

Sharing Dhamma

by

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Preface

The Buddha developed all the perfections¹ with right understanding of realities to the greatest extent so that he could become a Sammāsambuddha who teaches the truth of realities to the world. His teaching is the most precious gift to us all. He taught in such a way that the listeners could develop their own understanding. It is thanks to the Buddha that we can still listen to the Dhamma and that we can meet for discussions. In this way we can share what we hear with others who are interested in the teachings.

Our Vietnamese friends are very keen to learn and understand the truth of the Dhamma and they use every occasion to listen, consider and discuss the Dhamma. They organise several times a year sessions with Acharn Sujin in different locations in Vietnam. Acharn Sujin's book "Survey of Paramattha Dhammas" and my "Buddhism in Daily Life" were translated into Vietnamese. At this moment Tam Bach is translating my "Conditionality of Life". During this journey she asked many questions on the different conditions, paccayas, in order to facilitate her translation. They are a very active group of friends who are truly dedicated to make known the Dhamma.

They had invited Acharn Sujin and her sister Khun Sujit to Vietnam in January 2016 for a ten days sojourn. They sponsored their flight and hotel accommodation. Sarah and Jonothan were assisting Acharn during her Dhamma explanations and friends from Thailand, Canada, Australia and myself joined this journey. In Vietnam Tiny Tam, Tran Thai's wife, made all the traveling and accommodation arrangements for us.

The Dhamma discussions took place in Saigon, in a hall near our hotel. Among the audience were usually two monks, many "nuns", that is to say, women who wear robes and observe eight precepts, and many lay followers. Tam Bach translated into Vietnamese the English Dhamma discussions and a team of Vietnamese friends translated the questions from the audience into English.

Our Vietnamese friends took great care of all our needs and they were most inventive in taking us to different restaurants for luncheon. Once I had a bad

¹ The perfections or pāramīs are: generosity, wholesome behaviour (kusala sīla), renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving kindness, equanimity. The Buddha developed these for aeons in order to become the Sammāsambuddha.

cough, and they prepared a drink called “birds’ nest” with great loving care. It proved to be very effective, even after a few days.

Throughout our journey Acharn reminded us not to move away from the present object. Whatever is real appears now. Seeing is a conditioned dhamma, it cannot be a person who sees. I am grateful to hear again and again what she repeats because the development of understanding takes a long time to become well established.

Chapter 1

The World

What is the world? We live in the world of persons, of self, of different things. Before hearing the Buddha's teachings we did not really understand what the world is. Because of ignorance of the world we cling to our possessions, our family and friends. In truth the world is citta (moment of consciousness), cetasika (mental factor accompanying citta) and rūpa (physical phenomena). Seeing is a citta, experiencing visible object, just for a moment and then it falls away. Thinking is another citta that thinks of persons and different things like a table or tree. Thinking may be unwholesome, akusala, and then it is accompanied by ignorance and other mental factors, cetasikas, that are unwholesome such as attachment or aversion. Or thinking may be wholesome, kusala, and then it may be accompanied by kindness, compassion or understanding of realities. There could not be seeing without eyesense which is a physical reality, rūpa. Also what is seen, visible object, is a type of rūpa which conditions seeing by being its object.

We cling to our body and we believe that it belongs to us. However, what we take for body is in reality different rūpas that arise and fall away. They arise because of different conditioning factors and they are beyond control.

Citta, cetasika and rūpa arise just for a brief moment because of their proper conditions and then they fall away immediately. When seeing arises, only visible object is experienced and both seeing and visible object do not last, they fall away immediately. When hearing arises sound is experienced and both hearing and sound fall away immediately. There cannot be seeing and hearing at the same time; only one citta arises at a time and experiences one object through one of the six doorways of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind-door. Thus, actually, there are six worlds, appearing one at a time: the world of the experience of visible object, of sound, of odour, of flavour, of tangible object and the world of thinking.

Because of ignorance and clinging we have to reborn again and again. So long as there is birth there have to be old age, sickness and death. During life we have to experience a great deal of sorrow. The Buddha taught the end to rebirth by the development of right understanding of all realities that appear. During the discussions there was reference to the "Rohitassa Sutta".

We read in the "Gradual Sayings", Book of the Fours, Ch V, §5, "Rohitassa", that the deva Rohitassa asked the Buddha:

“Pray, lord, is it possible for us, by going, to know, to see, to reach world’s end, where there is no more being born or growing old, no more dying, no more falling (from one existence) and rising up (in another)?”

The Buddha answered that that end of the world is not by “going” to be reached. Rohitassa said that formerly he was the hermit Rohitassa of psychic power, a sky walker. The extent of his stride was the distance between the eastern and the western ocean. Rohitassa said:

“Though my lifespan was a hundred years, though I lived a hundred years, though I traveled a hundred years, yet I reached not world’s end but died ere that.”

He praised the Buddha saying, how well it is said by the Exalted One that the world’s end is not by going to be reached. The Buddha said:

“Nay, your reverence, in this fathom-long body, along with its perceptions and thoughts, I proclaim the world to be, likewise the origin of the world and the making of the world to end, likewise the practice going to the ending of the world.

Not to be reached by going is world’s end.

Yet there is no release for man from Dukkha

Unless he reaches world’s end. Then let a man

Become world-knower, wise, world-ender,

Let him be one who lives the divine life.

Knowing the world’s end by becoming calmed

He longs not for this world or another.”

Through the development of right understanding of mental phenomena (in Pali: *nāma*) and physical phenomena (in Pali: *rūpa*) one can become a world-knower, wise, a world-ender. The objects of right understanding are not far away, they are “this fathom-long body, along with its perceptions and thoughts”, thus, whatever mental phenomena and physical phenomena appear in daily life. For him who has completely developed understanding of the world at this moment and eradicated all defilements there will not be any rebirth, no more world at any time.

Acharn emphasized time and again that realities such as seeing, visible object, hardness or sound appear all the time in daily life and that understanding of them can be developed very gradually. One does not have to go to a quiet place and concentrate on realities. She reminded us that intellectual understanding of what appears now, *pariyatti*, can gradually condition direct understanding, *paṭipatti*, and this again conditions *paṭivedha*, the direct realization of the truth. Many times she said that each word of the Buddha points to the truth and leads to detachment. Study of the teachings is not for speculation or memorizing but for the understanding of this very moment.

In Saigon there were about a hundred listeners every day. They listened with great interest and many questions were raised. The topics that were discussed were the meaning of non-self, *anattā*, the perfections, free will and fatalism, meditation and many other subjects. Every day, before the morning session, a discussion was held in a smaller group with venerable Bhikkhu Silavamsa. He was first ordained as a Mahāyana monk and then he became a Theravada monk. He read my “Letters on Vipassanā” and became interested to listen to Acharn’s explanations and attended Dhamma discussions with her since 2013. He wanted to study all twenty-four classes of conditions for realities as laid down in the “*Paṭṭhāna*”, the seventh book of the *Abhidhamma*. But the study of conditions should not just be book study, theoretical knowledge. We cannot find out by how many conditions, *paccayas*, this moment is conditioned. Acharn always referred to understanding this moment of reality that arises. Seeing is conditioned by visible object and eyebase; without these *rūpas*, seeing could not arise. Visible object and eyebase are different realities which have different conditions for their arising. The Buddha taught the conditions for the realities which arise so that people could understand more deeply the truth of non-self, *anattā*. Whatever arises because of conditions cannot be directed by a self, it is beyond anyone’s control. Every day we discussed some aspects of the conditions which pertain to our daily life. Acharn emphasized the importance of deeply considering the meaning of the conditions for the realities that arise at this moment.

The texts we read about conditions always pertain to this moment. Whenever seeing arises there must be that which is seen, visible object. Visible object is object-condition for seeing, but we do not have to name it object-condition. We can come to understand this condition by understanding the reality appearing at this moment. Many times Acharn reminded us that life is very short and that what is most valuable is understanding this moment. Learning about conditions supports the understanding of seeing and hearing as not self. It depends on the individual’s accumulated understanding to what extent he can penetrate the truth of the different conditions.

Problems we have in daily life were also discussed and as Sarah stressed many times, the real problem is our own thinking with defilements. Instead of developing understanding of what is real at this moment, we continue to think of difficult situations and persons and we worry a great deal. Then we live in a dream world. Sarah said that there is always something to worry about, that there is no end to it. Not the circumstances or other people are the cause of our problems, the only problem is our unwholesome thinking arising now.

Sometimes we had to walk in the dark and this caused fear to me since I walk with difficulty. One night I had to take extremely high steps to get into a friend's car and then I was surprised to see Acharn sitting in the car already. She spoke to me about my thinking of fear in the dark and thinking that this would be my last trip, always thinking of "self". She reminded me that I have to build up courage, otherwise I will take fear with me from life to life.

The greatest courage is perseverance with the development of understanding of whatever appears now, no matter what the circumstances of our life are. We may come across the greatest difficulties and problems, but there are always seeing, visible object, hearing or attachment with different characteristics to be known.

Sarah had a conversation with Glen, Ann's husband, about life. She spoke about basic notions of Dhamma and she repeated this conversation when we stayed in Thailand, in Kaeng Krachan. Some people may not think that it is important to know more about realities such as seeing or hearing but Sarah explained the relevance of having more understanding of the realities of our life. She said:

"We believe that we see people and things, but actually just that which is seen, visible object, is experienced. Immediately after that there is thinking about people, chairs and trees. This is thinking, not the experience of that which is seen, visible object. The question is whether life just continues as usual with ignorance, or whether we are interested to understand a little more about life. What we usually find most important is our family, our work or our possessions, for example. What is the purpose of having more attachment to what we find important in life? For some of us what is most important of all is having more understanding about the truth of life. When people are dreaming and wake up it is very clear that it was a dream world, a fantasy world, not real. The dream seems so real, but it is just fantasy, an illusion. What about now? What about the dream we are having at this moment? When driving along the road one thinks that one sees a lake, but when one gets closer one knows that it was just a mirage. Also now we are living in a world of mirages and fantasies. As

soon as we see people, trees and different things it is the world of mirages and fantasies.”

As Sarah said, when we are dreaming our experiences such as seeing seem very real. But actually, at such moments there is no seeing, there is not visible object impinging on the eyesense. When we are asleep our eyes are closed and while dreaming we are just thinking of different ideas. Even so, when we are awake we believe that we are seeing when seeing has fallen away already and we are just thinking of different things, of people. Seeing is one extremely short moment of citta and after it has fallen away many other types of citta arise. We take for seeing what is actually thinking of mirages.

Sarah explained:

“Only visible object is seen now, only sound is heard. We think that we hear the sound of birds, of traffic, sound in the microphone. Immediately there is an idea of people and things, all the time. Actually, only sound is heard. There is just the experience of one world at a time, through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind and that is all. It seems that ‘I’ have such experiences, that I am seeing or hearing, but who is the ‘I’ that is seeing or hearing? It is just one moment of experience followed by moments of thinking. We can learn that what we take for ‘I’ is a mirage, an idea. There is just a moment of seeing, experiencing that which is seen and then thinking about it. Different realities, each one arising because of its own conditions. This is life, different moments of experience arising because of different causes or conditions which no one can control or make arise at will.

It is not a matter of the terms, the details or the books, but it is about what can be tested now at the moment of touching what we take for a table. Just hardness that appears now. Just touching of hardness. We may be thinking of a table, but that is not the reality that is experienced. When there is an idea of table we are back to the world of ideas. Images are not real, they are mind-created. One may think of the brain, but who could control the brain? That is a scientific outlook, not the present moment.”

Acharya said about the brain:

“We are told that the brain experiences. What is seen are different colours. We hear the word brain and think about its function but it cannot experience anything at all. When it is touched it is hard and hardness cannot experience anything at all. We can see a picture of it, but when it is seen, visible object cannot

experience anything. Brain is that which cannot experience or know anything. It cannot know, it cannot do anything at all.”

Brain is conventional truth one may think of, and it is different from what is real in the absolute sense: the physical phenomena or rūpa and the mental phenomena or nāma that appear one at a time at the present moment.

Acharn explained: ”This is what we are interested in: to learn more, to have less selfishness, less clinging to the self, the ego, the ‘I’, because it harms. All unwholesome realities harm oneself and the other. We cling to ‘I’, everything must be to our liking, from moment to moment. We search for pleasure from that which is experienced, from every doorway, from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and the experience of tangible object. Do you think that attachment is wholesome?”

Glen answered: “Attachment is harmful, but it is human.”

Acharn said: “That is the right answer. It is there, it is natural. It is conditioned, no one can do anything about it. It is conditioned to arise and fall away, like all conditioned realities. Each reality has its own characteristic and its own function.”

We were often reminded that the development of understanding has to be natural. Whatever reality arises cannot be changed, there were conditions for its arising. It has fallen away already when we think about it. It is valuable to hear again and again about basic dhammas, about what life really is from moment to moment. It is different from what we used to believe before hearing the Buddha’s teachings. We learn that what we take for ‘I’ are citta, cetasika and rūpa only. No self sees, but seeing sees, just by conditions. This is life.

Chapter 2

The Meaning of Anattā

The Anattā Lakkhaṇa Sutta is the Buddha's second sermon. We read in the "Kindred Sayings" (III, Kindred Sayings on Khandhas, Elements, Middle Fifty, § 59) that Buddha said in the Deerpark in Vārāṇasī:

"Body, brethren, is not the Self. If body, brethren, were the Self, then the body would not be involved in sickness, and one could say of body: 'Thus let my body be. Thus let my body not be.' But, brethren, inasmuch as body is not the Self, that is why body is involved in sickness, and one cannot say of body: 'Thus let my body be. Thus let my body not be.' "

He said the same about the four nāma khandhas² of feeling, perception (saññā), the activities (saṅkhārakkhandha) and consciousness. We then read:

"Now what think you, brethren. Is body permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, lord."

"And what is impermanent is that weal or woe?"

"Woe, lord."

"Then what is impermanent, woeful, unstable by nature, is it fitting to regard it thus: 'this is mine; I am this; this is the Self of me'?"

"Surely not, lord."

"So also it is with feeling, perception, the activities and consciousness. Therefore, brethren, every body whatever, be it past, future or present, be it inward or outward, gross or subtle, low or high, far or near,- every body should be thus regarded, as it really is, by right insight,- 'this is not mine; this am not I; this is not the Self of me.' "

He then said the same about the four nāma khandhas. We read:

² All conditioned realities can be classified as five khandhas or groups: one is rūpakkhandha, the khandha of physical phenomena, and four are nāmakkhandhas, citta and cetasikas. Saṅkhārakkhandha are all cetasikas apart from feeling and saññā, remembrance.

“So seeing, brethren, the well-taught Ariyan disciple feels disgust for body, feels disgust for feeling, for perception, for the activities, feels disgust for consciousness. So feeling disgust he is repelled; being repelled he is freed; knowledge arises that in the freed is the freed thing³; so that he knows: ‘destroyed is birth; lived is the righteous life; done is my task; for life in these conditions there is no hereafter.’ ”

After this sermon the five disciples who were from the beginning with the Buddha became arahats.

During our discussions one of the listeners said that the meaning of anattā is: nothing, no reality. He thought that it means that in the past, present and future there is no reality. Jonothan asked him whether there are dhammas now. The meaning of anattā cannot be understood merely by thinking about it. We should have more understanding of the dhammas that are arising at this moment. Seeing that arises at this moment is not self, it is seeing that sees. Nobody can make seeing arise. When understanding of the level of pariyatti develops, thus, intellectual understanding of the present reality, the meaning of anattā becomes clearer very gradually. We cannot expect to fully understand the meaning of anattā after a few years or even after one lifetime of listening to the Dhamma and considering it. But very gradually one can become closer to understanding of whatever appears now. Otherwise we are lost in words and ideas.

Someone else remarked that if all kusala and akusala arise because of conditions we cannot do anything. Some people believe that this would lead to fatalism, to being subject to fate. Acharn answered that what we take for “I” are different realities arising because of different conditions. In other words, also wholesomeness and unwholesomeness are cittas accompanied by cetasikas, not self. It makes no sense to hold on to the idea of someone who can do something to have more kusala. People believe that if there is no free will, responsibility for one’s actions is denied. Volition or intention is a mental factor, a cetasika, cetanā cetasika, accompanying every citta. It is conditioned. When there are conditions for kusala citta, cetanā is also kusala and when there are conditions for akusala citta cetanā is also akusala. Right understanding of realities can condition more kusala in one’s life.

That may be a beginning of the development of the perfections. In our life there is usually akusala citta and akusala citta cannot understand any reality. When kusala citta arises there are no attachment, aversion or ignorance. The perfec-

³ There is the knowledge that the mind is liberated.

tions which are actually kusala through body, speech or mind, support right awareness and right understanding of realities. Kusala without understanding is not a perfection. Firm and keen understanding of whatever appears now needs the perfection of truthfulness (sacca) and this can condition detachment from the idea of self. When the truth is known that there is no person, that there are only conditioned elements, there is a degree of detachment that develops along with understanding. Also the perfection of determination (aditṭhāna) and the other perfections are needed. One has to be firmly determined not to move away from the present object since the understanding of seeing or visible object that appears now is the only way to understand that there is no one there.

The perfection of patience is indispensable for the development of understanding. Acharn said: “Not just be patient towards cold and heat, but understand even such moments as not self who is patient.” There can be patience when we experience an unpleasant object, but also when the object we experience is pleasant there can be patience. When attachment arises on account of a pleasant object there is no patience.

Very often there is the idea of “I am patient”. For example, we were enjoying ourselves sitting in a restaurant outside, but there was mostly seafood which I cannot eat because of an allergy. But I found myself very patient, not complaining eating plain rice. Sarah said that we have a conventional idea of patience. When there is the perfection of patience there has to be the understanding that it is not I who is patient.

When listening to the Dhamma and considering it one should not be impatient and expect clear understanding of realities very soon. Acharn explained that when one has heard about right understanding that can penetrate the true nature of reality, there may be attachment and ignorance trying to attain this goal. That is not detachment from wanting to experience it. There are so many traps of attachment and that is why life continues in the cycle.

Robert Kirkpatrick came to visit us in Saigon with his wife and two young children, Ryan and little Nina, a baby of five months old who was named after me. Acharn was so kind to give us all an opportunity for Dhamma discussion in the evening after the usual morning and afternoon sessions. The discussion was held in Robert’s room. Ryan was sweetly playing with his toy cars and now and then he needed attention and the approval from his father. He was no longer the only child and his lovely little sister received a lot of attention. This happens to adults as well. We like to have other people’s attention and to be approved by them. At such moments we cling to the importance of self, there is conceit. Without the Buddha’s teaching we would not know when there is conceit.

Achann explained that when intellectual understanding of the level of pariyatti has become firm it can condition right awareness of the level of satipaṭṭhāna. There is not any idea of “I prepare, I will do” but right awareness arises unexpectedly by conditions. It is most important to remember that understanding is anattā and that it develops because of conditions. We should not turn away from the present object and look for a specific method to cause understanding to grow.

One of our friends remarked: “The more we hear, come to the sessions and hear new terms, the more we become agitated by intellectual understanding.” Achann answered: “It indicates that it is ‘you’ who studies, there is no understanding of realities as not ‘you’. It brings about the idea of ‘shall I do this, shall I do that’. That is the wrong study of Abhidhamma because it does not eliminate the idea of self. How deeply rooted it is.”

She explained that only the Buddha’s words can condition right understanding, not one’s own thinking or the guidance of someone else. There can be very firm confidence in the teachings. Realities arise by conditions and fall away again. Even doubt is real, it is not self. Usually we have an idea of my doubt, but paññā can see it as it is. She said: “It does not matter what reality arises, it is conditioned. That is the way to let go of the idea of self; by understanding that particular object, right then.”

People often wonder what they should do to have more wholesomeness in their life and more understanding. It is important to remember that there is no doer, no person who can do anything at all. Only citta accompanied by cetasikas can perform functions. These are fleeting phenomena, they fall away instantly. When we think of them they have fallen away already, so, how can they be a self that is doing or acting? Intellectually, this can be understood, but realizing the truth at the present moment when citta, cetasika or rūpa appears that is another matter. We are so used to take them for “self” or “mine”, and this wrong idea cannot be eliminated soon. Intellectual understanding of seeing now, hearing now, thinking now can become firmer and then it can be a condition for satipaṭṭhāna, direct awareness of whatever appears. There should be no selection of the object of mindfulness, the object is just whatever appears by conditions. We cannot select seeing as object of mindfulness, maybe at a given moment there is a condition for hearing, and only one reality at a time can be object of mindfulness. It is totally unexpected what reality appears, we never know the next moment: it may be kindness or selfishness. In this way the truth of anattā can become a little clearer: there is no doer, there is no one who makes such or such dhamma arise.

Kusala cittas and akusala cittas alternate all the time and we may wonder how we can know when there is kusala citta and when akusala citta. When we rejoice in other people's kusala, kusala citta arises, but in between also akusala cittas arise when we are attached to them. A kind and generous friend brought us several times at luncheon a special dessert. We appreciated her kindness but also akusala cittas with attachment arose. Acharn remarked: "Everything is dhamma." We are likely to forget this and we take kusala citta and akusala citta for self. When we find it important to have kusala citta instead of akusala citta we cling again to the idea of self. Everything is dhamma, non-self. Whatever arises is conditioned.

Jonathan remarked that the teaching is about the understanding of the presently arisen dhammas. It does not matter whether there is attachment or not, also attachment can be object of awareness and right understanding. We should not limit the dhammas that can be object of awareness. Instead of just wanting to have more kusala in a day one should have more understanding of whatever dhamma arises at the present moment.

During the discussions several questions about samatha or the development of calm were raised. Acharn explained that we should consider what true calm is: being away from akusala. In samatha calm is developed to a high degree so that jhāna can be attained.

Calm suppresses the hindrances⁴ and it is opposed to restlessness, uddhacca.

The aim of samatha is to be free from sense impressions that are bound up with defilements. Right understanding is necessary for the development of calm, there has to be precise understanding of the characteristic of calm so that it is known when kusala citta with calm arises and when attachment to calm arises.

There is also calm in the development of insight. Acharn explained that every moment of kusala is calm, there are no attachment, aversion or ignorance. Every kusala citta is accompanied by the cetasika calm, passaddhi⁵. When there is right understanding of nāma and rūpa, the six doors are guarded at that moment and there is true calm. When one has not heard the Buddha's teachings, one

⁴ The hindrances (nīvaraṇa) are the defilements of sensuous desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, doubt.

⁵ Actually, there are two cetasikas which are passaddhi: calm of body (kāya passaddhi) and calm of mind (citta passaddhi). Calm of body pertains to the mental body: And here 'body' means the three (mental) aggregates, feeling, perception and formations, see Dhs.40.

knows about good and bad deeds, but there is no precise understanding. There is no understanding of realities as non-self. One may take for calm what is not calm and cling to a conventional idea of calm which is actually a feeling of relaxation with attachment.

People are inclined to believe that there is awareness, sati, when one observes what one is doing. Sarah said that the idea of observing is not sati that naturally arises. No one can stop akusala citta from arising. Through more understanding of dhammas as anattā there will be less the idea of observing or selecting an object of awareness.

At the end of the sessions one of the nuns spoke very well on the development of right understanding. She used to think that she could attain nibbāna during this life, but now she realized that the development of understanding is bound to take a very long time. She had understood that one should not cling to terms, but truly understand characteristics of realities. She appreciated the Dhamma she had heard and she had understood that the conditions for understanding are listening and wise consideration of what one hears.

Chapter 3

Diverse Topics of Discussion

“This life was the future life of last life, and it will be the past life of the next life.” Acharn repeated this many times during our journey in order to remind us that we are at this moment in the cycle of birth and death. We cling to our family and friends, but they will not follow us to the next life. We find our life very important, but this life will be past life very soon, since each life does not last long. Then we will not remember who were our dear ones.

During all the discussions in Vietnam and also in the different locations in Thailand where we stayed, questions were raised about life and death, kamma and its result, conditions for kusala and akusala, the development of calm and of insight. In all her answers, Acharn would help the listeners to understand the present reality. She said many times that each word of the Buddha’s teachings leads to right understanding of reality now.

She said that we should even understand one word: “dhamma”, and she explained: “Dhamma is a reality, but it is no one. At the moment of seeing it is a dhamma. At the moment of hearing it is a different dhamma. By different conditions it arises and falls away, there is no self, no one at all.”

Whatever is real is dhamma. Time and again a dhamma appears through one of the senses or the mind-door. Whatever appears now is a reality that is conditioned. Otherwise it could not arise at all. Paññā of the level of pariyatti can begin to understand the characteristic of whatever appears, and there is no need to name it. Pariyatti is not book study. Realities work their own way by themselves, no one can make them arise. When this has been understood we are less inclined to cling to a collection of things, a whole, or a being, like before. Understanding leads to detachment.

There are two kinds of reality: the reality that experiences an object or nāma and the reality that does not know anything, or rūpa. Seeing experiences an object, it is nāma, whereas visible object does not know anything, it is rūpa. When seeing arises there is also visible object but they have different characteristics and these can be known one at a time. This cannot be realized in the beginning, but when paññā is more developed it can distinguish their different characteristics. Understanding of the level of pariyatti is not sufficient yet to understand directly just one reality at a time.

Acharn reminded us time and again: “Study one reality at a time, until one sees it as not self. We may say: ‘seeing is a reality’, but that is not enough. We should be careful in considering what is heard: ‘Seeing sees what?’ It takes time to get used to the fact that what appears is not self. It is only a dhamma that can impinge on the eyebase and that arises and falls away. When we think: ‘I see someone or something’ the understanding is not enough.”

When we cling to the idea that a flower is seen, a table is seen, we have to listen to the Dhamma and consider the truth again and again in order to have less ignorance. The Buddha and his great disciples recognized different people and saw different things such as a mountain or table, but they had no wrong view, they clearly distinguished between ultimate realities and conventional truth or concepts that can be objects of thinking.

People usually think of life and death in conventional sense. However, the Buddha’s teachings lead to the understanding of what is real in the ultimate sense: citta, cetasika, rūpa and nibbāna. Everything else is conventional truth, not ultimate truth. The last moment of life is a citta, the dying-consciousness, cuti-citta. It depends on kamma when it is time for the arising of the cuti-citta and nobody can prevent its arising. It is immediately followed by the rebirth-consciousness, paṭisandhi-citta, of the next life. The dying-consciousness and the rebirth-consciousness are both results of kamma, vipākacittas. Kusala citta and akusala citta may have the intensity to motivate deeds, kusala kamma and akusala kamma through body, speech or mind. Kamma is actually the cetasika volition or cetanā. When it is kusala kamma or akusala kamma it can produce result, vipāka. Kamma can produce vipāka in the form of rebirth-consciousness and in the course of life by way of pleasant and unpleasant experiences through eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body-consciousness.

Kusala kamma and akusala kamma are mental and, thus, they can be accumulated from one citta to the next citta and so also from past lives to the rebirth-consciousness of this life. All the kammās that have been accumulated and are carried on to the rebirth-consciousness have the potential to produce their appropriate results in the following lives. The rebirth-consciousness is followed by other cittas, bhavanga-cittas or life-continuum. These cittas are also vipākacittas produced by the same kamma that produced the rebirth-consciousness and they experience the same object as the rebirth-consciousness. We do not know what that object is, it is not experienced through any one of the six doorways. They arise throughout life at those moments that there is not the experience of objects through one of the six doorways by cittas arising in processes of cittas, such as seeing, hearing or thinking. Thus, they arise time and again in between the dif-

ferent processes of cittas. They also arise in deep sleep, when we are not dreaming. They keep the continuity in the life of an individual.

Seeing is vipākacitta and it arises in a process of cittas. It is preceded and followed by other cittas that do not see but nevertheless experience visible object while they perform other functions. A rūpa such as visible object lasts longer than citta, it is experienced by several cittas arising in a process. Seeing is only one moment of experiencing visible object and it falls away immediately. Very shortly after it has fallen away kusala cittas or akusala cittas that experience the same visible object arise and fall away very rapidly. They experience it with wholesomeness or unwholesomeness and this is conditioned by the wholesome or unwholesome inclinations that have been accumulated from one citta to the next one. When that sense-door process is over it is followed by a mind-door process which experiences visible object through the mind-door and later on there are other mind-door processes which think about the visible object.

During our life the experience of pleasant objects and unpleasant objects alternate: gain and loss, fame and obscurity, praise and blame, bodily wellbeing and pain. These are among the “worldly conditions” the Buddha spoke about. The moments of vipāka are extremely brief and when we think of the source of our experiences, they are already gone. The moments of thinking are no longer vipāka, but usually akusala cittas and these are conditioned by the accumulation of akusala in the past. This type of condition is different from kamma that produces vipāka⁶. When someone else speaks in a harsh way to us, we are inclined to blame that person and we take the unpleasant experience for “mine”. Then we do not think wisely about cause and result. In the ultimate sense there are only conditioned realities that just arise and appear very shortly. Kamma produces hearing which is vipāka, and thinking with akusala citta is caused by our accumulated defilements. There is no person who inflicts sorrow upon another person and no person who experiences it. There are only conditioned realities arising and falling away.

Cittas arising in a process do so in a specific order while they perform each their own function. The citta that adverts to an object that presents itself arises before seeing or another one of the sense-cognitions, and kusala cittas or akusala cittas arise later on in that process. One may wonder what the use is of knowing such details. The Buddha taught proximity-condition, *anantara-paccaya* of cittas,

⁶ Kusala kamma or akusala kamma that produces later on its appropriate result, vipāka, is one type of condition, kamma-condition. Wholesome and unwholesome inclinations that have been accumulated can condition the arising of kusala citta or akusala citta later on and that is another type of condition: natural decisive support-condition, *pakatūpanissaya-paccaya*.

meaning that cittas succeed one another: when one citta falls away it is immediately succeeded by the next one. He also taught contiguity-condition, *samanantara-paccaya*, meaning that cittas succeed one another in a fixed order that cannot be altered. This clearly shows the nature of *anattā* of cittas, they cannot be directed or controlled. There isn't anybody who is master of the cittas that arise and could change the order of their arising.

We are in the cycle of birth and death right now. *Vipākacitta* arises by way of an experience through one of the sense-doors, and then defilements are likely to arise. These may motivate *kamma* and *kamma* produces *vipāka*. Again defilements will arise and motivate *kamma* that produces *vipāka*. In this way the cycle goes on and on. All this occurs now, anywhere, at any time.

Many times Acharn said that we should not cling to names and terms, but that we should understand the characteristics of realities that appear. Citta is the faculty of experiencing an object and it is assisted by at least seven *cetasikas* that accompany it, such as feeling, remembrance (*saññā*), one-pointedness (*ekaggata cetasika*). When we read about *cetasikas* such as energy or effort (in Pali: *virīya*), we may think of their meaning in conventional sense, and then misunderstandings may arise. We believe that a self can make an effort to have more *kusala* and right understanding. We should remember that the *cetasika virīya* may arise with many cittas though not with all cittas, not with seeing and the other sense-cognitions and a few other cittas. Thus, effort may be *kusala*, right effort, or *akusala*, wrong effort. When we make an effort to have *kusala citta*, we are likely to cling to an idea of self who wants to direct cittas. Without knowing it we may take wrong effort for right effort. When understanding of the present reality is developed more, it is *paññā* that will know when citta and *cetasikas* are *akusala* and when *kusala*. We cannot find out by thinking about it. Several times we were warned not to try to work things out, then there is just thinking with an idea of self behind it.

We learn from the texts that some *cetasikas* are roots, *hetus*. Ignorance (*moha*) attachment (*lobha*) and aversion (*dosa*) are three *akusala hetus*. Understanding (*paññā* or *amoha*), non-attachment (*alobha*) and non-aversion (*adosa*) are three *sobhana hetus*, beautiful roots. A root, *hetu*, is the foundation of *akusala citta* or *kusala citta*. Ignorance accompanies every *akusala citta*. Acharn explained the roots with examples from daily life in order to help us to know their characteristics when they appear. They are not just classifications in the textbook and we should remember this whenever we read about the different cittas, *cetasikas* and *rūpas*. She said:

“We are attached to what is completely gone, but because of moha, ignorance, it seems to last. Each word of the Buddha pertains to right understanding of realities. Akusala hetu and sobhana hetu are opposites. At this moment of not understanding realities there is moha. A moment of understanding is not self but paññā cetasika. The subtlety of the teachings is that they are all about now. Otherwise it would be useless to listen, there would only be different words. What we take for the world are only citta, cetasika and rūpa. It is not you who understands but paññā cetasika. Each reality is different at each moment. Moha takes realities as a whole, such as a flower. Without seeing colours can there be a concept of flower?

When there is right understanding there is some detachment from ignorance and clinging. Life is like a dream, the world of people, ‘I’ and things. Actually, there is no one, only realities arising and falling away in succession....

There is seeing; it is citta, it is accompanied by cetasikas. Learn to understand that it is not ‘I’, that it is citta. There can be conditions for direct experience, paṭipatti. Without pariyaatti this is impossible. The Buddha did not tell anybody to gain it. He taught to understand what appears now, as it is. If this is not known how can there be paṭipatti. If paññā is not fully developed there will never be the realization of the four noble Truths, paṭivedha. Who knows what has been accumulated from aeons ago up until now.”

Most of the time there is forgetfulness of realities instead of the development of understanding. We have accumulated so much ignorance and forgetfulness.

Sarah gave us some good reminders about forgetfulness of realities. She said:

“There is forgetfulness and it is just a dhamma, falling away instantly. There is not my understanding or my forgetfulness. If we think: ‘How can I have less forgetfulness’ there is more attachment. It can be known when it appears as just a conditioned reality in daily life. We always follow the objects of desire and how ridiculous is this, because they fall away instantly. Like this morning, we were clinging to visible object, clinging to sound, but they have fallen away, just to be forgotten. Like now, who can remember them. Usually there is so much attachment to pleasant feeling, and we are disturbed by unpleasant feeling. Attachment is so common, it is not a matter of trying not to have it, trying not to be forgetful. But we should just understand what appears at this moment.”

We all have defilements that we would rather suppress instead of knowing them as conditioned dhammas. The sotāpanna, the person who has eradicated wrong

view and wrong practice, knows all the defilements that arise as only a dhamma, non-self. It may be ignorance, forgetfulness, subtle or strong lobha or conceit, māna. Their characteristics can only be known as they arise and appear at the present moment. If we do not realize as they are the defilements that arise, they will never be eradicated. Paññā can only investigate attachment when it has arisen. Paññā of the level of satipaṭṭhāna understands attachment little by little.

Chapter 4

The Benefit of listening

The understanding of anattā begins with listening, considering, investigating the present reality. If the Buddha had not taught the truth of realities we would not know that seeing is not self, hearing or thinking are not self. We can never listen and consider enough. Acharn repeated what she had said before about the three kinds of gocara⁷, resorts or objects: upanissaya gocara, the object that is a strong support; arakkha gocara, the object that is a protection; upanibandha gocara, the object that one can depend on.

Upanissaya gocara is the object that is a strong support; there should be considering, understanding right now. Seeing is not self. Without visible object and eyebase there is no seeing. The explanations of dhammas, realities, can be a strong support to hear more, consider more, develop understanding, so that it will be a protection, arakkha gocara, from akusala, from ignorance and attachment. Acharn said about upanibhandha gocara, resort as anchoring:

“This is not going away from reality right now, not going astray to such or such story. But what is there now?”

We are often absorbed in stories, conventional realities, with attachment or worry. We think of the future, of what will happen to “self” in the future. Then we forget that whatever pleasant or unpleasant experiences we have is conditioned by kamma of the past. We think with defilements and if we had not listened to the teachings we would not know that whatever problem we have in life is caused by our own defilements. Acharn explained about understanding ultimate realities:

“Seeing arises and falls away, without understanding at all. It has to be direct understanding with direct awareness of a reality which arises and falls away. If it is not direct how can there be the understanding of the arising and falling away of realities? Seeing experiences just visible object. Where is my hand? Seeing is conditioned. Hardness appears only at the moment of touching, it is

⁷ Gocara is resort or pasture. The Visuddhimagga, I, 49-51 mentions three kinds: resort as support, as guarding and as anchoring. Proper resort as support, upanissaya, is a good friend “in whose presence one hears what has not been heard, corrects what has been heard, gets rid of doubt, rectifies one’s view, and gains confidence: or by training under whom one grows in faith, virtue, learning, generosity and understanding.” As to proper resort as guarding (arakkha), here the Visuddhimagga gives an example of the bhikkhu who is restrained. As to proper resort as anchoring (upanibhandha), this is the four foundations of mindfulness.

gone completely. Each moment there is a reality that experiences an object. There are many things in this room, how many moments of that which experiences are there to condition that which is seen as some ‘thing’, as images of this or that?”

On account of what is seen we think of many things like persons or trees, but do we realize that there must be countless moments of seeing arising and falling away to condition thinking of concepts? Seeing arises and falls away again and again and visible object appears again and again. This gives us an idea of continuity. In reality, dhammas arise and fall away extremely rapidly and only a sign or nimitta is left of them when they have fallen away already. One unit of rūpa and one citta is not known, only a sign or nimitta of a dhamma is known, as Acharn reminded us time and again. One clings to that which has gone, but only a sign is left. The reality and its nimitta can be compared to a sound and its echo. Saññā, the cetasika remembrance, marks and remembers visible object so that we perceive shape and form and this leads to recognizing different people. We remember a person wrongly as permanent. We hear many things Acharn had said before, but it is most beneficial to hear it again, to consider it again and again. This is the way understanding can gradually grow.

Acharn had spoken before about subtle defilements that arise and that are unknown. It is beneficial to hear about these again since this reminds us how little we know. It reminds us that listening and considering the Dhamma has to continue on so that understanding can grow. There are countless defilements arising that are unknown. The Buddha taught different aspects and different intensities of defilements. He taught about the subtle defilements, intoxicants or āsavas⁸. It seems that after seeing or hearing that arise now nothing else is appearing, but subtle defilements that are unknown are bound to arise after seeing and the other sense-cognitions.

Very soon after seeing has arisen and fallen away there may be a subtle clinging that is unknown. Attachment is bound to arise on account of the experience of all the sense objects, of visible object, sound, odour, flavour and tangible object. Attachment to sense objects conditions rebirth again. Attachment is a danger, but it has to be understood as a conditioned dhamma, not to be suppressed. If it is not known when it appears as only a conditioned dhamma, it can never be eradicated.

⁸ These are: the canker of sensuous desire (kā mā sava), the canker of becoming (bhavā sava), the canker of wrong view (diṭṭhā sava), the canker of ignorance (avijjā sava).

After we returned from Vietnam, a side trip to Samir Sakorn was organised the next day by Khun Keowta for a group of Thais and I was invited as well. We stayed for two days in “Ravi Home Resort” and Khun Keowta paid for our whole stay as a gift of Dhamma. We appreciated her generosity. We had a short walk to a pavillion in the middle of nature where we had a copious luncheon. A choir was singing songs for Acharn, anticipating her birthday the next day. The next day films were shown with fragments of her life, there were songs with words of praise and poems were recited in honour of her. In the morning everyone entered the room where she stayed and paid respect to her. Actually, paying respect to her is paying respect to the Dhamma. The best respect we can show is listening to the Dhamma and discussing it. Someone made a touching speech, mentioning that his father listened to Acharn’s radio programs and since his father had put on the radio, he could not help listening too from his childhood on. It is so fortunate to be born a human so that we have an opportunity to hear the Dhamma. We cannot be sure to have such an opportunity the next life. He expressed with a song Acharn’s merit.

There were several sessions with Dhamma conversations. Acharn explained that most people want to eradicate quickly attachment, lobha, the second Truth. However, first wrong view of self should be eradicated. As long as we take realities for self, defilements cannot be eradicated. When we learn that whatever reality appears is only a conditioned dhamma that cannot be controlled, we shall gradually attach less importance to them.

She also explained that we may cling with wrong view, diṭṭhi, or without wrong view, or with conceit, māna. Clinging without diṭṭhi may arise, for example, when we dress ourselves or when we are eating delicious food. There need not be any wrong view at such moments. When there is conceit we find ourselves important. Conceit may arise because of beauty, possessions, rank or work. Or because of one's skills, knowledge, education or wisdom. There may be the wish to advertise oneself because of these things. We like to be honoured and praised. When we are dissatisfied with the way other people treat us there are bound to be moments of aversion, but there may also be moments of conceit. We find ourselves important and we are disturbed when others do not treat us the way we like to be treated. We tend to have prejudices about certain people, even about our relatives, we may look down on them. We should find out whether we have conceit when we are together with other people. There are many moments of forgetfulness and then we do not notice when there is conceit. A moment of conceit, of upholding ourselves, can arise so easily.

There were a few other trips in Thailand with Dhamma conversations in English. We went to Nakorn Nayok, to a place where we had been before. Vietnamese friends joined us and the sessions were held in their bungalow. They arranged everything for us with great hospitality, setting out the chairs, serving us drinks and snacks. They helped me with great kindness in many ways, when I was tired while walking. We had breakfast and other meals in the restaurant near a waterfall, and Tran Thai made delicious Vietnamese coffee for me.

We also went together with our Vietnamese friends to Kaeng Krachan, the place where Acharn and Khun Duangduen often stay. When we arrived at Kaeng Krachan, Sarah and Jonothan had to undergo a test of patience. Although our bungalows were reserved ahead of time, they were not available since the former occupants did not want to leave. Sarah and Jonothan spoke to the office and waited for a very long time. At last bungalows were assigned to us. I was in a bungalow next to Ann and Glen. One morning Ann helped me walking back from the restaurant which is on a hill, to the bungalow, in one hand holding Glen's breakfast in a covered dish to keep his toast and eggs warm and with the other hand giving me a support while walking.

We had at first sessions outside in the garden but since a cold wind was blowing one of our friends, Khun Bencia, brought shawls for everyone. Later on we continued the sessions in the bungalow of our Vietnamese friends. In the early morning they were already sweeping the place and cleaning up before setting out all our chairs. I came early and could lie down on a long chair enjoying the view of nature outside. Our friends made me feel at home.

During all our discussions we were reminded that book study, remembrance of names and terms, is not the same as understanding the reality that appears at the present moment. Acharn said:

“We better not go far away to other subjects, but what about now? The reality which is seen cannot be the reality which sees it. It takes years, a long time, to realize this. Seeing, the experience, has no shape and form. Attend more to seeing now. Get closer to whatever is now: hearing now, thinking now. Otherwise we are lost in the world of words and thinking. This is the beginning of the development of the perfections, *pāramīs*: really understanding that there is no one, only different elements. We do not have to call it *pāramī*, but the understanding begins to develop and this is the beginning of the *pāramīs*. No matter what kind of kusala arises, when there is no understanding it is not a perfection.

For right understanding to be keen and very firm, it needs the perfections of truthfulness, resolution and the other perfections because there is not enough

accumulation of kusala. At the moment of kusala citta there are no attachment, lobha, aversion, dosa, and ignorance, moha. Each moment is conditioned and nobody can change it.”

Seeing sees visible object, but they are different realities. Seeing is a mental reality, nāma, and visible object is a physical reality, rūpa. Even so, hearing is nāma and sound is rūpa. Nāma and rūpa have different characteristics, but, as Acharn said, it takes a long time to directly understand these different characteristics. Only paññā that precisely understands the present reality can distinguish different characteristics of realities.

Listening to the Dhamma at this moment and all the moments of considering it are not in vain, but they are accumulated, not lost. The understanding of realities at this moment falls away together with the citta it accompanies, but understanding is accumulated from one citta to the following citta and, thus, there are conditions for the arising of understanding again.

Towards the end of my stay in Thailand a short journey was organized for a group of Thai friends to Chiangmai, Lampun and Chiengrai, in the North of Thailand. Ann, Glen and I joined this group. Acharn explained that paññā can understand sound appearing now. The future has not come yet and what is past has gone. What has fallen away cannot be known. Acharn reminds us time and again to investigate the present moment, since that is the only way to penetrate the truth of nāma and rūpa. Sometimes there are conditions for the arising of sati, sometimes not, nobody can cause the arising of sati. We may enjoy our meal but when sati does not arise there is ignorance of realities such as hardness or flavour which may appear.

I was mentioning that appreciating someone else's good deed is kusala citta, but that also akusala citta arises with attachment to that person. Cittas arise and fall away so rapidly and therefore it is difficult to distinguish between kusala and akusala. Acharn said: “Everything is dhamma is the answer. Not self.” I said that I often forget that understanding is not self. Khun Unnop remarked: “The idea of self has not been eradicated yet.” When akusala citta arises paññā can know it as a dhamma, not self and this is most important.

Straight after the afternoon session in Chiangmai we went to Lampun, to visit an annex to “Dhamma Home” in Chiangmai. This was the first time for Acharn to visit this place. It was a traditional Thai house that had to be reached by following a path that went high up. Khun Porntip had bought this house to be used for regular Dhamma meetings. We were received with warm hospitality and many different kinds of food were offered to us. First Acharn had a more pri-

vate conversation with friends who were very interested in the development of right understanding. Then there was a general introduction by everyone who was present, very informal and friendly. We returned late to Chiangmai where we had another session the next morning, and after that we went by car to Chiangrai, to a meditation center we had visited last year. There we were received by the same kind lady we knew from last year. She is a very keen listener to Acharn's explanations of the Dhamma. Acharn said that paññā cannot be developed quickly, that it takes a long time. But we should not be neglectful since life is very short. Khun Unnop remarked that the problem is that it is unknown when there is neglectfulness.

Acharn explained about seeing: "Seeing now is seeing, it is not eye-sight or visible object. It is the result of kamma. Pleasant and unpleasant objects are seen, we cannot select any object. We cannot know whether the object that is seen is pleasant or unpleasant, cittas arise and fall away very rapidly." It seems that we see immediately people and things, but that is thinking on account of what is seen, it is not the experience of visible object.

Acharn explained that we have to look into the mirror, and then we shall know when we are in the world of ignorance. It seems that we are really inside the mirror, but when we touch the mirror only hardness appears.

We climbed up a hill where our hostess had a delicious luncheon prepared so that we could enjoy the meal and the view outside. In between we talked about Dhamma.

Chapter 5

The Four Noble Truths

After the Dhamma sessions in Saigon we went for a few days to Muine, a sea-side resort at the Chinese South Sea. Here we discussed the four noble Truths. In his first sermon the Buddha explained the four noble Truths. We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (V, Mahāvagga, Ch II, § 1, Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dhamma)⁹:

“Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Bārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There the Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus of the group of five thus: ‘Bhikkhus, these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone forth into homelessness. What two? The pursuit of sensual happiness in sensual pleasures, which is low, vulgar, the way of worldlings, ignoble, unbeneficial; and the pursuit of self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, unbeneficial. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata has awakened to the middle way, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

And what, bhikkhus, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathāgata, which gives rise to vision... which leads to Nibbāna? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention¹⁰, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration...

Now this, bhikkhus is the noble truth of suffering¹¹: birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering, union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.

Now this, bhikkhus is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied

⁹ I used the translation by Ven. Bodhi.

¹⁰ Ven. Bodhi and other translators have right intention, but sammā-sankappa is right thinking. Intention is the usual translation of cetanā cetasika, but this is not a factor of the eightfold Path.

¹¹ This is the translation of dukkha.

by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination.

Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonreliance on it.

Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view... right concentration.

‘This is the noble truth of suffering’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

‘This noble truth of suffering is to be fully understood’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

‘This noble truth of suffering has been fully understood’: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.”

The same is said about the origin of suffering, its cessation and the Path leading to its cessation.

In the preceding text we see three rounds or phases:

Sacca ñāṇa: ‘this is the noble truth of suffering’, clear understanding of all dhammas in daily life appearing now that are dukkha. All conditioned realities that are impermanent, are dukkha.

This is pariyatti, but pariyatti is not theory, it pertains to the dhamma that appears at the present moment. Sacca ñāṇa is pariyatti that has become firm so that it can condition direct understanding.

Kicca ñāṇa: ‘Now this noble truth of suffering ought to be fully understood’.

Understanding the task (kicca), the development of direct understanding of the characteristics of all dhammas as they appear one at a time through the senses and the mind-door. This is satipaṭṭhāna, and this is the way dhammas will be directly known as impermanent, dukkha and non-self.

Kata ñāṇa: ‘Now this noble truth of suffering has been fully understood’.

This refers to the direct realization, paṭivedha, of the truth that is reached when understanding of realities has been developed.

These three rounds pertain to each one of the four noble truths, and, thus, there are twelve modes of the three rounds. Kicca ñāṇa begins when awareness and right understanding is developed of all realities appearing through the six doors. This is the only way eventually to realize the cessation of dukkha.

Acharn often mentioned the levels of pariyatti, paṭipatti and paṭivedha, and the three rounds of sacca ñāṇa, kicca ñāṇa and kata ñāṇa. People may think that after reading the texts it is time for them to practise. They do not realize that the right conditions are necessary for paññā to develop stage by stage and that is likely to take many lives.

In Muine we discussed the different stages of understanding the noble Truths. Acharn asked us whether the understanding of the first noble Truth, of dukkha, is firm enough. Paññā should know nothing else but what appears now. What else will be the realization of dukkha if it is not understanding of what appears now.

In the sutta quoted above we read about all the different aspects of dukkha, and at the end the Buddha said: “the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.” The five khandhas are all conditioned realities. They arise and fall away instantly, and, thus, they are dukkha, not worth clinging to. Thus, the first noble Truth of dukkha is not merely bodily and mental suffering, it is the unsatisfactoriness due to the impermanence of all conditioned realities.

Acharn explained: “There should be no trying to understand the four noble Truths, but now is the first noble Truth. The impermanence of this moment is so fast that it seems that nothing arises and falls away. Detach from the idea of ‘I’ or something permanent. Pariyatti is not hearing or thinking but study of what appears now. There should be more understanding of non-self. There is seeing, but no understanding of seeing. We need hearing more and more so that there are conditions for direct understanding in daily life only, of different elements arising by different conditions.”

The succession of dhammas is so rapid that they seem to stay. Acharn said that it seems to us that we see not visible object but people, that we hear words, not sound, because of the continuous arising and falling away of realities. The first Truth is very subtle and there can be wise consideration arising just because of

conditions. In other words, there is no self who can make wise consideration arise.

Acharn said that we cling to nothing. What has fallen away is no more, but we still cling to it. We shall not understand what dukkha is if we are ignorant of the reality appearing now. We have to distinguish between what is reality now and what is only a conventional idea or “story”. Visible object is a reality, it arises and falls away. On account of what is seen we think of “something”, such as a glass or a tree. These are ideas, not realities that can be experienced one at a time through one of the six doorways.

Acharn explained that attachment and ignorance are the cause of dukkha. We are attached to all objects we experience but we do not realize when attachment arises. We fall into the trap of lobha time and again. Whatever arises does so since it is conditioned by ignorance and attachment. There is not yet direct awareness and direct understanding, but it is sacca ñāṇa that really understands what causes the arising of dukkha. The first Truth should be known and the second Truth should be abandoned.

When intellectual understanding of the level of pariyatti is firm it is sacca ñāṇa: clear understanding of all dhammas in daily life that are dukkha. One does not move away from the present object.

Nibbāna is the end of attachment, and there can be firm understanding that there is freedom from conditioned realities that are arising and falling away and that are unsatisfactory. One can come to understand that there is an unconditioned reality that is the end to dukkha and one will have strong confidence that there can be the direct realization of nibbāna.

There is a way to reach the end of the cycle of birth and death and that is the development of the eightfold Path, the fourth Truth. When understanding of the Path has become well established one does not deviate from the right Path anymore. One does not search for another practice in order to reach the goal more quickly. The more understanding grows, the less one clings to a result.

When there is firm confidence in the four noble Truths there can be a condition for direct awareness and understanding which is the second round of the four noble Truths, kicca ñāṇa.

Acharn said: “There will be detachment gradually, all the time, at the moment of understanding. When hearing the Dhamma one finds it so difficult, but since it is the teaching of the Enlightened One how can it be easy? But by having con-

confidence there begins to be direct understanding or satipaṭṭhāna of whatever appears now, by conditions. The more right understanding grows, the more we see the anattaness and it becomes firmer and firmer. It is very natural.”

I asked whether the understanding of the arising and falling away of the present reality is already a highly developed paññā.

Acharn answered: “Of what degree, of the level of sacca ñāṇa or of kicca ñāṇa? Sacca ñāṇa is not kicca ñāṇa.”

I asked: “How can arising and falling away be understood on the level of sacca ñāṇa?”

Acharn said: “Is seeing now permanent? Is thinking now permanent?”

I answered that they are impermanent.

Acharn explained that the fact that I said that they are impermanent showed that there is more confidence in the truth.

The second round, kicca ñāṇa, of the four noble Truths is satipaṭṭhāna, direct awareness and understanding of whatever reality appears. When right awareness arises it can be known that it is uncontrollable. It arises unexpectedly, by conditions. Hearing Dhamma at this moment and considering the truth of it is never lost, it is accumulated in the following cittas, on and on, so that there are conditions for its arising again. Like now, we may have a little understanding of explanations about realities, and such moments do not stay. Other cittas arise that experience for example a pleasant flavour we enjoy. We may be absorbed in savoury food. But still, in all those different cittas there is paññā accumulated. Then we listen again to the Dhamma and there is a new opportunity for the arising of understanding. Each time we understand a little more, a little more.

Patience is needed in the development of understanding and one should not be discouraged if paññā does not arise often. If it would be impossible to develop paññā of the levels of sacca ñāṇa, of kicca ñāṇa and even of kata ñāṇa, the Buddha would not teach it.

We read in the “Gradual Sayings, Book of the Twos, Ch II, § 9¹² that the Buddha said:

¹² I used the translation of Ven. Nyanaponika, BPS Kandy 1970.

“Abandon evil, O monks! One can abandon evil, O monks! If it were impossible to abandon evil, I would not ask you to do so. But as it can be done, therefore I say ‘Abandon evil!’

If this abandoning of evil would bring harm and suffering, I would not ask you to abandon it. But as the abandoning of evil brings weal and happiness, therefore I say, ‘Abandon evil!’

Cultivate the good, O monks! One can cultivate what is good, O monks. If it were impossible to cultivate the good, I would not ask you to do so. But as it can be done, therefore I say, ‘Cultivate the good!’

If this cultivation of the good would bring harm and suffering, I would not ask you to cultivate it. But as the cultivation of the good brings weal and happiness, therefore I say, ‘Cultivate the good!’ ”

People wonder about the characteristic of sati. Sati or awareness accompanies every citta. It is non-forgetful of the object citta experiences. When we are giving with generosity, the kusala citta is non-forgetful of generosity. When intellectual understanding of the present reality arises, sati is non-forgetful of that reality. When understanding of the level of satipaṭṭhāna arises sati is non-forgetful of the nāma or rūpa that appears. At that moment sati is mindful and paññā understands the characteristic of the present reality.

When people read in the “Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta” that the bhikkhu should be aware while he is standing, walking, sitting or lying down, they take this as a specific practice. However, the Buddha taught that there can be awareness of realities during all one’s daily activities very naturally, no matter in what situation. Someone asked when he intends to drink and takes up a glass whether that is mindfulness. At that moment one thinks of a situation and of concepts such as a glass, whereas sati of the level of satipaṭṭhāna is mindful of one nāma or rūpa as it appears through one of the six doorways. It is essential to know when one is thinking of concepts or ideas and when there is mindfulness of one reality at a time. When one touches a glass hardness may appear and this may be known as a kind of rūpa, a physical reality, and then one does not think of a “thing” that stays.

When one has the intention to be aware, there is still the idea of self who wants to know realities. At the moment of right understanding of realities as they ap-

pear one at a time there is no one, no world, only the experience and that which is experienced. Paññā abandons attachment to wrong practice.

The reality that experiences an object is quite different from the reality that does not experience anything. Each citta must experience an object, if there were no citta nothing could appear. We have heard this many times, but it always seems new to us, we did not consider this enough. When hardness appears or seeing appears the truth of realities can be investigated so that pariyatti can become firm intellectual understanding, sacca ñāṇa, which can condition direct understanding, satipaṭṭhāna. I am most grateful for all the explanations and reminders of the truth given by Acharn and friends. Those are the greatest treasures one could possibly receive. All the discussions we had are a way of sharing the gift of Dhamma.

Hardness appears at the moment of touching. It is not a table, it is not my hand but it is only a reality: a khanda, an element, an āyatana¹³, dukkha ariya sacca, a reality that arises and falls away. All conditioned realities are impermanent and dukkha and all dhammas, including nibbāna, are anattā. What the Buddha taught was not his own invention, he taught the true nature of all realities. He had by his supreme wisdom penetrated the truth and he taught the truth to others. The Sammāsambuddha had realized all by himself, through his enlightenment, the truth of all dhammas.

We read in the “Gradual Sayings,” Book of the Threes, Ch XIV, §134, Appearance, that the Buddha said:

“Monks, whether there be an appearance or non-appearance of a Tathāgata, this causal law of nature, this orderly fixing of dhammas prevails, namely, all phenomena are impermanent. About this a Tathāgata is fully enlightened, he fully understands it. So enlightened and understanding he declares, teaches and makes it plain. He shows it, he opens it up, explains and makes it clear: this fact that all phenomena are impermanent.”

The same is said about the truth that all conditioned dhammas are dukkha and that all dhammas are non-self.

¹³ Realities can be classified as āyatanas. The inner āyatanas are: the eyesense and the other senses and citta, and the outer āyatanas are: the sense objects and dhammāyatana, including cetasikas, subtle rūpas and nibbāna. The āyatanas show the aspect of association of realities for the experience of objects.

The Buddha respected the Dhamma he had penetrated. We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (I, Sagāthāvagga, Ch VI, §2, Holding in Reverence) that the Buddha, shortly after his enlightenment, while staying at Uruvelā, was considering to whom he could pay respect. But he could find nobody in the world who was more accomplished than himself in morality, concentration, insight, emancipation, or knowledge of emancipation. We then read that he said:

“This Dhamma then, wherein I am supremely enlightened –
what if I were to live under It, paying It honour and respect.”
