



Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center

Ajahn Kumāro Bhikkhu, Resident Monastic
122 Arlington Street, Unit B, Asheville, NC 28801
Elisha Buhler's telephone #: (910) 922-1549
website: mittameditation.com
email: mittameditation@gmail.com

November 2024 Newsletter



Rebirth (punabbhava or paccājāta) and a Brief Survey of Evidence for Rebirth

Rebirth, also known as re-becoming or renewed becoming, is continued existence from one life to another; i.e., to take birth again. The term "reincarnation" refers to a permanent fixed soul that is reborn while the term "rebirth" refers to a dynamic stream of consciousness (viññāṇa-sota) that transitions to another existence. Buddhism specifies "rebirth" and not "reincarnation."

Rebirth is governed by ignorance (avijjā), craving (taṇhā), clinging (upādāna), and kamma, and the process is defined by Dependent Origination (paticcasamuppāda).

Ignorance is not knowing the Four Noble Truths (ariya catusacca). The Noble Truths reveal the nature of existence and the path to liberation from suffering (dukkha).

1. The Noble Truth of Suffering (dukkha) acknowledges the existence of suffering, the reality of dissatisfaction and unsatisfactoriness in the cycle of birth, aging, sickness, death and rebirth (saṃsāra). This truth is discussed in the February 2023 Newsletter.
2. The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (samudaya) is craving (taṇhā), attachment and identification with that which is impermanent (anicca). This truth is discussed in the March 2023 Newsletter.
3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering (nirodha) is the elimination of the causes for suffering and the result is nibbāna, the escape from saṃsāra. This truth is discussed in the April 2023 Newsletter.
4. The Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering (magga) is training in the Noble Eightfold Path (ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga) that leads to nibbāna. This truth is discussed in the May 2023 Newsletter.

Kamma is intentional moral actions discussed in the August 2023 Newsletter.

Dependent Origination is the process of phenomena arising based on conditions discussed in the July 2023 Newsletter.

Rebirth takes place in the endless cycle of saṃsāra: birth (jāti), old age (jarā), sickness (byādhi), death (maraṇa), and rebirth. The endless cycle of saṃsāra results in suffering (dukkha), sorrow (soka), lamentation (parideva), pain (dukkha), grief (domanassa) and despair (upāyāsa) during each phase of the cycle. The Buddha taught the goal of practice is to escape from saṃsāra and be liberated from dukkha, that enlightened state is called nibbāna.

The evolving consciousness (samvattanika-viññāṇa) or stream of consciousness (viññāṇa-sotam); that is tainted by ignorance, craving and clinging, and conditioned by kamma; upon physical death, is propelled to be embodied by a new form. At the death of one personality, a new one comes into being, just as the flame of a dying candle can serve to light the flame of another. The consciousness in the new person is neither identical to nor entirely different from that in the deceased but the two form a causal continuum or stream.

Concepts Related to Rebirth

- Not-self (anattā)

Rebirth is not the transmigration of a permanent soul or self. Instead, what we think of as “self” is a collection of ever-changing components, the Five Aggregates (pañcakkhandhā):

1. material form (rūpa khandha),
2. mental formations (saṅkhāra khandha),
3. perceptions (saññā khandha),
4. feelings (vedanā khandha), and
5. sense consciousness (viññāṇa khandha).

Since these aggregates are always changing and are impermanent, there is no enduring permanent self that can be reborn. The concept of not-self (anattā) refers to the understanding that there is no permanent, unchanging self, ego or soul. The self, ego or personality is discussed in the January 2023 Newsletter,

- Saṃsāra is the endless cycle of birth, ageing, sickness, death, and rebirth. Saṃsāra literally means ‘perpetual wandering’. Rebirth occurs within saṃsāra and in a number of different cosmological realms. The Buddha taught that there is another world; i.e. different rebirth realms.

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya

translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

60 Apāṇṇaka Sutta: The Incontrovertible Teaching

8. “Since there actually is another world, one who holds the view ‘there is no other world’ has wrong view. ...”

Rebirth may occur in any of the following six main realms of existence.

1. Heavenly Realm (deva loka), also known as the realm of gods, are inhabited by devas. Devas are celestial beings or deities who experience mostly pleasure and a long lifespan. Devas are still subject to birth, ageing, sickness, death, and rebirth.
2. Titan or Demigod Realm (asura loka) are inhabited by asuras. Asuras are powerful beings who are driven by jealousy, aggression, and a desire for power. Asuras are often fighting battles with each other and with the devas. Despite their immense strength, they are dissatisfied and tormented.
3. Human Realm (manussa loka) are inhabited by human beings. This is a favorable realm due to the experience of both happiness (sukha) and suffering (dukkha). Dukkha motivates people to cultivate such spiritual qualities as wisdom (paññā) and loving-kindness (mettā) which are required to achieve nibbāna, the complete liberation from suffering.
4. Animal Realm (tiracchāna loka) are inhabited by animals who have a preponderance of ignorance and instinctual behavior. Animals have limited cognitive abilities, are motivated by survival instincts; and suffer greatly from hunger, fear, and predation.
5. Hungry Ghost Realm (peta loka) are inhabited by pretas who suffer from intense hunger and thirst. Pretas have insatiable appetites but due to their extremely narrow throats and tiny mouths, they are constantly frustrated and tormented by the impossibility of satisfying their cravings.

6. Hell Realm (niraya loka) are inhabited by beings who experience intense suffering and torment. Hell beings experience excruciating pain as a result of unwholesome actions (akusalakamma).

When a being dies, the intentional moral actions (kamma) accumulated throughout their current and past lives influences the conditions of their next rebirth. Beings are not necessarily reborn in the same realm in which they were born and may fall into a lower realm.

Volitional or mental formations are kamma formations, patterns of behaviour that are conditioned by past ignorance. Volitional formations (saṅkhārā), ignorance (avijjā), craving (taṇhā) and clinging (upādāna) are the causes that result in rebirth within saṃsāra from one life to the next. Ignorance (avijjā) is the primary cause for saṃsāra and is also the primary cause of suffering (dukkha) inherent in saṃsāra. The Second Noble Truth, discussed in the March 2023 Newsletter - The

Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, states that craving (taṇhā) is the proximate cause for dukkha, however ignorance is the fundamental cause.

Ignorance, craving, clinging, and kamma propels a being to wander in saṃsāra. The type of rebirth a person experiences depends on the kamma they have generated. The life of beings caught within saṃsāra experience suffering (dukkha) as they continuously wander across various realms of existence by taking repeated birth in fortunate and unfortunate realms. The aim of the teachings of Buddha is to escape from saṃsāra by uprooting the defilements (kilesa) that produce kamma and empower the cycle of saṃsāra. The primary defilements (kilesa), obstacles of mind, are the Three Unwholesome Roots (akusala mūla):

1. delusion (moha) = ignorance (avijjā),
2. greed (lobha), and
3. hatred (dosa).

Noble Truths, Noble Path: The Heart Essence of the Buddha's Original Teachings by Bhikkhu Bodhi; p. 32

"Ignorance was banished and clear knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose," and his mind was liberated from the āsavas, the primordial "influxes" that sustain the round of rebirths.⁷

Note 7: ... The three āsavas are:

1. sensual craving,
2. craving for existence, and
3. ignorance.

- Intentional moral action (kamma) is discussed in the August 2023 Newsletter, whether they are thoughts, speech, or deeds, create moral consequences. The effects of kamma necessitates a process beyond a single lifetime, as not all actions bear fruit within one lifetime.

The law of kamma states that intentional moral actions have results which operate as cause and effect; i.e., intentional moral actions have consequences. Kamma may be either wholesome (kusala) or unwholesome (akusala). Wholesome kamma cause rebirth in a good realm with pleasant experiences, while unwholesome kamma cause rebirth in a bad realm with unpleasant experiences. Past kamma has the potential to effect current and future lives, and the kamma created in the present life has the potential to effect the current life and future existence. Kamma determines the cosmic realm where rebirth will take place and whether the circumstances are fortunate or unfortunate within that realm.

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya

translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

136 Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta: The Greater Exposition of Action

8. "Ānanda, there are four kinds of persons to be found existing in the world. What four? Here some person kills living beings, takes what is not given, misconducts himself in sensual pleasures, speaks falsehood, speaks maliciously, speaks harshly, gossips; he is covetous, has a mind of ill will, and holds wrong view. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell.

"But here some person kills living beings... and holds wrong view. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world.

"Here some person abstains from killing living beings, from taking what is not given, from misconduct in sensual pleasures, from false speech, from malicious speech, from harsh speech, from gossip; he is not covetous, his mind is without ill will, and he holds right view. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world.

- Dependent Origination (paṭiccasamuppāda) or the Law of Conditionality is discussed in the July 2023 Newsletter, contains twelve links that are interdependent, in which the Buddha taught the causes and conditions leading to suffering and the possibility of liberation from suffering. The links illustrate how ignorance (avijjā), craving (taṇhā) and clinging (upādāna) lead to suffering (dukkha) and perpetuate the cycle of saṃsāra. The interconnectedness of all twelve links of Dependent Origination is the presentation that all phenomena is influenced by causes and conditions, and nothing exists in isolation.

Dependent Origination demonstrates the constant change and impermanence of all phenomena. Each link in the chain is impermanent, including sense consciousness and the Five Aggregates (pañcakkhandhā). If there were a permanent self, it would have to remain unchanged amidst this constant flux. There is no permanent self because any notion of self implies something separate from the interdependent web of existence.

What one thinks is conditioned by an underlying tendency (anusaya) in the mind and forms the object that (rebirth) consciousness grasps onto. The establishment of rebirth consciousness conditions the dependent arising of re-birth. The underlying tendencies are latent dispositions or inclinations in the mind. The Seven Latent Tendencies (anusaya) are:

1. lust for sensual pleasures (kāmarāga),
2. aversion (patigha),
3. conceit (māna),
4. views (ditthi),
5. doubt (vicikicchā),
6. craving for continued existence or becoming (bhavarāga),
7. ignorance (avijjā).

The following passages relate these tendencies underlying one's deluded thought processes to rebirth because they provide a basis for the continuity of consciousness in saṃsāra.

The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi.

38 (8) Volition (1)

At Sāvattṭhi. "Bhikkhus, what one intends, and what one plans, and whatever one has a tendency towards: this becomes a basis for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is a basis there is a support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is the production of future renewed existence. When there is the production of future renewed existence, future birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

"If, bhikkhus, one does not intend, and one does not plan, but one still has a tendency towards something, this becomes a basis for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is a basis, there is a support for the establishing of consciousness.... Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

"But, bhikkhus, when one does not intend, and one does not plan, and one does not have a tendency towards anything, no basis exists for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is no basis, there is no support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is unestablished and does not come to growth, there is no production of future renewed existence. When there is no production of future renewed existence, future birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair cease. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering."

39 (9) Volition (2)

At Sāvattṭhi. "Bhikkhus, what one intends, and what one plans, and whatever one has a tendency towards: this becomes a basis for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is a basis, there is a support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is a descent of name-and-form. With name-and-form as condition, the six sense bases [come to be]; with the six sense bases as condition, contact; with contact as condition, feeling ... craving ... clinging ... existence ... birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

"If, bhikkhus, one does not intend, and one does not plan, but one still has a tendency towards something, this becomes a basis for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is a basis, there is a support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is a descent of name-and-form. With name-and-form as condition, the six sense bases [come to be].... Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

Rebirth occurs according to the process of Dependent Origination. As long as there is ignorance, craving and clinging tainting the stream of consciousness there will be rebirth within saṃsāra.

- The end of rebirth and saṃsāra is nibbāna, discussed in the April 2023 Newsletter - The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering. The ultimate goal of spiritual practice is to break free from the cycle of saṃsāra and realize nibbāna. Nibbāna is the cessation of suffering, ignorance, craving, and clinging, and thus the end of rebirth. When a sentient being realizes nibbāna, they are no longer subject to the conditions that lead to rebirth.

Brief Survey of Evidence for Rebirth/Reincarnation

- Young children who have past life memories is evidence for rebirth. There are children who report detailed memories of past lives, which manifest as spontaneous recollections. These memories may fade over time, but during early childhood, they appear vividly.

These cases have been studied by researchers like Dr. Ian Stevenson, who compiled detailed investigations of children who provided specific and verifiable details about past lives, such as names, locations, and events that were later confirmed. Psychologist Ian Stevenson conducted extensive research on children who remember past lives, finding correspondences between their memories and the lives of deceased individuals. Wikipedia reports the following:

Dr. Ian Pretyman Stevenson (October 31, 1918 – February 8, 2007) was a Canadian-born American psychiatrist, the founder and director of the Division of Perceptual Studies at the University of Virginia School of Medicine. He was a professor at the University of Virginia School of Medicine for fifty years. He was chair of their department of psychiatry from 1957 to 1967, Carlson Professor of Psychiatry from 1967 to 2001, and Research Professor of Psychiatry from 2002 until his death in 2007.

As founder and director of the University of Virginia School of Medicine's Division of Perceptual Studies (originally named "Division of Personality Studies"), which investigates the paranormal, Stevenson became known for his research into cases he considered suggestive of reincarnation – the idea that emotions, memories, and even physical bodily features can be passed on from one incarnation to another. In the course of his forty years doing international fieldwork, he researched three thousand cases of children who claimed to remember past lives. His position was that certain phobias, phobias, unusual abilities and illnesses could not be fully explained by genetics or the environment. He believed that, in addition to genetics and the environment, reincarnation might possibly provide a third, contributing factor.

- Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) or Out-of-Body Experiences (OBEs) are people who have been declared clinically dead and then revived, they report having left their bodies and observed their own resuscitation. NDEs report seeing visions of previous lives or feeling a sense of life continuity. These experiences may include a sense of moving toward another realm or returning to life in a new form.

NDEs demonstrate that consciousness continues to exist when the physical body is medically declared dead. NDEs report heightened awareness, vivid perceptions, and a sense of separation from their body. This is evidence that consciousness can exist independently of the body and therefore is capable of surviving death and being reborn in a new body. After death, the stream of consciousness continues its journey, through multiple lives, rather than ceasing to exist.

During NDEs, consciousness experience a "life review," where there is a re-experiencing of major events from the recently lived life. This phenomenon may be part of the learning process to develop wisdom (paññā) and loving-kindness (mettā), which continues over multiple lifetimes. The stream of consciousness is given opportunities to grow and evolve through repeated rebirths, with the life review acting as a reflection or assessment.

NDEs describe a profound sense of peace, detachment from worldly concerns, and a sense that physical death is not something to be feared. This is an indication that physical death is a transition rather than an ending, and that the stream of consciousness transitions to new experiences, in another form through rebirth.

- Child Prodigies demonstrate inexplicable skills, knowledge, or traits that were learnt from past lives. These children have abilities or information they did not learn in their current lifetime in areas such as music, mathematics, or the arts.. The existence of prodigies is evidence of past lives.

Prodigies display remarkable abilities at an unusually young age. For instance, child musicians like Mozart or mathematical geniuses like Srinivasa Ramanujan are cited as examples of people who seem to "know" things without having been explicitly taught in their current lives. Such talents are the result of learning and practice from a previous life.

Intentional moral actions (kamma) in past lives can influence the conditions of the present life. Prodigies are examples of children who accumulated abilities or knowledge in previous lives and

are now reaping the fruits of that kamma in their current life. Talents and abilities are not random but arise from past causes and conditions.

- Xenoglossy, is Greek for “foreign tongue” or “foreign language,” is a situation in which a person is able to speak, write or understand a foreign language that they have never learned or been exposed to in their current lifetime. Xenoglossy is evidence for rebirth because the language was learnt in a past life. In some xenoglossy cases, the entire past life personality emerges and essentially takes over the body of the contemporary personality.
- Déjà Vu, is French for “already seen”, is the feeling of having experienced a situation before, even if it's the first time, and may be a memory from a past life. Dr. Brian Weiss, psychiatrist and author of Many Lives, Many Masters have said:

When you look into the eyes of another, often a stranger, and you feel a familiarity, a déjà vu, a vague recognition, or an electric rush... pay attention. You may be experiencing a past life connection and this is not a coincidental encounter.

- Certain marks on the body may correspond to injuries or characteristics from a previous existence. Birthmarks may correspond to particular injuries or wounds, like scars or lesions, that were caused in a past life. The placement of the birthmark correspond to the spot of something that characterized the past person. Ian Stevenson wrote in Birthmarks and Birth Defects Corresponding to Wounds on Deceased Persons the following:

In cases in which a deceased person was identified the details of whose life unmistakably matched the child's statements, a close correspondence was nearly always found between the birthmarks and/or birth defects on the child and the wounds on the deceased person.

- During pregnancy, the mother-to-be may have dreams about the child's past life identity. The dreams offer insights about their child's past life experiences.
- Spontaneous involuntary memories arising in a waking state or dreams may be of past life experiences. The stream of consciousness carries memories from previous lives. Spontaneous memories, whether experienced during waking moments or dreams, may be interpreted as echoes of these past experiences.

Some individuals report sudden, vivid memories that seem to come from nowhere, involving unfamiliar people, places, or events. These recollections might be of a past life.

- Pregnant women craving foods the deceased person liked may be an indication of rebirth. Pregnancy Cravings in Reincarnation Cases by James G. (Jim) Matlock, Ph.D. report the following:

Unusual food cravings and behaviors are fairly common during pregnancy and most have no discernible reincarnation connection. However, when the children born of those pregnancies crave the same foods, one has to wonder if they were influencing their mothers in some way while in the womb. The phenomenon becomes even more intriguing when the children recall previous lives that can be verified and it turns out that the people whose lives they remember were fond of those foods.

- A child that exhibit behaviors, traits, preferences, skills or memories reminiscent of a deceased person may be evidence of rebirth. This can include specific interests, mannerisms, or ways of speaking. Children of rebirth cases may act like the people whose lives they remember. These behavioral memories may extend to skills, such as those displayed by child prodigies.
- Drawings made by children that depict scenes, people, or experiences from past lives may be evidence for rebirth. There are children who have created drawings that vividly represent scenes or figures they've never been exposed to in their current life. These artworks may include elements like historical clothing, unfamiliar settings, or events that might be created from recollections of a past life.
- Past-Life Regression Therapy uses hypnosis to recover memories of past lives. Hypnosis is focused attention and absorption on specific thoughts, images, or sensations that produce an altered state of consciousness which may reveal past memories.

- Micro-cell regeneration is the natural biological process of replacing or restoring damaged or missing cells, tissues, organs, and entire body parts. All living organisms, including plants and animals, have some ability to regenerate as part of their natural maintenance of tissues and organs. The regeneration of cells is a reflection of the insight into the ever-changing nature of existence and the illusion of a permanent self.

Using sophisticated Carbon-14 dating methods, Dr. Frisen and his team of stem cells researchers in the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden, found that the average age of cells in an adult body would be between 7 and 10 years.

Micro-cell regeneration is a biological example of impermanence (anicca). Cells are constantly dying and regenerating, reflecting the ongoing process of change and decay. No-things remains static.

Both rebirth and cell regeneration deal with the idea of continuity within change. In micro-cell regeneration, there is a continual replacement of cells that maintain the overall organism's form, similar to the continuity of consciousness in rebirth. Despite the apparent "rebirth" of individual cells, the organism maintains a fluid integrity, just as the continuity of consciousness maintains a fluid integrity within saṃsāra. Micro-cell regeneration operates on biological mechanisms, rebirth is influenced by kamma; both processes describe a continuity.

The teaching of not-self (anattā) presents the illusion of a permanent, unchanging self. Micro-cell regeneration metaphorically illustrates anattā by showing that the human body, which unenlightened people identify with their "self," is constantly changing at a cellular level, leading to the insight that the "self" is not a fixed, permanent and an unchanging entity.

Announcements

- Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center has a presence on Meet-Up social media and we ask that you please sign-up for every event that you are planing to attend at www.MeetUp.com. Some people are intimidated by a small number of attendees and a larger number will be encouraging.
- Please help advertise Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center by providing a review at www.google.com/maps.

Activities of the Meditation Center

- Sitting meditation is held everyday at 6:30AM and 5:30PM. After meditation, Ajahn Kumāro is available to answer questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com on the days and time you would like to participate.
- The days of the full moon, new moon and the two half moons are called in Pāli: The Uposatha, and is a Buddhist day of observance. A lunar calendar is available at <https://cal.forestsangha.org>. Ajahn Kumāro will perform the ceremony of giving the five precepts on the full and new moon days after the 5:30PM meditation. You may elect to keep the precepts as long as you see fit (one night, a week, a lifetime, etc).
- Meditation Workshop is held on the first Sunday of each month between 11:00AM and 1:00PM. The workshop will provide instruction and practice for sitting and walking meditation. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- A recording of a Dhamma Talk from an experienced Thai Forest Teacher will be played on the third Sunday of each month. Sitting meditation starts at 4:30PM and the Dhamma Talk will be played afterwards. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- Every Saturday at 4:15PM the Meditation Center will be cleaned. Please join us in maintaining a clean space for practicing and discussing the Dhamma.

- There is a Library at the Meditation Center. You may browse for books to borrow at 5:00PM and check out the books for three weeks.
- Everyday at 8:40AM Ajahn Kumāro leaves for alms-round in order to give residents of Asheville the opportunity to earn merit by practicing generosity of giving food and placing it into the alms bowl. Ajahn does not accept or handle money. Ajahn usually arrives at the Whole Foods Market, 70 Merrimon Ave. just before 9:00AM and stands in front of the store for alms.
- Ajahn is available at other times during the day to meet with individuals or groups when requested.
- For more additional information please send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com. We also have a presence on Facebook and Meet-Up social media.

Request for Support

The Meditation Center is in need of support in order to accomplish its' mission and vision. The support may take various forms. You will support the Meditation Center by:

- Being present at the Meditation Center for group meditation.
- Giving alms during alms-round.
- Bringing to the Meditation Center items that are listed on the support page of the website www.mittameditation.com.
- Volunteering your skills, energy and time at the Meditation Center.
- Informing your family and friends about the Meditation Center and encouraging them to participate in the activities.
- Donating financial contributions for the Meditation Center's expenses. Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center is recognized as a tax-exempt organization by the IRS under section 501(c)(3). Donations are deductible in accordance with IRS regulations. Financial contributions may be made on the support page of the website www.mittameditation.com and additional means for making financial donations may be discussed with Elisha Buhler at (910) 922-1549.