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## (Nidāna) Loka Sutta

The (Causation) Discourse on the World | S 12.44  
 (Samuday'atthaṅgama) Loka Sutta The Discourse on (the Rise and Fall of) the World  
 Theme: The dependent arising of the world  
 Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

### 1 Introduction

1.1 The (Samuday'atthaṅgama) Loka Sutta contains this famous statement:

Bhikshus, dependent on the eye and forms, *eye-consciousness* arises.

**The meeting of the three is contact.**<sup>1</sup> With contact, as condition there is feeling.

[The same applies to rest of the sense-bases, sense-objects, sense-consciousnesses.]

1.2 This passage is also found in the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta (M 18/1:108-114) and the (Sabb'upādāna) Pariññā Sutta (S 35.60/4:32 f), but in different contexts. In the **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18), the passage is followed by the statement in terms of perception:

What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about.<sup>2</sup> What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates. What a person mentally proliferates is the source through which perceptions and notions due to mental proliferation<sup>3</sup> impacts one regarding past, future and present forms cognizable through the eye ... ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind.<sup>4</sup>

(M 18/1:108-114), SD 6.14

1.3 The main text of the short (**Sabb'upādāna) Pariññā Sutta** (S 35.60) reads:

Seeing thus, the learned noble disciple is disillusioned towards the eye, towards forms, towards eye-consciousness, towards eye-contact, towards feeling...[and towards each of the other five sense-bases, sense-objects, sense-consciousnesses, sense-contact, and feeling]...

Being revulsed<sup>5</sup> (at reality), he becomes dispassionate.

Through dispassion, it [his mind] is freed.

With liberation,<sup>6</sup> he understands, "Clinging has been fully understood by me."

(S 35.60/4:32 f), SD 6.17

For a definition of each of the 12 links of dependent arising mentioned here, see **the (Paṭicca,sam-  
 uppāda) Vibhaṅga Sutta** (S 12.2).<sup>7</sup>

1.4 It is interesting to note here that the cycle of dependent arising is shown to be broken at the link between feeling (*vedanā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) [§§11.2, 17]. Since the dependent arising comprises links, if

<sup>1</sup> *Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso*. For a discussion on this passage, see Bucknell 1999:318 ff.

<sup>2</sup> "One thinks about," *vitakketi*. On how when thinking stops, desires do not arise, see **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,2.2/-2:277), SD 54.8.

<sup>3</sup> *Papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*, see SD 6.14 (3).

<sup>4</sup> This important passage is the earliest statement on the Buddhist theory of perception. See **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18) in SD 6.13 (4). See SD 6.13 & SD 6.15 respectively.

<sup>5</sup> "Revulsed," *nibbindani*. The Eng word "revulse" is a neologism, a back-formation from "revulsion." See SD 17.12.

<sup>6</sup> "Liberation," *vimokkha*. This is an unusual term since the previous sentence says *virāgā vimuccati*, and one would expect *vimuttiyā* (liberation), the noun more directly related to *vimuccati*, to follow

<sup>7</sup> S 12.2/2:2-4 (SD 5.11).

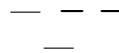
any of the links is broken or missing, it means that the cycle is broken. As the links occur with such momentary rapidity, it is almost impossible for us to notice a weak link.

However, there is such a link, that is, the link between feeling and craving.<sup>8</sup>

It is at that brief moment when the present resultant phase has come to a culmination in feeling, but the present causal phase has not yet begun, that the issue of bondage and liberation is decided. If the response to feeling is governed by ignorance and craving, the round continues to revolve; if the response replaces craving with restraint, mindfulness, and methodical attention, a movement is made in the direction of cessation.

(Bodhi, *The Great Discourse on Causation*, 1984:12)

This is a common view, but there are those who disagree with it. The controversy arising from this passage is discussed in the article on “**Dependent arising**” (SD 5.14(18)).



## (Nidāna) Loka Sutta The (Causation) Discourse on the World

S 12.44

[73]

1 [The Buddha was] residing at Sāvattthī.

2 Bhikshus, I will teach you **the arising and the ending**<sup>9</sup> of the world.<sup>10</sup>

Listen, bhikshus, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante!” the bhikshus replied the Blessed One in assent.

The Blessed One said this:

### The arising of the world

3 And what, bhikshus, is **the arising of the world**?

(1) EYE-BASED DEPENDENT ARISING

4 Bhikshus, dependent on **the eye** and forms, eye-consciousness arises.

The meeting of the three is contact.<sup>11</sup>

With contact as condition, there is feeling.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See also **Avijjā Pahāna S 2** (S 35.80/4:50), SD 16.9.

<sup>9</sup> “Ending,” *atthaṅgama*, lit “going home, setting (of the sun).”

<sup>10</sup> On the 3 types of “world,” see **Rohitassa S** (S 2.26/1:61 f), SD 7 (1).

<sup>11</sup> *Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso*. For a discussion on this passage, see Bucknell 1999:318 f f.

<sup>12</sup> From hereon, **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18,16) continues: “What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates. What a person mentally proliferates is the source through which perceptions and notions due to mental proliferation (\*\*\*) impacts one regarding past, future and present forms cognizable through the eye.” (M 18,16/1:112 f). See SD 6.13. A passage similar to this section (the preceding three sentences) is found in **Pariññā S** (S 35.60) where, however, the learned noble disciple becomes disillusioned (*nibbindati*) with the contact arising from sense-organ, sense-object and sense-consciousness (also

with feeling as condition, there is craving;  
 with craving as condition, there is clinging;  
 with clinging as condition, there is existence;  
 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.

—This, bhikshus, is the arising of the world.

(2) EAR-BASED DEPENDENT ARISING

**5** Bhikshus, dependent on **the ear** and sounds, ear-consciousness arises.

*The meeting of the three is contact.*  
*With contact as condition, there is feeling;*  
*with feeling as condition, there is craving;*  
*with craving as condition, there is clinging;*  
*with clinging as condition, there is existence;*  
*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.

—This, bhikshus, is the arising of the world.

(3) NOSE-BASED DEPENDENT ARISING

**6** Bhikshus, dependent on **the nose** and smells, nose-consciousness arises.

*The meeting of the three is contact.*  
*With contact as condition, there is feeling;*  
*with feeling as condition, there is craving;*  
*with craving as condition, there is clinging;*  
*with clinging as condition, there is existence;*  
*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.

—This, bhikshus, is the arising of the world.

(4) TONGUE-BASED DEPENDENT ARISING

**7** Bhikshus, dependent on **the tongue** and tastes, tongue-consciousness arises.

*The meeting of the three is contact.*  
*With contact as condition, there is feeling;*  
*with feeling as condition, there is craving;*  
*with craving as condition, there is clinging;*  
*with clinging as condition, there is existence;*  
*with existence as condition, there is birth;*  
*with birth as condition there arise*  
*decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.*

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using the sentence, *tinnari saṅgati phasso*), thereby “becomes dispassionate (*virajjati*); through dispassion, he is freed (*vimuccati*); through liberation, he understands, ‘Clinging has been fully understood by me.’” (S 35.60/4:32 f).

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

—This, bhikshus, is the arising of the world.

(5) BODY-BASED DEPENDENT ARISING

**8** Bhikshus, dependent on **the body** and touches, body-consciousness arises.

*The meeting of the three is* *contact.*

*With contact as condition, there is* *feeling;*

*with feeling as condition, there is* *craving;*

*with craving as condition, there is* *clinging;*

*with clinging as condition, there is* *existence;*

*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.*

—This, bhikshus, is the arising of the world.

(6) MIND-BASED DEPENDENT ARISING

**9** Bhikshus, dependent on **the mind**<sup>13</sup> and mind-objects, mind-consciousness<sup>14</sup> arises.

*The meeting of the three is* *contact.*

*With contact as condition, there is* *feeling;*

*with feeling as condition, there is* *craving;*

*with craving as condition, there is* *clinging;*

*with clinging as condition, there is* *existence;*

*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.*

—This, bhikshus, is the arising of the world.

## The ending of the world

**10** And what, bhikshus, is **the ending of the world**?

(1) END OF THE EYE-CONSTRUCTED WORLD

**11** Bhikshus, dependent on **the eye** and forms, eye-consciousness arises.

The meeting of the three is contact.

With contact as condition, there is feeling; with feeling as condition, there is **craving**.

11.2 But, with the remainderless fading away and ending of that same craving,

comes **the ending of clinging**,<sup>15</sup>

with the ending of clinging, there is the ending of existence;

<sup>13</sup> “The mind,” *mana*. Here Comy on **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18.16/1:112) glosses as *bhavaṅga, citta* (MA 2:79), the life-continuum, sometimes called the unconscious or sub-conscious.

<sup>14</sup> “Mind-consciousness,” *mano, viññāṇa*. Here Comy glosses as “advertence” (*āvajjana*) and impulsion (*javana*) (MA 2:77).

<sup>15</sup> This apparently shows that the dependent arising cycle can be broken here. For a different opinion, see **Dependent arising**, SD 5.12 (18).

with the ending of existence,        there is the ending of birth;  
 with the ending of birth,  
 there is the ending of decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.

11.3 Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

—This, bhikshus, is the ending of the world.

(2) END OF THE EAR-CONSTRUCTED WORLD

**12** Bhikshus, dependent on **the ear and sounds**, ear-consciousness arises.

*The meeting of the three is contact.*

*With contact as condition, there is feeling; with feeling as condition, there is **craving**.*

12.2 But, with the remainderless fading away and ending of that same *craving*,

comes **the ending of clinging**;

with the ending of clinging,        there is the ending of existence;

with the ending of existence,        there is the ending of birth;

with the ending of birth,

*there is the ending of decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.*

*Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering. [74]*

—This, bhikshus, is the ending of the world.

(3) END OF THE NOSE-CONSTRUCTED WORLD

**13** Bhikshus, dependent on **the nose and smells**, nose-consciousness arises.

*The meeting of the three is contact.*

*With contact as condition, there is feeling; with feeling as condition, there is **craving**.*

13.2 But, with the remainderless fading away and ending of that same *craving*,

comes **the ending of clinging**;

with the ending of clinging,        there is the ending of existence;

with the ending of existence,        there is the ending of birth;

with the ending of birth,

*there is the ending of decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.*

*Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.*

—This, bhikshus, is the ending of the world.

(4) END OF THE TONGUE-CONSTRUCTED WORLD

**14** Bhikshus, dependent on **the tongue and tastes**, tongue-consciousness arises.

*The meeting of the three is contact.*

*With contact as condition, there is feeling; with feeling as condition, there is **craving**.*

14.2 But with the remainderless fading away and ending of that same *craving*

comes **the ending of clinging**;

with the ending of clinging,        there is the ending of existence;

with the ending of existence,        there is the ending of birth;

with the ending of birth,

*there is the ending of decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.*

*Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.*

—This, bhikshus, is the ending of the world.

(5) END OF THE BODY-CONSTRUCTED WORLD

**15** Bhikshus, dependent on **the body and touches**, body-consciousness arises.

*The meeting of the three is contact.*

*With contact as condition, there is feeling; with feeling as condition, there is **craving**.*

15.2 But, with the remainderless fading away and ending of that same *craving*,

comes **the ending of clinging**;

*with the ending of clinging,                    there is the ending of existence;*

*with the ending of existence,            there is the ending of birth;*

*with the ending of birth,*

*there is the ending of decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.*

*Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.*

*—This, bhikshus, is the ending of the world.*

(6) END OF THE MIND-CONSTRUCTED WORLD

**16** Bhikshus, dependent on **the mind and mind-objects**, mind-consciousness arises.

*The meeting of the three is contact.*

*With contact as condition, there is feeling; with feeling as condition, there is **craving**.*

**17** But, with the remainderless fading away and ending of that same *craving*,

comes **the ending of clinging**;

*with the ending of clinging,                    there is the ending of existence;*

*with the ending of existence,            there is the ending of birth;*

*with the ending of birth,*

*there is the ending of decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.*

*Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.*

*—This, bhikshus, is the ending of the world.”*

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