Chapter-4

NIBBANA FROM DIFFERENT PERSEPECTIVE

We have discussed Buddhist meditation especially Vipassana Meditation in previous chapter. We are going to discuss Nibbana in this Chapter. In Theravada Perspective, the goal of Buddhism is to eradicate the defilements, Kilesa and the destruction of defilements is called Nibbana in Pali (Nibban in Burmese). Nibbana is defined as, ‘vanasankhataya tanhaya nikkhantatta nibbanan ti pavuccati’ in Abhidhammathasangaha. It means it is Nibbana because it is a departure from craving, which is an entanglement.228

It is impossible by mere perusal of books. Nibbāna is not something to be set down in print, nor is it a subject to be grasped by intellect alone; it is a supramundane state (lokuttara dhamma) to be realized only by intuitive wisdom. A purely intellectual comprehension of Nibbāna is impossible because it is not a matter to be arrived at by logical reasoning (atakkāvacara). The words of the Buddha are perfectly logical, but Nibbāna, the ultimate Goal of Buddhism, is beyond the scope of logic. Nevertheless, by reflecting on the positive and negative aspects of life, the logical conclusion emerges that in contradistinction to a conditioned phenomenal existence, there must exist a sorrow less, deathless, non-conditioned State.

The humans who are considered to be the supreme beings on this planet earth have entered into the twenty first century with many astonishing inventions and discoveries to their credit and yet they seem to find no solution to eradicate suffering,

dukkha. All the time we, humans, have been trying to eliminate or rather suppress the sufferings by engaging ourselves in some or the other pleasure seeking ventures and finally landing in greater problems. Having passed through this futile experiment for finding solutions to the ills of the world, now it is time to conduct the same age old and most effective experiment as conducted and taught by the Buddha himself.

The realization of the knowledge of the four paths is termed Nibbana and it becomes an object to the paths and fruits. Penetrating the Four Noble Truths namely:

(1) There is suffering, dukkha.
(2) There is a cause for suffering, samudaya.
(3) There is the cessation of suffering, nirodha.
(4) There is a path leading to the cessation of suffering, magga.

The above experiment is the need for the attainment of final liberation called Nibbana. Now it is left to the wisdom and scientific temperament of modern humans to make use of the tool and technique given by Buddha to eliminate the sufferings and attain the final liberation called Nibbana. Though outwardly this noble truth of suffering as taught by the Buddha is a poor consolation for the frailties of the faltering heart and seems to be pessimistic. But here in Buddha's teaching truth is not explained in terms of pessimism or optimism, but is explained in terms of realism and stresses of work because without working on the Noble eightfold path it is not possible to realize the truth of suffering and its cessation. Suffering no doubt is a pain but this very pain in Buddhism is used as wet stone to sharpen one's wisdom and penetrate the reality to see things as they are and not as we want them to be.
In *Mahatathipadopama sutta*\(^{229}\), the Buddha says: "Friends, just as the footprint of any living being that walks can be placed within an Elephant's footprint, and so the Elephant's footprint are declared the chief of them because of its great size; so too, all wholesome states can be included in the four noble truths of sufferings".

Therefore, in the name of pessimism or any other negative attitude one should not be afraid of suffering and react like an ostrich which buries its head in the sand to avoid challenge faced by it. Such delusions must be eradicated completely and one must be prepared to face the stark realities of life with its sufferings and attempt to follow the Noble eightfold path. This Noble eightfold path in turn is divided into three sections. They are Sila which includes right speech, right action and right livelihood. Samadhi includes right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Panna includes right view and right intention.

**WHAT NIBBANA IS**

*Nibbana* means extinction or annihilation. The round of suffering in the realm of defilement (*kilesa vatta*), of action (*kamma vatta*) and of the result of action (*vipaka vatta*) is extinguished. The realm of defilement encompasses *avijja*, ignorance, *tanha*, craving and *upadana*, clinging. The realm of action includes both meritorious and de-meritorious deeds that contribute to the emergence of the endless round of rebirths. The realm of the result of action, usually kamma-result, relates to the consequences of actions, good or bad. Every action produces a result of mind, matter, six sense-bases, feeling, etc.

seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking are all manifestations of the result of action, vipaka.

Failure to grasp at insight-knowledge which recognizes the real nature of existence when a man sees or hears something is ignorance. When he declares that he sees or hears something, he does so with the wrong, noting that it is actually his ego that sees or hear. This wrong notion deludes on into believing that things are permanent or pleasing or satisfactory. Therefore, it gives rise to craving as it intensifies into clinging. This is how defilement builds up its own empire.

**Nibbana** occurs in the *Ratana sutta*. Etymologically, it is derived from *ni*, a negative prefix, and *va*, meaning craving. It denoted the annihilation of the flames of lust, hatred and ignorance which are the root causes of suffering; the Text say: *nibbati vattakukkham etthati nibbanam*. It means where the round of suffering ceases, there is Nibbana. At the sight of Nibbana, on the realization of the Path and its fruition as a result of insight-meditation, defilements like craving and ignorance become extinct, thus, giving no opportunity for actions and results of actions to arise in the form of consciousness, nama, rupa, ayatana, phassa, vedana etc. New becoming does not occur. This is the extinction of *Kilesa vatta, kamma vatta* and *vipaka vatta*. In this definition, the special quality of Nibbana is metaphorically used for the location of Nibbana but actually it has no location.

The most important point to note here is that the nature of Nibbana is the annihilation of all defilements. With the end of the round of defilement, no new becoming arises, all is quiescent. For meditation practitioners, defilements become inert

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230 Suttanipata, p.4.
only for a moment during the practice of insight-meditation. They cannot be totally uprooted. Total elimination is possible only with the realization of the Noble Path, resulting in Path-consciousness flowing into the stream of annihilation.

Nibbana is figuratively shown as the abode of cessation of all suffering brought about by defilement. Its nature is also described metaphorically as the very element of quiescence, the result of the cessation of suffering. In actuality, Nibbana is the very nature of the annihilation of all the three rounds of suffering. According to the commentary, the characteristic of Nibbana is santi, peace and calm. In the Udāna and Itivuttaka the Buddha refers to Nibbāna as follows: “There is, O Bhikkhus, an unborn (ajāta), unoriginated (abhūta), unmade (akata) and non-conditioned state (asamkhata). If, O Bhikkhus, there were not this unborn, un-originated, unmade and non-conditioned, an escape for the born, originated, made, and conditioned, would not be, possible here. As there is an unborn, un-originated, unmade, and non-conditioned state, an escape for the born, originated, made, conditioned is possible.” The Itivuttaka states: The born, become, produced, compounded, made, And thus not lasting, but of birth and death An aggregate, a nest of sickness, brittle, A thing by food supported, come to be, – 'There no fit thing to take delight in such. The escape there from, the real, beyond the sphere Of reason, lasting, unborn, unproduced, The sorrow less, the stainless path that ends The things of woe, the peace from worries.231

Buddhists literature did not state that its ultimate goal can be reached only in a life beyond. Here lies the difference between the Buddhist conception of Nibbāna and some non-Buddhist conception of an eternal heaven which is attainable only after death. When

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231 Suttanipata.p.195.
Nibbāna is realized in the body, it is called Sopādisesa Nibbāna Dhātu. When an Arahant attains Pari-Nibbāna after the dissolution of the body, without any remainder of any physical existence, it is called Anupādisesa Nibbāna Dhātu. In the Itivuttaka the Buddha says, “There are, O Bhikkhus, two elements of Nibbāna. “Herein, O Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu is an Arahant, one who has destroyed the Defilements, who has lived the life, done what was to be done, laid aside the burden, who has attained his goal, who has destroyed the fetters of existence, who, rightly understanding, is delivered. His five sense-organs still remain, and as he is not devoid of them he undergoes the pleasant and the unpleasant experiences. That destruction of his attachment, hatred and delusion is called the ‘Element of Nibbāna’ with the basis still remaining.”

“What O Bhikkus, is ‘the Element of Nibbāna’ without the basis?”

“Herein, O Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu is an Arahant… is delivered. In this very life all his sensations will have no delight for him, they will be cooled. This is called ‘the Element of Nibbāna without a basis.’ These two Nibbāna-states are shown by Him Who seethe, who is such and unattached. One state is that in this same life possessed with base remaining, the becoming’s stream be cut off. While the state without a base belonged to the future, wherein all be comings utterly do come to cease. They who, by knowing this state uncompounded have heart’s release, by cutting off the stream, they who have reached the core of dhamma, glad To end, such have abandoned all be comings.”

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232 Itivuttaka, p.200.
THE CHARACTERISTICS OF NIBBANA

According to Buddhism all things, both mundane and supra-mundane are classified into two divisions, namely, those conditioned by causes (samkhata) and those not conditioned by any cause (asamkhata). The commentary describes Nibbana by its characteristics, functions and manifestations. The characteristic of it is peace, its function deathlessness and its manifestation signlessness. Insight into signlessness can be achieved only through the knowledge of the Path and its fruition aided by the knowledge of self-appreciation which is called paccavekkhana nana in pali. As noble ones reflect on the Path and its fruition the absence of form, conventional concept and sign become apparent.

The universal law of change applies to everything in the cosmos – both mental and physical – ranging from the minutest germ or tiniest particle to the highest being or the most massive object. Mind, though imperceptible, changes faster than matter. Nibbāna, a supramundane state, realized by Buddhas and Arahants, is declared to be not conditioned by any cause. Hence it is not subject to any becoming, change and dissolution. It is unbecoming (ajāta), undecaying (ajara), and deathless (amara). Therefore, Nibbāna is neither a cause nor an effect. In conventional terms the Buddha declares: “Nibbānamparamamsukham-Nibbāna is the highest bliss.” It is bliss supreme because it is not a kind of happiness experienced by the senses. It is a blissful state of positive relief from the ills of life.
TWO TYPES OF NIBBANA

Although Nibbana is one-fold according to intrinsic nature, by reference to a basis for distinction, it has twofold, namely:

1. Sa-upādisesa-nibbāna, the element of Nibbana with the residue remaining. Sa - with, upādi - the five aggregates grasped by craving and false view; sesa- remaining. In Buddhas and arahants, though all defilements (kilesās) have been annihilated, vipāka-cittas and their concomitants (together known as vipāka-nāmakkhandha) and kammaja-rūpas still remain. Yet Buddhas and arahants can experience Nibbāna fully. The element of Nibbāna which is realized by Buddhas and arahants before death with vipāka-nāmakkhanada and kammaja-rūpas remaining is called sa-upādisesa-Nibbāna-dhātu.

2. Anupādisesa-nibbāna, the element of Nibbana without the residue remaining. This is the Nibbāna experienced by Buddhas and arahantas after death. The element of Nibbāna which is realized without any vipāka-nāmakkhandha and kammaja-rūpa remaining is called anupādisesa-Nibbāna-dhātu. Sa-upādisesa-Nibbāna=kilesa-Nibbāna; it is attained by the annihilation of kilesās. Anupādisesa-Nibbāna=khandha-Nibbāna; it is attained by the annihilation of the five aggregates.

THREE MODES OF NIBBANA

It is threefold according to its different aspects, namely:

1. Suññata-nibbāna, void, Nibbāna is devoid of lust, hatred and ignorance; it is also devoid of groups of rūpa and nāma. So it is called Suññata-Nibbāna. Suñña-void or
zero; here it means that lust, hatred, ignorance, rūpa and nāma are zero, but it does not mean that Nibbāna is ‘nothingness’.

2. Animitta-nibbāna, signlessMaterial groups, which are composed of rūpa-kalāpas, have different forms and shapes. Mental groups consisting of citta and its concomitants may be assumed to have some kind of form for they can be seen by certain persons who have developed super-normal power (abhiññās). Nibbāna, however, has no form and shape at all. Thus it is called Animitta-Nibbāna.

3. Appanihita-nibbāna, desireless, Nibbāna has no Nama and rūpa nor any form to be longed for by tanhā (craving or Lust). Neither is there any lust nor craving in Nibbāna. Nibbāna is absolutely free from lust as well as from the hankerings of lust. So it is known as Appanihita-Nibbāna.233

Buddhism is a way of life based on the training of the mind. One ultimate aim of Buddhism is to show the way to complete liberation from suffering by the attainment of the Nibbāna (unconditioned), a state beyond the range of the normal untrained mind. Its immediate aim is to strike at the roots of suffering in everyday life.

The Abhidhamma deals with realities existing in the ultimate sense, or paramatthadhamma. There are four such realities:

1. Citta, mind or consciousness, defined as “that which knows or experiences” an object. Citta occurs as distinct momentary states of consciousness.

2. Cetasika, the mental factors that arise and occur along with the citta.

3. \textit{Rūpa}, physical phenomenon or material form.

4. \textit{Nibbāna}, the unconditioned state of bliss which is the final goal.

The Mind-Doctrine, or the Buddha’s teaching on Mind, is the heart of his message. It is the sum of human wisdom. It does not deal with something far, foreign, or antiquated. It deals with that which is common to all humanity, ever young, and nearer to man than hands and feet. The message of the Buddha comes to the world as an effective way of help to face the present-day problems. It is a radical cure for the ever-present ills. In the Buddhist doctrine, mind is the starting point, the focal point and also the culminating point in the liberated and purified saint. The \textit{Dhammapada}, the popular Buddhist scripture, opens with the following words: All that we are is the result of what we have thought: all that we are is founded on our thoughts and formed of our thoughts.

These momentous words lead straight into the man’s heart. Mind is the nearest to us, as through the mind alone, we become aware of the external world—including our own body. If mind is comprehended, all other things are comprehended. Mind is the source of all good and evil that arises within and befalls us from without. The words of the Buddha in the first two verses of \textit{The Dhammapada} highlight this fact: If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain pursues him, as the wheel of the wagon follows the hoof of the ox that draws it. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness pursues him like his own shadow that never leaves him.\textsuperscript{234}

\textsuperscript{234} \textit{Dhammapada}, Verse.1-2.
The Buddha’s message as a time-honored Doctrine of the Mind teaches the following three things: (1) to know the mind—so near to us, yet so unknown; (2) to shape the mind—so unwieldy and obstinate, yet may turn so pliant; and (3) to free the mind—in bondage all over, yet may win freedom here and now. Despite the tremendous advances humankinds have made in sciences and technology, advances that have dramatically improved the living conditions in so many ways, humans still find themselves confronted with global problems that mock their most determined attempts to solve them within the established frameworks.235

THE WAY TO NIBBANA

The way to Nibbāna is the Middle Path (Majjhima Patipadā) which avoids the extreme of self-mortification that weakens the intellect and the extreme of self-indulgence that retards moral progress. This Middle Path consists of the following eight factors: Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. The first two are classified as Wisdom (paññā), the second three as Morality (sīla), and the last three as Concentration (samādhi).

Man is a mysterious being with inconceivable potentialities. Latency in him is both saintly characteristics and criminal tendencies. They may arise to the surface at unexpected moments in disconcerting strength. How they originated we don’t know. We only know that they are dormant in man in varying degrees.

Within the powerful mind in this complex of man are also found a storehouse of virtues and a rubbish heap of evil. With the development of the respective characteristics, man may become either a blessing or a curse to humanity. Those who wish to be great, noble and serviceable, who wish to subliminate themselves and serve humanity, both by example and precept, and who wish to avail themselves of this golden opportunity as human beings, endeavors their best to remove the latent vices and to cultivate the dormant virtues.

To dig up precious gems embedded in the earth, men spend enormous sums of money and make laborious efforts, and sometimes even sacrifice their lives. But to dig up the valuable treasures latent in him, only persistent effort and enduring practice are necessary. Even the poorest man or woman can accomplish this task; for wealth is not an essential prerequisite to the accumulation of transcendental treasures. It is strange that the vices latent in man seems to be almost natural and spontaneous. It is equally strange that every vice possesses its opposite sterling virtue, which does not however appear so normal and automatic, though still within the range of all.

One powerful destructive vice in man is anger. The sweet virtue that subdues this evil force and sublimes man is loving-kindness (metta). Cruelty is another vice that is responsible for many errors and atrocities prevalent in the world. Compassion is its antidote. Jealousy is another vice that poisons one’s systems and leads to unhealthy rivalries and dangerous competitions. The most effective remedy for this poisonous drug is appreciative joy. There are two other universal characteristics that upset the mental equipoise of man. They are attachment to the pleasurable and an aversion to the non-pleasurable. These two opposite forces can be eliminated by developing equanimity.
The Eightfold Noble Path is the very basic teaching of the Buddha. According to the order of development, Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom are the three stages on the Grand Highway that leads to Nibbāna. These three stages are embodied in the beautiful ancient verse: Sabbapāpapassaakaranam–kusalassaupasampadāSacittapariyodapanam–etam Buddhānasāsanam. The verse meant not to do any evil, to cultivate well, and to purify one’s mind – This is the advice of all the Buddhas.\(^{236}\)

**KILESA (DEFILEMENT)**

The opposite of Nibana is called Kilesa in Pali which means defilements. When a person practices mindfulness, develops mindfulness or cultivates mindfulness, he can purify his being from all kilesa. Kilesa are so called because they afflict the mind or because they defile beings by dragging them down to a mentally soiled and depraved condition. Kilesa consists of ten kinds: greed (lobha), hatred (dosa), delusion (moha), conceit (mana), wrong view (ditthi), doubt (vicikiccha), sloth (thina), restlessness (uddacca), shameless (ahirika), and fearlessness (anottappa).\(^{237}\)

*Lobha* is also termed *pema* or *tanha* or raga or *samudaya*. The term *pema* is used for the love exchanged between sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives or members of the family, relatives, etc. Therefore *pema* means sincere love. This kind of sincere love is also called *samyojana*, which means binding. *Samyojana* binds one person to another as a rope does. It makes one inseparable from the other. *Lobha* means not only greed but also desire, lust, craving, attachment and love so *lobha* covers

\(^{236}\) Dhammapada, Verse 183.

all the sense of love, desire, lust, greed, craving and attachment. When one of these mental states arises in our mind gets defiled. So these are known as defilements.

*Dosa* is hatred, anger, ill will or aversion. Anger or violence of mind is called *dosa* (hatred). *Dosa* is not only violent but it also soils the mind. It is not only wild and rude, but also depressive resulting in inferiority complex and living in fear; they all belong to the category of *dosa* or hatred (ill will). In brief sorrow, grief, fear, depression, anger, grudge, frightening others with abusive language, attacking, planning to kill other people—all of these are *dosa*. Since *dosa* is with both fear and violence, the angry, violent person is also easily frightened.

*Moha* is ignorance. Not knowing (delusion) is *moha*. It is of two kinds, namely, *anusaya-moha* and *pariyutthāna-moha*. The term *anusaya* means inherent tendency or lying latent. The term *pariyutthāna* means rising up. Therefore, delusion, which lies latent in the mind of beings, is called *anusaya moha*, the latent delusion. The delusion that occasionally arises together with the consciousness is called *pariyutthāna moha*, the rising-up delusion.

*Mana* is meant to be conceit. Those who possess *mana* tends to be haughty and mean, turning their nose up at others. When they excel others in status, wealth, knowledge, health, etc., they think highly of themselves and look down upon others. When they are equal to others in status, wealth, etc., they reason thus: “Others are not different from us; we, too, have such things” and will be puffed up with pride nevertheless. When their position, wealth, knowledge, health, etc., are lower than others, they reason thus: “We needn’t heed their higher position, wealth, etc., we eat
only what we have; we get only what we work for. Why should we kowtow to others? Though inferior to others they will still be conceited.

Wrong view or wrong understanding is called ditthi. It may also mean wrong belief. Ditthi sees or Understands wrongly what is absent to be present, what is present to be absent, what is right to be wrong and what is wrong to be right; it also dogmatically takes one’s wrong view to be right and other’s right views to be wrong.

Vicikiccha is doubt or scepticism on the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Samgha. It is wavering between belief and disbelief. Doubts on the meaning of words and sentences, or doubts as to which route to follow on a journey, etc., do not constitute vicikiccha. Even Arahants sometimes have doubts about the meaning of Vinaya Rules, whether such an act is in accordance with the Vinaya or not. In this case it is not vicikiccha. It simply is conjecturing or discursive thinking, vitakka. Only scepticism on the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Samgha amounts to vicikiccha.

Thina-middha is cloth and torpor. Thina means sluggishness of mind and body, and middha means torpor or dullness of mind and body. These two mental factors arise together. They deprive one of zeal and vitality, inducing laziness as can be seen in a person about to fall asleep or in one dozing off while listening to a sermon. But not every sleepiness is thina-middha. Sometimes, due to overwork and bodily weariness, one becomes sleepy. Even an Arahant may feel sleepy, just as a plant wilts and shrivels under the burning heat of the sun. Note that only the sluggishness, inertia and torpidity of citta and cetasikas in various activities are described as thina-middha. Nowadays,
those who are lazy and unwilling to work are said to be under the influence of *thina-middha*.

Sleepiness also comes under sloth and torpor. Sleepiness or sloth and torpor are good friends of mediators and also listeners of Dhamma. When you go to the Meditation Center, you can see the sleepy person, taking meditation and listening to the Dhamma. *Uddacca-kukkucca* means restlessness and remorse. The next one is ahrirka. It means shamelessness, one who is not shameful of doing evil things in speaking (evil speech), thinking (evil thought) and action (evil actions).

Lack of moral shame is called *ahirika*. All immoral, unwholesome deeds are like faeces. Shamelessness, *ahirika*, is like a village swine. Face is very disgusting; being soiled with it, is embarrassing in the presence of people. But for the swine, faeces is fine food. It is not disgusting and so there is no need to be embarrassed when soiled with it. Swine surely enjoy rolling about in faeces and partaking of it.

Another one is *Anottappa*. It means fearlessness, which means, one is not afraid of doing evil things, speaking evil speech. This fearlessness is one of the defilements. Lack of moral dread is having no fear, no dread (*anottappa*). In other words *anottappa* means devoid of moral dread. Evil deeds are like an open flame. *Anottappa* is like the moths. In fact the open flame is to be very much dreaded. However, moths do not think the open flame as dreadful and recklessly fly into it. Just so, evil deeds cause a variety of sufferings; so they are indeed to be dried. But *moha* (delusion) conceals those resultant sufferings; and *anottappa* does not see them as dreadful. Those factors prompt
the doing of evil deeds boldly. With regard to evil deeds, the following dangers are impending.

These are the ten kinds of defilements, which must be abandoned or removed from our minds by means of *vipassana* meditation (mindfulness meditation). The Buddha say: - ‘one who practices mindfulness meditation can be purified of all defilements.’ That means, he can attain Arahantship and be purified from all kinds of defilements.

**KILESA COMPARED TO LOADS**

Everyone must load one’s heavy cases in daily and in the same way we all are carrying a heavy load which is the load of Kilesa. It has three kinds, namely, kilesa, abhisankhara and khandha.Kilesa load: Kilesa embraces all passions such as greed, anger and ignorance or delusion. It imposes a heavy burden on us- a burden of sins, for man is prone to committing murder, thievery, etc., at the dictates of his passions.

Abhisankhara load: Accumulation of actions performed by an individual is abhisankhara which is another name for the Kama - formation. It is also a heavy load. When actions performed are evil, they lead the evil doer to worlds of suffering like hell. When an individual is reborn in happy conditions, as in heaven, as a result of moral actions, he will still be troubled with old age, disease and death.

Whether he is satisfied with his kammic-results or not, he cannot get away from these three undesirable conditions. So he carries his load of actions, Willy-hilly, unable to avoid the round of suffering. Even when he is reborn a man, he may be so reborn in wretched poverty, afflicted with disease and troubled with ill-health. Even though he may
have good kamma-results awaiting him, he may not have the opportunity to enjoy these results if bad kamm overtakes him afterwards. He will as usual be forced to put up with miseries. In real life he felt may be possible for him to avoid punishment for his crimes. If he has a good lawyer to plead for him, he may come out of the criminal trial an innocent man.

In extenuating circumstances, he can bribe for his freedom. And then, there is amnesty to save him. But with kamma there is no escape from the law of retribution. It may be lying dormant for eons in the course of the round of existence, but when it discovers an opportunity to rear its head, it will make its presence felt. Therefore, heavy is the load of actions and actions-results.

There is only one way to abandon the abhisankhara-load; and that is for the meditation practitioners to practice insight-meditation. If he attains the state of sotapanna, all unprofitable actions cease; and he can never go down to nether worlds. If he attains Arahathip, all the loads will be lifted off his shoulders, and no new becoming will arise. But before a worthy one enters the state of final passing away, the past bad kammas can take their effect. It is said that even the Buddhas cannot evade the kamma-results.

**KHANDHA LOAD**

Because of the abhisankhara load, khandha load has to be carried from existence to existence. New khandhas arise as a consequence of the past old khandhas. They are very active, constantly moving about walking, sitting, standing and lying down. They have to be fed, cleansed and clothed. They like pleasure and so they have to be appeased with objects that give them pleasurable sensations.
In an attempt to fulfill their desires, one is compelled to do things which are sinful. When a crime is committed, it affects only the environment that surrounds the criminal, and that is the end of it. But when an immoral act is committed, it worries the sinner throughout the endless rounds of existence.

To escape from them, he will have to accumulate good actions with the development of good perception, good formation and good consciousness. When one gets old, one feels the heaviness of the burden. He learns that it has to be carried not for one brief moment, but for life, for the entire Samsara without any limits of weight, distance or time.

To sum up, all the defilements of the mind like greed, anger and ignorance constitute the load of defilement, all moral or immoral actions constitute the load of abhisankhara and all the five aggregates constitute the load of khandhas.²³⁸

**UNLOADING ALL BURDENS**

Since Arahants have laminated all defilements through path-consciousness, they succeed in laying down the burden of defilements; and that being so, their past actions are rendered ineffective after their final passing away. That is to say past actions can no longer create new becoming for them.

But during their lifetime, they continue to give results for their actions. Commentaries say that the Buddha was affluent in his day because of his past good

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actions but he was accused of being immoral by Sundary, the female ascetic, because his past action-result was working against him at that time.\textsuperscript{239}

**ROUND AND ROUND IN THE CIRCLE OF LIFE**

The Pali word ‘Vatta’ simply means going round and round. The round of defilement resolves into the round of action, which in its turn, resolves into the round of Kamma-results, and in this manner they revolve in a circle which knows no beginning or end. The round called *vatta* in pali has threefold: *Kilesa vatta*- the ignorance, craving and clinging belong to the round of defilement. *Kamma vatta*- one part of existence known as Kammic existence and kammic formations belong to the round of kamma. *Vipakka vatta*- one part of existence known as rebirth existence and the rest belongs to the round of result.\textsuperscript{240}

**KILESAVATTA**

This round of defilement set into motion by *avijja*, ignorance and *tanha*, craving according to the Law of Dependent Origination. The incessant arising of conditioned things like mind and matter at the six-doors is considered as unsatisfactory because of their transient nature. It brings nothing but suffering. This realism about the nature of existence is obscured by the machinations of craving; and so the truth remains clouded and not properly grasped. This deviation from truth is *avijja*. Sensual pleasures derived from pleasurable sights and sounds and enjoyable pieces of knowledge are all suffering; but ignorance accepts them as *sukha*. A person under this delusion thinks to himself, “I exist. He exists. This existence is everlasting.” The sense-objects he observes appear to

\textsuperscript{239} On The Nature of Nibbana,p.78.  
\textsuperscript{240} A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma, p.301.
him as good and wholesome, appealing to his aesthetic taste. Now that he takes them as wholesome and beautiful, he craves for them; and this craving goads him on to the satisfaction of his desires for them, which, in consequence, produces clinging. His volitional efforts to achieve the objects of his desires lead him to volitional activities and kammabhava, becoming, as a result of moral and immoral actions.

**KAMMAVATTA**

When the three primary defilements of ignorance, craving and clinging are taken into account, their secondary such as anger, pride and wrong views must also be considered. Prompted by craving asserts itself makes the utmost exertion to get what he desires by every means at his disposal. When he is not satisfied, anger arises in him. Unrestrained, he scrambles for the object of his desires, playing havoc with the life and property of his fellow-beings. Such an action is accompanied by delusion, moha, another form of ignorance which goes well with demerits. Therefore, when one feels angry or greed, delusion always is there to aggravate the situation. Then it makes one think highly of himself. As it brooks on equals, it strives after supremacy. All these actions stem from the rounds of defilement which brings into play the round of kamma vatta.

**VIPAKAVATTA**

Actions produce consequences, so round of action brings about round of kamma result known as vipaka vatta. To escape from this round, one should practice charity, morality and mental development, especially mental culture through insight meditation which will ultimately lead one to the Path of the Worthy Ones. Then rebirth ceases giving no
opportunity to the rise of new becoming. Therefore, *Vipaka vatta* may be defiled as the recurrence of aggregates or conditioned things as a result of actions moral and immoral.

No one can stop this wheel of round, *vatta*. Regarding the nature of actions and their results, it may be easy for an individual to desist from doing good; but he will be utterly unable to resist evil. If you fail to accomplish moral actions, you may be sure that immoral action will get the better of you. Kamma-result produced by meritorious deeds will be highly benefactory to you because they can send you to the abodes of men and devas but demerit accumulated by evil actions forced upon you by defilements will surely drag you down to hell. But if your kamma is favorable, you may have the opportunity to associate yourself with men of wisdom and virtue. If your bad kamma is unfavorable, you will become a co-traveler with evil deeds throughout your life. Even when favorable kamma is at work and one is reborn a man, one cannot escape old, disease, and death, which cause grief, lamentation which are all suffering. If one is unfortunate one may live in poverty in one’s new existence. There is no way of escape from these three rounds of suffering unless one practice the Noble Eightfold Path enunciated as the Middle Ways.

**HOW TO ESCAPE FROM THREE VATTAS**

We need to explain the way how to escape from three rounds as mentioned in the literature. It is nothing but practicing Vipassana meditation. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking are the works of the six groups of consciousness. They are eye-consciousness, visual, ear-consciousness, auditory, nose-consciousness, olfactory,
tongue-consciousness, gustatory, touch-consciousness, tactile, and mind-consciousness, ideational.\textsuperscript{241}

Consciousness, \textit{citta}, is invariably accompanied by its mental concomitant, \textit{cetasika}, which goes into the category of \textit{nama}, mind. The seat of the sense-organs, the body, is, of course, \textit{rupa}, matter. When the eye, the object and the base, \textit{ayatana}, meet, contact, \textit{phassa}, is achieved and consequently \textit{vedana}, feeling or sensation arises. These five resultants of \textit{vipaka vatta}, namely \textit{nama, rupa, ayatana, phassa} and \textit{vedana} belong to the present moment, for they are taking place in our daily life.

If they are not meditated upon with insight-knowledge, craving is developed in accordance with the kind of sensations created, whether pleasurable or un-pleasurable. Craving begets clinging and not being able to note the five resultants of \textit{vipaka} as they actually are is ignorance which constitutes the round of defilement. To prevent the first round from arising, the working of the round of kamma-result must be observed and dotted with the three marks of impermanence, \textit{anicca}, suffering, \textit{dukkha} and unsubstantiality, \textit{anatta}, when the absolute reality of conditioned things will dispel all defilements. In the absence of ignorance, craving cannot arise; and in the absence of craving, clinging withers away and finally the round of action ceases operating unable to bring about results. In this manner all the three rounds subside.

**NO CRAVING, NO REBIRTH**

All beings have a strong attachment to their present existence obsessed with craving. If death can be dispensed with, they would like to live eternally. Having no craving for a

\textsuperscript{241} A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma, p.54.
new life, an Arahant desires cessation of his mind and matter or five aggregates. Desire for a new existence is tanha, craving and an Arahant had eradicated all attachments. Action, moral and immoral is the soil; action-producing consciousness is water and manure. When a person is about to die, he recollects his actions whether good or bad that he had done in the past. Again, he may see visions or hear sounds associated with his deeds. He is seeing his sign of actions. In some cases the dying man has visions of signs and symbols that forecast his destiny after his demise. This is the sign of destiny.

We need to elaborate the word, kammavinnana. It is synonymous with abhisankharavinnana which assert itself at the dying moment as maranasannananaivana, death-impulsion, with its complement of moral or immoral action. It is active and so it takes in the sense-objects perceived at the time of death and causes the emergence of patisandhivinnana, rebirth-linking consciousness after death. This is in accordance with the Paticcasamuppada discourse which goes: “Dependent on kamma-formation, consciousness arise, ‘sankharapaccaya vinnanam’.242

There he attains Arahant-ship and lives till the end of his life. When a layman becomes an Anāgāmi, he leads a celibate life. The Anāgāmi Saint now makes his final advance and destroying the remaining five Fetters – namely, attachment to Realms of Form (rūparāga), attachment to Formless Realms (arūparāga), pride (māna), restlessness (uddhacca), and ignorance (avijjā) – attains Arahant-ship, the final stage of Sainthood. Stream-Winners, Once-Returners, Never-Returners are called Sekhas because they have yet to undergo training. Arahants are called Asekhas (Adepts) because they no more undergo any training.

An Arahant, literally, a Worthy One, is not subject to rebirth because he does not accumulate fresh Kammic activities. The seeds of his reproduction have all been destroyed. The Arahant realizes that what was to be accomplished has been done, a heavy burden of sorrow has finally been relinquished, and all forms of craving and all shades of ignorance are totally annihilated. The happy pilgrim now stands on heights more than celestial, far removed from uncontrolled passions and the defilements of the world, experiencing the unutterable bliss of Nibbāna. Rebirth can no longer affect him since no more reproductive seeds are formed by fresh kammic activities.

Though an Arahant he is not wholly free from physical suffering, as this experience of the bliss of Deliverance is not only intermittent nor has he yet cast off his material body. An Arahant is called an asekha, one who does not undergo training, as he has lived in the Holy Life and has accomplished his object. The other Saints from the Sotāpatti stage to the Arahant Path Stage are called Sekhas because they still undergo training. It may be mentioned in this connection that Anāgāmis and Arahants who have developed the Rūpa and Arūpa-Jhānas could experience the Nibbānic bliss uninterruptedly for as long as seven days even in this life. This, in Pāli, is known as Nirodha-Samāpatti.243

A noble person, an Ariya, in this state, is wholly free from pain, and his mental activities are all suspended. His stream of consciousness temporarily ceases to flow. With regard to the difference between one who has attained Nirodha-Samāpatti and a dead man, the Visuddhi-Magga states: “In the corpse, not only are the plastic forces of the body (respiration), speech and mind stilled and quiescent, but also vitality is exhausted,

heat is quenched, and the faculties of sense broken up, whereas in the Bhikkhu in ecstasy vitality persists, heart abides, and the faculties are clear, although respiration, observation, and perception are stilled and quiescent.244

According to Buddhism, in conventional terms, this is the highest form of bliss possible in this life. Why does an Arahant continue to live when he has already attained Nibbāna? It is because the Kammic force which produced his birth is still not spent. To quote Schopenhauer, it is like the potter’s wheel from which the hand of the potter has been lifted, or, to cite a better illustration from our own books – an Arahant is like a branch that is severed from the tree. It puts forth no more fresh leaves, flowers and fruits, as it is no longer supported by the sap of the tree. Those which already existed however last till the death of that particular branch. The Arahant lives out his life-span adding no more fresh Kamma to his store, and utterly indifferent to death. What happens to the Arahant after his passing away? As a flame blown to and fro by the wind goes out and cannot be caught, so says the Buddha, an Arahant, set free from mind and matter, has disappeared and cannot be caught.

Has such an Arahant then merely disappeared, or does he indeed no longer exist? For him who has disappeared, states the Sutta-Nipāta, there exists no form by which they could say, ‘he is’. When all conditions are cut off, all matter for discussion is also cut off. The Majjhima-Nikāya also relates an interesting discussion between the Buddha and Vacchagotta concerning this very question. Vacchagotta, a wandering ascetic, approached the Buddha and questioned: “But, Gotama, where is the Bhikkhu, who is delivered of mind, reborn? He was of course referring to the Arahant. To Gotama the

Arahant is neither re-born nor can it be said that he has no birth. Or it can be safely said that he is neither re-born nor not re-born. Vaccha concludes that it is not prompt to understand this statement.

*Vaccha* was asked not to be at a loss to think in this matter, and be not greatly confused. This doctrine is profound, recondite and difficult of comprehension, and not to be reached by mere reasoning, subtle and intelligible only to the wise and it is a hard doctrine for you to learn, who belong to another sect, to another faith, to another persuasion, to another discipline, and who sit at the feet of another teacher. Buddha posed a question then: Suppose, a fire was to burn in front of you, would you be aware that fire was burning in front of you? “*Gotama*, if a fire were to burn in front of me, I should be aware that a fire was burning in front of me.” “But suppose, *Vaccha*, someone was to ask you: ‘On what does this fire that is burning in front of you depend?’ What would you answer, *Vaccha*?” “I would answer, O *Gotama*, ‘it is on fuel of grass and wood that this fire is burning in front of me depends’.” “But *Vaccha*, if the fire in front of you were to become extinct, would you be aware that the fire in front of you had become extinct?” “*Gotama*, if the fire in front of me were to become extinct, I should be aware that the fire in front of me had become extinct.”

“*But, Vaccha* was asked the questions – ‘In what direction has that fire gone, East or West, North or South?’ What would you say, *Vaccha*?” “The question would not fit the case, *Gotama*, for the fire depended on fuel of grass and wood, and when that fuel has all gone, and it can get no other, being thus without nutriment, it is said to be extinct.” “In exactly the same way, all forms, sensations, perceptions, mental activities, and

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245 Apadana commentary, p.37
consciousness have been abandoned, uprooted, made like a Palmyra stump, become extinct, and not liable to spring up in the future.

The Saint, who has been released from what are styled the Five Aggregates, is deep, immeasurable like the mighty ocean. To say that he is reborn would not fit the case. To say that he is not reborn would not fit the case. To say that he is neither reborn nor not reborn would not fit the case.” One cannot say that the Arahant is reborn as all passions that condition rebirth is not eradicated, nor can one say that the Arahant is annihilated, for there is nothing to annihilate. The statement made by Robert Oppenheimer, a scientist, can be cited here:— it is asked, for instance, whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say ‘no’, if it is asked whether the electron’s position changes with time, the answer must be ‘no’; if it is asked whether it is in motion, we must say ‘no.’

The Buddha has given such answers when interrogated as to the condition of man’s self after death. But they are not familiar answers from the tradition of the 17th and 18th century science. Nibbāna, it may safely be concluded, is obtained by the complete cessation of the defilements (kilesa), but the real nature of this Supreme State (Dhamma) cannot be expressed in words. From a metaphysical standpoint, Nibbāna is a complete deliverance from suffering.

From a psychological standpoint, Nibbāna is the eradication of egoism. From an ethical standpoint, Nibbāna is the destruction of lust, hatred and ignorance. It needs an entire treatise to explain Nibbāna in full. “Recollection of Peaceful of Nibbāna” means recollecting repeatedly the ‘peaceful bliss (to cessation, that eternal quality or perpetual core remains and continues to exist Nibbāna is just existing as that eternal core. Still
others say, “How can Nibbāna be said to be blissful if you do not get to enjoy since there are no mind and matter in Nibbāna.” Just as something about an object can be thoroughly understood only by those who have actually experienced it, so the nature of Nibbāna can be thoroughly understood only by those noble persons who have actually attained it.

When an arahant is about to pass away, parinibbana, he is not troubled by kamma, kammanimitta and gatinimitta. Activating consciousness also fails to operate, therefore, no kamma-results can rear their heads. Only ineffective kiriya citta associated with his insight-meditation come into play. Beyond them there is nothing but death consciousness pertaining to parinibbana on the achievement of the seed of action becomes impotent. So, there is a complete annihilation of existence.

The deep nature of Nibbāna cannot be understood by mere speculation of a worldling. Nevertheless, Nibbāna will be presented in the light of texts and logical reasoning. Nibbāna is one of the Supreme Ultimates– it is independent of the other three paramatthasacca, namely ultimate realities of consciousness (citta), mental factors (cetasika) and matter (rūpa). Since it has nothing to do with mind and matter which are conditioned states (nāma-rūpa-sankhārā), it cannot be a special kind of mind or matter. Nibbāna is listed as “Bhidhā Dhammā”, external dhamma in the texts– Matrix (matika) text of the first book of Abhidhamma; so it is not eternal core within the body. It is not an object (ārammaṇa) like sight or sound because it cannot be felt. There is no enjoyment-feeling (vedayitasukha) bliss in Nibbāna– there is only ‘peaceful bliss’ (santisukha). Let us elaborate: Enjoyment-feeling (vedayitasukha), after being enjoyed, vanishes and so

effort has to be made to get it afresh time after time. But it is not worth going through that toil of renewing it just to get it anew. People, being not satisfied with what happiness they get out of that toil, try to enjoy more resorting to unlawful means like people taking a debt. It is a pity that as a result, they have to pay back the debt of happiness with suffering in the four woeful states.

The nature of ‘peaceful bliss’ which is not contaminated with such enjoyment is peacefulness due to the cessation of mind and matter, the conditioned states. To further elucidate: A rich man, endowed with worldly pleasures soundly asleep, will surely scold his servants when they make worldly pleasures that wake him up. While he was asleep there was no apparent enjoyment, but he prefers the peaceful sleep to happiness gained through enjoyment. So you can imagine how sublime the happiness of ‘peaceful bliss’ is, which is just peacefulness without mind and matter. Let us further consider the Once-returners and Arahants (Anāgāmis and Arahants). They consider the aggregates of mind and matter as a very heavy burden. Therefore, they often enter into the Attainment of Cessation (nirodhasamāpatti) in order to be free from the aggregates of mind and matter as much as possible. During that Attainment there is absolutely no enjoyment or feeling; there is only the cessation of mind and matter with no new arising from them.

The Nibbāna which is ‘peaceful bliss’ is not one as a common property; it is a property unique to each individual. That is why, when their aggregates still remain, the Noble persons enter into fruition Attainment each taking his own Nibbāna as object. It is said that dwelling with their mind inclined towards Nibbāna constitutes immense happiness. At the time of their Parinibbāna (final passing away). All theras (elders) and
therīs (sisters) relinquished their aggregates of mind and matter uttering words of joy; this puts the worldlings to shame as they are forever attached to mind and matter.

The world of ignorant ordinary beings together with Brahmas, Sakka and other Devas (celestial beings) consider the desirable sense-objects such as visible object, audible object, as pleasurable. In Nibbāna that is much revered by the noble ones, they cease. That Nibbāna where they cease without trace, these ignorant beings consider to be suffering since there is no enjoyment in Nibbāna. With the eye of wisdom the noble ones have clearly seen Nibbāna, the element of happiness, where the five aggregates that really exist in the ultimate sense, cease to be. The Noble Ones who have personally seen Nibbāna is actually in opposition to the world of worldlings who are afflicted with ignorance (avijjā) and craving (taṇhā); they are like people running back to back in opposite directions.

The only bliss (sukkha) and peacefulness (santi) exist in the mental stream. This unique bliss and peacefulness is called Nibbāna. It is this craving (taṇhā) which acts as a cord to connect the series of lives of an individual in the course of his wanderings in Samsāra- the eternal cycle of birth and death. As long as one is entangled by craving, one accumulates fresh kammās which will give rise to new birth and death repeatedly. When all forms of craving are annihilated by the four Paths, kammic force ceases to operate and one escapes from the cycle of birth and death. Then one is said to attain Nibbāna. The Buddhist concept of ‘Deliverance or Liberation’ is this escape from the ever-recurring cycle of birth and death and all the misery associated with them. By nature or intrinsically Nibbāna is peaceful (santi). As such it is unique. Though it is single by santi-lakkhaāa,  

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Nibbāna is viewed as twofold, according to the way it is experienced before and after the death of an arahant.

Destruction of defilements is gained from discerning mind and matter as they really are. Knowledge of mentality and materiality begin with the benefits of developing worldly wisdom, but destruction of deep defilements and fetters such as False Self Concept (sakkāyadithi) as well as attainment of the Path are the benefits of developing Supramundane (Lokuttara) wisdom. Lokuttara means transcending the world of five aggregates. That means going beyond the five aggregates. Actually that means going out of this Samsara (cycle), going out of this round of rebirths. The concept of “world” is threefold: the world of living beings (sattaloka), the physical universe (okāsaloka), and the world of formations (saṅkhāraloka), that is, the totality of conditioned phenomena, physical and mental. The notion of world relevant here is the world of formations, that is, all mundane phenomena included within the five aggregates of clinging. That which transcends the world of conditioned things is the unconditioned element, Nibbāna, and types of consciousness that directly accomplish the realization of Nibbāna is called lokuttāra citta, supramundane consciousness.

Attaining the taste of the Noble Fruits is also a benefit of developing insight wisdom. This is gained at two stages: When Noble Path consciousness arises and when Noble Fruit consciousness or cessation occurs. The Noble Fruit is the highest benefit of the Path. It has the eternal dhamma of Nibbāna as its object. It is a benefit of the highest and purest happiness, like tasting honey mixed with the elixir. Due to the wise causing Noble Path and Fruit to arise through concentration and insight meditation, one enters the
most refined attainment (*samāpatti*) that the Noble One's taste. This is considered reaching Nibbāna (Nibban in Burmese) in this world.

**THE UTTERANCE OF THE BUDDHA**

The discovery of the cessation of suffering cannot be realized by just thinking or imagining but by actual practice of meditation on mind and matter till the knowledge of equanimity is achieved. When it is truly penetrated that all conditioned things spell suffering will be gained. When craving is dispelled no new becoming can arise. On the attainment of Enlightenment the Buddha uttered the following stanzas, word of triumph, denoting satisfaction over His conquest of craving, tanha.

*Anekajati samsaam, samdhavissam anibbisam,*

*Gahakaram gavesanto, dukkha jati punappunam.*

*Gahakaraka ditthosi, puna geham na kahasi,*

*Sabba te phasuka bhagga, gahakutam visankhatam*

*Visankharagatam cittam, tanhanam khaya majjhaga.\(^{249}\)*

It means “I have gone through the round of rebirths seeking the builder of the house (of this khandhas) but to no avail for lack of wisdom. To be born again and again is misery indeed! Now, house –builder! I have thee beholden! Thou shalt no longer build any house again, for thy beams and rafters have been pulled down and the ridge-pole

\(^{249}\) Udana, p.63.
dismantled. My mind, inclined to the annihilation of all kamma-formation, has attained the end of craving.”

Needless to say, the house-builder is tanha, craving, which builds the house of the khandhas in the round of existences, thus bringing forth the rise of Jati, becoming, the most horrifying of all miseries and pain that can be encountered. If he is not discovered, he will continue building the house again and again. You may not have any inclination to go down to the netherworlds, but craving will insist on your taking up residence in the house he builds there. You shall never find him if you fail to gain Enlightenment. The Buddha, before gaining this Enlightenment, had to go round and round through myriads of rebirths.250

It has now become a custom with the Buddhists in Burma (Myanmar) to recite the two verses of Udana when the Buddha Images are to be sanctified. The verses were uttered by the Buddha on the seventh day of His Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.

NIBBANA AS HIGHEST STAGE OF HAPPINESS

In the Dhammapada, it states ‘Nibbanan paraman sukham’ which means Nibbana is the excellent Happiness so Nibbana bliss is higher and nobler than Joana bliss. Meditation practitioners know the rapture of joy experienced at the stage of sankharupekkha nana far excels those experienced at that of udayabhayanana. When the fruition of the Path is accomplished, rapture and joy experienced at the accomplishment are paramount. Hence we say avedayita or santi sukha fare excels vedayita sukha. Those who cannot practice insight-meditation or Jhana may be able to appreciate the different grades of happiness.

The teachings of the Buddha say that Nibbana is paramount. It is the cessation of all sensations. In the absence of sensations, peace and coolness reign supreme. All sufferings relating to old age, disease, death and dissolution cease. As it is deathless, its bliss is indestructible. Therefore, it is the highest bliss.