

SAMSĀRA – Life after Life

by

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The Discovery of Dependent Arising
(*Paṭiccasamuppāda*)

On the full-moon day of Vesakha (May), 588 B.C., the day the Bodhisatta Siddhatha was to attain Buddhahood, his mind is extremely pure with the attainment of eight mundane jhānas. It had been attained and trained in fourteen ways and further augmented by the fivefold mastery over the jhānas. It was totally free from all defilements and became pliable and gentle so as to be amenable to his wishes.

In the first watch of the night on that auspicious day, he developed the fourth rūpāvacara jhāna, emerged from it, and inclined his mind to recollect his former existences. Thereupon, the supernormal knowledge of recollecting former existences (*Pubberivāsānussari Abhiññā*) arose in him. He could see all his past existences together with his activities, events and experiences.

He also saw that there were only the phenomena of mind and matter throughout the countless rounds of existence, the beginning of which is not known. In all the three occasions of birth, living and death, there were only the arising and dissolving of mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*). Indeed in all abodes and at all times, the phenomena of

mentality-materiality were in a continuous state of flux, like the flame of an oil lamp or like the current of a river.

So in reality there is no sentient being at all to be called 'I', 'you', 'man', 'woman', etc. Indeed there is not a single Almighty God or Brahmā who could create such a sentient being.

At midnight he directed his mind towards the supernormal knowledge of Divine Eye (*Dibba Cakkhu*). Through that supernormal knowledge he could see a hundred thousand crores of world-systems known as *Ānābheta*, the field of authority of a Buddha, together with all living beings in the thirty-one planes of existence.

Based on Divine Eye he also developed the knowledge of faring according to deeds (*Yathākammupaga Nāna*). By means of this knowledge he reviewed in detail the past deeds of merit and demerit done by the respective beings and came to know them truly thus: "These denizens of the woeful states had in their past existences committed evil by deed, word or thought; they had maligned, abused and reviled noble persons (*Āriyās*); they held wrong views and with these wrong views they themselves committed and also caused others to commit various demeritorious deeds. After death and the dissolution of their bodies, they reappeared in miserable existences. Those beings in good existences had performed good deeds bodily, verbally and mentally; they did not malign, abuse or revile noble persons; they had right views and with the right views they performed various kinds of meri-

torious deeds and they persuaded others to do. After death and the dissolution of their bodies, they were reborn in the blissful realms of humans, Devas and Brahmās.

In the last watch of that night the Bodhisatta contemplated the causal relations which give rise to continuous succession of existences according to the karmmas performed by various beings. Thereupon he discovered the Doctrine of Dependent Arising (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*) consisting of eleven causal relations and twelve factors (described in the following).

When he contemplated the true nature of the beings living in each universe and belonging to three periods of time (past, present and future), he came to know full well that, no matter how numerous humans, Devas, Brahmās and woeful beings are in a single universe, they could be reduced to two factors of Paṭiccasamuppāda in the ultimate sense.

Summing up the number of objects of vipassanā known as Malāvājira Vipassanā, as there are a hundred thousand crores of world systems there are also a hundred thousand crores each of the twelve factors. The total number of objects then become one million and two hundred thousand crores.

As each of the factors of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* promotes three Insight Knowledges, namely, the Insight Knowledge of Impermanence (*Anicca Vipassanā Nāna*), the Insight Knowledge of Suffering (*Dukkha Vipassanā Nāna*) and the Insight Knowledge of Non-self, there are altogether three million six hundred thousand crores of Insight

Table 1 : Causal Relations between three Successive Existences

3 Periods	12 Factors	20 Modes + 4 Abridgments
Past	1 Avijjā (ignorance) 2 Saṅkhāra (Kamma-formations)	Kammabhava (Kamma process) 5 Past causes: 1,2,8,9,10
Present	3 Viññāna (result consciousness) 4 Nāmarūpa (mind-and-matter) 5 Saḥajāyana (six bases) 6 Phassa (contact) 7 Vedanā (feeling)	Uppaṭṭhābhava (Rebirth process) 5 Present effects: 3,4,5,6,7
Present	8 Taṇhā (craving) 9 Upādāna (clinging; taṇhā+ dāhi) 10 Kammabhava (Kamma Formations)	Kammabhava (Kamma Process) 5 Present causes: 1,2,8,9,10
Future	11 Jāti (rebirth) 12 Jarāmaraṇa (Ageing-death) (worry, lamentation, pain grief, despair)	Uppaṭṭhābhava (Rebirth process) 5 Future effects: 3,4,5,6,7

Insight Wisdom.

By means of *Mahāvajira Vipassanā* the Bodhisatta developed ten insight knowledges and fourfold Path-wisdom when he became an Arahant as well as a fully enlightened Sammāsambudha.

Perpetual Turning of the Wheel of Saṁsāra

1 The dependent arising of the causal relations of Paṭiccasamuppāda resembles a big wheel turning perpetually. The twelve factors form the support of the wheel whereas avijjā and taṇhā form its hub. The consecutive existences constitute the rim of the wheel.

The wheel turns round and round perpetually from one existence to another according to the discourse:

*A vijjā paccayā saṅkhārā,
Saṅkhāra paccayā viññānaṁ,
Viññāna paccayā nāma rūpaṁ,*

*Taṇhā paccayā upādānaṁ,
Upādāna paccayā bhavaṁ,
Bhava paccayā jāti,
Jāti paccayā jarā-maraṇaṁ-
soka-parideva-
dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā sambhavanti.*

2 The Wheel of Paṭiccasamuppāda can also be considered to be made up of four segments: the five past causes constitute the first segment; the present five effects, the second segment; the present

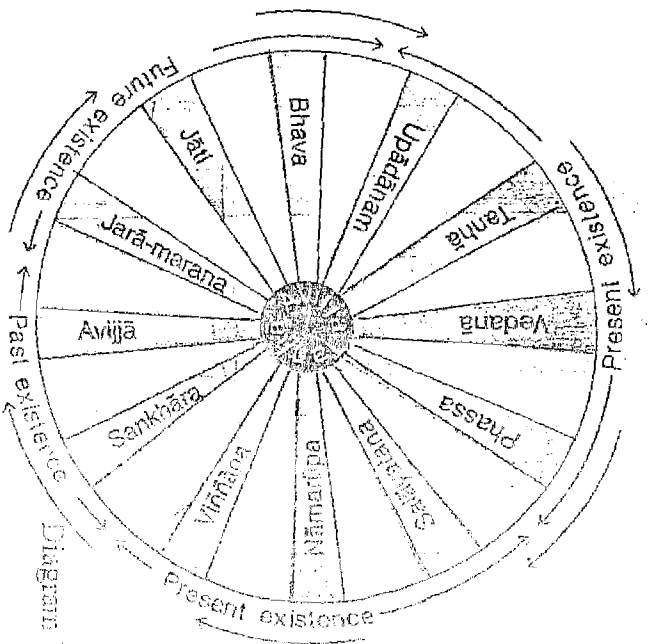


Diagram 1

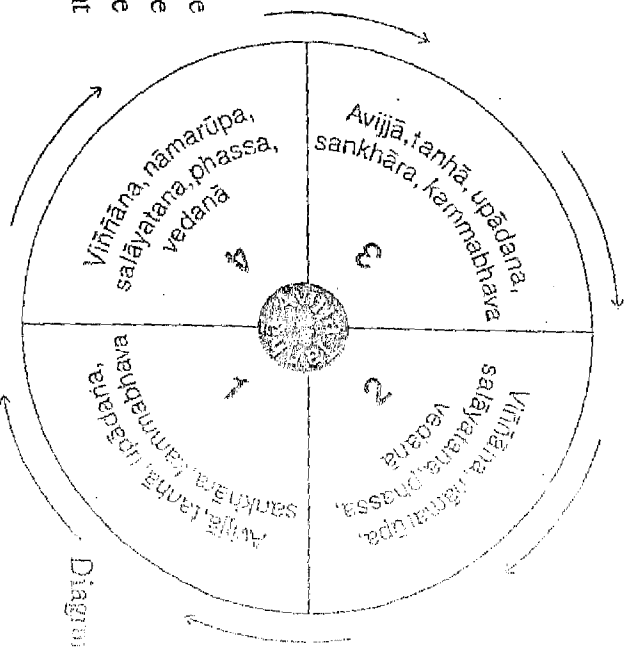


Diagram 2

five causes, the third segment; and the future five effects, the fourth segment.

This wheel will also be turning round and round perpetually as five causes in the past existence condition the arising of five effects in the present existence, and these effects will condition the arising of five new causes in the present existence which will in turn give rise to five effects again in the future existence, and so on.

3 The twelve factors of Pañcacasamuppāda can also be classified as three rounds:

- (1) *Kilesavatta* - round of defilements
- *avijjā, taṇhā, upādāna*
- (2) *Kamma-vatta* - round of kamma
- *saṅkhāra, kammabhava*
- (3) *Vipākavatta* - round of resultants
- *upapattibhava, viññāṇa, nāmarūpa, saḷāyatana, phassa, vedanā, jātī, jarā-marana*

In the past, because of ignorance (*avijjā*), wrong view (*diṭṭhā*) and attachment (*taṇhā*), living beings have strong craving or clinging (*upādāna*) for sense pleasure. So they perform both wholesome and unwholesome deeds to gratify their sense desires. These actions produce wholesome and

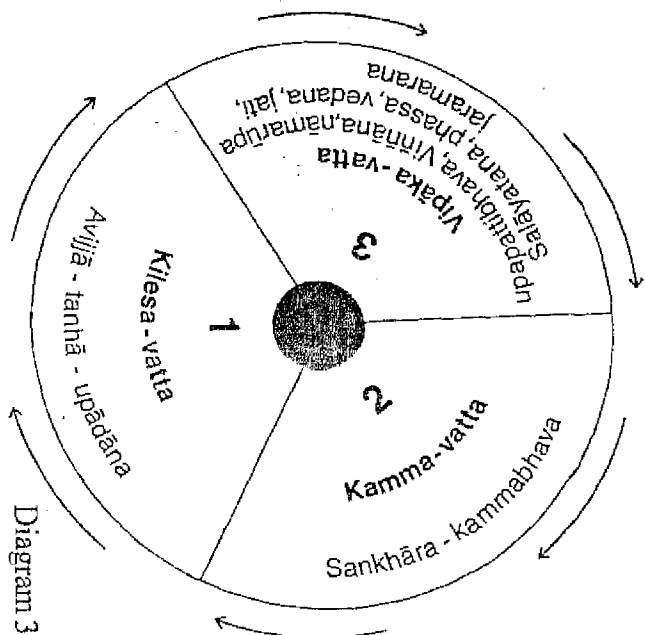


Diagram 3

unwholesome *kammās*. So *kilesavatta* gives rise to *kammavatta*.

When the *kammās* bear results with the support of *avijjā, taṇhā* and *upādāna*, *vipākavatta* arises as the present existence. At the same time *avijjā, taṇhā* and *diṭṭhā* come along with resultant *cittas* (*viññāṇā*) as latent defilements (*anusayakilesās*).

When the six bases (*saḷāyatana*) come into contact with six sense objects and *phassa, vedanā* arise, those latent defilements also pop up as full-fledged defilements. So *kilesavatta* arises again.

So *kilesavatta* conditions *kammavatta* to arise, and *kammavatta* in turn conditions *vipākavatta* to arise. When *vipākavatta* arises, *kilesavatta* arises

again. So the rounds of *vatta* will keep on rotating and so does the Wheel of *Pañcacasamuppāda*, ever.

Here the simile of "hen-egg-chicken-hen-chicken--" may be cited as a simple illustration of going round and round forever.

No Beginning nor End of *Samsāra*

From the explanations given above, it is clear that the beginning as well as the end of the round of rebirth for each individual cannot be known.

As each individual has been travelling *Samsāra* for aeons and aeons, there is no one in the world who has not been related to him as mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter, etc.

"*Bhikkhus, it is not easy to find a being has not formerly been your mother --- your father --- your brother --- your sister --- your son --- your daughter ---*" (S. II, 189-190)

Two Roots (*Mūla*)

The wheel of *Pañcacasamuppāda* (Table I) is divided into two portions. The first portion, starting from the Past Causes and Ends at the Present Ego, comprising *avijjā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa, nāmarūpa, saḷāyatana, phassa* and *vedanā*. In this portion, *avijjā* is the root or origin.

The second portion starts from the Future Causes and ends at the Future Effects covering 12

upādāna, bhava, jāti and jarā-maraṇa. In this portion taṇhā is the root or origin.

So the two roots of Paṭiccasamuppāda are ignorance and craving. They are the main forces which keep rotating the wheel of saṃsāra. If these two roots can be cut off, the wheel of Dependent Arising will be destroyed for ever just as a tree will die when its main roots are cut off.

We can cut off the two main roots by undertaking insight meditation (vipassanā). When all the realities including the Four Noble Truths are vividly seen by insight wisdom, the two roots will be cut off, and we shall be liberated from saṃsāra which is in reality also the round of suffering.

In Dīgha Nikāya (Sutta 15) the Buddha said: *“ Profound, Ananda, is this Dependent Arising, and profound does it appear. It is through not understanding, not penetrating, this law that this world resembles a tangled ball of thread, a bird's nest, a thicket of reed, and that man does not escape from the lower states of existence, from the course of woe and perdition, suffering from the round of rebirth.”*

No First Cause

Although the Paṭiccasamuppāda discourse begins with ignorance (avijjā), ignorance is not the first cause of saṃsāra for avijjā arises dependent on four intoxicants (āsava): the intoxicant of sense desire (kāmaśava), the intoxicant of attachment to

jñāna and brahmā existences (bhavāśava), the intoxicant of wrong view (diṭṭhāśava), and the intoxicant of the ignorance of Four Noble Truths (avijjāśava). So long as the intoxicants are present, avijjā will be generated incessantly for ever.

With regard to the First Cause and the Existent of Saṃsāra, the words of the Buddha in Anamatagga Samyutta are very interesting. He said that the whole earth can be made into small pellets and one pellet can be put down for one's father, another pellet for one's father's father, another pellet for one's grandfather's father and so on. The pellets will be used up before the line of ancestors can be traced out.

Again we can cut all the wood and the bamboo in the world into small pieces and place a piece for one's mother, another piece for one's mother's mother, another piece for one's grandmother's mother and so on. Again we shall run out of the pieces before we can trace all the mother's mother.

This also implies that the world System have been arising and dissolving from time immemorial and this process will go on indefinitely. Science has already borne witness to this fact.

Paṭiccasamuppāda also refutes the theory of creation and emphasizes the fact that life is generated from life as scientists have discovered: " Omne vivum ex vivo " (All life from life).

Where will you be reborn?

The causes which will bring about your existence after death are avijjā, taṇhā, upādāna, saṅkhāra and kammabhava that are present in your mental stream. Saṅkhāra and kammabhava refer to the karma formations and karma seeds that have accumulated in the present existence as well as in your uncountable past existences.

The karma seeds, like plant seeds, will produce definite results. Unwholesome karmas generated from immoral actions will produce next existence in woeful abodes when they have the chance to do so. Similarly wholesome karmas generated from wholesome actions will produce new existences either in human realms or celestial realms.

Just as seeds need the support of earth, water and light to produce new plants, so in the same way karmas need the support of avijjā, taṇhā, upādāna to bear results. Taṇhā is craving for attachment whereas upādāna is clinging due to sense craving and wrong view. These craving, clinging and wrong view arise on account of ignorance (avijjā).

Thus the place where you will be reborn will be determined not only by your karmas but also by your craving and clinging.

At the Buddha's time the multibillionaire miser Todeyya was reborn as a dog in his o

house in accordance with his craving and clinging.

The lay-devotee Upasathā of ancient Saketa regularly observed Sabbath precepts and wished to be reborn in the pleasant Nandavana Garden of Tavatimsā heaven. When she passed away she was reborn there as a celestial maiden.

The Egyptian Kings who had magnificent pyramids built as their palaces of next existences, would be certainly reborn there. There were stories about the treasure in the pyramids of being haunted by its possessor.

Dr. Tha Hla's remarkable experience at the tombs of Dr. Alexander Fleming and King George VI indicated that they were present at their tombs.

Another notable feature is that the temperament, the natural bent, the intelligence and the memory of the present existence are transmitted to the next existence for there is no break in the mental stream because of death in one place and rebirth in another place and the mind has the property of transmitting all its properties to the next arising mind.

So if you are short-tempered now, you will be so in the future and in your next life as well. If you are intelligent now, you will be intelligent the whole of your life as well as in your future existences. Some can even remember their past existences.

In What manner will you be reborn?

We should take note of the four possible

modes of conceiving in the new existence.

- (i) *Andaja-paṭisanḍhi* - Conceiving in egg shell; e.g. birds, fowls, snakes.
- (ii) *Jalābujja-paṭisanḍhi* - Conceiving in the womb; e.g. dogs, cat, men.
- (iii) *Samsedaja-paṭisanḍhi* - Conceiving in bamboo, fruit, mash, stagnant water, putrid carcass; e.g. flies mosquitoes, frogs.
- (iv) *Opapātika-paṭisanḍhi* - rebirth in the form of a grown-up person about 16-18 years old as if jumping out of no where; e.g. celestial beings, persons born in hells, some woeful ghosts, fish in hot water ponds.

The monk Tissa was reborn as a flea in his robe, and the beautiful courtesan Ambapālī was reborn also by opapātika rebirth at the Buddha's time.

By the power of kamma an individual may be reborn anywhere as far as the highest realm or at other planets by any one of the four modes of conceiving. This explains the first appearance of various forms of living beings on earth. It also explains the success of cloning and test-tube babies.

How to stop the wheel of life

"There is no one, even in a dream, who has emancipated from the round of misery without the ability to break through the Paṭiccasamuppāda causal Relations of the Saṃsāra machine with his wisdom sword which has been sharpened on the sacred whetstone of concentration."

(Vs. and Abhi.A)

Why are we wandering in Saṃsāra?

Saṃsāra literally means 'perpetual

wandering'. It is a name given to the continuous process of ever again and again being born, growing old, suffering and dying. To put it more precisely, saṃsāra is the unbroken chain of the fivefold khandha — combinations which continue to change from moment to moment and continue to follow one upon the other through inconceivable periods of time.

In *Diḅha Nikāya* (Sutta 15) the Buddha said "Profound, Ananda, is this Dependent Arising profound does it appear. It is through not understanding, not penetrating this law, that world resembles a tangled ball of thread, a knot, a thicket of reed, and that man does not escape from the lower states of existence, for course of woe and perdition, suffering from round of rebirth."

How long is Saṃsāra?

"Which do you think is more: the flow tears, which weeping and wailing you have set upon this long way — hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths, united with the undisturbed, separated from the desired — the waters of the four oceans? You have indeed more tears upon this long way than there is in the four oceans."

Saṃsāra is so long that there is no one has been not related to us as father, mother, a daughter, aunt, or uncle, etc. So we should not hostile but friendly to all beings.