





# **Dependent Origination**

The 12 Links

*Upādāna (Clinging)*

**By Delson Armstrong**

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“Bhikkhus, there are these Four Noble Truths. What four? The noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the origin of suffering, the noble truth of the cessation of suffering, the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

**Saccasamyutta Sn 56.13(3) Aggregates**



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# Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to help the truth seeker to understand the concept of *Dependent Origination*. This is the most essential idea to be understood on your journey to Nibbāna. The Buddha used the term *paṭicca samuppāda*, which is Pāli for dependent origination. When one understands Dependent Origination, one understands themselves and the world. It is truly the answer to the question of “Who am I?”

This is a 12-part series of small books - one for each of the 12 links. This book is about the 9<sup>th</sup> link of *Upādāna* or Clinging. Later all these booklets will be combined into a larger book or books.

But first, the definition of Dependent Origination from the Buddha...

## Dependent Origination

### **Samyutta Nikāya 12.1.1**

“Monks, I will teach you dependent origination. Listen to that and attend closely; I will speak.”—“Yes, venerable sir,” those monks replied.

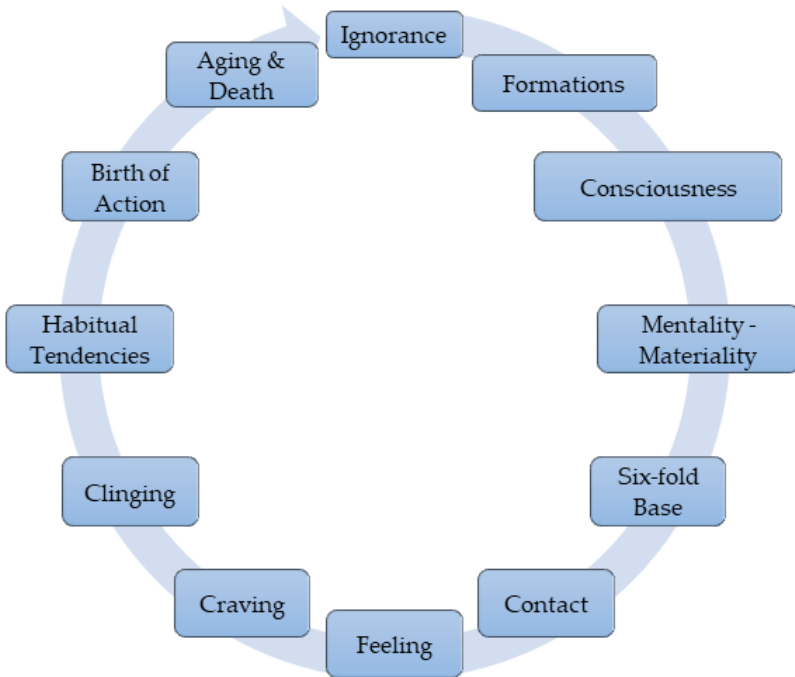
The Blessed One said this:

“And what, students, is dependent origination? With ignorance as condition, volitional formations come to be; with volitional formations as condition, consciousness; with consciousness as condition, name-and-form; with name-and-form as condition, the six sense bases; with the six sense bases as condition, contact; with contact as condition, feeling; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, existence; with existence as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. This, students, is called dependent origination.

“But with the remainderless fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations, cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness, cessation of name-and-form; with the cessation of name-and-form, cessation of the six sense bases; with the cessation of the six sense bases, cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact, cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling, cessation of craving; with the cessation of

## Dependent Origination

craving, cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of existence; with the cessation of existence, cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.”



## Upādāna -Clinging

*Katamaṃ paṇāvuso, upādānaṃ, katamo upādānasamudayo,  
katamo upādānanirodho, katamā upādānanirodhagāminī paṭipadā?*

*And what is clinging, what is the origin of clinging, what is the  
cessation of clinging, what is the way leading to the cessation of  
clinging?*

- MN 9, Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta

The link preceding bhava is upādāna. Upādāna is conditioned and proximately caused by the link of taṇhā or craving. Upādāna is a result of having craved further for a sensual experience or having aversion towards it or having craved for existence or non-existence. This existential type of craving causes the mind to take something as self that wants to continue existing or to stop existing, which leads to one type of

clinging. The craving for sensual experience leads to another type of clinging. In total, there are four broad types of clinging. They are kāmupādāna or clinging to sensory experience, ditṭhupādāna or clinging to views, sīlabbatupādāna or clinging to rites and rituals, and attavādupādāna clinging to self-view or the belief in a personal self. If bhava is the storehouse of habitual tendencies, fueled by the undercurrents of the āsavas, kilesas, upakkilesas, anusayas, hindrances, and fetters, and that it is also the becoming or the turning into jāti or the birth of action or a new rebirth on the macro level, then clinging is the fuel that ignites, facilitates, and supercharges that process. Upādāna takes the ingredients of those undercurrents and, through the process of holding onto, clinging, and deepening that hold by taking it personally and making it “me, mine, myself,” creates the recipe for the sense of self and existence in bhava. It is reactionary in nature because it stems from craving, which arises through lack of mindfulness, and so when the snowball of craving goes downhill, it picks up mass and energy through the process of clinging, in which the snow on the ground clings to the ball until it turns into bhava. Another way to understand clinging is to see how the mind proliferates concepts. Indeed, through papañca or conceptual proliferation, which is initiated by craving and then further intensified through clinging, Dukkha arises. Whenever there is picking of sides, developing favorites through sensory experiences, or there is an opinion, judgment, or evaluation of something with the sense of self, know that to be part of the process of upādāna. In this chapter, we will explore each of the four types of clinging in much depth as possible to understand each one through different contexts and everyday living situations, how

clinging fits in the schema of Dependent Origination, and how to recognize and abandon clinging to cease the process of Dukkha from further arising. Upādāna has been translated previously as clinging, grasping, fuel, or attachment. These words can be used interchangeably but for the purposes of understanding this process of Dependent Origination, we may use the active aspects – therefore, clinging or grasping.

### *The Four Types of Clinging*

*Cattārimāni, āvuso, upādānāni— kāmupādānaṃ, ditṭhupādānaṃ, sīlabbatupādānaṃ, attavādupādānaṃ.*

*There are these four kinds of clinging: clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, clinging to rules and observances, and clinging to a doctrine of self.*

- MN 9, Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta

In the suttas, the Buddha mentions four types of clinging. The first type, *kāmupādāna*, is the clinging to sensual experiences. This type of clinging arises specifically due to some sensory experience. When there is *vedanā*, there is a sensation or mental experience. From here, there is a possibility of *anusayas* arising if the mind reacts in a way that personalizes or identifies with the sensory experience. When this happens, the mind says, “I want that, or I hate that, or I’m choosing to ignore it even though I identify with it,” and this is the process of craving. If the mind holds on to the experience further by deciding with intention that it has become part of one’s personality – that is it has become the self’s favorite color, fragrance, food, movie, music or whatever other sense object – and if the mind becomes aggravated when its favorites aren’t available or it has deep disgust for unpleasant sensory experiences and that then becomes a part of the personality, this is the process of clinging to sensory experiences. Likewise, if a feeling is neutral, having neither the affective quality of being inherently pleasant nor unpleasant, one can still cling to the sensory experience by identifying with that experience on a deep level, making it part of one’s memory. In other words that neutral experience, having not affected one on either side of the spectrum, is still “me, mine, myself,” in that “I” experienced it and so on. This can be seen in the form of someone having seen the news and it becomes a historic moment and while not directly affecting the individual one way or another, one may think, “oh I was so and so when it happened,” and so that experience has become “mine,” even though it is vicariously lived through. When that process of identification becomes so deep that one defends their position

that they indeed were there and has pride for it, that is a process of clinging.

In clinging to views, the mind generally identifies with certain views. In a broader context, such views may be related to politics, religion, caste, status, wealth, or even favorite sports teams and identification with being part of a certain club and holding to that club's views. Such views arise from the primal need to belong because there is still belief in a personal self and so this self wants to feel part of something, to belong and be supported by fellow likeminded individuals. The need to belong therefore is dependent upon an image the mind creates of a self – because it was born in a certain city and one's friends are fans of a certain politician, actor, singer, sports team or even a new trend, the being identifies with the attraction to these things and starts to create the image of a self that identifies with these things. Whether one is a liberal or conservative, follows a certain religion, harbors attachment to a certain sports team, is a fan of a certain viewpoint, the self is involved in all of them. Therefore, one must first observe this, which then allows the mind to detach and finally become dispassionate towards all such general views. In a more specific context, the clinging to views that arises refers to the different types of views related to eternalism or annihilationism. Such clinging can further be dissected into clinging one or more of the six different types of view or schools of thought that were present during the Buddha's time, and it can be even further magnified by looking at the clinging to the sixty-two different types of view that arise due to certain meditative and contemplative experiences, as expounded by the Buddha in DN 1, Brahmajāla Sutta. All such



views are wrong views in relation to the Dhamma and therefore any such clinging is liable to cause further suffering. For the purposes of this chapter, we will further explore the six basic types of wrong view. When a person comes to the Right View, there can still be a self that attaches to that Right View – this is the clinging to the Dhamma. Letting go of this, one is altogether freed from the wheel of Saṃsāra.

### *Kāmupādāna*

Clinging to sensual experiences happens as soon as a being is born into a new existence. It arises through perception that gives rise to associations and ideations to fulfill a need at first. An infant is always experiencing something for the first time in a present life. Their sense bases are bombarded by new colors, sounds, scents, tastes and touches, as their minds continue to develop. A newborn's sense of smell is sensitive to the scent of its mother and breastmilk or formula. Being satisfied by breastmilk or formula as nourishment, the newborn's mind develops thoughts and ideas about that nourishment, especially attachment. It clings to that idea and recognizes the smell and thus, if it is experiencing the unpleasant feeling of hunger, it will know to cry because it has made the connection that upon crying, it is fed. The contact with the scent and taste of milk or formula provides a pleasant feeling, and the underlying tendency towards craving is built up, leading to

clinging – to formulating a favorite form of food through attachment. It knows if it cries, it will be held or fed or have its diaper changed. This ideation and associating process is the clinging a being experiences as a result of craving for the sensual object.

As the infant grows up, it is introduced to new foods, which can at first cause resistance to the food if it has become used to the breastmilk. Its clinging causes it to lash out throughout the weaning process, but eventually, it swaps cow's milk and new foods as favorites for the old favorite of breastmilk or formula. As it continues to further develop, watching cartoons, playing with its caretakers, making friends with other toddlers, and being introduced to a new world of sensory experiences, the toddler now comes up with more ideas about what it likes and doesn't like. This process of ideation is clinging. Perhaps it has already recognized certain colors and decides it likes red, but it hates blue. It decides it likes the taste of bananas, but it hates the taste of strawberries. It decides it likes the smell of bubblegum but hates the smell of fish, or that it likes the sound of its mother's voice but hates the sound of its sibling screaming, or that it likes the feeling of its favorite blanket but hates the feeling of anything but its favorite blanket as it goes to sleep. All of these decisions are a process of clinging to sensory experiences. When there is contact with the sense object, there is pleasant or unpleasant feeling or even a neutral feeling. If craving, aversion, or identification arises, there is then a further arising of opinions about that experience – "I like this, or I don't like this, or I identify with this because..." This "because" is the starting of clinging. The opinions strengthen

the habitual tendencies of favorites of a color, sound, smell, taste, or touch, which are stored in bhava. In other words, clinging is that which adds to the storehouse of bhava through the process of association. The rationale of “because” is just the sense of self arising in the process of clinging since the mind says “because it makes *me* feel a certain way, and it is *my* favorite experience, and it is who *I am*.” The reactivity that is craving becomes more intense through clinging where that mindset of liking or not liking or generally identifying is given a home within the link of bhava.

As the toddler goes to school and is introduced to newer things, it starts to develop further sensual clinging. In school, the toddler may be asked what its favorite color is, or what its favorite food is, and so on. These questions draw out the clinging when the toddler feels good about its favorite things and has emotional resonance with them. These favorites are the habitual tendencies stored at bhava, but they were all propagated by decision and opinion at the level of clinging. Eventually, as the being grows up in life, it continues to swap old favorites for new favorites. As a middle schooler, the being’s priorities are possibly finding the latest product to satisfy their desires – craving having possibly arisen from watching a television advertisement and approved by peers who want the same thing showed on TV – and thus their favorite television show changes, their favorite games change, and their favorite foods or drinks change as well. The television advertisement made contact with their ear and eye bases and brought about a pleasant feeling, with the craving for that product or experience fueling the being’s mental, verbal and

physical actions to find it and ask an elder to buy it for them or give them money to buy it. Having then bought it, the being finds a pleasant feeling, craving for future experience of the product or sensation – such as the latest video game, movie, or TV show – and then it opines on the experience, causing the mind to make that game, movie, or show the new favorite for the being. Thus, the bhava has changed as well. Now, instead of apple sauce, the being likes chocolate cake; instead of a show targeted to toddlers, the being now likes a show targeted to tweens, and so on. If a being doesn't have access to television, they may still experience pleasant colors and forms, sounds and so on through outdoor advertising and find games with their friends that they have grown to enjoy, replacing their interest from their younger years with new interests. No matter where in the world they may be, they are always prone to identify with certain sensory experiences, whether these are triggered by colorful displays, beautiful sounds and so on via electronic and social media or through word of mouth and firsthand experiences.

In its teenage years, a being starts to develop further identification, this time much stronger, towards certain kinds of sensual stimulation. It develops sexual interest and finds certain persons attractive and develops “crushes” and it may experiment with many firsts in the area of sexuality and so on. Through such experiences, there arises further craving. One wants to recapture one's experiences and thus this process creates craving – one's explorations then embed certain associations, which continue to change over one's teenage

years and indeed throughout one's adult life as well. The embedding of such associations is clinging.

Now, as the being continues to live out its teenage years, instead of coming back home from school in time to watch their favorite show or play games outside with their friends, the being prefers hanging out at the mall or someplace else where all the "cool kids" are or where their crush may most likely be, or they may be tied to their phones, seeking new music by their favorite artists or using social media to find excitement from more likes and comments on their posts, which can become another form of clinging, leading to a certain kind of identity in bhava. For example, they may find a wide social media presence for their posts and seek out more ways to satisfy the clinging to likes and positive comments. They may seek sensory experiences in the form of coffee, alcohol, and even drugs due to peer pressure. Some may want to experience this, while others may stay away. Others may not even have access to or the ability to visit malls or experiment with drugs due to location and culture.

As an aside, the intensely pleasurable sensations caused by certain drugs may be introduced at earlier or even much later periods of life. The powerful highs and euphoria that may be experienced will then be craved for whenever the being thinks about or sees that drug. This thinking about and obsessing over and reacting with intense emotions over having obtained or having failed in obtaining that drug is the process of clinging. By extension, the obsessive nature of the activity of clinging can be seen regarding any other sensation as well. One may become infatuated with another person and cling to the idea of them,

wanting to be with them and creating an image about and around them. One may become attached to one's surroundings and suffer sadness and sorrow at having to move from one's surroundings. Therefore, clinging is a strong conditioning for Dukkha to arise.

Preferences continue to evolve as the being continues to age and finds new emotional resonance with these new preferences. This change in the identification process is spurred by contact, which then gives rise to a feeling, which will cause a reaction of craving or aversion or ignoring, at which point, whatever that sensory experience is will be accompanied by an association, ideation, and opinions, causing strong likes and dislikes which are stored into the habitual tendencies of bhava. This creation process of those strong associations and storage process into bhava is facilitated by the link of clinging.

Then, as the being becomes an adult, their interests start to further solidify, whether it is in certain tastes of food or drink, certain kinds of music, genres of movies and books, and even certain fragrances and bodily feelings, including sexual experiences. Once again, the clinging process continues to swap out a selection of favorites for another group of favorites, which become edified in bhava. Now, the being seeks out only those things they have become attached to and it becomes stressed and agitated with encounters that are deemed unpleasant, causing reactions of aversion, irritation, fear, sadness, anxiety, depression and so on. Instead of wanting to hang out with friends as they did in their younger years, the adult may now be more interested in making money to experience luxury and comfort – a large home, the latest car, a

vacation, yacht, and so on. The idea that these will bring satisfaction to the self is clinging. It's where the mind obsesses over that goal, fueling its identity as a hard worker and replacing it later with the being who has achieved a goal. All of this is part of clinging. Emotional investment is provided in a goal for bigger and better things and experiences, and this is clinging. This fixation, activated by the underlying tendencies and ignited by craving, is clinging.

These emotional associations at clinging become so strong and so deeply embedded that even if that sensual experience happened under different emotional contexts and circumstances the mere replaying of that experience ignites that same association, causing the mind to use that association as an access point into a habitual tendency from where the being may react. For example, a person experiences the death of a loved one. At the funerary rites, someone concerned for the being touches their shoulder and rubs it to convey their condolences. That one act and the experience of that touch is now associated with grief and sorrow. Next time, perhaps even decades later, during a happy event such as the first birthday party of their first child, the being experiences someone rubbing their shoulder as a way to show their love and empathetic joy. And yet, the being experiences a general sense of sadness for a while and perhaps they may recall the funeral of their parents, or they may not – in either case, that sensual experience in that moment, because it was so heavily identified with and clung to with strongly associating it with the funeral, resulted in the experience of sudden grief at the birthday party.

When there is positive association with certain types of food, these same foods are eaten to provide comfort to the mind. If one grew up eating mashed potatoes in childhood and associated that food with more innocent and happier times, then whenever stress arises, one will seek out mashed potatoes, providing a temporary satisfaction. Clinging to the sensual experience of the taste and texture of the mashed potatoes on the tongue is then reactivated to provide and relive a similar emotional experience. Despite the evolution of music and the continual progression of popular songs as the decades go by, someone in their thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, and beyond will find satisfaction in the music they listened to in their teenage and adolescent years. Of course, there is a neuroscientific reasoning for it. From the age of twelve to the early twenties, as a being's brain circuitry, especially its prefrontal cortex, develops, the music that one listens to during that time evokes certain pleasurable sensations mentally and even physically, releasing a cocktail of feel-good chemicals such as dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin. The feelings become craved for and identified with, thus causing strong emotional associations at the link of clinging. That's why almost everything from that age range in one's life seems to evoke certain nostalgic feelings when one looks back – this looking back is craving, which then revisits clinging of those associations, and then further solidifies bhava.

Traumatic circumstances such as sexual, physical, or verbal and emotional abuse, or war, famine, starvation, poverty, and displacement cause the mind to have strong aversion, which leads to clinging to that experience with great emotional



resistance and even violence. Whenever similar circumstances or even when the memory of those experiences arise, the mind activates the underlying tendency towards aversion at the level of the unpleasant feeling, and one's aversion at the link of craving reactivates the association process at upādāna, where then a certain library of habitual patterns at bhava can be accessed to then react at the link of jāti with defensive or even violent actions. The process of clinging, therefore, causes the mind to accumulate certain patterns into bhava. A deep understanding with psychiatric care, if required, with forgiveness practice can relieve and release such bhava as well as clinging so that the mind retrains through weakening formations that were previously strengthened by such and therefore such a mind then strengthens new formations rooted in understanding, self-compassion, relief, and ultimately wisdom.

As a being continues through adulthood, seeking greater pleasures and avoiding painful experiences through craving and aversion respectively, their clinging to those pleasures or the defense mechanisms against those unpleasant experiences continue to change depending upon their intentions and choices in every given moment. Eventually, at the end of one's life, that same process of clinging arises dependent upon the formations that arise, which, in turn, are fueled by the activity of clinging.

Just as bhava feeds energy back to the āsavas, the roots in formations, the defilements in consciousness, and the anusayas in feeling, the activity and fuel of clinging feeds energy back to the preceding undercurrents as well. On the quantum level, in

the case of clinging to sensory experiences, the fuel of obsession feeds energy back to kāmāsava as well as avijjāsava, all three roots at formations, depending upon the type of clinging associated with greed, hatred, or ignorance, any of the defilements at consciousness depending on which ones trigger the sensory clinging, and the underlying tendencies towards craving, aversion, or ignorance. On the cosmic level, whatever sensory experiences one has clung to in past choices arise at the end of one's life, conditioned by formations rooted in those choices, and if a being continues to identify and reacts with clinging to the memories of those experiences with nostalgia, resentment, remorse, or any other emotional resonance, the fuel of that clinging pushes the formations to give rise to a departing consciousness that then becomes established in a new nāmarupā in a new bhava and experiences a new jāti into a new lifetime.

### *Cessation of Sensory Clinging with Right Effort*

Since sensory clinging is motivated, conditioned, and caused directly by the link of craving – specifically sensual craving – such clinging would be completely eradicated without even a slight ember of it left when the mind enters into the third level of awakening. When the mind has destroyed the fetters of sensual craving and aversion altogether, and therefore entered into the stage of the anāgāmī, such a mind is

free of the underlying tendencies towards sensual craving or aversion, as well as free from the roots of greed and hatred and their corresponding defilements of consciousness. Such a mind is also free of kāmāsava. Therefore, with such clinging gone, there won't be any bhava with habitual sensory tendencies and no emotional responses to sensations that would recreate further clinging. An anāgāmī may have preferences to certain sensory experiences but that is only in relation to what the body is used to; however, there won't be any emotional resonance with the experience. If, for example, one has been used to coffee in the morning and it is not available, there won't be any irritation arising because of the unavailability of coffee. If one has access to the foods one grew up eating, those foods won't be a source of craving or clinging. The body prefers it, but there won't be any craving to feed the body a certain food just because one has been used to that food and identifies it as part of a self's collection of favorites. Likewise, if it isn't available, there won't be any aversion due to its unavailability. Therefore, no craving or aversion means no sensory clinging and obsession.

Understanding the cause of sensory clinging to be sensual craving or aversion, and then seeing sensual craving arising due to the underlying tendencies towards sensual craving or aversion, the mind has to recognize the absolute importance of appamāda or being heedful in every moment. This is done so through the exercise of mindfulness, where the mind is always observing in every given moment so that it can recognize if sensual craving or aversion arise. With this mindfulness, one then continues to apply right effort by stopping the process of

further clinging from arising, then releasing any arisen clinging, after which the mind generates a mind void of clinging with an uplifted and wholesome object and continues to maintain attention to that object. If one is unable to recognize the arising of craving or aversion at the level of a pleasant or unpleasant feeling or is unable to recognize the identification with the neutral feeling, in the form of the underlying tendencies present in the experience of those feelings, then one may be able to notice the tightness and tension closing in on the mind, which is a manifestation of craving. If one is unable to notice the initial spark of craving, then one may recognize the thoughts around that craving, the ideations and associations, the self-referential obsessions, and streams of mentation, which are all manifestations of clinging. One will generally see that it may be more difficult to recognize bhava in the form of an identity arising than it is to recognize the clinging, and in fact, much easier to notice craving and even much easier to recognize the arising of underlying tendencies leading to that craving. Nevertheless, right effort can be applied at any stage in the process of Dependent Origination leading up to jāti, at which point, the action having been committed cannot be called back or its flow stopped.

Specifically at the link of clinging, while challenging as the mind is clouded by the myriad of thoughts about the sensory experience, creating various associations and proliferation of concepts and tangents in streams of ideas, decisions, and opinions, if it can be recognized, then one can see the stopping of the flow of all of these mental activities. Having been stopped, there is no possibility of bhava from arising, and one

then abandons the sensory clinging by understanding its impermanence and uproots any associations of self to it by penetrative wisdom of the impersonal nature of all conditioned existence, including sensory experiences. Doing so, one tranquilizes the formations leading to that process of clinging and, in turn, having been strengthened by that clinging, and then returns to a mind free of clinging altogether.

Using the Four Noble Truths as a way to understand the process, one can see the First Noble Truth of Dukkha inherent in the conceptual proliferation and self-referential thinking that causes further associations of identity that is clinging. When one sees that wrong attention or lack of mindfulness is the Second Noble Truth of Samudaya or the cause of that clinging process, one then abandons it and experiences the Third Noble Truth of Nirodha after having tranquilized the formations related to that clinging. One does so through the process of right effort, which is the heart and encapsulation of the Fourth Noble Truth of Magga. With the understanding of the 6Rs being right effort, one.

- ◆ Recognizes the flurry of self-referential mentation related to a sensory experience as Dukkha.
- ◆ Releases the undue attention to these thoughts and thus abandons Samudaya.

- ◆ Relaxes or tranquilizes the formations conditioned by and conditioning the activation of the sensory clinging and thus experiences Nirodha.
- ◆ Re-smiles to uplift the mind.
- ◆ Returns to a mind void of clinging and to a wholesome state.
- ◆ Repeats any time mind starts to cling to a sensory experience, and thus continues to cultivate Magga.

### *Clinging to Views*

Clinging to views means clinging to wrong views, but it can also be clinging to right view. Generally, there are two ends of the spectrum that are wrong views – that of the eternalist and that of the annihilationist. In between these two are differing views that are still not in conjunction with the Buddha’s dispensation. In DN 2, *Samaññaphala Sutta*, the king Ajātasattu discusses his encounter with the proponents of six views before going to see the Buddha. Of these six views, the two views of the eternalist and the annihilationist are also discussed. These six views were propagated by different *samaṇas*, wanderers who sought an alternative to Vedic

thought and philosophy. An attachment to any of these views constitutes an attachment to wrong view, and therefore such clinging leads one astray from entering the path to Nibbāna as discovered and explained by the Buddha. It would be beneficial to explore these views in order to assess whether the mind deviates from the path towards these lines of thought and therefore recognize the clinging to such wrong views and abandon them right then and there, using the path itself through right effort to come back to the Dhamma. We will explore right view as well, first the mundane and then the supramundane in order to see how this view differs to the other views during the Buddha's time, which still have echoes in certain modern philosophies of the present world.

Before we further explore these views, it's also important to understand the clinging to views in general. View here is translated from the word *diṭṭhi*. *Diṭṭhi* comes from the Sanskrit "*dr̥ṣṭi*," which means sight, perspective, view, or to look. This seeing, therefore, while on the mundane level may refer to the function of the eyes, on the supramundane level, it refers to having wisdom. View is what begins the process of any path. Wrong view can lead to the wrong intention, which can lead to wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, and wrong collectedness, and therefore wrong insight and wrong liberation. Wrong doesn't necessarily denote immorality in the same way right doesn't necessarily denote morality, although they could at some levels, but from a broader sense of practice and attainment of insight related to the Buddha's dispensation, wrong here can mean ineffective while right can mean effective. In other words, while other

views that are in contradiction with the Dhamma are ineffective to reach the Dhamma, the right view is the effective perspective to enter the path to Nibbāna. Ultimately, as we will see, the attachment to right view itself is an impediment to attaining full awakening.

Views develop over one's growth in a lifetime or even several lifetimes. Sometimes, a being may just inherit their elders' views on matters. These views can be political, spiritual, financial, or even discriminatory in nature. Throughout history, one can see this – certain views about certain classes, races, or ethnicities leads to displacement, genocide, and war. Holding onto such views without questioning them and seeing if they are indeed in alignment with the basic precepts would lead to pain and suffering due to having led an unexamined life. When one sees that a view causes one or others harm, such a view should be discerned and abandoned.

This violence, though not always as intense, can occur through political affiliations. One identifies as a follower or supporter of a certain political ideal and philosophy, and in due time, that becomes the bhava – “I am a liberal, I am a conservative, I am a centrist,” and so on. The defending of these views is initiated through unpleasant feeling. Perhaps someone says something contradictory to a view. The mind processes that as an unpleasant feeling and then acts on an underlying tendency towards aversion, launching the link of craving in the form of full-blown aversion. Additionally, underlying tendencies towards views, ignorance, and conceit will arise and along with sometimes doubt and even bhava, depending upon the circumstances and context of the statement by a person



holding a view contradictory to the clung to views of the mind. Then, the mind comes up with ways to defend the view. A being may lash out as a reaction and then start to defend their position, creating mental proliferation that causes the mind to get deeper submerged into the fuel of clinging to that view, until it launches a habitual tendency in bhava that then causes an unwholesome reaction at jāti. Even playful rivalries between sports teams and their fans can cause violence. One holds onto the view of being a fan of a certain sports team and even debates with other fans and this can result in more than an argument and could even lead to breaking of the first precept. Even the victory of one's favorite sports team elates and inflates the mind, even to the point of causing chaos and mayhem in the streets as part of a celebration, which can potentially cause one to break one or more precepts. When holding onto views, the mind is deluded and flooded with a gush of emotions that cause its ability to detract from that clinging and the potential of violence and other forms of harm in speech and mind.

In holding onto a view or group of views, there are bound to be two things that can happen, broadly speaking – confirmation bias or cognitive dissonance. Confirmation bias is simply when the mind recognizes information received as fitting the narrative of the views it holds. If someone were to give a presentation or to have even a simple conversation, their mind will have the tendency to convey information that makes sense in concordance with the view they are trying to persuade others to follow. On the flipside, as a listener with a certain view, if the person listens to someone else and is able to recognize certain key points that seem to fit with their view,

they tend to hold onto that and discard any conflicting information or evidence against that view. Therefore, with a confirmation bias, the holder of a certain view finds the explanation pleasing to the ear and to the mind, which then translates into deepening the clinging to their view. In the case of cognitive dissonance, when the holder of a view is confronted with opposing information that disproves their view or is dissonant with their view, on one level they will either ignore that new information as a result of their clinging to their view or on another level will fight back and lash out as a result of the discomfort the mind will feel at being introduced to this conflicting information. Whereas confirmation bias provides a pleasant experience with confirming and therefore justifying the clinging to the view despite not necessarily seeing the entire truth, cognitive dissonance is a painful experience that activates the underlying tendency towards aversion and therefore causes further clinging and digging one's heels to keep that view in mind. Everything else in that moment is an enemy to be hated and fought back against and so the person experiencing cognitive dissonance will at best ignore the conflicting view or at worst generate violent thoughts, words, and actions against the person presenting the conflicting view.

With this understanding, one must be diligent and see where attachment lies in relation to one's different views and longstanding held beliefs. For the purpose of deepening one's journey towards the Dhamma, it is therefore essential to evaluate one's views and use right view – the effective vision – that leads to Nibbāna as the touchstone and ultimately put

aside all views because Nibbāna is the cessation of conditioned experience, which includes even right view. Let us now explore right view with that goal in mind and then further investigate the traditional six views held by wanderers at the Buddha's time.

### ***Sammādiṭṭhi***

*Katamā ca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā? 'Atthi dinnam, atthi yiṭṭham, atthi hutam, atthi sukata dukkaṭānam kammānam phalam vipāko, atthi ayam loko, atthi paro loko, atthi mātā, atthi pitā, atthi sattā opapātikā, atthi loka samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggatā sammāpaṭipannā ye imaṅca lokam paraṅca lokam sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedentī'ti— ayam, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi sāsavā puññabhāgiyā upadhivepakkā.*

*Katamā ca, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggaṅgā? Yā kho, bhikkhave, ariyacittassa anāsavacittassa*

Dependent Origination

*ariyamaggasamaṅgino ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato paññā  
paññīndriyaṃ paññābalaṃ dhammaṅgīyasaṃbojjhaṅgo  
sammādiṭṭhi maggaṅgaṃ— ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi  
ariyā anāsava lokuttarā maggaṅgā.*

*And what, bhikkhus, is right view that is affected by the taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions? 'There is what is given and what is offered and what is sacrificed; there is fruit and result of good and bad actions; there is this world and the other world; there is mother and father; there are beings who are reborn spontaneously; there are in the world good and virtuous recluses and brahmins who have realized for themselves by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world.' This is right view affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions.*

*And what, bhikkhus, is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path? The wisdom, the faculty of wisdom, the power of wisdom, the investigation-of-states enlightenment factor, the path factor of right view in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path: this is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path.*

- MN 117, Mahācattārīsaka Sutta

*Katamā cāvuso, sammādiṭṭhi? Yaṃ kho, āvuso, dukkhe ñāṇaṃ, dukkhasamudaye ñāṇaṃ, dukkhanirodhe ñāṇaṃ, dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya ñāṇaṃ, ayaṃ vuccatāvuso: ‘sammādiṭṭhi’.*

*“And what, friends, is right view? Knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering — this is called right view.*

- MN 141, Saccavibhaṅga Sutta

There is the mundane and the supramundane or transcendental right view. The basis for right view is kamma and rebirth. There is an understanding that what actions one takes through mind, speech, and body, have repercussive effects. Therefore, the mundane right view starts with understanding the significance of a mind imbued with generosity – it holds great value in giving and in receiving with gratitude. There is a give and take, and so unwholesome thoughts, words, and actions lead to unwholesome effects at some point when the unwholesome causes ripen and bear fruit. It isn't that such kamma will ripen immediately, although it can, but it can also ripen after many lifetimes or even eons. The same is true of the understanding of the wholesome effects of wholesome thoughts, words, and actions. Being generous translates to a mind that is generous with its own understanding and attention. Generosity expressed results in

more favorable circumstances conducive to further development of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. Activating this nature of giving to others, one is giving within one's practice, translating to patience and acceptance of whatever arises with equanimity. One's patience leads to deeper attention and observation, which ultimately leads to wisdom and unlocking the transcendental view.

There is also the understanding of this world and the next. This implies rebirth. This view indicates a broader sense of rebirth – that there is a process of continuation of *kamma* from one lifetime to the next – but on the micro level, rebirth occurs in every moment with the arising and passing away of consciousnesses, *kamma* being carried forward from the arising of one consciousness to the next in one moment within one lifetime. Therefore, the decisions, intentions, and circumstances one finds themselves in change – there is change in an existence in one frame of mind to the next, as well as a change in physical existence initiated by *kamma* and intention, and so one is in one world at one time and in the next at another time.

The view of mother and father is straightforward. Human life is precious that provides a rare chance to attain *Nibbāna* and more importantly to get off of the wheel of rebirth. This can be done so through the biological reproduction and the joining of the sperm with the ovum to create the conditions for a new consciousness to descend and develop further into a human life. There is therefore gratitude implied for one's biological parents. Even if one were adopted or if parents did not provide a supportive environment for one's own mental

and emotional development, gratitude should be paid for the act of bringing one into this life – that itself is a precious gift. Beyond this, one ought to see that gratitude is owed to one's caretakers as well because they brought them up into the world – whether those are grandparents, aunts, and uncles, cousins, foster parents, or stepparents. They provided one with sustenance and the basic requisites of life as best as they could. Even if they were negligent, one ought to still have a grateful heart not because it's important to them but because it's vital for one's own mental and emotional health. In short, gratitude is implied in this understanding, specifically to one's parents, but broadly to the whole world because it is through the world that one learns and, one way or another, comes to the Dhamma.

The understanding of beings reborn spontaneously is deeply connected with the rebirth on a cosmic and quantum level. Rebirth occurs spontaneously in every moment and on a larger scale; it's not like there is an intermediary period in which rebirth occurs from one life to another. Instead, the consciousness at death arises, carrying forward the formations that activate it, and immediately descends into a viable *nāmarupā* at the point of conception. The matching of karmic formations with the correct genetic material happens spontaneously and without any waiting period. More specifically, within the context of the cosmic level of rebirth, spontaneous generation is also spontaneous rebirth in the case of coming into existence as a hell being, hungry ghost, deva, *rupādhātu*, or *arupādhātu* being. This is an understanding that arises after having experienced for oneself, and so no one is expected to have blind faith in these matters but to test and see



for themselves with an open mind. Only with experiential conviction can one then truly understand there is spontaneous generation at the level of these beings. The seeing of the rebirth of consciousnesses in every moment at a certain deep level of meditation brings clarity and conviction in the comprehension of spontaneous rebirth, even if one hasn't seen other realms or worlds beyond.

The last understanding in the mundane right view is that there are certain beings – recluses and brahmins – who have had direct experience of these different conditioned realities. Brahmin here doesn't indicate a priest from Vedic understanding but one who has had some wisdom or attainment. They have realized for themselves certain truths regarding the mechanisms of kamma, rebirth, other worlds, and the way to understanding these mechanisms in order to exit the wheel of rebirth altogether. It starts with a Buddha. It is a Buddha who rediscovers the path to freedom of the mind in a certain eon, and he then starts turning the wheel of the Dhamma, providing the way to complete awakening. He introduces the system through the knowledge and vision of the Four Noble Truths and those who learn this doctrine then attain the transcendental right view. First, one must straighten their view in order to direct the mind towards the right intention, which leads to the correct form of ethics that purifies the mind and prepares it for the practice of right samādhi, starting with right effort and right mindfulness and culminating in right collectedness, from where the right insight into the nature of cognition and reality arises and the knowledge and vision of right liberation of the mind is seen.

This supramundane right view therefore belongs to the mind that is liberated from the āsavas and achieves full awakening. Such a mind has complete knowledge of the Four Noble Truths. Such a mind understands the First Noble Truth of Dukkha, abandons the Second Noble Truth of Samudaya, and experiences the Third Noble Truth of Nirodha, after having walked the Fourth Noble Truth of Magga, having developed and perfected it. In such a mind, no clinging to views is present. The way leading to such a view by which all clinging stops includes the perception of the tilakkhaṇa, which leads to abandoning, the fading away of attachment and thus the complete cessation of upādāna and Dukkha.

While the arahant has no clinging to views, the stages of awakening comprehended by the mind before arahantship can have a tendency towards attachment to right view. Through conceit, craving, and ignorance, a being may cling to the mundane right view, thinking it to be “me, mine, myself,” defending it when it doesn’t require defending and wanting others to know it even though it has been unasked for and no invitation to teach has been given. This clinging to the Dhamma happens at the first three levels, and it becomes extremely subtle when it comes to attachment to the states within right samādhi, where one identifies with the jhānas and āyatanas. Such an attachment occurs due to conceit and clinging to the view of the perfection of the Dhamma. If one doesn’t eradicate this attachment and delight in the Dhamma then one is prone for rebirth in another realm. Therefore, this subtle stage of clinging intertwines with the subtle stage of self-view in which conceit still remains in the anāgāmī. While this may be

considered the most wholesome clinging, it is clinging nonetheless and if one doesn't let go of it in this life, it is sure to be let go of in the Pure Abodes. Now that we have investigated into the two levels of right view of the Buddha's Dhamma, let us examine the other six views that the mind could have a tendency to identify with and cling to, before we then look at how to cease the clinging to all views altogether.

### *Pūraṇakassapavāda*

*Karoto kho, mahārāja, kārayato, chindato chedāpayato, pacato pācāpayato socayato, socāpayato, kilamato kilamāpayato, phandato phandāpayato, pāṇamatipātāpayato, adinnaṃ ādiyato, sandhiṃ chindato, nillopaṃ harato, ekāgārikaṃ karoto, paripantthe tiṭṭhato, paradāraṃ gacchato, musā bhaṇato, karoto na karīyati pāpaṃ. Khurapariyantena cepi cakkena yo imissā pathaviyā pāṇe ekaṃ maṃsakhalaṃ ekaṃ maṃsapuñjaṃ kareyya, natthi tatonidānaṃ pāpaṃ, natthi pāpassa āgamo. Dakkhiṇaṃcepi gaṅgāya tīraṃ gaccheyya hananto ghātento chindanto chedāpento pacanto*

*pācāpento, natthi tatonidānaṃ pāpaṃ, natthi pāpassa āgamo.*

*Uttarañcepi gaṅgāya tīraṃ gaccheyya dadanto dāpento yajanto*

*yajāpento, natthi tatonidānaṃ puññaṃ, natthi puññaassa āgamo.*

*Dānena damena saṃyamena saccavajjena natthi puññaṃ, natthi*

*puññaassa āgamo'ti.*

*Your Majesty, by the doer or instigator of a thing, by one who cuts or causes to be cut, by one who burns or causes to be burnt, by one who causes grief and weariness, by one who agitates or causes agitation, who causes life to be taken or that which is not given to be taken, commits burglary, carries off booty, commits robbery, lies in ambush, commits adultery and tells lies, no evil is done. If with a razor-sharp wheel one were to make of this earth one single mass and heap of flesh, there would be no evil as a result of that, no evil would accrue. If one were to go along the south bank of the Ganges killing, slaying, cutting or causing to be cut, burning or causing to be burnt,*

*there would be no evil as a result of that, no evil would accrue. Or if one were to go along the north bank of the Ganges giving and causing to be given, sacrificing and causing to be sacrificed, there would be no merit as a result of that, no merit would accrue. In giving, self-control, abstinence and telling the truth, there is no merit, and no merit accrues.*

- DN 2, Samaññaphala Sutta

The view of Pūraṇa Kassapa is amoralism. According to the sutta, Pūraṇa Kassapa did not believe in causation and instead thought that things arose without a cause. According to this view, there is no meaning in generosity, giving, or following any moral and ethical precepts. Circumstances, things, beings, and lives arise without any prior causes. There is no merit of any form, and therefore, there is no afterlife or a world beyond through which merits are experienced, neither there and in the future nor here and now in one lifetime. While this view is not inherently immoral, it gives no importance to morality. This view doesn't say that one ought to be immoral. Rather, there is a nihilistic approach to morality altogether, in which there is no

meaning in good or bad. However, if one were to assess the implicit reasoning behind the precepts, one would understand their vital importance. No one wants to be killed, stolen from, lied to, cheated on, or have to deal with a heedless individual under the influence of intoxicants. The precepts, while moral and ethical, are also quite practical, ultimately eliminating immorality, and therefore presupposes moralism. This view is also known as *akiriya-vāda*, or the view of no action, as well as *ahetu-vāda*, meaning there is no root – whether wholesome or unwholesome – that influences, conditions, and causes further effects.

The danger in the view of Pūraṇa Kassapa is that if one subscribed to it and clung to it, one wouldn't find any importance it maintaining any form of a precept, having disregard for others and ultimately for oneself. One goes about the world without a care for others, which ultimately results in a life that is filled with trouble, stress, anxiety, and depression. It is no surprise that such a view would even lead to mental unease to the point of suicide if the commentary on the *Dhammapada* is to be believed, which states that the founder of this view killed himself by drowning. Clinging to such a view leads to misery and mental suffering.

### *Makkhaligosālavāda*

Natthi, mahārāja, hetu natthi paccayo sattānaṃ saṅkilesāya, ahetū apaccayā sattā saṅkilissanti. Natthi hetu, natthi paccayo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā, ahetū apaccayā sattā visujjhanti. Natthi attakāre, natthi parakāre, natthi purisakāre, natthi balaṃ, natthi vīriyaṃ, natthi purisathāmo, natthi purisaparakkamo. Sabbe sattā sabbe pāṇā sabbe bhūtā sabbe jīvā avasā abalā avīriyā niyatisaṅgatibhāvapariṇatā chasovevābhijātīsu sukhadukkhāṃ paṭisaṃvedenti. Cuddasa kho paṇimāni yonipamukhasatasahasāni saṭṭhi ca satāni cha ca satāni pañca ca kammuno satāni pañca ca kammāni tīṇi ca kammāni kamme ca aḍḍhakamme ca dvaṭṭhipaṭipadā dvaṭṭhantarakappā chalābhijātiyo aṭṭha purisabhūmiyo ekūnapaññāsa ājīvakasate ekūnapaññāsa paribbājakasate ekūnapaññāsa nāgāvāsasate vīse indriyasate timse nirayasate chattimsa rajodhātuyo satta saññīgabbhā satta asaññīgabbhā satta nigaṇṭhīgabbhā satta devā satta mānusa satta pisācā satta sarā satta pavuṭā satta pavuṭasatāni satta papātā satta papātasatāni satta

*supinā satta supinasatāni cullāsīti mahākappino satahassāni, yāni  
bāle ca paṇḍite ca sandhāvitoṃ saṃsaritvā dukkhassantaṃ karissanti.  
Tattha natthi “imināhaṃ sīlena vā vatena vā tapena vā  
brahmacariyena vā aparipakkaṃ vā kammaṃ paripācessāmi,  
paripakkaṃ vā kammaṃ phussa phussa byantiṃ karissāmi” ti hevaṃ  
natthi. Doṇamite sukhadukkhe pariyantakate saṃsāre, natthi  
hāyanavaḍḍhane, natthi ukkaṃsāvakaṃse. Seyyathāpi nāma  
suttaguḷe khitte nibbeṭhiyamānameva paleti; evameva bāle ca paṇḍite  
ca sandhāvitoṃ saṃsaritvā dukkhassantaṃ karissanti’ ti.*

*Your Majesty, there is no cause or condition for the defilement of  
beings, they are defiled without cause or condition. There is no cause  
or condition for the purification of beings, they are purified without  
cause or condition. There is no self-power or other-power, there is no  
power in humans, no strength or force, no vigor or exertion. All  
beings, all living things, all creatures, all that lives is without control,*



*without power or strength, they experience the fixed course of pleasure and pain through the six kinds of rebirth. There are one million four hundred thousand principal sorts of birth, and six thousand others and again six hundred. There are five hundred kinds of kamma, or five kinds, and three kinds, and half-kamma, sixty-two paths, sixty-two intermediary eons, six classes of humankind, eight stages of human progress, four thousand nine hundred occupations, four thousand nine hundred wanderers, four thousand nine hundred abodes of nāgas, two thousand sentient existences, three thousand hells, thirty-six places of dust, seven classes of rebirth as conscious beings, seven as unconscious beings, and seven as beings 'freed from bonds,' seven grades of devas, men, goblins, seven lakes, seven great and seven small protuberances, seven great and seven small abysses, seven great and seven small dreams, eight million four hundred thousand eons during which fools and wise run on and circle round till they make an end of suffering. Therefore, there is no such thing as*

*saying: 'By this discipline or practice or austerity or holy life I will bring my unripened kamma to fruition, or I will gradually make this ripened kamma go away.' Neither of these things is possible, because pleasure and pain have been measured out with a measure limited by the round of birth-and-death, and there is neither increase nor decrease, neither excellence nor inferiority. Just as a ball of string when thrown runs till it is all unraveled, so fools and wise run on and circle round till they make an end of suffering.*

- DN 2, Samaññaphala Sutta

The view of Makkhali Gosāla is niyativāda, or the view of absolute fate. The sect that Makkhali Gosāla subscribed to in ancient India was known as the ājīvikas. The ājīvikas believed that all that has arisen, is arising, and will arise in existence is completely predetermined. It is also a philosophy of no action and no root. According to such a view, there is an order to things without beings affecting that order. That order arises and there is no way to change or manipulate it. Beings are given their share of life in this order, which unravels and that

is the end of it. While this view does see rebirth in the macro sense as valid, it does so with the understanding of a self that takes rebirth from one life to another until there is an end to that process without any effort. In other words, this view suggests that there is nothing that can be done to steer the course of kamma through intention or action. Every soul, according to this view, therefore, has a predetermined amount of destinations from one life to the next and the end of suffering is also predetermined. A secondary aspect of this philosophy is that all of existence is made up of atoms, including the self. The sun, moon, stars, and all cosmic forces are predetermined in their places and movements, including how they influence the self as well.

Clinging to such a view, one believes that if there is no effect of one's actions and one is only living a predetermined life, then whatever one does will not have any bearing on their future. The future having already been written, what is the point in doing good deeds? So even one murdering one's father or mother, having lied and stolen, having had intentions to harm and cheat, and taking intoxicants were not in one's control. Whatever arose as a thought was not due to any intention conditioned by previous choices. Such a view causes the mind to let go of any commitment to a precept, and having become blind to the reality of choice and consequence the mind becomes further deluded. There is a false sense of relief in the idea that everything is predetermined and so why worry about anything, but in reality, the mind being untamed and untrained will cause further disturbances, leading to restlessness and lack of mental peace. An existential angst may

arise that can give rise to full-blown existential crises throughout life, pulling one away from the peace of the cessation of suffering. If suffering cannot be made to cease here and now and only at a predetermined time, then the mind will deviate towards ending one's life. It can lead to a nihilistic and pessimistic attitude, which only causes further suffering. According to Jain sources like the Bhagavati Sutra, Gosāla died out of sheer madness and a fever onset by that craze.

### *Ajitakesakambalavāda*

*Natthi, mahārāja, dinnam, natthi yitṭham, natthi hutam, natthi  
sukatadukkaṭānam kammānam phalam vipāko, natthi ayam loko,  
natthi paro loko, natthi mātā, natthi pitā, natthi sattā opapātikā,  
natthi loke samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggatā sammāpaṭipannā, ye  
imañca lokam parañca lokam sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedenti.  
Cātumahābhūtikō ayam puriso, yadā kālam karoti, pathavī  
pathavikāyam anupeti anupagacchati, āpo āpokāyam anupeti  
anupagacchati, tejo tejokāyam anupeti anupagacchati, vāyo  
vāyokāyam anupeti anupagacchati, ākāsam indriyāni saṅkamanti.*

*Āsandipañcamā purisā mataṃ ādāya gacchanti. Yāvālāhanā padāni  
paññāyanti. Kāpotakāni atṭhīni bhavanti, bhassantā āhutiyo.  
Dattupaññattaṃ yadidaṃ dānaṃ. Tesāṃ tucchaṃ musā vilāpo ye  
keci atthikavādaṃ vadanti. Bāle ca paṇḍite ca kāyassa bheda  
ucchijjanti vinassanti, na honti paraṃ maraṇā'ti.*

*Your Majesty, there is nothing given, bestowed, offered in  
sacrifice, there is no fruit or result of good or bad deeds, there is not  
this world or the next, there is no mother or father, there are no  
spontaneously arisen beings, there are in the world no ascetics or  
Brahmins who have attained, who have perfectly practiced, who  
proclaim this world and the next, having realized them by their own  
super-knowledge. This human being is composed of the four great  
elements, and when one dies the earth part reverts to earth, the water  
part to water, the fire part to fire, the air part to air, and the faculties  
pass away into space. They accompany the dead man with four bearers*

*and the bier as fifth, their footsteps are heard as far as the cremation-ground. There the bones whiten; the sacrifice ends in ashes. It is the idea of a fool to give this gift: the talk of those who preach a doctrine of survival is vain and false. Fools and wise, at the breaking-up of the body, are destroyed and perish, they do not exist after death.*

- DN 2, Samaññaphala Sutta

The view of Ajita Kesakambali is materialism and hedonism. It is also known as cārvāka or chewing the self or lokāyata or aimed towards the world. An alternative meaning is that cārvāka meant chewing the self in regard to being of the mindset to eat, drink and be merry, or even just simply being sweet and agreeable in speech. Lokāyata can also mean popular. It too is a view of no action and no root. This view is in direct disagreement with right view – it does not profess and, in fact, vehemently opposes any significance given to being generous, grateful, or considering the possibility of other worlds or existences beyond this life. It doesn't give an importance to providing any gratitude given to one's parents or caretakers. It denies the existence of spontaneous rebirth both on a macro and a micro level. It has no respect for nor inclination for respecting ascetics and sages who understand

reality as it is and profess to understand such a reality. For one who holds this view, the self is the body in the form of the four elements – the states of matter. It presupposes the self as arising with the formation of the body and passing away with the dissolution of the body, with no continuation of kamma or intention in the form of the same or even new consciousness.

For this reason, while the holder of such a view isn't inherently immoral, there isn't an emphasis on following precepts. Rather, this philosophy underscores the fulfillment of sensual desires. For those who cling to this view, the pursuit of sensual pleasures and their fulfillment by any means necessary are the end of suffering. The liberation they propose is the death of the body. That, to them, is the liberation of the mind – therefore, the enjoyment of the senses is to be squeezed out in every moment, even if one has to break a precept because in such a view, there is no kamma or rebirth. If one were to pursue this view and cling to it, it leads to short-term identification with the senses and their experiences, as well as the contentment found therein. However, when the truth is that such experiences are indeed impermanent and unstable, the seeking of them causes the mind to become restless and addicted to the sensual pleasures. Therefore, not only is there a clinging to this view, but from it, there is also a clinging to sensory experience for the sake of the so-called self. Through this, there is the bhava of a pleasure-seeker, and one dies in confusion, anxiety, mental pain, and suffering.

## *Pakudhakaccāyanavāda*

*Sattime, mahārāja, kāyā akaṭā akaṭavidhā animmitā animmātā vañjhā kūṭaṭṭhā esikaṭṭhāyitṭhitā. Te na iñjanti, na vipariṇamanti, na aññamaññaṃ byābādhenti, nālaṃ aññamaññaṃ sukhāya vā dukkhāya vā sukhadukkhāya vā. Katame satta? Pathavikāyo, āpokāyo, tejokāyo, vāyokāyo, sukhe, dukkhe, jīve sattame — ime satta kāyā akaṭā akaṭavidhā animmitā animmātā vañjhā kūṭaṭṭhā esikaṭṭhāyitṭhitā. Te na iñjanti, na vipariṇamanti, na aññamaññaṃ byābādhenti, nālaṃ aññamaññaṃ sukhāya vā dukkhāya vā sukhadukkhāya vā. Tattha natthi hantā vā ghātetā vā, sotā vā sāvetā vā, viññātā vā viññāpetā vā. Yopi tiṇhena satthena sīsaṃ chindati, na koci kiñci jīvītā voropeti; sattannaṃ toeva kāyānamantarena satthaṃ vivaramanupatati'ti.*

*Your Majesty, these seven things are not made or of a kind to be made, uncreated, unproductive, barren, false, stable as a column.*



*They do not shake, do not change, obstruct one another, nor are they able to cause one another pleasure, pain, or both. What are the seven? The earth-body, the water-body, the fire-body, the air-body, pleasure and pain and the life-principle. These seven are not made or of a kind to be made, uncreated, unproductive, barren, false, stable as a column. Thus, there is neither slain nor slayer, neither hearer nor proclaimer, neither knower nor causer of knowing. And whoever cuts off a man's head with a sharp sword does not deprive anyone of life, he just inserts the blade in the intervening space between these seven bodies.*

- DN 2, Samaññaphala Sutta

The view of Pakudha Kaccāyana is that of anuvāda or atomism, and sassatavāda or that of the eternalist. It states that there are seven elements that are permanent, unchanging, and unborn – the four great elements, pleasure and pain, and the life-principle, which is generally understood as the concept of the soul. These seven are irreducible in the same way if one were to divide particles, one would only divide them into

further sub-particles. According to this view, even when these elements are reduced, they are not destroyed. This view does not account for kamma and therefore is a view of no action and no root. These elements being eternal, says this view, there is no decay or death. This is closely linked with the view that takes a self to be immutable and even to be substratum of reality.

If the holder of this view clings to the belief of no kamma and no unchanging self, then they will see no value in having to maintain precepts. They will only remain calm, for the most part, in an idea of a permanent self that is immortal and all-pervading. However, such a view only leads to further identification with the idea of such a self. Such an idea originates as mentation, which in itself is dependent on the mind – it is just a mental construct that isn't all-pervasive but arises when thought of, and as such, since it is tied to a consciousness that arises and passes away, it is inherently impermanent and therefore cannot be considered self. The reality is that as soon as one thinks of a self, one has conceptualized that notion, which is bound to fade when the concept no longer makes contact with the mind. Having clung to such a view, the mind is unable to see reality as it is and thus everything experienced is seen through that filter of residing in a permanent self. With the ethics being abnegated because there is no killer or the killed in this view, what use is there for such ethics that bars one from killing, harming, stealing from, cheating, or disturbing others while intoxicated? When clung to this view, the mind becomes deluded and has strayed from the prospect of reaching Nibbāna.

## ***Nigaṇṭhanāṭaputtavāda***

*Idha, mahārāja, nigaṇṭho cātuyāmasaṃvarasaṃvuto hoti. Kathanca, mahārāja, nigaṇṭho cātuyāmasaṃvarasaṃvuto hoti? Idha, mahārāja, nigaṇṭho sabbavāriṅgārīto ca hoti, sabbavāriyutto ca, sabbavāridhuto ca, sabbavāriphuṭo ca. Evaṃ kho, mahārāja, nigaṇṭho cātuyāmasaṃvarasaṃvuto hoti. Yato kho, mahārāja, nigaṇṭho evaṃ cātuyāmasaṃvarasaṃvuto hoti; ayaṃ vuccati, mahārāja, nigaṇṭho gatatto ca yatatto ca ṭhitatto cā'ti.*

*Your Majesty, here a Nigaṇṭha is bound by a fourfold restraint. What four? He is curbed by all curbs, enclosed by all curbs, cleared by all curbs, and claimed by all curbs. 115. And as far as a Nigaṇṭha is bound by this fourfold restraint, thus the Nigaṇṭha is called self-perfected, self-controlled, self-established.*

- DN 2, Samaññaphala Sutta

The view of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta is extreme asceticism. It is known as Jainism in the modern day, derived from the word *jina*, which means conqueror – one who has conquered their passions and attained liberation. This view holds that there is a soul that transmigrates from lifetime to lifetime collecting the dust of impurities from previous immoral actions, and that in order to cleanse this soul, the being must perform austerities. According to this view, all is alive, including the four elements. The idea is that the soul transmigrates from various states of being, including plants and microorganisms like bacteria and so on, and the experience of that soul is dependent upon the quality of karmic particles its consciousness picks up. The goal, therefore, is to purify the soul through asceticism as a form of penance and to restrain the senses and sense desires to the point of mortification of and pain to the body. With the *cārvāka* view being that of hedonism that was lived by the prince Gotama, the view of Jainism that mortification leads to purity and ultimately liberation from *Saṃsāra* was one that the Bodhisatta tested and ultimately found to be futile and misguided. The logical line of questioning is – how is one to know how much karmic shedding has occurred and how much is left? Clinging to the view of *kamma* from this philosophy, one becomes obsessive over every action, even if unintentional and without a direct cause – in other words, this view of

kamma states that all must suffer the consequences of action even if they were unintentional. If someone had no intention to harm an insect but by lack of carefulness mistakenly stepped on one, then, according to this view, that person would have to bear the effects of that action. Therefore, intention isn't the only thing that matters – the pure action itself does, whether intentional or not. According to this view, when one has purified the soul through extreme penance, only then was one said to be a perfected one and would then enter into a realm of liberated beings.

Clinging to this view, the mind identifies with the idea of the soul and becomes obsessive over all actions to the point of self-mortification rather than purifying the intentions and getting rid of unwholesome states and stopping any identification with wholesome states. In other words, pleasant feeling itself doesn't need to be restrained. It is the wisdom of the tilakkhaṇa that allows the mind to abandon any attachment to a wholesome pleasant feeling without having to abandon the wholesome feeling itself. In the view of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, the mind loses its balance. It is extremely cautious of all it does to the detriment of even the body's health because any action, intentional or unintentional, can have direct consequences on the soul. Such a view can lead to measures at the end of one's life where *sallekhana*, or fasting onto death, is enacted and leads to suffering even until one's final breath. One limits the movements and activities of one's body, motivated by fear of creating unwholesome kamma and the desire for existence in a plane void of any imperfections. This is a path that does not

lead to the cessation of Dukkha because it uses Dukkha as a means of its own cessation.

### **Sañcayabelaṭṭhaputtavāda**

*Atthi paro lokoti iti ce maṃ pucchasi, atthi paro lokoti iti ce me  
assa, atthi paro lokoti iti te naṃ byākareyyaṃ. Evantipi me no,  
tathātipi me no, aññathātipi me no, notipi me no, no notipi me no.  
Natthi paro loko ...pe... atthi ca natthi ca paro loko ...pe... nevatthi  
na natthi paro loko ...pe... atthi sattā opapātikā ...pe... natthi sattā  
opapātikā ...pe... atthi ca natthi ca sattā opapātikā ...pe... nevatthi  
na natthi sattā opapātikā ...pe... atthi sukatadukkaṭānaṃ kammānaṃ  
phalaṃ vipāko ...pe... natthi sukatadukkaṭānaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ  
vipāko ...pe... atthi ca natthi ca sukatadukkaṭānaṃ kammānaṃ  
phalaṃ vipāko ...pe... nevatthi na natthi sukatadukkaṭānaṃ  
kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāko ...pe... hoti tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā  
...pe... na hoti tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā ...pe... hoti ca na ca hoti*

*tathāgato param̃ maraṇā ...pe... neva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param̃ maraṇāti iti ce maṃ pucchasi, neva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param̃ maraṇāti iti ce me assa, neva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param̃ maraṇāti iti te naṃ byākareyyaṃ. Evantipi me no, tathātipi me no, aññathātipi me no, notipi me no, no notipi me no'ti.*

*“If you ask me: ‘Is there another world?’ if I thought so, I would say so. But I don’t think so. I don’t say it is so, and I don’t say otherwise. I don’t say it is not, and I don’t not say it is not. If you ask: ‘Isn’t there another world?’ . . . ‘Both?’ . . . ‘Neither?’ . . . ‘Is there fruit and result of good and bad deeds?’ ‘Isn’t there?’ . . . ‘Both?’ . . . ‘Neither?’ . . . ‘Does the Tathāgata [59] exist after death?’ ‘Does he not?’ . . . ‘Both?’ . . . ‘Neither?’ . . . I don’t not say it is not.”*

- DN 2, Samaññaphala Sutta

The view of Sañcaya Belaṭṭhaputta is philosophical skepticism. It is known as ajñāna, which can either mean the lack of knowledge or not-knowing. In the second meaning, it implies that one who holds such a view withholds any acknowledgement of any sort about anything. This view is also known as amaravikkhepavāda or the view of the “eel-wrigglers” because the holders of such views evade any form of conclusion on anything. This withholding of conclusion on a topic is seen in four different schools of this view. The first three schools have a reason for withholding any kind of conclusion. The first school has the fear of concluding on something that they don’t have an understanding of and are motivated by fear of mental confusion and restless because they are afraid their view may be based on their personal biases and not on reality as it is. Likewise, the second school has a similar worry except they don’t want to get entangled into conflict. The third school has the same worry except more specifically they do not want to be interrogated by declaring anything as good or bad. In all three cases, the fear and worry have an underlying desire for mental peace. The fourth school is that of Sañcaya Belaṭṭhaputta who didn’t come to any conclusion not out of worry or fear of mental confusion or desire for mental peace but just for sake of being fully skeptical of all ideas, including those of other skeptics.

Not subscribing to right view and, to use this school’s method of linguistic wriggling, not *not* subscribing to right view, and therefore not conclusively stating the value of good mental, verbal, and physical deeds, or professing the importance of generosity, of one’s parents, of kamma, rebirth,



spontaneous generation, and of the idea that there are indeed those who know of a path of liberation from Saṃsāra, such a view deviates from the path to Nibbāna. Holding onto such a view, the mind ultimately becomes dull, deluded, and even anxious and confused. No mental peace or extinguishment of the fires of greed, hatred, and delusion can be experienced by such a view because if the mind doesn't conclusively see that greed, hatred, and delusion are present and that there is a way out, no progress towards their cessation can be made.

First, one must straighten their view in order to progress. Any attachment and clinging to the six types of wrong view and their subsets leads to a mind filled with anxiety and further identification. Anytime the mind acts on such views, the link of clinging feeds the energy of the mental, verbal, or physical action back to the āsavas, specifically avijjāsava, with diṭṭhāsava being a subset of that, and bhavāsava, but can also feed energy back to kāmāsava if one subscribes to and acts from the cārvāka view. The energy at these āsavas then influence ignorance, formations, and consciousness, leading to seeing existence in a certain way, which leads to further ingraining of clinging to views. This whole process is at the quantum level during the moments in one lifetime. Having clung to wrong view potentially leads to a state of woe and misery at the cosmic level – a being holding to such a view may start to have an agitated or dull mind that automatically inclines towards regret, remorse, or craving to such a great degree that the formations rooted in that inclination can give rise to a consciousness that can depart and transport those

formations and become established into a new nāmarupā in a hell realm, animal realm or a hungry ghost realm.

### *Cessation of Clinging to Views with Right Effort*

Stream-entry completely ceases all clinging to wrong view. Arahantship destroys clinging even to the Dhamma. Until the experience of stream-entry arises, caused by the experiential conviction and confidence in the Triple Gem, one must be careful in observing what sorts of views may arise in one's mind as a response or reaction to contact with the externalities of reality. In other words, through becoming a sotāpanna, one has eradicated the doubt in the teachings of the Buddha after having tested with an open mind the mundane right view and applied it on the path. One has applied the right intention and right effort to align one's words and actions respectively with right speech and right action, as well as one's livelihood with right livelihood. Doing so, mind maintains precepts and commits to the practice of samādhi, thereby purifying mind even further by letting go of unwholesome formation, consciousnesses, tendencies, and craving, conceit and ignorance. Mind then has an experience of Nibbāna and then knows with experiential confidence that the Magga, the Eightfold Path, is the way towards full awakening and liberation from rebirth. Let's now explore the way the mind comes to eradicate each of these six views, which, one should

note, are subsets of views. As we saw earlier, in DN 1, Brahmajāla Sutta, for example, there are as many as sixty-view wrong views, which are derived from these six main wrong views that are ineffective for attaining any level of awakening and exiting the wheel of Saṃsāra as understood in the Buddha's dispensation.

Amoralism is a misunderstanding of conditioned reality. While it doesn't condone immorality, it has the potential to prompt a mind towards it. One has to see the vitality of mind the precepts provide through experimentation and application. Seeing the precepts as the backbone for walking the path to Nibbāna, the mind must first use the following line of reasoning. Would one want to be subjected to harm or murder? Would one enjoy having been stolen from or lied to? Would one accept and be okay with a partner cheating them sexually or have someone cause harm to one through sensual misconduct? Would one completely tolerate without a shred of aversion someone intoxicated and misbehaving with one? Knowing these actions as being unwholesome, not conducive to emotional development and joy, and knowing them to be hurtful to oneself, how then would one feel if someone had killed, stolen from, lied to, cheated or misbehaved in an intoxicated manner with a family member or friend? Therefore, while these precepts are inherently moral and ethical, they are also quite practical and reveal by the nature of applying them that there is a universally accepted system of wholesome and unwholesome. No matter what the upbringing, culture, civilization, religion, nationality, status, and so on, all see the fundamental basis for growth and harmony as some form of

following these five basic precepts. Having seen this, at first in a logical manner, questioning and reasoning to get to a level of understanding rooted in that logic, one then commits to following these precepts. After some time, through practice and application of these precepts, one notices a clarity and calmness in the mind. This tranquility, when used as the foundation and starting point of meditation practice, provides the enrichment of insight and wisdom. The commitment to and the maintenance of following these precepts eradicate the view of amoralism.

The view of fatalism denies intention and kamma, and thus rejects the understanding of choice and responsibility for one's actions in mind, speech, and body. The flawed idea that even choices are predetermined leads to further delusion. To eradicate this view, one sees that just by committing to and maintaining the precepts causes the mind to have more clarity and calmness. One doesn't need to have a belief that these choices will change circumstances in the afterlife, but one can see a direct result in the here and now. One can decide to be kind and loving to others and see how that changes one's circumstances in a wholesome manner, or one can choose to be filled with ill will and see the effect that has on oneself and other beings. Therefore, if one reflects on the understanding of intention – one's own, as well as the possibility of others' intentions, or both, or neither, but most importantly one's own – and sees how previous choices arose as a result of contact with a sense base, but then certain choices were changed based on new information or wisdom, then one sees that there is a possibility of changing and responsibility for one's actions.

Simply put, if one can intend a change in behavior, then that change in behavior is not predetermined or fated by cosmic principles as the ājīvikas professed – it is in the intention of that mind, even if that intention was conditioned by previous choices and other environmental factors. That intention then directs the actions, providing the ripening and fruition of the effects of those actions. This seeing of the direct causal relationship between kamma and fruition of kamma – exemplified by how right view yields wisdom and the experience of Nibbāna – eradicates the view of fatalism.

The view of materialism and hedonism rejects that same understanding of kamma as per the Buddha's dispensation. However, it goes a step further and says that the only objective one should have is to fulfill all sensual pleasures no matter how this is done and whether it affects another – meaning one ought to break a precept if required for the sake of sensory gratification. This view presupposing no kamma is eradicated by the understanding of choice and consequence as one does when eradicating the view of fatalism. Secondly, the view that precepts have no effect is destroyed by having seen and experienced for oneself the direct effect the precepts have on one's own life and with the rationale of knowing that one doesn't appreciate or want anyone to break a precept to affect them or their loved ones in a negative and harmful manner. One must go a step further to understand the fallacy of the view that sensory gratification is all there is, no matter what the cost. First, one must see that there is that pleasure beyond the senses through the experience of the jhānas and āyatanas. Seeing that there is joy and happiness that arises in the mind

secluded from sensual pleasures, the mind stops seeing the sensual pleasures as the only way to fulfillment. One then starts to see the *tilakkhaṇa* in all feeling, including pleasant feeling. First, one understands the impermanent and conditioned nature of sensual pleasures and therefore sees them as inherently *Dukkha*. Seeing this, one no longer identifies with those pleasures and attains disenchantment and dispassion, leading to a mind that experiences cessation of feeling and perception altogether. The mind then ceases this view after having seen and experienced *Nibbāna*, the unconditioned and highest bliss beyond the conditioned experience of the senses.

The view of eternalism as proliferated by *Pakudha Kaccāyana* during the Buddha's time presupposed the idea of the self that was eternal. Before tackling this aspect of the view, one has to understand that it directly espouses that there is no *kamma* and responsibility for action since all creation is just atoms interacting with one another and that self or soul is part of that process, and in doing so it advocates that there is no need then to develop in an ethical manner. If all is eternal and there are no consequences even when one kills since it is just atoms interacting with another, then what use is there for *kamma* and responsibility for one's actions, and what use is there to develop and maintain precepts? According to this view, there are seven eternal principles of existence – earth, water, air, fire, pleasure, pain, and the soul. If one sees that the first four are the four great elements of ancient Indian thought then this leads them to understand that this is the contemporary understanding of the four states of matter – solid, liquid, gas, and plasma (or heat) – then one also

recognizes the impermanent nature of these states, both internally and externally. Matter changes all the time. Taking into account the internal solid matter of the body, the liquid matter of bodily fluids, the gaseous matter of air moving through the intestines, and the heat and electrical impulses of the body, one sees that the body itself has grown and changed over the years. From infancy, the body grows, bones and joints fuse, one's height increases. As one develops in puberty, the body goes through further changes, and as one enters adulthood, sickness – which has been prevalent since infancy – is more noticeable as a sign of change. The body ages, skin wrinkles up, the hair becomes thinner and grayer and even falls out, and the sense organs themselves become diminished. Seeing this, one realizes the impermanence of the four elements in this way and ceases the view that they are eternal.

Pain and pleasure are experiences dependent upon the process of contact. When a painful feeling arises, one can trace it back with reflection and see that such a feeling arose due to contact. Cease contact and the painful feeling ceases. In other words, you experience the pain of sitting in an uncomfortable position. Cease sitting in that position and the pain ceases. You smell garbage outside your window. Close the window, ceasing contact between the smell and the nose, and the nose consciousness of that garbage smell ceases. Likewise, with regards to pleasant feeling the same is true. You are eating your favorite dessert. The sweetness makes contact with the tongue and there is awareness of that sweetness and the affective projection of that experience being pleasant. Cease contact between the dessert and your tastebuds, and there is no longer

the pleasure of sweetness. On the radio or a streaming music service, your favorite song plays – the auditory nerve in your ear makes contact with the sound waves vibrating in the air, and the ear consciousness dependent upon the two becomes aware of the familiar tune of the music that gives you pleasure. Mute the radio or the phone or computer and the song stops playing and thus the pleasure ceases. Having experienced contact and observed the feeling arising dependent upon that contact, then ceasing that contact and observing the cessation of the feeling, one sees that indeed pain and pleasure are impermanent and ceases such a view that they are eternal.

The life-principle is a translation of the word *jiva-satta*, which means the life being, which in ancient Indian thought was accepted to be a self or a soul. The idea of a self is that which is perfect, untouched, unborn, uncreated, permanent, fulfilling, ever-present and pervasive, independent of causes and conditions, and sometimes even equated with a substratum of reality. If one investigated through observation and looked for such a self, one would see first and foremost all that is in the awareness of the mind is dependent upon causes and conditions and therefore impermanent and not fulfilling forever, thus, not to be considered as self. Now in certain subsets of this view the awareness itself is equated to a self, but upon closer inspection one sees that even this awareness or consciousness arises dependent upon an experience and can even be aware of nothing or no-thing as in the case of the experience of the *āyatana* of nothingness. When a new experience arises, dependent upon the intention and attention of *nāma*, the awareness of nothingness is gone, and a new



awareness arises tied to the new experiences. Even the objectless awareness is tied to the nāmarupā, which itself is interdependent with consciousness and therefore changes based on the fluid experience of varying mental objects. An experience of self being infinite, the nature of happiness, and so on are tied to the mental pleasure and concepts within the scope of the impermanent mind and its movement. Cease that and the concept of such an experience ceases as well. Seeing this, one lets go of any concept of such an eternal, independent self and ceases the view of the eternal self as well.

The view of a soul requiring liberation as per Jainism is abandoned by the understanding that one comes to when seeing the concept of the soul tied to the functioning of the mind. The view of restraint the extreme requirement of mortification for the purposes of eliminating negative kamma and liberation is refuted by the understanding of intention and kamma. If one did something without intention, that in itself is not kamma because one's intention is the fuel for any kamma. The question that should be reflected is thus – can one see in the here and now through mortification and asceticism the reduction of negative kamma? How is it measured? When did it begin? What about the kamma one unknowingly produced, meaning without intention? All of these, if one were to closely investigate with a calm and equanimous mind, are dependent upon concepts and theories that cannot be tested, experienced, or confirmed in the here and now. What can be seen, even over a long period of time, is that with the changing of intention, there is an effect. One can see that kamma being dependent upon intention, if a person changes their unwholesome

intentions by abandoning them and replacing them with wholesome intentions, they see a visible transformation in the quality of their thoughts, words, and actions. Seeing this, one can then extend the understanding to the fruition of unwholesome intentions from previous moments, even previous lifetimes, as being impermanent, Dukkha, and impersonal, and therefore one abandons any further interaction, interference, or reaction to such karmic fruition. In this way, instead of mortifying the body and mind and thus causing pain, one just sees the playing out of that kamma. The non-interaction and hence non-reaction with it ensures no fuel is further added through the processes of intention, craving, conceit, and ignorance. That doesn't mean the complete effect of an action is experienced right then and there, but there is certainly a reduction in its intensity the next time such an effect arises until there is no effect at all. This is best understood through the following –

*So navañca kammañ na karoti, purāṇaṇca kammañ phussa phussa byantikaroti. Sandiṭṭhikā nijjarā akālikā ehipassikā opaneyyikā paccattañ veditabbā viññūhīti.*

*He does not create any new kamma and he terminates the old kamma having contacted it again and again. The wearing away is*

*directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see, applicable,  
to be personally experienced by the wise.*

- AN 3.74, Nigaṇṭha Sutta

In this sutta, Ānanda is providing Abhaya, a follower of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, the explanation of how kamma wears away through three steps – sīla, samādhi, and paññā. Initially, one's commitment to the precepts helps the intentions and mind orientate towards eradicating unwholesome states and cultivating wholesome states. Entering the jhānas and āyatana is a direct refutation of the idea in the view of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta that only mortification and therefore what can be considered an unpleasant feeling is a path to liberation. Instead, the jhānas and āyatana are pleasurable mental experiences that provide the mind comfort and solace, which in turn allows the mind to become dispassionate towards physical pleasant sensations that could give rise to the underlying tendencies towards craving and hence further suffering. Finally, through samādhi, one then attains paññā. Paññā here indicates the liberation of the mind through knowledge and vision of reality as it is. A mind liberated of the āsavas will not have craving for sensual pleasure, craving for existence, or ignorance arise, and so when any form of old kamma arises, such a mind automatically sees it through the

lens of the *tilakkhaṇa*, in which case there won't be any reaction rooted in craving, conceit, or ignorance to cause further new *kamma* and therefore fuel further rebirth. In this way, one observes the wearing of the old *kamma* without interference bit by bit in every succeeding moment or sometimes even disconnected moments – such a *kamma* wears away in one timeframe but then doesn't arise but then recurs with less intensity in another timeframe at which point it may completely cease. With such an understanding and seeing for oneself when one enters the stream that there is no purpose for mortification and rather one just cultivates wholesome states through intention, then experiences pleasant mental feelings through *jhānic* states through which one develops the insight of the *tilakkhaṇa* and therefore perceives the disenchantment, dispassion and ultimately cessation of *Dukkha*, one eradicates the view that mortification is required for the purposes of liberation from the wheel of *Saṃsāra*.

Finally, it is through having gone through the process of seeing for oneself and testing out the Dhamma, understanding its principles, following the ethics of the precepts, then deepening one's contemplation through right collectedness, and gaining surety and experiential conviction due to the direct experience of *Nibbāna* that one abandons this view of *Sañcaya Belatṭhaputta*. One no longer withholds judgment on what is right or wrong or on the factors of the mundane right view. Having experienced the Four Noble Truths at stream-entry through following the path, one concludes by the authority of one's own experimentation and findings with the Dhamma, and therefore one shatters doubt from existence in the mind.

Until stream-entry is attained, it is important to be mindful of the thoughts harbored as a reaction to any experience. Those thoughts are what shed light on any form of view that one may hold and therefore cling to as a foundation for identification and hence the becoming into the holder of such a view in bhava, from where one then acts at the link of jāti. Having understood, clarified, studied, attended to, and practiced right view, the thoughts related to all other views automatically dwindle, but sometimes such thoughts may arise and that is where diligence is required. If one notices that there is a thought of hatred or attachment, and such clinging arises to a certain view – whether wrong view or any other view – then one must use right effort to abandon and cease such clinging. First, one must be aware of the emotional resonance with certain views, be they political, religious, spiritual, nationalistic, status-oriented, racist, or whatever they may be. It is this emotional resonance that causes the mind to attach to the view as “me, mine, myself,” and therefore cling to it and thus cause the process of Dukkha to arise. Noticing the flurry of thoughts as the First Noble Truth of Dukkha, one then abandons attention to those thoughts that is the Second Noble Truth of Samudaya and experiences the Third Noble Truth of Nirodha. One has used the Fourth Noble Truth of Magga in order to recognize this clinging to views and abandon it. Ultimately, even the clinging to right view must be understood as a fuel for rebirth.

At the level of the sotāpanna, with the deep knowledge and vision of the Dhamma, all wrong views are abandoned, and thus rebirth in a miserable state of mind, whether on the cosmic

or quantum level, is no longer possible. Other views related to politics, sports, and so on – with the exception of racist and discriminatory views, which are completely gone at the level of the sotāpanna – may still have a slight emotional sting when challenged, but even these are shed, and one loses complete emotional interest in them at the level of the anāgāmī. The only clinging there is for the anāgāmī is for the Dhamma itself, which means such clinging won't lead to any of the sensual realms but to a jhānic, formless, or Pure Abode realm depending on the level of clinging to a jhāna, āyatana, or to identity in general. There won't be any emotional attachments to it, but there will be a level of reverence that causes the mind to identify with it. For this reason, one utilizes the wisdom from the following sutta –

*Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, puriso addhānamaggappaṭipanno. So passeyya mahantaṃ udakaṇṇavaṃ, orimaṃ tīraṃ sāsankāṃ sappaṭibhayaṃ, pārimaṃ tīraṃ khemaṃ appaṭibhayaṃ; na cassa nāvā santāraṇī uttarasetu vā apārā pāraṃ gamanāya. Tassa evamassa: 'ayaṃ kho mahāudakaṇṇavo, orimaṃ tīraṃ sāsankāṃ sappaṭibhayaṃ, pārimaṃ tīraṃ khemaṃ appaṭibhayaṃ; natthi ca nāvā santāraṇī uttarasetu vā apārā pāraṃ gamanāya. Yannūnāhaṃ*

*tiṇakatṭhasākhāpalāsaṃ saṅkaḍḍhitvā, kullaṃ bandhitoṃ, taṃ  
kullaṃ nissāya hatthehi ca pādehi ca vāyamamāno sotthinā pāraṃ  
uttareyyan'ti. Atha kho so, bhikkhave, puriso tiṇakatṭhasākhāpalāsaṃ  
saṅkaḍḍhitvā, kullaṃ bandhitoṃ taṃ kullaṃ nissāya hatthehi ca  
pādehi ca vāyamamāno sotthinā pāraṃ uttareyya. Tassa purisassa  
uttiṇṇassa pāraṅgatassa evamassa: bahukāro kho me ayaṃ kullo;  
imāhaṃ kullaṃ nissāya hatthehi ca pādehi ca vāyamamāno sotthinā  
pāraṃ uttiṇṇo. Yannūnāhaṃ imaṃ kullaṃ sīse vā āropetvā khandhe  
vā uccāretvā yena kāmaṃ pakkameyyan'ti. Taṃ kiṃ maññatha,  
bhikkhave, api nu so puriso evaṅkāri tasmim kulle kiccakāri assā"ti?*

*No hetam, bhante.*

*Kathaṅkāri ca so, bhikkhave, puriso tasmim kulle kiccakāri assa?*

*Idha, bhikkhave, tassa purisassa uttiṇṇassa pāraṅgatassa evamassa:  
bahukāro kho me ayaṃ kullo;imāhaṃ kullaṃ nissāya hatthehi ca*

*pādehi ca vāyamamāno sotthinā pārāṃ uttiṇṇo. Yannūnāhaṃ imaṃ kullaṃ thale vā ussādetvā udake vā opilāpetvā yena kāmaṃ pakkameyyan'ti. Evaṅkārī kho so, bhikkhave, puriso tasmim̐ kulle kiccakārī assa. Evameva kho, bhikkhave, kullūpamo mayā dhammo desito nittharaṇatthāya, no gahaṇatthāya. Kullūpamaṃ vo, bhikkhave, dhammaṃ desitaṃ, ājānantehi dhammāpi vo pahātabbā pageva adhammā.*

*“Bhikkhus, suppose a man in the course of a journey saw a great expanse of water, whose near shore was dangerous and fearful and whose further shore was safe and free from fear, but there was no ferryboat or bridge for going to the far shore. Then he thought: ‘There is this great expanse of water, whose near shore is dangerous and fearful and whose further shore is safe and free from fear, but there is no ferryboat or bridge for going to the far shore. Suppose I collect grass, twigs, branches, and leaves and bind them together into a raft,*



*and supported by the raft and making an effort with my hands and feet, I got safely across to the far shore.’ And then the man collected grass, twigs, branches, and leaves and bound them together into a raft, and supported by the raft and making an effort with his hands and feet, he got safely across to the far shore. Then, when he had got across and had arrived at the far shore, he might think thus: ‘This raft has been very helpful to me, since supported by it and making an effort with my hands and feet, I got safely across to the far shore. Suppose I were to hoist it on my head or load it on my shoulder, and then go wherever I want.’ Now, bhikkhus, what do you think? By doing so, would that man be doing what should be done with that raft?”*

*“No, venerable sir.”*

*“By doing what would that man be doing what should be done with that raft? Here, bhikkhus, when that man got across and had*

*arrived at the far shore, he might think thus: 'This raft has been very helpful to me, since supported by it and making an effort with my hands and feet, I got safely across to the far shore. Suppose I were to haul it onto the dry land or set it adrift in the water, and then go wherever I want.' Now, bhikkhus, it is by so doing that that man would be doing what should be done with that raft. So, I have shown you how the Dhamma is similar to a raft, being for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping."*

- MN 22, Alagaddūpama Sutta

The wisdom here is that one doesn't abandon the Dhamma, since at this point such a mindset is automated by the Buddha's teachings. Instead, one abandons the attachment to the Dhamma, which manifests in the form of identification with the Dhamma and making the Dhamma something to hold onto as a view or object belonging to "me, mine, myself." Once one has seen reality as it is, reviewed that the mind has let go of the five higher fetters and understood the clinging to the Dhamma being present in the form of clinging to aspects of the Dhamma

– clinging with pride at having perfect sīla, enjoying jhānic states with a sense of self, and even clinging to the idea of possessing wisdom with a sense of self – one recognizes these forms of clinging and abandons them. One sees sīla as a means to cultivate the mind, frees the mind of any ideas of an observer or enjoyer of samādhi and sees the whole process as conditioned and therefore possessing the tilakkhaṇa, and finally understands wisdom to be having arisen out of the understanding of Dependent Origination and therefore, all attachment to the view or the idea of the Dhamma as a view is abandoned. In this way, such a mind is freed of attachment to all views, including right view, and with the complete cessation of clinging to views altogether as a fuel for rebirth, one isn't liable to arise in a new state of existence. This is the mindset of the arahant, as described in the following verse –

*Attam pahāya anupādiyāno,*

*Ñāṇepi so nissayam no karoti;*

*Sa ve viyattesu na vaggasārī*

*Having abandoned what is taken up, not clinging,*

*one does not create a dependency even on knowledge.*

*Not taking sides among those who are divided,*

*one does not fall back on any view at all.*

- Snp 4.5, Paramatṭhaka Sutta

To cease attachment to any and all views, one must first have diligence to be aware of any tension or tightness in the head. This is a manifestation of craving – either as elation for celebrating victory over defending a view or as aversion for having a view challenged – which can then roll into clinging where the mind becomes flooded by emotionally charged ideas that group together. This is clinging to view, the proliferation of thoughts around the view, which then culminate into the bhava or identity of a holder and defending of that view. To stop this process of holding to clinging with the charges of elation or aversion, the 6Rs are utilized as one.

- ◆ Recognizes the clinging to a view or making right view an object of personal attachment in the form of emotional reactivity towards the view as Dukkha.
- ◆ Releases attention towards the flurry of thoughts and thus abandons Samudaya.

- ◆ Relaxes tightness and tension associated with identifying with a view and experiences Ni-rodha.
- ◆ Re-smiles to uplift the mind if appropriate to the situation.
- ◆ Returns to a mind void of clinging and filled with tranquility.
- ◆ Repeats any time mind tightens and starts to become bombarded by thoughts related to identifying with a view as “me, mine, myself,” and thus continues to cultivate Magga.

### *Sīlabbatupādāna*

Sīlabbatupādāna is the fuel for the fetter of sīlabbataparāmāso. In other words, clinging to rites and rituals strengthens the fetter of attachment to rites and rituals. The clinging to rite and rituals is in turn fueled by sīlabbataparāmāsānusaya or the underlying tendency towards attachment to rites and rituals. When one begins to become attached to certain rites and observances, whether handed down from tradition without assessing and contemplating

their meaning and significance towards wholesome development of the mind or personalizing the rituals, the underlying tendency towards attachment to rites and rituals can activate due to lack of mindfulness, which in turn strengthens the clinging to rites and rituals and this clinging not only adds weight to the fetter of attachment to rites and rituals, but it also feeds energy back to the formations rooted in the attachment, which then strengthens the whole process repeatedly until mindfulness is developed and brings to fruition insight and letting go.

Sila means precepts while bata means vows. Therefore, one can use interchangeable phrases such as rules and observances, rites and rituals, precepts, and vows, and so on. There are a few ways to understand the clinging to rites and rituals. They include the mundane when it comes to the mind's attachment to certain things one may do throughout the day as well as the deeper meaning where attachment or adherence to certain rites and rituals leads one astray and away from the Dhamma. We will explore these different ways of understanding further and also see the importance of maintaining precepts.

Let us discuss the attachment to the mundane rites and rituals. This includes certain superstitions in relation to one's day. There are many such ideas that when performing a certain action or saying a certain string of words any form of bad luck will not occur for one. However, luck as a concept that comes at random or is possessed by someone outside of the scope of causes and conditions is not a correct understanding. The idea of fortunes having arisen for a being is understood as a fruition of previous actions in mind, body, and speech, whether in the

very same life or in a previous life. Therefore, with the desire for fortunate occurrences which can be likened to lucky situations, a person may start to cultivate habits towards making their own luck – they take the necessary actions to amass a fortune or to make friends with influential people. These actions then result in some form of positive development in a being’s wealth and relationships. There are a great many quotes about luck being a byproduct of hard work and such quotes are in alignment with the understanding of cause and effect. Here are some quotes that exemplify this understanding

–

*Diligence is the mother of good luck.*

- Benjamin Franklin

*I’m a greater believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it.*

- Thomas Jefferson

## Dependent Origination

*The amount of good luck coming your way depends on your willingness to act.*

- Barbara Sher

*Luck is what we make it, not what is thrust upon us. You've shown initiative and it has nothing to do with luck.*

- George Bellairs

*The harder I work, the luckier I get.*

- Samuel Goldwyn

Having seen these quotes as being in alignment with the understanding of cause and effect – hard work, effort, and action may result in the fruition of that action, whether in this



life or another – one can then see the rationale behind the Buddha’s injunction on wrong livelihood. Wrong livelihood is to earn one’s keep from the process of “base arts,” such as palmistry and divination. An extensive list of such wrong livelihood is given by the Buddha in various suttas, including DN 1, Brahmajāla Sutta, and DN 2, Samaññaphala Sutta. Both descriptions being identical, here is a list from these suttas pertaining to the long sections on ethics in relation to wrong livelihood –

*Yathā vā paneke bhonto samaṇabrāhmaṇā saddhādeyyāni  
bhojanāni bhuñjivā te evarūpāya tiracchānavijjāya micchājīvena  
jīvitam kappenti.*

*Seyyathidam—añgam nimittam uppātam supinam lakkhaṇam  
mūśikacchinnaṃ agghomaṃ dabbihomaṃ thusahomaṃ kaṇahomaṃ  
taṇḍulahomaṃ sappihomaṃ telahomaṃ mukhahomaṃ lohitaṃ  
añgavijjā vatthuvijjā khattavijjā sīvavijjā bhūtavijjā bhūriovijjā  
ahivijjā visavijjā vicchikavijjā mūśikavijjā sakuṇavijjā vāyasavijjā  
pakkajjhānaṃ saraparittānaṃ migacakkaṃ...*

*Seyyathidam—maṇilakkhaṇam* *vatthalakkhaṇam*  
*daṇḍalakkhaṇam satthalakkhaṇam asilakkhaṇam usulakkhaṇam*

*dhanulakkhaṇaṃ āvudhalakkhaṇaṃ itthilakkhaṇaṃ  
purisalakkhaṇaṃ kumāralakkhaṇaṃ kumārilakkhaṇaṃ  
dāsalakkhaṇaṃ dāsilakkhaṇaṃ hatthilakkhaṇaṃ assalakkhaṇaṃ  
mahimsalakkhaṇaṃ usabhalakkhaṇaṃ golakkhaṇaṃ ajalakkhaṇaṃ  
meṇḍalakkhaṇaṃ kukkuṭalakkhaṇaṃ vaṭṭakalakkhaṇaṃ  
godhālakkhaṇaṃ kaṇṇikalakkhaṇaṃ kacchapalakkhaṇaṃ  
migalakkhaṇaṃ...*

*Seyyathidaṃ—raññaṃ niyyānaṃ bhavissati, raññaṃ  
aniyyānaṃ bhavissati, abbhantarānaṃ raññaṃ upayānaṃ  
bhavissati, bāhirānaṃ raññaṃ apayānaṃ bhavissati, bāhirānaṃ  
raññaṃ upayānaṃ bhavissati, abbhantarānaṃ raññaṃ apayānaṃ  
bhavissati, abbhantarānaṃ raññaṃ jayo bhavissati, bāhirānaṃ  
raññaṃ parājayo bhavissati, bāhirānaṃ raññaṃ jayo bhavissati,  
abbhantarānaṃ raññaṃ parājayo bhavissati, iti imassa jayo  
bhavissati, imassa parājayo bhavissati...*

*Seyyathidaṃ—candaggāho bhavissati, sūriyaggāho bhavissati,  
nakkhattaggāho bhavissati, candimasūriyānaṃ pathagamaṇaṃ  
bhavissati, candimasūriyānaṃ uppathagamaṇaṃ bhavissati,  
nakkhattānaṃ pathagamaṇaṃ bhavissati, nakkhattānaṃ  
uppathagamaṇaṃ bhavissati, ukkāpāto bhavissati, disāḍḍāho*

*bhavissati, bhūmicālo bhavissati, devadudrabhi bhavissati, candimasūriyanakkhattānaṃ uggamaṇaṃ ogamaṇaṃ saṅkilesaṃ vodānaṃ bhavissati, evaṃvipāko candaggāho bhavissati, evaṃvipāko sūriyaggāho bhavissati, evaṃvipāko nakkhattaggāho bhavissati, evaṃvipākaṃ candimasūriyānaṃ pathagamaṇaṃ bhavissati, evaṃvipākaṃ candimasūriyānaṃ uppathagamaṇaṃ bhavissati, evaṃvipākaṃ nakkhattānaṃ pathagamaṇaṃ bhavissati, evaṃvipākaṃ nakkhattānaṃ uppathagamaṇaṃ bhavissati, evaṃvipāko ukkāpāto bhavissati, evaṃvipāko disāḍāho bhavissati, evaṃvipāko bhūmicālo bhavissati, evaṃvipāko devadudrabhi bhavissati, evaṃvipākaṃ candimasūriyanakkhattānaṃ uggamaṇaṃ ogamaṇaṃ saṅkilesaṃ vodānaṃ bhavissati...*

*Seyyathidaṃ—suvuṭṭhikā bhavissati, dubbuṭṭhikā bhavissati, subhikkhaṃ bhavissati, dubbhikkhaṃ bhavissati, khemaṃ bhavissati, bhayaṃ bhavissati, rogo bhavissati, ārogyaṃ bhavissati, muddā, gaṇanā, saṅkhānaṃ, kāveyyaṃ, lokāyataṃ...*

*Seyyathidaṃ—āvāhanaṃ vivāhanaṃ saṃvaraṇaṃ vivaraṇaṃ saṅkīraṇaṃ vikīraṇaṃ subhagakaṇaṃ dubbhagakaṇaṃ viruddhagabbhakaṇaṃ jivhānibandhanaṃ hanusaṃhananaṃ hatthābhijappaṇaṃ hanujappaṇaṃ kaṇṇajappaṇaṃ ādāsapañhaṃ*

*kumārikapañhaṃ devapañhaṃ ādiccupatṭhānaṃ mahatupatṭhānaṃ  
abbhujjalanaṃ sirivohāyanaṃ...*

*Seyyathidaṃ—santikammaṃ paṇidhikammaṃ bhūtakammaṃ  
bhūrikammaṃ vassakammaṃ vossakammaṃ vatthukammaṃ  
vatthuparikammaṃ ācamanaṃ nhāpanaṃ juhanaṃ vamaṇaṃ  
virecanaṃ uddhaṃvirecanaṃ adhovirecanaṃ sīsavirecanaṃ  
kaṇṇatelaṃ nettatappaṇaṃ natthukammaṃ añjanaṃ paccañjanaṃ  
sālākiyaṃ sallakattiyaṃ dāraikatikicchā, mūlabhesajjānaṃ  
anuppadānaṃ, osadhīnaṃ paṭimokkho iti vā iti evarūpāya  
tiracchānavijjāya micchājīvā paṭivirato hoti*

*...iti vā iti evarūpāya tiracchānavijjāya micchājīvā paṭivirato  
samaṇo gotamo'ti – iti vā hi, bhikkhave, puthujjano tathāgatassa  
vaṇṇaṃ vadamāno vadeyya. (In DN 1, Brahmajāla Sutta)*

*...iti vā iti evarūpāya tiracchānavijjāya micchājīvā paṭivirato  
hoti. Idampissa hoti sīlasmim. (In DN 2, Samannaphala Sutta)*

*Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins, feeding on the food of the faithful, make their living by such base arts, such wrong means of livelihood as palmistry, divining by signs, portents, dreams, body-marks, mouse-gnawings, fire-oblations, oblations from a ladle, of husks, rice-powder, rice-grains, ghee or oil, from the mouth or of blood, reading the finger-tips, house- and garden-lore, skill in charms, ghostlore, earth-house lore, snake-lore, poison-lore, rat-lore, bird-lore, crow-lore, foretelling a person's life-span, charms against arrows, knowledge of animals' cries...*

*Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins make their living by such base arts as judging the marks of gems, sticks, clothes, swords, spears, arrows, weapons, women, men, boys, girls, male and female slaves, elephants, horses, buffaloes, bulls, cows, goats, rams, cocks, quail, iguanas, bamboo-rats, tortoises, deer...*

*Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins make their living by such base arts as predicting: 'The chiefs will march out – the chiefs will march back', 'Our chiefs will advance and the other chiefs will retreat', 'Our chiefs will win and the other chiefs will lose', 'The other chiefs will win and ours will lose', 'Thus there will be victory for one side and defeat for the other'...*

*Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins make their living by such base arts as predicting an eclipse of the moon, the sun, a star; that the sun and moon will go on their proper course – will go astray; that a star will go on its proper course – will go astray; that there will be a shower of meteors, a blaze in the sky, an earthquake, thunder; a rising, setting, darkening, brightening of the moon, the sun, the stars; and 'such will be the outcome of these things'...*

*Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins make their living by such base arts as predicting good or bad rainfall; a good or bad harvest; security, danger; disease, health; or accounting, computing, calculating, poetic composition, philosophizing...*

*Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins make their living by such base arts as arranging the giving and taking in marriage, engagements and divorces; [declaring the time for] saving and spending, bringing good or bad luck, procuring abortions, using spells to bind the tongue, binding the jaw, making the hands jerk, causing deafness, getting answers with a mirror, a girl-medium, a deva; worshipping the sun or Great Brahmā, breathing fire, invoking the goddess of luck...*

*Whereas some ascetics and Brahmins, feeding on the food of the faithful, make their living by such base arts, such wrong means*

*of livelihood as appeasing the devas and redeeming vows to them, making earth-house spells, causing virility or impotence, preparing and consecrating building-sites, giving ritual rinsings and bathings, making sacrifices, giving emetics, purges, expectorants and phlegmagogues, giving ear-, eye-, nose-medicine, ointments and counter-ointments, eye-surgery, surgery, pediatry, using balms to counter the side-effects of previous remedies...*

*... the ascetic Gotama refrains from such base arts and wrong means of livelihood. It is, monks, for such elementary, inferior matters of moral practice that the worldling would praise the Tathāgata. (In DN 1, Brahmajāla Sutta)*

*A monk refrains from such base arts and wrong means of livelihood. Thus, he is perfected in morality. (In DN 2, Samaññaphala Sutta)*



With the exception of the last part in regards to application of medicine as well as the section where is described calculating for harvests and so on, which can be beneficial for human beings in general, all other examples are part of wrong livelihood because they have to do with wrong beliefs and the idea of luck, fortune, and happiness dependent upon things outside of the scope of cause and effect and that doing oblations, offering prayers, and reading signs will bring luck . In the case of medical applications or making scientific calculations and so on, the main reason they are considered wrong livelihood is because monastics within the Sangha have given up all attachments to money and profession, and instead have devoted their lives towards the emancipation of the mind from the wheel of Saṃsāra. In fact, they are allowed to take medications for their health, which presupposes the need of a doctor or medical professional who can prescribe or even administer such medicine or even surgeries. Moreover, subsisting on alms, they are dependent upon laypeople who must make calculations for harvests and so on – so while for a monastic these things are considered wrong livelihood, for the layperson it is not wrong.

The mind of insight and wisdom realizes that the notion of luck can and clinging to it through rites and rituals are fueled by the roots of greed, hatred, and delusion. The greedy mindset seeks fortune for itself, the hateful mind seeks to use rites and rituals to demolish the fortunes of others, and the deluded mind thinks of such rites and rituals affecting a “me, mine,

myself," and therefore clings to wrong views and has no understanding of Dependent Origination, kamma, and rebirth of action. Having seen that there is no point to reading one's palm, studying astrology, studying supposed signs from entrails, predicting the future through tarot card readings, or offering sacrifices to other deities for the sake of making one's fortunes and luck, instead of understanding that action produces an effect that comes to fruition at a future time, one lets go all such ideas and concepts, and comes to experience relief from wrong view and clinging. Therefore, if one is in a profession where one predicts based on astrology or palmistry or any such activities mentioned from the sutta extract above, if one has truly understood the Dhamma, they would realize the wrong view of luck as being independent from wholesome and fruitful action and actually leave such professions behind naturally as a result of such insight. For those who go to astrology readers and so on in the hopes of finding out their future and making plans based on their readings, if they realized the Dhamma, experienced and saw with clarity the insight into causation and kamma, then they would leave all such desire to discover the future through such readings and cultivate their mind, speech, and bodily actions in a wholesome manner befitting for the fruition of their wholesome intentions. Therefore, they completely abandon all belief in any luck charms and amulets, predictions of any form, and become committed towards developing the path towards full awakening. For such a mind, there is no need to wear a lucky sock. You don't need a rabbit's foot. You don't need to toss salt over your shoulder just because you spilled some. You can keep walking on the same path even if a black cat has passed

you by, and breaking a mirror isn't going to give you seven years of bad luck. All such superstitions arise from a mind filled with restlessness and seeking some clarity and meaning in life. After having cultivated the path, the mind begins to see the emptiness of the "base arts" and it may even be amusing but one will no longer be enamored by the charms of predictions, offering money and food to deities in the hopes of better welfare, and one will be able to keep their mind stabilized, still, calm, and collected, not concerned about the future and in fact, remaining firmly in the Dhamma of the present, understanding cause and effect occurring through active kamma and its fruition. Such a mind has abandoned the mundane clinging to rites and rituals in the form of believing in the concept of luck and processes to bring such luck. There is still the understanding of the deeper, subtler clinging to rites and rituals one must assess, understand, and abandon, leading to the destruction of such clinging altogether.

Such subtle clinging can be contextualized through the following sutta –

*Yañhissa, bhante, sīlabbataṃ jīvitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ  
upaṭṭhānasāraṃ sevato akusalā dhammā abhivaḍḍhanti kusalā  
dhammā parihāyanti, evarūpaṃ sīlabbataṃ jīvitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ  
upaṭṭhānasāraṃ aphalaṃ. Yañca khvāssa, bhante, sīlabbataṃ jīvitaṃ*

*brahmacariyaṃ upatṭhānasāraṃ sevato akusalā dhammā  
parihāyanti, kusalā dhammā abhivaḍḍhanti, evarūpaṃ sīlabbataṃ  
jīvitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ upatṭhānasāraṃ saphalan”ti.*

*Bhante, suppose one cultivates behavior and observances, an [austere] lifestyle, and a spiritual life, setting them up as if they were the essence. If unwholesome qualities then increase and wholesome qualities decline, such behavior and observances, [austere] lifestyle, and spiritual life, set up as the essence, are fruitless. But if unwholesome qualities decline and wholesome qualities increase, then such behavior and observances, [austere] lifestyle, and spiritual life, set up as the essence, are fruitful.*

- AN 3.78, Sīlabbata Sutta

In other words, one must assess where certain observances, rites, rituals, and even lifestyles oriented around such practices

are taking the mind. There are those practices that take one away from the establishment of Sammādiṭṭhi. In other words, they take one away from Nibbāna. In the Buddha's time, there were such practices followed by ascetics and other samaṇas outside of the Dhamma that were considered a means to salvation or to the fulfillment of a soteriological goal of exiting the wheel of Saṃsāra.

Certain rituals during the Buddha's time included animal sacrifice, which is still practiced in present cultures and traditions, even human sacrifice, with the hopes of absolving one's sins or bad kamma and attaining an eternal heaven or some similar notion of salvation. Sacrifices that involved the killing of another being is a direct breaking of the basic precept of abstaining from intentionally harming or killing living beings. Other observances included fasts and making vows to appease the gods in hopes of attaining some level of understanding and insight. Some, like the ascetics under the Jain tradition, believed this to be a way of cleansing the soul, while others considered it an important form of penance for the attainment of awakening or psychic powers. Taking up fasts with such intention are misguided from the perspective of the Buddha's dispensation – they only create harm to the body, make it weak, and eventually lead to pain and aches, none of which are conducive for proper meditation practice.

Another common practice, according to MN 57, Kukkuravatika Sutta, was to act like a dog or like a cow. This was done by ascetics who took the vow to behave the same way a dog or a cow would for their entire lives. In this sutta, the Buddha explains that anyone who takes up the vow to act like

a dog has two destinations – either in a hell realm or as a dog in the animal realm. Likewise, the Buddha says anyone who takes up the vow to act like a cow will either end up in a hell realm or as a cow in the animal realm. The reason for this is when taking up such practices, the intention along with the corresponding behavior strengthens certain formations that cause the mind to become more dog-like or cow-like in its nature. However, such a practice is deemed unwise because it does not bring about wisdom. It does not bring about Nibbana in the here and now and therefore doesn't have any potential to completely eradicate rebirth. Instead, it ties a person to wrong intention with wrong view, therefore opening up the possibility of rebirth in the two aforementioned lower realms.

Another practice that is common in many traditions is chanting – this can be found even in various schools of Buddhism. Regardless, one has to understand the Buddha said nothing of chanting as a means to end suffering. In the time of the Buddha and even now various ideas about chanting motivated some to repeatedly utter a phrase or word for an extended period of time, whether silently in the mind or out loud because according to a teacher, a text, or just handed down from ritualistic tradition this process help to cleanse one's kamma and one may attain liberation from the wheel of Samsāra. However, such a notion is closely linked with the Jain school of thought – although it is not necessarily an ascetic practice to chant for extended periods of time, but it can be when combined with measures like standing on one leg for days or even weeks or taking up fasting and so on, the notion that such chanting will alleviate bad kamma from one's life and

hopefully get one to some form of salvation. Now one may chant if it makes them happy but that's different from religiously chanting with the intention of getting something more like Nibbāna out of the process.

Ultimately, whether it's clinging to the mundane rites and rituals of doing things to gain fortune's favor or clinging to observances and practices with the belief that they will lead one to Nibbāna, both are rooted in wrong view. In the first case, as we've seen, such clinging further cements the wrong view that directly opposes the understanding of the mechanics of kamma being intention and action and the fruition of that intention and action. The second type of clinging can give rise to wrong views as well and lead to certain habits or misconceptions that take the mind farther away from the Dhamma. These types of clinging can only lead to further rebirth and therefore they are not in alignment with the goal of the practice – to understand, and through that understanding, cease Dukkha. In other words, such types of clinging do not pass the litmus test of the Four Noble Truths because they arise from craving, conceit, and ignorance. This is what is meant when the Silabbata Sutta says while taking up certain practices one doesn't decrease unwholesome qualities and increase wholesome qualities. Clinging to such practices, or rites and rituals, is fruitless and leads to further confusion and Dukkha.

It is only when one takes up a practice or set of observances that lead to the eradication of unwholesome states and the cultivation and growth of wholesome states are such observances and practice considered to be fruitful. At the core, this refers to the five basic precepts. These precepts are

common sense and over time they protect a person from mental agitation and cultivate the mind for further practice, namely meditation that results in insight and understanding. If we were to understand the reasoning behind these precepts, we would know that they are essentially a guide for living in a harmonious and peaceful manner, and it can result, starting from the individual, in a peaceful and prosperous society. These precepts are the beginning of the path. They nurture the mind. They purify thoughts, speech, and physical deeds. They guide the mind towards the intention to be balanced, loving and kind, and compassionate. They cause the mind to enter into jhāna with very little effort and eventually, these precepts become habits. Such observance of the precepts and the lifelong commitment to their practice results at the very least in better circumstances in the present life and if one doesn't lead to a level of awakening, it can lead to higher rebirths where the fruits of such practice can result in awakening.

A form of clinging that can arise in relation to the precepts is not due to the maintaining of the precepts themselves but can be due to a mind filled with doubt or restlessness, wondering if they are following the precepts correctly and to which extent they need to follow them and so on. To simplify, one can begin with just having the intention not to: harm, steal, like, misbehave due to sensual or sexual experiences, and become intoxicated. Eventually, with a more purified mind, that intention becomes more refined, and person becomes mindful. Perhaps a person has been angry and abrasive towards others all their life. When they make the commitment to not harm with intentional thought, speech, or deed, they notice their



mind becomes more peaceful and naturally more uplifted, resulting in better connectivity with their peers, friends, and family members. Eventually, they practice with intention loving-kindness and compassion and the quality of their life completely changes for the better. Likewise, when a person commits not to steal, lie or misbehave due to sensual or sexual experiences, they find their mind becomes less agitated, more certain about people and things in their life, and they have self-respect and respect for others. This helps them to develop more wholesome states of mind, which in turn results a clearer outlook on their path in life as well as in the Dhamma. Some beings have a problem with indulging in intoxicants, but if they make the commitment to refrain from them, they will find their mind becomes oriented towards being alert, focused, and mindful. It may take time and perhaps help from other sources, like medicinal, psychiatric, and general care and healing, but over time, when they see their non-attachment and complete disenchantment and dispassion towards all indulgences, their mind becomes clear and sharp and ready to do the work of meditation. The other form of clinging that can arise is pride and conceit in relation to the precepts. This clinging arises when the mind identifies with how good the feeling is and makes it “mine, me, I am,” and therefore becomes stuck in that pride. It feels good and that’s fine, but if it becomes a matter of pride, then that’s a sign the mind is clinging to the precepts with a misguided understanding. This can lead to clinging to the Dhamma, even after all other clinging has been let go, and so such a being would be an anāgāmī and would take birth in the Pure Abodes. Outside of this, any such clinging to the idea of rites and rituals giving one good fortune or Nibbāna arises

from wrong view and can lead to confusion and even rebirths in lower realms.

### *Cessation of Clinging to Rites and Rituals with Right Effort*

The fetter of attachment to rites and rituals with the belief that they lead one to Nibbāna is destroyed the moment the mind realizes Nibbāna using the Eightfold Path and therefore understands for oneself that this is the way to freedom and all other observances are not needed for Nibbāna. There can still be some clinging towards the Dhamma in the form of pride for maintaining the precepts. If this occurs, then one must eradicate this by becoming fully awakened. The mind has to come to the understanding that moral precepts are beautiful seeds for the mind cultivate through the process of Samādhi and ripen into insight into the true nature of reality. This is best understood through the following sutta –

*Evameva kho, āvuso, sīlavisuddhi yāvadeva cittavisuddhatthā,  
cittavisuddhi yāvadeva diṭṭhivisuddhatthā, diṭṭhivisuddhi yāvadeva  
kaṅkhāvitarāṇavisuddhatthā, kaṅkhāvitarāṇavisuddhi yāvadeva*

*maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhatthā,*

*maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhi*

*yāvadeva*

*paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhatthā,*

*paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhi*

*yāvadeva ñāṇadassanavisuddhatthā, ñāṇadassanavisuddhi yāvadeva*

*anupādāparinibbānatthā. Anupādāparinibbānattham kho, āvuso,*

*bhagavati brahmacariyam vussatī”ti.*

*So too, friend, purification of virtue is for the sake of reaching purification of mind; purification of mind is for the sake of reaching purification of view; purification of view is for the sake of reaching purification by overcoming doubt; purification by overcoming doubt is for the sake of reaching purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path; purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path is for the sake of reaching purification by knowledge and vision of the way; purification by knowledge and vision of the way is for the sake of*

*reaching purification by knowledge and vision; purification by knowledge and vision is for the sake of reaching final Nibbāna without clinging. It is for the sake of final Nibbāna without clinging that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One.*

- MN 24, Rathavināta Sutta

In other words, purifying one's mind through maintaining precepts, one is able to purify the mind, leading to the correct understanding of the Dhamma, in dispelling all doubt and understanding reality as it is, which ripens in final Nibbāna without clinging. This is understood as meaning Parinibbāna that the arahant experiences at the end of life, but also as that Nibbāna that one experiences when the mind frees itself of all fetters and attains Arahantship. This should be kept in mind – making a commitment to keep the precepts helps the mind attain enough balance, clarity and mindfulness to have a smooth flowing experience in meditation, but the precepts are meant for the purification of mind for that purpose. If one identifies with them through the pride of maintaining these precepts, then they have missed the point.

Until one does finally let go of all clinging to rites and rituals, it's important to maintain a practice of attention,

mindfulness, and wisdom to assess whether the mind is clinging to a fruitless set of rites and rituals or clinging in the form of identification and conceit towards fruitful rites and rituals. One must use the precepts and the Four Noble Truths as litmus tests to see whether certain observances give the mind peace and clarity, or they take one away from the Dhamma. Certainly, any form of observance that harms a living being is not the Dhamma as it breaks the first precept. Chanting on the other hand, if one wants to do it as way to uplift the mind, is fine so long as one has the understanding chanting will not grant one deeper levels of awareness, attention, mindfulness, and ultimately will not lead to complete extinguishment without clinging. The idea of luck is something the mind has to see as a manifestation of a conditioned mind seeking an idea that it believes can be actualized outside of the scope of causation. Only after a deeper understanding of kamma can one see that there is no such thing as luck, only effort and the fruits of that effort, and it is then that one's mind becomes dispassionate towards the idea of rites and rituals as means of fruition of fortune and ultimately abandons all such concepts related to that misguided understanding.

Therefore, using the context of the Four Noble Truths, we can understand any clinging to rites and rituals –in the form of clinging to the idea of acquiring luck and fortune through certain practices, clinging to rituals that have nothing to do with the Dhamma, clinging with the pride of maintaining the precepts – is a form of the First Noble Truth of Dukkha manifested as restlessness, attachment, and mental confusion. The attention to such thoughts related to this clinging, making

it “me, mine, I am,” and to the opinions of such rites and rituals that make up this kind of clinging is the Second Noble Truth of Samudaya. The freedom from such clinging, having totally abandoned all thoughts, opinions, or ideas regarding the types of clinging to rites and rituals we discussed, is the Third Noble Truth of Nirodha. The tools that facilitate this letting go process are found in the Fourth Noble Truth of Magga. Using the 6Rs as the Right Effort and therefore the encapsulation of the Path, one

- ◆ Recognizes the mind becoming buried in thoughts related to clinging to rites and rituals – in the form of attachment to unquestioned traditions, belief in luck, or rituals that don’t lead to Nibbāna – and thus understands Dukkha.
- ◆ Releases awareness and attention towards these thoughts and thus abandons Samudaya.
- ◆ Relaxes the mind and/or body and thus tranquilizes the formations strengthened by such clinging, experiencing Nirodha.
- ◆ Re-smiles to uplift the mind.
- ◆ Returns to a more balanced mind free of such clinging or to a meditation object.

- ◆ Repeats whenever thoughts become centered around such clinging, thus further cultivating Magga.

### *Attavādupādāna*

Attavādupādāna is the clinging to view of self. Attavāda is a synonym in Pali for sakkāyadiṭṭhi or self-view, theories about a self, or belief in a personal self. In this context, the clinging to self-views is associated with the idea of a self in relation to the five aggregates. The five aggregates are frames of reference for experience, and if we were to dissect any kind of experience, it would fit within the scope of one or more of these aggregates. There are a myriad of misinterpretations of self that cause Dukkha, but the basic core misperceptions that give rise to other related views all stem from misapprehending these five aggregates and ultimately clinging to them. This type of clinging can arise in one or more of twenty different ways. Self-view in relation to the five aggregates is summarized in the following sutta –

*Katham panāyye, sakkāyadiṭṭhi hotī"ti?*

*Idhāvuso visākha, assutavā puthujjano, ariyānaṃ adassāvī  
ariyadhammassa akovido ariyadhamme avinīto, sappurisānaṃ  
adassāvī sappurisdhammassa akovido sappurisdhamme avinīto,  
rūpaṃ attato samanupassati, rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ, attani vā  
rūpaṃ, rūpasmiṃ vā attānaṃ, vedanaṃ attato samanupassati,  
vedanavantaṃ vā attānaṃ, attani vā vedanaṃ, vedanasmiṃ vā  
attānaṃ, saññaṃ attato samanupassati, saññavantaṃ vā attānaṃ,  
attani vā saññaṃ, saññasmiṃ vā attānaṃ, saṅkhāre attato  
samanupassati, saṅkhārāvantaṃ vā attānaṃ, attani vā saṅkhāre,  
saṅkhārāsmiṃ vā attānaṃ, viññāṇaṃ attato samanupassati,  
viññāṇavantaṃ vā attānaṃ, attani vā viññāṇaṃ, viññāṇasmiṃ vā  
attānaṃ. Evaṃ kho, āvuso visākha, sakkāyadiṭṭhi hotī”ti.*

*“Lady, how does identity view come to be?”*



*“Here, friend Visākha, an untaught ordinary person, who has no regard for noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, who has no regard for true men and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, regards material form as self, or self as possessed of material form, or material form as in self, or self as in material form. He regards feeling as self, or self as possessed of feeling, or feeling as in self, or self as in feeling. He regards perception as self, or self as possessed of perception, or perception as in self, or self as in perception. He regards formations as self, or self as possessed of formations, or formations as in self, or self as in formations. He regards consciousness as self, or self as possessed of consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness. That is how identity view comes to be.”*

- MN 44, Cūḷavedalla Sutta

This profound sutta is a question-and-answer session between the questioner Visākha and the answerer Dhammadinnā, an arahant bhikkhuni who used to be Visākha's wife before she decided to ordain. It is a beautiful little story of how she ordained but suffice it to say that Visākha inspired Dhammadinnā when he came back from a discourse by the Buddha and had become an anāgāmī. Dhammadinnā became fascinated with Visākha's sudden change in behavior, displaying complete non-attachment, void of lust or hatred. Seeing this and realizing from her husband's words that this deep effect was a result of his personality transformation from having heard the Buddha's discourse, she decided to ordain as a nun and then surpassed her former husband by becoming an arahant, and later Visākha came to her to clarify some deeper points of the Dhamma, such as self-view or identity view as it's also known. In reading the snippet from this sutta, we see the possibility of taking any of the five aggregates as self in one of four different ways, which are – the five aggregates as self, a self that owns the five aggregates, the five aggregates being in a self, or self being in them. Let's explore each of these views in relation to each of the aggregates through a deeper analysis with some real-world examples of how such views can arise and how clinging to them causes Dukkha.

### *The Five Aggregates as Self*

The Paṭisambhidāmagga or Path of Discrimination, which is a text in the Khuddaka Nikāya or minor collection of discourses and ascribed to Sāriputta, provides some similes in regard to the various self-views. For this particular set of views, the text states –

*Just as one sees a lighted lamp's flame and color as identical, thus, 'What the flame is, that the color is; what the color is, that the flame is', so too, here someone sees self and form, self and feeling, self and perception, self and formations, or self and consciousness as identical.*

When there is reference to form, it can mean bodily form as well as external forms. For the purpose of understanding the ignorance of seeing form as self, let's tighten our lens to the context of bodily form. Now, with regards to bodily form, we have to understand in what ways the mind may take form to be self. If one notices it in one's language, especially in one's thoughts – "I am in pain," "I am healed," "I am sick," and so on – one sees there is an innate and unconscious clinging to the body as being self. When someone hits the body or harms it in any other way, the instinct is to immediately recoil in pain but then there is the added mental proliferation of "I am" added to

that pain with the ignorance that feeds the idea that the body being “me” is in pain. Likewise, when there is some great pleasure to the body that brings a feeling of enjoyment, it is not an enjoyment that the body experiences in that moment for the untrained mind – it is instead the pleasure the “I” feels in that moment. Neutrally, one may identify a self with body in general by seeing the qualities of the body as a self – “I am too thin,” “I am fat,” “I am beautiful,” “I am ugly,” and so on. Every time there is pain or pleasure to the body, one sees this as affecting the self as “me” and therefore takes that whole process personally, and every time one identifies with the quality of the body as self, one creates a certain self-image and self-worth. Doing so, one clings to the idea of self as the body. This is dependent upon the quality of the vedanā or feeling.

Feelings are sixfold – the sensations of sight, sound, taste, smell, touch, and thought. For the untrained mind, these feelings can be taken as self. For example, when there is a pleasant sight such as a wondrous sunset, there can arise an innate connection with it and one can become so enamored by that sunset that the image becomes one with the self. All other ideas fade away and one becomes unified as a self being that sight. When one eats an exquisite meal and tastes sumptuous foods and drinks, the mind can become so infatuated by the tastes that it loses all other senses of self and becomes one with those tastes. When the mind ponders thoughts and ideas and becomes so engrossed in them – such as during one-pointed focus – everything else is tuned out and the thoughts become the self. Whatever the sensation, the untrained mind may take it to be self and therefore clings to it – this is closely related with

clinging to sensory experiences. Whenever such feeling is taken as self, with opinions and ideations creating that self around the experience as being self, there is further deepening of the clinging to this particular self-view.

Perceptions arise conjoined with feeling. Where there is a sight, sound, taste, smell, touch, or thought, there is also a naming of that sensation. For example, there is the seeing of the sunset, and the mind instantaneously knows to call it a sunset because it retrieves information of what to perceive it as from a previous memory – and therefore perception is the recognition of something. Likewise, having gathered a collection of favorites of colors, tastes, smells, touches, and ideas, or a collection of hated objects of the senses – these favorites and hated objects becoming part of bhava through the process of collecting through proliferation at upādāna – the mind roots these favorites or objects of displeasure into the formations, which when making contact with them, gives rise to a certain idea about them. If there is a certain smell that is associated with an unwholesome memory, the mind recoils in hatred and the “me” becomes that smell, causing mental pain and anguish. These perceptions are deep-seated in the mind and oftentimes the untrained mind may react with volatile anger or infatuation without even questioning the perception, seeing it as self, even if there doesn’t seem to be a conscious reason for these unwholesome states – a deep-seated memory from one’s infancy can still create a certain negative or positive reaction dependent upon this memory which gives rise to a certain perception and therefore becomes the self. The attachment of self to a perception of thought can also be found

when one clings to a certain ideological view or any wrong views. This extends to clinging to the Dhamma as well. Having then clung to this perception as the same as self, the mind becomes further deluded.

Formations are dependent upon contact for their arising. They influence choice in every given moment and are therefore sometimes synonymous with intention. When there is an intention brought about by contact, a mental formation can arise to think, feel, and perceive in relation to that contact, or a verbal formation can arise to speak and comment on what was experienced, or a physical formation can arise to move one way or the other dependent upon that contact. Therefore, these formations provide the spark for intention to ignite. If that intention arises and the mind immediately says, "I want to do this," or "I don't want to do this," with the deluded idea that that intention is self, then the mind can further cling to the notion that everything that arises as a cause or effect an intention affects the "me" as that intention. This clinging produces further craving, conceit, and ignorance to be deeper embedded into the formations, thus perpetuating a vicious cycle of further ignorance and Dukkha.

Consciousness is understood as that which conditions mind and body from conception onwards, arising and passing away in every microsecond dependent upon experiences of the sense bases, and therefore it can mean that which carries forward formations from a previous life into a new one, then dissipates and gives rise to a consciousness at the point of birth to continue to carry forward the previous formations into the new life with a continuous cycle of birth and death in every

microsecond. It can also mean on the quantum level the awareness of an experience and can be used synonymously with the words, understanding and cognition or to cognize. Whereas perception is to re-cognize, consciousness in this context is to cognize it for the first time or to become aware of the recognition. This is why feeling, perception, and consciousness are intertwined and cannot be easily separated. When there is a feeling, there is an awareness of the feeling, and therefore there is the recognition of what that feeling is as perception. When there is awareness, there is a feeling of thoughts that perceive and understand that awareness. When there is a perception, there is an awareness of that perception and a feeling tied to that perception. In essence, these three – feeling, perception, and consciousness – run around each other.

Consciousness of a sensory experience arises dependent upon the contact between a sense base and its object, and it arises conjoined to feeling and perception. Therefore, there are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind consciousnesses, and there are the consciousnesses of sights, sounds, odors, flavors, tangibles, and thoughts, as well as the consciousnesses of the feeling and perception of the seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking. This awareness, especially in certain Brahmanical schools of thought during the Buddha's time as well as in certain present-day philosophies, is seen as the self whenever there is the observation of something. This observation, synonymous with awareness or consciousness, then is taken to be as a witness. It is this witness that is felt as the experiencer and is therefore considered self. Without understanding the subtle phenomena of multiple

consciousnesses arising in a moment, the untrained mind takes it to be one unified consciousness, which never arose nor ever will die and is therefore equated with the idea of the eternal self. This is the wrong view that Sāti held in MN 38, Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta –

*Evam byā kho ahaṃ, āvuso, bhagavatā dhammaṃ desitaṃ  
ājānāmi yathā tadevidaṃ viññāṇaṃ sandhāvati saṃsarati,  
anaññan”ti*

*Exactly so, friends. As I understand the Dhamma taught by the  
Blessed One, it is this same consciousness that runs and wanders  
through the round of rebirths, not another.*

Clinging to such a view, the mind becomes deluded and is led into further confusion, even while in the āyatana or the base of infinite consciousness because it is unable to effectively perceive that the infinite aspect of this state refers to a multitude of consciousnesses arising and passing away, as well as in the signless collectedness of mind where the observing without an object can be misguidedly taken as a self in the form



of the volitionally produced witness, and therefore thoughts such as “I am consciousness, I am awareness,” arise. In short, this sense of “I am” can arise with any of the other five aggregates – “I am this body, I am this feeling, I am this perception, or I am this intention” – because the mind takes them to be self. When clung to any of these four views, the mind reacts from a lack of mindfulness, wisdom, and restraint. This can give rise to further cementing of craving, conceit, and ignorance. At the quantum level, this can lead to further bouts of clinging, etching deeper into delusion, while at the cosmic level, this can give rise to formations that take one or more of the aggregates as self and therefore cause a deluded state of existence or bhava into a new jāti.

### ***The Self that Possesses the Five Aggregates***

For this particular set of views, the Paṭisambhidāmagga states –

*Just as, were there a tree possessed of shade, such that a man might say ‘This is the tree, this is the shade; the tree is one, the shade is another; but this tree is possessed of shade by means of this shade’ and thus see the tree possessed of shade, so too, here some one sees self*

*possessed of form, possessed of feeling, possessed of perception, possessed of formations, or possessed of consciousness.*

With bodily form, there arises the notion that this body belongs to “me,” to a self. Whenever the body may be in pain or pleasure or experiencing anything neutral, the tendency to say, and more importantly to think, “My body hurts,” or “You fixed my arm,” or “I could feel that radiating in my body,” or any other variation thereof, can be an indication of an attachment to a self that owns the body. In other words, there is this nebulous sense of self that is the “I” which controls the body. Such thoughts and ideas can cause the mind to cling to the wrong view of an eternal and independent self beyond the reality of cause and effect, an idea also rooted in certain Brahmanical schools of thought that saw a self beyond any of the five aggregates, especially the body.

When there is a pleasant sensation, the untrained mind that latches onto this self-view sees that sensation as “mine,” and likewise for unpleasant sensation. This too is connected with clinging to sensory experiences. When the mind experiences a pleasant sensation, if it lacks mindfulness, it will cling to that experience as “mine” and start to conceptualize a sense of self around that sensation. Therefore, the pleasant sight of a sunset, the sound of a great classical piece, the smell of freshly chopped vanilla beans, the taste of a luxurious drink, or the thought of something inspirational and happy are all “mine,” and belong

to “me.” Likewise, any unpleasant sensation is immediately looked as disturbing “me” and “my” peace. This clinging results into the mind become further ingrained in a bhava of reactions that cause the mind to take unmindful actions in thought, word, or deed.

Perceptions being rooted in the process of memory, if the untrained mind begins to consider such memory as “mine,” then even those perceptions are thought of as belonging to a self. Such perceptions can be related to physical sensory experiences where the mind then recollects these experiences and has opinions of a “mine,” about them. These memories belonging to a self become precious and defensible to the point that one may even argue and debate or even become physically violent in order to defend one’s viewpoint dependent upon that memory and their perceptions. This too is closely linked to attachment to views in general as well as wrong views. Such attachment of perceptions as belonging to a self leads to further greed, hatred, and delusion, which can then influence the next set of formations to give rise to certain defiled consciousness and strengthening certain underlying tendencies in connection with those perceptions at the level of feeling, which, if not relaxed and released, can give rise to further craving, clinging and a next set of actions repositioned in bhava ready to spring forth at jāti, only to produce further Dukkha.

Formations being the carriers of experience that feed and guide and intention, one can assess if the mind identifies any intentions as belonging to a self. For example, certain decisions about one’s life circumstances – not appearing for a job interview, separating from a partner, adopting a child, or other

seemingly major life activities – can become fodder for one’s thoughts that cause the mind to identify with those choices as “mine,” and therefore proliferation around those decisions in the form of nostalgic or regretful or happy thoughts may arise, further deepening the clinging to formations as belonging to a self. These decisions are seen as mine and therefore considered very important to the point that one may even defend them like one may defend views as one clings to those views. Such clinging can also arise in the form of regret, sadness, or grief for making what may seem to be a rash decision creating unwanted consequences. If one continues to see these choices as “mine,” then one continues to experience Dukkha – clinging with ideations and conceptualization regarding these choices, the mind creates a storehouse of reactions in bhava that can cause the mind to react brashly and without mindfulness yet again, causing further potential mental and physical anguish. The more one does this on the quantum level, the further away from wisdom one travels and only continues to create more seeds of lust, hatred, and delusion. On the cosmic level, this translates to a potential dissolution of the aggregates and a consciousness that departs carrying forward these formations rooted in deep conceit and potentially leading to confusion and misfortune.

Taking consciousness to belong to a separate self arises whenever mind watches thoughts, then becomes aware of those thoughts and finally takes the awareness as an object. This can arise in the base of infinite consciousness, where the mind becomes so sharp that it is able to see the arising and passing away of individual sensory consciousnesses. When

this happens, there can occur the sense that consciousness is not self but rather an extension of a self, a tool or a limb of a self. This can also arise when the mind sees in the signless collectedness of mind that there is just an objectless awareness and then mistakes this for an object of the “true self,” which results in clinging to this idea of the self. This translates in the experience of the world as seeing the arising of an awareness tied to a sensation – an awareness dependent upon the seeing of a movie, hearing of a song, smelling of a perfume, tasting of a piece of food, touching of a surface, or the thinking of an idea or concept. Here, the mind has some understanding of an awareness that arises dependent upon contact between the internal sense bases and the objects of the senses as being impermanent, but then this understanding is twisted into a misconception that there is a self that is experiencing this awareness and therefore this awareness belongs to the self. With such a misconception, the mind can cling and create all kinds of wrong view that leads to states of confusion and a bhava that can become deeply rooted in conceit, from where the mind reacts in jāti that results in further dukkha. On the cosmic level, this can lead to potentially lower states of existence due to clinging to such a wrong view of self. Ultimately, clinging to the deluded set of self-views described above that take any of the five aggregates as belonging to a separate, independent self or any of their components – like “this is my eyes, my ears, my nose, my tongue, my body, my mind, my experience of these sense bases, my perception of these experiences, my intentions based on these experiences, and my awareness of these experiences – can cause further

bhava rooted in conceit on the micro level and a new existence of dukkha on the macro level.

### *The Five Aggregates in Self*

For this particular set of views, the Paṭisambhidāmagga states –

*Just as, were there a scented flower such that a man might say 'This is the flower, this is the scent; the flower is one, and the scent another; but this scent is in this flower', and thus see the scent in the flower, so too, here someone sees form in self, feeling in self, perception in self, formations in self, or consciousness in self.*

According to this set of views, the idea is that there is an all-encompassing self. That is one thing. However, within this all-encompassing self, there are the aggregates. Each of these is another. The notion of the all-encompassing self stems from certain ideas in Vedānta and other Brahmanical traditions of thought that stipulate the concept of a Brahman – a substratum

of existence. This substratum is alive and is the true self according to this view, and everything that exists is ultimately a limb, a projection, an aspect of this self and it resides in the self.

With regard to form, the ideas from this view state that form, whether internal or external, bodily or otherwise, originates and resides within the all-powerful self. Here the elements of form – that is earth, water, fire, air or in more modern terms solid, liquid, plasma, or gaseous states of matter – do not form the self, nor are they identical with self. Instead, they are within the self, with the self being some supramundane, independent, omnipresent self. This differs from the second set of views in that where the second set states that there is a self that is indeed independent and separate, it isn't necessarily all-encompassing and instead there is a self that possesses the aggregates as tools, while this third set of views rationalizes that the aggregates may be tools and extension of the self but more importantly, the self is beyond and the originator of the aggregates, in the same way the scent (the aggregates) originate from the flower (the self).

Likewise, a mind holding such a view would see feeling as stemming from the self. Whereas the second view states the feeling belongs to the self, the third view states the self is the cause of the feeling. Any form of feeling – whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, mental or physical, equanimous, stemming from contact between the six sense bases and their objects, related to the lay life or the life of a monastic, in the past, present, or future – is seen as stemming from the self. According to this particular view, when one has the experience

of the wonderful sunset, it is not just the eyes and the contact between the eyes and the sunset, but also the actual experience of seeing the sunset that originates from the omnipresent self. Likewise, the experiences of all other senses also originate from the self. Holding onto such a view, one strengthens the roots of greed, hatred, and delusion in the formations, which give rise to a deluded consciousness that then filters any experience of contact with the idea of an all-encompassing self that then takes the feeling to be its creation. This gives rise to further craving of existence as self and the clinging to this view becomes even stronger. The bhava that arises from this clinging continues to provide a storehouse of mental, verbal, and physical reactions that actuate at jāti, ultimately giving rise to Dukkha.

Perceptions are experienced as having arisen from the self in this particular view. Any form of memories that arise, concepts, thoughts, and other ideations are also seen as a product of the self. Here, all memories do not belong to the self. Instead, whatever memories arose are seen as manifestations of self. Like waves of the ocean, these thoughts are seen as arising due to the self. Here, the labeling of an experience as something, whether it's the recognition of a piece of music, the scent of a certain fragrance, or the touch of a familiar friend, is seen as arising due to the self. They arise within the omnipresent self, but they are not taken as self nor belonging to self. With such a view, the mind may not have the deluded view belonging to the first and second sets, but it can still fetter the formations that give rise to an experience and intentions with conceit, leading one away from the Dhamma.



Formations are seen as waves of the self as well, occurring within the realm of a play of different choices and intentions. In certain Indic traditions, this notion is known as a lila. This lila is a divine play – and all those who enact it are seen as representations of their origin, which is the one true self, according to this set of views. Here, a mind clinging to this view will see that even their choices are not them in the sense of an individual self, but rather an expression of the overarching self that is the one and the same as the Brahman, as certain schools of Brahmanical traditions called this substratum. The understanding of this view is that the choices one makes isn't one's own, although it may seem so, but all things, including intentions dissolve into this great self. This can be a dangerous view because a mind deluded under it can think that certain choices rooted in unwholesome qualities, including even murder, is not really going to affect them on an individual level because there is no individual – there is only the one great self in which all intentions arise and pass away into – and therefore, holding onto this view can lead one into cultivate unwholesome and even violent states.

Consciousness is understood not as an instrument of or belonging to the self as perceived in the second set of views nor is it seen as self as in the first set of views, and instead it is experienced as a product of the self. The self is outside of the scope of daily experience and therefore, according to this view, the self is not bound by the aggregates nor or is it just independent of the aggregates. Instead, it is the aggregates, including consciousness, that are dependent on the self. Here, consciousness is seen as an arising of awareness of an

experience but while it may be understood correctly that consciousness arises and passes away, the faulty view adds to this understanding that the awareness dissolves into the great self. With such a view, the mind that clings to it, will hold onto a concept of self that is outside of the scope of the aggregates, fueling and strengthening conceit, craving and ignorance, further fettering the formations that give rise to intentions that can cause the mind to misperceive feeling as a product of self, thus holding onto the thought of this self, leading to craving, further clinging to this view, and the bhava of reactions that become realized at jāti. This applies for any of the views within this set – whether one perceives body, feeling, perception, formations, or consciousness as being inside the so-called supreme self – which results in wrong view and at the dissolution of the body it can result in a lower state of existence, filled with confusion and misfortune.

### *Self in the Five Aggregates*

For this particular set of views, the Paṭisambhidāmagga states –

*Just as, were there a gem placed in a casket such that a man might say 'This is the gem, this is the casket; the gem is one, and the casket*

*another; but this gem is in this casket', and thus sees the gem in the casket, so too, here someone sees self in form, self in feeling, self in perception, self in formations, or self in consciousness.*

This set of views also has its origins in certain traditions like Brahmanism and others where the idea of a core self, underneath, inside, and residing in the aggregates is the central theme of such beliefs. According to this set of views, there is a soul, spirit, self, essence, experiencer, inner self, inner witness, or however else it may be seen that is the true self. It may reside in one or more of the five aggregates. One can find these views especially in modern-day Abrahamic religions as well, where in each of these faiths there is understanding of a core spirit that controls the aggregates or remains within one of more of the aggregates. Regardless of the belief system, what is evident and common is the concept of the core self that is inside of the aggregates.

With regards to form, this view sees the body as being a vessel in which the self continually resides. Within the Brahmanical traditions, one common idea is the Atman-Brahman duality and non-duality. Here, the self is one thing and the substratum of Brahman is another. Using the analogy of a clay pot filled with water floating around in the ocean, the traditions state that the water inside the pot is Atman, the self, while the ocean is Brahman, the substratum. The clay pot is the body. Once the clay pot cracks – the body dies – the water or

self rejoins the ocean or the Brahman. Depending on the subtleties, the idea can be that the Atman and Brahman are separate and become one in the end or that they were both one thing from the beginning with the body being the distinguishing factor. In any case, the holder of such a view perceives the body as being something the self may control. It's like a homunculus, a small being inside the body that is the intelligence behind all the workings of the body, from genetic expression to cellular metabolism to digestion and heart rate and so on – everything is seen as being controlled by the self that lives inside the body. In fact, according to this view, it is the self that gives life to the body. Taking such a view, one becomes deluded with the idea of an eternal self giving life to the body and its functions and wrongly believes that same self will depart the body at death. Holding onto this view, the mind is prone to further craving, conceit, and ignorance, causing one to develop a bhava rooted in these fetters, leading to actions, if not seen as impersonal, can cause further Dukkha. On the macro level, holding to such a view while the dying process arises, there is a possibility of further rebirth in an existence of ignorance, confusion and misfortune.

When feeling arises, the holder of this view sees self in that feeling. Here, it's not that the seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching or thinking are self or self controls these experiences. It's not in the sensory objects or in the sense bases, but rather in the actual process of feeling. So, when one is watching the sunset, in the act of watching there is the self. When one is listening to music, in that listening there is the self. When smelling a freshly baked batch of cookies, tasting those cookies,

feeling the warmth of the fireplace, or thinking about a happy memory, in those experiences there is the self. When one holds on to such a view, there arises an attachment to that feeling and one has the misperception of seeing the permanent in the impermanent and therefore strengthens the fetter of ignorance along with the fetters of craving and conceit. At the moment of death, the last feeling or experience in the mind is taken to be a vessel for the self, leading the formations rooted in that process of that experience to activate a consciousness that then transports those formations to a new state of birth and existence tied to the immediate feeling before death.

When perception arises in the form of recognition or accessing a previous memory, the holder of this view sees self in that process of recognition or remembering. If one perceives an object, like a tree, first having experienced the shape, form, dimensions, and color of the tree in the process of feeling, then recognizing it as a tree, to such a one the self resides in that perception. The self arises with every perception that arises and it continues to exist in every perception, like an iota of some luminous essence, just as it would in the body or feeling or the other aggregates in this set of views. Likewise, in the remembering of a memory, there is self residing in that process. In the conceptualizing of something, one mistakenly takes that process of conceiving in the mind as being the vessel for self. From clinging to this view, the mind further proliferates concepts, ideas, and notions about self, leading to deeper conceit, from where one continues to add to the storehouse of reactions at bhava that are then launched at jāti and lead to further Dukkha. While the mind perceives a mental experience

at death and takes a self in that perception, the attachment to that view fuels the formations that arise from the experience, leading to further rebirth in concordance with those formations, which can potentially be an existence of ignorance, wrong view, and therefore misfortune.

When the holder of the view that self resides in formations sees any choice being made, they don't think the choice is "mine," or "myself," but rather they a self in the process of making the choice. So, when contact arises where the eye meets the form of the tree, a mental formation arises that gives rise to a feeling and perception of that tree. From there, a thought may arise, "Let me go and sit under that tree for some shade." This is intention arising, from which one then makes the choice to move towards the tree, thus activating the physical formation to walk. In this whole process, the mind holding onto this particular view takes self to be within the process of making that choice. Here the intention is the vessel for the self. When the mind holds onto this view, then it takes all choices as being worth protecting and defending because the self built into those choices. Therefore, such a mind will have further mental proliferation, leading to a bhava in which the mind is reactionary towards any experience that refutes its intentions and choices, causing a jāti of unwholesome thoughts, words, and deeds that can lead to further Dukkha, thus reengaging the whole process of Dependent Origination by further strengthening the unwholesome roots in the fetters, defilements in consciousness, and contact that is filtered by conceit, craving, and ignorance. If one is unable to see the unwholesome arising in the form of underlying tendencies at

the level of feeling, then craving rooted in that view of self may once again arise, potentially leading to further clinging to this view and so the cycle repeats unless one reenables mindfulness and breaks that cycle. At the macro level, whatever choices one has made in the past may arise in the form of thoughts and perception, tinted with remorse and regret, or attachment and greed, and when one takes self to be in those images, the formations that arise can lead to a consciousness that takes descends into an existence related to those formations, which could potentially be unwholesome and state of decline.

When the holder of this view experiences the consciousness – or cognition or awareness – of an experience, they take self to be within that experience of awareness. In other words, when any sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, or thought arises, in the awareness of these sensation one considers there to be self. So, self arises inside an awareness of these sensations and experiences arise, or whenever an awareness of the sense bases themselves or of the process of perceiving arise. Here awareness is the carrier of the self. To such a person, if their mind takes self to reside in the awareness of an object or any other phenomena, then that awareness and even the memory of that awareness becomes worth clinging onto and defending, leading to bhava that causes unwholesome actions in jāti, which can potentially deepen the clinging. Likewise, at death, if an awareness of a feeling or perception in the mind arises, and one clings to that awareness as being the vessel of what one believes to be self, then the formations arising from that process will be fettered by conceit, craving, and ignorance, leading to a consciousness rooted in the desire, aversion, regret,

or attachment to that feeling or perception in mind, which can then transport the formations into a new existence that corresponds to the mental desire or aversion prior to that new consciousness leaving the body.

### *Cessation of Clinging to Views of Self with Right Effort*

When the mind attains the state of the sotāpanna, the clinging to all views of self is eradicated. This is because the mind experiences the arising and passing away of phenomena, and understands the impermanence of all conditioned things, including the aggregates, and realizing this, one then sees the inherent Dukkha in that impermanence. Having seen this, the mind abandons all attachment to the idea of a self and knows on an experiential level that all is not-self. This is further cemented when the mind attains Nibbāna and sees even that as not-self, where the links arise without a self, and thus the aggregates – part of nāmarupā – arise without a self before the arising, during their existence, and after they cease.

There is, however, still some conceit that remains as a result of many lifetimes of taking one or more of the five aggregates as well. Therefore, even though the mind knows on some experiential level and understands that all is not-self, there is still as Khemaka puts it in the SN 22.89, Khemaka Sutta, some notion of “I am” with regards the aggregates –



*Imesu khoāhaṃ, āvuso, pañcasu upādānakkhandhesu na kiñci  
attaṃ vā attaniyaṃ vā samanupassāmi, na camhi araham khīṇāsavo;  
api ca me, āvuso, pañcasu upādānakkhandhesu 'asmī'ti adhigataṃ,  
'ayamahasmī'ti na ca samanupassāmi"ti.*

*I do not regard anything among these five aggregates subject to  
clinging as self or as belonging to self, yet I am not an arahant, one  
whose taints are destroyed. Friends, [the notion] 'I am' has not yet  
vanished in me in relation to these five aggregates subject to clinging,  
but I do not regard [anything among them] as "This I am."*

In other words, for the anāgāmī, the notion of "I am" is a residue of having taken the aggregates as self or belonging to self, in self, or self in them. And how does one eliminate this notion of self? Khemaka provides the answer –

*Kiñcāpi, āvuso, ariyasāvakassa pañcorambhāgiyāni saṃyojanāni pahīnāni bhavanti, atha khvassa hoti: 'yo ca pañcasu upādānakkhandhesu anusahagato asmīti māno, asmīti chando, asmīti anusayo asamūhato.*

*So aparena समयena pañcasu upādānakkhandhesu udayabbayānupassī viharati— iti rūpaṃ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthaṅgamo; iti vedanāṃ, iti vedanāssa samudayo, iti vedanāssa atthaṅgamo; iti saññāṃ, iti saññāssa samudayo, iti saññāssa atthaṅgamo; iti viññāṇaṃ, iti viññāṇassa samudayo, iti viññāṇassa atthaṅgamo'ti iti viññāṇaṃ, iti viññāṇassa samudayo, iti viññāṇassa atthaṅgamo'ti*

*Tassimesu pañcasu upādānakkhandhesu udayabbayānupassino viharato yopissa hoti pañcasu upādānakkhandhesu anusahagato*

*'asmī'ti, māno 'asmī'ti, chando 'asmī'ti anusayo asamūhato, sopi samugghātam gacchati.*

*Friends, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, still, in relation to the five aggregates subject to clinging, there lingers in him a residual conceit "I am," a desire "I am," an underlying tendency "I am" that has not yet been uprooted.*

*Sometime later he dwells contemplating rise and fall in the five aggregates subject to clinging: "Such is form, such its origin, such its passing away; such is feeling ... such is perception ... such are volitional formations ... such is consciousness, such its origin, such its passing away."*

*As he dwells thus contemplating rise and fall in the five aggregates subject to clinging, the residual conceit "I am," the desire*

*“I am,” the underlying tendency “I am” that had not yet been uprooted — this comes to be uprooted.*

The simple exercise here, in the form of daily mindfulness and observing in every moment the arising and passing away of the aggregates and any sense of “I am” attached to them as well as during one’s formal meditation sitting and walking practices, is to understand the *tilakkhaṇa* of the five aggregates. Using mindfulness and sharp observation, one discerns the impermanence of form, contemplating with the help of visualizing the states of bodily decay or just understanding and seeing through one’s memories, through one’s past photos, of how form invariably changes. Having discerned this, one realizes that form is subject to *Dukkha* and therefore cannot be taken to be a permanent, essential, and separate self that remains unaffected by conditioned reality. Likewise, using this discernment born from mindfulness, one sees how feelings are dependent upon contact – there is seeing dependent upon the meeting of the visual form and the eye, hearing dependent upon the meeting of the sound vibrations and the ears, smelling dependent upon the meeting of odor molecules and the nose, tasting dependent upon the meeting of flavor molecules and the tastebuds on the tongue, touching dependent upon the meeting of a tangible and the body, and thinking dependent upon the meeting of mental objects and the mind. When contact ceases, so does the feeling. This means

feeling is not independent of causes and conditions and is impermanent, and therefore liable to bring Dukkha in one form or another, either through the presence of painful feelings or the disappearance of pleasant feelings. For this reason, the mind understands that the aggregate of feeling cannot be considered self.

Since perception is also dependent upon contact, in that when a feeling arises dependent upon contact, there is a perception conjoined to it to recognize the experience or to further conceptualize from that experience, it too is impermanent and therefore liable to bring Dukkha and cannot be taken as self. Formations arise when contact arises, and they are influenced by previous choices, and so when choices are made or changed, so to do the formations, arising and passing away in every microsecond. This perception of impermanence leads to the understanding of Dukkha in formations and therefore the mind abandons and uproots notions of self as formations. Consciousness arises dependent upon contact – with the joining of a sense base and its object, there is a consciousness that arises to bring awareness of the experience. As it is also conjoined with feeling and perception, consciousness is always arising and passing away, which means it is impermanent, and what is impermanent is liable to become or bring Dukkha, and therefore consciousness cannot be taken as self.

Seeing in this way, the mind abandons the sets of views that misperceive the five aggregates as self or the self being in the five aggregates. With regards to seeing self as the owner of the aggregates or as the originator or vessel of the aggregates –

meaning that the self is in some way independent of the aggregates – one has only to see this as an experience that is felt in the mind as a mental concept based on ideas of the self. Since it is dependent upon the mind, which in itself is impermanent, liable to Dukkha, and therefore not-self, the experience of self is also possessive of the *tilakkhaṇa*. In other words, the sets of views that misperceive self as outside the aggregates or inside the aggregates are dependent upon an experience conditioned by contact between mind and a mental object, the object being a concept of self that the mind distortedly takes as being the true self, when in reality that notion can disappear and reappear but cannot be stabilized as a uniform, permanent, and independent experience outside the scope of causation and conditioning.

The key to first abandoning the various self-views is the perception of impermanence of and Dukkha in the aggregates and in the concept of self. Seeing this, the mind relaxes and stops taking all experience within conditioned reality as personal. This alleviates all tension in the mind, therefore causes the destruction of craving in that moment and produces an experience of letting go and cessation of Dukkha. Eventually, when the mind completely lets go of all notions of “I am” that may be residual due to habitual tendencies in *bhava* that continued to take the aggregates or notions of self as the true self, it does after having uprooted the fetters of conceit, craving, and ignorance through continual practice of observation, discernment, and meditation, leading to the natural consequence of liberation and the destruction of the taints by not clinging.

Using the context of the Four Noble Truths, we can understand that the clinging to any notions of self is the First Noble Truth of Dukkha. The undue attention to these views of self add further fuel to the clinging and is therefore the Second Noble Truth of Samudaya. The abandoning and detachment of this attention to these views is the Third Noble Truth of Nirodha. The utilization of the 6Rs, which are the abbreviated form of the Noble Eightfold Path, is the Fourth Noble Truth of Magga. Using the 6Rs, one

- ◆ Recognizes that the mind is taking personally one or more of the five aggregates or to a sense of self experienced as a mental feeling in the form of a concept and ideations – this is understanding Dukkha.
- ◆ Releases the attention to these notions contributing to taking things personally through some form of self-view – thus abandoning Samudaya.
- ◆ Relaxes the mind and/or body, tranquilizing formations rooted in and strengthened by such notions of self – leading to the experience of Nirodha.
- ◆ Re-smiles to uplift the mind.

- ◆ Returns to that experience of Nirodha in the form of pure observation without any conceit-driven intention, both outside of and in meditation
- ◆ Repeats whenever mind strays back to self-views – thus cultivating Magga.

We have now examined in as much detail as possible the four types of clinging with the aim to understand each aspect, then abandon each one through that understanding in order to experience the relief from such clinging, using the path as laid out by the Buddha. Having done so, let us now explore and comprehend the crux of Dukkha as it's understood in the usual and traditional format of the Four Noble Truths, specifically the Second Noble Truth of Samudaya or the cause of Dukkha, which is Taṇhā or craving.

**This is the end of the book for the link of 'Upādāna'.**