

# THE END OF THE WORLD

In Buddhist Perspective



**Bhikkhu Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda**

Pothgulgala Dharmagrantha Dharmasravana Mādhyā Bhāraya

**Pothgulgala Dharmagrantha  
Dharmasravana Mādhya Bhāraya**

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P.D.D.M.B.  
Kandy  
2013.07.07

# THE END OF THE WORLD

in Buddhist Perspective

An Exposition of  
THE ROHITASSA SUTTA

**Bhikkhu Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda**

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## Introduction

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

- Rohitassa Sutta , S.I.61

The Buddha's concept of the world and its end comes to light in a number of discourses in the Pali Canon. It is of refreshing relevance in the context of the findings in modern Quantum physics. Rohitassa Sutta occurring in two discourse collections, probably due to its importance ( S I 61 , A II 47) is highly significant in this connection. In my “Samyutta Nikaya – An Anthology with Notes, First published in 1972 in the Wheel series of Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy (Wh. Nos 183/184/185) I gave a long annotation to this sutta with a sidelight on Einstein's Theory of Relativity, Some of those who appreciated it, suggested the feasibility of bringing out the Sutta and the annotation<sup>1\*</sup> as a separate booklet. Though belatedly, I take up the suggestion now in the hope that the booklet will reach a wider readership.

Wherever the Buddha redefines a word in common usage, he introduces it with the phrase 'Ariyassa vinaye' (in the discipline of the noble ones) Once Venerable Ānanda solicited a redefinition of the concept of the world in the following words. (Paloka S. S. Iv53)

“The world, the world” so it is said. In what respect, Venerable Sir, is it called a world”

The Buddha responds with the following answer:

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*The annotation running into several pages is presented here under the title “The End of the World in Buddhist Perspective”*

**“Whatever, Ānanda, is subject to disintegration, that is called 'the world' in the noble one's discipline. And what, Ānanda, is subject to disintegration? The eye, Ānanda, is subject to disintegration, forms are subject to disintegration, eye-consciousness is subject to disintegration, eye-contact is subject to disintegration, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on eye contact, be it pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant, that too, is subject to disintegration. Whatever is subject to disintegration, Ananda, is called the world in the noble one's discipline.**

(So also, in regard to ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.)

That the Buddha's redefinition of the world is in terms of the six sense spheres is clearly revealed by his reply to venerable Samiddhi's following question in the Samiddhi Sutta (S IV 39f).

“The world. the world, so it is said Venerable Sir, But how far, Venerable Sir, does this world or the concept of world go”?

The Buddha gives the following answer:

“ Where there is the eye, Samiddhi, where there are forms, where there is eye consciousness, where there are things cognizable by eye- consciousness, there exists the world, or the concept of the world. “ A similar statement is made with regard to the other spheres of sense, including the mind. That, according to the Buddha, is where the world exists.

Then he makes a declaration concerning the converse.

“Where there is no eye, Samiddhi, where there are no forms, where there is no eye - consciousness, where there are no things cognizable by eye- consciousness, there the world does not exist nor any concept of the world.



Of similar import is the following definition of the world by Venerable Ananda later ratified by the Buddha.

“Friend, that by which one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world <sup>2</sup>, that in the discipline of the noble ones, is called the world? By what friend has one perception of the world and a conceit of the world.?”

**By the eye" friends, one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world, by the ear ..... by the nose ..... by the tongue..... by the body ..... by the mind, friends, one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world . That friend by which one has a perception of the world and a conceit of the world, that in this discipline of the noble ones, is called 'the world'.**

(S iv 95)

Now here are a few extracts from an article titled 'What is Quantum Physics' as an illustration of the relevance of the Buddha's definition of the world to the insoluble problems confronting the modern physicists.

“ ..... So have the electrons outsmarted us? "perhaps, but they have also taught us one of the fundamental lessons in quantum physics. an observation is only valid in the context of the experiment in which it was performed. If you want to say that something behaves a certain way or even exists, you must give the context of this behavior or existence since in another context it may behave differently or not exist at all”

“..... Sometimes a particle acts like a particle and other times it acts like a wave. So which is it? According to Niels Bohr, who worked in Copenhagen when he presented what is now known as the Copenhagen interpretation of Quantum theory, the particle is what

you measure it to be. When it looks like a particle it is a particle, when it looks like a wave it is a wave. Furthermore it is meaningless to ascribe any properties or even existence to anything that has not been measured, Bohr is basically saying that nothing is real unless it is observed.

'..... Bohr has invited Schrodinger to Copenhagen where they found that Schrodinger's waves were in fact nothing like real waves. For one thing, each particle that was being described as a wave, required three dimensions. Even worse, from Schrodinger's point of view, particles still jumped from one quantum state to another; even expressed in terms of waves, space was still not continuous. Upon discovering this Schrodinger remarked to Bohr that "Had I known that we were not going to get rid of this damned quantum jumping, I never would have involved myself in this business"

'..... Bohr reasoned out that nature likes to keep its possibilities open and therefore follows every possible path. Only when observed is nature forced to choose one path, so only then is just one path taken.

'..... well fine. But how exactly are we to determine the position and momentum of the electron. If we disturb the electrons just in seeing if they are there or not, how are we possibly going to determine both their position and momentum?

'..... Furthermore, Quantum physics leaves us with a rather large open question. What is reality ? The Copenhagen interpretation attempts to solve this problem by saying that reality is what is measured. However the measuring device itself is then not real until it is measured. The problem which is known as the measurement problem is, when does the cycle stop?

\*\*\*

This 'quantum – quandary' could best be understood by reflecting on the following declaration of the Buddha regarding the world.

'The world has arisen in the Six  
The world has commune in the Six  
Holding on to these very Six  
The World finds itself in a fix'

-The World S I 41

(From Topsy-turvydom to Wisdom vol 1 p8)

- Bhikkhu Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda

Pothgulgala Aranyaya  
'Pahan Kanuwa'  
Kandegedara  
Devalegama  
March 2014

## Notes

### 1 *Subject to disintegration – 'palokadhammam'*

*Here the Buddha is punning on the world 'loka' going by the verb 'palujjati' (to break up, to disintegrate, to crumble)*

*In the Loka sutta (S IV 52) a certain monk asks the Buddha:*

*"The world, the world' so it is said, Venerable Sir, In what respect, Venerable Sir, it is called a world?"*

*"It is disintegrating, monk, therefore it is called a world. And what is disintegrating? The eye monk is disintegrating, forms are disintegrating, eye-consciousness is disintegrating, eye-contact is disintegrating and whatever feeling that arises with eye contact as condition, whether pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant-that too is disintegrating. .... the mind is disintegrating ..... that too is disintegrating. It is disintegrating, monk, therefore it is called the world.*

*(Lujjatiti kho bhikkhu, tasmā lokoti vuccati)*

### 2 *Rendered literally the term 'lokamānī' means 'a measurer of the world' for māna (Vmā—to measure) is both conceit and measuring.*

*Likewise, 'lokasaññī' is a perceiver of the world.*

*In fact, the opening sentence in 'Venerable Ananda's definition of the world, strictly translated should read:*

*"Friends, that by which one is a perceiver of the world and a measurer of the world, that in this discipline of the noble ones, is called 'the world' ('yena kho āvuso lokasmim lakasaññī hoti lokamānī' ayaṃ vuccati ariyassa vinaye loko')*

*So it seems that the 'measurement problem' of quantum physics was anticipated by the Buddha more than 2500 years ago'.*

## List of Abbreviations

D.	Digha Nikāya
M.	Majjhima Nikāya
S.	Samyutta Nikāya
A.	Anguttara Nikāya
Dhp.	Dhammapada
Ud.	Udāna
Itiv.	Itivuttaka
Sn.	Sutta Nipāta
Thag.	Theragatha
K. S.	Kindred sayings

# At your fingertips

## A Prologue

Some seers of ancient India held that it is impossible to understand consciousness itself, because it is with consciousness that we get to know everything else. They thought that it is like trying to touch one's finger-tip with the same finger-tip.

The Buddha understood their difficulty when he compared consciousness to a magical illusion or *māyā*. But he pointed out a way out of it. Instead of taking seriously the worldly notions of 'I' and 'mine', he analyzed experience in terms of an interdependence between 'consciousness' on the one hand and 'name and form' on the other.

Now what is this 'Name' and 'Form'. Venerable Sariputta, the Chief Disciple of the Buddha explains it for us. “Feeling, Perception, Intention, Contact, Attention—these O! friends, are called 'Name!'. The four great primaries and Form dependent on them these O! friends are called Form”.

Feeling, Perception, Intention, Contact and Attention, are collectively, called 'Name' because they are the primaries of all what is named. The four great elements of solidity, liquidity, heat and motion, represented by earth, water, fire and air are the primaries of all what has to do with 'Form'

Between Name and Form themselves, there is a reciprocal relationship. It is with Name that one understands Form and it is

Form that gives a content to Name. Name is such that it conjures up a Form and Form is such that it calls forth a Name.

But we have to get more acquainted with the five representatives of Name. Let us have them at our fingertips. In fact one can even count them on one's fingers. Feeling is the little finger – small but mischievous. Perception is the ring – finger. both popular and notorious. Intention is the – middle finger, prominent and intrusive. Contact is the fore finger- fussy and busy all the time. Attention is the thumb- standing apart, but approachable to the rest.

Now out of the whole lot, who is going to be our witness of the back-stage workings of the magic – show of consciousness. Attention, of course. He is the most competent. When there are no witnesses to prove a case of murder or theft, sometimes judges give 'free pardon' to one of the alleged culprits under the oath "you have to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but truth"

So it is in this case of the tragic drama of consciousness. Though himself culpable, attention is dependable as a witness, provided he does his duty as Right attention.

Now attention will gradually disclose what feeling felt, what perception perceived, what intention intended, what contact contacted and last but not least, what attention attended to.

This is why all insight meditators single out attention for preferential treatment when they want to get the full inside story of the tragic drama of consciousness.

## Rohitassa Sutta

.....At Savatthi... Standing at one side, Rohitassa, son of the gods, spoke thus to the Exalted One:

"Where, lord, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, is one able, lord, by walking, to come to know that end of the world, or to see it, or to get there?"

"Where, friend, one does not get born, nor grow old, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, that end of the world, I say, you are not able by walking, to come to know, or to see, or to arrive at."

"Wonderful is it, lord. marvellous is it, lord, how well it is said by the Exalted One: 'Where, friend, one does not get born... or to arrive at.'

"In times past, lord, I was a seer, Rohitassa by name, son of Bhoja, gifted so that I could fly through the air. And so swift, lord, was my speed that I could fly just as quickly as a master of archery, well-trained, expert, proficient, a past-master in his art, armed with a strong bow could, without difficulty, send a light shaft far past the area covered by a palm-tree's shadow. And so great, lord, was my stride that I could step from the eastern to the western sea.

"In me, lord, arose such a wish as this: 'I will arrive at the end of the world by walking.' And though such, lord, was my



speed, and such my stride, and though, with a life-span of a century, living for hundred years I walked continuously for a hundred years, save the while I spent in eating, drinking, chewing or tasting, or in answering calls of nature, save the while I gave way to sleep or fatigue, yet I died on the way without reaching the end of the world. Wonderful is it, lord, marvellous is it, lord, how well it is said by the Exalted One: 'Where, friend, one does not get born.. or to arrive at.'

"But neither do I say, friend, that without having reached the end of the world there could be an ending of ill. It is in this very fathom-long physical frame with its perceptions and mind, that, I declare, lies the world, and the arising of the world, and the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world.

"Ne'er may world's end be reached by walking.  
No release is there from ill till that end is reached.  
Therefore that wise one, the knower of the world,  
Is the one who has reached the end of the world.  
Consummate in him is the holy life.  
Knowing the world's end that sage serene  
Yeans not for this world nor for the other."

S I 61 (II 3,6)

## The End of the World in Buddhist Perspective

According to the Buddha, that end of the world where there is no birth, decay or death, in search of which Rohitassa walked for a hundred years, is not somewhere in outer space, but within this very fathom-long body. The cessation of the six sense-spheres constitutes, for the arahant, a transcendental sphere (āyatana) of experience in which he realizes, here and now, that he is free from all suffering connected with birth, decay and death, and indeed from all forms of existence (bhavanirodho). These aspects of Nibbanic bliss find expression in such epithets as ajātaṃ ('non-born'), abhūtaṃ ('non-become'), ajaraṃ ('non-decaying') and amataṃ ('deathless').

**"...With the utter fading away of ignorance, even that body is not there, dependent on which there arises for him inwardly happiness and unhappiness; that speech is not there... that mind is not there, dependent on which there arises for him inwardly happiness and unhappiness. That field does not exist, that ground does not exist, that sphere does not exist, that reason does not exist, dependent on which arises inwardly happiness and unhappiness." (A II 158f). When body, speech and mind, which are at the root of all discrimination and conceit, fade away in the jhanic experience of the arahant, he finds himself free from all suffering, mental as well as physical. Such epithets of Nibbana as khemaṃ (security), dīpaṃ (island), tāṇaṃ (protection), leṇaṃ (cave), saraṇaṃ (refuge) and parāyanam (resort) suggest this transcendence of worldly imperfections.**

The culmination of the 'not-self' attitude is the eradication of the conceit, '(I) am':...the percipient of 'not-self attains to the eradication of the conceit 'I am,' which is Nibbāna here and now," (A. V. 358). The removal of the subtle conceit, '(I) am' (*asmimāna*) is tantamount to a destruction of that delusive superimposed 'frame' from which all measurings and reckonings of the world were directed through the instrumentality of the sense-faculties, and by which the mass of relative concepts in the form of sense-data were so organized as to give a picture of 'the world' with 'self' mirrored on it. What we call the normal functioning of the five external senses, is but the outward manifestation of the notion 'I-am': "Given the notion 'I-am,' monks there set in then the five sense-faculties." \* (S. III. 46).

When this 'frame' is dismantled, the conveyors — the senses — losing their provenance and sanction, become ineffective, and their usual objects too fade away into insignificance:

"Wherefore, monks, that sphere should be known wherein the eye ceases and the perception of forms fades away... wherein the ear ceases and the perception of sounds fades away... the nose ceases and the perception of smell fades away... the tongue ceases and the perception of tastes fades away... the body ceases and the perception of touch fades away... the mind ceases and the perception of ideas fades away. That sphere should be known; that sphere should be known." (S. IV. 98).

All percepts are 'signs' (*rupanimitta saddanimitta* etc.), and when signs cease to be 'significant,' they are as good as non-existent. The 'signless deliverance of the mind' (*animitta cetovimutti*) as one of the doorways-to-deliverance (*vimokkhamukha*), points to this re-orientation of the arahant's mental life. Thus, although he is wide awake when he is in this paradoxical *samaadhi* (D. II. 132; S. I. 126), although his sense-organs appear to be all intact, yet he is free from normal sense-experience.

"That very eye will be there, those very visible forms will be there, yet one will not experience the corresponding sphere of sense... that same body will be there, those very tactile objects will be there, yet one will not experience the corresponding sphere of sense." (A. IV. 426f).

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\*This quotation provides the clue to that much-disputed passage in Itiv. (38f.) which defines the two 'Nibbāna-Elements' - the one with residual clinging or appendages ('*Saupādisesā Nibbānadhātu*') and the one without them ('*Anupādisesā Nibbānadhātu*'). "... And what, monks, is the Nibbāna element with residual clinging?"

Herein, monks, a monk is an arahant, whose influxes are extinct, who has lived the Holy Life, accomplished the task, laid down the burden, reached his Goal, whose fetters of existence are fully extinct, and who is freed through right knowledge. His five sense-faculties still remain, which being undestroyed, he partakes of the pleasant and the unpleasant, and experiences the pleasurable and the painful. The extinction of lust, hatred and delusion in him - this, monks, is called the Nibbāna-Element with residual clinging

"He is not one with the normal perception, nor is his perception abnormal. He is not non-percipient, nor has he put an end to perception." (*'na saññasaññi na visaññasaññi — no pi asaññi na vibhūtasaññi'* — Sn. 874). "In the case of a monk who is fully emancipated in mind, friends, though many forms cognizable by the eye may come within the range of the eye, they never obsess his mind, unalloyed is his mind, steady and become imperturbable and he sees its passing away. Though many sounds cognizable by the ear may come... many smells cognizable by the nose... many tastes cognizable by the tongue... many tangibles cognizable by the body... many ideas cognizable by the mind may come within the range of the mind, they never obsess his mind, unalloyed is his mind, steady and become imperturbable and he sees its passing away..." (A. IV. 404).

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*(Continued from the previous page)*

And what, monks, is the Nibbāna-Element without residual clinging? Herein, monks, a monk is an arahant whose influxes are extinct... and is freed through right knowledge. All his feelings, monks, will, even here, cool down, not having been delighted in. This, monks, is called the Nibbāna Element without residual clinging." Once he has experienced within his own sensorium that transcendence which results from the removal of the latent conceit 'I-am,' all his influxes are extinguished and he gains mastery over the 'mechanism' of the sixfold sense-sphere in its five aspects - the arising, the passing away, the satisfaction, the misery and the escape. For him, the sense-spheres become detachable, since he now knows the principle on which they function - the law of Dependent Arising in its direct and indirect order, which pivots upon Ignorance, involving the notion 'I-am.' While Saupādisesā Nibbānadhātu enables the Arahant to live 'in the world,' Anupādisesā Nibbānadhātu ensures that he is 'not of the world.' 'Once crossed over, the such-like One comes not back.' (Sn.V. 803) 'To the farther shore they go not twice.' (Sn.V. 714)

This 'non-manifestative consciousness' (*anidassana viññāṇa*) of the arahant, which is uninfluenced by extraneous forces and is steady and imperturbable, is, perhaps, the 'Inertial Frame' in search of which Relativity Physics has, in modern times, set out. As the scientist gradually awoke to the truths of relativity, he too longed for a '**state-of-rest**' from the ever-deepening conflict of view-points.' But his search for this imaginary laboratory was unsuccessful for, like Rohitassa, he searched outside relying on the demonstrative apparatus known to science. The Buddha's exhortation to Rohitassa is, therefore, of refreshing relevance to the modern age, in that it implies that the sphere (*āyatana*) wherein one transcends the labyrinths of relativity is not somewhere in outer space but within this very fathom-long physical frame.

As an interesting sidelight, it may be mentioned that **according to the Theory of Relativity, light is the top-velocity in the universe, it propagates even in vacuum, its velocity is constant and it propagates in all directions.** Now, that non-manifestative consciousness of the arahant is described in the suttas as infinite and 'lustrous all-round' (*viññāṇam anidassanam anantaṃ sabbato pabham* — D. I. 213; M. I. 329).\*

The arahant's consciousness is untrammelled by name-and-form (Dhp. V. 221), and has no object as its point of focus (*anārammanam..* - Ud.. 80). Hence it is infinite, and he is one of infinite range ('*anantagocara*' — Dhp. vr. 179, 180) as regards his mental compass.

Wisdom (*paññā*), according to the Buddha, is a light which excels all other forms of light known to the world (*natthi paññasamā ābhā* — 'no lustre like unto that of wisdom' — S. I. 6; A. II. 139f). It has the property of penetration '*paññāpatedha*'; '*nibbedhikā paññā*) and its function is comprehension of the consciousness, which is called an illusion ('*māyā* — S. III. 142). Hence in that illumination through wisdom, consciousness becomes infinite and 'lustrous-all-round.' The mind, thus 'lustre-become and gone to the Fruit of Arahantship' ('*obhāsajātaṃ phalagaṃ cittaṃ*' — Thag. V. 1. 3.5) lights up, in its turn, the five external senses.

The sense-objects, which are but the denizens of the dark world of ignorance, fade away before the penetrative all-encompassing lustre. The illusion of consciousness — the magic of the senses — thereby becomes fully exposed to the light of wisdom. The six spheres of sense cease altogether ('*salāyatanaṃirodha*') and the arahant is now conscious merely of the cessation of existence which is Nibbana itself (*bhavaṃirodho nibbānaṃ* — A. v. 9). He is conscious, in other words, of the voidness of the world ('*suñño loko*' — S. IV. 54) which the scientist might prefer to call the 'vacuum' which this light-of-wisdom now pervades.

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Ñānananda,. Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought First Published by Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, 1971 — pp. 52-66. Latest reprint by P. D. D. M. B. Kandy 2013

The scientist, however, might hesitate to grant the possibility of a 'light-of-wisdom' which is not amenable to any demonstrative apparatus. He has recognized only the purely physical notions of light, and has already set a limit to this 'top-velocity' — 300,000 km. per second. He considers that 'the discovery of the existence in the Universe of the top velocity is one of the greatest triumphs of human genius and of the experimental capacity of mankind.'\*...

On the basis of the foregoing observations, it can be said that this 'greatest triumph' was made by the Buddha more than 2,500 years ago, when he discovered by means of his 'noble experiment' (*ariya pariyesana*), that the mind is intrinsically luminous (*'pabhassaramidaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ'*: 'This mind, monks, is luminous' — A. I. 10) and that, when cleansed of all extraneous taints, it develops that penetrative, all-pervasive lustre of wisdom which liberates one from the labyrinths of the world of relativity. It is a penetration into the truth of impermanence (*aniccatā*) by thorough reflection on the rise-and-fall of phenomena, and the deeper it proceeds, the more one becomes aware of the conflict (*dukkha*). For Buddhism, the conflict of view-points is a far more intricate affair than what the scientist would make it out to be. It is not simply a question of a spectator's physical presence at a point in time and space, but one that deeply involves such facets of psychological life as interest and attention.

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L. Landau, Y. Rumer; What is the Theory of Relativity, Peace Publishers, Moscow. 1965. pg.41.



"Rooted in desire, friends, are all phenomena; originating in attention, are all phenomena;..." ("*chandamūlakā āvuso sabbe dhammā, manasikāra sambhavā sabbe dhammā ...*" — A. v. 106). The result is an awareness of a conflict that affects life as a whole (*dukkhasaññā*).

This awareness, naturally enough, is the springboard for utter detachment through the perception of 'not-self' (*anatta-saññā*), the culmination of which, as stated above, is the eradication of the most subtle conceit of all — the conceit 'I-am' (*asmimāna*). The Buddha has pointed out that the liberation from the world of sense-experience is not possible until the influxes (*āsavā*) are made extinct, and the influx of the notion of existence (*bhavāsavā*) can only be destroyed by means of a penetrative perception of cessation (*nirodha*) focussed on sense-experience itself. 'As far as is the range of attainments to levels of perception, so far is there a penetration into Knowledge' (*yāvatā saññā-samāpatti tāvatā aññāpativedho*). — A. iv. 426). The 'habit-energy' we have acquired in the course of our blind groping in Saṃsāra impelled by craving, readily flows in, in our ordinary sense experience, and, with its agglutinative effect, creates before us a world of 'things' that we can 'grasp.' Hence nothing short of an inner illumination could fully penetrate this *façade* and liberate us from the bondage of the senses. It is noteworthy that the paradoxical samadhi of the arahants is also called '*ānantarika*' ('Immediacy') in the sense that in it the extinction of the influxes is immediate (*anantarā āsavānam. khayō hoti*' A. III. 202. Cf. Sn. V. 226). In his infinite and all-lustrous

consciousness where view-points have been displaced by an all encompassing vision of truth, the 'signal-transmission' as to the impermanence of the senses and their objects, occurs at such an infinite velocity that it prevents the most elementary coagulation or compounding which accounts for the six spheres of sense.

Rohitassa's fantastic journey, which was perhaps the prototype of modern space-travel, was undertaken for the purpose of 'coming to know and to see and reach that end of the world where there is no birth or death.' According to the Buddha, everything could not be verified in this manner. "Monks, there are these four realizable things. What four? There are things, monks, that are realizable through the body. There are things, monks, that are realizable through memory. There are things, monks, that are realizable through the eye. There are things, monks, that are realizable through wisdom. And what, monks, are the things that are realizable through the body? The eight deliverances, monks, are realizable through the body. And what... through memory? One's former habitations, monks, are realizable through memory. And what... through the eye? The death and rebirth of beings, monks, is realizable through the eye. And what, monks, are the things realizable through wisdom? The extinction of influxes, monks, is realizable through wisdom. These, monks, are the four realizable things. (A. II. 182f).

Just as much as one cannot board a time-machine and race back into the Past in order to verify the fact of one's

former lives, even so it is inherently impossible for one to take a leap into the Future in order to ascertain whether one has actually destroyed all influxes that make for rebirth. The verification can only be made through the penetrative faculty of wisdom — the 'eye' of wisdom (*paññācakkhu*) — which gives one the certitude, here and now, that all influxes of existence as well as the sediments of speech associated with them, 'are burnt out and are no more' (*'bhavāsavā yassa vacīkharā ca — vidhūpitā atthagata na santi'* — Sn. V. 472.) That his cycle of Samsāra. is breached at its vortex (consciousness><name-and-form), is vouched for the arahant by the breached epicycle that he sees and experiences in his paradoxical samadhi. "The whirlpool 'cut-off, 'whirls no more — this, even this, is the end of Ill" (*'chinnam vattam na vattati-esevanto dukkhassa'* — Ud. 75). The end of the world is thus seen and realized in this very life in one's own immediate experience, avoiding all pit-falls of speculative logic — a fact which accounts for such epithets of the Dhamma as '*sanditthiko..*' ('visible in this very life'), '*akāliko*' ('not involving time'), '*ehipassiko*' (inviting every one to come and see for himself), '*opanayiko*' (leading one onwards'), '*paccatam veditabbo viññūhi*' ('to be understood by the wise, each by himself'), and, above all, '*atakkāvacarō*' ('not moving in the sphere of logic'). The *ensemble* of this realization is presented in that stereotyped sentence in the suttas which announces a new arahant. And he understood: "Extinct is birth, lived is the holy life, done is the task, and there is nothing beyond this for (a designation of) the conditions of this existence" (*'Khīṇā jāti, vusitam. brahmacariyam. katam. karaṇīyam. nāparam. itthattāyati abbhaññāsi'* — S. III. 54)

The fact that the arahant has transcended the relativity of space, mass, motion and time with which the scientist is still grappling, is clear enough from certain Canonical statements. It is said that in his 'non-manifestative consciousness,' the concepts of earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*apo*), fire (*tejo*) and air (*vāyo*) find no footing and that the relative concepts of long (*dīgham*), and short (*rassam*), are cut off altogether. (D. I. 213, M. I. 329). Likewise, the concepts of 'here,' 'there' and 'between-the-two,' have lost their significance for him ('*neva idha na huram. na ubhayamantarena* - Ud. 8). He does not consider himself to be anywhere (*na kuhiñci maññati* — M. III. 45), nor can any god or man trace him as to where he 'stands' (Sn. V. 1055). He has done away with the 'abode of the mind' ('*nivesanam. yo manaso ahāsi*' - Sn. V. 470) and is 'abodeless' (*anoko* - S. I. 126) in the fullest sense of the term. The distinctions between a 'subtle' (*aṇum*), and a gross (*thūlam*), which may well be a reference to the relativity of mass, have also faded away (D. I. 213). So too, the concepts suggestive of the relativity of motion, such as 'coming' 'going and 'standing' (*āgati gati thiti*. — Ud. 80). Relativity of time which the modern world regards as the 'brain-child' of Einstein, was not only discovered but transcended by the Buddha in that extra-ordinary dimension of the mind. 'Death-and-birth' (*cutupapaata*) - the most formidable dichotomy of all - has no sway at all in that jhanic consciousness of the emancipated one.

The elusive phenomenon of time, is hypostatized in Buddhist usage in that multiple personality of *Māra* - the god of Death. As his epithet, 'kinsman of the indolent' (*pamattabandhu*)

ironically suggests, he has the vicious trait of lying low in order to take his victim unawares. He is also very aptly called 'the Ender' (*antaka*). *Māra* as the symbol of death, is indeed 'the curfew' that 'tolls the knell of parting day.' Now, the Buddha and the arahants are those who have outwitted *Māra*, blinded him, put him off the track and attained the Deathless. (M I. 160 Dhp. V. 274; Ud. 46; Itiv 50, 53, etc). This feat was made possible by a recognition of the principle of the relativity of time.

The Buddha discovered that the concepts of birth and death are correlative - the one being given the other follows (D. II. 55). And the concept of birth itself, is born in the matrix of the notion of becoming or existence (*bhava*). The 'becoming,' the existence, is an attempt to 'stand-forth' - that is, to stand forth in defiance of the universal law of impermanence. It is an ever-failing struggle, but the struggle (ie, *Dukkha*) itself continues depending on the supply of fuel, which is *upādāna* ('grasping'). 'Dependent on grasping is becoming; having become one undergoes suffering; unto the born there is death; this is the origin of suffering.' (Sn. V. 742). The Buddha realized that *Māra*'s tragic drama of birth-decay-and-death, is staged on this supply of fuel itself: 'Whatever they grasp in the world, by that itself does *Mara* pursue a man' ('*yam yam hi lokasmim upādiyanti-teneva māro anveti jantum*' - Sn.v.1103). "Whatever they egotistically conceive of, *ipso facto* it becomes otherwise" ('*yena yena hi maññanti tato tam hoti aññathā*' Sn. v. 757). The only escape from *Mara*'s strategy, therefore, lay in the complete giving-up of all supplies of fuel which grasping implies (*anupādā parinibbāna*). "Save by their giving up all - no

weal for beings do I behold" (*'nāññatra sabbanissagā - sotthim passāmi pāṇinam'* - S. I. 53). With the cessation of the process of grasping and becoming (i.e., *'upādānanirodha'* and *'bhavanirodha'*) consequent on destruction of craving or 'thirst' (*taṇhakkhaya*), all 'assets'\* are abandoned (*nirupadhi*), thus depriving Māra of the basic wherewithal for his drama.

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\*Upadhi: The word has two distinct shades of meaning. Primarily, in accordance with its etymology (*upa+dhā* - 'putting under or near') it means 'foundation,' 'basis,' 'ground,' 'substratum' or 'support' (Cf. *upādhāna* - pillow or bolster). Secondly, in its Canonical usage it often stands for one's possessions ('wife and children,' flocks and herds, silver and gold, etc. M. I. 162. Sn.v.33 = S.I.6=S.I.107. Translators who stressed the former sense preferred 'substratum' 'support' 'basis' or 'ground,' while those who went in for the latter, used such terms as 'possession,' 'attachment' and 'clinging.' Perhaps 'asset' will do justice to both senses, since assets are 'things laid-by' which one 'relies on' as 'supports.' (Cf. *'upadhīsu tāṇam na karonti buddhā'* - S.I.107: 'Buddhas do not seek refuge in assets'; *'Sammādiṭṭhi sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā'* - M. III. 72: 'Right view associated with influxes, on the side of merits and ripening into assets'). Being less impersonal than 'substratum,' it captures the nuances of the secondary sense as well. Being less trenchant than 'clinging' or 'attachment,' it is better suited in references to the arahant's *'Saupādisesa-Nibbāna-dhātu,'* since he is no longer attached to the assets, which are now, for him mere appendages (though *upādi* is of different derivation than *upadhi*).

Once Mara, in his role as Tempter, declares, in the presence of the Buddha, that such assets like sons and cattle are a source of joy to a man, but the Buddha's reprisal was that, on the contrary, they are a source of grief (S. I. 107). All assets, in the long run, turn out to be liabilities.

By giving them up, the arahant has transcended time, and the concepts of existence, birth, decay and death have lost their significance for him. (See A. V. 152; S. IV. 207; Sn. vv. 467, 500, 743, 902, 1048, 1056, 1057). Nibbāna is not only the Deathless (*amataṃ*) it is also the Birthless (*ajātaṃ*) Epithets of Nibbāna such as the 'not-become,' (*abhutaṃ*), the 'not-made' (*akataṃ*) and 'not compounded' (*asaṅkhatam*) suggest the absence of that fundamental notion of existence which gives rise to the relative distinctions of birth, decay and death.

"Monks, there are these three compound-characteristics of the compounded. Which are the three? An arising is manifest, a passing away is manifest, a change in persistence is manifest... Monks, there are these three un-compounded characteristics of the un-compounded. Which are the three? No arising is manifest, no passing away is manifest, no change in persistence is manifest..." (A.I.152).

The emancipated-one is 'in the world' but not 'of the world.' For him, the world is no longer the arena of a life-and-death struggle in which he is sorely involved but one vast illustration of the first principles of impermanence, suffering and not-self - of the separative (*nānābhāvo*), privative (*vinābhāvo*)

and transformative (*aññathābhāvo*) nature of all existence. He experiences the ambrosial Deathlessness in the very destruction of craving and consequent detachment characteristic of that unique samādhi ('*khayaṃ virāgaṃ amataṃ pañītaṃ - yadajjhagā sakyamunī samāhito*': 'That destruction (of craving), that detachment, that excellent deathless state which the Sakyan sage attained to, being concentrated.' - Sn. v. 225).

His contemplative gaze is now fixed, not on the 'things' (*dhammā*) with their fluid, superficial boundaries, but on that nature of things (*dhammatā, dhammadhātu*) — that causal-status (*dhammatthitatā*),.. that causal orderliness (*dhammaniyāmatā*), namely, the 'relatedness-of-this-to-that' (*idappaccayatā* - S. II. 26). 'This being, this becomes: from the arising of this, this arises. This not being, this becomes not: from the ceasing of this, this ceases' (M. III. 63). 'Whatever is of a nature to arise, all that has the nature to cease' (S. IV. 192). This law of Dependent Arising itself being always 'such,' invariable and not-otherwise (*tathatā avitathatā, anaññathatā idappaccayatā* — S.II.26), in its contemplation the arahant's mind too is firm and steady. 'Mind is steady and well-freed, and he sees its passing away' (*thitam.. cittam. vipparamuttam. — vayañcassānupassati* — A. III. 379). Hence he is 'such' (*tādī*) in his adaptability and resilience, having understood the suchness (*tathata*) of all conditioned phenomena. It is to one who takes his stand upon the concepts of existence and birth, that the fear of decay and death can occur. To the emancipated one who is fully attuned to the reality of impermanence by giving up all standpoints, there can be no fear at all. And when 'Death' does come, as



surely it must, he is no more shocked at it than at the crash of an extremely brittle jar ascertained well in advance to be perforated-beyond-use — a 'jar' not-worth-its-name.

The prospect of eluding death by travelling into outer space, has kindled the imagination of the modern scientist also, though, unlike Rohitassa, he did not take it up in all seriousness. He has, however, speculated on the possibility of prolonging human life by flying to a distant star many light-years away in an Einstein rocket. '...Theoretically, travelling at a sufficiently high speed we can reach the star and return to the Earth within a minute! But on the Earth 80 years will have passed just the same. To all appearances, we thus possess a way of prolonging human life, though only from the point of view of other people, since man ages according to "his" own time. To our regret, however, this prospect is illusory if we take a closer look at it...' (op. cit. p. 50). No wonder that the prospect is illusory, particularly when it is examined in the context of the Buddha's teachings. Indeed, 'man ages according to "his" own time,' and this, as shown above, was precisely the point of divergence for the Buddha.

That end of the world where one does not get born, nor die, nor pass away, nor get reborn, is therefore, within this very fathom-long physical frame with its perceptions and mind. This momentous declaration is quite popular with writers on Buddhism, and perhaps for that very reason, it has rarely enjoyed the privilege of a long annotation. Traditionally too, it does not seem to have been much favoured in this respect, if

Buddhaghosa's commentary to the sutta is any indication. As Mrs. Rhys Davids remarks: 'It was a great opportunity for exegesis, but Buddhaghosa makes no use of it.' (K. S. I. 86 fn. 3).

## Interest and Rest (An Epilogue)

Interest takes you half the way. That is the 'root' of the 'matter' – where we butt in with a 'But the thing is...'

To 'get - interested' in something is to find a 'perch' in the fleeting trend of thought, the rapidity of which the Buddha declared – has no parallel".

"It is not easy to give a simile to show how rapidly thought changes, "A. N. I.10.

Then how does 'interest' come in?

Interesting as it may seem, interest ('chanda') is a euphemism for craving ('taṇhā'). It is a seemingly innocuous representative of craving- the lightest shade of it, as it were. It works almost unseen like the root of a plant. It is the 'mouse' which controls the 'cursor' - attention ('manasikāra')

Where interest rests, you find yourself attending to some point of contact (phasso) and you become aware of three grades of feeling (vedanā)- pleasant, unpleasant and neutral (sukha, dukkha, adukkamasukha).

Your concentration now picks up the thing of your choice – and there you are!

Concentration is the harbinger of the 'thing' and you are either happy, unhappy, or bored.

You are now fully involved in it with 'mind-fulness' (sati) That is, you can be mindful of your pleasure, pain or boredom.

According to the Buddha, the uninstructed wording is always 'see sawing' between pain and pleasure. It is the 'blind alley he finds himself in - ignorant as he is.

' .....on being touched by painful feeling, he delights in sense pleasures, and why is that? The uninstructed worldling, monk, knows no way out of painful feeling, other than sense pleasures '..... S1208

But is there an exit from this blind alley? Is there an end to this 'see-sawing'?

'Yes' says the Buddha, you have to move towards the middle - the fulcrum - leaving the extremes of pain and pleasure. You have to find an interest in the neutral. though it may appear 'boring' . In fact you have to go on boring at the middle. If you delve deeper at the middle, you can get at the Truth and find an Exit.

It is true that we are usually not 'interested" in the neutral. We simply ignore it. We are indifferent. All the same , ignorance lurks there. However , If we delve deeper at this point with right attention (yoniso manasikara) ignorance gets transformed into wisdom. That is the light in which you see the exit.

At one time the Buddha instructed the monks as to how they should reply to a series of questions likely to be raised by wandering ascetics of other sects, concerning, the origin, behavior and purpose of 'all things' (sabbe dhammā)

"..... when thus questioned, monks, you may reply to those wandering ascetics as follows"

'Rooted in interest (desire) are all things.

Born of attention are all things

Arising from contact are all things'

Converging on feeling are all things

Headed by concentration are all things

Dominated by mindfulness are all things

Surmountable by wisdom are all things

Yielding Deliverance as essence are all things

Merging in the Deathless are all things

Terminating in Nibbana are all things

"When thus questioned monks, You may reply in this way to those wandering ascetics of other sects"

-A V 106f

So, after all, interest takes you only half the way, and it is wisdom that takes care of the rest. In fact, you are fully 'at rest' when there is no 'inter-rest' !\*

(From Topsy-turvydom to Wisdom Vol II p35)

\* Cf. p.9 : 'state of rest'

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**Pothgulgala Dharmagrantha  
Dharmasravana Mādhya Bhāraya**

This is to inform our readers that all Dhamma books so far written and yet to be written by Venerable Bhikkhu Kaṭukurunde Ñāṇananda will hereafter be published by the P.D.D.M.B. (Kandy) and that the D.G.M.B. (Colombo) would not be publishing any of his books.

P.D.D.M.B.  
Kandy  
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