

The Dependent Origination

The law of cause and effect

(Paticcasamuppāda)

Buddhism always points out the path that how to overcome suffering and achieve the final liberation. The Buddha's main purpose was explaining the path that leads to get rid of suffering. If someone understands the suffering, he realizes the origin of suffering. If someone realizes the origin of suffering, he understands the cessation of suffering. If someone understands the cessation of suffering, he goes forward on the path that leads to get rid of suffering. When one is realized by a wise person, other steps are also understood by himself. This is the nature of understanding the four noble truths. Understanding the four noble truths and understanding the dependent origination are interrelated. Understanding one helps the other.

Understanding the dependent origination is the turning point in Buddhism. The dependent origination is like the heart of Buddhism. He who understands the dependent origination understands the process of arising and suffering. Also, understanding the dependent origination leads to understand the Supreme Buddha. That's is why the Buddha says;

He who sees the dependent origination sees the Dhamma.

He who sees the Dhamma sees the dependent origination.

(Yo paticcasamuppādam passati, so dhammam passasati,

Yo dhammam passati so paticcasamuppādam passati)

He who sees the dhamma sees (me) the Buddha. He who sees (me) the Buddha sees the Dhamma.

(Yo dhammam passati so mam passati yo mam passati so dhammam passati)

Above four things, the fourfold noble truth (*Cattāri ariyasaccāni*) is based on understanding of the dependent origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*). Understanding the dependent origination is like understanding the heart of Buddhism. On the other hand, understanding the four noble truths depends on understanding ignorance. In short, the meaning of ignorance is lack of understanding of cause and effect of suffering. When we experience something through our senses like eye, ear, that experience doesn't come to the present from the past, also that experience doesn't go to future from the present. This is the ultimate truth which happens in our experiential world whether we like or not. Unfortunately, because of lack of comprehension people think that before we experience something, it happened. And also, after we experienced, the experience remains. This is the way that the world thinks. This is the ignorance that we have to overcome as much as we are knowledgeable about what the Buddha explained.

In very early morning, the Buddha got enlightened in Bodh Gaya on the Vesak Full moon day. The supreme Buddha by his wisdom realized and reflected on cause and effect of suffering that the world suffers with decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. At that moment he realized reasons of suffering one by one orderly. There he understood the closest reason of decay (*Jarā*), death (*Marana*), sorrow (*Soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*Dukkha*), grief (*Domanassa*) and despair (*Upāyāsa*) as birth (*Jāti*). Then he analyzed why birth happens. Here he saw the reason of birth as the process of becoming (or existence=*Bhava*). The Buddha again investigated the reason of the process of becoming. He understood the reason of becoming as clinging (*Upādāna*). Next, he considered the reason of clinging as craving (*Tanhā*). After that he realized the reason of craving as sensation (or feeling=*Vedanā*). When he reflects on the cause of feeling, he understood the reason of feeling as contact (or impression = *Phassa*). Then he recognized six senses (*Salāyatana*) as the cause of contact. Again, while he was investigating the reason of six senses, he knew mind and matter (Mentality and corporeality = *Nama Rupa*). When he analyzed the cause of mind and matter, he understood consciousness (*Viññāna*). After that he examined the reason of consciousness as volitional actions (*Sankhāra*). Finally, he clearly explored that volitional actions arise because of ignorance (*Avijjā*). When we are ignorant of volitional actions other causes of suffering arise like decay, death etc. According to this discovery, the Buddha understood the process of our entire life cycle in the Sansāric Journey. Here we can classify all of them in an order like this;

Through ignorance are conditioned volitional actions or kamma-formations

(Avijjā paccayā samkhārā).

Through volitional actions is conditioned consciousness

(Sankhāra paccayā viññānam).

Through consciousness are conditioned mental and physical phenomena

(Viññāya paccayā nāmarupam).

Through mental and physical phenomena are conditioned the six faculties (i.e., five physical sense-organs and mind)

(Nāmarupa paccayā salayatanaṃ).

Through the six faculties is conditioned (sensorial and mental) contact.

(Salāyatana paccayā phasso)

Through (sensorial and mental) contact is conditioned sensation.

(Phassa paccayā vedanā)

Through sensation is conditioned craving.

(Vedanā paccayā tanhā)

Through craving ('thirst') is conditioned clinging.

(Tanhā paccayā upādānam)

Through clinging is conditioned the process of becoming.

(Upādāna paccayā bhavo)

Through the process of becoming is conditioned birth.

(Bhava paccayā jāti)

Through birth are conditioned decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair

(Jāti paccayā jarā marana soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyasā)

This discovery can be seen only in a dispensation of a Buddha. It can't be seen in any other religion or philosophy. Buddhism has explained this process using several terms like;

- Ariya ñāya*** – The theory of the Buddha
- Paticcasamuppāda*** – The dependent origination
- Hetuphala Dhamma*** – The law of cause and effect
- Idappaccayatā*** – The process of cause and effect

Main deference in Buddhism, when compared with other religions and philosophies, is the theory of cause and effect. All other religions, philosophies and sciences explain their teachings and theories depending on conventional truth. According to the conventional truth before we experience there was a world and also after our experience the world remains. According to the dependent origination in Buddhism where the ultimate truth is explained, before we experience there was no world and also after our experience the world doesn't remain. The experience or the world arises and ceases as the result of conditions coming together and separated.

When our eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind contact with external objects such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, mental formations, the experience arises at the moment. Simultaneously, five aggregates (form, feelings, perception, mental formation and consciousness) arise when a sense contacts with an object and mind. These five aggregates are the bottom line of all our experiences which we receive through our senses. The nature of these five aggregates is it wasn't here before the experience. And also, it doesn't remain after the

experience. This is the main teaching that the Buddha realized, discovered and preached to the world to get rid of suffering. The Buddha has explained this theory in various ways in his teachings like this;

When this is, that is (*Asmin sati idam hoti*)

This arising, that arises (*Imassa Uppādā idam uppajjati*)

When this is not, that is not (*Asmin asati idam na hoti*)

This ceasing, that ceases (*Imassa nirodha idam nirujjhati*)

Understanding of Buddhism depends on how far we have understood this theory, the dependent origination. If someone has a clear knowledge, he is knowledgeable about suffering. Understanding of suffering causes to understand the four noble truths. If somebody knows suffering as lack of knowledge of this theory, listening to what the Buddha taught he tries to understand the dependent origination, five aggregates and four noble truths as much as he can. And also, he always tries to practice the path how to get rid of suffering. Here he has to practice three disciplines. They are;

1. Virtue (*Sīla*)
2. Tranquility (*Samādhi*)
3. Wisdom (*Paññā*)

First of all, he disciplines his physical and verbal actions with the knowledge of the dependent origination. Having a good discipline in speech and behavior, he gradually trains his mind in tranquility by practicing concentration meditation. Because of his clear knowledge about the process how suffering arises with concentrated mind he reflects on impermanence. Here he always reflects on arising and ceasing of the five aggregates. As much as he can examine, his ignorance gradually decreases. Simultaneously, arising of other parts of dependent origination of his life also decreases. As the result of practicing this path suffering gradually decreases. He always tries to live with virtue and concentration seeing insight as impermanence. Also, he is aware of the present moment. This is the way how ignorance ceases and other things with ignorance gradually decrease;

With the fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations.
(*Avijjāyatveva asesavirāga nirodhā samkhāra nirodho*)

With the cessation of volitional formations comes cessation of consciousness

(*Samkhāra nirodhā viññāna nirodho*)

With the cessation of consciousness comes cessation of mentality and corporeality

(*Viññāna nirodhā nāmarupa nirodho*)

With the cessation of mind and matter comes cessation of six senses

(Nāmrupa nirodhā salāyatana nirodho)

With the cessation of six senses comes cessation of contact

(Salāyatana Nirodhā phassa nirodho)

With the cessation of contact comes cessation of feeling

(Phassa nirodhā vedanā nirodho)

With the cessation of feeling comes cessation of craving

(Vedanā nirodhā tanhā nirodho)

With the cessation of craving comes cessation of clinging

(Tanhā nirodhā upādāna nirodho)

With the cessation of clinging comes cessation of existence of becoming

(Upādāna nirodhā bhava nirodho)

With the cessation of existence comes cessation of birth *(Bhava nirodhā jāti nirodho)*

With the cessation of birth, cessation of decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair comes

(Jāti nirodhā jarā marana soka parideva dukka domanassa upāyāsā)

This is the way that the Buddha pointed out to get rid of suffering and achieve the final bliss of liberation. For this result we should dedicate all our things like time, wealth, effort in this time when the Buddha's dispensation has appeared in the world. Actually, we were born in this world in this time to attain liberation. Therefore, we have to attempt as much as we can. Practicing the deliverance path (*Mokkha Magga*) is the most beneficial thing that we receive throughout our life as wise people.

May the Triple Gem Bless you!

May all Beings be Well, Happy, Prosperous and Peaceful!

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