

REBIRTH IN BUDDHIST LOGIC

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Of all the ways, the most excellent for attaining happiness and eradicating suffering is the infallible doctrine of the Buddha. Influenced by His true path, the virtuous person will reach the desired goal of emancipation. Because of the absolute certainty of attaining the desired goal in His teachings, the Buddha is adored as the Great Being, Who is Authority personified (Skt. Pramāṇa puruṣha, Tib. Tsad-ma'-skyes-bu), that is, He attained Bliss and shed all suffering. The epithet of 'omniscient being' as referring to the Buddha is also mentioned by Slob-dpon-phyogs-glang (Āchārya Dignāga) in his Tsad-ma-kun-btus (Pramāṇa sammuccaya). The Buddha as omniscient being could be found in more detail in the commentary works of Chos-kyi-grags-pa (Dharmakīrti) in the second chapter of Tsad-ma-ranm-grel (Pramanavartika).

Buddhist logic accepts only two sources of valid knowledge: revelation of the Buddhist scripture (Skt. Agamanirdeśa, Tib. Lung-gi-bstan-pa) and the mystic intuition of the saint (Skt. Adhigamanirdeśa, Tib. Rtogs-pai'-bstan-pa). The validity of these two truths is also mentioned in the works of Slob-dpon-dbyig-gnyen (Āchārya Vasubandhu) as contained in Abhidharma.

Revelation of scripture is the three pitakas (Sde-snod-gsum): Vinaya pitaka ('dul-bai'-sde-snod), Sūtrapitaka (Mdo-sde'-sde-snod) and Abhidharma pitaka (Mngon-pai'-sde-snod). Mystic intuition can be cultivated through the three trainings of the mind

This note on rebirth is from believer's point of view and is based mainly on Dharmakīrti, the master of logic. Buddhist logic takes cognition of mind as the lord of five senses. Consciousness is thus leading point in the concept of this life and the life beyond. Modern Scientists find great interest in Buddhist theories of life and death. This note is a mere introduction in the believer's language.

(Skt. Trisikṣā, Tib. Bslab-pa-gsum): training in moral discipline (Skt. Śīla sikṣā, Tib. Tshul-khrims-kyi-bslab-pa), training in concentration (Skt. Samadhi siksa, Tib. Ting-nge-'zin-gyi-bslab-pa), and training in wisdom (Skt. Prajñā sikṣā, Tib. Shes-rab-kyi-bslab-pa).

Why is the Buddha called the 'perfect being'? Because his profound teachings have the innate value to lead the virtuous person to the path of emancipation. That is to say, he will never let them down in their expectations and desires. The two truths of revealed scripture (Lung-gi-bstan-pa) and mystic intuition as taught by the Buddha are infallible. Therefore, from whom the two sources of valid knowledge comes, is a 'perfect one'. Dignāga in the beginning of Pramāṇa Samuccaya praised the Buddha for having transformed into the 'perfect being'. By studying the infallible doctrine of Buddha such as the four Noble Truths, the disciples will attain the higher realms of gods and human beings and will also be able to penetrate deep into his sublime teachings.

Those who desire happiness should find the means to attain such in the teachings of Buddha. There is much knowledge which does serve the ultimate purpose of attaining the higher path. But to find the ultimate truth, one has to resort to Buddha's teachings. Therefore the Buddha must be taken as the perfect teacher because he had observed the true nature of the transmigratory existence.

Another reason why the Buddha is known as perfect being is that he excelled in the cultivation of great compassion (Bsam-pa-phun-sum-tshogs-pa-nying-rje-chen-po) and acquired realization through eliminating the wrong conception of self (byor-ba-phun-sum-tshogs-pa-bdag-med-rtogs-pai'-shes-rab). The practice of compassion and destruction of self consciousness (ego) are the most excellent methods for delivering beings from the world of suffering and to attain the realm of all-knower (Thar-pa-dang-thams-ched-mkhyen-pai'-go-phang). The universal compassion (nying-rje-chen-po) in Buddha does not arise without a cause. This great compassion is the sum total of the long period of practice carried through innumerable past lives. He disposed his mind towards the deliverance of innumerable beings from suffering. The omniscient one therefore chose the best method: cultivation of universal compassion (Nying-rje-chen-po).

The theoretical school of Chārvākas however discounted the belief in the efficiency of the practice of compassion for many lives, because there is no previous birth and rebirth, and hence no Karmic formation. They argued that the mind is based upon physical body and when the body dissolves the mind also perishes with it. The body is made up of four elements and five senses and when body dissolves, they also disintegrate and disappear like a rainbow. Hence one's mind cannot go for the next rebirth. When the Charvakas disown the next birth, they also discount the virtuous or wise deeds and their results. For Chārvākas, there is no attainment of the higher path through the accumulation of virtuous deeds.

They supported their views with the following examples: 'like an essence of the liquor, the mind is the essence of the body'; 'like an illumination of the light, the mind is the illumination of the body'; and 'like a fresco on the wall the mind is a projection of the body'. Thus when there is no liquor there is no essence of it, when there is no light there is no illumination, when there is no wall there is no fresco or there is no mind when there is no body.

How the Buddhist refute them? If only the body is the cause of the mind, then the dead body should also have the mind. Therefore, physical causative body also warrants the existence of mind even when the body is out of function.

The mind, however, is not dependent on the body. The mind is a separate entity because its development and degeneration does not depend upon the body's development and degeneration. If the mind is of same nature as that of body, then the senses which perceive the objects should also perceive the mind. But this is not so.

Most of the beings appear in physical form. However in some realms there exists only mind (Skt. Manas, Tib. Yid). Both the mind and body have their own original causes (Nyer-len). The formative stage of the body comes from the semen and blood of the father and mother. Likewise the formative stage of the mind is the Karmic force that flows from the semen and blood of the two opposite sexes. The original cause of the mind is already in development before the present mind is born. That is to say, the origi-

nal cause of the mind has already preceeded before the present mind is formed, because the external elements like flesh and blood cannot generate mind. Therefore, the original cause of mind must necessarily be the mind that has preceeded it.

Mind must have the substantial cause of its production. The substantial cause is the one that was already there before it enters the semen and blood of father and mother. This very mind is the mind of the previous birth and not of the present birth. That is how Chos-kyi-grags-pa (Dharmakīrti) says in the second chapter of Pramānavārtika (Tshad-ma-rnam -'grel):

Skt. Prānāpānendriyādhiyām dehādeva na kevalāt/
Sajātinirapekṣāṇām janma janmaparigrahe//37
Pramanavartika, Ch. I

Tib. Skye-ba-yongs-su-len-pa-na/
'byung-rnub-dbang-poi'-blo-dag-ni/
Rang-gi-lus-la-ltos-med-phyir/
Lus-nyid-'bah-shig-las-skyes-min//

The verses signify the existence of previous birth. For example, the consciousness of an old man is brought about by the previous consciousness, because without the previous consciousness there cannot be the consciousness that he has now. Similarly a dying man's consciousness will join with the future consciousness. There is always an unbroken chain of the development of consciousness. Out of this chain of consciousness comes the cycle of birth and rebirth. That is why acts in this life bear fruits for the future life through consciousness.

In many lives the 'omniscient one' has cultivated to perfection all the virtuous acts and thus he has become the 'perfect one'. Because he has devoted so much of his time to the cultivation of compassion in the previous lives, even without practising it now, the compassion nevertheless remains in abundance within him. This is one aspect of the wisdom that is inherent in him because of his previous consciousness. As a result he was filled with much compassion, which is comparable to an uncontrollable fire.

Now in order to utilize his universal compassion Buddha chose the best method that can expedite the removal of sufferings. That is, he contemplated on the four Noble Truths and the sixteen characteristics of voidness.

In his numerous lives, the omniscient one attempted to penetrate into the real nature of the four Truths (Tib. Bden-pa Bshi; Skt. Catvāri satyāni) and as a result, Buddha cultivated an unmistakable knowledge on them. Through this knowledge, he contemplated on their nature and generated immense compassion. Overwhelmed by compassion, the Buddha directed his thoughts toward the deliverance of entire beings from sufferings. In this endeavour Buddha, however, found that egoism (Tib. Bdag-'zen, Skt. Ātmagraha) is the root cause of all sufferings. The Buddha then investigated the meaning of worldly existence which is bound with egoism. In order to remove such misapprehension of self, Buddha concentrated on the methods during his previous lives and, therefore, he could unmistakably discern the correct and faulty means to eliminate the grasping self. By his discriminatory wisdom, the inclination towards ignorance is also removed. He now became an 'accomplished one' in fulfilling the wishes of others with his perfect means.

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