

10. Breaking the Cycle

The Buddha described another format for the cessation cycle of dependent origination. The initial part of this format begins with the standard origination cycle, from ignorance to the arising of suffering. From there, instead of describing the cessation cycle, it describes a connected process of wholesome qualities leading up to and ending with awakening. This is a completely new format which does not refer to the cessation of any of the factors in the origination cycle. This outline is an important example of applying the factors of the Path in a system of Dhamma practice; in other words it is a process that occurs for a person who successfully follows the Path and reaches perfect realization. The Buddha described this format for liberation on many occasions, with slight variations in detail:

Avijjā → *saṅkhārā* → *viññāṇa* → *nāma-rūpa* → *salāyatana* → *phassa* → *vedanā* → *taṇhā* → *upādāna* → *bhava* → *jāti* → **suffering (*dukkha*)** → faith (*saddhā*) → joy (*pāmojja*) → delight (*pīti*) → tranquillity (*passaddhi*) → happiness (*sukha*) → concentration (*samādhi*) → knowledge and vision according to reality (*yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana*) → disenchantment (*nibbidā*) → dispassion (*virāga*) → liberation (*vimutti*) → knowledge of the destruction of mental defilement (*khaya-ñāṇa*).¹

This process begins with ignorance until it reaches suffering (the word *dukkha* here replaces the terms *jarāmaraṇa* & *soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā*). But from this point, instead of linking with ignorance and resuming the cycle of origination, it proceeds in a wholesome, positive direction, with faith taking over from ignorance. It finally reaches knowledge of the destruction of the taints and does not link up with ignorance again. If one counts suffering as the pivotal factor, the number of factors both preceding and following suffering is identical.

This new outline can be divided into two parts: first, from ignorance to suffering, and second, from faith to knowledge of the destruction of the taints. In the second part, faith replaces ignorance as the initial factor. Referring back to an earlier section in this book, one can recognize that faith here is equivalent to a ‘disciplined’ or weakened form of ignorance. At this stage ignorance is no longer totally ‘blind,’ but is imbued with a grain of understanding, which sprouts as an aspiration to reach a virtuous goal and blossoms into true knowledge and complete liberation. [575]

In this instance, when the cycle has proceeded from ignorance and reached suffering, a person seeks an escape. If the person receives correct instruction or considers carefully the law of cause and effect, and he has gained confidence in goodness, then there will arise joy, contentment, and a determination to gradually advance in virtue until the end is reached.

¹ S. II. 31. *Virāga* can also be translated as ‘detachment.’ *Khaya-ñāṇa* = the attainment of arahantship.

The second part of the new outline is in fact the same as the standard cessation cycle of dependent origination (ignorance ceases → volitional formations cease → consciousness ceases, etc.). This new outline merely describes the prominent factors of the cycle in greater detail, and emphasizes the connection between the origination cycle and the cessation cycle.

In the Nettipakaraṇa² the following teaching by the Buddha is interpreted as a form of cessation cycle of dependent origination:

Virtuous conduct, Ānanda, has the benefit³ and reward of non-remorse....⁴ Non-remorse has the benefit and reward of joy.... Joy has the benefit and reward of delight.... Delight has the benefit and reward of tranquillity.... Tranquillity has the benefit and reward of happiness.... Happiness has the benefit and reward of concentration.... Concentration has the benefit and reward of knowledge and vision of things as they really are.... Knowledge and vision of things as they really are has the benefit and reward of disenchantment.... Disenchantment has the benefit and reward of dispassion.... Dispassion has the benefit and reward of the knowledge and vision of liberation.... In this way, Ānanda, virtuous conduct brings the succeeding qualities to perfection, for reaching step by step the fruit of arahantship.⁵

This teaching can be illustrated easily as follows:

Virtuous conduct → non-remorse → joy → delight → tranquillity → happiness → concentration → knowledge and vision of things as they really are → disenchantment → dispassion → knowledge and vision of liberation.

This process is almost identical to the outline above, except that it begins with moral conduct and non-remorse instead of faith, and it only describes the cessation cycle—it does not refer to the origin of suffering. It is fair to say, however, that the meanings of the two formats are essentially the same. The first format focuses on a situation where faith is the predominant factor, but when a person has faith—faith in virtue and confidence in the law of cause and effect—this state of mind is connected to conduct. Faith is supported by virtuous conduct and thus leads to gladness. [576] The second format focuses on conduct as the predominant factor. In this situation, the mind has a foundation of faith and confidence, which promotes virtuous conduct. Virtuous conduct leads to an untroubled mind—a person has self-confidence concerning his good actions. This self-confidence is an attribute of faith

² Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu, *The Guide*, P.T.S., 1962, p. 97.

³ *Attha*—purpose; result.

⁴ Alternatively, of an ‘untroubled mind.’

⁵ A. V. 311. The same passage occurs at A. V. 1-2, except that disenchantment and dispassion are combined as a single factor. Cf.: A. III. 19-20.

(*saddhā*), which also leads to gladness, the following factor. The final factors of the first format end with liberation and with knowledge of the destruction of the taints, while the second format ends with knowledge and vision of liberation. These two endings are identical in meaning; the second format combines liberation with knowledge of the destruction of the taints into a single factor.

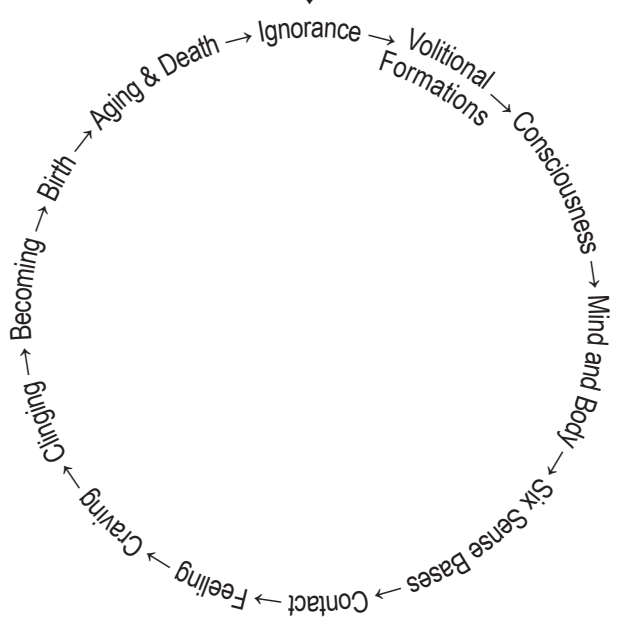
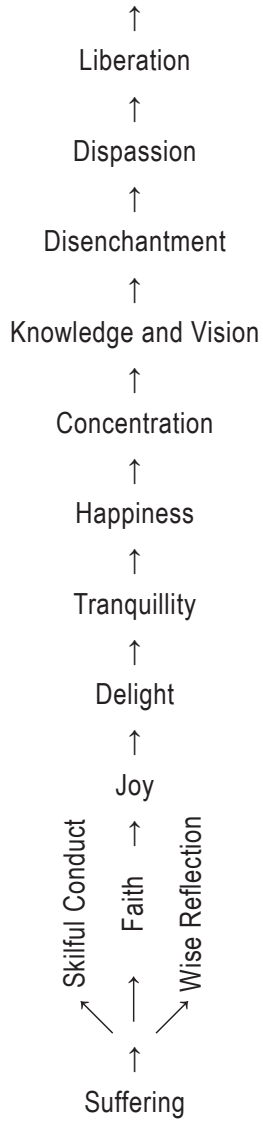
There is another outline similar to the one beginning with faith, but here faith is replaced by wise consideration (*yoniso-manasikāra*):

Wise consideration → joy → delight → tranquillity → happiness → concentration → knowledge and vision according to reality → disenchantment → dispassion → liberation.⁶

This teaching does not introduce a radically different idea; the process simply begins with a person's ability to analyze and to apply wisdom to investigate cause and effect. Instead of beginning with faith, which is equivalent to entrusting one's wisdom to someone or something else, the process begins with proper attention, which leads to an understanding of things as they truly are and to a bright and joyous mind. The subsequent factors are the same as in the preceding formats.

⁶ D. III. 288.

Destruction of Mental Defilements



These processes of cessation shed light on the path of practice and on the tasks required by human beings. However, they still lack sufficient details for a comprehensive practice; the question remains as to what is required to bring about and fulfil these cycles of cessation.

At this point, in order to gain a new perspective let us look at another format of Dependent Origination:

4. Nutriment of Ignorance

Monks, and ignorance too, I declare, is a specific condition. And due to its nutriment, it manifests. I declare:

- 1. Ignorance has its nutriment: the five hindrances.*
- 2. The five hindrances have their nutriment: the three ways of wrong conduct.*
- 3. The three ways of wrong conduct have their nutriment: lack of sense restraint.*
- 4. Lack of sense restraint has its nutriment: lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension.*
- 5. Lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension has its nutriment: improper attention.*
- 6. Improper attention has its nutriment: lack of faith.*
- 7. Lack of faith has its nutriment: not listening to the true teachings.*
- 8. Not listening to the true teachings has its nutriment: not associating with superior people. [577]*

When non-association with superior people prevails, not listening to the true teachings will prevail. When not listening to the true teachings prevails, it will make a lack of faith prevail... When the five hindrances prevail, they will make ignorance prevail. In this way, ignorance has its nutriment and becomes complete.⁷

2. Nutriment of Knowledge and Liberation

- 1. Supreme knowledge and liberation have their nutriment: the seven factors of enlightenment.*

⁷ A. V. 113-4.

2. *The seven factors of enlightenment have their nutriment: the four foundations of mindfulness.*
3. *The four foundations of mindfulness have their nutriment: the three ways of good conduct.*
4. *The three ways of good conduct have their nutriment: restraint of the senses.⁸*
5. *Restraint of the senses has its nutriment: mindfulness and clear comprehension.*
6. *Mindfulness and clear comprehension has its nutriment: wise reflection.*
7. *Wise reflection has its nutriment: faith.*
8. *Faith has its nutriment: listening to the true Dhamma.*
9. *Listening to the true Dhamma has its nutriment: association with superior people.*

When association with superior people prevails, it will make listening to the true Dhamma prevail. When listening to [and studying] the true Dhamma prevails, it will make faith prevail.... When the seven factors of enlightenment prevail, they will make supreme knowledge and liberation prevail. In this way, supreme knowledge and liberation have their nutriment and become complete.⁹

In this teaching two factors play a pivotal role: wise reflection (*yoniso-manasikāra*), which is the principle of Buddhist application of thought and is a key internal attribute; and association with superior persons (*sappurisa-saṃseva* = having a ‘beautiful friend’—*kalyāṇa-mitta*),* which reveals the importance of social factors and is a key external factor. Faith acts as the link between these two factors.† [578]

*Or ‘spiritual friend.’ This term refers to moral or spiritual beauty.

† This subject is discussed in chapter 17 of *Buddhadhamma*; as yet untranslated.

⁸ Restraint of the senses (*indriya-saṃvara*) does not mean sense deprivation—for example shutting one’s eyes to the world. At early stages of practice, it implies a degree of control over one’s responses to sense impressions, not allowing the mind to be overwhelmed by defilement. At higher levels of realization, in the case of one who has ‘developed the sense bases,’ it refers to mastery over sense impressions and an ability to control one’s responses according to one’s wishes. See the *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta*: M. III. 298-302.

⁹ A. V. 114-5.

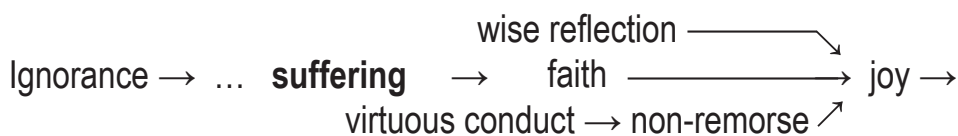
The various outlines of the cessation cycle mentioned above along with particular forms of practice can be summarized in the following way:

1. The cessation cycle and the path of practice:

Cessation cycle of Dependent Origination: ignorance ceases → volitional formations cease → consciousness ceases → ... birth ceases → aging and death cease → sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease = the cessation of suffering.

The Middle Way: right view + right intention + right speech + right action + right livelihood + right effort + right mindfulness + right concentration → cessation of suffering.

2. The cessation cycle explained as a process of wholesome qualities leading to liberation, in which suffering is the beginning point. This cycle proceeds in an opposite direction to the origination cycle of suffering:¹⁰



delight → tranquillity → happiness → concentration →

knowledge and vision according to reality → disenchantment →

dispassion → liberation → knowledge of the destruction of

mental defilement.

3. A gradual way of practice comprised of (subsidiary) factors of the Path. This way of practice is not an automatic causal process, but each step of this process acts as a support for the subsequent stages of practice. Here is an example of this outline:

Mutually sustaining qualities: association with superior people → listening to the true Dhamma → faith → wise reflection → mindfulness and clear comprehension → sense restraint → good conduct → foundations of mindfulness → factors of enlightenment → supreme knowledge and liberation.

The placement of Path factors into a way of practice (as shown above) can result in many different detailed stages of practice, corresponding to the specific

¹⁰ 'Liberation' & 'knowledge of the destruction of mental defilement' are equivalent to 'knowledge and vision of liberation.'

objective and emphasis of the compiler. However, the stages of practice generally conform to the framework and sequence of the Three Trainings (moral conduct, concentration, and wisdom),¹¹ which is a key principle in the application of the Path factors in Dhamma practice. Following is a brief summary of three further examples of this last outline of practice which are mentioned frequently in the scriptures. [579]

The Fulfilment of the Holy Life (*brahmacariya*):¹²

Moral conduct:

Encountering the Buddha → listening to the Dhamma →
 (= association with superior persons)
 faith → ('going forth' as a monk) → noble moral conduct +
 (the happiness of leading a faultless
 life—*anavajja-sukha*)

+ Concentration:

Restraint of the senses + mindfulness and clear comprehension +
 ('untarnished' happiness—
avyāseka-sukha)
 contentment (*santosa*) → (developing concentration in secluded
 places) → eliminating the hindrances → four *jhānas* →
 (joy—*pāmojja*) (the bliss of *jhāna*—
jhāna-sukha)

Wisdom:

Three kinds of supreme knowledge—*vijjā* (or the six kinds of direct knowledge—*abhiññā*; or the eight kinds of supreme knowledge) → liberation → knowledge of the destruction of the taints.

¹¹ Wisdom (*paññā*) = right view and right intention; moral conduct (*sīla*) = right speech, right action, and right livelihood; concentration (*samādhi*) = right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

¹² This way of practice is found frequently in the scriptures. It is referred to as the fulfilment of the holy life at: M. I. 521-22; and it is equivalent to the Three Trainings at: D. I. 206-9. According to this format, sense restraint is grouped under 'concentration,' but in later texts, e.g. Vism. 15-6 and [Comp. 55], it is grouped under moral conduct and is called the 'virtuous conduct of sense restraint' (*indriya-samvara-sīla*), where it is the second factor of the four 'modes of pure conduct' (*pārisuddhi-sīla*). On many occasions contentment is not mentioned. See also: D. I. 62-85; M. I. 178-84, 265-71, 344-9, 412; M. II. 38, 162-4, 226-7; A. II. 207-8; A. V. 203; Dhbk. 27.

Seven Kinds of Purity:¹³

Moral Conduct:

- 1) purity of moral conduct (*sīla-visuddhi*) = pure conduct in accord with a person's personal circumstances →

Concentration:

- 2) purity of mind (*citta-visuddhi*) = 'access concentration' and higher forms of concentration →

Wisdom:

- 3) purity of views (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*) = knowledge of mind-and-body →
- 4) purity of knowledge leading to the end of doubt (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*) = an understanding of Dependent Origination →
- 5) purity of knowledge regarding Path and not-path (*maggāmagga-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*) = encountering and going beyond the 'defilements of insight' (*vipassanūpakilesa*) →
- 6) purity of knowledge of the way of practice (*paṭipadā-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*) = 'insight knowledge' (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) →
- 7) purity of knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*) = 'Path knowledge' (*magga-ñāṇa*). [580]

Fifteen Modes of Conduct & the Three Kinds of Knowledge:¹⁴

Fifteen Modes of Conduct (= moral conduct & concentration):

'Practice of a trainee'—*sekha-paṭipadā*: perfect moral conduct (*sīla-sampadā*) (1) + sense restraint (2) + moderation in eating (*bhojane-mattaññutā*) (3) + practice of wakefulness (*jāgariyānuyoga*) (4) +

Seven essential qualities (*saddhammā*): faith (5); moral shame—*hiri* (6); fear of wrong-doing—*ottappa* (7); great learning—*bāhusacca* (8); energy—*viriya* (9); mindfulness—*sati* (10); and wisdom (11); + four jhānas (12-15) →

Three Kinds of Supreme Knowledge (= wisdom).

Occasionally the Buddha emphasized the development of wisdom, for example:

¹³ M. I. 149-50; the entire text of the Visuddhimagga. At D. III. 289, two more kinds of purity are added at the end: *paññā-visuddhi* and *vimutti-visuddhi*. The commentaries explain that these two refer to *arahatta-phala-paññā* and *arahatta-phala-vimutti*, respectively (DA. III. 1062).

¹⁴ D. I. 100; M. I. 354; Nd. II. 47.

Gradual Training (*anupubba-sikkhā*) or Gradual Practice (*anupubba-paṭipadā*):¹⁵ faith (in a teacher) → a person seeks out (the teacher) → he approaches (the teacher) → he is eager to listen (to the teacher) → he listens to the Dhamma → he memorizes the Dhamma → he examines the meaning of the teachings → he gains a reflective understanding of the teachings → enthusiasm → perseverance → a person examines the truth and gains a clear understanding → resolute effort → a person penetrates the truth with wisdom.

A well-known teaching that applies to daily life is the teaching on the ten ‘righteous ways of conduct’ (*dhamma-cariyā*),¹⁶ which are also known as the ten ‘wholesome ways of action’ (*kusala-kamma-patha*).¹⁷ In the Pali Canon these qualities are sometimes referred to as ‘noble qualities’ (*ariya-dhamma*).¹⁸ The commentaries refer to them as ‘human qualities’ (*manussa-dhamma*).¹⁹ This teaching is an example of applying the factors of the Path to Dhamma practice:

Righteous Ways of Conduct:

Moral Conduct:

Right Action: abstaining from injury to living creatures—*pāṇātipātā* (= mutual kindness and support) + abstaining from taking what is not freely given—*adinnādānā* (= respect for personal property) + abstaining from improper sexual relations—*kāmesumicchācārā* (= not violating cherished persons) +

Right Speech: abstaining from lying—*musāvādā* (= truthful speech) + abstaining from gossip—*pisuṇāya vācāya* (= harmonious speech) [581] + abstaining from harsh speech—*pharusāya vācāya* (= polite speech) + abstaining from frivolous speech—*samphappalāpā* (= reasoned, constructive speech) +

Wisdom:

Right Intention: non-covetousness (*anabhijjhā*) + non-aggression—*abyāpāda* (= loving-kindness) + Right View → happiness (*sugati*) → liberation (*vimutti*).

Some people may object that this process does not contain any factors related to concentration. Although the development of concentration is not emphasized,

¹⁵ M. I. 480; M. II. 174. The Pali terms for these factors are: *saddhā*, *upasaṅkamana*, *payirupāsana*, *sotāvadhāna*, *dhamma-savana*, *dhamma-dhāraṇā*, *atthupaparikkhā*, *dhamma-nijjhānakkhanti*, *chanda*, *ussāha*, *tulanā*, *padhāna*, *aññārāadhanā* (or *saccānubodhi*).

¹⁶ M. I. 287-8.

¹⁷ E.g.: A. V. 266; alternatively, ‘wholesome actions leading to a happy destination.’

¹⁸ A. V. 274; alternatively, ‘qualities leading to nobility.’

¹⁹ AA. I. 58; alternatively, ‘humanizing qualities.’

the factors related to concentration are included in this process, because right effort and right mindfulness are necessary factors when developing all the other factors of the Path.²⁰ This process applies to daily life, in which concentration does not yet need to be intensively developed. Right concentration is a part of this process, however, as it is integral to factors eight and nine: non-covetousness and non-aggression. Furthermore, from an internal perspective, the entire process of ‘righteous conduct’ is a preparation for the development and fulfilment of concentration.²¹

²⁰ M. III. 71-8. [The eightfold path is sometimes divided into three parts, corresponding to the threefold training: factors 3, 4 & 5 comprise the training in higher morality, factors 6, 7 & 8 (including right effort and right mindfulness) comprise the training in higher mentality (as a group they are sometimes referred to simply as *samādhi*), and factors 1 & 2 comprise the training in higher wisdom.]

²¹ The teaching on ‘righteous conduct’ emphasizes morality. An important Buddhist principle is that well-developed moral conduct is conducive to concentration. One attribute of coarse language is that it is an obstacle to concentration (*asamādhi-samvattanikā*), and an objective of polite speech is to act as a support for concentration. See: M. I. 286-7; M. III. 48; A. V. 265, 292-3; Dhs. 230; Vbh. 360.