

The Dependent Origination (*Patīccasamuppāda*) & the Five Aggregates (*Pañcupādānakkhadā*)

The Buddha says very clearly “I explained in the past, and now I explain only thing which is suffering and the cessation of suffering” (Anurādhassutta, SN). This is the way how the Buddha defined the four noble truths in short. When the Buddha explained the arising of suffering, he pointed it out according to the dependent origination as “*Avijjā paccayā saṃkhārā, Saṃkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṃ ... etc.*”. When he explained the path to cease from suffering, he pointed its cessation out as; “*Avijjāyaveva asesavirāga nirodhā saṃkhāra nirodho, Saṃkhāra nirodhā viññāṇa nirodho...*” etc. Accordingly, the Blessed One explains the patīccasamuppāda based on the Four Noble Truths.

Otherwise, the noble truth of suffering is the five aggregates, the origin of suffering is the clinging to the five aggregates, the cessation of suffering is releasing from the clinging of the five aggregates and the path to cessation of suffering is the way how to release from suffering completely.

In the Buddha’s time, there were three wrong views among brahmins and ascetics. Which are;

1. ***Pubbekatahetuvāda*** :-

‘Whatever this person experiences—whether pleasure, pain, or neither-pain-nor-pleasure—all that is caused by what was done in the past

2. ***Issaranimmānavāda*** :-

‘Whatever this person experiences—whether pleasure, pain, or neither-pain-nor-pleasure—all that is caused by God’s creative activity,’

3. ***Ahetu-appaccayavāda*** :-

‘Whatever this person experiences—whether pleasure, pain, or neither-pain-nor-pleasure—all that occurs without a cause or condition,’

Declining those three views with evidence, Buddhism explains the four noble truths based on the dependent origination. Here, the Buddha represents the ascending order and the descending order of the patīccasamuppāda as;

1. ***Dukkhasamudaya sacca*** :- Ascending order (*Anuloma*)

“With ignorance as condition, volitional activities come to be....”

2. ***Dukkhanirodha sacca*** :- descending order (*Patiloma*)

With the cessation of ignorance volitional activities come to be...”

This is the way how the Buddha explained the world reality.

The Buddha's main purpose was explaining the path that leads to cessation 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 of those truths is realized by a wise person, other steps are also understood (*Gavampati Sutta*). This is the nature of the understanding of the four noble truths. The dependent origination is the process of the arising and ceasing of suffering and the world as well.

Understanding the dependent origination is the turning point and the unique in Buddhism. The dependent origination is like the heart of Buddhism. He who understands the dependent origination understands himself and the world. Also, understanding the dependent origination leads to understand the Supreme Buddha. Hence understanding the four noble truths, the dependent origination and the Buddha are interrelated. That's why the Buddha says;

He who sees the dependent origination sees the Dhamma.

He who sees the Dhamma sees the dependent origination.

*(Yo paticcasamuppādaṃ passati, so dhammaṃ passasati,
Yo dhammaṃ passati so paticcasamuppādaṃ passati)*

He who sees the dhamma sees (me) the Buddha. He who sees (me) the Buddha sees the Dhamma.
(Yo dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ 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 the lack of understanding of the 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 it 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.

Early morning on the Vesak Full moon day, the Buddha got enlightened in Bodh Gaya. 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 for decay (*Jarā*), death (*Maraṇa*), 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 for birth as the process of becoming (or existence=*Bhava*). The Buddha again

investigated the reason for the process of becoming. He understood the reason for becoming as clinging (*Upādāna*). Next, he considered the reason for clinging as craving (*Taṇhā*). After that he realized the reason for craving as sensation (or feeling=*Vedanā*). When he reflected on the cause of feeling, he understood the reason for feeling as contact (or impression = *Phassa*). Then he recognized six senses (*Salāyatana*) as the cause of contact. Again, while he was investigating the reason for six senses, he knew mind and matter (Mentality and corporeality = *Nama Rupa*). When he analyzed the cause of mind and matter, he understood consciousness (*Viññāṇa*). After that he examined the reason for consciousness as volitional actions (*Samkhāra*). 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 (kamma-formations)
(*Avijjā paccayā samkhārā*).

Through volitional actions is conditioned consciousness
(*Samkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṃ*).

Through consciousness are conditioned mental and physical phenomena (mentality & corporeality)
(*Viññāṇa paccayā nāmarupaṃ*).

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

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

Through (sensorial and mental) contact is conditioned sensation.
(*Phassa paccayā vedanā*)

Through sensation is conditioned craving. (*Vedanā paccayā taṇhā*)

Through craving ('thirst') is conditioned clinging. (*Taṇhā paccayā upādānaṃ*)

Through clinging is conditioned the process of becoming. (*Upādāna paccayā bhavo*)

Through the process of becoming is conditioned rebirth. (*Bhava paccayā jāti*)

Through rebirth are conditioned decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair
(*Jāti paccayā jarā maraṇa 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;

<i>Ariya ṅāya</i>	– The theory of the Buddha
<i>Paticcasamuppāda</i>	– The dependent origination
<i>Hetuphala Dhamma</i>	– The law of cause and effect
<i>Idappaccayatā</i>	– The process of cause and effect

The Dependent Origination Buddhism (*Paticcasamuppāda*) mostly explains the arising and ceasing of suffering focusing on one thought in the present moment. When someone is ignorant, all the facts (steps) of the dependent origination immediately arise until decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. However, when we acknowledge some references in Buddhism such as *Mahānidāna Sutta*, *Patisambhidāmagga* ect., we can see its explanation as times like past, present and future.

Past	1. Ignorance – <i>Avijjā</i> 2. Volitional formations - <i>Samkhāra</i>	Karma – Formation (<i>Kamma Bhava</i>)
Present	3. Consciousness – <i>Viññāṇa</i> 4. Mentality and Corporeality - <i>Nāma-rupa</i> (Mind & Matter) 5. Six Senses - <i>Salāyatana</i> 6. Contact - <i>Phassa</i> 7. Feeling - <i>Vedanā</i>	Rebirth Process (<i>Upapatti Bhava</i>)
	8. Craving - <i>Taṇhā</i> 9. Clinging – <i>Upādāna</i> 10. Existence of becoming - <i>Bhava</i>	Karma Process (<i>Kamma – Bhava</i>)
Future	11. Rebirth - <i>Jāti</i> 12. Decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair - <i>Jāti nirodhā jarā maraṇa soka parideva dukka domanassa upāyāsā</i>	Rebirth – Process (<i>Upapatti Bhava</i>)

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 separating.

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 arise when a sense contacts with an object and mind.

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| i. | Matter | (<i>Rūpa</i>) |
| ii. | Feelings | (<i>Vedanā</i>) |
| iii. | Perception | (<i>Saññā</i>) |
| iv. | Mental formations | (<i>Samkhāra</i>) |
| v. | Consciousness | (<i>Viññāṇa</i>) |

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 (*Asmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti*)

With the arising of this - this arises (*Imassa Uppādā idaṃ uppajjati*)

When this not being, this doesn't come to be (*Asmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti*)

With the cessation of this - this ceases (*Imassa nirodha idaṃ nirujjhati*)

Eye is impermanent (*Cakkhuṃ aniccaṃ*)

Forms are impermanent (*Rupaṃ aniccaṃ*)

Eye consciousness is impermanent (*Chakkhu Viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ*)

Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.

(*yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*”ti)

Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence (*ahutvā sambhutaṃ hutvā na bhavissati*).

Understanding of Buddhism equals 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 the understanding of the four noble truths. If someone 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 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 of how suffering arises with a concentrated mind he reflects on impermanence. Here he always reflects on the 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 decrease with ignorance gradually;

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

With the cessation of volitional formations comes cessation of consciousness
(*Saṃkhāra nirodhā viññāṇa nirodho*)

With the cessation of consciousness comes cessation of mentality and corporeality (Mind & Matter)
(*Viññāṇa nirodhā nāmarupa nirodho*)

With the cessation of mind and matter comes cessation of six senses
(*Nāmarupa 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 taṇhā nirodho*)

With the cessation of craving comes cessation of clinging
(*Taṇhā 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 rebirth (*Bhava nirodhā jāti nirodho*)

With the cessation of rebirth, cessation of decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair comes (*Jāti nirodhā jarā maraṇa 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 path of deliverance (*Mokkha Magga*) is the most beneficial thing that we receive throughout our life as wise people.

References:

Abhisamaya saṃyutta – Saṃyutta Nikāya

Anuruddha sutta - Saṃyutta Nikāya

Mahānidāna sutta – Dīgha Nikāya

Paṭiccasamuppāda vibhanga – Vibhaṅgappakaraṇa

Tiṭṭhāyatana Sutta – Aṅguttara Nikāya

Udānapali - Khuddaka Nikāya



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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