

Anattalakkhana Sutta **The Teaching of Non-Self**

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Editor's Words

The original translation can be downloaded from our Digital Library section.

I have taken out and translated most of the Pali words into English as well as rendering the sentences for better understanding. This is the abridged version of the original book, and the original book should also be studied extensively if one cannot gain insight from the abridged version.

The editing process of this book is far more beyond done, but hopefully the current version will not obstruct the readers too much on the side of English grammar and the little mixture between "English" and "American" words such as "practise" and "practice."

Introduction

"At that time, when the Blessed One was staying in the deer sanctuary in the township of Varanasi, the Blessed One addressed the group of five bhikkhus, 'Oh, Bhikkhus' and the group of five Bhikkhus answered, 'Revered Sir.' Then the Blessed One taught the Dhamma which is presently to be recited."

This is the introduction given by the Venerable Ananda in response to the question asked by the Venerable Maha Kassapa. The Buddha's words in the first part of the *Anattalakkhana Sutta*.

"Bhikkhus, *rupa*, the material body is not self; soul, or a living entity."

People in general think that they and others are living entities with a soul, self, or ego. What is taken to be a soul is called *Atta* in Pali, which is derived from the Sanskrit expression *Atman*.

This

Atta

is also known as

Jiva

, life; thus

Atta

conveys the concept of life, soul or living entity. Holding the view that there exists a soul or a living entity in man is known as misconception of self or wrong belief of Self,

Attaditthi

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Ordinary common worldling cannot be said to be freed from this wrong belief of Self. The only difference from person to person with regard to this wrong belief lies in whether it is firmly hold or manifested plainly by each individual. In a person who has become accomplished in the knowledge of mental and physical phenomena (*rupa, nama*), this belief in Self may be considerably attenuated; but it cannot be said that he is completely devoid of the notion of self. He is still liable to misconceive that it is the soul or self in him that is the thinker of his thoughts, the doer of his actions, the speaker of his words, and the feeler of the pleasant sensations.

In order to remove this misconception of Self and make it clear that there is no such thing as soul or living entity in one's own body and mind, the Blessed One began the discourse with the pronouncement,

"Bhikkhus, *rupa*, the material body is not self, soul, or living entity."

Material Body

What is *rupa*, the material body which is wrongly conceived and held as self? The following material qualities form the foundation of a material body. They are the sensitive part of the eye which enables one to see objects, the sensitive part of the ear which enables one to hear sounds, the sensitive part of the nose which enables one to smell odours, the sensitive part of the tongue which enables one to sample the taste, the sensitive part of the body to feel the touch, the material quality of base, that is, the seat of consciousness, and the material quality of the life principle or vital force.

If we consider carefully we can see that eye consciousness arises because of the sensitive material quality of the eye, and from eye consciousness comes the concept of a living entity of self. Similarly, it can be understood that it is because of sensitive material qualities of the ear, nose, tongue, and body, we have the consciousness of hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching.

The material quality of base, which acts as the seat of consciousness is responsible for thoughts and thinking results in the notion of self or living entity. The material quality of the life principle is the vital force which vivifies all material bodies and preserves them from decay and decomposition. This life principle, which is just a material quality, is wrongly believed to be a soul or a living entity. In the absence of the sensitive material qualities such as the sensitive part of the eye, etc., there is no such thing as soul or living entity.

For instance, consider a wooden figure of a man which resembles a living person in appearance, but is devoid of the sensitive material qualities of the sense organs that can give rise to different cognitions. Consequently such a wooden figure etc., is never mistaken for a living being with a soul or a living entity. There arises also no notion of a soul or a living entity with respect to the body of the person who has just died, the reason is that there is no longer any sensitive material qualities such as the sensitive part of the eye etc., in that body. So long

as the sensitive qualities such as the sensitive part of the eye etc., exist, other material body elements which are their co-adjuncts and concomitant with them are also wrongly conceived as self or living entities. Material bodies such as sight, sound, odour etc., which are concomitant with the sensitive material qualities of the eye, etc., are misconceived as soul or living entities when seen, heard, smelt, etc. In short, the whole material body which is co-existing with the eye, etc., is regarded to be a living entity. In common parlance, too, the whole body which is compounded of the material qualities is spoken of as self, soul or a living entity.

The usage in the daily life of expressions such as self or a living entity is not utterance of falsehood but conforming to the convention of the world. From the point of view from the ultimate and absolute reality, all the material substances of the whole body are not in reality self, individual, or a being, but only the aggregates or matter or material qualities. Therefore, the Blessed One had pronounced definitely and explicitly that "although individuals view the aggregates of material qualities as a living being or a living entity, but in reality, it is not self, soul, or a living entity. It is merely a physical phenomena." But exponents of the doctrine of Self, who hold that the material substance in their body is self are bound to come up with the question, 'Why is it not self?' Therefore, the Blessed One had also provided an explanation that why it is not self in the following manner. **REASONS SHOWING WHY MATERIAL BODY IS NOT SELF)**

"Bhikkhus, if the body were self, the inner core of one's own body, the body would not tend to affliction or distress. And one should be able to say of the body, 'Let the body be thus (in the best of conditions); let the body not be thus (in the worst of conditions).' It should be possible to influence the body in this manner."

HOW THE BODY INFLICTS SUFFERING

"Were material body the inner core, or self, it should not cause suffering."

But actually the body is imposing suffering in this manner, it does not remain youthful and vigorous, it distresses by growing old and by decaying, and it distresses by dying. Without the body, one would be free from afflictions of getting grey hairs, fallen teeth, bent hunch back, deafness, poor eye-sight, and wrinkled skin infirmity. The body is therefore inflicting these sufferings. Again, because of the body, one is troubled with sore-eye, earache, tooth-ache, back-ache, flatulence, feeling hot, cold, painful, itching, diseases of blood, skin, stomach, urine or with high blood pressure, etc. These ailments arise because of the body through which they make their manifestations. We suffer from hunger and thirst because of the body, and because of it, we are subjected to be attacked by mosquitoes, insects, or afflictions by other oppressors. Suffering in the states of miseries and woes are also due to the body.

In short, one suffers from all these various ailments and afflictions because of the existence of the body. It is, therefore, the body whose function is to bring about distress and impose suffering. In addition, the body is responsible for the phenomenon of death in the human existence. When the material qualities in the body undergo deterioration and decay, death occurs. Therefore it may be said that the body inflicts suffering by causing death. Thus we can reflect that if the body were self, it would not inflict us with sufferings of old age, disease, and death. One usually causes sufferings to others, but not on oneself.

Therefore, if the body were self or the inner core, it should not inflict suffering on itself by bringing about old age, etc. Furthermore, even before the onset of old age, disease, and death, the body is subjecting to various distresses. A young person, although he is free from ailments and enjoys good health, cannot remain long in any of the body postures such as sitting, standing, or walking. He has to change his postures quite often. It is within the experience of all of us that we cannot remain for as long as we wish in any body posture. We find it difficult to remain seated for half an hour or one hour without changing the posture or lie down for two or three hours. Constant changing of postures is necessitated by feelings of hotness or tiredness in the limbs after a certain amount of time in one position. All these distresses arise because of the body. In other words, it is the body that is inflicting these distresses.

Thus one may reflect that if the body were self, it would not impose these sufferings on one. **THE BODY IS NOT SUBJECT TO ONE'S WILL**

Furthermore, it is stated,

"If the body were self, the inner core, it should be possible to say of the body, 'let the body be thus (in the best of conditions), let the body not be thus (in the worst of conditions).'"

Truly, one should be able to exercise one's will on the body if it were one's self. All beings desire to have their material body youthful and healthy in appearance, and to keep it away from old age, illness, and deterioration resulting in death. But the material body is never obliging, it refuses to be subject to one's will. Its fresh youthfulness fades into aged debility and its robust health declines against one's will, resulting in illness, disease, and finally in dissolution and death. Thus the body is not amenable to one's control and not manageable according to one's wish.

The Blessed One pointed out, therefore, that the body is not one's self or the inner core of one's body. Let us briefly restate the meaning of the Pali passage quoted above:

"Bhikkhus, the body is not self; if it were self, it would not inflict suffering. And it should be possible to say of the body, 'Let the body be thus (in the best of conditions), let the body not be thus (in the worst of conditions). If the body were self, the inner core, there would be no infliction of suffering on oneself, and it should be possible to subject it to one's will.

The fact of the matter is that the body is not self or one's inner core. Hence, it inflicts suffering on one and refuses to be controlled. The Blessed One continued to further explain this fact. **DI RECT EVIDENCE OF HOW THE BODY IS NOT SELF**

It is not possible to influence and manage the the body. In reality, the body is not self or one's inner core. Hence, the body oppresses with old age, disease, etc. Furthermore, it is not amenable to one's management and control. To reiterate, in reality the body is not self or one's inner core. Since it is not self, this the body tends to affliction and distress. It is not possible to manage and control the body by instructing, 'Let it be thus (in the best of conditions), let it not be thus (in the worst of conditions).'

Belief in Creation

ORIGIN OF THE BELIEF IN CREATION

After the previous world has perished away, there was a time when a new world began to evolve. The first Brahma who made his appearance with this thought and believed thus:

"I am a Brahma, a great Brahma, a conqueror invincible by anyone, who can see everything, almighty to have every wish fulfilled, a Lord, a maker, a creator, the noblest of all, and one who assigns to each of his station. Accomplished in attainments, the father of all the past and the future beings."

The Brahmas who had made their appearance later in the realm of the Brahmas also thought and believed likewise. Of those Brahmas, who had passed away from the realm of Brahmas to be reborn in the human world, there were some who could recall their past existence in the Brahma land. These persons boldly announced that,

"The great Brahma created the beings in the world. The Creator himself, the Great Brahma, is permanent, eternal; the creatures he has created, however, do not last permanently; they die and pass away."

These bold announcements from their personal experience were believed and accepted by those who heard their teachings. The Blessed One explained that this was how the notion of 'only the creators who first created things are permanent, eternal,' originated. From the Pali Canon we have just quoted, one can surmise that the so-called God who is said to have created the beings and the God who is said to be in the Heavenly abode, could be the great Brahma who first appeared in the realm of the Brahmas in the beginning of the world.

It is clear from the teachings of the Buddha that, 'The self of the great Brahma is of the same kind as the self of other beings; it is just misconceiving the continuous flux of material and mental processes as self. Actually, there is no such thing as self apart from the psycho-physical phenomena; it is mere figment of imagination.'

Furthermore, the mind-and-body of the great Brahma is just like the mind-and-body of other beings that is subject to the law of impermanence. When his lifespan is exhausted, the great Brahma also faces death and has to pass away. In reality, the great Brahma cannot have every wish of his fulfilled, he cannot maintain his body according to his wish. Therefore, the body of the great Brahma is also not self or his inner core, but is only non-self.

Attachment to Self

In general, people hold on to the belief that there is an individual soul or a living entity which lasts for the duration of the life span before one dies (This is the view held by annihilists who believe that there remains nothing after death). But the eternalists believe that the individual soul remains undestroyed after death, and lives on in other new bodies. According to the eternalists, the body of a being is made up of two parts: the gross body and the subtle body. At the end of each existence, when death ensues, the gross body gets destroyed but the subtle body departs from the old body and enter into the new body. It remains eternal and never perishes. This view of the eternalists, as described in their literature, has been reproduced in full in the sub-commentary of the *Visuddhi Magga*. We have given a detailed description of the

various beliefs in self together with origination in order to present more clearly the concept of no soul and non-self.

Among the general mass who profess themselves to be Buddhists, there are many who normally believe in the existence of a soul or a living entity, even though they have not put down their beliefs in so many words in the form of literature. They hold to the view that when life ends, a being departs via one's nose or mouth. When conception takes place in the womb of a mother, life enters through her nose, her mouth, or pierce through her abdomen. And from birth to death, it remains steadfastly in the new body. All these views relate to a belief in the existence of a soul or a living entity.

WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE MANNER OF SELF CLINGING

In reality, death is meant just the cessation of psycho-physical process, the non-arising of new mind-and-body, after the termination of death consciousness at the moment of death. There is no such thing as the departing soul or living entity. The new becoming means the arising of new consciousness at a new site together with the physical base in which it finds its support. Just before death consciousness terminates at the moment of death, it holds on to one of the objects (i.e. kammic vision). Conditioned thus by the objects (held on to) at the last moment of consciousness, a new consciousness arises at a new existence. This is called rebirth or re-linking consciousness as it forms a link between the previous and the new existence. When the re-linking consciousness passes away, it is followed by *Bhavanga* consciousness, the life continuum, which goes on continuously throughout life as prescribed by one's previous kammic energy.

When sense-objects such as sight, sound, etc., appear at the sense-doors, the life continuum consciousness is replaced for the respective moments by the eye consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc. The arising of the new consciousness in the new existence is conditioned by kamma of the past existence, and is conventionally called by common usage: migration from the old to the new existence. But in reality, there is no soul nor living entity which transmigrate from one existence to another.

WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE MANNER OF SELF CLINGING, CONCEPT OF NON-SELF CANNOT BE GRASPED THOROUGHLY

There are people who cannot grasp the concept of non-self, because they do not know about the theory of self as explained in detail above. They think it is self-clinging if someone holds on to the shape and form of objects. For instance, to recognise a tree as a tree, a stone as a stone; a house as a house, and a monastery as a monastery, is according to them, clinging to self. In their view, the fact of non-self and soulessness, are clearly grasped only when the concept of

shape and form are transcended and replaced by perception of ultimate truth. As a matter of fact, merely perceiving forms and shapes does not amount to self-clinging, neither does it mean that belief in non-self is established once shapes and forms are no longer perceived.

Recognising inanimate objects such as tree, stone, house, or monastery does not constitute a belief in non-self, and it does not amount to self-clinging. It is merely holding on to a conventional concept. It is only when sentient beings with life and consciousness such as men, deva, animals, etc., are assumed to have a soul, a living entity, or a self, it amounts to clinging to a belief in self. When one assumes oneself to be a living soul or others as living entities, then one is holding the belief in self. Brahma of the immaterial realms (*Arupa*) has no material body, and they do not perceive themselves in the conventional shapes and forms, but the ordinary worldling Brahma are not free from the perverted view of self. They believe as they do, in the existence of self or a living entity. It is only when the belief in existence of self or a living entity is discarded, and one's own body and other's body are perceived as merely psycho-physical phenomena, that knowledge of non-self arises. It is essential to develop true knowledge of non-self.

FOUR KINDS OF SELF-CLINGING

There are four kinds of self-clinging arising out of belief in self or soul.

(1) *Sami atta* clinging: Believing that there is, inside one's body, a living entity, who governs and directs every wish and action. It is this living soul which goes, stands up, sits down, sleeps, and speaks whenever it wishes to.

"Sami atta clinging is belief in a living entity in one's body, controlling and directing as it wishes."

The *Anattalakkhana Sutta* was taught by the Blessed One particularly to remove this *Sami atta* clinging. Now, as this Sutta was first taught to the group of five Bhikkhus who had become by then

Stream Enterers

, may it not be asked whether a Stream Enterer is still encumbered with self-clinging?

"Stream Enterer has abandoned self-clinging, but still holds on to conceit."

At the stage of *Sotapanna*, Stream Enterer, the fetters of personality-belief (false view of individuality), doubts and uncertainty, and adherence to rites and rituals have been completely eradicated. But a Stream Enterer is not yet free from *Asmi-mana*, the I-conceit. To take pride in one's ability and status, "I can do; I am noble," is to hold on to the I-conceit. But a Stream Winner's conceit relates only to the genuine qualities and virtues he actually possesses and is not false pride based on non-existing qualities and virtues.

The Stream Enterer has, therefore, to continue on with the practice of Vipassana in order to remove the I-conceit clinging which is still a fetter for him. When Vipassana knowledge (i.e. insight-knowledge) is considerably developed, this I-conceit becomes attenuated and is partially removed by the *Sakadagami* stage. But it is not completely abolished yet. The *Anagami* stage further weakens it, but this stage also could effect only partial removal. It is only the final *Arahatta magga* that could completely eradicate the I-conceit. Thus it could be regarded that the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* was taught by the Blessed One in order to bring about total eradication of the I-conceit clinging which was still lingering in the persons of the group of five Bhikkhus, although they had attained the stage of Stream Enterer.

(2) *Nivasi atta* clinging: Believing that there is a living entity permanently residing in one's body.

"*Nivasi atta* clinging is belief in a living entity permanently residing in one's body."

It is the common belief of people that they exist permanently as a living being from the moment of birth to the time of death. This is the *Nivasi atta* clinging. Some hold that nothing remains after death; this is the wrong view of annihilationism. Yet others believe in the wrong view of eternalism which holds that the living entity in the body remains undestroyed after death, and it continues to reside in a new body in a new existence. So long as one clings to the belief that there exists permanently a living entity or a soul, so long would one hold that one's body is amenable to one's control as one wishes. It is understood that the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* was delivered to remove not only the *Sami atta* clinging but also the *Nivasi atta* clinging. Once the

Sami atta

clinging is removed, other types of self-clinging and wrong views are simultaneously eradicated completely.

(3) *Karaka atta* clinging: Believing that it is the living entity, the soul that effects every physical, vocal, and mental action.

"*Karaka atta* clinging is belief in a living entity that is responsible for every physical, vocal and mental action."

This *Karaka atta* clinging is more concerned with the aggregate of formations. We shall deal more fully with it in the aggregate of formations.

(4) *Vedaka atta* clinging: Believing that all sensations whether pleasant or unpleasant are felt by a self.

"*Vedaka atta* clinging is belief in that all sensations whether pleasant or unpleasant are felt by the living entity or the self."

This *Vedaka atta* clinging is concerned with the aggregate of feelings which is explained fully in the Five Aggregates. The aggregate of material body is not self or a living entity, it is but non-self. It has been adequately expounded, but it still remains to explain how meditators engaged in Vipassana meditation come to perceive the nature of non-self. We shall proceed with an explanation of how it comes about.

Vipassana Meditation

Practical methods of Vipassana meditation have been elaborately described and explained in Meditation. We need not go over them in detail here; we will just give a brief description of them.

Vipassana meditation consists of contemplation on the *upadanakkhandha*, aggregates of grasping which manifest themselves at the moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking. For the novice meditator, however, it is hard to take heedful note of each and every phenomenon of seeing, hearing, etc. Therefore they have to start their practice with only a few of the most prominent objects of sensation. For instance, while sitting, the meditator can concentrate on the nature of stiffness and resistance felt in his body and note it as 'sitting, sitting.' If the meditator feels that it is too simple to do and does not require much effort to just keep on noting 'sitting, sitting,' he can combine it with noting another phenomenon like touching, and note as 'sitting, touching, sitting, touching.' But the movements of rising and falling of one's abdomen will be more prominent. Thus if one heedfully notes 'rising' as the abdomen rises, and 'falling,' as it falls, one will come to see distinctly the phenomena of stiffening, resisting, distending, relaxing, and moving which are happening inside his abdomen.

These are the characteristics, function, and proximate cause of *Vayodhatu*, the element of motion. Such contemplation and noting is in accordance with

Visuddhi Magga

, which states that "the nature of mind-and-body should be comprehended by observing its characteristics, functions, and so on." We have therefore instructed the beginners in the practice of Vipassana to start with observing the rising and falling of the abdomen, but this exercise of noting the rising and falling alone does not comprise all that has to be done in Vipassana meditation. While noting the rising and falling of the abdomen, any thought that may occur, has to be noted too. When feeling stiff, hot, cold, or painful, the meditator has to note these sensations as they arise.

When he bends or stretches his arms or legs, these movements should also be noted. As he rises from the sitting position, the change of posture should be accompanied by heedful noting. While walking, every motion involved in each step has to be noted as, 'arising, stepping forward, dropping.' If possible, all physical activities including even the opening and shutting of eye-lids should come under close observation. When there is nothing particular to take note of, meditator's attention should revert to the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. This is then the brief description of exercises involved in the practice of Vipassana meditation.

While thus occupied in taking note of rising, falling, sitting, and touching as they occur, the desire arises in the meditator to change postures in order to release the pain, the aches, and the sensation of hotness which are developing in his bended arms and legs. The meditator should take note of these wishes as they arise but should remain still, without immediately yielding to the temptation to stretch the limbs. He should put up with the discomforts as long as he can. If the desire to stretch his arms and legs arises once again, he should first take note of

them without changing posture. Only when he becomes unbearably distressed with pain and aches, he should slowly stretch out his arms and legs. At the same time note these actions carefully as 'stretching, stretching.'

During each session of meditation exercise, frequent change of posture becomes necessary due to discomforting pains and aches. With repeated adjustments of posture, the oppressive nature of the physical body becomes apparent. Despite his inclination to remain still and quietly seated without changing position for one or two hours, it becomes evident to him that he cannot remain so as he wishes. Then realization comes to him that the body which is constantly oppressing him, afflicting him, is not self, soul, or living entity, but mere physical phenomenon that is occurring in accordance with its own conditions. This realization is knowledge of contemplation of non-self.

One cannot remain very long either seated, lying down, or standing. Thus realization comes too that the body never obliges one with what one wishes, and is unmanageable. Being uncontrollable, it is not self or inner substance, but mere physical phenomenon that is occurring in accordance with its own conditions. This realization, too, is knowledge of contemplation of non-Self.

Again, being repeatedly disturbed by having to answer to the calls of nature, while engaged in meditation in sitting or lying postures, it becomes apparent that the body is oppressive, unmanageable, not amenable to one's will, and being unmanageable, it is not self. While contemplating on the behavior of the body, its true oppressive nature becomes exposed when bodily filths such as nasal mucus, saliva, phlegm, tears, sweat, etc., coze out of the body. Cleanliness cannot be maintained as one desires because of this uncontrollable nature of the body, which is therefore not self. In addition, the body oppresses by inflicting hunger, thirst, old age, and disease. These afflictions are evident even to a casual observer.

But there is likelihood of the notion of self persisting in one who observes just casually, it is only by noting heedfully that the body is exposed not to be self nor a living entity and a mere physical phenomenon which is happening incessantly can one realize that it is non-self. These are just a few examples to indicate the non-self nature of the body. The meditator who is actually taking note of all the phenomena comes to experience much more that establishes the oppressive nature of the body, and make it clear how it is not amenable to one's will and how it is not self.

Thus in the course of heedfully noting all the bodily actions such as rising, falling, sitting,

bending, stretching, and perceiving how the body afflicts one, how it is unmanageable and ungovernable, the realization arises in him through personal knowledge: "Although the body appears to be self, since it oppresses me, it is not my 'self' nor my inner core, because it is not amenable to my wish. It is not self or my inner core. I have been all along in error to take it to be my self and inner substance. It is in actuality, not self, and being unmanageable and not subject to my will."

This is the true knowledge of contemplating on non-self, and we have fairly dealt with how the nature non-self is perceived in the body.

Feelings

"Bhikkhus, *vedana*, feeling is not self."

There are three categories of feeling.

1. *Sukkha vedana* pleasurable feeling.
2. *Dukkha vedana* unpleasurable feeling.
3. *Upekkha vedana* equanimous or neutral feeling, neither pleasurable nor painful.

The equanimous or neutral feeling is generally not prominent. The pleasurable feeling and unpleasurable feelings only are commonly known and talked about. It is such a pleasure to feel the touch of a cool breeze or cold water when the weather is scorching hot, it is very comforting to be wrapped up to warm, woolen blankets during a cold spell, and one feels so easeful after one has stretched the limbs or changed positions to relieve the tired stiff limbs. All these comfortable feelings felt through contact with pleasant objects are *Sukha vedana*, pleasurable feelings, which the sentient beings assume to be self: "I feel pleasant, I feel comfortable."

Therefore they go in pursuit of such pleasurable sensations. Sufferings that arise when coming into contact with unpleasant objects, feeling hot, tired in the limbs, discomforts due to intense cold, itchiness, etc., are classified as *Dukkha vedana*, unpleasurable sensations, which are also assumed by sentient beings to be self: "I feel painful, I feel hot, I feel itchy, I feel unpleasant."

Therefore, they try to avoid contact with these unpleasant objects as much as possible, but when overtaken by disease that afflicts the body, they have to suffer the pain unavoidably. What we have just described relate to the pleasurable and unpleasurable feelings are with respect to the physical body. In addition we have to consider the feelings that arise in relation to states of mind. Thoughts on pleasant objects give rise to happiness and gladness; while thinking about things and affairs which develop dejection, despondency, defeatism, sadness, grief, timidity and so on, give rise to unhappiness. Dwelling on ordinary everyday affairs gives rise to neutral or equanimous feeling. These are the three kinds of feelings that are related to thoughts or imaginations. Whilst in such various states of mind, the sentient being assumes these feelings also to be self: "I am feeling glad, happy; I am despondent, unhappy; I am not feeling happy, not unhappy, I am just equanimous." When pleasant objects are seen, heard, smelt, or tasted pleasurable feelings arise in them. These are also regarded as self: "I feel good I feel happy." Therefore they go after the good things of life, visiting places of entertainments, etc., in order to enjoy good sights and good sounds, they use fragrant flowers and perfumes to enjoy pleasant aroma, and they go to any length and trouble to satisfy their gustatory demands. When unpleasant objects are seen, heard, smelt, or tasted, unpleasant feelings arise in them. These are also assumed to be self. They try, therefore, to have nothing to do with unpleasant objects.

The ordinary every day scene which one sees and hears. Indifferent sense objects excite neither a feeling of pleasure nor feeling of unpleasantness. This is neutral equanimous feeling which is also assumed to be self. People are never content with this medial condition of neither pleasantness nor unpleasantness. They strive hard, therefore, to attain the state of pleasantness to enjoy pleasurable feelings.

FEELING MISCONCEIVED AS SELF

Therefore, enjoyment of various sense-objects, pleasant or unpleasant, every time they are seen, heard, touched or become known, constitutes feeling. When an agreeable sensation is felt, there arises the clinging of self: "I feel pleasant." When the sensation is disagreeable, there arises the clinging of self: "I don't feel pleasant;" or "previously I have felt pleasant, but now I feel unpleasant." "When the feeling is one of indifference, self is quite pronounced too as "I feel neither pleasant nor unpleasant. I feel indifferent." This is self-clinging with respect to feeling, known as *vedaka atta*, believing that it is self or soul who enjoys the pleasant or unpleasant feelings.

Vedaka atta is belief that it is self who enjoys the pleasant or unpleasant feelings.

This is how every ordinary worldling clings onto the notion of self. In Indian literature, feeling is described as self or having the attributes of a self. In Myanmar, this notion does not seem to be so firmly held to be inscribed in writing. But all the same, there is the clinging to the belief that, on happy occasions, "It is I who enjoys pleasant things; when faced with difficult circumstances. It is I who suffers." The reason for such beliefs lies in the fact that inanimate objects such as stones or sticks do not feel the heat when coming into contact, and they do not feel cold when touched with a cold body. They feel neither happy nor sad under pleasant or unpleasant circumstances. The animate objects, the sentient beings, on the other hand, suffer or rejoice according to pleasant or unpleasant circumstances. It is assumed, therefore, that sentient beings must be endowed with an animating spirit or a living entity. It is this living entity which enjoys on moments of pleasure or suffers on occasions of distress. In reality, feeling is not self, a living entity but only a phenomenon that arises and vanishes as conditioned by circumstances. Therefore, the Buddha declared first and foremost the truth which must be firmly held: "Bhikkhus, feeling is not self," and he continued to explain the reason why feeling is not self.

WHY FEELING IS NOT SELF

"Bhikkhus, if feeling were self, the inner substance of the body, then feeling would not tend to afflict or distress. And one should be able to say of feeling, 'Let feeling be thus (always pleasant); let feeling not be thus (always unpleasant).'"

It should be possible to influence feeling in this manner as one wishes. True, if feeling were self, it should not cause distress to oneself, because it is not in the nature of things to afflict oneself, and it should be possible to manage feeling as one wishes. These should all obtain and follow from the supposition "if feeling were self." Furthermore, if feeling did not tend to afflict, and if our feelings were always pleasant as we desire and never unpleasant, we should regard feeling to be truly self. This hypothetical statement 'if feeling were self' is a form of instruction to pause and consider whether it afflicts one or not, whether feeling can be managed to be always pleasant as one desires. On careful examination, it will become very evident that feeling is almost always afflicting us and that it arises, not following one's wish but in accordance with its own conditioning circumstances.

Audience here will find it within their personal experiences that feeling afflicts them now and then. They can never have their wish fulfilled to be always enjoying good sights, good sounds, good smells, good foods, soft touch, etc. They will have discovered that unpleasant feelings outweigh pleasant ones. That one cannot have feeling as one wishes is because feeling is not self or one's inner substance. The Blessed One continued to explain why feeling is not self,

"Bhikkhus, as a matter of fact, feeling is not self. Since feeling is not self, it tends to affliction. And it is not possible to say of feeling, 'Let feeling be thus (always pleasant); let feeling not be thus (always unpleasant).'"

In reality, feeling is not self. Hence it oppresses by painful feelings and mental distresses, and it is not amenable to one's control. Being unable to keep it always pleasant and never unpleasant, the Blessed One had explained that feeling is not self or inner substance, because it ends to afflict; feeling is not self since it cannot be managed as one wishes. Although it is evident that feeling is oppressive and ungovernable, there are some people with strong attachment to wrong belief in self and intense craving believe in pleasurable sensations, cling to feeling as self and take delight in it. Careful consideration, however, will reveal that moments of joy and happiness are few compared to occasions of suffering and distress.

HOW FEELING INFLICTS SUFFERING

There has to be constant accommodations and adjusting to conditions to maintain ourselves comfortably. One suffers discomforts of feeling stiff, cramped, hot, and aching when confined to one position for long unless one makes necessary adjustments in body postures to relieve the pains. The oppressive nature of feeling is quite evident even if we consider only the case of the eye which needs constant accommodation by frequent winking and occasional blinking. Without these adjustments, tiredness in the eye will become unbearable. Other organs of the body also need similar accommodations.

Even with constant adjustments, feeling under certain circumstances, is likely to inflict severe pains and suffering which may lead to serious ailment and illness resulting even in death. Many have been incidents where the afflicted person, unable to bear the oppressions of feeling any longer, have sought the termination of their own lives by committing suicide. The physical pains and suffering just described are not inflicted entirely by feeling, the body also contributes its share of oppressions, being the original source of troubles. In the previous pages on sufferings caused by the body we have described different types of feelings which may be regarded as afflictions brought about by the body also.

Mental distresses and suffering on the other hand are afflictions caused solely by feeling without the aid of the body. At death of one's dear ones such as parents, husbands, wives, sons, and daughters, feeling inflicts sorrow, grief, and lamentations on the bereaved ones. Likewise, there is intense mental suffering, which may even result in death, on loss of wealth and property too. Frustration and discontent owing to one's failure to solve life's problems, separation from one's

associates and friends, and unfulfilled hopes and desires are other forms of oppressions inflicted by feeling.

Even pleasant feeling, the pleasurable sensations which are very comforting by giving happiness while they last, prove to be a source of distress later on. When they disappear after their momentary manifestation, one is left with a wistful memory and yearning for them. One has, therefore, to be constantly endeavouring in order to maintain the pleasant happy state. Thus people go in pursuit of pleasant states even risking their lives. If they happen to use illegal and immoral means in such pursuits, retribution is bound to overtake them either in this life time or in the states of woe. Thus apparently pleasant sensations also inflict pain and distress.

Equanimous feeling, like pleasant feeling, affords comfort and happiness. And like pleasant feeling, it requires constant effort to maintain its state, which of course entails cumbersome trouble and burden. Both pleasant feeling and equanimous feeling are not enduring being of fleeting nature, they require constant labour for their continuous arising. Such activities which involve continuous striving, constitute suffering due to formations. This is just a brief indication of the oppressive nature of all the three kinds of feelings. If there were no feeling, feeling there would be no experiencing of pain or pleasure either physically or mentally. There would be freedom from suffering.

Take for instance a log, a post, a stone, or a lump of earth. Having no feeling they do not suffer in any way. Even when subjected to hacking, beating, crushing, and burning, they remain unaffected. The continuum of mind-and body which are associated with feeling is, however, afflicted with suffering in many ways. Thus it is plain that feeling is not self, the inner substance.

FEELING IS UNMANAGEABLE

Feeling is unmanageable and not amenable to one's will. Just consider the fact that we cannot manage things as we wish so we may see and hear only what is pleasant only. Even when with great effort and labour, we select and pick out only what is most desirable to see, hear, taste, or smell, these objects are not enduring. We can enjoy them only for a short while before they vanish. Thus we cannot manage as we wish and maintain a state in which pleasant and desirable things will not disappear but remain permanently. When pleasant objects of sights, etc., vanish, they are replaced by undesirable objects of sight, etc., which of course, causes suffering. Unpleasant sounds are more oppressive than unpleasant sight, undesirable smell is worse than undesirable sound, and undesirable taste is far worse still.

Further, toxic substances when taken internally may cause even death. The worst of all is the unpleasant sense of touch. When pricked by thorns, injured by a fall, wounded by weapons, scorched by fire, and afflicted by disease, the suffering which ensues is always very painful. It may be so intense as to cause clamorous outbursts of wailing and results even in death. These are instances of unpleasant feelings which cannot be commended not to happen. That which is unmanageable is surely not self. Feeling is thus not self, and it is not proper to cling to it believing it to be self either. What we have so far described relate only to feelings experienced in the human world.

The feelings of the four netherworlds are far more excruciating. Animals such as cattles, buffaloes, poultry, pigs, etc., have to face tormenting troubles almost all the time with no one to assist them or guard them against these afflictions. The ghosts have to suffer more than the animals, but the denizens of hell such as the Niraya states suffer the most. We cannot afford to remain smug with the thought these four netherworlds have nothing to do with us. Unless we have attained the stage of the Noble Ones, there is always the possibility that we may have to face the sufferings in the lower worlds.

Thus as feeling tends to affliction in every existence, it cannot be regarded as self or inner core of an individual. And it is not possible to manage as one wishes so that unpleasant feelings should not arise, undesirable feelings arise inevitably in their own accord. Mental distresses which we do not wish to arise, make their appearance all the same which all go to prove the uncontrollable nature of feeling. Each being has to contend with feelings which cannot be managed as one wishes, and hence cannot be self or one's own inner substance. To reiterate:

"Bhikkhus, feeling is not Self (not one's inner substance); If feeling were self, then feeling would not tend to afflict or distress. And it should be possible to say of feeling, 'Let feeling be thus (always pleasant); let feeling not be Thus (always unpleasant).'"

In reality, feeling is not self or one's inner substance. Therefore it tends to afflict or distress, and it is not possible to say of feeling: "Let feeling be thus (always pleasant); Let feeling not be thus (always unpleasant)." As stated in this canonical text that the feeling which is felt in one's own body tends to afflict and is not amenable to control. Hence it is very clear that feeling is not self or one's own inner substance. Nevertheless, ordinary common worldling clings to the belief: "It is I who suffers after experiencing happiness; it is I who enjoys as circumstances favour, after going through distresses."

Clinging to belief of self is not easy to be eradicated completely. This wrong belief in self with respect to feeling is abandoned only through personal realization of the true nature of feeling. This realization can be brought about by contemplation on feeling in accordance with the *Satipatthana Vipassana* practice, otherwise the *Middle Way*, as instructed by the Blessed One.

In Vipassana Practice

We will now deal with how this self-clinging can be discarded by contemplation on feeling. A brief description of Vipassana meditation has been given in the previous part of these articles. The meditator who keeps noting rising, falling, sitting etc., as described therein will come to notice in time uncomfortable sensations of pain, stiffness, hotness, etc., arise in him. He has to concentrate on these various feeling as they arise by noting 'pain, pain, stiffness, stiffness, hot hot,' etc.

During the initial period when concentration is not yet strong, these distressing sensations may get more and more intensified. But the meditator has to put up with the pains and discomforts as long as possible and keeps on noting the various sensations as they arise. As his concentration gets strengthened, the discomforting pains will gradually lose their intensity and begin to perish away. With very deep concentration they will vanish as if removed by hand even while they are being noted. These feelings may never come back again to trouble the meditator.

But prior to advent of strong concentration, the meditator will find the painful sensation in one place disappear only to rise in another form of distressing feeling at another site. When this new sensation is heedfully noted, it vanishes away to be in turn replaced by another form of sensation in yet another place. When the distressing feelings have been observed for a considerable time to be repeatedly appearing and vanishing in this way, personal realization comes to the meditator that "feeling is always oppressive. Unpleasant feelings cannot be managed not to arise; it is uncontrollable. Pleasant as well as unpleasant feelings are not self, not one's inner substance. It is non-self."

This is the true knowledge of contemplation on non-self. The meditator who has observed the vanishing of feelings in the course of contemplation recalls the oppressive nature of feeling while it lasted. He knows that feeling has disappeared not because of his wishing nor in obedience to his command to do so, but as a result of necessary conditions brought about by concentrated mental power. It is truly ungovernable.

Thus the meditator realizes that feeling, whether pleasant or painful is a natural process, arising out of its own accord. It is not self or inner substance, but it is non-self. Furthermore, the incessant arising and vanishing of feeling as it is being noted also establish the fact that feeling has the nature of non-self. When the meditator reaches the stage of knowledge of the rising and falling of compounded things, he notices that his meditational practice of taking note of phenomena is being accomplished with ease and comfort (unaccompanied) by pain or suffering. This is the manifestation of a specially pleasant feeling, which cannot be maintained for long however much he wishes for it.

When his concentration wanes and becomes weakened, the very pleasant feeling vanishes and may not arise again in spite of his yearning for it. Then it dawns upon him that feeling is not subjected to one's will and is ungovernable. Hence it is not self or the inner substance. The meditator then realizes through personal experience the non-self nature of feeling. He also vividly sees the non-self nature of feeling because of its dissolution on each occasion of noting. In the initial stages of meditation the meditator suffers from physical pain of stiffness, itching, or feeling hot. Occasionally, he suffers also mental distresses of disappointment, dejection, fear, or repugnance. He should keep on noting these unpleasant feelings. He will come to know that while these unpleasant feelings are manifesting themselves, pleasant, good sensations do not arise. On some occasions, however, the meditator experiences in the course of meditation very pleasant sensation both physical and mental, arising in him.

For instance, when he think of happy incidents, happening feelings are evolved. He should keep on noting their pleasant feelings as they arise. He will come to know then that while pleasant feelings are manifesting themselves, unpleasant sensations do not arise. On the whole, however, the meditator is mostly engaged in noting the origination and dissolution of ordinary physical and mental processes such as the rising and falling of the abdomen which excite neither painful nor pleasurable sensations. The meditator notes these occasions when neutral feeling only is evident. He knows therefore, that when the equanimous feeling arises, both painful feeling and pleasurable feelings are absent.

With this personal knowledge, comes the realization that feeling is that which makes a momentary appearance, and only to vanish away soon. Hence it is transitory, not self, or not ego, which is to be regarded as permanent.

Perception

Sañña, perception, is not self.

"Bhikkhus, *Sañña*, which is perception or remembering is not self."

Perception is sixfold in kinds:

1. Perception born of eye-contact.
2. Perception born of ear-contact.
3. Perception born of nosecontact.
4. Perception born of tongue-contact.
5. Perception born of body-contact.
6. Perception born of mind-contact.

People in general think that every time an object is seen, heard, touched, or known, it is 'I' who perceives and objects are perceived and remembered by 'me.' On seeing a sight, it is remembered as a man or a woman as an object perceived at such and such a time, at such a place, etc. This process of perception or remembering is wrongly held to be a personal feat as 'It is I who remembers, it is I whose memory is excellent.'

The Blessed One explained here that this view is wrong, and there is nothing individual or personal in the process of remembering: no living entity is involved, and it is just an insubstantial phenomenon and the nature of non-Self.

REASONS SHOWING THAT PERCEPTION IS NON-SELF

To continue to explain how perception is not self:

"Bhikkhus, perception is not self; if perception were self, then it would not tend to afflict and oppress, and one should be able to wish for and manage thus: 'let my perception be thus (all wholesome); let my perception be not thus (unwholesome).'"

Were perception, a living entity or one's inner substance, there is no reason for it to inflict and oppress. It is not the usual thing to cause self injury and harm, and it should be possible to manage in such a way that only good things are allowed to arise to be remembered and bad things not to arise to be remembered. But since perception is oppressing and does not yield to one's wish, it is not self.

DIRECT STATEMENT OF PERCEPTION BEING NOT SELF

"Bhikkhus, in reality, perception is not self, so it is oppressing. And no one can wish for and manage thus 'let my perception be thus (all wholesome); let my perception be not thus (unwholesome).'"

One can view perception from the angle of its good aspects. Cognition of things and objects by way of their characteristics is certainly very useful, and so is retentive memory. Remembering facts and retaining what has been acquired from learning the mundane and supramundane knowledges are good functions of perception, and they are beneficial and helpful. But mental retention or recalling to mind that which is sad, sorrowful, disgusting, horrible, etc., from the bad aspects of perception is oppressing. Some suffer from haunting memories of the departed loved ones such as sons, daughters, husbands, wives, or of financial calamities. These lingering memories bring about constant sorrow and consternation, and only when such memories fade away, one is relieved of the sufferings. Thus perception, which manifests in recognition and remembering is truly oppressing. So long as perception is bringing back memories of bereavements and financial losses, so long will sorrow and lamentation cause intense suffering which may even result in death. This is how perception oppresses by recalling to mind the sad experiences of the past. Suddenly recalling in mind during a meal time of some disgusting and repulsive object is bound to impair one's appetite.

Having seen a dead body earlier in the day, one may be disturbed in sleep at night by one's retentive memories of it. Through fanciful imaginations, some may have visualised a dangerous situation which they keep on anticipating with intense suffering for themselves. Thus perception oppresses by bringing back distressing mental objects. Hence perception is not self, but it is of the nature of non-self. Its appearance is dependent on conditions. Perception cannot be manipulated as one wishes so as to recall only those experiences which are beneficial and profitable. It is unmanageable, ungovernable, and not amenable to one's will. And because it is unmanageable and ungovernable, it is not self or a living entity, but it is mere insubstantiality and dependent on conditions and circumstances.

Perception is oppressing, unmanageable, and not subject to one's will. This is obvious, and therefore perception is not one's self, the inner core, or a living entity. But people in general find

that on recalling past experiences, conclude that, "It is 'I' who have stored these experiences in mind, it is 'I' who recalls them. It is the same 'I' who has stored them up and brought them back to mind now." They cling to the belief of self and assert that there is only one individual: the self, who stored up and recalled past experiences. This wrong belief arises because of lack of heedful notings at the moment of seeing, hearing, etc., and because of the fact that the real nature of the phenomenon is not yet known by Vipassana insight. When constant arising and ceasing of the phenomenon of seeing, hearing, etc., is seen as it truly is through Vipassana insight, then the realization dawns on the person that perception is also a natural phenomenon of constant arising and ceasing.

Here, it may be asked that in view of the impermanent nature of perception, how does recollection take place of things that were cognised and known previously? The retentive power of preceding perception is handed on and passed on to the succeeding perception. As this retentive power increases on being inherited by the succeeding generations of perception, some people become equipped with the faculty of recalling the past life. This is how the perception in the life continuum or death-consciousness of past life ceases and arises again. It is because of this handing over of retentive power by the previous perception to the succeeding perception that we can recollect both what is wholesome and pleasant as well as that which is unwholesome and unpleasant.

Without even thinking about them, the experience of days gone by may re-surface sometimes. The meditators engaged in *Satipatthana meditation* may be recalling as his concentration gets stronger, episodes which happened earlier in his life such as childhood. The meditator should dispose them off by noting them as they appear. Remorsefulness over past mistakes and faults in words and actions may lead to worry and restlessness in the course of meditation. Worry is a form of hindrance, and it should be discarded by taking note of it. Worry and restlessness may become a great hindrance deterring the progress in the development of concentration and Vipassana insight.

Thus perception which recalls past incidents producing worry and fret is oppressing. For this reason, it is not self. As explained in the previous discourse, there are four ways of clinging to self and perception is concerned with three of them: *Sami atta*, *Nivasi atta*, and *karaka atta*.

Thinking that there is self that controls over perception and remembering things as willed is *Sami atta*

clinging, which is exercising control over the process of remembering. This

Sami atta

clinging is rejected by the

Anattalakkhana Sutta

which states that it is not possible to say of perception, "Let perception be thus (all wholesome), let perception be not thus (all unwholesome). Thinking there is living self ever present in the

body, and constantly engage in the task of remembering things, is
Nivasi atta

This type of clinging can be discarded by taking note of every mental phenomenon which makes its appearance. By doing so one perceives by one's own knowledge that the remembered things keep appearing afresh and vanishing instantly. Also by taking note of the past incidents in one's life as they reappear in the mind's door, one comes to realize that there is no such thing as permanent retentive perception. There is only recurrent phenomenon renewing itself by arising and ceasing incessantly. This realization drives home the fact that there is no permanent self, or living entity residing in one's body and doing the task of remembering and recollecting. Thinking that it is I or self which is doing the action of remembering or recollection is *Karaka atta* clinging, and this may also be removed by meditative noting.

When perception takes place of every sight or sound, the meditative noting observes its arising and vanishing. When it is thus observed that perception of sight or sound arises and vanishes, there comes the realization that perception of sight and sound is merely a recurrent mental phenomenon and not the action of any abiding self or inner substance. And according to the *An attalakkhana Sutta*, it cannot be managed in such a way that only pleasant wholesome memories persist forever and that memories of unpleasant and unwholesome incidents fade away into oblivion.

Since it is thus ungovernable and uncontrollable, realization comes to the meditator that perception is not self or living entity, but it is merely a natural process dependent on conditions, and it is renewing itself incessantly and vanishing. The *Anattalakkhana Sutta* was discoursed by the Blessed One specifically for the purpose of removing the self-clinging through such personal realization of the true nature (of the five aggregates).

Here a question may arise as to what difference exists between perception at the moment of contact and heedful note-taking at the moment of occurrence. It may be said that the two are diametrically opposed to each other in the purpose of objective. Perception perceives so as to retain every thing that is seen, heard, etc., in memory so that it may be recalled. It may take in form, shape, or condition of the object observed, whereas meditative note-taking according to the *Satipatthana* method is concerned just with the passing events of the mind-and-body so as to realize the impermanent nature, unsatisfactoriness, and insubstantiality. This should be a sufficient elaboration on the aggregates of perception being not self. We shall go on to explain how the aggregate of volitional activities is not self.

Volitional Activities

"Bhikkhus, volitional activities are not self."

Here, it should be noted that volitional activities are of two kinds: Conditioned things and conditioning things. The conditioned things are those aggregates that have arisen through such causes as kamma, mind, climate (seasonal conditions), and nutriment. Immediately after the rebirth consciousness, mental and material phenomena arising as resultants of kamma spring up.

Kamma-result types of consciousness with its concomitants and parts of the physical body are all conditioned things and resultant effects of kammic activities. They are called resultant volitional activities as they are conditioned by kamma. Likewise, mind produced bodily activities and also resultant volitional activities. Physical changes involved in acts of bending, stretching, moving, going, standing, sitting, talking, and smiling are examples of such resultant volitional activities.

Being born of thoughts generated by a person, they are known as resultant volitional activities conditioned by mind. With regard to mind and its concomitants, they are both mutually conditioned and conditioning, and we have volitional activities as causal agents as well as resultants. Bodily change produced by climatic conditions are resultant volitional activities. Bodily change that arise through intake of food are resultant volitional activities conditioned by nutriment.

Finally all the succeeding mental states with all their concomitants are resultant volitional activities being dependent on the preceding mental conditions and their concomitants for their arising. All such aggregates which arise because of kamma, mind, seasonal conditions, and food are resultant volitional activities conditioned by their respective causes. This is summarised in the famous formula:

Sabbe sankhara anicca; Sabbe sankharas dukkha-- All things conditioned by respective causes are impermanent; all things conditioned by respective cause are suffering.

These are the aggregates of mind and body which manifest themselves when seeing, hearing, etc. The five groups of grasping must be realized by Vipassana insight as being impermanent, unsatisfactory, and insubstantial. The Blessed One has exhorted in the above formula that they should be seen as such.

In order to see them in such light, one must take heedful note of every arising of these aggregates as they appear. While observing them in this way and as concentration gets strengthened, one becomes aware that the aggregates are arising and vanishing incessantly. Accordance to the Commentary statement, *Hutva abhavato*, it is impermanent because it perishes after having arisen, and according to the Commentary statement, *Udayabbaya patipilato*, it is fearsome because of being oppressed by constant arising and perishing. This is the manner of contemplation conforming to the words of the Blessed One.

GOING AGAINST THE WORDS OF THE BLESSED ONE

There are people who are damaging and harming the Buddha's Dispensation by teaching in a way diametrically opposite to what the Buddha had taught. According to them, the above formula means 'All activities are suffering, and therefore there is no need to do good deeds or merits.' Hence they admonish against any kind of activity such as giving alms, keeping precepts, and practising meditation. According to them, these activities will only produce suffering, and they advise, therefore, to keep the mind as it is. Such preachments find ready acceptance by uninstructed persons and by those who are not keen to put in efforts in meditation practice. It can be seen by anyone even with a limited knowledge of the teaching that such preachments are going against the words of the Buddha. Accepting such preachments which go against the words of the Buddha amounts to the rejecting of the teaching of the Blessed One, and once the teaching is rejected, one will find oneself outside the dispensation of the Buddha, and which is a matter for serious consideration.

THE AGGREGATE OF VOLITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Of the five aggregates, the aggregate of material body has the quality of being changed or transformed by opposing circumstances. It cannot by itself bring about any action or change, but it has substantive mass, and volitional activities are manifested in the material body, which then appear to be doing the action. The aggregates of feeling are the sensations experienced, pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. It cannot effect any action productive of results, neither can the aggregate of perception which merely recognizes or remembers things, just like a clerk in a

office records his note in the notebook for future reference.

The aggregate of consciousness also just knows that a sight is seen, a sound is heard, etc. It is not capable of causing any action. It is the aggregate of volitional activities which is responsible for physical, vocal, or mental deeds such as going, standing, sitting, laying down, bending, stretching, moving, smiling, talking, thinking, seeing, hearing, etc. The wish to go, stand, sit, or sleep is expressed by the aggregate of volitional activities. All the three kinds of physical, vocal, and mental activities are instigated and organized by this aggregate.

To think that all these activities are carried out by one's self is to hold the wrong view of self in the aggregate of volitional activities, and is known as *Karaka atta* clinging. To think that this self that is doing all the activities resides all the time as a living entity in one's body is to hold the wrong view of *Nivasi atta* clinging. Thinking that this self or living entity in one's body can act according to its wishes such that its actions are subject to its will is

Sami atta

clinging. The volitional activities are held to by all these three modes of clinging. In reality, however, there is no self or living entity to cling to but merely natural processes happening according to their own conditions and circumstances. The Blessed One, therefore, taught that volitional activities are not living entities that carry out these activities. From the viewpoint of common man, there obviously exists a living entity that executes the actions of going, standing, sitting, etc. But the Blessed One refutes his belief by stating:

"Bhikkhus, were volitional activities self, the inner core, they would not inflict and it should be possible to say of volitional activities, 'Let volitional activities be thus (all wholesome); let volitional activities not be thus (unwholesome), and manageable as one wishes.'"

REASONS WHY VOLITIONAL ACTIVITIES ARE NOT SELF

These volitional activities are mental states headed by volition. There are fifty-two kinds of mental states, and besides the two states of sensation and perception, the remaining fifty mental states constitute the aggregate of mental formations. In the Sutta discourses, only the volition is enumerated as representing the volitional activities. But according to *Abhidhamma*, we have other mental formations such as attention (

manasikara

), initial application of thought (

vitakka

), sustained application (

vicara

), zest (

piti

), greed (

loba

), hate (

dasa

), delusion (

moha

), non-greed, non-hate, non-delusion, etc., that can produce kammic effects.

These fifty kinds of mental formations are responsible for all kinds of activities. It is these fifty mental formations which instigate and direct actions such as going, standing, sitting, sleeping, bending, stretching, smiling, speaking, etc. These actions are being carried out as directed and motivated by the volitional activities which also instigate and direct mental activities such as thinking, seeing-consciousness, and hearing-consciousness.

HOW VOLITIONAL ACTIVITIES OPPRESS

The Blessed One had urged us to reflect in this way: Were volitional activities that are responsible for all the actions of self or the living entity, they would not have been oppressing. Actually they are oppressing in many ways. Engaging in activities out of desire or greed, one finds oneself exhausted and distressed. Speaking something which should not be spoken, one finds oneself embarrassed. Doing things which should not be done, one gets punished for criminal offences. One burns oneself with longing desires for which one suffers loss of appetite, loss of sleep, etc. Doing evil deeds such as stealing or telling lies, one lands up in states of woe undergoing intense miseries. Likewise, volitions accompanied by hate motivates vocal actions as well as physical ones that are not wise and produce distress and suffering. Volitions accompanied by delusion, conceit, and wrong views leads one similarly to distress and suffering in the present life and in the states of woe. These are the various ways which the volitional activities oppress. Were volitional activities self, it would not be oppressive in the manner.

VOLITIONAL ACTIVITIES ARE NOT AMENABLE TO ONE'S WILL

Were volitional activities self or one's inner substance, it should be possible to arrange and organise in such a way that wholesome activities productive of beneficial results only as one wishes, and not those activities which will harm oneself. Actually it is not possible to manage their activities as one wishes. One will find oneself engaging in activities one should not do, speaking of things one should not speak of, and thinking of thoughts one should not think about. In this way it could be seen that volitional activities are not amenable to management and control and are therefore not self or one's inner core.

And the Blessed One had, to enable one to see thus, taught directly: "Bhikkhus, in reality, volitional activities are not self or one's inner core." For this reason, they tend to inflict distress. Furthermore, it is not possible to manage and say of volitional activities: 'Let volitional activities be thus (all wholesome); let it not be thus (all unwholesome).'" Volitional activities are, therefore, not self, not inner core, but they are of the nature of insubstantiality occurring in accordance with their own conditions and circumstances. These volitional activities are oppressing accordingly as described above.

Through bad companions, through defective guidance of poor teachers, and through wrong attitude of mind, one gets involved in activities which one should not do, one should not speak of, nor think about. With respect to mundane affairs, one gets engaged in blameworthy actions, illegal activities, and indulge in bad habits such as drinking, drug taking, and gambling. Also because of greed or anger, one speaks that which should not be spoken about. Such activities result in destruction of one's prosperity and punishment by legal authorities, and loss of friends and associates. From spiritual and moral standpoint, bad deeds of killing, telling lies, etc., produce bad results and lead even to miseries in woeful states. Thus volitional activities oppress by producing bad kamic effects.

HOW THE REALIZATION OF NON-SELF COMES ABOUT

For the meditators that constantly take note of the phenomena of mind-and-body, it becomes very obvious that volitional activities are not amenable to will and are unmanageable. While contemplating on the movements of the abdomen and the bodily motions, and note them as 'rising, falling, sitting, touching, etc.,' and when stiffness arises, note it as 'stiffness, stiffness,' the desire to change postures follows. This desire is nothing but mental activity headed by volition. It is volition that is giving silent instructions: 'Now, change the posture, change the posture.'

The meditator wants to continue on noting without changing position, but because of the insistent urgings of volition, he changes the posture. This is an unwanted volitional activity. Likewise, while noting the feelings of 'pain, heat, itchiness,' posture is changed as directed by the ungovernable volitional activities. Again, during the course of meditation, thoughts on sensual pleasures may appear. This is volitional activities which the meditator does not wish for. These have to be banished by incessant noting. At the same time, volitional activities may urge the meditator to go and interview someone, talk to some one, look around here or there, or to do some work.

These are all undesirable volitional activities which rise up all the same whether one likes it or not. These are instances of unmanageable and uncontrollable nature of volitional activities. They should not be welcomed but discarded by heedful noting. To think that there is a

manageable, controllable self, inner core, is *Sami atta* clinging. The meditator who takes notes of the processes of mind-and-body as they take place, notices clearly that what one desires does not happen and what is not desired is happening. In this way he can get rid of the *Sami atta* clinging. As he observes the processes of origination and dissolution taking place in quick succession, and sees that which is desired to be maintained is getting dissolved, *Sami atta* clinging is abandoned. Nothing is seen to remain stable and everything is dissolving and perishing. In this way, the *Nivasi atta* clinging which believes in permanent existence of self or inner substance can be banished, too.

Then the meditator perceives also that any events that take place arise only when various factors concerned with the event come together to fulfill the necessary conditions for its happening. Take for instance the arising of eye-consciousness. There must be the eye, the object of sight, as well as sufficient light for it to occur. Then there must be the intention to look. When there is the eye and the object of sight, clear and visible, the act of seeing is bound to ensue. Likewise when a sound is heard, only when there is ear, sound, obstructionless space, and intention or bending the mind to hear, the act of hearing will surely take place. An act of touching will take place when there is object, tactile body, bodily impression, and intention to touch. Seeing that respective resultant events of seeing, hearing, and touching take place when corresponding factors necessary for the arising of the event have come together, the meditator decides that no self or living entity is capable of causing to see, hear, or touch exists. He thus banishes the *Karaka atta* clinging which holds that there is self or living entity masterminding over seeing all kinds of activities.

In order to remove this *Karaka atta* clinging, the Blessed One had taught that volitional activities are not self or living entity. We have fairly fully dealt with the exposition on volitional activities not being self. By virtue of having given respectful attention to this discourse on the *Anattalakkhana Sutta*, may you all attain and realize soon, the Nibbana by means of the Path and Fruition as you wish.

Consciousness

"Bhikkhus, consciousness is not self."

Consciousness means eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, touch-consciousness, and mind-consciousness. These six kinds of consciousnesses are held to as self or living entity: 'It is I who sees or I see. It is I who hear or I hear.' In this way all the six cognitions of senses and six kinds of consciousnesses are attributed to one single self, I. This clinging to self is ordinarily inevitable. Those objects which are devoid of sense of cognition such as a log, a post, a lump of earth, and a stone are regarded as inanimate, and only those objects invested with faculties of cognition are regarded to be animate and living entities. Therefore, it is not surprising that eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc., are taken to be self or a living entity. But in fact, eye consciousness, ear consciousness, etc., are not self or living entities. Therefore, the Blessed One declared that consciousness is not self. He explained why it is not as follows:

"If consciousness were self, the inner substance, it would not tend to afflict. It is not usual for self to oppress self. It should also be possible to manage so as to have always wholesome states of mind and not to have unwholesome attitudes appearing."

REASON WHY CONSCIOUSNESS IS NOT SELF

But as a matter of fact, consciousness tends to afflict and is not amenable to management and control. Consequently, it is not self or the inner substance.

DIRECT STATEMENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS NOT BEING SELF

"Bhikkhus, in reality, consciousness is not self. Therefore, it tends to afflict and it is not possible to say of consciousness, 'Let consciousness be thus (always wholesome), let consciousness be not thus (unwholesome).'"

Of the fifty three kinds of mind (consciousness) and mental states (mental formations or concomitants), generally people are more acquainted with mind. Myanmar's people talk about *ci tta*, mind. They rarely speak of the concomitant such as mental states that always appear in conjunction with mind. Furthermore, they are attached to that mind as I or self: 'It is I who sees or I see. It is I who hears or I hear,' etc. Not only human beings but even devas as well as other creatures cling to the belief that consciousness is I or self. However, consciousness is definitely not self, and not being self, it tends to oppress.

HOW CONSCIOUSNESS IS OPPRESSING

Consciousness oppresses when seeing what is repulsive and horrible, hearing unpleasant

sound or unpleasant talks, smelling foul or offensive odours, tasting bad food, feeling bad sensations of touch, and thinking of depressing, sad, and horrible mental objects. All beings like to dwell only on pleasant sights, but according to circumstances, they may have to face horrible, and repulsive sights. For unfortunate people, the majority of what they see is made up of undesirable objects. This is how eye consciousness tends to oppress.

Ever wishing to hear sweet sounds and sweet words, circumstances may compel them to listen to unpleasant sounds, and stricken with misfortune, they may be subjected to dreadful noises, threats, and rebukes most of the time. This is the way ear-consciousness is oppressing. Again, all beings like to enjoy nice and clean smell, but they have to put up also with foul and fetid odours. This is how nose-consciousness oppresses. The oppressions by eye, ear, and nose consciousness are not very apparent in the human world, whereas in the animal world and the world of ghosts the oppressive nature of these consciousness are vividly seen.

Creatures in the animal world are almost constantly seeing horrible objects, hearing dreadful sounds, and those existing in filth have to smell putrid and foul odours all the time. It goes without saying that ghost will fare worse than animals. They will be all the time submerged in distress, seeing bad sights, hearing bad sounds, and smelling bad smells. In some ghostly worlds, everything seen, heard, smelt, tasted, touched, and thought of are unpleasant, and there exists nothing pleasant for them. They are being subjected to oppression all the time by the six kinds of consciousness. All men like to enjoy only good taste, but unfortunate people have to exist on bad food. This is how tongue consciousness oppresses.

In this respect too the oppression is more apparent in the four netherworlds. Men like to feel only pleasant sensations, but when circumstance would not allow, they will have to put up with undesirable experiences. For instance, when they are suffering from an illness. At such time their suffering is so oppressive such that they even yearn for instant death to get release from suffering. It is far worse, of course, in the four netherworlds. Men would like to live a carefree life all the time.

Nevertheless, circumstances would not let them lead such a life. Instead, there are many who are gripped with depression, disappointment, sorrow, and lamentation. Some of them never get out of the trough of miseries and unhappiness all throughout their life, and they are victims of oppression by the mind consciousness.

CONSCIOUSNESS IS NOT SUBJECT TO ONE'S WILL

The oppressing consciousness is not subject to one's will, it arises as it was determined by circumstances, and is unmanageable and uncontrollable. Although one may wish for a pleasant sight, in the absence of pleasant objects, one cannot see a pleasant sight. On the other hand, hateful and horrible sights will be seen when there are unpleasant objects around, and when the eyes are kept open. This is an example of how eye-consciousness is not being subjected to one's will, and arises itself dependent upon conditions.

Likewise, although one may wish to hear only pleasant sounds, in the absence of pleasant objects of sounds such as pleasant voices and talks, they cannot be heard. Hence it is necessary to keep oneself provided with a radio, a recorder, or a cassette to produce, when desired, pleasant sound and voices. Reluctant as we are to hear undesirable sounds, and when there are such sounds and voices, inevitably they will come into our ears. The ear-consciousness is thus unmanageable, arising itself, and depending upon conditions. In a similar manner, although we like to enjoy sweet smell, if sweet smell is not present, our wish cannot be fulfilled. Hence people provide themselves with scents, perfumes, and flowers.

However unwilling we may be to breathe in bad smells, when foul smells exist around, we have to suffer from their smell and other physical illnesses too such as head-ache, etc. This is how nose-consciousness is not amenable to one's will and how it arises itself depending upon circumstances. Although we wish to enjoy good taste, pleasant taste-consciousness cannot arise in the absence of good food. It arises only when good food is taken. Hence we have this wild pursuit after food day in and day out. When one is ill, one seeks relief and cure by taking bitter medicine, which we do not relish. This is how tongue-consciousness arises itself uncontrollably and unmanageably. Touch consciousness can be pleasant only when there are pleasant objects such as fine clothings, comfortable bed, good seats, etc. are around.

Therefore constant effort has to be made to acquire inanimate and animate objects for delightful sensations of touch. At times when it is extremely hot or extremely cold, when one is faced with dangers such as thorns, spikes, fires, and arms, or when one is taken ill with a severe malaise, one has to suffer unreluctantly from effects of undesirable touch-consciousness, which is obviously uncontrollable, arising itself, and dependent upon circumstances.

Every one wants to have a happy, joyous, and contented life. This can come about only when one is well provided with sufficient wealth and means. Hence it is necessary to constantly endeavour for maintenance of such a way of life. While thus engaged in seeking the means of a comfortable, and joyous living, thoughts about difficulties in every day life about beloved ones, husbands, and sons who have died, about financial and business problems, and about old age and debility, may arise to make one unhappy. This is how mind consciousness makes its own

appearance unmanageably and uncontrollably.

RESULTANT OF A CAUSE

We have used the expression "In accordance with circumstances and conditions." It is meant to connote circumstantial and conditional causes that will produce a certain resultant effect. It means also that good causes will give good resultants, and bad causes will end up in bad effects. No resultant effects can be brought about merely by one's own desire. A certain resultant effect will arise from a given set of causes whether one like it or not. Resultant effects are produced from respective causes and they are uncontrollable and unmanageable. It is obvious, therefore, they are not self or one's inner substance.

The Blessed One had therefore stated that mind consciousness is not self because it is not amenable to one's will. The Blessed One had taught thus to enable one to get rid of the *Sami atta*

clinging which holds that there is a self inside a person, which can be controlled and managed as one will. When

Sami atta

clinging is removed,

Nivasi atta

clinging which believes there is a permanent self residing in one's person is banished at the same time. When it is realized that resultant consciousness is developed only from the conditioning causes and it soon disappears once it has arisen, it becomes obvious that there is no such thing as permanently enduring self.

For example eye-consciousness arises only when there are eye and object of sight. Likewise, ear-consciousness can arise only when there are nose and odour, tongue-consciousness can arise only when there are tongue and taste, body consciousness can arise only when there are body and tactile object, and mental consciousness can arise only when there are mental base and mental object. When these conditional causes are known for the arising of respective results, the notion of a permanent entity, the *Nivasi atta* clinging will be discarded.

The meditator who is taking note of the phenomena of mind-and-body at the time of its occurrence will perceive clearly that depending on conditions such as eye and sight, consciousness such as eye-consciousness arises and vanishes recurrently. Perceiving thus, the meditator clearly understands that there is no self or living entity which is bringing about the act of seeing. He realizes that there is only eye-consciousness which arises when right conditions prevail. In this way, the meditator gets rid of the *Karaka atta* clinging, which believes that all actions physical, vocal, and mental are being done by self or the inner substance.

For those who cannot perceive this, through heedful noting the true nature of consciousness as it really is will be revealed. However, the clinging is held fast in the form of *Sami atta*, *Nivasi atta*, or

Karaka atta

. It appears that the aggregates of consciousness is more firmly clung to than the other aggregates. At present time, it is being referred to as soul or living entity.

MNEMONICS

1. Thinking that there is a living substance inside one's person, manageable and amenable to one's will is *Sami atta* clinging.
2. Thinking that the inner substance is permanent and enduring is *Nivasi atta* clinging.
3. Thinking that all three kinds of physical, vocal, and mental activities are carried out by the inner substances is *Karaka atta* clinging.
4. Thinking it is this living substance which experiences all the good and bad sensations is *Vedaka atta* clinging.

True Dhamma

1. *Sabba papassa akaranam* -- To abstain from all evil deeds

Physical misdeeds such as killing, stealing, and maltreating should be avoided. Vocal evils of lying, slandering, and using offensive language should also be avoided. Thinking of evil thoughts should also be abandoned. Evil thoughts could be got rid of only by engaging in the practice of concentration and Vipassana meditation. 'Avoidance of all evil deeds, physical, vocal, and mental, constitutes the First Teaching of the Buddha.'

2. *Kusalassa upasampada* -- To develop all forms of meritorious deeds such as giving alms, keeping precepts and practicing meditation.

With regard to keeping of precepts, it may be fulfilled to a certain extent by avoidance of evil deeds in pursuance of the first teaching. But one does not become establish in *Ariyamagga sila*, precepts pertaining to the Noble Path, by mere practice of abstinence. It can be accomplished only through practice of Vipassana meditation till the path is attained or practice of concentration meditation and absorption concentration. Some people talk disparagingly of concentration meditation.

The Blessed One himself had however recommended cultivation of the concentration meditation too. When jhanic concentration is achieved, that concentration can be used as an ideal basis for Vipassana meditation. Alternatively, if jhanic stage is not attainable, access concentration may be tried for and this concentration, when attained, may be used as a basis for Vipassana meditation. If even access concentration is not attainable, one has to work for the momentary concentration of the Vipassana meditation. Once it is attained, the Vipassana insights will become developed in their own sequence till the Noble Path is accomplished.

In Buddha's dispensation, the most essential tasks is to acquire wholesome merits of Vipassana concentration and Vipassana insight because the Noble Path and Fruition are unattainable without Vipassana meditation. Thus in order to become equipped with the merits of the Noble Path and Fruition, the good deeds of Vipassana meditation must be developed. We cannot afford to ignore any form of meritorious deeds because the second teaching of the Buddha enjoins fulfillment of all the three types of good deeds. We are hearing about 'new teachings' which go against these first and second teachings of the Buddhas. The propagandists of such 'new teachings' said, 'the unwholesome defilement (*akusala kilesa*) do not exist permanently. Consequently, no effort is needed to dispel them, and no effort is needed either to perform good deeds of keeping precepts, practicing concentration, and insight meditation. All these efforts are futile and produce suffering only.

It must be definitely understood that all these new teachings are diametrically opposed to the true teaching of the Buddha.

3. *Sacitta pariyadapanam* -- To keep one's own mind pure

Through practice of Vipassana, the Path must be developed. With the Path developed thus and the Fruition attained, the mind is completely free of defilements and hence absolutely pure. According to the Commentary, the degree of purity to be attained is no less than that of an Arahant. This exposition by the Commentary is in full agreement with the teaching of the Buddha enshrined in the Pali texts. Nevertheless, those who are causing harm and injury to the dispensation by discouraging the practice of keeping precepts, developing concentration, and Vipassana meditation, say that they are futile efforts that will land in suffering only. "Keep the mind rested, and don't engaged in any activity. Place it in a blank spot in one's person where no unwholesome activities are developing. In this way the mind will remain pure." This is a teaching which is entirely devoid of reason, foundation, and support. To discourage the practice of *sila*, *samadhi*

, and
bhāvanā

is to despoil the Buddha's dispensation. It is an impossibility to keep one's mind pure without the practice of concentration and insight meditation.

Consciousness is in the nature of insubstantiality, uncontrollable, and unmanageable. To assert that mind can be kept as one wish without the help of meditation is to refute the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* which

states that it is not possible to say of consciousness, 'Let consciousness be thus (all wholesome); let it not be thus (all unwholesome).' This is something to be pondered well upon. The last sentence in this concise statement of the teaching says:

['Etam Buddhana sasanam.'](#) "These three namely, avoidance of evils, promotion of all that is good, keeping the mind pure, are the teachings of all the Buddhas."

The Buddhist Dispensation thus constitutes concisely the three factors as stated above. For the Dispensation to endure and to prosper, all evil deeds must be avoided as far as possible by oneself. Others should be taught as far as possible to avoid evil deeds. One must perform as far as possible meritorious deeds and teach others to do the same. If someone is found teaching the non-Dhamma, 'Don't avoid evil deeds; don't do good deeds,' one must do the utmost to prevent him from teaching such wrong views. One should purify one's mind by practising meditation and exhort others to do likewise. It is thus for the purpose of safeguarding the Dispensation and promoting its prosperity that we have to point out the wrong teaching and explain how they have deviated from the right one.

Consciousness is named according to whatever condition through which it arises. On account of the eye and the visible objects there arise a consciousness that is called eye-consciousness, on

account of the ear and sounds there arise a consciousness that is called ear-consciousness, on account of the nose and odours there arise a consciousness that is called nose-consciousness, on account of the tongue and taste there arise a consciousness that is called tongue-consciousness, on account of the body and tactile objects there arise a consciousness that is called tactile (body) consciousness, and on account of the mind and mind objects there arise a consciousness that is called mental consciousness.

For example, a fire may burn on account of wood, and it is called wood fire. When it is burnt on account of bamboo splinter, grass, cow dung paddy husk, and refuse, then it is called splinter fire, grass fire, cow dung fire, etc., respectively. In a same manner, consciousness is named according to how it is conditioned.

The distinction is more pronounced in the case of hearing than in seeing. Similarly, in smelling and tasting, each consciousness is noted separately and distinctly. The most distinct note-taking is involved in the phenomenon of touching and the distinction of each consciousness is the most pronounced here. When feeling a pain, careful noting of 'pain, pain,' enables one to see distinctly each consciousness of pain one by one as it arises. Similarly, mind-consciousness of thought and ideas can be noted as each consciousness arises separately. If any thought or idea intrudes while noting rising and falling of the abdomen, these should be noted off as they arise.

Usually the intruding thought or idea comes to cessation as soon as its arising is noted off by the meditator, but if thoughts persist in arising conditioned by the same mental objects, they should be observed with their making of appearance turn by turn in sequence. When the thought moves over to another mental object, the arising of separate consciousness is very distinctly observable. When meditator can perceive the arising of each distinct consciousness with each separate noting, he comes to realize personally the impermanent nature of consciousness, its nature of suffering because of constant arising and vanishing, and its insubstantial nature because it is happening according to its conditions; it is uncontrollable and unmanageable.

It is the most important to gain such personal realization in Buddhism. We have explained fully how the five aggregates, namely, material body, feeling, perception, volitional activities, and consciousness are not self. We will recapitulate with mnemonics on the four kinds of self-clinging and how consciousness is not self.

What Five Aggregates are Like

THE MATERIAL BODY IS LIKE FROTH

The body is like froth, which is seen floating about in the creeks and waterways, made up of air bubbles, and entrapped in droplets of water. These droplets of water are blown up by air bubbles, and congregate to form frothy scum at the size of a human fist, a human head, a man, or even bigger. When it is casually seen, a big mass of froth may appear to be a matter of substance, but when carefully observed, it turns out to be insubstantial and useless for any purposes. Likewise, the human body complete with its head, body, hands, feet, in male form, and in female form, appears to be very substantial when casually seen, and it seems permanent, looks beautiful, good, and seemingly a living entity. But when the body is subjected to mental analysis, it turns out to be just like the mass of froth which is quite insubstantial - a mere conglomeration of thirty-two abominable constituent parts, namely, hair, body hair, nail, toe nail, teeth, skin, flesh, muscle, bone, etc. On further minute analysis, it is found to be a conglomerate of minute sub-atomic particles, invisible to the naked eyes. It may be likened to a big pile of sand made up of minute individual sand particles. Alternatively, we may take the example of rice flour or wheat flour consisting of minute individual grains of rice or wheat powder. When soaked with the right amount of water, it turns into a dough, a substantial mass, which can be quite big by using large amounts of flour. This substantial dough can be shaped into a figure of a man of massive size. Similarly, the body is made up of small particles of matters massed together in one big heap, and it is just like the mass of froth, which is devoid of inner substance. There is no permanent core, no beautiful substances, and no living entity called self. The visible material qualities form a part of the body. If one removes those visible qualities, the body will become devoid of shape and form. The earth element of extension (*pathavi*) forms the part of the body which is manifested in the sense of touch as rough, smooth, hard, or soft. The elements of heat or cold and the element of motion form the other parts of the body. If one removes these three elements, the human body which can be touched and felt will no longer exist.

As stated above, if these constituent parts are pulverized so as to make them fall apart, then the human body will no longer exist. There will be left only fine particles of matter. Furthermore, these sensitive material qualities such as eye and visual objects are not existing permanently and enduring. They keep on arising and vanishing, the new one comes into the place of the old. Thus this body is like a lump or mass of froth. When this body is to be subjected to careful examination and analysis, one should start from where phenomenon manifests itself vividly. When walking, the material qualities of extension and motion become the most prominent.

Therefore, in accordance with the *Satipatthana* discourse, '*gacchanto va gacchamiti pajanati*' (When going knows 'I am going'), the meditator should take note, 'going, going, raising, stepping out, dropping, etc.' While standing, the meditator should note, 'standing, standing,' while sitting, 'sitting, sitting, touching, touching, rising, falling, etc,' when the things are seen, it should be noted as 'seeing, seeing,' when body odours are smelt, 'smelling smelling,' when limbs are moved and stretched, 'stretching, stretching, moving, changing.'

When concentration gets strengthened by carefully noting as described, the meditator realizes that an act of going consists of desire to go, the motion, and the expansion. Acts of standing and sitting are made up of desire to stand or sit followed by a series of motions and expansions, likewise with bending, stretching, and changing postures.

In an act of seeing, there are eye consciousness and visual object, and in smelling, nose consciousness and odor. Each phenomenon is seen to arise for the moment only to pass away instantly. The limbs, hands, feet, head, and the shape of the body are no longer felt and recognized as such. They appear merely as a recurrent of physical processes rising and passing away incessantly. At this stage, the meditator comes to understand by himself how the body is like a mass of froth.

Perceiving thus, the meditator realizes that the body is impermanent and terribly suffering because of its incessant rising and vanishing processes. It is not-self because it is happening not as one wishes, but it happens according to its conditions, and it is not one's own inner substance.

The material body is likened to froth. It is unstable, impermanent, constantly rising and vanishing so this suffering and not self.

FEELING IS LIKE A BUBBLE

Feeling is likened to an air bubble. When rain drops fall on the water surface, little pockets of air find themselves trapped in the surrounding wall of water forming minute bubbles. Children produce similar bubbles to play with by blowing softly from a blow pipe. Conglomeration of these minute bubbles form a mass of froth. These bubbles are formed whenever rain drops fall on the surface of water only to vanish instantly. Feeling which experiences the sensations is likened to the bubbles, because of its nature of incessant perishing after arising.

This is in conformity with what the meditator have known through personal knowledge, but it's different than what ordinary people presume to be. In ordinary common people's view, when looking at a beautiful object for a long time, it is that pleasant sight which remains for a long time. When an unpleasant sight has been seen for some time, they think that it will also last for a long time. The ordinary object, neither pleasant nor unpleasant, is also thought to last long and to remain permanently. In the similar manner, whatever is pleasant or unpleasant to hear is believed to remain long. Especially the painful feeling is thought to remain for days, months, or years.

Thus, ordinary people's view of feeling is not quite what really happens. To personally realize that feelings are like bubbles, one must become engaged in observing constantly the psycho-physical processes happening inside one's body. If one engages thus in observing constantly the psycho-physical processes, the meditator will progress to the stage of *Udayabba*
ya and *Bh*
anga ñanas

, that whatever is pleasant or unpleasant to see, hear, and smell vanishes instantly. The passing away of painful feeling is especially vivid. Observing the painful feeling as 'painful, painful,' with each noting enables one to see the perishing of each pain.

At the stage of *Samasana ñana*, painful feeling becomes more noticeable. At each noting, the pain from each place of observation vanishes, thus the pain vanishes from one place to another, and It goes on and on in this manner. The pain vanishes when noted as if it is instantly removed by hand. Thus for the meditator whose concentration has become strengthened, the pleasant sight which is seen and noted vanishes quickly. But since there are eye and visual object, the sight is seen again. Every time it is seen, it is noted and quickly vanishes again.

The process thus goes on and on. The same process takes place with unpleasant and neither pleasant nor un-pleasant objects. Disappearance with each noting of pleasant, unpleasant, and neither pleasant nor unpleasant sensations of sound is more distinct. So do the various sensations of smell disappear when noted. The tasting sensations are specially vivid to the meditator who keeps noting the taste. The delicious taste he feels while chewing the food keeps on vanishing and rising with each act of his noting. The pleasant, unpleasant, and neither pleasant nor unpleasant sensations of touch too arise and vanish when noted. Similarly, feelings of unhappiness, sorrow, sadness, happiness, and gladness will be seen, but when subjected to heedful noting, they vanish quickly. Thus feelings are just like bubbles; they disappear fast and are impermanent, untrustworthy, and of the nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self.

Feeling is likened to bubbles. It is unstable, impermanent, and constantly rising and vanishing. This is suffering and not self.

SENSE PERCEPTION IS LIKENED TO MIRAGE

Sense perception which apprehends ordinary sense-objects (whatever is seen, heard, touched, or known) as reality is likened to a mirage. Mirage is optical illusion caused by atmospheric conditions in the appearance of a sheet of water or pictures of houses in the hot gases that arise from the earth at the midday sun. Thus mirage is an optical illusion. Wild beasts such as deers, etc., roam about in summer heat in search of water. When they see a body of water in the distance, they hasten towards that place only to find a dry tract of land instead of a pond or a lake. They have been misled by a mirage and put to a great deal of trouble.

Just as a mirage gives the illusion of a body of water or of houses where no such things exist, so perception perceives people into thinking whatever is seen, heard, touched, or known to be a human, a man, a woman, etc. Having an illusory perception of whatever is seen, heard, touched, or known, people are engaged in multiple activities concerning them, just like the deers of the wild forests who go after a distant mirage taking it to be a mass of water.

To realize that perception is illusory and to save oneself from the sufferings of pursuing after non-existent objects, one must take heedful note of all the material and mental phenomena as they occur. When concentration gets strengthened, it is seen that in every phenomenon there are only material object to be known and the mind that knows it. Later it becomes known that each phenomenon is a related event of cause and effect. Finally it is personally experienced that the knowing mind as well as the object to be known keep on perishing while they are being noted.

Thus what was formerly held by perception to be enduring, permanent, an individual, a being, a man, a woman, or self, is now being seen as a deception by perception which is creating an optical illusion like a mirage. In reality, the meditator realizes that it is merely a phenomenon of incessant arising and vanishing which are of the nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self.

Perception is likened to a mirage. It is unstable and impermanent, and constantly rising and vanishing. This is suffering and not self.

VOLITIONAL ACTIVITIES ARE LIKE A PLANTAIN TRUNKS

Volitional activities are likened to plantain trunks. A plantain trunk looks like an ordinary tree trunk, which has a solid and hard inner core. But when the plantain trunk is cut up and examined, it will be found to be made up of layers of fibrous material with no substantial and solid inner core. Volitional activity is like the plantain trunk, which is void of inner substance. It consists of fifty kinds of mental concomitants headed by volition. The outstanding members of this group are contacts with the object, attention given to the object, one-pointedness of mind, discursive thinking or initial application, investigation or sustained application, effort, greed, hatred, delusion, conceit, wrong view, doubts, non-greed, non-hatred, non-delusion, faith, mindfulness, loving kindness, mercy, sympathetic joy, etc., are all mental concomitants forming aggregate of volitional activities. Volition is responsible for all volitional activities (physical, vocal, and mental) and it is their leading member.

These volitional activities are numerically large and involve all activities (physical, vocal, and mental). Thus volitional activities are mainly responsible for the self-clinging that it is I or self doing all these activities. Volitional activities appear to possess a hard core of inner substance. In reality, however, volitional activities are devoid of useful inner substance. The meditator can see the reality by taking note constantly of the phenomenon of mind and body. The meditator who is constantly taking note while going as 'going, going' and 'raising, stepping, dropping,' comes to notice also the arising of the desire to go when concentration becomes stronger. This desire to go is also observed to be vanishing and arising. Although desire to go is usually described as 'mind to go,' it is actually volitional activities under the guidance of volition. It is the volitional activity led by volition that motivates the action of going. Urged on by the volition, the act of going involves raising, stepping, and dropping are accomplished. Before such knowledge is gained, there was the notion that it is I who wants to go, and I go because I want to go, which is a clinging to self. Now that the desire to go is seen to be perished away, and the knowledge appears that there is no self and there is only a phenomenon. The desires to bend, to stretch, to move, and to change are also seen in this true light. In addition, the effort put to fulfill the desire to look and to see are also volitional activities making momentary appearance and vanishing at once.

It is realized therefore, they are void of essence and not self, mere phenomenon, and passing away. Likewise, with regard to desire to listen and the effort made to hear fulfills the desire to hear. It is further seen that when thinking, investigating, and effort are noted as they arise, vanish instantly. Thus they are also devoid of essence, not self, and mere phenomenon. As greed and hate make their appearances, they are noted as 'wanting, liking, being angry' and they soon disappear establishing the fact that they are also not self, and have no essence or hard core. When faith, confidence, wishing well, wishing happiness, having compassion, etc., are noted, they vanish away instantly. They are, therefore, not made up of substance, devoid of essence, and not self. This analytical knowledge brings home the fact that volitional activities are like a plantain trunk, which reveals no solid inner core when cut open and examined layer by

layer.

Volitional activity is like a plantain trunk. It is unstable and impermanent, and constantly rising and vanishing. This suffering and not self.

CONSCIOUSNESS IS LIKE A CONJUROR'S TRICK

Becoming conscious of something is like producing a conjuror's trick. When seeing an object, a person ordinarily knows that he sees a man or a woman. He also knows that 'I sees; it is I who see.' (When hearing anything too, he knows, 'I hear a man's voice or I hear a woman's voice. I hear, it is I who hears.') When smelling something, he knows, 'This is the smell of such and such a person. I smell.' When eating, he knows, 'this food I eat is prepared by such and such a person; it is I who eats.' When touching, he knows, 'I have touched so and so. It is I who touches.' In thinking too, he considers that, 'I think; it is I who thinks.' To know and to become conscious of things in this manner is not knowing things as they truly are or to know things wrongly from the standpoint of the ultimate truth. Such wrong knowledge is not brought about by the five consciousness, namely, eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc.

These five consciousness cognizes only what is ultimately true, namely, visible sight, sound, etc., but not as the wrongly conceived objects like man, woman, etc. But at the end of full process of a particular cognition (*citta vitthi*) when reflection takes place with arising of mind consciousness (*mano viññana*), misconceptions such as man or woman with regard to the visible sight previously seen are liable to occur. For your general information, we shall briefly explain the process of cognition with respect to the process of seeing and process of reflection.

If the eye has caught a sight of visible form, the flow of the life continuum consciousness is interrupted to be followed immediately by mind door consciousness that turns to and considers the sensation. Immediately after that arises the eye-consciousness which first cognizes the sensation of sight without any reflection giving it is man or woman. As it ceases, it is followed by recipient consciousness for a moment of reception of the object. After its cessation comes the investigating consciousness, the momentary examination of the object so received. After this comes the stage of determining consciousness. When this consciousness ceases, there arises for seven times in rapid succession with much impetus, the impulsive or the active consciousness called *javana*. With the cessation of the last impulse, there comes the registering consciousness, which is repeated twice holding on to the same object which is still attracting the attention. At the expiration of this registering consciousness, the processes of cognition is complete and there follows a series of life continuum consciousness, a passive state of mind like that obtaining in a deep sleep.

To recapitulate, the consciousness that arises from the life continuum state is the mind door apprehending consciousness, it is then followed by eye-consciousness and recipient consciousness. Then comes the investigating consciousness followed by the determining consciousness. Then followed for seven times in rapid succession the impulse consciousness, the impulsions, then the registering consciousness appears twice in succession. Thus every time a sight is seen, from the appearance of the sense-door consciousness to the sinking of the last consciousness, there are altogether fourteen thought moments which complete a process of cognition in a regular manner. If the impression of the object is not very strong, it survives only as far as the consciousness has reached its impulse stage.

When one is near death, impulse consciousness occurs only five or six times. When the impression of the object is very obscure, the process of cognition runs up to the stage of determining, after two or three thought moments of which the process of cognition comes to an end. When Vipassana is very strong, the process does not advance till impulse stage. It abruptly ends after two or three thought moments of determining and sink back to the life continuum level. This is in accordance with the meditation instructions given to the Venerable Pothila by the young novice who instructed that the process of cognition with respect to five door consciousness should not sink to impulse stage. As staged above, in the process of cognition with respect to eye-consciousness, the object is only the ultimate visible sight, and not the conceptual form of a man or a woman.

After running the complete process, it sinks down to the life continuum which runs its course for some time. Then the process of cognition with respect to the mind door, arises through reflection on whatever has been seen. Arising from life continuum, the mind door apprehending consciousness appears, followed by impulse process which runs for seven moments and the registering consciousness which lasts for two moments. The whole course, therefore, runs for ten thought moments after which it sinks down to life continuum level again. In this thought process, the object is just the reflection on the sight that has been seen, and does not yet have any wrong concept of previous experiences. When the reflective process of cognition takes place for the second time, it is the concept of form and appearance that have become its object -- the form and appearance of a man or a woman. When the process is repeated for the third time, it is the concept of name (of man or woman) that has become the object. From then onwards, everytime there is a reflection on what have been experienced previously, the object is always a wrong concept: 'I see a man, I see a woman.' This is how consciousness plays conjuring tricks and brings on wrong concepts in place of realities.

Summary of Processes

1. In the first process of cognition of sight, consciousness registers only the ultimate reality of sight.
2. In the first round of reflection on what has been seen, there is still consciousness of what has actually been seen, namely the sight. No misconception has appeared yet. If at this stage, heedful noting is done, wrong concept cannot come in. Cognition will rest only on the ultimate object.
3. In the second round of reflection, concept of form and shape of man and woman begin to appear.
4. In the third round of reflection, the concept of name as man and woman has appeared. Likewise in the process of cognition of sound, odour, taste, and touch, the same sequence of transition from consciousness of reality to consciousness of concept takes place.

When consciousness of sight, sound, etc., arises or when the first round of reflection on what has been seen, heard, etc., takes place, if careful noting is done instantly as 'seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, etc.,' wrong concepts cannot come in. The consciousness will rest on the reality of what is actually seen, heard, etc. That is the reason for taking note of 'seeing, hearing, touching' at the instant of each arising so that consciousness will remain with reality. If note is taken as 'seeing, seeing' while an object is being seen the, object of cognition will cease just with the fact of seeing, and process of cognition of concepts through reflection of what was seen cannot take place.

In accordance with the teaching '*ditthe ditthamattam bhavissati*,' just seeing at the time of seeing and consciousness of seeing ends its course there. Then there appears the analytical knowledge of the unknowing matter such as eyes, sounds, etc., of the body and the knowing mind which is consciousness of the objects. There is also knowledge that seeing and noting appear recurrently both rising and vanishing. Realization comes that there is only impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Likewise with what is heard, smelt, tasted, touched, or thought about.

Constant note taking of these phenomena will reveal the difference between mind and body, their nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Realization comes to the meditator, "Previously, because there was not taking any note of the phenomena, the wrong concepts are

believed to be reality; the conjuring tricks have been accepted as reality. Now that the phenomena are noted as they occur at the moment of occurrence, there is not seen any such thing as self, and there is only incessant arising and perishing. When seeing an object, the eye consciousness immediately vanishes after it has arisen, and there is no such thing as seeing for a long time. There is only fresh arising of eye consciousness with each act of seeing and its instant perishing. Likewise with hearing, touching, thinking , etc.

There is no hearing for a long time. With each act of hearing, the ear consciousness arises and vanishes instantly. There is no touching for a long time. At each act of touching, the touch consciousness arises and vanishes instantly. There is no thinking over for a long time, with each act of thinking, the mind consciousness arises and vanishes instantly. Therefore everything is impermanent. Arising is always followed by instant perishing, and there is nothing reliable and trust-worthy. There is only terror and suffering. Every thing happens not as one wishes, and they are conditioned by their own causes and circumstances which is just the nature of non-self.

Mere conjuring tricks, this consciousness. Unstable, impermanent. Constantly rising and vanishing. This is suffering and not self.

From this Sutta also, it is quite obvious that the five aggregates are void of permanent substance, wholesome, pleasant inner core, and are subservient to one's will. They are not self, but they are of the nature of insubstantiality. We have amply made these points very clear. By virtue of having given respectful attention to this discourse on the Anattalakkhana Sutta may you all attain and realize soon, the Nibbana, by means of the Path and Fruition of your wish.

-The End-

(THIS IS THE ABRIDGED VERSION)