

Dhamma discussion on

# The Five Aggregates

## of Form and Mind

**Based on a transcript of a recorded talk given by  
Bro Teoh Kian Koon on 17th March 2005**

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# CONTENTS

1. PREFACE.....	1
2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	1
3. THE FIVE AGGREGATES OF FORM AND MIND .....	3
3.1 THREE TURNINGS OF THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS (3 TYPES OF WISDOM) .....	3
3.2 WHAT IS A PHENOMENON?.....	13
3.3 SEEING THE UNREALITY OF FORM AND SEEING BEYOND FORM .....	17
3.4 PANCA NIYAMA (5 UNIVERSAL ORDERS OF NATURE) .....	22
4. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS .....	49

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Dhamma website : <http://broteoh.com>

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## 1. PREFACE

It is Bro Teoh's **sincere** wish that Dhamma friends, spiritual practitioners, seekers of truth and cultivators will be able **to make use** of these Dhamma **transcript notes** to develop a **better understanding** of the **Buddha Dhamma as taught** by the Buddha so that they may **progress along the Path of Dhamma** to become more **virtuous, nobler** and **wiser** human beings that may be a  **blessing** to all of humanity and to the world.

These notes were **compiled** based on a **transcript** of the recording of the Dhamma talk (dated 17 March 2005). In this edition, **some editorial amendments** have been **adopted without detracting** from the **essence** of the talk. With this, it is hoped that readers can better **understand** the **true meaning** and **intent** of this transcript.

To get a copy of the eBook you can log onto the <http://broteoh.com> **website** under **Repository** of Dhamma materials or you may **google** 'Bro. Teoh's Kalyāṇamittas – A Repository of Dhamma Materials' to view them under **Repository**, 'Publications and Notes'.

## 2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is the donors' **sincere intent** that these Dhamma transcript notes be **given** to those who are **interested** and have the **affinity** to receive them. I would like to take this opportunity **to thank** and **rejoice** in the **generosity** and **wholesomeness** of all **Dhamma friends** or **Kalyāṇamittas** who have **donated** and **helped** in the **transcription, editing, publishing, etc** to make this **free distribution** of **dhamma dāna** possible.

Special thanks should be accorded to all those who have edited and helped improve the flow of this book without changing the meaning of the text and that is also the reason for this **2<sup>nd</sup> edition**. Special thanks should also be accorded to **Brother Tune** who has taken the **initiative** to help convert the **earlier hard copy** of the **transcript** into PDF soft copy format for this **subsequent editing** thereby enabling this reprint of the **Dhamma transcript book** on the **5 Aggregates of Form and Mind**.

By the **power of all this wholesomeness**, may all beings be **well and happy, free** from all mental and physical suffering and danger and may there be **love, peace and joy** deep **within** their hearts. And may it also **pave the way** for there to be **causes and conditions** for all dharma friends who have **donated or helped** in one way or another to realize their **good and noble wishes/aspirations** soonest possible.

With Metta always,  
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31<sup>st</sup> January 2019

# DHAMMA DISCUSSION

By Bro Teoh Kian Koon at SBVMS (Selangor Buddhist Vipassana  
Meditation society] on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2005

## **Topic: Five Aggregates of Form and Mind**

Based on a transcript from taped recordings

### **3. THE FIVE AGGREGATES OF FORM AND MIND**

A very good evening to all! Tonight's topic is a continuation of our last session, which is on the **First Sermon** as taught by the Buddha. Tonight we are going to discuss **an important aspect** of his teaching, the **2<sup>nd</sup> turning** of his **First Noble Truth**. Just to recap, I will summarize what we discussed in the last session. We discussed the First Sermon (**Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta**) as taught by the Buddha. This sermon is **very important** because it is the **first sermon** the Buddha delivered **immediately** after his enlightenment. He went to meet the five ascetics that were with him earlier on. At first, they were quite skeptical about him. On approaching them, he explained to them this very important sutta so that there would be no more doubt that he was already fully enlightened. He advised them to avoid the **two extremes** of **self-mortification** and **sensual indulgence** which is very important. You have to avoid these two extremes to cultivate the **Middle Path** or the **Noble Eightfold Path** which we had discussed previously.

#### **3.1 THREE TURNINGS OF THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS (3 TYPES OF WISDOM)**

After that, he proclaimed the **Four Noble Truths** and **turned** it **three times**. Because there are four truths and 3 turnings there are hence

a total of **twelve** (4x3) **aspects**. And these twelve aspects are very important because according to the Buddha unless he himself understood the Four Noble Truths in these **twelve aspects**, he **cannot** proclaim himself to be the **Sammāsambuddha**. I will read to you his actual words. In his first proclamation of the Dhamma addressing the five ascetics, the Buddha said,

*“So long as my **knowledge** and **vision** of the **reality** regarding these **Four Noble Truths** in its **three phases** or **turnings** and its **twelve modes or aspects** was not fully clear to me, I did not claim to have **attained** the incomparable supreme **enlightenment** in the world. But when my **knowledge** and **vision** of the **reality** regarding these **Four Noble Truths and its 3 turnings** are clear to me, then I proclaim to have won the **incomparable** supreme enlightenment in this world”.*

Just imagine even the **Buddha**, the **fully Enlightened One**, **emphasized strongly** the **understanding** of the Four Noble Truths. What we had done was we had discussed the first turning of the First Noble Truth as proclaimed by the Buddha. He proclaimed, “Birth, old age, sickness and death are dukkha” and “To be separated from your loved ones is also dukkha; to be with people whom you don’t like is also dukkha; not able to get what one desires is also dukkha”. Then there is also the **final summary** which summarized all of the first seven types of dukkha. He said, “In short, it is this **clinging, grasping** and **attachment** to the **five aggregates** of form and mind that lead to dukkha or suffering”. This **final summary** is very important. The first seven realities of birth, old age, sickness and death, to be separated from your loved ones, to be with people whom you do not like and not able to get what one



desires lead to dukkha - these are relatively easy to understand. But then why did the Buddha summarize: “In short, it is this **five aggregates of clinging and grasping borne of self-delusion that I call dukkha**”.

This is the topic we are going to discuss in detail tonight. Understanding these **five aggregates of form and mind** are very important. It will **lead** to true **realization** and **enlightenment**. Regarding the **3 turnings** I will just summarize the reasons why the Buddha turned it 3 times. In the **1<sup>st</sup> turning**, he **proclaimed** the truth just as what we had just done. After he had proclaimed that truth, upon hearing the **truth**, certain people who already have the karmic past or conditions behind them can then become **enlightened**. It is like the case of Venerable Kondanna. Before the Buddha even finished the first sermon, Kondanna was already a Sotāpan. He had already enlightened to the truth. Likewise with Venerable Sariputta who just inquired from **Venerable Assaji**, one of the five ascetics on what his teacher had taught him. **Venerable Assaji** just mentioned two very simple verses and Venerable Sariputta was enlightened to the truth. So this **proclamation of truth** is **very powerful** and the Buddha talked about this in certain parts of his sutta.

He said, “Under **sutta maya panna**, through hearing of the truth, wisdom leading to enlightenment can arise.” Sutta maya panna means upon hearing of the sutta (or discourse of the Buddha), a type of wisdom can arise. During the Buddha’s time there were many incidences of such happenings. Then in the **second turning**, he said, “This **noble truth** of **dukkha** is to be **understood**”. Listen to his words. The key word is “it is to be **understood**”. You **have to understand it clearly**. If you cannot understand this noble truth of

dukkha clearly, it will be **very difficult** for you to understand your form and mind and also **very difficult** for you to understand all the subsequent truths. That is why you should not **underestimate** the **importance** of the **First Noble Truth**. It may sound very simple after we have heard what the Buddha said, but does it **impact you**? How this truth impacts you is very important. That is, **upon your first hearing it** and **subsequently after** you have heard it.

When the Buddha mentioned that this truth needs to be understood, he meant, you **need** to **reflect** and **contemplate** on this **truth** that he had proclaimed. We should ponder why the Buddha said that. Through contemplation and reflection on those truths as proclaimed by the Buddha and putting forth those truths and opening them up for discussion like what we are doing now at this dhamma discussion session, you will be able to receive another level of **understanding** or **wisdom**, which the Buddha called **cinta maya panna**.

According to the Buddha, cinta maya panna is a type of wisdom borne of contemplation and reflection on the truths that have been proclaimed. When you do the **contemplation properly**, **understanding** will arise. **Wisdom** will also arise. Even nowadays, through dhamma discussion or when you are listening to a dhamma talk, when there is a **keen audience** with the **right conditions**, **truth or wisdom can arise**. Then in the **third turning**, he said, “This **First Noble Truth of dukkha has already been understood**”. The reason he said it has already been understood is because that is the **realization part** and it is equivalent to **bhāvanā maya panna** which is **wisdom borne of bhāvanā**. **Bhāvanā** is the **meditative approach** to develop wisdom through **meditative training**. If you apply the

subsequent meditative practice, let us say through 2<sup>nd</sup> turning cultivation to develop citta maya panna and you still **do not have** the conditions to **really penetrate** the **Dhamma to realize** the truth, then you have to do the **meditative** part. The meditative approach is the **3<sup>rd</sup> turning**. He said, “Finally through the **meditative approach**, you can also realize the truth to be enlightened, to be liberated because the 3<sup>rd</sup> turning wisdom is very penetrative”.

After we covered that, we discussed what dukkha is. Can you all remember the first seven types of dukkha and the final summary which we just covered? The Buddha said, “In short, the **attachment** to the five aggregates of form and mind is **dukkha**”. Then I asked you what these five aggregates of form and mind are? I had discussed it in summary form. Understanding these five aggregates of form and mind is very important **in order** to develop the **full understanding** of this First Noble Truth. That is why the Buddha **summarized** it that way. What do you mean by this **form and mind (Nama Rūpa)? How does it arise in ‘you’?** You have to inquire. What is it? What are these five aggregates of form and mind and how do they arise in you? And why do they bring about dukkha? Why do we **cling** on to them? Why do we have this **attachment** toward them? It is because we do not understand what these five aggregates of form and mind are? If **you have the understanding**, you **will know that these five aggregates of form and mind are not real**. They are **condition arising entities**. They are **not really what you think they are**. The understanding of these five aggregates of form and mind can bring about the **subsequent unfolding** of what they call, the **realization** of the **three universal characteristics** of the five aggregates of form and mind. The **unreality** of these five aggregates of form and mind will be **clearly exposed** and we will be

able to have that understanding if we **truly cultivate** through the **silent mind** to **'see' clearly within**, the moment of its **arising and cessation**. I will explain to you again what this form and mind is.

First, we have to ask ourselves what the Buddha meant by Nama Rūpa. Nama Rūpa can be understood in **two ways**. **The first aspect** is seeing it as a **living being**. We have a **physical form**, which is our physical body. Then we have a mind and **this mind** has **four aspects** or **aggregates**. That is why we have a form and mind - the **five aggregates** of form and mind makes up the **living being**. Our body is the rūpa or form aggregate. The four aggregates of mind are very important. If you want to develop a very good and easy understanding of these four aggregates within your mind, you will have to **ask yourself** what your **mind can do**. Remember what we had discussed before? What is the first aggregate? What can your mind do? You can **feel**, can you not? The **aggregate of feeling** is there.

Secondly, the mind can **perceive** and **know** things. Whatever has been perceived can be known, is that not so? This **power of perception** is also **part** of the **ability** of the **mind**. Then what is the **third aggregate**? This part is very important. It is **saṅkhāra**. Saṅkhāra is a pāḷi word. There are four equivalent English words used to explain Saṅkhāra. All these **four combined will still not fully explain what saṅkhāra is**. According to the text translation, four words are used to explain this saṅkhāra. First, is **mental activities** which are your mental thinking, planning, scheming, etc. Then there is this **mental volition**. Do you know what volition is? It is mental intention. Then there are these **mental states which are** your mind states. There are many types of mental states. They include your

**moods**, your **emotions** and your various states of mind, etc which arise after sense door contact. The last term is **mental formations**. Your mind can create formations within your brain. Your brain is one of the organs that give rise to the conditions for **mental formations** to arise. That is why all your **perceptions** have this **mental formation** within your mind. There is **an image** there. What else can your mind do? It can give rise to **consciousness** - is that not so? In Pāḷi it is called **viññāṇaṃ** which is the last aggregate of mind. Your **sense organs** assist you to trigger off their **respective sense door consciousness**. Your **eyes** can give rise to **seeing consciousness**. Your ears, your nose, your tongue, your bodily touches or tactile sensations and your thinking mind. All these **six sense doors consciousness** will arise within you if there are conditions for the mind to come into **contact** with the **sense data** and their respective **sense organs**. When these **three things** come together **through contact**, they **trigger off** the **appropriate sense door consciousness**. You were given an analogy at the last session. For those who are not familiar, this analogy will help you understand what consciousness is. Because the term is a bit new and for those who do not really follow the Buddhist teachings, understanding consciousness is not that easy. So I will use a **physics experiment analogy** to explain it so that it is easier for you to understand.

You have a **battery**, a **bulb** and a **switch**. When these three things are in order - the battery functioning with the connection in the correct polarity, the bulb in its functional state and there is this switch. Upon turning on the switch, the light bulb lights up. Our **sense consciousness** is **exactly the same**. The **sense data** enters our sense door. If it is seeing, then it is an external **form** (colour, shape and form) that enters the eyes which is the **sense organ**. Then

together with your mind's contact, **seeing consciousness** will arise. And when seeing consciousness arises, you have to develop the understanding of what this 'thing' is all about because **together** with that consciousness the **five aggregates of form and mind** also arise. Within every consciousness that arises, there is the **content of consciousness**. This consciousness and **its content** have been **summarized** by the Buddha as the **five mental aggregates of form and mind**. And there are certain contents of consciousness that are **universal** to all consciousness. **Contact** is universal; **feeling** is universal and **perception** is also universal. Then there are four more but these first three are the most important.

So if you really want to understand form and mind, you need to **really understand** how **consciousness arises**. Then there is also **saṅkhāra**. We have to come back to saṅkhāra because according to the Buddha's teaching, there are 52 sankharas. It includes the first two aggregates of **Feeling** which is the **vedanā** aggregate and **perception**, the **saññā** aggregate. And because it covers these two, the four aggregates of mind are only saṅkhāra and consciousness. That is, saṅkhāra is the content of consciousness and everything that the mind can do is saṅkhāra. So **if you understand saṅkhāra, you will understand the mind very well**. Up to this point is it clear? Can you all follow? If you cannot follow, please let me know because this part is not easy to understand.

Now we have to inquire further **to develop a deeper understanding** of these five aggregates of form and mind. Why did the Buddha say, it is your **attachment** or **clinging** to these **five aggregates of form and mind** that **leads to dukkha**? You have to ask yourself why? Anyone wants to try? Why did the Buddha say that? .... Yes, that is

one of the characteristics. That is very good. They have this characteristic of **impermanence**. What else? The **non-self nature** will also arise if you understand what **impermanence** is all about. When you **see impermanence clearly, non-self is more or less automatic** because it is of the nature to arise, exist and pass away. Everything that arises, exists and passes away due to conditions. They do not have a **nature of their own** because they are **condition arising** entities. Because they are condition arising, they **cannot be permanent unchanging entities** as their existence are dependent on conditions. They arise when the **conditions that support them** are there and they will continue to exist or sustain themselves accordingly. When the conditions behind their existence **cease** to be, that **phenomenon** will also **cease** to be.

Can you all follow? What are the other reasons? How does it cause you to cling? Why is it that when these five aggregates of form and mind arise, they **cause clinging**? Why? There is this **sensual desire**, right? But in the first place, you should ask yourself how do all these arise and why? That is because you **do not understand** the five aggregates of form and mind **as they really are**. You **think** they are **very real**. That is why you never really see its **unreality** and **empty nature**. To see the **unreality** of the form aggregate, the **unreality** of the aggregates of mind leading to a clear understanding of **their impermanence, afflicting and non-self-nature** is very important. That is why in the last session I asked you all those questions: Is your **body** really you? Are your **feelings** really you? Are your **perceptions** really you? Are your **saṅkhāra** or **mental activities**, your **thoughts**, your **mental states**, etc - are they really you? Are all the consciousness that arise within you really you? You have to ask yourself all these questions, because these are the things that

**delude** you. That is why they say, the **self-delusion** of form and mind (**sakkāyadiṭṭhi**) **will cause living beings to cling and attach** because you **do not understand** their **realities**. You think they are **so real**. Especially when you look around the world today, the **level of sensuality** is **so strong** that it can easily **lure** and **delude** living beings. Look at the **multimedia** world. Look at all the things you can have, the food paradises, fashion and automobile worlds, the modern musical instruments inside your **studio** and **home theatre**. Even the **TV**, the **computers** nowadays, the **multimedia capability**, the **social media** and **entertainments industry** etc project high levels of sensuality and they can **lure you** and **draw your senses**, draw living beings into thinking that they are **very interesting**, they are **very nice** and they are **very real**. Living beings can fight for them and kill for them. They can do anything **just to own** and **possess them or just to experience them**.

The **key to understanding all this** is to understand that your five aggregates of form and mind are **not real**. They are not what you think they are and in order to truly understand that, you need to penetrate the three **universal characteristics** of these five aggregates of form and mind. It means seeing its **impermanent characteristic** like what KC said and its **non-self** and **afflicting characteristics**. Once you are able to 'see' **clearly** with **direct seeing** these characteristics, clinging will not arise. And when you have **penetrated these truths** and **understood** them for what they are, **clinging** to these five aggregates of form and mind **can never arise again**. In fact you have **already understood** them for what they are. (This completes the 3<sup>rd</sup> turning of the 1<sup>st</sup> Noble Truth.)



## 3.2 WHAT IS A PHENOMENON?

The other thing that I need to explain is **phenomena**. This term is very important. In order to understand the five aggregates of form and mind, you need to know what these five aggregates of form and mind are. We have already covered that. As a living being, you have this body and mind. That is why the four aggregates of mind combined with this body are also called the five aggregates of form and mind. The **second aspect** of the understanding is more important. It is the **mental aspect**. **Whenever sense consciousness** arises, we have already said there are three things that trigger it. Sense organ, sense data and the mind **coming into contact trigger off** their **respective sense door consciousness**. When sense door consciousness arises, the whole consciousness and **its content** is the five mental aggregates of form and mind (Nama Rūpa). How does the form come about? In the last session, I think KC and Bro Lim managed to get the answer. **How does that form appear in the mind?** We already concluded the mind is the knowing element. The rūpa does not have mind. It **does not have any knowing**. **So whatever the mind knows** will be the rūpa, so how does this knowing come about? Can you recall? It is through your sense **perception** because you can perceive things. **To know something, you need to perceive it**. Just like the fan, the TV, the air-conditioner, living beings or whatever you see. If you perceive it, it means the knowing come from there. Just like sound and hearing and the perception of vibration and voices, etc. Even when somebody is opening the door, through that sound, you will know **through your perception** that somebody is trying to open the door or break into it. So the **power of perception is linked to your six sense doors**. You have eyes and whatever you see, you will perceive. Likewise for your hearing, your smell, your taste, your touch and your thoughts,

**perception is the one** that brings the **external form** into your mind. It transfers the rūpa of the **external world (external form)** into your mind. **So this particular understanding of form and mind** is more **important** than the **first** aspect of **understanding because** you have to **deal with this** in the **12 links** or the **Paticca Sammutapada** teaching as taught by the **Buddha**, the **meditation** in our **daily life** and **learn to see how this form and mind**, the **five mental aggregates** arise in you and **how they pass away**.

At every moment of sense consciousness or arising of this form and mind, there is this **contact**, there is this **feeling aggregate** inside and there is this **perception** and your thoughts or saṅkhāra, the **contents of consciousness**. You have to learn to see them and you will also have to learn **to see** your **thoughts** and your **feelings**. How they **arise** and how they **pass away** and how they **condition each other** to make you **attach** and **cling** to the **five aggregates** of form and mind through **self-delusion**. When feelings arise, when you do not have the **right view** or **clear understanding** of how these feelings are going to condition you, you **will attach**. Because when feelings arise, there are normally three types of feelings (pleasant, unpleasant and neutral). If you do not have the **wisdom** or the **right understanding**, when any of these three feelings arise, you **will cling**. Because **pleasant** feeling is **positive craving**, there will arise a **positive** attachment/clinging to that sense experience. If it is a **negative, unpleasant** feeling, that is **negative craving**, aversion or **dislike** will arise and **you want to push it away**. As for **neutral** feeling, if you are not careful and **if do not have** the **wisdom** and **right understanding** to arise the equanimous or upekkhā mind to really understand what **neutral feeling** is all about, it can give rise to **indifference**. This is normally brought about by what they call

**delusion** because you do not understand what it is. The **feeling just arises**. To you, it is as though it **does not bother** you. It is neither pleasant nor unpleasant. But there is an **element of delusion** because you do not have the wisdom to understand it for what it is. So when that neutral feeling arises, it can also affect you because of your lack of wisdom. So, this second aspect of five mental aggregates of form and mind is **very important**.

Now, before you really develop this understanding, I need you to understand one more thing because they are all interrelated. You need to understand **phenomena**. We had discussed it in our last session. I opened up the topic for discussion but I did not go into detail. **The key to understanding mind is the understanding of phenomena**. If you cannot understand phenomena clearly, it will not be easy to understand the mind. That is why Mahayana books always say, "The world is a **phenomena world of consciousness** created by mind." That is why it is **not so real**. But what is it that they call the **phenomenal world of consciousness**? What is that? Can anyone recall the definition of what is a phenomenon? **Anything that the senses can perceive is a phenomenon**. Can you all follow?

This definition is very important because **from this definition you will understand the mind**. You will understand how the mind comes about. Can everyone repeat this? What is a phenomenon? **Anything perceivable by the mind is a phenomenon**. Can you give examples of a phenomenon? Yes! Sound can be perceived. Also anything that you can see is also **perceivable** through your eye organ, through your seeing consciousness. They are all phenomena. But many people do not understand. They think phenomenon must be a

movement or a flow or something that can cause you to perceive it. But the **true meaning of phenomenon** is **very deep** and wide. It is **anything that is perceivable by your senses or mind**, even your tasting, your smell, your touch, your sensations, your thought processes and whatever mental activities that arise, that **your mind can perceive** is also a phenomenon. That is how we can have three basic phenomena. First, we have this **physical body** which can give rise to **physical phenomena** such as your hand movement is a physical phenomenon. The blinking of your eyes, your walking, your four postures, etc - all these are manifestations of your physical body which give rise to **physical phenomena**. Is this part regarding physical phenomena clear? Can you all follow? Then within your physical body, you really need to understand the **unreality** of this **form** and these **physical phenomena**.

In fact under kāyānupassanā, the Buddha **emphasized** the need to develop **mindfulness** by anchoring the **true mind (awareness)** to this form or kaya. Mindfulness encompasses: **ānāpānasati**, which is **mindfulness of the in and out breathe**, **mindfulness of the four elements**, **mindfulness of the thirty two bodily parts**, **mindfulness of the four postures** and **clear comprehension** and **mindfulness of every action and movement** within life - all these are part of your physical phenomena for you to cultivate kāyānupassanā, the foundation on mindfulness of the kaya. The **second type of phenomenon** has to do with **your mind**. That is the **mental flow or mental phenomena**. All the perceptions that your mind perceive through your seeing, your hearing, your smell, your taste, your touch and your thinking will **give rise to mental phenomena** because anything that is perceivable by the senses is a phenomenon.

The third and last phenomenon is **nature's phenomena**. Nature has a lot of phenomena. In our daily life we will come across many things that **confront our senses** as **nature's phenomena**. When you walk out of here, you can **perceive** the **moving cars**, you can look at the **trees**, the **plants** and the **way** the **branches, leaves** and the **flags move** when the **wind blows**. All these are **nature's phenomena** that come about through **nature's creation**.

### **3.3 SEEING THE UNREALITY OF FORM AND SEEING BEYOND FORM**

The first aggregate of form (rūpa) is not restricted to only our body. The **more comprehensive** and **wider** definition includes the **external form** that the **senses perceive** through our **six sense doors**. These **external forms** are very important. If you are **not able to see** these **external forms clearly** for **what they are**, then you **will not** be able to see the **unreality** of these **forms**. And if you **cannot** establish the **unreality** of these forms, you will **never** be able to **understand how clinging** to all these **forms arise** because you do not know that they are **not real**. Their arising is due to **two** very **fundamental conditionings**. First, ask yourself how all these **external forms** that you come to **perceive** including the moving car, etc - everything else within nature or whatever is external to us and within the world where our **senses can perceive**, such as the fan, the painting, the lightings and all that you can see in this room including all that you can hear, smell, taste, tactilely feel, etc (all these are **external mental forms**) **come about**. You have to **understand** these **mental forms** and **see** them **very clearly**. They are **not really the way** your mind **perceive** them to be. How do all these forms come about? How do they arise? You have to ask yourself. We have dealt with

phenomena. Whatever you **perceive** and **bring to mind** is your **mental creation**. Is that not so? All the **external forms** have been **created** by your mind through your **sense door consciousness**. Can you see the **power of creation** by your **mind**? Can you follow? The seeing consciousness arises when you open your eyes. All those sense perceptions that come through your seeing consciousness are **created** by you. These external forms have already arisen in you because there are these conditions for their existence. Can you follow? But when the **conditions cease** to be, just as **when you close your eyes**, all these external forms that have been created through your seeing consciousness are gone. **So, are they real?** The **moment** of their **arising, sustenance** followed by their **cessation** (of that consciousness) **must be seen clearly** through very **stable daily mindfulness** in order **to have the ability to see the unreality** of all these **external forms**. This is very important. Even this physical body the mind dwells in is not really you and it is not so real, not what you think.

External forms - there are **two ways** to see their **unreality**. First, it is through **nature's law** and its **conditioned arising nature**. We ask ourselves, anything that we see, be it a table, a chair, a human being or any phenomena, such as a sound, how do they come about? There are **nature's conditions** that bring about their existence. Is that not so? How does this table arise or come to be? **Do you need a Creator GOD to create this table? No!** There are conditions for it to arise. The conditions are: you need someone to gather the raw materials. Then you need a skilled worker to skillfully craft the parts and fixed up the table. Then someone offers it for sale. You have the money, you buy it and it comes to be. It has already been created. These are very tangible forms. External forms are mostly more

tangible and they last longer so you cannot see **their impermanent nature** easily. But when it comes to sound (which we have already dealt with), you can **understand** its **transient nature** more easily. Sound is a very good example. When the **vibration arises**, there **is a condition** for its arising is that not so? When you have ears and you are nearby, you can **perceive** the arising of that sound. So these are the conditions for hearing consciousness to arise. The external conditions that are needed to give rise to the sound are many. The air-conditioner and the vibration from the engine of a passing car are examples. All these are conditions needed for their arising. So when you switch off the air-conditioning or when the moving car passes beyond your hearing range, to you that sound (an external form) has ceased to be. Then we ask the question, is it real? Maybe **real** to the **existential** world or to the **physical** world, the **conditioned or conceptual** world (means **conventional truth**). It may **appear real** but **because it is conditioned arising, dependent on conditions it arises**, so it is **not so real!** The reason is when the **supporting conditions** are there, they **sustain its existence**, and when the supporting conditions **cease to be**, it ceases to arise or ceases totally! Now you see the **coming** and **going** and the **appearing** and **disappearing** of all the external phenomena that your mind creates through your mind door. They are all **not so real** because they arise due to conditions.

The Buddha gave a **bullock cart** analogy which I have shared before on a number of earlier occasions. This is a very good analogy. He pointed to the bullock cart and asked his disciples, “What do you all see?” Of course all the Bhikkhus said it was a bullock cart. The Buddha then told them, “Take all the parts away, separate out the wheels, separate all the parts of the bullock cart”. Then he asked,

“Now where is the bullock cart?” Anyone want to try and answer? To living beings, when the conditions or the parts come together, the phenomenon that arises performs a function. You give it a **name** and a **concept** by calling it a **bullock cart**. Do you see how it arises and how it is being created? **When all the parts come together**, when you **assemble them** and it is **able to perform a function**, you give it a **concept** or a **name**. Then it has **already arisen**. But when the **sustaining conditions** are **not there**, such as when you dismantle them, the concept is gone, and the ‘bullock cart’ is also gone. So the coming and going of **external form** is based on external conditions linked to the physical law of nature and there are **causes and conditions** behind their arising. **When the conditions cease to be**, it **disappears**. In that sense, basing on **ultimate truth** when you look at it, it is **not real** because it is **impermanent** due to its **condition arising** nature. With this understanding you will be able to subsequently understand why people say, **‘conditioned existences are all manifestations of the mind’** and **causal phenomena** are also **manifestations of the mind**. This is because all phenomena or external forms arise **due to the mind’s perception**. When there are causes for it to arise like sound or the bullock cart, then it arises. When the conditions no longer exist, it ceases to be. Can you follow?

You see, **externally**, it is **already** not so **real** because it is **conditioned arising**. But **how** do you **perceive** the **bullock cart**? This part is very important. This part involves the mind. Where does the knowing of the bullock cart come from? It is through your **mental perception** because you **need to perceive** it. So you bring the external ‘form’ into the mind. That perception comes through your sense door consciousness. **The five aggregates of form and mind**



**must arise. If it does not arise, there is no seeing consciousness.** If there is no seeing consciousness, it means there is no contact, no feeling and no perception of form. Can you follow? When you do not perceive, nothing arises. That is why if you look at the Dhammapada, you will know why the first two verses are so important. The Buddha proclaimed, **“Mind is the forerunner of all things, by mind is the world created and led and by mind is the world drawn. And all men own the sovereignty of mind”**.

You see, this aspect of mind is very important and we have already discussed it. That is why I say **if you do not understand phenomena, it will be very difficult for you to understand mind.** If you understand what a phenomenon is, that is anything that is perceivable by the senses is a phenomenon and then you will know how mind arises. I had already explained, through your sense door consciousness and sense perception how everything comes about through conditions. All phenomena are conditioned arising phenomena. You must know all these! You need the **sense organ**, you need the **sense data** and you need the **mind** to create **contact** to arise the **sense door consciousness**. Within the sense consciousness there is the feeling aggregate and the perception aggregate that perceive things for you to see. So externally it is already **not real** because the bullock cart arises from external conditions. That is, when it is assembled, it comes about. When you perceive it through your mind, **it is only an image** here (pointing to forehead). That is why the **mental formation** that **created** the bullock cart is actually **mind-made, a creation of your thought and your mind**. Externally it is already not so real and when you bring it to mind, it is **only an image created by your thought**. That is the reason why the Buddha said, “Mind is the forerunner of all things”.

The Mahayana tradition gave great emphasize on this understanding and their equivalent Mandarin quote is: “**Yi qie, yi qie, wei xin zao**” (一切一切为心造). Those who understand Mandarin will know it means that **everything is created by the mind**. From the definition of phenomena, you will come to know that all **sense door perceptions** create for you the ‘**phenomena world**’ and the ‘**conventional reality**’. All the **external forms** arise **due to** this **understanding** and you will come to know that **their nature** are due to **other conditions** that **condition** their arising. And because they are **conditioned arising entities**, how can they be **permanent unchanging entities**? Now you will start to see and understand why they are **impermanent** because **dependent on conditions**, they arise. So when **conditions change**, things will also change. And when they change, you must understand their characteristics. It is nature’s law. It is **beyond each and every one** of us **to control**. That is why **there is no control**. According to the Buddha, “Whatever that **arises**, there are **causes and conditions** behind it”.

### 3.4 PANCA NIYAMA (5 UNIVERSAL ORDERS OF NATURE)

We have already discussed the five **universal orders (pañca niyāma) of nature**. They are:

1. **utu-niyāma**, the **physical order** of nature;
2. **bija-niyāma**, the **biological order** of nature;
3. **karma-niyāma**, the **karmic laws**;
4. **citta-niyāma**, which is the **order** of the **mind**; and

5. **dhamma-niyāma**, which are **natural occurrences** or whatever nature's laws or truths not already covered by the first four universal orders.

Having understood these, we have to link them back to our earlier discussion on the five aggregates of form and mind. You have already understood what phenomenon is. After understanding that, it will **direct** you to the mind. Because by understanding phenomena, which is **key to the understanding of mind**, you can know how all the external forms (meaning the aggregate of your physical body together with all the external forms/things that you perceive), come about - through nature's conditions because they are conditions arising phenomena. So when you know that they are **conditions arising**, you **will start** to develop the **understanding** that you cannot **cling** on to them or **want things your way** because **nature** already **has its laws** and **that is the way it is going to be** or the way it will happen. **If you want it your way, which is not nature's way**, you will suffer because you have **attachment** to things. If you want things your way, for example, you want your body to always remain young, never get old, never get sick and never die, you will be disappointed because the **laws of nature** have their own set of laws and as such, **this body** will go the **way of nature** for it **has not** gone beyond **old age, sickness** and **death**.

That is the reason why in the last session, we discussed the **five daily recollections** as taught by the Buddha. The first three recollections are that this body of ours is **not beyond** sickness, **not beyond** decay and **not beyond** death. And the fourth contemplation is whatever that you think you own or are dear to you, they will one day **either separate** from you or you **will separate**

from them. And the **last contemplation** is with **regard to the law of karma**. If you contemplate these **daily, you will** develop the **2<sup>nd</sup> turning wisdom**, the *cinta maya panna* **understanding**. Then your attachment to your physical and mental forms will be greatly reduced. Finally when you awaken you will understand that natural laws are such. All the **clinging** comes from your **attachments** and **feelings** borne of **self-delusion**. Whenever sense door consciousness arises, there is this aggregate of feeling for which you must develop the understanding. That is the reason why this *vedanānupassanā* or ‘mindfulness on feeling’ is a very important aspect of meditation. If you cannot develop that well, it will be **very difficult** for you to deal with your **attachments** or **clinging** because **attachment arises** from this **feeling** aggregate.

If you can recall what the Buddha had taught us under the twelve links ... have you all heard of the twelve links? In pali it is termed **Paṭicca-samuppāda** or **Idappaccayatā**. The **twelve links** is also called the **Law of Dependent Origination**. For the benefit of those who **have not** heard about it, let me **briefly run through it**. According to the Buddha, **understanding this 12 links teaching** is **very important** because it explained clearly how our mind functions (*citta niyama*). Later you will be able to understand why he taught this.

First, he said, “*Avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra*”. **Avijjā** is ignorance or **delusion**. Because you have ignorance, you do not understand so it **conditioned saṅkhāra (mental activities)**. Hence, dependent on **ignorance, mental activities arises** because you do not understand and **wanting to know** and **wanting to experience** you will **create thinking**. Is that not so? You tend to think. That is why the first link

is, “avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra.” Because there is this ignorance, you **do not understand** the **truth** and the **reality**. And because of that, you will start **mental activities which is thinking**. **Dependent on this saṅkhāra**, he said **Nama Rūpa arises**. What is **Nama Rūpa** (Form and mind)? Why did he say that? We had already discussed it. Remember? What is saṅkhāra? All your mental activities, your mental volitions, your mental formations and everything that your mind can do (including your thinking, planning, scheming, mental states, etc) are saṅkhāra. So when saṅkhāra arises, these thinking activities will trigger off the **mind door consciousness** through contact with the mind organ. Then you input the **content of consciousness** hence giving rise to the **five mental aggregates of form and mind**.

I had explained how consciousness arises. There must be the **sense organ, sense data** and **contact** of mind. Contact of mind will give rise to that sense door consciousness and that consciousness will have the content of consciousness giving rise to your five mental aggregates of form and mind. That is how Nama Rūpa arises. So Nama Rūpa arises because of ignorance. Because you do not understand that is why you want to think. **Thinking creates contact** within your mind, which is an organ. That is how these mental five aggregates of form and mind continuously arise in living beings. That is why just now before I started, I told you, we have to see how Nama Rūpa arises in you and understand what these five aggregates of form and mind are all about before you can deal with the form and mind. That is how the clinging and attachment to all those things come about. I will go through the twelve links and then you will understand clearly how dukkha arises. We have just discussed the first three links. Can you all follow?

Dependent on ignorance mental activities arises. That is to say, **Avijjā paccaya saṅkhāra** is followed by **saṅkhāra paccaya viññāṇaṃ**. They are dependent originating. And dependent on saṅkhāra, viññāṇaṃ or the **pure consciousness** arises first. From this pure sense door consciousness borne of contact (thinking), your five mental aggregates of form and mind arise after you **input your content of consciousness** through your **views, opinions and conditioning**. After these five mental aggregates of form and mind arise, what do they condition? Who can remember? Yes! **Nama Rūpa paccaya salayatana**. What is salayatana? .... No! Before contact... your **sense bases**, that is, Nama rūpa paccaya salayatana. **Salayatana is your sense bases**. Dependent on the arising of these five mental aggregates of form and mind, there must be sense bases because without the sense door bases, there will be no form and mind. Then he said **dependent on these sense bases** it will condition **contact**. In Pāḷi they call it **phassa**. **Dependent on contact**, he said **feeling** will arise. **Feeling is vedanā**. Then dependent on **feeling**, it conditions **craving or tanha** (Vedanā paccaya taṇhā) to arise. **Tanha is craving**. If you **do not** have the **wisdom (yonisomanasikara)** when feeling arises, you will attach. Whether positive or negative, craving has already arisen. Then dependent on craving or taṇhā, **upādāna or grasping arises**. After you have developed craving, it will condition you to grasp at things because the craving has become so strong that you want it so badly. So dependent on this craving, grasping arises and **dependent on grasping, you become that**. They call it **bhavo or becoming**. You will **become** that which you grasp and cling. Let us say you have a lustful nature. You have a feeling that arises and makes you lustful, then when you develop the craving further, you grasp it; you have a very strong desire to have it and you **become** that **lustful nature**. Then

from this becoming, it conditions 'birth' (of for example, a rapist) hence the whole mass of suffering, sorrow and lamentation, etc will follow. So this is essentially a **very brief explanation** of the twelve links.

I want to emphasize particularly the second link. Dependent on ignorance, mental activities or saṅkhāra arises. This part is very important. That is why if you can recall what the Buddha said - he always uses the words, "**Sabbe saṅkhāra aniccaṃ, sabbe saṅkhāra dukkhaṃ and sabbe dhamma anattā**". Anyone know what these three stanzas mean? He said all of saṅkhāra are **impermanent**. That is what Sabbe saṅkhāra aniccaṃ means. All of saṅkhāra are impermanent and all saṅkhāra lead to dukkha, if you have attachment. Then in the last stanza he said, whether it is saṅkhāra or whatever, **all of dhamma is anattā or non-self**. He classified saṅkhāra as the **conditioned world** because saṅkhāra or mental activities arise within our form and mind. It is the **existential world of consciousness** or the **phenomena** world of consciousness. Do you know what the world of existence is? Whatever we experience within life itself, is existence and that part is what the Buddha means by saṅkhāra. It is the reason why he said **all of saṅkhāra are only your mental thinking, your mental activities** and that is why they are **impermanent**. The moment that sense consciousness arises such as seeing, the thinking that follows the seeing will arise; then the next moment another hearing, smell, taste, touch or even the thought process can arise. They will **continuously create saṅkhāra** within you. All the mental activities, mental volitions, mental states and even the activities of mind that create attachment will arise. Can you understand this part of his teaching?

The **understanding** of the **impermanent nature of saṅkhāra** is very important and **key** to the **understanding of dukkha**. If you do not understand that, **clinging will continue** to arise in you. Because **saṅkhāra are just your mental activities. They are only your thoughts, not so real** and everything that you bring to your mind when you think are **mind made images** only. It may be a very **pleasant moment** in your life or a **very sad moment** in your life or something that had happened and affected you a lot; maybe your loved ones are sick, very sick or whatever. When it comes to you, it is only your thought, your saṅkhāra; your activities of mind will start to develop the thinking. When you **do not have the wisdom** to know that it is only your thought, you will **develop attachment**. Then you may think the person that is dear to you is **very real** and **he is very important** to you and you want the best for him. So he must not have that type of traumatic sickness; he must not have that kind of problem. If you are **not able** to see this clearly, - everything that goes on within us **are all mind made**, are only our **mental creation**. Then this **truth** that the Buddha tried to explain to us regarding impermanence, suffering state and non-self or empty nature characteristics of all phenomena **will not** be easy for us to comprehend.

Any questions? Yes, KC. Yes.... **Ah, yes, a very good question. The content of consciousness** arises **simultaneously together** with the **arising** of that **consciousness**. **Initially**, it is just the **sense consciousness** that **arises**. That is why the Buddha said that **in the seeing**, there is only the **seeing consciousness**; there is no **one** to see as yet! **Do remember this clearly. It is only a consciousness**. Like the light bulb, when you turn on the switch, if the battery is in order, the **bulb will light up**, just like the consciousness arising. But



because most cultivators do not understand the **reality** of this consciousness, they cannot develop the true understanding of the twelve links. Within the **five aggregates** of form and mind, one of the aggregates is **viññāṇam**, which is the **pure sense door consciousness without its content**. When it arises, if you **do not understand** its **impermanent** and **non-self nature**, you **will proceed to think** by **inputting the content** of **consciousness** conditioned by your **views, opinions** and **conditioning**. If you can have the **stability** of mindfulness to be at the moment of that pure consciousness before the input of the content of consciousness, that is the **pure seeing** or **direct seeing** as taught by the Buddha when he said, “In the seeing there is only the seeing consciousness and there is no one to see as yet” then you can understand because the self-delusion has not set in as yet.

What KC asked just now is very good. **Whenever sense consciousness arises, what actually arises and in what order?** If you have **developed** your **meditative understanding** well, you will understand that every arising of consciousness is followed by the content of consciousness arising **simultaneously**. They **do not arise separately**. But your **mind** can only **do one thing** at a time. So, all your **aggregates of mind** are within the **content** of consciousness and your mind can be at the moment of **perception**, at moment of **feeling**, at moment of **mental activities** and at the moment of **arising of the sense door consciousness** and your mind is capable of knowing them. **It is moment to moment**. But because they arise **so fast** in you, if you do not have the **stability** of **sati or mindfulness** within you, there is **no way you can deal** with the **arising** of your **sense door consciousness**. And when they arise, your thought process with its **perceptions** and **thinking** (as conditioned by your

views, opinions and other conditionings) **will also arise** very quickly. **Unless** you have **developed** a very **stable sati (mindfulness)**, you will **not** be able to **cope** with what is happening.

That is why in the earlier sessions I **always stress** that you should **try to see form, the unreality of form**. Only **then** will you be able to **see beyond form**. If you **cannot** see form, the **unreality** of form or the **empty nature** of form (that is, form is **unreal** like what we discussed just now), it will be **very difficult for you to develop** the **wisdom to see beyond form**. Remember, there are **two conditions arising aspects** to it. The first aspect is through **nature's condition**, based on **nature's laws** the external form arises, like the bullock cart analogy. The second aspect is through **mental creation**. Our mind **creates** through the **sense door consciousness** and through our **sense perception** which brings the **external form** into **mind**. If you can understand how forms come about, you will understand how to **see forms clearly** and **why** they are **not real**. It is **because** they are **condition arising** entities and they exhibit the **three universal** characteristics of **anicca, dukkha** and **anattā**, they are **not real**. You **cannot** have it **your way** because when conditions are the way they are, things will be just the way they are. They will go the way of nature or flow that way because they are **condition arising entities** and **dependent on conditions** they will arise, exist and cease accordingly. You cannot have things your way. So when you understand the **impermanent** nature of form, you can also see the **dukkha** and **anattā** nature of form and how attachment (craving) leads to dukkha. Being **dependent on conditions, they arise and flow** and there is **no permanent unchanging entity** behind **every phenomenon**. That is why they say it is a **phenomenal world of consciousness created** by the mind.

First, learn to **understand** form and mind. The **emphasis is on form**. If you **cannot see form**, you **cannot see** the **unreality** of form and then it is even more difficult for you **to see beyond** form. Then form will continue to **haunt** and **create delusion in you**. This **form delusion** will cause you to **attach** and **cling to form**. When **attachments arise, dukkha** will follow. It is very important for you to **learn to see form** and the **unreality of form** before you can see the **empty nature of form**. Once you are able to see the **empty nature of form**, the **external creation** that the mind creates **will collapse** in front of you and the **wisdom arising** will lead you to understand the **twelve links**. The links are: **dependent on ignorance, mental activities** arise. Then **dependent on mental activities, vinanam or mental consciousness** arise, etc. When **wisdom had dawned** upon you, you can **see the twelve links clearly especially** how ignorance condition mental activities or thinking leading to the arising of the five aggregates of form and mind (mental aspect). You can also see the **unreality of form** through seeing the **condition arising and impermanent nature** and **how this bodily form goes the way of nature**. With this **understanding** your thought processes (**thinking or saṅkhāra**) will start to **slow down** because **without ignorance** the sankhara or mental activity link cannot arise. But dependent on ignorance they arise, flow and create attachments through delusion. And if you want things your way, dukkha will follow because they are impermanent and **go the way of nature**; it is **not a permanent unchanging entity**. They come and they go, so **hey no you, hey no me** within. The **anicca, dukkha** and **anattā characteristics** will be very clear. Once you can see all these very **clearly**, all the **external creations** (the world of **forms**) **created** by the mind will collapse in front of you. They will not be able **to trap you** anymore. Not until

this collapse happens, your mind will have **no peace** because these **external forms** will continue to **entice, haunt** and have **power over** you to **create attachments** in you and because of that, living beings will find it **very difficult to free their minds**. But when you have developed the **wisdom** to see the **unreality of form** and how **form arises** because of **nature's conditions**, you will be able to develop the wisdom **not to attach**.

We have already said there are **two aspects** to the **conditions arising** nature of all phenomena. I have to repeat this because this topic is **not easy** to understand. I may have to repeat it many times. I have already spoken on this many times before. That is, if you can have this **ability to see the unreality of form**, your **thinking will slow down** because by then you will have **less ignorance**. You will have **less and less** thinking because these forms **cannot haunt or delude** you anymore. **Your mindfulness** will become **more and more stable**. The **direct seeing of reality** and the **phenomenal (physical, mental and nature's phenomena all included) world** will be **very clear** to you. You will start to develop the **understanding** and the **wisdom very quickly** because when your mind is **not clouded** by **mundane thinking** or the **mundane arising** at the moment of sense door consciousness (**leading** to perceptions, attachments, feelings and emotions, etc) your mind will be very clear. The **real seeing** can then **come forth**. The **true penetration of truth leading to insight knowledge can come** about. This is how it actually works. When you are able to see form, the unreality of form, only then **can you see beyond form** and **form** will no longer **delude** you. Only **then** are you in a **position** to see **the mind** because **the mind is less tangible (invisible) not like external forms** which are more tangible and gross and you can see them more

easily. Since mind is **invisible**, more **subtle** and **very deceiving**, it can **deceive** you into believing many things. That is the reason **why** it is even **more difficult** to see **mind**. **If you** cannot see **form**, you cannot see **mind**. After we have dealt with this, there is another thing I want you all to understand – the **2<sup>nd</sup> aspect** of the five aggregates of **form and mind**.

The mind is very **tricky** and it is very **deceiving** because it **creates** a lot of things through our sense door consciousness. Every time it **creates** through the arising of sense door consciousness, thinking will arise, feelings will arise, attachments will arise and then you will be trapped. Through your **thinking and thought processes**, they will create all the **dualities** and **concepts** for you to **attach** to. That is the reason why J Krishnamurti said **thought will divide**. Why does he say that? Take for example thoughts create the word, **religion and it starts to divide** religions into Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Bahai, and the rest. **Everything has already arisen**. Even for living beings, they will differentiate and create the concept of **male** and **female**, **young** and **old**, **youth** and **middle age**, etc.

That is the reason why if you are not able to see clearly what **form** is, you will attach to **form**. Take for example, when you look at KC, you immediately think he is a Chinese, right? The words **race**, **age** and **gender** can describe KC as a Chinese, middle aged, male, etc. And because of that, living beings develop **attachments** to **race**, **age** and **gender** and also to **religion**. These can give rise to a lot of unnecessary conflicts and misunderstandings because you **unknowingly** accepted such division/categorization. Then you are given a name, such as KC, Mr Chang or Mr Wan. That label **creates** the **'I' in you** just like when you were dealing with the **sense door**

**consciousness** just now. **When the seeing arises**, it is only the **seeing consciousness**. There is **no one** to see. But **because of delusion** and **ignorance**, we **created** the thinking that says **'I see**. You **associate with** the seeing. Can you inquire further? Who is the **'I that sees?**

Anyone wants to try to answer that? When you say 'I see, what is that 'I', the big capital 'I' that you are referring to? No, no, no, the English word 'I'. The **ego, 'I see. But the five aggregates do not see**. A lot of people will say my eyes see which is **quite logical** because without eyes I cannot see. Then how do you answer him? **Is he right?** He said his eyes see. Is he right? You have **to probe** into this. Is there **any truth** in what he said? ... That is one way of answering it. Is there any other way? He said his eyes see. You have to ask him because he **may not** know about the five aggregates of form and mind. But now that you have studied the five aggregates of Form and Mind (which is very important), this understanding can help us. We can start to probe by asking: Are the eyes responsible for the seeing? You must **listen to this carefully!** It **will** give you **good understanding**. The eyes, the physical organ is only **one** of the **conditions** that gives rise to the **seeing consciousness**. The **eyes alone do not see**. Just as Bro Wong said, **without the mind**, how can the **eyes see?** You ask a dead man to open his eyes and ask him to see. **He does not see**. Can you follow? At night, certain people sleep with their eyes open but they do not see. **That is** why understanding **conditions, existence** and **phenomena** are very **important**. If you **cannot understand phenomena**, you cannot understand **mind**. Because the understanding of **phenomena** is **key** to the **understanding of mind** and the **understanding of mind** is **key** to the **understanding** of the **five aggregates of form and mind**. You have

to understand **these very clearly** because the eye is only one of the organs responsible, meaning one of the conditions that give rise to seeing consciousness. The other thing you need is **external sense data** in the form of **colour, shape or form**. Then you need the **mind**. The mind is key just like what Bro Wong said - because without **mind**, there is **no knowing**. **When there is no knowing, there is no seeing**. Do you follow?

But is there really an 'I' that see? What is this 'I'? Our sister here said the 'I' is the five aggregates. If you call the five aggregates 'I', then you are calling a compounded thing the 'I'. Then can I ask you is your body really you? The five aggregates of form and mind, your physical form and mental aggregates, are they really you? If not **who are you? What are you?**

To understand truth, you need to understand who you are and what you are. If you do not even **know who you are** and **what you are**, then how can you **understand form and mind?** How can you understand **reality** and **truth?** Who are you? What are you? I will give you a hint. **How do you know the world? How do you interact with the world?** Let me go back to basics. It is like going back to school but school never teach this understanding. You have to know who you are and what you are. So how do you know the world? Through what? We have already gone through that. Through your **perceptions**, remember? You need your senses. Without your senses, you cannot know. Your form and mind comes back again. You need the **mind** and your **physical senses to arise** the sense **door consciousness** and your **perceptions to know**. That is why they say Man is the **greatest magician**; Man **creates the world of consciousness**.

That is the reason why **the Buddha** gave five very important **analogies to** the five aggregates. First, he said form or **rūpa** is like **foam**. Have you heard of this before? When you wash with the soap, the foam appears as one white mass. It looks **very solid** but after a while it just **withers away** and **there is nothing left**. It is **not solid** at all. He said our rūpa is just like that. Not so **real**. Then he said **feeling** is like a **bubble**. What is a bubble? It pops, arises and disappears; pops, arises and disappears. So **feeling is momentary**. It **comes and goes**. But when you are in a retreat, during your sitting, when you are in a certain posture that creates a lot of pain, you will ask yourself, how is it pain does not go away? It always arises. Not to say it does not go away. Actually it was never there. But because your **mind clings** to it and you are **not relaxed**, that **phenomenon** tends to make you **attach to it**. You **think that very body** is very **real**; you **think** that **pain** is associated with you because you think the **body is you**. But very few people can actually see that. You have to learn **to see through** that because this body as we had said before has **three types of dukkha**, remember? One is **within this physical form**. They call it **dukkha dukkhata**. The dukkha that arises within this form is **karmically bound to us**, so it is a **karmic arising**. When this physical body **ages** or becomes **diseased** or there is a **wound**, a **cut** or whatever, or when you sit in a certain posture you constrict it and the **pain arises**. This **dukkha** within the **form** is not easy to **penetrate** unless you really have the **meditative wisdom** to see its reality and learn to **endure** it with **proper contemplative wisdom**. Your mind can only develop the **wisdom not to cling** if you are able to **see clearly** what these things are. That **detachment of your mind** can only arise after **wisdom** has come about, that is after you have known the body for what it is and that the body is not you - just like the way we see form. Form is **unreal**. Form is



**impermanent. It is conditioned arising.** Form has no **permanent unchanging nature of its own.** It is **non- self.** Not until you see that and **penetrate it with real insight,** you **can never free yourself.** You will **always cling.**

I have already discussed feeling, right? Now we discuss the third aggregate (**perception**) which is more interesting. Do you know what its analogy is? I think KC will know - It is like a **Mirage!** Yes that is the answer. Why did he say perception is like a mirage? Everybody knows what a mirage is. In the desert, when you are very thirsty you may see a mirage and you think the pond of water is really there. Mind you, that is what Buddha said. **That is why perception is unreal.** It is only a **mirage** because **you created it through your mind** - only a mental formation/image here (pointing to forehead), that **appears** so real. It is similar for all the external forms you create and bring to mind through your sense perceptions. That is why when you understand what a **phenomenon** is (anything **that is perceivable by the senses is a phenomenon**) then you will know all **external phenomena** are just your **sense perceptions.** That is what the **external form** is all about. **External form is tied to external phenomena. When you understand phenomena, you will understand form.** Then **you will understand mind.** If you **cannot see phenomena,** you will not be able to see **form.** You **will not** be able to see **mind.** Is it that difficult to understand? So for the third aggregate of perception, remember the mirage analogy. It is the **reason why it is not so real.**

The fourth aggregate is even more interesting. This will **lead you to see anattā.** Anyone wants to try and answer? Brother Lim? It is **saṅkhāra.** The Buddha said that saṅkhāra is like a banana stem. Has

anyone peeled a banana stem before? You cut out the trunk and you peel it layer by layer. **What do you get at the end?** There is **nothing** at the end because when you peel layer after layer, at the **center, there is no core; it is empty. In this way you can better understand the empty nature of sankhara.** It is only your **thought** or **activities of mind** and your saṅkhāra arising due to conditions when there is **mind contact** with **sense data** and **sense organ.** They come and they go. Consciousness keeps on arising, thoughts keep on arising, perceptions keep on arising and your mental activities keep on arising, mental volitions, mental states, mental formations, etc keep on arising and **they are all not real.** How do they arise? They arise **through your mind when** you perceive them to be your **problem.** You **create** them **through** your **wrong thoughts** borne of **delusion.** That is why the Noble Eightfold Path is very clear. **Right view leading to right thought** is very important. You need to have the **Right Effort** to develop the **Right Thought** because **thoughts condition feeling.** If you are **not careful** with thought, it can make you suffer because all the things that bring about suffering or dukkha are due to your **conditioned thinking** borne of **wrong view.** Because of your wrong thoughts **born of ignorance,** you tend to **grasp** at those things that you think are real (borne of your attachment to the **external forms** or **aggregate of rūpa).**

We have not come to **mind** yet. When you come to mind, **it is even more complicated.** When you are attached to your **aggregates of mind** it is **worst.** This is only **external form** but because form can give rise to so much meaning to **delude** and **deceive** you, **to lure** and **trap** you, you have to be **very careful.**

Just now we discussed the physical body and all those things that you differentiate and discriminate. We discussed young, Chinese, race, etc. **But when you start to see clearly that all these are created by thought to delude you, what must you do?** You must learn to **see beyond form**. What is the meaning of **seeing beyond form**? **Do not only look** at the **physical** (or **outward appearances**), or **external forms** because **without wisdom** the external form will **divide** and **create** a lot of attachment. You will attach to your religion, your appearance, your age, your gender, etc. That is why they say some people's **views** are very strong. Their **opinions** are very strong because they attach to external forms. They are attached to labels, especially religious labels and that is why they fight, kill and do all sorts of things in **the name of religion**, in the **name of their nationality/country**, in the **name of their race and so on**. If you are not able to see clearly what this form is all about, how it **deludes you** and creates all those **confusion** and **attachment**, you **can never see beyond form**. But once you have the ability to see the **unreality of form**, then you say, eh, why should I look at KC based only on his external appearance? KC is not just the external form. **If I see beyond that, what do I see?** No more male, female, old, young, Chinese, etc. - all those divisions disappear, right? I do not have so many problems already, is that not so?

Then what do I see? I **see** the **mind inside**. Is there still any difference? When you look into his mind by looking beyond his form, what do you see? You see mind, is that not so? In that sense are we not more alike? Yes, we are **not so different after all**. You have a mind and I also have a mind. But there are **still differences**. He has his **views**, he has his **opinions** and he has his **understanding**. That is why he is still different. That is why between two persons,

even if you do not look at their **physical differences**, at the **mental level** he will still **argue** with you, **fight with you** because of **his views, opinions and conditionings** which are **strong** - that is **attachment** to views and opinions etc. This is the **mental part** which is more complicated because it is **invisible** and it is **so deceiving**. It can really **trap** living beings. That is why we must keep **an open mind**. Whatever you do not understand, try to develop the understanding. **Do not cling** to your views and opinions and start to develop the **misunderstanding** through **argument** and having difference of **opinions**. No point doing all these because everything is just the way it is. **The reality** is just like that. **Nature** is just like that. When **you can see beyond the physical form**, you can look at the mind. There are still these differences because we are conditioned by our teachers, our parents, the media, the books we read, our education, the school and all that **influence** us. They condition us and we only accept or agree to whatever that is **acceptable** to us. Then you manifest, live and act in **accordance with those views, opinions and conditioning** because you do not want to develop the understanding of the truth. You think that is what you are. Then again you are **deluded** because your views and opinions are going to block you. It is going to **create a lot of attachment and suffering within you**. But when you have the ability to develop the **meditative cultivation** especially the cultivation of the **Four Foundations of Mindfulness** and the **Noble Eightfold Path** to fruition, your form and mind will cease. Then you will be able to **see beyond mind**. When you are able to see **beyond mind**, all the views, attachments, opinions and the creations of **mind** will **collapse**. They will no longer deceive you and true **understanding borne of wisdom** will arise and **enlightenment** in the **here** and the **now** is possible.

Regarding the five analogies, just now I stopped at the fourth one, saṅkhāra. The **saṅkhāra analogy** pertains to its **empty nature**. Remember the analogy of the banana **stem**? You peel it layer after layer and there is nothing in the middle. At the core of **its existence** there is **nothing**. What Buddha tried to tell you is that whatever your **mind** or your **saṅkhāra creates** through your **sense door** perceptions (all the **external forms**) are **not real**. That is why it is **empty**. **All of phenomena are unreal**. They come and they go because of conditions. They **arise** because of **conditions**; they **sustain** their existence because of **supporting conditions** and they **cease to be when conditions cease to be**. When you understand all this very clearly, you will be able to understand the **empty nature of existence**. **Finally it is only your thoughts hence not real**.

Everything arises and passes away because of conditions. That is the reason why Venerable Sariputta was able to realize enlightenment upon hearing just two verses from Venerable Assaji. When he met Venerable Assaji who was one of the five ascetics who heard the First Sermon, Venerable Assaji was **so serene, so calm**. Venerable Sariputta knew this monk was special, very different from the other monks. So he decided to approach him. But he waited till Venerable Assaji had finished his pindapata and his meal and as he was about to return to where he came from, Sariputta approached him and asked, **“May I know who is your teacher and what is it that he teaches?”** Venerable Assaji being **very humble** replied, **“I do not know much”**. Then Sariputta, who is very wise said, **“Do not worry I do not need much from you. I only need to know what your teacher told you. Just repeat what little you know. That is enough for me”**. This was because Sariputta was the **foremost in wisdom**

and he had very strong pāramī behind him. When he listened to any truth, not necessarily from the Buddha, he could also become enlightened. So when Venerable Assaji said, **“This is what my teacher taught. He said whatever that arise in this world, there are causes and conditions behind”**. Then he said the second verse, **“These causes and conditions my master had explained”**. Do you know what happened after that? After hearing those two verses, Venerable Sariputta became a **sotāpan**. He realized the **first stage of sainthood**. Venerable Sariputta, upon hearing that truth became enlightened because his wisdom was so high. Now you understand.

This is what I have been trying to explain to you all. Please **pay attention** and **contemplate** this. The second turning of the first Noble Truth clearly states that this noble truth of dukkha is to be **understood**. You have to **understand it** and to understand this, the Buddha summarized all of dukkha as **clinging to the five aggregates** of form and mind. That is the reason why the form and mind is so important. I try to develop for you the understanding of this form and mind by explaining what a phenomenon is. If you **cannot** understand what a **phenomenon** is, you will not be able to **understand** the **form** and **mind**. If you **cannot** understand mind, it will be very **difficult** for you to **understand** the second turning. Even the first **aggregate of form**, I try very hard to make it **simple** for you to **understand** but **it is not easy**. Luckily **it is recorded**. You can **listen** to it slowly, but ignore the first part because all this while I am not used to holding a microphone, so when I start holding the microphone, I do not know what happened. **I cannot hold** on to things. When I hold on to things the **Dhamma cannot** come out or **flow** from the heart **naturally**. Luckily you all fixed that. After you fixed that, the **flow is more natural** because **many things** that come

**out from me are not** what ‘I’ say. I cannot speak from **memory** anymore. **Whatever comes, ‘I’ speak from my nature.** But if the **conditions are not** there, **it cannot** come out. I do not know why. **Do not ask me why.**

So this form and mind is very important. We have already discussed the fourth aggregate, saṅkhāra. The last one, the fifth aggregate which is **viññāṇaṃ** or **consciousness** is also very important. This fifth aggregate of form and mind is also termed the fourth aggregate of mind. Do you know the analogy the Buddha gave? You will get a **shock** of your life when you hear it. He says it is like a **magician!** This viññāṇaṃ is like a magician. That is the reason why just now I told you, you are the **greatest magician** on earth because you **can create almost everything that you can see and perceive** in this universe. When you open your eyes, everything is already created. The world comes into being immediately. The whole of existence has already arisen. That is why the Buddha said, **“Mind is the forerunner of all things”**. Now do you follow?

Mind is the forerunner of all things and because of sense door consciousness, whenever you see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think, the respective consciousness will arise to create the whole phenomena world of consciousness. That is the reason why just now I asked **who are you and what are you?** The key to understanding this is to ask yourself how you know the world. We know the world through our **six sense doors, is that not so?** And we know the world through **our mind** that **creates the sense door consciousness** and the **sense perception**. And how do you **interact** with the world? Again it is through your five aggregates of form and mind and your sense door consciousness, through your thinking,

your thoughts, your views, your opinions etc. This is what **living beings** are all about. So we have to ask ourselves, who are we, what are we? **Do these bodies really belong to us?** Is this **body really you?** You have to ask yourself that. Try to understand that. **Contemplate that to develop the understanding.** I used to give the analogy of the car and the driver to explain this. For discussion purposes we can inquire, is this body really you? Someone answered, No! .... That is a very good answer. Apart from that any other answers? This is also one way of seeing it and it is quite good. However, many people who are **not Buddhists** will **not** agree. As Buddhists, we take quite a lot of things for granted because we understand the teaching of the Buddha that is why we said **it is not really us.** But other people may ask **how can you say it is not me? I want to eat, I eat. I want to walk, I walk. I want to do anything I can do.** Why do you say it is not me? I have full control over myself. I want to commit suicide, I can. I want to die, I can. I want to scold you, I can. They also say if I want to be loving and kind, I can. Then why do you say it is not me? How do you answer that? ..... That is a very close answer just like the question on seeing and the eyes just now. Is it your physical eyes that see? Of course **not.** What is it that sees? It is a **combination of conditions.** The eyes are **only one** of the **conditions.** It assists in the seeing. It is a **supporting condition** for seeing. Likewise this body is exactly the same. That is why the form and mind is **not easy** to comprehend. The ability to **control** does not mean you own it and it belongs to you.

I want to share this analogy that I used previously. This analogy is quite close but not exact. You assume that this very body and mind are synonymous to **a car** and a **driver.** This is the car and the driver analogy. Let us say the car is in perfect condition. Everything is there



- the petrol, the engine, etc - everything is functioning. The driver, being a skillful driver, can drive and has control over the car. If he wants to accelerate, he can; if he wants it to brake, he can; if he wants to turn, he can and if he wants to execute all the other functions allowable by that car, he can. **But you can see very clearly, the driver is the driver and the car is the car, right?** But why is it that when it is in your body, the mind together with this physical body, you cannot see? Why? When it is the driver and the car they are so clear to you. The two entities are different; one controls the other. **Likewise, the mind also controls you but you never see. That is why to develop the real seeing, you have to reflect within. Mahayana Buddhists** always say “**Hui guang fan zhao (回光返照)**”, meaning that you **reverse** the light and **look within**. In other words, **turn and shine** the **light** inward into your **mind; see and look within** and you will **understand** how all **mental formations** arise in your **mind**. Then you **will see how** all these are **created** by your **mind**. The **mind** is the one that **instructs** you through its **mental intentions or volitions**.

That is why if you can see very clearly, you will come to realize that **this physical body** is just an **external manifestation** of our mind. Because there is **this mind within** that **causes mental intentions to create all the movements such as intention to eat, intention to walk, plus all those activities created by mind**. It is just like the driver, but there is a limit to what this body can do. That is why it is just one of the **supporting conditions** behind its arising because of the **karmic force** that comes together with it. But this physical body of ours takes a **much longer time to arise and disappear**. It is also a phenomenon like sound, except that the sound phenomenon is very short, hence the conditions are very clear and very easy to see.

However because this body takes a longer time to cease, we **overlook** it as a **phenomena**. We **think it is real**. This is the reason why I said it is **not real** .... If somebody is **paralyzed from the waist down** and you ask him to walk, he cannot walk. Even if he **wants** to walk, he **cannot** walk. So you can see **very clearly** that it is **not the body that walks**. It is the **mind** together with this **form**. When the **conditions are there**, then it can **perform** the **function** of **walking**. Just like the case of the car and the driver. If the engine has no problem, the car will obey the driver. But if there is no petrol, no matter how skillful the driver is, that car will not move. Or if there is a problem with the engine, the car cannot move, just like the body when it is paralyzed - it cannot walk. **So** it is not **you**. Can you **understand?**

It is just a phenomenon that arises because of birth, and then there is a sustenance phase of growth, aging and dying. So this **body** is **not** really you because of its **impermanent nature**. It arises because of **biological order**. This physical body is governed by the **biological order of nature**. All the food that you eat, the air that you breathe and water you drink, sustains this body. The way you wash it, clean it and maintain its health, are all dependent on the **karmic inheritance** behind it. If your karmic force is such that it is time to go, no matter how well you try to take care of it, it will still go. Death will still occur. But when the physical body dies, what actually happens? Living beings take death as 'die'. They say die. But the actual understanding is different; it is just this **mental part** that **separates** from the physical body and they called it **death**. When the **physical body is devoid of consciousness, what will happen to that body?** It decays and no more pain can be felt. You can do an autopsy on it, cut it and there will be no pain. It does not know

what is going on because there is no more seeing consciousness, smell, taste, touch, etc - everything is gone. So when **this physical body is devoid of consciousness** and the **other supporting conditions**, it behaves differently hence it is no more you. It becomes only elements and it **returns to nature**. Can you follow? So that is the reason why the body is not you. I hope this part is clear.

Now the **magician part**. Do you all understand that part? The Buddha said that **consciousness is the greatest magician**. Why is consciousness analogous to a **magician**? Magicians **create illusions** for their audience, is that not so? Look at all the great magicians, they create illusion. It appears as if they create magic but it is **only an illusion**. It **looks real** but it is actually **not real**. **Your sense consciousness** is the **same**. When seeing consciousness arises, it creates the whole sense sphere of seeing. The **existential world** that you perceive through your seeing consciousness will arise as explained just now. There are external conditions behind their arising, just like the air-conditioner, etc. But the knowing is by the mental part that perceives the external form through your mind. So there are **two aspects** to their arising; the external (nature's conditions) and the **mental conditions** behind their arising. That is why all these forms that are external to your mind are not real in the sense that they arise because of conditions. One is **nature's condition**, dependent on the five pañca niyāmas. Just like the table and the air-conditioner. How do they arise? There must be conditions behind their arising. Secondly it is through your mental knowing, your mental **perception** and your **mind's creation**. Your mind after having made contact with your sense organ and the sense data gives rise to the **sense door consciousness**, in this case

the **seeing consciousness**. Then your **perception** brings the **external form into the mind**. So all these are **conditioned arising** entities. Because they are **conditioned arising**, they are **impermanent**. Do you see the **anicca characteristic** and the **impermanent nature** of form? When you see this, you will understand the **empty nature** of form. Forms are **not real**, just like this body, they come and they go. When the conditions for their arising are no more, they cease to be and they also cease to be when the consciousness leaves. Then it is no more you because there is no more feeling, there is nothing. Its elements return to nature. Is that clear?

Tonight I try very hard to make you all understand the **unreality of forms**. I also do not know how to put it in words because there are so many aspects to develop this understanding of the First Noble Truth of dukkha **especially the five aggregates of form and mind**. The first aggregate of form (its two aspects) is very important and tonight we stressed a lot on the first aggregate of form. We have not really gone into the other four aggregates of mind yet. There are many aspects to this first aggregate of form. Whatever that comes with the conditions tonight, 'I' just spoke on it. But there are still a lot more which I do not know why they do not come out or they do not flow. Maybe it is not the time yet. We have to wait for the appropriate condition and timing.

We have another 10 minutes. Maybe we should open up for questions. Anyone has any question? Yah! ..... That is a very good question. You see, what we are sharing tonight is the **second turning of the 1<sup>st</sup> Noble Truth**. This **second turning** of the **First Noble Truth** can let us **understand dukkha clearly**. The Buddha said under this second turning proclamation, **"This noble truth of**

**dukkha is to be understood**". So we should **inquire why** the **Buddha** said that. **And how** can we **understand** this truth? I **initially led** you all to this understanding but **finally** the reason why we need to discuss these **five aggregates of form and mind** is because the Buddha had summarized all of dukkha as clinging to **these five aggregates of form and mind**. So for that reason, we must delve deeply into them to develop a clear understanding.

#### **4. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**Question 1: How do you relate all this to meditation?**

**Answer:** Bro Wong's question on "**how do you relate all these that you have taught us to meditation**" is very important. What I try to share tonight is to help **develop the conditions** for your **initial understanding** to arise. This will help **prepare you** to have the **base** and the **conditions** to receive the **truth subsequently**. If you do not have the understanding of what these **five aggregates** of form and mind are, how to **see form**, the **unreality of form**, how to see the **empty nature of form** and **phenomena** and how to see **beyond form**, then it will **not be easy** to develop the **awakening through meditation**. But once you are **able to grasp this understanding**, it will develop within you a very strong **base to receive truth**, to receive **real wisdom**. And the next time you **listen** and **reflect** on what has been **taught**, the **contemplative understanding** or **wisdom** leading to the **enlightenment** in the here and the now will be **possible** because this is the **second turning wisdom** borne of **reflection** and **contemplation** on the Truth (cinta maya panna) as proclaimed by the **Buddha**.

If you **reflect** and **contemplate on** it, you will develop a **different** type of **understanding** and based on what I have explained, it will **straighten** your views. It will **strengthen** your **understanding** of the **five aggregates of form and mind**. When you **see** this **very clearly** after cultivating the **meditative practice**, it will be a lot **easier for you** to **develop** the **true wisdom** and **insight knowledge** required to **trigger** enlightenment. **Sati** supported by **right understanding** or **right view** with regard to the **law of Karma**, the **Four Noble Truths** and the **Laws of Cause and Effect/Dependent Origination** will bring about **Samma Sati** leading to **Samma Samadhi** which are the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> path factors of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The key to developing meditation is **to develop** the **understanding** of **what meditation is**. You can use any method or technique because **method** and **technique** never define the **meditation practice**. They are just **skillful means to anchor** and **train the mind in sati**. But many cultivators need **method** and **technique** as an **anchor** to **start** with. There is no harm in doing that. But understanding the real meaning of **meditation as taught by the Buddha** is **most important**. Then the method does not matter much because the **method is not** the meditation. If you **inquire sincerely** by asking yourself what is a method, you will come to understand that it is **just a series of instructions to help you practice**. Whichever method you use, be it the breathing or ānāpānasati method, I can tell you that if you get 100 students or practitioners to do the so called ānāpānasati or mindfulness of in-and-out breath, they will all **understand** the practice differently and **do** it differently. They can have the same teacher giving them the **same instructions** but when they sit, a lot of different things will arise in their minds **because of different interpretations** and **different understanding of**

**the instructions and topic.** The mind is really very **unpredictable** unless it is **very well trained**. If the mind is **not well trained**, what you are doing may not be the **real ānāpānasati**. You may end up **focusing** on the breath, **concentrating** on the breath and developing the **absorption** on the breath. The same goes for **rising and falling** of the abdomen, or whichever method or technique you may use.

Cultivating a **very stable daily mindfulness** leading to **sense restraint** and the **three ways of right conduct** are **very important**. The **key to understanding meditation** is to develop these **abilities** to **cultivate** the **Satipaṭṭhāna practices** of the **Four Foundations of Mindfulness**. With that, your **mindfulness** will be **very strong** and **very stable** and you will be able to develop the **collectedness** or **firmness of mind** which is **unwavering**. They call this **Samādhi**. Your mind will be very quiet. Your thought will be reduced (becoming less and less) as explained by me just now.

According to the twelve links, “If there is **ignorance, mental activities** will continue to arise”. And that is the reason why you think a lot. So if you **do not** develop the **wisdom** to **understand** the **five aggregates** of **form and mind** and their **universal characteristics** of nature (anicca, dukkha and anattā) **clearly**, it will be **very difficult** for you to develop the ability to **weaken ignorance or avijjā**. But when you have developed the wisdom to **straighten** your **views**, you will have **less saṅkhāra** and **less thinking** leading to more **clarity of mind**. Finally you will understand, you **only need** to **cultivate** the **Noble Eightfold Path** especially the **Four Foundations of Mindfulness** to **develop** the **deeper understanding** of your **form and mind to awaken**. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness under its fourth foundation, Dhammanupassana covers the cultivation of

**mindfulness of the five aggregates of form and mind.** The first foundation, kāyānupassanā deals mainly with **mindfulness** of our kaya or physical body and its main purpose is to stabilize our **daily mindfulness** and with that, it will be easier for us to develop the meditation.

## **Question 2: Who are you and what are you?**

**Answer:** Is your feeling really you? Is your **perception** really you? Are your **thoughts** and your **thinking** really you? Are your **sense consciousnesses** really you? We have dealt with all these, have we not? Are they really you, your feelings, etc? All those feelings you have experienced while living your life, are they really you? **Not you? Why?** Why do you say it is not you? You have to develop your own understanding. Do not just say it is not you because I told you that before. What I have told you is **very true** because it can be understood. It is like an **inquiry within**. That is why when you are in a meditation retreat, if you have this **contemplative mind** that **enables** you to **contemplate** into the **truth, realization** can come about; **wisdom** can arise. It is exactly what I am trying to ask you to do. Do not take the answer for what it is, just because the Buddha proclaimed it. When he said Dukkha is this, this and this, do not just say, oh! I already know that! Then you never learn unless your pāramī is very strong like some of those monks. That is to say, upon hearing the Sutta, they became enlightened. But if you do not have that kind of pāramī, if your past is not that strong to support you, then try to develop your own understanding. This is **important** because you have to ask, **why** this feeling is **not me**. Because when I **feel something, it is so real**; when there is **pain it is so real**, but because it **comes and goes**, that is why it is **not you** or not so **real**.



And because when I have this pain, after a while the pain disappears and **I did not die**. Then **another feeling arises**. A more pleasant feeling may arise or another maybe more painful feeling. And **because I do not die**, it **clearly shows** that this **feeling is not me**.

The same goes for **perception**. At one moment I perceive something; the next moment I perceive another thing, the TV, the car or whatever. **Every time perception changes, did I die?** I did not die. Likewise our thinking. Every time your thought arises, another one arises; you never die. **Thoughts come and go. Consciousness also comes and goes**. Your hearing, smell, taste, touch and thinking, they come and go. **So, if they are not you**, then how come **they arise in you?** **How** come the **five aggregates of form and mind continuously arise in you?** I have been trying to make you all understand this through **explanations with analogies** that are as simple as I can think of. The purpose of asking all these questions is to help you develop the **inquiring mind**. **If it is not you**, then **what is it?** **How come it arises together** with your **five aggregates of form and mind?** How come it is always there? At the beginning of my talk, I said that **you will learn** to see **how form and mind arise in you**. **How thoughts and feelings arise** in you with **every moment** of **sense experience** or **consciousness** and **how they condition each other**. Your thoughts **condition** your feelings first and in turn your feelings **condition** your thoughts. If you are **not mindful**, and if you have not developed the **wisdom** to **enable you to detach by accepting them for what they are**, **clinging or attachment is going to arise** and Dukkha is going to follow.

I will give you all a hint on how to understand these five aggregates of form and mind clearly. Feeling is not you because feeling changes and you did not die. All the other aggregates of mind changes and you also did not die. So what can they be? **If it is something that follows you and it is not you, then what can it be?** “It is just a phenomenon”.... That is one of the answers and it is quite close because phenomenon is **condition arising**, is that not the case? Sense consciousness is also **condition arising**. There is the mind, there is the sense data, and there is the sense organ. Upon contact, the respective sense consciousness arises. So it is conditioned arising. What does it mean? **It means it is born of nature’s creation following nature’s law. Is that not so?** When the conditions come together, it arises. If it is born of conditions and it only arises when the conditions come together, then it is **not a permanent unchanging entity. That is why it is not you, for it comes and it goes.** If you look **clearly** into this and your nature, there is **another aspect within you** that has **nothing to do** with all these **but** is responsible for the **creation** of all these.

There is another aspect that is **beyond** these five aggregates of form and mind **within your nature** that is responsible for the arising of all these. Still cannot follow? Yes! Karmic! **Karmic nature** is one of them because a lot are caused by **karmic past** and **karmic activities** and they can cause many things to arise. There is this **karmic nature** within us - we will deal with that later because that part is more abstract and very different.

What I can tell you is that all these are **by-products of the mind**, of the **True mind**. All these are **creations**, created by the **mundane mind**, the **thinking mind** - the one that **creates** all the **delusion of**

**form** and **phenomena**. Delusion is ignorance. Mahayana Buddhists have a very good analogy to explain this. They gave the **analogy of an Inn Keeper**. If you are the owner of the Inn, you will take care of the Inn. You are always there. Whereas the **guests** that **come** and **stay**, will **come** and **go**. Let us say this hotel has six rooms and every time there is a tenant or someone coming to stay, they will occupy one of these rooms. These rooms are equivalent to your six sense doors. All these guests **come and they go because they are not the owner**. They are only there to stay for the night. But upon contact, the sense door consciousness arises **quickly; they do not even stay overnight and in a split second, they may be gone**. They come and they go and because of that, they are the **by-products of your true mind**. They are **not** your true mind because all this **arising are due to causes and conditions** and there must be the sense data, sense organs and the mind for them to arise.

**What happens if the sense data cease to be?** When you switch off all these vibrations, all these sounds, is there anymore hearing? No more, right? There is no more hearing. That **hearing consciousness is no more** but what is that which is **aware** of this **cessation**? It is the **essence of mind**, right? There actually is only **one mind** but because of the **six sense organs** and the **six external sense data**, the six types of corresponding sense consciousness comes to be and 6 plus 6 plus your 6 types of mind consciousness, the **eighteen sense realms** that **create the World** and the **UNIVERSE** arise. But there is **one aspect within 'you'** that exist **no matter whether there is sense data or not. Whether there is anything coming or going, it is always there**. It is that which can give rise to sati or mindfulness. It is mindfulness that enables you to be aware. It is **before perception**. **Perception is creation already**, coming out of it already. It is already

the mundane mind. But that **nature within you** which is just aware of the non-arising of that sense consciousness of hearing or sound is of a **totally different nature** within you. **It is also Anattā**. It is not you. But when you develop your practice to a level where your **mindfulness can be quite stable** and your **wisdom starts** to arise and **when** your **penetration of truth** reaches a **certain level**, your **thinking will naturally become lesser and lesser** because it is just like what the Buddha said, “It is **Avijjā that creates saṅkhāra**” or Ignorance that creates thinking and mental activities. So when that goes, or becomes less, your mental activities also **slow down** and **become less**. When this happens you will have **less distraction** caused by the **thinking mind** (mundane mind). Your seeing will become **clearer** and you will **have the ability to see nature as it really is!** You will be able **to see the flow of nature**, the **moment of its (phenomenon) arising, its sustenance and flow leading to its cessation**. All these you will start to see clearly until it becomes very clear. The three universal characteristics of **Anicca, Dukkha and Anattā** also become very clear. And **when you see Truth, you will always see** because **Truth is everywhere in the midst of life and nature**. These **characteristics of nature** are always there and if you see, you will always see. **That is why you have to develop this ability to see**. Not until you can really develop the **understanding** through **right seeing**, you will not understand all these. That is why the **second turning** of the **First Noble Truth** states that this Dukkha **is to be understood**. Do not **underestimate its importance**. Do not think that it is just the First Noble Truth of suffering and it is not important. It is the **key to understanding all the subsequent truths** - the Second and the Third Noble Truths, etc and the realization of almost everything because through this understanding of the form

and mind, you will actually penetrate. Do you have any other questions?

### Question 3 Question from Sister Lye

**Answer:** A lot of the Mahayana teachings seem very abstract if you cannot understand. Even the **Heart Sutra's proclamation of, "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form"** is difficult for many people to **understand**. Not only they **cannot understand**, they **cannot even accept what is being said!** They say, how can you say that form is emptiness? Form is form! But when you understand what I had already taught you that **form is unreal** and it is there because of **conditions** (as forms are **conditioned arising** entities), then you can **understand why form is actually emptiness and emptiness is form**. That is what our Sister Lye here is trying to ask: 'In the Zen tradition, they always say, "if you see water that is not water; if you see mountain that is not mountain" because they are referring to your **wrong seeing**'. The **Surangama Sutra** has a very good saying to explain this. Listen to this carefully! It says, "**Perception of form is consciousness**, whereas its **non-perception is wisdom**."

I had already taught you all this. **Mind** is the **forerunner** of all things. When mind arises, **everything arises**. So everything **you see and perceive** is your **consciousness**. Because within consciousness, there is the **content of consciousness** which are your **five mental aggregates of form and mind** that create the world and everything else that 'you' come to perceive. All **knowing** comes from **the mind**. That is why the Buddha said, 'the **most important** part within your mind is **saṅkhāra**. That is why he said: "**Sabbe Saṅkhāra Aniccaṃ**" - All of saṅkhāra are impermanent. "**Sabbe Saṅkhāra Dukkhaṃ**" - All of saṅkhāra lead to dukkha if you have attachment to them. Then

**“Sabbe Dhamma Anattā”** - all of **saṅkhāra (the conditioned)** and the **unconditioned** are also Anattā because “Dhamma” here includes the **conditioned** and **the unconditioned** which are also **Anattā**, non-self and it is not you.

The other thing that I want you all to understand is that the **ability to understand the five aggregates of form and mind** can enable you **to free your mind** from the **delusion of self**. This is very important. That is how you **gain realization** of the **first stage of sainthood**. **Self-delusion** or **sakkāyadiṭṭhi** is rooted out and overcome when you have **penetrated with understanding** that these **5 aggregates of form and mind** are **not real, not you**. Then your understanding of **anattā** will become **very clear** and with that, the **delusion of self** is gone. And then it is possible to develop the **real understanding**. That is the reason why understanding the five aggregates of form and mind are not really you is very important because they arise due to conditions and they are **conditioned arising phenomena** hence no more **self-delusion**. Do you all have any more questions? If not, let us end. Thank you!

**SADHU! SADHU! SADHU!**