

Dependent Origination and Rebirth

Just as the flame of an oil lamp depend upon the wick and the oil for its existence , so rebirth and suffering occur dependent on an impure mind and actions (karma).

The mind is impure so long as it is not free from ignorance, craving and clinging. Ignorance is failing to see thing as they really are. Out of ignorance, people crave for pleasant experience arise, they cling to them. They fail to understand that pleasant experience such as wealth, friendship, youth and even life, are impermanent. All these will eventually slip through their fingers like a handful of sand.

As a result of an impure mind, people commit unwholesome acts to obtain the things they crave for and soon become used to acting in the same way. If some people find that they can obtain what they want by dishonest means on one occasion, they may be tempted to do it again on future occasions. Eventually, dishonesty becomes a habit. However, other may find that they can succeed by hard work. As a result, they are encouraged to work hard at each task and hard work becomes a habit for them.

In the same way, other habits are formed and become part of the personality. When people come face to face with a new situation, they will respond to it in their accustomed way and so reinforce their habits. At death, an impure mind with its habitual actions becomes the cause of a person's rebirth just as the seed which is supplied with soil, moisture, air and sunlight, is the cause of a sprout. So long as people's minds are not freed from ignorance, craving and clinging, they will continue to act in their accustomed way, and so long as they act in this way, they will be reborn.

Rebirth is suffering because experience conditioned by ignorance, craving and cling is never satisfactory. Even the pleasant experience which people crave for and cling to, are impermanent. Consequently, people experience the suffering of loss, ageing, death, sorrow and grief.

To end rebirth and suffering, people need to purify their minds of ignorance, craving and clinging. When they have freed their minds of impurities, action (karma) will not take place. Then rebirth and suffering will also cease and freedom from the cycle of birth and death is achieved.

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1. Ignorance is the condition for karmic activity;
2. Karmic activity is the condition for consciousness;
3. Consciousness is the condition for the name and form;
4. Name and form is the condition for the six sense organs;
5. Six sense organs are the condition for contact;
6. Contact is the condition for feeling;
7. Feeling is the condition for emotional love/craving;
8. Emotional love/craving is the condition for grasping;
9. Grasping is the condition for existing;
10. Existing is the condition for birth;
11. Birth is the condition for old age and death;
12. Old age and death is the condition for ignorance; back to (1) and the cycle continues...