

non-existence.<sup>124</sup> This insight into conditioned genesis as the middle way does not imply attachment to the middle ground, nor does it mean being unsure about which side is right. It means to be devoid (empty) of the two extremes: the self-based view of existence and the self-based view of non-existence. And it directly implies the meaning of nirvana. In other words, "the middle way of conditioned genesis" has the same meaning as "the emptiness of nirvana".

Clearly, this approach to insight is very different from that which focuses on "impermanence (= suffering)" to eliminate self-view and thus lead to nirvana. The way of right view consisting in seeing conditioned genesis as the middle way, involves directly seeing that there is, in the nature of phenomena, neither existence nor non-existence, so as to see directly the emptiness or not-self-hood of phenomena and thus attain nirvana.

Concerning this middle way of conditioned genesis, there is raised a question linking impermanence, not-self and nirvana. According to SN 22. 90 and SA 262,<sup>125</sup> a bhikkhu ("monk") Chanda (P. Channa), who has not yet achieved the wisdom of nirvana, asks various other bhikkhus to teach him dharma (P. dhamma). They teach him that material form (rūpa), feeling (vedanā), perception (saññā), activities (saṃkhārā) and consciousness (viññāṇa) are impermanent (anicca) and, as compounded things, are not self (anatta).<sup>126</sup> Chanda replies: I do know that material form, feeling, perception, activities and consciousness are impermanent, and being compounded things, are not self.<sup>127</sup> Nevertheless, I (Chanda) do not understand and delight when I hear of "the *calming* of all activities, renunciation of all attachment, the destruction of craving, the fading away of desire, cessation: **nirvana.**" (sabbasaṅkhārasamathe sabbhūpadhi-paṭinissagge taṇhakkhaye virāge nirodhe nibbāne). For the section in quote marks the Chinese SA 262 has: "the

*emptiness* of all activities, renunciation of attachment, the destruction of craving, the fading away of desire: **nirvana.**" (一切諸行空寂, 不可得, 愛盡, 離欲, 涅槃). Thus where the Pāli has "calming" (samatha), the Chinese has "emptiness" (空寂).

Chanda's point is that all activities (compounded things, saṅkhārā) are impermanent and not-self; but nirvana is not characterised by impermanence and not-self, and thus there is something, some metaphysical entity, for oneself to attain in the cessation of nirvana (the ending of suffering). If there is complete emptiness in nirvana, who then is the self? or, what is meant by the self seeing (passati) the dharma (the nature of phenomena)? That is, the dharma of compounded nature (saṅkhata) and uncompounded nature (asaṅkhata) are divided into two different things. Chanda admitted impermanence and not-self of compounded nature (saṅkhata-dhamma) as essential for the ending of suffering; but he could not admit the uncompounded nature (asaṅkhata-dhamma) of nirvana where all activities are empty (or "calm") of self.

Harbouring this doubt, Chanda goes to ask the venerable Ānanda. Ānanda tells him: "I heard the Buddha teach this to the venerable Kaccāyana:

This world, Kaccāyana, usually depends on two [extremes]: existence and non-existence ... (the content is as quoted above).

To resolve Chanda's misunderstanding regarding impermanence, not-self, and nirvana, Ānanda helps him to understand compounded nature (saṅkhata = conditioned genesis) as neither existence nor non-existence, and also as the ending of suffering: nirvana. The extreme views of existence and non-existence both come from self-view (atta-diṭṭhi). The extinction of self-view, or of desire, hatred, and