

# The Process of Arising of Suffering (Unsatisfactoriness) Dependent Origination

## The law of cause and effect

### (*Paticcasumuppāda* - පටිච්චසමුප්පාද)

Buddhism always points out the path that leads to overcome suffering and achieve liberation. The Buddha's main purpose was explaining the path that leads to getting 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 step is realized by a wise person, other steps are also understood by him.

The fourfold noble truth (*Cattāriariyasaccāni*) that we discussed before is based on understanding of 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 the 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 the 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.

In the early morning, the Buddha got enlightened in Bodh Gaya on the Vesak Full moon day, by his wisdom he 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 (*Upāyasa*) 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 (*Upadana*). 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 for feeling as contact (or impression = *Phassa*). Then he recognized six senses as the cause of contact. Again, while he was investigating the reason for the six senses, he realized mind and matter (Mentality and corporeality = *Nāma Rupa*). When he analyzed the cause of mind and matter, he understood consciousness (*Viññāna*). After that, he examined the reason for consciousness as volitional actions (*Sankhāra*). Finally he clearly realized 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 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**  
(*Samkhāra 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 salāyatanam*)
- 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 upāyāsā*)

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 Ñāya</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 main difference of Buddhism, when other religions and philosophies are compared, 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 whether the conditions are 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 arise when a sense contacts with an object and mind. Five aggregates are: matter (*Rupa* - රූප), feelings (*Vedanā* - වේදනා), perception (*Saññā* - සංකල්පනා), mental formations (*Sankhāra* - සංකාර) and consciousness (*Viññāna* - විඤ්ඤාණ). These five aggregates are the bottom line of all our experiences

which we receive through our senses. The nature of these five aggregates is they weren't here before the experience. And also, they don't remain after the experience.

As a result of the union of the five aggregates, when factors are together, we have experiences through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. When factors (or conditions) are separated, the experience ceases. The highest intelligence in Buddhism is the intelligence that "**Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence**" (*Ahutvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati* - අහුන්වා සම්භුතං හුන්වා න භවිස්සති). If we can understand this ultimate truth practicing insight meditation, that is the only way to get rid of suffering. 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 nirodhā idam nirujjhati*)

Understanding of Buddhism depends on how far we have understood this theory, the dependent origination. If someone has clear knowledge, he is knowledgeable about suffering. Understanding of suffering causes us to understand 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 (*Seela*)
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 phenomena with ignorance gradually decrease;

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

With the cessation of **volitional formations** comes cessation of **consciousness**  
 (*Samkhāra nirodha viññāna nirodho*)

With the cessation of **consciousness** comes cessation of **mentality and corporeality**  
 (*Viññāna nirodha nāmarupa nirodho*)

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

*(Nāmrupa nirodha salāyatana nirodho)*

With the cessation of **six senses** comes cessation of **contact**

*(Salāyatana Nirodha phassa nirodho)*

With the cessation of **contact** comes cessation of **feeling**

*(Phassa nirodha vedanā nirodho)*

With the cessation of **feeling** comes cessation of **craving**

*(Vedanā nirodha tanhā nirodho)*

With the cessation of **craving** comes cessation of **clinging**

*(Tanhā nirodha upādāna nirodho)*

With the cessation of **clinging** comes cessation of existence of **becoming**

*(Upādāna nirodha bhava nirodho)*

With the cessation of existence **becomes** 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 jārā marana soka parideva dukka domanassa upāyasā)*

This is the way that the Buddha pointed out how 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 intelligent people.

As the result of practicing the above path we comprehend all mental and physical things according to three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). They are:

- i. Impermanence *(Anicca - අනිත්‍ය)*
- ii. Unsatisfactoriness *(Dukkha - දුක්ඛ)*
- iii. Selflessness *(Anatta - අනාත්ම)*

We see these three characteristics of existence (ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ) through all our experience by practicing mindfulness and wisdom. They have become life experience. We don't struggle with them. And they are like our close friends. Then we have overcome all kinds of sufferings, unsatisfactoriness and lamentations. We achieve the real liberation from everything.

May The Triple Gem Bless You!

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May All Beings Be Well, Happy & Peaceful!

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