

The Discourse giving the Explanation and Analysis of Conditional Origination from the Beginning

Translated by Ānandajoti Bhikkhu

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The Discourse giving the Explanation and Analysis of Conditional Origination from the Beginning¹

This I heard:

at one time the Gracious One was dwelling near Śrāvastī,² in Jeta's Wood, at Anāthapiṇḍada's³ monastery, together with a great Community of monks, with twelve-hundred and fifty monks.

There the Gracious One addressed (the monks, saying):

“I will teach you, monks, about conditional origination from the beginning, and its analysis,

listen to it, apply your minds thoroughly and well, and I will speak. What is conditional origination from the beginning?

This being so that is, beginning with the arising of this that arises,
thus: because of ignorance there are (volitional) processes,
because of (volitional) processes: consciousness,
because of consciousness: mind and body,
because of mind and body: the six sense-spheres,
because of the six sense-spheres: contact,
because of contact: feeling,
because of feeling: craving,
because of craving: attachment,
because of attachment: continuation,
because of continuation: birth,
because of birth: old age, death, grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair (all) arise,
and so there is an origination of this whole great mass of suffering.

¹ This is a translation of Pratītyasamutpādādivibhaṅganirdeśasūtram published in Buddhist Sanskrit Texts No. 17 Mahāyāna-sūtra-saṃgrahaḥ (part 1), edited by P.L. Vaidya (Darbhanga, 1961). With this discourse should be compared and contrasted Vibhaṅgasuttaṃ from Nidānasaṃyuttaṃ (SN 12.2), which is similar but takes the factors in reverse order to the one adopted here, and is somewhat less elaborate.

² Pāḷi: *Sāvattihī*; in the translation I use the Sanskrit form of the words.

³ Pāḷi: *Anāthapiṇḍika*.

The Explanation and Analysis of Conditional Origination from the Beginning

This is called conditional origination from the beginning.

What is its analysis?

‘Because of ignorance there are (volitional) processes’, what is ignorance?

Not knowing the past, not knowing the future, not knowing the past and the future, not knowing the internal, not knowing the external, not knowing the internal and the external, not knowing what are (volitional) actions, not knowing results, not knowing (volitional) actions and their results, not knowing the Buddha, not knowing the Teaching, not knowing the Community, not knowing suffering, not knowing origination, not knowing cessation, not knowing the path, not knowing causes, not knowing the origination of causes in things, (not knowing what is) wholesome and unwholesome, blameworthy and blameless, what should be practiced and what should not be practiced, not knowing the despicable and the excellent, the black and the white, those things that are a part of conditional origination, again (not knowing) the comprehending of the six spheres of contact as they really are, not knowing here and now (things) as they really are, not seeing, not penetrating, darkness, complete delusion, blind ignorance.

This is called ignorance.

What are (volitional) processes?

There are these three (volitional) processes: bodily (volitional) processes, verbal (volitional) processes, mental (volitional) processes.

‘Because of (volitional) processes: consciousness’, what is consciousness?

There is a group of six consciousnesses: eye-consciousness, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind-consciousness.

‘Because of consciousness: mind and bodily form’, what is mind?

The four formless constituent groups.

Which four?

The feelings constituent group, the perceptions constituent group, the (volitional) processes constituent group, the consciousness constituent group.

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What is bodily form?

Whatever bodily form there is, all of that is (made of) the four great elements. Attachment to the four great elements this is bodily form.

This simply and in short is what is called mind and bodily form.

‘Because of mind and body: the six sense-spheres’, what are the six sense-spheres?

The six internal sense-spheres: the internal eye-sense-sphere, the internal ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind-sense-spheres.

‘Because of the six sense-spheres: contact’, what is contact?

There is a group of six contacts: eye-contact, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind-contact.

‘Because of contact: feeling’, what is feeling?

There are three feelings, pleasant, unpleasant, and neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant.

‘Because of feeling: craving’, what is craving?

There are three cravings: craving for the sense-realm, craving for the form-realm, and craving for the formless-realm.

‘Because of craving: attachment’, what is attachment?

There are four attachments: attachment to sense pleasures, attachment to views, attachment to virtue and practice, attachment to self-theories.

‘Because of attachment: continuation’, what is continuation?

There are three continuations: continuation in the sense-realm, continuation in the form-realm, continuation in the formless-realm.

‘Because of continuation: birth’, what is birth?

For the various beings in the various classes of beings there is birth, being born, appearing, turning up, manifestation, the acquisition of the constituent parts (of mind and body), the acquisition of the elements, the acquisition of the sense-spheres, the turning up of the constituents (of mind and matter), the manifestation of the life faculty.

‘Because of birth: old age and death’, what is old age?

Whatever baldness, greying hair, wrinkled skin, agedness, bentness, crooked-, warped-, twisted-, aging-, hanging-bodiliness, rheumatic pains in the body, forward bending of the body, propping up on crutches, indisposition, slowness, dwindling away, complete dwindling away, decay of the sense faculties, breaking up of the processes, elderliness, decrepitude.

This is called old age.

What is death?

For the various beings in the various classes of beings, there is a fall, a falling away, an internal dwindling away, a dwindling away of the lifespan, a dwindling away of the vital heat, a cessation of the life-faculty, a throwing off of the constituent parts, a death, a making of time.

This is called death.

This death together with the former old-age, these two together are in short what is called old-age and death.

This is what is called the analysis of conditional origination.

‘I will teach you, monks, about conditional origination from the beginning, and its analysis’, is what was said to you, and this is what was said in reply.

The Gracious One said this,

and those monks were uplifted and greatly rejoiced in the Gracious One’s words.

*The Discourse giving the Explanation and Analysis
of Conditional Origination from the Beginning is Complete*