

# ***Companion to Under the Bodhi Tree:*** ***readings on paṭiccasamuppāda from Pāli suttas***

## **The Pāli Sources as Teacher**

Ajahn Buddhadāsa's primary teachers were the Buddha and Nature as expressions of Dhamma. The latter was all around him at Suan Mokkh, the forest monastery where he lived from 1932 until the end of his life, as well as within his mind-body. For the Buddha, he relied upon the Pāli language texts, particularly the Suttanta, the discourses of the Buddha and leading disciples that were passed down orally for a few centuries and then transcribed, compiled, and edited in written form around 2100 years ago. Though influenced by senior monks around the district where he grew up, by his Pāli language teacher in Bangkok, and by a high-ranking Bangkok Abbot who encouraged him, he relied primarily on the school of life and nature that he championed all his life, supported by healthy study of the core texts of Buddhayāna.

Pāli is, literally, the language of the most complete collection of early Buddhist scriptures, those preserved by the southern school currently known as "Theravāda." This textual language is derived from the languages and dialects spoken by the Buddha and later shaped by the incorporation of ancient Sanskrit grammar as these teachings were written down a few centuries later. While never a living language, it is rich in terms describing the workings of mind, how suffering is generated, and how the path of non-suffering through non-clinging may be lived. Fortuitously, corresponding material is preserved in Chinese translation and other Asian languages, which on-going scholarship is bringing to light.

Ajahn Buddhadāsa's teaching consistently refers to these Pāli suttas, the oldest extant record of the Buddha's discourses (suttas), which come closest to the Buddha's original teachings. He did so out of respect and gratitude, as well as to show that teachings considered by his detractors to be controversial and unorthodox were actually based in early teachings the supposedly orthodox had chosen to overlook. To give readers a healthy sampling of these original Buddhist teachings, and to provide background for Ajahn Buddhadāsa's explanation of Buddha's key insights into dependent co-arising, we have included passages from the Pāli suttas between the chapters of *Under the Bodhi Tree*. Further sutta readings are recommended at the end of each chapter, along with full references to enable readers to locate them in various sources, including on the web ([www.liberationpark.org](http://www.liberationpark.org)). Of course, readers are welcome to peruse these passages at will and in whatever order suits you.

As the Pāli suttas were Ajahn Buddhadāsa's root teacher, along with the Nature we are and dwell within, it is fitting to provide translations of these sutta passages based on Ajahn Buddhadāsa's own translations. Early on in his monastic education, he realized that Theravāda orthodoxy followed the Visuddhimagga and Commentaries, too often at the expense of the more fundamental Pāli suttas. Consequently, encouraging serious student-practitioners to explore the Pāli originals was part of his "digging jewels from the Tipiṭaka."

Further, as traditionalists have labeled Ajahn Buddhadāsa's understanding of dependent co-arising "wrong view," "heresy," and "controversial," including these selections from the Pāli alongside his commentary helps to show how his perspectives are grounded in the original teachings.

While the nature of the sutta teaching on dependent co-arising allows for various interpretations, it is important to break free of the rigid, clumsy standardized orthodoxy of the Commentaries (*Atthagatha*) of a millennium after Buddha's *parinibbāna*. While the official Theravāda commentaries have value, they in places stray from Buddha's original meaning and presentation. That is nowhere more clear than with *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

Almost all of these translations are taken from Ajahn Buddhādāsa's *From His Own Lips* series, in which he translated into Thai large portions of the suttas before there was a complete Thai language translation of the *Tiṭṭaka*. These five large volumes are organized around *The Buddha's Life*, *The Noble Truths* (Ariya-Sacca), *Dependent Co-Arising* (Paṭiccasamuppāda), and *Treasure Chest* (a miscellany with emphasis on the proper and improper behavior of monks). I have rendered these selected passages into English, with one eye on the Pāli and another on already published English translations. As alternative readings are available, and cited, I have stuck with Ajahn Buddhādāsa's interpretation and style, for the most part.

I have included these new translations because some of the more widely available translations, while valuable and excellent in many ways, are, in my view, overly beholden to the commentarial orthodoxy. Though still valid as representative of that understanding of Buddha-Dhamma, they tend towards certain biases of view. They consequently lose the openness, even ambiguity, of the original suttas. While we can appreciate the desire for a clear, fixed interpretation of these teachings, accuracy, truth, and practical value can be better served by renderings that encourage exploration of more than one level or angle of understanding.<sup>1</sup> Rather than commit ourselves to one rigid understanding, I prefer to remain open to various interpretations. After all, the commentators of sixteen hundred years ago were well removed from the Buddha's time and context, and we are even further distant. When pondering subtle and profound teachings, nobody can say absolutely that "this is what the Buddha meant." To claim certainty in such matters is hubris. Further, I encourage serious cultivators to compare our renderings here with the standard published translations and consequently have cited those texts as much as possible.

There are variations in the English wording of the standard *paṭiccasamuppāda* sequence. Some of these reflect variations in the Pāli terms used, while others are the translator's attempt to show alternative terms when no one English term is an exact equivalent or clearly superior. In *Under the Bodhi Tree*, the majority of Pāli terms were translated into English at the publisher's urging. Here, I have returned many to Pāli, in keeping with Ajahn Buddhādāsa's practice in his translations. We wish to encourage readers to explore the range of meaning carried by important Pāli terms rather than fall for the illusion that a single English word is the exact translation of the Pāli word. Many English renderings are not actual equivalents and carry connotations not included in the Pāli original. In some cases, no English term is a good translation. Please look into the background of key terms and become familiar with the range of possible meanings. Though such inquiry may take time, familiarity with them enables more accurate understanding of these original texts, especially when English equivalents are lacking.

As *Under the Bodhi Tree* already has an extensive Glossary, I have not included one here. Please refer to *Under the Bodhi Tree*'s Glossary for Pāli terms herein. However, I do comment on a few of the terms that are both central and problematic.

There is a loose ordering of the sutta passages that generally coordinates with the book chapters in their vicinity. At the same time, many relate to numerous portions of the main text. Most of the passages connect with multiple chapters.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, literal, metaphorical, allegorical, and creative use of language to express non-material subtleties in more or less ordinary terms. In Chapter 8, Ajahn Buddhādāsa discusses the different uses of people language and Dhamma language.

I encourage readers to familiarize themselves with these sutta perspectives as they appear between the chapters of *Under the Bodhi Tree* and in this Companion. Please revisit them as you work through the book. Time may be needed for them to grow on and in you. Patterns emerge and understanding accumulates as your familiarity grows. There is no other way to get to know the suttas. (The old shortcut of skipping them and reading only more modern works has been disastrous for understanding the Buddha's actual teaching.<sup>2</sup>) We hope that Ajahn Buddhādāsa's commentary helps you to do so, but ultimately each serious student-practitioner ought to wrestle with the suttas themselves without letting any authorities, including Ajahn Buddhādāsa, carry too much weight.

In some ways the suttas are not easily organized, though the compilers have tried various schemes. There is no obvious way to study them systematically, though some attempts currently available are worth a look.<sup>3</sup> I have followed themes and threads (the literal meaning of *sutta*) through various volumes more than reading a collection from front to back. This has been helped by Ajahn Buddhādāsa's *From His Own Lips* series and their indices.

Many suttas are addressed to *bhikkhus*, the alms-mendicant home-leavers who were the most immediate disciples of the Buddha and the original reciters of the oral transmission. Among their settled descendents, were the compilers and editors of the suttas.<sup>4</sup> As most readers of this book are unlikely to be *bhikkhus* or *bhikkhunis*, and it is extremely rare to find modern day monks and nuns who actually live like the *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis* of the Buddha's time, these translations are addressed to "friends." When a bhikkhu is referred to in third person, I translate as "cultivator" or "practitioner" for the sake of inclusiveness.

Each passage is referenced by Nikāya (collection) and sutta name; Pāli Text Society numbering, and an already published English translation. The Pāli Text Society (PTS) Tipiṭaka is the accepted standard for romanized Pāli. Sutta names can vary among Thai, Burmese, and Sinhalese versions of the Tipiṭaka. Most of the English translations are available from Wisdom Publications, which has published the first four Nikāyas, three of which are good, dependable, orthodox renderings. Sutta numbering can vary slightly between sources (e.g. [Sutta Central](#) and [Access to Insight](#).)

### Abbreviations used

AN	Āṅguttara-nikāya with Book (Ones, Twos, etc.): Sutta place within book.
DN	Dīgha-nikāya with Sutta number.
MN	Majjhima-nikāya with Sutta number.
SN	Saṃyutta-nikāya Chapter: Sutta place within chapter.
It	Itivuttakka (from the Khuddaka-nikāya)
Ud	Udāna (from the Khuddaka-nikāya)
CDB	The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Wisdom)
LDB	The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Wisdom)

<sup>2</sup> This is not the place for a full treatment of this topic. Two problematic examples are how many modern works follow the Commentaries compiled a thousand years after Buddha and how other modern works are strongly influenced by the psychological beliefs and economic needs of the authors and their cultures.

<sup>3</sup> For example, *In the Buddha's Words: an Anthology of Discourses from the Pāli Canon*, edited and introduced by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> It is possible but not at all clear that the frequent addresses to bhikkhus (men) included the bhikkhunis (women).

MDB	The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Wisdom)
NDB	The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Wisdom)
Ireland	The Udana & The Itivuttaka (Buddhist Publication Society)

## Sutta Passages supporting *Under the Bodhi Tree*

In *Under the Bodhi Tree* sutta passages were interspersed between the chapters and recommended for further reading at the end of each chapter. These are listed below, followed by all of the passages themselves.

Links in this list will take you to the passages. Click on [↶](#) to return here.

“Web #” refers to the numbered headings in this list.

1. [Newly awakened, the Buddha reviewed \*paṭiccasamuppāda\*](#)
2. [The basis of dukkha are dependently co-arisen stuff](#)
3. [Sahampati Brahma begs the Buddha to have compassion](#)
4. [Suffering and its end: all Buddha taught](#)
5. [The fundamental law of everything](#)
6. [Reactive tendencies accumulate in those who do not understand](#)
7. [Avoid metaphysical assumptions to maintain the Way](#)
8. [Challenging views that happiness and suffering are due to old karma or a Creator](#)
9. [Dhamma that cannot be rebuked or disputed](#)
10. [All Buddhas teach action, activity, and effort](#)
11. [Be lamps unto yourselves](#)
12. [Don't be too quick to accept or reject](#)
13. [Abandon or practice only when you know what's what](#)
14. [Neither excited nor irritated by worldly stuff](#)
15. [Avoid being confused about self and other](#)
16. [“Who is born?” is not a helpful question](#)

17. [Tathāgata understands the world](#)
18. [The world's end is right here](#)
19. [No doubts concerning the origin and quenching of the world](#)
20. [This natural element of truth is “just so”](#)
21. [Details of each mode of \*paticcasamuppāda\* \(Dhammic perspective\)](#)
22. [The food of ignorance](#)
23. [Concoctings \(\*saṅkhāra\*\)](#)
24. [Cannot say it's yours nor that it's someone else's](#)
25. [Tangles inner and outer](#)
26. The Buddha's original reluctance to teach
27. [Basic humming \*paticcasamuppāda\*](#)
28. [Beginning of the spiritual life](#)
29. [Seeing the Buddha](#)
30. [Seeing the Dhamma](#)
31. [Free of conceptions “existence” and “nonexistence”](#)
32. [Apparently & actually profound](#)
33. [Unable to cool because of clinging to the sense media](#)
34. [Just experience, nothing more](#)
35. [Two levels of contact](#)
36. [Origin and disestablishment of dukkha](#)
37. [Two aspects of vedanā and the accumulation of hurtful tendencies](#)
38. [Four ennobling truths of \*paticcasamuppāda\*](#)
39. [Karma bears fruit or ends in this individuality](#)
40. [New existences depend upon underlying tendencies](#)
41. [The five aggregates are heavy burdens for “me”](#)
42. [Manifesting the five clinging together aggregates](#)

43. [Regarding the clinging together aggregates as self](#)
44. [The quenching of \*paṭiccasamuppāda\*](#)
45. [Happiness and suffering aren't a matter of our own actions or of others](#)
46. [Rather than past and future existences, Dhamma is here-now](#)
47. [The clinging together aggregates are \*paṭiccasamuppānadharmas\*](#)
48. [Karma that is the end of karma](#)
49. [Infant gets into \*paṭiccasamuppāda\*](#)
50. [Bodhisatta reflected upon \*paṭiccasamuppāda\* previous to awakening](#)
51. [\*Paṭiccasamuppāda\* Beyond \*Paṭiccasamuppāda\*](#)

## Practice Group

52. [Relying on atammayatā abandon even equanimity](#)
53. [Cultivate samādhi to clearly understand](#)
54. [Ānāpānasati is a full path of practice](#)
55. [Ānāpānasati is the full application of mindfulness](#)
56. [The mutual arising of the seven factors of awakening](#)
57. [Exploring inner conditions](#)
58. [One practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma](#)
59. [Buddha did his duty, now it is our turn](#)

## Buddha taught only dukkha and its final quenching

*This simple statement maps out the territory of Buddha's message, the beginning and end of his teachings. A teaching cannot be considered Buddha's unless related to dukkha and its quenching. Staying within this domain of concern eliminates the time-wasting speculations and excessive philosophizing that Buddha discouraged. We must share this primary concern for these teaching to be meaningful. The paṭicca-samuppāda teachings are based in it and elaborate further.*

Friends, there are groups of wanderers and priests that misrepresent me with lying, empty, baseless, insincere words: "The samaṇa Gotama, who leads people astray to their ruin, lays out a creed of the vacancy, destruction, and nonexistence of beings."

These wanderers and priests misrepresent me with dishonest, empty, baseless, insincere words because I have never said such things. You will never hear me saying such things.

In the past as well as now, friends, I teach only *dukkha* (distress, suffering) and the remainderless quenching of *dukkha*.<sup>5</sup>



## Conditionality: the most basic law of all

*Idappaccayatā is the fundamental principle, the law of nature, running through all of the genuine awakened teachings is contained in this oft repeated formula. With this perspective, we see like a Buddha.*

When this exists, this naturally exists;

Due to the arising of this, this consequently arises.

When this does not exist, this naturally does not exist;

Due to the quenching of this, this consequently is quenched.<sup>6</sup>



## Newly awakened, the Buddha reviewed paṭiccasamuppāda

*Buddha's experience of full awakening is described in various ways. This passage links that experience with a thorough realization of paṭiccasamuppāda. Although he elaborated the usual formulations of paṭiccasamuppāda later, it is clear that from the beginning this teaching was unique to Buddha and central to his realization. Furthermore, he stated in other suttas that he had explored paṭiccasamuppāda prior to the great awakening (SN 12:65 Nagara Sutta, S.ii.104, CBD 601, passage 49 below).*

At that time, Buddha, recently awakened, remained seated at the base of the Bodhi Tree, near the bank of the Nerañjarā River, in the area of Uruvelā. The Bhagavā sat in one spot beneath the Bodhi Tree for all of seven days savoring the bliss of liberation.

Then, the Bhagavā reflected upon paṭiccasamuppāda forward and backward throughout the first watch of the night, as follows:

---

<sup>5</sup> MN 22 Alagaddūpama Sutta, M.i.140 (also S.iii.119 and S.iv.384), MDB 234.

<sup>6</sup> MN 79 Cūḷasakuludāyī Sutta, M.ii.32 (also S.ii.28, S.iii.63, A.v.184, and others), MDB 655.

with ignorance (avijjā) as condition, there are concoctings (sankhāra);  
with concoctings as condition, there is cognizing (viññāṇa);<sup>7</sup>  
with cognizing as condition, there is mind-body (nāmarūpa);<sup>8</sup>  
with mind-body as condition, there is sense-media (saḷāyatana);  
with sense-media as condition, there is contact (phassa);  
with contact as condition, there is vedanā;<sup>9</sup>  
with vedanā as condition, there is craving (taṇhā);  
with craving as condition, there is clinging (upādāna);  
with clinging as condition, there is becoming (bhava);  
with becoming as condition, there is birth (jāti);

with birth as condition, old age and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair arise completely. The dependent co-arising of the entire mass of dukkha naturally happens in just this way.

Due to the fading away and remainderless quenching of ignorance, concoctings are quenched;

due to the quenching of concoctings, viññāṇa is quenched;  
due to the quenching of viññāṇa, mind-body is quenched;  
due to the quenching of mind-body, the sense-media are quenched;  
due to the quenching of the sense-media, contact is quenched;  
due to the quenching of contact, vedanā is quenched;  
due to the quenching of vedanā, craving is quenched;  
due to the quenching of craving, clinging is quenched;  
due to the quenching of clinging, becoming is quenched;  
due to the quenching of becoming, birth is quenched;

due to the quenching of birth, old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are quenched. The quenching of the entire mass of dukkha naturally happens in just this way.

Then, as the Bhagavā experienced this, he uttered this verse:

“Whenever dhammas manifest clearly  
to the Brahmin striving in focused contemplation,  
then all of this Brahmin's doubts vanish,  
for this Brahmin fully comprehends all dhammas and their causes.”<sup>10</sup>

\*\*\*\*\*

Then, the Bhagavā reflected upon paṭiccasamuppāda forwards and backwards throughout the middle watch of the night, as during the previous watch:

With ignorance as condition, there are concoctings; ... [as above] ...

---

<sup>7</sup> I no longer consider “consciousness” a good translation of *viññāṇa* and tentatively prefer “cognizing,” “cognition,” or even, more simply, “knowing.” Consequently, I use “cognizing” or “cognition” in this document, although “consciousness” is used in *Under the Bodhi Tree*. My reasons for preferring “cognizing” are based on a careful review and rethinking of how *viññāṇa* appears most commonly in the suttas. I will explain this in a later essay. Here, I will alternate between *viññāṇa*, cognizing, and cognition. Please see Appendix 1 for further comment.

<sup>8</sup> *Nāmarūpa* can also be translated “name-form.”

<sup>9</sup> Vedanā is one of the terms commented on in Appendix 1.

<sup>10</sup> Here, *brahmin* does not refer to Vedic priests who, according to suttas, did not realize for themselves the Supreme Reality of which they spoke. Buddha’s reimagining of the term refers to those who have the highest realization of liberated reality.



With birth as condition, old age and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair arise completely. The dependent co-origination of the entire mass of dukkha naturally happens in just this way.

Due to the fading away and remainderless quenching of ignorance, concoctings are quenched; ... [as above] ...

Due to the quenching of birth, old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are quenched. The quenching of the entire mass of dukkha naturally happens in just this way.

Then, as the Bhagavā experienced this, he uttered this verse:

“Whenever dhammas manifest clearly  
to the Brahmin striving in focused contemplation,  
then all of this Brahmin's doubts vanish,  
for this Brahmin has known the ending of all conditions.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Then, the Bhagavā reflected upon paṭiccasamuppāda forwards and backwards throughout the final watch of the night, as during the previous two watches:

With ignorance as condition, there are concoctings; ... [as above] ...

With birth as condition, old age and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair arise completely. The dependent co-origination of the entire mass of dukkha naturally happens in just this way.

Due to the fading away and remainderless quenching of ignorance, concoctings are quenched; ... [as above] ...

Due to the quenching of birth, old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are quenched. The quenching of the entire mass of dukkha naturally happens in just this way.

Then, as the Bhagavā experienced this, he uttered this verse:

“Whenever dhammas manifest clearly  
to the Brahmin striving in focused contemplation,  
then this Brahmin incinerates Māra and his armies  
just as the sun (vanquishing darkness) keeps the air bright.”<sup>11</sup>



### Don't be too quick to accept or reject

*The Kālāma (or Kesaputti) Sutta stresses the pragmatic and experiential focus of Buddha's Dhamma. When wise examination arrives at sufficiently clear understanding of what is harmful and what is healthy, then one knows what to do. Knowledge for its own sake does not liberate. Knowledge that leads to appropriate action frees us from reactive emotions and suffering. This is one of the many sutta teachings that cultivates right view, the focus of Ajahn Buddhadasa's work as a teacher. These passages and the book are for the sake of stimulating and encouraging reflection, intelligent thought, and discernment.*

---

<sup>11</sup> Vin.i.1 (Mahāvagga) and also Udāna 1:1-3 (Bodhi-suttas 1, 2, and 3).

*Ajahn Buddhādāsa neither wanted to be believed nor rejected, just to serve the Buddha.*

Kālāmas, you ought to question, you ought to wonder, your doubts have arisen concerning things you should question.

Come, Kālāmas,

do not accept something as true merely because of oral tradition;

do not accept something as true merely because of customary practice;

do not accept something as true merely because it is widely rumored;

do not accept something as true merely because of scriptural citation;

do not accept something as true merely because of logical inference;

do not accept something as true merely because of reasoned deduction;

do not accept something as true merely because of thinking according to appearances;

do not accept something as true merely because it holds up to one's views;

do not accept something as true merely because the speaker appears credible;

do not accept something as true merely because the speaker is one's teacher.<sup>12</sup>



### Renounce or undertake only when you know what's what

*Often cited as the Buddha's permission for "free thinking," important parts of this sutta are usually glossed over. Rather than permission to think whatever one likes, hold whatever opinions one likes, or reject whatever one doesn't wish to believe, this sutta is about finding out in one's own experience along with that of companions in the way what is wholesome and what is not, what is conducive to suffering and what leads to liberation. Kneejerk rejection of teachings, beliefs, and practices is no better than uncritical or blind belief. Neither is encouraged by this sutta or any of the Early Buddhist teachings.*

Kālāmas, how do you regard the following: When greed arises in someone does it arise for their benefit or not? *"Not for any benefit."* When that person is greedy, when greed dominates, when greed overwhelms the heart, he may kill, steal, commit adultery, lie, and encourage others to behave in such ways, which are actions leading to suffering and are without any long-lasting benefit, is that not right? *"That is true."*

How do you regard the following: When hatred arises in someone does it arise for their benefit or not? *"Not for any benefit."* When that person is hateful, when hatred dominates, when hatred overwhelms the heart, she may kill, steal, commit adultery, lie, and encourage others to behave in such ways, which are actions leading to suffering and are without any long-lasting benefit, is that not right? *"That is true."*

How do you regard the following: When delusion arises in someone does it arise for their benefit or not? *"Not for any benefit."* When that person is delusory, when delusion dominates, when delusion overwhelms the heart, he may kill, steal, commit adultery, lie, and encourage others to behave in such ways, which are actions leading to suffering and are without any long-lasting benefit, is that not right? *"That is true."*

---

<sup>12</sup> AN 3:65 Kesaputtiya (Kālāma) Sutta, A.i.189, NDB 65. (AN 3:66 on Access to Insight.)

How do you regard the following: Are these things wholesome or unwholesome? *"They are unwholesome."* Are they harmful or not harmful? *"They are harmful."* Do the wise censure or praise them? *"The wise censure them."* After one practices according to their standards do they lead to suffering and are of no benefit, or the opposite? *"After one practices according to their standards they lead to suffering and are of no benefit."*

*[Buddha repeats the ten bases for unwise acceptance and rejection again.]*

Kālāmas, whenever you yourselves know that these things are unwholesome, are harmful, are censured by the wise, and when practiced according to their own standard bring suffering and have no benefit, then you ought to abandon these things.

*[The Buddha repeats the ten bases again and then asks the same questions about non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion, which the Kālāmas answer appropriately.]*

Kālāmas, whenever you yourselves know that these things are wholesome, are harmless, are praised by the wise, and when practiced according to their own standard bring happiness and are beneficial, then you ought to dwell with these things.<sup>13</sup>



### With Dhamma be your own lights and refuges

*Rather than depending on him over much, Buddha advised that we become lights and refuges for ourselves, which is to have Dhamma as our lights and refuges. This advice is as applicable for us in later times as it was for those who were alive in Buddha's time. To consistently contemplate the applications of mindfulness is the means to follow his advice. Such practice is a more excellent foundation than depending on someone else for our understanding.*

You ought to be lights for yourselves, to be your own refuges without any other refuges, having Dhamma as your light, having Dhamma as refuge without any other refuges.

Ānanda, how is it that a practitioner is his own light and refuge without any other refuge, having Dhamma as light and refuge without any other refuge?

In this case, a cultivator is one who lives constantly contemplating body in bodies ... is one who lives constantly contemplating vedanā in vedanā ... is one who lives constantly contemplating mind in mind ... is one who lives constantly contemplating Dhamma in dhammas, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.<sup>14</sup>

This is how a cultivator is his own light and refuge without any other refuge, having Dhamma as light and refuge without any other refuge.

Ānanda, whether at this time, or after I have passed away, whoever lives as his own light and refuge without any other refuge, who lives with Dhamma as light and refuge without any other refuge, he will live on the most excellent basis, that is, one who loves the training.<sup>15</sup>



---

<sup>13</sup> AN 3:65 Kesaputti (Kālāma) Sutta, A.i.189, NDB 279.

<sup>14</sup> See MN 118 and passages [54](#), [55](#), and [56](#) below for details.

<sup>15</sup> DN 16 Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, D.ii.100, LDB 245.

## The Buddha challenged beliefs about old karma and a Creator

*Perspectives and beliefs that attribute our current well-being and distress to actions in the past or a Creator God have no support in Early Buddhism. Instead, this sutta describes how well-being and dukkha occur based upon six fundamental elements of experience, six avenues for sense contact, and eighteen ways mind interacts with sense experience. Due to these and paṭiccasamuppāda, there is vedanā. Therefore, the Buddha laid out the four ennobling truths, here in a form that incorporates paṭiccasamuppāda and gives his perspective on how well-being and distress come about. In short, happiness and suffering are a matter of natural phenomena and conditionality (idappaccayatā).*

Friends, there are these three sectarian tenets that however they are considered, evaluated, and critiqued by the learned ones, no matter how much they are turned and spun, these tenets will lead to inaction regarding what is wholesome.

What sort of sectarian tenets are these three? The three are:

1. Certain groups of wanderers and priests hold and teach the view that "all persons who experience pleasure, pain, and neither-pleasure-nor-pain do so because of previous actions."
2. Certain groups of wanderers and priests hold and teach the view that "all persons who experience pleasure, pain, and neither-pleasure-nor-pain, do so because of God's creative power."
3. Certain groups of wanderers and priests hold and teach the view that "all persons who experience pleasure, pain, and neither-pleasure-nor-pain, do so for no reason whatsoever."

Friends, I have approached and questioned groups of wanderers and priests who hold and teach such sectarian tenets ... I said to them, "If that is the case, those who kill beings ... steal ... misbehave sensually ... speak falsely ... provoke discord ... speak crudely ... speak frivolously ... are greedy of heart ... harbor ill-will ... have perverted tenets, must do so because of actions previously acted ... or because of God's creative power ... or for no reason whatsoever. When actions done previously or God's creative power or no reason whatsoever is taken as the primary issue, those individuals will have no desire and will make no effort regarding things that ought and ought not to be done. When appropriate acts are not accomplished and inappropriate acts are not abandoned with sincerity, these people who lack mindfulness to guard themselves have nothing by which to honestly call themselves 'samaṇa' (wandering seekers of truth)."

Friends, this is how I rebuked with Dhamma the wanderers and priests who held such sectarian tenets.<sup>16</sup>



## Sahampati Brahma begs the Buddha to teach other beings

*At first, the profundity of his realization and awakening, and of paṭiccasamuppāda, made the newly awakened Buddha reluctant to teach. His decision to point out these realities and their realization to others is portrayed in this encounter with Sahampati Brahmā, who came down from his Brahmāloka to implore the Buddha to teach. The compassionate decision to tirelessly do so blossomed into humanity's most profound legacy.*

---

<sup>16</sup> AN 3:61 Titthāyatanādi Sutta, A.i.173, NDB 266.

The thought occurred to me, "The Dhamma I have realized is profound, difficult for other beings to see and understand, peaceful and refined, not easily penetrated by thought, subtle, and experiencable only by the wise. Beings today seek delight in attachment (*ālaya*), are delighting in attachment, and take pleasure in attachment. For these beings seeking delight in attachment, delighting in attachment, and taking pleasure in attachment it is extremely difficult to see dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and conditionality (*idappaccayatā*). And it is also extremely difficult to see this Dhamma, namely, the calming of all concoctings, the removal of all fuel, the end of craving, the fading away of passion, remainderless quenching, Nibbāna. If I were to teach Dhamma these beings will not be able to comprehend, which will be fruitlessly wearisome and troublesome for me." Thereupon, this verse occurred to me, one I had never heard before:

This is not the time for proclaiming Dhamma  
that even I realized only with much difficulty.  
This Dhamma cannot be easily known  
by beings constricted with lust and hatred.

Those passionate with lust and obscured by darkness  
will never see this Dhamma that goes against the stream,  
that is subtle, profound, and difficult to see.

Considering in this way, my heart inclined toward passive ease and did not incline toward demonstrating the Dhamma.<sup>17</sup>

Then, knowing my thoughts and scruples, Sahampati Brahmā thought, "Oh my, the world will be ruined. Oh my, the world will perish because the heart of the Tathāgata, worthy and perfectly self-awakened, inclines toward passive ease and does not incline toward demonstrating the Dhamma. Immediately, Sahampati Brahmā disappeared from his Brahmāloka and appeared before me, just as quickly as a strong man might extend and retract his arm.

Then, Sahampati Brahmā with robes arranged over one shoulder and hands in respectful greeting approached where I was seated and spoke: "Venerable Sir, may the Bhāgava demonstrate Dhamma out of graciousness toward me. May the Sugata demonstrate Dhamma as there are beings with only a little dust in their eyes, who will degenerate from not hearing Dhamma. There certainly will be beings who comprehend Dhamma." After saying so, Sahampati Brahmā continued in verse:

Impure Dhamma thought up by tainted people  
have appeared in Magadha for a long time.  
Please open the Door to Deathless Nibbāna.  
Beings will listen to the Dhamma awakened to  
and proclaimed by the Stainless Buddha.

Just as one standing on a mountain peak  
can on all sides see the people below;  
so, oh wise one with all-seeing eye,  
please ascend the palace of Dhamma.  
Behold these beings engulfed by sorrow,  
intimate with sorrow, oppressed by birth and aging.

Arise victorious hero, caravan leader,  
who is debt free, please wander the world.

---

<sup>17</sup> MN 85 Bodhirājakumāra Sutta, M.ii.293, MDB 260. Also MN 26 Aripariyesanā Sutta (Pāsarasī Sutta).

May the Bhagavā demonstrate Dhamma.  
Certainly, there will be beings who comprehend.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, recognizing Sahampati Brahmā's invitation, with compassion for all beings, I surveyed the world with the Buddha-Eye. Surveying the world with the Buddha-Eye, I saw beings with just a little dust in their eyes and a great deal of dust in their eyes, with mature faculties and immature faculties, with good qualities and poor qualities, easy to instruct and difficult to instruct, and some who see the danger and punishment in other worlds. Just as in a pond containing blue, pink, or white lotuses, some lotuses are born in the water, grow supported by the water, and remain submerged in the water; while some lotuses are born in the water, grow supported by the water, and live at the surface of the water; while other lotuses are born in the water, grow supported by the water, and rise above the water untouched by it; in the same way, we saw the diversity of beings.

Consequently, I accepted Sahampati Brahmā's invitation:

Opened is the Door of Deathless Nibbāna.  
Those with ears to hear ought to commit faithfully.  
Brahmā, feeling it would be troublesome,  
I did not speak among the many kinds of beings  
the subtle Dhamma so familiar to me.

Finally, Sahampati Brahmā knew that he would have the opportunity provided by my agreement to teach Dhamma. He circled to the right and disappeared from there.<sup>19</sup>



### Those who do not understand Dhamma accumulate reactive tendencies

*Teachings on the dependent co-arising of dukkha take many forms. Teachings on the senses, sense contact, and accompanying vedanā are always central and provide an important practice clue. In this passage, indulgence in such vedanā due to lack of mindfulness leads to accumulating patterns of lust, aversion, and ignorance, which obstruct the arising of true knowledge and liberation. Thus, suffering continues through habituation to these three basic toxic energies. Observing these patterns in ourselves is an essential practice.*

Friends, depending on eyes and forms, eye-cognition arises. The meeting together of these three is contact. With contact as condition, vedanā arises, which is sometimes pleasant, sometimes, painful, and sometimes neither-painful-nor-pleasant.

When someone experiences pleasant vedanā, he delights, relishes, and indulges in it. The tendency towards lust naturally accumulates for such a one. When someone experiences painful vedanā, he sorrows, worries, laments, despairs, and is deluded regarding it. The tendency towards aversion naturally accumulates for such a one. When someone experiences a vedanā neither painful nor pleasant, he does not understand in accordance with reality the causes for this vedanā, the quenching of this vedanā, the delicious charm of this vedanā, the penalty from this vedanā, and the skillful means of escape from this vedanā. The tendency towards ignorance naturally accumulates for such a one.

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. MDB 261.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, MDB 261.

Friends, such a person cannot abandon the tendency towards lust arising in reaction to pleasant vedanā, cannot diminish the tendency towards aversion arising in reaction to painful vedanā, and cannot remove the tendency towards ignorance arising in reaction to neither-painful-nor-pleasant vedanā. Unable to abandon ignorance, he cannot cause true knowledge to arise. That he could make an end of suffering here and now is not possible.

*[The identical wording is applied to the other sense media as well as the viññāṇa, contacts, and vedanā that arise depending upon them.]*<sup>20</sup>



### Metaphysical assumptions lose the Middle Way

*Human societies are awash in metaphysical opinions about human beings and the universe, the past and the future, and what happens after death. Holding to such views entraps us in positions that distract us from Dhamma and lead us off the Middle Way. In this passage, a young brahmin wonders whether things exist or do not exist. The Buddha considers such views to be extremes. Rather than answering the brahmin's statements, the Buddha reviews his middle way of teaching concerning the conditionality of dukkha and its quenching.*

The brahmin Jāṇussoṇi approached the Buddha and asked: “Venerable Gotama, do all things exist?”

Brahmin, a statement that insists on the view that “all things exist” is one extreme [not the Middle Way].

“Venerable Gotama, then do all things not exist?”

Brahmin, a statement that insists on the view that “all things do not exist” is a second extreme.<sup>21</sup>

Brahmin, the Tathāgata teaches Dhamma through the Middle Way and does not incline towards these two extremes. That is, the Tathāgata teaches:

With ignorance as condition, concoctings occur; with concoctings as condition, viññāṇa occurs; ... and so on ... with birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, pain, lamentation, grief, and despair occur; the entire mass of dukkha arises in just this way.

Through the fading away and quenching of ignorance, concoctings are quenched; through the quenching of concoctings, viññāṇa is quenched; ... and so on ... through the quenching of birth, aging and death, sorrow, pain, lamentation, grief, and despair are quenched utterly; the entire mass of dukkha is quenched in just this way.

The brahmin Jāṇussoṇi praised the Buddha's words and dedicated himself to following the Buddha-Sāsana (Message of Awakening) for the rest of his life.<sup>22</sup>



<sup>20</sup> MN 148 Chachakka Sutta, M.iii.285, MDB 1134.

<sup>21</sup> The term "extreme," in a case like this, refers to a view, opinion, or thought that goes off in one direction or another. It is characterized by regarding something to be self (having essential existence) or the opposite. The Buddha points to a Dhamma principle that does not go off to one extreme or another, but speaks scientifically along the lines of "when this exists, this occurs; when this is quenched, this is quenched" in inter-connected succession without anything that arises or ceases all by itself. Thus, there are no views that "everything exists" or "nothing exists."

<sup>22</sup> SN 12:47 Jāṇussoṇi Sutta, S.ii.76, CDB 584, PS 61.



### All Buddhas teach action, activity, and effort

*The Buddha once declared that he merely points out the way and that the path requires our own effort. At other times he described his teaching as a "doctrine of effort." In this passage, the Buddha condemns a wanderer's claim that actions do not exist and there are no meaningful spiritual endeavors. This is compared to a trap that merely inflicts pain and torments its victims. Unfortunately, such pseudo-Dhamma is still heard today by certain sophisticates.*

Friends, among all the cloths woven from fibers, cloth woven from human hair is the poorest. When the weather is cold, cloth woven from human hair is too cool; when the weather is hot, it is really hot; the colors are not attractive, it has a foul odor, and it is coarse. In the same way, among all the different sects of thick-headed wanderers, the Makkhalivāda sect is the worst.

The worthless Makkhali says and is of the opinion that "there is no action (*kamma*), there is no activity (*kiriya*), and there is no effort (*virīya*)." (In other words, in this world do not even think of the results of actions, there are not even the actions themselves. Whatever one might do is equivalent to not doing anything at all.)

The worthy, perfectly self-awakened buddhas of the distant past always spoke of there being action, activity, and effort. The worthless Makkhali disputes with all of those worthy, perfectly self-awakened buddhas in claiming "there is no action, there is no activity, and there is no effort."

Friends, the worthy, perfectly self-awakened buddhas that will appear in the future for a long time will always speak of there being action, activity, and effort. The worthless Makkhali disputes with all of those worthy, perfectly self-awakened buddhas in claiming "there is no action, there is no activity, and there is no effort."

At this time even myself, a worthy, perfectly self-awakened buddha, speaks of there being action, activity, and effort. The worthless Makkhali disputes with me in claiming "there is no action, there is no activity, and there is no effort."

Friends, just as someone places a fish trap at the mouth of a river not to aid the fish but for their pain, struggle, and ruin, just so the worthless Makkhali appears in the world like someone who sets out traps for humans not for their benefit but for the pain, struggle, and ruin of many beings.<sup>23</sup>



### Don't get excited or annoyed with worldly stuff

*Worldly experience is a constantly shifting terrain of conditions that seemingly oppose and compete against each other. Ajahn Buddhadasa often referred to sadness and gladness as negativeness and positiveness. Reacting and clinging to these worldly conditions stirs up our minds. The wise see more deeply than the world's transitory appearances.*

Gain and loss, disrepute and prestige,  
blame and praise, happiness and suffering,

These are the common human conditions,  
transitory, unstable, and subject to change.

---

<sup>23</sup> AN 3:137 Kesakambala Sutta, A.i.287, NDB 364.



The wise, ever mindful, know these dhammas,  
seeing them as subject to change.

Pleasant experiences do not excite such a mind;  
unpleasant experiences do not irritate such a mind,

There is no decay of virtue due to grasping at  
or repulsion from these conditions.

The wise one, knowing the path, realizes  
Nibbāna free of passion and sorrow.  
Such a one has found the end of becoming.<sup>24</sup>



### Avoid being confused about self and other

*Do we create our own pleasure and pain? Or do others cause us to suffer and be happy? Or might some combination of self and other be responsible? As we all seek to avoid suffering and be happy, knowing who is able to bring this about is crucial. The Buddha's response to this issue might surprise you. His middle way teaching concerning the conditionality of dukkha and its quenching is once again central.*

Once, at Jeta's Grove, the Wanderer Timbarukkha approached the Bhagavā and asked:  
*"Venerable Sir, are pleasure and pain (sukha and dukkha) created by oneself?"*

Do not say that, Timbarukkha.

*"Are pleasure and pain created by someone else?"*

Do not say that, Timbarukkha.

*"Are pleasure and pain created both by oneself and by someone else?"*

Do not say that, Timbarukkha.

*"Are pleasure and pain created neither by oneself nor by someone else?"*

Do not say that, Timbarukkha.

*"Pleasure and pain do not exist, then?"*

Timbarukkha, it is not that pleasure and pain do not exist. In fact, pleasure and pain do exist.

*"In that case, perhaps Ven. Gotama does not know or see pleasure and pain."*

Timbarukkha, it is not possible that I do not see and know pleasure and pain. I indeed know and see pleasure and pain.

*"Ven. Sir, when I asked 'are pleasure and pain created by oneself,' you responded, 'do not say that, Timbarukkha.' When I asked 'are pleasure and pain created by someone else' ... .. 'are pleasure and pain created both by oneself and by someone else' ... .. 'are pleasure and pain created neither by oneself nor by someone else,' you responded, 'do not say that, Timbarukkha.' When I asked 'pleasure and pain do not exist, then,' you responded 'it is not that pleasure and pain do not exist. In fact, pleasure and pain do exist.' When I asked 'perhaps Ven. Gotama does not know or see pleasure and pain,' you responded, 'it is not possible that I do not see and know*

---

<sup>24</sup> AN 8:5 Lokadhamma Suttas, A.iv.156, NDB 1116.

*pleasure and pain. I indeed know and see pleasure and pain.' Ven. Gotama, please explain pleasure and pain. Please reveal pleasure and pain to me."*

Timbarukkha, when someone assumes that vedanā and the one who feels it are one and the same, I still do not say that pleasure and pain are created by oneself.

When someone is touched by vedanā and assumes that vedanā and the one who feels it are different things, I still do not say that pleasure and pain are created by another.

Timbarukkha, the Tathāgata teaches Dhamma through the Middle Way and does not incline towards either of these two extremes. That is, the Tathāgata teaches:

With ignorance as condition, concoctings occur; with concoctings as condition, viññāṇa occurs; ... nāmarūpa ... and so on ... with birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, pain, lamentation, grief, and despair occur; the entire mass of dukkha arises in just this way.

Through the fading away and quenching of ignorance, concoctings are quenched; through the quenching of concoctings, viññāṇa is quenched; ... nāmarūpa ... and so on ... through the quenching of birth, aging and death, sorrow, pain, lamentation, grief, and despair are quenched utterly; the entire mass of dukkha is quenched in just this way.<sup>25</sup>



### **“Who is born?” is not a useful question**

Friends, with ignorance as condition, concoctings occur; with concoctings as condition, viññāṇa occurs; ... nāmarūpa ... and so on ... upādāna ... bhava ... with birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, pain, lamentation, grief, and despair occur; the entire mass of dukkha arises in just this way.

After the Bhagavā had said this, a certain bhikkhu said to him: *“Venerable sir, what now is aging and death, and for whom is there this aging and death?”*

“Not a valid question,” the Bhagavā replied. “Friend, whether one says, ‘What now is aging-and-death, and for whom is there this aging-and-death?’ or whether one says, ‘Aging-and-death is one thing, the one for whom there is this aging-and-death is another’ – both these assertions are identical in meaning; they differ only in the phrasing. If there is the view, ‘The *jīva* (soul) and the body are the same,’ there is no supreme way of living; and if there is the view, ‘The *jīva* is one thing, the body is another,’ there is no supreme way of living. Without veering towards either of these extremes, Tathāgata teaches Dhamma by the middle: ‘With birth as condition, aging-and-death.’”<sup>26</sup>

*“Venerable sir, what now is birth, and for whom is there this birth?”*

“Not a valid question,” the Bhagavā replied. “Friend, whether one says, ‘What now is birth, and for whom is there this birth?’ or whether one says, ‘Birth is one thing, the one for whom there is this birth is another’ – both these assertions are identical in meaning; they differ only in the phrasing. ... Without veering towards either of these extremes, Tathāgata teaches Dhamma by the middle: ‘With existence as condition, birth.’”

*“Venerable sir, what now is existence, and for whom is there this existence?”*

<sup>25</sup> SN 12:18 Timbarukkha Sutta, S.ii.22, CDB 548.

<sup>26</sup> *Jīva* is one of the terms that is loosely correlate with *atman/attā/self*. In some contexts “life” is meant; in others “soul” seems to fit, especially if we avoid metaphysics and understand the term loosely, just like ordinary English in which the meaning is usually vague and obscure.

“Not a valid question,” the Bhagavā replied. “Friend, whether one says, ‘What now is existence, and for whom is there this existence?’ or whether one says, ‘Existence is one thing, the one for whom there is this existence is another’ – both these assertions are identical in meaning; they differ only in the phrasing.... Without veering towards either of these extremes, Tathāgata teaches Dhamma by the middle: ‘With clinging as condition, existence.... With craving as condition, clinging.... With vedanā as condition, craving.... With contact as condition, vedanā.... With the six sense media as condition, contact.... With name-form<sup>27</sup> as condition, the six sense media.... With viññāṇa as condition, name-form.... With saṅkhāra as condition, cognizing.’”

“Venerable sir, what now are concoctings, and for whom are there these concoctings?”

“Not a valid question,” the Bhagavā replied. “Friend, whether one says, ‘What now are concoctings, and for whom are there these concoctings?’ or whether one says, ‘Concoctings are one thing, the one for whom there are these concoctings is another’—both these assertions are identical in meaning; they differ only in the phrasing. If there is the view, ‘The soul and the body are the same,’ there is no supreme way of living; and if there is the view, ‘The soul is one thing, the body is another,’ there is no supreme way of living. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma by the middle: ‘With ignorance as condition, concoctings.’

“But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, whatever kinds of contortions, maneuvers, and vacillations there may be—‘What now is aging-and-death, and for whom is there this aging-and-death?’ or ‘Aging-and-death is one thing, the one for whom there is this aging-and-death is another,’ or ‘The soul and the body are the same,’ or ‘The soul is one thing, the body is another’—all these are abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated so that they are no more subject to future arising.

“With the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance, whatever kinds of contortions, maneuvers, and vacillations there may be—‘What now is birth, and for whom is there this birth?’ ... .. ‘What now are concoctings, and for whom are there these concoctings?’ or ‘Concoctings are one thing, the one for whom there are these concoctings is another,’ or ‘The soul and the body are the same,’ or ‘The soul is one thing, the body is another’—all these are abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, obliterated so that they are no more subject to future arising.”<sup>28</sup>



## Tathāgata understands the world

*One who appears in this world neither to reject it nor be trapped in it is called “Tathāgata.”<sup>29</sup> Such a one thoroughly understands the world in terms of the four ennobling truths and paṭiccasamuppāda. If we aspire to freedom in this world, to live “just so,” the guidance of a Tathāgata is of the greatest value.*

Friends, the world is thoroughly understood by the Tathāgata; the Tathāgata has removed himself from the world. The origin of the world is thoroughly understood by the Tathāgata; Tathāgata has completely abandoned the world's origin. The quenching of the world is

<sup>27</sup> Ajahn Buddhādāsa tended to explain *nāmarūpa* as “mind-body,” which is common in Thailand and used throughout *Under the Bodhi Tree*. Here, in this *Companion*, I also used the more literal “name-form,” which suits his more subtle interpretations.

<sup>28</sup> SN 12:35, S.ii.60, Avijjāpaccaya sutta, CDB 573. This translation is adapted from those of Bhikkhu Bodhi and Venerable Thanissaro, as I could not find one by Ajahn Buddhādāsa.

<sup>29</sup> One who has arrived in thusness, one who is just so: the Buddha’s preferred term of self-reference.

thoroughly understood by the Tathāgata; the Tathāgata has realized the world's quenching. The practice leading to the quenching of the world is thoroughly understood by the Tathāgata; the Tathāgata has cultivated the path leading to the world's quenching.

Anything in the world with its devas, māras, and brahmas, that the myriad beings – including wanderers and priests, devas and humans – have seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched, known, reached, searched, or visited with mind, that is thoroughly understood by the Tathāgata; thus he is called "Tathāgata."<sup>30</sup>



### The world's end is right here

*In the material world we expect that a path leads from one physical location to another and requires physical travel to reach the destination. Buddha pointed out a path followed within this living body without physically going anywhere. Here, the world's end and quenching is found.*

We do not speak of a world's end where beings are not born, do not age, do not die, do not pass away, and do not arise, such that somebody might see and might reach such a world's end by traveling there.

In this fathom-long body with perceiving and cognizing we describe the world, the origin of the world, the thorough quenching of the world, and the path to the world's thorough quenching.<sup>31</sup>



### Have no doubts concerning the origin and quenching of the world

*The noble follower of Buddha's way has no doubts about how experience arises and occurs, is quenched and ceases. The world of experience, especially experiences of distress, arises and is quenched through paṭiccasamuppāda.*

Friends, the noble disciple who has listened well has no doubts concerning "due to what occurring does something occur, through the arising of what does something arise."

due to what occurring do saṅkhāras (concoctings) occur?

- ... does viññāṇa (cognizing) occur?
- ... does mind-body occur?
- ... does sense-media occur?
- ... does contact occur?
- ... does vedanā occur?
- ... does taṇhā (craving) occur?
- ... does upādāna (clinging) occur?
- ... does bhava (becoming) occur?
- ... does birth occur?

due to what occurring does aging-and-death occur?"

---

<sup>30</sup> AN 4:23 Loka Sutta, A. ii.23, NDB 410.

<sup>31</sup> AN 4:45 Rohitassa Sutta, A.ii.48, NDB 434.

In fact, friends, the noble disciple who has listened well has penetrating knowledge of this matter that does not depend on believing what someone else says, namely, "Because this exists, this exists; through the arising of this, this arises;

with ignorance as condition, there are concoctings;  
with concoctings as condition, there is viññāṇa;  
with cognizing as condition, there is mind-body;  
with mind-body as condition, there are sense-media;  
with sense-media as condition, there is contact;  
with contact as condition, there is vedanā;  
with vedanā as condition, there is craving;  
with craving as condition, there is clinging;  
with clinging as condition, there is becoming;  
with becoming as condition, there is birth;  
with birth as condition, there is aging and death."

That noble disciple clearly knows "the world originates in just this way."

Friends, the noble disciple who has listened well has no doubts concerning "due to what not occurring does something not occur, through the quenching of what does something quench."

due to what not occurring do concoctings not occur?

... does cognizing not occur?  
... does mind-body not occur?  
... do sense-media not occur?  
... does contact not occur?  
... does vedanā not occur?  
... does craving not occur?  
... does clinging not occur?  
... does becoming not occur?  
... does birth not occur?

due to what not occurring does aging and death not occur?"

In fact, friends, the noble disciple who has listened well has penetrating knowledge of this matter that does not depend on believing what someone else says, namely, "Because this does not exist, this does not exist; through the quenching of this, this is quenched;

with the quenching of ignorance, concoctings are quenched;  
with the quenching of concoctings, cognizing is quenched;  
with the quenching of viññāṇa, mind-body is quenched;  
with the quenching of mind-body, sense-media are quenched;  
with the quenching of sense-media, contact is quenched;  
with the quenching of contact, vedanā is quenched;  
with the quenching of vedanā, craving is quenched;  
with the quenching of craving, clinging is quenched;  
with the quenching of clinging, becoming is quenched;  
with the quenching of becoming, birth is quenched;  
with the quenching of birth, aging and death is quenched."

That noble disciple clearly knows "the world is quenched in just this way."

Friends, at whichever time the noble disciple comprehends the origination and quenching of the world according to reality, then we describe that noble disciple as "perfect in view, perfect in vision, realizing the Good Dhamma, seeing the Good Dhamma, endowed with the learner's

insight, endowed with the learner's knowledge, entered into the Dhamma stream, excelling with pollution-cleansing wisdom, and standing at the Gate of the Deathless."<sup>32</sup>



### This natural element of truth is “just so”

*These teachings are not concocted out of speculative views, logic, or ideologies. Rather, they point to basic facts of human experience. These natural facts are “just so,” whether or not Buddha’s appear to point them out. Further, even a single dependent relation is called “paṭiccasamuppāda.” We need not get stuck on a particular formulation of this teaching; each is as a skillful pointing to the way things are.*

Friends, we will demonstrate paṭiccasamuppāda (dependent co-arising) for you. You ought to listen carefully to this paṭiccasamuppāda and wisely consider in your hearts as we speak.

Friends, what is paṭiccasamuppāda? With birth as condition there is aging and death.

Whether a Tathāgata appears or does not, this natural element exists, namely, natural ordinariness (*dhammaṭṭhitatā*), natural lawfulness (*dhammaniyāmatā*), and conditionality (*idappaccayatā*).

The Tathāgata fully understands this Dhamma-element. Fully understanding, he tells, demonstrates, teaches, lays out, reveals, disseminates, as if setting upright what has been overturned, and says, “Friends, come and see: with birth as condition, there is aging and death.”

So it is, friends, whichever Dhamma-element is just thus (*tathatā*), does not differ from thusness (*avitathatā*), is not other than thusness (*anaññathatā*), and is conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) — that we call paṭiccasamuppāda.

[The same treatment is given to the other linkages of paṭicca-samuppāda through to] ...

“Come and see, friends, with ignorance as condition, there are concoctings.”

Friends, whether a Tathāgata appears or does not, this natural element exists, namely, natural ordinariness (*dhammaṭṭhitatā*), natural lawfulness (*dhammaniyāmatā*), and conditionality (*idappaccayatā*).

The Tathāgata fully understands this Dhamma-element. Fully understanding, he tells, demonstrates, teaches, lays out, reveals, disseminates, as if setting upright what has been overturned, and says, “Friends, come and see: with birth as condition, there is aging and death.”

So it is, friends, whichever Dhamma-element is just thus (*tathatā*), does not differ from thusness (*avitathatā*), is not other than thusness (*anaññathatā*), and is conditionality (*idappaccayatā*) — that we call paṭiccasamuppāda.<sup>33</sup>



### Dhamma that cannot be rebuked or disputed

*Here Buddha lays out basic experiential facts about which he sees no grounds for dispute: the basic elements of experience, the sense doors through which contact takes place, the sense objects that the mind resorts to, and the vedanā that depend on sense*

<sup>32</sup> SN 12:50 Duttiya-ariyasāvaka Sutta, S.ii.79, CDB 586.

<sup>33</sup> SN 12:20 Paccaya Sutta, S.ii.25, CDB 551.

*contact. We need not dispute them because we can all experience and investigate them personally. He gives the four ennobling truths as a framework for investigation and practice regarding these realities that recycle within "feeling beings" countless times each day.*

Friends, these Dhammas that I have demonstrated (pointed to) cannot be rebuked, defiled, censured, or disputed by any wanderers or priests. And what are these Dhammas demonstrated by me that wanderers and priests cannot rebuke, defile, censure, or dispute?

Friends, the Dhamma I have expressed as "there are these six elements" ... "there are these six avenues of contact" ... "there are these eighteen resorts of mind" ... "there are these four ennobling truths" that cannot be rebuked, defiled, censured, or disputed by any wanderer or priest.

... The six elements are earth-element, water-element, fire-element, wind-element, space-element, and mind-element. ...

... The six avenues of contact are eyes as means of contact, ears as means of contact, nose as means of contact, tongue as means of contact, body as means of contact, and mind as means of contact. ...

... Through seeing form with the eyes, mind (*mano*)<sup>34</sup> resorts to forms that are a basis for gladness, resorts to forms that are a basis for sadness, and resorts to forms that are a basis for equanimity; through hearing sound with the ears, mind resorts to sounds that are a basis for gladness, ... a basis for sadness, and ... a basis for equanimity; through smelling odors with the nose, *mano* resorts to odors that are a basis for gladness, ... a basis for sadness, and ... a basis for equanimity; through tasting flavors with the tongue, *mano* resorts to flavors that are a basis for gladness, resorts to flavors that are a basis for sadness, and resorts to flavors that are a basis for equanimity; through touching sensations with the body, *mano* resorts to sensations that are a basis for gladness, ... a basis for sadness, and ... a basis for equanimity; through knowing ideas with mind, *mano* resorts to ideas that are a basis for gladness, resorts to ideas that are a basis for sadness, and resorts to ideas that are a basis for equanimity. These are the Dhamma I have expressed as "these eighteen resorts of mind" that cannot be rebuked, defiled, censured, or disputed by any wanderer or priest.

Friends, depending on what do I speak in this way? Depending on the six elements there is descent into the womb. When there is descent into the womb, there is mind-body. With mind-body as condition, there are the six sense media. With the six sense media as condition, there is contact. With contact as condition, there is *vedanā*.

Friends, we teach that there is *dukkha*, there is the origin of *dukkha*, there is the quenching of *dukkha*, and there is the path leading to the quenching of *dukkha* for beings that experience *vedanā*.<sup>35</sup>



## Tangles inner and outer

*The Buddha's image of tangles and entanglement is an apt metaphor for the human*

---

<sup>34</sup> *Mano* is the mental function that experiences sense experiences and is counted the sixth of the sense doors. *Mano* is distinguished from *viññāna* (sensory knowing) and *citta* (mind that thinks, reacts, understands, and realizes). Please note how sense objects become a basis for gladness, sadness, and equanimity when *mano* is involved, that is, something more than the bare workings of the physical senses.

<sup>35</sup> AN 3:61 *Titthāyatanādi Sutta*, A.i.175, NDB 268.



*condition. Here, he outlines how anyone can untangle the knots and dukkha created by lust, hatred, and ignorance. This passage is quoted at the beginning of the Visuddhimagga, the classic fifth century Singhalese manual that is honored like a Bible by Theravāda orthodoxy.*

The inner tangle and the outer tangle,  
these people are entangled in a tangle.  
So I ask of you Gotama,  
who can disentangle this tangle?

One established in virtue, deeply knowing,  
developing mind and wisdom,  
a cultivator ardent and sagacious:  
she can disentangle this tangle.

Those for whom lust and hatred,  
along with ignorance have been dispelled,  
the arahants with impulses ended:  
for them the tangle is disentangled.

Where both name and form  
stop without the least remainder,  
also impingement and recognition of form:  
it is here this tangle is cut.<sup>36</sup>



### How to stop feeding ignorance

*Ignorance is both active false knowing and the absence of true knowing. Especially in the more basic form, the beginning of ignorance cannot be discovered. Yet, as a conditioned phenomenon like just about everything else, it can be investigated in terms of idappaccayatā. Feed ignorance its food and it becomes well fed; stop feeding ignorance and it will starve.*

Friends, a beginning of ignorance is not apparent such that before this ignorance did not exist and only came to exist later. Friends, the following statement is worth saying and must be stated "ignorance naturally appears having a specific condition."

We say that even this ignorance is a natural phenomenon having food, that it lacks food cannot be. What then is the food of ignorance? The answer ought to be "the five hindrances<sup>37</sup> are the food of ignorance."

We say that even these five hindrances are natural phenomena having food, that they lack food cannot be. What then is the food of the hindrances? The answer ought to be "the three wrong behaviors (in body, speech, and mind)."

... "not restraining the senses" ...

... "lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension" ...

... "unsystematic, irrational reflection" ...

---

<sup>36</sup> SN 1:23 Devatāsāmyutta, Jaṭṭa Sutta, S.i.13, CDB 101. Adapted from various sources (not from Lips series).

<sup>37</sup> Sensuousness, aversion, sloth and torpor, worry and flurry (agitation), and doubt.



... "lack of faith" ...

... "not having heard the True Dhamma" ...

We say that even not hearing the True Dhamma is a natural phenomenon having food, that it lacks food cannot be. What then is the food of not hearing the True Dhamma? The answer ought to be "not associating with true persons."

Friends, in just this way, the fulfillment of not associating with true persons leads to not hearing the True Dhamma being fulfilled. The fulfillment of not hearing the True Dhamma leads to lack of faith being fulfilled. ... leads to unsystematic, irrational reflection being fulfilled. ... leads to lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension being fulfilled. ... leads to non-restraint of the senses being fulfilled. ... leads to the three wrong behaviors being fulfilled. ... leads to the five hindrances being fulfilled. The fulfillment of the five hindrances leads to ignorance being fulfilled.

Friends, the feeding of ignorance occurs in just this way and is fulfilled just like this.

This process can be compared to a heavy rain falling upon the mountains. The rain seeks the lower places and naturally fills the crevices, ravines, and streams. Once the crevices, ravines, and streams are filled, they naturally fill the bogs. Once the bogs are filled, they naturally fill the marshes. Once the marshes are filled, they naturally fill the small rivers. Once the small rivers are filled, they naturally fill the large rivers. Once the large rivers are filled, they naturally fill the oceans.

Friends, in the same way the fulfillment of not associating with true persons naturally leads to not hearing the True Dhamma being fulfilled. The fulfillment of not hearing the True Dhamma leads to lack of faith ... leads to unsystematic, irrational reflection ... leads to lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension ... leads to non-restraint of the senses ... leads to the three wrong behaviors ... leads to the five hindrances being fulfilled. The fulfillment of the five hindrances leads to ignorance being fulfilled. Friends, the feeding of ignorance occurs in just this way and is fulfilled just like this.<sup>38</sup>



### The bases of dukkha are dependently co-arisen phenomena

*To see Dhamma is to see everything as arising, changing, and passing away through and within the flow of idappaccayatā and that all things implicated in dukkha are dependently co-arisen phenomena. All the stuff of our distresses, which have to do with one or another of the five clinging-together-aggregates, is a matter of paṭiccasamuppāda. This applies to both the causal and the quenching aspects.*

Venerable Sirs, ... these are words I have heard the Bhagavā speak: "Whoever sees paṭiccasamuppāda sees Dhamma; whoever sees Dhamma sees paṭiccasamuppāda."

These phenomena are named *paṭiccasamuppānadharmā* (dependently co-arisen phenomena), namely, the five clinging-together-aggregates (*upādānakkhandha*).

Any phenomenon that is desire (*chando*), attachment (*ālayo*), chasing after (*anunayo*), or indulgence (*ajjhosaṇam*) towards the five clinging-together-aggregates: that phenomenon is considered to be a source of dukkha (*dukkhasamudhaya*).

---

<sup>38</sup> AN 10:61 Avijjā Sutta, A.v.115, NDB 1415.

Any phenomenon that is the removal of lusty desire (*chandarāgavinayo*) or abandonment of lusty desire (*chandarāgappahānam*) towards the five clinging-together-aggregates: that phenomenon is considered to be a quenching of dukkha (*dukkhanirodho*).

Venerable Sirs, through this range of practice the teaching of the Bhagavā is considered greatly developed.<sup>39</sup>



### Consider the Dhamma meaning of each mode of *paṭiccasamuppāda*

*Chapter 7 of Under the Bodhi Tree presented Ajahn Buddhadāsa's lucid exposition of the twelve modes of paṭiccasamuppāda that make up the classic formula. This sutta gives a widely cited analysis of all the modes. Please take time to go beyond common or literal meanings and ponder the Dhamma meaning of each mode. As dukkha is a spiritual dilemma, the causes and conditions are likely to be spiritual as well (rather than material or merely biological).*

Friends, what is aging and death? The old age, growing old, loosening teeth, graying hair, sagging skin, drawing to a close of life, and faltering faculties among the various beings within each collection of beings is called "aging (*jarā*)." The passing away, transitioning, falling apart, disappearing, losing life, dying, reaching ones time, breaking up of the aggregates, abandoning the body, and loss of the life-principle among the various beings within each collection of beings is called "death (*maraṇa*)." Aging together with death is called "aging and death."

What is birth (*jāti*)? The birth, origin, descent, production, bringing forth, manifestation of the aggregates, and acquisition of sense media among the various beings within each collection of beings is called "birth."

What is becoming? There are these three kinds of becoming (*bhava*, being): sensual becoming, material becoming, and nonmaterial becoming. Friends, these are called "becoming."

What is clinging? There are these four kinds of clinging (*upādāna*): sensual clinging, ideological clinging, ethical clinging (to precepts and practices), and clinging to terms having to do with self. Friends, these are called "clinging."

What is craving? There are these six kinds of craving (*taṇhā*): craving for forms, craving for sounds, craving for odors, craving for flavors, craving for sensations, and craving for experiences. Friends, these are called "craving."

What is *vedanā*? There are these six kinds of *vedanā*: *vedanā* due to eye-contact, *vedanā* due to ear-contact, *vedanā* due to nose-contact, *vedanā* due to tongue-contact, *vedanā* due to body-contact, and *vedanā* due to mind-contact. Friends, these are called "*vedanā*."

What is contact? There are these six kinds of contact (*phassa*): eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, and mind-contact. Friends, these are called "contact."

What are the sense media? There are these six kinds of sense-media (*saḷāyatana*): eye-media, ear-media, nose-media, tongue-media, body-media, and mind-media. Friends, these are called "sense-media."

What is mind-body (*nāmarūpa*)? *Vedanā* (*vedanā*), recognition (*saññā*), volition (*cetana*), contact (*phassa*), and mental activity (*manasikāra*, thinking, pondering): these are called "nāma

---

<sup>39</sup> MN 28 Mahāhatthipadoma Sutta, M.i.191, MDB 284. Spoken by Ven. Sariputta.

(mind, name).” The four great aspects of material being (mahābhūta)<sup>40</sup> and forms depending on the four great aspects: these are called “rūpa (form, body).” Friends, mind together with body is called "mind-body."

What is cognizing? There are these six kinds of cognizing (viññāṇa): eye-cognition, ear-cognition, nose-cognition, tongue-cognition, body-cognition, and mind-cognition. Friends, these are called "cognizing."

What are the concoctings? There are these three kinds of concocting (saṅkhāra): bodily concocting, verbal concocting, and mental concocting. Friends, these are called "concocting."

What is ignorance (avijjā)? Any not-knowing that does not understand dukkha, does not understand the origin of dukkha, does not understand the quenching of dukkha, and does not understand the path leading to dukkha's quenching is "ignorance."<sup>41</sup>



### Understand the activities of concoctings (saṅkhāra)

*Of the variously interpreted and disputed terms of paṭiccasamuppāda, saṅkhāra has the most influence on how paṭiccasamuppāda is understood. One perspective places ignorance and saṅkhāra in a past life. For Ajahn Buddhadasa, they are repeatedly operating in this life and every day. Can you find them in your daily life?*

Friends, why do people call them "concoctings (saṅkhāra)"? Because of the activities of concocting into “things” these activities are called "saṅkhāra." And what do these activities concoct into concocted things? They concoct form into “form,” concoct vedanā into “vedanā,” concoct recognition into “recognition,” concoct concocting into “concocting,” and concoct cognizing into “cognizing.” Because of these activities of concocting into “things” these very activities are called "saṅkhāra (concoctings)."<sup>42</sup>



### This body is neither yours nor another's

*This body which we so easily identify with, scheme for its pleasures, and fight to defend, is also known as “old karma.” What is it made of? Who does it really belong to? Paṭiccasamuppāda provides a deeper perspective than people language can.*

Friends, this body is not yours nor does it belong to someone else. You ought to see this "old karma" as something concocted by conditions (*abhisāṅkhata*), as conditioned to be sensate (*abhisāñcetayita*), and which can experience sense objects (*vedanīya*).

Friends, in the case of this body the noble disciple who has listened well reflects with systematic care concerning paṭiccasamuppāda that "Because this exists, this exists; through the arising of this, this arises; because this does not exist, this does not exist; through the quenching of this, this is quenched;" in other words, "with ignorance as condition, there are concoctings; with concoctings as condition, there is cognizing; ... and so on through ... with birth as

---

<sup>40</sup> Earth-element (solidity), water-element (cohesion), fire-element (combustion), and wind-element (motion).

<sup>41</sup> SN 12:2 Vibhaṅga Sutta, S.ii.2, CDB 534.

<sup>42</sup> SN 22:79 Khajjanīya Sutta, S.iii.87, CDB 915. The quotation marks are meant to convey a mental conception abstracted from reality as it is.

condition, there is aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair in full. The entire mass of dukkha arises in just this way."

Through the fading away and remainderless quenching of ignorance, concoctings are quenched; with the quenching of concoctings, cognizing is quenched; with the quenching of viññāṇa, mind-body is quenched; ... and so on through ... with the quenching of clinging, becoming is quenched; with the quenching of becoming, birth is quenched; with the quenching of birth, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair utterly are quenched. The entire mass of dukkha is quenched in just this way."<sup>43</sup>



### Try humming this basic paṭiccasamuppāda to yourself

*Here, Buddha gives us a straightforward and practical version of paṭiccasamuppāda. He explains that based in the senses, sense experience occurs along with vedanā. In the absence of sufficient mindfulness and wisdom, craving, clinging, and the others conditions for dukkha follow. Ajahn Buddhādāsa called this "humming paṭiccasamuppāda," as Buddha was heard reciting it to himself, long after his awakening.*

Depending on the eyes and form, eye-cognition arises. The meeting together of these three phenomena is contact. With contact as condition, there is vedanā; with vedanā as condition, there is craving; with craving as condition, there is clinging; with clinging as condition, there is becoming; with becoming as condition, there is birth; with birth as condition, old age and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair arise completely. The dependent co-arising of the entire mass of dukkha happens in just this way.

Depending on the ears and sound, ear-cognition arises. ... and so on ...

Depending on the nose and odor, nose-cognition arises. ... and so on ...

Depending on the tongue and flavor, tongue-cognition arises. ... and so on ...

Depending on the body and physical sensation, body-cognition arises. ... and so on ...

Depending on mind (mano) and an "idea" (dhammāramaṇa), mind-cognition arises. The meeting together of these three phenomena is contact. With contact as condition, there is vedanā; with vedanā as condition, there is craving; with craving as condition, there is clinging; with clinging as condition, there is becoming; with becoming as condition, there is birth; with birth as condition, old age and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair arise completely. The dependent co-arising of the entire mass of dukkha happens in just this way."<sup>44</sup>



### Rely on humming paṭiccasamuppāda as the basis of spiritual life

*Buddha advised an interloping young monk to rely on this "humming paṭiccasamuppāda," calling it "the beginning of the spiritual life." Ajahn Buddhādāsa considered it to contain all that is necessary for understanding the fundamentals of*

<sup>43</sup> SN 12:37 Lokāyatika Sutta, S.ii.64, CDB 575.

<sup>44</sup> This passage appears a number of times in the Pāli Suttas, for example, SN 12:45 Nātika Sutta, S.ii.74, CDB 582. Because the Buddha recited these words to himself while alone in the forest, Ajahn Buddhādāsa called this "humming paṭiccasamuppāda."

*practice, which makes it the basis of spiritual life. We too can benefit from humming paṭīccasamuppāda to ourselves as we establish the fundamentals of practice each day.*

It so happened that a monk was standing and listening to Buddha (as he recited the preceding passage). When he noticed the monk standing there, he asked the monk:

Monk, did you hear this recitation of Dhamma?

Yes, Venerable Sir, I did.

Monk, you ought to take this recitation of Dhamma to heart. You ought to learn this recitation of Dhamma. You ought to remember this recitation of Dhamma. This recitation of Dhamma is most beneficial. It is the beginning of the spiritual life (adibrahmacariya).<sup>45</sup>



### See the Buddha through Dhamma

*In our materially minded moments, we consider Buddha an embodied person or as shown in images. Sometimes we try to know Buddha through words from ancient texts. Yet these are not the places to look. Buddha is seen only through Dhamma.*

Friends, even though someone grabbed hold of my outer robe and walked in my steps behind me, if he was full of covetousness, with strong sensual lust, malevolent, thinking of harm, with wandering mindfulness, without clear awareness, distracted and unsettled, swaying to and fro, and with unrestrained faculties, that person would be far from me and I would be far from him. Why is this? Because such a person does not see Dhamma. Not seeing Dhamma, he does not see me.

Even though someone a hundred leagues distant, if she were free of covetousness, without sensual lust, kindhearted, compassionate, with well-established mindfulness, clearly aware and discerning, composed and settled, and with restrained faculties, that person would be near to me and I would be near to her. Why is this? Because such a person sees Dhamma. Seeing Dhamma, she sees me.<sup>46</sup>



### See Dhamma through paṭīccasamuppāda

*The heart of Dhamma is paṭīccasamuppāda. To see paṭīccasamuppāda is to see Dhamma and therein the Buddha, no matter how many centuries have passed since a certain prophetic individual died.*

Ven Sariputta, speaking to a group of monks:

These are words I have heard spoken by the Bhagavā himself: "Whoever sees paṭīccasamuppāda, is one who sees Dhamma. Whoever sees Dhamma, is one who sees paṭīccasamuppāda."<sup>47</sup>



---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. This passage immediately follows the preceding passage.

<sup>46</sup> It 92, Saṅghāṭīkaṇṇa Sutta, Ireland 217.

<sup>47</sup> MN 28 Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta, M.i.191, MDB 284.

## See beyond conceptions of “existence” and “nonexistence”

*“Being” and “nothing,” “existence” and nonexistence,” “I am” and “I am not” are dualisms that we conceive and grasp. Buddha’s middle way teaching of paṭiccasamuppāda enables us to avoid the extremes of such dualisms by rightly seeing that the nature of all phenomena is arising and passing away. With this wisdom one does not take a stand on “my self.”*

At Sāvatti, Ven. Kaccānagotta approached the Bhagavā, paid homage, and sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Bhagavā: "Lord, 'Right view, right view,' it is said. In what way is there right view?"

This world, Kaccāna, by and large rests in a duality: “there is” (existence) and “there is not” (nonexistence). For one who sees the origin of the world as it really is with right wisdom, the notion of nonexistence in regard to the world (or anything of the world) does not occur. For one who sees the cessation of the world as it really is with right wisdom, the notion of existence in regard to the world (or anything of the world) does not occur.<sup>48</sup>

This world, Kaccāna, by and large is shackled by engagement, clinging, and adherence (biases). But one who sees (as described above) does not get involved with or cling to these engagements, attachments, mental standpoints, adherences, biases, or obsessions; nor does one take a stand on 'my self.' He has no uncertainty or doubt that just dukkha, when arising, is arising; dukkha, when passing away, is passing away. In this, his knowledge is independent of others. It's to this extent, Kaccāna, that there is right view.

“Everything exists”: that is one extreme. “Everything doesn't exist”: that is a second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches Dhamma via the middle:

With ignorance as condition, there are concoctings; with concoctings as condition, there is viññāna; ... with birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, pain, lamentation, grief, and despair come fully into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of distress & suffering.

With the remainderless fading away and quenching of ignorance, concoctions are quenched. With the quenching of concoctions, cognizing is quenched. ... With the quenching of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, and despair naturally are quenched. Such is the quenching of this entire mass of distress and suffering.<sup>49</sup>



## Paṭiccasamuppāda is apparently and actually profound

*Buddha scolds his cousin and personal attendant Ānanda for proudly declaring that paṭiccasamuppāda is not as profound as many believe. Buddha declares that paṭiccasamuppāda is in fact truly profound. We remain entangled with dukkha as long as we fail to penetrate its truth.*

Ven Ānanda approached the Buddha saying, "Marvelous, Reverend Sir, this has never occurred before. Reverend Sir, paṭiccasamuppāda is widely spoken of as profound Dhamma and has the appearance of being profound yet it appears to me as if not so profound."

Ānanda, do not say that. Do not speak like that. Paṭiccasamuppāda both has the outward appearance of being profound and is truly profound. Through not understanding deeply and not

<sup>48</sup> World here does not refer to an objectively existing outer world, as commonly assumed in modern culture. Here world is the world of conscious experience arising and passing away from moment to moment.

<sup>49</sup> SN 12:15 Kaccānagotta Sutta, S.ii.16, CDB 544.



penetratively realizing this Dhamma of paṭiccasamuppāda, (the minds of) the many kinds of sentient beings are like a tangled skein of thread, are entangled like thread all tied up in knots, are like muṅja grass and pabbaja-grass all matted together. They cannot escape the recurring cycles (saṃsāra) of woeful, painful, and hellish realms.<sup>50</sup>



### Craving, indulging, and clinging to pleasing experiences obstruct liberation

*Even the gods are interested in Dhamma practice. Sakka asks Buddha the difference between those who are thoroughly cooled (liberated from dukkha) here in this life and those who are not. Those who do not indulge in or cling to sense experiences are liberated and cooled soon enough to directly experience it.*

Sakka, King of the Gods, asked Buddha: “Venerable Sir, what is the cause, what is the condition, that prevents certain kinds of beings in this world from thoroughly cooling right here; and what is the cause, what is the condition, that enables certain kinds of beings in this world to thoroughly cool right here?”<sup>51</sup>

King of the Gods, there are forms cognizable by the eyes, forms that are pleasing, attractive, satisfying, delightful, bases for desire, establishments of lust. If a cultivator takes pleasure in, indulges in, and is infatuated with such forms, while he takes pleasure in, indulges in, and is infatuated with form, the cognizing on which craving for that form depends occurs for him. That cognizing is clinging.<sup>52</sup> King of the Gods, the cultivator with clinging does not thoroughly cool.

[Identical wording is used regarding the other sense media — sounds heard by the ears, odors smelled by the nose, flavors tasted by the tongue, and physical sensations felt by the body — differing only in terms of the relevant sense door. We will continue with the sixth sense.]

King of the Gods, there are phenomena cognizable by mind, phenomena that are pleasing, attractive, satisfying, delightful, bases for desire, establishments of lust. If a cultivator takes pleasure in, indulges in, and is infatuated with such phenomena, while she takes pleasure in, indulges in, and is infatuated with phenomenon, the cognizing on which craving for that phenomena depends occurs for her. That cognizing is clinging. King of the Gods, the cultivator with clinging does not thoroughly cool.

King of the Gods, this is the cause, this is the condition that prevents certain kinds of beings in this world from thoroughly cooling right here.

[the inverse]

King of the Gods, there are forms cognizable by the eyes, forms that are pleasing, attractive, satisfying, delightful, bases for desire, establishments of lust. If a cultivator does not take pleasure in, does not indulge in, and is not infatuated with such forms, while he does not take pleasure in, does not indulge in, and is not infatuated with form, the cognizing on which craving

<sup>50</sup> SN 12:60 Nidāna Sutta, S.ii.92, CDB 594.

<sup>51</sup> *Diṭṭhadhamma*, before it is too late, able to see without needing to wait for the future. “Thoroughly cool” is a verb form of *parinibbāna*, traditionally associated with death, although many sutta passages use it in regard to a still living being. Ajahn Buddhādāsa often rendered *nibbāna* as “coolness” and emphasized that it can be realized here in this life.

<sup>52</sup> Ajahn Buddhādāsa comments: *Viññāṇa*, here, refers to the cognition of mental phenomena (*manoviññāṇa*) that experiences the pleasure and infatuation regarding that form. This does not refer to the eye-cognition (*cakhuviññāṇa*) that sees the form in the ordinary functioning of the visual sense.

for that form depends does not occur for him. The cognizing that would be clinging does not happen in him. King of the Gods, the cultivator without clinging thoroughly cools.

[Identical wording is used regarding the other sense media.]

King of the Gods, there are phenomena cognizable by mind, phenomena that are pleasing, attractive, satisfying, delightful, bases for desire, establishments of lust. If a cultivator does not take pleasure in, does not indulge in, and is not infatuated with such phenomena, while she does not take pleasure in, does not indulge in, and is not infatuated with phenomenon, the cognizing on which craving for that phenomena depends does not occur for her. The cognizing that would be clinging does not happen in her. King of the Gods, the cultivator without clinging thoroughly cools.

King of the Gods, this is the cause, this is the condition that allows certain kinds of beings in this world to thoroughly cool right here.<sup>53</sup>



### Experience fully and simply without fabricating anything extra

*An aged monk seeks a succinct Dhamma teaching. Rather than dwelling in past experiences or conjecturing about future ones, Buddha advises him to be fully present and simply to experience here and now. In this way we do not fabricate ourselves anywhere or in anything; hence, there is nobody to suffer.*

Reverend Sir, I am aged, have been old for a long time, and have passed through the many stages of life. Might the Bhagavā demonstrate Dhamma succinctly, may it please you to demonstrate Dhamma succinctly, so that I may thoroughly understand the essence of your words in a way that I may be an heir to the Bhagavā 's words.

Mālunḅyaputta, what do you make of this? Would you experience satisfaction, lust, and love towards forms experientable by the eyes that you did not see and have never seen, forms that you are not seeing now, and forms you do not think you will ever see?

That could not be, Reverend Sir.

[The above line of questioning and response are repeated in the cases of sounds experientable by the ears, odors experientable by the nose, flavors experientable by the tongue, touches experientable by the body, and mental phenomena experientable by the mind-door.]

Mālunḅyaputta, among all the things you might see, might hear, might experience, and might cognize (know):

- among things seen, there will be merely seeing;
- among things heard, there will be merely hearing;
- among things experienced, there will be merely experiencing; and
- among things known, there will be merely knowing.

Mālunḅyaputta, whenever in seeing you merely see, in hearing you merely hear, in experiencing you merely experience, and in knowing you merely know; for that reason, then, you will not be;

---

53 SN 35:118 Sakkapañha Sutta, S.iv.101, CDB 1192.



when you are not, you will not be in that; when you are not in that, you will be neither here nor beyond nor in between the two. Just this is the end of suffering.<sup>54</sup>



### Distinguish the subtle difference between two levels of contact

*Two aspects or levels of contact is one of paṭiccasamuppāda's many subtleties. This insight illuminates the distinctions made in the above two passages. Sense experience in itself is not necessarily dukkha. Craving manifests through designations or meanings based on qualities and signs.*

Ānanda, it has been said that “depending on craving there is seeking.” You need to understand the words “depending on craving there is seeking” in the following way. If craving did not happen for anyone anywhere in any way — whether in the form of sensual craving, existential craving, or negative craving — through the non-existence and quenching of craving in all respects, how could seeking be discerned?

“That could never be.”

For this very reason in this matter, the cause, the source, the origin, and the condition for seeking is craving. Further, we can say that these two aspects of craving — perpetuating cycles of ego-birth and seeking enjoyment — both have the same source in vedanā; that is, vedanā is the source for the arising of both kinds of craving.

Ānanda, it has been said that “vedanā exists with contact as condition.” You need to understand the words “vedanā exists with contact as condition” in the following way. If contact did not happen for anyone anywhere in any way — whether eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, or mind-contact — through the non-existence and quenching of contact in all respects, how could vedanā be discerned?

“That could never be.”

For this very reason in this matter, the cause, the source, the origin, and the condition of vedanā is contact.

Ānanda, it has been said that “contact exists with mind-body as condition.” You need to understand the words “contact exists with mind-body as condition” in the following way. The description of a mental-group (collection of mentality) depends upon qualities, marks, signs, and indications. When these qualities, marks, signs, and indications do not exist, how could contact through designation ever be discerned concerning the physical-group?

“That could never be.”

Ānanda, the naming of a physical-group (collection of physicality) depends upon qualities, marks, signs, and indications. When these qualities, marks, signs, and indications do not exist, how could contact through mere interaction ever be discerned concerning the mental-group?

“That could never be.”

Ānanda, the naming of both the mental-group and the physical-group depends upon the qualities, marks, signs, and indications. When these qualities, marks, signs, and indications do not exist, how could contact through designation and contact through mere interaction ever be discerned?

---

<sup>54</sup> SN 35:95 Mālunḅkyaputta Sutta, S.iv.72, CDB 1175.

"That could never be."

Ānanda, the naming of mind-body depends upon the qualities, marks, signs, and indications. When these qualities, marks, signs, and indications do not exist, how could contact ever be discerned?

"That could never be."

Ānanda, for this very reason in this matter, this is the cause, this is the source, this is the origin, this is the condition of contact, that is, mind-body. For this very reason in this matter, the cause, the source, the origin, and the condition of contact is mind-body.<sup>55</sup>



### The quenching of craving and clinging disestablishes dukkha

*This variation of paṭiccasamuppāda refers to the four ennobling truths. Ajahn Buddhādāsa observes that this sutta and others like it show how paṭiccasamuppāda is quenched in the middle of the sequence of conditions by quenching craving without needing to cross over into another life. This and similar sutta passages indicate that there is no reason to assume that paṭiccasamuppāda is about past and future lives.*

Friends, how does dukkha originate?

Depending on eyes and form, eye-cognition arises. The meeting together of these three is eye-contact. With contact as condition, there is vedanā; with vedanā as condition there is craving. This is the origin of dukkha.

Friends, how is dukkha disestablished?

Depending on eyes and form, eye-cognition arises. The meeting together of these three is eye-contact. With contact as condition, there is vedanā; with vedanā as condition there is craving. Through the fading away and remainderless quenching of craving, clinging is quenched. Through the quenching of clinging, becoming is quenched. Through the quenching of becoming, birth is quenched. Through the quenching of birth, aging and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair are quenched thoroughly. The quenching of the entire mass of dukkha occurs in just this way. This is the disestablishment of dukkha.

[Identical wording is used for the remaining sense doors, their outer media, and corresponding forms of cognizing.]<sup>56</sup>



### Without training we get stuck in vedanā and accumulate harmful tendencies

*How we respond to vedanā distinguishes ordinary people from well-trained disciples of Buddha. We all experience the gamut of pleasant, painful, and neither painful-nor-pleasant vedanā. We can become stuck in the vedanā we experience and strengthen unhealthy tendencies that perpetuate suffering. The wise don't get stuck, don't harbor tendencies, and don't perpetuate suffering.*

---

<sup>55</sup> DN 15 Mahānidāna Sutta, D.ii.61, LDB 225.

<sup>56</sup> SN 12:43 Dukkha Sutta, S.ii.72, CDB 580 (also SN 35:106 Dukkhasamudaya Sutta S. iv.86). The following sutta of this section speaks in exactly the same way about the origin and disestablishment (passing away) of the world SN 12:44 Loka Sutta, S.ii.73, CDB 581 (also SN 35:107 Dukkhasamudaya Sutta S. iv.87).

Friends, the untrained worldly person experiences *vedanā* that may be pleasant, painful, or neither-pleasant-nor-painful. Even the well-trained noble disciple experiences *vedanā* that may be pleasant, painful, or neither-pleasant-nor-painful. When this is the case, what is the distinction between the well-trained noble disciple and the untrained worldly person? What is the different purpose, and what is the different cause?<sup>57</sup>

The monks pleaded with the Bhagavā to answer the question himself.

Friends, the untrained worldly person when touched by painful *vedanā* is sorrowful, is agitated, laments, despairs, and has impaired mindfulness. He experiences two aspects of *vedanā* — *vedanā* related to body and *vedanā* because of mental factors.

This can be compared to someone who shoots someone else with an arrow, and then shoots him a second time in the same place. The one who is shot by the two arrows experiences *vedanā* both physically and mentally.

In the same way, the untrained worldly person, when touched by painful *vedanā*, is sorrowful, is agitated, laments, despairs, and has impaired mindfulness. This is considered to be experiencing two aspects of *vedanā* — physical and mental. He feels aversion due to that painful *vedanā*. Whatever tendency towards aversion arises from painful *vedanā*, that tendency towards aversion accumulates in one who is averse toward painful *vedanā*.

This person when touched by painful *vedanā* thinks longingly of sensual pleasure. Why is this? This is because the unlearned worldly person does not know clearly the skillful means for being liberated from painful *vedanā* and escapes in sensual pleasure (which he thinks will do away with the painful *vedanā*). When this worldly person indulges in sensual pleasure, whatever tendency towards lust arises from pleasant *vedanā*, that tendency towards lust accumulates in that worldly person.

This worldly person does not clearly know according to reality the origin, the disestablishment, the delicious charm, the wicked harm of *vedanā*, and the skillful means of liberation from all these *vedanā*. When this worldly person does not clearly know according to reality the origin, the disestablishment, the delicious charm, the wicked harm of *vedanā*, and the skillful means of liberation from all these *vedanā*, whatever tendency towards ignorance arises from neither-pleasant-nor-painful *vedanā* that tendency towards ignorance accumulates in this worldly person.

This worldly person, when experiencing pleasant *vedanā* gets stuck in experiencing that *vedanā*; when experiencing painful *vedanā* gets stuck in experiencing that *vedanā*; and when experiencing neither-painful-nor-pleasant *vedanā* gets stuck in experiencing that *vedanā*.

Friends, this unknowing worldly person is declared by us to be one bound up in birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; we declare him to be bound up in *dukkha*.

\*\*\*\*\*

Friends, as for the well-trained noble disciple, when touched by painful *vedanā* is not sorrowful or agitated, does not lament or despair, and mindfulness is unimpaired. He experiences only one aspect of *vedanā* — *vedanā* related to body but not *vedanā* because of mental factors.

This can be compared to someone who shoots someone else with an arrow, but does not shoot him a second time. The one who is shot experiences the *vedanā* of only one arrow.

---

<sup>57</sup> Ajahn Buddhadasa explains the Pāli *puthujjana* as “those with the thickness of ignorance obscuring their vision”; alternatively translated “worldlings, common folk.”

In the same way, the well-trained noble disciple, when touched by painful vedanā, is not sorrowful or agitated, does not lament or despair, and mindfulness is unimpaired.

This is considered to be experiencing a single aspect of vedanā — physical only without mental factors. He feels no aversion due to that painful vedanā. Whatever tendency towards aversion arises from painful vedanā, that tendency towards aversion doesn't accumulate in one who isn't averse to painful vedanā.

This person when touched by painful vedanā doesn't long for sensual pleasure. Why is this? This is because the well-trained noble disciple understands the skillful means for being liberated from painful vedanā rather than escaping in sensual pleasure. When this noble disciple doesn't indulge in sensual pleasure, whatever tendency towards lust arises from pleasant vedanā, that tendency towards lust doesn't accumulate in this noble disciple.

This noble disciple understands according to reality the origin, the disestablishment, the delicious charm, the wicked harm of vedanā, and the skillful means of liberation from all these vedanā. When this noble disciple understands according to reality the origin, the disestablishment, the delicious charm, the wicked harm of vedanā, and the skillful means of liberation from all these vedanā, whatever tendency towards ignorance arises from neither-painful-nor-pleasant vedanā that tendency towards ignorance doesn't accumulate in this noble disciple.

This noble disciple, when experiencing pleasant vedanā doesn't get stuck in experiencing that vedanā; when experiencing painful vedanā doesn't get stuck in experiencing that vedanā; and when experiencing neither-painful-nor-pleasant vedanā doesn't get stuck in experiencing that vedanā.

Friends, this well-trained noble disciple is declared by us to be one no longer bound up in birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; we declare him to be unbound by dukkha.<sup>58</sup>



### The four ennobling truths of paṭiccasamuppāda cannot be rebuked or censured

*This passage explicitly links Buddha's core teaching framework of the four noble truths with paṭiccasamuppāda in both the arising and quenching modes. Here he also points out that these teachings are for embodied sensate beings. These teachings are not abstract metaphysical propositions; they are practical guidance for those recognizing and facing the consequences of being alive and sensate.*

Friends, the Dhamma that I have demonstrated regarding "these four ennobling truths" cannot be rebuked, defiled, censured, or disputed by any of the learned wanderers or priests. Having stated this, what is my basis for doing so? Friends, depending on the six elements there is descent into the womb. When there is descent into the womb, there is mind-body. With mind-body as condition there are the sense media. With the sense media as condition there is contact. With contact as condition there is vedanā. We designate that "this is dukkha," "this is the origin of dukkha," "this is the quenching of dukkha," and "this is the path leading to dukkha's quenching" for beings able to experience vedanā.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> SN 36.6 S.iv.207, CDB 1263.

<sup>59</sup> This passage comes from the same sutta as one appearing between chapters 1 and 2.

Friends, what is the ennobling truth of dukkha? Birth is dukkha, ageing is dukkha, and death is dukkha. Also, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair are dukkha. Further, experiencing the unloved is dukkha, missing the beloved is dukkha, and wanting things and not obtaining them is dukkha. Finally, the essence of dukkha is the five clinging-together-aggregates. This is the noble truth of dukkha.

Friends, what is the ennobling truth of dukkha's origin? With ignorance as condition, there are concoctings; with concoctings as condition, there is cognition (*viññāṇa*); with cognition as condition, there is name-form; ... there are sense-media; ... there is contact; ... there is *vedanā*; ... there is craving; ... there is clinging; with clinging as condition, there is becoming (*bhava*); with becoming as condition, there is birth; with birth as condition, old age and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair fully arise. The dependent co-arising of the entire mass of dukkha naturally happens in just this way. This is the noble truth of dukkha's origin.

Friends, what is the ennobling truth of dukkha's quenching? Due to the fading away and remainderless quenching of ignorance, concoctings are quenched; due to the quenching of the concoctings, *viññāṇa* is quenched; due to the quenching of *viññāṇa*, name-form is quenched; ... the sense-media are quenched; ... contact is quenched; ... *vedanā* is quenched; ... craving is quenched; ... clinging is quenched; due to the quenching of clinging, *bhava* is quenched; due to the quenching of becoming, birth is quenched; due to the quenching of birth, old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are quenched. The quenching of the entire mass of dukkha naturally happens in just this way. This is the noble truth of dukkha's quenching.

Friends, what is the ennobling truth of the way of practice leading to dukkha's quenching? The noble eightfold path composed of right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right collectedness. This is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to dukkha's quenching.

Friends, these make up the Dhamma I have demonstrated as "these are the four ennobling truths" that cannot be rebuked, defiled, censured, or disputed by any of the learned wanderers or priests.<sup>60</sup>



### Karma bears fruit or ends in this individuality

*Actions based in selfishness – greed, hatred, and delusion – bear fruit within the collection of aggregates (human life) where the sense of individuality arises. Egoistic action occurs with a sense of separate existence and agency that acts and the fruits of the action fall to that individuality, too. Unselfish action – action without greed, hatred, and delusion – doesn't bear such fruit. When we consider this teaching in light of "birth" within *paṭiccasamuppāda*, while recognizing that the fruits of some actions may have a time lag, we need not assume they are spread out over various "life times," understood conventionally.*

Friends, there are these three causes for the occurrence of actions (*karma*). What are these three? The three are greed as a cause of actions, hatred as a cause of actions, and delusion as a cause of actions.

Any action that someone has carried out with greed, occurring with greed as its cause, and having greed as its origin, that action bears fruit within the aggregates that are the basis for his individuality (*attabhāvo*). In whichever individuality that action bears fruit, he experiences that

<sup>60</sup> AN 3.61, *Titthāyatanādi Sutta*, A.i.176, NDB 268.

karmic fruit within that very individuality, either immediately, a moment later, or some time later.<sup>61</sup>

[The exact same description is applied to hatred and delusion, word for word.]

Friends, this is comparable with plant seeds that have not broken, rotted, or been destroyed by wind and sun, that have been chosen for their soundness, carefully stored, and planted by someone in a well prepared plot with good top soil. Further, the rain falls according to the season. Those seeds will sprout, develop, and thrive most certainly. In the same way, any action that someone has carried out with greed ... hatred ... delusion, occurring with greed ... hatred ... delusion as its cause, and having greed ... hatred ... delusion as its origin; that action bears fruit within the aggregates that are the basis for his individuality. In whichever individuality that action bears fruit, he experiences that karmic fruit within that very individuality, either immediately, a moment later, or some time later.

These are the three causes for the occurrence of actions (*kamma*).

\*\*\*

\*\*\*

Friends, there are these three other causes for the occurrence of actions (*karma*). What are these three? The three are non-greed as a cause of actions, non-hatred as a cause of actions, and non-delusion as a cause of actions.

Any action that someone has carried out with non-greed, occurring with non-greed as its cause, and having non-greed as its origin; being free of greed in this way, that action has been abandoned by him, been uprooted, been made like a palm with its growth removed, become nothing, so that it won't arise again.

[The exact same description is applied to non-hatred and non-delusion, word for word.]

Friends, this is comparable with plant seeds that have not broken, rotted, or been destroyed by wind and sun, that have been chosen for their soundness, and carefully stored. However, someone burns them until only ashes remain, then tosses them into a scattering wind or sprinkles them into a fast flowing river. Certainly, those seeds are as if uprooted, been made like a palm with its growth removed, become nothing, so that they won't sprout ever again.

In the same way, any action that someone has carried out with non-greed ... non-hatred ... non-delusion, occurring with non-greed ... non-hatred ... non-delusion as its cause, and having non-greed ... non-hatred ... non-delusion as its origin; being free of greed ... hatred ... delusion in this way, those actions have been abandoned by him, been uprooted, been made like a palm with its growth removed, become nothing, so they won't arise again.

These are the three causes for the occurrence of actions (*kamma*).

Any karma that the actor sees as born  
from greed, hatred, or delusion,

---

<sup>61</sup> More literal translations are used here for the Pāli terms *diṭṭhadhamma*, *uppajja*, and *aparapariyāya*, instead of translations commonly interpreted as "this life," "the next life," and "subsequent lives." Ajahn Buddhādāsa comments that "this sutta demonstrates how all three causes of actions occur in this life, before physical death within this individuality (appearance of self), which corresponds to birth (*jāti*) in the language of paṭiccasamuppāda. That is, any time there is clinging, there is a birth, which can happen many times each day. Thus, *diṭṭhadhamma* means immediately, *uppajja* means a moment later, and *aparapariyāya* means some time later. In paṭiccasamuppāda terms "some later time" means after the second birth, third birth, fourth birth, and so on, which could be in the same hour, or the same day, or even years later. All of these timeframes are within the same individuality. There is no need to interpret any of this in terms of occurring after death. The meaning of birth should be understood according to the intention of paṭiccasamuppāda's language, that is, the language of ultimate truth. The language of *sīladhamma* (ethics), which is used to teach ethics and speaks of recollecting countless past lives, also can be understood using the language of paṭiccasamuppāda."

once done, whether small or great,  
 that karma will bear fruit to be  
 experienced within this individuality.  
 No other basis can be found.  
 Therefore, the practitioner  
 who clearly understands greed, hatred, and delusion,  
 summons true knowledge and thereby  
 abandons all evil, unwholesome actions.<sup>62</sup>



### New existences depend upon underlying tendencies

*Thinking over, planning about, and inclining toward (over-familiarizing with) something creates an object or basis for cognizing to rest upon and take hold. Growth here is the means for entering a new existence and the changes and suffering that follow. Even without active thinking and pondering, remaining tendencies toward something or patterns of habituation are a sufficient basis for becoming and entering a new existence (bhava). Becoming, birth, and dukkha have no basis when such tendencies are absent.*

Friends, what one thinks of, plans about, and inclines towards (habituates to); that becomes the object for the establishing of viññāṇa (cognition). When there is an object, the specific establishment of viññāṇa occurs. When this cognition is established and thrives, the arising of further new existence occurs; when there is the arising of further new existence, coming and going occur; when there is coming and going, shifting and arising occur; when there is shifting and arising, old age and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair occur. The dependent co-arising of the mass of all this dukkha happens in just this way.

Friends, when one does not think of, does not plan about, yet still inclines towards (habituates to) something, that becomes the object for the establishing of viññāṇa. When there is an object, the specific establishment of cognition occurs. When this cognition is established and thrives, the means of entering a new existence occurs; when there is the means of entering a new existence, coming and going occur; when there is coming and going, shifting and arising occur; when there is shifting and arising, old age and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair occur. The dependent co-arising of the mass of all this dukkha happens in just this way.

Friends, if one does not think of, does not plan about, and [further] does not incline towards (habituate to) anything; there is nothing to be the object for the establishing of viññāṇa. When there is no object, the specific establishment of cognition does not occur. When this viññāṇa does not establish and thrive, there is no means for entering a new existence; when there is no means for entering a new existence, coming and going do not occur; when there is no coming and going, shifting and arising do not occur; when there is no shifting and arising, old age and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair are thoroughly quenched. The quenching of the mass of all this dukkha happens in just this way.<sup>63</sup>



<sup>62</sup> AN 3:34 Nidāna Sutta, A.i.134, NDB 230.

<sup>63</sup> SN 12:38, Cetanā Sutta, S.ii.65, CDB 576. The next two suttas (12:39 and 12:40) are almost identical with this sutta. Dutiyacetanā Sutta has "mind-body descends" and Tatiyacetanā Sutta has "the means of new existence" in place of "the arising of further new existence."



### The five khandhas are heavy burdens for “me”

*The aggregates of our clinging to existence, the aggregates of our egoistic lives, become burdens when we take them personally and experience them in terms of self. We create stress for ourselves by weighing ourselves down with such burdens. The wise lighten their loads and know how to leave new burdens alone.*

The five heaps are heavy loads;  
the "person" foolishly shoulders them.  
Carrying such weights is suffering in the world;  
tossing away these burdens is bliss.  
The wise have discarded all that weight,  
without picking up any new troubles,  
have torn out craving by the roots,  
and are free of desire, thoroughly quenched.<sup>64</sup>



### The five clinging-together-aggregates manifest with passion and infatuation

*In the absence of true understanding, we react passionately to the factors of experience, such as contact and vedanā. With such passion and fixation, the five clinging-together-aggregates – life with distress and suffering – fully manifest. This is described in terms of agitation, roasting, and burning. This paṭiccasamuppāda perspective highlights the rebirth of suffering within daily experience.*

Friends, anyone not knowing and seeing the eyes as they actually are, not knowing and seeing visual forms as they actually are, not knowing and seeing eye-cognition as it actually is, not knowing and seeing eye-contact as it actually is, and not knowing and seeing vedanā arising with eye-contact as condition — whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant — as it actually is, naturally is passionate regarding the eyes, is passionate regarding visual forms, is passionate regarding eye-cognition, is passionate regarding eye-contact, and is passionate regarding vedanā arising with eye-contact as condition — whether pleasant, painful, or neither-painful-nor-pleasant.

When somebody is passionate, bound up, infatuated, fixated on attractiveness, the five aggregates of clinging (*ūpādānakkhandha*) have achieved their manifestation. Further, his craving that is a means for entering a new becoming, accompanied by the lusty delight that is a means for excessive delight in its object, reaches its full development in him.

Physical agitation and mental-emotional agitation fully develop in him, physical roasting and mental-emotional roasting fully develop in him, and physical burning and mental-emotional burning fully develop in him. Thus, that person experiences both physical pain and mental-emotional suffering.

[The exact same exploration follows through with the other sense media: ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.]<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> SN 22:22 Bhārā Sutta, S.iii.26, CDB 872.

<sup>65</sup> MN 149 Mahāsaḷāyatana Sutta, M.iii.287, MDB 1137.





### Regarding the clinging-together-aggregates as self

*Our habitual ways of regarding things are usually bound up with the five clinging-together-aggregates and taking them personally, that is, in terms of me, mine, or self (attā). The untrained mind is still infected with ignorance and identifies with these basic life functions, assuming “I am” in regard to them. With the natural functioning of the sense faculties, ignorant contact arises and the vedanā conditioned by it give rise to such appropriations and attachments. Noble disciples see all of this in light of paṭiccasamuppāda, without appropriations and attachments to “I am.”*

Friends, any group of wanderers or priests when regarding things (*samanuppassati*),<sup>66</sup> tend to regard attā as existing in various ways. All of those wanderers or priests regard the five clinging-together-aggregates collectively or one or another of the five clinging-together-aggregates as being attā.

What are the clinging-together-aggregates? In this world, worldly people who have not paid attention, who have not seen noble ones, are not intelligent regarding the noble ones’ Dhamma, and have not received the Dhamma advice of the noble ones, and who have not seen true persons, are not intelligent regarding the Dhamma of true persons, and have not received the Dhamma advice of true persons, (1) tend to regard form as being attā, or regard attā as having form, or regard form as being in attā, or regard attā as being in form; (2) tend to regard vedanā as being attā, or regard attā as having vedanā, or regard vedanā as being in attā, or regard attā as being in vedanā; (3) tend to regard recognition as being attā, or regard attā as having recognition, or regard recognition as being in attā, or regard attā as being in recognition; (4) tend to regard thought as being attā, or regard attā as having thought, or regard thought as being in attā, or regard attā as being in thought; and (5) tend to regard cognizing as being attā, or regard attā as having cognizing, or regard cognizing as being in attā, or regard attā as being in cognizing.

So it is that the regarding of attā occurs, and so such worldly persons also take possession of things regarded as attā with “I am.”

When one takes possession with “I am,” the descent of the five faculties occurs, namely the eye-faculty, ear-faculty, nose-faculty, tongue-faculty, and body-faculty.

There is mind (as a sense door), there are phenomena (as objects of experience), and there is the ignorance-element.

When the untrained worldly person experiences the vedanā arising through ignorant contact, there is appropriation with “I am,” with “this is me,” with “I will be,” with “I will not be,” with “I will have form,” with “I will not have form,” with “I will have perception,” with “I will not have perception,” or with “I will neither have perception nor be without perception.”<sup>67</sup>

The five faculties remain established amidst these appropriations. However, in the case that ignorance is something naturally abandoned by well-trained, noble disciples, right knowing naturally arises. With the arising of right knowing through the complete vomiting up of ignorance by that noble disciple, there is no appropriation with “I am,” nor with “this is me,” nor with “I will be,” nor with “I will not be,” nor with “I will have form,” nor with “I will not

<sup>66</sup> To seize, grasp, examine, explore, and know thoroughly.

<sup>67</sup> In this paragraph, *saññā* may not have the same meaning as the third of the aggregates. *Saññā* is a variable term that at its broadest can mean being conscious and aware. Here, I have used “perception” because in English it also has a wide range of meaning. “Form” and “perception” are about identifying with the physical and psychological aspects of life.

have form,” nor with “I will have perception,” nor with “I will not have perception,” nor with “I will neither have perception nor be without perception” in the noble disciple.<sup>68</sup>



### Happiness and suffering are neither a matter of our own actions nor of others

*This passage illuminates the early links of paṭiccasamuppāda, specifically ignorance and concoctings. Whatever claims disparate teachers may make about happiness and distress being caused by oneself or by others, we can observe that all happiness and distress arise dependent upon sense contact. Ignorance is the significant factor that insinuates itself into volitions related to body, speech, and mind, and the concocting of happiness and distress that follow. With the remainderless quenching of ignorance, body, speech, and mind no longer function in ways subject to troublesome volitions.*

Well done, Ānanda, well done. Sariputta answered the question correctly. Happiness and dukkha are merely dependently arisen phenomena (*paṭiccasamuppānadhama*). On what condition do happiness and suffering depend? Happiness and suffering depend on contact. Whoever speaks in this way speaks in line with what I teach and does not abuse me with untruthful words; rather, he speaks rightly and any Dhamma comrades who speak accordingly will not be censurable.

Ānanda, we discern four groups of teachings about karma (action). Those teachers of karma who claim that happiness and suffering arise from one’s own actions, even that happiness and suffering of which they teach must arise dependent upon contact. Those teachers of karma who claim that happiness and suffering arise from the actions of others, ... Those teachers of karma who claim that happiness and suffering arise from both one’s own actions and the actions of others, ... Those teachers of karma who claim that happiness and suffering arise from neither one’s own actions nor the actions of others, even that happiness and suffering of which they teach must arise dependent upon contact.

Ānanda, among the four groups of teachings about karma, those teachers of karma who claim that happiness and suffering arise from one’s own actions, should those teachers refrain from contact, would they feel any happiness and suffering? That is impossible. Those teachers of karma who claim that happiness and suffering arise from the actions of others, ... Those teachers of karma who claim that happiness and suffering arise from both one’s own actions and the actions of others, ... Those teachers of karma who claim that happiness and suffering arise from neither one’s own actions nor the actions of others, should those teachers refrain from contact, would they feel any happiness and suffering? That is impossible.

Ānanda, whenever body [physical gateway functioning under the influence of ignorance]<sup>69</sup> exists, internal happiness and suffering naturally occur due to physically expressed volition (*kāyasañcetanā*). Whenever speech [verbal gateway functioning under the influence of ignorance] exists, internal happiness and suffering naturally occur due to verbally expressed volition (*vacīsañcetanā*). Whenever mind [mental gateway functioning under the influence of ignorance] exists, internal happiness and suffering naturally occur due to mentally expressed volition (*manosañcetanā*).

<sup>68</sup> SN 22:47 Samanupassanā Sutta, S.iii.46, CDB 885.

<sup>69</sup> Words in [square brackets] were added by Ajahn Buddhādāsa.

Ānanda, thus conditioned by ignorance physical concocting (*kāyasankhāra*) is generated as the condition for the arising of internal happiness and suffering, sometimes all by oneself; ... sometimes stimulated by others; ... sometimes self-aware; ... sometimes unaware.

Conditioned by ignorance verbal concocting (*vacīsankhāra*) is generated as the condition for the arising of internal happiness and suffering, sometimes all by oneself; ... sometimes stimulated by others; ... sometimes self-aware; ... sometimes unaware..

Conditioned by ignorance mental concocting (*manosankhāra*) is generated as the condition for the arising of internal happiness and suffering, sometimes all by oneself; ... sometimes stimulated by others; ... sometimes self-aware; ... sometimes unaware.

Ānanda, ignorance is the principal factor that insinuates itself among all these phenomena.

Ānanda, through the fading away and remainderless quenching of that ignorance, there is no longer a [ignorantly functioning] body to be a condition for the arising of internal happiness and suffering.

Through the fading away and remainderless quenching of that ignorance, there is no longer any [ignorantly functioning] speech to be a condition for the arising of internal happiness and suffering.

Through the fading away and remainderless quenching of that ignorance, there is no longer any [ignorantly functioning] mind to be a condition for the arising of internal happiness and suffering.

Ānanda, through the fading away and remainderless quenching of that ignorance, there are no bodily, verbal, and mental volitions acting as fields for the sprouting of, as bases for the arising of, as avenues for the occurrence of, or as instruments bringing about internal happiness and suffering.<sup>70</sup>



### Set aside questions about past and future aggregates, Dhamma is seen in conditionality right here

*The Wanderer Sakuludāyi asks a question about the past. The Buddha responds that discussing matters of the past and future requires having the psychic powers of recollecting past births and the divine eye that sees beings disappearing and moving on according to karma. The Buddha recommends setting aside questions about the past and future in order to contemplate idappaccayatā here and now.*

The Wanderer Sakuludāyi asked a question of someone who declared himself to be "all-knowing and all-seeing," yet responded by changing the subject and getting angry. The Buddha responded to the same question:

Udayi, perhaps someone can recollect the multifarious existences in which he had dwelt previously, that is, one birth, two births, three ... four ... five ... ten ... twenty ... thirty ... forty ... fifty ... one hundred ... one thousand ... or one hundred thousand births, including many world evolving eras, many world devolving eras, and many world evolving and devolving eras; and can remember how he was named in each existence, belonged to such and such clan, had such and such caste, ate such and such food, experienced happiness and suffering in such and such ways, and lived to such and such an age; and can recall after disappearing from each existence,

<sup>70</sup> SN 12:25 Bhūmija Sutta, S.ii.37, CDB 561.

how he appeared in some other existence with such and such name, clan, caste, and food, experienced happiness and suffering in such and such ways, and lived to whatever age; and after disappearing and reappearing however many times he was born into this current existence. He would be able to recollect the aggregates (body, vedanā, perception, thinking and emoting, and sense cognizing) on which he depended in those previous existences, together with defining conditions and characteristics. Just such a person is fit to ask me questions about past aggregates or I might ask him questions about past aggregates. Such a person could satisfy my mind with his responses to questions about past aggregates or I could satisfy his mind with my responses to questions about past aggregates.

Udayi, perhaps someone has the divine eye purer than ordinary human eyes, can see the multitudes of beings disappearing and appearing, coarse and subtle, within better and lower castes, with happiness and with suffering, and clearly understands the classes of beings acquired according to karma thus, "Venerable Sirs, these beings committed harmful bodily, verbal, and mental behaviors, argued with the noble ones, held wrong views, and acted under the influence of those wrong views, then after the breaking up and death of that body, all entered into the woeful, painful, punishing, hellish realms; Venerable Sirs, these beings committed beneficial bodily, verbal, and mental behaviors, respected the noble ones, held right view, and acted under the influence of right view, then after the breaking up and death of that body, all entered into the happy-going, heavenly worlds." If someone has the divine eye purer than ordinary human eyes, can see the multitudes of beings disappearing and appearing, coarse and subtle, within better and lower castes, with happiness and with suffering, and clearly understands the classes of beings acquired according to karma as above, just that person is fit to ask me questions about future aggregates or I might ask her questions about future aggregates. Such a person could satisfy my mind with her responses to questions about future aggregates or I could satisfy her mind with my responses to questions about future aggregates.

Enough, Udayi, set aside matters of aggregates in the past and aggregates in the future. I will teach you Dhamma in this way: "When this exists, this exists; through the arising of this, this arises; when this does not exist, this does not exist; through the quenching of this, this is quenched."<sup>71</sup>



### How to quench the clinging-together-aggregates in this life

*Buddha points out with subtlety and sophistication how the aggregates of life come to be taken personally (clinging together; together with clinging) and how this process constitutes suffering. Conversely, he shows how the quenching of dukkha is found in the removal or abandoning of passionate desire regarding the five clinging-together-aggregates. Ajahn Buddhādāsa takes this as further evidence that the Buddha's intention was liberation within this life: to die (halting the process of self-centered rebirth) before dying (physical death).*

---

<sup>71</sup> MN 79 Cūḷasakuludāyī Sutta, M.ii.31, MDB 655. Ajahn Buddhādāsa comments: "This passage shows that one who understands *idappaccayatā-paṭiccasamuppāda* will not experience in terms of being past and future, and will instead simply experience the stream of concocting conditions following each other in the style of *idappaccayatā*. Speech in terms of past and future is dropped because the existence of the aggregates is just the stream of *idappaccayatā*. Furthermore, this sutta shows that recollection of previous dwellings concerns aggregates in the past and knowledge of passing away and reappearing concerns aggregates in the future."

Venerable Friends, comparable to how space surrounded and enclosed by trees, vines, clay, and grasses is considered a dwelling; similarly, space surrounded and enclosed by bones, ligaments, muscle, and skin is considered "form (body)."

Friends, even though the eyes, the internal medium, are not destroyed, if visual form, the external medium, has not entered the channel of the eyes and foolishly advertent mind<sup>72</sup> that depends on those two media does not occur, then the cognizing arising due to those two media does not occur.

Friends, even though the eyes, the internal medium, are not destroyed and visual form, the external medium, has entered the channel of the eyes, if foolishly advertent mind that depends on those two media does not occur, then the cognizing arising due to those two media still does not occur.

Friends, when the eyes, the internal medium, are not destroyed and visual form, the external medium, has entered the channel of the eyes, and furthermore there is foolishly advertent mind depending on those two media, then the cognizing arising due to those two media naturally occurs.

Any form that has arisen together with foolishly advertent mind is categorized within the form aggregate of clinging (*rūpūpādānakhandha*). Any vedanā that has arisen together with foolishly advertent mind is categorized within the vedanā aggregate of clinging (*vedanūpādānakhandha*). Any recognition-perception that has arisen together with foolishly advertent mind is categorized within the recognition aggregate of clinging (*saññūpādānakhandha*). Any thinking and emoting that has arisen together with foolishly advertent mind is categorized within the concocting aggregate of clinging (*sankhārūpādānakhandha*). Any sense cognizing that has arisen together with foolishly advertent mind is categorized within the cognizing aggregate of clinging (*viññānūpādānakhandha*).

A practitioner clearly knows and hears how the gathering, the meeting, and collecting together of these aggregates of clinging occurs in this way.

The Tathāgata himself has said, "Whoever sees paṭiccasamuppāda, see Dhamma; whoever sees Dhamma, sees paṭiccasamuppāda." All these phenomena — namely, these five clinging-together-aggregates — are known as dependently co-arisen phenomena (*paṭiccasamuppannadhamma*).

Anything that is delight, longing, obsession, or infatuation regarding these five clinging-together-aggregates is known as the origin of dukkha (*dukkhasamudhaya*).

Anything that is the removing of passionate desire (*chandharāga*) or abandoning of passionate desire regarding these five clinging-together-aggregates is known as the quenching of dukkha (*dukkhanirodha*).

Venerable Friends, through this extent of practice the Bhagavā's teaching is developed and well cultivated.

[The exact same exploration is done with the other sense media: ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.]<sup>73</sup>



---

<sup>72</sup> *Samannāhāracitta* is the aspect of mind that becomes conscious in order to cognize the object striking a sense door and is accompanied by ignorance, lacks mindfulness, and lacks true knowledge regarding liberation. (Pāli actually has *samannāhāro*; *samannāhāracitta* may be Abhidhamma term.)

<sup>73</sup> MN 28 Mahāthipadopamasutta, M.i.190, MDB 283.

## The Buddha describes the quenching sequence of *paṭiccasamuppāda*

*Buddhist practice is about the quenching of dukkha and paṭiccasamuppāda highlights what that involves. Here is the standard “quenching sequence” of the twelve links or modes. Elsewhere in the suttas are found many variations on this theme. With the quenching of ignorance, all the links are quenched, culminating in the quenching of dukkha, distress, and suffering. Ajahn Buddhadasa spoke of this as “paṭiccanirodha,” as this quenching also depends on conditions.*

Through the remainderless quenching of ignorance, concoctings are quenched.

*Avijjāya tveva asesavirāgaṇirodhā saṅkhāranirodho;*

with the quenching of concoctings, cognizing is quenched;

*saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho;*

with the quenching of cognizing, name-form is quenched;

*viññāṇanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho;*

with the quenching of name-form, sense media are quenched;

*nāmarūpanirodhā saḷāyatananirodho;*

with the quenching of sense media, contact is quenched;

*saḷāyatananirodhā phassanirodho;*

with the quenching of contact, vedanā is quenched;

*phassanirodhā vedanānirodho;*

with the quenching of vedanā, craving is quenched;

*vedanānirodhā taṇhānirodho;*

with the quenching of craving, clinging is quenched;

*taṇhānirodhā upādānanirodho;*

with the quenching of clinging, becoming is quenched;

*upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho;*

with the quenching of becoming, birth is quenched;

*bhavanirodhā jātinirodho;*

with the quenching of birth, ageing and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair are quenched thoroughly.

*jātinirodhā jarāmarāṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti.*

the entire mass of dukkha is quenched in just this way.

*Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti ti.*<sup>74</sup>



## Karma that ends karma

*We hear a lot about karma (action, kamma) in Buddhist circles but seldom about the Buddha’s unique teaching on karma. The conventional karma teachings are more moralistic than Buddhist. The distinctive feature of Buddhist teachings about karma is the karma (action) that ends karma. The noble eightfold path is the culmination and end of karma as it frees life of the “actor” that is responsible for karma. The “actor” is*

<sup>74</sup> SN 12.1 Paṭiccasamuppāda Sutta, S.ii.1, CDB 533, and many others in the Nidāna-samyutta and elsewhere.



*quenched within paṭiccanirodha. Without an actor, that is, somebody identified with the action, there is no need for a “recipient” or “victim” of the consequences.*

Punṇa, the intention to abandon dark karma with dark fruit, the intention to abandon bright karma with bright fruit, and the intention to abandon dark and bright karma with dark and bright fruit is karma that is neither dark nor bright with fruit that is neither dark nor bright and leads to the end of karma.<sup>75</sup>



### Ignorance and infatuation begin in young children

*Unlike the traditional commentaries on the suttas that place the beginnings of paṭiccasamuppāda in past lives, Buddha here describes its beginning in the young child. At some point in our lives, paṭiccasamuppāda is concocted out of ignorance for the first time. Once the child’s senses are developed to the extent they can be indulged, they become the basis for liking and disliking, which gives rise to clinging and egoism. This perspective may confuse those from cultures that idealize children’s innocence. Nevertheless, Buddha pointed out that the ignorance that underlies suffering is present in both children and adults. In other words, underlying innocence there is also ignorance. Note again the crucial role of the senses and vedanā.*

Friends, that child, relying upon the growth and development of the sense faculties (*īndriya*) plays with childish playthings, namely, with toy plows, with pots and pans, with spinning tops, with pinwheels, at scooping sand with leaves, with toy carts, and with toy bows and arrows.

Friends, that child, relying upon the growth and development of the sense faculties is delighted with and immersed in the five sensual values (*kāmaguṇa*). These cause him to pander to himself through the eyes with forms, through the ears with sounds, through the nose with odors, through the tongue with flavors, and through the body with touches, all of which are desirable, delightful, pleasing, loveable, provocative of sensuality, and the bases of lust.

That child, on seeing a form with the eyes ..., on hearing a sound with the ears ..., on smelling an odor with the nose ..., on tasting a flavor with the tongue ..., on experiencing a touch with the body ..., on cognizing an "idea" with mind, is passionately pleased with the form, sound, or whatever that is agreeable and is offended by the form, sound or whatever that is disagreeable. Consequently, that child's mind is deficient in virtue, lives without mindfulness regarding the body, does not clearly realize according to reality the liberation of mind and liberation through wisdom that are remainderless quenchings of the multitude of evil, unwholesome dhammas.

That child, once conditioned by liking and disliking in this way, when partaking of any vedanā whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant, becomes infatuated with, indulges in, and is intoxicated by that vedanā. When infatuated with, indulging in, and intoxicated by that vedanā, nandi (lusty delight in one’s desire) arises. Any such delight towards any of these vedanā is clinging. Dependent on the child's clinging, there is becoming. Dependent on becoming, there is birth. Dependent on birth, aging and death, sorrow, grief, pain,

<sup>75</sup> MN 57 Kukkuravāditka Sutta, M.i.389, MDB 495. In other suttas "the karma that ends karma" is expressed in terms of the noble eightfold path (AN 4:237 Ariyamagga Sutta, A.ii.235, NDB 604) and the seven factors of awakening (AN 4:238 Bojjhaṅga Sutta, A.ii.236, NDB 605).



lamentation, and despair arise completely. The dependent co-arising of the entire mass of dukkha naturally happens in just this way.<sup>76</sup>



### Buddha-to-Be investigated *paṭiccasamuppāda* before the Great Awakening

*The Bodhisatta (Buddha-to-Be) thought about, reflected upon, and investigated the details of paṭiccasamuppāda even before the ultimate awakening under the Bodhi tree. Here, he asks what makes aging and death possible, and has the certain insight that birth is the condition for aging and death. He continues to investigate the conditions one after another until culminating in mind-body and cognizing circling back upon each other. This discovery is compared to a man finding the remains of a long-lost ancient city deep in the forest.*

Friends, before awakening, before I had fully awakened, while still a bodhisatta, this question occurred to me: Beings in this world experience hardship due to being born, aging, dying, passing away, and arising. When they are ignorant of the skillful means of escape from suffering, that is, aging and death, how will an escape from suffering ever happen?

Friends, the question occurred to me, what is there such that there is aging and death? With what as condition is there aging and death?

Friends, through systematic reflection (*yonisomanasikāra*) the supremely clear insight occurred to me that, due to birth, there is aging and death; with birth as condition, there is aging and death.

... Due to becoming, there is birth; with becoming as condition, there is birth.

... Due to clinging, there is becoming; with clinging as condition, there is becoming.

... Due to craving, there is clinging; with craving as condition, there is clinging.

... and so on regarding vedanā, sense contact, and sense media ...

... Due to name-form, there are sense media; with name-form as condition, there are sense media.

... Due to cognizing (sense-knowing), there is name-form; with cognizing as condition, there is name-form.

Friends, the question occurred to me, what is there such that there is cognizing? With what as condition is there cognizing?

Friends, through systematic reflection the supremely clear insight occurred to me that, due to name-form, there is cognizing (sense-knowing); with name-form as condition, there is cognizing.

Friends, the systematic reflection occurred to me that, this cognizing turns back upon name-form and does not proceed further. For just this reason beings in this world are born, age, die,

---

<sup>76</sup> MN 38 Mahātanhāsankhaya Sutta, M.i.266, MDB 358. Ajahn Buddhadasa comments: “This passage shows, first, how the child must mature enough to experience clinging in regards to vedanā for the stream of *paṭiccasamuppāda* to arise in the child's mind through the power of ignorance. Second, the passage clearly shows that becoming and birth arise only after there is clinging to vedanā, and not immediately at birth from the mother's womb, as is generally understood in everyday people language. This passage uses the language of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, that is, Dhamma language. *Bhava* and *jāti* arise every time there is clinging to vedanā. In Dhamma language, aging and death occur even for a child, that is, the heavy-hearted problems connected with the meaning of ‘aging and death,’ which genuinely cause dukkha when clung to such that they have power over the child's mind.”

pass away, and arise; the reason being that with name-form as condition there is cognizing, with cognizing as condition there is name-form, with name-form as condition there are sense media, ... and so on regarding sense contact, vedanā, craving, clinging, and becoming ... with birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, pain, lamentation, grief, and despair occur; the entire mass of dukkha arises in just this way.

Friends, the eye arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, gnosis arose, and light appeared for me regarding this Dhamma that I had never heard before: "Origination, origination (*samudayo*)."

*[opposite perspective]*

Friends, the question occurred to me, without what is there no aging and death? Through the quenching of what does aging and death quench?

Friends, through systematic reflection the supremely clear insight occurred to me that, without birth, there is no aging and death; with the quenching of birth, aging and death are quenched.

... Without becoming, there is no birth; with the quenching of becoming, birth is quenched.

... and so on regarding clinging, craving, vedanā, sense contact, and sense media ...

... Without cognizing, there is no name-form; with the quenching of cognizing, name-form is quenched.

Friends, through systematic reflection the supremely clear insight occurred to me that, without name-form, there is no cognizing; with the quenching of name-form, cognizing is quenched.

Friends, this clear certain knowledge occurred to me, the path of awakening that I have arrived at is this: with the quenching of name-form, cognizing is quenched; with the quenching of cognizing, name-form is quenched; with the quenching of name-form, sense media are quenched; ... and so on regarding contact, vedanā, craving, clinging, and becoming ... with the quenching of birth, aging and death, sorrow, pain, lamentation, grief, and despair are quenched utterly; the entire mass of dukkha is quenched in just this way.

Friends, the eye arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, gnosis arose, and light appeared for me regarding Dhamma that I had never heard before: "Quenching, quenching (*nirodho*)."

Friends, this is comparable to a man who wanders through a thick forest and comes across the tracks of an ancient path once followed by people long ago. This man followed that path and by doing so discovered an ancient royal city where people once lived, full of parks, gardens, forested groves, and ponds, surrounded by a wall, with delightful airs and views. Afterwards, this man went to inform his Rājā, "Your lordship, while wandering within a thick forest I came across the tracks of an ancient path followed by people long ago. I followed the path and by doing so discovered an ancient royal city where people once lived, full of parks, gardens, forested groves, and ponds, surrounded by a wall, with pleasant airs and views. Your lordship ought to renovate it and rebuild the city."

Friends, then the king or his minister renovated that place and rebuilt the city. Subsequently, that city was full of wealth and prosperity, well-populated, thick with people, and fully developed. In the same way, I saw the tracks of an ancient path that the perfectly self-awakened buddhas of the past have traveled.

Friends, what are the tracks of the ancient path that the perfectly self-awakened buddhas of the past have traveled? It is just this noble eightfold path, namely, right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right collectedness. Friends, these are the tracks of an ancient path that the perfectly self-awakened buddhas of the past have traveled.

I followed that path. By following that path I had supreme knowledge of aging and death, of the cause of aging and death, of the quenching of aging and death, and of the path leading to the quenching of aging and death.

I followed that path. By following that path I had supreme knowledge of birth, of the cause of birth, of the quenching of birth, and of the path leading the quenching of birth.

... of becoming ... of clinging ... of craving ... of vedanā ... of contact ... of sense media ... of name-form ... of cognizing ...

I followed that path. By following that path I had supreme knowledge of concocting, of the cause of concocting, of the quenching of concocting, and of the path leading to the quenching of concocting.

Friends, once I had supreme knowledge of this path, I explained it to bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs, upasakas, and upasikas (male and female alms-mendicants, devoted male and female householders).

Friends, this sublime way of life that I have taught has been firmly established, is widespread, is known by many, and is rock solid, such that devas and humans are able to proclaim it most excellently.<sup>77</sup>



### Paṭiccasamuppāda that transcends paṭiccasamuppāda

*One of the most profound suttas in the entire Pāli canon traces the paṭiccasamuppāda sequence from ignorance to dukkha and then describes how profound knowledge and liberation arise out of dukkha. The realization of dukkha's end is also a matter of causes and conditions, just like everything else (almost) we experience. Many other suttas examine these conditions for liberation but only this one links them with the sequence of dukkha's origin. Faith emerging from dukkha is a crucial turning point. This teaching is the epitome of the Buddha's four ennobling truths.*

Friends, we speak of the impulses (*āsavas*, intoxications, influxes, leaks) ending for one who knows and sees, and not for one who neither knows nor sees.

In what way does the ending of the impulses happen in one who knows and sees?

Friends, the ending of the impulses occurs naturally in one who knows and sees that, “form is thus, the origin of form is thus, and the passing away of form is just thus”; that “vedanā is thus, the origin of vedanā is thus, and the passing away of vedanā is just thus”; that “recognition-perception is thus, the origin of recognition-perception is thus, and the passing away of recognition-perception is just thus”; that “concocting (thinking and emoting) is thus, the origin of concocting is thus, and the passing away of concocting is just thus”; and that “cognizing (sensory knowing) is thus, the origin of cognizing is thus, and the passing away of cognizing is just thus.” The ending of the impulses happens in one who knows and sees in just this way.

Friends, the ending of the *āsavas* (impulses) occurs and the knowledge that the impulses have ended (*āsavakkhayañāna*) naturally follows. We speak even of this knowledge as being dependent (*upanisa*), it is not independent (*anupanisa*).

---

<sup>77</sup> SN 12:65 Nagara Sutta, S.ii.104, CBD 601.

Then on what does the knowledge of the impulses ending depend? The answer ought to be that “the knowledge of the impulses ending depends on liberation (*vimutti*).” We speak even of liberation as being dependent, it is not independent.

Then on what does liberation depend? The answer ought to be that “liberation depends on the fading away of clinging (*virāga*).” We speak even of fading away as being dependent, it is not independent.

Then on what does fading away depend? The answer ought to be that “fading away depends on disenchantment with the objects of clinging (*nibbidā*).” We speak even of disenchantment as being dependent, it is not independent.

Then on what does disenchantment depend? The answer ought to be that “disenchantment depends on knowing and seeing according to reality (*yathābhūtañāṇadassana*).” We speak even of knowing and seeing according to reality as being dependent, it is not independent. Then on what does knowing and seeing according to reality depend? The answer ought to be that “knowing and seeing according to reality depends on unity of mind (*samādhi*, concentration).” We speak even of unity of mind as being dependent, it is not independent.

Then on what does unity of mind depend? The answer ought to be that “unity of mind depends on joy (*sukha*).” We speak even of joy as being dependent, it is not independent.

Then on what does joy depend? The answer ought to be that “joy depends on tranquility (*passaddhi*, physical and mental calm).” We speak even of tranquility as being dependent, it is not independent.

Then on what does tranquility depend? The answer ought to be that “tranquility depends on rapture (*pīti*).” We speak even of rapture as being dependent, it is not independent.

Then on what does rapture depend? The answer ought to be that “rapture depends on inspiration (*pāmojja*, dhammic delight).” We speak even of inspiration as being dependent, it is not independent.

Then on what does inspiration depend? The answer ought to be that “inspiration depends on faith (*saddhā*, confidence).” We speak even of faith as being dependent, it is not independent.

Then on what does faith depend? The answer ought to be that “faith depends on dukkha (suffering, distress).” We speak even of dukkha as being dependent, it is not independent.

... “dukkha depends on *jāti* (birth, egoism).” ...

... “ego-birth depends on *bhava* (becoming, existence, identity).” ...

... “identity depends on *upādāna* (clinging, attachment).” ...

... “clinging depends on *taṇhā* (craving, ignorant wanting).” ...

... “craving depends on *vedanā* (pleasure and pain).” ...

... “vedanā depends on *phassa* (contact).” ...

... “contact depends on *saḷāyātana* (sense media).” ...

... “the sense media depend on *nāmarūpa* (name-form, mind-body).” ...

... “name-form depends on *viññāṇa* (cognizing).” ...

... “cognizing depends on *saṅkhāra* (concoctings).” ...

Then on what do concoctings depend? The answer ought to be that “concoctings depends on *avijjā* (ignorance).”

Friends, for the reasons we have just given, concoctings are said to depend on ignorance; cognizing is said to depend on concoctings; ... cognizing ... name-form ... sense media ... contact ... vedanā ... craving ... clinging ... birth is said to depend on becoming; dukkha is said to depend on birth;

faith is said to depend on dukkha;

inspiration is said to depend on faith;

rapture is said to depend on inspiration;

tranquility is said to depend on rapture;

joy is said to depend on tranquility;

unity of mind is said to depend on joy;

knowing and seeing according to reality is said to depend on unity of mind;

disenchantment is said to depend on knowing and seeing according to reality;

fading away is said to depend on disenchantment;

liberation is said to depend on fading away;

and the knowledge of ending is said to depend on liberation.

Friends, this process can be compared to a heavy rain falling upon the mountains. The rain seeks the lower places and naturally fills the crevices, ravines, and streams. Once the crevices, ravines, and streams are filled, they naturally fill the bogs. Once the bogs are filled, they naturally fill the marshes. Once the marshes are filled, they naturally fill the small rivers. Once the small rivers are filled, they naturally fill the large rivers. Once the large rivers are filled, they naturally fill the oceans.<sup>78</sup>



### Rely on unconcoctability to abandon even equanimity

*To give up the things that cause us suffering, we may rely upon more refined phenomena. The sadness, gladness, and equanimity of spiritual practice are more refined than those of sensual experience. The equanimity of spiritual practice is more refined than the sadness and gladness of spiritual practice. The equanimity of deeper absorptions is more refined than that of the lesser absorptions. Finally, atammayātā – unconcoctability – is more refined than any form of equanimity.*

Friends, on the basis of which principle did I speak the words "relying upon this, abandon this"? I spoke those words according to this principle:

... relying upon non-householder gladness, abandon and go beyond the six kinds of householder gladness (dependent upon the six senses) ...

... relying upon non-householder sadness, abandon and go beyond the six kinds of householder sadness ...

... relying upon non-householder equanimity, abandon and go beyond the six kinds of householder equanimity ...

... relying upon non-householder gladness, abandon and go beyond non-householder sadness ...

---

<sup>78</sup> SN12:23 Upanisa Sutta, S.ii.29, CDB 553.

... relying upon non-householder equanimity, abandon and go beyond non-householder gladness ...

Friends, there are various equanimities that rely upon various conditions (sense media). There is a singular equanimity that relies upon a singular condition (a formless absorption).

Friends, among these various kinds of equanimity, you ought to rely upon the singular equanimity that relies upon a singular condition to abandon and go beyond the various equanimities that rely upon various conditions. This is how to abandon and go beyond the various equanimities that rely upon various conditions.

Friends, you ought to rely upon unconcoctability (*atammayatā*) to abandon and go beyond the singular equanimity that relies upon a singular condition. This is how to abandon and go beyond the singular equanimity that relies upon a singular condition.

Friends, the words "relying upon this, abandon this" were spoken with this principle as basis.<sup>79</sup>



### Cultivate *samādhi* to clearly understand reality

*When the mind is focused, stable, and clear, it sees the five clinging-together-aggregates according to reality. That is, such a mind understands how taking pleasure in, exalting, and indulging in the five aggregates leads to delight and such clinging supports becoming and so on. The Buddha also describes the reverse process.*

Friends, you ought to cultivate *samādhi*. A cultivator whose mind is collected and stable (*samādhi*) naturally understands reality clearly. What does he clearly understand according to reality? That cultivator clearly understands according to reality the arising and the passing away of form, ... *vedanā*, ... recognition, ... concocting, ... cognizing.

How is the arising of form, ... *vedanā*, ... recognition, ... concocting, ... cognizing? Someone takes pleasure, exalts, and indulges. Regarding what does he take pleasure, exalt, and indulge?

A practitioner takes pleasure in, exalts in, and indulges in form. When she takes pleasure in, exalts in, and indulges in form, delight arises. Any delight in form amounts to clinging. With her clinging as condition, there is becoming. With becoming as condition, there is birth. With birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair arise successfully. The arising of the entire mass of *dukkha* occurs in just this way.

*[Vedanā, perception, and concocting are spoken of in exactly the same way.]*

Someone takes pleasure in, exalts in, and indulges in cognizing. When he takes pleasure in, exalts in, and indulges in cognizing, delight arises. Any delight in cognizing amounts to clinging. With his clinging as condition, there is becoming. With becoming as condition, there is birth. With birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair arise successfully. The arising of the entire mass of *dukkha* occurs in just this way.

Friends, this is the arising of form, ... *vedanā*, ... recognition, ... concocting, ... cognizing.<sup>80</sup>

Friends, how is the passing away (disestablishment) of form, ... *vedanā*, ... recognition, ... concocting, ... cognizing?

---

<sup>79</sup> MN 137 Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga Sutta, M.iii.220, MDB 1070.

<sup>80</sup> SN 22:5 Samādhi Sutta, S.iii.14, CDB 863.

Someone doesn't take pleasure in, doesn't exalt, and doesn't indulge. Regarding what does he not take pleasure, exalt, and indulge?

He doesn't take pleasure, doesn't exalt, and doesn't indulge in form. When he doesn't take pleasure, doesn't exalt, and doesn't indulge in form, that delight is quenched. Through the quenching of that delight, clinging is quenched. With the quenching of clinging, becoming is quenched. With the quenching of becoming, birth is quenched. With the quenching of birth, aging and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair are quenched thoroughly. The quenching of the entire mass of dukkha occurs in just this way.

*[Vedanā, perception, and concocting are spoken of in exactly the same way.]*

She doesn't take pleasure, doesn't exalt, and doesn't indulge in cognizing. When she doesn't take pleasure, doesn't exalt, and doesn't indulge in cognizing, that delight is quenched. Through the quenching of that delight, clinging is quenched. With the quenching of clinging, becoming is quenched. With the quenching of becoming, birth is quenched. With the quenching of birth, aging and death, sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair are quenched thoroughly. The quenching of the entire mass of dukkha occurs in just this way.

Friends, this is the passing away of form, ... vedanā, ... recognition, ... concocting, ... cognizing.<sup>81</sup>



### Mindfulness while breathing is a complete path of practice

*In guiding the international retreats at Suan Mokkh, Ajahn Buddhadasa instructed us to emphasize two teachings: paṭiccasamuppāda for the sake of right understanding and ānāpānasati to cultivate the conditions and skills for living free of egoism and dukkha. He investigated these topics himself and regularly explained how they go together. Accordingly, it is important to understand the full liberating scope of ānāpānasati.*

Friends, mindfulness with breathing in and out (ānāpānasati) that one has developed and made much of has great fruit and great benefit. Ānāpānasati that one has developed and made much of fulfills the four applications of mindfulness. The four applications of mindfulness that one has developed and made much of fulfill the seven factors of awakening. The seven factors of awakening that one has developed and made much of fulfill true knowing and liberation.

How does ānāpānasati that one has developed and made much of have great fruit and great benefit?

Friends, a practitioner within this training, having gone into the forest, to the base of a tree or to an empty dwelling, having sat cross-legged with body erect, securely maintains mindfulness. Ever mindful that practitioner breathes in, ever mindful he breathes out.<sup>82</sup>



### Mindfulness while breathing is the full application of mindfulness

*While acknowledging other ways of being mindful while breathing, the Buddha*

---

<sup>81</sup> SN 22:5 Samādhi Sutta, S.iii.14, CDB 864.

<sup>82</sup> MN 118 Ānāpānasati Sutta, M.iii.82, MDB 943. A translation of the entire sutta is available at <http://www.liberationpark.org/medit/mn118.pdf>.



*consistently presented his approach as encompassing all four applications (establishments, foundations) of mindfulness. Unfortunately, this is often overlooked when modern teachers present a truncated version of “ānāpāna.” Ajahn Buddhadasa felt we should have the whole package encompassing all four applications of mindfulness as the Buddha taught.*

Friends, I say that in-breaths and out-breaths are certain bodies among all bodies. For this reason that practitioner [who skillfully follows the Buddha’s guidance] is considered one who dwells contemplating body in bodies, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.<sup>83</sup>

Friends, I say that attending carefully in the mind to in-breaths and out-breaths is a certain vedanā among all vedanā. For this reason that practitioner is considered one who dwells contemplating vedanā in vedanā, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.

Friends, I do not say that ānāpānasati is possible for someone whose mindfulness strays and lacks ready comprehension. For this reason that practitioner is considered one who dwells contemplating mind in minds, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.

That practitioner looks on with perfect equanimity because she has seen with wisdom the abandoning of all liking and disliking toward the world. For this reason that practitioner is considered one who dwells contemplating Dhamma in dhammas, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.

Friends, this is how ānāpānasati that one has developed and made much of fulfills the four applications of mindfulness.<sup>84</sup>



### **Mindfulness with breathing nurtures the seven factors of awakening**

*The factors of awakening describe a high level of practice that brings one to the cusp of awakening. Ordinary mindfulness matures to a level ready for awakening and is accompanied by six other highly developed factors of awakening. When these are sufficiently developed, true knowing brings about liberation from paṭiccasamuppāda, that is, paṭiccanirodha replaces the dependent co-arising of clinging and dukkha. All this is possible while breathing in and out and can be called “Buddha’s original vipassanā.”*

Friends, how do the four applications of mindfulness that one has developed and made much of perfect the seven factors of awakening?

Whenever a practitioner is one who lives constantly contemplating body in bodies ... contemplating vedanā in vedanā ... contemplating mind in the mind ... constantly contemplating Dhamma in dhammas, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world; then the mindfulness thus established in that practitioner is natural and unconfused.

---

<sup>83</sup> "Contemplating body in bodies" means seeing the truth of bodies directly within actual bodies themselves experienced here-now and seeing all the components of the body as being various physical subsystems within the collective body system. The breath is one body. It conditions all kinds of bodies, whether physical or mental.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, M.iii.83, MDB 944; see also SN 54:13 Pathamānanda Sutta, S.v.329, CDB 1780.

Whenever the mindfulness thus established in that practitioner is natural and unconfused, then the mindfulness factor of awakening is engaged by that practitioner and she develops it further and finally its development in her is perfected. That practitioner when mindful in such a way selects, takes up, and scrutinizes these dhammas (phenomena) with wisdom.

Whenever a practitioner is mindful in such a way, selects, takes up, and scrutinizes these dhammas with wisdom, then the investigation of dhammas factor of awakening is engaged by that practitioner and he develops it further and finally its development in him is perfected. When that practitioner selects, takes up, and scrutinizes these dhammas with wisdom, unwavering energy is engaged by her.

Whenever unwavering energy is engaged by a practitioner who selects, takes up, and scrutinizes these dhammas with wisdom, then the energy factor of awakening is engaged by her and she develops it further and its development in her is perfected. When energy is engaged by that practitioner, non-sensual rapture arises.

Whenever non-sensual rapture arises in the practitioner who has engaged energy, then the contentment factor of awakening is engaged by that practitioner and he develops it further and its development in him is perfected. When that practitioner's mind is contented both body and mind are calmed.

Whenever both the body and the mind of a practitioner who is contented are calm, then the tranquility factor of awakening is engaged by her and she develops it further and its development in her is perfected. When that practitioner's body is calmed there is joy and the mind collects and unifies.

Whenever the mind of a practitioner whose body is calmed and who is joyful collects and unifies, then the concentration factor of awakening is engaged by that practitioner and he develops it further and its development in him is perfected. That practitioner looks upon that concentrated mind with perfect equanimity.

Whenever a practitioner looks upon that concentrated mind with perfect equanimity, then the equanimity factor of awakening is engaged by that practitioner and she develops it further and its development in her is perfected.

Friends, this is how the four applications of mindfulness that one has developed and made much of perfect the seven factors of awakening.<sup>85</sup>



### Explore inner conditions in this life here and now

*In this passage, “inner conditions” refer to dukkha (aging and death), acquisitions, craving, and lovely and gratifying sense experiences; as such, “inner conditions” are an abridged version of paṭiccasamuppāda. If these are to be actively explored, common sense would explore them in this life, while they are happening. Here we have yet another passage that supports Ajahn Buddhādā’s understanding that the traditional interpretation in terms of past, present, and future lives misses the main import of paṭiccasamuppāda. Spreading “inner conditions” over three lifetimes puts them beyond direct experience, turning them into an intellectual pursuit. The primary reason for interpreting paṭiccasamuppāda in “this life” is the ability to explore it in our lives here and now and be free of its suffering in this lifetime.*

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, M.iii.85, MDB 946; see also SN 54:13 Pathamānanda Sutta, S.v.331, CDB 1782.

Friends, when you explore, do you explore inner conditions?

A monk responded that he did but could not explain in a way that satisfied Buddha. Ven Ānanda then asked Buddha to say more.

Friends, someone in this training, when exploring, explores inner conditions as follows: "What is its basis, ... origin, ... source, ... and birthplace of the not insignificant variety of dukkha occurring in the world, such as aging and death? Through the occurrence of what does aging and death occur? Through the non-occurrence of what does aging and death not occur?"

That practitioner in exploring, knows as follows: "The not insignificant variety of dukkha occurring in the world, such as aging and death, has upadhi (assets, acquisitions, fuel<sup>86</sup>) as its basis, ... origin, ... source, ... and birthplace. Through the occurrence of upadhi aging and death occur. Through the non-occurrence of upadhi aging and death do not occur." That practitioner clearly understands aging and death, the origin of aging and death, the quenching without remainder of aging and death, and the way of practice leading to the quenching of aging and death, and is one who practices appropriately according to Dhamma. Friends, we say of this practitioner that he rightly practices for the end of dukkha in all respects, namely, for the quenching without remainder of aging and death.

Friends, there is more: A practitioner when exploring, explores inner conditions as follows: "What is the basis, ... origin, ... source, ... and birthplace of upadhi? Through the occurrence of what does upadhi occur? Through the non-occurrence of what does upadhi occur?" That practitioner in exploring, knows as follows: "Upadhi has craving as its basis, ... origin, ... source, ... and birthplace. Through the occurrence of craving upadhi occurs. Through the non-occurrence of craving upadhi does not occur." That practitioner clearly understands upadhi, the origin of upadhi, the quenching without remainder of upadhi, and the way of practice leading to the quenching of upadhi, and is one who practices appropriately according to Dhamma. Friends, we say of this practitioner that she rightly practices for the end of dukkha in all respects, namely, for the quenching without remainder of upadhi.

Friends, there is more: A practitioner when exploring, explores inner conditions as follows: "When this craving arises, where does it arise? When craving establishes itself, where does it establish?" That practitioner in exploring, knows as follows: "Anything that is lovely and satisfying in this world is where craving arises and where craving establishes itself." And what are the lovely and satisfying things of this world?

Eyes are lovely and satisfying things of this world; when craving arises it arises regarding the eyes and when craving establishes it establishes in the eyes. Ears ... Nose ... Tongue ... Body ... Mind (as sense door, mano) is a lovely and satisfying thing of this world; when craving arises it arises regarding mind and when craving establishes it establishes in mind.

Friends, whichever groups of wanderers or priests in the past have seen the lovely and satisfying things of this world as permanent, as pleasurable, as selves (substantial), as disease free, and as safe and secure, we can say that they have cultivated craving. Any group of wanderers or priests that have cultivated craving, we can say that they have cultivated upadhi. Any group of wanderers or priests that have cultivated upadhi, we can say that they have cultivated dukkha. Any group of wanderers or priests that have cultivated dukkha, we can say that they are not liberated from birth; from aging and death; from sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair. We say that they are not liberated from dukkha. [*The same is repeated for the future and present.*]

---

<sup>86</sup> *Upadhi*, acquisitions, assets, fuel of clinging, egoism, and *dukkha*.

Friends, this can be compared to a copper vessel full of a colorful, fragrant, and flavorful beverage that is mixed with poison. Should a man burned and heated by the sun, tired and weary, and extremely thirsty approach it; people would tell him "honorable sir, this copper vessel is full of a colorful, fragrant, and flavorful beverage but it is mixed with poison. If you wish to, then go ahead and drink. This beverage, once you drink, will gratify you with its color, fragrance, and flavor, but it also will either kill you or cause you suffering almost to death." If that man without thinking or examining would drink the beverage instantly rather than throwing it away, he would either die or suffer almost to death because of it.

Friends, this comparison illustrates the wanderers and priests of the past, future, and present who are not liberated from dukkha. [Abridged]

Friends, whichever groups of wanderers or priests in the past have seen the lovely and satisfying things of this world as impermanent, as painful, as not-self, as disease, and as dangers, we can say that they have abandoned craving. Any group of wanderers or priests that have abandoned craving, we can say that they have abandoned upadhi. Any group of wanderers or priests that have abandoned upadhi, we can say that they have abandoned dukkha. Any group of wanderers or priests that have abandoned dukkha, we can say that they are liberated from birth; from aging and death; from sorrow, grief, pain, lamentation, and despair. We say that they are liberated from dukkha. [The same is repeated for the future and present.]

Friends, this can be compared to a copper vessel full of a colorful, fragrant, and flavorful beverage that is mixed with poison. Should a man burned and heated by the sun, tired and weary, and extremely thirsty approach it; people would tell him "honorable sir, this copper vessel is full of a colorful, fragrant, and flavorful beverage but it is mixed with poison. If you wish to, go ahead and drink. This beverage, once you drink, will gratify you with its color, fragrance, and flavor, but it also will either kill you or cause you suffering almost to death."

If that man were to reflect "My thirst could be satisfied by cool water, sour milk, salty rice gruel, or soup. So I will not drink this beverage as it will not benefit me and will only lead to pain and punishment for a long time. I'd better throw it away." This man would neither die nor suffer almost to death because of it.

Friends, this comparison illustrates the wanderers and priests who are liberated from dukkha. [Abridged]<sup>87</sup>



### Practicing for remainderless quenching is Dhamma practice according to Dhamma

*The phrase "Dhamma practice" has become a well-worn synonym for meditation. It might appear that meditation, then, is the Dhamma or the way. However, the Buddha's teachings stress that practice is to be guided by right understanding of Dhamma. As seeing Dhamma is a matter of seeing paṭiccasamuppāda (see [passage above](#)), practicing according to right understanding of paṭiccasamuppāda is crucial. Consequently, right understanding of paṭiccasamuppāda is the purpose of both the Buddha's teaching and Under the Bodhi Tree.*

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of aging and death, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as "one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma."

---

<sup>87</sup> SN 12:66 Sammasa Sutta, S.ii.107, CDB 604.

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of birth, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as “one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma.”

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of becoming, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as “one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma.”

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of clinging, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as “one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma.”

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of craving, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as “one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma.”

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of vedanā, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as “one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma.”

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of sense contact, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as “one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma.”

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of sense media, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as “one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma.”

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of name-form, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as “one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma.”

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of sense cognition, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as “one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma.”

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of concoctings, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as “one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma.”

Friends, if one practices for disenchantment with, the fading away of, and the remainderless quenching of ignorance, it is appropriate to speak of that practitioner as “one practicing Dhamma according to Dhamma.”<sup>88</sup>



### **Buddha fulfilled his duty and encouraged us in ours**

*Buddha offered himself as a guide not a savior. He compassionately shared the Dhamma and path he had discovered (see [passage 50](#)) and formulated a multitude of expressions*

---

<sup>88</sup> SN 12:16 Dhammakhatika Sutta, S.ii.18, CDB 545. In this sutta, each mode of paṭiccasamuppāda is also used to describe “one who is a speaker of Dhamma” and “one who has realized Nibbāna in this very life.” Here, Ajahn Buddhādāsa selected the middle section of each paragraph, which concerns the practice of Dhamma.

*and presentations fitting the needs and abilities of his listeners. In fulfilling the duty (Dhamma) of a Perfectly Self-Awakened One, he did not presume to save anyone. Instead, the Buddha taught that practicing wisely according to Dhamma is the duty of each one of us. Dukkha is to be quenched wherever its conditions arise.*

Friends, there are duties you should perform in order to understand dukkha, the origin of dukkha, the quenching of dukkha, and the path leading to dukkha's quenching;

I have demonstrated to you Nibbāna and the path leading to Nibbāna;

Any duty that a caring teacher seeking the long-term aid and benefit of his students would do, I have performed towards all of you;

Here are trees, here are empty dwellings, you ought to summon ardent effort, do not be careless, do not put yourself in danger of being anxious later:

Friends, this is my teaching to all of you.<sup>89</sup>



## Notes from Editor-Translator

Readers may have noticed a dearth of the definite article “the.” As Pāli does not have articles, I question how much we insert them into our translation. Defining nouns over much can imply more is “there” than Dhamma teachings admit. So I experiment with leaving out “the” even where it might be expected by readers of standard English, for example, in front of Buddha, Dhamma, and practice.



## Appendix 1: a few important and problematic terms

As noted in the Introduction, Ajahn Buddhādāsa advised serious Dhamma student-practitioners to become familiar with important Pāli terms as they are used in the early suttas. This is especially true for terms where translations are unsatisfactory or misleading.

It is worth noting that some translations, dependent co-arising for one, are accurate and not too hard to understand, at least no more difficult than the Pāli term.

### attā, ātman

A thing, being, entity, or essence that lasts, is separate and independent, and has agency and control. Though we speak of such a thing, Buddha’s teaching insists that it never can be found. Loosely, “self,” “ego,” “spirit,” or “soul,” though each of these in ordinary English usage have meanings that may not fit attā. I find it helpful to recall the religio-philosophical context of Buddha’s time. Then, atman was assumed to be an essential part of us that passed on from life to life until reaching *moksha*, “release.”

---

<sup>89</sup> SN 43 Asaṅkhatasaṃyutta (composite of various suttas), CDB 1372ff, and elsewhere.

Theories abounded as to the details of what it is and how it transmigrated. Yet it's existence and permanence were generally taken for granted. Buddha's brilliance was in questioning it rather than assuming its existence.

## vedanā

The simple subjective feeling tone or affect of an experience; any feeling of pleasure, pain, and neither-pleasure-nor-pain that occurs with sense contact (phassa). Some experiences are pleasant, agreeable, comfortable, attractive, or beautiful. Some experiences are painful, unpleasant, disagreeable, uncomfortable, repellent, or ugly. Some experiences don't feel either way, which may feel "neutral" or "ambiguous." Vedanā are generally distinguished in this threefold manner and also according to the six kinds of contact on which they are based. Within paṭiccasamuppāda, and as the second aggregate, vedanā has this limited meaning. Vedanā is not the same as physical sensation (phoṭṭabba, tangibles), which can be a basis for the various vedanā. In chapter 10, "sexual feelings" and "feelings of sensuality and form" are mentioned. These are not vedanā per se, although they will be felt as pleasurable or uncomfortable, which are vedanā. Such is the ambiguity of the Thai *ruseuk* and English "feeling." Unfortunately, emotion is often confused with vedanā, leading to superficial confusions of Buddha-Dhamma. Emotions, like other forms of experience, involve vedanā, that is, may feel pleasurable, painful, or ambiguous. And emotions are partly triggered by the vedanā of a sensible experience. Still, emotions are not vedanā. Causal relationship is not equivalence.

## viññāṇa

In an incomplete and unpublished manuscript critiquing the orthodox "three lives interpretation" of paṭiccasamuppāda, Ajahn Buddhadasa counts eleven shades of meaning that viññāṇa takes in the suttas. Most occur infrequently, some of them only once or twice. Two uses are overwhelmingly predominant: as the fifth of the five clinging-together-aggregates and within the most common paṭiccasamuppāda formulations. Further, viññāṇa in "humming paṭiccasamuppāda" is essentially the same as the fifth khandha. Such is the case in important suttas such as The Honey Ball (MN 18), also. Based on sutta evidence, rather than later commentary, the viññāṇa conditioned by avijjā and saṅkhāra in the "12 modes formulation" seems to have the same meaning. This is the viññāṇa I will comment on here.

Viññāṇa is categorized according to the six sense media and always has an "object" (ārammaṇa) such as a visual form, a sound, or an idea. Viññāṇa distinguishes a separate object within each sensory sphere. The most appropriate English term may be "cognition" or "cognizing," never forgetting that cognition of a sense object through its appropriate sense door is meant. "Sense knowing" of a sense object could be an easier-on-the-ears equivalent.

When readers come across "consciousness" in translations of the Pāli suttas and books on Early Buddhism such as *Under the Bodhi Tree*, understand it in the sense explained here and avoid confusing it with the various associations in English usage.

???