

Paticca-samuppada

A film by Michael Pilz
Austria 1986, 16'

Accavijam bhante abbhutam, bhante yava gambhiro cayam
bhante **paticca-samuppada** gambhiravabhaso
ca. Atha ca pana me uttanakuttanako viya khayatiti.

Maha-Nidana-Suttanta – Digha Nikaya XV.

Amazing Lord, marvellous Lord it is, that whereas this
doctrine of events as arising from causes is so deep and
looks so deep, to me it seems as clear as clear can be.

Dialogues of the Buddha,
doctrine of dependent origination –
Translation from the Pali by
T.W. Rhys Davids

The doctrine of **paticca-samuppada** – that all dhamma
(phenomena physical and mental) are paticcasa
muppamma (happen by the way of cause) finds in the
Maha-Nidana-Suttanta the fullest exposition accorded to
it throughout the Pitakas. Thus Buddhaghosa, in explaining
the name **paticca-samuppada**, points out, that it excludes
all theories of absolutism, nihilism, chance, irregular
causation and indeterminism. And of such theories, it is
concerning the implied rejection of the first two that he
is most explicit. Namely, that there is no persistent ego
reaping results in one life sown as causes in a previous life,
and that it is not a different, an alien ego either, which
reaps. The latter person is the resultant, the creature, the
evolute of the former.

T.W. Rhys Davids



Recollection of dependent origination
(Paticca-samuppada).

Avijja-paccaya sankhara; sankhara-paccaya vinnanam;
vinnana-paccaya namarupam; namarupa-paccaya salaya-
tanam; salayatana-paccaya phasso; phassa-paccaya
vedana; vedana-paccaya tanha; tanha-paccaya upada-
nam; upadana-paccaya bhavo; bhava-paccaya jati; jati-
paccaya jaramaranam; sokaparideva-dukkha-domanassu-
payasa sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakk-
handhassa samudayo hoti.

Avijjayatveva asesaviraganirodha sankhara-
nirodho; sankhara-
nirodha vinnana-
nirodho; vinnana-
nirodha namaru-
panirodho; namaru-
pa-
nirodha salaya-
tana-
nirodho; salaya-
tana-
nirodha phassa-
nirodho; phassa-
nirodha vedana-
nirodho; vedana-
nirodha tanha-
nirodho; tanha-
nirodha upada-
na-
nirodho; upada-
na-
nirodha bhava-
nirodho; bhava-
nirodha jati-
nirodho; jati-
nirodha jara-
marana-
soka-
parideva-
dukkha-
domanassu-
payasa nirujjhanti.
Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti'ti.

The process of dependent origination seemed so difficult to explain, that the Buddha contemplated not teaching at all. He thought it possible no one would understand.

Dependent origination is a chain with 12 links. The chain starts with:

1. Ignorance or delusion. Based on ignorance we get
2. karmic formations, karmic activities, a karmic process which is the driving force of a deluded existence. The karmic formations give us
3. consciousness or the stream of consciousness. The stream of consciousness is then manifested in
4. body/mind-union. The body/mind-union is the precondition for
5. the six senses. The six senses enable us to have
6. contact with the world around us. From contact with the world arise
7. feelings. Out of feelings
8. craving arises. Craving is the root for
9. grasping. As soon as we are trapped with grasping the cycle continues with
10. the process of becoming. With the process of becoming we get
11. birth. And with birth there is
12. suffering, lamentation, pain, sorrow, desparation, old age and death.

This wheel, fed by ignorance, goes on and on until we escape that cycle by insight and enlightenment. The process of dependent origination is valid not only for the continuation of the karmic process over several physical lifetimes, but also as an explanation for the karmic process from moment to moment. An acceptance of the Buddhist theory of rebirth is therefore not an essential pre-condition for an understanding of dependent origination. The karmic process from one moment to the next is fed and continued by this chain of conditions.

If we examine the chain more closely, we will find that there is not much we can do to influence the first six links. It is the seventh link that gives us a chance to get out of the cycle. The seventh link is our reaction to our contact with the world, the aspect of feelings. With mindfulness we can observe how feelings arise and pass away, realize their character and destroy their power. Then craving and grasping can be overcome.

For those interested in an in-depth study of this subject I recommend:

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, "Paticca-samuppada, Practical Dependent Origination". Nonthaburi, Thailand: Vuddhidhamma Fund 1992.

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Original title	Paticca-samuppada
Country of production	Austria
Year of production.....	1986
Date of completion.....	September 1986
Producer	Michael Pilz
Realization.....	Michael Pilz
Cinematography.....	Michael Pilz
Editing	Michael Pilz
Original sound recording	Othmar Schmiderer
Original format	Film, 16mm, color, negative, AGFA XT 125, 1:1,38
Print format	Blowup 16/35mm, Gevacolor 982, 1:1,38
Laboratorium	Film 16, Helmut Rings, Munich, Germany
Sound	Mono
Running time	16 minutes
Length (35mm)	450 m
Number of reels.....	1
Shooting location & time	The Old Market, Salzburg, Austria, 10 August 1986 between 9:41 a.m. and 9:57 a.m.
Technique	Aaton 16, Angenieux 16mm, f.11, AGFA XT 125; Nagra 4,2 mono, Sennheiser 416P, AGFA-tape 368
Financial support	Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Sport and Art Cultural Department of the Government of Lower Austria
First public screening.....	16 October, 1986, Austrian Film Days, Wels, Austria
Festivals.....	Wels, Austrian Film Days, October 1987 Riga, Latvia, Arsenal, International Film Festival, September 1994 Graz, Diagonale, Festival of Austrian Film, April, 2008
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