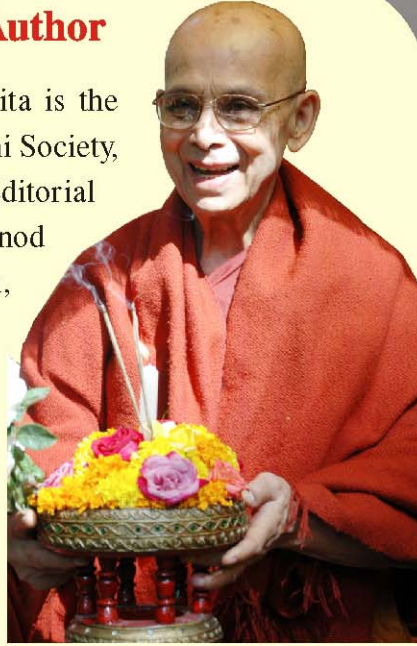


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Mahabodhi Academy of Pali and Buddhist studies and Bhagavan Buddha University of Pāli and Theravāda Buddhism, Bangalore are the result of his effort and research to provide a systematic Buddhist education as widely as possible, the first of its kind in whole of India.



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The Buddhist Law of
KAMMA AND REBIRTH

By: Venerable Acharya Buddharakkhita

The Buddhist Law of

Kamma

&

Rebirth



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**Buddha Vachana Trust
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FOREWORD

The Buddhist law of kamma and rebirth is the antithesis of fatalism. Lord Buddha unambiguously declared, that there is no need to search for a First Cause in a vicious circle that life is. Buddhism does not subscribe to the concept of a permanent, unchanging entity called soul, self or ātmā. So rebirth does not mean transmigration of a soul from life to life, while the soul itself is made out to be constant.

It was given to Lord Buddha to render the semantics of Kamma into the profound postulate of a Law that works on its own. Kamma is the manifestation of a principle or law, the Law of Moral Causation, that governs the universe.

Here is the unique declaration of the Buddha: **“Bhikkus, volition is what I call Kamma (action); for through volition does one perform an action in deed, word and thought.”** Thus, man is the captain of his destiny and the creator of his misfortune or good luck. Whatever action a man performs, the consequence thereof must be experienced. This is the Law of Kamma.

Destiny and freewill need not be discordant. In fact, it is the orchestration of one’s potential capacity and self-effort, to give rise to excellence, in terms of virtue, compassion and wisdom, that constitutes the basic Buddhist approach to the law of kamma. The potential capacity manifests as temperament. The relation between Kamma and inborn character-traits, has also been elucidated in this book. Karmic heredity is more real, than the so-called physical heredity.

There are three unwholesome motives inducing volitional action. Greed motivates evil volitional action; hatred motivates evil volitional action; delusion motivates evil volitional action.

And then, three other wholesome motives induce volitional action. Non-greed motivates good volitional action; non-hatred motivates good volitional action; non-delusion motivates good volitional action. What roots are to a tree, the motivations are to kamma. Just as a tree rests on its roots, even so, a kamma derives its sap from the motives.

Lord Buddha pronounced: **“Beings are owners of their actions, they are heirs to their actions; their actions are the womb whence they spring, their actions are their true kith and kin and their actions are their refuge. Whatever action they do – good or evil – of such they are the heirs”.** As we proceed, this book will explain, in detail, what exactly are good and bad actions, traces the motivating factors and describes the consequences of these actions.

In this book the relationship between kamma and vipāka (the result of kamma) is made clear. For instance, a particular experience need not, in itself, constitute kamma, for it could be the ripening of a kamma, i.e., a kammaphala or vipāka. If a man is of violent nature, he pollutes, not only his own mind, but others as well, and also the environment. So there is an interconnection between the individual and the society or the world, through the action (kamma) of the individual. Similarly, the vice versa, i.e., impact of the society or the world on the individual is equally true.

There is rebirth. But no reincarnation. As Venerable Nāgasena very succinctly put it to King Milinda, that lighting a lamp with another does not imply that the flame has departed from one to another. In the same way rebirth takes place without the transmigration of any soul.

If there is no permanent medium for transfer of karmic energy from one life to another, how then does action or kamma of one life bring forth its fruit in another life? This

philosophical riddle is beautifully dealt with in the Buddha's teaching of universal flux (anicca) and unsubstantiality (anatta). How a Karmic resultant becomes a medium for the continuity of Katattā Kamma (reserve kammic potential) too has been clearly explained.

Buddhism, as a framework of conduct, is essentially experiential, and not so much conceptual. The purpose of the code of conduct is to recapture the experiences which the Buddha himself had of the highest spiritual life. The ethics of kamma defines how volitional action, (kamma) is of two types either wholesome (kusala) or unwholesome (akusala). These, in turn, are bodily actions, verbal actions and mental actions.

What goes out of one, returns to one. In the Cūla Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta (discourse) the Master answers Subha's questions about the inequalities so evident in the world, and traces the causes of the differentiation to kusala and akusala kammās.

Analytical approach or Vibhajjavāda is defined as the path of discrimination. In the Great Analysis of Action, Mahā Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta, the summary of kamma-patterns have been adumbrated by means of a simple and succinct formula: "Thus, indeed Ānanda, there is the unworthy action which overtakes an unworthy action; there is the unworthy action which overtakes the worthy action; there is the worthy action which overtakes the worthy action; and there is the worthy action and which overtakes an unworthy action." Here by unworthy (abhabbo) is meant an action which is incapable of producing a good result. And worthy (bhabbo) action means that which is capable of producing a good result.

In the Upāli Sutta, a certain sectarian, with the intention of defeating the Master in a debate, declared the validity of bodily penance as against mental action. In the ensuing

argument, the Blessed One gradually but surely veered Upāli out of delusion, and set him on the path of truth.

In the Sutta entitled "The Consequences of misconduct" one can see how the Moral Law of cause and effect can make or mar one's life. For everything that exists is governed by a set of laws. Then in the sutta on "Becoming" the Buddha lucidly elucidates the profound and intricate mechanism of rebirth through simple analogies. "Action is like the land, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. When consciousness of beings, who are bounded by ignorance and fettered by craving, gets established in the lower, middle or higher elements (of existence), rebirth takes place accordingly."

Instead of looking for a creator, it would be better to discover the creativity of kamma. And by giving a new orientation to this creativity, one can transcend kamma itself and therewith rebirth. The Buddhist Law of Kamma provides the greatest hope for mankind, as the past kammās can be nullified by the present kammās, and the future course can be changed by present kammās.

It opens up an unique vista of hope and spiritual possibilities. If by one set of kamma a person is fettered to the wheel of becoming, by developing another set of kamma, that person can transcend the bondages of saṃsāric existence.

The problem of inequalities which exist in the world cannot be dispelled by artificially creating an egalitarian society. It can be removed by changing the moral standards of people's lives in a positive way, and by spiritually restructuring the way of living of the people as taught by the Omniscient Buddha.

Venerable Acharya Buddhārakkhita
Maha Bodhi Society, Bangalore-9

Sabba Dānam Dhamma Dānam Jināti

Upasaka Shri L.Shivalingaiah has donated for the publication of this book with the following dedication of merits:

I was very much impressed by the discourse of Bada Bhantheji, on the Law of Kamma and Rebirth. With Reference to my own life I have examined and got convinced with some incidents. I feel fortunate for being born on Buddha Poornima Day – 13th May 1930 to my parents in whom I could see some favourable characteristics for me to come to Dhamma. I dedicate my merits to my beloved parents Late **Shri.Lingaiah** and Late **Smt.Siddamma** and to my ancestors. I also dedicate to Late **Shri.S.Sadanand** and **Shri.B.Sarvamitra** of Deena Seva Sangha and their family members who helped me to get my education.

I also dedicate my merits to my family members late **Smt.Tejevathy**, my wife and to late **Chandrakala**, my daughter, and to my sons **Dr.Raviprakash** and **Sri. Ramesh** and their family, and my granddaughters **Rupali**, **Shefali** and **Ramila**.

Ven.**SONA** and Ven.**UTTARA** who took Dhamma to Burma made a Prophecy that “Buddhism will come back to its Birth place, India, after 2500 years after Tathagata’s Mahaparinibbāna,” i.e. 1956 C.E. This reality is visible and hence I dedicate my merits to those who are instrumental in modern times to bring back Buddhism in India:

1. **Ven.Anagārika Dhammapāla** who established Maha Bodhi Society in 1891- to spearhead a mission for revival of Buddhism in India and many other parts of the world.
2. **Ven .Acharya Buddharakkhita** who established Maha Bodhi Society in Bangalore on 5th June 1956, on a land given by the Maharaja of Mysore, for a Buddhist centre.
3. **Shri. Acharya S.N Goenkaji** who learnt Vipassana meditation from ‘**Sayagyi U Ba Khin** in Burma, in 1956 and established Vipassana centres all over the world.
4. **Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar** who took Dhamma Deeksha on 14th October 1956 along with lakhs of his followers and

played a vital role in reviving Buddhism in India. I had the fortune to see him earlier on 8-8-1954 and read his books.

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- 1) **Sri. L.R. Balley**, editor of Bheema Patrika, Author of many books who has travelled with me in India and abroad for Dhamma mission.
- 2) **Late Sri.Bhagawan Das** president, Samatha Sainik Dal, author of *Thus spoke Ambedkar* and many other books.
- 3) **Late Sri. Nanak Chand Rattu** P.A to Baba Saheb who shared many vital issues with us.
- 4) **Chairman and members of Peoples Education Society** Mumbai and **Late Sri.Wasanth Moon**, who published many books of Baba Saheb.
- 5) **Ven.Dr. Chandrabodhi**, **Late Sri. Chanan Chahal**, **Shri C. Gautam** and **members of FABO of U.K.**

I also dedicate my merits to **Ven’ble Sanghasena Bhanteji** with whom I have visited many Buddhist countries, to **Ven’ble Ananda Bhanteji** with whom I have discussed many of my doubts and learnt Dhamma. **Ven’ble Vinayarakkita Bhanteji**, with whom I travelled to Myanmar and Thailand and had thought provoking discussions.

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I dedicate my merits to those noble and great persons both known and unknown who relentlessly fought against ignorance, superstition, slavery, exploitation and struggled, sacrificed their lives in the past and who are carrying on this movement at present and will carry on in future for establishing liberty, equality, and fraternity to make the entire humanity to live with human dignity, harmony and ever-lasting peace in the world. I share my merits with all beings and may all beings be enlightened!

A SURVEY

In order to explain the inequalities, the turmoils, pains and pleasures of life, thinkers in India, from the earliest times, have sought to examine the validity, efficacy and fruits of all actions, good and bad. In this, with the exception of the Cārvāka materialists, all the systems of Indian philosophy postulate a higher standard, a moral basis, to judge all actions. In Buddhism this is known as the Law of Karma and Rebirth.

In his monumental work 'A History of Indian Philosophy' Dr. S.N. Dasgupta writes – "All the Indian systems agree in believing that whatever action is done by an individual leaves behind it some sort of potency which has the power to ordain for him joy or sorrow in the future according as it is good or bad. When the fruits of the actions are such that they cannot be enjoyed in the present life or in a human life, the individual has to take another birth as a man or any other being in order to suffer them".

History:

Historically, the rudiments of the Indian doctrine of Karma are to be found in the Vedic sacrifices where it is still a simple ritual, almost magical in nature, and has not attained the somewhat philosophical and ethical significance of the Upanishadic period. In the Upanishads we find a clear distinction arising between a mechanical ritual and ethical action. Buddhism transformed the very content of the doctrine of Karma by making the ethical character depend upon volition, thereby blending it into a perfect psycho-ethical system. Thus Karma, in Buddhism, is a Law and not just a doctrine.

Materialistic view:

Side by side with the development of spiritualism in the history of Indian thought, there also flourished a school of

materialism from the earliest of times in India. Mention of its growth is to be found in the Vedic, Buddhist and Jain records alike.

While the doctrine of Karma formed one of the fundamental tenets of the Vedic, Buddhist, Jain religions, the materialists completely rejected any moral responsibility of actions (Karma).

"Bruhaspati Laukya of the Rig Veda is the earliest exponent of this creed. Cārvāka, who is said to be his follower, was the celebrated teacher who gave the final form to this philosophy. His dictum was that matter is the ultimate reality in all things. The animate and inanimate, are the products of matter. Mental phenomenon is like the intoxication that comes out from the mixture of some ingredients which themselves are not intoxicating. Hence, there is no such thing as moral responsibility. Enjoyment and gratification of the senses are the only reasonable ends of man- Kāma ekaika purushārthaha" (Radhakrishnan-Indian Philosophy).

According to Cārvāka, pain is there but only to enhance the taste of pleasure like the intermittent separation of two lovers. In short, the materialists said :

Yāvat jivet sukhaṃ jivet,
Ruṇam krutvā ghṛtam pivet;
Bhasmi bhūtasya dehasya,
Purnarāgamaṇaṃ kutaha?

When the body is burnt
Where is the (question of) returning?
So while you live, live happily;
Even having borrowed
Drink ghee, and enjoy!

In the West, Epicurus and Aristippus, the two celebrated counterparts of Cārvāka, preached an identical creed rejecting any higher standard or moral basis for actions.

6 teachers, Purana Kassapa etc. on Kamma

The Two Main Positions:

Among the believers of the doctrine of Kamma there are two main positions; one, those who associate the idea or presence of a soul-entity in relationship with a retributive authority or creator god, and the other, those who do not believe in a soul (Ātman) and who interpret kamma not as a doctrine, but purely as a Law, based on psychological and ethical norms.

Again among the former, there are two views – theistic and non-theistic. The Vedic or the general Hindu tradition holds the theistic view of karma and reincarnation, in which there is an ultimate authority (god) who guides the moral standard and who, therefore, is the giver of the fruit of all actions (Phaladātā). Beings are ceaselessly performing all kinds of actions, according to which they are receiving retributions – pleasure and happiness, for good action (Shukla Karma), and pain and misery, for evil action (Krishna Karma); or a mixed reward of pleasure and pain, for a mixed action of good and bad (Shukla-Krishna Karma).

The Hindu doctrine of Karma in a general way propagates that it is due to actions that beings undergo rebirth again and again, in various planes of existence. It is desire and illusion that produce all actions. When a person is completely divested of (desire) through pure deeds or as in Gitā, Nishkāma Karma, then one ceases to accumulate new karma and thus becomes a Jivan Mukta (Liberated One). And it is then that one finds within oneself the ‘actionless soul’, which neither suffers nor enjoys. So long as one accumulates karma, the ‘soul’, thus imprisoned in it, undergoes ceaseless incarnations through varied planes of existence reaping, as it were, the fruits ordained by the god).

Kamma Yes, Rebirth No:

The Christians, Muslims, Parsis and Jews also come under this category, however, with an important difference: while they

believe in the moral retribution of actions as ordained by God, they do not believe in the reincarnation or Rebirth which is an essential corollary from the point of view of the Hindus, Jains and Buddhists.

In his ‘Reincarnation and Karma’, W.W. Atkinson says that even the ancient Egyptians, Peruvians, the Druids, Greeks, Romans and the Chinese, all believed in some sort of karma. He also mentions that although the official Christian Church or the Islamic and Jewish ecclesiastic authorities, do not accept the concept of reincarnation or rebirth, many eminent theologians and leaders of these respective bodies have, however, recognised and accepted individually, the doctrine of Rebirth, In any case, the proposition of an eternal hell or heaven, after death, as taught by these religions, does presuppose some kind of afterlife, which in effect, means rebirth.

Thus, the general belief, regarding karma, according to these theistic (Ātmavādin) believers, requires the existence of a supreme judging authority, and further it is assumed that without such an authority it is not possible to construct ethics.

Non-theistic:

The other Ātmavādin concept of karma is non-theistic as formulated by the Jains. According to the Jains, karma is twofold bhāva karma or mental passions (also called kāshāya) and dravya karma or material atomic aggregates. As a result of the mental passions the atomic aggregates relate themselves in bondage with the soul. Just as a piece of wet cloth attracts and is covered by dust particles, even so, these passions, attract, the dravya karma particles, and the soul is kept in bondage. Thus the four fundamental qualities of the soul viz., Knowledge (Gñāna), Belief (Darshana), Energy (Vīrya) and Bliss (Ānanda), are distorted and obscured and the being is led to ceaseless cycles of rebirth. Accordingly, to the Jains, Moksha, liberation, consists in the total clearance of these karma particles. This view of karma is also known as Atomic Pluralism.

From this brief survey of the doctrine of Karma as propounded by various schools, it is clearly evident that the idea of a 'soul' is invariably associated with 'a doer', as well as 'a reaper' of the fruits, in conjunction with or without an ultimate judge or authority as the dispenser of the fruits or judgements.

Buddhist Perspective:

In the history of religion and philosophy, Buddhism is unique and distinct from others, in this respect. And this is because it advocates a perfect ethics purely on psychological postulates without the need of any moral retribution and without assuming the presence of a 'soul' or ātmā. Buddha's presentation of the Law of Karma is entirely on new lines and on a fundamentally different perspective. It is based on 'Dependent Origination' (Paṭicca Samuppāda) and 'Unsubstantiality' (Anattā), two fundamentals of Buddha-Dhamma, to be dealt with later.

Kamma is not Fatalism:

According to Buddhism, Karma is not fatalistic. It is not geared to a retributive authority who decides the fate, nor to a soul-entity which gets inextricably caught, requiring the invoking of help from some higher power. There is no pre-determined or fixed action, which one is destined to do, and to be released from which, or for the results of which, one must seek a saviour. Fatalism induces grave mental inertia by making karma subservient to something else. In Buddhism, knowledge about karma is not an idle intellectual speculation trying to explain, rather explain away, certain happening of life for which no other satisfactory answer could be found. It is a Norm, a Law that operates on its own ground, just as any other law, effective in other spheres of life.

THE SEMANTICS OF KAMMA

(Word-meaning)

'A' was condemned to life-imprisonment for having killed a woman with whom he had extramarital relationship. 'A' was worried when asked why he committed murder, he said: "Of course, I had to. It was predestined. Even my astrologer told me that I will murder. It was my prārabdha (destiny)."

'B' was an L.M.P. doctor who thought it below his dignity to visit the houses of poor villagers and slum-dwellers. He would sit cosily in his dispensary and exert the least even to fulfil his normal duties, expecting his assistant and others to do everything for him. Whenever doctor 'B' came, he would invariably blame his fate, saying how unlucky he was in everything; how every venture he took up failed. It appears he had started a number of clinics in several areas, but succeeded nowhere; he even entered into a business venture with a close relative who duped him; then he took up jobs with several doctors, but nobody kept him for more than a few months; on top of all these, he was constantly suffering from some disease or other; and worse still, he had no children! He attributed his ill-luck to karma. He said he must have done some bad karmas in the past which led to failures. When asked why he did not exert, whereby these very failures could become stepping stones to success, he said he was quite certain that these very past karmas were responsible for his non-exertion too!

'C' was a businessman. He duped a close friend of his to the tune of several lakhs. And then, after some time he went on an elaborate pilgrimage, visiting famous temples, having dips in holy rivers and so on. It seems his friend, hailing from a humble house, was brought up by his rich father-in-law, who gave him lots of money to develop the family business. Surreptitiously he removed money every now and then from

the business, until he had accumulated the large sum of several lakhs which he kept for safe custody with 'C'. After sometime he wanted the money from 'C' to start a new venture and was duly duped because there was no record of the transaction. He was out of his mind for some time and the truth soon became known to everyone around. When 'C' was questioned about it, he said without any compunction: "There is nothing wrong in my keeping the amount since it was ill-gotten any way; and my sins are certainly washed away by the dips I have had during my pilgrimage, and offerings I made in many temples must have looked after the sins, if any."

'D' was doing a roaring business in pharmaceuticals. He had a laboratory which specialised in the production of spurious drugs, and in particular, in adulterating well known brands. He was also known as a very pious person who visited his community temple and looked after the monks of his caste with considerable exhibitionist fervour. One of the things that he frequently and ostensibly practised was to patronise certain people who carried rope cots (charpai) which were reeking with bugs, millions of them. These were the professional self-mortifiers. In the name of penance a 'pious' devotee would pay a certain sum in lieu of which the self-torturer would lie down on the cot allowing himself to be bitten by the bugs visibly. 'D' regularly patronised these peddlers of bug-fed self-torturing cots and considered himself doing tremendous good karma nullifying all sins.

From these cases, it is evident that the word karma is used to denote widely differing activities and contexts. Karma according to 'A' is plain and simple fatalism, a doomed destiny from which there is no escape and to which one is mercilessly fettered. If kamma had been understood, as it is in Buddhism, as a Law, then 'A' would have exerted himself to overcome the urge leading to murder. If 'A' had sufficiently trained himself in Sīla – moral purification, he would have certainly tamed his vicious propensity to murder.

Karma, according to 'B', is that deterministic chain whereby a given cause passes its force upon another cause, and both are related, not by way of cause and effect, but by way of determinism or necessitarianism. If the good Licentiate Medical Practitioner had vigorously and perseveringly applied himself, then he certainly would not have failed in his ventures. And he would undoubtedly have turned every adversity into a stepping-stone to prosperity.

Karma for 'C' amounts to masked materialism. Two wrongs do not make one right and no amount of religious bigotry can become an alternative for spiritual merit. A materialist masquerading in the garb of karma is indeed a very common phenomenon in religion.

Paying a man to lie down on a bug-infested cot, and be bitten for a certain period, at a given rate (longer the period, higher the rate), in the name of penance by the self-torturer, and thus acquiring good karma to outbalance bad karma by patronising a rapacious trader, is probably the most twisted usage of the term karma. Here karma would appear to have acquired a physical quantity.

Such is the kaleidoscopic variegatedness of the interpretation of karma in various religious schools. Yet the simple fact remains that kamma just means action as in Buddhism. It is derived from karoti – to act, do, perform or make. Karma, like Dharma, is the most important, powerful and all-embracing term in Indian linguistics. And this widespread use, probably, explains its considerable misuse. It was given to Lord Buddha to render the semantics of kamma into the simple yet profound postulate of a Law that works on its own as a self-sustaining system and brooks no interference from any human or divine source.

The Five laws

Buddhism distinguishes five laws called 'Pañca Niyāma Dhammā', which operate in different spheres of animate and inanimate existence. These are:

1. **Utu Niyāma:** The law which governs seasons, change in temperature, and other physical conditions, such as, thunderstorm, flood, epidemic, famine, good or bad harvest, etc.
2. **Bīja Niyāma:** The law which governs the reproduction of species, such as, man giving birth to man, dog to a dog, or a mango tree producing only mangoes.
3. **Citta Niyāma:** The law which governs mental or psychological phenomena, such as, the function of a particular type of mind or consciousness (citta), in a particular way, in conjunction with its concomitant factors. For instance, the wholesome (kusala), unwholesome (akusala), resultant (Vipāka) and functional (kriyā) types of cittas, working together with their respective concomitants (cetasikā) in a regulated way.
4. **Kamma Niyāma:** The psycho-ethical law of Cause and Effect, otherwise called Moral Causation. That is to say, relating a cause to an effect on the basis of certain conditions, such as, evil and hateful actions producing painful and disagreeable consequences and vice versa.
5. **Dhamma Niyāma:** The law which obtains in rare and special circumstances causing unusual and miraculous manifestations. For instance, when great and spiritually perfected beings, such as, the Buddhas, appear, all the phenomenal changes that are witnessed during such events, like unprecedented prosperity and various other miracles – all these come within the purview of this law.

Thus, kamma is one of the Niyāmas, laws, which operates in the sphere of morality and which determines rebirth in a particular plane of existence, occasioning the varied experiences of pain, pleasure, poverty, prosperity, etc. Thus, the law of kamma is intimately linked with saṃsāric bondage (bandhana), as well as with Deliverance (Nibbāna).

Heir to actions

The following passages from the Aṅguttara Nikāya is indeed illuminating in this context:

“Here, monks, someone destroys living beings...takes what belongs to others... commits sexual misconduct with the other sex...speaks the untruth...is a tale-bearer...uses harsh language...is an empty prattler...is covetous...is hateful...holds perverted views.”

*“Idha, bhikkhave, ekacco pānātipātī hoti...
adinnādāyī hoti... kāmesu micchācārī
hoti... musāvādī hoti... piṣuṇāvāco hoti...
pharusāvāco hoti... samphappalāpī hoti... abhijjhālu
hoti... byāpannacitto hoti... micchādīṭṭhiko hoti ti.*

“Thus he warps his bodily, verbal and mental actions. Therefore his deeds, words and thoughts become crooked. As such, his whole course of living and his destiny too becomes crooked. But I tell you: Whoever pursues a crooked course of living and destiny, will have to expect one of these two consequences, either the torments of hell, or birth amongst the creeping animals.”

So saṃsappati kāyena, saṃsappati vācāya, saṃsappati manasā; tassa jimhaṃ kāyakammaṃ hoti, jimhaṃ vacīkammaṃ, jimhaṃ manokammaṃ, jimhā gati, jimhūpapatti. Jimhagatikassa kho panāhaṃ, bhikkhave, jimhūpapattikassa dvinnaṃ gatīnaṃ aññataraṃ, gatiṃ vadāmi : ye vā ekantadukkhānirayā, yā vā saṃsappajātikā tīracchānayoṇi.

“Monks, it is in this way that commensurate with how they act that determines the rebirth of beings; whatever one does, according to that is one reborn. And having been reborn, beings experience the results of their actions.” Thus do I declare that beings are the heirs of their action. Monks, indeed,

beings are the owner of their action, heirs of their actions, their action is the womb when they are reborn, their actions are their kinsmen and to them their actions come home again, whatever action they do be it good or bad, of that they become the heir. A.X.21.6.

Iti kho, bhikkhave, bhūtassa upapatti hoti. Yaṃ karoti tena upapajjati. Upapannamenāṃ phassā phusanti. Evamāhaṃ, bhikkhave, kammadāyādā sattāti vadāmi. Kammassakā, bhikkhave, sattā, kammadāyādā, kammayoni, kammabandhu, kammaṇṇasaraṇā. Yaṃ kammaṃ karonti kalyānaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā, tassa dāyādā bhavanti.”

Dhammapada, the most widely read book of Buddhism, opens with very similar thoughts:

“Mind precedes all unwholesome states and is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts, misery follows him like the wheel that dogs the hoof of the ox.”

“Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manosetṭhā manomaya;
Manasāce paduṭṭhena, bhāsati vā karoti vā,
Tato naṃ dukkhamanveti, cakkamaṃ vā vahato padaṃ.”

“Mind precedes all wholesome states and is their chief; they are all mind wrought. If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts, happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow.”

“Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manosetṭhā manomayā,
Manasā ce pasannena, bhāsati vā karoti vā,
Tato naṃ sukhamanveti, chāyā’va anapāyinī.” (1-2).

There are many suttas where the Buddha has made clear the complex and profound nature of the Law of Karma through such simple yet penetrating teachings.

Dimensions of the personality

The universe in which we live represents a synchrony and an inter-dependence of lasting laws. There is a certain justice and orderliness, a certain mutuality and sequence, regulating the course of the cosmos. There is nothing fortuitous, nothing arbitrary about the universe. There is no mandate, no command that rules, but only laws, eternal laws, that govern, conformity to which means harmony and evolution, orderliness and continuity. To abide by them is to abide in peace.

Lord Buddha identified five such laws regulating the cosmic order. They are known as Niyāma Dhammā, Cosmic Norms, because they bring order and concord, in the same way, a good rule does, like the traffic rule in a busy and bustling city. These are the laws that regulate and systematize the physical, biological, psychological, ethical and spiritual sphere.

If the human society becomes too preoccupied with things physical, or if the biological considerations dominate the issues of life, then it will be at the cost of the aesthetic and intellectual excellence of life. Similarly, if only the mental laws become the chief preoccupation, then man will dabble with lots of psychic powers, at the cost of the ethical and spiritual excellence. It is said the Asuras, who are spiritually inferior to human beings, have tremendous psychic powers. They have unlimited titanic creativity, but all to diabolical and destructive ends. This is because of a misapplication that overdoes or over-reaches the mark. Man would appear to be following in the footsteps of the Asuras by becoming over-occupied with the physical and biological laws. Unless governed by the psychological, ethical and spiritual laws, science and technology would only end up in total destruction, as is evident from the monstrous destructions which modern world wars have wrought.

Ethical laws maintain moral excellence and harmony, not only in the individual but also in the universe, and exert priority and dominance over the three preceding laws. Yet if this law

is again overplayed, it degenerates into Puritanism and ideological fanaticism. But when it is synchronous with the functions of all other laws, then it is this law that preserves the universe, assures progress, secures the succession of phases, and maintains continuity.

The spiritual law is the supreme law that regulates all the other laws and brings about an unanimity, a harmony and dispassion, as in an elevating symphony wherein all sounds converge to create a divine music, and never to clash into the noise of the demon.

And as it is with the universe, so it is with man. There are dimensions of the human personality each representing a law, and all together forming the interpenetrating whole – the man. Just as the human civilisation progresses and thrives when all the laws work in unison, even so, when all these human dimensions are in harmony, life becomes an unfolding adventure unto reality.

The law of kamma, plays the most dominant role in effecting this progression – from imperfection to perfection, unreality to reality, ignorance to enlightenment. Therefore Lord Buddha unambiguously pronounced: “Heirs to their actions are beings. Commensurate with their actions is the destiny of beings. Actions are their refuge.”

And actions, springing from the mind, express the state of the mind. Therefore, if the mind is kept in a wholesome state, an elevating destiny is assured. Hence the hopeful message of the Master: “If with a pure mind one speaks or acts, happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow”.

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

Kamma, has been clearly enunciated by the Buddha by means of a precise and succinct formula known as the ‘Dependent Origination’ (Paṭicca Samuppāda). Reduced to its simplest equation, it means the moral causation of all life; that is to say, the conditioned arising of all those psycho-physical

phenomena, generally summed up by the conventional term ‘being’, ‘person’, etc. Said the Buddha:

1. **Avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā:** Dependent on ignorance kamma-formations arise, i.e. rebirth-producing volitional activities originate.
2. **Saṅkhārā-paccayā viññāṇaṃ:** Dependent on kamma-formations (of the past life), the (relinking) consciousness (of the present life) arises.)
3. **Viññāṇa-paccayā nāmarūpaṃ:** Dependent on (the relinking) consciousness, the psycho-physical aggregate (which makes up our so-called individual existence) arises.
4. **Nāmarūpa-paccayā salāyatanaṃ:** Dependent on the psycho-physical aggregate, the six bases (that is, the five physical sense organs and mind as the sixth) arise.
5. **Salāyatana-paccayā phasso:** Dependent on the six (sensory and mental) bases, contact arises.
6. **Phassa-paccayā vedanā:** Dependent on contact, feeling or sensation arises.
7. **Vedanā-paccayā taṇhā:** Dependent on feeling, craving arises.
8. **Taṇhā-paccayā upādānaṃ:** Dependent on craving, clinging arises.
9. **Upādāna paccayā bhavo:** Dependent on clinging, the process of becoming (consisting of the active and passive aspects of life, that is to say, the rebirth producing karmic-process, kamma-bhava, and as its result the rebirth-process, upapatti-bhava), arises.
10. **Bhava-paccayā jāti:** Dependent on becoming, (the rebirth-producing karmic process) rebirth (in a plane of existence) arises.
11. **Jāti-paccayā jarāmaraṇa-soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā sambhavanti:** Dependent on rebirth, ageing, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, depression and despair arise.

The following chart shows the relationship (of dependence) between three successive lives:

PAST

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Ignorance (avijjā) | Kamma Process
(kammabhava) |
| 2. Kamma-formations
(Saṅkhārā) | Five. causes : 1, 2,
8, 9, 10 |

PRESENT

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 3. Consciousness (viññāṇa) | |
| 4. Corporeality & Mentality
(nāma-rūpa) | Rebirth-Process
(upapattibhava) |
| 5. Six Bases (saḷāyatana) | |
| 6. Contact or Impression
(phassa) | Five results : 3 - 7 |
| 7. Feeling (vedanā) | |
| 8. Craving (taṇhā)
(Kamma bhava) | Kamma-Process |
| 9. Clinging (upādāna) | Five causes 1, 2, 8, 9, 10. |
| 10. Process of Becoming (bhava) | |

FUTURE

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 11. Rebirth (jāti) | Rebirth-Process
(Upapattibhava) |
| 12. Old Age and Death | Five results: 3 to 7
(jarā-maraṇa) etc. |

Buddhist Dictionary by:
Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera

The Three Cycles and Four Aspects

There are in this chart three distinct cycles of existence and four aspects of cause-effect relationship.

The first two conditions, i.e., avijjā and saṅkhārā, represent the past life, and the last two, i.e., jāti and jarāmarāṇa, etc., the future course, and the remaining eight concern the present life. These are the three cycles of existence.

The four aspects of cause-effect relationships are:

1. The active karmic-process of the past life, comprising avijjā and saṅkhāra (in which are also to be included taṇhā upādāna and kammabhava).
2. The passive kamma-resultant or vipāka-process of the present life, consisting of viññāṇa, nāma-rūpa, saḷāyatana, phassa and vedanā.
3. The active karmic-process of the present life, (dependent on the acquired passive kamma-resultant), comprising taṇhā, upādāna and kammabhava (which includes avijjā and saṅkhārā).
4. The passive vipāka-process of the future life, consisting of upapattibhava, jāti, jarāmarāṇa, etc.

Now, dependent on the past avijjā-based saṅkhārā or volitional activities, certain conditions were wrought forming the passive aspect of our present life. This in turn sets in motion the active karmic-process as represented by taṇhā, upādāna and bhava. This active karmic-process is similarly fashioning the course of our future life, i.e., the passive aspect of it. Through this chain of cause-effect relationship, the process of kamma and rebirth goes on ad infinitum in samsāra, without a break, in various forms, under different circumstances, now as a man, now as a deva (god) and now as an animal.

These eleven conditions (in twelve āṅgas or links) explain the entire process of kamma and rebirth psychologically, ethically and metaphysically.

Psychological: Psychologically, it shows the cause-effect relationship, by way of the 24 conditional relationships (paccayas) of all mental phenomena, which keep the continuity of the life-process in a state of flux, combining and recombining at varied levels, in different planes, according to the ethical character of the mental factors.

Ethical: Ethically, it shows how a particular type of action, performed through any of the three modes, that is, by deed, speech and mind, produces corresponding results in proportion to the ethical nature of the act.

Metaphysical: Metaphysically, the law of kamma and rebirth is correlated to the process of bondage and liberation. Kamma, based on the principle of casual genesis, does away with the two extremes of nihilism and eternalism. How the nihilistic position has been rejected is shown above while the materialist's views were presented. In a changing world the eternalistic position of a permanent entity, from the point of view of causal genesis, is a metaphysical fiction as also a logical contradiction. For if the ātmā or permanent entity remains unaffected in spite of constant changes, then what is it that is in bondage? And for something which is unaffected by change, what need is there for liberation?

“Sassata diṭṭhiyā sati brahmacariyavāso na hoti,
Uccheda diṭṭhiyā sati brahmacariyavāso ca na hoti”.

Sacca Saṅgaho

“When the eternalistic, as also the nihilistic, wrong view (or dogma) prevails, living the holy life has no relevance (because no improvement is possible in either case!)”.

Further, if it is granted that this permanent entity (ātmā or self) is covered, for some reason or other, with some adventitious thing called Māyā, then what is the guarantee that after it is freed from the state of bondage, it will not fall back (from liberation) to the same state (of bondage) again, since its

fundamental nature remains unchanged and unaffected anyway? This also brings the difficulty of a ‘first-beginning’ and its corollaries. Metaphysically, therefore, according to the Buddhist law of kamma, there is nothing that transmigrates but there is only a process of nāma-rūpa (psycho-physical aggregation) which continues in a flux, and which is ‘neither the same nor different’ (naca so na ca añño), arising and passing away, from existence to existence, depending on the concatenation of conditions.

Flame-like

There is the classical analogy of a lamp that burns for the whole night. The flame in the first watch cannot be said to be the same as that of the last watch. Neither could it be said to be entirely different. But there is a relationship between the flames of these two periods, one occurring dependent upon the other. Kamma is like the oil, the fuel, which keeps the manifestation of life, the flame, going on and on. But each life-manifestation, originally based on a single Janaka Kamma, is a series of units of consciousness that works itself out in rapid succession, thus maintaining an apparently unbroken continuity. Just as a flame, through a succession of combustion and due to the rapidity, maintains an appearance of continuity, even so it is with life.

Wheel of Life

‘Divyavadāna’, a Buddhist biographical work, containing life-stories of the Buddha and his important immediate disciples, records some interesting accounts about the psychic exploits of Moggallāna the Great, second one of the two chief disciples of the Buddha. It is said that Mahā Moggallāna was second only to the Buddha in the mastery of supernormal powers. He used to visit the various sub-human and super-human planes of existence, such as, the different states of niraya (hell), the realm of the ghosts, etc. Similarly, he visited the various deva lokas – divine realms, and the realms of the radiant exalted

Brahma gods. After visiting these realms, he would return and describe to the Buddha in the presence of the monks the terrible sufferings which the denizens of the spirit and hell worlds experienced, as well as the blissful life which the heavenly beings enjoyed.

Now it so happened that whenever a discontented and rebellious monk troubled an Elder monk, he invariably brought the culprit to Venerable Moggallāna. And he set him right in no time by revealing the miserable conditions of the nether worlds. One day Lord Buddha noticed a large congregation of monastic and lay disciples listening to the Venerable Moggallāna who was describing the various planes of existence and how beings wandered from life to life driven by the power of kamma. Then the Lord told the Venerable Ānanda that since the Venerable Moggallāna's discourse will not be available to all, a big mural of the Wheel of Life – Bhava Chakka, be painted on the entrance of the Preaching Hall for the benefit of devotees. It was to be a teaching aid.

Even today in monasteries of various Buddhist countries throughout the world this art of depicting the Wheel of Life is not only preserved but actively cultivated and promoted.

Thus at the instance of Lord Buddha, a great wheel was painted having three distinct circles. The inner circle, or the hub, depicting the three roots of kamma that keep the wheel rotating ad infinitum.

The middle circle depicts the six gatis – realms, where one is heading to be reborn, such as, the six types of births – in the hells, in the realm of ghosts, in the animal world, in the realm of the demons, in the human world and in the divine spheres. These six dimensions of existence represent the domain of kamma, that is to say, where the kammās get worked out.

The outer circle, or the rim, contains, twelve segments representing the twelve links of Dependent Origination. These

links depict the time-succession of the dynamics of kamma; that is, the past, the present and the future lives wrought by kamma.

The Wheel of Life is the Wheel of Becoming (Bhava), the endless wandering in phenomenal existence (samsāra). It is a whirling wheel depicting faithfully the whirling cosmos with all its universes, and its myriad rungs of evolution.

In the hub, three animals are painted: the cock; in red, representing greed, or lust; the snake in green, representing hate or aversion, and the hog, in black, representing ignorance or delusion. These animals are swallowing each other's tail, thus forming a ring. The idea behind is that greed, hate and delusion are mutually related and interactive. When an action is committed, motivated by greed or hatred, delusion automatically springs up to support, thus keeping the individual mentally blinded as to the consequences of the kamma. As soon as the consequences are visualised, which is what wisdom does, forthwith a wrong action is averted. Delusion is therefore the mother of all evil, since it keeps beings in darkness with reference to the nature, consequence and content of evil. It is these three roots of evil, by setting in motion a kammic process, whirl the wheel of wandering in samsāra on and on.

The middle circle represents the domains of existence (gati). The bottom centre is the hell, flanked on the left side by the animal world and on the right side by the realm of ghosts. The top centre represents the heavenly worlds, flanked on the left by the human world and on the right by the realm of the titans or demons.

Of these six domains of phenomenal existence, four are known as Duggatis – the states of woe, the other two – the realms of the human beings and gods, are called the Sugatis – the states of happiness. In the Duggatis, beings are born to suffer the consequences of evil kammās committed earlier. And in the Sugatis, beings are born to enjoy well-being and to get

an opportunity for further spiritual evolution, as consequences of good kammās done earlier.

Beings born in the Asura loka, titans or demons, are constantly struggling and waging wars, filled as they are with violent passion for power and other psychic abilities. It is said that they even fight with ideas for supremacy but only to be defeated. The ghosts lead a most wretched life of hunger, thirst and discomforts of various kinds, filled as they are with tremendous greed. It is said ghosts have huge bloated bellies and mouths that are no bigger than the eye of a needle, and extremely slender necks.

The illustrations given of the various gatis in the Wheel of Life, are indeed telling. The Asuras are constantly warring and are oppressed by humiliation from defeat and thwarted ambition. The ego-drives and the power-mongering traits are pronounced, born of the three roots of kamma depicted in the central circle. They have no peace or respite from their ceaseless strife and toil.

The ghosts are so pitifully portrayed, that to any casual onlooker it conjures up a sense of fear and disgust at their plight. It is said that they have to endure tremendous torments, e.g. they find the moon hot in summer and, the sun cold in winter, the rivers turn dry as they look at them when thirsty, a thick forest becomes barren as they seek shelter therein, whatever little food they manage to get, turns into swords, knives and splinters in their bellies and all these because of indulging in avarice and greed earlier.

The picture of the animal world is equally gory with killing and swallowing each other with constant fear and insecurity. There is indeed no recompense. Animals suffer not only because of the mutual slaying without remorse and antagonism, but because they are, in turn, the object of others' avarice and greed. They are slain for meat, bone or hide, or because they produce fur or wool, silk, pearl or musk; and then there are animals

who slog for men with iron-hooks and straps around, receiving whips and blows in the bargain; and pray, who can describe the intense sufferings of the animals caged in the laboratories, as specimen for vivisection? And this to produce knowledge for men! Furthermore, what about those that are caged in zoos and circuses for men's merriment? These grisly tales of the animal world only illustrate the fate that ravenous desire and voluptuousness create.

The hell in Buddhist cosmology is not the permanent state that Christian and Semitic theology makes out. The horrors depicted in the illustration are hair-raising and dreadful enough to pale any concentration camp into insignificance. The denizens of hell are ripped apart, mangled, devoured by titanic maggots, spiked a thousand times and tortured in a myriad ways.

The unmitigated torments of hell, it is said, have no interval. And yet, when the kammās of sheer wickedness, diabolic depravity and satanic savagery are exhausted, the wraiths of hell do find a respite and a change to evolve again, may be in a better plane, even in the human world, as do the asuras, the ghosts or the animals.

Beings born in the duggati, it is said, are caught in the net of woe, in a way that it becomes very difficult for them to get out of it. That is why birth in the human plane is considered a rare gain. Once a being finds an access into the sugati, he has infinite opportunities to evolve.

In the illustration, human beings engaged in the various avocations are shown happy, because, they have at hand a temple symbolising the means for spiritual development. But human beings could also be deprived. Therefore they are reminded by Lord Buddha, not to debase a gem-studded golden bowl by pouring into it vomit, urine and dung, meaning that the human state is like a gem-studded golden bowl, and let not this beautiful opportunity be despoiled by avarice and aversion, attachment and delusion.

Unlike the beings in the duggati who are deficient in ‘merit’, human beings are endowed with merit, and therefore, can find protection on their own. ‘Punya’ or merit, renders the human state into an instrument for gaining spiritual liberation. Hence the Buddha’s emphasis that “Let not this precious opportunity of finding access in the sugati, as a human being, be despoiled or lost by desire!”

If one’s clothes are on fire, one hastily puts it off. Likewise should desires be put off whenever they arise in the human heart. For, polluted by desire, the human mind can degenerate, so as to fall into any of the afore-mentioned states in duggati.

The heavenly realms are many. There are the Kāmāvacara gods and the Brahmas, radiant high divinities of Form and Formless states. In the illustration of the Wheel of Life different types of divine mansions are depicted to show the various celestial planes.

The divine beings are totally freed from the pain and anxiety as evident in lower planes. They live on merit. Hence their blissful existence. They live an immensely long life, going into astronomical figures, not of years but of kalpas – aeons. And an aeon is an immensely long duration of time which cannot be computed in terms of mere years.

But this blissful state of existence, too, is impermanent. Just as the hells are not permanent states of torture, even so, the heavenly realms are not eternal states of bliss. Specially if the devas get angry, or their minds are polluted otherwise, they either fall into the Asura loka and remain there, or are reborn elsewhere. Just as a rogue elephant lives in the forest all by himself threatening others, even so, the fallen god lives among the demons. A defiled mind cannot hold a being in that rarefied and sublime state of the devas. When the merits or the karmas, or both, are exhausted, the devas are reborn in other planes of existence.

Therefore, the heavenly state, though very blissful, does not constitute the Summum Bonum—the ultimate state of perfection in Buddhism. But it is definitely a very elevating condition, and a being, seriously pursuing the path of Dhamma, can derive great benefit from being a deva and progress unto the transcendental dimension of freedom – Nibbāna. It is to be understood, however, that whosoever fails to take spiritual advantage of the celestial realms, could end up miserably. For, exactly in proportion to the bliss enjoyed, there is the anticlimactic agony occasioned by the fall or death therefrom.

It is said that of all these domains of existence, where karmas are acquired and their consequences worked out, spiritually, the human plane is about the best,. And why? Because of its mixed blessings of pain and pleasure.

Again it is here that the Buddhas are born to attain to the summit of spirituality, to discover and declare the ultimate truth, to benefit all beings, in all realism, and at all times. Though born in the human sphere, the Buddhas, by virtue of their spiritual excellence and exalted attainments, become the Supreme Ones, the Saviors and the Spiritual Masters of all, including the highest Brahma gods.

Because of a relatively transient existence, the human beings can discern **anicca** – impermanence and changefulness, **dukkha** – unsatisfactoriness and suffering, and **anattā** – unsubstantiality and non-self, the three cardinal actualities that characterise phenomenal existence. The devas live so long, and so blissfully, that they can’t see the truths of impermanence, suffering and unsubstantiality. Neither do the beings in the duggatis realise these actualities, prepossessed as they are with pain and distress.

It should be interesting to note that birth in these various realms means not only happiness or misery but also altogether varied perceptions. As it is said in the commentarial literature, a pitcher full of water means entirely different things to different beings. While it is nectar to the celestial beings, it is plain water

to the human beings, and to the hungry ghosts it is a container of blood and pus; similarly to the nāgās and the fish, it is just the right environment wherein to live, and to the Brahmas of the Formless sphere of infinite space, it is empty space! Likewise, anything, animate or inanimate, subjective or objective, is different to different beings, in consequence of their kammās.

The twelve links of Dependent Origination, depicted in the outer circle, constitute a pictorial portrayal of the dynamics of kamma, in terms of three successive lives, i.e., the past, the present and the future, comprehending thus, the totality of time. Time, in terms of reality, is fiction. It exists only in relation to motion. And since existence, in all its forms, is intensely dynamic, as is clear from the transitoriness of all phenomena, time acquires a relative actuality. It validates, at any rate, the truth, of continuous creation, in terms of the chain of causal and conditional relations – Paṭicca Samuppāda.

The twelve links (nidānas) are pictorially depicted, as in the case of the (gatis), in order to make clear the working of the causal chain, ignorance, the first link, is represented by a blind woman, old and infirm, supported by a stick, groping about. She is led by a boy.

Ignorance is mental blindness. When the mind is seized with ignorance, it does not know things as they really are, but mistakes the essential to be non-essential and the non-essential to be essential, the real to be unreal, the true to be false and vice versa. Groping in the mental wilderness of fancies and delusions, the ignorant mind distorts the truth about things and holds on to perverted ideologies and beliefs—upholding the impermanent to be permanent, suffering to be happiness, the non-self to be self or soul, and the ugly to be beautiful.

Mental blindness, therefore, is not only unknowing but also knowing wrongly and inadequately, as is so tellingly portrayed by the symbol of the old women. Ignorance does not go alone, it is always accompanied by bhava taṇhā - the drive, otherwise

called craving for the continuity of existence. That is why a boy is shown leading the old woman.

Now, the formula of Dependent Origination says that dependent on ignorance, volitional activities arise; that is, due to ignorance, a kamma, in deed, word and thought, is produced.

Here the relation between the two is that of cause and effect, i.e., when ignorance obtains, one is motivated to commit volitional actions – actions that are deliberately, intentionally or willfully performed, as distinct from an unintentional or mechanical action.

Volitional action, the second link, has been shown as a potter engaged in turning out a variety of products, some very beautiful, others substandard, representing the two basic categories of action, viz., kusala kamma – wholesome, skillful, good or meritorious action, and akusala kamma – unwholesome, unskillful, evil or demeritorious action. Here then one finds ignorance mothering willed-actions that have the potency to establish time-succession by producing results in future.

These two links constitute the active or productive aspect of the personality, therefore they are conjoined with the other three productive links, which are taṇhā – craving, upādāna – clinging, and bhava – becoming (8, 9, 10 links to be explained later.)

Dependent on volitional activities, relinking consciousness arises. By relinking consciousness is meant that consciousness which arises at the moment of conception, that is, as the first thought-moment of the present life.

It is depicted as a monkey which, leaps onto a fruit-bearing tree from another, and devours the fruits, alluding thereby to a state that amounts to the ‘experiencing’ of a consequence—the enjoyment of the fruit of a past kamma. The leaping analogy is very apt, in the sense that on the cessation of the past life, the potential or residual karmic energy, ‘leaps’, so to say, into a new vehicle, that is, into a fresh life-process.

The relinking consciousness is therefore a vipāka or resultant type of consciousness. It is produced and is not itself productive. It is a passive condition and not an active one.

The mechanism of rebirth is an extremely complex condition. It is not by the mere interaction of the ovum and the sperm that rebirth is brought about. Unless the karmic agency, known in Pāli as gandhabba – ‘being’, is available with the right time-and-space-synchronicity. That is to say, just the right moment when the physical base is being provided by the parents, as well as the environmental and social possibilities to fit in with the being’s kamma-potentials, that rebirth occurs. Therefore it is very explicitly said in the Pāli canon that when the mother’s time is ripe, and when the mother and father meet, and the sperm is deposited in the womb, and the ‘being’ with the drive to leap, that is, to take rebirth, at that particular time and in that environment providing the right conditions for its evolution, is present, then does rebirth take place.

Relinking consciousness, thus, is the crystallisation of a new process of life. It inaugurates, so to say, a new state of existence, carrying with it the potential of the entire past.

Dependent upon (relinking) consciousness, mind-body aggregation arises. Though causal, it is a coeval relation in the sense that a synthesis of psychological and physiological factors, is occasioned conascently, with the arising of the first consciousness in a given state of existence. The symbol used to depict this link is a boat being rowed by a man with a few passengers across swift currents. While the boat symbolises the corporeal basis – the body, the boat-man and passengers represent the mind which is a compound of feelings (vedanā), perceptions (saññā), mental formations (saṅkhārā) and consciousness (viññāṇa). Consciousness is the boat-man proper in this analogy. The swirling currents represent the perilous and unstable world through which life should plod across.

With the arising of this psycho-physical combination, the six sense bases too are established; hence the phrase, dependent on mind-body, the six sense bases arise.

A base – āyatana, is a sphere, or an ‘access’ or ‘door’. Therefore the six sense-bases are depicted as a house with six windows. These are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind bases. The eye, like a harbour, ‘shelters’ the consciousness; it is where the consciousness must be based. The eye is also a door (or a window), that is, an access, for the objects to be ‘received’; in this case, the sights or visible objects to be ushered in, constitute the eye-consciousness. When food is ‘ushered’ into the mouth, through metabolic process feeds on the body. Similarly, when a visible object impinges on the eye, through the psychic process of five-door-advertence (pañcadvārāvajjana), it metabolizes into eye-consciousness. It is the same with the five other senses.

Dependent upon the six sense-bases, contact (phasso), the sixth link, arises. By contact is meant the meeting of subjective and objective factors; that is to say, the meeting of eye with sight, ear with sound, nose with smell, tongue with taste, touch with tangibles and mind with mental objects-ideas or concepts.

It is depicted as a man and woman in embrace, an explicit analogy, to emphasise what is called ‘the made for each other’ impact. The arising of a consciousness, as earlier mentioned, such as, eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness etc., comes about through the instrumentality of contact. It is contact which ‘ushers in’ the external object.

Dependent upon contact, feeling (Vedanā) arises. This seventh link is represented by an arrow piercing the eye, a vivid illustration to drive home the immediate and sharp impact, something like a shock, that it imparts into the personality. It is an emotional response to the contact between the sense and its object. Vedanā is the meeting-ground, between the mind and the matter. Thus, it plays a very important role. It rouses an active interest of the mind in the form of craving, and thereby introduces a new

productive activity. From relinking consciousness up to feeling, these five links (3, 4, 5, 6 and 7), are all Resultants (vipāka), the passive aspect of the personality. They are predicated by the first two links. Thus, the first five links stand for the present life, in consequence of the past-life, as an endowment, that is.

Dependent on feeling, Craving arises. Craving is depicted by a boozier lost in a drinking bout and a woman supplying the drinks. Boozier is the symbol of insatiability and thirst that characterise kamma. Craving is an active volitional action and it is invariably supported by ignorance, even as the boozier is by the woman.

Dependent on craving, clinging arises. It is due to craving that one grasps what is craved for, i.e., one gets attached. That is why clinging is depicted by a man feverishly plucking fruits from a tree and trying to fill a basket that is already full. Clinging, thus, signifies an intensification and multiplication of craving.

This clinging, as extended craving, now brings about Becoming. Because, what one grasps, that one gets, i.e. that becomes one's own. And what one craves for and cling to, that one becomes, i.e. with that the mind is impregnated. Hence, the very striking simile of a pregnant woman. Though the child is not born, not visible as yet, nonetheless, it has 'arrived,' it is conceived, it is on the way, it is only a matter of time when the parturition brings it into the world. Similarly, once craving arises, and kamma is thus performed, the consequence thereof is already wrought, it is only a matter of time when its actualisation is accomplished.

Thus, the three links (8, 9 and 10) of craving, clinging and becoming, conjoined with ignorance and volitional activity, constitute the active aspect of the present life. It is a vicious circle that is so worked out, by the insidious hands, not of destiny, providence or a creator god, but of the implacable law of Moral Causation-Kamma.

Dependent on becoming, birth arises. Birth is depicted by the picture of child-birth, a painful, if not loathsome, and an utterly helpless process. This refers to rebirth into the future, as the passive endowment of life (represented by the five links, 3,4,5,6 and 7).

The active process of kamma, (represented by the links 8, 9 and 10) in turn, fashions the future, even as the seed contains the fruit that is to come in due course. Likewise, Bhava-becoming, now unfolds itself in the form of birth in a new state of existence.

Dependent on birth, old age and a whole chain of infirmity, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, depression and despair arise.

Old age has been depicted very appropriately by an old man carrying a corpse. Just as the pregnant woman already carries the child, so does the aged carry death. The mass of suffering (dukkhakkhandha), as expressed by the terms sorrow etc., that is intrinsic in life, has been spelt out in the incoming existence, by way of the last two links (11 and 12) which naturally stand for the five links, expressing the passive aspect of the personality in the present life.

Here, then, we get the Wheel of Life in twenty propositions, like so many spokes of the Wheel: the five active of the past, condition (feed) the five passive of the present which condition the five active of the present, which in turn condition the five passive of the future. And so the vicious circle, called the 'Wheel of Life', whirls on and on, ad infinitum, until by the deft intervention of the Dhamma of the Buddha brings about Deliverance to those that may aspire to break this circle, by using its own force, only in reverse!

PREDETERMINISM

The fatalists believe that everything, even the present active karmas, are predetermined or predestined factors. This simply means confusing two very different issues, namely, Karma and Vipāka.

Karma, according to Buddhism, is volition (cetanā), included in the second proposition, namely, saṅkhārā, of the ‘Wheel of Life’—Paticca Samuppāda.

And vipāka is the fruition of karma, as expressed by the passive aspect of our life. The vipāka aspect of life is represented in the ‘Dependant Origination, by the five passive factors - 3 to 7.

All our present karmas are ‘independent’ and ‘new’ actions, and not necessarily based on karmas of past lives, or their vipākas-results, though the results (of past actions) may have an alimental relation. But to be related does not mean to be entirely wrought, fashioned, or formed by this relation. If this possibility of being ‘independent’ was not there, it would be impossible to shape the course of one’s future life. And to exert for higher spiritual attainments would also be useless. Likewise, a miserable poor man or an animal will always remain in the same state, in all the future course of existence, if he/it were so inextricably bound by past karma.

Thus there is no karma-to-karma relation, but there are karma-vipāka and vipāka-karma relations, determining the future course of existence. There can be a succession of karmas by way of various paccayas (conditions), such as Āsevanā-repetition. Āhāra-aliment or nutriament, etc. But this is not predeterminism.

Thus, Buddhism, is truly optimistic, in that it sees the possibility of changing the future course by the efforts or impacts

of the present karmas. And one need not worry about the effects of past karmas, because through a strong ‘counter-active’ karmas of the present, one can certainly attenuate, even modify, the evil effects of past karmas. That is why Buddhists devote themselves to the active-present and not the passive-past, in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha: “Cetanāhaṃ, Bhikkhave, kammaṃ vadāmi; cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti, kāyena, vācāya, manasā”. ‘Volition, Monks, do I call Karma (Action): through volition does one act in deed, word and thought’.

FATALISM AND FREE-WILL

Fatalism and Free-will are diametrically opposite and mutually negatory propositions. Yet these two antipodean concepts are invariably bound up with the fatalistic belief of Karma, with the whole conduct of one’s existence, with all one’s experiences—joys or miseries, good or ill-luck, success or failure.

The truth, however, is that all our experiences, our motivations and actions, are determined by a number of factors. Further, elements of both fatalism and free-will can combine to determine one’s life-style.

Fatalism is a disposition or a belief that accepts everything in life—every event or condition, every action or experience—as predestined, ordained by providence. That is, as something that is unpreventable, unalterable and certain. It presupposes, a supernatural agency, a god etc. as the final arbiter, the supreme authority and paramount power. It could be, indeed, a despotic world in which the fatalist is consigned to exist by the deceptive and arbitrary machinations of his own life.

A man born in a humble family—the so-called ‘outcaste’ in India, the hapless ‘coloured’ in the West, the ‘white’ in black Africa—is, according to the fatalist, destined to be lowly. It is ‘inevitable’ that he/she must suffer all social, economic and political exploitations. He/she is ‘fated’ to be so.

The dowry which the poor relatives are forced to pay to get a girl married, or the high prices and the resultant sufferings and corruptions, which the common folk are subjected to, because of the greed of heartless black-marketers, hoarders and smugglers. A myriad other evils, are unpreventable and inescapable destinies that are already 'fixed', and no human effort can alter this situation – this is what the fatalist believes.

The management, out of its greed, deprives the working class of a legitimate gain; or the labour, out of sheer wickedness, exploits a whole population by organizing strikes and violence, and all these are predetermined according to the fatalist.

Fate, thus, implies a deterministic pattern and suggests the working of forces that are beyond 'cause and effect' Choice and volition, or a causal relation, play no part. Fate, according to this mode of thinking, becomes an invincible and overruling necessity, foreordained by occult pre-arrangement. And fatalism therefore is a submission to this inevitable destiny or necessity.

A corollary of fatalism is the total lack of effort or choice, decision or judgement. There is no option and no preference but there is only surrender and submission—a helpless acceptance.

In contradistinction, free-will underlines liberty of choice, therefore the power of self-determination. It implies independence from subservience to fatalism. It vests an unconstrained power of directing one's action and an unhampered will to fashion one's path as well as the goal. Choice and judgement constitute the invincible armour that make free-will itself the arbiter of a given lot or destiny.

However, by making free-will an all-powerful factor, the free-will-upholder unwittingly could push this proposition into an arbitrary and wholly illogical concept. Just as total submission to fate is an extreme position, even so, is a rigid and mechanical concept of free-will. Just as a variety of superstitions and perverted practices follow from fatalism, even so, a great deal of sensuality and materialism are perpetrated in the name of free-will.

A child is born mentally retarded. The free-will-monger would try to explain it away as pure coincidence or due to lack of nutrition or some such pseudo-scientific dogma. The inequalities which exist in a totalitarian society are, according to the free-willist, necessary modes for the distribution of labour and talent. That there could be an inborn factor, a genius, an inherent skill, capacity or insight, determining individual excellence or limitation, and superseding free-will, is a truism that does not strike the vainglorious free-will-fanatic.

The Buddhist approach to these contra-propositions is tempered entirely by moderation and a concern for the avoidance of excess, in keeping with the 'Middle-path' teachings of the Enlightened One.

With reference to the Law of Karma and its corollary, Rebirth, both these propositions are partially valid. In fact, there is an element of destiny, just as there is of free-will. But they are to be understood in their proper context and perspective, and made use of in a way that furthers the cause of freedom from karma itself and transcendence from rebirth.

A master-painter creates a new shade that heightens or beautifies his creation out of two mutually contrasting colours, which if made use of in their original form, would render the work gaudy and unseemly. Even so, is the approach of the Buddhist. Knowing fully well that the inborn qualities—one's predispositions and character-traits; and various handicaps like mental retardation, blindness, lameness, etc.—are factors that are beyond free-will and therefore determined by a Law, that of past Karmas, and not by a supernatural agency. The Buddhists do not try to explain away these factors through pseudo-rationalism.

Having unreserved conviction in the truth of rebirth, a Buddhist knows that there are things in life which cannot be explained or altered. There are, many experiences and events which are unconnected with one's present conduct or actions,

and which profoundly determine one's happiness or misery, success or failure, indeed one's life-style itself. And these, the Buddha-votary knows to be connected with the actions of past lives. Destiny, according to Buddhism, thus, is one's own creation and one need not therefore worry about it.

Lord Buddha unambiguously declared that Kamma ultimately is volition or will. And will, therefore, is vested with the power of destiny. Accordingly, every effort, nay every consciousness, is autonomous and there is no place for a supernormal judge or authority. Man is the captain of his destiny and the creator of his misfortunes or good luck, his success or failure, because man wills it that way. Cause and effect are like the tree and the fruit, the hen and the egg, the natural sequence of a law in which no supervising agency or an arbitrator need have any role. The law itself, by a combination of factors, works out its own course and there is no authority which can interfere, whether human or divine.

The Law of Kamma and Rebirth constitute such a complex situation that to subject it totally to either of these antithetical propositions—fatalism or free-will—automatically deprives the law of its logic and power. Thus in the Buddha's Teachings of Kamma and Vipāka (the results of kamma), both the elements of predetermination and self-determination, choice and inevitability, find acceptance, as consistent with the context. Here it is not possible to dogmatise either way.

There are some unalterable situations in life which are predetermined, therefore, beyond one's self-determination. Yet by a certain attitude or outlook in life, one can nullify the rigours of these handicaps and take the sting out of one's cruel lot. This attitude or outlook is wholly a matter of one's freewill, one's liberty of choice. The acceptance of a challenge, being wholly self-determined, can make all the difference in the quality of life.

Now this is the quintessential character of the Buddhist Golden Mean which, while utilising both the ideas, transcends them nonetheless.

Here is a famous enigma found in the Dhammapada which tellingly portrays this approach:

**Vanam chindatha mā rukkham,
Vanato jāyati bhayaṃ;
Chetvā vanañ ca vanathañ ca
Nibbanā hotha bhikkhavo.**

Cut down the forest;
But not the tree;
From forest springs fear.
Having cut down the forest
And the underwood,
Be passionless, O monks!

Is there a forest without a tree? Yet while preserving the tree one is advised to cut down the forest!

What does it mean? The forest is at best a concept, a mental creation, so are the concepts of pre-determinism or self-determinism. They are at best formulations of the mind which, if wisely utilized, can produce positive results.

The tree, however, is real and not merely conceptual. And, like an equipment, it is useful, if not harmless. The tree, here, stands for the 'body and mind' (nāma-rūpa); it is life itself which, as an instrument, should be wisely utilized in order to achieve the best result viz., spiritual emancipation.

While a forest can be ever perilous, because one gets lost in it, a tree need not. The allusion is that if one, by following the Golden Mean, cuts down the subjective forest of lust and egotism, hate and delusions, and therewith the wrong approach and the perverted views and ideology, then one can yet preserve the tree of life.

However, an excessive love for the tree itself can involve a man in the extremes of self-indulgence or self-mortification. This is like getting lost in the forest while searching for the best tree. Therefore, through wise consideration (yoniso manasikāra), one should cultivate just that discrimination and sagacity, whereby, while utilizing, in a practical way, the positive elements of both predetermination and self-determination, one must still transcend them. That is to say, remain uninvolved mentally in these concepts. This approach of preserving the tree while destroying the forest, is the typical Buddhist approach towards both fatalism and free-will.

ROOTS

All actions are performed through three modes, or doors (dvāra): These are:

1. **Kāyakamma** – action in deed;
2. **Vacikamma**—action in words;
3. **Manokamma**—action in thought;

These may be either **kusala** - morally wholesome, or **akusala** - morally unwholesome, depending on what they are rooted in. There are six roots - **Lobha** = greed, **Dosa** = hatred, **Moha** = delusion, **Alobha** = non-greed, **Adosa** = non-hatred, **Amoha** = non-delusion. Kammās are called kusala when they are rooted in alobha, adosa and amoha, and akusala when rooted in lobha, dosa and moha.

‘Root’ (hetu) is a picturesque term. And its psychological import is ‘motivation’, inducing a volitional action-Kamma. Further, it is the motive that invests a kamma with its moral quality.

What the roots are to a tree, the motivations (hetu or mūla) are to a kamma. Just as the tree rests on the roots, feeds itself through them and remains alive because of them, even so, a kamma rests on its roots, depends on them, and is motivated by them. That is to say, it is the hetu that supply the motivations

to, or induce the will to act through deed, word and thought. And will, as already mentioned, is the core-element of a kamma.

It is the roots, however, that determine the moral quality of a volition. That is to say, whether a kamma (volitional action) is ‘good’ or ‘bad’, is entirely dependent on the roots, that is, the motivations of greed (lobha), hatred (dosa) and delusion (moha); or of non-greed (alobha), non-hatred (adosa) and non-delusion (amoha). Thus, what the fuel is to a vehicle, or the sap is to growth, the roots are to kamma.

Now what is the criterion that determines what is good or what is bad in an action or conduct? Is it convention or is there an absolute quality that validates the wholesomeness or the unwholesomeness of the conduct or action, at all times and under all circumstances?

According to the Teachings of the Buddha, an action or conduct is wholesome – kusala, because it is rooted in wholesome states, such as, alobha, adosa, amoha, and unwholesome because of the unwholesome roots of lobha, dosa and moha. These psychological factors determining the moral quality of an action, therefore, are not conventional notions, but they have an absolute quality—paramattha dhamma.

Lobha is that appetitive urge whereby one becomes ‘attracted’ to objects of the senses or the mind. So greed is characterized by ‘being attracted’, expressing itself in various forms—from a harmless desire to the grossest form of sensuality, possessiveness and egotism.

Dosa (hatred) implies the quality of repulsion, and has a variety of shades, ranging from a simple dislike to strong hatred, anger or enmity.

Moha is delusion or mental blindness. It is characterized by ignorance or perverted intelligence or stupidity.

On the contrary, Alobha, though expressed in a negative way, implies a very positive state. It means charity, generosity, renunciation, and not just the negation of greed. Just as a negative term like ‘unlimited’ expresses the very positive concept of ‘vastness’ even so non-greed (alobha) means ‘giving’ or being generous, charitable etc.

Adosa, similarly, is not merely the absence of hate, but the positive quality of goodwill, friendliness or loving-kindness. It is Mettā – Universal Love. One of its facets is expressed beautifully by another negative term ‘ahiṃsā’ – inoffensiveness or non-violence.

Amoha, non-delusion, is knowledge, insight or wisdom. ‘Undeludedness’ is not merely the non-existence of delusion, but it signifies the distinctive presence of wisdom, which penetrates into the reality of things.

Greed, it is said, enraptures the volition and thus defiles the kamma. Hatred causes enragement of the volition and thus defiles the kamma. And delusion makes the volition blind and defiles the kamma. The qualities of enrapturing, enraging and blinding are what makes the roots of the evil kamma poisonous, just as the positive qualities of generosity, love and wisdom make the roots of good kamma so enlivening, so full of vitality and wholesomeness.

MOTIVATIONS

The motivation of a volitional action has been likened, in a vivid manner, to a seed by the Buddha in the Nidāna Sutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya.

An undamaged seed is capable of sprouting when sown in a well-prepared field. And once sprouted, it grows and abounds. Per contra, a damaged seed, which is further burnt and reduced to ash, signifies a total annihilation of its power of germination.

The unwholesome and negative motivations, such as, greed, hatred and delusion, are like the seeds that quickly sprout and

thrive, even as the weeds that require no agricultural input or operations for them to flourish. Wholesome and spiritually positive motivations, on the contrary, do not germinate in the same way. By the very fact that they destroy the unwholesome motivations, which ‘bring forth’, and ‘conduce’ to rebirth, the wholesome motivations of non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion make an end of the karmic process itself, leading one to the Transcendental State (Nibbāna).

The attainment of the transcendental state signifies the transformation of mind itself, that is, placing it above the law of kamma and rebirth. Since greed is made an end of by non-greed, the greed-born action, which is at the root of the process of bondage and saṃsāra, is cut off, and rendered incapable of coming up again. In other words, if the unwholesome motivations entangle an individual in saṃsāra, the wholesome ones disentangle him from it. This is how the law, which conduces to saṃsāric existence, itself is struck at its root.

Just as one poison nullifies another, even so, by one action, another action is totally uprooted. The actions that keep one fettered in phenomenal existence, i.e., in a polluted dimension, now having been cut at their roots by actions which remove the pollutant and the effect of pollution, such actions naturally induce a free and pure state. Greater the freedom and the pollution-free purity, greater is the happiness, peace and emancipation. Bondage in saṃsāra, a defiled state of existence, signifies suffering, turmoil, and involvement. Freedom of Nibbāna is more than emancipation from saṃsāric bondage. It also means the bliss and peace of immortality.

Nibbāna, the ultimate state of liberation, and the Summum Bonum of Buddhism, has been defined as the state of Absolute Peace (Santapadaṃ), of Ineffable Bliss (Paramaṃ Sukhaṃ), of Unconditioned Liberation (Asañkhataṃ Vimuttiṃ). When something which brings bondage, misery and involvement, i.e., the endless process of kamma and rebirth, is made to dry up,

what obtains or comes into being, partakes naturally of the quality of freedom arising from the negation of this process. Nibbāna signifies freedom from the process of kamma. When the positive and liberating spiritual motivations, which reflect the qualities of Nibbāna, remove the bondage-bearing and suffering-conducting negative motivations of saṃsāra, what remains or prevails must necessarily reflect the nibbānic qualities of happiness and freedom.

That is why even relative spiritual happiness is not merely an absence of misery. It has that positive facet which reflects the absolute happiness of Nibbāna. In fact, it offers, so to say, a ‘foretaste’ of what the Nibbānic happiness is likely to be. And this is just the reason why the happiness of the good life, however relative, is a sufficient ‘incentive’, a ‘recompense’ by itself, and a ‘reward’ enough to undergo the arduous, toilsome journey, and make the hard sacrifices that it inevitably entails, to gain the absolute happiness of Nibbāna. In other words, the need of the punya or the merit of the wholesome motivation, eggs a man on, and bestirs in him that elan, to progress upon the onward path to liberation. The transformation of the relative to the absolute state of happiness is brought about by the transformation of the mind itself through the Lokuttara or Supramundane Insights, which are also kammās of a transcendental character.

Here is presented the Nidāna Sutta which makes this truth abundantly clear.

WHAT MOTIVATES ACTION (Nidāna Sutta – A.3.40)

1. “Monks, there are these three motives inducing volitional actions. Which three? Greed motivates volitional action, hatred motivates volitional action, delusion motivates volitional action.”

“Monks, whatever action is performed out of greed, is born of greed, is motivated by greed, is caused by greed, that action ripens wherever one is reborn; and whenever that action ripens,

then does one experience the consequence thereof, whether it be in this very life or in the next life or in any other life thereafter.”

“Whatever action is performed out of hatred, is born of hatred, is motivated by hatred, is caused by hatred, that action ripens wherever one is reborn; and whenever that action ripens, then does one experience the consequence thereof, whether it be in this very life or in the next life or in any other life thereafter.”

“Monks, whatever action is performed out of delusion, is born of delusion, is motivated by delusion, is caused by delusion, that action ripens wherever one is reborn; and whenever the action ripens, then does one experience the consequence thereof, whether it be in this very life or in the next life or in any other life thereafter.”

“Monks, suppose seeds that are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind and heat, capable of sprouting, and well-embedded, on earth, are sown in a good field, the soil whereof is properly prepared; also there were to be steady rain and in right measure; those seeds would come to growth, thrive and become plentiful.”

“Monks, even so, whatever action is performed out of greed, is born of greed, is motivated by greed, is caused by greed, that action ripens wherever one is reborn; and whenever that action ripens, then does one experience the consequence thereof, whether it be in this very life or in the next life or in any other life thereafter.”

“Whatever action is performed out of hatred, is born of hatred, is motivated by hatred, is caused by hatred, that action ripens wherever one is reborn; and whenever that action ripens, then does one experience the consequence thereof, whether it be in this very life, or in the next life or in any other life thereafter.”

“Whatever action is performed out of delusion, is born of delusion, is motivated by delusion, is caused by delusion, that action ripens wherever one is reborn; and whenever that action ripens, then does one experience the consequence thereof, whether it be in this very life or in the next life, or in any other life thereafter.”

2. “Monks, there are also these three motives inducing volitional action. Which three? Non-greed motivates volitional action, non-hatred motivates volitional action, non-delusion motivates volitional action.”

“Monks, whatever action is performed out of non-greed, is born of non-greed, is motivated by non-greed, is caused by non-greed, by such action, since greed has been eliminated, that (greed-rooted) action too is abandoned, is cut off at the root, is made like a palm-tree-stump, rendered incapable of coming up again and is not subject to arising any more in future.”

“Monks, whatever action is performed out of non-hatred, is born of non-hatred, is motivated by non-hatred, is caused by non-hatred, by such action, since hatred has been eliminated, that (hatred-rooted) action too is abandoned, is cut off at the root, is made like a palm-tree-stump, rendered incapable of coming up again, and is not subject to arising any more in future.”

“Monks, whatever action is performed out of non-delusion, is born of non-delusion, is motivated by non-delusion, is caused by non-delusion, by such action, since delusion has been eliminated, that (delusion-rooted) action too is abandoned, is cut off at the root, is made like a palm-tree-stump, rendered incapable of coming up again, and is not subject to arising any more in future.”

“Monks, suppose seeds that are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind and heat, capable of sprouting, and well-embedded on earth; and a man were to burn these seeds with fire; after burning, reduce them into ash; and after reducing

them into ash, he were to winnow the ash in a strong wind or cast it to be carried away by a swift stream; those seeds thus made, monks, would be cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree-stump, rendered incapable of coming up again, and not be subject to arising any more in future.”

“Monks, even so, whatever action is performed out of non-greed, is born of non-greed, is motivated by non-greed, is caused by non-greed, by such action since greed has been eliminated, that (greed-rooted) action too is abandoned, is cut off at the root, is made like a palm-tree-stump, rendered incapable of coming up again and is not subject to arising any more in future.”

“Whatever action is performed out of non-hatred, is born of non-hatred, is motivated by non-hatred, is caused by non-hatred, by such action, since hatred has been eliminated, that (hatred-rooted) action too is abandoned, is cut off at the root, is made like a palm-tree-stump, rendered incapable of coming up again, and is not subject to arising any more in future.”

“Whatever action is performed out of non-delusion, is born of non-delusion, is motivated by non-delusion, is caused by non-delusion, since by such action, since delusion has been eliminated, that (delusion-rooted) action too is abandoned, is cut off at the root, is made like a palm-tree-stump, rendered incapable of coming up again and is not subject to arising any more in future.”

“Monks, there are the three motives inducing volitional actions.”

“Rooted in greed, hatred and delusion,
A deed, great or small, is committed by fools;
When ripened, herein it is experienced,
For no other ground exists thereof;
Hence whoever monk, develops wisdom,
And eschews greed, hatred and delusion,
Forsakes forever all states of woe.”

REALISTIC VIEW

Like a boomerang, every action recoils upon the actor. That is, all that goes out of one, returns to one. This is an inescapable norm. Whatever action a man performs in thought, word and deed, the consequences thereof must necessarily be experienced. This is the Law of Kamma as propounded by the Lord of Wisdom, the Buddha.

Every action, however, is not kamma, though all kammas are actions, in deed, word and thought. Only volitional or deliberately 'willed' actions are kammas. An action which is not 'intentional' is either mechanical or just functional, and is not capable of producing its own result – vipāka. A willed-action inevitably produces a result because it is motivated by greed or hatred or delusion, or by non-greed, non-hatred or non-delusion. While the former three motivations represent the roots of all evil actions, the latter three motivations constitute the roots of all good actions. Just as a tree must have roots to stand on, to find stability, to draw nourishment, to perpetuate itself and to bring about flower and fruit, even so, unwholesome or wholesome willed-actions must have their respective roots to flower into experiences of misery or happiness.

Until a kamma ripens, it exists as a potential karmic-force awaiting appropriate occasion when it can mature into a specific experience, event or situation in life. Since life is essentially limited, the myriad kammas committed during a life-time, do not naturally come to their fruition. That is how the kammic potency is carried forward', in the form of a new existence. Thus rebirth is the natural consequence or the corollary of Kamma. They are inter-dependent and inseparable. To deny rebirth, therefore, is to deny the validity of the Law of Kamma itself.

That action has a tremendous potency and its efficacy can be validated even empirically in day-to-day life situations. The fact that the State has to keep a police force and so many jails, proves the capability of evil actions of people; likewise, the rewards that deserving people find through their occupations and attainments in different human spheres, also validate the power of good actions. Action-reaction-nexus, thus, constitutes the stream of existence which flows on and on, ad infinitum, until it is made to dry up through transcendental achievements.

There are two extreme views often noticed in India 1) the Brahmanical one which dubs Buddhism as Nastikavāda, nihilism. This view is due to sheer prejudice and ignorance, because nihilism rejects Kamma and Rebirth. Buddhism affirms it. 2) The other is held by some new converts of Buddhism, contending that Buddha never preached kamma and rebirth but was foisted on it by upper caste Hindus. To them kamma is fatalistic, an interpretation arising from caste-prejudice of another kind. To deny the Law of Kamma because of political consideration amounts to 'throwing away the baby with the bathwater'.

Lord Buddha's presentation of Kamma is essentially an affirmation and a further elaboration of his principal teaching, the Middle Path, which avoids, all extremes. This 'Golden Mean' approach of Buddhism combines the finest and most profound elements of the humanities with the most precise and superbly objective elements of the scientific traditions, and thus removes all fallacies, whether of nihilism or of fatalism. The Buddhist law of kamma is based on the realistic and pragmatic application of the Four Noble Truths.

Just as a nail drives out another nail, or one poison nullifies another poison, even so, by one set of wholesome actions (kusala kammas), one can nullify another set of unwholesome actions (akusala kammas), and ultimately outgrow the law of kamma itself. This is the Buddhist position. It is this positive approach which turned even a mass-murderer like Aṅgulimālā or a prostitute like Ambapālī into saints in the Dispensation of the Buddha.

Character & Conduct

Man is born with certain traits or predispositions which constitute his character.

Man is also equipped with a faculty to judge and choose anew, and conduct himself with free will.

Is there a conflict between the inborn traits and the acquired disposition? Can't the pre-determined and the self-determined be reconciled? Where do the destined and the designed meet? These are questions intimately connected with the Law of Kamma, as can be seen from what has been discussed in the Chapter on 'Dependent Origination'.

There could be, yet there need not be, conflicts. The character-traits and the volitional conduct, the pre-determined and the self-imposed, the destined and the designed—though are disparate factors, yet they need not be discordant. In fact, the sole concern of Buddhist spiritual life is to harmonize them to the optimum extent.

A life that is not guided by the Moral Law (Kamma), must abound in conflicts and contradictions. And a life which takes the fullest advantage of the Law of Kamma, either removes all conflicts or evolves them into that grand pattern of harmony and beauty which conduces to the 'Highest Good', Nibbāna. This orchestration of the potential capacity with the powers of self-effort, to bring about individual excellence in terms of virtue, compassion and wisdom, constitutes the basics of Buddhist approach to the Law of Kamma. While kamma is such a vicious circle to others, to the Buddhists, because of this wise and subtle approach, it becomes like an ever widening spiral leading one from the abyss of samsāric bondage to the summit of Nibbānic Freedom.

Character is something with which one is born. It is the sum total of the past. And very little can be done to change

it, though one can always give it a direction with the equipment of the free-will which belongs to the present.

The proper conservation and reorientation of a mighty power and inward resource require a superb skill. And this skill, known as Kusala in Buddhism, is the chief instrument with which one can design one's life and thereby one's destiny. Whether it is the ethics, the psychology or the philosophy of kamma, it is always kusala that determines the course of its development. For, spiritual life is an evolving pattern, wrought by developments in the three dimensions of ethics, psychology and philosophy – sīla, samādhi and paññā.

Dhamma, said the Buddha, is sīla bhāvanā—the development of morality and citta bhāvanā—the development of mind, and paññā bhāvanā—the development of wisdom. These developments are again equated with sīla visuddhi – purification of morality, citta visuddhi – purification of mind, and Paññā visuddhi – purification of insight or wisdom. Development and purification, thus, are correlative and inter-dependent, e.g. to the extent the mind is developed to that extent, it is pure.

As the mind is purified, so it evolves, and so does one become perfect. And perfection is synonymous with the acquisition of excellence. That is why the Arahant who has climbed on the peak of spirituality, after having attained to these three developments, purifications and perfections, are accredited with three coeval accomplishments of purifications and perfections of ñāna – knowledge, dāssana-vision and visuddhi – purification, culminating in vimutti - liberation.

In other words, when morality is perfected through a sound system of ethical conduct, and the mind is perfected through effective methods of meditation or mind-culture, and wisdom is perfected through effective practise of insight-meditation, it is then that there comes about the efflorescence of perfect knowledge and supreme liberation, leading to the transformation

of the personality, as achieved by an Arahāt, the Perfect One, who therefore is truly the Holy and Accomplished One.

Beneath this perfect spiritual consummation of the Arahāt, lie struggles of innumerable lives. How relentless must have been his efforts at matching his character with his conduct, so as to remove the conflicts that so often burgeoned into day-to-day cares of existence! What tremendous perseverance and vigorous application, he perforce had to cultivate to harmonise his inborn traits with his acquired qualities! And, indeed, how great must have been the skill he acquired to bring about an equilibrium between the kammic potency brought forward from the past and the kammic conditioning of the present life, wrought by environment, education and the extant value-system!

Without neglecting or suppressing the character-traits, as the Buddhist embarks on spiritual development and inner purification, always spurred on by an urge for excellence, his principal concern is to stick to the proven path of right conduct as enunciated by the Exalted Buddha. In treading on this path, as he conditions his mind to new dispositions of virtue, compassion and wisdom, his inborn tendencies, however contradictory they prove to be, also get affected and influenced, thereby redirected and changed. This constant flux and dynamic redistribution of factors of the personality, naturally bring about a restructuring of the entire being, and at the same time unfold a new and insightful pattern of life, a unified mind, an integrated character, and a sagacious conduct in deed, word and thought. Thus the harmonious blending of character and conduct is the measure for one's spiritual progress.

The Confluence

The kammic life of an individual is like a confluence where various streams co-mingle and create ever-new and ever-changing patterns. The dynamic situation which is life, is analogous to a confluence in a number of ways. One can view it as a confluence of time with its streams of the past, present and

future, in keeping with the law of Dependent Origination. One can also view it as a confluence of norms with its streams of ethics, psychology, and philosophy. Several other parallels could also be adduced, such as the confluence of the three modes of action and so on.

As to time, it has been already discussed under the 'Wheel of Becoming' how the passive and active aspects of one's life interpenetrate and create new patterns. Suffice it to say that the past is always interacting with the present, which in turn creates the future pattern. The past is represented by character traits and the present by conduct born of free-will; and the future, like a model, is continuously shaping and reshaping, not quite determined, yet designed all the same.

The future cannot be fully determined, because life is so unpredictable and uncertain. At any given moment a new element can be introduced whereby the whole pattern of the future life may change. If this potential for change were not there, how could liberation itself come about? Therefore, it is never too late to start life anew for spiritual development. It is never inappropriate to introduce spiritual norms in one's day-to-day conduct and effect changes in shaping the model until one evolves into the perfect image of the Arahāt. This dynamic possibility of the kammic life of man indeed holds the highest hope for mankind. It is this that ensures the perfectibility of man.

In the confluence of the norms, the kammic life is like a boat that is afloat upon the triple streams of ethics, psychology and philosophy. As the boat floats on the confluence, it is naturally tossed about so as to be in contact with the waters of all the three streams which co-mingle. So is the kammic life. To be more precise, so is every kamma, whether in deed, word or thought. It is bound to comprehend new elements of ethics, psychology and philosophy. These threefold norms cannot be separated. An attempt will be made here to explain how these principles work conjointly.

Ethics

The ethics of kamma has been expressed in terms of a definite frame-work of moral values and a code of conduct, known as Kammapatha – The Course of Action. This is a three-lane-avenue, or a thoroughfare with three archways. The traditional metaphor is the ‘three-fold door-way’ of kāya kamma – bodily action, vacī kamma– verbal action, and mano kamma–mental action. These components of the ethical framework are once again diversified into ten concrete instances of volitional acts representing precisely definable values.

This framework is not just a value-system which is formulated conventionally or by scriptural authority. The distinction between ‘value’ and ‘value-system’ has to be clearly kept in mind in this context. Buddhist ethics lays bare values and ideals which are to be validated by conduct. It furnishes standards of excellence which are to be measured by character. In other words, character and conduct, with their specifications and patterns converge on values to fulfil ethics. The validation of principles and fulfillment of precepts are very distinct from the study of good and bad or from holding rules of conduct as a creed.

More often than not, ethics deals with rules of conduct and standard of morality based upon a set of notion about good and bad or right and wrong. That is, it requires an objective sanction which is more than a subjective validation. In religious systems, ethics becomes subservient to theological revelation, divine command and authority of the hierarchy. So much so that something is good or evil because it has been so construed. In this way when ethics, becomes the creature of circumstances i.e., subject to relative requirements, its absolute content is naturally lost sight of. At best it becomes a value-system operated by value-judgement that can always be conditioned by personal faith, dogma and superstition.

In Buddhism, as already indicated, ethics is free from any such theological or dogmatic considerations. It is based entirely on precise psychological and philosophical norms. A Buddhist cannot understand a ‘command’, but he certainly can understand a ‘commitment’. He follows a certain code of ethics, not because it is handed down by custom or tradition or commanded by a supernatural agency. Ethics, he would construe, can never be structured on hearsay or any relative consideration. He would commit himself to an ethical code because it develops and purifies his mind, leading to the unfoldment of intuitive insights, which in turn will conduce to spiritual emancipation. In other words, since the approach is marked by critical appreciation rather than by mere acceptance, ethics is a definite discipline, and not a prescription, it is a prerequisite to a step-by-step development, a rung in the ladder.

Abhidhamma, a major section of the Tipitaka, the Sacred Pāli canon, consists of seven important psychological and philosophical works. It adopts an exacting analytical method as to the ‘what’ ‘why’ and ‘how’ of ethics. What exactly is ethics? Why is it to be practised? What is the logic behind the commitment to it? And how can ethics be so structured as to be void of contradictions or subjectivity?

Dhammasaṅgani, the first book of Abhidhamma, defines the whole range of ethics with three very expressive and precise terms, in the same way an area is well-defined or marked by stout fencing. These terms are, kusala, akusala, and ‘abyākata’, which mean ‘morally wholesome’, ‘morally unwholesome’, ‘morally indeterminate’ or neutral. Since a volition is either wholesome, unwholesome or neither, by virtue of the motivations of greed, hatred and delusion or non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion, the ethics (of kamma) naturally can be defined only in terms of these ethical roots revealing ethical content. Accordingly, when asked ‘what is good?’ ‘Whatever is morally wholesome, kusala, is good.’ Similarly with reference to evil, ‘whatever is morally unwholesome, akusala, is evil’, and with

reference to the third, ‘whatever is neither good nor evil, is indeterminate, abyākata, amoral’.

Kusala has a number of facets, as expressed by the various renderings, such as, moral, skilful, wholesome, good, meritorious, profitable, beneficial and progressive. In other words, an act is wholesome, in the sense that it preserves goodness and morality. It ensures progress on the spiritual path and reveals profitability and effectiveness of spiritual practice. It infuses merit, deservedness and value, and conduces to development and inner purity, and brings about happy consequences. Hence, an act which is morally wholesome, is good.

Per contra, an act is unwholesome, in the sense that it is destructive and demeritorious. It robs one of worthiness and conduces to degeneration. It comes on the way to development and purification. It renders one ineffective and brings about miserable consequences. Hence an act which is morally unwholesome, is evil.

In the category of the abyakata, are placed the vipākas, results of actions, and the kriyas, the merely functional states or acts. Because the vipākas and kriyas are void of ethical content, they are neutral.

Further, elaborating, the Dhammasaṅgani says:

“Katame dhammā kusalā? Tīni kusalamūlāni–alobho, adoso, amoho; taṃ sampayutto vedanākkhandho, saññākkhandho; saṅkhārakkhandho, viññāṇakkhandho; taṃ samuṭṭhānaṃ kāya kammaṃ, vacī kammaṃ, mano kammaṃ – ime dhammā kusalā.

“What constitute morally wholesome phenomena? There are three morally wholesome roots – non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion; and whatever is associated therewith – the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of perception, the aggregate of mental formations, the aggregate of consciousness, and whatever proceeds therefrom – bodily action, verbal action, mental action; these constitute morally wholesome phenomena.”

Katame dhammā akusalā? Tīni akusalamūlāni– lobho, doso, moho; tadekaṭṭhāca kilesā; taṃ sampayutto vedanākkhandho, saññākkhandho, saṅkhārakkhandho, viññāṇakkhandho; taṃ samuṭṭhānaṃ kāya kammaṃ, vacī kammaṃ, mano kammaṃ – ime dhammā akusalā.

“What constitute morally unwholesome phenomena? There are three morally unwholesome roots – greed, hatred and delusion; and defilements coexisting therewith; and whatever is associated therewith – the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of perception, the aggregate of mental formations, the aggregate of consciousness; and whatever proceeds therefrom– bodily action, verbal action and mental action; these constitute morally unwholesome phenomena.”

Katame dhammā abyākatā? Kusalākusalānaṃ vipākā, kāmāvacarā rūpāvacarā arūpāvacarā apariyāpaṇṇā; vedanākkhandho, saññākkhandho, saṅkhārakkhandho, viññāṇakkhandho; ye ca dhammā kiriyā, neva kusalā nākusalā na ca kamma vipākā; sabbaṅca rūpaṃ, asaṅkhatā ca dhātu– ime dhammā abyākatā”.

“What constitute morally neutral phenomena? The resultant of morally wholesome and morally unwholesome phenomena, pertaining to the sphere of sense-desire, the sphere of subtle form, the formless sphere, the transcendental; the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of perception, the aggregate of mental formations, the aggregate of consciousness; and whatever phenomena are functional, i.e., neither morally wholesome, nor morally unwholesome nor yet the resultants of morally wholesome and morally unwholesome actions; all corporeality; and the Unconditioned Element (Nibbāna) – these constitute morally neutral phenomena”.

An analysis of the above text brings forth very instructive and interesting facts. What exactly is kusala – the good? Whatever is rooted in non-greed, meaning generosity, charity and magnanimity, and in non-hatred i.e. goodwill, compassion and

altruism, and non-delusion i.e. in wisdom, insight, comprehension and sagacity, is wholesome and meritorious, therefore is good. Further, whatever is associated with these basically pure motivations, viz., the four aggregates of feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness, i.e., the various mental factors which bring about a certain formation of mind, or consciousness, —these too are good.

By ‘association’ is meant whatever coexists, is born together and is interdependent and co-extensive with these motivations. When reduced to their basic feature, these associated factors amount to a state of consciousness, pertaining to any of the four mundane and super-mundane dimensions, i.e., the three spheres of existence and the transcendental.

The word ‘punya’, merit, stands for the intrinsic worthiness or the deservedness of a wholesome state with which kusala, its synonym, is endowed. In Buddhist idiom, punya is what clothes the kammic life, instilling into it the deservedness of merit with which a person is endowed, and because of which he is placed empirically in a certain position, enjoying certain powers and privileges etc. In other words, punya, is that which provides the salient qualities that are unique or specific in a given birth in a particular sphere of existence. To use a modern analogy, punya is to man what a given equipment is to an industrial unit, determining its productive capacity.

The good, as a state of consciousness, pertaining to a sphere of existence, is again appraised in terms of the specific actions viz., the bodily, the verbal and the mental actions. These are the concrete manifestations of a given state of consciousness pertaining to a sphere of existence, and rooted in specific motivations.

A deed, word and thought proceeds from a state of consciousness which is the crystallisation, so to say, of the four aggregates rooted in the three motivations. It is interesting to

note that an action ‘proceeds’, that is, arises from mind. Even thought, which is unmanifested, unlike deed and word which manifest, is the activity of the mind, and therefore proceeds from the mind, is created by the mind. Thus, mind precedes because acts are always mind-made. Despite the non-simultaneity between a kusala citta, and the actions that proceed therefrom, both come under a common definition, since kusala covers the entire gamut of the concept of morality.

As to what is evil, akusala? Whatever is rooted in greed or lust, possessiveness, attachment and egotism; or in anger, enmity, cruelty and aversion; or in ignorance, stupidity, mental blindness, unknowing, or distorted knowledge, is unwholesome and demeritorious, therefore evil. And whatever coexist with these fundamentally impure motivations, that is to say, the four aggregates, in the form of a specific akusala citta – unwholesome consciousness, is also evil. Further, the actions which are derived fall within the scope of the evil i.e. morally unwholesome.

The word pāpa, which is synonymous with akusala, is not just the antithesis of punya, but something more. Apart from causing pain, here and now, and a miserable rebirth in states of woe, it has that insidious quality which robs a man of his inner worthiness. Further, psychologically, what is even more alarming is that it is basically a pollutant, that which defiles the mind and therewith all the actions.

To use a modern analogy, what ecological pollutions are in terms of destructivity, ill-health, unproductiveness and a score of other socio-economic hazards, mental pollutions are far more serious and sinister. For, in the last analysis, mind precedes everything. And if mind itself becomes defiled and diseased, then the creations of mind, namely, an organised social life, culture and civilisation, religion, art, science and technology, in short, all that express human excellence and human capacity, too, become distorted and menacing. That is why, together with the motivations, the co-existing defilements and the other mental

factors have been marshalled within the ambit of the definition of the evil.

And what is morally indeterminate, *abyākata*? The consequences of good and bad actions, which manifest by virtue of their intrinsic merits or demerits in the sensual sphere, in the sphere of subtle form and in the formless sphere, as rebirths as well as varied happy and miserable life-experiences, these are indeterminate. For instance, some beings are long-lived, some are short-lived, some are poor, some are rich, some are ugly, some are beautiful, some are healthy, some are unhealthy, in short, all inborn inequalities which are ethically feckless, are basically indeterminate.

Even the consequence, *vipāka*, belonging to the supramundane dimension in the form of transcendental fruition (*phala citta*) are without a moral content because of its incapacity to produce a result of its own. The word *apariyāpaṇṇa* which stands for the supramundane, is very meaningful. For, it literally means ‘whatever is not included’ or ‘does not fall within’ or ‘is beyond the reach of’, the three mundane spheres.

In other words, whosoever reaches this transcendental dimension becomes transformed so as never to fall back into the mundane sphere, which is characterised by recurring existence, inequalities and limitations. This noble saint, through his unique attainment, is enabled now to break the ten fetters which bind one in the Wheel of Becoming, thus securing release, once for all, from birth, death and rebirth. He becomes an *Arahat* having climbed unto the *Summum Bonum*. The *Arahat* also performs actions, but these are no longer productive of results; for, they are now purely functional. They are like the boiled seeds (*Khīnabīja*) which though have the appearance of the original seed, can never sprout.

There are other forms of *kriya cittas* as well, as also all forms of corporeality and the unconditioned element of *Nibbāna*, which come under the category of indeterminate. All these varied

and very disparate constituents of the indeterminate are so categorised because they are basically unproductive unlike the moral and the immoral, which are productive of happiness and misery, of deservedness and undeservedness, of progress and degeneration, here and now and hereafter.

Having enunciated the definitive part, i.e., the ‘what’ of Buddhist ethics, it is opportune to examine the ‘why’ part of it. That is, why must anyone follow the ethical path?

The compelling reasons for one’s commitments to *sīla*-virtue, or more appropriately, ethical purification, are presented succinctly in many verses of the *Dhammapada*:

The evil-doer grieves here and hereafter;
He grieves in both the worlds.
He laments and is afflicted,
Recollecting his own impure deeds. (15)

The doer of good rejoices here and hereafter;
He rejoices in both the worlds.
He rejoices and exults,
Recollecting his own pure deeds (16)

The evil-doer suffers here and hereafter;
He suffers in both the worlds,
The thought “Evil have I done” torments him.
And he suffers even more
After having gone to realms of woe (17).

The doer of good delights here and hereafter;
He delights in both the worlds.
The thought “Good have I done” delights him.
And he delights even more
After having gone to realms of bliss.

The logic of *sīla* is that it brings happiness here and now, as well as in future states of existence, even as one progresses on the onward Path to Deliverance. Any act, whether good or

bad, is bound to produce a change in the mind. Action affects the mind because it arises or proceeds from the mind. The state of a pure consciousness is like a pool, pellucid and placid. Even as wind whips up ripples, so does an action causes a flutter in the pool of the consciousness.

Remorse or the sense of guilt must necessarily dog the evil-doer, however dexterous and sophisticated he or she may be, in trying to hide the inner conflict and uneasiness. Inevitably remorse stirs up the mind, afflicts and torments it. Worry, distraction and the fragmented mental state that follow the uneasy conscience, or the lack of conscience, make the life of the evil-doer a burden and a torture.

Contrarily, the satisfaction which inevitably follows a good action, is like the tranquillity which follows a gale or, the soothing relaxation, that follows a meaningful vigorous exercise. Undoubtedly the good action too causes a vibration in the mental pool. But then this is a motion which, by arresting all tiny and invisible contramotions, only sets in greater composure and equilibrium in the mind. This is particularly so if the good action is supported by wisdom and meditative concentration.

So the Dhammapada warns:
Fools of little wit are,
Enemies unto themselves,
As they move about doing evil deeds.
The fruits whereof are bitter. (66)

Ill-done is that action,
Doing which one repents later,
And the consequence of which,
One reaps with tears, weeping. (67)

Well-done is that action,
Doing which one repents not later,
And the consequence of which,
One reaps with delight and pleasure . (68)

So long as an evil deed has not ripened,
The fool thinks that it is sweet as honey.
But when it has,
The fool comes to grief. (69)

Indeed, an evil deed once committed,
Does not at once bear fruit,
Like milk that does not
Turn sour all at once.
But smouldering, it follows the fool
Like fire covered by ashes.

When the fool commits evil deeds,
He does not realise (their evil nature).
The witless man is tormented.
By his own deeds
Like one burnt by fire. (136)

And just as, after having appropriately cautioned about the dire health hazards, a mother persuades the child to drink milk for good health, instead of the popular, though unhealthy beverages, even so, the compassionate Lord now tells the seekers of truth:

Hasten to do good,
Restrain your mind from evil;
Whoever is slow in doing good,
His mind delights in evil. (116)

Should a person commit evil,
Let him not do it again and again;
Let him not find pleasure therein;
For, painful is the accumulation of evil. (117)

Should a person do good,
Let him do it again and again;
Let him find pleasure therein,
for, blissful is the accumulation of good. (118)

It is well with the evil-doer,
So long as the evil ripens not;
But when it does ripen,
Then the evil-doer sees the ills (of evil). (119).

It is ill (perhaps) with the doer of good,
So long as the good ripens not;
But when it does ripen,
Then the doer of good
Sees the joys of good. (120)

Do not think lightly of evil,
That 'It will not come upon me'.
Drop by drop the water-pot is filled,
Likewise the fool
Gathering little by little,
fills himself with evil. (121)

Do not think lightly of good,
That 'It will not come unto me'.
Drop by drop is the water-pot filled.
Likewise, the wise man,
Gathering little by little,
Fills himself with good. (122)

Neither in the sky, nor in mid-ocean,
Nor by entering into mountain-clefts,
Nowhere on earth is a place wherein
One may escape from (the results of) evil deeds. (127)

It is only the evil done by oneself.
Born of oneself and produced by oneself,
That grinds a witless man,
Like a diamond, a hard gem. (161)

Easy to do are things,
That are bad and harmful to oneself;
But exceedingly difficult it is,
To do what is good and beneficial. (163)

By oneself committing evil,
Does one defile oneself;
By oneself not committing evil,
Does one become pure.
Purity and impurity depend on oneself,
No one can purify another. (165)

Just as rust springing from iron,
Eats into it, having arisen therein;
Even so, their own deeds lead,
The transgressors to states of woe. (240)

The essence of morality, *sīla*, is self-restraint, *saṃvara*. Unless a person is prepared to sacrifice his pleasures and the proclivity for acquisitiveness, aversion and pride, it is just not possible to adhere to precepts of virtue and bring about inner purification. The wholesome and the unwholesome cannot function at the same time. There can't be a co-existence of the good and the evil. One of these has to be given up in order that the other flourishes.

Self-mastery, therefore, is the key to ethical development. It means diligent application to self-correction, to observation of the code of conduct and to renounce a lesser prize in order that a higher and more enduring award is wrenched out of one's endeavour. That is why Lord Buddha gave the logic of ethics in these words.

**Mattā sukhapariccāgā,
Passe ce vipulaṃ sukhaṃ;
Caje mattā sukhaṃ dhīro,
Sampassaṃ vipulaṃ sukhaṃ.**

If by renouncing a lesser happiness,
One may realise a greater happiness,
Let the wise man renounce the lesser,
Having regard for the greater. (290)

One should follow this course:
First establish oneself in what is proper,
Then only should one instruct others.
Thus the wise man will not be reproached. (158)

One, truly, is the master of oneself.
For, who else a master could be?
With oneself fully controlled,
One gains a mastery hard to gain. (160)

If one is really serious about solving the various problems of life, about facing the various ticklish issues that tempt one to take to the escapist path rather than seek for an enduring solution, then there is no other way but to work for a greater objective. To be contented with immediate, short-term benefits and expedients, however cleverly conceived and manipulated, is never the solution.

Buddhist ethics therefore insist on sacrificing, rather than compromising with, worldly gains and pleasures, showy permissive life, mammon worship, resorting to 'tit for tat' and 'might is right' postures, in short, anything that defiles the mind. It also insists that there is no use trying to set others right, without setting oneself right. For, the world appears to be what it is, because one 'looks at' it in that way, and not in the way the world really is. In other words, so long as one's mind is conditioned, so long the world will appear in the way the mind wants to view it. Hence the above enunciations.

Caught up in the day to day struggles of existence, forced by the socio-economic and other empirical compulsions, the ethical mores in man are often damaged. When this happens man hardly has the moral courage to act rightly. Taking into consideration all the pitfalls of an imperfect world, the Enlightened One, in his great compassion, exhorts the seeker of truth to keep a vigil, at least during one watch of his life. The wise man is he who divides his life-time into three periods. From

birth till youth is the first period; till the middle age is the second period; and thereafter the third period.

If the immaturity of the youth, with his preoccupations of a learner's life, deprives him of effectively practising the moral code, he should at least make an effort to fulfil the obligation during the second period. If the toil and sheer strain in the attempt at eking out a livelihood, strips man of this need in the second period, then he must unyieldingly commit himself to the supreme task of self-purification in the third period of his life. This is the least that one can do to oneself if one really holds oneself worthy and dear. That is to say, one should keep vigil upon one's moral requirements.

The pāli word **paṭijaggeyya** expresses this moral imperative indeed excellently. A warrior, who has been commissioned by the king to protect a given area, keeps an unbroken vigil, using every stratagem, to preserve the sovereignty of the territory.

Even so, should the seeker of Bodhi—Enlightenment, without ever capitulating to the caprice of the world, dedicate himself to moral development, *sīla bhāvanā*. Hence the exhortation of the Dhammapada:

If one holds oneself dear,
One should diligently watch oneself.
Let the wise man keep vigil
During any of the three watches. (157)

Let not one neglect one's true welfare.
For the sake of another, however great.
Comprehending the need,
First, of one's own welfare,
Let one be intent upon the Highest Good. (166)

This should not mean that one should confine oneself to spiritual life only at the end of one's existence, and 'make hay while the sun shines'. That is, enjoy the so-called good things of life, which really amounts to indulgence in sensuality and

worldliness. The allusion here is to the categorical imperative of ethics. Just as a bamboo brings forth flower and seeds only for self-destruction, even so, do the so-called good things of life. If ethics means only a compromise solution to the needs of a complicated life, then it produces mighty little, for all the ado! The contradictions which are inevitable in any move to compromise and water down values, can hardly allow ethics to retain sufficient strength.

According to Buddhism, ethics is protected, not by adoptions of new features in a changing world, nor by adopting itself to the exigencies of time. Only by firm adherence to its basic spirit and content, as well as to its framework does one preserve ethics. True ethics is universally valid at all times. It's intrinsic quality, as reflected in the framework of the tenfold kammapatha, has all the ingredients of power and efficacy to protect itself under all circumstances. Buddhist ethics, therefore, has no need to fall back upon any worldly prop for its preservation. It is self-preserving. And by its own inherent excellence, it is never forlorn. There is no helplessness or desolateness in the ethical law discovered by the Buddha.

Therefore, it is said that Sīla is not only what is right but what has the power to protect the person who follows it. In other words, Buddhist ethics conduces not only to rightness and goodness, but also to the power with which to protect, preserve and further consolidate what is right, good and moral. It will not be out of place to mention that even a humble and unsophisticated Buddhist is convinced that sīla not only enables him to live the good life but also gives him the strength to defend his life-style.

Further, ethics, apart from putting oneself in a position of strength, also ensures, worldly success. The Dhammapada says that whoso, with conviction, is possessed of moral purity, he also becomes endowed with wealth and repute. In whatever land he travels he is honoured everywhere.

Similarly, the good ever shines, even from afar, like the great Himalaya mountain. That is, a worthy person is always prominent and powerful.

Virtue has been likened to the best of fragrance, such as, the sweet smell of lotus, jasmin, sandal, etc. However with the very important difference: while the ordinary fragrance can travel only with the wind, the aroma of virtue blows against the wind, it pervades all directions, and can reach even the gods. The allusion is that it can supersede the norms of the world.

While social, political, economic, scientific and technological laws have certain bounds, since they are relative, the moral and spiritual norms transcend all limitations and tend towards the absolute. Therefore, it is the virtuous man who becomes truly great, who can transcend all bonds and boundaries.

He who is full of faith and is virtuous,
And who is possessed of repute and wealth,
In whatever land he travels,
He is respected everywhere. (303)

The good shines even from afar,
Like the Himalaya mountains.
But the vile are unseen,
Like arrows shot in the night. (304)

Not the sweet smell of flowers,
Not even the fragrance of Candana,
Tagara and Mallika blow against the wind.
But the aroma of the virtuous,
Indeed blows against the wind.
Truly, the virtuous man
Pervades all directions with the fragrance (of virtue). (54)

Of all the fragrance of Candana,
Tagara, Uppala and Vassiki,
Virtue is by far the sweetest. (55)

Faint is the fragrance
Of Tagara and candana.
Excellent, indeed, is
The fragrance of the virtuous,
Wafting in even among the gods. (56)

Again, goodness is never out of date, it does not become obscure. But it is ever relevant and fruitful. In this world, for every age — for the child, youth, middle-aged and the aged— there is a certain life-style, a becoming conduct and taste. A dress or behaviour which is becoming of a child can be atrocious when a middle-aged man takes to it. A particular haircut, or a type or quantity of food which a young man enjoys, if the aged man strays into that mode, he certainly will appear ridiculous. Similarly, the ornament of the young lass can never be suitable for the old grand-mother. So there is always a generation-gap, meaning a lack of relevance.

In sharp contrast to this empirical norm, is the universal relevance and effectuality of the ethical law. For instance, the Five Precepts, Pañca Sīla, which constitute the basic framework of conduct for all Buddhists, is meant for everybody, irrespective of age, sex, time and place. It is for all time, and it conduces to immediate benefit. Hence the emphasis by the Lord:

Good is virtue till life's end,
Good is faith that is steadfast;
Good is the acquisition of wisdom,
Good is the abstinence from evil. (333)

Again:

Whoso, by good deed,
Covers the evil done,
He illumines this world,
Like the Moon freed from clouds. (173)

This brings us to the all-important question of how to formulate a sound system of ethics which can stand certain tests basic to Buddhism itself. These are the tests which:

- a) Validate, the Buddhist principle of 'here and now,' (sanditṭhiko).
- b) Validate the Buddhist principle of inviting an honest scrutiny on the basis of 'come and see' (ehipassiko) for yourself.
- c) Give a 'foretaste' of the happiness of the transcendental;
- d) Make 'visible' an otherwise illusive and invisible principle or quality.

It is to be noted that the ethics of kamma has been formulated to give a concrete expression to a dispensation – Sāsana, which constitutes the authentication of the Buddha's discovery. That is to say, Buddhist ethics is a framework of conduct which is essentially experiential, not conceptual. It is intended by the Buddha that this code of conduct should 'recapture' the experience, which he himself had, of the highest spiritual life. In other words, it is a 'verification' of the truth as implied by the above tests of 'here and now' etc.

THE CARRIER OF KAMMIC POTENCY

(Kaṭattā Kamma Satti)

What is that mental factor or force which acts as the carrier of the unspent kammic energy or potency from life to life? There are several factors, both mental and physical, which in combination act as the media for continuity of the kammic potency. The imagery of a storage consciousness, (ālayaviñāna), as posited by certain Mahāyanā schools conflicts with the Buddha's central teachings of universal flux (anicca) and unsubstantiality (anatta).

Everything is dynamic, particularly in the realm of the mind. Kammic potency is especially so, being mental in nature. Therefore the only metaphor which can be used is that of a carrier or medium. Electrical energy requires a carrier in the form of transmission equipment. Diseases, too, require carriers and hosts. Kammic potency similarly requires a carrier for it to be preserved until it is activated and spent out. It also needs a host for its fruition, in the form of specific existential results, such as rebirth in a happy or miserable state of existence and other attributes of worldly life, such as, beauty, ugliness, intelligence, dullness, pleasure, pain, gain, loss, etc.

Every action has reaction, and a kammic action in particular. While all kammās are actions, not all actions are kammās. Only volitional actions, that is, those which are intentionally and wilfully performed, are kammās. Actions which are involuntary, unintentional, mechanical or unsupported by will, are actions all right, but not kammās.

Life ultimately can be reduced to actions, bodily, verbal and mental. But not all actions contribute to the perpetuation of life. Only the kammic actions give rise to and perpetuate the life-force or the living-process. The right understanding

of volitional actions as forming the core element of the living process, therefore, constitutes the vital centre of the Teachings of the Buddha. The Perpetuation of the living process, at two levels, namely, from moment to moment in a given life time, as well as from life to life in the saṃsāric journey, can be identified fairly accurately, as the Kammic potency or force Kamma-Satti. This Kamma-potency operating as katattā kamma carries the process of evolution from moment to moment in life time or from life to life in saṃsāric existence. In other words, the evolutionary process of one's wordly existence is determined by one's kamma, meaning volition-cetanā, both in its active form (Saṅkhāra=Karma-formation) and passive form (Katatta Kamma=accumulated kamma potency).

Jīvitindriya, literally means life-force or vital force. It is a faculty or an original power (indriya) which controls and vitalizes the kamma impressions into a living current (jīvita) and ingests it into a biocomponent, in the same way, the kamma impressions as mental inputs are ingested, absorbed and turned into psychic vitality.

At the corporeal level, Jīvitindriya is that vital biological element which includes the genetic code and other biotic factors, which cannot be interfered with by any physiological or physical manipulation. It is also that inborn faculty which includes specific functions like metabolism, converting inanimate matter into an animate constituent of the body.

Kammic impressions are recorded by a specific mental action known as registering consciousness, as tadārammanā. And they get imprinted, so to say, on the jīvitindriya, thus determining the exact evolutionary process.

Jīvitindriya as a faculty not only puts on record or absorbs the impressions of actions, but also preserves them, not unlike a microfilmed cybernetic device. It is therefore a dynamic repository of original power, determining destiny.

In Buddhism, mind, also called consciousness, is a complex aggregate. It is a unit of energies that can be called a power package, with an array of mental factors or properties known as **Cetasikas**. These mental factors are the components or concomitants of mind, each with a very specific function and each a force by itself. *Jīvitindriya* is one such mental factor whose function is to animate the entire unit or aggregation. In so doing, it vitalizes the kammic impressions.

Every time an act is committed in deed, word or thought, it leaves its impression upon this vital faculty. The cumulative force of these kamma formations, creates a specific evolutionary pattern upon the personality. When this pattern is materialized as a psychophysical mechanism, it represents life as it is.

How the evolutionary process works can be explained in terms of the workings of the seven primary mental factors known as *Sabbacitta sādharana*, or in terms of the workings of the twenty-two indriyas, controlling powers, with awesome potentialities.

The primary mental factors are present in all states of consciousness, i.e. from the most defiled to the most sublime, from the sub-conscious states to the functional conscious states, and from the mundane consciousness to the supramundane transcendental states of insight stages. Also these seven mental concomitants or factors work together, though each factor has its own different and distinctive function. And all the factors, conjointly working under the leadership of *Cetanā*, or volition, bring about the evolutionary process wrought by *Kamma-satti*, *kamma*-potency.

These seven mental factors are: *Phasso*, Contact; *Vedanā*, feeling; *Saññā*, perception; *Cetanā*, Volition; *Ekaggatā*, Concentration; *Manasikāra*, Attention, and *Jīvitindriya*, the life or vital force. For instance, when the eye as the sense faculty, and its object a visible form, impacts or rather impinges on

each other, there arises eye-consciousness i.e. seeing a visible object; and this coming together of three factors, namely, the sense organ, the external object, as well as seeing-consciousness, is called contact *Phasso*. This is a powerful feeder *āhāra* that keeps feeding the process of consciousness *Viññāṇa* which has now come into existence conditioned by this contact. Now contact, having arisen, simultaneously gives rise to feeling, conditioned by which there arises *Saññā*, and the rest; in fact all the seven simultaneously co-exist and function together each in its own distinctive manner, to bring about the evolutionary process determined by the karmic force or potency.

For instance, at the stage of *Vedanā*, feeling, if it is an unpleasant feeling, then in that feeling dwells a dormant defilement called *paṭighānusaya*, a tendency to repel or resist, which now becomes activated as a thought process, or mental action *mano kamma*, and gets translated into *vitikkama*, i.e. verbal or bodily action. Now this is how *kilesa* defilement arises and therewith dormant karmic force gets activated into *kamma*-formation, in the form of verbal and bodily volitional activity.

If the feeling is a pleasant one, then it may give rise to greed in the form *Kāmarāgānusaya*, dormant form of sensual desire, which gets activated and then gets translated into bodily and verbal action. Similarly, if the feeling is indifferent or neutral, *upekkha*, then it may give rise to the defilement of *moha*, delusion. So, this is called the demeritorious form of karmic force evolving from a dormant to an activated, to an externally translated volitional activity.

The opposite is equally true i.e. if it is *puññābhisaṅkhata kusala* or meritorious mental kammic potential, then pleasant feeling gives rise to a wish to do a good deed *kusala chanda* or *nekkhama chanda*, a wish to renounce. If it is an unpleasant one, then also it may give rise to *mettā* or good-will, or compassion, or *khanti* forbearance etc. If it is an indifferent or equanimous feeling, it may give rise to wisdom, leading to

activated meritorious deeds, which in turn get translated into verbal or bodily meritorious deeds.

Whether it is as akusala dormant disposition, it gets activated, then translated into volitional actions that lead to apāya bhumi woeful states of suffering. And if it is kusala vipāka resultant, it leads to sugati, the happy states of existence. And if the meritorious deed is based on wisdom, then it may lead to higher wisdom through the practice of Sīla, wisdom-rooted conduct, or samādhi then it may lead to insightful meditative process, or if it is wisdom-rooted insight, paññā, higher transcendental states, i.e. to Nibbāna.

Ultimately the purpose of spiritual life is to develop wisdom leading to 1) freedom of mind, cetovimutti; and 2) liberation through higher insight paññā, vimutti; for wisdom alone liberates a being from the shackles of kamma-determined evolutionary process.

This is, as to how vedanā or feeling can be so powerful, as to determine one's kamma which leads either to karmic bondage or to freedom from karmic bondage. With reference to other factors, like saññā etc., we have already mentioned cetanā is kamma; Cetanā functions as a leader that makes other factors come together conjointly and achieve an objective. Ekaggatā, mental one-pointedness, is a basic capacity to unify the mind with all other factors to work together. Manasikāra or attention has a very-very vital role. It triggers the impingement between a sense-organ and its object, giving rise to a given state of consciousness, thus bringing about a triple contact, either sensory or mental.

Here, by attention is to be understood two things: one, advertence towards the object, i.e. mind's first confrontation with an object; the other, binding the associated mental factors to the object, thereby playing a very important role both at the five sense-door and at the mind-door levels. In other words, these two functions of manasikāra, - by breaking through the

sub-conscious life-continuum (bhavaṅga citta), it gives rise to the first stage of the perceptual process called Citta vithi. Secondly, in a more general sense, it stands for wise reflection. Hence the term yoniso manasikāra, wise reflection. The opposite of it is called ayonisomanasikāra, unwise reflection which occurs when attention is paid in a distorted way. In the Sabbasāva Sutta (M.2), it is said, 'to counteract the cankers, āsava, manasikāra attention is the condition for the arising of the right view leading to stream entry, sotapattiyaṅga.

See Buddhist Dictionary page 95 by Venerable Nyanatiloka.

The seventh mental factor, jīvitindriya, literally means life or vital force. It's a faculty, indriya, or controlling power, which influence the vital force into a living current, jīvita, and ingest into it a bio component, in the same way the kamma impressions, as mental inputs, are ingested or absorbed, then materialized into vitality. It is that biological element which includes the genetic code and other biotic factors that cannot be interfered with any physiological or physical manipulation. It is also that inborn faculty which include specific functions like metabolism, converting inanimate matter into an animate constituent of the body.

Now it is time one examines the relationship between the wheel of becoming, kamma and character. As impressions of volitional actions are imprinted on the mind, definite patterns of kamma-formations (saṅkhārā) gradually come into existence. This is how character is formed by actions. Character in turn conditions ceaseless activity, thus creating endless action-patterns again. In this manner a vicious circle of becoming is created by way of a relationship known as repetitiveness, Āsevanāpaccaya.

In other words, repetitive actions create character, and character in turn engenders further actions, and establishes the wheel of becoming. The wheel of becoming is not bound by time, which means, it can and does stand for an endless recurrence

of existence. In Buddhism this vicious circle, expresses a law, that of kamma and rebirth.

The law of kamma and its corollary, rebirth, explains life as a psycho-biological cause-effect-cause chain. This is beautifully and very comprehensively enunciated in the Buddha's Teachings of Dependent Origination, Paṭicca Samuppāda. Paṭicca Samuppāda explains how the past life produces the present which creates the future by way of twelve interdependent factors. There are varieties of relations which combine in the working of this complex mechanism.

Often it is made out that cause-effect refers only to a relationship of precedence and succession in time. The Paṭicca Samuppāda denotes not only a chain in series but also relationships of simultaneity, interdependence and mutuality. When the three legs of a tripod interdependently support each other to keep the tripod in its place, it is a relationship of mutual support which is simultaneous, not serial. Similarly, the twelve factors of Paṭicca Samuppāda, explain life as a stream in time—the past, present and future.

However, these factors are related to each other by multiple and varying sets of conditions, such as, inter-dependence, precedence, antecedence, mutuality, coexistence, kamma, vipāka (kamma-consequence), etc. Dependent Origination, is a cycle that has profound philosophical, psychological and ethical significance, cutting across all forms of extreme. It negates, for instance, the extreme view of pre-determinism or fatalism on one hand, and the supernatural or fortuitous creation on the other.

There are a number of other Indian Schools of Thought which believe in kamma and rebirth. The Hindus of various shades, the Sikhs and the Jains too believe in kamma and rebirth like the Buddhists. But then there is a fundamental difference. These schools posit a third phenomenon called soul, ātmā, self

or ego, which continues from life to life unaffected by any change.

They believe that a man may be reborn as a dog or as a god by virtue of his karmas, actions. Despite this profound change in the pattern of existence, the ātmā, being immutable, remains the same, and thus links the being from life to life. And it is only with the exhaustion of kamma that the soul is released and merges in the paramātmā, godhead. This release is variously termed as moksha, kaivalya, jīvan mukti, etc. The exhaustion of kamma is effected not by individual effort, but by the will of the divine or by the grace of a saint, or a supernatural being, etc.

The whole theory is confusing, if not illogical. In order to explain or explain away the phenomena of rebirth, first of all they assume some kind of a link (soul) which is immutable and therefore can outlast the mutable life. Thus having arbitrarily created a permanent entity in an impermanent setting, they find themselves drifting in an endless stream. Having unwittingly created an endless life by this permanent linkage, they are now forced to accept existence as a bondage, something essentially unsatisfactory and miserable.

In order to wriggle out of this invidious and basically self-contradictory situation, they then posit another equally arbitrary proposition by saying that to get out of the bondage of kamma one has perforce to resort to a divine grace or supernatural intervention.

However, just by sticking to the simple dynamics of the Law of Moral Causation, paṭicca samuppāda, one obviates all these difficulties and avoids needless self-contradictions. Not that there are no gods. Indeed, there are innumerable divine beings with imponderable powers. These gods do have the capacity to help human beings, just as a strong man can help a weak one.

Buddhism does not deny the existence of gods or heavens, as made out by some detractors and sectarians who make a vested interest out of scientific materialism. Buddhism only rejects the theory of God-creation and divine intervention in human destiny. Karma is a law, and it does not brook interference from any source, human or divine. Being a law it is a self-sufficient norm. It works on its own.

In the same manner, Buddhism does not deny that there is no ego as such, though it rejects the idea of an immutable, permanent soul with a divine or supernatural origin. Soul and God-creation theories are mentally constructed ideologies or concepts. These cannot be rationally proved or demonstrated, nor are they of any relevance to explain the phenomenon of life.

Ego is a mental factor which cannot be wished away. It is very much there. But only as the well-spring of all human lust and greed, desire and hatred, jealousy and malice, delusion and ignorance. It is one of those mental pollutants that involve a being in karma and rebirth. Self or ego is at the very heart of all evil. Since it acts as the basic material with which bondage is wrought, it is something to be outgrown and totally destroyed. To glamorize this mind-defiling and bondage-producing, insidious enemy of man, by calling it a soul, or by making it appear to be permanent and of divine origin, one only perpetuates delusion or greed or hatred. Therefore, the attempt to institutionalize ego by giving it a philosophical or theological content is the worst of all errors and the folly of all follies.

Ātmā is a glamorised, theologised and idealized extension of ego. When mind is conditioned by such a non-existing and dogmatic assumption, no wonder that mind automatically bends towards fatalism, determinism and god-creation theory. Even the worst of crimes is explained away as the will of god. Wholesome moral conduct, persevering effort at development and purification of mind, and awakening of the transmundane

potentials which break the kammic vicious circle, are thus sacrificed on the altar of theological blind faith.

To recapitulate, it is to be emphasized that Buddhism rejects a god-creator but accepts and believes in gods as higher beings with powers. There is no God but there are gods. Belief in gods and deities does not, however, mean dependence on them for spiritual progress. Spiritual development is entirely based on one's efforts, one's urge for spiritual excellence, one's commitment to the goal of nibbāna, liberation from the bondage of worldly existence.

Likewise, Buddhism rejects the theory of a permanent soul with divine origin, though it accepts ego as an empirical reality with its origin in desire and delusion. Acceptance of ego does not mean dependence on it. It is not even a 'necessary evil'. It is to be abandoned. Just as the acceptance of the reality of karma does not mean acquiescing to its perpetuation, but emphasizing the need for its overcoming, just so it is with ego.

To come back to the point of the relationship of repetition, by which the kammic law is perpetuated, and therewith rebirth, it is to be emphasized that repetition by itself is not ominous. It is an impersonal happening. What matters is the way it is directed. If it creates a psychological determinism, by repeating unwholesome volitional action-patterns, then, by repetitive wholesome volitional action-pattern, a cycle of freedom, negating the deterministic one, can also be created. Just as the force of the brake negates the force of motion, even so, an intentionally performed good action, when repeated deliberately, breaks the cycle of kilesa, mental defilement, leading to the destruction of the cycles of karma and karma-resultants (vīpāka), thus phenomenal existence itself.

Karma-formation, is the basic ingredient of character. It lays tracks, so to say, on the vast desert of samsāra, projecting one into the future endlessly. The unwholesome karma-

formations, therefore, are known as the arid tracks of future existence. Per contra, well-formed wholesome kamma-formations become the peaceful pathways to ultimate freedom. When one lays this pathway, and resolutely fares thereon, one breathes the air of freedom with each step.

Further, one also builds within a supernormal faculty by which one traces backwards and recalls all the past lives. The ability to remember bygone existences enables one to acquire that invincible spiritual excellence by which all future wandering or drifting in samsāra can be done away with once and for all. This is how, by fully grasping the significance of kamma, one outgrows kamma.

Just as with one hand one can clean the other hand, or by one thorn one can pull out another thorn, or by one kind of poison one can neutralize another poison, even so, by one set of kamma, one can counteract another set of kamma. By firm repetitive performance of wholesome actions, one can lay a cycle of wholesome kamma-formations building up the propensity towards excellence and freedom. In this manner one can certainly counteract unwholesome actions and the proneness to repeat unwholesome kamma-formations that involve one in bondage and suffering.

Jīvitindriya is a perfect microfilmed genetic record. Properly handled, it enables one to establish the noble pathway of wholesome kamma-formations as mentioned above.

It is not uncommon to hear people advancing an apparently rational argument against rebirth, saying that since we don't know our past lives, nor can we foresee the future, therefore we can't validate either the past or the future existence. This kantian-sounding argument that because I don't know the past or future, so they do not exist, however, is misleading and untrue. It is really absurd, because even a simple knowledge like that of the working of memory can puncture this bloated falsehood.

It is well-known, even in the materialistic and sceptical scientific circles that knowledge particularly of a specialized kind, requires a certain discipline, certain skill, ability and information. For instance, to become a doctor one has to undergo years of study in a college, spend hours of practical work every day, sweat for hours in collecting material to gather the knowledge and practical skill, and then pass many examinations, and, even more, intensively work in hospitals. Only then can a person become a doctor. If mere knowledge could turn a person into a doctor, then by purchasing medical books and sitting at home, one could acquire the knowledge and be a doctor. Anybody who attempts to do that, instead of saving a patient, will surely kill him.

To acquire the ability to recall past lives or foresee the future, also requires a certain discipline and a great deal of hard work. It means moral purification and the development of mind and its various faculties. It also means the voluntary renunciation of sensual pleasures and the overcoming of the possessive instinct. Without cultivating dispassion, or at least a modicum of detachment, the mind just cannot gain access to that level, reaching which alone enables one to have this glorious hind-view of past lives, or foreknowledge of future lives.

Who can dispute that sensual lust and addiction to sex, enfeebles the consciousness and throws it into a state of distraction? And a weak mind cannot develop the faculty by which one can recall the past or penetrate into the future. Just as a weak body cannot be expected to do the work which a strong body can do, even so, a weak mind cannot perform what only a powerful mind can. A mind which has not been trained and cultivated to recall the past will suffer from inadequacy that hinders knowledge of the past.

Heedlessness produces both worldliness and excessive discursiveness, leading to dry intellectualism. To be heedless

means to lack that mindful alertness without which no concentration and insight can be cultivated.

Learned and able people, with all their intellectual, aesthetic, oratorical and other talents, without training in mindfulness through meditation, will suffer from a great deal of tension if they try to exercise the mind leading to remembrance of past lives. Whereas a meditator who has developed his faculties of mindfulness, concentration and insight, and therewith his intuitive powers of comprehension, can easily recall the past, without ever causing any distraction and tension.

Lord Buddha uses a very meaningful term to describe a spiritually untrained mind used to pleasures and possessions. It is called **papañca** in Pāli, meaning proliferation, multiplicity, dispersal, distraction, etc. A mind exposed to a multiplicity of impressions easily wavers, gets distracted, and is dispersed like so many passing clouds, among fleeting images, dissolving into the mental horizon. As the mind is dispersed, one's attention is distracted which blurs the memory.

Just as when a track is clogged with heaps of garbage, no communication is possible; even so, when the memory track is blurred by the multiplicity of impressions, no higher knowledge or supernormal attainment is ever possible. Further, sensual desire and sexual involvements defile and weaken the mind, and render memory powerless. From the beginnings of time, kilesas, mental defilements, have been the agencies that kept beings fettered and will continue this bondage until the mind is freed of their vise-like grip. Just as a transistor becomes useless when the batteries are discharged, even so, as long as the mind is rendered powerless, it just cannot perform certain higher tasks, like remembering past lives or looking into the future.

In order to develop **pubbenivāsānussati**, recalling past lives, and therewith experience the actual dynamics of rebirth, three

things have to be accomplished, these are: moral, mental and spiritual purifications. In pāli they are known as **Sīlavisuddhi**, purification of morality by putting into practice certain moral precepts and virtues; **Cittavisuddhi**, purification of mind by practising meditation leading to samādhi, supersensory ecstatic absorptions; **ñānavisuddhi**, purification of wisdom by practising vipassanā, insight meditation, leading to spiritual experience of the Four Noble Truths.

We have used the word kamma-formation to explain how character or predispositions are actually built up here in this life and carried forward to the next life, as inborn traits or propensities. Cloud formation signifies a process of building up shapeless, floating masses of vapour into formidable structures of thick, heavy storm-cloud, precipitating as drizzles and rains then downpours. Kamma-formations can be visualised similarly as building up of sporadic and dispersed kamma-impressions into definite, structured, trait-patterns, and dispositions that, with the given opportunity to express, precipitate into urges, compulsions and blind drives.

To understand the working of kamma impressions, one should clearly grasp the relation between thought and thought, thought and speech, and thought and action. When we think, say and do, something good or bad, we set in motion a series of images of the same object in our minds. Thus, for each act of thinking, speaking or doing, a large number of images are created and set afloat, so to say, in the mental horizon.

Again, each verbal act (speech) involves a large number of thought or mental acts. Likewise, for each bodily action, innumerable mental acts are committed. That is to say, before one says or does something, one has already thought many times over the same. The verbal and bodily actions are only expressions of thought. Throughout the day a person is engaged in saying and doing things, which means also thinking many times over.

Again, having thought, said or done, one has the tendency to re-live them over and over, many times, that is, mentally repeat them by way of the relationship of repetitiveness, āsevanā paccaya. Thus do people build up definite patterns of kammic-formations. The cumulative force of these formations provides the necessary power-base for both good and bad motivations to spring up as urges, compulsions and drives.

In Pāli motivations are known as hetu, root of good (kusala) and bad (akusala) actions (kamma). The essential function of manindriya is to convey, conserve and transmit this hetu power-base, whenever appropriate conditions obtain.

Indriyas have been described as the carrier or medium of kammic energy from life to life. How does it act as a carrier is a moot point, particularly because, as has been mentioned before, Buddhism does not believe in a permanent soul or ātma which links one life with another. In other religions, ātmā or soul has been construed as the linking principle. Whereas in Buddhism, the phenomenal world, and life, both are essentially momentary, in a state of flux.

Life is a stream consisting of series of consciousness, the preceding one passing on the entire kammic energy to the following one. So in a relay-chain, the kammic energy, which gives rise to and perpetuates life, continues. Life and death, therefore, are momentary events, one following the other. It is said that even during lifetime one keeps dying, that is, one dies every moment-and is reborn every moment. Thus essentially living a process of moment – to – moment existence. This should be clearly understood.

What we call death, as the end of a given state of existence, only dramatizes the reality of momentariness. When the given kamma, which gives rise to that existence, completes its cycle, becomes mature (lit. ripen, vipāka), it also gives rise to its end-product in the form of death. That is, with the exhaustion of

the kammic energy, the body too gives way, only to allow the arising of a new psycho-physical combination, a new life. In other words, the death-rebirth mechanism is nothing different from the stream of moment-to-moment arising and passing away that takes place during the so-called lifetime. Life deceptively appears solid and whole, yet it is only a stream of momentariness. The mental flux is so inconceivably rapid that by its very dynamism it appears static.

Viewed in this perspective, it will not be difficult to understand how Indriya, itself a mental factor, acts as the carrier of the kammic energy in relay in the stream of mind. An indriya is characterized by several functions. First of all, it absorbs the kamma impressions. Then, in the manner of metabolism, it vitalizes or animates them. That is, it keeps them alive until they are matured into specific existential results, in the form of rebirth or a certain happy or painful renewed life-experience.

The crystal in the transistor absorbs, conserves and emits the sound energy. In the same way an indriya absorbs, conserves and matures the kammic energy, emitting into a specific kammic result or vipāka.

To carry the imagery a step forward, since an indriya acts as a carrier of the kamma-energy, the vital force of the being, the life itself, gives rise to or represents the “host”. As already mentioned, an indriya, literally means a faculty, i.e., an original controlling power, which vitalizes the kammic impressions into an evolutionary current or life-force. So when the kammic-energy fructifies, this outcome itself becomes a host or a condition for giving rise to another kamma. In this way a cause-effect-cause chain is perpetuated ad infinitum. The simplest analogy is that of the hen and the egg. The metaphor ‘host’ is particularly apt in a psychological sense.

Further, it is to be noted that this vital force is not merely a repository that preserves the kammic energy and animates

it. It is also a force that ceaselessly activates or motivates mental activity i.e., keeps this process of thinking going, whether automatic or intentional. As a matter of fact, thinking is possible exactly because the mind is “charged by” the accumulated kammic energy. A discharged battery cannot run a device. Even so, a kammically discharged indriya, as that of an Arahāt, an Enlightened Disciple of the Buddha, does not generate any more kammic activity. And because thinking goes on ceaselessly, the other two expressions of kamma, namely, speech and action, follow. This is how a stream of kammic activity flows, and therewith the process of life.

To stem this stream and then dry it up, Lord Buddha discovered the Middle Path, with its three-pronged approach of Sīla (moral purification) samādhi (meditative concentration) and paññā (intuitive wisdom). The Middle Path approach, by transcending all extremes, converts these tidal waves of kammic activities, with the indriya as the vortex, into a massive energy channel, and utilizes the same skilfully to generate wisdom-power, liberating the mind from all bondages.

It is a rewarding experience to observe how thoughts move and control the body. It is not the emotion or sensation, nor the perception, nor any other mental concomitants as such, that move the body, but only volition, kamma, or kammic energy does it. When an indriya and will (cetanā), conjointly manipulate mental activity or thinking, they carry with them the necessary motivations to give rise to verbal and bodily intimations (viññattī) or even most minute movement of the body.

A dead body, like a piece of stone, is motionless. It is the miracle, conjointly produced by indriya and cetanā, that is able to manipulate movements of all kinds and with such consummate skill and precision that no machine or computer can even remotely be compared to it. Sensations or feelings of pain or pleasure are undoubtedly pervasive, sometimes even overwhelming, yet these essentially time-bound experiences cannot move, much

less control, the body. It is only when one intends, that is, exercises the kammic volitions that this otherwise carcass-like structure becomes alive and moves. It is the same with other important mental factors like perception, attention, etc.

KAMMIC HEREDITY

How does a person come to possess a certain temperament? What exactly is the origin or source of a character-trait? What role does heredity play in this embedded psychic mechanism?

Basically, a temperament is an inborn mental formation, therefore, represents a kammic heredity. To borrow a medical jargon, it is a congenital factor. But with a difference. That is, with appropriate spiritual training this formation can be modified, sublimated, even transmuted.

The kammic heredity, like genetic information, is kammic energy transmitted from one life to another. Kamma, volitional action, also contains the ethical components of one’s conduct or activity. So the transmitted kammic energy also form the in-built moral inheritance of a person’s mental genetics. Therefore, a temperament, not only represents a psychological mosaic, but also how rich or otherwise that mosaic is by virtue of this moral content.

This inheritance of psycho-ethical constitution by an individual is in keeping with the norm of “like begets like”. A volitional action, whether unwholesome or wholesome, bad or good, has very definite moral roots which motivate and support it. There are six such roots—three unwholesome and three wholesome. These are **lobha** (greed), **dosa** (hatred) and **moha** (delusion); **alobha** (non-greed), **adosa** (non-hatred) and **amoha** (non-delusion).

When any one or more of these motivate a person to act intentionally, this kamma, ultimately forms the building-block of one’s character. According to the Visuddhimagga, the origin (nīdāna) of temperament is past kammic habit (pubbācinna),

that is to say, a habitual volitional action-pattern. When a person habitually commits karmas which are rooted in greed, hatred and delusion, he lays psychic impressions, as it were, of these factors thus forming the character-contour of the personality.

For instance, in the process of accumulating rebirth-producing (janaka) karmas, if greed is the motivating force, the cumulative effect of such actions would turn the person into one of greedy temperament. It is the same with reference to the wholesome roots like non-greed, etc.

It is to be emphasized that non-greed is not merely absence of greed. It means the presence of a positive factor like renunciation, generosity, self-sacrifice, etc., which negates greed. Just as the presence of light is not merely an absence of darkness, or health is not just the absence of disease, non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion signify the presence of powerful, wholesome motivating factors that go in the formation of positive character-traits like **Saddhā**, **Buddhi** and **Vitakka Caritas**, devotional or faithful, and intelligent or sagacious, and thoughtful temperaments.

The Visuddhimagga contains a clear analysis of character-traits in terms of ethical roots at the moment of accumulating rebirth-producing karmas. Here is an outline: If at the time of committing the janaka, rebirth-producing kamma, greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion are strong, and non-greed, hatred and delusion are weak, the resultant temperament would be that of a greedy man who however is good tempered and intelligent because of non-hatred and non-delusion. Whatever is strong prevails. If at the time of committing kamma, a particular root prevails by its strength, the recurrence of such actions naturally builds the pre-disposition. A combination and permutation of the positive and negative root-conditions create a multiplicity of temperament patterns.

For instance, if greed, hatred and non-delusion are the strong motivations, the resulting trait-mosaic would be a greedy and

ill-tempered man but who is also very intelligent. To put it concretely, when a man is induced to act wilfully by some selfish and acquisitive consideration, and he acts aggressively but has no illusion about it, that is, he makes no false justification or rationalisation, and he commits such actions often, he is bound to build within himself dispositions that would make him greedy and ill-tempered, yet quite knowledgeable. Upon death, if that man is reborn in the human plane by a set of favourable conditions, his disposition, based upon kammic habit, will be carried over as a matter of natural law and form the temperament.

While accumulating the rebirth producing janaka karmas, if greed, delusion and non-hatred are strong, and non-greed, non-delusion and hatred are weak, the man by temperament will be greedy and dull-witted; but he will also be a good-tempered and non-aggressive type.

Likewise, if all the three unwholesome motivating factors – greed, hatred and delusion are strong, and the three wholesome ones are weak, the outcome will be a poor species of a man who by temperament is greedy, angry or hateful and thick-headed.

Again, if non-greed, hatred and delusion are strong, and greed, non-hatred and non-delusion are weak, the ensuing temperament will be that of a man who is incorruptible and impervious to temptations, but because of his strong hate and delusion he would be hypercritical and vengeful, and of course, foolish, filled with all kinds of self-deceptions.

Similarly if non-greed, non-hatred and delusion are strong in the kammic pattern, and greed, hatred and non-delusion are weak, the consequent character-mosaic will be that of a generous man, with a mind unaffected by acquisitive or possessive urges, and who is also good natured and friendly, compassionate and sympathetic; but since his delusion is strong he is definitely flat-minded, doltish and vane.

Alternatively, if non-greed, non-delusion and hatred are strong, and greed, delusion and non-hatred are weak, in the process of heaping up kammās, the outcome will be a temperament naturally prone to generosity and open handedness, to understanding and sagacity; but the subject will be given to anger and ill-will.

In the same way, if the rebirth-producing kammās are rooted in the three wholesome roots, that is, non-greed, non-hatred, non-delusion are strong, and greed, hatred and delusion weak, then the person will be a possessor of very saintly qualities. Endowed with native wisdom, his mind will be perspicuous and rich with understanding. He will be a large-hearted man, full of love and compassion, unaffected by craving and antipathy. Such an individual is known as **tihetuka**, blessed with triple wholesome roots, that fortify his consciousness and protect him from the myriad pitfalls that dot the path of every-day life.

Again the varieties of human-traits have threefold intensity – mild, medium and strong. A tihetuka person who has got strong wholesome roots, if properly guided on the path of Dhamma, can attain **Jhānas**, Super-conscious absorptions, **Samāpattis**, Supernormal attainments and **Magga-phalas**, Supramundane Path and Fruition insights.

Similarly, in the scale of intensity, the medium type will have less possibilities than the strong, and more than the mild. With effort and perseverance while the medium can gain the supernormal attainments, the mild requires steadfast pursuit with unrelenting determination to achieve higher spiritual states. Also time plays an important role. Longer the pursuits, better the possibilities of spiritual attainments. Duhetuka, persons with two wholesome roots i.e. less amoha, tend to be simpletons even retarded individuals, lacking in basic intelligence they are driven by instinct and emotion, thus easily carried away by blind faith, sensuality love affairs etc.

KAMMA AND TEMPERAMENT

What exactly is temperament? Three specific terms are used in Pāli to convey the meaning of this term. These are:

1. **Sabhāva:** Lit. What is ‘natural’ for one. That is, a particular pre-disposition or the essentially inborn qualities of a person.
2. **Pakati:** An innate nature or tendency of an individual.
3. **Carita:** A Character trait which distinguishes an individual.

Thus a temperament is the specific individuality of a person. Certain tendencies are inborn while others are acquired. A temperament comprehends both. Every man has a particular temperament, something that makes him unique and distinguishes him from others. People can have similar qualities. But no two persons have identical temperaments.

The human personality has been divided into six distinct types based on temperaments. Three of these pertain to the darker side of the personality and the other three reflect the brighter side.

A normal man is a conglomeration of good and bad, i.e. a blend, not entirely, of good or bad. When a particular facet of one’s personality is predominant the type of the person is specified in accordance with this. Sometimes it is found that both good and bad facets seem to function equally. Even in such a situation, whatever functions more frequently or effectively that determines the type. However, for most temperaments it is a permutation and combination of different traits.

When a person understands the nature of his temperament, not only will he live meaningfully and make his efforts spiritually productive, but he will acquire a valuable insight into human nature itself which is bound to help him in his day-to-day transactions of life.

These six temperaments are as follows:

Rāgacarita, Avaricious and greedy type:

One belonging to this type is characterised by varied shades of appetitive tendencies, such as, acquisitiveness, greed, avarice, lust, selfishness, egotism, attachment, possessiveness, passion, etc. A greed-bound mind is attracted to things of the world, and clings to them. The greedy type is prone to all kinds of cravings and covetousness. This makes the person a prey to discontentment. When the mind is dissatisfied, frustration follows and there is always anxiety, anguish and unhappiness. Thus fear becomes a natural corollary of desire. Rāgacarita persons, fluctuating between cravings, fears and anxieties, are ill at ease, to obviate which they resort to gratification of the desires all the more. This is how a vicious circle is established in which both the inborn and acquired tendencies get thoroughly enmeshed.

Dosa Carita, Hateful or resenting type:

Those who possess this disposition, are prone to ill-will, antipathy, rancour, anger and insolence. They can be arrogant and spiteful, and become an easy prey to prejudice and malice. Resentful persons easily alienate people, even friends, by their irritable nature. Such characters quickly resort to rebellious and iconoclastic stances. Bitterness of feeling, short temper, umbrage, grudging, acrimony, quarrelsomeness, offensiveness and such unpleasant qualities characterise the person of hateful temperament. If the avaricious person eagerly desires to get and keep things, the resentful one, exhibiting aversion, is the opposite. Both these temperaments represent attraction and repulsion characteristics.

Mohacarita, Deluded type:

Moha is mental blindness. It is characterized by many shades—delusion, ignorance, nescience, unknowing, knowing wrongly

or distortedly, confusion, stupidity, illusion, self-deception, fantasy, unperceiving, witlessness etc. A deluded person need not be an ignoramus, lacking knowledge. Indeed highly educated and intelligent persons can be prodigiously deluded.

Whoever distorts truth, or mistakes the essential to be non-essential, betrays delusion. The ignorant and stupid individuals, lacking comprehension, mistake things easily. The deluded types are prone to suspicion, doubt and restlessness of mind. They can be cynical and misconstrue sceptical doubt to be a part of rationalism. In the name of enquiry and investigation, they can indulge themselves in self-delusion and egotistic, discursive intellectualism.

Saddhācarita, Faithful Type:

In Buddhism faith is conviction based on knowledge and experience. Faith rooted in wisdom conduces to that firm state of confidence, whereby one is settled inwardly and no longer troubled by disquiet and doubt. A man of faithful temperament is naturally devout, righteous, endowed with conviction, and fully confident about the efficacy of Dhamma. If Rāgacarita signifies an attraction to things of the world, Saddhācarita signifies an attraction to things religious and spiritual.

Thus a person of faithful temperament is always open to truth and responsive to spiritual values. It is the emotional content of attraction, that forms the common feature between Rāgacarita, and Saddhācarita, representing the dark and the bright facets of the personality. That is why religious persons often fall victims to avarice and possessiveness. For meditators training in Buddhist meditation, it is emphasised that faith has to be guided by wisdom, so that one's devotion to religious and spiritual conduct may not degenerate into acquisitive and dogmatic life.

Buddhicarita, Intelligent Type:

One endowed with native intelligence is Buddhicarita, that is, a person with clear and quick understanding. With spiritual

association, he/she becomes sagacious, discerning and wise; with worldly association this type turns merely brainy and intellectual, no more. What is required for purposes of spiritual development is clear-sightedness, not cleverness; intuition, not dry reasoning; wisdom, not mere learning.

Brain-power, rationality, being gifted and smart—all these qualities are useful, but only as tools to survive in the world. The Buddhacarita individual, therefore, can become dry and disdainful, lacking in warmth, unless the person's intelligence faculty is cultivated to become more and more perspicacious, discriminative and comprehending.

Just as Dosacarita individuals are prone to anger and aversion, resenting things and individuals, Buddhacarita individuals become more and more disenchanted and detached, resenting falsehood, and worldly vanities. While the former dislikes individuals and things, the latter dislikes qualities. The common feature between Dosa carita and Buddhacarita is a sense of repulsion or disgust. A hateful person is disgusted with the evildoer, while the intelligent person is disgusted with evil as such.

Vitakkacarita, Discursive or speculative type:

The discursive type is prone to ideological, theological or metaphysical speculation. The person would pursue an enquiry and get lost in conjectural opinion and theory. This type is fond of debates, arguments and the like. Getting lost in discursiveness and rambling thoughts, the Vitakka individual resorts to expatiatory dialectics. In the name of being scholarly and rational, even scientific, he/she degenerates knowledge into digressive verbiage, being subjected to the same type of confusion and perplexity that characterise the delusive character. Thus the delusive and the speculative temperaments have something in common, the tendency to becloud the mind, the former by delusion and the latter by discursiveness.

IDENTIFICATION OF TEMPERAMENT

The Visuddhimagga, the well-known and authoritative manual on Buddhist meditation provides precise guidelines to recognise human types and correctly identify temperaments. How can one precisely identify a given person to be of greedy temperament and so on? Temperaments may be identified by one's posture, by how one acts, eats, looks at objects etc., and by the frequency of mental states which one is subjected to.

Both greedy and faithful temperaments have common features and act in identical fashion. It is the same with reference to hateful and intelligent temperaments.

An individual belonging to the first category (Rāga-Saddhā), carefully walks in his natural gait; he puts down the step slowly, places it on the ground evenly and lifts it also smoothly. His steps are measured and have springy rhythm. He stands and sits in a confident and graceful manner and is not ruffled. He lies down unhurriedly, spreading his bed slowly, composing himself deliberately, he sleeps fully assured; when woken, he does not suddenly do so, but, deliberately as it were, and when called he answers slowly and confidently.

The individual belonging to the second category (Dosa-Buddhi), walks as if digging with the point of the feet. He puts down and lifts his foot quickly with jerks, and his steps drag along. He stands and sits in a rigid manner. While laying down, he spreads the bed hastily, flings himself down and sleeps eagerly, with a tense look. When woken he gets up quickly and answers as if annoyed.

An individual belonging to the third category (Moha-Vitakka) walks with a confused gait, puts down and lifts his foot hesitantly. He stands and sits in a muddled way. He lies down clumsily and mostly sleeps with face downwards. When woken he gets up lazily.

Of all the human activities the functions of the sense organs (Indriya) seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking—are primal activities in that they represent one's kammic heredity and determine the course of one's happiness and misery, here and now, and hereafter.

The Indriyas play the vital role of giving rise to results of past karmas leading to the commitment of a fresh kamma, thus establishing a vicious circle of cause-effect-cause. Thus, it covers life in its totality—the past, the present and the future. Lord Buddha, therefore, places sense-restraint as the only weapon against the horrendous cause-effect-cause saṃsāric wheel. Mindfulness based at the indriya (satisaṃvara) successfully reverses one's course in saṃsāra as it progressively moves towards higher spiritual states ultimately leading to the Transcendental Dimension of Freedom (Nibbāna).

ETHICS OF KAMMA

It has been mentioned that the ethics of kamma is expressed in terms of **Kammapatha** i.e., Kamma performed through the three doors of deed, word and thought. These are either wholesome (kusala) or unwholesome (akusala) actions, viz., to abstain from the acts of killing, stealing and adultery, constituting the threefold wholesome bodily actions (kāyakamma); to abstain from lying, tale-bearing, abusing and gossiping, constituting the four verbal actions vacīkamma); to abstain from covetousness, ill-will and wrong views, constituting the threefold mental actions (manokamma). To abstain from the evil also implies to perform the opposite good.

In terms of the psychology of kamma, it is to be noted that kamma is equated with citta-consciousness, to emphasize the underlying psychological import.

There are twelve akusala cittas, eight of which are rooted in greed (lobhamūlika), two in hatred (dosamūlika) and two in delusion (mohamūlika), all obtaining in the sphere of sense desire (kāmaloka).

Likewise, there are twenty-one kusala karmas or cittas, of which seventeen are mundane (lokīya) i.e., belonging to the three lokas or spheres of existence, and four are supramundane (lokuttara). The lokuttaras do not belong to any particular sphere as such, but are attainable from any of the three spheres. For, these are also Ñāṇas, Transcendental insights with Nibbāna as object.

Out of the seventeen lokiyas, eight are kāmāvacara (sense desire) kusalas, five are rūpāvacara, belonging to the sphere of subtle matter, and four are arūpāvacara, belonging to the immaterial sphere. Of the eight kāmāvacara kusalas, four are du-hetuka, i.e., rooted in alobha and adosa only, and the remaining

four, and the nine rūpa and arūpa kusalas, are tihetukas, i.e., rooted in all the three kusala-roots—alobha, adosa and amoha.

In terms of the ontology of kamma, dealing with bondage (bandhana) and liberation (Nibbāna), the akusalas keep beings fettered to the cycle of birth, death and repeated existence, like the silkworm which spins a cocoon only to bring its own bondage and death. Kusalas, per contra, purify beings, leading to the attainment of spiritual insight, and ultimately to liberation. Like pulling out a thorn by another thorn kusalas uproot mental defilements and thus help insight, ñāṇa, to bring about ultimate liberation.

Fourfold Analysis

The abhidhamma, which treats things from the stand-point of ultimate reality, gives a fourfold analysis of kamma distinguishing it in terms of:

- (1) Its functions (kiccavasena)
- (2) Its relative effectiveness i.e., the order in which or the strength and readiness with which, it takes effect (pākadānapariyāyena).
- (3) The time according to which it takes effect (pākakālavasena).
- (4) The place in which it works out its effect (pakaṭṭhānavasena).

This is a comprehensive classification which knits the subject into a perfectly integrated psycho-ethical system.

Functions

Functionally, kamma is fourfold viz.,

- i. Janaka kamma - Generative action.
- ii. Upatthambhaka kamma - Supportive action.
- iii. Upapīlaka kamma - Counteractive action.
- iv. Upaghātaka kamma - Destructive action.

The function of generative kamma is to generate 1. rebirth-consciousness (paṭisandhi viññāṇa, the first citta in a state of

existence, which links one state of existence to another), 2. the succeeding subconscious state - bhavaṅga or life-continuum, and 3. the five kinds of resultant sense-consciousness, viz., eye-consciousness, etc.

Supportive kamma supports all that has been produced by generative kamma and rebirth in a new state of existence. Shwe Zan Aung, in his article 'On the Forces of Character (Published in 'Buddhism' Rangoon) says-Generative (Janaka) kamma is 'like the mother that causes' and Supportive (upatthambhaka) kamma 'the nurse that nourishes'. If one is born wealthy it is due to Janaka kamma and if one continues to be wealthy, it is due to Upatthambhaka kamma.

Counteractive (Upapīlaka) kamma is that which weakens, obstructs, interrupts or retards fruition of the janaka kamma by counteracting the function of upatthambhaka kamma. Janaka kamma can be effective only when supported by upatthambhaka kamma. Therefore, if upapīlaka kamma intervenes, the total effect on the former two, can be, to a considerable extent, changed and attenuated. For instance, if there is a strong counteractive kusala kamma, then it may quite easily attenuate the evil effect of akusala upatthambhaka kamma, and thereby an akusala janaka kamma also. For example, a skilful dog who, by virtue of its special merit, has earned the privilege of being treated exceptionally well, attenuating thus much of the anguish and pain that generally befalls its kind.

Destructive kamma is much stronger than counteractive kamma. It can completely annihilate a supportive kamma of the opposite kind and further enforce its dire power. It is very strong kamma of superlative good or bad.

Thus, according to function, while the first (janaka) is always the passive side, the remaining three may be both passive and active, that is, these may operate either as a dormant kammic-force carried over from the past (kamma-samaṅgi), working

out the effects as suitable opportunities present themselves, or as active kamma of the present life. To put it more precisely:

- a) A passive state due to past kamma may be supported or strengthened, counteracted, destroyed or terminated, either by another passive state of the past life, or by an active state based on present kamma.
- b) An active state based on the present kamma may be strengthened, counteracted and terminated either by a passive state due to past kamma or by another active state based on present kamma.

Thus, the interactions of these kammic-forces upon life, viewed from the standpoint of saṃsāra, phenomenal existence, as a whole, are undoubtedly very complex in nature.

Relative Effectiveness

Kamma is again fourfold according to its relative effectiveness; viz.,

- i. Garuka kamma - Weighty action;
- ii. Āsanna kamma - Death-proximate action;
- iii. Ācinna kamma - Habitual action;
- iv. Kaṭattā kamma - Accumulated action.

Of these, the first three belong to the active side of the present life, and the fourth is the heritage of our former lives. It is the kammic-force held, as it were, in reserve, to be worked out whenever favourable opportunities are present.

- i. Weighty kamma is so-called because of the quickness and power with which it is effective. It may be both good or bad, and, in its functions, either generative or supportive, counteractive or destructive. Akusala garuka kammās are those superlative evil acts known as the five ānantarikas which produce immediate effect in hell. And the kusala garuka kammās are the jhānas (absorptions) and samāpattis (supernormal attainments) which are effective in the

kāmasugati bhūmi (happy states in the sphere of sense-desire, like those of human beings and kāmāvacara devas) and rūpāvacara and arūpāvacara sugati bhūmis.

- ii. Death-proximate or Āsanna kamma is the kamma of the last thought-moment before death which determines the course of next life; hence it is of great importance to Buddhists who, in order to fashion, so to say, a good future life, recall, to the dying person, all the good deeds he or she has performed during that life-time. It is the point, as it were, at which the kammabhava (Kammic force) gets translated into upapattibhava (Kamma-resultant in the form of rebirth). This type of kamma may also function in any of the four ways of the functional (i.e., Janaka, etc.) group depending upon the degree of its intensity.
- iii. Habitual or Ācinna kammās are the active kusala or akusala actions one habitually or repeatedly performs during the course of one's present life. It may produce results in the same lifetime or, in the absence of proper opportunities, fructify in the future existence.
- iv. Accumulated or kaṭattā kamma is a stock of latent kammic-forces awaiting suitable opportunities to bear fruit now or hereafter. This is a kind of reserve of potential good or evil inherited from every past life.

Time of Working Out Effect

Kamma is fourfold according to the time in which its results are worked out, viz.,

- i. Diṭṭhadhammavedanīya – Kamma bearing fruit during the present life time.
- ii. Upapajjavedanīya – Kamma bearing fruit in the next life.
- iii. Aparāpariyavedanīya – Kamma bearing fruit in later lives, and
- iv. Ahoṣikamma – kamma which has become ineffective or defunct.

In this classification the subject has been treated rather technically in terms of what is called the ‘Javanakhanas’—Moments of Impulsions, that is, thought-moments which carry the kamma-impulses. There are altogether seventeen thought-moments (khanas) required to complete a particular mental process (citta vīthi). Of these, one is functional (krīyā), nine resultants (vīpākas) and the remaining seven are ‘impulsions’ or active kammic moments (javanas).

Out of these seven impulsion-moments, javanakhanas, the first one bears fruit during the present lifetime (diṭṭhadhammavedanīya), the last one in the following birth (upapajjavedanīya), and those in between these two moments will bear fruit in later lives (aparāpariyavedanīya). If the first two kinds fail to be effective for being ‘spent-off’ or feeble in force or due to the opposition from counter-active or destructive kmmas, then these become ahosi kmmas i.e., ineffective or defunct, their potency having lapsed or expired. The aparāpariya kmmas will, however, be effective whenever and wherever suitable opportunities (upaṭṭhāna Samaṅgi) present themselves. Most of the kaṭattā (accumulated) kmmas are in this category.

Place of working out effects

Again kamma is fourfold, according to the place for working out it’s effects, viz.,

- i. Akusala kamma – Morally unwholesome actions are effective in the kāmāvacara duggati, states of woe, in the sphere of sense-desire.
- ii. Kamāvācara kusala kamma – Morally wholesome actions that are effective in the kāmāvacara sugati, happy states, in the sphere of sense-desire.
- iii. Rūpāvacara kusala kamma, Morally-wholesome actions that are effective in the sphere of Brahma gods of subtle matter.
- iv. Arūpāvacara kusala kamma - Morally wholesome actions that are effective in the immaterial sphere of Brahma gods.

The details of these have been already treated above. It may be noted that the lokuttara kusalas are not mentioned here. That is because the effects of the lokuttara cittas are not worked out in a place or sphere. Whereas the function of these fourfold Kmmas are productive in some sphere of existence, the function of the lokuttara kusalas is just the opposite; it is destructive, not productive of rebirth. That is to say, it destroys or uproots those factors and conditions which make wordly bondage possible in any sphere (of existence).

The Ten Meritorious Kmmas

The Abhidhammattha Sangaha gives a further set of ten kusala kmmas known as Puññakiriyavatthuni - bases for meritorious actions. These are :

1. **Dāna** - Acts of giving.
2. **Sīla** - Practice of moral precepts
3. **Bhāvanā** - Practice of meditation, mental culture.
4. **Apacāyanā** - To pay due reverences.
5. **Veyyavacca** - Service to parents, teachers etc.
6. **Pattidāna** - Sharing one’s merits with others.
7. **Pattānumodana** - Sharing the merit accruing from other’s good deeds.
8. **Dhammassavana** - Listening to Dhamma, Teachings of the Enlightened One.
9. **Dhammadesanā** - Preaching the Dhamma, propagating the Teachings of the Buddha.
10. **Diṭṭhujjukamma** - Developing right understanding and wisdom, literally, straightening of views.

Foundations of Kamma

As already mentioned, in Buddhism, the Law of Kamma, rests on three distinct foundations, viz., the psychological, the ethical and the metaphysical foundations. When a kusala or

akusala kamma is termed as kusala or akusala citta, it is the psychological aspect that is emphasized; and when it is called kusala or akusala kammapatha, it is the ethical side that is stressed. Likewise, while considering the Law of Kamma and rebirth, as a whole, in relation to the actualities of bondage and liberation, then obviously one treads on the ground of mataphysics.

There is a difference, however, between the two ethical terms, kamma and kammapatha. While kamma implies the above mentioned fourfold classifications, and also kusala or akusala in general, kammapatha is more specific. It means only the tenfold kamma, through deed, word and thought. These ten 'courses of action' are capable of producing paṭisandhi, relinking-consciousness. That means kammapathas are confined only to janaka kamma.

Dynamics of Rebirth

Now, having viewed the complex structure of the Law of Kamma, some questions remain to be clarified.

It is well-known that Buddhism does not postulate a permanent entity or substance called ātma or soul, which transmigrates from life to life without any change in its inherent nature. In the words of a Vedantin-the change of the physical form at death is like changing clothes as we do everyday, and the ātman remains constant like ourselves in spite of the change in clothes. The question is, if there is no such entity which reaps the fruit of actions, or which receives the fruit of actions, or again which receives the fruit of actions from the retributing authority, then what is it that passes from one life to another? Or to put it more objectively, how does this passing from existence to existence occur?

This brings us to an examination of the mechanism or process of rebirth. The Bactrian King Milinda had asked the same question to the Buddhist saint, the Venerable Nāgasena

about two thousand years ago. Here is a brief account of the dialogue:

Anatta - No-Self as reality, not as concept.

Milinda: “Venerable Sir, how can rebirth take place without the passing over of anything? Please illustrate this matter to me.”

Nāgasena: “If, O King, a man should light a lamp with the help of another lamp, in that case, does the light of one lamp pass over to the other lamp?”

M: “No, Venerable Sir.”

N: “Just so, O King, does rebirth take place without the transmigration of any self or soul.”

In the Visuddhi Magga too we find:

“Kammasa kāraṇa natthi,
Vipākassa ca vedako...”

“No doer of deed there is,
Nor one who reaps the result thereof...”

“Evam kamme vipāke ca,
Vattamāne sahetuke,
Bījarukkhādikānaṃ va,
Pubba koṭi na nāyati...”

“And while the deeds and their results,
Roll on and on, conditioned all,
There is no first beginning found,
Just as it is with seed and tree...”

“Na hi ettha devo brahmā vā,
Saṃsārassatthi kāraṇa,
Sudhadhammā pavattanti,
Hetu sambhāra paccayā ti.”

“No, God, no Brahmā, can be called,
The maker of this wheel of life,
Impersonal phenomena roll on,
Dependent on conditions all.”

Like a Wheel

The nature of kamma, as a psycho-ethical continuum, therefore, is to be understood as something which is dynamic, ever in flux. Birth and death are merely two points of this ever-changing process.

This dynamic continuity has been compared with that of a rolling wheel which, in its rotation, rests, at a given moment, only on a particular point. Our life is similarly supported by a succession of single thought-moments that are constantly changing. Further, just as, through this very rotation, the wheel maintains its balance, in the same way, the very rapidity of the mental-process keeps the continuity of our life with a firmness and stability that produces the illusory notion of a substance.

Three Phases

Every thought-moment consists of three points or phases; namely, arising-uppāda, continuity-ṭhiti, and ceasing-bhaṅga. And every time a particular thought-moment ceases, this very ‘ceasing’ becomes a condition for the arising of the next thought-moment. Just as, a wave arises whipped up by external forces, like wind, and then falls, and this ‘falling’ itself becomes the condition for the arising of a new wave, even so, is the mental-process, arising, continuing and ceasing, in succession, conditioned by proximity and contiguity (anantara and samanantara paccaya). Just as, it cannot be said that the first wave was transformed into the second wave, but that there was only a transmission of new volumes of energy that caused new successive waves, in the same way, whipped up by karmic-energy. Cittas, mental states arise and cease, each preceding one being only a ‘helper’ (paccaya) to the succeeding one.

So from birth to death, life is only a rapid succession of thought-moments. Therefore, in the ultimate sense, we are being born each moment, and we are dying each moment, as it were, as our thought-moments arise and cease. What we call ‘death’, ultimately, is only such a ‘cessation,’ a mere break-up of a particular psycho-physical combination, which we call a ‘being’, only to give rise to a new combination so long as there is karmic energy to replenish this process. Thus, endlessly the process of ‘breaking up’ and ‘recombining’ of nāmarūpa - mental and corporeal aggregation, goes on in saṃsāra.

The well-known translator of the Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha, —Shwe Zan Aung, says: “At the moment of Death, Kamma, as it were, takes a leap, a move, ‘per saltum’”, the kamma bhava or active kamma of the preceding life being changed or transformed into the upapatti bhava or passive kamma of the succeeding life.” (On the forces of Character. ‘Buddhist’ Rangoon).

Thus when the **maranāsanna** citta of one life ceases, the subsequent thought-moment, the paṭisandhi citta of the next life, arises, dependent upon the former, and in conformity with the psychological law, citta niyāma.

The physical change that takes place in this ‘change-over’ is not the concern, however, of this law, but of a different set of laws, where morality plays a dominant role. For instance, if a man dies and is reborn as a dog, the physical change thus effected is due to the moral or ethical character of the paṭisandhi.

In the ultimate sense, ‘time’ and ‘space’ do not exist. These are mere ‘concepts’-paññatti, mentally created intellectual expedients. Both the psychological process and the ethical principle have ultimate values and are entirely free from, and not governed by, the relative concepts of time and space. A person can visualize, within the same time-duration, objects he has seen only a few yards away, as well as in a place that

lies a few thousand miles away. This proves the relativity of time and space.

Thus, when a person dies in New York and is reborn in Bangalore, the question of distance and duration is immaterial. If the relinking consciousness (paṭisandhi) of the dying person at New York finds a suitable material basis (i.e., in keeping with its ethical nature), in Bangalore, the distance between these two widely separated places will not, in any way, matter because mind is not hindered by the relative factors of time and space. It is only when we allow relative concepts to encroach upon things that have ultimate values that confusion arises.

The Norm of Affinity

The physical change that takes place, at rebirth, is governed by the 'Norm of Karmic Affinity' (Kamma Sarikkhatā), which regulates, as it were, this change. A cruel man who indulges in killing, carries deep within himself a disposition (saṅkhāra), which shortens even his own life. And if this life-shortening disposition, at death-moment, becomes a condition for the arising of paṭisandhi, by way of any of the three mental objects, such as, kamma, kamma-nimitta or gatinimitta, then this very disposition, by virtue of 'affinity', will grasp the material basis in the mother's womb that is destined to be short-lived.

Likewise, a niggardly and envious man who carries deep within himself a tendency to grudge everything, will, attracted by 'affinity', (sarikkhatā) be born in poor and miserable circumstances wherein only such tendencies could find the proper expression. Again, if a man dies with a disposition, charged with anger and rage, the only suitable 'germ' or material base for him to grasp, would be in the womb of a wild and ferocious creature, say a tigress, in which state this tendency or disposition will find full expression.

Hence, it is the 'Norm of Affinity' (sarikkhatā), that regulates rebirth in conjunction with psychological and moral laws, all

synchronizing, in a co-ordinated occurrence, without the least being affected by any abiding entity, such as soul, self or atmā. The law of kamma and rebirth, enunciated by the Buddha, establishes thus a high moral order without the interference of a divine authority or the postulation of an ātman or soul-entity.

It has been said that the Norm of Affinity act as the regulator of rebirth. How does this law work? In the Abhidhammattha Sangaha, it is succinctly said that rebirth is determined by the immediately preceding mental process known as the death-proximate consciousness, maranāsanna citta.

A Stream

According to Buddhism, life is like a stream, *nadi soto viya*. Units of the mental process, comprising in consciousness and its concomitant mental factors, flow on and on, from the time one is born i.e., with the relinking-consciousness. And death passes on the karmic energies of the last mental unit to the first mental unit of the new life, which means it causes a renewal of the mental process in a changed 'vehicle' and environment. This metempsychosis, (changed mental process), is in reality, not much different from the changes that occur, from moment to moment, even while the flow of life continues.

To understand the mechanics of rebirth it is essential that one should have a clear grasp of how the mind works. Just as a line consists, in reality, of a series of dots, or the flame of a lamp is nothing but a series of combustions, even so, it is with the working of the mind, a series of mental processes or units (citta-vīthi). Preference is given to the term 'process' rather than 'state' to indicate the dynamic nature of the mind. No mental process, however, can arise without an object, ārammaṇā. These objects are the counterparts of the sense-organs-the 'doors' or 'bases' of consciousness. That is to say, a visible object is the counterpart of the eye-base, i.e. eye-door or eye-consciousness.

Similarly, sound, smell, taste, touch and idea or concept, respectively, of ear, nose, tongue, body and mind-base, door or consciousness.

Mental Objects at death (Kamma)

The last mental process, in a given life, i.e., the death-proximate consciousness, has as its object these three phenomena viz. Kamma, Kamma-nimitta and Gati-nimitta. Here, kamma means any of the four categories of actions, already mentioned in terms of relative effectiveness, (pākadāna pariyāyena), namely, the garuka (weighty), āsanna (death-proximate), ācinna (habitual), kaṭattā (accumulated) kammās. These four kammās could either be good or bad, committed by the dying man during his lifetime.

The weighty good kamma is the attainment of Meditative Absorption (jhāna) or the supernormal attainments (samāpatti); the weighty bad kamma is matricide, patricide, killing of a holy saint-Arahat, etc. The weighty kammās are so powerful and vivid to the mental eye of the dying person, that they elbow out all other types of action and become effective, thus determining the next mental process which is the relinking-consciousness in a new state of existence. One who has attained Absorption (jhānalabhi) is sure to find an access into the divine realm of the Brahmās, because the weighty kamma presented at the death-moment, determining rebirth, is equivalent to that of the consciousness of a Brahma God. Contrarily a man who has killed his mother, father or a saint, is sure to be reborn in hell because his murdering consciousness is comparable to that of the denizens of the hell. Thus, by virtue of the Norm of affinity (kamma sarikkha), rebirth is produced.

In the absence of a weighty kamma, āsanna kamma or the action which immediately precedes death, takes priority over others. It is a well-known practice among Buddhists that protective (Paritta) suttas are recited, so that the dying man is reminded

of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, and also of the various good and meritorious deeds he has performed, or he is advised to meditate, or to think of something that elevates his consciousness. This death-proximate (maranāsanna) kamma, when operative, determines rebirth according to its relative strength and effectiveness.

In the absence of an āsanna kamma, a habitual (ācinna) meritorious or demeritorious kamma takes precedence. The habitual kamma, i.e., action routinely committed in day to day life, arises as the mental object of the death-proximate consciousness and thus conditions rebirth according to its effectiveness.

When these three fail to register themselves as mental objects, the last one, accumulated (kaṭattā) i.e., actions stored through many lives, become operative, conditioning the next mental process, i.e., relinking-consciousness, according to its strength.

Kamma-Nimitta

This brings us to the second, that is to say, Kamma-Nimitta. Nimitta means a sign or a symbol, i.e., any agent, instrument, implement, belonging to, or associated with, one's Kamma, action. For instance, a man, given to destruction of life might see a knife or a gun as a kamma-nimitta. To a monk, a temple, an image of the Buddha, or a robe, may appear as the kamma-nimitta, determining his rebirth.

Gati-Nimitta

The third, gati-nimitta is the 'preview' symbol or sign that presages one's destiny, Gati. And the sign which indicates where one is going to be reborn, presents itself in the absence of the first two (kamma and kamma-nimitta), to the rebirth-producing death-proximate consciousness. For instance, the dying person might see hell fire or animals mating, darkness or a fearful forest, etc., indicating an unfortunate future in the duggati-

the four sub-human states of woe. Or, he might see a beautiful city, a human family or a celestial mansion, indicating a fortunate birth in the sugati, the human worlds and the realms of the gods.

It must be noted that if the indications of the future, are bad, they can be changed to conduce a better rebirth, by skillfully influencing the thoughts of the dying person. If the dying person is enabled to think in a good way, the janaka kamma, which has presaged itself by way of a gati-nimitta, can be overtaken, by this induced good thought, amounting to a good maraṇā-sanna kamma. This technique of kamma, supplanting a nimitta, is widely prevalent among Buddhists.

Rebirth is not Reincarnation

Having adumbrated the mechanics of the norm of affinity (sarikkha), determining rebirth, it is essential to point out that rebirth is not the same as reincarnation. Reincarnation presupposes an agent—a soul, atmā, self or ego, incarnating again and again, or migrating from one state to another, without being intrinsically effected despite the change brought about by transmigration. Rebirth, on the contrary, as already mentioned, brooks no such agency. It is part of a self-sustaining mechanism, known as **Samaṅgi Dhamma**, requiring no adventitious element – a soul etc., for its working.

Fourfold Samaṅgi

The dynamics of the Law of kamma has been set out by the Buddha by means of what is called the fourfold Samaṅgi dhamma as found in the Abhidhamma. Samaṅgi means something which one is endowed with, a potency, an intrinsic resource or power, that propels the life-flux. These are **Cetanā-Samaṅgi** (the volition-potency), **Kamma-Samaṅgi** (the kammic-force potency), **Upaṭṭhāna Samaṅgi** (the opportune moment potency), **Vipāka-Samaṅgi** (the Kamma-resultant-potency). The four samaṅgis constitute a circuit, as it were, to complete the Kamma-

formation cycle, commencing with volition and concluding with the resultant.

It is like a transmission circuit, which starts from the generation point, where electricity is produced, and ends in the consumers tapping point, a light, fan, motor, etc. In between, the energy travels along hundreds of miles of the transmission line and through many relay or distribution stations. It has been mentioned that kamma, strictly speaking, is volitional activity. Volition thus constitutes the core-element or the nucleus of the kammic process. It is with volition that one commits an action, in deed, word and thought. Like the generator which produces electricity, volition is the generator of kamma. Having set in motion, an action through volition until the result is accrued, kamma prevails as a potent force, i.e., as kammic energy, flowing along with the life-flux, awaiting for a suitable ‘opportunity’ or occasion for it to fructify.

Lighting of the bulb, working of the fan, etc., represent the end-result. Until this manifestation, the energy that is generated is transported through varied means. Similarly, the kammic energy, continues as a dormant power in the form of Kamma-Samaṅgi, until it is suitably manifested in the form of rebirth, or other life-situations, like health, ill-health, beauty, ugliness, prosperity, adversity etc., awaiting an opportunity or opportune moment-upaṭṭhāna samaṅgi, for it to fructify as the resultant-vipāka samaṅgi.

Opportune-moment

As to the time-factor connected with the manifestation of the fruits or results of kamma, it has been already dealt, in terms of the ‘Time for Working out Effects’. That is, kamma bearing fruit in the present life-time, in the next-life, in later lives or becoming ineffective. Upaṭṭhāna samaṅgi, the opportune moment, though an adventitious condition, plays a very crucial role in the entire scheme of the working out of kamma. Just

as the wire or the bulb or any other electrical accessories, help or provide suitable opportunity for the electrical energy to manifest, even so, upat̥hāna samaṅgis are certain occasions, or modes of life, that help the karmic energy to mature and produce result.

For instance, the Mahā Maṅgala Sutta, describes certain conditions bringing about in one's life 'great blessings', such as, the avoidance of wrong company, association with the wise, reverence for elders, etc., or residing in a suitable locality, being possessed with merits of past deeds, setting oneself on the virtuous path, etc. When one abides by these ennobling conditions, the meritorious kammic-energy finds the opportunity, to be matured, and bring forth the happy results thereof. Contrarily, if one is given to wrong company, is irreverent, lives in a notorious locality, is devoid of merits, and follows the unethical course, then all these modes become an opportunity for the demeritorious kammic-energy to fructify and produce unhappy results. This is how the kammic cycle, inherent in our lives, rotates and completes the circuit.

KAMMA AND MENTAL CULTURE

Kamma is the Law of moral causation, which governs the Universe. It is a 'norm of working out' a result, the use or misuse of which builds or breaks a civilisation. A motorcar engine fitted to a battle tank will kill a hundred men, but fitted to an ambulance will save a hundred men. The machine is neutral, what use is made of it, is a different matter. Even so is kamma. It is left to the wisdom and clear-sightedness of the person to make use of this moral law aright by conducting oneself in a positive way.

If kamma were to be the instrument of a blind force called fate or destiny, evolution or progress would be impossible and all effort at material, aesthetic, moral or spiritual development would be meaningless. While man does feel the burden of past

forces, he also has in his command the powerful weapon of will. With proper spiritual orientation, when this will is put in operation, it can create not only a new future but also enable him to bear the burden of the past valiantly and with grace. Blind urges do spring up in the mind generated by the actions of the past, like the sudden eruptions of old inactive volcanoes, but by assiduous following of a moral code of conduct, by culture of mind and by availing of the company and counsel of wise men, it is possible to curb these blind drives and even direct them to purposive ends.

An Insight into the working of kamma is a prerequisite for mental culture. Beings — a deva or god, a man, an animal, a ghost or a denizen of hell, all, come within this universal norm. And all life is mutually related by the inter-penetration of a law, the Law of Kamma. Therefore, if a person commits a good or bad volitional act, it affects others within this inter-related pattern of existence. This is the metaphysics of kamma which a person, not used to a total view of life, cannot easily understand.

If a man commits violence, he not only contaminates his mind but also that of others and the nature around him as well. As this contamination spreads, a violence-psychosis overtakes the entire society impacting against civilisation. This is the actuality of a larger working norm or pattern. If an illiterate ordinary Indian villager is asked why is there famine or other forms of natural calamity, he is likely to say that men's minds have degenerated, so nature has become harsh. This speaks of his native wisdom into the working of the law of kamma.

If a farmer sows a crop, not only does he reap the benefit thereof, but his family and many others too reap the benefit. Living in a world of inter-dependence, there is no question of reaping alone, though the fact remains that the farmer reaps what he has sown. But this reaping need not be of the same kind. For, cause and effect need not be exactly identical though

there may be similarity. The concatenation of conditions brought about by various karmas can radically change an effect. The Buddha has said: “If cause and effect were to be identical then Nibbāna, spiritual deliverance, is not possible.”

If a person has done a wrong kamma and he follows it up with the right one, he can certainly outbalance, or at least, attenuate the effect of the preceding wrong kamma, by performing the right kamma. The analogy of a machine is appropriate since it can be used either way. It has been said earlier that an auto engine can kill or save depending on the vehicle it runs. The machine is neutral; what use is made of it, kills or saves depends on the user. Even so, is kamma. It is a function, a law, which can be used either way, good or bad. It is left to the wisdom and clear-sightedness of the user to make use of this law in a positive way. Thus as one kamma can cancel another, there is no need for a fatalistic interpretation of kamma.

Some say that kamma theory fails if there is no provision for a forgiving agent, call it god, etc. It will be noted that when there is possibility of cancelling the effect of a bad kamma by introducing a good kamma, a Buddhist is ever imbued with hope and finds no need to construe a forgiving agency. He knows that just as a thorn plucks out another thorn, or a poison nullifies another poison, even so, a good kamma can always outbalance a bad kamma. Therefore, he does not find the need of creating a deity who will ‘take over’ his sins. He would on the contrary like to have someone above the range of the law of kamma, such as the Buddha, and the Arahats, to follow and make an end of kamma. Such conviction in the law of kamma when allowed to shine in one’s heart, it is then that the Culture of Mind becomes real and productive.

During a visit to a prison, while talking to a ‘Lifer’, the prisoner said in all faith, “After all, I was predestined to commit murder. It had to be done. I couldn’t help it. What could I do? I was helpless. It was my fate, prārabdha”.

If kamma were to be the instrument of a blind force called fate or destiny, evolution or progress would be impossible and all effort at material, aesthetic, moral or spiritual development would be meaningless. Why should anyone endeavour to achieve anything, if he or she is already destined to some pre-designed course of existence? These are extremely important questions.

Lives of innumerable great men in different fields of human endeavour have amply and eloquently proved that through the exercise of positive will and self-effort, man could create his own destiny, achieve a certain goal, overcome impediments or at least attenuate the effects of actions of the past. There would be no saints or sages walking on the face of the earth, enlivening and glorifying spiritual excellences, if fatalism were to be true. That a Buddha manifests on the earth, opening up a new horizon of worthwhile knowledge, belies the fallacious, fatalistic contention, as that of the prison-inmate.

Through human effort rooted in wisdom and compassion, there is nothing which man cannot achieve said the All-Enlightened Buddha. So long as the common man is fed with the false belief that a person is pre-destined to do something, that he is totally helpless and that he cannot exercise free-will to change the so-called pre-ordained propensities, so long there is no hope for him, or the society or nation composed of people like him to really achieve something worthwhile, or even live a decent life. Such persons are obsessed with dogmas, superstitious beliefs and rituals as also prepossessed with a fear for some unknown divine authority. Superstition and fear certainly, can never bring about anything meaningful.

There are two extremes, namely, belief in fatalism and belief in absolute free-will. The truth lies in between, in the Golden Mean. That is, it resides in the insight, not a belief, into the working of the Law of moral causation, kamma niyāma. Kamma takes into account the force coming from the past that cannot be totally exterminated. To that extent it is ordained in some

measure, though when wisely directed this (kammic effect) can be attenuated. This law of moral causation also fully recognises the power of the forces wrought by volition, the instant operational will. In the Middle Path approach of the Buddha this truth-bearing insight is cultivated, garnered and put in use resulting in clear-sighted knowledge and humanism.

Life is complex and no single rule can govern this complex machinery. While man does feel the burden of past forces, he also has in his command the powerful weapon of will. With proper spiritual orientation, when this will is put in operation, it cannot only create a new future, but enable him to bear the burden of the past valiantly and with grace. Blind urges do spring up in the mind generated by the actions of the past, like the sudden eruptions of old inactive volcanoes. But by assiduous practice of moral conduct, by culture of mind and by availing the company and counsel of wise men, it is possible to counter and curb these blind drives or compulsions, even direct them to purposive ends.

Unless the force that rotates the wheel and the force that acts as the brake to stop it, are perfectly co-ordinated, a vehicle can never work, the benefits of technology would elude mankind. Like-wise it is with the technology of the human personality. Unless the past karmic forces are not properly co-ordinated with the forces of the present karmas, the miracles which human life can fashion, will ever remain a dream. Since Kamma is a law and not a blind force, this co-ordination is not only possible but the only purposive aim of any serious cultural, moral or spiritual endeavour.

Kamma is not a punishment or visitation of divine displeasure, but a manifestation of principle. During visits to various hospitals, one comes across patients who lament, "Oh! my karma has befallen on me; this is God's punishment I am undergoing." It is this kind of misconstruction of the law of Kamma that forms the basis of various theological superstitious beliefs and practices.

In the first place, a particular experience, pleasant or unpleasant, does not constitute kamma, but the result of kamma. It is known as Vipāka, meaning 'ripening of kamma'. That is to say, the completion or culmination of a process. Kamma means volitional action (bodily, verbal or mental) which begins the karmic process. When the process 'ripens', it shows itself in the form of a certain experience, such as, a disease. This does not mean that all diseases are kamma-results. These two things, therefore, should never be confused, namely, kamma and vipāka or kamma-phala. They are at the two ends of the process.

Lord Buddha compared this process to a cycle. It has been termed as the 'Cycle of Volitional Action.' Here it is to be noted again that not all actions are karmas but only 'willed or volitional' actions are. This cycle has four stages, namely (1) Cetanā Samaṅgi: The volitional potency, (2) Kamma Samaṅgi: The dormant Karmic Potency, (3) Upaṭṭhāna Samaṅgi: The Opportune moment as supporting condition for the manifestation of this dormant force, and (4) Vipāka Samaṅgi, the ripening, or the concretisation of the Karmic-Potency.

The karmic process has also been compared to that of a tree. Seed is the mind which forms the basis of kamma; the sprouting of the seed is brought about by the initial volitional impulse which begins the process. The growth of the young shoot into a tree is analogous to the intrinsic formation of the dormant karmic force. The various external conditions like the seasonal factors, sunshine, water, fertiliser and so on constitute the supporting conditions. The flowering or fruition constitutes the manifestation or result of the kamma.

If these two very distinct factors, namely, kamma and vipāka, are rightly grasped, then the question of punishment will not arise at all. The idea of punishment is not only unnecessary but positively harmful. If a particular god were to be the dispenser of punishment, the kamma cannot be considered a law which means a self-sufficient principle.

Further when a situation like happiness or misery is constructed as the working or manifestation of a principle then there is always the possibility of making use of the same principle either for matching, or for nullifying or attenuating a particular situation or experience. That by positive action one can outbalance a negative action or the result of a negative action, is sufficient proof of this fact. It is only such discriminative insight that provides enough hope and vitality to fashion a new future. If kamma is accepted as a punishment then one is ever fettered by fear and helplessness which can never contribute to progress and enlightenment.

MORAL ACCOUNTABILITY

All inequalities in the world could be ultimately traced to human conduct. In the Cūla Kammavibhaṅga Sutta, Lord Buddha clearly enunciates the correlation between action and the results of action. For many inexplicable factors of life, scientists point out the cause to be in the sphere of genetics and heredity. There is the genetics and heredity of mind too, whence arise volition constituting the core-element of Kamma.

If, therefore, the mind can be set right through the practice of Sīla (moral precepts) and meditation, inequalities in the world would certainly be levelled up. In the name of humanism, demagogues often talk of equality, good standard of living and so on. What is more important is to improve the quality of life, rather than the so-called standard of life. And to do that all that is required is to purify ones actions leading to genuine equality and happiness.

‘What goes out of one, returns to one’ is a well-known Buddhist adage. That is to say, whatever volitional actions are committed, the consequences thereof, inevitably boomerang. Of course, this is not a fatalistic way of giving in to a given situation which cannot be changed or even attenuated. In fact, by skillfully designing a wholesome conduct, one can surely bring about modification.

A volitional action is a course leading to a destination. If one commits a base act signifying poverty of mind, the result would be rebirth in poor circumstances, undergoing the hardships of poverty. The course laid by the base act, when ripens, ends up in base circumstances. This is the dynamics of the law of kamma as enunciated by the Buddha.

This Sutta mentions the various inequalities evident in the world, such as, shortness of life or longevity, ill-health or good-health, ugliness or beauty, being powerless or powerful, being poor or wealthy, low-born or high-born, ignorant or wise, etc. Subha, the son of Todeyya, is perplexed, but the clarity with which the Buddha enunciates the cause, saying: “Young devotee, beings are owners of their action, heirs of their action, action is the womb whence they are born, action alone is their friend and action their refuge. It is the action that differentiates beings as inferior or superior”. This pithy saying renders an otherwise abstruse and confusing proposition into something that is practical and true indeed.

A COMPACT ANALYSIS OF THE LAW OF KAMMA

(Cūlakamma Vibhaṅga Sutta - M. 135)

1. “Thus have I heard. Once the Blessed One was staying at the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍka, in Jeta’s Grove, near Sāvatti. Now, Subha, a young man, the son of Todeya, went to where the Blessed One was; having approached, he greeted the Blessed One. And having respectfully greeted and exchanged courteous words, he sat down at one side. After sitting at one side, the young man Subha, son of Todeyya, spoke to the Blessed One thus:

2. “Revered Gotama, what is the cause, what is the reason, that among human beings some are found to be low and some to be high? Revered Gotama, it is found that there are human beings who are short-lived, and those that are long-lived; there are those who are sick and those who are healthy; there are those who are ugly and those who are beautiful; there are those who are powerless and those who are powerful; there are those who are poor and those who are wealthy; there are those who are low-born and those who are high-born; there are those who are ignorant and those who are wise. Revered Gotama, what is the cause, what is the reason, that among human beings, are found (the inequality) of the low and the high?”

3. “Young devotee, beings are owners of their action, heirs of their action, action is the womb whence they are born, action alone is their friend and action their refuge. It is the action that differentiates beings as inferior and superior”.

“I cannot fully understand the meaning of this saying which the Revered Gotama has declared briefly and without a detailed analysis. It would, indeed, be good, if the Revered Gotama

will so expound the Dhamma to me that I will be able to fully grasp the meaning of this saying which the Revered Gotama has declared briefly and without a detailed analysis.”

“In that case, young devotee, give ear and attend well in mind. I shall now expound.”

Saying “Very well, Sir,” the young man Subha, son of Toddeyya, replied to the Lord. And the Blessed One spoke thus:

4. “Here, young devotee, a certain woman or man destroys life, is predatory, with hands stained by blood, is given to killing and beating, and is devoid of compassion towards living beings.

By this action, committed and undertaken thus, on the breaking-up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell. If, on the breaking-up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell, but comes to be reborn as a human being, wherever it be, she/he becomes short-lived.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to shortness of life, namely, destroying life, being predatory, with hands stained by blood, being given to killing and beating, being devoid of mercy towards living beings”.

5. “But on the other hand, young devotee, here a certain woman or man, having given up destruction of life, refrains from killing, has laid down the cudgel and the weapon, is conscientious, is endowed with compassion, lives with a heart imbued with mercy, promotes the well-being of all beings.

By this action, performed and undertaken thus, on the breaking-up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world. If on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world, but comes to be reborn as a human being, wherever it be, she/he is long-lived.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to longevity, namely, giving up the destruction of life and refraining from killing, laying down the cudgel and the weapon, being conscientious and compassionate living with a heart imbued with mercy, promoting the well-being of all beings.

6. “Here, young man, a certain woman or man is in the habit of hurting living beings with hand, or a clod of earth, a stick or a weapon.

By this action, committed and undertaken thus, on the breaking-up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell. If, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell, and comes to be reborn as a human being, then wherever it be, she/he suffers acute ill-health.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to many illnesses, namely, being in the habit of hurting living beings with hand, or a clod of earth, a stick or a weapon.

7. “But, on the other hand, young devotee, here a certain woman or man, is not in the habit of hurting living beings with hand, or a clod of earth, a stick or a weapon.

By this action performed and undertaken thus, on the breaking-up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world. If, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world, and comes to be reborn as a human being, then wherever it be, she/he enjoys very good health.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to good health, namely, being not in the habit of hurting living beings with hand, or a clod of earth, a stick or a weapon.

8. “Here, young devotee, a certain woman or man, is by nature angry, given to aggression; at a mere remark, she/he takes offence,

gets enraged, is upset, resents, shows antipathy, hatred and displeasure.

By this action, committed and undertaken thus, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell. If, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell, and comes to be reborn as a human being, then wherever it be, she/he becomes ugly.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to ugliness, namely, being offensive, enraged, upset, resentful, and showing antipathy, hatred and displeasure.

9. “But, on the other hand, young devotee, here a certain woman or man, is not angry by nature, nor is given to aggression. Even when accused much, she/he does not take offence, does not get enraged, is not upset nor resents and shows no antipathy, hatred and displeasure.

By this action, performed and undertaken thus, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world. If on the breaking up of the body after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world, and comes to be reborn as a human being, then wherever it be, she/he becomes beautiful.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to beauty, namely, not being angry, not given to aggression, and even when accused much, she/he does not take offence, nor resents, shows no antipathy, hatred and displeasure.

10. “Here, young devotee, a certain woman or man harbours jealousy, she/he is envious and jealous towards others for the gain, honour, reverence, respect, homage and worship they receive.

By this action, committed and undertaken thus, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the

realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell. If, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell, and comes to be reborn as a human being, then, wherever it be, she/he becomes a non-entity.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to powerlessness, namely, to harbour jealousy, to be envious, vengeful and grudging towards others for the gain, honour, reverence, respect, homage and worship they receive.

11. “But, on the other hand, young devotee, a certain woman or man does not harbour jealousy, is not envious, vengeful or grudging towards others for the gain, honour, reverence, respect, homage and worship they receive.

By this action, performed and undertaken thus, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world. If on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world, and comes to be reborn as a human being, then, wherever it be, she/he becomes powerful.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to great power, namely, not to harbour jealousy, not to be envious, vengeful or grudging towards others for the gain, honour, reverence, respect, homage and worship they receive.

12. “Here, young devotee, a certain woman or man, does not give in charity to monks and holy men, such as food, drink, clothing, travel facility, garlands, perfumes, unguents, bedding, lodging, lighting materials.

By this action, committed and undertaken thus, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell. If, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen

state, in hell, and comes to be reborn as a human being, then, wherever it be she/he becomes poor.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to poverty, namely, not giving in charity to monks and holy men, such as food, drink, clothing, travel facility, garlands, perfumes, unguents, bedding, lodging and lighting materials.

13. “But on the other hand, young devotee, here a certain woman or man gives in charity to monks and holy men, such as, food, drink, clothing, travel facility, garlands, perfumes, unguents, bedding lodging, and lighting materials.

By this action, performed and undertaken thus, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world. If, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world, and comes to be reborn as a human being, then, wherever it be, she/he becomes wealthy.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to great wealth, namely, giving in charity to monks and holy men, such as, food, drink, clothing, travel facility, garlands, perfumes, unguents, bedding, lodging, and lighting materials.

14. “Here, young devotee, a certain woman or man is haughty and self-conceited, does not greet one worthy of greeting; does not rise up to receive one who is worthy to be so received, does not offer a seat to one worthy of offering a seat; does not make way for one worthy of making way for; does not honour one who is worthy of honour; does not revere one who is worthy of reverence, does not respect one who is worthy of respect; does not worship one who is worthy of worship.

By this action, committed and undertaken thus, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell. If, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not

reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell, and comes to be reborn as a human being then wherever it be, she/he is of low birth.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to birth in a low family, viz., being haughty and conceited, not greeting one worthy of greeting; not rising up to receive one who is worthy of being so received; not offering a seat to one who is worthy of being offered a seat; not making way for one who is worthy of making way for; not honouring one who is worthy of honour; not revering one who is worthy of reverence; not respecting one who is worthy of respect; not worshipping one who is worthy of worship.

15. “But on the other hand, young devotee, a certain woman or man is not haughty nor is self-conceited, greets one worthy of greeting; rises up to receive one who is worthy to be so received; offers a seat to one who is worthy of being offered a seat; makes way for one who is worthy of making way for; honouring one who is worthy of honour; revering one who is worthy of reverence; respecting one who is worthy of respect; worshipping one who is worthy of worship.

By this action, performed and undertaken thus, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world. If, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world, and comes to be reborn as a human being, then wherever it be, she/he is of high birth.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to birth in high family, viz., not being haughty, nor being self-conceited, greeting one who is worthy of greeting; rising up to receive one who is worthy to be so received; offering a seat to one who is worthy of offering a seat; making way for one who is worthy of making way for; honouring one who is worthy of honour; revering one who is worthy of reverence; respecting

one who is worthy of respect; worshipping one who is worthy of worship.

16. “Here, young devotee, a certain woman or man, approaching a monk or a holy man does not inquire: ‘Venerable Sir, what is good? What is evil? What is being blameworthy? What is being blameless? What should be practised? What should not be practised? What, when done, tends to my harm and suffering for a long time? On the other hand, what, when done, leads to my welfare and happiness for a long time?’

By this action, committed and undertaken thus, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn, in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell. If, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell, and comes to be reborn as a human being, then wherever it be, she/he becomes ignorant.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to ignorance, viz., not approaching a monk or a holy man to inquire: ‘Venerable Sir, what is good? What is evil? What is being blameworthy? What is being blameless? What should be practised? What should not be practised? What, when done, tends to my harm and suffering for a long time? On the other hand, what, when done, leads to my welfare and happiness for a long time?’

17. “But on the other hand, young devotee, here a certain woman or man, having approached a monk or a holy man inquires: ‘Venerable Sir, what is good? What is evil? What is being blameworthy? What is being blameless? What should be practised? What should not be practised? What, when done, tends to my harm and suffering for a long time? On the other hand, what, when done, leads to my welfare and happiness for a long time?’

By this action, performed and undertaken thus, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is reborn in the

realm of bliss, in the heavenly world. If, on the breaking up of the body, after death, she/he is not reborn in the realm of bliss, in the heavenly world and comes to be reborn as a human being, then wherever it be, she/he becomes very wise.

For, young devotee, this is the course leading to great wisdom, viz., having approached a monk or a holy man and making an enquiry, saying: ‘Venerable Sir, what is good? What is evil? What is being blameworthy? What is being blameless? What should be practised? What should not be practised? What, when done, tends to my harm and suffering for a long time? On the other hand, what, when done, leads to my welfare and happiness for a long time?’

18. “This, indeed, young devotee, is the course leading to shortness of life, bringing about short-life; the course leading to longevity, bringing about longevity; the course leading to ill-health, bringing about ill-health; the course leading to good health, bringing about good health; the course leading to ugliness, bringing about ugliness; the course leading to beauty, bringing about beauty; the course leading to powerlessness, bringing about the state of being a powerless, the course leading to great power bringing about the state of being powerful; the course leading to poverty, bringing about the state of being poor; the course leading to great wealth, bringing about the state of being wealthy; the course leading to low birth, bringing about the state of being low-born; the course leading to high birth, bringing about the state of being high-born; the course leading to ignorance, bringing about the state of being ignorant; the course leading to great wisdom, bringing about the state of being very wise.

19. “Young devotee, beings are owners of their action, heirs of their action, action is the womb whence they are born, action alone is the friend, and action their refuge; it is the action that differentiates beings as inferior or superior.”

20. When this Dhamma was taught, the young devotee Subha, son of Todeyya, exclaimed thus to the Blessed One: “Wonderful, Most Venerable Gotama! Indeed, wonderful, Most Venerable Gotama! Just as, Most Venerable Gotama, one might set upright that which is upside down, or lay bare that which is concealed, or show the way to one who has lost his way, or hold a lamp in the dark, so that those with vision might see things; even so, the Dhamma has been taught to me in many ways by the Most Venerable Gotama. Therefore, I go to the Most Venerable Gotama for refuge and to his Teachings and to his Holy Order of Monks. Deign, the Most Venerable Gotama accept me as a lay disciple who has taken refuge from this day onward till life’s end.”

The Haughty Niggard

Subha the young millionaire had refused to accept the fact that a man can be reborn as an animal, particularly when the man happened to be his own father, a learned and wealthy priest. It didn’t occur to Subha that rebirth has a logic of its own, a logic which wholly supersedes all empirical considerations. Whosoever harbours the nature of an animal must end up as an animal. The mechanics of rebirth only actualizes this rationale.

When the Buddha told him, “Young devotee, beings are owners of action, heirs of action, action is the womb whence they are born” and so on, he was only stating plain truth and not a dogma, he was not advocating fatalism either. Those who deny rebirth, because of their illogical or materialistic conditioning, unfortunately, have a congenital difficulty in grasping this truth. It was the sheer power of truth as revealed by the Buddha that compelled Subha to awaken to this truth.

The commentator’s narration of the story of Todeyya is indeed inspiring and insightful.

Here is the English version from the original Pāli of the story of Todeyya and how his rebirth as a dog was proved,

leading to the spiritual transformation of Todeyya's materialistic son, Subha.

“He was called Subha because he was handsome and very personable. The appellation Mānava, was given to him as a boy for his comely youthfulness, which he carried even when he was an old man.

Todeyya, the royal brahmin priest belonged to Tudi village, a flourishing extension of the city of Sāvatti. He derived his name Todeyya from being the village chieftain. He was extremely wealthy, possessing eighty-seven crores of money. Yet he was a terrible miser. He held the perverted belief that “for one who gives, there is no such thing as not becoming impoverished” and therefore never offered charity to anyone. It seems he promoted the cause of anti-charity by quoting such negative sayings:

“Observe how the eye-salve wastes away,
How the termites pile up their hill,
Again how the bee runs his house-hold.”

Though the Supremely Enlightened Buddha stayed for a long time in the monastery close to his home, never once did he offer so much as a ladleful of gruel or a spoon of rice. At the end he died blinded by an avarice for money and was reborn in his own household as a dog.

It so happened that Subha became extremely attached to this dog. He fed the dog with his own specially prepared food and got a special bed made for him. Now lifting him lovingly, he would place the dog on his bed.

One early morning, as the Lord projected his clairvoyant vision and scanned the universe, he observed the dog in the ‘Net of His Vision’, and became aware: “This Brahmin Todeyya, out of sheer greed for wealth, is now reborn as a dog in his own house. Today as I visit the house of Subha, seeing me, this dog will bark. Then I will have the occasion to tell the

dog something and he will understand “Oh the Monk Gotama knows me”. And then leaving me he will go and lie down on the ash-heap. Because of this encounter there will be a discussion between me and Subha. And after hearing the spiritual enunciation he will be finally established in the Refuge. The dog, however, will die and be reborn in hell.”

In this way the Lord foresaw the impending spiritual edification of Subha Mānava and his being established in the Refuges. After attending to his routine morning chores, now the Lord entered the Tudi village, all by himself. And when Subha left his house, he entered it on alms-round.

Seeing the Lord, the dog started barking, and came charging at the Blessed One. The Lord spoke to him: “Todeyya, formerly you referred to me in a supercilious manner out of your caste-arrogance. And now you are a dog! Again by barking at me so viciously you will only make a way for further fall”. Hearing this the dog understood: “This Monk Gotama, indeed, knows me!” Then seized with a sense of guilt, hanging his head down, he went away and lay down on the ash-heap behind the kitchen.

The servants failed to pull him out of this place and make him sleep on his bed. When Subha returned, seeing him in that condition, he demanded: “Who has removed him from the bed and put him here?” The servants replied: “No one has done it”. And thereafter they related the entire episode. After hearing, Subha said: “My father is reborn in the Brahma Loka. There is no dog by name Todeyya. The Monk Gotama is falsely making out my father to be a dog. Whatever comes to his mouth he blurts out”. Then angrily he rushed to the monastery to challenge the Lord. On reaching there, he accused the Buddha of falsification and for creating such an outrageous incident.

The Lord now recounted the incident in the proper perspective. Then in order to disabuse his mind of any lurking cynicism, he asked him: “Well, dear young devotee, is there any unaccounted

wealth which your father had left and not shown to you?” “Yes, O Gotama, there are several items left by him which are not shown to me - a gold chain costing a lakh, a slipper made of solid gold costing a lakh, a gold bowl costing a lakh and a lakh in cash.” “Well then, dear, go and feed the dog with milk-porridge unmixed with water then place him on his bed, and as he is about to fall asleep, lovingly ask him about these precious items. He will show all of them to you. Then you will know, ‘Undoubtedly he is my father!’”

Thinking, “If what he says turns out to be true, I will only gain wealth; if not, I will charge the Monk Gotama with falsehood”, the youth Subha felt inwardly satisfied on both counts. And going home, did exactly what he was told. Thinking “I am now found out”, the dog yelled out loudly, and then making a subdued sound of ‘ho ho’, he made a beeline for the spot where this unaccounted wealth was buried, and then started digging the earth with his paws and gave the clue to the hidden treasure trove.

Having got the treasure removed, the youth now was seized with the thought “How fantastic that such a subtle phenomenon like this subconscious thought-stream, buried deep in the dog’s psyche, completely unknown and unfathomable to the world, is known to the Monk Gotama! Undoubtedly he is the Omniscient One.” Thus, with devout faith in the Lord, he now formulated fourteen questions. As Subha happened to be a man skilled in the art of astrology and character-reading through the bodily marks, he said to himself: “Now while studying him, in keeping with my special knowledge, I shall put these questions of Dhamma to him”. Then he went to where the Lord was on a second visit. On being questioned, the Blessed One answered him, very succinctly, which he could not quite grasp. It was done so understandably to humble him and to free his mind from intellectual arrogance. As he became aware of his limitations, he became humble. The Lord then enunciated to him his Teachings on kamma in detail.

Now why did Todeyya became a dog? Because of his miserliness, it is said.

In Buddhist psychological treatises, envy and miserliness (issā, macchhariya) are clubbed together as forming the twin-quality of resentment (dosa-yuganaddha). While envy resents others for their success or enjoying their own things, miserliness resents others enjoying the miser’s things or their trying to find access into his realm of success and possession. Here the common factors are resentment and the objects thereof; i.e., other’s or one’s own success or property. And because of this difference in the cause, issā and macchhariya do not occur together in the same malevolent consciousness (dosa citta). They occur separately, because only one type of consciousness can function at a time. However, clubbing them together is for the purpose of analysis.

It is said, the dog is tremendously possessive, a quality that characterises the niggard. Because Todeyya was obsessively possessive and niggardly, he ended up as a dog. While this simple logic is perfectly clear even to the most unsophisticated peasant or worker in a Buddhist society, it is not often understood by the so-called intelligent persons whose minds are conditioned either by rebirth-denying theology or by materialistic cynicism. Todeyya was also very haughty and supercilious. So was the dog. The term watch-dog is only an euphemism for its extreme arrogance. The dog arrogates to itself the role of protecting its master and his properties, anyway.

What is cultivated as a thought at the human level, becomes an instinct at the animal level. Thus the moral of the story is, as the saying goes: “Evil befalls him who thinks evil.”

Stingy Hoarder

Sāvatti was the capital of the empire of Mahākosala. And like Bombay and other principal cities, Sāvatti also happened to be the financial and cultural metropolis of the time. On one

hand, there was the tremendous rat-race for amassing wealth, on the other, there was also a running piety. In essence, it was a city of worship and pursuit, of power, of the Mammon or the holy, something, through and through, very typical of modern life. While a large number of people, including the king, inspired by the presence of the Buddha, assiduously practised charity, cultivated the moral precepts and regularly meditated, there was also a coterie of millionaires who not only believed in anti-charity and permissiveness, but energetically promoted their materialistic belief in the manner of a religious belief.

Prominent names of members mentioned in the commentaries of this “Don’t give” club are those of the millionaires Todeyya, Ananda, Subha and Mūlasiri. These millionaires were invariably mean and ill-tempered, though they held the high office of a royal treasurer equivalent to a minister of our time.

An English rendering from the original Pāli of the story of Treasurer Ananda is presented here in support of the Buddha’s declaration in the Cūlakammavibhaṅga Sutta, namely, “Young devotee, beings are owners of action, heirs of action, action is the womb whence they are born” and so on.

Treasurer Ananda, to highlight his philosophy of life, had named his son Mūlasiri, Glory to Wealth. He even organised a regular fortnightly session in his house, in the same way the lay-devotees and monks observed the newmoon and fullmoon as days of retreat. On these retreat days the disciples and devotees of the Lord Buddha would spend the whole day giving charity, observing the moral precepts and practising meditation in an intensive way.

Contrarily, Ananda, would collect all his relatives and friends and subject them to brain-washing sessions with the intention of conditioning the minds of his hearers to the ideology of “Keep accumulating” and “Give not” your wealth. He was fond of quoting the examples of termites and bees, i.e. their feverish

and non-stop gathering-activities. He would burst into rhetoric explaining how even a thing so rarely and sparingly used like eye-salve made of lamp-black and oil (Kājal) also wastes away due to use. Therefore spending money, is criminal; instead he would say, one should only bother about receipts and deposits and never about payments.

In keeping with this ideology, he hoarded a tremendous lot of wealth in five different treasure troves and made sure that this hoard was not known even to his wife and son. The niggard that he was, it never occurred to him that he not only deprived himself but also a large number of people, of the benefit of his wealth. Never given to thinking wisely, and totally unprepared, he suddenly died one day, and under miserable circumstances.

Here is the commentarial account of Ananda’s skinflint sojourn on earth.

“It seems at Sāvatti there lived a millionaire, Ananda by name, worth forty crores of wealth, who was a terrible miser. Once every fortnight he would gather the members of his family and other relatives and exhort his son, Mūlasiri, three times a day, morning, noon and evening, saying “Don’t imagine that these forty crores of wealth constitute a great lot. The wealth one possesses, one should never give away: on the contrary one should always acquire anew. For, even if one lets slip his substance, coin by coin, he is bound to waste away. Therefore it has been said by the ancients:

“Observe how the eye-salve wastes away,
And how the termites pile up their hill,
Again how the bees gather the honey,
Even so, the wise man should run his household.”

Later without having shown to his son the five great treasure troves, prepossessed by the craze to hoard and utterly tainted by the stain of avarice, he died and was reborn in the womb

of a certain outcaste woman, belonging to a group of thousand out-caste families, in a village, adjacent to the gate of that very city.

Now, having heard of his death, the king sent for his son Mūlasiri and appointed him to the office of the royal treasurer.

Meanwhile, those thousand families of outcastes made their living by working together on hire. However, from the day of his conception, Ananda's parents lost their jobs and received no wages, thus couldn't even get a morsel of rice to sustain themselves. So, discussing among themselves, they said "Though we have been working, we don't get even a morsel of food; there must be a bringer of ill-luck amongst us". Thereafter they divided themselves into two investigating groups, and when the mother and father (of Ananda) were away, they concluded: "In this family only the bringer of ill-luck is born". Accordingly, they sent away the mother from the community. Thus, indeed, the once-powerful millionaire became the outcaste of the outcastes, all because of a perverted ideology and miserliness!

From the time Ananda was conceived, his mother was in great trouble even to procure food for sustenance. After giving birth to this son, she found that his hands, feet, ears, nose and mouth were not where they should have been. A monstrosity that he was, he was like a Dust-bin ghost looking exceedingly repulsive. Even then his mother did not abandon him, for the love of a mother for the child she has carried in her womb is, indeed, great. Bringing him up with great difficulty, whenever she went out for work carrying him, she never got work: but whenever she left him at home and went alone, she got her work. Now when he was old enough to beg, she placed a mud-pot in his hand and sent him away, saying, "Son, we have got into this great misery because of you; now I cannot support you anymore. In this city, meals are provided to the poor and the travellers. Go, beg for food and make a living!"

As he went from house to house, he came to the dwelling where he had lived as Treasurer Ananda. Suddenly he became aware of his past life. Then, seized with emotion, he entered his erstwhile house. No one noticed him as he went through the three inner courtyards. However, when he entered the fourth courtyard, the children of the Treasurer Mūlasiri, seeing him, got frightened and loudly cried out. Now the workers of the Treasurer gathered and shouted, "You monster, get out!" And after beating him, they pushed him out of the house, then threw him into a road-side refuse pit.

Now, as the Master was on his alms-round together with the Venerable Ananda as the attendant monk, he came to that very place and looked at the Elder (meaningfully). On the Elder entreating him to reveal the truth, He unfolded the entire storey. Thereupon the Elder sent for Mūlasiri. Meanwhile, a great crowd had assembled. Addressing Mūlasiri, the Master asked him. "Do you know the monster-child?" When he replied "I do not, Venerable Sir", the master said, "He is your father, Treasurer Ananda!" When Mūlasiri showed disinclination to believe, the Master addressed the monster-child, "Come, Ananda, point out to your son your five great treasure-troves!"

When the treasure-troves were duly pointed out, and the fact proved, Mūlasiri was compelled to believe. Thereafter, he sought the Master's refuge. And the Lord, elucidating the truth, proclaimed this verse:

"The fool is worried thinking
'I have sons, I have wealth';
Indeed, when he himself is not his own
Whence sons, whence wealth!" (Dhammapada 62)

At the conclusion of the discourse, it is said, that many of the hearers were spiritually transformed.

Why was Ananda reborn a human hobgoblin, a bringer of ill-luck? The cause is obvious. By harbouring a most perverse

mind and by spending a hobgoblin's life of utter meanness and avarice, he must necessarily end up in the most mean circumstances of an outcaste and thoroughly deformed monster-like existence. From the time he was born, he caused misery not only to himself, but to everyone in his family and community.

He had that destructive power which brought misfortune wherever he went. He was also endowed with the psychic faculty of remembering his past life, which is known as Kammaja Iddhi (psychic power born of kamma).

It is believed that the saints and sages, who are spiritually evolved, are normally endowed with the psychic faculty. From the two cases adduced already, it is clear that beings of a lower order too possess supernatural powers. Psychic powers are not necessarily expression of spirituality. They don't reflect a person's spiritual development. In fact, they can greatly mislead one, both oneself and others. Psychic exhibitionism, in the form of materialisation of objects, etc., that are flaunted about in the name of spirituality is therefore not to be mistaken as spirituality.

It was through the great compassion of the Buddha that both this monster-child as well as Mūlasiri were saved. After hearing the Lord's discourse on the evil of possessiveness, a large number of people who had already gathered, had been transformed. The problem of 'inequalities' in the world, particularly highlighted in the case of this monster-child, cannot be set right by any empirical programme towards the creation of an egalitarian society. They can be set right only by a moral and spiritual restructuring of life as taught by the Omniscient Buddha.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Vibhajjavāda

Analytical approach means the objective analysis and investigation of reality, otherwise called the path of discrimination–

Vibhajjavāda. Lord Buddha himself was called **Vibhajjavādī** – the Master of Analytical Wisdom, the Peerless Analyst of Truth, One gifted with perfect judgement and penetration. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Blessed One is called the 'Analyst Supreme of Truth' (Vibhajjavādinaṃ Aggo), since he is able to discriminate, with perfect judgement and penetration, the blameable to be blameable, the praiseworthy to be praiseworthy, etc. (A.X. 94).

Vibhajjavāda is the oldest and the most revered term by which the Teaching of the Buddha is referred to. Vibhajjavāda later came to be known as the 'Path of the Elders'–**Theravāda**. Much later, sectarians used a derogatory appellation known as Hīnayāna to vilify Theravāda. Some so-called Mahayanists and non-Buddhist scholars, ignorant of the Buddhist heritage, use this mischievous and abusive term.

The Dhamma of the Buddha is distinct only because of its analytical approach. It is not possible to identify Buddhadhamma by any of these terms, namely, 'religion', 'ethical system', 'scientific humanism', etc. While Buddhism may contain elements of all these systems of thought, yet it transcends all of them, only because of its unique approach to reality–the 'discriminating path'.

A Technique

In the **Mahā Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta**, (M 136) the application of Vibhajjavāda-technique is particularly frank. A certain sectarian propagandist approaches a young monk and tries to mislead him by his sophistry. The monk, though inexperienced, protests at the misinterpretation of the Dhamma. Potaliputta, the propagandist quotes the Buddha out of context by saying that Buddha taught that only mano kamma (mental action) is efficacious, capable of producing results, therefore genuine. Kāya kamma and vaci kamma (bodily and verbal actions) are ineffectual, therefore spurious.

Then he also cunningly involves the monk in a half-truth by eliciting from him a statement that amounts to a one-sided answer to a one-sided question. When the monk approaches the Buddha and reports to him about the discussion, the Master calmly and affectionately advises him to apply the technique of Vibhajjavāda—the ‘analytical approach to reality’. Undoubtedly mano kamma does play the dominant role, since mind is the well-spring for all actions, yet it is not the only efficacious action. The other two actions – in deed and word, too, are equally efficacious, in the sense that they are capable of all the four functions of a Kamma namely, generative, supportive, obstructive and destructive.

If kāya and vacī kammās are not efficacious, then there will be no need for structuring a viable and valid system of ethics. Sīla, which is the foundation of Buddhist life, is actually based on kāya and vacī kammās, mano kamma being always there. The ten kamma-pathas adumbrated in the sūta, are killing, stealing, sexual misconduct; lying, slandering, abusing, gossiping; covetousness, resentment and holding perverted views; of these the first three are kāya kammās, the last three are mano kammās, and the four in between are vacī kammās. The ten kammās are called Kamma-pathas because they are so potent that they bring about rebirth. Hence, the term — janaka kamma—reproductive or generative action.

Design ‘future’

Vibhajjavāda signifies a greater penetration into the implications of the three kammās, as is evident from the Buddha’s remark that the young monk should have given discriminative reply which ‘required an analytical presentation’. The question was, when one commits a volitional action in deed, word and thought, what does one experience, to which the monk naively replied and in a one-sided manner; ‘when one commits a volitional action, one experiences suffering’.

The analytical presentation would have been, ‘when one commits a volitional action in deed, word and thought, one feels happy with reference to such actions that are productive of happiness in future. Similarly, an action which is productive of misery or neither happiness nor misery (neutral condition), in future. That is, the feeling that co-exists with the action, is an indicator of the consequence of the action. For instance, if a man is destined to enjoy a happy rebirth consequent on a certain action, then this happiness will be reflected while committing the action itself.

In other words, since the present presages the future, by applying the technique of Vibhajjavāda, one can so design one’s present conduct that a happy and elevating future will be assured. Whatever is past is vanished, gone; and nothing can be done about it. Whatever has not yet come, the future, has not yet come and no one can foresee it, therefore it is futile to worry about it. The present is always there; in fact, it is the only tangible reality, something on which one can have a hold. Therefore, if the present is shaped aright, a happy destiny is already shaped.

Sevenfold Relations

In this sūta, Lord Buddha also enunciated four types of individuals and four types of kammās. Through vibhajjavāda, it is made clear that an individual is nothing but what his action is. Ultimately, an individual can be reduced to action. Therefore, if action is taken care of, the individual’s interest and future well-being is doubtlessly ensured. The approach to reality, vis-a-vis individual and action, would mean, in simple words, ‘conduct is destiny’. A very interesting and instructive aspect of the sūta is how psychic power can be a most misleading acquisition, unless one, endowed with such a power, is fully oriented in the analytical approach to reality.

1. Mystic ‘A’, through his clairvoyant vision, sees an individual committing all sorts of evil, and later, he also perceives that

the individual is reborn, after death, in an unhappy state; by connecting the misconduct with the miserable destiny, he immediately assumes: “There is a thing called evil action and its miserable consequence. Whoso, therefore, does anything bad must perforce be reborn in a state of misery? Those who know thus, alone know rightly. Only this is true; all else is if false, because he himself has seen it thus”.

2. Mystic ‘B’, clairvoyantly sees an individual who, after committing a lot of evil, is reborn in a happy state; by connecting the misconduct with the happy destiny, he assumes: “There is no evil action, nor the consequence of evil conduct; whoso, therefore, commits evil, is reborn in a happy state. Those who know thus, alone know rightly. Only this is true, all else is false, because he himself has seen it thus”.

3. Mystic ‘C’ clairvoyantly sees an individual who, after refraining from evil and after doing a lot of good, is reborn in a happy state; by connecting the good conduct with the good destiny, he assumes: “Indeed, there is a thing called action and the consequence thereof; whoso, therefore, does good, is bound to be reborn in a happy state; those who know thus, know rightly etc.”.

Mystic ‘d’ clairvoyantly sees an individual who, after doing good, is reborn in an unhappy state; by connecting the good conduct with the miserable destiny, he comes to the conclusion: ‘There is no such thing as good action nor the consequence thereof; whoso, therefore, does good, must perforce be reborn in a state of misery, etc.’

A mystic, who through a tremendous ethical and mental discipline acquires the psychic power of clairvoyance, is not a man who is likely to be given to falsehood or wickedness; moreover, clairvoyance itself need not be a hallucinatory experience. It can be and often is quite genuine, in the sense that it records an actuality. Yet, since the mystics failed to apply the Vibhajjavāda-technique, they only saw one possibility in

the cause-consequence nexus. Through his analytical approach, Lord Buddha detected four distinct possibilities (i.e., causes, otherwise called kammarāsi, action-aggregation) where the mystics saw only a single possibility of kammarāsi. Likewise, the Buddha saw three consequence-possibilities of a single or given kamma-aggregation, where the mystics saw only one consequence-possibility. Thus when Vibhajjavāda detected a seven-fold cause-consequence relations, the mystics could assume only an absolute or a single-track cause-effect relationship. This means a great deal of distortion of the actualities.

Individual and action

Having thus analysed, the Buddha then connected the relationship between the four types of individuals and the four types of action-patterns. 1. An unworthy action, he said, which cancels another unworthy action by its higher potency and induces a rebirth, amounts to the individual envisioned by Mystic ‘A’; his unhappy destiny, however, is the consequence, not of the action as seen by the Mystic, but of an action prior to or after the Mystic’s vision, or the action he performed at the death-proximate moment. With reference to the action seen by the Mystic, the consequence thereof could be experienced in that very life, or in the next, or in any other life thereafter.

2. The second kamma-pattern, that is, an unworthy action overtaking a worthy action corresponds to the individual envisioned by Mystic ‘B’. Though he was seen doing good at a given moment, an evil action prior to or after the vision, or the one that conditioned the death-proximate consciousness, brought about the unhappy destiny. Thus, the apparent contradiction between the conduct and consequence, is only due to the Mystic’s own misconception of the relationship.

3. The third kamma-pattern, a worthy action overtaking another worthy action and itself effecting a consequence, corresponds to the Mystic ‘C’s individual.

4. The fourth, worthy action cancelling an unworthy action, corresponds to the individual seen by Mystic 'D'.

In this Sutta, Lord Buddha clearly proved the indisputable effectiveness of Vibhajjavāda. And this contrasts with the method applied in the previous Sutta, Cūlakammavibhaṅga Sutta, where the model of the exposition is more popular and syllogistic, showing the moral accountability of conduct.

THE GREAT ANALYSIS OF THE LAW OF KAMMA

Maha Kammavibhaṅga Sutta M. 136

Thus have I heard:

Once the Blessed One was staying at the squirrels' feeding place in the Bamboo Grove, in the vicinity of Rājagaha. At that time the Venerable Samiddhi was staying in a forest hut. Now the Wandering Ascetic Potaliputta, while on a stroll, leisurely going about places, went where the Venerable Samiddhi was. Having approached, he exchanged greetings with Venerable Samiddhi. And after greeting and exchanging words of courtesy, he sat down on one side. After sitting on one side, the Wandering Ascetic Potaliputta spoke thus to the Venerable Samiddhi.

Misrepresentation

“Revered Samiddhi, it is from the Recluse Gotama's own mouth I have heard, from his own mouth I have learnt that “An action in deed is inefficacious, an action in speech is inefficacious, only an action in thought is efficacious” and that “There is that supramundane attainment, realising which one experiences nothing.”

“Friend Potaliputta! do not speak thus; Friend Potaliputta! Do not speak thus. Do not misconstrue the Blessed One. Indeed, misconstruing the Lord is never good. Surely, the Lord would never speak thus: “An action in deed is inefficacious, an action in speech is inefficacious, only an action in thought is

efficacious”, and that “There is a supramundane attainment, realising which one experiences nothing”.

“Revered Samiddhi, how long have you been a monk?”

“Not long, friend, three years.”

“Why then should we mention about monks who are Elders, when even a newly ordained monk thinks that the Teacher should be defended! Well, Revered Samiddhi, when one commits a volitional action in deed, word and thought, what does one experience?”

“Friend Potaliputta, when one commits a volitional action (in deed, word and thought), one experiences suffering.”

The Wandering Ascetic Potaliputta neither agreed to nor disagreed with what the Venerable Samiddhi had said. Then rising from his seat, without agreeing or disagreeing, he just left.

Soon after the Wandering Ascetic Potaliputta had departed, the Venerable Samiddhi went where the Venerable Ānanda was; having approached, he exchanged greetings with the Venerable Ānanda; and after greeting and exchanging words of courtesy, he sat down on one side; after sitting on one side, the Venerable Samiddhi related to the Venerable Ānanda all the discussion that took place with the Wandering Ascetic Potaliputta.

Ānanda's Initiative

When this had been said, the Venerable Ānanda spoke thus to the Venerable Samiddhi:

“Venerable Samiddhi, in this discussion, there is a subject matter that calls for our paying homage to the Blessed One. Come Venerable Samiddhi, we shall go where the Lord is, and having approached we shall report this matter to the Lord. In whatever way the Lord explains we shall accept the same accordingly.”

Saying, “Yes, Venerable Sir”, the Venerable Samiddhi replied in assent to the Venerable Ānanda.

Then the Venerable Ānanda and the Venerable Samiddhi went where the Blessed One was; having approached, they worshipped the Blessed One, and sat down respectfully on one side; and sitting down respectfully on one side, the Venerable Ānanda placed before the Blessed One all the discussions that took place between the Venerable Samiddhi and the Wandering Ascetic Potaliputta.

When this was said, the Lord spoke thus to the Venerable Ānanda:

“But, Ānanda I don’t recall even the sight of the Wandering Ascetic Potaliputta. Where then is the question of this discussion (between him and me)? And Ānanda, the one-sided question of the wandering ascetic Potaliputta, which required an analytical presentation, has now been answered in this one-sided way by this foolish Samiddhi.”

When this was said the Venerable Udāyi spoke thus to the Lord:

“Could it be, Most Venerable Sir, what has been said by the Venerable Samiddhi is meant to express that whatever is experienced all that is included in suffering”.

Then the Lord addressed the Venerable Ānanda:

“Now do you see, Ānanda, this foolish Udāyi’s misconception? I knew, Ānanda, that now this foolish Udāyi’s unwise meddling, will muddle further.

Feelings and Actions

“Ānanda, even at the beginning, the three feelings were inquired into by the wandering ascetic Potaliputta. Ānanda, when questioned thus by the wandering ascetic Potaliputta, this foolish Samiddhi should have answered in this manner: ‘Friend Potaliputta, he experiences a pleasurable feeling while committing a volitional

action in deed, word and thought, which is productive of happiness (in future). Friend Potaliputta, he experiences a painful feeling while committing a volitional action in deed, word and thought, which is productive of unhappiness (in future). Friend Potaliputta, he experiences neither a pleasurable nor a painful feeling while committing a volitional action in deed, word and thought, which is productive of neither happiness nor unhappiness (in future)’.

Explaining thus, Ānanda, the foolish Samiddhi would have given the wandering ascetic Potaliputta the right explanation. Moreover, Ānanda, there are those foolish and unwise sectarian wandering ascetics. Pray, who among them will understand the Truth-Finder’s Great Analysis of Action?

Ānanda, perhaps you would like to listen to the Truth-finder elucidating the Great Analysis of Action?”

“This, indeed, is the time, O Lord! This, indeed is the time, O Exalted One! When the Blessed One might dilate on the Great Analysis of Action. And having heard from the Lord the monks will retain it.”

“In that case, Ānanda, listen and keep it well in mind; I will now expound.”

“Yes, Most Venerable Sir,” replied Venerable Ānanda to the Lord.

And the Lord spoke thus:

Four Individuals

“Ānanda, there are these four (types of) individuals in the world. Which four?

1. “Here, Ānanda, is a certain individual, who kills, steals and commits sexual misconduct; who tells lies, slanders, abuses, and gossips; who is covetous, resentful, and holds perverted views. On the breaking up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, even in hell.

2. “Here, Ānanda, is a certain individual who kills, steals and commits sexual misconduct; who tells lies, slanders, abuses and gossips; who is covetous, resentful and holds perverted views. On the breaking up to the body, after death, he is reborn in the happy realm, or in the heavenly world.

3. “Here, Ānanda, is a certain individual who refrains from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct, from telling lies, from slandering, abusing and gossiping, who is not covetous, not resentful and is one with right understanding. On the breaking up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the happy realm, or in the heavenly world.

4. “Here, Ānanda, is a certain individual who refrains from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; from telling lies, from slandering, abusing and gossiping; who is not covetous, not resentful and is one with right understanding. On the breaking up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, even in hell.

Misleading Clairvoyance

1. “Here, Ānanda, a certain monk or seer, because of his zeal, striving, persistence, diligence, and right mental application, attains to ecstatic meditative absorption. So that, while the mind is so absorbed, he sees with the purified divine vision, surpassing that of the human being, a certain individual here, who had killed, stolen and committed sexual misconduct; had told lies, slandered, abused and gossiped; had been covetous, and resentful, had held perverted views; and who, he sees, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell.”

He then said: “Indeed, there is a thing called ‘evil action’, and there is the consequence of evil conduct. For, the individual I saw here, who had killed, stolen and committed sexual misconduct; had told lies, slandered, abused and gossiped; had been covetous, and resentful, had held perverted views, and

who, I see, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, even in hell.”

So he opines: “Indeed, whoso kills, steals and commits sexual misconduct; tells lies, slanders, abuses and gossips; who is covetous, resentful and holds perverted views; every such individual, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, even in hell. Those who know thus, they alone know rightly, and those who know otherwise, they indeed, know wrongly.”

In this way, he obstinately clings and adheres to the dogmatic view: “This indeed is the truth, all else is false”, because by himself he had known it thus, by himself he had seen it thus, and by himself he had envisioned it thus.

2. “Here, Ānanda, a certain monk or seer, because of his zeal, striving, persistence, diligence and right mental application, attains to ecstatic meditative absorption. So that, while the mind is so absorbed, he sees with the purified divine vision, surpassing that of the human being, a certain individual, here, who had killed, stolen and committed sexual misconduct; told lies, slandered, abused and gossiped; had been covetous, and resentful, had held perverted views; and who, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the happy realm, in the heavenly world.”

He then said: “Indeed, there is no such thing as ‘evil action’, nor is there the consequence of evil conduct. For, the individual I saw here, who had killed, stolen and committed sexual misconduct; told lies, slandered, abused and gossiped, had been covetous, and resentful, held perverted views and who, I see, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the happy realm, in the heavenly world.”

So he opines: “Indeed, whoso kills, steals and commits sexual misconduct; tells lies, slanders, abuses and gossips; who is

covetous, resentful and holds perverted views; every such individual, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the happy realm, in the heavenly world. Those who know thus, they alone know rightly, and those who know otherwise, they indeed, know wrongly’.

In this way, he obstinately clings and adheres to the dogmatic view: “This indeed is the truth, all else if false’, because by himself he had known it thus, by himself he had seen it thus and by himself he had envisioned it thus.

3. “Here, Ānanda, certain monk or seer, because of his zeal, striving, persistence, diligence and right mental application, attains to ecstatic meditative absorption. So that, while the mind is so absorbed, he sees with the purified divine vision, surpassing that of the human being, a certain individual, here, who refrained from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; from telling lies, slandering, abusing and gossiping; who was not covetous, not resentful and was one with right understanding; and who, he sees, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the happy realm, in the heavenly world.

He then said: “Indeed, there is a thing called ‘good action’, and there is the consequence of good conduct. For, the individual I saw here, who refrained from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; from telling lies, slandering, abusing and gossiping; who was not covetous, not resentful and was one with right understanding; and who, on the breaking up of the body, after death, I saw, was reborn in the happy realm, in the heavenly world.”

So he opines: “Indeed whoso refrains from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; from telling lies, slandering, abusing and gossiping; who is not covetous, not resentful and is one with right understanding, every such individual, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the happy realm in the heavenly world. Those who know thus, they alone know

rightly, and those who know otherwise, they indeed know wrongly.”

In this way, he obstinately clings and adheres to the dogmatic view: ‘This indeed is the truth, all else is false’, because by himself he had known it thus, by himself he had seen it thus, and by himself he had envisioned it thus.

4. “And here, Ānanda, a certain monk or seer, because of his zeal, striving, persistence, diligence, right mental application, attains to ecstatic meditative absorption. So that, while the mind is so absorbed, he saw with the purified divine vision, surpassing that of the human being, a certain individual here, who refrained from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; from telling lies, slandering, abusing and gossiping; who was not covetous, not resentful, and was one with right understanding; and who, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell.’

He then said: ‘There is no such thing as ‘good action’, nor is there the consequence of good conduct. For, the individual I saw, here, who refrained from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; from telling lies, slandering, abusing and gossiping; who was not covetous, not resentful and who was one with right understanding; and who, on the breaking up of the body, after death, I saw, is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell.’

So he opines: ‘Indeed, whoso refrains from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; from telling lies, slandering, abusing and gossiping; who is not covetous, not resentful and who is one with right understanding, every such individual, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell. Those who know thus, they alone know rightly, and those who know otherwise, they indeed know wrongly.’

In this way, he obstinately clings and adheres to the dogmatic view: ‘This indeed is the truth, all else is false,’ because by himself he had known it thus, by himself he had seen it thus, by himself he had envisioned it thus.

Analysis of the Assumptions

1. “There, Ānanda, whatever monk or seer says: ‘There is indeed, a thing called ‘evil action’, and there is the consequence of evil conduct’, there I concur with him. And when he says: ‘The individual I saw here, who had killed, stolen and committed sexual misconduct; told lies, slandered, abused and gossiped; was covetous, resentful and held perverted views; and who, I saw, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell’; there I concur with him.

But when he opines: ‘Indeed, whoso kills, steals and commits sexual misconduct; tells lies, slanders, abuses and gossips; is covetous, resentful and holds perverted views; every such individual, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell; there I do not concur with him.

Further, when he says; ‘Those who know thus, they alone know rightly, and those who know otherwise, they indeed, know wrongly; there I do not concur with him. And regarding his obstinate clinging and adherence to the dogmatic view: ‘This indeed is true, all else is false’, because (as he says) by himself he had known it thus, by himself he had seen it thus, and by himself he had envisioned it thus; here, too, I do not concur with him.

And why? Ānanda, indeed, the Truth-Finder’s Discernment of the Great Analysis of Action is all-embracing (hence) wholly distinctive.

2. “There, Ānanda, whatever monk or seer says, ‘There is, indeed, no such thing as ‘evil action’, nor is there the consequence

of evil conduct’; there I do not concur with him. And when he says: “The individual I saw here who had killed, stolen and committed sexual misconduct; told lies, slandered, abused and gossiped; was covetous, resentful and held perverted views; and who, I saw, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the happy realm in the heavenly world’; - there I concur with him.

But when he opines: “Indeed, whoso kills, steals and commits sexual misconduct; tells lies, slanders, abuses and gossips, who is covetous, resentful and holds perverted views; every such individual, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the happy realm, in the heavenly world”; - there I do not concur with him.

Further when he says: “Those who know thus, they alone know rightly, and those who know otherwise, they indeed, know wrongly”; - there I do not concur with him. And regarding his obstinate clinging and adherence to the dogmatic view: “This indeed is the truth, all else is false”, because (as he says) by himself he had known it thus, by himself he had seen it thus, by himself he had envisioned it thus; - there, too, I do not concur with him.

And why? Ānanda, indeed, the Truth-Finder’s Discernment of the Great Analysis of Action is all-embracing (hence) wholly distinctive.

3. “There, Ānanda, whatever monk or seer says ‘there is, indeed, a thing called ‘good action’, and there is the consequence of good action’; there I concur with him. And when he says: ‘The individual I saw here, who had refrained from killing, stealing and committing sexual misconduct; from telling lies, slandering abusing and gossiping; who was not covetous, not resentful, and was one with right understanding; and who, I saw on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the happy realm in the heavenly world’; there I concur with him.

But when he opines: 'Indeed, whoso refrains from killing, stealing, and committing sexual misconduct, from telling lies, slandering, abusing and gossiping; who is not covetous, who is not resentful, and who is one with right understanding, every such individual, on the breaking up of the body after death, is reborn in the happy realm, in the heavenly world, there I do not concur with him.

Further when he says: 'Those who know thus, they alone know rightly, and those who know otherwise, they, indeed, know wrongly; there I do not concur with him. And regarding his obstinate clinging and adherence to the dogmatic view: 'This indeed is the truth, all else is false', because (as he says) by himself he had known it thus, by himself he had seen it thus, and by himself he had envisioned it thus; there, too, I do not concur with him.

And why? Ānanda, indeed, the Truth-Finder's Discernment of The Great Analysis of Action is all-embracing (hence) wholly distinctive.

4. "There, Ānanda, whatever monk or seer says: 'There is, indeed, no such thing as 'good action', nor is there the consequence of good conduct'; there I do not concur with him. And when he says: 'The individual I saw here, who had refrained from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; from telling lies, slandering, abusing and gossiping; who was not covetous, not resentful and was one with right understanding; and who, I saw, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn, in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell'-there I concur with him.

But when he opines: 'Indeed whoso refrains from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct, from telling lies, slandering, abusing and gossiping, who is not covetous, not resentful and is one with right understanding' every such individual, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the realm

of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell-there I do not concur with him.

Further when he says: "Those who know thus, they alone know rightly and those who know otherwise, they, indeed know wrongly,'- there I do not concur with him. And regarding his obstinate clinging and adherence to the dogmatic view: 'This indeed is the truth, all else is false', because (as he says) by himself he had known it thus, by himself he had seen it thus, and by himself he had envisioned it thus; there too, I do not concur with him.

And why? Ānanda, indeed, the Truth-Finder's discernment of the Great Analysis of Action is all-embracing (hence) wholly distinctive.

Action and Consequences

1. "Now, Ānanda, a certain individual, who here, had killed, stolen, and committed sexual misconduct; told lies, slandered, abused and gossiped; was covetous, resentful and held perverted views; and who, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell.

Either that evil action, (later) experienced as misery, was committed by him before (the clairvoyant vision), or the evil action, (later) experienced as misery, was committed by him after (the clairvoyant vision), or, at the time of death, a perverted view had actuated and seized him (i.e., his death-proximate consciousness). Because of this, on the breaking up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell.

And with reference to his present killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; lying, slandering, abusing and gossiping; covetousness, resentment and perverted view, he experiences the consequence thereof even here and now, or in the next life, or in any other life thereafter.

2. “Now, Ānanda, a certain individual, who here, had killed, stolen, and committed sexual misconduct; told lies, slandered, abused and gossiped; was covetous, resentful and held perverted views; and who on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the happy realm, in the heavenly world.

Either that good action, (later) experienced as happiness, was committed by him before or the good action, (later) experienced as happiness, was committed by him after (the clairvoyant vision), or, at the time of death, right understanding actuated and influenced him (i.e., his death-proximate consciousness). Because of this, on the breaking up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the happy realm, in the heavenly world.

And with reference to his present action of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; lying, slandered, abusing, and gossiping, his covetousness, resentment, and perverted view, he experiences the consequence thereof even here and now, or in the next life, or in any other life thereafter.

3. “Now, Ānanda, here, a certain individual, had refrained from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; from telling lies, slandered, abusing, and gossiping; was not covetous, not resentful and was one with right understanding; and who, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the happy realm in the heavenly world.

Either that good action, (later) experienced as happiness, was committed by him before (the clairvoyant vision), or, the good action, (later) experienced as happiness, was committed by him after (the clairvoyant vision), or at the time of death, right understanding actuated and influenced him. Because of this, on the breaking up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the happy realm, in the heavenly world.

And with reference to his present action of refraining from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct, from telling lies,

slandering, abusing and gossiping; his non-covetousness, non-resentment, and being one with right understanding, he experiences the consequence thereof even here and now, or in the next life, or in any other life thereafter.

4. “Now, Ānanda, here a certain individual, had refrained from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; from telling lies, slandered, abusing, and gossiping; was not covetous, not resentful and was one with right understanding and who, on the breaking up of the body, after death, is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell.

Either that evil action (later) experienced as misery, was committed by him before (the clairvoyant vision), or, the evil action, (later) experienced as misery, was committed by him after (the clairvoyant vision), or, at the time of death, perverted view actuated and seized him. Because of this on the breaking up of the body, after death, he is reborn in the realm of woe, in the world of misery, in the fallen state, in hell.

And with reference to his present action of refraining from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; from telling lies, slandered, abusing and gossiping; his non-covetousness, non-resentment and being one with right understanding, he experiences the consequence thereof even here and now, or in the next life, or in any other life thereafter.

“Ānanda, thus, indeed, there is the action which is incapable (of good result) and which appears incapable; there is the action which is incapable (of good result) and which appears capable; there is the action which is capable (of good result) and which appears capable; there is the action which is capable (of good result) and which appears incapable.

Thus spoke the Blessed One. Inspired the Venerable Ānanda rejoiced at the exposition of the Lord.

CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

(Notes on Mahā Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta)

Sectarianism

Sectarian mud-slinging was apparently a pastime for the sectaries in the time of the Buddha, as it is, indeed, even today. Sects or religions backed by political and/or money power indulged in running down others. It is so today with those sects or religions which are well organised and which take to mass-conversions. Lord Buddha was subjected to brutal sectarian attacks and manoeuvres. Yet not one harsh word ever came out of the Lord's lips. He showered greater compassion on the sectarians who came with the sole purpose of finding fault with him.

Upāli, a multi-millionaire of Nālanda, was the chief lay-disciple of Nātaputta who was the head of the sect of nigaṇṭha (naked) ascetics. Upāli, one day, boasted in the presence of his teacher and a gathering of fellow disciples that he could defeat the Recluse Gotama in a debate that originated in a conversation between the Buddha and Dīghatapassī, an ascetic-disciple of Nātaputta.

The Upāli Sutta in the Majjhima Nikāya gives a vivid description of this encounter – how instead of defeating the Buddha, Upāli himself became an ardent disciple of the Lord.

It seems, Lord Buddha was staying at Nālanda in a mango grove owned by his cloth-mERCHANT-disciple Pāvārika. In a nearby hamlet Nātiputta too had camped together with a retinue of his ascetic and lay disciples. Upāli had been talking to him when Dīghatapassī came in and reported the conversation he had with the Buddha.

Dīghatapassī said that he had driven home the truth of the supremacy of the Daṇḍas, penances, (lit. Punishments), which one imposed upon oneself or which are imposed by the Guru of the sect. This was in contradistinction to what the Buddha

said about kammās-actions. Of the three daṇḍas kāya, vacī, mano-in deed, word and thought, Dīghatapassī had emphasized the supremacy of penance in deed – kāyadaṇḍa.

The Buddha, always maintained that of the three kammās-actions, i.e., in deed, word and thought, mano kamma, action in thought was more potent than the other two, since it is the well-spring whence all others spring. Hearing this, Upāli boasted that he could defeat the Buddha on the futility of his argument, and Nātaputta approved Upāli's assertion giving him an assurance that he is bound to convert the Buddha into his disciple.

Accordingly, Upāli went to the Buddha and there began the historic debate leading to Upāli and many other prominent disciples of the sectarians becoming followers of the Enlightened One.

Debate

The Upāli Sutta describes how Upāli asserted the validity of kāya daṇḍa (bodily penance), against mano kamma-mental action. Before proceeding with the debate, Buddha told Upāli that a discussion on Dhamma can take place only if Upāli is prepared to stick to truths and facts, i.e., the discussion should not be a mere intellectual pastime but a pursuit of truth and an investigation of reality. Having thus laid the ground rule for the debate, the Buddha then commenced the discussion. Here is a gist of the dialogue between the Buddha and Upāli:

The Buddha: “What do you say to this Upāli? Imagine a nigaṇṭha ascetic who is suffering from an acute illness. He refuses to take cold water on religious scruple, and takes only hot water. Since he did not get hot water and refused to touch cold water, he died. Now what will be his destiny, do you think?”

Upāli: “There are, Venerable Sir, devas, known as Mano satta, i.e., a being who is hooked on the mind. This ascetic will be born as one such Mano satta deity.”

The Buddha reminded him that he was now committing himself to a premise which proved the supremacy of mind. Nevertheless Upāli stuck to his old position.

The Buddha: “What do you say to this Upāli? Imagine here a nigaṇṭha ascetic who strictly adheres to the fourfold rules of Nāṭaputta i.e., the various controls with regard to bathing, washing, etc. But when he goes out and returns, he destroys many tiny creatures or micro organisms. What do you say to this?”

Upāli: “Since it is an unintentional act, it is not blamable.”

The Buddha: “But, Upāli, if, he does it with intention?”

Upāli: “Then, Venerable Sir, it is to be greatly blamed.”

The Buddha: “Now to what category do you place intention?”

Upāli: “It belongs to mano daṇḍa - mental penance.”

The Buddha: “Now, householder, take care of what you say! Your earlier assertion does not tally with what you are saying now; you are contradicting your own position.” But Upāli continued to hold on to his assertions.

The Buddha asked: “What do you say to this Upāli? Nālanda is a prosperous and thickly populated place. Suppose a man were to come and say: ‘Well, I shall destroy all the people of Nālanda in an instant; in a second, I shall render the entire populace into a heap of flesh.’ Do you think he will be able to do that physically, in an instant?”

Upāli: “Venerable Sir, not even fifty such men could turn in a moment the entire populace of Nālanda into a heap of flesh.”

The Buddha: “But, what do you think, householder, if a monk or a mystic with psychic power would say that; could he do that mentally?”

Upāli: “Yes, indeed, Lord. He could turn the populace of fifty such Nālandas into cinders in the fraction of a second through psychic powers.”

The Buddha: “Mind, what you say, householder! You are again contradicting yourself.”

The Buddha gave one more example of how great forests of Daṇḍaka, Kāliṅga, Mejja and Mātaṅga which become inhabited areas through the psychic power of seers, were again turned into thick forests.

Upāli: “I was satisfied and inspired with the Lord’s first illustration alone. Since I wanted to hear more, I deliberately pursued the debate. It is great, Most Venerable Sir, it is wonderful! It is as if someone sets upright something that is upside down, uncovers something that is covered, shows the way to one with eyes so that he may see things. In so many ways the Lord has made the Dhamma clear to me. May the Lord accept me as a lay-disciple from now onwards till life’s end.”

The Buddha: “Now, householder, investigate properly; for well-known people like you, it is important that you must investigate the truth and then commit yourself to Dhamma!”

Upāli: “Most Venerable Sir, I am satisfied more, and inspired even more, by what the Lord now said concerning investigation of truth and thereafter committing myself to Dhamma. Lord, if the sectarians had secured me as a disciple they would have paraded a banner all round Nālanda proclaiming ‘The householder Upāli has joined our sect.’ But the Lord only advises me to investigate the truth then commit to the Dhamma. Therefore Lord, I go to the Lord for refuge for the second time.”

The Buddha: “Now householder, for a long time your family has been like unto the well-spring for nigaṇṭhas; you should continue to support them with alms and other requirements.”

“Wonderful, Lord! Wonderful Lord! It is made out by the sectarians that the Recluse Gotama advises thus: ‘Gifts should be given to me and my disciples alone and not to others. Only when gifts are offered to me and my disciples, that they bear great merit.’ But the Lord now advises me that I must continue my charity to the nigaṇṭhas and others and to keep my door open to all. And, therefore, I go to the Lord for refuge, for the third time to his Dhamma and to his Order of Monks, for refuge! May the Lord accept me as a lay-disciple till life lasts.”

Thereafter the Buddha gave a discourse in stages as to lead Upāli’s mind to the transcendental heights and he soon entered into the Supramundane Path of Sotāpatti and became an enlightened-disciple.

It is said that many such encounters took place in various parts of the country resulting in prominent people, such as, general Siha of Vesāli, becoming a follower of Lord Buddha. This, obviously, brought about a lot of jealousy and frustration among the votaries of various sects. That is how one finds organised efforts at mud-slinging, as evident in the following accounts recorded in the Mahā Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta.

A Misconstruction

Potaliputta was a well-known Wandering Ascetic, Parivrājaka, who appears to have harboured a good deal of grudge against the Buddha. This is clear from the plain lies and twists he indulged in, before Samiddhi, a young monk, who was staying in a forest hut. Potaliputta goes to him and tells him that he has heard from Buddha’s own mouth that only action in thought is potent, i.e., capable of producing results - vipāka, and therefore, genuine and efficacious; while word-vācā, and deed - kāya, are without power i.e., unable to produce results, therefore, inefficacious and useless. When Samiddhi protested to this misconstruction and rejected his contention, he tried to involve him in another mischievous move by asking him a very involved question. He queried:

“Now, Revered Samiddhi, when one commits a volitional action in deed, word and thought, what does one experience?” By experience he, of course, meant what kind of future retribution (in his language), and kamma-consequence (according to Dhamma); and these retributions, again, in terms of the three feelings, since retributions are felt as certain sensations, feelings and emotions. But deliberately Potaliputta was not explicit for he had already found out from Samiddhi how long he had spent as a monk in the Order (three years only), and knowing his inexperience he further craftily charged him of defending his Teacher (the Buddha) when he had protested at his misconstruing the Buddha.

Unable to detect the deception in the question, the Venerable Samiddhi gave a rather naive answer, saying:

“When one commits a volitional action one experiences suffering.” Potaliputta’s question was like a cross-word puzzle, it was ambiguous and misleading and so too was the answer, one-sided, which came handy for further mudslinging. When Potaliputta left, Samiddhi went to Venerable Ānanda, and both together approached the Lord for clarification, since Venerable Ānanda rightly suspected a lacunae in the whole discussion. Buddha pointed out the deliberate one-sidedness of the question and then explained how an analytical presentation could have been made.

The ‘Future’ in the ‘Present’

If a person commits a volitional action, the Buddha explained, which must produce a certain result in future, then that result is experienced in terms of the three feelings viz, pleasurable, painful and neither of the two, i.e., neutral. And this future experience is again reflected in the action itself, by way of a certain feeling or emotion. Thus, the future is presaged by the present. The interdependence of feelings and actions, and the consequences of actions, are unambiguously set forth by the Buddha when he says:

“He feels happy when he commits a volitional action in deed, word and thought which is productive of happiness in future.” It is the same with the unhappy feeling or the neutral feeling associated with volitional action, which is productive of similar future experience respectively. Here, by ‘happiness’ is to be understood only the kusala-wholesome states, by unhappiness is to be understood the akusala-unwholesome states, and the neutral covers both.

Making this an occasion the Lord then gave his famous discourse entitled, the Great Analysis of Action. In this he elucidated, what the Aṭṭhakathācariya says, the seven great rāsis or aggregations, constituting the content of the Tathāgata’s insight concerning the Great Analysis of the law of kamma. These aggregations are: Four kamma or action-aggregations, and three vipāka or consequence-aggregations. These are: the kammas committed ‘before’ or ‘after’ a clairvoyant vision and the-death-proximate kamma, as well as the kammas detected by the clairvoyant vision. The vipāka-aggregations are those of the present life (diṭṭhadhamma vedanīya), as well as those to be experienced in the next life (upapajja vedanīya), and the lives thereafter (aparāpariya vedenīya).

These aggregates are so formulated because of the misleading clairvoyant experiences which tried to relate a certain action-aggregate with a certain consequence-aggregate that are not related mutually. It is this misassigned cause-effect-relationship that is also responsible for the formulation of ideologies and philosophies that are essentially self-contradictory.

Four Individuals

It is a being or an ‘individual’ who is involved in a kamma, and its corollary rebirth, and therewith, happiness or misery, neither, or both. This centrality of the individual is very clearly outlined against the backdrop of a complex perspective of actions and consequences. The Buddha enunciated, in this sutta, four

types of individuals (this classification is entirely with reference to the context of the sutta).

The first type of individual is one who perpetrates all the ten-unwholesome or evil kammāpathas, namely, the three bodily actions of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; the four verbal actions of lying, slandering, abusing and gossiping; and the three mental actions of covetousness, resentment and holding perverted views. There is a difference between kamma and kammāpatha. While kamma signifies, any volitional action, a kammāpatha means only those volitional actions which function as the generative or rebirth-producing (janaka) kamma. In other words, the kammāpathas are more potent, since they have the capacity to produce rebirth. Now, the first type of individual, after death, is reborn in a state of misery.

The second type of individual is one who also perpetrates all the ten evil kammāpathas, but who, after death, is reborn in a state of happiness.

The third type of individual is one who refrains from all the evil kammāpathas, i.e., he practises the ten-positive, good Kammāpathas. And after death he is reborn in a state of happiness.

The fourth type of individual is one who also practises the ten good kammāpathas, but who, after death, is reborn in a state of misery.

Logic in Contradiction

Regarding the first and the third types, there is apparently a certain relationship between the cause and the consequence; that is to say, between the evil and good action in the preceding life and the miserable and happy rebirth in the following life. In the case of the second and the fourth types, there seems to be a reversal of logic, a contradiction between the cause and the consequence.

How is this to be explained? The logic in the first and third is apparent; and when the underlying laws are discerned, the contradiction in the second and third, in fact is logical. The contradiction, in reality, proves that the relationship between the cause and consequence is not necessarily a causal or contiguous one; that is to say, between the preceding and the succeeding lives, but is governed by a concatenation of conditions which are revealed lucidly by the Master, as the sutta unfolds itself.

There are two gatis (destinies): Duggati, the realm of misery and Sugati, the realm of happiness, representing the consequences of the two types of karmas-evil and good. The dynamics of rebirth in these two types of gatis, in consequence of the two kinds of karmas, however, is a complex matter, as can be seen from the misleading clairvoyant experiences.

Obscuring Visions

Clairvoyance is a vision of certain actualities. It is a direct experience and not a fantasy or hallucination. Yet, wrong assignment of the cause and effect can lead to so much of confusion due to the formulation of assumptions and dogmas that are not only untrue but indeed harmful. Here, for instance, a monk or a mystic, who is highly regarded because of his supernormal powers, sees, through clairvoyance, a person committing a lot of evil. Then he also sees the same person, after death, being reborn in a realm of happiness, or vice versa, he sees a man after doing a lot of good being reborn in a realm of misery. This contradiction is very puzzling because he is quite certain of the actuality of what he has seen. And he resorts to certain assumptions, compounding his confusion further, because he is not oriented to the Vibhajjavāda, Path of Analysis of Buddhism.

Seeing the bad man being reborn in Sugati and vice versa, he asserts that there is no such thing as evil action nor is there

the consequence of evil conduct. And there is no such thing as good action, nor is there the consequence of good conduct. On the other hand, whoso perpetrates the evil, is reborn in the happy state, and whoso practises the good, only drags himself to the realm of misery. This kind of pernicious assumption, upheld dogmatically as 'this alone is true, all else is false', only proves that mere psychic power is not enough to fathom the depths of reality. In fact, psychic powers could be most misleading, as they very often are unless supported by genuine spiritual insight. That is why, Lord Buddha forbade the exhibition of or indulgence in psychic powers, and emphasised the need for cultivating insight into reality.

Cloud Cleared

In support, as it were, of this contention, we find in the sutta, Lord Buddha categorically spelling out the six facts which are in keeping with actualities, and the fourteen assumptions which do not accord with reality and thereafter unveiling the truth of the mechanism that relates a cause with its consequence. The Buddha pointed out that the Sugati into which an evil-doer is reborn, and which appeared so contradictory to the clairvoyant, compelling him to resort to perverted assumptions, was actually occasioned, not by the evil-doing as detected by clairvoyance, but by a good kamma which he performed 'before' (pubbekataṃ), or 'after' (pacchākataṃ), or at the death-proximate moment (maranāsanna). This is how the logic of the cause and consequence has been restored by the irrefutable presentation of an Omniscient Mind-that is, of the Buddha.

With reference to the present evil action, the sutta clearly points out that the individual experiences the consequence thereof, in that very life; for instance a killer going to the Jail; or in the next life a killer, having a very short span of life, as being still born; or in any other life thereafter—a killer being subjected to short life, diseases, accidental deaths, etc.

Thus, where the clairvoyant saw only one aggregate of kamma and one aggregate of vipāka, the Buddha comprehended four aggregates of kamma, that is, actions done ‘before’ or ‘after’ the clairvoyance and at death-proximate moment, plus the action of the present as detected by the clairvoyant; and three aggregates of vipāka, that is, here and now (dīṭṭhadhamma vedanīya) or in the next life (upapajja vedanīya) or in any other life thereafter (aparāpariya vedanīya).

Four Kammas

Now, after precisely identifying the four types of individuals, the Buddha exposed the four types of misleading clairvoyant experiences of mystics. For, these constituted the fertile ground for the growth of pernicious assumptions. Then he made a thorough and penetrating analysis of the assumptions-rejecting the spurious and establishing the genuine. Finally, he revealed exhaustively the four cause-aggregations and the three consequence-aggregations. Then the Lord of All Wisdom pronounced the four fundamental kamma-patterns and their correlative resultants. That is, how they determine ultimately the four types of individuals, already mentioned at the commencement of the sutta.

The kamma-patterns have been adumbrated by means of a succinct formula for which identical English words are almost impossible to find. An attempt at a faithful rendering is as follows:

“Thus, Ānanda, there is the action which is incapable (of good result) and which appears incapable; there is the action which is incapable (of good result) and which appears capable; there is the action which is capable (of good result) and which appears capable; and there is the action which is capable (of good result) and which appears incapable.

The Pāli term abhabba, means incapable, i.e. the ten types of unwholesome kammāpathas, which are incapable of producing good result, meaning rebirth in Sugati. Similarly, bhabba, means

capable i.e. the ten wholesome kammāpathas, which are capable of producing good result, meaning rebirth in Sugati. Accordingly, the kamma-patterns when summed up amounts to the following analysis:

1. An evil action (such as, killing, stealing, etc. i.e., the ten evil kammāpathas), which by its potency overtakes another evil action from producing its consequence, and itself gains precedence, i.e. produces the consequence.

In the words of the Aṭṭhakathācārya. “Of the many unwholesome actions committed, the one that is powerful enough to stand out and produce result, at the death-proximate moment, conditions the mind and determines rebirth”. This kamma-pattern corresponds to the first type of individual; that is to say, an individual who, after evil conduct, upon death, is reborn in a realm of misery. In other words of the many evil actions which one commits, the one that is most powerful, influences the individual’s death-proximate consciousness and produces a rebirth in a realm of misery. It could also be the evil garuka kamma of a past life that impelled an unhappy rebirth.

2. An evil action which is incapable of producing a good result, but is capable of good result due to the last death proximate good action. This corresponds to the second type; that is, an individual who, after evil conduct, at the death-proximate moment does a good kamma and is reborn in a good state. This means that though the individual performed evil actions, since he was mindful enough at the moment of death and conducted a good action to spring up, based upon a wholesome mental object, the course of his destiny took a turn towards a fortunate rebirth.

3. A good action, (such as refraining from killing etc., and practising the positive alternative of promoting the well-being of life and so on), overtaking another good action and generating its consequence. This corresponds to the third type of individual; that is, one who, after good conduct, upon death, is reborn in

a realm of happiness. In other words, here is a man who has in the armoury of his good actions one that is so outstanding that it commands its priority over others, and thus steering the individual to happy destiny.

4. A good conduct is overtaken by an evil death-proximate action, produces its unhappy consequence. This corresponds to the fourth type of individual, who, after good conduct due to death-proximate evil act, is reborn in the realm of misery.

Science–Spirituality

The sum and substance of the above analysis when grasped rightly, i.e., in keeping with truth and wisdom, and without being conditioned by a creed or an intellectual preference, is a message of great hope indeed.

Life, in the last analysis, is a stream of momentary consciousness. And just as a certain action conditions this consciousness, thereby determines the destiny of the stream, even so, the consciousness, by its own dynamics, can conjure up a pattern of conduct. In turn, it may make all the difference in the course of the consciousness itself. For, what else is a line other than so many dots in series? And what else is a stream of consciousness other than so many discrete psychic quanta called the ‘moment’s, with each one though related by contiguity, yet carries its own unique quality as to ever provide an opportunity for a new direction.

Just as, between a cause and consequence there are definite factors that conduct their relationship, even so, it is between two thought-moments. And the concatenation of conditions, relating cause and consequence, could be of such diverse nature that by their very relativity provide hope of a change for the better.

In the dynamics of the law of kamma, Buddhism combines the two great scientific findings, theories of quantum and of

relativity, and which in Buddhist terms are called ‘Khanika-vāda’ and ‘Anatta-vāda’ respectively. While both the scientific theories deal only with matter, khanika and anatta truths comprehend both matter and mind, in fact everything conceivable. Khanikavāda shows the momentariness of every phenomenon-corporeal and psychic, and each momentary phenomenon is a discrete factor. The presence of these factors, in a certain combination and permutation, lead to the arising of a thing. And the absence of them, similarly, brings about a negation, which means that there is no permanent, lasting and stable underlying entity. But that all is a flux, is an impersonal process, is dynamic.

Thus, the impersonality, continuity and momentariness of everything summarise the quintessence of Buddhist philosophy. Here for the purpose of clarity, khanika and anatta truths, have been compared to quantum and relativity.

IS REBIRTH A MYTH?

Rebirth (punarjanma) or 'Again-Becoming' (Punabbhava) is a postulate basic to Buddhism and indeed to the Indian spiritual heritage as such. The Buddha recalled five hundred and fifty of his previous lives to illustrate the processes of spiritual evolution leading to his attainment of Supreme Enlightenment. To a votary of the Buddha, the phenomenon of rebirth is not merely a belief but axiomatic to his spiritual experience. The understanding and acceptance of the principle of rebirth can be and is a most spiritually rewarding and hopeful philosophy of life. For, herein lies the key to one's higher evolution on the Onward Path to Perfection.

As a child of five, I distinctly remember, how I went through a terrifying experience. I had hit my elder brother with a piece of soap for constantly nagging me. He started screaming. My father, an orthodox shastri type of brahmin, instead of punishing me physically said that I would be reborn in hell if I commit violence. And he quickly demonstrated his dictum by producing a picture of hell where the 'yamadutas', the fiend wardens, of the king of hell, were engaged in various acts of torture, such as, sawing off a head, boiling victims in a bubbling cauldron etc. From that time onwards whenever I committed a mistake I was always haunted by that picture.

As a student of science and technology and in the wake of rationalistic objectivity I led myself to wondering, more probably as a reaction to fear, whether rebirth was not a superstitious belief. But honesty required that the fallacy of the belief is proved by objective investigation. So whenever an account of somebody remembering events of his previous life was made known to me, I attempted at a systematic investigation.

Many years later, in 1949, staying as a monk in a forest hermitage in Ceylon, I received a newspaper cutting from a

friend. It was the account of a boy, Pramod by name, recalling the events of his previous life as Paramanand. I wrote immediately to the father of Pramod as well as to the brother of late Paramanand and got an account that had been duly authenticated by a district magistrate who happened to witness the incidents. Not as a mere academic justification but for the spiritual edification of serious aspirants, this account of rebirth is herewith produced.

I have come across, during my travels as a monk in India and abroad, a number of people who not only recalled their past lives but actually identified past associations and objects. Further, in one's own life, one comes across situations and people creating such an overwhelming impact that nothing else, apart from associations of the past, would seem to explain the phenomenon satisfactorily.

Case-history of Pramod

21-1-49

Venerable Sir,

Yours of the 12th inst., to hand. I give you an authentic and uncoloured version. The entire incident as it came to pass is as follows:

My brother Paramanand aged 39 died on 9-5-43 at Saharanpur (a district of this province) about a hundred miles away from Moradabad towards the west. He died of appendicitis and prior to his death he had been give a tub-bath. Medical advisers had prohibited the use of curds and hence he had given up eating curds. As a boy he was devoted to religion. During his last days he had left for Saharanpur, becoming extremely disgusted with his wife. He left four sons and a daughter, three brothers and a sister to mourn him.

Pramod, the present incarnation of Pramanand, was born on 15-3-44 at Bissauli, in district Badaun, some 44 miles away from Moradabad towards the east. His father Pandit Bankey Lal Sharma, M.A. is a Professor in an Intermediate College

at Bissauli and his mother is a matriculate. Pramod's maternal grandfather belongs to village Mohammadpur Mai, three miles away from Bissauli.

As the boy grew up and intelligence began to develop, he began to speak of things of his previous life. When offered biscuits, he would tell his father that he owned a big shop at Moradabad and he would have biscuits only from there. He could say he had four sons and a daughter, and an elderly wife too. When his mother prepared meals, he would say "Why should you prepare meals when I have an elderly wife? Send for her." He could not give the name of the shop but only say that it was a big one.

One Sahu Raghunandan Lal of Bissauli is the brother-in-law of Sahu Surya Prakash of Moradabad and hence he was contacted by Professor Bankey Lal Sharma to let him know after due inquiry in Moradabad about the biscuit shops and who owned them. After inquiry Sahu Raghunandan Lal informed the Professor that the details given by the boy tallied with the family of Mohan Brothers of Moradabad.

Although the boy Pramod said a lot of strange things to his parents and grand-father, they didn't pay any heed. In the beginning, the expressions used by the boy were incoherent, but as his intelligence began to develop, he began to say more coherent things.

It so happened that Pramod returned home very late one evening. His anxious father asked him, "Where are you coming from?" "From Saharanpur", was his abrupt reply. "Why did you come from Saharanpur?" "Because my stomach got drenched I am coming from there." These replies from the boy who did not know what and where Saharanpur was, nor had he ever heard of Saharanpur before, amazed the father. The father who is deeply learned in Sanskrit and English did not know what to do.

When we came to know of this, we went to Bissauli to see the boy. The boy had gone to village Mohammadpur Mai. However we had a heart-to-heart talk with the boy's father. He described Pramod's daily life which tallied with our family in toto. We requested the Professor to bring the boy to Moradabad. He promised to bring the boy on the 15th of August.

On the 15th of August, 1949, Sri Karam Chand, our eldest brother, went to receive the Professor at the Moradabad station. When Mr. Bankey Lal alighted from the train, Mr. Karam Chand who was on the platform in search of them advanced towards them. Pramod spotted him out in the crowd and clung to him. He would not go to his father or talk to him. The father questioned him whether he knew who the gentleman was on whose lap he was sitting. The boy at once replied, "Yes, he is my elder brother (bara bhai)." The father was speechless.

From the railway station they all boarded a Tonga. It may be noted that we own two shops at Moradabad; one is situated in a locality known as Choumukhapul and the other near Civil Courts. The way to the Choumukhapul shop from the railway station lies via the Town Hall Compound.

When the boy was taken from the Moradabad railway station to the Choumukhapul shop, the boy exclaimed while crossing the Town Hall compound that it was the Town Hall. Every one was taken aback for Town Hall is an English word and how could a little boy from Bissauli know it? After crossing Town Hall the boy identified the Choumukhapul shop. When the boy was taken near the house, he at once recognised the building and said he used to live there. When he was taken into the house, he identified his daughter named Lata and his son named Govardhan Das. Afterwards he identified his sister and other members of the family.

When the boy was taken to Chowmukhapul shop, he at once identified the soda water machine and said that he used to work on that machine. The water tank of the machine was

detached and was kept elsewhere. The boy was asked, "Where is the water tank?" he wanted the tube of the water tank to be reconnected and when it was done, he gave a demonstration. When he was taken round the place where biscuits etc., are manufactured, he at once said that it was a bakery.

How could a little boy living in a small town know the word 'Bakery'? It was a great surprise to everyone. Then he was taken to the kitchen. He pointed to a place in the kitchen and said at that place he used to sit and pray. Before he entered the room, he bowed to the place with folded hands. He asked to be taken to the Gaddi (Gaddi – Seat means the place where the businessman sits to transact his business). When he was taken to Gaddi, he asked, "How is it that the seat of the gaddi is low-levelled?" He remembered that it was high-levelled in his previous life. He pointed to an almirah and said that he used to keep his money in it.

It may be further pointed out that among Hindus, women keep vermilion mark on their foreheads. If their husbands die, they renounce all wordly pleasures and lead an austere life. When Pramod saw his wife, he asked "Where is the vermilion on your forehead? Why is it bare?" When his wife went on asking him questions, he made a very characteristic remark, "Would you still go on troubling me like this?"

The day being the 15th of August, the shop situated near the Civil Courts was closed as it dealt in liquors. Though it was closed, he identified it and asked the bearer to take him by the main gate. He was also taken upstairs. It may be pointed out that during Parmanand's life time, the third storey was not built. He said, "When was the third storey built? I had not seen it."

Mr. Sahu Nandalal Saran, the premier citizen of Moradabad took the boy alone in his car. He owned a big mansion in the civil lines in one of the rooms of which Paramanand had opened his shop in his lifetime. To this man's utter surprise, Pramod

went to the room where in his previous life he had sat and worked. On the way back, the boy recognised Allahabad Bank building and the District Jail building and the Central Post Office.

I have mentioned only the salient point of his short stay here. If required further details can be furnished.

While sitting in the train, he saw a railway engine passing beside him emitting huge puffs of smoke. The boy shuddered and trembled and asked as to what that was. When told it was smoke, he exclaimed. "Is it that smoke which had flown me away?"

Yours sincerely

M.L. MEHTA

25-10-49

Respected Sir,

My obeisances to you. Your favour of Sept. 12th to hand. I really appreciate your views on the doctrine of Karma and hope that Sri Paramanand's incarnation in the body of Pramod, my dear child, will help you to reach a veritable conclusion in your quest.

I have read almost all the versions of the statement regarding the rebirth of Paramanand of Moradabad. As I was an eyewitness to all these things, I can say with emphasis that everything contained in the statement is true to its minutest detail.

Pramod is a wonderful child with a fine intelligence. He has been saying 'Moradabad and Mohan Brothers' for almost a year now. Since December last, he has been speaking of the firms he owned during his last existence and also of the articles he dealt with. A few days later he referred to a shop of his at Saharanpur. He is very fond of biscuits and tea. It was through the association on biscuits that he spoke of his previous soda-water and biscuit firm.

When he visited Moradabad he recognised almost everybody with the exception of a few, especially his eldest son who is very much changed after five years of his father's death. He recognised all his other sons, his only daughter, wife, brothers, mother and several others who had come in contact with him during his previous life. All the important places in Moradabad connected with significant events were familiar to him as his daily haunts.

In short, I can say that he answered unflinchingly every question put to him much to the delight and amazement of the public.

The child sometimes sits for hours moving his fingers on the lines of big volumes. He makes models of shops while playing and spreads lines of thread as if to electrify them. Sometimes he stammers the names of Dalmia, Tata and Birla which even many grown-ups here do not know.

He has got a big head with an abnormal protuberance bulging on the back side. Had you been here, you would have been pleased to see him.

I am a middle-class man, but the boy is not satisfied with my present status. He often stresses on business and opening a big shop in Bombay or Delhi. He says he had been to Delhi several times on business. He wants aeroplanes, ships and radios.

He has a leaning towards his past relations and does not want to live with me. I am between the horns of dilemma. His ambitions are many. He is worrying me to buy a car and wants me to start a bank of my own. Sometimes tears trickle down my cheeks at my inability to match his dreams. I shall be obliged if you will kindly let me know a way out of it.

I have scribbled these lines hurriedly as I am pressed for time. I assure you that every enquiry of yours will readily be attended to.

Yours very truly,

B.L. SHARMA

THE CONSEQUENCE OF MISCONDUCT

A. 8.4.10

“Monks, killing, when indulged in, cultivated and repeated, leads one to hell, or to the animal world, or to the realm of the ghost. Whatever be the consequence of killing, even the least, subjects one, when born as a human being, to short life.

“Monks, stealing, when indulged in, cultivated and repeated, leads one to hell, or to the animal world, or to the realm of the ghosts. Whatever be the consequence of stealing, even the least, subjects one, when born as a human being, to deprivation of possessions.

“Monks, sexual misconduct, when indulged in, cultivated and repeated, leads one to hell, or to the animal world, or to the realm of the ghost. Whatever be the consequence of sexual misconduct, even the least, subjects one, when born as a human being, to rivalry and hostility.

“Monks, lying, when indulged in, cultivated and repeated, leads one to hell or to the animal world, or to the realm of the ghosts. Whatever be the consequence of lying, even the least, subjects one, when born as a human being, to false accusations.

“Monks, slandering, when indulged in, cultivated and repeated, leads one to hell, or to the animal world, or to the realm of the ghosts. Whatever be the consequence of slandering, even the least, subjects one, when born as a human being, to break-up of friendship.

“Monks, abusing, when indulged in, cultivated and repeated, leads one to hell, or to the animal world, or to the realm of the ghost. Whatever be the consequence of abusing, even the least, subjects one, when born as a human being, to ill-repute.

“Monks, gossiping, when indulged in, cultivated and repeated, leads one to hell or to the animal world, or to the realm of

the ghosts. Whatever be the consequence of gossiping, even the least, subjects one, when born as a human being, to a condition in which his words carry no weight.

“Monks, drinking of intoxicants, when indulged in, cultivated and repeated, leads one to hell, or to the animal world, or to the realm of the ghosts. Whatever be the consequence of drinking intoxicants, even the least, subjects one, when born as a human being, to mental disorder or madness.”

Fate is Caused

Everything that exists, animate and inanimate, is governed by a set of laws. There is nothing fortuitous, nothing as chance-happening or coincidental, every situation, every incident, everything that happens, has an underlying cause.

There are certain things which cannot be explained by mere intellectual knowledge. And such things are often explained away as chance-occurrence or providential. The inability to find a reason should not lead to a blind acceptance. There is a ‘higher middle’, that, by avoiding the extremes of mere intellectualism and blind faith or dogmatism, tries to understand the actuality of things through an effective spiritual discipline. This the Buddha called the ‘Path of Dhamma’, which opens up wisdom and compassion (paññā-karunā), a perfect fusion of the head and heart, leading to a really meaningful existence. People who are so endowed are truly wise.

One of the concomitants of wisdom is the capacity to penetrate into the causes, as well as into the infinite causal relations between a cause and an effect, underlying a life situation.

A handsome, intelligent and only son of a rich man, in the prime of youth, suddenly dies either through an accident or a disease. Can this be a mere chance-occurrence or the retribution from a mysterious power? Similarly, a prosperous and influential family is suddenly dispossessed of all wealth and properties either by a social or political convulsion, or by

some other way, e.g. loss in business or being robbed etc. A man or a woman, otherwise well-behaved and honourable, is subjected to a lot of rivalry and hostility in their private as well as professional lives.

A leader like Gandhiji who made significant contribution towards human well-being, or any other innocent person for that matter, is subjected to vicious propaganda and false accusations. A very likeable person with a large circle of friends faces heart-rending situations of break-up with dear ones and intimate friends. A very soft spoken man or woman known for pleasant manners and goodness, is subjected to ill-repute. A very honest and helpful person whose words are respected suddenly becomes a non-entity, and whatever he says carries no weight. An intelligent and well-placed man or woman, engaged fruitfully in various affairs of life, suddenly becomes a victim of mental ill-health. He or she becomes mad to the dismay of all well-wishers.

Are all these cases mere accidents of life? Are they just coincidents, or the cruel punishment of the unknown providence? These instances are all too familiar in our day to day life. No one can brush them aside by saying that we are not concerned. For, none can vouch for certain that such life-situations cannot befall him or her!

The answer to all these has been clearly and convincingly pointed out by the Enlightened One. He has shown the moral-correlates that condition these feared misfortunes. In the sutta entitled ‘The Consequence of Misconduct, one can see how the moral law of cause and effect can make or mar one’s life.

Becoming – I

A. 3.8.6

“Now the Venerable Ānanda went to where the Blessed One was. Having approached and worshipped the Lord, he sat down

on one side. Sitting on one side, the Venerable Ānanda then said this to the Blessed One:

“Most Venerable Sir, ‘becoming!’, ‘becoming!’ so it is said. Most Venerable Sir, in what way is there the ‘becoming’?”

Becoming (bhava), means a sphere i.e. where one becomes someone, a man, animal, god etc. It consists of 3 planes of existence: The sphere of Sense-desire, (Kāma-bhava), of subtle-matter, (Rūpa-bhava) and Immaterial sphere (Arūpa-bhava).

“Ānanda, if there were no action which ripens into an element of existence, in the sphere of sense-desire, would the world of desire ever manifest?”

“Indeed not, Most Venerable Sir.”

“Thus it is, Ānanda, that action is the land, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. When the consciousness of beings, who are bounded by ignorance and fettered by craving gets established in the lower element (of desire), it is then that rebirth, becoming in the future, takes place.”

“Ānanda, if there were no action which ripens into an element of existence in the sphere of subtle matter of Brahma Gods, would the Brahma world of subtle matter ever manifest?”

“Indeed not, Most Venerable Sir.”

“Thus it is, Ānanda, that action is the land, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. When the consciousness of beings, who are bound by ignorance and fettered by craving, gets established in the middle elements (of subtle matter), it is then that rebirth, becoming in the future, takes place.

“Ānanda, if there were no action which ripens into an element of existence in the immaterial sphere of Brahma Gods, would the world of immaterial Brahma existence, ever manifest?”

“Indeed not, Most Venerable Sir.”

“Thus it is, Ānanda, that action is the land, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. When the consciousness of beings, who are bound by ignorance and fettered by craving, gets established, in the higher elements (of pure mind), it is then that rebirth, becoming in the future, takes place. In this way, Ānanda, there is becoming.”

Becoming-II

Now the Venerable Ānanda went to where the Blessed One was. Having approached and worshipped the Lord, he sat down on one side. Sitting on one side, the Venerable Ānanda then said this to the Blessed One.

“Most Venerable Sir, ‘becoming!’ ‘becoming!’ so it is said. Pray, Most Venerable Sir, in what way is there the ‘becoming’?”

“Ānanda, if there is no action which ripens into the element of existence in the sphere of sense-desire, would the world of sense-desire ever manifest?”

“Indeed not, Most Venerable Sir?”

“Thus it is, Ānanda, that action is the land, consciousness the seed and craving the moisture. When the will and the aspiration of beings, who are bound by ignorance and fettered by craving, get established in the lower element (of sense-desire), it is then that rebirth, becoming in the future, takes place.

“Ananda, if there is no action, which ripens into the element of existence in the sphere of subtle matter of Brahma Gods, would the Brahma world of subtle matter ever manifest?”

“Indeed, not, Most Venerable Sir?”

“Thus it is, Ānanda, that action is the land, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. When the will and the aspiration of beings, who are bound by ignorance and fettered by craving, get established in the middle element (of subtle matter), it is then that rebirth, becoming in the future, takes place.”

“Ānanda, if there were no action, which ripened into the element of existence in the immaterial sphere of Brahma existence, would the world of immaterial Brahma gods, ever manifest?”

“Indeed not, Most Venerable Sir.”

“Thus it is, Ānanda, that action is the land, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. When the will and the aspiration of beings, who are bound by ignorance and fettered by craving, get established in the higher elements (of pure mind), it is then that rebirth, becoming in the future, takes place. In this way Ānanda, there is becoming.”

It is said that ‘marriages are made in heaven’; that is to say, men and women, hitherto unknown to each other come together in a mutual bond due to the working of an implacable law which assigns that only they are ‘made for each other’.

Every soldier on the battlefield knows that there is only one bullet that is inscribed with his name, meaning that he is to die only through that bullet. And if there is no bullet with his name, even if he is tied to a pole in the very centre of the battlefield, pounded constantly by bullets and bombs, he just won’t die.

Among the village-folks, it is a well-known saying that each grain of rice or wheat has a name written on it, and no one but that man can eat it. Even if a quintal of rice is boiled and a thousand people sit down to eat, each grain will reach the respective mouths, by the mysterious working of a principle. These are simple instances of the law of mutuality.

However these examples should be understood in the right context, which is the specific law of mutuality. They don’t mean the theory or predestination or fate.

Now applied to the actualities of life, it means that birth in a certain sphere of existence, is determined by an action which represents, life in that sphere or destiny so to say. Action

is the common-ground where the determining (consciousness), and the destiny (plane of existence), meet. In other words, it is the path-way that connects them. As to the mechanism of becoming, one becomes a man, because one has acquired human qualities; or one becomes a god or a dog, according to the divine or canine qualities obtaining within oneself, in the form of the ‘element of existence’, dhātu.

Lord Buddha has enunciated three distinct dimensions of existence: Kāma Loka - the world of sense-desire, Rūpa Loka - the divine (Brahma) world of subtle matter; Arūpa Loka-the divine (Brahma) immaterial world.

Kāma Loka or desire-oriented dimension of existence is so-called because here the element of one’s life is governed by desires based upon the six senses. Just as fish living in the water cannot outgrow the ‘watery’ condition, even so, beings in the kāma loka, immersed, so to say, in sense-desires, are conditioned in such a way that all their deeds, words or thoughts are desire-inclined or are prone to sense-bound craving.

In this dimension, the consciousness is confined to the four walls of ignorance, representing a state of mental blindness with reference to the Four Noble Truths; also is fettered to craving, in the manner a prisoner is incarcerated in a jail and fettered. As such, it can hardly keep away from those mental pollutions, such as, greed, hatred, delusion, conceit, perverted views, worry, scepticism, sloth, lack of moral shame and moral fear etc., even as a prisoner can hardly keep away from the atmosphere of bondage obtaining in a prison.

Nonetheless, by applying oneself to Dhamma, one not only can nullify these defiling influences, but also remain impervious to and outgrow them. And this means a metamorphosis of the Kāma element of existence into the sublime divine elements represented by rūpa and arūpa lokas, or into the transcendental element-Nibbāna Dhātu, whereby one attains to the Summum Bonum. That is why, these three lokas-kāma, rūpa, arūpa, have

been characterized respectively as the lower element of desires, the middle element of subtle matter, reflecting spiritual qualities, and the higher element of pure mind reflecting the attributes of infinite consciousness.

Kāmaloka consists of eleven planes of existence, i.e., four apāyas-states of woe, representing rebirth in the subhuman planes, in consequence of evil actions or misconduct; the human world, and the six heavenly planes (deva-lokas). The human and the celestial states are in consequence of moral actions or good conduct.

The Rūpaloka, the world of Brahma gods, is so called, because here the gods, with immense luminosity and radiance, are born of subtle matter, as distinct from the gross matter of the beings of kāmaloka. Rūpa Brahma loka is the materialization, so to say, of sublime ethical and spiritual qualities, like universal love, compassion, altruism, equanimity, joy, rapture, bliss, ecstasy, tranquillity, ecstatic absorption, etc. The Brahmas are free from certain mental corruptions as obtaining in Kāmaloka, such as, sensual desire, ill-will or hatred, inertia or sloth, remorse, restlessness and doubt or scepticism. Due to a very sublime and pure mental condition the Brahmas enjoy a state of consciousness analogous to the samādhis which are brought about through an sublimation of the kāma-consciousness.

Nonetheless, beings in Brahma Loka do suffer from certain limitations. They too have mental defilements, commensurate to their subtle condition, which fetter their consciousness to craving, and place it within the bounds of certain delusions that keep them away from the actualisation of the Four Noble Truths.

The Brahmas enjoy such blissful existence and for such tremendously long periods—thousands of aeons, that it becomes immensely difficult for them to penetrate into the actualities of anicca, impermanence, dukkha, unsatisfactoriness, and anatta, unsubstantiality, which characterize all phenomena of the three lokas.

It is this incapacity to see through the basic characteristics of life in all dimensions, that constitutes the tragic aspect or the irony of these sublime states of the Brahmas, not only in the rūpa dimension of subtle matter but also in the immaterial dimension of the arūpa Brahmas.

Interestingly, it is in the kāmaloka, especially in the human world, where the dichotomies of pain and pleasure etc., are so pronounced, that these three characteristics of life become clearly evident. That is why the Buddhas arise only in the human world. In the subhuman planes, apāyas, the agony, fear and despair are too over-powering for the mind to grasp these actualities of life. And conversely, in the sublime divine planes, the bliss is so prepossessing that the mind is equally incapacitated to comprehend the basic actualities. Hence the irony of both pain and pleasure, and the need for their transcendence through transformation of the consciousness into the transcendental element.

The dimension of Rūpa Brahmas is computed in terms of the four jhānas, including the pure spiritual realm of Suddhāvāsa and the sphere of Asañña Satta—the unconscious beings of the pure and subtlest matter. Each of these jhānas are again threefold in terms of their distinctive development. Thus, there are altogether sixteen (9+1+1+5) realms of the Rūpa Brahmas.

The Arūpa Loka - the immaterial divine dimension of Brahmas is so-called because of its pure mental state, unfettered by any form or matter, even the most subtle. It is the dimension of infinite mind in four distinct stages, representing the four Arūpa jhānas of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness and neither-perception nor non-perception.

This is an existence which is like an immense mental constellation, afloat in the vast void of the arūpa-immaterial plane. These pure mental beings live a life of total singlemindedness and equanimity, unruffled by the dichotomies of pain and pleasure, good and bad, beauty and ugliness, day

and night, loss and gain, etc. It amounts to a total withdrawal from anything which provided contrast in time, space and mode, as experienced in the kāmāloka and rūpāloka. In this realm of pure awareness, life is indeed so immensely long that it is almost impossible for it to understand impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and unsubstantiality. That is why birth in the Arūpāloka is considered unprofitable and wasteful from the standpoint of attainment of Nibbāna.

To recapitulate the sutta on Becoming, Lord Buddha elucidates further the law of mutuality – the destiny and the destined are related by identity of qualities or nature. That is to say, becoming is similar to productivity, to use an agricultural analogy. He said: “Action is the land, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture.”

So long as these three components of agriculture obtain, productivity is assured. Likewise, so long as the mental factors of volition and craving conjointly operate with consciousness, becoming is assured, as an action, i.e., in deed, word and thought, saturating the element of existence with its properties. The element, now so conditioned, automatically inclines towards a plane of existence commensurate with its qualities.

This is becoming as rebirth. It is like the illustration of a pregnant woman found in the ‘wheel of becoming’, bhava cakka. The child is already conceived. It is only a matter of time when parturition takes place, bringing about the completion of the cycle of becoming.

Thus, becoming is two-fold: Kamma bhava, becoming as action, and Upapatti bhava - becoming as rebirth. Action corresponds to conception and rebirth to parturition. The time necessary to complete this cycle, that is, from conception to parturition, is governed by a psychological law. The child takes ten months to sufficiently become mature as to be born, to step into this world. Similarly, for the element of life to mature in such a way as to be able to gravitate into a plane of existence,

it is governed by a specific factor called javana - mental impulsion, that forms the core-element of an action. There are seven such impusions which form the action-cycle or kammic process.

These mental impusions are comparable to a series of seven waves, which reach the crescendo at the fourth. Of these waves, the first Javana brings result here and now, in this very life (dīṭṭhadhammavedanīya). For example a murderer being hanged or jailed, or one cultivating the ecstatic absorptions (jhāna), or the transcendental insights, (magga), which are followed by appropriate spiritual metamorphosis.

The seventh Javana brings result in the next life (upapajjavedanīya); and the remaining five in any other life thereafter (aparāpariyavedanīya). If the first and seventh impusions fail to fructify at the appropriate time, they get ‘spent’ or ‘exhausted’ (ahosi lit. defunct). They are very much like time barred drugs, the potency of which is strictly governed by time.

The ripening of the action-becoming (kamma bhava) into rebirth-becoming (upapatti bhava) is thus governed by a very precise psychological law. And any new factor which intervenes in the function of this law, such as, delay, unreachability, etc., entirely changes the course of the law. If an action has to fructify, let us say, in this life, and if before this could happen the person dies; or if a fruition, which can be effective in a particular surrounding is delayed because the person has changed the surrounding; or if a person, who as a householder is to experience a certain consequence of an action, now becomes a monk and leads a celibate life, then this action becomes defunct, thus unreachable.

In fact, it is this possibility of turning the specific impusions into spent-out or exhausted actions (ahosi kamma), that provides the hope for deliverance from the cycle of becoming, and thus freedom from the bondage of the three dimensions of existence. That is why Lord Buddha said that, if all the results of actions that one performs, are to be experienced, and in identical form,

then there is no liberation from the vicious circle of kamma and rebirth.

In the first sutta entitled “Becoming”, Lord Buddha said that when the consciousness of beings, who are bound by ignorance and fettered by craving, gets established in any of the elements - lower, middle or higher, meaning getting matured in any of the three lokas, it is then that rebirth in future takes place. In the second sutta, otherwise identically worded, he mentions that when volition and desire or aspiration (instead of consciousness) get established, that is, in any of the three lokas, it is then that rebirth takes place in future.

In other words, when consciousness, volition and aspiration, conditioned by ignorance and craving, get matured, then it acquires the quality of a given dimension of existence. Only when this happens, in conjunction with the psychological law (*citta niyāma*) of time-succession, that rebirth take place. In this way, the Lord concludes, ‘there is becoming’, that is, as the endless cycle of rebirths.

Mechanism of Rebirth

The Venerable Ānanda, as the Attendant-monk, was a constant companion of the Enlightened One. One day he asked a question to the Lord that must have been a much-discussed subject in his time, as it is indeed even in our time. The question is so crucial to human existence that it is bound to plague the human mind at all times.

Ānanda queried: “Becoming, becoming, it is said Lord; in what way is there the becoming?” In order to clarify, the Master put a counter-question saying: “Ānanda, if there were no action which ripened into an element of existence, would there be a plane of existence in which this element could manifest?” And thereafter he elucidated the profound and intricate mechanism of rebirth lucidly through simple analogies.

Apparently in the time of the Buddha too, people questioned about the actuality of rebirth. It is not uncommon today to hear people denying rebirth because they say, they can’t remember it nor can they prove it intellectually or scientifically, or because of their belief in a certain ideology or theology which dogmatically denies rebirth. Just because a truth is doubted or denied, that doesn’t mean it is nullified. To grasp a truth one has to have an instrument. Unless one is mentally equipped with that faculty which is capable of penetrating into the mechanism of rebirth, surely, one will not be able to understand it, in the same way as a layman without the knowledge of a complex machine, cannot grasp the principles by which it works.

The counter-question could also be put in a different metaphor thus: “If there is no cloud which matures into rain, would there ever be ponds, lakes, rivers and forests? Or could there ever be agricultural activities, power-production, or trade and industry based thereon? And indeed could the human civilization itself be there?” The answer obviously is ‘no’.

If there is no rain, of course, there could be no river or agriculture or the rest of it. Just as, if there is no action that ripens into an element of existence, that is, into that specific consciousness, known as the ‘resultant’ – *vipāka*, there would be no dimension of existence; that is to say, no world to hold this element of existence, this life-force or vital principle, this sentient, animate, living organism. The so-called inanimate worlds, or the various planes of existence, are mere containers, or better still, are materialisations of the vital energy-life.

In other words, the inanimate dimension is the destiny, in which the animate principle is destined. Between the ‘destiny’ and the ‘destined’, there is, thus, an inviolate relation based upon an inexorable and irreversible law, the law of mutuality. Lord Buddha’s simple, yet penetrating counter-question, tellingly outlines this law.