

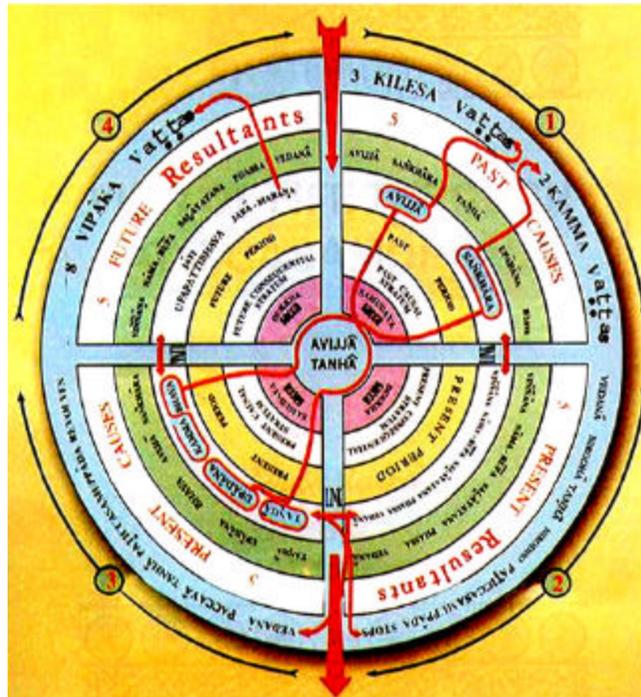
# PATICCASAMUPPADA

## - THE CYCLE OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION



Ven. U Candavarabhivamsa

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**PATICCASAMUPPADA –  
THE CYCLE OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION**

**“ NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMASAMBUDDHASSA “**

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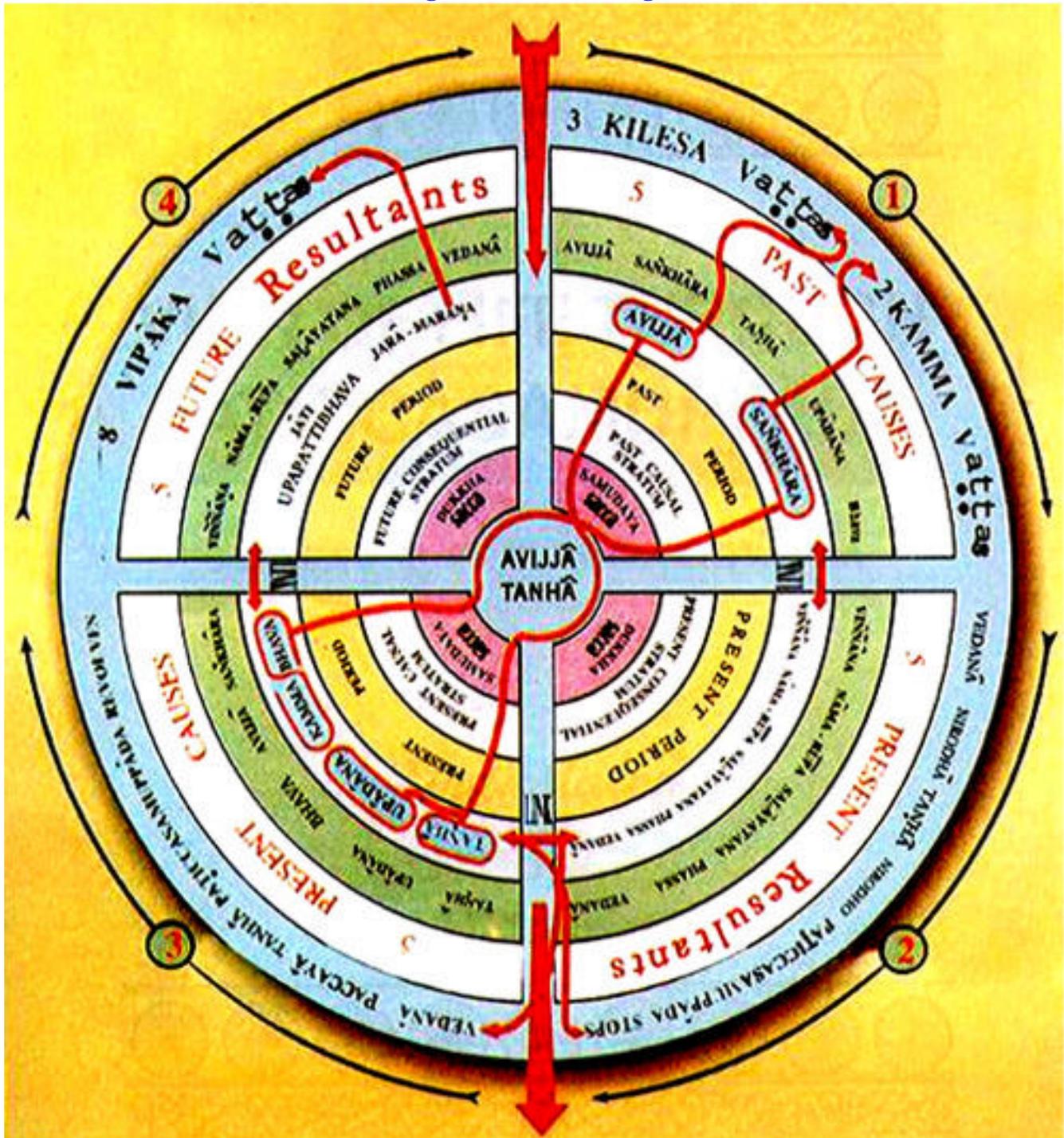
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# PATICCASAMUPPADA –

## THE CYCLE OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

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## Part - 1

The Paticcasamuppada, or the Cycle of Dependent Origination has 12 parts,

13. Avijja - ignorance or delusion
14. Sankhara - kamma-formations
15. Vinnana - consciousness
16. Nama-rupa - mind and matter
17. Salayatana - six sense bases
18. Phassa - contact or impression
19. Vedana - Feeling
20. Tanha - craving
21. Upadana - clinging
22. Bhava - becoming
23. Jati - rebirth
24. Jara-marana - old age and death

The 12 parts form a cycle, in which each part is conditioned by the preceding part, and in turn, conditions the part that follows.

1. *Avijja paccaya Sankhara:* - Ignorance are conditioned the Sankharas, that is, the rebirth producing kamma-formations.
2. *Sankhara paccaya vinnana:* kamma formations is conditioned Consciousness.
3. *Vinnana paccaya nama-rupam:* Consciousness is conditioned Mind and Matter.
4. *Nama-rupa paccaya salayatana:* mind and matter are conditioned the 6 Sense Bases.
5. *Salayatana paccaya phasso:* 6 Sense Bases is conditioned (sensorial) Contact or Impression.
6. *Phassa paccaya vedana:* Contact or Impression is conditioned feeling.
7. *Vedana paccaya tanha:* Feeling is conditioned Craving.
8. *Tanha paccaya upadana:* Craving is conditioned Clinging.
9. *Upadana paccaya bhavo:* Clinging is conditioned becoming, the process of kamma-formations (kammabhava and Upapattibhava).

10. *Bhava paccaya jati* : **Becoming**, the process of kamma formation (kammabhava) is conditioned **Rebirth**.

11. *Jati paccaya jara-maranam-soka-parideva dukkha-domanassa-upayasa sambhavanti*: **Rebirth** are conditioned **Old Age and Death - , Sorrow, Lamentation, Suffering, Grief and Despair**.

Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakhandhassa sumudayo hoti: thus arises this whole mass of suffering.

# Part Two

## The Four Groups

The cycle of Dependent Origination can, from another view point, be considered as consisting of four groups, being past causes, present resultants, present causes, and future resultants. The four groups are:

### Group 1. Past life

1. Avijja (Ignorance)
2. Sankhara (Kamma-formations)
3. Vinnana (Consciousness)

### Group 2. Present life

1. Nama-rupa (Mind and Matter)
2. Salayatana (Six Bases)
3. Phassa (Impression)
4. Vedana (Feeling)

### Group 3. Present life

1. Tanha (craving)
2. Upadana (Clinging)
3. Bhava (kammabhava)
4. (kamma formations)

### Group 4. Future life

1. Jati (Rebirth)
2. Jara-marana (old age-death)
3. Rebirth being the passive process of becoming or upapatti Bhava.

Group One relates to a past life. Group Two and Three relate to this present life. Group Four relates to a future life in Samsara, the Wheel of life and death. The Doctrine of Paticcasamuppada shows the condition and dependent nature of the uninterrupted flux of all the physical and mental phenomena that make up individual existences. An understanding of the Doctrine is essential if we are to really understand the Buddha's teaching.

We will look at each Group of the Paticcasamuppada and then we will review "Life" and "Existence" as it is considered in the Doctrine of Paticcasamuppada and in the Abhidhamma

### Group One (Quadrant 1)

Group one of the Paticcasamuppada is made up of **Avijja** and **Sankhara**. **Avijja is ignorance** of what really constitutes individual existence. It is delusion regarding Truth and Reality of existence, that in all the bodily and mental phenomena of existence, there is nothing that can ultimately be regarded as a satisfying, self-reliant, independent, abiding "self" or "ego". **Ignorance is not to understand suffering, its origin, its extinction, and the path leading to its extinction.** Because of ignorance and delusion regarding existence, we are constantly engaged in delusions based on **ignorance, which are wholesome or unwholesome deeds, of body, speech and mind. Kamma-formations are deeds born of our volitions, or our wishes and desires.**

Most people are thus engaged in all kinds of activities without an understanding of what really constitutes individual existence; they are proceeding like the blind. They are unable to think correctly, they are unable to act correctly and they are unable to speak correctly. They will never get to where they wish to go. It is only the Ariya, or Noble Disciples, of the Buddha who have been able to penetrate into the truth of existence, into the understanding of the related nature of mind and matter, of the cause and effect of all mind and matter, and the impersonality (lack of abiding self) of all such phenomena. **In the Buddha's dispensation, there are four stages of purity or sainthood, namely the stages of Sotapanna, Sakadagami, Anagami and Arahanta or fully purified saint, who is no longer bound by any fetters or defilements.**

What then is "life" or "Existence"?

Looking at Group One of the Paticcasamuppada, we can say that life or existence, for most people, is **"delusion and kamma-formations or delusion and activities which is with delusion"**. Our delusions keep us always active, always making new kamma.

### Group Two (Quadrant 2)

Group Two comprises 5 components, namely **vinnana, nama-rupa, salayatana, phassa, and vedana**, ((Pancakkhandha), or (The Five Aggregates) in English, consciousness, mind and matter, six bases, impression, and feeling. We will look at each component for in-depth understanding of the continuous flux of life or existence.

Consciousness appears for the first time at conception in the mother's womb. Consciousness is to be aware of something. It is Consciousness which brings into effect the interplay of mind and matter, which is existence. Mind and matter in turn are linked to the six bases. The six bases are namely, the **eye**-base for sense of sight, the **ear**-base for sense of hearing, the **nose**-base for sense of smell, the **tongue**-base for

the sense of taste, and the **body**-base for sense of touch, and finally, the sixth base is the **mind**-base, which is the sense of knowing or being aware of sensual impression.

When a visual object comes into contact with the eye base, there is consciousness or being aware of this visual object. This however is a very brief look at the process of becoming conscious of a visual object. The Abhidhamma teaches that 14 subtle sub functions come into play in the process of becoming conscious of an object (vinnana kicca). It is the same for other bases. **Because of the six bases, there is a continuous stream of consciousness**; consciousness of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily feelings, and thoughts and fantasies.

What then is "Life" or "Existence"

Because of the Six Bases, we spend our time seeing and enjoying visual form, hearing and enjoying sounds, smelling and enjoying scents, tasting and enjoying flavors, touching and enjoying bodily feelings, thinking and fantasizing and enjoying thoughts, imaginings, day-dreams. From the time we wake up, until we fall asleep again at night, because of the six bases, we spend our time looking, listening, smelling, tasting, feeling, or lost in thoughts and fantasies. There is no rest at all from these activities. We are led by the six bases into spending all our time and all our energies, whether these activities are wholesome or unwholesome, whether they are of use or no use at all. From the day of our birth until the day we are put into our coffins, the six bases take up all our time, How else do we spend our time, if not with our six bases?

"Life" or "existence", from two points of view, is therefore nothing but the six bases leading us into all kinds of physical, verbal and mental activities.

### **Group Three (Quadrant 3)**

Group Three of the Paticcasamuppada consists of **tanha, upadana, and kamma-bhava**, in English. craving, clinging, and volitional acts. Bhava here refers to kamma-bhava, all the volitional activities that cause becoming into existence. (upapatti-bhava is the resultant rebirth or the coming into existence or Jati of Group Four.)

**Tanha**, Craving, clearly, is to desire, to want, and to long for some things. But not to want some things, or to dislike some things, is also a form of craving. If we dislike the heat, it may be because we like cold. If we dislike the color green, it may be because we like the color red.

**Upadana**, Clinging is strong attachment to something. It is compulsive or obsessive craving. We refuse to let go. Even if we do not actually possess something, we are mentally obsessed by it. We think of it constantly. **We will do anything to get it. Do we therefore not create more kamma formations?** Thus, upadana paccaya bhavo; "through clinging is conditioned the process of volitional acts".

We have look at the Group Three constituents. What do they tell us about "Life" or "Existence"?

Group Three tells us that Life is nothing but likes and dislikes. We meet with something we like and we are all smiles. We meet with something we dislike and we all frown. So life is nothing but likes and dislikes, smiles and frowns. We meet with something we like, and we become strongly attached to it. We cling to it mentally, and we react. We react if we like something, and we react if we dislike something. This is kammabhava.

If we wish to judge a person's character, we need only look at his behavior, and how he reacts physically and verbally to external stimuli. It is a person's face that betrays his clinging (upadana) to his likes and dislikes, and to his views and opinions.

To summarize, what does Group three tell us about life? Group Three constituents, **tanha**, **upadana** and **kamma bhava**, tell us that "life" is nothing but our likes and dislikes, and resulting smiles or frowns. In other words, life is nothing but our reacting to external stimuli. We like some thing and we react in a certain way. We dislike something and we react in another way.

## Group Four

Group Four is concerned with future resultant period. Group Four constituents are **Jati**, and **jara-marana**; in English, **rebirth**, and **old age-death**. What then is "life" according to Group Four? Group Four tells us that "life" **is to be born, and then to die**. This, very briefly and very truly, is what life is. "Life" starts with birth, and it ends with death.

Group Four of the Paticcasamuppada tells us that "Life" has three parts: to be born, to live, and then to die, or Jati, jara, marana.

When we look at the Paticcasamuppada, **we see two constituents that belong to the future, namely, Jati and jara-marana**. If we, in our present life, are unable to rid ourselves of the causes, tanha, upadana, kamma bhava, then unfailingly, we will reap these two results, which are Jati and jara-marana.

We can say for certain that we will be born, and we will die. Birth and death. There is no need to elaborate, no need to say more than this. It is the biography of all men.

In this world, man is faced with all kinds of troubles, problems, pain and misery. It is no wonder that people wish to be reborn as celestial beings in the deva world or the brahmas world. But even in the deva and Brahma worlds, where some constituents such as our gross mind-matter component may not be present as in the human world, all remain subject to Jati and jara-marana, birth and death. There is no need to elaborate, no need to say more than this. **It is the biography of humans, devas and**

**Brahmas.** According to the Abhidhamma, life or existence is nothing more than **an unending sequence of discrete phenomena, which arise and then pass away.** Phenomena come into being or arise (uppada), they exist for an infinitesimally short moment (thiti) and then they pass away and disappear (bhanga). People in an intensive retreat for insight meditation should strive to realize this truth.

# Part Three

## Eight Points of View

In studying how and why an individual life can come into existence, there are different ways of looking at the cause-and-effect links in the Paticcasamuppada?

**View One :** Two original causes

Two original causes or two original evils are ignorance (**avijja**) and Craving (**tanha**)- why an individual life comes into being. Rid your self of avijja and tanha and you can bring the cycle of existence to a stop.

**View Two:** Two truths

Life having started, what is the truth of existence - there are just two truths regarding existence 1) **Dukkha-sacca, the truth of dukkha**, that existence is suffering and misery, and 2) **Samudaya-sacca, the truth of the origin of suffering**. And what is the truth of origin of suffering? The truth of the origin of suffering is that it is craving - tanha - which is the cause of all sufferings. There is nothing else apart from these two truths in our life.

**View Three:** Four main groups

Existence can be viewed as simply consisting of Four Groups, namely, **past causes, present results, present causes, future results**. Past causes give rise to present results. Dependent on present results, present causes arise, and because of present causes, there arises future result.

**View Four:** Twelve components

Once life or existence has come into being, there comes into being at the same time, the twelve components of the Paticcasamuppada, each dependent on the previous, and giving rise to the following. Each is both cause and effect, and it is impossible to say which component is the dominant or driving force. But together, they perpetuate an unending cycle of repeated life, suffering, and rebirth.

**View Five:** Three main connectors or links

Existence can also be viewed as formed by three main connectors.

1. Between **sankhara** and **vinnana**, because sankhara (kamma-formations) gives rise to consciousness in a new birth.

2. Between **vedana** and **tanha**, because it is vedana that causes tanha.

3. Between kamma-**bhava** and **Jati**, because it is our kamma (deeds) that bring about rebirth.

Time-wise we can look upon the links as being:

1. between past causes and present results
2. between present effects and present causes
3. between present causes and future effects.

**View Six:** Three circles

We may look at the Paticcasamuppada as consisting of:

1. Quadrant 1 of defilements (**kilesa vatta**),
2. Sector of volitional activities (**Kamma vatta**), and
3. sector of resultants (**vipaka vatta**).

Kilesa vatta consists of **avijja**, **tanha**, and **upadana**.

Kamma vatta consists of **sankhara** and **kamma-bhava**.

**Vipaka vatta** consists of **vinnana**, **nama-rupa**, **salayatana**, **phassa**, **vedana**, **jati**, **upapatti-bhava**, **jara-marana**.

The causal kilesavatta and kammavatta give rise to resultant vipaka vattas. Using the vipaka components, we create more causal kilesavatta and kammavatta. Like waves breaking onto the beach just as one wave breaks onto the beach, countless others are forming out at sea, ready to follow onto the beach, one after another in an endless and unending succession. So this too is what life or existence is all about.

**View Seven:** Three time periods

Existence can be considered as comprising **past**, **present** and **future** time periods. Past causes give rise to present effects. We reap what we sow. But we are unable to meet these effects with poise and equanimity. We cannot let them just remain what they are, which is, the effects or results of past causes. Rather, we react to them. We allow these effects to anger us, or to seduce us, and we react verbally or bodily, or we let our minds become lost in imaginings and fantasies, thereby creating more causes. We allow present effects to become present causes. **The body that we now have become a link between past cause and future effects.**

## **View Eight: Twenty components**

Existence can also be viewed as consisting of twenty components. This is an expansion of the twelve as originally taught by the Buddha.

Thus, **five past causes** are **avijja, sankhara, tanha, upadana, and kamma bhava**. They give rise to five present effects, namely, **vinnana, nama-rupa, salayatana, phassa and vedana**. We use these five effects to create five present causes, **tanha, upadana, kammabhava, avijja and sankhara**. As a result, we reap in the future five effects, which are **vinnana, nama rupa, salayatana, phassa and vedana**.

*To summarize* our understanding of the Paticcasamuppada, existence can be viewed as being composed of:

1. **Two original causes, avijja and tanha.**
2. **Two truths, dukkha (suffering)sacca and samudaya (origin of suffering) sacca.**
3. **Four main groups, past causes, present results, present causes and future results.**
4. **Twelve components, as originally enumerated by the Buddha.**
5. **Three main connectors or links, sankhara-vinnana, vedana-tanha, kamma bhava-Jati.**
6. **Three circles (vattas) of kilesas, kammass, and vipakas.**
7. **Three time periods, past, present and future.**
8. **Twenty components in four groups of five.**

## Part Four

### The view of life through Paticcasamuppada

How individual lives vary greatly

We have said that all biographies can be summarized as:

They were born.

They lived.

They died.

Individual lives of course vary greatly in detail. Some are born into wealthy families. Some are born poor. But wealth is not all. Rich people can have lives filled with difficulties, hardships, great unhappiness, while materially poor people can have lives that are filled with happiness. Some are born with excellent health. Some are sickly. Some are long-lived, some are short-lived. Some are born with happy dispositions, or with inborn courage; others are easily agitated, frightened or worried. Some are born good-looking, some are ill-formed. Some are intelligent, other are less so. The list of differences between people is endless.

And each of us leads lives, no two can be identical. Shakespeare wrote, "All the world's a stage." But who is the stage-master who assigns to each of us our roles? **This stage-master is none other than our kamma**, for the Buddha has said, "*Beings are heirs to their kamma.*" To help us understand individual existences better, let us review Paticcasamuppada in reverse order. The Abhidhamma examines the experience of death in detail, but here, we will consider just two kinds of death, a good death, and a bad death. **A good death is one in which a dying person recalls or thinks about wholesome deeds.** If a person of bad character remembers or performs a good deed just before dying, he may receive a good rebirth.

Alternatively, a good person may remember or do a bad deed before dying and thereby get a bad rebirth. Generally speaking, a person's death will be a reflection of how he has lived. To have lived well is generally to die well, and to have lived badly is generally to die badly. **If a person desires a good death, he should live a good moral life, with goodwill and compassion towards all.** If a person has lived in an agitated way, if greed, anger, delusion, self-deceit, envy, pride and self-interest have been the dominant and controlling factors in his life, then he is unlikely to have a gentle and peaceful death. Paticcasamuppada teaches us "*Jatipaccaya Jaramaranam*" The stage of becoming creates different deaths. It is because of the great variety and complexity

of past deeds, or kamma, that there are a great variety and complexity of lives. Who is responsible for our well being in life? Who is to be blamed for our troubles? Who is to be thanked for our comforts. The truth is that our deeds are responsible for our present conditions in life. This is a basic tenet of the Buddha's teachings. A good Buddhist realizes that no one else is responsible for the conditions of his present life. He does not blame any one else for his troubles. **They are self-made, the fruits of his past deeds.**

In general, past good kamma will give rise to good things in the present, and conversely, past bad kamma will give rise to bad things. If we have committed both good and bad things in the past, then we can expect our life to have ups and downs, like the flight of a wood pecker which is said to be high one moment, and low the next. But whatever ups and downs you may encounter, don't point the finger of blame at other people. Instead, review your past actions. Review your past states of mind to determine whether it is mostly goodwill or anger that has governed your deeds. This proposition teaches that wholesome and unwholesome kamma-formations are the cause of future rebirth and destiny. **Also, "bhavapaccaya Jati"- through the process of volitional acts is conditioned rebirth.** This proposition teaches that through the whole some and unwholesome kamma process (kamma-bhava) is conditioned the rebirth-process (upapatti-bhava).

By kamma is meant not only actions in a past life, but past actions in this present life, and even actions in lives before the previous life. A person will do a great many deeds in a lifetime. Good or wholesome deeds, motivated by goodwill, compassion, faith, wisdom or knowledge, duty; and bad or unwholesome deeds motivated by desire, greed, anger, fear, envy, pride, selfish interest, and so on. There will be deeds done with great enthusiasm, or deeds done half-heartedly, or without interest. There will be deeds done with mindfulness, and deeds done in a careless or automatic way. People may appear to be carrying out similar actions, such as praying at the pagoda, or giving alms or donations, or cooking a meal, or speaking to friends, but what cannot be seen or guessed at will be their inner thoughts. Their outward actions may look the same, but their states of mind will vary greatly. And in all these acts, it is volition or "**cetana**" which is of great importance - "**cetana**", which is unseen, unknown to others, and varying greatly from one person to another.

In any one situation, there is a great variety and complexity of acts being carried out by many people, each with different states of mind. Even within just one person, state of mind is extremely complex varying constantly, not just from hour to hour, but even from one moment to another. Even in the act of worship, in the calm of the early morning, many people are unable to maintain concentration and mindfulness but vagrant thoughts must flit constantly across their minds. Having come into a new existence, as we have stated previously, **past kamma will bear fruit when the time and conditions are appropriate. There is no escaping kamma, although the interplay of kamma is so complex that weak kamma may be replaced or cancelled by stronger**

**opposing kamma, or strengthened by similar kamma.** Thus, a person may be enjoying a period of great comfort or success in life due to past wholesome kamma being in effect, when suddenly, counter-active or opposing kamma may come into play, bringing illness, or material loss. On the other hand, a person leading a rather miserly existence due to past unwholesome kamma may unexpectedly find life taking a turn for the better as past wholesome kamma come into effect.

## King Kusa and Princess Pabhavati

To illustrate the working of kamma, we here digress a little with the story of **King Kusa**, the Bodhisatta, and Princess **Pabhavati (Papawati)**, who was in a later life to be Princess Yasodhara.

In a previous lifetime, the Bodhisatta was the younger of two brothers, and lived with his elder brother. One day, he returned home late to find a cake meant for him had just been put into the bowl of a Pacceka-Buddha (solitary Buddha) by his sister-in-law. He therefore spoke angrily to her, and snatched back his cake from the monk's bowl. Thereupon, his sister-in-law filled the monk's bowl with fresh butter, and made this wish: "**As a result of this gift, may I be reborn beautiful, and not ever again have to live in the same household as this rude person (her brother in-law)**". Not to be outdone, the younger brother put back the cake in the monk's bowl and wished: "**And however far away she may be reborn, may I have with the power to make her my bride.**" The sister-in-law was reborn as Princess Pabhavati, the eldest and most beautiful daughter of a king. The younger brother was reborn as King Kusa. For first angrily snatching back the cake from the monk's bowl, he was born ugly, but as a result of giving back his cake, his wishes bore fruit, for he was exceedingly wise. Princess Pabhavati was betrothed to King Kusa by her parents, but upon discovering later how ugly he was, she ran away back to her parents' palace. King Kusa followed, and for many months undertook all kinds of menial work to be near Princess Pabhavati, unrecognized by all except Princess Pabhavati. She however spurned his love, saying: "As well to catch the wind within a net, as woo unwilling maid."

Eventually, her father angered at her refusal to accept King Kusa, and her father's palace surrounded by enemies, she had no choice but to turn to King Kusa for help. King Kusa thereupon overcame all their enemies, and won the Princess' heart through his magnanimity, courage and skills.

## Types of Clinging

We might ask ourselves why kamma is so extraordinarily complex, and why it has such a wide range. Why do people engage in wholesome or unwholesome activities? The answer is given in the Paticcasamuppada: upadana paccaya bhavo, or "through Clinging is conditioned the process of kamma (volitional activities)." It is because our

individual clinging is so extraordinarily complex and wide-ranging, that our kamma-bhava or existence-forming volitional activities are so complex and wide-ranging.

Individuals vary greatly. Some are soft-spoken, some are coarse and abrupt, some are kind and gentle, some are callous and cruel. Some are selfish, others are altruistic or civic-minded. All these differing characteristics have been developed and nurtured through many lives. Clinging is a strengthened form of desire. It is desire become obsessive. Buddhist scriptures recognize four main types:

Types of Clinging:

1. kamupadana: clinging to sensuous pleasures
2. ditthupadana: clinging to views and opinions
3. silabbatupadana: clinging to rules, rituals, habits, and
4. attavadupadana: clinging to self or ego.

Kamupadana, clinging to sensuous pleasures, is easy enough to understand, and it is the cause of a great many of our deeds. We speak, we do, we imagine and fantasize because of our sensual clinging, or our intense liking for someone, something, or some activity. The basis for our clinging is of course our nama-rupa (mind and matter), salayatana (six sense bases) as a result of which we get phassa (impressions) and Vedana (feeling).

There are as many types of clinging as there are individuals. Some of us cannot do without watching certain television programs, some of us are compulsive smokers, or betel-nut chewers. **Some cannot stop drinking, even though it is leading them to social and financial ruin.** Others spend huge amounts of money buying beautiful objects to satisfy their clinging to beauty in form. Of course, such craving and clinging can never be satisfied.

Ditthupadana is clinging to erroneous views and opinions such as "**alms and offerings are useless, ...there is no fruit and result for good and bad deeds,....**".

Silabbatupadana is clinging to mere rules and rituals in the firm belief that one may thereby reach purification. There were, and there still exist, many strange and interesting rules and rituals. In the time of the Buddha, there were many weird ascetics. Some lived like dogs, ate like dogs, slept like dogs curled up on the ground, and even urinated like dogs with one leg raised. Some lived like cows, ate grass, and slept like cows with hands and legs tucked underneath their bodies.

Nigantha Nataputta and Makkhali Gosala were leaders of sects who believed themselves purified of all defilements. **They went around naked.** Even to this day,

followers of **Nigantha Nataputta, known as Jains**, are to be found in India, wandering the streets naked. People may wonder how they could be so shameless. Their answer is that the human body is neither desirable nor attractive. Just as there was no need for adornment, there was no need for concealment. The human body should neither attract nor repel. There was surely no need for clothes! What can others give in reply.

Attavadupadana is **clinging to self or ego** as an enduring, independent entity. Attavadupadana results in persons with inflated egos, "know-alls" who know everything, can do everything, and want to be involved in everything, and who are inordinately self-important.

We all have a wide range of things to which we cling, to greater or lesser extents, giving rise to a great variety of personality types or characteristics. Consequently, we have differing outlooks on life, differing purposes or objectives, differing reactions to people and events that we encounter. Since we think, speak and act in differing ways, **we are all constantly creating vastly differing types of kamma. The fruits of differing kamma are differing conditions of rebirth and differing lives.** Is it any wonder that among the billions of individuals on this planet earth, no two lives can be identical; all lives are different when looked at closely.

**Desire or craving conditions clinging.**

Why are people's characters so different that they are constantly engaged in differing wholesome and unwholesome deeds, from dawn till dusk, and indeed from the cradle to the coffin? Again, the Paticcasamuppada gives us the answer; *tanha paccaya upadana*, through craving is conditioned clinging."

Craving or desire, our strong likes and dislikes, when further strengthened, mould our character. Character traits, developed, strengthened, and reinforced through many lives in samsara become inborn. Buddhist scriptures, for example, the Visuddhimagga, recognizes several inborn characteristics (*carita*) such as the **greedy-natured** (*ragacarita*), **the hateful-natured** (*dosa-carita*), **the dull-natured** (*moha-carita*), **the faithful-natured** (*saddh-carita*), **the intelligent-natured** (*buddhi-carita*).

We can all recognize many types among our friends and acquaintances. Some are attracted to form, and happily spend hours admiring works of art; some are attracted to opinions and ideas, and are happy just arguing and discussing; some are born critics, and must always be criticizing one thing or another. When they themselves are criticized however, they may rear up angrily like disturbed cobras. Some are selfish and self-centered. They must always have centre stage. Some like classical music while others like modern music, some give priority to clothes and keeping up appearances, others care less about clothes, and like to eat well.

**Why there are so many lives.**

Why are there so many different lives? The Paticcasamuppada gives the answer. *Tanha paccaya upadanam. Upadana paccaya bhavo. Bhava paccaya jati.* Craving or desire conditions clinging, clinging conditions volitional acts, volitional acts condition rebirth. The Paticcasamuppada, nature's law of cause and effect, tells us that **from our cravings or desires spring all our different clinging, characters and all our lives.** Some parents wish ardently for their children to succeed in life. They want their children to be virtuous, hard-working, prosperous and happy. However, children, as all of us are, **are heirs to our deeds, and while some grow up successful, others must reap bitter fruits no matter how hard they try.** There is therefore absolutely no use in becoming angry with other people or with ourselves. Just understand and accept that we all lead different lives because of our different desires, clinging, and resulting characters. To understand and accept in this way will bring your problems into the proper perspective and give you greater peace of mind.

Feeling conditions craving.

Let us take this matter a little further and consider why craving should differ from person to person. Where can we look for the answer? Yes, the Paticcasamuppada.

*"Vedana paccaya tanha"* - through feeling is conditioned craving. It is because the feelings that arise are not the same that craving is not the same. Some people like to be spoken to in a courteous soft manner, others find this irritating and prefer speech that is direct, even abrupt. Some enjoy flattery, others like the blunt truth, although, as the following story illustrates, it normally doesn't pay to be too truthful.

Once, a traveler came upon a poor hut just outside a village, and tired and thirsty, he entered to ask for a little water. He found inside an old woman, apparently living alone. Curious, he asked the old woman, "Are you living alone, and why outside the village? Have you no children?" The old woman replied, "Young man, I am a person who always speaks the truth, and for this reason, I have been banished by the village elders to this poor hut outside the village."

The traveler took the water the old woman offered, and thought to himself, "A truthful person ought to be praised and honored, not banished like this. What was the world coming to?" And taking his leave of the old woman, he left the hut and continued on his way. He had left his shoulder bag in the hut, however, and the old woman, not knowing his name, called after him, "Hey! Black, crossed-eyed crippled, you've left your bag behind!"

The traveler, who was in truth dark-skinned, cross-eyed and walked with a limp, came back to the hut and took his bag, but could not help retorting, "Hey, old woman, you're lucky indeed! The villagers should have done more than just banished you from the village!"

So please be careful and think before replying if someone comes to you and says, "Please tell me honestly." It is just a turn of phrase. Most people don't want you to be too honest.

Because feelings that arise from external stimuli are not the same from person to person, do not be surprised that likes and dislikes should differ. Don't become angry because others like what you dislike or don't like what you like. Some of us like to read about the Buddha's teachings. They derive feelings of inspiration, comfort, encouragement and satisfaction from deepening their learning. Others can derive no such feelings. Without such feelings, there can be no question of liking such activity.

In the time of the Buddha, the Buddha never failed to inspire and delight his disciples. For someone like Devadatta, however, the sight of the Buddha was not welcome. Devadatta wanted to create a schism in the sangha. For Devadatta, the Buddha and his teachings no longer evoked feelings of devotion and worship. Instead, there arose feelings of anger and frustration.

We can also consider the eating habits of vultures. These are big birds which feed on the rotten meat of dead dogs. What is utterly repulsive to us is utterly tasty to them. Pickled fish sauce, ngapi, is another example more familiar to us. Many people say it smells of rotted fish, but many people find it delicious. Perhaps it would be rude to suggest that some people like pickled fish sauce just as vultures like rotted dog meat. Because feelings are different, our likes and dislikes are different. We cling to different things. We have different outlooks, and we have different purposes. We think, we speak and we act in different ways. Consequently, our kamma being different, the fruits we reap are different.

Impression conditions feeling.

Why are feelings different from person to person? The Paticcasamuppada tells us: "*salayatana paccaya phasso, phassa paccaya vedana*"- through the six bases is conditioned impression, through impression is conditioned feeling. The Buddha's teaching is comprehensive and specific. For the six bases, there must be also consciousness, mind and matter, thus we speak of consciousness, mind and matter six bases, impression and feeling as a group.

Dependent on the six bases are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking; six kinds of consciousness conditioning six kinds of impression. Quite clearly, people with different backgrounds and different characters are going to react differently to impressions received through the six bases.

For example, during the time of Buddha, different feelings arose on seeing the Buddha. Ananda was the Buddha's chief attendant. A cousin of the Buddha, he was utterly devoted to the Buddha. At the sight of the Buddha, he felt the greatest respect, and although of the same age, he attended upon the Buddha as a young novice might

attend an aged and venerated Sayadaw. Sariputta was a very senior monk who was second only to the Buddha in his wisdom and ability to explain the Buddha's doctrine. Consequently, he felt heavily his responsibility as spokesman for the Buddha. Kassapa the Great was another senior monk, and this venerable elder was always reminded that one day, the heavy responsibility for the Doctrine's purity and perpetuation would fall on his shoulders. Devadatta was another monk who was also, like Ananda, the Buddha's cousin. He believed that the Buddha ignored him while giving favor to other monks, and as a result, the sight of the Buddha aroused feelings of anger, hatred, frustration and envy.

Different feelings arose because the backgrounds and characters underlying were different. Cultural background too has an important influence on impressions and feeling, because people become accustomed to sights, sounds and ways of thinking. Modes of dress, behavior and thinking that are acceptable, perhaps even commendable, to western people might therefore be unacceptable, or grossly improper, or incomprehensible to any one from Myanmar. This is merely an example of the Paticcasamuppada at work - different impressions condition different feelings, such feelings condition different cravings, such cravings condition different clinging, such clinging condition different deeds, and these deeds condition different lives. The Paticcasamuppada truly has an answer for everything.

With respect to impressions and feelings, an Indian woman looks good in a *sari*, a Chinese woman looks good in *trousers*, a Myanmar woman looks good in a *htamein* (sarong), and a westerner looks good in a *skirt*.

Why we are here.

Why are we where we are? The answer is that our past delusion and deeds (**avijja** and **sankhara**) have put us where we are. If our past delusion and deeds had sent us to England, the fruit of our deeds would be English sights and sounds, bread and butter, and probably the Ten Commandments. If our delusion and deeds had sent us to India, to perhaps a family of Jain devotees, then we might now be worshipping naked Jain ascetics. As it is, our past delusion and deeds have sent us to Myanmar (Burma), and we have now the great opportunity to learn and practice the Buddha's teachings. **It is these teachings that will show us how to break out of our ignorance, how to break free of our craving and clinging, and how to win release from the unending suffering of Samsara.**

Prepare to die well.

As Buddhists, we believe in an existence after death. However, we do not believe in an all-mighty savior who will save us. Rather, **it is our own efforts, our own good deeds that will give us a good rebirth. At the time of death, the last consciousness (the "death citta") of this present existence is followed by the first consciousness (the**

"rebirth linking citta") in the next existence. The rebirth-linking citta is a resultant citta produced by the past kamma responsible for the *kammanimitta* or *gati-nimitta* (portends or signs of destiny) which present themselves during the final and crucial moments of consciousness before death. A good rebirth is crucial for us as we undergo one rebirth after another, because our purpose must be to purify ourselves by following the Buddha's teachings of dana (charity), sila (virtuous living) and bhavana (mental development), until finally we win release from samsara.

A good death is therefore crucial. A death with a smile on our face. One of our most important purposes in this life must be to prepare for a good death. It is hoped that by learning about the Paticcasamuppada and thinking about it carefully and deeply, we can come to grasp the truth of the condition of all existence. We should avail ourselves of the opportunity to practice insight meditation (vipassana), so that we can realize for ourselves the truth of the Paticcasamuppada.

We are where we are today because of past causes, and whatever we do now, there will be wholesome or unwholesome consequences. Daily we are bombarded with impressions through the six bases. **Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch and thoughts.** May we be ever mindful of how we react to these impressions. May we be able to react to them mindfully in wholesome ways. May we thus find ourselves on the Right Path, the Buddha's Path, to release from suffering, to the attainment of the eternal peace of Nibbana.

**Nibbana - the extinction of suffering**

We began with the first half of the Paticcasamuppada. Now we present the second half, which is nothing less than the way out of samsara.

**The Paticcasamuppada (second half):**

Through the total fading away and extinction of ignorance, the Kamma-formations are stilled. Through the extinction of kamma-formations, consciousness arises no more. Through the extinction of consciousness, mind and matter arise no more. Through the extinction of mind and matter, the six bases arise no more. Through the extinction of the six bases, impressions arise no more. Through the extinction of impression, feeling arises no more. Through the extinction of feeling, craving arises no more. Through the extinction of craving, clinging arises no more. Through the extinction of clinging, the process of volitional acts arises no more. Through the extinction of the process of volition acts, rebirth is no more. Through the extinction of rebirth, old age and death, sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief, and despair arises no more. Thus takes place the extinction of this whole mass of suffering.

**A final aspiration**

**As good sons and daughters of the Buddha, may we, through insight meditation, be able to break the **ignorance** and **craving**, and realize the eternal Peace of Nibbana. May we work successfully for the propagation and perpetuation of the Buddha's teachings**