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The Worn-out Skin

Reflections on the Uraga Sutta

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Introduction

The Suttanipāta, in its oldest and most characteristic parts, is a deeply stirring Song of Freedom. The verses of this ancient book are a challenging call to us to leave behind the narrow confines of our imprisoned existence with its ever-growing walls of accumulated habits of life and thought. They beckon us to free ourselves from the enslavement to our passions and to our thousand little whims and wishes.

A call to freedom is always timely because in our lives we constantly bind ourselves to this and that, or let ourselves be bound in various ways by others and by circumstances. To some extent, normal life cannot entirely escape from such a situation. In fact, "binding" oneself to a worthy task and duty or to an ennobling human relationship is an indispensible antidote to the opposite tendency: the dissipation of our energies. The physical act of walking consists not only in the "freeing" action of lifting and stretching the foot, but also in the "binding" function of lowering it and placing it firmly on the ground. Analogously, in mental movement, there is the same need for support as well as for uplift and forward advancement.

But, having the comfort of a "secure footing" in life, we too easily forget to walk on. Instead, we prefer to "strengthen

our position," to improve and embellish the little cage we build for ourselves out of habits, ideas and beliefs. Once we have settled down in our habitual ways of living and thinking, we feel less and less inclined to give them up for the sake of risky ventures into a freedom of life and thought full of dangers and uncertainties. True freedom places on us the uncomfortable burden of ever-fresh responsible decisions, which have to be guided by mindfulness, wisdom and human sympathy. Few are willing to accept the full weight of such a burden. Instead, they prefer to be led and bound by the rules given by others, and by habits mainly dominated by self-interest and social conventions. With the habituation to a life of inner and outer bondage, there grows what Erich Fromm calls a "fear of freedom." Such fear, if allowed to persist and take root, inevitably leads to a stagnation of our inner growth and creativeness as well as to a stagnant society and culture. In a state of stagnation, toxic elements will endanger mankind's healthy progress—physical and mental, social and spiritual. Then William Blake's words will prove true: "Expect poison from stagnant water."

Those too who say "Yes" to life and wish to protect mankind from decline by its self-produced toxins—biological and psychological—will also have to shed that "fear of freedom" and enter freedom's arduous way. It is an arduous way because it demands of us that we break the self-forged fetters of our lusts and hates, our prejudices and dogmas—fetters we foolishly cherish as ornaments. But

once we see them for what they really are, obstacles to true freedom, the hard task of discarding them will become at the same time a joyous experience.

The Suttanipāta, however, warns repeatedly of false ideas of freedom. He is not truly free who only follows his self-willed whims and desires (chandagū, v. 913), who is carried along by them (*chandānunīto*, v. 731). Nor can true freedom be found by those who only seek to exchange one bondage for another.

> Leaving the old through craving for the new—
> Pursuit of longings never from bondage frees;
> It is but letting go to grasp afresh
> As monkeys reach from branch to branch of trees.
>
> (v. 791)

Mankind is always in need of both lawgivers and liberators. It is for echoing the voice of that great liberator, the Buddha, that the following pages have been written as a humble tribute.

What follows are free musings on the first poem of the Suttanipāta, the Uraga Sutta, interspersed with gleanings from the Buddhist texts, which may help to illuminate the verses.

The Serpent

1. He who can curb his wrath
as soon as it arises,
as a timely antidote will check
snake's venom that so quickly spreads,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

2. He who entirely cuts off his lust
as entering a pond one uproots lotus plants,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

3. He who entirely cuts off his craving
by drying up its fierce and rapid flow,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

4. He who entirely blots out conceit
as the flood demolishes a fragile bamboo bridge,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

5. He who does not find core or substance
in any of the realms of being,
like flowers that are vainly sought
in fig trees that bear none,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,

just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

6. He who bears no grudges in his heart,
transcending all this "thus" and "otherwise,"
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

7. He who has burned out his evil thoughts,
entirely cut them off within his heart,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as the serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

8. He who neither goes too far nor lags behind,
entirely transcending the diffuseness of the world,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

9. He who neither goes too far nor lags behind
and knows about the world: "This is all unreal,"
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

10. He who neither goes too far nor lags behind,
greedless he knows: "This is all unreal,"
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

11. He who neither goes too far nor lags behind,
lust-free he knows: "This is all unreal,"
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

12. He who neither goes too far nor lags behind,

hate-free he knows: “This is all unreal,”
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

13. He who neither goes too far nor lags behind,
delusion-free he knows: “This is all unreal,”
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

14. He who has no dormant tendencies whatever,
whose unwholesome roots have been expunged,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

15. States born of anxiety he harbours none
which may condition his return to earth,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

16. States born of attachment he harbours none
which cause his bondage to existence,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

17. He who has the five hindrances discarded,
doubt-free and serene, and free of inner barbs,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

I. Reflections on the Refrain

The refrain:

- such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
  just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

The Simile of the Serpent

The ancient masters of the Theravada Buddhist tradition explain the simile of the serpent's worn-out skin, occurring in the last line of each of the poem's verses, as follows:

The shedding of the serpent's old skin is done in four ways:

1. in following the law of its own species,
2. through disgust,
3. with the help of a support, and
4. with effort.

1. "Its own species" is that of those long-bodied animals, the snakes. Snakes do not transgress these five characteristics of their species: in regard to their birth, their death, their surrendering to (a long and deep) sleep, their mating with their own kind only, and the shedding of the old, worn-out skin. Hence, in shedding the skin, a snake follows the law of its own kind.

2. But in doing so, it sheds the old skin out of disgust. When only half of the body has been freed of the old skin and the

other half is still attached, the snake will feel disgust.

3. In such disgust, the snake will support its body on a piece of wood, a root or a stone, and

4. making an effort, using all its strength, it will wind its tail around the supporting object, exhale forcefully and expand its hood, and shed the old skin fully. Then it will go freely wherever it likes.

It is similar with a monk. The "law of his own species" is virtue (*sīla*). Standing firm in his own law of virtue, and seeing the misery involved, he becomes disgusted with the "old worn-out skin" of the "here and the beyond," comprising (such pairs of opposites) as his own and others' personalised existence, etc., which are productive of suffering. Thus he becomes disgusted and, seeking the support of a noble friend, (a wise teacher and meditation master), he summons his utmost strength by way of the path factor, right effort. Dividing day and night into six periods, during daytime, while walking up and down or sitting, he purifies his mind from obstructive things; doing so also in the first and the last watch of the night, he lies down for rest only in the night's middle watch. Thus he strives and struggles. Just as the serpent bends its tail, so he bends his legs to a crosslegged posture. As the serpent exhales forcefully, so the monk musters all his unremitting strength. As the serpent expands its hood, so the monk works for an expansion of his insight. And just as the serpent sheds its old skin, so the monk abandons the here

and the beyond, and being now freed of the burden, he goes forth to the Nibbāna-element that is without a residue of the groups of existence (*anupādisesa-nibbānadhātu*).

Commentary to the Suttanipāta

Conforming to the "law of its own species," the serpent discards what has become only a burden. It is worn-out, outgrown skin which the snake gladly sheds. And thus it will finally be with him who earnestly walks the path to the freedom from all burdens (*yogakkhema*). Daily practise of alienation from what has been understood to be actually alien will wear thin the bondage to "self" and the world, loosen more and more clinging's tight grip, until, like the serpent's worn-out skin, it falls away almost effortlessly. Just as, according to similes given by the Buddha, the handle of a hatchet is wasted away by constant use; just as the strongest ship-ropes will become brittle by constant exposure to wind, sun and rain and finally fall asunder—so will constant acts of giving up, of letting go, wear thin and fragile the once so stout and unbreakable fetters of craving and ignorance, until one day they drop off completely.

By such an act of "shedding the old skin," no "violence against nature" is done; it is a lawful process of growing, of *out*growing that which is no longer an object of attachment —just as the old skin is no longer attached to the snake's

body. Only in such a way can a person vanquish those passionate urges and deceptive notions of his, which are so powerful and so deeply rooted. In the act of ultimate liberation, nothing is violently broken which was not already detached from the living tissues of mind and body or only quite loosely joined with them. Only a last effort of the powerful muscles will be needed to shake off the empty sheath—this hollow concept of an imaginary self which had hidden for so long the true nature of body and mind.

Here it lies before the meditator's feet—like the serpent's worn-out skin—a lifeless heap of thin and wrinkled thought tissue. Once it had seemed to be so full of alluring beauty—this proud and deceptive idea of "I" and "mine." Now this illusion is no more, and a new "conceptual skin" has grown which, though likewise made of imperfect words, has no longer the deceptive colourings of conceit, craving and false ideas. Mind-and-body are now seen as they truly are. Now one no longer misconceives them for what they are *not* and no longer expects of them what they cannot give: lasting happiness. How big a burden of anxiety, fear, frustration and insatiate craving will have been discarded! How light and free the heart can become if one sheds attachment to what is not one's own!

What actually has to be shed is this attachment rooted in the ego-illusion. But until discarded entirely, this ego-illusion will still cling to mind-and-body by the force of three powerful strands which are also its feeders: conceit, craving and false ideas. Even if false ideas about a self have been

given up intellectually, the other two "feeders," conceit and craving, are strong enough to cause an identification of mind-and-body (or of some of their features) with the imaginary self.

This identification has to be dissolved on all three levels until mind-and-body are seen to be as alien as those dry leaves of the Jeta Grove which the Buddha once picked up, asking the monks whether these leaves are their self or their self's property. And the monks replied: "They are surely not our self or anything belonging to our self." Then the Master said: "Therefore, monks, give up what is not yours! Give up all clinging to body, feelings, perceptions, volitions and consciousness" (MN 22) **[1]**

It is certainly not difficult to give up what is so obviously foreign to us, and worthless, too, like those dry leaves or any other insignificant trifles we encounter in our lives. It is harder to give up a cherished material object or a beloved human being. It is hardest, however, to detach ourselves from the body and its pleasures, from our likes and dislikes, from the intellectual enjoyment of our thoughts, from deep-rooted tendencies and habits; in short, from all that we instinctively and without question identify with as "ourselves." All these constituents of our supposed "self" are visibly changing, sometimes rapidly and radically; sometimes the changes of our likes and dislikes, habits and ideas, turn them into their very opposite. Yet we still continue to identify ourselves whole-heartedly with those new states of mind as if they were the old ego. So tenacious

is the ego-illusion and therefore so hard to break.

Yet it is to that hardest task that the Master summons us: "Give up what is not yours! And what is not yours? The body is not yours: give it up! Giving it up will be for your weal and happiness. Feelings, perceptions, volitions and consciousness are not yours: give them up! Giving them up will be for your weal and happiness."

We must recall here that it is *attachment* to these five aggregates that has to be given up and that this is a gradual process. We must not expect our habitual likes and dislikes, our intellectual enjoyments and our desires to vanish all at once; nor can or should they be broken by force. This seemingly compact and identifiable personality has been gradually built up by the intake of physical and mental nourishment. Again and again, thousands of times during a single day, we have approached and absorbed the physical and mental objects of our desire. One after the other we have made them "our own" and believed them to be our own. This continuous process of accumulating attachments and self-identifications must now be reversed by a gradual process of detachment achieved by dissolving or stopping the false identifications. The Buddha's teaching chiefly consists of aids assisting us in that task of gradual detachment—aids to right living and to right thinking. The simile of the snake's worn-out skin is one of these aids, and if seen as such it has much to teach. These are some of the ways in which contemplation can be helpful:

1. We look at our skin encasing the body: it is now firm and taut, healthily alive, our warm blood pulsating beneath it. Imagine it now lying before you, empty and limp, like a snake's discarded slough. In such a manner you may visualise the feature *skin* among the thirty-two parts of the body, a meditation recommended by the Buddha. **[2]** When thus brought vividly to life, it will help you to alienate and detach yourself from the body.

2. Just as the serpent does not hesitate to fulfil the biological "law of its kind" in shedding its old skin, so right renunciation will not waver or shrink from those acts of giving up which right understanding of reality demands. Just as the serpent does not mourn over the loss of its worn-out slough, so right renunciation has no regrets when it discards what has been seen as void of value and substance and replaces it by something new and more beautiful: the happiness of letting go, the exhilaration of the freedom won, the serenity of insight and the radiance of a mind purified and calmed. It is the growing strength of this new experience which will gradually clear the road to final emancipation.

3. According to the commentary quoted by us, the snake feels disgust towards its old skin when the sloughing is not yet complete and parts of the old skin still adhere to its body. Similarly, the disgust felt towards residual attachments and defilements will give to the disciple an additional urgency in his struggle for final liberation. Such disgust is a symptom of his growing detachment. It is

strengthened by an increasing awareness of the perils inherent in the uneliminated defilements—perils to oneself and to others. On seeing these perils, the whole misery of man's situation, the saṃsāric predicament, will gain for him increasing poignancy; and the more he progresses in mental training and moral refinement, the stronger his distaste will become for what is still unamenable in him to that training and refinement. Therefore the Buddha advised his son Rāhula: "Make disgust strong in you" (Sn v. 340).

This disgust (*nibbidā*) is often mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures as an aid as well as a phase on the road to full detachment. Thus among the eight insight knowledges the contemplation of disgust (*nibbidānupassanā*) follows upon the awareness of the peril and misery in saṃsāra, when formations of existence have become tasteless and insipid to the meditator. And in innumerable sutta passages the Buddha says that when the disciple sees the constituents of body and mind as impermanent, suffering and not self, he becomes disgusted with them; through his disgust he becomes dispassionate, and through dispassion he is liberated. The Noble Eightfold Path itself is extolled because it leads to complete disgust with worldliness, to dispassion, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment and Nibbāna. **[3]**

When insight is deepened and strengthened, what has been called here "disgust" (in rendering the Pali *nibbidā*) loses the strong emotional tinge of aversion and revulsion. It manifests itself instead as a withdrawal, estrangement and

turning away from worldliness and from the residue of one's own defilements.

4. Just as the snake, in its effort to throw off its old skin, uses as support a stone or the root of a tree, similarly, the teachers of old say that the striving disciple should make full use of the support of noble friendship in his efforts towards full liberation. A friend's watchful concern, his wise counsel and his inspiring example may well be of decisive help in the arduous work of freeing oneself from the burdensome encumbrance of passions, frailties and tenacious habits.

Often and emphatically, the Buddha praised the value of noble friendship. Once the venerable Ānanda, who was so deeply devoted to the Master, spoke of noble friendship as being "half of the holy life," believing he had duly praised its worth. The Buddha replied: "Do not say so, Ānanda, do not say so: it is the entire holy life to have noble friends, noble companions, noble associates" (Saṃyutta Nikāya). If this holds true for the spiritual life of a monk, there are additional reasons for cherishing noble friendship within the common life of the world with all its harshness and perils, struggles and temptations, and its almost unavoidable contact with fools and rogues. Noble friendship, so rare and precious, is indeed one of the few solaces which this world can offer. But this world of ours would be truly "disconsolate" if, besides the solace of friendship, it did not harbour the still greater solace of the Buddha's compassionate message of an open way to final

deliverance from suffering.

The Meaning of "Monk"

The word monk (*bhikkhu*) has to be taken here in the same sense as explained in the old commentary on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta:

> *Monk* is a term to indicate a person who earnestly endeavours to accomplish the practise of the teaching. Though there are others, gods and men, who earnestly strive to accomplish the practise of the teaching, yet because of the excellence of the state of a monk … by way of practise, the Master spoke here of a monk … Verily, one who follows the teaching, be it a deity or a human being, is called a monk.

The Here and the Beyond (ora-pāraṃ)

Now what is it that should be given up finally and without regret? Our text calls it "the here and the beyond," using Pali words that originally signified the two banks of a river. The "here" is this world of our present life experience as human beings; the "beyond" is any world beyond the

present one to which our willed actions (*kamma*) may lead us in our future existences in saṃsāra, the round of rebirths. It may be a world of heavenly bliss, or one of hell-like suffering, or a world which our imagination creates and our heart desires; for life in any world beyond the present one belongs as much to the totality of existence as life on earth, Nibbāna alone being the "beyond of existence."

The phrase "the here and the beyond" also applies to all those various discriminations, dichotomies and pairs of opposites in which our minds habitually move: the lower and the higher, the inner and the outer, the (life-affirming) good and the bad, acceptance and rejection. In brief, it signifies the ever-recurring play of opposites, and as this play maintains the game of life with its unresolvable dissatisfactions, disappointment and suffering, the Buddha calls on us to give it up.

The overcoming of the opposites, the detachment from "both sides," is one of the recurrent themes of the Suttanipāta. Among the various pairs of opposites structuring our thoughts, attitudes and feelings, the most prominent is that of "the lower and the higher." All the numerous religious, ethical, social and political doctrines devised by man employ this dichotomy, and though their definitions of these two terms may differ enormously, they are unanimous in demanding that we give up the low and attach ourselves, firmly and exclusively, to whatever they praise as "high," "higher" or "highest."

Espousing among views his own as highest,
Whatever he regards as "best,"
All else he will as "low" condemn;
Thus one will never get beyond disputes.

Sn v. 796

However, in any area of human concern, secular or religious, clinging to discriminations of "high and low" is bound to result in suffering. When we are attached to anything as "high," if the object changes, we will meet with sorrow; if our attitudes change, we will find ourselves feeling flustered and discontent.

But despite their repeated experience of transiency, and despite all their prior disappointments, men still foster the vain hope that what they cherish and cling to will remain with them forever. Only those few "with little or no dust in their eyes" understand that this play of opposites, on its own level, is interminable; and only one, the Buddha, has shown us how to step out of it. He, the Great Liberator, showed that the way to genuine freedom lies in relinquishing both sides of the dichotomy, even insisting that his own teaching is only a raft built for crossing over and not for holding on to:

"You, O monks who understand the Teaching's similitude to a raft, you should let go even of good teachings, how much more the false ones."

MN 22

> "Do you see, my disciples, any fetter, coarse or fine, which I have not asked you to discard?"
>
> MN 66

One should, however, know well and constantly bear in mind that the relinquishing of both sides, the transcending of the opposites, is the final goal—a goal which comes at the end of a long journey. Because this journey unavoidably leads through the ups and downs of saṃsāra, the traveller will repeatedly encounter the play of opposites, within which he will have to make his choices and select his values. He must never attempt to soar above the realm of opposites while ill-equipped with feeble wings or else his fate, like that of Icarus, will be a crash landing. For a time, to the best of his knowledge and strength, he must firmly choose the side of the "higher" against the "lower," following what is beneficial from the standpoint of the Dhamma and avoiding what is harmful. But he should regard his choices and values as a raft, not clinging to them for their own sake, always ready to leave them behind to embark on the next phase of the journey. While still on the mundane plane, he must never forget or belittle the presence within himself of the "lower," the dark side of his nature, and he must learn to deal with this wisely, with caution as well as firmness.

To cross the ocean of life and reach "the other shore" safely, skill is needed in navigating its currents and cross-currents. In adapting oneself to those inner and outer currents, however, one must always be watchful. The currents can be

powerful at times and one must know when it is necessary to resist them. Sometimes right effort has to be applied to avoid or overcome what is evil and to produce and preserve what is good. At other times it is wise to restrain excessive and impatient zeal and revert to a receptive attitude, allowing the processes of inner growth to mature at their own rate. By wisely directed adaptation we can learn to give full weight to both sides of every situation—to the duality in our own nature and in the objective circumstances we face. Only by confronting and understanding the two sides within one's own experience can one master and finally transcend them.

An increasingly refined response to the play of opposites will teach one how to balance, harmonise and strengthen one's spiritual faculties (*indriya*) by reducing excess and making up deficiencies. When it concerns two equally positive qualities—such as the faculties of energy and calm —one will naturally prefer to strengthen the weaker side instead of reducing the stronger, thus re-establishing the balance of faculties on a higher level. Only by a harmonious balance of highly developed faculties can one move on to the next phase of progress: the "transcending of both sides," the final comprehension and mastery of merely apparent opposites, such as firmness and gentleness, which appear opposed only when isolated or unbalanced.

This harmony, which is dynamic and not static, gains perfection in the equipoise and equanimity of the Arahat, the Liberated One, an equanimity far wider, deeper and

stronger than any the ordinary man can even envision.

On the *emotional* level, the Arahat's equanimity is marked by perfect and unshakable equipoise in the midst of the vicissitudes of life and in the face of all the problems and conflicts that may come within the range of his experience. This equanimity is not indifferent aloofness but a balanced response to any situation—a response motivated and directed by wisdom and compassion.

On the *volitional and active* level, the Arahat's equanimity appears as freedom from partiality; as a thoughtful choice between action and non-action, again motivated by wisdom and compassion; and as perfect equipoise when the choice has been made.

On the *cognitive and intellectual* level, his equanimity shows up in a balanced judgement of any situation or idea, based on a mindful and realistic appraisal; it is the equipoise of insight that avoids the pitfalls of extreme conceptual viewpoints.

This is the triple aspect of the Arahat's equanimity as an embodiment of the middle path rising above the extremes and opposites.

The Structure of the Verses

In each verse of the poem, the giving up of "the here and the

beyond" mentioned in the refrain is connected with the abandonment of certain mental defilements (*kilesa*), basic distortions of attitude and understanding, mentioned in the first lines of the verse (always two in the original Pali). The purport behind this connection is that only if the mental defilements mentioned in the first lines are eliminated entirely (*asesaṃ*, "without remainder")—as stated expressly in verses 2, 3 and 4—can one rise above the opposites involved in those defilements. Only by entire elimination are the defilements eradicated in their lower and higher, coarse and subtle forms, in their manifest and latent states. If even a minute residue of them is left, it will suffice to revive the full play of the opposites and a recurrence of the extremes. No member of a pair of opposites can exclude the influence of its counterpart and remain stationary within the same degree of strength or weakness. There is a constant fluctuation between "high" and "low" as to degree of the defilements, as to evaluation of mental qualities, and as to forms of existence to which the defilements may lead.

It is the *complete* uprooting of the defilements alone which will make an end of rebirth—of the here and the beyond, the high and the low, which remain in constant fluctuation as long as the defilements persist. When such an uprooting is made, the here and the beyond will be transcended, left behind as something empty, coreless and alien—"just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin."

II Reflections on the Verses

Wrath

1. He who can curb his wrath
as soon as it arises,
as a timely antidote will check
snake's venom that so quickly spreads,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

This first verse compares wrath, which is vehement anger or rage, to a snake's poison that rapidly spreads in the body of the person bitten; for snakes, or at least some of the species, have always been regarded as irascible animals of venomous ire. Wrath is an outcome of hate, one of the three powerful roots of all evil and suffering. [4] The term "hate" (*dosa*) comprises all degrees of antipathy, from the weakest dislike to the strongest fury. In fact, the Pali word *kodha,* used in this verse and rendered here by "wrath," actually extends to the whole scale of antagonistic emotions. We have, however, singled out its extreme form, "wrath," because of the simile and in view of the fact that its less vehement forms will find their place under the heading of "grudge," in verse 6.

Of the evil root hate in its entire range the Buddha says, "It

is a great evil but (relatively) easy to overcome". (AN 3:68) It was perhaps for both these reasons that wrath is mentioned here first, preceding the other defilements which appear in the following verses. Hate is a great evil because of its consequences. Its presence poses a much greater danger of a straight fall into the lowest depths of inhuman conduct and into the lowest forms of existence than, for instance, greed or lust, another of the three evil roots. On the other hand, hate is relatively easy to overcome, for it produces an unhappy state of mind which goes counter to the common human desire for happiness. But hate will be "easy to overcome" only for those who also know of the need to purify their own hearts and are willing to make that effort. For those, however, who identify themselves fully with their aversions or even try to justify their outbursts of temper—for them hate, too, is very difficult to overcome and may well harden into a character trait of irritability.

Just as a snakebite needs prompt treatment to prevent the venom from spreading rapidly and widely through the body, so also any uprising of wrath should be curbed at once to prevent it from erupting into violent words and deeds of possibly grave consequence.

The true curative antidote for hate in all its forms is loving kindness (*mettā*), assisted by patience, forbearance and compassion. But unless the mind is well trained, when vehement wrath flares up, it will rarely be possible to replace it immediately by thoughts of loving kindness. Nevertheless, a mental brake should be applied at once and

the thoughts of anger curbed [5] without delay; for if this is not done, the situation may be aggravated by continual outbursts of anger to the point where it gets completely out of control. This temporary curbing of wrath accords with the fifth method of removing undesirable thoughts as mentioned in the 20th Discourse of the Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima Nikāya), [6] namely, by vigorously restraining them. By such an act of firm restraint, time will be won to compose the mind for dealing with the situation thoughtfully and calmly. But if the anger thus suppressed is left smouldering under the ashes, it may well flare up on a future occasion with greater vehemence. Hence, in a quiet hour on the very same day, one should try to dissolve that anger fully, in a way appropriate to the situation. The Dhamma can offer many aids for doing so.

Hate can bind beings to each other as strongly as lust does, so that they drag each other along through repeated life situations of revenge and counter-revenge. This may first happen in the "here," that is, within one life, or in continued human rebirths. But persistent hate harbours the constant danger of dragging the hater down into a subhuman world of misery, "beyond the human pale"; or the hater's fate might be a rebirth among the Asuras, the demonic titans of militant pride and aggressive power-urge, some of whom, in turn, seem to have taken human birth as great conquerors and rulers.

Whipped up by hate and wrath, towering waves of violence and fierce tempests of aggression have swept again and

again through human history, leaving behind a wake of destruction. Though issuing from the one root of evil, hate, these upheavals have taken a multitude of forms: as racial, national, religious and class hatred as well as other varieties of factional and political fanaticism. Those who crave for leadership among men have always known that it is so much easier to unite people under the banner of a common hate than by a shared love. And all too often these leaders have made unscrupulous use of their knowledge to serve the ends of their burning ambition and power urge, even using millions of people as tools or victims of their own unquenchable hate for others or themselves. Untold misery has been wrought thus and is still being wrought today, as history books and the daily newspapers amply testify. Now mankind is faced by the mortal danger posed by tools of violence and aggression made utterly destructive through modern technology, and by a climate of hate made more infectious through modern mass media and subtle mind manipulation.

So there are, indeed, reasons enough for curbing wrath individually and for helping to reduce it socially. An appeal for the reduction of hate and violence in the world of today can no longer be dismissed as unrealistic moralising. For the individual and for mankind, it has now become a question of survival, physically and spiritually.

He, however, who “sees danger in the slightest fault,” and knows that even slight but persistent resentments may grow into passionate hate and violence, will earnestly strive for

the final eradication of the deepest roots of any aversion. This is achieved on the third stage of the path to liberation, called the stage of non-return (*anāgāmitā*). At that stage, no return to the "here" of existence in the sense sphere can any longer come about, while the end of the "beyond," that is, the existence in the fine-material and immaterial spheres, will also be assured. **[7]**

> You must slay wrath if you would happily live;
> You must slay wrath if you would weep no more.
> The slaughter of anger with its poisoned source
> And fevered climax, murderously sweet—
> That is the slaughter noble persons praise;
> That you must slay in order to weep no more.
>
> SN 11:21

Lust

2. He who entirely cuts off his lust
   As entering a pond one uproots lotus plants,
   —such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
   just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

Lust (*rāga*) is here compared to the lotus flower as a symbol of beauty. Because of its loveliness one too easily forgets that the enchanting blossoms of sense enjoyment will soon wilt and lose their beauty and attraction. But the mere

awareness of that impermanence is not enough, for it may even add to the enchantment and whet the desire to pluck the flowers of lust again and again as long as strength lasts. But desire often lasts longer than the strength to seek or obtain its fulfilment—and this is just one of the ways in which lust brings suffering and frustration.

In a single moment the roots of lust can sink deeply into a man's heart; its fine hair-roots of subtle attachments are as difficult to remove as the great passions, or even more so. Thus the Buddha says that "greed is hard to overcome"; but in the same text he also says that greed "is a lesser evil" (or, literally rendered, "less blameworthy"). **[8]** This statement may appear strange in view of the fact that greed is one of the evil roots and also a form of craving, the fundamental cause of suffering. Yet greed is "less blameworthy" than hate in all those cases where the gratification of lust does not violate basic morality and is not harmful to others; for instance, in the enjoyment of delicious food, sexual gratification within the bounds of the third precept, and so forth.

Nevertheless, all forms of lust, be they inside or outside the moral norms, are still *unwholesome* (*akusala*), as they chain man to kammic bondage and necessarily result in suffering. Therefore, for one who aspires to perfect purity and final liberation, all forms of lust, coarse or refined, are obstructions.

"All lust wants eternity" (Friedrich Nietzsche)—but cannot

obtain it. For, though lust itself may well go on eternally without ever being quenched, its objects are all inevitably evanescent. When the objects of lust perish, as they must, or are unattainable, as they often are, suffering results for the lusting person; and when his desire for a loved person fades and changes, suffering will result for the beloved.

Lust receives its full dimension of depth as an expression of craving, an unexhaustible neediness, the state of ever being in want. This craving is the subject of the next verse.

Lust is "entirely cut off" at the stage of Arahatship, when desire even for the worlds of refined material form or the immaterial has vanished forever. With the elimination of lust, its unavoidable concomitants also disappear: the frustration, torment or despair of non-gratification and the listlessness, boredom or revulsion of surfeit. He who frees himself of lust is also free of its "both sides," attraction and repulsion, like and dislike. He too has given up the here and the beyond.

Craving

3. He who entirely cuts off his craving
by drying up its fierce and rapid flow,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

Craving (*taṇhā*) is the mighty stream of desire that flows through all existence, from the lowest microbes up to those sublime spheres free from coarse materiality. Craving is threefold: craving for sensuality, for continued existence, and for annihilation or destruction.

Sensuous craving (*kāma-taṇhā*), within that mighty river of which our verse speaks, is a powerful whirlpool dragging everything into its depth. The infinity of all craving appears here as the bottomless abyss which vainly longs for fullness and fulfilment. But though it ceaselessly sucks into itself the objects of desire, it can never find safety and peace. For like the hunger for food, this perpetual hunger of the senses daily craves afresh for gratification: "The senses are greedy eaters." The habit of daily sense gratification produces in us a *horror vacui*. We fear being left empty of sense experience, and this fear, an expression of the fear of death, stands dark and threatening behind each sensual craving as an additional driving force. We see starkly the partnership of fear and desire in the pathological avarice, the hectic grasping and clinging, of those old people so masterly described by Moliere and Balzac.

Driven by the burning sensation of a void within, by a feeling of constant lack and neediness, we try to suppress that painful sensation by swelling our ego. We strive to absorb into our ego what is non-ego or "alien"; we chase hectically and insatiably after sense enjoyment, possessions or power; we yearn to be loved, envied or feared. In short, we try to build up our "personality"—a *persona,* a hollow

mask. But such attempts to satisfy sensual craving must fail. If the supposed ego expands its imagined boundaries, then, by the extension of its periphery, its points of contact with a hostile or tempting world also grow, inevitably bringing along a growth of both irritation and neediness.

One believes that by the mere gratification of lust what has been "appropriated" from the outside world of objects or persons becomes a part of the ego or its property, becomes "I" and "mine." But what the ego thus appropriates from outside it can never fully assimilate. There remains an undissolved alien residue which accumulates and slowly but deeply alters the structure of body and mind. This process will finally end in the disruption of the organism—in death. To some extent, this is normal, an ever-present process as it is also a formula for the intake and assimilation of food. [9] But if sensory craving grows excessive and becomes an uncontested, or only weakly contested, master, it may well happen that "the food devours the eater": that the craving and search for sensual nourishment becomes so dominant that it weakens other functions of the human mind, and just those which are most refined and distinctively human.

Unrestrained sensual craving makes a personality "featureless" and "impersonal"; it reduces human individuation and thus brings us into dangerous proximity to the animal level which is bare or poor of individuation. Specific sensual enjoyment may easily become habit-forming and even compulsive, again pulling us down to the

animal level of instinctive behaviour at the cost of conscious control. A life dominated by sensual craving may turn into a monotonous automaton of sense-stimulus, craving, and sense gratification. Uninhibited sensuality reduces our relative freedom of choice and may drag us, by way of rebirth, into subhuman realms of existence. We say this, not to moralise but to emphasise the psychological effects of sensual craving and to show its implications for our progress towards true human freedom, that is, towards an increase of our mindfully responsible moral choices.

In the threatening effacement of individuation, in the rapturous submergence of individuality at moments of highest passion—in these features sensual craving approaches its apparent opposite, the craving for annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*). It is ancient knowledge: the affinity of Eros and Thanatos, of passionate love and death.

Craving for annihilation, for non-being, may be likened to the flooding of the river of individualised life. The waters revolt against the banks, the restricting boundaries of individuality. Suffering under their frustrating limitations, they seek to burst through all dams in quest of the great ocean, longing to be one with it, to submerge painful separateness in an imagined Oneness. It is the enticing melody of "Unbewusst—hoechste Lust!" ("To be unconscious—oh highest lust!", Richard Wagner), the "descent to the mother goddess," the cult of the night.

On a simpler level, the craving for annihilation is the

outcome of sheer despair, the reverse of worldly enchantment. Worn out by the vicissitudes of life, one longs for a sleep without awakening, to obliterate oneself as a protest against a world that does not grant one's wishes. As an irrational revenge, one wants to destroy oneself or others. In some cases, fanatical creeds of violence and destruction stem from this very source. **[10]**

Finally, in its rationalised form, this craving appears as the view or theory of annihilation (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*), expressed in various types of materialist philosophies throughout the history of human thought.

Craving for continued existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) is the unceasing, restless flow of the river of life towards goals hoped for, but never attained. It is fed by our persistent hope that happiness will come tomorrow, or in a heaven or golden age of our belief. Even when all our toil gives little or no present satisfaction and happiness, we console ourselves with the thought that we work for our children or our nation or mankind; and each generation repeats that deferred hope.

As a longing for life eternal, desired and imagined in many forms, this craving for existence appears in many religions and philosophies. In Buddhist texts, it is called "the eternalist view" (*sassata-diṭṭhi*).

Craving for existence is the driving force that keeps the Wheel of Life in rotation. If viewed by an unclouded eye, this wheel is seen as a treadmill kept in motion by those

who have condemned themselves to that servitude. It is a contraption "where you are perpetually climbing, but can never rise an inch" (Walter Scott). The beings who rotate in it are again and again victimised by their illusion that the stepping-board before their eyes is the cherished goal, the desired end of their toil. They do not know that within a turning wheel there is no final goal or destination; and that the end of the world with its suffering cannot be reached by walking on a treadmill. It can be attained only by stopping the driving forces within us—craving and ignorance. Yet those beings who have committed themselves to that wheel still believe that, within this truly vicious circle, they do "get on in life," and hopefully speak of progress and evolution.

This is the sober and sobering view of existence and the craving for its continuation. But if there were not also a tempting aspect, beings would not cling to life and crave for it to go on. We need not dwell here on those tempting aspects high or low, as there have been, and still are, many eulogists of life and its beauties. Hence we shall speak here only of some of the more subtle forms of allurement which the craving for existence takes.

Among its numerous forms, craving for existence may appear as a longing for variety. This longing frequently makes people seek for happiness somewhere else than in the here and now, and in some form other than the one they actually possess. The mirage of a "happiness elsewhere" becomes a bait that moves further away the closer it is approached, ever eluding the hand that tries to grasp it. It is

like the fate of Tantalus to which man has become so habituated that he even finds it pleasant, saying that "it adds spice to life."

There are others who thirst after ever-widening horizons of life, seeking new sensory or mental experiences for their own sake; some who are enamoured with their own prowess in confronting life; and some who enjoy their own creativeness. The latter includes many geniuses in diverse fields who may well be reborn as those deities of the Buddhist tradition who "delight in their own creations" (*nimmānarati-deva*). Characteristic of this mentality is Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's preference for the search for truth over the attainment of it; or Napoleon's words that he loved power just as a musician loves his instrument: for the sake of the music he produces on it. Those who enjoy life for its own sake proudly aver that they are willing to pay the price for it in life's coinage of suffering and pain, defeat and frustration. Often, however, this is just an heroic pose that hides feelings of frustration and pride. But even when that avowal is honest and stands firm against pain and failure, it will finally break down when body and mind lose their strength, or when satiety and boredom set in.

It is one of the most subtle and effective ruses of the "will to live" to lure man on and on, dangling before him hope, novelty or the gratification of pride. The allurement of "far horizons," the search for the unknown, has tempted many imaginative and adventurous minds; and those of an heroic mould it has urged to meet the vicissitudes of life as a

challenge, appealing to their pride to rise above them. Only in the Arahat, the liberated one, will such detachment in face of adversity be genuine and unshakable. Only he can truly say of himself that he has risen above the vicissitudes of existence; that his "mind is unshaken by the eight worldly events" (Mahā-Maṅgala Sutta): gain and loss, repute and disrepute, praise and blame, joy and woe. Being free from all three cravings, he is free of "both sides": the longing for life and the longing for death, the fear of life and the fear of death. He who has conquered craving has conquered all the worlds, the "here and the beyond." For craving is the triune Lord of all the Worlds, their creator, sustainer and destroyer; and he who is craving's conqueror is also the true world conqueror.

Conceit

4. He who entirely blots out conceit
as the flood demolishes a fragile bamboo bridge,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

Human conceit is here compared with a fragile bamboo bridge. In countries of the East, such bridges often consist of just two or three bamboo poles, sometimes with a railing of the same material. On such bridges one has to be quite sure of one's balance in order to safely cross a roaring mountain

brook or a deep gorge. Human pride is just as fragile and shaky. It may easily be upset by a whiff of public opinion, hurt by any fool's snide remark, hurled down deep by defeat, failure or misfortune.

Conceit has its roots in ego-belief, which may be either intellectually articulated or habitually and tacitly assumed. In return, conceit gives a very powerful support to ego-belief. It does not tolerate any doubt or challenge of what it prides itself on so much: the existence and the supreme value of that precious self. Any attempt to question its existence and its worth is regarded with as much violent resentment as a powerful ruler would exhibit if he were to be subjected to a body search at the border of his country.

The noun *conceit* derives from the verb *conceiving*. **[11]** It is, indeed, a conceited conception to conceive oneself superior to others. But also to conceive oneself equal to another ("I am as good as you"), or as inferior (which often comes from frustrated pride)—these, too, are rooted in conceit, in an egocentric evaluation of oneself in relation to others. All three are modes of conceit: the superiority complex, the equality claim, and the inferiority complex. This urge to compare oneself with others springs from an inner insecurity that deep within knows and fears the shakiness of the delusive ego image.

This triple conceit entirely vanishes only when even the most subtle ego reference disappears. This comes only with Arahatship, when the last vestige of the fetter of conceit

(*māna-saṃyojana*) has been eliminated. The Arahat no longer needs the shaky bridge of ego conceit as he has given up "both sides," the discrimination of self and others, and has transcended both the here and the beyond of worldly existence.

The Search For Stability

5. He who does not find core or substance
in any of the realms of being,
like flowers that are vainly sought
in fig-trees that bear none,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

Like ignorant people who want to pick flowers where none can be expected, since time immemorial men have sought in vain for an abiding core and substance within themselves and in the world they inhabit. Or they have hoped to find it beyond their own world, in celestial realms and in their gods. Man is driven to that unceasing but futile quest for something immortal by his longing for a state of security, living as he does in an entirely insecure world which he constantly sees crumbling around him and below his own feet. Not that the vast majority of men would care for the boredom of living forever in the immobility which any stable and secure condition implies. But they long for it as a

temporary refuge to which they can resort, as children resort to the soothing arms of their mother after becoming sore and tired by their wild and reckless play.

Behind that longing for security, be it temporary or constant, there looms a still stronger driving force: the fear of death, the desire for self-preservation. This holds true for the coarsest as well as the subtlest form of that search for permanency, be it a wish for the perpetuation of sense enjoyment in a sensuous heaven, or the expression of a "metaphysical need," or the deep yearning for a *unio mystica.* This quest for permanency and security may also manifest itself as an urge for absolute power or for absolute self-surrender, for absolute knowledge or for absolute faith.

Since man's early days, as soon as he first started to reflect upon his life situation, he turned his glance everywhere in search of something stable in a world of instability. He looked for it in the personified forces of nature, in stellar bodies, in the four great elements of matter, believing one or another to be the ultimate matrix of life. But chiefly he sought it in those changing forms and symbols of the divine which he had created in the image of his own longings, within the scope of his own understanding, and for the furtherance of his own purposes, noble or low.

Firm belief in an Absolute, whether a god or a state, has appeared to man to be so absolutely necessary that he has used all subtleties of his intellect and all autosuggestive devices to persuade himself to accept this or that form of

religious or political faith. He has also used every possible means, fair and foul, either to coax or to coerce others to recognise and worship his religious or political idols. Often not much coercion was needed, as there were always those who were only too glad to sacrifice their intellect and surrender their freedom at the altars of those idols, to win in return a feeling of security and doubt-free certainty.

Men have too easily believed, and made others believe, that when there is a word there must also be a "real thing" corresponding to it: hence an abiding core, an eternal substance, within or behind this transient world. It was the Buddha who urged men to desist from their vain search for the non-existent and see reality as it is:

> Entirely coreless is the world.
>
> Sn v. 937

He, the Awake, cleared the way to the open, leaving behind the towering edifices of ideologies and the debris in which they inevitably end. Showing up in their hollowness the claims of diverse Absolutes, he pointed out that only the hard way of critical examination, our precarious and limited freedom of choice, and the road of morally responsible thought and action can lead us to freedom from suffering. And only a world that is entirely changeable can give us hope for final liberation. Anything permanent found in the world would necessarily bind us to it forever, making liberation impossible.

But one who is instructed by the Buddha, "the Knower of

the Worlds," will not find any core of permanency in any form of existence high or low, nor a core of lasting happiness or of an abiding personality. Such a one will not cling to the *here* nor yearn for a *beyond*; he will remain unattached to *either side.* Seeing world and self as void of an abiding core, he wins the unclouded vision of reality and, finally, Nibbāna's peace.

Grudge

6. He who bears no grudges in his heart,
transcending all this "thus" and "otherwise,"
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

Grudge is felt towards people by whom one has been wronged or offended, or towards those who act against one's interests, even if in fair competition. Grudge may also have an impersonal character, as a resentful bitterness about one's life, if one feels that one has been treated unfairly in life by too long a chain of misfortunes. Such grudge and resentment may show up outwardly as angry words and deeds, or may rankle deep in the heart as a gnawing bitterness spreading a dark mood over all that one feels, thinks and speaks. With some temperaments it can foster vengeful and aggressive behaviour, with others an ever dissatisfied or melancholic and pessimistic mood. Habitual

grudge and resentment can drain much joy from one's life. When growing into enmity, a deep personal grudge—just as strong attachment—may persist and grow from rebirth to rebirth, from the here to the beyond, repeatedly bringing dire misery to those linked in such an unhappy relationship. Also the impersonal grudge one bears against one's unhappy experiences may well reappear in a young child as an innate mood of resentment and discontent. All these are certainly more than sufficiently harmful consequences for spurring us on to banish grudge from our hearts as soon as it arises.

Personal grudge arises from an unwise reaction to conflicts in human relationships. It is avoided and abandoned by forgiveness, forbearance, and understanding of the fact that people are heirs of their kamma.

Impersonal grudge is caused by an unwise reaction to the unavoidable vicissitudes of life—the "thus" and "otherwise" of our text. It is prevented and abandoned by understanding and accepting the impermanent nature of existence, and again by an understanding of kamma.

Fertile soil for the arising of a deep-seated grudge is political fanaticism, and national, racial, religious and class prejudices. Such grudges can have a personal or impersonal character, or both. For the elimination of this type of grudge the aid of both intellectual and ethical faculties is required: impartial examination of facts, together with tolerance and a feeling for the common human nature shared with others in

spite of differences.

Grudge—like all other forms and degrees of aversion—is entirely discarded, like the snake's worn-out skin, at the stage of the non-returner. Then it loses forever its power to germinate in lives beyond—though even at the earlier stages of the stream-enterer and the once-returner, it will have been greatly weakened. There is what may be called a "higher" form of grudge, appearing as "righteous indignation" and a resentful or even hostile attitude towards evil and evil-doers. But even this "*higher*" form of grudge, as well as its very common *lower* form, will be transcended in a mind that has grown mature in compassion and understanding.

Evil Thoughts

7. He who has burned out his evil thoughts,
entirely cut them off within his heart,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

Our verse speaks only of "thoughts" (*vitakka*), without further qualification; but there is no doubt that only undesirable, unwholesome and evil thoughts are meant. Skilful and noble thoughts, particularly those aiming at liberation, should not be "burned out" from the heart. The commentary to our verse speaks of the threefold wrong

thoughts of sensuality, ill will and cruelty, as opposed to the threefold right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*) of the Noble Eightfold Path. The commentary further mentions thoughts of gain, position and fame; concern for personal immortality; excessive attachment to home and country, to one's family or to other persons. These latter types of thought apply chiefly to monks, since, according to Buddhist lay ethics, concern for home and family, and even a moderate concern for gain and position, are not discouraged when they contribute toward the fulfilment of a layman's duties. Yet all these attachments are fetters binding us to the here and the beyond, and one day they have to be discarded if the heart's freedom is to be won.

But the root thoughts of everything harmful and evil are those of greed, hatred and delusion, which are expressly mentioned in the "Discourse on the Quelling of Thoughts" (Vitakka-Saṇṭhāna Sutta). **[12]**

In that discourse, the Buddha sets forth five methods of removing such harmful thoughts from one's mind, given in a graded sequence from subtler methods of removal to increasingly coarser approaches.

The first method is that of immediately replacing undesirable, evil thoughts by their desirable and beneficial opposites: greedy thoughts should be superceded by thoughts of renunciation and selflessness; hate by thoughts of friendliness, love and compassion; delusion and confusion by wise comprehension and clarity of thought.

The discourse gives here the simile of driving out a coarse peg with a fine one, as carpenters do. This method will work best when there is a strong natural tendency to turn away quickly from any inner defilement or outer temptation, and to replace these thoughts immediately by their antidote. When this spontaneity of moral reaction is weak or absent, this method of replacement may still be workable, if one has a fair degree of mind control, aided by alert mindfulness and firm determination. These latter qualities, however, can be gradually acquired or strengthened by mental training, until they ripen into spontaneous advertence to the good.

The second method makes use of the mental impact of strong *repugnance* against evil, by impressing on the mind the ugliness, depravity, danger and unworthiness of evil thoughts. This may serve as a transition to, or preparation for, the first method. The simile in the discourse is here that of a carcass thrown over the neck of a handsome young man or woman who will then feel "horrified, humiliated and disgusted" by it and will do the utmost to discard it.

Third, when these methods fail and undesirable thoughts still perturb the mind, one should deny them attention. One should not think about them or dwell on them in any way, but divert one's attention to any other thoughts or activity suitable to bind one's interest. This is the method of *diverting* the mind by non-attention. Here the simile is that of closing one's eyes before a disagreeable sight or turning the glance in another direction. This approach, too, can

prepare the mind for the application of the first method.

The fourth method is to go back to the thought-source from which those undesirable thoughts started and to remove them from one's mind. This might be easier than to cope directly with the resulting undesirable thought. Such tracing back to the cause will also help to divert the mind and thus reduce the strength of the undesirable thoughts. In view of the latter fact, the simile in the discourse speaks of reducing coarser movements of the body by calmer ones: a man who is running asks himself, "Why should I run?", and he now goes slowly. He then continues the process of calming, by successively standing still, sitting and lying down. The commentary explains this method as referring to a tracing *of the cause*, or of the starting point of the undesirable thoughts. **[13]** The simile, however, seems to admit an interpretation of this method as one of *sublimation* or gradual refinement.

The fifth and last method is vigorous suppression, the last resort when undesirable thoughts, e.g., extremely passionate ones, threaten to become unmanageable. This method, likened to a strong man pressing or forcing down a weaker person, shows the realistic and undogmatic approach of the Buddha, which does not exclude a method of suppression where the situation demands it, lest a serious worsening of that situation or a deterioration of one's character may occur.

By applying these methods, says the discourse, one may

become a "master of the paths taken by one's thought processes. The thought he then wants to think, that he will think; and the thought he does not want to think, that he will not think. Thus, having cut down craving, removed the fetter (binding to existence), and fully mastered pride, he has made an end to suffering."

Hence the perfect mastery of defiled thoughts—their entire burning out, as our verse calls it—is identical with perfect holiness (*arahatta*), in which all the here and beyond has been transcended.

Transcending Diffuseness

8. He who neither goes too far nor lags behind,
entirely transcending the diffuseness of the world,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

The first line of this stanza recurs five more times in the following verses 9–13. This sixfold repetition indicates the importance given to these few words by the creator of this poem, the Buddha, who "sees the deep meaning" (*nipuṇatthadassī*, Suttanipāta, v. 377) and "clads it in beautiful speech" (*vaggu-vādo*, v. 955).

The first two lines of the stanza, if viewed closely, are variations of the last two lines which speak of the

transcending of "both sides"—taking the meaning of the Pali words *ora-pāraṃ* in their wider sense as explained above.

The range of meaning of these first few words is as wide as the "world entire," the world of diffuseness or plurality (*papañca*). In this context, it is significant that the Pali word *papañca* has also the connotation of "lagging behind" or "procrastination." **[14]** Its over-active partner within that pair, providing the extreme of excessive movement, is craving, which tends to go far beyond what the retarding force of objectified saṃsāra, or *papañca*, will allow. Craving produces again and again the disillusioning experience of its own futility; and yet again and again it seeks "ever-new enjoyment, now here, now there" (*tatra tatr'ābhinandinī*). The failure to which craving is necessarily doomed is caused not only by its own inherent illusions, but also, on the objective side, by the unfathomable diffuseness of the world—that intricate saṃsāric net of interactions in which the frantic flutterings of craving are invariably caught, be it here or in a beyond, now or later.

The very same ideas as those of our verse are conveyed in the first text of the Saṃyutta Nikāya (Kindred Sayings). There we read:

> "How, Lord, did you cross the flood (of *saṃsāra*)?"
>
> "Without tarrying, **[15]** friend, and without struggling did I cross the flood."
>
> "But how could you do so, O Lord?"

> "When tarrying, friend, I sank, and when struggling I was swept away. So, friend, it is by not tarrying and not struggling that I have crossed the flood." **[16]**

What in our verse is called "going too far" is here spoken of as "struggling," **[17]** which has the attendant danger of being "swept away" all over the wide expanse of the saṃsāric flood. The "lagging behind" is here expressed by "tarrying," which leads to "sinking" or declining—possibly to the lowest depth.

There is a similar metaphor in the verses 938–939 of the Suttanipāta:

> I saw what is so hard to see,
> the dart embedded in the heart—
> the dart by which afflicted we
> in all directions hurry on.
> If once this dart has been removed,
> one will not hurry, will not sink.

These two extremes—going too far (struggling) and lagging behind (tarrying)—point also to basic tendencies of life and mind, manifesting themselves in various ways: as motory impulses and inertia; the phases of "opening," developing, evolving, and of "closing," shrinking, receding; **[18]** dispersal and contraction; dilution and hardening; distraction and concentration; hypertension and laxity; the flights of imagination and the confinement by habit and

routine; the will to conquer and the desire for self-preservation; the wish for independence and for security ("freedom and bread"); an imperturbable will to believe, and unappeasable scepticism, and so on.

The sets of paired terms given in the canonical texts considered here, that is:

> Going too far—lagging behind (Suttanipāta)
> Struggling—tarrying (Saṃyutta Nikāya)
> Being swept away—sinking (Saṃyutta Nikāya),

have been explained by the Buddhist commentators by corresponding dual concepts taken from the terminology of the Dhamma. A selection of these explanations follows. Where it serves greater clarity, the separate commentarial statements on the two texts have been combined, paraphrased and amplified by additional comments.

By *clinging* to the defiling passions, tarrying and seeking a hold in them, beings will sink into a low and unhappy existence in the course of future rebirths; and in this life, their moral and mental standard will sink and deteriorate; or at least they will "lag behind," stagnate, in whatever higher aims they have in their life.

Struggling for life's varied aims, for what is really a mere accumulation of kammic bondage, beings are liable to "go too far" by aiming at unattainable goals; be it the gratification of insatiable desires, the pursuit of insatiable ambitions, or the fulfilment of unrealizable ideals. In that

vain effort, beings are swept away, carried along in all directions of the saṃsāric ocean.

Driven by *craving for continued existence*, longing after the bliss of a theistic heaven or for any other form of a happy rebirth, one "goes too far" by following one's wishful thinking or one's desire for self-perpetuation; and when turning to self-mortification of body or mind to achieve these aims, one likewise goes to excess. When adopting a materialist creed, *the view of annihilationism*, one struggles for an earthly paradise, fights fanatically against any religious teaching, and may even go so far as to deny dogmatically all moral and spiritual values.

In performing *evil actions* one lags behind, falls short of the basic human postulates; and deteriorating, one will finally sink and be submerged by the saṃsāric floods. In struggling for the performance of *worldly good actions*, with all their inherent limitations and attachments, illusions and frustrations, one will be carried away endlessly into the ever-receding horizon of the unattainable.

In *yearning after the past*, one strays too far from the present and even struggles to bring back the past, as for instance, when one tries to "appear young," or, in a more serious way, to impose one's romantic notions of the past upon the present. By doing so, one is carried far away from a realistic grasp of the present. In *hoping for the future*, for a heavenly beyond, a golden or messianic age to come, or even merely for "better luck tomorrow," one neglects present effort, lags

behind in meeting the demands of present situations, and sinks into a multitude of fears, hopes and vain worries.

Given to lassitude, one will lag behind, fall short in one's achievements, and be submerged in sloth and torpor. In the *excitement and restlessness* of struggling, one will be inclined to go too far and be carried away to extremes. **[19]**

But he who, avoiding all these extremes, walks the middle path and harmonises the five spiritual faculties, (the balancing of faith with wisdom, and energy with calm, while mindfulness watches over this process of harmonising)—he is one "who neither goes too far nor lags behind."

* * *

After these specific illustrations, a few general observations may be made on what may be called the structural or functional nature of these pairs of opposites.

"Going too far" is the extreme development of one single aspect of many-sided actuality. But the desire for dominance and ever-continued expansion on the part of that one single aspect has also an activating effect on its counterpart. In the neglected or suppressed function, it will rouse the will to self-preservation and assertion. But apart from such opposition, any unrestrained one-sided expansion will finally weaken that "extremist" factor itself. When "going too far abroad," the distance from its original source of strength will grow, and there will be a loss of concentrated energy. The initial recklessly self-assertive

factor that set out on a journey of conquest in order to impose itself on the world, will gradually be thinned out and diluted in the process. Through those thousand things which it absorbs in its conquering career, it will imperceptibly become alienated from its original nature; and those thousand influences, wrongly believed to have been mastered in the "struggle," will carry their former master still further away into unrecognised and perilous self-alienation. This is a case of "the eater being devoured by what he eats." All these characteristics of "going too far" hold good for external activities (political, social, etc.) as well as for the interplay of the inner forces of the mind.

In "lagging behind," there is a preponderance of heaviness or inertia, a lack of self-impelling force, of powerful, springy tension, and even an aversion against it. As far as there is movement in that tarrying tendency, it is of a recoiling, centripetal nature. It is the cramped or contracted mind (*saṅkhitta-citta*) spoken of in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This centripetal and recoiling tendency is characteristic of an extremely introverted type of mind. Though an introvert type sometimes "goes too far" in certain psychological and ideological attitudes, generally it is shy and timid, or resentful and contemptuous. Recoil from too close a social contact places him on the side of "lagging behind." An extreme introvert type tries to resist even those slight shiftings of its inner centre of gravity called for by the human or psychological environment.

All manifestations of "lagging behind" show a lack of

reciprocity and of exchange with the outside world. We may even call it "weak mental metabolism," since mental activity is also a process of nutrition. While the opposite tendency towards excessive expansion may run the risk of being invaded by an excess of "foreign bodies," there is here a deficiency of them; and this will make for poor adaptability and lack of stimulation for new developments. This may finally lead to such a degree of isolation and inbreeding that here, too, the neglected counterpart will rise in self-defence. If its counter-move succeeds, it may produce a harmonious balance of character, unless it starts on a one-sided development of its own. But if such a corrective is absent or remains unsuccessful, that particular life-process, by seriously "lagging behind," will "sink," that is, deteriorate, and may reach a point of complete stagnation.

Thus the strands of life's texture meet crosswise in their upward and downward path. In that way they weave the intricate net of the world's diffuseness (*papañca*), to which the interplay of these paired opposites adds uncountable meshes.

It is through balanced view and balanced effort that one can transcend all these extremes. If one has thus found the harmonising centre in one's life and thought—the Noble Eightfold Path, the *Middle Way*—then the outer manifestations of the inner opposites and conflicts will also fall away, like the worn-out skin of the snake, never to be renewed again. Then there will be rebirth no more, neither in the lower nor in the higher realms, neither here nor

beyond: both sides have been left behind. For the Liberated One, world migration, world creation, have utterly ceased.

Knowing the World

9. He who neither goes too far nor lags behind and knows about the world: "This is all unreal,"

10. greedless he knows: "This is all unreal,"

11. lust-free he knows: "This is all unreal,"

12. hate-free he knows: "This is all unreal,"

13. delusion-free he knows: "This is all unreal,"
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond, just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

The world is unreal in the sense of presenting a deceptive appearance, being quite different in actuality from the way it appears to a greedy, lustful, hating and ignorant mind. The Pali word vitatha, here rendered by "unreal," has both in Pali and Sanskrit the meaning of "untrue" or "false." These verses, however, are not meant to convey the idea that the world is mere illusion, a play of the imagination. What underlies its deceptive appearance, the flux of mental and physical processes, is real enough in the sense that it is effect-producing. The unreality lies in what we attribute to the world, and not in the world itself.

What, now, is this "world" (*loka*) and this "all" (*sabba*), which should be seen as unreal, in the sense of being deceptive? When the Enlightened One was questioned about these two words, he gave the same answer for both:

> 1. "One speaks of 'the world,' Lord. In how far is there a world or the designation 'world'?"
>
> "When there is the eye and visible forms, visual consciousness and things cognizable by visual consciousness; when there is the ear and sounds … ; nose and smells … ; tongue and flavours … ; body and tangibles … ; mind and ideas, mind-consciousness and things cognizable by mind-consciousness—then there is a world and the designation 'world'."
>
> SN 35:68
>
> 2. " 'All' will I show you, O monks. And what is 'all'? The eye and visible forms, ear and sounds, nose and smells, tongue and flavours, body and tangibles, mind and ideas—this, O monks, is what is called 'all'."
>
> SN 35:22

This twelvefold world process is kept going by craving for the six objects and by attachment to the six sense faculties deemed to belong to a "self." Craving itself is kindled by the discrimination between "likes and dislikes," that is, choice and

rejection motivated by greed, hatred and delusion.

> What "like and dislike" commonly is called,
> induced by that, desire comes into being.
>
> Sn v. 867

It is this ego-centred discrimination of "like and dislike" that gives to the world its deceptive colouring—its semblance of reality, meaning and value—which is derived from those subjective emotions. But he who is neither carried away by the unreal nor recoils from the real—and thus neither goes too far nor lags behind—he is able to remove that deceptive colouring (*rāgaratta:* coloured by passion) and to gain dispassion (*virāga*). When the colouring fades away, the bare processes of body and mind will appear in their true nature as being void of a core of permanence, happiness and selfhood. In the sense of that triple voidness, too, this world is unreal.

> Look at the world as void,
> Mogharāja, ever mindful!
> Uprooting the view of self
> You may thus be one who overcomes death.
>
> Sn v. 1119

Through freedom from lust and greed (vv.10–11), there is the final fading away of the fictive reality bestowed by attraction.

Through freedom from hatred (v.12), there is the final fading away of the fictive reality bestowed by aversion and

aggression.

Through freedom from delusion (v.13), greed and hatred come to an end, and there is the final fading away of all vain hopes and fears concerning the world and of all delusive ideologies about it.

A text in the Itivuttaka (No. 49) of the Pali Canon speaks of the ideological extremes of eternity-belief and belief in annihilation, using figurative expressions similar to those of our Uraga Sutta:

> There are two kinds of view, O monks, and when deities and human beings are obsessed by them, some stick fast and others run too far; only those with eyes see.
>
> And how, O monks, do some stick fast? Deities and human beings for the most part love existence, delight in existence, rejoice in existence. When Dhamma is taught to them for the ceasing of existence, their minds do not take to it, do not accept it, and do not become firm and resolute (about that Dhamma). Thus it is that some stick fast (to their old attachments).
>
> And how do some run too far? Some feel ashamed, humiliated and disgusted by that same existence, and they welcome non-existence in this way: "Sirs, when with the breaking up of the body after death, this self is cut off, annihilated, does not become any more after death—that is peaceful, that is sublime, that is

true." Thus it is that some run too far.

And how do those with eyes see? Here a monk sees what has become as become, he has entered upon the way to dispassion for it, to the fading away of greed for it, to its cessation. This is how those with eyes see.

Dormant Tendencies

14. He who has no dormant tendencies whatever,
whose unwholesome roots have been expunged,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

"Dormant tendencies" (*anusaya*) are mental defilements which have become so strong that, from a state of latency, they easily become active in reaction to appropriate stimuli. These dormant tendencies are, as it were, the deepest strata of three levels on which defilements may exist.

At the first level, the most obvious and the coarsest, the defilements become manifest in unwholesome, evil deeds and words. This is called the level of moral transgression (*vītikkama-bhūmi*), which can be temporarily controlled by morality (*sīla*).

The second level is that of a purely mental involvement (*pariyuṭṭhāna-bhūmi*), namely, in defiled thoughts. It can be temporarily suppressed by jhāna, meditative absorption.

The third level is that of the dormant tendencies (*anusaya-bhūmi*). These are gradually eliminated by wisdom (*paññā*), arising in the four stages of final emancipation.

At the first stage of emancipation, stream-entry, the tendencies to false views and sceptical doubt are eliminated.

At the second stage, once-returning, the gross forms of the tendencies of sensual desire and ill will are eliminated.

At the third stage, non-returning, the residual tendencies of sensual desire and ill will are eliminated.

At the fourth stage, Arahatship, all remaining unwholesome tendencies have disappeared—those of conceit, desire for any new becoming, and ignorance.

Our clinging to habitual desires and their objects on the one hand, and our emotional rejections and aversions on the other—these are the main feeders of the hidden but powerful tendencies in our minds. The tendencies in turn strengthen our habitual reactions of grasping and repelling, making them almost automatic. Hence they become potent unwholesome roots of evil (*akusala-mūla*), by way of greed or hate, while the unthinking state of mind in which we so react is the third evil root, delusion.

It is mindfulness that can check the unrestricted growth of those unwholesome tendencies. At the beginning mindfulness may not be strong enough to prevent the arising of every instance and degree of mental defilement. But when these defilements in their manifestation are

confronted by awareness and resistance, they will no longer bring an increase in the strength of the dormant tendencies.

They are finally silenced, however, only by an Arahat, in whom all "unwholesome roots have been expunged." The Arahat has abandoned "both sides" of the tendencies, those of attraction and repulsion. Being freed of all fetters that bind to existence, he has given up the here and the beyond, the high and the low, of saṃsāra.

Anxiety and Attachment

15. States born of anxiety he harbours none
which may condition his return to earth …

16. States born of attachment he harbours none
which cause his bondage to existence,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

"Anxiety" (*daratha*) and "attachment" (*vanatha*), from which similar states of mind are born (*jā*), can be interpreted here as forms of dormant tendencies, as basic moods causing appropriate manifestation.

Anxiety appears as anguish, fear and worry, and as feelings of tension, oppression and depression caused by those emotions. Also inner conflict may be included here, especially as the Pali word *daratha* has the primary meaning

of “split.”

Hence the range of what we have called “anxiety” may extend to the dark moods resulting from:

cares and worries, which make the heart heavy;
anxieties proper: fears for oneself and for others, fear of death and fear of life;
the tension and agitation caused by inner conflict;
the feelings of insecurity, helplessness and loneliness;
the primordial (or metaphysical) anguish, rooted in those former three and in the fear of the unknown.

All these moods and feelings create a negative emotional background in the character, which may colour one’s human relationships and influence decisions of consequence. It may also throw a deep shadow over one’s attitude to life in general, and may lead to a shirking of reality, to a recoil from it. When anguish and worry continue to grow in the mind without finding relief, they may become a cause of the anxiety neurosis which is so widespread in times of emotional and social insecurity.

But anguish and anxiety are inherent in human life itself, and their presence in the human mind is not limited to times of particular stress and turbulence. How poignantly the weight of anguish was felt even in ancient India has found a moving expression in words that were once addressed to the Buddha:

The heart is always in a state of fear,
And is always full of anguish drear,
Concerning things that now have taken place
And things that shortly I shall have to face.
If there's a place that's free from ev'ry fear,
That fear-free place will thou to me make clear?

SN 2:17.
Tr. Soma Thera

Attachment, via "states born of attachment" (*vanathajā*), leads to entanglements in the thicket (*vanatha*) of life. These entanglements through attachment are of many kinds and they throw over man the widespread "catch-net" of craving (Sn v. 527). Apart from those that are openly seductive, others appear in an innocuous or respectable guise, or are rationalised in more or less convincing ways. Attachments can be pursued actively or enjoyed passively. Of the innumerable forms they may take, only a very few will be mentioned here.

There is the whole scale of five-sense enjoyment, with sex as its strongest; sex in all its varieties, coarse and refined, with all its trappings and subservient arts and enticements.

There is the enchantment of beauty, in nature and art, with man's creative or receptive response.

There is the insatiable craze to get and to grasp, the fierce determination to hold and hoard; thirst for power and domination, in the smallest circle and on a world-wide scale.

On the passive side, there is the felt need and the inner satisfaction to obey and submit; the gregarious instinct, and the wish to creep under the protective shelter of this or that personal or group relationship; the comfortable feeling of following habits and custom; hero worship and leader cult.

And there is also the mystic's loving surrender to his god, which, of course, can have an ennobling effect on the mind, and yet is an "intoxication of the soul," just like the attachment to the bliss of meditation (*jhāna-nikanti*) for its own sake.

"States born of attachment" are at the root of the entire life process, on all its levels. Hence their variety is inexhaustible. Some may show man at his lowest and others at his most refined level. There are attachments that can inspire man to noble virtues, such as loyalty or self-sacrificing love, and to sublime creativity in many fields. But even the most lofty heights reached by refined attachment are no safeguard against a plunge into the lowest depths if one unwarily entrusts oneself to the dangerous gradient of attachment. Therefore, the wise will strive to detach themselves from the high as well as the low, from the *here* of earthly attachments and from the *beyond* of their "divine" and subtle forms. The Master said: "Do you see, my disciples, any fetter, coarse or fine, which I have *not* asked you to discard?"

Anxiety (fear) and attachment (craving) produce each other, but they also set limits to each other. "Craving breeds anxiety; craving breeds fear," says the Dhammapada. And

fear and anxiety on their part give rise to an intensified attachment to what is threatened and to a craving for the means to attain security. On the other hand, greed may sometimes be restrained by fear, both in individuals and in nations. But greed may also put shackles on fear: thus, disregarding fear's warnings, a person may set out on a perilous course to satisfy his desires.

Anxiety and attachment—these two well up from an unfathomable past, and again and again become, as our text says, conditions for renewed existence, here and beyond. For "anxiety," our text specifies a rebirth *here* (*oraṃ*), in this human existence. Anxiety, in all the aspects we have mentioned, is so deeply embedded in the human situation that it may sometimes "drag to rebirth" as strongly as craving does. To illustrate that typical human mood of anguish, we have quoted earlier a voice from the Buddha's own days. Closer to our days, it was that great and radical Christian, Soren Kierkegaard, who held that the human predicament demanded from those who seriously desired salvation, an "anxious concern" and even "despair." The Buddha, however, as a teacher of the Middle Way, advocated neither a mood of despair nor of facile appeasement. In his earnest disciples he instilled a "sense of urgency" (*saṃvega*), like that of one "whose turban is on fire." And on the side of "attachment," he urged his disciples to show "keen desire" (*tibba-chanda*) for the task of liberation.

The Arahat, however, has transcended "both sides" even in

their beneficial aspects. He is free from "anxious concern" (*asoko*) and free from any clinging (*anupādāno*).

The Five Hindrances

17. He who has the five hindrances discarded,
doubt-free and serene, and free of inner barbs,
—such a monk gives up the here and the beyond,
just as a serpent sheds its worn-out skin.

When, in the Arahat, all defiling tendencies have been silenced and become non-existent, they can no longer provide a soil for the growth of the five hindrances, which in jhāna and in the worldling's insight are only temporarily suppressed. The pair of opposites in the moral sphere, sense-desire and ill will, can no longer impede, and these painful "inner barbs" can no longer irritate. The extremes in temperament, sloth and agitation, cannot arise and disturb the serenity of one who has reached the perfect equipoise of the faculties of energy and calm; nor can there be any doubtful wavering in one of perfect wisdom.

It is for these reasons that, in this last verse of our text, the Arahat is portrayed as being "doubt-free and serene, and free of inner barbs."

The five hindrances illustrate once more some of the strands that keep the skin—be it fresh or partly worn-out—attached

to the body. Unhindered by them and free from all that has been "worn out," the Liberated One serenely goes his way into the Trackless—Nibbāna.

Notes

1. These are the "five aggregates" (*pañcakkhandhā*) into which the Buddha analyses the individual personality.
2. In this method of meditation, mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and explained at length in the *Visuddhimagga* (Chap. VIII), the body is contemplated by way of its constituent parts, such as skin, muscles, sinews, bones, the internal organs, secretions and excretions.
3. See *Visuddhimagga*, XXI, 43; Discourse on the Characteristic of Not-self and The Fire Sermon (in *Three Cardinal Discourses of the Buddha*, trans. by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli; **Wheel No. 17**); Majjhima Nikāya 83.
4. See "Hate as Unwholesome Root" by Irene Quittner, Bodhi Leaves No. A 16.
5. The words *he can curb* in verse 1 are a rendering of the Pali word *vineti,* which, among other connotations, may have the two nuances of "restraining" and "removing."

6. See The *Removal of Distracting Thoughts*, trans. by Soma Thera (**Wheel No. 21**).

7. Buddhist cosmology recognises three spheres of existence—the sense sphere, the fine-material sphere and the immaterial sphere. Human existence belongs to the sense sphere. Non-returners, after death, are reborn in the fine-material sphere and attain liberation there.

8. Aṅguttara Nikāya, 3:68; see comment, p.131ff.

9. See below, "The Four Nutriments of Life."

10. On these necrophilic, "death-loving" tendencies, see Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 37ff.

11. Quite similarly, in the Pali language, *māna* (conceit) and *maññati* (conceiving).

12. Majjhima Nikāya 20. See note 6 above.

13. In the discourse, the relevant Pali term is *vitakka-saṅkhāra-saṇṭhāna*, and the commentary explains here *saṅkhāra* by condition (*paccaya*), cause (*kāraṇa*), and root or source (*mūla*). This phrase, however, could also be rendered by "stilling the thought formations (or processes)."

14. Another important connotation of the term *papañca*, i.e., "conceptual proliferation," has been emphasised and ably explained by Bhikkhu Ñāṇananda in his book *Concept and Reality* (BPS, 1971), which mainly deals with

that term. But we feel that this meaning chiefly applies to a psychological context and not, as the author thinks (ibid., p.26), also to our present text where the range of reference is wider than the topic of delusive concepts. The first line of the verse, for instance, refers to extremes of conduct and not only to those of conceptual thought. The concluding two lines, too, point to a wider significance.

15. *Appatiṭṭhaṃ*, "without standing still" or "without seeking a hold."

16. See the translation of this text with notes by Bhikkhu Ñāṇananda in *Saṃyutta Nikāya Anthology, Part II* (**Wheel No. 183/185**).

17. The Pali word *āyūhana* also means "accumulation" of rebirth-producing actions (*kamma*), and thereby, of new lives.

18. Here one may think too of the cosmic periods of evolving and shrinking (*vivaṭṭa-saṃvaṭṭa*) within one world-cycle (*kappa*).

19. This relates our paired terms to two of the five hindrances (nīvaraṇa). See verse 17 and commentary

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