

**CESSATION OF**

# **THE WORLD**

**FROM WITHIN**



**The Buddhist Philosophy as Illuminated by Venerable  
Mankadawala Sudassana Thero**

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**SABBA DANAM DHAMMA DANAM JINATHI!**  
**‘The Gift of Dhamma surpasses all other Gifts.’**

Merits of this Dhamma Dana will be shared by following members of my family who contributed towards the printing of this booklet.

Shiromi Mallawarachchi & Family  
Srini Mallawarachchi & Family  
Udeni Mallawarachchi & Family  
Anoma Chandrasekara  
Gamini & Saman Goonetilleke  
Tilak Goonetilleke & Family  
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Ravi & Asanthi Diwulwewa  
Kavi & Nishadhi Jayaweera  
Ashan & Sachitra Chandrasekara  
Jayani Galketiya & Family  
Isura & Shashini Fonseka

May the merits gained be bestowed upon them & their loved ones,  
both living and departed!

## **PREVIOUS BOOKS ON DHAMMA SERMONS BY VENERABLE SUDASSANA THERO**

- **WHAT IS SEEN IS NOT WHAT IT IS**  
LIBERATION FROM SUFFERING THROUGH THE RIGHT VIEW
- **BEYOND FORM**  
SEEING THINGS AS THEY REALLY ARE

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<http://sudassana.org/transcripts>

Cover Graphics by Piyangi Mallawarachchi

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## Introduction

Imagine the reflection of a tree on water.

Can we interact with that image? If we reach out to touch it we only touch the water and if we try to feel the taste of the image all what we can feel is the taste of the water. Any sound that we may associate with the image usually is caused by something dropping into the water but has no connection to the image. Likewise any odour we may experience does not belong to the image but to the water. The interaction we can have with the image or the reflection on water is only a visual experience. It neither can bring us luck or bad luck nor benefit or harm. This Dhamma applies to other sense experiences as well and therefore Lord Buddha preached *“In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognised, only the cognised”*. (Bahiya Sutra)

Our day to day experiences with visible forms that we encounter through eye contact is identical to the above

experience with the reflection of the tree on water, says Venerable Mankadawala Sudassana Thero. “Visual objects we encounter are mere shapes of different shades and colour. However, we develop our own opinions on those objects, aided by defilements and cankers we have in store, and project those opinions on to the objects to interact with them. Not only we create the world around us consisting of things and people that are formed in our mind, we continue to believe that they exist out there regardless of us looking at them or not.”

Making reference to the Teachings, the Venerable further adds, “the visual consciousness that arises due to conditions ceases when the conditions cease to exist, however, we tend to tie the corresponding thought that arises in the mind to that visual experience. This is to identify the object seen and to know with descriptions so that we can think, speak and act upon it. ” This, he says, is how we collect new Kamma and the difference between us and an enlightened person is that he or she does not combine the thought arising at the mind consciousness level (mental experience) to the visual experience.

The Enlightened One called upon the worldly beings to achieve deliverance or ‘cessation of the world’ (*loka Nirodhaya*).

The world according to Buddha Dhamma comprises of the three existences known as Sensual World, Material World (Form Realms) and Immaterial World (Formless Realms). The Buddha preached that the one who sees the ‘Form’ (*Rupa*) as it is with insight liberates himself from the Sensual World. When the person sees (with insight) the arising of ‘Name’ (Sensations, Perceptions and formations - *Nama*)<sup>1</sup> due to contact he or she moves beyond the Form and hence from the Form Realms. Finally, when the person sees the cessation of ‘Name’ (*nama dhamma*) as a result of cessation of contact and realises its nature of dependent origination, he or she relinquishes ‘Name’ and thus liberates from the immaterial world to eventually reach the ultimate bliss (become *Lokottara*).

In this booklet, I present three articles that discuss profound Buddhist teachings essentially focusing on deliverance, as explicated by Most Venerable

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<sup>1</sup>The Five Aggregates (Skandas) are also referred to as Nama-Rupa which is translated as Name -Matter

Mankadawala Sudassana of Labunoruvakanda Forest Monastery in Sri Lanka.

Extreme care has been taken to the best of my ability to convey salient dhamma concepts discussed by the Venerable in his invaluable sermons in plain English, however, I apologise for any mistakes or shortcomings that are purely unintentional.

Once again I extend my gratitude to all venerable monks and scholars of dhamma for their invaluable efforts and kindness in presenting the precious teachings of Buddha to us lay people, to the devoted followers of dhamma who organise Dhamma programs and provide access to such rare dhamma sermons to the world via internet and finally, to my family & friends for their support & encouragement in completing this task. May the merits gained, be bestowed upon all of you!

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## **1. World Within: Rohitassa Sutra**

When Buddha was residing at Jethavana in Savathnuwara, one night, a god named Rohitassa approached him and after seeking permission asked the blessed one ‘ whether it is possible for someone to reach the edge of the world by walking, where birth, death, decay , passing away and reappearance , do not exist. The Buddha responded saying that no one can reach the edge of the world by walking where, birth, death, decay, passing away and reappearance do not exist.

Rohitassa was delighted with this response from the Buddha and exclaimed, ‘oh, isn’t it wonderful that the blessed one said that no one can reach the edge of the world by walking ,where birth, death, decay , passing away and reappearance do not exist,’ he went on to admit that in his previous existence as a rishi he possessed super natural powers that enabled him to travel so fast, however, despite his attempts throughout his entire life, he still couldn’t reach the

edge of the world which is free of birth, death, decay , passing away and reappearance.

Nevertheless, the Buddha added ‘though it is true that no one can reach the edge of the world by walking where birth, death, decay, passing away and reappearance do not exist, I claim that without reaching the edge of the world one cannot find the refuge, free from of birth, death, decay , passing away and reappearance .

He declared that the edge of the world in fact is found within the twelve sense bases, i.e. eye, ear, nose, tongue body, mind, visible objects, sound, odour and so on and hence, the Enlightened one preached,

“It is in this very fathom-long physical frame with its perceptions and mind that, I declare, lies the world, and the arising of the world, and the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world.”

*(“Imasmin yeva vyama matte kelavare sa sangnimbhi lokan cha pannambhi samanake loka cha, Panchapemi lokasamudayancha loka nirodan cha, Loka nirodha gamini papipadan cha panchapemi”)*

Rohitassa Sutta: Samyutta Nikaya (Translation: Bikkhu Nanananda, 2007)

The Buddha went on to say ‘I consider that understanding the sense bases, the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind and visible objects, sound, odour, tactile and dhamma alone is reaching the edge of the world, the unconditional state or the *asankathaya*.’

In order to understand this dhamma we need to distinguish between the world and the edge of the world says Venerable Sudassana, *First you need to know the garden before you look for the periphery or boundary.*

The world is the state of mind where one believes in the existence of objects that is seen, both before and after seeing. It is where someone uses the eye, the ear, the nose and so on throughout his or her life to perceive things and persons. Perceiving gold, silver, car, father, mother, child and so on is the nature of the mind in the world. To the one who finds people and things in what he or she sees, hears, and smells & so on, in short everything that one associates with and is able to remember, is the world. It is said that such

persons mind is heavily burdened with associations with greed, aversion or delusion.

The edge of the world is where you see the reality as it is. It is where you encounter four great elements and the forms created by those elements (*upadaya* forms) yet in sketchy format. For example if you capture the scene in front of you by a camera and print it to a life size photo, it will portray the shapes and colours but you will not find life in it as you see now in front of you with people and perhaps animals. The state of cognition is identical to this experience apart from that you give life to the shapes of people and things that you see, in your mind, influenced by defilements you have accumulated. We project our sensual thoughts onto the picture and make it real. In other words we see according to the way we behold.

The blessed one has preached,

*‘Objects of sensuality in the world become sensual only due to man’s lustful conceptions. The things of beauty exist in this world as they are; they do not carry sensuality that man associates with. The wise, subdue their desire, in this regard.*

When we behold a visual object as a man or a woman we associate him or her accordingly, same with sounds such as vehicle sound, voice of singers etc. In perceiving sound we have a habit of identifying them with visual images, for example, when we hear a sound of a vehicle we quickly connect it to an image of a car or a truck in our mind. Same with odour and taste, the other sense bases.

Venerable Sudassana explains, ‘If you meet a foreigner who talks to you in a strange language you will not have any feeling either with like or dislike though he may even be accusing you. However, if you know the language and understand what he says you will either like him or dislike him and may even express your feelings.’

At the edge of the world we only meet sketches with no details; similar to how we sensed when we were toddlers. This is the true nature of the world. As adults we project our knowledge to the sketchy images that we encounter to associate them as things or persons that exist.

The mind can only recall or memorise impressions of our own mental constructions and not what is out there.

We combine our mind impressions with external elements for our satisfaction. As long as we are deluded in this manner in the sensual world we continue to have attachments and thus craving prevails. The one who realises the truth will eventually get dissatisfied.

Venerable Sudassana explains how one could get dissatisfied; ‘a person who is having a meal thinks that the taste he enjoys is in the food on his plate where in fact it is the taste of the morsel of food that has become a pulp mixed with saliva while chewing. For some reason if he has to put it out he will throw it away with disgust. The one who realises that what he enjoys when eating is nothing pleasant to look at as the piece of meat or fish on the plate, he will no longer crave for food.’

To overcome our delusion we need to understand the true nature of the sense bases which is found at the edge of the world. The sketchy images that we encounter initially is a result of our past ignorance, kamma and craving.

When we see the true nature that is present at the edge of the world (or the sense bases) we liberate from

death, decay etc. and suffering due to losing valuables, separating from the beloved and so on. This state is called attaining *Sopadishesha* nirvana.

The teachings guide us to live while enjoying the truth free from fermentations (cankers). **The edge of the sense basses is the edge of the world and the truth, whether a Buddha is present or not, is that.** When the truth is not known we do not see the reality and we are said to be having a wrong view and due to the wrong view the truth in turn gets concealed. In other words **owing to the Ignorance, fermentations are formed and these fermentations in turn cause ignorance.**

Other religions show us how to live while we associate the things that exist in the world. On the contrary Buddha showed us how the world is created within this fathom long body and it is the excellence of his dhamma.

## 2. Perception of Cessation

It is said that perception is the cause for *prapanca*, translated as proliferation of (erroneous) concepts<sup>1</sup> and also defined as taking as me mine and my soul. It is considered as an occurrence that fetters one to samsara. We need to study the consequences that *prapanca* bring in to our lives, so that it won't be mistaken as an accepted norm.

The aggregates of perception or noting are categorised as

Perception of Form

Perception of Sound

Perception of Smell

Perception of Taste

Perception of touch and

Perception of mental objects based on six sense bases.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation Ven. Katukurunde Gnananda.

When an object impinges on the eye, eye consciousness arises and consequently the occurrence of eye contact followed by sensation and perception. At this point there are no defilements and the act of seeing is completed by knowing, as perceived. We contemplate on what we see, hear and smell etc. and express through thought, speech and action, committing kamma or formation. Determination or formation (*Sankara*) of what is perceived is said to be vital for the purpose of communication and use. We need to distinguish the state of perception in the process of seeing, hearing etc. from that of the state of determination.

One uses definitions for the purpose of expression and communication, for e.g. a toddler sees colour distinctions of a mobile hanging over his crib but doesn't know descriptions of it such as the commonly used terminology, Red, Blue and yellow etc., to identify them. The state of seeing diversity of colour and shape, without knowing details, is the state of noting or perceiving (*sanna*), it is observation with no designation or description yet being aware of a visible form similar to what a toddler sees. Perceptions through other sense bases are the same. However, as

the child matures in age and experiences, he (or she) learns to differentiate colour by names which helps him to identify objects distinctly and to communicate.

In addition to aggregates of perceptions or noting there are other forms of perceptions such as perception of wholesomeness, permanence, happiness and self as well as perceptions of sense-desires (*kama*), ill will (*vyapada*) and cruelty (*himsa*) etc. These are caused by ‘*micca ditti*’ or wrong views and hence can be corrected.

It is said that the ability to perceive, developed through knowledge and application, augment contemplation. *Madu Pindika* Sutra describes that contemplation occur corresponding to the perception (*Yan sanjati tan vitakketi*). **However, the sutra clearly states that this occurrence does not take place vice versa, i.e. perception is not determined by how we contemplate (*Vitakka*), for instance, though we consider aggregates as persons and associate, say for instance as father, mother or child, the state of aggregates will not change and thus need not necessarily be perceived as father, mother etc.** Perception is fundamental to how we contemplate (on what we see or hear and so on) expressed through

thought, speech and action. Nevertheless, our habits have an influence on how we perceive.

Perceiving as persons, say father, mother, son and so on is due to our habits of associating with the world developed through previous sense experiences known in the scripts as cankers or fermentations (*Asrava*). We are unaware of being the owners of our perception that we often believe that perception is determined by external objects. We associate the world through perceptions we have developed through our previous experiences. We note persons as men, women etc. due to our defilements & cankers accumulated through previous experiences. If we are to remove attachments that we develop as father, mother etc., we should first recognise our errors in perceiving as persons.

The body formed of hair, nails, teeth, skin and flesh etc. nourished with edible food is not a person as we are used to perceive. The mind inhibits the body to make it conscious and to manoeuvre and when we see a body our cankers take precedence in perceiving as a man or a woman. As we are ignorant of the reality of the body form we surrender to our defilements and cankers in perceiving and hence what we experience is

distorted (*Viparitha Sanna*). Grasping as me, mine and myself (*Prapanca*) results from how we contemplate which is determined by how we perceive and therefore we form defilements in accordance with our sense of perception.

*Madu Pindika Sutra* goes onto explain that *prapanca* that arise due to contemplation hinder and delay our ability to see objects as it is at all times, i.e. in the past, present and in future, thereby restraining us in samsara grasping as me, mine and myself.

Objects themselves do not constitute elements of perception but the way we behold influence our perception. The *Tathagata* has explained this through the following stanza,

*Nete kāmā yāni citrāni loke;  
Saṅkappa-rāgo purisassa kāmo,  
Tiṭṭhanti citrāni tatheva loke;  
Athettha dhīrā vinayanti chandan.  
Nibbedika Sutra*

*Objects of sensuality in the world become pleasurable due to man's lustful conceptions. Things of beauty exist*

*in this world as they are; they do not constitute any sensuality that man associate with. The wise are not affected by them.*

Here, The Enlightened one stresses that objects do not constitute sensuality but man's lustful conceptions bring about sensuality on objects. In other words man's perception is influenced by corrupted conceptions that are tainted by his defilements and cankers (or fermentations).

Venerable Sudassana explains "the dilemma is that the visual consciousness that arises due to conditions ceases when the conditions cease to exist, however, we tend to tie the corresponding thought that arises in the mind to that visual experience. This is to identify the object seen and to know with descriptions so that we can think, speak and act upon it. This, he says, is how we collect new Kamma and **the difference between us and an enlightened person is that he or she does not combine the thought arising at the mind consciousness level (mental experience) to the visual experience.** An arhat experiences both and could even respond with thought, speech or action, however, knows them apart as two different sense experiences and hence he or she does not collect kamma. **The above distinction in responses to the same sense**

**experience is said to be due to ignorance of the former and wisdom of the latter (being free of ignorance).** We collect Kamma by combining the internal sense experience to the external sense experiences while an Arhat who knows them as independent occurrences discards Kamma.

Due to ignorance we form defilements on aggregates and due to our habits in associating with defilements (say as son, daughter etc.) our mind gets polluted (with cankers) distorting our perceptions. As we interact with such cankers we perceive the corporeal as man or woman and contemplate accordingly. In summary we are associating aggregates and defilements which are described, in terms of Four Noble truths, as suffering and cause for suffering. The teachings urge us to separate defilements from aggregates in order to attain cessation of suffering. If we cease perceiving as persons we will not contemplate on ‘persons’ and hence we free ourselves from suffering from decay, sickness and death due to grasping as father, mother, son or daughter. This implies that we need a shift in our ‘View’ in order to correct the way we perceive. If we can see aggregates as they are with the Right View we will not form defilements and that in turn will free us from grasping as me, mine and my-self (*prapanca*).

## Scarecrow Example

Imagine a scarecrow in the middle of a paddy field which may appear as a real person to someone looking from far. Being deceived he may start contemplating about the ‘person’ say as a youth or an old person, a man or woman etc. Due to his wrong perception a stream of conceptions will flow in his mind (*prapanca*) with regard to the ‘person’ he is ‘seeing’. Eventually if he walks towards the scarecrow, at some point he will realise what it is and discard all conceptions he had developed on it so far, instantly. At that particular point having gained a clear view, his perception becomes clearer and hence, his contemplation followed by how he respond through thought, speech and action.

Venerable Sudassana finds no difference between seeing the scarecrow as a person and perceiving a body, that is dependent on edible food, as a person or a soul. “Our habits of perception or defilements come to the fore here distorting the view” he says.

The Venerable further compares such perception to looking through a pair of coloured glasses, as our

contemplation is influenced by our perceptions similar to the way a pair of coloured glasses influences our view. The challenge is to remove this pair of coloured glasses, says the Venerable.

How can we associate the world without perceiving erroneously so that we can free ourselves from *prapanca* and liberate from this samsaric cycle? How can we discard the habits of taking as me mine and myself?

The challenge as Buddha has preached is that we must associate the world exactly like the others do but perceive differently by not having greed, ill will or delusion that corrupt our conceptions. By gaining the Right View one can change the way he or she perceives things and persons and hence, how we associate the world. The teachings refer to a cessation that can take place regardless of whether the eye (or ear etc.) is present or not. It advocates a philosophy of wisdom that the world cannot even imagine.

The Enlightened one has preached,

Na saññasaññi na visaññasaññi  
Nopi asaññi na vibhūtasaññi,  
Evaṃ sametassa vibhoti rūpaṃ  
Saññānidānā hi papañcasaṅkhā.  
-Kālaha Vivada Sutta

Let us examine this profound teaching.

We all perceive visible objects, sound, odour, taste, touch and mental objects, as worldly beings. The six forms of perceptions are the world. Here, the Buddha shows us a goal to reach through the Noble Path, to be free from all six worldly perceptions, *na sanna sanni*. If one is to cease the world (*loka Nirodha*) he needs to be free from perceiving forms as the rest of the world do, through sense bases. However, he can't be unconscious, stresses the Buddha, as one may suggest that being unconscious he can be free from all sense perceptions. One can also argue that he can move to the state of nothingness (*asanna*), No, the teaching does not accept that either. How about reaching a state beyond perception, neither consciousness nor unconsciousness (*neva sanna na sanna*), the Buddha wouldn't concur with that either.

According to the Teachings, one needs to associate the world while being detached from it. This is the challenge in front of us, to clear our view and live in a state of being ‘free from worldly perceptions’ i.e. ‘*nirodha sanna*’. However, it’s not associating nothingness or living without associating objects, the cessation or nirvana is not that, it is stressed. It is the state of perceiving cessation of the eye, ear etc., a state through which one can liberate from objects of sight, sound, smell etc., while still living in the world.

It is the state of living with **perception of cessation** (*nirodha Sanna*) where one does associate the world, however, differently to how the others do perceiving the opposite, i.e. arising (*samudaya*) only. He or she perceives things but in such a way that suffering is ceased by abandoning ignorance that cause kamma formation and therefore, he is not affected by decay, sickness or death.

The one who is free from worldly perceptions (*nirodha sanna*), experiences cessation of contact, but not by removing eye, ear etc. It is to be noted here that *sanna nirodaya* is different to *nirodha sanna*, the former is similar to the state of a dead body, no perceptions

whatsoever, on the contrary, an enlightened one (Arhat) lives within the world, free from worldly perception, and is called the one who has **ceased the world.**

The Buddha preached that the one who moves beyond form relinquishes himself from contact as well as from cause for contact & experience cessation. Such person is free from all forms of worldly sense perceptions however; continue to associates the world perceiving arising as well as cessation of aggregates. To move beyond the form, one needs to see things as they really are with the Right View and see that things do not exist before or after being sensed but arise to the occasion due to conditions and cease when the conditions cease to exist.

Tranquillity meditation techniques help in cultivating concentration that is essential to experience arising ceasing nature of aggregates with insight. The teachings emphasise that the practitioner needs to adopt both forms of meditation techniques, tranquillity and insight, in his endeavour.

### 3. Discussion on the Middle (Path) Doctrine: Majjhe Sutra

When Tathagata was residing at *Issipathanarama* in Benares (*Varanasi*), one day after their usual meal round, a group of monks were having a discussion on a dhamma previously preached by the enlightened one clarifying the Middle Path to a youth called Tissa Metteyya. One monk started the discussion making reference to the Buddha's exact words to the youth, seeking clarification from the other monks what precisely has Buddha referred to here in terms of the two extremes.

*'So ubh'ante vidithvana – Majjhe manta na lippathi  
Tam brumi maha purusothi – so'dha sibbhani maccaga ti'*

'The one who sees the two extremes and does not adhere to the middle either to relinquish braiding, is called a great man.'

*(Majjhe Sutra - Anguttara Nikaya)*

He questioned how one could have an inclination to an extreme and how one could be in the middle practicing the middle path. The monk further queried, how could that person avoid braiding (*sibbhani*) by associating the middle and what is meant by braiding?

One elderly monk clarified the Buddha's teaching as follows, "contact is one extreme and the cause for contact is the other, cessation is the middle. *Sibbhani* is a name for craving which means braiding or stitching." He further noted that craving being the cause for suffering braids one to the existences. "The one who discards craving by not leaning to the extreme of contact or the cause for contact but by being in the middle, i.e the state of cessation of contact, is called the Great Man (*Mahapurisa- an Enlightened person*)," the monk clarified.

Another monk stood up and said, "as I understand, the Buddha's teaching refers to the following, 'the past is one extreme, the future is the other and the present is the middle'. If one embrace the Past and dwell in the past that is one extreme and the one who dwells in the Future that is in the other extreme. Present is the middle, however, one should not stick to the present

either. The one who practice in this manner will discard ‘braiding’ or craving and hence will be called a great man.”

“Well, as I have heard the Tathagata meant that the internal sense bases are one extreme while external sense bases are the other, the consciousness is the middle”, said the third monk joining the conversation. “The one who removes craving by avoiding the above two extremes is said to be the great man”, he added.

Likewise three more monks presented their views on the topic, one said, the Matter is one extreme and the Name is the other while the consciousness being the middle and another thought that the Happiness is one extreme the Grief the other and the equanimity is the middle. The opinion of the last monk was that the Personality (*Sakkaya*) is one extreme and the Cause for Personality (*Sakkaya Samudaya*) is the other where cessation (of Personality) is the middle. As all these monks had different views on what Buddha referred to as the middle path, they decided to meet the Tathagata himself for clarification.

Having listened to all of them the Buddha was delighted and expressed his agreement with everyone, they all being correct, however, he clarified that when he preached this dhamma to the youth Tissa Metteiya on a previous occasion, he particularly referred to ‘Contact’ and ‘Cause for Contact’. The Buddha has further said that the interpretations from all monks in this instance are also correct in terms of the middle path, as the path to remove craving (referred to as braiding or *sibbani* in this instance) and to end suffering.

By knowing any of the above interpretations one can relate to the true meaning of the Middle path disclosed by the blessed one. If one practices to keep to the middle avoiding extremes in terms of any one of the methods discussed above he will not be inclined to any of the extremes explained through other methods.

The one who avoids extremes of Contact and the Cause for contact and keeps to the middle (the state of cessation) will inevitably avoid the extremes of the Past or Future, Happiness or Grief, Name and Matter and so on. The person who practices the middle path through any method mentioned above will avoid

inclination to any form of extremes explained through other methods.

“The above discussion of the two extremes primarily relate to two of the **Four Noble Truths** revealed by the Buddha, the **Truth of Suffering** and the **Truth of Cause for Suffering**. Where these two extremes exist the middle path cannot exist. For example the extreme of contact is, the Truth of Suffering and the extreme of cause for contact is the Cause for Suffering”, explains Venerable Sudassana Thero.

The one who discards the extremes of both suffering and cause for suffering accomplishes cessation and therefore the path to liberate from suffering (by removing craving - the cause for suffering) is shown as the middle path. In other words the Noble practice is to discard the two extremes, suffering and cause for suffering,

Let us examine what the two extremes of Contact and the Cause for contact are and the reason to identify the cessation of contact as the middle?

## **The Extremes of Contact & Cause for Contact**

There are six types of contact.

Eye contact

Ear contact

Nose contact,

Tongue contact

Body contact and

Mind contact.

For the contact to arise three factors should come together, for example, due to combination of the eye, visible object and the eye consciousness, the eye contact arises. When a contact occurs it results in creating sensation, perception followed by formation (or determination) which are said to be endowed with contact. The state of seeing, i.e. when the three factors, eye, visible object and the eye consciousness come together to form sensation (as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral), is called the Contact extreme. Thereafter, generating defilements in form of greed, ill will and delusion on what is seen and knowing it distinctively is the other or the extreme of Cause for Contact.

In other words the state of seeing and knowing what is seen are the two extremes and hence, the one who is inclined to either of the above is not following the noble path.

As described there are two states in the act of seeing an object, the state of seeing and the state of knowing what is seen. We all see the same object but each one of us may know it differently. For example one person may have a liking to a thing or a certain person while the other may hate that thing or the person. The same person will be seen as mother, sister, daughter and wife by different people.

The one who leans to the state of seeing is said to be in the extreme of Contact. If he responds to what is seen through thought, speech, or action, in accordance with his liking and disliking, he is in the state that ensures future arising of contact (extreme of Cause for Contact).

A toddler in a cradle sees the colourful mobile hanging above him but he wouldn't know what it is. Though he sees the colour variations say as, red, blue or yellow, he wouldn't know what they are known as. This is the

state of noting without knowing any descriptions, the state of contact. The toddler dwells in the contact extreme and what an adult primarily experiences at such state of seeing or hearing is no different to that of the toddler. However, the latter proceeds to the other extreme forming defilements and developing a cause to experience a contact again. It should be noted that though the toddler's experience end in the first extreme he is still not free from the ability to form defilements as he mature, since ignorance is present as a latent tendency (*Anusaya*).

When we are said to be dwelling in the contact extreme, the mind is not defiled similar to that of the toddler, however, both are still considered to be in an extreme as the ignorance is still present latently. When the grown up child eventually identify the colours of red, blue yellow etc. it's the state of determination or formation and responding through thought, speech and action, the opposite extreme. Defilements are now developed in form of attachment, aversion or delusion. Now we note that the state of causing contact is at this extreme since kamma is formed here to cause Relink-Cognition. We also recognise that our attachment or aversion is on our own mental formations which occur

at the state of developing the Cause for Contact rather than on people or things that we encounter at the state of Contact. Say we develop a lustful affection upon a person and contemplate on him or her over and over again making it a habit, we tend to remember the person based on that habit when we see him or her again, even on a picture. This occurrence is identified as the function of cankers, or fermentations (*Asrava*) in teachings. When we are ignorant of this phenomenon, we begin to love a person or to hate a person that seem to exist externally, in accordance with those cankers we have developed (as habits). When the Contact extreme is not understood as it is, one cannot refrain from moving to the next extreme, the state of creating Cause for Contact.

Elephants love to eat twigs of a Mesquite tree, called *Katu-Andara* in Sri Lanka. Mesquite tree has sharp thorns in abundance which can make greater harm to the man but not to the elephant. When the elephant eats the Mesquite twigs the thorns pierce its gums causing bleeding. The animal enjoys eating the thorny Mesquite twigs not knowing that it is the taste of his own blood that he enjoys and hence reaches out to eat more and more.

Similarly, not knowing the unwholesome consequences of the Contact we interact with things or persons that we have grasped with desire. We are ignorant that our attachment is to our own mental fabrications rather than to an external object, similar to the elephant who is deceived of the taste of his own blood as that which belongs to Mesquite twigs.

As the two extremes are not known the elephant returns to the contact extreme, munching the twigs and thereafter enjoying the taste which is the other extreme. It's craving for the taste of blood makes the elephant to reach out again to the Mesquite tree. There is no end to this cycle.

**Keeping to the Middle (path) avoiding extremes does not mean going into seclusion escaping from the sensual contacts.** The noble practice is to live like the rest of the world do but being aware of the unwholesomeness in leaning to the extremes.

The Deer sees presence of water in the Mirage and so do we, which is the contact extreme. Due to lack of wisdom the Deer runs towards the mirage to quench its thirst while we don't as we are aware of the

phenomenon that the appearance of water is created by the eye and the surrounding conditions. Not knowing the truth the Deer is deluded but we aren't due to our wisdom in this instance. In the same way, if we can develop our awareness that what is seen is different to what exists out there, in our day to day life, we can experience what the others experience in the world but not being deluded as the others do in such instances. This is known as living in the world while being aware of the causality. **In summary it is the realisation of the distinction between sense experiences and what arises in the mind in relation to those experiences, the noble practice of not combining the two together.**

The person who avoids the two extremes and follow the middle path discards craving and such person is called '*Maha Purisa*'.

The above being the explanation of the middle path through Contact and the Cause for Contact let us examine how this Dhamma applies to the other methods too.

## The Extremes of the Past & the Future

As raised by one monk who participated in the discussion, Past is considered as one extreme and the Future as the other while present being the Middle. Our experiences through contact (sense) bases occur in the present. Our thinking of the past or future is strictly at mind consciousness level.

Definition of the present is different in terms of the mundane (*Laukika*) state to that of the super-mundane (*lokottara*) state. Though it is called the state of equanimity, ignorance is present as a latent tendency in the former state, at each sense experience, say seeing, hearing etc., hence we do not see beyond the sense bases. The equanimity observed with insight, in the latter state, is different as one sees beyond sense bases and hence there is no adherence to the present.

Six sense bases arise from Name-Matter which are developed by re-link consciousness that come to be due to past kamma & craving caused by ignorance. Therefore, sense bases are said to be conditioned by past ignorance, kamma and craving. The act of seeing is associating the causes from the Past and responding

by thought, speech and action known as the Future extreme. Further, not seeing beyond the form, holding on to eye, is noted as associating the past as well (same with all other senses). Also noteworthy as associating the past are what we experience, such as things that we saw or people we have met in the past. This is due to the notion of existence and presence that characterises the world but noted as an extreme.

Thinking of future action to see someone or to get something is leniency to the future extreme through the mind sense base forming attachment, aversion and delusion in the mind, to cause future existence. Responses through thought, speech and action with greed or ill will for what was experienced, relate to the future extreme.

The past extreme is responsible for creating the future extreme, as explained in other methods e.g. contact extreme and the cause for contact extreme.

**A frame of mind beyond the world is necessary to understand how to refrain from dwelling in form (past) and not to respond with likes and dislikes**

**(future).** Such a frame of mind can only be achieved in the Buddhist way.

One can train himself to see beyond form while associating the eye. Such person will not dwell in the past extreme & will inevitably avoid the future extreme. He or she will see things in the same way as the worldly beings do but see beyond form. To him or her what is seen is one thing but what exists externally is another, as discussed in the mirage example.

Though the Deer grasps the mirage seen as water the man has the wisdom to see beyond and not to dwell in the visible form. Knowing what is seen is not there and things seen do not exist (before or after the act of seeing) is discarding the past extreme (and therefore the future extreme). The one that associate the world in a manner where he will not leave anything behind, any form of trace that would cause future cognition, is said to be the ‘Great Man’.

## **The Extremes of Happiness and Sorrow**

The script refers to five forms of happiness arising from the, eye, ear, nose, tongue and body sense bases

as well as in the mind (*Somanassa* - through mind contact :*Mano Sampassa*). Similarly, it refers to five forms of sorrow or grief that arise from the five sense bases, eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and in the mind (*Domanassa* - through mind contact: *Mano Sampassa*)

Equanimity or *Adukkhama Sukha* is recognised as the intermediate or middle feeling in respect of the above feelings. However, this isn't the middle that is referred to in teachings (in respect of the Noble Path) as it is not unique to Buddhist practice. The Middle path preached by the Buddha is not just observing equanimity which even the non-Buddhists practice. What lacks in that practice is that the ignorance is not removed.

As lay people we constantly associate lust, hatred and delusion even though they are not clearly evident in our thoughts, speech and actions. Though we can refrain from lust and hatred we cannot remove ignorance that is present as a latent tendency (*Anusaya*) and hence we are 'not free from *Mara*' the Tathagata has said.

In addition to his advice to avoid the two extremes of feeling, the Buddha went on to stress that one should

take necessary care not to adhere to the middle either, *Majje mantha na lippathi*.

The presence of Happiness and Grief themselves are not extremes but it is our leniency and attachment to them that was rejected by the Enlightened One as extremes. Leniency to equanimity is also categorised under the extreme of happiness since people find comfort in equanimity, as a state of relief from suffering, however, they are said to be still not free from delusion (*moha*). The nature of worldly existence is that beings hold onto Happiness, Grief or Equanimity, being subject to the 'Eight Laws Relating to the Vicissitude of Life' (*Ashta Loka Dharma*), Liberation is only achieved by moving beyond the worldly existences, becoming *lokottara*.

Understanding the causality of both happiness and grief helps one to overcome his or her obsession to be inclined to either of the two extremes. When one learns the unwholesome consequences of leaning to Happiness and Grief he will not be attracted to them, hence, will seek equanimity. However, he needs to be aware of the conditionality of the state of Equanimity and observe equanimity within equanimity so that he

will not adhere to it. The one who discards craving by practicing in such a manner avoiding the two extremes and not adhering to the middle is called the Great Man.

### **The Extremes of Name and Matter or Nama & Rupa**

In Buddhist teachings Name (*Nama*) are defined as contact, sensation, perception, intention and attention. Matter (*Rupa* - visible, audible etc.) is said to be formed by the Four Great Elements and those forms that appear due to the presence of Four Great Elements. The name and matter are said to be interdependent.

Contacts through five senses (with external objects) give rise to sensations experienced as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Attachment to such sensations through contact within five senses is considered as leniency to Matter (or Form) extreme. Pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling experienced through the mind is due to association of the mind sense base. When what is thought becomes reality, i.e. accepting the mental object as a thing or person that exists, it's the name extreme which is also referred to as the extreme of cause for suffering. The matter extreme is

considered as the extreme of suffering and hence the relief is said to be in the middle, which, in this explanation is noted as the state of consciousness. Such state of mind is noted as the mind that is free from any inclination.

When there aren't any mental impressions of external objects (visible, audible etc.) and thus what occurs in mind does not become reality, one realises that nothing exists externally. **This is the knowledge that, what occurs in mind ceases from within, as the middle.** Attachment to either extreme makes one prone to '*sibbani*' (braiding).

The one who associate the mind without leaning to the extremes of Name or Matter is known as the Great Man.

### **The Extremes of External Sense Bases and Internal Sense Bases**

Seeing form and leniency to see form (hear sound, inhale odour etc.) is known as inclination to the external sense bases. When one sees a visible object, experiencing as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, his or

her mind is engaged in that act and hence is said to be attached to an external object. Similarly when one hears a sound and listen to it attentively, experiencing it as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, he is said to be attached to an external object. The same applies to other sense experiences including the mind. This is the nature in the world of associating form, whether it is a visible, audible or otherwise, known as the extreme of external sense bases. In this process even if one decide to contemplate on impermanence, unwholesomeness etc. of the object being experienced he or she is said to be still in the extreme of external sense bases not being free from the 'Form' (visible, audible etc.).

To experience external sense bases we have six internal sense bases. The notion of presence of an eye, an ear or a nose etc. that is engaged in the acts of seeing, hearing, inhaling etc. is said to be the extreme of inner sense bases. The one with the notion of possessing senses that exist constantly is not free from the extreme of internal sense bases.

The Buddha has preached that the eye is invisible, internal and being non-existent it arises and ceases without any remainder. He further said that the eye

arises when the conditions for the occurrence of seeing come together and ceases completely when the conditions cease to exist. Therefore, the eye is said to be subject to causality and does not belong to a person, the same applies to the other internal sense bases. The worldly beings with no knowledge of this phenomenon believe on senses that exist constantly and hence are in the extreme of internal sense bases.

The one that grasps the sense bases cannot avoid the resultant feelings, creating defilements of greed, ill will and delusion that form part of the process.

Moving beyond forms that we grasp as things that exist externally is vital to be free from the extreme of external sense bases and release from the extreme of internal sense bases is considered as being detached from internal sense bases, eye, ear, nose etc. Seeing, hearing etc. in the same way as the worldly beings see or hear but with the knowledge that that what is seen (or heard) is not what exists externally and what exists externally cannot be seen (or heard) is the vision that has to be developed. '*Vidharshana*' (Insight) is defined as the ability to see (or hear, smell etc.) in a superior manner than the lay people. Here when a person sees

an external object he sees the same object that the others see. Even though his thoughts on that object are wholesome (unlike those of the others who see the same object), what he sees is no different to the others. Contemplating differently on a form that others also experience is not considered as seeing Insights. The difference noted here is that his or her thoughts will be wholesome while the thoughts of others are unwholesome (with greed, ill will and delusion). As a consequence one will gain merits to be born in a higher realm while the other will be borne in a lower realm having gained demerits.

In the mirage example, the deer and the man both see with the eyes that has arisen due to previous kamma, both sees water where the mirage is, however, while the deer believes that what is seen (water) is there, the man who also sees the presence of water is not deceived as the deer, owing to his wisdom in this instance. The latter knows that what is seen is not there but is created due to conditions. This is considered as seeing with insights or *Vidharshana* which is beyond the vision of the animal. In this instance the man's mind is free from developing greed, ill will or delusion compared to that of the deer.

The person with a mind that will not grasp both extremes of internal or external sense bases but stay in the middle without adhering to it either is the Great Man.

### **Extremes of Personality & Cause for Personality**

‘Personality’ or *Sakkaya* is also defined as the five clinging aggregates; it’s the state of arising of eye consciousness, ear consciousness & nose consciousness etc. It is the state of noting as, a visual object is seen, a sound is heard etc, yet not knowing with descriptions and is identified as the ‘personality’ or *sakkaya* extreme. This is called the five clinging aggregates (*sakkaya*) extreme as the aggregates that arise favour clinging and are susceptible to forming depravities (*keles*). The extreme of cause for ‘Personality’ or the state where craving comes into play is the extreme where defilements are formed.

Worldly existences, either in Sensual world, Material World or In-Material World, belong to these two extremes. The mind that associate any of these three existences is associating the two extremes. Craving for the five clinging aggregates is the Cause

for *sakkaya* and hence it drags one to Cause for Personality extreme. No one in the world is free from either of the two extremes as one extreme leads to the other.

In terms of a Thought Process, *Cakku dwarawarjana* - the state of eye consciousness, is the extreme of Personality, at the completion of the thought process, the *Javana* state, is the extreme of Cause for 'Personality'. There for the two extremes are identified as the beginning and the end of a thought process.

Would there be cessation within the state of personality - at the state of seeing? Can we see impermanence, suffering and non-self at this state and seek liberation? The answer according to Buddhist teachings is no, as the presence of an 'object' is already noted and then contemplated upon. It is a wholesome act, however, and will bestow merits compared to the demerits produced by those who contemplate on the same object with greed or ill will. Both are equal in terms of not knowing beyond the personality extreme.

Cessation is something beyond the worldly thinking.

If we can refrain from extremes of Personality and Cause for Personality it is the path to cessation. **The one on the path can be in the world knowing both extremes but the one in extremes won't see the path.** When one ceases the Personality extreme he or she ceases the extreme of the Cause for Personality as well.

The path is to associate objects that the worldly beings associate but differently. The difference is that while in the two extremes one will hold onto the form, when associating objects, whereas the other who tread on the middle path will refrain from getting caught up with the form though he associates it as well.

The vital factor is to see objects exactly as a worldly being see. A Deer believes that the appearance of water in the mirage is real. It believes that what is seen is what exists out there. However, we know that what appears to be water does not exist but is an illusion occurring in the mind and hence have the wisdom in this instance that what is seen is not what really exists. The sudden thought that may come in to our mind about the presence of water vanishes immediately as we know it is not real. This is the mind frame that we

need to develop to remove the personality extreme. Associating form, visible, audible etc. without grasping, having a mind frame similar to that we have in the mirage experience - moving beyond the form, abandons personality extreme. The one who sees beyond form is free from any attachments (greed or aversion) and hence removes craving, the Cause for Personality. The one who removes both extremes in this manner is called the Great Man.

“It is in this very fathom-long physical frame with its perceptions and mind that, I declare, lies the world, and the arising of the world, and the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world.”

Lord Buddha: Rohitassa Sutta: Samyutta Nikaya



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