

Dependent Origination as the Key to Bondage and Liberation  
in the Buddha's Teaching

I. The Importance of Dependent Origination in the Buddha's Teaching

1. The Bodhisatta's contemplation while seeking the way to enlightenment
2. Under the Bodhi Tree: "This Dhamma that I have found is deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand ..."
3. "One who sees dependent origination sees the Dhamma; one who sees the Dhamma sees dependent origination."

II. The two aspects of Dependent Origination in the Buddha's Teaching

1. The abstract principle of conditionality (*idappaccayat*): When this exists, that exists; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not exist; with the cessation of this, that arises.
2. Specific applications of this principle of conditionality to the problem of suffering

III. The Usual Exemplification: The twelvefold formula of dependent origination

IV. "Transcendental dependent origination": the principle of conditionality applied to the process of liberation

1. "Primitive form": the three trainings in morality, concentration, and wisdom. Each depends on its predecessor
2. A more elaborate version: the Upanisa Sutta
3. The two series, samsaric and nirvanic, are united by the link: suffering is the condition for faith
4. Thus faith becomes the foundation for the entire unfolding process of liberation

Upanisa Sutta  
Supporting Conditions  
(Samyutta Nikaya 12: 23)

"Bhikkhus, I say that the destruction of the taints is for one who knows and sees, not for one who does not know and does not see. For one who knows what, for one who sees what, does the destruction of the taints come about? 'Such is form, such its origin, such its passing away; such is feeling ... such is perception ... such are volitional formations ... such is consciousness, such its origin, such its passing away': it is for one who knows thus, for one who sees thus, that the destruction of the taints comes about.

"I say, bhikkhus, that the knowledge of destruction in regard to destruction has a supporting condition; it does not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for the knowledge of destruction? It should be said: liberation.

"I say, bhikkhus, that liberation too has a supporting condition: dispassion.

"I say, bhikkhus, that dispassion too has a supporting condition: disenchantment.

"I say, bhikkhus, that disenchantment too has a supporting condition: the knowledge and vision of things as they really are.

"I say, bhikkhus, that the knowledge and vision of things as they really are too has a supporting condition: concentration.

"I say, bhikkhus, that concentration too has a supporting condition: happiness. Happiness too has a supporting condition: tranquillity. Tranquillity too has a supporting condition: rapture. Rapture too has a supporting condition: gladness. Gladness too has a supporting condition: faith.

"I say, bhikkhus, that *faith too has a supporting condition: suffering*. Suffering too has a supporting condition: birth. For birth: existence. For existence: clinging. For clinging: craving. For craving: feeling. For feeling: contact. For contact: the six sense bases. For the six sense bases: name-and-form. For name-and-form: consciousness. For consciousness: volitional formations.

"I say, bhikkhus, that volitional formations too have a supporting condition; they do not lack a supporting condition. And what is the supporting condition for volitional formations? It should be said: ignorance.

"Thus, bhikkhus, with ignorance as supporting condition, volitional formations [come to be]; with volitional formations as supporting condition, consciousness; with consciousness as supporting condition, name-and-form; with name-and-form as supporting condition, the six sense bases; with the six sense bases as supporting condition, contact; with contact as supporting condition, feeling; with feeling as supporting condition, craving; with craving as supporting condition, clinging; with clinging as supporting condition, existence; with existence as supporting condition, birth; with birth as supporting condition, suffering; with suffering as supporting condition, faith; with faith as supporting condition, gladness; with gladness as supporting condition, rapture; with rapture as supporting condition, tranquillity; with tranquillity as supporting condition, happiness; with happiness as supporting condition, concentration; with concentration as supporting condition, the knowledge and vision of things as they really are; with the knowledge and vision of things as they really are as supporting condition, disenchantment; with

disenchantment as supporting condition, dispassion; with dispassion as supporting condition, liberation; with liberation as supporting condition, the knowledge of destruction.

"Just as, bhikkhus, when rain pours down in thick droplets on a mountain top, the water flows down along the slope and fills the cleft, gullies, and creeks; these being full fill up the pools; these being full fill up the lakes; these being full fill up the streams; these being full fill up the rivers; and these being full fill up the great ocean; so too, with ignorance as supporting condition, volitional formations [come to be]; with volitional formations as supporting condition, consciousness ... with liberation as supporting condition, the knowledge of destruction."