
THE BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF
PAṬICCASAMUPPĀDA BASED
ON PĀLI MANUSCRIPTS:
GENESIS, MEANINGS,
ANNOTATED TRANSLATION,
INTERPRETATION AND
DOCTRINAL SIGNIFICANCE

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Introduction

The doctrine of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is considered a “central principle”¹ of the Buddha’s teachings². The Buddha acknowledged that the doctrine of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* appeared to him as an astonishing and eye-opening discovery that brought him vision, knowledge, wisdom and a deep understanding on the occasion of his enlightenment.³ In clarifying its doctrinal value along the path of awakening, the Buddha asserted that the realization of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is like the under-

¹ The phrase, “central principle” alludes to the depth of the doctrinal worth of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* based on Buddhist soteriology, i.e., *nibbāna*. The Buddha states that when one realizes the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, they can experience the bliss of *nibbāna*. For a detailed analysis, see M I 184.

² Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Great Discourse of Causation: The Mahānidāna Sutta and its Commentaries* (Kandy: Buddhist Publications Society, 1995), 1.

³ See S II 104.

standing of his “subtle and profound teachings”,⁴ i.e., the Dhamma.⁵ Because of its doctrinal prominence, the discourse of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is frequently found in the mainstream Pāli manuscripts from *Tipiṭaka*⁶. On the basis of canonical scriptures, scholars and Buddhist monks described the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* in various ways for thousands of years. The paper aims to clarify the genesis [or origin] of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* and its meaning, annotated translation, interpretation and doctrinal significance, based on the *Nikāya* manuscripts.⁷ Prior to academics and practitioners, an in-depth study of this research reveals why and to what degree the Pāli tradition values the thought of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* as articulating its insight into how to attain the path of ultimate liberation from a Buddhist perspective.

The Genesis of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

The Buddha stated that one of his quintessential teachings is the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*.⁸ Hence, it was expressed in various ways through-

⁴ In the Buddha’s teaching, the “subtle and profound teachings” are designated as the *Dhamma* in accordance with the Pāli Tradition, which is equivalent to *Dharma* in Sanskrit. According to Nyanatiloka, the four noble truths synthesize the *Dhamma*, the liberating law that the Buddha discovered and proclaimed. See the Venerable Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1960), 97. The four noble truths are expounded in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* from the *Dīgha Nikāya* as “subtle and profound teachings”. The Buddha asserted that he experienced enormous sorrow for innumerable rebirths as long as he did not understand the essence of the four noble truths. For a detailed analysis, see D II 91.

⁵ M I 184: *yo paṭiccasamuppādam passati. So dhammam passati. Yo dhammam passati. So paṭiccasamuppādam passati.*

⁶ *Tipiṭaka* is a Pāli or *Tripitaka* in Sanskrit, which means “Three Baskets”. The collections of the scriptures from the *Suttas*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* - the three divisions that constitute the Buddhist Canon - were originally preserved in the “three baskets” on palm-leaf manuscripts. See Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 459-462.

⁷ The *Nikāya* manuscripts allude to the subdivisions of the *Suttapiṭaka* (Basket of Discourses) in the Pāli canon. As shown by the *Tipiṭaka*, there are five *Nikāyas* (collections) of *suttā* (discourses), namely: *Dīgha Nikāya* (*The Long Discourses*); *Majjhima Nikāya* (*The Middle-length Discourses*); *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (*The Connected Discourses*); *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (*The Numerical Discourses*); and *Khuddaka Nikāya* (*The Minor Collection*). “Tipitaka: The Pali Canon”. Available online: <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/> (accessed on July 11, 2022).

⁸ Bodhi, *The Great Discourse of Causation: The Mahānidāna Sutta and its Commentaries*, 1.

out the *Tipiṭaka*. Inquiring into the Pāli manuscripts, we learn that the thought of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* appeared as a remarkable, stunning, and eye-opening discovery during the Buddha's inward journey along the way of his journey to awakening. He further clarified that the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* articulated itself to him as vision, knowledge, insight, understanding and light.⁹ According to the *Udāna*,¹⁰ we come to know about the three watches of the night during the Buddha's journey into awakening. Each night, the concept of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* was applied to observe in one of three different ways: forwarding, reversing and both forwarding-reversing orders.¹¹ Due to their applicability to understanding the process of life from its origins to eradication-from existence in *saṃsāra*¹² to attainment in *nibbāna*,¹³ – the three distinct formulas are recognized as the practical aspects of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*.¹⁴

Aside from its practical aspect, the abstract formula of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* was discovered during an insightful conversation that an *arahat*,¹⁵ Assaji Thera,¹⁶ had with Brahmin Upatissa, thereaf-

⁹ See S II 105.

¹⁰ The *Udāna*, the third manuscript of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* (the Minor collection), contains a rich collection of concise discourses, each of which culminates with a short verse spoken by the Buddha. The *Udāna* consists of eighty *suttā* (discourses) arranged into eight *vaggas* (chapters).

¹¹ See Ud 1-3.

¹² The Pāli word, *saṃsāra*, is frequently translated as “the cycle of life”. Nyanatiloka defines the term *saṃsāra* as “round of rebirth”. See Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, 297-298.

¹³ The Pāli term *nibbāna*, also known *nirvāṇa* in Sanskrit, translates as “blowing out” or “extinction”. See Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, 201. The goal of the Buddhist path is *nibbāna*, which is seen as the ultimate release from suffering in this existence. See Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013) 589-590.

In a Buddhist context, *nibbāna* could be defined as going beyond the “cycle of life” of *saṃsāra*. According to the *Ādittapariyāya Sutta* of *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, the Buddha stated that the whole world is in flames and the extinction of greed, hatred and delusions are the state of *nibbāna*. For a detailed analysis, see S IV 19-20.

¹⁴ Sanjoy Barua Chowdhury, “Unfolding Dependent Origination – A Psychological Analysis for Disclosing the Root of the Afflictive State of Mind”, *Journal of International Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 13 No.1 11-43 <http://www.ojs.mcu.ac.th/index.php/JIBS/article/view/6913/4529>

¹⁵ The Pāli phrase “arahat” designates people who have eradicated greed, hatred and delusion, and are free of all affiliations or cankers. See I. B. Horner, *Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected: A Study of the Arahān* (London: William and Norgate Ltd., 1936) 44.

¹⁶ Assaji Thera was one of the first five *arahats* of the Buddha. See S III 66, S IV 420.

ter known as Sāriputta.¹⁷ The Venerable Assaji responded when asked about the philosophy of his instructor that the Buddha defined both the origins of all things [of *dhammā*]¹⁸ and how to eradicate them.¹⁹ The abstract formula of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* exposes cause and effect, also known as the law of conditionality (*idappaccayatā*²⁰),²¹ which was found in a dialogue between the Buddha and his attendant, Ānanda.²² Since the teaching of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is positioned as a crucial discourse, it can be found in every *Nikāya* of Pāli manuscripts. Both the theoretical and practical aspects of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* are equally important prior to the methodology of Buddhist soteriology.

The Meanings of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

The Pāli word *Paṭiccasamuppāda*²³ is derived from a combination of two words: *paṭicca* and *samuppāda*. The first term *paṭicca* means “because of” or “on account of”, whereas the second word *samuppāda* refers to “arising on the ground of”, or “happening by way of cause”. Following the Pāli grammatical structure of *sandhi* (union), *samuppāda*

¹⁷ Sāriputta is one of the chief male disciples of the Buddha, together with Moggallāna. After hearing Assaji Thera’s presentation of the Buddha’s teaching, he proceeded to meet with the Blessed One and became his sincere student. See Nāṇaponika Thera and Hellmuth Hecter, *Great Disciples of the Buddha: Their Lives, Their Works and Their Legacy*, ed. Bhikkhu Bodhi (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003) 49-53.

¹⁸ In this regard, *dhammā* is denoted as the phenomenal object of things. See D II 290.

¹⁹ Vin I 40: *ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetuṃ teṣāṃ tathāgato hyavadat, teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha evaṃvādī mahāśramaṇaḥ*.

²⁰ The Pāli term *idappaccayatā* is analyzed by Bhikkhu Bodhi as a specific conditionality of the doctrine of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. He added that *idappaccayatā*, also referred to as the law of cause and effect, is the emergence of phenomena in dependence on specific conditions and circumstances. See Bodhi, *The Great Discourse of Causation: The Mahānidāna Sutta and its Commentaries*, 2.

²¹ M III 63: *imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti, imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati, imasmiṃ asati idaṃ ha hoti, imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati*.

²² Ānanda served as the Buddha’s primary attendant. According to the *Mahānidāna Sutta* of *Dīgha Nikāya*, we can find a conversation between the Buddha and Ānanda in which the Blessed One addressed how the doctrine of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is marvelous, astounding, eye-opening and deep to comprehend. In the same discourse, we further observe the Buddha’s admonishment to Ānanda while he mentions that the teaching of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* was easy and clear to understand. For a detailed analysis, see D II 55.

²³ See Vin II 96; S III 16; A III 406.

can be subdivided into two words: *saṅ* or *saṃ* and *uppāda* [*saṅ* (with) + *uppāda* (arising)].²⁴ Both the words *samuppāda* and *uppāda* imply “origin”, “arising”, “genesis”, “production” or “coming to be”.²⁵ Buddhaghosa²⁶ defines the term *Paṭiccasamuppāda* in terms of three words: *Paṭicca*, *sammā*, and *uppāda* [*Paṭicca* (having dependent) + *sammā* (a right) + *uppāda* (arising)].²⁷ According to Buddhaghosa, the Pāli word *Paṭiccasamuppāda* can be rendered as either “having dependent, a right arising” or “dependent on causes rightly by”.²⁸ Literally, the Pāli term *Paṭiccasamuppāda* can be translated into English as “Dependent Origination,” or “Dependent Arising”.²⁹ Peter Della Santina transliterated the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* as “Interdependent Origination” or “the chain of causation”.³⁰

Annotated Translation of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

The discourse of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, in both theoretical and practical formats, is found in a number of places in the Pāli manuscripts. The theoretical formula of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, also known as the law of conditionality (*idappaccayatā*), is articulated through the exposition of causes (*hetu*) and conditions (*paccaya*). Referring to the “Bahudhātuka

²⁴ *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is rendered in Sanskrit as *Pratītyasamutpāda*, which is also derived from the combination of two words: *pratītya* and *utpāda* [*pratītya* (dependent) + *utpāda* (origination)]. This Sanskrit translation is similar to the Pāli phrase and follows the same grammatical structure. See Chowdhury, “Unfolding Dependent Origination,” 6930.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Buddhaghosa was a commentator, translator and philosopher of Theravāda Buddhism. He is well known for his monumental book *Visuddhimagga* (*Path of Purification*), which was compiled around the 5th century. The translator of the *Visuddhimagga* (*Path of Purification*), Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu, stated that the *Visuddhimagga* is recognized as a masterpiece of world literature that methodically organizes and interprets the teachings of the Buddha found in the Pāli *Tiṭṭaka*. See Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification*, trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (Colombo: Samayawardana Printers, 2010) xxvii.

²⁷ Vism 574: *Keci pana paṭicca sammā ca tiṭṭhiyaparikappītapakatīpurisādīkāraṇanirapekko uppādo paṭiccasamuppādoti evaṃ uppādamattam paṭiccasamuppādoti vadanti.*

²⁸ Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga*, 533.

²⁹ Bodhi, *The Great Discourse of Causation: The Mahānidāna Sutta and its Commentaries*, 1.

³⁰ Peter Della Santina, *The Tree of enlightenment* (Taiwan: Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc., 1997) 119.

Sutta” of the *Majjhima Nikāya*,³¹ a conversation between the Buddha and Ānanda can be found, where the Blessed One³² introduces the law of causationality [or the theoretical formula of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*] as follows:

“When this exists, that comes to be; with this arising from this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases.”³³

On the other hand, the practical aspect of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* was presented through introducing twelfold links within two sequences of forwarding (*anuloma*) and reversing (*paṭiloma*) orders.³⁴ The twelfold linkage of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* are: (i) ignorance (*avijjā*), (ii) mental formations or fabrication (*saṅkhārā*), (iii) consciousness (*viññāṇa*), (iv) mentality and materiality (*nāmarūpa*), (v) sixfold sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), (vi) contact (*phassa*), (vii) feeling (*vedanā*), (viii) craving (*taṇhā*), (ix) clinging (*upādāna*), (x) becoming (*bhāva*), (xi) birth (*jāti*), and (xii) aging and death (*jarāmaraṇa*).³⁵ The discourse of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* in terms of practical aspects is translated into two sequences, with reference to the “Nidāna Vaggo” of *Saṃyutta Nikāya*,

I. Forwarding order (*anuloma*) of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*:

With the condition of ignorance, mental formations,³⁶ arise;

With the condition of mental formations, consciousness,³⁷ arises;

³¹ See M III 63.

³² The Blessed One is referred to the Buddha. See Vism 210.

³³ The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, trans. Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu; ed. Bhikkhu Bodhi (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995) 927.

³⁴ Ud 1-3; S II 25-26.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Bhikkhu Bodhi translates the Pāli term *saṅkhārā* as “volitional formation”. See Bodhi, *The Great Discourse of Causation: The Mahānidāna Sutta and its Commentaries*, 55.

A.P. Buddhadatta Mahāthera defines *saṅkhārā* as “mental coefficients”. See A.P. Buddhadatta Mahāthera, *Concise Pali-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1994) 225.

I. B. Honor renders *saṅkhārā* as “habitual tendencies”. See *Majjhima Nikāya: The Collection of the Middle Length Saying. Vol I*. Trans. I. B. Horner (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1995) 360.

³⁷ T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stade interpreted “mental quality” as “consciousness (*viññāṇa*)”. See T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stade, *Pali-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 2007) 618-619.

With the condition of consciousness, mentality and materiality arises;

With the condition of mentality and materiality, sixfold sense bases arise;

With the condition of sixfold sense bases, contact arises;

With the condition of contact, feelings arise;

With the condition of feeling, craving arises;

With the condition of craving, clinging arises;

With the condition of clinging, becoming arises;

With the condition of becoming, birth arises;

With the condition of birth, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair [come into play]. This is the genesis of all of this suffering [stress and dissatisfaction].³⁸

II. Reversing order (*patiloma*) of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*:

With the cessation of ignorance, mental formations cease;

With the cessation of mental formations, consciousness ceases;

With the cessation of consciousness, mentality and materiality cease;

With the cessation of mentality and materiality, sixfold sense bases cease;

With the cessation of the sixfold sense base, contact ceases;

With the cessation of contact, feeling ceases;

With the cessation of feeling, craving ceases;

With the cessation of craving, clinging ceases;

With the cessation of clinging, becoming ceases;

With the cessation of becoming, birth ceases;

In a study of Pāli literature, mental states [or consciousness] can be defined using four different terms, such as mentality (*nāma*), thought (*citta*), mind (*mano*) and consciousness (*viññāna*). See Sanjoy Barua Chowdhury, "The Process of Life in Dependent Origination: An Analysis Based on Buddhist Psychology", Ph.D. Dissertation (Ayutthaya: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2019) 51.

³⁸ S II 2: *Avijjāpaccayā bhikkhave, saṅkhārā. Saṅkhārapaccayā viññānaṃ. Viññānapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ. Nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanaṃ. Saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso. Phassapaccayā vedanā. Vedanāpaccayā taṅhā. Taṅhāpaccayā upādānaṃ. Upādānapaccayā bhavo. Bhavapaccayā jāti. Jātipaccayā jarāmaṇaṃ, sokaparidevadukkhadomanassūpāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti.*

Translation by the author of the article.

With the cessation of birth, ageing, and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair cease. This is the cessation of all this suffering [stress & dissatisfaction].³⁹

Interpretations of the Twelfefold Links of the Paṭiccasamuppāda

The Buddha's proposal of the twelfefold links and their active roles are delineated within the forward and reverse models of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. In addition to the work of Buddhist scholars, Buddhist scriptures provide detailed information on these twelfefold formulas. Based on the *Nikāya* manuscripts and scholars' views, Buddhist interpretations of the twelfefold formulas are as follows:

1. The first constituent of the cycle of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is ignorance (*avijjā*), which refers to "lacking knowledge or information".⁴⁰ The Buddha defines ignorance as the lack of knowing the four noble truths (*cattāri ariya saccāni*),⁴¹ namely suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the way to its cessation.⁴² Gethin defines "ignorance" as a positive misconception and not the mere absence of knowledge.⁴³ Based on the wisdom of the Pāli manuscripts, ignorance is defined as the foundation of all evil actions and wrong views,⁴⁴ along with the taproot of suffering (*dhakka*);⁴⁵ therefore, it stands first in the formula of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*.

³⁹ S II 4: *Avijjāya tveva asesavirāgaṇirodhā saṅkhāraṇirodho, saṅkhāraṇirodhā viññāṇaṇirodho, viññāṇaṇirodhā nāmarūpaṇirodho, nāmarūpaṇirodhā salāyatananirodho, salāyatananirodhā phassaṇirodho, phassaṇirodhā vedanāṇirodho, vedanāṇirodhā taṇhāṇirodho, taṇhāṇirodhā upādānaṇirodho, upādānaṇirodhā bhavaṇirodho, bhavaṇirodhā jātinirodho, jātinirodhā jarāmaṇaṇaṃ sokapariveda dukkhadomanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti*"ti.

Translation by the author of the article.

⁴⁰ "Oxford learner's Dictionary". Available online: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/ignorance?q=ignorance+> (accessed on July 13, 2022)

⁴¹ See D II 91.

⁴² See S II 4.

⁴³ Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 150.

⁴⁴ S V 1.

⁴⁵ See S II 2; S XII 4; D II 91.

2. The second link in the cycle of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is mental formation (*saṅkhārā*). Bhikkhu Bodhi translates the Pāli term *saṅkhārā* as “volitional formation”,⁴⁶ whereas A.P. Buddhadatta Mahāthera defines it as “mental coefficients”.⁴⁷ I. B. Honor renders *saṅkhārā* as “habitual tendencies”.⁴⁸ The Buddha acknowledges three kinds of volitional formations: bodily volitional formation, verbal volitional formation, and mental volitional formation.⁴⁹ In brief, the mental formation can be expressed as habitual tendencies [whether positive or negative] that lead the mind to attach to the aforementioned three actions. Based on the Buddha’s above exposition, Bhikkhu Bodhi asserts that the Buddhist concepts of *Kamma* (actions) and mental formation (*saṅkhārā*) are synonymous.⁵⁰
3. The third is consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which defines the mental quality.⁵¹ Inquiring in the *Nikāya* manuscripts, the words mentality (*nāma*), thought (*citta*), mind (*mano*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) are all used as synonyms for one another. According to Buddhist doctrine, the mind predominates over both wholesome and unwholesome actions.⁵² In this sense, consciousness is crucial to understanding how the mind generates phenomenal and physical actions. The Buddha classified consciousness into sixfold categories: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness.⁵³ However, the Buddhist teaching of consciousness offers the basis for a comprehensive understanding of

⁴⁶ Bodhi, *The Great Discourse of Causation: The Mahānidāna Sutta and its Commentaries*, 55.

⁴⁷ A.P. Buddhadatta Mahāthera, *Concise Pali-English Dictionary*, 225.

⁴⁸ *Majjhima Nikāya: The Collection of the Middle Length Saying. Vol 1*. Trans. I. B. Horner, 360.

⁴⁹ See S II 4.

⁵⁰ *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, Vols 2, trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000) 45-47.

⁵¹ T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stade, *Pali-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 2007) 618-619.

⁵² Dhṛp 1-2: *Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā; Manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhāsati vā karoti vā*.

⁵³ See S II 4.

mental states, whether wholesome or unwholesome. Bhikkhu Bodhi signifies the appearance of consciousness as follows:

“Consciousness appears as an enduring subject due to a lack of attention. When it is mindfully examined, the appearance of lastingness is dissolved by the perception of its impermanence.”⁵⁴

Additionally, Buddhist scripture clarifies that consciousness and wisdom are inseparable and precisely states that wisdom cannot flourish alone without an awareness of consciousness.⁵⁵ The Buddhist interpretation of consciousness reveals a clear notion of the role of the mind and its various directions [or mental concomitants].

4. Mentality and materiality (*nāma-rūpa*) are listed as the fourth link together. According to Buddha, mentality (*nāma*) is precisely correlated to feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetana*), contact (*phassa*) and attention (*manasikāro*), while form or materiality (*rūpa*) derives from the four great elements (*mahābhūtānaṃ upādāyarūpaṃ*).⁵⁶ The Venerable Buddhaghosa, in *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, affirms that when mentality and materiality (*nāma-rūpa*) are connected to the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), mentality (*nāma*) is correlated with the three aggregates of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*) and mental formation (*saṅkhāra*), whereas materiality is signified with the aggregate of material form (*rūpa*).⁵⁷
5. The fifth link in the cycle of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), which define the six sense organs, including the eye base (*cakkhāyatana*), the ear base (*sotāyatana*), the nose base (*ghānāyatana*), the tongue base (*jivhātana*), the body base (*kāyāyatana*) and the mind base (*manāyatana*).⁵⁸ Inquiring into the *Nikāya* manuscripts, the six sense doors are operated by the

⁵⁴ Bodhi, *The Great Discourse of Causation: The Mahānidāna Sutta and its Commentaries*, 27.

⁵⁵ J. Allam Hobson, “Normal and Abnormal States of Consciousness” in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, ed. Max Velmans and Susan Schneider (Oxford & MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2007) 101.

⁵⁶ S II 3.

⁵⁷ See “Paññā-bhūmi-niddesa”, *Vism* Ch. XVII.

⁵⁸ S II 3.

mind base.⁵⁹ In fact, the mind is the key term for noticing responses from the bodily organs.⁶⁰

6. The sixth link of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is contact (*phassa*), as it results from the interaction between mentality (*nāma*) and materiality (*rūpa*).⁶¹ Rhys Davids and William Stede define contact (*phassa*) as the fundamental fact in the sense of impression.⁶² Inquiring into the *Nikāya* manuscripts, Mahākaccāna⁶³ expresses contact as follows:

“Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact.”⁶⁴

The aforesaid statement clearly indicates the crucial significance of consciousness in the process of the mentality and materiality mechanism. The Buddha classified contact into six ways : eye-contact (*cakkhusampasso*), ear-contact (*sotasamphasso*), nose-contact (*ghāṇasamphasso*), tongue-contact (*jivhāsamphasso*), body-contact (*kāyasamphasso*) and mind-contact (*manosamphasso*).⁶⁵

7. The seventh link is feeling (*vedanā*). Interpreting the cycle of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, feeling is distinguished into six aspects: feeling born of eye-contact (*cakkhusamphassajā*), feeling born of ear-contact (*sotasamphassajā*), feeling born of nose-contact (*ghāṇasamphassajā*), feeling born of tongue-contact (*jivhāsamphassajā*), feeling born of body-contact (*kāyasamphassajā*) and feeling born of mind-contact (*manosamphassajā*).⁶⁶

8. The eighth formula is craving (*taṇhā*), which is also denoted as one of the chief roots of suffering.⁶⁷ Buddhist scripture makes

⁵⁹ See Dhp 1-2.

⁶⁰ See M I 108.

⁶¹ Sn 170: *Nāmañca rūpañca paṭicca phassā; icchānidānāni pariggahāni, icchāya'santya- na mamattamatthi, rūpe vibhute na phusanti phassā.*

⁶² T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, *Pali-English Dictionary*, 478.

⁶³ Mahākaccāna is recognized as one of the skilled and versatile teachers of eighty outstanding disciples of the Buddha in accordance with the *Nikāya* manuscripts. For a detailed investigation, See Thag 494-501.

⁶⁴ M I 111: *Cakkhuñcāvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuviññāṇam. Tīṇaṃ saṅgati phasso.*

⁶⁵ See S II 3.

⁶⁶ See S II 3; M I 396; S III 226.

⁶⁷ See Dhp 334-359.

it clear that craving rules the world.⁶⁸ In the discourse of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, the Buddha expounds upon six classes of craving: craving for forms (*rūpatanḥā*), craving for sounds (*saddatanḥā*), craving for smells (*gandhatanḥā*), craving for tastes (*rasatanḥā*), craving for tactile objects (*phoṭṭhabbatanḥā*) and craving for mental phenomena (*dhammatanḥā*).⁶⁹

9. The ninth constituent, clinging (*upādāna*), is commonly referred to as grasping.⁷⁰ The Blessed One expounds on four kinds of clinging: clinging to sensual pleasures (*kāmūpadāna*), clinging to views (*ditṭhūpadāna*), clinging to rules and vows (*silabbatūpadāna*), and clinging to a doctrine of self (*attavādūpadāna*).⁷¹ In addition, the process of clinging has a strong bond with the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandho*). Therefore, on the basis of the aggregates, the Blessed One classified clinging-aggregates into five aspects: form as a clinging-aggregate (*rūpūpadākkhandho*), feeling as a clinging-aggregate (*vedanūpadākkhandho*), perception as a clinging-aggregate (*saññūpadākkhandho*), fabrication as a clinging-aggregate (*saṅkhārūpadākkhandho*) and consciousness (*viññānūpadākkhandho*) as a clinging-aggregate.⁷²
10. The tenth link of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is the existence or becoming (*bhāva*), which refers to the sensual characteristics of the body.⁷³ The Buddha describes its threefold existences: sense-sphere existence (*kāmahavo*), form-sphere existence (*rūpabhavo*) and formless-sphere existence (*arūpabhavo*).⁷⁴
11. The eleventh link is birth (*jāti*), which comprises the entire embryonic process beginning with conception and ending with parturition.⁷⁵ The Blessed One expounds upon birth as follows:

⁶⁸ M II 54: *ūno lko atitto tanhādāso*.

⁶⁹ See S II 3; A II 211; M I 256.

⁷⁰ Nyanatiloka. *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, ed. Nyanaponika (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2004) 184.

⁷¹ See S II 3.

⁷² M III 15.

⁷³ Nyanatiloka. *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, 31.

⁷⁴ See S II 3.

⁷⁵ Nyanatiloka. *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, 69.

“The birth of the various beings into various orders of beings, they are being born, descend into production, the manifestation of the aggregates, the obtaining of the sense bases.”⁷⁶

12. The twelfth constituent is ageing and death (*jarāmarana*). According to the discourse of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, the Blessed One explained that ageing (*jarā*) refers to a being’s old age, brokenness, greyness, wrinkling, decline of vitality, and degeneration of the faculties, whereas death (*marana*) refers to a being’s deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, mortality, death, completion of time, breaking up of the aggregates and casting off of the body.⁷⁷

The Doctrinal Significance of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

Despite the fact that the four noble truths (*cattāri ariyasaccāni*) are regarded as the Buddha’s awakening discovery, the concept of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is the methodological approach to how to end suffering along the path to ultimate freedom. The four noble truths and the concept of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* are integral to each other because the principal object of both doctrines is to clarify the taproot and cessation of suffering, i.e., *dukkha*.⁷⁸ According to the Buddha’s first discourse, “Setting the Well of Dhamma in Motion”, the four noble truths⁷⁹ are expounded as follows:

1. The first noble truth is suffering, which includes birth, ageing, illness, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.
2. The second truth is the origin of suffering, which is defined as clinging that leads to further becoming within the cycle of *saṃsāra*.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ See S II 3.

⁷⁸ Despite the Pāli term, *dukkha* is commonly translated as suffering or dissatisfaction, its intricate meaning makes it difficult to convey in English. According to the discourse of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, the Buddha mentioned eight types of suffering, including birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. See S II 3-4.

⁷⁹ See S V 420.

The discourse mentioned three kinds of craving: craving for sensual pleasure, craving for existence, and craving for non-becoming.⁸⁰

3. The third noble truth is the cessation of suffering that can be acquired by abandoning craving.⁸¹
4. The fourth noble truth is the path leading to the cessation of suffering. Here, the path refers to the noble eightfold path.⁸²

As per the above description, the four noble truths can be divided into two groups: (I) the first two are grouped together as suffering and its origin, and (II) the final two are placed in a separate category as the end of suffering and the path to ceasing the suffering. Both groups explicitly demonstrated the Buddhist soteriological approach, which is methodologically articulated in the two sequences of forwarding (*anuloma*) and reversing (*paṭiloma*) orders in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. Practical aspects of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* clarify its connection with the four noble truths as follows:

1. Forwarding (*anuloma*) of the twelvefold constituents of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*: Ignorance (*avijjā*) → Volitional formation (*saṅkhāra*) → Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) → Mentality and materiality (*nāma-rūpa*) → Six sense bases (*salāyatana*) → Contact (*phassa*) → Feeling (*vedanā*) → Craving (*taṇhā*) → Clinging (*upādāna*) → Becoming (*bhāva*) → Birth (*jāti*) → Aging and Death (*jarāmarana*) → ... Sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*) and despair (*upayasa*) = The origin of suffering (*dukkha samudaya*) = the first and second noble truths.
2. Reversing the order (*paṭiloma*) of the twelvefold constituents of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*: Ignorance (*avijjā*) ceases → Volitional formation (*saṅkhāra*) ceases → Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) ceases → Mentality and materiality (*nāma-rūpa*) ceases → Six sense bases (*salāyatana*) ceases → Contact (*phassa*) ceases → Feeling (*vedanā*) ceases → Craving (*taṇhā*) ceases → clinging (*upādāna*)

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ See A II 211; M I 256; S III 227; S v 420.

⁸² The noble eightfold path includes the right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. For a detailed investigation of the noble eightfold path, see A I 178; D II 72; M I 299; S II 104.

ceases → Becoming (*bhāva*) ceases → Birth (*jāti*) ceases → Aging and Death (*jarāmarana*) ceases → ... Sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*) and despair (*upaya-sa*) cease = The cessation of suffering (*dukkha nirodha*) = the third and fourth noble truths.

Based on the notes mentioned above, if the realization of the four noble truths is considered to be the ultimate goal for seekers and devotees, the doctrine of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is applied as the methodology of Buddhist soteriology, i.e., *nibbāna*.

Conclusion

The concept of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* describes the vision of life through demonstrating twelvefold links – from birth to death. Examining the depth of every link brings an explicit notion that everything is interconnected and inseparable, i.e., nothing exists independently of its cause and condition. The causal relationships of the law of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* assert that the process of life and its motion are a part of the chains of twelvefold links. The Buddha's teaching of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* clearly outlines the taproot of suffering and its path to cessation. The doctrinal and scriptural study of this paper clarifies the connection between the concept of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* and the four noble truths. If realizing the four noble truths is considered to be the ultimate aim for seekers and followers, the understanding of the doctrine of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* – also known as the attainment of *nibbāna* – is applied as the Buddhist soteriological methodology.

We can conclude from the discussion in the scripturally based research paper that the doctrine of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is unquestionably the most profound, distinctive and dynamic yet subtle teaching in Buddhist doctrine. By providing a landscape of its historical genesis, explicit meaning, annotated tradition, interpretation and doctrinal significance, the discourse of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* can be considered the pivotal Buddhist teachings that succinctly articulate the path of ultimate liberation. The Buddha's objective was to present the teaching of the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* to delineate clear steps and motions of life from womb to tomb, in addition to seeking out the taproot of suffering and

the method to vanquish it. The concept of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is valued for the teaching of the Buddhist method of eradicating *dukkha* as well as directions for an ethical life, which is how its doctrinal relevance and significance are expressed.

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Abbreviations

A	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
D	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
M	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
S	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya</i>
Thag	<i>Theragāthā</i>
Ud	<i>Udāna</i>
Vin	<i>Vinaya-piṭaka</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>

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