

REALITIES AND CONCEPTS

The Buddha's explanation of the world

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Translated from the Thai by Nina van Gorkom

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FOREWORD

What is real and what is only concept? Or is anything real? We might think these perennial questions are the irrelevant musings of philosophers. In fact, as the following pages make clear, they are pertinent to every moment of our lives. More than 2500 years ago, Siddhattha Gotama, the Buddha, comprehended the answers to them; and with unlimited patience and compassion explained how to develop that same knowledge. We are extraordinarily fortunate to live in a period where his complete teachings are still available.

There are now many books in English that give an overview of Buddhism, but the deeper aspects that people in Thailand receive on a daily basis, on the radio and in print, are seldom seen in the West. This book is, accordingly, a very welcome addition to this sparsely sown area. However, for those not steeped in the Buddhist scriptures, it is a difficult read. The subject is profound and many words from Pāli language are used. Nevertheless, it is not beyond the capacity of anyone who perseveres. The Pāli terms actually promote clarity as their meaning is precise; they are used because the English equivalents are too approximate and have varying connotations. It should also be understood that the goal of the book is not to help readers gain mere intellectual comprehension. It aims, rather, to be a support for experiential understanding of realities as they arise at the six doors. If this practical purpose is kept in mind the apparent technicality of the text will be brushed aside and the deep truths may be glimpsed.

Realities and Concepts

Wise readers will then hopefully pursue further knowledge and consult the Tipiïaka (the collection of the Buddha's teachings) and commentaries; they may even be encouraged to begin to study realities directly, as they appear at this moment.

Realities and Concepts is a section from a much larger book, *A Survey of Paramattha Dhammas*, by Sujin Boriharnwanaket. This comprehensive guide has been reprinted many times in its original Thai version and has now been translated into English. Further sections will be published in the future.

For those who would like background reading *The Buddha's Path* and *Abhidhamma in Daily Life*, both by Nina van Gorkom, are recommended (Zolag, London). English translations of the Tipiïaka and many of the commentaries can be obtained from the Pali Text Society, Oxford.

About the Author

Sujin Boriharnwanaket has been explaining Abhidhamma and the path of vipassanà for forty years. Her talks are broadcast daily on more than twenty radio stations throughout Thailand and are a source of guidance for monks, nuns and laypeople alike.

Realities and Concepts

Part 1

Paramattha dhammas¹ are realities, they are not beings, people, or self. The paramattha dhammas that arise are only citta, cetasika, and rúpa,² which each has its own characteristic, its own nature. They arise because of conditions and then they fall away again very rapidly. If one does not know the characteristics of citta, cetasika, and rúpa, paramattha dhammas, which arise and fall away and succeed one another very rapidly, one knows just concepts. One takes rúpa and náma,³ which arise and fall away in succession, for things which are lasting. Thus, one lives in the world of conventional truth, sammutti sacca. When realities appear one clings to shape and form, to a “whole”, one takes fleeting realities for things that exist. However, when one has studied paramattha dhammas and knows how to develop paññá (wisdom), there can be awareness of the characteristics that appear and paññá can become keener. Then the stage of insight can be reached which is the clear under-

¹ Paramattha dhammas: usually translated as ultimate, absolute, or fundamental realities.

² Citta, cetasika, and rúpa: Citta is a moment of consciousness which cognizes an object; seeing, for example cognizes colour. There is one citta at a time and it is accompanied by several cetasikas, mental factors, which each perform their own function. Rúpa, physical phenomena (materiality, matter), does not know anything.

³ Náma : mental phenomena, that is citta and cetasika. Rúpa: physical phenomena.

standing of realities that arise and fall away at this moment. One will clearly see that there is no being, person or self. One will know that there are only paramattha dhammas that appear one at a time. This is in accordance with the truth which the Buddha realized at his enlightenment and which he taught to others.

Ignorance is deeply rooted and very persistent. It conditions us to cling to conventional truth and to take realities for things, beings, and people. From the moment of rebirth-consciousness there are *nāma* and *rūpa* which are arising and falling away, succeeding one another all the time. When we leave our mother's womb and enter this world we experience the sense objects which appear through the six doors. We see, hear, smell, taste, and experience cold and heat through the bodysense. We do not know that what appears through the eyes is only a kind of reality that can be seen, visible object. Realities arise and fall away and succeed one another all the time, but it seems as if they do not arise and fall away and thus they are taken for "something". We cling to a concept of things as a mass, a conglomeration or whole (*gaṇa paññatti*). We may do this even when we don't know yet the conventional terms of things. Even small children, who cannot talk yet and do not know the meanings of things as expressed in language, and also animals, know concepts of a "whole". When a child grows up it learns the correct meaning of the words used in language which denote concepts. Thus, the child becomes familiar with conventional truth.

Realities and Concepts

If we only know conventional truth, and do not develop right understanding of náma (mentality) and rúpa (physical phenomena), realities appear as if they do not arise and fall away. It seems that we see things, beings, and people. We may touch a cup, a plate, a spoon or fork, but in reality it is just the element of earth⁴ or hardness that is touched. What do we see or touch in daily life? When we touch something we are not used to realizing that the reality of hardness can be touched. We have the feeling that we touch a spoon, a fork, a plate, a cup. Since realities arise and fall away and succeed one another very rapidly we cling to the shape and form of things, to a conglomeration or mass. It seems that the spoon is hard, the fork is hard, the cup is hard, the plate is hard. In reality, what is touched is only the rúpa (physical phenomena) which is hardness, the element of hardness. Since we remember the different shapes and forms of things we know that a cup is not a dish, a spoon is not a fork. What is real in the absolute sense is rúpa dhamma, which has the characteristic of hardness, but we remember only what is real in the conventional sense. We remember that a dish is for serving rice, a bowl for curry and a spoon for serving food.

One recognizes the conventional things, which are in reality different elements of hardness. When one sees, for example, a radio or television one takes it for granted that they are composed of iron, plastic, and other materials. However, in reality the component parts are only

⁴ The element of Earth denotes solidity appearing as hardness or softness. It can be experienced through touch.

different *rúpa* elements. One may be forgetful of the characteristics of *nāma* dhammas and *rúpa* dhammas that appear one at a time and then fall away. One remembers the conventional terms of things after seeing what appears through the eyes. There are all the time more and more conventional terms needed because every day there are new inventions. When we know the shape and form of different things which appear as a mass or a whole, we know concepts, thus, conventional truth, not absolute truth.

We know the concept of a whole or a mass (*gaṇa paññatti*) because of the experience of visible object. Apart from this we know a concept of sound (*sadda paññatti*), we know the meaning of sounds. All this occurs in daily life. We should know precisely what is absolute truth and what is conventional truth. Conventional truth is not real in the absolute sense. We recognize the shape and form of things and they appear as a cup, a dish, a spoon, a radio, a car, or television. Human beings can utter sounds that form up words; they use conventional terms with which they name the things that appear. Thus we can understand which thing is referred to. Animals cannot, to the same extent as human beings, refer to things by means of language. Sound is a reality; different sounds constitute words or names. There could not be words or names without sounds. When someone has eyesight he can see different things, but he needs also speech sounds which form up words and names in order to refer to what he sees. When someone knows the meaning of the sounds that form up words, he can speak, he can name things and refer to different subjects. We all

Realities and Concepts

cling to names which are used in conventional language. We should also know absolute realities. We should know the characteristic of sound, a kind of reality that can be heard. The reality of sound is named differently in different languages. In English the word “sound” is used to denote this reality. In Pāli it is named “sadda-rúpa”. No matter how one names it, it is a reality which has its own characteristic: it is a rúpa (physical phenomena) which appears through ears, it is not nāma (mentality), a reality which experiences.

The commentary to the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*,⁵ the *Abhidhammattha Vibhāvanī*, (Book 8), gives an explanation of paramattha dhammas (fundamental or ultimate realities), sammutti dhammas (conventional realities) and paññatti dhammas (concepts). This subject pertains to daily life, it is deep in meaning and it should be correctly understood. Names can be given because there is the reality of sound. Sounds form up names, in Pāli: nāma. This word nāma does not refer to nāma-dhamma, the reality that experiences. A name “bends towards,” conveys the meanings of things. “Namati” in Pāli means: to bend, incline towards. According to the subcommentary there are two kinds of names: a name which is suitable to convey a meaning, and a name which is used because of preference. About what do we speak in daily life? Why do we speak? We speak in order

⁵ *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*: an encyclopedia of the Abhidhamma, ascribed to Anuruddha and composed sometime between the 8th and 12th century A.D. It has been translated as a *A Manual of Abhidhamma* by Venerable Narada, Colombo, and as *Compendium of Philosophy* in a Pali Text Society edition.

that someone else will understand the subject we refer to. Thus, *sadda-rúpa* (sound) functions then as name, *nāma*, it bends towards, conveys the meaning of the different subjects we want to make known. The fact that someone else understands the meaning of what we say and the subjects we speak about depends on the words we use to convey the meaning, it depends on the language we choose to express ourselves. The *Abhidhammattha Vibhāvanī* deals with several other aspects concerning different kinds of names. It distinguishes between four kinds of names. There are names which are generally agreed upon (*sāmañña nāma*), such as sky, rain, wind, or rice. There are names denoting a special quality (*guṇa nāma*), such as “Arahatta Sammāsambuddho.”⁶ Someone who does not have the special qualities of a Buddha cannot have this name. Then there are names denoting activity (*kiriya nāma*) and names that are given according to ones liking. The Dhamma is very intricate and detailed. We should study all realities that the Buddha realized at his enlightenment and taught to others. He wanted to help people to understand the true nature of the realities which appear. The *Abhidhammattha Vibhāvanī* states:

Question: For which reason did the Buddha teach the Dhamma in such an extensive way?

Answer: Because he wished to help three groups of beings.

There are beings who are slow in understanding *nāma* (mentality), beings who are slow in understanding *rúpa* (materiality, physical phenomena), and beings who are

⁶ The Fully Enlightened One. Epithet of the Buddha.

Realities and Concepts

slow in understanding both *nāma* and *rūpa*. They have different faculties: some have keen faculties, some have faculties of medium strength, and some have weak faculties. There are people who like short explanations, there are people who like explanations of medium length, and there are people who like detailed explanations. Those among the different groups who are slow in understanding as regards *nāma* can understand realities as explained by way of five *khandhas*,⁷ because *nāma* is classified by way of four *khandhas*, thus, in a more extensive way. Those who are slow in understanding as regards *rūpa* can understand realities as explained by way of *āyatanas*.⁸ The five senses and the five sense objects are ten kinds of *rūpa* which are *āyatanas*. As to *dhammāyatana* this comprises both *nāma* and *rūpa*. Thus in this classification *rūpa* has been explained more extensively. Those who are slow in understanding as to both *nāma* and *rūpa* can understand realities as explained by way of elements, *dhātus*,⁹ because in this classification both *nāma* and *rūpa* have been explained in detail.

⁷ The five *khandhas* (aggregates) are *rūpa* (matter), *saññā* (perception, memory), *vedanā* (feeling), *saòkhāra* (all other mental factors) and *viññāua* (*citta* or consciousness).

⁸ The twelve *āyatanas* (bases) are eye base, visible object base, ear base, sound base, nose base, odour base, tongue base, flavour base, body base, tangible-data base (includes hardness, softness, heat, etc.), mind base, mental object base. *Dhammāyatana*, mental object base includes objects experienced through the mind-door. Mind base, *manāyatana* includes all *cittas*.

⁹ The eighteen *dhātus* (elements) include three for each sense-door. For the eye-door these are: eye element, visible object element, seeing-consciousness element. The other five doors are ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. (See *Visuddhimagga* XV, 17)

We should consider whether we are people who are slow in understanding only as regards *nāma* (mentality), only as regards *rúpa* (materiality) or as regards both *nāma* and *rúpa*. If we are of slow understanding as regards both *nāma* and *rúpa* we need to listen to the Dhamma very often, and we need to study different aspects of the teachings in detail. This is necessary in order to have right understanding of realities and to be able to cultivate all kinds of kusala. In this way there will be supporting conditions for *satipañhāna* to arise and be aware of the characteristics of realities, just as they naturally appear in daily life.

The *Abhidhammattha Vibhāvanī* (Book 8) distinguishes between six kinds of concepts that are names, *nāmapaññatti* (see *Visuddhimagga* VIII, note 11).

1. *Vijjamāna paññattis*, concepts which make known what is real, for example the words *rúpa*, *nāma*, *vedanā* (feeling), or *saññā* (perception)¹⁰.
2. *Avijjamāna paññattis*, concepts which make known what is not real, such as the words Thai or foreigner. These concepts do not represent absolute realities, *citta* and *cetasika* which are *nāma*, and *rúpa*. Thai or foreigner are not real in the absolute sense, they are conventional realities, *sammutti dhammas*. Could *akusala citta*¹¹ (unwholesome consciousness) be Thai or foreign? *Akusala citta* is a *paramattha dhamma* (a reality), it is a

¹⁰ *Vedanā* and *saññā* are *cetasikas* which accompany each *citta*.

¹¹ *Akusala citta* includes mind states with greed, delusion, or aversion. *Kusala citta* includes all wholesome, or skillful mind states.

Realities and Concepts

dhamma which has its own characteristic, it is not Thai or foreign.

3. Vijjamānena avijjamāna paññattis, concepts of the non-existent based on the existent. There is the expression “the person with the six abhiññās.”¹² The six abhiññās are real but person is not real. Thus this concept stands for what is real and for what is not real.

4. Avijjamānena vijjamāna paññattis, concepts of the existent based on the non-existent. There is the expression “woman’s voice”. The sound is real, but the woman is not real.

5. Vijjamānena vijjamāna paññattis, concepts of what is real based on what is real. There is the term cakkhu-viññāṇa (eye-consciousness). Cakkhu (eye) is a reality, namely the cakkhu-pasāda-rūpa (eyesense, a reality sensitive to colour or visible object), and viññāṇa (consciousness) is also a reality, namely the reality which experiences.

6. Avija amānena avijjamāna paññattis, concepts of what is not real based on what is not real. There is the expression “the king’s son”. Both king and son are not real, they are sammutti dhammas, conventional realities.

There are objects which are real and there are objects which are not real. Objects can be experienced through six doors and they can be classified as sixfold:

Visible object (rūpārammaṇa) can be known through the eye-door.

¹² Abhiññās are supernatural powers.

Sound (saddārammaṇa) can be known through the ear-door.

Odour can be known through the nose-door.

Flavour can be known through the tongue-door.

Tangible object can be known through the body-door.

Dhammārammaṇa (mental object) can be known through the mind-door.

As to visible object, this is the reality that appears through the eyes. It is the object of *vīthi-cittas*¹³ that arise depending on the eyesense, the *cakkhu-pasāda-rūpa*. When visible object has fallen away there are many *bhavanga-cittas*¹⁴ arising and falling away, and then *vīthi-cittas* of the mind-door process experience the visible object which has just fallen away. Thus, visible object can be experienced through two doors: through the eye-door, and, after there have been *bhavanga-cittas* in between, through the mind-door.

As to sound, this is the reality that appears through ears. It is the object of *vīthi-cittas* which arise depending on the earsense, the *sota-pasāda-rūpa*. It appears through the mind-door after there have been *bhavanga-cittas* in between. There have to be *bhavanga-cittas* after each

¹³ *Cittas* experiencing objects that impinge on the six doors arise in a process of *cittas*, they are *vīthi-cittas*. Visible object is not only experienced by seeing-consciousness, but also by other *cittas* arising within a process. See appendix.

¹⁴ *Bhavanga-cittas*, translated as life continuum. *Bhavanga-cittas* arise in between the processes of *cittas*. They do not experience the objects which impinge on the five sense-doors and the mind-door. They experience the same object as the rebirth-consciousness, the first *citta* in life. See appendix.

Realities and Concepts

process of cittas. Thus, there must always be bhavanga-cittas in between a sense-door process and a mind-door process. When we hear a sound and know the meaning of what is heard there are different processes. When one knows the meaning of a word there are mind-door processes of cittas which think of that word. These cittas are different from cittas of the ear-door process which experience the sound which has not fallen away yet.

As regards odour, this is the reality which appears through the nose. It is the object of cittas which arise depending on the rúpa which is smelling-sense. After there have been bhavanga-cittas in between, there are cittas of the mind-door process which experience odour.

As regards flavour, this is the reality which appears through the tongue. It is the object of cittas which depend on the rúpa which is tasting-sense. After there have been bhavanga-cittas in between there are cittas of the mind-door process which experience flavour.

As regards tangible object, this is cold, heat, softness, hardness, motion and pressure which appear through the bodysense. They are the objects of cittas which arise depending on the bodysense. After there have been bhavanga-cittas in between, there are cittas of the mind-door process which experience tangible object.

The five classes of sense objects, which have just been mentioned, can appear through six doors. When the cittas of the eye-door process have arisen and experienced visible object through the eye-door there are, after there have been bhavanga-cittas in between, cittas of the

mind-door process which experience visible object through the mind-door. It is the same with the experience of the other sense objects. These objects are experienced by the cittas of the corresponding sense-door processes, and then, after there have been bhavanga-cittas, they are experienced through the mind-door. Thus each of the five classes of sense objects are experienced through their corresponding sense-door and through the mind-door. They are experienced through the six doors: the eye-door, the ear-door, the nose-door, the tongue-door, the body-door, and the mind-door.

There is one other class of objects, namely dhammārammaṇa (mental object). This class of objects can only be experienced through the mind-door. There are six kinds of dhammārammaṇa:

the five pasāda-rūpas (senses),

sixteen subtle rūpas (sukhuma rūpas),¹⁵

citta, cetasika, nibbāna, and concepts (paññattis). Five classes of dhammārammaṇa, namely, the pasāda-rūpas, the subtle rūpas, citta, cetasika, and nibbāna are paramattha dhammas. One class, the paññattis, are not paramattha dhammas.

The cittas of the eye-door process, namely the eye-door adverting-consciousness, seeing-consciousness, receiving-consciousness, investigating-consciousness, determining-

¹⁵ There are 28 kinds of rūpas. Twelve are gross and sixteen are subtle. The gross rūpas are the five sense-organs and the sense objects which can be experienced through eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, and three rūpas which can be experienced through the bodysense, namely, solidity, temperature, and motion. Subtle rūpas include, for example, cohesion and nutritive essence.

Realities and Concepts

consciousness, the javana-cittas¹⁶ and the tadāmbana-cittas¹⁷ (retention), experience visible object which has not fallen away yet. They do not have a concept as object.

The cittas of the ear-door process experience sound which has not fallen away yet, they do not have a concept as object. It is the same with the cittas of the nose-door process, the tongue-door process and the body-door process.

When the vīthi-cittas of a sense-door process have fallen away, there are many bhavanga-cittas in between, and then there are cittas of the mind-door process. The first series of cittas of the mind-door process which arise after a sense-door process experience a sense object which has only just fallen away, they do not have a concept as object.

In each series of mind-door process cittas there are two or three kinds of vīthi-cittas, namely: one moment of mind-door advertent-consciousness, seven moments of javana-cittas and two moments of tadāmbana-cittas. When the first series of mind-door process cittas has fallen away, there are many bhavanga-cittas in between, and then there is another series of mind-door process

¹⁶ Javana literally means “running through,” impulsion; the javana-cittas arise in the sense-door processes, and they “run through the object.” There are usually seven javana-cittas in a process of cittas, and these are kusala or akusala in the case of non-arahats. Arahats do not have kusala cittas or akusala cittas, they have kiriyacittas.

¹⁷ Tadāmbana: this is also called tadārammaṇa. See appendix.

cittas, which can have as object a concept (such as shape and form, or the image of something as a “whole”) on account of a sense object. When this series of mind-door process cittas has fallen away there are bhavanga-cittas in between, and then there are more rounds of mind-door process cittas which follow. They know the meaning of something, they know words and names. In between the different series there are bhavanga-cittas. When we know that we see people or different things, the citta experiences a concept, not a paramattha dhamma which is rúpa. The object which is a paramattha dhamma appearing through the eyes are only different colours. When the víthi-cittas of the mind-door process know that there are beings, people and different things, then the cittas have paññattis, concepts, as object. They know what a particular thing is.

Paramattha dhammas are not paññatti dhammas. Paramattha dhammas are realities which each have their own characteristics which can be directly experienced, even if one does not use terms to name them. Paññatti dhammas, concepts, are not absolute realities. We may see a painting of fruits, such as grapes, or mangos, and we may see real grapes, and mangos. What is then a concept? When we see a painting of mountains, of the sea, or trees, we know that it is a picture. When we see real mountains or trees do we believe that these are realities, not concepts? It is evident that names are concepts, paññattis, because they convey the characteristics or the meaning of phenomena. However, even if one does not name things yet or there is no name yet, one can already think of a concept of a “whole” or a mass.

Realities and Concepts

There can be a concept or idea of “something” which appears even though one does not know any language or words to express its meaning. When we know what it is that appears, even without naming it, we know a paññatti (concept). When we see what is only a painting of fruits and real fruits, both the painting and the real fruits are paññattis. A paññatti (concept) is not a paramattha dhamma (reality). As we have seen there are many aspects with regard to paññatti. It can be an idea of a whole or a mass or it can be a name or term that refers to something, be it real or not real. What is the difference between real fruits and a painting of fruits? What appears through the eyes while one sees are not beings, people, or different things. No matter whether one sees a painting of grapes or the real grapes, through eyes only colour appears. We may believe that only the picture is a paññatti and that the real grapes are not a paññatti (concept). However, in reality the picture as well as the real grapes that appear are objects which are paññatti experienced by mind-door process cittas. The cittas of the eye-door process experience only colour which appears. The cittas of the mind-door process that experience a concept know the meaning of something, they know what something is. They know that there are grapes. Thus, the cittas (moments of consciousness) which know that there are grapes, have a concept, a paññatti, as object, not a paramattha dhamma. When we see somebody, we should know that this is in reality the same as seeing a picture, thus, we know in both cases a concept. It is difficult to separate concepts from realities, for example, when we notice that there is a chair. The

object which is the paramattha dhamma appearing through the eyes and the object which is the paramattha dhamma appearing through the bodysense are not paññattis.

Question: I do not understand very well conventional realities. I see at this moment a pen. You say that when one sees that there is a pen it is evident that the sense-door process has passed and that there is already a mind-door process. I do not know how I should study or practice so that I do not let the sense-door process pass without knowing it.

Sujin: One should listen to the Dhamma so that one will really understand when the object of citta (consciousness) is a concept and through which door citta knows a concept. When citta has a paramattha dhamma (ultimate reality) as object, there are no beings, people or things, there is no self. At this moment realities arise and fall away and succeed one another so rapidly that it seems that we see a thing, such as a fan. The fan rotates, and it seems that we can see rūpas (matter) moving. In reality there are many series of mind-door process cittas which have a paññatti (concept) as object and thus the characteristics of the paramattha dhammas are hidden. One does not know the characteristics of the paramattha dhammas as they really are.

Question: If this is so, how can we do away with concepts?

Realities and Concepts

S.: That is not possible. However, one should understand correctly that, when one knows that there are beings, people, or things, there are at such moments mind-door process cittas which have a concept as object.

Question: Are there then cittas which think of words?

S.: Even when we do not think of words we can know a concept. When we know the shape and form of something, when we have a concept of something as a whole or know the meaning of something; that is, we know what something is, then the object is a paññatti (concept), not a paramattha dhamma (reality). The characteristics of realities should be known precisely so that their arising and falling away can be realized. Someone may believe that he does not see that a chair falls away. When we cannot distinguish the different characteristics of paramattha dhammas as they appear one at a time, we take them all together as a whole. When we see a chair we know a concept. How could a concept fall away? As to the example of a picture of grapes and real grapes, is there any difference when one touches them and there is the experience of tangible object through the bodysense? Is the element of hardness not the same in both cases? The element of hardness originates from different factors and this is the condition that there are different degrees of hardness and softness. Hardness is a reality which appears through the bodysense, no matter whether there is a picture of grapes or real grapes. However, the grapes in the picture do not have the flavour of real grapes. Real grapes can be recognised because there are different

types of rúpas (physical phenomena) which arise together. Flavour is one type of rúpa, odour is another type of rúpa. Cold or heat, softness or hardness, motion or pressure, these are all different types of rúpa which arise together and fall away very rapidly and are then succeeded by other rúpas. Thus we think of a concept of a thing which does not seem to fall away. In reality the rúpas that constitute grapes such as cold or heat, hardness or softness, or flavour, fall away. Each rúpa lasts only as long as seventeen moments of citta, no matter which colour, sound, or other type of rúpa it may be. Pañña (wisdom) should consider realities and know them one at a time, it should resolve the whole which is remembered by sañña (mental factor of remembrance or perception) into different elements. Thus it can be known that what one takes for a particular thing are in reality only different paramattha dhammas, each with their own characteristic, which arise and fall away together. When we join them together and have an image of a whole there are mind-door process cittas which have a concept of a whole, gaüa paññatti, as object.

Question: If it is known through the mind-door that there is a pen, is that right or wrong?

S.: It is not wrong. The object at that moment is a concept which is included in dhammārammaüa (mind-door object). However, pañña should realize the difference between the mind-door process and the eye-door process. When one does not develop pañña one cannot distinguish the sense-door process and the mind-door

Realities and Concepts

process from each other and then one believes that there are beings, people and different things. To what are we attached in daily life? What does lobha (mental factor of craving) like? It likes everything, and what does this mean?

Questioner: All things which are desirable.

S.: Lobha likes everything, including concepts. The world is full of concepts. We cannot stop liking paramattha dhammas as well as paññattis. Whenever we like something we do not merely like a paramattha dhamma, we also like a concept. When we, for example, like a particular belt we like the colour which appears through the eyes.

Q.: We like also its trademark.

S.: We like everything. When we say that we like colours, what are these colours? The colours of eyebrows, eyes, nose, or mouth. If there were no colours appearing how could there be eyebrows, eyes, nose, or mouth? There could not be. However, when we see colours such as red, green, grey, blue, or white we should know that colour is only the reality which appears through the eyes. Nevertheless, we like the colours of eyes, nose, and mouth, thus, we like concepts. Paramattha dhammas are real. However, when we like something we like both the paramattha dhamma which appears and the concept which is formed up on account of that paramattha dhamma.

The Buddha's Explanation of the World

Part II

The *Atthasālinī* (II, Book II, Part II,400) explains about being unguarded as to the “controlling faculties”, the indriyas. Here the indriyas of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind are referred to. We read: “Grasps the general appearance i.e., grasps by way of lusting desire a sign such as is of the male, or female, pleasant, etc., and which is the basis of corruption.”

When we cling to the general appearance of male or female, it shows that the object is not a paramattha dhamma. When we know that we see a man or woman, we don't just know the reality which appears through the eyes, but we have an image (nimitta), a concept on account of what appears through the eyes. The image of the general appearance of a man or woman is the foundation of defilements.¹⁸ Through the power of desire (chanda raga) we take that image for something attractive. When we like a concept such as a belt, it shows that the belt is an attractive image. One is attached to it, one is ruled by desire. If the belt is not beautiful, if it is not an attractive nimitta (image), one does not like it. On account of colours which appear through the eyes, there can be different nimittas, attractive or unattractive. We read further on in the *Atthasālinī*.

¹⁸ There are numerous defilements (unwholesome mental factors), such as lobha, greed, attachment, aversion, ignorance, and wrong view.

Grasps the details (anuvyañjana), “i.e. takes the various modes of hands and feet, of smiling, laughing, speaking, looking straight ahead, looking askance, which have earned the name of “details”, they manifest, reveal the defilements.

The details are the condition that defilements appear. When someone likes a belt he likes the general appearance, the image, and the details. If all belts were the same, if there were no variety of them, the details would not be different. However, there are many kinds of belts and they are different as to the details. The details condition the arising of different kinds of defilements.

Question: If we don't cling to concepts, I fear that we don't know that this is a pen.

Sujin: That is not so. We should know realities in accordance with the truth. What appears through the eyes falls away and then there are mind-door process cittas, which arise afterwards and know a concept. Pañña (wisdom) should know realities as they are. It should know what is visible object, which appears through the eye-door. It should know that the experience of visible object is different from the moment that citta knows a concept. Thus we can become detached from the idea that visible object which appears are beings, people, or things; we can become detached from that which is the foundation of clinging. We should understand that when it is known that there is a man, a woman, beings, or different people, the object is an image or concept known through the mind-door. When we develop sa-tipaïhàna we should know, in order to be able to realize the arising and falling away of nàma and rúpa, the

Realities and Concepts

characteristics of the realities just as they naturally appear. It should be known that paramattha dhammas are not concepts. One should continue to develop pañña when realities appear through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense, and mind-door.

Question: Did you say that a concept is a kind of dhammàrammaà (mind-door object)?

S.: A concept is dhammàrammaà. It is an object which can only be known through the mind-door.

Question: Are there also paramattha dhammas (ultimate realities) which are dhammàrammaà?

S. : There are six classes of dhammàrammaà.¹⁹ Five classes are paramattha dhammas and one class is not paramattha dhamma. We should know when the object is a concept. When the object is not a paramattha dhamma the object is a concept.

When we think of concepts in daily life the characteristics of the paramattha dhammas which are experienced through the six doors are hidden. Thus realities are not known as they are. One does not know that what appears through the eyes is not a being, person, or self. It is only colour which appears when it impinges on the eyesense. When will pañña become keener so that it will know the truth when there is seeing?

¹⁹ The six classes are: the five sense-organs, the sixteen subtle rūpas, citta, cetasika, nibbàna, and concept.

When the truth is known we will let go of the idea that there is a self, that there are beings or people. One will be able to distinguish between the object which is a paramattha dhamma and the object which is a concept and one will have right understanding of the realities which appear through the six doors.

Question: Which object is experienced while we are dreaming?

Everybody except an arahat is sure to dream. When we have woken up we say that we in our dream saw a relative who has passed away already. Do we, while we are dreaming, see a concept or a paramattha dhamma? If we do not consider this we will not know the truth. It seems as if we can really see in our dreams. However, if we ask someone what he sees in his dream, he will answer that he sees people, relatives and friends, that he sees different beings. Thus, when we dream we see concepts. At such moments the eye-door process cittas do not arise since we are asleep. However, cittas arising in the mind-door process are thinking, they “see” beings and people. When we are dreaming we think of concepts which are conceived on account of what we formerly saw, heard, or experienced through the other senses. Also, when we read about different subjects in the newspaper and see pictures we only think of concepts. Then we don't know the characteristics of paramattha dhammas (realities) which appear, we don't know the difference between concepts and paramattha dhammas. When we read or perform our tasks in daily life, there is

Realities and Concepts

seeing of what appears through the eyes, but we pay attention only to concepts and keep on thinking of them.

Concepts are conceived on account of what was heard. A small child often hears sounds but it does not know words yet, it does not understand conventional language. It sees, hears, smells, tastes, experiences tangible object, it experiences pain, it is angry, it has like and dislike, and it cries. However, it does not know words with which it can explain its feelings, it cannot speak yet until it has become older. Can anybody remember all that has happened from the moment he was born? Seeing, hearing, and other sense-cognitions arose but we could not use words to express ourselves since we did not understand yet the meaning of the different words used in speech. That is why the memory of the events of early childhood fades away. When we grow up we know the meaning of the different sounds which form up words in current speech which are used to express ourselves. We take in more and more impressions through eyes and ears and combine these experiences, and thus many kinds of events of our lives can be remembered. The world of conventional truth expands and there is no end to its development.

When one reads a story one also wants to see a moving picture of it and hear the corresponding sounds. We should realize to what extent the world of conventional truth hides realities, paramattha dhammas. We should consider what are concepts, not paramattha dhammas, when we, for example, watch television, when we watch a play and look at people talking. It seems that the

people who play in a film in television are real people but the story and the people who play in it are only concepts. The paramattha dhammas that appear fall away very rapidly and then they are succeeded by other realities. When we know that there is a particular person the object of the citta is a concept.

The characteristics of paramattha dhammas are hidden because of ignorance, avijjā, which does not know the difference between paramattha dhammas and concepts, paññattis. Therefore one is not able to realize the realities which appear through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind-door as not a being, a person, or self. If we study citta, cetasika (mental factors), and rūpa in more and more detail the intellectual understanding of the Dhamma will develop. This understanding is accumulated and thus conditions are developed for the arising of sati (mindfulness) which can be directly aware of the characteristics of paramattha dhammas. Thus there can be more detachment from the outward appearance (nimitta) and the details (anuvyañjana) which are forms of paññatti.

Question: Can a concept be an object of satipaṭṭhāna?

S: It cannot.

Question: From what I heard just a moment ago it seems that a concept can be the object of satipaṭṭhāna .

S.: Only paramattha dhammas can be the object of satipaṭṭhāna. When flavour impinges on the rūpa which

Realities and Concepts

is tastingsense, there are conditions for the arising of cittas which experience flavour through the tongue-door. First there is the five-door adverting-consciousness and then there are tasting-consciousness, receiving-consciousness, investigating-consciousness, determining-consciousness, the javana-cittas and the tadālabhāna-cittas (registering or retention). Then the flavour falls away and thus there is no grape in the absolute sense. However, when one joins different realities together into a whole, such as a grape, then the object is a concept.

Satipaṭṭhāna is developed when there is awareness of the characteristics of paramattha dhammas and they are realized as not a being, a person or self. When sati does not arise the characteristics of paramattha dhammas cannot be discerned, only concepts are known. Then there is all the time the idea of beings, people and self

Q: You said that concepts can be known through the mind-door. Therefore I am inclined to think that if there is awareness through the mind-door concepts can be the object of satipaṭṭhāna.

S.: In order to have more understanding of satipaṭṭhāna we should begin with this very moment. Is there a concept while you hear sound now? Sound is a paramattha dhamma. When citta knows the meaning of the sounds it knows a concept and it knows this through the mind-door. Citta thinks about different words. Sati can follow and be aware of that citta, so that it can be realized as just a type of citta which thinks of words.

Question: Thus satipaṭṭhāna can know the reality which is thinking, but it cannot know concepts. As far as I understand, each of the sense-door processes has to be followed by a mind-door process, it cannot be otherwise. When there is seeing there is an eye-door process, and after there have been bhavanga-cittas in between there is a mind-door process of cittas which experience visible object. Is that right?

S. The vīthi-cittas of the mind-door process which follow vīthi-cittas of a sense-door process, have to experience the same rūpa. If the javana-cittas of the sense-door process are lobha-mūla-cittas²⁰ (cittas rooted in attachment), the javana-cittas of the first mind-door process after that sense-door process have to be the same types of lobha-mūla-citta. The mind-door process follows extremely rapidly upon the sense-door process. With respect to this there is a simile of a bird which perches on a branch. As soon as the bird perches on the branch its shadow appears on the ground. Evenso, when the object has been experienced through the sense-door and there have been many bhavanga-cittas in between, arising and falling away very rapidly, it is immediately afterwards experienced through the mind-door. Since cittas succeed one another so rapidly one does not know that visible object which is experienced through the eyes is only a paramattha dhamma that can appear because it has impinged on the eyesense.

²⁰ Unwholesome cittas, akusala cittas, are cittas rooted in unwholesome roots, akusala hetus. They are lobha-mūla cittas, dosa-mūla cittas (cittas rooted in aversion or hate) or moha-mūla cittas, cittas rooted in ignorance.

Realities and Concepts

Question: When there is seeing through the eyes and we know that it is a pen, it shows that we know the word pen through the mind-door. Is that right?

S.: Before we can think of the word pen we already know a concept. A paññatti is not merely sadda paññatti, a concept of sound, a word or name.

Question: After seeing I remember what was seen. Is the object then already a concept?

S. The Pâi term paññatti means: it makes something known (derived from paññāpeti).

Question: Must each of the sense-door processes be followed by a mind-door process so that the meaning of things can be known?

S. The five sense objects which are visible object, sound, odour, flavour, and tangible object appear through two doorways. Thus, visible object appears through the eye-door and then, after there have been bhavanga-cittas in between, it appears through the mind-door. In the same way sound, odour, flavour, and tangible object appear through the corresponding sense-doors and then through the mind-door.

Question: When we taste a sour flavour and we notice that it is sour, do we experience already a concept?

S.: What is sour?

Q.: For example, a sour orange.

S.: The flavour is a paramattha dhamma, and when we think of a sour orange the object is a concept. The words sour orange are sadda paññatti, concept of sound. When we name something the object is a nāma paññatti, a concept which is a name. If there are no sounds, no words, and we do not think of the meaning of things, we do not pay much attention to objects. When sound is the object of cittas of the ear-door process and then of cittas of the mind-door process, saññā (mental factor of perception) which remembers the meaning of the different sounds conditions thinking about words and names.

Everything can be called by a name; such as a pen, a pencil, a table or a chair, these are all names. There is no dhamma which cannot be called by a name. Since dhammas have distinctive characteristics names are needed to make these known. Thus, dhammas are the cause of name giving. The *Atthasālinī* (Book II, Part II, Ch II, 391) describes the process of name giving. We read:

There is no being, no thing that may not be called by a name. Also the trees in the forest, the mountains are the business of the country folk. For they, on being asked, "What tree is this?" say the name they know, as "Cutch", "Mango tree". Even of the tree the name of which they know not, they say, "It is the nameless tree". And that also stands as the established name of that tree...

If there were no names it would be most difficult for people to understand one another. Even paramattha dhammas need to be named. The Buddha used concepts to classify dhammas according to their characteristics, such as the following names:

Realities and Concepts

the five khandhas,
the twelve āyatanas,
the eighteen elements,
the four Truths,²¹
the twenty two indriyas,²²
the different groups of people (puggala).

Thus the Dhamma the Buddha taught needs different terms and names in order to be understood.

The *Atthasālinī* uses different synonyms for nāma paññatti, concepts which are names.²³ It is an interpretation, an expression which renders the meaning of something in language (nirutti). A name is a distinctive sign which shows the meaning of something (vyañcana). There are sounds which people utter, letters combined as words which express the meaning of something (abhilāpa). These synonyms just explain the meaning of nāma paññatti, a name or term. A term makes the meaning of something known. The idea or notion which is made known can also be called concept. Thus, there are generally speaking two kinds of paññatti:

1. That which is made known (paññāpiyatta)
2. That which makes known (paññāpanato). The name or term (sadda paññatti) which makes known the meaning of things.

²¹ The four noble truths are: dukkha(suffering), the origin of dukkha, the cessation of dukkha, the way leading to the cessation of dukkha.

²² Indriya (faculties): see Visuddhimagga XVI, 1

²³ See footnote *Dhammasaṅgāṭi* (translated as *Buddhist Psychological Ethics* by P.T.S.) par.1306.

If we remember these two classes of concepts it will be easier to understand what a concept is. There are many kinds of concepts and they can be classified in different ways. One way of classifying them is the following (see *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* Ch VIII, section 4, on paññatis):

i) formal concept (saùihàna paññatti), corresponding to the form of things, such as land, mountain or tree, which are so designated on account of the mode of transition of the elements.

ii) collective concept (samúha paññatti), corresponding to modes of construction of materials, to a collection of things, such as a vehicle or a chariot.

iii) conventional concept (sammutti paññatti), such as person or individual, which is derived from the five khandhas.

iv) local concept (disà paññatti), a notion or idea derived from the revolving of the moon, such as the directions of East or West.

v) concept of time (kàla paññatti), such as morning, evening.

vi) concept of season (màsa paññatti), notions corresponding to seasons and months. The months are designated by names, such as Vesakha.

vii) concept of space (akàsa), such as a well or a cave. It is derived from space which is not contacted by the four Great Elements.

Realities and Concepts

viii) *nimitta paññatti*, the mental image which is acquired through the development of samatha, such as the nimitta of a kasina.

We read in the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*:

All such different things, although they do not exist in the ultimate sense, become objects of thought in the form of shadows of ultimate things. They are called *paññatti* because they are thought of, reckoned, understood, expressed, and made known on account of, in consideration of, with respect to, this or that mode. This kind of *paññatti* is so called because *it is made known*. As *it makes known*, it is described as name concept, name, name-made.

Lobha-múla-citta (consciousness with attachment) arises time and again through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind-door. Even when lobha-múla-citta is without wrong view (*diñhihigata vippayutta*), it is not merely attached to paramattha dhammas (realities) which appear through the six doors, but it is also attached to concepts. It is attached to the general appearance of things and to the details, it is attached to names and to subjects of thought.

We should ask ourselves at this moment what kind of object we usually experience in our daily life. The objects are mostly concepts and thus the characteristics of paramattha dhammas are hidden, they are not known as they are.

Question: When we touch grapes or a picture of grapes, softness and hardness²⁴ are paramattha dhammas, the

²⁴ Softness and hardness are tangible objects, rúpas, which can be experienced through the bodysense.

flavour of grapes is a paramattha dhamma. Many realities which are joined together constitute a real grape and this we call a concept. Thus I am inclined to think that a concept is real.

Sujin: The rúpa of flavour arises and then falls away, it can only last as long as seventeen moments of citta²⁵. The rúpa which is the colour of grapes arises and then falls away very rapidly since it only lasts as long as seventeen moments of citta. Can we then say that grapes exist?

Q.: They exist in our memory.

S.: There is a concept, a notion that there are grapes, but in reality there is only flavour which arises and then falls away, or hardness which arises and then falls away.

Q.: A concept is formed because many paramattha dhammas are joined together into a mass or a whole.

S. : When one does not realize the arising and falling away of one reality at a time one takes what appears to be a whole for a thing which exists.

Question: Is a concept not real? A concept is constituted of many kinds of paramattha dhammas (realities): softness, hardness, heat, colour, odour or flavour. They are joined together, they are a whole, a thing which has such or such colour, this or that shape. There is a concept of this or that person with such outward appearance. Thus a concept is constituted by paramattha dhammas.

Realities and Concepts

Sujin: One will know that concepts are not paramattha dhammas one if one learns to discern the characteristics of the different paramattha dhammas which arise together. One should be aware of one characteristic at a time as it appears through one doorway at a time. In order to know the truth we should realize the arising and falling away of rúpa, which appears through one doorway at a time.

Each rúpa lasts only as long as seventeen moments of citta and then it falls away. Therefore rúpa which arises has no time to stand, walk, or do anything. During the time one lifts one's hand already more than seventeen moments of citta have passed. One sees people walking or lifting their hands but in reality the rúpas which arise fall away immediately and are succeeded by other rúpas. The rúpa which is visible object appears to cittas of the eye-door process and then, after there have been bhavanga-cittas in between, there are many mind-door processes of cittas. That is why one can see people walking or lifting their hands. Seventeen moments of citta pass away extremely rapidly. Thus we should consider what happens in reality. It should be known that the rúpa which appears at this moment through the eyes only lasts seventeen moments of citta and that it must fall away before sound can be experienced through ears. It seems that there can be hearing and seeing at the same time, but in between the moment of hearing and the moment of seeing there is an interval of more than seventeen moments of citta. The visible object, which

²⁵ See appendix.

appears through the eyes, and lasts seventeen moments of citta must have fallen away before the citta which hears arises. It seems that there can be hearing and seeing at the same time, but these are different moments of citta experiencing different objects. Rúpas arise and fall away and succeed one another.²⁶ Visible object appears through the eye-door and after there have been bhavanga-cittas in between it appears through the mind-door. Then there are many mind-door processes of cittas which think of concepts. That is why people who walk, lift their hands or move can appear. When we see people lifting their hands or walking there are all the time countless náma dhammas and rúpa dhammas arising and falling away. So long as we don't realize the arising and falling away of náma and rúpa we cling to the idea that what appears are people, women, men, or this or that thing. We cling to the concept of somebody or something.

When one studies paramattha dhammas one should remember that they are real, that they are not beings, people or self, that they are not women, men, or different things. The dhammas, which are true, can be verified. One may have often heard the words that paramattha dhammas are real, that they are not beings, people or self, and one may have repeated these words oneself. However, paññā should be developed to the stage that the truth can be directly understood. Flavour and hard-

²⁶ Rúpas which fall away are immediately replaced by new rúpas so long as there are conditions for them. Rúpas of the body are produced by four factors: kamma, citta, temperature, and nutrition.

Realities and Concepts

ness are realities which appear and then on account of these realities there is a concept of grapes. The rūpas which arise and then fall away are real but there are, in the absolute sense, no grapes, no beings, or people. There are only rūpa dhammas and nāma dhammas which arise and fall away, succeeding one another very rapidly. Paramattha dhammas are real, they are not concepts. From the beginning the practice of the Dhamma should correspond to the theoretical knowledge acquired through listening and through study. The practice should be in accordance with the true characteristics of realities. We have, for example, learnt that paramattha dhammas are anattā (not-self), and thus we should try to understand the meaning of this, even on the theoretical level; we should consider it and develop paññā so that we can realize the truth in accordance with what we have learnt before.

Question: Someone asked before whether concepts are real. There is, as you said, absolute truth (paramattha sacca) and conventional truth (sammutti sacca). Could one not say that concepts are real in the conventional sense?

S: One can, but one should remember that concepts are not paramattha dhammas. The idea of grape has no flavour at all. Flavour is a reality and when it has appeared we have a concept on account of it, we have a concept of flavour of grapes and we call it the flavour of grapes.

The Buddha's Explanation of the World

Part III

Lobha-múla-citta (consciousness with attachment) without wrong view,²⁷ diìhivippayutta, which arises in our daily life, is not only attached to visible object, sound, odour, flavour, tangible object and concepts, it is also attached to micchà samàdhi, wrong concentration. Someone may, for example, apply himself to yoga exercises such as concentration on breath in order to improve his bodily health. Then there is a kind of samàdhi.

When the citta is not kusala at such moments there is lobha-múla-citta with micchà-samàdhi, wrong concentration. There may only be attachment to samàdhi with the aim of improving one's bodily health. Someone may not necessarily have the wrong view that he should apply himself first to samàdhi in order that he afterwards can consider nàma and rúpa and have right understanding of them more quickly, and that this is the way to realize the noble Truths. If he has such wrong understanding he does not know the characteristic of right mindfulness, sammà-sati, he does not know that sati is not self, anattà. It is not true that when someone applies himself first to micchà-samàdhi it will help pañña to know the charac-

²⁷ Lobha-múla-cittas can be accompanied by wrong view or they can be without wrong view. When they are accompanied by wrong view there is clinging to a distorted view of reality.

teristics of *nāma* and *rúpa*. In order that *sati* is *sammā-sati*, a factor of the Eightfold Path,²⁸ it must accompany *sammā-diñhi*, right understanding, which understands the characteristics of the realities that are appearing. These are the objects *sati* should consider in the right way, it should be mindful of them so that right understanding can become more and more refined. Right understanding of *nāma* and *rúpa* is accumulated as *saòkhàrakkhandha*²⁹ and thus conditions are being developed for the arising of direct awareness of the realities which are appearing. When there is seeing one should know when the object is a *paññatti*, a concept, and when a *paramattha dhamma*. It is the same in the case of hearing, smelling, tasting, the experience of tangible object and the experience of an object through the mind-door.

When we watch television, a football game or tennis match, when we read a newspaper or look at pictures, we should know when the object is a concept and when a *paramattha dhamma*. If we do not know this we may mistakenly think that only the story in television is a

²⁸ The *sobhana cetasikas*, beautiful *cetasikas*, which are the factors of the eightfold path are: right understanding, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The development of the eightfold path is actually the development of right understanding of *nāma* and *rúpa* which appear at the present moment

²⁹ This is the *khandha* or aggregate which includes all *cetasikas* except *vedanā*, feeling, and *saññā*, remembrance or perception. *Paññā* and all *sobhana cetasikas* are included in *saòkhàrakkhandha* and they are together the accumulated condition for the growth of *paññā*, eventually leading to enlightenment.

Realities and Concepts

concept. In reality however, there are concepts when we watch television and also when we do not watch television. Even the names of all of us here are *nāma-paññattis*, they are words of conventional language which refer to *citta*, *cetasika* and *rúpa* which arise together and thus we know that there is this or that person.

Micchā-samādhi (wrong concentration) can be the object of *lobha-múla-citta* without wrong view or with wrong view. In the latter case one believes that this kind of *samādhi* is the way to realize the noble Truths. There is *micchā-samādhi* all over the world. While people apply themselves to concentration with *citta* which is not *kusala citta* (wholesome consciousness) accompanied by *paññā*, there is *micchā-samādhi*. When they believe that this is a faster way to achieve mindfulness of the characteristics of *nāma* and *rúpa* there is wrong understanding. *Sammā-sati* of the eightfold Path can be mindful in the right way of the realities which are appearing if first the difference between the characteristics of *nāma* and *rúpa* is understood. *Micchā-samādhi* cannot condition right mindfulness.

Question: It is said that samādhi (concentration) is the proximate cause for vipassanā.

S.: What kind of *samādhi* is meant?

Q: It must be sammā-samādhi (right concentration) which is the proximate cause.

S.: It must be sammā-samādhi which arises together with sammā-sati, sammā-diñhi (right understanding), sammā-saòkappa (right thinking) and sammā-vāyāma (right effort).

Concepts are the object of citta in daily life, at the moments that it does not have paramattha dhammas as object. We should find out ourselves how often we have concepts as object. There is seeing and then we think of a story about what appears through the eyes. There is hearing and then we think about what appears through the ears. It is the same with regard to the other sense-doors. The cittas (moments of consciousness) that arise in a mind-door process experience visible object, sound, odour, flavour and tangible object, and they think in many different ways about all these objects. Can there be other kinds of objects in our daily life? There can be either paramattha dhammas or concepts as objects in this life, in previous lives, or in future lives, in whatever plane or world one is living. There cannot be other kinds of objects. There are only six classes of objects (the objects which are experienced through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) and in these classes paramattha dhammas as well as concepts are included.

We may wonder whether the Buddha experienced objects which were concepts. Let us first speak about the daily life of ordinary people. When the cittas of an eye-door process have fallen away and there have been bhavanga-cittas in between, there is one series of mind-door process cittas which have as object the same paramattha dhamma as the eye-door process cittas which

Realities and Concepts

have just fallen away. After there have been again bhavanga-cittas in between there can be mind-door process cittas which think of the shape and form of what appeared. What appears through the eyes is a kind of rúpa, visible object, and this arises together with the four Great Elements of earth, water, fire and wind.³⁰ We could not separate colour from these four Great Elements. Wherever there are these four Great Elements there also have to be together with them in one group of rúpas, the rúpas which are colour, odour, flavour and nutritive essence. These eight rúpas cannot be separated from each other.³¹ Thus, since we cannot take colour away from the four Great Elements, there can, after we have seen colour through the eyesense, be a concept on account of colour. We can have a concept of a whole, we can know that there is this or that thing, this or that person. Seeing conditions thinking of concepts. If there were no colour impinging on the eyesense and no seeing, could we notice people, beings and different things?

The Buddha certainly had concepts as objects. When we listen to the Dhamma we should also consider which cause leads to which effect. There are paramattha dhammas as well as concepts which can be the object of citta. At the moment a paramattha dhamma is not the object, a concept must be the object. This has been repeated time and again so that there are conditions for

³⁰ The four great elements of earth, water, fire and wind are conventional terms which refer to characteristics of rúpa such as solidity, cohesion, temperature, and motion or pressure.

³¹ Rúpas do not arise singly, they arise in groups consisting of at least eight rúpas.

sati to be aware of the characteristics of realities which appear. Thus it can be understood correctly that what appears through the eyes are only different colours. Since colour arises together with the four Great Elements and cannot be separated from them, different concepts are conceived on account of the colour which was seen. If satipaṭṭhāna arises it can distinguish visible object, it can consider it and be aware of it, so that it can be correctly known that what appears are just different colours. Colour can be realized as only a kind of reality appearing through the eyes. It can be correctly understood that when one knows what different things are there are mind-door process cittas which know concepts.

When we have studied the Dhamma and considered it, we shall see that the cittas of all beings which arise in daily life have sometimes a paramattha dhamma and sometimes a concept as object. There are not only cittas of the eye-door process which have colour as object. When the cittas of the eye-door process have fallen away and there have been bhavanga-cittas in between, mind-door process cittas arise experiencing the colour which was just before experienced by the eye-door process cittas. When that series of mind-door process cittas has fallen away and there have been bhavanga-cittas in between, there can be another series of mind-door process cittas which have a concept as object. If we did not know concepts how could we lead our daily life? If one wouldn't know what the different things are, such as a table, a chair, food, a bowl, a plate or a spoon, one

Realities and Concepts

could not lead one's daily life. Also animals must have concepts as objects, otherwise they could not stay alive. They must know what is food and what is not food.

Is there a difference in the ways different people experience concepts, namely in the ways the Buddha, the arahat, the anāgāmi, the sakadāgāmi, the sotāpanna³² and the ordinary person experience them? There is a difference between ariyans and non-ariyans as to the way they experience concepts. Ordinary people who do not know anything about paramattha dhammas take concepts for things which are real. The ariyans who have realized the Noble Truths know that all dhammas are anattā. The realities which arise and appear through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense, and mind-door are impermanent, whereas concepts are not realities with the characteristics of impermanence and anattā. Concepts are not realities but they are the means to make things known. Concepts are the object of citta and cetasika when we know the meaning of the things which appear, when we know what different things are. We should carefully consider phenomena and the conditions for their appearing, we should consider which cause leads to which effect. If there were no citta and cetasika could there be concepts? That would be impossible. If there would only be rūpas but no nāmas, no citta and cetasika, there could not be concepts. Rūpa is the reality which does not

³² The arahat is fully enlightened, he has extinguished all defilements. The sotāpanna (first stage of realisation) has uprooted wrong view but still has other defilements. The sakadāgāmi and anāgāmi are at the second and third stage of realisation, respectively. All four are called ariyan, noble.

know an object whereas citta and cetasika are the realities which know an object. Therefore, if citta and cetasika would not arise concepts could not be known. Ariyans as well as non-ariyans have concepts as object, but there is a difference. Non-ariyans take concepts for realities whereas ariyans know when citta has a paramattha dhamma as object and when it has a concept as object.

When citta has a concept as object is there wrong view, micchà-diñhi? It depends on the kind of citta which has a concept as object. All ariyans have concepts as object but they do not have wrong view, they have completely eradicated the cetasika which is wrong view, micchà-diñhi. If we do not carefully consider realities we will not know the difference between lobha-múla-citta with wrong view and lobha-múla-citta without wrong view. Lobha-múla-citta without wrong view is attached to all objects. It is attached to what appears through the eyes and to the concept conceived on account of it. It is attached to sound which appears through the ears, and to a concept on account of the sound. It is the same in the case of the objects appearing through the other doorways. This is our ordinary daily life. Thus, lobha-múla-citta can be attached to all objects without wrong view about them.

The sotápanna and the sakadágámí have lobha-múla-citta (consciousness with attachment) without wrong view, and this citta can be attached to all six classes of objects. The anágámí has lobha-múla-citta without wrong view which is attached to the class of objects

Realities and Concepts

which is dhammārammaṇa, objects which can only be experienced through the mind-door. He has eradicated attachment to the sense objects which are visible object, sound, odour, flavour and tangible object. The arahat has neither kusala dhammas nor akusala dhammas on account of the six classes of objects. He has completely eradicated all defilements and akusala dhammas. The person who is not arahat may understand the characteristics of the objects as they are, he may know when the object is a paramattha dhamma and when a concept. However, so long as one has not eradicated all defilements there are conditions for their arising. There can be happiness or sadness, like or dislike on account of the objects, be they paramattha dhammas or concepts. To what extent defilements arise for the non-arahat depends on the degree of understanding that has been developed, it depends on whether a person is a non-ariyan or an ariyan who is a sotāpanna, a sakadāgāmi or an anāgāmi.

We should carefully consider when there is sakkāya-dīṇhi, personality belief. Although concepts are not realities, paramattha dhammas, we may take them for things that really exist, and then there is wrong view. When someone clings to the concept of self, being, person, or different things and really believes that they exist, there is the wrong view of sakkāya-dīṇhi (personality belief). So long as sakkāya-dīṇhi has not been eradicated there are conditions for the arising of many other kinds of wrong view as well. There may be the wrong view that there is no kamma, no result of kamma, there may be the belief in an almighty god, the creator of the world and of all beings and all people. When we do

not know the conditions for the arising of all saòkhàra dhammas, conditioned dhammas, there can be different kinds of wrong view. However, not each time when citta has a concept as object there is clinging to wrong view.

Can concepts be the object of akusala citta (unwholesome consciousness)? They can, they are in fact usually the object of akusala citta. There can be lobha-múla-citta which is attached to a concept. Or there can be dosa-múla-citta which has aversion towards a concept. When one does not like this or that person does one realize what the object is? At such moments a concept is the object of citta. Thus we see that a concept can be the object of any kind of akusala citta.

Can a concept be the object of kusala citta (wholesome consciousness)? It can be the object of kusala citta. Concepts belong to our daily life and thus they are the object of all kinds of cittas arising in our daily life. If we want to perform dāna (giving) but we didn't know concepts, we wouldn't know what the gift is in conventional sense, thus there could not be kusala citta which performs dāna. There could not be abstention (virati) from wrong deeds or speech if one did not know what is there in conventional sense, if one did not know that there is a being or a person.

When someone develops samatha can concepts be the object of citta? Someone may think that it is difficult to answer this question when he has not studied in detail the way of development of samatha and the subjects of calm. However, it is important to remember that when a

Realities and Concepts

dhamma (reality) is not the object of citta a concept must be the object. Thus also in samatha a concept can be the object of citta. All cittas other than the cittas which develop satipaïhàna and the sense-door process cittas can have concepts as object. Only if we develop satipaïhàna can we know whether a phenomenon is a paramattha dhamma. When satipaïhàna does not arise there is at such moments no awareness, no study and investigation of the characteristics of paramattha dhammas. In our daily life the object of citta is sometimes a paramattha dhamma and sometimes a concept. The development of satipaïhàna is very intricate, because pañña must become very refined in order that it can see, as they are, all the realities which appear.

Question: Satipaïhàna cannot have concepts as object and therefore when we develop satipaïhàna should we try to stop citta having a concept as object?

S.: That is not right because then we could not lead our ordinary daily life. We cannot stop citta having concepts as object. However, pañña can be developed so that it can be known that when a concept is the object, it is citta, a type of nàma, which knows that concept. A concept could not be the object at that moment if there were no citta which knows it. When we develop satipaïhàna we should not force ourselves not to think of concepts. We should not try not to know what the different things are which we normally see and recognize in daily life. Then we would not be able to know the characteristic of nàma dhamma, the reality which knows

something. When a concept is the object one should realize that citta and cetasika which are nāma dhammas have arisen and that they know at that moment an object which is a concept. Satipaṭṭhāna can study and consider realities and be aware of them. Thus it can be known that when there is thinking it is nāma which thinks, an element, a reality which experiences, not a self, a being or person. We should know that all dhammas are non-self, anattā, and that we cannot stop citta thinking of different things. Paññā should penetrate the characteristics of the different nāmas that experience different objects through the six doors. Then doubt about the characteristics of nāma dhammas can be eliminated. Nobody can prevent the arising of the phenomena of our daily life. It is because of ignorance that one tries not to think or not to know the concepts of the things that appear. If someone tries to avoid thinking of concepts paññā cannot be developed.

We should consider our way of practice. One may follow a kind of practice which is not the development of paññā (wisdom) which studies, notices, and considers the characteristics of the nāma dhammas and rūpa dhammas. People don't lead their usual daily life while they try to follow a particular practice. Then they develop the wrong Path, micchā-magga, which is: wrong understanding, wrong thinking, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration. That is not the right Path, the development of satipaṭṭhāna, the development of vipassanā. If someone does not know as they are the characteristics of the realities which appear, and if he does not

Realities and Concepts

understand which cause leads to which effect, there will be wrong understanding. He will cling to wrong view, he will search for a way of practice which is the wrong Path. There will be ignorance while he sees different colours and perceives different things.

We read in the *Kindred Sayings* (V, Mahà-vagga, Book I,XLV, Kindred Sayings on the Way, Ch. I, par.4, the Brahmin):

Sàvatthí was the occasion for this discourse... Then the venerable Ānanda, robing himself in the forenoon and taking bowl and outer robe, entered Sàvatthí on his begging round.

Now the venerable Ānanda saw Jānussoüi, the brahmin, driving out of Sàvatthí in his car, drawn by pure white mares. White were the steeds harnessed thereto and white the trappings, white the car. White were the fittings, white the reins, the goad, the canopy, his turban, his clothes and sandals, and by a white fan was he fanned. And when the people saw it they cried out: “Ah! There is the best of cars! There is the best of cars for beauty!”

Someone may just see white colour and then there can be wrong understanding if he does not know realities, and if he does not know the way to realize the truth of not self. He may look for another way to know the truth. He may have the wrong understanding that the car which has a white colour is the best of cars. We read further on that the venerable Ānanda, after going his begging round, came back, ate his meal and visited the Exalted One. He told him that he had seen Jānussoüi in his white car and that the people had cried out that that was the best of cars. Ānanda asked the Buddha whether

he could point out the best of cars in this Dhamma and Discipline. The Buddha explained that the defilements can be eradicated through the development of the eightfold Path, not by seeing a white carriage with white trappings. The best of carriages is the ariyan eightfold Path. The Dhamma carriage is unsurpassed for its conquest in the fight.³³ The Buddha then said the following verse:

Whoso has Confidence (saddhà) and Wisdom, these two
states,
Forever yoked together lead him on:
Conscience (hiri) the pole, and Mind the yoke thereof,
And heedfulness (sati) his watchful charioteer.
The car is furnished with Righteousness (sila),
Rapture its axle, Energy its wheels,
And Calm, yoke fellow of the balanced mind,
Desirelessness the drapery thereof,
Goodwill and Harmlessness his weapons are,
Together with Detachment of the mind.
Endurance is his leathern coat of mail:
And to attain the peace this car rolls on.
It is built by oneself, and thus it becomes
The best of cars, unconquerable in battle.
Seated therein the sages leave the world,
And verily they win the victory.

Thus we see that the white carriage and all the white paraphernalia have nothing to do with the ariyan wisdom.

In the commentary to this sutta (in the *Sàratthappakàsini*) it is said that when the brahmin Jānussoüi would drive around town he had people

³³ In Pāli there is a word association of yana, car, and ñāua, wisdom.

Realities and Concepts

announce his coming ahead of time. When people had something to do outside town they would not go away, in order to see Jānussoùì driving out. If people had gone out of town already, they would return in order to see him. They believed it to be an auspicious sign to see the treasures and wealth of someone like Jānussoùì. When the brahmin Jānussoùì was going to drive around the whole day the people in town swept the roads from early morning on. They made them smooth with sand and scattered white flowers all over. They were helping each other to put up flags and banners and they caused the whole town to be wafted with the smell of incense. Jānussoùì rode through the town in a white carriage with white paraphernalia, pulled by four white horses. The wheels and the fittings of the car were made of silver. Jānussoùì had two cars: a battle car and a car for his paraphernalia. The battle car was quadrilateral and it was not so big, it could take two or three people. The car for his paraphernalia was very big. There was room for eight or ten people who carried the canopy, the fan and palmleaves. These people could stand or comfortably lie down. The horses which pulled the carriage were all white, their ornaments were made of silver. The carriage was called white because its coverings were made of silver and it was decorated with ivory. The coverings of the other carriages were lion skins and tiger skins or yellow cloths. It was different in the case of Jānussoùì's carriage, this was covered by very precious cloths. The reins and even the bridles were covered with silver. The canopy erected in the middle of the carriage was white. Jānussoùì's turban was seven inches wide and made of

silver. His clothes were white, of the colour of a lump of foam. His clothes and the coverings of his carriage were all of very expensive material. His sandals, unlike the sandals of those who travel or go in the forest, were meant to be worn when going on his carriage, and they were ornamented with silver. His fan was white with a handle of crystal. Jānussoùì was the only person whose paraphernalia were all white. He used white face powder and white flowers to adorn himself. His jewelry, including the rings on his ten fingers and in his ears, were made of silver. His retinue consisted of ten thousand people and these were dressed in white clothes and adorned with white flowers and white jewelry. Jānussoùì enjoyed his wealth and dignity from early morning, while he took his breakfast, applied perfumes and dressed himself in white. He went outside his palace and took off on his carriage. The brahmins of his retinue who were dressed in white, adorned with white cosmetics and white flowers, surrounded him while they carried his white canopy. Then coins were scattered about for the children, and the people of the town would gather and cheer, tossing pieces of cloth. Jānussoùì went around town to display his wealth. Thus he would give people who wanted to have an auspicious sign and blessings for good luck an opportunity to see him. People who were lucky entered the palace and went up to the first floor, opened the windows and looked down to have a good view. When people saw the carriage of Jānussoùì they exclaimed that this was the best of cars.

The Buddha said to Ānanda that people may give money to small children so that the giver will be praised

Realities and Concepts

because of loveliness, beauty, and wealth. However, only by being praised one will not really be lovable and rich. Although the people who saw Jānussoùi's car praised it as the best of cars, it could not be the best of cars just because people praised it. The Buddha said that in reality that car was a miserable, ugly thing.

The Buddha said to Ānanda that the best of cars is a term that may be applied to the eightfold Path. The eightfold Path is the excellent way because it liberates from all that is wrong. By the noble eightfold Path one can become an ariyan, and attain nibbāna. The wisdom car, the Dhamma car, is the best vehicle, the best battle car. Nothing can excel this car and by this car the defilements are conquered. Thus we see the difference between the car of Jānussoùi and the Dhamma car. There can be wrong view and wrong practice just because of seeing something. Some people may believe that white is an auspicious colour which conditions them to become pure, and without defilements. However, the Buddha said that in reality that car was a miserable, ugly thing because it caused people to have wrong view. They thought that it was the best of cars. The understanding of things as they are has nothing to do with the colour of someone's clothes or ornaments. When satipaīhāna arises and is aware of the characteristics of the realities which appear it can be said that there is the vehicle of paññā which leads to the eradication of defilements.

Appendix

Sense-door process and mind-door process of cittas:

When a sense object, which is *rúpa*, impinges on one of the senseddoors, it is experienced by several cittas arising in a sense-door process. Counting from the "past bhavanga", there are seventeen moments of citta if the sense-door process of cittas runs its full course. *Rúpa* lasts as long as seventeen moments of citta, and thus it

Realities and Concepts

falls away when that process is over. The seventeen moments of citta are as follows:

1. atīta-bhavanga (past bhavanga).
2. bhavanga calana (vibrating bhavanga).
3. bhavangupaccheda (arrest bhavanga), the last bhavanga arising before the object is experienced through the sense-door.
4. five-sense-door-adverting-consciousness (pañcadvārāvajjana-citta), which is a kiriyacitta.
5. sense-cognition (dvi-pañcaviññāna, seeing-consciousness, etc.), which is vipākacitta.
6. receiving-consciousness (sampañicchana-citta), which is vipākacitta.
7. investigating-consciousness (santīrana-citta) which is vipākacitta.
8. determining-consciousness (votthapana-citta) which is kiriyacitta.
- 9-15 seven javana-cittas ("impulsion", kusala citta or akusala citta in the case of non-arahats).
16. registering-consciousness (tadārammaṇa-citta) which may or may not arise, and which is vipāka citta.
17. registering-consciousness.

After a sense object has been experienced through a sense-door it is experienced through the mind-door, and then that object has just fallen away. Before the mind-

door process begins there are bhavanga-cittas and the last two of these are specifically designated by a name. There are the following cittas:

bhavanga calana (vibrating bhavanga)

bhavangupaccheda (which is, in this case, the mind-door through which the cittas of the mind-door process will experience the object)

mind-door-adverting-consciousness (mano-dvārāvajjana-citta) which is kiriyacitta

Seven javana-cittas

Two tadārammaṇa-cittas (which may or may not arise).

After the mind-door process has been completed there are bhavanga-cittas again.

Realities and Concepts

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