

6abc

Cetanā Sutta 1-3

Discourses on Volition | S 12.38-40

1 Related Sutta teachings

These three suttas have an identical name—the **Cetanā Sutta 1-3** (S 12.38-40)¹—and, as the title suggests, deal with volition (*cetanā*), but each in a different way. Such a collection is valuable as a scriptural Rosetta Stone² for comparing the senses of the same teachings (volition and karma) in different contexts. **Bh Bodhi** makes this instructive note:

These variants make it plain that the sequence of factors should not be regarded as a linear causal process in which each preceding factor gives rise to its successor through the simple exercise of efficient causality. The relationship among the factors is always one of complex conditionality rather than linear causation. The conditioning function can include such diverse relations as mutuality (when two factors mutually support each other), necessary antecedence (when two factors mutually support each other), necessary antecedence (when one factor must be present for another to arise), distal efficiency (as when a remotely past volitional formation generates consciousness in a new life), etc. (Bodhi S:B 522 f)

All the three suttas speak, in different ways, of the conditions “for the establishing [sustaining] of consciousness” (*viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā*), that is, how consciousness moves on to a new existence. This is sometimes called “existential consciousness.”³ The three discourses are closely related to **the Atta, kāri Sutta** (A 6.38), which says that karma and rebirth arises through one’s latent tendencies, and not just as a result of intentional acts.⁴

All this shows that we can proceed directly from consciousness (*viññāṇa*) (the usual third link in the 12 links of dependent arising)⁵ to “rebirth” (*puna-b, bhava*), that is, existence (*bhava*) (the usual tenth factor),⁶ as exemplified in **the Cetanā Sutta 1** (S 12.38). This first Cetanā Sutta shows that the conditions for the arising and sustenance of consciousness are the latent tendencies (*anusaya*), defined here as comprising ignorance and craving, and “what one intends, what one plans,” that is, our volitional forma-

¹ See §§6abc below.

² The Rosetta Stone is an ancient Egyptian stele which was instrumental in advancing modern understanding of hieroglyphic writing. The stone, a carved text of Ptolemy V’s time, contains three translations of a single passage, written in two Egyptian language scripts (hieroglyphic and Demotic), and in classical Greek. Created in 196 BCE, it was discovered by Napoleon’s French army in 1799 at Rosetta (today Rashid), a harbor on the Mediterranean coast in Egypt, and was deciphered in 1822 by the French scholar Jean-François Champollion.

³ “**Existential consciousness**” is a modern generic term for what is commonly known in the texts as “being-to-be-born” or *gandharva* (*gandhabba*) (M 1:266, 2:157; *tatrūpagata, satto*, “the being that has arrived there,” MA 2:310), and in Comys as “rebirth consciousness” (*paṭisandhi, citta*, DA 2:430; MA 4:174; SA 1:184, 2:31), and “life-continuum” (*bhavaṅga*, DA 1:194, 2:594; MA 1:262, 2:77, 229, 352, 366; SA 1:184, 224, 2:358, 3:4, 54, 97, 3:191). In contrast, there is “**cognitive consciousness**,” which is operative during life itself, ie, in sense-experiencing. See **Nagara S** (S 12.65), SD 14.2 (2) & **Viññāṇa**, SD 17.8a (6).

⁴ A 6.38/3:37 f (SD 7.6).

⁵ The 12 links of the standard dependent arising are: (1) ignorance, (2) volitional formations, (3) consciousness, (4) name-and-form, (5) the 6 sense-bases, (6) contact, (7) feeling, (8) craving, (9) clinging, (10) existence, (11) birth, (12), decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair. See **Cetanā S 2** (S 12.39/2:66), SD 23.5 & also **Dependent arising**, SD 5.16 (4).

⁶ See **Dependent arising**, SD 5.16.

tions (*saṅkhāra*).⁷ Once consciousness is established (that is, arises and continues), the new existence begins [§2].

According to **the Cetanā Sutta 2** (S 12.39), when consciousness is arises and grows, “there is the descent of name-and-form.”⁸ It shows how name-and-form (*nāma,rūpa*) sets rolling the chain of dependent arising resulting in protracted suffering. Here we see *karma fruition* acting up us: this is the “passive” aspect of the karmic process. (The active or doing aspect of karma is still defined as *intention*.)⁹

The Cetanā Sutta 3 (S 12.40) shows how latent tendencies condition our personal inclinations of habits (*nati*). Although such habits are rooted in latent tendencies, which are effectively past karma, we can still correct them, or overcome the unwholesome roots of action, through our present actions. Here we have a situation where karma is still created on account of our *habitually* being defined and controlled by our past. This is where karma breeds like karma.

These three suttas (and similar ones) show that not everything we experience (or do not experience) is due to past karma. Even if they do arise from past karma, they arise on account of present conditions, which further aggravate or mitigate them. They also throw some light on our study on *whether there is free will*.¹⁰ Basically, these suttas show that due to our latent tendencies (*anusaya*), accumulated through our karma over numerous lives, effectively condition our lives. However, by destroying these latent tendencies we ultimately free ourselves from this cyclic life. [4]

2 Commentary on Cetanā Sutta 1¹¹

2.1 CETANĀ SUTTA 1 STATEMENT 1 (S 12.38,2). Here, the Cetanā Sutta 1 focusses on latent tendencies (*anusaya*)¹² as the force behind one’s deeds, rebirth and suffering. According to **Bodhi**, here:

saṅkhārā are referred to elliptically by the expressions *yam ceteti*, “what one will,” and *yam pakappeti*, “what one plans” (*pakappeti* is a rare term, apparently synonymous with *ceteti*). The expression *yam anuseti*, ‘what lies latent within,’ points to the *anusaya*, the latent tendencies, which other texts tell us include the latent tendency of ignorance (*avijjānusaya*) and the latent tendency of lust or craving (*rāgānusaya*) [M 1:190 f, 1:303 etc]. Thus, this sutta is stating that when one forms volitions on the basis of ignorance and craving, these volitions become a support which grounds consciousness and establishes it in a new existence. Once consciousness becomes so established, it sets in motion the entire production of the new existence, beginning with birth and ending with death, accompanied by all the attendant suffering.

(1998:21, digital ed)

Bodhi further notes, in *In the Buddha’s Words* that:

Although it is not possible to have the underlying tendencies [latent tendencies] without intentions and plans, this passage might be seen to have the rhetorical purpose of emphasizing the role of the underlying tendencies in sustaining the process of rebirth. But according to [the Saṃyutta Commentary], the passage is intended to show that for an insight meditator who has overcome unwholesome thoughts, the danger of rebirth still exists as long as the underlying tendencies remain intact.

(Bodhi, *In the Buddha’s Words*, 2005: 451 n50)

⁷ On how consciousness arises from formations, see *Viññāna*, SD 17.8a (3.2).

⁸ S 12.39/2:66 (SD 23.5).

⁹ **Nibbedhika (Pariyāya) S** (A 6.6.3.11b/3:415), SD 6.11.

¹⁰ See SD 7.7.

¹¹ This section includes important nn (esp from the Sub-Comy) from S:B 757 n112.

¹² Or, latent dispositions.

Pace Bodhi's reservations that "it is not possible to have the underlying tendencies [latent tendencies] without intentions and plans," I think the Sutta passage, as it is, still makes sense without being "rhetorical." The point is that we do *not* intend and plan all the time (certainly not while we are asleep or deep in meditation), and also that the latent tendencies, as it were, move on their own momentum as stored or potential karma.

The deepest roots of karma are the latent tendencies (lust, aversion and ignorance), by which one may consciously or *unconsciously* create karma through body, speech and mind. This is clearly stated in the conclusion of **the (Kamma,vāda) Bhūmija Sutta** (S 12.25),¹³ which is repeated in **the Sañcetanā Sutta** (A 4.171).¹⁴

2.2 CETANĀ SUTTA 1 STATEMENT 2 (S 12.38,3). The Saṃyutta Commentary (SA 2:71) explains the second statement of the sutta in this manner. This statement refers to the moment when there is occurrence of any (wholesome or unwholesome) volition of the 3 planes (*bhūmi*),¹⁵ and no occurrence of mental fabrications of craving and views. By "**but one still has a habitual tendency**" (*atha ce anuseti*) is meant that the latent tendencies are included because they have not been abandoned here in the resultants of the three planes, in the limited functional states (the five-door adverting and mind-door adverting cittas),¹⁶ and in form. As long as the latent tendencies exist, they become a condition for the karmic consciousness; for there is no way to prevent its arising.

The Saṃyutta Porāṇa Ṭīkā says that this second statement shows that wholesome and unwholesome karma capable of producing rebirth is accumulated in the preliminary stage (of the path of practice), and that even without planning (through craving and views), the volitions of insight meditation in a meditator who has seen the dangers in existence are still conditioned by the latent tendencies and are capable of generating rebirth. It is also stated to show that even when wholesome and unwholesome states are not occurring, there is still an establishing of karmic consciousness with latent defilements as condition; for so long as these have not been abandoned, they lie latent in the existing resultants of the three planes, etc. In other words, without mindfulness and wisdom one has practically no real over one's actions and their consequences.

2.3 CETANĀ SUTTA 1 STATEMENT 3 (S 12.38,4). The Saṃyutta Commentary (SA 2:71 f) explains statement 3 of the sutta in this manner. The first phrase ("**one does not intend**") shows that the wholesome and unwholesome volitions pertaining to the three planes have ceased. The second phrase ("**does not plan**") shows that the craving and views in the eight cittas (accompanied by greed) have ceased. The third phrase ("**does not have a habitual tendency**") shows that the latent tendencies lying dormant in the aforesaid states have ceased. What is being discussed here? The function of the path of arhathood (*arahatta, maggassa kiccaṃ*). It can also mean the arhat's doing of his task (*khīṇ'āsavassa kicca, karaṇaṃ*) and the nine supramundane states (*nava, lok'uttara, hamma*), that is, the four paths, their fruits, and nirvana.

¹³ S 12.25,13-19 (SD 31.2).

¹⁴ A 4.171 (SD 51.14).

¹⁵ **The 3 planes** (*bhūmi*), which the Suttas call "existences" (*bhava*), ie, sense-existence or sense sphere (*kāma, bhava*), the form existence or form sphere (*rūpa, bhava*) and the formless existence or formless sphere (*arūpa, bhava*) (D 3:215; M 1:294). In the suttas, 4 planes (*bhūmi*) are also mentioned, ie, the sensuous plane (*kāmāvacara, bhūmi*), the form plane (*rūpāvacara, bhūmi*), and the formless plane (*arūpāvacara, bhūmi*) (Pm 1:83).

¹⁶ That is, they arise even before one is ever conscious of them. On the cognitive process (*citta, vīthi*), see Abhs: BRS 4.1-30/149-184 (ch 4). See T below.

← The 14 instants of process consciousness →

B	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	B
***	P	V	A	F	E	Rc	I	D	J	J	J	J	J	J	J	Rg	Rg	***
***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Stream of bhavaṅga	Past bhavaṅga	Vibrating bhavaṅga	Arrest bhavaṅga	Five-door adverting	Eye-consciousness	Receiving	Investigating	Determining							Registration	Registration	Stream of bhavaṅga	

Table 2.2 A Complete Eye-door Cognitive Process or Cycle (after Abhs:BRS 1999:155)

The Saṃyutta Porāṇa Tīkā says that in this third statement, the function of the path of arhathood is discussed because that path completely stops the production of latent tendencies. On the “arhat’s doing of his task,” the Tīkā remarks, “it is permissible to say that this is on account of his state of negating all feeling, etc” (*vattum vattati sabbaso vedan’ādinam paṭikkhepa, bhāvato*).¹⁷ The 9 supramundane states¹⁸ refer to the latent tendencies having been destroyed by the series of paths, where the fruits follow immediately upon the paths, and nirvana is the object of both.

Bodhi interprets the phrase “**when consciousness is not established [has no support]**” (*appatiṭṭhita viññāṇa*) here to refer to “a consciousness without the prospect of a future rebirth through the propulsive power of ignorance, craving, and the volitional formations” (S:B 760 n114). The arhat is said to pass finally away with consciousness “unestablished,” as described in **the Godhika Sutta** (S 4.23/1:122) and **the Vakkali Sutta** (S 22.87/3:24).¹⁹

3 Commentary on Cetanā Sutta 2

The Cetanā Sutta 2 (S 12.39) says that when consciousness is arises and grows, “there is the descent of name-and-form.”²⁰ It shows how name-and-form (*nāma, rūpa*) sets rolling the chain of dependent arising resulting in protracted suffering. Here we see the process of *karma fruition*, the “passive” aspect of the karma. The active or doing aspect of karma, already mentioned, is still defined as *intention*.²¹

In **the Moḷiya Phagguna Sutta** (S 12.12), the “further arising of rebirth” (*ayatim punabbhavābhini-batti*) is placed between consciousness and the six sense bases (S 12.12,3/2:13). Taken together, the Moḷiya Phagguna Sutta and the Cetanā Sutta 2 imply that the “**The descent of name-and-form**” (*nāma, rūpassa avakkanti*) and the “**further [continued] arising of rebirth**” are interchangeable, that is, they are synonymous. This, notes Bodhi, “in spite of the commentarial predilection for always seeing the latter as kammically active existence” (S:B 761 n115).

The Commentary says that there is a “link” (*sandhi*) between consciousness and name-and-form (SA 2:72), “thus on this interpretation, consciousness denotes the kammically generative consciousness of the previous existence, name-and-form the beginning of the present existence. It seems to me, however, more likely that *viññāṇa* straddles both the past and the present life, as the principle of personal continuity.” (S:B 761 n115)

4 Commentary on Cetanā Sutta 3

The Cetanā Sutta 3 (S 12.40) shows how latent tendencies condition our personal inclinations of habits (*nati*). Although such habits are rooted in latent tendencies, which are effectively past karma, we can still change or better them, that is, by overcoming the unwholesome roots of action, and cultivating the wholesome roots through our present actions.

The Cetanā Sutta 3 has a parallel teaching in **the Chann’ovāda Sutta** (M 144), where Mahā Cunda admonishes Channa:

¹⁷ Bodhi has “can be said because of the exclusion of feeling, etc (meaning unclear)” (S:B 760 n114).

¹⁸ “The 9 supramundane states” (*nava lok’uttara, dhammā*) are the 4 paths (*magga*) (entry into each stage of sainthood, the fruitions (*phala*) (their respective fulfillments) and nirvana (Dhs 1094).

¹⁹ See also **Anusaya**, SD 31.3 (1.3).

²⁰ S 12.39/2:66 (SD 23.5).

²¹ **Nibbedhika (Pariyāya) S** (A 6.63,11.2/3:415), SD 6.11.

When this was said, the venerable Mahā Cunda said this to the venerable Channa:²²

“Therefore, avuso Channa, this teaching of the Blessed One should be constantly considered:

‘There is wavering in one who is (emotionally) dependent; there is no wavering in one who is (emotionally) independent.

When there is no wavering, there is tranquillity.

When there is tranquillity, there is no inclination.

When there is no inclination, there is no coming and going.

When there is no coming and going, there is no passing away and reappearing.

When there is no passing away and reappearing, there is no here nor beyond nor in between.

This is the end of suffering.”

(M 144,11/3:266), SD 11.12²³

What is interesting here is Mahā Cunda’s statement that rebirth and suffering are rooted in “emotional dependence” (*nissita*), which the Majjhima Commentary explains as arising on account of craving and view (MA 5:83). “Craving” is the habit of reifying people, things and ideas, resulting in the notion that we need “more and more” to live happily; “view” is the delusion that sustains and moves craving, and its necessary opposite, hate.²⁴

The Saṃyutta Commentary explains the “support for consciousness” (*patitṭhā viññāṇassa*) and the “consciousness (that is) established” (*patitṭhite viññāṇe*) in all the three Suttas rather narrowly as “karmic consciousness” (*kamma,viññāṇa*), that is, as “karmic potential” (SA 1:70). **Bodhi**, however, interprets it “simply as the ongoing process of consciousness, including both the kammically active and resultant phases,”²⁵ that is, as cognitive consciousness.²⁶

Putting the three Suttas side by side, and comparing the following sentences, we come to an interesting conclusion. All three Suttas say, “When that consciousness is established and grows therein,...” but each continues in a different way, thus:

Cetanā Sutta 1 (S 12.38,2)	... there is further arising of rebirth (<i>āyatim punabbhava</i>);
Cetanā Sutta 2 (S 12.39,2)	... there is the descent of name-and-form (<i>nāma,rūpassa avakkanti</i>);
Cetanā Sutta 3 (S 12.40,3)	... there is inclination (<i>nati</i>).

We can easily see that “**further arising of rebirth**” and “**descent of name-and-form**” as referring to the same thing or as interchangeable: “This in spite of the commentarial predilection for always seeing the [former] as kammically active existence,” notes Bodhi.²⁷ The Saṃyutta Commentary says that there is a “link” (*sandhi*) between consciousness and rebirth (SA 1:72). Thus, on this interpretation, consciousness denotes the karmically generative consciousness of the previous existence. “It seems to me,” notes Bodhi, “however, more likely that *viññāṇa* straddles both the past life and the present life, as the principle of personal continuity” (id), that is, as existential consciousness.

The Cetanā Sutta 3 is one of the rare places where “**inclination**” is mentioned. The Saṃyutta Commentary says that this is craving. It is called “inclination” in the sense of inclining (*namanatṭhena*) towards pleasant forms, etc (SA 2:72), or inclining (*namanato*) to objects such as visible forms etc (UA 393,

²² SA says that Mahā Cunda, thinking, “I will make known (to him) his condition as an ordinary person,” gave the admonition (*Cunda-t,therena pan’assa puthujjana,bhāvaṃ saññāpessāmī ti ovādaṃ adāsī*, SA 2:372).

²³ S 35.87/4:59; U 8.4/81; UA 393, 398; Nett 65; cf S 12.40/2:67.

²⁴ See “**Mine**”: **The nature of craving**, SD 19.3.

²⁵ S:B 759 n112.

²⁶ “Cognitive consciousness,” see (1) n on “existential consciousness.”

²⁷ S:B 761 n115.

398). So while the first two Cetanā Suttas refer to existential consciousness, the Cetanā Sutta 3 refers only to cognitive consciousness.²⁸

5 Comparison with other suttas

By mindfully comparing the variant sutta texts above, we can see that at certain points in the series the links loop back, reminding us of the complexity of the process. For example, while *consciousness precedes the 6 sense-bases* in the standard formula, in **the (Samuday’atṭhaṅgama) Dukkha Sutta** (S 12.43) and **the (Samuday’atṭhaṅgama) Loka Sutta** (S 12.44), the 6 sense-bases are given as conditions for consciousness.²⁹ In fact, we find *both* processes mentioned together in **the Mahānidāna Sutta** (D 15).³⁰

Further, while *consciousness normally precedes and conditions craving*, **the Atthi,rāga Sutta** (S 12.64) gives craving (with lust and delight) as the condition for the continuation of consciousness and volitional formations as the condition for existence.³¹

The three Cetanā Suttas should be studied in connection with the following discourses:

- **Atthi,rāga Sutta** (S 12.64/2:101-104) Consciousness arises dependent on the 4 kinds of food (*āhāra*).³²
- **Upaya Sutta** (S 22.53/3:53 f) One who is engaged (*upaya*) with the 5 aggregates is not liberated; that consciousness arises dependent on the aggregates.
- **Bija Sutta** (S 22.54/3:54 f) Consciousness is compared to seed propagation; seeds grow when the right conditions are present.³³

The Bhava Sutta (A 3.76) explains the process of rebirth in similar terms as the Cetanā Sutta 1, thus:

Karma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture, for consciousness...to be established [find support] in a low (... a middling; ... a superior) realm. Thus there is further rebirth. (*Kammaṃ khettaṃ viññāṇaṃ bijaṃ taṇhā sineho...hīnāya (...majjhimāya;...paṇitāya) dhātuyā viññāṇaṃ patiṭṭhitāṃ. Evaṃ āyatim punabbhavābhiniḥḥatti hoti.*) (A 3.76/1:223 f)

According to **Bodhi**, “[t]his implies that it is the stream of consciousness coming from the preceding existence that functions as the nutriment consciousness by generating, at the moment of conception, the initial rebirth-consciousness, which in turn brings forth (or “nourished”) the concomitant name-and-form.” (S:B 733 n24)

6 The 3 related suttas and important terms

6.1 The Critical Pali Dictionary (CPD) gives two main forms of the verb *anuseti*: (1) said of a person: to adhere, to cling to, to be occupied about (acc) (S 2:65); (2) said of things: to lie dormant (continually aris-

²⁸ See (1) n on “existential consciousness.”

²⁹ Respectively S 12.43/2:71-73 & S 12.44/2:73 f.

³⁰ D 15,21-22/2:62-65 (SD 5.17). See also **Nagara S** (S 12.65), SD 14.2 (2) & **Viññāṇa**, SD 17.8a(6).

³¹ S 12.64/2:101-104.

³² On “food” (*āhāra*), see **(Upādāna) Parivattā S** (S 22.56.7)n in SD 3.7 (2003).

³³ For a comparison of consciousness to seeds, see **Bija S** (S 22.54/3:54 f) & **Bhava S** (A 3.76/1:223 f). For a comparison of karma to seeds, see **(Kamma) Nidāna S** (A 3.33/1:134-136), SD 4.14. For a poetic version of the vegetation simile, see **Selā S** (S 5.9/1:134c = 550*).

ing again).³⁴ The Cetanā Suttas' context is that of a person; as such, I have rendered it as "one has a habitual tendency." The verb *anuseti* refers to *anusaya* (latent tendencies), of which there are three kinds.³⁵

The latent tendency of lust (*rāgānusaya*) (ie, craving, in the dependent arising formula)
 The latent tendency of aversion (*paṭighānusaya*), and
 The latent tendency of ignorance (*āvijjānusaya*).

The first and third of these 3 latent tendencies also belong to the standard dependent arising formula. The two—craving and ignorance—maintain consciousness in the same way as volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*), fueled by ignorance and craving, act as the condition for consciousness. Together they fuel the flow of consciousness, fill it with karmic potential for existence, thereby initiating the process leading to birth.

6.2 Some useful points by Bodhi should be noted:

I am not in agreement with [the Saṃyutta Commentary] in taking the *viññāṇa* that is "maintained" and "established" [*patiṭṭhita*] as the kammic consciousness. I interpret it simply as the ongoing process of consciousness, including both the kammically active and the resultant phases. At S 22.53-54 [**Upaya Sutta**, **Bija Sutta** respectively] the other four aggregates are spoken of as the *ārammaṇa* and *patiṭṭhita* of *viññāṇa*, but I am doubtful that this application will work here. To use the categories of the Abhidhamma, it seems that in this sutta the terms *ārammaṇa* and *patiṭṭhita* denote the decisive-support condition (*upanissaya, paccaya*) for consciousness, while in the two suttas in the Khandha Saṃyutta they denote the conascence and support conditions (*sahajāta, paccaya, nissaya, paccaya*).

I use "volition" as a rendering for *cetanā* but "intends" for the corresponding verb *ceteti*; I use "intention" for the unrelated noun *saṅkappa*. I justify this apparent inconsistency on the ground that in Pāli the verb *saṅkappeti* (corresponding to *saṅkappa*) occurs very rarely (if at all), while English lacks a simple verb corresponding to "volition." "A support for the establishing of consciousness" renders *patiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa*. I find that "established" works consistently better as a rendering for the participle *patiṭṭhita*, but "support" for the noun *patiṭṭhā*, so to bridge the participle and the noun in the present passage (and at S 22.53-54), I have coined this compound expression. (S:B 758 f n112)

6.3 The verb, *patiṭṭhati*, "it is established (loc)," that is to become "attached" mainly on account of craving and other defilements. As such, the participle, *patiṭṭhitā* (sometimes idiomatically translated as "stuck"),³⁶ is usually rendered as "is established" or "finds support." A number of suttas³⁷ show that consciousness (*viññāṇa*), when driven by craving, is "established," but when craving is removed from it, it becomes "unestablished or "unsupported." As such, the arhat is often said to pass away "with consciousness unestablished" (*appatiṭṭhitena viññāṇena ... parinibbuto*).³⁸

³⁴ D 2:64; M 1:40, 303, 433, 3:285; S 4:188, 208; A 1:283 = 2:111, 2:10, 54, 3:246, 4:188 f.

³⁵ On latent tendencies (*anusaya*), see **Buddhism and Free Will**, SD 7.7(8).

³⁶ Eg It 3.2.4/53 f; cf S 46 f/1.20/1:11,23 @ SD 14.9 (1).

³⁷ See **Cetanā S 1** (S 12.38/2:65 f), SD 7.61, **Cetanā S 2** (S 12.39/2:66), SD 7.6b, **Cetanā S 3** (S 12.40/2:66 f), SD 7.6c, **Atthi, rāga S** (S 12.64/2:101-104), **Upāya S** (S 22.53/3:53), **Bija S** (S 22.54/3:54 f).

³⁸ See **Godikha S** (S 4.23/1:122,12-13).

SD 7.6a

Cetanā Sutta 1

Or, (Punabbhava) Cetanā Sutta | S 12.38/2:65 f

The Discourse on Volition 1 (on rebirth)

Theme: Karma still works without intention

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2004

1 (The Buddha was) staying near Sāvattihī.

The conscious arising of suffering

2 (1) ³⁹Bhikkhus, what one intends,⁴⁰ and what one plans,⁴¹ and has latent tendency⁴²—this is a mental basis⁴³ for the support [establishing] for consciousness.⁴⁴

2.2 When there is a mental basis [condition], consciousness is established.⁴⁵

⁴⁶When that consciousness is established and grows therein,⁴⁷ there is **further [continued] arising of rebirth**.⁴⁸

³⁹ *Yañ ca kho bhikkhave ceteti, yañ ca pakappeti, yañ ca anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa hoti.* According to Bodhi, here “*sañkhārā* are referred to elliptically by the expressions *yañ ceteti*, ‘what one wills,’ and *yañ pakappeti*, ‘what one plans’ (*pakappeti* is a rare term, apparently synonymous with *ceteti*). The expression *yañ anuseti*, ‘what lies latent within,’ points to the *anusaya*, the latent tendencies, which other texts tell us include the latent tendency of ignorance (*avijjānusaya*) and the latent tendency of lust or craving (*rāgānusaya*) [M 1:190 f, 1:303 etc.]” (1998:21, digital ed). See Intro (2.1) above.

⁴⁰ “**One intends**” (*ceteti*) here includes all wholesome and unwholesome volition of the three planes. See Intro (2.1) above.

⁴¹ “**One plans**” (*pakappeti*), the mental fabrications of craving and views (*taṇhā, diṭṭhi, kappā*) in the 8 cittas (mind-moments) accompanied by greed. [SAP†: The fabrications of views occur only in the 4 cittas associated with views.] See (2.1) above.

⁴² “**Has latent tendency**” (*anuseti*), ie, one habitually does something whether out of unwholesome motivation or wholesome motivation, or even without intention. See Intro (2.1) above.

⁴³ *Yañ ca kho bhikkhave ceteti, yañ ca pakappeti, yañ ca anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa hoti.* “**This is a mental basis**” (*ārammaṇam etaṃ hoti*). These various states such as volition become a condition; for here the word *ārammaṇa* is intended as condition (*paccaya*) [that is, here *ārammaṇa* does *not* signify an object of consciousness, the usual meaning in the Abhidhamma].

⁴⁴ “**For the support for consciousness**” (*viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā*), that is, for the purpose of maintaining the karmic consciousness. When there is this condition, “**there is a support for consciousness**” (*patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti*), that is, for the establishing of that karmic consciousness. [SAP†: It has a capacity to yield fruit in one’s mental continuum.]

⁴⁵ *Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa hoti*, lit “when there is a mental basis, there is the establishing of consciousness.” Here, *ārammaṇa* has an early non-technical sense, meaning simply “condition,” and as Bodhi takes pain to state, “does *not* signify an object of consciousness, the usual meaning in Abhidhamma” (S:B 758 n112). For an expl of this “condition,” see **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18.16/1:111 f), SD 6.14.

⁴⁶ *Tasmim̐ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūlhe āyatim̐ punabbhavābhiniḅbatti hoti.*

⁴⁷ “**When that consciousness has a support and grows**” (*tasmim̐ patiṭṭhite viññāṇe ... virūlhe*). When, having driven karma on (*kammaṃ javāpetvā*), it has grown and produced roots, through its ability to cause rebirth; hence, “**there is further arising of rebirth**,” ie, production consisting in renewed existence. (SA 2:71)

⁴⁸ *Punabbhavābhiniḅbatti*. Here *punabbhava* (lit “renewed existence”) is the Sutta term for “rebirth,” which in later literature is called *paṭisandhi* (see BDict). See **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43.17/1:294). It is possible to render this phrase, taking *punabbhavābhiniḅbatti* as a dvandva, as “renewed existence and arising in the future” (BDict). Here I have taken it in a general sense of the continuance of existence within the present life and indefinitely into future ones. Sometimes *abhiniḅbatti* by itself means “rebirth” (A 6.61/3:399-402, 10.65/5:120 f).

2.3 When there is the further arising of rebirth, there further arise birth,⁴⁹ decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain [displeasure], and despair.

Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

The unconscious arising of suffering

3 (2) ⁵⁰If, bhikshus, one neither intends nor plans, but if one still has latent tendency (anuseti)⁵¹—this is a mental basis (*ārammaṇa*) that supports consciousness.

3.2 When there is a mental basis, there is a support for consciousness.

When consciousness has a support and grows, there is **further [continued] arising of rebirth.**

3.3 When there is the further arising of rebirth, there further arise birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair.

Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.⁵²

The ending of suffering

4 (3) But, bhikshus, insofar as one neither intends, nor plans, and if one has no latent tendency, then there is no mental basis for the support for consciousness. **[66]**

4.2 When there is no mental basis, there consciousness is not established.

When consciousness is not established⁵³ and does not grow, **there is no further arising of rebirth.**

4.3 When there is no further arising of rebirth, there ends further birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair.

Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.⁵⁴

— evaṃ —

⁴⁹ “Birth” (*jāti*), omitted in PTS ed.

⁵⁰ *No ce bhikkhave ceteti no ce pakappeti atha ce anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā.*

⁵¹ **“But if one still has latent tendency”** (*atha ce anuseti*); here “latent tendency” is countless collective n: the latent tendencies are included because they have not been abandoned here in the resultants of the three planes, in the limited functional states (the five-door adverting and mind-door adverting cittas), and in form. As long as the latent tendencies exist, they become a condition for the karmic consciousness; for there is no way to prevent its arising. See Intro (2) for more details.

⁵² Comy says that this section refers to the moment when there is occurrence of volition of the 3 planes, and no occurrence of mental fabrications of craving and views (SA 2:71). See Intro (3) above for detailed nn.

⁵³ Bodhi interprets the phrase **“when consciousness is not established”** (*appatitṭhita viññāṇa*) here to refer to “a consciousness without the prospect of a future rebirth through the propulsive power of ignorance, craving, and the volitional formations” (S:B 760 n114). The arhat is said to pass finally away with consciousness “unestablished,” as described in **Godhika S** (S 4.23/1:122) and **Vakkali S** (S 22.87/3:24). See Intro (4) for more details.

⁵⁴ This section describes the path of arhathood, when the latent tendencies are all abandoned. See Intro (5) for detailed nn.

SD 7.6b

Cetanā Sutta 2

Or, (Nāma,rūpa) Cetanā Sutta | S 12.39/2:66
 The Discourse on Volition 2 (on name and form)
 Theme: Latent tendencies lead to rebirth
 Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2004

[66]

1 (The Buddha was) staying near Sāvathī.

The conscious arising of suffering

2 (1) Bhikshus, what one intends (*ceteti*), and what one plans (*pakappeti*), and what latent tendency one has⁵⁵—this is a mental basis (*ārammaṇa*) for the support for consciousness.

2.2 When there is a mental basis, consciousness is established.

When that consciousness is established and grows, there is **the descent of name-and-form**.⁵⁶

3 With <u>name-and-form</u> as condition,	there are the 6 sense-bases;
With <u>the 6 sense-bases</u> as condition,	there is contact;
With <u>contact</u> as condition,	there is feeling;
With <u>feeling</u> as condition,	there is craving; ⁵⁷
With <u>craving</u> as condition,	there is clinging;
With <u>clinging</u> as condition,	there is existence;
With <u>existence</u> as condition,	there is birth;
With <u>birth</u> as condition	there arise <u>decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.</u>

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

The unconscious arising of suffering

4 (2) If, bhikshus, one neither intends nor plans, but if one still has latent tendency—this becomes a mental basis for the support for consciousness.

4.2 When there is a mental basis, consciousness is established.

When that consciousness is established and grows, there is **the descent of name-and-form**.

⁵⁵ *Anuseti*, ie, one habitually acts whether out of unwholesome or wholesome intention, or even without intention.

⁵⁶ “**The descent of name-and-form**” (*nāma,rūpassa avakkanti*): see **Moliya Phagguna S** (S 12.12), where the “further arising of rebirth” (*ayatim punabbhavābhiniḅbatti*) is placed between consciousness and the six sense bases (S 12.12,3/2:13). Taken together, the Moliya Phagguna Sutta and the Cetanā Sutta 2 imply that the “**The descent of name-and-form**” (*nāma,rūpassa avakkanti*) and the “**further [continued] arising of rebirth**” are interchangeable, ie, synonymous. This, notes Bodhi, “in spite of the commentarial predilection for always seeing the latter as kammically active existence” (S:B 761 n115).

Comy says that there is a “link” (*sandhi*) between consciousness and name-and-form (SA 2:72), “thus on this interpretation, consciousness denotes the kammically generative consciousness of the previous existence, name-and-form the beginning of the present existence. It seems to me, however, more likely that *viññāṇa* straddles both the past and the present life, as the principle of personal continuity.” (S:B 761 n115)

⁵⁷ In (**Samuday’atthaṅgama**) **Loka S** (S 12.44), the dependent arising is shown to be broken here when “with the remainderless fading away and ending of that same craving comes cessation of clinging ... ” the rest of the chain breaks accordingly leading to the ending of “this whole mass of suffering.” (S 12.44/2:71-73)

- 5 With name-and-form as condition, there is the sixfold sense-base;
 With the sixfold sense-base as condition, there 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.

The dependent ending of suffering

6 (3) But, bhikshus, insofar as one does not intend, and one does not plan, and one does not have latent tendency, then there is no mental basis for the support for consciousness.

6.2 When there is no mental basis, consciousness is not established.

When consciousness is not established and does not grow, there is **no descent of name-and-form.**

- 7 With the ending of name-and-form, the 6 sense-bases end;
 With the ending of the 6 sense-bases, contact ends;
 With the ending of contact, feeling ends;
 With the ending of feeling, craving ends;
 With the ending of craving, clinging ends;
 With the ending of clinging, existence ends;
 With the ending of existence, birth ends;
 With the ending of birth, there end decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.

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

— evaṃ —

SD 7.6c

Cetanā Sutta 3

The Third Discourse on Volition | S 12.40/2:66 f
(Nati) Cetanā Sutta, The Discourse on Volition 3 (on inclinations)
 Theme: Our inclinations are conditioned by latent tendencies
 Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2004

1 (The Buddha was) staying near Sāvattḥī. [67]

The conscious arising of suffering

2 (1) Bhikshus, what one intends (*ceteti*), and what one plans (*pakappeti*), and what latent tendency one has (*anuseti*)—this is a mental basis (*ārammaṇa*) for the support for consciousness.

When there is a mental basis, consciousness is established.

3 When consciousness is established and grows therein,

When there is inclination,

When there is coming and going,

When there is passing away and being reborn,

—Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.⁶¹

there is **inclination** (*nati*).⁵⁸

there is coming and going.⁵⁹

there is passing away (here) and being reborn (there).⁶⁰

there comes to be further birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.

The unconscious arising of suffering

4 (2) If, bhikshus, one neither intends nor plans, but if one has latent tendency—this is a mental basis for the support for consciousness.

When there is a mental basis,

5 When consciousness is established and grows,

When there is inclination,

When there is coming and going,

When there is dying and arising,

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

consciousness is established.

there is **inclination**.

there is coming and going.

there is dying and arising.

there comes to be further birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.

⁵⁸ “**Inclination**” (*nati*): Comy says that this is craving. It is called “inclination” in the sense of inclining (*nama-natṭhena*) towards pleasant forms, etc (SA 2:72; cf UA 393, 398).

⁵⁹ “**There is coming and going**” (*sati āgati, gati*): Comy says that there is going of consciousness by way of rebirth towards what has come up (at death), presenting itself as karma, or the sign of karma (*kamma, nimitta*), or the destiny sign (*gati, nimitta*) (SA 2:72). This is an allusion to the 3 objects of the last conscious process before death: see Abhs:BRS 5.35-37. On the ending of all this, see **Nibbāna Paṭisaṃyutta S 1** (U 8.1/80,15), SD 98.1 & UA 398.

⁶⁰ *Cutūpapāto hoti*. For a more contextual application of the key terms here, see **Alabbhaniya Ṭhaṇa S** (A 5.48,5-/3:54), SD 42.1. On the extinction of this duality, see **Nibbāna Paṭisaṃyutta S 1** (U 8.1/80,15), SD 98.1.

⁶¹ On this passage, see Harvey 1995:96 f.

The ending of suffering

6 (3) But, bhikshus, when one does not intend, and one does not plan, and one does not have latent tendency, then there is no mental basis for the support for consciousness.

When there is no mental basis, consciousness is not established.

7 When consciousness is unestablished and grows not,

there is no inclination.

When there is no inclination,

there is neither coming nor going.

When there is neither coming nor going,

there is neither dying nor arising.

When there is neither dying nor arising,

there ends further birth, decay-and-death,
sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental
pain and despair.

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.⁶²

— evaṃ —

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⁶² Cf the “teaching of the Blessed One” recited by Mahā Cunda to counsel the suicidal Channa, in **Chann’ovāda S** (M 144 = S 35.87) and elsewhere:

There is wavering in one who is dependent;

there is no wavering in one who is independent.

When there is no wavering,

there is tranquility.

When there is tranquillity,

there is no bias.

When there is no bias,

there is neither coming nor going.

When there is neither coming nor going,

there is neither dying nor arising.

When there is neither dying nor arising,

there is no here nor beyond nor in between.

This is the end of suffering. (M 144,11 = S 35.87/4:59 @ SD 11.12; U 81; UA 398; Nett 65; cf S 12.40/2:67).