

Why is the Forward Sequence of Dependent Origination the Wrong Path? An annotated translation of the Commentary to the *Nidānasamyutta's Discourse of the [Two] Paths*

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Abstract

In the Pāli *Paṭipadā Sutta* (*Discourse of the [Two] Paths*) of the *Nidānasamyutta*, the Buddha distinguishes two opposite paths of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*); the forward sequence (*anuloma*) of dependent origination is the wrong path (*micchāpaṭipadā*), while the reverse sequence (*paṭiloma*) is the right path (*sammāpaṭipadā*). However, a question is raised as to why the former is called the wrong path: despite ignorance, there are also meritorious volitional formations (*puññābhisaṅkhāra*) and imperturbable volitional formations (*āneñjābhisaṅkhāra*) being generated. The commentary to the *Paṭipadā Sutta* (*Paṭipadāsuttaṅṅānā*) explains that actions or attainments rooted in the desire for success within the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*) are not good enough to free a person from suffering. However, actions that are rooted in the aspiration for *nibbāna*, will eventually lead to liberation. This article provides an annotated English translation of the commentary to the *Paṭipadā Sutta*, with selections from its sub-commentary (*Nidānavagga-purāṇaṭīkā*) and a brief outline of the philosophical tenets addressed in the text.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The *Paṭipadā Sutta* (*Discourse of the [Two] Paths*)¹ is a *sutta* (discourse) of the *Nidāna Vagga* (the Book of Causation)² in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (Collection of Connected Discourses). In this discourse, the Buddha expounds two paths (*paṭipadā*), namely, the wrong path (*micchāpaṭipadā*) and the right path (*sammāpaṭipadā*). The wrong path here is identified as the forward sequence

¹ S II 4–5.

² In the Pāli Text Society's edition (PTS), the *Nidāna Vagga* contains ten *saṃyuttas*. The *Nidānasamyutta* is the first *saṃyutta* with ninety-three *suttas*, and the *Paṭipadā Sutta* is the third *sutta* in this group, see S II x and 4.

(*anuloma*) or the way of emergence of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), while the right path is the reverse sequence (*paṭiloma*) or the way of cessation of dependent origination.

The doctrine of dependent origination is the cornerstone of the Buddha's teaching. The essence of this doctrine states that all the conditioned (*saṅkhata*) things (dharmas) arise in dependence upon other things,³ and it is outlined in this short formula: "when this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases."⁴ The dependent origination doctrine provides the key for understanding the arising (*samudaya*) and cessation (*nirodha*) of suffering experienced by sentient beings, for example, by addressing questions such as: "when what exists does aging-and-death comes to be?"⁵ Or "when what does not exist does aging-and-death not come to be?"⁶

Dependent origination is usually expounded in a sequence of twelve linked factors (*dvādasāṅga*), starting from ignorance (*avijjā*) or the lack of knowledge of the four truths of the Noble Ones.⁷ Because of ignorance, a person engages in volitional actions that leads to volitional formations (*saṅkhārā*) or karma. These volitional formations then sustain consciousness (*viññāṇa*) from one life to the next. Along with consciousness, comes the physical body and the mental activities (*nāmarūpa*) of a sentient being at the moment of its conception. The sentient being is equipped with six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*); that is, the physical sense faculties and the cognitive mind. These six sense bases allow contact (*phassa*) to take place between consciousness and its objects. Contact gives rise to feeling (*vedanā*). With feeling, craving (*taṇhā*) arises. When craving intensifies, it becomes clinging (*upādāna*); to the object of one's desire. Clinging then leads to the seeding of a potential new existence (*bhava*). When the sentient being dies, the potential of a new existence is actualised in the form of a new life starting with birth (*jāti*) and ending with

³ Cf. Vibh-a 135.4–6: "*tattha aniccā vata saṅkhārā ti ādisu vuttā sabbe pi sappaccayā dhammā saṅkhata-saṅkhārā nāma* (In the case of "all formations are impermanent" and so on, it is said that in all dharmas with a cause are also called conditioned formations)." Cf. *nibbāna* as the unconditioned dharma, see the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* CST4 6.65; Bhikkhu Bodhi 2012, 260 §32.

⁴ S II 28.7–9: "*imasmim sati idaṃ hoti imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati. imasmim asati idaṃ na hoti imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati.*"

⁵ S II 5.26: "*kim hi nu kho sati jarāmarañam hoti.*" See also CDB 537.

⁶ S II 7.13–14: "*kim hi nu kho asati jarāmarañam na hoti.*" CDB 539.

⁷ S II 4.11–14: "*katamā ca bhikkhave avijjā. yam kho bhikkhave dukkhe aññānam dukkhasamudaye aññānam dukkhanirodhe aññānam dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya aññānam* (And what, monks, is ignorance? Not knowing suffering, not knowing the origin of suffering, not knowing the cessation of suffering, not knowing the way leading to the cessation of suffering)." See CDB 535.

aging-and-death (*jarāmaraṇa*).⁸ Therefore, these twelve factors in the forward sequence starting with ignorance, propel and sustain a sentient being in a continuous cycle of rebirth or *saṃsāra*, which is laden with pain and suffering. Hence, the forward sequence of dependent origination in this *Paṭipadā Sutta* is called the wrong path.

On the other hand, in the reverse sequence, starting with the cessation and fading away of ignorance without remainder, the cessation of volitional formations comes to be.⁹ Without volitional formations, consciousness cannot be sustained from one life to the next, as such, no formation of physical body and its mental activities takes place. Without a physical body and its mental activities, no six sense bases can be developed and no contact occurs. Without contact, no feeling arises. Without feeling, craving and clinging do not set in. And with no clinging, there is no impregnation of a new existence, and hence, there is no starting of a new life. And without the birth of a new life, there is no aging-and-death.¹⁰ With that, the cycle of rebirth comes to an end, and a sentient being is thus liberated from the cyclical suffering-laden *saṃsāra*. Therefore, the reserved sequence of dependent origination here is called the right path.

1.2 Why is it called the wrong path?

The question the commentary to the *Paṭipadā Sutta* (*Paṭipadāsuttavaṇṇanā*)¹¹ addresses is: Why is it that the forward sequence of dependent origination is called the wrong path? The question arises from the fact that with ignorance, there are also meritorious volitional formations (*puññābhisāṅkhāra*) as well as imperturbable volitional formations (*āneñjābhisāṅkhāra*). In other words, good karmas are also generated through this path.

The understanding that ignorance generates meritorious and imperturbable volitional formations can be seen from another sutta of the *Nidānaśamyutta*, the *Parivīmaṃsana Sutta* (*Discourse of Thorough Investigation*).¹² In this discourse, the Buddha says:

Bhikkhus, if a person immersed in ignorance generates a meritorious volitional formation (*puññaṃ saṅkhāraṃ*), consciousness fares on to the meritorious; if he generates a demeritorious volitional formation (*apuññaṃ saṅkhāraṃ*),

⁸ S II 1–4; CBD: 516–520.

⁹ S II 4: “*avijjāya tv eva asesavirāgaṇirodhā saṅkhāraṇirodho.*”

¹⁰ S II 1–2.

¹¹ Spk II 19.

¹² S II 80–84.

consciousness fares on to the demeritorious; if he generates an imperturbable volitional formation (*āneñjam saṅkhāram*), consciousness fares on to the imperturbable.¹³

The commentary to the *Parivīmaṃsana Sutta* explains the above statement further:

Consciousness fares on to the meritorious means the karmic consciousness becomes associated with a meritorious karma, the resultant consciousness with the fruits of merit....consciousness fares on to the imperturbable means the karmic consciousness become associated with an imperturbable karma, the resultant consciousness with the fruits of the imperturbable.¹⁴

The fruit of the imperturbable is described in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (*Discourse of the Fruits of Recluseship*) as having the mind concentrated, purified and cleansed, unblemished, free from impurities (*upakkilesa*), malleable, workable and established.¹⁵ Moreover, in the *Laṭukikopama Sutta* (*Discourse of the Simile of the Quail*), the imperturbable (*aniñjita*)¹⁶ is associated with the fourth *jhāna*.¹⁷ Once imperturbability has been reached, the mind can be turned to the attainments of the immaterial sphere and to the three or six higher knowledges (*abhiññā*).¹⁸ These attainments are the final stages preceding the abandoning of all fetters (*saṃyojana*) that bind a sentient being to *saṃsāra*.¹⁹ Furthermore, in the commentary to the *Āneñjasappāya Sutta* (*Discourse of the Way*

¹³ Trans. adopted from Bhikkhu Bodhi in CDB 587; S II 82.9–13: “*avijāgato yaṃ bhikkhave purisapuggalo puññaṃ ce saṅkhāram abhisamkharoti, puññūpagamaṃ hoti viññānaṃ, apuññaṃ ce saṅkhāram abhisamkharoti, apuññūpagamaṃ hoti viññānaṃ. āneñjam ce saṅkhāram abhisamkharoti, āneñjūpagamaṃ hoti viññānaṃ.*”

¹⁴ Spk II 78.2–9: “*puññūpagamaṃ hoti viññānaṃ ti, kamma-viññānaṃ kamma-puññena upagataṃ sampayuttaṃ hoti, vipāka-viññānaṃ vipāka-puññena....ānañjūpagamaṃ hoti viññānaṃ ti, kamm’ānañjena kamma-viññānaṃ, vipāk’ānañjena vipāka-viññānaṃ upagataṃ hoti.*” Also see CDB 765, n. 136.

¹⁵ D I 76.13–15: “*so evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mūdū-bhūte kammaniye ṭhite ānejjappatte.*” See also LDB, 104.

¹⁶ BHS gives *āniñja* and *āneñj(y)a* as variants. See BHS s.v. *aniñjya*.

¹⁷ M I 455.1–4: “*idh’udāyi bhikkhu sukkhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā – pe – catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Idaṃ kho ahaṃ Udāyi aniñjitasmiṃ vadāmi* (Here, Udāyin, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain...a monk enters upon and abides in the fourth *jhāna*...Now this, I say, belongs to the imperturbable [MLD, 557]);” M I 456.7–9. For more discussion on the benefits of achieving imperturbability and its presence in the immaterial spheres, see Anālayo 2009: 177–195.

¹⁸ Anālayo 2009, 178.

¹⁹ M I 456.3–6.

to the Imperturbable), it is said that “consciousness fares on to that imperturbable” could even mean that it is associated with the state of wholesomeness with regard to the imperturbable.²⁰

Therefore, how can a path that generates fruits of meritorious deeds and wholesome fruits of the imperturbable be the wrong path?

1.3 Powers and meditative attainments are not enough

In response to this question, the commentary states that the forward sequence is the wrong path because it is the head of the cycle of rebirth and being that, covers the entire path of the cycle. It is a path whereby no one gets out of the cycle of rebirth, even those who have gained spiritual attainments such as the five supernormal powers (*pañcābhīñā*), or those who have won the eight attainments (*aṭṭha samāpattiyo*).

The five supernormal powers here could be the first five powers of the six discussed in the *Kassapasamyutta*, namely: the power of performing various miracles (*anekavidha iddhidhā*); having divine ear-element (*dibba-sotadhātu*); the ability to know the thoughts of other people (*parasattānaṃ parapuggalānaṃ cetasā ceto paricca pajānāti*); the ability to recollect one’s own previous births (*anekavihitam pubbenivāsam anussarati*); and having divine eyes with the ability to know or see the passing away and rebirth of other beings according to their karma (*dibbena cakkhunā...cavamāne uppajjamāne hīne paṇīte suvaṇṇe dubbaṇṇe sugate duggate yathākammupage satte pajānāti*).²¹ In other *suttas*, for example, the *Dasuttara Sutta* (*Discourse of Expanding Decades*), these five powers are parts of the six supernormal powers (*cha abhiñña*).²² The sixth, listed together with the earlier five, is the destruction of all cankers (*āsavakkhaya*), which itself signifies *arahantship*, one who is fully liberated from the cycle of rebirth.²³ However, this power is not part of the group of people who possess only the five supernormal powers.

²⁰ Ps IV 61.21–62.1: “*taṃ viññānaṃ ānanjupagan ti kusalānañjasabhāvaṃ upagataṃ* (Burmese: *kusalāneñjassabhāupagataṃ*) *assa tādisam eva bhaveyyā ti*”

²¹ S II 212.18–214.21.

²² D III 281.13–28.

²³ Cf. Mp IV 115.22: “*āsavānaṃ khayam paṭijānāti ti arahattaṃ paṭijānāti* (to acknowledge the destruction of cankers is to acknowledge *arahantship*).”

Meanwhile, the eight attainments referred to here are the four *jhānas*²⁴ and the mental absorptions attained with regard to the immaterial spheres, such as, in progressive scale of concentration, the sphere of boundless space (*ākāśānañcāyatana-samāpatti*), the sphere of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana-samāpatti*), the sphere of nothingness (*ākāśañcāyatana-samāpatti*), and the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana-samāpatti*).²⁵ Even with these attainments, it is not enough to free a being from *saṃsāra*. In the *Laṭukikopama Sutta*, the Buddha says that abiding in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is still not enough and it should be abandoned in order for one to enter upon and abide in the cessation of perception and feeling.²⁶

Therefore, as we can see here, even for those who have gained the five supernormal powers or won the eight attainments, if these achievements are rooted in the wrong path, they are still bound to *saṃsāra*. The message the commentary may try to convey here is: one should not be satisfied and continue to abide in any of these achievements or attainments, but instead should strive further in order to free oneself from the cycle of rebirth.²⁷

1.4 That which breaks the cycle of rebirth

On the other hand, according to the commentary, one who aspires for *nibbāna*, which breaks the cycle of rebirth, would even make a spiritual progress by merely performing an act of alms-giving. The size or extent of alms-giving does not matter as long as the act is rooted in the aspiration (*paṭthanā*) for *nibbāna*. For example, while performing an act of alms-giving, one makes an aspiration, such as, “may this act of alms-giving bring about the destruction of cankers for me,” then the donor is placed rightly on the path that breaks the cycle of rebirth, either for *arahantship*, or for the knowledge and understanding of the true nature of experience, [and reaching *nibbāna*

²⁴ Cf. Nidd-a I 241.12: *paṭhamajjhānādi*

²⁵ Cf. Paṭis I 8.9–12; PED s.v. *samāpatti*

²⁶ M I 456.1–6; MLD, 558–559. According to Bhikkhu Bodhi, the cessation of perception and feeling is not another higher attainment but here it implies the full development of insight brought to the eventual attainment of *arahantship*. See MLD, n. 681 at p. 1271.

²⁷ The equanimity (*upekkhā*) of mind, directed to the bases of these immaterial spheres, will stay for a long time if one clings to it. Thus, these attainments, if one is not careful, may become a trap in *saṃsāra*. Moreover, these attainments are mere mental creations or conditionally arisen (*saṅkhata*), whereas one should not cling to any condition, see M III 243.25–244.19; MLD, 1092.

by oneself],²⁸ or for attaining omniscience. On the contrary, even if one performs a great wholesome act of alms-giving, such as that of Velāma,²⁹ but the act is rooted in the desire for success within *saṃsāra*, then one is placed on the wrong path, and would bring upon oneself the continuous cycle of rebirth.

1.5 Why the two paths?

The commentary goes on to explain that the intention of the Buddha to expound dependent origination in these two paths—the wrong path and the right path—as some people may have been confused thinking that dependent origination in total is about achieving *nibbāna*.

The possible confusion comes as no surprise. For instance, in the *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, the Buddha says, without going towards the two extremes, that is, at one side, “all exists (*sabbaṃ atthi*),” and the other side, “all does not exist (*sabbaṃ n’atthi*),” he will teach the dharma by the middle (*majjhena*). The dharma by the middle is expounded as dependent origination.³⁰ As such, dependent origination has been seen as the philosophical “middle path” placed between the two extremes of permanent existence and nihilistic non-existence.³¹ Thus, dependent origination can be easily mistaken, in total, as the ‘path’ for *nibbāna*. However, there are two different paths in it.

The word “path (*paṭipadā*)” in the *Paṭipadā Sutta* may not correspond to the usual meaning of a path or a way (*magga*) that one practices or follows in order to achieve a certain goal.³² The path as in the “right path (*sammāpaṭipadā*)” given here is an end rather than the means itself. And the end here for the right path is *nibbāna*. Similarly, for the wrong path, the end is *saṃsāra*. The

²⁸ *Paccekabodhiṇāṇa*. A *paccekabuddha* is one who reaches *bodhi*, the understanding of true nature of the world of experience (awakening) by oneself, without relying on the Dharma taught by a Buddha, but is not capable of teaching the Dharma to others. For more information on the notion of *paccekabuddha*, see Kloppenborg 1983.

²⁹ Velāma is a chaplain of Benares (Vārāṇasī) who was famous for his alms-giving, see DPPN II 932–933 for further details.

³⁰ S II 17.21–24; CDB, 544.

³¹ D. J. Kalupahana 1999 [1991]: 1.

³² Despite the term *paṭipadā* has been used as a synonym for the term *magga*. Cf. .S V 421.32–422.1: “*idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā ariyasaccam || ayam eva ariyo atthaṅgiko maggo |* (Now this, O monks, is the truth of the Noble Ones which is the path leading to the cessation of suffering. This indeed is the Noble Eightfold Path).”

commentary emphasizes that the path is shown by the fruit. According to the sub-commentary, the fruit of *nibbāna* is called the ‘right path.’³³

The commentary further explains that the path is shown by the fruit of *nibbāna* when it begins with the statement; “with the cessation and fading away of ignorance without remainder, the cessation of volitional formations [come to be].” It means that there are no more karmic formations that propel any future rebirth. When this happens, a sentient being is free from *saṃsāra* and thus attains *nibbāna*.

If the right path (*sammāpaṭipadā*) here is an end or the fruit of *nibbāna*, then what is the practice that one needs to follow in order to realize this path or the fruit? In the *Nagara Sutta* (*Discourse of the City*), it is stated that the understanding of dependent origination or the causal genesis of the origination and cessation of suffering, can be realized by following the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*); that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.³⁴ Practicing and perfecting this Eightfold Path, which is also the fourth truth of the Noble Ones as expounded by the Buddha in his first sermon, would lead to the extinction of suffering, and the realization of the right path or *nibbāna*.³⁵

1.6 Summary

In brief, dependent origination consists of two paths, the right path and the wrong path. The right path leads to *nibbāna*, and the wrong path to *saṃsāra*. Even if one has achieved much progress in one’s spiritual training, for example, generating meritorious deeds, or attaining the different states of higher meditative absorptions, if the intention of these achievements is rooted in the desire for success within *saṃsāra*, then one would not escape from the cycle of rebirth. As such, it is the wrong path. However, if one’s practice is rooted in the aspiration for *nibbāna*, which breaks the cycle of rebirth, one will eventually gain the fruit of liberation, thus it is called the right path. As such, the purpose of the division of paths in the *Paṭipadā Sutta* is to elucidate that dependent origination consists of two paths and that should not to be confused.

³³ S-pt: “*evaṃ nibbānaphalā ayaṃ sammāpaṭipadā ti vuccati* (In this way, it is said that the “right path” is the fruit of *nibbāna*).”

³⁴ S II 106.19–37; CDB, 603.

³⁵ The *Dhammacakkavattana Sutta* (*Discourse of Setting the Motion the Wheel of Dharma*). See. S V 421.12–18. CDB, 1844.

2.0 Annotated translation

2.1 Methodology

Except for a few cases, I follow here, for the *Paṭipadā Sutta*, the Pali Text Society (PTS) edition of the *Samyutta Nikāya, Part II, Nidāna Vagga*, edited by Leon Feer in 1888. The Pāli commentarial text to the *Paṭipadā Sutta* is also taken from the PTS *Sārattha-ppakāsinī, Buddhaghosa's Commentary on the Samyutta Nikāya*, volume II, edited by F. L. Woodward in 1932. I have also consulted the online Burmese *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti* (Six Council) edition (CST4) published by the Vipassana Research Institute,³⁶ which contains some sentences which are absent in the PTS edition. Any changes will be indicated in the footnotes of the Pāli texts. However, punctuation or regularization of the spacing are changed silently.

The twelve-linked factors given in the *Paṭipadā Sutta* text of the PTS edition have been truncated (given as *peyyāla*) to avoid repetition of the same phrase from previous suttas. However, in order to show a complete formula here, I have restored the omission of the text by making reference to the complete formula from the previous sutta (*Desanā Sutta*, S II 1).³⁷

The annotated translation includes selected inputs from the Pāli sub-commentary (*ṭīkā*), taken from the *Nidānavagga-purāṇaṭīkā (Tatiyā Līnatthapakāsinī)* of the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti* edition (CST4).³⁸ It is abbreviated as S-pt in the footnotes. The tradition ascribes the authorship of the sub-commentary to Dhammapāla.³⁹

2.2 Approach to translation

I choose to translate the Pāli text into English as literally as possible while balancing this approach with standard English prose. Two sets of translation are provided here; one is the *Pāṭipadā Sutta*,

³⁶ As in <https://tipitaka.app/> (Accessed on 12 December 2021)

³⁷ In CST4, this sutta is called the *Paṭiccasamuppāda Sutta (Discourse of Dependent Origination)*. See S CST4 *Nidānavagga* 1.1.1.

³⁸ CST4 *Nidānavaggaṭīkā*, 1.1.3; There are two sets of sub-commentary to the *Samyuttanikāya*, one is collectively known as the *Līnatthapakāsinī*, and the other later one, is collectively known as the *Sāratthamañjūsā*. The sub-commentary approved and published by the Sixth Council (Chaṭṭha-saṅgāyana) for the *Samyuttanikāya* is the *Tatiyā Līnatthapakāsinī*. For more information on these two sets of sub-commentary, see Pecenko 2007.

³⁹ O. von Hinüber 1996: §357 at p.167

and the other one is its commentary, the *Paṭipadāsuttavaṇṇanā*. Obscure passages will be supplemented with further explanation in the footnotes including inputs from the sub-commentary.

3.0 Translations

3.1 *Paṭipadā Sutta (Discourse of the [Two] Paths)*

In Sāvatti.

‘O monks, I will teach you the wrong path and the right path. Listen and pay close attention to that [and] I shall speak.’

Then those monks replied to the Blessed One: ‘Yes, venerable sir.’

The Blessed One said this:

‘And what, O monks, is the wrong path? With ignorance as condition,⁴⁰ volitional formations [come to be];⁴¹ with volitional formations as condition, consciousness [comes to be]; with consciousness as condition, name-and-form [comes to be]; with name-and-form as condition, the six sense bases [come to be]; with the six sense bases as condition, contact [comes to be]; with contact as condition feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving [comes to be]; with craving as condition, clinging [comes to be]; with clinging as condition, existence [comes to be]; with existence as condition, birth [comes to be]; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair [come to be.] In this way, is the origin of the whole mass of suffering. This, O monks, is called the wrong path.’

‘And what, O monks, is the right path? With the cessation and fading away of ignorance without remainder, the cessation of volitional formations [comes to be]; with the cessation of volitional formations, the cessation of consciousness [comes to be]; with the cessation of consciousness, cessation of name-and-form [comes to be]; with the cessation of name-and-form, cessation of the six sense bases [come to be]; with the cessation of the six sense bases, the cessation of contact [comes to be]; with the cessation of contact, cessation of feeling [comes to be]; with the cessation of feeling, cessation of craving [comes to be]; with the cessation of craving, cessation

⁴⁰ Spk II 10.3–4: “*avijjā ca sā paccaya cā ti, avijjā-paccayo* (it is ignorance and it is a condition, thus it is ignorance-as-condition).” Cf. CDB 725, n. 1.

⁴¹ Spk II 10.4–5: “*tasmā avijjā-paccayā sankhārā sambhavanti ti* (therefore with ignorance, volitional formation comes to be).” Cf. CDB 725, n. 1.

of clinging [comes to be]; with the cessation of clinging, cessation of existence [comes to be]; with the cessation of existence, cessation of birth [comes to be]; with the cessation of birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair cease. In this way, is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. This, O monks, is called the right path.’ The third [*sutta*].

3.2 *Paṭipadāsuttavaṅṅanā* (Commentary to the *Paṭipadā Sutta*)

In the third [*sutta*]:

‘*The wrong path*’ means: this indeed is a path whereby no one gets out [of the cycle of rebirth].⁴²

[Question:]

However, is it not that [even] with ignorance as condition, there are also meritorious volitional formations as well as imperturbable volitional formations? [And] how is this [then] the wrong path?

[Answer:]

[The wrong path] has the nature of being the head of the cycle [of rebirth].⁴³ That head of the cycle is the entire part of the cycle for whoever has desired for the so-called the state of a being, even for one who has made progress [in the spiritual path,⁴⁴ like the one] who possesses the five supernormal powers, or who has won the eight attainments. That [path] which has the nature of the head of the cycle is indeed the wrong path.

On the other hand, all that which is rooted in breaking the cycle [of rebirth], [or] part of breaking the cycle, [just like] whoever has aspired for *nibbāna*, that which breaks the cycle, even makes

⁴² Cf. Th-a II 178.1: “*saṃsāra-cāraṅkato niyyānato niyyāniko* (‘*niyyāniko*’ is in terms of getting out from the prison of cycle of rebirth).”

⁴³ S-pt: “Because of being the head of the parts in the cycle [of rebirth] (*vaṭṭapakkhiyānaṃ uttamaṅgabhāvato*).”

⁴⁴ *Antamaso*, S-pt: “He speaks with reference to the superior limit from the inferior limit (regarding the spiritual progress of a being), (*antamaso ti ukkaṃsapariyantam sandhāya vadati avakaṃsapariyantato*).”

progress by [merely] giving⁴⁵ rice-gruel measuring a ladle or just a handful of leaves.⁴⁶ That which leads to break the cycle [of rebirth] is indeed the right path.

Let it be an act of a great wholesome [alms-]giving as that of Velāma, or a small act of wholesome [alms-]giving as a handful of vegetables, if one has desired for success within the cycle, he is placed wrongly on the account of being rooted in the cycle, he is certainly able to bring upon himself the cycle [of rebirth], and not breaking the cycle. On the other hand, if he is able to perform the act of giving, and through an aspiration to break the cycle in this way: ‘May this [act of] giving bring about the destruction of cankers for me,’ [then] he is caused to be placed rightly, on the account of breaking the cycle, either for *arahantship*, or for individual knowledge and understanding [of the true nature of experience], or for attaining omniscience.⁴⁷ Having not [yet] attained⁴⁸ *arahantship*, he goes for the final goal.⁴⁹

It should be understood that it is taught in this way: the wrong path, is on account of forward sequence (by way of origination), and the right path is on the account of reverse sequence (by way of cessation) [of dependent origination].⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Through the merit of giving. S-pt: "May this merit be the contributing cause for me to attain *nibbāna* (*idaṃ me puññaṃ nibbānādhiḡamāya paccayo hotu*)."

⁴⁶ S-pt: "The giving that measures a handful of vegetable leaves (*sākaṇṇamuṭṭhidānamattaṃ*)."

⁴⁷ The passage: "*appamattakampi hi...dātuṃ sakkoti yeva*" is absent in the PTS edition. This passage is also found in Mp I 56.10–17.

⁴⁸ The sub-commentary (S-pt) explains the word ‘having not attained’ (*appatvā*) as: "This description ‘having not attained (*appatvā*)’ has a causative sense in it, like the meaning ‘having not cause to attain (*apāpetvā*).’ It is said that at the moment *arahantship* is attained because of entering upon the path, from that moment it is said the path, which brings about that, is also attained. Therefore, it is said [the path] has not attained (*appatvā*) (*appatvā ti antogadhahetu esa niddeso, apāpetvā ti attho. yadaggena vā paṭipajjanato arahattaṃ patto ti vuccatī, tadaggena tadāvahā paṭipadā pi pattā ti vuccatī ti ‘appatvā ti vuttaṃ*)."

⁴⁹ Cf. A III 363.25, the final goal of a recluse (*samaṇa*) is *nibbāna* (*nibbānapariyosāna*).

⁵⁰ S-pt: "‘On the account of forward sequence’ is on the account of forward sequence of dependent origination. ‘On the account of reverse sequence’ is also the same sense here (*anulomavasenā ti anulomapaṭiccasamuppāda-vasena. paṭilomavasenā ti etthāpi es’eva nayo*)."

[Question:]

Is it not that the path which was asked⁵¹ here, is like a response answered with reference to the domain which is *nibbāna*?⁵² But the name [used here] is neither the “path of *nibbāna*,” nor the name of the four ways [to establish the foundations of mindfulness]⁵³ together with insight. Therefore, with [these kind of] responses to the questions, the division of phrases does not agree.

[Answer:]

No not at all. Why? Because the path⁵⁴ is shown by the fruit.⁵⁵

⁵¹ S-pt: “By this ‘*pucchita*’ (which was asked) means that which was initiated to point out the path (referring to the discussion above), this [word] is also a summarised meaning. Despite the meaning is holding on to such, it is for the fact that the question comes with the intention to teach (*pucchitā ti etena paṭipadā desetum āradhāti ayam pi attho saṅgahito yathāradhassa atthassa kathetukamyatāpucchāya idhāgatattā*).”

⁵² S-pt: “In this case, dependent origination is also expounded in a forward sequence, however, by way of the contrary, with the cessation of ignorance and the rest, when there is true knowledge, the non-arising of volitional formations come to be. In this way it is called ‘the domain that is *nibbāna* (*nibbānaṃ bhājitam*).’ However, because of its similarity, it has appeared even as a cycle [of rebirth] to him (the one who asks the earlier question). For he will say ‘it is said that [emergence of] the cycle and the breaking of the cycle is about the final goal (*nibbāna*).’ (*anulomapaṭiccasamuppādadesanāyampettha byatireka-mukhena avijjādinirodhā pana vijjāya sati hoti saṅkhārānaṃ asambhavoti vuttam “nibbānaṃ bhājita”nti. Sarūpena pana tāya vaṭṭameva pakāsitaṃ. Vakkhati hi pariyoṣāne “vaṭṭavivaṭṭameva kathita”nti*).”

⁵³ The four ways most probably refer to the contemplation to establish the four foundations of mindfulness as depicted in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*: “Monks, there is a direct path for the purification of being...for the realisation of *nibbāna*...namely the four foundations of mindfulness...here a monk abides contemplating body as body...feelings as feelings...mind as mind...mind objects as mind objects, ardent, fully aware and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world (Cf. MLD 145) (*ekāyano ayaṃ bhikkhave maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā...nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya, yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhāna...idha bhikkhave bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī...vedanāsu vedanānupassī...cittē cittānupassī...dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpi sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ*, M I 55.32–56.10).”

⁵⁴ S-pt: “The condition and the cause to obtain (*sampāpakahetu*); For it is like the threefold causes: ‘a cause that makes known’, ‘a cause that produces,’ and ‘what makes obtain.’ In the same way the threefold fruit is: ‘a fruit to be made known,’ ‘a fruit to be produced,’ and ‘a fruit to be obtained.’ Therefore, because the fruit to be gained is *nibbāna* has the following meaning: ‘because by *nibbāna*, the fruit to be obtained, the path, which is what makes obtain it, is seen. (*yathā hi tividho hetu nāpako, nibbattako, sampāpakoti, evaṃ tividhaṃ phalaṃ nāpetabbaṃ, nibbattetabbaṃ, sampāpetabbanti. tasmā pattabbaphalena nibbānena taṃ sampāpakahetubhūtāya paṭipadāya dassitattā ti attho*).”

⁵⁵ S-pt: “The fruit to be gained (*pattabbaphala*)”

Here, the path is shown in terms of the fruit: – ‘*With the cessation and fading away of ignorance without remainder, the cessation of volitional formations [comes to be].*’ In this way, the fruit, in terms of the path, is *nibbāna*, the cessation of volitional formations. In this case, it has a similar meaning as:– ‘*This, O monks, is called the right path.*’

Moreover, as for the meaning ‘*with the cessation and fading away without remainder*’: here ‘fading away (*virāga*) is definitely a synonym for cessation (*nirodha*).’ In this case, the inference is: by whatever means, either fading away or in terms of the path which is reckoned, the cessation without remainder comes to be. It is said that this division of the paths is to reveal that. Indeed when the path is divided as such,⁵⁶ it possesses magnificent power.⁵⁷ In this way also, the cycle and the breaking of the cycle [of rebirth] is spoken of⁵⁸ just as in the discourse.

4.0 Pāli Texts

Editorial symbols and abbreviations:

]	lemma
	<i>daṇḍa</i>
<i>em.</i>	emendation
<i>om.</i>	omitted in/absent in
DS _{PTS}	<i>Desanāsutta</i> of the <i>Nidānasamṃyutta</i> as found in S II 1–2
PS _{PTS}	<i>Paṭipadāsutta</i> of the <i>Nidānasamṃyutta</i> as found in S II 4–5
PS-a _{PTS}	<i>Paṭipadāsuttavaṇṇanā</i> of the <i>Nidānavaggavaṇṇanā</i> as found in Spk II 19
PS-a _{CST4}	<i>Paṭipadāsuttavaṇṇanā</i> of the <i>Nidānasamṃyutta-aṭṭhakathā</i> as found in S-a CST4 1.1.3
PTS	Pali Text Society

⁵⁶ S-pt: “With reference to *nibbāna* and the division of tracks in this way (*evaṃ padabhājanassa nibbānassa padatthe sati*).”

⁵⁷ S-pt: “The path is the cause of the cessation of ignorance without remainder, in that case, the divided [path] is that which possesses magnificent power due to the combined ability and superiority (*avijjāya asesanirodhahetupaṭipadā tattha sātisayasāmatthiyasamāyogato sānubhāvā vibhattā hoti*).”

⁵⁸ S-pt: “It is said that because of the division of the cycle also, herein, it is taken as the wrong path (*micchāpaṭipadāgahaṇenettha vaṭṭassapi vibhattattā vuttam*).”

4.1 Paṭipadāsutta

sāvattthiyam viharati || la ||

micchāpaṭipadañ ca vo bhikkhave desissāmi sammāpaṭipadañ ca || taṃ suñātha sādhukaṃ
manasikarotha bhāsissāmī ti || ||

evam bhante ti kho te bhikkhū bhagavato paccassosuṃ || || bhagavā etad avoca ||

katamā ca bhikkhave micchapāṭipadā || || avijjāpaccayā bhikkhave saṅkhārā ||
saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ || viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ || nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanaṃ
|| saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso || phassapaccayā vedanā || vedanāpaccayā taṇhā ||
taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ || upādānapaccayā bhavo || bhavapaccayā jāti || jātipaccayā
jarāmaraṇaṃ soka-parideva-dukkhadomanassupāyasā sambhavanti⁵⁹ || evam etassa kevalassa
dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hotī ti || ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave micchāpaṭipadā || ||

katamā ca bhikkhave sammāpaṭipadā || avijjāya tv eva asesavirāganirodhā saṅkhāranirodho ||
saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho || viññāṇanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho || nāmarūpanirodhā
saḷāyatananirodho || saḷāyatananirodhā phassanirodho || phassanirodhā vedanānirodho ||
vedanānirodhā taṇhānirodho || taṇhānirodhā upādānanirodho || upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho ||
bhavanirodhā jātīnirodho || jātīnirodhā jarāmaraṇaṃ soka-parideva-dukkha-domanāssupāyāsā
nirujjhanti || evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti || ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave
sammāpaṭipadā ti || || tatiyaṃ || ||

4.2 Paṭipadāsuttavaṇṇanā

tatiye: *micchāpaṭipadan* ti ayaṃ tāva aniyānika-paṭipadā. nanu ca avijjā-paccayā
puññābhisaṅkhāro pi atthi āneñjābhisaṅkhāro pi? so kathaṃ micchā-paṭipadā hotī ti.

vaṭṭa-sīsattā. yaṃ hi kiñci bhavattaya-saṅkhātaṃ vaṭṭaṃ patthetvā pavattitaṃ antamaso
pañcābhīññā aṭṭha vā pana samāpattiyo, sabbaṃ taṃ vaṭṭa-pakkhiyaṃ vaṭṭa-sīsan ti.

vaṭṭa-sīsattā micchā-paṭipadā va hoti.

⁵⁹ viññāṇapaccayā... sambhavanti [DS_{PTS}] om. PS_{PTS}. This passage also found in Mp I 56.10–17

yaṃ pana kiñci vivaṭṭaṃ nibbānaṃ patthetvā pavattitaṃ antamaso uḷuṅka-yāgu-matta-dānam pi paṇṇa-muṭṭhi-matta-dānam pi sabbaṃ taṃ vivaṭṭapakkiyaṃ vivaṭṭanissitaṃ,⁶⁰ vivaṭṭa-pakkhikattā sammā-paṭipadā va hoti.

appamattakampi hi paṇṇamuṭṭhimattadānakusalaṃ vā hotu mahantaṃ velāmadānādi-kusalaṃ vā, sace vaṭṭasampattiṃ patthetvā vaṭṭanissitavasena micchā ṭhapitaṃ hoti, vaṭṭam eva āharitaṃ sakkoti, no vivaṭṭaṃ. “idaṃ me dānaṃ āsavakkhayāvahaṃ hotū”ti evaṃ pana vivaṭṭaṃ patthentena vivaṭṭavasena sammā ṭhapitaṃ arahattaṃ pi paccekabodhi-ñāṇaṃ pi sabbaññutaññāṇaṃ pi dātuṃ sakkotiyeva,⁶¹ na arahattaṃ appatvā pariyoṣānaṃ gacchati.

iti anuloma-vasena micchā-paṭipadā, paṭiloma-vasena sammā-paṭipadā desitā ti veditabbā.

nanu c’ettha paṭipadā pucchitā⁶² nibbānaṃ bhājitaṃ, niyyātane pi paṭipadā va niyyātītā. na ca nibbānassa paṭipadā ti nāmaṃ, savipassanānaṃ pana catunnaṃ maggānaṃ etaṃ nāmaṃ. tasmā pucchā-niyyātanehi pada-bhājanaṃ na sametī ti.

no na sameti, kasmā? phalena paṭipadāya dassitattā.

phalena h’ettha paṭipadā dassitā:– *avijjāya tv eva asesavirāga-nirodhā saṅkhāra-nirodho* ti evaṃ nirodha-saṅkhātaṃ nibbānaṃ yassā paṭipadāya phalaṃ, *ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, sammā-paṭipadā* ti ayam ettha attho.

imasmiñ ca atthe asesavirāga-nirodhā ti: ettha virāgo nirodhass’eva vevacanaṃ. asesavirāgā asesavirāga-nirodhā ti ayaṃ h’ettha adhippāyo: yena vā virāgā saṅkhātena maggena asesavirāga-nirodho hoti, taṃ dassetuṃ etaṃ pada-bhājanaṃ vuttaṃ. evaṃ hi sati sānubhāvā paṭipadā vibhattā hoti. iti imasmim pi sutte vaṭṭavivaṭṭam eva⁶³ kathitaṃ ti.

⁶⁰ vivaṭṭapakkiyaṃ vivaṭṭanissitaṃ PS-ACST] om. PS-APTS

⁶¹ appamattakampi...sakkotiyeva PS-ACST] om. PS-APTS

⁶² pucchitā PS-ACST] pucchitvā PS-APTS

⁶³ vaṭṭavivaṭṭameva PS-ACST] vaṭṭam eva PS-APTS

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