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2503 B.E.

April 1960 C.E.



THE LIGHT OF THE DHAMMA

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CONTENTS

ARTICLE	PAGE
Editorial.....Buddha's First Utterance.....	6
Buddhist Ceremonies by Ven. U Sīlananda.....	11
The Case for Rebirth by Francis Story.....	16
Notes and News	48
Book Review.....	51

Also in the original issue:

Bodhipakkiya Dīpani by Ven. Ledi Sayadaw, translated by U Séin Nyo Tun, I. C. S. (Retd.)

Ambaṭṭha Sutta, Translated by the Editors of The Light of the Dhamma

Uggaha Sutta, Translated by the Editors of The Light of the Dhamma

Tirokuṭṭa Sutta, Translated by the Editors of The Light of the Dhamma

Tirokuṭṭa Commentary Translated by the Editors of The Light of the Dhamma

Dhammapada Commentary (Magha Vatthu , Translated by the Pāḷi Department, University of Rangoon

EDITORIAL

BUDDHAS FIRST UTTERANCE

“*Anekajātisamsāraṃ
sandhāvissaṃ anibbisaṃ
gahakāraṃ gavesanto;
dukkhā jāti punappunaṃ.
Gahakāraka diṭṭho’si;
puna gehaṃ na kāhasi.
Sabbā te phāsukā bhaggā
gahakūṭaṃ visaṅkhatāṃ
visaṅkhāragataṃ cittaṃ
taṇhāhaṃ khayamajjhagā.*”

....Dhammapada, Verses 153, 154.

Because of Ignorance I wandered in
saṃsāra through many a birth,

Vainly seeking the *builder* of this house,
Repeated birth is dukkha (Suffering).
O house-builder, you are seen;
You shall not build the house again.
All your rafters are broken, and
Your ridge-pole is shattered.

My mind has reached the Unconditioned
(Nibbāna).

The end of craving have I attained.

A Supreme Buddha is one who, having discovered the Four Noble Truths which had been lost to the world, realized them and proclaimed them to the world. Or, He is one who understands by himself without anybody’s aid the Four Noble Truths, and therein attains Omniscience (*Sabbāññuta-ñāṇa*) and gains mastery of the powers.

The last Buddha, whose teachings we are fortunate to follow was named Gotama. He was born in the Sākya Clan, and we call him Sākya Muni—the Sage of the Sākya Clan.

It was not within a life-span or two that he attained supreme enlightenment. To attain that Omniscience he had to fulfill his *Pāramīs* for a period of four *asaṅkheyyas* (unit followed by 140 ciphers) and one hundred thousand *kappas* (world-cycles). During that long period, he had been reborn in the world of men, animal-world and the heavenly abodes experiencing both

happy and woeful states. In all these existences he had fulfilled the ten *Pāramīs*, namely, (1) *dāna* (Almsgiving), (2) *sīla* (Morality), (3) *nekkhamma* (Renunciation), (4) *pañña* (Wisdom), (5) *vīriya* (Effort), (6) *khantī* (Patience), (7) *sacca* (Truthfulness), (8) *adhiṭṭhāna* (Determination), (9) *mettā* (Loving-kindness), and (10) *upekkhā* (Equanimity).

That ponderous cycle of time slowly rolled on, and on the eve of the full moon day of Visākhā (May) 2548 years ago, Prince Siddhattha sat cross-legged under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha Gaya. There with the firm determination ‘Let my skin, and sinews, and bones remain; let all the flesh and blood in my body dry up; but I will never move from this seat, until I attain Supreme Enlightenment’, he was immersed in rigid and austere processes of meditation. He then acquired, in the first watch of the night, *pubbenivāsa ñāṇa* (Knowledge pertaining to remembrance of former existences); in the middle watch of the night, *dibbacakkhu ñāṇa* (the Celestial Eye); and in the last watch of the night, his intellect fathomed *paṭicca-samuppāda* (Dependent Origination) in the following manner:

(a) *Anuloma* (in direct order):—When this cause exists, there is this effect; with the arising of this cause, this effect arises.

(b) *Paṭiloma* (in its reverse order):—When this cause does not exist, there is not this effect; with the cessation of this cause, this effect ceases.

(c) *Anuloma-paṭiloma* (both in their direct and reverse order):—When this cause exists, there is this effect; with the arising of this cause this effect arises; when this cause does not exist, there is not this effect; with the cessation of this cause, this effect ceases.

Therefore, in His First Utterance of ecstasy, the Buddha summed up all His past experiences that enabled Him to attain Omniscience and proclaimed them to the

world. The Buddha thus uttered: “Through many a birth I wandered in *saṃsāra*.”

“Vainly seeking the builder of this house”:

Herein, “house” means the Five Constituent Groups of Existence, namely, (1) Corporeality-group, (2) Sensation-group, (3) Perception-group, (4) Mental-Formations-group, (5) Consciousness-group. There is nothing permanent in them. It is this fivefold Group of Existence which is the “house” as well as its dweller, and it is from within this five-fold group that “Craving”—the builder of the house is aroused. There is neither outside nor separate builder. That was the real problem that awaited the Enlightened One to solve and to proclaim its solution to the world.

To show that *saṃsāra*¹ (round of rebirths) is not created by any outside agency, the Ancients declared:

*“Na h’ettha devo brahmā vā
saṃsārass’atthi kāraḥ:
suddhadhammā pavattanti,
hetusambhārapaccayā.”*

(There is no god, nor Brahmā who is the maker of this Wheel of Life;

Empty phenomena roll on, on account of their respective causes.)²

*“Kammaṣa kāraḥ n’atthi
vipākassa ca vedako:
suddhadhammā pavattanti,
ev’etaṃ sammadassanaṃ”*

(There is no doer of the deed; Or one who reaps the deed’s result:

Empty phenomena alone flow on—Seeing thus is the Right View.)³

“Repeated birth is dukkha (Suffering)”:

In the Agha-mūla Sutta, the Buddha declared:⁴

“What, monks, is Suffering? The Corporeality-group is Suffering; Sensation-group is Suffering; Perception-group is Suffering; Mental-Formations-group is

Suffering; and Consciousness-group is Suffering.

And what, monks, is the cause of Suffering?

It is this *taṇhā* (Craving) which gives rise to fresh rebirth and, bound up with lust and greed, finds ever fresh delight now here and now there: namely, the Sensual Craving, the Craving for Existence, and the Craving for Self-Annihilation.”

Again, in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta⁵ the Buddha declared:

“The Celestial Eye”:

Again, O King, with his mind thus tranquil, purified, cleansed, flawless, free from defilements, supple, ready to act, firm, and imperturbable, he applies and bends his mind to the knowledge pertaining to death and rebirth of beings. With his supernormal knowledge, surpassing that of men, he sees beings dying and being reborn, low and noble ones, beautiful and ugly ones, happy and unhappy ones, sees how beings are being reborn according to their deeds.

These beings, indeed, followed evil ways in bodily actions, words and thoughts, insulted the Noble Ones, held wrong views and according to their wrong views they acted. At the dissolution of their bodies after death, they have been reborn in the lower worlds, in painful states of existence, in the world of perdition, in hell.

Certain other beings have good actions, bodily, verbal and mental, did not insult the Noble Ones, held Right Views, and according to their Right Views they acted. At the dissolution of their bodies after death, they have been reborn in a happy state of existence, in a heavenly state.

Thus with his supernormal knowledge, surpassing that of men, he sees beings dying and being reborn, low and noble ones, beautiful and ugly ones, happy and unhappy ones, sees how beings are being reborn according to their deeds.’

Pubbenivāsa-ñāṇa.

“Knowledge of Former Existences”:

So, a person who attains *pubbenivāsa-ñāṇa* (Knowledge of Former Existences) will be able to see for himself or herself what a long time he or she has been wandering in the *saṃāra*. Then he or she will be able to know whether it was more woe or happiness that he or she had experienced.

As has been stated before, the embryo Buddha attained *pubbenivāsa-ñāṇa* and *dibbacakkhu-ñāṇa* in the first and second watch of the night respectively. Then he knew the ills of repeated birth and so uttered: “Repeated birth is *dukkha* (Suffering)”.

In the Dhammacakka-pavattana Sutta,⁶ the Buddha declared:

“But what, O monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is Suffering, Old Age is Suffering, Illness is Suffering, Death is Suffering, to be conjoined with things which we dislike, to be separated from things which we like—that also is Suffering. Not to get what one wants—that also is Suffering. In short, the Five Constituent Groups of Existence which are the objects of Clinging are Suffering.”

“O house-builder, you are seen;

You shall not build the house again.”

The Buddha contemplated the Dependent Origination in the direct order, in the reverse order, and both in the direct and reverse order as follows:—

1. Through Ignorance Kamma formations arise;
2. Through Kamma formations Consciousness arises;
3. Through Consciousness Mental and Physical phenomena arise;
4. Through Mental and Physical Phenomena the 6 Bases arise;
5. Through the 6 Bases Contact arises;
6. Through Contact Sensation arises;
7. Through Sensation Craving arises;
8. Through Craving Clinging arises;

9. Through Clinging Volitional action and further existence arise;

10. Through Volitional action and further existence Rebirth arises;

11. Through Rebirth there arise Old Age, Death, Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief and Despair.

Thus arises the unalloyed mass of Suffering.

1. Through the complete fading away and cessation of Ignorance Kamma formations cease;

2. Through the cessation of Kamma formations Consciousness ceases;

3. Through the cessation of Consciousness Mental and Physical Phenomena cease;

4. Through the cessation of Mental and Physical Phenomena the 6 Bases cease;

5. Through the cessation of the 6 Bases Contact ceases;

6. Through the cessation of Contact Sensation ceases;

7. Through the cessation of Sensation Craving ceases;

8. Through the cessation of Craving Clinging ceases;

9. Through the cessation of Clinging Volitional action and further existence cease;

10. Through the cessation of Volitional action and further existence Rebirth ceases;

11. Through the cessation of Rebirth, Old Age, Death, Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief and Despair cease.

Thus ceases the unalloyed mass of Suffering.”

After contemplating thus the Buddha realized that *taṇhā* is the Cause of Suffering, and that the complete fading away and cessation of this *taṇhā* is the Cessation of Suffering—*Nirodha-sacca*. So He Uttered: “O house-builder, you are seen; you shall not build the house again.”

Why cannot the carpenter (*taṇhā*) build a house (the Five Constituent Groups of Existence) again?

As the materials—*avijjā* and *taṇhā* (Ignorance and Craving)—with which the house (*khandhā*) was built have been totally destroyed and rooted out, how could the builder build the house with them? Simultaneously with the complete fading away and cessation of *taṇhā*, there occur its forsaking, and giving up— liberation and detachment from it.

So the Buddha continued:

“All your rafters are broken, and
Your ridge-pole is shattered.”

In the Assutavā Sutta⁷ the Buddha declared:

“Thus realising (the Dependent Origination) in both the serial and reverse order, the well-trained noble disciple becomes disgusted with the corporeality-group, the sensation-group, the perception-group, the group of mental formations and the consciousness-group. Being disgusted with them he has no craving for them; he is detached from them and the knowledge that he has attained Freedom arises in his mind-continuum. And he knows that rebirth is extinguished, the holy life accomplished, done that which was to be done, there is no more arising again to be subject to these conditions.”

“My mind has reached the Unconditioned (Nibbāna).

The end of craving have I attained.”

When *avijjā* and *taṇhā* had been eradicated, the Buddha bent His mind to the knowledge pertaining to the extinct on of *Āsavas*⁸ (Fluxions). He knew as it really is: “This is suffering.” He knew as it really is: “This is the cause of suffering.” He knew as it really is: “This is the cessation of suffering.” He knew as it really is: “This is the Path leading to the cessation of suffering.” He knew as they really are: “These are *Āsavas*.” He knew as it really is: “This is the cause of *Āsavas*.” He knew as it really is: “This is the extinction of *Āsavas*.” He knew as it really is: “This is the Path leading to the extinction of *Āsavas*.” To Him, thus realising, His mind was set free from Sensuous *Āsava*, was set free from the *Āsava* of

existence, was set free from the *Āsava* of Ignorance. In Him thus set free, there arose the knowledge of His Freedom, and He realised: “Rebirth is no more; I have lived the pure life; I have done what ought to be done; I have nothing more to do for the realisation of Nibbāna.”

Hence the utterance “My mind has reached the Unconditioned (Nibbāna). The end of craving have I attained.”

It is also evident from the fact that after spending the seven weeks’ period, the Buddha went to the group of five ascetics at Sarnath and preached to them as follows:— “So long, monks, as I did not thoroughly understand, as they really are, the Four Noble Truths with three aspects in each,—so long, monks, I did not declare that I had attained supreme enlightenment, unsurpassed in the world with its *devas*, its *Māras*, its *Brahmās*, among the host of *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas* and of *devas* and men.

But, monks, as I thoroughly understand, as they really are, the Four Noble Truths with three aspects⁹ in each,—then, monks, I have declared that I have attained supreme enlightenment, unsurpassed in the world with its *devas*, its *Māras*, its *Brahmas*, among the host of *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas*, and of *devas* and men.

Then, indeed, the Supreme Knowledge arose in me and insight arose in me:—‘Sure is my Freedom. This is my last birth. There is no more rebirth for me now.’”

Notes

- 1 *Samsāra* is the unbroken sequence of the five-fold *Khandha*-combinations, which, constantly changing from moment to moment, follow continually one upon the other through inconceivably long periods of time. Of this *Samsāra*, a life-time constitutes only a tiny fraction.

- 2 Visuddhimagga, Book II, p. 238, 6th Synod Edition. Please see Nāṇamoli's Visuddhimagga translations, p. 701.
- 3 Visuddhimagga. Book II, p. 237, 6th Synod Edition.
- 4 Saṃyutta Nikāya, Salāyatana Saṃyutta. Khanda-vagga Saṃyutta—3. Bhāra-vagga, 10. Agha-mūla Sutta, page 27, 6th Synod Edition.
- 5 Dīgha Nikāya, Sīlakkhandha-vagga. 2. Sāmaññaphala Sutta, p. 44, 6th Synod Edition. Please see the Light of the Dhamma, Vol. V. No. 1, p. 25.
- 6 Vinaya Piṭaka. Mahāvagga, 5. Pañcavaggiyakathā, p. 14, 6th Synod Edition.
- 7 Saṃyutta Nikāya, Nidāna-vagga, 1. Assutavā Sutta, page 319, 6th Synod Edition.
- 8 There are four kinds of Fluxions, namely, (1) Sensuous Fluxion. (2) Fluxion of Views, (3) Fluxion of existence, (4) Fluxion of Ignorance.
- 9 Vinaya Piṭaka Mahāvagga, 5. Pañcavaggiyakathā, page 14, 6th Synod Edition.
1. Sacca-ñāṇa: Knowledge of the Truth;
 2. Kicca-ñāṇa: Knowledge of what is to be done in connection with the Truth;
 3. Kata-ñāṇa: Knowledge of what has been done in connection with the Truth.

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BUDDHIST CEREMONIES

By

Ven. U Sīlananda.

Buddhism is unique among religions in that it knows no ceremonies comparable to those in other religions. Ceremonies and rituals, elaborate and tiresome in performance, have no room in Buddhism. We do not find any instance in the Pāli Canon where the Buddha lays down the rules and methods for the performance of ceremonies for the laity. It is left to the individual whether or not to perform them. He has only one thing which he must take into consideration; that is his performing of ceremonies does not clash with the teachings of the Buddha.

In the absence, then, of any rules governing the performance of ceremonies in Buddhism, man cannot but follow the customs of the place where he lives, provided that these customs do not go against the tenets of Buddhism.

If the customs or performance of the ceremonies do not accord with Buddhist religion, or if the religious compunction does not approve of them, then the method of performance, rather than the ceremony itself, should be adapted to suit the religious teachings, or an entirely new way of performing the ceremony should be sought for.

A man will want to do something of a ceremony when a child is born to him, or he has an occasion to give away his son or daughter in marriage, or at the time of death of other persons. The following are the ways of performing ceremonies in connection with occasions mentioned above, and they are so arranged as to be acceptable to all, Buddhists.

Name-giving-ceremony:

A few days after a child is born to a man, it occurs to him to give the child a name,— a name which would be auspicious and pleasant to the ear. To do this he should invite some Bhikkhus and laymen to his house and offer food and other requisites to the Bhikkhus.

When the offering of the food is over, he should place the child in front of the Bhikkhus, take Five Precepts—*Pañca Sīla*—from them and request them to recite Buddhist Suttas called *Parittas* and give a name to the child. The Bhikkhus will then recite such Suttas as Maṅgala Sutta, Ratana Sutta, Metta Sutta, all of which can be found in Khuddaka Pāṭha of the Khuddaka Nikāya, and such other Suttas as they think fit to recite on the occasion.

The leader of the Bhikkhus will give a name to the child, or if the father desires that the name be given by some other person, he can ask a person whom he likes, to give the name. He is free to choose a man who will give the name, or if he wishes, he could himself choose a name for the child. After the recitation of the Suttas and offering are over the Bhikkhus will leave his house, after which he can give a feast to the people whom he has invited to participate in the ceremony.

The significance of this ceremony is to help the child grow up in good health, and live a long and prosperous life. The effect of reciting the Suttas is to scare away the bad spirits who might harm or even kill the child. There was an instance, at the time of the Buddha, of a certain child who was destined to die after seven days as a demon had got permission from his superiors to eat the child. The parents knew this from their family ascetic and at his advice went to the Buddha and requested Him to save the child. The Buddha then told them to have a pandal built in front of their house and invite eight or sixteen Bhikkhus to recite the Suttas for seven days without stop. They did exactly as advised by the Buddha so as to save the child. On the seventh day the Buddha Himself came to the pandal, where a great gathering of powerful gods who came to listen to the Dhamma was formed. The demon got no chance to snatch away the child as he dared not approach the assembly of gods. The child

accordingly was saved and lived a very long life—for one hundred and twenty years !¹

Marriage:

For Buddhists, marriage is totally secular and has nothing to do with religion. No Bhikkhus in Theravāda countries officiate at marriage ceremonies. Neither are marriage ceremonies performed at Buddhist Vihāras, Temples or Pagodas. They can be done at any convenient place other than the places already stated.

Ways of ceremony may differ with the place where the individual concerned lives. As marriage is secular in its nature, the individual is free to follow the custom of the place or country in so far as the tenets of Buddhism are not impaired. It is, therefore, not allowable for the marriage to be held, e.g., in a Christian Church, or to have it been officiated by a Christian. The best place to have a marriage ceremony performed is at one's own house, or if the house is not big enough for the gathering, the town hall or some other suitable place. Marriage can be conducted by the parents of both sides, or by an elderly man respected by both families, or any other person whom the two sides choose. There will, no doubt, be rejoicings and feasts, which can be done freely.

But if the individual is desirous of having some religious flavour in marriage, he can do no better than invite some Bhikkhus a day or two after the ceremony, and offer them food and requisites and request them to give advice or admonition to the newly-wedded couple. The Bhikkhus will recite some *Parittas* and one of them will give advice to the husband and wife. Buddha Himself gave advice to the maidens who were about to be married.

Buddha was once invited to the house of a lay follower named Uggaha to accept food. When the Buddha had finished eating food, Uggaha asked the Buddha to deliver a sermon giving them advice. Buddha then preached to them regarding their behaviour towards their husbands.²

In the famous Siṅgāla Sutta³ of Dīgha Nikāya, Buddha laid down duties of husband and wife to each other. These duties should be told to the newly weds so that they may lead a happy married life.

I The duties of a wife are:—

- (1) To do domestic work (or to have it done) well in time,
- (2) To please the relatives of both her husband and herself by treating them with affection and by sending presents, messages, etc. to them,
- (3) To abstain even from thought of misconduct with another man,
- (4) To take good care of whatever has been earned by the husband, and
- (5) To have skill and zeal for whatever she may have to do.

II The duties of a husband are:—

- (1) To treat the wife with due affection,
- (2) To avoid superiority complex,
- (3) To abstain from misconduct with other women,
- (4) To authorize the wife to do what she pleases (in the kitchen and other household affairs), and
- (5) To let the wife have clothes and ornaments according to his rank and position in life.³

These duties were laid down over 2500 years ago, yet they are applicable in these modern times. These are the duties which, if properly fulfilled, would make the couple happy and prosperous. There is another set of advice given by her father to Visākḥā, who later became the foremost female devotee of the Buddha, before sending her away in marriage to her husband.⁴

Funeral Ceremony:

In order to understand the meaning of the funeral ceremony performed by the Buddhists,

it is necessary to understand the philosophy underlying it. Funeral ceremony performed without the knowledge of this philosophy will not be beneficial both to the deceased and to the person who performs it. This philosophy which is so essential in this ceremony is as follows:—

According to Buddhism, a person after his death is ordinarily liable to be reborn in one of the 31 planes of existence. His rebirth is conditioned by good or bad deeds which he does in the present life or in some cases by deeds done in past lives. If he is virtuous, or if he does good deeds during his life, he may be reborn in the world of gods where he will enjoy godly pleasures; or if he is vicious in this life, he may be reborn in one of the four woeful states known in Pāli as *Apāya*, which consists of Hell, Animal World, World of *Petas* and World of *Asuras*. He will suffer various torments and inflictions, hunger and thirst, etc., in those states.

Again, according to the Buddhist Law of Kamma, even a person who has done good deeds is not definitely certain where he will be reborn, whether in higher planes or in woeful states. Through Kamma which he has done in past lives and which gets a chance to give result, he may be reborn in a woeful state. Such is the Buddhist Law of Kamma. We cannot, therefore, be sure where a person, who has passed away, will be reborn.

If he is reborn in the world of gods or Devas, we can do nothing to help him in his new existence. Neither could we do anything in the case of his being reborn in Hell or Animal World or world of *Asuras*. But if he is reborn in the World of '*Petas*', we can help him. A *Peta* does not get enough to eat, enough to drink and enough cloth to cover up its body. It is always hungry, thirsty and deficient in all necessities of life. It is to help such beings that we perform ceremonies at or after the funeral. But as we can never know where a deceased person is reborn, we perform funeral ceremonies whenever death occurs, so that in case the deceased is reborn in the World

of *Petas*, he may benefit from our ceremony here, and even or if he is reborn elsewhere we may acquire merits for ourselves.

The ceremony should be performed in this way:

Bhikkhus should be invited to the house where a person has died, or to the cemetery. The corpse should be placed before the Bhikkhus. The relatives should then assemble and take '*Pañca Sīla*' from the Bhikkhus. Then they should offer the Bhikkhus something—a piece of cloth is usual—, and after that they should invite the deceased to take a share of the merit for a meritorious deed by rejoicing at it. If the deceased could come and rejoice at it, i.e. utter "Sādhu! Sādhu!", he will at that very moment be free from the woeful state he has fallen into and will enjoy godly clothes, ornaments, abodes and so on, and he will be thankful to his relations.

Also seven days after the death, offering of food should be made to the Bhikkhus. The same procedure should be repeated here, and the deceased should be invited to take a share of the merit by rejoicing at the meritorious deed.

As a result of this offering of food he will be able to enjoy godly food there. So, to put it in a nutshell, ceremony connected with the death of a person should be performed twice, once, at burial or cremation and again seven days after death. Both should be done with the intention of helping the deceased, if by some evil Kamma he is reborn in the World of *Petas*.

Pattidāna and Pattānumodanā

Inviting others to take shares of the merit by rejoicing at one's own meritorious deeds itself is a meritorious act called *Pattidāna* (giving of merit acquired); and rejoicing at meritorious deeds done by others is also a meritorious act called *Pattānumodanā* (rejoicing at merit acquired by others).

Besides, one's own merit does not decrease although it is shared with others just as the

light of a candle does not decrease although other candles are lighted with it. That is why all Buddhists, when they do meritorious deeds, invite all other beings to take shares of the merit by rejoicing at the meritorious deed.

Difference between ordinary offerings and the offerings made for the benefit of the deceased:

However, ordinary offerings are made primarily for the benefit of the donors themselves. The benefit of others, who rejoice at the offerings and thereby get a share of the merits, are therefore, only a matter of secondary consideration. Whereas offerings made at or in connection with funerals are primarily for the benefit of the deceased and the benefit of the donors themselves is only a matter of secondary consideration.

Besides, in the case of ordinary offerings it is not essential that the donors and the sharers of their merit should get immediate benefit, whereas in the case of offerings made for the deceased it is absolutely essential that they should on rejoicing at the offerings get immediate benefit, e.g. in the form of godly clothes, ornaments, abodes and so on. The deceased cannot wait for future benefits like the donors and other sharers of merits and they can get immediate benefit only if the donees are virtuous.

Three essential conditions for effectiveness of offerings made for the benefit of the deceased.

So, three essential conditions must be fulfilled in order that the deceased might get the full benefit of the offering made by his relative.

These three conditions are:

(1) That the donor must make the offering expressly for the benefit of the deceased saying, "Let the merit for this offering reach my relative so and so";

(2) That the donee must be a virtuous person; and

(3) That the deceased himself must rejoice in and express appreciation of the offering.⁵

The first condition does not prevent the donor from inviting other deceased relatives and all other beings to rejoice at the offering; and take shares of the merit therefore.

With reference to the second condition there was an instance of a *Peta*, who had not benefited by three offerings made successively to one and the same vicious donee, crying "The vicious person has robbed me!" (i.e. of the benefits which might have arisen to me immediately if the offerings had been made to a virtuous person).⁶

However, the second condition is essential only for the special purpose of letting the deceased benefit immediately by rejoicing at the offering.

Offerings without such special object can be made to any being, good or bad. Even offering a little food to a dog is an act of merit; the donor will get benefit therefore; and the sharer will get benefit for rejoicing thereat although the benefit in either case may not be immediate and the amount of merit for offerings increases with the virtue not only of the donee but also of the donor.

This performing of funeral ceremony or in other words, giving *dāna* and sharing merit with the spirits is the duty of every relative (*ñāti dhamma*), be he a near or remote, as the person who has passed away from this world and is reborn in the Woeful State of *Petas* always hopes for an opportunity to utter "Sādhu", i.e., to rejoice at the *dāna* done for his benefit by his relatives.

For sons and daughters, it is imperative that they perform funeral ceremony at the death of their father or mother. Expectation that they would perform such ceremony is one of the reasons for the parents' desire to have children. Says the Buddha in *Āṅguttara Nikāya*:⁷ "Seeing five things, Bhikkhus, parents desire a son born in the family. What five? He will support and attend to us in our old age, having been reared by us; he will do for us what must

be done; our tradition will long endure (on account of him); he will enjoy the heritage; and he will make offerings for us and will share merit with us when we are dead.” It is also one of the five duties of sons or daughters towards their parents to do meritorious deeds and to share merits with the parents who have passed away.

In conclusion, it should be noted that only ceremonies which are in accord with Buddhism are permissible. It is most important for a Buddhist, when performing ceremonies, to be careful not to go to other religions or deities for refuge discarding the Triple Gem; i.e., the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. If the refuge in the Three Gems is discarded, he will no longer be a Buddhist.

Notes

1 Dhammapada Commentary, Vagga 8.

- 2 Aṅuttara Nikāya, Vol. II., pp. 30-31, 6th Synod. Edition.
- 3 Please see Suttanta Piṭaka, Dīgha Nikāya, Pāthika-vagga. Siṅgāla Sutta, page 146, 6th Synod Edition; and Pāthika-vagga Aṭṭhakathā, Siṅgāla Sutta Vaṇṇanā, page 124, 6th Synod Edition.
- 4 Dhammapada Commentary, 4, Story 8.
- 5 Petavatthu Aṭṭhakathā. 6th Synod Edition, p. 25.
- 6 Majjhima Nikāya, Uparipaṇṇāsa Aṭṭhakathā, 4. Vibhaṅga Vagga, 12. Dakkhinā-vibhaṅga Sutta-vaṇṇanā, p. 219, 6th Synod Edition.
- 7 Aṅuttara Nikāya, Pañcaka Nipāta, Paṭhama Paṇṇāsaka, 4. Sumana-vagga, 9. Putta Sutta, p. 37, 6th Synod Edition.

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THE CASE FOR REBIRTH ¹

By

FRANCIS STORY

PART ONE

The doctrine of reincarnation, the ceaseless round of rebirths, is not, as many people imagine, confined to Buddhism and Hinduism. It is found in some form or another in many religious and philosophical systems and in many parts of the world.

In the oldest records of man's religious thinking we find traces of a belief in the 'transmigration of souls'. Some of the forms it took were naturally primitive and crudely animistic; there is for instance a theory that the ancient Egyptians embalmed their dead to prevent the Ka, or soul, from taking another body. If idea existed in Egypt it almost certainly must have been familiar also to the Babylonians and Assyrians, who shared many of the most important religious beliefs of the Egyptians.

Coming to later times we find reincarnation prominent in the Orphic cult of Greece in the 6th century B.C., when it formed part of the teaching of Pherecydes of Syros. In the Orphic view of life man is a dualism, part evil and part divine. Through a succession of incarnations the individual has to purge himself of the evil in his nature by religious rites and moral purity. When this is accomplished he becomes liberated from the 'circle of becoming' and is wholly divine.

This corresponds very closely to the Buddhist, Hindu and Jain teaching, and there may have been a connection, between them; but it is not possible to establish one on historical evidence. Although by the 6th century B.C. the doctrine had already been developed in the Brahmanas and Upanishads, and may have travelled West along the trade routes, there is still a possibility that arose spontaneously in Greece. The emphasis on ritualism differentiates it from the Buddhist view, but it is significant that it was at about

the same time in both Greece and India that the idea of reincarnation first became linked with a scheme of moral values and spiritual evolution. The connection of Orphism with the mysteries of ceremonial magic must not be allowed to blind us to the fact that it represented a great advance in religious thinking. Hitherto, reincarnation had been regarded in primitive cults as a merely mechanical process, to be controlled, if at all, by spells, incantations and physical devices. This is the idea still prevalent among undeveloped peoples in certain parts of Africa, Polynesia and elsewhere, where, far removed from Indian influences the idea of metempsychosis must have sprung up spontaneously.

Through Orphism reincarnation came to be taught by, among others, Empedocles and Pythagoras. In the hand of the latter the Orphic mysticism was converted into a philosophy. This philosophical aspect of the teaching was inherited by the Platonists, while its mystical character was preserved in the traditions of Gnosticism.

In many respects Greek Gnosticism resembled Hinduism; it was syncretic and eclectic, capable of absorbing into itself ideas from outside sources while at the same time it impregnated with its own thought the beliefs peculiar to other systems. Its influence was felt over many centuries, persisting into the Middle Ages of Europe. In the early centuries of the Christian era we find it in the teachings of men as dissimilar in the general character of their outlook as Plotinus, Cerinthus and Marcion.

Clement of Alexandria about the second century C.E., wrote very largely from the Gnostic standpoint. He combined reincarnation with the necessity of striving for an enlightened moral elevation; a result that could be achieved only through a development taking place not merely in the present life but

in past and future incarnations as well. This belief was shared by Pre-existiani, a sect that numbered among its adherents some of the roost advanced thinkers of the period, including Justin Martyr and the great theologian Origen. They represented a very powerful intellectual movement, one in which the natural freedom of Greek intellectualism was struggling for survival in a world that was sliding towards the Dark Ages. Many of their ideas survived in Neo-Platonism; but for the most part they were driven under ground to find an insecure refuge in the suppressed teachings of the so-called heretical sects that came to be known collectively as the Cathars, or 'Illuminati'.

A not dissimilar doctrine of transmigration is found in the Kabbalah, where it goes under the Hebrew name Gilgul. It forms an integral part of the Kabbalistic system and is one of the features that distinguish Kabbalism from primitive Judaic thought. The Hekhaloth, a Kabbalistic work of the Gaonic era, gives Gnostic and Pythagorean ideas along with the orthodox stream of Talmudic teaching. The result may be regarded as Hellenised Judaism, but modern research on the Kabbalah tends to suggest that its original sources may be much older than has hitherto been granted. It may in fact preserve a very ancient Rabbinical tradition which was not intended for the masses. Much of its philosophical content is of a high order and reveals a creative expansion of Jewish thought in which reincarnation occupies a significant place.

The idea of a transmigrating soul is the central theme of the Bhagavad Gita: "As the soul in this body passes through childhood, youth and old age, even so does it pass to another body. As a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, so does the incarnate soul cast off worn out bodies and enter into others that are new" (Gita, Chapter II Vs. 13 and 22).

Throughout the Upanishads the idea of "soul" (atman) in this sense persists; it is the totality of selfhood and personal identity which

transmigrates, occupying successive bodies, becoming now a man, now a god or an animal, yet in some way preserving its uniqueness as the personal ego throughout. Because of certain difficulties attaching to this concept. however, it was somewhat modified in Vedanta, the last phase of Upanishadic thought. In its place arose the theory that the atman, as an unborn, unoriginated principle not in any way affected by the activities, good or bad, of the phenomenal being was not identical with the individual at all, but with the "Supreme soul", the Paramatman or (neuter) Brahman.

Mahavira, the founder of Jainism (the Nigantha Nataputta of the Buddhist texts), held unequivocally to the "individual soul" theory. Jainism teaches that there are an infinite number of individual souls transmigrating in happy or unhappy states according to their deeds. But whereas in Vedanta release, or Moksha, comes with the realization that the "I" is really identical with the Prammatman or Brahman (the idea summarised in the formula "Tat tvam asi"— (Thou art that), in Jainism it is believed to come only with the complete cessation of rebirth-producing activities. Since automatic and involuntary actions are considered to bear resultants as well as those performed intentionally, the Jain ideal is complete inactivity. As will be seen later, the Buddhist doctrine concerning what it is that undergoes rebirth, and the nature of the moral law that governs Kamma and Vipaka, or actions and results, differs from both these theories and eliminates the teleological and ethical difficulties to which they give rise.

The faith in survival after death which is basic to religious thought has its natural correlative in reincarnation. If life can extend forward in time beyond the grave it must surely be capable of having extended from the past into the present. "From the womb to the tomb" has its complement in "from the tomb to the womb", and to be born many times is no more miraculous than to have been born once, as Voltaire pointed out.

The opposite view, that a being comes into existence from non-existence, implies that it can also—and most probably will—come to an end with the dissolution of the body. That which has a beginning in time can also cease in time and pass away altogether. The doctrine of a single life on earth therefore holds out no promise of a future life in any other state; rather does it make it improbable. But if we accept that there is survival of some part, no matter what, of the personality after death we are accepting also a very strong argument for its existence before birth. Reincarnation is the only form that after-death survival could logically take.

So it is not surprising that wherever religion has developed beyond its simplest beginnings some idea of spiritual evolution through a series of lives is found to be a part of its message. The doctrine of reincarnation together with that of the moral law of cause and effect not only provides an explanation of life's inequalities and the crushing burden of suffering under which countless millions of people labour, thus disposing of the problem raised by the existence of pain and evil in the world; it also gives a rational and practical hope where none existed before. It is, moreover, the supreme justification of moral values in a universe which otherwise appears to be devoid of ethical purpose. It is evident that the Orphic and Gnostic cults recognised this fact when they introduced the concept of moral values into their theology.

PART TWO

In all these systems of thought rebirth is seen, as it is in Buddhism, to be the only means of spiritual purgation. It is necessary for the moral and spiritual evolution of the individual that he should, through a variety of experiences, by his consciously-directed efforts struggle upwards from the lower planes of sensuality and passion to a state of purity in which his latent divinity becomes manifest. That the Cathars, the Kabbalists and others mixed up this reasoned and enlightened

doctrine with the practice of what was later to become known as ritual magic, and with theories of the immortal soul that were frankly animistic, is no argument against the essential truth of their belief. Reason has to emerge slowly and painfully from unreason. It was in like manner that the true principles of science were unfolded at the time when scientific method was growing up alongside the occult practices of the astrologers and alchemists. We may smile at the alchemist's faith that he could find a means of transmuting base metals into gold, but in this age of nuclear physics the idea does not seem quite so crazy as it once did. The alteration of atomic patterns in the structure of metals is no longer entirely outside the range of possibility. The alchemist's methods may have been hopelessly wrong; his basic assumption was not. Similarly, the transformation of the base metal of human nature into the pure gold of divinity is still a possibility. It is only a question of finding the right key to unlock the doors of the mind.

To understand how the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth differs from all of those that have been mentioned, and why the term "rebirth" is preferable to "reincarnation" or "transmigration", it is necessary to glance at the main principles of Buddhist teaching.

These are summed up in the Four Noble Truths:

1. The Truth concerning Suffering
2. The Truth concerning the cause of Suffering
3. The Truth concerning the cessation of Suffering
4. The Truth concerning the Way to the cessation of Suffering.

The first proposition is nothing more than a self-evident fact: that suffering is inherent in all forms of existence. No one can go through life without experiencing physical pain, sickness, disappointment and grief; none can escape old age and death. Suffering is even more prevalent in the life of animals than in

that of human beings, and Buddhism takes into account all forms of sentient life. But aside from these obvious aspects of the universal world-suffering there is the fact that all conditioned existence is unstable, restless and lacking in fulfillment. It is a process of becoming which never reaches the point of completion in being. This in itself is suffering. In brief, life even at its best is unsatisfactory.

In the formula of the Three Characteristics of Being, all phenomenal existence is defined as being impermanent, fraught with suffering, and devoid of self-essence. These three characteristics derive from one another; because existence is transitory it is painful; because it is transitory and painful it can have no enduring essence of selfhood. There is no "soul" in the sense of a total personality-entity, for what we call the self is merely a current of consciousness linked to a particular physical body. This current of consciousness is made up of thought-moments of infinitesimal duration succeeding one another in a stream of inconceivable rapidity. The psychic life of the individual is just the duration of a single moment of consciousness, no more. We are living all the time what is in reality a series of lives. The life-stream is the rapid succession of these consciousness-moments, or momentary existences, resembling the running of a reel of film through a projector. It is this which gives the illusion of a static entity of being where nothing of the kind exists. The general characteristics of personality are maintained, but only in the same way that a river maintains the same course until some thing diverts it or it dries up. Thus there is no "immortal soul" that transmigrates just as there is no river, but only the passage of particles of water flowing in the same direction. Anattā, soullessness, is therefore bound up with Anicca, impermanence, and Dukkha, suffering. The three Characteristics are the three aspects of the same central fact.

Yet this state of soullessness is capable of producing rebirth. How can this be so, if there is no transmigrating entity—no "soul" to reincarnate? The answer is to be found in the

Buddhist system of ethico-psychology, the Abhidhamma. There it is shown that the act of willing is a creative force, which produces effects in and through the conditions of the physical world. The thought-force of a sentient being, generated by the will-to-live, the desire to enjoy sensory experiences, produces after death another being who is the causal resultant of the preceding one. Schopenhauer expressed the same idea when he said that in rebirth, which he called "Palingenesis", it is the will, not an ego-entity, which re-manifests in the new life. The being of the present is not the same as the being of the past, not will the being of the future be the same as the being of the present. Yet neither are they different beings, because they all belong to the same current of cause and effect. Each is part of an individual current of causality in which "identity" means only "belonging to the same cause-effect continuum". Since mind and body are alike continually undergoing change—or, more precisely, they are made up of constituent factors which are arising and passing away from moment to moment—this is the only kind of self-identity which connects the various stages of a single life through childhood, youth, maturity and old age. Buddhism presents a dynamic view of existence in which the life-continuum is merely the current of momentary existences, or successive units of consciousness, linked together by causal relations, both mental and physical. The process may be likened to a current of electricity, which consists of minute particles called electrons. An electron is much lighter in weight than an atom of the lightest chemical element, hydrogen, yet waves of these particles in the form of an electric current can produce many different effects in heat, light and sound, and can produce them on a tremendous scale. In the same way the units of consciousness constitute an energy-potential which in the Buddhist view is the basic energy of the universe, operating through and in conjunction with natural laws.

So we see that mental force is a kind of energy, which Buddhism has linked with moral

principles by way of Kamma, actions, and Vipaka, moral resultants. Buddhism maintains that the physical universe itself is sustained by this mental energy derived from living beings, which is identical with their Kamma. The energy itself is generated by craving. It operates upon the atomic constituents of the physical world in such a way as to produce bodies equipped with organs of sense by means of which the desire for sensory gratification, produced by past experiences, may be satisfied again. In this world the mind-force which produces rebirth has to operate through the genetic principles known to biology; it requires human generative cells and all the favourable physical conditions of heat, nutrition and so forth, to produce a foetus. When it does so, the foetus and the infant that it later becomes bear both biologically-inherited characteristics and the characteristics carried by the past Kamma of the individual whose thought-force has caused the new birth. It is not the question of a "soul" entering the embryo, but of the natural formation of the foetus being moulded by an energy from without, supplied by the causative impulse from some being that lived before. It is only necessary to conceive craving-force as an energy-potential flowing out from the mind of a being at the moment of death, and carrying with it the kammic characteristics of that being, just as the seed of a plant carries with it the botanical characteristics of its type, and a mental picture is formed that corresponds roughly to what actually takes place. Mind force is creative, and its basis is desire. Without desire there can be no will to act; consequently the "will" of Schopenhauer is identical with the Buddhist *Taṇhā*, or Craving.

The second of the Four Noble Truths, therefore, is that the cause of suffering in the round of rebirths is Craving. But one cause alone is not enough to give rise to a specific result. In this case, craving is conjoined with ignorance. The mind generates craving for sensory experience because of ignorance of the fact that these experiences are impermanent, unsatisfactory and so themselves a source of

suffering. So the circle of becoming, without discernable beginning and without end, is joined. This wheel of existences does not exist in time; time exists in it. Hence it does not require a point of beginning in what we know as time. It is the *perpetuum mobile* of cause and effect, counter-cause and counter-effect, turning round upon itself.

But although, like the revolution of the planets round the sun, it goes on perpetually simply because there is nothing to stop it, it can be brought to an end by the individual of himself, through an act of will. The act of will consists in turning craving into non-craving. When this is accomplished and *Nibbāna*, the state of desirelessness, is reached, there is no more rebirth. The life-asserting impulses are eliminated and there is no further arising of the bases of phenomenal personality. This is the objective set forth in the third of the Noble Truths; that concerning the cessation of suffering.

The Way to that cessation, which is the Noble Eightfold Path of self-discipline and meditation leading to perfect purity and Insight-wisdom, is the subject of the last of the Four Noble Truths, and gives epistemological completeness to the whole.

The Buddhist system of thought is thus presented as a reasoned progression from known facts to a conclusion which is ascertainable by the individual and is also accessible to him as a personally-experienced reality. The round of rebirths, or *Śaṃsāra*, does not come to an end automatically, neither is there any point at which all beings revolving in it gain their release by reason of its ceasing, for it has not temporal boundaries. But anyone can bring to an end his own individual current of cause and effect, and the whole purpose of the Buddha's Teaching was to demonstrate the theoretical and practical means by which this can be achieved. The painful kind of "immortality" conferred by rebirth in conditioned existences is not to be regarded as a blessing, but rather as a curse which man pronounces upon himself. Nevertheless, by

understanding it we are able to gain assurance that there is in truth a moral principle governing the universe; and by learning to use its laws in the right way we become able to control and guide our individual destinies by a higher spiritual purpose and towards a more certain goal.

PART THREE

Of late years interest in the doctrine of rebirth has been greatly stimulated by the publicity given to several cases of people who have remembered previous lives. For a long time past it has been known that under deep hypnosis events in very early infancy, outside the normal range of memory, could be recovered, and this technique has been increasingly employed for the treatment of personality disorders. It cannot be used with success on all patients because of the involuntary resistance some subjects show to hypnotic suggestion, which inhibits the cooperation necessary to obtain deep trance. But where it can be applied it has definite advantages over the usual methods of deep psychoanalysis, one of them being the speed with which results are obtained.

The technique is to induce a state of hypnosis and then carry the subject back in time to a particular point in childhood or infancy at which it is suspected that some event of importance in the psychic life may have occurred. In this state, known as hypermnesia, the subject becomes in effect once more the child he was, and re-lives experiences that have long been buried in the unconscious. Memories of earliest infancy, and in some cases pre-natal memories, have been brought to the surface in this way.

Some practitioners have carried experiments in regression even further, and have found that they were uncovering memories that did not belong to the current life of the subject at all, but to some previous existence. In cases where nothing could be proved, the rebirth explanation has been

contested, and various theories such as telepathy, fantasies of the unconscious, and even clairvoyance, have been put forward to account for the phenomena. But apart from the fact that many of the alternatives offered call for the acceptance of psychic faculties which, if what is claimed for them is true, themselves bring rebirth nearer to being a comprehensible reality, none of them alone covers all the phenomena which have been brought under observation. If, for example, xenoglossy, the ability shown by some subjects under hypnosis to speak languages unknown to them in their normal state, is to be explained by telepathy we are brought face to face with a supernormal faculty of the mind which itself contributes to our understanding of the manner in which mental energy may operate processes of rebirth. But although telepathy has now been acknowledged as one of the unexplained phenomena of parapsychology, along with clairvoyance, telekinesis and psychometry, it cannot legitimately be expanded to include all the phenomena these experiments have disclosed. To account for all of them on these lines it would be necessary to combine every one of the known extra-sensory faculties into one concept, that of a freely-wandering, disembodied intelligence, independent of spatial and temporal limitations, if we are to apply here the scientific law of parsimony, the more likely alternative is the obvious one that they are simply what they purport to be—memories of previous lives.

As to the theory that the memories are products of the unconscious mind, it cannot survive the proof to the contrary which comes from the revelation of facts that could not have been known to the subject in his present life. These are objective and circumstantial and they exist in abundance, as any reading of the literature on the subject will confirm.

The best-known example of this kind is the case of Bridey Murphy in America, which raised a hurricane of controversy when it broke into the news a few years ago. It was followed some time later by a similar case in England in which the subject Mrs. Naomi Henry,

remembered under hypnosis two previous existences. The experiments were carried out under test conditions by Mr. Henry Blythe, a professional consultant hypnotist. In the presence of several witnesses tape recordings were made of the sessions, which were held under the supervision of a medical practitioner, Dr. William C. Minifie, who testified that the hypnotic trance was genuine. It has been said of these recordings that they provide "what must surely be the most thought-provoking, absorbing and controversial angle ever offered" on the subject.

What happened was this. Mrs. Naomi Henry, a thirty-two-years-old Exeter house wife, the mother of four children was cured of smoking habit by hypnotic treatment given by Mr. Henry Blythe, of Torquay, Devon. He found her to be "an exceptionally receptive hypnotic subject", so much that without informing her of the purpose of his experiment he began a series of sessions in which he succeeded in taking her back beyond her present life.

Mrs. Henry remembered two previous existences. In the first she gave her name as Mary Cohan, a girl of 17 living in Cork in the year 1790. Among other circumstances she told how she was married against her wishes to a man named Charles Gaul, by whom she had two children, Pat and Will. Her husband ill-treated her, and finally caused her death by a beating which broke her leg. Whilst describing these events in the trance she was evidently reliving the intense emotional experiences of the past with the vividness of a present reality rather than of a mere memory. Intervening time had been obliterated and she was once more the illiterate Irish girl she had been over a century and a half before. Her marriage, she said, took place in St. John's Church, in a hamlet named 'Grenner'. Several of the facts at she related were afterwards verified on the spot, but no village of the name of 'Grenner' could be traced. Eventually, however, some records dating back to the 17th century were found in the possession of a parish priest, and in them mention was made of a Church of St.

John in a village named Greenhalgh. The name is pronounced locally just as Mary Cohan gave it—"Grenner".

Next she remembered a life in which she was Clarice Hellier, a nurse in charge of twenty-four children at Downham in 1902. After relating what she remembered of this life she went on to describe her last illness, her death and her funeral, which it seems she had been able to witness. She was even able to give the number of the grave, 207, in which she had been buried.

When Mrs. Henry emerged from her trance she had no recollection of what had taken place and it was only when she heard the recording that she learned the purpose of the experiments. The authenticity of this case has been established beyond reasonable doubt.

One of the most remarkable men of recent times, Edgar Cayce, obtained evidence of an even more striking nature. Born in Christian Country, Kentucky, in 1877, he suffered as a young man from psycho-somatic constriction of the throat which deprived him of his voice. Orthodox medical treatments having failed, he was treated by hypnotic suggestion, which was not a recognised form of therapy in those days. In deep trance his voice returned to normal and he diagnosed his own condition. Not only did he describe the physiological symptoms in terms of which he knew nothing in his waking state, but he also prescribed treatment.

His self-cure was so remarkable that he was persuaded, rather against his will, to try prescribing for others whose illness would not respond to medical treatment. This he did with great success, using technical terms and prescribing remedies, which, as a man of only moderate education, he was quite unfamiliar with in his normal state. Some times the medicines he prescribed were conventional remedies in unusual combinations; sometimes they were substances not found in the standard pharmacopoeia. Cayce himself was puzzled and somewhat dismayed by his abnormal faculty, but since it was proving of benefit to an increasing number of sufferers he continued

to use it, only refusing to take any payment for the help he rendered. He soon found that a hypnotist was unnecessary; his trances were really self-induced, and he worked thereafter solely through auto-hypnosis.

One day while Cayce was giving a consultation a friend who was present asked him whether reincarnation was true. Still in the trance, Cayce immediately replied that it was. In answer to further question he said that many of the patients who came to him for treatment were suffering from afflictions caused by bad Karma in previous lives. It was because of this that they resisted ordinary treatment. Asked whether he was able to see the past incarnations of his patients and describe them, he said that he could.

When he was told what he had said in the trance, Cayce was more disturbed than before. The thing was getting decidedly out of hand. He had never heard the word "Kamma," and his only idea of reincarnation was that it was a belief associated with some "heathen" religions. His first reaction was to give the whole thing up, as being some thing supernatural and possibly inimical to his Christian faith.

It was with great difficulty that he was persuaded to continue. However, he consented to be questioned further under hypnosis, and after having given some readings and more successful treatments he became convinced that there was nothing irreligious or harmful in the strange ideas that were being revealed. From that time onwards he supplemented all his diagnoses by readings of past Karma of his patients. It was then found that he was able to give valuable moral and spiritual guidance to counteract bad Karmic tendencies, and his treatments became even more effective. He was now treating the minds as well as the bodies of the patients who sought his help.

When Cayce discovered that he was able to treat people living at great distances, whom he had never seen, the scope of his work broadened until it ultimately extended all over the United States and beyond. Before he died

in 1945 Cayce, with the help of friends and supporters, had established an institution, the Cayce Foundation, at Virginia Beach, Virginia. It is now operating as a research institute under the direction of his associates. Cayce left a vast number of case-histories and other records accumulated over the years, and these are still being examined and correlated by the Foundation. For further information on Edgar Cayce, his work and the light it throws on rebirth the reader is referred to *Many Mansions* by Gina Cerminara, "Edgar Cayce, Mystery Man of Miracles" by Joseph Millard, and numerous publications issued by the Cayce Foundation.

There is a great deal in the evidence to suggest that Cayce in his hypnotised state had access to lost medical knowledge, as well as the power to see the previous lives of others. In the Buddhist texts of a very early date there are references to advanced medical knowledge and techniques of surgery in some ways comparable to our own. Jivaka, a renowned physician who was a contemporary of the Buddha is recorded as having performed a brain operation for the removal of a living organism of some kind. But there are still older records. The Edwan Smith Papyrus (c.3500 B.C.) describes the treatment of cerebral injuries, and the writing attributed to Hippocrates include directions for opening the skull. The great Egyptian physician, Imhotep, who lived about three thousand years before the Christian era and was a many-sided genius comparable to Leonardo da Vinci, had such skill in medicine that he became a legend. He was deified under the Ptolemies and identified with Asklepois, the god of healing, by the Greeks; but there is no doubt whatever that he was an actual historical personage. Without venturing beyond what is naturally suggested by Edger Cayce's statements concerning rebirth, and their linking up with the often unusual but brilliantly successful treatments he prescribed, it is possible to see that there might be a direct connection between the knowledge possessed by these ancient physicians and the

abnormal knowledge released from Cayce's unconscious mind under hypnosis.

But even Cayce was not altogether unique. Egerton C. Baptist, in "Nibbāna or the Kingdom?" quotes the following from "Life and Destiny" by Leon Denis:

"In 1880 at Vera Cruz, Mexico, a seven-year-old child possessed the power to heal. Several people were healed by vegetable remedies prescribed by the child. When asked how he knew the things, he said that he was formerly a great doctor, and his name was Jules Alpherese. This surprising faculty developed in him at the age of four years."

In Buddhism, the faculty of remembering previous lives and of discerning the previous lives of others is one that is developed in the course of meditation on selected subjects. But it is acquired only when a certain precisely-defined stage of Jhāna, or mental absorption, has been reached. The subject is dealt within the Canonical Texts of Buddhism, and at considerable length in the *Visuddhi-Magga* of Buddhaghosa Thera². Those who have practised meditation to this point in previous lives without having attained complete liberation from rebirth may be reborn with the faculty in a latent form. In the case of others, hypnosis seems to provide a short-cut technique to releasing some at least of the dormant memories of former lives, just as it provides a short cut to result ordinarily reached by deep psychoanalysis. There is much to be done in the way of more extensive and systematic investigation before definite conclusions can be tabulated. The chief difficulty is to obtain suitable subjects or the tests.

PART FOUR

A question that is often asked is: if rebirth is a fact, why is it so rare for people to have any recollection of their previous lives?

There are several answers to this. The first and most obvious is that even ordinary

memory is very restricted, and varies greatly in extent and vividness with different people. Death itself, the Lethe of psycho-mythology, is an obliterating agent, for it is necessary for each consciousness to begin its renewed course more or less a tabula rasa with the formation of a new physical brain. Another factor is the nature of the lives intermediate to one human birth and another. There are, as Buddhism maintains, rebirths in states that are non-human and in which the consciousness does not register impressions clearly, so that a series of such lives between one human birth and another may erase all traces of memory connection between them. A study of the earliest behaviour patterns of children, however, will furnish much evidence to suggest that they bring with them into the new life certain dim awarenesses that do not belong to their present range of experience. The aptitude certain children show for acquiring some particular skills strongly suggests remembering rather than learning. The headmistress of a kindergarten school told the author that a few years after the end of the First World War she noticed that some of her boy pupils were showing a maturity of mind and a facility in gaining knowledge which was so unlike anything in her previous experience that it roused her curiosity.

After making a study of these children she came to the conclusion that they were not learning but remembering. She became convinced of the truth of rebirth when one small boy, born after the war and exhibiting a highly-strung nature which she had formerly attributed to post-war conditions, one day became violently agitated by a sudden explosive noise close behind him. The fear he showed was out of all proportion to the cause; in fact he fell into an almost cataleptic state. When he recovered, he told her that he had a vague memory of a tremendous explosion and a brilliant flash of light, and that the loud noise had brought it back to him so vividly that he felt as though he was dying. From that time she was convinced that her extremely intelligent but often nervously unstable pupils

were the reincarnations of men whose immediately previous lives had been cut short by the war, and who had been reborn almost at once into the human state to complete the interrupted Kammic continuity of that particular life. [5]

Many children lead vivid lives of the imagination, or so it is supposed. They sometimes speak of things that bear no relation to their present experiences. Parents as a rule do not encourage this kind of imaginativeness, particularly if some of its manifestations cause them embarrassment. They then peremptorily forbid the child to tell any more untruths. But are these always untruths? May they not in fact be residual memories of past experiences? In any case, they are "driven-under" by the parents' unsympathetic attitude and quickly become obliterated by new impressions. In the East, where children are allowed greater latitude to prattle of what they will, this does not happen. The difference may account for the frequently-noted fact that instances of people recollecting past lives are more numerous in the East than in Western countries.

The son of a distinguished Indian doctor practising in Burma started talking of his "wife" and of events and people belonging to another realm of experience as soon as he was able to speak. The boy was living in a trilingual environment where Hindi, English, and Burmese were spoken, but his father noticed that from the start he used words to denote familiar things, such as doors, tables, and houses, which were not Hindi, English or Burmese. The doctor noted down a number of these words phonetically, with the intention of later on trying to identify them. Unfortunately, at that time the Japanese occupation of Burma took place and the records were lost, so it was never possible to establish whether the words belonged to any existing language or not.

Cases of children remembering their previous lives in considerable detail are not uncommon in Asian countries. An example which bears all the classic features of this

phenomenon is that of Parmod, the son of Babu Bankey Lal Sharma, M.A., Shastri, a Professor in an intermediate college at Bissuli in the district of Badan. The boy was born at Bissauli on March 15th 1944. As soon as he was able to utter any words clearly he pronounced the names "Mohan," "Moradabad" and "Saharanpur." Later he said quite distinctly, "Mohan Brothers." When he saw his relatives purchasing biscuits, he told them that he had a big biscuit factory in Moradabad, and on being taken to large shops he would frequently say that his shop in Moradabad was bigger than any other shop. As time went on he became insistent that he should be taken to Moradabad, where he had a brother, sons, a daughter, and a wife.

When he was able to give a clear account of himself, he said that he was Paramanand, the brother of one B. Mohanlal, the proprietor of a catering firm, Messrs. Mohan Bros., having branches in Saharanpur and Moradabad. As Paramanand, he said, he had died of a stomach ailment at Saharanpur on May 9th 1943. The date was just nine months and six days before his birth as Pramod.

Early in the year 1949, when the boy was five, a friend of the family, Lala Raghunandanlal of Bissauli, told one of his relatives living in Moradabad about the boy and his assertions. It was then learned that there was actually a firm of Mohan Bros. caterers, the proprietor of which was named Mohan Lal. When the story was told to him, Mr. Mohan Lal visited Bissauli with some of his relatives, and there met the boy's father. Young Pramod, as it happened, was paying a visit to some relatives in a distant village at the time (July 1949) and could not be seen. Professor Bankey Lal however consented to take him to Moradabad during the forthcoming Independence Day holidays.

They arrived in Moradabad on August 15th. On alighting from the train the boy at once recognised his brother and ran to embrace him. On the way to Mohan Lal's house Pramod recognised the Town Hall and announced that

his shop was close at hand. They were riding in a tonga which, to test the boy, was being driven past the shop. Pramod recognised the building and called out for the vehicle to stop. He then alighted and led the way to the house in front of Mohan Lai Brothers' premises where the late Paramanand had lived. There he entered the room which Paramanand had kept for his religious devotions, and did reverence to it. He also recognised his wife and other relatives, and recalled incidents known to them, by which he established his identity to their complete satisfaction. The only person he failed to recognise was his eldest son, who had been thirteen years old when Paramanand died and had altered greatly in the five years' interval.

After a touching reunion with the relatives of his former life, the boy expressed a desire to go to his business premises. On entering the shop he went to the soda-water machine and explained the process of making aerated water, a thing of which he could not have acquired any knowledge in his present life. Finding that the machine would not work, he at once said that the water connection had been stopped, which was a fact; it had been done to test him. After that he said he wanted to go to the Victory Hotel, a business owned by a cousin of Paramanand's, Mr. Karam Chand. The boy led the way to the building, and entering it pointed out some rooms on the upper storey which had been added since his time.

During the two days of their stay in Moradabad the boy was taken to the Meston Park by a leading citizen of the town, Sahu Nanda Lal Saran, who asked him to point out where his civil lines branch had been. At once the boy led the company to the Gujerati Building owned by Sahu Lal Saran and indicated the shop which had once been the branch of Mohan Bros. On the Way to the Meston Park he had already recognised and correctly named the Allahabad Bank, the waterworks, and the district jail. Some of the English words, such as Town Hall, were not in use in the small town of Bissauli, and Pramod had never heard them, yet he used them

accurately. He not only identified his former relatives but also people who used to visit his shop on business.

The following is the account given by Mr. J. D. Mehra of Messrs. Mohan Bros., Moradabad, a brother of the late Paramanand :

“My brother, Paramanand, aged 39, died of appendicitis on 9th May 1943 at Saharanpur about 100 miles from Moradabad. Pramod, the boy concerned, was born on 15th March 1944 at Bissauli. As the boy grew up he began to utter things of his previous life. For instance, he would say to his father when offered biscuits that he would have biscuits of his own shop and that he owned a big shop at Moradabad. He used to refer to his four sons, daughter, and wife. When his mother would prepare meals, he would say to her, 'Why should you prepare meals? I have an elderly wife, send for her.'

“As requested by us it was decided to bring this boy to Moradabad on August 15th 1948 (the day of India's Independence). Sri Karam Chand, the eldest of our brothers, went to the station to receive the boy and his father. When Mr. Bankey Lal, the father, alighted from the station with his boy, Pramod spotted out Sri Karam Chand from the crowd and clung to him, and would not go to his father. When questioned whether he knew the gentleman, he at once replied, 'Yes, he is my Bara Bhai (elder brother).'

“Whilst passing the Town Hall compound the boy said that it was the Town Hall, an English word with which he was not familiar in his own small city. ... When taken round the place where biscuits were manufactured, he said that it was a bakery, another English word not familiar to him in his birthplace. Entering the kitchen he said that he used to sit on a wooden cot there and pray. Before he entered the room he did Namaskar to the place where he used to sit in meditation.

“Seeing his wife without the vermilion mark on her forehead he questioned her: 'Where is your Bindu (mark) on the forehead?’”

This was a very significant remark for a boy of his age ... “

The boy's own father, Shri Bankey Lal Sharma, wrote the following testimony:

“I have read almost all the versions of the statement regarding the rebirth of Paramanand of Moradabad. As I have been the eyewitness of all these things, I can say with emphasis that everything contained in the report is true to its minutest detail.

“Paramanand is a wonderful child with a very fine intelligence. He began to utter “Moradabad” and “Mohan Brothers” alone one year back. Since December last he spoke of the firm he owned during his last existence and also the articles he dealt in. A few days later he made a reference to a shop of his at Saharanpur. Biscuits and tea have been his great attraction. Although nobody attaches any importance to them in my family, he is very fond of them. It was through the association of 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 much changed. ... He recognised other sons, his only daughter, wife, brothers, mother and father, and several others whom he contacted during his previous life ...

“I am a middle-class man, but the boy is not satisfied with the present status. He often stresses on business and opening a big shop in Bombay or Delhi. In the latter place, he says, he had been several times on business. He wants aeroplanes, ships, mansions, radios, and all modern fashions.“ He has a great leaning towards his past relatives and does not want to live with me. He requests me to purchase and have a bank of our own ...”

It was only with great difficulty that the boy was taken away from Moradabad after the visit. He showed such unwillingness to leave his old relatives and the shop, that his present father had to carry him away in the early hours of August 17th while he was still asleep.

On the day prior to their departure, August 16th 1949, a large public meeting was held at the Arya Samaj where Prof. Bankey Lal, Pramod's father, gave a full account of the development of the boy's memories since his early childhood. The case was investigated in the full light of local publicity by people known to all the persons concerned.

Among numerous cases from Burma, the following, given on the testimony of U Yan Pa of Rangoon, is one of the most thoroughly substantiated.

In the village of Shwe Taung Pan, situated close to Dabein on the Rangoon-Pegu trunk line, the eldest daughter of a cultivator named U Po Chon and his wife, Daw Ngwe Thin, was married to another cultivator of the same village, named Ko Ba Thin. This girl, whose name was Ma Phwa Kyin, died in childbirth some time later.

Shortly afterwards, a woman in Dabein, Daw Thay Thay Hmyin, the wife of one U Po Yin, became pregnant and in due course gave birth to a daughter whom they named Ah Nyo. When she first began to speak, this child expressed a strong wish to go to the neighbouring village, Shwe Taung Pan. She declared that she had lived and died in that village, and that her name was really not Ah Nyo but Ma Phwa Kyin. Eventually her parents took her to the village. The child at once led them to the house of the late Ma Phwa Kyin, pointing out on the way a rice field and some cattle which she said belonged to her. When the father, mother, and two brothers, Mg Ba Khin and Mg Ba Yin, of Ma Phwa Kyin appeared, she at once identified them. They confirmed that the house, field, and cattle were those that had belonged to Ma Phwa Kyin, and when the child recalled to them incidents of her former life they admitted that her memories were accurate and accepted her as being without doubt the dead girl reborn. Later she convinced her other surviving relatives in the same way. The girl Ah Nyo, now about twenty-five years of age,

is everywhere in the neighbourhood accepted as the former Ma Phwa Kyin reborn.

More numerous are the cases in which specific skills are carried over from one life to another, rather than any distinct recollection of identity. Among musical prodigies we find Mozart composing minuets before he was four years old; Beethoven playing in public at eight and publishing compositions at ten; Handel giving concerts at nine; Schubert composing at eleven; Chopin playing concerts in public before he was nine and Samuel Wesley playing the organ at three and composing an oratorio at eight. The musical precocity of Brahms, Dvorak, and Richard Strauss was manifest at an equally early stage.

In a less specialised field there is the case of Christian Heinrich Heineken, born at Lubeck in 1721. At the age of ten months he was able to speak, and by the time he was one year old he knew by heart the principal incidents of the Pentateuch. "At two years of age he is said to have mastered sacred history; at three he was intimately acquainted with history and geography, ancient and modern, sacred and profane, besides being able to speak French and Latin; and in his fourth year he began the study of religions and church history."

This amazing child created a tremendous sensation, crowds of people flocking to Lubeck to see and discourse with him. He died at the age of four, soon after he had begun to learn writing. That he was able to master so many abstruse subjects before he could even write is proof that his abnormal achievements were not the result of learning but of remembering.

Saṅgāyana, the journal of the Union of Burma Buddha Sāsana Council, reported in its issue of July 1954 the case of a six-year-old girl, Ma Hla Gyi, who showed remarkable intelligence for her age, combined with a phenomenal memory. "She can read," the report stated, "the most difficult Pali verses a few times, memorise and recite them promptly and correctly." In a test given to her she recited the final stanza of the sub-commentary on the

Buddhist Compendium of Philosophy in Pali without an error, after reading it five times. She was also able to recite without a single error a page of the Pali Paṭṭhāna text (an abstruse Abhidhamma passage) after looking at it for one minute. This might be explained by the possession of a photographic memory, but for the fact that the child could understand what she read and was able to give its meaning.

These and many other instances of the appearance from time to time of child prodigies, although not constituting direct evidence for rebirth, present phenomenon for which biology and psychology cannot account. That memory itself is something extra to the activities of the brain cells is a conclusion accepted on physiological grounds by Max Loewenthal and others.

From the cases available for examination it would seem that memories carried over from one life to another are subject to the same broad, general principle as are ordinary memories belonging to the current life: we remember what most interests us, and what we most desire to remember. Therefore a strong Kammic predisposition to a particular form of study is more likely to persist from the past life than are the actual details of that life, which may be connected with personal psychological reactions and emotional responses that are in the ordinary course of nature suppressed.

PART FIVE

Despite great advances in the study of genetics, there is still much that is unexplained in the biological processes that produce living organisms. While the transmission of hereditary characteristics through the genes can be traced in the operation of physical laws, there is yet no known method of accounting for the sudden mutations that occur from time to time and so give rise to variations of species. Yet these mutations, and the fact that they are possible, are a matter of the first

importance, since it is by them that biological evolution takes place. For many generations the structural units of a chromosome, the genes, remain the same, and produce uniform hereditary types; but suddenly, without any intermediary stages, a new type is formed from them which may or may not continue to propagate itself. A well-known example of this is the fruit fly, *Drosophila melanogaster*, which, being normally an insect with a grey body and long wings, produces from time to time a spontaneous mutation having a black body slightly different in shape, and very short wings. Many similar cases are known of this kind of departure from a hereditary form, but precisely what different combinations or genes, chromosomes or atomic patterns cause the variation, or why they occur, is still a mystery to biologists. All that can be said is that the changes are isomeric transformations of the kind found in simple molecular structures, and that they follow the laws of chemical kinetics which also apply to non-living substances under certain conditions.

Between “living” and “non-living” matter there is no sharp line of distinction, for it is known that the processes by which living cells nourish themselves from their surrounding medium, assimilate material for their sustenance, and divide into other cells capable of independent existence is closely paralleled by processes observable in chemical molecules. For example, virus particles, which are the simplest form of life known at present, have to be considered as living units because they perform all the essential functions of living cells, yet at the same time they are regular chemical molecules, subject to all the laws of chemistry and physics. As living molecules comparable to the genes by which organic life is propagated, they are able to multiply, and they are also capable of producing biological mutations which result in the appearance from time to time of new types of a particular virus.

Yet a purely chemical study of them shows each type of virus to be a well-defined chemical compound similar to various

complex organic compounds that are not strictly “living” matter. They thus represent a “bridge” between living” and “non-living,” substance, and possibly the point at which the “non-living” merges into the “living.”

What has to be sought is the directive principle that prompts the transformation and guides the molecules to combine into more complex organic structures. To be able to follow the process, even right from its earliest stage, is not the same as to know its cause, and it is here that scientific method has to enlarge its scope to include the study of principles and laws underlying the phenomena of the physical universe and functioning on a different level from that to which the scientist has hitherto confined himself. Inasmuch as Buddhism locates these ultimate principles in the mental and immaterial, rather than the physical realm, the enquiry must necessarily be turned towards the interaction between mind-energy and the material substance through which it manifests itself.

If the transformations of non-living into living matter and the developments which these transformations afterwards undergo are regarded as the physical manifestation of kamma and vipāka (kamma-result), it is only necessary to add these to the present stock of scientific knowledge as the unknown factors that at present elude identification, for many things still obscure to become clarified, without resorting to the supernatural for an explanation.

The embryonic human being derives its hereditary characteristics from the genes of the parents, sharing in equal measure the chromosomes of father and mother, the sex being determined by the proportion of what are distinguished as X and Y chromosomes. Female cells contain always two X-chromosomes, while the male has one X and one Y, and it is in the substitution of one Y for an X-chromosome that the basic difference in sex consists. At the time of conception the male sperm cell unites with the female and by the process of syngamy forms one complete

cell, which afterwards divides into two, thus starting the process of mitosis by which the complete organism eventually comes into being. Here, what is not known is exactly why in certain cases the X and Y chromosomes combine to form a female, while in others they produce a male cell.

This may be purely fortuitous, but it is more in accordance with the scientific view of cause and effect to suspect the presence of another factor that in some way determines the combination. The Buddhist view that this unknown factor is kamma or energy-potential, the mental impulse projected by another being which existed in the past, is one that science by itself can neither prove nor disprove, but it provides the most likely explanation—in fact, the only one which can be offered as an alternative to the improbable theory of chance.

Kamma as cause, and vipāka as result, also provide an explanation of the intermediate conditions in which sex characteristics are more or less equal in one individual, or where it is possible for a complete change of sex to take place. The kamma which in the first place produced a male may be weak, or may become exhausted before the life-supporting kamma comes to an end, in which case the characteristics of the opposite sex may become so marked that they amount virtually to a sex-transformation, the result of a different kind of kamma coming into operation. [†] Similarly, masculine thoughts and habits gradually becoming dominant in a female may bring about more and more marked male characteristics with the passage of time, and these influences may be so strong that they actually reveal themselves in physical changes.

On the other hand, they may only affect the psychic life. What is certain, as this analysis will attempt to show, is that the thought-accretions do have the power to affect not only the general outlook and habits but the physical body itself. For “thought-accretions” we may substitute here the Buddhist term *saṅkhāra*, since this is one of the various associated meanings of this highly-comprehensive word.

Individual character is usually attributed to two factors, the first being heredity. But simple physical characteristics alone are not always traceable to this cause. Colour-blindness, although it can be followed back through successive generations and shows clearly-marked biological transmission, is not invariably hereditary; and in those individual features that partake of both the physical and psychological, such as the sexual deviations referred to above, the hereditary influence does not provide any satisfactory explanation. That they are not hereditary is the conclusion of most authorities.

This also applies to the many examples of infant prodigies and to the less striking, but nevertheless significant, instances of children who bear no resemblance whatever to their parents or grandparents. Where hereditary traits transmitted through the genes of the parents cannot account for differences in character the second factor, environmental influence, is brought in to explain the variation. But this also fails to cover all the ground because the same antecedents and the same environment together frequently produce quite dissimilar personalities, and there are numerous examples of pronounced characteristics appearing at birth, before any environmental pressure is brought to bear on the developing personality.

In Buddhist philosophy it is axiomatic that more than one cause is necessary to produce a given result, so that while character may be partly drawn from heredity, and partly modified by environment, these two factors do not in any way rule out the third factor, that of the individual *saṅkhāra*, or kamma-formation-tendency developed in previous lives, which may prove itself stronger than either of them.

Hereditary transmissions themselves are a part of the operation of the causal law, for it happens that owing to strong attachments the same persons may be born again and again in the same family. This accounts for the fact that a child may be totally unlike either of its parents in temperament, tastes, and abilities,

yet may resemble a dead grandfather or some more distant ancestor. Physical appearance may be derived in the first place from the genes of the parents, but it undergoes modifications as the individual develops along his own lines, and it is then that distinctive characteristics, the result habitual thought-tendencies stamping themselves upon the features, become more pronounced.

That the mind, or rather the mental impressions and volitional activities, produce changes in the living structure, is a fact which science is beginning to recognise. Hypnotism affords an opportunity of studying this phenomenon under test conditions. It is only recently that hypnotic suggestion as a mode of therapeutic treatment has been officially recognised by medical associations in many parts of the world, but it is already being used with success as a form of harmless anaesthesia during operations and child-birth, and as a treatment for psychological disorders. Clinical experiments with hypnosis are helping to reveal the secrets of the mysterious action of mind on body, for it has been found possible by suggestion to produce physical reactions which under ordinary conditions could only be obtained by physical means. Doubtless many of the "faith cures" of Lourdes and other religious centres are the result of a strong mental force, comparable with that produced under hypnotism, acting upon the physical body; the force in this instance being the patient's absolute conviction that a miraculous cure will take place.

The task of the hypnotic practitioner is to induce this acquiescent and receptive state of unquestioning faith by artificial means. This, of course, requires the consent and cooperation of the subject, and it is here that the difficulty usually arises. The patient must have complete faith in the operator to enable him to surrender his own will entirely, for the time being, to another person. When full control of the subject's mind is gained, the required suggestions can be made with every confidence that the mind of the subject will carry them out, and the astonishing thing is

that not only does the mind obey, but the body also responds. If, for instance, the idea of a burn is conveyed through the mind, the mark of a burn duly appears on the flesh on the spot indicated, without the use of any physical means to produce it. Many similar experiments attest to this close inter-relationship of the mental and physical, and prove beyond question the truth of the Buddhist teaching that mental conditions precede and determine certain classes of phenomena which we have been wont to consider purely physical and material.

Hysteria also produces marked physiological changes in certain circumstances, among them being the well-attested phenomenon of "phantom pregnancy." The abnormal mental excitation which produces phantom pregnancy is also to be found in states of religious frenzy, when an unnatural degree of strength, insensibility to pain, and even invulnerability to injury are exhibited. These unexplained phenomena point to the existence of a mental force which can not only inhibit normal reactions to sense-stimuli, but more than that, is able to affect the physical structure in a particular way.

All this has a distinct bearing on the manner in which the mental impulses generated in past lives, particularly the last mental impressions at the time of the preceding death, influence the physical make-up and often predetermine the very structure of the body, in the new birth. Before going more deeply into this a specific example may be offered for consideration.

REBIRTH CASE HISTORY

From the records of the Burma Buddhist World-Mission.

S. T. Karen, age 20. Birthplace, Upper Burma: Examined in Rangoon, 1949.

The subject, a Karen house boy employed by a friend of the writer, while he was in all other respects, physically sound, well built, and well proportioned, suffered from an

unusual malformation of hands and feet. Across his right hand a fairly deep, straight indentation, roughly following the heart-line of palmistry, but much deeper and sharper than any of the normal lines of the hand, and extending right across the palm, divided the hand into two sections. Above this line the hand was not as well developed as at the base of the palm, and the fingers had something of the childish, unformed appearance that is one of the physical accompaniments of cretinism, although not to the same degree. Lower down on the hand and across the forearm there were similar marks, but not so pronounced as that at the base of the fingers.

The left hand was indented in the same unusual fashion, but to a lesser degree; and linear indentations of the same kind appeared less distinctly across both feet and on the calves, the lines being roughly parallel to one another. In addition to this, two toes of the left foot were joined together.

The boy's previous employment had been with a leading Rangoon surgeon who, after examining these marks had declared that although they had been present from birth they could not have been caused by any pre-natal injury or abnormal condition in the womb. Questioned about them, the boy confirmed that they were congenital, and stated that all the indentations had been much more pronounced in childhood. Furthermore, at birth three of his toes had been joined, but his father, with the rough surgery of village folk, had separated two of the toes himself. During his infancy and boyhood these malformations had been a cause of acute suffering to him, for, at times, particularly when the attention of others was drawn to them, his right arm would swell, and severe pain would be felt in all the affected parts. At such times he experienced mental as well as physical distress, being conscious of fear and depression in connection with the malformations.

According to the boy's own narrative, as a child he had been very reluctant to talk about his physical defects, but one night, lying under

the mosquito net with his mother he felt a sense of security which enabled him to speak freely. He then told her that he remembered incidents of his previous life which were the cause of his terror and distress whenever he was reminded of the marks. He had been, he said, the son of a rich man, possibly a village headman, who had died leaving him three adjoining houses and a large quantity of silver stored in large vessels of the type known as Pegu jars besides other treasure secreted in various parts of the buildings.

After his father's death he had lived alone, unmarried and without servants, in one of the three houses. One night a band of dacoits, armed with bamboo spears, broke into the house and demanded to be told where the treasure was hidden. When he refused to tell them, the robbers bound him with wire in a crouching position, with his hands firmly secured between his legs. In this position, tightly bound and unable to move, they left him huddled in a corner while they ransacked the other two houses, finally making off with the entire store of silver and jewellery.

For three days he remained in that position in acute agony, and one of the things he remembered vividly was that blood, dripping from the deep cuts made in his hands by the wire, fell onto his feet and congealed between three of his toes. Some time during the third night he suddenly became aware, in his alternating periods of consciousness and insensibility, that he was looking down at a still form, crouched in a corner, and wondering who it was. It was only later that he realised the body was his own, and that his consciousness was now located in a different and less substantial form.

The rest of his recollection was confused and obscure. It seemed to him that for a long time he wandered about the scene of his former life, conscious only of a sense of loss and profound unhappiness. In this condition he appeared to have no judgement of the passage of time, and was unable to say whether it lasted for days or centuries. His sense of

personal identity, too, was very feeble, his thoughts revolving entirely around the events just prior to his death; and the memory of his lost treasure, which he felt a longing to regain. He seemed, he said, to have his whole existence in a single idea which was like an obsession: the loss of his wealth and the desire to recover it. [6]

After a long time he again became aware of living beings, and felt an attraction towards a certain young woman. He attached himself to her, following her movements, and eventually another transition was effected, in a manner he was unable to describe clearly, as the result of which he was reborn as the woman's child.

These were the memories that lingered with him in connection with the strange malformations of his hands and feet, and which he told his mother in halting, childish words when he was able to speak. The case history bears several features in common with other instances of the recollection of previous lives that are fairly frequent in the East, and so may be profitably discussed as a typical example. One fact, however, should be noted at the outset: the child who made the claim to these recollections had nothing material to gain by doing so, neither had the parents. Another noteworthy fact is that the boy was a Karen, of a family that had been nominally Christian for two generations, and would be expected to have no belief in the doctrine of rebirth.

Certain interesting and very significant features emerge from an analysis of this particular case. In the first place, the craving motif is strongly marked throughout. The young man's choice of a solitary life in a house filled with valuables suggests a fear of employing servants and a tendency towards miserliness in his character. After death, in the Peta state (i.e. as an unhappy ghost), his attachment to the lost treasure and to the locale of his previous life persisted as the strongest element in his consciousness, up to the time when he again became attracted to another human being.

So far, this important part played by the impulse of craving and attachment links the story with other instances of Petas haunting the spots where their former property was located; but here there is another element, that of fear, combined with the attachment. This fear was generated during the days and nights when the subject crouched, bound with wire, in the empty building, with no possibility of escape. In remote spots on the outskirts of villages and townships it is even now possible for such solitude to remain unbroken for weeks at a time.

An intensely strong mental impression of the wire cutting into the flesh must have been formed during this period, and it was probably the last image present in the consciousness at death. In accordance with the principles of Abhidhamma psychology, this last thought-moment would determine the character of the paṭisandhi-viññāna, (connecting-consciousness or rebirth-consciousness), and would thus become the chief factor in determining the conditions of the new birth.

To understand how this comes about we must turn to a brief consideration of the Buddhist analysis of consciousness.

The process by which thought impressions register themselves is called citta-vīthi, or the course of cognition, and there is a citta-vīthi connected with each of the organs and fields of sense-cognition; that is, eye, ear, nose, tongue, touch (body) and mind. The passive flow of the subconscious mind-continuum (bhavaṅga) is disturbed whenever an external impression through one or other of these six channels impinges upon it. This disturbance is called bhavaṅga-calana, (vibration of the subconscious mind-continuum) and it lasts for exactly one thought-moment. It is followed immediately afterwards by bhavaṅgupaccheda, or the cutting-off of bhavaṅga, which is a definite interruption in the smooth flow of the subconscious current. At this point the thought-moments begin to follow a set progression of cognitive response beginning with Paṭca-dvārāvajjana, which is the turning

towards the sense-door (in this case one of the five physical organs).

This is followed by the arising of the consciousness-moment appertaining to whichever of the sense-doors, eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body, is involved. This is the involuntary act of turning the attention towards the external object, and it is followed at once by *sampaticchana*, which is the actual seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or feeling as the case may be. When this has been effected, the function of *santīraṇa*, or investigation, comes into play; at this stage associative ideas arise by which the mind is able to identify the impression that has been received, so that the next stage, that of *Votthapana*, or identification, can be produced. *Votthapana* is the stage of conscious recognition, at which the object assumes a definite identity in the mental awareness. This stage is then succeeded in a full course of cognition by no less than seven *javana* [‡] thought-moments, during which consciousness relating to the object arises and passes away. It is followed by *tadālambana*, which is the holding of the impression and the registering of it upon the mental stream; this stage, which lasts for two thought-moments, completes the *cittavīthi* of that particular impression, making sixteen thought-moments of the course of cognition from the first awakening of attention to the object to its fixing upon the consciousness. Each of these thought-moments is complete in itself, consisting of three phases: arising (*uppāda*), enduring (*ṭhiti*), and passing away (*bhaṅga*).

The relative intensity or feebleness of impressions varies considerably. One single impression may be the subject of thousands of complete *vīthi*, each of them very distinct (*atimahanta*). If the impression is less marked it is called *mahanta* (distinct), and does not give rise to the *tadālambana* stage. Still weaker is an impression that does not even reach the *javana* stage (*paritta*; i. e. feeble); while, if it is very feeble indeed (*ati-paritta*), it passes away after the *bhavaṅga-calana* (vibration of *bhavaṅga*) without any of the subsequent

thought-moments arising. An extremely vivid and clear impression reaching the mind door, accompanied by a full course of cognition, is called *vibhūta* (vivid). It is such impressions as these, repeated over and over again, which influence the mind and may be capable ultimately of influencing the body, with or without the accompaniment of a volitional impulse directed towards that end.

Normally the mind is selective, turning again and again to those impressions which are most agreeable, while ignoring the others; but under certain exceptional conditions disagreeable impressions force themselves upon the attention so strongly that they cannot be thrust aside. Very often such impressions may be rejected by the conscious mind, yet linger in the *bhavaṅga* ineradicably.

We are here dealing with states of consciousness arising in the *kāmaloka* (the world of fivefold sense-perception) and such as come into being through contact with external sense-objects. The course of ideational objects, those entering through the *mano-dvāra*, mind-door, is slightly different. In the cognitive series (*cittavīthi*) dealt with above, the *javana* thought-moment occurs up to seven times, but in loss of consciousness or at the moment of death it subsides after the fifth repetition. At that moment, representing the end of the final phase of the current life, cognitive thought (*vīthi-citta*) is experienced, and this takes the form of an idea-image which may be that of predominant *kamma*, of something associated with that *kamma* and its performance, or else a representation of the destiny to which the past *kamma* has been directed. At the expiry of the cognitive thought (*vīthi-citta*) or that of the *bhavaṅga*, there arises the *Cuti-citta* (death-consciousness) which performs the function of cutting off, and immediately after that the *paṭisandhivīñṇāṇa*, or connecting-consciousness, arises in the next life as rebirth-consciousness. In the formula of 'Dependent Origination' (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) this is expressed as:

“Viññānapaccayā nāma-rūpa”—“From (rebirth-) consciousness arise name and form”, i.e., mental and physical aggregates. This consciousness, conditioned by ignorance and actions (kamma) motivated by craving, carrying with it predominant impressions of the last thought-moments, functions as the bhavaṅga of the next existence, and so determines the key, as it were, in which that life is pitched. Thus the life-continuum flows on from one existence to another in the endless succession of paṭisandhi, bhavaṅga, vīthi, and cuti.

There is no actual thought-existence that passes across from one life to another, but only an impulse. Each moment of consciousness passes away completely, but as it passes it gives rise to a successor which tends to belong to the same pattern; and this process is the same, whether it be considered from the viewpoint of the moment-to-moment life-continuum that makes up a total life-span, or from that of the connecting link between one life and the next.

The rebirth is instantaneous and directly conditioned by the preceding thought-impulse. Since both mind and body are conditioned by it, even the distinctive pattern of the brain convolutions that accompanies a particular talent, say for music or mathematics, is the result of this powerful mental force operating from the past life and stamping its peculiar features on the physical substance, the living cell tissues of the brain. It is this which accounts for the phenomenon of genius in circumstances where heredity offers no tenable explanation. In the case of the Karen boy under discussion, the most potent rebirth-force, craving, was conjoined with a strong impression of physical suffering and physical marks, and this impression had been the central pivot of consciousness for three days and nights—long enough to set up a thought-construction (or a pattern impressed on the bhavaṅga) sufficiently emphatic to influence the succeeding phases of consciousness and the new body that was formed under its direction. In some way not yet known to

science, the thought-energy released at the time of death is able to, control the combinations of male and female gametes and by means of utu (temperature) and the other purely physical elements of generation to produce a living organism that embodies the nature and potentialities of the past kamma in a new life (anāgata-vipāka-bhava).

Here it should be noted that strongly marked tendencies, both mental and physical, as well as actual memories belonging to past lives, are most in evidence when the rebirth is direct from one human life to another. The memories themselves are transferred by impression on the brain cells, so that the ordinary rules of memory obtain here, and it is the most recent and vivid impressions that survive. Intermediate lives in one or other of the remaining thirty planes of existence can efface altogether the memory of previous human lives, and if these intermediate existences have been in any of the lower states, where consciousness is dim, or spent in the inconceivably long lifespan of the Deva realm, it can hardly be expected that there should be any recollection at all.

This is only one of the many reasons why most people altogether fail to remember having existed in a previous state, and yet may have a vague feeling that they have done so. In the case under review the subject spent an undefined period in the state of a Peta, or what is popularly known as an “unhappy ghost”. His own belief was that this state lasted for a long time; but in such conditions time is a purely subjective element. His existence as a Peta may in fact not have lasted for more than a few thought-moments.

Questions put to the boy by the writer, however, seemed to indicate that the interval of Peta existence had actually been of considerable duration, for after his rebirth he had not been able to identify any places or people from the former life. Everything had changed from his memory of it. Other attempts to draw some clue as to the period of the previous life were equally profitless. The

primitive weapons of the dacoits did not necessarily indicate that it took place before the invention of firearms, for the statement that they used wire points to a more recent date. It is possible, however, that the boy's use of the word "wire" was a linguistic error, he may have meant thin strands of creeper, which would produce the same effect. The joining of his toes, corresponding to the manner in which they had stuck together with the congealed blood, is a striking instance of the enduring power of a mental impression: crouched with his head bent down to his knees, his hands and feet would be the central objects of his cittavīthi, and what was happening to them must have stamped itself visually on his, consciousness, to reproduce itself later in his new body by means of paṭisandhiviññāṇa.

This case is the most remarkable one known to the writer for the demonstration it gives of the mind's influence upon the physical body in a direct causal sequence from one life to another. [7]

That the process of mutation from one existence to the next is carried out without any "soul" or transmigrating entity is another fact that becomes apparent on examination of the case history. The only factor of identity between the headman's son, the peta (unhappy ghost), and S. T. the Karen houseboy, was the craving-impulse that carried with it the potentiality of re-manifestation: that is, bhava (existence) resulting from upādāna (attachment). The terrors and physical affliction were the direct outcome of the upādāna, or attachment. In terms of Dependent Origination, saṅkhāra (kamma-tendencies) conditioned by avijjā (ignorance) had produced viññāṇa (consciousness), and from that consciousness had sprung a fresh nāma-rūpa (mind-body) bearing the marks that had impressed themselves on the last moments of consciousness during repeated cittavīthi on the same object. It is thus that all living beings carry with them, throughout countless existences, the inheritance of their own thoughts and actions, sprung from past tendencies and nourished on the ever-renewed

craving that comes from contact between the senses and the objects of the external world. Heredity itself is merely one factor in the multiple operations of the law of kamma and vipāka (result), and it too is greatly influenced by the direction taken by past interests, activities, and attachments.

In the Buddha's Teaching it is naturally the moral aspect of kamma and vipāka that is stressed; and indeed there is a moral aspect to every major volitional impulse. The relationship of good kamma and good vipāka, bad kamma and bad vipāka, however, is not always obvious at first glance. A child born with a physical deformity, as in the present case, has not necessarily inflicted injury of a similar kind on someone else in a previous life. The physical defect may be the result of a strong mental impression produced by some other means. But as in the case of the Karen boy, the ultimate cause can invariably be traced back to some moral defect of the individual concerned to some trait of character unduly dominated by the āsavas, the taints or fluxes associated with the grasping tendency which in Paṭiccasamuppāda is shown as the immediate cause of the process of "becoming" (uppāda, or grasping, gives rise to bhava, or "becoming, which in its turn causes jāti, arising or rebirth). Thus the whole individual life-process, including its physical medium, the rūpa (body), must be viewed as "santati," that is, a causal-continuum of action and result; all the actions being to some degree tainted by craving for existence, passion, self-interest, and ignorance, until the attainment of Arahatsip extinguishes these energy-supplying fires.

It only remains to be noted that in the operation of mental impulses upon living cells at the time of their uniting, and during the processes of syngamy and mitosis, Buddhism offers a fully scientific explanation of the biological mutations described at the beginning of this chapter.

PART SIX

Buddhism teaches that there are altogether thirty-one planes of existence on which rebirth is possible; the human plane is only one of them. The thirty-one “abodes” comprise the states of extreme suffering, or “hells,” to which people consign themselves by reason of their bad kamma; the realms of the unhappy spirits, or “Petas,” who on account of attachment to mundane concerns of a low order are more or less earthbound; the animal world into which people may be reborn through the manifestation of bestial characteristics; the realm of superior spirits intermediate between earth and the heavenly planes themselves, which are the abodes of Devas enjoying sense-pleasures as the result of their past good actions; and lastly the Brahma worlds, wherein beings who on earth have attained specific spiritual goals live for aeons in pure and immaterial forms. All of these states of existence, however, are impermanent; sooner or later they come to an end, when the kamma that has produced them is exhausted. Rebirth then takes place once more, as the result of craving and residual kamma of another type from past lives which then comes into operation. So the process of saṃsāra continues until all craving is extinguished and Nibbāna is reached.

It is important to realise that Buddhism does not teach rebirth only on the human level. If it did so it would leave unexplained all the phenomena of spiritualism and a great deal more besides, which has to be accounted for in human experience. Many western spiritualists have now come to accept rebirth as a fact because it is the only valid explanation of certain data which cannot otherwise be fitted into the spiritualist concept. To give only one example, it is well known that spiritualist mediums find it impossible to “contact” certain people after death, while with others they are able to do so. This has always been a great difficulty to spiritualists, but the Buddhist answer is a simple one: it is not all who are reborn into the so-called spirit worlds, and furthermore some of these planes of existence

are too remote from the human world to be accessible to any ordinary “medium.”

The idea of other realms of existence is more difficult for those to accept who have become conditioned to thinking in terms of “naive realism,” and it sometimes happens that through a misunderstanding of the Buddhist doctrine of anattā (no-self) they believe that rebirth can take place only in a physical and human body. This is an error which the Buddhist texts do not support. To deny the possibility of rebirth in the animal world, for example, is a negation of the universal applicability of the moral law of cause and effect which the Buddha consistently proclaimed. Both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism teach unequivocally that if the kamma of the last thought moment before death is on a low moral level governed by any of the unwholesome factors associated with lust, hatred and delusion, the next manifestation of the causal continuum will be on precisely that level. In other words, rebirth as an animal, a peta, or a being in one of the hell states will result. It must be understood that this does not correspond at all to the Pythagorean idea that the “soul” of one type of being can enter the body of another. For the sake of a clear understanding of the processes of saṃsāra in regard to other realms of existence, the following extracts from letters from the present writer to a friend are given:

“Like yourself, when I first studied Buddhism I thought of rebirth as being only in human form. In the beginning that was satisfactory; as you say, ‘a nice, clear-cut philosophy, rational’—and of course ethical as well. But further consideration revealed certain mechanical difficulties in the way of direct rebirth invariably from one human state to another. It meant, for instance, that at the moment of death some conception must be taking place somewhere which was in all respects ideally suited to be the vehicle of expression for the kammic potential released by the death. Of course, conception is actually taking place in millions of cases all over the world at any moment one cares to name; yet

still it seems that too many coincidental factors must somehow be present to bring the thing within the realms of probability. Again, if animals are to be taken into the scheme, which is philosophically necessary in order to make the world-view comprehensive and to get away from the anthropocentric idea that ethics and spiritual meanings apply only to mankind—an idea which always seemed to me quite indefensible—it must be that the rebirth concept is somehow extensible to other modes of existence besides the human. After all, why should we assume that we are the only form of sentient and intelligent existence in the cosmos? Does the scientific outlook forbid us to envisage the possibility of other modes of life, simply because we cannot see, hear or handle them? Does not science itself tell us that most of the significant things in the universe, the things that really shape the visible world, are themselves invisible and intangible forces? We have to take many things on the authority of science which we cannot see and test for ourselves. True, somebody else has presumably tested these theories and so, science being a body of shared knowledge, as distinct from the esotericism of personal revelations, we accept the findings that the universe is of such and such a construction, that man has evolved from lower forms of life, and so forth. Even when we are led by gradual degrees to Einstein's general theory of relativity, the space-time complex, curved space, the expanding universe, and other ideas which nobody, not even the scientists themselves, can demonstrate in tangible form, we go on believing something that we cannot realise, or ever hope to realise except as perhaps a mathematical concept, simply because we have faith in the former discoveries of science and have seen that the method bears results. In other words, we believe in the method, even when we cannot check its latest results for ourselves. At that stage very few of us are philosophers enough to ask ourselves why we believe in a substantial physical universe when every new concept of science brings us into a more

abstract world and proves that the universe is in reality something quite different from the mental picture we have formed of it from the data furnished by our senses. In a universe of energy, what has become of the solid, impenetrable substance of our world? If it is not exactly illusion, it is so different from the reality that its appearance at least may be termed illusion. Because it is a shared illusion and one that is necessary to our continued functioning within the framework of a world that we must regard as substantial, we are compelled to go on treating it as though it were actually the thing it appears to be as interpreted by our sensory awareness. But when we try to apply the laws of Newtonian physics to nuclear physics, and Euclidean geometry to the multiple space-time dimension, we find that these laws, while they are still valid in the limited sphere of the material world, are quite inadequate to cope with the abstract and much more complicated world of mathematical (and therefore philosophical) reality. From then on we have to suspect that the relatively simple material universe, in which certain things just cannot be because they cannot be always seen, heard or felt, is only a very partial aspect of the whole. What was simple and obvious to Charles Bradlaugh becomes not quite so certain. But still, through habit we go on asserting the validity of materialistic principles in spheres where it is far from certain that they obtain. So people say that there cannot be a heaven because they were always told that heaven existed somewhere up above the clouds, and stellar exploration (even before it became fact) has disproved this.

“But on what principle do we insist that heaven or hell must have an objective, external existence? If 'heaven' is happiness and 'hell' misery, they are personal and subjective states; they exist independently of physical location. To take a concrete example, two men may be sitting side by side in a bus. One is desperately unhappy, perhaps through remorse, unsatisfied longing, anger, or any one of the myriad causes of human misery; he may be contemplating suicide, even. The other is

blissfully happy; he has perhaps got promotion in his job, just had his first book published and the reviewers have been enthusiastic, or he has married the girl he loves. Each of these two men is inhabiting his own personal world, which has nothing to do with the world of the other; yet physically they are sitting side by side in this familiar world shared by us all. They may both get off at Sloane Square, but for one of them Sloane Square is a bus stop in heaven, while for the other it is located nowhere but in hell. So these states of being—really the only true states, since the external world has no part in making them what they are, but itself takes on whatever aspect they give to it—are internal, subjective, and purely mental states. As such they have no connection with location in time or space, or the events of the world going on about them. Each of us lives and has his own peculiar experience in a separate world, to which the external world presents only points of contact and general reference.

“So, if this can be the case in regard to two living men in a bus, whose physical bodies are touching one another but whose minds—and therefore real being—are living in different realms, why do we insist that if heaven exists as a reality it must be accessible by space travel or anything of that kind? In doing so we are naively applying laws that are relevant to physical space and time to other modes of conscious being where they are not relevant at all.

“What I am trying to express is a different vision of the world of reality. To me it seems that the real world is an intangible world of mental events and concepts, to which the external is only incidental. This may of course take the appearance of Berkeleyan idealism or, worse still, mysticism. But in reality it differs fundamentally from both: it is not Berkeleyan idealism because it does not attempt to brush aside the physical world as being nonexistent. It accepts that world as a reality, but not the whole or the final reality. It differs from mysticism in that it does not lose touch with the conditions in which we function as living,

material organisms, and does not postulate any invasion of the laws governing extra-physical phenomena into the realm of the physical to the disorganisation of the latter. The worlds exist side by side; interpenetrating one another and affecting one another in various ways, but only within the limits imposed by the laws peculiar to each, and in conformity with those laws. Each world stands in relation to the others as a teleological necessity.”

It may be objected that of the two men in the bus, the happiness of the one and the wretchedness of the other have certainly been caused by external events; something has happened to them to put them into their respective heaven and hell. That is true, but it is retrospective to the cause, while we are dealing with the effect as it now is. Their present conditions, whatever may have induced them, have no reference to one another nor to the objective world they share. They are living in discrete worlds that have been created for them by their reaction to some previous events. Now had they been indifferent to those events they could not have been plunged into hell or exalted to heaven by them. So finally their condition can be traced back to their own minds and the degree of their susceptibility to external occasions for joy or sorrow. A certain thing happening to one man may cause him a mild and fleeting unhappiness; the same thing happening to another may reduce him to suicidal despair. The same kind of event objectively, but vastly different in its results—that is, in the kind of world it creates internally. If that is the cause, which is the more significant—the event in itself or the respective mental conditions of the two men, which have invested it with such different degrees of importance? If we say, as it seems to me we are bound to say, that the mental condition is the more significant, it must follow that it is the mental state, not the event, that represents the true reality in any situation. The illustration of the two men in the bus may be a trite and obvious one, but from it we are entitled to draw certain inferences concerning the nature of state of being in terms

of isolated experiences. One of them is that the mind has its own habitat and a limitless capacity for creating its own worlds out of the raw materials of any situation. That these worlds of subjectivity have their counterparts in planes of existence other than our own is borne out by the testimony of Swedenborg, William Blake, and a host of others whose independent experience has given them glimpses of their reality.

The part science plays in life is only on the fringe of mankind's collective experience. In any case, when we bring science into the problem of being we ought to begin by defining just what we mean by the word. The most we can say is that science is a body of knowledge concerning accepted facts, gained by the pursuit of a certain method which has been found to give results in the past and so is presumed to be valid for all investigations. Scientific theories are constantly subject to alteration as knowledge increases, but scientific method remains the same. Therefore at any given point it is the method that is more important than any particular stage it has brought us to in the never-ending pursuit. But there can be no assurance that the method will eventually succeed in revealing everything. In fact, its progress suggests that the more it reveals the more there remains to be explored. It continually opens up new vistas, each of which demands that it be explored with new compasses. The 'expanding universe' maybe just a natural allegory of man's expanding knowledge of the universe, something to which there can be no final limit. It becomes increasingly difficult to apply any sort of scientific knowledge to ontological questions, even when it seems to have some bearing on what we desire to know. Science may destroy religious myths but it has not made any important change in the terms of philosophical thought. It has given us a wider range of symbols and a more exact terminology, but that is all. We are no longer obliged to talk of the elements of earth, air, fire, and water, but the philosophical concepts they stood for remain fairly constant. Everything we know is

merely a subjective experience based upon data presented by our senses, and these data come to us in the form of impressions which are in most cases far removed from the nature of the object as it really is. All that physics tells us is that the objects of the external world would appear to us quite differently if we possessed a different kind of cognitive apparatus. But even this was known long ago. Things that we see, hear, smell, taste, and touch have no intrinsic properties, only the characteristics we invest them with in the course of cognising and appraising. Thus the world of aesthetic values lies only in ourselves, and is in some respects different for each of us. In this mental world, made up of highly individualised impressions combined with the concepts that have gathered about them from prior association and, in the field of abstract concepts, the biases, predilections, and prejudices that are personal to the individual concerned, the range of variations becomes limitless. No two people think exactly alike, which means that no two people inhabit precisely the same world. Two persons may agree on all factual points, yet the interpretation they give to the totality may produce two quite different pictures.

So the world we live in is largely, if not wholly, a mental construct. Science gives us information about the external world which we know to be true so far as it goes. It is true because it is seen to work; if we apply the knowledge practically we get the expected results. Constructing a machine in accordance with certain proved laws of physics we get something that flies, defying another law of physics, gravitation. Something which one law seems to make impossible thus becomes practicable by the understanding and use of other laws. It is this form of progression from the impossible to the possible that has made our world what it is. The laws governing the propagation of sound make it possible for the of voice of someone talking in London to be heard in New York, and three hundred years ago the "natural philosopher" would have been content to leave it at that and would have had a

hearty laugh at the notion of radio. But Newton would probably not have dismissed it as impossible because the genius of a really great scientist is like all other forms of genius—it includes a large amount of imagination. Had it not been for the old alchemists with their absurd theory that somehow the elements of one metal could be rearranged to form another, we should never have had modern chemistry. Even those who went further than the elixir of life and the transmutation of metals, and tried to produce the 'homunculus,' an artificial man, were only in a crude way trying to anticipate something which bio-chemistry may one day make possible.

And here it may be noted in passing that even if science should ultimately succeed in generating life from nonliving matter, the achievement will make no difference to the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth according to karma. The kammic causal current may manifest through vital elements brought together artificially in the same way as it does through the natural biological processes. The artificial production of living organisms may deal the final blow to the theory of divine creation, but it will not in any way affect the Buddhist explanation of life.

The laws that work in science are continually having to give way before the discovery of fresh laws which either cancel them out or modify them, or make them subservient to ends which previously they appeared to obstruct. And as this process develops we find ourselves becoming more and more doubtful as to whether it will reach any conclusive end. The horizon is eternally receding from us, the spiral nebulae forever thrusting outwards into limitless space. The familiar and comfortable world of 'things' is meanwhile dissolving into abstract forces, a whirling dance of electrons, of atoms which are never the 'same' atoms from one moment to another of their restless existence. Does what we see bear any relation whatever to the external reality? Can we ever be certain that physics itself is 'true'?

Speculative thought has been dried up at its source by the realisation that science alone can never help to reveal ultimate truth, but can show us only expanding areas of what is relatively true. It was because of this that Wittgenstein was constrained to renounce all attempts to erect systems of philosophy, even negative systems, and was particularly averse to theories which take mathematics or natural science as the ideal. But while the scientist remains content to work within the areas of relative truth and to leave teleological questions alone, his self-denial does not forbid others from making use of his knowledge in the attempt to trace a coherent pattern in the diversity of human experience. We have evidence from other sources that it is possible to improve man's perceptual apparatus and extend it, and by that means we may break through the impasse. It is only necessary that the ideas we bring into play should not be of a kind that science has shown to be false on grounds within its own province.

The limits of scientific competence should be clearly understood. It is a common error to suppose that science has accounted for a phenomenon when it has given it a name, and that it has explained a cause when it has merely described a process. To take an example, 'natural selection' is accepted as one of the primary factors in evolution. But if we ask what causes natural selection—precisely why does a living organism choose one course of action rather than another, or whence comes the instinctive urge to mate in a certain way that 'happens' to be conformable to biological needs—science is silent. It does not know the answer. It has named a process, and shown how it works, but it has not discovered the reason for it. To say that there is no reason is to evade the issue. The purpose may be assumed to tie in the final result, but that is legislating after the event. A certain phenomenon may be produced by accident, but for a long and involved series of such accidents to bring forth in the end a highly-organised and equipped animal of the type of the higher vertebrates is stretching pure chance

too far. All the evidence points towards some kind of drive behind the process, but this theory is vitiated by the fact that the drive does not go directly towards the fulfilment of its purpose. It blunders along by a painful process of trial and error—stopping, retracing its steps, coming to dead ends, and scattering the debris of its failures along the path of geological time, yet always ensuring that in some way its surviving stages are contributory to the ultimate result, whatever that may be. This drive, or demiurge, cannot be a creator-god, for if it were, it would achieve its purpose with greater economy and, presumably, with more regard for ethical principles. That these are completely lacking in nature is one of the strongest arguments against the emergent theory. All the indications in fact are opposed to the idea of a supreme deity, whether God be conceived as a complete being or as an evolving and progressively revealed spiritual principle. Yet when all this is granted we are still left with the vacuum created by the lack of a purposive directing force. The question still remains: Can biological processes be explained in purely physical terms, or do the problems of structure, function, and organisation necessitate some kind of teleology? The scientist may reject the “vitalism” which Hans Driesch postulated as a necessity, but something of the kind is needed to account for organic evolution.

Buddhism meets the challenge with the concept of the force of craving, an impersonal urge to fulfilment continually renewing itself in successive manifestations. The “demiurge” and the “*élan vital*” are both functionally represented in this concept. Here we have not a ‘something’ which has visualised the final result from the beginning and has been capable of creating from nothing and moving directly towards its consummation, but a blindly-groping urge which shows itself in the instinctive behaviour of animals and on the deeper psychological levels of human beings. It is the one great creative impulse to which all the laws of the universe are subservient.

Far from precluding the possibility of other states of being besides our own, science makes them, by inference, a logical necessity. The facts suggest that, in the words of Sir Oliver Lodge, “an enlarged psychology, and possibly an enlarged physiology—possibly even an enlarged physics—will have to take into account and rationalize a number of phenomena which so far have been mainly disbelieved or ignored.”

It is as well to bear in mind that the existence of extraterrestrial modes of being had always been recognised until science, by confining the method and grounds of knowledge to the material level, caused an unprecedented antagonism to metaphysical ideas. The revolution in outlook justified itself in many ways, but a new rationalism is emerging which has its roots in the enigmatic territory that modern physics has revealed beyond the tangible world.

Understanding of how rebirth in the human states takes place is sometimes obscured by misconceptions regarding certain biological principles, especially those relating to the transmission of hereditary characteristics. Here it is necessary to realise that the various parts of an organism are not received intact from the parents but developed out of comparatively simple structures present in the egg. There is no real analogy between heredity and the legal motion of inheritance of property. One speaks loosely of a given hereditary character being ‘transmitted’ from parent to offspring, but obviously this is impossible since the only materials which can be thus transmitted are those contained in the uniting sex cells, the eggs and spermatozoa in higher animals. “An individual receives from his parents not a set of fully-formed characters but a set of determinants or genes, as a consequence of whose activities the hereditary characters are developed. This concept of hereditary determinants is fundamental for an understanding of heredity” (Prof. G.H. Beale, Lecturer in Genetics, Edinburgh University, 1957). The determinants are therefore only a contribution to the sum total of characters, or

personality. The extent to which they are decisive must depend very largely on other factors, not all of which are to be accounted for by environment. Heredity and the predispositions from past kamma may be complimentary to one another, as when attachment leads to repeated rebirths in the same racial group, or even in the same family; or the kammic tendencies may modify or counteract the hereditary characteristics. It is only if rebirth is taken to mean the transmigration of a 'soul' that there is any conflict between it and the known facts of genetics.

The emphasis laid upon anattā is fundamental to the Buddhist point of view. There is no 'soul' in the sense of an enduring entity; in its place there is mental energy flowing out from living creatures which after their death continues its current of causality by assembling out of physical substances a new being. But this new being, which is the continuation of the kammic cause-effect current of the previous one, does not necessarily have to be a human being. It may be an animal or it may be a being existing in other realms, where it produces a body in accordance with the particular laws of generation obtaining in those realms. If it has brought about a birth in the Deva or Peta loka (which are justifiably called 'spirit' realms, since 'spirit' has nothing to do with 'soul' but denotes a particular type of body, different from the bodies of the terrestrial plane) it continues with a more or less recognisable personality. It is similar enough in general characteristics to the person who died to be recognisable as belonging to the same current of causal identity, and so we call it the 'same' person, just as we say that John Smith at ninety is the 'same' person as John Smith the infant which he once was. Actually they are not the same, except in this conventional sense—they merely belong to the same continuum of cause and effect. The new being, Deva or Peta, also retains memories of the previous life, and if emotional links or other attachments are strong, it continues to share the interests of

people living on this, our own plane. Furthermore, when personality is very strongly marked it is all the more likely to reproduce characteristics which make it identifiable as the 'same' person in a new manifestation.

In this way Buddhism accounts for the phenomena of the séance room. Rebirth in these other realms, or loka, does not necessitate a soul any more than does rebirth as a human being or animal. When the result of the kamma that has caused the rebirth in the Deva or Peta realms is exhausted, the mental energy once more flows out to operate through the conditions of the physical world and human rebirth takes place again. Or it may be that another Deva or Peta rebirth will come about, or a rebirth in any other of the thirty-one planes of existence according to the nature of the residual kamma.

There are several lines of enquiry on which investigation into rebirth may be carried out. It has been possible to indicate only a few of them here. The serial continuity of life, which so many people in all ages have felt instinctively to be a truth, however, carries with it the force of an intellectual conviction to all who seek for a purpose and a moral pattern in human experience. It is not too much to say that the whole of man's future development depends upon an acceptance of rebirth and a fuller understanding of the ethical principles it brings to light. Mankind is now ripe for a complete reassessment of values and a restatement of the universal principles on which our moral and spiritual convictions rest. Unless this is undertaken, we stand in danger of a catastrophic destruction of all those virtues by which man has risen to his present position in the hierarchy of living beings. It is only by the acceptance of rebirth as a fact that the sense of moral responsibility in an ordered universe can be restored.

NOTES

[1] Since this was written, confirmation of the view that reincarnation beliefs in Kabbalistic Judaism are of considerable antiquity has been found in an article, *Seelenwanderung und*

Sympathie der Seelen in der Jüdischen Mystik (Transmigration and the Sympathy of Souls in Jewish Mysticism), by Prof. Gershom Scholem, in the Eranos Jahrbuch Vol XXV, 1955 (Rhein Verlag, Basel 1956).

Prof. Scholem finds the first mention of reincarnation in the book Bahir, edited ca. 1180 in Southern France, but notes that it is there spoken of as a matter of course, without apology or explanatory comments. Official Jewish theology emphatically opposed the doctrine, yet Kirkisani, a 10th century writer, in his "Book of the Lights" affirms that the Karaic teacher 'Anan accepted the doctrine in the 8th century.' Anan wrote a book on it, and his followers preserved the doctrine.

Prof. Scholem considers it open to question whether the Kabbalists developed the theory of transmigration of souls independently as a psychological assumption, or whether they adopted it from older traditions. But he draws attention to the fact that the Bahir contains fragments of an older, undoubtedly Oriental Jewish Gnostic source, and concludes: "All things considered, I incline to the view that we are here dealing with an older Gnostic Jewish tradition which the book Bahir derives through channels unknown to us."

The author is indebted to the Ven. Nyanaponika Maha Thera for the translation of Prof. Scholem's articles from the German.

[2] The formation of personality has to be considered under three heads. There is first the Kammic potentiality of the individual, which is the inheritance from his own previous lives. Secondly, there is the set of hereditary characteristics which he derives from his parents. This appears to be connected with the kamma by way of attraction, as when the rebirth takes place in the same family or in the same sociological or ethnic group, and accounts for racial characteristics the origins of which cannot be specifically determined. Thirdly, there is environmental influence, which produces modifying effects upon the developing personality. Since causality in the Buddhist sense implies multiple-causality, the

Kammic character-motif which represents at once the residuum of the old personality and the matrix of the new, does not exclude the other two formative factors, nor is it excluded by them.

On the other hand, the attempt to erect a theory of the origin of personality solely upon biological heredity and environmental influences is at the outset nullified by the fact that beings with the same hereditary background and reared in the same environment show marked differences in character and abilities. Such differences are frequently to be met with even in the case of twins.

[3] The will to act undergoes a complete reversal when desire is totally extinguished, as in the case of the Arahāt. It is not, however, converted into what would appear to be its opposite, volitional inertia. The Arahāt continues to will and to act as long as he lives, but his willing is not prompted by desire; its source is the uniform, practically automatic, functioning of the impulse of disinterestedness. For this reason it is Kiriya, or kammically neutral and non-regenerative. The personality-pattern in which desire is totally absent bears no resemblance to the psychology of the ordinary person who is subject to rebirth. A close parallel to the Buddhist conception of will as a generative force is to be found in Bergson's theory of Creative Evolution. If the Bergsonian Idea were to be enlarged, as quite logically it could be, to include a succession of lives subject to kamma and its results, the parallel would be exact.

[4] Hypnotic regression, the technique of carrying a subject under hypnosis back to a previous life, may give negative results from a variety of causes. Due to an unconscious resistance the regression may not be complete; or the existence to which the regression has led may have been on a sub-human level and therefore inarticulate. Several cases are known to the author in which the subject has had fragmentary memories of a previous life whilst practising meditation. In some instances the

descriptions afterwards given of these experiences strongly suggest that they relate to states of consciousness of a sub-human order. If a hypnotic subject is regressed to a previous condition of this kind the response will naturally be negative.

The question of hetero-biological transition in rebirth is a controversial one, but so far as Buddhism is concerned it is disputed only by those who have not succeeded in overcoming the anthropocentric bias that has its root in personality-belief (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*). It cannot be too often stressed that Buddhism does not subscribe to the belief in a sharp distinction between human and animal life which has dominated Western thought for many centuries, and which continues to colour it on the emotional level despite the discoveries of biological science.

The chief objections to the cases of apparent memories of previous lives under hypnosis may be briefly stated here. The first is that such cases can rarely be confirmed by objective evidence, and that even when such proof is given, as in the cases mentioned in Part I. It is difficult to eliminate the possibility that the subject may have acquired the information either unconsciously by normal means, from books and other sources, or telepathically from other minds. The picture is further complicated by the possibility that the source of information is the "collective unconscious," or race memory. Nevertheless, methods are being devised whereby these possibilities may be either ruled out or confirmed. The "collective unconscious" itself, if it exists, may turn out to be a misinterpretation of what are actually memories of previous lives. Rebirth would seem in fact to imply the existence of a common stock of experiences preserved on the unconscious level in each individual.

Another possibility, in cases where no objective proof can be obtained, is that the suppressed memory of a previous life may be a 'phantasy.' Experience has shown, however, that mental phantasies under hypnosis do not

arise spontaneously. They come about in response to suggestions from the hypnotiser, and can readily be distinguished from genuine memories.

In the cases of spontaneous recollection, those in which a child claims, to remember a previous existence without assistance from hypnotism, it is easier to eliminate alternative explanations of the phenomenon. These cases present a much broader basis for investigation, particularly in view of the fact that, as recent examples seem to indicate, they occur when the intermediate existence between the former human life and the present one has been relatively short. A number of such cases have recently come under investigation and the findings on them will be published in the near future. They are supported by much evidential material in the form of identifications by the subjects of persons and places known to them in their previous lives. In quite a few instances the subjects have been found to be in possession of information on matters hitherto unknown to the other persons involved, which on inquiry has been found correct.

[5] Recent investigations carried out by the author in Ceylon and Thailand appear to indicate that such memories occur when the previous life was cut short abruptly by sickness, accident or violence. From a survey of these and a number of cases gathered from other parts of the world it would seem that rebirth in the human world tends to take place more quickly after a premature death, and that it is in such cases that vestigial memories of the previous life are retained in sufficient strength to permit their spontaneous revival.

The implication is that a premature death leaves the pattern set by the regenerative Karma uncompleted, with the result that it is renewed more quickly, and more of the previous personality- structure survives. This, of course, is a tentative supposition which further research may establish or disprove. The accumulation of evidence has to be examined in the light of the fact that personality is a composite formation, subject to alteration,

disintegration and reconstruction, and that in rebirth it is not the total personality that is transferred from one life-manifestation to another, but only the karmically-directed impulse of the previous existence, which may reproduce more or less of the recognisable features of the former personality.

[6] Several cases have been found in which the subject remembers an intermediate life. These memories show an underlying unity of pattern, and in some respects confirm the accounts given in spiritualist communications. At first the disembodied entity is not aware that death has taken place. The sensations described resemble those of persons who have had experiences of the disembodied consciousness under anaesthesia or in what is known as astral projection. The term "disembodied" is not strictly correct; the consciousness is always located in, or associated with a body of some kind but the physical vehicle (*Rūpa*) is of the fine-material type known to Buddhist metaphysics; that is to say, while it is unsubstantial on the plane of human consciousness, it is solid on the plane of a different vibrational frequency on which it manifests.

A feature which frequently occurs in these memories is the appearance of a guide who assists and directs the discarnate entity. In the case of a Burmese Buddhist monk whose rebirth history was investigated by the author, such a guide appeared to him shortly after his death, and directed him to his new birth. Subsequently, the same personage appeared to the monk in a dream during a critical period of his present life, and gave him valuable advice (see Ch XX). A close parallel has been found in a case in America. A connection may be traced here with the almost universal belief in the "guardian angel" or spirit guide. It is significant, also, that such helpers do not appear to be attached to every individual. The Buddhist explanation is that the guide and protector is someone who has been closely connected by ties of friendship or relationship with the individual in a past life, and who still continues to take an interest in his welfare. The

case from America, referred to above, gives support to this explanation. Here again, the post-mortem experience was followed by further appearances of the guiding entity in the present life, in one of which a strong hint was given of a karmic link between the two persons concerned.

7. (p. 259) Cases in which the subjects have birthmarks corresponding to injuries or physical characteristics they bore in the previous' life form an important class of the rebirth case-histories, They include the following examples:

THAILAND. Large capillary naevus on left of cranium, corresponding to fatal knife wound received in the previous life... Also malformation of big toe, corresponding to wound present at the time of death. (This is the case of Sgt. Thiang San Kla of which a report is included in Chapter XVIII.)

THAILAND. Slight malformation of left ear, reproducing similar irregularity in the previous life. (This is the case of Nang Tong Klub,, included in Chapter XX.)

BURMA. Birthmark on ankle, resembling the mark of adhesive tape, corresponding to mark on the dead body of the previous life, where adhesive tape had been fixed for blood-transfusion. (This is the case of Win Win Nyunt, which is reported in Chapter XIX.)

CEYLON. Extensive malformation of right arm and right upper chest. The subject remembers having killed his wife by stabbing, and relates his deformities to the use of his right hand in the slaying. Case confirmed by a number of living witnesses. (This is the case of Wijeratne, reported in "Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation" by Tan Stevenson M.D.; *Proc. A.S.P.R.*, vol. 26, 1966.)

ENGLAND. Round, reddish area the size of a bullet wound, corresponding in position to fatal bullet wound in the previous life.

BRAZIL. Pigmented mark on back, below right scapula, with area of increased hair over left ribs in front of chest. The subject as a child said that he had been killed by a bullet in World War II.

AMERICA. Scars closely resembling bullet wounds of entry and exit, front and back of left chest. Other particulars of the case suggest death by murder in the previous life.

The case in Ceylon differs from the others in that it indicates retributive karmic effect. The others in this selection would appear to be psycho-kinetic effects which could be explained on the assumption that the subjects in a post-mortem disincarnate state saw the marks on their own bodies. These were then reproduced on the new body, as in the cases of S.T., the Karen boy, quoted here in Section V (p. 252).

‘Well-authenticated cases of a change of sex in rebirth at present number fifteen. These are being made the subject of special study in view of the light they may throw on sexual deviations where the cause is not traceable in the present life. In a few of the cases so far investigated there is a decided predominance of the characteristics of the opposite sex in the present personality. In others the sexual adjustment is normal. The latter cases are valuable in that they eliminate the possibility that the rebirth memories are a phantasy designed to explain away the sexual aberration.

In one case, that of a girl, the previous personality was a boy who had a strong desire to be of the opposite sex. The child not only identified places, and persons still living, connected with the previous life, but also showed strong liking for certain persons and dislike of others, exactly as the previous personality had done. She remembers having wished to be a girl, and is happy now that her wish has been fulfilled. One striking feature of this case is that the girl recognised a school teacher who had been kind to her in the previous life, and now shows a strong attachment to him. The teacher testified that the dead boy whom she claims to be, had asked him whether it was true that people were reborn after death. This particular case is supported by an abundance of detailed proof and contains many features of psychological interest. (This is the case of Gnanatilleka, reported in “Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation”.)

Notes:

1 THE CASE FOR REBIRTH was first published in 1959, in *The WHEEL*, Publications Nos. 12-13, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Ceylon. The essay later appeared in an expanded form in *Rebirth as doctrine and experience*, BPS 1975

2 Please see Visuddhi-Magga translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli: *The Path of Purification*, 2nd ed. (Colombo 11, Ananda Semage).

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CONFERMENT OF THE “PIṬAKA-RECITER” TITLES ON THE NINETEEN VENERABLE THERAS OF BURMA.

An impressive ceremony was held at the President's house on the 28th February 1960, when the Venerable Bhikkhu Neminda and the other eighteen Venerable Bhikkhus were awarded the title of “Tipiṭaka-dhara” (Tipiṭaka-Reciter) and the title of “Vinaya-Bhāṇaka” (Vinaya-Reciter) and the title of “Dīgha-Bhāṇaka” (Dīgha-Reciter) respectively.

Present at the ceremony were the 10 Nāyaka Sayadaws of the Tipiṭaka-dhara Selection Committee, the nineteen successful Bhikkhus, the Union President U Win Maung, Thamadagadaw, the Chief Justice of the Union, the Hon'ble Sao Shwe Thaik, Speaker of the Chamber of Nationalities, U Lun Baw, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Religious Affairs, U Khin Maung Pyu, Home Minister, U Chan Htoon Aung, Minister for Foreign Affairs, U Thi Han, Minister for Trade Development and Civil Supplies, members of the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Association, members of the Union Buddha Sāsana Council, some representatives from the Buddhist Organisations and relatives of the successful Bhikkhus.

The ceremony was opened with “Jeyya Maṅgalāa Gāthā”. The Venerable Bhikkhu Neminda, the holder of the Tipiṭakadhara title administered the audience with the five precepts. After that, U Ba Maung, Vice-President of the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Association and U Ba Swe, Deputy-Secretary of the Religious Department described briefly the biographies of the nineteen Bhikkhus.

His Excellency the President of the Union of Burma then delivered an address of veneration in which he stated among others: “Today's ceremony is an auspicious one inasmuch as Burma could have produced two Tipiṭaka-dharas (Tipiṭaka-Reciters)—the first being Ven. U Victittasārābhivamsa who won

the Tipiṭaka-dhara title in 1954, and the other being Ven. Bhikkhu Neminda who is now among us. The Bhikkhu-Saṅgha and the laymen should follow the Teaching of the Buddha and practise the Dhamma so that the Buddha Sāsana may last for a very long time.” He then made the respective awards to the nineteen Bhikkhus.

A meal was offered to the Mahātheras and Theras present at the ceremony, and the guests were entertained to breakfast.

The following were the recipients of the “Piṭaka-dhara” titles:—

Tipiṭakadhara Title:—

1. Bhikkhu Neminda of Pakokku.

Vinayadhara Title:—

1. Bhikkhu Kosalla of Prome.

Dīgha Nikāya Kovida Title:—

1. Bhikkhu Ketumālā of Sagaing.
2. Bhikkhu Nāyaka of Sandoway.
3. Bhikkhu Ñāṇābhivamsa of Mandalay.
4. Bhikkhu Sūriya of Yenangyaung.

Visetṭha Dīgha Bhāṇaka Title:—

1. Bhikkhu Kovida of Pegu.
2. Bhikkhu Tejaniyābhivamsa of Rangoon.
3. Bhikkhu Kosalla Ñāṇābhivamsa of Pegu.
4. Bhikkhu Maṅḍalābhisiri of Mandalay.
5. Bhikkhu Kodañña of Yenangyanung.

Dīgha Bhāṇaka Title:—

1. Bhikkhu Vivekābhivamsa of Mandalay.
2. Bhikkhu Paññobhāsābhivamsa of Mogok.
3. Bhikkhu Sirinda of Rangoon.
4. Bhikkhu Nanda of Pakokku.
5. Bhikkhu Medhāvī of Pegu.
6. Bhikkhu Vaṇṇita of Pegu.
7. Bhikkhu Sobhaṇa of Pegu.
8. Bhikkhu Kelāsa of Sagaing.

CEREMONY TO HONOUR THE “PIṬAKA-RECITERS”

A ceremony to honour the above-mentioned nineteen “Piṭaka-Reciters” was held at the Preaching Hall in the Thāthana Yeikthā, Hermitage Road, Rangoon on the 6th March

1960 in the presence of the Members of the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Association many dignitaries and the nation’s leaders and elders.

ATṬHAKATHĀ SANGĀYANĀ CONCLUDED

The Fourth and Final Session of the Aṭṭhakathā Sangāyanā commenced on the 18th of November 1959 and terminated on the 3rd. March 1960. Some 200 learned Bhikkhus from four other Theravādin countries and the Union of Burma participated. In this Session the remaining 17 books on the Commentaries were recited.

A ceremony to honour the Saṅgīti-kāraka Bhikkhus was also held at the Mahā Pāsāṇa Guhā (Great Sacred Cave) on the 5th March 1960 at 1 p.m. The Saṅgīti-kāraka Bhikkhus who participated in the Final Session of the Aṭṭhakathā Sangāyanā were each offered a set of Aṭṭhakathās in addition to other allowable things.



THEIR THAI MAJESTIES’ MERITORIOUS DEEDS IN BURMA

At 8 a.m. on the 3rd. of March 1960, their Majesties King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit of Thailand accompanied by the Union President U Win Maung and Thamadagadaw and members of their entourage visited the Shwedagon Pagoda to pay their homage to the Buddha. They were greeted by Thado Thin Thudhamma, Agga Maha Thray Sithu Dr. U Thein Maung, former Chief Justice of the Union and members of the Board of Trustees. The King donated a sum of K 2503 towards the funds of the Shwedagon Pagoda in commemoration of the 2503rd year of the Buddha Sāsana.

Thence their Majesties and party proceeded to the Mahā Pāsāṇa Guhā (Great Sacred Cave) at Kabā Aye, where the concluding session of the Aṭṭhakathā Sangāyanā was proceeding. There they were received by Thado Thiri Thudhamma Sir U Thwin and Foreign Minister U Chan Htoon Aung and were conducted to the seats specially prepared for them. After they had offered lighted candles to the Buddha and paid their deep veneration to

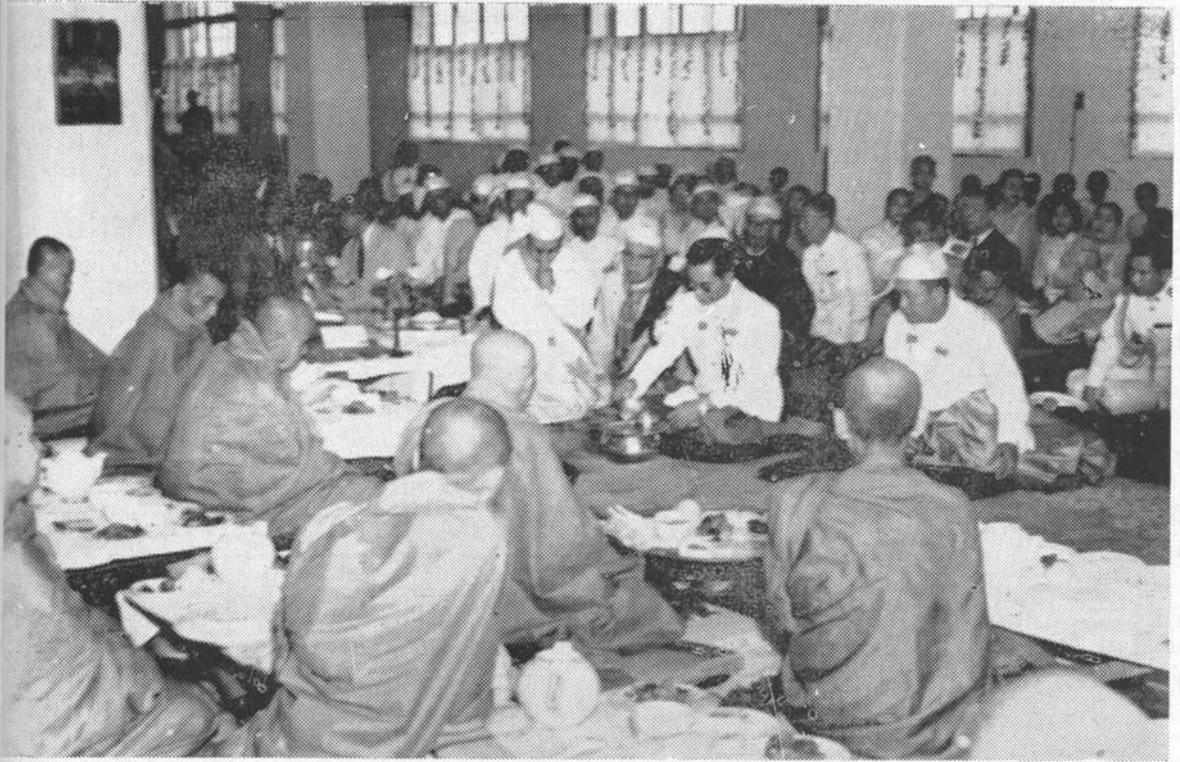
Him, their Majesties together with the audience received the Five Precepts from His Holiness the Most Venerable Abhidhaja Mahā-ṛaṭṭhaguru Masoyein Sayadaw, Saṅgha Nāyaka of the Sixth Great Buddhist Council.

After that, His Holiness the Most Venerable Masoyein Sayadaw delivered the following Benedictory Address:—

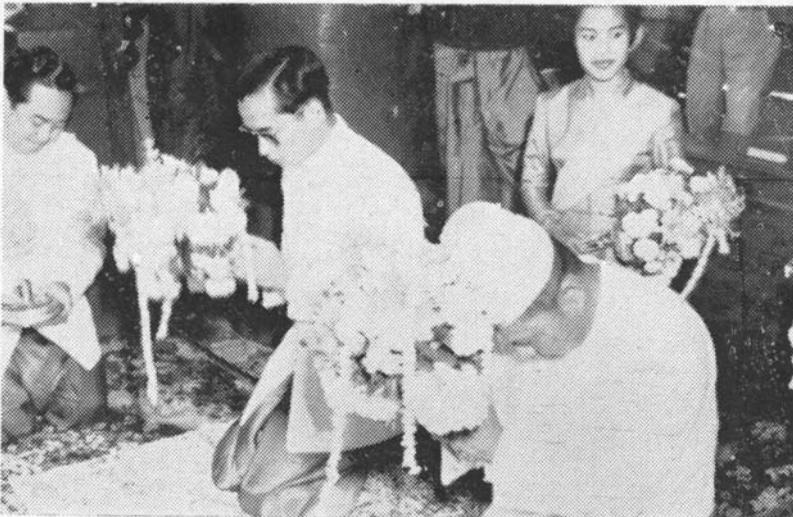
Svāgataṃ vo mahārāja!
Devīhi Sirimaṅgalaṃ,
Sāsanassa ca lokassa,
Uddhihetu pamoditaṃ.

O Great King and Sāsana Dāyakā!

I firmly believe that the presence of Your Majesties and also that of the President of the Union of Burma, at the Fourth and Final Session of the Aṭṭhakathā Saṅgāyanā (Great Recital on the Commentaries), which Recital is replete with glories and blessings resulting from the successful co-operation among the five Theravādin countries, is auspicious and most welcome.



After offering *Soon* to 1000 Saṅgītikāraka Bhikkhus headed by His Holiness the Most Venerable Masoyein Sayadaw, His Majesty the King of Thailand poured water of libation and shared his merits with all sentient beings.



Their Majesties the King and Queen of Thailand together with the Union President U Win Maung and Thamadagadaw paying homage to the Buddha at the Shwedagon Pagoda.

I am also much happy to see that such a visit by your Majesties is highly conducive to the progress of the Buddha Sāsana, and also to the general well-being of the world.

Kuladiṭṭhi samāyatta—
Raṭṭhānaṃ sādhu saṅgamo.
Cira-kālato bhāvita—
Sineho thirato thiraṃ.

With the affinity of and identity of race and religion, Thailand and Burma are still brought closer together by exchange of visits such as the present, and by joint religious undertaking as the Saṅgāyanā.

The religious and friendly ties that already exist between the two countries from ancient times are thus further cemented.

Rājāno deviyo cā.dim,
Katvāna raṭṭhikā cu.bho.
Arogā sukhitā hontu,
Sampaggaṇhantu sāsana.nti.

May Your Majesties and the people of the two countries be well and happy!

May you be successful in your noble work to spread the Light of the Dhamma to all the world!

The Sangīti-kākara Bhikkhus then continued to recite the concluding part of the Aṭṭhakathā. At its conclusion, the Thai Majesties joined the devout gathering in saying, “Sādhu!, Sādhu!, Sādhu!”

Next, the Venerable Masoyein Sayadaw, on behalf of the Bhikkhu-Saṅgha of Burma, presented their Majesties with a Dakkhina-sākhā Buddha Image, while the President of the Union of Burma presented them with a set each of Tipiṭaka Pāli Texts and Aṭṭhakathās.

After leaving the Great Cave, their Majesties planted a Bo-sapling in the eastern foreclosure of the Great Sacred Cave in commemoration of their visit there.

Next, they visited the Library and then went to the Refectory where His Majesty the King of Thailand offered a set of silk robes and eight requisites to the Venerable Masoyein Sayadaw. Their Majesties also graciously offered “soon” to 1000 Sangīti-kākara Bhikkhus. After the meal was over, the King poured water of libation and shared his merits with all sentient beings.

BOOK REVIEW

Nature and Destiny. A Theory of Evolution. Hans Christian Sandbeck. Oslo University Press, Oslo. Pp. 353. Price £1-10-0.

By the coming of a New Age, an Age in which spiritual values will play a more important role than they do now, this book is much welcomed. It is a highly informative book and as such, is a much needed one. It is not a book on Buddhism, and yet, most of the concepts discussed therein are also explained in Buddhism, because Buddhism itself has covered all the domains of scientific knowledge.

The book is specially directed towards the main inquiry: “What well-founded conclusions may a human being draw concerning the mental reactions of himself and other sentient beings in the past, the present and the future?” The author states that he would not discuss things pertaining to “uncausedness”. So, Nibbāna, being “uncaused” and “unconditioned,” is not within the purview of this book. The concepts “consciousness,” “impulses,” etc. are elaborately explained in the book, and these explanations, in most cases, are in agreement with the trend of the Abhidhamma (Higher Doctrine).

In the novel entitled “He who sees,” the doctor who was the companion of the hero said that he was always thinking of writing a book on “The Dynamics of the Neurones.” Now, 40 years after the appearance of that novel, Mr. Sandbeck is able to write a book on the dynamics of the neurones. For example, there is no English word capable of expressing what “Javana” imports for the Abhidhamma (Higher Doctrine). U Swe Zan Aung, the author of “The Compendium of Philosophy” defined “Javana” as “apperception.” The late Ven. Nyanatiloka translated it as “Impulsive moment.” Mr. Sandbeck explains this concept of “Impulse” in various ways in the light of advanced atomic theories, and we are inclined to think that, according to the explanation given by the author, and in the absence of any better English word, the nearest word is “Impulsive moment.”

On page 281 of the book, the author states as follows:—

“The past is that which no longer is.”

“The future is that which not yet is.”

“The present is the infinitesimally brief fraction of an event which occurs between the past and the future.”

In accordance with a sensible definition of “infinitesimal” one may say that if the minimum of duration which can be perceived at all is found to correspond, for instance, to one thousandth of a second, the “infinitesimally brief” may be said to be less than that; implying that a thousandth of a

second belongs partly to the past or to the future, so that “the very present” is always imperceptible.

From these three propositions. the conclusion may be formally drawn that neither the past, the future, nor the present exists, and as that should be true always, nothing is ever true.

Again, on page 282 of the same book the following appears:

“Actually, it is an excellent way to a more tolerable life to realize that the ‘future’ effects of ‘past’ experiences may be radically altered by one’s own ‘present’ efforts.’

According to Buddhist psychology, the combination of the three phases of time—the past, the present and the future—is conventionally termed as a constituent group of existence. Nibbāna is outside the reckoning of time.

In the epilogue of his book, the author says:

“Destiny, as an unvarying principle characterising the procedure of nature in general, and of human beings in particular, is expressed by the word: Self-continuation comprising the preservation of an identity within an ever-changing self and the infinite expansion of such individual identity—particularly the individual consciousness ss.”

It is suitable for those who desire to study Buddhism in the light of modern sciences.