

Additional Texts on Dependent Origination

Consciousness as a condition for name-and-form

From the Mahānidāna Sutta (Dīgha Nikāya sutta no. 15)

“How consciousness is a condition for name-and-form should be understood in this way: If consciousness does not descend into the mother’s womb, name-and-form would not take shape in the womb. If, after descending into the womb, consciousness departs, name-and-form would not be generated into this present state of being. If the consciousness of a young boy or girl is cut off, name-and-form would not grow up, develop, and reach maturity.”

Volitional formations as a condition for consciousness

From Saṃyutta Nikāya 12:39

“Monks, what one intends, and what one plans, and whatever one has a tendency towards: this becomes a basis for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is a basis, there is a support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is a descent of name-and-form. With name-and-form as condition, the six sense bases [come to be]; with the six sense bases as condition, contact; with contact as condition, feeling ... craving ... clinging ... existence ... 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....

“But, monks, when one does not intend, and one does not plan, and one does not have a tendency towards anything, no basis exists for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is no basis, there is no support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is unestablished and does not come to growth, there is no descent of name-and-form. With the cessation of name-and-form comes cessation of the six sense bases.... Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.”

From Saṃyutta Nikāya 12:51

“Monks, if a person immersed in ignorance generates a meritorious volitional formation, consciousness fares on to the meritorious; if he generates a demeritorious volitional formation, consciousness fares on to the demeritorious; if he generates an imperturbable volitional formation, consciousness fares on to the imperturbable. But when a monk has abandoned ignorance and aroused true knowledge, then, with the fading away of ignorance and the arising of true knowledge, he does not generate a meritorious volitional formation, or a demeritorious volitional formation, or an imperturbable volitional formation. Since he does not generate or fashion volitional formations, he does not cling to anything in the world. Not clinging, he is not agitated. Not being agitated, he personally attains Nibbāna. He understands: ‘Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being.’”

Ignorance, too, is conditioned

Anguttara Nikāya 10:61

“Monks, it is said: 'A first point of ignorance is not discerned such that before this there was no ignorance and afterwards it came into being.' Still, ignorance is seen to have a specific condition.

“I say, monks, that (1) ignorance has a nutriment; it is not devoid of a nutriment. And what is the nutriment for ignorance? It should be said: (2) the five hindrances. The five hindrances, too, I say, have a nutriment; they are not devoid of a nutriment. And what is the nutriment for the five hindrances? It should be said: (3) the three kinds of misconduct. The three kinds of misconduct, too, I say, have a nutriment; they are not devoid of a nutriment. And what is the nutriment for the three kinds of misconduct? It should be said: (4) non-restraint of the sense faculties. Non-restraint of the sense faculties, too, I say, has a nutriment; it is not devoid of a nutriment. And what is the nutriment for non-restraint of the sense faculties? It should be said: (5) lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension. Lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension, too, I say, has a nutriment; it is not devoid of a nutriment. And what is the nutriment for lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension? It should be said: (6) careless attention. Careless attention, too, I say, has a nutriment; it is not devoid of a nutriment. And what is the nutriment for careless attention? It should be said: (7) lack of faith. Lack of faith, too, I say, has a nutriment; it is not devoid of a nutriment. And what is the nutriment for lack of faith? It should be said: (8) hearing bad Dhamma. Hearing bad Dhamma, too, I say, has a nutriment; it is not devoid of a nutriment. And what is the nutriment for hearing bad Dhamma? It should be said: (9) associating with inferior persons.”