

DEPENDENT CO-ARISING

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avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhāra-paccayā viññāṇan'ti

Now I will explain the aspects of conditionality in dependent co-arising, which is the structure of the path of *vipassanā*, according to the verse that I have highlighted at the beginning. It goes: *avijjā, saṅkhārā, viññāṇa, nāma-rūpa, āyatana, phassa, vedanā, taṇhā, upādāna, bhava, jāti, jarā, maraṇa*. There are thirteen aspects, but the Buddha put *jarā* and *marañā* together as one. Thus there are twelve, because he included *avijjā* as one of the aspects. If we take out *avijjā*, making it the presiding chief, counting only from *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* as the aspects, we are bound to have twelve aspects – we don't have to join *jarā* and *marañā*. In the same way that the Buddha took the body as the presiding chief, and head-hair, body-hair – up to the brain – as the thirty-two aspects of the

body, if we count only *saṅkhārā* up to *marāṇa* as twelve – it is absolutely appropriate and right to have them as the aspects of *avijjā*.

Now I will distinguish things, starting with *avijjā* and *saṅkhārā*: 8 *avijjā*, 3 *saṅkhārā*, 6 *viññāṇa*, 2 *nāma-rūpa*, 6 *āyatana*, 6 *phassa*, 6 *vedanā*, 6 *taṇhā*, 4 *upādāna*, 2 *bhava*, 2 *jāti*, 2 *jarā* and 2 *marāṇa*.

Now I will distinguish the 8 *avijjā*, according to the phrase '*avijjā aṭṭha-vatthukā*' – *avijjā* has 8 manifestations: *pubb'ante añāṇam* – not knowing one's beginning, *apar'ante añāṇam* – not knowing one's end, *pubb'antāpar'ante añāṇam* – not knowing both one's beginning and end, *dukkhe añāṇam* – not knowing suffering, *dukkha-samudaye añāṇam* – not knowing the cause that gives rise to suffering in all its fullness, *dukkha-nirodhe añāṇam* – not knowing the cessation of suffering, *dukkha-nirodha-gāmini-pañipadāya añāṇam* – not knowing the means leading to the cessation of suffering, *pañicca-samuppāde añāṇam* – not knowing dependent co-arising: that is, the states that rely on each other for their arising. *Ayaṃ vuccati avijjā* – this is what the Buddha called '*avijjā*'. It has 8 characteristics, modes and aspects like this.

Now I will explain all eight characteristics of *avijjā*, enough to serve as a path of contemplation for meditators – those who aspire to the path of *vipassanā*. If anyone investigates and has a sense of clarity arise, they will experience the arising of a lot ease in the mind because of the ending of doubt in this path.

The first point, which is not knowing one's beginning, is not knowing *jāti* – birth. That is, knowing only *appaṭicchanna-jāti* – the birth that is not concealed: namely, being delivered out of the womb of your mother. This is called 'not knowing birth'. It is the characteristic of one aspect of *avijjā*. As for *pañicchanna-jāti* – that is, the birth that is concealed – it is, namely, the 4 stages of being born. That is, when still a *kalala-ambuda* (a 'mud-cloud'), the Buddha called this the '*samsedaja* (impregnation) stage of birth'. At the moment when one becomes a *ghaṇapesi* (a 'congealed lump'), the Buddha called this the '*aṇḍaja* (ovule/embryonic) stage of birth'. When the five extremities have become differentiated – that is, when the head, arms and legs are formed – the Buddha

called this the '*jalambuja* (foetal) stage of birth'. When one comes out at delivery, the Buddha called this the '*upapātika* (appearance) stage of birth' [release birth]. Once delivered, it is bound to be called the '*upapātika* stage of birth' from then on until the day we die. All four stages of birth here are the beginning. It is the characteristic of inherent suffering. It is *dukkha-sacca*. You should understand that it is present at all times. This *paṭicchanna-jāti* is the first element of *vijjā*.

The second point, which is not knowing one's end, means not knowing *maraṇa* – death. One knows only *appaṭicchanna-maraṇa* – the death that is not concealed: namely, with the end of breathing one has to go into a coffin. Just that much. This mode of death, being in the future, is an affair of *samudaya*. It is *vibhava-taṇhā*. Knowing only this *appaṭicchanna-maraṇa* is called 'not knowing death' – that is, not knowing one's end. It is one aspect of *avijjā*. As for *paṭicchanna-maraṇa* – namely, death that is concealed – it is the present-moment death, present every moment, every in-and-out breath. That is, on whatever day we are born, death is there from that day onward: namely, disappearance. That is, being a child – a boy or a girl – within us has simply disappeared. This is symbolic – it allows us to know that we always have *maraṇa* within us. This *paṭicchanna-maraṇa* is one's end. It is the second *vijjā*.

The third point, that describes not knowing either one's beginning or one's end, means not knowing the in-between – that is, not knowing aging. One only knows *appaṭicchanna-jarā* – the aging that is not concealed: that is, someone who is established in the last phase of life, losing their hair and breaking their teeth, for example. This mode of aging is in the future – it is also an affair of *vibhava-taṇhā*. It is *samudaya*. One knows only *appaṭicchanna-jarā*: this is called 'not knowing aging'. It is an aspect of *avijjā*. As for aging that is an affair of *vijjā*, this means aging in the present moment. This is called '*paṭicchanna-jarā*' – aging that is concealed. That is, ever-present aging, every moment, every in-and-out breath – namely, change in the physical body. That is, the growth of the physical body, constantly differing from its previous state, starting right from the first coming into connection with consciousness until the day of one's death. This here is our in-between. It is the substance of momentary arising, momentary

establishment, and momentary destruction. Knowing one's beginning as birth, knowing one's end as death, knowing one's in-between as aging – all comes together as one, as the substance of the present moment at all times. It is the third *vijjā*.

The fourth point, which is not knowing suffering, is not knowing the birth, aging and death which are in the present moment. This is called 'not knowing suffering'. It is one aspect of *avijjā*. If one knows this, it is the ability to comprehend suffering – thus it is the fourth *vijjā*.

The fifth point, which is not knowing the cause that gives rise to suffering in all its fullness, means not knowing the birth, aging and death that are in the past and future – which is knowing that they are the substance of *samudaya*. That is, they are *kāma-taṇhā*, *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā* – the understanding that birth is in the past, and that aging and death are in the future, and oneself – being in the present here – is currently free of aging and death. It transforms into *bhava-taṇhā*, not knowing oneself. This is called 'not knowing *samudaya*'. It is an aspect of *avijjā*. Coming to know the birth, aging and death that are in the past and future – that they are worldly perceptions – is called 'knowing *samudaya*'. It is the fifth *vijjā*.

The sixth point, which is not knowing cessation, is not knowing the countenance of craving – that is, the birth, aging and death that exist in the past and future are *kāma-taṇhā*, *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā*. (Thinking) Oneself free of birth, aging and death transforms into *bhava-taṇhā* – not knowing oneself – but the countenance of craving isn't known by the person who intends to extinguish it: this is called 'not knowing *dukkha-nirodha*'. It is one aspect of *avijjā*. When the states which are in the present moment – that is, the real birth, aging and death – are seen clearly by a meditator within themselves, the birth, aging and death in the past and future, which are an affair of *samudaya* – that is, *kāma-taṇhā*, *bhava-taṇhā* and *vibhava-taṇhā* – cease. This is called '*dukkha-nirodha*'. This is something called 'knowing the cessation of suffering'. It is the sixth *vijjā*.

The seventh point, which is not knowing the means to enable that cessation of suffering, means not knowing birth, aging and death – these modes as suffering, these modes as the origin, these modes as cessation, these modes as the path. This is called 'someone not knowing the means to enable the cessation of suffering'. It is an aspect of *avijjā*. When you come to know clearly that the birth, aging and death which are in the present moment are the substance of the truth of suffering, the birth, aging and death that are in the past and future – an affair of *samudaya* – cease. That very cessation of *samudaya* is called 'the cessation of suffering'. The discernment that knows suffering, knows its origin and knows its cessation is the factor of 'right view' – it is the path. This is knowing the means that lead to the cessation of suffering. It is the seventh *vijjā*.

The eighth point, which is not knowing the states that condition and rely on each other in arising, is not knowing dependent co-arising. This means not knowing that oneself is *avijjā*. One must thus transform into volitional fabrications. Relying on just those volitional fabrications, one then has to take on many names: cognisance, sentient-form, sense-bases, contact, sensation, craving, appropriation, being, birth, aging and death. When one still has the perspective, the knowledge, the understanding, that one's self is a volitional fabrication – is cognisance, is aging, is death – however much, this is called 'the modes of *avijjā* still existing in one's self' just that much. You should know that our self is true *avijjā*, because the Buddha presented these twelve kinds of states as the modes of *avijjā*. It's the substance of past perceptions. They're all birth. They're all *samudaya*. He thus described the not knowing of dependent co-arising as one aspect of *avijjā*.

When a meditator comes to know and apprehend the affairs of volitional fabrications – that is, that the Buddha meant volitional fabrications of goodness, volitional fabrications without goodness, and imperturbable volitional fabrications – namely, mental characteristics. Volitional fabrications of goodness implies beautiful mental characteristics; volitional fabrications without goodness implies unwholesome mental characteristics; imperturbable volitional fabrications implies *añña-samānā* mental characteristics.

As for the 6 cognisances, this means cognisance starting with visual cognisance... The 2 aspects of sentient-form mean sentience and form. The 6 sense-bases mean the sense-bases starting with the visual sense-base... The 6 contacts mean sense-contact starting with visual contact... The 6 sensations mean sensation that arises starting from visual contact... The 6 cravings mean the craving that depends on contact for its arising, starting with visual contact... The 4 aspects of appropriation start with the appropriation of sensuality... The 2 aspects of being mean sensual being and *upapatti* ('apparitional') being. The 2 aspects of birth mean concealed birth and unconcealed birth. The 2 aspects of aging mean concealed aging and unconcealed aging. The 2 aspects of death mean concealed death and unconcealed death.

The truth is that these states of *samudaya*, from *avijjā* to aging and death, are altogether the nature of fabricated states. They are merely conventional. Know them all as just that much. That which receives all of those conventions is the natural state that is unfabricated – that is, it is *dhamma-ṭhiti*: the necessity of Dhamma at the unfabricated level.

As for all of those natural states that are fabrications, they are *anattā* – not one's self. If you know equal to this, they simply cease. What is bound to remain is just the natural state that is unfabricated. If you look at reality following the way of the noble truths, you will see only suffering. If you look at reality in the way of Nibbāna, birth, aging and death, which are conventional suffering, won't exist anymore because birth, aging and death are the affairs of fabrications. When you know equal to fabrications, birth, aging and death simply cease. What is bound to remain is exclusively just a transcendent state. Those who know rely on using designations, speaking in accordance with the world, not in opposition to the world. Their substance is called '*vijjā*'. The modes of *avijjā*, such as volitional fabrications and cognisance, for example, completely cease. This is the state of cessation. It is called the eighth *vijjā* in this way.

When *avijjā*, volitional fabrications, aging and death are conditioning and relying on each other, this is called 'the flow of *samudaya* still carrying on'. It is

the substance of a cause. The result of *samudaya* is the substance of suffering: namely, *soka* – sorrow and disappointment; *parideva* – out of one's mind with despondency and lament; *domanassa* – disheartened and offended; *upāyāsa* – choked and distressed; *sambhavanti* – they are fully present because of suffering, with *samudaya* as the initial cause.

When the flow of *samudaya*, starting with *avijjā*, ceases without remainder, this is called 'cessation'. The nature of what still remains is called '*vijjā*'. It is the path: that is, the substance of a cause. The result of *vijjā* is the substance of the cessation of suffering: namely, *soka parideva domanassa upāyāsa nirujjhanti*. They cease without remainder, because these sufferings cease without remainder with *vijjā* – that is, the path – as the cause.

I have explained the types of dependent co-arising – both in the manner of *samudaya* and the manner of *nirodha* – enough to serve as a path of contemplation for the assembly of followers of the Buddha – those who aspire to the method of *vipassanā*. Just this much is enough to serve as an instructive illustration.



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