

FOREWORD

At a time when Buddhism is spreading fast across the globe, it is our intention to make the general public acquainted with the great teachings of the Lord Buddha.

Whilst listening to a sermon is the ideal way of going forward in the path of Dhamma, some may prefer to read it at their leisure and comprehend the teachings at their own pace and time. Then there may be those who are weak in their faculty of listening, so the only way they can understand it is by reading a text or a Dhamma book.

These transliterations are available for all those who wish to have an understanding of the Lord Buddha's teachings in order to find true salvation.

****This work is a transcription of a sermon held in 2017-12-17. There may be the odd omission or inclusion inadvertently due to quality issues of the audio or deliberate editing to make the text more readable.**

This sermon explains the definition given to the 'world' by the Lord Buddha and how attachment to this world brings us suffering and by realising this ignorance, we can detach from it. You will end up pondering 'Is it worth attaching yourself to this world' comprising only of the five aggregates.

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KEY WORDS

rupa, rùpa

vedana, vedanà

sanna, sannà

sankhara, sankhàra

vinnana, vinnàna

attachment

beautiful woman

avidya, avidyà

tanha, tanhà

àpò

thèjò

vàyò

patavi

THE FIVE AGGREGATES

17.12.2017

The Five Aggregates

We have noticed that people want to cling on to worldly things, worldly possessions. Sometimes it is titles behind names, material possessions like vehicles and houses. Sometimes it is people, wives, husbands, children. Everyone is different because everyone has an attachment or attachments to different things. However, there is also something that is common across all sentient beings. When the Buddha described the world, defined the world, His definition was, the world can be defined as the combination or the collection of the five aggregates. These are **form** (*rùpa*), **feeling** (*vèdana*), **recognition or identification** (*sannà*) **activity towards formation** (*sankhàra*) and **consciousness** (*vinnàna*).

What do you mean by the 'world'?

So, *rùpa*, *vèdana*, *sannà*, *sankàra*, *vinnàna*. This is how He defined the world. Now, when I say the word, '**world**', I am sure most of you are thinking of the globe, the one that you have at home, the one with the seven oceans and the land masses or the seven continents. But how much of that 'world' that you are thinking of right now really means anything to you?

To take a really simple example, imagine you are at home. You are in your own room. There is something going on in the adjoining room. Say your sister's bedroom. You have no way of perceiving what's going on in there. Maybe someone is watching TV, they've got a headset on, therefore you don't hear a sound coming from the room and you don't see any pictures. All you know is there's a wall separating that room from yours. You are probably aware that something is going on because you saw someone going in there. This is as far as your perception of what is going on in that room is. Beyond that point you have no idea what it is. They may be doing something that you like. They may be doing something that you dislike. They may be doing something that is completely and absolutely you don't care about. Perhaps they are doing their homework that is nothing to do with you. What they are doing in that room is not in the scope of your universe. So,

your universe does not include what is happening in there. Unless perhaps you are trying to do your own homework and there is noise coming from that room. Now it is bothering you. You are trying to focus, you are trying to concentrate on your work and there is noise coming from the other room and therefore it is distracting. Now what is going on in that room is your problem. I mean in the conventional sense. One could argue, "*well, why is it that it is my problem?*" We will come to that in a minute. But technically, fundamentally nothing in this world should be your problem. But let's not go there just yet. But until you either hear something or see something or perhaps you smell something, unlikely you'll taste something, unlikely you feel something in this example, although perhaps it is possible if you were to imagine that they are banging on something - like a desk and now you are feeling the vibrations. That is possible. Unless you sense what is happening in the next room in some way, shape or form, what is going on in there has nothing to do with you. It's not a part of your universe and it's not a part of your world.

The Buddha's definition of the world

Now, why is it that it's not a part of your world? What's the '**world**' to us? As the Buddha described it, He defined the world in a multitude of different ways. One way was that it is *rùpa, vèdana, sannà, sankhàra, vinnàna*. He also defined it as *nàma-rùpa*. He also defined it as different *àyatana*s; *rupàyatana, shabdàyatana, sòtayatana, gandhàyatana, jewhàyatana, kàyatana, manàyatana*. He also defined it as, ***Patticca Samuppàda*** - Dependent Origination.

What is a 'rùpa'?

It doesn't matter in which one of these ways you want to look at 'the world', fundamentally, 'the world' has got to be something that interacts with you in some way. This interaction comes in the shape of *rùpa, vèdana, sannà, sankhàra, vinnàna*. Because if you can't absorb or perceive any *rùpa* (any kind of form), so here we talk about *rùpa-rùpa* which are sights, the things or form that you see through your eyes, or forms that you hear through your ears, that's *shabda-rùpa*. (When I use the word 'form' this is where the English translation might be a little bit difficult for someone to grasp.) Because the word '*rùpa*' has a lot of meaning inside it. The translation that I am trying to us

here which is form, the material form, I am hoping you can base the meaning that is contained within that word. It is essentially something that can be pointed out, something which can be distinguished from another.

Here is an example. Let's say you are looking at a wall. You can see that there is a picture hung on the wall. Now, the wall itself is *rùpa-rùpa*. You are seeing it with your eyes. And you are seeing the frame that borders the picture and then there is also the picture that is within the frame. So essentially, at a fundamental level you are seeing three distinct objects. Perhaps you can also see that it is hung using some string attached to a nail on the wall. How do you distinguish all these different objects as distinct objects? The way the eyes can distinguish one object from the other is, when it sees differences in colour. Let's say, it's a white wall. If you look at a white wall and the picture is also white, all aspects of it including the border is also white, then you are not going to be able to distinctively spot the picture in the background. It's all going to appear as one. The picture is going to just blend in to the background. This is where the word '*blending in*' comes.

What are 'rùpa-rùpa'?

Imagine you are seeing a silhouette; you are just seeing a shadow of someone. That's how you see a silhouette. All you see is the border of that person against the background. So, when we talk about form, and form in the sense of what your eyes can see, we are now talking about the background which has a certain colour, that is *rùpa-rùpa* and now you are seeing the object that is contrasting with a different colour. Therefore, that is another *rùpa-rùpa*.

Now, here is another example you are probably familiar with. You might have seen at times, perhaps when at school when you were trying to mix colours to give another colour. You have three overlapping circles. Therefore, you see how when two colours mix, you see a totally different colour. I think the colours we are talking of are red, green and blue. So, when various colours are mixed, you get other shades, or different colours. Imagine when the three circles were apart, you are seeing three *rùpa-rùpa* against another background, if the background was white then you are

seeing four *rùpa-rùpa*. When two of these circles come together you are seeing another *rùpa-rùpa* where the two overlap and another colour has come into being. When the third circle comes along, now you are seeing additional two colours. So that's, *rùpa-rùpa*.

Shabdha rùpa

Now, the *shabdha rùpa*, the forms that you pick up through your ears are not that different except that you are now talking of 'sound' instead of seeing an object. An example could be when you are listening to a symphony. You are now hearing various instruments being played. You hear one person playing an organ, another playing a guitar, another playing a violin, and you can distinguish each of these instruments as distinct instruments because you can identify them as being different sounds.

Rasa rùpa

Then moving on to *rasa-rùpa* or the form that you pick up through your tongue. Clearly, we are talking of taste here. The tongue is able to pick up four fundamental tastes; sweet, salt, sour and bitter. Now you might wonder how is it that I can taste chocolate or a Pizza? How is it that I can taste Spaghetti? Well, you can taste all these things because essentially what is happening is similar to how those coloured circles overlapped with each other in the earlier example where they gave rise to new colours that didn't exist until those conditions came along. How you can taste chocolate is because the various ingredients that go into making the chocolate have distinct tastes. And all of these fundamentally are either sweet, salty, sour or bitter. But different combinations of these give rise to different tastes. Therefore, you can taste things like chocolates, pizza, spaghetti or whatever foods you can think of.

Now imagine, if the tip of your tongue that tastes sugar stops working. If ,that bit of the tongue got chopped off or stopped working for some reason, or say you were doing some experiment, say you cover that area with some polythene and you eat a chocolate I bet the chocolate won't taste the same. You are still going to taste something. But you are not going to get the full combination of the

taste. Because you have now removed one of the conditions from that equation. So, we have covered *rùpa-rùpa*, *shabda-rùpa* and *rasa-rùpa*.

Gandha rùpa

Now you have the *gandha-rùpa*. That is the form that you sense with your nose. So, we are talking about smells here, good smells and bad smells. What's a good smell and a bad smell? Have you ever wondered how is it that some smells feel good while some not so good? Think about this for a second.

Gandha rùpa (examples)

You know that there are some cheeses that smell awful and yet people like to eat them. There are various fruits that we find even in Sri Lanka and I am sure in other countries as well. A good example is the fruit called Durian which has an awful smell. Its smells as if someone's passed wind. But people enjoy eating it. When people go on trips, they buy these fruits and they go into the boot. It's about the size of a jack fruit and its prickly as it's got thorns on the outside. But it's a mixture of sour and sweet on the inside. And for those who haven't seen a Durian or eaten one, some people really dislike the smell. They go even as far as to threaten if someone buys and puts it in the car, that it should go in the boot or I am going to take the bus from here, whereas some others really love it. They see absolutely nothing wrong with that. And then there are others who don't care one way or the other. It doesn't bother them. When you go to eat sometimes people remove the edible bit, throw away the skin and put it on a plate and serve it, then it's a different story. People who said they didn't like it ,will happily enjoy it for the sweet taste that it has. But if you took all categories of people, those who said they loved Durian and enjoy eating it, those who said they hated it and it smelled like wind because it contains sulphur dioxide. Supposing if that person stood in front of somebody who did pass wind, he is going to find that really offensive and repulsive. So, what is a good smell then? If you liked the smell of cheese that smelled rotten, but give the same person a sock or an item of clothing that hasn't been washed in five years which might smell

the same, they may find it repulsive. But for the person who enjoys this cheese that smell perhaps may not be so bad. All these things are forms that you pick up through your nose.

Pottabba rùpa

Then there are forms that you pick up through touch or texture. This is why when you go in to a clothing store you want to feel things. When you go in to a furniture store you feel the fabric of an item. Imagine you are buying a bed. You want to touch the bedding, see how that feels. If you are buying a new car you touch the steering wheel, you touch the dash board, you feel the leather of the car seats. You want to feel all of these. They are forms you pick up through touch. So, it's all of these things that are '*rùpa*'. These are '*pottabba rùpa*'.

So, to summarise you have *rùpa-rùpa*, *shabda-rùpa*, *gandha-rùpa*, *rasa-rùpa* and *pottabba rùpa*. *Rùpa-rùpa* are the forms you pick through your eyes, *shabda-rùpa* are the forms you pick up through your ears, *gandha rùpa* are forms you pick through your nose, *rasa-rùpa* being the forms you pick up through your tongue, and *pottabba -rùpa* being those forms you pick up through your sense of touch.

Dhamma rùpa

There is also *Dhamma-rùpa*. *Dhamma rùpa* are things you can imagine through your mind's eye. You know sometimes how when you are in the middle of a lecture how you are completely switched off, you are in a cuckoo land or you have gone off at a tangent, you have gone in to a world that you have created yourself - all these mental images, these are called *Dhamma-rùpa*. People can create all types of *Dhamma-rùpa*. Consider a sculptor. They bring a block of wood to you and it is just a piece of wood that lights a fire, but the sculptor may ask,

'how can you waste such a fine piece of wood on a fire, I can sculpt a beautiful object with this wood, a beautiful animal, a woman or an object, create a truly remarkable work of art from this piece of wood'.

From where did that *rùpa* come from? It was all in his mind. He has created all these *Dhamma-rùpa*, which through the process of *abhisankàra* is able to express, bring out and create a world. So, you may wonder, "*where do all of these things come from?*". You know the trees, the cars, the houses, they were all at one-point *Dhamma-rùpa*. All of humankind's inventions were all *Dhamma-rùpa*. Unless of course they came about by mistake. Some antibiotics for instance, they didn't realise this is what they were going to make but something happened, and lo and behold you've now got something that has been invented you didn't even know of. So, you got all these *rùpa* and that's one of the five aggregates that make up your world.

Vèdanà

Then you have *vèdana*, feelings. These *vèdana* or feelings are three-fold. *Sukha-vèdana* (pleasurable feeling), *dukkha-vèdana* (painful feeling or suffering) and *adukkama sukka vèdana* (equanimous or indifferent feeling - the feeling that is neither painful nor joyful). So, you have these three types of *vèdana*.

Dukka vèdanà

If you can, as an experiment, close your eyes for a moment and listen to all the things you can hear right now, all the things you can sense right now through your body, touch. Clearly, when you close your eyes you cannot see things, but you can hear things through your ears and your body is now active. Perhaps you just had something to eat and you feel the taste of it lingering in your mouth still. Now, if you close eyes for a moment and observe these sensations that you are receiving through your sense organs, what you will be able to realise is that some of these sensations are pleasurable. Imagine if you sat on a chair, some of your body parts will come into contact with the chair. Your arms will probably be resting on the arms of the chair, your bottom may touch the seat of the chair. How does that feel? Does it feel pleasurable in the sense that it feels good or does it hurt or painful so that after a while you shuffle yourself a little so that you don't feel the *dukkha-vèdana*.

Types of *vèdanà*

What about the sounds you are hearing right now? You are hearing some noises perhaps coming from the environment. It could be birds chirping or noise of traffic depending on where you are. All of these things, if you focus on that particular sound you are going to either feel pleasurable or painful or dis-pleasurable or perhaps equanimous. Whether you feel your world through your eyes or through your ears (you can now open your eyes and scan the room) again objects that you see around you are going to bring you the same feelings. If you are someone who likes to be tidy all the time and you are looking around to see a bed that is untidy, that could bring you *dukkà-vèdana*, dis-pleasurable feeling. But if you are perhaps looking at an object that was given to you as a birthday present, that may give you a *sukha-vèdana* but could bring *dukkà-vèdana* to someone else or it could be equanimous to another person.

Either way, what you are seeing around you, what you are hearing or feeling or what you are tasting; like when you are having lunch, you will be eating some food. If you close your eyes while taking that food you will be able to taste various flavours. Some of those flavours you will like, may give you a pleasurable feeling. There will be some items of food which you may not like. For example, if you are having bitter-gourd (*karawila*) for lunch, perhaps that is a taste that you don't like. But if you are having some dessert afterwards, like ice-cream, that is most likely going to be pleasurable.

Sukha *vèdanà*

So, you are receiving *vèdana* through your eyes, ears, nose, and the same applies to smells. Say, if you walk into a toilet that hasn't been washed or flushed you are probably going to feel *dukkà vèdana*. This is why people invented air-fresheners. So, if you walk into a brand-new toilet, a new house or a shop where they always keep clean and tidy for their customers and feels like as if someone has left a bouquet of flowers, those will give you a pleasurable feeling; *sukha vèdana*. Then, there will be other times when what you are sensing or smelling through your nose is neither pleasurable nor dis-pleasurable.

Likewise, through your six senses (sixth sense being your mind) you will have *sukha*, *dukkha* or *adukkama sukha vedana*. The same rules apply to the sixth sense too. Like when you are imagining things in your mind. Imagine that you are looking forward for a friend to come and visit you after a long time. You are now creating all these mental images in your mind. How you are going to be happy seeing him or her, how you are going out with that person, how you are going to engage in pleasant activities, all these are mental images. How do they make you feel? They make you feel good because they are all pleasurable. But what if you are going to give a presentation to a large audience in the next ten minutes? You will have butterflies in your stomach. Now you will imagine how people will stare at you, how they will ask tough questions, or if it is at school, how your Principal is going to be a part of the audience staring at you through his glasses. That will probably make you feel nervous. This is not *sukha vedana* but most likely *dukkha vedana*. So that's the *vedana*.

Sannà (Recognition)

We have covered *rùpa*, we have talked about *vedana*. What about *sannà*? *Sannà* is perception or perhaps recognition. It's how you recognise the world. Recognition is a very interesting word. It's made up of RE-COGNITION. To cognise something is to identify something. But you can only recognise if you've had that *sannà* previously. That is true of all *sannà*. Think about a new born child that has just come in to the world. This little guy is hearing all sorts of sounds around him. He is probably hearing the mother's voice, which he has already heard while he was in the mother's womb through vibrations. So, the voice is familiar to him. But the baby is going to hear sounds of traffic, animals, birds chirping, an air-conditioner working, maybe there is a heartbeat monitor. It is going to be a sensory overload for him with lots of new sounds coming in. So, the baby is going to be completely confused. He is going to be distraught, anxious and stressed at times. Because he is unable to recognise all these sounds. Are they a threat to him? He is probably thinking, "*are they going to do me any harm, or good?*".

The same applies to you and me. Say if you are at home waiting for your dad to come home. Say, he usually comes at 10 O'clock. Around 10 O'clock you are waiting for the garage door to open. The sound of the garage door is an indicator that your dad is driving in. What if this happens around 9

o'clock? You hear the garage doors opening. You know your dad has never come home at 9 o'clock. Now this may give you cause for concern. Or say, if your dad is already home and you still hear the garage doors opening. And the time is 12 midnight. Now a different set of *sannà* is going to come into your mind. Because you never hear the garage doors opening at midnight and everyone who is supposed to be at home are already in. So, you are thinking, "*who is opening the garage doors now?*".

Or think about learning a new language. That is a whole world of taking in new sights, new sounds. Because it is a combination of how you write and read, new letters, new pronunciations and how you speak the language. Imagine the first time you were introduced to the Sinhala language, or English, whichever the case might be for you, the new words coming in, you may not recognise or identify. To you these are just sounds. You couldn't tell whether someone is sneezing or actually speaking to you in another language. Because it's just a sound that you have never been introduced to, before and this sound is not re-cognisable. You cannot recognise it, this happens through your eyes when you are seeing something for the first time. Say you are coming home and you see a car parked outside, a car that you have not seen before. Question; '*Who's car is this?*' Or it could be through your ears as we discussed. Through your nose, could be through your tongue, as in new tastes and could be through touch.

Now, the only sense through which you are not going to receive new *sannà* is through your mind. Because your mind is not capable of creating new *sannà*. It is going to create a *sannà* only based on what it has already received. That's where the problem comes when you are perceiving something through one of the other senses and you are unable to identify it, because your mind cannot give the *sannà*. It needs to be fed that *sannà*. It is like, if I ask you, if you have eaten a certain type of food, or a fruit, say... Durian. I referred to Durian before. There will probably be quite few of you who have never even heard of Durian let alone tasted one. So, you are probably thinking, '*what is a Durian?*'. This is why I described the fruit in a certain way. Because until such time, your mind is probably imagining Durian to be something similar to what you think it is. Your mind is going in to action. Your mind is doing *sankàra*. That's what your mind is doing. But you are

imagining that a Durian is something like an apple or an orange. Or is it something like a grape? Or maybe something like a coconut? Because you know these fruits and you have seen them. You identify these things and recognise them. Therefore, when given a new *Dhamma*, when given a new object, your mind is immediately going into action and try and give it *rùpa*, try and give it *vèdana* or it will try and give *sannà*; primarily *sannà*; *vèdana and sannà*. That is the purpose of the mind. Your mind wants to know,

'oh! something's happened. I just heard the word Durian. Right, take it in. Now give it sannà. It says it's just a fruit. Well, a fruit is something physical. So, I should be able to feel it, I should be able to smell it, fruits have a colour, fruits have a texture'.

Again, your mind is trying to go through bags of aggregates - *rùpa*, *vèdana*, *sannà*, *sankhàra*, *vinnàna* - trying to pick up the things you saw, the sights, the sound, the tastes, the smells and the textures you are familiar with and apply all those things to the new object called the Durian. So, by the time I described what a Durian is, your mind has already painted it in a thousand different ways. So, I can't beat your mind at that rate. That is how *sannà* works.

Sankhàra (Action)

Then you have *sankhàra*. Going back to the example I used before, the moment I say Durian, your mind is going to build *sankhàra*, your mind is going into action. It's like how cogs turn in a machine where one is connected to the other when one turns the others start turning. That is how the mind works. Because the world is *rùpa*, *vèdana*, *sannà*, *sankhàra*, *vinnàna*. And you live in this world. And what you sense as your world is what is real to you. Then you are constantly trying to make it real to you.

Sankhàra (examples)

Have you seen those pictures where there are some objects which look like they are 3D objects, but your mind is unable to decipher them as 3D objects? Because you could never build something like that. The artist is M.C. Escher, what he does is, he paints these pictures - he might paint the picture of a desk for instance. When I say a desk, you probably imagine a desk, or you are looking

at one right now. And you know in 3D form how a desk should look. It's got the table top, it's got legs. So, in 3D form you can see what it is, if drawn on a piece of paper. But this artist, through clever manipulation draws it in a certain way that your mind struggles to identify it as a desk. Because if that object were actually to be constructed, it wouldn't be possible to do it. Because one leg goes through another leg. Or you have probably seen this picture - the picture of a silhouette. In it, depending on how you look at it, you either see a young woman or an old lady. The young woman is wearing a hat with a feather, or if you see the old lady, she's got a wide wrinkled chin. It's the same picture - you don't need to turn it upside down or inside out, but depending on how you distinguish it, that's how your mind does *sankhàra*. If your mind does this process of cogs turning one way it's going to pick up one silhouette, if it turns the other way it will pick up the other silhouette or picture. Ultimately, the result of what you are seeing is how your mind does *sankhàra*. So, this is something really interesting to think about. Do the things that we see actually exist out in the world or is it purely the result of how our minds process what we see? Something I want you all to think about. Because, often times either we attach ourselves or are in conflict with the things we see, sounds we hear. But do those sounds, the sounds that annoy us actually exist out there? Or is it us, our minds that either determine them as being a really nice sound or a really annoying sound? Is it not *sankhàra* that does that? So that's *sankhàra*. We are talking about mental formations here. When the five senses report what is going on in the world through your eyes, ears or nose or tongue or through the sense of touch, what your mind does is, use all those, whichever ones it's receiving from, it starts processing them and it produces a mental object. To do that it has to do *sankhàra*.

Vinnàna (Consciousness)

Finally, you have *vinnàna* or consciousness. In order to do all of the above things you have to be alive. Your mind and body, a person, an animal or a sentient being including an Arahant - he is no different - has to have *vinnàna*. *Vinnàna* is consciousness. So, it's consciousness that powers all of the above things. These are the thoughts and the mental objects, *Citta* and *Chaitasika*. So, the *vinnàna* is what keeps all these things in sync, that's *rùpa*, *vèdana*, *sannà* and *sankhàra*, and it processes all of those things. It's like how you keep a well-oiled machine, similarly it's the *vinnàna*

that keeps them all lined up and do all these processes. That is why the Lord Buddha said, that *vinnàna* is like a magician. What does a magician do? A magician uses tricks to create something that doesn't exist. Like pulling a rabbit out of a hat. The rabbit was never there in the first place. But that's what the spectators saw when he played the trick. Or perhaps create a parrot out of a red handkerchief. You and I know that could never happen. But the magician makes it seem like he actually did it. This is why how people are surprised thinking, "*how did he do that?*" That is what *vinnàna* is capable of. It uses *rùpa*, *vedana*, *sankhàra* and *sannà*, brings all of these things and produces this result which is the mental object. That is the purpose or objective of *vinnàna*.

So, if what we are attached to is the world outside, we live in, now going back to what we said at the beginning, like what was happening in the adjoining room at home, we are aware of it or it bothers us or involves us only if we can perceive some *rùpa*, *vedana*, *sannà*, *sankhàra* and *vinnàna* from what's going on in the other room. If we cannot take in any of those five things from what is happening in the other room, then for all intents and purposes, nothing is going on in there. This is why even if the person in the other room is running the entire United States of America from that room, perhaps the entire Presidential Suite is in that room, but if you do not know about it, nothing is going on in that room. If someone asks you if the other room is vacant or if it is available, you might even say, "*yes, it is vacant, please go in*". If the person opens the door and walks in and finds a mob in there. Why? Because, until that point there was no *rùpa*, no *vedana*, no *sannà*, no *sankhàra* or *vinnàna*. But the moment someone tells you that someone is in that room, that is all you need.

Attachment to the five aggregates

Now your mind is capable of producing all these *rùpa*, *vedana*, *sannà*, *sankhàra*, *vinnàna* of what's going on, in that other room. Perhaps nothing may even be happening in that room. But that's what *vinnàna* is doing. Therefore, when we say, we are attached to this world, what we are attached to, is actually *rùpa*, *vedana*, *sannà*, *sankhàra* and *vinnàna*. There is nothing else, no less, no more. Our world, our universe is all *rùpa*, *vedana*, *sannà*, *sankhàra* and *vinnàna*. For as long as we have *rùpa*, *vedana*, *sannà*, *sankhàra* *vinnàna*, a being continues to exist. When this being is

attached to *rùpa, vèdana, sannà, sankhàra* and *vinnàna*, this being continues life in *sansàra*. But when you begin to understand that, "*hang on.. I thought this world was something more than that, I thought there were people that I liked, people who loved me, food that I really enjoyed*", but ultimately it's just *rùpa, vèdana, sannà, sankhàra, vinnàna*.

You have probably played with Lego, when you put all these pieces of Lego together, you might build a castle, you might build a racing car or something that is really fancy. Now you give what you have built to your little brother and he is going to really like it. He might say, "*wow, that is really colourful, look at that, I like to play with that, can I have that, please?*". But if you took it all apart and now it's all just a bagful of Lego bricks, he is probably not going to like it very much. Why? Because what you have done is broken it down to its fundamental building blocks.

There is nothing called a 'woman'

This is what the Lord Buddha says you and I need to do, if we want to detach ourselves from the world. It could be a person, imagine a young, beautiful woman. To someone who is attracted to this woman or *rùpa-rùpa*, you look at that person and you are seeing, "*oh, beautiful hair, what a beautiful person, beautiful eyes, beautiful shape, beautiful lips, beautiful teeth*", because inside your mind your consciousness or *vinnàna* is playing tricks. What it is doing is, it is taking the *rùpa*, taking all the *vèdana*, the *sukha vèdana*, taking all of the *sannà*, and saying, "*oh! this is a woman*". Where did the woman come from? Which bit of that woman's body is the woman? It is taking all of those things and produces *sankhàra*. It is doing *sankhàra* to produce this mental object called, 'a woman', when actually the woman does not exist there. If you and I are clever enough to break what we are seeing apart into building blocks, *kèshà, lòma, nathà, danthà, tachò*, that is the hair, the eyes, the teeth, the skin, the nails - you lay it all out on a table and now you ask that person to pick the bit that he really liked before, he is probably going to run a mile. He will say, "*now I don't like any of those things*". Well then, what did you like when all of those things were together? All I did was to break it apart and lay out the building blocks. If I put them back together then you will like what you are really seeing but when I break it apart you don't like it. That doesn't make sense. This is why the Lord Buddha says, attachment brings suffering. Attachment is the reason why beings go through in *sansàra*. When you attach yourself to something, expecting something good to

happen, it will ultimately bring you suffering. But being under the delusion, that it is going to bring you happiness when you go attach yourself to it that will take you through *sansàra*.

What is it I am attached to?

Tanhà paccaya upàdàna;

Upàdàna paccaya bhawa;

Bhawa paccaya jàti;

To break this process, you have to break it at *tanhà*. Or you have to break it at *avidyà*. Now, to break it at *tanhà* you have to understand, "*what is it that I am attached to?*" If *tanhà* is attachment, and if you want to break *tanhà*, if you want to shatter it, you have to look at what is it that I am attached to.

You look at a beautiful person, and you say ..."*it's that person I am attached to*". Well, where is the person? Does that person actually exist? Let's break that person apart into the building blocks, now where is that person? Oh, there is no person. Are you attached to the hair? Then go to the barbershop where you can have bags full of hair. Are you attached to the nails? Then go to a nail spa. You can get bags full of them. Or nail chippings, you can go around the neighbourhood with a bag and you can collect plenty of it. I know the thought itself is disgusting. But that bit of nail on the person's body all of a sudden is so attractive. How is it? What about the skin? Someone will say, "*Oh! I really like the skin of that person*". Did you know that every day, perhaps every hour, you are shedding millions of dead skin cells from your body? What if you collected all of that over a number of years and you put them into a bag and gave it to someone and say, "*by the way, you said that you really liked that person's skin, here's a bag full of it*". Do you think they are going to take it with them? No. So, how is it that you said you really liked that person's skin? Oh! you mean you want to lay it as the skin on that person's body? Who is doing that? No one is doing that. It's just your mind that's doing it. It's *vinnàna* that's doing it.

What is it I am attached to? (Example)

If you took something else like a car for example, and you are looking at it and thinking, *"Oh! that's a really lovely sports car"*. But what are the constituent parts of that car? You've got the steering wheel, you've got the seats, you've got the leather, you've got the carpets, you've got the chassis. Have you not seen cars that have been in accidents? Before they have completed the repairs at the garage sometimes they allow you to take the car on the road. But some of the parts on the body have not yet been replaced. For example, you might see a car that is approaching you, where a part of the bumper is still missing. You look at that and say, *"that looks really ugly"*. But with the bumper on, or with the spoiler on, that looks really nice. Sometimes you see bits of the car missing because they have not been able to complete the repair process after an accident, in your mind you think, wow... a Benz, a BMW and all these nice flashy cars, but if you remove one part of that car from its body...*"No, I don't want it, not interested"*. So, who is doing this process of putting all of these together and then going and attaching to it? it's the mind that's doing it. It's the *vinnàna* that's doing it.

Avidyà and tanhà causes attachment

Therefore, if you go to the root of where this attachment is coming from you will realise that it is really *avidyà* or ignorance that is causing it. This problem is caused by ignorance. This attachment is caused by ignorance. Ignorance of what? Ignorance of the fact that it is a number of constituent parts put together, and then *vinnàna* tying it all together and saying,

"that's just one object or that's one person, a really good-looking object, go and attach yourself to it. Because it is going to bring you lots of pleasure".

But if you looked under the hood, and then saw it's just a bunch of constituent parts, parts put together and then continue to see the world in that way, you are beginning to understand that's all it is. It's just some pieces put together. Every time you do that, tiny bits of ignorance gets chipped away. Sometimes when you begin to realise, that this is what I have always been seeing up until now, you now got the right view of things. Do you know the Noble Eight-Fold Path? Starts with the right view (*sammà ditti*).

Sammà Ditti

Sammà ditti - **Sam** is *avidyà*, *thrushnà* - ignorance and attachment, **Ma** is to eradicate, **Ditti** is your view. The reason why we have 'sam' or *avidyà* and *thrushnà* up until now is that because we saw it all as one unit. To stop doing that process, to eradicate *avidyà* and *thrushnà* what are we doing now? We are breaking them up in to various parts and now looking at it from that view. It's called *sammà ditti*. So, if you are able to understand that, if I feel like I am attached to any kind of *rùpa*, *vedana*, *sannà*, *sankhàra*, *vinnàna* or if I am attached to any kind of food or any kind of object or a person, what I need to do to come to my senses, is to get out of this delusion. What I need to do is to break it into the constituent parts and then ask myself the question,

"Ok, which bit are you now attached to?"

That is one of the methods to eradicate *avidyà* and *thrushnà*. Therefore, if you accept that this is one way to look at the world then you have come to *sammà ditti*. With *sammà ditti*, your process then starts. From *sammà ditti* you go into *sammà sankappa*. If you begin to see that this is all the world is, the entire universe around you is just some pieces put together and nothing more than that, if you begin to see the world like that, you are no longer going to speak about the world in a way that creates sensual pleasures sensual attachments which makes you attach yourself to things or to people. You are not going to sing praises about 'a beautiful person' or 'a beautiful car'. All you are going to say is, *"what is the point?"*

Break things into constituent parts

Have you ever considered breaking things into their constituent parts? Now, which bit do you like? That is all you are going to talk about. Because that's the view that you have. But up until now you didn't have that view. Up until now your view was, *"what a beautiful person"...* *"what a beautiful car"*. But now you are beginning to see, it's all just bits and pieces put together. That's all it is and it is my *sankhàra* that is wrapping it all up together and my *vinnàna* giving it this shape or form and identifying it, therefore, giving it a *sannà* that this is a woman, this is a car. But where is the car? Where is the woman? It is just parts put together. At any given time when the causes come together, it's like, where is the fire? Where can you point out to and say, there is the fire? The fire

is nothing but three constituent parts coming together. Where is the rainbow? You can't point at the rainbow and say there's the rainbow. You can't touch the rainbow, because it is all but light being refracted through water. For as long as that keeps happening you are going to see a rainbow. So, for as long as these parts, these 32 parts of the body are put together, in that shape, in that form, you are going to see this person called a woman. For as long as the bonnet, the hood, the spoiler, the lights, the wipers, the windscreen, the steering wheel, the seats are put together you are going to see a car. And that car is only going to be there or going to appear as a car for as long as all those parts are there together. If you remove one of those things, say you remove the steering wheel, that's no longer a car. That's a car without a steering wheel.

Is it worth attaching yourself to things?

Once you start to see the world in that way, you are no longer going to sing praises about the world that you see around you. You are only going to explain it as, "*what are you attached to?*" "*Are you crazy? It's your vinnàna that is doing this*". It is your *vinnàna* that is putting all these things together and attaching yourself to it. Stop doing that. Because it's only going to bring you pain and suffering. Try and see the world as just constituent parts coming together. Try and see the world as just, *rùpa, vèdana, sannà, sankhàra, vinnàna*. When you do that, you continue your journey again on the Noble Eight Fold Path. *Sammà Ditti, Sammà Sankappa, Sammà Vàcà, Sammà Kammantha, Sammà Àjiva, Sammà Vàyàma, Sammà Sathi, Sammà Samàdhi* and then *Sammà Gnàna* and *Sammà Vimukthi*.

See the world as constituent parts coming together

So, you can do this process for all the things that you are attached to, absolutely anything and everything in this world. At the start it's going to be a bit difficult. At the start you have to deliberately and intentionally remind yourself...

"Ah...hang on a second, why am I attached to this? Stop...stop...stop... what am I doing right now? Why am I seeing that person as a person? Let me see the bits that makes up this person".

For example, if you saw a girl and say she is pretty. Now you have got desires for her, fires of desire in your heart, your blood pressure is rising, your heart is going dig...dig...dig. You know and understand this is *ràga* playing up and this is what's going to keep you in *sansàra* and you understand that somehow, I need to stop this. Well, why can't you in your mental eye, scan this body and start looking at the skeleton inside this person? Inside your mental body, why can't you see this person's digestive system? How the food is being churned up in the stomach. All of that exists but all we are seeing unfortunately is only what's on the outside. The skin, the eyes, the hair on the head or the body, *kesà, lòmà, nakhà, danthà, tachò*. That's all you are seeing from the outside. Even those five things, if you removed it as we said before, give you bags full of them, you are still not liking it. It's only when it is all together... Who is putting it all together? It's your *vinnàna* that is doing it. So, you are creating something that you like and now you are thinking that the things you like exists in that person. Now you are going after that person. Who created it? You created it. Your mind created it. But you are trying to find that within that person's body. You are never going to find it.

I've often used the example of you painting the picture of a holiday that you like to go on. The best holiday that you like to go on. Someone paints holidaying on the beach, they draw the sandy beach they've seen in Trincomalee, they draw the coconut trees they saw in Galle, turtles they might have seen in Negombo, the Blue waters that they might have seen in Batticaloa. And now they say 'let's go find it' They are never going to find this. Because none of those things actually exist in one place. They are all bits that have come from various different places. So, if one is able to see these things distinctively as being different bits, now he is no longer attached to a holiday. Because that holiday does not exist.

Àpò Thèjò Vàyò Patavi

Similarly, if we can look at the world around us, anything we are attached to, it could be food, it could be people, it could be cars, it could be absolutely anything, we are able to see the constituent parts now and ask ourselves the question, "*hang on, which bit am I now attached to?*" ...you are probably going to find it is just another bit. Going a step further, we can see things as *àpo, thèjo, vàyò, patavi*. Because when you get to that level, you are now at the really fundamental level of things, the lowest level. You are seeing heat in an object. You are seeing the solid nature of an object. You are seeing the flowing nature of an object and you are seeing the airy nature of an object; *àpò, thejò, vàyò, patavi*. If you are seeing those things, now you are attached to something solid. No one is attached to solidness. No one is attached to airiness. No one is attached to heat. They might like a barbecue. But that's not heat. That's a barbecue. You know the fire place, someone might like that. Now you are attached to all the things you are going to do around the fire, people sitting around or keeping warm, those *sankhàra* and *vinnàna* that come into your mind. This is what people are attached to. But this is just heat we are talking about. No one is going to be attached to that.

I hope this has helped you to look at the world in a way that perhaps you might not have up until now. Look at the world as *rùpa, vèdana, sannà, sankhàra, vinnàna*. But if you are not going to apply what you learnt, you are going nowhere. You could read books and books about Buddhism; you can even read the entire *Tripitakaya*. But if you are not going to apply the knowledge that you gain, knowledge not put into action is not power. Knowledge itself is not power. But knowledge put into action is power. Therefore, listen to this and then go and apply it.

Look at the world as five aggregates

So, what you should start doing now is start looking at the world as the five aggregates - anything that you are attached to, it could be your favourite cartoon, your favourite dish, try and see how there is *rùpa-rùpa*, try and see how there is *shabda-rùpa*, how there is *gandha-rùpa*, how there is *rasa-rùpa* and how there is *pottabba-rùpa*.

If you are in an Italian restaurant you are seeing the colourful food, you see the fancy lighting. Why are they doing all of these things? They are doing these things to attract you. That is *rùpa-rùpa*, then there is *shabda-rùpa*, the cutlery that is clinking, then the people chatting with each other, the waiters walking up and down asking, "Sir, how can I help you?" or "what can I get you?" Perhaps you can hear the chefs working in the kitchen. Perhaps you can hear something being grilled. All that's *shabda-rùpa*. Then there's *ghanda-rùpa*. The smells emanating from the kitchen or the food that is being served. Then there is *rasa-rùpa*, the taste of the food. Then comes *pottabba-rùpa*. How does it feel once it is inside your mouth? What about the furniture you are sitting on? Everything you are taking in right now while you are there will be one of those five things. It will also be *rùpa* or *vèdana*. Some will be good, some will be bad. Imagine you are putting a bit of spaghetti in your mouth and it tastes foul, are you not going to complain? You are going to spit it out. You are going to ask for the manager and you are going to complain. But most likely it is going to taste good. What if it is really hot and it burns your tongue? Again, that's just *vèdana*. What about the *sannà*? You read the menu, perhaps when you go on holiday to another country and you don't know anything that is on the menu. You don't know what to order. Why, because you have no *sannà* about any of those things. You have no recognition. There is no recognition because you have not had this before. So, there is no RE-COGNITION. But what happens usually when you go to a restaurant for the second time. Now you know something on that list. Today you order No 25. You have no idea what it is. But the waiter brings the food and you find the dish really good. You like the *rùpa-rùpa*, you like the *rasa-rùpa*, *shabda-rùpa*, *gandha-rùpa* and *pottabba-rùpa*. You like the *vèdana* and you like the *sannà*. You like the *sankàra* and you like the *vinnàna*. Next time to save time, 'can I have the same thing'? Because now I have a *sannà* about what that food is. Because if I order another food again it's going to be new and after ordering it you are thinking, "What if it doesn't taste good?" "What if I can't eat it?" Again, it goes into *dukka-dukkha*. The what-ifs. It might be a really good dish. Might be the best dish that you ever had. But until the food is served and until you've had it, you are thinking, 'what if I have wasted my money now'? 'What if it doesn't taste good?'. 'What if it got something that I am allergic to?' You are creating all these *sankàras* and its tormenting. So, you are going to have something that you are familiar with - 'I'll just have one of those please'.

So, if you are going out today this is what you should be doing. You might go to a club or dancing. Think what you are doing right now? Is there one thing that you have seen around you that is happening right now, that is not *rùpa*, that's not *vèdana*, that's not *sannà*, that's not *sankàra* or *vinnàna*? That is all that's going around you. And if you start breaking it all up into the five aggregates, which of those things are you attached to? Whichever one you think you are attached to, then focus your mind on that and think about, how that one thing brings you all this pain and suffering in *sansàra*. How perhaps it is the colour that you saw in the club, the fancy lighting if that's what you are attracted to; that is *rùpa-rùpa*, or the rock music that is playing that you are attached to, that's *shabda-rùpa*. If that's what you are attached to, that's what is taking you along in *sansàra*. Are you willing to be born to come back into the human world or into an *apàya* (hell) because you are attached to *shabda-rùpa*? Is it worth it? These are the things you should be asking yourself.



00.14.22 Start

00.17:24 Paying homage to the Lord Buddha

00.17.55 Inviting all beings to listen to the Dhamma

00.27.48 The Five Aggregates

00.29.43 What do you mean by the 'world'?

00.33.53 The Buddha's definition of the world

00.34.48 What is a 'rùpa'?

00.41.25 What are 'rùpa-rùpa'?

00.43.44 Shabda rùpa

00.44.22 Rasa rùpa

00.46.49 Gandha rùpa

00.47.20 Gandha rùpa (examples)

00.51.37 Pottabba rùpa

00.53.00 Dhamma rùpa

00.55.51 Vèdanà

00.56.39 Dukka vèdanà

00.58.15 Types of vèdanà

01.00.37 Sukha vèdanà

01.02.47 Sannà (Recognition)

01.09.57 Sankhàra (Action)

01.10.40 Sankhàra (examples)

01.15.10 Vinnàna (Consciousness)

01.18.39 Attachment to the five aggregates

01.20.40 There is nothing called a 'woman'

00.23.24 What is it I am attached to?

01.25.20 What is it I am attached to? (Example)

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01.30.30 Break things into constituent parts

01.32.22 Is it worth attaching yourself to things?

01.33.12 See the world as constituent parts coming together

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01.39.35 Look at the world as five aggregates

01:44:43 Transfer of merits

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