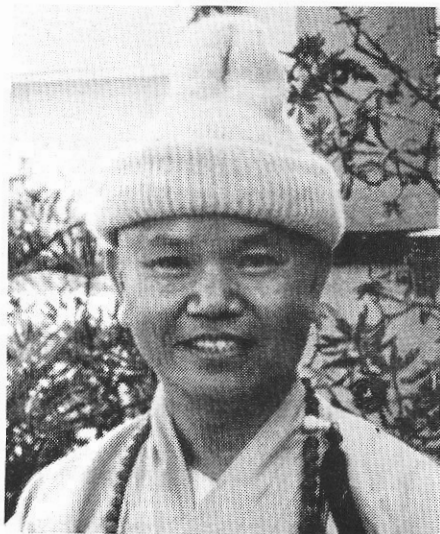


Zen Buddhism Awareness in Action

by
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Preface

The following is the finished version of a lecture given by Ven. Dr. Thich Thien-An at a U.C.L.A. Extension course entitled "States of Consciousness", which was coordinated by Dr. David Nowlis and given at U.C.L.A. in the Spring Quarter of 1972. The author, Dr. Thich Thien-An, was a native of Vietnam and served as Director of the International Buddhist Meditation Center and President of the College of Oriental Studies in Los Angeles, California. He received his religious and academic education in both Vietnam and Japan, training in Buddhist monasteries and Zen temples from the age of fourteen and completing his advanced academic work in Japan. In 1964 he received his D Litt. degree in Oriental Philosophy from Waseda University in Tokyo. Before coming to the United States, Dr. Thich Thien-An was Professor of Philosophy and Chairman of the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Saigon and Dean of the Faculty of Letter and Human Sciences at Van Hanh Buddhist University, which he together with two other high-ranking Buddhist monk scholars founded in 1964. He came to this country in 1966 to assume the position of Visiting Professor at the University of California at Los Angeles. He taught courses in numerous colleges and universities around Southern California. He especially taught classes in Oriental Philosophy, Comparative Philosophy, Eastern Religions and Zen Buddhism at U.C.L.A Extension and Los Angeles City College. In 1972 he was elected "Outstanding Teacher" at the latter institution and was included in *Who's Who in the West*, 1971 and 1973. He was also included in *Men of Achievement* - 1973.

In 1975 Dr. Thien-An served as special advisor to the government in the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees. He became founder of the first Vietnamese temple in the United States and established A-Di-Da Temple, Los Angeles as well. He was named as the first Hoa Tuong, Archbishop, of the Vietnamese residing outside of Vietnam in 1976. Upon his untimely demise November 22, 1980, the responsibilities for the

Vietnamese and American temples split, with Ven. Dr. Thich Man-Giac becoming Supreme Abbot of the Vietnamese, and Ven. Dr. Karuna Dharma taking on the International Buddhist Meditation Center.

In order to serve students, members and friends and to present to them the essentials of Zen Buddhism as taught by Dr. Thich Thien-An, we first published this booklet in 1973. Together with other lectures given by various speakers in the course of Dr David Nowlis, this present paper was included in an anthology on *States of Consciousness*, published in 1973.

We especially would like to express our deep thanks to Ven. Dr. Bhikkhu Bodhi, former Assistant Director of the International Buddhist Meditation Center, now residing in Sri Lanka, for editing the lecture and preparing it for booklet form. We would also like to thank Ven. Dr. Thich Giac Duc of Van Hanh University for the use of his paper on *The Matter of Soul in Buddhism*, printed here as an appendix.

In September, 1998 the book was republished by International Buddhist Meditation Center, under the direction of its current director, Ven. Dr. Karuna Dharma. The booklet has been consistently praised by readers for its straight forward, easy to read style and is in constant demand by newcomers to Buddhism and Zen.

Ven. Dr. Karuna Dharma
Los Angeles, September 1998

Zen Buddhism Awareness in Action

It is a tradition amongst Buddhists that when two people meet they join their two hands together, palm to palm, place them before their chests and bow. The purpose of this gesture is to show respect to each other because they have the Buddha nature. According to Buddhism every individual contains within himself the Buddha nature or principle of perfection. Therefore, every person has the potential to become a Buddha. Since all human beings have the Buddha nature, all, regardless of their outward positions, are worthy of respect. Fundamentally there is no difference between men. Such differences as male and female, black and white, high and low, rich and poor, pertain only to the manifestations and not to the essence. At the level of essence all people are equal. That is why the Buddha rejected the caste-system of Hinduism, which bound people to specific social classes from birth. The Buddha said that all people are equal at birth. Physically all humans have red blood and salty tears, whether they be rich or poor; American, Russian, or Chinese; black, white, or yellow. And spiritually all humans have the Buddha nature, whether they be intelligent or dull, educated or illiterate.

Because the Buddha nature exists in everybody, all living things can develop into Buddhas. A Buddha is a fully enlightened being, and we can become fully enlightened. Such is our nature. For the same reason we can change this imperfect world of suffering into a perfect world of peace, happiness and harmony. A cardinal tenet of Buddhism is change or impermanence, called *anicca* in Pali. Buddhism asserts that all conditioned things are subject to the law of change. There is nothing put together which does not come apart, nothing that arises which does not one day perish and nothing born which does not die. Our body is a combination of different elements, constantly changing. Our mind likewise is a flux of mental events ever arising and passing away. Buddhism denies the existence of a unique individual spiritual entity, such as a self, soul, or ego-substance. Unlike Hinduism, which postulates the self (*atman*) as a

permanent reality behind the body and mind; Buddhism holds that there is no permanent self. This is the famous Buddhist doctrine of *anatta*. A living being is made up of two basic factors, the mind and the body. The two are interdependent, and at the human level both are essential to life. We cannot exist without the body; neither can we exist without the mind. These two make up our life, yet Buddhism says that neither is fully real. The body is composed of four primary elements: solidity, as seen in bone and muscle; wetness, as seen in blood, tears and sweat; air, as found in our breathing; and heat, exemplified in our bodily warmth. Since the body is a compound entity, it is not single, unique, simple and permanent; so how can it be a real and permanent self? Likewise, the mind is combined of different elements: feeling (sense contact), perception, volition and consciousness. Behind these there is no permanent self, soul, or ego hiding. What exists is only the flow of mental processes linked to each other by their causal ties.

The emphasis on change central to Buddhist thought may appear alien to Western modes of comprehension, but the fact of impermanence has not altogether escaped the notice of Western thinkers. In the West we find a saying: "A man begins to die the moment he is born." Even while man is living he is being carried towards death: the fact of change is ineluctable. Another maxim first spoken by the Greek philosopher Herakleitos holds: "Nobody can step into the same river twice." You may think that the river you step into today is the same as the river you stepped into yesterday, but in fact the waters of that river are always flowing and so the river does not remain the same. Our bodies and minds are also flowing rivers, never the same from one moment to the next. The realization that everything in the world is changing brings, according to Buddhism, not a note of despair as some critics have charged, but of hope. For if all things change, then we can transform this world into a better world and ourselves into better people. Man is not a sinner at birth, burdened from the cradle to the grave with the sin of his forefathers in the distant past. At birth, Buddhism says, nobody is a sinner. If a man commits evil only then is he a sinner, and if a man overcomes evil through his own will then he can become a saint. Whether a man is a sinner or a saint depends on himself, on his action. The English philosopher John Locke said that at birth the mind is a *tabula rasa*, a blank tablet, with nothing written upon it. Since the mind is blank, it takes on whatever colors experience paints upon it. The same holds true with regard to our character. If we do good we become good,

and if we do evil we become evil. Therefore, Buddhism asserts, whether we are a sinner or not depends upon ourselves -- upon our deeds, our speech and our thoughts. Our make-up is not determined for us in advance by someone else. We determine our make-up ourselves. The karma or volitional action we performed in the past - in past lives as well as the part of the present life - makes us what we are now. And what we do now determines what we will become in the future. Therefore, Buddhism does not subscribe to the simplistic notion of reward and punishment and the plea for forgiveness. If we do not commit any evil nobody can punish us. If we commit evil we must reap the fruits and nobody can forgive us. Buddhists do not go to a temple to repent and beg forgiveness, but for self-reflection and self-understanding. If a Buddhist discovers some weakness in himself he will try to rectify it, and if he discovers some virtue he will try to cultivate it until he becomes a perfect person. That is the essence of the Buddhist way of Life

To abstain from all evil.
To cultivate all good,
And to purify the mind:
That is the Teaching of the Buddhas.
-- *Dhammapada*

Man and His Environment

Because human nature is so malleable, the influence of the environment upon humans is very important. However, the Buddhist conception of the role of the environment differs somewhat from that of modern sociologists in the West. Certain social thinkers hold that the environment makes the human. In this view humankind is totally a product of their circumstances and cannot transcend the conditions of their upbringing. Thus, a person raised in a bad environment tends to become bad, and a person raised in a good environment tends to become good.

But Buddhism gives a new perspective on this relationship between people and their environment. Buddhism asks: If the environment creates the person, who is it that creates the environment? The answer is that it is they themselves. Thus, whether the environment is good or bad depends on the actions of people. This conception shows us that the condition of the world depends upon ourselves and reveals to us the way to change the world. How can we change the world? In the West people often believe that the way to change the world is by controlling the world. For example, if we want to have peace we believe the solution lies in securing

a stronger position -- producing more potent weapons, amassing a stronger army, dominating other parts of the world, and destroying the enemy. But the Buddhist does not agree with this view. According to the teaching of Buddhism, a lasting peace can never be created by hatred, terror and war. The peace built upon aggression and oppression will not endure. As Asoka, a great Buddhist emperor of ancient India, said: "Hatred does not cease by hatred; hatred ceases only by love." If we want to stop war, Buddhism says, we cannot use war; if we want to stop hatred we cannot use hatred. The only way to end the vicious circle of hatred and killing is by calling in a more potent power, the power of love. It is through love, tolerance, mutual understanding and respect that we can overcome our enemies.

By this method we transform our enemies into our friends. Buddhists believe that friends and enemies are created by our own behavior. If I treat you well then even though you were originally my enemy you will change your attitude and become my friend. And if I treat you badly then even though you were originally my friend, you will turn your back on me and become my enemy. The way to build up a peaceful world is through mutual respect between person and person, community and community, and nation and nation. The founders of different religions often claim to be themselves the truth and the way, but the Buddha was different. The Buddha said: "I am a man who shows the way. If you think this is the right way, follow it. If not, you may follow your own way." This saying illustrates the great liberty in Buddhism. The Buddha just points out the way and gives us the choice to follow or to reject. He does not command or compel, but always leaves us the liberty to make our choice and to follow our decision. The Buddha's statement also implies that there may be many different ways, not only one way. By recognizing the possibility of many ways, the Buddhist is able to respect either teachings and show tolerance towards different beliefs, religions and ideologies. He believes that people of different faith can live together in harmony and help each other in the spirit of cooperation.

Interdependence and Interrelatedness

Buddhism subscribes to the famous dictum that "No man is an island " To me an island can exist alone in the ocean, but a man cannot exist alone. We need each other; therefore we have to respect each other and love each other too. Life hinges upon inter-

dependence and interrelatedness. To live is to give and to receive. We live by receiving from many different sources; therefore we have to contribute our part to the world in turn, but in giving we should remember one thing: we should not make a distinction between giver and receiver. If we think of ourselves as giving and somebody else as receiving, then we will tend to give rise to a sense of pride, egotism and expectation. From these arise all the problems with which we are familiar. In giving there should be no conception of a giver, a gift and a receiver. This is the Buddhist concept of *sunyata* (*Mu* in Japanese), which means emptiness or nothingness. At the same time that we give we should be aware that nothing is received. The saying "non-giving and non-receiving of gifts" describes this philosophy. If when we give we think of ourselves as givers and the receivers as receivers, no one will be happy to receive. For example, this country is very rich and strong and gives aid to many smaller, poorer countries, especially in Asia, but because of its attitude in giving it does not win the favor and gratitude of the people in the smaller countries. To make the receiver happy we must give without thinking that we are giving favor. We must not place ourselves in a higher position and look down upon others, as in a receiver position. In other words, we must give with a humble and compassionate attitude of mind. A key virtue of Buddhism is humility. To be humble is to avoid placing oneself above other people.

A Vietnamese Zen master once taught his disciples, "I am not necessarily a saint or a sage, and you are not necessarily a common man." In the Buddhist point of view everybody is a human being, and because we are human we have our weak points as well as our strong points. Nobody short of a Buddha, a Completely Enlightened One, can be considered perfect. If I recognize that I am not yet perfect, then I cannot expect you to be more perfect than myself. And this recognition will promote better relations between human and human. To be aware that we are not yet perfect will not only make us more humble towards one another, but more respectful and more tolerant too. For example, in a marriage relationship, the wife often expects her husband to be a perfect man and the husband expects his wife to be a perfect woman. As a result, when they become aware of each other's shortcomings they become upset. If they recognize that they themselves are imperfect, they will not place such heavy demands on each other and will be able to respect, tolerate and love each other more. To me, tolerance is a key factor in interpersonal relations. Through tolerance we can achieve harmony in the family, order in the nation and peace in the world. As I mentioned before, Buddhism recognizes that all people and all living beings are interdependent. Though our bodies and minds are different we are still interrelated. Since we are interrelated, we are not separate. Therefore, in Buddhism it is

said: "You are my extension and I am your extension." We are all different facets of the same reality, different parts of the one whole, just as the numerous waves rising and falling in the ocean are inter-related transformations of the one ocean. Because we are all so inseparably bound together in the vast ocean of existence, Buddhism suggests that we should love one another. We must shift our sense of identity away from the narrow, constrictive ego-consciousness to the all-embracing universal consciousness. We must learn to see each other as extensions of the same reality. Then we can live together in the world as friends and brothers, and this world of hatred and suffering will be changed into an abode of peacefulness and bliss. This *Samsara* world will be transformed into *Nirvana*.

Karma: The Past, Present and Future

The Buddhist conception of time regards the present, the here and now, as the causal determinant between the past and the future. The present is the effect of the past and the cause of the future. What we are in the present is the result of what we did in the past, and what we do now in the present determines what we are to become in the future. A Buddhist saying runs thus: "The present is a shadow of the past, the future a shadow of the present." Hence our action in the present is most important, for what we do in the present determines the course of our future development. According to the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth, the causal relation between action and its results holds not only with regard to the present life but also with regard to past and future lives. Our karma, or action, in past lives has issued into our present condition. Again, our present karma will bring about results in future lives. This universal law of cause and effect is ineluctable. Just as we cannot run away from our own shadows, so we cannot run away from the results of our actions. They will pursue us no matter where we hide.

The doctrine of karma is, precisely speaking, not merely a doctrine of cause and effect, but of action and reaction. The doctrine holds that every action willfully performed by an agent - be it of thought, word, or deed - tends to react upon that agent. As the Bible says: "Ye reap what ye sow." But in Christianity it is believed that people can avoid reaping what they have sown by appealing to the mercy of God. Not so in Buddhism. For Buddhism the law of karma is a natural law and its operation cannot be suspended by any power of

deity. It is as if we violated a traffic law and appealed to the policeman for forgiveness. He would not forgive us, for we have violated the law and must pay the consequences. In the same way, through the working of the law of karma our actions bring about their natural results. Recognizing this, Buddhists do not pray to a God for mercy but rather regulate their actions to bring them into harmony with the universal law. If they do evil, they try to discover their mistakes and rectify their ways; and if they do good they try to maintain and develop that good.

Eight Forms of Consciousness

The law of karma binds together the past, present and future lives of an individual through the course of his transmigration. To understand how such a connection is possible between the experiences and actions of an individual in successive lives we must take a brief look at the Buddhist analysis of consciousness. According to the Buddhist philosophy of consciousness, the *Vijnanavada* school, there are eight kinds of consciousness. There are the five sorts of sense-consciousness: i.e. eye, ear, nose, tongue and body consciousness. These make possible awareness of the five kinds of external sense data through the five sense organs. The sixth consciousness is the intellectual consciousness, the faculty of judgment which discerns, compares and distinguishes the sense-data and ideas. The seventh consciousness, called the *manas*, is the ego-consciousness, the inward awareness of oneself as an ego and the clinging to a discrimination between oneself and others. Even when the first six kinds of consciousness are not functioning, for example in deep sleep, the seventh consciousness is still present, and if threatened this consciousness, through the impulse of self-protection, will cause us to awaken. The eighth consciousness is called the *alaya-vijñana*, the storehouse-consciousness. Because this consciousness is so deep it is very difficult to understand, but its literal name gives us the cue to its meaning. The *alaya* is a storehouse which stores all the impressions of our deeds and experiences. Everything we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, think and do deposits, so to speak, a seed in the store-consciousness. The seed is a nucleus of karmic energy. Since the *alaya* hoards all the seeds of our past actions it is the architect of our destiny. Our life and character reflect the seeds in our store-consciousness. If we deposit good seeds, i.e. perform more good actions, we will become good persons, and if we deposit bad seeds, i.e. perform more evil actions, we will become bad persons. It is as though in this large hall we were to burn incense, then the hall would take on a sweet smell. If we were to bring in some rotten eggs, the hall would take on a foul smell.

The *alaya-consciousness* not only stores all the seeds, both good and bad, but also carries them from one moment to the next, and from the past life to the present life. This is what makes possible the transmission of character, as well as the development or decline of character, over a series of lives. The store-consciousness also explains how, in certain exceptional cases, memories occur of experiences in past lives, or talents and character traits acquired in past lives reach early fruition in the present life. We read of poets, painters, and musicians who were creating works of art at a very tender age. We also sometimes hear of children who can speak foreign languages they were never taught by their parents. All these wonders are manifestations of the seed-tendencies in the *alaya vijñāna*. Our destiny in life is a result of the working-out of the karmic seeds in our store-consciousness. This destiny is not predetermined, as fatalism holds, but is rather a product of our own will, through our volitional actions or karma. If we do good actions, we deposit good seeds in the *alaya* and will reap good results; and if we do bad actions, we deposit bad seeds and will reap bad results.

The Eternal Present

Buddhism tells us not to worry about the past and the future, but to be concerned with the present. The past is something which has already gone by and the future is something which has not yet arrived. So why should we be concerned about what does not actually exist? What exists on hand is the present, and it is therefore in the present moment - in the immediacy of the "now" - that we should live. The way to live in the present is given to us by Zen Buddhism. This way is the method of meditation. Through meditation we try to eliminate futile thoughts about the past and the future - worries, fears, regrets and hopes until we can reach a state of pure, thoughtless "being-ness" in the present. When this state is attained we see that the present moment is the only moment, it is our whole life, it is all time, it is eternity and bliss and peace.

Meditation: Key to Self-Realization

Meditation is not something foreign to the nature of humanity, but is an activity uniquely and distinctly human. Perhaps the distinguishing mark of human nature is the capacity for self knowledge. Both humans and animals have consciousness, that is, awareness of the environment. Only humans, however, have self-consciousness, the

ability to know themselves. They alone can come to an understanding of their own nature and character. Now if self-knowledge is the special mark of humankind, meditation is the means to make this knowledge accessible. Normally we live turned around by objects. We run here and there in blind pursuit of externals, our minds swayed by crowds of delusive thoughts, with very little knowledge of the world within. Meditation helps us to calm down the restless "monkey mind," that mind which is wilder than the wind; and when the mind is still and at rest there dawns the knowledge of our true Self. In the Bible there is a saying: "Be still and know that I am God." What is referred to here is not physical stillness, but the stillness of the mind. Christianity teaches that if the mind is not still, then even during prayer God is far away. But if the mind is still then God is near within the prayer. Similarly, Buddha is not some superior power high up in the clouds and far away from us. Buddha is the true nature, the perfect being, which can only be found within ourselves. One Vietnamese Zen master instructed his disciple: "The Buddha is not in the mountain retreat. The Buddha is in your mind. If your mind is calm and pure, then you can find Buddha everywhere."

According to a Buddhist scripture, the *Avatamsaka Sutra*: "The mind, the Buddha and sentient beings are not three different things." Even though the word "Buddha" signifies the enlightened human, "mind" the agent of thought and "sentient being" the living creature, still these three are not different things, only different manifestations of the One Reality. This is the concept of oneness in Zen Buddhism. In meditation we try to realize this Oneness. Stilling the restless mind, transcending the distinctions between subject and object, oneself and others, the mind arrives at a realization that everything is one. This realization is called in Japanese *Satori*, i.e. enlightenment. The experience of *satori* has many different aspects and can be described in many different ways: as the sense of oneness with everything, the sense of transcending space and time, or the insight that one is all and all is one. But however it is described, *satori* is a direct inner experience of realization brought about by the calming down and concentration of the mind.

Just as the experience of *satori* has different dimensions, so it has different degrees of depth. At its deepest and fullest the attainment of *satori* results in that state of being called by Buddhists *Nirvana*. *Nirvana* is the highest state according to Buddhism, and the ultimate goal of our striving. In this sense *Nirvana* plays a role in Buddhism similar to that of heaven in Christianity. However, *Nirvana* differs from heaven in at least one very important respect: heaven can only be achieved in the next life, while *Nirvana* can be achieved here on earth. The reason for this is be

cause *Nirvana* is a state of mind. If we are in that state of mind, then wherever we are, that place is *Nirvana*. If the mind is not in that state, then no matter where we go we will not be in *Nirvana*. The Buddha enjoyed the bliss of *Nirvana* while dwelling right here on earth. Yet the many people who lived very close to Him were not in *Nirvana*. Since *Nirvana* is a state of mind, the way to attain *Nirvana* lies through a transformation of the mind. *Nirvana* is the state of perfect quiescence, calm, bliss and purity. To advance toward *Nirvana* we must make our mind calm and quiet and pure. Normally the mind is wilder than the wind. The wind moves very fast, yet it is still limited. It can only move a few miles per hour. But the speed of the mind is unlimited. In a split second my mind can move from here to Vietnam, or to the moon, or beyond.

You are sitting here listening to me, yet in a moment your mind can rush to your home, to your place of work, or to some vacationland. Thus the mind moves very quickly, thoughts are always rising and falling in rapid succession. To have *satori*, or self-realization, the most important thing is to keep the mind calm. With a calm, quiet mind we can penetrate the illusions and realize our self-nature. In that way we attain enlightenment. The calm mind is not only of value to our personal spiritual search, but also of great value to our society. If the minds of men are calm and pure, their society will reflect their consciousness and will also be calm and pure. The influence of the calm mind spreads outward until it embraces our community, our society and our world. Confucius explained that the road to world peace begins with our inner life. He said "If there be righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character; if there be beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home; if there be harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation; if there be order in the nation there will be peace in the world." Peace in the world begins with peace in the mind and heart of humans. And the way of Zen is the way to attain this peace. This is the message which I hope to introduce to you tonight. But before we move on to the question and answer period I would like to conclude in this way: In the seventeenth century, with the growth of reason and the emphasis on the intellectual side of man, Descartes could say: "I think, therefore I am." In the present century, as a result of the development of science and technology, we are inclined to say: "I produce, therefore I am." But in the future, based on my knowledge and experience, I believe that people will say: "I feel, therefore I am."

Questions and Answers

Q: What is reincarnation? What is the position of man in Buddhism ?

A: Buddhism recognizes six realms of existence: the heavens, the realm of asuras or titans, the human realm, the realm of pretas or hungry ghosts, and the hells. According to the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth, we may be reborn in any of these different realms of existence. The process of rebirth has been going on since beginningless time and will continue onwards into the future. What determines the realm and conditions of rebirth is the karma, or volitional actions, of the being undergoing rebirth. Life therefore does not move in a straight line, but, like a circle, revolves around and around with out beginning or end.

We may be reborn many times in the six realms before we reach Nirvana. For example, perhaps in my previous life I dwelt in heaven. But because I did not continue to develop myself there, I have now been reborn as a man. If in this life I commit many evils, I acquire bad karma and perhaps in my next life I will as a consequence be reborn in hell or in some other lower form of life. From there, if I work to improve myself I may be reborn as a man again and work myself up to a heavenly state. Thus, many may fall from a higher state to a lower state, or may rise up from a lower state to a higher state. Whatever course his destiny takes depends on his karma.

Buddhism regards human existence as a very precious state, offering tremendous opportunities for self-development. All the great philosophers and religious thinkers -- such as Jesus, Krishna, Socrates, Confucius, Lao Tzu and the Buddha - were men. Because human existence is of such high value, Buddhism suggests to us that we strive to maintain our human state by doing good now. To do good means to practice the Five Precepts: to abstain from killing, theft, adultery, lying and the excessive drinking of intoxicants. In Christianity if you want to achieve future bliss you must observe the Ten Commandments. In Buddhism to achieve a favorable rebirth you must practice the Five Precepts.

Q: What is the concept of space and time in Buddhism?

A: Buddhist cosmology differs very much from traditional Judeo-Christian cosmology and comes close to the standpoint of modern science. Like

modern science, Buddhism teaches that space and time are boundless. Since space is boundless, the universe contains many other worlds and galaxies besides our own. Since time is boundless, life is not limited to the present and recent past but has existed throughout the beginningless past and will continue on into the endless future. Life may change in form and in location, but it has always existed and will endure forever.

Q: If life is endless, how can we break the circle of birth and death?

A. We can break the circle of birth and death and attain Nirvana through our karma or practice. Once Nirvana is attained there is no return to the world of becoming. Under normal conditions an object thrown into the air will be pulled back to earth by the earth's power of gravity. But a projectile shot into space with a force greater than the earth's gravitational pull will escape that pull and continue on indefinitely into space. Similarly, according to Buddhism, all living beings who are not yet enlightened are drawn back into the ocean of existence life after life by the power of their desire. But the enlightened, who have extinguished desire and attachment, break free from the circle and achieve Nirvana.

From this we see that the main cause of rebirth is desire or attachment. Because we crave for existence we cling to our bodies, and when the body dies, so long as the thirst for life is still with us we will continue the cycle again in a new body and under new circumstances. To use an analogy, the GIs in Vietnam, after they finish their period of service, return to the United States. The reason they come back is because their home is here, and their parents, relatives, friends and family are also here. Through their attachment to this country they return as soon as they are able. But if a soldier has no attachment to the U.S., then he may not return. He may instead go to another country to live. As long as we have attachments to the world, we will be drawn back into the world through a succession of lifetimes. But once the desire for life is cut off we pass beyond the life process to the transcendental state of Nirvana.

Q: If every being that is born comes from a prior being that has died, the number of living beings should remain the same. How then do you account for the population explosion?

A: The number of beings on the earth may be increasing, but this does not mean that the total population of the universe is also increasing. According to Buddhism living beings can be found on many planes of existence, in the heavens and the hells and in the intermediate planes as well as on earth. So the increase in terrestrial life may be accounted for by a decrease in the number of beings on other planes. Perhaps the inhabitants of the heavenly

worlds are falling from their high states while the denizens of the hells are rising to the human level. Rebirth, we should add, is not necessarily progressive. A living being may rise in the scale of life, but he may also fall. An animal can be reborn as a man, but a man can be reborn as an animal. It all depends on our karma.

Q: Buddhism, especially Zen, always emphasizes inner serenity. Is the expression of natural anger compatible with this inner serenity?

A: If anger can be considered part of the nature of man, then love and tolerance can also be considered part of this nature. Now anger and love are two opposing states of mind, so you have to choose which kind of man you would like to be. However, the Buddha taught that greed, anger and ignorance are the three poisons that destroy all the goodness and virtue of people. Therefore, if we want to become good persons we must control and eventually eliminate these three poisons. But why do you get angry? Because somebody does something that does not please you. If you learn to understand him more you will be able to accept what he does without becoming angry.

The Buddha had one disciple who left his wife and family in order to become a monk. This made his wife very angry and she went to the Buddha to speak her mind. She yelled at the Buddha in strong language for taking her husband as a disciple, but the Buddha just smiled and remained silent. His disciples, seeing a strange woman speaking to their Master so harshly, tried to push her away. The Buddha, however, prevented them from doing so. After the woman left a student asked the Buddha: "How could you allow her to speak to you like that?" The Master asked in turn: "If somebody offers you a gift and you do not receive it, what would happen?" The disciple answered: "The gift would remain with the owner." "So," the Buddha said, "it is the same with the gift I was offered today."

Does this story make sense to you? If so then put it into practice. It will bring benefits to yourself and to others also.

Q: Some modern psychologists believe that a man must express some anger or he will harm himself psychologically. How does this accord with your philosophy?

A: Since man is an emotional being he cannot stop anger all at once. Even though the Buddha exhorts us to destroy anger, it seems to me that if you cannot overcome the emotion it may not be bad to express it once in a while. But remember, there is a difference between expressing anger, or any other emotion, with control and without control. A mother, though she loves

her children, sometimes becomes angry towards them. If that anger is mild, and is directed to improving the children, then it is not bad at all. Therefore, it is best to overcome emotions of attachment and anger, but when we cannot overcome them it may be all right to express them in a controlled way. To keep the emotions under control it is essential to be aware. We must watch the emotion when it arises to see how it comes and goes. If we are mindful of emotions such as anger and greed when they are present in the mind we can restrain them before they grow strong and eventually eliminate them from the mind.

Q: If the doctrine of rebirth is true, why can't we remember what happened to us in previous lives?

A: Let me answer this question with another question: Can you remember what happened to you the day you were born? If we cannot remember this event in the present life, how much harder it must be to remember past lives! Nevertheless, it is not impossible. Occasionally certain psychic individuals are able to recollect their past identities. A number of these have been collected together by Dr. Ian Stevenson of the Psychology Department at the University of Virginia, in his book *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. But for the Buddhist the recollection of the past is not very important. What is important is the present, for it is in the present that we determine our future.

Q: If an animal does not know what is good and bad, how can he be held karmically responsible for his actions? And how can an animal aspire to become a man or a Buddha?

A: While animals may not be able to consciously distinguish good and bad to the same extent that men are, still we find that some animals are good and others are bad. For example, we see some dogs who risk their own lives for the lives of people and other dogs who bite people without any provocation. In accordance with the law of karma, these good and bad actions will produce corresponding results. Whether or not I know the law, when I am caught breaking a traffic law I have to get a ticket. Ignorance is no excuse from responsibility. Similarly, whether or not a being knows an action to be karmically unwholesome, if it performs that action it must reap the results. This applies to the actions of animals as well as to those of men.

Q: According to the law of karma, good actions produce good results and bad actions produce bad results. Why then do some very good people meet with trouble all their lives while some very bad people enjoy health, prosperity and fortune?

A: To understand this we must realize that the fruits of karma do not necessarily mature in the same lifetime in which the karma is originally accumulated. Karma may bring about its consequences in the next life or in succeeding lives. If a person was good in a previous life he may enjoy happiness and prosperity in this life even though his conduct now is bad. And a person who is very virtuous now may still meet a lot of trouble because of bad karma from a past life. It is like planting different kinds of seeds; some will come to flower very fast, others will take a long time, maybe years. The law of cause and effect does not change, but the effects come about at different times, in different forms and at different locations.

Q: I would like to return to the earlier question about the good dog and the bad dog. If the dog doesn't realize whether he is good or bad, if he does good then he goes up in the circle of life. What causes this? Does this happen by chance?

A: According to Buddhism nothing happens by chance. Everything is governed by the law of cause and effect. There is no being or power standing above this law and supervising its operation; rather, in the Buddhist view, this law is self-subsistent. Sometimes the causes may be very difficult to see at first glance, but with investigation they may be found out. For example, if I wreck my automobile driving on the freeway, I say that I had an accident, but really the wreck may have been caused by my bad driving or by my previous karma. Therefore, if a dog lives a good life, then, whether he knows it or not, by so improving himself he will rise in the scale of being and may in the future be reborn as a human being. But remember one thing. According to Buddhism, every sentient being has Buddha nature, or potential to become a Buddha, but only humans have the intelligence and depth of mind necessary to attain enlightenment. Animals have the potential, but first they have to improve themselves, rise step by step to a higher form of life, and then eventually achieve Buddhahood.

Q: Do Buddhists believe in heaven and hell?

A: Yes they do, but the Buddhist concepts of heaven and hell differ from the Christian concepts. Heaven and hell in Buddhism are not eternal states, only temporary abodes in the ever changing process of phenomenal existence. By reason of our exceptionally good karma we may be reborn in heaven, and by reason of our exceptionally evil karma we may be reborn in hell. But once we pay back the karmic debt which brought us into those realms of existence we will be reborn in some other realm. Thus life in heaven and hell is not everlasting, for there is no quantity of good or bad karma sufficient to bring about an infinite result. The above explanation indicates that in Buddhism heaven and hell are the results of our karma or

action, not rewards or punishments imposed on us by God as held by monotheism.

Q: In Buddhism is the motivation for living a good life present enjoyment or future development?

A: The answer is both. As I mentioned before, the past is gone and the future has not yet arrived, so we should not bother too much over the past or future, but live fully in the present. But what is a good life? A good life, Buddhism holds, is a life which produces the greatest happiness for oneself and others. Life is a mutual process, so a good life is a useful and a helpful life. Life is a process of giving and receiving, so a good life involves giving as well as receiving. Life is a process of change and transformation, so a good life involves evolution from the lower to the higher form, from imperfection to perfection, from ignorance to enlightenment. If you live a good life as defined in these terms, then you will not only experience greater happiness at present, but will develop and enjoy a better life in the future. And since you are a part of the whole living community, when you rise upwards the whole community will rise up with you. And when the whole community rises, the world also will rise. Thus by your work you can change this world of suffering, greed and hatred into Nirvana, the blissful realm of wisdom and compassion. Isn't that wonderful?

Q: Could you please explain at greater length the relation between karma and its results?

A: The law of karma holds that we reap what we sow. If we do good we will reap good results; if we do bad we will reap bad results. This cause and effect relationship does not apply only within a single life but extends over past and future lives. A karmic deed of killing, for example, tends to produce being killed as its fruit. Of course only intentional killing is taken into account here. If I kill somebody intentionally, then the police may discover me, arrest me and sentence me to death or to life imprisonment. This will be the evil fruit of my evil karma in the present life. But if I should escape the police undetected in this life, sometime in the future my karma will catch up with me and I will have to pay the consequences for killing in the present life. Therefore, Buddhism suggests to us not to owe a life by taking a life. So the first precept for all Buddhists, monks and laymen alike, is to abstain from killing. A good Buddhist does not go hunting or fishing. Not only is he unable to find enjoyment by inflicting suffering on other living beings, but he does not want to owe a life by taking a life.

Q: This question is a little complicated...

A: Please do not give me too complicated a question. May be I cannot answer it. (Laughter) But go on....

Q: You said before that at birth man is like a blank sheet of paper, yet you also say that a person IS born with the karma of his past. If this is so, then no one is really responsible for what he does. Isn't that so?

A: The idea that man at birth is like a blank tablet is the idea of a Western philosopher, John Locke, not Buddhism. When Buddhism says that at birth man is "neither good nor bad," what is meant is that man's nature is not predetermined for him but is rather determined by his own actions, including his deeds, words and thoughts. However, the consciousness at birth is not totally blank, but is colored by all the seeds which have been stored in the alaya-vijnana, the store-consciousness. These seeds are of two sorts, good and bad. So depending on the nature of the seeds a person's character develops. But his character is not imposed upon him from without, for the seeds he inherits at birth are the results of his own actions in past lives. Thus a person can change his seeds, and thereby his character, by changing his actions. By abstaining from evil and doing good he can purify his consciousness and perfect his character.

Q: I have a friend who believes in karma. Whenever any thing bad happens to him he says it is because of his karma and does nothing to change it. To me it's obvious that what has happened was merely the result of his own stupidity. Isn't it?

A: Since I don't know your friend I can't really say. But the theory of karma is not fatalism. We do not merely resign ourselves to fate without making any effort to change our circumstances. Buddhists believe that since we produce karma ourselves we can, by changing our actions, change our destiny. We must work to eliminate bad karma and create good karma, just as we burn incense to eliminate unpleasant smells. The karma doctrine does not call for resignation, but for striving towards the good, since our destiny lies in our own hands. By self-effort we can change ignorance into wisdom, hatred into compassion and imperfection into perfection.

Q: If a person is suffering very much right now, can they do anything to eliminate it in the present life or must they wait until a future life?

A: Yes, they can eliminate it right now. Why does a person suffer so much? The reason is because his desire conflicts with reality: because he wants something he cannot have or because he would like to escape from some unbearable situation he is in. So suffering is based on our mental attitude, and so is happiness. If you change your attitude towards certain conditions, then you can end the suffering they cause. For example, ordinarily we are

happy when we succeed and suffer when we fail. But if we regard failure as an experience from which we can learn, then it will not cause us too much trouble. The same holds true of gain and loss, praise and blame, and health and illness.

In this context, let me tell you about the way a certain Buddhist writer described happiness. This will give you a clear idea of the concept of happiness in Buddhism. He wrote, "Happiness is something very charming and very beautiful, like a butterfly." You know what a butterfly looks like. It flutters about the garden on sunny days, bright and colorful amidst the flowers and the grass, fluttering in the breeze and gliding with the wind. Isn't it beautiful? Our writer continues: "But do not try to catch it. For if you catch the butterfly, when you open your hand you will see that it is just an insect." The writer wishes to tell us we should let the butterfly fly freely around the garden. Then we can enjoy its beauty. But if we catch it in our hands it is no longer beautiful. It is just an insect. Happiness is just the same way. When it comes let it come. When it goes let it go. Do not try to grasp it. Nothing remains with us forever. If we try to grasp happiness it will disappear and turn to sorrow.

Many people believe that the more we possess, the more happiness we will gain, but I'm not so sure about this. According to Buddhism, the desire of people is bottomless. Because it has no bottom it is without limit, so no matter how much we put into it we can never fill it up. And since all things are impermanent, when we lose what we have gained our happiness turns to sorrow. Therefore, the way to find happiness according to Buddhism is not to catch more things in our hands, but to open our hands large so everything can come and go freely. We should let our life flow with the rhythm of life in order to enjoy life as it is.

Q: What does Buddhism have to say about love?

A: To my knowledge love is spoken about in all the major religions of the world. However, the degree of love and the extent of love's object differ in the different religions. Most religions emphasize love between human and human and some religions even say love your enemy. Buddhism does not say "love your enemy" because the very idea that someone is your enemy makes love difficult to practice. Instead, Buddhism says "Have no enemies, regard all as your friends." Buddhism teaches love for all sentient beings. We should make no distinctions between friends and enemies, or between men and animals, but should extend love and compassion equally to all. In the Buddhist view we are all extensions of each other. Therefore to practice love in Buddhism is to act without distinguishing between oneself and others. One of the Four Great Vows of a Bodhisattva is: "How ever innumer-

able sentient beings may be, I vow to save them all." That is the expression of love in Buddhism.

Q: If a man were to injure or kill an animal would that be as bad as injuring or killing another man ?

A: If other religions emphasize love between humans and hold human life to be of greater value than the lives of animals, Buddhism is different. Buddhism teaches that all life is precious, the lives of animals as well as of men. Just as the death of a person brings suffering to the person and to his relatives, so does the death of an animal bring suffering to the animal and its relatives. Just as our parents love us and do their best to protect and to support us, so do animals love their children and do their best to protect and support them. We have our lives and animals have theirs. We don't like to be killed and neither do animals. For this reason Buddhism makes "not killing" the first of its precepts. This precept applies to animal life as much as to human life. Along this life we find that many Buddhists, especially Mahayana Buddhists, are vegetarians. I remember when I became a monk at the age of fourteen I lived in a forest monastery where there are many mosquitoes. I hated them and tried to kill them whenever they came close to me. One day my master saw what I was doing and said "A Buddhist monk is not supposed to do that." Then he taught me how to brush them away without killing them. Does that make sense to you?

Many of you still have your hands raised for questions. I would like to answer them all, but our time is limited. I sincerely hope that we will have another opportunity to be in touch with each other in searching for truth.

Meditation

Now as many of you requested I am going to give you some brief instructions on Zen meditation and then we will practice for a short period in order to experience meditation for ourselves. But before we begin you should know that a classroom is not the ideal place for meditation. To fully experience the benefit of meditation it is best to practice in a quiet place with a congenial atmosphere, such as a meditation center or in a quiet~ secluded area of your home. The quality of meditation is strongly influenced by the environment. While meditating it is best to have a soft light or candles, incense burning and some fresh flowers tastefully arranged about a small altar. The first thing to learn in practicing meditation is the proper posture. Strictly speaking, Zen meditation has nothing to do with any particular posture. At its highest level meditation is to be practiced in the midst of all sorts of activities-standing, walking, studying, working, driving, etc. In the history of Zen Buddhism many a master attained enlightenment while washing dishes, cooking, carrying water and collecting fuel. So the next time it is your turn to wash dishes do not complain. Keep your mind under control and remain mindful of what you are doing, and even washing dishes can become a vehicle to self-realization. However, while we can meditate in any activity, the best way to control the mind is by the practice of sitting meditation.

In the Zen tradition there are two ways of sitting, the full-lotus and the half-lotus. The full-lotus posture involves placing each foot across the opposite thigh. The half-lotus involves placing one foot across the opposite thigh with the other foot resting upon the ground. Since we are in a classroom you may remain sitting in your chairs. But the most important point in sitting is to hold the body erect, stable and comfortable. Do not let the body lean to the right or left and do not lean forward or backward, but keep it straight. When the body is stabilized through the proper postures, the mind too becomes stable and calm, and with a clam mind we can undertake the practice of mental concentration. Once your body is erect place the left hand over the right hand or vice versa and both hands on your lap near the lower abdomen. The two thumbs should be joined at the top, making an empty circle. The circle signifies that during meditation my hands are empty and my mind is also empty. As I hold nothing in my hands I hold nothing in my mind. Keep the mind empty. Do not think about the past and the future. Do

not worry about the external world but just sit in meditation and be with yourself here and now. If you are meditating alone you may keep the eyes partially open, looking downwards at a distance of about three feet. Or else you may sit with your face turned to the wall. If you are practicing with a group, it is best to close the eyes to avoid distraction. The tongue should be touching the upper part of your mouth to avoid excessive salivation. The most important thing in meditation is to keep the mind under control so it can return to its natural condition of calm and quiet. To regulate the mind the first and most effective method is awareness of breathing. Breathing in the Zen tradition differs from Yogic breathing, where the meditators breathe deeply and retain the air for long periods of time. In Zen every thing is natural. Just breathe in and out lightly and naturally, but be aware of your breathing. Do not let your mind wander here and there. Tie it down to the here and now of present existence. When you finish one cycle of inhalation and exhalation, as you finish breathing out count one; when you finish the second cycle count two; and so on up to ten. Then count backwards from ten down to one. This method is very simple but it is not easy to practice. As you practice, many times you will find that your mind is drifting away from its object. You may find yourself counting: "One, what time is it? Two, what am I going to do tomorrow? Three, what is the best way to go home tonight?, etc." When your mind drifts, just let go of all extraneous thoughts and bring your attention back to the breathing. Just breathe in and out fully aware of what you are doing. When I ring the bell we will start to practice. At the beginning and end of our meditation period I will ring the bell, and we will all chant together three times the mantra: "Om Mani Padme Hum." Let us begin.

Then the entire audience of about four hundred people sat in meditation for fifteen minutes. The atmosphere of the whole lecture hall changed and the feeling of each participant also changed. Everything became very quiet and peaceful. A feeling of oneness, of loving-kindness, of serenity penetrated everywhere and everything. Everyone shared in this experience. Then the bell rang and Dr. Thich Thien-An continued speaking.

How beautiful and peaceful it is. I sincerely hope that if you are interested in meditation and if you cannot join us at our Meditation Center you will continue to practice at home. If you practice about ten or fifteen minutes before going to bed and again after waking up I believe you will find that your life will become calmer, quieter and more peaceful. You will realize that life is meaningful and you will enjoy life more and find more happiness. I wish you all success in your spiritual search.

Appendix

The Matter of Soul in Buddhism

by Ven. Thich Giac-Duc

The re-becoming or rebirth doctrine in Buddhism has been understood narrowly. When almost everyone hears the word rebirth, they conceive of it as involving the continuation of a permanent soul in a succession of physical bodies. It is thought that, according to this doctrine, when one dies the soul will leave the body, wander in space and enter a new-born body, or go to a heaven or a hell for a certain time before becoming reborn in a human or animal body. In fact, Buddhism holds that after a person dies, there is nothing at all which leaves one body and enters another. As we know, Buddhism teaches that the individual is the continuous combination of five skandhas, that is, all the elements of physiology and psychology (*rupa* -- physical form, *vedana*-- sensations, *sanna*-- perceptions, *sankhara*--mental formations, *viññana*--consciousness). The first is the physical, and the other four are the mental (spiritual) components. All these mental components can only be manifested when there is a basis-organ for their arising. This basis-organ for their arising is physical body, or the physiological components of the individual; because of this the body in Buddhism is called the "body-organ." If the body organ is dead, all the other mental processes can no longer function, but return to the subconsciousness, and become deposited in the form of seeds. Just as the physical body, the combination of the four major elements - solidity (earth), fluidity (water), air (wind), and heat (fire) - undergoes a perpetual transformation, so the four mental components form a continuous and incessantly changing current. The body is forever changing every moment- from one moment to the next it is not the same, the mental current proceeds in the same way. Every moment there is a new feeling and a new perception arising to replace the old which has faded away, or has sunk into the deep recesses of memory, returning to the seed. Because it is always changing, that mental current is not an eternally identical unit. therefore, we cannot call it a "self" or "ego" A thing that we assume as a soul must be an identical unchanging self which controls our body. Here Buddhism holds that there is no self. This means that there is no soul. The mental components of mind are only the mental components.

They arise and function when the appropriate conditions are present (i.e. active body basis-organ), and return to the state of seeds in the subconsciousness when the physical elements are destroyed, i.e. with the death of the physical body. Many people believe that behind the physiological and physical elements, which are always changing, there must be an element which is unchanging. That element is itself the soul, and that element recognizes itself as an ego. If there were no such soul it is asked, how can we explain the identical character which exists throughout change. the identical character which every body feels exists in oneself and in others.

However, if we examine this issue with care, we will discover that the explanation of identical character does not require reference to the existence of any ego, or soul. Several years ago I bought a bicycle. This year that bicycle is much older. I have replaced many parts of it at different times, including the parts of the body but I still have the feeling that that bicycle is the one I bought several years ago. So, on what grounds can I discover the identical character of the bicycle in its process of evolution? Perhaps because that bicycle contains within itself an "unchanging element," a "soul"? If it were in this way, then what should we call the unchanging element? Should we call it the soul of the bicycle, or the ego of the bicycle? Therefore, there is no unchanging element, no soul, no ego. There is only the mental and physical phenomena, which are always changing. On what ground do we base the identical character of a thing. According to Buddhism, we feel that there is something identical persisting through the changing phenomena because we are subject to erroneous ideas. These erroneous ideas come from the illusions based on continuously changing phenomena. All phenomena are perpetually subject to transformation, to arising and cessation at every moment. From the seed comes the manifestation, the manifestation returns to the seed, and this transformation, arising, and cessation happen so rapidly that we feel that there is an identical character of a single thing persisting through the incessant change. When we twirl a speck of fire at the end of a stick, we see a "circle of fire"; but in fact, that circle is only a continuous illusion which is comprised of the many specks of fire always changing.

I say "many specks of fire always changing" give rise to that circle because there is not one speck of fire, but countless specks of fire. The last speck of fire is burnt at a different stage of wood, so it cannot be the same as the previous speck of fire. Therefore the speck of fire on the top of the circle is not the same as the speck of fire at the bottom of the circle. However, the last speck of fire is not completely different from the preceding speck of fire, because if there were no preceding speck of fire there would be no later speck of fire. The preceding speck of fire is the cause for the later speck of fire. This continuous current has given us the erroneous idea of the identical character.

This issue is elucidated for us by a passage in *The Questions of King Milinda*, a dialogue between the Venerable Nagasena and the King Milinda

"Suppose a man, O king, were to light a lamp. would it burn the night through?"

Yes, it might do so.

"Now is it the same flame which burns in the first watch of the night, sir, and in the second?"

No.

"Or the same that burns in the second watch and in the third?"

No.

"Then is there one lamp in the first watch, and another in the second, and another in the third?"

No. The light comes from the same lamp all the night through.

"In exactly the same way, O king, do the elements of being join one another in serial succession: one element rises, another perishes, and another arises, succeeding each other as it were instantaneously. Therefore neither as the same nor as a different person do you arrive at your latest aggregation of consciousness."

We can compare our physical body with the lamp, wick and oil. and our mental structure with the incessantly changing flame: there is not an "identical unit", but neither are there differences. (There is no one, there are no differences - *The Awakening of Faith*.) Our psycho-physical organism is not an identical unchanging unit. but is a continuously changing current. This continuous current gives us the illusion of the Identical character of things and at our psycho-physical organism. If there is not such an entity as an unchanging ego, a soul. what is reborn ? What becomes? What is the subject of the current of birth and death? This question has tormented many people. We often see in Buddhist sutras stories of rebirth in which , for example, a man in Benares dies and is reborn as an animal in Kilpilavasll. So what leaves the body of that man and enters the body of that animal? How does the death of one living being connect with the birth of another?

As we know, Buddhism does not recognize the existence of a transmigrating soul. Buddhism only holds to cause and effect, or conditioned co-production (*Pratitya-Samutpada*): any result or effect must have a previous cause. As long as craving exists the life will continue to exist. As long as craving exists, all the seeds in the store-consciousness (*Alaya-Vijnana*) still bear the tendencies of rebirth, which means the tendencies for the arising of birth and death. If, with the end of life, all the craving is destroyed and ignorance no longer exists, then all the seeds become transformed into wisdom, the store-consciousness returns to the fundamentally enlightened Essence, and the current of birth and death no longer continues. But if

craving still exists, the store consciousness sinks into the state of impurity and cannot yet attain liberation from birth and death. Therefore, the current of life must continue. In *The Dharma of Buddha* the Ven. Jagdish Kasyapa explains the Buddhist view of rebirth by an analogy. Everyone knows of the Hundred Years War between France and England. To call it a "Hundred Years War" means that many battles continued for one hundred years. All the battles occurred at different times and at different places and with different weapons. But why do all the battles appear as a single way, a "Hundred Years War"? Why didn't they stop after the first battle, so that later battles could not take place? Perhaps because the hatred between the two countries still continued. That idea of hate was the cause of war and also was the cause for the continuation of the sequence of battles. As long as that idea existed, the battles had the condition to exist. In the same way, as long as craving exists, the current of birth and death exists with a new body, new circumstances and a new world.

A wave appears here. Why? Because of the impulse of the wave over there. This wave rises and subsides, and when it subsides it originates a new impulse. By the force of this impulse, there arises over there a new wave: that new wave is the result of this wave. In the same way, the sequence of lives in the past originate the causal karma which conditions the life in the present. and the causal karma originating in the present life conditions the sequence of lives in the future. All of our causal karma - that of thought, word and deed, as well as other functions such as feeling - forever returns to and sinks into the store-consciousness; thus nothing is ever lost. They comprise the karma factors which propel us into a new life. The Buddhist doctrine of non-self, or non-soul, is very complex, and much more could be written about it than is contained herein. We must, however, for the present remain content with what we have said.

*Should one recite a hundred verses comprising
useless words, better is one single word of the Dharma,
hearing which one is pacified.*

*Though one should conquer a million men in battlefield
yet he, indeed, is the noble's victor who has conquered himself.*

Dhammapada

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