

## Twelve Links of Dependent Arising (*Paṭicca-samuppāda*)

### Key Ideas

- Dependent Arising depicts the complex web of processes that perpetuate suffering and bind beings to the cycle of existence.
- There are twelve “factors”, each of which is considered a representative, significant causal condition for the succeeding factor (not a single sufficient cause):  
*“When this is, that is. From the arising of this comes the arising of that.”*  
 And, as all the conditioned processes and events are unstable and impermanent, so also:  
*“When this isn’t, that isn’t. From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that”*  
*(Middle Length Discourses Sutta 115, Many Kinds Of Elements)*
- The twelve links form a continuous chain of events with no specific beginning or ending.
- The process of conditioning is not necessarily a linear progression through the twelve links, but is a complex web of possibilities and interactions amongst causal factors.
- The traditional twelvefold formula below is the most representative one, but there are numerous canonical variations on it.
- The Buddha redefined the contemporary concept of action (*kamma*) as a particular kind of mentality—one’s act of will or intention (*cetanā*). This ethicized sense of *kamma* is fundamental to the doctrine of dependent arising, for the Pali texts portray *kamma* as the key conditioning factor in the causal chain (*Connected Discourses* II 65).

	Factors	Pali	Notes
1	Ignorance	<i>avijjā</i>	Ignorance refers to the absence of Right View (i.e. not realizing the Four Noble Truths).
2	Volitional Formations	<i>sankhāra</i>	Volition and intention shape states of body and mind and produce formations.
3	Consciousness	<i>viññāṇa</i>	The six classes of consciousness consist of consciousness associated with the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and intellect.
4	Materiality and Mentality	<i>nāmā rūpa</i>	The category of <i>nāmā rūpa</i> includes all material elements and mental factors.
5	Six sense media	<i>saḷāyatana</i>	This item highlights the material sensitivity of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and intellect.
6	Contact	<i>phassa</i>	Contact occurs with the meeting of a sense organ, object, and consciousness. It is characterized as touching, but does not require physical impact.
7	Feeling-Tone	<i>vedenā</i>	<i>Vedanā</i> may be pleasant, unpleasant or neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant (neutral). It is a basic feeling tone, not a complex sensation or emotion.

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	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Pali</b>	<b>Notes</b>
8	Craving	<i>taṇhā</i>	<i>Taṇhā</i> is literally translated as “thirst.” There are three kinds of craving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Craving for sensual pleasure</li> <li>2. Craving to assume an identity in a world of experience</li> <li>3. Craving for the end of an identity in a world of experience</li> </ol>
9	Clinging	<i>upādāna</i>	Clinging is the result of passion and delight focused on the five aggregates. Four kinds of clinging include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. clinging to sensual pleasures</li> <li>2. clinging to rituals and practices</li> <li>3. clinging to views and opinions</li> <li>4. clinging to the concept of self</li> </ol>
10	Becoming	<i>bhava</i>	Becoming refers to the force that is required for a new formation to arise. It is generated by action.
11	Birth	<i>jāti</i>	Birth occurs with the formation of an existence or identity. With birth, a formation is consigned to a particular state of existence.
12	Aging and death	<i>jarā-maraṇa</i>	Aging and death describe the dissolution of identity, vanishing of youth, decay, and ending of the formation in a particular state of existence.