

# PATICCASAMUPPADA

ပဋိစ္စသမုပ္ပါဒ်သုတ် တရားတော်

## Part - I

### The Law of Dependent Origination

#### Ignorance leads to Kamma formation

1. **Avijja** - ignorance or delusion
2. **Sankhara** - kamma-formations
3. **Vinnana** - consciousness
4. **Nama-rupa** - mind and matter
5. **Salayatana** - six sense bases
6. **Phassa** - contact or impression
7. **Vedana** - Feeling
8. **Tanha** - craving
9. **Upadana** - clinging
10. **Bhava** - becoming
11. **Jati** - rebirth
12. **Jara-marana** - old age and death

The doctrine of Paticcasamuppada can be categorized as i.e.

- ? *avijja* and *sankhara* are described as the causes in the **past life**,
- ? *vinnana*, *nama-rupa*, *phassa* and *vedana* as the consequences in the **present life**; *upadana* and *bhava* as the causes in the **present life** and
- ? *jati* and *jaramarana* (old age and death) as the consequences that will occur in the **future life**.

**Introduction** – **PA-TIC-CA-SA-MUP-PA-DA** – the law of Dependent Origination – is very tedious to study. Without simile to illustrate its meaning, it is hard to get a clear understanding. However, to know the essence of Buddhism, it is important to get a clear understanding of one's interaction of kamma's action **in the frame work of the past, present, and future existences**.

All the twelve factors named above ( **Avijja, Sankhara, ... . Jati, Jara marana**) are mutually interdependent one on the other and together formed a vicious cycle that knows no beginning. One who knows could break this cycle to attain Nibbana.

## IGNORANCE AND ILLUSION

If you do not know the truth, then you are obviously ignorant of the true facts. Those who do not know the four noble truths you may be leading a life with no specific goal.

### The Four Noble Truths:

1. The Noble **Truth** of Suffering;
2. The Noble Truth of the **Cause** of Suffering;
3. The Noble Truth of the **Annihilation** of Suffering;
4. The Truth of the **Path** leading to the Annihilation of Suffering;

### The Noble Eight-fold Path:

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|--|---|
| 1. Right Understanding {Samma-ditthi}    | } Wisdom Group<br><i>Pañña</i>                            |
| 2. Right Thought { Samma-sankappa }      |   |
| 3. Right speech { Samma-vaca }           | } Morality Virtue<br>Group <i>Sila</i>                    |
| 4. Right Action { Samma-kammanta }       |   |
| 5. Right Livelihood { Samma-ajiva }      |   |
| 6. Right Effort { Samma-vayama }         | } Mental Culture<br>Concentration<br>Group <i>Samadhi</i> |
| 7. Right Mindfulness { Samma-sati }      |   |
| 8. Right Concentration { Samma-samadhi } |   |

**In the practice of Vipassana meditation, Buddhist believe the two laws as absolute TRUTH.**

In the practice of *vipassana* the yogi must be absorbed in the Universal truth of - Universe – **Anicca** – Impermanence of all things; **Dukha** – all things leads us to nothing but sufferings; **Anatta** – there is nothing that we can identify with and is called **no-self**. **Meditator must contemplate on this Universal Law of impermanence.**

To escape from the cycle of birth and rebirths, there are three things an individual must be equipped with - **Sila** (Precepts); **Samdhi** (Concentration); and **Panna** (Vipassana Wisdom). Meditator must gradually cultivate in the perception of the law of impermanence.

In cultivating Sila, **the story of Visakha illustrates, the way we should give donation of charity or alms to Sangha.**

The Story of Visakha (Withakha Yahan Ama)

## Dhammapada Verse 53

### The Story of Visakha

While residing at the Pubbarama monastery in Savatthi, the Buddha uttered Verse (53) of this book, with reference to Visakha, the famous donor of the Pubbarama monastery.

Visakha was the daughter of a rich man of Bhaddiya, named Danancaya, and his wife Sumanadevi, and the granddaughter of Mendaka, one of the five extremely wealthy men of King Bimbisara's dominions. When Visakha was seven years old, the Buddha came on a tour to Bhaddiya. On that occasion, the rich man Mendaka took Visakha and her five hundred companions with him to pay homage to the Buddha. After hearing the discourse given by the Buddha, Visakha, her grandfather and all her five hundred companions attained Sotapatti Fruition.

When Visakha came of age, she married Punnavadahana, son of Migara, a fairly rich man from Savatthi. One day, while Migara was having his meal, a bhikkhu stopped for alms at his house; but Migara completely ignored the bhikkhu. Visakha, seeing this, said to the bhikkhu, "**I am sorry, your reverence, my father-in-law only eats leftovers.**" On hearing this, Migara flew into a rage and told her to leave his house. But Visakha said she was not going away, and that she would send for the eight elderly rich men who were sent by her father to accompany her and to advise her. It was for them to decide whether she was guilty or not. When the elders came, Migara said to them, "While I was having my rice-with-milk in a golden bowl, Visakha said that I was taking only dirt and filth. For this offence, I'm sending her away."

Thereupon, Visakha explained as follows: "When I saw my father-in-law completely ignoring the bhikkhu standing for alms-food, I thought to myself that **my father-in-law was not doing any meritorious deed in this existence. He was only eating the fruits of his past good deeds. So, I said, 'My father-in-law only eats leftovers.'** Now Sirs, what do you think, am I guilty?" The elders decided that Visakha was not guilty. Visakha then said that she was one who had absolute and unshakable faith in the Teaching of the Buddha and so could not stay where the bhikkhus were not welcome; and also, that if she was not given permission to invite the bhikkhus to the house to offer alms-food and make other offerings, she would leave the house. So permission was granted her to invite the Buddha and his bhikkhus to the house.

The next day, the Buddha and his disciples were invited to the house of **Visakha**. When alms-food was about to be offered, she sent word to her father-in-law to join her in offering food; but he did not come. When the meal was over, again she sent a message, this time requesting her father-in-law to join her in hearing the discourse that would soon be given by the Buddha. Her father-in-law felt that he should not refuse for a second time. But his ascetic teachers, the Niganthas, would not let him go; however, they conceded that he could listen from behind a curtain. After

hearing the Buddha's discourse Migara attained Sotapatti Fruition. He felt very thankful to the Buddha and also to his daughter-in-law. Being so thankful, he declared that henceforth Visakha would be like a mother to him, and Visakha came to be known as Migaramata.

Visakha gave birth to ten sons and ten daughters, and ten sons and ten daughters each were born to every one of her children and grand-children. Visakha possessed an immensely valuable gem-encrusted cloak given by her father as a wedding present. One day, Visakha went to the Jetavana monastery with her entourage. On arrival at the monastery, she found that her bejeweled cloak was too heavy. So, she took it off, wrapped it up in her shawl, and gave it to the maid to hold it and take care of it. The maid absentmindedly left it at the monastery. It was the custom for the Venerable Ananda to look after the things left by any one of the lay disciples. Visakha sent the maid back to the monastery saying, "Go and look for the bejeweled cloak, but if the Venerable Ananda had already found it and kept it in a place do not bring it back; I donate the bejeweled cloak to the Venerable Ananda." But the Venerable Ananda did not accept her donation. So Visakha decided to sell the bejeweled cloak and donate the sale proceeds. But there was no one who could afford to buy that bejeweled cloak. So Visakha bought it back for nine crores and one lakh. With this money, she built a monastery on the eastern side of the city; this monastery came to be known as Pubbarama.

After the libation ceremony she called all her family to her and on that night she told them that all her wishes had been fulfilled and that she had nothing more to desire. Then reciting five verses of exultation she went round and round the monastery. Some bhikkhus hearing her, thought she was singing and reported to the Buddha that Visakha was not like before, and that she was going round and round the monastery, singing. "Could it be that she had gone off her head?" they asked the Buddha. To this question, the Buddha replied, "**Today, Visakha had all her wishes of the past and present existences fulfilled and on account of that sense of achievement, she was feeling elated and contented; Visakha was just reciting some verses of exultation; she certainly had not gone off her head. Visakha, throughout her previous existences, had always been a generous donor and an ardent promoter of the Doctrine of successive Buddhas. She was most strongly inclined to do good deeds and had done much good in her previous existences, just as an expert florist makes many garlands from a collection of flowers.**

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

**Verse 53.** As from a collection of flowers many a garland can be made by an expert florist, so also, much good can be done (with wealth, out of faith and generosity) by one subject to birth and death.

**Lesson 1.** – *One must work hard to accrue as much good merits as possible in this existence, so you can continue to enjoy good living in some future lives; in addition knowing that every good action leads to good result (kamma), we must accrue good*

*kamma (action). A good kamma action is one that supports your aspiration to attain Nibbana.*

On one occasion **Visakha**, the lay woman asked the Buddha for lifelong permission to make eight kinds of offering to the Sangha; these were (1 ) bathing garments for the bhikkhus, (2) food for guest-monks, (3) food for traveling monks, (4) food for sick monks, (5) food for the monk who attended on a sick monk (6) medicine for the sick monk, (7 ) rice-gruel for the Sangha and (8) bathing garments for the bhikkhunis. **The Buddha asked Visakha what benefits she hoped to have in offering such things** and the substance of Visakha's reply is as follows.

"At the end of the lent the bhikkhus from all parts of the country will come to see the Buddha. They will tell the Lord about the death of certain monks and ask him about their rebirth and stages on the holy path that they (the deceased monks) had attained. The Lord will reveal their spiritual attainments. I will then approach the visiting monks and ask them whether their late fellow-monks had ever visited Savatthi city. If they say yes, I will conclude that the Noble one who is now at the *sotapanna* or any other stage on the holy path must have certainly used one of my offerings.

**This remembrance of my good *kamma* will fill me with joy. It will be conducive to peace, tranquility and self-development"**

**Lesson No. 2** Preaching or hearing the dhamma is a wholesome *kamma* and it is an intelligent act if the dhamma is understood. Every good deed based on the belief in *kamma* is an intelligent *kamma*...

Verse 416\*

### The Story of Thera Jotika

While residing at the Veluvana monastery, the Buddha uttered Verse (416) of this book, with reference to Thera Jotika.

Jotika was a famous rich man from Rajagaha. He lived in a stately mansion with seven tiered pinnacles. There were seven walls around his mansion, each of which had an entrance guarded by celestial demons. The fame of his wealth spread far and wide, and many people came to see his mansion. On one occasion, **King Bimbisara** came to visit Jotika; he also brought his son **Ajatasattu** with him. Ajatasattu seeing the grandeur of Jotika's mansion vowed that he would not allow Jotika to live in such a magnificent mansion when he became king. On the king's departure from his house Jotika presented the king with a large priceless ruby. It was the custom of Jotika to give presents to all visitors who came to see him.

**When Ajatasattu ascended the throne, after killing his father,** he came with his soldiers to take the mansion of Jotika by force. But as all the gates were well

guarded by celestial demons, Ajatasattu and his soldiers had to retreat. Ajatasattu fled to the Veluvana monastery and he found Jotika listening to a discourse given by the Buddha. Seeing Jotika at the feet of the Buddha, Ajatasattu exclaimed, "After making your guards fight me, you are now pretending to be listening to a discourse!" Jotika realized that the king had gone to take his place by force and that he had been compelled to retreat.

In a past existence, Jotika had made a solemn wish that his property might not be taken away from him against his wish, and this wish had been fulfilled. So Jotika said to King Ajatasattu, "O king! My property cannot be taken away against my wish." Saying this, he stretched out his ten fingers and asked the king to take off the twenty rings he was wearing on his fingers. The king tried hard to take them off but did not succeed. Jotika then asked the king to spread out a piece of cloth and as Jotika put his fingers on to the cloth, all his rings easily slipped off. After he had given all his rings to **King Ajatasattu**, Jotika asked the Buddha that he might be permitted into the Order. Soon after entering the Order, **Jotika attained arahatship**.

One day, when other bhikkhus asked him whether he had any more craving left in him for his mansion his wealth and his wife, he answered that he did not have any more craving for them. The bhikkhus then went to the Buddha and said, "Venerable Sir! Thera Jotika claims to have attained arahatship; he is telling lies." To them the Buddha said, "Bhikkhus! Jotika speaks the truth; he does not have any more craving in him. He is now an arahat."

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

**Verse 416.** Him I call a brahmana, who, in this world, has given up craving, and leaving the home-life has become a bhikkhu; who has eradicated craving and has come to the end of existence.

**Lesson 3** – *Thera Jotika used his wealth to attain Arahantship; while King Ajatasattu, ignorant of the truths, committed evil deeds and as a result had to suffer in hell.*

People do evil deeds for their welfare. They kill, steal, rob or give false evidence at court for their well-being. Even those who kill their parents do so to achieve their own ends. For example, prince **Ajatasattu** killed his father to become king. Misguided by his teacher Devadatta, he had concluded that he would be able to enjoy life as a king for a longer period if he could make away with his father and take his place. For his great evil of patricide and the murder of a *sotapanna* at that, he was seized with remorse and anxiety that caused him physical suffering as well. **Later on he was killed by his son and reborn in hell where he is now suffering terribly for his misdeed.**

The Story of Mara Susi.

In the time of *Kakusanna* Buddha the *Mara* called *Susi* did his utmost to harm the Buddha and the Sangha. Failing to achieve his object, he possessed a man and stoned to death the chief disciple *Arahat* behind the Buddha. For this horrible crime he instantly landed in *Avici hell*, the lowest of the thirty-one worlds of living beings. As a *Mara* he was lord over others but in *Avici* he lay prostrate under the heels of the guardians of hell. He had hoped to rejoice over the fulfillment of his evil desire but now he had to suffer for his evil *kamma*. This is true of evil-doers all over the world.

People do these unwholesome kinds of *kammas* or *sankharas* for their welfare and as a result there arises *vinnana* or consciousness. With *vinnana* there also come into being *namarupa*, *salayatana phassa*, etc. of the new existence.

**Kamma (SANKHARA) causes Consciousness (VINNANA)**

Because of *avijja* there is *sankhara* which in turn causes *vinnana* as the result of the good or bad *kamma* in the previous life there arises the stream of consciousness beginning with rebirth consciousness in the new life. Evil deeds may, for example, leads to the four lower worlds. After that there arises the stream of *Vinnana* which functions ceaselessly. In other words, the kind of sub consciousness that we have when we are asleep. We die with this sub consciousness. So the rebirth-consciousness, the sub consciousness and death consciousness represent the mind which results from the *kamma* of previous life.

**How Kamma (SANKHARA) leads to new Consciousness (VINNANA)**

**It is very important but hard to understand how *kamma (sankhara)* gives rise to rebirth-consciousness.**

**Learned people who think on the basis of faith usually accept the teaching that *kamma sankhara* gives rise to rebirth consciousness.**

Some people ask whether there is a future life after death. But Buddhism does not categorically deny the future life. Hence, the Buddha's refusal to answer this question. Moreover, it is hard to produce evidence for ordinary people. **Psychic persons may be able to point out the hell or the deva-worlds but skeptics will dismiss such exhibition as black magic or chicanery.** So the Buddha did not answer the question directly but said that there is continuum of *nama-rupa* process in the wake of death without the extinction of defilements.

The problem of future life does not admit of intellectual approach. It is to be settled only through certain Buddhist practices. These practices enable the yogi to acquire psychic powers by virtue of which he can see the dead, the good men who have attained the deva-worlds as well as the evil persons who are suffering in the nether worlds. What he sees is as clear as what an observer who occupies a position directly opposite two houses sees--persons passing from one house to the other. Among the

many devas, animals, etc of the higher and lower realms, he (the yogi) can easily find the person whom he wants to see.

**It is possible for the yogis to attain *jhana* and psychic powers.** There is no teaching which rules out this possibility. Some practicing yogis have in fact had paranormal contact with the other world (*paraloka*). But paranormal gifts are hard to come by. Their emergence depends on intense concentration and so the easier way is to practice *vipassana*. The problem of life becomes fairly clear when the development of *paccayapariggaha* insight makes the yogi well aware of the nature of death and conception. It becomes clearer when he attains *sammasana*, *udayabbaya* and *bhanga* insights for then he sees clearly how the consciousness units arise and pass away ceaselessly one after another and how death means the passing away of the last unit to be followed by conception or the arising of the first consciousness-unit in a new existence. But this insight is still vulnerable and it is only when the yogi attains at least the *sotapatti* stage that he becomes wholly free all doubts about future life. The trouble is that people wish to inquire about it instead of practicing *vipassana*. Some seek the verdict of Western scientists and philosophers while others accept the teaching of those who are reputed to be Arahats with psychic powers. But the best thing is to seek the answer through *vipassana* practice instead of relying on other people.

The nature of rebirth process: - When a person is dying, his *kamma* , the signs and visions related to it and **visions of the future life appear**. After his death there arises the rebirth consciousness conditioned by one of these visions at the last moment of his existence. So rebirth is **conditioned by the visions on death-bed**, it is rooted in *avijja*, *sankhara*, etc., that form the links in the chain of causation leading to the vision of the dying person.

## Death Bed Visions

A fisherman on his death-bed may talk as if he were catching fish or a man who has given much alms may think in his last hours that he is doing *dana*.

### Verse 16

#### The Story of Dhammika Upasaka

While residing at the Jetavana monastery in Savatthi, the Buddha uttered Verse (16) of this book, with reference to Dhammika, a lay disciple.

Once there lived in Savatthi, a lay disciple by the name of Dhammika, who was virtuous and very fond of giving in charity. He generously offered food and other requisites to the bhikkhus regularly and also on special occasions. He was, in fact, the leader of five hundred virtuous lay disciples of the Buddha who lived in Savatthi. Dhammika had seven sons and seven daughters and all of them, like their father, was virtuous and devoted to charity. When Dhammika was very ill and was on his

death-bed he made a request to the Samgha to come to him and recite the sacred texts by his bedside. While the bhikkhus were reciting the Maha satipatthana Sutta, six decorated chariots from six celestial worlds arrived to invite him to their respective worlds. Dhammika told them to wait for a while for fear of interrupting the recitation of the Sutta. The bhikkhus, thinking that they were being asked to stop, stopped and left the place.

A little while later, Dhammika told his children about the six decorated chariots waiting for him. Then and there he decided to choose the chariot from the Tusita world and asked one of his children to throw a garland on to it. Then he passed away and was reborn in the Tusita world. Thus, the virtuous man rejoices in this world as well as in the next.

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

**Verse 16:** Here he rejoices, hereafter he rejoices; one who performed meritorious deeds rejoices in both existences. He rejoices and greatly rejoices when he sees the purity of his own deeds.

**Lesson 4** - Consciousness is always focussed on objects. We often recall what we have done and think of the deva-world or the human society. **If a man who has done good deeds dies with these thoughts, he will be reborn as a deva or a human being.** The objects of these thoughts on death-bed are visions of objects associated with kamma.

In the **Balapandita** and other suttas the Buddha speaks of the death-bed memories of good or bad deeds and likens them to the shadows of a mountain dominating the Plains in the evening. It is impossible to remove them..

**Lesson 5** - So when you do a good deed you should do it with zeal and with Nibbana as your objective. If you set your heart on Nibbana, the good deed will lead you to it and the zeal with which you do it will ensure rebirth with good predispositions.

The practice of *dana* and *sila* must be motivated by the desire for Nibbana, it will ensure the noblest rebirth and lead to the supreme goal. It was due to *dana* and *sila* that Sariputta and other disciples of the Buddha finally attained Nibbana.

**The bodhisatta, too, attained supreme enlightenment in the same way by praying that his good deeds contribute to the attainment of omniscience (*sabbannutanana*).**

## Summary :

The doctrine of Paticcasamuppada the first two factors i.e.,

- ? *avijja* and *sankhara* are described as the causes in the **past life**,
- ? *vinnana*, *nama-rupa*, *phassa* and *vedana* as the consequences in the **present life**; *upadana* and *bhava* as the causes in the present life and
- ? *jati* and *jaramarana* (old age and death) as the consequences that will occur in the **future life**.

Continue on Part II

## Reference –

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