycle of rebirths via ten fetters called “*sanyōjana* = “san+yōjana”; see, “[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#)”; *yojana* means bond. *Sanyojana* is sometimes called *samyojana*.

- These ten *sanyojana* (or *samyojana*) are also gradually removed as one goes through the three rounds or *tiparivattaya* in four stages.
- At the *Sotāpanna* stage, one removes the two *sanyojana* of *sathkaya diṭṭhi* and *silabbata paramasa* by removing *micca diṭṭhi*, and also removes the *vicikicca sanyojana* that is associated with *mōha*, and thus reduces *mōha* to *avijjā*.

- At the *Sakadāgāmi* stage, one reduces the two *sanyojana* of *kāma rāga* and *patigha*, and those two completely removed by attaining the *Anāgāmi* stage.
- In terms of *sanyojana*, an *Anāgāmi* has five left to remove: *rūpa rāga*, *arūpa rāga*, *māna*, *uddacca*, and *avijjā*. When those are removed, one attains the *Arahanthood*.
- Thus we can see that there are many types of analyses one can do. They all mean the same thing at the end: one needs to first comprehend the three characteristics of this world (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*) to some extent to reach the *Sotāpanna* stage by overcoming the first round of *tiparivattaya*. Then going through the second and third rounds of bondage via the next three stages of *Nibbāna* leads to the complete comprehension of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, which automatically leads to stopping the *sansaric* journey filled with so much suffering.

10. It should also be clear that this whole journey is a mission of seeking the truth about this world of 31 realms. The more one understands the true nature, one's mind AUTOMATICALLY gives up attachments to this world VOLUNTARILY.

- This is why *majjima patipada* is not just “middle path” as discussed in a previous post in this series: “[Majjima Patipada – Way to Relinquish Attachments to this World](#)”.

11. Thus, now we can see that the *Dhammacakkappavattana sutta* (or *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana sutta*) gives the blueprint of what Buddha Dhamma is all about. What the Buddha did in the following 45 years was to describe this blueprint in detail in various ways.

- One could scan through all the posts at: [Pure Dhamma – Sitemap](#)

16.8 Na Cetanākaraniya Sutta

May 21, 2018; revised May 23, 2018

1. “*Na Cētanākaraniya Sutta*” is the correct name of the *sutta*, NOT “*Cētanākaraniya Sutta*” as it entitled at several websites including the Sutta Central website: “[WebLink: suttacentral: Cetanākaraniyasutta \(AN 11.2\)](#)”. The English translation there is entitled accordingly and erroneously: “Making a Wish”.

- *Cetana* is what one intends or wishes; *karaniya* means “what one should do”, and “*na*” means “not”. What the *sutta* is teaching is “Just by wishing such and such one will not get to *Nibbāna*”.
- The correct title appears in the Pāli/Sinhala Buddha JayanathiTipitaka Series XXIII, *Anguttara Nikāya* (Part 6, p.586).
- Therefore, the English title of the *sutta* should be something like “Making a Wish Will Not Work”.

2. It is a fairly short *sutta*. So, I decided to translate the full *sutta* and put it side-by-side with the Pāli version, so that one can see how it is translated.

- As mentioned above, there is no point in just chanting or repeating to oneself, “May I be free of this, May I be that”, etc.
- One needs to map out what needs to be done to stop future suffering and follow that path. There are no easy solutions like sitting down in a quiet place and just chanting or even meditating, even though that should be a part of the whole process.
- This step-by-step process is summarized clearly in the *sutta*.
- I have put in bold every other verse, so it would be easier to match the English and Pāli verses.

“For a person engaged in moral conduct (*sila*), *“Sīlavato, bhikkhave, sīlasampannassa na and is thus moral and virtuous, there is no cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ: ‘avippaṭisāro me need to wish (cetanā): ‘May I be able to act upparijjatū’ ti. Dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ silavato sīlasampannassa avippaṭisāro with a calm mind’’. It is in the nature of things that agitation of the mind does not arise in a upparijjati.* person engaged in *sila*, and is virtuous.

“For a person free from an agitated mind, *Avippaṭisārissa, bhikkhave, na cetanāya there is no need to wish (cetanā): ‘May karaṇīyaṃ: ‘pāmojjaṃ me upparijjatū’ ti. happiness arise in me’’. It is in the nature of Dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ avippa- things that happiness (tranquility) arises in a ṭisārissa pāmojjaṃ upparijjati.* person free from agitation in the mind.

“For a person with happiness (tranquility of mind), *Pamuditassa, bhikkhave, na cetanāya there is no need to wish (cetanā): ‘May karaṇīyaṃ: ‘pīti me upparijjatū’ ti. Dhammatā joy arise in me’’. It is in the nature of things that esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ pamuditassa pīti upparijjati.* joy arises in a person with a peaceful mind.

“For a joyful person, *Pīṭimanassa, bhikkhave, na cetanāya there is no need to wish (cetanā): ‘May karaṇīyaṃ: ‘kāyo me passambhatū’ ti. It is in the nature of things that a joyful Dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ pīṭimanassa person attains bodily lightness (passaddhi). kāyo passambhati.*

“For a person with bodily lightness, *Passaddhakāyassa, bhikkhave, na cetanāya there is no need to wish (cetanā): ‘May I karaṇīyaṃ: ‘sukhaṃ vediyāmi’ ti. Dhammatā experience sukha’’. It is in the nature of things esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ passaddhakāyo sukhaṃ vediyati.*

that a person with bodily lightness experiences *sukha*.

“For a person experiencing *sukha*, there is no need to wish (*cetanā*): “May my mind get to *samādhi*“. It is in the nature of things that the mind of a person experiencing *sukha* gets to *samādhi*.

“For a person who gets to *samādhi*, there is no need to wish (*cetanā*): “May I know and see the true nature of things in this world (*yathābhūta ñāna* or comprehension of *Tilakkhana*)“. It is in the nature of things that a person who gets to *samādhi* will see the true nature of this world. (Here it is assumed that one is exposed *Tilakkhana* from an *Ariya*; see #3, #4 below).

“For a person with *yathābhūta ñāna*, there is no need to wish (*cetanā*): “May I not be attracted to temptations in this world (*virāga*) “. It is in the nature of things that a person who knows and sees things as they actually are, will be dispassionate towards things in this world.

“For a person who thus naturally dispassionate, there is no need to wish (*cetanā*): “May I be free of cravings for things in this world“. It is in the nature of things that a person who dispassionate through understanding of the real nature of things will be free of cravings.

“For a person who is free of cravings, there is no need to wish (*cetanā*): “May I realize the knowledge of the final release from all suffering (*vimuttiñāṇadassana*)“. It is in the nature of things that a person who is free of cravings will attain the final release from all suffering.

“In this way, *bhikkhus*, freedom from cravings (dispassion) has release from all suffering as its reward, Disenchantment has dispassion as its reward, *yathābhūta ñāna* has , disenchantment as its reward, *samādhi* has *yathābhūta ñāna* as its reward, *sukha* has *samādhi* as its reward, bodily lightness (*passaddhi*) has *sukha* as its reward, calm mind has bodily lightness as its reward. Joy has calm mind as its reward, freedom from an agitated mind has joy as its reward, moral conduct has freedom from an agitated mind as its reward.

“In this way, dhamma qualities cultivate and fulfill more dhamma qualities in the Noble Path

Sukhino, bhikkhave, na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ: ‘cittaṃ me samādhīyatū’ ti. Dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati.

Samāhitassa, bhikkhave, na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ: ‘yathābhūtaṃ jānāmi passāmī’ ti. Dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ samāhito yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passati.

Yathābhūtaṃ, bhikkhave, jānato passato na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ: ‘nibbindāmi’ ti. Dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ yathābhūtaṃ jānaṃ passaṃ nibbindati.

Nibbinassa, bhikkhave, na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ: ‘virajjāmi’ ti. Dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ nibbinno virajjati.

Virattassa, bhikkhave, na cetanāya karaṇīyaṃ: ‘vimuttiñāṇadassanaṃ sacchikaromī’ ti. Dhammatā esā, bhikkhave, yaṃ viratto vimuttiñāṇadassanaṃ sacchikaroti.

Iti kho, bhikkhave, virāgo vimuttiñāṇadassanattho vimuttiñāṇadassanānisamsa, nibbidā virāgatthā virāgānisamsā, yathābhūtañāṇadassanaṃ nibbidattham nibbidānisamsam, samādhi yathābhūtañāṇadassanattho yathābhūtañāṇadassanānisamsa, sukham samādattham samādhānisamsam, passaddhi sukhathā sukhānisamsā, pīti passaddhatthā passaddhānisamsā, pāmojjaṃ pītattham pītānisamsam, avippaṭisāro pāmojjattho pāmojjānisamsa, kusalāni sīlāni avippaṭisāratthāni avippaṭisārānisamsāni. Iti kho, bhikkhave, dhammā dhamme abhisandenti,

in getting to from this shore to the Far shore *dhammā dhamme paripūrenti apārā pāraṃ (Nibbāna).*”
gamanāyā”ti.

3. The path to *Nibbāna* is not a straight step-by-step process in a linear fashion. Rather, a given person cycles through the steps over and over until the *Arahant phala* moment is attained.

- One starts with mundane *sila*, and can get to early stages of *samādhi* even without hearing about *Tilakkhana*. **One cannot proceed beyond that with just *sila*, which is on shaky grounds until one comprehends *Tilakkhana*.**
- Once one starts comprehending *Tilakkhana* (and becomes a *Sōtapanna/Sōtapanna Anugāmi*), one’s *sila* (moral conduct) will become unbreakable: **It is called *Ariyakānta sila*.**
- That is when one really gets into the Noble Eightfold Path.

4. In other words, there are two paths: One starts on the mundane path and with the comprehension of *Tilakkhana*, one switches over to the Noble Path; see, “[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)”.

- Only a *Sammāsambuddha* or a *pacceka Buddha* can figure out (or comprehend) *Tilakkhana*, by themselves; all others have to learn *Tilakkhana* from an *Ariya*.

5. Another key thing to note is that there is no mention about the need to attain *jhānas*.

Jhanas are a special kind of *samādhi*. It is good to cultivate *jhānas*, but they are not necessary to attain *magga phala*.

And there are an innumerable types of *samādhi*; one gets to *Ariya samādhi* (conducive to attain *Nibbāna*) with the comprehension of *Tilakkhana*.

6. Key words:

- ***Avippaṭṭisāra* (විප්ප්‍රතිසාර බව (vigilance) in Sinhala [vipilisara bava in Sinhala]):** One’s mind is normally agitated. It tends to go everywhere. This is why it is hard for most people to comprehend Dhamma. When one really focus on maintaining moral conduct (*sila*) and stays away from *dasa akusala*, this agitation of the mind will gradually diminish, and one will be able to concentrate on a given concept for longer times. [*Avippaṭṭisāra* ; [a + vipaṭṭisāra] absence of regret or remorse]
- ***pāmojja* (සතුට or ප්‍රමොදය (wellness) in Sinhala [satuta or pramodaya in Sinhala]):** Happiness or tranquility of mind is the closest English translation. This is below the “joyful state of mind” or *pīti* (පීතිය in Sinhala [pīti in Sinhala]).
- ***passambhati/passaddha*:** calming down (lightness) of the physical body (කයික සහෙල්ලුව [kāyika sähælluva] (physically light)).
- ***nibbindati*:** get weary of, unsatisfied with (කලකිරීම [kalakiriṃa] (disappointment)).
- ***virajjati* (related to *virāga*): absence of cravings.**
- ***vimutti*:** becomes free of suffering, final release (විමුක්ති [vimukti] (liberation)).

16.9 **Paṭhama Mettā Sutta**

June 7, 2018

1. [WebLink: suttacentral: Pathama Mettā Sutta \(AN 4.125\)](#) clearly states the difference between *jhānās* cultivated by Noble Persons (*Ariyās*) and those who are merely on the mundane path (*assutavā puthujjano*). Here *assutavā puthujjano* means one who has not comprehended *Tilakkhana*; one MUST have removed the 10 types of *miccā diṭṭhi* even to cultivate *anāriya jhāna*.

- Since *jhānic* states represent the same *rupavacara* realms, the *jhānic* experience could be the same for both *Ariya* and *anāriya jhāna* (I am not certain).
- However, the critical difference is that Noble Persons NEVER come back to *kāma loka* and attain *Parinibbāna*, while the *anāriyās* come back to *kāma loka*, and could be born in the *apāyās* too.
- That is because the *Ariyās* have REMOVED *kāma rāga* (*ucceda pahāna*), while *anāriyās* have only SUPPRESSED them (*vikkhambhana pahāna*).

[*pahāna* : ‘overcoming’, abandoning. There are 5 kinds of overcoming:

- (1) overcoming by repression (*vikkhambhana-pahāna*), i.e. the temporary suspension of the 5 hindrances (*nīvarana*, q.v.) during the absorptions,
- (2) overcoming by the opposite (*tadanga-pahāna*),
- (3) overcoming by destruction (*samuccheda-pahāna*),
- (4) overcoming by tranquillization (*patipassaddhi-pahāna*),
- (5) overcoming by escape (*nissarana-pahāna*).

[*nissarana* : [nt.] 1. going out; departure; 2. escape.]

- (1) “Among these, ‘overcoming by repression’ is the pushing back of adverse things, such as the 5 mental hindrances (*nīvarana* q.v.), etc., through this or that mental concentration (*samādhi*, q.v.), just as a pot thrown into moss-clad water pushes the moss aside....
- (2) “ ‘Overcoming by the opposite’ is the overcoming by opposing this or that thing that is to be overcome, by this or that factor of knowledge belonging to insight (*vipassanā* q.v.), just as a lighted lamp dispels the darkness of the night. In this way, the personality-belief (*sakkāyaditthi*, s. *ditthi*) is overcome by determining the mental and corporeal phenomena ... the view of uncausedness of existence by investigation into the conditions... the idea of eternity by contemplation of impermanency ... the idea of happiness by contemplation of misery....
- (3) “If through the knowledge of the noble path (s. *ariyapuggala*) the fetters and other evil things cannot continue any longer, just like a tree destroyed by lightning, then such an overcoming is called ‘overcoming by destruction’ ” (Vis.M. XXII, 110f.).
- (4) When, after the disappearing of the fetters at the entrance into the paths, the fetters, from the moment of fruition (*phala*) onwards, are forever extinct and stilled, such overcoming is called the ‘overcoming by tranquillization’.
- (5) “The ‘overcoming by escape’ is identical with the extinction and Nibbāna” (Pts.M. I. 27). (App.)]

2. The *brahmavihāra* in Buddha Dhamma are four types: *mettā* (loving kindness), *karunā* (compassion, the opposite of *karunā* is anger), *muditā* (empathetic joy), and *upekkhā* (equanimity towards all beings).

- The four realms correspond to the four highest-intensity *rupāvacara jhāna* levels (in *sutta* categorization of *jhāna*).
- Instead of translating the *sutta* word-by-word, I have just provided the meaning of each verse.

	Pali	English
1	<i>Cattārome, bhikkhave, puggalā santo saṃvijjamānā lokasmiṃ. Katame cattāro?</i>	<i>Bhikkhus, there are four types of "cooled down" individuals (santo) to be found existing in the world. Which four?</i>

2	<p><i>Idha, bhikkhave, ekacco puggalo mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati, tathā dutiyaṃ tathā tatiyaṃ tathā catutthaṃ. Iti uddhamadho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantaṃ lokaṃ mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena averena abyāpajjena pharitvā viharati. So tadassādeti, taṃ nikāmeti, tena ca vittiṃ āpajjati.</i></p>	<p><i>Bhikkhus</i>, There is an individual who cultivates mettā bhavana in four directions. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, and all around the universe with compassion.</p>
3	<p><i>Tattha t̥hito tadadhimutto tabbahulavihārī aparihīno kālaṃ kurumāno brahmakāyikānaṃ devānaṃ saḥabyataṃ upapajjati. Brahmakāyikānaṃ, bhikkhave, devānaṃ kappo āyupparamāṇaṃ. Tattha puthujjano yāvatāyukaṃ t̥hatvā yāvatakaṃ tesāṃ devānaṃ āyupparamāṇaṃ taṃ sabbāṃ khepetvā nirayampi gacchati tiracchānāyonimpi gacchati pettivisayampi gacchati.</i></p>	<p>When he dies, he is reborn in the realm Brahmakayika realm. Those <i>devas</i> have a life-span of an aeon (<i>Maha Kappa</i>). An anariya person having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those <i>devas</i>, can be reborn in hell, animal womb, or the state of the hungry ghosts.</p>
4	<p><i>Bhagavato pana sāvako tattha yāvatāyukaṃ t̥hatvā yāvatakaṃ tesāṃ devānaṃ āyupparamāṇaṃ taṃ sabbāṃ khepetvā tasmiṃyeva bhava parinibbāyati. Ayaṃ kho, bhikkhave, viseso ayaṃ adhippayāso idaṃ nānākaraṇaṃ sutavato ariyasāvakaṃ assutavatā puthujjanena, yadidaṃ gatiyā upapattiyā sati.</i></p>	<p>But a disciple of the Blessed One (an <i>Ariya</i>), having used up all the life-span of those <i>devas</i>, attains Parinibbana there. The difference is in the gati between a Noble Person and an <i>anariya</i> (<i>assutavatā puthujjanena</i>).</p>
5	<p><i>Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, idhekacco puggalo karuṇāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati,..(rest of the verse same as that of 2 above).</i></p>	<p>Again, <i>Bhikkhus</i>, There is an individual who cultivates karuna bhavana in four directions (rest same as in 2 above).</p>
6	<p><i>Tattha t̥hito tadadhimutto tabbahulavihārī aparihīno kālaṃ kurumāno ābhassarānaṃ devānaṃ saḥabyataṃ upapajjati. Ābhassarānaṃ, bhikkhave, devānaṃ dve kappā āyupparamāṇaṃ. Tattha puthujjano yāvatāyukaṃ t̥hatvā yāvatakaṃ tesāṃ devānaṃ āyupparamāṇaṃ taṃ sabbāṃ khepetvā nirayampi gacchati tiracchānāyonimpi gacchati pettivisayampi gacchati.</i></p>	<p>When he dies, he is reborn in the <i>Abhassara</i> realm. Those <i>devas</i> have a life-span of 8 aeons (<i>Maha Kappa</i>). An anariya person having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those <i>devas</i>, can be reborn in hell, animal womb, or the state of the hungry ghosts.</p>
7	<p><i>Bhagavato pana sāvako tattha yāvatāyukaṃ t̥hatvā yāvatakaṃ tesāṃ devānaṃ āyupparamāṇaṃ taṃ sabbāṃ khepetvā tasmiṃyeva bhava parinibbāyati. Ayaṃ kho, bhikkhave, viseso ayaṃ adhippayāso idaṃ nānākaraṇaṃ sutavato ariyasāvakaṃ assutavatā puthujjanena, yadidaṃ gatiyā upapattiyā sati.</i></p>	<p>But a disciple of the Blessed One (an <i>Ariya</i>), having used up all the life-span of those <i>devas</i>, attains Parinibbana there. The difference is in the gati between an the noble ones and an <i>anariya</i> (<i>assutavatā puthujjanena</i>).</p>
8	<p><i>Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, idhekacco puggalo karuṇāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati,..(rest of the verse same as that of 2 above).</i></p>	<p>Again, <i>Bhikkhus</i>, There is an individual who cultivates mudita bhavana in four directions.</p>
9	<p><i>Tattha t̥hito tadadhimutto tabbahulavihārī aparihīno kālaṃ kurumāno Subhakinha</i></p>	<p>When he dies, he is reborn in the <i>Abhassara</i> realm. Those <i>devas</i> have a life-span of 8 aeons</p>

	<i>devānaṃ saḥabyataṃ upapajjati. Subhakinha, bhikkhave, devānaṃ cattāro kappā āyupparamāṇaṃ. Tattha puthujjano yāvātāyukaṃ thatvā yāvatakaṃ tesāṃ devānaṃ āyupparamāṇaṃ taṃ sabbaṃ khepetvā nirayampi gacchati tiracchānayaṇimpi gacchati pettivisayaṃpi gacchati.</i>	(Maha Kappa). An anariya person having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those <i>devas</i> , can be reborn in hell, animal womb, or the state of the hungry ghosts.
10	Bhagavato pana sāvako tattha yāvātāyukaṃ thatvā yāvatakaṃ tesāṃ devānaṃ āyupparamāṇaṃ taṃ sabbaṃ khepetvā tasmīṃyeva bhavē parinibbāyati . Ayaṃ kho, bhikkhave, viseso ayaṃ adhippayāso idaṃ nānākaraṇaṃ sutavato ariyasāvakassa assutavatā puthujjanena, yadidaṃ gatiyā upapattiyā sati.	But a disciple of the Blessed One (an <i>Ariya</i>), having used up all the life-span of those <i>devas</i> , attains Parinibbana there . The difference is in the gati between an the noble ones and an <i>anariya</i> (assutavatā puthujjanena).
11	Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, idhekacco puggalo upekkhāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati,..(rest of the verse same as that of 2 above)	Again, <i>Bhikkhus</i> , There is an individual who cultivates upekkha bhavana in four directions.
12	Tattha thito tadadhimutto tabbahulavihārī aparihīno kālaṃ kurumāno vehapphalānaṃ devānaṃ saḥabyataṃ upapajjati. Vehapphalānaṃ, bhikkhave, devānaṃ pañca kappasatāni āyupparamāṇaṃ. Tattha puthujjano yāvātāyukaṃ thatvā yāvatakaṃ tesāṃ devānaṃ āyupparamāṇaṃ taṃ sabbaṃ khepetvā nirayampi gacchati tiracchānayaṇimpi gacchati pettivisayaṃpi gacchati.	When he dies, he is reborn in the <i>Vehapphala</i> realm. Those <i>devas</i> have a life-span of 500 aeons (Maha Kappa). An anariya person having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those <i>devas</i> , can be reborn in hell, animal womb, or the state of the hungry ghosts.
13	Bhagavato pana sāvako tattha yāvātāyukaṃ thatvā yāvatakaṃ tesāṃ devānaṃ āyupparamāṇaṃ taṃ sabbaṃ khepetvā tasmīṃyeva bhavē parinibbāyati . Ayaṃ kho, bhikkhave, viseso ayaṃ adhippayāso idaṃ nānākaraṇaṃ sutavato ariyasāvakassa assutavatā puthujjanena, yadidaṃ gatiyā upapattiyā sati.	But a disciple of the Blessed One (an <i>Ariya</i>), having used up all the life-span of those <i>devas</i> , attains Parinibbana there . The difference is in the gati between an the noble ones and an <i>anariya</i> (assutavatā puthujjanena).
14	Ayaṃ kho, bhikkhave, viseso ayaṃ adhippayāso idaṃ nānākaraṇaṃ sutavato ariyasāvakassa assutavatā puthujjanena , yadidaṃ gatiyā upapattiyā sati. Ime kho, bhikkhave, cattāro puggalā santo saṃvijjamānā lokasmin”ti.	<i>Bhikkhus</i> , this is the difference in outcomes due to difference in gati between a Noble Person and an <i>anariya</i> (assutavatā puthujjanena).

Notes:

1. For more information on *jhānās*, see “[Samādhi, Jhāna \(Dhyāna\), Magga Phala](#)” and “[Power of the Human Mind](#)”.
2. Information on 31 realms comes from *suttas* like this one. I have corrected the lifetimes of these four *rupavacara* realms in the post, “[31 Realms of Existence](#)”.
3. Discussion at : “[WebLink: Pathama Mettā Sutta \(AN 4.125\)](#)”.

XVII Myths or Realities?

April 29, 2016

1. In this section, I plan to address some **concepts and practices** in Buddha Dhamma that appear to be myths and/or contradictions to many. Some are indeed myths, but some are not. And sometimes it depends on the interpretation. There are two aspects to some of these **practices**.

- It is hard for people from various religions to understand why Buddhists pay respect to *Bodhi* trees or *pagodas (chetiya)* which look like pyramids with different shapes.
- On the other hand, even many Buddhists who worship them do not really know why they are doing it.
- Some of the practices are outright myths, like the belief that one can attain *Nibbāna* by doing breath meditation; there is no basis to that. How can one remove defilements (greed, hate, ignorance) by concentrating on the breath?
- However, some of them can be shown to be **verifiable and inter-consistent fundamentals of nature: realities or verities**.

2. Then there are other **concepts** like a *Bodhisattava* getting “*niyata vivarana*“, or confirmation from another Buddha that he WILL become a Buddha at such and such a time. How does that tally with the concept that one can change one’s future drastically by even a single act, and that *kamma* is not deterministic?

3. The value and strength of Buddha Dhamma comes from its unshakable foundational concepts (axioms) and inter-consistency. There is nothing inconsistent in the practices or concepts in true and pure Buddha Dhamma.

- But it requires some background material in order to be able to discuss some of these issues. Buddha Dhamma cannot be assessed with conventional thinking. One needs to comprehend the basics of Buddha Dhamma first.
- The more one understands the basic premises, the easier it will become for one to sort out myths from realities.
- After two years of posting essays on key concepts, we are at a stage to start discussing some of these issues. With time, we will have enough background to cover more of these issues.

- [Animisa Locana Bodhi Poojawa – A Prelude to Acts of Gratitude](#)
- [Paramita and Niyata Vivarana – Myths or Realities?](#)
- [Tisarana Vandana and Its Effects on One’s Gathi](#)
- [Does the Hell \(Niraya\) Exist?](#)
- [Can Buddhist Meditation be Dangerous?](#)

17.1 Animisa Locana Bodhi Poojawa – A Prelude to Acts of Gratitude

April 29, 2016

1. The conventional interpretation of *Animisa Lōcana Bōdhi Poojāwa* (here “*locana*” is pronounced “lōchana”) is that Buddha paid his gratitude to the sacred *Bodhi* tree that gave him shade when he attained Enlightenment (Buddhahood). In current literature, it is described as the Buddha spending the second week after attaining Enlightenment — looking at that *Bodhi* tree even without blinking — as an act of gratitude for sheltering him during that Noble effort.

- It is true that the *Bodhi* tree was (and still is) a special tree, and has many unique properties which we will discuss in a future post.
- But there is no basis to the interpretation that he was looking at the *Bodhi* tree without even blinking. There the word “*animisa*” is incorrectly translated as “unblinking”. **What he did during that week was related to his acts of gratitude that were to follow.**

2. *Nimisa* or *nimésa* is a moment, and *animisa* is “without pausing for even a moment”. “*Lo*” is for the “*lokaya*” or “world”, “*ca*” is for the *citta* (thoughts), and thus “*locana*” is basically contemplation, in this case about his long path to the Buddhahood (*bodhi* is the “path to Enlightenment”, thus the name 37 *Bodhipakshika Dhamma*, where “*pākshika*” means “relevant to” or “associated with”. The current English translation is 37 Factors of Enlightenment, which is not too far off).

- What the Buddha did during that *Animisa Locana Bodhi Poojawa* (for 7 days) was to trace back to the time that he started fulfilling the requirement for the Buddhahood (*pāramitā*), i.e., scanned the memory records (*nama gotta*) of his previous lives to see who helped him during that whole time.
- Records of our past remain intact basically forever; see, “[Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya \(Mind Plane\)](#)” and “[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#)”.
- After leaving the site of the *Bodhi* tree, he spent the first several years (and even at later times) locating those who helped him during that whole time and helped them attain *Nibbāna*. We will discuss some cases below.

3. It is said that it took the Buddha (or rather the *Bodhisattva*) a “*sāra asenkkheyya kalpa lakhayak*” to fulfilled the requirements (*pāramitā*) to attain the Buddhahood. See, “[Difference between a Wish and a Determination \(Paramita\)](#)” for a simple explanation of *paramita*.

There are four *asenkkheyya kalpas* in a *mahā kalpa*, and “*lakhayak*” is 100,000. But human beings live in *kāma loka* only during one *asenkkheyya kalpa* and during the other three *asenkkheyya kalpas* the *kāma lokas* (and some of the lower lying *rūpa lokas*) are destroyed and re-formed. We will discuss this in detail later.

- Thus in calculating the *pāramitā* time, “*asenkkheyya kalpa lakhayak*” actually takes the time of a *mahā kalpa*. I have not yet been able to find out what “*sāra*” means to my satisfaction even though I have come across some estimates. Thus, the time taken to fulfill the *pāramitā* was some number (“*sāra*”) of hundred thousand *mahā kalpas*.
- However, there are other data points that give us an idea how long that is. According to the *Tipitaka*, there have been 512,000 Buddhas that appeared in our world during the time Buddha Gotama to fulfill his *pāramitā*.
- There have been only 7 Buddhas during the past 31 *mahā kalpas*, and with the Maithreya Buddha that is expected to appear before the end of this *mahā kalpa*, there would be 8 Buddhas in those 31 *mahā kalpas*. Thus if we assume there is roughly a Buddha appearing for every four *mahā kalpas*, then the time taken for our *Bodhisattva* to complete the *pāramitā* would be roughly two million *mahā kalpas*. If we take a *mahā kalpa* to be about 30 billion years (see, “[Samsaric Time Scale](#)”), then this time would be around 60 trillion years!

- Regardless of the actual time taken, it can be assumed to be truly mind-boggling. Working nonstop (that is what “*animisa*” means), it took the Buddha fully seven days to cover this time span (recall the *nama gotta*).
- Of course many of the key people had been with him in repeated lives; this is why it took so long (seven days) for the Buddha to go through those records.

4. When the Buddha left the site of the *Bodhi* tree seven weeks after attaining the Buddhahood, he immediately started “paying back debts” to them.

- **This highlights the importance in paying back debts and showing gratitude for those who come to help; see, “[Kamma, Debt, and Meditation](#)”.**
- One of the ten wrong views is the belief that there is no merit in paying back debts or showing gratitude; see, “[Three Kinds of Ditthi, Eightfold Paths, and Samādhī](#)”, and “[Wrong Views \(Micca Ditthi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#)”.
- Buddha’s own actions were to highlight the importance of getting rid of that wrong view.

5. It is said that he first wanted to pay back his most recent “teachers”: Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta. Unfortunately, both had died recently and both had been born in the *arūpa loka* (they had both cultivated *anariya arūpa jhānas*). In *arūpa loka*, beings do not have eyes or ears, and thus are unable to learn Dhamma. Thus the Buddha was not able to help them.

- Next, he thought about the five ascetics (Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma, and Assaji) who had attended to him while he was practicing austerities for six years. It is those five ascetics that the Buddha delivered the first and second discourses at the Deer Park at Isipathana: *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* and the *Anatta Lakkhana Sutta* (*Anatta* is the third of the *Tilakkhana: anicca, dukkha, anatta*). They all became *Arahants* after the two discourses.
- Then the Buddha sought out and preached Dhamma to Yasā, a son of a wealthy brahmin, who lived nearby. Yasā and 54 friends of his became *Bhikkhus* and soon attained the *Arahantship*.

6. It is also important to note that most of those who helped the *Bodhisattva* in his efforts, had also filled versions of *pāramitā* to be major disciples of the Buddha. They themselves had worked towards liberation (*Nibbāna*) in previous lives.

- This is why most of them were able to attain the *Arahanthood* or various stages of *Nibbāna* in short times.
- Even these days, it is easier for some than others because of their past efforts. Thus no one should be discouraged in their efforts. The efforts will pay off in time, possibly even later in this life or in future lives.

7. By the time the Buddha left Isipathana, there were thus 60 *Arahants* in his *Sāsana*. After sending them in different directions to propagate his message of liberation, the Buddha himself left towards Uruvela, to meet the three Kassapa brothers and their followers who had been with him in numerous lives in the long past.

- On the way there, he intercepted 30 young wealthy men who were looking for a woman who had robbed them of their valuables. That was not an accidental meeting either. All 30 of them had encounters with the Buddha in previous lives and were ready to comprehend the Dhamma. They all attained *Arahanthood* shortly.

8. Upon arriving in Urevala, the Buddha had to spend a considerable time and effort to convince the Kassapa brothers that were not *Arahants*. They were *yogis* who were under the impression that they had already attained liberation, and were very reluctant to embrace the Buddha Dhamma. Finally, they became disciples of the Buddha and all 1000 of them attained the *Arahanthood* upon hearing the *Aditta Pariyaya Sutta*.

- Then the Buddha traveled with those 1000 *Arahants* to Rajagaha, the capital of the Kingdom of Magadha. King Bimbisara became a *Sotāpanna* and offered the Buddha his first monastery, the Bamboo Grove in Rajagaha.

9. While the Buddha was residing in the Bamboo Grove two brahmins, Upatissa and Kolita, met Assaji Thero (who was one of the five ascetics), and became *Sotapannas* upon hearing a single verse from the Assaji Thero. Then they came to see the Buddha and requested to become *bhikkhus*, and attained the *Arahanthood* within two weeks.

- Of course they became the two chief disciples of the Buddha: Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana.

10. Then the Buddha, accompanied by the *bhikkhus*, made the way to Kapilavatthu, his father's Kingdom. Here, he was able to help numerous people who had been together with him many, many lives in the past.

- By the way, it is those who have mutual debts to each other who are born into the same family and share common relatives and friends. Thus one's obligations are mostly in that order. Of course one is most indebted to one's parents.
- Just so this will not convey the wrong message, this is not to condone the common practice of "giving perks" to family and friends by misusing government resources, done by many politicians today. One should give only things of one's own.

11. Thus the first several years of Buddha's life was dedicated to helping those who had been with him and helped him in many ways through multiple rebirths in his endeavor to become a Buddha. Of course, neither a *Bodhisattva* (until becoming a Buddha) nor his helpers "knew" that was the case beforehand. That is how nature works. The next post in this series discusses this issue.

- It is easy to see that people with same interests always tend to stay together, because they have similar *gathi*. This is a very deep concept that we have encountered many times. A simple explanation is given in the post, "[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)".

12. King Suddhodana, Prince Siddhartha's father, attained the *Arahanthood* just before passing away about five years after the Enlightenment of the Buddha.

- The Buddha, as a mark of gratitude to his mother who was born as a *deva* in *Tavatimsa deva* realm, preached the *Abhidhamma* to his mother together with other *devas* continuously for three months. The principal topics of *Abhidhamma* were then repeated by the Buddha to Venerable Sariputta, who subsequently worked with his clan of 500 *bhikkhus* to compile the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* that we have today.
- Of course, both Princess Yasodhara and Prince Rahula entered the monastic order and attained *Arahanthood* too.
- Numerous other relatives entered the monastic order and attained various stages of *Nibbāna*.
- A fairly good book that goes through this timeline is "The Life of the Buddha" by Bhikkhu Nanamoli. It is important to note that the *Tipitaka* itself does not show the actual timeline of events; it is categorized according to other criteria.

13. Sometimes, it is not only those who help each other, but also arch enemies that follow each other through the cycle of rebirths (*samsāra*). While almost all other relatives of the Buddha (Prince Siddhartha) were able to attain *Nibbāna*, there were a few who could not overcome their deeply-embedded hatred towards the Buddha.

- The best examples were Devadatta and King Suppabuddha, who were the brother and father, respectively, of Princess Yasodhara. They both eventually ended up in the *niraya* (hell) for committing violent acts towards the Buddha.

Next, "[Paramita and Niyata Vivarana – Myths or Realities?](#)",

17.2 Paramita and Niyata Vivarana – Myths or Realities?

April 29, 2016

1. *Pāli* is a “phonetic language”, meaning it does not have grammar rules. Most meanings come from sounds. This is why many people get into trouble trying to apply grammar rules to *Pāli*.

- Luckily, most *Pāli* words have related Sinhala words, so one with a good Sinhala knowledge and the basics of Buddha Dhamma can understand many *Pāli* terms. This is called “*pada nirukthi*” or clarifying via using some key phrases and sounds. (But it takes a special knowledge or “*patisambidha ñāṇa*” of a *jati Sotāpanna* to glean the meanings of key words like *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, without anyone’s help).
- The word, “*pāramita*” comes from “*pireema*“, or to fulfill. There are certain conditions that have to be met while one is purifying one’s mind to become a Buddha; actually, the 80 great disciples (*mahā savaka*) of the Buddha also have to fulfill less stringent conditions.
- Attaining *magga phala* — including *Arahantship* — do not have such requirements. Yet, those also require cleansing one’s mind over multiple lives. No goals can be achieved without an effort. Even when one wins a lottery, there is a reason (a good *kamma vipāka* from previous lives).
- See, “[Difference between a Wish and a Determination \(Paramita\)](#)” for a simple explanation of *pāramita*.

2. The above paragraphs may give the impression that one “knows” that one is fulfilling *pāramita* to be a Buddha or a great disciple. **They do not know that they are gradually fulfilling such requirements.** It is only when a *Bodhisattva* reaches a certain stage of progress, he gets told by Buddhas at those times:

- First he gets “*aniyata vivarana*” meaning he is told by a Buddha that he is likely to become a Buddha in the future, because has acquired “Buddha *gathi*” through his moral *gathi* and his drive for finding truth in past lives.
- Then when more “Buddha *gathi*” are acquired and firmly established with time, a later Buddha may give “*niyata vivarana*“, i.e., that he will definitely become a Buddha.
- We discussed this in detail in the post, “[Animisa Locana Bodhi Poojawa – A Prelude to Acts of Gratitude](#)“.

3. At first it seems that this “*niyata vivarana*” appears to say that the future can be deterministic. But in most cases, future is not deterministic; one can change one’s future drastically by one’s determined efforts; see, “[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)“.

- The key lies in one’s *gathi* (*āsava* and *anusaya* are related). It is comparatively easy to remove/change those *gathi* that one has acquired recently, but the longer one acts according to those *gathi*, they become deeply-embedded. One gets “*niyata vivarana*” when one’s Buddha *gathi* are unshakable, so to speak.
- This is closely related to the fact that when one attains any stage of a *magga phala*, that is never removed in future rebirths.

4. To give a very simple example, a child who has just memorized, but not grasped the concept of adding, may be able to give the correct answer if that particular addition has been memorized. But a child who has grasped the concept of addition can add any two numbers, and that “knowledge base” cannot be removed from him.

- This is the same thing that happens when one attains the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*, for example. When one grasps the fact that nothing in these 31 realms can be maintained to one’s satisfaction for long times, That “base level of comprehension of the nature of this world” is not going to change ever, even though future lives.

- With that level of understanding, one does not have to consciously think to avoid the drastic immoral actions that make one eligible to be born in the *apāyas*; thoughts of such actions never come to a *Sotāpanna*'s mind.

5. In another example from the *Tipitaka*, once there was going to be a war between two factions. *Bhikkhus* asked Ven. Sariputta which side was going to win, and Ven. Sariputta named the winning side.

- But when the war was fought months later, the other side won. The *bhikkhus* were perplexed; how can a prediction of Ven. Sariputta be wrong? They went and asked the Buddha. The Buddha said that Ven. Sariputta's prediction was correct based on the conditions at that time. But as unforeseeable factors came into play, the outcome changed.

6. The world is extremely complex, and it is not possible to make predictions most of the time. In fact, this is related to the *anicca* nature: any *sankata* can undergo unexpected change, called *viparināma*.

- But some *gathi* and *kamma* can become so strong that it becomes virtually impossible to change the outcome. For example, if one kills one's parent, it is not possible to avoid birth in the *apāyas* in the very next birth.
- In the same way, when one's views about this world become clear to some level, and one can truly "see" the dangers of births in the *apāyas*, or the unfruitfulness of such actions, one's mind become permanently averse to such actions. That is when one becomes a *Sotāpanna*.
- Through the next two stages (*Sakadāgāmi* and *Anāgāmi*), one's mind becomes purified to the extent that one will cease to enjoy sense pleasures automatically, and then one will never be born in *kāma loka*. At the *Arahant* stage, one sees the dangers of rebirth anywhere in the 31 realms.

7. But all those stages can be attained only if one is taught the correct path by a Noble Person, who has attained one of the four stages of *Nibbāna*. The special aspect of a Buddha is the ability to figure out that without anybody's instructions. And the mind of a Buddha is much more pure than that of an *Arahant*.

- Even when one attains the *Arahanthood*, some *sansaric* habits remain. Those are not defilements but just habits in the sense of doing something in a particular way, for example. Many such cases are mentioned in the *Tipitaka*. One *Arahant* could not remove the habit of addressing others in an inappropriate manner, even though there was no malice involved. Another *Arahant* had the habit of jumping over puddles on the road.
- But the mind of a Buddha was perfect. Not even a minor behavioral problem could be detected in a Buddha.

8. This can be compared to removing dirt from a glass of water. One could filter the water and get rid of the big pieces of contaminants first. Then one could use better filters to remove even smaller particles. Now there may not be any visible contamination. But for all practical purposes, the water is clean and that can be compared to an *Arahant*.

- But there may be still some contaminant molecules there that can be uncovered only with a chemical analysis. Perfectly pure water without even a single molecule of a contaminant can be compared to the purity level of a Buddha.
- In fact, another meaning of "*pāramita*" is "*pereema*" or "to filter". As one keeps filtering out contaminants (defilements) from one's mind it becomes more and more pure. Filtering to the ultimate level is fulfilling "*pāramita*".

9. A person who eventually becomes a Buddha starts off as a scientist or a philosopher in today's terminology. It is started via one of two paths and both need to be fulfilled: "*kim sacca gavesi, kim kusala gavesi*": investigations of truth and morality.

- *Sacca* (pronounced “sachcha”) means the truth; “*kusala*” is of course morals, and “*gavesi*” is one who investigates. One starts off with the intention of finding the how the nature works, and also what are morals and the origins of morals.
- Even today, we can assign such labels to many of the scientists and philosophers. Of course only a minute fraction of them will eventually become a Buddha or a great disciple, but that is how one starts.

10. That habit (*gathi*) of looking into the truth and morals grows through successive lives. Most of them drop off due to external influences, and due to unexpected circumstances. But those few who get to cultivate those *gathi* keep cultivating them. As I said before, one may not have even heard of a Buddha for many aeons while cultivating such *gathi* inadvertently. It is just that when one is on the right (or even wrong) path, nature starts guiding one: “*Dhammo ha ve rakkathi dhammacari*”.

- By the way, one could start as a man or a woman, but the Buddhahood is attained by only a man. In our rebirths process, one could change sex. Actually, the sex change can happen even during a lifetime (these days such transgenders are common).
- In the rebirth process, we all have been born a man and a woman innumerable times. If I remember correctly, the *Bodhisatva* was a woman when she started cultivating *paramita* to become Buddha. But at some point (probably after getting *niyata vivarana*), he had been a male.
- There is a slight difference between male and female. That may not be politically correct to say these days, but that is the reality. One is a man or a woman because one has cultivated the corresponding *gati*. No matter how many laws are passed, the military is always going to be dominated by men, for example.

11. In the *Tipitaka*, it says the usual progression of one’s character (*gathi*) buildup is *dāna* (giving), *seela* (moral conduct), *bhāvanā* (mostly loving kindness towards others), and culminating in *paññā* (wisdom).

- While these main ones are being cultivated, there are others that simultaneously cultivate, and there are actually ten of them called *dasa pāramita*. The others are: *virīya* (effort), *khanti* (patience), *adhittana* (determination), *metta* (loving kindness), *nekkhamma* (renunciation), and *upekkha* (equanimity).
- The process has been analyzed in great detail. For example, each of those ten grow into higher stages: *upa pāramita* (middle) and *aramatta pāramita* (ultimate). As one keeps making progress through successive lives, such *gathi* get amplified and one makes advances to those higher stages.
- As we saw in the previous post, “[Animisa Locana Bodhi Poojawa – A Prelude to Acts of Gratitude](#)”, it takes an unimaginably long time to purify the mind and get to the perfect mind of a Buddha.

12. As an example, let us consider the *dāna pāramita*. Here one starts with mundane giving (*dāna*), i.e., giving to the needy, to animals, to elders and *yogis*, etc.

- Then one advances to the *abhaya dāna*. Here one comprehends the fact that each and every sentient being values one’s life the most, and thus does everything possible to save lives. It has even a deeper meaning too: *abhaya* means remove “*bhaya*” or fright. Thus the *metta paramita* grows simultaneously too. Most categories are inter-related, and grow together.
- The highest is *dhamma dāna*. It of course starts with teaching morals to others, and living an exemplary life. It is when one becomes a Buddha, that one starts teaching the Buddha Dhamma (the way to eliminate *bhava* or “*bhava udda*” and to attain *Nibbāna*).

13. As I said before, such instructions about *dasa paramita* are not known to the world for even through aeons. There are many *mahā kalpas* where not a single Buddha is born. Thus it is not like following a set instructions. Those qualities grow as one’s *sansaric gathi* without even realizing that one is fulfilling such requirements.

- Even today, we can see many people, regardless of their religions or cultures, engage in such activities. Many of today's scientists, teachers, physicians, philanthropists, etc. could be in such early stages.
- Thus we should always respect and honor those who live such exemplary lives regardless of their religions or cultures or any other categorization. One is considered "suitable for paying respects" only based on one's actions.

14. Finally, it is informative to see why there are special categories of five Buddhas, seven Buddhas, 24 Buddhas, and 28 Buddhas in Buddhist literature. All these Buddhas are named and discussed in the following Wikipedia article:

[WebLink: WIKI: List of the named Buddhas](#)

- After striving for a long time as discussed in #3 above, our *Bodhisattva* first obtained "*niyata vivarana*" that he will definitely become a Buddha in the future, from Buddha Dipankara, who was the 24th Buddha preceding Buddha Gotama. A *Bodhisattva* customarily obtains "*niyata vivarana*" from 24 Buddhas before attaining the Buddhahood. The last Buddha that our *Bodhisattva* obtained "*niyata vivarana*" was from Buddha Kassapa.
- Before obtaining "*niyata vivarana*", our *Bodhisattva* obtained "*aniyata vivarana*" or "not confirmed, but very likely" from three Buddhas named Tannankara, Medhankara, and Saranankara. As the *Bodhisattva* kept fulfilling the requirements, they were first fulfilled during the time of Buddha Deepankara, as mentioned above.
- The special aspect of the seven Buddhas is that those were the most recent Buddhas. There have been four Buddhas (Kakusanda, Konagama, Kassapa, Gotama) in this *mahā kalpa*, and there were 30 *mahā kalpas* prior to that which did not have even a single Buddha. In the *mahā kalpa* before that there were 2 Buddhas (Siki and Vessabhu); Prior to that there was only a single Buddha in the *mahā kalpa* that was 91 *mahā kalpa* earlier. **So, there have been only 7 Buddhas within the past 91 *mahā kalpas*, and the timeline are discussed in the "[WebLink: Suttacentral: Mahapadana Sutta \(DN 14\)](#)".**
- The present *mahā kalpa* is a very special one, having the maximum number (five) of Buddhas in a given *mahā kalpa*. We have had four Buddhas so far, and there is going to be one more, Buddha Maithreya, before this *mahā kalpa* comes to an end.

17.3 Tisarana Vandana and Its Effects on One's Gathi

May 28, 2016

1. Many people consider the recital of *namaskaraya* followed by the 24 supreme qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha (*Tiratana vandanā* or *Tisarana vandanā*) in three possible ways: (i) recite them mechanically (and erroneously), (ii) disregard them as unimportant, or (iii) even consider the practice as “mythical” per benefits of their recital.

- These qualities are called “*suvisi guna*“, where *suvisi* means 24 and *guna* are the qualities.
- These qualities (and the meanings of the words *Tisarana Vandana*) are discussed briefly in “[Supreme Qualities of Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha](#)“; correct way to recite them are also discussed there.

2. As I have discussed in many posts, there are many things in this world that we do not really understand. Many of the Buddhist practices have become “mystical” simply because their true interpretations as well as their correct usage have been lost. This current topic is a good example. One can reap many benefits by understanding the true meanings of these phrases AND by reciting them correctly. I have experienced these benefits.

- Now, this does not mean one can attain *Nibbāna* (or the *Sotāpanna* stage) by reciting them day and night. This is simply one of the many tools available to calm the mind and to slowly but surely change one's character (*gathi*) over time.
- As everything else with Buddha Dhamma, it is all in one's mind. If one has the motivation and the drive to learn and apply these tools, they can bring many benefits not only in this life but in future lives. But it is not like taking a pill for a headache; one cannot expect results quickly. We have developed “bad *gathi*” over beginning-less rebirths and it is not easy to change them quickly.

3. First of all, we all have seen how it is possible to convey a given message by just changing the tone. The words, “come here” can give different meanings based on the way how the words are uttered. When a parent says, “come here” to a child with love and affection, the child would be delighted to oblige. The same parent can get angry at the same child and yell, “COME HERE!”, the child is likely to cringe and back out afraid of a possible spanking.

- The “*gathi* sound” (“*gathi handa*” in Sinhala) in the two cases were totally different even though the words were the same; see below. The way the same phrase was uttered made a difference to the child's mind.

4. Many Pāli words have a different kind of power too; certain words can influence the mind strongly. As we will discuss in future posts, the early humans had a single language called Magadhi from which Pāli words originated. It was a universal language with the effects conveyed by the way the words were pronounced.

- This is why I mentioned in other posts also that Pāli is a phonetic language. Grammar rules are secondary.
- Just by listening to a recital of a *pirith desanā* (i.e., recital of *suttas*) can make a change in one's mindset, which may be even visible to others. There is a subliminal message (*saññā*) in the *suttas* that the mind can grasp, even if the person may not understand what is being said.
- **The words themselves, how they are uttered, and even who utters them, are “embedded” in “*gathi* sounds”.**

5. There are several such examples mentioned in the *Tipitaka*. A famous example is about a frog who was attentively listening to a discourse of the Buddha. Of course a frog could not understand what the Buddha was saying. But the “*gathi* sound” (“*gathi handa*” in Sinhala) that came from the Buddha combined with *sansaric gathi* of the frog led the frog to attentively listen to the pleasing sound from the Buddha and to have a pleasant mindset.

- While listening to the discourse, the frog was accidentally killed by the walking stick of a person there, and the frog was born in a *deva loka* instantaneously. His name was Manduka *deva* and he immediately realized how he was born there. He came back to listen to the same discourse and attained a *magga phala*.
- Then there were a bunch of bats who resided in a cave that was used by *Bhikkhus* who used to recite *pirith* every night. Those bats were all said to have born as children in the same village and to have attained *Arahantship* later. There are few other accounts as well.

6. These may sound like myths, but when one learns Abhidhamma and understands the power of a “*somanassa sahagata citta*” , (or a “thought with joy”), one could make the connection. We all, including animals who had been humans at some point in the past, have accumulated good *kamma* seeds as well as bad ones from the past.

- One of the factors that comes into play at the dying moment is the state of the mind. If the mind is highly perturbed or is “covered with” *panca nivarana* (see, “[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#)”), then it allows conditions for a bad *kamma* seed to come into play. But while listening to *Dhamma* or *pirith*, those *panca nivarana* are temporarily suspended and that allows for a good *kamma* seed to come into play; see, “[Patisandhi Citta – How the Next Life is Determined According to Gathi](#)”.
- One’s *gathi* are not fixed. Even a person with many immoral *gathi* has some moral ones as well. What kind of *gathi* operates at a given moment depends on one’s state of mind.

7. Now we can come back to the issue of “*gathi* sound” that we mentioned in #5 above. *Tisarana vandanā* especially has the power to change one’s mindset, if recited correctly.

- Entities with same *gathi* always naturally tend to be close to other entities with same *gathi*. This can be clearly seen anywhere. People who like sports get together. People like to party all the time, hang out with others who like to do the same. This is discussed in a simple but illustrative post: “[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavas\)](#)”.
- This is why in Asian Buddhist countries it is customary to turn on *pirith* (recital of *suttas*) on the radio in the mornings and/or at night. This is supposed to keep undesired beings away and attract benevolent beings to the houses. It is actually effective if done properly. Those *pretas* with immoral *gathi* do not like to hang around when such chanting are being played. On the other hand, *devas* of the lowest realm (*Bhummatika devas*) like to stay close to such sounds/environments.

8. Another related property is “*gathi ruva*” or “*gathi* picture”. The obvious example is a picture of a Buddha, not the distorted laughing Buddha, but the serene Buddhas like shown below.



- This is why most meditators keep a Buddha statue in the meditation room. It is just another factor that helps in getting to the right mindset.
- Then there is “*gathi* suvanda” or “*gathi* smell”. Burning incense gives an odor that is also compatible with a meditation environment. A perfume on the other hand, is a distraction. A good perfume is compatible when going out on a date; that sets a compatible environment for sense pleasures.
- All these subtle things add up to make a difference. And how much of a difference depends on the person too. Some people do not need any of such “incentives” to get onto even *jhānas*. But for some others they could make a difference.

9. In order to establish this point we can think about a “party atmosphere” compared to a “meditation atmosphere”. When someone organizes a party or a dance, one decorates the room with bright colors, eye catching pictures, sensual fragrances, loud music, etc. That is the environment with “matching *gathi*” for such an event. That would be a disastrous setting for a meditation session; one would not be able to concentrate at all.

- On the other hand, a meditation atmosphere is not compatible for a dance. One cannot dance to *pirith* or to *Tisarana vandanā*. It provides a setting that is calm and peaceful, and conducive for contemplation.
- Another aspect is that people when attracted to *Dhamma* will start skipping parties as I have. I would rather stay home and learn *Dhamma* rather than going to a noisy environment let alone a party.
- One will start associating with different people too, if one seriously gets into *Dhamma*. It is not done by sheer will power; rather it just happens because one’s *gathi* change. It is just natural for “likes to get together with likes”, the Law of Attraction: “[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Āsavās\)](#)”.

10. This concept actually works at a deeper level too. We emit electromagnetic radiation (*cittaja rūpa*) according out *gathi* and mindset at a given moment. Whatever the types of *Dhamma* that are

attracted at any given time are compatible with that state of the mind. A deeper discussion is at “[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#)”.

- For example, when we are angry we never receive more good thoughts. If we are arguing with someone, what always comes to mind are just bad thoughts, bad memories about that person.
- On the other hand, when we are calm and in a joyful mood, we mostly think about good memories.
- When one is at a funeral, one's thoughts and complexion becomes attuned to that environment: one sees and hears people crying, and one gets sad and one's face shows that as well; one does not feel like laughing. On the other hand, when one is at a party it is totally opposite atmosphere, and one feels like laughing and dancing.
- Other people can also be affected by our mindset. It is quite pleasant to look at a Buddhist monk. They just have that calm demeanor which is part of their cultivated *gathi*. In fact, our bodies also change over time according our *gathi*. There are other people whom we can instantly recognize as “rough characters”.
- This is a deep subject with many complexities and even exceptions. But I hope I have been able to convey the basic idea.

11. When one is reciting *Tisarana vandanā* correctly in a suitable environment, one's *gathi* will change at least during that short time for the better. One will be able to grasp deeper concepts during meditation following the recitation. When one does this over a long time, one's salient *gathi* will gradually change too.

- I know mine have changed over the past several years, and in particular within the past several months. It is a process that needs a bit of time to get traction, and then the results becomes clear one day. When I first wrote the original post (which I just revised), my enthusiasm for reciting *Tisarana vandanā* was not that high.
- However, I do not want to over emphasize this aspect. It can be considered a tool that could make a difference for some people.

12. For those who may be trying to cultivate the *anicca saññā* (i.e., comprehend what is meant by *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*), reciting *Namasakaraya* followed by *Tisarana vandanā* could be helpful. I am providing the recordings below.

- The Buddha has also stated that when one is in a dangerous situation or gets frightened by something, reciting *Budu Guna (Ithipi sō Bhagavā.....)* can help getting rid of the fear. One could recite this just before going to bed and it might help with falling asleep; again, it depends on one's own *gathi*, how faithfully one does it, whether it is done with *saddhā*, etc.

Here is a recital of the *Namaskaraya* by the Venerable Thero (you need to adjust volume control on your computer). It is normally recited three times:

[WebLink: Listen to the verses of Namaskaraya recital](#)

Here is a recording of the *Tisarana vandana* by the Venerable Thero (You need to control the volume level on your computer):

[WebLink: Listen to the verses of Tiratana Vandana](#)

Pāli text (click to open the pdf file):

[WebLink: Tiratana Vandana](#)

17.4 Does the Hell (Niraya) Exist?

December 18, 2015

Here we will discuss information on the nature of the hell according to the *suttas* and indirect evidence from our experiences for the existence of hell (*niraya*). This post provides a bit more information on the way to clarifying the role (and importance) of the human brain.

- Beings in most realms do not have the capacity to change their destiny; they just pay off their past *kamma*, whether good *kamma* in *deva* or *brahma* realms or bad *kamma* in the human and lower realms (*apāyas*).
- **Mostly humans have the capacity to mold their future**; they are the ones who can cultivate *citta* with high *javana* power. They are ones who do (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra* that lead to both good and bad rebirths (via cultivating character or “*gathi*”). They either enjoy the fruits of those in good realms or pay for them in bad realms, and eventually — after long times — come back to the human realm. This is what all of us have been doing from an untraceable beginning.

1. Here is well-circulated youtube video that claims to playback the “sounds of hell” recorded in a deep underground mine in Siberia (I must warn that these sounds are horrific, even though the recording is likely to be a fake; see below):

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Siberia Hell Sounds](#)

There is a post describing the background of this video: [WebLink: SKEPTOID: The Siberian Hell Sounds](#) and refers to the following youtube video apparently proving that the above video is a hoax:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Sounds of Hell Debunked](#)

- If it is really a fake (as it appears to be), it does not make sense to try to fool people by making videos such as above. One should realize that truth always comes out at the end.
- Still, debunking the “hell sounds” video does not prove that the hell does not exist either.

2. We should ask the following question. It is necessary for us to directly observe something with our five physical senses in order to believe its existence?

- When many people hear about the *apāyas* — other than the animal realm that we can see — or heavenly worlds of *devas*, they refuse to even consider their existence, because “they cannot see those realms”. (By the way, there are four *apāyas* (*niraya*, *preta*, *asura*, *thirisan* or animal).
- But this contention has been disproved by science. Science was not aware of the existence of billions of galaxies and uncountable number of planetary systems like our solar system until the 20th century until better instruments became available; see, “[Wrong Views \(Micca Dittṭhi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#)“. There are many such examples given in the “[Dhamma and Science](#)” section.
- However, the Buddha was able to see those realities 2500 years ago by purifying his mind. And the existence of some of these realms can be experienced or at least deduced even today, by purifying one’s mind.
- The problems with refusing to consider anything that cannot be confirmed with our direct experiences is discussed in detail in several posts, including “[Wrong Views \(Micca Dittṭhi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#)“.

3. I am going to summarize what we can glean from the *suttas* in the *Tipitaka* of the four *apāyas* and other realms including the *niraya* (sometimes called *naraka*). The general layout of the 31 realms was summarized in the post, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“.

- The *niraya* is located in the deep interior of the Earth. The “hell beings” have solid bodies that can be subjected to various forms of torture. When a “hell being” is born, it is done via *opapatika* birth, where the *manomaya kaya* is instantaneously transformed to a full physical body capable of experiencing the suffering.
- The beings who impart those sufferings to the hell beings (called *yama pallas* in Sinhala and may be called hell-wardens) are also living beings that are born in the *nirayas* because of their

“*gathi*” due to the “*saṅkhāra*” that they developed in previous lives; their bodies are formed by their *kammic* energy to be tolerant of the harsh conditions in the *niraya*, i.e., they do not suffer like the hell beings.

- The *Devadūta Sutta* in the *Majjima Nikāya* explains in vivid detail how a hell being is tortured by the hell-wardens. A reasonably good translation can be found at: [WebLink: Devaduta Sutta: The Deva Messengers](#)

4. Apparently, there is a king Yama (or probably many kings) in each *niraya* (there are several), interrogates a newly arrived hell-being and reminds him/her of the opportunities that he/she had to understand the bad consequences of their actions.

- It is important to note that the king Yama interrogates only those new arrivals that are from the human realm. There are an uncountable number of beings born in the *niraya* from other *apāyas*; they just move from one *apāya* to another until a rare opportunity comes to get out of the *apāyas* (due to a good *kamma vipāka* from the past, before they got to the *apāyas*).
- Again, such a Yama king is born there also according to his/her “*gathi*” that were cultivated by their characteristic “*saṅkhāra*”; see below. Like all other living beings, those hell wardens and king Yama have finite lifetimes.

5. It is significant to note the ending of the *sutta*, where the Buddha says, “..”I tell you this, monks, not from having heard it from another contemplative or brahman. On the contrary, I tell you this just as I have known for myself, seen for myself, understood for myself.” This is what I mean when I say all that the Buddha has thought, he had experienced. He had the ability to “see” all of 31 realms.

- Of course, we have to have faith in the Buddha to believe that, but as one learns Dhamma it is difficult not to appreciate the fact that all he had taught is self-consistent, and there are no contradictions; see, “[Buddha Dhamma: Non-Perceivability and Self-Consistency](#)”.

6. There are close comparisons in the world that we experience. A good example are policemen, who can be compared to the hell-wardens. They both like to punish those who have done immoral acts. Being a policeman is not easy; they themselves are under stress and it is not easy to deal with rough criminals. Not everyone can be a policeman (or policewoman).

- They have cultivated “*gathi*” or habits that do not tolerate “bad behavior”. They always think about ways to find and bring to justice those who do immoral deeds.
- King Yama can be compared to a criminal judge; they also have similar *gathi* as hell-wardens, but do not like to physically punish the culprits.

7. I am discussing these body types to illustrate the point that the physical body is prepared by the specific *kamma vipāka* to impart *vipāka* in according to the mental state (*gathi*) of the being (that are cultivated by the types of *saṅkhāra* one entertains) and the specific *kamma* that led to that *bhava*.

- The hell-being is born in a *niraya* to experience the *kamma vipāka* of a bad *kamma* done with hate, like killing or torturing others. But that *kamma* was done after cultivating “hate *sankhara*” for long times.
- A *preta*’s body is in such a way to experience hunger; many have huge bodies with very small mouths, so that they can never satisfy hunger. One is born a *preta* because one has cultivated “*preta sankhara*”, i.e., one is always thinking about sense pleasures and also crave for what others have. This does not only apply to poor; one can be wealthy, but still not satisfied with what one has. On the other hand, there may be a poor person, who is totally satisfied with what he/she has, and is not cultivating “*preta saṅkhāra*”.
- The “*asuras*” are those who have cultivated “*asura saṅkhāra*”, i.e., those who like to get “free rides”. They depend on others for their needs, and are too lazy to work and make a living. Those who steal or embezzle money from others also have similar *gathi*.
- Animals (called “*thirisan*” because they have all three “*san*” of *lōbha*, *dōsa*, *mōha*) have a mixture of those *gathi*; see, “[What is ‘San’?](#)”.

- One cultivates particular *saṅkhāra* because one has certain character or *gathi*. And the more *saṅkhāra* one does (thinking, speaking, and doing certain things), the more established *gathi* become, which in turn lead to corresponding *jathi* (births); see, “[Gathi to Bhava to Jathi – Ours to Control](#)”.

8. In the post “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)“, the 31 realms were represented by spherical shells with a sphere in the middle and the bodies of the beings in lower realms were higher in general than the bodies of the beings in the higher realms. Each “inhabited” planetary system has all 31 realms, and most planetary systems are not “inhabited”.

- Modern science say that the nearest planetary system to the solar system is Alpha Centauri which is located 4.37 light years away; see, [WebLink: WIKI: Alpha Centauri](#). A light year is the distance travelled by light in a YEAR at the speed of 299 792 458 m/s (186,000 miles/second).
- That is a humongous distance which cannot be travelled with current technology or any technology in the foreseeable future. It is estimated that it would take 100 years to reach that star system; see, [WebLink: WIKI: Project Longshot](#). Thus it is doubtful that we will verify the existence of life in other planetary systems during our lives.
- However, there are other living beings in the solar system itself that science has not found. This is in agreement with the scientists admission that only 4% of the mass of the universe is explainable by science.

9. Going back to the locations of the 31 realms in our solar system, they are centered around the Earth. The *nirayas* are located deep inside the Earth and those beings have very dense bodies.

- The other three *apāyas* are located at and close to the surface of the Earth: of course, the animals live among the humans, and *asuras* are said to live mostly in the oceans. The *pretas* also live on the surface of the Earth just like us, but normally we cannot see them. They all have body densities comparable to humans, except for *pretas*. Some *pretas* have “fine bodies” suffer not via bodily punishments, but mentally: they can recall the past lives and bad deeds that led to the *preta bhava*.
- There are three other human realms close to the Earth that we cannot see. Then there are many *deva* realms are extended from the surface of the Earth outwards. The *brahma* realms are located even further out. Of course, *devas* have much less dense bodies than humans, and *brahmas*’ bodies get even less at higher realms, and at the highest *brahma* realm, a living being (an *arūpa brahma*) has only one *suddhāshtaka* [*suddhatṭhaka*], the *hadaya vatthu*; see, “[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatṭhaka\]](#)”.
- The body types in the 31 realms have been discussed in the previous post: [Body Types in 31 Realms – Importance of Manomaya Kaya](#).

10. Thus roughly speaking, we can say beings with more immoral “*gathi*” are born with denser bodies inside or on the surface of the Earth; their dense bodies are used to impart *kamma vipāka* either via torture or via bodily ailments and diseases.

- The beings in the *deva* and *brahma* realms, who have less and less dense bodies do not suffer bodily ailments. At the end of their *kammic* energy, they just disappear, and are born at the next realm appropriate for the most potent *kamma* seed they have; it could be in a lower realm, including the *niraya* (unless they had attained at least the *Sotāpanna* stage).
- Thus beings with better and better “*gathi*“, i.e., “*deva gathi*” and “*brhama gathi*” are located further and further away from the surface of the Earth, and those hell beings with the “worst *gathi*” are located below the surface of the Earth.

11. Therefore, each living being can be said to “carry his/her own dhamma”; here dhamma means “to bear”. Actually, it is more correct to say, each *bhava* carries its own *dhamma*, and when the *bhava* changes, the types of *dhamma* one carries changes.

- A hell being is carrying a heavy load, and has the biggest burden. *Devas* carry very light loads, they have negligible suffering during that lifetime, and *brahmas* even lower.

- But the load carried by a being cannot be always determined by the body density. As mentioned above, some *pretas* have light bodies and their *kamma vipāka* are imparted by the mind, not physically via the body.

12. We all have seen some children, when they don't get their way and become mad, fall on the floor and cry. It is as if they want to go towards the *niraya* (sometimes they bang their heads on the floor). This is a reflection of their "*gathi*" AT THAT MOMENT.

- In the same way, they (and even adults) jump up with joy. It is as if they are trying to go up towards the higher realms. Again it is a reflection of their "*joyous gathi*" at that moment.
- Another example is the behavior of criminals. We all have seen pictures of criminals when they are brought to the court of law: their heads are lower. They feel a heavy burden.
- On the other hand, when we have done something meritorious we feel good and keep our heads high. Our bodies feel lighter too.
- These may not be Earth-shattering observations, but they are consistent with the Buddha's world view.

13. Thus each of us can momentarily live in the *apāyas* or in higher *deva* and *brahma* realms.

- I am sure anyone can recall such moments. When we get really angry, we burn inside, our bodies even get heated, faces get reddish, and we perspire. It is not a pretty sight to see a really angry person or even a child.
- On the other hand, when we are calm and relaxed especially after doing a moral deed, we feel good and our body language reflects that. We are confident, we feel lighter, and also feel "cooled down" inside. It is always a pleasure to look at Buddhist monks.

14. Thus even though we may not see the beings in the other realms, there are many indicators that are consistent with the "bigger world picture" of the Buddha. We have reasons from our experiences to believe the existence of such realms. This may be a small part of the whole story, but indirect pieces of evidence like this are always consistent with Buddha Dhamma; we will discuss more in the future. These are things that one can contemplate during insight meditation and verify for oneself.

17.5 Can Buddhist Meditation be Dangerous?

June 17, 2016

1. A friend of mine alerted me to a recent article on possible dangers of mindful meditation:

[Weblink: BBCRadio: Is Mindfulness Meditation Dangerous?](#)

- It seems that there are possible dangers in not only “mindful meditation” but other types of meditation too. I did a Google search and found that there are many articles, videos, and podcasts on the subject. You can do the same just to get an idea (try, “dangers of meditation” and “dangers of meditation youtube”).
- There is a recent book, “The Buddha Pill” by Miguel Farias (2015), which downplays benefits of meditation and also points to some reported bad outcomes.
- There is a vast amount of misinformation out there. So, I thought of writing down my own thoughts based on the Buddha Dhamma that I understand and practice. In genuine Buddhist meditation too, one may encounter some discomforts as I will discuss below. But those are temporary and definitely not dangerous.

2. First of all, 99% of “Buddhist meditation programs” that are being taught and practiced today are not compatible with Buddha Dhamma, the original teachings of the Buddha. Let us first discuss this point.

- The goal of the Buddha was NOT to teach practices and methods by which to attain temporary relief from daily stresses of life. Such procedures had been in practice even when the Buddha (Prince Siddhartha) was born 2500 years ago.
- For example, breath meditation used by even Theravāda Buddhists today was a practice that was rejected by the Buddha; see, “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” section and in particular, “[6. Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā \(Introduction\)](#)”, which discusses breath meditation.

3. I do not either dispute or agree with the findings reported in the above articles or the above book. I do not know those specific cases, and it does not matter either because those meditation techniques are not “Buddhist meditations”.

- There are many varieties of meditation techniques used by so-called “Buddhist meditators”; most are a waste of time and some are definitely bad. For example, one of the dangerous techniques is to try remove all thoughts that comes to one’s mind. One could lose memory (and perception) if this is done for a long time.
- The Buddha said to stop IMMORAL thoughts, not ALL thoughts. There is a big difference between the two. Furthermore, he encouraged cultivating moral thoughts (*Ānāpāna* is “āna” AND “pāna”; see, “[6. Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā \(Introduction\)](#)”).

4. The suffering that the Buddha really focused on was the *samsaric* suffering, i.e., unimaginable suffering in some realms of this world which consists of 31 realms; see, “[The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#)” or other posts on suffering.

- For a normal human, It is not possible to avoid births in the future in the four lowest realms (*apāyas*) filled with suffering without attaining at least the *Sotāpanna* stage of *Nibbāna*. Not only any bad actions done in this life, but bad actions done in previous lives can contribute. We have been lucky to get this human life due to a past good action (*kamma*), but all of us have done both good and bad actions in our deep past.
- Future births in the *apāyas* is stopped not by “erasing” those past bad *kamma*, but mainly by a subtle mechanism which involves understanding the Buddha’s world view.
- This website is all about explaining that complex process, but I can state what the end result is: the solution is to remove greed and hate from our minds which happens to a large extent when one comprehends the “bigger world picture” of the Buddha (which is called getting rid of ignorance of the correct world view or attaining *sammā ditṭhi*).

5. Thus one could take one of three approaches:

- One could learn pure Buddha Dhamma, the original teachings of the Buddha, and understand his world view. When one learns and comprehends this wider world view, one can clearly see the possibility of much suffering in future lives.
- The other approach is to believe in the above stated conclusion, i.e., that getting rid of greed and hate from one's mind will remove future suffering, and to start working on it.
- But there is a third approach, which is to do both in parallel.

6. The third approach above is the best approach since it accelerates the process of cleansing. Furthermore, one can experience relief from not only future suffering but also in this life.

- However, it must be understood that it is not possible to remove all types of suffering in this life by meditation. What we experience in this life are results of what we have done in the past. It is possible to avoid some bad outcomes but not all; see, "[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#)".
- Another fact which is not discussed correctly is that there could be some physical discomfort one can experience when one really gets into deep meditation. But this is not dangerous at all, and is actually an indication that one is actually progressing!
- The best way to convey the information is to describe my own experience (at least parts of it). Even though each person's experience will be different, there are some common themes.

7. First of all, one does not even need to understand what *Nibbāna* is in order to get started. Even though it is possible to describe what *Nibbāna* is (there are many posts at the site), it is not easy to truly comprehend what is meant by stopping rebirth process, especially at early stages.

- As an example, a child in the primary school may say she wants to be a scientist; that is her goal, because she has heard that it is a good occupation. But she has no idea what a scientist does.
- In the same way, most Buddhists know that *Nibbāna* is a coveted and worthy goal, but have no idea what it is. Most have not even thought much about it. They know that it involves stopping the rebirth process, but if pressed some may even say they do not "really want to attain *Nibbāna* yet; I want to enjoy life a bit more". That is because it is not easy to comprehend the dangers of such "enjoyments".
- However, the above child knows that she has to work hard and get good grades in school in order to become a scientist in the future. As she makes progress through the primary, secondary, and high school, she will gradually get a better idea of what becoming a scientist means and involves. It becomes even more clear when she gets a university education, and finally she may enter graduate school to actually become one.
- Most Buddhists can be compared to that child stuck in the primary or secondary school: they refrain from immoral actions to some extent, but have not proceeded any further due to a number of reasons: lack of time, lack of understanding the urgency to do something before one gets old and the brain starts slowing down, etc.

8. On the other hand, most beginners to Buddhist meditation may not have any idea what *Nibbāna* is or even may not believe in the rebirth process. And one does not need to.

- As I have tried to explain in many posts, *Nibbāna* has many levels starting from just a relaxed state of mind all the way to stopping the rebirth process. One needs to proceed gradually, experiencing the increasing level of relief on the way.
- Any reasonably moral person can see the benefits of living a moral life. Most religions teach how to live a moral life, at least to some degree.
- The first thing to do is to try extending this way of moral living by incorporating factors that may not necessarily taught in other religions; for example, killing animals is not considered immoral in many of the major religions.

- Killing other people for any perceived benefit is an inconceivably bad idea. We have to stop calling such ideas as “religious” regardless of the “religious label” attached. One would be bound for the worst sufferings imaginable for billions of years.

9. I think we live in a world today that is too “politically correct”. We are afraid to even give our honest points of view for the fear of being labelled “insensitive to other religions or cultures”. We should be free to point out and condemn immoral and harmful actions.

- For me there are no religious or cultural boundaries; we live this life for about 100 years and may be reborn in a different culture which may follow a different religion; “[Implications of the Rebirth Process in Daily Life and in Society](#)“. However, it is not good to impose sudden cultural changes that could lead to major disruptions in societies.
- My intention is to make as much progress as possible in this short time left, and to help others who may be interested.
- I also think it is a disservice not to share with others something that one has experienced to be of value. It is of course up to others even to bother reading about it.

10. Going back to our discussion, one should **try to avoid** things that we know deep inside to be bad: **engaging in dishonest and harmful behavior**. This of course has many facets and levels. So, one should start stopping actions such as: taking advantage of others in any way, engaging is sexual **misconduct**, avoiding drugs and cutting down on alcohol, etc.

- This gradual process is describe in detail in the first several posts in the “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” section. What I like to do here is to point out some key points that I think could be useful.

11. **It is obvious that meditation, at least in beginning, does not require one to even sit down.** Before one gets to that stage, one needs to remove some cobwebs from the mind that have accumulated over time.

- Some people cannot sit down and concentrate anyway; the mind likes to wander around. **This “agitation” is due to greed and hate, even though it may not be obvious.** What breath meditation does is to force the mind to concentrate on breathing in order to stop this wandering temporarily.
- And it does work for some people. But any calming effect is temporary. One may feel good during a meditation retreat, but when coming back to real life, the mind goes back to the agitated state.
- Thus if one just does the standard “breath meditation” (without doing crazy things like trying to stop all thoughts) it is unlikely that they will experience any bad psychological effects, but it is bad in the sense of being an utter waste of time in the long run.
- Many people I know to be meditators are stuck in this stage for tens of years, enjoying the temporary relaxation **and refusing to get out of that “comfort zone”**. By their own accounts, they have not made significant progress. But for some reason, they are still “being hopeful”.

12. **Genuine Buddhist meditation is focused on long term effects.** As the title of the book in #1 above implies, many people believe that going to a meditation session is like taking a pill for a headache; one is after a quick, temporary solution.

- Buddhist meditation starts with stopping immoral activities that one can clearly see, such as those mentioned in # 8 and #10 above.
- If one can persevere for a few weeks or months (depending on how much “cobwebs” are there), one should start experiencing a better state of mind. One will be able to concentrate on a given task (even a mundane task) better. In a few months one can look back and see that one has changed in some ways.
- Then one can incorporate more “good habits” and discard more bad habits. One will start seeing the future.
- By the way, one will be able to absorb more from the posts at this site with time too.

13. As time goes, one can try “sitting down” meditation sessions. Just sit in a quiet room away from disturbances, and think about a Dhamma concept. One could even read a post and contemplate on it while reading.

- Actually, this is what I did in my early days. I would be sitting at my desk and either reading a book or listening to a discourse on the internet from my teacher Thero. As I contemplated and started comprehending some concepts, I felt joyful in the mind, and I could start feeling a lightness in the body with time.

14. This is the beginning of a process that the Buddha described as, “*preethi manassa kāyō passaddathi, passadda kāyō sukhanthiyathi, sukhinō samādhīyathi*“. That means, “joy in the mind (from absorbing Dhamma) leads to lightness in the body, lightness in the body leads to happiness (*niramisa sukha*), and that leads to *samādhī* (enhanced concentration and a relaxed mind)”.

- Once one starts feeling joy in the mind and lightness in the body, there is no stopping. Because now one can clearly see the benefits.
- Then it becomes easier to grasp deeper concepts, which in turn leads to more joy, etc. and the whole process repeats and accelerates.
- However, how much progress one makes depends on many factors. Some have practiced meditation in previous lives and they progress relatively fast. Regardless of the actual time taken, most should be able to make at least some progress. **If it appears that one has not cultivated meditation in previous lives, it is time to start now.**

15. **When one is making more progress (especially when one begins to grasp *anicca, dukkha, anatta*), there could be some physical discomforts that one can feel.** When I started feeling those, luckily I had heard about that from my teacher Thero’s discourses (**by the way, I have not met the Thero or talked to him personally; both times I went to Sri Lanka he was not available**).

- Different people feel this kind of discomfort in different body parts above the waist. I am not talking about leg pains due to sitting cross-legged, etc. If a given posture becomes uncomfortable, one just needs to change the posture: one could straighten out the legs or go for a walk. Some people can sit cross-legged for longer times simply because they are more flexible or have had more practice. Mine started in the head, throat, and hands. They were not painful at all; they are more like pressure waves. But if one did not know that it could happen, one could be concerned. Because it happens only during formal sit-down meditation sessions.
- Other possible “symptoms of progress” are sweating and becoming thirsty (if this is the case, keep a glass of water close-by). Yes. all these are good symptoms; **they indicate that the body is beginning to respond.**
- This was my first personal confirmation that it is not the body that gives rise to consciousness. **It is ALWAYS the mind that controls the body. My mind decides when I want to do a meditation session. Furthermore, I can change my body sensations with my thoughts!**
- I have not yet heard anyone else experience it, but my body freezes when I get into *jhānas* (up to the third). It really freezes, like a statue. If someone comes and tries to pull my hands apart, it is difficult for them to do. But when I decide to stop the session, the body unfreezes within seconds. This is undeniable evidence that the mind can control the body.
- The explanation for these (and other types of) experiences involves the concept of the *gandhabba* that I have been discussing for some time now. These are discussed in, “[Possible Effects in Meditation – Kundalini Awakening](#)“.

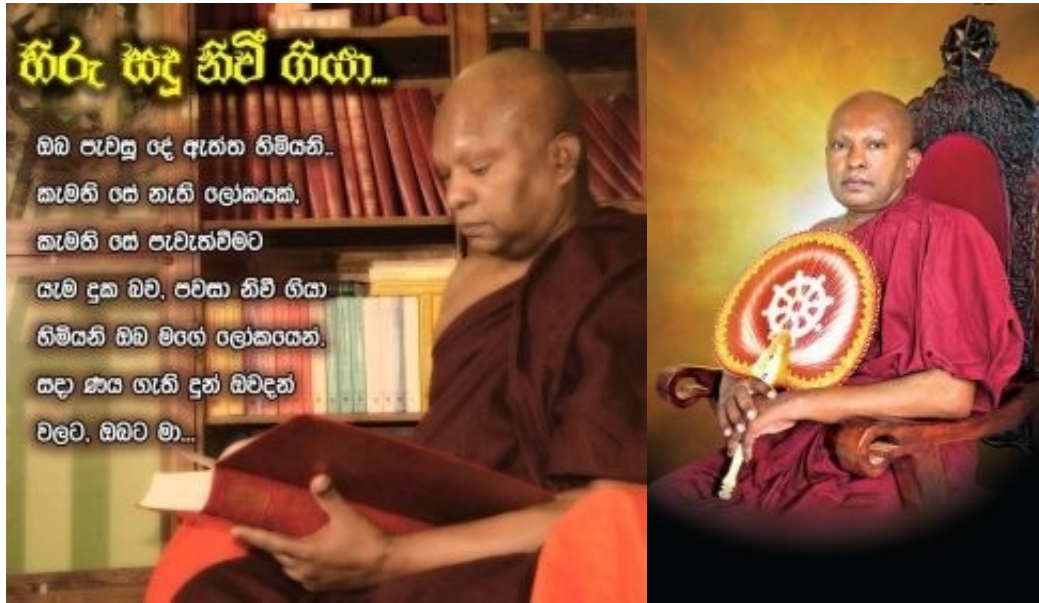
XVII References

I

- [Popup Pāli Glossary with Pronunciation](#)
- [Reflections on 2015](#)
- [Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)
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- [Introduction to “Rebirth by Francis Story” – Ian Stevenson](#)
- [Thirty One Planes of Existence](#)
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18.1 Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thero

March 9, 2017; Pictures of *dhāthu* added June 10, 2017; Revised September 7, 2017; February 6, 2018; *desana on jhana/magga phala* added April 28, 2018



1. It is with great sadness that I report the *Parinibbāna* of my Noble teacher, Waharaka Abhyaratanalankara Thero a month ago, on February 9, 2017.

- Even though he did not confirm attaining the *Arahanthood*, several years ago he had declared that he would not be reborn again (i.e., at least will attain the *Antara Parinibbāna* state), according to the video below.
- If someone dies with the three *samyojana* of *kāma rāga*, *rūpa rāga*, and *arūpa rāga* removed (and thus cannot grasp a *bhava* in any of the 31 realms) — but has not removed *māna*, *uddacca*, and *avijjā samyojana* — then one gets to what is called the *Antara Parinibbāna* state.
- The *gandhabba* would still survive the death of the body and come out and stay alive until the *kammic* energy for the human *bhava* is exhausted, at which point the actual *anupadisesa Nibbāna* will take place, since a new *bhava* cannot be grasped. This is explained at the discussion forum topic “[Antara Parinibbana](#)”.
- From the accounts below, it is quite possible that he did attain *Parinibbāna* (i.e., bypassed the *Antara Parinibbāna* state) at the dying moment, which does happen.

2. When the news came out first, it was not clear whether the Thero had passed away or whether he was in *Nirodha Samāpatti*. One does not breath while in *Nirodha Samāpatti*, but the body does not get cold. I am told that the body was warm for 6 few days, but then it started to get cold. Therefore, his death was not declared for six days.

- Even though I made trips to Sri Lanka in 2014 and 2015, both times I did not get an opportunity to meet him because he was not well.

3. He was the first person to extract the true meanings of the key Pāli words in the *Tipitaka* in recent times— which have been mistranslated for hundreds of years.

- It appears that his *Patisambhidhā Ñāṇa* (the knowledge to extract the meanings of words) was at the same level as many of renowned *Arahants* at the time of the Buddha.

4. As I discussed in the post, “[Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala](#)” , one has to learn the correct Dhamma from a Buddha or a true disciple of the Buddha. He was able to bridge a gap that will hopefully last until the end of the *Buddha Sāsana* (Ministry) of Buddha Gotama, which is expected to last for 2400 years from now for a total of 5000 years.

- I am grateful to his followers in Sri Lanka (Ven. Attidiye Sudheethadheera Thero and others) who made recordings of thousands of hours of his *desanas* over the years. They have organized those recordings here: “[WebLink: waharaka.com: Waharaka Sadaham Desana](http://waharaka.com)” (updated September 11, 2017).
- Unfortunately, those are available only in Sinhala language. I will do my best to convey these true teachings in English at this website.
- I was able to meet Ven. Walasmulle Abhaya Thero and Ven. Attidiye Sudheethadheera Thero (both of whom were lay people at that time) on a trip to Sri Lanka in early 2014 and also in 2015. They provided me with many *desanā* recordings before they became available on the internet. I am also grateful to Dr. Neranga Abeysinghe, with whom I had many discussions and who also updated me on recent events of Waharaka Thero’s last days.
- Ven. Walasmulle Abhaya Thero conducts regular *desanas* and meditation sessions (in Sinhala). Recordings of those can be found at: “[WebLink: Nirapekshathwayemaga](#)“. **September 7, 2017:** I have been somewhat concerned about the over-emphasis on *jhāna* in this program over the past few months; many people may be under the false impression that getting into *jhāna* necessarily means *magga phala*: “[Ascendance to Nibbāna via Jhāna \(dhyāna\)](#)” and “[Mundane versus Supramundane Jhāna](#)“.
- **September 7, 2017:** Just yesterday, I came to know about Rathupasketiye Vimukthirathana Thēro in Sri Lanka, who had come to find the true meanings of the *Tilakkhana* independent of the Waharaka Thēro. It seems that people found out about this Thēro after the *Parinibbana* of Waharaka Thēro. His *desanas* (in Sinhala) can be found at: “[WebLink: Youtube: Ariya Asankathaya](#)“.

5. **April 28, 2018:** I found a *desana* by Waharaka Thero where he present clear evidence that *jhāna* are not necessary to attain *magga phala*:

[WebLink: Download “Are Jhāna Required for Magga-Phala”](#)

- The main point the Thero makes is that we know that there are *jāti Sotāpannas* born in the human realm. But if a *jhāna* was REQUIRED to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, then that person WOULD NOT be born in the human realm, but in a *brahma* realm corresponding that *jhāna*.

6. I must also express my gratitude to Ven. Meevanapalane Dhammalankara Thēro, who had been in close association with the Waharaka Thēro. I first came across these correct interpretations when I came across one of his *desanas* on the internet on July 30, 2013.

- Ven. Meevanapalane Dhammalankara’s *desanas* can be found at: “[WebLink: Sirisaddharmaya](#)“

7. June 6, 2017: I received some pictures of “*dhathu*” collected after the cremation of Waharaka Thēro’s body. Some of an *Arahant*’s bones are crystalized, and cannot be destroyed by fire or anything else. I selected the following two pictures out of many sent by Ven. Attidiye Sudheethadheera Thēro and Dr. Neranga Abeysinghe.



8. By the way, here is a historical picture of the “Tooth relic” of the Buddha kept at the “*Daladā Maligāwa*” in Kandy, Sri Lanka:



- Such Dhāthu of the Buddha or an Arahant are considered to be indestructible up to the end of the current “Buddha Sāsana“, which will last roughly another 2500 years.

9. Here is a youtube video of the funeral of the great *Thero* (the speech by Mr. Chandana Siriwardhana — where he stated the possibility of *Antara Parinibbāna* of the *Thero* — is in Sinhala language):

[WebLink: අහයරතනාථාකාර හිමි ඇසුරෙන් ලද දහමේ පෞර්විකයන් - හඳුල බිඳේ පියුම සමපාදක - නීතිඥ චන්දන සිරිවර්ධන මහතා](#)

18.2 Pure Dhamma – Sinhala Translation

January 24, 2017; more sections added December 2, 2017

1. Professor J. M. R. Sarath Bandara, who is a retired professor at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, has kindly taken upon the task to translate the Pure Dhamma site to Sinhala language.

- With his mastering of both Sinhala and English languages, this translation is very much superior to the word-by-word translation provided by the Google Translator plugin for WordPress.
- Therefore, I will remove Sinhala as an option in the Google Translator.

2. The pdf files for different sections at the website are given below. Only some of the sections have been translated so far, and there could be gaps in those sections as well.

- As he translates more posts and sections, the updated files will be uploaded here.

3. We have left the English titles for each section below as they appear at the website. That will make it easier to refer back to the original English posts.

- The links in the Sinhala translation to various websites — and especially videos — may not work. One can access those in the original English posts.

Much merits to Professor Sarath Bandara and his family for this meritorious deed!

[Cover page – Pure Dhamma – Sinhala](#)

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[Section 2.1 – Key Dhamma concepts -San](#)

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[Meditation](#)

[Kamatthana](#)

[Sutta Interpretations](#)

[Living Dhamma](#)

18.3

Pure Dhamma – German Website

October 21, 2017

1. Puredhamma.net, which discusses Buddha's teachings per *Tipitaka*, is now available in German, thanks to Mr. Tobias Große in Heilbad Heiligenstadt, Germany. Here is the link:

<https://puredhamma/de>

- Mr. Große has spent a lot of time studying Buddha Dhamma, and he tells me that he has read almost all posts at the puredhamma.net site and many posts more than once. From the questions that I have been getting from him over the past year, I feel that he has grasped the key concepts and is quite capable of expressing those concepts in German.
- As of today, he has translated three main sections, and will continue to add more sections until the two sites are “in sync”.
- He is also willing to answer questions; there is a “Comment” bar at the bottom of each page.

2. Even though the “Google Translator” at the top right of the puredhamma.net site is a useful resource that can be used to translate the site material to many languages, it is done by a mechanical process, which basically translates word for word.

- Such a word for word translation sometimes gives incorrect interpretations, especially since key Pāli words with deep meanings are involved. Therefore, the “Google Translator” is not very reliable. I will remove German as an option for the “Google Translator” in a couple of months after enough sections are available at <https://puredhamma/de>.

3. Finally, it has been a pleasure to interact with Mr. Große and his family over the past year or so. His wife and children are also fully engaged and it is heartwarming to see how much they have advanced, and their enthusiasm for this meritorious project. Much merits to the whole family for their efforts!

18.4 New / Revised Posts

New Posts:

March 2, 2018: I will be taking some time off to work on a science-based project on Buddha Dhamma for the next few months. I may publish posts whenever I find time.

There are two useful tools to find relevant posts: One is the “Search” box on top right, and the other is: [User’s Guide to Pure Dhamma Website](#).

January 15, 2018: Some of you who have registered for the Discussion Forum seem to have login problems. There is a simple way to handle this problem: [“Problems with Registering, Login, Lost Password?”](#).

[Pathama Mettā Sutta](#) – 6/7/18 (in the [“Sutta Interpretations”](#) section).

[Ānantariya Kamma – Connection to Gandhabba](#) – 6/2/18 (in the [“Living Dhamma”](#) section and [Mental Body – Gandhabba](#) subsection).

[Na Cētanākaraṇīya Sutta](#) – 5/21/18 (in the [“Sutta Interpretations”](#) section).

[Sammā Ditthi – Realization, Not Memorization](#) – 5/13/18 (in the [“Sōtapanna Stage of Nibbāna”](#) subsection).

[Manōpubbangamā dhammā..](#) – 5/5/18 (in the [“Dhammapada”](#) subsection).

[Kusala and Akusala Kamma, Punna and Pāpa Kamma](#) – 4/27/18 (in the [“Dhamma Concepts”](#) subsection).

[Anussati and Anupassanā – Being Mindful and Removing Defilements](#) – 4/16/18 (in the [“Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)”](#) subsection).

[Buddha Dhamma for an Inquiring Mind – Part I](#) – 4/12/18 (in the [“Dhamma with Less Pāli”](#) subsection).

[“Exploring All Possible Paths” Leads to Fermat’s Principle of Least Time](#) – 4/1/18 (in the [“Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma”](#) section).

[Feynman’s Method of “A Particle Exploring All Possible Paths”](#) – 3/29/18 (in the [“Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma”](#) section).

[Will Quantum Mechanics Be Able to Explain Consciousness?](#) – 3/20/18 (in the [“Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma”](#) section).

[The Observer Effect in Quantum Mechanics](#) – 3/20/18 (in the [“Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma”](#) section).

[Feynman’s Glass Plate Experiment](#) – 3/16/18 (in the new [“Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation”](#) subsection).

[Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma – Introduction](#) – 3/13/18 (in the new [“Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma”](#) section).

[What Is a Wave and What Is a Particle?](#) – 3/13/18 (in the new [“Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation”](#) subsection).

[Photons Are Particles Not Waves](#) – 3/13/18 (in the new [“Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation”](#) subsection).

[Cloning and Gandhabba](#) – 3/5/2018 (in the “Dhamma and Science” section).

“Discourse 5 – Tilakkhana and Micca Ditthi” added to [Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses](#) – 3/2/2018 (in the “Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta” section). This is the last one in this series.

“Discourse 4 – Sakkaya Ditthi – What is “a Person”?” added to [Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses](#) – 2/27/2018 (in the [“Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta”](#) section).

“Discourse 3 – Distorted Perceptions or Saññā Vipallāsa” added to [Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses](#) – 2/19/2018 (in the “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)” section).

[Nirōdha Samāpatti, Phala Samāpatti, Jhāna, and Jhāna Samāpatti](#) – 2/13/2018 (in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

“Discourse 2 – Icça, Nicca, Anicca” added to [Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses](#) – 2/10/2018 (in the “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)” section).

“Discourse 1 – Nicca, Sukjha, Atta” in the [Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses](#) – 2/3/2018 (in the “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)” section).

[Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses](#) – 2/3/2018 (in the “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)” section).

[Citta, Manō, Viññāna – Stages of a Thought](#) – 1/24/2018 (in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Bhava and Bhavanga – Simply Explained!](#) 1/19/2018 (in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Does Bodily Pain Arise Only Due to Kamma Vipāka?](#) 1/12/2018 (in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Anidassana Viññāna – What It Really Means](#) – 1/6/2018 (in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Pure Dhamma – Reflections on 2017](#) – 1/1/2018

[Essays – 2017](#)

[Essays – 2016](#)

[Essays – 2015](#)

[Essays – 2014](#)

Revised Posts:

Please note (4/25/15): I am going to start listing the revised posts that are included with each update of the eBook.

[Sansaric Time Scale, Buddhist Cosmology, and the Big Bang Theory](#)

[What are rūpa? – Dhammā are rūpa too!](#) – 6/3/18

[Right Speech – How to Avoid Accumulating Kamma](#) – 6/3/18

[31 Realms of Existence](#) – 6/3/18

[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#) – 6/3/18

[Possible Outcomes of Meditation – Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala](#) – 6/3/18

[What is “Kāya” in Kāyānupassanā?](#) – 5/22/18

[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#) – 5/22/18

[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Samsāra\)](#) – 5/22/18

[How Does One Know whether the Sotapanna Stage is Reached?](#) – 5/22/18

[Akusala-Mūla Pavutti \(or Pravurthi\) Paticca Samuppāda](#) – 5/14/18

[Kusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#) – 5/14/18

[Akusala-Mūla Paticca Samuppāda](#) – 5/14/18

[Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala – Introduction](#) – 5/6/18

- [Kāma Guna, Kāma, Kāma Rāga, Kāmaccanda](#) – 5/6/18
- [Difference Between Jhāna and Stages of Nibbāna](#) – 5/6/18
- [Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thēro](#) – 5/6/18
- [Anussati and Anupassanā – Being Mindful and Removing Defilements](#) – 4/28/18
- [Kusala and Akusala Kamma, Punna and Pāpa Kamma](#) – 4/28/18
- [The Double Slit Experiment – Correlation between Mind and Matter?](#) – 3/29/18
- [Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected](#) – 3/29/18
- [Feynman’s Glass Plate Experiment](#) – 3/29/18
- [Photons Are Particles Not Waves](#) – 3/17/18
- [Patisandhi Citta – How the Next Life is Determined According to Gathi](#) – 3/17/18
- [What is Intention in Kamma?](#) – 2/28/18
- [Mahā Chattārisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#) – 2/28/18
- [Dasa Samyōjana – Bonds in Rebirth Process](#) – 2/20/18
- [Is Eating Meat an Akusala Kamma \(Immoral Deed\)?](#) – 2/20/18
- [Sankhāra – What It Really Means](#) – 2/20/18
- [Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thēro](#) – 2/11/18
- [What are Dhammā? – A Deeper Analysis](#) – 2/11/18
- [Mundane versus Supramundane Jhāna](#) – 2/11/18
- [Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbana](#) – 2/11/18
- [Bhava and Bhavanga – Simply Explained!](#) – 2/11/18
- [The Infinity Problem in Buddhism](#) – 2/11/18
- [Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#) – 2/4/18
- [Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – According to Some Key Suttas](#) – 2/4/18
- [Rupa \(Material Form\)](#) – 2/4/18
- [Sakkāya Ditthi is Personality \(Me\) View?](#) – 1/25/18
- [Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#) – 1/25/18
- [Sotapanna Magga Anugami and a Sotapanna](#) – 1/19/18
- [Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#) – 1/19/18
- [Preservation of the Dhamma](#) – 1/13/18
- [Pure Dhamma Discussion Forum Guidelines](#) – 1/7/18
- [Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means](#) – 1/7/18
- [Gathi \(Gati\), Anusaya, and Āsava](#) – 1/7/18
- [What is Suñyāta or Suññāta \(Emptiness\)?](#) – 1/2/18
- [Pure Dhamma Discussion Forum Guidelines](#) – 1/2/18
- [The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatthaka\]](#) – 1/2/18
- [Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?](#) – 1/2/18

Revised Posts – 2017

Revised Posts – 2016

[Revised Posts – 2015](#)

[Revised Posts – 2014](#)

18.4.1 Google Translations to Other Languages

October 2, 2016

1. Couple of days ago, I installed the capability to translate the whole site into different languages. A different language can be selected in the “Google Translate” button right above this post.

- I received input from a couple of people. Based on those, it seems that translation is 60%-80% good for Chinese translation.

2. The main problem is that with “word-to-word” translations, meanings can get lost. So, please use the translations only if necessary. For example, it may able to provide translation of some words that are not familiar.

- **Therefore, it is a good idea to use the English version as much as possible. I really worry about meanings getting lost in the translation.**

3. There are other languages that can be added. I did not want to add too many at this early stage, especially until I get some feedback on the usefulness. **I would appreciate feedback on the accuracy/usefulness of these translations, in the comments box below.**

- **If you like other languages to be added, also please comment below.** Just type the language(s) you like. I think you need to add your email address too, in order to avoid spam. Comments are not published. I normally respond only if a question is asked.

18.4.2 Pure Dhamma Discussion Forum Guidelines

December 12, 2017; revised December 17, 2017

A link to the Forum is provided at the lower right in the main menu.

1. In order to post questions or answers (i.e., to participate in discussions), one will need to register first. But anyone can read existing posts without registering.

To Register:

Click on the “Forum” at the very end of the main menu or [FORUM](#) to enter the Forum.

1. Click on the “Register” button (in red) at the LOGIN box and enter a username and an email address and submit.
2. It will say that it will send you a link and then display a “WORDPRESS” screen. CLOSE that screen. Do not do anything with that screen.
3. You will get an email to that address within minutes. Open your email browser and click on the link that was sent to you. The link in that email WILL EXPIRE within a certain time, so you need to use it before it expires. (If you don’t see an email within minutes, check you “Junk” folder).
4. **If you don’t get an email within 5 minutes, send me an email and I can setup a temporary password for you. It is easy to do and you can then reset to anew password. This is the easiest way.**
5. It will ask to enter the username that you selected earlier and you also need to choose a password. Once you hit enter, you may get another “WORDPRESS” screen. CLOSE that screen. Do not do anything with that screen.
6. Enter the Forum and login with that username/password at the “Forum Login” box.

When first registered, one will receive an email with a link to setup your own password. One needs to use that link within 15 minutes or so (I am guessing, I don’t know exactly how much time is allowed), because that link expires. Check you Junk folder if you do not see an email within minutes.

- **If it does not work within a few tries, DO NOT keep trying.** After 5 tries or so, the system will lock you out and then it becomes more difficult. Please send me an email at lala54@hotmail.com, and I can help you.

2. If one forgets the password at a later time, a new password can be generated by clicking on the “Lost Password” link.

- **Even an unregistered person would be able to read the posts by others on any topic. One needs to register to ask a question or to post a reply to another’s question.**
- Please respect the viewpoints of others. No one knows everything (except for a Buddha), and we should help each other in uncovering the truth.

3. Mr. Seng Kiat Ng from Singapore has kindly agreed to act as a moderator. He will be able to move topics to “better matching” forums and also to open up new forums as necessary. He is doing this in addition to maintaining and updating the eBook; much merits to him and his family!

- Within a forum, anyone who is registered can open a new topic. Please find the forum that seems to match; we can add more forums if needed.
- **Any question even remotely connected to Buddha Dhamma (Buddhism) is welcome. There are people of very different levels of exposure to Buddhism.**
- If you feel uncomfortable posting here initially, please send it to me at lal54@hotmail.com.
- But I encourage everyone to participate because there will be people who can benefit from information at different levels. Also, it is critical to comprehend basic concepts; otherwise it will be difficult to make progress.

4. I can set the time one has to come back and edit a given post, and it is currently set at one hour. This allows one to think about one’s comment and change it, if needed. Please think carefully before making comments. It is not a good idea to write too many posts on the same issue. I try to write my response in a Word document and post it when I feel comfortable. Even then I may have to come back and revise.

- This is in no way to restrict discussions. We just need to try to make our points without repeating. I have seen online forums where people just go back and forth “trying to push their views” without making any progress for themselves or helping others learn.

5. **Replying to a question:** If one hits the **reply button**, one can directly respond to a comment by that specific person (i.e., one’s comment will appear below that comment or that thread). Then a reader will need to scan to find the new comment (especially if there are newer threads at the bottom).

- If one just types in the **default window**, then the comment will appear at the very end of the discussion, as a new thread. Anyone will be able to see that as the latest comment, but then one needs to refer to the comment that he/she is responding to.
- You can figure this out by looking at the posts already there.

6. A discussion forum for the Pure Dhamma website is beneficial in several aspects:

- I receive many good questions via email. When I reply to that email, only that person will get the information, and in many cases it could be of interest to so many others.
- There could be “gaps” in a given section. A given section at the website starts at a base level with initial posts and move to deeper stages with subsequent posts. If one has a question about a certain post, one could open a new topic with the post name.
- I also plan to have some information access threads on topics like “Pāli Resources”. I will post some key tools available at this site as well as at other sites, and users can add more information to it.

- This forum will also give an opportunity for others with different opinions to express their viewpoints (i.e., how they interpret a given *Sutta* or a verse in the *Dhammapada*, etc). **In most cases, there can be more than one explanation.**
- Sometimes, each individual may have their own interpretation even if it looks incorrect to others. No one should expect others to come to agreement with one's viewpoint. **It is up to each person to decide for him/herself.**
- Thoughtful, logical, and respectful discussions can be an important part of the learning process.

7. Following the Path is not merely following some set precepts or blindly following a “*guru*“. One needs to engage in stimulating discussions with oneself first (contemplation), and also with others. It is an intellectual process.

- I hope this forum will be a “virtual community center” which will help people with different levels of exposure to Buddha Dhamma to come together and grow together.
- In my own experience, I know that when trying to answer a question posed by another person — who is looking at the issue from a totally different point of view — forces me to look at the issue from a different angle. I have learned many things over the past few years that way.

8. The Buddha was the greatest scientist to be born, and we are trying to recover those deep teachings that have been buried over many centuries. Thanks to my late Noble teacher, Waharaka Thero (“[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thēro](#)“), true meanings of key concepts (eg., *anicca*, *anatta*, *viññāṇa*) have been uncovered.

- We need to maintain this momentum and make it easier for the future generations to access the pure and original teachings of the Buddha.

18.4.3 How to Reply to a Forum Question

- If one just types in the **default window**, then the comment will appear at the very end of the discussion, as a new thread. Anyone will be able to see that as the latest comment, but then one needs to refer to the comment that he/she is responding to.
- If one hits the **reply button**, one can directly respond to a comment by that specific person (i.e., one's comment will appear below that comment or that thread). Then a reader will need to scan to find the new comment (especially if there are newer threads at the bottom).
- You can figure this out by looking at the postings by others that are already there.
- Once a reply is submitted, it can be revised within the next hour only. After that it will be locked and one needs to submit a new reply if needed.

18.4.4 April – July 2017

[The Infinity Problem in Buddhism](#) – 7/15/17 (in the “[Dhamma and Philosophy](#)” section).

[List of “San” Words and Other Pāli Roots](#) – 6/29/17 (in the “[Tables and Summaries](#)” section).

[Pure Dhamma Discussion Forum Guidelines](#) – 6/22/17

[Saṅkhāra and Kammā, Viññāṇa and Kamma Beeja](#) – 6/16/17 (in the “[San](#)” section).

[User's Guide to Pure Dhamma Website](#) – 6/8/17 (in “[Buddha Dhamma](#)” section).

[Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?](#) – 6/2/17 (in “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” section).

[Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#) – 5/26/17 (in “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Working of Kammā – Critical Role of Conditions](#) – 5/21/17 (in “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#) – 5/13/17 (in “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Micca Ditṭhi, Gandhabbayā, and Sotāpanna Stage](#) – 5/6/17 (in “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#) – 4/29/17 – 4/29/17 (in the “Historical Background” section).

[Misintepretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#) – 4/29/17 (This replaces a recent post, “Answers to Criticism of Pure Dhamma Interpretations”).

I have also combined two previous posts, “Theravada – Problems with Current Interpretations of Key Concepts” and “Historical Timelines of Buddha Dhamma and Sri Lanka – End of Sinhala Commentaries” to make a new post, “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)” — 4/29/17.

[Are There Procedures for Attaining Magga Phala, Jhāna and Abhiññā?](#) – 4/23/17 (in the “[Power of the Human Mind](#)” section)

Answers to Criticism of Pure Dhamma Interpretations – 4/16/17 (in the “[Historical Background](#)” section).

[Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#) – 4/13/17 (in the “[Abhidhamma](#)” section).

[Buddhaghosa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background](#) – 4/8/17 (in the “[Historical Background](#)” section)

[Dasa Akusala and Anatta – The Critical Link](#) – 4/2/17 (in the “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)” section)

18.4.5 **January – March 2017**

[Difference Between Jhāna and Stages of Nibbāna](#) – 3/24/17 (in the “[Power of the Human Mind](#)” section)

[Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?](#) – 3/17/17 (in the “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)” section)

[Sakkaya Ditthi is Personality \(Me\) View?](#) – 3/10/17 (in the “[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)” section)

[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thero](#) – 3/9/17

[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#) – 3/4/17 (in the “[Sutta Interpretations](#)” section)- Revised 3/7/17.

[Attā Hi Attano Nātho](#) – 3/4/17 (in the “[Dhammapada](#)” section).

[Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means](#) – 2/25/17 (in the new “Four Aggregates” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Vedanā – What It Really Means](#) – 2/18/17 (in the new “What is Vedanā (Feelings)?” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Satara Āhāra for Mental Body or Gandhabbayā](#) – 2/11/17 (in the new “Mental Body – Gandhabbaya” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Mental Body \(Gandhabbayā\) – Personal Accounts](#) – 2/5/17 (in the “[What is Saññā \(Perception\)?](#)” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Ditthi, Saññā, and Saṅkhāra – How They Relate](#) – 1/28/17 (in the “What is Saññā (Perception)?” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

Also, a really good Sinhala translation of many sections of the website by Professor Sarath Bandara is now available: “[Pure Dhamma – Sinhala Translation](#)“.

[Future Suffering – Why It Arises](#) – 01/22/17 (in the “[What is Saññā \(Perception\)?](#)” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section)

[Sexual Orientation – Effects of Kamma and Gathi \(Saṅkhāra\)](#) - 1/14/17 (in the “[Living Dhamma – Fundamentals](#)” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section)

[Nikāya in the Sutta Pitaka](#) – 1/7/17 (in the “[Sutta Interpretations](#)” section)

[Pure Dhamma – Reflections on 2016](#) – 01/01/17

18.4.6 **Essays – 2017**

[Bhūta and Yathābhūta – What Do They Really Mean](#) – 12/28/2017 (in the “[Rūpa Aggregate](#)” subsection of “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

12/17/2017: Puredhamma Discussion Forum is now open: “[Pure Dhamma Discussion Forum Guidelines](#)”.

[Kamma Viññāna and Nāmarūpa Paricceda Ñāna](#) – 12/12/2017 (in the “[Nāmarūpa Formation](#)” subsection of “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Tipitaka Commentaries – Helpful or Misleading?](#) – 12/6/2017 (in the “[Historical Background](#)” section).

[Pure Dhamma – Sinhala Translation](#) – 12/2/2017 (More sections added by Prof. Sarath Bandara).

[Kamma Viññāna – Link Between Mind and Matter](#) – 11/30/2017 (in the “[Nāma & Rūpa to Nāmarūpa](#)” subsection of “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Root of All Suffering – Ten Immoral Actions](#) – 11/14/2017 (in the new “[Dhamma with Less Pāli](#)” subsection of “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Kāma Guna, Kāma, Kāma Rāga, Kāmaccanda](#) – 11/9/2017 (in the “[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana](#)” subsection of “[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)”).

[Difference Between Dhammā and Saṅkhāra](#) – 11/5/2017 (This is an old post in the section “[Key Dhamma Concepts](#)”. I basically re-wrote the post. This is a much better version).

[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana – Introduction](#) – 11/1/2017 (in the NEW “[Assāda, Ādīnava, Nissarana](#)” subsection of “[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)”).

[Pure Dhamma – German Website](#) – 10/21/2017

[Avyākata Paticca Samuppāda for Vipāka Viññāna](#) – 10/17/2017 (in the “[Paticca Samuppāda Cycles](#)” subsection).

[Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala – Introduction](#) – 10/12/17 (in the new subsection “[Samādhi, Jhāna \(Dhyāna\), Magga Phala](#)” of the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Mundane versus Supramundane Jhāna](#) – 10/12/17 (in the new subsection “[Samādhi, Jhāna \(Dhyāna\), Magga Phala](#)” of the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Ascendance to Nibbāna via Jhāna \(dhyāna\)](#) – 10/4/17 (in the “[Transition to Noble Eightfold Path](#)” subsection of the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Abnormal Births Due to Gandhabba Transformations](#) – 9/30/17 (in the “[Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)” subsection of the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Gandhabba State – Evidence from Tipitaka](#) – 9/16/17 (in the “[Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)” subsection of the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Sila, Samādhi, Paññā to Paññā, Sila, Samādhi](#) – 9/2/17 (in the “[Transition to Noble Eightfold Path](#)” subsection).

[Anicca – Worthlessness of Worldly Things](#) – 8/20/17 (in the “[Anicca – True Meaning](#)” subsection).

[Dasa Samyōjana – Bonds in Rebirth Process](#) – 8/6/17 (in the “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” section).

[The Infinity Problem in Buddhism](#) – 7/15/17 (in the “[Dhamma and Philosophy](#)” section).

[List of “San” Words and Other Pāli Roots](#) – 6/29/17 (in the “[Tables and Summaries](#)” section).

[Pure Dhamma Discussion Forum Guidelines](#) – 6/22/17

[Saṅkhāra and Kammā, Viññāna and Kamma Beeja](#) – 6/16/17 (in the “[San](#)” section).

[User’s Guide to Pure Dhamma Website](#) – 6/8/17 (in “[Buddha Dhamma](#)” section).

[Is Ānāpānasati Breath Meditation?](#) – 6/2/17 (in “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” section).

[Viññāṇa – What It Really Means](#) – 5/26/17 (in “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Working of Kammā – Critical Role of Conditions](#) – 5/21/17 (in “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[What are rūpa? – Dhamma are rūpa too!](#) – 5/13/17 (in “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Micca Ditṭhi, Gandhabbayā, and Sotāpanna Stage](#) – 5/6/17 (in “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga – A Focused Analysis](#) – 4/29/17 – 4/29/17 (in the “Historical Background” section).

[Misinterpretation of Anicca and Anatta by Early European Scholars](#) – 4/29/17 (This replaces a recent post, “Answers to Criticism of Pure Dhamma Interpretations”).

I have also combined two previous posts, “Theravada – Problems with Current Interpretations of Key Concepts” and “Historical Timelines of Buddha Dhamma and Sri Lanka – End of Sinhala Commentaries” to make a new post, “[Incorrect Theravāda Interpretations – Historical Timeline](#)” — 4/29/17.

[Are There Procedures for Attaining Magga Phala, Jhāna and Abhiññā?](#) – 4/23/17 (in the “[Power of the Human Mind](#)” section)

Answers to Criticism of Pure Dhamma Interpretations – 4/16/17 (in the “[Historical Background](#)” section).

[Pabhassara Citta, Radiant Mind, and Bhavanga](#) – 4/13/17 (in the “[Abhidhamma](#)” section).

[Buddhaghosa and Visuddhimagga – Historical Background](#) – 4/8/17 (in the “[Historical Background](#)” section)

[Dasa Akusala and Anatta – The Critical Link](#) – 4/2/17 (in the “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)” section)

[Difference Between Jhāna and Stages of Nibbāna](#) – 3/24/17 (in the “[Power of the Human Mind](#)” section)

[Anatta – the Opposite of Which Atta?](#) – 3/17/17 (in the “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#)” section)

[Sakkaya Ditṭhi is Personality \(Me\) View?](#) – 3/10/17 (in the “[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#)” section)

[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thero](#) – 3/9/17

[Pāli Dictionaries – Are They Reliable?](#) – 3/4/17 (in the “[Sutta Interpretations](#)” section)- Revised 3/7/17.

[Attā Hi Attano Nātho](#) – 3/4/17 (in the “[Dhammapada](#)” section).

[Saṅkhāra – What It Really Means](#) – 2/25/17 (in the new “Four Aggregates” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Vedanā – What It Really Means](#) – 2/18/17 (in the new “What is Vedanā (Feelings)?” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Satara Āhāra for Mental Body or Gandhabbayā](#) – 2/11/17 (in the new “Mental Body – Gandhabbaya” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Mental Body \(Gandhabbayā\) – Personal Accounts](#) – 2/5/17 (in the “[What is Saññā \(Perception\)?](#)” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

[Ditṭhi, Saññā, and Saṅkhāra – How They Relate](#) – 1/28/17 (in the “What is Saññā (Perception)?” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section).

Also, a really good Sinhala translation of many sections of the website by Professor Sarath Bandara is now available: “[Pure Dhamma – Sinhala Translation](#)”.

[Future Suffering – Why It Arises](#) – 01/22/17 (in the “[What is Saññā \(Perception\)?](#)” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section)

[Sexual Orientation – Effects of Kamma and Gathi \(Saṅkhāra\)](#) - 1/14/17 (in the “[Living Dhamma – Fundamentals](#)” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section)

[Nikāya in the Sutta Pitaka](#) – 1/7/17 (in the “[Sutta Interpretations](#)” section)

[Pure Dhamma – Reflections on 2016](#) – 01/01/17

[April – July 2017](#)

[January – March 2017](#)

18.4.7 Essays – 2016

[December 2016](#)

[November 2016](#)

[October 2016](#)

[September 2016](#)

[August 2016](#)

[July 2016](#)

[June 2016](#)

[May 2016](#)

[April 2016](#)

[March 2016](#)

[February 2016](#)

[January 2016](#)

18.4.7. **January 2016**

1

[Tiparivattaya and Twelve Types of Ñāṇa \(Knowledge\)](#) – 1/29/16 (Dhamma Cakka Pavattana sutta in the Sutta Interpretations section)

[Majjima Patipada – Way to Relinquish Attachments to this World](#) – 1/22/16 (Dhamma Cakka Pavattana sutta in the Sutta Interpretations section). Revised 1/23/16.

[Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta – Introduction](#) – 1/16/16 (in the Sutta Interpretations section).

[Popup Pāli Glossary with Pronunciation](#) – 1/7/16. There will be no new essay this weekend.

[Pancaupadanakkhandha – It is All Mental](#) – 1/1/16 (in the “The Five Aggregates (Pancakkhandha)” section).

18.4.7. **February 2016**

2

[Nibbatti Lakkhana in Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#) – 2/26/16 (under the Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna)

[Hidden World of the Gandhabbayā: Netherworld \(Paralowa\)](#) – 2/18/16 (in Manomaya Kaya section)

[Udayavaya Ñāṇa – Introduction](#) – 2/12/16 (under the Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna)

[Relinquishing Defilements via Three Rounds and Four Stages](#) – 2/4/16 (Dhamma Cakka Pavattana sutta in the Sutta Interpretations section)

18.4.7. March 2016

3

[Getting to Samādhī via Formal Meditation Sessions](#) – 3/25/16 (in Meditation section)

[Āhāra \(Food\) in Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#) – 3/19/16 (under the Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna; new subsection on [Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#))

[How Perceived Pleasures \(Assāda\) lead to Dukkha](#) – 3/11/16 (Under Āsvada (Mind-Made Pleasures), Ādeenava (Bad Outcomes), Nissarana (Relinquish))

[Craving for Pornography – How to Reduce the Tendency](#) – 3/4/16 (Under Discussion of Comments)

18.4.7. April 2016

4

4/29/2016 New Section: [Myths or Realities?](#)

Two posts: [Animisa Locana Bodhi Poojawa – A Prelude to Acts of Gratitude](#)

and [Paramita and Niyata Vivarana – Myths or Realities?](#)

[Brain – Interface between Mind and Body](#) – 4/22/16 (in the Abhidhamma section. Don't be discouraged even if you don't have any exposure to Abhidhamma; I am trying to make Abhidhamma easy to grasp. No need to memorize anything)

[What are Dhamma? – A Deeper Analysis](#) – 4/15/16 (in the Abhidhamma section)

[Two Versions of 37 Factors of Enlightenment](#) – 4/8/16 (in “Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta” subsection under “Key Dhamma Concepts”)

[Why are Tilakkhana not Included in 37 Factors of Enlightenment?](#) – 4/1/16 (in “Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta” subsection under “Key Dhamma Concepts”)

[Getting to Samādhī via Formal Meditation Sessions](#) – 3/25/16 (in Meditation section)

[Āhāra \(Food\) in Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#) – 3/19/16 (under the Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna; new subsection on [Udayavaya Ñāṇa](#))

[How Perceived Pleasures \(Assāda\) lead to Dukkha](#) – 3/11/16 (Under Āsvada (Mind-Made Pleasures), Ādeenava (Bad Outcomes), Nissarana (Relinquish))

[Craving for Pornography – How to Reduce the Tendency](#) – 3/4/16 (Under Discussion of Comments)

18.4.7. May 2016

5

[Supreme Qualities of Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha](#) – 5/28/16 (This is a re-write of a previous short post).

[Tisarana Vandana and Its Effects on One's Gathi](#) – 5/28/16

5/20/2016 New Subsection: [The Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma](#), which includes two old posts and a new post: [31 Realms Associated with the Earth](#). New post in Tables and Summaries section: [31 Realms of Existence](#)

[Our Two Worlds : Material and Mental](#) – 5/14/16 (in Buddha Dhamma section)

[Indriya and Āyatana – Big Difference](#) – 5/7/16 (in the Key Dhamma Concepts section)

18.4.7. June 2016

6

[Possible Effects in Meditation – Kundalini Awakening](#) – 6/25/16 (In the section on Bhāvanā (Meditation))

[Can Buddhist Meditation be Dangerous?](#) – 6/17/16 (In the section on Myths or Realities)

[Gandhabbayā Sensing the World – With and Without a Physical Body](#) – 6/11/16 (In the subsection on the Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma)

[Gandhabbayā – Only in Human and Animal Realms](#) – 6/4/16 (In the subsection on the Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma)

18.4.7. July 2016

7

[Antarabhava and Gandhabbayā](#) – 7/29/16 (In the section Myths or Realities?)

[Udayavaya Ñāṇa – Importance of the Cittaja Kaya](#) – 7/22/16 (In the subsection on the Udayavaya Ñāṇa in the Sotāpanna stage of Nobbana)

New section: Abhidhamma via Science (Changed to [Inconsistencies with Science](#) on 06Mar2018) and a new post: [Vision \(Cakkhu Viññāna\) is Not Just Seeing](#) – 7/15/16

[Nibbāna in the Big Picture](#) – 7/8/16 (In the subsection on the Grand Unified Theory of Dhamma)

[Hetu-Phala, Paccuppanna, and Paticca Samuppāda](#) – 7/2/16 (In the section [Sorting out Some Key Pāli Terms](#) (Taṇhā, Lobha, Dosa, Moha, etc))

18.4.7. August 2016

8

Started a new section: [Living Dhamma](#). The subsection “New Approach to Meditation” was deleted and those posts are now in this section. New post in this section: [What Are Kilesa \(Mental Impurities\)? – Connection to Cetasika](#) – 8/26/16

[Starting on the Path Even without Belief in Rebirth](#) (Niramisa Sukha to Nibbāna Suva – The Key Step) – 8/19/16

New subsection in the “Bhāvanā (Meditation)” section : [Living Dhamma](#) and a new post in it: [Peace of Mind to Nibbāna – The Key Step](#) – 8/12/16

Also, Pāli Glossary replaced by two posts with over 400 Pāli words:

[Pāli Glossary – \(A-K\)](#) and [Pāli Glossary – \(L-Z\)](#) – 8/12/16

and, updated version of [Popup Pāli Glossary with Pronunciation](#) – 8/12/16

[Living Dhamma – Introduction](#) – 8/5/16 (In the section Bhāvanā (Meditation))

18.4.7. September 2016

9

[Noble Eightfold Path – Role of Sobhana Cetasika](#) – 9/30/16 (in the “Living Dhamma” section)

[How Are Gathi and Kilesa Incorporated into Thoughts?](#) – 9/22/16 (in the “Living Dhamma” section)

[Satipatṭhāna Sutta – Relevance to Suffering in This Life](#) – 9/10/16 (in the “Living Dhamma” section)

Two new posts:

[Nibbāna “Exists”, but Not in This World](#) – 9/2/16 (in the “Nibbana” subsection)

[Suffering in This Life – Role of Mental Impurities](#) – 9/2/16 (in the “Living Dhamma” section)

18.4.7. October 2016

10

[Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda](#) – 10/28/16 (in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section)

Started a new subsection: [Pattana Dhamma](#) in the Paticca Sumuppada section. New post in this section: [Pattana Dhamma – Connection to Cause and Effect \(Hethu Phala\)](#) – 10/22/16

September 30, 2016: I just installed Google Translator at top right of the website. I have setup only a few languages for now. I would appreciate feedback on the quality of the translations. Also, if you need a language that is not there, please let me know and I can add. You can use the “Comments” box below to provide input.

[Micca Ditthi – Connection to Hethu Phala \(Cause and Effect\)](#) – 10/18/16 (in the “Living Dhamma” section)

[Getting to Samādhī](#) – 10/7/16 (in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section)

18.4.7. **November 2016**

11

[Sutta Learning Sequence for the Present Day](#) – 11/30/16 (in [Sutta Interpretations](#) section).

[Asevana and Annamanna Paccaya](#) – 11/20/16 (in [Pattana Dhamma](#) subsection in the Paticca Sumuppada section).

[Correct Meaning of Vacī Saṅkhāra](#) – 11/10/16 (in the “[Sorting out Some Key Pāli Terms](#)” sub section of the “Key Dhamma Concepts” section)

18.4.7. **December 2016**

12

[Saññā – What It Really Means](#) – 12/31/16 (in the “[What is Saññā \(Perception\)?](#)” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section)

[Our Mental Body – Gandhabbayā](#) – 12/26/16 (in the “[What is Saññā \(Perception\)?](#)” subsection in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section)

[Suffering in This Life and Paticca Samuppāda II](#) – 12/7/16 (in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section)

18.4.8 **Essays – 2015**

[December 2015](#)

[November 2015](#)

[October 2015](#)

[September 2015](#)

[August 2015](#)

[July 2015](#)

[June 2015](#)

[May 2015](#)

[April 2015](#)

[March 2015](#)

[February 2015](#)

[January 2015](#)

18.4.8. **December 2015**

1

[Pancakkhandha or Five Aggregates – A Misinterpreted Concept](#) – 12/25/15 (in the “The Five Aggregates (Pancakkhandha)” section).

[Does the Hell \(Niraya\) Exist?](#) – 12/18/15 (in the “Role of the Brain in Human Consciousness” section).

[Feelings: Sukha, Dukha, Somanassa, and Domanassa](#) – 12/11/15 (in the Paticca Samuppāda section).

[13. Kammattana \(Recitations\) for the Sotāpanna Stage](#) – 12/5/15 in the Bhāvanā (Meditation) section

18.4.8. **November 2015**

2

[The Origin of Matter – Suddhāshtaka \[Suddhatthaka\]](#) – 11/27/15 (in the Abhidhamma section)

[Kāma Āsvada Start with Phassa Paccaya Vedanā or Samphassa Ja Vedanā](#) – 11/19/15 (in Paticca Samuppāda Section)

[12. Key Factors to be Considered when “Meditating” for the Sotāpanna Stage](#) – 11/13/15 (in the Meditation section).

[How Are Paticca Samuppāda Cycles Initiated?](#) – 11/6/15 (in the Paticca Samuppāda section).

18.4.8. **October 2015**

3

[Do Things Just Happen? – The Hidden Causes](#) – 10/30/15 (in the Moral Living and Fundamentals section).

[“Self” and “no-self”: A Simple Analysis – Do We Always Act with Avijjā?](#) – 10/23/15 (in the Comments/Reviews section).

[Is Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) a Religion?](#) – 10/21/15 (in the Dhamma and Philosophy section).

Āsvada (Mind-Made Pleasures), Ādeenava (Bad Outcomes), Nissarana (Relinquish) – 10/16/15 (New subsection with the following two posts under it)

Āsvada, Ādeenava, Nissarana – Introduction -10/16/15

[What is “Kāma”? It is not Sex](#) – 10/16/15

[How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#) – 10/8/15 (I revised the original post with this title and made two posts; most of the new material is in this first post and is better to be read first)

[How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā – II](#) – 10/8/15

[Logical Proof that Impermanence is Incorrect Translation of Anicca](#) – 10/8/15

I have also added audio files to “[Pāli Glossary](#)” – 10/6/15

[Is Eating Meat an Akusala Kamma \(Immoral Deed\)?](#) – 10/2/15

18.4.8. **September 2015**

4

[Would Nibbāna be Possible if Impermanence is the Cause of Suffering?](#) – 9/25/15

[Anicca vata Sankhara...](#) – 9/17/15

[What is Intention in Kamma?](#) – 9/11/15 (in a new section on “Discussion of Comments” under “Comments/Reviews”).

[Niramisa Sukha – In a Chart](#) – 9/4/15

[Learning Buddha Dhamma Leads to Niramisa Sukha](#) – 9/4/15

18.4.8. August 2015

5

[What is the only Akusala Removed by a Sotāpanna?](#) – 8/28/15

[Cetasika – Connection to Gathi](#) – 8/20/15

[Body Types in 31 Realms – Importance of Manomaya Kaya](#) – 8/13/15

[Citta Vithi – Processing of Sense Inputs](#) – 8/6/15

18.4.8. July 2015

6

[10. Attaining the Sotāpanna Stage via Removing Ditthasava](#) – 7/30/15 (This is a major revision of a previous post with a different title).

[Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala](#) – 7/27/15

[Four Noble Truths: Recipe for Problem Solving](#) – 7/16/15

[Gathi to Bhava to Jathi – Ours to Control](#) – 7/9/15

[Gathi and Bhava – Many Varieties](#) – 7/3/15

18.4.8. June 2015

7

[Nama Gotta, Bhava, Kamma Beeja, and Mano Thalaya \(Mind Plane\)](#) – 6/26/15

[Arogya Parama Labha](#) – 6/19/15

[Key to Sotāpanna Stage – Ditthi and Vicikicca](#) – 6/13/15

[Why Do People Enjoy Immoral Deeds? – Ditthi Is Key](#) – 6/6/15

[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#) – 6/1/15

18.4.8. May 2015

8

[How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#) – 5/24/15

[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – According to Some Key Suttas](#) – 5/15/15

[How Does One Know whether the Sotāpanna Stage is Reached?](#) – 5/9/15

[Buddha Dhamma: Non-Perceivability and Self-Consistency](#) – 5/3/15

18.4.8. April 2015

9

[Bhava paccaya Jati....Jara, Marana,...](#) -4/29/15 (under “Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English”).

[Phassa paccaya Vedana....to Bhava](#) – 4/24/15 (under “Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English”).

[Difference between Phassa and Samphassa](#) – 4/18/15 (under “Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English”).

[Namarupa paccaya Salāyatana](#) – 4/11/15 (under “Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English”).

[Mahā Chattarisaka Sutta \(Discourse on the Great Forty\)](#) – 4/6/15

[Does any Object \(Rūpa\) Last only 17 Thought Moments?](#) – 4/1/15

18.4.8. **March 2015**

10

[Viññāna paccaya Namarupa](#) – 3/28/15 (under “[Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English](#)”).

[Saṅkhāra paccaya Viññāna – 2](#) – 3/24/15 (under “[Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English](#)”).

[Saṅkhāra paccaya Viññāna – 1](#) – 3/20/15 (under “[Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English](#)”).

[Avijja paccaya Saṅkhāra](#) – 3/16/15 (under “[Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English](#)”).

[Introduction -2 – The Three Characteristics of Nature](#) 3/12/15 (under “[Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English](#)”).

[Introduction – What is Suffering?](#) 3/8/15 – new sub section on “[Paticca Samuppāda in Plain English](#)” where I will use minimum Pāli words.

[3. Viññāna, Thoughts, and the Subconscious](#) 3/4/15

18.4.8. **February 2015**

11

[What is “Kaya” in Kayanupassana?](#)– 2/26/15.

[Difference between a Wish and a Determination \(Paramita\)](#) 2/18/15

[Are you not getting expected results from meditation?](#) 2/15/15

[Lobha,Dosa, Moha versus Raga, Patigha, Avijja](#) 2/13/15

[Prerequisites for the Satipatthāna Bhāvanā](#) 2/12/15

[Kayanupassana – The Section on Habits \(Sampajanapabba\)](#) 2/9/15

[First Noble Truth – A Simple Explanation of One Aspect](#) 2/6/15

[“Spark” by John Ratey](#) 2/5/15

[Satipatthāna Sutta – Structure](#) 2/4/15 – I have revised the other two older posts on the Satipattha sutta in order to insert this post in the beginning.

[Kayanupassana – The Foundation \(Iriyapathapabba\)](#) 2/1/15

18.4.8. **January 2015**

12

[Wrong Views \(Micca Ditthi\) – A Simpler Analysis](#) 1/28/15

[Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta – Satipatthāna – Introduction](#) – 1/22/15

[Sutta – Introduction](#) – Starting a new section on Suttas – 1/20/15

[Origin of Morality \(and Immorality\) in Buddhism](#) 1/17/15

[Recent Evidence for Unbroken Memory Records \(HSAM\)](#) 1/15/15

[11. How to Select and “Grow” Meditation Procedures for Magga Phala](#) – Meditation Section (1/12/15)

[Possible Outcomes of Meditation – Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala](#) (1/8/15)

[If Everything is Anicca Should We Just give up Everything?](#) (1/7/15)

[“The Language of God”, by Francis Collins](#) – Book Review (1/3/15)

18.4.9 **Essays – 2014**

[December 2014](#)

[November 2014](#)

[October 2014](#)

[September 2014](#)

[August 2014](#)

[July 2014](#)

[June 2014](#)

18.4.9. **December 2014**

1

[Saṅkhāra – Life is a Bundle of Saṅkhāra](#) (12/28/14)

[Anicca – Repeated Arising/Destruction](#) (12/24/14)

[1. Thoughts \(Citta\), Consciousness \(Viññāṇa\), and Mind \(Hadaya Vatthu\) – Introduction](#) (12/20/14)

[2. Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) can be of Many Different Types and Forms](#) (12/20/14)

[Three Kinds of Ditthi, Eightfold Paths, and Samādhi](#) (12/18/14)

[What does Buddha Dhamma \(Buddhism\) say about Birth Control?](#) (12/14/14)

[Citta and Cetasika – How Viññāṇa \(Consciousness\) Arises](#) (12/12/14) – Abhidhamma

[Manomaya Kaya – Introduction](#) (12/12/14). I am starting a new subsection in the “Key Dhamma Concepts” section on Manomaya Kaya, and have added two previous posts from other sections to here as well. This section is a prerequisite for the Abhidhamma material, but this material may help clarify other issues as well.

[“Waking Up” by Sam Harris](#) (12/9/14) – I am starting a new section on “Book Reviews”. I have moved a post that I did last month on [“Why Does the World Exist?” by Jim Holt](#) from a different section to this section.

[The Cooling Down Process \(Nibbāna\) – How the Root Causes are Removed](#) (12/5/14)

18.4.9. November 2014

2

[What Does “Paccaya” Mean in Paticca Samuppāda? – Effect not Guaranteed](#) (11/21/14)

[Memory, Brain, Mind, Nama Loka, Kamma Bhava, Kamma Vipāka](#) (11/19/14)

[Saddharma Pundarika Sutra \(Lotus Sutra\) – A Focused Analysis](#) (11/16/14)

[Sadhu – Symbolizes Purified Hadaya Vatthu \(Mind\)](#) (11/12/14)

[Root Cause of Anicca – Nature of Sankata](#) (11/10/14)

[Cuti-Patisandhi – An Abhidhamma Description](#) (11/9/14) – Technical but informative!

[Sotāpanna Magga and Phala – How to Distinguish](#) (11/7/14)

[Vinaya – The Nature Likes to be in Equilibrium](#) (11/6/14)

18.4.9. October 2014

3

[Najajja Vasalo Hoti.....](#) (10/28/14)

[Why Does the World Exist?](#) (10/28/14)

[Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#) (10/25/14)

[Appamadō Amata Padam....](#) (10/23/14)

[Nirödha and Vaya – Two Different Concepts](#) (10/19/14)

[Difference Between Giving up Valuables and Losing Interest in Worthless](#) (10/15/14)

[Patisandhi Citta – How the Next Life is Determined According to Gathi](#) (10/12/14)

[How Character \(Gathi\) Leads to Bhava and Jathi](#) (10/12/14)

[A Simple Way to Enhance Merits \(Kusala\) and Avoid Demerits \(Akusala\)](#) (10/7/14)

[Buddhist Chanting – Introduction](#) (10/4/14)

[The Double Slit Experiment – Correlation between Mind and Matter?](#) (10/2/14)

18.4.9. September 2014

4

Namaskaraya – What does it Really Mean? (9/29/14)

[Javana of a Citta – The Root of Mental Power](#) (9/26/14)

Tiratana Vandana – Supreme Characteristics (9/25/14)

[Sutta Chanting \(with Pāli Text\)](#) (9/25/14)

[Panca Indriya and Panca Bala – Five Faculties and Five Powers](#) (9/24/14)

[Namaskaraya – Homage to the Buddha](#) and [The Five Precepts – Panca Sila](#) (9/24/14) – new section on Buddhist Chanting

[Sabba Papassa Akaranan.....](#) (9/22/14) – new section on Dhammapada

[What is Samādhī? – Three Kinds of Mindfulness](#) (9/17/14)

[What Does Buddha Dhamma Say about Creator, Satan, Angels, and Demons?](#) (9/16/14)

[Ultimate Realities – Table](#) (9/12/14)

[First Noble Truth is Suffering? Myths about Suffering](#) (9/11/14)

[Kāma Taṇhā, Bhava Taṇhā, Vibhava Taṇhā](#) (9/9/14)

[Lobha, Raga and Kamaccanda, Kamaraga](#) (9/9/14)

[Vipassana \(Vidassana\) Bhāvanā – Insight Meditation](#) (9/7/14)

[Ariya Metta Bhāvanā \(Loving Kindness Meditation\)](#) (9/6/14)

18.4.9. **August 2014**

5

[Conditions for the Four Stages of Nibbāna](#) (8/31/14)

[How Habits are Formed and Broken – A Scientific View](#) (8/31/14)

[Gathi \(Character\), Anusaya \(Latent Defilements\), and Āsava \(Cravings\)](#) (8/31/14)

[37 Factors of Enlightenment](#) (8/30/14)

[Second Law of Thermodynamics is Part of Anicca!](#) (8/29/14)

[Ghost in the Machine – A Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#) (8/24/14)

[Key to Ānāpānasati – How to Change Habits and Character \(Gathi\)](#) (8/23/14)

[The Five Precepts – What the Buddha Meant by Them](#) (8/18/14)

[True Brain – How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#) (8/15/14)

[Implications of the Rebirth Process in Daily Life and in Society](#) (8/14/14)

[What is in a Thought? Why Gathi are so Important?](#) (8/12/14)

[Why is it Necessary to Learn Key Pāli Words?](#) (8/9/14)

[Is Suffering the Same as the First Noble Truth on Suffering?](#) (8/8/14)

[“What is a Thought?”](#) (8/7/14)

[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#) (8/6/14)

18.4.9. July 2014

6

[What is Ānāpāna?](#) (7/31/14)[Difference Between Dhamma and Saṅkhāra](#) (7/30/14)[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\) – How Does it Happen?](#) (7/29/14)[Abhidhamma – Introduction](#) (7/25/14)

Ten Moral Actions (Dasa Kusala) and Ten Meritorious Actions (Punna Kriya) (7/21/14)

[The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#) (7/18/14)[Annantara and Samanantara Paccaya](#) (7/15/14)[Dhamma and Philosophy – Introduction](#) (7/3/14)[Philosophy of the Mind](#) (7/3/14)**18.4.9. June 2014**

7

[Myths about Meditation](#) (6/26/14)[Myths about the Sotāpanna Stage](#) (6/23/14)[Dhamma and Philosophy](#) (6/21/14)

I did not document to postings by date before 6/21/14.

Postings started in January 2014.

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[Four Conditions for Attaining Sotāpanna Magga/Phala](#) – 8/7/15

[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – According to Some Key Suttas](#) – 8/7/15

[“Spark” by John Ratey](#) – 8/7/15

[What is a Thought](#) – 8/7/15

[What is Mind? How do we Experience the Outside World?](#) – 8/7/15

18.4.14 .6 **July 2015 Revisions**

[11. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#) – 7/30/15

[Sotāpanna Magga Anugami and a Sotāpanna](#) – 7/28/15

[The Sotāpanna Stage](#) – 7/28/15

[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#) – 7/28/15

[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#) – 7/28/15

[Root Cause of Anicca – Five Stages of a Sankata](#) – 7/17/15

[Six Kinds of Consciousness in Our 3-D World](#) – 7/17/15

[Why Do People Enjoy Immoral Deeds? – Ditthi Is Key](#) – 7/4/15

[Why is it Necessary to Learn Key Pāli Words?](#) – 7/4/15

[Dhamma and Philosophy – Introduction](#) – 7/4/15

[Sotāpanna Magga and Phala – How to Distinguish](#) – 7/4/15

[Gathi \(Character\), Anusaya \(Latent Defilements\), and Āsava \(Cravings\)](#) – 7/4/15

[10. Magga Phala and Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#) – 7/4/15

[Possible Outcomes of Meditation – Samādhi, Jhāna, Magga Phala](#) – 7/4/15

[Truine Brain: How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#) – 7/4/15

18.4.14 June 2015 Revisions .7

[Key Problems with Mahayana Teachings](#) – 6/26/15

[Sutta Chanting \(with Pāli Text\)](#) – 6/26/15

[What Reincarnates? – Concept of a Lifestream](#) – 6/26/15

[Bhava and Jati – States of Existence and Births Therein](#) – 6/26/15

[Manomaya Kaya and Physical Body](#) – 6/26/15

[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#) – 6/26/15

[Five Aggregates – Introduction](#) – 6/26/15

[Welcome!](#) -6/20/15

[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#) -6/20/15

[What is a Thought?](#) -6/20/15

[Sabba Papassa Akaranan....](#) –6/20/15

[A Buddhist or a Bhauddhaya?](#) –6/20/15

[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#) -6/20/15

[What is Kamma? – Is Everything Determined by Kamma?](#) -6/20/15

[5. Ariya Metta Bhāvanā \(Loving Kindness Meditation\)](#) -6/20/15

[11. How to Select and “Grow” Meditation Procedures for Magga Phala](#) -6/20/15

[Preservation of the Dhamma](#) -6/20/15

[First Noble Truth is Suffering? Myths about Suffering](#) -6/14/15

Kilesa (Defilements) , Diṭṭhi (Wrong Views), Sammā Diṭṭhi (Good/Correct Views) -6/14/15

[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#) -6/14/15

[Buddhist Chanting – Introduction](#) -6/14/15

[Sotāpanna Stage of Nibbāna](#) -6/14/15

[Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#) – 6/6/15

[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#) -6/6/15

[Myths about the Sotāpanna Stage](#) -6/6/15

[Cetasika \(Mental Factors\)](#) -6/6/15

[Consciousness Dependence on Number of Dimensions](#) -6/6/15

[Akusala Citta and Akusala Vipāka Citta](#) -6/6/15

[How to Cultivate the Anicca Saññā](#) – 6/2/15

[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#) – 6/2/15

[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#) – 6/2/15

18.4.14 May 2015 Revisions .8

[Does the First Noble Truth Describe only Suffering?](#) – 5/25/15

[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#) – 5/25/15

[Three Levels of Practice](#) – 5/25/15

[Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem](#) – 5/25/15

[How do we Decide which View is Wrong View \(Ditthi\)?](#) – 5/25/15

[Key to Calming the Mind – The Five Hindrances](#) – 5/25/15

[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#) – 5/25/15

[The Incessant Distress \(“Peleema”\) – Key to Dukkha Sacca](#) – 5/25/15

[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta](#) – 5/25/15

[1. Thoughts \(Citta\), Consciousness \(Viññāna\), and Mind \(Hadaya Vatthu\) – Introduction](#) -5/15/15

[How to Taste Nibbāna](#) -5/15/15

[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#) -5/15/15

[The Way to Nibbāna – Removal of Āsavas](#) -5/15/15

[How Does One Know whether the Sotāpanna Stage is Reached?](#) -5/15/15

[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#) -5/15/15

[The Cooling Down Process \(Nibbāna\) – How Root Causes are Removed](#) -5/15/15

[Ten Immoral Actions \(Dasa Akusala\)](#) -5/9/15

[10. Ariya Jhānas via Cultivation of Saptha Bojjanga](#) -5/9/15

[Infinity – How Big Is It?](#) -5/9/15

[Misinterpretations of Buddha Dhamma](#) -5/9/15

[Abhidhamma – Introduction](#) -5/9/15

[The 89 \(121\) Types of Citta](#) -5/9/15

[Why a Sotāpanna is Better off than any King, Emperor, or a Billionaire](#) -5/9/15

[Welcome!](#) -5/4/15

[Buddhism without Rebirth and Nibbāna?](#) -5/4/15

[What is Buddha Dhamma?](#) -5/4/15

[Pāli Glossary](#) -5/4/15

18.4.14 **April 2015 Revisions**

[Vinaya – The Nature Likes to be in Equilibrium](#) –4/30/15

[What is Mind? How do we Experience the Outside World?](#) – 4/30/15

[Anicca – Inability to Maintain Anything](#) – 4/30/15

[Transfer of Merits \(Pattidana\) – How Does it Happen?](#) – 4/25/15

[Anatta and Dukkha – True Meanings](#) – – 4/25/15

[Nibbāna – Is it Difficult to Understand?](#) – – 4/25/15

18.4.15 **Revised Posts – 2014**

[Evidence for Rebirth](#) (9/30/14)

[Four Bases of Mental Power \(Satara Iddhipada\)](#) 9/6/14

[Introduction to Buddhist Meditation](#) (8/26/14)

[What is Avijja \(Ignorance\)?](#) (8/26/14)

[Neuroscience Says There is no Free Will? – That is a Misinterpretation!](#) (8/25/14)

[The 89 Types of Citta](#) (8/3/14)

[Preservation of the Dhamma](#) (8/2/14)

[How do we Decide Which View is Wrong View \(Diṭṭhi\)?](#) (7/28/14)

[Saṅkhāra, Kamma, Kamma Beeja, Kamma Vipāka](#) (7/20/14)

[The Five Aggregates \(Pancakkhandha\)](#) (7/10/14)

[Akusala Citta – How a Sotāpanna Avoids Apayagami Citta](#) (7/8/14)

[What is “San”? Meaning of Sansāra \(or Saṃsāra\)](#) (7/8/14)

Kilesa (Defilements) , Diṭṭhi (Wrong Views), Sammā Diṭṭhi (Good/Correct Views) (7/8/14)

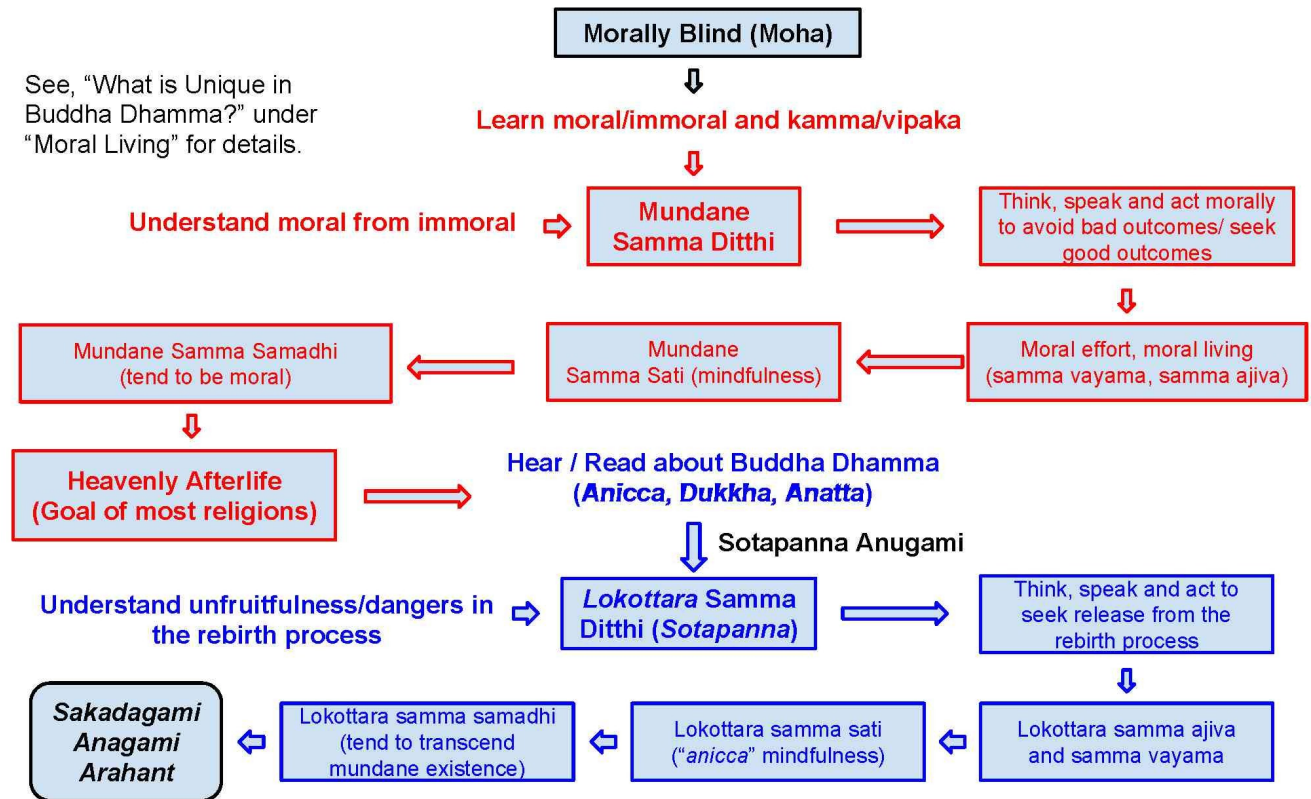
[Foundation of Dhamma](#) (6/30/14)

18.5 Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart

I have made a single page chart that shows the uniqueness of the Buddha's message, and also outlines the Path that he suggested clearly.

The pdf file can be saved or printed for reference:

[WebLink: Buddha Dhamma – In a Chart](#)



Discussion of the chart is at:

[What is Unique in Buddha Dhamma?](#)

18.6 **Pure Dhamma Essays in Book Format**

For those who may like to read the posts in epub book format, please download it at the below website:

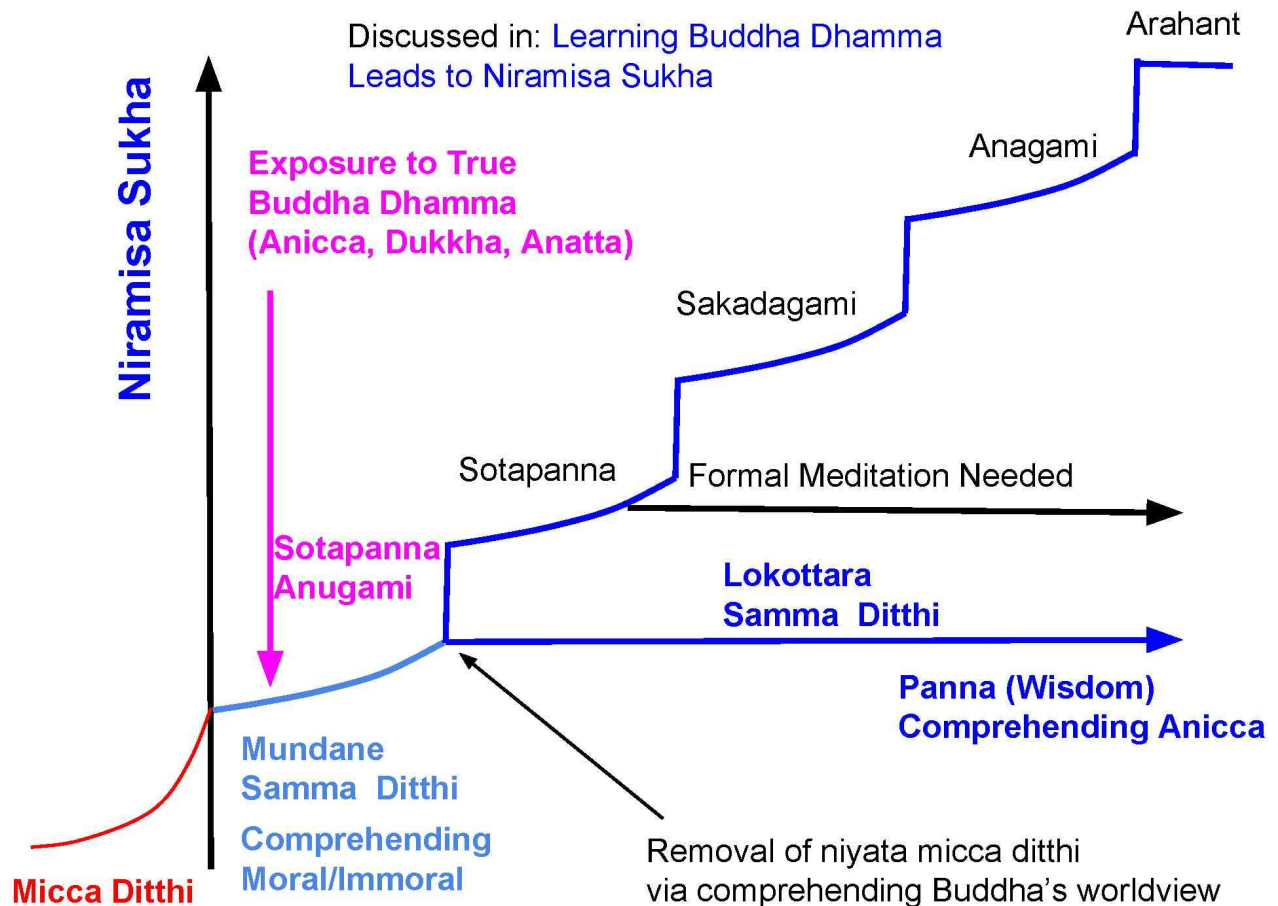
[WebLink: Pure Dhamma Essays in Book Format](#)

18.7 Niramisa Sukha – In a Chart

There are several posts at the site on “*niramia sukha*“. It is NOT a feeling (*vedanā*) in the sense of a sense pleasure; it does not belong in the *vedanā cetasika*. It is a “sense of relief” when one starts realizing the “burdens” associated with sense pleasures.

- The closest analogy (if one can be given) is the feeling one gets when one is relieved of an headache that one had since birth.

I have made a single page chart that shows how the *niramisa sukha* starts as one starts when one first hears the true message of the Buddha and starts comprehending it, and becomes a *Sotāpanna Anugami*. Then it makes permanent stepwise jumps at the four stages of *Nibbāna* culminating in the *Arahanthood*.



The pdf file can be saved or printed for reference:

[WebLink: Niramisa Sukha – In a Chart](#)

Discussion of the chart is at:

[Learning Buddha Dhamma Leads to Niramisa Sukha](#)

18.8

Popup Pali Glossary with Pronunciation

August 12, 2016: Mr. Seng Kiat Ng added the new words in the two new posts “[Pāli Glossary – \(A-K\)](#)” and “[Pāli Glossary – \(L-Z\)](#)” to the pop-up dictionary, so that there are now a **total of 414 Pāli words**. Please download the two new files in #3 below and delete the old files, if you have already installed the GoldenDict dictionary.

- Installation instructions are given below for those who have not installed the pop-up GoldenDict dictionary, but would like to do so.

January 7, 2016

This post was written by Mr. Seng Kiat Ng. Much merits to him and his family for this meritorious work. This is a very useful feature that can be used with any other site as well (by downloading other dictionaries; see below).

- Please remember that once you download the files as he instructed, **you will be able to highlight a Pāli word (178 words as of today) in any of the posts at the site and a popup screen will display the English meaning. You also be able to hear the Pāli pronunciation if clicked on the audio button.**
 - The old [Pāli Glossary](#) (with the same 178 words) is still there in case anyone wants to peruse there; the audio files have been removed since they take too long to download.
1. We will be using the GoldenDict online dictionary platform. First, one needs to install it on one's computer and then download the two Puredhamma Pāli dictionary files to a folder on one's computer.
 - Other online or downloadable (free) dictionaries can also be used as described below.
 2. Goto <http://goldendict.org/download.php> and choose the version suitable for you. I chose the first option to download the Windows version.
 - Download the .exe file and double click to run it and install it.
 - Mine was installed in the C:\Program Files (X86)\GoldenDict directory. There should a “GoldenDict.exe” file there. This is the “clickable icon” that will open the application. It does not automatically create this “clickable icon” on the desktop, so right click on that and make a copy on the desktop for convenience.
 - Now the GoldenDict application can be opened by double clicking that link on the desktop.
 3. Next download the two files (one text, one audio) for the Pāli dictionary from Puredhamma.net to a folder in your computer (could be the same “GoldenDict” folder above).
 - [Pure-Dhamma-Pāli-English Glossary \[414 words\].mdx](#) (Text) **New 12Aug2016**
 - [Pure-Dhamma-Pāli-English Glossary \[414 words\].mdd](#) (Audio) **New 12Aug2016**
- You may want to close any other screens (other than the one with the “Download” button) that pop up with advertisements. Wait until the “Download” button becomes “clickable”.
4. Now open the GoldenDict as instructed in #2 above.
 - Go to “Edit” and choose “Dictionaries” and then choose the **folder** that you put the above two Pāli Glossary files.
 - Now, right next to the “search button” on GoldenDict, there is the “scan popup” option selection button indicated by a “pen like” symbol. Click on it to enable scan popups.
 - Now, open any page on Puredhamma.net and select a Pāli word. **If you are running Windows Explorer**, just placing the cursor on the word will make the dictionary popup (if that word is one of the 414 words that are so far in the Pāli dictionary). Try “anicca” in a post to test because that word is there.
 - **If you have Google Chrome**, you need to select the word (highlight) and hit CTRL+C+C (hold CTRL button and hit C twice) for it to popup.

- There is a “speaker” symbol there in the popup and you can click on it to play back the audio file (pronunciation).
- In order for the popup dictionary to work, GoldenDict must be opened at the same time.

5. Here is a complete list of options to download the GoldenDict platform:

- Windows [GoldenDict-1.5.0-RC-517](#)
- Mac OS X [GoldenDict Early Access Builds for Mac OS X](#)
- Linux [GoldenDict Eng-Rus-En v1.1](#)
- Mobile Android [BlueDict](#)
- Mobile iPhone/iPad [MDict](#)

6. You can use the GoldenDict platform to access other online or downloadable dictionaries (to be used either with this site or any other site). Some can be chosen at the “Edit” menu. Go to “Edit” and choose “Dictionaries” and on the second row of that screen there are some online dictionaries that you can choose from.

- More information at the [GoldenDict.org](#) site.
- If you have two or more dictionaries loaded, then the popup will display translations provided by all of them (if that word is in them).

7. Other than GoldenDict, the following two platforms also could be used.

- [BlueDict](#) (Android – Free; limited to 10 Dictionaries and with advertisement)
- [MDict](#) (Windows/iPhone/Ipad/Windows Mobile/Android – Free with limitations)

Reflections on 2017

January 1, 2018

1. Pure Dhamma discussion forum was launched on December 17. I had wanted to do that for a while, and I am glad to see that there are several good discussions started already. I hope more readers will take part, not only to ask questions but also to answer questions by others.

- Over the past few years, I have learned a lot by trying to answer questions put forth by others. Such questions force me to look at a given issue from a different point-of-view.
- Now more people can benefit in two ways: One can get answers from multiple people (different people look at the same issue from different angles), and everyone can benefit from the discussions.

2. I want to start working a new project that I have been wanting to do for a while. It is to illustrate the real connection between quantum mechanics and Buddha Dhamma. Some people have tried to do that highlighting “quantum weirdness”, but in fact there is no weirdness in quantum mechanics.

- So, I hope the discussion forum will grow and I can only drop by once in a while.
- Forum guidelines and how to register: “[Pure Dhamma Discussion Forum Guidelines](#)”.
- One does not need to register to read questions and comments by others.

3. Puredhamma.net is now available in German language, thanks to Mr. Tobias Große in Heilbad Heiligenstadt, Germany. Here is the link:

<https://puredhamma/de>

- Professor J. M. R. Sarath Bandara has added more sections to the Sinhala translation of the Puredhamma website recently: [Pure Dhamma – Sinhala Translation](#)

4. I have personally made significant progress. Even though I am not certain that I have been released from the *kāma lōka*, it seems I am almost there.

- However, I do not worry about specific attainments. I believe that if I pursue the Path, the fruits will appear naturally, just like a tree will grow and bear fruit if it is taken care of by providing water, sunlight, and nutrients.

5. I need to make a comment about the *jhānas*, since there are some misconceptions. If one cultivates *jhāna*, the fourth *Ariya jhāna* can be attained only by an *Anāgāmī*. It is fairly easy to verify if one has attained the *Anāgāmī* stage (no cravings left for any sensual pleasures including sex, food, music, etc).

- When one attains the *Anāgāmī* stage, *Sammā Samādhi* is complete; hence if one has cultivated *jhāna*, one would attain the fourth *Ariya jhāna*.
- One finally attains the *Arahant* stage by completing *Sammā Ñāṇa* and *Sammā Vimutti*: “*atthāṅgēhi samannāgatō Sēkhā, dasāṅgēhi samannāgatō Arahant*”, i.e., there are ten steps to the *Arahant* stage.
- These are discussed in detail at: “[Samādhi, Jhāna \(Dhyāna\), Magga Phala](#)”.

6. A related issue is that one does not lose “*kāma guna*” associated with the human *bhava* (i.e., any sense pleasure like the ability to taste the sweetness of sugar) even when attaining the *Arahant* stage. **One just loses any craving for them. One has seen the fruitlessness and dangers in craving for them.**

- Therefore, one with any type of *magga phala* will still taste delicious food as such, or good music as pleasant, or feel the comfort in an air-conditioned room. These are “*kāma guna*” associated with the human *bhava*, and are removed only when an *Arahant* attains *Parinibbāna*, i.e., at the physical death of the body.
- This is explained in “[Kāma Guna, Kāma, Kāma Rāga, Kāmaccanda](#)”.

7. Buddha’s true message is contrary to the message embodied in all other religions and philosophies/world views. The goal is not to merely live a moral life, but also to see the dangers in

“maintaining status quo” by just living a good, moral life: **It is imperative to get out of the rebirth process in order to prevent unimaginable types of suffering in future lives.**

- It is true that a “normal human mind” sees this as a pessimistic message. Stopping the rebirth process seems very drastic and disconcerting.
- **Therefore, it is not even advisable to focus on that in the beginning.** It is better to try to understand basic concepts first, as discussed in the first subsections in the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section (and the “[Bhāvanā \(Meditation\)](#)” section), and feel the increasing levels of *nirāmisā sukha* as one makes progress.
- When one advances to higher subsections of the “[Living Dhamma](#)” section, one will be reading advanced concepts. In the end, one would realize that the key message of the Buddha is actually the best message that one could receive and is more valuable than anything in this world.
- The unconventional message of the Buddha is “a world view that has never been known to the world” or “*pubbē ananussutēsu dhammēsu*“. That is what I try to explain at this website in a systematic way.

8. If even a single person can attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, that would be worthwhile my time writing for even ten years. That means stopping an uncountable number of births in the *apāyas* for that person.

- But I know that number is higher even for a given year, based on emails that I receive. That will keep me going for as long as I can write. And there is so much to write! Even if I write for ten more years, there will still be more to write.
- Of course, I or anyone else cannot verify whether another has attained the *Sotāpanna* stage or any other *magga phala*. But even if one has become a *Sotāpanna Anugāmi*, he/she is an *Ariya* and is bound to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage in the immediate future. *Sotāpanna Anugāmis* are included in “*Attha purisa puggalā*” or the “Eight types of Noble Persons”.

9. I am appreciative of many kind comments on the usefulness of the site, and about personal achievements; that gives me confidence that there are people who can see the value of pure Dhamma and can make genuine progress.

- My thanks also to those who made comments/suggestions/questions that have led to improvements of many web pages. Special thanks to Mr. Seng Kiat Ng from Singapore for putting together all the posts in an eBook format and for updating it every weekend as I write new posts and update old posts.
- Many others also pointed out many errors in posts which have led to improvements. My goal is to have 100% inter-consistency as well as consistency with the *Tipitaka*.
- I also want to illustrate that there is no need to consult late commentaries like Visuddhimagga; that can only lead to confusion. I have shown many inconsistencies in them; see, “[Historical Background](#)“. There are three original commentaries included with the *Tipitaka* and those are sufficient.

9. Finally, I always highlight the fact that Buddha Dhamma is not about hiding in a remote place and shying away from the society or subjecting oneself to harsh living.

- One with a purified mind can live in the most seductive place and yet not be perturbed. But of course to get to that point, one needs to gradually reduce attachment to **excess** sense pleasures, and to stay away from bad friends and bad environments (in order to see for oneself how much “peace of mind” can be realized).
- It is not those enticing or seducing things that make us do immoral things and make our minds stressed in turn; rather it is our own defiled minds making us do immoral things (defilements can vary from hate and excess greed to just being ignorant of the true nature of the world).
- All we need to do is to get rid of our bad *gati* (or *gathi*; I note that I have used both spellings over the years) and cultivate good *gati*. This is the key to *Nibbana*. During that process, one

will start feeling the “cooling down”, and then start comprehending *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, which leads to the *Sotāpanna* stage. Therefore, it is a step-by-step process.

Happy New Year!

May the Blessings of the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha) be with you always!

18.10 Reflections on 2016

January 1, 2017; revised (#7) January 6, 2016

1. Buddha's true message is contrary to the message embodied in all other religions and philosophies/world views. The goal is not to just live a moral life, but also to see the dangers in "maintaining status quo" by just living a good, moral life. It is imperative to get out of the rebirth process in order to prevent unimaginable types of suffering in future lives.

- This unconventional message of the Buddha is "a world view that has never been known to the world" or "*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu*".
- However, it is not possible for a "normal human mind" — no matter how brilliant — to comprehend the fact that **this apparently pessimistic message of the Buddha is actually the best message that one could receive and is more valuable than anything in this world.**

2. I know this by own experience and that is why I am willing to state this straightforwardly, even though it may scare off some, who have been erroneously led to believe that Buddha Dhamma (Buddhism) is not that different from other religions or world views that confine a life's goal to just to live a moral life.

- It is definitely true that one MUST live a moral life. If one lives an immoral life, one's mind will be too contaminated to grasp that critical message of the Buddha.

3. Expressed in a different way: One needs to live a moral life and follow the mundane Eightfold Path first to get rid of the worst defilements (cobwebs that cover the mind) so that one could grasp this unique message.

- So, after three years of writing, and contemplating how to guide someone through the easiest path to grasp that key message of the Buddha that goes against our traditional beliefs, I have started a new section — "[Living Dhamma](#)" — that can hopefully make this process easier.
- **One starts at a place even without having to accept any key foundational concepts like *kamma* and *kamma vipāka* or the validity of the rebirth process.**
- One does not need to believe in anything except one's own experience. Through the improvements in one's sense of well-being, one's mind will become clear and will be able to grasp the key aspects of Buddha Dhamma.

4. My goal is to make this section the centerpiece of the website. Anyone — regardless of one's familiarity with Buddha Dhamma (Buddhism) — should start at the very beginning, because it is imperative to grasp the very basics. I have had enough correspondences with many readers over these three years to see that many have not fully grasped the basics; that could leave out key pieces in the big picture.

- It could be a big mistake to assume that one knows the basics and thus skip them.
- It is also a mistake to try to contemplate on concepts like *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* or *sunyata* without grasping the essential fact that one needs to start experiencing the "peace of mind" (*niramisa sukha*) by staying away from those thoughts, speech, and actions that can defile and make a mind stressful and not susceptible to grasping "a world view that has never been known to the world".
- The goal should be to "capture the essence" and not to try to memorize everything. Bits and pieces of the jigsaw puzzle will start falling into place, leading to joyful "Aha! moments".

5. The website is completing three full years in existence, and I am glad that there an increased interest among countries all over the world despite the fact that pure Dhamma is unconventional.

- When one starts seeing and experiencing the "true Dhamma", it will become a joyful experience and one will be compelled to dig deeper and find more.

6. This is why I am appreciative of many kind comments on the usefulness of the site; that gives me confidence that there are people who can see the value of pure Dhamma.

- My thanks also to those who made comments/suggestions/questions that have led to improvements of many web pages. Special thanks to Mr. Seng Kiat Ng from Singapore for putting together all the posts in an eBook format and for updating it every weekend as I write new posts and update some old posts. He and many others also pointed out many errors in posts which led to improvements.
- There are readers from many countries and for the year 2016, the top 20 countries are: United States, Singapore, New Zealand, Great Britain, Sri Lanka, Japan, China, Australia, India, Sweden, Hong Kong, Canada, Germany, Bulgaria, Thailand, France, Malaysia, Russian Federation, Indonesia, South Africa.
- A few more statistics from Google Analytics on user experience: Sessions = 50,688; page views = 720,269; Pages / Session = 14.21; Bounce Rate = 1.83%; % New Users = 54.41%. And in December, 8.3% spent over an hour at a time at the site according to the web host.
- Pure Dhamma seems to have no national boundaries, as it should be. It describes the true nature of our world.

7. Another related comment from some is their anxiety of why it is taking too long for them to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, and how can one know for sure whether one is even making progress.

- This is a very important question. The Buddha was asked the same question. His answer was: “Do not worry about those things day in and day out. Just concentrate on learning Dhamma and keep living by that Dhamma”.
- His gave a simile: “How does a good farmer go about making sure that he gets a good harvest? He prepares the field, uses good seeds, and once they germinate he makes sure to keep the weeds out and provide necessary nutrients. He does not waste time worrying about the harvest”.
- The best way to gauge one’s progress is to look back and see whether one has made improvements in controlling one’s anger and greed by being mindful of one’s thoughts and actions.

8. I would like to share a personal experience that illustrates the “*anicca* nature” of this world. I eat healthy and exercise regularly (yoga and cardio), and have been able to avoid even a minor ailment since 2009. But two weeks ago, a herniated disk (which was first diagnosed in 2008) started giving me physical pain on my left arm/shoulder without any obvious physical cause.

- By the way, I can also confirm that it is impossible to get into *jhānas* when one is under such physical pain. Therefore, there is no relief from this obvious *kamma vipāka*.

This is a good example of the *anicca* nature: unexpected problems can arise even if you take necessary precautions. I must hasten to point out two facts:

- I am not saying that this happened without a cause. It is obviously a strong *kamma vipāka* that was hard to avoid despite taking precautions (eating well/exercise) or in the *Abhidhamma* language, not making bad conditions (*samanantara paccaya*) for such *kamma vipāka* to bear fruit.
- If I had not been engaging in a good exercise program or had not paid attention to what I eat, I am sure I would not have been able to go 7 years without a significant health problem.

But with my productivity plunging (it is almost impossible to concentrate with such acute pain), it has brought me back to reality.

9. Finally, I very much want to highlight the fact that Buddha Dhamma is not about hiding in a remote place and shying away from the society or subjecting oneself to harsh living.

- Even if one is not be able to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage in this life, the effort will not go to waste: it will make it easier in the future. As the Buddha advised, just follow the Path if it seems to make sense; results will follow.
- But to get there, one needs **some self-control** to stay away from such extremes initially. **Learning pure Dhamma is the only way to break through that first barrier.** Once the

Sotāpanna stage is attained, one will never, ever go back. (if one becomes a *Sotāpanna magga anugami*, one will never go back in this human *bhava*, which could be many more human births).

- One with a purified mind can live in the most seductive place and yet not be perturbed.
- It is not those enticing or seducing things that make us do immoral things and make our minds stressed in turn; rather it is our own defiled minds (defilements can vary from hate and excess greed to just being ignorant of the true nature of the world) making us do immoral things.

Happy New Year!

May the Blessings of the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha) be with you always!

18.11 Reflections on 2015

January 1, 2016

I started the website sometime in early January of 2014. I am pleasantly surprised to see a marked increase in audience in 2015 compared to 2014. Actually, the increase in time spent at the site (indicated by the bandwidth and pages) has increased much more than the number of visits. That is what I really like: those who “really get it” spend more time learning pure Dhamma.

1. First of all, my heartfelt thanks for the many kind comments on the usefulness of the site, and also making comments/suggestions/questions that have led to improvements of many web pages. Special thanks to Mr. Seng Kiat Ng from Singapore for putting together all the posts in an eBook format and for updating it every weekend as I write new posts and update some old posts; he has also pointed out many errors in posts which led to improvements.

- Many others have pointed out such errors and suggested improvements to the site, and I am grateful to all.
- There are readers from over 50 countries and for the month of December, 2015, the top 20 countries are: United States, Singapore, New Zealand, Great Britain, Sri Lanka, India, Australia, Malaysia, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Netherlands, China, Canada, France, Indonesia, Thailand, Austria, Brazil, Hong Kong, and Russian Federation. Pure Dhamma seems to have no national boundaries, as it should be. It describes the true nature of our world.
- In early December, 2015, I upgraded the hosting platform to have a virtual private server and it also seems to have helped speed up the page loading.
- If you encounter problems accessing the site, avoid the www in the address line: It should just be: <https://puredhamma.net>. Normally, typing just “puredhamma.net” should direct to <https://puredhamma.net>. Or, one could Google search “puredhamma” and the link will come out on the top.
- I also upgraded to a more secure “https” from “http” just to assure that the content will not be tampered with. I encourage sharing or using anything that is on the site. Anyone is “free to copy” any of the content. Reference to the site is a courtesy, but not required.

2. The most common feedback I get is on the usefulness of the site. I appreciate those comments.

- When I started the site, some of my friends warned me that “pure Dhamma” is too difficult to understand, and I may turn off people. But my goal is to present the true message of the Buddha as much as possible. Not everyone may be able to understand it initially, but for those who can, it will be a life-changing experience as it has been for me.

3. Another related comment from some is their anxiety of why it is taking too long for them to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage, and how can one know for sure whether one is even making progress.

- This is a very important question. The Buddha was asked the same question. His answer was: “Do not worry about those things day in and day out. Just concentrate on learning Dhamma and on contemplating the *anicca* nature of this world. The rest will follow”.
- His gave a simile: How does a good a farmer go about making sure that he gets a good harvest? He prepares the field, uses good seeds, and once they germinate he makes sure to keep the weeds out and provide necessary nutrients. He does not waste time worrying about the harvest”.

4. In the same way, one just needs to learn pure Dhamma and live by it. One needs to understand what *Nibbāna* or *Nivana* is, in a step-by-step process. Initially, one does not need to worry about stopping the rebirth process (this is true even up to the *Sotāpanna* stage). One should first focus on “quenching the fires that burn inside”: One should experience the “peace of mind” that is palpable when one gradually loses extreme greed, hate, and ignorance (not knowing the true nature of this world).

- “*Ragakkhayo Nibbanan, dosakkhayo Nibbanan, Mohakkhayo Nibbanan*” (“Cooling down is attained with getting rid of greed, hate, and ignorance”) is valid from this initial “cooling

down” all the way to the attainment of the *Arahant* stage. Just concentrate on getting rid of the strongest immoral acts via the body, speech, and the mind first.

- Thus the best way to gauge the progress is to see how much greed, hate, and ignorance has been lost over a given time.
- Here, “getting rid of ignorance” is an important aspect, which can come ONLY via learning Dhamma, i.e., only via learning the true nature of this world.

5. When one follows this basic process, one WILL start feeling the resulting cooling down. One will realize that one becomes more thoughtful and tolerant of others, even when they do inappropriate things.

- And with time, one will see that others also seem to act less harshly. It is hard to believe but one’s mindset CAN affect how others treat oneself. It is a feedback loop that may not be noticeable initially, but will become apparent with time.

6. Then one day, one will realize that one does not have the *gathi* even remotely resembling of those in the four *apāyas*: no extreme hate suitable for a hell being, no extreme greed suitable for a *preta* (hungry ghost), no “animal *gathi*“, and one does not have the mindset to rely on others (*asura*). Then one realizes that one is a *Sotāpanna*.

- When one understands that the consequences of extreme immoral acts can be much more harsh in the long-term compared to any short-lived satisfaction, then one’s mind will automatically reject such thoughts. Comprehending the *anicca* nature will do the same.

7. I very much want to highlight the fact that Buddha Dhamma is not about hiding in a remote place and shying away from the society or subjecting oneself to harsh living.

- It is not those enticing or seducing things that make us do immoral things and make our minds stressed in turn; rather it is our own defiled minds (defilements can vary from vile to just being ignorant of the true nature of the world) making us do immoral things.
- One with a purified mind can live in the most seductive place and yet not be perturbed.
- But to get there, one needs **some self-control** to stay away from such extremes initially. **Learning pure Dhamma is the only way to break through that first barrier.** Once the *Sotāpanna* stage is attained, one will never, ever go back. (if one becomes a *Sotāpanna magga anugami*, one will never go back in this life).
- Even if one is not be able to attain the *Sotāpanna* stage in this life, the effort will not go to waste: it will make it easier in the future. As the Buddha advised, just follow the Path if it seems to make sense; results will follow.

Happy New Year! May the Blessings of the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha) be with you always!

18.12 Reflections on 2014

January 1, 2015

I started the website sometime in early January of 2014. Since there is no discussion forum at the site, I thought of making a summary on the 52 comments (excluding follow-up correspondence) that I received over the year (I did respond to all individual comments).

1. First of all, my heartfelt thanks for the many kind comments on the usefulness of the site.
2. Some people (mainly those I know personally) “complained” that once they start reading, they “got absorbed” in the material and they could not get to their “daily tasks”. This could be a concern for some others as well. The easiest solution is to set an alarm.
 - I assure everyone that once one gets a “foothold” one will become more responsible for their families, not the other way around. As one begins to understand the true message of the Buddha, one will start allocating one’s time wisely, taking time away from “entertainment” rather than from those tasks that are one’s responsibilities.
 - As some of you may have already noticed, one becomes more thoughtful and considerate, when one starts truly understanding the message of the Buddha. One realizes that we all are in the same boat, trudging along in this tedious rebirth process, and one feels true compassion for others. One will not shy away from one’s responsibilities to anyone let alone to one’s family.
 - If you do get absorbed in the material, it is not to my credit. From experience, I know that pure Dhamma is much more satisfying and fulfilling than any sense pleasure (even before the *jhānas*). Learning Dhamma is learning about nature in a way that had not been possible before the Buddha! And there is no other task that is more important than one’s own “long-term” future.
3. There were several people who made suggestions for new posts. Such suggestions are always welcome. If I have not responded to a couple of requests that is because of a reason. I do not want to “jump ahead” until the background material is presented. Please do not shy away from making suggestions.
4. Another important comment was that, “in the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*, didn’t the Buddha recommend the “breathing meditation” contrary to what I described as *ānāpāna*?”. If one is reading the *sutta* as commonly translated these days, that is indeed what the translations say. But we need to examine the Pāli text of the *sutta* to get the correct interpretation. I plan to write a series of posts on the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta* carefully going through the Pāli text.
 - And we need to sort out the types of meditation recommended by the Buddha from those that have been practiced by *Hindu yogis* and are described in the *Visuddhimagga*. I think this is a “mental block” for even *Theravāda* Buddhists. Unless one sits down and stay like a statue, it does not count as “meditation” for many people.
 - Those days, Buddha’s primary recommendation was to listen to Dhamma discourses. Many people attained *magga phala* just by listening to such discourses. The *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta* was delivered in the later years for *bhikkhus* who needed systematic guidance.
 - If one pays attention, one can get to *samādhi* while listening (and also while reading) Dhamma concepts. I highly recommend reading posts at this site at a quiet time, and see whether it makes you more calm. It will help in getting to *jhānas* in the longer term.
 - Whether listening or reading, one should fully concentrate on the subject, and may even want to stop reading and think about the material when a new concept is discussed. Then the mind focuses on that point and automatically gets to *samādhi*. This is the key to removing defilements from the mind (which are the biggest chunk that in turn trigger other defilements). When one focuses on a “worldly thing” such as breath or a *kasina* object, that just gets the mind to *samādhi*, without doing any cleansing.
5. One does not even need to do any formal meditation initially. If one can spend some “quality time” (quite times where one can think as one reads) a few times a week, that would be more than enough.

As with anything with the mind, the mind will ask for more as needed (this is the *chanda* and *citta* part in the *Satara Iddhipada* of *chanda*, *citta*, *virīya*, *vimansa*). And when the mind asks for it, that is the best time to start getting absorbed in the material, making the effort (*virīya*) and critically examining the key concepts (*vimansa*).

- One can get all the way to the *Sotāpanna* stage by just comprehending the main message that the Buddha was trying to convey: In the long run, it is unprofitable to strive for material things in this world. That there is a happiness of better quality when one loses craving for sense pleasures.
- **But that cannot be achieved by “forcefully giving up sense pleasures”, doing “breath meditation”, or just by following the five precepts.** Rather, by understanding the deep message of the Buddha about the “real nature of this world”, one’s mind gradually realizes the futility of seeking sense pleasures as one gradually comprehends *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. Dhamma will be the guide.

6. I very much want to highlight the fact that Buddha Dhamma is not about hiding in a remote place and shying away from the society or subjecting oneself to harsh living.

- It is not those enticing or seducing things that make us do immoral things and make our minds stressed in turn; rather it is our own defiled minds (defilements can vary from vile to just being ignorant of the true nature of the world) making us do immoral things.
- One with a purified mind can live in the most seductive place and yet not be perturbed.
- But to get there, one needs **some self-control** to stay away from such extremes initially. **Learning pure Dhamma is the only way to break through that first barrier.** Once the *Sotāpanna* stage is attained, one will never go back.

Happy New Year! May the Blessings of the Triple Gem be with you always!

18.13 List of Pāli words with diacritical mark

Pāli characters with diacritical mark

Ā Ī Ū Ñ Ṃ Ñ̃ Ṭ Ḍ Ṅ Ḳ Ṣ
 ā ī ū ñ ṁ ñ̃ ṭ ḍ ṇ ḳ ṣ

Ā ā Ī ī Ū ū Ñ ñ Ṃ ṁ Ñ̃ ñ̃ Ṭ ṭ Ḍ ḍ Ṅ ṇ Ḳ ḳ Ṣ ṣ

The Pāli word “xxxx” is in between two “|”s — i.e. “|xxxx|” to prevent replacement when “Find and Replace” is carried out.

Pāli word	Pāli word with Diacritical Mark	
abhijja	abhijjā [abhijjhā]	Abhijjā [Abhijjhā]
abhinna	abhiññā	Abhiññā
adinava	ādīnava	Ādīnava
adinnadana	adinnādāna	Adinnādāna
ahara	āhāra	Āhāra
anagami	anāgāmī	Anāgāmī
anapana	ānāpāna	Ānāpāna
anapanasati	ānāpānasati	Ānāpānasati
apaya	apāya	Apāya
apo	āpo	Āpo
arupa	arūpa	Arūpa
asava	āsava	Āsava
asavakkhaya	āsavakkhaya	Āsavakkhaya
avijja	avijjā	Avijjā
ayatana	āyatana	Āyatana
bhavana	bhāvanā	Bhāvanā
bhuta	bhūta	Bhūta
ditthi	diṭṭhi	Diṭṭhi
jhana	jhāna	Jhāna
kamesu miccacara	kāmesu micchācāra	Kāmesu micchācāra
maha	mahā	Mahā
mula	mūla	Mūla
musavada	musāvāda	Musāvāda

nana	ñāṇa	Ñāṇa
nibbana	nibbāna	Nibbāna
nikaya	nikāya	Nikāya
pali	pāli	Pāli
panatipata	pāṇātipātā	Pāṇātipātā
panna	paññā	Paññā
parusavaca	parusāvācā [pharusāvācā]	Parusāvācā [Pharusāvācā]
patisambhida	patisambhidā	Patisambhidā
pisunavaca	pisuṇāvācā	Pisuṇāvācā
piti	pīti	Pīti
raga	rāga	Rāga
ragakkhaya	rāgakkhaya	Rāgakkhaya
rupa	rūpa	Rūpa
sakadagami	sakadāgāmī	Sakadāgāmī
salayatana	salāyatana	Salāyatana
samma	sammā	Sammā
sampappalapa	sampappalāpa	Sampappalāpa
samsara	saṃsāra	Saṃsāra
samuppada	samuppāda	Samuppāda
sankhara	saṅkhāra	Saṅkhāra
sanna	saññā	Saññā
satipatthana	satipaṭṭhāna	Satipaṭṭhāna
sotapanna	sotāpanna	Sotāpanna
suddhashtaka	suddhāshtaka [suddhaṭṭhaka]	Suddhāshtaka [Suddhaṭṭhaka]
tanha	taṇhā	Taṇhā
theravada	theravāda	Theravāda
upadana	upādāna	Upādāna
vacī	vacī	Vacī
vayo	vāyo	Vāyo
vinnana	viññāṇa	Viññāṇa

vipaka	vipāka	Vipāka
vyapada	vyāpāda	Vyāpāda
saddha	saddhā	Saddhā
samadhi	samādhi	Samādhi

18.14 **Mars Curiosity Photos Suggest Life May Have Existed on Red Planet**

“A careful study of images taken by the NASA rover Curiosity has revealed intriguing similarities between ancient sedimentary rocks on Mars and structures shaped by microbes on Earth. The findings suggest, but do not prove, that life may have existed earlier on the Red Planet”:

[WebLink: NBCNEWS: Mars Curiosity Photos Suggest Life May Have Existed on Red Planet](#)

Here is the pdf of the paper just published that proposed the hypothesis:

[WebLink: LIBERTPUB: Life on Mars Hypothesis-Noffke-Astrobiology-2015](#)

18.15 Recent Publications on Benefits of Meditation

There have been an accelerated activity in studying the benefits of meditation on the brain and on physical health in general. Here are some very recent publications:

- Scientific American November 2014 (volume 311, Number 5) cover story is “Mind of the Meditator”, by M. Ricard et al. : [WebLink: Ricard-Mind of the Meditator- Scientific American – November 2014](#)
- A paper that just came out online in early November (in the journal *Cancer*) reports that the [WebLink: WIKI: Telomeres](#) – the protein caps at the end of our chromosomes that determine how quickly a cell ages – stayed the same length in cancer survivors who meditated or took part in support groups over a three-month period: [WebLink: Carlson-Mindfulness based Cancer recovery-2014](#)

I have discussed the effects of changing habits on the brain (which is more related to insight meditation): see, “[Truine Brain: How the Mind Rewires the Brain via Meditation/Habits](#)“. Insight meditation can be expected to have much more significant changes in the brain as well as in physical health. But such studies have not been conducted yet. Selected references on research studies (2011-2012) and books related to meditation can be found in that post; there have been many more publications since then.

I was surprised to come across the following article in the prestigious journal “Science” which, using real time input from 5000 people all over the world, confirmed what the Buddha said 2500 years ago: that a wandering mind is an unhappy mind; see, [WebLink: A wandering mind is an unhappy mind- Science-Killingsworth-2010](#).

Much merits to Neranga Abeyasinghe and his family for sending me the second publication.

18.16 Laniakea: Our home supercluster

Superclusters – regions of space that are densely packed with galaxies – are the biggest structures in the Universe. But scientists have struggled to define exactly where one supercluster ends and another begins. Now, a team based in Hawaii has come up with a new technique that maps the Universe according to the flow of galaxies across space. Redrawing the boundaries of the cosmic map, they redefine our home supercluster and name it Laniakea, which means ‘immeasurable heaven’ in Hawaiian (**from Nature Video**)

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Laniakea: Our home supercluster](#)

- It is amazing to see how unfathomably vast our “world” is, even though this is only a small part of even our universe. However, imagine this together with uncountable worlds teeming with life, that we are not aware of! This is why the Buddha said not to spend time exploring the details of this “world”. There is no end to it, either spacewise or timewise.
- But we need to keep in mind that only human minds can even comprehend such things. If we are to be born an animal or worse this kind of thinking is not possible, and we will get trapped in such worlds for unimaginably long times. Thus what we need to do is to take advantage of the brief time we have in this life to comprehend the true nature of ‘this world’, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, and to become free of it.

18.17 Think Outside the Box!

1. Here is an interesting presentation on the question of what motivates people. Embedded in this presentation is the fact that without self-motivation coming from self-satisfaction, it is hard to examine things from different perspectives. It works the other way too: new insights in turn provide motivation:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Dan Pink: The puzzle of motivation](#)

- One of my goals has been to help others to achieve the same exhilarating experience that I have had learning and practising pure Dhamma. It cannot be matched by any other experience.
2. Many people do things just because others do, and follow the “standard practices”. In following Buddha Dhamma too, many just do what their parents or other “established authorities” do. It may be a good idea to pause and re-examine some deeply-embedded ideas. Each person may have his/her own set of “beliefs”.
- Some think it is enough to say some precepts and may be chant or listen to chantings to follow the Path.
 - Others think it is silly to do those exact same things. And what needs to be done is to learn *Abhidhamma* at the deepest level.
 - I think there is a value in each, if done properly. And what needs to be given priority in one’s practice should be in line with one’s own preferences, but the horizons need to be expanded to look into other aspects once-in-a-while and see whether there is something to be gained from those too. Our perspectives change as we make progress.
3. Yet, no matter what one does, real progress cannot be even STARTED without understanding the main message of the Buddha: the true nature of this world, i.e., *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.
- It makes a huge difference between the interpretation of *anicca* as “impermanence” or “not being able to maintain to one’s satisfaction”. Same with *anatta* as “no-self” or “one ends up truly helpless trying to seek happiness in this rebirth process”.
 - See, “[Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta – Wrong Interpretations](#)” and the follow-up posts.

18.18 **There are as many creatures on your body as there are people on Earth!**

January 20, 2016: A new study on household bugs added (below the video)

1. Before the simple microscope was invented in the late 1500's, people could see only those animals visible to the naked eye. Life seemed to explode when Van Leeuwenhoek reported the discovery of micro-organisms in 1676; he first reported numerous "microscopic creatures" in a glass of water.

With the new scientific instruments we can "see" even more minute lifeforms:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: There are as many creatures on your body as there are people on Earth](#)

2. A new study reveals that there are numerous species of bugs — not counting the actual number — that live in a house (which has only a few humans):

[WebLink: EUREKALERT.ORG: First study of arthropods in US homes finds huge biodiversity](#)

The pdf file of the publication: [WebLink: Bertone-Arthropods of the great indoors-peerj-2016](#)

3. The number of people on this Earth is insignificantly small compared to the number of other beings (seen and unseen), or even just the animals. As the above video shows, there are a huge number of living beings even on a human body; imagine how many would be on the body of an unclean animal. This is why the Buddha said it is extremely difficult to get a human birth; see, "[How the Buddha Described the Chance of Rebirth in the Human Realm](#)".

4. It must be noted that Buddha's disciples (and probably other *Hindu yogis*) were able to "see" such microscopic creatures with their *abhiññā* powers. There is a story in the *Tipitaka* about a *bhikkhu* with *abhiññā* powers (but not yet attained *Arahanthood*) once focused his powers to a glass of water that he was about to drink and saw a multitude of tiny creatures. He kept trying to filter them out and was getting distressed. The Buddha saw this and told the *bhikkhu* that it is not possible to live in this world without hurting other beings, but that does not count as an immoral act since the intention is not to hurt.

- For example, if we have a wound on the head, we have to apply medication and get it healed; otherwise one may even die from that. Yet, numerous tiny creatures on the wound die when we apply the medication. There is nothing we can do to avoid it unless we are willing to risk our own life.
- But the point is that this single human life is much more "worthy" than all those creatures multiplied many times over; see, "[How to Evaluate Weights of Different Kamma](#)".
- This is an important point because many people get stressed over even cleaning their house for the fear of killing insects. But if we do not keep the house clean, those insects will multiply and make the problem even bigger. One always need to look at things with a deeper understanding. The best thing to do is to keep the house clean so that insects are not attracted in the first place.
- It is important to clarify these concepts, because it is difficult to attain any kind of calmness (*samādhi*) in the mind if one's mind is agitated by such things as "Am I sitting on some unseen tiny insects and killing them?". As long as our intent is not directed to willfully taking another life with hatred, there will not be any negative consequences.

18.19 News Article on Robin Williams and Buddhist Meditation

I have not read the books written by the author of this following news article, so I cannot comment on his books. But I thought this sad news about Robin Williams illustrates the concept of *anicca* (that one cannot maintain anything to one's satisfaction in this world and that there is hidden suffering). He had more than enough money and fame, but apparently he was depressed in the latter years.

- Having a peaceful mind cannot be matched by any amount of money or fame; see, “[First Noble Truth – A Simple Explanation of One Aspect](#)”.
- According to the Buddha, the suffering is proportional to the craving. Getting old is more stressful for those who have enjoyed beauty, fame, power, etc. But the inevitability of old age and dying is common to us all.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Aging Stars of the Golden Age](#)

- Buddhist meditation is primarily on understanding the true nature of the world and that hidden suffering may come out unexpectedly; that understanding itself makes one have a peaceful mind; see, “[1. Introduction to Buddhist Meditation](#)”.
- When depression or old age hits, the mind gets weak. Thus one should preferably start when the mind is sound and healthy.
- Suicide can only make things worse in the “long term” in the rebirth process. It is never too late to start at any stage. Human life is rare and should not be wasted at any stage.

Article: [Meditation Isn't Enough: A Buddhist Perspective on Suicide](#)

18.20 **World Historical Timeline**

It will be convenient to have a timeline of the major world events that I can refer to in my posts. Please let me know any errors that you may see. My goal is to provide a consistent and accurate timeline.

Note: I used c. to denote *circa* or about

I have added descriptive links to some events, and will try to add more links in the future.

Date	Event
Before 10k BCE	WebLink: WIKI: Last Ice Age
3.1k BCE	First king of Egypt, King Menes
2.5k BCE	WebLink: WIKI: Mohenjo Daro civilization in India
2.1k - 1.6k BCE	WebLink: WIKI: The Xia Dynasty of China
Before 1.7k BCE	Abraham came to Jerusalem from Ur (Old Testament)
1.4k BCE	City of Troy, kingdom of Crete, and other Greek cities
1.4k - 0.9k BCE	Olmec civilization in Mexico
776 BCE	First Olympiad
558-530 BCE	Cyrus ruled North India
Until 536 BCE	Daries I, II, III ruled North India; until Chandagupta, Persian and Greek kings ruled North India
563-483 BCE	Buddha Gotama
470-399 BCE	Philosopher Socrates
538 BCE	Old Testament was written
424-348 BCE	Plato: First Western philosopher whose writings survived intact
384 - 322 BCE	Aristotle: student of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great
c. 333 BCE	Emperor Alexander's Empire peaks
323 - 325 BCE	Alexander the Great in India
268-231 BCE	Emperor Asoka ruled North India
307-276 BCE	King Devanampiyatissa in Sri Lanka
247 BCE	Ven. Mahinda in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka
41 BCE	Beginning of the Roman Empire
29 BCE	Tipitaka written down in Sri Lanka
6–4 BC to 30–33 AD	Jesus of Nazareth or Jesus Christ
31 BCE	Augustus becomes the first Roman Emperor and ruled until 14 CE

Date	Event
c. 150-250 CE	WebLink: WIKI: Life of Nagarjuna ; considered to be the founder of Mahayana Buddhism
After 200 CE	Roman empire starts to decline
4th century CE	Buddhism introduced to Korea
380 CE	Christianity became the official religion in Roman empire
5th century CE	Burma adopts Theravāda Buddhism
412-434 CE	Buddhaghosa arrives in Sri Lanka and writes Visuddhimagga
552 CE	Buddhism enters Japan from Korea
589 CE	First Chinese commentaries written
586 CE	Beginning of the Dark Ages in Europe with the decay of the Roman empire
6th century CE	First diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet
570-632 CE	Prophet Muhammad
622 CE - (1258-1492) CE	WebLink: WIKI: Islamic Golden Age
618-907 CE	Chinese T'ang dynasty; golden age of Buddhism in China
1215 CE	King John signs the Magna Carta granting rights to English citizens
1280	WebLink: WIKI: Eyeglasses invented in Italy
c. 1420 - c. 1600	Renaissance in Europe starting in Florence, Italy
1450	Gutenberg in Germany invents the printing press
1492	Modern Age begins with the arrival of Columbus in America
1564–1642	Galileo Galilei
1596–1650	René Descartes
1610	Galileo announces observation of mountains on the Moon and the existence of four planets.
1642	Adding machine invented by Blaise Pascal
1643–1727	Isaac Newton
c. 1650 - c. 1800	WebLink: WIKI: European "Enlightenment"
1662	Fermat's Principle of Least Time
1678	Huygens' wave theory
1687	Newton published Principia Mathematica
1688	English revolution

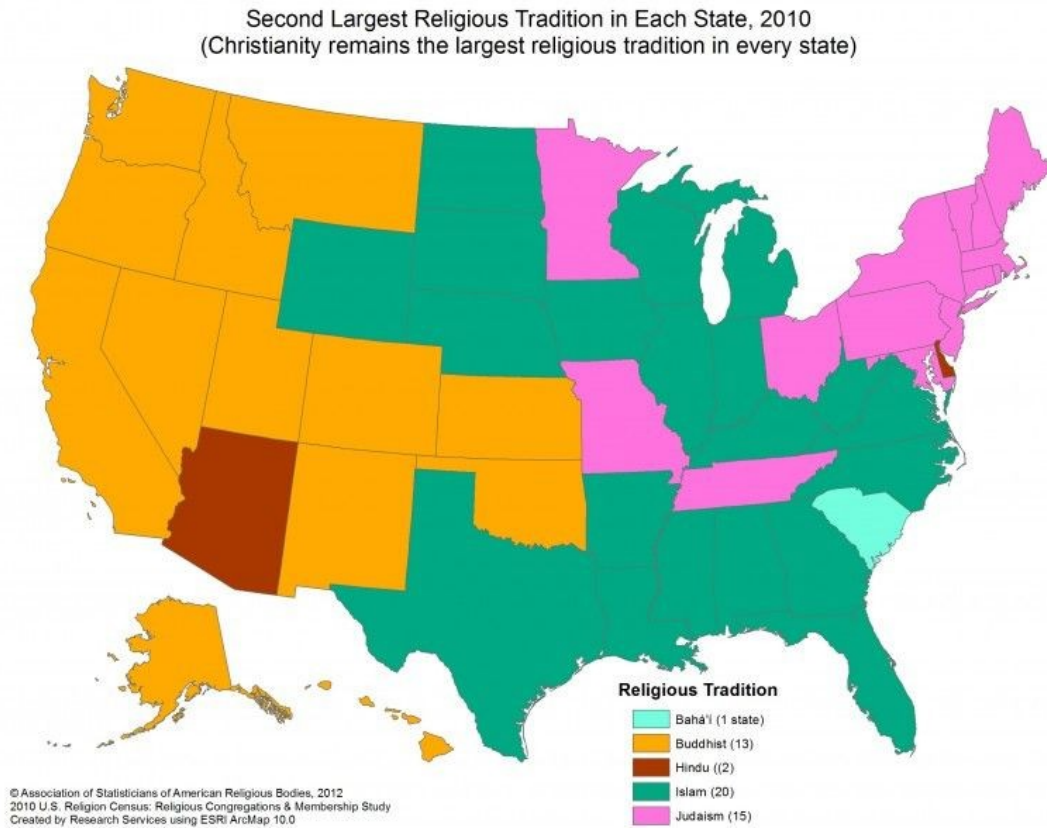
Date	Event
1698	Steam engine invented by Thomas Savery
1749–1827	P.S. de Laplace
1774	Priestly isolates oxygen
1776	America declares independence from England
1789	French revolution period
1791	Steamboat invented by John Fitch
1798	Vaccination invented by Edward Jenner
1804	Locomotive invented by Richard Trevithick
1809–1882	Charles Darwin
1816	Huygens–Fresnel principle explaining light interference
1821	Faraday demonstrates the principle of the electric motor
1822	Charles Babbage designs his first mechanical computer
1826	Photography invented by Joseph Nicephore Niepce
1834	Refrigerator invented by Jacob Perkins
1835	Morse code invented by Samuel Morse
1837	American Samuel Morse invented telegraph
1842	Anaesthesia invented by Crawford Long
1843	Typewriter invented by Charles Thurber
1846	Rotary printing press invented by Richard M. Hoe
1859	Charles Darwin publishes The Origin of Species
1868	Poisson explained Young's double slit experiment with Huygens–Fresnel principle
1869	Mendeleev produces the Periodic Table
1873	Maxwell states the laws of electro-magnetic radiation
1877	Phonograph invented by Thomas Alva Edison; Microphone invented by Emile Berliner
1878	Edison invents the incandescent lamp
1883	First skyscraper built in Chicago (ten stories)
1888	Hertz produces radio waves
1893	Wireless communication invented by Nikola Tesla

Date	Event
1895	Diesel engine invented by Rudolf Diesel
1898	Remote control invented by Nikola Tesla
1900	Planck develops quantum theory
1901	Vacuum cleaner invented by Hubert Booth
1903	Powered airplane invented by Wilbur Wright and Orville Wright
1905	Einstein proved that photon is a particle
1905	Einstein's Theory of Relativity
1907	Color photography invented by Auguste and Louis Lumiere
1908	Henry Ford mass-produces the Model T
1919	London to Paris air service begins
1923	Sound film invented by Lee DeForest
1923	Edwin Hubble discovers the first galaxy other than Milky Way
1928	Antibiotics, penicillin invented by Alexander Fleming
1937	Jet engine invented by Frank Whittle and Hans von Ohain
1937	Alan Turing develops the concept of a theoretical computing machine
1945	The atomic bomb
1951	Nuclear power reactor invented by Walter Zinn
1957	Sputnik I and Sputnik II: Sputnik I and Sputnik II are launched by the Russians
1958	The first integrated circuit, or silicon chip, is produced by the US Jack Kilby & Robert Noyce
1960	Laser invented by Theodore Harold Maiman
1961	Uri Gagarin is the first man in space
1965	The Big Bang theory confirmed by Penzias and Wilson
1969	Neil Armstrong sets foot on the moon
1971	E-mail invented by Ray Tomlinson
1971	Floppy Disk invented by David Noble with IBM
1973	Ethernet invented by Bob Metcalfe and David Boggs
1973	Personal computer invented by Xerox PARC
1983	Camcorder invented by Sony

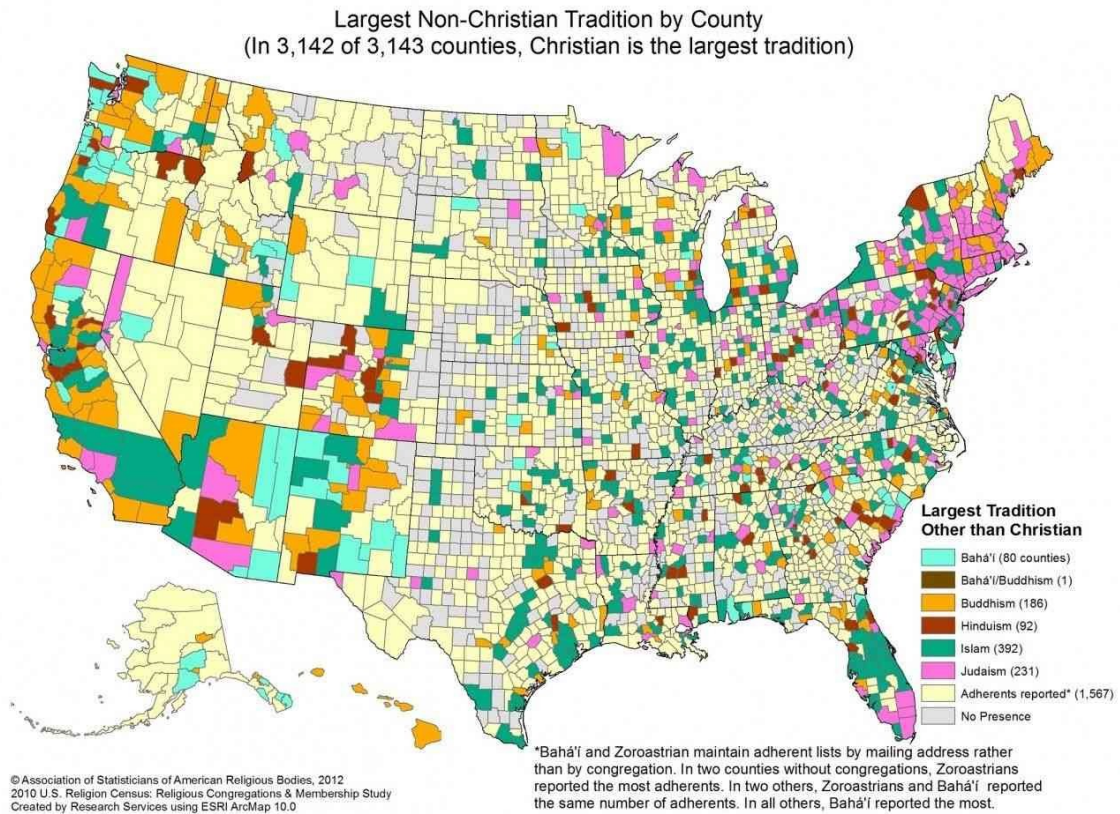
Date	Event
1990	World Wide Web invented by Tim Berners-Lee
2001	WebLink: WIKI: World center attack
2001	Digital satellite radio
2003	WebLink: WIKI: Completion of the Human Genome Project
2008	WebLink: NASA: Discovery of ice on Mars
2014	First comet landing
2014	WebLink: NASA completes a successful test flight of Orion spacecraft for future trips to Mars
2014	WebLink: INTERNETLIVESTATS: Number of websites on the internet reached 1 billion

18.21 Second Largest Religion by State in the US

The second largest religion by state in the United States (2012):



[WebLink: BOINGBOING: Christianity is the top Religion](#)



However, Buddha Dhamma is not a religion, in the sense of providing a set of guidelines to live by. It is about the natural laws of nature. Any person of any religious faith (or no faith in any religion, i.e., atheist) can follow Dhamma and benefit. All religions are about leading a good moral life, but Buddha Dhamma describes a much more comprehensive “world view” where this life of 100 years is just a blip.

If one becomes convinced of the truth of the Buddha’s world view, i.e., that this life is not the only we had or we will have, and that there are consequences to one’s actions, and the only way to get relief from inevitable suffering at least at the old age and death is to purify one’s mind, then the person is a Buddhist. It is all in one’s mind. No one else is tracking one’s progress, and no one else can purify one’s own mind.

18.22 Introduction to “Rebirth by Francis Story” – Ian Stevenson

The following are the scanned pages from the book, “Rebirth-as Doctrine and Experience” by Francis Story. The first scan is an inside cover page, and the rest are the Introduction pages by Ian Stevenson. Dr. Stevenson mentions that he is a Buddhist on page 3. The whole introduction is insightful.

[WebLink: Introduction-Stevenson \(PDF file\)](#)

18.23 Thirty One Planes of Existence

Here is a video from Carl Sagan to get an idea how vast our “detectable universe” is:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Carl Sagan "100 Billion Galaxies each W/100 Billion Stars"](#)

The “world view” of the Buddha is not merely about the living beings on this planet. Our Solar system is one of an infinite number of “world systems” (planetary systems). In EACH planetary system with life (scientists have not found even one yet; but they are out there!), there are 31 “planes of existence”. As we find out below, we can “see” only two of these realms: our human realm and the animal realm. Thus our “world” is much more complex than even the present-day science believes. As some of you may already know, science cannot account for 95% of the mass of the universe, which they label “dark energy” and “dark matter”. This is why I say that the Buddha transcended “this world”. He was able to “see” the whole of existence: see “Godel’s Incompleteness Theorem” under “Dhamma and Science”.

Now, it is not easy to describe the 31 planes of existence in a short essay. Therefore, I will use a visual to simplify things a bit.

Imagine a sphere with 31 shells, with a small sphere in the middle. Thus the total volume of the big sphere is completely filled by the center sphere and surrounding shells. The 31 sections represent the 31 planes of existence. I emphasize that this is just a visual. The reality is different. For example, animal and human realms co-exist in reality. Also, both time and space are infinite in reality.

1. The innermost sphere represent the Niraya (hell) where there is non-stop suffering; next is the animal realm. Going outward there are two more realms where suffering is higher than at the human realm (the fifth shell). The sixth through eleventh shells represent the realms of the devas (wrongly translated as gods by many), beings who enjoy higher level of mundane happiness and no suffering. These innermost 11 shells represent the kamaloka, where all five physical sense faculties are present.
2. The next 16 shells represent realms where only two physical sense faculties (eye and ear) are active. These beings have very fine (less dense) bodies. These are called rūpa lokas.
3. The last 4 shells represent the arūpa lokas, where beings have ultra fine bodies and only the mind faculty; no physical senses.
4. In rūpa and arūpa lokas, the beings are in jhānic states. These states can be attained by humans and thus a humans can “temporarily live” in those lokas by attaining jhānas. The 16 realms in the rūpa loka correspond to the four lower jhānas, and the 4 realms in the arūpa loka correspond to the higher four jhānas.
5. Any living being (including each of us) has been in all realms in this beginning-less saṃsāra. We have been in the niraya (hell) and we have been at the highest (except on arūpa loka which can be accessed only by Anāgāmi or Non-Returners). One time the Buddha pointed to a bunch of ants on the ground and told bhikkhus that each of those ants had lived in a Brahma loka. The saṃsāra is that long; there is no discernible beginning.
6. Above the human realm, there is no suffering (except at death, which is inevitable). However, unless one has achieved at least the Stream Entry (Sotāpanna) stage, even a being at the highest level can fall to any lower level, and thus will end up in the niraya (hell) at some point; once there one will spend a long agonizing time there and eventually come out. Each of us have done this many times over. I will explain the cause of births in different realms in terms of “kamma seeds” in upcoming posts.
7. So, each living being just moves from one realm to another, but spends most time in the four lower worlds, mainly because once fallen there it is hard to come out. This “samsaric wandering” is the critical point to think about and comprehend.
8. As one moves away from the center the level of suffering decreases, and level of mundane pleasure increases up to the 11th realm. After that in the rūpa and arūpa lokas it is mainly the jhānic pleasures, not the sense pleasures.

9. The human realm is the only one from which one can attain Nibbāna. Nibbāna, in this model, corresponds to getting out of all 31 shells, out of the big sphere; no more rebirth in any of the 31 realms. Nibbāna is where the permanent sukha or niramisa sukha, is. When one attains Nibbāna or Arahant hood, he/she looks just like any other human, but has no attachments to any worldly things. He still has some kamma vipāka to pay off from the kamma seed that he was born with. When that kammic power is used up, he dies and is not reborn because there are no kamma seeds left to start a new birth. He/she is in *Parinibbāna* with *niramisa sukha*.

10. Can we taste Nibbānic “pleasure”? Yes. We can taste it in increments, even below the Stream Entry stage. This is niramisa sukha, the “pleasure of giving up worldly things”. This niramisa sukha has “quantum jumps” at the four stages of Nibbāna: Stream Entry, Once-Returner, Non-Returner, Arahant. Thus when one is on the Path, one can experience niramisa sukha at varying degrees, all the way to Nibbānic bliss, during this very lifetime.

11. All these 31 realms are located in our solar system (Chakrawata), and are associated with the Earth. There are a great number of such Chakrawata (planetary systems) in existence at all times with living beings. These are in clusters of small (galaxies?), medium (universes?), and large (multiverse?) “world systems”. But none is permanent. They come into being and eventually perish. Within the past 100 years or so, scientists have confirmed the existence of billions of planetary systems within galaxies in our universe, and are now exploring the possibility of the existence of multiple universes (multiverse).

The other big factor to take into account is that we have been born in almost all of these realms in our sansaric journey that has no traceable beginning. All of us have been bouncing around “inside the sphere” (mainly in the inner ones) from a beginning that is not even discernible to a Buddha.

Next, “[Sansaric Time Scale](#)“,

18.24

Curiosity Rover finds Crater probably was once a Giant Martian Lake

According to Buddha Dhamma we are alone in the universe. These preliminary results from the NASA Curiosity Rover may not hold up in the end as evidence that life existed on Mars. But there will many more to come, especially if technology is developed to explore distant stars.

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: Curiosity rover finds crater it is exploring was once a giant Martian LAKE](#)

Here is a report that came out today, Dec 9, 2014, which has another video by NASA:

[WebLink: DAILYMAIL: Curiosity rover finds crater it is exploring was once a giant Martian LAKE](#)

18.25 Did Not Get a Response to Your Comment?**July 18, 2016**

I reply to each and every question that comes through “Comments” under each post.

Several of my replies bounced back within the past few weeks, including one today because the email address of the sender was not typed correctly. Please make sure that you type your email address correctly.

18.26

Ancient teeth found in China challenge modern human migration theory

October 16, 2015

When we discuss the *Agganna Sutta*, that describes how the Earth and life originated it will become very clear that the basis of current theories on “human evolution” is completely wrong. However, they are consistent with Buddha Dhamma in the sense that species will exist only when conditions for their existence prevail.

- The current scientific theory is that human originated in Africa and then migrated to other parts of the world, starting about 50,000 years ago. Recent evidence just published in the prestigious journal Nature provides evidence of the existence of humans like us in China some 80,000 to 100,000 years ago. Below is the news article from CNN. I will add the paper from Nature when it becomes available:

[WebLink: CNN: Ancient teeth found in China challenge modern human migration theory](#)

- In this context, I must also point out that there are other archeological evidence for the existence of humans in Sri Lanka and India dating back to 30,000 years and earlier:

[WebLink: WIKI: Balangoda Man](#)

December 18, 2015

The following post says, “..We’re quickly learning that Europe and Africa may not provide the best model for us to use to interpret the fossil record of East Asia. For example, Denisova Cave is as far east as we’ve found the Neanderthals, and they don’t seem to have occupied Siberia permanently. This is unlike Europe, where they lived until about 40,000 years ago. **And so far, no Neanderthals have been found in China or anywhere further South of Denisova Cave.**

The fact is that we’ve really only scratched the surface in East Asia..”

Read more at: [WebLink: PHYS.ORG: Bone suggests 'Red Deer Cave people' a mysterious species of human](#)

XIX Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma

March 13, 2018

This section will discuss two issues:

1. **A new interpretation of quantum mechanics (QM) based on non-locality is presented based on Feynman's ideas.** Concepts like wave-particle duality, observer effect, are not needed. Furthermore, complex interpretations like the “Many-Worlds interpretation” are avoided. All existing experimental data will be shown to be consistent with this interpretation.
2. **A deeper understanding of how *kamma* automatically lead to corresponding *kamma vipāka* in Buddhism (Buddha Dhamma), becomes clear with this interpretation.**

○ [Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma – Introduction](#)

○ [Quantum Mechanics and Consciousness](#)

- [Will Quantum Mechanics Be Able to Explain Consciousness?](#)
- [The Observer Effect in Quantum Mechanics](#)

○ [Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation](#)

- [What Is a Wave and What Is a Particle?](#)
- [Photons Are Particles Not Waves](#)
- [Basis of the Proposed Interpretation – Feynman's Technique in QED](#)
 - [Feynman's Glass Plate Experiment](#)
 - [Feynman's Method of “A Particle Exploring All Possible Paths”](#)
 - [“Exploring All Possible Paths” Leads to Fermat's Principle of Least Time](#)

19.1 Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma – Introduction

March 13, 2018

1. This section will discuss two issues:

- a. **A new interpretation of quantum mechanics (QM) based on nonlocality will be presented, where wave-particle duality is shown to be an incorrect and unnecessary assumption.** All existing experimental data are shown to be inter-consistent with this interpretation.
- b. **A deeper understanding of how *kamma* automatically lead to corresponding *kamma vipaka* in Buddhism (Buddha Dhamma), can be realized with this interpretation.**

2. I started working on this project to provide a new interpretation of quantum mechanics based on some new and interesting experimental observations within the past 20 years or so. My goal is to provide a simple explanation with only a few mathematical equations. This work is an extension of the work of the late physicist Richard Feynman.

- In order to understand this material, one needs to have at least a high-school level physics background. Only those who have some background QM can closely follow the material here.
- **I would NOT recommend anyone to start learning QM in order to follow this section.** It is better to spend that time to learn Buddha Dhamma. But of course, anyone may be able to get a general idea. Just read the first several posts and see.
- At the end of this project, I believe that a deep connection to Buddha Dhamma can be made, especially regarding how *kamma vipaka* materialize naturally due to one's *kamma*.

3. When I started working on this project over two years ago, I had conversations with Professor Gayanath Fernando and we tried to get a paper published on the proposed interpretation of QM.

- However, we were unable to convince the reviewers, and the paper did not get published. I am attaching the pdf of the last version here: "[WebLink: A Self Consistent Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics Based on Nonlocality](#)".
- The main objection of the reviewers seemed to be the nonlocality argument, and some were reluctant to reject the "wave-particle duality". I will be discussing those and other issues in detail in this section.
- However, it is ironic that nonlocality of Nature was firmly established in 2015, as we discussed in the above paper.

3. In this section, I will also discuss the implications of this new interpretation of QM for Buddha Dhamma. A key issue that keeps coming up in the discussion forum is what intention in *kamma* is, and how the Nature "knows" what the connection of the person committing the *kamma* to the person affected by that *kamma*.

- For example, consider person X who was adopted and brought up by foster parents soon after birth was not even aware that he was adopted. Suppose X kills his biological father later on, of course without knowing that it was his father. It is still an *anantariya kamma*. Since it is the Nature that automatically manages *kamma/kamma vipaka*, how would the Nature know the connection between those two people?

4. That is the key question on which we may get some clues from QM. The proposed interpretation of QM is based on nonlocality. I will explain what is meant by nonlocality in future posts (see also, "[Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected](#)"), but it is inherently connected to how the Nature automatically enforces *kamma/kamma vipaka*.

- Of course, the Buddha had not mentioned what this mechanism is, because at that time, it was not possible to explain concepts like quantum entanglement.
- Furthermore, it is not really necessary to know such details. But since we are at a point to be able to make this connection, it is better to do so. That could help build confidence in Buddha Dhamma.

5. I plan to write several posts in this section laying out the basic ideas, and welcome comments from knowledgeable readers who are familiar with concepts in quantum mechanics. I have opened a new forum entitled, “Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation” at the discussion forum in order to discuss each post that is published.

- Anyone will be able to read these posts and also the posts at the discussion forum. However, one needs to register at the forum to ask questions or make comments. Forum registration instructions can be found at, “[WebLink: General Information and Updates](#)”.
- Now, let us discuss briefly the key idea behind the proposed connection of *kamma vipaka* to QM.

Intention in Kamma – Connection to Quantum Mechanics

1. There are two key steps that can be used in evaluating how to assess a *kamma vipāka*:
 - i. **Which of the *dasa akusala* is the intention?** For example, it could be taking a life, stealing, harsh speech, etc. Who is affected is not involved in this step. The “*cetana*” in “*cetana ham bhikkhave kamman vadami*”, is just which *dasa akusala* (and associated *cetasika*) are in one’s mind when one committing that *kamma*; that is all.
 - ii. Then the **strength of the *kammā vipāka* is based on the “level of consciousness” or “moral qualities” of the living beings affected** by that *kammā*. For example, killing a human will bring stronger *kamma vipaka* than killing an animal. In the same way, giving to an *Arahant* will be much more meritorious than giving to a normal human.

That is the clearest way to analyze any given situation.

2. In another example, in a recent discourse on *Tilakkhana*, I discussed the case of a person killing a bunch of people with a bomb; see Discourse 2 in “[Three Marks of Existence – English Discourses](#)”.

- His intention (*cetanā*) was to kill. Thus the *dasa akusala* involved is “*pānatipātā*”, that of taking a life.
- Now to the second step. He may not even know who was killed. By some coincidence if a parent of the killer was killed by the bomb, then he would have done an *ānantariya pāpa kammā*. If an *Arahant* was killed, the same. If a *Sōtapanna* was killed, then it would not be a *ānantariya kammā*, but still equivalent to killing thousands of normal humans.
- So, it is important to understand that “*cetanā*” is which of *dasa sakusala* are in one’s mind when a *kamma* is committed. It could be more than one. In the case of the bomber, there is *miccā ditthi*, and likely greed also, in addition to “*pānatipātā*”.
- One can analyze various situations with the above two steps.

3. We know that there are five *ānantariya kammā*, which are so grave that one will be subjected to their *vipākain* the very next life in the *niraya* (lowest realm): Killing one’s mother, killing one’s father, killing an *Arahant*, and injuring a Buddha (it is not possible for anyone to take the life of a Buddha), and causing schism in the *Sangha* (which really means trying to propagate a wrong version of the Buddha Dhamma).

- Since killing a normal human is not an *ānantariya kammā*, it is clear that the “strength of the *kammā*” depends on who is being killed.
- *Kamma vipāka* for committing any other offense, is similar. Hurting an *Arahant* would be million -fold grave compared to hurting a normal human. Thus, logically, hurting an *Anāgāmi*, a *Sakadagami*, a *Sōtapanna* would have corresponding levels of consequences.
- The “value of a life” depends on the “mental status” of that lifeform. Any life is not the same. This is why it is not possible to compare the life of an animal with that of a human; even among animals there are huge variations, and we can easily see that a gorilla or a dog is “more sentient” than a worm.

- However, we must keep in mind that we all had been born a lowly worm; so even though we need to keep in mind that there is a variation, we should never take the life of ANY sentient being intentionally (unnecessarily).

4. Regarding the issue of “how would one know” the status of the living being who is affected by one’s actions, that does not matter. The “Nature” would know.

- This point of “we are all inter-connected” is now proven by quantum mechanics: “[Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected](#)”.
- This is a key factor in understanding *kammā/vipāka*. The proposed interpretation of QM can show this at an even deeper level.

5. The above discussion is a part of the post, “[What is Intention in Kamma?](#)”. You may want to read that get more information.

- Furthermore, this issue was also discussed at the discussion forum: “[WebLink: Kamma and Kamma Vipāka](#)”.

6. We will start discussing QM with the next post. These days there is so much confusion about whether a photon is a particle or a wave, i.e., “wave-particle duality” in QM. I will address the issue of wave-particle duality in the next few posts.

- We will define what is meant by a wave and what is meant by a particle. Furthermore, many people confuse a “wave function” as a “wave”. A wave function is a mathematical concept that can REPRESENT the motion of a particle; it is not a wave.
- We will discuss the fact that a photon is a particle and not a wave. It does not have dual Nature (particle and wave Nature) either, even though it can be REPRESENTED by a wave function.

As I always say, one needs to know (or define) such fundamental entities before tackling deeper issues. Otherwise, we will get bogged down in re-defining what is meant by a given word in the middle of a discussion.

19.2 Quantum Mechanics and Consciousness

March 20, 2018

[Will Quantum Mechanics Be Able to Explain Consciousness?](#)

[The Observer Effect in Quantum Mechanics](#)

19.2.1 Will Quantum Mechanics Be Able to Explain Consciousness?

March 20, 2018

1. Quantum mechanics (QM) has some features (quantum entanglement, Heisenberg uncertainty principle, etc), **that makes it appear “mysterious”** compared to classical physics where the predictions are intuitive and transparently deterministic.

- The “hard problem in consciousness” (discussed in philosophy) is also mysterious, just like quantum phenomena: **the question of how consciousness can arise in a brain made of inert matter.**
- When quantum mechanics was emerging in the early 1900’s, many people started tying the two together, and speculating that the new found quantum theory would be able to explain how consciousness arises in the brain.

2. There have been several such QM based theories proposed to explain consciousness.

- There have been several popular books published recently that emphasize the possible role of QM in generating human consciousness (Walker, 2000; Penrose et. al.2011; Rosenblum and Kuttner, 2011; Stapp, H. 2011).
- Recent scientific activity in this area of research can be found in the review paper: “[WebLink: Neural correlates of consciousness- Koch et al- 2016](#)”.
- Another proposed approach, for example, is based on consciousness originatng in microtubules in neurons: “[WebLink: Consciousness in the universe – Hameroff and Penrose-2014](#)”.

3. Other than such activities in science, a hot topic in current philosophy is “how consciousness arises in a material brain”. Most philosophers are physicalists, and believe in the “causal closure of the physical domain”, i.e., all phenomena can be explained with a physical (matter) basis. For a collection of discussions with a number of philosophers, see, (Blackmore, 2005).

- As David Chalmers pointed out in 1994 at the first Tucson conference on consciousness: “The hard problem...is the question of how physical processes in the brain give rise to subjective experience” (Chalmers, 1995).
- The problem in philosophy (and in science) then is to figure out how the “subjective” consciousness arises from “objective” matter. **This is an impossible task.**

4. This key bottleneck was also emphasized by Thomas Nagel (Nagel, 1974) even earlier in his famous essay, “[WebLink: What Is It Like to Be a Bat- Nagel- 1974](#)”. As he pointed out at the end of the essay, “...it seems unlikely that any physical theory of mind can be contemplated until more thought has been given to the general problem of subjective and objective. Otherwise we cannot even pose the mind-body problem without sidestepping it” .

- The difference between “subjective” and “objective” is becoming clear with the neuroscience research done especially in the past decade, and we will discuss those new developments below. Subjectivity plays an important role in cognition (consciousness), and the question is how that can arise from an “objective” material base.

Subjective versus Objective: Difference between Mind and Matter

1. In order to clearly state the issue that we intend to address, we need to first clarify the distinction between “objective” and “subjective”.

- **Objective simply means one's own personal opinions and biases do not come into play.** It is easy to be objective about physical properties of matter: We all agree what the length, weight, density, color, etc of a given object is. We have developed standard procedures for measuring them. Therefore, no matter who makes the measurement, the same answer will result.
 - Thus we all agree (unless one is color blind) that a certain rose is red; that is also objective.
2. **Then, what is subjective? Those are personal opinions that can vary from person to person.**
- For example, if you ask the opinion about politician X from many people, some will love him, some will hate him, and others will be somewhere in between.
 - Same is true about politics in general, religions, foods, smells, books, movies, etc. All those are subjective.
 - In Buddha Dhamma, those subjective opinions arise because different people have different “*gati*”; see, “[The Law of Attraction, Habits, Character \(Gathi\), and Cravings \(Asavas\)](#)”.
3. Therefore, it is clear that while objective assessments are much easier to assess compared to subjective. By definition, we all cannot agree on something subjective. That is because we place different values on things, and have different opinions based on our value systems.
- But, one would think that it should be easy for science to figure out how objective assessments are made in our brains. But even that is more complex than we would think.
4. For example, neuroscience is not yet able to explain how our brains even discern a rose as “red”, i.e., how inert neurons can give rise to an “experience” even if it is objective. Explaining subjective experiences is much harder.
- This root problem even in handling such basic aspects of “qualia” has been pointed out by several philosophers and scientists over the years; see, for example, Noe and Thompson (2004), Bitbol (2008), Miller (2014), Aru and Bachmann (2015), and references therein.
 - As these authors point out, currently efforts are focused on investigating just *neural correlates* of consciousness; but finding *neural constitution* of consciousness (how consciousness arises), appears impossible (and it is!).
 - It is impossible because consciousness is not in the physical body. It is in the mental body (*gandhabba*); see, “[Ghost in the Machine – Synonym for the Manomaya Kaya?](#)”.
5. To emphasize; Even though the color of a rose is an objective property, we still do not know how that is identified in the brain. **Still, the real subjective experience entails not only in identifying a rose as red, but also forming a feeling about that rose. And that is the really critical problem.**
- Therefore, “the actual problem of consciousness” is much more complex because the *feeling* that arises upon seeing a red-color object can be different for different people; some like red clothes to wear, for example, and some don't. **Thus it is those feelings and perceptions that arise due to a sensory experience that are truly subjective.**
 - Until recently, neuroscience had not been able to even recognize the existence of mental attributes such as emotions, feelings, and perceptions. The availability of precision neuro-imaging methods has enabled an explosion of activity in those areas basically within the past decade; see, for example (Lindquist and Barrett, 2012; Bird and Viding, 2014; Klasen et al., 2014; Lamm and Majdandzic, 2015). However, these studies are able to point out only *neural correlates* (not *neural constitution*) of these mental qualities.
6. Therefore, even if we solve the “hard problem” associated with discerning basic aspects of “qualia” (such as experiencing “redness of a rose”), that will still not solve the problem of the “subjective experience”. *For that the neurons in each person's brain must have its own set of some special “characteristics” to provide the “subjective experience”.* Yet, neurons are neurons. How can person X's neurons be different from those of person Y?

- Thus the difference between mind and matter is much deeper than just “qualia” (redness of a rose); it is those complex, very personal, feelings (happiness, sadness, greediness, hatefulness, jealousy, etc.). Because of that, our follow-up actions also become very personalized. Mind is much more complex than matter.
- The problem in trying to explain the mind phenomena with inert neurons in the brain has its root in trying to explain complex “subjective mental phenomena” with an ontologically different “objective” material base (neurons).
- The Buddha has explained that those feelings arise not in the physical body, but in the mental body (*gandhabba*).; see, “[Mental Body – Gandhabba](#)”.

7. We have a thriving science and technology field because we deal objectively (and thus rationally) with inert matter in such cases. Thus we can lay out an experiment in detail and then carry it out anywhere by any team of competent scientists who design and carry out experiments objectively, and they will get the same result (within experimental uncertainties) which they all can agree on.

- Science and technology would not be able to flourish if such experiments did not produce consistent and repeatable results.

8. In any case, we are focusing on even a narrower aspect in this paper, i.e., the role of quantum mechanics.

- It is pointed out that there is no evidence for even a correlation between the mind and quantum phenomena, let alone a causal connection.
- Results of QM experiments do not depend on the “subjectivity” of the person conducting those experiments, simply because truly subjective decisions are not involved in such experiments.

9. Subjective decisions are very personalized, like voting liberal versus conservative, buying versus selling a given stock, liking versus disliking a given food, and zillions of such decisions that are truly subjective.

- **Quantum mechanical experiments do not involve any such subjective decisions, and the same result is obtained regardless of who does the experiment. Backbone of QM, as with any area in science, is the reproducibility of experimental results, and QM measurements are reproducible.**
- This is the key to realizing that quantum phenomena have nothing to do with the mind.

Both Classical and Quantum Phenomena Are Objective and Deterministic

1. Transparently “deterministic” classical physics (Newtonian mechanics) did not come even close to explaining the “subjective” consciousness. But the emergence of QM with its “unusual aspects” immediately led many to infer that it may be able to explain the equally “mysterious” consciousness.

- Since the 1920s attempts were made to rationalize the “unusual” nature of QM and ideas emerged from the physics community itself that conscious observations could affect the outcomes of an experiment (e.g., the “observer effect”); see “[The ‘Observer Effect’ in Quantum Mechanics](#)”. Recently, such ideas have been adopted to explain the origin of consciousness itself.
- We will summarize the existing experimental results in future posts to show that there is no evidence to suggest that quantum mechanical phenomena are even related to consciousness, let alone be able to explain consciousness.

2. It is true that quantum phenomena have characteristics that are very different from classical phenomena (described by Newtonian mechanics); **but both quantum and classical phenomena are objective.** There is no evidence of quantum phenomena having anything to do with the subjective consciousness of a human.

- The use of the phrase “non-deterministic” (or “indeterminacy”) for quantum phenomena is a misleading one. It gives the impression that results of QM experiments cannot be pre-determined. That is false.
- Even though many “classical experiments” have just one outcome, that is not true in all cases. For example, in chaos theory, one can calculate only probabilities.
- Similarly, in QM experiments one can calculate only probabilities, but those predictions are ALWAYS consistent with experimental measurements. **Therefore, it is misleading to label QM phenomena as “non-deterministic”.**

3. All QM experiments conducted up to date are totally objective in nature, and subjective consciousness does not play any role in these experiments. A given QM experiment may give different results based on the conditions under which the measurements are made; but if those conditions are fixed, then the results are the same regardless of who does the experiment or where it is done.

- There is no “intrinsic subjectivity” in those experiments, other than the possibility of a range of outcomes (with known probability) due to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle.
- If the same experiment is conducted under the same conditions, the same result is obtained regardless of who does the experiment; no connection to consciousness of the observer.
- We will continue this discussion in the next post, “[The Observer Effect in Quantum Mechanics](#)“. Later on, we will discuss different types of QM experiments, including the famous double-slit experiment.

Any questions on these QM posts can be discussed at the discussion forum: “[Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation](#)“.

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19.2.2 The Observer Effect in Quantum Mechanics

March 20, 2018

1. The “observer effect” — sometimes called the “measurement problem”— in quantum mechanics is defined as the problem of how (or *whether*) wave function collapse occurs. But the whole point is that there is no need for a “wave function collapse”, as we explain in this post.

- Let us start with what is meant by “wave function collapse”. It is always good start with the basics.
- Please make sure to read the previous post, “Will Quantum Mechanics Be Able to Explain Consciousness?”, including the section there on “Subjective versus Objective: Difference between Mind and Matter”.

2. The wave function in quantum mechanics evolves deterministically according to the Schrödinger equation as a linear superposition of different states. But actual measurements always find the physical system in a definite state. Therefore, it seems that at the time of the measurements all those multiple states should collapse to just one (the observed).

- Since an observer is needed to make a measurement (and thus “cause a collapse”), it is called the “observer effect”.

3. Even if such an “observer effect” exists, just the mere decision to make a measurement does not make such a measurement “subjective” in the sense we defined the term subjective in the post, “Will Quantum Mechanics Be Able to Explain Consciousness?”.

- There is no “measurement problem” in the sense that the “personal” mind state of an observer does not play a role; **anyone can initiate a measurement and get the same result. Furthermore, terminating a given experiment can also be achieved at random by a computer program and a conscious observer is not needed.**

4. This controversy over an “observer effect” arises in the first place because of the assumption that the wave function is “ontic”, i.e., it has all the correct information about the particle in it.

- But this assumption has been rejected not only by Einstein but many others including Bell: “..Either the wavefunction, as given by the Schrödinger equation is not everything, or it is not right.” (Bell, 1987, p. 201).

5. **Furthermore, this requirement to “collapse the wave function” or the involvement of an “observer” is absent in Bohmian mechanics**, a version of quantum theory discovered by Louis de Broglie in 1927 and rediscovered by David Bohm in 1952 (Bohm, 1952).

- In Bohmian mechanics a system of particles is described in part by its wave function, evolving, as usual, according to Schrödinger’s equation. **But this description is completed by the specification of the actual positions of the particles by a “pilot wave” or a “guiding wave”. In Bohmian mechanics, particle trajectories can be traced in real time without the need for a “wave function collapse”.**

6. A key experiment that actually led to the concept of an “observer effect” is the famous “double-slit experiment”.

- However, recent double-slit experiments (Kocsis et al., 2011; Schleich, et al., 2013b), where individual trajectories of particles were monitored and any possibility of a “mind effect” or “observer effect” was ruled out.
 - The results of those recent experiments were shown to be consistent with the trajectories of individual particles calculated with Bohmian mechanics.
7. All possible paths are naturally described by Bohmian mechanics. Each one can be assigned a probability and experimental outcomes have been verified to be in agreement with those probabilities.
- **So, the measurements are deterministic, in the sense that when a series of measurements is made, the outcome is compatible with the predictions.** Those measurements are objective.
 - A detailed description of Bohmian mechanics can be found in (Durr, Goldstein, and Zanghi, 1992).
8. Physicists have been slow to use Bohmian mechanics because it involves more work (solving the pilot wave equation), but there has been a renewed interest in recent years.
- We have done a literature survey on the Science Citation Index and found that interest in Bohmian mechanics seems to have accelerated starting around the turn of the century. The total number of publications from 1992-1999 were 52. From 2000-2005, 2006-2011, and 2012-2017 had 134, 174, and 200 papers published respectively. Thus, even though it took time to gain traction, Bohmian mechanics seems to be attracting attention now.
9. Furthermore, a series of recent papers have illustrated the beautiful connection between classical mechanics and quantum mechanics; see, for example, (Field, 2011; Taylor, 2003, Hanc et. al., 2003), which was originally pointed out by Feynman (Feynman, 1948).
- **These and other papers show how the “sum over all possible paths” by Feynman in quantum mechanics (Feynman, 1948) converges to the “path of least action” in classical mechanics at the limit \hbar (Planck’s constant) approaching zero.** Thus classical mechanics is just a limiting case of quantum mechanics.
10. Other papers have described how the Schrödinger’s equation can be derived from classical mechanics; see, (de Gosson and Hiley, 2011; Field, 2011; Schleich et al., 2013a).
- The so-called “quantum weirdness” arises due to the effects of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, which becomes non-negligible when \hbar is non-negligible in the microscopic realm.
11. **Therefore, there is no connection to human consciousness in QM experiments.** Quantum mechanical experiments always provide consistent results that are not subject to or even related to the “conscious state” of the observer.
- The need for a “personal” or subjective conscious mind is not even needed; a computer can randomly to decide when to initiate/terminate a measurement and get the same result.

Quantum Phenomena May Be “Weird” but Nothing to Do with Mind

Quantum phenomena, just like some phenomena in relativity, seem “unusual” to us, since they were uncovered only since 1900, and are not of common occurrence. But they all involve the behavior of inert matter at small scale (quantum phenomena), and speeds approaching the speed of light (relativity). This unusual behavior has nothing to do with the human consciousness; that is how Nature works in the microscopic realm.

1. There are two issues that need to be separated out:

- (i). Do quantum phenomena display characteristics that are very different from phenomena displayed by classical (Newtonian) systems?
- (ii). Do quantum phenomena provide any evidence that they are related to mental phenomena (i.e., are they affected by the particular state of mind of the experimenter?).

2. The answer to (i) above is unequivocally “yes”. The experiments that we discuss below all display characteristics that are alien to the phenomena displayed by Newtonian or classical systems.

- **However, QM is not alone in that respect.** The two theories of relativity also are applicable to phenomena that are not compatible with classical phenomena: time dilation and length contraction are obvious examples.

3. In both relativity and QM, **the mental state of the observer** is NOT involved in any such “alien phenomena”.

- For example, relativity predicts that if a person takes off in a rocket, travels at speeds close to speed the light for an extended time, and comes back, he will find that those on Earth have aged much more than him. This is called time dilation.
- However, if two people travel at similar speeds for a certain time and come back, the time dilation experienced by both will be the same.
- In the same way, if any of those “weird” QM experiments are conducted by two different people, they will get the same result.

4. In both cases of QM and relativity, the results are “weird” by classical standards, but there is no involvement of the “consciousness of the observer”; and this apparent “weirdness” in QM goes away smoothly as the Plank’s constant (h) becomes negligibly small (and in relativity as the speed is reduced).

- There is no “mind effect” or “observer effect” in the sense of the subjectivity of the observer affecting the results of either type of experiment; **there are no subjective decisions to be made during an experiment.**
- By definition, unless an experimenter is truly objective, the results of any experiment cannot be reproduced.

5. In other words, all quantum phenomena, as well as those explained by relativity, are objective just like classical phenomena.

- **On the other hand, mind phenomena CAN BE subjective.** As discussed earlier, when describing physical properties of matter, two people can be objective, i.e., they report the same length, weight, etc for the object. But their PERCEPTION of a given person X, or a given food or music, etc , could be very different. Those are subjective.
- For example, two people with opposing political views (A and B) may encounter a politician C on the street who has views compatible with those of A. Person A will be happy to meet C and may go up to C, shake his hands and talk to him enthusiastically. On the other hand, Person B will automatically have irritable thoughts about C and is likely to avoid C.
- What properties of neurons in A and B could lead to such huge difference in feelings and intentions (consciousness) upon seeing the same person?
- Such subjective mental states do not play a role in carrying out experiments, whether quantum or classical. But they do play critical roles in making decisions in everyday life.

6. Therefore, those two issues need to be handled separately. Quantum phenomena have characteristics that are very different from classical phenomena; but both quantum and classical phenomena are objective. There is no evidence of quantum phenomena having anything to do with the subjective consciousness of a human.

- The crucial distinction that we need to realize here is that the phrase “non-deterministic” as applied to such QM experiments is not correct. Some measurements may not provide the exact location of a particle, for example. There could be many possible locations for that particle, but they all can be predicted with associated probabilities accurately.
- There is no “intrinsic subjectivity” in those experiments, other than the indeterminacy depicted by the Heisenberg uncertainty principle. If the same experiment is conducted under the same

conditions, the same result is obtained regardless of who does the experiment; no connection to consciousness.

Any questions on these QM posts can be discussed at the discussion forum: “[Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation](#)”.

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19.3 Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation

March 13, 2018

1. A new interpretation of quantum mechanics (QM) based on nonlocality and realism is presented, where wave-particle duality is shown to be an incorrect and unnecessary assumption.

- In our proposed interpretation, appropriate wave functions are established instantaneously across space in accordance with nonlocality.
- Nonlocality of Nature is hard for many to accept, but it has been shown to be valid in three key experiments conducted in 2015.
- All existing experimental data, including those are shown to be inter-consistent with this interpretation.

2. When I started working on this project over two years ago, I had conversations with Professor Gayanath Fernando and we tried to get a paper published on the proposed interpretation of QM.

- However, we were unable to convince the reviewers, and the paper did not get published. The pdf of a recent version can be downloaded here: [“WebLink: A Self Consistent Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics Based on Nonlocality”](#).
- The main objection of the reviewers seemed to be the nonlocality argument, and some were reluctant to reject the “wave-particle duality”. I will be discussing those and other issues in detail in this section.
- However, it is ironic that nonlocality of Nature was firmly established in 2015, as we discussed in the above paper.

3. I plan to write a series of posts in this section, and welcome comments from knowledgeable readers who are familiar with concepts in quantum mechanics. I have opened a new forum entitled, [“Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation”](#) at the discussion forum in order to discuss each post that is published.

- Anyone will be able to read these posts and also the posts at the discussion forum. However, one needs to register at the forum to ask questions or make comments. Forum registration instructions can be found at, [“WebLink: General Information and Updates”](#).
- Now, let us discuss briefly the key idea behind the proposed connection of *kamma vipaka* to QM.

4. I will systematically expand the arguments given in the above paper (in #2 above) in a series of posts at the website. The following are the posts published so far:

[What Is a Wave and What Is a Particle?](#)

[Photons Are Particles Not Waves](#)

[Basis of the Proposed Interpretation – Feynman’s Technique in QED](#)

- [Feynman’s Glass Plate Experiment](#)
- [Feynman’s Method of “A Particle Exploring All Possible Paths”](#)
- [“Exploring All Possible Paths” Leads to Fermat’s Principle of Least Time](#)

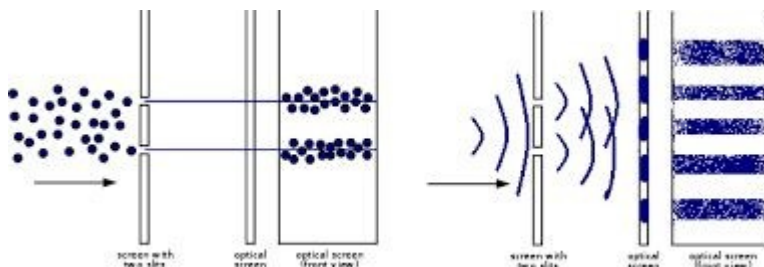
19.3.1 What Is a Wave and What Is a Particle?

March 13, 2018

1. Waves involve the transport of energy without transport of matter. When you drop a pebble onto a water reservoir, you can see the ripples move out. There is no displacement of water from one place to another; but the disturbance moves out.

- Therefore, a *wave* can be described as a disturbance that travels through a medium, transporting energy from one location (its source) to another location without transporting matter.

- On the other hand, a **particle** can move and therefore transfer matter. The most important characteristic of a particle is that its position is localized at any given time, and it is detected as a single detection event or a “single click”.
 - Those are the ways waves and particles were expected to behave before the advent of quantum mechanics. But starting around the year 1900, our ideas about waves and particles became somewhat confusing, due to many drastic changes that took place for many years.
2. The fundamental concepts in quantum mechanics (QM) were worked out between roughly from 1900 to 1930. A good description of the evolution of QM within this period and beyond is given in the book “Einstein, Bohr and the Quantum Dilemma” by Andrew Whitaker (second edition, 2006).
- That book describes how the key words like waves, particles, and wave functions related to QM evolved. Some of the old — and unnecessary — concepts like “wave-particle duality” linger on because of the impressions made at that time.
 - Experiments carried out within the past 20-30 years (some key experiments within the past few years), show that such lingering ideas on “wave-particle duality” are really an obstruction to grasping the reality revealed by QM.
3. For a long time, it was thought that light is a wave, specifically an electromagnetic wave. That idea still lingers on.
- Light consists of particles (photons) was firmly established only in 1986. We will discuss the next post.
 - **The most distinguishing characteristic of a particle is that its detection is recorded as a single event (“a click”) at the detector.**
4. However, the motion of a particle — including a photon — can be represented by a wave function, which is a mathematical function, not a wave. **A wave function is extremely useful for calculating experimental results, but it is not something that is physically real.**
- It is easier to see the differences among the terms waves, particles, and wave functions by looking at what happens when waves and particles go through two adjoining slits.
5. When normal particles that we are familiar with go through two slits and fall on a screen to make their imprints, we will see two “line images” as shown on the left in the figure below. On the other hand, a wave (like a water wave) will give rise to “fringes” as shown on the right.



- In normal life we will see particles (say marbles) going through two large slits leading to those marbles hitting the screen as shown on the left
- With a water wave going through two slits we will see ripples giving rise to water wave crests as shown on the right.

Those are the scenarios with normal particles and normal waves.

6. If quantum particles (like electrons or photons) are going through two slits where slit opening are LARGE (say a cm or more), then we will again see the “normal particle pattern” shown on the LEFT.
- **However, if quantum particles (like electrons or photons) are going through two slits where slit opening are SMALL (say less than a mm), then we will see the “wave pattern” shown on the RIGHT.** If the aperture dimensions are of the order of h/p (where h = Planck’s constant and p is the momentum of the particle), then such diffuse wave patterns can be expected.

- In such cases, those experimental results can be CALCULATED by using wave functions to represent the motion of such particles.
- However, a particle is never spread out. A given particle will always be detected at a certain point within that diffraction pattern. One needs to repeat the experiment with a single particle many times to get that diffraction pattern.

We will discuss this in detail in upcoming posts, together with the following related issues.

Light is a Wave or a Particle?

1. In the early days, Newton's concept of light consisting of particles prevailed for a long time. But Newton's corpuscular theory of light was abandoned around 1850 because it could not explain interference and diffraction phenomena, and Young and Fresnel showed that the wave picture could explain those experimental results.

- However, a wave needs a medium to support it. A water wave propagates in water, and a sound wave can propagate in a solid or a liquid, and needs at least air to propagate. Still, light can travel in a vacuum, and therefore the existence of a yet unknown "aether" was proposed as the all-pervading medium through which light could propagate.
- The "aether theory" itself ran into several objections, and finally was abandoned after the famous Michelson–Morley experiment performed in 1887, which conclusively proved the absence of an aether.

2. Now we know that light doesn't need a medium through which to travel. Furthermore, the speed of light is constant and is independent of the movement of the source or detector or the direction in which it travels, as shown by the theory of relativity of Einstein (discovered in 1905).

- Therefore, light is not a wave. This was confirmed without any doubt by an experiment conducted with single photons in 1986, which we will discuss in the next post. I just wanted to present the background in this post.

Matter as Waves?

1. While the debate was going on about whether light is a wave or a particle between 1850 to early 1900's, and even up to 1986 to some extent, another related development came with the early studies in quantum mechanics beginning around 1900.

- The issue was whether solid particles can be treated as waves.

2. After Planck, Einstein, Compton, and others established that light behaved as particles (photons), Bohr in 1913 came up with an idea to quantize the energy levels of a hydrogen atom. He was able to explain why discrete lines in the spectra of hydrogen.

- The reason why Bohr's idea worked was clarified by a yet another ground-breaking hypothesis put forth by de Broglie in 1924. He proposed that just like photons can be represented by a wave (specifically with electromagnetic wave equations of Maxwell), the motion of electrons can be represented by a "wave". At that time it was not fully clear what this "wave" would be. Now, we know that it is a wave function.

3. Light had been considered to be a wave for a long time, as we discussed above. But the idea that electrons with no-zero rest mass could be represented by waves was an unanticipated one.

- Then in 1927, Davisson and Germer produced clear diffraction patterns for electron scattering from a nickel lattice, just like a diffraction pattern due to light. This led to the speculation that maybe particles sometime behave as waves.
- That is how the idea of "wave-particle duality" evolved in the confusing period of 1900 to about 1930. Even though an accepted "quantum theory" had been established by around 1930, the idea of "wave-particle duality" lingers to the present.

- Nowadays, those diffraction patterns seen with electrons can be explained via the wave functions that represent the motion of electrons. However, a given electron can be found only at one location at a given time.

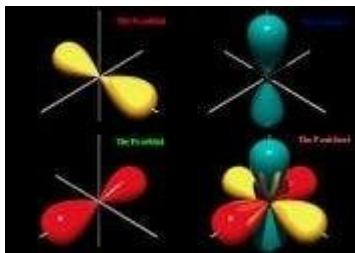
Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle

1. To make things even more complicated, in 1927 Heisenberg came up with his famous uncertainty principle. This principle says that the uncertainty of the position of a particle (σ_x) multiplied by the uncertainty of the particle's momentum (σ_p) must be larger than what is known as the Planck's constant, \hbar :

$$\sigma_x \cdot \sigma_p \geq \hbar$$

- Planck's constant is extremely small; it has a value of about 10^{-34} Js.
 - For any particle that we can see with our eyes, any uncertainty in particle's position will be much smaller than the size of the particle. Therefore, we don't notice this in our normal lives.
2. However, when it comes to microscopic particles like electrons, the uncertainty in position is normally very large. If you have seen a pictorial representation of the orbit of an electron in a hydrogen atom, it is shown as an area; the electron could be anywhere within that area.

The following picture shows some examples of such electron orbitals. An electron could be anywhere within a given orbital at a given time.



- Therefore, the key point to remember is that the uncertainty in the position and the momentum (or velocity) of a particle become significant only for small particles like electrons and photons.
3. We can make the following statements about the location of such a “quantum particle” at a given time.
- The significance of this uncertainty is that we cannot say precisely where such a small particle to be found. We can only say that it should be located within a certain region and calculate the probability for it to be found at a given point within that region.
 - But that does not mean “the particle is spread out in that volume”. At any given time, the particle is located at only one point. It is just that we cannot say precisely at which point due to the uncertainty principle.

I hope you can see the difference. Some people make the grave mistake of saying a quantum particle is “spread over space” just like a wave. That is grave mistake, and is a key reason why people have a hard time understanding quantum mechanics.

Any questions on these QM posts can be discussed at the discussion forum: “[Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation](#)”.

19.3.2 Photons Are Particles Not Waves

March 13, 2018

Summary: Photons are ALWAYS particles. They travel as particles and are detected as particles. But the position of a photon during travel cannot be pinned down to a point (due to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle; see, “What Is a Wave and What Is a Particle?”). Only POSSIBLE

LOCATIONS of the photon at any time (and the probability of detection at each location) are provided by the wave function that represents the photon. The difference between a wave and a wave function was discussed in the previous post.

1. I must warn that this post could be too advanced for many people. However, this is the sort of “deepest level” that we will go to in this section, and if one can at least comprehend the basic idea, then one should be able to follow the future posts. The basic idea that I am trying to express is that light consists of particles, which are called photons.

- What is meant by a “wave” in wave-particle duality is vague and different people seem to interpret the term differently. Therefore, it is helpful to resolve what is meant by a “wave” in “wave-particle” duality. Is it a “real wave” like a water wave or is it a mathematical function?
- As we show below, it has been confirmed that photons are particles, and the word “wave” SHOULD NOT be used to describe light. But, the motion of a photon can be REPRESENTED by a wave function, a mathematical representation.

2. For example, a statement that is made frequently is, “..the position of a single particle is spread out over space..”. **This is a misleading statement, and never should be used.** *A particle always occupies a localized position*; what is spread out is the wave function, indicating possible positions for the particle to be at a given time. See the summary statement above.

- A particle, whether it is an electron or a photon, is detected at a detector as a single detection event. When light — reduced to low intensity — is detected at a detector, those photons are registered as “single clicks”.
- **Therefore, we should give up the notion of light as a “wave”.** Light consists of photons and each photon may be represented by a wave function, which is a mathematical concept. This lingering and false idea of a “wave” is the main obstacle to have a unified theory of QM.

3. Newton believed that light consisted of particles. Newton’s corpuscular theory of light prevailed until around 1850 when it was abandoned because it could not explain the interference and diffraction effects of light. Since then light was regarded as a wave for a while.

- But starting around 1900 that wave picture could not account for many new experimental observations including the photoelectric effect, black-body radiation, and Compton scattering. Einstein proposed that light is quantized to explain the photoelectric effect (Einstein, 1905) — for which he received the Nobel Prize in physics in 1921 — and those quanta were given the name photon; they are the original “quanta” of quantum mechanics.
- A photon was a particle with momentum was confirmed experimentally by Compton (Compton, 1923), for which he received the Nobel Prize in 1927.
- The photon concept has led to momentous advances in experimental and theoretical physics such as lasers, Bose–Einstein condensation, and quantum field theory.

4. Then, in 1948 Feynman illustrated that it is not necessary to consider photons as waves at all in quantum electrodynamics (Feynman, 1948; Feynman, 1949; Feynman, 1985).

- While the first two references above are technical papers, third one is a book written in very simple terms. I would recommend those who are interested to read the book . I am only going to summarize what is in the book.
- That book was based on a series of 4 lectures. These are simple lectures delivered to non-physicists, and could be useful especially if one does not have access to the book:

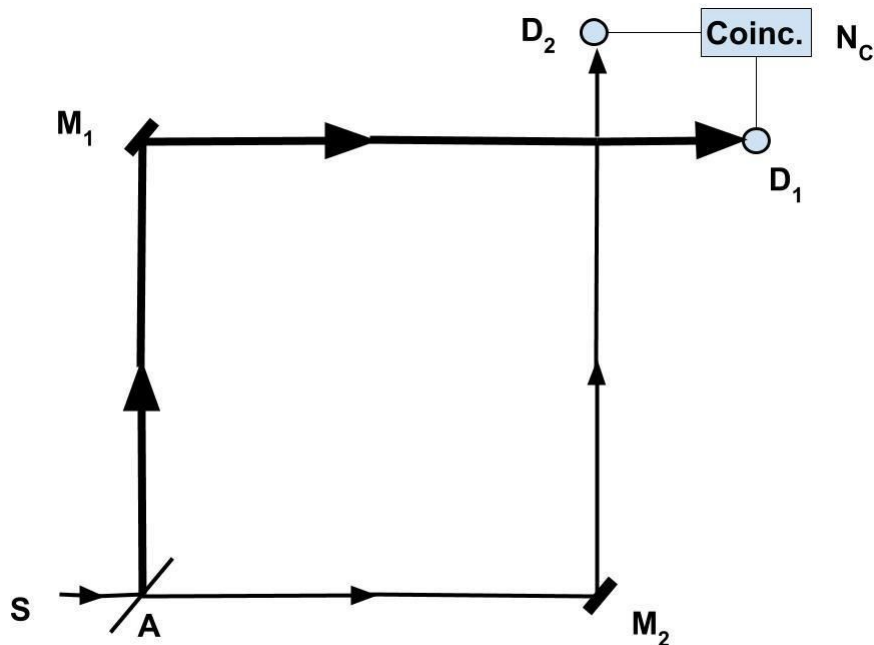
[WebLink: YOUTUBE: QED: Photons — Corpuscles of Light — Richard Feynman \(1/4\)](#)

5. However, there was a persistent view up to 1986 that light could not be particles, and that many effects such as the photoelectric effect can be explained without the concept of a photon (Lamb and Scully, 1968; Crisp and Jaynes, 1969; Mandel, 1976).

- The final confirmation of a photon as a particle had to wait until single photon sources were developed, and in 1986 Granger, Roger, and Aspect confirmed in their anticorrelation experiments that photons are indeed particles. We discuss this experiment below.

Proof That Photons Are Particles

The figure below shows the experimental configuration used by Granger, Roger, and Aspect to verify that photons are indeed particles (Granger, Roger, and Aspect, 1986).



1. Single photons generated at S are sent through a beam splitter and signal via each leg is detected at D_1 and D_2 . In this experiment, **one photon at a time** is incident on the beam splitter A .
 - If a photon is a particle, then it can be either reflected at A and go towards mirror M_1 , which then will be detected at detector D_1 , OR, it could go through A , reflected by mirror M_2 , and detected at detector D_2 . **Then a detection would register only at D_1 or D_2 .**
 - However, if the photon is a wave, it could partially propagate through each arm and be detected at **both D_1 and D_2 simultaneously**. That would count as a “coincidence count (N_c)”.
 - If a photon sometimes acts like a wave, there should be some coincidence counts.
2. The experiments confirmed that a given photon always takes one path at a time (Granger, Roger, and Aspect, 1986).
 - This experiment conclusively proved that a photon travels **either** via the path $A M_1 D_1$ **or** the path $A M_2 D_2$.
 - If photons had the “wave nature”, there would have been at least some coincidence counts.
3. With this experimental confirmation (together with all other evidence discussed above), a photon is now categorized as an elementary particle. A photon at any wavelength is detected as a particle.
 - In Feynman’s Quantum Electrodynamics (QED), a photon is successfully treated as a particle which takes into account “all possible paths” via path integrals.
 - In our proposed theory, a photon is a particle and its motion is governed by a mathematical wave function that is set up instantaneously across space taking into account the details of the experimental arrangement; interference and diffraction effects are explained by this wave function.

4. Newton's corpuscular theory of light was abandoned around 1850 because it could not explain interference and diffraction phenomena.

- However, when Feynman introduced his new approach to quantum mechanics in 1948, he proposed that, “..The probability that a particle will be found to have a path $x(t)$ lying somewhere within a region of space time is the square of a sum of contributions, one from each path in the region. The contribution from a single path is postulated to be an exponential whose (imaginary) phase is the classical action (in units of \hbar) for the path in question..” (Feynman, 1948, p. 367).
- Then he applied that concept to describe the propagation of photons as well as electrons in his formulation of quantum electrodynamics (QED); see (Feynman, 1949). The basic idea of photon propagation using “all possible paths available” has been explained by Feynman in his introductory book (Feynman, 1985) on QED.

5. Feynman has explained his theory of QED with simple diagrams without using any equations in his book (Feynman, 1985). I will use one of his diagrams to illustrate the basic concept in the next post.

- However, his technique was completely ad hoc; there was no rationale behind it. As he explained (p. 10 of Feynman, 1985): “..what I am telling you is, while I am describing to you *how* Nature works, you won't understand why Nature works that way. But you see, nobody understands that. I can't explain why Nature behaves in this particular way”.
- With new experimental results published since that time, now we can understand the rationale behind his technique. That is what we will be discussing in the first series of posts, and is also in the unpublished paper: “[WebLink: A Self-Consistent Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics Based on Nonlocality](#)”.

6. Of course, many phenomena involving light can be explained with light treated as an electromagnetic (EM) wave, just like the motion of large particles can be treated with Newtonian mechanics.

- But when analyzing quantum phenomena, the EM theory does not work for light and the Newtonian mechanics does not work for microscopic particles. This is quite apparent in QED, which deals with interactions of light with electrons.

Any questions on these QM posts can be discussed at the discussion forum: “[Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation](#)”.

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19.3.3 Basis of the Proposed Interpretation – Feynman’s Technique in QED

March 29, 2018

[Feynman’s Glass Plate Experiment](#)

[Feynman’s Method of “A Particle Exploring All Possible Paths”](#)

[“Exploring All Possible Paths” Leads to Fermat’s Principle of Least Time](#)

Any questions on these QM posts can be discussed at the discussion forum: “[Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation](#)”.

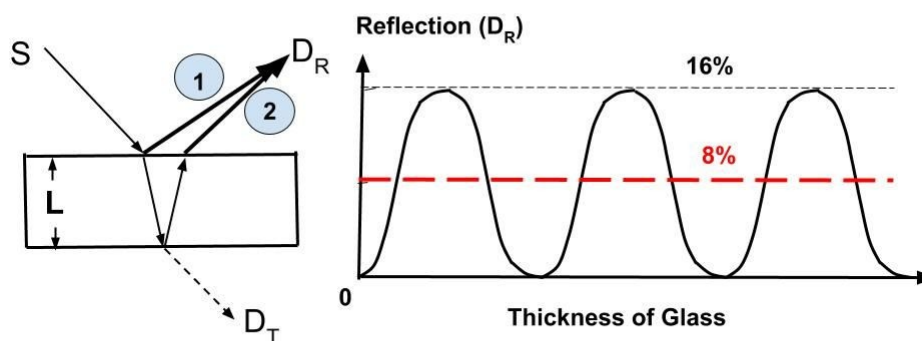
19.3.3.1 Feynman’s Glass Plate Experiment

March 16, 2018; revised March 25, 2018

1. Feynman’s glass plate experiment that he discussed in pages 17 – 35 in his book (see the References below) is discussed in order to lay the foundation for our new interpretation of quantum mechanics (QM).

This is a key post that lays the foundation for the “nonlocality” argument. Even before I explain in detail what “nonlocality” is, I want to illustrate the simple fundamental idea behind it.

- **This idea is:** Even before a particle takes off, Nature evaluates all possible paths that particle could take, and come up “with a plan” for its motion. This happens AUTOMATICALLY and some “unconventional paths” could result only in the case of microscopic particles like electrons and photons.
- This is why quantum mechanics appear to reveal “strange phenomena”. But when particles increase in size, this “unusual behavior” goes away naturally.
- This simple idea that the physicist Richard Feynman came up is best illustrated with a simple experiment that is discussed in his book (see the References below). That experimental setup and the key result is shown in the figure below.



Experiments show signal at D_R to vary from 0% to 16% as the thickness of glass plate varied.

One would expect constant reflection at about 8%.

2. There are two “special features” in this experiment (it could be easier to print the post and read):

- i. The two surfaces of the glass slab are well-polished and are parallel to each other with high accuracy.
- ii. The light is monochromatic, which means it has a well-defined wavelength.

3. Light from the source (S) is incident on a glass plate. Part of the light is reflected as indicated by the arrow labelled #1, and the rest is transmitted through the glass and incident on the second surface where a part of it is reflected and goes back up as indicated by the arrow #2. Rest of light emerges from the other side of the glass plate indicated by the dotted arrow. Two more things to be noted:

- **What is plotted on the right side of the figure is the light signal in the reflected beams #1 and #2.**
- **Variable on the X-axis of that figure is the thickness of the glass plate (L).**

4. The first thing one would expect is to have a fraction of light (about 8%) to be reflected via path #1. In fact, that is what one WILL observe with normal light (with all wavelengths in the visible region).

- However, as we can see in the experimental data to the right in the figure, that reflected signal varies from 0% to 16% as the thickness of the glass plate is increased for light with a well-defined wavelength (like from a laser).
- **It is interesting to see that the reflected signal is zero (very low) at some thicknesses of the glass plate. This is a KEY feature that cannot be explained without our interpretation of QM. If anyone can, please post at the discussion forum.** Feynman explicitly said that he could not, on p. 10 of his book.

5. Normally, one would expect the light reflected from the front surface (#1) *to be at a constant level* since photons are particles, *i.e., a photon hitting the first surface would have no idea whether another interface existed below or not*. Again, this is the key to the puzzle.

- For an analogy, we can consider the following case. Imagine a wire fence with holes a bit larger than a ball that we throw at it. Some balls (those that align with the holes) will go through those holes and others will bounce back. Would it make any difference to the number of balls that bounce back if we install another fence a little bit beyond the first fence? Would it matter how far apart the fences are? Of course not.
- That is a reasonable analogy that shows how amazing the above observations — seen with the glass plate and the particles of light (photons) — are.
- But such effects are seen only in the microscopic realm, as we will discuss later.

6. The following is how Feynman devised a “rule” that turned out to be able to account for those observations in the figure above.

- For a photon to get to the detector D_R , there are two paths available via the glass plate (#1 and #2), as shown in the figure. **Feynman’s key assumption was that wave functions are established instantaneously via both those paths, and the vector sum of them would determine the possible path for a photon. These are not real waves, but just mathematical functions.**
- In quantum electrodynamics (QED), this procedure of “summing up all possible paths” is given the fancy name, “path integrals”.
- When the path difference between those two paths is equal to the wavelength of the light, those two contributions are cancelled out (there is a phase shift of 180° for the two paths in addition). That is why one sees zero intensity at plate thicknesses that are multiples of even number of half the wavelength.
- On the other hand, when the path difference between those two paths is equal to the half of the wavelength of the light, those two contributions add together. That is why one sees large intensity at plate thicknesses that are odd multiples of half the wavelength.
- Those are just technical details. Don’t worry about them if you are “non-technical”.

7. **As long as one uses monochromatic light (and glass with no defects), one could in principle make the width of the plate arbitrarily large and those oscillations in the signal in the above figure persist.** Thus as long as those two possible paths are available (without any defects in the

glass plate), the resultant wave function will enforce “no reflection” at the front surface regardless of how thick the glass plate is.

- On p. 21 of his book (Feynman, 1985), Feynman says, “..Today, with lasers (which produce a very pure, monochromatic light), we can see this cycle still going strong after more than 100,000,000 repetitions — **which corresponds to glass that is more than 50 meters thick.**“. This is an amazing observation!

8. Therefore, QM wave functions — which take into account the phases and amplitudes of all possible paths — *are established instantaneously*. **This is a consequence of the nonlocality of nature that we will discuss in detail in upcoming posts.**

- In the case of the above figure, there are two possible paths for a given photon — indicated by the arrows #1 and #2 — leading to D_R as shown in the figure. It is important to note that the path of a given photon leaving the source (S) is predetermined from the start.
- Thus the question does not arise as to how the photon coming to the first surface “knows” that there is a second surface below it. There is no causality problem here, *since the QM wave function is established at the very beginning* because of the nonlocality of nature; if any changes are made to the experimental setup, the wave function will adjust *instantaneously*. **Nonlocality means exactly that: physical proximity is not needed for this mechanism to work.**

9. Now we will discuss a critical implication of Feynman’s “a particle exploring all possible paths” or “path integral” approach, **that even Feynman did not realize.**

- **What happens when we increase the thickness of the (defect-free) glass plate to a value that is greater than the distance from the glass plate to the detector D_R ?**
- Now, a photon reflecting off of the front surface would have had time to reach the detector before another photon going through the glass plate even reaches the lower glass-air surface, and start coming back to the detector D_R via #2 path.
- You need to take time and think about this. That is why it could be better to print the post and read. I don’t think the reviewers of our paper even realized this key point; see, bullet #3 of [“Quantum Mechanics and Dhamma – Introduction”](#).

10. Therefore, in the absence of wave functions establishing instantaneously across both possible paths (and thus undergoing destructive interference), there CANNOT be a zero signal at the detector D_R , for ANY thickness of the glass plate **if that thickness (L) is greater than the distance from the glass plate to the detector D_R .**

- This is the second aspect of the key observation that cannot be explained without our proposed interpretation of QM.
- Again, please make comments at the discussion forum, if anyone can explain this observation in another way.

11. With the above observation, this experiment also confirms that photons are not waves, which we established in the post, [“Photons Are Particles Not Waves”](#). In principle, two waves coming off of the front and back surfaces of the glass plate COULD destructively interfere to yield the zero intensities at those plate thicknesses.

- However, in this particular case (thickness of the glass plate larger than the distance from the glass plate to the detector D_R), the “light wave” from the front surface would have arrived at the detector and be gone, by the time “light wave” from the back surface of the glass surface arrives at the detector.
- Therefore, destructive interference at the detector cannot take place **in the case of real waves propagating at the speed of light**. What undergoes destructive interference are the **mathematical wave functions** representing a photon.

- This is why it is important to distinguish between waves and wave functions; see, “[What Is a Wave and What Is a Particle?](#)”.

12. Therefore, the zero intensity observed at some plate thicknesses is not due to the destructive interference of waves. Instead it is due to the combined contributions from those two paths (two wave functions).

- If the two wave functions destructively interfere, **then not even a single photon will be directed via either of those paths, and all incident photons will go through the glass slab.**
- If the two wave functions interfere constructively, then maximum possible number of photons will be directed via those paths, and maximum possible signal (16%) will be observed at D_R ; rest of the photons will go through the glass slab.

13. Therefore, it is very important to understand the difference between waves and wave functions. Light cannot be really called electromagnetic waves, even though the term is used even today. We have established that in the post, “[Photons Are Particles Not Waves](#)”. I am proceeding slowly to establish a solid foundation, so that questions like this do not arise later on.

- Feynman’s method says that even before a particle starts moving, **wave functions** for “all possible paths” for that particle are established instantaneously. The particle will then move along a path that results from the “summation over all those paths”.
- These wave functions are vectors (i.e., they have a magnitude and a direction). Therefore, vector addition must be used in “summing up all possible paths”. For those who are “non-technical” such details can be skipped; just get the idea.
- This vector addition using a simple method with arrows is described by Professor Feynman in his book and also in a series of four public lectures (see the References below).

14. To summarize the above discussion in another way, let me quote from Feynman’s book (p.36):

- **“This strange phenomenon of partial reflection by two surfaces can be explained for intense light by a theory of waves, but the wave theory cannot explain how the detector makes equally loud clicks as the light gets dimmer.** Quantum electrodynamics “resolves” this wave-particle duality by saying that light is made of particles, but the price of this great advancement of science is retreat by physics to the position of being able to calculate only the probability that a photon will hit a detector, **without offering a good model of how it actually happens**”.
- Our proposed theory shows exactly how it happens.

15. As we will discuss in the upcoming posts, we point out that Feynman’s idea of a photon exploring all possible paths is none other than the enforcement of nonlocality; *Feynman’s QED implicitly assumed nonlocality*.

- A wave function is instantaneously set up over all space taking into account the phases for all possible paths; there is no spatial limitation. This is why two particles across the universe could be still entangled; see, “[Quantum Entanglement – We Are All Connected](#)”.
- In the next post we will show that in the above case, a photon will actually “explore ALL possible paths”, an infinite number of them! However, only those two paths actually came into play in the above discussion, because all others cancel out at ALL TIMES.

Any questions on these QM posts can be discussed at the discussion forum: “[Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation](#)”.

REFERENCES

1. Richard Feynman, “QED: The Strange Theory of Light and Matter”, Princeton University Press (1985).

2. The above book is based on a set of simple lectures delivered to non-physicists, and could be useful especially if one does not have access to the book:

[WebLink: YOUTUBE: QED: Photons — Corpuseles of Light — Richard Feynman \(1/4\)](#)

19.3.3. Feynman's Method of "A Particle Exploring All Possible Paths"

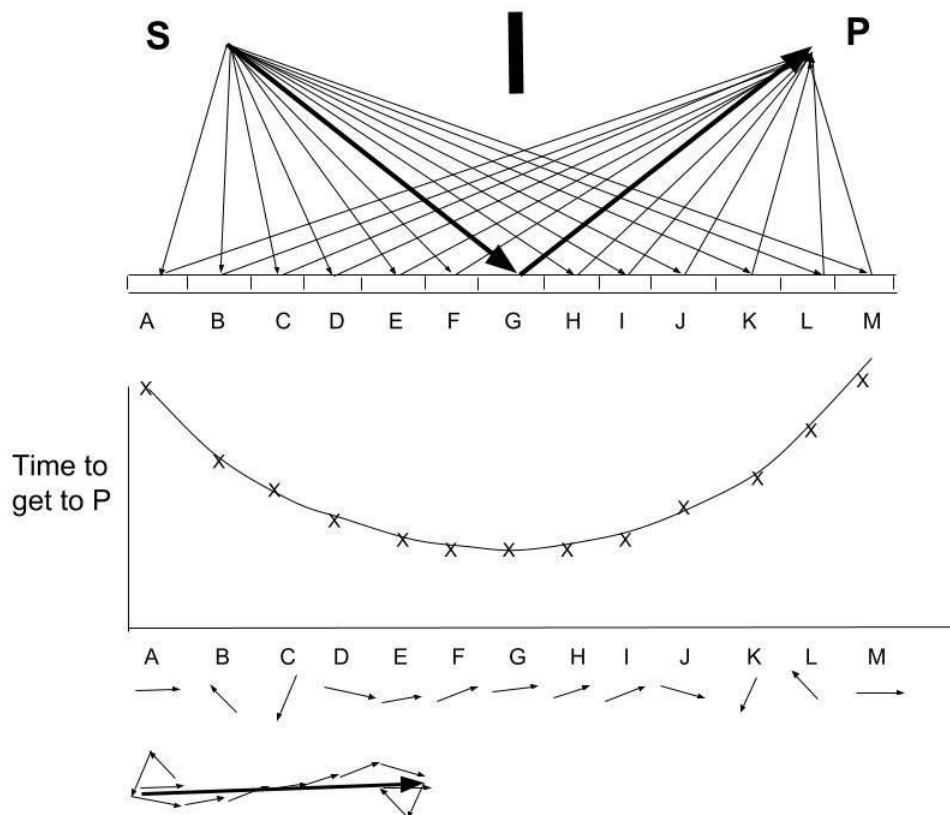
March 29, 2018

1. In the previous post we discussed Professor Feynman's illustration of how **two wave functions (not waves)** corresponding to two possible paths for a photon interfere (constructively and destructively) to produce an oscillating signal; see, "[Feynman's Glass Plate Experiment](#)".

- It was pointed out that this experimental result is not explainable if light is treated as an electromagnetic wave.
- More importantly, it showed that a path for a photon is mapped out instantaneously by Nature, as soon as the photon takes off.
- In this post, we will discuss his argument that the Nature actually takes into account **ALL possible paths, an infinite number of them!** This is our key idea behind "nonlocality", so we will proceed step-by-step to make our case crystal clear.

2. This discussion is also based on the following figure from Feynman's book (p 43); see the reference below. Light received at point P due to source S is considered; direct path from S to P is blocked by a screen placed in between them.

- Everyone is familiar with the "law of light reflection" where the light from from A goes to a Point B in a path that is defined by the angle incident being equal to the angle of reflection.



- Of course, the time for a photon to get from S to D is minimum close to the center of the mirror.
- However, Feynman showed that a better picture with more explanatory power is available with the concept of "a photon exploring all paths". He showed that most possible paths are cancelled out and only those paths that lie close to the expected path stated by the Law of Reflection contribute to the final detection probability.

3. In order to illustrate the concept of a photon “exploring all possible paths”, the mirror is divided into sections A through M, and reflection from each section of the mirror is indicated (see the above figure).

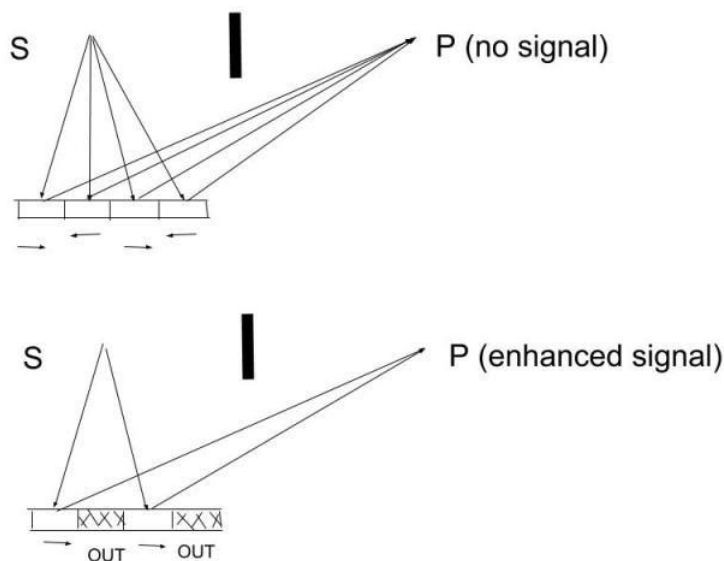
- Due to different distances of travel, the time taken for each path varies as shown in the middle figure, and correspondingly the phase varies as shown below that. The final amplitude is given by adding those arrows, and is indicated at the bottom of the figure.

4. Just like in adding the contributions from two “waves”, adding the contributions from “wave functions” requires one to take into account the difference in phase angle. Feynman has described this in simple terms, how to add contributions due to many wave functions using vector addition (see pp. 24-35).

- It is evident that the major contribution to the final arrow’s length is made by arrows E through I (from the central part of the mirror), whose directions are nearly the same because the timing of their paths is nearly the same. **This also happens to be where the total time is the least indicated by the heavy arrow, which is the expected path from the law of reflection.**
- The law of reflection, that we learn at high school, is a simple rule that works. But actually reflections from **each point in the mirror** contribute to the signal at P. It is just that most of those contributions cancel out (as shown by the bottom part of the above figure).

5. **To prove that even the edge of the mirror does contribute to the signal at P**, we chop off most of the mirror, leaving only the sections A, B, C on the left. From the above figure, if we add the three arrows due to those three sections, they nearly cancel out. This is why we do not see significant contributions from parts of the away from the center.

- If we now divide that section (of A,B,C in the above figure) into **four equal sections**, they of course again cancel out as shown in the top section of the figure below.



- **But if we now carefully scrape two alternating sections of those four sections (as shown in the bottom figure), then the signals due to the two reflecting sections add up to give an intense signal;** see the bottom part of the above figure.

6. This conclusively proves that during normal reflection, parts of the mirror away from the center also contribute to the signal. It is just that most of that signal is cancelled out. Thus, for all practical purposes, it is sufficient to just take the reflection from the center part of the mirror (i.e., to use the law of reflection in geometrical optics).

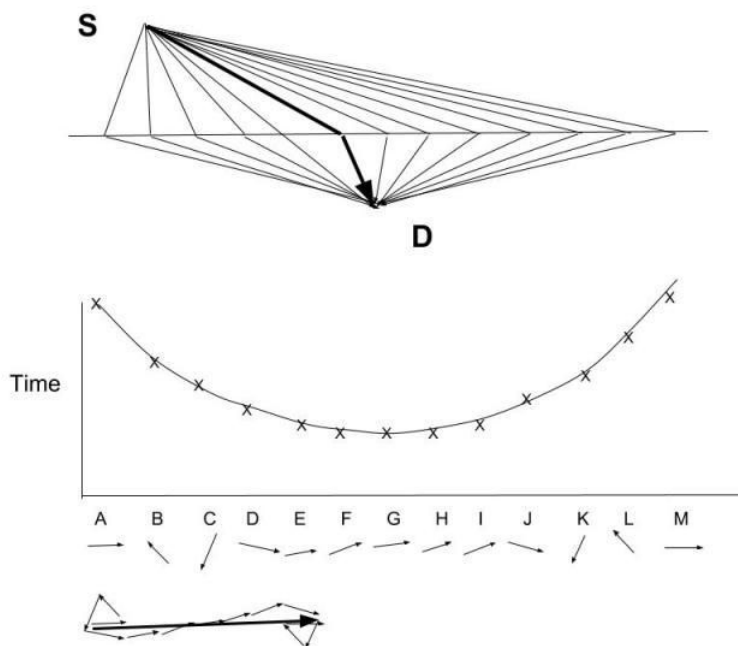
- However, If only the arrows in a particular direction are kept, while the others in opposite direction are removed (by etching the mirror in those places), then a substantial amount of light reflects from a piece of mirror located away from the center, as shown in #5 above.
- **That modified section of the mirror is of course now a diffraction grating.**

7. Feynman discusses several examples in his book, but let us discuss just one more example to illustrate the point that this method is consistent with the Principle of Causation.

- **Here we consider the case of refraction, which had led to causal issues with the “photon as a particle” idea of Newton and Fermat.**
- Those who are really interested can read in detail the historical evolution of ideas from Newton through Fermat to Feynman, in the book by Ivar Ekeland (see References below).

8. Figure below shows the refraction of light from a source (S) in the air to a detector (D) placed in water. As in the case of the mirror, we consider all possible paths from S to D, and map out the time taken for a photon to reach point D via “different sections” of the water surface.

- The observation of light taking the “time of least time” to reach a detector in the water by changing its path (called “refraction”) was explained by Fermat back in 1657, by taking into the account that light travels slower in water than in air; we will discuss this in the next post, “Exploring All Possible Paths” Leads to Fermat’s Principle of Least Time”.
- However, until Feynman came up with his method of “a particle exploring all possible paths”, this phenomenon could not be explained within the “particle picture”.



- Once again, most paths away from the optimum path are CANCELLED OUT. The major contributions come from those paths close to the expected arrow indicated by the heavy arrow, and the Fermat’s Principle of Least Time is recovered with this “particle representation”.

9. What bothered everyone (including Feynman) about Fermat’s idea is that it seemed to require agency. How could light *choose* a path? How could it possibly *know* which path was the fastest?

Here’s how Feynman puts it (Feynman Lectures, Vol. 1, Chapter 26):

“The principle of least time is a completely different philosophical principle about the way nature works. Instead of saying it is a causal thing, that when we do one thing, something else happens, and so on, it says this: we set up the situation, and light decides which is the shortest time, or the extreme one, and chooses that path. But what does it do, how does it find out? Does it smell the nearby paths, and check them against each other? The answer is, yes, it does, in a way.”

- **The explanation is that Feynman method works because the Nature is nonlocal.** We will discuss this in detail in future posts.
- A link to Feynman Lectures is given in the References.

An Electron Will Also Explore All Possible Paths

As Feynman pointed out, everything we have discussed so far can be applied to the propagation and detection of electrons: Electrons also “explore all possible paths”, and these paths are determined by the experimental configuration.

- If the experimental configuration changes, those paths reconfigure instantaneously. Of course, quantum electrodynamics (QED) incorporates the possible trajectories of both electrons and photons.
- It is amazing to realize that physicists used Feynman’s version of QED for 70 years without realizing that the same needs to be applied to quantum phenomena like the “double-slit experiment”.

Conclusion

The key philosophical problem that existed for Newton to Fermat to Feynman with their “particle representation of light” was to explain how a photon would know in advance how to determine the path of least time.

- But that problem goes away when we realize that a photon (or any particle) takes into account “all possible paths” **dictated by the nonlocality of Nature.**
- We will discuss the nonlocality in detail in upcoming posts. I just wanted to provide the experimental evidence from the work of Professor Feynman first.

Any questions on these QM posts can be discussed at the discussion forum: “[Quantum Mechanics – A New Interpretation](#)”.

References

I. Ekeland, “The Best of All Possible Worlds: Mathematics and Destiny”, (University of Chicago Press, 2006).

R. P. Feynman, “QED: The Strange Theory of Light and Matter” (Princeton University Press, 1985).

[WebLink: The Feynman Lectures on Physics, Volume I](#)

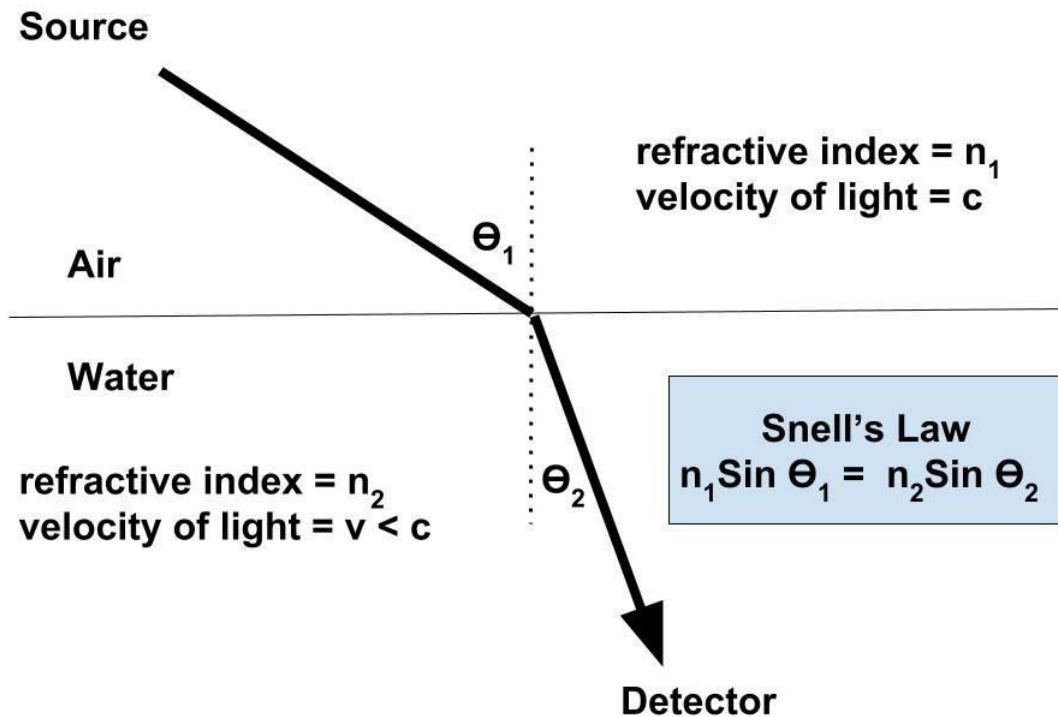
[WebLink: The Feynman Lectures on Physics, Volume II](#)

[WebLink: The Feynman Lectures on Physics, Volume III](#)

19.3.3. ³ “Exploring All Possible Paths” Leads to Fermat’s Principle of Least Time

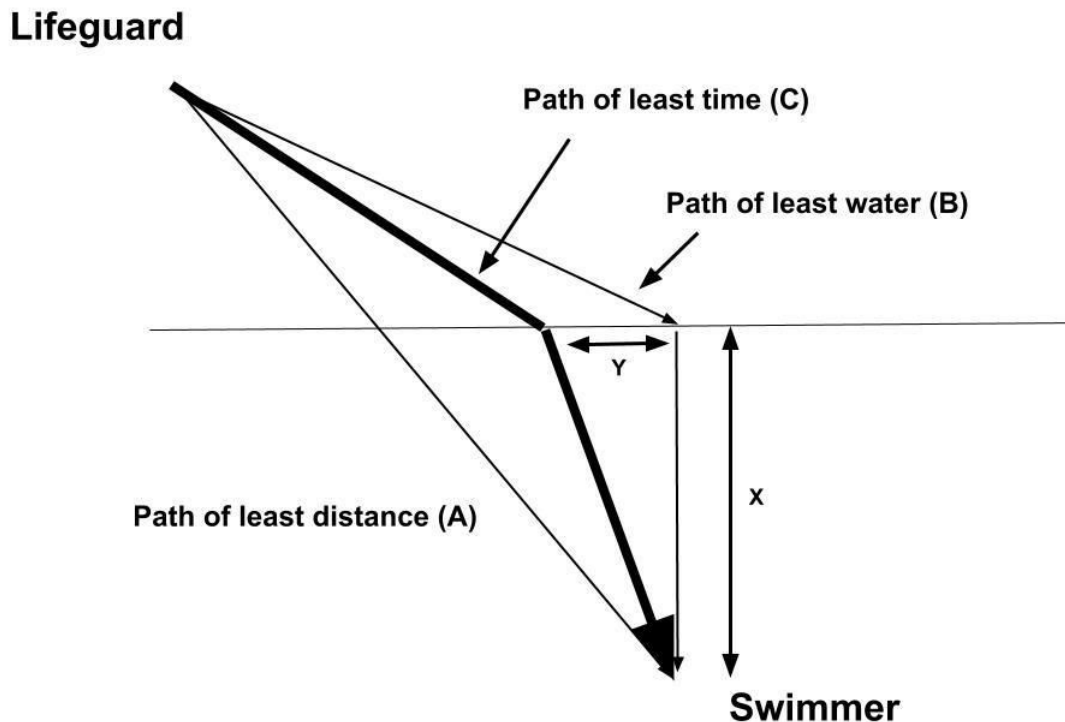
April 1, 2018

1. In 1657 the French lawyer and mathematician Pierre De Fermat (behind Fermat’s Last Theorem) worked out that when light travels from one place to another, it always takes the path of least time. The path of a ray of light going from air to water is shown below.



- There's a formula called Snell's law (shown in the figure) that correctly predicts the exact angle by which the light bends, depending on the materials it's traveling through and the angle at which it hits the surface.
- This observation of light taking the "time of least time" to reach a detector in the water by changing its path (called "refraction") was explained by Fermat by taking into the account that light travels slower in water than in air.
- But the question of WHY it does that (and how a photon would know there is an interface) has not been answered up to now. **As we saw in the post, "Feynman's Method of [A Particle Exploring All Possible Paths](#)", wave theory of light cannot explain it.**
- As we also saw in that post, Feynman came up with a technique called "a photon exploring all possible paths", but admitted that he did not know WHY it worked. In future posts, we will show that it is due to the nonlocality of Nature and the instantaneous establishment of quantum fields for "all possible paths" for the photon.

2. In fact, this is exactly the same procedure followed by a lifeguard (instinctively) in reaching a drowning swimmer in water. The situation is shown in the figure below.



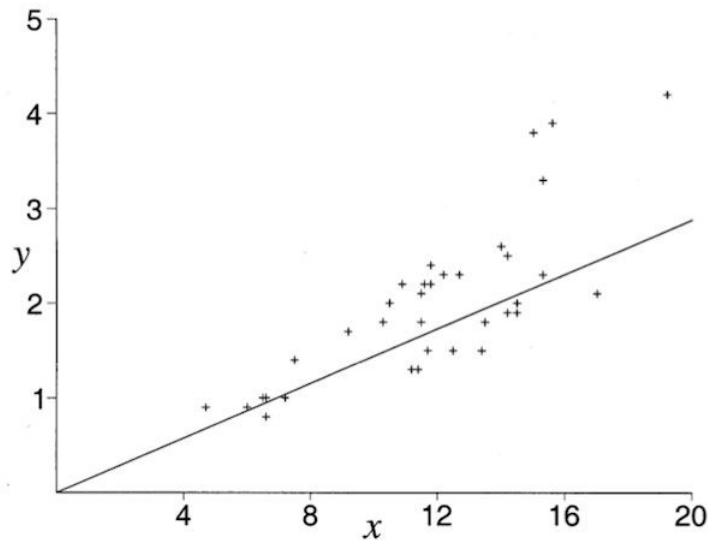
3. When we look at the above figure, at the first glance one may wonder whether a straight line (path A) is the fastest path. This is indeed the shortest one, but it isn't the quickest. This is because one can run faster along the beach, and cover more distance on land than in water.

- However, if one runs on path B, make the distance in water to be minimum, that is not the quickest either. This route is too long, and it slows you down.
- The quickest path is C, a very specific path that lies somewhere between A and B, where the lifeguard jumps in at a distance x before the shortest path in water.
- **Of course, a lifeguard would not even think about all this. He/she would just instinctively choose a path that turns out to be close to this optimum path C.**

4. I have not come across anyone doing an experiment on lifeguards, and seeing how close they get to the "optimum path". But I came across a paper by a math professor who did an experiment on his dog fetching a ball thrown into Lake Michigan.

- He found out that his dog's path (over many measurements) came close to the "optimum path" predicted by Snell's law: "[WebLink: Do Dogs Know Calculus- Pennings-2003](#)".

5. After collecting 35 data points (the x and y values in the figure above, in meters), Professor Pennings plotted them. Along with these data points, he also plotted the optimal trajectory predicted by the Snell's law, shown by the straight line below (figure from the above paper).



- **Therefore, just like a photon “would know” how to take the “path of least time”, a dog would too!**

6. Even more interestingly, even ants seem to be able to find the “optimum path” that takes least time to get to their food.

- A group of researchers used a glass surface and a rough green felt surface — analogous to air and water or sand and water in above cases – to separate a colony of ants and some food they placed some distance in to the rough green felt surface.
- They found that the ant trails were far closer to the quickest path than to the direct path. Like light and lifeguards, these ants seemed to minimize time and not distance. The following figure showing the trail of the ants is from their paper: “[WebLink: Fermat’s Principle of Least Time Predicts Refraction of Ant Trails at Substrate Borders](#)”.



Conclusion

The key philosophical problem that existed for Newton to Fermat to Feynman with their “particle representation of light” was to explain “how a photon would know” in advance how to determine the path of least time; see, the book by Ivar Ekeland in the References.

- But that problem goes away when we realize that a photon (or any particle) takes into account “all possible paths” instantaneously due to the nonlocality of Nature. That is the basis of our new interpretation of quantum mechanics. We will discuss this in detail in upcoming posts.
- Even more interestingly, the observations of humans, dogs, and ants also taking the “path of least time” just instinctively, illustrate that this is how Nature works. **Even living beings are guided by this “nonlocality of Nature”.** This is a good example to show that there is so much that we DO NOT KNOW about how Nature works.
- This is closely related to how *kamma vipaka* are AUTOMATICALLY executed by Nature. That will become more clear as we proceed.

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XX About Author

Revised March 9, 2017

My name is Lal Ariyaratna Pinnaduwa. I loved physics from the school days and became a physicist. I was a Senior Scientist at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and a Research Professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I was elected a Fellow of the American Physical Society in 2004. Since retiring in 2009 at age 55, I have been on a quest to uncover the pure Dhamma of the Buddha. Even though I am a Buddhist by birth, I did not really “practice” until I retired. Initially it was just to find out what “Buddhism” really was, and how it compared with other world religions.

- I provided the above description in keeping with my intention to be fully open, and also to make the website “as experienced” by myself; I will specifically mention what I have not experienced as such. I intend to record my progress in these web pages as much as advisable (not everybody will have the same kind of experiences related to *samādhi*, *jhāna*, or *magga phala*).
- What I have found in my quest that began in 2009 is that Buddha Dhamma is really different from not only other religions, but also many forms of “Buddhism” that we have today, and that even the Theravāda version has been contaminated by other religious and cultural influences.

In July 2013, I accidentally came to know about new interpretations of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* (true nature of existence). It was “the main missing piece” that I had been looking for. I will never forget the ecstatic feeling while listening to that fateful *desanā* from one Thero on July 30, 2013 on the internet. I made a trip to Sri Lanka and was able to get more information, even though I was not able to meet Venerable Waharaka Abhayaratanalankara Thero who had uncovered the true teachings. What I present here is this complete picture, with my own input from my science background.

- Waharaka Thero passed away on February 9, 2017; see, “[Parinibbāna of Waharaka Thero](#)“. His recorded *desanas* have been organized into a website, which can be found in that post. Unfortunately, those *desanas* are available only in Sinhala language.
- As in science, here I am going to treat Buddha Dhamma as a theory and explore whether it provides a consistent picture of our world. Buddha Dhamma is a complete worldview and its principles are the laws of Nature. Scientists have uncovered only a fraction of these laws, and only those pertaining to matter. But mind precedes matter.

My only hope is that I can give you a taste of the exhilarating experience that I have enjoyed over the past several years in uncovering the pure Dhamma. Buddha Dhamma is indeed for those who seek to broaden their horizons. You will truly gain benefit from this site if you leave behind any pre-conceived ideas about “Buddhism”.

- Above all, I wanted to convey the truth of the fact that one CAN experience the “cooling down” or “*Nivana*” or “*Nibbāna*” at various levels as one LEARNS AND LIVES the pure Dhamma. This is not something to be attained in future lives, but is something that one CAN experience in this very life by cleansing one’s own mind. What I describe here is mostly what I have experienced.
- **11/7/14 update:** When I was struggling to find the pure Dhamma, I made a promise to myself that if I ever experience any real progress I will be open about it. Most people do not like to talk about their “spiritual experiences” and that is understandable. But I think it could be beneficial to others if I describe my progress to get an idea of what to expect; a brief description of my progress is given in, “[10. Attaining the Sotāpanna Stage via Removing Ditthasava](#)” and the posts mentioned there. This will also provide a context for the material presented at this website. Please be aware that each person’s experience is different.
- Please post your questions on anything that is not clear or inconsistent using the comments tab under each post. I have a filter setup so that I will receive only those comments that have a return e-mail address. My hotmail account (lal54@hotmail.com) puts emails from unknown addresses to the junk folder most of the time. It is better to make comments under the relevant

web page, in the “Leave a Reply” box. You can address me as “Lal” or simply write your message.

- Buddha Dhamma is a totally self-consistent description of the Nature’s laws, and if there are any inconsistencies in these pages, they are due to my own mistakes and I should be able to correct them. I do revise these posts on a continuing basis as my own understanding improves.

The Buddha said, “*Sabba danan Dhamma danan jinati*”, or “Gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts”. Please inform others about this site if you benefit from it.

July 25, 2016: There are around 400 posts at the site as of today. There are two ways to find relevant posts on a given concept/ topic.

- All posts are categorized under sections and subsections at “[Pure Dhamma – Sitemap](#)“. One could scan through it to locate relevant posts.
- The “Search” button at top right is also good at extracting relevant posts for a given key word or key words.
- If you have not heard back within a day or two from me in response to your comment under a post, that means you have not entered your email address correctly. You could write directly to me (lal54@hotmail.com), but keep in mind that sometimes Hotmail sends messages from unknown senders to the junk folder.

XXI Sitemap

December 25, 2015

The sitemap is updated every time a new post is added. Therefore, it is up-to-date.

This is an auto-generated Table of Contents, and the posts are listed in an alphabetical order. Therefore, they may not be in the same order as in the top Menu.

- The top menu is better if one is trying to follow the posts in a given section in the order of complexity.
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