



THE WAY TO GOOD REBIRTH IN BUDDHISM

PYAN NYAN WON THA PAÑÑĀVAMSA

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
(Buddhist Studies)

Graduate School
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

C.E. 2017



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The Graduate School of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University has approved this thesis entitled “The Way to Good Rebirth in Buddhism” in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies.

.....
(Phramaha Somboon Vuḍḍhikaro, Dr.)
Dean of Graduate School

Examination Committee

.....
(Dr. Veerachart Nimahong) Chairperson
.....
(Phramaha Somphong Khunakaro, Dr.) Member
.....
(Dr. Soontaraporn Techapalokul) Member
.....
(Asst. Prof. Dr. Sanu Mahatthanadull) Member
.....
(Ven. Walmoruwe Piyaratana, Dr.) Member

Supervisory Committee: Dr. Soontaraporn Techapalokul Chairperson
Ven. Walmoruwe Piyaratana, Dr. Member

Researcher:

.....
(Pyan Nyan Won Tha Paññavamsa)

Thesis Title : The Way to Good Rebirth in Buddhism

Researcher : Pyan Nyan Won Tha Paññāvamsa

Degree : Master of Arts (Buddhist Studies)

Thesis Supervisory Committee

: Dr. Soontaraporn Techapalokul, B.A.
(Economics), M.A. (Economics), M.S.
(Telecommunications), Ph.D.
(Buddhist Studies)

: Ven. Walmoruwe Piyaratana, Dr., B.A.
(Pāli), M.A. (Buddhist Studies), Ph.D.
(Buddhist Studies)

Date of Graduation : March 10, 2018

Abstract

Rebirth, although difficult to understand, is a doctrine taught by round religious schools of thought in the Eastern world over two and a half millennia. However, there was no any religious school discussed the ways to good rebirth until the enlightenment of the Buddha, since then this secret has been revealed. This thesis is, therefore, an attempt to study the way to good rebirth under three major objectives: 1) to explore the origin of rebirth concept, 2) to explain the doctrine of rebirth in Buddhism, and 3) to analyze the way to good rebirth in Buddhism. This research is about analyzing the way to good rebirth from the view point of Theravāda Buddhism. It is found that why were we born? We were born for not to be reborn again. Normally, we may hope for the next life. But according to the Buddha, we should try the way not to be born again

Acknowledgement

This thesis is submitted to the Graduate School at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies. I wish to acknowledge the help of several individuals because without their assistance, guidance, helping, and understanding this research would not have been possible.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the Most Venerable Professor Dr. Phra Brahmaṇḍit, Rector of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, to the Most Venerable Assoc. Prof. Dr. Phramaha Hansa Dhammaḥaso, Director of International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC), for setting up the thesis camp program to support the completion of the graduate students. I am very thankful to have got the opportunity to study under IBSC at MCU.

My deepest gratitude goes to the Chairman of my thesis Supervisor Committee, Dr. Soontaraporn Techapalokul. I am really thankful for her endless supports and kindly help, for her precious comments, and various suggestions in my thesis writing as well as general knowledge. I learned many of the best parts of research from her. Thank you for trusting in me.

My sincerest gratitude and many thanks go as well to Ven. Dr. Walmoruwe Piyaratana, my co-advisor and a lecturer for IBSC and at the Faculty of Buddhism, I would like to say many thanks to him for helping to collect data, giving kind advice and other important comments during the writing of my thesis base on the various aspects of Suttanta and Abhidhamma point of view.

As the last but the best benefactors, I would like to express my gratitude to my parents, my ordination supporters, and any other alms-food donators, who make me to become a monk and support me to learn Buddhist scriptures.

Ven. Pyan Nyan Won Tha (Paññāvamsa)

March 10, 2018

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List of Abbreviations

Sources

A	: Angutaranikāya
Dhp	: Dhammapada (Khuddakanikaya)
DhA	: Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā
D	: Dīghanikaya
DA	: Dīghanikaya Aṭṭhakathā
Dhs	: Dhammasaṅganī (Abhidhamma Piṭaka)
DhsA	: Dhammasaṅganī Atthakatha (Aṭṭhasālinī)
It	: Itivuttaka (Khuddakanikāya)
Khp	: Khuddakapata
M	: Majhimanikāya
MA	: Majhimanikāya Atthakathā
MBh	: Mahabharata
Miln	: Milindapañhā
S	: Saṃyuttanikāya
Sn	: Suttanipata (Khuddakanikāya)
Vism	: Visuddhimagga

Other Abbreviations

ed.	Edited by
<i>ibid.</i>	Ibidem/ in the same book
p.	page
pp.	pages
PTS	The Pāli Text Society
Tr.	Translated by

Notes on the usage of the Abbreviations

In quoting Pāli sources, the references are given according to the volume and page number of the PTS edition. In the case of Dhammapada, the verse number is given instead of the page number, For example-

Dhp 50.

Dhp = Dhammapada,

50 = Verse 50.

S V 455.

S = Saṃyutta-Nikāya,

V = Volume V,

455 = Page 455.

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Problem

Rebirth is one of the major Buddhist doctrine which is difficult to understand. Actually, rebirth has been taught by many religions such as Hinduism and Jainism, the major religions schools of thought before the Buddha's Time. These religious are very popular in the Pre-Buddha's period. Rebirth was a concept with different definitions according their perspectives.

In Theravāda Buddhism, rebirth means to 're-become' but the concept is generally referred to as 'rebirth' in Buddhist writings. In contrary to reincarnation where an enduring entity, the 'soul', transmigrates from one body to another following death, rebirth is the process involving only a constantly changing stream of consciousness influencing a new stream of consciousness in the subsequent birth. According to the Theravāda Buddhism, rebirth means that the actions of a person lead to a new existence after death, in endless cycles called *samsāra*.¹ Rebirth could be defined in differently with Theravāda Buddhism and the religions in Pre-Buddha's time.

Moreover, understanding of the concept of rebirth sometimes it is very complicated. Venerable Ñānatiloka has mentioned this:

“The theory of rebirth envisages that all sentient creation is endowed with consciousness and this consciousness transmigrates at the time of death to a new birth. This

¹ Peter Harvey, **An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices**, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 32–33.

transmigration is regulated by the accumulated *kammas* which have yet to mature and fructify. The cycle of rebirth and the process of thought-for-motion are one and the same thing.²

In theory of *kamma* regarding rebirth is complex to make the person to believe in. Actually, this fact may be illustrated by various similes, such as the echo, the light of a lamp, the impression of a seal, or the image produced by a mirror. Furthermore, in this continuous process, no sameness and no otherness can be found. Venerable Ñānatiloka, in his Buddhist dictionary, further discusses that for if there were full identity (between the different stages), then also milk never could turn into curd. And if there were a complete otherness, then curd could never come from milk. If in a continuity of existence that any *kamma* result takes place, then this *kamma* result neither belongs to any other beings, nor does it come from any other (*kamma*), because the absolute sameness and otherness are excluded.”³

The theory of rebirth is very attractive and interesting issue nowadays for more scholars worldwide but the works devoted mostly to philosophical aspects and to the texts itself. Questions, for example ‘how can we realize Rebirth?’ Who else could explain this out of the canon as the theory itself? Still need the answer, in the psychological arena, it colors the discussion of psychological states; especially, the doctrine of rebirth which is the key to understand what kinds of psychological analysis benefits to people. Moreover, how can this analysis explain in an easy way in order to understand the basis of the concept for interested people as a persuasive way for provable results for good rebirth self-welfare to one’s own practice and others’ in the future. The highest benefit of understanding and realizing true doctrines of the rebirth taught by the Buddha and his followers for more than two thousand and five

² Kor Khao Saun-luang, **Reading the Mind: Advice for Meditators**, (Bangkok: The Wheel Publication, 1993). pp. 26-30.

³ Ven. Ñānatiloka, **Buddhist Dictionary: A Manual of Buddhist Terms and Dictionaries**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1956), p. 163.

hundred years ago will not be limited in the text itself, but spread out widely for benefits of all beings according to the founder's intention.

The question arises then, if it appears that interpretations conform to the Buddha's teaching in one way or another and also provide understandable interpretations of this subtle theory for modern people, the benefit of the Buddha's teaching as the universal truth could be provided globally for all traditions. Therefore, it is interesting to find out the explanation of *punabbhava* (rebirth) in philosophical and practical aspects based on the contemporary Theravada scholars' who seems to be the knowledgeable persons with authentic skills on the issue guested by this research. The researcher is enthusiastic to research on these aspects for the benefits of not only the Buddhist but also the people from different background and beliefs.

In order to develop the way to good rebirth, it should be identified or practice the teaching such as the Law of Kamma, Eightfold Paths, and the Four-Noble Truth in our daily lives. The researcher will discuss clearly the meaning of rebirth and its significances as well as the aim of this research to give the in-depth knowledge and to find out the way to good rebirth pertaining to the Theravāda Buddhist teaching.

1.2 Objectives of the Research

- 1.2.1 To explore the origin of rebirth concept
- 1.2.2 To explain the doctrine of rebirth in Buddhism
- 1.2.3 To analyze the way to good Rebirth in Buddhism

1.3 Statements of the Problems

- 1.3.1 What is the origin of rebirth concept?
- 1.3.2 What is the doctrine of rebirth in Buddhism?
- 1.3.3 Is there the way to good rebirth in Buddhism?

1.4 Definitions of Terms Used in the Research

In this research has terminologies related to the study. Thus, in order to gain benefit to the study, definitions of terms are defined as follows:

1.4.1 Rebirth means the process of being born again, or the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. In this research, the Buddhist concept of rebirth covers only the notion in Theravāda school of Thought. Good Rebirth refers to Nibbāna.

1.4.2 Buddhism generally refers to the teaching of the Buddha which now has comprised three main schools: Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna. Buddhism in this research means only the Theravāda school of thought.

1.4.3 Theravāda means ‘The Doctrine of the Elders’ is the name of the oldest form of the Buddha’s teachings, handed down to us in the Pāli Canon. Specifically, it refers to the teaching derived from the First Buddhist Council that presided over by Venerable Mahā Kassapa, soon after the death of the Buddha.

1.5 Review of Relevant Literature

1.5.1 Nandamālābhivamsa, Sayadaw. **Kamma at Death and Rebirth**. Germany, Bruckmuhl: Abhidhamma-Forderverein e.V., 2016.

In his book, *Kamma at Death and Rebirth*, a selection of Sayadaw Dr. Nandamālābhivams's lectures and Dhamma talks given throughout the years at several venues in Myanmar and abroad in the Netherlands, Singapore and Malaysia, explains simply and succinctly the process at this journeys end whereby *kamma* takes over us just before death to sow its seed for the next life. Along the way, Sayadaw clears up some common misconceptions about ghosts, an interim life before rebirth, reincarnation, and so on. According to the Sayadaw questions made in his book, “Who is it who shifts from one life to the next?” and

“Who is it who performs *kamma* and receives its result?” they are aiming to dismiss the notion of a permanent entity or soul. Issues regarding about cloning and the efficacy of prayer to stop *kamma* are also raised.

1.5.2 Nguyen Van Sau. **The Theory of Karma and Rebirth in Buddhist and Jaina Traditions.** Dissertation. Savitribai: Pune University, 2014.

In this book, Van Sau explains the nature and qualities of the Buddha and Mahāvīra’s teachings on the theory of karma and rebirth. Moreover, he did more research into the Doctrine of Karma and Rebirth in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

1.5.3 Janaka Ashin. **Die-Human, Born-Human: The Life and Posthumous Trial of Shin Ukkatṭha, a Pioneering Burmese Monk during a Tumultuous Period in a Nation’s History.** Dissertation. London: King’s college, 2016.

This dissertation examines the life, teachings and posthumous prosecution of the Burmese nationalist monk Shin Ukkattha (1897-1978), who in 1981 was posthumously found guilty of misinterpretation of the Buddha's teaching. His case is the most famous of seventeen Vinicchaya trials conducted by the State Sanghamahanayaka Committee (SSC) established under Ne Win, the President of Myanmar during 1962-1988.

1.5.4 Buddhassa Bhikkhu. **Why Were We Born? Essays on life and Enlightenment.** Tr. By Stephen A. Evans. Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing Public Co., Ltd., 2008.

This book contains such a series of Buddhadassa’s Dhamma talks as Why Were We Born?, Happiness and Hunger, A Different Kind of Birth, No Religion, The Prison of Life, The Way to Buddhadhamma, Spiritual Exchange in the Midst of Combat and About Suan Mokkh, which are given over the span of his teaching career to a wide variety of audiences. Brought together here for the first time, these talks are ranging from “The Way to Buddhadhamma” given in 1940 to the traditional Thai Buddhists up to "The Prison of Life" given in 1988 to the international

groups of Meditators. Most of these selections have been newly translated for this volume and all have been significantly revised in consultation with the Thai originals, in hope for presenting Buddhadasa's teachings as honestly and directly as possible.

1.5.5 Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty. **Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions.** California: University of California Press, 1980.

The essays in this volume describe the developments of karma and rebirth theory in major Indian religions. Karma is perhaps the central concept in Indian Philosophy, but there is no comprehensive study of its various meanings or philosophical implications. Leading American Indologists met on several occasions to discuss their ideas about Karma. The result is this useful thought-provoking volume.

Therefore, in this thesis, all literature reviewed here will be used as main document and citation of the study.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study divided into five chapters: In the first chapter, it was introducing about the conceit from Theravada perspective. In the second chapter, it was explained the origin of rebirth concept in pre-Buddha time to make clear its Hinduism and Jainism. Although studies of Buddhism usually begin with the Enlightenment of the Buddha, the historical founder of the faith. Researcher would like first to examine the situation that prevailed in India before the time of the Buddha, that is to say, the Pre-Buddhist background of Buddhism.

The third chapter examines the doctrine of rebirth in Buddhism. Rebirth normally is understood to be the transmigration of a soul to another body after death. There is no such teaching in Buddhism--a fact that surprises many people, even some Buddhists One of the most fundamental doctrines of Buddhism is *anatta*, or *anatman*--no soul or no self. There is no permanent essence of an individual self that survives death, and thus Buddhism does not believe in reincarnation in the

traditional sense, such as the way it is understood in Hinduism. However, Buddhists often speak of “rebirth.”

The fourth chapter studied about the overcoming of conceit in analyzes the way to good Rebirth in Buddhism and the fifth chapter is conclusion and suggestion for further studies.

1.7 Methodology of the Research

This Thesis is the type of documentary research which is designed to apply the qualitative methodology to the analysis. Also, the historical background and social movement during and after the Buddha time will be examined for the influential status of society. The processes of the research are as follows:

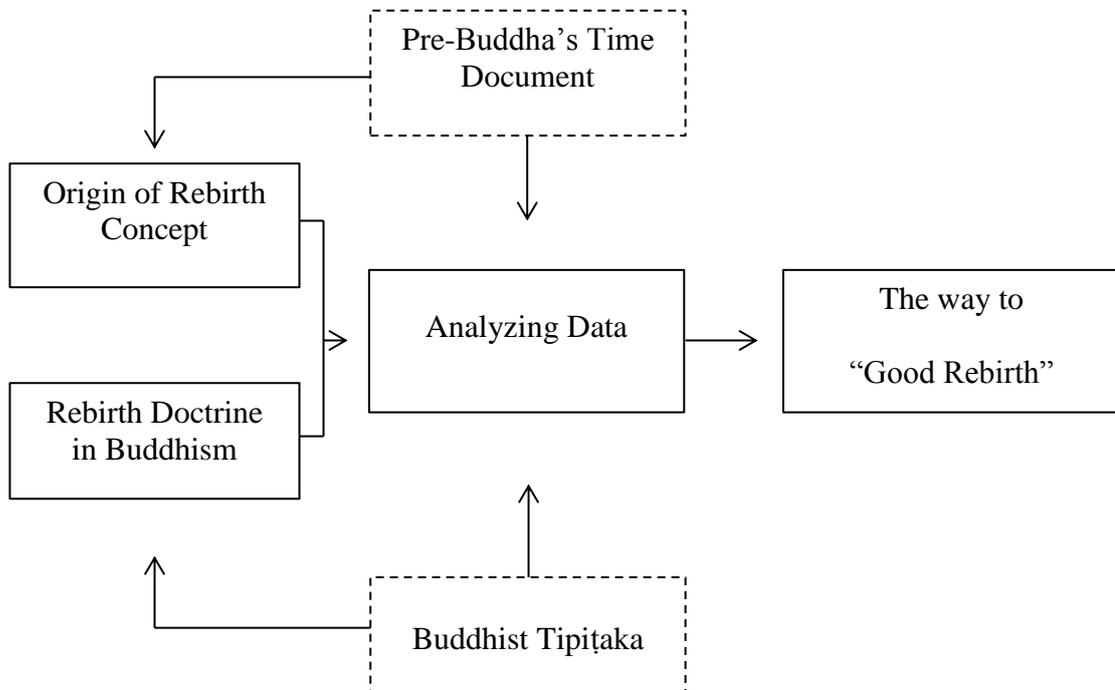
1.6.1 Collecting the data from the Tipiṭaka and the commentaries as the primary sources with selected Suttas which appears the explanation of *punabbhava* (rebirth) concept in theory and practice. The sub-commentaries will be gathered as well if it needs more supportive explanation.

1.6.2 Collecting the data from the works of selected contemporary scholars which appears their interpretation to this topic in both areas.

1.6.3 Studying and analyzing the data.

1.6.4 Formulating the conclusions and identifying the significant results and areas for further research.

Conceptual Framework



1.8 Expected Benefits of the Research

- 1.7.1 The knowing of the origin of rebirth concept
- 1.7.3 The understanding of the doctrine of rebirth in Buddhism
- 1.7.3 The ability to apply the way to good rebirth in Buddhism to daily life

Chapter II

The Origin of Rebirth Concept

This Chapter will discuss the origin of rebirth concept in the pre-Buddha time to make clear its Hinduism and Jainism. Although studies of Buddhism usually begin with the Enlightenment of the Buddha, the historical founder of the faith, this research would like first to examine the situation that prevailed in India before the time of the Buddha, that is to say, the Pre-Buddhist background of Buddhism.

2.1 Rebirth Concept in Pre-Buddha Time

Pre-Buddha's time refer to the time before the Buddha. When concerning the religious thought of that time, many kinds of schools of thought and belief can be seen. Among those, the Hinduism and Jainism were famous ones. The outstanding teachings of those religious thought the concept of rebirth. When examine the rebirth concept of those religious thought in the pre-Buddha time, we can see the differences and similarities among those doctrines. In this Chapter will examine the origin of rebirth concept.

2.1.1 Rebirth in Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the oldest known organized religions in Indian, or a way of life, widely practiced in South Asia. It is also one of the most diverse and complex, having millions of gods. Hindus have a wide variety of core beliefs and exist in many different sects. Although it is the third largest religion in the world, Hinduism exists primarily in

India and Nepal. Scholars regard Hinduism as a fusion or synthesis of various Indian cultures and traditions, with diverse roots and no founder. This “Hindu synthesis” started to develop between 500 BC and 300 BC, following the Vedic period (1500 BC to 500 BC).⁴

The main texts of Hinduism are the Vedas, Upanishads, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. These writings contain hymns, incantations, philosophies, rituals, poems, and stories from which Hindus base their beliefs. Other texts used in Hinduism include the Brahmanas, the Sutras, and the Aranyakas.

The whole of the Hindu ethical code laid down the ancient law books presupposes the survival of the soul after death and assumes that the present life is fundamentally a preparation for the life to come. According to the Hindu conception of transmigration or rebirth, the circumstances of any given lifetime are automatically determined by the net results of good and evil actions in previous existences. This, in short, is the law of *kamma*, a universal law of nature that works according to its own inherent necessity. Reward and punishment are thus not decreed by a god or gods or by any other supernatural personage. It is a person’s own actions, in conformity to the moral and cosmic law that is determinative. The law of *kamma* finds synoptic expression in the Upanisadic assertion: “By good deeds one becomes good, by evil, evil.”

As early as the Upanisads human destinies are assigned to two divergent pathways: the pathway of the ancestors, which is traversed by those persons who follow worldly pursuits, and the pathway of the gods, which is taken by those who meditate with faith and austerity in the forest. The former path leads to rebirth; the latter, toward brahman and liberation. After the “worldling” has resided in the postmortem realm until the effects of his previous deeds have been consumed, he returns along the same route by which he departed the world to be reborn. By contrast, those who depart by the pathway of the gods reach brahman, the

⁴ Tyler, **An Anthropological Perspective**, (India: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1990), p. 43.

Ultimate, and are released from the rule of samsara forever. For them, say the scriptures, there is no returning.⁵

The Bhagavadgītā, one of the most highly revered texts of Hinduism, asserts that the eternal self (*atman*) is unaffected even to the slightest degree by the vicissitudes of finite existence. According to this text, the universal soul, or self, in its essential nature neither comes to be nor passes away, for “of the nonexistent there is no coming to be; of the existent, there no coming not to be” It is rather the body or the embodied form of the self that is subject to the changing conditions of life: creation and destruction, good and evil, victory and defeat. As the eternal, unchanging and imperishable spiritual essence of humanity, the self is invincible to alteration of any sort, whether on this side of eternity or beyond.

The succession of finite births has traditionally been regarded by Hindus pessimistically, as an existential misfortune and not as a series of “second chances” to improve one’s lot, as it is often viewed in the West. Life is regarded not only as “rough, brutish, and short” but as filled with misery. Thus, the multiplication of births within this “vale of tears” merely augments and intensifies the suffering that is the lot of all creatures. Furthermore, this painful existence continues unabated until such time as a person experiences spiritual liberation.

The root cause of this existential bondage to time, ignorance, and suffering is desire, or avaricious attachment to objects that at best bring only limited, and often debased, pleasure. Even the life of a deity (*deva*) is governed by the law of death and rebirth. Hence, a person's only hope of escaping the clutches of rebirth is through extinguishing all desires except the desire for perfect unification with the universal self (*brāhman*). The empirical self of the liberated person goes to the *brahman* and becomes the brahman. As a result, he is free from the effects of all actions, both good and from any subsequent participation in existences

⁵ Lindsay Jones (ed.), “Reincarnation”, **Encyclopedia of Religion**, Vol.11 (2005), pp. 7676-7.

determined by *kamma*. This state of complete union with the universal self is known as *moksa* (release or salvation)

Opinions differ among Indian sages as to whether final liberation is attainable while still in an embodied state or only after death. At least from the time of the Vedanta Sutra (second century), the sages believed that salvation could be achieved while still alive.

Thus, according to the Mahābharata, the *ātman* is affected by the bonds of finite existence only under the conditions of metaphysical ignorance, but once a soul is enlightened, the self is freed from the consequences of its good and evil deeds and thereupon becomes indistinguishably identified with the Brahman.⁶

2.1.1.1 Kamma as a Relation to Rebirth

In the Hindu view, spirit no more depends on the body it inhabits than the body depending on the clothes that it wears or the house that it lives in. When we outgrow a suit or find our house too cramped we exchange these for roomier ones that offer our bodies' freer play. Souls do the same....The mechanism that ties these new acquisitions together is the law of *kamma*. *Kamma* means, roughly, the moral law of cause and effect. Science has alerted the Western world to the importance of causal relationships in the physical world. Every physical event, we are inclined to believe, has its cause, and every cause will have its determinate effects. India extends this concept of universal causation to include man's moral and spiritual life as well.

To some extent the West has also. "As a man sows, so shall he reap" or again, "Sow a thought and reap an act, sow an act and reap a habit, sow a habit and reap a character, sow a character and reap a

⁶ Tyler, *An Anthropological Perspective*, (India: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1990), p. 56.

destiny”- these are ways the West has put the point. The difference is that India tightens up and extends its concept of moral law to see it as absolutely binding and brooking no exceptions. The present condition of each individual’s interior life- how happy he is, how confused or serene, how much he can serene an exact product of what he has wanted and got in the past; and equally, his present thoughts and decisions are determining his future states. Each act he directs upon the world has its equal and opposite reaction on himself. Each thought and deed delivers an unseen chisel blow toward the sculpturing of his destiny.

This idea of *kamma* and the completely moral universe it implies. Commits the Hindu who understands it to complete personal responsibility... Most persons are unwilling to admit this. They prefer, as the psychologists would say, to project-to locate the source of their difficulties outside themselves... This, say the Hindus, is simply immature...⁷

Because *kamma* implies a lawful world, it has often been interpreted as fatalism. However often Hindus may have succumbed to this interpretation, it is untrue to the doctrine itself. *Kamma* decrees that every decision must have its determinate consequences, but the decisions themselves are, in the last analysis, freely arrived at. Or, to approach the matter from the other direction, the consequences of a man's past decisions condition his present lot, as a card player finds himself dealt a particular hand, but is left free to play that hand in a number of ways. This means that the career of a soul as it threads its course through innumerable human bodies is guided by its choices. . . We live in a world in which there is no chance or accident; the words are simply covers for ignorance.

⁷ Joseph Head and S.L Cranston, *Reincarnation in World Thought*, (New York: The Julian Press, 1971), p.16.

2.1.1.2 Kamma and Rebirth in the Vedas and Puranas

In the theory of rebirth not only appear in the Vedas; but also a very early stage indeed. It may be that ancient Indian ideas about death predate and indeed predetermine the later theory of birth. Moreover, the idea of *kamma* in its broader sense (including the concept of merit transfer) may well have preceded the idea of rebirth, giving strong grounds for postulating Vedic origins of the *kamma* theory. In this research, will use the term “merit transfer” to indicate the process by which one living creature willingly or accidentally gives to another a non-physical quality of his own, such as a virtue, credit for a religious achievement, a talent, or a power-often in exchange for a negative quality given by the recipient.

In his analysis of the *srāddha* and *sapindikarana* rites, David M. Knipe has raised a number of points relevant to the question of the origin of the theory of *kamma*. He suggests that even the earliest recorded forms of these rites may reflect yet an older level, in which “the simpler, unsophisticated Vedic desire to prevent the dissolution of an after-life for the deceased” may have prevailed; the need to provide ritual food for the deceased ancestors would then be based on the desire to keep them there in some sort of heaven, not to move suffering “repeated death (punarmrtya).”⁸ This ambivalence is the very earliest texts that account for a number of the paradoxes, contradictions, and inconsistencies in the various theories-paradoxical statements about whether *kamma* can or cannot vert reason), the desire to prevent the persistent be overruled, contradictory statements about the interaction of fate and human effort, and inconsistencies between various state regarding the actual physical mechanism by which *kamma* is trans from one life to the next. Knipe's observation regarding motivation underlying the Vedic funeral rites indicates that the tension is built in from the very beginning, a simple tension between the desire to prevent rebirth and the desire to assure rebirth.

⁸ David M. Knipe, **Sapindikarana: The Hindu Rite of Entry inti Heaven**, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.114-124.

This ambivalence appears in many forms of *Purānic* Hinduism and is usually referred to as the tension between *moksa* and dhamma or between Vedic and Upanisadic world views. It is often specifically related to the question of rebirth: one kind of immortality, spiritual immortality, is destroyed by the birth of a son and the consequent ties to the world of *saṃsara*; the other kind of immortality, physical immortality, is assured by the birth of a son to perform *srāddha* rites. That these two goals are often equated is evident from the oft-quoted maxim, “You create progeny and that’s your immortality, O mortal.”⁹ They are actually confused is evident from the statement of one of Carstairs’ informants, who quoted the maxim defining a son as one who saves his father from hell and explained it thus: “When a man dies without a son he cannot attain nirvana. Because when he has no son, after his death there is anyone to perform the funeral rites and for lack of these rites he can’t get nirvana.” According to the classical texts, the son is necessary to assure that his father will be able to get another body; to be sure of being freed from the body forever, a man should have no son. But this Hindu confuses the two, probably equating the trap of *samsara* with the trap of the limbo to which the man without descendants is condemned; in his view, the *sraddha* saves the dead man from rebirth—perhaps by assuring that he will be reborn at least once in order to find his way to ultimate release, instead of stagnating forever in hell. The Puranic attitude toward *kamma* is basically Vedic, and non-Upanisadic: it advocates the *sraddha* in order to achieve rebirth. But enough Vedantic influence filters through to allow popular texts to equate the Vedic and Vedantic goals.

More specifically, it is interesting to note how precisely the death rituals foreshadow the model later set forth for the creation of the embryo. As Knipe describes the ritual, each day of the rites results in a new portion of the *preta*’s intermediate body, the head being created on the first day, then in succession the neck and shoulders, and on the tenth

⁹Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, **Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva**, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 76-77.

day of the offerings, the preta receives digestive powers so that the sufferings of hunger and thirst now experienced by the “body of nourishment” duly created may be allayed by continued offerings of pindas and water from the living. After citing various authorities for this process, Knipe remarks:

Incidentally, among the samskāras (Vedic-Hindu rites of passage), it is remarkable to note the parallel structures of these post-cremation śrāddhas and the rites at birth (jātakarman). In each case, following the day of birth and death there are ten days of offerings of rice, sesame, etc., ten being a homology to the human gestation period of ten (lunar) months. It may well be the case, then, that the completion of the temporary body on the tenth day is an intentional rebirth expression.¹⁰

Numerous peculiarities in the classical kamma doctrine begin to make good sense when viewed as developments or inversions of the process ritual. That it can all be put together from an assumption of the primacy of death is a genuinely Brāhmanic, ritualistic view; all the kamma texts on rebirth begin with death and then proceed to describe birth. It is like a chicken and egg problem: Śrāddha is chicken, and birth is egg.

A final, and highly significant, variation on the theme of *pinda* appears in a Sanskrit and Tibetan Tantra. Here the adept uses a meditation on the process of creation of the embryo as an explicit metaphor for his own “creation” of the visualized image of the deity with which he will identify himself. This metaphorical process is an exact parallel to the process by which the new body of the ancestor in the *śrāddha* ritual is imagined to develop like an embryo. The first stage of the embryo is a dot between semen and blood; it then takes the shape of urine, then of a bubble called a *pinda*, then of a

¹⁰ Shinichi Tsuda, **The Samvarodaya Tantra, Selected Chapters**, (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1974), pp. 14-29.

lump which is identified with semen, then of a mass identified with menstrual blood; and finally it takes the form of flesh. Kamma is said to enter the body through the seed. The text adds, however, that the aggregate of physical qualities (skin, flesh, and blood from the mother, and tendon, marrow, and semen from the father) is called *pinda*, the form of the body. Thus *pinda* in this text is contrasted with both semen and menstrual blood but used to designate the final product of the embryo resulting from the combination of male and female elements.

At this point, Jainism provides a useful negative example to pinpoint the historical development from *srāddha* to *kamma*. As P.S. Jaini points out, the Jainas refused to indulge in *srāddha* ceremonies because they would not accept the illogical idea that one person's merit affects another basic component of the *kamma* doctrine, and one with strong Vedic roots, roots that might already have sparked off a challenge among the early Jainas. The Carvakas, too, found the *srāddha* hard to swallow: "If the *srāddha* produces gratification to beings that are dead, then here, too, in the case of travelers when they start, it is needless to give provisions for the journey." Jainism may well have developed this distinctive non-Vedic eschatology at the same time as, or even before, the Buddhists and Upanisadic thinkers were developing theirs at least as early as the time of the Buddha, the sixth century BC. These various doctrines of *kamma* may then have evolved at the point in history when the Jainas either anticipated or split off from the rest of Indian tradition. The Buddhists adhered more closely to the Vedic model, rejecting *srāddha* but developing the idea of merit transfer far more strongly than the Hindus ever did themselves. The Jainas cannot explain the process of birth and rebirth at all, but more because all other Indian explanations of rebirth are based on a ritual image of food transfer and an underlying concept of merit transfer which the Jainas reject.¹¹

¹¹Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, **Karma And Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions**, (California: University of California Press, 1980), p. 10.

(a) The Process of Death

Some Purānas discuss the processes of death and birth in great detail; in true Indian fashion, they begin with death and then proceed to birth, a procedure which this essay will mimic.

The sadness of death and the inability to accept it as final are clearly reflected in several discussions of dying: The sages asked Vyāsa, “Who is the companion of a dying man, his father or mother or son or teacher, his crowd of friends and relations? When he leaves goes into the world beyond, who follows him?” The sage Vyāsa replied, Alone he is born, and alone he dies; alone he crosses the dangerous thresholds, without the companionship of father, mother, brother, son or teacher, without his crowd of friends and relations. When he leaves the dead body, for a brief moment he weeps, and then he turns his face away and departs. When he leaves the body, dharma alone follows him; if he has dharma he goes to heaven, but if he has adharma he goes to hell. Earth, wind, space, water, light, mind, intelligence, and the self are the witnesses that watch constantly over the dharma of creatures that breathe on earth; together with them, dharma follows the *jīva*. Skin, bone, flesh, semen and blood leave the body when it is lifeless; but the *jīva* that has dharma prospers happily in this world and the world beyond.”¹²

Another version of this text rings a few minor changes: “His relatives turn away and depart, but dharma follows him. The body is burnt by fire, but the *kamma* he has done goes with him.” The five elements mentioned by Vyasa and coupled with three levels of cognition are more fully expounded in other texts, which seek to distinguish between this material component of the human being and the immortal *jīva*: Earth, wind, sky, fire, and water- these are the seed of the body of all who have bodies. The body made of these five elements is an artificial and impermanent thing which turns to ashes. The *jīva* has the form of a

¹²Mrs. Bindu C. Pandit, **The Origin and Development of the Doctrine of Transmigration in the Sanskrit Literature of the Hindus**, Ph.D. dissertation, (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1957) p. 168.

man the size of a thumb; this subtle body is taken on in order to experience. That subtle body does not turn to ashes even in the blazing fire in hell; it is not destroyed in water, even after a long time, nor by weapons, swords or missiles, nor by very sharp thorns or heated iron or stone, or by the embrace of a heated image, or even by a fall from a high place. It is not burnt or broken. It is not burnt or broken.

This subtle body, here called the *jīva*, is the carrier of the karmic deposit; it is identical with the *linga-īarira* and is also called the *ātivāhika* body, the body “swifter than wind.” The karmic chain does not end with the *ativahika* body, however; several texts posit yet another stage of development, and another body to experience it in. This involves the world of the *pretas*, whom we have already encountered as central figures in the Vedic antecedents of the *kamma* theory; it is therefore not surprising that they remain central to the full Puranic efflorescence of that theory. The duty of the living to offer oblations to the *preta* ancestors is a subject of major interest to the Brahmin authors of our texts.¹³ An entire thirty-five-chapter portion of the *Garuda Purāna*, known as the *Pretakalpa*, deals with nothing but the nature of these suspended souls, the very embodiment of karmic ambivalence, literally hanging between life and death. Other texts take up the thread after the dead man has been judged by *Yama*:

The dead man remains in that impure *ativahika* body, eating the *pinda* offered by his relatives; then he abandons that body and assumes a *preta* body and goes to the *preta* world for a year. A man cannot be released from his *ativabika* body without the *pinda* for the *pretas*, but when the *sapindikarana* rite has been performed a year after his death, he gives up his *preta* body and obtains an experience body. By means of the experience body he experiences the good and bad accumulated according to the ties of *kamma*; then he is cast down, and the night-wandering demons eat that body... These deformed and hideous demons on earth eat that experience body when it has fallen from heaven. Not content with the

¹³ Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, **Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva**, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) pp. 68-70.

preta body mediation of the mediation, the dialectic Pauranikas, always eager to subdivide anything into two of anything else, have added yet another body-the experience body which is disposed of in a way which, we shall see is highly significant for Purānic mythology. But even this does not satisfy them, and they go on to split the experience body itself into two:

There are two forms of experience body, one good and the other bad; the good one has the form of a god, but the bad one is hideous to look upon. Whatever form he used to have when he was a man, the body resembles that form somewhat. Then he leaves the experience body and goes to heaven, and when there is only a little *kamma* left, he falls from heaven. If some evil remains, then when he has experienced heaven he takes a second experience body for evil, and having experienced the evil he then experiences heaven afterwards when he falls from heaven, he is born in the house of good, pure people. But, if merit remains, then he experiences the evil, and when that body has been eaten he takes a good form, and when only a little *kamma* remains, the soul is released front hell and is born in an animal womb, and there he does not experience any evil.¹⁴

Although the sequence of action is not entirely clear, it is evident that the man of mixed *kamma* has one experience body in heaven and another one in hell; if evil predominates, apparently he goes first to hell, then to heaven, and then from hell to an animal womb; if good predominates, he goes first to heaven, then to hell, and then from heaven again to a good birth among humans. It is highly significant that the word translated throughout these selections as “experience” also has the strong connotation of “eating” or “consuming.” Thus the soul in limbo eats not only the pinda offering, its literal food, but its own past *kamma*- its spiritual food.

¹⁴ Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, **Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions**, California: University of California Press, 1980), p. 17.

(b) The Process of Birth

This brings us then to the mechanism of birth itself. In early texts, the process is merely described, not explained, and certain questions are raised: “Every dead person consumes both his good and bad deeds; then how do they bear fruit for him? How is it that the little creature is not digested like a piece of food in the woman’s belly where so many heavy foods are digested?” The close historical connection between the transfer of merit-food to dead ancestors and to unborn descendants underlies the Indian variant of an anatomical misconception universal among children: that babies grow in the stomach. But the Sanskrit text supplies a lengthy and serious answer to the naïve question:

When he has suffered through all the hells, the sinner, through the ripening of his own kamma he committed even while inside another body, enters the animal creation, among worms, insects, and birds; among wild animals, mosquitoes and so forth; among elephants, trees, cattle, and horses, and other evil and harmful creatures. Then he is born as a man, a contemptible one like a hunchback or a dwarf; among Candalas, Pulkasas, and so forth. And then, accompanied by his remaining sins and merits, he enters the classes in ascending order- Sudra, Vaisya, king, and so forth-and then he comes a Brāhmin, a god, and an Indra. But sometimes he does it in descending order, and evil-doers fall down into hell.¹⁵ This text, the *Garuda Purana*, is unique as regards consciousness as a significant element of semen; it also places more emphasis upon the consciousness of the father himself: “Whatever a man has on mind at the time of impregnation, a creature born of such a nature will enter the womb.” This is a variant of the wide spread Indian belief that whatever one thinks of at the moment of death determines one’s form of rebirth; thus the tale is told of a virtuous man who, being frightened by demons at the moment of his death, thought, “Demons!” and was therefore reborn as a demon. The significant variant in the *Garuda Purāna* is that it is the thought of the father, not of the reborn *jīva* itself that determines this

¹⁵ Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, **Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions**. (California: University of California Press, 1980), p. 18.

birth.

This brings up once more the question of the role of the ka,ma of the parents in the process of rebirth, a role that is implicitly excluded by most of the direct discussions of the karmic process in the Purānas but is obviously central to many of the narratives in these very same texts. There are even hits of it in some of the texts describing the karmic process: The material substance of the embryo becomes completely dried up by kamma and because of the nature of others. Who could these “others” be if not the parents? The Purānas state that the child’s birth is affected by the kamma of the father and the mother; similarly, the embryo’s physical makeup is contributed by both parents: the mother gives hair, nails, skin, flesh, and the father gives bone, sinew and marrow. In the many Purānic accounts of the wicked king Vena, his evil nature is often attributed to his mother’s sinful kamma. The actual mechanism of this karmic transfer during the process of birth is not explained in the Purānas, but the effect of it is certainly taken for granted; and, as we shall see, the transfer of kamma in the opposite direction takes place often during life and after the death of the parent.

2.1.1.3 Kamma and Rebirth in the Mahābhārata

In accordance with its own syncretistic nature and the general propensity of Indian sages and mythographers to appeal to a multivalent range of ideas in treating almost every doctrinal topic, the Mahābhārata recognizes a number of different causal factors at work in arranging both immediate results and ultimate destinies. Any summary of the factors which are cited at one point or another in this great storehouse of Indian cultural lore would necessarily include the following: providential acts of God, divine ordinances, divine power or fate proper, time, death, nature, and finally, human action.¹⁶

¹⁶ Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, **Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions**. (California: University of California Press, 1980), p. 40.

(a) The Causal Determinants of Human Destiny

The variegated nature of the palette of the ancient Indian intellectual tradition is exemplified in the initial chapter of the Svetaśvatara Upanisad where the sage passes in review a series of concepts of causation, then vogue within various schools of thought time, inherent nature, necessity, chance, the elements, the womb, the person, a combination of these, and the soul. He rejects all of these phenomena as being incapable of forming the causal basis of the existence of conscious beings and contends, instead, that it is the “power of God himself, concealed in its own qualities” that controls all the forces mentioned, “from time to the soul.” The importance of this passage lies in the fact that it is both a synoptic history of the religious philosophies of India up to the time of the late Upanisads and a kind of prospectus for philosophical reflection on questions of causation and human destiny for centuries to come. The durability of this set of ideas is demonstrated by the appearance of a comparable statement made by Yudhisthira in the Santi-parvan:

Among the various groups of scholars, there are some who say that in the production of results, human effort (purusakira) is primary. Some learned ones say that destiny (darva) is primary and some that it is nature that is the motivating force. Others say that acts flowing from effort (combined) with destiny produce results, assisted by nature. Rather than taking any one of these (factors) as the sole cause of results, others say that the three in conjunction produce results. These, of course, are the views of those who depend on acts with reference to goals. Those, however, whose view of things is established upon the truth, know Brahman to be the cause.¹⁷

While the epic sages drew upon this set of ideas almost exclusively in characterizing the principle of causation, they manifested a

¹⁷ F. Edgerton, “Action and Rebirth,” **Consult the essay**, (London: University of California Press, 1980), p. 157.

remarkable lack of consensus concerning the precise number and combination of causal factors which they believed to be operative in the world. The passage from the Sānti-parvan above suggests that the various schools could be classified under two rubrics: those which were committed to a life of action in quest of worldly goals and, perhaps, heaven after death, and those which were committed to the renunciation of all worldly values (including heaven) in preference for the liberate knowledge of absolute truth. The particular concept of causation and human action to which any person gave allegiance would have been dictated by the school of thought or life-ethic to which he was committed. While the philosophies of Sankhya and Vedanta provided the philosophical basis and framework for a majority of discourses on human action and destiny numerous sectarian traditions also made a significant imprint upon epic thought.

One conclusion that we might draw from this diversification of philosophical perspectives and the inclination to intermingle ideas drawn from a variety of schools of thought evidenced throughout the Mahābhārata. The sages and scholars failed to discover any single principle of causation that could account for all the exigencies of human life. Or, to state the matter affirmatively, like their Vedic forebears, the epic writers were prepared to embrace a diverse array of doctrines, in the conviction that while reality is one, it can be designated by many names.

A cursory survey of a select number of passages is in the Mahābhārata. Which address some aspect of the topic of the nature of human action and its role in influencing human destiny will illuminate the range of ethic religious ideas to which the sages appealed and the nature of the existential situations in which such questions demanded a didactic response.

(b) The Process of Death

Whenever a person is haunted by a sense of his own approaching death, his mind becomes overwhelmed with fear, doubts, and despair. As a result, he is diverted from the course of thought and action which he knows to be proper and conducive to a felicitous existence. As the intensity of his anxiety grows, he develops poor eating habits, with the result that he eats on an irregular basis and partakes of improper types of food. In the course of time he develops an intestinal disorder that combines with the psychological infirmity to create a disruption of the balance among the three humors. The disequilibrium among the humors in the body provokes other severe psychosomatic infirmities and, ultimately, death, if the degenerative process is not reversed.

According to a more detailed account of this process that follows immediately in the same text, the wind in the body becomes agitated in response to the combined disorders.¹⁸ The wind disperses debilitating heat throughout the organism. The free and natural movements of the vital breaths are first restrained and then, just prior to the moment of death, halted completely.

Excited by another violent disorder, the wind inflicts upon the body an immobilizing chill and thereby dissolves the body into its five component elements. In order to escape confinement within the tortured frame, the wind residing within the *prana* and *apana* frantically rushes upward and abandons the body, leaving it destitute of warmth, breathe, beauty, and consciousness. The channels through which the person once apprehended sense objects collapse with the loss of the support of the life breaths, the internal wind, and the *jīva*. As a result, all perception ceases.

The *jīva* attracts to itself the basic elements and fuses them together to form the vital organs. Whenever those vital parts are pierced, the *jīva*, rising up, enters the heart and immediately represses

¹⁸ J. Filliozat, **The Classical Doctrine of Indian Medicine**, (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Oriental Booksellers And Publishers, 1964), p. 196.

the principle of cognition. Though still retaining the rudimentary faculty of consciousness, the individual is not conscious of anything. With the unification of the vital functions, the mind is overwhelmed with darkness. Deprived of all its life-supports, the *jiva* is agitated by the wind, At this point, the person makes one long final exhalation, and the unconscious body experiences a final shudder. Deserted by the *jiva*, the person is recognized as dead.

Even though it is now separated from the body, the *jiva*, nonetheless, is surrounded on all sides by its deeds, “marked” by auspicious and inauspicious deeds. The *jiva* is said to be imperceptible in its present condition to all except those Brahmins who, endowed with spiritual knowledge and the resolutions of the scriptures, have the capacity to perceive the moral and spiritual quality of a person’s deeds, by deciphering the “signs” that are left behind by those deeds in the post-mortem state. The soul of the deceased is said to experience pain of an identical nature at the time of both death and rebirth, caused, no doubt, by the rapid transition from one mode of being to another. This latter statement may refer, implicitly, to that postmortem state of consciousness in which the *jiva* experiences rewards and punishments demanded by acts in the previous lifetime. However this may be the assertion is made that until that time when the soul is freed completely from bondage to egotism and rebirth, each and every lifetime will be framed and suffused by suffering.¹⁹

Another significant feature of the anthropology that informs this passage is the absence of any reference to a preternatural being or principle, or to any non-material factor connected with the death process. Mental anxiety arising from the anticipation of death appears to be the sole causal factor. This text appears to draw directly upon the writings of either Caraka or Susruta or both, where the conception of man is delineated in the terms of philosophical materialism. Nevertheless, reference is made to the influences of divine forces upon the human

¹⁹ Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, **Karma And Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions**. (London: University of California Press, 1980), p. 55.

situation elsewhere in the Anugītā, and such references are juxtaposed, without being completely synthesized, with the concepts of materialistic physiology as a means of accommodating the central theistic bias of the Anugītā, and of the Mahābhārata generally.

(c) The Mechanism of Rebirth

Given the fact that the *jīva* is compelled to encounter the effects of its previous deeds and to assume a mode of being that is different from its true nature, the question arises as to why the various *jīvas* came under the sway of corporeality in the first place. The Brahmin's explanation of the "initial incarnation" of the *jīvas* is framed by a philosophical cosmology composed of ideas drawn from both Vedānta and Sankhya- a procedure commonly followed in virtually every part of the Mahābhārata. According to this cosmology, the Grandfather of all the creatures first created a body for himself and then fashioned the three worlds with both moving and still creatures. He then created *pradhāna*.²⁰ It pervades and constitutes everything in the cosmos and, therefore, is known by the sages to be the "chief" constituent of all phenomena. Every creature has a dualistic nature: the invisible, non-material, spiritual essence of the self is the imperishable; the visible, material, corporeal abode of the self is the perishable. Prajāpati then created all the primal elements and all the immobile creatures, after which he ordained a temporal boundary as well as transmigrations and a returning for all mortals.

This account of the cosmology and the establishment of the law governing birth and death differ markedly from the version presented in the subsection "The Process of Corporeal Dissolution at Death" above. This is all the more remarkable given the fact that the two accounts are, supposedly, delivered by a single person. Whereas the first account makes no mention of a supernatural agent in connection with the

²⁰Gerald James Larson, **Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of Its History and Meaning**, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), p. 121.

establishment of the cosmic-order, the second credits a personal or quasi-personal divine being with the fashioning of not only the material basis of existence, the primal elements and the creatures of every species, but of the law of transmigration as well. The latter section makes no mention whatever of the role of kamma in the determination of human destiny. This passage supports a position midway between philosophical Vedānta and devotional Kṛṣṇaism, by attributing all primary causative action to god while, at the same time, identifying that Creator as Brahma-Prajāpati rather than Kṛṣṇa. We might be justified in assuming that the idea of kamma is the underlying assumption of every statement on human destiny in the Mahābhārata, but taking this text as it stands the responsibility for the creation of the world-order and the actualization of human destiny lies with the divine being, with no contribution of any magnitude from man himself.

2.1.1.4 Rebirth and Advaita Vedānta

The reincarnation theory essentially says that, there is a ‘soul’, called variously ‘*atman*’ or ‘*purusa*’ (‘*jiva*’ in the Brāhma Sūtras) which exists in our heart, and which is the real master of our consciousness. This soul can exist apart from the consciousness, and after death, this soul comes out of the body and takes a different consciousness which may be higher or lower depending on its kamma. When the consciousness with which it was associated is exceptionally clear, then the soul does not have any more rebirths and merges with the Brahman.

However, a soul defined in this way, as existing apart from the consciousness and undergoing rebirth, suggests that there are three levels of existence, Brahman at one end, the soul in the middle and the body–mind complex at the other end.

This leads to logical and ontological problems for Advaita, as it is then difficult to explain the nature of the soul, and therefore the Upanishads in some sections strives to say that this ‘soul’ is ultimately non–different from Brahman. This point is also repeatedly emphasized by

Sankaracharya. However, this explanation does not work, as the soul necessarily has to be separate from Brahman as long as it is undergoing the cycle of rebirth.

If the theory of reincarnation were discarded, then the soul needed not regard as a separate entity and can consider ones' own consciousness itself as ones' soul or *atman*, as our *purusa* and *jiva*. We then have only two levels of existence, the relative body–mind complex and the absolute Brahman. This theory is logical from all fronts and is a clear and unambiguous structure. However, this cannot be accepted by traditional Advaita because reincarnation is not supported by such a theory.

In the Upanishads, as already discussed, the majority of sutras support a two level existence, and three level existences with a soul is brought in only when reincarnation is discussed. If we are to accept the soul as consciousness, we also have to discard reincarnation. Most parts of the Upanishads which discuss death accept the theory of reincarnation. However, there are some sutras in which reincarnation is not so clearly stated, and which can support a philosophy which does not accept reincarnation.

2.1.1.5 Regression of Souls

In the Orient the belief in regression of human souls to subhuman level is prevalent and is based usually on a literal interpretation of certain scriptures. The earliest sacred writings, the Vedas, make no mention of regression, while the Upanishads have only one or two casual references thereto. The dead letter interpretation of later texts has served the special interests of the orthodox Brahmin priests, for rigid caste practices are easily enforced when the penalty for violation is declared to be rebirth as an animal or insect.

The Western reincarnations ask: is it conceivable that a human being with his remarkable mental powers could be "encased" in an insect

or bird? Would not the mere contact cause instant disintegration, just as high voltage power shatters a lamp? Furthermore, how could precipitation into an animal frame be in the least effective as a remedial or punitive measure, for a no thinking animal would have little awareness of the loss of status and karmic lesson? Aristotle states on regression: “For any soul to clothed with anybody is as absurd as to say that the art of carpentry could embody itself in a musician's flutes; each art must use its tools, each soul its body.”

Radhakrishnan believes that the Hindu idea of regression “may have been derived from the beliefs of the aboriginal tribes,” when the ancient Aryans descended into the Indian peninsula from their original home in northern Asia. “In almost all regions of the world,” he states, “the untutored savage thought that human souls could pass into animal bodies.” Edward Tylor, the father of anthropology, interestingly adds:

As it seems that the first conception of souls may have been that of the souls of men, this being afterwards extended by analogy to the souls of animals, plants, etc., so it may seem that the original idea of transmigration was the straightforward and reasonable one of human souls being reborn in new human bodies, where they were recognized by family likenesses in successive generations. This notion may have been afterwards extended to take in rebirth in bodies of animals. .. The half-human features and actions and characters of animals are watched with wondering sympathy by the savage, as by the child. The beast is the very incarnation of familiar qualities of man; and such names as lion, bear, fox, owl, parrot, viper, worm, when we apply them as epithets to men, condense into a word some leading feature of a human life. Consistently with this, we see in looking over details of savage transmigration that the creatures often have an evident fitness to the character of the human beings whose souls are to pass into them, so that the savage philosopher's fancy of

transferred souls offered something like an explanation of the likeness between beast and man.²¹

The history of the regression idea is probably worth investigating. It is on this subject that Western prejudice against reincarnation often centers, and the stories missionaries and travelers relate serve only to increase the prejudice. When it is observed, for example, that the Jain and the Buddhist act very carefully as to animals and insects, it is hastily concluded that this is done because dead friends or relatives are thought to exist therein. On the contrary, such care is usually exercised out of reverence for life. Applying the reincarnations philosophy to the lower kingdoms, the Buddha enunciated this general commandment: “Kill not-for pity’s sake-and lest ye slay the meanest thing upon its upward way.” Whether this injunction applies to harmful insects and dangerous animals has always been an open question.

2.1.2 Rebirth in Jainism

Jainism is an ancient religion from India that teaches that way to liberation and bliss is to live a life of harmlessness and renunciation. Jainism began in the 6th century as a reformation movement within Hinduism. Jains trace their history through a succession of twenty-four victorious saviors and teachers known as Tirthankaras, with the first being Rishabhanatha, who is believed to have lived millions of years ago, and twenty-fourth being the Mahavira around 500 BC. Jains believe that Jainism is an eternal dharma with the Tirthankaras guiding every cycle of the Jain cosmology.

The main religious premises of Jainism are *ahimsā*, *anekantavada*, *aparigraha* and asceticism. Followers of Jainism take five main vows: *ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya*, *brahmacharya*, and *aparigraha*. These principles have impacted Jain culture in many ways, such as leading to a

²¹ Joseph Head and S.L Cranston, **Reincarnation in World Thought**, (New York: Julian Press, 1971), p. 47.

predominantly vegetarian lifestyle that avoids harm to animals and their life cycles. Parasparopagraho Jivanam is the motto of Jainism. Namokar Mantra is the most common and basic prayer in Jainism.

Jainism has two major ancient sub traditions, Digambaras and Svetambaras; and several smaller sub-traditions that emerged in the 2nd millennium CE. The Digambaras and Svetambaras have different views on ascetic practices, gender and which Jain texts can be considered canonical. Jain mendicants are found in all Jain sub-traditions, with laypersons supporting the mendicants' spiritual pursuits with resources.

Present life is nothing more than a link of the great chain of transmigratory circuit. The doctrine of *kamma* is meaningless in the absence of a fully developed doctrine of transmigration. The soul that runs through various stages of birth and death is not to be understood in the shape of a collection of habits and attitudes. It is in the form of an independent entity to which all these habits and attitudes belong. It is a spiritual and immaterial entity which is permanent and eternal in the midst of all changes. To put it in psychological form, personal immortality is indeed impossibility. But individual immortality is one of the deepest truths of life.²²

When a soul enters a new birth, it is born into a body and life according to the *kamma* it has gained in previous lives.

The soul can be born in one of the following conditions – *gatis*:

1. a human being – *manussagati*
2. a heavenly being, living in the heavens – *devagati*
3. an infernal being, living in the hells – *nirayagati*
4. an animal or plant – *tiricchanagati*.²³

²² Joseph Head and S.L Cranston, **Reincarnation in World Thought**, (New York: Julian Press, 1971), p. 49.

²³ Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, **Karma And Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions**, (London: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 136-137.

Activities and thoughts during a lifetime create karmas, which may be positive or negative. Positive karmas arise from behaviour Jains consider meritorious, such as giving alms to mendicants and avoiding violence. Negative karmas are generated by conduct condemned in Jain scriptures, such as lying, being greedy or committing deliberate violence.

Gathering positive *karmas* may lead to birth as a god or human being. Having lots of negative *karmas* may result in birth as an animal or even an insect, plant or hellish being. This makes it difficult to follow Jain principles and gain enough positive *karma* to be born in a better condition in the next life. However, even a soul born as a god is trapped within the cycle of births. The best condition to be born into is that of a human, because it is the only one in which the soul can be liberated.

2.1.2.1 The Jaina Universe

The Jaina “universe” (*loka*) is a three dimensional structure divided into five parts.

(A) The Lower World consists of seven layers and is the abode of infernal beings (*naraki*) as well as certain demigods (demons, titan, etc.).

(B) The Middle, or Terrestrial, World consists of innumerable concentric island-continents with Jambudvīpa in the center. This is the abode of humans and animals. Human beings are not found beyond the third “continent” from the center.

(C) The Higher, or Celestial, World, are found the abodes of heavenly beings (*devas*).

(D) Beyond the border of the Celestial World, marked by the crescent, is the permanent abode of the Liberated Souls. This region is the apex of “World-space” (*ākāśaloka*).

(E) Contains abodes restricted to inhabitation by ekendriyas. The area surrounding this entire structure is known as “Space without Worlds”, which is devoid of souls, matter, and time. It should be noted

that there is no provision for a *pitr-loka* (World of Ancestors) in the Jain cosmology.

2.1.2.2 The Cycle of Birth

Samsāra is one of the principal theories in Jain belief and is closely linked to the concepts of the soul and kamma. Literally meaning ‘wandering around’ in Sanskrit, the term *samsāra* describes the recurring process in which a soul is born into a body, which lives and dies, and then is reborn into a different body. Jains believe that this event repeats endlessly for souls that have *kammas* bound to them. The aim of Jainism is liberation of the soul from this cycle, which requires the soul to be free of karma.²⁴

The Jains also call the concept the ‘river of rebirth’, which explains why the term *Tīrthaṅkara* is frequently used as a synonym for Jina. Meaning ‘ford-breaker’, *Tīrthaṅkara* emphasises that the Jinas have led the way to liberation – *mokṣa* – and left a path for others to follow.

Rebirth can take place in one of four conditions – *gatis* – which relate to the *kammas* gathered in previous lifetimes. All activities and thoughts create *kammas*, which can be negative or positive. Bad *kammas* lead to rebirth as a creature of low spirituality and minimal senses, whereas good *kammas* affect birth as a god or human being. The most desirable condition is that of the human being, because liberation is impossible for any other kind of being.

The Jain cycle of rebirths is similar to the *samsāra* found in Hinduism and Buddhism, but is different in that the transmigration of the soul from one body to another is instant. There are other major differences in religious tenets that influence the various conceptions of

²⁴ Shridhar B. Shrotri, **Jainism an Indian Religion of Salvation**, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1999), pp. 259-273.

the cycle of births.

2.1.2.3 Endless Cycle

The concept of continuous rebirth is one of the principal Jain beliefs. Jains hold that a soul exists within one physical body, dies and is then born into a different body in a different life, with this process repeating. This continues for eternity or until the soul is free of all *kamma*. The liberation of the soul from the cycle of rebirth (*mokṣa*) is the ultimate aim of Jainism.

The cycle of births is usually considered to be long for each soul, with the soul reborn many times in different lifetimes. The traditional number of rebirths is 8,400,000.²⁵ Only souls that become Jinas have few births. The 24th Jina Mahāvīra, for instance, is said to have had 27 rebirths before the last, when he became a *Jina*. Various numbers of rebirths are given for other *Jinas*. In each lifetime or birth a soul may develop spiritually or it may deteriorate spiritually, which influences future births. Spiritual progress can be tracked against the 14 stages of the ‘scale of perfection’ which links conduct and beliefs to level of spirituality. Spiritual development is not a straightforward advance, as the diverse conditions of the various births and the activities in different lives all influence *kamma*’s interaction with the soul. The Jain game of *gyanbazi*, which is similar to the Western game of snakes and ladders, clearly sets out the ups and downs of the soul’s journey.

Eventually, a soul may develop spiritually enough to free itself of old *kamm*s and avoid creating new ones. It then gains omniscience or enlightenment and, when its body dies, can become a liberated soul (*siddha*). Instead of being born into another life, it remains disembodied and rises to the *siddha-silā*, at the apex of the universe. This place is where all the *siddhas* dwell together, enjoying the realization of

²⁵ Shridhar B. Shrotri, **Jainism an Indian Religion of Salvation**, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1999), pp. 318-322.

their true nature of perfection.

2.1.2.4 The Soul

The soul's essential character is consciousness and knowing. In its original state, the soul knows everything: nothing is hidden from it; it commands the knowledge of existence in all its various aspects, and at all times, past, present and future. In its present state in this world, ensconced in a material body, the soul's knowledge is made imperfect and incomplete by the limitations matter places on it. The soul is graded into five levels according to which form it takes in its earthly existence.

At the lowest level are the souls possessing only one sense—touch; these include the elements themselves, earth, water, air and fire, and the vast vegetable kingdom. At the second level are the souls possessing two senses: touch and taste – including worms and shell creatures. At the third level are the souls possessing three senses: those of touch, taste and smell including ants, bugs and moths. At the fourth level are the souls possessing four senses: touch, taste, smell and sight; these include, for example, wasps, locusts and butterflies.

At the fifth and highest level are the souls possessing all five senses - touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. These include four types of creatures: infernal beings, the higher animals, humans, and heavenly beings. The soul's journey from one level of consciousness to another and from one grade to another, up or down the scale, depends on the inexorable law of Kamma.²⁶

According to Jainism, soul is the conscious substance that is present in all living-beings. It is the soul that knows things, performs activities, enjoys pleasures, suffers pain and illumines itself and other objects.

²⁶ Aidan Rankin, **Jainism and Environmental Philosophy**, (UK, Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 77-79.

Some other points associated with the concept of soul are:

The soul is eternal, but it also undergoes changes of states.

Each soul is an independent entity and is not a part of any God.

When a living-being dies, the soul migrates to a new body until it gets liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

Each soul is responsible for what it does. It experiences the consequences of its actions.

The soul can become liberated from the cycle of birth and death. As such there are two types of souls – the liberated souls (siddhas) and souls bonded with karmas.

There are infinite souls in the universe. The number remains constant as soul cannot be created or destroyed.

The soul expands and contracts fully according to the size of the body it lives in. When it is liberated from all karmas, it is two-third the size of the last body it lived in.

2.1.2.5 Kamma and the problem of Rebirth in Jainism

Although nearly every religious or philosophical tradition of India has accepted the idea of kamma as valid, a wide divergence exists in the extent to which various schools have developed this idea into a coherent system of doctrine. In terms of the level of interest shown in such development- a level best measured by the amount of sacred and scholastic works devoted to it-one tradition, that of the Jainas, stands clearly apart from all others. In addition to the large number of kamma-grantha texts found among the Svetambara scriptures, Digammas possess some thirty-eight volumes of the Satkhandagama, the Kasāyabhrta, and their commentaries. Portions of the latter are said to represent the only surviving examples of the ancient Pūeva texts, which Digambaras suggest may even predate Mahāvīra himself. All of these materials deal in great detail with various problems relating to kamma in its four aspects,

namely, influx, bondage, duration, and fruition.²⁷

Jainas seem to have been preoccupied with these problems from the earliest times; not only do their own scriptures pay a great deal of attention to such matters, but certain Buddhist writings in Pali attempt to discredit Jaina theories of kamma, indicating that these theories were even then seen as fundamental to the overall Jaina world-view.

We are not yet in a position to explain definitively the earlier and more intense interest in kamma shown by Jaina thinkers relative to their Brāhmanical counterparts. Perhaps the entire concept that a person's situation and experiences are in fact the results of deeds committed in various lives may be not of Āryan origin at all, but rather may have developed as part of the indigenous Gangetic tradition from which the various Sramana movements arose. In any case, as we shall see Jaina views on the process and possibilities of rebirth are distinctively Non-Hindu; the social ramifications of these views, moreover, have been profound.

2.1.2.6 The Process of Rebirth

In the theory of rebirth we assume the kammas to be somehow transmitted with the soul from one life to the next after rebirth. This entity of life that is transmitted we shall call "Entity" for convenience. It should have at least three properties:

- (1) It travels very fast;
- (2) It has a specific destination, i.e., the place of birth (conception); and
- (3) It allows very specific individuality in that a person's *kammas* are specifically attached and transfuse with the zygote of the newborn. Now, what known scientific elements could hypothetically

²⁷ N. Tatia, **Studies in Jaina Philosophy**, (Benares: Jain Cultural Research Society, 1951), pp. 220-260.

possess these three properties?

First, consider the pheromones, the chemical compounds identified in the study of animal communications. These substances are known to be produced by ants, bees, and so forth, which leave odor trails by individuals to inform their social groups about their position, distance, path of travel, and so forth. Very small quantities are needed, the odor is very rapidly disseminated, and scientists think that the complexity of these compounds can allow many specific signals. Specificity, that is, the great amount of variation among individuals transmitted through an equal diversity of pheromones is quite feasible. Thus, conceivably, at least higher animals including men are capable of communicating during their lifetime or at the time of death very specific individualized signals, and provide some entity of transmission.

A second form of this entity could be in radio waves, released as “energy” at the time of death, which would travel at high speed, have the capacity of being received by a specific destination, and carry a specific message (or *kammas*). Now, one could easily postulate within the realm of current ideas about the origin of mutation that this “energy” received by the zygote could induce changes in DNA, the genetic code of life, which when decoded during the newborn’s lifetime would bring about predestined changes. Birth defects or inherited diseases, for instance, are now attributed to chance origin of mutations and expression in a suitable environment. With the present thesis, one could argue that their origin is due in part to parental genetic materials and in part to the “entity” received from the previous life.

Both of these ideas are speculative in large part, but are present here in relation to some specific facts, which are not to be misconstrued as proofs but are merely suggestions of feasible, scientifically permissible theses. The most serious difficulty in formulating these ideas lies in our ignorance about the precise mechanism by which “destination” or “receiving station” is determined. How does a zygote receive its proper kammas? How do parents of a child provide for receiving it? How this entity is maintained in a zygote to unfold the consequences poses a

second difficulty. Thus, at this time we are only speculating about the details of these theses. We need to understand the physical or metaphysical features of these processors of information.

2.2 Concluding remarks

In the pre-Buddha time, Hinduism and Jainism were famous. Rebirth in Hinduism is not limited to being born as human. We may have had prior lives as animals, plants, or as divine beings who rule part of nature. There is no permanent heaven or hell in Hinduism. In the afterlife, based on one's *kamma*, the soul is reborn as another being in heaven, hell, or a living being on earth (human, animal). In Jainism, along with its theories of *saṃsāra* and *kamma*, are central to its theological foundations. Rebirth in contemporary Jainism traditions is the belief that the worldly life is characterized by continuous rebirths and suffering in various realms of existence. The Jaina philosophy assumes that the soul exists and is eternal, passing through cycles of transmigration and rebirth. After death, rebirth into a new body is asserted to be instantaneous in early Jaina texts. They are original rebirth concepts in Buddhism.

Chapter III

The Rebirth Doctrine in Buddhism

The rebirth doctrine in Buddhism will be discussed under four headlines: (1) Meaning of rebirth, (2) Rebirth concept in Buddhism, (3) The significance of rebirth, and (4) The process of rebirth.

3.1 Meaning of Rebirth

Rebirth normally is understood to be the transmigration of a soul to another body after death. There is no such teaching in Buddhism--a fact that surprises many people, even some Buddhists. One of the most fundamental doctrines of Buddhism is *anatta*, or *anatman* - no soul or no self. There is no permanent essence of an individual self that survives death, and thus Buddhism does not believe in reincarnation in the traditional sense, such as the way it is understood in Hinduism. However, Buddhists often speak of "rebirth." If there is no soul or permanent self, what is it that is "reborn"?

In the Buddhist dictionary, Ven. Ñānatiloka described the meaning of rebirth as *Paṭisandhi* follow.

Paṭisandhi: reunion, relinking, rebirth, is one of the fourteen functions of consciousness (*viññāna-kicca*) It is a kamma resultant type of consciousness and arises at the moment of conception with the forming of new life in the mother's womb. Immediately afterwards it sinks into the subconscious stream of existence (*bhavaṅga-sota*) and conditioned thereby ever and ever again corresponding states of sub-consciousness arise. Thus, it is really rebirth-consciousness that determines the latent character of a person. "Neither has this consciousness transmigrated from the previous existence to this present existence, nor did it arise without

such conditions, as *kamma*, *kamma*-formations, propensity, object, etc. That this consciousness has not come from the previous existence to this present existence, yet that it has come into existence by means of conditions included in the previous existence such as *kamma*.”²⁸

3.2 Main Idea of Rebirth

The rebirth doctrine in Buddhism, sometimes referred to as reincarnation or metempsychosis, asserts that rebirth does not necessarily take place as another human being, but as an existence in one of the six realms (*gati*) called Bhavachakra. The six realms of rebirth include Deva (heavenly), demigod (*asura*), human (*manussa*), animals (*tiricchana*), ghosts (*peta*), and resident of hell (*niraya*). This rebirth, state Buddhism traditions, is determined by *kamma*, with good realms favored by kusala (good *kamma*), while a rebirth in evil realms is a consequence of *akusala* (bad *kamma*). While nibbāna is the ultimate goal of Buddhist teaching, much of traditional Buddhist practice has been centered on gaining merit and merit transfer, whereby one gains rebirth in the good realms and avoids rebirth in the evil realms.

Death is only the beginning in Buddhist thought. Buddhism embraces the concept of rebirth, also commonly known as reincarnation, as a fundamental principle that governs our world. Each person born on the planet Earth is locked into a cycle of death and rebirth and can only achieve Nibbāna when they successfully break the cycle.

Origins of the rebirth concept in Buddhism can be traced to Hindu doctrines of reincarnation and *kamma*. Rebirth has often been dismissed as a superstition in modern society, but it actually forms an important element in understanding how Buddhists believe they reach enlightenment.

²⁸ Ñānatiloka, **Buddhist Dictionary: A Manual of Buddhist Terms and Dictionaries**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1956), p.163.

Buddha taught that life does not end. It merely continues on in other forms. There are six possible states of existence for all lifeforms.²⁹

These states include:

Heaven

Human Life

Asura (Demi-Gods)

Hungry Ghost (Realm of evil deeds)

Animals

Hell

Where a person is reborn and what form they assume hinges on *kamma*. Everything in life is tied to *kamma*. Actions create a new *kamma* that imprints on the soul. Past actions in past lives, both positive and negative, shape where a soul ends up when reborn into a new body. Good *kamma* means happiness in future lives. Bad *kamma* means suffering down the road.

The basic principle behind rebirth is that death is not meant to be feared. It should be seen as a door opening to a new life. And a person who has cultivated good *kamma* is promised to experience rebirth in a higher realm more suitable to that *kamma*.

The ultimate goal for Buddhists, however, is to escape the never-ending cycle of death and rebirth and reach *nibbāna*. Each soul desires attachment to a body and will seek out a new body and start a new life upon the death of its previous body. Obtaining release from the limitations of existence into a state of enlightenment constitutes *nibbāna*.

It is possible for a person to reach *nibbāna* only through living a pure life and subduing their ego before birth leads to death. Buddha taught that each person must prepare for death whenever it comes by cleansing the mind of impurities. Taking a step forward in this direction

²⁹ Maha Thera Narada, **A Manual of Abhidhamma (Abhidhammattha Sangaha)**, (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1979), pp. 265-273.

requires letting go of attachments to possessions and other people. It means accepting that nothing in life is permanent. Once a person does these things, they can be free from experiencing nonstop death and rebirth.

3.2.1 Impermanence and Renunciation

Renunciation is another word one hears a lot in Buddhism. Very simply, it means to renounce whatever binds us to ignorance and suffering. It is not simply a matter of avoiding things we crave as a penance for craving. The Buddha taught that genuine renunciation requires thoroughly perceiving how we make ourselves unhappy by clinging to things we desire. When we do, renunciation naturally follows. It is an act of liberation, not a punishment.

3.2.2 Impermanence and Change

The world you see around you actually is in a state of flux. The human senses may not be able to detect moment-to-moment change, but everything is always changing. When ones fully appreciate this, ones can fully appreciate experiences without clinging to them. People can also learn to let go of fears, disappointments, and regrets. Nothing is real but this moment. Because nothing is permanent, everything is possible. Liberation is possible. Enlightenment is possible.

3.3 The Significance of Rebirth

The one question which through all its complexities is the sum of philosophy and to which all human enquiry comes round in the end, is the problem of ourselves, why we are here and what we are, and what is behind and before and around us, and what we are to do with ourselves, our inner significances and our outer environment. In the idea of evolutionary rebirth, if we can once find it to be a truth and recognize its

antecedents and consequences, it is a very sufficient clue for an answer to all these connected sides of the one perpetual question. A spiritual evolution of which our universe is the scene and earth its ground and stage, though its plan is still kept back above from our yet limited knowledge,— this way of seeing existence is a luminous key which we can fit into many doors of obscurity. But we have to look at it in the right focus, to get its true proportions and, especially, to see it in its spiritual significance more than in its mechanical process. The failure to do that rightly will involve us in much philosophical finessing, drive on this side or the other to exaggerated negations and leave our statement of it, however perfect may be its logic, yet unsatisfying and unconvincing to the total intelligence and the complex soul of humanity.

A person is a composite of four primary elements. At death, the earth (in the body) returns to and merges with the (external) earth-substance. The fire returns to and merges with the external fire-substance. The liquid returns to and merges with the external liquid-substance. The wind returns to and merges with the external wind-substance. The sense-faculties scatter into space. Four men, with the bier as the fifth, carry the corpse. Its eulogies are sounded only as far as the charnel ground. The bones turn pigeon-colored. The offerings end in ashes. Generosity is taught by idiots. The words of those who speak of existence after death are false, empty chatter. With the breakup of the body, the wise and the foolish alike are annihilated, destroyed. They do not exist after death.³⁰

The bare idea of repeated births as the process of the soul existence does not carry us much further than the simple material reality of this single life in the body, that first fact of the conscious sensation and memory which is the occasion of all our speculations. Behind the present starting-point and preceding this one lappet of the race in the fields of being rebirth reminds us indeed of a past, of pregnant anterior courses, a soul-existence in many previous bodies which have immediately created

³⁰ D I 49.

what we now are. But to what use or advantage if there is no progressive significance in the pre-existence and our persevering continuity? In front of us it rolls far back from the vision the obstruction of the near blank wall of death; the journeying upon earth becomes less of a long or brief unretraceable road ending abruptly and perplexingly in a cul-de-sac; the physical dissolution is robbed of the cruelest poison of its sting.

For the burden of death to man the thinking, willing, feeling creature is not the loss of this poor case or chariot of body, but it is the blind psychical finality death suggests, the brute breaking off of the heart's kind and sweet relations and affections, the futile convicting discontinuity of that marvelous and all-supporting soul-sense which gives us our radiant glimpses of the glory and delight of existence,— that is the discord and harsh inconsequence against which the thinking living creature revolts as incredible and inadmissible. The fiery straining to immortality of our life, mind, psyche, which can assent to cessation only by turning in enmity upon their own flame of nature, and the denial of it which the dull acquiescence of a body consenting inertly to death as to life brings in on us, is the whole painful irreconcilable contradiction of our double nature.³¹

Rebirth takes the difficulty and solves it in the sense of soul continuity with a beat of physical repetition. Like other non-materialistic solutions it gives the right to the soul's suggestion as against the body's and sanctions the demand for survival, but unlike some others it justifies the bodily life by its utility to the soul's continued self-experience; our too swift act in the body ceases to be an isolated accident or an abrupt interlude, it gets the justification of a fulfilling future as well as a creating past for its otherwise haphazard actions and relations. But simple persistence, mechanical continuity is not enough; that is not all our psychical being signifies, not the whole luminous meaning of survival and continuity; without ascension, without expansion, without some growing up straight into light in the strength of our spirit our higher

³¹ Sri Aurobindo, **Essays in Philosophy and Yoga**, (India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1998), pp. 296-298.

members toil here uncompleted, our birth in matter is not justified by any adequate meaning. We are very little better off than if death remained our ending; for our life in the end becomes then an indefinitely continued and renewed and temporarily consequent in place of an inconsequent abruptly ended and soon convicted futility.

By rebirth, too, this world around us, our environment, its suggestions, its opportunities are no longer left as the field of an ephemeral physical flowering or as a Life which cares very little for and means very little to the individual, though it may offer much perhaps during its uncertain longer time to the species. The world grows to us a field of soul-experience, a system of soul-recurrences, a means of self-effectuation, perhaps a crystallizing of the conscious being's effective self-reflections. But to what end if our recurrence is only a repetition or a hesitating fluctuation within a few set types with a very limited, always uncompleted circle of accomplishment? For that is what it comes to, if there is no upward outlet, no infinite progression or no escape or enlarging into the soul's infinities.

Rebirth tells us that what we are is a soul performing constantly the miracle of self-embodiment; but why this embodiment, what this soul has to do here with itself and what use it is to make of this world which is given to it for its grandiose scene, its difficult, plastic material and its besieging battery of multiform stimulus and suggestions, is hardly at all clearer than before. But the perception of rebirth as an occasion and means for a spiritual evolution fills in every hiatus. It makes life a significant ascension and not a mechanical recurrence; it opens to us the divine vistas of a growing soul; it makes the worlds a nexus of spiritual self-expansion; it sets us seeking, and with a sure promise to all of a great finding now or hereafter, for the self-knowledge of our spirit and the self-fulfillment of a wise and divine intention in our existence.

The oppressing sense of a circle of mechanical recurrence and the passionate seeking for an outlet of absolute escape haunted the earlier statements of the truth of rebirth and have left upon them in spite of the depths they fathomed a certain stamp of unsatisfactory inadequacy, not

illogical, for they are logical enough, once their premises are admitted, but unsatisfying, because they do not justify to us our being.³² For, missing the divine utility of the cosmic workings, they fail to explain to us with a sufficiently large, patient, steadfast wholeness God and ourselves and existence, negate too much, miss the positive sense of our strain and leave sounding an immense note of spiritual futility and cosmic discord. No statement of the sense of our being or our non-being has laid a more insistent stress on rebirth than did the Buddhist; but it affirms strongly only the more strongly to negate. It views the recurrence of birth as a prolonged mechanical chain; it sees, with a sense of suffering and distaste, the eternal revolving of an immense cosmic wheel of energy with no divine sense in its revolutions, its beginning an affirmation of ignorant desire, its end a nullifying bliss of escape. The wheel turns uselessly forever disturbing the peace of Non-being and creating souls whose one difficult chance and whole ideal business is to cease. That conception of being is only an extension from our first matter-governed sense of the universe, of our creation in it and of our decisive cessation. It takes up at every point our first obvious view of the bodily life and restates all its circumstances in the terms of a more psychical and spiritual idea of our existence.

The material universe is a stupendous system of mechanical recurrences. A huge mechanical recurrence rules that which is long-enduring and vast; a similar but frailer mechanical recurrence sways all that is ephemeral and small. The suns leap up into being, flame wheeling in space, squander force by motion and fade and are extinct, again perhaps to blaze into being and repeat their course, or else other suns take their place and fulfil their round. The seasons of Time repeat their unending and unchanging cycle. Always the tree of life puts forth its various flowers and sheds them and breaks into the same flowers in their recurring season. The body of man is born and grows and decays and perishes, but it gives birth to other bodies which maintain the one same

³² Sri Aurobindo, **Rebirth and Karma**, (USA: Lotus Light Publication, 1915), pp. 38-39.

futile cycle. What baffles the intelligence in all this intent and persistent process is that it seems to have in it no soul of meaning, no significance except the simple fact of causeless and purposeless existence dogged or relieved by the annulling or the compensating fact of individual cessation. And this is because we perceive the mechanism, but do not see the Power that uses the mechanism and the intention in its use. But the moment we know that there is a conscious Spirit self-wise and infinite brooding upon the universe and a secret slowly self-finding soul in things, we get to the necessity of an idea in its consciousness, a thing conceived, willed, set in motion and securely to be done, progressively to be fulfilled by these great deliberate workings.

But the Buddhist statement admits no self, spirit or eternal being in its rigorously mechanical economy of existence. It takes only the phenomenon of a constant becoming and elevates that from the physical to the psychical level. As there is evident to our physical mind an energy, action, motion, capable of creating by its material forces the forms and powers of the material universe, so there is for the Buddhist vision of things an energy, action, *kamma*, creating by its psychic powers of idea and association this embodied soul life with its continuity of recurrences.³³ As the body is a dissoluble construction, a composite and combination, so the soul too is a dissoluble construction and combination; the soul life like the physical life sustains itself by a continuous flux and repetition of the same workings and movements. As this constant hereditary succession of lives is a prolongation of the one universal principle of life by a continued creation of similar bodies, a mechanical recurrence, so the system of soul rebirth too is a constant prolongation of the principle of the soul life by a continued creation through *kamma* of similar embodied associations and experiences, a mechanical recurrence. As the cause of all this physical birth and long hereditary continuation is an obscure will to life in Matter, so the cause of continued soul birth is an ignorant desire or will to be in the universal energy of *kamma*. As the

³³ Sri Aurobindo, **Rebirth and Karma**, (USA: Lotus Light Publication, 1915), pp. 157-159.

constant wheeling's of the universe and the motions of its forces generate individual existences that escape from or end in being by an individual dissolution, so there is this constant wheel of becoming and motion of *kamma* which forms into individualized soul-lives that must escape from their continuity by a dissolving cessation. An extinction of the embodied consciousness is our apparent material end; for soul to the end is extinction, the blank satisfaction of Nothingness or some ineffable bliss of a super coincident Non-being. The affirmation of the mechanical occurrence or recurrence of birth is the essence of this view; but while the bodily life suffers an enforced end and dissolution, the soul life ceases by a willed self-extinction.

The Buddhist theory adds nothing to the first obvious significance of life except an indefinite prolongation by rebirth which is a burden, not a gain, and the spiritual greatness of the discipline of self-extinction, the latter, no doubt, a thing of great value. The illusionist solution adds something, but does not differ very greatly in its motive from the Buddhist. It sets against the futile cosmic repetition an eternity of our own absolute being; from the ignorance which creates the illusory mechanism of a recurrence of rebirth, it escapes into the self-knowledge of our ineffable existence. That seems to bring in a positive strain and to give to our being an initial, a supporting and an eventual reality. But the hiatus here is the absence of all true and valid relation between this real being of ours and all our birth and becoming. The last event and end of our births is not represented as any absolute fulfilment of what we are, that would be a great, fruitful and magnificently positive philosophy, nor as the final affirmation of a progressive self-finding, that too would give a noble meaning to our existence; it is a turning away from the demand of the universal Spirit, a refusal of all these cosmic ideas, imaginations, aspirations, action and effectuation.

The way to find our being given us is an absolute denial of all our becoming. We rise to self by a liberating negation of ourselves, and in the result the Idea in the universe pursues its monstrous and aimless road, but the individual ceases and is blest in the cessation. The motive of this way of thought is the same oppressive sense of an ignorant mechanical

cosmic recurrence as in the Buddhist and the same high impatient passion of escape. There is recognition of a divine source of life, but non-recognition of any divine meaning in life. And as for rebirth it is reduced in its significance to a constant mechanism of self-deception, and the will not to live is shown us as the last acquisition, the highest good and the one desirable result of living. The satisfaction which Illusionism gives, for it does give a certain high austere kind of satisfaction to the intellect and to one turn of spiritual tendency, is the pressing to a last point of the obvious antinomy between this great burdensome and tyrannous mechanism, the universe, and the spirit which feels itself of another and a diviner nature, the great relief to a soul pensioning for freedom, but compelled to labor on as a spring of the dull machine, of being able to cast away the cosmic burden, and finally the free and bare absoluteness of this spiritual conclusion.

Nevertheless it gives no real, because no fruitful answer to the problem of God and man and the significance of life; it only gets away from them by a skillful evasion and takes away from them all significance. So that any question of the sense and will in all this tremendous labor and throb and seeking loses meaning. But the challenge of God's universe to the knowledge and strength of the human spirit cannot in the end be met by man with a refusal or solved by an evasion, even though an individual soul may take refuge from the demand, as a man may from the burden of action and pain in unconsciousness, in spiritual trance or sleep or escape through its blank doors into the Absolute. Something the Spirit of the universe means by our labor in existence. Some sense it has in these grandiose rhythms, and it has not undertaken them in an eternally enduring error or made them in a jest. To know that and possess it, to find and fulfil consciously the universal being's hidden significances is the task given to the human spirit.³⁴

The questions which surround our existence elucidate

³⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, (India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1998), pp. 312-318.

themselves at once with a certain satisfactory fullness. What we are is a soul of the transcendent spirit and self-unfolding itself in the cosmos in a constant evolutionary embodiment of which the physical side is only a pedestal of form corresponding in its evolution to the ascending degrees of the spirit, but the spiritual growth is the real sense and motive. What is behind us is the past terms of the spiritual evolution, the upward gradations of the spirit already climbed, by which through constant rebirth we have developed what we are, and are still developing this present and middle human term of the ascension. What is around us is the constant process of the unfolding in its universal aspect: the past terms are there contained in it, fulfilled, overpassed by us, but in general and various type still repeated as a support and background; the present terms are there not as an unprofitable recurrence, but in active pregnant gestation of all that is yet to be unfolded by the spirit, no irrational decimal recurrence helplessly repeating forever its figures, but an expanding series of powers of the Infinite. What is in front of us is the greater potentialities, the steps yet unclimbed, the intended mightier manifestations.

Why we are here is to be this means of the spirit's upward self-unfolding. What we have to do with ourselves and our significances is to grow and open them to greater significances of divine being, divine consciousness, divine power, divine delight and multiplied unity, and what we have to do with our environment is to use it consciously for increasing spiritual purposes and make it more and more a mould for the ideal unfolding of the perfect nature and self-conception of the Divine in the cosmos. This is surely the Will in things which moves, great and deliberate, unhasting, unresting, through whatever cycles, towards a greater and greater informing of its own finite figures with its own infinite Reality.

All this is to the mind that lives in the figures of the present, as it must be to the careful skeptical mind of positive inquiry, no more than a hypothesis; for if evolution is an acknowledged idea, rebirth itself is only

a supposition.³⁵ Take it so, but still it is a better hypothesis than the naive and childlike religious solutions which make the world an arbitrary caprice and man the breathing clay puppet of an almighty human-minded Creator, and at least as good a hypothesis as the idea of a material inconscient Force somehow stumbling into a precarious, ephemeral, yet always continued phenomenon of consciousness, or a creative Life labouring in the Bergsonian formula oppressed but constant in the midst of a universal death, *dandramyamāṇo andhena nīyamāṇo yathāndhaḥ*, until he can get out of it by a spiritual liberation.

There are transcendental questions of the metaphysical necessity, possibility, final reality of an evolutionary manifestation of this kind, but they do not need to be brought in now and here; for the time we are concerned only with its reality to experience and with the processional significance of rebirth, with the patent fact that we are a part of some kind of manifestation and move forward in the press of some kind of evolution.³⁶ We see a Power at work and seek whether in that power there is a conscious Will, an ordered development and have first to discover whether it is the blind result of an organized Chance or in coincident self-compelled Law or the plan of a universal Intelligence or Wisdom. Once we find that there is a conscious Spirit of which this movement is one expression, or even admit that as our working hypothesis, we are bound to go on and ask whether this developing order ceases with what man now is or is laden with something more towards which it and he have to grow, an unfinished expression, a greater unfound term, and in that case it is evidently towards that greater thing that man must be growing; to prepare it and to realize it must be the stage beyond in his destiny.

Towards that new step in the evolution his history as a race must be subconsciously tending and the powers of the highest individuals half consciously striving to be delivered of this greater birth; and since the

³⁵ Charles Elliott, **An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry**, (Canada: the International Institute for Sustainable Development, 1999), pp. 140-156.

³⁶ Sri Aurobindo, **Rebirth and Karma**, (USA: Lotus Light Publication, 1915), pp. 45-46.

ascending order of rebirth follows always the degrees of the evolution, that too cannot be meant to stop short or shoot off abruptly into the superconscious without any regard to the intended step. The relation of our birth to life on other levels of consciousness and to whatever transcendent Super conscience there may be, are important problems, but their solution must be something in harmony with the intention of the Spirit in the universe; all must be part of a unity, and not an imbroglio of spiritual incoherence and contradictions. Our first bridge from the known to the unknown on this line of thought must be to discover how far the yet unfinished ladder of evolution can mount in the earth series. The whole processional significance of rebirth may be wrapped up in that one yet unattempted discovery.

3.4 The Causes and Process of Rebirth

3.4.1 Dependent Origination and Rebirth Roots

The process or cycle of dependent origination is generally presented in the following formula:

Therein, dependent on ignorance arise conditioning activities. Dependent on conditioning activities arises (rebirth) consciousness. Dependent on (rebirth) consciousness arise mind and matter. Dependent on mind and matter arise the six (sense) bases. Dependent on the six (senses) bases arises contact. Dependent on contact arises feeling. Dependent on feeling arises craving. Dependent on craving arises grasping. Dependent on grasping arises action or becoming. Dependent on action arises birth. Dependent on birth arise decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. Thus arises the whole mass of suffering. Herein this is the Law of the dependent arising.³⁷

That process is generic dependent origination. There are twelve

³⁷ Nārada Maha Thera, **A Manual of Abhidhamma (Abhidhammattha Sangaha)**, (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1979), p. 396.

kinds of essential statement of the law. But, this section is an attempt to explain the roots of *kamma* and dependent origination. But the roots of twelve kinds of essential statement are only two. Ignorance and craving should be understood as the two roots.

- (1) Kamma formation,
- (2) Consciousness,
- (3) Mental & physical,
- (4) Six sense bases,
- (5) Contact and
- (6) Feeling are the roots of ignorance.

- (1) Grasping,
- (2) Life,
- (3) Rebirth in future and
- (4) Old age, death, worry, lamentation, pain, grief and despair

are the roots of craving.

3.4.2 The cessation of dependent origination and Rebirth

The two roots of *paṭiccasamuppāda* are *avijjā* and *taṇhā*. If we can cut off these roots, Rebirth will be terminated. Because, rebirth is a part of the Paṭiccamuppāda (dependent origination). By the destruction of these roots does the round cease.³⁸

Ignorance (*avijjā*) and Craving (*taṇhā*) are the roots of the dependent origination and *kamma*, which is an apart of dependent origination. If being can cease the roots of dependent origination, they can cease *kamma* circle of any life, because, *kamma* and life are a part of dependent origination. If beings can cease the ignorance (*avijjā*), they can cease kamma-process or kamma-formation (*saṅkhāra*), consciousness (*viññāna*), corporeality-mentality (*nāma-rūpa*), six sense bases (*salāyatana*) and feeling (*vedanā*).

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 400.

In addition, if being cease the craving (*taṇhā*), they can cease grasping (*upādāna*), life (*bhava*). kamma-process (*kamma-bhava*) and rebirth-process (*upapatti-bhava*), old age and death (*cara-marana*), sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*) and despair (*upāyasa*) If we can eradicate the ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*), we can eradicate the Dependent Origination. If we can eradicate Dependent Origination, we can cease the rebirth. Because, rebirth is a part of Dependent Origination. If we need to try to cease the rebirth and their result, we need the eradicated the ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*), the root of dependent origination and rebirth.

3.4.3 Rebirth Formation Root

Ignorance is the root of rebirth formation, consciousness, mental and physical, six sense bases, contact and feeling. Craving is the root of grasping, life, rebirth in future and old age, death, worry, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Therefore, the roots of rebirth formation are the root not only dependent origination but also rebirth formation or conditioning activities.

3.4.4 Life of Becoming (bhava) Root

Craving is the root of (1) grasping, (2) life or becoming, (3) rebirth, (4) Old age, death, worry, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Therefore, the root of life or becoming is craving.

3.4.5 Kamma Is an Integral of Life (bhava)

Bhava, becoming, is explained as both moral and immoral action which constitute Kamma (*kamma-bhava*) – active process of becoming and the different planes of existence (*upapattibhava*) passive process of becoming. The only difference between *Sankhāra* and *Kammabhava* is that the former pertains to past and the latter to the present. It is only the

(*kamma*) Bhava that conditions the future birth. (*kamma-Bhava*) active process of becoming and (*upāpattibhava*) passive process of becoming are an intergral of Life or becoming (*bhava*). On the other hand, rebirth producing Kamma and rebirth process Kamma are an intergral of life. As craving is the root of life or becoming (*bhava*), craving is the root of (*kamma-bhava*) active process of becoming and (*upapattibhava*) passive process of becoming. Therefore, the roots of dependent origination and kamma are ignorance and craving.

3.4.6 The Cessation Consciousness of Two Roots

There are ten impurities (Ten-*kilesa*). Ignorance (*Avijā*) and craving (*Tana*) are a part of ten Impurities (Ten-*Kilesa*). Ignorance (*Avijā*) and craving (*Tana*) are mentioned with different names in ten purities (ten-*kilesa*). Ignorance (*Avijjā*) is mentioned in ten impurities as Delusion (*Moha*). Craving (*Tana*) is mentioned as Greed (*Lobha*). Path of worthy consciousness can cease ten impurities or ten defilements (Ten-*Kilesa*). Therefore, it can cease the two roots: ignorance and craving.³⁹

3.4.7 The Power of Arahatta Path-Consciousness

An Arahata who can cultivate the Arahatta path-consciousness can eradicate all defilements. He will become a Worthy One. Arahata, literally meaning a worthy one, does not accomplish fresh kammic activities, and he is not subject to rebirth because the conditions for his reproduction in matter have been destroyed. Accordingly, The Arahatta path-consciousness will cease ten impurities. As Ignorance (*Avijjā*) and Craving (*Tanhā*) are a part of ten impurities, Ignorance (*Avijjā*) and Craving (*Tanhā*), the root of dependent origination ceased by the

³⁹ Lama Zopa Rinpoche, **Cutting the Root of Samsara**, (USA: Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, 2014), pp. 33-42.

Arahatta path-consciousness. Then, there will be no more life or refresh *kamma*.

3.4.8 Rebirth and the Four Noble Truths

In His first sermon, the Buddha presented the Four Noble Truths: suffering, its origin, cessation, and the path. The first term in the definition of suffering is *jāti*, which we translate as ‘birth’, although ‘conception’ might be more accurate. Note that birth is an existential problem, to be overcome, and hence cannot merely refer to one’s birth in this life. It must refer, as the universal testimony of the Buddhist traditions affirm, to rebirth in *samsāra*, as part of an endless stream of lives. Hence the second Noble Truth is *yāyam taṇhā ponobbhavikā*, ‘that craving pertaining to future existence’, and the Third is ‘the complete fading away and cessation of that very craving’⁴⁰ (*yo tassāyeva taṇhāya asesavirāganirodho...*). These few phrases establish rebirth as central to the Buddha’s fundamental teachings. From them we can draw some important conclusions.

1. Rebirth is regarded as an ongoing process to be escaped from in the search for liberation.
2. Rebirth is determined by one’s own mind, particularly one’s ethical choices.
3. The practice of Buddhism aims at ending rebirth.

Precisely, these three principals have been established by McEvelley as the basic constituents of a ‘reincarnation belief complex’, shared by many philosophers in ancient Greece and India, and nowhere else (except places that have borrowed from these sources).⁴¹ Of course, many cultures have some kind of belief in rebirth or reincarnation, but only in these places do we have these central ideas figured together. It is

⁴⁰ S V 425.

⁴¹ McEvelley, **The Shape of Ancient Thought** (New York: Allworth Press, 2002), p. 98.

clear, then, that Buddhist ideas on rebirth have important things in common with ideas that were current in the Buddha's culture. In fact, the two best known Indian religions today – Hinduism and Jainism– also share this belief complex. This alerts us to an important point: the way the Buddha spoke about rebirth was a part of the wider cultural discourse of his time, and used current concepts and vocabulary, though, of course, he may well have used the words in his own way. This means we must ask: 'What did the Buddha's teachings on rebirth mean to the people he was addressing?'

However, it would be incorrect to claim that the Buddha simply absorbed the universal Indian belief in rebirth. In fact, the ancient Vedas speak little of rebirth, and it only slowly appears in the post-Vedic literature. The radical śramaṇa movements, among which the Buddha counted himself, rejected the authority of the brahmanical tradition as a whole, and many of the śramaṇas rejected rebirth outright. There is no doubt that the Buddha would have rejected rebirth if he did not believe in it. Moreover, the Āgama Suttas regularly say that the Buddha realized the truth of rebirth with his own direct knowledge, and he explicitly states that he does not affirm rebirth because of what he has learned from another.⁴² Historically, the Āgama Suttas are the oldest texts that place this rebirth complex in a central position, and we could well argue that the Hindu belief in rebirth was conditioned by the Buddhist belief rather than the other way around.

So right away we get a good sense for the soteriological significance of rebirth within Early Buddhism. But we have learned little of the mechanics of it: How does it happen? What makes it work? How do we analyze the process in detail? We must admit that the Āgama Suttas do not offer us a detailed explanation of such matters. But this it has its own significance: for the Āgama Suttas, the underlying basis of rebirth is not the issue. The issue is that rebirth is suffering, and practice is needed to find freedom. A detailed 'scientific' understanding of rebirth is marginal to the lacerative teachings of the Āgama Suttas. Perhaps the

⁴² It 70, 71.

main importance of ‘scientific’ investigation of rebirth is that it brings Buddhist teachings within a contemporary mode of discourse. This has certain benefits, not least that it engages some people who otherwise might dismiss important aspects of Buddhist teachings as ‘unscientific’.

3.4.9 Rebirth and the Aggregates

The definition of the first Noble Truth sums up the problem: ‘in brief, the five grasping-aggregates are suffering’ (*saṅkhittena pañcūpādākkhandhā dukkhā*). What exactly are these five aggregates, and how do they figure in rebirth?

The basic meaning of the aggregates is well-known: physical form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitional activities (*saṅkhārā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These are all observable aspects of conscious experience. We are used to thinking of rebirth involving some mysterious entity such as a ‘soul’, so the prosaic nature of these aggregates comes as a bit of a surprise. But the Saṃyutta tells us: “Whatever ascetics or priests there are that recollect their manifold past lives, all of them recollect the five grasping-aggregates or one of them” This suggests that the aggregates are empirical realities that characterize not just this life, but past lives as well. Thus the Saṃyutta tells us that the unawakened individual runs and circles around these five aggregates from one life to the next.⁴³

We often find sectarian theories or other non-Buddhist contexts which interpret the ‘soul’ as one or other of the aggregates. In the Brahmajāla Sutta, to quote the best known example, the Self is said to be ‘formed’ (*rūpī*) or ‘experiencing pleasure’ (*sukhapaṭisaṃvedī*) or ‘percipient’ (*saññī*) after death. Similarly, *saṅkhārā* is closely associated with rebirth, and one Sutta describes how one can use *saṅkhārā* to direct one’s rebirth. And consciousness is regularly spoken of as the phenomenon that undergoes rebirth, not only in a Buddhist context, but

⁴³ S III 149-151.

also by those who mistakenly take it for something permanent.

It seems to me that the five aggregates must have been used in the Buddha's culture as a scheme for classifying soul theories. This is not to reduce the five aggregates to merely a mechanistic classification scheme, but to bring forward an aspect that I believe would have been assumed by many of the Buddha's listeners, but is not obvious to us. Various more or less refined conceptions of rebirth were current, and the more sophisticated theorists must have arranged and compared these. I have not found a passage outside of Buddhism where the five aggregates as such were a recognized teaching; but the Suttas regularly portray sectarians as being familiar with the aggregates. Moreover, certain of the pre-Buddhist Self theories are clearly expressed in terms of the aggregates: for example, the Upaniṣadic sage Yajñavalkya identified consciousness as the highest Self. These theories no doubt descended in part from simple animist ideas, and in part from theoretical speculation; but at least sometimes the theories were based on a direct experience. However, even meditative experience might be subject to misinterpretation.

If we are correct in supposing that the five aggregates are a scheme for categorizing Self-theories, this would explain why the teaching of not-self is so strenuously emphasized in this particular context. The Suttas say that the five aggregates exhaust the possible range of Self theories, and the Buddha was scathingly critical of anyone who asked how the not-self aggregates could affect the Self.

3.4.10 The In-between State

After gaining a general impression of the role of rebirth in a few mainstream contexts in the Āgama Suttas, we may now have a look at the controverted question of the 'in-between state'. The basic problem is whether one life immediately follows another, or whether there is a period of time in between. This question was disputed among the early Buddhist schools. In their debates, all parties accepted the Suttas as

authoritative, and quoted them in support of their position. So we usually find that when the early Buddhists could not agree, this was because the question was not addressed in a straightforward or explicit way in the Āgama Suttas. In this case the Theravādins denied the in-between state, while many other schools affirmed it.⁴⁴

It should be noted that many modern Theravādins do in fact accept the in-between state, despite the fact that it's 'officially' heretical. Popular belief is, so far as I know, on the side of the in-between state; so is the opinion of the forest monks of Thailand, based on their meditative experience; and so is the opinions of most monks and scholars I know, whose ideas are based on the Suttas.

The main canonical argument against the in-between state, relied on by the Kathāvatthu, is that the Buddha mentions only three states of existence (*bhava*): the sense world, the form world, and the formless world. If the intermediate state exists, it should fit into one of these worlds, but it doesn't: therefore, there's no such thing. This argument, however, rests on mere linguistic pedantry. If I say my house has three rooms, someone might object that it also has a corridor, which is an 'in-between room'. Is this a fourth room, or is it merely a space connecting the rooms? That simply depends on how I define it and how I want to count it. Maybe my definition is wrong or confused – but that doesn't make the corridor disappear.

The Kathāvatthu offers a further argument, based on the idea of the *ānantarikakamma*. These are a special class of acts (such as murdering one's parents, etc.) which are believed to have a kammic result 'without interval': i.e. one goes straight to hell. But again this argument is not convincing, for the meaning of *ānantarika* here is surely simply that one does not have any interceding rebirths before experiencing the results of that bad kamma. It has nothing to do with the interval of time between one birth and the next.

⁴⁴ Thich Thien Chau, **The Literature of the Personalists of Early Buddhism**, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), p. 20.

These arguments sound suspiciously post hoc. The real reason for the opposition to the in-between state would seem rather that it sounds suspiciously like an animist or self-theory. Theravādins of old were staunch opponents of the Self theory: the critique of the thesis that a ‘person’ truly exists and takes rebirth is the first and major part of their doxographical treatise, the *Kathāvatthu*; a similar though shorter debate is attributed to the *Kathāvatthu*’s author Moggaliputtatissa in the *Vijñānakāya* of the Sarvāstivādins. The idea of an immediate rebirth seems to me a rhetorical strategy to squeeze out the possibility of a Self-sneaking through the gap. It agrees with the general tendency of Theravādin Abhidhamma, which always seeks to minimize time and eliminate grey areas. But philosophically this achieves nothing, for whatever it is that moves through the in-between state, it is impermanent and conditioned, being driven by craving, and hence cannot be a ‘Self’.

There are some places in the Suttas that tell ‘real life’ stories of people who die and are reborn. For example, the *Anāthapiṇḍika Sutta* says that Sāriputta and Ānanda went to see Anāthapiṇḍika as he was dying, and: ‘Soon after they had left, the householder Anāthapiṇḍika died and reappeared in the Tusita heaven.’⁴⁵ While this does not mention any in-between state, neither does it rule it out. If I were to say, ‘I left the monastery and went to the village’, no-one would read as suggesting that I disappeared in one place and reappeared instantly in another! Such narrative episodes are too vague to determine whether they assume an in-between state or not.

The most explicit statement in support of the in-between state is probably the *Kutuhalasāla Sutta*, which speaks of how a being has laid down this body but has not yet been reborn into another body.

‘Vaccha, I declare that there is rebirth for one with fuel, not for one without fuel. Vaccha, just as fire burns with fuel, not without fuel, even so, Vaccha, I declare that there is rebirth for

⁴⁵ M III 259: *Atha kho anāthapiṇḍiko gahapati, acirapakkante āyasmante ca sāriputte āyasmante ca ānande, kālamakāsi tusitaṃ kāyaṃ upapajji.*

one with fuel, not for one without fuel.’

‘But, master Gotama, when a flame is tossed by the wind and goes a long way, what does master Gotama declares to be its fuel?’

‘Vaccha, when a flame is tossed by the wind and goes a long way, I declare that it is fueled by the air. For, Vaccha, at that time, the air is the fuel.’

‘And further, master Gotama, when a being has laid down this body, but has not yet been reborn in another body, what does the master Gotama declare to be the fuel?’

‘Vaccha, when a being has lain down this body, but has not yet been reborn in another body, it is fueled by craving, I say. For, Vaccha, at that time, craving is the fuel.’⁴⁶

From this we can conclude that the Buddha, following ideas current in his time – for Vacchagotta was a non-Buddhist wanderer (*paribbājaka*) accepted that there was some kind of interval between one life and the next. During this time, when one has ‘laid down’ this body, but is not yet reborn in another, one is sustained by craving, like a flame tossed by the wind is sustained by air. The simile suggests, perhaps, that the interval is a short one; but the purpose of the simile is to illustrate the dependent nature of the period, not the length of time it takes. Here, as in the other contexts we shall examine below, it is not really possible to draw any conclusions about the length of time in the in-between state. While a fire is burning normally, it is sustained by a complex of factors, such as fuel, oxygen, and heat. But when a tongue of flame is momentarily tossed away from the source fire, it can last only a short while, and in that time it is tenuously sustained by the continued supply of oxygen. Similarly in our lives, we are sustained by food, sense stimulus, and so on, but in the in-between, it is only the slender thread of craving that propels us forward. The difference is, of course, that the

⁴⁶ S IV 399.

flame will easily go out, while the fuel of craving propels the unawakened inexorably into future rebirth.

There is a stock description of the various grades of awakened beings, which appears to speak of one who realizes nirvana in-between this life and the next. This passage starts by mentioning the one who becomes fully awakened in this life, then one who realizes nirvana at the time of dying, then speaks of a kind of non-returner: With the utter destruction of the five lower fetters, one becomes an attainer of nirvana ‘in-between’ (*antarāparinibbāyī*).⁴⁷

The next kind of non-returner realizes nirvana ‘on landing’ (*upahaccaparinibbāyī*). Given the context – between dying and ‘landing’ in the Pure Abodes – it seems likely that this passage refers to an individual who, dying as a non-returner, realizes full nirvana in the in-between state. This is how the passage was interpreted by the Puggalavādins and Sarvāstivādins, as well as in modern studies by Harvey and Bodhi.⁴⁸

The Purisagatisutta makes these categories much more vivid with a series of similes, comparing the *antarāparinibbāyī* to a spark of hot iron, which when beaten, flies off the block and ‘cools down’ before striking the ground. Again, it seems difficult to interpret this as anything but an in-between state.⁴⁹

Like the previous passage, here the description is informed by the metaphor of fire, which symbolizes pain and entrapment. The ‘going out of the flame’ is the goal of Buddhist practice, so the fiery imagery associated with rebirth is entirely apt. The fact that *nibbāna* can apparently occur during this stage suggests that it is of spiritual significance. It might be taken to imply that the process takes a reasonable length of time, unlike the more ‘instantaneous’ feel we noted

⁴⁷ D III 207.

⁴⁸ Peter Harvey, **The Selfless Mind** (London: Curzon Press, 1995), p. 100.

⁴⁹ Peter Masefield, **Divine Revelation in Pāli Buddhism** (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1986), pp. 116-120.

in the ‘tossed flame’ image. Nevertheless, the ‘going out’ here is just the natural cooling off, the culmination of a process that was already nearly complete, and so it does not imply that one should give any special importance to the in-between state as a realm for practice of Dhamma.

There is evidently an allusion to the in-between state in the Channovādasutta, where Mahā Cunda instructs Channa the Vajjī, quoting the Buddha thus:

For one who is dependent there is wavering (*calita*); for one who is independent, there is no wavering. When there is no wavering, there is tranquillity. When there is tranquillity, there is no inclination (towards craving or existence) (*nati*). When there is no inclination, there is no coming and going (*agatigati*). When there is no coming and going, there is no passing away and rebirth (*cutūpapāta*). When there is no passing away and rebirth, there is neither here nor beyond nor in between the two (*naubhayam antarena*). This is the end of suffering.⁵⁰

While the terminology used here is perhaps a little too vague to insist on a definitive interpretation, nevertheless in the light of the previous passages it is reasonable to see this as a further allusion to the in-between state.

A somewhat mysterious usage of the term *gandhabba* has also been taken as referring to the in-between state. By the time of the Buddha, *gandhabba* had almost entirely reached its classical meaning of a class of celestial musicians. But earlier Vedic usage varied, and it seems to have been as vague as our ‘spirit’. This quasi-animist meaning appears in the following passage.

Bhikkhus, the descent of the being-to-be-born (*gabbhassāvakkanti*) takes place through the union of three things. Here, there is the union of the mother and the father;

⁵⁰ M III 263.

but the mother is not in season, and the being-to-be-born (*gandhabba*) is not present. In this case, no descent of a being-to-be-born occurs. But when there is the union of the mother and father; the mother is in season; and the being-to-be-born is present, through the union of these three the descent of the being-to-be-born occurs.⁵¹

The Assalāyana Sutta attributes the same doctrine to brahmans of the past, showing that the Buddha had no objection to adopting current views on rebirth into his teaching, as long as they did not postulate a Self. The acceptance of the conventional term *gandhabba* suggests that whatever is in the in-between state is in some sense a functioning ‘person’, not just a mechanistic process or energetic stream devoid of consciousness. However, the use of the term is so casual and uncertain that it would be unwise to make much of it.

A stock passages on the four ‘foods’ (i.e. four physical or mental supports for life) introduces the term *sambhavesī*. Interpreted by the commentary to mean ‘one seeking rebirth’, modern grammarians prefer to construe the term as ‘one to be reborn’. In either case it appears to refer to the being in the in-between state.

Bhikkhus, there are these four kinds of food for the maintenance of beings that already have come to be (*bhūtā*) and for the support of beings seeking a new existence (*sambhavesī*). What are the four? They are physical food, gross or subtle; contact as the second; mental volition as the third; and consciousness as the fourth.⁵²

While the early Suttas do not give us any further information, the fact that the *sambhavesī* is contrasted with the *bhūta*, which clearly means one in a state of being (*bhava*), suggests that the *sambhavesī* is in a state of potential. The in-between state is truly ‘in-between’, it is only defined

⁵¹ M I 256.

⁵² S II 11, 12.

by the absence of more substantial forms of existence, and one in that state, so it seems, is exclusively oriented towards a more fully-realized incarnation.

We have already noted the use of similes to render the in-between state more vivid. A stock passage found in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta in explaining the recollection of beings faring according to their *kamma* (*cutūpapātañāṇa*) employs this simile:

Great king, just as if there were a palace in the central square (*siṅghāṭaka*), and a man with good eyesight standing on the top of it were to see people entering (*pavisanti*) a house, leaving (*nikkhamanti*) it, wandering (*sañcaranti*) along the carriage-road, and sitting down (*nisinnā*) in the central square. The thought would occur to him, ‘These people are entering a house, leaving it, walking along the streets, and sitting down in the central square.’⁵³

Of course, a simile can only ever be suggestive. Nevertheless, it is hard to understand why the Buddha would use such a description of the process of rebirth if he wanted to exclude the possibility of an in-between state. Peter Harvey interprets this passage on the basis of the Kimsuka Sutta.⁵⁴

Here the usage of entering (*pavisanti*), leaving (*nikkhamanti*) and wandering (*sañcaranti*) refers respectively to one being reborn, dying, and seeking a new birth. The house represents the body or form of rebirth, and sitting down (*nisinnā*) in the central square refers to the consciousness finding a new birth in the sense-world (the four roads representing the four elements, earth, water, fire, wind). Here, the sitting down of the simile refers to the discernment (consciousness) coming to be established in a new personality, after wandering in search of ‘it’.⁵⁵

⁵³ D II 47.

⁵⁴ S IV 152.

⁵⁵ Peter Harvey, **The Selfless Mind**, (London: Curzon Press, 1995) p. 103.

3.4.11 *Paṭisandhi*: the Link to *Samsāra*

For all living beings kamma provides a life by producing a *paṭisandhi citta* for each and every one at death. In uniting two lives, this rebirth consciousness provides the continuity so that the mental process is not interrupted.

By its act of linking two different lives, two different mental processes – for example, a past life as a human, a new life as a dog – we wander from life to life in *samsāra*'s various planes, depending on conditions and different *paṭisandhis*. By means of this rebirth consciousness, the 31 realms of existence can be categorized, in the same way as these *cittas* are differentiated in producing rebirth.

There are fourteen of official duties (*viñña-nakicca*):

1. The process of birth (*paṭisaṅdhi*), serial mind work new life. 19 things to mind is born with beauty Agency Life 2, 8 mind mind result of gender identity results 5, 4 results formless mind.

2. The life, organic part (*bhavanga*), interest maintenance work life. Center also has 19 life-things like keep students interested. Center to students who work for him, the heart of life-it also works for him.

3. The opening subject (*avajjana*), working toward center and open new scenes reveal an objective mind. There are two subjects that interest declared interest declared interest declared that the five disciplines and subjects.

4. The show (*dassana*), bye scene. There are two things a second heart awareness.

5. Listening (*savana*), silent mind that scene. There are two things the two atria form.

6. The smell (*ghayana*), gas warning center said. There are two things that two interest rate formula.

7. Tasting (*sayana*), quiet the mind that scene. There are two things the two atria form.

8. Use (*phusana*), contact centers that scene. There are two things or two mental modes.

9. The next recording (*sampaticchana*), as the reception center in

the foreign scene into the consciousness. There are two things to mind is the second recording.

10. Observations (*santirana*), comments in mind as the scene was put into a third thing is the sense of beauty 3 tons.

11. Segmentation (*votthapana*), being identified as the active object scene. Having an open mind that things are subjects (opening mind that this subject make the declaration subject to the Highway mind skills, and work for the highway segment contingent interest subject).

12. The driving force (*javana*), a life interest in using swing scene, the center will create a dynamic business, if this treaty is good or evil. There are 55 care work force is 12 immoral, moral 21 (the width 37), 18 care elements (except for two open subject), 4 World care deficit results.

13. The scene na (*tadalambana*), enjoying the scene balance care work force of mind. There are 11 scenes are interested to work *na 8 mahā* beauty and 3 tons of fruit.

14. The death (*cuti*), terminate the Center works present life. There are 19 works from the heart, 19 heart to heart like students (who work continuously interested students for life, as well as the life-death and life there).

Fourteen of these in pure or direct call *vinnanapavatti vinnanapavattiakara* (average daily physical form). Fourteen of these facilities or sorted by location (drop-na) in the line of consciousness, 10, because five of the see, hear, smell, taste, touch a single facility (a highway moment the mind, the following positions open subject prior to bidding) to call this office is (*pancavinnanathana*) - based contingent interest method.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Vism 457.

(a) *Paṭisandhi Produced by Akusala*

The rebirth consciousness produced by *akusala: upekkhā santīraṇa* 25, with the associated feeling of indifference. The 11 *akusala* kammās are able to produce this *citta* except for the one with *uddhacca* (restlessness) which has not enough power to produce a new life. This *akusala paṭisandhi* is the same for all beings in the four *apāyas*. However, for hell beings the suffering is most intense. Animals are better off by comparison. On the other hand *petas* have a better lot than animals. Although the *paṭisandhi citta* is the same, why is there a variety of beings born with it? That is because there are other conditions.⁵⁷

The *akusala* performed by an individual is not the same as that done by another. The extreme kind results in hell. The less extreme *akusala* results in animal birth. Evil of a lesser degree ends in a *peta*'s life. So at the time *kamma* acts, it can be with full-strength or reduced in power. By seeing the degree of *akusala*, the result can be foreseen. A high degree brings about rebirth in an equally drastic environment like a fiery volcano. So there is a degree: extremely hot, hot, or not hot environment associated with the level of *akusala*. There are also different levels of planes according to the degree of unwholesomeness.

Despite having the same rebirth consciousness, beings in the woeful states do not share the same experience. Therefore various *akusalas* carried out have different powers, each having its own degree or level.

(b) *Human Paṭisandhi*

For people, their rebirth consciousness can be one of nine types of *kusala vipāka upekkhā santīraṇa* and eight *mahāvīpākas*. Deities too are born with these *mahāvīpāka citta*s. However, are these *citta*s of the

⁵⁷ Nandamālābhivamsa, **Kamma at Death and Rebirth**, (Germany: Abhidhamma-Forderverein e.V, 2016), p. 37.

same grade or class? Again, there is no similarity in producing their results. Some people are poor, others rich. Some are intelligent while others are not. Some are long-lived, others have short lives. Why is this so? It is because what they had done previously is not the same.

Of the eight *mahāvīpākas*, the first is the strongest and the best with the three roots of *alobha*, *adosa* and *amoha*. If the knowledge factor is not present, then the condition of birth is two-rooted or *dvihetuka*. Only *alobha* and *adosa* are present, unlike the three-rooted (*tihetuka*). Thus in an act of merit (for example, in *dāna*), when knowledge leads, the merit gained is called *ñāṇa-sampayutta kusala*. Without *amoha*, it is *ñāṇa-vīpayutta kusala*, of a lesser sort.

For these different grades of *kusala* at the time of conception, their associated *cetanās* will give different grades of *paṭisandhi* result. This is a natural law or *niyāma* that *kammas* will produce their results of similar form. This is to say that *tihetuka kusala* will give rise to *tihetuka paṭisandhi* result. A *dvihetuka kusala* will produce a two-rooted rebirth consciousness. So a type of kamma only gives result of the same kind. Put in another way: through the kamma carried out by you, you will receive its corresponding result.⁵⁸

Then whether there is knowledge or not, some people are ever light-hearted by nature. This is due to *somanassa* dominating the rebirth consciousness. They are happy-born on this basis. Those with neutral (*upekkhā*) feeling are hardly inclined to smile. Their demeanor is usually rather solemn. Rarely are there happy smiles. So through the factor of feeling, the difference among people can be seen.

The Buddha was born with the first *mahāvīpāka citta*, accompanied by pleasure, connected with knowledge, and without prompting. However, some Abhidhamma scholars in Sri Lanka maintain that the Buddha's *paṭisandhi* could not be accompanied by *somanassa*

⁵⁸ Nandamālābhivamsa, **Kamma at Death and Rebirth**, (Germany: Abhidhamma-Forderverein e.V., 2016), p. 39.

since He was always composed and steady in everything that He did. The rebirth consciousness could only have been with *upekkhā*. Nonetheless many others disagree. This is why the following terms are used to extol the Buddha: *piyamukha* – the Buddha’s face was always lit with a happy smile. Even in talking, He had this habit of smiling first before speaking. *Sukha sambhāsa*: It was easy and pleasant to converse with Him.

As for people without the wisdom factor, they need time to figure out any ordinary matter, being unable to give spontaneous answers or ready solutions. Those with the wisdom factor are sharper. We call such people bright or endowed with a high IQ (Intelligence Quotient). They are able to quickly understand, being mentally nimble because of *ñāṇa-sampayutta* at their conception. It is accepted that only *tihetuka* yogis striving in meditation can realize the noble Dhamma. Those with the condition of *ñāṇa-vipayutta* will not be able to reach that level. (However, their efforts will not be in vain. To a certain extent progress can be made.)

Besides the *mahāvipākas*, there is the rootless *upekkhā santīraṇa citta*. People born with it are physically or mentally handicapped. In the womb they were already blind, deaf, that is, with an innate defect. Unlike the *mahāvipākas* their *paṭisandhi* is produced by kamma with weak strength. So despite the advantage of human birth, it is one which is below par.

What is originally given by *kamma* cannot be changed. For instance, a person with a two-rooted condition will not be able to upgrade to a higher level by acquiring the wisdom factor. Neither too can he change his disposition. So according to one’s *kamma* carried out, one will be brought to one’s destination in life by it. Those who appear in the human and deity realms had done wholesome acts like giving *dāna*, observing *sīla* and practicing meditation. Those who had committed *duccarita* will arrive in the woeful states.

3.5 Concluding remarks

In Buddhism, the concept of endless rebirth is the focal point as preached by Buddha. There is a rebirth in dependent origination. The dependent origination roots the ignorance and craving. Therefore, we must cease the ignorance and craving. The most important things to cease the rebirth are to cease the ignorance and craving. Understanding in order to cease how rebirth work will help to change the kamma to rebirth by them. Rebirth and rebirth results will be supported, oppressed, reproduced and destructed. Sometime, the rebirth and rebirth results will not be avoidable. But, the main goal for Buddhist is that rebirth will be ceased by *Arahatta* path-consciousness.

Chapter IV

The way to good Rebirth in Buddhism

The rebirth doctrine in Buddhism will be discussed under four headlines: (1) Action for Good Rebirth, (2) The Practical Way to Good Rebirth, and (3) How to Stop Karma.

4.1 Actions for good rebirth

What does it mean to “comprehend” birth as an instance of suffering? And what is accomplished by viewing it in that way? The Buddha often compared all suffering to the acts of clinging and feeding: acts inherently stressful not only for those clung to and fed upon, but also for those who, through the disease of hunger,⁵⁹ need to cling and feed.

In fact, for the Buddha, feeding and clinging are virtually one and the same. The Pāli word for clinging *upadāna* also means fuel or sustenance and the act of taking sustenance from fuel. In his explanation of how a fire burns, for instance, the fire feeds itself by clinging to its fuel—an image he also used to illustrate how rebirth happens through the process of clinging to craving:

‘But, Master Gotama, at the moment a flame is being swept on by the wind and goes a far distance, what do you designate as its clinging sustenance then?’

‘Vaccha, when a flame is being swept on by the wind and goes a far distance, I designate it as wind-sustained, for the wind is its clinging, sustenance at that time.’

‘And at the moment when a being sets this body aside and is

⁵⁹ Dh. 203.

not yet born in another body, what do you designate as its clinging, sustenance then?” “Vaccha, when a being sets this body aside and is not yet born in another body, I designate it as craving-sustained, for craving is its clinging sustenance at that time.’⁶⁰

By introducing a “being” into this passage, the Buddha might be suspected of introducing a “what” into his discussion of birth. And this is not the only place where he talks about a being-to-be-born in this context.

“Monks, the descent of the embryo occurs with the union of three things. There is the case where there is no union of the mother & father, the mother is not in her season, and a *gandhabba* is not present, nor is there a descent of an embryo. There is the case where there is a union of the mother & father, and the mother is in her season, but a *gandhabba* is not present, nor is there a descent of an embryo. But when there is a union of the mother & father, the mother is in her season, and a *gandhabba* is present, then with this union of three things the descent of the embryo occurs.’⁶¹

However, on the level of dependent co-arising, the Buddha did not treat the concept of a being as a “what.” His definition of a “being” shows that he recommended that it, too, be regarded as a process. This is evidenced by the explanation of the Buddha to venerable Radha thus:

Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for form, Radha: When one is caught up (*satta*) there, tied up (*visatta*) there, one is said to be ‘a being (*satta*).’

Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for consciousness, Radha: When one is caught up there, tied up there, one is said to be ‘a being.’⁶²

⁶⁰ S IV 395.

⁶¹ M I 256.

⁶² S III 189.

So the Buddha advocated viewing a “being” simply as a process of attachment to desire, passion, delight, and craving. A being in this sense can take birth, die, and be reborn many times in the course of a day—as attachment develops for one desire, ends, and then develops for another one—to say nothing of how often it occurs during the lifetime of a physical body. This is why the processes leading to rebirth can be observed and redirected in the present moment, for—as we have already noted—the mental processes that move from moment to moment on the micro level are identical with the mental processes that move from body to body on the macro level.

Once born on either the micro or the macro level, the being-process is maintained by the four nutriments of consciousness: physical food, sensory contact, sensory consciousness, and the intentions of the mind.

Where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of physical food, consciousness lands there and increases. Where consciousness lands and increases, there is the alighting of name and form. Where there is the alighting of name and form, there is the growth of fabrications. Where there is the growth of fabrications, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging, and death, together, I tell you, with sorrow, affliction, and despair....⁶³

There is a complex relationship between craving and nutriment in sustaining this process. On the one hand, as the above passage shows, craving has to be actively present before consciousness will land on any of the forms of nutriment. On the other hand, had there been no past craving, none of these forms of nutriment would even exist: “These four nutriments have craving as their cause, craving as their origination, are

⁶³ S II 101.

born from craving, and are brought into being from craving.”⁶⁴

This means that craving produces the food that it then feeds on—a fact that allows for the processes leading to birth to lead to repeated rebirth. The role of craving here is closely connected with that of consciousness, which like craving produces the food on which it feeds.

Because these processes are self-sustaining, any attempt to map them has to be complex. One of the primary complaints about dependent co-arising is that it is overwhelmingly complicated. This, however, is like complaining about the complexity of a city map that shows all the streets. You put up with the complexity so that you can find precisely the street you want. In the same way, once you accept the fact that the processes leading to suffering are complex, you appreciate the usefulness of the maps provided by dependent co-arising: They point out precisely where in the processes you can make a difference, so that causal patterns can be directed away from suffering and toward its end.

We can see this clearly in the way the two prime models of dependent co-arising depict the self-sustaining pattern by which consciousness produces the food on which consciousness can then continue to feed. This pattern is most obvious in the model that traces the causes of birth back to a mutual causality between consciousness on the one hand, and name and form—the mental and physical dimensions of experience—on the other.

“From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name and form. Thus it has been said. And this is the way to understand how from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name and form. If consciousness were not to descend into the mother’s womb, would name and form take shape in the womb?”

“No, Lord.”

“If, after descending into the womb, consciousness were to depart, would name-&-form be produced for this world?”

⁶⁴ M I 256.

“No, Lord.”

“If the consciousness of the young boy or girl was to be cut off, would name and form ripen, grow, and reach maturity?”

“No, Lord.”

“Thus this is a cause, this is a reason, this is an origination, and this is a requisite condition for name-&-form, i.e., consciousness.”⁶⁵

In playing a part in the process of birth and growth, consciousness also depends on the phenomena it sustains:

“If consciousness were not to gain a foothold in name-&-form, would a coming-into-play of the origination of birth, aging, death, and stress in the future be discerned?”

“No, Lord.”

“Thus this is a cause, this is a reason, this is an origination, and this is a requisite condition for consciousness, i.e., name and form.”⁶⁶

In this way, consciousness directly feeds the factors that it, in turn, feeds upon. So this model for mapping dependent co-arising focuses on one place to break the sequence: the mutual dependence between consciousness and name-&-form.

Ven. Sāriputta says that “It’s as if two sheaves of reeds were to stand leaning against one another. In the same way, from name and form as a requisite condition come consciousness, from consciousness as a requisite condition come name and form....

“If one were to pull away one of those sheaves of reeds, the other would fall; if one were to pull away the other, the first one would fall. In the same way, from the cessation of name and form comes the cessation of consciousness; from the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name and form.”⁶⁷

The more standard model for dependent co-arising gives a more

⁶⁵ D II 55.

⁶⁶ D II 63.

⁶⁷ S II 113.

precise picture of what it means to “pull away” consciousness and name-&-form. This model—whose factors we listed in the preceding chapter—traces the causes of suffering back to ignorance, and in so doing provides a more complex picture of the way in which consciousness produces its own food.

At first glance, the pattern of a self-sustaining consciousness-process is less obvious in this model because consciousness appears as a factor only once. However, it functions as a sub-factor at two other points in the process, where it feeds off the factors it sustains. Because the picture here is more complex, it’s more explicit in showing where to focus your attempts to deprive the process of food.

Consciousness first appears in the process as the factor of consciousness itself. This factor follows on ignorance and fabrication, and acts as the condition for name-&-form. The fact that consciousness occurs immediately after fabrication emphasizes that it is driven by intention. As SN 22:79 notes, the element of intention is what turns the potential for sensory consciousness into an actual experience of sensory consciousness.

“For the sake of consciousness-hood, fabrications fabricate consciousness as a fabricated thing.”⁶⁸

Thus every act of sensory consciousness is purposeful. As long as ignorance drives fabrication, there is no such thing as a totally passive or pure state of consciousness. Every act of consciousness is colored by the intentional element that shapes it.

The fact that the factor of consciousness appears before name-&-form emphasizes the fact that consciousness has to be present for all the remaining factors—including “intention” under “name”—to occur. And because both consciousness and name-&-form depend on fabrication, which in turn depends on ignorance of the stressful nature of fabrication, this model shows that one way to deprive the consciousness-process of

⁶⁸ S III 87.

food is to develop right view about the intentional element of fabrication underlying that process.

The second point where consciousness appears in the process of dependent co-arising is as a component of the factor of contact at the six senses. Its role here carries over from its dependence on fabrication, emphasizing the fact that sensory contact is never purely passive. Even the barest contact already contains an element of intentional fabrication that colors it with ignorance.

“It’s in dependence on a pair that consciousness comes into play. And how does consciousness come into play in dependence on a pair? In dependence on the eye & forms there arises eye-consciousness. The eye is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Forms are inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Thus this pair is wavering and fluctuating—inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise.

“Eye-consciousness is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Whatever is the cause, the requisite condition, for the arising of eye-consciousness that is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Having arisen in dependence on an inconstant factor, how could eye-consciousness be constant?

“The coming together, the meeting, the convergence of these three phenomena is eye-contact.⁶⁹

What this shows is that, to starve the consciousness-process of food, you have to focus less on how you react to sensory contact and more on what you bring to sensory contact—the habits of ignorant fabrication that shape what you sense.

At the third point in the series, consciousness together with its nutriment plays the role of feeding and clinging: building on craving, and leading to becoming—a sense of one’s identity in a particular world of

⁶⁹ S IV 67.

experience—which is the prerequisite for birth. In this case, the Buddha said, consciousness plays the role of a seed that—when watered by craving and delight—blooms into becoming on the level of sensuality, form, or formlessness.

Kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in a lower property a middling property a refined property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. This is how there is becoming.⁷⁰

Like the earth property, monks, is how the four standing-points for consciousness should be seen. Like the liquid property is how delight & passion should be seen. Like the five types of plant propagation is how consciousness together with its nutriment should be seen.⁷¹

To view consciousness and its nutriment here as a seed watered by craving, delight, and passion helps focus attention on the role played by these three latter mind-states in producing food for endlessly repeated suffering and birth. These are the mind-states that sustain the consciousness-process as it moves from one standing-point to another. Perhaps the Buddha switched from the feeding analogy to the seed analogy here because the implications of the food analogy at this point would have been too harsh to state explicitly in polite company: We keep feeding off the by-products of our earlier feeding. The seed analogy, however, makes this point more indirectly. Just as seeds, when watered, grow into plants that both produce seeds and, when they die, add fertilizer to the soil that feeds those seeds, in the same way, consciousness nourished with *kamma* and craving keeps producing more standing-points—the aggregates of form, feeling, perception, fabrication, and

⁷⁰ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, **The Paradox of Becoming**, (USA: Valley Center, 2008), pp. 86-88.

⁷¹ S III 54.

consciousness—for future acts of consciousness to feed on:

Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to form, supported by form (as its object), landing on form, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, and proliferation.

Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to feeling, supported by feeling (as its object), landing on feeling, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, and proliferation.

Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to perception, supported by perception (as its object), landing on perception, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, and proliferation.

Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to fabrications, supported by fabrications (as its object), landing on fabrications, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, and proliferation.

Were someone to say, ‘I will describe a coming, a going, a passing away, an arising, a growth, an increase, or a proliferation of consciousness apart from form, from feeling, from perception, from fabrications,’ that would be impossible.⁷²

In other words, as long as delight and passion—this phrase is a synonym for clinging—nourishes the consciousness-process, consciousness in turn keeps creating the food to keep the process going indefinitely, even after the form of this body is cast aside. This is why repeated birth as process will not end until it’s deprived of the water of craving and clinging. And the only way to deprive the process of its water and food is to develop dispassion for activities that sustain it.

⁷² S III 54.

This is where this model for dependent co-arising shows its pragmatic value. It demonstrates not only that the food and water for rebirth can be directly experienced, but also that these processes are the direct consequence of choices made in the mind: the intentional activity of fabrication based on ignorance. In this way, it points to the possibility that the suffering of repeated rebirth can be ended by choice: choosing to develop appropriate attention—right view concerning the four noble truths—which puts an end to craving and ignorance. That way, instead of getting entangled in trying to destroy the conditions of birth—which would lead to taking on a destroyer-identity, which would merely continue the process of becoming— one, choose simply to starve the process of its sustenance, allowing it to end on its own. That choice is where the path, the fourth noble truth, begins.

4.2 The practical way to good rebirth

The usage and deployment of Threefold Training (*tisikkhā*) should seek to create benefits in all aspects of our daily life. The three ways to peace are morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). Their destinations are as the followings:

No.	Tisikkhā	Būmi	Būmi
3.	paññā	Nibbāna 1	Nibbāna 1
2.	samādhi	Brahma 20	Rūpāvacara 16 Arūpāvacara 4
1.	Sīla	Kāmasugati 7	Manussa 1 Deva 6

4.2.1 Morality (*sīla*)

Sīla is usually translated into English as virtuous behavior, morality, ethics or precept.⁷³ It is an action committed through the body, speech, or mind, and involves an intentional effort. It is one of the three practices (*sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*) and the second *pāramitā*. It refers to moral purity of thought, word, and deed. The four conditions of *sīla* are chastity, calmness, quiet, and extinguishment. *Sīla* is foundation of *Samādhi* or *Bhāvana* (Meditative cultivation) or mind cultivation. Keeping the precepts promotes not only the peace of mind of the cultivator, which is internal, but also peace in the community, which is external.

According to the Law of *Kamma*, keeping the precepts are meritorious and it acts as causes which would bring about peaceful and happy effects. Keeping these precepts keeps the cultivator from rebirth in the four woeful realms of existence.⁷⁴ *Sila* refers to overall principles of ethical behavior. There are several levels of *sila*, which correspond to “basic morality” (five precepts), “basic morality with asceticism” (eight precepts), “novice monkhood” (ten precepts) and “monkhood” (*Vinaya* or *Pātimokkha*). Lay people generally undertake to live by the five precepts, which are common to all Buddhists. If they wish, they can choose to undertake the eight precepts, which add basic asceticism. The five precepts are training rules in order to live a better life in which one is happy, without worries, and can meditate well to refrain from taking life (non-violence towards sentient life forms), to refrain from taking that which is not given (not committing theft), to refrain from sensual including sexual misconduct), to refrain from lying (speaking truth always) and to refrain from intoxicants which lead to loss of mindfulness (specifically, drugs and alcohol). The precepts are not formulated as

⁷³ A. P. Buddhadatta Mahlthera, **Concise Pali-English Dictionary**, (Delhi: Motilal Banaridass Publishers, 1997), pp. 283-284.

⁷⁴ Peter Harvey, **An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 186.

imperatives, but as training rules those laypeople undertake voluntarily to facilitate practice.⁷⁵

When the creeds and systems were in a state of disintegration, it was the task of Buddha to provide a firm foundation for morality. He made it clear that the attainment of salvation depends upon the perfection of character and devotion to the good. The gospel of the Buddha is sometimes said to be summarized in the following verse of the Dhammapada:

Sabba pāpassa akaranan,
Kusalassa upasampadā,
Sacitta pariyō dapanan,
Etan Buddhānasāsanān
 Not to do any evil,
 to cultivate the good,
 to purify one's mind
 is the teaching of the Buddhas.⁷⁶

It is the fact that for every negative virtue there is corresponding positive one. The terms can be arranged in negative or positive form, i.e, one may conquer anger by love (*akkodha*), but conquer evil (*asādhu*) by good (*sādhu*).⁷⁷ An act which is to be opposite to the evil of *himsā* has to be, in part at least, positive by nature. The cultivation of each of the four *brahmavihāras* serves as an antidote to corresponding evil. As it is said:

By friendliness (*metta*) malevolence (*byāpāda*)
 By sympathetic joy (*mudita*) aversion (*āraṭi*) will be overcome.
 By equanimity (*upekhā*) sensory reaction (*patigha*) will be prevented.⁷⁸

Ethics is the philosophical study of morality. Ethics can be

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 187.

⁷⁶ Dhp 183.

⁷⁷ Dhp 223.

⁷⁸ M II 104-105.

viewed as understanding the foundation and structure of morality regarding how we ought to live. The terms moral and ethics denote the idea of custom. Although these terms have different origins, philosophers use these terms interchangeably. Ethics is defined as systematic understanding of moral concepts and justifies the theories and principles of right behaviour that guides individuals and groups on how to behave in the society. According to Peter Singer observes that an ethical issue is “relevant if it is one that any thinking person must face.”⁷⁹ Ethics is not a bunch of principles that everyone should follow in society, rather, ethics guides and allows as a rational agent in society. Dharmasiri Gunapala writes:

The Buddha advised men on the conditions which were most wholesome and conducive to long term benefit for self and others. Rather than addressing sinners with such words as ‘shameful’, ‘wicked’, ‘wretched’, ‘unworthy’, and ‘blasphemous’ He would merely say, ‘You are unwise in acting in such a way since this will bring sorrow upon yourselves and others.’⁸⁰

The theory of Buddhist ethics finds its practical expression in the various precepts. These precepts or disciplines are nothing but general guides to show the direction in which the Buddhist ought to turn to on his way to final salvation. Although many of these precepts are expressed in a negative form, we must not think that Buddhist morality consists of abstaining from evil without the complement of doing well.

In description of virtue, the Visuddhimagga begins with the reference from the Theravāda scripture in the following:

When a wise man, established well in virtue,
Develops consciousness and understanding,

⁷⁹ Peter Albert David Singer, **Practical Ethics**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. vii.

⁸⁰ Dharmasiri Gunapala, **Fundamentals of Buddhists Ethics**, (Antioch, Calif: Golden Leaves, 1989), p. 27.

Then as a bhikkhu ardent and sagacious
He succeeds in disentangling this tangle.⁸¹

The virtue is one who abstains from killing living things, etc. the *paṭisaṃbhidā* states: There is virtue as volition, virtue as consciousness concomitant, virtue as restraint, virtue as non-transgression.⁸² Its benefits are the acquisition of the several special qualities beginning with non-remorse. For this is said: “Ānanda, profitable habits (virtues) have non-remorse as their aim and non-remorse as their benefit”.⁸³ Also it is said further:

Householder, there are these five benefits for the perfecting of virtue. What five? Here, householder, one who is virtuous, possessed of virtue, obtains a large fortune as a consequence of diligence; this is the first benefit for the virtuous in the perfecting of virtue. Again, of one who is virtuous, possessed of virtue, a fair name is spread abroad; this is the second benefit for the virtuous in the perfecting of virtue. Again, whenever one who is virtuous, possessed of virtue, enters an assembly, whether of khattiyas (warrior nobles) or brahmans or householders or ascetics, he does so without fear or hesitation; this is the third benefit for the virtuous in the perfecting of virtue. Again, one who is virtuous, possessed of virtue, dies unconfused; this is the fourth benefit for the virtuous in the perfecting of virtue. Again, one who is virtuous, possessed of virtue, on the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in a happy destiny, in the heavenly world; this is the fifth benefit for the virtuous in the perfecting of

⁸¹ Buddhaghosa, Bhadantacariya. **Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification**, (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2001), p. 8.

⁸² Maria Heim, **The Forerunner of All Things**, (USA: Oxford University Press, 2014) p. 115.

⁸³ A V 1.

virtue.⁸⁴

There are also the many benefits of virtue beginning with being dear and loved and ending with destruction of cankers described in the passage beginning, “If a Bhikkhu should wish, ‘May I be dear to my fellows in the life of purity and loved by them, held in respect and honored by them,’ let him perfect the virtues”⁸⁵

One may then either recite or determine, as follows:

(1) From today throughout my life, I shall refrain from killing any living creatures.

(2) From today throughout my life, I shall refrain from taking what is not given.

(3) From today throughout my life, I shall refrain from wrong conduct in sexual pleasures and from intoxicants.

(4) From today throughout my life, I shall refrain from false speech.

(5) From today throughout my life, I shall refrain from setting one person against another.

(6) From today throughout my life, I shall refrain from harsh and abusive words regarding any person's status in society and beliefs.

(7) From today throughout my life, I shall refrain from speaking in ways not conducive to the welfare of beings in this present life, or of those in the wandering-on, or of those in the supermundane plane.

(8) From today throughout my life, I shall refrain from wrong livelihood.

In relation to five, eight and ten precepts of the virtuous qualities are explained in detailed in: Three kinds of bodily righteous conduct; four kinds of verbal righteous conduct; and three kinds of mental righteous conduct.

⁸⁴ D II 86.

⁸⁵ M I 33.

Three kinds of righteous bodily conduct are:

1. Someone, abandoning the killing of living beings, abstains from killing living beings (*pāṇātipātā paṭivirato*); with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings.

2. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given (*adinnādānā paṭivirato*); he does not take by way of theft the wealth and property of others in the village or in the forest.

3. Abandoning misconduct in sensual pleasures (*kāmesu macchācārā pativirato*), he abstains from misconduct in sensual pleasures; he does not have intercourse with women who are protected by their mother, father, mother and father, brother, sister, or relatives, who have a husband, who are protected by law, or with those who are garlanded in token of betrothal.⁸⁶

Four kinds of righteous verbal conduct are:

1. Someone, abandoning false speech, abstains from false speech (*musāvada pativirato*); when summoned to a court, or to a meeting, or to his relatives' presence, or to his guild, or to the royal family's presence, and questioned as a witness thus: 'So, good man, tell what you know; or not knowing, he says, I do not know; or knowing', he says, 'I know'; not seeing, he says, 'I do not see; or seeing, he says, I see'; he does not in full awareness speak falsehood for his own ends, or for another's ends, or for some trifling worldly end.

2. Abandoning malicious speech, he abstains from malicious speech (*pisupaya vācaya pativirato*); he does not repeat elsewhere what he has heard here in order to divide (those people) from these, nor does he repeat to these people what he has heard elsewhere in order to divide from those; thus he is one who reunites those who are divided, a promoter of friendships, who enjoys concord, rejoices in concord, delights in concord, a speaker of words that promote concord.

⁸⁶ M I 287. Bhikkhu Nānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha (Majhima-Nikāya)**, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), p. 382.

3. Abandoning harsh speech, he abstains from harsh speech (*pharusāya vācaya pativirato*); he speaks such words as are gentle, pleasing to the ear, and loveable, as go to the heart, are courteous, desired by many, and agreeable to many.

4. Abandoning gossip, he abstains from gossip (*samphapphalapa pativirato*); he speaks at the right time, speaks what is fact, speaks on what is good, and speaks on the Dhamma and the Discipline; at the right time he speaks such words as are worth recording, reasonable, moderate, and beneficial.⁸⁷

Three kinds of righteous mental conduct are

1. Someone is not covetous (*anabhijhālu*); he does not covet the wealth and property of others thus: ‘Oh, may what belongs to another be mine!’

2. Someone mind is without ill will (*abyāpannacitto*) and he has intentions free from hate thus: ‘May these beings be free from enmity, affliction and anxiety! May they live happily!’

3. Someone has right view (*sammāditthi*), undistorted vision, thus: ‘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 good and virtuous recluses and brahmins in the world who have themselves realized by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world.’

⁸⁷ M I 288. Bhikkhu Nāpamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, (tr.), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya**, (Somerville, Wisdom Publications, 1995), pp. 382-393.

4.2.2 Meditation (*samādhi*)

Buddhist meditation is fundamentally concerned with two themes: transforming the mind and using it to explore it and other phenomena.⁸⁸ According to Peter Harvey, “Whenever Buddhism has been healthy; not only monks, nuns and married lamas but also more committed lay people have practiced meditation.”⁸⁹ In another word, two kinds of meditation are found in Buddhism. These are: tranquility and insight. These two lead to supreme knowledge.⁹⁰ If tranquility is developed, the mind becomes developed. The benefit of a developed mind is all lust is abandoned. When tranquility is developed independently of insight, it brings about the suppression of the five hindrances, the first of which is sensual lust, and issues in the “higher mind” of the *jhānas*, characterized by the absence of lust. According to Routledge’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism, in contrast, throughout most of Buddhist history before modern times, serious meditation by lay people has been unusual. Sarah Shaw pointed out: The evidence of the early texts suggests that at the time of the Buddha, many male and female lay practitioners did practice meditation, some even to the point of proficiency in all eight *jhānas*.⁹¹

Jhāna, it is only when tranquility is developed in conjunction with insight that it can give rise to the noble path, which eradicates the underlying tendency to sensual lust (by the path of non-returning) and attachment to becoming (by the path of Arahantship). Tranquility presumably explains:

The mind becomes developed into the path consciousness (*maggacitta*). Lust (*rāga*) becomes abandoned because it is

⁸⁸ B. Alan Wallace, **Contemplative Science: Where Buddhism and Neuroscience Converge**, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017) p. 81.

⁸⁹ Peter Harvey, **An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices**, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 144.

⁹⁰ A II 44.

⁹¹ Sarah Shaw., **Buddhist Meditation: An Anthology of Texts from the Pāli Canon**, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 502.

opposed to (incompatible with) path-consciousness, and the path is incompatible with lust. At a moment of lust there is no path consciousness; and at the path-moment there is no lust. When lust arises, it obstructs the arising of the path-moment, cutting off its basis; but when the path arises it uproots and eradicates lust.⁹²

If insight is developed, wisdom becomes developed. The benefit of developed wisdom is all ignorance is abandoned. Ignorance is incompatible with path-wisdom, and path-wisdom is incompatible with ignorance. At a moment of ignorance there is no path-wisdom, and at a moment of path-wisdom there cannot be ignorance. When ignorance arises, it obstructs the arising of path-wisdom and cuts off its basis; but when path-wisdom arises it uproots and eradicates ignorance. In this way, two coexistent phenomena have been dealt with here: path-consciousness (*maggacitta*) and path-wisdom (*maggapaññā*).⁹³ A mind which is defiled by lust is not freed; and wisdom which is defiled by ignorance cannot develop. Thus, monks, through the fading away of lust there is liberation of mind; and through the fading away of ignorance there is liberation by wisdom. Arahantship is often described as “taintless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom (*anāsavacetovimutti-paññāvimutti*).”⁹⁴ Jhāna Sutta: Mental Absorption (1)⁹⁵ and Mental Absorption (2)⁹⁶ are also given a detailed method of meditation practice. For meditation practice, the objects or Kasipas are necessary. There are ten kasinas⁹⁷ are mentioned in the Pali Tipitaka, namely: (1) Earth (*paṭhavī kasīṇa*), (2) Water (*āpo kasīṇa*), (3) Fire (*tejo kasīṇa*), (4) Air, wind (*vāyo kasīṇa*), (5) Blue, green (*nīla kasīṇa*), (6) Yellow (*pīta kasīṇa*) (7) Red (*lohita kasīṇa*), (8)

⁹² Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi, **Anguttara Nikāya Discourses of the Buddha An Anthology**, Part I, Selected and translated from the Pāli, The Wheel Publication No. 155-156, (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980), p. 12.

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ A II 126.

⁹⁶ A II 128.

⁹⁷ A V 36, M II 14, D III 268.

White (*odita kasīṇa*), (9) Enclosed space, hole, aperture (*ākāsa kasīṇa*) and (10) Bright light (*āloka kasīṇa*).

Ten kinds of bodily decay, also called “ten kinds of foulness”: bloated corpse, livid corpse, festering corpse, and so forth. Ten recollections: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, virtue, generosity, deities, mindfulness of death, mindfulness of the body, mindfulness, of breathing, and peace. Four divine abiding: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. Four immaterial states: the base of boundless space, the base of boundless consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-no perception, One perception: repulsiveness in nutriment, One defining: of the four elements.⁹⁸

The insight meditation practice have the particular objects of contemplation on the 31 different body parts: Head hairs (*kesā*), body hairs (*lomā*), nails (*nakhā*), teeth (*dantā*), skin (*taco*), flesh (*maṃsaṃ*), tendons (*nahāru*), bones (*aṭṭhi*), bone marrow (*aṭṭhimiñjaṃ*), kidneys (*vakkam*), heart (*hadayaṃ*), liver (*yakanam*), pleura (*kilomakam*), spleen (*pihakam*), lungs (*papphāsam*), large intestines (*antaṃ*), small intestines (*antagūṇam*), undigested food (*udariyaṃ*), feces (*karīsam*), bile (*pittam*), phlegm (*semham*), pus (*pubbo*), blood (*lohitaṃ*), sweat (*sedo*), fat (*medo*), tears (*assu*), skin-oil (*vasā*), saliva (*kheḷo*), mucus (*siṅghānikā*), fluid in the joints (*lasikā*), urine (*muttam*).

4.2.3 Wisdom (*paññā*)

In the Noble Eightfold Path, the Right View and the Right Thought are categorized into the Wisdom. Here, the practice of right view and right thought will explain from the Theravada Buddhist scriptures. The right view, according to Buddha's teaching refers to the understanding of the Four Noble Truths. By understanding of the Four

⁹⁸ Richard Shankman, **The Experience of Samādhi: An In-depth Exploration of Buddhist Meditation**, (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2008) p. 61.

Noble Truths lead to the right thought which is free from sensuous desires, ill-will, and hatred. When understand suffering in the Four Noble Truths, it is the understanding of the Five Aggregates that are suffering. In Paññā sutta (Discommend),⁹⁹ the Buddha states that:

“Here, friend, secluded from sensual pleasures... a Bhikkhu enters and dwells in the first jhāna... and he understands it with wisdom. To this extent the Blessed One has spoken of one liberated by wisdom in a provisional sense. “Again, friend, with the subsiding of thought and examination, a Bhikkhu enters and dwell in the second jhāna... the third jhāna... the fourth jhāna... and he understands it with wisdom. To this extent, too, the Blessed One has spoken of one liberated by wisdom in a provisional sense. “Again, friend, with the complete surmounting of perceptions of forms, with the passing away of perceptions of sensory impingement, with non-attention to perceptions of diversity, [perceiving] ‘space is infinite,’ a Bhikkhu enters and dwells in the base of the infinity of space...the base of the infinity of consciousness... the base of nothingness . . . the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; and he understands it with, wisdom. To this extent, too, the Blessed One has spoken of one liberated by wisdom in a provisional sense. "Again, friend, by completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non perception, a Bhikkhu enters and dwells in the cessation of perception and feeling, and having seen with, wisdom, his taints are utterly destroyed; and he understands it with wisdom. To this ex friend, the Blessed One has spoken of one liberated by wisdom in a non-provisional sense.”¹⁰⁰

Deliverance through wisdom (*paññāvimutti*) and deliverance

⁹⁹ A IV 151.

¹⁰⁰ A IV 452-453; Bhikkhu Bodhi, **The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Anguttara-Nikāya**, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), pp. 1321-1322.

through concentration (*cetovimutti*) exist in the same person. The discrepancy lies in the different development of behavior. *Cetovimutti* character corresponds to those who have cultivated perfections in the fashion of ascetics and sages. Tranquil meditation and higher meditative attainments were practiced to perfection. Upon being reborn in this lifetime, their training must begin with *jhāna* and serene meditation. Once the mind has reached equanimity, it will withdraw into the state of alert and focused meditation (*Upacarasamādhī*). Thereafter, it will turn towards wisdom in order to contemplate the ultimate truth (*saccadhamma*). Once the mind realizes the truth and clearly understands according to the truth, a level of holiness will be attained that corresponds to the cultivated perfection.

Those with *paññāvimutti* character cultivated perfection of wisdom during past lives. They will only be able to practice alert and focused meditation during their new rebirths. However, they will be exceptionally expert in wisdom. When alert and focused meditation unites with wisdom, there will be comprehensive realization and lucid understanding in contemplation of the ultimate truth. Consequently, a level of holiness as an *ariyapuggala* (one who has attained a level of enlightenment) will be achieved that is consistent with the perfection developed. The one liberated by wisdom is an Arahāt who does not obtain the immaterial attainments. In the words of the Sutta:

And what person, monks, is the one liberated by wisdom? Herein monks, someone has not reached with his own (mental) body those peaceful material deliverances transcending material form, but having seen with wisdom his cankers are destroyed. This person, monks, is called one liberated by wisdom.¹⁰¹

It should be noted that the one liberated by wisdom is contrasted not with the one liberated by faith, but with the one liberated in both ways. The issue that divides the two types of Arahāt is the lack, or

¹⁰¹ M I 477-478.

possession of the four immaterial *jhānas* and the attainment of cessation. The person liberated by faith is found at the six intermediate levels of sanctity, not at the level of Arahatsip. When he obtains Arahatsip, lacking the immaterial *jhānas*, he becomes one liberated by wisdom even though faith rather than wisdom is his predominant faculty. Similarly, a meditator with predominance of concentration who possesses the immaterial attainments will still be liberated in both ways even if wisdom rather than concentration claims first place among his spiritual endowments, as was the case with the venerable Sariputta.

To conclude, according to Buddhist view, Morality (*Sīla*) is the basic condition of peace, the basis of our bodily and verbal actions. Buddhist Morality is not as it may appear from the negative formations in Sutta-texts. Morality is the very basis of concentration. It is not only the restraining of the body and speech to restrain from doing and speaking of the sinful, but it is also the control of the violence of society, as well as of the world. Moral purity or moral conduct can only be gained by oneself in not violating ones moral precepts bodily, verbally and mentally. In fact, observing the moral precepts provides one with a guard against anxiety and fear. On the contrary, we are sure to come across those who break the moral precepts a lot because of their evil deeds and crimes. So, Morality is the symbol of peace, which can promote world peace and the way to non-violence.

Buddhist Meditation (*Samādhi*) is the direct way of mind development brings peace to mind. In fact, real peace is the state of mind; it does not come from money and property.¹⁰² Concentration deals with training the mind and feelings, to cultivate many qualities which will broaden the mental horizon of man in a positive way. Qualities like love, compassion and charity. It is also involves increasing one's mental capacity by developing mental capability like stability of mind, will to make an effort, endurance, a sense of responsibilities and self-awareness.

¹⁰² Ven. Phra Dhammavisuddhikavi (Pichitr Thitavappo), **Insight Meditation**, (Nakhompathom: Mahāmakuta Rajavidyalaya Press, 2004), p see in Preface.

Mental training is also concerned with developing elements conducive for bringing happiness, such as a sense of satisfaction, joyfulness, sanity of mind and cheerfulness. In brief, mental training is concerned with developing a capable, efficient and healthy mind. Training the mind plays a very important role in establishing individual and social peace.¹⁰³ Dr Ambedkar writes, “Pure thoughts are important and conducive to individual happiness and social well-being.” He says that all wise are just because their thoughts are good and come from a well-trained mind.¹⁰⁴ Practice meditations not only do at the temple or monastery, we can apply to do at any places, any time, any actions, any activities. But we must learn to practice meditation to get more experience then we can apply to do in every manner. After that we can apply with any methodology for establishing peace very easy.

Wisdom (Paññā) is the real philosophy of knowing about all objects of the world. Wisdom produces knowledge-shine and destroys darkness of ignorance. By practicing wisdom man able to make welfare and attain enlightenment. The beings those who are at the stream of Nibbāna they don't do un-wishes and bad action in the world.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, Morality, mind-concentration and wisdom are the supreme object in the Buddhism.

4.3 How to Stop Karma

In saṃsāra many different karmas have been accumulating in us. Take a tree bearing thousands of fruit each time. If all these seeds were to grow into trees, what would happen? We will be in deep forest. But not all the seeds can develop. In the same way, not all the

¹⁰³ Phra Saneh Dhammavaro, **Buddhism: Ethics and the Path to Peace**, (Chiang Mai: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2001), pp. 163-164.

¹⁰⁴ B. R. Ambedkar, **Buddha and His Dhamma**, (Bombay: Siddhrath College Publication, 1957), p. 366.

¹⁰⁵ F. L. Woodward, Tr., **The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Sāmyutta Nikāya)**, Vol. V, (Oxford: PTS, 1994), pp. 85-109.

accumulated kmmas within us can produce their effect. Only a few will have the chance. Some become expired. Others have no opportunity to produce their result. Otherwise we have no way to escape from kamma.

Actually we must first understand that kamma cannot be removed directly. What has been done cannot be undone. Can we change what happened yesterday? Can we bring it back? No, we cannot because it has gone. It is impossible to change what has been done.

4.3.1 Can A Prayer Help?

In India Brahmins have the practice of praying over the corpse, “May you be born in heaven.” However, according to the Buddha¹⁰⁶, prayers can do nothing. They also cannot bring a better life or save others. What happens if a heavy stone is dropped in water? It will sink. Then suppose many Brahmins gather together to pray, “O big stone, rise up. O big stone, rise up.” By praying, will the stone rise up or not? It is the same for a bad person. Suppose we were to pray for him, “Please go to heaven. Please go to heaven. May you have a better life.” It would be impossible for it to happen. Then the Buddha gave an analogy for a good person: a pot of ghee breaks, falling into water. The ghee floats to the water surface. Many people gather around to pray, “Ghee, please sink. Please sink.” This is also impossible for it to happen. Thus praying is not possible.

4.3.2 The Buddhist Way

The Buddha always mentioned kamma together with kilesa as a pair. People usually point to kamma alone. But without kilesa, kamma becomes isolated and cannot take effect. In brief, if kilesas or mental defilements cease, kamma will cease. If kilesas remain, so will kamma.

¹⁰⁶ S IV 312.

This is the point of Paṭiccasamuppāda which shows the whole picture of our life. Here the Buddha specified the root kilesa as *avijjā* in the cycle of birth and death. Volitional activities of *saṅkhāra* or kamma arise depending on ignorance. Thus “*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*”. Because of our ignorance, we act according to our wish; not knowing what should or shouldn’t be done. This *saṅkhāra* produces the kamma-result of *viññāṇa*, that is, a rebirth consciousness of a new existence. So “*saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇaṃ*”. With the right conditions *paṭisandhi* seed will sprout, with *nāma-rūpa* arising with it. Thus the Buddha said, “*Viññāṇa paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*”. Then “*nāma-rūpa paccayā saḷāyatanam*”: with sense organs communication with the outside world is possible. We see, hear, and think, and so on. With communication, feeling arises. We want more and more of desirable objects. Craving appears. Hatred develops with undesirable objects. Then there is “*vedanā paccayā taṇhā*”. The mind with *taṇhā* becomes strongly occupied with grasping, that is, *upādāna*. With this situation, there is a desire for life existence. As kamma accumulates, through its birth will occur again. Consequently worry, lamentation, mental pain, despair, that is, problems will follow. Thus in the perspective of paṭiccasamuppāda: What begins again is not a permanent entity, but just phenomena which are a mass of suffering, started by *moha*.

So this cycle occurs again and again with *saṅkhāra* accumulating, like a tree which seasonally bears flowers, fruits and seeds in a never-ending round.

If you do not like the seed and wish to escape from such an endless process, you must cut the tree’s root. No need to chop down the tree. In Dhammapada it is said that if you do, leaving the roots intact, the tree will grow again and again. If you do not cut off the *kilesas*, these mental defilements will come again and again. The root is the main supporting condition: that is, the *kilesa* root of the *saṃsāra* tree of *avijjā* and *taṇhā*. If cut, the *saṅkhāra* fruit will cease. Therefore there will be no production of seed again.

4.3.3 Pitting Kamma against Kamma

The Buddha pointed out the seven factors of enlightenment or *bojjhaṅgas* and the Noble Eightfold Path as *kammas*. These *kammas* are very important because they can destroy the other *kammas*. It is like some people who have to take anti-body medicine. But if it is produced naturally in the body, then such medicine is not necessary. Isn't that so? It is nature to nature; here it is *kamma* to *kamma*. If we were to develop these factors of enlightenment and the Noble Eightfold Path, we can escape from *kamma*. Being very powerful, these Dhammas never produce rebirth. Instead they lead to Nibbāna, destroying *kamma* in *saṃsāra*.

According to Aṭṭhasālinī, 21 *cetasikas* associated with *cetanā* or motivation is called *kamma*. The three *akusala* ones are covetousness (*abhijjhā*), hatred (*byāpāda*) and wrong view (*micchā diṭṭhi*). Then non-covetousness (*anabhijjhā*), anti-hatred (*abyāpāda*) and right view (*sammā diṭṭhi*) belong to *kusala*. Also there are the seven factors of enlightenment and the eight factors of the Noble Path. There is overlapping of some *cetasikas*, for example *samādhi* belongs to both *bojjhaṅga* and *maggaṅga*. *Sammā diṭṭhi* is the same as *paññā* and *dhammavicaya sambojjhaṅga*. So the list can be reduced to 17 *cetasikas* including *cetanā*: (1. *Sammā diṭṭhi* 2. *Sammā saṅkappa* 3. *Sammā vācā* 4. *Sammā kammanta* 5. *Sammā ājīva* 6. *Sammā vāyāma* 7. *Sammā sati* 8. *Sammā samādhi* 9. *Pīti sambojjhaṅga* 10. *Passadhi sambojjhaṅga* 11. *Upekkhā sambojjhaṅga* 12. *Abhijjhā* 13. *Byāpāda* 14. *Micchā diṭṭhi* 15. *Anabhijjhā* 16. *Abyāpāda* 17. *Cetanā*).

However we must be careful to note that not all kinds of *pīti* are *kamma*, only those belonging to *bojjhaṅga*. *Pīti* associated with *akusala* is not *kamma*. The Buddha also never said that *vīriya* associated with *akusala* is *kamma*, only *vīriya* in *bojjhaṅga* and *maggaṅga* is *kamma*. Similarly *ekaggatā* (also called *samādhi*) cannot be called *kamma* when it is associated with *akusala*. It is *kamma* only as *ekaggatā* in *bojjhaṅga* and *maggaṅga*. The Buddha wants to say that these *cetasikas* only at a high level can lead to Nibbāna.

4.3.4 At *Arahatta-magga*

By developing these factors in meditation a point is reached when they are matured enough (especially in right understanding) and when all mental defilements are burnt down. Kusala is the direct opposite of akusala. As long as there is akusala, kusala will remain. If there is no more unwholesomeness, wholesomeness is not necessary. As a result kamma has no more supporting conditions. It is like keeping a seed in a bottle away from soil and water.

Arahattamagga is the highest kusala occurring. After that no more kusala arises. (Instead there is kriya.) Whoever do so have become an arahant with ignorance discarded and no kilesas remaining (kilesa nirodha). So his *mahākriya cittas* are like the blooms of a flowering tree whose root has been cut. Eventually the tree will shrivel and die. As kamma cannot work anymore in him, his actions are like the flowers on the tree which will not bear fruit. His actions cannot produce the next life because he is without any mental defilement. Even though his *mahākriya cittas* have *alobha*, *adosa*, and *amoha* which are contrary to *lobha-dosa-moha*, they have no more enemies to fight. In some countries there is always peace because there are no rebels to wage war. Though there is an army, it is only for show. In the same way *alobha*, *adosa* and *amoha* associated with *mahākriya cittas* have no more enemies to fight. Thus kammic energy cannot accumulate. Unlike us, as our mental process has both good and bad roots, such kammic energy continues to build up.

For the arahant at death – as kamma cannot produce any *vipākakamma* - result also ceases. All suffering is finished. That is Nibbāna when the fire is extinguished as no fuel is left. Meanwhile in his present life without kilesas, no passions like lust and hate can arise. His mind is calm and Equanimeous in freedom or *vimutti*. Although no new kamma accumulates, old *kammās* still remain. What has been done still remains? They are still online as long as there are the five aggregates. Though the old kammās are powerless to produce a new life, they can still act to support or obstruct throughout the arahant's present life. Times were not golden all the time even for the Buddha. He had to suffer from

evil actions done many eons ago. That is *akusala kamma*'s result which is unavoidable.

Then there is Aṅgulimālā who had murdered hundreds of people, and who had even tried to kill the Buddha. As a monk he attained arahantship with all kilesas cut off. Although he had killed so many, his *pāṇātipāta* had no effect for the next life. Otherwise he would have been in hell. Being very powerful, *arahatta magga* had written off whatever akusala he had done. But in the present life he could not avoid former kamma's result. On his alms round, his bowl would get broken, and his robes would be torn. Many stones would hit him, causing blood to flow and at times broken bones. Because people were still afraid of him, they would close the door on him.

4.3.5 A Worldling and an Arahant's Attitude to Life and Death

Consider the case of Venerable Sāriputta, an arahant. Seven days earlier he conducted a "medical" check-up on himself and realized that he would pass away after a week. For any ordinary person who is told by a doctor, "You have terminal cancer," after a medical check-up, he would get very worried. This is due to attachment to the body. Even monks too were no different during the Buddha's lifetime.

There was a monk who suffered a lot in sickness. As he was a good meditator, attachment and other mental defilements had not appeared for a long time. This led him to think that he was an arahant, having no kilesas. But he had – only he did not know it. As he disliked living any longer in pain, he wanted to kill himself. That is subtle hatred. You see, trees start very small, hatred too. He had ignorance of his own mental state. Venerable Sāriputta tried to dissuade him from committing suicide. But as soon as he left, the sick monk cut his throat with a razor.

The human mind is very funny. After cutting his throat, fear appeared. He realized then, "I've to die." At that moment he noticed the

fear. “Oh, fear is *dosa*. I’ve *kilesas* after all.” Before that he thought he had no attachment to life, being detached about his body and everything. Thus he thought he had no mental defilements. As a good meditator, he noticed it when fear arose. Immediately he contemplated it as a meditation object. In so doing, he became an arahant. Just after attainment of arahatta-magga and phala, he passed away -- a happy end for a suicide.¹⁰⁷ Due to ignorance of his hatred and fear, he committed suicide. Had he realised earlier, “Oh, my *kilesas* are temporarily hidden. Inside, they’re still there,” he would never have killed himself. “I’m free of mental defilements. So I can commit suicide.” Is it possible that he could have this thought? Such an idea is impossible. If he wanted to die, it was because he hated to live. Hate is important. Nobody wants to die. Death is never liked. However he disliked his present situation, that is, it mattered more to him.

This was not so with Venerable Sāriputta. He was not worried, having really no attachment to his body or his life. He only thought of carrying out his last duty: to explain the Dhamma to his mother (who still prayed to Brahma). It took him a week to walk back to his native village. On the seventh day he arrived, and stayed in the room where he was born. Late that night he became ill with diarrhoea. Near dawn of the next day, after listening to his talk, his mother realised the Dhamma. Not long after, he passed away.

In the first place, Venerable Sāriputta saw life as a big problem, so heavy just to stay on living. Yet his attitude was not due to depression: “Life is so burdensome. It is like bearing a mountain on my head.” In the Theragāthā, he recited this verse: “I have no attachment to my life. I do not want to die. I have no wish to live or die.” He was just waiting for his last day. That day would be his reward, because then “I will be free from all kinds of suffering.”

¹⁰⁷ Such an arahant is called *jīvita samasīsi* (*jīvita* = life, *sama* = equal, and *sīsa* = head). In horse-racing, two horses reach the finishing post at the same time. Here, death and attainment reach the goal – not together, only seconds one after the other.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

In the above explanation of the way to good rebirth in Buddhism, it is clearly stated that the Right Thought (*Sammā-Saṅkappa*) is the way to attain peace and happiness of the mankind. The practice of *Brahmavihāra* in meditation is also capable to attain some higher stages of next life. Out of the Four *Brahma-vihāra* attributes, *Avyāpāda* is associated with *Mettā*, loving-kindness to wish that all beings be happy, while *Avihimsā* is associated with *Karuṇā*, compassion to wish for all beings to be free from suffering. According to the Buddhism, all being have the condition rebirth. The state such as *sugati* and *duggati*, being will be existed. The theory of some people on rebirth is reborn in a better state (*sugati*) but according the aim of the Buddha is not to be born again.

Chapter V

Conclusion and Suggestion

5.1 Conclusion

The study of the way to good rebirth has achieved the three objectives of the research without any limitation. We all are known that we will die on one day. But we are afraid to die. Somebody tried not to die. But it cannot control. It is the law of nature. If there is *jāti*, there is *jarā*. If there is *jarā*, there is *byādhī, maraṇa*. So, if there is *jāti*, there is *marana*. All life is in a cycle of death and rebirth called samsara. According to dependent origination, the causes of suffering and the course of events lead a being through rebirth, old age, and death. The Buddha did not teach not to die. He taught the way not to reborn. If we can cut out reborn, we cannot die again. Being born as a human is seen by Buddhists as a rare opportunity to work towards escaping this cycle of samsara. The escape from samsara is called Nirvana or enlightenment.

The Buddha said in the Dhammapada that one should give up anger, renounce pride, and overcome all fetters. Suffering never befalls him who clings not to mind and body and is detached. In this context, we have to understand that rebirth is based on the attachment of one's own body and mind. It can prove that except an Arahant. Nevertheless, one who listened to the teaching of the Buddha, learn and penetrated in the teaching by the right view, he can attain temporary liberation. With the breakup of the body after death, he heads for the distinction, not for deterioration; he is one going to distinction, not to deterioration.

Buddhism request "Not to do evil, To do good deed and Keep purity our mind". As being bad *kamma*, the bad *kamma* will disturb not only society but also actor of bad *kamma*. The root of bad *kamma*, Greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and ignorance (*moha*) destroy the benefit of our

society. It will disturb both society and actor of bad *kamma* in this life and next life. The beings must avoid the bad *kamma* to do. As being good *kamma*, the good *kamma* will support the good rebirth. The root of good *kammas*, Non-greed (*alobha*), Non-hatred (*adosa*) and Non-ignorance (*amoha*) will provide to be good life. The good *kammas* must be done by beings. Finally, good or bad *kamma* are linking old age, death, sorrow. Good or bad *kamma* must be eradicated completely by meditation. They can be eradicated by meditation. There will be no *kamma* results. It is the goal of Buddhism.

Therefore, the aim of this research work is to know the way to good rebirth. Here in, I would like to strongly give recommendation to study about defilement, fetters, mental proliferation to know the way to practice the end of suffering and to get final liberation (Nibbāna).

5.2 Suggestions

My research work, which has been presented, is very small. It looks like a tiny spot compare with the wealth of knowledge found in the Buddhist Canonical Texts. As for suggestions of further studies, this field of research still has room for some interested researchers to continue their research as follows;

- 1) “A Study Consciousness between two states”,
- 2) “A Study of Rebirth as Prime cause of human life” and so on.

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Biography

Name	: Pyan Nyan Won Tha
Pāli Name	: Paññāvamsa
Date of Birth	: July 4 th 1991
Date of Ordination	: November 19 th 2010
Parents Name	: U Tin Pe and Daw Pyone
Place of Birth	: Pinlebu Township, Sagaing Division, Myanmar
Nationality	: Myanmar
Country	: Myanmar
Education Background	: 2008- Pāli Paṭhamangal, Abhidhamma (Simple) Level-1, 2, 3. 2009- Pāli Paṭhamalat, Abhidhamma (Honors) Level-1, 2, 3. 2010- Pāli Paṭhamagyi 2014- B.A. (English) Windermere Academy
Permanent Address	: Saddhammananda Monastery, Pinkying, Pinlebu Tsp, Sagaing Division, Myanmar
Email	: ven.panna.mm@gmail.com
Phone	: +66(0)948657565, +95(0)9421176801