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Moliya Phagguna Sutta

The Discourse to Moliya Phagguna | S 12.12

Theme: There is no self behind our mental processes

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2006

1 Dependent arising

1.1 The Moliya Phagguna Sutta (S 12.12) is a discourse on how the 4 foods sustain and proliferate rebirth through *dependent arising* [§1-7], and how this cycle is broken through *dependent ending* [§8]. A more elaborate explanation of this process, using the parable of seeds, is given in **the Bija Sutta** (S 22.-54).¹ The dependent arising sequence as given in the Moliya Phagguna Sutta begins thus:

Consciousness as food → rebirth → the 6 sense-spheres → contact (sense-stimuli). [§3-4]

Here, “consciousness as food” plays the role of the “consciousness” causal link (*nidāna*), and this consciousness is defined in **the (Paṭicca,samuppāda) Vibhaṅga Sutta** (S 12.2) as the six types of consciousness,² each arising at their respective sense-faculties. Harvey, based on his interpretation of **the Bija Sutta** (S 22.54), concludes that consciousness-as-food

must thus be the equivalent of these [six sense-faculties], with the root-like discernment [consciousness] of **[the Bija Sutta, S 22.54]** being a form which does not occur in the processing of sensory or mental objects, just as *bhavaṅga* does not. The root-like nature of this discernment [consciousness] would also make it like *bhavaṅga*, for this not only precedes but also makes possible the “process of *cittas*” which arises in the sensory channels: it is like the root from which they grow. (Harvey 1995:158 f)³

The Bhava Sutta (A 3.76), too, compares consciousness to a seed [3.2].

1.2 This distinction is a very important and useful one, and has earlier been pointed out by a number of scholars.⁴ The term *viññāṇa* is used in early Buddhism in at least two important senses, that is, **the 2 basic conscious processes**—namely, the functions of dependent arising (*paṭicca,samuppādā*)—discovered by the Buddha, that is, as cognitive consciousness and as existential consciousness. The first—cognitive consciousness—centering around *viññāṇa* and *nāma,rūpa*, shows how our senses work and how our lives are sustained down to the moment.

The second function of dependent arising—that of existential consciousness—centering around *taṇhā* (craving) and *upādāna* (clinging or fuel), is to show the true nature of what we call an “individual,” going through various lives, and it shows this by stating that *consciousness* arises conditioned by ignorance and formations. In simple terms, the former is our present-life flow of consciousness, while the latter is the rebirth-consciousness.⁵

¹ S 22.54/3:54 f @ SD 8.3(9-10).

² S 12.2,13/2:2-4 @ SD 5.15.

³ See SD 8.3 (9-10).

⁴ Amongst the scholars who have used this distinction are O H de A Wijesekera 1964, Rune E A Johansson 1965: 198 f, & W W Waldron 2003: 41-45. See *Viññāṇa*, SD 17.8a (6.1) & **The unconscious**, SD 17.8b (3).

⁵ For details, see *Viññāṇa*, SD 17.8a(6.1) & **The unconscious**, SD 17.8b (3).

2 Moliya Phagguna’s wrong view

The Commentary explains that the name *Moliya* was given to Phagguna⁶ in lay life because he wore his hair in a huge topknot (*moḷi* or *cūḷa*), and the nickname remained with him after he joined the order (SA 2:30).⁷ Throughout the Sutta, Phagguna only asks the Buddha the following “who” questions: “... *who* consumes...?” [§3]; “...*who* touches?” [§4]; “...*who* feels?” [§5]; “...*who* craves?” [§6]; and “... *who* clings?” [§7].

All these questions are pregnant with an implicit self-view: one assumes that there is a *person* involved, without any real knowledge of *what* constitutes a “person.” The Commentary says that Phagguna believes that he has understood the three other kinds of food, but as regards consciousness he has conceived the notion that there is a “being” (*satta*) that depends on consciousness as food:

Why does he omit the other three? Because they are more obvious conditions of effects. He could see anyone eating food. He could easily understand contact as food, such as, by looking at a partridge, a quail, a peacock, or a hen, being raised by its mother’s contact. And he sees mental volition as food, as when a turtle lays her eggs in the sand above the highwater mark.

(SA 2:29)

He is however unfamiliar with the workings of consciousness, and falls back on his own opinions.

3 The Buddha’s clarification

3.1 INVALID QUESTIONS

For each of Phagguna’s invalid questions, the Buddha rephrases it. Thus, when Phagguna asks, “*Who* consumes ... ?” the Buddha rephrases it as “What is the food that is consciousness for?” (*Kim paccayā nu kho ... phasso ti*). The Commentary explains that this means: “For what state (*katamassa dhammassa*) is ‘consciousness as food’ a condition (*paccaya*)?” According to **Nyanaponika**:

The term *dhamma*, in the sense of an impersonal factor of existence, is here contrasted with the questioner’s assumption of a being or person performing the respective function. By re-formulating the question, the Buddha wants to point out that there is no reason for assuming that the nutriment consciousness “feeds” or conditions any separate person hovering behind it; but that consciousness constitutes just one link in a chain of processes indicated by the Buddha in the following.

(1981:45)

Bodhi adds that in the valid question, *Kissa nu kho ... viññāṇ’āhāro ti* [§3], the Buddha replaces the personal pronoun *ko*, “fraught with substantialist connotations,” with the impersonal *kissa*, genitive singular of the stem *ki-*,⁸ and also the dative of *ko* (“who”) and *kiṃ* (“what, which”), but the context requires neuter gender.⁹

⁶ S 23.32/2:50. There is a Phagguna of **Phagguna S** (S 35.83/4:52 f) who asks the Buddha whether the past Buddhas could be known through any of our sense-faculties, but the Buddha replies no. It is not certain whether the two are the same person.

⁷ There is another “Moliya,” ie Sīvaka, who wears a similar topknot; cf J 1:65. See **Sīvaka S** (S 36.21), SD 5.6; also SA 3:81.

⁸ See Geiger, *Pāli Grammar*, §111.1. Bodhi adds that “Although all eds read here *kissa nu kho bhante viññāṇ’āhāro*, the sense seems to require that we add *paccayo* at the end. [SA] glosses: *Bhante ayam viññāṇāhāro katamassa dhammassa paccayo? Paccayo* does in fact occur in the reply.” (S:B 733 n23)

⁹ See S:W 2:9 n2.

3.2 BHAVA SUTTA

In connection with consciousness as food, the **Bhava Sutta** (A 3.76) applies another simile, thus,

Karma is the field, consciousness the seed, craving the moisture...to become established in (a low realm) (a middling realm) (a subtle realm). Thus there is the production of further rebirth.

Kammaṃ khettaṃ viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ taṇhā sineho... (hīnāya) (majjhimāya) (paṇitāya) dhātuyā viññāṇaṃ patiṭṭhitaṃ. Evaṃ āyatim punabbhavābhiniḅbatti hoti. (A 3.76/1:223 f), SD 23.13

“This implies,” says **Bodhi**, “that it is the stream of consciousness coming from the preceding existence, at the moment of conception, the initial rebirth-consciousness, which in turn brings forth (or “nourishes”) the concomitant name-and-form.” (S:B 733 n24). As already seen above, the **Bīja Sutta** (S 22.54), too, compares consciousness to a seed [1].

3.3 CORRECTING PHAGGUNA’S WRONG VIEWS

3.3.1 Dependent arising

3.3.1.1 EMPTY QUESTIONS. The Buddha patiently corrects Phagguna’s wrong views, explaining the dependent arising formula,¹⁰ two limbs (or connections) at a time, until the limb of existence (*bhava*). The Commentary at this point asks,

Why does the monk not continue to ask: ‘Who becomes?’ Because as one holding wrong views, he believes that ‘A being has become, has come to be,’ and the Blessed One’s answer would contradict his belief. Hence, he does not question further. Furthermore, after being contradicted so many times, he is convinced, and the Teacher, too, continued the discourse without a pause to prevent him from asking further invalid questions. The Teacher ends the exposition here, thinking: “However much he questions, he will not be satisfied. He is just asking empty questions.” (SA 2:31)

3.3.1.2 THE RIGHT QUESTIONS. The Moḷiya Phagguna Sutta teaches us **to ask the right questions**. If we ask the wrong questions, we will only get the wrong answers. Questions such as “Who created the world?” and “Do you believe in God?” are the proverbial wrong questions, as they are loaded, tricky and imaginative with assumptions of which we (and perhaps the questioner, too) might not be aware of.

When we ask “who” created the world, we are assuming that “someone” did it; but we do not really know this, except of course through scripture or belief (which are not helpful in any serious open questioning about life and liberation). Even the word “world” needs definition: Are we here talking about the physical universe of space and time (what about other universes?), or the “living” world (of people and other life-forms), of the self-constructed world of our senses and mind (called “formations”).¹¹

The question, “Do you believe in God?” is a wrong question, too (assuming that it is asked by a God-believer who wishes to convert another or defend his view). It assumes that to “believe” is a right or good thing to do. A “belief” is simply a view that is based on neither knowledge nor experience, but on imagination or wishful thinking (say, for power, that is, controlling others, or solving a certain problem). Again the notion “God” can mean anything to anyone. All the God-believing religions have their own definitions of God, and each think that only he is right, and everyone else is wrong. Since not everyone can be right here, could it mean that everyone is wrong?

¹⁰ For details, see **Dependent arising**, SD 5.16.

¹¹ On “world,” see **Rohitassa S** (S 2.26), SD 7.2 (1).

To frame a **right question**, then, we must begin with what is before us. For example, we might ask “How do we know things?” or “What can we know?” or “Why do we know?” or “Why am I asking this question (or these questions)?” The simple answers for these questions are respectively:

- (1) We have only our 5 physical senses and the mind to know with (that is, the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind).
- (2) All that we can know are the experiences of these 6 senses, that is, the six sense-objects (forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts).
- (3) Things happen because of impermanence and conditionality, which helps to understand the situation, the conditions behind it, the solution, and how to go about solving it.
- (4) The last question is also known as a “thought-reduction” self-healing process. We begin by openly asking ourselves why we think this way; an answer arises; then we question that answer and so on, until we come to the root of the problem.¹²

3.3.2 “Who” assumes an agent

As an interrogative pronoun, **who** (*P ko*) always refers to people or to other beings treated as humans (such as in stories). In other words, we might say that Phagguna is here taking “who” (*ko*) in this grammatical and conventional sense. In Buddhist terms, this is wrong here because he assumes—or such a usage assumes—that there is a person or some abiding “being” (*satta*) or self (*attā*) acting as an agent behind the action.

In our normal social communications, when we ask a “who” questions, we generally expect the answer to be a name (Who are you?) or someone who is identifiable (Who did this?). This works in the daily (that is, worldly and conventional) sense, but on a Dharma level, we need to understand that this wrongly implies some kind of identity behind the action, such as someone to praise or to blame, to reward or to punish, and so on. The reality is that there are neither “actors” nor “doers,” only actions and deeds. As **Buddhaghosa** famously says:

There is no doer of an action, nor the one who reaps the result: only mental states occur— this is truly right vision. Empty events occurs, with the component conditions as cause.	<i>kammasa kārako n’atthi vipākassa ca vedako suddha,dhammā pavattanti ev’etaṃ samma,dassanaṃ ... suñña,dhammā pavattanti hetu,sambhāra,paccayāti</i>	(Vism 19.20/602)
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The Buddha, in correcting Phagguna each time he asks a “who” question, is pointing out conditionality to him [3.3.1]. Events do not arise of themselves, but as a result of component conditions. There is no first cause, as there is only arising and passing away of events. When the conditions are right, an event occurs. These occur seamlessly to our eyes that we think such events are connected so that they go back to some point in the past. But the past is as infinite as the future: past, present and future are all our awareness of time. Whatever exists, exists in time: they are all conditioned and necessarily impermanent.

¹² On this “thought-reduction” method, see **Vitakka Saṅṭhāna S** (M 20.6/1:120) @ SD 1.6 & **Samaṇa Gadrabha S** (A 3.81), SD 24/10b (2.1.3).

3.3.3 “What” refers to a state or event

Whenever Phagguna asks a “who” question, the Buddha corrects him to rephrase it as a “what” question [§§3-7]. In conventional language, the interrogative pronoun **what** refers mostly to something not human, but it can refer to people when it comes before a noun (eg, “What kind of person did this?”). In Buddhist terms, *what* (P *kim*) is often taken in the instrumental mood (“with what?”), that is, we are looking for the conditions that bring about the arising of an event (here a person or being, too, is regarded as an *event* or *process*).

Having said that, we still need to understand the “what” question: that it looks for conditions, not for an agent or entity behind the event. To ask “What is that?” in this case, is to seek for such an abiding entity or fixed quality. In fact, when we keep on looking for some kind of “that” (P *tam*), we are identifying with it, meaning that there is some kind of measuring or conceit (*māna*), and we wish to appropriate *that* if we see it as pleasurable, or to reject *that*, if we think it is painful. This is called “thatness” (*tam, mayatā*), which is a synonym for craving (*taṇhā*). We are thus admonished to cultivate its antidote, that is, “non-thatness” (*atam, mayatā*), or not identifying with anything.¹³

3.3.4 “Why” looks for conditions

If we look deeper into such events or processes, questioning them as we have done, as taught in the Moliya Phagguna Sutta, we invariably come to a point where we would ask **why** questions. In conventional, even philosophical, language, a *why* question usually seeks a reason or cause or meaning. In the daily or worldly situation, how we answer a *why* question inevitably depends on our personal views and what we know (as well as what we do not know). Here, we are all biased, since we are each looking at the situation from our own personal angle.

In the Buddhist teachings, the why question is a closer look into the conditionality behind an event. We look at the event or process first and then ask “Why does this happen?” or “Why is this so?” Now in the Sutta, the first right question is: “What is the food that is consciousness “for?” (*kissa nu kho bhante viññāṇ’āhāro’ti*). This is of course a “what” question?

Here, when we ask a why question, we reverse or invert (turn around) the question: “Why is there birth or rebirth?” or better, “Why does birth or rebirth arise?” Answer: It arises on account of “food that is consciousness,” which in turn arises on account of formations (*saṅkhārā*) or our karma of body, speech and mind; which in turn arises from ignorance. And why is there ignorance? The best answer: I don’t know!¹⁴

3.3.5 “How” is the way out

Now that we have the right questions (so far), we can go on to look for the right answers: How do we solve the problem, or overcome suffering, or how do we become truly happy? This is not about changing the world: nobody has been able to do that! [3.3.1.2]. We may not be able to change the world, we can and need to change ourselves. This self-change or mental evolution begins with asking the right questions, and then reflecting on the answers.

On a practical level, let us begin with the basics. We have a conscious body and there are other living bodies, and we all feel special about this body: we love life. Hence, it makes sense for us to respect life, our own and those of others. To respect life means to understand the meaning and purpose of life. The meaning of life is that it is impermanent but capable of boundless happiness, physical and mental.

¹³ See *Atammayatā*, SD 19.13.

¹⁴ On formations, see *Saṅkhārā*, SD 17.6.

The purpose of life then is to grow or evolve into better beings. This also means a wholesome use of our speech and other means of communicating with others. In this sense, we can say that we are living **morally virtuous lives**.

When our body is healthy and our communication with others is healthy, too, a good society or community is possible. Our society should not just be a herd of living beings, but an ideal or at least workable environment for **mental development**, not just for the betterment of our society, but our personal or spiritual growth.

In other words, we have a better self-understanding so that we can tap the depths of our minds and hearts, so that we directly see truth and enjoy beauty. We are only wise and truly free when we understand the nature of truth and beauty. This is the cultivation of **wisdom**, what frees us from the limits and frailties of our physical bodies and societies, to realize the best of our minds and hearts so that we live as fully liberated beings even beyond what we have imagined heaven or paradise to be.

3.3.6 The truth of these questions

All this analysis is not novel at all, for it is an application of the 4 noble truths to the Sutta teachings here. This is how the truths and the questions are related:

<u>The 4 noble truths</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Essence of the truth</u>	<u>Question</u>
(1) The 1 st noble truth	the state of suffering	unsatisfactoriness	“who”
(2) The 2 nd noble truth	the arising of suffering	craving	“what”
(3) The 3 rd noble truth	the end of suffering	nirvana	“why”
(4) The 4 th noble truth	the way to suffering’s end	the eightfold path	“how”

The essence of the 1st noble truth is found in our constant “**who**” questions: Who am I? Who are you? Who was I? Who will he be? and so on. Such questions are based on the notion of an abiding ego or self. It brings about a profound sense of **unsatisfactoriness** because we think in terms of an unchanging personality and mental fixations. As a result we are unable even to see that something is wrong. The idea of an abiding entity is based on craving, and not knowing what this is all about is ignorance.

The 2nd noble truth centres around the “**what**” questions. We tend to look at ourselves, others and life as a whole as consisting of things which we measure and desire to collect. We often ask: What am I worth? What are you worth to me? Is this worth doing? These only involve *thinking* and calculating, without any wholesome *feeling*, certainly lacking in lovingkindness. The “what” fixation is a result of **craving**.

The end of suffering—the 3rd noble truth—begins with our asking: “**Why**” do we think this way? All answers are provisional, and need to further questioned *why*, until we come to a “eureka” moment,¹⁵ a realization our personality, tendencies and fixations are all past conditionings reacting negatively what is before us—**the solution and true happiness**. We envision how without such mental fetters we become spiritually liberated and awakened beings. We also realize that these fetters are all mind-made, and as such can be unmade by the mind.

“**How**” do we liberate ourselves and awaken to true reality? This is the 4th noble truth: **the way** to the end of suffering, the noble eightfold path. With this understanding, we empower ourselves to deconstruct these conditions and conditionings, so that we become free of them, at least temporarily, and feel the joy of spiritual freedom, which in turn reinforces our inner strength until we are fully awakened.

¹⁵ **Eureka** (Gk Εύρηκα, “I’ve found it!”) is an interjection expressing the joy of a discovery or invention. It is a transliteration of an exclamation attr to the ancient Greek mathematician and inventor Archimedes of Syracuse (c287-c212 BCE), who discovered the basis of specific gravity.

3.4 DEPENDENT ENDING

The Buddha then continues his teaching with dependent ending, beginning thus: “But, Phagguna, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases of contact there is the cessation of contact” [§8]. The Commentary notes,

Here the Teacher takes up that very point from where he started the exposition: “Conditioned by the six sense-bases, there is contact,” and here he now turns around the exposition (to the dependent ending).

In this discourse, there is one link (of cause and fruit) between consciousness and mind-and-body; one link (of fruit and cause) between feeling and craving, and one link (of cause and fruit) between the process of existence and birth. (SA 2:31)

The Saṃyutta Subcommentary adds here that

Since, in the words of the discourse, ‘The food that is consciousness is a condition for the future arising of a renewed existence,’ is taken as a condition in a former existence for a future existence, and as being a principal cause (*mūla, kārana*), therefore the Commentary says that ‘there is a link (of cause and fruit) between consciousness and mind-and-body.’ Hence it should be understood that by the term consciousness, also the ‘kamma-forming consciousness’ (*abhisankhāra, viññāṇa*) is implied” (ie, apart from being resultant rebirth-consciousness). (SAṬ:Be 2:35)

4 The Kakacūpama Sutta

The Kakacūpama Sutta, “the Discourse on the Parable of the Saw” (M 21), opens with the Buddha admonishing Moliya Phagguna on his excessive socializing with the nuns.¹⁶ The Buddha explains to Phagguna that his attachment to the nuns has made him prone to feeling upset when anyone speaks ill of them. Applying a “graduated scale of ill-treatment” model, the Buddha exhorts him:

Phagguna, if anyone were to speak ill of the nuns...you should abandon any desire based on the household life, or any thought based on the household life...

Phagguna, if anyone were to give you a blow with his hand, with clods of earth, with a rod, or with a knife, you should abandon any desire based on the household life, or any thought based on the household life. And here you should train yourself thus:

“My mind will be unaffected, and I shall utter no evil words; and I shall dwell compassionate for his wellbeing, with a mind of lovingkindness, without inner hate.”

This, Phagguna, is how you should train yourself. (M 21,6/1:123 f)

The graduated scale of ill-treatment is famously found in **the Puṇṇ’ovāda Sutta** (M 145).¹⁷ However, it is presented in a more dramatic context of **the Kakacūpama Sutta** (M 21).

Sadly, however, it appears that Phagguna is unmoved by the Buddha’s admonition or feels that he has failed in the training. In **the Kaḷāra Sutta** (S 12.32), the kshatriya Kaḷāra reports to Sāriputta that Moliya Phagguna has returned to the lay life.¹⁸

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¹⁶ M 21.1-6/1:122-124.

¹⁷ M 145/3:267-270 ≈ **Puṇṇa S** (S 35.88/4:60-63), SD 20.15 (4.2).

¹⁸ S 12.32/2:50 @ SD 83.6. For a list of suttas recording case where the Buddha give teachings even though his audience is not converted, see **Udumbarikā Sihanāda S** (D 25), SD 1.4 (2.3).

Moḷiya Phagguṇa Sutta

The Discourse to Moḷiya Phagguṇa

S 12.12

1 [The Blessed One] was residing at Sāvattḥī ... [13]

The 4 kinds of food

2 ¹⁹“Bhikshus, there are these 4 kinds of food [nutriment] for the maintenance of beings that have arisen, and for the support of those seeking birth.”²⁰

What are the four?

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| (1) material food | (<i>kabaḷiṅkāra āhāra</i>), | gross or subtle; |
| (2) contact | (<i>phassa</i>) | is the second; |
| (3) mental volition | (<i>mano,sañcetanā</i>) | is the third; and |
| (4) consciousness | (<i>viññāṇa</i>) | is the fourth. |

These, bhikshus, are the four kinds of food [nutriment] for the maintenance of beings that have arisen, and for the support of those seeking birth.”²¹

Consciousness

3.1 When this was spoken, the elder Moḷiya Phagguṇa²² said this to the Blessed One:

“Now, bhante, *who* consumes (*ko āhāreti*) the ‘food that is consciousness’?”²³

“The question is not valid [wrongly put],” said the Blessed One, “I do not say that ‘One consumes.’²⁴ If I had said, ‘One consumes,’ then it would be valid to ask, ‘Bhante, who consumes?’

3.2 But I did not speak thus. Since I did not speak thus, if one should ask me,

‘Now, bhante, what is the “food that is consciousness” for?’²⁵—this would be a valid question.

3.3 And the answer to this valid question is:

‘The “food that is consciousness” is a condition for the re-arising of future rebirth.’²⁶

¹⁹ This whole section is stock: see **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38,15/1:261 @ SD 7.10) & also in **Āhāra S** (S 12.11/2:11 @ SD 12.11). See foll n.

²⁰ *Ime kho bhikkhave cattāro āhārā bhūtānaṃ vā sattānaṃ tṭhiyā sambhavesīnaṃ vā anuggahāyāti.* On **sambhavesī**, see **Putta,maṃsa S** (S 12.63.2) @ SD 20.6 n ad loc; as “intermediate beings,” see “Beings seeking birth,” SD 2.16(7).

²¹ Comy: The Blessed One stops the teaching at this point because he knows that there is an opinionated person (*diṭṭhi,gatika*) in the gathering, and he wants to give him an opportunity to ask his questions. (SA 2:29)

²² On Moḷiya Phagguṇa, see Intro (2).

²³ *Ko nu kho bhante viññāṇ’āhāraṃ āhāreti.* Phagguṇa clearly believes that there is a “being” (*satta*) that depends on consciousness as food: see Intro (2-3).

²⁴ *Āhāreti ti ahaṃ na vadāmi.* Comy: “I do not say that there is any being or person that consumes (or eats).” SA 2:31)

²⁵ *Kissa nu kho bhante viññāṇ’āhāro’ti.* Comy: This means: “For what state (*katamassa dhammassa*) is consciousness as food a condition (*paccaya*)?” See Intro (4).

²⁶ *Viññāṇ’āhāro āyatim punabbhavābhiniḅbattiyā paccayo.* “Consciousness as food” here, as such, is the rebirth-consciousness: “This is the name-and-form (*nāma-rūpa*) conascent with that very (rebirth-)consciousness.” SA 2:31). This refers to the 3rd link of dependent arising: “With (rebirth-)consciousness as condition, name-and-form arises” (*viññāṇa,paccayā nāma,rūpaṃ*). See Intro (5).

When that *being* is, the six sense-bases are.²⁷
 With *the six sense-bases* as condition, there is contact.”

Contact

4.1 “Now, bhante, *who* touches [feels the contact] (*ko phusati*)?”

“The question is not valid [wrongly put],” said the Blessed One, “I do *not* say that ‘One touches.’ If I had said, ‘One touches,’ then it would be valid to ask, ‘Bhante, who touches?’

4.2 But I did not speak thus. Since I did not speak thus, if one should ask me, ‘Bhante, with what as condition is there contact?’²⁸—this would be a valid question.

4.3 And the answer to this valid question is:
 ‘With *the six sense-bases* as condition, there is contact.²⁹
 With *contact* as condition, there is feeling.’³⁰

Feeling

5.1 “Now, bhante, *who* feels (*ko vediyati*)³¹?”

“The question is not valid [wrongly put],” said the Blessed One, “I do *not* say that ‘One feels.’ If I had said, ‘One feels,’ then it would be valid to ask, ‘Bhante, who feels?’

5.2 But I did not speak thus. Since I did not speak thus, if one should ask me, ‘Now, bhante, with what as condition is there feeling?’³²—this would be a valid question.

5.3 And the answer to this valid question is:
 ‘With *contact* as condition, there is feeling.³³
 With *feeling* as condition, there is craving.’³⁴

Craving

6.1 “Now, bhante, *who* craves (*ko taṇhīyati*)³⁵?”

“The question is not valid [wrongly put],” said the Blessed One, “I do *not* say that ‘One craves.’ [14] If I had said, ‘One craves,’ then it would be valid to ask, ‘Bhante, who craves?’

6.2 But I did not speak thus. Since I did not speak thus, if one should ask me, ‘Now, bhante, with what as condition is there craving?’³⁶—this would be a valid question.

6.3 And the answer to this valid question is:

²⁷ *Tasmim bhūte sati saḷāyatanaṃ*. Comy: When that name-and-form called “the arising of rebirth” is produced, when it is, there is the sixfold sense-base. SA 2:31). Bodhi: “The conjunction *bhūte sati* is unusual and the redundancy can only be avoided if the past participle *bhūte* is here understood to function as a noun denoting the being that has come to be. (S:B 733 n25)

²⁸ *Kim paccayā nu kho, bhante, phasso’ti*. Comy: “The Blessed One said this to give the monk an opportunity for a further question.” SA 2:31)

²⁹ *Saḷāyatana, paccayā phasso*.

³⁰ *Phassa, paccayā vedanā*.

³¹ Ce Ee Ke: *vediyati*; Be: *vedayati*.

³² *Kim paccayā nu kho, bhante, vedanā ‘ti*.

³³ *Phassa, paccayā vedanā*.

³⁴ *Vedanā, paccayā taṇhā*.

³⁵ Be Ee: *tasati*; Ce Ke Se: *taṇhīyati*.

³⁶ *Kim paccayā nu kho, bhante, taṇhā ‘ti*.

‘With the *feeling* as condition, there is craving.³⁷
 With *craving* as condition, there is clinging.’³⁸

Clinging

7.1 ³⁹“Now, bhante, *who* clings (*ko upādiyati*)⁴⁰?”

“The question is not valid [wrongly put],” said the Blessed One, “I do *not* say that ‘One clings.’ If I had said, ‘One clings,’ then it would be valid to ask, ‘Bhante, who clings?’

7.2 But I did not speak thus. Since I did not speak thus, if one should ask me,

‘Now, bhante, with what as condition is there clinging?’⁴¹—this would be a valid question.

Dependent arising (continues)

7.3 And the answer to this valid question is:

‘With the craving as condition,	there is clinging. ⁴²
With clinging as condition,	there is existence. ⁴³
With existence as condition,	there is birth.
With birth as condition,	there arise decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair.

Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.⁴⁴

Dependent ending

8 But, Phagguṇa, with the remainderless fading away and cessation of the six bases of contact, there is the cessation of contact;⁴⁵
 with the cessation of contact, there is the cessation of feeling;
 with the cessation of feeling, there is the cessation of craving;
 with the cessation of craving, there is the cessation of clinging;
 with the cessation of clinging, there is the cessation of existence;
 with the cessation of existence, there is the cessation of birth;
 with the cessation of birth, there is the cessation of decay-and-death, sorrow,
 lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair.

Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.”

— evaṃ —

³⁷ *Vedanā, paccayā taṇhā.*

³⁸ *Taṇhā, paccayā upādānā.*

³⁹ This passage is abridged in Bodhi’s S:B tr,

⁴⁰ *Upādiyati.*

⁴¹ *Kiṃ paccayā nu kho, bhante, upādānan ‘ti.*

⁴² *Taṇhā, paccayā upādānaṃ.*

⁴³ *Upādāna, paccayā bhavo.*

⁴⁴ Comy: Why does not the monk continue to ask: ‘Who becomes?’ See Intro (6).

⁴⁵ The dependent ending begins here: see Intro (7).

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