

Clinging

Meaning of Upādāna

Used to mean clinging, grasping, fuel, or attachment.

Four Kinds of Clinging

Kāmupādāna – Clinging to Sensory Experience

Diṭṭhupādāna – Clinging to Views

Sīlabbatupādāna – Clinging to Rites and Rituals

Attavādupādāna – Clinging to self-view/belief in personal self

Clinging to Sensory Experiences

Clinging to Sensory experiences starts at birth of a new being when they latch onto sensory experiences. Discuss the clinging evolving from birth to toddler to childhood to teenage years and adulthood

Clinging to sensory experiences can also trigger PTSD and so on.

Ceasing Sensory Clinging

Since sensory clinging is motivated, conditioned, and caused directly by the link of craving – specifically sensual craving – such clinging would be completely eradicated without even a slight ember of it left when the mind enters into the third level of awakening. When the mind has destroyed the fetters of sensual craving and aversion altogether, and therefore entered into the stage of the anāgāmi, such a mind is free of the underlying tendencies towards sensual craving or aversion, as well as free from the roots of greed and hatred and their corresponding defilements of consciousness. Such a mind is also free of kāmāsava. Therefore, with such clinging gone, there won't be any bhava with sensory habitual tendencies and no emotional responses to sensations that would recreate further clinging. An anāgāmi may have preferences to certain sensory experiences but that is only in relation to what the body is used to; however, there won't be any emotional resonance with the experience. If, for example, one has been used to coffee in the morning and it is not available, there won't be any irritation arising because of the unavailability of coffee. If one has access to the foods one grew up eating, those foods won't be a source of craving or clinging. The body prefers it, but there won't be any craving to feed the body a certain food just because one has been used to that food and identifies it as part of a self's collection of favorites. Likewise, if it isn't available, there won't be any aversion due to its unavailability. Therefore, no craving or aversion means no sensory clinging and obsession.

Understanding the cause of sensory clinging to be sensual craving or aversion, and then seeing sensual craving arising due to the underlying tendencies towards sensual craving or aversion, the mind has to recognize the absolute importance of appamāda or being heedful in every moment. This is done so through the exercise of mindfulness, where the mind is always observing in every given moment so that it can recognize if sensual craving or aversion arise. With this mindfulness, one then continues to apply right effort by stopping the process of further clinging from arising, then releasing any arisen clinging, after which the mind generates a mind void of clinging with an uplifted and wholesome object and continues to maintain attention to that object. If one is unable to recognize the arising of craving or aversion at the level of a pleasant or unpleasant feeling, or is unable to recognize the identification with the neutral feeling, in the form of the underlying tendencies present in the experience of those feelings, then one may be able to notice the tightness and tension closing in on the mind, which is a manifestation of craving. If one is unable to notice the initial spark of craving, then one may recognize the thoughts around that craving, the ideations and associations, the self-referential obsessions and streams of mentation, which are all manifestations of clinging. One will generally see that it may be more difficult to recognize bhava in the form of an identity arising than it is to recognize the clinging, and in fact much easier to notice to craving and even much easier to recognize the arising of underlying tendencies leading to that craving. Nevertheless, right effort can be applied at any stage in the process of Dependent Origination leading up to jāti, at which point, the action having been committed cannot be called back or its flow stopped.

Specifically at the link of clinging, while challenging as the mind is clouded by the myriad of thoughts about the sensory experience, creating various associations and proliferation of concepts and tangents in streams of ideas, decisions, and opinions, if it can be recognized, then one can see the stopping of the flow of all of these mental activities. Having been stopped, there is no possibility of bhava from arising, and one then abandons the sensory clinging by understanding its impermanence, and uproots any associations of self to it by penetrative wisdom of the impersonal nature of all conditioned existence, including sensory experiences. Doing so, one tranquilizes the formations leading to that process of clinging and in turn having been strengthened by that clinging, and then returns to a mind free of clinging altogether.

Clinging to Views

Clinging to views can mean the following:

- Clinging to wrong views
- Clinging to opinions (expand)
- Clinging to the Dhamma (expand)

First let's go into Right View and what that means in order to understand what the Dhamma's definition of a wrong view would be –

Majjhīma Nikaya 117, The Great Forty

“And what, bhikkhus, is right view? Right view, I say, is twofold: there is right view that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions; and there is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right view that is affected by the taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions? ‘There is what is given and what is offered and what is sacrificed; there is fruit and result of good and bad actions; there is this world and the other world; there is mother and father; there are beings who are reborn spontaneously; there are in the world good and virtuous recluses and brahmins who have realised for themselves by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world.’ This is right view affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions.

“And what, bhikkhus, is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path? The wisdom, the faculty of wisdom, the power of wisdom, the investigation-of-states enlightenment factor, the path factor of right view in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path: this is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path.

Ultimate Right View is understanding of the Four Noble Truths

The Six Wrong Views Prevalent during the Buddha’s Time

Amoralism

Digha Nikaya 2, Samaññaphala Sutta

Purana Kassapa said: Your Majesty, by the doer or instigator of a thing, by one who cuts or causes to be cut, by one who burns or causes to be burnt, by one who causes grief and weariness, by one who agitates or causes agitation, who causes life to be taken or that which is not given to be taken, commits burglary, carries off booty, commits robbery, lies in ambush, commits adultery and tells lies, no evil is done. If with a razor-sharp wheel one were to make of this earth one single mass and heap of flesh, there would be no evil as a result of that, no evil would accrue. If one were to go along the south bank of the Ganges killing, slaying, cutting or causing to be cut, burning or causing to be burnt, there would be no evil as a result of that, no evil would accrue. Or if one were to go along the north bank of the Ganges giving and causing to be given, sacrificing and causing to be sacrificed, there would be no merit as a result of that, no merit would accrue. In giving, self-control, abstinence and telling the truth, there is no merit, and no merit accrues.”

Letting go of Amoralism

Amoralism is a misunderstanding of conditioned reality. While it doesn’t condone immorality, it has the potential to prompt a mind towards it. One has to see the vitality of mind the precepts provide through experimentation and application. Seeing the precepts as the backbone for walking the path to Nibbāna, the mind must first use the following line of reasoning. Would one want to be subjected to harm or murder? Would one enjoy having been stolen from or lied to?

Would one accept and be okay with a partner cheating them sexually or have someone cause harm to one through sensual misconduct? Would one completely tolerate without a shred of aversion someone intoxicated and misbehaving with one? Knowing these actions as being unwholesome, not conducive to emotional development and joy, and knowing them to be hurtful to oneself, how then would one feel if someone had killed, stolen from, lied to, cheated or misbehaved in an intoxicated manner with a family member or friend? Therefore, while these precepts are inherently moral and ethical, they are also quite practical and reveal by the nature of applying them that there is an universally accepted system of wholesome and unwholesome. No matter what the upbringing, culture, civilization, religion, nationality, status, and so on, all see the fundamental basis for growth and harmony as some form of following these five basic precepts. Having seen this, at first in a logical manner, questioning and reasoning to get to a level of understanding rooted in that logic, one then commits to following these precepts. After some time, through practice and application of these precepts, one notices a clarity and calmness in the mind. This tranquility, when used as the foundation and starting point of meditation practice, provides the enrichment of insight and wisdom. The commitment to and the maintenance of following these precepts eradicate the view of amoralism.

Fatalism

‘Makkahali Gosāla said: “Your Majesty, there is no cause or condition for the defilement of beings, they are defiled without cause or condition. There is no cause or condition for the purification of beings, they are purified without cause or condition. There is no self-power or other-power, there is no power in humans, no strength or force, no vigour or exertion. All beings, all living things, all creatures, all that lives is without control, without power or strength, they experience the fixed course of pleasure and pain through the six kinds of rebirth. There [54] are one million four hundred thousand principal sorts of birth, and six thousand others and again six hundred. There are five hundred kinds of kamma,¹⁰³ or five kinds,¹⁰⁴ and three kinds,¹⁰⁵ and half-kamma,¹⁰⁶ sixty-two paths, sixty-two intermediary aeons, six classes of humankind, eight stages of human progress, four thousand nine hundred occupations, four thousand nine hundred wanderers, four thousand nine hundred abodes of nāgas,¹⁰⁷ two thousand sentient existences, three thousand hells, thirty-six places of dust, seven classes of rebirth as conscious beings, seven as unconscious beings, and seven as beings ‘freed from bonds’,¹⁰⁸ seven grades of devas, men, goblins, seven lakes, seven great and seven small protuberances,¹⁰⁹ seven great and seven small abysses, seven great and seven small dreams, eight million four hundred thousand aeons during which fools and wise run on and circle round till they make an end of suffering. “Therefore there is no such thing as saying: ‘By this discipline or practice or austerity or holy life I will bring my unripened kamma to fruition, or I will gradually make this ripened kamma go away.’¹¹⁰ Neither of these things is possible, because pleasure and pain have been measured out with a measure limited by the round of birth-and-death, and there is neither increase nor decrease, neither excellence nor inferiority. Just as a ball of string when thrown runs till it is all unravelled, so fools and wise run on and circle round till they make an end of suffering.”

Letting go of Fatalism

The view of fatalism denies intention and kamma, and thus rejects the understanding of choice and responsibility for one's actions in mind, speech, and body. The flawed idea that even choices are predetermined leads to further delusion. To eradicate this view, one sees that just by committing to and maintaining the precepts causes the mind to have more clarity and calmness. One doesn't need to have a belief that these choices will change circumstances in the afterlife but one can see a direct result in the here and now. One can decide to be kind and loving to others and see how that changes one's circumstances in a wholesome manner, or one can choose to be filled with ill will and see the effect that has on oneself and other beings. Therefore, if one reflects on the understanding of intention – one's own, as well as the possibility of others' intentions, or both, or neither, but most importantly one's own – and sees how previous choices arose as a result of contact with a sense base, but then certain choices were changed based on new information or wisdom, then one sees that there is a possibility of changing and responsibility for one's actions. Simply put, if one can intend a change in behavior, then that change in behavior is not predetermined or fated by cosmic principles as the ājīvikas professed – it is in the intention of that mind, even if that intention was conditioned by previous choices and other environmental factors. That intention then directs the actions, which then provide the ripening and fruition of the effects of those actions. This seeing of the direct causal relationship between kamma and fruition of kamma – exemplified by how right view yields wisdom and the experience of Nibbāna – eradicates the view of fatalism.

Materialism

'Ajita Kesakambalī said: "Your Majesty, there is nothing given, bestowed, offered in sacrifice, there is no fruit or result of good or bad deeds, there is not this world or the next, there is no mother or father; there are no spontaneously arisen beings, there are in the world no ascetics or Brahmins who have attained, who have perfectly practised, who proclaim this world and the next, having realised them by their own super-knowledge. This human being is composed of the four great elements, and when one dies the earth part reverts to earth, the water part to water, the fire part to fire, the air part to air; and the faculties pass away into space. They accompany the dead man with four bearers and the bier as fifth, their footsteps are heard as far as the cremation-ground. There the bones whiten, the sacrifice ends in ashes. It is the idea of a fool to give this gift: the talk of those who preach a doctrine of survival is vain and false. Fools and wise, at the breaking-up of the body, are destroyed and perish, they do not exist after death."

Letting go of Materialism

The view of materialism and hedonism rejects that same understanding of kamma as per the Buddha's dispensation. However, it goes a step further and says that the only objective one should have is to fulfill all sensual pleasures no matter how this is done and whether it affects another – meaning one ought break a precept if required for the sake of sensory gratification. This view presupposing no kamma is eradicated by the understanding of choice and consequence as one does when eradicating the view of fatalism. Secondly, the view that precepts have no effect is destroyed by having seen and experienced for oneself the direct effect the precepts have on one's own life and with the rationale of knowing that one doesn't appreciate or wants anyone

to break a precept to affect them or their loved ones in a negative and harmful manner. One must go a step further to understand the fallacy of the view that sensory gratification is all there is, no matter what the cost. First, one must see that there is that pleasure beyond the senses through the experience of the jhānas and āyatanas. Seeing that there is joy and happiness that arises in the mind secluded from sensual pleasures, the mind stops seeing the sensual pleasures as the only way to fulfillment. One then starts to see the tilakkhaṇa in all feeling, including pleasant feeling. First, one understands the impermanent and conditioned nature of sensual pleasures and therefore sees them as inherently Dukkha. Seeing this, one no longer identifies with those pleasures and attains disenchantment and dispassion, leading to a mind that experiences cessation of feeling and perception altogether. The mind then ceases this view after having seen and experienced Nibbāna, the unconditioned and highest bliss beyond the conditioned experience of the senses.

Eternalism

‘Pakudha Kaccāyana said: “Your Majesty, these seven things are not made or of a kind to be made, uncreated, unproductive, barren, false, stable as a column. They do not shake, do not change, obstruct one another, nor are they able to cause one another pleasure, pain, or both. What are the seven? The earth-body, the water-body, the fire-body, the air-body, pleasure and pain and the life-principle. These seven are not made . . . Thus there is neither slain nor slayer, neither hearer nor proclaimer, neither knower nor causer of knowing. And whoever cuts off a man’s head with a sharp sword does not deprive anyone of life, he just inserts the blade in the intervening space between these seven bodies.”

Letting go of Eternalism

The view of eternalism as proliferated by Pakudha Kaccāyana during the Buddha’s time presupposed the idea of the self that was eternal. Before tackling this aspect of the view, one has to understand that it directly espouses that there is no kamma and responsibility for action since all creation is just atoms interacting with one another and that self or soul is part of that process, and in doing so it advocates that there is no need then to develop in an ethical manner. If all is eternal and there are no consequences even when one kills since it is just atoms interacting with another, then what use is there for kamma and responsibility for one’s actions, and what use is there to develop and maintain precepts? According to this view, there are seven eternal principles of existence – earth, water, air, fire, pleasure, pain, and the soul. If one were to see that the first four are the four great elements of ancient Indian thought and updates them to the contemporary understanding of the four states of matter – solid, liquid, gas, and plasma (or heat) – then one also recognizes the impermanent nature of these states, both internally and externally. Matter changes all the time. Taking into account that the internal solid matter of the body, the liquid matter of bodily fluids, gaseous matter of air moving through the intestines, and the heat and electrical impulses of the body, one sees that the body itself has grown and changed over the years. From infancy, the body grows, bones and joints fuse, one’s height increases. As one develops in puberty, the body goes through further changes, and as one enters adulthood, sickness – which has been prevalent since infancy – is more noticeable as a sign of change. The body ages, skin wrinkles up, the hair becomes thinner and grayer and even falls out, and the sense organs themselves become diminished. Seeing this, one realizes the impermanence of the four elements in this way and ceases the view that they are eternal.

Pain and pleasure are experiences dependent upon the process of contact. When a painful feeling arises, one can trace it back with reflection and see that such a feeling arose due to contact. Cease contact and the painful feeling ceases. In other words, you experience the pain of sitting in an uncomfortable position. Cease sitting in that position and the pain ceases. You smell garbage outside your window. Close the window, ceasing contact between the smell and the nose, and the nose consciousness of that garbage smell ceases. Likewise, with regards to pleasant feeling the same is true. You are eating your favorite dessert. The sweetness makes contact with the tongue and there is awareness of that sweetness and the affective projection of that experience being pleasant. Cease contact between the dessert and your tastebuds, and there is no longer the pleasure of sweetness. On the radio or a streaming music service, your favorite song plays – the auditory nerves in your ear makes contact with the sound waves vibrating in the air and the ear consciousness dependent upon the two becomes aware of the familiar tune of the music that gives you pleasure. Mute the radio or the phone or computer and the song stops playing and thus the pleasure ceases. Having experienced contact and observed the feeling arising dependent upon that contact, then ceasing that contact and observing the cessation of the feeling, one sees that indeed pain and pleasure are impermanent and ceases such a view that they are eternal.

The life-principle is a translation of the word *jiva-satta*, which means the life being, which in ancient Indian thought was accepted to be a self or a soul. The idea of a self is that which is perfect, untouched, unborn, uncreated, permanent, fulfilling, ever-present and pervasive, independent of causes and conditions, and sometimes even equated with a substratum of reality. If one investigated through observation and looked for such a self, one would see first and foremost all that is in the awareness of the mind is dependent upon causes and conditions and therefore impermanent and not fulfilling forever, thus not to be considered as self. Now in certain subjects of this view the awareness itself is equated to a self, but upon closer inspection one sees that even this awareness or consciousness arises dependent upon an experience and can even be aware of nothing or no-thing as in the case of the experience of the *āyatana* of nothingness. When a new experience arises, dependent upon the intention and attention of *nāma*, the awareness of nothingness is gone and a new awareness arises tied to the new experiences. Even the objectless awareness is tied to the *nāmarupā*, which itself is interdependent with consciousness and therefore changes based on the fluid experience of varying mental objects. An experience of self being infinite, the nature of happiness, and so on are tied to the mental pleasure and concepts within the scope of the impermanent mind and its movement. Cease that and the concept of such an experience ceases as well. Seeing this, one lets go of any concept of such an eternal, independent self and ceases as well the view of the eternal self.

Extreme Ascetism

‘The Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said: “Your Majesty, here a Nigaṇṭha is bound by a fourfold restraint. What four? He is curbed by all curbs, enclosed by all curbs, cleared by all curbs, and claimed by all curbs.115 And as far as a Nigaṇṭha is bound by this fourfold restraint, thus the Nigaṇṭha is called self-perfected, self-controlled, self-established.”

Letting go of Extreme Ascetism

The view of a soul requiring liberation as per Jainism is abandoned by the understanding that one comes to when seeing the concept of the soul tied to the functioning of the mind. The view of restraint the extreme requirement of mortification for the purposes of eliminating negative kamma and liberation is refuted by the understanding of intention and kamma. If one did something without intention, that in itself is not kamma because one's intention is the fuel for any kamma. The question that should be reflected is thus – can one see in the here and now through mortification and asceticism the reduction of negative kamma? How is it measured? When did it begin? What about the kamma one unknowingly produced, meaning without intention? All of these, if one were to closely investigate with a calm and equanimous mind, are dependent upon concepts and theories that cannot be tested, experienced, or confirmed in the here and now. What can be seen, even over a long period of time, is that with the changing of intention, there is an effect. One can see that kamma being dependent upon intention, if a person changes their unwholesome intentions by abandoning them and replacing them with wholesome intentions, they see a visible transformation in the quality of their thoughts, words, and actions. Seeing this, one can then extend the understanding to the fruition of unwholesome intentions from previous moments, even previous lifetimes, as being impermanent, Dukkha, and impersonal, and therefore one abandons any further interaction, interference, or reaction to such karmic fruition. In this way, instead of mortifying the body and mind and thus causing pain, one just sees the playing out of that kamma. The non-interaction and hence non-reaction with it ensures no fuel is further added through the processes of intention, craving, conceit, and ignorance. That doesn't mean the complete effect of an action is experienced right then and there, but there is certainly a reduction in its intensity the next time such an effect arises until there is no effect at all.

Philosophical Skepticism (Eel Wrigglers)

‘Saṅjaya Belaṭṭhaputta said: “If you ask me: ‘Is there another world?’ if I thought so, I would say so. But I don’t think so. I don’t say it is so, and I don’t say otherwise. I don’t say it is not, and I don’t not say it is not. If you ask: ‘Isn’t there another world?’ . . . ‘Both?’ . . . ‘Neither?’ . . . ‘Is there fruit and result of good and bad deeds?’ ‘Isn’t there?’ . . . ‘Both?’ . . . ‘Neither?’ . . . ‘Does the Tathāgata exist after death?’ ‘Does he not?’ . . . ‘Both?’ . . . ‘Neither?’ . . . I don’t not say it is not.”

Letting go of Skepticism

Finally, it is through having gone through the process of seeing for oneself and testing out the Dhamma, understanding its principles, following the ethics of the precepts, then deepening one's contemplation through right collectedness, and gaining surety and experiential conviction due to the direct experience of Nibbāna that one abandons this view of Saṅcaya Belaṭṭhaputta. One no longer withholds judgment on what is right or wrong or on the factors of the mundane right view. Having experienced the Four Noble Truths at stream-entry through following the path, one concludes by the authority of one's own experimentation and findings with the Dhamma, and therefore one shatters doubt from existence in the mind.

Stream Entry Destroys all Wrong Views

Clinging to Views and Opinions

Clinging to the Dhamma

Clinging to Rites and Rituals

Belief in Luck

Wrong Livelihood (for Monastics)

Using Occult Arts

Animal Sacrifices

Chanting

Clinging to Rites and Rituals cease the moment you have stream entry

Clinging to Self-Views

Majjhīma Nikaya 44, Culavedalla Sutta, Shorter Series of Questions and Answers

“Here, friend Visākha, an untaught ordinary person, who has no regard for noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, who has no regard for true men and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, regards material form as self, or self as possessed of material form, or material form as in self, or self as in material form. He regards feeling as self, or self as possessed of feeling, or feeling as in self, or self as in feeling. He regards perception as self, or self as possessed of perception, or perception as in self, or self as in perception. He regards formations as self, or self as possessed of formations, or formations as in self, or self as in formations. He regards consciousness as self, or self as possessed of consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness. That is how identity view comes to be.”

Stream-entry ceases this clinging

How to let go of residue of “I am” conceit in regards to the five aggregates