

Translator's note.

This is the first draft translation of a section of Clear Words, composed by Chandrakirti, one of the most important works of the Middle Way corpus of commentaries from the Indian Masters of Nalanda tradition.

These teachings are the first of a series dedicated to the works of Indian Masters, the initial topic treated within the wider spectrum of a program called Thought Education and Emotional Hygiene.

This program, created by the Education and Translation team of Lama Tzong Khapa Institute, is currently developed and promoted in collaboration with Wisdom Publication.

I must acknowledge the kindness of Gen Ngawang Sangye of Sera Je and Ken Rinpoche Losang Samten, abbot of Drepung Loseling for answering my questions, and my friend Atisha Mathur of the Dialectic School in Dharamsala, for reading the draft and correcting many of the difficult points.

Wisdom Publication will publish the translation of the four chapters with Rinpoche's commentary, at the end of teachings.

This draft is not for public distribution but intended for the use of students attending Serkong Rinpoche's teachings "Dependent Arising and Emptiness".

Fabrizio Pallotti
Senior Translator Manjusri Lotsawa at ILTK

དབུ་མ་རྩ་བའི་འགྲེལ་བཟོག་གསལ་ལ།
རབ་བྱེད་ཉེར་དྲུག་པ།
སྲིད་པའི་ཡན་ལག་བརྟན་པ།

CLEAR WORDS

BY CHANDRAKIRTI

COMMENTARY TO THE ROOT OF MADHYAMIKA
CALLED WISDOM
OF
NAGARJUNA

Chapter 26

THE ANALYSIS OF THE TWELVE BRANCHES OF EXISTENCE

Chapter 26

The analysis of the twelve branches of existence

Everything that arises by dependent relation
Has been explained as emptiness.
That, is designated in dependence and
This is the Middle Way

This verse indicate that what is called emptiness is explained as arising by dependent relation. In the same way, the following:

He who sees arising by
Dependent relation sees
Suffering and origin,
Cessation and the path itself.

Since is necessary to understand arising by dependent relation, its branches are analyzed in detail with these words:

*1. Because ignorance obstructing, one is reborn.
What forms¹ has three aspects
And formative actions
Keep migration going.*

Ignorance is not knowing, an obscuration **obstructing** reality as it is. The meaning of **one is reborn** is those person covered by the obstruction of ignorance are reborn because they **form** rebirth thorough intention, virtues and the other, that is, they produce. Formations, since they induce rebirth, are **formative** and are of three types: virtues, not virtues and immovable. Or, those of body, speech and mind.

Since the person is obscured by ignorance, he performs three types of formations whose characteristic is action. Because they form, **formative actions** are called action. These are the causes that **keep the migration** of beings **going**.

*2. Consciousness endowed with formative condition²,
Enters in the migrators*

A person accumulates by performing formative actions. His consciousness **endowed with formative causes**, the unfortunate samsaric seeds, **enters** devas and so on in accordance with formative actions of the migrator. To enter means to be born. Afterwards:

After consciousness has entered

¹ Tibetan du byed, is translated as what forms. Usually is translated as action or karma.

² Tibetan rkyen can or rgyu can possessing condition or cause, is a term equivalent with result. Therefore consciousness in the content of the 12 branches is a result of formations.

Name and form occur.

Here it is called **name** because being affected by actions and afflictions, leads to the place of birth. Or, the four aggregates that are not form are called name because of rushing after objects. The term *form* indicates that it is perishable, or damageable. This form and the previous name, because it rushes after, together are **name and form**.

Here, in the last moment of death, as with a form and its reflection, the interruption of the aggregates of this life and the production of the aggregates of the next rebirth, in accordance with the projecting actions, occurs in the very same moment, like one arm of a scale raising as the other lowers. Then, in the womb of the mother, with the mind in a state of unconsciousness, **name and form** possessing the condition of consciousness³ **occur**. If the migrator's mind does not fall into the state of unconsciousness, at that moment name and form do not take place. "Ananda, if the consciousness does not enter the mother's womb, the nur nur⁴ cannot develop and happen either." Therefore:

3. Once name and form occur

The six sources arise

Because it produces the birth of suffering, the gateways that naturally give rise to [it], **the six sources** that possess the cause of **name and form**⁵ are produced: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. In the context of eyes seeing forms, joy arises and attachment is created and so on, the six sources are the gateway to suffering. So, after the production of the six sources:

And depending on the six sources

Actual contact arises.

In order to show what is actual contact and how is produced:

4. It is produced only depending

On eye, form and thought.

Therefore, in dependence of name and form,

Consciousness arises.

5. Eye, form and consciousness

The union of these three

is the contact..

With reference to **eye, forms and thought**: mental attention, object and so on, which are different, depending on the immediately preceding condition which is concomitant, become seeds for consciousness, producing the eye consciousness. The eye and the source of form are form. The four aggregates characterized by thought are name. Therefore, depending on these three, eye consciousness is produced. They are produced in dependence upon name and form. Therefore, when the three, the sensory

³ They are the result of consciousness

.

⁴ Stages of fetus formation

⁵ the result of name and form

power, the object and consciousness converge, this immediate condition of mutual benefit is the characteristic that defines contact. Afterwards:

*...from contact
All feelings arise.*

Feelings are the experience of an object pleasant, unpleasant or neither of these two due to a knower experiencing its object. These feelings are of happiness, suffering and neither happiness nor suffering.

Just as this is called feeling, depending on contact that is characterized by the convergence of the three, form, consciousness and eye, one should know that also the remaining⁶, characterized by possessing the causes of the contact, occur for the convergence of the three: sense organ, object and consciousness.

Afterwards:

6. With the condition of feelings, craving.

This follows after the above (passage) *all feelings arise*. **Craving** occurs **with the condition of feelings**. But what object possessor is this craving? Is the object possessor of feelings. Why? Because endowed with craving, for the sake of feelings, becomes attached. Seeking that feeling, manifest desire is born. In what way? In the case of the onset of a pleasant sensation, because wishing not to be separated from it, one becomes attached. When suffering arises at that moment the attachment of wanting to separate oneself from it arises. Or, in the absence of production of happiness or suffering, one develops attachment for that state not to end.

Therefore:

*Craving arises for the sake of feelings
And with craving, appropriation
The four aspects are completely appropriated.*

Desire, that is strong craving to feelings, possesses the condition of craving, the cause for the increase of (formative) actions, completely conceives the four types (of appropriations): desire, view, morality and conduct, and expounding a self. These, by being the condition of existence, are appropriation.

Afterwards:

*7. If appropriation is present, the appropriator's
Existence fully arises.
So, without appropriation
One is free and existence will not happen.*

8. With that existence, also the five aggregates

The appropriator of the four types of **appropriation** just mentioned, the one conceiving, arises. The **existence** of this **appropriator** occurs because of the condition

⁶ Sense consciousness, from ear to body sense consciousness.

of appropriation. Why? If the appropriator doesn't generate craving and due to the strength of individual discrimination doesn't get involved with craving to have them, abandons the four types of appropriation. After having manifested the stainless transcendental wisdom one eliminates appropriation thus achieving freedom. At that moment **existence will not happen**.

What is existence then? **That existence is also the five aggregates**. That which completely arises from appropriation is understood also of being in the nature of the five aggregates. It is called existence because the five aggregates arise from the maturation of the three types of actions of body, speech and mind.

The actions of body and speech are in the nature of the aggregate of form, the actions of mind are in the nature of the five aggregates. In this way, it should be understood that the five aggregates are existence.

From that existence birth occurs

The future emergence of aggregates is **birth**, which fully arises **from existence**. Afterwards:

*Old age, death, sorrow and
Suffering with crying.*

*9. Anguish and agitation
These are from birth.*

With birth, which is the cause, **old age** and **death** occur. This should be understood in accordance with the explanations of the Sutras. Old age is the maturation of the body and death is the destruction of the aged body. **Sorrow** is the profound torment of the total obscuration of the manifest attachment that accompanies death. **Crying** is the verbal expression of the pain that has arisen. **Suffering** is the damage that the five senses receive. **Anguish** means unpleasant, **agitation** means the occurrence of many sufferings and mental sorrow. Therefore, this being the situation,

*Therefore, an accumulation of suffering
It's the only thing that happens.*

The meaning of **therefore** is merely by the strength of causes and conditions. **An accumulation of suffering** is the whole or the multitude of sufferings called the accumulation of suffering. **The only thing** means it is devoid of the nature of I and mine. The mere designation of childish being is synonymous with embodiment of suffering totally devoid of happiness. Why? Because the ramifications of existence arise from ignorance and so on.

*10. Formations are the root of samsara:
So the wise do not form.
Therefore, the unwise form
The wise (don't), because they see reality.*

In this context, the main causes of samsara, which are characterized by the involvement of consciousness and so on, are **formations**. So, he who is not wise enacts formations that are the root of samsara. As the Baghawan taught, "O monks, the person who

follows on ignorance forms also meritorious formations, forms also non meritorious formations, and forms also unmovable formations".

Why? Because he is an **unwise** agent. Only the person who possesses ignorance is an agent of formations. Not the wise one who sees reality and abandons ignorance. How? Because **he sees reality**. For the one who sees reality all things are unobservable. One becomes an agent by observing them, because they do not exist at all. That's why he who sees reality is the wise one who is not an agent. Because of that with ignorance formations occur, without it do not. Therefore

*11. With the cessation of ignorance
Formations do not occur*

Because the causes are not complete.

How is that ignorance ceased?

*Ignorance is ceased
With cognition familiarizing with reality*

Familiarizing oneself with the correct view of the reality of arising by dependent relation, completely **abandons ignorance**. Thus, he who correctly sees the arising by dependent relation does not observe a nature of his own even in the subtlest things. He relates to the emptiness of intrinsic existence of things, as if they were reflections. Since for this person all things are empty of intrinsic existence, no phenomena becomes minimally observable. By not observing he is not afflicted, and by not being afflicted she does not act.

In this way, by becoming familiar with the arising by dependent relation one enters into the **reality**. The yogi who sees reality definitely abandons ignorance. Abandoning ignorance stops formations. In the same way as abandoning ignorance stops formations,

*12. Ceasing this and that
This and that don't occur.
What are only aggregates of suffering
Cease completely in this way.*

This passage explains that by **ceasing** previous branches, subsequent branches are also ceased. With this process, the yogi separates himself from the wrong view of the self and mine, the aggregates of suffering, and since they will no longer arise, the aggregates that are empty of an intrinsic nature devoid of agent and the experiencer, cease completely.

From the Superior Sutra of the Rise Sprout: "This is due to the two inner arising by dependent relation. What are these two? Arising by dependent relation of causes and arising by dependent relation of conditions. What is the arising by dependent relation of causes? It starts with ignorance causing formations and so on, until finally, birth causes aging and death. If ignorance does not arise, then formations do not manifest and so on, until finally, if birth does not arise, then aging and death do not manifest. Likewise, from the existence of ignorance, formations occur and so on, until finally, from the existence of birth, comes aging and death. Ignorance does not think, 'I produce

formations.' Nor do formations think, 'We are produced by ignorance,' and so on. Finally, birth does not think, 'I produce aging and death.' Nor do aging and death think, 'I am produced by birth.' Nevertheless, formations take form and arise through the existence of ignorance and so on, until finally aging and death take form and arise through the existence of birth.

Thus is the how the arising by dependent relation of causes is to be seen.

How is the inner arising by dependent relation of conditions to be seen? This is due to the assembling of six elements. What are the six elements assembled?

It is like this: the arising by dependent relation of conditions is to be seen as due to the assembling of the elements of earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness.

Here, what is the earth element of the inner dependent arising? That which assembles to form the solidity of the body is called the earth element.

That which provides cohesion in the body is called the water element.

That which digests whatever the body eats, drinks, chews, and tastes is called the fire element.

That which performs the function of the body's inhalation and exhalation is called the wind element.

That which allows the body to have hollow spaces inside is called the space element.

That which induces the manifesting of name and form, the collection of five consciousness together, in the manner of a shelter, and the defiled mental consciousness, is called the element of consciousness.

Without these conditions the body cannot be born. But when the inner earth element is complete, and likewise the elements of water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness are complete, then from the coming together of all these the body forms.

In this process, the earth element does not think, 'I provide the solidity of the body by assembling.'

Nor does the water element think, 'I provide cohesion for the body.'

Nor does the fire element think, 'I digest what the body eats, drinks, chews, or tastes.'

Nor does the wind element think, 'I perform the function of the body's inhalation and exhalation.'

Nor does the space element think, 'I create hollow spaces inside the body.'

Nor does the element of consciousness think, 'I produce the name and form of the body.'

Nor does the body think, 'I am produced by these conditions.'

Yet, when these conditions are present, the body is born.

The earth element is not a self, not a being, not a life force, not a creature, not a human, not a person, not female, not male, not an hermaphrodite, not me, not mine, and not anybody else's.

Similarly, the water element, the fire element, the wind element, the space element, and the consciousness element are also not a self, not a being, not a life force, not a creature, not a human, not a person, not female, not male, not an hermaphrodite, not me, not mine, and not anybody else's.

Here, what is ignorance? That which perceives these same six elements to be unitary, whole, permanent, constant, eternal, pleasurable, a self, a being, a life force, a creature, a soul, a man, an individual, a human, a person, me, and mine, along with the many other such types of misapprehension, is called ignorance. If ignorance is present, there is desire, aversion, and delusion toward objects. Such desire, aversion, and delusion toward objects are the formations caused by ignorance. That which distinguishes between individual objects is consciousness. The four aggregates of appropriation that emerge in conjunction with consciousness, are name. The four great elements and their cause is form. That name and that form together are name and form. The faculties related to name and form are the six sources.

The conjunction of the three is contact. The experience of contact is sensation. Attachment to sensation is craving. The intensification of craving is appropriation. Action that comes from appropriation and causes rebirth is existence. The emergence of the aggregates from such a cause is birth. The maturation of the aggregates after birth is aging. The perishing of the destruction of aggregates is death. The inner torment of the deluded, attached, dying person is sorrow. The utterance that comes from sorrow is crying.

The mental discomfort associated with the collection of the five consciousnesses is suffering. Mind associated with mental suffering is anguish. Moreover, any other subtle mental afflictions of this kind are called agitation.

These, because they are very obscured, are called ignorance. They are formations because they are formative. They are consciousness because they are cognizing. Name and form, because reciprocally dependent. Sources, because they are gateways of production. Contact, because contacting. Feelings, because experiencing. Craving, because needing. Appropriation, because appropriating. Existence, because coming into existence again. Birth, because the arising of aggregates. Aging, because maturation of the aggregates. Death, because perishing. Sorrow because grief. Crying, because verbal lamenting. Suffering, because body harm. Anguish, because mental harm. Confusion, because mental afflictions.

Or, is ignorance because not knowing reality, wrong understanding, not knowing.

If such an ignorance is present, three types of formations develop: those leading to meritorious states, those leading to unmeritorious states, and those leading to immovable states.

From formations that lead to meritorious states come consciousness leading to meritorious states. From formations that lead to unmeritorious states come consciousness leading to unmeritorious states. And from formations that lead to immovable states come consciousness leading to immovable states. This is what is meant by formations cause consciousness. This is called consciousness. Due to consciousness as condition is what is called name and form. Feeling and so forth, the four aggregates other than form because they lead to that existence, are name. The form aggregates, called form, together with name, are called name and form.

The four immaterial aggregates emerging together with consciousness, along with physical form, is what is meant by the condition of consciousness, name and form. Due to the development of name and form, the performance of actions through the entryways of the six sources occurs. This is what is meant by the condition of name and form, the six sources. From the six sources arise the six collections of contact. Thus with the condition of the six sources, is contact. Feelings arise in the manner of the arising of contact. What is due to the condition of contact is called feelings. Experiencing those different kinds of sensations, taking delight in them, distinctive clinging to them, and basking in that clinging is what is called craving due to the condition of feelings.

From experiencing, taking delight, clinging, and basking in that clinging comes an unwillingness to let go, with the repeated wish: 'May this dear self never separate from the entity of this happiness'. This very wish, is appropriation with the condition of attachment. Due to being attached to that phenomena wanting to accumulate and achieve it, the wishing for that is appropriation.

Such wishing gives rise to actions of body, speech, and mind producing rebirth. This is existence due to the condition of appropriation. The aggregates born from such actions is birth with the condition of existence. The full maturation of the development of the birth aggregates and their perishing is aging and death with the condition of birth. The maturation of the development of the aggregates formed from birth, and their disintegration, is what is meant by 'birth causes aging and death.'

Thus, this twelve branches of arising by dependent relation, which comes from several different causes and from several different conditions, is neither permanent nor impermanent, is neither compounded nor un-compounded, is not without any cause or condition, is not an experiencer, and is not something exhaustible, something destructible, or something that ceases, a beginningless uninterrupted continuity, like the flow of a river.

This twelvefold dependent arising, which comes from several different causes and from several different conditions, is neither permanent nor impermanent, is neither compounded nor un-compounded, is not without any cause or condition, is not an experiencer, and is not something exhaustible, something destructible, or something that ceases, has proceeded from beginning less time without interruption, like the flow of a river.

Nevertheless, there are four links that serve as the cause for assembling this twelvefold dependent arising. What four links? They are: ignorance, craving, action, and consciousness.

Consciousness functions as a cause by having the nature of a seed. Action functions as a cause by having the nature of a field. Ignorance and craving function as causes by having the nature of afflictions.

Action and afflictions cause the seed of consciousness to grow. Here, action functions as the field for the seed of consciousness. Craving moistens the seed of consciousness. Ignorance sows the seed of consciousness. Without these conditions, the seed of

consciousness does not develop. In this process, action does not think, 'I function as the field for the seed of consciousness.' Nor does craving think, 'I moisten the seed of consciousness.' Nor does ignorance think, 'I sow the seed of consciousness.' Nor does the seed of consciousness think, 'I am produced by these conditions.' Yet when the seed of consciousness grows, planted in the field of action, moistened by the water of craving, and strewn with the manure of ignorance, the sprout of name and form manifests within whichever mother's womb one will take rebirth.

And this sprout of name and form is not created by itself, not created by another, not created by both, not created by God, not transformed by time, not derived from time transformation, not dependent on a single factor, and not born without any cause. Nonetheless, from the combination of the union of the parents, the period of ovulation, and other conditions, the seed of consciousness, filled with experience produces the sprout of name and form within whichever mother's womb one will take rebirth.

For although things are devoid of owner, devoid of ownership, ungraspable, space-like, and their nature is the mark of illusion, the requisite causes and conditions are not incomplete.

For instance, the eye consciousness arises by way of five causes. What five? Namely, the eye consciousness arises based on the eye on which it depends, form, appearance, space, and the mental attention. Here, the eye functions as the basis for the eye consciousness. Form functions as the object of perception for the eye consciousness. Appearance functions as visibility. Space functions by not obstructing. Mental attention functions as mentality. Without these conditions, the eye consciousness cannot arise. But when the inner sense source, the eye, is not incomplete, and likewise, when form, appearance, space, and mental attention are not incomplete, then from the coming together of all these factors, the eye consciousness arises.

The eye does not think, 'I serve as the basis for the eye consciousness.' Nor does form think, 'I serve as the object of perception for the eye consciousness.' Nor does appearance think, 'I function as the visibility for the eye consciousness.' Nor does space think, 'I do not obstruct the eye consciousness.' Nor does mental attention think, 'I provide mental reflection for the eye consciousness.' Nor does the eye consciousness think, 'I am produced by these conditions.' Yet, the eye consciousness is born from the presence of these conditions. A similar analysis should be applied to the rest of the sense faculties.

Here, there is nothing whatsoever that transmigrates from this existence to the next. And yet, because causes and conditions are not incomplete, the result of actions nonetheless manifests. It is like the appearance of the reflection of a face on the surface of a well-polished mirror. The face has not shifted onto the surface of the mirror, but because causes and conditions are not incomplete, the face nonetheless appears there. Similarly, there is nobody at all who transmigrates from here after death and is born elsewhere. And yet, because causes and conditions are not incomplete, the result of actions nonetheless manifests. It is like how the lunar disk is at a distance of forty-two thousand yojanas above earth, and yet its reflection nonetheless appears in small vessels filled with water. It is not that the moon moves from its position and enters the small vessels filled with water. Yet, because causes and conditions are not incomplete, the lunar disk nonetheless appears there.

Likewise, that there is nobody at all who transmigrates from here after death and is born elsewhere, and yet, because causes and conditions are not incomplete, the result of actions nonetheless manifests, is like how a fire ignites from the assemblage of its

requisite causes and conditions, and not when its causes and conditions are incomplete.

In the same way, although things are devoid of owner, devoid of ownership, ungraspable, space-like, and their nature is the mark of illusion, because causes and conditions are not incomplete, the seed of consciousness born of actions and afflictions will nonetheless produce the sprout of name and form within whichever mother's womb one will take rebirth.

Thus the inner arising by dependent relation of conditions should be seen.

Here, inner arising by dependent relation is to be seen in terms of five aspects. What five aspects? As not permanent, as not discontinuous, as not involving transmigration, as the production of a large result from a small cause, and as a continuity of similar type.

How is it not permanent? It is not permanent because the final aggregates at death are one thing and those at birth are another; that is, the final aggregates at death are not the ones at birth. And yet, only when the final aggregates at death cease do the aggregates at birth arise.

How is it not discontinuous? It is not discontinuous because the aggregates at birth do not arise from the final aggregates at death either when they have already ceased, or when they have not yet ceased. Like the arm of a scale tilting from up to down, the aggregates at birth arise precisely when the final aggregates at death have ceased.

How does it not involve transmigration? It does not involve transmigration because beings from different classes of existence bring about their rebirth in a common form of birth.

How does it entail the production of a large result from a small cause? The ripening of a large result is experienced from having performed a minor action. Thus, it entails the production of a large result from a small cause.

It involves a continuity of similar type because the ripening of an action is experienced precisely according to the action performed.

These are the Clear Words spoken by master Chandrakirti, commenting chapter 26
The analysis of the twelve branches of existence.