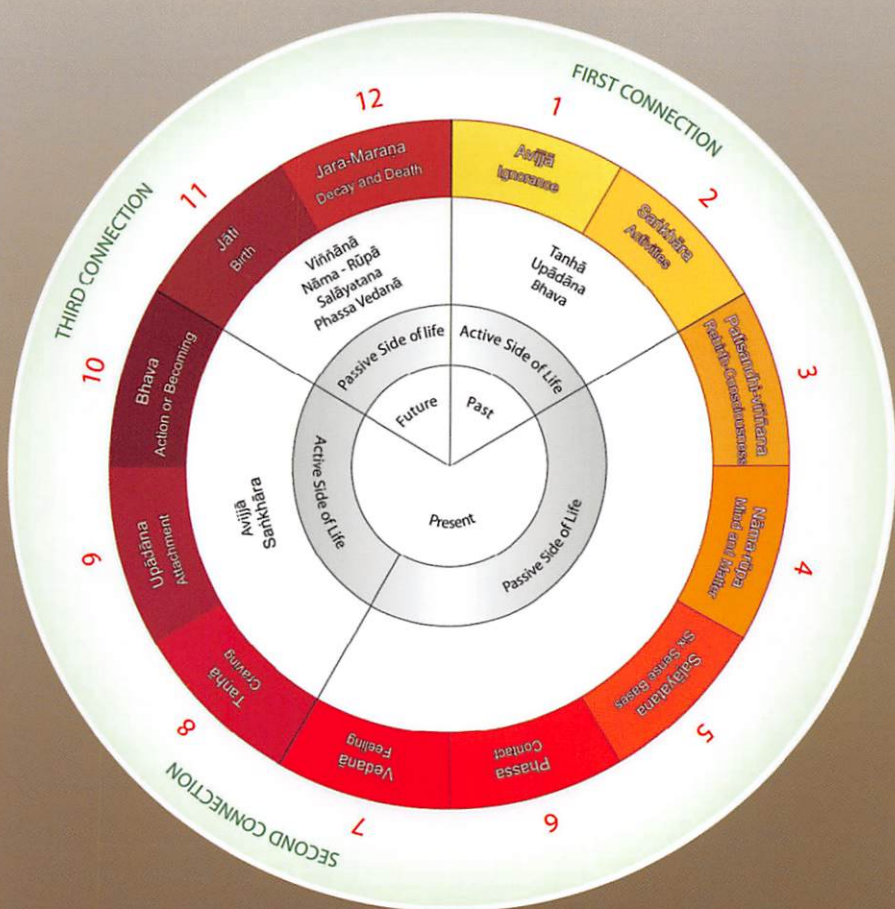


Sayadaw U Sīlānanda

# Dependent Origination (Paticca-samuppāda)



THE WHEEL OF LIFE

Edited by **U Hla Myint**

**Sayadaw U Sīlānandabhivamsa**

# **Dependent Origination** **(Paṭicca-samuppāda )**

Edited by  
**U Hla Myint**

2010

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## **Dependent Origination**

***In remembrance of the late  
Sayadaw U Sīlānanda with  
love and gratitude.***

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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato  
Sammāsambuddhassa



## **Publisher's Note**

We are glad to have this book “Dependent Origination” published, even though it is not in time as planned. We apologize for the delay. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the late Sayadaw U Sīlānanda for his Dhamma talks on this topic at our center, which are the source for this book. We also thank U Hla Myint for having spent time to edit the talks into a book. Last, but not least, we would like to thank those who have helped and contributed financially to make this book possible.

The late Sayadaw U Sīlānanda, while living, had devoted his time and energy to spreading the original teachings of the Buddha until the final days of his life. He kept his pledge to serve the Buddha Sāsana without retirement. He had led so many Vipassana meditation retreats, taught several Dhamma classes, and given many Dhamma talks at Tathāgata Meditation Center, as well as at other places, to benefit people. While still living, Sayadaw was always energetic and in high spirits to spread the original teachings of the Buddha. For deep topics, such as the Dependent Origination, Sayadaw showed tremendous patience and encouragement to those who would like to learn the deep teachings of the Buddha but have no or limited knowledge of Buddhism. Sayadaw clearly sets an example of what a kind, understanding, and compassionate teacher should be. Our knowledge of the original teachings of the Buddha, including Vipassana practice, is owed to Sayadaw's loving-kindness and compassion. For this, we are always grateful to Sayadaw.

In publishing this book, our goal is to bring a textual and academic explanation to a topic about which many books



have been written. We would like to dedicate this book to the late Sayadaw U Sīlānanda, who was our Chief Meditation Teacher for almost two decades and passed away in 2005.

Tathāgata Meditation Center

# Biographical Sketch of Venerable U Sīlānanda

(Ashin Sīlānandabhivamsa - Agga Mahā Paṇḍita)

(based on Sayadaw's biography from the website [tbsa.org](http://tbsa.org))

Sayadaw U Sīlānanda was born in Mandalay, Burma (now known as Myanmar) on Friday, December 16, 1927. His father is *Wunna Kyaw Htin* Saya Saing and his mother Daw Mone. Saya Saing was a renowned Burmese architect credited with many famous religious buildings throughout the country. He was awarded the title “Wunna Kyaw Htin” by the Government of Burma for his outstanding achievements in Burmese architecture and religious activities. He was a very religious man and a meditator as well. Two brothers of Sayadaw are also prominent Burmese architects.

His sister, Daw Thandasari, is Chief Nun of a Buddhist nunnery institute known as “*Shwezedi Sāsana-pala Chaung*,” in Sagaing Hills. Sayadaw thus comes from a highly religious family.

On April 14, 1943, during the Japanese occupation, Sayadaw U Sīlānanda at the age of 16 became a novice at *Mahavijjodaya Chaung* monastery in Sagaing Hills under the preceptorship of Sayadaw U Pannavata, a very famous and popular preacher. He was then given the religious name “Shin Sīlānanda.”

With the consent of his parents, on Wednesday, July 2, 1947, he became a full-fledged monk at the same monastery with the same preceptor. Four days later, re-ordination

<sup>1</sup> ‘*Chaung*’ here means a secluded place or a religious sanctuary for monks or nuns.

ceremony was held in his honor at *Payagyi Taik* monastery in Mandalay by U Ba Than and Daw Tin (his aunt), dealers in religious artifacts. Again, in 1950, a second re-ordination ceremony was held in his honor at *Kyaungdawya Shwegyin Taik*, Rangoon (now Yangon), by rice merchants U Ba Thein and Daw Ngwe Saw.

He received his early years' education at Kelly High School, an American Baptist Mission School for boys, in Mandalay. He had his religious education in *Tipitaka* (Buddhist Scriptures) under the guidance of his preceptor and many other renowned Sayadaws, both in Sagaing Hills and in Mandalay.

He took the religious examinations held by the Government of Burma and passed the *Phatamange* (1st Grade) in 1946, *Phatamalal* (2nd Grade) in 1947, and *Phatamagyi* (3rd Grade) in 1948. He attained the 1st position in the 2nd Grade in the whole of Burma and 2nd position in the 3rd Grade. He got the degree of *Dhammācariya*, Master of Dhamma, in 1950, and was awarded the title *Sāsanadhaja Siripavara Dhammācariya*. In 1954, he attained another degree when he passed the examination held by *Pariyattisāsanahita* Association in Mandalay, which was renowned to be the most difficult examination in Burma. He duly got to add to his name the word "*abhivamsa*," hence his full name and title: U Sīlānandabhivamsa, *Sāsanadhaja Siripavara Dhammācariya and Pariyattisāsanahita Dhammācariya*.

He went to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1954 and while there passed the GCE Advanced Level Examination (General Certificate of Education Examination held by the University of London in Ceylon), with distinctions in Pāli and Sanskrit.

While he was in Ceylon, he made a brief return to Burma and during that trip he practiced Vipassana meditation in the Mahasi Sayadaw's tradition.

He taught as a lecturer Buddhist Scriptures, Pāli, Sanskrit at *Atothokdayone* Pāli University in Sagaing Hills, and Prakrit languages at *Abhayarama Shwegu Taik* monastery, Mandalay and was an External Examiner for Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the Department of Oriental Studies, Arts and Science University, Mandalay.

Sayadaw U Sīlānanda was the Chief Compiler of the Tipitaka Pāli-Burmese Dictionary and was one of the distinguished editors of the Pāli Canon and the associated Commentaries at the Sixth Buddhist Council held at the *Kaba Aye Hlaing Gu* (World Peace Cave) in Rangoon (Yangon) from 1954 to 1956. Sayadaw U Sīlānanda had a golden opportunity to work for Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw and Venerable Mingun Tipitaka Sayadaw.

In 1960, he inherited the *Mahavijjodaya Chaung* monastery after the passing away of his preceptor and became the Abbot of that monastery. He moved to the *Abhayarama Shwegu Taik* monastery, Mandalay in 1968, and, in 1969, was appointed the Vice Abbot of that monastery. Later, he became the Chief Abbot.

He was also appointed a member of the Executive Committee of *Shwegyin* Sect and, in 1993, became a Senior Member of that sect. He participated in the meeting of Cleaning-up of the Sāsana held at *Hmawbi* (50 miles from Yangon).

In 1993, he was appointed a member of the Advisory Board of Meditation Teachers of *Mahasi Sāsana Yeiktha* in Yangon.

Sayadaw was requested to be the Rector of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University of Yangon in Myanmar (which opened in December, 1999).

He had visited many countries, both in Asia and in Europe, and, as a member of a party, visited the United States in 1959, at the invitation of the U.S. Government. In April 1979, Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw and his entourage

(including Sayadaw U Sīlānanda) visited San Francisco, California, USA, with a full program of discourses, meritorious offerings, dhamma talks, and meditation sessions. At a later stage of the visit, Mahasi Sayadaw agreed to leave behind U Sīlānanda and U Kelasa in San Francisco to fulfill the overwhelming request of Burmese community. (Sayadaw U Kelasa later moved to Maryland to become the Abbot of *Mangalarama* monastery.)

Since then, Sayadaw U Sīlānanda had been giving lectures on Buddhism, including *Abhidhamma* (Buddhist Psychology), and teaching Vipassana meditation in the country. He was a competent teacher and rarely uses Pāli words, which are not familiar to lay people, in his sermons. As one devotee said, “He teaches from an extraordinary depth of knowledge, communicating in clear and precise English. He is loved by his students and devotees as a skilled, patient and compassionate teacher.”

He was the Spiritual Advisor of the Theravada Buddhist Society of America (TBSA), which he had helped set up, and the Founder Abbot of the *Dhammananda Vihara* monastery.

He was also the Spiritual Director of the following: Dhammachakka Meditation Center in Berkeley, California, the Bodhi Tree Dhamma Center in Largo, Florida, the Society for Advancement of Buddhism in Ft. Myers, Florida. In addition, he was the Chief Meditation Teacher of Tathāgata Meditation Center (TMC) in San Jose, California.

Sayadaw had gone on numerous *Dhammaduta* missions to give Dhamma talks and to conduct short term and long term retreats. Sayadaw had also conducted retreats in Malaysia and Singapore.

Despite his busy schedules, Sayadaw had authored the following (in English):

- The Four Foundations of Mindfulness
- An Introduction to the Law of Kamma

- Thoughts for the Occasion (Some Sayings of Lord Buddha on Death)
- An Introduction to the Doctrine of Anatta (No-Soul)
- Meditation Instructions
- Protective Verses

Sayadaw had extensively revised and edited a translation of "Abhidhamma in Daily Life," by Sayadaw U Janakabhivamsa.

Sayadaw had also published numerous works in Burmese:

- The First Sermon (a popular exposition of Buddha's First Sermon)
- Sayadaw U Narada of Mandalay (a biography)
- A Course on *Sima* (for monks)
- Mahasi Sayadaw (a biography)
- Burmese Architect - Saya Saing (a biography of his father)
- Comparative Study of Saddaniti Dhatumala and Paniniya Datupatha
- Exposition of Syllogism in Pāli
- A New Burmese Translation of Rupasiddhi Tika
- Tipitaka Pāli-Burmese Dictionary, as Chief Compiler
- Burmese translations of some short Sanskrit works

Sayadaw U Sīlānanda lectured to the M.A. (Pāli) students at Mandalay University. He was also invited to give guest lectures at University of California at Berkeley and Stanford University.

Sayadaw had conducted the following courses in both English and/or Burmese:

- In-depth Study of Matika of Abhidhamma
- An Introduction to Abhidhamma, Vissudimagga, Patimokkha and Jataka
- Fundamentals of Buddhism

- Four Foundations of Mindfulness
- Kalyana Buddhist
- Dhammapada
- Sutta
- Vinaya rules
- *Thein-hnote* (ensuring the consecration of *sima* )
- Theory and Practice of *Vipassana*
- Pāḷi Grammar.

Based on Sayadaw U Sīlānanda's lecture notes, U Nandisena has translated a Pāḷi Grammar text into Spanish.

Sayadaw had given numerous Dhamma talks in both English and Burmese. There are over 300 tapes holding Sayadaw's talks. Some tapes (e.g., “*Vassa*,” “*Dana*”) have been distributed freely by TMC to its devotees.

Some talks have been transcribed and printed. They include ‘The Meaning of *Tathāgata* ,’ “Benefits of Walking Meditation,” to name a few.

With the initial support from TBSA, Sayadaw U Sīlānanda had initiated several projects:

- Compilation of a CD-ROM to hold text of the Pāḷi Canon and the Associated Commentaries approved at the Sixth Buddhist Council
- Compilation of digital pictures of the *kyauk-sa* (stone inscriptions) holding the text of the Pāḷi Canon approved at the Fifth Buddhist Council
- Fund to support the propagation of *Sāsana* in the Frontier Areas in Myanmar

For his outstanding contribution to the *Sāsana*, Sayadaw U Sīlānanda was conferred the prestigious titles of *Agga Maha Pandita* in March, 1993, and *Agga Maha Saddhammajotika Dhaja* in March, 1999.

# Dependent Origination

(Paṭicca-samuppāda)

## Introduction

*Paṭicca-samuppāda* is a very important teaching among the teachings of the Buddha. This doctrine teaches that all mental and physical phenomena in living beings are conditioned; therefore, there is no such a thing as creation or a Supreme Creator who creates all things at all. This teaching makes Buddhism different from all other religions that believe in God.

**Definition of Paṭicca-samuppāda:** First, I want you to be familiar with the Pāḷi name “*Paṭicca-samuppāda*” in this teaching. It is translated as “Dependent Origination,” “Dependent Arising” or “Conditioned Arising”...Since there are so many English translations for this word, I think it is better to use the Pāḷi word.

According to the “*Paṭicca-samuppāda*” teaching, everything needs conditions to arise. The word “*Paṭicca-samuppāda*” is composed of two parts: *Paṭicca* and *Samuppāda*. *Paṭicca* means dependent upon and *Samuppāda* means those that come into existence. However, when combined, these two words together mean not those that arise out of conditions but the conditions themselves. The word “*Paṭicca-samuppāda*” was, therefore, used by the Buddha to mean those physical and mental phenomena that cause and condition other physical and mental phenomena to arise. There is another word, “*Paṭicca-samuppanna*,” which means those that arise depending on conditions. So *Paṭicca-samuppāda* means the causative or conditioning phenomena



and *Paṭicca-samuppanna* means the resultant or conditioned phenomena.

There are many other definitions of this word mentioned in the commentary, but I am not going to mention them here to avoid confusions. So, just note that *Paṭicca-samuppāda* is used by the Buddha to mean things conditioning others to arise. In other words, it means the twelve conditioning factors.

**Buddha Discovered It:** This law of Dependent Origination was not the creation of the Buddha. Buddha just discovered it and then taught it to the world. Buddha once said: “*Whether Buddhas arise in this world or not, this law of Dependent Origination has always been being there.*” Like the law of gravitation, it was not created by Sir Isaac Newton. It has been being with the world, but nobody knew about or aware of it. As the story goes, one day an apple fell on the head of Sir Isaac Newton, making him think about gravitation. Thus, he discovered the law of gravitation. So, sometimes it is called Newton’s Law, meaning the law discovered but not created by Newton. In the same way, the law of Dependent Origination has been being with living beings ever since they came into existence. But no one knew this law until the Buddhas discovered and revealed it to the world.

### **Would-be Buddha and Paṭicca-samuppāda**

In fact, Buddha was familiar with the law of Dependent Origination even before he became the Buddha. As a would-be-Buddha, he practiced *Vipassanā* meditation on the factors of this law. On the full moon day of May, Buddha, or rather the Bodhisatva, approached the Bodhi tree, sat under it and made the resolution that he would not break the posture until he became the Buddha. Then he practiced meditation the whole night.

He practiced mindfulness of breathing meditation and,

during the first part of the night, he attained all eight stages of high-level concentration (*jhāna*). Based on such powerful stages of concentration, he gained what is called supernormal knowledge (*abhīññā*) by which he could remember his past lives in minute details. Thanks to his supernormal knowledge, we now get a great chance to learn his five hundred and forty seven past lives recorded in the *Jataka*.

The would-be Buddha continued his practice and, during the second or middle part of the night, he gained another supernormal knowledge, which enabled him to clearly see beings dying from one existence and being reborn in another existence according to their good or bad kamma. The Buddha's teaching of the law of kamma came from that supernormal knowledge. So, Buddha's teaching was based upon neither inference nor logical thinking, but on direct knowledge.

### **How Would-be Buddha Practiced Vipassanā**

During the last part of that very night, he practiced *Vipassanā* meditation, taking the twelve factors of this law of Dependent Origination as objects. We will learn about these twelve factors later.

The would-be Buddha practiced *Vipassanā* meditation on each of the twelve factors. I mean, he observed the impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and non-soul (*anatta*) of the factors. He took one factor after another as a *Vipassanā* object and saw their impermanence, suffering and non-soul. In this way, he practiced *Vipassanā* by contemplating on the twelve factors millions of times back and forth. That is why I said Buddha was familiar with the Dependent Origination even before he became enlightened as a Buddha.

Just before he practiced *Vipassanā* meditation, he entered into the fourth *jhāna*, contemplating on in-and-

out breath. And then he got out of that *jhāna* and practiced *Vipassanā* meditation by observing the factors of Dependent Origination back and forth, millions of time. He attained the first stage of *Vipassanā* insights. After that stage, he entered into the fourth *jhāna* again then got out of that *jhāna*, and went on to the next stage of *Vipassanā* insight. He continued on this way until he reached the last stage of *Vipassanā*. So, after each stage, or between stages, he entered into the fourth *jhāna* and then got out of that *jhāna* and practiced *Vipassanā* meditation. In this way, he practiced *Vipassanā* and *Samatha* alternately.

Why did he enter into the *jhānas* rather than practicing *Vipassanā* continuously? It is said in the books that entering into the fourth *jhāna* in between *Vipassanā* stages is to sharpen his mind. For example, if you cut something hard with a knife, the blade of the knife gets blunt. So, you have to sharpen the knife again for it to cut well. In the same way, in order to sharpen his wisdom, the *Bodhisatva* entered into the fourth *jhāna* and then got out of it to practice the next stage, and so on. His practice of *Vipassanā* was on a very grand scale, as he practiced it on the twelve factors as many times as he liked. His *Vipassanā* was, therefore, called *mahā-vipassanā* or the *Vipassanā* practiced on grand scale. As a result, he attained enlightenment.

### **Buddha and Paṭicca-samuppāda**

The *Bodhisatva* practiced meditation that way on the night of the full moon day of May under the Bodhi tree and attained full enlightenment as the Buddha at dawn of the next day. He went through the four stages of enlightenment (*magga*) in rapid succession. By practicing *Vipassanā* on grand scale, he reached the first stage of enlightenment (*sotāpatti-magga*), then he practiced *Vipassanā* again and reached the second stage (*sakadāgāmi-magga*), then he practiced *Vipassanā* again and reached the third stage (*anāgāmi-magga*), and

he then practiced *Vipassanā* again and reached the fourth and final stage (*arahatta-magga*). When he reached the fourth stage, he became the Buddha with the attainment of what is called omniscient knowledge, or know-all wisdom (*sabbaññuta-ñāna*). With that “all-knowing wisdom,” the Buddha knew everything he wanted to know.

I am explaining this point in details, because it will be difficult to get this information yourselves. I also want you to know that *Bodhisatva* practiced *Vipassanā* on all twelve factors before he became the Buddha. He practiced not on just one factor but on all twelve factors of the Dependent Origination. Actually, these twelve factors comprised mind and matter of a human being.

After his enlightenment, he kept on sitting under the Bodhi tree for seven days. It is said that he did not move and he did not stand up during this time. During that week, the first night he again contemplated on the law of Dependent Origination in due order and also in reverse order. “Due order” (*anuloma*) means the order of arising and “Reverse Order” (*paṭiloma*) means the order of ceasing. On the seventh night, he again contemplated on the Dependent Origination. But this time, he contemplated on it in due order during the first part of the night, in the reverse order during the second or middle part of the night, and both in due order and reverse order during the third or last part of the night.

During forty-five years of his ministry, the Buddha taught the law of Dependent Origination on many occasions. It occupies one whole chapter in the book of Kindred Sayings (*Samyutta Nikaya*) and also in the Abhidhamma. The Buddha taught this law in many different ways. Sometimes he picked up the first factor and then went over to other factors one by one from the beginning to the end. Sometimes he picked up a factor in the middle and then went to the end. Sometimes he picked up the last factor and then went backwards to the

beginning. And sometimes he picked up the middle and went backwards to the beginning. He taught it whatever way beneficial to his audience. Buddha only taught in such a way that his listeners could understand and attain enlightenment. That is why there are many different styles of Buddha's teaching found in the Pāli texts.

The Dependent Origination is the doctrine that is very deep and difficult to understand. Buddha himself said that it is profound. Once the Venerable Ānanda, his personal attendant, said to him: "*Sir, it is wonderful! Dependent Origination is so profound, it also looks profound, but to me it's very vivid and not that difficult to understand.*" The Buddha replied: "*Don't say like this Ananda! Don't say like this! Dependent Origination is profound as well as it looks profound. Not understanding this law well, beings get confused and do wrong things that lead them to four woeful states.*" After saying that, the Buddha taught the Law of Dependent Origination to Ānanda and at the end of the discourse, Ānanda was pleased with the Buddha.

**A Saying:** There is a saying with regard to Dependent Origination that is quoted very often by many preachers: "*Whoever sees the Paṭicca-samuppāda sees the Dhamma; Whoever sees the Dhamma sees the Paṭicca-samuppāda.*" That is the exact translation of the saying. We are tempted to interpret this saying as "If you know Dependent Origination, you know the Dhamma well. If you know the Dhamma, you know the Dependent Origination well." However, the commentary explains this saying in a different way. Since we are always dependent on our ancient tradition, we always like to follow the commentary. The commentary on this saying explains that 'Paṭicca-samuppāda' means just the cause, and 'Dhamma' means the result. So, we should understand the saying this way: "*Whoever knows the cause knows the result; whoever knows the result knows the cause.*" We should

interpret the saying in accordance with the commentary, but not our own idea.

**Paṭicca-samuppāda and Paṭṭhāna:** We should also note that Dependent Origination (*Paṭicca-samuppāda*) only deals with mental and physical phenomena in living beings, but not noncognitive things like trees, mountains, and so on. But there is another teaching called *Paṭṭhāna* that deals with everything, including living beings as well as things.

In order to understand Dependent Origination, you need to have the knowledge of the fundamentals of *Abhidhamma*. It is very difficult, or I should say it is impossible, to understand the law of Dependent Origination to the full extent without that knowledge. I hope some of you have enough knowledge of the fundamentals of *Abidhamma* to follow the explanations.

First, I want you to get familiar with the formula of Dependent Origination. The formula is very short, as you see on the following Table 1. It does not even take a full half page, but the exposition of this formula runs into maybe 100 pages or more. So, it is almost impossible to understand this formula without depending on the ancient commentaries. Fortunately, there is a very detailed explanation of this doctrine in our ancient commentaries, such as the commentary on *Abhidhamma* and *Visuddhi-magga*. Both are the same in essence as they were written by the same author.

I want you to be familiar with this formula in Pāli, because we will be using Pāli words again and again in our explanations. The first heading is *Paṭicca-samuppāda (anuloma)*. Here, “*loma*” literally means hair on one’s body and “*anu*” means “along with.” So, “along with the hair” means “in due order” or “in order of arising.” Its opposite is “*Paṭiloma*” that literally means going against the hair, so it is “in reverse order” or “in order of ceasing.”

Table-1

## *Paṭicca-samuppāda*

(Anuloma)

1. Avijjā-paccayā sankhārā.
2. Sankhārā-paccayā viññāṇaṃ.
3. Viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ.
4. Nāma-rūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanaṃ.
5. Saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso.
6. Phassa-paccayā vedanā.
7. Vedanā-paccayā taṇhā.
8. Taṇhā-paccayā upādāna.
9. Upādāna-paccayā bhavo.
10. Bhava-paccayā jāti.
11. Jāti-paccayā jarā-marāṇa,  
soka-parideva-dukkha-  
domanass'upāyāsā  
sambhavanti.

Evam'etassa kevalassa dukkha-kkhandhassa samudayo hoti.

Table-2

## Twelve Factors

In the formula, there are eleven links but twelve factors because *jarā-marāṇa* and *soka-parideva-dukkha-domanass'upāyāsā sambhavanti* are taken as one separate factor.

1. Avijjā	ignorance
2. Sankhārā	kamma-formations
3. Viññāna	resultant consciousness
4. Nāma-rūpa	mind and matter
5. Saḷāyatana	six sense-bases
6. Phassa	mental contact
7. Vedanā	feeling
8. Taṇhā	craving
9. Upādāna	clinging, grasping
10. Bhava	becoming (the process of kamma and rebirth)
11. Jāti	birth
12. Jarā-marana	aging and death
Soka	sorrow
Parideva	lamentation (or crying)
Dukkha	bodily pain
Domanassa	mental pain (or grief)
Upāyāsa	anguish caused by excessive mental pain

### Signs and Pronunciation of Pāli Words

**Macron** (a bar on a vowel): The small bar above some letters indicates that those vowels are twice as long as regular ones. For example, the last vowel of the word “*avijjā*” is an “ā” or an “a” with a bar above it. This means it is a long “a” and, therefore, should be pronounced as “avijjaa” (as twice long as a normal “a”). There are three such vowels with two forms each, regular and long: a, ā, i, ī, u, ū.

*Viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpa*: In the word “*nāma*,” the



first “a” is long and the second is short. In *rūpa*, the ‘ū’ is long and should be pronounced “ruupa”, not rupa.

**A Dot and Tilde:** In the link *Saṅkhāra-paccayā viññāṇaṃ*, the word “*saṅkhāra*” has a dot above the “ñ”, and the word “*viññāṇaṃ*” has a tilde above “ñ.” If you are familiar with Spanish, you know how to pronounce letter “ñ.” Here, there is a double ñ. In “*viññāṇaṃ*” there is another dot below the “ñ.” So, one “n” has a dot above it and the other a dot below it. That means it is articulated with some instruments in the mouth that are called cerebral. It is also good to know two forms of “m”: regular “m,” and the “ṃ” with a dot above. And, in the link *nāma-rūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanaṃ*, there is a dot beneath “l.” When we write Pāḷi, we have to use those signs so that we could get the correct spelling and correct meaning. If you don’t understand this, it is no problem.

**To Pronounce “V” or “W”:** *Phassa-paccayā vedanā*: In the word “*vedanā*,” there is “v” that we pronounce just like “w.” If you follow the correct phonetic laws of Pāḷi, you should pronounce it as in English. But in Burma as well as in Ceylon and in Thailand, it is pronounced like “w.” So we always say “*wedanā*.” Whether you say “*vedanā*” or “*wedanā*,” it is alright although “v” is preferred because Pāḷi grammars say it comes from teeth and lip (*danta-oṭṭha*).

**An “H” Following a Consonant:** *Upādāna-paccayā bhavo*: An “h” following a consonant “b” like in “*bhavo*” means that consonant is aspirated. “*Ba*” and “*bha*” are a little different. In the same way, in “*namo tassa bhagavato*” it’s not just “*bagavato*.” For many people, it would be difficult to pronounce correctly as it is not in their language. If you cannot do it, it’s alright. I just want you to know that it is pronounced this way.

*Evam’etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti*: In the word “*evam*,” if there is a dot above the “m,”

we should pronounce “*evan*” separately from the word “*etassa*.” But if there is no dot above the “m,” we pronounce two together as “*evametassa*.”

In the word “*dukkhakkhandhassa*,” there are two words “k” and “kh” combined. Here “kh” and “dh” are regarded as single consonants. As mentioned above, they are just to be aspirated. The vowel “a” in *avijjā* is always pronounced “a” and not like an American English “eh.” You say “Pat,” right? But, in Pāli, you never say pat but like “u” in “but.”

**Definition of “Paccayā”:** The word “*paccayā*” appears in every sentence of the formula of Dependent Origination. So, it is good to know its exact meaning. It has two meanings: a cause (producing factor) and a condition (supporting factor). Here, cause and condition are different. By the word “cause,” we mean “something that produces something else,” but by the word “condition,” we mean something that just helps something else to arise. For example, seeing arises because there is something to be seen. So “something to be seen” is a condition for the seeing to arise; it is not the producer of the seeing. Seeing arises with the help of or depending upon “something to be seen.” “Something to be seen” is, therefore, regarded as the condition, not the cause. We have to understand the word “*paccayā*” in these two senses.

**Translation of the Formula:** There are many English translations for this formula, but I think the translations below are the closest to the original. We take the first sentence “*avijjā-paccayā sankhārā*” as an example:

Because there is *avijjā* as condition, *sankhārās* arise.

Because of *avijjā* as condition, *sankhārās* arise.

Conditioned by *avijjā*, the *sankhārās* arise.

Dependent upon *avijjā*, the *sankhārās* arise.

The same way should be applied to the remaining sentences:

“Because of *sankhārās* as condition, *viññāna* arises.”  
“*Viññāna*” means resultant consciousness, as you can see the English translation in Table 2.

“Because of consciousness as a condition, mind and matter arise.”

“Because of mind and matter as condition, six sense-bases arise,” and so on.

In this way, you should understand the formula.

Before we dive straight into the formula, let us follow the train of thoughts that occurred to the would-be Buddha called *Bodhisatta*. *Bodhisattas* are extraordinary people. They have more wisdom and more compassion than ordinary people. They see that old age, disease, death as suffering and want to find out a way for beings to be out of suffering.

**Finding The Origin of Old Age and Death:** It occurs to *Bodhisattas* that the cause of aging and death is birth. We were born as a being and so we have to suffer aging. From the moment we are born to the moment we die, we are always tormented by aging in every second of our life and then we will die in the end. All this occurs because we were born as beings. The birth as a being is the cause of aging and death. In this way, they contemplate on the Dependent Origination in reverse order.

They take death as the starting point. We know that we are human beings and we know that we will die one day. We don't want to get old and we don't want to die, but we will. If we want to get rid of this, we must understand what the cause is. The would-be Buddha finds birth as the cause. The birth in one life is the cause or origin of aging and death in that life.

**The Condition for Birth:** What is the cause of birth in an existence? Is this our first birth, existence? Did we have some

other existences before this life? Why are we human beings so different from one another? These are tough questions. Even babies born of the same parents are different in many ways. We cannot attribute all of our differences to heredity and environment because the children who were born to the same parents and brought up in the same environment can be different in several ways. Considering these facts, we infer that our different personalities and different quality of life must be related to something we did in the previous life. That is what we call “*kamma*,” which is, in this formula, called by two names: *sankhārā* and *bhava*. So, the *kamma* we did in the past results in our birth in this life. We just infer it from logical thinking, but the *Bodhisatva* saw it by his supernormal power.

**The Condition for Kamma:** What is the cause of or condition for *kamma*? Why do we do good *kamma* or bad *kamma*? Because we always want to enjoy life better and better and have a strong desire (clinging) to be reborn to a better life or to a celestial world. So, we do something good or bad to fulfill our desire or we create good or bad *kamma*. Good teachers advise us to do meritorious deeds like keeping precepts or practice meditation. As a result of the good *kamma*, we will be reborn there. Bad teachers may tell us to sacrifice animals to be reborn in the celestial world. Having faith in those teachers, we sacrifice animals with the hope that we may be reborn there. But sacrificing or killing an animal is a bad *kamma*. As a result, we will be reborn not in the celestial world that we hoped for but in the woeful states. In any case, a strong desire (*upādāna*) to be reborn in a celestial world is a condition for the *kamma*, as it makes us do *kamma*, good or bad.

Wrong view is another cause or condition for rebirth. When we have wrong view, we hold on to it tenaciously, then we act according to that wrong view. We do mostly

unwholesome actions that will result in woeful rebirth. So, strong desires and wrong view are interrelated and contribute to rebirth.

**The Condition for Strong Desire:** The strong desire (*upādāna*) grows from moderate desire or craving (*taṇhā*). We first have a moderate desire for something or someone (*taṇhā*) that later leads to strong desire and wrong view.

**The Condition for Moderate Desire:** What is the cause of or the condition for this moderate desire or craving? Why do we crave for someone or something? Why are we attached to things or persons? That is because we feel good about those things or persons. We like them because we have pleasant feeling about them. Feeling, especially the pleasant one, is a condition for desire or craving. If we don't have a pleasant feeling for something or someone, then we will not crave for it, him or her. So, the pleasant feeling is a condition for craving.

What about unpleasant feeling? We will not attach to things that cause unpleasant feeling; however, that unpleasant feeling motivates the desire for a pleasant feeling. Indirectly, unpleasant feeling is also a condition for desire or craving. What about neutral feeling (neither pleasant nor unpleasant)? Neutral feeling is like pleasant feeling because it is peaceful. So, we crave for it, too. Thus, all kinds of feelings are a condition for craving.

**The Condition for Feeling:** Why is there feeling? Because there is contact with sense-objects. Here, "contact" is a mental state, not the physical contact. When a visible object comes into the avenue of our eye, there would arise what we call "contact." That contact leads to feeling. If there is no contact, the feeling cannot arise. So, contact is the condition for the arising of feeling (pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral).

**The Condition for Contact:** Why is there contact? Because of the six-sense organs with which sense-objects come into contact. In *Abhidhamma*, mind is the sixth-sense organ. So, there are six senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. They are called six internal organs, which correspond to six external sense-objects, such as visible object, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mind-objects (that include all the mental phenomena and all the material phenomena except the first five senses). If we do not have the eyes there can be no eye-related mental contact (*cakkhu-samphassa*); if we do not have the ear, there can be no ear-related mental contact (*sota-samphassa*), and so on. These senses are called six internal sense-bases (*āyatana*), which are conditions for the mental contact (*phassa*).

**The Conditions for Six Sense-bases:** What are the conditions for the sense-bases to arise? They are mind and matter. Among the six sense-bases, the first five are matter, such as eyes, ears, etc., and the last one is mind. If there are no mind and matter, there can be no sense-bases, as they depend upon the mind and matter to arise. They arise together and they support each other.

**The Condition for Mind and Matter:** What is the condition for the mind and matter to arise? It is the resultant consciousness. At the moment of human conception, there arises a certain type of resultant consciousness generated by the past kamma. Along with that consciousness, there arise some mental factors and some minute amount of material phenomena. According to *Abhidhamma*, the combination of these three kinds of phenomena is called conception (*patisandhi*). They arise together at the moment of conception. So, if the resultant consciousness does not arise, the other two cannot arise, as it is their chief. That is why this resultant consciousness is said to be the condition for mental and material phenomena to arise.

**The Condition for Resultant Consciousness:** When *Bodhisatva* contemplated on *Paṭicca-samuppāda* on the occasions before the night he became the Buddha, his mind stopped at the resultant consciousness, because he found out that consciousness is conditioned by mind and matter. So, *Bodhisatva* said: “Oh! This consciousness comes back.” At those occasions, *Bodhisatva* did not find kamma (*sankhārā*) as a cause of resultant consciousness. Here, the commentaries do not explain why *Bodhisatva* stopped there. I think that was enough for him to understand the Dependent Origination, since he already had gone through two lives backward. If we follow the formula taught by him after he had become the Buddha, we find that the resultant consciousness is conditioned by kamma (*sankhārā*).

**The Condition for Kamma:** Why does kamma (*sankhārā*) arise? Why do we perform deeds, good or bad? Because we don't know the reality. We are ignorant of the Four Noble Truths and the law of Dependent Origination, and so on. We are so clouded by this ignorance or delusion (*avijjā*) that we happen to do good or bad deeds. Whatever kamma we do, we do it because we are blinded by ignorance.

**The Condition for Ignorance:** According to this teaching, we find ignorance (*avijjā*) as the starting point of this round. Actually, the ignorance is not the first cause because we can go further than ignorance. Although the teaching begins with ignorance, it is not the origin of everything because it also has its conditions. When people are tormented by old age and death, they become confused. And because of the confusion, ignorance arises. So, it goes on and on like a wheel.

Let us go through this formula from the beginning:

1. Because of ignorance as condition, there arise kamma formations.

2. Because of kamma formations as condition, there arise resultant consciousnesses.
3. Because of resultant consciousness as condition, there arise mind and matter.
4. Because of mind and matter as condition, there arise six sense-bases.
5. Because of six sense-bases as condition, there arises contact.
6. Because of contact as condition, there arises feeling.
7. Because of feeling as condition, there arises craving.
8. Because of craving as condition, there arises clinging.
9. Because of clinging as condition, there arise kamma and existence.
10. Because of kamma as condition, there arises rebirth.
11. Because of rebirth as condition, there arise aging and death, and there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.

Thus arises this whole mess of suffering.

**Why the Last Five Are Separated:** In the eleventh link, old age, death and the last five mental states (sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair) are grouped separately. If we look at the Pāli, we can find “*jāti-paccayā jarā-marana*” is one part and “*soka-parideva-dukkha-domanass-upāyāsa*” is another.

When there is birth, there will always be old age and death without any exception. But even though there is birth, there do not necessarily arise the sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. As human beings, all of us may experience more or less these mental states, but celestial beings like deva may not have so many of them, although they still have sorrow, etc., to some extent. If we are reborn as Brahmas, we



will not have bodily pain and grief, and so on. So, these five resultant factors are not necessarily resulted from birth. That is why they are grouped separately.

**Then Conclusion:** This doctrine is concluded with the sentence: “*Thus there arises the whole mass of suffering.*” Here, the phrase “whole mass of suffering” means that there is only suffering, no happiness there at all. So, this is how this mass of suffering arises.

This is the rough overview of the doctrine of Dependent Origination. Later on, we will go deeper into the links between the factors, such as between ignorance and kamma formation and between kamma formation and the resultant consciousness, and so on. Right now, I just want you to be familiar with the bare statements of this law. So, if you don’t fully understand, please be patient.

**Twelve Factors (Anga):** This doctrine constitutes twelve factors or components (*anga*). They are in Pāḷi: *avijjā, sankhārā, viññāna, nāma-rūpa, saḷāyatana, phassa, vedanā, tanhā, upādāna, bhava, jāti, jarā-maranan*. That is all. We don’t count *soka, parideva*, etc., as factors because, as mentioned earlier, they are not unavoidable. So, there are 12 factors.

**Three Periods (Addha):** Earlier, we followed the order of *Bodhisatva*’s contemplation on the *Paṭicca-samuppāda* that went backwards from the end to the beginning. Whether we go through this law from the end to the beginning or from the beginning to the end, we notice that this law covers not just one life. Among the twelve factors, the first two such as ignorance (*avijjā*) and kamma (*sankhārā*) belong to the past life. And then the middle eight such as resultant consciousness (*viññāna*), mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*), six senses (*saḷāyatana*), mental contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), desire (*tanhā*), clinging (*upādāna*) and kamma

(*kamma-bhava*) belong to the present life. And the last two such as rebirth (*upapatti-bhava* or *jāti*) and aging and death (*jarā-marana*) belong to the future life.

You see “*bhava*” is of two kinds: *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava*. *Kamma-bhava* really means *kamma*, which is the same as *sankhārā*. And *upapatti-bhava* means rebirth, which is actually the same as *jāti*. The commentary explained it two ways and so we have to follow the commentary.

**Four Phases (*Sankhepa*):** We have divided twelve factors into three periods: past, present, and future. There are four phases or segments: past causes, present results, present causes, and future results.

1. Past causes      *avijjā* (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*)  
                          *sankhārā* (*kamma-vaṭṭa*)
2. Present results    *viññāna* (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*)  
                          *nāma-rūpa* (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*)  
                          *saḷāyatana* (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*)  
                          *phassa* (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*)  
                          *vedanā* (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*)
3. Present causes    *taṇhā* (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*)  
                          *upādāna* (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*)  
                          *kamma-bhava* (*kamma-vaṭṭa*)
4. Future Results    *upapatti-bhava* (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*)  
                          *jāti* (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*)  
                          *jarā-marana* (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*)

As you see, there are only two past causes, ignorance (*avijjā*) and mental formations (*sankhārā*). But it is said there are five past causes. How do two become five? As for five present results, it is clear. There are only three present causes in this chart, but it is said there are five. And then

future results are only three in the chart, but it is said they are of five. How do we get five factors? It is kind of puzzle, right? In order to understand this, you must understand three rounds (*vaṭṭa*).

### Three Rounds (*Vaṭṭa*)

1. Kilesa-vaṭṭa: *avijjā, taṇhā, upādāna*
2. Kamma-vaṭṭa: *sankhārā, kamma-bhava*
3. Vipāka-vaṭṭa: *viññāna, nāma-rūpa, saḷāyatana, phassa, vedanā (upapatti-bhava, jāti, jarā-marana)*.

Here, “*vaṭṭa*” means rounds. There are three rounds: “*kilesa-vaṭṭa*” is round of defilements, “*kamma-vaṭṭa*” round of kamma, and “*vipāka-vaṭṭa*” round of results. So, three factors belong to *kilesa-vaṭṭa*, two to *kamma-vaṭṭa*, and five to *vipāka-vaṭṭa*. If you take one factor in each round, you have to take the other remaining factors since they are connected to each other. In the round of defilements (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*), if you take ignorance (*avijjā*), you have to take craving (*taṇhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*), too. In the round of kamma (*kamma vaṭṭa*), mental formation (*sankhārā*) is in the ultimate sense the intention behind all the actions we do, either wholesome or unwholesome. It is also called “*kamma*.” If you take *sankhārā*, you have to take *kamma-bhava* also and vice versa since both *sankhārā* and *kamma-bhava* belong to the round of kamma (*kamma-vaṭṭa*). And the round of results (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*), rebirth (*upapatti-bhava* or *jati*), old age and death (*jarā-marana*), are the same in the ultimate sense as consciousness (*viññāna*), mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*), six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), contact (*phassa*), feelings (*vedanā*).

**Five Causes in the Past:** So, when you take *avijjā* and *sankhārā* as the past causes, you have to take *taṇhā, upādāna, kamma-bhava*, too. Thus, you can get five past causes. Two causes can be found directly and three others indirectly.

**Five Results in the Present:** Since there are five present results, we don't have to do anything about it. *Viññāna*, *nāma-rūpa*, *saḷāyatana*, *phassa*, *vedanā* are the results that belong to this present life.

**Five Causes in Present:** In this present life, we have three causes such as *taṇhā*, *upādāna* and *kamma-bhava*. But it is said there are five causes. When we take *taṇhā* or *upādāna*, we also have to take *avijjā*, right? And when we take *kamma-bhava*, we also take *sankhārā*. Thus, we get five. So, the five causes in the present life are *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, *kamma-bhava*, *avijjā* and *sankhārā*.

**Five Results in Future:** There are three results in the future life: *upapatti-bhava*, *jāti*, *jarā-marana*. But it is said there are five. How do you get five? Actually, *upapatti-bhava* and *jāti* are the same. So, future results are just *jāti*, *jarā-marana*. *Jāti* is birth, *jarā* is old age and *marana* is death. What are they in the ultimate sense? They are resultant phenomena that refer to *viññāna*, *nāma-rūpa*, *saḷāyatana*, *phassa*, and *vedanā* just like those in this present life. Therefore, we will get five results in the future life, the same as in the present life.

**Twenty Modes (ākāra):** So, the four phases have five factors each and, thus, there are 20 factors all together called modes (*ākāra*) as follows (the factors in the parentheses are those that are indirectly taken):

- Past Causes: *avijjā*, *sankhārā*, (*taṇhā*, *upādāna*, *kamma-bhava*)
- Present Results: *viññāna*, *nāma-rūpa*, *saḷāyatana*, *phassa*, *vedanā*
- Present Causes: *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, *kamma-bhava*, (*avijjā*, *sankhārā*)
- Future Results: *jāti*, *jarā-marana* (*viññāna*, *nāma-rūpa*, *saḷāyatana*, *phassa*, *vedanā*)

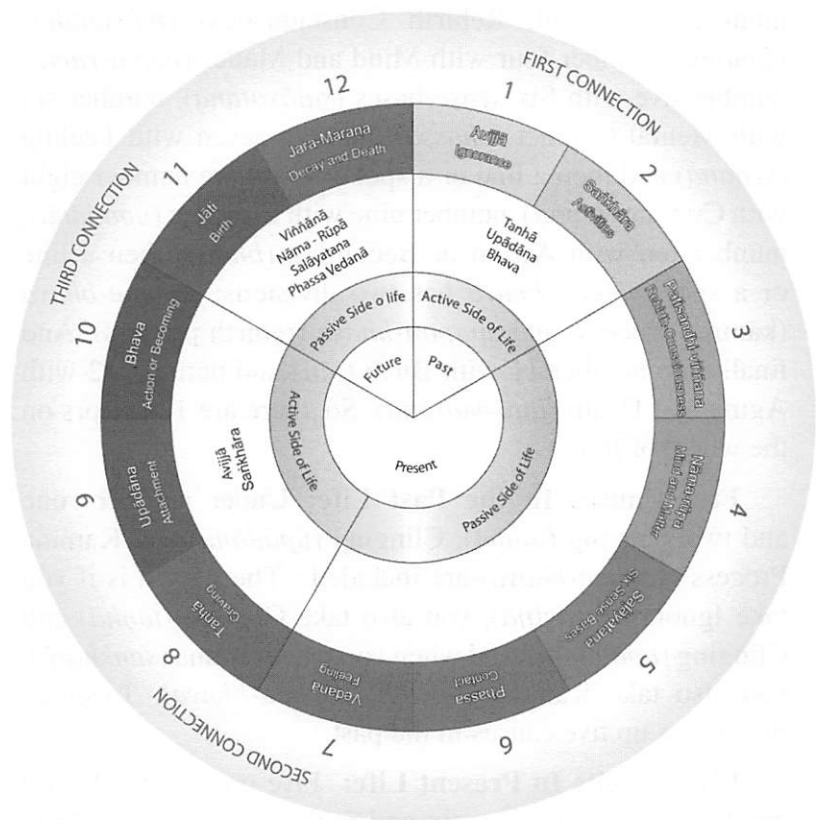
**Three Connections (*sandhi*):** Thus, there are three links between past causes and present results, between present results and present causes, and between present causes and future results.

So, what we should know about the structure about Dependent Origination are: 12 factors, 3 rounds, 20 modes, 4 phases, and 3 links.

**Two Roots (*mūla*):** There is one more thing to learn about the root causes of Paṭicca-samuppāda or the root causes of this round of rebirths. It is ignorance or delusion (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). Actually, ignorance (*avijjā*) is the head of one group and craving (*taṇhā*) is the head of another group. They are the most powerful in prolonging this round of rebirth. So long as we have ignorance and craving, we will always be going from one life to another and there can be no end to this round of rebirths. This round of rebirths will stop once we are able to get rid of these two. So, they are called the roots of the round of rebirth.

When Buddha preached the law of Dependent Origination, he put ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) at the head of these groups because they are those that cause rebirth again and again. As we are overwhelmed by ignorance and craving (craving for life, craving for this or that), we become conditioned to do wholesome or unwholesome deeds (*kamma*). And where there is *kamma*, there are always kammic result and rebirth in good or bad state.

# THE WHEEL OF LIFE



## The Wheel Of Life

With this wheel of life chart, you can follow the Dependent Origination easily. First, start with number one with Ignorance (*avijjā*) and number two with Kamma-formations (*sankhārā*) then a line or a spoke. Second are number three with Rebirth Consciousness (*patisandhi-viññāna*), number four with Mind and Matter (*nāma-rūpa*), number five with Six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*), number six with Mental Contact (*phassa*), number seven with Feeling (*vedanā*) and then a line or a spoke. Third are number eight with Craving (*taṇhā*), number nine with Clinging (*upādāna*), number ten with Action or Becoming (*bhava*) then a line or a spoke. Here, *bhava* has two divisions: *kamma-bhava* (kamma process) and *upapatti-bhava* (rebirth process). And finally are number 11 with Birth (*jāti*) and number 12 with Aging and Death (*jarā-marana*). So, there are 12 factors on the wheel of life.

**Five Causes In the Past Life:** Under numbers one and two, Craving (*taṇhā*), Clinging (*upādāna*) and Kamma Process (*kamma-bhava*) are included. The reason is if you take Ignorance (*avijjā*), you also take Craving (*taṇhā*) and Clinging (*upādāna*). And when you take Kamma (*sankhārā*), you also take Kamma Process (*kamma-bhava*). Together, they make up five causes in the past.

**Five Results In Present Life:** Five present results are number three, four, five, six and seven on the chart. They are Rebirth Consciousness (*patisandhi-viññāna*), Mind and Matter (*nāma-rūpa*), Six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*), Mental Contact (*phassa*) and Feeling (*vedanā*).

**Five Causes In Present Life:** They are number eight with Craving (*taṇhā*), number nine with Clinging (*upādāna*), and number ten with Action or Becoming (*bhava*). Ignorance

(*avijjā*) and Kamma (*sankhārā*) are included because if you take Craving (*taṇhā*), you also take Ignorance (*avijjā*); and if you take Kamma Process (*kamma-bhava*), you also take Kamma (*sankhārā*). So, they constitute five causes in this present life.

**Five Results In the Future Life:** As I explained before, the 11 and 12 factors, i.e., Birth (*jāti*), Aging and Death (*jarā-marana*), refer in ultimate sense to the same factors as the numbers 3-7, namely, Rebirth Consciousness (*patisandhi-viññāna*), Mind and Matter (*nāma-rūpa*), Six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*), Mental Contact (*phassa*), Feeling (*vedanā*). Thus, we get five results in the future life.

So, we get the five causes in the past, five results in the present, five causes in the present, and five results in the future. They are designated as passive and active here by Narada Thera. The results are passive and the causes are active. The results are said to be passive since they have no action of their own. They are like something thrown down and are just there. So they are passive side of life. Kamma and others create new things and are active side of life.

The innermost circle has past, present, and future as you have already known.

**Three Connections (*Sandhi*):** There are three connections. The first connection is between number two and three or between past causes and present results. The second connection is between number seven and eight or between the present results and present causes. And the third is between 10 and 11 or between present causes and future results.

### **How to Break the Wheel**

Once in this wheel, we have to go on and on. Isn't there an escape from this wheel or can we break this wheel somewhere? When there is ignorance (*avijjā*), can we do something to prevent kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) from



arising? No, so long as there is ignorance, there will arise kamma-formations.

And, when there are kamma, can we avoid having rebirth consciousness (*viññāna*)? No, we do *kamma* and, therefore, we get the kammic results. When there arises rebirth consciousness (*viññāna*), there will surely arise mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) that are accompanied by six senses (*saḷāyatana*). There is no way to stop them from arising. When there are six senses, there will arise the mental contact with six external objects. For example, when there is eye and there is something to be seen which falls in the avenue of the eye, there will always be mental contact (*phassa*) from these two and we cannot avoid seeing or having eye consciousness. When there is the mental contact, there will be feeling (*vedana*). If we see something, we will either feel pleasant, unpleasant or neutral about it.

Then what about craving (*taṇhā*) after feeling? Although feeling is unavoidable, the attachment can be avoided. We may have a pleasant feeling but if we know what to do, we may not get attached to it. Similarly, we may have pain or any kind of unpleasant feeling but we will not get upset or angry if we know how to deal with it. So, this is the only link where we can break or stop the round of suffering or the Dependent Origination.

But how can we break the wheel at this point? By mindfulness and mindfulness meditation. It is only by the practice of mindfulness that we can break this wheel of life. We can avoid craving and clinging by applying mindfulness to whatever feeling we experience at that moment. That is why you are told to be mindful of the feelings or sensations when you practice *Vipassanā* meditation. After sitting for some time, you have stiffness or pain here and there such as pain in the back. These feelings will motivate the craving for pleasant feeling if you do not apply mindfulness.

Once the Wheel of Life or Law of Dependent Origination is broken, clinging (*upadana*), kamma and becoming (*bhava*)... will not follow one after another. However, if we cannot apply mindfulness to the feelings we experience, then the feelings will lead to craving and then to clinging, and so on. Therefore, the link between feeling and craving is the most important because it provides an opportunity for us to break the cycle of suffering.

The third connection is between this life and next life or present causes and future results. In this connection, nothing we do can stop this wheel. So long as there is kamma process (*kamma bhava*), there will always be rebirth (*jati*). That is the most terrifying.

Ignorance or delusion (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) are the two most powerful sources for the future existences. Buddha taught both ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) in some discourses, and only one of them in others. But, whenever we see ignorance (*avijjā*), we should also understand that craving (*taṇhā*) is included because *avijjā* and *taṇhā* are concomitant. Craving (*taṇhā*) is always based on ignorance (*avijjā*). Even when craving (*taṇhā*) alone is mentioned, we must understand that there is also ignorance (*avijjā*) because they are inseparable.

Among the three connections, the second one is where we can break this wheel of life or the recurring of suffering.

## First Link

### Avijjā-paccayā Sankhārā

The sentence “*Avijjā-paccayā sankhārā*” is translated as “Because of ignorance (*avijjā*) as condition, there arise kamma-formations (*sankhārās*).” It means that “kamma-formations arise because there is ignorance as a condition” or “kamma-formations are conditioned by ignorance.”

**Definitions of Avijjā and Sankhārā:** First, we must understand the word “*avijjā*” that is composed of two words “*a*” and “*vijjā*.” “*Vijjā*” means knowledge, wisdom or understanding. The prefix “*a*” means “no” or “not.” So, “*avijjā*” means not understanding or ignorance. “*Paccaya*” can mean either producing-cause or supporting-cause. “*Sankhārā*” must be translated according to its context. Its active meaning is “something that makes or forms,” and its passive meaning is “something that is made or formed.” In this first link, we must understand it in the active sense and it is translated as kamma-formations.

#### Classifications of Sankhārā

The commentaries mention six types of *sankhārās* that consist of two sets with three each. Two sets are actually the same in essence, but classified from two different aspects.

Set One:

1. Wholesome kamma-formation (*puññābhi-sankhārā*), which is wholesome volition that belongs to either sensual sphere (*kāma-bhūmi*) or material sphere (*rūpa-bhūmi*).
2. Unwholesome kamma-formation (*apuññābhi-sankhārā*), which is the unwholesome volition that is associated with twelve types of unwholesome consciousness.
3. Imperturbable kamma-formation (*aniñjābhi-sankhārā*),

which is the volition that is associated with four types of Formless Jhāna that belong to immaterial sphere.

Set Two:

1. Formation of bodily actions (*kāya-sankhārā*), which is the volition (*cetanā*) that generates our bodily actions good or bad.
2. Formation of verbal actions (*vaci-sankhārā*), which is the volition (*cetanā*) that generates our verbal actions good or bad.
3. Formation of mental actions (*mano-sankhārā*), which is the volition (*cetanā*) that takes place when we think of doing something good or bad in mind.

If you don't understand them yet, don't be disappointed. Just note that *sankhārā* means kamma or volition that is a driving force behind all actions. When we do something good, there is a wholesome volition, called *kusala-kamma*. When we do something bad, there is unwholesome volition, called *akusala-kamma*. That is all you need to understand.

### **The Link Between Avijjā and Sankhārā**

“Because of Ignorance (*avijjā*) as condition, there arise kamma-formations (*sankhārā*).” What does this link means? It means that because of the ignorance (*avijjā*), we do or think of good or bad things (*sankhārā*). Whatever deeds we do, wholesome or unwholesome, they are done with ignorance (*avijjā*) as a condition. It is explained in the commentary with a question and an answer.

How do we know that kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) arise because of ignorance (*avijjā*) as a condition?

We know that because in view of the fact that when there is ignorance, these kamma-formations arise and, when there is no ignorance, these kamma-formations do not arise. It may be similar to this question: How do we know that the shadow

is caused by light? The answer is when there is no light, there is no shadow and, when there is light, there is shadow. So, we conclude that light causes shadow.

Ignorance is defined in the *Suttanta* as not knowing the four noble truths. *Abhidhamma* defines it as not knowing the four noble truths, the aggregates of mind and matter, and the Dependent Origination.

**Ignorance of the Four Noble Truths:** Not knowing the truth of suffering, we think things in the world as pleasant or good. This delusion makes us do good or bad things. Thus, kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) are conditioned by the ignorance of the first noble truth.

We don't know that craving is the cause of suffering. Some may even take craving to be the cause of happiness thinking that the craving makes us happy by bringing us what we want. This ignorance and delusion make us do good or bad deeds. Thus, kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) arise due to the ignorance of the second noble truth.

We don't know the truth of the cessation of suffering. So we may think that the highest realm or heaven is the place where suffering ceases. To reach there, we may do deeds like practicing meditation. So, our practice of meditation is kamma-formations (*sankhārā*) conditioned by the ignorance of the third noble truth.

We don't know the way to the cessation of suffering. Therefore, we do deeds like sacrificing animals to gods in order to reach the cessation of suffering or the ever-blissful state. Thus, *sankhārās* are conditioned by the ignorance of the fourth noble truth.

Moreover, when we enjoy good fortunes such as better rebirth, wealth, high social status and so on, we take them to be happiness or to be conducive to happiness. In order to get such good fortunes, we do meritorious deeds. So,

our meritorious deeds are conditioned by our ignorance of the fact that those good fortunes cannot save us from old age, disease, and death. This is how the ignorance is the condition for our wholesome kamma (*sankhārā*). On the other hand, by not seeing the danger in sensual pleasures and seeking them desperately, we do something unwholesome. Those unwholesome deeds (*sankhārā*) are conditioned by ignorance. Thus, the ignorance brings about good or bad kamma (*sankhārā*).

### **Meditation and Ignorance**

What about the practice of meditation? Is it also conditioned by ignorance? The Commentary didn't say anything about that. Could we say that we practice meditation out of ignorance?

It is difficult to say whether or not our practice of meditation is caused by ignorance (*avijjā*). I do not know the correct answer to this question. However, ignorance is a condition for whatever we do in this life, good or bad. Actually, all beings except the Buddhas, Picceka-buddhas and Arahants have this ignorance.

At least through dhamma talks and dhamma books, we know that things are impermanent and unwholesome deeds (*akusala kamma*) bring suffering. We also acquire wholesome merits through meditation practice (*kusala kamma*). If they are kamma (*sankhārās*), they must have ignorance (*avijjā*) as a condition.

Therefore, it can be said our practice of meditation could also be conditioned by ignorance (*avijjā*) in a way.

### **How Avijjā Is Related to Kamma**

Let us accept that kamma-formations (*sankhārā*) are conditioned by ignorance (*avijjā*) as the commentator explained. We will have examples to show this relationship.

Suppose we are practicing *vipassanā* meditation, observing the mental state of ignorance arising and passing away. In this case, the ignorance in the form of a meditative object (*ārammana*) is conditioning our meditation practice, a wholesome kamma formation. Another example is in order to overcome ignorance, we practice the deed of generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), tranquility meditation (*samatha*) and insight meditation (*vipassanā*). In these cases, the ignorance is the supportive condition (*pakatūpanissaya*) for kamma-formations (*sankhārā*) to arise. For example, being ignorant that the existence in any form is impermanent and suffering, we do meritorious deeds in order to reach celestial or human existences or we practice meditation until we get immaterial *jhāna* to be reborn in the formless *brahma* realm. Thus, our meritorious deeds (*sankhārā*) are conditioned by the ignorance in terms of supportive condition (*pakatūpanissaya*).

We also do the unwholesome actions because we are ignorant of any sin in evil deeds such as killing, stealing, etc. Thus, the unwholesome kamma-formations (*sankhārā*) are conditioned by the ignorance (*avijjā*) in terms of supportive condition.

Ignorance is a root condition for its corresponding consciousness and other mental factors. They arise together and support each other. Thus, the ignorance is related to kamma-formations (*sankhārā*) by means of arising together and supporting each other (*sahajāta-paccaya*).

**Two Forms of Avijjā:** We usually say *avijjā* is not knowing (ignorance) but *avijjā* has two forms: not knowing correctly (ignorance) and knowing falsely (delusion). If we don't know something correctly then we know it falsely. Not knowing that things are impermanent is ignorance and thinking that they are permanent is delusion. Thus, these are two forms of *avijjā*.

**Avijjā and Moha:** What mental factor (*cetasika*) is *avijjā*? Among fifty-two mental factors, fourteen are unwholesome. Among those fourteen, *avijjā* comes under 'moha' (delusion). So, *moha* and *avijjā* are synonymous. Here in this Dependent Origination, it is called *avijjā*. In many discourses, however, Buddha used *avijjā* and *moha* interchangeably.

*Avijjā* and wholesome kamma never arise together. *Avijjā* arises at one moment and wholesome kamma at another. But *avijjā* and unwholesome kamma sometimes arise together cooperatively, sometimes not. We have to understand that the conditioning factors do not necessarily arise ahead of the conditioned factors. Sometimes they arise together but one is conditioning and the others are conditioned. For example, unwholesome kamma sometimes arises together with *avijjā* at the same time. But *avijjā* is called the conditioning factor, and the unwholesome kamma and some other mental factors are called the conditioned factors. We have to understand this so that we can see what kind of relationship they have.

### **Why Does Buddha Point Out “One Cause One Effect?”**

There are two questions discussed in the Commentary as follows:

**Question 1:** Is ignorance (*avijjā*) the only cause of kamma-formations (*sankhārā*)? Or if there are many conditions for kamma-formations (*sankhārā*) to arise, why did Buddha teach in this formula that ignorance (*avijjā*) is the condition for kamma-formations (*sankhārā*)?

If ignorance (*avijjā*) is said to be a sole condition for kamma-formations (*sankhārā*), then it is tantamount to saying that there is only one cause for many effects. This view is not agreeable to Buddhism. According to the law of cause and effect, Buddhism does not accept these three ideas: one-cause many effects, many causes one effect, one



cause one effect. What is accepted in Buddhism is many causes and many effects. For example, when we grow a plant, for example, it produces shoots, which are conditioned by many causes like moisture, temperature, soil, and their gene in addition to what we feed them. And the shoots consist of many kinds of material qualities like the earth element, water element, smell, taste, etc. So, there are many effects produced by many causes, not by one cause. Then, why the *Buddha* only mentioned ignorance (*avijjā*) as a condition for kamma-formations (*sankhārā*)?

**Answer:** The *Buddha* sometimes points out only one condition because it is the most basic or the most obvious or the most peculiar to that particular effect.

In many places, *Buddha* pointed out a single cause for many effects. For example, the sixth link of this Dependent Origination says: “Feeling (*vedana*) is conditioned by Contact (*phassa*).” Feeling actually arises not just by contact since there are many other conditions such as sense-object, sense-base, and so on. But why did *Buddha* said: “Because of the contact, there arises feeling.”

We identify feeling according to contact such as the feeling generated by the eye-contact (*cakkhu-samphassajā-vedanā*), the feeling generated by the ear-contact (*sota-samphassajā-vedanā*), and so on. *Buddha* gave contact as the condition for feeling not because it is the only condition for feeling but because it is the most basic to determine the feeling. Here is a simile to explain this point: When a sick person goes to a physician and the physician diagnoses that the cause of the disease is phlegm. Actually, phlegm is not the only cause of the disease but it is the obvious cause of the disease. So the physician says that the disease is caused by phlegm. In modern terms, we say that the disease is caused by a virus although virus is not the only cause. There can be many other conditions for a disease such as bad climate,

junk food, unhealthy lifestyle, and so on. But the physician picks phlegm or virus because this is the most obvious of the causes. In the same way, since contact (*phassa*) is the most obvious cause for feeling (*vedanā*), *Buddha* only pointed out contact as a condition for feeling.

In another example, *Buddha* also said that all unwholesome mental states are rooted in unwise way of thinking (*ayoniso manisikara*). It means that unwise way of thinking is the condition for all unwholesome mental states. Actually, there are many other conditions such as the sense-object and the sense-base, and so on. But the unwise way of thinking is a unique or distinctive condition for the unwholesome mental states. The others are common conditions. So, sometimes *Buddha* pointed out only one cause because it is a unique or distinctive condition for a particular effect. And this explanation applies to all the remaining links. Therefore, whenever there is only one condition given, we should remember this explanation.

### **Wholesomeness Can Be Conditioned By Unwholesomeness**

**Question 2:** Ignorance is an unwholesome mental state and has undesirable and painful results. However, it is said that ignorance conditions kamma formations (*sankhārā*) which can be wholesome or unwholesome. Since the commentary says that no mango tree will grow out of namba seed, how can it be that wholesome kamma is conditioned by unwholesome ignorance<sup>1</sup>?

**Answer:** The answer is cause and effect are not necessarily of the same quality, characteristics, or nature. Cause and effect can be different in place and quality. So,

<sup>1</sup> *Namba, Tama-bin in Burmese, is a particular kind of tree that has a bitter taste in its leaves, fruits and bark. We use its small little branches as toothpicks and tooth brushes. We don't see many of them in this country and some are found in Florida.*

out of ignorance, the good quality (*kusala*) can arise.

### Summary

Let us recapitulate:

1. *Avijjā* is the unwholesome mental state called *moha* in *Abhidhamma*.

2. *Avijjā* has two forms: not knowing (ignorance) and knowing falsely (delusion).

3. *Sankhārās* are volition synonymous with *kamma*, which are conditioned by *avijjā*.

4. We know that *avijjā* is a condition for *sankhārā* because when there is *avijjā*, there are *sankhārās* and, when there is no *avijjā*, there is no *sankhārā*.

5. *Sankhārās* are conditioned by *avijjā* in terms of sense-object, in terms of supportive condition, etc.

6. Buddhism accepts only multi-cause and multi-effect. It does not accept one cause one effect, one cause many effects, many causes one effect.

7. Wholesome (*kusala*) can arise by unwholesome (*akusala*) condition because cause and effect are not necessarily of the same nature or condition. Out of bad things, good things can arise like a lotus out of mud. So, conditioned by *avijjā*, wholesome *sankhārās* can arise.

## The Second Link

### Sankhārā-paccayā Viññānam.

This link is important and interesting and can attract many questions, too. This is the link where “condition” really means “producing cause.” So in this link, *sankhārās* produce *viññāna*. This link says:

*Sankhārā-paccayā viññānam.*

Because of kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) as conditions, there arise consciousnesses (*viññānas*).

**Sankhārā:** *Sankhārā* is of three kinds: formations of merit, formations of demerit and formations of imperturbable. In ultimate sense, *sankhārās* are just volition (*cetanā*), synonymous with *kamma*, wholesome or unwholesome.

**Viññāna:** *Viññāna* and *Citta* are synonymous and both are translated as consciousness. There are 89 or 121 types of consciousness, but this link does not take all of them. In order to understand this point, we have to understand the four kinds of consciousness such as wholesome, unwholesome, resultant, and functional. Functional consciousness actually means the same as wholesome consciousness; however, they are so called because they lack the power to give result. Out of these four, only the resultant kinds of consciousness are taken here as *viññāna* since this link is to explain the result of *kamma* (*sankhārā*). Here, the question is: Should we take any resultant consciousness or only certain kinds of them? Some books say that only the rebirth consciousness (*patisandhi*) should be taken here, but The Path of Purification (*Visuddhi-magga*) commentary includes all types of resultant consciousness as *viññāna*.

**32 Viññānas:** To understand the resultant consciousness here, let us divide a life into two parts. The first part is the moment of rebirth consciousness (*patisandhi-kāla*) or the first consciousness in life and the second part is the rest of life (*pavatti-kāla*). The first consciousness arises at the very moment we are conceived in the mother's womb. It is the direct result of kamma (*sankhārā*). Afterward, the same kind of resultant consciousness by the name of "life-continuum" (*bhavanga*) recurs for the rest of life whenever there are no full or active conscious thoughts (*vīthi-citta*). There are also other kinds of resultant consciousness such as seeing consciousness, which is a result of a past kamma but cannot arise at the moment of rebirth consciousness. Seeing something good or beautiful means the result of good kamma while seeing something bad, ugly or undesirable means the result of the bad kamma. The same is true with the hearing, smelling, tasting, touching. Anyway, they are the result of past kamma (*sankhārā*) and should also be included in the consciousness factor in this second link (*sankhārā-paccayā viññāna*), although they don't arise at the moment of the rebirth consciousness in life. There are altogether thirty-two (32) types of such resultant consciousnesses that should be taken as "*viññāna*" here in this link.

**So Deep the Subject Is!** Dependent Origination is a very difficult teaching that even the famous commentator *Buddhaghosa* was hesitant about it when he began to write the commentary on this subject. He said: "When I try to write the commentary on this subject, I do not get a foothold and felt as if plunged into the ocean." The ocean is so deep that we cannot get a foothold in it. Similarly, this subject is so deep that even the great commentator had felt hesitant when he tried to write the commentary. Even such a celebrated commentator was hesitant about it, so what of us? We are little compared with the great commentator. This is a very

deep subject, difficult to understand and explain to others. I will try my best to explain as much as I know and, if I cannot make you understand it, then it is my fault, not the fault of the books.

In this link between kamma-formations (*sankhārā*) and consciousnesses (*viññāna*), the kamma-formations belong to one life and the consciousnesses belong to another. If kamma-formations belong to this life, then consciousnesses will belong to the next life. If kamma-formations belong to the next life, then consciousnesses will belong to the life after next. It is important to understand how these two factors are related and how the kamma-formations produce consciousnesses in the next life. It is also necessary to understand how death takes place in one life and rebirth in another life. This is a very difficult subject.

**Life and Death:** The last thought or consciousness in life is called “death” in *Abhidhamma*. Immediately after the last thought in the past life, there arises the first thought called “linking consciousness” in this present life. Prior to the last thought in the past, there arose the last mental process, usually with five thought moments (*maranāsanna-javana*), which is very important as it influences this current life. The process of five thought moments is followed sometimes by the last consciousness (death) immediately or sometimes after a few thought-moments in between.

**Three Signs On One’s Death Bed:** On our deathbed, we are naturally weak both physically and mentally. We may not even see or hear although we are still conscious. At that time, one of the three things will vividly occur to our mind: kamma, kammic sign (*kamma-nimitta*), and destiny sign (*gati-nimitta*). Kamma means our good or bad kamma that is going to determine our destiny. Kammic sign means something or someone that was involved in our performance of kamma. For example, if kamma was donation (*dāna*), then

the kammic sign would be a monk who accepted our donation or the things we donated to the monk, or something like that. Destiny sign means sign of life after death. If we are going to be reborn as a human being, the sign would be the wall of our mother's womb. If we are going to be reborn in hell, then hell fire, the torturers will be the sign of our destiny. If we are going to be reborn in the celestial world, then the celestial beings and the celestial building mansions... will be the sign of our destiny. So, one of these three signs vividly occurs itself in our mind during our last moments.

**No Interval In Between:** Suppose a deed of generosity (*dāna kamma*) as an object occurs to us on our deathbed. Then, we would feel as if we were giving donation (*dana*) at present. So, the last five thought-units take that *dāna kamma* as their sense-object. Actually, the other thought units before these five also take this deed of generosity as sense-object, but these five are more important than the others as they are going to influence the life after death. The process of these five is followed by the last thought called "death consciousness." Immediately after death, there arises the relinking consciousness in the new life. There is no interval of time between the last consciousness in the past life and the first consciousness in the present life.

The first consciousness in life is called "*patisandhi*" meaning relinking or joining consciousness as it is sort of link between the two lives, past and present. It can also be called rebirth consciousness which is one of the thirty-two resultant consciousnesses. And this is how kamma (*sankhārā*) is conditioning the resultant consciousnesses (*viññānas*).

So, the third link says: "Because of kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) as conditions, there arise the resultant consciousnesses (*viññānas*)." *Sankhārā* is in one life and *viññāna* is in the next. The relinking consciousness in this life takes the same sense-object as the last five thought-units

and the death consciousness took in the past life.

The *kamma* is so powerful that it can keep on producing the same kind of resultant consciousness as the relinking one but called life-continuum (*bhavanga*); throughout our life unless there are active thoughts intervening. Throughout our lives, this life-continuum consciousness and active thoughts like seeing, hearing, thinking, reasoning and so on arise alternatively until death. Let us call this kind of resultant consciousness (life-continuum) as inactive consciousness (or subconsciousness) and the active thoughts like seeing, hearing, thinking, reasoning, etc., as active consciousnesses (full consciousnesses). So, the series of subconsciousness and full consciousness arise alternatively until we come to death again.

**Three Are Identical:** As mentioned earlier, the first consciousness in life is called “relinking consciousness” (*patisandhi*). After that moment, the same kind of consciousness takes place but called “life-continuum” (*bhavanga*) since they keep life continued. If they did not arise, our life would have ended. *Bhavanga* literally means “factors of life.” Also, the same kind of consciousness will arise as the last consciousness in this present life and is called “death consciousness” (*cuti*). So, the relinking consciousness (*patisandhi*), life-continuum consciousness (*bhavanga*), and last or death consciousness (*cuti*) are identical. They are conditioned by the same past *kamma* (*sankhārā*).

**Question:** If the process of last five thought-units are very important as they determine our rebirth consciousness or our new life (if they are wholesome, they lead us to the blissful rebirth or if unwholesome they lead us to woeful rebirth), why do we need to do good *kamma* long before we die? Do we just need to do something good on our deathbed?

**Answer:** Commentaries explain this point with simile



of three persons. One of them blindfolds us, another entices us to go towards a cliff, and the last one pushes us down. These three are respectively compared to ignorance, craving and *kamma* done earlier in the current life or even in the previous lives. With the support of the last five thought-units, the past *kamma* produces the rebirth in the next life, and the rebirth consciousness takes the same sense-object as they do. Moreover, the sense-object they take at this moment is known appropriately by one of the three names: *kamma* (the reflection of an action one once did), *kamma-nimitta* (the sign of action-related objects) and *gati-nimitta* (the sign of one's rebirth)<sup>1</sup>. So, the last five thought-units are not really the direct cause of rebirth, but just a supporting condition for the producing *kamma* and its produced rebirth consciousness.

**Conventional Usage:** Along with this rebirth consciousness (*patibandhi-citta*), arise mental states (*cetasika*) and some matter (*kammaja-rūpa*). For all beings except certain brahma, “rebirth” is just the combination of these three factors. Matter is body (*rūpa*), mental states and consciousness are mind (*nāma*). So, what we call “rebirth” is just mind and matter, or *nāma* and *rūpa*. When these mind and

*1 To elaborate the three technical names, let's take the example of Mr. Tambadathika from the Dhammapada who had been an executioner for 50 years.*

- 1. Kamma here does not refer to real kamma but to its reflection. In this particular case, if he were to experience kamma on his death bed, he would have felt as if he were killing people at that current moment.*
- 2. Kamma-nimitta refers to the reflection of a sense-object that was impressed on one's memory when one performed an action and reappears in one's mind's eye at the dying moment. In his case, therefore, the kamma-nimitta would have been the images of people he had killed or the sword he had used at that time.*
- 3. If he were to experience the sign of his possible rebirth (gati-nimitta), then he would have seen in his mind's eye hell fire or ghost's kingdom or something like that.*

body arise, we say, in conventional usage, that this person has transmigrated to another life or reincarnated in another life.

We use these expressions because living in the conventional world we cannot avoid using them; however, nothing is really transferred since the *nāma* and *rūpa* that arise at rebirth are new. According to the Buddhist explanation, the rebirth does not mean that a permanent soul or a permanent entity or a being transmigrates from one life to another. Nothing from this life goes over to the next life. All arise in the next life are just new mind and matter even though they are the results of past *kamma*. So, the relinking or the rebirth in the present life is totally a new life but has connection with *kamma* in the past.

**The One He Is and the One He Used to Be:** It is very difficult to understand this connection since the person in this life is neither identical to nor totally different from the person he used to be in the past life. There are several analogies given in the commentary.

The first analogy is the echo. When we shout into a cave, the echo that comes back is not our voice but just a sound caused by our voice. The echo is, therefore, neither identical with our voice nor totally different from our voice. It does not come about without our voice.

The second simile is the flame of a lamp. You have a lamp with a flame and a person comes and lights his lamp from your lamp. Are the flame on his lamp and the flame of your lamp the same? No. But does his flame come about totally unconnected with your flame? No. So, the person's flame is neither your flame nor totally different from your flame.

Another example is your picture taken when you were young. The person in the picture is neither the same nor a different person as you are right now, right? Similarly, your

image in the mirror is not you but nobody else either. If you were not there, there would be no image. But the image is not you. If it were you then when I hit the image you would be hit.

And one more example is a stamp and its impression. The impression is not the stamp but it is there because of the stamp. So, impression is although not the stamp but not totally disconnected with the stamp.

The teaching of *Theravāda Buddhism* is that at every moment there are new mind and matter arising and then passing away, and nothing is transferred from one life to another. However, what arises here is the result of what we did there in the past. They are connected although there is no permanent identity.

The commentaries explained this another way with no absolute identity and no absolute diversity. Since there is the sequence or the continuity of mind and matter arising and passing away, there is neither absolute identity nor absolute diversity of otherness. The commentary gives an example here, too. If there were absolute identity then the milk would not turn into the curd (yogurt). And, if there were complete diversity or complete otherness then yogurt would take place without milk. Similarly, if you say there is absolute identity then there will be no more rebirth from the *kamma* done here. And, if you say there is absolute diversity then the two will be totally disconnected.

The commentary gave us some tough questions but also provided answers for these questions related to this.

**Question:** If no transmigration is manifested, or if we do not accept transmigration, then after the cessation of aggregates (of mind and matter) from this human person in this life, the result could be in another person in another life because all the five aggregates including *kamma* already

ceased in this life. This is a question.

**Answer:** Here, the commentary gives an answer with an example of planting a tree. First a seed is put into the soil and may be fertilized... Then the seed grows into a tree and the tree bears fruits. The fruits are, therefore, the result of the seed although it is no longer present at that time. Both the seed and the fruits are, therefore, involved in the growing process or growing sequence. In the same way, the rebirth is a continuous process or sequence. For this reason, we cannot say that one does *kamma* and another gets result.

**Question:** If there is no person to experience the result, then for whom would the result be?

**Answer:** Let's take the tree example again. When we see fruits in the tree, we just say that the tree bears fruit. However, the fruits are not for the tree. Similarly, when we see someone happy or unhappy, we just say that this person is happy or unhappy. This is just a conventional usage since, in the ultimate sense, there is no person but only the mental process of happiness or unhappiness. So, conventionally, we say somebody gets good or bad results, but in the ultimate sense, no one experiences it, just the experiencing process.

**Question:** When do the kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) cause consciousness (*viññāna*) to occur? Is it when they are present or not present? If you answer when they are present then they should produce the result at the very moment they arise, not some other time. And, if they produce results when they are not present, then the results could be produced before they arise. Tough question!

**Answer:** The kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) produce results because they were done regardless they are present or not. There is a simile here to explain this point. Suppose, for example, you promise to pay for somebody else, like "I will pay for him." You are paying simply because you undertake

to pay; it doesn't matter whether the promise is present or not. But after you have paid, you don't have to pay any more. In the same way, once the results have been produced, the kamma (*sankharas*) has spent its potential and, therefore, produces no more results.

### **Sankhārās in Real Life**

For a full understanding of the link between kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) and consciousness (*viññāna*), I will explain how the law of kamma and the process of death and rebirth are working through real life, and also pitfalls we must avoid regarding this process.

What are kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) in brief? You have already learned that *sankhārā* is good or bad kamma and *viññāna* is the resultant consciousness. Now, we will see them in real life. Whenever you do, say, or even think good or bad, there is *sankhārā*. As you have learned before, *sankhārā* is technically known as volition (*cetana*) that is a driving force behind all the good or bad activities. You are doing wholesome *sankhārā* when you practice charity, pay homage to the *Buddha*, keep precepts, or practice meditation. When you kill a living being, steal, tell a lie, and so on then you are doing unwholesome *sankhārā*. It is very rare that you are without *sankhārā* while you are awake. Only when you are fast asleep, these *sankhārās* do not occur. Most of the time, you do one of these two types of *sankhārās*.

Where do these kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) lead to? All these kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) lead to consciousness (*viññāna*), and consciousness (*viññāna*) also leads to mind and body (*nāma* and *rūpa*). We can say kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) lead to consciousness (*viññāna*) and mind and body (*nāma* and *rūpa*). And consciousness (*viññāna*) and mind and body (*nāma* and *rūpa*) mean just the new life or rebirth. So, kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) lead

to rebirth. Rebirth means an existence, a new existence. When there is rebirth, there follow old age, disease, death, and then there will be the next existence and the next existence.

### **Not to Let Sankhārā Prolong Samsāra**

**Question:** Should we not do any kamma-formations (*sankhārās*), good or bad, if we want to get out of cycle of rebirths (*samsāra*) since kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) only prolong our cycle of rebirths?

**Answer:** There are some people who don't want to give charity, keep precepts or practice meditation. They would say that these kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) also lead to rebirths and only prolong the cycle of rebirths (*samsāra*) which is the process of mind and matter going on and on from life to life. They reason that if we want to stop the cycle of rebirths, we'd better stop doing all kinds of kamma-formations (*sankhārās*), good or bad. These people, however, are not aware that if we do not do good deeds, we would do bad deeds. So long as we are not fully-enlightened persons (*arahant*), we are still doing kamma-formations (*sankhārās*). However, we could not even imagine how longer *samsāra* would be if we fail to do wholesome *sankhārā*.

**Two Kinds of Good Sankhārā:** There are two kinds of good kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) you need to understand: one prolongs the cycle of rebirths (*samsāra*) and the other leads to the end of it. For example, if we do good *sankhārā* such as giving, keeping moral precepts, practicing meditation wishing to have a good rebirth with longevity, beauty, wealth...in human being or celestial world, then that good *kamma* or *sankhārā* will lead us to be reborn as a person or a celestial being. It will not lead us to the end of cycle of rebirths (*samsāra*) but help prolong it. On the other hand, if we direct our mind whenever we do these meritorious deeds to the attainment of enlightenment or the cessation of

suffering, then these kamma-formations (*sankhārās*) will lead us to a life where the conditions are favorable for us to practice for liberation from the cycle of rebirths (*samsāra*). This *sankhārā* will not prolong our *samsāra*. That is why every time we take precepts, we say something at the end: “*Idam me sīlam magga-phala-ñānassa paccayo hotu*: May my *sīla* contribute to the attainment of path and fruition.” Or “May this merit lead to the destruction of mental defilements or cessation of suffering and to the attainment of *nibbāna*” when we do good meritorious deeds. This means we direct our mind to getting out of this *samsāra*.

**Sankhārā and Viññāna in Real Life:** What is *viññāna* here? *Viññāna* here means resultant consciousness. There are 32 types of resultant consciousness but some of them are difficult to understand. So, I will pick up those that are easy to understand. When we see something or someone, we have a seeing consciousness (*cakku viññāna*) at that moment. That seeing consciousness is *viññāna* here, the result of the past kamma-formations (*sankhārās*). Good kamma creates conditions for us to see beautiful and pleasant things, and bad kamma ugly and unpleasant things. In the same way, when we hear, smell, taste or touch something good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, we are really experiencing *viññāna*, the result of past kamma. Therefore, when we do something good or bad, we are accumulating kamma-formations (*sankhārās*), and then, when we see, hear, etc, we are experiencing the result of these past kamma.

**Belief in the Law of Karma:** Now you see the law of Dependent Origination is working with you, working within you. This link is important and is difficult to understand because it involves the law of kamma and the cycle of life and death (*samsara*). But as a disciple of the Buddha, you understand the law of kamma and the process of death and rebirth to some extent. So, we can say we believe in the law of

*kamma*. But do we accept the law of *kamma* just on faith?

First, we believe in *kamma* because it was taught by the Buddha. We have full faith and confidence in the Buddha because we know from Pāli texts that Buddha was the person who only taught after having discovered the truth himself. For this reason, we just accept the law of *kamma* he taught us.

It is not satisfactory yet, however, because we accept it just on faith. We can do further analysis. We see people with different conditions in the world. Some people live long and others live short; some rich and others poor; some healthy and others sickly; some smart and others stupid; some beautiful and others ugly... We can even see differences among the children who are born of the same parents and brought up under the same environment. Why are there differences among us? We cannot attribute them all to the heredity or environment.

If we cannot find a reason or a cause in this life then we have to find it somewhere else. The explanation of the causes for these differences must go beyond this life. These differences must be related to the deeds we did in the past life called "*kamma*." Thus, we can get better and deeper understanding of the law of *kamma*. We, therefore, accept the *kamma* in a more analytical way.

Later, when we practice insight or mindfulness (*vipassanā*) meditation, we come to see physical phenomena changing moment by moment, our sensations coming and going, our thoughts appearing and disappearing, and our observing mind itself arising and passing away, too. When our concentration and mindfulness get stronger, we come to see interaction of mind and body. For example, we realize that we see something because there is a visible object, eyes and our attention. The same is true with hearing, smelling,



etc. So, everything is dependent upon some other things to arise. Thus, we start to see the law of cause and effect through the practice of *vipassanā* meditation. From this empirical experience, we infer that what we are now is the result of what we did in the past. In this way, we come to accept the law of kamma at deeper level.

**Is It Blind Faith?** Is our acceptance of the law of kamma based on the faith in the Buddha a blind faith? Many of you have studied science at school. You study chemistry and learn that there are a little more than a hundred physical elements. You learn the names of those elements, their serial numbers, atomic weight, and some other features or information about these elements. But I don't think all of you have really gone into the lab to measure the weight of each element and try to experiment with these elements yourselves. You just accept what you are taught because you have confidence in those who first discovered them and in those who taught you. If we can call that blind faith then we may call our acceptance of *kamma* blind faith also. I leave it to you to decide. And, if you are not satisfied with inference but you want to see it clearly for yourself, then you need to practice *samatha* meditation until you get the supernormal power to see beings die in one existence and be reborn in another.

Buddha himself got this supernormal knowledge on the eve of the enlightenment. And with that knowledge, he saw beings die from one existence and be reborn in another. He also saw that some beings did good kamma and were reborn in a better world and other beings did bad kamma and were reborn in woeful state. With his supernormal knowledge, the Buddha saw clearly the law of kamma during the night before his enlightenment and also viewed it many times in his life as the Buddha. He said that this knowledge can be attained not only by Buddhas but also by many others. Even when there is no Buddha, this kind of supernormal power can

be attained. So, if you are not very pleased to accept the law of kamma on faith or by inference but want to see it directly for yourself, then you just practice samatha meditation to get this supernormal power.

### **Better Understanding of Death and Rebirth**

Then what about rebirth or life after death? I think it is the same. First, we accept it on faith. We are born to Buddhist parents who, along with other people around, believe in rebirth and we pick up this belief from them. So, our acceptance of rebirth in the beginning is based on faith. But later, we may come across people who could remember their past lives. In some stories, their links are so convincing that we just have to believe them. Sometimes they can even describe their past lives in minute details. They can find the houses they used to live in their past lives without being helped by any person. And they can find out things they have used, and sometimes they remember the names of people in the past lives, and so on. The descriptions are so convincing that we cannot dismiss them as just hallucination or just coincidence. From such accounts, our belief in life after death becomes stronger. And, in our country, such people are not few and can be found at many places. In the West, although there may be as many people who can remember their past lives, they are afraid to tell their stories because they were brought up in the Christian tradition. When their parents hear them telling these stories, they just suppress them. But nowadays, these stories are coming out more frequently and more openly. So, I think the Western people will also accept rebirth more easily than they did in the past.

Our understanding of rebirth can be a little bit deeper when we think of the mental activities arising and passing moment by moment. Sometimes we are happy and sometimes we are sad; other times we are neither sad nor happy. These mental states come one after another when we are alive. They

go on and on because there is *kammic* force to perpetuate their continuation. And this *kammic* force will continue as long as there are ignorance and craving as its sources. Until these two sources are eradicated, there will always be *kammic* force. And, so long as there is a *kammic* force, the mental states arise and disappear, and this process will go on and on even after our life span expires and will continue life after life. That is what we call “rebirth” or “*samsāra*.” Thinking this way, we can also accept rebirth.

Through *vipassanā* meditation, our understanding of rebirth becomes stronger. When we practice *vipassanā* meditation, we try to be mindful of whatever is happening to us. When we watch our mind, we will see different thought every moment. We see one thought after another arising and passing away. By seeing phenomena arising and disappearing, we come to realize that what we call death is just the disappearance of the last thought in this life and what we call “rebirth” is the appearance of a new thought in the future life. Death and rebirth, therefore, can be understood in comparison with two consecutive moments of thoughts. So, it is acceptable that the arising and disappearing of consciousness can go on and on not only when we are living but also after death because of *kammic* force.

And when consciousness arises, it needs some matter for its base. There are six kinds of sense bases such as eye base for seeing consciousness, ear base for hearing, and so on. The last one is heart base for thinking consciousness. These material bases become weaker and weaker as death approaches. And, when they can no longer serve as bases for the consciousness, consciousness must take another material property in the next life for its base and go on. So, in this way, we can accept death and rebirth through the practice of meditation in addition to our knowledge of the Buddha’s teaching.

I think the *kammic* force can be understood by the analogy of a clock using springs. Before the electronic clocks were invented, we had had ordinary clocks with springs. In order for the clock to work, we wind the spring to create a force to turn the wheels of the clock. And the more we wind the springs, the more powerful the force becomes. So, we wind the springs to the maximum to have full force for the clock. And, so long as there is force, the wheels will turn and make the tick, tick noise all the time. The more the force, the longer the wheels turn, and the turning will not stop if the force is not spent altogether. In the same way, when we do something good or bad, we create *kammas*. The *kammic* force causes mind and matter to arise and disappear continuously. This force will not stop upon what you call death in one life but will continue to another life as long as its causes, such as craving and ignorance, are there. This analogy, I think, gives us better understanding of the circle of life and death or rebirth.

#### **Four Wrong Views**

**1. View of Eternal Soul:** We need to understand the process of death and rebirth correctly as I have explained above. Otherwise, we may fall into a wrong view that when we die, physical activities cease but a kind of soul does continue to move to another life, like a man moving from one house to another. Thus, we may fall into the wrong view of an everlasting soul that moves from one life to another. This kind of false view is called eternalism (*sasata-dit̃hi*).

**2. View of Annihilation:** If there is no permanent entity, we may think, a person who dies here is gone forever. This is view of annihilation (*uccheda-dit̃hi*).

**3. View of No-cause:** In view of the fact that mind and matter arise and pass away without soul, we may assume that mind and matter arise randomly and arbitrarily without any

specific cause. This is view of no-cause (*ahetuka-diṭṭhi*).

**4. View of False Cause:** The fourth wrong view is that a new being comes into existence as the creation of God or Brahma. This is view of false cause (*visama-hetu-diṭṭhi*).

**The Wrong View a Buddhist Likely to Fall into:** Among these four wrong views, we Buddhists must be careful about the first one. As Buddhists, we have neither the false view that beings are annihilated at death nor there is no cause as we believe in the law of kamma. Nor do we believe in creation. But we may likely fall into the first one. Even though we have learned that there is no soul or there is no individual, we still think there must be something that goes on from one life to another. We usually say that *Bodddhi-satta* was born as someone in this life and then reborn as another person in the next life, and so on. It seems there is a kind of eternal entity going on from life to another. We may fall into that *eternalism* (*sasata-diṭṭhi*) if we do not understand correctly the process of death and rebirth.

**Formula:** In order to avoid falling into these wrong views, we need to apply this formula: “*Neither the same nor different person.*” This means that the person who is reborn is neither the person who dies in the previous life nor another person in this life. We need to apply this formula to the process of death and rebirth as they are different in one sense but the same in another sense. The first part means the difference or diversity and the second one is the lack of identity. We should take these two together since if we take only one of them, we may fall into one of these two views, *eternalism* or *annihilation*.

This link is actually difficult to understand but very interesting because it explains the law of kamma and also the process of death and rebirth. There are some more elaborations regarding which *sankhārā* causes which *viññāna*. In order

to understand these details, you need to have knowledge of *abhidhamma* such as at least the 121 types of consciousness. If you are not familiar with these types of consciousness then you will get bored. So I won't go into the explanation of these details. For those people who want to go to such details, I will give a special class after we finish this. If you want to attend those special classes, I think there is still time for you to prepare. You should study the types of consciousness and also the 24 modes of causal relation I have talked about.

## The Third Link

### Viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ

We have finished two links in this teaching of dependent origination. Now, we will go to the third link:

*Viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*

Because of consciousness as condition, mind and matter arise.

**What Is Consciousness?** In this link, consciousness (*viññāna*) is the conditioning factor, and mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) are the conditioned factors. You might expect that consciousness in the second link and consciousness here are the same but they are not. In the second link, consciousness refers to just the resultant consciousness, but in this link, consciousness means both resultant and non-resultant consciousness. So consciousness here is wider than in the previous link. In this link, consciousness sometimes means resultant consciousness (*vipāka-viññāna*), sometimes kamma-associated consciousness (*kamma-viññāna*), and sometimes all kinds of consciousness, depending on the situation.

**What Are Mind and Matter?** The conditioned factors in this link are mind and matter (*nāma* and *rūpa*). *Nāma* means mind, which normally includes consciousness (*citta*), mental factors (*cetasika*) and *nibbāna*. But this Dependent Origination is all about the round of rebirth; therefore, *nibbāna* is not included here. And consciousness is already taken as a conditioning factor in this link. So, mind or *nāma* is just 52 mental factors (*cetasika*) such as mental contact, feeling, perception, and so on.

*Rūpa* means all 28 material qualities. The first four are called “primaries” and the other 24 are called “dependent.” In this third link, the mode of relationship is different from that in the second link. In the second link, the relationship is between producer and product. The mental formations (*sankhārās*) are producers and consciousness (*viññāna*) is the product. Here, the relationship is not between producer and product but between those that arise together. Consciousness (*viññāna*) and mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) arise together. According to this link, however, *viññāna* is a condition for *nāma-rūpa* by means of supportive mode. They will arise together but consciousness is said to be the condition for mind and matter. And, since consciousness represents both resultant and non-resultant consciousnesses, this link is applicable to both the moment of relinking as well as later on in life. So, we will have to study in two places. One is at the moment of relinking in the mother’s womb and the other in the later life.

**Four Kinds of Birth:** There are four different kinds of births:

1. Birth in moisture (*sansedaja*) like insects, mosquitoes or something like that.
2. Spontaneous birth (*opapātika*) like that of celestial beings. They don’t have to be in a mother’s womb. They just arise spontaneously.
3. Birth in egg (*andhaja*) like that of birds and fish.
4. Birth in mother’s womb (*jalābuja*) like that of human beings.

To avoid being confused, we confine ourselves to only the human birth.

**What “Birth” Means:** By birth, we mean the conception, not the baby coming out of the mother’s womb. According to



*Abhidhamma*, at the moment of conception of a human being, there arise the resultant consciousness (*viññāna*), a number of mental factors or *cetasika* (*nāma*) and 30 kinds of material qualities (*rūpa*) as a result of *sankhārā* (*kamma* done in the past). These 30 kinds are divided in three groups of ten each. I say “30 kinds,” not 30 pieces of material qualities. These are what arise at the moment of conception. The moment of their appearance is what we call “birth.” Earlier, I have explained what kinds of consciousness (*viññāna*) should be taken here in this link. I will explain it later what mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) should be taken according to the “*viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*” link. Now, just remember that three kinds of phenomena (*viññāna*, *cetasikas* and 30 kinds of *rūpa*) arise at the moment of conception as a result of past *sankhārā* (*kamma*).

These three arise together but consciousness (*viññāna*) is said to be the conditioning factor and the other two are conditioned factors. You can understand it better when we apply the “*paṭṭhāna*” method to this point but I cannot explain it now because it would be too complicated. Just understand that the mental factors (*cetasika*) and physical phenomena (*rūpa*) are conditioned by consciousness (*viññāna*) and they arise together. But, why one is the conditioning and the other conditioned? It is because mental factors (*cetasika*) cannot arise without consciousness (*viññāna*). Consciousness is like the leader.

Among the 30 physical phenomena, there is what is called “heart-base.” Heart base is different from the remaining material properties (*rūpas*) here, because it is related to consciousness (*viññāna*) reciprocally. The two are mutually conditioned. But the remaining material properties (*rūpas*) cannot have reciprocal relationship with consciousness (*viññāna*). So, the relationship between consciousness and heart base is different from that between consciousness and

the other 29 material properties here. It is too complicated to understand.

**Two Kinds of Special Beings:** There are two kinds of special beings: one has only consciousness and mental factors (*nāma*) but no physical body (*rūpa*), and another has only *rūpa* but no *nāma* just like a statue.

For the *nāma*-only beings, the formula must be “because of consciousness as condition, mind arises” (*viññāna-paccayā nāma*), instead of ‘because of consciousness as condition, mind and matter arise’ (*viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*).

How about for the *rūpa*-only beings? In order to be reborn as a *rūpa*-only being, we must practice *samatha* meditation with special method until the attainment of the fifth *jhāna*. As a result of that *jhāna*, we will be reborn there as a *rūpa*-only being. The fifth *jhāna* is taken here as *viññāna* and is a conditioning factor for *rūpa*. In this case, the formula would be “because of consciousness as condition, matter arises” (*viññāna-paccayā rūpa*). In this link, the consciousness (*viññāna*) is more or less the same as mental-formations (*sankhārā*). Strictly speaking, however, *sankhārā* is volition but this kind of *viññāna* is consciousness associated with that volition. So, this *viññāna* is *kamma*-associated consciousness, not resultant.

**One Link of Three Formulas:** This link should be divided into three formulas: Because of consciousness as condition, mind arises (*viññāna-paccayā nāma*) for mind-only beings; because of consciousness as condition, matter arises (*viññāna-paccayā rūpa*) for matter-only beings; and because of consciousness as condition, mind, matter or mind-matter arise (*viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*) for five-aggregate beings. So, what we should really say is: Because of consciousness as a condition, mind, matter, or mind-matter

arises (*viññāna-paccayā nāma, rūpa, nāma-rūpa*).

In *Pāḷi*, however, there is an expression called *eka-sesa* that combines all similar words until only one remains. Although the words are combined, their meanings are embedded in the remaining words. That is why we can see only one formula *viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*, even though the real meaning is “because of *viññāna* as condition, there arises *nāma* or *rūpa* or both *nāma-rūpa*” (*viññāna-paccayā nāma, rūpa, nāma-rūpa*).

**Rūpa Born of Kamma and Mind:** Immediately after the relinking consciousness (*patisandhi*), there arises the same type of consciousness for many times. However, it is called by a different name from this moment on as “*bhavanga*” in *Pāḷi*. *Bhavanga* is translated as the life continuum, the constituent of life or subconsciousness.

It is a little complicated but I will try to make it as simple as possible. The second consciousness in life is “life continuum” which is accompanied by mental factors (*cetasika*) and additional 30 *rūpa*. So, there are all together 60 kamma-born *rūpas* at this moment. This life-continuum itself gives rise to another kind of *rūpa* called mind-born *rūpa* (*cittaja-rūpa*). From then on, our *kamma* and mind keep on producing *rūpa* every moment for the whole life. Now we see how *viññāna* is conditioning *nāma* (mental factors) and *rūpa* (physical phenomena).

That is how the resultant *viññāna* such as the relinking and life-continuum are happening at the earliest moments of life. Later, when wholesome consciousness arises, there arise mental factors and mind-born *rūpa*. So, this link can be applied not only to the relinking moment but also to later moments in life. Moreover, it can be also applied to the resultant consciousness as well as to other types of consciousness. That is why we have to take *viññāna* to mean

here not only resultant consciousness but also kamma-associated consciousness and other types of consciousness.

**Rūpa Born of Temperature and Food:** So far we have gotten two kinds of *rupas*: kamma-born (*kammaja*) and mind-born (*cittaja*). Another kind of *rupa* is temperature-born *rūpa* called “*utuja*” that arises every moment in life starting from the second sub-moment of the relinking consciousness. Every thought-unit is constituted of three sub-moments: arising, lasting and disappearing. A physical phenomenon (*rupa*) always lasts 17 thought-units or 51 sub-moments. At first, our body was a very tiny little thing that cannot even be seen by the naked eye. Later, it grows into a fetus. In due course of time, the fetus starts to get the nutrition from its mother through the umbilical cord. From then on, the nutrition-born matter (*āhāraja*) takes place every moment. In this way, physical phenomena multiply every moment for the whole life until death. The Manual of Abhidhamma says as follows:

“Thus, the continuity of material phenomena produced in four ways: kamma-born starting from the time of first consciousness, mind-born from the time of the second consciousness, temperature-born from the time of the second sub-moment of first consciousness, nutriment-born from the time of the diffusion of nutritive essence - uninterruptedly flows on in the sense sphere till the end of life, like the flame of a lamp or the stream of a river.”

Among the four kinds of matter, the temperature-born and food-born are not directly related to the mind (*viññāna*). However, all kinds of matter (*rūpa*) are regarded to be conditioned by consciousness (*viññāna*) in one way or the other because they can arise and exist only when the body is living. A person is called alive when he has a consciousness. The moment he has no consciousness, he is said to be dead. When the body is dead, there will remain only temperature-

born *rupa* for a while, but no more food-born, mind-born and kamma-born *rupas*. So, consciousness (*viññāna*) is said to be in some ways a condition for all four kinds of matter to arise and exist. Hence, this link says: “Because of consciousness as condition, there arise mind-matter.”

There are questions and answers mentioned in the commentary as follows:

**Question:** How do we know consciousness (*viññāna*) is a condition for mental states (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*)?

**Answer:** According to the Buddha’s teaching, “mental factors have mind as a chief” (*mano-pubbangamā dhammā*). *Abhidhamma* also says that mental factors and some kinds of physical phenomena are followers of consciousness (*citta*). So, depending on these references, we know that *viññāna* is a condition for *nāma* and *rūpa*.

**Question:** How do we know that the relinking consciousness (*patisandhi*) is related to mental states (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*)? This question is raised because nobody can see this exact moment. Even if we got the supernormal power to see beings dying from one existence and being reborn in another, we would not really see the exact moment of death and rebirth.

**Answer:** Only the Buddha can see the exact moment. The commentary said we can know it by inference. When we are happy, for example, our body (*rūpa*) is in one look or shape and when we are unhappy, it is in another look or shape. Sometimes when we are depressed for a long time, we look old in a very short time, hair turns gray, and so on. So, we see for ourselves how mind is conditioning our physical body. From that, we infer that the relinking consciousness must also be a condition for mental states (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*). That is how we know it. That is the answer given by the commentary.

Can a *vipassanā* meditator see the relinking consciousness? No! Nobody except Buddhas can see consciousness individually, I mean, one by one. A yogi may see the whole thought process generally, but not individually. But, if we are really mindful of the present phenomena, then we can see the relationship between consciousness and mental factors. Say, we may happen to be aware of mental contact or feeling or sensation or perception or anger or attachment, something like that. Moreover, when we see thoughts or consciousnesses clearly, we may also see their physical bases (*rūpa*). Thus, as a yogi, you will realize this link from your own experience: Because of consciousness as condition, mind and matter arise (*viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*).

**This Third Link Goes Two Ways:** This link says *viññāna* is the condition for *nāma-rūpa* by means of one-way link. Previously, I mentioned how *Bodhisatva* contemplated on Dependent Origination. He went about Dependent Origination from the beginning to the end and vice versa. When he went backward, he reached this link as consciousness is condition for mind and matter. He contemplated on what is the condition for consciousness (*viññāna*) and found out mind and matter are conditions for consciousness. Then he exclaimed: “Oh! this consciousness turns back” and he did not go beyond that. Actually, consciousness (*viññāna*) and mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) are reciprocally dependent because *viññāna* has to depend on physical sense-bases to arise. For example, seeing consciousness depends on the eye. So, in this case, the formula would be: Because of matter, consciousness arises (*rūpa-paccayā viññāna*). As you know, consciousness (*viññāna*) always arises along with mental factors (*cetasika*) and they support each other. In this case, the formula should be: Because of mental factors as conditions, consciousness arises (*nāma-paccaya viññāna*). So, this formula can go two ways thus: “*viññāna-paccayā*

*nāma-rūpaṃ,*” “*nāma-rūpa-paccayā viññānaṃ.*”

**Let us Recapitulate this Link:** “*Viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ.*” What is *viññāna* here? Resultant consciousness and non-resultant consciousness. And what is *nāma* here? Mental factors (*cetasika*). And what is *rūpa*? All 28 material qualities. And with regard to human beings at relinking moment, the link is *viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*. In the case of mind-only beings, it would be: *viññāna-paccayā nāma*. In the case of body-only beings, *viññāna-paccayā rūpaṃ*. So, this link would be: *viññāna-paccayā nāma, rūpa, nāma-rūpa*.

Can *viññāna* be a condition for temperature-born *rūpa* and nutriment-born *rūpa*? Yes. Then how? Only when there is *viññāna*, can the body be alive and only when the body is alive, can these material properties arise. The temperature-born *rūpas* in our living bodies are different from those in death bodies. These arise and exist together. In that way, we can say that *viññāna* is a condition for all types of material properties, kamma-born, consciousness-born, temperature-born or nutriment-born. And does this link go one way or two ways? Two ways. How do you know it? From the *Bodhisatva*’s contemplation on this Dependent Origination.

## The Fourth Link

### Nāma-rūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanam

We have finished three links, one between ignorance and kamma-formation, one between kamma-formation and consciousness, and one between consciousness and mind and matter. Now we come to the fourth link that is between mind and matter and six sense-bases.

*Nāma-rūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanam*

Because of mind and matter, there arise six sense-bases.

**Still Difficult:** After having done the third link, I thought we had already finished the difficult part, and the next one would be easy. But, when I prepared for the teaching on this link by re-reading the *Paṭicca-samuppāda*, I found that it is still difficult. The subject of Dependent Origination is actually a difficult one, and I want you to pay close attention to the teaching. Even when hearing Venerable *Ananda* say that it was not so difficult, the Buddha said: “Do not say that *Ananda*, do not say that. The Dependent Origination looks deep and it is also really deep.” It is not easy to understand because many minute details are involved. You need some kind of basic knowledge and, if you do not have that background knowledge, it may be difficult for you to understand. However, I will try as much as I can to present it in such a way that you can fairly understand it.

**Pāli Words:** In my talks, I use *Pāli* words to avoid misunderstanding because we cannot have exact English translations for them. The translations we use are just what we think to be closest to the original. But, although they may be close to the original, they do not mean exactly the same thing.



So, it is better to be familiar with the *Pāḷi* words and understand their meaning so that there is no misunderstanding. For those who are not yet familiar with *Pāḷi* words, please be patient and do not be afraid of these *Pāḷi* words. Once you get the taste of *Pāḷi* words and understanding them, you will want to use *Pāḷi* words only.

### **What ‘Nāma’ Means**

This fourth link is between mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) and six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*).

There are three technical *Pāḷi* terms you need to know: *nāma*, *rūpa*, and *āyatana*. *Nāma* means mind or mental phenomena. Mind means mental faculty which depends on the body. It is mind that experiences sense objects; it is mind that thinks, reasons, or judges; it is mind that is attached to, or angry with people and things. And the word *nāma* (mind) is a collective noun. So it is composed of two components, at least in this context, such as consciousness (*citta* or *viññāna*) and mental factors (*cetasika*). And the consciousness means pure awareness of sense-objects. This awareness is always accompanied by or associated with corresponding mental factors (*cetasika*) such as attention, concentration, perception, feeling, mindfulness, understanding, desire, craving, aversion and so on. They arise together, but the consciousness is said to be the leading or key factor among them because only when there is consciousness, can mental factors arise.

The consciousness, by its nature, has no variety. But, depending on wholesome or unwholesome mental factors, it is varied into wholesome or unwholesome. The mental factors, therefore, are those that add color to the consciousness. Consciousness is naturally colorless like the water, and mental factors are like colors. The water become red if you put red color in it, green if you put green color in it, and so on. So, mental factors are those that give color to consciousness

as they always arise together. There are 52 mental factors, which categorize the single consciousness into 89 types. Not all 52 mental factors accompany a consciousness at the same time. In certain cases, certain kinds of mental factors accompany the consciousness.

In this fourth link, *nāma* is just mental factors (*cetasika*).

### **What ‘Rūpa’ Means**

*Rūpa* means matter or physical phenomena. Matter belongs both to animate beings and to inanimate things like trees, houses, mountains, and so on. In general, there are 28 types of matter:

1. Four (4) primary elements (*mahā-bhūta*)
2. Five (5) sensitivities (*pasāda*)
3. Five (5) sense-objects (*gocara*)
4. Genders or sexes (1) (*bhāva*)
5. One (1) heart or specially material phenomena in the heart (*hadaya*)
6. One (1) life-faculty (*jīvitindriya*)
7. One (1) nutrition (*āhāra*)
8. One (1) space (*ākāsa*)
9. Two (2) communications (*viññatti*)
10. Three (3) modes or manners (*vikāra*)
11. Four (4) common characteristics (*lakkhana*)

Since I cannot explain all these things in detail, I will explain only properties relevant to this link.

**Four Primary Elements:** Among them, the first group is of the four primary elements: earth element (*pathavī-dhātū*), water element (*āpo-dhātū*), fire element (*tejo-dhātū*), and air element (*vāyo-dhātū*). The earth element does not

necessarily mean what we call “the earth” but the physical quality that constitutes the earth such as the hardness or softness. The water element means the physical quality that constitutes water such as wetness and cohesiveness. The fire element means heat, cold, or temperature. The air element means pressure. These four primary elements or fundamental elements serve as bases for other material properties.

The other material properties are dependent upon these four primary elements for their arising as well as for their existence. So, they are called “dependent material phenomena” (*upādā-rūpa*).

**Five Sensitivities:** Five sensitivities are eye sensitivity (*cakkhu-pasāda*), ear sensitivity (*sota-pasāda*), nose sensitivity (*ghāna-pasāda*), tongue sensitivity (*jivhā-pasāda*), and body sensitivity (*kāya-pasāda*). Eye sensitivity means sensitive material in the eye where the images reflect on and then helps us to see. Ear sensitivity means sensitive material phenomena in the ear where the sound strikes and then we hear. Nose sensitivity means the sensitive material in the nose. Tongue sensitivity means tongue sensitive material in the tongue, and body sensitivity means body sensitive material in the whole body except the tip of the nails and the outer part of the hairs. So, altogether there are five kinds of sensitive phenomena.

**Heart and Other Phenomena:** Actually it is not what we call “heart,” but it is just blood in the heart. More accurately, it is material phenomena that arise in the blood inside the heart. It is called heart-base since it serves as the base for consciousness.

**Life Faculty:** The next one is life faculty that is the material phenomena arising in the whole body to keep the body alive. If this life faculty dies, our body becomes decomposed.

**Nutrition:** One more material property applicable to this link is nutrition. Without nutrition, the other material properties cannot survive.

So what *rūpa* means here in this link is as follows:

1. Four primary elements (*mahā-bhūta*)
2. Five sensitivities (*pasāda*)
3. Heart (*hadaya*)
4. Life faculty (*jivitindriya*)
5. Nutrition (*āhāra*)

**Nāma Rūpa in This Fourth Link:** In brief, *nāma* in this link are just mental factors (*cetasika*), not consciousness (*citta*), and *rūpa* consists of four primaries, five sensitivities, one heart, one life faculty and one nutrition, not all 28 material properties. Here *nāma* and *rūpa* are the conditioning factors, and six *āyatana* (sense-bases) are the conditioned factors.

**Salāyatana:** Now we come to the six senses (*āyatana*) which literally mean bases, the bases for the consciousness to arise on. The eye or rather the eye sensitivity is the eye base (*cakkhāyatana*) for seeing consciousness (*cakkhu viññāṇa*). Without that, we cannot see anything. Similarly, ear sensitivity is the ear base (*sotāyatana*) for hearing consciousness (*sota viññāṇa*); nose sensitivity is the nose base (*ghanāyatana*) of smelling consciousness (*ghāna viññāṇa*); tongue sensitivity is the tongue base (*jivhāyatana*) for tasting consciousness (*jivhā viññāṇa*); and body sensitivity is the body base (*kāyayatana*) for touching consciousness (*kāya viññāṇa*). So, these are called bases here: eye base, ear base, nose base, tongue base and body base. These five bases are all *rūpa*. However, the sixth base is mind. Mind base (*manāyatana*) is the base for other types of consciousness to arise. Actually, mind base is just consciousness. So, under *nāma*, there come mental factors (*cetasika*), under '*rūpa*' there come physical

phenomena as mentioned earlier, and under six *āyatana*, there are five sensitivities and consciousness. Now, you understand what is *nāma*, what is *rūpa*, and what are the *āyatana* (sense-bases).

**Mental Factors (*Nāma*) to the 6<sup>th</sup> Sense (*Saṭṭhāyatana*)** (for mind-only beings): Now we will see how they are related. The formula “because of mind and matter as conditions, there arise six sense bases” (*nāma-rūpa paccayā saḷāyatanaṃ*) is just a general statement as we do not apply it to every situation. Depending on the situation, we have to understand the formula in a modified form. For example, the mind-only beings have no physical body; so, their mental factors (*cetasika*) cannot be related to the five material sense-bases, but only to the sixth sense-base. In this situation, we cannot say “because of mind and matter as conditions, there arise six sense bases.” Instead, we have to say “because of mental factors (*cetasika*) as condition, there arises the sixth sense-base or mind-base or consciousness (*nāma-paccayā saṭṭhāyatanaṃ*).” So, for each particular situation, we have to modify this formula. Please remember that heart-base (*hadayavatthu*) and mind-base (*manāyatana*) are not the same. Heart base is material while mind-base is consciousness. Consciousness and mental factors arise together but the mental factors support the consciousness in this link.

**Mental Factors Contribute to Consciousness:** I told you that consciousness is the chief of the mental states because if there is no consciousness, there can be no mental factors. But, here it goes the other way round. If mental factors do not arise, consciousness cannot arise either. If there is no attention to the object, if there is no contact with the object, if there is no concentration on the object, then consciousness cannot arise. In this sense the mental factors are said to be the condition for consciousness although they arise together.

Suppose a group of people with one of them as the leader is trying to lift a very heavy object. The leader cannot lift the object by himself. He needs the help of his followers. Only when he gets their support can he accomplish the task. So, although he is the leader, he still needs the assistance from his followers. In the same way, although the consciousness is said to be the leading factor, it still needs the cooperation of its concomitant mental factors. And that is why here mental factors are said to be conditioning factors and the consciousness is said to be conditioned factor.

**Mental Factors (*Nāma*) to Six Sense-bases (*Ṣaḍāyatana*)** (for five-aggregate beings): How about with five-aggregate beings or mind-and-matter beings? As for them, dependent on the mental factors (*cetasika*), there arise all the six sense-bases such as eye-sensitivity, ear-sensitivity, nose-sensitivity, tongue-sensitivity, body-sensitivity and consciousness. That means the mental factors in us are the conditioning factors, and eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and consciousness are conditioned factors.

As mentioned above, dependent on mental factors there arises consciousness, the sixth sense-base. If mind and mental factors do not arise, we would die. When we die, our physical body will decompose. Five sensitivities cannot exist without mind and mental factors. Without the mind, our body becomes useless, like a log of wood or a rock. So, dependent on mental factors, there arise the material phenomena including the five sense-bases. In this case, the formula should be: “Because of mental factors as condition, there arise six sense-bases.” (*Nāma-paccayā ṣaḍāyatana*).

**Physical Phenomena (*Rūpa*) to Six Sense-bases (*Ṣaḍāyatana*) Correspondingly:** As mentioned earlier, *rūpa* relevant to this link are:

1. Four primary elements (*mahā-bhūta*)

2. Five sensitivities (*pasāda*)
3. Heart (*hadaya*)
4. Life faculty (*jivitindriya*)
5. Nutrition (*āhāra*)

**Four Primaries:** Let us first take four primary elements: earth, water, fire and air. Five sense-bases (*āyatana*) cannot arise and exist without the four primary elements. Therefore, the four primaries (*rūpa*) are conditioning factors, and the five sense bases (*āyatana*) are conditioned factors. In this particular case, we modify the statement thus: “Because of *rūpa* as condition, there arise five sense-bases” (*rūpa-paccayā pañc’āyatana*). For elaboration, in the eyeball, there are millions of material particles and many of them are the four primary elements. If there were no eyeball, there can be no eye sensitivity. So, the eyeball is the base for the eye-sensitivity (*cakkhu-pasāda*) which, in turn, serves as a base for seeing consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*). The four elements existing in the eyeball are contributing to the eye sensitivity or, in other word, the four primary elements in the eyeball are conditioning factors and the eye sensitivity is the conditioned factor. The same with ear, nose, tongue and body.

**Five Sensitivities:** Five sensitivities (*pasāda*) cannot be said to contribute to the first five sense-bases (*āyatana*) because both are the same. Both are eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. The five sensitivities (*pasāda*) are said to contribute to mind-base or consciousness (*manāyatana*). So, eye sensitivity contributes to the seeing consciousness; ear sensitivity to the hearing consciousness; and so on.

**Heart:** You already know that heart-base (*hadayavatthu*) is the material phenomena in the blood in our heart. Mind-base is consciousness (*citta*). Heart-base and mind-base are different. Please do not mix up the two. Here the heart-

base contributes to the mind-base that is consciousness like thinking, reasoning, remembering, judging, being angry, feeling happy, and so on. So, dependent on the heart, there arises consciousness.

**Life Faculty:** Life faculty (*rūpa-jīvitindriya*) is a particular kind of material phenomena that keeps our body or our material phenomena alive. When there is life faculty, other material phenomena live. When there is no life faculty, the other material phenomena die. So, it is a condition for the first five sense-bases.

**Nutrition:** Nutrition (*āhāra*) is also essential for material phenomena to live. Nutrition is, therefore, related to five sense-bases, not to the sixth. So, in this particular case, the formula should be modified thus: “Because of the matter (nutrition) as condition, there arise the five sense-bases” (*rūpa (ahāra) paccayā pañcāyatana*).

This is only level one. Let us go back. The formula is “*nāma-rūpa paccayā saḷāyatanaṃ*” or “Dependent on mind and matter, there arise six sense-bases.” At first, this statement seems to be one solid statement. But now you see that it is composed of many small statements depending on the situation. So, let us see how many modified statements are there. Seven statements get involved in just one link as in the chart below:

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Mental factors ( <i>nāma</i> )     | to the 6 <sup>th</sup> sense, ( <i>saṭṭhāyatana</i> )<br>(mind-only beings) |
| 2. Mental factors ( <i>nāma</i> )     | to six senses ( <i>saḷāyatana</i> )   |
| 3. Four elements ( <i>rūpa</i> )      | to five senses ( <i>pañc'āyatana</i> )                                      |
| 4. Five Sensitivities ( <i>rūpa</i> ) | to the 6 <sup>th</sup> sense ( <i>saṭṭhāyatana</i> )                        |
| 5. Heart ( <i>rūpa</i> )              | to the 6 <sup>th</sup> sense ( <i>saṭṭhāyatana</i> )                        |
| 6. Life-faculty ( <i>rūpa</i> )       | to five senses ( <i>pañc'āyatana</i> )                                      |
| 7. Nutrition ( <i>rūpa</i> )          | to five senses ( <i>pañc'āyatana</i> )                                      |



**Taken only by Faith:** Among these statements, there are many factors taken by faith. For example, with regard to mind-only beings, we just have to take it by faith as we have no way to prove it. If we want to understand them, we just try to be one of them. So, we have to leave it on the faith in the Buddha.

But there are some ways in which we can understand some statements. During meditation practice, we will come to be aware of the mental states. When you are angry, you are aware of anger; when you are happy, you are aware of happiness; when you are in pain, you are aware of the feeling. Sometimes you are angry, and the angry mind goes on and on and on. You can realize that the consciousness keeps going on. Thus, you can understand that the mental factor of anger (*nāma*) is conditioning the sixth base which is anger-related consciousness (*saṭṭhāyatana*). And, also, when you are mindful of, say, seeing something, you can note as seeing, seeing, seeing. Then you can understand that seeing arises (*nāma*) because there is the eye-base (*āyatana*). If there is no eye, there can be no seeing. Therefore, the seeing is conditioned by the eye. You, as yogi, can understand some of these statements from your own experience from practice, but others have to be taken by faith.

Many people think that these links are between producer and product, but it is not quite so. The only link between producer and product is between kamma formations (*sankhārā*) and consciousness (*viññāna*). This fourth link is just between supporter and supported. Both the conditioning factors and conditioned factors must exist at the same time for this relationship to occur. When you see something, the eye, the object to be seen, and seeing consciousness must coexist. When consciousness arises, the mental factors also arise and they support each other when they exist. It is not that one produces the other.

This is level one. Level two can be even more complicated. We will do it now. If you understand level one, I think you will also understand level two.

## **Vipassanā or Satipaṭṭhāna**

This talk is very technical; therefore, many newcomers may not understand it. So, today I will talk about *vipassanā* a little before we return to our regular talk.

**Vipassanā and Its Results:** What is *vipassanā*? Another name for *vipassanā* is *satipaṭṭhāna* that literally means setting up mindfulness or establishing mindfulness. When you practice *vipassanā* meditation, you develop mindfulness. You try to be mindful of the object at the present moment. Practicing *vipassanā*, you live at the present moment or you live with the present phenomena. You do not think about the past or future. When you are fully aware of the object at the present moment, your mind becomes purified of mental defilements and you feel peaceful. Mental purification and peacefulness are the immediate results of mindfulness meditation.

**Keep Correct Attitude:** Some of you may want to say “I am practicing *vipassanā* and I am not peaceful; I get confused and cannot concentrate” or something like that. Of course, if you don’t practice with correct attitude, you won’t get peacefulness. Your mind needs to be free from expectations. When you have expectations, your mind is contaminated and it is not free, and then mindfulness cannot establish. In order to establish mindfulness, you have to give up or drive out expectations you may have with regard to meditation.

But then you may want to say: “Bhante, we practice meditation to get benefits and you are telling us not to have expectations.” Take the example of building a pagoda with the help of scaffolding. The question is, when the pagoda is

finished, what will you do with the scaffolding? You break it down, right? You wouldn't say, "Oh, it was useful to us; we might keep it there." Nobody keeps the scaffolding when the construction is done. In the same way, you want or expect benefits from the meditation and so you come to practice. But, once you are in meditation, your goal of coming is accomplished. Expectation, if any, becomes an obstacle just like the scaffolding after construction. So, you have to clear your mind of these expectations. Shadow is another good example. When you follow the shadow, it goes away from you. The moment you go the other way, the shadow follows you. Similarly, if you are desirous of benefits, the benefits will go further and further away from you because you cannot get mindfulness and concentration. Once you don't think about that, just do what you have to do; i.e., just being mindful of the things at the present moment, they will come.

So, when you practice meditation, you need to have a "don't care attitude." Say to yourself:

"I don't care if I don't have results; I don't care if I don't have concentration; I don't care for anything at all. The only thing I care is mindfulness. So long as I am mindful of all the objects at the present moment, I have done my duty; I have done what is to be done and that is all that is to it."

This is the attitude you need to have when you practice meditation. With that attitude, your mind is free and clean for mindfulness to be established in it. The moment mindfulness is established in your mind, as I said before, your mind becomes purified and you become tranquil and peaceful. Tranquility and peacefulness are actually the immediate benefits of mindfulness.

**A Tool to Solve Mental Problems:** Mindfulness is a very powerful tool even in dealing with problems in daily life. Whatever mental state arises in you, you can apply

mindfulness to that state and you can overcome it. For example, you are depressed. So long as you are thinking of depressing things, it will get worse and worse. If you apply mindfulness to depression itself, or in other words, if you make depression the object of mindfulness and note as “depressed, depressed, depressed,” you will see what is really happening to you goes away further and further. So, whatever negative mental state arises in your mind, you can apply mindfulness to it and see it disappear. Your mindfulness should not be superficial but strong and sharp. Mindfulness is, therefore, beneficial not only when you practice meditation but also when you are outside meditation in your daily life. You can apply mindfulness as a tool to solve many of problems in your mind.

**Meditation to Healthy Body:** I hope you believe that mind is able to influence matter. When you are depressed for a long time, you become or look old; your hair becomes gray and so on. And that is how the mind influences material properties in your body. Now, if you practice meditation and have mindfulness and concentration, then your mind is pure, and this pure mind can contribute to your healthy body. Even in illness, some ailments can be healed by the power of mindfulness or by this power of the mind. I think if you practice mindfulness, you will look younger, stay healthier and will have a long life. As long as you have mindfulness, your mind is not contaminated by what are called mental impurities that torment the mind. When there are no mental torments, your mind will become tranquil and peaceful. Such a peaceful mind will support or even produce the good quality material phenomena and, therefore, helps you to be healthy and to live longer.

**Meditation Leads to Realization:** Just by applying mindfulness, you will be able to see for yourself the truth of what the Buddha taught. Buddha taught that conditioned

things or mind and matter are impermanent, unsatisfactory and insubstantial. You may have already learned these characteristics of all phenomena from books or talks. However, it is not really your own understanding. If you practice mindfulness meditation, you will come to see the impermanence, the unsatisfactoriness and the insubstantiality of the objects you are observing clearly in your mind. That is your own understanding and that is very precious. You cannot buy that even if you could pay a million dollars. That understanding or that knowledge is your own and nobody could take that away from you. You gain it just by practicing mindfulness. So mindfulness is a very powerful tool in penetrating into the nature of things and seeing for ourselves what the Buddha taught over 2500 years ago.

**Meditation Leads to Ultimate Happiness:** Through the practice of mindfulness or *vipassanā* meditation, you will make one discovery after another of mind and matter. And this series of discovery will help you to realize what the *Buddhas* and *Arahants* realized long ago. That is the realization of *Nibbāna*. And then when the realization of *Nibbāna* comes, you will be able to get rid of mental defilements altogether. When there are no mental defilements in our minds, we will have ultimate happiness. Because of desires, we are sometimes not happy but have anger, anxiety, jealousy, pride, and so on. When our minds are free from all these mental defilements, we are peaceful and are ultimately happy in the spiritual sense. So, happiness comes from the eradication of impurities in the mind, and that can be achieved through the practice of *vipassanā* or mindfulness meditation. Many, many people in the past have gone along this path and have arrived at their destinations. If we practice meditation with real sincere effort, we will also be able to achieve what they have achieved.

### **Just Practice, the Benefits Will Come Themselves:**

The practice of meditation has many benefits but, as I said in the beginning, do not think of these benefits during practice. You just practice and the benefits will come themselves. If you expect, they will go further and further away from you. During meditation practice, just simply sit and be mindful of the thing at the present moment and let go of everything else. The prominent object at the present moment is the most important thing for yogi. As long as you are mindful of the prominent object at the present moment, then you have done your duty as meditator.

I think that is all with regard to the practice of meditation. So, always remember the word “mindfulness,” mindfulness of the prominent object at the present moment. So long as you have mindfulness, you are doing the right thing. You will be hearing a lot more about *vipassanā* meditation from the Venerable Khippapañño during the upcoming retreat. I need not talk about *vipassanā* anymore. We have to continue our class on Dependent Origination.

We are going to the level two, and this level talk is meant for those who have some knowledge of *Abhidhamma*. If you are already familiar with level one, I think level two will be easy. We have been studying the link “*nāma-rūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanam*” and have learned something about this link. Now, we will go into more details.

**Three Terms in This Link:** Let us refresh our memory. There are three terms in this link: *nāma*, *rūpa* and *āyatana*. What is *nāma* here? Generally, *nāma* means consciousness and mental factors, but here it means mental factors only. There are many kinds of *rūpa* but here we need only some of them. What are those? Four primaries, five sensitivities, one heart, one life faculty, and one nutrition. They will be related to the six sense-bases, which are eye-base, ear-base, nose-base, tongue-base, body-base, and mind-base. If you remember this, you understand this topic in details.

1. Mental factors (*nāma*) to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense (*saṭṭhāyatana*)  
(mind-only beings)
2. Mental factors (*nāma*) to six senses (*saḷāyatana*)
3. Four Primaries (*rūpa*) to five senses (*pañc'āyatana*)
4. Five Sensitivities (*rūpa*) to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense (*saṭṭhāyatana*)
5. Heart (*rūpa*) to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense (*saṭṭhāyatana*)
6. Life-faculty (*rūpa*) to five senses (*pañc'āyatana*)
7. Nutrition (*rūpa*) to five senses (*pañc'āyatana*)

In the *Abhidhamma*, different kinds of causal relations are taught, and there are altogether 24 such relations:

1. Root Condition *hetu-paccayo*
2. Object Condition *ārammana-paccayo*
3. Predominance Condition *adhipati-paccayo*
  - a. Object Predominance *ārammanādhipati*
  - b. Conscience Predominance *sahajātādhipati*
4. Proximity Condition *anantara-paccayo*
5. Contiguity Condition *samanantara-paccayo*
6. Conscience Condition *saha-jāta-paccayo*
7. Mutuality Condition *aññamañña-paccayo*
8. Support Condition *nissaya-paccayo*
  - a. Conscience Support *sahajāta-nissaya*
  - b. Presence Support *purejāta-nissaya*
  - c. Base-prenascence Support *vatthu-purejāta*
  - d. Base-object-prenascence Support *ārammana-purejāta*
9. Decisive Support Condition *upanissaya-paccayo*
  - a. Object Decisive Support *ārammanūpanissaya*
  - b. Proximity Decisive Support *anantarūpanissaya*
  - c. Natural Decisive Support *pakatūpanissaya*

10. Prenascence Condition	<i>purejāta-paccayo</i>
a. Base Prenascence	<i>vatthu-purejāta</i>
b. Object Prenascence	<i>ārammana-purejāta</i>
11. Postnascence Condition	<i>pacchājata-paccayo</i>
12. Repetition Condition	<i>āsevana-paccayo</i>
13. Kamma Condition	<i>kamma-paccayo</i>
14. Result Condition	<i>vipāka-paccayo</i>
15. Nutriment Condition	<i>āhāra-paccayo</i>
a. Material Nutriment	<i>kabalikār'āhāra</i>
b. Mental Nutriment	<i>manosañcetan'āhāra</i>
16. Faculty Condition	<i>indriya-paccayo</i>
a. Prenascence Faculty	<i>purejātindriya</i>
b. Material Life Faculty	<i>rūpajīvitindriya</i>
c. Conascence Faculty	<i>sahajātindriya</i>
17. Jhāna Faculty	<i>jhāna-paccayo</i>
18. Path Condition	<i>magga-paccayo</i>
19. Association Condition	<i>sampayutta-paccayo</i>
20. Disassociation Condition	<i>vippayutta-paccayo</i>
a. Conascence Dissociation	<i>sahajāta-vippayutta</i>
b. Prenascence Dissociation	<i>purejāta-vippayutta</i>
c. Postnascence Dissociation	<i>pacchājāta-vippayutta</i>
21. Presence Condition	<i>atthi-paccayo</i>
a. Conascence Presence	<i>sahajātatthi</i>
b. Prenascence Presence	<i>purejātatthi</i>
c. Postnascence Presence	<i>pacchājātatthi</i>
d. Nutriment Presence	<i>āhāratthi</i>
e. Faculty Presence	<i>indriyatthi</i>
22. Absence Condition	<i>natthi-paccayo</i>



23. Disappearance Condition      *vigata-paccayo*

24. Non-disappearance Condition      *avigata-paccayo*

For example, in this fourth link, suppose mental formations (*sankhārā*) are for mind-only beings. They are, therefore, related to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense-base (*saṭṭhāyatana*) only. The sixth sense-base here is mind-base or consciousness (*citta*). This relation has to be explained with reference to the causal relation taught in *Paṭṭhāna*.

According to *Paṭṭhāna*, sometimes mental formations are related in seven ways of relation, sometimes six, sometimes five, and so on, with sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*). Mental factors (*cetasikas*) here have to be divided into some groups. The first one is *arūpa* realm. *Arūpa* realm means the realm where there are mind-only beings.

Among the 24 causal relations, there is the resultant relation called “*vipāka-paccayo*.” With reference to that, I will explain the sixth sense-base (*mānayatana*) or consciousness (*citta*) divided into two kinds. Resultant consciousness and non-resultant consciousness. Resultant consciousness means consciousness that are the result of past *kamma*, and non-resultant consciousness means all the remaining consciousnesses that are not the result of past *kamma*.

Now again, we can classify consciousness into four categories:

1. Unwholesome consciousness (*akusala-citta*)
2. Wholesome consciousness (*kusala-citta*)
3. Resultant consciousness (*vipāka-citta*)
4. Functional consciousness (*kiriya-citta*)

Unwholesome *nāma* are attachment, anger, and so on. Wholesome *nāma* includes mindfulness, concentration, loving kindness, etc. Resultant *nāma* involves those that

are the result of past kamma, such as seeing consciousness, hearing consciousness, and so on. And the last one is called functional which means they just arise and disappear without leaving any potentials for results. The unwholesome *nāma* and wholesome *nāma* give results. Resultant *nāma* themselves are results. Functional *nāma* is actually identical with wholesome *nāma* except that they do not give results. So, the resultant *nāma* is resultant, the other three are non-resultant *nāma*.

The relationship between *kamma* and resultant *nāma* at the moment of relinking (*patibandhi*) is different from their relationship during lifetime (*pavatti*). Therefore, they have to be differentiated. Relinking refers to the first moment in life. It is the very brief, very short moment called relinking moment. It does not even last one second. The period after the moment of relinking until death is called *pavatti* or “lifetime.” The lifetime means the whole life after the single moment of relinking mind until the last moment in life. Therefore, we have these two kinds of periods: relinking and lifetime.

### **1. Nāma to Six Senses:**

**a. Nāma to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense for mind-only beings:** For beings in *arūpa* realms, they have only mind. That means only consciousness and mental factors and no physical body. And these beings are reborn in that realm as a result of the certain kinds of concentration absorption (*jhāna*) from tranquility meditation (*samatha*) they practiced in human life.

When they were human beings, they saw this physical body as sufferings and thought that if there was no physical body, they would not suffer pain, diseases, and so on. Therefore, with the intention to get rid of the physical body, they practiced tranquility meditation until they got a certain kind of *jhāna*. *Jhāna* means a deep concentration, a

higher state of mind. As a result of that very powerful *jhānic* concentration, when they die they are reborn in the realm of beings who have only mind and no physical body according to their wish.

At the relinking moment of their rebirth, there arose the resultant consciousness (*citta*) and its mental factors (*nāma*). Among these two, the resultant mental factors are contributing to the resultant consciousness that is what we call the 6<sup>th</sup> sense-base (*saṭṭhāyatana*). They arise together and they support each other. That is the way they are related, which you have to understand first. Then, in how many ways they are related? That is for the level three.

At the moment of the relinking, there is resultant *nāma* only. However, during lifetime, we have both resultant and non-resultant *nāma*. The resultant *nāma* at the relinking moment is different from the resultant *nāma* and non-resultant *nāma* during the lifetime in terms of their mode of relationship. In addition, during the lifetime after the relinking, these kinds of resultant mental factors arise again and again, billions and billions of time, along with the resultant consciousness. However, the consciousnesses and their corresponding mental factors arising during the lifetime are not only resultant but also non-resultant such as wholesome, unwholesome, and functional. Regardless of resultant or non-resultant, the mental factors (*nāma*) are contributing to their corresponding consciousnesses, the 6<sup>th</sup> sense-base.

**b. Nāma to sixth sense for Five-aggregate Beings:**  
The next one is five-aggregate beings. The human beings as well as the celestial beings such as *devas* and certain kinds of *brahmas* are composed of five aggregates. In their realms, there are three kinds of relationships regarding *nāma* contributing to senses including *nāma* to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense and *nāma* to five senses. Now, let us talk about human beings.

**Nāma to the 6<sup>th</sup> Sense at Conception:** At the moment of conception, there arise the resultant relinking consciousness, its mental factors that we call here as *nāma*, and 30 kinds of material properties. So, at the relinking moment, the resultant mental factors (*nāma*) are contributing to the relinking consciousness, the 6<sup>th</sup> sense.

**Nāma to the 6<sup>th</sup> Sense During Lifetime:** One of the 30 material properties that arise together with the resultant *nāma* is heart-base (*hadayavatthu*). But, here in this 4<sup>th</sup> link, we leave out heart base simply because we are talking about *nāma* contributing to six senses or six *āyatanas* (*saḷāyatana*). During the lifetime too, the resultant mental factors (*nāma*) arise along with their resultant corresponding consciousnesses (the 6<sup>th</sup> sense). So, *nāma* contributes to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense. The resultant mental factors are in nature so peaceful and so inactive that we cannot even be aware of them. But non-resultant mental factors (*nāma*) are active and obvious enough for us to be aware of them. Sometimes we are angry, sometimes we crave something or someone, sometimes we have concentration, sometimes we are happy. We can be aware of them during lifetime. So non-resultant mental factors (*nāma*) arise along with their corresponding non-resultant consciousnesses (the 6<sup>th</sup> sense), and they are related to each other.

Regarding mindfulness meditation, what is mindfulness (*sati*)? Is it *rūpa* or *nāma*? *Nāma*. Resultant *nāma* or non-resultant *nāma*? Of course, non-resultant *nāma*. The mindfulness arises along with consciousness since mindfulness cannot arise by itself but must arise together with consciousness. So, if you try to be mindful of this or that, then mindfulness along with its corresponding consciousness will become obvious to you. That consciousness is resultant or non-resultant? Non-resultant. Wholesome or unwholesome? Wholesome. According to this link, mindfulness (*nāma*) is

a condition for the consciousness (the 6<sup>th</sup> sense). Here the link is between *nāma* to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense: “Dependent on mental factors, there arises the consciousness (the 6<sup>th</sup> sense)” (*nāma-paccayā chaṭṭh’āyatana*). So, through the actual practice, you can see the link between mental factors (*nāma*) and consciousness or the 6<sup>th</sup> sense (*āyatana*).

What is anger (*dosa*)? *Nāma* or *rūpa*? *Nāma*. Consciousness or mental factor? Mental factor. And along with anger what arises? Consciousness. It is an anger-rooted consciousness (*dosa-mūla-citta*). So, when you are angry, there is anger and consciousness. Then anger (*nāma*) here contributes to the consciousness (the 6<sup>th</sup> sense). You can see this link when you are angry.

Similarly, you can see this link with whatever merit you do. *Nāma* contributes to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense although the formula generally says, “Dependent on *nāma* and *rūpa*, there arise six senses (*āyatana*)” (*nāma-rūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanam*). So, if you know how to see this link, you will see it in your daily life, too.

**c. Nāma to Five Senses** (for Five-aggregate Beings): Let us go to the next one: *nāma* contributes to five senses (*āyatana*). *Nāma* means mental factors and five *āyatanas* means five senses such as eye-base, ear-base, nose-base, tongue-base, and body-base.

At the relinking moment, for the five-aggregate beings, the resultant mental factors (*nāma*) contribute to five senses. Here, however, we cannot take human beings because they don’t have all five senses yet at the moment of their conception. All they have at that moment is very minute formation of 30 material properties, consciousness and its mental factors. They do not yet have eye, ear and so on, which will arise maybe after seven to eleven weeks. So, here we will take another kind of five-aggregate beings.

You know “*deva*”, gods and goddesses, right? When they are born, they are born full grown, not like human beings. If you are to be reborn as a *deva*, you don’t have to stay in your mother’s womb. You just appear there as a grown-up about sixteen years of age. So, when you are reborn as a *deva*, you already have these five bases even at the moment of conception.

At the moment of the relinking as a *deva*, there is resultant consciousness, its mental factors and about 17 material properties including six sense-bases such as eye base, ear base, nose base, tongue base, body base and also heart base. There, the resultant mental factors (*nāma*) contribute to those five senses.

At the moment of relinking as a human being, how many material properties arise? Do you remember? Thirty, right? Among 30, there is body base (the 5<sup>th</sup> sense), but no eye base, ear base, nose base, tongue base. At this moment, their resultant mental factors (*nāma*) contribute to the 5<sup>th</sup> *āyatana*. That is what is happening to human beings at conception.

And then, during lifetime, the resultant *nāma* arises again and again contributing to the five bases (*āyatana*) and so do non-resultant *nāma*. These *nāma* can be wholesome or unwholesome mental factors.

During lifetime as human beings, resultant mental factors (*nāma*) arise repeatedly and so do all material phenomena. Every moment, resultant mental factors (*nāma*) arise, they contribute to the five bases. That means only when there are mental factors (*nāma*), are we alive. If there is no *nāma*, we die and, when we die, these five bases also die. So, the resultant *nāma* is said to be a condition for the existence of the five bases. Resultant *nāma* do not produce the five bases but support them. By way of support, the resultant *nāma* is a condition for five bases during lifetime in human beings.

Similarly, during lifetime, non-resultant *nāma* arises again and again contributing to the existing five senses according to this link of *nāma* to five senses.

We have finished *nāma* to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense (*man'āyatana*) and *nāma* to five senses (*pañc'āyatana*).

## **2. Rūpa to Six Senses (For Five-aggregate Beings):**

Regarding *rūpa* to six senses (*āyatana*), I have already explained from the five aspects which illustrate the conditional relationship between the components of *rūpa* and the senses such as:

1. Four Primaries (*rūpa*) to five senses (*pañc'āyatana*)
2. Five Sensitivities (*rūpa*) to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense (*saṭṭhāyatana*)
3. Heart (*rūpa*) to the 6<sup>th</sup> sense (*saṭṭhāyatana*)
4. Life-faculty (*rūpa*) to five senses (*pañc'āyatana*)
5. Nutrition (*rūpa*) to five senses (*pañc'āyatana*)

## The Fifth Link

### Salāyatana-paccayā Phasso

The next link is between six senses (*salāyatana*) and mental contact (*phassa*). In the previous link, *salāyatana* means six internal senses: eye-base (*cakkhāyatana*), ear-base (*sotāyatana*), nose-base (*ghanāyatana*), tongue-base (*jivhāyatana*), body-base (*kāyayatana*) and mind-base (*manāyatana*). But here there are two opinions. Some teachers say that, since the Dependent Origination has to do with living beings, only six internal bases are to be taken as six bases. However, other teachers say the result or the conditioned phenomena belong to living beings are internal, but the conditioning phenomena can be also external. So, in their opinion, we have to include six external bases, too. They are visible object, sound, smell, taste, touch and dhammas. Thus, six bases (*salāyatana*) mean six internal and six external bases. Therefore, all 12 bases will be dealt with in this link.

#### *Salāyatana-paccayā phasso*

Because of six bases as conditions, there arises the mental contact.

**Instances of Phassa:** We should understand what mental contact (*phassa*) is. It is a distinct mental factor (*cetasika*) and is one of the seven mental states (*cetasikas*) that arise with all types of consciousness (*citta*).

The *Pāli* word “*phassa*” literally means touching and its characteristic is touching. Here touching does not mean physical touch. Actually it is not real touch, but it arises as if it were touches. In the books, the instances are given of



*phassa*, which arises in the mode of touching. For example, you see something striking and are affected by that. That is the result of this mental contact (*phassa*). Seeing someone eating a sour fruit, your mouth would water. That is the effect of *phassa*. When you see someone or some animal being tortured and, if you are a compassionate person, then you will be moved by that, or sometimes you may even shake. That is also the effect of *phassa*. Another instance is the trembling of the knees in a timid man standing on the ground watching a man precariously balancing on a high tree branch. That is also the effect of *phassa*. You may have been to a circus and saw someone walking on the tightrope or some acrobats performing on the trapeze and have some feeling in your heart, right? That is the effect of *phassa*. The next instance is the loss of power of the legs in one who sees something terrifying such as a goblin. Sometimes seeing a ghost or scary thing makes people lose power to move or paralyzed. That is caused by *phassa*. Once, I was living in a religious sanctuary for monks and nuns in Sagaing near Mandalay of Upper Burma. This area is like a forest where leopards live. At night, they would come down to drink water in the river. When dogs got the scent of the leopard, they could not move and just became easy prey for the leopard. That is *phassa*. You can add many more instances of *phassa* from your own experience.

**Phassa Explained by Mahasi Sayadaw:** Mahasi Sayadaw explained the difference between consciousness (*citta*) and mental contact (*phassa*). To see something, for example, there are the eye, the visible object coming into the avenue of the eye, and then the awareness of that object. That mere awareness is consciousness. After the awareness, you experience the object vividly. That vivid experience of the object according to Sayadaw is mental contact (*phassa*). So, whenever you come across any object, there is this kind of vivid

experience, not just awareness. When there is consciousness or bare awareness of the object, mental contact (*phassa*) comes up and brings them closer together or something like that, and we have a vivid experience of that object. That is the function of the *phassa*. During meditation, if you pay close attention and, if your concentration gets stronger, you can see *phassa*. When you are mindful of something, then you see it clearly; you will know it clearly. That clear or vivid experience of the object is what is called *phassa*. There is pain in the body and you are aware of the pain, and that pain becomes very vivid and that is *phassa*. Sometimes yogis in concentration are startled by a very soft noise, a noise of a house lizard or a very faint noise. That is the effect of *phassa* on them. Their faculties become so keen that they are able to detect very subtle objects. Even such a subtle noise appears to them as a big noise, and so they are startled. Many yogis have experienced that kind of *phassa*.

**Characteristics of Phassa:** When mental contact (*phassa*) is strong, it can give rise to strong feeling that leads to wholesome or unwholesome mental states (*kusala* or *akusala cetasikas*). You see something which you like very much and then you would crave it. And through that craving, you may do something wrong such as robbing or killing. So, a lot of unwholesome (*akusala*) can arise out of this mental contact (*phassa*). On the good side, you look at the Buddha's statue and see it vividly and have wholesome (*kusala*) thoughts or you may see a monk who would accept your offerings and you offer to him. So, *phassa* can lead to wholesome or unwholesome. That is the characteristics of *phassa*.

**Function of Phassa:** Mental contact (*phassa*) has the function of striking a sense object. That means it engages consciousness and sense-objects together. Their meeting or something that comes out of meeting is what you call

“*phassa*.” Let us see what function the *phassa* does. For example, the seeing constitutes three factors such as the eye, visible object, and the consciousness. The *phassa* arises bringing these three factors together.

On the other hand, *phassa* is something that comes out of the meeting of these three factors. Maybe it is like, say, you put three balls together and the noise is produced because the balls meet. So, *phassa* is not just bringing things together (*kipca-rasa*) but a particular mental factor that arises as a result of these three coming together (*sampatti-rasa*). Sometimes the term “*rasa*”, which is translated as “function”, means a kind of result coming out of the function. If you take the word *rasa* in that sense, then the function of *phassa* is actually the result of the coming together of the three: sense-base, sense-object and consciousness.

**Manifestation of Phassa:** Mental contact (*phassa*) manifests to a yogi as something that comes out of the concurrence of the three factors i.e. a combination of eye-base, visible object and eye-consciousness.

**Approximate Cause of Phassa:** Its approximate cause is a sense-object that comes into one’s attention. That means, when an object comes into one’s attention, mental contact (*phassa*) always arises, and nothing can prevent it from arising. So, the object that comes into one’s attention is said to be its proximate cause.

*Phassa* could be compared to a cow that has no hide or skin. If you take the skin off the cow, it would become the object of many insect bites. The *Pāli* text “*samyutta*” (kindred sayings) mentions this case as a cow with a sore hide instead of cow without hide. However, I use the phrase “without hide” in the bracket because that is what really means in *Pāli*. A cow without hide should stand leaning against the wall because it is too weak. Whichever it leans against, the insects

in that place would bite hard. It has no chance of getting free from being bitten by the insects, even in the water or up in the air. In the same way, when there is mental contact (*phassa*), there will always be feeling (*vedanā*). We cannot stop or avoid feeling when there is mental contact. So, mental contact is a dwelling place for feeling like a cow without a hide is a place for insects.

**Six Kinds of Phassa:** Mental contact (*phassa*) is of six kinds: mental contact associated with seeing consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*), with hearing consciousness (*sota-viññāṇa*), with smelling consciousness (*ghāna-viññāṇa*), with tasting consciousness (*jivhā-viññāṇa*), with body consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*), and with the rest kinds of consciousness. Now let us see how mental contact is conditioned by senses (*āyatana*).

**Process of Seeing:** Let's see what happens when we see something or someone. First, we have a flow of subconsciousness called *bhavanga* which arises through our life. But it is often interrupted by six sense-related consciousnesses such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching consciousness, and several other kinds of thought. When a visible object comes into the avenue of the eye or, as we call it, when the object strikes the eye, it strikes the *bhavanga*, too. *Bhavanga* becomes shaky (*bhavanga-calana*) for two moments and stops (*bhavang'upaccheda*). Then it is replaced by a certain kind of mind-unit turning attention towards the sense-object called five-sense-door adverting consciousness (*pañca-dvār'āvajjana*). After that, there arises the seeing consciousness (*cakku-viññāṇa*), which is followed by the mind-unit receiving the sense-object (*sampaṭiccana*) and the mind-unit investigating the object (*santīrana*). After that, there arises the mind-unit called (*voṭṭhabbana*) which judges the sense-object whether it is good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, and so on. And then the mind-unit takes place

seven times at most, fully experiencing the sense-object (*javana*). Finally, there arises the mind-unit registering the sense-object (*tadārammana*).

**Phassa Is Conditioned by Three Factors:** When we see a visible object, there arises the eye-consciousness along with mental contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*) and other mental factors. They take place together on the eye-sensitivity (eye-base). We have the visible object or rūpa-base (*rūp'āyatana*), the seeing consciousness or mind-base (*man'āyatana*), and eye sensitivity or eye-base (*cakkh'āyatana*). These three sense-bases are conditions for the mental contact (*phassa*). When we hear a sound or sound-base (*sadd'āyatana*), there arises ear-consciousness (*mind-base*) along with mental contact, feeling and other mental factors on ear-sensitivity (ear-base). Here, mental contact (*phassa*) is conditioned by three sense-bases: sound, ear-consciousness and ear-base. When we get a smell (smell-base), there arise smelling consciousness (mind-base) along with mental contact, feeling and other mental factors on the nose sensitivity (nose-base). Here mental contact (*phassa*) is conditioned by smell, smelling consciousness and nose sensitivity. When the object is the taste then mental contact (*phassa*) is conditioned by the taste, tasting consciousness and tongue sensitivity. And, if it is a touch, then mental contact (*phassa*) is conditioned by tangible objects, body consciousness, and body sensitivity.

**Sight-related Phassa:** Now, let us apply this to real experience. You see something because of eyes, visual object and seeing consciousness. When these three come together, there arises the mental contact or *phassa*. So, *phassa* is conditioned by these three. And you hear something like a noise because there are the ear, sound to hear, and hearing consciousness. When these three come together, *phassa* also arises in terms of vivid experience of the sound. When a yogi is mindful of seeing, he or she can be aware of this

mental contact (*phassa*). He or she can understand this by noting as “seeing, seeing.” And he or she will also know that consciousness arises simply because there is the eye and there is something to be seen. In other words, it arises because there are suitable conditions for it to arise at that moment. So, yogi sees that things happen depending upon some other things and they are not created by any Brahma or any God at all. Nothing is causeless. This is how the yogi comes to see when he observes what is prominent at the present moment.

**Sound-related Phassa:** With sound it is even clearer because sound arises and disappears very vividly. When a yogi pays attention to what he or she hears making notes as “hearing, hearing, hearing,” he or she knows that there is hearing because there is the ear and there is the sound. Only when the sound reaches the ear can there be hearing. And that hearing is the awareness of the sound. These three, such as the ear, the sound and the awareness, cause the vivid experience of the sound. And this is *phassa*. He or she also knows that hearing is not created by anybody, but just arises as a result of the conditions coming together.

**Smell-related Phassa:** When you smell something, you know that the smell and the nose come together and there arises the awareness of the smell. This smelling consciousness arises because there is the nose and there is the smell. And because of these three coming together, there is the vivid experience of smell (*phassa*). Sometimes, you feel a great deal about the smell, like a kind of perfume you like. Just by being mindful of what you smell, you will come to see that phenomena related to smell just arise and disappear depending upon their respective conditions.

**Taste-related Phassa:** When you taste, you know that the tasting consciousness arises because there are the tongue or tongue sensitivity and the taste. Along with these three,

there arises the vivid experience of the taste which is *phassa*. And you also know that the tasting consciousness and also *phassa* arise depending on conditions, not created by anyone. They arise and disappear under certain conditions, and there is no controlling over their arising and disappearing. So, you can realize the truth when you are mindful of the taste at present.

**Body-related Phassa:** Body-related *phassa* involves the tangible objects which are constituted of the earth element, fire element, and wind element. These three primary elements together are called tangible objects. The tangible objects are much wider in range than other objects because the body sensitivity is everywhere in our body. Except at the tip of the nails or the upper part of the hair, in most parts of the body, there is body sensitivity. We can feel the tangible or experience touch sensation anywhere in our body. For example, our bodies are touching the cushion when we are sitting, our legs and hands are touching something, our eye lids are touching the eye-balls and so on. If we are mindful of the touching or mindfully noting as “touching, touching, touching,” we will see that there is touching sensation because there are body sensitivity and the tangible objects. Because there is the tangible object, there is the touch sensation or touching consciousness. Along with these three, there arises the vivid experience of touch which is *phassa*. So, *phassa* arises depending on these three corresponding conditions, not created by anyone.

**Phassa Related to Other Factors:** In case of seeing, after seeing consciousness, there arises the receiving consciousness (the mind-unit that receives the sense-object), which is mind-base (*man'āyatana*). And, together with the receiving consciousness, there arise mental contact (*phassa*), feelings (*vedanā*), and other mental factors. The receiving consciousness depends on the heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*).

So, *phassa* concomitant with this receiving consciousness is conditioned by heart-base, visible object-base (*rūp'āyatana*), and mind-base (*man'āyatana*).

The same with the next mind-unit called investigating consciousness "*santīrana*" (the mind-unit that investigates the sense-object). With that consciousness, there arise mental contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), and other mental factors. *Phassa* concomitant with investigating consciousness is also conditioned by rupa-base (visible object-base), mind-base, and heart-base.

After investigating consciousness (*santīrana*), there come *voṭṭhabbana* and *javana*. These two are not taken here because they are not resultant consciousness.

*Tadārammana*, the mind-unit that registers the sense-object "after-taste," involves the resultant consciousness. *Phassa* concomitant with *tadārammana* is also conditioned by visible object-base, mind-base, and heart-base.

So, in this link, *phassa* means mental contact concomitant with resultant consciousness, and bases mean 12 bases, six internal and six external bases.

Can you see this link during the practice? You yourself can see this link during meditation as how six internal sense-bases and six external sense-bases contribute to the mental contact (*phassa*). For example, you hear a noise then you become aware of it and experience it. That means you are seeing this link between the sound and the mental contact (*phassa*) here. Or, suppose you remember past experiences vividly. In this case, you are not actually seeing the present object but are thinking (mind-base) of the past object, which is the mental object called the dhamma-base (*dhamm'āyatana*) that comes to your mind. Then, the mental contact (*phassa*) is obvious and conditioned by the dhamma-base (the mental object) and mind-base (the thinking).



**Mind-base (*man'āyatana*):** Regarding the mind-base, the *bhavanga* (subconsciousness) is also called mind-base because active kinds of consciousnesses arise as if they come out of the *bhavanga*. As I have explained previously, *bhavanga* is flowing continuously in life except times when the flow is interrupted by active kinds of consciousnesses or thoughts. So, full consciousness or thoughts arise as if they just come out of *bhavanga*. For this reason, the consciousnesses are said to be conditioned by this *bhavanga* called mind-base.

Furthermore, two kinds of full consciousnesses are also taken as a mind-base namely five-sense-door-adverting consciousness (*pañca-dvārāvajjana*) and mind-door-adverting (*mano-dvārāvajjana*). They are the mind-units that turn our attention towards a sense-object to examine it. They can be described as preliminary thinking as either one of them always arises prior to the real thinking. That preliminary thinking is also called mind-base because from that kind of preliminary thinking, arises the real thinking. Though we cannot see *bhavanga*, we can see these two mind-units preceding our thoughts. Sometimes you want to think of something and then you think of it. During meditation, we can find such preliminary thoughts very often. So, you can see that mental contact (*phassa*) arises with the real thinking conditioned by that preliminary thought as a mind-base.

This is the link between 12 bases (*āyatana*) including six external bases and six internal bases and mental contact (*phassa*). Though this link can be seen in meditation, please do not deliberately try to see the link during practice. Otherwise, you will become agitated and this is a kind of distraction. Realization must come by itself. Just by paying attention to the prominent object at the present moment, the truth will be revealed to you.

## Sixth Link

# Phassa-paccayā Vedanā

When there arises *phassa*, there arises *vedanā*. Mental contact (*phassa*) and feeling (*vedanā*) always arise simultaneously. For example, when you step on a thorn, the thorn gets into your flesh and you have pain there. The pain arises as soon as the thorn gets into your flesh, not before or not after. In the same way, when you experience an object clearly, the feeling arises along with the mental contact. So, this sixth link says:

*Phassa-paccayā vedanā*

Because of mental contact as condition, feeling arises.

**What “Vedanā” Really Means:** *Vedanā* is translated as feeling, and I don’t know whether this is an adequate translation because *vedanā* means the experience of the object, pleasant or unpleasant. When the object is pleasant, there is enjoyment; and when the object is unpleasant, there is suffering. That enjoyment or suffering is what we called *vedanā*. So, it may not be just feeling. Actually, it is all about experience of the object. If we call *phassa* a vivid experience, then we should call *vedanā* a thorough experience of the sense-object. And, although there are other mental factors that experience the sense-object, it is *vedanā* which thoroughly experiences the object. That is why only this particular mental factor is called *vedanā* translated as feeling, or whatever English word we choose to translate it.

To understand it, there is an analogy of the Royal Cook and the King. The Royal Cook prepares delicious food for the King. And, when he lays all the dishes on the table, he has to

taste all of them in front of the King to prove that there are no harmful things like poison in the food. He tastes every dish at every meal but it is the King who really enjoys the taste of the food to the fullest. In the same way, *vedanā* experiences a sense-object fully, whether pleasant or unpleasant. That is why it alone is called *vedanā*. Corresponding to the six kinds of mental contacts (*phassa*), there are six kinds of feelings (*vedanā*). From now on, I will use the word “feeling” in my talks for *vedanā*, but please remember what it really means.

**Eye-related Feeling:** There are six kinds of feelings corresponding to the six kinds of mental contact. When we see something, there is the seeing consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*) and, along with it, there arise mental contact (*phassa*) and feeling (*vedanā*). Ordinarily, in the case of a desirable object, the feeling would be pleasant. When we see something unpleasant or something neutral, there is the unpleasant feeling or neutral feeling, respectively. So, depending upon the quality of the object, there arises pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling or neutral feeling. They arise because there is mental contact or the vivid experience of the object. If the mental contact is weak, then the feeling is weak or no feeling at all. If the mental contact is strong, then feeling is also strong. The feeling that arises through eye contact, pleasant or unpleasant, is called feeling born of eye contact (*cakkhu-samphassajā*). The same is true with the remaining senses.

**How Pleasant Feeling Associated With Senses:** I said that when we see something, our feeling can be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. But if you know *Abhidhamma*, you may want to ask me why I said so, because, based on *Abhidhamma*, sense-related consciousnesses such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting are accompanied by neutral feeling only. Strictly following *Abhidhamma*, at the moment of seeing, hearing, smelling and tasting, there is only neutral

feeling. But nobody except the Buddha can see each moment of consciousness individually. The most minute experience for a being may be an individual thought process that includes many moments of consciousnesses. The reason, as you know, is mind works very, very fast, and our understanding is not keen enough to check each and every moment of consciousness individually. So, when we take, say, two or three thought processes as a whole, we may know the individual mind-units involved such as investigating consciousness, *javana* consciousness and registering consciousness, which can be either pleasant or neutral. In this sense, we can say that, at the moment of seeing, there can be pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling, and neutral feeling.

The other explanation is given in the commentary on *Visudhi-magga*. Although the feeling that arises with sense-related consciousness is always neutral in an ultimate sense according to *Abhidhamma*, it is the result of past *kamma*. Seeing something undesirable is a result of unwholesome (*akusala*) *kamma* and is regarded as unpleasant or suffering. On the other hand, seeing something desirable is the result of wholesome (*kusala*) *kamma*, and it is regarded as pleasant or to have the pleasant flavor. In this sense, the feeling at the moment of seeing can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

**Neutral Feeling:** You can see these feelings clearly when you practice mindfulness meditation by paying attention to what is prominent at the present moment. Among these feelings, however, neutral feeling is the most difficult to perceive, as it is too subtle to notice. Sometimes it may become obvious to us in comparison with the preceding and succeeding feelings of the other two kinds. Suppose, first we may experience unpleasant feeling and then pleasant feeling; therefore, in between, there is the neutral feeling known to us by inference. So, the neutral feeling is not as easy to see as the other two. There are times when meditators think they

do not experience any feeling obviously, but actually they are experiencing this neutral feeling at that time.

**Ear-related Feeling:** When you hear something pleasing, such as a good music or your favorite music, then you have a pleasant feeling with regard to the sound. When you hear something you do not like, say, a very loud noise like the thunder or other unpleasant sound, then you have unpleasant feeling at that moment. So, through the mental contact between the ear and the sound, there arises the feeling pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. When the mental contact is strong, the feeling is strong. Sometimes you like that music so much that you want to hear it over and over again; you may be even afraid that it might come to an end. I have a friend who once listened to a very long song but thought it is short. After he finished, he listened again and again. He was kind of craving it, because the mental contact and the pleasant feeling about it were so strong. On the other hand, if the sound is so offensive to you then you can experience the unpleasant feeling very obviously. Quite often, it will lead to anger. So, the stronger the contact, the more obvious the feeling becomes. If the sound you hear is neither pleasant nor unpleasant but just an ordinary sound, then you will have the neutral feeling with regard to that sound. This is the feeling born of ear contact (*sota-samphassajā vedanā*).

**Nose-related Feeling:** When you smell something, there is mental contact with smell or, in other word, the experience of the smell. If that smell is a good smell, such as a perfume, then you have a pleasant feeling at that time. But if the smell is a foul smell, the smell of a corpse decomposing or the smell of food that has gone bad, you will close your nose and you have unpleasant feeling. If the smell is so bad, like the smell of a gas, then you may even die of that smell. So, there is a lot of suffering or unpleasant experience at that time. If the smell is neither good nor bad, then there will be

the neutral feeling. This is the feeling born of nose contact (*ghāna-samphassajā vedanā*).

**Tongue-related Feeling:** When you eat something delicious and agreeable, then there arises the pleasant feeling. But, if the food is not what you like, then there is suffering or unpleasant feeling. I was sick last month and one yogis brought the medicine to me after having boiled it. She said it was bitter. I took it and it was really bitter. It was good for my health but the taste of bitterness on my tongue gave me an unpleasant feeling. Such medicine may not be on this part of the world but, in our country, it is common. So, if the mental contact is strong, then the feeling is strong. And, if the taste is neither good nor bad, then there is the neutral feeling. This is the feeling born of tongue contact (*jivha-samphassajā vedanā*).

**Body-related Feeling:** If your body touches smooth thing like a soft cloth or a silk or velvet, then you have the good, pleasant feeling. But if you happen to hit yourself against a rock or something sharp, then you have pain or unpleasant feeling. Sometimes the object is neither smooth nor rough then there is the neutral feeling. The feeling arises because there is contact, and contact arises because three factors such as body, touch and body-consciousness come together. This is the feeling born of body contact (*kāya-samphassajā vedanā*).

**The Mental Object and Mind-base:** It is a little bit difficult to understand what the mental object is and how it strikes the mind-base and ignites thoughts. There is mental contact (*phassa*) that brings these together leading to feeling. For example, you read a book of fiction and the characters and cities in the book seem real to you. They become vivid in your mind-eye, although they never exist in reality. If there is something funny, you will laugh even though you are alone; if there is something disagreeable, then you will

get angry; and so on. These feelings arise because of the strong mental contact. If you like the fiction very much, you may want to read it again and again. I think you all know about Sherlock Holmes. The writer of those stories got tired of writing and wanted to end the fiction by letting Sherlock Homes die. But, when that story came out, he got a lot of letters from his readers requesting him to continue writing about him because they enjoyed reading these stories so much. The author had to revive Sherlock Holmes by some means and continue to write stories about him again. You see how powerful the mental objects, the mental contact, and the feeling are on the people.

**Mind-related Feeling:** Now, let us go to something more difficult to understand. It is how the mental contact and feeling arise from combination of three factors such as mind-base (*man'āyatana*), mental objects (*dhamm'āyatana*), and full or active consciousness (*mano-viññāna*). When the mental object strikes subconsciousness (*bhavanga*, mind-base called *man'āyatana*), there arises the full consciousness. Here, there is the mental contact (*phassa*) that brings these three factors together and results in feeling. This feeling is called mind-related feeling (*mano-samphassajā vedanā*) and it can be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

**Mental Object:** The mental object (*dhammārammana*) here means the object that can only be experienced through the mind. It includes five sensitivities (*pasāda*), 16 subtle physical phenomena (*sukhuma-rūpa*) such as water element, masculinity (*pubbhāva*), femininity (*itthibhāva*), heart phenomena (*hadaya*), life faculty (*jīvit'indriya*), lightness of the body (*lahutā*), softness of the body (*mudutā*), adaptability of the body (*kammaññatā*), etc., in addition to all mental states (*cetasika*), *nibbāna* and conceptual objects (*paññatti*).

Suppose you think of your good eye-sight and are glad and have a pleasant feeling. This means your mind is taking

the eye sensitivity as an object and that eye sensitivity is *dhamma* object. The pleasant feeling in your mind arises at the eye sensitivity in the eyes out of mental contact with the eye sensitivity. If we have to wear glasses, then when we think of our eyes, we may not be glad. Sometimes we may be sad about the condition of our eyes. In this case, taking the eye sensitivity as an object, we have unpleasant feeling. Or if our eye-sight is fine, we may feel just fine, neither pleasant and nor unpleasant. Then we have neutral feeling. So, taking the eye sensitivity as the sense-object, we have pleasant feeling or unpleasant feeling or neutral feeling depending upon the condition of the eye sensitivity. This is the feeling born of mental contact (*phassa*). Similarly, if you have good ear, good hearing, then you are happy and have good feeling; if you have bad ear, hearing impaired, then you are unhappy and have unpleasant feeling; and if your hearing or ears are neither good nor bad, then you have the neutral feeling. So, the feeling arises out of mental contact.

When I was sick for about three days last time, I almost lost sense of smell. I noticed when I took out some incense sticks to offer to the Buddha. Normally, I smelled the strong scent of the incense; but that day I did not get any smell at all. I thought the smell has worn away or something like that. I lighted and offered the incense to the Buddha and still I didn't get any smell. Then I thought I had lost the sense of smell; therefore, I tried some other smell like perfume but I got a very faint smell and was sad about that. There was unpleasant feeling in me taking my nose sensitivity as a sense-object. However, after about three days, the sense of smell came back. I was happy and so I had pleasant feeling. Now, I have neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling about the nose sensitivity or I just have a neutral feeling. So, the feeling arose in me when I took my nose sensitivity as the object and, depending on the sensitivity of my nose, I was unhappy,



happy, or neutral. I think you can understand other senses, such as the sense of touch, and also thinking in the mind in similar way. Therefore, I will not elaborate about them here.

**Mind-base (*Manāyatana*):** When the mental object strikes against the subconsciousness (*bhavanga*), the subconsciousness becomes shaky. After the shaky moment, it stops. Then, there arises a thought process with full consciousnesses or active minds. First, the mind-door-adverting consciousness (*mano-dvārāvajjana*) which is the mind-unit that examines the sense-object takes place. Then, the fully active consciousness (*javana*) follows for seven moments and, after that, the registering mind-unit for two moments. If there is no subconsciousness, there cannot arise these full consciousnesses. And the subconsciousness must be strong enough to cause the full consciousness to arise. If it is very weak (somewhat like unconscious state), you may not hear what other people say or you may not know the object clearly. So, the subconsciousness is called “mind-base” as it is the source of the full consciousness.

**18 Kinds of Feeling:** Three kinds of feeling multiplied by six sense-doors (*dvāra*), such as eye door, ear door, and so on, become 18 kinds of feeling (*vedanā*) that arise through contact. Although we say feeling arises from the mental contact, they actually arise together at the same time.

**Two Relationships:** There are two kinds of relationship between the mental contact and feeling according to the Path of Purification (*Visuddhi-magga*). The first kind of relationship is that the mental contact and feeling arise at the same moment and support each other. Such relationship is called reciprocal relationship (*sahajāta*). Another kind of relationship is called decisive support (*pakatūpanissaya*). To understand this, you have to understand 24 modes of relationships in *Paṭṭhāna*. In this relationship, the mental contact arises with one thought-unit and contributes to the

feeling that arises with another subsequent thought-unit. In this case, the mental contact is said to cause the feeling to arise.

When we say one thing is conditioned by another, we do not necessarily mean that one is produced by another. The conditioning factor and conditioned factor may arise simultaneously and support each other or be related to each other. Or they may belong to different moments or different times and are related as conditioning and conditioned which, in certain cases, are real cause and real effect. The relationship between these links has to be understood with reference to what is taught in the last book of *Abhidhamma*, *Paṭṭhāna*. Only when you understand with reference to *Paṭṭhāna* conditions, can you understand Dependent Origination fully; otherwise, your understanding is deficient.

**Going Round and Round:** So far, we have gone through five factors in Dependent Origination including consciousness (*viññāna*), mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*), sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), mental contact (*phassa*), and feeling (*vedanā*). They are resultant phenomena in this present life and called ‘round of results’ (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*) which is conditioned by or caused by the kamma round (*kamma-vaṭṭa*) or *sankhārā*. Again, *sankhārā* is conditioned by *avijjā* and *taṇhā* that belong to “round of defilement” (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*). So, the *kilesa-vaṭṭa* generates *kamma-vaṭṭa* (*sankhārā*) which, in turn, produces the *vipāka-vaṭṭa* that includes the five factors mentioned above. Depending on these five resultant factors, *the kilesa-vaṭṭa* comes again. This *kilesa-vaṭṭa* again conditions *kamma-vaṭṭa*, and the *kamma-vaṭṭa* creates *vipāka-vaṭṭa* and then *kilesa-vaṭṭa* again. Thus, it goes on and on and on. That is why it is called *vaṭṭa* in *Pāli*, which means round or going round and round and round, or rolling on and on and on. So these are the three *vaṭṭas*.

With regard to the five resultant factors and also with

*avijjā* and *sankhārā*, there is no way to interrupt their process. Once there is *viññāna* (rebirth consciousness), there will always be *nāma-rūpa* (mind and matter) and *saḷāyatana* (six senses), and so on until *vedana*. There is no way to interfere with or to break this process. Even the Buddha cannot stop it. But there is hope since the Buddha said there is one weak spot in this wheel of Dependent Origination, which is the next link, where you can break this chain of links.

Again, the last two links are:

*Saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso*: Dependent on six senses, there arises mental contact.

*Phassa-paccayā vedanā*: Dependent on the mental contact, there arises feeling.

According to these two links, six senses and six sense-objects get together and generate the six kinds of consciousness along with pleasant or unpleasant feeling. Following are the six kinds of consciousness of the sense-related mental processes that are mostly constituted by resultant minds and mental factors.

1. *Cakkhu-viññāna, sampaticchana, santīrana, (votthabbana, javana), tadārammana.*
2. *Sota-viññāna, sampaticchana, santīrana, (votthabbana, javana), tadārammana.*
3. *Ghāna-viññāna, sampaticchana, santīrana, (votthabbana, javana), tadārammana.*
4. *Jivhā-viññāna, sampaticchana, santīrana, (votthabbana, javana), tadārammana.*
5. *Kāya-viññāna, sampaticchana, santīrana, (votthabbana, javana), tadārammana.*

Let's examine the first mental process' five consciousnesses. The first one is *cakkhu-viññāna*. *Cakkhu* means

eye and *viññāna* means consciousness; so, *cakkhu-viññāna* is eye-consciousness. It is followed by *sampaticchana*, the mind-unit that receives the sense-object or receiving consciousness. Next is *santīrana*, the mind-unit that investigates the sense-object or investigating consciousness. Then, within the above brackets, the first one is *vothabbana*, the mind-unit that determines the sense-object or determining consciousness. And then *javana*. It is translated as impulsion but its adequate meaning is difficult to translate. So, we'd better use Pāli word *javana*. *Vothabbana* and *javana* are put in the brackets because they are not resultant and, therefore, not relevant to this round of results. The last one is *tadārammana*, the mind-unit that registers the sense-object or registering consciousness. It is also described as after-taste because it takes the same sense-object as the *javana* takes. Each of these consciousnesses or other consciousnesses (mind-units) is accompanied by mental contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), and some other mental factors (*cetasikas*).

The round of results consists of five factors such as consciousness (*viññāna*), mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*), six senses (*saḷāyatana*), mental contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*). How do we identify them? In the eye-consciousness case, *cakkhu-viññāna* (the eye-consciousness) is *viññāna*. *Phassa*, *vedanā* and other mental factors are *nāma*. The visible object and eye-sensitivities are *rūpa*. So, there are *viññāva*, *nāma-rūpa*. Where are *āyatana*s (sense-bases)? These mind and matter constitute *āyatana*s. *Rūpa* (visible object) is *rūpāyatana* and *cakkhu-viññāna* (the eye-consciousness) is *manāyatana* (mind-base), and *cetasika* (mental factors) are *dhammāyatana* (dhamma-base) and *cakkhu-pasāda* (eye-sensitivity) is eye-base. Of course, not all six sense-bases (*āyatana*) can become active at the same time. When there is seeing, there cannot be hearing or other sense-consciousnesses at the same moment. We can find

the five factors of the round of results in ourselves at any moment. We do not need to go to other places to find them. Whenever we see or hear something, these five factors arise together. If you understand the five factors with regard to seeing consciousness then you understand the five factors regarding hearing consciousness, smelling consciousness, tasting consciousness, and touching consciousness.

When you study the round of results, you can find its five factors such as resultant consciousness, mind and matter, six senses, mental contact, and feeling together. For example, let us take the case of eye consciousness. When the visible object comes into the avenue of eye sensitivity, eye-consciousness arises. There is the object to be seen, the eye to see with, and the eye-consciousness that sees. Along with that eye-consciousness, there are mental contact and feeling and some other mental factors. So, when you see something, there come at least all these five factors together. This seeing consciousness depends on the eye-sensitivity. If there is no eye-sensitivity, there can be no eye consciousness or no seeing consciousness. This eye-sensitivity is what is called eye-door. There are six sense doors including eye-door, ear-door, nose-door, and so on. They are called doors because through which consciousness arises.

The other types of consciousnesses, such as *sampaticchana* (receiving consciousness), *santīrana* (investigating consciousness), *voṭṭhabbana* (determining consciousness), *javana* and *tadārammana* (registering consciousness), rely not on eye-base but on heart-base, although they are involved in the seeing process. Heart-base is one of the *āyatanas*. It is included in *dhammāyatanas*.

In eye consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*), mental contact (*phassa*) and feeling (*vedanā*) arise together at the same moment with eye consciousness. And *phassa* is said to be the conditioning factor and *vedanā* is the conditioned factor.

How are they related? In what way? They arise and exist at the same time. Their relationship is a kind of co-existence (*sahajāta*), and there is also mutual support between them (*aññamañña*).

But immediately after seeing consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāna*), there is receiving consciousness (*sampaticchana*). The seeing consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāna*) disappears creating a chance for receiving consciousness (*sampaticchana*) to arise. Thus, seeing consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāna*) is a condition for receiving consciousness (*sampaticchana*) by way of disappearance. For example, I vacate this chair so that you can sit on it or something like that. So, I am a condition for you to be in this place.

If mental contact (*phassa*) that arises with eye-consciousness contributes to feeling (*vedanā*) that arises with receiving consciousness (*sampaticchana*), then their relationship is not of co-existence because they don't arise together. It is by way of decisive support (*upanissaya*), by way of proximity (*anantara*), or by way of disappearance (*natthi*).

But when mental contact (*phassa*) that arises together with eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāna*) is related to feeling (*vedanā*) that arises along with investigating consciousness (*santīrana*) or later mind-moments, their relationship is again different. It is neither proximity relationship nor disappearance relationship between them, but just decisive support (*upanissaya*). So, mental contact (*phassa*) and feeling (*vedana*) are related in different ways in different cases. In order to fully understand their different relationships, you have to study *Paṭṭhāna*, the seventh book of *Abhidhamma*.

## Seventh Link

# Vedanā-paccayā Taṇhā

*Vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*

Because of feeling as condition, there arises craving (*taṇhā*).

**What Taṇhā Means:** What is *taṇhā*? The literal meaning of *taṇhā* is thirst. It literally means thirst for sense-objects such as visible object, sound, and so on. For example, we feel thirsty and we want to drink water. We cannot satisfy our thirst once and for all. However much water we drink, we will again become thirsty and want to drink again. The mental state *taṇhā* is like that thirst. It is translated as craving because it craves for this thing, that thing, and so on. It is simply the mental state called *lobha* among the 52 mental factors. *Lobha* is attachment to sense-objects and so is *taṇhā*. *Rāga* is another word for *taṇhā* meaning stain or dye. *Taṇhā* is called “*rāga*” (stain or dye) because when there is *raga*, our mind is stain. Once there is the stain or the dye, it is very difficult to get rid of it. The opposite word of *rāga* is *virāga*. *Virāga* is translated as fading away but actually it is disappearance of the dye or color because when you reach the fourth stage of enlightenment, the *rāga* is totally eradicated. So, *lobha*, *taṇhā*, *rāga* are synonymous. “*Kāma*” is also another word for *taṇhā*. Actually, there are many other words synonymous with *taṇhā*. However, these four words are in frequent use for this mental factor *taṇhā* in the discourses as well as in the *Abhidhamma*.

**Six Kinds of “Taṇhā”:** Corresponding to the six kinds of sense-objects there are six kinds of *taṇhā* such as *rūpa-taṇhā*, *sadda-taṇhā*, *gandha-taṇhā*, *rasa-taṇhā*, *phoṭṭhabba-*

*taṇhā*, and *dhamma-taṇhā*. They, respectively, mean thirst for visible objects, audible objects or sound, smell, taste, touch and all the rest (*dhamma-taṇhā*).

**Dhamma-Object and Dhamma-taṇhā:** *Dhamma-taṇhā* means thirst for dhamma-object. What are the *dhamma* objects? As I mentioned before, there are many dhamma objects including 5 sensitivities, 16 subtle physical phenomena (*pasāda-rūpa*) such as water element, masculinity, femininity, life faculty, lightness of the body, softness of the body, adaptability of the body and so on, 89 consciousnesses (*citta*), 52 mental factors (*cetasika*), *nibbāna*, and conceptual objects (*paññatti*). When you see something beautiful, you have eye-consciousness along with mental contact (*phassa*), pleasant feeling (*sukha vedanā*). And, since the object is beautiful and the feeling is pleasant, there arises *taṇhā*, craving or attachment to that pleasant and beautiful object. Strictly speaking, *taṇhā* does not arise yet at the moment of eye-consciousness. It can arise only at the moment of *javana*. So, the *taṇhā* is conditioned by feeling by way of decisive support or wider support. For example, you take delight in your good eyesight meaning you enjoy the seeing ability of your eye. That is *taṇhā*. What kind of *taṇhā* is it? *Dhamma-taṇhā*, since it is the attachment to dhamma-object. It is similar with ear-sensitivity, etc. When you like your mindfulness that is also *dhamma-taṇhā*, right? Therefore, there can be many kinds of *dhamma-taṇhā*.

**We Follow Time-tested Tradition:** These six *taṇhā* are classified into three kinds in accordance with how they arise. And those three kinds of *taṇhā* are *kāma-taṇhā*, *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā*. I deliberately use the Pāli words because I want you to be familiar with them so that you can get the correct meaning or correct interpretation of these three kinds of *taṇhā*. Many authors are likely to say they make their own interpretations that may not be in accordance with



the traditional ones. The traditional interpretation is made by the ancient masters who were closer to the Buddha than we are and, therefore, understood the Buddha's teachings more than we do. We rather follow this time-tested tradition for our correct interpretation. If you want to part from the traditional interpretation and put in your own interpretation, you must be careful since you might be wrong. The reason is your knowledge may not be comprehensive enough to consider all the relevant aspects of the subject. You may just see one aspect and draw conclusions from that one aspect and that will not be correct. So, if you want to part from tradition, please be sure that you are perfectly right to make such a departure from tradition.

I will follow the traditional interpretation of these three kinds of *taṇhā*. I would use the explanation made by masters of ancient times which has been handed from generation to generation until our time since it is time tested.

**Kāma-taṇhā:** The first one is called *kāma-taṇhā* which means thirst for desirable objects. Objects of desire are those objects that are beautiful and pleasant to people. Actually this *kāma-taṇhā* is like an ordinary kind of “*lobha*”, attachment to any object of desire. So, almost everything in the world can be the object of desire and attachment to or thirst for these objects is called *kāma-taṇhā*.

**Bhava-taṇhā:** *Bhava-taṇhā* occurs along with the eternity view. The craving for visible objects is called *rūpa-taṇhā*. When that *rūpa-taṇhā* arises together with the view that things are everlasting, permanent or eternal, then it is called *bhava-taṇhā*. If you translate *bhava-taṇhā* as *taṇhā* for *bhava* (thirst for life), it would not be different from *kāma-taṇhā* because *bhava* is also the object of desire. We desire to be born in a good existence. If we translate this desire as thirst for *bhava* (*bhava-taṇhā*), then it will not be different from *kāma-taṇhā*. That is why, I think, the commentaries

of the ancient masters interpreted that the *bhava-taṇhā* is *taṇhā* associated with *bhava*; and *bhava* here does not mean existence but the point of view that things are eternal. So, *bhava-taṇhā* is *taṇhā* arising together or associated with the view that things are permanent or eternal.

**Vibhava-taṇhā:** In the word *vibhava*, “*vi*” has a negative meaning. So, “*vibhava*” means a “*non-bhava*,” which means destruction of *bhava* or annihilation. *Vibhava-taṇhā* is, therefore, the *taṇhā* associated with the view that beings are just annihilated at death and there is no rebirth for them. In this view, things are destroyed once and for all without leaving any effect behind. When the thirst for *rupa* (visible object), for example, arises together with that kind of view taking beings to be annihilated at death, then that is called *vibhava-taṇhā*.

**Correct Interpretation of Three *Taṇhā*:** Thirst for objects of desire (*kāma-taṇhā*) itself is taken as “*bhava-taṇhā*” if it is based on the eternity view, and as “*vibhava-taṇhā*,” if it is associated with the annihilation view. This is the correct interpretation of these three kinds of *taṇhā*. In his translation of the *Visuddhi-magga* book, Ñānamoli translates *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā* as craving for becoming and craving for non-becoming, respectively. Some even translate *vibhava-taṇhā* as craving for self-annihilation. Once, years back, I gave a book on Buddhism to a man and one week later he came to me and said: “Bhante, Buddhism recognizes suicide.” I was surprised and wondered where he got this idea. I asked him why he said so. He then referred to a translation of the first sermon where these three types of *taṇhā* are mentioned. He said the *sutta* says craving for self-annihilation means craving for suicide or something like that. People can get a very wrong idea from these translations. So, it is very important to have a knowledgeable teacher to correct wrong understanding of the teachings of the Buddha.

**108 Taṇhā:** Each of the six basic kinds of *taṇhā* (thirst for a visible object, etc.) can be divided into *kama-taṇhā*, *bhava taṇhā*, and *vibhava taṇhā*. Therefore, there are eighteen kinds of *taṇhā*. They arise in our mind, internal *taṇhā*, as well as in other people's minds, external *taṇhā*. So, there are 36 kinds. Again, they each belong to the past, the present, and the future. Therefore, altogether, there are 108 kinds of *taṇhā*. You can find this number mentioned in the *Pāli* cannon and the Commentaries, but how to get to 108 *taṇhā* is rarely explained. For this reason, I want you to be familiar with how *taṇhā* gets this number 108.

**Craving for Any Feeling?** Now let me talk about the relationship between feeling (*vedanā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). Does the link “*vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*” mean that we just crave for any kind of feeling? The commentary says there is only one relation and that is relation of decisive support. In this case, only pleasant feeling (*sukha-vedanā*) is to be taken as *vedanā* because normally craving or desire can arise only for pleasurable feeling. However, the link is just “*vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*” in general. It doesn't say “*sukha-vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*.” So, the commentary explained this way: a person in pain longs for pleasure and a person in pleasure longs for better. And neutral feeling, since it is peaceful, is included in pleasure (*sukha*). A person who is experiencing neutral feelings also longs for more and better. Thus, all three kinds of feelings are a condition for *taṇhā*. That is how *taṇhā* is conditioned, not only by pleasant feeling but also by neutral and unpleasant feelings.

It is not that we are craving the unpleasant feeling but craving for something opposite of it. For instance, towards the end of the last sitting period, it became hot. When you feel hot, what was in your mind? You made notes of “hot, hot, hot” or you just wished that the heater be turned off or that the clock strikes. If you wished that way, then you have

*taṇhā*. Our craving for getting cool or getting out of this heat is conditioned by the unpleasant feeling we have at that time, right? So, *taṇhā* can be conditioned by unpleasant feelings. To tell the truth, I had *taṇhā* first. I wanted the heater to be turned off or the clock to strike; but a little later I remember about practice and so I just made notes of “heat, heat, heat” and was able to live with that heat. That is how *taṇhā* is conditioned by unpleasant feeling. Then what about neutral feeling? Since neutral feeling is close to pleasant feeling, you want something more and better. So, neutral feeling is also a condition for *taṇhā*.

Therefore, “dependent on all three kinds of feelings there arises thirst or craving.” And the commentary said: “Although feeling is the condition for craving, no craving can arise from the feeling of a perfect saint (*arahant*) who is free of inherent tendency.” The commentary said it is true that feeling (*vedanā*) is a condition for craving (*taṇhā*), but craving cannot arise to those who have eradicated the inherent tendency of mental defilements (*anusaya-kilesa*). This is a very good statement for us because it points out a way to break this wheel of life, since, if we do not have inherent tendency, the craving (*taṇhā*) will not arise. That means, if we become an *arahant*, the craving (*taṇhā*) will not arise.

**To Stop the Wheel by Vipassanā:** In order to break the wheel of life, what can we do? As I have explained, the rounds (*vaṭṭa*) of *kilesa*, *kamma* and *vipāka* are going on and on and on. It seems there is no escape from this. It is like an ox yoked to a mill going round and round and round. When people want to get oil from sesame seeds or peanuts, they yoke an ox to a mill and make it go round and round and round in order to press oil out of the sesame seeds or peanuts. In some places, people have to bring water from the lower level to the upper level by wheel. They attach the rope to the

wheel and buckets to the rope and then make an ox go round and round to turn the wheel to get water. So, for an ox yoked, there is no escape. It must go round and round and round. In the same way, when you look at these three rounds, there seems to be no escape, and it is very depressing. However, Buddhism provides us with solaces here because it shows the way to break this wheel. If we can do something to stop craving (*taṇhā*) from arising out of feeling (*vedana*), we can break this wheel at this spot. The link between feeling (*vedanā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) is the only spot where we can break this round of suffering.

How do we break this wheel of life? How do we break this link? It is by the practice of *vipassanā* meditation. When you practice *vipassanā* meditation, you are making notes of what is prominent at the present moment. Let's say you have pain, you are aware of pain and note "pain, pain, pain." Then you come to see that pain does not last forever but arises and disappears. So, you do not long for the pleasant feeling to come. You are just with the feeling of pain and you are concentrating on it, and so craving (*taṇhā*) cannot arise out of this feeling (*vedana*). When you are feeling good and thus have pleasant feeling, you must also note this feeling and understand that it also arises and disappears. Seeing the true nature of feeling that it arises and disappears, then you will not be attached to the pleasant feelings. Therefore, you will not have craving when you have pleasant or unpleasant feelings. That means you are cutting the wheel of life at this spot. This is the only place where we can cut this wheel. Let's call it a weak spot in this wheel and, if you can hit it strongly enough, you will be able to break this wheel. At other places, there is no way out; even the Buddha can't interfere with the process.

**To Put an End to the Wheel:** Can we really break this link with *vipassanā* meditation? The break we make with

*vipasana* meditation is momentary for the object we observe. With regard to the objects we fail to observe, there will still be craving following the feeling.

Regarding to the objects we observe, we see their true nature as impermanent and so on. Then there are no cravings arising out of the feeling. Therefore, through the *vipassanā* meditation, we are breaking this link momentarily with respect to the observed objects. Compared with path (*magga*) enlightenment, it is very weak. However, the wheel of life is so big and so strong that it is almost impossible to deal with it. So, it is still a great job that we are able to at least stop craving from arising with regard to the object we observe. For this reason, the *vipassanā* practice is really great. And, if we carry on this practice, one day we will be able to break this link once and for all. When reaching that stage, we will be able to uproot the latent tendency of mental defilements out of our mind. Not only craving but all other unwholesome mental states will leave us forever or the mass of suffering will end. On the other hand, if we let the craving arise, then the process will go on and on. Once the craving has arisen, there is no way to stop the process or to interfere with it.

In summary, in order to end the round of rebirth or the mass of suffering, what we need to do is to observe present phenomena so that we can prevent craving from arising out of feeling. So, this is the link where we can do something to get out of the mass of suffering based on the teachings of the Buddha. It is very encouraging that there is a way to break this giant and strong wheel at its weak point. The only thing left for us to do is to make a constant effort to be mindful of present prominent phenomena moment by moment until we attain path-and-fruit (*magga-phala*) enlightenment.

## Eighth Link

# Tañhā-paccayā Upādāna

*Tañhā-paccayā upādāna*

Because of craving as condition, there arises attachment or grasping.

**Definition of Upādāna:** The word *upādāna* is made up of “*upa*” and “*ādāna*.” You are already familiar with the word “*ādāna*” (taking) because you find this word in *adinn’ādāna* (taking what is not given). Here, the prefix “*upa*” has the meaning of intensity. “*Upa*” and “*ādāna*” combined becomes *upādāna*, which means taking or holding firmly. It is grasping. It is also translated as clinging.

*Tañhā* and *upādāna* both are called *lobha* in *Abhidhamma* but belong to different moments with different intensity. *Tañhā* is actually weak attachment and *upādāna* is very strong attachment. When it is not so strong, it is called *tañhā*; and when it becomes strong a little later, then it is called *upādāna*. When there is *tañhā*, there comes to be *upādāna*. Not only craving (*tañhā*) but wrong view (*diṭṭhi*) is also called *upādāna*. We can grasp an object not only by attachment or craving but also by wrong view, since once we have taken a wrong view, we cannot let go of the object. Therefore, wrong view is also called *upādāna*.

*Upādāna* is described by the simile of a snake swallowing a frog. Once the snake has taken a frog, it will never let its prey go. In the same way, when craving (*tañhā*) reaches the state of grasping (*upādāna*), it will not let go of the object.

**Kāmupādāna:** When the weak attachment to the sense-objects develops into strong attachment or grasping, it is

called *kāmupādāna*. There are sense-objects which are the objects of craving (*taṇhā*) as well as of grasping (*upādāna*). You see something desirable and pleasing then you are attached to it. First attachment is not so strong or craving (*taṇhā*). Later on, you are so attached to that object that you cannot let go of it. That is called grasping (*upādāna*). The grasping of sense-objects is called *kāmupādāna*.

Sense-objects are of five kinds: desirable sight, desirable sound, desirable smell, desirable taste and desirable touch. Attachment to and grasping of these objects is called *upādāna*. Here, the desirable objects mean the sense-objects that are normally desirable and also those that we think desirable. Sometimes one object may be desirable to one person but it may not be so to another person. The obvious example is taste of pepper or chilly. Taste of chilly for the one who likes it is desirable but, for another person, it may be quite the opposite. So, when you say desirable object, you mean both that are naturally desirable and also those that we take to be desirable. Both of these kinds of objects can be the object of *kāmupādāna*.

When we see something desirable or which we think desirable, first there is attachment, not so strong attachment to that object (craving) and then later on we like it so much that we cannot let go of that object (grasping). Thus, the craving (*taṇhā*) develops into grasping (*upādāna*).

The same is with the audible objects. When you first hear a song, it may not be so attractive, but later it may become so attractive that you can not let go of it and you want to hear it again and again. The craving has developed into grasping.

It is similar with smell. Take the smell of perfume as an example. At the first instant, the attachment may not be so strong but later it may become strong and develop into grasping. And you are attached to it so much that you use it



again and again.

The same is with taste. First you may have the normal attachment to food and then it develops into grasping that you become addicted to it. For example, you may like a certain kind of food so much that you take it again and again. Here, taste can be meant in a figurative sense such as to like being treated by another person especially by a person who is dear to you. For example, men like the way their wives prepare food, bed or wash clothes for them. So, the treatment is also a kind of taste (*rasa*), and people are also attached to such treatments that there arise craving (*taṇhā*) and grasping (*upādāna*).

In the case of touch, you may like some kind of touch more than another. So, at first there is just not so strong attachment (craving) and later on it develops into strong attachment (grasping).

**Different Interpretations of Taṇhā and Upādāna:** Sometimes authors include the opinion of other teachers when they write books. Here, also *Visuddhi-magga* quotes other teachers regarding the difference between *taṇhā* and *upādāna*: the weak *lobha* is *taṇhā* (craving) and strong *lobha* is *upādāna* (grasping); the attachment to an object before one gets it is *taṇhā* and attachment after one gets it is *upādāna*. It is explained with a simile of a thief. At the time he stretches out his hand to take something, it is *taṇhā* and, once he has gotten the object, it is *upādāna*. Once he has taken hold of something, he will not let it go. It is said that *taṇhā* is the opposite of what is called “fewness of want,” or you have not much desire. And *upādāna* is the opposite of what is called non-contentment, not being content with what one already has. Also it is explained that *taṇhā* leads to the trouble searching for the object, and *upadana* is the cause of suffering protecting the object. That means when you want something you try to get that thing. Looking for that thing or

trying to get that thing you have to suffer trouble. After you get the object, there is another kind of suffering to protect it. You have to protect it so that it is not stolen or not damaged by other persons, and so on. So, *taṇhā* leads to suffering of searching for the object and *upādāna* leads to suffering of protecting that object.

The difference between *taṇhā* and *upādāna* is given by other teachers, and the *Visuddhi-magga*'s author did not mention whether he approved their opinion or not. Since he did not reject their opinions, we can assume that they were acceptable to him. That was *kāmupādāna*, grasping of sense-objects.

**Diṭṭhi Upādāna:** Another *upādāna* is wrong view, which is of three kinds. The first is called *diṭṭhi-upādāna*. *Diṭṭhi* really is a view, but mostly it means wrong view. Here *diṭṭhi-upādāna* means wrong view about *kamma* and its results. Actually, disbelief in *kamma* and its results is called *diṭṭhi-upādāna*. These opinions once established in one's mind will hardly leave. So, they are so strong that it is very difficult to get rid of them. That is why such opinions are called *upādāna*. If you think or believe that giving, offering or the practice of generosity does not bring any result, then you have this kind of wrong view. If you think there are no results of wholesome and unwholesome acts, then you have this kind of wrong view. And if you think that attendance, service or respect to your parents brings no results, then you have this wrong view. And if you believe or think that there is no such thing as another world or another existence or rebirth, then you have this wrong view. And if you believe that there can be no persons who by their own intuitive knowledge understand the world like the Buddha then you have this wrong view. This wrong view is described in the books as 10 points because there are 10 points or 10 objects of this wrong view. So, lack of faith in the law of *kamma* is

called *diṭṭhi-upādāna*.

**Sīlabbata Upādāna:** The next grasping is very important. It is called *sīlabbata upādāna* in Pāḷi. There is a lot of misunderstanding about this grasping because it is very difficult to accurately translate this word. Loose translation used for this word often leads to some kind of misunderstanding. The word *sīlabbata* is composed of two words, “*sīla*” and “*vata*.” According to Pāḷi grammar, when they are joined together, “v” turns into “b” and then “b” is doubled. So, they make up the word *sīlabbata*.

The word “*sīla*” here means habit, not morality, and an action which one habitually does is called *sīla*. And *vata* means practicing what one has undertaken. For example, taking precepts may be called *sīla* and actually practicing them is called *vata*. So, there is a difference between *sīla* and *vata* but, in actual practice, they may be understood together.

During the time of the Buddha, there were people who believed that, if you act like a dog or like an animal, you will get emancipation and be free from suffering. According to their belief, animals are not so wicked as the human beings and, if you live and act like them, then you can get rid of mental defilements. Undertaking the practice of those acts is “*sīla*” and really acting on them is called “*vata*.” If you believe that *sīla* and *vata* are sufficient means for achieving enlightenment, then you have a wrong view.

**Seniya and Puṇṇa:** During the time of the Buddha, there lived two men named Puṇṇa and Seniya. The two follow the behaviors of a cow and dog, respectively. They believed that, by practicing that way, they could get emancipation. One day, they went to the Buddha and, after exchanging greetings with the Buddha, Puṇṇa said that Seniya was a follower of the dog’s behavior and followed all the behavior of a dog

such as sleeping, walking, and eating like a dog. Puṇṇa then asked Buddha what result would come out of this act. Buddha refused to answer his question by saying: “Don’t ask me.” But he insisted, and when he asked for the third time, Buddha said, thus: “I have told you not to ask this question but I could not get you to desist from asking. So, now I will give you the answer. A person acts like a dog, sleeps like a dog, walks like a dog, eats like a dog, urinates like a dog... and if he practices that behavior fully and entirely, then he will be reborn as a dog. Although he does not practice it fully and entirely but bears this wrong view, then the wrong view itself will lead him to rebirth either in hell or in animal kingdom.” When Buddha gave this answer Seniya cried and said thus: “I feel so sorry because I have been deceived by my teachers for that long.” Regarding Puṇṇa’s practice of cow’s behavior, Seniya asked the same question and the Buddha gave the same answer that, if a person acts like a cow, he will be reborn as a cow, and the wrong view itself will lead him to the rebirth in hell and animal kingdom.

You may think that such practices were only in the past, not in these days. But I think there are still some people even nowadays who have such strange views. Although they may not act like animals, they live like primitive people. Except the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā*, if you take any practice as a sufficient means to enlightenment, then you are regarded as having this kind of wrong view. That is *sīlabbata upādāna*.

**Wrong View of Practices:** *Visudhi-magga* commentary says that even *sīla* like five-precept, eight-precept, etc., and *jhāna* (tranquility meditation) can be called *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* (wrong view of practices) if they are considered as ways of practice leading to liberation. So, if you think that you can achieve emancipation or enlightenment by just keeping precepts or developing *jhāna*, then you have this

wrong view. According to the teachings of the Buddha, the practice of mindfulness is the only way for the purification of our minds and for the attainment of *nibbāna*.

As I have previously mentioned, Buddha taught that the practice of mindfulness is the only way for purification of our mind. If you look at our practice, I think you can accept this without any reservation. So long as we are mindful, we can keep unwholesome mental states from arising in our minds. When mindfulness is standing guard at the eye-door, we can stop the unwholesome mental states from arising in our minds through the eye-door. Similarly, if we can put mindfulness at ear-door, then we can stop unwholesome states from arising in our mind through the ear-door and so on. The moment we lose mindfulness, the mental states such as attachment, anger, envy, jealousy, and so on arise in our mind. Therefore, it is only mindfulness that can prevent unwholesome mental states from arising in our minds or can purify our minds. When our minds are purified, we can achieve *nibbāna*. So, mindfulness is the only way for the achieving our purification and attaining *nibbāna*. If you take any other practices to be the way to attain *nibbāna*, then we have this wrong view of practices.

**Just by Samatha:** There are two kinds of meditation, calm or tranquil (*samatha*) meditation and insight or mindfulness (*vipassanā*) meditation. If you believe that *samatha* meditation alone can lead us to enlightenment, we have this wrong view of practices. *Samatha* meditation is taught by the Buddha not as a sufficient way for liberation but as a basis for *vipassanā* meditation. Only for that purpose, the Buddha taught the *samatha* practices. So, *samatha* practices by themselves without any *vipassanā* meditation cannot lead us to enlightenment. If we take *samatha* meditation to be the way to attain *nibbāna* and liberation, then we are wrong, too.

Among the *samatha* practices, for example, there is *Buddhānussati*, the recollection of the Buddha or the recollection of the qualities of the Buddha. It is a very good practice that can help us calm our mind. In addition, as Buddhists, when we are recollecting the good qualities of the Buddha, we are happy and our minds are free from mental defilements. Yet, that is not enough for the achievement of liberation. We have to practice *vipassanā* meditation to achieve that goal. So, although the recollection of the Buddha's attributes is a good practice for calming down our minds, it is not enough or it is not a real way to attain *nibbāna*. We have to practice *vipassana* meditation to achieve that goal.

**Just by Praying or Wishing:** Also, if you think that just by praying you can achieve enlightenment, then you are wrong again. I wish I could say it is possible to achieve *nibbāna* just by wishing for it or by praying. But the Buddha taught in one discourse thus: "There are five desirable pleasant and agreeable things which are rare in the world. And what are those five? They are long life, beauty, happiness, fame and heavenly rebirth. But of those five things I do not teach that they are to be obtained by wishing or by praying. If one could obtain them by asking or praying, who would not be without what in this world?" That means everybody would have everything he wants just by praying. Buddha continues, "For a noble disciple who wishes to have long life, it is not befitting that he should pray for long life, but he should rather follow a path that is conducive to longevity." So, according to the Buddha, for even these worldly qualities you cannot achieve them just by praying but have to follow the way leading to that. That means you must do good deeds (*kusala-kamma*) that are conducive to longevity, not just by praying. That is what is taught by the Buddha in that discourse.

In another *sutta*, Buddha said thus: "If a monk wishes his mind be free from mental defilements but does not practice

or does not apply himself to the development of his mind, then his mind will not be free.” That means, if a monk just prays but does not practice mental development, then he will not get what he prays for because he has not established his mind in the four foundations of mindfulness. And, the Buddha continues that, if you do not pray for *nibbāna* but practice mindfulness, then you will achieve it.

Whether you pray or not, if you practice, you will get the result; otherwise, you do not. So, praying or wishing is just something that gives us a little consolation. *Nibbāna* is not something we just wish for but must practice mindfulness to achieve it. Sometimes we do pray, “May I attain *nibbāna*” or something like that, but if you do nothing, you will not get any nearer to *nibbāna*. The important thing is to practice the four foundations of mindfulness (*sati-paṭṭhāna*) or *vipassanā* meditation. The practice of *samatha* meditation like recollection of the Buddha by remembering or repeating the attributes of the Buddha over and over again is good, but please do not be satisfied with just that kind of meditation. Try to practice mindfulness meditation also so that you can get rid of mental defilements.

There is a saying, especially in *Mahayana* Buddhism, that, if you wish for the Buddha land, then, at the moment of death, the Buddha will come to you with his disciples to take you to the western paradise. That means you will be reborn there or something like that. The description of that land closely resembles the description of celestial realms *deva-loka* in *Theravada* literature. I think that pure land cannot be *nibbāna* because it is said that you will be reborn there. What will follow if you are born there? When there is rebirth, there is old age and death. It is just another existence even though it maybe a better existence than the human one. Therefore, it is subject to impermanence. It cannot be said to be an ultimate peacefulness like in *nibbāna*. So, I would like

to ask you not to be content with just *samatha* meditation, but try to practice *sati-paṭṭhāna* or *vipassanā* meditation to attain liberation.

“*Sīlabbata-parāmāsa-upādāna*” is often translated as grasping or clinging to wrong views of rights and ritual. That is a loose translation that can lead to misunderstanding. In the instance of *Seniya* and *Punṇa*, behaving like a dog or a cow cannot be called rite or ritual. So, it is very difficult to translate this word phrase into English. The commentaries always say *sīla* and *vata* to mean behavior and practice of dogs or cows and so on, but not just rites and rituals. If you take rites and rituals or any kind of practice other than *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* to be a sure way to liberation, then there is this kind of wrong view.

**Atta-vāda-upādāna:** The next *upādāna* is called *atta-vāda-upādāna*. It is clinging to a belief in soul or a belief that identifies soul with physical body, feeling, perception, mental formations or consciousness. A belief in that everlasting soul is called “*atta-vāda-upādāna*”, clinging to the wrong view of soul. According to the teachings of the Buddha, there is no permanent or everlasting soul. And, according to *Abhidhamma*, wrong view is always accompanied by attachment (*lobha*). You have attachment to something and then you have wrong view about it. That is why it is here said thus: “Dependent on craving or attachment, there arises grasping.”

So, the weak attachment leads to the strong attachment and wrong view based on desirable sense-objects. In summary, there are four kinds of grasping or strong attachment:

1. Attachment to sense-objects (*kāma-upādāna*)
2. Attachment to wrong view of kamma (*diṭṭhi-upādāna*)
3. Attachment to the wrong view of practices (*sīlabbata-upādāna*)



#### 4. Attachment to wrong view of soul (*atta-vāda-upādāna*)

These four kinds of grasping are conditioned by craving. That is why Buddha said: “Dependent on craving, there arises grasping.” This is the eighth link of Dependent Origination.

Out of these four kinds of grasping, the first one is strong attachment and the other three are wrong view. In brief, there are two kinds of grasping: attachment and wrong view. Both are conditioned by craving.

## Ninth Link

# Upādāna-paccayā bhavo

*Upādāna-paccayā bhavo*

Because of grasping as condition, there arises action.

We have learned about grasping (*upādāna*). In this link, we are going to learn that, with grasping (*upādāna*) as a condition, action (*kamma-bhava*) follows. And when there is action, there is result. So, dependent upon grasping, there arise action (*kamma-bhava*) and its results (*upapatti-bhava*).

**Meaning of “Bhava”:** The ninth link, *upādāna-paccayā bhavo*, teaches us the relationship between grasping (*upādāna*) as the conditioning factor and action (*kamma-bhava*) and its results (*upapatti-bhava*) as the conditioned factors. When we study Buddha’s teachings, especially the Dependent Origination, it is very important to understand the meaning and connotations of the words used in the teaching. Otherwise, little knowledge often leads to misinterpretation of the teaching. There are some words having different meanings from what we usually understand, and the word “*bhava*” here is one of them.

The word “*bhava*” usually means an existence or rebirth. Here in this link, however, it has another meaning. We will understand this better if we explore the tenth link which says: “*Bhava-paccayā jāti* or *dependent on bhava, there arises jāti* (existence).” If “*bhava*” in the ninth link is understood as existence or rebirth as usual, then this tenth link would mean: “Existence is conditioned by existence.” That would make no sense. So, we have to understand the word “*bhava*”

in a different way.

**Two Kinds of “Bhava”:** Here the explanation given in the *Abhidhamma* and the Commentary help us tremendously. We owe a lot to them. Without them, we would not be able to understand the teachings of the Buddha correctly and properly. Now, we know that *bhava* must mean more than rebirth in the tenth link. It means cause of existence, not the existence itself. That is why, in this ninth link, “*upādāna-paccayā bhavo*,” the word “*bhava*” must mean not only existence but also the cause of existence.

**How Kamma Is Called “Bhava”:** How come the word “*bhava*” means the cause of *bhava*? Sometimes we use the results to imply the cause especially in everyday language. For example, if we are afraid of diabetes and we see sugar, then we say “oh, it is diabetes” or, if we see salt on the table, then we say “oh, it is high blood pressure.” In these cases, sugar means the cause of diabetes and salt the high blood pressure. In the same way, here *bhava* means not only existence as usual but also the cause of existence. The cause of existence is, as you know, *kamma*. So, there are two kinds of *bhava* to understand in this link: *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava*.

*Kamma-bhava* means just *kamma*. Normally, *kamma* means volition (*cetana*). But here it means not only volition but also its concomitant mental factors (*cetasikas*). And *upapatti-bhava* here means rebirth or existence. There are nine kinds of *upapatti-bhavas* given in the exposition. You don’t need to know them all now. You may just note that *upapatti-bhava* means rebirth or existence or what we called life in all 31 planes such as 4 woeful states, 7 sensual realms, 16 material brahma realms, and 4 immaterial brahma realms. In brief, all kinds of rebirth are included in the nine kinds of *upapatti-bhava*.

**Why Kamma is Repeated With Two Different Names:**

In the first link, *kamma* is called *sankhārā* there. Here in this ninth link, *kamma* is called *bhava* or *kamma-bhava*. So, there is a repetition of *kamma* in these 12 factors or in this doctrine of Dependent Origination (*Paṭicca-samuppāda*). Why is that? The Commentary explained that, in the first link, *kamma* as *sankhārā* belongs to past lives as a condition for *viññāna* (resultant consciousnesses) to arise in the present life. Here in this ninth link, *kamma* as “*bhava*” belongs to the present life. Since they belong to different periods of time, *kamma* is repeated first by the name of “*sankhārā*” and second by the name of “*bhava*.”

In the second link “*sankhārā-paccayā viññāna* or *dependent on sankhārā, there arises viññāna,*” *sankhārā* (*kamma*) is condition for *viññāna* (consciousness). There is, however, one brahma realm where there is only matter, not consciousness. Beings in this realm have no mind or no consciousness (*viññāna*). Therefore, the second link “*sankhārā-paccayā viññāna* or *dependent on sankhārā, there arises viññāna*” is not applicable to them. But, in the tenth link, “*bhava-paccayā jāti*”, those mindless beings are also included since *jāti* means all kinds of rebirth including mindless one. So, the *kamma* is repeated by the name of “*bhava*” to include the mindless beings. Another difference between *sankhārā* and *kamma-bhava* is *sankhārā* means just the volition, wholesome or unwholesome, but *kamma-bhava* means not only wholesome or unwholesome volition but also its concomitants.

**Why Kamma Has Two Causes:** You may have noticed some inconsistency between the first and the ninth links. According to the first link, “Because of ignorance as condition, there arises action” (*avijjā-paccayā sankhārā*), *kamma* by the name of *sankhārā* is conditioned by *avijjā* (ignorance or delusion). But in the ninth link of “Because of grasping as condition, there arises action” (*upādāna-paccayā bhavo*),

*kamma* by the name of *bhava* is conditioned by *upādāna* (clinging or grasping). So, there is a kind of discrepancy because both *avijjā* and *upādāna* are said to be the cause of *kamma*. If you understand *Abhidhamma*, there would be no problem because ignorance (*avijjā*) is concomitant with all unwholesome mental states (*cetasikas*). Whenever there are unwholesome mental states, there is ignorance. Therefore, when *upādāna* is said to be a condition for *bhava* (*kamma*), then virtually ignorance (*avijjā*) is also a condition for *kamma*. Hence, if we take one link, then we also take the other link.

I hope you remember three rounds (*vaṭṭa*): round of mental defilement (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*), round of *kamma* (*kamma-vaṭṭa*) and round of resultant phenomena (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*). You may also remember that ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*) and clinging or grasping (*upādāna*) belong to *kilesa-vaṭṭa*. If one that belongs to *kilesa-vaṭṭa* is taken, so are the other two. Therefore, when *upādāna* is taken here, so is ignorance. In essence, these two links are the same.

**How Four Upādāna Give Rise to Two Bhava:** This link teaches us that, dependent upon four kinds of attachment (*upādāna*), there arise two kinds of *bhava*: *kamma-bhava* (action) and *upapatti-bhava* (rebirth). Let us see how the *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava* arise dependent upon these four kinds of attachment.

**Two Kinds of Bhava Conditioned by Attachment to Sensual Pleasure:** The first grasping or attachment is called *kāma-upādāna*; that means attachment to something or someone in the world. When you have a strong desire for something, you will try to get it by all possible means. You may snatch it away from other person, you may even kill or cheat him, or something like that. So, when there is a strong desire for something, you will do something good or bad to get that thing. And, in trying to get that thing, you acquire

*kamma* called *bhava*. And, as a result of that *kamma-bhava*, there will arise *upapatti-bhava* or rebirth that is composed of resultant mental and material aggregates. Therefore, depending upon the attachment to sensual objects, there arise the *kamma-bhava* and its resultant *upapatti-bhava* in the next life.

Suppose you heard someone say or you read in a book that the world of celestial beings is a very happy place with only enjoyment of sensual pleasures, longevity, and without suffering, and you have a desire to be reborn there. If the desire is strong enough, you will do something so that you will be reborn in that world. You may pick up a correct book or approach a good teacher and they will guide you to do some meritorious deeds like practice of giving (*dana*) or keeping precepts (*sila*). Your practice of *dana* and *sila* are *kamma-bhava* that are conditioned by the desire to be reborn in the celestial world (*kāma upādāna*). As a result of good deeds here, you will be reborn there. The rebirth is *upapatti-bhava* that is also conditioned by that desire.

Sometimes you get wrong information such as to be reborn as a celestial being you must sacrifice an animal like a lamb, a cow, or even a human being. You believe this and do the sacrifice. That means you kill an animal or a human being. Thus, unwholesome *kamma* is conditioned by your grasping or desire to be reborn in a celestial world (*kāma-upādāna*). But, as a result of that unwholesome *kamma*, you will have rebirth (*upapatti-bhava*) in hell or the four woeful states, not in the celestial world as you wish. So, the rebirth in four woeful states is the *upapatti-bhava*, and the sacrifice of animal or human being is the *kamma bhava*. Both of them are conditioned by the strong desire to be reborn in the celestial world (*kāma-upādāna*).

And suppose you hear someone says that, in the *Brahma* world, there are enjoyments of sensual pleasures and you

practice tranquil meditation (*samatha*) to get concentration absorption (*jhāna*) so that you can be reborn as a *Brahma*. The practice of *jhāna* is *kamma-bhava* (action). It is conditioned by the desire to enjoy the sensual pleasure in the Brahma realm (*kāma-upādāna*). As a result of the *jhāna*, you will be reborn there, and that is the *upapatti-bhava* (rebirth).

Actually, according to the teachings of the Buddha, there are no sensual pleasures in the world of *Brahma* because the *Brahmas* have only three senses: eye, ear, and mind. They do not have the sense of smell, taste or touch. Even the two senses of eye and ear are not for enjoyment of sensual pleasures but to see the Buddha and to hear the *dhamma*. In Hindu teachings, the *Brahmas* have wives and enjoy sensual pleasures in their realms.

**Two Kinds of Bhava Conditioned by Attachment to Wrong View:** The law of *kamma* says that wholesome deeds (*kusala kamma*) bring wholesome results and unwholesome deeds (*akusala kamma*) bring unwholesome results. If you do not believe in the law of *kamma*, then you may not do wholesome deeds and fail to refrain from unwholesome actions. What you will do may be all for your own happiness and enjoyment. You may do anything, whether just or unjust, to get happiness for yourself.

If you do something unwholesome, that is the *kamma-bhava* conditioned by your attachment to wrong view of *kamma* and *kammic* results (*diṭṭhi-upādāna*). As a result, you will be reborn in the four woeful states. The rebirth in the four woeful states is the *upapatti-bhava* conditioned by your attachment to wrong view (*diṭṭhi-upādāna*).

There are some people who may not believe in *kamma* but do so many good deeds, like giving to charities, building hospitals or schools, or giving a great amount of money to some humanitarian foundation, and so on. Although they

do not believe in the law of *kamma*, they still do good to help people in this world. So, their good deeds are their *kamma-bhava* that will bring them good result and good rebirth (*upapatti bhava*) in the future according to the law of *kamma*. If they do good deeds with belief that their deeds will take them to the God or will bring eternal happiness to their soul, then their good deeds (*kamma-bhava*) and good rebirth (*upapatti-bhava*) are regarded as being conditioned by the attachment to their wrong view.

**Two Kinds of Bhava Conditioned by Attachment to Habitual Practices:** If you believe that acting like a dog, a cow or any animal can lead you to liberation and you practice as such, then this is an attachment to the wrong view of habitual practices (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa upādāna*). Your practice is the *kamma-bhava* and, as Buddha said, your rebirth as an animal or in hell is the *upapatti-bhava*. Both are conditioned by the attachment to the wrong view of habitual practices. On the other hand, if you believe giving (*dana*) and keeping precepts (*sila*) as the only means of liberation and practice them accordingly, then this is also another kind of attachment to wrong view of habitual practices. This attachment is a condition for your merit (*kamma-bhava*) and celestial rebirth (*upapatti-bhava*). This is what is explained in the commentary. So, *sīlabbata* mean not only rites and rituals or animal behaviors but also the wholesome practice of *dana* and *sila* if they are performed as only ways of liberation.

**Two Kinds of Bhava Conditioned by Attachment to Wrong View of Soul:** The fourth *upādāna* is the attachment to wrong view of soul (*atta-vāda*). A person who has this view will think that I have a soul and, therefore, must do something to improve my soul or to get liberation. With such purpose, he may do meritorious deeds (*kamma-bhava*) and get a good rebirth (*upapatti-bhava*); or he may do unwholesome deeds



(*kamma-bhava*), like sacrifice of animal or something like that, and will get the woeful rebirth (*upapatti-bhava*). His good or bad deeds (*kamma-bhava*) and good or bad rebirth (*upapatti-bhava*) are conditioned by his attachment to the wrong view of soul.

This is how the attachment contributes to two kinds of *bhava*: action (*kamma-bhava*) and rebirth (*upapatti-bhava*). Among these two, *kamma-bhava* is the direct consequence of attachment (*upādāna*), and rebirth is actually a secondary consequence. Since *upapatti-bhava* in this link and *jāti* in the next link means rebirth, it would be better to take *bhava* as “*kamma bhava*” in this link. Then, it will be easier for us to understand. The only reason we have explained why two *bhavas* are taken in this link while only one *bhava* is for the next one because our books explained like that.

**Vipassanā Practice Is Not Exceptional:** According to this link, whatever we do, either good or bad, is conditioned by one of these four kinds of attachment or grasping (*upādāna*). How about our practice of *vipassanā* meditation? *Vipassanā* practice is not exceptional. It is also conditioned by attachment to happiness (*kāma-upādāna*). We practice *vipassanā* because we want to be free from mental defilements; in other words, we want to get true happiness. The attachment or clinging to that true happiness is *upādāna*. Whether it is for *nibbāna* or *arahantship*, the desire is desire. Attachment is attachment. So, conditioned by the attachment to happiness (*kāma-upādāna*), we practice *vipassanā* meditation. There is also another reason why we can say that practice of *vipassanā* is conditioned by attachment. We know that these four kinds of attachment are mental defilements and *vipassanā* meditation must be practiced to get rid of them. For this reason, we practice *vipassanā*. Thus, our practice of *vipassanā* is conditioned by attachment. This second explanation is based on a statement made by the commentator that *kusala*

is conditioned by ignorance. Ignorance is an unwholesome mental state but if you do something wholesome in order to get rid of it, then ignorance is said to be a condition for the act of wholesomeness.

**Whether Vipassanā Leads to Rebirth:** It is good that we practice *vipassanā* meditation regardless of whether we are motivated by desire to gain true happiness or to overcome the mental defilements. The question here is: Whether *vipassanā* practice leads to rebirth. When we practice *vipassanā*, do we aim for a good rebirth? One commentary says that *vipassanā* will not bring rebirth; but it also states the opinion of a renowned monk that, until one becomes an *arahant*, *vipassanā* will bring rebirth at least seven times. And Mahasi Sayadaw pointed out that, in the book of *paṭṭhāna* which is the highest authority of *Abhidhamma*, it is stated that even the highest level of *vipassanā* insight called “*gotrabhū*” which takes *nibbāna* as object is a condition for rebirth. So, if the highest state of *vipassanā* is a condition for rebirth, then the lower states of *vipassanā* will definitely bring rebirth. Following the *paṭṭhāna*, we must say that *vipassanā* also brings rebirth. If you believe the law of *kamma*, you can easily accept it.

What kind of *kusala* is the *vipassanā* practice? It is a wholesome act belonging to the sense sphere (*kāmāvacara-kusala*) and will give results. Why? Because it is the law of *kamma*. So, if you do this kind of merit, you will surely get the result as a rebirth as a human being or as a celestial being. You cannot avoid it. Once you put a seed of mango in the soil, even though you have no desire for it to grow into a tree, it will nevertheless grow into a tree if it gets necessary moisture and temperature and other suitable conditions. In the same way, we can accept that *vipassanā* as sense-sphere wholesomeness (*kamavacara kusala*) will give results as rebirth in the sense sphere.

**Why We Practice Vipassanā:** Why we practice *vipassanā* if it is just for a good rebirth when we can get such good rebirth by practicing giving (*dāna*) and keeping precepts (*sīla*) which are less strenuous and more comfortable? Or, in other words, why do we practice *vipassanā* if it still brings rebirth as a result? We practice *vipassanā* because *vipassanā* can lead us out of this round of rebirth. With the practice of *vipassanā*, we abandon the mental defilements little by little, moment by moment. By being mindful of the prominent object at the present moment, we are preventing mental defilements from arising. That means we are abandoning or getting rid of the mental defilements momentarily. When the practice improves, we will see that mental defilements cannot arise even with regard to objects which we do not observe. So, by overcoming mental defilements with regard to the objects we observe, we will also be able to keep the mental defilements away with regard to the objects which we do not observe. Thus, mental defilements become weaker and weaker as we make progress in *vipassanā*. And time will come when the path (*magga*) enlightenment arises destroying mental defilements altogether.

So, *vipassanā* is something that prepares conditions for the *magga* (path) enlightenment to arise. Without *vipassanā*, without this preparation, *magga* cannot arise. Since *vipassanā* can lead us to the eradication of mental defilements, we have to practice it. We don't need to think about the rebirth it leads to. If we look at how it can help *magga* enlightenment to arise to eradicate mental defilements, then we will deeply appreciate the practice of *vipassanā*.

That is the difference between ordinary wholesome deeds and *vipassanā* practice. Although both are wholesome acts belonging to sense sphere, there is this difference. The other kinds of meritorious deeds cannot by themselves lead to the eradication of mental defilements or lead to freedom

from this round of rebirths. It is only *vipassanā* practice that can lead us out of this round of rebirths. So, if we want to experience true happiness or want to get out of this round of rebirths, then we must practice *vipassanā* meditation. We should not be content with just the deed of generosity (*dana*) or the observation of moral precepts (*sila*) or even the practice of *samatha* meditation.

## Tenth Link

# Bhava-paccayā Jāti

### *Bhava-paccayā jāti*

Because of *kamma-bhava* as condition, there arises rebirth.

**Bhava:** We come to the tenth link that is between *bhava* and *jāti*. I hope you still remember two kinds of *bhava*. In the link between grasping (*upādāna*) and *bhava*, we explained two kinds of *bhava*: *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti bhava*. So, *kamma bhava* means just *kamma*, wholesome or unwholesome deeds, and *upapatti bhava* means actually rebirth in different realms.

**Jāti:** *Jāti* here means rebirth. It is the same as *upapatti bhava*.

In the ninth link that is between *upādāna* (clinging) and *bhava* previously discussed, we learn that *bhava* means both *kamma* and rebirth because if there is grasping, there are both *kamma* and rebirth. In this link “*Bhava-paccayā Jāti*: Dependent on *bhava*, *jāti* arises,” we must take *bhava* to mean only *kamma* (*kamma-bhava*), not rebirth (*upapatti-bhava*) because if we take *bhava* to mean rebirth, then it will clash with *jāti*, which is also rebirth. In this link, *bhava* as just *kamma* is a condition for rebirth.

What is rebirth? Rebirth is defined as the first manifestation of aggregates in living beings. For human beings, rebirth does not mean birth but conception when the phenomena arise first in one’s life. They are the relinking consciousness, its concomitant mental factors, and certain kinds of material properties. They constitute five aggregates,

and they are collectively called “*jāti*.”

For *devas*, gods, and *brahmas*, there is no conception in the mother’s womb for nine or ten months like human beings. When they are born, they are born fully grown. For them, the first aggregates arising at the beginning of their life is *jāti*.

**Link to Link:** According to this tenth link, rebirth (*jāti*) is conditioned by wholesome or unwholesome deeds (*kamma bhava*). Tracing the link further then *kamma* is conditioned by clinging (*upādāna*), clinging is conditioned by craving (*taṇhā*), and craving is conditioned by feeling (*vedanā*). When you have some good feeling about something, then you are attached to it. That attachment grows into clinging. The clinging makes you do something to get what you crave for by all means available, whether right or wrong. Then, wholesome or unwholesome *kamma* takes place. And this is *bhava* or *kamma* in this link. As a result of *bhava* or *kamma*, there arises *jāti* or rebirth, whether it is in happy or unhappy state. Human realm, *Deva* realm and *Brahma* realm are called happy states, and the realms of hell, animal, hungry ghost, and *asura* are called unhappy states. So, as a result of good *kamma*, a being gets rebirth (*jāti*) in happy state and, as a result of unwholesome *kamma*, a being gets rebirth (*jāti*) in an unhappy state.

**How We Know Kamma Producing Rebirth:** How do we know rebirth (*jāti*) is conditioned by wholesome or unwholesome deeds (*kamma*)? We do not possess supernormal power to have a direct knowledge of this link; therefore, we have to rely on inference.

There are differences in human beings. Even among children born of the same parents, they have differences. One member of the family is intelligent while the other may be dull; one may learn something quickly while the other

slowly; one may be beautiful while the other may be not, and so on. We can see differences even in twins. Twins are very much alike, but still there are differences among them. We cannot find the cause of their differences in this life because they are born of the same parents meaning the same heredity and they are raised in the same family and brought up under the same circumstances. But still they are different.

So, there must be some reasons other than heredity and environment for their differences. If we cannot find the reason in the current life, then it is logical to assume that past *kamma* must be responsible for differences in the present. By inference, we accept that differences here in this life are caused by wholesome or unwholesome deeds done in the past (*kamma bhava*). In a nutshell, *kamma bhava* is the condition for the rebirth (*jāti*).

**Two Links Similar:** We have learned a similar connection in the second link: “*Sankhārā-paccayā viññāna*: Dependent on *sankhārā* (*kamma*), there arises *viññāna* (rebirth-consciousness).” And I told you that the difference between *sankhārā* there in the second link and *bhava* (*kamma-bhava*) in this link. *Sankhārā* belongs to previous period and *kamma-bhava* belongs to current period. Furthermore, *viññāna* in the second link means only rebirth-consciousness while *jāti* in this link includes not only rebirth consciousness but also its concomitant mental factors and material properties. So, *jāti* here is wider than *viññāna* there.

There is no explanation why only rebirth consciousness (*viññāna*) is taken there in the second link. I think it is because Buddha wanted to explain the relationship between rebirth consciousness and its concomitant mental factors and physical phenomena in the third link: “*Viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpa*: Dependent on consciousness, there arise mental factors and physical phenomena.”

## Eleventh Link

# Jāti-paccayā jarā maramana

*Jāti-paccayā jarā maramana, soka-parideva-dukkhadomanass'upāyāsā sambhavant.*

Because of rebirth as condition, there arise aging and death, and there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.

It is not difficult to understand that old age and death are conditioned by rebirth (*jāti*). Since the day we were reborn as a human being, we are getting old day by day and approaching death in the end. So, old age and death are related to rebirth for a human being.

**Two Kinds of Old Age (*Jarā*):** *Jarā* is translated into English as old age or decay. There are two kinds of *jarā* explained in the commentary. The first one is as a characteristic of all conditioned phenomena. All conditioned phenomena, or in other words, all mind and matter, go through three stages when they come into existence: arising stage, prolonging stage, and disappearing stage. These three stages are called three common characteristics of all conditioned phenomena (*sankhata-lakkhanā*). Among them, the prolonging stage is actually the stage of getting old. So, *jarā*, in an ultimate sense, means the prolonging stage of conditioned phenomena. And the first kind is not visible by our naked eyes (*apākaṭa-jarā*).

The second kind is obvious old-age. The aggregates are obviously getting older and older year by year, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment. We call this second kind of *jarā* as visible *jarā* (*pākaṭa-jarā*).



Do you think you can see old age? What you see is the consequences of old age, not the old age itself. Old age (*jarā*) is said to be known only to the mind, which means only through the mind can we see the old age. What we see as old age is actually the result or consequences of old age.

**Loss of Youthfulness:** When you become old, your limbs become loose or heavy. And then you don't feel as energetic as you did in the past. You may have impaired hearing and your ears might not be as keen as they were before. All your faculties are deteriorating. You lose youthfulness day by day. When you become old, you don't look young any more. In 1990, I went to Japan and a former student of mine showed me the pictures he took of me more than thirty years ago when we were in Burma in 1957. When I looked at my pictures, I was surprised: "Could I be that person?" I was so young at that time. If you compare that picture and me now, you will say, "Oh, these are two different persons." We have changed so much through time. In the same way, for example, if you look at the pictures of a movies star when she was young and when she is old, you will see how different she becomes. So, everybody must lose youthfulness, when he or she gets old.

**Loss of Strength:** Also, we are not as strong as before when we get old. We lose strength. Then we tend to forget many things. Although I have been practicing and teaching mindfulness, I often have to look for my things here and there. That is old age. I mean consequences of old age.

**Loss of Pleasantness:** It is said in the books that when you get old there are times when even your own children are not happy with you. "This old man is getting in my way," or something like that. Your sons and daughters will say something unpleasant about you. I am lucky enough not to meet that condition because I am a monk. If you are a lay person or have children, you might encounter that situation.

**Dotage:** When people get very old, they act like children. And this happens to many people. It is called dotage.

All of these are the signs of old age. They are not old age itself but symptoms of old age. When you see these things in a person, we know that this person is old. So, we cannot see *jarā* or old age with our eyes but we can see consequences of *jarā*. Then, we can infer that there will be *jarā* in a person because he or she is reborn as a human being.

**Two Kinds of Death (Marana):** There are two kinds of death. One is as a characteristic of all conditioned phenomena and the other is conventional death. You remember the three moments such as arising moment, prolonging moment and the disappearing moment. This disappearing moment is death moment in ultimate sense or the characteristic of all conditioned phenomena. Consciousness (*citta* or *viññāṇa*) arises and disappears very very fast. It is said that, in a single flash of lightening, there are billions of thought moments arising and passing away. That means we are dying billions of times within a second, dying and then being reborn, and dying and being reborn. The second kind of death is what we call “convention death,” or it is the end of one’s life. This kind of death is defined in *Pāli* text thus: “Discontinuation of life faculties in one life.”

The first kind of death is too subtle to be afraid of. But the conventional death is what we are very afraid of because this is the end of our life. Such scary death will come to us because we have rebirth.

So, old age and death are the consequences of rebirth (*jāti*). That is why it says: “Dependent on rebirth, there arise old age and death.”

**No Eternal Life to Enjoy:** The whole of Dependent Origination is applicable only to living beings. But this last link, the link between rebirth and old age and death, can also

be applied to inanimate things. If we take *jāti* as the arising, then where there is an arising, there is *jarā-marana*, aging and destruction, in the end. So, where there is beginning, there is an end. This is natural law. It is not created by the Buddha or anyone else and cannot be modified or changed. Everything or every being comes under this law. If we accept this law, then we can understand that there is no such a place or realm where we can be reborn and live forever. We must understand this correctly and should not wish for what is against this law like: “May I be reborn in *nibbāna* or in heaven to live forever.” So long as there is arising or rebirth, there is aging and death. That is why, according to Buddha’s teaching, there cannot be a heaven where you are reborn and enjoy life forever.

There are some more consequences of rebirth other than old age and death such as *Soka*, *Parideva*, *Dukkha*, *Domanassa*, and *Upāyāsa*. If you know *Pāli*, you will see that *Jarā* and *Marana* are combined as one compound word and then *Soka*, *Parideva*, *Dukkha*, *Domanassa*, and *Upāyāsa* are combined as another compound word. Why are they separated as two compound words? Or, why are they not made into one long compound word? It is because *Jarā* and *Marana* are unavoidable consequences of *Jāti* but *Soka* and others are not so. They are incidental consequences of *Jāti*. That is why the two compounds are separated.

**Sorrow:** *Soka* means sorrow or the unpleasant feeling (*domanassa*). It is caused by loss of relatives, wealth, health, virtue or *sila*, or loss of right view.

**Lamentation:** *Parideva* or lamentation means crying. When people are sorrowful, they cry and say something, especially at funeral. You may have seen some people crying and talking to someone in the coffin. So, the making of sound or noise through sorrow is called lamentation.

**Pain, Grief and Despair:** *Dukkha* means physical pain experienced in physical body. *Domanassa* means mental pain and is translated as grief or whatever pain in the mind. The last one, *upāyāsa*, is translated as despair. It is defined or explained as anguish produced by excessive mental pain in one who is affected by loss of relatives, and so on. So, *Upāyāsa* is excessive mental suffering.

The commentaries give a simile to explain the difference between sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*) and despair (*upāyāsa*) that are similar but different in intensity. Sorrow is compared to oil boiling in a pan on the fire. Lamentation is compared to the oil that overflows as it is overheated. And despair is compared to that oil drying out after excessive burning.

Although sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are described as incidental consequences, they are very real to us. All of us have experienced all of these. It is hard to imagine people who have not experienced any of these five consequences. For a human being, they are almost unavoidable. Even for *Devas*, these five consequences may be inevitable because *Devas* also experience sorrow, and so on. It is said that, when the signs of death appear to *Deva*, they experience a great amount of sorrow. Once a *Deva* saw these signs and realizes that he was to be reborn in hell, he was so afraid and sorry that he came down to ask the Buddha to preach to him.

As for *Brahmas*, it is different. They do not have all these five consequences. That is why these are called incidental consequences of rebirth (*jāti*). Do you know why? It is because in the *Brahma* realm, there is no anger and sadness (*dosa, domanassa*) although they have not eradicated them altogether. What about *Dukkha*? *Brahma* has only senses of eye and ear. They do not have sense of touch; therefore, they do not have body pain or no *dukkha*. They do not have

mental pain, grief and despair either. So, *Brahmas* do not experience these five. That is why these five are called incidental consequences of rebirth and separated from old age and death.

**Going Round and Round:** We have learned all eleven links with twelve factors. The commentaries say that these links should be viewed as a wheel or a circle with no beginning. They explain that, when sorrow, lamentation and others arise, there also arises ignorance or delusion. Actually, where there is ignorance, there are sorrow, lamentation, etc., and vice versa, although ignorance is not mentioned by name in the last link. Once there is ignorance, there is *sankhārā*. Where there is *sankhārā*, there arises *viññāna*, and so on. Thus, this circle is going round and round.

This explanation, however, is applicable only to human beings and *Devas*, but not to *Brahmas* who do not have sorrow, lamentation, etc. How can the wheel of life turn round and round for *Brahmas* if they do not have sorrow, lamentation and so on?

The other explanation is that sorrow and others in ultimate sense are mental defilements called cankers (*āsava*). They are passive form of anger (*dosa*) and sadness (*domanassa*), which are always accompanied by ignorance or delusion. There are four kinds of canker; canker of sense of desire, canker of attachment to existence, canker of wrong view and canker of ignorance. Sorrow arises from one of these. You feel sorrow when you don't get what you want, when you lose something or someone you love. Your sorrow is caused by the canker of attachment to sense object and so on. So, the Buddha said that, with arising of cankers, there is arising of ignorance. In that way, starting from ignorance this wheel turns round and round and on and on and on. These are explanations given in the *Visuddhimagga*.

The *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* gives explanation as follows:

“With arising of cankers in those who are constantly oppressed by perplexity of decay and death, the ignorance again occurs.”

When ignorance arises, there arise *sankhārās* again. Thus, this round goes on and on and on. I think that explanation covers all beings, including *Brahmas*, because it says that cankers arise in us when we are oppressed by old age and death, but it does not mention the sorrow and lamentation, and so on. Actually aging and death really means this very life. When we are living this life, we have cankers. When cankers arise, then the ignorance also arises. So, when there is ignorance, there are *sankhārās*, and so on. It goes on and on and on in this way.

**Three Rounds Turning Endlessly:** We can also explain it based on the three rounds. I hope you remember three rounds such as round of defilement (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*), round of *kamma* (*kamma-vaṭṭa*) and round of result (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*). Let say, we see something, and we fail to apply mindfulness to it. Then, we cannot understand its true nature. That is ignorance. We think it to be good, beautiful or everlasting. That is delusion. As a result, we crave it and later cling to it. Thus, we are developing ignorance, craving, and clinging (*avijjā, taṇhā, upādāna*), which constitute round of mental defilements. We will do something good or bad in order to get what we get attached to. Therefore, we accumulate *kamma* (*sankhārā, kamma-bhava*). This is round of *kamma*. When we do something good or bad, we are bound to get its results. This is round of result (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*). This round of result includes consciousness (*viññāna*), mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*), six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*), contact (*phassa*) and feeling (*vedanā*). When we have these five, we again have ignorance and delusion with regard to them because we

fail to be mindful. Thus, we go from one round to another endlessly. The beginning of the wheel is never known as in the case of hen and egg.

**Is Ignorance not the Beginning?** If this wheel of life has no beginning, why is ignorance mentioned at the beginning of the wheel? Does it mean that ignorance is the first cause of all things. Ignorance is mentioned first, not because it is beginning of this wheel but because it is the basic cause of the whole wheel or it is the prominent cause of the whole wheel. Ignorance is actually at the root of all wholesome and unwholesome *kamma*. When ignorance is taken, then you have taken all. When you can destroy it, you can destroy all. It is basic cause of this wheel of life. Here, the Commentary gives a simile. If you hold a snake at the head, your arm may be coiled by the snake with its body. But, when you cut its head, you do not have to uncoil its body around your arm. It will uncoil by itself. In the same way, when there is ignorance, there are the other consequences going round and round. But, once you cut ignorance, everything will be gone. Since ignorance is the basic cause of the wheel of life, it is mentioned at the beginning. But it does not mean that it is the first cause of this wheel of life. Because, as you know, ignorance is also conditioned by cankers and conditioned by some other things.

Now the conclusion of the Dependent Origination.

***Evam'etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.***

*Thus, there arises this whole mass of sufferings*

This conclusion is also important. Buddha described the whole of this *Paṭicca-samuppāda* as mass of suffering that belong to a living being. Here, Buddha used the word “*kevalassa*” that means “whole” or “solid.” It means the whole mass of suffering or mass of solid suffering, not

mixed with any pleasure. In ultimate reality, what we call an individual or a person or a man or a woman or a being is nothing but mass of solid suffering. When we say a person is born, that means, in the ultimate sense, a mass of solid suffering is born. When we say someone dies, that mean a mass of suffering dies. It is wrong view if we take this mass of suffering as a person or as an individual. Understanding a being to be a mass of solid suffering, we can protect ourselves from falling into this wrong view.

**Why Are They Called Mass of Suffering?** Because they are tormented and oppressed by arising and disappearing. That is the meaning of *dukkha*. *Dukkha* means being oppressed by arising and disappearing. Since each of these factors is oppressed by arising and disappearing, it falls under the head of *dukkha*. What we call a person or an individual or a being is nothing but this mass of *dukkha*. In daily life, however, we cannot avoid using the words like a person or a being or whatever. Because we live in the conventional world, we cannot do away with conventional terms altogether. Although we use the conventional terms, we must understand that what we refer to as a person is actually a group of five aggregates or a mass of suffering, a mass of things that are impermanent. If we understand this, we understand the question below.

**“Is an *Arahant* Reborn After His Death?”** We can understand that this is not a proper question because, in the ultimate sense, there is no *Arahant*. *Arahant* is also a mass of suffering. However, it does not reproduce once it disappears because its causes are eliminated. With the exhaustion of fuel of ignorance and craving, there is no more rebirth. That means there is no more mass of suffering arising there. Therefore, we do not say an *Arahant* dies and he is not reborn. If we must say this then we have to understand that we use this term unavoidably and conventionally. This is how



we must understand.

In one *Sutta*, a monk said that, when an Arahant dies, he disappears once and for all. Then Venerable *Sāriputta* rejected what the monk said and taught him until he was enlightened. Later, venerable *Sāriputta* asked him about the death of an *Arahant*, and he answered as follows:

“It is just a mass of suffering that is happening for that long. It ceases with the exhaustion of fuel of ignorance and craving. That’s all about the death of an *Arahat*.”

So, please be mindful of this mass of suffering.

So far, we have gone through the *Paṭicca-samuppāda*, which is all about understanding of this mass of suffering. This mass of suffering will go on so long as we cannot eliminate its basic causes of ignorance, craving and clinging. Once we are able to stop them from arising, we will be able to put an end to this mass of suffering.

## Conclusion

**To Discard Wrong View:** We have gone through all the eleven links of the twelve factors in the Dependent Origination. But there are some more things to understand in connection with this teaching. When we look at the links, say, “Conditioned by ignorance, there arises *sankhārā* (*kamma*);” “Conditioned by *sankhārā*, there arises *viññāna* (consciousness)” and so on, we can see that everything is conditioned. They are not created by neither God nor *Brahma* nor anyone else. By understanding of Dependent Origination, we can discard the wrong belief that there is a creator or that beings are created by God or *Brahma* or whosoever.

There was a belief during the time of the Buddha that it is our soul (*atta*) that experiences anything. When we are happy, it is the soul that is happy; when we are sad, it is the soul that is sad, and so on. This teaching of *Paṭicca-samuppāda* can abolish such wrong notion. There are just mental and physical phenomena arising and disappearing depending upon the conditions. There is nothing apart from them. There is no person who enjoys or suffers the feeling apart from the feeling itself. So, when we study the *Paṭicca-samuppāda*, we can get rid of that wrong notion.

**To See Emptiness:** The Commentary teaches us that we must see emptiness in all the twelve factors. But here emptiness does not mean nothingness. Emptiness means devoid of certain qualities. For example, ignorance is void of permanency. It is also void of beauty as it defiles and torments our mind. Also it is void of pleasure as it is itself tormented by arising and disappearing. And it is also void of soul, any eternal substance. In this sense, we should see emptiness in all the twelve factors.

In *Theravada* Buddhism, emptiness does not mean that

there exists nothing. But it is empty of certain qualities. I think the English word “empty” is a good word for “*suññata*” in *Pāli* here. If we say a bag is empty, then there is a bag but there is nothing in it. In the same way, when we say, “ignorance is empty,” there is ignorance in ultimate reality; but it is empty of such qualities as permanency, beauty, pleasantness, or soul. That is what is meant by saying ignorance is empty. The same is true with all the remaining factors.

**First Link:** It is: “*Dependent on ignorance, there arises sankhārā (kamma).*” It teaches us that there is no soul or God who creates *kamma*. Things happen just because they have their conditions. There is a belief that whatever you do is done by the soul. Whether you do good or bad, actually you do not do it, but the soul does it. That view is discarded by this first link.

**Second Link:** “*Dependent on sankhārā (kamma), there arises rebirth-consciousness (viññāna).* This link teaches us that there is no transmigration of the soul. It is good or bad *kamma* that is the condition for the rebirth-consciousness. So, nothing goes from one life to another. Both transmigration and soul are denied as there is nothing that transmigrates from one place to another. Every phenomenon arises and disappears at the same place. No mind or no matter actually moves from one place to another one. What we are here in this life is the result of what we did in the previous life. The rebirth consciousness (*viññāna*) arises or, in other words, we were born to this life as a result of good or bad past *kamma*. There is neither soul nor transmigration of anything.

**The Third Link:** “*Dependent on consciousness, there arise mind and body.*” This teaches us that what we call a being is not one solid thing as it is believed, but is made up of different components. They are mental and physical phenomena. So, a being is actually a conglomeration of different components such as consciousness, mental factors

and material properties.

**The Remaining Links:** The remaining links show us that, when we see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think (*saḷāyatana*), there arises mental contact (*phassa*), which is followed by feeling (*vedanā*) that leads to craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), *kamma* (*bhava*). So, there is no soul or any permanent entity that sees, hears, feels, craves, clings, and so on. These are all just mental and physical phenomena interrelated and interconnected. This is what these links are teaching us.

### Summary

There are some more to learn. I think I have already mentioned at the beginning of the class and thereafter about three periods, twelve factors and so on. Let me give summary of them to ensure your better understanding.

**Twelve Factors (Anga):** First of all, the twelve factors that are the components of the wheel of life or the teaching of Dependent Origination are ignorance (*avijjā*), mental formation (*sankhārā*), consciousness (*viññāna*), mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*), six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), mental contact (*phassa*), feelings (*vedanā*), craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), *kamma*-*bhava* (*bhava*), rebirth (*jāti*), old age (*jarā*), death (*marana*).

Five remaining factors including sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*), and despair (*upāyāsā*) are not counted because they are not unavoidable consequences.

**Three Periods (Addha):** The twelve factors are divided into three periods: past, present and future. Ignorance (*avijjā*) and mental formation (*sankhārā*) belong to past period or past life. Consciousness (*viññāna*), mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*), six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), mental contact (*phassa*), feelings (*vedanā*), craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*),

*kamma bhava* (*bhava*) belong to the present period or present life. Rebirth (*jāti*), old age (*jarā*), death (*marana*) belong to the future period or future life. So, this wheel covers three periods or three lives, not one life. If you take this life as present, then the previous life is regarded as past, and life to come is future. But if you take the life to come as present, then this very life would be regarded as past, and the life to come after the future one would be future life, and so on.

There are some people nowadays who say *Paṭicca-samuppāda* covers only this life. They interpret it in their own way. But, if we follow the traditional exposition and explanation, we cannot avoid the conclusion that Dependent Origination covers three lives. For example, mental formation (*sankhārā*) and consciousness (*viññāna*) belong to different lives. Mental formation (*sankhārā*) are *kamma* done in one life and consciousness (*viññāna*) is something that arises in another life as result of that past *kamma*. It goes on until *bhava* that is another *kamma* (*kamma bhava*). And, as a result of past *kamma bhava*, there is rebirth (*jāti*) or the first appearance of aggregates in another different life. So, following the traditional exposition or explanation, we can safely say that *Paṭicca-samuppāda* covers not one but three lives.

**Four Phases (*Sankhepa*) and Twenty Modes (*Ākāra*):**  
In this Dependent Origination, there are four phases or segments (*sankhepa*) and twenty modes (*ākāra*) such as:

1. Five past causes (*avijjā, sankhārā, taṇhā, upādāna, kamma-bhava*)
2. Five present results (*viññāna, nāma-rūpa, saḷāyatana, phassa, vedanā*)
3. Five present causes (*taṇhā, upādāna, kamma-bhava, avijjā, sankhārā*)
4. Five future results (*viññāna, nāma-rūpa, saḷāyatana,*

*phassa, vedanā*)

In the original teaching, there are only two factors in the past causes: ignorance (*avijjā*) and mental formation (*sankhārā*). But ignorance (*avijjā*) takes craving (*taṇhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*) with it as they are concomitants and belong to the round of defilement (*kilesa vaṭṭa*). And mental formation (*sankhārā*) takes *kamma-bhava* as they belong to the round of *kamma* (*kamma vaṭṭa*). Hence there are five causes in the past.

Present causes consist of only three factors: craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), *kamma-bhava*. But they also take their concomitants in the same way as the past factors which are ignorance (*avijjā*) and mental formation (*sankhārā*).

Present results are obvious and straightforward. But future results have only two factors in the original formula: old age (*jarā*) and death (*marana*). In ultimate sense, however, what are really getting old and dead are nothing but the same five factors as in present results. That is why five present results and five future results are all the same, as both belong to the round of result.

**Three Connections (*Sandhi*):** There are three connections among the twelve factors. The first is between past causes and present results or between mental formation (*sankhārā*) and consciousness (*viññāna*). The second is between present results and present causes or between feelings (*vedanā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). And the third is between present causes and future results or between *kamma bhava* (*bhava*) and rebirth (*jāti*).

**Fourth Connections Available:** There are only three connections in this Dependent Origination as mentioned above because we take them in terms of cause and effect. But, if we take them to be a wheel, I think, there should be one more connection. The books do not say about the fourth,

but we can say there is connection between old age and death (*jarā-marana*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) because, as I said before, ignorance (*avijjā*) is not causeless but conditioned by cankers which results from old age and death (*jarā-marana*). Remember, we don't count sorrow (*soka*) and others as they are not unavoidable. So, the fourth connection is between old age and death (*jarā-marana*) and ignorance (*avijjā*).

**Three Rounds (*Vaṭṭa*):** There are three rounds that go on and on and on. They are:

1. Round of Defilement (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*) constitutes ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*).
2. Round of *Kamma* (*kamma-vaṭṭa*) consists of mental formation (*sankhārā*) and *kamma* (*kamma-bhava*).
3. Round of result (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*) includes consciousness (*viññāna*), mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*), six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana*), mental contact (*phassa*), feelings (*vedanā*), and then rebirth (*upapatti-bhava* or *jāti*) and old age and death (*jarā-marana*).

These three rounds are turning round and round because round of defilement (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*) generates round of *kamma* (*kamma-vaṭṭa*) that, in turn, generates round of result (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*). And, depending on round of result (*vipāka-vaṭṭa*), there arises round of defilement (*kilesa-vaṭṭa*) again. Thus, it goes on and on like a wheel. That is why they are called rounds (*vaṭṭa*).

**Two Roots (*Mūla*):** There are two roots in the Dependent Origination such as ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). They are called roots because we can divide the twelve factors into two parts: the first one is from ignorance (*avijjā*) to feelings (*vedanā*) and the second one from craving (*taṇhā*) to old age and death (*jarā-marana*). Ignorance (*avijjā*) is the chief of the first part and craving (*taṇhā*) is the chief of the second part. Actually, as you know, ignorance (*avijjā*)

and craving (*taṇhā*) always arise together. When craving (*taṇhā*) arises, so does ignorance (*avijjā*). They arise together. Ignorance (*avijjā*) with the help of craving (*taṇhā*) perpetuates this round of existence. Without mindfulness, we cannot see the true nature of things then we take things to be beautiful and good and then attached to them.

It is like somebody blindfolding you and another person pushing you into the pit. Ignorance (*avijjā*) blindfolds you making you not see the true nature of things. Then craving (*taṇhā*) comes and pushes you into the pit. So, ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) are together. They are called the roots of the rounds of existence (*mūla*). When you cut the roots of the tree, the tree dies. Similarly, when you cut ignorance and craving, this tree of round of rebirth also dies. With *vipassanā*, you are cutting these roots moment by moment. When you reach enlightenment, you will cut these two roots once and for all. Once these two roots are cut altogether, there will be no more results of them or no more suffering. So, there will be cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

What do we do to prevent ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) from arising? Mindfulness, right? That is why Buddha said: “*This is the only way for the purification of the mind of beings.*”

So, this is the teaching of *Paṭicca-samuppāda* or Dependent Origination or the wheel of life or whatever name you may call it. As you see, it is profound and very difficult to understand. Only those who have reached the enlightenment such as *Buddhas* and *Arahants* know everything about it. Other people, like us, will know according to their capabilities. Our knowledge of this wheel of life is like just a drop of water in the ocean; therefore, we need not be proud of our knowledge of it. There are many, many more to know about this teaching.



**Four Ways (Naya):** According to the commentary, there are four ways in which we should correctly understand this Dependent Origination.

1. *Ekattha-naya*: In terms of same or ceaseless process
2. *Nānatta-naya*: In terms of different individual
3. *Abyāpāra-naya*: In terms of spontaneousness
4. *Evaṃ-dhammatā-naya*: In terms of Natural Law

**In Terms of Same Process:** We have learned that ignorance (*avijjā*) conditions mental formation (*sankhārā*) and mental formation (*sankhārā*) conditions consciousness (*viññāna*), and so on. These twelve factors are interrelated as cause and effect. This process is turning round and round continuously and ceaselessly without interruption. They belong to the same and ceaseless process, or in daily language, they belong to the same person. My ignorance (*avijjā*) is condition for my mental formation (*sankhārā*) but not for your mental formation (*sankhārā*). And my *sankhārā* (*kamma*) leads to my rebirth (*viññāna*) in the next life. So, they belong to the same process or to the same person. When we understand this way, we can avoid falling into the annihilation view that beings disappear altogether after death.

In this sense, we say that *Bodhisatta* was reborn as a king and *Devadatta* was reborn in hell. We mean they belong to the same process, but we do not mean there is someone migrating from one life to another. So, we should understand the results of *kamma* in this sense. We say, if you do good deeds in this life, you will gain good result in the next life. We mention you as the same person in terms of same and ceaseless process, but not in terms of permanent soul.

**In Terms of Different Individual:** The misinterpretation of the fact that these factors belong to the same process

or the same person can lead us to another wrong view. We may think that if *avijjā*, *sankhārā*, *viññāna*, etc., belong to the same person, then there must be a permanent entity or soul that goes from one life to another. So, it is very important to understand this teaching in terms of different individual factors.

All twelve factors of this wheel have their own individual characteristics. The ignorance is one separate mental factor with its own individual characteristic. The same is true with *sankhārā* (*kamma*), etc. So, ignorance (*avijja*) and *sankhārā* (*kamma*) are separate mental factors, although they belong to the same process. When we understand this, we can avoid the wrong view of eternity since different phenomenon arises every moment. So, there is no permanent identity whatsoever, even though all the factors belong to the same process.

**In Terms of Spontaneousness:** Ignorance (*avijjā*) makes no arrangement for *kamma* (*sankhārā*) to arise. In the same way, mental formation (*sankhārā*) makes no effort to bring about consciousness (*viññāna*), and so on. This means they make neither effort nor arrangement to give rise to their results. Their results just arise spontaneously and naturally. If you understand the twelve factors and their interaction in terms of spontaneousness, you will be able to discard the wrong view that there is a soul (*atta-vāda*) or creator (*issara-nimmāna-vāda*) behind every action we do.

**In Terms of The Natural Law:** If you misinterpret the spontaneousness, however, you may think that things just happen at random without conditions or causes. For example, *avijjā*, *sankhārā*, etc., just arise spontaneously without any condition or cause. The consequence of this is you cannot accept the law of cause and effect and fall into two wrong views that things are happening at random without any cause (*ahetuka-diṭṭhi*). As a result, whatever you do good or bad, they do not constitute *kamma* (*akriya-diṭṭhi*).

Therefore, you should understand that it is the natural law that dependent on ignorance (*avijjā*), there arises mental formation (*sankhārā*), and so on. So, corresponding conditions bring about the corresponding results. Nothing arises at random or without corresponding cause. If you understand this wheel in this way, you can overcome two wrong views mentioned above: wrong view of no-cause (*ahetuka-diṭṭhi*) and wrong view of no-kamma (*akriya-diṭṭhi*).

These are the four ways in which we must understand the doctrine of Dependent Origination.

We live in a conventional world; therefore, we cannot avoid using conventional words. But, as I said before, we should see things in ultimate sense. You know how deep and profound the teaching of Dependent Origination is. That is why the Buddha said to Ananda: “*This Dependent Origination is really profound and appears profound, too.*” It is difficult to understand this wheel of life like to untangle the tangled thread. We only understand Dependent Origination according to our own capability. So, we would still get confused and are not able to get out of the round of rebirth. That is what the Buddha said to Ananda.

The talks I gave here do not cover all aspects of Dependent Origination. Some are so complicated and may be too difficult for the listeners that I purposely left them out. But I think this much is enough. I hope you have a good understanding of the doctrine of Dependent Origination. If you thought you had understood the Dependent Origination before, but now you realize that you do not really understand it after having learnt more about it, then I think you have made progress. The reason is, there are so many things about Dependent Origination for us to learn.

Do you need to learn this much or more about Dependent Origination to practice *Vipasanā* meditation?

When we read *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, we may draw the conclusion that we need to know a lot about Dependent Origination before we can practice *Vipassanā* meditation. This book is actually a guide or a manual for meditating monks. It describes first the purification of virtue or moral conduct and then concentration or *samatha* meditation. After *samatha* meditation, it describes the aggregates, sense-bases, faculties, truths, and then *Paṭicca-samuppāda*. The *Paṭicca-samuppāda* occupies one long chapter in this book. The chapter is called “The Domain of Understanding (*paññā-bhūmi*)” or the domain of *vipassanā* knowledge. So, we may think that, in order to practice, we need to have this much knowledge about aggregates, sense-bases, faculties, truths, and *Paṭicca-samuppāda*.

Furthermore, the *Visuddhimagga* describes *Vipassanā* meditation as to discern mind and matter and their arising and disappearing and so on. From this book, we may draw the conclusion that we must understand much of *Abhidhamma* and Dependent Origination before we practice *Vipassanā* meditation. In addition, even some teachers in our country insist that you must study Dependent Origination (*Paṭicca-samuppāda*) before you practice meditation. As a result, you may have to spend some time learning *Abhidhamma* and Dependent Origination beforehand.

**How Much Knowledge We Need for Vipassanā:** What do you think about that? Can you give me an example which shows that we don’t need much knowledge of *Abhidhamma* and Dependent Origination to practice *Vipassanā* and to become enlightened?

Recently, we have gone through two stories. One is about a female devotee. She did not even know that meditation could be practiced by lay people. But, when she got instructions from the monk and practiced at home, she became enlightened even before those monks who gave

her instructions. I am sure she did not study *Abhidhamma* or Dependent Origination. Another example is a monk called *Cūlapanthaka* who was unable to memorize a verse consisting of only forty-four syllables. How could he learn this Dependent Origination? But Buddha gave him a piece of cloth to contemplate on by saying, “getting dust, getting dust.” Doing so, he got the sense of impurity, impermanence and became fully enlightened in that very morning. There are many stories like this. So, we don’t need to learn much in order to practice meditation.

How much one needs to learn before practicing meditation is a good question. In a discourse, Buddha said, “If a monk just heard that mind and body are impermanent, suffering, devoid of soul, and they are not to be attached to or not to be clung to, then this (much knowledge) is enough for him to practice meditation and get results.” I think all of you have this much knowledge. Of course, it is good to have a good knowledge of *Abhidhamma* and *Paṭicca-samuppāda* but, if you don’t have, you can still practice meditation. So, the knowledge that things are impermanent, suffering, and insubstantial is sufficient.

In conclusion, let us pay respects to the Buddha who discovered this Dependent Origination and taught it to us, and make wishes in a formal way. So, please repeat after me.

*Avijjā-paccayā sankhārā.*

*Sankhārā-paccayā viññānaṃ.*

*Viññāna-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ.*

*Nāma-rūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanaṃ.*

*Saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso.*

*Phassa-paccayā vedanā.*

*Vedanā-paccayā taṇhā.*

*Taṇhā-paccayā upādāna.*

*Upādāna-paccayā bhavo.*

*Bhava-paccayā jāti.*

*Jāti-paccayā jarā-marana,*

*soka-parideva-dukkha-*

*domanass'upāyāsā*

*sambhavanti.*

*Evam'etassa kevalassa dukkha-kkhandhassa samudayo  
hoti.*

**Sayadaw:** *Bhavatu sabbamingalam, rakkhantu  
sabbadevata.*

*Sabba Buddha'nubhavana, sada sukhi bhavantu te.*

*Bhavatu sabbamingalam, rakkhantu sabbadevata.*

*Sabba Dhamma'nubhavana, sada sukhi bhavantu te.*

*Bhavatu sabbamingalam, rakkhantu sabbadevata.*

*Sabba Sangha'nubhavana, sada sukhi bhavantu te.*

May all blessings be to you, may all deities protect you,  
By the power of all Buddhas, may happiness ever be  
yours.

May all blessings be to you, may all deities protect you,  
By the power of all Dhammas, may happiness ever be  
yours.

May all blessings be to you, may all deities protect you,  
By the power of all Sanghas, may happiness ever be  
yours.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

## **Sharing Merits**

May all beings share this merit  
Which we have thus acquired  
For the acquisition of all kinds of happiness

May beings inhabiting space and earth,  
Devas and nagas of mighty power  
Share this merit of ours  
May they long protect the teachings!

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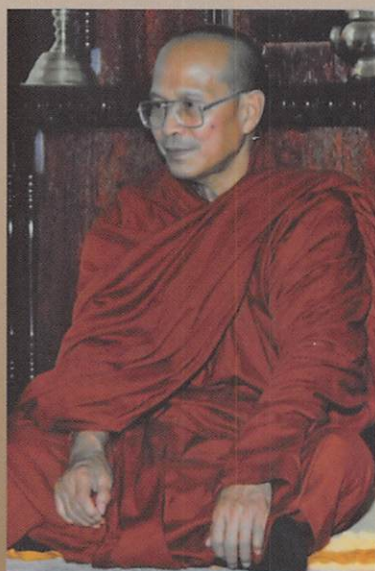
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“Dependent Origination is profound as well as it looks profound. Not understanding this law well, beings get confused and do wrong things that lead them to four woeful states.”

The Buddha



Sayadaw U Silānanda



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