

Cetanā Sutta 1-3

Discourses on Volition

(Sāmyutta Nikāya 12.38-40/2:65-67)

1 Related Sutta teachings

These three suttas have an identical name—the **Cetanā Sutta 1-3** (S 12.38-40)¹—and, as the title suggests, deal with volition (*cetanā*), but each in a different way. Such a collection is valuable as a scriptural Rosetta Stone² for comparing the senses of the same teachings (volition and karma) in different contexts. **Bhikkhu Bodhi** makes this instructive note:

These variants make it plain that the sequence of factors should not be regarded as a linear causal process in which each preceding factor gives rise to its successor through the simple exercise of efficient causality. The relationship among the factors is always one of complex conditionality rather than linear causation. The conditioning function can include such diverse relations as mutuality (when two factors mutually support each other), necessary antecedence (when two factors mutually support each other), necessary antecedence (when one factor must be present for another to arise), distal efficiency (as when a remotely past volitional formation generates consciousness in a new life), etc. (Bodhi S:B 522 f)

All the three suttas speak, in different ways, of the conditions “for the establishing [sustaining] of consciousness” (*viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā*), that is, how consciousness moves on to a new existence. This is sometimes called “existential consciousness.”³ The three discourses are closely related to **the Atta, kāri Sutta** (A 6.38), which says that karma and rebirth arises through one’s latent tendencies, and not just as a result of intentional acts.⁴

All this shows that we can proceed directly from consciousness (*viññāṇa*) (the usual third link in the 12 links of dependent arising)⁵ to “rebirth” (*puna-b, bhava*), that is, existence (*bhava*) (the usual tenth factor),⁶ as exemplified in **the Cetanā Sutta 1** (S 12.38). This Sutta shows that the conditions for the arising and sustenance of consciousness are the latent tendencies (*anusaya*), defined here as comprising ignorance and craving, and “what one intends, what one plans,” that is, our volitional activities (*saṅkhāra*).⁷ Once consciousness is established (that is, arises and continues), the new existence begins [§2].

¹ See §§6abc below.

² The Rosetta Stone is an ancient Egyptian stele which was instrumental in advancing modern understanding of hieroglyphic writing. The stone, a carved text of Ptolemy V’s time, contains three translations of a single passage, written in two Egyptian language scripts (hieroglyphic and Demotic), and in classical Greek. Created in 196 BCE, it was discovered by Napoleon’s French army in 1799 at Rosetta (today Rashid), a harbor on the Mediterranean coast in Egypt, and was deciphered in 1822 by the French scholar Jean-François Champollion.

³ “**Existential consciousness**” is a modern generic term for what is commonly known in the texts as “being-to-be-born” or *gandharva* (*gandhabba*) (M 1:266, 2:157; *tatrūpagata, satto*, “the being that has arrived there,” MA 2:310), and in Comys as “rebirth consciousness” (*paṭisandhi, citta*, DA 2:430; MA 4:174; SA 1:184, 2:31), and “life-continuum” (*bhavaṅga*, DA 1:194, 2:594; MA 1:262, 2:77, 229, 352, 366; SA 1:184, 224, 2:358, 3:4, 54, 97, 3:191). In contrast, there is “**cognitive consciousness**,” which is operative during life itself, ie, in sense-experiencing. See **Nagara S** (S 12.65) = SD 14.2 Intro (2) & **Viññāṇa** = SD 17.8a(6).

⁴ A 6.38/3:37 f = SD 7.6.

⁵ The 12 links of the standard dependent arising are: (1) ignorance, (2) volitional activities, (3) consciousness, (4) name-and-form, (5) the six sense-bases, (6) contact, (7) feeling, (8) craving, (9) clinging, (10) existence, (11) birth, (12), decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair. See **Cetanā S 2** (S 12.39/2:66) = SD 23.5 & also **Dependent Arising** = SD 5.16(4).

⁶ See **Dependent Arising** = SD 5.16.

⁷ On how consciousness arises from formations, see **Viññāṇa** = SD 17.8a(3.2).

According to **the Cetanā Sutta 2** (S 12.39), when consciousness is arises and grows, “there is the descent of name-and-form.”⁸ It shows how name-and-form (*nāma,rūpa*) sets rolling the chain of dependent arising resulting in protracted suffering.

The Cetanā Sutta 3 (S 12.40) shows how latent tendencies condition our personal inclinations of habits (*nati*). Although such habits are rooted in latent tendencies, which are effectively past karma, we can still correct them, or overcome the unwholesome roots of action, through our present actions.

Such suttas (mentioned above) clearly show that not everything is due to past karma, but are mainly the result of present conditions. They also throw some light on our study on *whether there is free will*.⁹ Basically, these suttas show that due to our latent tendencies (*anusaya*), accumulated through our karma over numerous lives, effectively condition our lives. However, by destroying these latent tendencies we ultimately free ourselves from this cyclic life. [4]

2 Commentary on Cetanā Sutta 1¹⁰

2.1 CETANĀ SUTTA 1 STATEMENT 1 (S 12.38.2). Here, the Cetanā Sutta 1 focusses on latent tendencies (*anusaya*)¹¹ as the force behind one’s deeds, rebirth and suffering. According to **Bodhi**, here

saṅkhārā are referred to elliptically by the expressions *yaṃ ceteti*, “what one will,” and *yaṃ pakappeti*, “what one plans” (*pakappeti* is a rare term, apparently synonymous with *ceteti*). The expression *yaṃ anuseti*, ‘what lies latent within,’ points to the *anusaya*, the latent tendencies, which other texts tell us include the latent tendency of ignorance (*avijjānusaya*) and the latent tendency of lust or craving (*rāgānusaya*) [M 1:190 f, 1:303 etc]. Thus this sutta is stating that when one forms volitions on the basis of ignorance and craving, these volitions become a support which grounds consciousness and establishes it in a new existence. Once consciousness becomes so established, it sets in motion the entire production of the new existence, beginning with birth and ending with death, accompanied by all the attendant suffering. (1998:21, digital ed)

Bodhi further notes, in *In the Buddha’s Words* that

Although it is not possible to have the underlying tendencies [latent tendencies] without intentions and plans, this passage might be seen to have the rhetorical purpose of emphasizing the role of the underlying tendencies in sustaining the process of rebirth. But according to [the Saṃyutta Commentary], the passage is intended to show that for an insight meditator who has overcome unwholesome thoughts, the danger of rebirth still exists as long as the underlying tendencies remain intact. (Bodhi, *In the Buddha’s Words*, 2005: 451 n50)

Pace Bodhi’s reservations that “it is not possible to have the underlying tendencies [latent tendencies] without intentions and plans,” I think the Sutta passage as it is still makes sense without being “rhetorical.” The point is that we do *not* intend and plan all the time (certainly not while we are asleep or deep in meditation), and also that the latent tendencies, as it were, move on their own momentum as stored or potential karma.

The deepest roots of karma are the latent tendencies (lust, aversion and ignorance), by which one may consciously or *unconsciously* create karma through body, speech and mind. This is clearly stated in the conclusion of **the (Kamma,vāda) Bhūmija Sutta** (S 12.25),¹² which is repeated in **the Sañcetanā Sutta** (A 4.171).¹³

⁸ S 12.39/2:66 = SD 23.5.

⁹ See SD 7.7 (2005).

¹⁰ This section includes important nn (esp from the Sub-Comy) from S:B 757 n112.

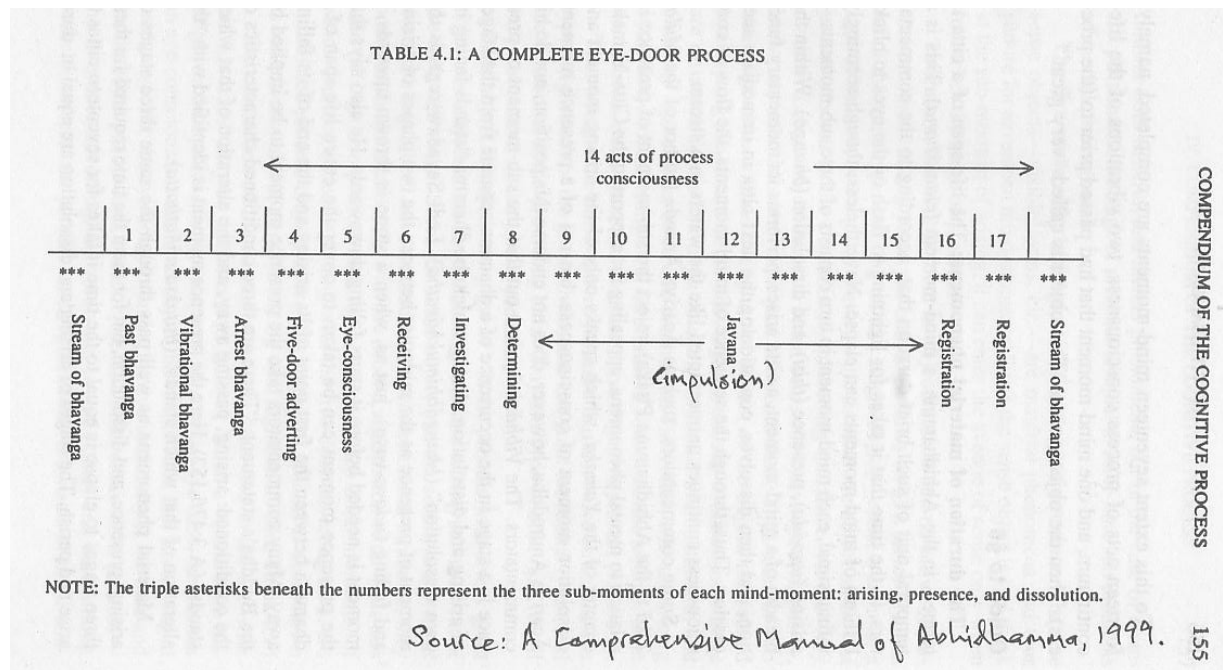
¹¹ Or, latent dispositions.

¹² S 12.25.13-19 = SD 31.2.

¹³ S 4.171/2:157-159.

2.2 CETANĀ SUTTA 1 STATEMENT 2 (S 12.38.3). The Sāmyutta Commentary (SA 2:71) explains the second statement of the sutta in this manner. This statement refers to the moment when there is occurrence of any (wholesome or unwholesome) volition of the 3 planes (*bhūmi*),¹⁴ and no occurrence of mental fabrications of craving and views. By “**but one still has a habitual tendency**” (*atha ce amuseti*) is meant that the latent tendencies are included because they have not been abandoned here in the resultants of the three planes, in the limited functional states (the five-door adverting and mind-door adverting cittas),¹⁵ and in form. As long as the latent tendencies exist, they become a condition for the karmic consciousness; for there is no way to prevent its arising.

The Sāmyutta Porāṇa Tīkā says that this second statement shows that wholesome and unwholesome karma capable of producing rebirth is accumulated in the preliminary stage (of the path of practice), and that even without planning (through craving and views), the volitions of insight meditation in a meditator who has seen the dangers in existence are still conditioned by the latent tendencies and are capable of generating rebirth. It is also stated to show that even when wholesome and unwholesome states are not occurring there is still an establishing of karmic consciousness with latent defilements as condition; for so long as these have not been abandoned, they lie latent in the existing resultants of the three planes, etc. In other words, without mindfulness and wisdom one has practically no real over one's actions and their consequences.



2.3 CETANĀ SUTTA 1 STATEMENT 3 (S 12.38.4). The Sāmyutta Commentary (SA 2:71 f) explains statement 3 of the sutta in this manner. The first phrase (“**one does not intend**”) shows that the wholesome and unwholesome volitions pertaining to the three planes have ceased. The second phrase (“**does not plan**”) shows that the craving and views in the eight cittas (accompanied by greed) have ceased. The third phrase (“**does not have a habitual tendency**”) shows that the latent tendencies lying dormant in the

¹⁴ The 3 planes (*bhūmi*), which the Suttas call “existences” (*bhava*), ie, sense-existence or sense sphere (*kāma,-bhava*), the form existence or form sphere (*rūpa,bhava*) and the formless existence or formless sphere (*arūpa,bhava*) (D 3:215; M 1:294). In the suttas, 4 planes (*bhūmi*) are also mentioned, ie, the sensuous plane (*kāmāvacara,bhūmi*), the form plane (*rūpāvacara,bhūmi*), and the formless plane (*arūpāvacara,bhūmi*) (Pm 1:83).

¹⁵ That is, they arise even before one is ever conscious of them. On the cognitive process (*citta,vīthi*), see Abhs: BRS 4.1-30/149-184 (ch 4). See diagram below.

aforesaid states have ceased. What is being discussed here? The function of the path of arhathood (*arahatta, maggassa kiccam*). It can also mean the arhat's doing of his task (*khīṇ'āsavassa kicca, karaṇam*) and the nine supramundane states (*nava, lok'uttara, hamma*), that is, the four paths, their fruits, and nirvana.

The Saṃyutta Porāṇa Tīkā says that in this third statement, the function of the path of arhathood is discussed because that path completely stops the production of latent tendencies. On the “arhat's doing of his task,” the Tīkā remarks, “it is permissible to say that this is on account of his state of negating all feeling, etc” (*vattum vattati sabbaso vedan'ādinam paṭikkhepa, bhāvato*).¹⁶ The nine supramundane states¹⁷ refer to the latent tendencies having been destroyed by the series of paths, where the fruits follow immediately upon the paths, and nirvana is the object of both.

Bodhi interprets the phrase “**when consciousness is not established [has no support]**” (*appatitṭhita viññāṇa*) here to refer to “a consciousness without the prospect of a future rebirth through the propulsive power of ignorance, craving, and the volitional formations” (S:B 760 n114). The arhat is said to pass finally away with consciousness “unestablished,” as described in **the Godhika Sutta** (S 4.23/1:122) and **the Vakkali Sutta** (S 22.87/3:24).¹⁸

3 Commentary on Cetanā Sutta 2

In **the Moliya Phagguṇa Sutta** (S 12.12), the “further arising of rebirth” (*ayatiṃ punabbhavābhiniḍḍatti*) is placed between consciousness and the six sense bases (S 12.12.3/2:13). Taken together, the Moliya Phagguṇa Sutta and the Cetanā Sutta 2 imply that the “**The descent of name-and-form**” (*nāma, rūpassa avakkanti*) and the “**further [continued] arising of rebirth**” are interchangeable, that is, they are synonymous. This, notes Bodhi, “in spite of the commentarial predilection for always seeing the latter as kammically active existence” (S:B 761 n115).

The Commentary says that there is a “link” (*sandhi*) between consciousness and name-and-form (SA 2:72), “thus on this interpretation, consciousness denotes the kammically generative consciousness of the previous existence, name-and-form the beginning of the present existence. It seems to me, however, more likely that *viññāṇa* straddles both the past and the present life, as the principle of personal continuity.” (S:B 761 n115)

4 Commentary on Cetanā Sutta 3

The Cetanā Sutta 3 (S 12.40) shows how latent tendencies condition our personal inclinations of **habits** (*nati*). Although such habits are rooted in latent tendencies, which are effectively past karma, we can still better them, that is, by overcoming the unwholesome roots of action, and cultivating the wholesome roots through our present actions.

The Cetanā Sutta 3 has a parallel teaching in **the Chann'ovāda Sutta** (M 144), where Mahā Cunda admonishes Channa:

When this was said, the venerable Mahā Cunda said this to the venerable Channa:¹⁹

“Therefore, avuso Channa, this teaching of the Blessed One should be constantly considered:

‘There is wavering in one who is (emotionally) dependent; there is no wavering in one who is (emotionally) independent.

When there is no wavering, there is tranquillity.

When there is tranquillity, there is no inclination.

When there is no inclination, there is no coming and going.

When there is no coming and going, there is no passing away and reappearing.

¹⁶ Bodhi has “can be said because of the exclusion of feeling, etc (meaning unclear)” (S:B 760 n114).

¹⁷ “The nine supramundane states” (*nava lok'uttara, dhammā*) are the 4 paths (*maggā*) (entry into each stage of sainthood, the fruitions (*phala*) (their respective fulfillments) and nirvana (Dha 1094).

¹⁸ See also *Anusaya* = SD 31.3 (1.3).

¹⁹ SA says that Mahā Cunda, thinking, “I will make known (to him) his condition as an ordinary person,” gave the admonition (*Cunda-t, therena pan'assa puthujjana, bhāvaṃ saññāpessāmī ti ovādaṃ adāsi*, SA 2:372).

When there is no passing away and reappearing, there is no here nor beyond nor in between.
This is the end of suffering.”

(M 144.11/3:266 = SD 11.12; S 35.87/4:59; U 8.4/81; UA 393, 398; Nett 65; cf S 12.40/2:67)

What is interesting here is Mahā Cunda’s statement that rebirth and suffering are rooted in “emotional dependence” (*nissita*), which the Majjhima Commentary explains as arising on account of craving and view (MA 5:83). “Craving” is the habit of reifying people, things and ideas, resulting in the notion that we need “more and more” to live happily; “view” is the delusion that sustains and moves craving, and its necessary opposite, hate.²⁰

The Sāmyutta Commentary explains the “support for consciousness” (*patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa*) and the “consciousness (that is) established” (*patiṭṭhite viññāṇe*) in all the three Suttas rather narrowly as “karmic consciousness” (*kamma, viññāṇa*), that is, as “karmic potential” (SA 1:70). Bodhi, however, interprets it “simply as the ongoing process of consciousness, including both the kammically active and resultant phases,”²¹ that is, as cognitive consciousness.²²

Putting the three Suttas side by side, and comparing the following sentences, we come to an interesting conclusion. All three Suttas say, “When that consciousness is established and grows therein,...” but each continues in a different way, thus:

Cetanā Sutta 1 (S 12.38.2) ...there is further arising of rebirth (*āyatim punabbhava*);

Cetanā Sutta 2 (S 12.39.2) ...there is the descent of name-and-form (*nāma, rūpassa avakkanti*);

Cetanā Sutta 3 (S 12.40.3) ...there is inclination (*nati*).

We can easily see that “**further arising of rebirth**” and “**descent of name-and-form**” as referring to the same thing or as interchangeable: “This in spite of the commentarial predilection for always seeing the [former] as kammically active existence,” notes Bodhi.²³ The Sāmyutta Commentary says that there is a “link” (*sandhi*) between consciousness and rebirth (SA 1:72). Thus, on this interpretation, consciousness denotes the karmically generative consciousness of the previous existence. “It seems to me,” notes Bodhi, “however, more likely that *viññāṇa* straddles both the past life and the present life, as the principle of personal continuity” (id), that is, as existential consciousness.

The Cetanā Sutta 3 is one of the rare places “**inclination**” is mentioned. The Sāmyutta Commentary says that this is craving. It is called “inclination” in the sense of inclining (*namanaṭṭhena*) towards pleasant forms, etc (SA 2:72), or inclining (*namanato*) to objects such as visible forms etc (UA 393, 398). So while the first two Cetanā Suttas refer to existential consciousness, the Cetanā Sutta 3 refers only to cognitive consciousness.²⁴

5 Comparison with other suttas

By mindfully comparing the variant sutta texts above, we can see that at certain points in the series the links loop back, reminding us of the complexity of the process. For example, while *consciousness precedes the six sense-bases* in the standard formula, in **the (Samuday’atṭhaṅgama) Dukkha Sutta** (S 12.43) and **the (Samuday’atṭhaṅgama) Loka Sutta** (S 12.44), the six sense-bases are given as conditions for consciousness.²⁵ In fact, we find *both* processes mentioned together in **the Mahā, nidāna Sutta** (D 15).²⁶

²⁰ See “**Mine**”: The nature of craving = SD 19.3.

²¹ S:B 759 n112.

²² “Cognitive consciousness,” see (1) n on “existential consciousness.”

²³ S:B 761 n115.

²⁴ See (1) n on “existential consciousness.”

²⁵ Respectively S 12.43/2:71-73 & S 12.44/2:73 f.

²⁶ D 15.21-22/2:62-65 = SD 5.17. See also **Nagara S** (S 12.65) = SD 14.2 Intro (2) & *Viññāṇa* = SD 17.8a(6).

Further, while *consciousness normally precedes and conditions craving*, the **Atthi,rāga Sutta** (S 12.64) gives craving (with lust and delight) as the condition for the continuation of consciousness and volitional activities as the condition for existence.²⁷

The three Cetanā Suttas should be studied in connection with the following discourses:

- **Atthi,rāga Sutta** (S 12.64/2:101-104) Consciousness arises dependent on the 4 kinds of food (*āhāra*).²⁸
- **Upaya Sutta** (S 22.53/3:53 f) One who is engaged (*upaya*) with the 5 aggregates is not liberated; that consciousness arises dependent on the aggregates.
- **Bīja Sutta** (S 22.54/3:54 f) Consciousness is compared to seed propagation; seeds grow when the right conditions are present.²⁹

The Bhava Sutta (A 3.76) explains the process of rebirth in similar terms as the Cetanā Sutta 1, thus:

Karma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture, for consciousness...to be established [find support] in a low (...a middling;...a superior) realm. Thus there is further rebirth. (*Kammaṃ khettaṃ viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ taṇhā sineho...hīnāya (...majjhimāya; ...paṇitāya) dhātuyā viññāṇaṃ patiṭṭhitaṃ. Evaṃ āyatim punabbhavābhiniḥbatti hoti.*) (A 3.76/1:223 f)

According to **Bodhi**, “[t]his implies that it is the stream of consciousness coming from the preceding existence that functions as the nutriment consciousness by generating, at the moment of conception, the initial rebirth-consciousness, which in turn brings forth (or “nourished”) the concomitant name-and-form.” (S:B 733 n24)

6 Important terms

The Critical Pali Dictionary (CPD) gives two main forms of the verb *anuseti*: (1) said of a person: to adhere, to cling to, to be occupied about (acc) (S 2:65); (2) said of things: to lie dormant (continually arising again).³⁰ The Cetanā Suttas’ context is that of a person; as such, I have rendered it as “one has a habitual tendency.” The verb *anuseti* refers to *anusaya* (latent tendencies), of which there are three kinds:³¹

The latent tendency of lust (*rāgānusaya*) (ie craving, in the dependent arising formula)

The latent tendency of aversion (*paṭighānusaya*), and

The latent tendency of ignorance (*āviññānusaya*).

The first and third of these three latent tendencies also belong to the standard dependent arising formula. The two—craving and ignorance—maintain consciousness in the same way as volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*), fueled by ignorance and craving, act as the condition for consciousness. Together they fuel the flow of consciousness, fill it with karmic potential for existence, thereby initiating the process leading to birth. Some useful points by Bodhi should be noted:

I am not in agreement with [the Saṃyutta Commentary] in taking the *viññāṇa* that is “maintained” and “established” [*patiṭṭhita*] as the kammic consciousness. I interpret it simply as the ongoing process of consciousness, including both the kammically active and the resultant phases. At S 22.53-54 [**Upaya Sutta**, **Bīja Sutta** respectively] the other four aggregates are spoken of as the

²⁷ S 12.64/2:101-104.

²⁸ On “food” (*āhāra*), see (**Upādāna**) **Parivaṭṭā S** = S 22.56.7n in SD 3.7 (2003).

²⁹ For a comparison of consciousness to seeds, see **Bīja S** (S 22.54/3:54 f) & **Bhava S** (A 3.76/1:223 f). For a comparison of karma to seeds, see (**Kamma**) **Nidāna S** (A 3.33/ 1:134-136) = SD 4.14. For a poetic version of the vegetation simile, see **Selā S** (S 5.9/1:134c = v550).

³⁰ D 2:64; M 1:40, 303, 433, 3:285; S 4:188, 208; A 1:283 = 2:111, 2:10, 54, 3:246, 4:188 f.

³¹ On latent tendencies (*anusaya*), see **Buddhism and Free Will** = SD 7.7(8).

ārammaṇa and *patiṭṭhita* of *viññāṇa*, but I am doubtful that this application will work here. To use the categories of the Abhidhamma, it seems that in this sutta the terms *ārammaṇa* and *patiṭṭhita* denote the decisive-support condition (*upanissaya, paccaya*) for consciousness, while in the two suttas in the Khandha Saṃyutta they denote the conascence and support conditions (*sahajāta, paccaya, nissaya, paccaya*).

I use “volition” as a rendering for *cetanā* but “intends” for the corresponding verb *ceteti*; I use “intention” for the unrelated noun *saṅkappa*. I justify this apparent inconsistency on the ground that in Pāli the verb *saṅkappeti* (corresponding to *saṅkappa*) occurs very rarely (if at all), while English lacks a simple verb corresponding to “volition.” “A support for the establishing of consciousness” renders *patiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa*. I find that “established” works consistently better as a rendering for the participle *patiṭṭhita*, but “support” for the noun *patiṭṭhā*, so to bridge the participle and the noun in the present passage (and at S 22.53-54) I have coined this compound expression.
(S:B 758 f n112)

The verb, *patiṭṭhati*, “it is established (loc),” that is to become “attached” mainly on account of craving and other defilements. As such, the participle, *patiṭṭhitā* (sometimes idiomatically translated as “stuck”),³² is usually rendered as “is established” or “finds support.” A number of suttas³³ show that consciousness (*viññāṇa*), when driven by craving, is “established,” but when craving is removed from it, it becomes “unestablished or “unsupported.” As such, the arhat is often said to pass away “with consciousness unestablished” (*appatiṭṭhitena viññāṇena...parinibbuto*).³⁴

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³² Eg It 3.2.4/53 f; cf S 46 f/1.20/1:11,23 = SD 14.9 Intro (1).

³³ See **Cetanā S 1** (S 12.38/2:65 f) = SD 7.61, **Cetanā S 2** (S 12.39/2:66) = SD 7.6b, **Cetanā S 3** (S 12.40/2:66 f) = SD 7.6c, **Atthi,rāga S** (S 12.64/2:101-104), **Upāya S** (S 22.53/3:53), **Bīja S** (S 22.54/3:54 f).

³⁴ See **Godikha S** (S 4.23/1:122,12-13).

6a

Cetanā Sutta 1

Or, (Punabbhava) Cetanā Sutta

The Discourse on Volition 1 (on rebirth)

[Karma still works without intention]

(Saṃyutta Nikāya 12.38/2:65 f)

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2004

1 (The Buddha was) residing near Sāvattihī.

The conscious arising of suffering

2 (1) ³⁵Bhikkhus, what one intends,³⁶ and what one plans,³⁷ and has latent tendency³⁸—this is a mental basis³⁹ for the support [establishing] for consciousness.⁴⁰

When there is a mental basis [condition], consciousness is established.⁴¹

⁴²When that consciousness is established and grows therein,⁴³ there is **further [continued] arising of rebirth.**⁴⁴

³⁵ *Yaṇ ca kho bhikkhave ceteti, yaṇ ca pakappeti, yaṇ ca anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa hoti.* According to Bodhi, here “*saṅkhārā* are referred to elliptically by the expressions *yaṇ ceteti*, ‘what one wills,’ and *yaṇ pakappeti*, ‘what one plans’ (*pakappeti* is a rare term, apparently synonymous with *ceteti*). The expression *yaṇ anuseti*, ‘what lies latent within,’ points to the *anusaya*, the latent tendencies, which other texts tell us include the latent tendency of ignorance (*avijjānusaya*) and the latent tendency of lust or craving (*rāgānusaya*) [M 1:190 f, 1:303 etc.]” (1998:21, digital ed). See Intro (2.1) above.

³⁶ “**One intends**” (*ceteti*) here includes all wholesome and unwholesome volition of the three planes. See Intro (2.1) above.

³⁷ “**One plans**” (*pakappeti*), the mental fabrications of craving and views (*taṇhā, diṭṭhi, kappā*) in the 8 cittas (mind-moments) accompanied by greed. [SAPT: The fabrications of views occur only in the 4 cittas associated with views.] See Intro (2.1) above.

³⁸ “**Has latent tendency**” (*anuseti*), ie, one habitually does something whether out of unwholesome motivation or wholesome motivation, or even without intention. See Intro (2.1) above.

³⁹ *Yaṇ ca kho bhikkhave ceteti, yaṇ ca pakappeti, yaṇ ca anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa hoti.* “**This is a mental basis**” (*ārammaṇam etaṃ hoti*). These various states such as volition become a condition; for here the word *ārammaṇa* is intended as condition (*paccaya*) [that is, here *ārammaṇa* does not signify an object of consciousness, the usual meaning in the Abhidhamma].

⁴⁰ “**For the support for consciousness**” (*viññāṇassa ṭhitiyā*), that is, for the purpose of maintaining the karmic consciousness. When there is this condition, “**there is a support for consciousness**” (*patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti*), that is, for the establishing of that karmic consciousness. [SAPT: It has a capacity to yield fruit in one’s mental continuum.]

⁴¹ *Ārammaṇe sati patiṭṭhitā viññāṇassa hoti*, lit “when there is a mental basis, there is the establishing of consciousness.” Here, *ārammaṇa* has an early non-technical sense, meaning simply “condition,” and as Bodhi takes pain to state, “does not signify an object of consciousness, the usual meaning in Abhidhamma” (S:B 758 n112). For an expl of this “condition,” see **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18.16/1:111 f) = SD 6.14.

⁴² *Tasmim patiṭṭhite viññāṇe virūḷhe āyatim punabbhavābhiniḍḍatti hoti.*

⁴³ “**When that consciousness has a support and grows**” (*tasmim patiṭṭhite viññāṇe...virūḷhe*). When, having driven karma on (*kammaṃ javāpetvā*), it has grown and produced roots, through its ability to cause rebirth; hence, “**there is further arising of rebirth.**” ie, production consisting in renewed existence. (SA 2:71)

⁴⁴ *Punabbhavābhiniḍḍatti*. Here *punabbhava* (lit “renewed existence”) is the Sutta term for “rebirth,” which in later literature is called *paṭisandhi* (see BDict). See **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43.17/1:294). It is possible to render this phrase, taking *punabbhavābhiniḍḍatti* as a dvandva, as “renewed existence and arising in the future” (BDict). Here I have taken it in a general sense of the continuance of existence within the present life and indefinitely into future ones. Sometimes *abhiniḍḍatti* by itself means “rebirth” (A 6.61/3:399-402, 10.65/5:120 f).

When there is the further arising of rebirth, there further arise birth,⁴⁵ decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain [displeasure], and despair.

Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

The unconscious arising of suffering

3 (2) ⁴⁶If, bhikkhus, one does not intend, and one does not plan, but if one still has latent tendency (*anuseti*)⁴⁷—this is a mental basis (*ārammaṇa*) that supports consciousness.

When there is a mental basis, there is a support for consciousness.

When consciousness has a support and grows, there is **further [continued] arising of rebirth.**

When there is the further arising of rebirth, there further arise birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair.

Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.⁴⁸

The ending of suffering

4 (3) But, bhikkhus, insofar as one does not intend, and one does not plan, and if one has no latent tendency, then there is no mental basis for the support for consciousness. [66]

When there is no mental basis, there consciousness is not established.

When consciousness is not established⁴⁹ and does not grow, **there is no further arising of rebirth.**

When there is no further arising of rebirth, there ends further birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair.

Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.⁵⁰

— evaṃ —

⁴⁵ “Birth” (*jāti*), omitted in PTS ed.

⁴⁶ *No ce bhikkhave ceteti no ce pakappeti atha ce anuseti, ārammaṇam etaṃ hoti viññāṇassa thitiyā.*

⁴⁷ “**But if one still has latent tendency**” (*atha ce anuseti*); here “latent tendency” is countless collective n: the latent tendencies are included because they have not been abandoned here in the resultants of the three planes, in the limited functional states (the five-door advertent and mind-door advertent cittas), and in form. As long as the latent tendencies exist, they become a condition for the karmic consciousness; for there is no way to prevent its arising. See Intro (2) for more details.

⁴⁸ Comy says that this section refers to the moment when there is occurrence of volition of the 3 planes, and no occurrence of mental fabrications of craving and views (SA 2:71). See Intro (3) above for detailed nn.

⁴⁹ Bodhi interprets the phrase “**when consciousness is not established**” (*appatīṭṭhita viññāṇa*) here to refer to “a consciousness without the prospect of a future rebirth through the propulsive power of ignorance, craving, and the volitional formations” (S:B 760 n114). The arhat is said to pass finally away with consciousness “unestablished,” as described in **Godhika S** (S 4.23/1:122) and **Vakkali S** (S 22.87/3:24). See Intro (4) for more details.

⁵⁰ This section describes the path of arhathood, when the latent tendencies are all abandoned. See Intro (5) for detailed nn.

6b

Cetanā Sutta 2

Or, (Nāma,rūpa) Cetanā Sutta

The Discourse on Volition 2 (on name and form)

[Latent tendencies lead to rebirth]

(Saṃyutta Nikāya 12.39/2:66)

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2004

[66]

1 (The Buddha was) residing near Sāvattthī.

The conscious arising of suffering

2 (1) Bhikshus, what one intends (*ceteti*), and what one plans (*pakappeti*), and has latent tendency⁵¹—this is a mental basis (*ārammaṇa*) for the support for consciousness.

When there is a mental basis, consciousness is established.

When that consciousness is established and grows, there is **the descent of name-and-form**.⁵²

3 With name-and-form as condition, there is the sixfold sense-base;

With the sixfold sense-base as condition, there is contact;

With contact as condition, there is feeling;

With feeling as condition, there is craving;⁵³

With craving as condition, there is clinging;

With clinging as condition, there is existence;

With existence as condition, there is birth;

With birth as condition, there arise decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.

—Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

The unconscious arising of suffering

4 (2) If, bhikshus, one does not intend, and one does not plan, but if one still has latent tendency—this becomes a mental basis for the support for consciousness.

When there is a mental basis, consciousness is established.

When that consciousness is established and grows, there is **the descent of name-and-form**.

5 With name-and-form as condition, there is the sixfold sense-base;

With the sixfold sense-base as condition, there is contact;

⁵¹ *Anuseti*, ie, one habitually acts whether out of unwholesome or wholesome intention, or even without intention.

⁵² “**The descent of name-and-form**” (*nāma,rūpassa avakkanti*): see **Moḷiya Phagguna S** (S 12.12), where the “further arising of rebirth” (*ayatiṃ punabbhavābhiniḍḍatti*) is placed between consciousness and the six sense bases (S 12.12.3/2:13). Taken together, the Moḷiya Phagguna Sutta and the Cetanā Sutta 2 imply that the “**The descent of name-and-form**” (*nāma,rūpassa avakkanti*) and the “**further [continued] arising of rebirth**” are interchangeable, ie, synonymous. This, notes Bodhi, “in spite of the commentarial predilection for always seeing the latter as kammically active existence” (S:B 761 n115).

Comy says that there is a “link” (*sandhi*) between consciousness and name-and-form (SA 2:72), “thus on this interpretation, consciousness denotes the kammically generative consciousness of the previous existence, name-and-form the beginning of the present existence. It seems to me, however, more likely that *viññāṇa* straddles both the past and the present life, as the principle of personal continuity.” (S:B 761 n115)

⁵³ In (**Samuday’atthaṅgama**) **Loka S** (S 12.44), the dependent arising is shown to be broken here when “with the remainderless fading away and ending of that same craving comes cessation of clinging...” the rest of the chain breaks accordingly leading to the ending of “this whole mass of suffering.” (S 12.44/2:71-73)

With <u>contact</u> as condition,	there is feeling;
With <u>feeling</u> as condition,	there is craving;
With <u>craving</u> as condition,	there is clinging;
With <u>clinging</u> as condition,	there is existence;
With <u>existence</u> as condition,	there is birth;
With <u>birth</u> as condition,	there arise <u>decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.</u>

—Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

The dependent ending of suffering

6 (3) But, bhikkhus, insofar as one does not intend, and one does not plan, and one does not have latent tendency, then there is no mental basis for the support for consciousness.

When there is no mental basis, consciousness is not established.

When consciousness is not established and does not grow, there is **no descent of name-and-form.**

7 With the ending of name-and-form,	the six sense-bases end;
With the ending of the six sense-bases,	contact ends;
With the ending of contact,	feeling ends;
With the ending of feeling,	craving ends;
With the ending of craving,	clinging ends;
With the ending of clinging,	existence ends;
With the ending of existence,	birth ends;
With the ending of birth,	there end decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.

—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.

— evaṃ —

6c

Cetanā Sutta 3

Or, (Nati) Cetanā Sutta

The Discourse on Volition 3 (on inclinations)

[Our inclinations are conditioned by latent tendencies]

(Saṃyutta Nikāya 12.40/2:66 f)

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2004

1 (The Buddha was) residing near Sāvaththī. [67]

The conscious arising of suffering

2 (1) Bhikshus, what one intends (*ceteti*), and what one plans (*pakappeti*), and has latent tendencies (*anuseṭi*)—this is a mental basis (*ārammaṇa*) for the support for consciousness.

When there is a mental basis, consciousness is not established.

3 When consciousness is established and grows therein,

there is **inclination** (*nati*).⁵⁴

When there is inclination,

there is coming and going.⁵⁵

When there is coming and going,

there is passing away (here) and being reborn (there).

When there is passing away and being reborn,

there comes to be further birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.

—Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

The unconscious arising of suffering

4 (2) If, bhikshus, one does not intend, and one does not plan, but if one has latent tendency (*anuseṭi*)—this is a mental basis for the support for consciousness.

When there is a mental basis, consciousness is established.

5 When consciousness is established and grows,

there is **inclination**.

When there is inclination,

there is coming and going.

When there is coming and going,

there is passing away and being reborn.

When there is passing away and being reborn,

there comes to be further birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.

—Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

The ending of suffering

6 (3) But, bhikshus, when one does not intend, and one does not plan, and one does not have latent tendency, then there is no mental basis for the support for consciousness.

When there is no mental basis, consciousness is not established.

7 When consciousness is unestablished and grows not,

⁵⁴ “**Inclination**” (*nati*): Comy says that this is craving. It is called “inclination” in the sense of inclining (*namanāṭṭhena*) towards pleasant forms, etc (SA 2:72; cf UA 393, 398).

⁵⁵ “**There is coming and going**” (*sati āgatigati*): Comy says that there is going of consciousness by way of rebirth towards what has come up (at death), presenting itself as karma, or the sign of karma (*kamma, nimitta*), or the destiny sign (*gati, nimitta*) (SA 2:72). This is an allusion to the three objects of the last conscious process before death (see Abhs:BRS 5.35-37).

<p>When there is no inclination, When there is no coming and going, When there is no passing away and being reborn,</p>	<p>there is no inclination. there is no coming and going. there is no passing away and being reborn. there ends further birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.</p>
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—Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering.⁵⁶

—evam—

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⁵⁶ Cf the “teaching of the Blessed One” recited by Mahā Cunda to counsel the suicidal Channa, in **Channa S** (S 35.87) and elsewhere:

“There is wavering in one who is dependent; there is no wavering in one who is independent.
 When there is no wavering, there is tranquillity.
 When there is tranquillity, there is no bias.
 When there is no bias, there is no coming and going.
 When there is no coming and going, there is no passing away and reappearing.
 When there is no passing away and reappearing, there is no here nor beyond nor in between.
 This is the end of suffering.” (S 35.87/4:59; U 81; UA 398; Nett 65; cf S 12.40/2:67).