

From *In the Buddha's Words* by Bhikkhu Bodhi

Ch. I – 4: Without Discoverable Beginnings

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Chatta Sangayana Edition

**1. Introduction (to Selected Discourses in Ch I – 4).
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The Buddha's teaching addresses a fourth aspect of the human condition which, unlike the three we have so far examined, is not immediately perceptible to us. This is our bondage to the round of rebirths. From the selection of texts included in the final section in this chapter, we see that the Buddha teaches our individual lifespan to be merely a single phase within a series of rebirths that has been proceeding without any discernible beginning in time. This series of rebirths is called *samsāra*, a Pali word which suggests the idea of directionless wandering. No matter how far back in time we may seek a beginning to the universe, we never find an initial moment of creation. No matter how far back we may trace any given individual sequence of lives, we can never arrive at a first point. According to Texts 1,4(1) and 1,4(2), even if we were to trace the sequence of our mothers and fathers across world systems, we would only come upon still more mothers and fathers stretching back into the far horizons.

Moreover, the process is not only beginningless but is also potentially endless. As long as ignorance and craving remain intact, the process will continue indefinitely into the future with no end in sight. For the Buddha and Early Buddhism, this is above all the defining crisis at the heart of the human condition: we are bound to a chain of rebirths, and bound to it by nothing other than our own ignorance and craving. The pointless wandering on in *samsara* occurs against a cosmic background of inconceivably vast dimensions. The period of time that it takes for a world system to evolve, reach its phase of maximum expansion, contract, and then disintegrate is called a *kappa* (Skt: *kalpa*), ; an eon. Text 1,4(3) offers a vivid simile to suggest the eon's duration; Text 1,4(4), another vivid simile to illustrate the incalculable number of the eons through which we have wandered.

As beings wander and roam from life to life, shrouded in darkness, they fall again and again into the chasm of birth, aging, sickness, and death. But because their craving propels them forward in a relentless quest for gratification, they seldom pause long enough to step back and attend carefully to their existential plight. As Text 1,4(5) states, they just keep revolving around the "five aggregates" in the way a dog on a leash might run around a post or pillar. Since their ignorance prevents them from recognizing the vicious nature of their condition, they cannot discern even the tracks of a path to deliverance. Most beings live immersed in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. Others, driven by the need for power, status, and esteem, pass their lives in vain attempts to fill an unquenchable thirst. Many, fearful of annihilation at death, construct belief systems that ascribe to their individual selves, their souls, the prospect of eternal life. A few yearn for a path to liberation but do not know where to find one. It was precisely to offer such a path that the Buddha has appeared in our midst.

2. Without Discoverable Beginnings

Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi

(1) *Grass and Sticks*

The Blessed One said this: “Monks, this saṃsāra is without discoverable beginning.¹ A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving. Suppose, monks, a man would cut up whatever grass, sticks, branches, and foliage there are in this Jambudipa² and collect them together into a single heap. Having done so, he would put them down, saying for each one: ‘This is my mother, this my mother’s mother.’ The sequence of that man’s mothers and grandmothers would not come to an end, yet the grass, sticks, branches, and foliage in this Jambudipa would be used up and exhausted. For what reason? Because, monks, this saṃsāra is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving. For such a long time, monks, you have experienced suffering, anguish, and disaster, and swelled the cemetery. It is enough to become disenchanted with all formations, enough to become dispassionate toward them, enough to be liberated from them.”

(SN 15:1; II 178)

(2) *Balls of Clay*

Monks, this saṃsāra is without discoverable beginning. A first point not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving. Suppose, monks, a man would reduce this great earth to balls of clay the size of jujube kernels and put them down, saying [for each one]: ‘This is my father, this my father’s father.’ The sequence of that man’s fathers and grandfathers would not come to an end, yet this great earth would be used up and exhausted. For what reason? Because, monks, this saṃsāra is without discoverable beginning. A first point is not discerned of beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving. For such a long time, monks, you have experienced suffering, anguish, and disaster, and swelled the cemetery. It is enough to become disenchanted with all formations, enough to become dispassionate toward them, enough to be liberated from them.”

(SN 15:2; II 179)

(3) *The Mountain*

A certain monk approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to him: “Venerable sir, how long is an eon?”³

“An eon is long, monk. It is not easy to count it and say it is so many years, or so many hundreds of years, or so many thousands of years, or so many hundreds of thousands of years.”

“Then is it possible to give a simile, venerable sir?”

“It is possible, monk,” the Blessed One said. “Suppose, monk, there was a great stone mountain a *yojana* long, a *yojana* wide, and a *yojana* high, without holes or crevices, one solid mass of rock.⁴ At the end of every hundred years

1. *Anamattago yam bhikkave saṃsāra*. The original meaning of *anamatagga* is uncertain. Spk glosses it as “having an unfindable beginning,” explaining: “Even if it could be pursued by knowledge for a hundred or a thousand years, it would be with unfindable beginning, with unknown beginning. It wouldn’t be possible to know its beginning from here or from there; the meaning is that it is without a delimiting first or last point. *Saṃsāra* is the uninterruptedly occurring successio of the aggregates.”

2. *Jambudipa* “The rose-apple land”. The Indian subcontinent.

3. *Kappa*. Apparently a *mahākappa*, a “great eon”, is intended, the length of time it takes for a 2world system to arise, develop, and perish. Each *mahākappa* consists of four *asankheyyakappas*, individual periods of expansion, stabilization, contraction and dissolution. For a discussion of early Buddhist cosmology see Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, pp. 112-15.

4. A *yojana* is approximately seven miles.

a man would stroke it once with a piece of fine cloth. That great stone mountain might by this effort be worn away and eliminated but the eon would still not have come to an end. So long is an eon, monk. And of eons of such length, we have wandered through so many eons, so many hundreds of eons, so many thousands of eons, so many hundreds of thousands of eons. For what reason? Because, monk, this samsara is without discoverable beginning.... It is enough to be liberated from them."

(SN 15:5; II 181-82)

(4) The River Ganges

At Rajagaha, in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrel Sanctuary, a certain brahmin approached the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When they had concluded their greetings and cordial talk, he sat down to one side and asked him: "Master Gotama, how many eons have elapsed and gone by?"

"Brahmin, many eons have elapsed and gone by. It is not easy to count them and say they are so many eons, or so many hundreds of eons, or so many thousands of eons, or so many hundreds of thousands of eons."

"But is it possible to give a simile, Master Gotama?"

"It is possible, brahmin," the Blessed One said. "Imagine, brahmin, the grains of sand between the point where the river Ganges originates and the point where it enters the great ocean: it is not easy to count these and say there are so many grains of sand, or so many hundreds of grains, or so many thousands of grains, or so many hundreds of thousands of grains. Brahmin, the eons that have elapsed and gone by are even more numerous than that. It is not easy to count them and that they are so many eons, or so many hundreds of eons, or so thousands of eons, or so many hundreds of thousands of eons. For what reason? Because, brahmin, this samsara is without discoverable beginning.... It is enough to be liberated from them."

(SN 15:8; II 183-84)

(5) Dog on a Leash

"Monks, this samsara is without discoverable beginning. A first point discerned of beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving.

"There comes a time, monks, when the great ocean dries up and evaporates and no longer exists, but still, I say, there is no making an end of suffering for those beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving.

"There comes a time, monks, when Sineru, the king of mountains, burns up and perishes and no longer exists, but still, I say, there is no making an end of suffering for those beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving.

"There comes a time, monks, when the great earth burns up and perishes and no longer exists, but still, I say, there is no making an end of suffering for those beings roaming and wandering on hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving.

"Suppose monks, a dog tied up on a leash was bound to a strong post or pillar it would just keep on running and revolving around that post or pillar. So too, the uninstructed worldling regards form as self ... feeling as self ... perception as self ... volitional formations as self ... consciousness as self.... He just keeps running and revolving around form, around feeling, around perception, around volitional formations, around consciousness. As he keeps on running and revolving around them, he is not freed from form, not freed from feeling, not freed from perception, not freed from volitional formations, not freed from consciousness. He is not freed from birth, aging, and death; not freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and despair; not freed from suffering, I say."

(SN 22:99; II 149-50)

3. Pali Text Society Translation

From : *The Book of Kindred Sayings, Vol II*

Translated by Mrs. Rhys Davids, Assisted by F. L. Woodward

(1). *Grass and brushwood*

THUS have I heard:— The Exalted One was once staying at Savatthi in Jeta Grove, the Anāthapiṇḍaka's Park.

Now there the Exalted One addressed the brethren: Brethren! Lord! (*Bhadante*) they made response. The Exalted One said this:—

Incalculable is the beginning,⁵ brethren, of this faring on. (*Sam̐sāro*). The earliest point⁶ is not revealed of the running on, the faring on, of beings cloaked in ignorance, tied to craving.

If a man, brethren, were to prune out the grasses, sticks, boughs and twigs in this India and collecting them together, should make a pile laying them in a stack of squares⁷ saying for each: 'This is my mother; this is my mother's mother.' Brethren, the grasses, sticks, boughs, twigs in this India would be used up, ended or ever the mothers of that man's mother were come to an end.'

Why is that? Incalculable is the beginning, brethren, of this faring on. The earliest point is not revealed of the faring on, running on, of beings cloaked in ignorance, tied to craving.

Thus many a day, brethren, have ye been suffering ill, have ye been suffering pain (*tibbam̐*), have ye been suffering disaster, have the charnel-fields been growing. Thus far enough is there, brethren, for you to be repelled by all the things of this world,⁸ enough to lose all passion for them, enough to be delivered therefrom.

(2) *Balls of Clay (Earth)*

At Sāvattthī:—

Incalculable is the beginning, brethren, of this faring on. The earliest point is not revealed of the faring on, running on, of beings cloaked by ignorance, tied by craving.

If a man, brethren, were to make this great earth into clayballs each the size only of a kola kernel and laid them down saying 'This is my father, this is my father's father. Brethren, this great earth would be used up, ended or ever the fathers of that man's father were come to an end.'

Why is that? Incalculable is the beginning, brethren, of this faring on. The earliest point is not revealed of the running on, faring on, of beings cloaked in ignorance, tied to craving.

Thus many a day, brethren, have ye been suffering ill, have ye been suffering pain, have ye been suffering disaster, have the charnel-fields been growing. Thus far enough is there, brethren, for you to be repelled by all the things of this world, enough to lose all passion for them, enough to be delivered therefrom

5. *Ana-mata-gga*. *Ana* is negative prefix. *Mats* = thought, judged. *Agga* = beginning. *Comy*:— *-avidita-ggo*. Cf. Rhys Davids and Stede, *Pali-English Dictionary*; *Pas. Of the Sisters*, ver. 495f.

6. *aPubba-koti*. Or past, or former extreme. B. paraphrases:— The first boundary is not seen, the beginning of which is the first point. Nor is the last extreme revealed. Just in the middle beings are passing on.

7. *Caturangulam̐ caturangulam̐ ghatikam̐*. *C.* is silent. Cf. *Dialogues*, i,10 (6), where a game of tip-cat is so called.

8. *Sabbā-sankhāresu*. Usually explained as all that has arisen from conditions. But I doubt whether this more philosophical import was any more present to the mind of the Sutta editors than it is to-day to any Buddhist, when on the occasion of a death, he utters the usual exclamation *Aniccā vata sankhārā!*

(3) The Mountain [The Hill]

At Sāvathī, in Anāthapiṇḍika's Park.

Now a certain brother came to the Exalted One ... Seated at one side he said this to the Exalted One: How long, lord, is an aeon ?

Long, brother, is an aeon. It is not easy to reckon how long by saying so many years, so many centuries, so many thousand centuries.

Can it be told, lord, by a parable ?

It can, brother, said the Exalted One. Suppose, brother, there were a great crag, a hill one yojana wide, one yojana across, one yojana high without chasms or clefts, a solid mass. And a man at the end of every hundred years were to stroke it once each time with a Kasi cloth. Well, that mountain in this way would be sooner done away with and ended than would an aeon. So long, brother, is an aeon. And of aeons thus long more than one has passed, more than a hundred have passed, more than a thousand, more than a hundred thousand.

How is this ? Incalculable is the beginning, brother, of this faring on. The earliest point is not revealed of the running on, the faring on of beings cloaked by ignorance, tied to craving. Thus far enough is there, brother, for thee to be repelled by all the things of this world, enough to lose all passion for them, enough to be delivered therefrom.

(4) The River Ganges

At Rajagaha at the Bamboo Grove:—

Now a certain brahmin came to the Exalted One saluted him and sat down beside him. So seated he asked the Exalted One *the same question and was so answered. He too asked:* Can it be done, master Gotama, by a parable ?

It can, brahmin, said the Exalted One. Take whence the Ganges has its source and where it reaches the sea. The sand that lies between, that is not easy to count — so many [grains of] sand, so many hundreds, so many thousands, so many hundred thousand grains of sand.⁹ More than that are the aeons that have passed and gone by. Them it is not easy to count: so many aeons, so many hundreds, so many thousands, so many hundred thousands of aeons.

How is this? Incalculable is the beginning, brahmin, of this faring on. The earliest point is not revealed of the faring on, running on of beings cloaked in ignorance, tied to craving. Thus many a day, brahmin, has ill been suffered, has pain been suffered, has disaster been suffered, has the charnel-field been growing. Thus far enough is there, brahmin, for you to be repelled by all the things of this world, enough to lose all passion for them, enough to be delivered therefrom.

When he had thus said, that brahmin said to the Exalted One: Excellent, master Gotama ! excellent, master Gotama ! May master Gotama accept me as a follower who from this day forth as long as life shall last has taken refuge under him !

(5) Dog on a Leash

[PTS Translation not available]

9. That is 500 yojanas, reckons the Commentary. Our gazetteers reckon the river as 1,455 miles in length. This gives us the disputed length of the yojana as nearly three miles. I do not know whether this is borne out by Buddhaghosa's estimate of the distance from Benares to Gaya as 18 yojanas. There are a few others. Rhys Davids concludes, from the distance given in the Mahavaṃsa from Anurādhapura to Mahintala as one yojana, in favour of 7 miles (Ancient Coins and Measures of Ceylon).

4. The Doctrine of Rebirth and Karma

by Victor Gunasekara

The selections in the last section of the first chapter of Bhikkhu Bodhi's *In the Buddha's Words* relate to a doctrine that the Buddha repeatedly stressed in many of his discourses, This is the doctrine of re-birth, usually advanced in connection with his doctrine of action (*kamma*) and its fruits (*phala*). This short note looks at this question, especially if will pass the criteria laid down in the Kālāma Sutta? The Buddha realised that there would be a problem in doing so for most people, and this explains why the Buddha concludes his discourse to the Kālāmas with a brief consideration of this doctrine, one of the most difficult to understand in the whole of the Dhamma.

Where action and its fruit take place in a given lifetime it is possible to observe it empirically. But the Buddha said that some actions bear their consequences beyond death (*para maraṇam*). This is the theory of saṃsāra, the cycle of birth and re-birth. How could the fruiting of actions be observed if the action (*kamma*) takes place in one lifetime and the fruit (*phala*) in another?

According to the Buddha his three-fold knowledge (*tisso vijjā*) includes the knowledge to see past births. Other enlightened persons too may develop the psychic power to recall some past lives. However most people are not in this position, and would not have developed this psychic ability. How could they then observe empirically the post-mortem operation of the law of *kamma*?

In the concluding section of the Kālāma sutta the Buddha speaks of four different levels of confidence (*assasā*) that people can have relating to this particular doctrine. These are given as follows:

“ ‘Suppose there is a hereafter and there is a fruit, result, of deeds done well or ill. Then it is possible that at the dissolution of the body after death, I shall arise in the heavenly world, which is possessed of the state of bliss.’ This is the first solace found by him.

“ ‘Suppose there is no hereafter and there is no fruit, no result, of deeds done well or ill. Yet in this world, here and now, free from hatred, free from malice, safe and sound, and happy, I keep myself.’ This is the second solace found by him.

“ ‘Suppose evil (results) befall an evil-doer. I, however, think of doing evil to no one. Then, how can ill (results) affect me who do no evil deed?’ This is the third solace found by him.

“ ‘Suppose evil (results) do not befall an evil-doer. Then I see myself purified in any case.’ This is the fourth solace found by him.”

The first solace is for those who believe in *kamma* and rebirth. For them the fruits of their good actions will be manifested in a future life. The second solace is for one who cannot accept the hypothesis of rebirth. Such a person if he does good *kamma* he can aspire to happiness on that account in this very life. The third solace is for the evil doer who believes in the consequences of evil actions and thereby decides to refrain from evil actions. The last solace is for a person who does not believe in the consequences of evil acts, yet sees in not committing evil deeds a kind of self-purification.

What is significant here is that the Buddha does not require absolute confidence in the post-death operation of the law of *kamma*. If he did so he would have stopped at the first solace. By putting in the supposition that ‘there is no hereafter and there is no fruit, no result, of deeds done well or ill’ he is accommodating the possibility that a person who is skeptical of the (post-death) operation of *kamma* (and therefore in re-birth) could also be a dhamma-farer. So even if you do not believe in rebirth, but only in this present life, doing good *kamma* has benefits here and now, and similarly for bad *kamma*.

The Buddha's adoption of the hypothesis of rebirth may be due to the widespread acceptance of this idea in the India of his time. The Hindu version of post-mortem existence has been properly called reincarnation rather than rebirth. This is because the Hindus posit of the existence of a “soul” (*ātman*) like the Abrahamic religions. The Buddha is emphatic that no such entity exists. This certainly is a rational position to take, as no physical or psychological evidence has been adduced to show that a soul exists. The question has been posed that if there is no “soul” that survives death what indeed is there to be reborn. One explanation for this problem is that only the karmic record of an individual that

is transferred to a new individual when rebirth takes place.¹⁰ This view is very succinctly put by Ven Buddhaghosa in his classic book when referring to the identity between the deceased person and his newly reborn person he says that they are not the same and yet not different (*na ca so, na c'añño*). The two persons are not the same because there is no soul to pass over from one person to the other. Yet they are not totally different as the newly-born person inherits the 'unfruited' karmic residue of the deceased person.

But for some diehard supporters of the rebirth idea even Ven Buddhaghosa's rationalization is unacceptable. They want to posit a substantial identity between the deceased person and the reborn person. One "proof" they adduce in support of their view is the so-called retained memory of some persons. An American professor Ian Stevenson has made a study of cases where young children claim to recall their previous existence. According to Stevenson's investigations some of their recollections have been borne out, and the individual they claim that they were in their previous existence did in actual fact exist, and the memories recalled of the deceased person turn out to be substantially accurate. However even Prof Stevenson does not say that this phenomenon of retained memory does not "prove" rebirth. There could be other explanations for the transfer of recollections even if they are genuine. Moreover Hindus and others can claim that this phenomenon proves their hypothesis that a "soul" (*ātman*) exists which would refute a basic tenet of Buddhism (that of *anatta*).

But whether we accept the Buddhaghosa hypothesis or the Stevenson hypothesis there still remains the question of how this transfer is affected. Rebirth can take place between persons who are separated by great distance, or even time.¹¹ So how could rebirth take place even if we allow for its possibility? There is no known physical process that has even been suggested to explain the possibility. Only analogies are provided like a flame passing from one candle to another, or electricity passing through a wire. But arguing by analogy is not an acceptable scientific procedure. Physical science can explain the transfer of the flame or of electrons through the electric cable, but these processes will not explain how a conception takes place in a womb of a woman carrying the karmic imprint of a dead person separated by a great distance.

Thus the doctrine of rebirth and post-mortem transmission of kamma can only be accepted on the basis of faith on what the Buddha has said in certain contexts. But in the *Kālāma sutta* the Buddha leaves a way open for the rational person to dispense with this particular belief and still retain the essence of his enlightening message.

5. Pali Original

(1) *Grass and Brushwood*

1. *Tiṇakaṭṭhasuttaṃ*

124. Evaṃ (1.0387) me suttaṃ– ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā sāvatthiyaṃ viharatī jetavane anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme. Tatra kho bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi– “bhikkhavo”ti. “Bhadante”ti te bhikkhū bhagavato paccassomaṃ. Bhagavā etadavoca–

“Anamataggoyamaṃ , bhikkhave, saṃsāro. Pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhāsamyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsaratamaṃ. Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, puriso yaṃ imasmiṃ jambudīpe tiṇakaṭṭhasākhāpalāsaṃ taṃ chetvā , ekajjhaṃ saṃharitvā caturaṅgulaṃ caturaṅgulaṃ ghaṭikaṃ katvā nikkhipeyya– ‘ayamaṃ me mātā, tassa me mātu ayamā mātā’ti, apariyādinnāva , bhikkhave, tassa purisassa mātumātaro assu, atha imasmiṃ jambudīpe tiṇakaṭṭhasākhāpalāsaṃ parikkhayaṃ pariyādānaṃ gaccheyya. Taṃ kissa hetu? Anamataggoyamaṃ, bhikkhave, saṃsāro. Pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhāsamyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsaratamaṃ.

10. It is usually postulated that at the moment of death the karmic record of the dying person, sometimes called the “relinking consciousness” (*paṭisandhi viññāna*) is transferred to a new being that is about to be born (sometimes called the *gandhabba*).

11. The Theravāda view is that the transfer is immediate. That is the newly person is conceived precisely at the same moment as death overcomes the dying person. Tibetan Buddhists posit a separation between the two events of up to 60 days during which the *bardo* of the dead person roams the world finding a suitable womb to be reborn into.

Evam dīgharattaṃ vo, bhikkhave, dukkhaṃ paccaṇubhūtaṃ tibbaṃ paccaṇubhūtaṃ byasanaṃ paccaṇubhūtaṃ, kaṭasī, vaḍḍhitā. Yāvañcidam, bhikkhave, alameva sabbasaṅkhāresu nibbindituṃ alaṃ virajjituṃ alaṃ vimuccituṃ”ti. Paṭhamam.

(2) *Balls of Clay*

2. Pathavīsuttaṃ

125. Sāvaththiyaṃ viharati ...pe... “anamataggoyam, bhikkhave, saṃsāro. Pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhāsamojjanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsaratam. Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, puriso imam mahāpathaviṃ kolaṭṭhimattaṃ kolaṭṭhimattaṃ mattikāguḷikaṃ karivā nikkhipeyya— ‘ayam me pitā, tassa me pitu ayam pitā’ti, apariyādinnāva bhikkhave, tassa purisassa pitupitaro assu, athāyam mahāpathavī parikkhayaṃ pariyādānaṃ gaccheyya (1.0388). Tam kissa hetu? Anamataggoyam, bhikkhave, saṃsāro. Pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhāsamojjanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsaratam. Evam dīgharattaṃ vo, bhikkhave, dukkhaṃ paccaṇubhūtaṃ tibbaṃ paccaṇubhūtaṃ byasanaṃ paccaṇubhūtaṃ, kaṭasī vaḍḍhitā. Yāvañcidam, bhikkhave, alameva sabbasaṅkhāresu nibbindituṃ, alaṃ virajjituṃ, alaṃ vimuccituṃ”ti. Dutiyaṃ.

(3) *The Mountain*

5. Pabbatasuttaṃ

128. Sāvaththiyaṃ viharati ...pe... ārāme. Atha kho aññataro bhikkhu yena bhagavā tenupasaṅkami; upasaṅkamitvā bhagavantaṃ abhivādetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi. Ekamantaṃ nisinno kho so bhikkhu bhagavantaṃ etadavoca— “kīvadīgho nu kho, bhante, kappo”ti? “Dīgho kho, bhikkhu, kappo. So na sukaro saṅkhātuṃ ettakāni vassāni iti vā, ettakāni vassasatāni iti vā, ettakāni vassasahasāni iti vā, ettakāni vassasatasahasāni iti vā”ti.

“Sakkā pana, bhante, upamaṃ kātun”ti? “Sakkā, bhikkhū”ti bhagavā avoca. “Seyyathāpi, bhikkhu, mahāselo pabbato yojanaṃ āyāmena yojanaṃ vitthārena yojanaṃ ubbedhena acchinno asusiro ekagghano. Tameṇa puriso vassasatassa vassasatassa accayena kāsikena vatthena (1.0390) sakim sakim parimajjeyya. Khippataraṃ kho so, bhikkhu, mahāselo pabbato iminā upakkameṇa parikkhayaṃ pariyādānaṃ gaccheyya, na tveva kappo. Evam dīgho, bhikkhu, kappo. Evam dīghānaṃ kho, bhikkhu, kappānaṃ neko kappo saṃsito, nekaṃ kappasataṃ saṃsitaṃ, nekaṃ kappasahasataṃ saṃsitaṃ, nekaṃ kappasatasahasataṃ saṃsitaṃ. Tam kissa hetu? Anamataggoyam, bhikkhu, saṃsāro. Pubbā koṭi ...pe... yāvañcidam, bhikkhu, alameva sabbasaṅkhāresu nibbindituṃ, alaṃ virajjituṃ, alaṃ vimuccituṃ”ti. Pañcamaṃ.

(4) *Ganges*

8. Gaṅgāsuttaṃ

131. Rājagahe viharati veḷuvane. Atha kho aññataro brāhmaṇo yena bhagavā tenupasaṅkami; upasaṅkamitvā bhagavatā saddhiṃ sammodi. Sammodanīyaṃ kathaṃ saraṇīyaṃ vītisāretvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi. Ekamantaṃ nisinno kho so brāhmaṇo bhagavantaṃ etadavoca— “kīvabahukā nu kho, bho gotama, kappā abbatitā atikkantā”ti? “Bahukā kho, brāhmaṇa, kappā abbatitā atikkantā. Te na sukarā saṅkhātuṃ— ‘ettakā kappā iti vā, ettakāni kappasatāni iti vā, ettakāni kappasahasāni iti vā, ettakāni kappasatasahasāni iti vā’”ti.

“Sakkā pana, bho gotama, upamaṃ kātun”ti? “Sakkā, brāhmaṇa”ti bhagavā avoca. “Seyyathāpi, brāhmaṇa, yato cāyaṃ gaṅgā nadī pabhavati yattha ca mahāsamuddaṃ appeti, yā etasmiṃ antare vālikā sā na sukarā saṅkhātuṃ— ‘ettakā vālikā iti vā, ettakāni vālikasatāni iti vā, ettakāni vālikasahasāni iti vā, ettakāni vālikasatasahasāni iti vā’”ti. Tato bahutarā kho, brāhmaṇa, kappā abbatitā atikkantā. Te na sukarā saṅkhātuṃ— ‘ettakā kappā iti (1.0392) vā, ettakāni kappasatāni iti vā, ettakāni kappasahasāni iti vā, ettakāni kappasatasahasāni iti vā’”ti. Tam kissa hetu? Anamataggoyam, brāhmaṇa, saṃsāro. Pubbā koṭi na paññāyati avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhāsamojjanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsaratam. Evam dīgharattaṃ kho, brāhmaṇa, dukkhaṃ paccaṇubhūtaṃ tibbaṃ paccaṇubhūtaṃ

byasanaṃ paccanubhūtaṃ, kaṭasī vaḍḍhitā. Yāvañcidaṃ, brāhmaṇa, alameva sabbasaṅkhāresu nibbinituṃ, alaṃ virajjituṃ, alaṃ vimuccituṃ”ti.

Evaṃ vutte, so brāhmaṇo bhagavantaṃ etadavoca– “abhikkantaṃ, bho gotama, abhikkantaṃ, bho gotama ... pe... upāsakaṃ maṃ bhavaṃ gotamo dhāretu ajjatagge pāṇupetaṃ saraṇaṃ gatan”ti. Aṭṭhamaṃ.