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Twelve nidanas

“Whoever sees interdependence sees the dharma; whoever sees the dharma sees interdependent origination.”

Nidanas are links or chains describing the interdependent origination of suffering and confusion. They are the ring of causality---or accidents---that lead from one situation to another. As long as we are subject to karma and klesha, there is basically no alternative. Nidanas describe the nature of inner phenomena --- that which gives rise to sentient beings and the operation of the skandhas.

- 1) Ignorance, not knowing (Tibetan ma-rigpa, Sanskrit avidya). Ignorance of impermanence, suffering, egolessness. Imagining a continuous self, it stubbornly holds to fiction. Impermanence. Unaware. The blind grandmother. Subconscious gossip, intelligence stirring up clusters of thought and crowded energy. Thingness, solidifying intangibles. Irritation and claustrophobia which continues throughout all the nidanas. Claustrophobia, undermining intelligence. This is the root factor, the Samadhi of samsara. This gives birth to
- 2) Formation, karmic patterns (Sanskrit: samskaras). Virtuous, nonvirtuous, nonagitated or neutral, produced by aversion, attachment or confusion (aggression, passion, ignorance). Image of the Potter's Wheel. Impulsive accumulation, turning the wheel constantly in a spin. Karmic creation. We make ourselves into something. Development of I and other, like water & clay.
- 3) Consciousness (Skt vijñana, bifurcated knowing). The Monkey. “I am” ---the meaning we ascribe to conditions and activities, elaborating and developing further factors. The escalation of samsara.
4. Name & form (Skt: nama-rupa). A Person in a boat. Giving ourselves a function, significance. Making a home for things --- a conceptual box. Fleshing out identity.
5. The six sense fields (Skt: shadayatana). A six-window house. Still tentative, though providing some sense of security. Paranoia, diplomacy used as management.
6. Contact (Skt: sparsha). A married couple. Male & female, personality, relationships. Role playing.
7. Feeling (Skt: vedana). Arrow through the eye. Echo of the world, rebound, reactivity. Experience of acceptance and rejection, success and failure. Being alive in the world.
- 8 .Craving (Skt: Trishna). Drinking milk and honey. Effortless consumption, indulgence. It swallows us constantly.
9. Grasping (Skt: upadana). Gathering fruit. Courting the world. Exuberance. Falling in love. Doing whatever one wants, pursuing fun.
10. Becoming (Skt: bhava). Copulation. Sense that someone else can share the experience, longing for companionship. Being caught, captured in this life. Relating to another mind/body. Heightened perception.

11. Birth (Skt: jati). Woman giving birth. Result of copulation. Parenthood. Sense of power, producing life. Irritation follows. Questioning self-indulgence. Sensing possibility of sickness and death or extinction of world you create.

12. Old age & death (Skt: jara-marana). A funeral procession. Loss of zest for managing life. Cherished & abhorred objects & relationships become inspiration for the charnel ground, cycling into the next life.

Hinayanists cut the linkage between craving and grasping through renunciation.

Bodhisattvas start to question what gives rise to old age & death; see that the cause is birth; the cause of that is becoming; that is caused by grasping, etc. Reversing the chain of inevitability, ultimately draining the reservoir of ignorance.