

# “Mine”

## The Nature of Craving

[Craving, eternalism and nihilism]

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### 1 The nature of worldly experience

**1.1 THE DYNAMICS OF EXPERIENCE.** In this paper, we will examine the nature of craving, and its relationship with the extreme views of eternalism and nihilism: we are of course discussing the conditions that lead to the arising of suffering, that is, the second noble truth. Before we can have some useful working idea of craving (*taṇhā*), it is helpful to understand how we experience the world around us and inside us.

According to the **Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18) and the **Mahā Hatthi, padopama Sutta** (M 28.8), sense-experience begins when these three conditions concur: the sense-faculty (say, the eye), its sense-object (a visible form), and proper attention towards the object. Then there follows sense-stimulus (contact, *phassa*), for example, seeing.<sup>1</sup> The Suttas then, each in their own words, go on to explain how suffering arises and how it ends.<sup>2</sup>

The **Mahā, nidāna Sutta** (D 15) explains that we experience *only two kinds of phenomena*: the physical and the mental.

Ānanda, how name-and-form (*nāma, rūpa*) conditions contact should be known in this manner:

(1) If, Ānanda, there were no qualities, traits, signs and indicators<sup>3</sup> through which there is a description [definition] (*paññatti*) of the mental body [mind-group]<sup>4</sup>—then would **conceptual impression**<sup>5</sup> manifest in the physical body?<sup>6</sup>  
“Certainly not, venerable sir.”

<sup>1</sup> M 18.16/1:111 f = SD 6.14; M 28.27/1:190 = SD 6.16. See also SD 17.8a(1.3.2).

<sup>2</sup> M 18.17-19/1:112 f = SD 6.14; M 28.27-38/1:190 f = SD 6.16. See also SD 17.8a(1.3.2).

<sup>3</sup> *Yehi ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi*. Comy: The mutually dissimilar nature of feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness, are called “qualities” (*ākāra*). They are also called “traits” (*liṅga*) because, when carefully looked at, they betray the hidden meanings (of their base) (*līnam-attha*). They are also called “signs” (*nimitta*) because they are the causes of perceiving (*sañjānana, hetuto*); and they are also called “indicators” (*uddesa*) because they are to be indicated (“pointed out”) (*uddisitabbo*) [through these the meaning is signalled or inferred]. (DA 2:500 f; DAṬ within square brackets). See text, below, for further discussion.

<sup>4</sup> *Nāma, kāya*, the “mind-group” comprises the 4 formless groups of existence (*arūpino khandhā*): feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), formations (*saṅkhārā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is distinguished from *rūpa, kāya*, the body-group, comprising form (*rūpa*), ie the 4 elements (*dhātu, mahā, bhūta*) [see SD 17.1 & 2]. We have here the first canonical occurrence of this term and also at **Pm 1:183** (where it is def as “feeling, perception, intention, contact, attention and naming are the mental body, and also what are called mind-formations, *vedanā saññā cetanā phasso manasikāro nāmañ ca, nāma, kāyo ca, ye ca vuccanti citta, saṅkhārā*) but *nāma, kāya* is mentioned by itself at **Sn 1074**. The twofold grouping (*nāma, kāya* and *rūpa, kāya*) is common in Comys. In **Dhamma, saṅgāṇī**, all phenomena are classified as 3 groups: consciousness (*citta*) (*khandha* 5), mental factors (*cetasika*) (*khandhā* 2-4) and form (*rūpa = khandha* 1).

<sup>5</sup> “Conceptual impression,” *adhivacana, samphassa*, lit “designation-contact,” referring to verbal (ie mental or conceptual) impression. Comy: “Conceptual impression is synonymous with mind-contact, which arises in the mind-door taking the four (mental) aggregates as its basis [because it is apprehended by means of designation and description]” (DA 2:501 with Subcomy). U Thittila, in his **Vbh 6** tr, renders it as “analogical contact” (Vbh: T §17/7) with the n, “Mind and mental objects do not impinge but are explained by the analogy (*adhivacana*) of physical states.” On *adhivacana* and *pañiḥa*, see Intro 5b above.

<sup>6</sup> *Yehi Ānanda ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi nāma, kāyassa paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu asati, api nu kho rūpa, kāye adhvavacana, samphasso vā pañiḥa, samphasso vā paññāyethā ti*. On *rūpa, kāya*, see n on *Nāma, kāya* above.

(2) If, Ānanda, there were no qualities, traits, signs and indicators through which there is a description of the mental body [mind-group]—then would **sense-impression**<sup>7</sup> manifest in the mental body?<sup>8</sup>

“Certainly not, venerable sir.”

(3) If, Ānanda, there were no qualities, traits, signs and indicators through which there is a description of the mental body and the physical body [the mind-group and the body-group]—then would conceptual impression or sense-impression manifest itself?”

“Certainly not, venerable sir.”

(4) If, Ānanda, there were no qualities, traits, signs and indicators through which there is a description of the name-and-form—then would there be **contact**?”

“Certainly not, venerable sir.”

“Therefore, Ānanda, this is the cause, the source, the origin, the condition for contact, that is to say, name-and-form. (D 15.20/2:62) = SD 5.17

There is a set of terms in this passage that needs some explanation, and they allow the experience to be “described” (*paññāyetha*). The terms are as follows:

- qualities *ākāra* the dissimilar nature of feeling, perception, formations and consciousness;
- traits *liṅga* they betray the hidden meaning of their base;
- signs *nimitta* they are the causes of perceiving;
- indicators *uddesa* they are to be indicated (pointed out).

Let me try to explain the meaning and context of these four terms. A sense-experience goes through fourfold process: **feeling** → **perception** → **formations** ↔ **consciousness** (note the double-headed arrow). Each of these four aggregates have their special “**quality**” (*ākāra*), that is, nature or function: *feeling* feels (gives a hedonic tone), *perception* is the recognition of the stimulus, *formations* refer to the resulting emotional reaction, and *consciousness* is the ground for this process and is in turn fed by the whole process (hence the double-headed arrow).

The sequence of “feeling → perception → formations,” however, occurs due to the support of consciousness, and in turn feeds consciousness.<sup>9</sup> This process results in what is termed “name-and-form” (*nāma,rūpa*), where “name” (*nāma*) is the recognition process and “form” (*rūpa*) is the notion that it is an existent (an existing object) based on material form. The material form here refers specifically to any of the sense-objects.<sup>10</sup>

For example, suppose we see a small furry animal that meows (name), and recognize it as a “cat” (form); or on a deeper level of explanation: we put together our pieces of mental data (like an identikit) of fur, whiskers, meowing sound, etc (form) and so recognizes the composite as “cat” (name).

Here “**trait**” (*liṅga*) refers to the meaning that we ourselves attribute to the parts of an experience: an experience is never a single event, but always a composite of numerous past memories and present impressions. Although such meanings generally comes from our early learning process and later education, we are all the time forming, adding, revising, forgetting, recalling, and re-forming such meanings. Here

<sup>7</sup> “Sense-impression,” *paṭigha,samphassa*, lit “impingement-contact,” referring to impression through sensory stimulus. Comy: Sense-impression is the contact that arises taking the contact-aggregate of form as basis (*sappaṭigham rūpa-k,khandham vatthum*) (DA 2:501), that is, contact arising through eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, and body-contact (ie the 5 physical sense-experiences). On *adhivacana* and *paṭigha*, see Intro 5b above.

<sup>8</sup> *Yehi Ānanda ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesihī rūpa,kāyassa paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu asati, api nu kho paṭigha,samphasso vā paṭigha,samphasso vā paññāyethā ti.*

<sup>9</sup> This mutual feeding between consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and name-and-form (*nāma,rūpa*) is described in **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 15.3/2:57) = SD 5.17(3), Table 1.

<sup>10</sup> Both our physical body (*kāya*) and what we sense (*visaya*), ie the range (*gocara*) of our senses, are both regarded as “form” or “matter” (*rūpa*). Here, matter is analyzed as the 4 primary elements (*mahā,dhātu*), viz, earth (or resistance, extension, solidity), water (cohesiveness, attraction of matter), fire (heat, temperature, maturation, decay), and wind (air, movement), which do not exist as separate entities, but are phases of material existence.

*meaning* means the value we attach to the experience or an aspect of it, that is, it induces us to like, dislike or ignore the stimulus. In other words, we do not *find* meaning, but we *give* meaning.<sup>11</sup>

The term “**sign**” (*nimitta*), more fully “sign and details” (*nimitta, vyañjana*),<sup>12</sup> refers to the bits and pieces of data recorded in our identikit-like memory, which we put together to form a recognizable “form” (*rūpa*). Having “recognized” the experience or event, we place indicators (*uddesa*) upon it: we not only give it meaning and react accordingly, and so project the private realities that we generally share with others by way of communication.

All that has been explained is succinctly stated in **the Mahā, nidāna Sutta** (D 15), and which is in fact the definition of cognitive consciousness,<sup>13</sup> thus:

It is thus far, Ānanda, that you can be born, decay and die, pass away and re-arise; thus far that there is a pathway for designation; thus far there is a pathway for language; thus far there is a pathway for description; thus far there is a sphere for wisdom; thus far that the round [of cyclic lives] turns for describing this [state of being], that is, when there is name-and-form together with consciousness.  
(D 15.22/2:63) = SD 5.17

**The Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43) reminds us that the apparently different processes all function together, and do not exist as separate realities:

“Feeling, perception and consciousness, avuso—these states are associated, not dissociated. And it is impossible to separate these states in order to describe their difference.

For, what you feel (*vedeti*), that you perceive (*sañjānāti*); and what you perceive, that you cognize (*vijānāti*).

Therefore these states are associated, not dissociated, and it is impossible to separate these states in order to describe their difference.”<sup>14</sup>  
(M 43/1:292 f) = SD 35.1

Feeling (*vedanā*) is affective cognition, perception (*saññā*) is discriminatory cognition (that recognizes things), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the consciousness of every part of the process as a whole. Formations (*saṅkhāra*) are not mentioned in this set which is a cognitive process: formations is part of the *conative* or willing process, that is, the formation of karma, which is some way is within the control of a well-trained mind. The conative process is when *ideas* are formed as a result of karma, or which have the potential of further karmic results.<sup>15</sup>

The key aspect of **the cognitive process** is consciousness itself, whose importance here is attested by the various names for it: consciousness (*viññāṇa*), name (*nāma*), and attention (*manasikāra*). What is it that we cognize? We cognize either physical phenomena or mental phenomena. Physical phenomena arise as the experiences of *the five physical sense-faculties*:

- seeing forms and colours;
- hearing sounds;
- smelling odours;
- tasting tastes; and
- sensing touches (resistance, hardness, softness, temperature, vibrations).

Mental phenomena, on the other hand, arise as experiences of the mind-faculty. **The Sammā Dīṭṭhi Sutta** (M 9.54) explains that the mental side of our experience comprises these five conditions:<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cf “You don’t get meaning, you respond with meaning.” Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), founder of American pragmatism. (Note: His surname is pronounced *purse*.)

<sup>12</sup> See **Nimitta & Anuvyañjana** = SD 19.14.

<sup>13</sup> “Cognitive consciousness” is what keep us going moment-to-moment in daily life; the other consciousness that links up with a new life called “existential consciousness”: see SD 17.8a(6.1).

<sup>14</sup> See SD 17.8a(8.1).

<sup>15</sup> On how consciousness is dependent on the other aggregates, see SD 17.81(5.1).

<sup>16</sup> M 9.54/1:53 = SD 11.14.

- contact (that is, sense-stimulus);
- feeling (that is, experiencing the stimulus’s hedonic tone as pleasant, painful or neutral);
- perception (that is, identifying and collating the stimulus with past experiences);
- volition (that is, deciding whether we like, dislike or ignore the stimulus); and
- attention (that is, the consciousness connecting all these aspects as a thought-moment).

From the explanation so far, it should not be misconstrued that physical phenomena, that is, the experience of physical sense-faculties, arises independently of the mind. This is not the case. All the physical sense-faculties depend on the mind, that is, consciousness, or more specifically, attention. This is what is meant by the first two verses of **the Dhammapada** that says: “The mind precedes all mental states; | The mind is supreme, mind-made are they” (Dh 1-2). In other words, when the mind is unguarded, all the sense are unguarded (DhsA 68).<sup>17</sup>

**1.2 OUR SENSE-PROCESSES ARE ROOTED IN CRAVING.** What does it mean to say that our sense-processes are rooted in craving (*taṇhā*). The term craving (Skt *trṣṇā*) literally means “thirst” and this is the nature of the sense-faculties: they are always thirsting for sense-data, or more correctly, pleasurable sense-data. Those experiences, ideas, memories and notions that seem to provide us with some feeling of security or self-identity we regard as “pleasant” (*sukha* or *manāpa*). In reality, such notions are merely memories of past pleasant experiences—past here refers not only in this life, but also previous ones.

It is important to note here that the Buddha does not teach that “the world is evil,” but that it is always in a state of flux: the world is impermanent. The world is neither pleasurable or painful: our perception of it makes it so. **The Nibbedhika Pariyāya Sutta** (A 6.63) explains the world in terms of our senses, thus:

There are these five cords of sensual pleasures (*kāma,guṇa*):

Forms cognizable by the eye that are desirable, attractive, pleasant, endearing, associated with sensuality, delightful;

Sounds cognizable by the ear that are...delightful;

Smells cognizable by the nose that are...delightful;

Tastes cognizable by the tongue that are...delightful;

Touches cognizable by the body that are desirable, attractive, pleasant, endearing, associated with sensuality, delightful.

—**Monks, these are not sensual objects (*kāma*), but in the noble discipline, they are called “cords of sensual desire” (*kāma,guṇa*).**<sup>18</sup>

The thought of passion is a person’s sensuality:

There is no sensuality in what is beautiful (*citra*) in the world.

The thought of passion is a person’s sensuality:

What is beautiful in the world remains as they are.

So here the wise remove the desire for them.<sup>19</sup> (A 6.63.3/3:411) = SD 6.11

**The Indriya,bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152) similarly teaches the mastery over one’s sense-faculties rather than removing the sense-objects (which have the natural right to be where they are). The practice of sense-restraint taught by the Indriya,bhāvanā Sutta may be represented in this table:

<sup>17</sup> See SD 17.8a(4.4).

<sup>18</sup> *Api ca kho bhikkhave n’ete kāmā, kāma,guṇā nam’ete ariyassa vinaye vuccanti.* This is an enigmatic statement whose meaning is clarified in the verse that follows. See foll n.

<sup>19</sup> This verse, which explains the previous prose sentence, “plays upon the double meaning of *kāma*, emphasizes that purification is to be achieved by mastering the defilement of sensuality, not by fleeing [from] sensually enticing objects.” (A:NB 1999:302 n34). An almost identical verse (without line c) is found in **the Na Santi Sutta** (S 1.34).

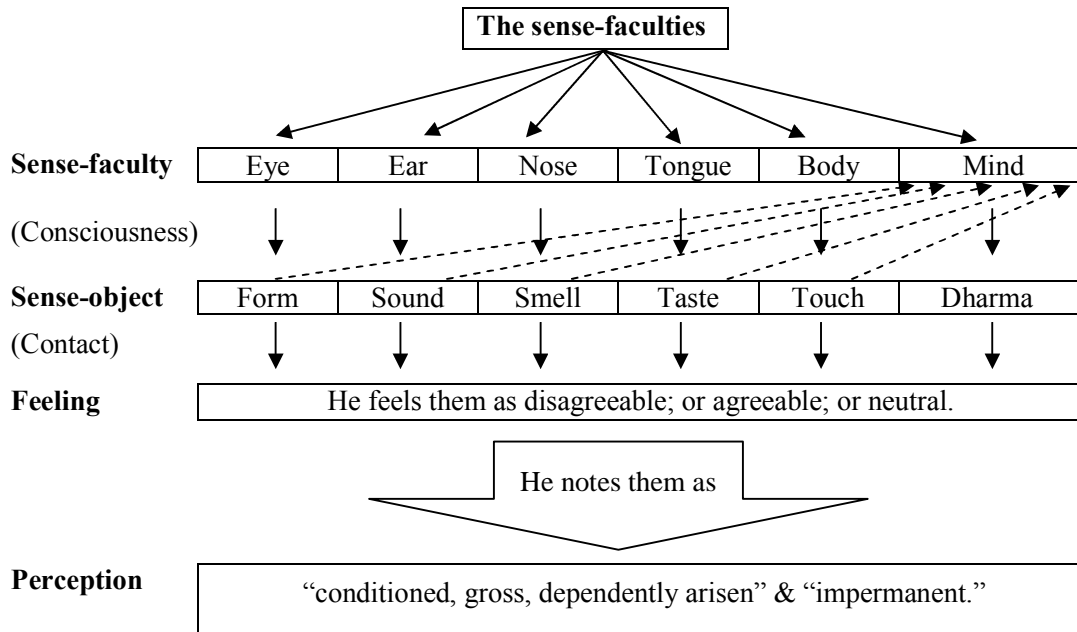


Table 1.2. How to cultivate the faculties (for the unawakened)

**1.3 FALSENESS OF SELF-IDENTITY VIEW.** According to Buddhism, one of the most deep-seated errors we make is our tendency to identify with our bodies, feelings, or thoughts. We think or desire that this body would last forever, or that it would healthy, strong or beautiful in a certain indefinitely. We think that our feelings are what we really are, and that these feelings remain with us forever, that our feelings would not change. We think that our thoughts, ideas, opinions, fears, and mindsets are what we really and that they cannot change.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, we often think that the bodies, feelings, or thoughts of others, too would endure and not change. We tend to hold the notion that there is some kind of essence or enduring entity, or soul. Some identify themselves with their own physical body. Some think that the soul controls the body. Some think that the physical being exists in some sort of greater self or universal soul. Some think that the soul exists inside the body, and is capable of coming and going as it pleases. None of such views are accepted in early Buddhism.

**The Puṇṇama Sutta** (M 109 = S 22.82) records how when the Buddha is asked “How does self-identity view arise?”<sup>21</sup> gives this comprehensive and definitive reply:

“Here, bhikshu, the uninstructed ordinary person who is not a seer of the noble ones, and is unskilled in the Dharma of the aryas [noble ones], undisciplined in the Dharma of the aryas, who is not a seer of the true persons,<sup>22</sup> and is unskilled in the Dharma of the true persons and undisci-

<sup>20</sup> On how our thoughts tend to proliferate in this manner, see Waldron 2003:36-39.

<sup>21</sup> Also called “identity view,” or simply “self-view.” §§10-11 as at **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.7-8/1:300). “Self-identity view,” *sakkāya, diṭṭhi* (M 109/3:17,23 = S 22.82/3:102,5), but SĀ 58 = T14c29 has “I conceit,” 我慢 wōmàn. See **Pārileyya S** (S 22.81) = SD 6.1(4).

<sup>22</sup> “True person,” *sappurisa*, also “virtuous person,” “ideal person.” The qualities of a *sappurisa* are given at D 33.2.2(6)/3:252, 34.1.8(7)/3:283; M 113; A 7.64/4:113, 8:38/4:144 f & at M 110.14-24/3:23 f.

plined in the Dharma of the true persons, considers<sup>23</sup> [the 20 kinds of self-identity views (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), namely:]<sup>24</sup>

- (1) form as the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form;
- (2) feelings as the self, or the self as possessing feelings, or feelings as in the self, or the self as in feelings;
- (3) perception as the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception;
- (4) formations as the self, or the self as possessing formations, or formations as in the self, or the self as in formations;
- (5) consciousness as the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.<sup>25</sup>

This, bhikshu, is how self-identity view arises.”

(M 109.10/3:17 f = S 22.82/3:102) = SD 17.11

In simple terms, we can say that whatever exists in this world or universe, is *either physical or mental*. Our **body** is physical: it has a shape and is solid (the “earth” element); much of it is liquid (the “water” element); it generates heat, processes food and energy (metabolism); and it breathes and can move freely. But none of these states are permanent. Indeed nothing physical in the universe is permanent: everything in this universe is in a constant state of flux, from the largest galaxy to the tiniest particle of matter.

Our **mind** consists of our feelings, perceptions, attention, and impulses (both intentional actions and involuntary processes) are all impermanent. The very processes of our mind-body—called consciousness—too, are impermanent. Indeed, nothing makes sense unless there are such processes. Any *process* by definition is impermanent.

Suffering arises when we regard any of these processes to be permanent. We hurt ourselves in a profound way—we suffer emotional trauma—when we believe that either the mind or the body, or any part of it, is permanent. We are only laying the ground for great suffering if we think that because of our scientific understand or religious beliefs or any reason, our health, our youth, our life do not change or end.

<sup>23</sup> “Considers,” *samanupassati* = *sam* (completeness) + *anu* (after) + *passati* (he sees), ie, to look at intuitively (with wisdom).

<sup>24</sup> **The Paṭisambhidā, magga** illustrates the 4 basic modes of self-identity view in connection with form in this manner. One might wrongly regard form as self in the way that the flame of a burning oil-lamp is identical to the colour of the flame. Or one might wrongly regard self as possessing form just as a tree possesses a shadow. Or one might wrongly regard form as in self as the scent is in the flower. Or one might wrongly regard self as in form, as a jewel is in a casket.<sup>24</sup> **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.7 f/1:300), too, lists these 20 kinds of self-identity view in connection with the 5 aggregates. The Cūḷa Vedalla S Comy (MA 2:360) here qu **Paṭisambhidā, magga** to illustrate the 4 basic modes of self-identity view in regard to form. In regarding form as self, it is just as the flame of a burning oil-lamp is identical with the flames’s colour; or, in regarding self as possessing form, as a tree has a shadow, or, in regarding form as in self, as the scent in a flower; or in regarding self as in form, as a jewel in a casket (Pm 1:143 f).

<sup>25</sup> The Chinese version refers to this four self-identity views as 見我 jiànwǒ, 異我 yìwǒ, 相我 xiāngwǒ, “seeing as I, as other than I, as mutually present” (SĀ 58 = T2.14c29). Choong 2000:59 draws attention to two Saṃyukta Āgama sutras that are helpful here. The first, SĀ 45 = T2.11b5, describes the viewing of self in regard to the aggregate of form as 見色是我 jiànsèshiwǒ, 色異我 sèyìwǒ, 我在色 wǒzài sè, 色在我 sèzài wǒ; and SĀ 109 = T2.34b-13, giving a similar list but slightly shorter, 見色是我, 異我, 我在色, 色在我. “Thus,” notes **Analayo**, “見我和異我 refer to identifying the aggregate of self and to taking the aggregate to be owned by the self, corresponding to *rūpam attato samanupassati* and *rūpavantam vā attānam* in M 109/3:17,27.” The Madhyama Āgama version of this formula such as that in MĀ 210 = T1.788a28 (parallel to M 44/1:300,7) is more intelligible: 見色是神 jiànsèshīshēn, 見神有色 jiànshēnyǒusè, 見神中有色 jiànshēnzhōngyǒushēn, 見神中有色也 jiànshēnzhōngshīyǒuyě. (See Analayo 2005n ad loc for detailed n).

We gravely delude ourselves when we think that that our **health** (especially mental health) will always be good. Even with the best care we can give the physical body, it will end somehow, even suddenly, like a burning candle: a wind may snuff out the light prematurely, or the wick may burn itself out, or both the whole candle burns itself out. The best we can do is to give the best care to our minds, by training it in mindfulness and understanding the impermanence of all things in this world. To accept impermanence is to live in true reality.

We gravely delude ourselves when we think that our **youth** will last, that our bodies will not decay, change, or respond to our efforts to keep it youthful, beautiful and impressive. We can refuse to look at old people, or reject them, or hate them, but decay and old age will come upon us in an even more painful way, aggravated by our denial of impermanence. It is only natural that we will one day be painfully shocked to find that our body is different from what we have hoped it to be. There is nothing wrong in being happy and zestful with our youth while it lasts, but we have also to accept that *we begin to decay from the day we are born*. True happiness only comes from understanding and accepting true reality.

We gravely delude ourselves when we think that our **life** will last, that we might one day have eternal life, or that life can be indefinitely prolonged. Eternal life is a conundrum, a self-contradicting word: to exist or to live is to change; without change there is no life. Just because it is *said* that there is eternal life, does not mean that it is so, no matter who says it. True happiness is beyond life and death, beyond time and space, beyond thinking and doing. This is nirvana, as stated in **the Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11):

The consciousness without attribute [non-manifesting],<sup>26</sup> without end, radiant all around<sup>27</sup>—  
 There earth, water, fire, air find no footing.  
 There long and short, small and great, fair and foul,  
 Name and form are totally stopped.  
 With the cessation of consciousness all this stops.<sup>28</sup> (D 11.85/1:223) = SD 1.3

## 2 Three kinds of craving

**2.1 SENSE-DESIRES AND LATENT TENDENCIES.** As normal human beings, we have only six sources of knowledge, that is, sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought. These are known in Buddhism as the six sense-faculties (*saḷāyatana*). We experience the world and ourselves through these six sense-faculties, collecting and processing sense-data into meaningful structures. More technically, we *cognize or know* things when there is a “contact” (*phassa*) or meeting of these sense-faculty, its related sense-object and the appropriate attention.

Then, we go on to recognise (*sañjānāti*) the sense-stimulus,<sup>29</sup> and construct (*abhisankharoti*) a meaningful conception of the experience.<sup>30</sup> All this happens conditioned by our consciousness, and which in

<sup>26</sup> “Without attribute [signless],” *anidassana*, “invisible.” Nānananda renders it as “non-manifesting” (*Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1971:59). See Bodhi’s important n at M:ÑB 1249 n513.

<sup>27</sup> “Radiant all around,” *sabbato, pabham*, where *pabham*, vl *paham*. **Ñānamoli**, in his *Majjhima tr*, takes *pabham* to be the negative present participle of *pabhavati* (“to be able”)—*apabham*—the negative-prefix *a* elided in conjunction with *sabbato*: “The sense can be paraphrased freely by ‘not predicating being in relation to “all,”’ or ‘not assuming of “all” that it is or is not in an absolute sense’ (M:ÑB 1249 n513). “But,” argues **Bodhi**. “if we take *pabham* as ‘luminous,’ which seems better justified, the [Majjhima] verse links up with the idea of the mind as being intrinsically luminous [A 1:10]” (id). See D:W 557 n241. Cf A 1.10 (SD 8.3) where the mind is said to by nature radiant (*pabhassara*) & A 2:139 where the light of wisdom (*paññā, pabha*) is called the best of lights. See Bodhi’s important n at M:ÑB 1249 n513. See also Sue Hamilton, *Identity and Experience*, 1996:100 f.

<sup>28</sup> The Buddha makes a similar statement by way of an Udāna (inspired utterance) on the parinirvana of **Bāhiya Dāru, cīriya**: “Where water, earth, fire and air find no footing, | There neither brightness burns nor sun shines | There neither moon gleams nor darkness reigns. | When a sage, a brahmin, through wisdom has known this by himself | Then he is freed from form and formless, from joy and pain.” (U 9). A similar verse is found at S 1.69/1:15, and a similar teaching is given by Mahā Cunda to Channa 4.87/4:59. On this verse (D 11.85) see D:W 557 n242 & **Mahā Parinibbāna S** = SD 9 Intro (9h).

<sup>29</sup> See *Saññā* = SD 17.4.

turn reinforces and perpetuates it.<sup>31</sup> As a rule, we superimpose our past experiences and views onto the sense-experiences. In other words, such experiences are *not* representations of the world or others, or even of our own self, but rather jigsaw or hodge-podge constructions of ideas and memories—a sort of identikit—that we have stored from throughout our past (this life and previous lives).

Those experiences that we regard as pleasing or beautiful, we continue to seek and store them in our minds. Those experiences that we regard as painful or ugly, we simply push them away. When we do not experience either of them, we simply feel bored or are left ignorant of reality. As such, we end up as predictable automata reacting to external and internal sense-stimuli, pulling in the pleasant, pushing away the unpleasant, and disregarding the neutral.

Human or animal, we are all basically creatures of habit. Whatever act we do, we are likely to do it again, and again—even if we have done it only once, we are likely to do it again under similar conditions—unless we make a conscious effort to modify or end the pattern altogether. If the karmic pattern of our action is *unwholesome*, that is, motivated by greed, hate or delusion, the sooner we end it the better. If not it is accumulate only suffering for us and those connected with us. If the karmic pattern is *wholesome*, that is, motivated by non-greed, non-hate or non-delusion (that is, charity, lovingkindness or wisdom), then it should be cultivated as much as possible; for, this forms the basis for mental development and spiritual wisdom.

**2.2 TWO COMMON MINDSETS.** The Buddha speaks of many kinds of wrong views,<sup>32</sup> but they are not necessarily “unwholesome course of conduct” (*akusala kamma, patha*) because even with wrong views, we can still live together harmoniously, that is, provided we are civil in our bodily actions and speech. So long as the walls of moral virtue and restraint can contain these wrong views, they are unlikely to cause much harm. However, being wrong views, lying at the root of human nature, they are always dangerous, lurking in our subconscious waiting to wreak havoc whenever the opportunity arises.

Even in today’s urbanized and developed societies, two ancient wrong views still chain for most people’s minds, namely, eternalism and annihilationism. **Eternalism** (*sassata, diṭṭhi*) is the belief that there is a permanent entity, self, or “soul, that the body or the mind, or an aspect of it, is *an abiding entity* (such as a “soul”); or that this entity in some way *connected* to either the body or the mind; or that the mind or body *is in this entity* (like a universal soul); or that *the entity resides* somewhere in the body or the mind [2.2].

The eternalist view comes with a baggage, since a permanent entity such as a soul could not have existed in itself. In the theistic religions, the creator God is also the creator (and, sometimes, also the destroyer) of the soul. The creator God idea, throughout its history, has always been closely connected with political power.<sup>33</sup> It is interesting but sad to see how global triumphalism (powerful country policing others), terrorism (destruction of public building and innocent lives) and violence (especially intra- and inter-religious intolerance) today arise from God-belief (on both sides of the divide), but we shall examine this in a moment [5].<sup>34</sup>

The other notion that rules the lives of modern humans, especially the urban affluent, is that of **annihilationism**, that is, the view that this body is all that we are, and when we die, it dies, too, ending everything else for us; or that there is a self or soul, but it is exterminated after we die. The annihilationist has no need for any other belief (whether it is God, soul, karma or moral virtue) *except for what contributes to our immediate success and happiness*. For the materialists, who predominate this group, the purpose of

<sup>30</sup> See *Saññā* = SD 17.6.

<sup>31</sup> See *Viññāṇa* = SD 17.8a.

<sup>32</sup> On the 62 grounds for wrong views, see **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1) = SD 25.

<sup>33</sup> The rise of monotheism in the west, for example, has melded religion and politics into a devastatingly potent brew. Works, such as Augustine of Hippo’s *The City of God* (413-426), synthesized current philosophies and political traditions for the greater glory of Christian ones. During the Middle Ages, politics was commonly studied in the churches and courts, and issues regarding church-state relationships were clarified. Although Europe is generally said to be “post-Christian,” the global violence in which the US administration is embroiled during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has much to do with the belief of whose God is true and right [5].

<sup>34</sup> See also **Group Karma** = SD 39.1(9.3).



life is to *take* as much we can out of it. The ancient Indian materialist (Carvāk) Laukya Brhaspati (c600 BCE) quips: “Live happily all life long: borrow money, drink ghee!” (*yāvat jīvat sukham jīvet, rinam kṛtvā ghr̥tam pivet*).

The unawakened may sometimes hold on to an eternalist view, sometimes to an annihilationist view. There is a common vital link between these two extreme groups, albeit the god-fearing and the godless, that is, as a rule, *they put themselves before and above others*. That there are believers in a single supreme God entails that there are also non-believers. When the believers are in power (especially the ruling elite or power centre), they would invariably try to consolidate their power by enticing, even forcing, others to join their fold. Such a notion is politically convenient because the enemy can easily be defined: *the enemies are those who do not believe*. Understandably, God-believers are as a rule tribal and triumphalistic. Now we will examine what often happens to non-believers in term of our study of self-view.

**2.3 ETERNALISM AND THE GOD-IDEA.** One of the most common notions outside of early Buddhism, best defined in the works of such great western philosophers as Aristotle, is that a thing either exists or does not exist (either p or –p). In **the Kaccāna, gotta Sutta** (S 12.15), when the monk Kaccāna asks the Buddha about *right view*, the Buddha replies thus:

**4** “This world, Kaccānā, mostly depends on a duality: upon (the notion of) existence and (the notion of) non-existence.

**5** But for one who sees the arising of the world as it really is with right wisdom, there is *no (notion of) non-existence* regarding the world.

And one who sees the ending of the world as it really is with right wisdom, there is *no (notion of) existence* regarding the world.<sup>35</sup>

**6a** This world, Kaccāna, is mostly bound by fixation [attachment], clinging and inclination.”<sup>36</sup> (S 12.15/2:16 f) = SD 6.13

To say that **everything exists** is to advocate some kind of *eternalism*, that is, there is some kind of eternal essence behind life and the universe. Eternalism is the foundation of such wrong views as those of the eternal soul and the creator-god.<sup>37</sup> In such a scheme of things, there is a supreme being who judges what is good and what is evil, and accordingly rewards believers with eternal life in some heavenly life, or punishes unbelievers with eternal damnation in some hellish existence.<sup>38</sup> The eternalist view is, consciously or unconsciously, linked with lust,<sup>39</sup> because it affirms and delights in existence, however sublimated a form.

<sup>35</sup> The 2 sentences of this verse are the two extremes rejected by the Buddha in **Lokāyatika S** (S 12.48/2:77), incl 2 more: that all is unity and that all is plurality. Comy: In terms of dependent arising, “the origin of the world” is the direct conditionality (*anuloma paccay’ākāra*), “the ending of the world” is the reverse conditionality” (*paṭiloma paccay’ākāra*). Here the world refers to formations (*saṅkhāra*). In reflecting on the direct-order dependent arising, (seeing the rise of phenomena) one does not fall into the notion of annihilationism; reflecting on the reverse dependent origination, (seeing the ending of phenomena) one does not fall into the notion of eternalism. (SA 2:33). The Buddha’s teaching on the origin and ending of the world (in terms of the 5 aggregates) is found in **Loka S** (S 12.44/-2:73 f).

<sup>36</sup> “bound...adherence,” PTS *upāy’upādānābhinivesa, vinibandha*, but preferred reading is Be Ce *upāy’upādānābhinivesa, vinibaddha* = *upāya* (attachment, fixation) + *upādāna* (clinging) + *abhinivesa* (inclination, mindset, adherence) + *vinibaddha* (bound, shackled) [alt reading *vinibandha*, bondage]. Comy: Each of the three—fixation, clinging, inclination [mindset]—arise by way of craving (*tanhā*) and views (*dīṭṭhi*), for it is through these that one fixates to, clings to, inclines to the phenomena of the three spheres as “I” and “mine.” (SA 2:33). These 3 words appear to be syns or near-syns of latent tendencies, but I have rendered them in order of their subtlety (fixation, clinging, inclination [mindset]). See S:B 736 n31.

<sup>37</sup> On Buddhism as a non-theistic religion, see **Beyond Good and Evil** = SD 18.7(2).

<sup>38</sup> In Buddhist mythology, even the ruler of the hells, Yama, after some time tire of his position and turns to spiritual development in the Buddha Dharma: see **Deva, dūta S** (M 130.28/3:186) = SD 2.23.

<sup>39</sup> *Sārāgāya santike*, lit “close to lust.”

More commonly, we tend to sway between these two poles of extreme wrong views; we suffer from a bipolar delusion. Technically, this is called “partial eternalism” (*ekacca,sassata,vāda*).<sup>40</sup> For example, the theists. Some, however, even believe that the soul (such as that of the unbeliever) is destructible, that is, impermanent. As such, there are many views of the creator-god. This is problematic because a *view*, by its very definition, is a way of looking at something: views as such tend to conflict with one another.

One of the most serious problems with the creator-god idea is that their proponents uphold that there is only one such god. Such a notion may well work in a closed community, say, during the pre-modern times, when there is little contact and influence amongst different cultures. However, with the clash of cultures in the market-place and the battlefield, the differences become more pronounced and devastating. The situation becomes more problematic when religion is linked with political power—and the god-idea is often closely linked with political struggle, such as the Middle Eastern cultures and their religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and their various sects and factions). There is only one true God, say all these God-believers, but *whose* God is the true one? From the histories of such cultures, we must say that apparently *might is right*. The one true God is that of the conqueror or the most powerful.

**2.4 NIHILISM AND MATERIALISM.** On the extreme of the bipolar views, there is the view that *nothing exists*, that is, everything is false: this is **annihilationism**.<sup>41</sup> The most common form of annihilationism is the materialist view that *death is the complete end of the self*, without any surviving entity or principle of any kind. This is the notion that is gaining fast growing numbers today, as the human sight turns more and more away from its rich spiritual past towards the mere gratification of desire for its own sake. Scientific, medical and technological advances, by providing greater creature comfort, longer and healthier lives, more rationalistic explanations of existence, makes the quest for inner peace or spiritual knowledge less urgent, and giving us the euphoric illusion that this is heaven here and now.

Social and political ideologies that preach social wellbeing and economic security as their ideals further reinforce the annihilationist appeal. Narrow religious ideologies that promote triumphalism and tribalism can also be classed as being annihilationist when they tend to devalue this earthly human life, especially those of unbelievers, so that their end by any means is justified, even rewarded in the afterlife. In destroying the lives of unbelievers, such religious terrorists’ belief actually amounts to **“the annihilation, destruction, non-existence of an existent being,”**<sup>42</sup> which is the annihilationist thesis. As such, it is clear that the annihilationist view is rooted in hate, as it is based on a wrong conception of the self, and is characterized by a disrespect for and exploitation of life and nature.

**2.5 THE WAY OUT.** Whichever one of the three views—eternalism, annihilationism, or partial eternalism—we hold on to, it will somehow conflict with the other two. The eternalist view is, consciously or unconsciously, linked with *lust*, because it affirms and delights in existence, however sublimated a form. The annihilationist view is rooted in *hate*, as it is based on a wrong conception of the self, and is characterized by a disrespect for and exploitation of life and nature. Partial eternalism is a mixture of the two notions and tendencies. The only way put of this triangle of conflicts is to abandon all three views.<sup>43</sup>

The unawakened, however, cannot work without views and concepts. For example, it is meaningful to say, “I am reading this book.” If we regard this “I” or person as a constant, unchanging self that underlies all our different experiences, then we have fallen into the wrong view of eternalism. On the other hand, if we think that there is no real connection between the person at the moment and another (say, between yesterday and today)—that “I” am *now* not the same person that was *yesterday*—then we have fallen into the extreme of annihilationism. However, there is a middle way out of both these extremes, that is, *there is only the connectedness or continuity*, that there is only dependent arising (*paṭicca,samuppāda*) [4],<sup>44</sup> a network of causes and effects that constitutes what we call body and mind.

<sup>40</sup> See **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74.4a+5b/1:498) = SD 16.1; also **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.38/1:17) = SD 25.2 & SD 25.3 (38.1-2).

<sup>41</sup> See **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.88-91/1:34 f) = SD 25.2 & SD 25.3(88-91).

<sup>42</sup> D 1.84/1:34 = SD 25.2.

<sup>43</sup> See eg **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74.4b-5b/1:498) = SD 16.1.

<sup>44</sup> See **Dependent Arising** = SD 5.16.

The way out of the extreme notions of existence and non-existence is stated in **the Kaccāna,gotta Sutta** (S 12.15), thus:

**6b** But this person (with right view) does not engage in, cling to, incline towards that fixation and clinging, the latent tendency of mindset and inclination—he does not take a stand (that anything is) “my self.”<sup>45</sup>

He has neither uncertainty nor doubt that what arises is only suffering arising, what ceases is only suffering ceasing.<sup>46</sup> His knowledge about this is **independent of others.**<sup>47</sup>

It is in this way, Kaccana, that there is right view. (S 12.15.6/2:16 f) = SD 6.13

The phrase “**independent of others**” (*apara-p.paccayā*) is of central importance. It refers to the nature of the stream-winner. From stream-entry on, the noble disciple sees the truth of the Dharma by himself, and as such is *emotionally independent of others*. Although he has deep faith in the Buddha, it is through his personal insight into the Dharma that he is liberated.<sup>48</sup> Of course, he may still approach the Buddha or any awakened teacher for instructions and guidance in meditation until he fully awakens. But he himself breaks through the shell of ignorance into the open light of reality.

### 3 Pain

**3.1 THE NATURE OF PAIN.** An understanding of the nature of craving is useful, as craving and suffering are closely related: they bite one another like the uroboros biting its own tail. First of all, it should be understood that, according to Buddhist psychology, there are **two kinds of pain**, bodily and mental. Bodily pains are natural as the body is physical, but mental pain are subjective, that is, we create and aggravate them. Physical health may be common, but mental health is rare.<sup>49</sup>

The Vibhaṅga Commentary declares that “the ordinary person is like one mad” (*ummattako viya hi puthujjano*) because “without considering what is right or not right (what is relevant or irrelevant), he, due to the force of clinging, creates karma out of desire for existence” (VbhA 186).<sup>50</sup> In short, the ignorant ordinary person is mad because *he acts out of greed, hate and delusion*. **The Roga Sutta** (A 4.157.1) makes an important statement in this connection regarding health:

Monks, there are these two kinds of illnesses [diseases]. What are the two?

Illness of the body and illness of the mind.

<sup>45</sup> “But this... ‘My self’,” *tañ cāyaṃ upāy’upādānaṃ cetaso adhiṭṭhānaṃ abhinivesānusayaṃ na upeti na upādiyati nādhiṭṭhāti “attā me” ti*. Comy: Craving and views are called “mental standpoint” (*cetaso adhiṭṭhāna*) because they are the foundation for the (unwholesome) mind, and “the latent tendency of inclination [mindset],” or perhaps “inclination [mindset] and latent tendency” (*abhinivesānusaya*) because they stay to the mind and lie latent there (SA 2:33). This is a difficult sentence, and I am guided by the Sutta spirit than the letter. See S:B 736 n32. Cf **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3.9/3:10) = SD 10.12.

<sup>46</sup> Comy: Suffering (*dukkha*) here refers to the 5 aggregates of clinging. What the noble disciple sees, when he reflects on his own existence, is not a self or a substantially existent person but only the arising and passing away of causal conditions (*paccay’uppanna,nirodha*) (of dependent arising) (SA 2:33). Cf **Selā’s** verses (S 548-551/1:134) & **Vajirā’s** verses (S 553-55/1:135).

<sup>47</sup> “Independent of others,” *apara-p.paccayā*. From stream-entry on, the noble disciple sees the truth of the Dharma by himself, and as such is not dependent on anyone else, not even the Buddha, for his insight into the Dharma. However, he may still approach the Buddha or an enlightened teacher for instructions and guidance in meditation until he attains liberation.

<sup>48</sup> See the inspiring case of Sāriputta, who declares that it is *not* out of faith in the Buddha that he has realized nirvana by way of the 5 faculties (faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom), but through his own wisdom: see **Pubba,kotṭhaka S** (S 48.44/5:220-222) = SD 10.7; see also the case of Citta the householder in **Niḅaṅṅa Nāta,putta S** (S 41.8/4:297-301) = SD 40.4.

<sup>49</sup> See **Nakula,pitā S** (S 22.1/3:1-5) = SD 5.4.

<sup>50</sup> *So idam yuttam idam ayuttan ti avicāretvā yassa kassaci upādānassa vasena yaṃ kiñci bhavaṃ patthetvā yaṃ kiñci kammaṃ karoti yeva.*

Bhikshus, there are to be seen beings who can claim to be **physically healthy** [illness-free] for a year, ... two years, ... three years, ... four years, ... five years, ... ten years, ... twenty years, ... thirty years, ... forty years, ... fifty years, ... who can claim to be healthy for a hundred years.

But bhikshus, hard to find are those beings who can claim to be **mentally healthy** for even a moment, except for those [arhats] whose mental cankers are destroyed. (A 4.157.1/2:142 f)

Pain is *subjective* in the sense that we mentally create, increase or imagine it. In Buddhist psychological terms, mental pain arises and worsens when we “own” it, that is, we regard the pain in terms of “I,” “me” and “mine”: “I am in pain,” “It is hurting *me*,” “This is *my* body,” “*My* pain is greater than yours,” and so on. In reality, it is the nature of pain to arise when the conditions are right. When we direct our minds to unwholesome objects, rooted in greed, hate and delusion, mental pain would surely arise. When we understand the true nature of pain, we will not suffer from its effects. *Pain is natural, suffering is optional.*

**3.2 DISOWNING THE PAIN.** We suffer painfully when we *own* the pain. In **the Nakula, pita Sutta** (S 22.1)<sup>51</sup> the Buddha explains how to disown our pain, thus:

And how, householder, is the body sick, but the mind not sick?

Here, householder, the learned noble disciple, who sees the noble ones, skilled in the way of the noble ones, trained in the way of the noble ones, who sees the true persons and is skilled in the way of the true person, trained in the way of the true person,<sup>52</sup>

—does *not* regard **form** as self, nor self as possessing form, nor form as in self, nor self as in form;

—he does *not* live obsessed by the notions, “I am form. Form is mine.”

As he lives *not* obsessed by these notions, that form changes and alters. With the change and alteration of form, there does not arise in him, sorrow, lamentation, [physical] pain, [mental] displeasure or despair. (S 22.1.17-25/3:3-5) = SD 5.4

The same reflection is repeated *mutatis mutandis* for *feeling*, for *perception*, for *formations*, and for *consciousness*.

The simplest way to prevent or overcome suffering is the practice of sense-restraint (*indriya, samvara*). The most famous Sutta instruction on sense-restraint is known as **the Bāhiya teaching**, taught by the Buddha to Bāhiya Dārucīriya in **the Bāhiya Sutta** (U 1.10).<sup>53</sup> It is perhaps the oldest formulation of sense-restraint, and is the same teaching given to the aged Malunkya,putta (when he has given up all his intellectual speculating and decides to go into solitary retreat). The version as recorded in **the Māluṅkya,putta Sutta** (S 35.95), runs thus:

Here, Māluṅkya,putta, regarding things<sup>54</sup> seen, heard, sensed<sup>55</sup> and cognized [known] by you:<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> S 22.1/3:1-5 = SD 5.4.

<sup>52</sup> This whole section is stock, descriptive of the stream-winner, ie one who has destroyed the three lower fetters of self-identity view, doubt and attachment to rules and rituals.

<sup>53</sup> **Bāhiya S** (U 1.10/6-8) = SD 21. For a study of Bāhiya’s Teaching, see SD 5.9 Intro (2).

<sup>54</sup> “Regarding things seen, heard, sensed and cognized,” *diṭṭha, suta, muta, viññatabbesu dhammesu*, lit “in things that are to be seen, to be heard, to be senses, to be cognized.” See foll n.

<sup>55</sup> *Muta*, that is, what is tasted, smelt and touched. See prev n.

<sup>56</sup> This verse is the crux of the Sutta and of *satipaṭṭhāna*. In sutta terms, such experiences are not to be seen as “This is mine” (*etam mama*) (which arises through craving, *taṇhā*), or as “This I am” (*eso ’ham asmi*) (due to conceit, *māna*), or as “This is my self (*eso me attā*) (due to wrong view, *diṭṭhi*) (**Anatta.lakkhaṇa** S, S 3:68). In short, such experiences are not “beliefs” but direct experiences of reality. See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f. In simple Abhidhamma terms, such a process should be left at the sense-doors, and not be allowed to reach the mind-door. As long as the experience of sensing is mindfully left at its sense-door and taken for what it really is, that is an experience of reality (*param’attha*); after it has reached the mind-door and evaluated, it becomes conventional (*paññatti*) reality, that brings one suffering due to greed, hate or delusion. When such sense-experiences are mind-

in the seen	there will be only the seen;	
in the heard	there will only be the heard;	
in the sensed	there will only be the sensed;	
in the cognized	there will only be the cognized.	(M 35.95.12/4:73) = SD 5.9

In simple terms, this means that we should simply observe the pain *just as it is*, without any comment. We watch how it arises, peaks and passes away. Like everything else in this world, pain is *impermanent*.

**3.3 “LET GO OF WHAT IS NOT YOURS!”** *All such self-notions described so far are not “beliefs” but actual and direct reactions to reality.*<sup>57</sup> Let us examine a well known sutta where the Buddha admonishes us against such a reaction to reality. **The Alagaddūpama Sutta** (M 22) is a good example where the Buddha attempts to refute the doctrine of *ātman* (Skt *attā*). In §15 of the Sutta, the Buddha declares these six wrong views, namely, that “an ignorant ordinary person...regards form...feeling...perception...formations...what is seen, heard, sensed, thought...that ‘The world is the self; after death I will be permanent, everlasting, eternal, unchanging in nature, eternally the same; I will endure as long as eternity’ as ‘This is mine; this I am; this is my self’.”<sup>58</sup> **KR Norman**, in his paper, “A note on Attā in the Alagaddūpamā Sutta” (1981), points out that

The idea the world and the *ātman* (= *brahman*) are the same is found in the Upanishads, and it is possible to find actual verbal echoes of the Upanishads in this passage,<sup>59</sup> eg *eṣa ma ātmā* (Chān[dogyā] Up[anishad] 3.14.3-4) and *yathākratur asmim loke puruṣo bhavati tathetaḥ pretya bhavati sa kratum kurvīta...etam itaḥ pretyābhisambhavitāsmī ti* (ibid 3.14.1 and 4).

In contrast to this false view the Buddha states that someone who is cognizant with the *ariyadham[m]a* looks at *rūpa*, etc. with the thought: *na etaṃ mama n’eso ‘ham asmi, na m’eso attā*.<sup>60</sup> “This is not mine, I am not that, that is not my *attā*.” Consequently he is not anxious about something which does not exist. (Norman 1981c:20)

The Buddha then rephrases this statement (M 22.15) in terms of the five aggregates (*khandha*), and exhorts his disciples, “**Let go of what is not yours!**” (*yaṃ na tumhākaṃ taṃ pajahatha*, M 22.40).<sup>61</sup> To close his admonition that the aggregates are not their *attā*, that is, a final refutation of the view that the external world, the aggregates and the *attā* are the same, the Buddha deftly points to the “the grass, sticks, branches and leaves in this Jetavana” in the famous Jetavana simile (M 22.41).

We are now in a position to assess the basis of the Buddha’s refutation. The doctrine that the world and the *attā* are the same (*so loko so attā*) also affirms the oneness of the individual *attā* and the world-*attā*. The phrase *eso ‘ham asmi* “I am that” is the *tat tvam asi* “That thou art” of the Upaniṣad[s] looked at from the point of view of the first person instead of the second person. Since *loka* = *attā*, then the Buddha’s argument is:

“If there is a world-*attā*, then there is something belonging to the world-*attā* in me. If there is something belonging to the world-*attā* in me, ie if there is a world-*attā*, then I (and all other things) would have *attā* which is part of the world-*attā*, and I would have all the “things” that go to make up the world-*attā*. Form (*rūpa*), etc., would be “mine.” If, however, each individual *attā* were part of the world-*attā*, then each painful sensation felt by one part of the world-*attā*

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fully left on the reality level, one would in due course see the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self. See Mahasi Sayadaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta*, tr U Htin Fatt, Rangoon, 1981.

<sup>57</sup> See Bodhi, 1980:8-11; Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f.

<sup>58</sup> M 22.15/1:135 f = SD 3.13.

<sup>59</sup> Norman thinks that “EJ Thomas is too cautious when he states, ‘There may be here some reference to upaniṣadic doctrine, though it is still not the identity of self and Brahmā’ (*History of Buddhist Thought*, London, 1933:-103).”

<sup>60</sup> See Norman 1981:29 n5 on a wrong reading in V 1:14, 19.

<sup>61</sup> M 22.41/1:140 = SD 3.13.

would be felt by every part of the world-*attā*, i.e. when wood is burned the *attā* in us would feel the pain suffered by the *attā* in it. We do not feel any such pain because there is no world-*attā*.”  
(Norman 1981:23)

In other words, nowhere in his teachings, does the Buddha ever mention the “world-soul” or universal Self.<sup>62</sup> We find an interesting parallel in the Jain texts where the *Sūyagaḍaṃga* 1.1.1, too, refutes the world-soul (Norman 1981:24 f). The similarity of the Jain and Buddhist arguments, Norman concludes, “makes it clear that the Buddha in the [Alagaddūpamā Sutta] is not merely refuting the individual *ātman*, but also the concept of the world-*ātman*.” (Norman 1981:25)

**3.4 SUMMARY.** Craving, as such, is a conscious or unconscious perception of a sense of inner lack that drives us to seek solutions outside of ourselves, to measure and manipulate others for our seeming benefit. This craving reifies our ideas of happiness into identifying with power, pleasure, sex, money, and things. Sustained craving turns us into unwitting automata or chemical states that only react to similar chemicals to form more complex chemical solutions that only drug and drag us around in drunken rut. Craving limits our thinking to immediate needs for quick fixes instead of dealing in the reality of the present moment, and developing ourselves.

In summary, *craving* is a power defilement that robs us of the desire and ability for self-awakening and to perceive a sense of lack within that must be filled by things outside, such as the bodies of others, the wealth of others, and the qualities of others. This defilement is at the root of the following problems (and related ones):

- monastics breaking the celibacy and abstinence rules (that is, indulging in sex and sensual pleasures) (“animal Buddhism”);
- monastics handling money, owning property, and living luxurious lives (hungry-ghost Buddhism);<sup>63</sup>
- money-centred Buddhism (simony), such as using religious relics to raise funds (“moneytheism”);
- structured fees for chanting sutras, blessings and prayer for the dead (“dead Buddhism”);
- fear and favour towards rich and influential devotees, and neglecting the “lesser” devotees (“political Buddhism”);<sup>64</sup>
- misinterpreting Buddhism to suit one’s agenda of greed, hate, and delusion (“lazy Buddhism”); and
- inflicting pain or torture upon ourselves to atone for some “sin” (“guilt Buddhism”).

Even if we are poor, we should not envy the rich or the powerful; even less so, try to live like them. In our desperation over our lack or failure, we should neither cheat nor hurt anyone. For, like chickens coming home to roost in the evening, *our karma has ways of returning to us in due course*. And when we do succeed, forget not our good teachers, relatives, friends, and fellowmen, even if they have not been very helpful us in the past, For, in our compassion towards them, we break the painful chains of the past. For, they are neither sloughs nor shells that we shed, or steps we climb up for higher ones. They are living memories that will follow us forever, to haunt us as an unhappy past, or to enrich our lives.

It is all right to fail, so long as we learn from them. We should recognize our failures and weaknesses within ourselves, accept and learn from them, let go of them with lovingkindness, and reflect on their impermanence. Then, our journey on the path to awakening has truly begun. For, failure can often teach us they way that success never can.

## 4 Dependent arising

**4.1 THE 12 LINKS.** To overcome suffering, we have to understand how the notions of “I,” “me” and “mine” work, keeping us in their suffocating stranglehold of suffering. These notions mislead us into identifying with our bodies or minds, of measuring ourselves and others by way of conceit, and of being caught in the rut of more grasping by failing to see true reality for ourselves.

<sup>62</sup> R Gombrich, in review of Bhattacharya, *L’Ātman-Brahman dan le Bouddhisme Ancien*, in *Archives Internationales d’Histoire des Sciences*, 1978:128 f. (Quoted by Norman 1981:24)

<sup>63</sup> See **Money and monastics** = SD 4.19.

<sup>64</sup> See eg **Dharma-ending Age** = SD 1.10.

The self-centred notions goad us on to hold extreme view of eternalism and of annihilationism, and their various forms. Fortunately, the Buddha has declared to the world, the middle way out of both these extremes, that is, that *there is only the connectedness or continuity*, that there is only dependent arising (*paṭicca,samuppāda*), a network of causes and effects that constitutes what we call body and mind.

The well known formula of **the twelve links of dependent arising**, showing how suffering arises, is given as follows.<sup>65</sup>

*Avijjā,paccayā saṅkhārā  
saṅkhārā,paccayā viññāṇam  
viññāṇa,paccayā nāma,rūpam  
nāma,rūpa,paccayā sal'āyatanam  
sal'āyatana,paccayā phasso  
phassa,paccayā vedanā  
vedanā,paccayā tanhā  
tanhā,paccayā upādānam  
upādāna,paccayā bhava  
bhava,paccayā jāti  
jāti,paccayā jarā, maranam  
soka,parideva,dukkha, -  
domanas'upāyāsa sambhavanti  
evam-etassa kevalassa dukkha-k,-  
khandhassa nirodho hoti.*

with ignorance as condition, there are volitional activities;<sup>66</sup>  
with volitional activities as condition, there is consciousness;  
with consciousness as condition, there is name-and-form;  
with name-and-form as condition, there is the sixfold sense-base;  
with the sixfold sense-base as condition, there is contact;  
with contact as condition, there is feeling;  
with feeling as condition, there is craving;<sup>67</sup>  
with craving as condition, there is clinging;  
with clinging as condition, there is existence;  
with existence as condition, there is birth;  
with birth as condition there **arise decay and death.**  
**sorrow, lamentation, physical pain.**  
**mental pain and despair.**

—Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

#### 4.2 SUMMARY OF DEPENDENT ARISING OVER THREE LIVES.

(1) [PAST EXISTENCE: KARMA PROCESS.] The formula traditionally begins with **ignorance** (*avijjā*), that is, the lack of understanding true reality (as defined, for example, in the four noble truths, S 12.2/2:4).

(2) Ignorance conditions **volitional activities** (*saṅkhārā*), that is, when ignorance is present, it initiates and supports intentional mental ideations and deliberations. In simple terms, we conjure up private realities and meanings. Driven by greed, hate and delusion in our actions, they reinforce these unwholesome roots through our thoughts, speech and actions.

Here, as Waldron notes, “this complex [*saṅkhārā*] concept denotes both *formations* that have been formed from past actions as well as the *formative* actions that give rise to future formations, exhibiting a ‘process-product’ bivalence...”<sup>68</sup> (2003:14).

(3) [PRESENT LIFE: REBIRTH PROCESS.] The volitional activities condition consciousness (*viññāṇa*), that is, cognitive awareness, which here begins with rebirth or conception (D 15.21/2:62 f). It is “existential consciousness” that links the past life to the present one, and at once again begins the process of “cognitive consciousness.”<sup>69</sup> This is the consciousness that would later be taken as the store-consciousness (*ālaya,-vijñāna*) by the Yogācāra.<sup>70</sup>

(4) Our internal (private) reality once again relates to the external world, analysing it as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches, and superimposing meanings upon them. That is, to say, consciousness conditions **name-and-form** (*nāma,rūpa*), a name is given to an experience or sense-object, so that they can be apperceived meaningfully and reified, sometimes referred to as “the psychological and phy-

<sup>65</sup> See **Dependent Arising** = SD 5.16.

<sup>66</sup> Note that the verb “(they) arise” (*sambhavanti*) occurs only at the end of the whole formula, and which should be connected to each proposition, thus establishing that each conditioned state arises through its condition.

<sup>67</sup> In (**Samuday'aṭṭhaṅgama**) **Loka S** (S 12.44), the dependent arising is shown to be broken here, when “with the remainderless fading away and ending of that same craving comes cessation of clinging...,” the rest of the chain breaks accordingly leading to the ending of “this whole mass of suffering.” (S 12.44/2:71-73)

<sup>68</sup> Philosopher AW Sparkes describes what he calls “process-product ambiguity,” that is, it is used to refer both to the *process* (or, more accurately, *activity*)...and to the *product* of the activity” (Sparkes, *Talking Philosophy*, 1991: 76). Participial words, such as painting or building often exhibit this ambiguity. [Waldron’s fn]

<sup>69</sup> On these two types of consciousness, see **Viññāṇa** = SD 17.81(6.1).

<sup>70</sup> See **The Unconscious** = SD 17.8b(4).

siological aspects of human experience that begin developing in the intra-uterine stage and continue throughout a single lifetime” (Waldron 2003:14). In the unawakened mind, this is where the word becomes the thing. These processes are the basic workings of the human mind and body that are technically known as “the five aggregates of clinging” (*pañc’upādāna-k,khandha*).<sup>71</sup>

(5) Name-and-form in turn conditions upon **the six sense-bases** (*saḷāyatana*): the internal process of naming and reifying is projected through the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. As a human baby develops, it begins to make up more and more details of the functioning of the sense-faculties and its universe grows larger: it makes more sense of more things.

(6) As these six sense-bases develop, they condition **contact** (*phassa*). This is the basic process of cognition arising through the triad of sense-faculty, sense-object and sense-consciousness, resulting in a sense-experience.

(7) Where there is contact (sense-stimulus), there is **feeling** (*vedanā*), that is, the mind perceives various sense-objects already coated with notions of pleasant and unpleasant, taking the former to be desirable and the latter undesirable, and ignoring a situation where neither arises.

(8) [PRESENT LIFE: KARMA PROCESS.] Feeling conditions **craving** (*taṇhā*). Whether we desire a certain experience or we dislike it, they are both conditioned by craving: in the former the craving mind attempts to accumulate them, perceiving them as *desirable*, and in the latter, the same craving sees them as *undesirable*. Ignorance is reinforced whenever the two opposing forms of craving are absent. As a collective process, stages (4-7)—the six sense-bases, contact, feeling and craving—constitutes the typical perceptual process.<sup>72</sup>

Whenever we are drawn to a pleasant sense-object, we reinforce the latent tendency of lust (*rāgānusaya*); whenever we are repelled by an unpleasant sense-object, we reinforce the latent tendency of aversion (*paṭighānusaya*); whenever we ignore the absence of both (without noting its impermanence), we reinforce the latent tendency of ignorance (*avijjā’nusaya*). This sort of behaviour keeps us in the rut of unwholesome habits, clinging to mirages and rejecting phantoms we have created in our own minds.

(9) Craving conditions **clinging** (*upādāna*): a habit tends to feed itself; a single thought can explode into a myriad thought, often conflicting with one another. This is called mental proliferation (*papañca*), and which goads us on, running after sense-pleasures (*kāmūpādāna*), goaded on by views (*diṭṭhūpādāna*), caught up in compulsive and obsessive ritualistic cycles (*sīla-b, batupādāna*), and misguided by self-view (*attā, vādūpādāna*). These are the fuel (*upādāna*) of life, a “substratum by means of which an active process is kept alive or going” (PED), here referring to the endless cycle of rebirths.

(10) [FUTURE LIFE: REBIRTH PROCESS.] In this way, clinging conditions **existence** (*bhava*): clinging links with the process of new and renewed lives (A 1:223). We repeatedly become those things we lust after, or turn away from, or ignore. We are our latent tendencies, expressed through “I,” “me” and “mine.” Craving is the fuel (*upādāna*) of life, and which is a fuel heavily laced with mental dross and defilements.

(11) Understandably, existence conditions **birth** (*jāti*): it marks the transition between this life (death) and the new one (rebirth). In the three-life model, this is effectively links (3-7) repeated, resulting in a new birth, inevitably experiencing decay and death, and all the vicissitudes of life, all over again.<sup>73</sup> In the single-life (momentary), the whole 12-link process is taken as occurring *simultaneously*.<sup>74</sup> The process can also be taken as a *phasic* model, where a series of dependent arising cycles refer to episodes or stages in our lives.<sup>75</sup> In either case, “birth” is taken in a metaphorical sense to refer to recurrence of the previous stages, connected in a series. In due course, birth inevitably must suffer:

(12) **Decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair**.<sup>76</sup> And so

<sup>71</sup> See SD 17.1a.

<sup>72</sup> On the perceptual process, see *Saññā* = SD 17.4(8).

<sup>73</sup> On the three-life model of dependent arising, see SD 5.16(10).

<sup>74</sup> On the momentary model of dependent arising, see SD 5.16(3).

<sup>75</sup> On the phasic model of dependent arising, see SD 5.16(11-13).

<sup>76</sup> For similar, albeit academic, summarized explanations of this process of dependent arising, see Matthews 1983:17 f; Waldron 2003:14-16.



the wheel of life and death rolls on and on.

**4.3 SUMMARY OF DEPENDENT ENDING.** According to the (**Samuday’atṭhaṅga**) **Loka Sutta** (S 12.44), since dependent arising comprises links, if any of the links is broken or missing, it is possible that the cycle would be broken. However, as the links occur with such rapidity, it is almost impossible for one to locate a weak link. **The Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38), on the other hand, ends by showing how the cycle of dependent arising can be broken just before craving arises, that is, between the feeling (*vedanā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) links:

(On experiencing a sense-object with the sense-faculty.) he does not lust after it if it is pleasurable. He does not dislike it if it is unpleasurable. He abides with mindfulness of the body established, with an immeasurable mind,<sup>77</sup> and he understands it as it really is the liberation of mind and the liberation by wisdom wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder.

Having thus abandoned liking and disliking, whatever feeling he feels—whether pleasant or painful or neutral—he delights not in that feeling, does not welcome it, and does not remain holding on to it.

As he does not do so, delight in feelings does not arise and remain in him. With the non-arising of this delight, clinging ends [does not arise];

with the ending of clinging, existence ends;

with the ending of existence, birth ends;

with the ending of birth: decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair end.

—Such is the ending [non-arising] of this whole mass of suffering.

(M 38.40/1:270) = SD 7.10<sup>78</sup>

The full reverse formula for the ending of suffering by way of the twelve links runs as follows:

<p><i>Avijjaya tveva asesā, viragā, nirodhā saṅkhāra, nirodho saṅkhāra, nirodhā viññāṇa, nirodho viññāṇa, nirodhā nāma, rūpa, nirodho nāma, rūpa, nirodhā sal’āyatana, nirodho sal’āyatana, nirodhā phassa, nirodho phassa, nirodhā vedanā, nirodho vedanā, nirodha taṇhā, nirodho taṇhā, nirodhā upādāna, nirodho upādāna, nirodha bhava, nirodho bhava, nirodhā jāti, nirodho jāti nirodhā jarā, maraṇam</i></p>	<p>But with the remainderless fading away and ending of ignorance, volitional activities end,<sup>79</sup> with the ending of volitional formation, consciousness ends, with the ending of consciousness, name-and-form ends, with the ending of name-and-form, the sixfold sense-base ends with the ending of the sixfold sense-base, contact ends, with the ending of contact, feeling ends, with the ending of feeling, craving ends, with the ending of craving, clinging ends, with the ending of clinging, existence ends, with the ending of existence, birth ends, with the ending of birth, there ends decay-and-death,</p>
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<sup>77</sup> Cf *aparitto mah’attā appamāṇa, vihārī* (A 1:249).

<sup>78</sup> See **Dependent Arising** = SD 5.16(18).

<sup>79</sup> **Payutto** (1994) remarks: “Generally speaking, the word ‘cease’ [‘end’] means to do away with something which has already arisen, or the stopping of something which has already begun. However, *nirodha* in the teaching of Dependent Origination (as also in *dukkhanirodho*, the third of the Noble Truths) means non-arising, or non-existence, of something because the cause of its arising is done away with. For example, the phrase ‘when *avijjā* is *nirodha*, *saṅkhāra* are also *nirodha*,’ which is usually taken to mean, ‘with the cessation of ignorance, volitional impulse ceases,’ in fact means that ‘when there is no ignorance, or no arising of ignorance, or when there is no longer any problem with ignorance, there is no volitional impulses, volitiona; impulses do not arise, or there is no longer any problem from volitional impulses.’ It does not mean that ignorance already arisen must be done away with before the volitional impulses which have already arisen will also be done away.” (1994:107 f). In this context, he suggests that the reverse (cessation) cycle of dependent arising might be better rendered as “being free of ignorance, there is freedom from volitional impulses...,” or “when ignorance is gone, volitional impulses are gone...,” or “when ignorance is no longer a problem, volitional impulses are no longer a problem.” (1994:107). See **Kaccā(ya)na,gotta S** (S 12.15) = SD 6.13 Intro (3).

*soka,parideva,dukkha,-  
domanass'upāyasa nirujjhanti  
evam-etassa kevalassa dukkha-k,-  
khandhassa nirodho hoti*

sorrow, lamentation, physical pain,  
mental pain and despair.  
—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Comy: By “ending” (*nirodha*) in all these phrases nirvana is meant. For all those phenomena end in dependence on nirvana, and therefore the latter is spoken of as their ending. Thus in this sutta, the Blessed One teaches the rounds of existence (*vatta*) and the ending of the rounds (*vivatta*) by 12 phrases and brought the discourse to a climax in arhathood. (SA 2:18)