



Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center

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September 2026 Newsletter



Agricultural Metaphor for Existence (bhava)

An agricultural metaphor to explain existence (bhava) is associated with Dependent Origination (paṭicca-samuppāda). The imagery is expressed as:

- consciousness (viññāṇa) = the seed,
- name-and-form, mentality-materiality (nāma-rūpa) = the field where it grows,
- craving (taṇhā) = the moisture or water that nourishes growth,
- clinging (upādāna) = the process that sustains it, and
- becoming (bhava) = the growth of the plant and its coming into existence.

Consciousness in this context is the kammically formative stream of consciousness (conditioned consciousness) accompanied by ignorance, craving, and kamma; i.e., pure consciousness tainted or conditioned by the four stations of consciousness.

The four stations of consciousness (viññāṇaṭṭhitiyo) are ways consciousness can become established or “take a stand” in relation to experience. The four are:

1. Consciousness established in relation to form (rūpaṃ upayaṃ viññāṇaṃ tiṭṭhati). Consciousness is supported by physical form (rūpa). For example: “I am this body,” attachment to physical existence.
2. Consciousness established in relation to feeling (vedanaṃ upayaṃ viññāṇaṃ tiṭṭhati). Consciousness becomes grounded in pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feelings. For example: seeking pleasant sensations and resisting painful ones.
3. Consciousness established in relation to perception (saññaṃ upayaṃ viññāṇaṃ tiṭṭhati). Consciousness becomes based on recognition, labeling, and interpretation. For example: “This is beautiful,” “This is mine,” “This is who I am.”
4. Consciousness established in relation to formations (saṅkhāre upayaṃ viññāṇaṃ tiṭṭhati). Consciousness becomes supported by mental constructions, intentions, habits, and volitional activities. For example: identity, views, plans, and the stories the mind creates.

The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi
 22.54 (2) Seeds

At Sāvatthī. “Bhikkhus, there are these five kinds of seeds. What five? Root-seeds, stem-seeds, joint-seeds, cutting-seeds, and germ-seeds as the fifth.⁷³ If these five kinds of seeds are unbroken, unspoilt, undamaged by wind and sun, fertile, securely planted, but there is no earth or water, would these five kinds of seeds come to growth, increase, and expansion?”

“No, venerable sir.”

“If these five kinds of seeds are broken, spoilt, damaged by wind and sun, unfertile, not securely planted, but there is earth and water, would these five kinds of seeds come to growth, increase, and expansion?”

“No, venerable sir.”

“If these five kinds of seeds are unbroken, unspoilt, undamaged by wind and sun, fertile, securely planted, and there is earth and water, would these five kinds of seeds come to growth, increase, and expansion?”

“Yes, venerable sir.”

“Bhikkhus, the four stations of consciousness should be seen as like the earth element. Delight and lust should be seen as like the water element. Consciousness together with its nutriment should be seen as like the five kinds of seeds.⁷⁴

“Consciousness, bhikkhus, while standing, might stand engaged with form; based upon form, established upon form, with a sprinkling of delight, it might come to growth, increase, and expansion. Or consciousness, while standing, might stand engaged with feeling ... engaged with perception ... engaged with volitional formations; based upon volitional

formations, established upon volitional formations, with a sprinkling of delight, it might come to growth, increase, and expansion.

“Bhikkhus, though someone might say: ‘Apart from form, apart from feeling, apart from perception, apart from volitional formations, I will make known the coming and going of consciousness, its passing away and rebirth, its growth, increase, and expansion’—that is impossible.

“Bhikkhus, if a bhikkhu has abandoned lust for the form element, with the abandoning of lust the basis is cut off: there is no support for the establishing of consciousness. If he has abandoned lust for the feeling element ... for the perception element ... for the volitional formations element ... for the consciousness element, with the abandoning of lust the basis is cut off: there is no support for the establishing of consciousness.

“When that consciousness is unestablished, not coming to growth, nongenerative, it is liberated. By being liberated, it is steady; by being steady, it is content; by being content, he is not agitated. Being unagitated, he personally attains Nibbāna. He understands: ‘Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being.’”

Notes

73 The five kinds of “seeds” (bīja) are actually five means of propagation. Spk gives examples of the five kinds drawn from Vin IV 35.

74 For a poetic version of the vegetation simile, see 5:9; for an elaboration of the comparison of consciousness to a seed, see AN I 223-24.

The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi

5.9 Selā

At Sāvattṭhi. Then, in the morning, the bhikkhunī Selā dressed ... she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day’s abiding.³⁵⁷

Then Māra the Evil One, desiring to arouse fear, trepidation, and terror in the bhikkhunī Selā, desiring to make her fall away from concentration, approached her and addressed her in verse:

548 By whom has this puppet been created?

Where is the maker of the puppet?

Where has the puppet arisen?

Where does the puppet cease?”³⁵⁸

Then it occurred to the bhikkhunī Selā: “Now who is this...? This is Māra the Evil One ... desiring to make me fall away from concentration.”

Then the bhikkhunī Selā, having understood, “This is Māra the Evil One,” replied to him in verses:

549 “This puppet is not made by itself,

Nor is this misery made by another.

It has come to be dependent on a cause;

With the cause’s breakup it will cease.

550 “As when a seed is sown in a field

It grows depending on a pair of factors:

It requires both the soil’s nutrients

And a steady supply of moisture:

551 “Just so the aggregates and elements,

And these six bases of sensory contact,

Have come to be dependent on a cause;

With the cause’s breakup they will cease.”³⁵⁹

Then Māra the Evil One, realizing, “The bhikkhunī Selā knows me,” sad and disappointed, disappeared right there.

Notes

357 There is no way to determine whether this bhikkhunī is identical with Āḷavikā; see n. 331. The verses do not appear in Thī.

358 Spk: Both puppet (bimba) here, and misery (agha) at v. 549b, refer to individual existence (attabhāva), in the latter case because individual existence is a foundation for suffering. The philosophers of the Buddha’s time were divided on the question whether suffering is created by oneself (attakata) or by another (parakata). The former was the position of the eternalists, who held there is a permanent self which transmigrates from life to life reaping the fruits of its own deeds. The latter was the position of the annihilationists, who held that a being is annihilated at death and nothing survives, so that one’s share of suffering and happiness is due entirely to external conditions. See the debates recorded at 12:17, 18, 24, 25.

359 One key to the interpretation of Selā’s reply is AN I 223-24, where it is said that kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture, for the production of future renewed existence. The cause (hetu), then, is the kammically formative consciousness accompanied by ignorance and craving. When that dissolves through the elimination of ignorance and craving there is no production of aggregates, elements, and sense bases in a future life. The imagery of seeds and vegetation recurs at 22:54, which also helps to illuminate these verses.

The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Complete Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi

3.76 (6) Existence

Then the Venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“Bhante, it is said: ‘existence, existence.’ In what way, Bhante, is there existence?”⁵⁰³

(1) “If, Ānanda, there were no kamma ripening in the sensory realm [kāma-bhava], would sense-sphere existence be discerned?”

“No, Bhante.”

“Thus, Ānanda, for beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture [Kammaṃ khettaṃ, viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ, taṇhā sineho] for their consciousness to be established in an inferior realm. In this way there is the production of renewed existence in the future.⁵⁰⁴

(2) “If, Ānanda, there were no kamma ripening in the form realm [rūpa-bhava], would form-sphere existence be discerned?”

“No, Bhante.”

“Thus, Ānanda, for beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture for their consciousness to be established in a middling realm. In this way there is the production of renewed existence in the future.

(3) “If, Ānanda, there were no kamma ripening in the formless realm [arūpa-bhava], would formless-sphere existence be discerned?”

“No, Bhante.”

“Thus, Ānanda, for beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture for their consciousness to be established in a superior realm. In this way there is the production of renewed existence in the future.

“It is in this way, Ānanda, that there is existence.”

Notes

503 Bhava. What is meant is a concrete state of individual existence in one of the three realms. Nibbāna is called bhavanirodha, the cessation of individual existence.

504 Āyatam punabbhavābhiniḍḍanti hoti. Mp says that the consciousness that serves as the seed (bīja) is the kammically active consciousness (abhisankhāravivinnāṇaṃ) co-arisen with the kamma. In calling craving moisture (sneha) a word play is involved. Sneha, in Pāli, can mean both moisture and affection; in the latter sense, sneha is sometimes used as a synonym for craving. The rebirth process is described in similar terms at SN 5:9, SN 12:64, SN 22:53, SN 22:54. The “inferior realm” (hīnā dhātu) is the sensory realm. Similarly, just below, the “middling realm” (majjhimā dhātu) is the form realm, and the “superior realm” (paṇītā dhātu) is the formless realm. The Buddha’s path aims at overcoming rebirth in all realms.

In each of the above cases:

- kamma (action) = the field (khetta), the accumulated potential conditions in which experience can arise;
- consciousness (viññāṇa) = the seed (bīja), the continuity of conditioned consciousness capable of establishing a new experience; and
- craving (taṇhā) = the moisture (sineha), the nourishing force that allows the process of becoming to continue.

The meaning is that rebirth and continued experience arise when consciousness is supported by craving and conditions. Just as a seed needs soil and water to sprout, the stream of consciousness continues when it is “fed” by desire, attachment, and conditions. This does not mean there is an eternal consciousness that travels from life to life. Rather, the conditioned consciousness arises dependently. When the conditions are present, there is the arising of experience; when the conditions cease, that process ceases.

The metaphor can also be applied moment-to-moment in meditation: a sense object appears → consciousness contacts it → perception and feeling arise → craving can “water” the experience → clinging allows the sense of “me” and “my experience” to grow. In this way, the “field” is not just the world outside; it is the whole conditioned process of mind-body experience. This connects closely with the teaching of not-self (anattā): what appears to be a continuing “self” is like a plant continually growing from conditions—seed, soil, water, sunlight—without a permanent essence inside it.

Conditioned consciousness is not eternal, an independent, permanent entity that exists by itself; it is conditioned. Conditioned consciousness arises due to conditions. In the Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta (MN 38) below, the Buddha rejected the view that sense consciousness is something that wanders unchanged from life to life:

“... consciousness to be dependently arisen, since without a condition there is no origination of consciousness.”

Conditioned consciousness does not exist as a permanent "thing" waiting somewhere to enter a body, it arises when the appropriate causes and conditions are present.

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya (The Teachings of the Buddha)
translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli, and Bhikkhu Bodhi

38 Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta: The Greater Discourse on the Destruction of Craving
(SETTING)

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park.
2. Now on that occasion a pernicious view had arisen in a bhikkhu named Sāti, son of a fisherman, thus: "As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is this same consciousness that runs and wanders through the round of rebirths, not another."⁴⁰²
3. Several bhikkhus, having heard about this, went to the bhikkhu Sāti and asked him: "Friend Sāti, is it true that such a pernicious view has arisen in you?"

"Exactly so, friends. As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is this same consciousness that runs and wanders through the round of rebirths, not another."

Then those bhikkhus, desiring to detach him from that pernicious view, pressed and questioned and cross-questioned him thus: "Friend Sāti, do not say so. Do not misrepresent the Blessed One; it is not good to misrepresent the Blessed One. The Blessed One would not speak thus. For in many ways the Blessed One has stated consciousness to be dependently arisen, since without a condition there is no origination of consciousness."

Yet although pressed and questioned and cross-questioned by those bhikkhus in this way, the bhikkhu Sāti, son of a fisherman, still obstinately adhered to that pernicious view and continued to insist upon it.
4. Since the bhikkhus were unable to detach him from that pernicious view, they went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, they sat down at one side and told him all that had occurred, adding: "Venerable sir, since we could not detach the bhikkhu Sāti, son of a fisherman, from this pernicious view, we have reported this matter to the Blessed One."
5. Then the Blessed One addressed a certain bhikkhu thus: "Come, bhikkhu, tell the bhikkhu Sāti, son of a fisherman, in my name that the Teacher calls him." — "Yes, venerable sir," he replied, and he went to the bhikkhu Sāti and told him: "The Teacher calls you, friend Sāti."

"Yes, friend," he replied, and he went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, sat down at one side. The Blessed One then asked him: "Sāti, is it true that the following pernicious view has arisen in you: 'As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is this same consciousness that runs and wanders through the round of rebirths, not another'?"

"Exactly so, venerable sir. As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is this same consciousness that runs and wanders through the round of rebirths, not another."

"What is that consciousness, Sāti?"

"Venerable sir, it is that which speaks and feels and experiences here and there the result of good and bad actions."⁴⁰³

"Misguided man, to whom have you ever known me to teach the Dhamma in that way? Misguided man, have I not stated in many ways consciousness to be dependently arisen, since without a condition there is no origination of consciousness? But you, misguided man, have misrepresented us by your wrong grasp and injured yourself and stored up much demerit; for this will lead to your harm and suffering for a long time."
6. Then the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus, what do you think? Has this bhikkhu Sāti, son of a fisherman, kindled even a spark of wisdom in this Dhamma and Discipline?"

"How could he, venerable sir? No, venerable sir."

When this was said, the bhikkhu Sāti, son of a fisherman, sat silent, dismayed, with shoulders drooping and head down, glum, and without response. Then, knowing this, the Blessed One told him: "Misguided man, you will be recognised by your own pernicious view. I shall question the bhikkhus on this matter."
7. Then the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus, do you understand the Dhamma taught by me as this bhikkhu Sāti, son of a fisherman, does when he misrepresents us by his wrong grasp and injures himself and stores up much demerit?"

"No, venerable sir. For in many discourses the Blessed One has stated consciousness to be dependently arisen, since without a condition there is no origination of consciousness."

"Good, bhikkhus. It is good that you understand the Dhamma taught by me thus. For in many ways I have stated consciousness to be dependently arisen, since without a condition there is no origination of consciousness. But this bhikkhu Sāti, son of a fisherman, misrepresents us by his wrong grasp and injures himself and stores up much demerit; for this will lead to the harm and suffering of this misguided man for a long time."

(CONDITIONALITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS)

8. Bhikkhus, consciousness is reckoned by the particular condition dependent upon which it arises. When consciousness arises dependent on the eye and forms, it is reckoned as eye-consciousness; when consciousness arises dependent on the ear and sounds, it is reckoned as ear-consciousness; when consciousness arises dependent on the nose and odours, it is reckoned as nose-consciousness; when consciousness arises dependent on the tongue and flavours, it is reckoned as tongue-consciousness; when consciousness arises dependent on the body and tangibles, it is reckoned as body-consciousness; when consciousness arises dependent on the mind and mind-

objects, it is reckoned as mind-consciousness. Just as fire is reckoned by the particular condition dependent on which it burns — when fire burns dependent on logs, it is reckoned as a log fire; when fire burns dependent on faggots, it is reckoned as a faggot fire; when fire burns dependent on grass, it is reckoned as a grass fire; when fire burns dependent on cowdung, it is reckoned as a cowdung fire; when fire burns dependent on chaff, it is reckoned as a chaff fire; when fire burns dependent on rubbish, it is reckoned as a rubbish fire — so too, consciousness is reckoned by the particular condition dependent on which it arises.⁴⁰⁴ When consciousness arises dependent on the eye and forms, it is reckoned as eye-consciousness... when consciousness arises dependent on the mind and mind-objects, it is reckoned as mind-consciousness. ...

Notes

402 According to MA, through faulty reasoning based on the fact of rebirth, Sāti came to the conclusion that a persisting consciousness transmigrating from one existence to another is necessary to explain rebirth. The first part of the sutta (down to §8) replicates the opening of MN 22, the only difference being in the view espoused.

403 This is the last of the six views described at MN 2.8. See n.40.

404 MA: The purpose of the simile is to show that there is no transmigration of consciousness across the sense doors. Just as a log fire burns in dependence on logs and ceases when its fuel is finished, without transmigrating to faggots and becoming reckoned as a faggot fire, so too, consciousness arisen in the eye door dependent on the eye and forms ceases when its conditions are removed, without transmigrating to the ear, etc., and becoming reckoned as ear-consciousness, etc. Thus the Buddha says in effect: “In the occurrence of consciousness there is not even the mere transmigration from door to door, so how can this misguided Sāti speak of transmigration from existence to existence?”

Announcements

- Please help advertise Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center by providing a review at www.google.com/maps.

Activities of the Meditation Center

- Group sitting meditation practice for one hour is held Monday through Friday at 6:30 a.m. and every day at 5:30 p.m. After meditation, Ajahn Kumāro is available to answer questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com on the days and time you would like to participate.
- Group sitting meditation practice for two hours is held every Saturday and Sunday at 6:30 a.m.
- The days of the full moon, new moon, and the two half moons are called in Pali: The Uposatha, and is a Buddhist day of observance. A lunar calendar is available at <https://cal.forestsangha.org>. Ajahn Kumāro will perform the ceremony of giving the five precepts on the full and new moon days after the 5:30 p.m. meditation. You may elect to keep the precepts as long as you see fit (one night, a week, a lifetime, etc.).
- Meditation Workshop is held on the first Sunday of each month between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The workshop will provide instruction and practice for sitting and walking meditation. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- A recording of a Dhamma Talk from an experienced Thai Forest Teacher will be played on the third Sunday of each month. Sitting meditation starts at 4:30 p.m. and the Dhamma Talk will be played afterwards. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- Every Saturday at 4:15 p.m. the Meditation Center will be cleaned. Please join us in maintaining a clean space for practicing and discussing the Dhamma.
- There is a library at the Meditation Center. You may browse for books to borrow at 5:00 p.m. and check out the books for three weeks.
- Everyday at 8:40AM Ajahn Kumāro leaves for alms-round in order to give residents of Asheville the opportunity to earn merit by practicing generosity of giving food and placing it into the alms bowl. Ajahn does not accept or handle money. Ajahn usually arrives at the Whole Foods Market, 70 Merrimon Ave., just before 9:00 a.m. and stands in front of the store for alms.
- Ajahn is available at other times during the day to meet with individuals or groups when requested.

- For more additional information, please send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com. We also have a presence on Facebook and Meet-Up social media.

Request for Support

The Meditation Center is in need of support in order to accomplish its mission and vision. The support may take various forms. You will support the Meditation Center by:

- Being present at the Meditation Center for group meditation.
- Giving alms during alms-round.
- Bringing to the Meditation Center items that are listed on the support page of the website www.mittameditation.com.
- Volunteering your skills, energy, and time at the Meditation Center.
- Informing your family and friends about the Meditation Center and encouraging them to participate in the activities.
- Donating financial contributions for the Meditation Center's expenses. Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center is recognized as a tax-exempt organization by the IRS under section 501(c)(3). Donations are deductible in accordance with IRS regulations. Financial contributions may be made on the support page of the website www.mittameditation.com, and additional means for making financial donations may be discussed with Elisha Buhler at (910) 922-1549.