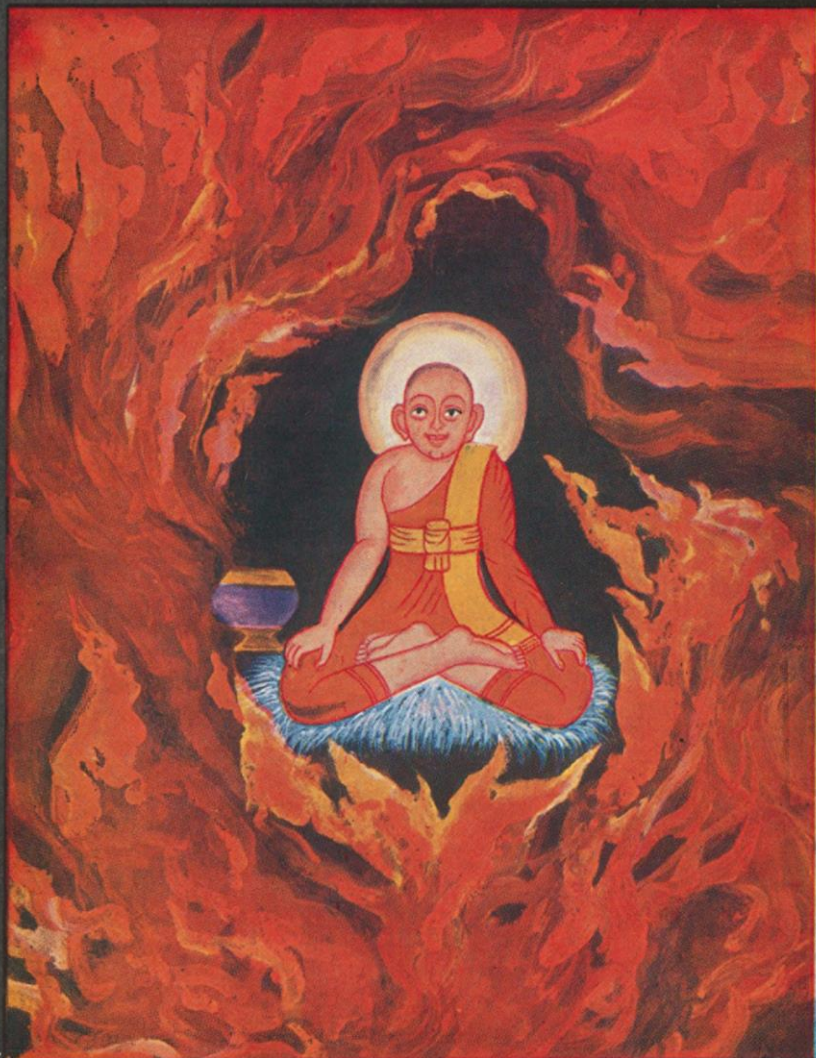


IN SAMŚĀRA  
EXISTS  
NIBBĀNA

by  
Bhikkhu

Buddhadāsa



# IN SAMŚĀRA EXISTS NIBBĀNA

*by*

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Delivered at

**SUANMOKKHABALARAMA, Chaiya.**

June 2, B.E. 2511

Translated from the Thai version under the title

ในวัฏสงสารมีนิพพาน

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Distributed  
by  
Buddha – Nigama,  
Chiangmai, Thailand.

## IN SAMŚĀRA EXISTS NIBBĀNA

To the ordinary person *samsāra*<sup>1</sup> is generally thought of as something differed and opposed to *Nirvāna* (*Pali: Vatta: Nibbāna*):<sup>2</sup> man is always roaming in this whirlpool of *samsāra* until he reaches out at *Nibbāna*. But I would like to propose here that *Nibbāna* *does* exist in that very whirlpool. The wise man, searching without external effort, can discover it, but the fool cannot; and it is the matter of one's own ability.

What is the basis for saying this?

Let us first consider the Lord Buddha's saying: "*The world, the cause of the world, the cessation of the world, and the way to the cessation of the world, I declare, exists within our six-foot body with perception and mind.*" The *world* here means suffering (*dukkha*), the troubles of human beings; and *within the six-foot body with perception and mind* means the living physical body of a man. In the dead body there cannot be found these four truths. In other words, suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and

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1. Literally means circling; in this context it means the recurrence of desires, the pursuit of those desires, and the out-comes; the suffering. (see "Handbook for Mankind" by the same author.)
  2. The prevalence of stillness, coolness and calmness; serenity, the Supermandane State, the Perfect Extinction of Suffering.

the way to the cessation of suffering, can all be found in a living body.

Further more, since there exists both suffering and the cessation of suffering within our living body, it is inevitable the whirlpool of saṃsāra and Nibbāna are there; and the Lord Buddha has already declared the truth.

The body and the mind are just natural elements composed of solid, liquid, air, fire, space, and consciousness (viññāna).<sup>3</sup> In the ordinary state of their compounded existence the body and mind is passive, neither in saṃsāra nor Nibbāna. Only in the face of excitement the mind-body<sup>4</sup> (nāma rūpa) become the ground of either Nibbāna or saṃsāra.

3. Since the body is dependent on the mind this can be referred only to the mind.
4. Note that this mind-body of ours can both manifest Saṃsāra and Nibbāna: Whenever the mind-body is conditioned under the influence of ignorance, then and there it is stirred up into Saṃsāra, the embodiment of suffering; when the mind-body is not conditioned by ignorance, it is, as it were, standstill, undisturbed, calm and peaceful,—this is characterized as Nibbāna. Remember briefly, when the mind-body is excited, that is Saṃsāra, when it is *perfectly* calm and cool, that is Nibbāna. We may leave out the body and speak of (in terms of) mind, for, after all, body is conditioned by mind—When the mind is conditioned into being excited that is Saṃsāra, when it is not conditioned and remains cool that is Nibbāna.

In this connection, we should recall another Buddhist saying: "*The mind is crystalline; only the visiting defilements darken it.*" The mind is darkened only when the defilements are welcomed; otherwise it will be naturally luminous, as usual (as before) typified by stillness, coolness, and calmness: and that is a kind of Nibbāna.

It should be noted here that there are several levels of what is called Nibbāna. It may either be temporary or permanent, automatically happened by chance or by conscious effort. But, in the broadest sense they imply the same: stillness, coolness, and calmness. They are at least *sufferingless*, and remain the cessation of suffering always.

Everyone has to be mindful of his own body-mind existence, and thus realizes that it is sometimes boiling hot and comfortably cool at the other. The heated mind rises but once in a while and *lasts for a short duration*, while the cool and peaceful period is much longer endured. When one goes to sleep or stays awake without becoming temperamental in love, hate, anger, or foolish and conceited, the mind is empty: one is still, cool, and calm. Even while one is talking, thinking, or doing anything, the boiling is still suppressed most of the time. In our normal daily activities, when the mind is not excited into the "I and mine" conception—without being 'cooked' by greed, hatred, and delusion, that it is said to be still, cool, and calm.

Since the mind normally sustains the cool and calm Nibbāna much longer than the boiling saṃsāra, we are able to survive nervous breakdown, or madness so far. So we should be thankful to what is called Nibbāna for keeping us intact.

The problem remaining is whether this Nibbāna is temporary or permanent.

The temporary Nibbāna is subject to change, but the permanent one is without; we must try to attain the latter. If we could only extend the impermanent Nibbāna attained longer without change, we then consequently would acquire the best and most proper way to our longer survival.<sup>5</sup> So let us wish to live longer this way.

Within a day the mind would just boil for a few hours; for the rest of more than 20 hours it would maintain the coolness of Nibbāna. If we could prolong the cool period until the mind no longer becomes hot and excited, then the permanent Nibbāna would be of all avail.

Let us now look in detail at the words *saṃsāra* and *nibbāna*. We should not be foolish, as many students of Buddhism are, believing that the whirlpool of saṃsāra is eternal; I was once because I was taught

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5. Some superstitious people believe one could beg for a longer life through rites and rituals.

that way. But in my own opinion now, the saṃsāra exists occasionally and only when we are careless or foolish so as to give birth to the "I" and "mine" conception. Whenever the mind is without then there is no whirlpool of saṃsāra. There will exist only the pure state of mind-body overwhelming with the serenity and blissfulness of nibbāna, not saṃsāra.

The whirlpool of saṃsāra occurs when the mind is disturbed by sensation. For example, when the mind conceives a visible stimulus, and, due to ignorance, responds unmindfully, then there will successively occur the feelings, the desires and the attachment which give rise to the "I and mine" conception; this is the whirlpool of saṃsāra. The saṃsāra will be sustained until the event has ceased; and the saṃsāra is simultaneously ended. The similar consequences may repeat time after time when another stimuli are sensorially conceived. It should be clearly understood that saṃsāra occurs only when sensation gives rise to the thought (saṅkhāra), without the mind disturbing stimulus then there is no whirlpool of saṃsāra. In other word, when the mind is in this cycle of dependent origination (paṭicca-samuppāda), it is in the whirlpool of saṃsāra.

No two people are the same; some are more easily stimulated than others. During the day some might be in the saṃsāra or the cycle of dependent



origination many times, and some are for just a few. An Arahanta is the one never induced into the whirlpool of saṃsāra, but ordinary man submerges in the saṃsāra considerably depending on how much or less he is inclined towards Dhamma. If he is without any Dhamma at all, then he will be frequently impelled more and more into saṃsāra by even the sleep dreaming.

Depending on certain circumstances, we normally may not be so much excited. But when an object comes into contact with the mind, and one is careless, becoming unmindful, then definitely ignorance will occur. The ignorance will instantly give rise to the thought (saṅkhāra), and successively to the consciousness, the mind-body, the senses (āyatana), the contact, the feelings, the desires, the graspings, the "becoming" and the birth of the "I and mine" conception. This is the boiling state in the whirlpool of saṃsāra. If the corresponding consequences are relatively nice they are called merits, and characteristically ugly-demerits. Both are equally disturbing.

With sufficient mindfulness the stimuli, conceived by the senses, will not be able to irritate the mind. The concurrence of stimuli and responses in the mind will accumulatively give rise to the thought and, finally, a complete "I and mine" conception. The consequence mostly results in the attachment of greed, anger, and

delusion, or even in desires for sensuality and for being and not being. The thought (saṅkhāra) that leads to either merits or demerits is none other than saṃsāra; demerits are the sufferings in the way of demerit, and merits - the sufferings in its own way.

Let us first consider the demerit. In a day there may possibly arise several different forms of greed, anger and delusion recognized as the four woeful states: the state of hell, of the animal world, of the world of hungry ghosts and of demon (asura). Whenever greed, anger and delusion cause us to be excited and *heated*, then we become creatures in the hell-like saṃsāra. When the grasping *desire* rises, then hungry ghosts we are. If we are greedily *foolish* then we will assume the animal aspect right at that moment; and when we are *fearful* of death to an extent that we have to rely upon mystical rites and rituals performed to help expand our lives, or fear of lizards, etc., we are the cowardly demons then. All these four woeful states are the results of demerits: the saṃsāra instigated by greed, anger and delusion.

Now, on the other hand, there are those who are spurred into making merit. When the sensual desire occurs, they will be eager to acquire the happiness of sensual pleasures. The desires of "becoming" and "not-becoming" will lead them to the form and the formless realm respectively. These are called meritorious states, pertaining to the heavens. The satisfactions

of devas of the sense plane, of the form and formless planes are all heavenly pleasures. The three heavens are created by the force of desires for merits: for sensual pleasure, for existence, and for non-existence. These desires give rise to the meritted saṃsāra, instigating the cycles of sensuality, materiality, or life and heaven, as opposed to the cycles of the four woeful states.

Ignorance gives rise to the desires of both merits and demerits; if they branch into the direction of greed, anger and delusion, then they are "unwholesome" woeful states. When the desires rise in the direction of those three kinds of pleasures, then they are merits or heavens.

Merit is opposite to demerit as well as the heavenly states are to the woeful ones. But no matter how they oppose each other, both are still in the whirlpool of saṃsāra. One who attains the sensuous pleasure in such a sensual temperament is supposed to be in the sensuous plane heaven. When he is peaceful and free from sensuous desires, while pertaining to the joy of imaginary objects, he is said to be in the realm of form. One of better trained mind who is just at ease and peacefully enjoying himself with abstraction, without any attachment to either sensuous or imaginary objects, is readily in the heaven of formless realm.

Most people are satisfied with sensuous happiness in the beginning; but getting old, they turn to seek for

the satisfactions in things which attract their attention and unrelated to sensuous pleasure: the realm of form. Higher still, they look for the realization of their dreams, the fulfilment of their hopes, and honor: the happiness of the formless realm.

In one day a layman can be in various different states and levels of merits and heavens of his own. We should ponder this seriously, and not be biased. Go and look at the nature of the mind directly, and we will see that it is impossible to sustain sexual desire throughout twenty four hours; it must be relaxed. Since the mind, during the relaxation, cannot be totally without an object, so it has to turn to some other form of fulfilments which is not related to sex such as strolling, sightseeing, or playing. Or he might prefer to sit still, praying, chanting, or gaining states of concentration, in order to nourish the mind. This is how one adjusts and advances himself in a day.

Even these relaxed periods are still the saṃsāra, not nibbāna yet, because they are not truly still and peaceful. Nevertheless, there are times in between these moments which are true relaxation, such as sound sleeping - when the mind is not excited by anything, or when we do not want to think about anything, just making both the body and the mind still and yet mindful. Then we can distinguish the boiling into saṃsāra and the cooling down into nibbāna of the mind.

Turning to “Nibbāna”.

One can be peaceful and calm during the day. No matter what the causes of this calm, its amount and characteristics, and its level are, all can be called nibbāna. “Nibbāna” means cool: the coolness of a matter such as the burnt out charcoal that has no heat left: it is the nibbāna of the burning charcoal. A well trained animal, becomes tamed and not irritable, can be called the cooled down animal; the animal is in the nibbāna state. A man who is truly without defilements and remains completely cooled and calmed, certainly abides in the coolness of nibbāna.

A closer attention will reveal three different ways of attaining nibbāna: by natural occurrence, by suppressing the defilements, and by deliberately uprooting the defilements. A nibbāna, occurred out of naturally favourable circumstances, is *tadaṅga-nibbāna*. One’s association with some ‘cooled’ people, or relaxing under a tree, reclining against the stones, or being in a peaceful environment, will automatically bring about the *tadaṅga-nibbāna*: the nibbāna arisen out of suitable circumstances. It is not hard to attain this kind of nibbāna, unless we overlook it because of our own ignorance.

The next higher category of nibbāna is *vikkhambhana-nibbāna*. It is sustained by our deliberate control and suppression of the defilements, such as in

some of concentration and meditation practices; a peaceful mind is maintained as a result. This vikkhambhana-nibbāna tastes the same as the tadanga one, and differs only that we can maintain and control it by practice.

The highest nibbāna is called samuccheda nibbāna, which means a complete extinction of defilements and the total elimination of ignorance, not giving ignorance the chance to disturb the mind at all. It is the ridding of the latent bias of ignorance, or the habit-pattern of being ignorant or deluded. It is this habit-pattern which is called Anusaya (latent tendency or bias), Somyojana (fetter.)

Those biases or fetters we should be mindful of are:

Wrong view: accustomed to or habitualized egocentricity, selfishness, and the "I and mine" conception.

Doubt: accustomed to skepticism and unwillingness to accept the true and proper things.

Belief in mere rites and rituals: accustomed to blind faith such as practising mysticism, or even blindly following the precepts and practices in Buddhism.

Lust: accustomed to sensual stimulation.

Repulsion: accustomed to emotional disorder.

Lust for form: accustomed to the joy of pure form.

Lust for the formless: accustomed to sinking into the happiness of the formless realm.

Conceit: accustomed to comparison of oneself to the others in order to find out if one is better, equal or worse.

Restlessness: accustomed to meddling in all sorts of event and unable to hold oneself back.

Ignorance: accustomed to foolishness, incoherence, and mindlessness.

Rid of all these habitual associations and acquaintances, and of the latent biases, the nibbāna attained will then be the true, permanent and unweaved nibbāna. The other two nibbānas, the tadanga-nibbāna and the vikkhambhana-nibbāna, are still alterable and subjected to some certain favourable circumstances; they are still not really under our control. But in the samuccheda-nibbāna, the defilements are more than just under control. They are uprooted; and nothing further is needed to be done. This is the true Nibbāna which can never be changed into the whirlpool of saṃsāra. It is the absolute Nibbāna.

However, it is still implorable to say that within this six-foot body there exists both Nibbāna and the whirlpool of saṃsāra. Without attaining the absolute Nibbāna we then are alternating between nibbāna and the saṃsāra. All the time the mind allows the objects

to thrust us into the "I and mine" conception, then we are that much in the whirlpool of saṃsāra, even though the mind is periodically passive. The superbly trained mind, by whatever methods, is the mind of special quality, full of unfluctuating goodness and without any further attachment; it poises the simile of "one hand clapping".

Normally, we have to clap both hands to produce a sound. When the percussion of the mind and the sense-objects occurs, it evokes attachment - the saṃsāra sounding: the echo of suffering. If the mind does not respond to the objects it is then the parable of one hand clapping: the sound produced thus is the sound of Nibbāna; it is the typical sound of silence, coolness, and peacefulness, echoing throughout the universe. The two hands clapping reproduces only the immediate sound at the moment, full of heated disturbances. The clapping of one hand can always be heard all over the universe; cool and silent.

With ignorance uprooted, its opportunity to grow is destroyed, the habit-pattern of delusion is extinguished, the mind thus is virtually in Nibbāna - the eternal and boundless Nibbāna which is no longer bounded to death. Deluded people take the eternity to be somewhere else, but actually it is here in nibbāna.



Where the great heat is, great coolness is found; where there is little heat there will be little coolness. Let us ponder well: when the small amount of heat is subdued there gains little "coolness", and hence the coldest can be found in the midst of the hottest, as a simile saying: try to find the coldest spot in the midst of the furnace. It means the greatest coolness is gained through the greatest heat quenched.

So the whirlpool of saṃsāra is the diabolic equivalent of Nibbāna; no matter how much heat saṃsāra generates, Nibbāna will equally reverberate coolness. The simile of finding the coldest spot in the midst of the furnace will serve well if we would say, "Look for Nibbāna in the midst of saṃsāra" instead. The fool evidently will not be able to find it, but the wise man can. Our ancestors have been correct when they said 'the clever sells nearby while the neurotic and the dumb trade afar.' The "now" generation does not understand this implication: when the "I-mine" conception arisen, it is saṃsāra; *in that very same mind*, when it is without the "I-mine" conception, it is nibbāna.

We should go on living without having the "I-mine" arising and in this very body-mind Nibbana will always persist. If we manage to get rid of the "I-mine" conception completely and indefinitely, then the temporary nibbāna will without doubt become permanent Nibbāna,

The Lord Buddha said things which occur naturally will pass away in the same token. We should thoroughly understand one of the shortest, fairest and most useful dicta: wherever there is suffering, the cessation of suffering must be there. If saṃsāra occurs naturally then it must also fade away naturally. Do not separate the occurrence and the cessation; by whatever means, and whenever the saṃsāra rises it will recess in the same manner. As suffering obviously stems from ignorance, so it must cease at that point of ignorance. No use of looking for cessation anywhere else when we must definitely find the cessation of suffering at that very suffering itself, in the same way as said the Lord Buddha: the world, the cause of the world, the cessation of the world, and the way to the cessation of the world, all exist within this six-foot long body with perception and mind.

Non-existence is simply at the existence. For example, if there is a mass object in front of us, we say it exists. But, where is its non-existence then? Its state of being absent is actually overlapped by the mass's existence. If we take the mass away, we will find the state of being absent of that object at the same spot. We must look for the cessation of the suffering at suffering always, the same as we look for the coldest spot in the midst of the furnace.

Seek the coldest in the hottest point. Look for the cessation at the point of boiling. If saṃsāra is boiling, Nibbāna must be the cessation of the boiling; they together exist there. Many of us have not thought about this at all, not to question their knowing and putting it into practice. We are like fools who have diamonds on our foreheads, but never know and never even bother to reach for them; it is the way the fools are looking for Nibbāna somewhere else than saṃsāra.

If we want to see the passivity, we must look at the activity. If we want to see stillness, we must look at the movement; if the cessation, then we must look creation. All these can be found within our six-foot body, as the Lord Buddha has said. The old folks of Chaiya (Southern Thailand), in one of their lullabies, show their comprehension of this condition well:

The coconut tree called Nalike  
 In the sea of wax lonely stays;  
 Untouched even by thunder or rain  
 But one surpassing merits gains.

The cocoanut palm mentioned above is the simile of Nibbāna in the middle of saṃsāra—the sea of wax. The saṃsāra persistence can be either wholesome or unwholesome one; when it is heated it is one thing, and cooled the other, as the wax naturally is. But it is essentially the wax still: the saṃsāra always. Meanwhile the palm tree is not heated even though it is in the middle of the sea of saṃsāra.

But now we live in a very different world. We must take account of the situation as if we were sitting in the serpent's mouth; without touching the fangs, we will find happiness, providing that we realize what are the fangs and what are not. In the worldly condition, one should be mindful enough not to attach to the senses that will give rise to the "I-mine" conception. If the worldly contact is unavoidable, we must be wise and mindful enough to be able to handle it, there will be no suffering. In other words, do not let the conception of "I-mine" formed, and wisely and mindfully consumes the worldly things; one may make use out of them, or disregard them, according to the circumstances.

The Lord Buddha said that one must beware of stimulations that give rise to saṃsāra, be mindful and comprehensive, avoid carelessness, and ignorance will not exist. This is the knowledge true to Buddhism, and necessary to modern man. He has told us to search into ourselves, eliminating saṃsāra, and hold on Nibbāna until we finally attain the permanent Nibbāna.

Whether one could find Nibbāna in the whirlpool of saṃsāra, or not, depends upon either one's own wisdom or foolishness. Both, saṃsāra of the boiling mind-body, and Nibbāna of the non-grasping and cooled mind-body, are together in the same place. Nibbāna can be found in saṃsāra. Once the Nibbāna

is found, the saṃsāra is meaningless; there will be left to us only the meaning of Nibbāna. So we should be willing to face what is called the hottest in order to discover the coolest. The coolest is not very far away either: just right on our forehead. Time after time, the foolish searches through the universe, and never finds it.

When one can keep the rise of the "I-mine" conception under control, nibbāna exists right there. And so he should wish to expand and extend his life, by spanning the time without "I-mine" longer, until it becomes deathless and eternal. Be completely out of the "I-mine" conception, then the unconditioned Dhamma only prevails: there will no longer be the problem of birth and death.

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8. No Religion
9. Exchanging Dhamma while Fighting
10. Why were we born ?

## **KNOW THYSELF**

“KNOW YOURSELF” – NOW? THESE WORDS MEAN:

THAT IN YOURSELF A GEM IS FOUND.

WHY LOOK WITHOUT? – ALL IS IN VAIN,

WITHIN A LOTUS BLOSSOMING.

WITHIN THE LOTUS – BEST OF GEM,

THAT WHICH A MAN SHOULD FIND AND KNOW:

“ENLIGHTENMENT OR KNOWLEDGE HERE

ALL COMES FROM KNOWING IN YOURSELF.”

*BUDDHADĀSABHIKKHU*









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(24 March 2021)

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3. Buddhism in 15 Minutes
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Published by:

The Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives  
Vachirabenjatas Park (Rot Fai Park)  
Nikom Rot Fai Sai 2 Rd., Chatuchak, Bangkok  
Thailand, 10900 Tel. +66 2936 2800  
<https://en.bia.or.th/>