Dependent Origination: The Origin and Cessation of Suffering

*1. What Is Dependent Origination?* (Saṃyutta Nikāya 12:1)

“Monks, I will teach you dependent origination. Listen to that and attend closely, I will speak.” The Blessed One said this: “And what, monks, is dependent origination? With ignorance as condition, volitional formations [come to be]; with volitional formations as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, name-and-form; with name-and-form as condition, the six sense bases; with the six sense bases as condition, contact; with contact as condition, feeling; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, existence; with existence as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. This, monks, is called dependent origination.

“But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations, cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness, cessation of name-and-form; with the cessation of name-and-form, cessation of the six sense bases; with the cessation of the six sense bases, cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact, cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling, cessation of craving; with the cessation of craving, cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of existence; with the cessation of existence, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.”

*2. Analysis of Dependent Origination* (SN 12.2)

“Monks, I will teach you dependent origination and I will analyse it for you. Listen to that and attend closely, I will speak.”

“And what, monks, is dependent origination? With ignorance as condition, volitional formations [come to be]; with volitional formations, consciousness … (*as in preceding sutta*) … Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

“And what, monks, is *aging-and-death*? The aging of the various beings in the various orders of beings, their growing old, brokenness of teeth, greyness of hair, wrinkling of skin, decline of vitality, degeneration of the faculties: this is called aging. The passing away of the various beings from the various orders of beings, their perishing, breakup, disappearance, mortality, death, completion of time, the breakup of the aggregates, the laying down of the carcass: this is called death. Thus this aging and this death are together called aging-and-death.

“And what, monks, is *birth*? The birth of the various beings into the various orders of beings, their being born, descent [into the womb], production, the manifestation of the aggregates, the obtaining of the sense bases. This is called birth.

“And what, monks, is *existence*? There are these three kinds of existence: sense-sphere existence, form-sphere existence, formless-sphere existence. This is called existence.

“And what, monks, is *clinging*? There are these four kinds of clinging: clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, clinging to rules and vows, clinging to a doctrine of self. This is called clinging.5

“And what, monks, is *craving*? There are these six classes of craving: craving for forms, craving for sounds, craving for odours, craving for tastes, craving for tactile objects, craving for mental phenomena. This is called craving.

“And what, monks, is *feeling*? There are these six classes of feeling: feeling born of eye-contact, feeling born of ear-contact, feeling born of nose-contact, feeling born of tongue-contact, feeling born of body-contact, feeling born of mind-contact. This is called feeling.

“And what, monks, is *contact*? There are these six classes of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-contact. This is called contact.

“And what, monks, are the *six sense bases*? The eye base, the ear base, the nose base, the tongue base, the body base, the mind base. These are called the six sense bases.

“And what, monks, is *name-and-form*? Feeling, perception, volition, contact, attention: this is called name. The four great elements and the form derived from the four great elements: this is called form. Thus this name and this form are together called name-and-form.6

“And what, monks, is *consciousness*? There are these six classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness. This is called consciousness.

“And what, monks, are the *volitional formations*? There are these three kinds of volitional formations: the bodily volitional formation, the verbal volitional formation, the mental volitional formation. These are called the volitional formations.

“And what, monks, is *ignorance*? Not knowing suffering, not knowing the origin of suffering, not knowing the cessation of suffering, not knowing the way leading to the cessation of suffering. This is called ignorance.

“Thus, monks, with ignorance as condition, volitional formations [come to be]; with volitional formations as condition, consciousness…. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations, cessation of consciousness…. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.”

3. *The Origin and Passing of Suffering (*SN 12:43)

“Monks, I will teach you the origin and the passing away of suffering….

“And what, monks, is the origin of suffering? In dependence on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving. This is the origin of suffering.

“In dependence on the ear and sounds … In dependence on the nose and odours … In dependence on the tongue and tastes … In dependence on the body and tactile objects … In dependence on the mind and mental phenomena, mind-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving. This is the origin of suffering.

“And what is the passing away of suffering? In dependence on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving comes cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of existence; with the cessation of existence, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. This is the passing away of suffering.

“In dependence on the ear and sounds … In dependence on the mind and mental phenomena, mind-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving comes cessation of clinging … cessation of existence … cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. This is the passing away of suffering.”

4. *The Origin and Passing of the World* (SN 12:44)

“Monks, I will teach you the origin and the passing away of the world….

“And what, monks, is the origin of the world? In dependence on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, existence; with existence as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and despair come to be. This, monks, is the origin of the world.

“In dependence on the ear and sounds … In dependence on the nose and odors … In dependence on the tongue and tastes … In dependence on the body and tactile objects … In dependence on the mind and mental phenomena, mind-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging … existence … birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and despair come to be. This, monks, is the origin of the world.

“And what, monks, is the passing away of the world? In dependence on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving comes cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of existence; with the cessation of existence, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. This, monks, is the passing away of the world.

“In dependence on the ear and sounds … In dependence on the mind and mental phenomena, mind-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving comes cessation of clinging … cessation of existence … cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, dejection, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. This, monks, is the passing away of the world.”

5. *Not the Same, Not Another* (SN 12.46)

A certain brahmin asked the Blessed One: “How is it, Master Gotama: is the one who acts the same as the one who experiences [the result]?”

“To say, ‘The one who acts is the same as the one who experiences [the result]’—this is one extreme.”

“Then, Master Gotama, is the one who acts one, and the one who experiences [the result] another?”

“To say, ‘The one who acts is one, and the one who experiences [the result] is another’—this is the second extreme. Without veering towards either of these extremes, *the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma by the middle:* ‘With ignorance as condition, volitional formations [come to be]; with volitional formations as condition, consciousness…. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations, cessation of consciousness…. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.’”

6. *The Body is Not Yours* (SN 12:37)

“Monks, this body is not yours, nor does it belong to others. It is old kamma, to be seen as generated and fashioned by volition, as something to be felt. Therein, monks, the instructed noble disciple attends carefully and closely to dependent origination itself thus: ‘When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases. That is, with ignorance as condition, volitional formations [come to be]; with volitional formations as condition, consciousness…. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations, cessation of consciousness…. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.”

7. *The Wise Man and the Fool* (SN 12:19)

“Monks, for the fool, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, this body has thereby originated. So there is this body and external name-and-form: thus this dyad. Dependent on the dyad there is contact. There are just six sense bases, contacted through which—or through a certain one among them—the fool experiences pleasure and pain.

“Monks, for the wise man, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, this body has thereby originated. So there is this body and external name-and-form: thus this dyad. Dependent on the dyad there is contact. There are just six sense bases, contacted through which the wise man experiences pleasure and pain.

*“What, monks, is the distinction here, what is the disparity, what is the difference between the wise man and the fool?”…*

“Monks, for the fool, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, this body has originated. For the fool that ignorance has not been abandoned and that craving has not been utterly destroyed. For what reason? Because the fool has not lived the holy life for the complete destruction of suffering. Therefore, with the breakup of the body, the fool passes on to [another] body. Passing on to [another] body, he is not freed from birth, aging, and death; not freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair; not freed from suffering, I say.

“Monks, for the wise man, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, this body has originated. For the wise man that ignorance has been abandoned and that craving has been utterly destroyed. For what reason? Because the wise man has lived the holy life for the complete destruction of suffering. Therefore, with the breakup of the body, the wise man does not pass on to [another] body. Not passing on to [another] body, he is freed from birth, aging, and death; freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair; freed from suffering, I say.

“This, monks, is the distinction, the disparity, the difference between the wise man and the fool, that is, the living of the holy life.”