

## THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH OF SUFFERING :◆ DUKKHA

### The Wheel of Dependent Origination

#### *(paticca sammupada)*

Questions to Ask Oneself

If we examine our lives, we seem to often make the same mistakes.◆

For instance, we usually have arguments about the same things. Even though we keep changing jobs, we're never satisfied. If we stay in the same job, we seem to go through cycles of enthusiasm and depression.

Why do you think, we do this?◆

Why do we keep repeating the same mistakes?

Why does history, personal or global, repeat itself?◆

It is also true that success leads to success. Is it the same underlying process?

There came a time in the Buddha's life in late middle age when he decided to appoint one of his monks as a permanent attendant and he asked Ananda, a cousin, to be that person.◆ Ananda agreed to do so, but only on the condition that he could hear every word the Buddha spoke and if he were to miss any talks that the Buddha would relate to him what had been said. The Buddha agreed.◆ When the Buddha died, a great council was held to bring together all the discourses and make a compilation.◆ It was this very same Ananda who came to be relied upon to supply the discourses. He seems to have had quite an extraordinary auditory memory, lucky in an oral tradition which was to hand down these discourses by rote learning for five hundred years before they were finally committed to paper.◆ So it is that all the discourses are prefaced with, Thus have I heard (evam me sutam) and then there follows the place and◆ occasion for the discourse.

On one particular occasion it is this same Ananda who tells the Buddha that although the teaching on the Wheel of Dependent Origination is deep and profound, yet he, Ananda, found it to be self-evident and fathomable. The Buddha rebukes him: t say that, Ananda.◆ Don't say it.◆ This teaching of mine, the Wheel of Dependent Origination is not only deep and profound, it also bears the signs of being so. Then the Buddha goes on to say that it is because people have not grasped this, that their lives continue to be miserable. In a way, the teaching of the Wheel of Dependent Origination is the centrepiece of the Buddha's doctrine. It encapsulates not only the Four Noble Truths, but the whole of Buddhist psychology.◆ It is an explanation of how we come to suffer and why we do so.◆ It describes this in detail.

Although the formulation of the Four Noble Truths came first during his reflections after the Enlightenment, it is said that after a period of seven days following the Enlightenment, the whole formula of the Wheel came to the Buddha as he emerged from concentration in the early night and that later he understood it in reverse order. Here we can only hope to get a general idea of this teaching.◆ We shall look at it as a day-to-day psychology and how it helps us to understand the meditation we do. How it can help us in daily life, for the Buddha's teaching is not some empty, descriptive philosophy, it's a theory we must prove to be true for ourselves by putting it into practice, by trying it out.

The Wheel of◆ Dependent Origination is made up of twelve links and reads as follows:

Conditioned by ignorance, intentional activities arise.

Conditioned by intentional activities, consciousness arises.

Conditioned by consciousness, mind and matter arise.

Conditioned by mind and matter, the six-fold sense base arises.

Conditioned by the six-fold sense base, contact arises.

Conditioned by contact, feeling arises.

Conditioned by feeling, craving arises.

Conditioned by craving, grasping arises.

Conditioned by grasping, becoming arises.

Conditioned by becoming, birth arises.

Conditioned by birth, ageing, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair arise.

In this way, does this entire aggregation arise.

The first link, **Ignorance**, is not to be considered a 'first cause', but an underlying precondition out of which all our suffering and indeed existence arise. ♦ Ignorance here means, not-knowing, just as I might not know your name since I've simply not heard it. ♦ This not-knowing produces wrong understanding about life, delusions in fact. These delusions are inbuilt in our psychology. These delusions cause us to make decisions and act in certain ways which are unskilful and bring about unwholesome results. It is in this way that mind is conditioned. ♦ Our mental life, our psychology is full of habits which have been produced by our own decision making - our wills. ♦ However, because our wills have acted upon wrong information, those delusions of ours, so the mind ends up with unskilful or unwholesome conditioning which in turn causes further suffering.

When I'm a child, because I don't know any better, because I'm ignorant, I accept what is given to me. ♦ If, for instance, I'm told that people of other religions are evil and to be avoided, at first I believe it. This wrong understanding now produces an attitude, which in turn produces words and actions, a particular behaviour, whenever I should meet such people. ♦ I have internalised my parents' prejudice. ♦ An interesting word, prejudice. To form an opinion about something before the facts are known. Deluded by this prejudice, I'm on my guard. ♦ I feel fear. 'These people are evil!' ♦ 'I must get away before they do me harm' Or worse! 'If only we could be rid of them'. Upon these thoughts I avoid them. ♦ The important point to understand here is that although I have received a prejudice from my parents and although I have been taught an attitude, in the final analysis, I make the decision to act upon it. In this way, I reinforce it so that it now becomes ♦ prejudice. All these decisions, acts of will, build up in the child's mind until the way I behave with people of other religions will be simply a blind conditioned response. I may even have forgotten the reasons why I behave like that. In fact, to the child become adult such behaviour comes to be accepted as perfectly proper and self-evidently righteous. So if we take any point in our lives, say when we wake up, we bring with us from the past, all our ignorance and our delusive conditionings, the mental habits we have developed. Upon this twin base of ignorance and conditioned mental states, we perform all our activities.

As soon as we wake, the next ♦ five links on the Wheel come into being also. The first is **Consciousness** itself. ♦ Just that faculty in the mind that knows. With this arises all the rest of the mind - the mental aggregates of sensations, perceptions and volitional conditionings and at the same time as the body itself. ♦ Because of this **Mind and Body**, the **Six Senses** are activated. ♦ The sixth sense being the mind itself as a sense base receiving information from the other five senses. ♦ Because of these senses, **Contact** is made with the world out there. When this Contact is made, **Feeling** arises experienced ♦ as either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Here then is the human being as a receiver of information : the consciousness, the mental faculties and the body, the sense bases, contact with the world through these senses and feelings caused by these contacts. Again, it is important to remember that everything has arisen because of something else. ♦ The human being comes into life at every moment of life in this way. ♦ Even in deep sleep, there is some form of consciousness and sense contact or how else could we pull a blanket over us when cold? This moment is a product of all the past and contains in it the effects of all our yesterdays' decisions, skilful and unskilful. Some are realised, others lie potential in this moment, to be realised at some future time.

To look at it another way. As soon as I see an apple, the first light that strikes the retina,

the sense base, is the contact and from it a percept arises. ♦ Upon the contact, feeling arises. ♦ I know this feeling. I am conscious of it. All this has happened by way of the physical and mental properties. ♦ In other words, the whole process is dependent, one thing on another, hence the Wheel of Dependent Origination. Perhaps it should be better called Inter-dependent Origination since all these functional properties inter-relate and work one upon the other.

However, this is not the end of the story. ♦ There are yet more links. In the previous five links, ignorance has been the latent factor effecting all our perception of things, the way we understand. ♦ It is the next link where the ignorance factor comes again more obviously into play. ♦ As soon as pleasurable feelings are experienced, because of our past deluded conditioning, desire for them arises. ♦ ♦ As soon as desire has arisen, there is a strengthening of it if the Wheel is to progress onto craving, grasping, even obsession. Once this has happened, the will comes into play and the desire is realised, activated, satisfied. If we return to my apple, as soon as I saw the apple, there arose in me pleasurable feelings conditioned by past apple eating. As soon as this happened, desire for more of those pleasurable feelings, not the apple itself, notice! ♦ arose in me. This desire takes hold of my mind in the form of wanting and grasping. Before I know it I've made the decision to eat it. ♦ When I actually eat the apple, I become the eater of the apple. I become absorbed in it, lost in, totally self identified with it. ♦ This is becoming. ♦ This is what Buddhism means by kamma. ♦ Kamma is simply becoming, being my actions, whether verbal or physical. ♦ And it is all brought about through my own will.

What about aversion and hatred? ♦ Here it is simply seen as a type of desire. ♦ ♦ If, for instance, I don't like apples, my conditioned response may be to ignore it, that is, not wanting, not wishing to see it. ♦ If I have a disgust for it, I may throw it away in the bin. ♦ My desire is to remove it. Aversion and hatred are simply the obverse of desire. I want it. I don't want it. It's all want. ♦ It's all a matter of desire. Fear also is desire. ♦ In this case, the desire is to remove myself. ♦ If I had a phobia of apples, I might shrink away when I see one or run off. If they are neutral feelings, we usually remain ignorant of them, such as the sensations of our breathing process. ♦ Here I'm using the words sensations and feelings to mean the same. What separates them into pleasant, unpleasant and neutral is our perception of them, how we name or label these sensations through our past experience. The Wheel has not yet finished turning. Having made visual contact with the apple, felt all the attendant sensations of delight, and knowing this, having reacted with desire and craving, I eat it. ♦ Now, of course, I've finished. ♦ I've eaten the apple. It took a little time, but I saw the apple coming to an end. ♦ My sensual pleasure coming to an end. Suddenly I'm left with just a core and few pips. ♦ The apple is no more and my delight is gone. These are the last two links. ♦ Having decided to do something, I am 'born' into that action. This 'birth' is the becoming, is the beginning of a act of kamma. ♦ It is in this way that we are 'reborn' from moment to moment. But as soon as I am born again, reborn into anything, that thing must begin to decay or decline. Everything decays and dies. However, in the process, I have also reinforced my conditioning, those volitional conditionings that sit as potential in the mind. ♦ I shall react in very much the same way when next I espy an apple. And the Wheel of Dependent Origination will turn yet again.

This is an explanation of the whole of moral human behaviour. Although this is a harmless example of apple eating, it's the same psychology that produces negative habits of smoking, alcoholism, sexual deviancy, crimes of violence, murder, and the same that causes selfishness, and egotism to enter into the acts of love and compassion. If a young teenage boy, continually bombarded with sexual images, uses the medium of sex to develop feelings of hate or the pleasures of cruelty, is it any wonder that sooner or later there is a rape. ♦ Indeed this Wheel can be formulated in a slightly different way that brings this

personality development more into relief.

It is taught in Buddhism that upon the arising of an intention, there is an action. A intention here includes all the underlying ignorance/delusion, the basic human faculties of body and mind needed to bring this about and the deluded thought underpinning the desire. ♦ Action is that point of decision which is an act of will. ♦ Upon a set of actions, a habit is established. ♦ So we see that if we turn the Wheel in a certain direction often enough, it will keep turning that way. It gathers momentum. ♦ Habits are hard to break. Long established habits harder still. ♦ Now a collection of habits is a personality. ♦ That's worth pondering on. ♦ A personality in Buddhism is just a whole collection of conditioned responses. This is not to say that humans are automatons, for remember we condition ourselves. Its when we don't know this, or forget this, that we lose the ability to direct our lives. ♦ ♦ And so it is that this personality determines our destiny! ♦ How important it is to become aware of our intentions. ♦

If you were to say to an ordinary person in the street, whats worse, the intention to murder, the threatening of murder or the action of murder? The answer would be the action itself since up to that time no actual harm had been done. ♦ And indeed from the victim's and society's point of view, this is quite right. ♦ But from a mental process point of view and the murderer's point of view, the most important was the intention. For without the intention, the action would never have arisen, nor indeed the threatening. ♦ From our point of view, as meditators, this is something we have to grasp very deeply indeed if we're to eventually escape this Wheel of Dependent Origination, this Wheel of Suffering.

In longer periods of meditation practice such as a weekend or weeklong course, this process becomes more obvious to us. ♦ But with the practice of moment-to-moment awareness in our daily life, we can begin to catch this process and see how it's doing us harm and more important, see how we can put a stop to it.

So how do we undermine this Wheel? ♦ First of all, we have to accept that all the links up to feeling, that is, all the ignorance, volitional conditionings, consciousness, mind and body, the six senses, contact and the feelings that arise, are a given. ♦ They are conditioned. ♦ We can do nothing about thoughts arising in the mind. ♦ They will come of their own. Let me return to the problem of religious prejudice. Now because of this conditioning, when I come to know a person who is of a different religion to me, unpleasant, perhaps hateful thoughts and feelings arise. ♦ This is my conditioning, prejudicial, caused by a combination of my upbringing and past acts of will. ♦ It's a combination of my believing misinformation and acting upon it. ♦ But at that moment when I see this other person, there is no act of will. I am not actively prejudicial. ♦ Upon the seeing, there arises a conditioned response. ♦ There is nothing in the world I can do to stop that arising. ♦ It is in the next links that this conditioned prejudice already arisen in my mind, is acted upon. It is at the actual point of reaction, the desire, the craving and the action or becoming, where the choice arises to develop, reinforce these prejudicial conditioning, or to let them go, to just observe them. ♦ If I decide to act upon them, to obey their suggestions, then I will strengthen my religious prejudice. I will feed it, develop it. But if I refuse to do so, if I just observe them, let them go, refuse to obey them, I undermine that conditioning. For that conditioning needs my continued active wilful support to grow, to develop, to sustain. ♦ More! ♦ In deciding, in willing, not to act upon their suggestions, I set up a more wholesome conditioning of positive values. I am creating a new response, a new conditioning which not only counteracts and undermines the older negative one, but is also producing something new. ♦ In short, initial thoughts and feelings are products of past action and conditioning. ♦ It is what I do with them that matters.

Now you will have noticed that I have used the concepts of wholesome and unwholesome. Indeed, this is Buddhist training. ♦ It is to begin to recognise what is unwholesome, harmful

for us and other beings and to refuse to develop any further those very conditionings. Secondly, it is to foster and to develop thoughts and feelings within ourselves that are beneficial, wholesome. In this way, we purify the mind. In this way, we are slowing down, wearing out the Wheel. So long as we react to and indulge in unwholesome states of mind, so long are we deepening our ignorance and so worsening our suffering. When we begin to let go of unwholesome states of mind and develop wholesome states of mind, we rid ourselves of ignorance. ♦ As we begin to rid ourselves of ignorance, the mind, clear of its obscuring wrong attitudes, opinions and prejudices, becomes more and more insightful until it can begin to plumb the depths of our being and see what it is we really are. This seeing ourselves as we really are, beyond greed, hatred and delusion, is the Nibbanic experience. ♦ Every time we undermine an unwholesome conditioning, we come to understand more deeply the insights the Buddha had on the night when he discovered the Wheel of Dependent Origination in its reverse order. Indeed, as ignorance is destroyed, so are all the links on the Wheel, one upon the other. And with it goes our suffering. ♦ This doesn't mean annihilation. ♦ The Buddha continued to live another 45 years after his enlightenment, but in perfect peace and joy. ♦ When he was asked what happened to a Buddha or a totally purified one upon death, his answer was that it was simply ineffable, not describable. Parinibbana is beyond this Wheel of Becoming : the Wheel of Dependent Origination. So this is our task. To recognise unwholesome conditioning, thoughts and feelings for what they are. ♦ Let them go! ♦ We have to train ourselves in more wholesome ways of thinking and feeling. ♦ We can do this. ♦ This is our freedom of choice.. ♦ We have the power through our own wills to change our states of mind. ♦ In meditation, we see these conditionings, these states of mind, these emotions and moods, just as passing events, transient phenomena. We mustn't attach to them. ♦ We mustn't identify with them. And so to in daily life, while going about our day-to-day activities. In this way our lives will become happier, more peaceful. When all conditions ripen, wholesome conditions, insight will arise naturally into that state beyond change. ♦ Nibbana is assured.  
May the Teachings of the Buddha shed light into your life!  
May you quickly attain the Supreme Goal!

### **The Wheel of Dependent Origination : Paticca Sammupada.**

The Law of Causality:Conditioning in the present moment:

This being so, that is ♦

This not being so, that is not

Conditioned by the past:

This having arisen, that arises.

This having ceased, that also ceases.

♦In order of arising.

Conditioned by ignorance, intentional activities arise.

Conditioned by intentional activities, consciousness arises.

Conditioned by consciousness, mind and matter arise.

Conditioned by mind and matter, the six-fold sense base arises.

Conditioned by the six-fold sense base, contact arises.

Conditioned by contact, feeling arises.

Conditioned by feeling, craving arises.

Conditioned by craving, grasping arises.

Conditioned by grasping, becoming arises.

Conditioned by becoming, birth arises.

Conditioned by birth, ageing, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair arise.

In this way, does this entire aggregation arise.

In order of cessation.

◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ With the entire cessation of this ignorance, intentional activities cease.  
◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ With the cessation of intentional activities, consciousness ceases.  
◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ With the cessation of consciousness, mind and matter cease.  
◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ With the cessation of mind and matter, the six-fold sense base ceases.  
◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ With the cessation of the six-fold sense base, contact ceases.  
◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ With the cessation of contact, feeling ceases.  
◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ With the cessation of feeling, craving ceases.  
◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ With the cessation of craving, grasping ceases.  
◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ With the cessation of grasping, becoming ceases.  
◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ With the cessation of becoming, birth ceases.  
◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆◆ With the cessation of birth, ageing, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain,  
grief and despair cease.  
In this way does the cessation of this entire aggregation of suffering result.