

The Translation and Interpretation of the Twelve Terms in the Paṭiccasamuppāda

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THE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION
OF THE TWELVE TERMS
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Abbreviations

A.	Anguttara Nikāya	S.	Samyutta Nikāya
D.	Dīgha Nikāya	Sn.	Sutta Nipāta
Dhp.	Dhammapada	Thag.	Theragāthā
Dhs.	Dhammasangani	Thig.	Therīgāthā
Itv.	Itivuttaka	Ud.	Udāna
M.	Majjhima Nikāya		

The immediate question may be asked: “What is the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*?” And the further inquiry may then be made: “Is it *really* necessary to enter into the semantics concerning its terms?” The answer to the first question can be found in the following text:

And what, bhikkhus, is the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*? Dependent on ignorance (*avijjā*) (there are) the volitional sustenances (*sankkhāra*); dependent on the volitional sustenances (there is) consciousness (*viññāna*); dependent on consciousness (there is) name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*); dependent on name-and-form (there are) the six bases (of the senses) (*saḷāyatana*); dependent on the six bases (there is) reaction (*phassa*); dependent on reaction (there is) feeling (*vedanā*); dependent on feeling (there is) craving (*taṇhā*); dependent on craving (there is) grasping (*upādāna*); dependent on grasping (there is) becoming (*bhava*); dependent on becoming (there is) birth (*jāti*); dependent on birth, old-age (*jarā*) and death (*marāṇa*), sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), dis-ease (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*) and tribulation (*upāyāsa*) arise. Thus there is the arising of this whole aggregate of *dukkha*. This, bhikkhus, is called arising. (*S. II.1*).

An answer to the second question is given in another text:

He who sees the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* sees the *Dhamma*;
He who sees the *Dhamma* sees the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*. (*M. I.190*).

With the latter text in mind it can be said that an understanding of the terms in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* (P-s) can lead to a better under-

standing of the Buddhist teachings as found in the Pāli texts. And also, there will be a better understanding of how these twelve units can be said to be conditionally dependent on each other; though space does not allow us to enter into a discussion of this matter at this time.

However, before we turn to the various terms, it is necessary to include a caveat. Dr. W. Stede recognised the difficulties that lie in any attempt at translating words found in ancient languages, and one can do no better than quote some of his words:

In all our dealings with literary documents of the past we are confronted with words, and we do not know what these words meant to those who used them, because we are not born and bred into these words: they are not part of our life-experience, they are more or less phantoms... Our view is so totally different from the view of the first users of ancient words that we necessarily move in a fog of self-deception.¹⁾

It follows from this, therefore, that few translations can be regarded as being absolutely correct. However, although this observation may indeed be true, it is not the *translations* of some of the following terms that is a matter for dispute. The difficulty arises mainly with their *interpretations*. Thus, although translations have been found for all the terms, more attention must be paid to the qualifying remarks which will usually be made, since the English words do not as a rule carry the correct connotations that are necessary for the contexts in which they appear.

Avijjā

In spite of Dr. Stede's words, it would be little more than pedantic to argue concerning the translation of this word. The obvious one, and the one most often used, is "ignorance". The two synonyms for *avijjā*, which will be used in this section, will be translated differently: *aññāṇa* as "nescience" and *moha* as "delusion".

This ignorance is not that which is to do with an individual's lack of knowledge in some branch of the sciences or other part of academic study. It was the Buddha's concern only to teach people that which was of supreme benefit to them, i.e., that which would lead them to enlightenment and eventual release from this sorrowful, weary world of

1) "The Self and Its Complications" in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. XX, 1948, p. 652.

rebirths. As can be seen from the incident of the *simṣapā* leaves, ²⁾ it was sufficient for one to know the handful of knowledge that the Buddha was offering, rather than waste life-times accumulating the veritable forest of knowledge that no doubt could be the possession, in the Buddhist view, of any enlightened person. The reason for the Buddha's avoidance in teaching this other knowledge is purely pragmatic: it is not necessary for the living of the good-life, and the attaining of enlightenment and *nibbāna*. ³⁾

Ignorance, therefore, is the individual's unawareness that he is in any evil state whatsoever merely by the fact that he exists. It was the Buddha's realisation that there were such things as old-age, death and sickness that produced the deep shock necessary for his eventual enlightenment. It is ignorance of what constitutes this evil, and how to remove oneself from it:

What, bhikkhus, is ignorance? It is that which is nescience (*aññāna*) of *dukkha*; the nescience of the arising of *dukkha*; the nescience of the cessation of *dukkha*; and the nescience of the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha*. (S. II.4).

In the *Sammādiṭṭhi-sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* there is found the condition for ignorance, which is the *āsavas* ("influxes"). ⁴⁾ Previous to this, *avijjā* is explained as ignorance of the Four Truths, and then it is stated how the cessation of ignorance, through the cessation of the *āsavas*, may be brought about. This is by means of the Eightfold Path. When the noble disciple has understood ignorance, then:

having given up every inclination to passion, having removed the inclination to repugnance, having abolished the inclination to the view of 'I am', having renounced ignorance and obtained knowledge, then there is an end of *dukkha* in this world. To this extent, friend, the noble disciple has right view, and his view is upright (so that) he possesses absolute faith in the *Dhamma*. He then comes to this very-*Dhamma* (*saddhammaṃ*). (M. I.54).

In an *Itivuttaka* text ignorance is referred to as a hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*), and is therefore the reason why each individual goes from one life to another. It is only through the destruction of this "mass of

2) S. V. 437.

3) S. V. 438.

4) M. I. 54. Here, and elsewhere, a Pāli word has been pluralised in the English manner (i.e., by adding 's' to the Pāli stem form).

darkness" (*tamokkhandha*) that this process of rebirth can be stopped. 5)

Since *avijjā* and *moha* are synonyms — this could be seen from a full quotation of the *Itivuttaka* text just mentioned — it follows that a definition of the latter is equal to a definition of the former. In the *Dhammasangani* we find *moha* defined in the following manner:

Nescience concerning *dukkha* (and the other Truths); nescience concerning the past (and) the future (and both); nescience concerning this being conditioned by that (*idapaccayatā*) among things dependently arisen (*paṭicca-samuppannesu*); such nescience concerning wrong view, insufficient understanding, not knowing the truth... non-restraint, non-penetration concerning foolishness, stupidity, non-attention, delusion, bewilderment, infatuation, ignorance, the flood of ignorance... delusion concerning the root of evil. (*Dhs.*, para. 1061).

With the existence of these and other texts it is small wonder that *avijjā* has found itself coupled with various derogatory epithets. For example, it has been called "the direst of bonds" (*sammā bandhanā*), 6) "the greatest stain" (*avijjā paramaṃ malaṃ*); 7) and in a parable in the *Sunakkhatta-sutta* reference is made to the "ill-effect of the poison of ignorance" (*avijjāvisadoso*). 8) Finally, we have it put to us that ignorance is the main reason for the moral decay of a man; and, conversely, knowledge is the reason for his release:

Knowledge is the best among things that arise;
Ignorance is foremost among things that fall. (*S. I.42*).

How then does one give up ignorance and gain knowledge? The answer is to give up the ignoble path which is dominated by sensual lust, and an overpowering desire to possess wealth and property, which are conventionally described as pleasant, and which are seen by the unlearned lay-man to have an intrinsic ability to make him happy and contented. For the Buddhist ignorance is *almost* entirely made up of the various shades of the conventional truth that the world is, on the whole, a good place in which to be. In order, therefore, to destroy this superstition, the Buddha and his followers resorted to giving a literal — and thus an unrefined — description of that which is possessed by

5) Itv., p. 8.

6) M. II.44.

7) A. IV.195 and Dhṃ., v. 243.

8) M. II.256.

all: the body. As a consequence of this phenomenological standpoint two results will accrue. The body of a woman will no longer be desired, and thus one of the prime urges in man will have been avoided. Also, in realising what must be termed the virtual obscenity of actually existing, the other prime urge will be avoided: that of self-preservation. This last assertion is made on a more literal and wider basis that it would have in the West. To put it another way: there would be no desire to preserve the self both in this life and in others following, neither in this world nor in the various heavens. With this, of course, will be included the destruction of any desire to obtain the so-called material advantages in the world. And all this renunciation leads not only to the gaining of knowledge, but also to the loss of worries and griefs. 9)

All that has been said in the preceding paragraph can be summed up in the two Pāli expressions *kāma-taṇhā* and *bhava-taṇhā*, that is, respectively, “craving for sensuous pleasures” and “craving for becoming”. But there is one other form of craving left (in this context), and that is *vibhava-taṇhā*, “craving for non-becoming”. It is true that the ultimate aim of the Buddhist is to attain *nibbāna*, and therefore not to be reborn any more. But the subtle paradox exists that this must not be desired, since desire or craving is a thing of this world, and its existence in the mind, whether it be for things in this world, or for *nibbāna*, or for *annihilation*, will achieve the same result: rebirth. If then, through knowledge (in the Buddhist sense) the individual can erase his craving, it is only then that he can work toward not being reborn.

In the *Anguttara Nikāya* there is a text which states that there is no beginning to *avijjā*:

Bhikkhus, the beginning of ignorance is not perceived, so that it may be said: ‘Formerly ignorance did not exist, then afterwards it arose’. (*A. V. 113*).

This text, taken indiscriminately out of context, could easily suggest that *avijjā* is some cosmic primaeval cause of the world. And it would follow, therefore, according to this argument, that special significance may be given to the P-s., since this begins with *avijjā*. Such was the view of Schayer, who referred to the P-s. as a “kosmische Emanations-

9) See Sn., vv. 1106-1107.

formel" degraded into a "primitiv Biologie".¹⁰⁾ However, the remainder of this text shows the fallacy of this theory: "But it may be perceived that ignorance is dependent on this (or that)".¹¹⁾

More specifically, it is further stated that ignorance occurs because there are the five hindrances, which are in turn dependent on the three wrong actions (*tīṇi duccharitāni*) in thought, word and deed.

In summing up, *avijjā* can be stated to be ignorance of the Four Truths, the Eightfold Path, the impermanence of all things in the world, of what craving for material things actually entails, and ignorance of the P-s.¹²⁾ Ignorance does not allow one to see the world, and man's state in it, as they really are. On the other hand, the essence of knowledge is to see the world divorced from preconceived and conventional notions. This leads to dispassion and the giving up of any wish to obtain material possessions.¹³⁾

Sankhāra

This term is a difficult one, both in the matter of translation and in interpretation. Concerning the latter, we will be looking at several texts in order to arrive at some explanation. But with regard to the former, the task seems a formidable one; and Dr. Stede's words are more appropriate than ever.

The translations of the other terms in the P-s. vary little, if at all. But with this term it seems that each scholar chooses his own translation. There are, therefore, many examples that could be cited. The following are but a few of those that the present writer has found: impressions, conformations, formations, dispositions, aggregates, mental activities, volitional acts, composite-unity, pre-natal forces, co-operating forces, synthesis, karmic form-energy and affirmations.

Two eminent scholars, G. P. Malalasekara and W. Stede, have similar opinions concerning a translation of this term. The former describes it as "a difficult word to translate, since it means various things in various contexts", but its etymological meaning may be given

10) "Vorarbeiten zur Geschichte der mahāyanistischen Erlösungslehren" in *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Buddhismus*, Vol. V, p. 235. Quoted in *History of Buddhist Thought*, E. J. Thomas, London, 1933, p. 79.

11) A. V.113.

12) See, for example, S. II.14-15.

13) See S. II.82.

as “what is put together as a composite thing”.¹⁴) And Dr. Stede’s opinion is that *sankhāra* (and *viññāṇa*) cannot be translated at all, “since the reality underlying these concepts baffles understanding.”¹⁵) Nevertheless, an attempt will now be made to try to find some word(s) which, with the necessary qualifications, will be of some service in the translation of this very enigmatic term.

In S. II.4 there are said to be three *sankhāras*: the *sankhāra* of the body (*kāyasankhāra*), the *sankhāra* of speech (*vacīsanikhāra*) and the *sankhāra* of thought (*cittasanikhāra*). The meaning of this threefold division is brought out in a passage found in the *Cūḷavedallasutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. Here the bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā is speaking to her former husband Visākha, while teaching him concerning this matter:

In-and-out breathings are the *sankhāras* of the body, friend Visākha; deliberation and reflection are the *sankhāras* of speech; perception and feeling are the *sankhāras* of thought... Because, friend Visākha, in-and-out breathings belong to the body, these states are (irretrievably) bound up with the body... Firstly one reflects and deliberates, and then one says something... Perception and feeling belong to thought, these states are (irretrievably) bound up with thought... (*M. I.301*).

With this text in mind the beginnings of a translation for *sankhāra* suggests itself: “sustenance”. The reason for this suggestion is that, so far at least, the main idea is that of supporting and nourishing, so to speak. Without the sustaining power of these states, the body, mind and speech would not continue.

The last quotation is followed by Visākha asking concerning “the attaining of the cessation of feeling and perception” (*saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpatti*). Dhammadinnā replies that the bhikkhu is led naturally into this state by his mind without his thinking about it. As he enters this state the *sankhāra* of speech ceases first, followed by that of body and then mind. On his leaving this state the respective *sankhāras* return to him in the reverse order.

There is nothing astonishing about this matter — indeed, the order is the logical one — except that it is admitted here that a bhikkhu, who is capable of attaining trance, possesses *sankhāras*; and yet a glance

14) “Some Aspects of Reality as Taught in Theravāda Buddhism” in *The Indian Mind*, C. A. Moore (ed.), Honolulu, 1967, p. 85, fn. 8.

15) Loc. cit., p. 653, fn. 1.

at the P-s. will show that from the cessation of *avijjā* there should come the cessation of the *sankhāras*. In addition to this, even the Buddha is shown as possessing *sankhāras*: “Als er ein bestimmtes Wunder tun wollte, ‘gestaltete er einen solchen auf das Wunder gerichteten Sankhāra’, dass die betreffende Wirkung erreicht wurde.”¹⁶) Furthermore, in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* the Buddha, at his last meeting with Māra (the Evil One), tells him that within a short period of time he would leave the world. After this we are told: “Then the *Bhagāvan* . . . being conscious and mindful, gave up the sustenance of life (*āyusankhāra*) . . .”¹⁷) From this and other texts we are then to suppose that not all the *sankhāras* are given up when *avijjā* is destroyed. The *sankhāras* sustaining the physical existence of the body in this life continue, but only in the fashion of a potter’s wheel which will continue to spin for a short time after the potter has finished his task.

Our understanding of this problem is further helped by the following text:

Those sustentances of life, friend, do they belong to the feeling-states, or (are they both different)? The sustentances of life, friend, do not belong to the feeling-states. (If they did, then) the emerging of the bhikkhu who has attained the cessation of feeling and perception would not be evident. (However, they are different, therefore his emergence is evident.) How many states, friend, leave this body, (so that) this body is cast away, rejected, and has the condition of a senseless piece of wood? Three states leave this body, friend: life, heat and consciousness . . . What is the difference between this dead (body) and the bhikkhu (described above)? The dead (body’s) sustenance of the body has ceased, become quieted; (and so for) the sustenance of speech and thought, life is extinct, its heat is extinguished, and the faculties have broken up. The bhikkhu’s sustentances of the body, speech and thought have ceased, become quiescent when he attains the cessation of feeling and perception, (but) the life is not extinct, the heat is not extinguished, and the faculties are clear. (*M. I.295-296*).

If this text is understood properly the interpretation of it would be that there are in all, so far as this quotation is concerned, four *sankhāras*: *āyusankhāra*, *kāyasankhāra*, *cittasankhāra* and *vacīasankhāra*; and the first is not in the same class as the other three. The latter are destroyed in the particular state of trance referred to, but the former must necessarily exist so long as the bhikkhu lives. The *āyusankhāra* contains

16) H. Oldenberg: *Buddha, Sein Leben, Seine Lehre, Seine Gemeinde*, (Herausgegeben von Helmuth von Glasenapp) Stuttgart, 1959, p. 257.

17) D. II.106.

the life, heat and consciousness of the individual, and none of these can be given up until the fruit of his past *kamma*, has been exhausted. And, in order that there should be no more *kamma*, the other *sankhāras* must be, and can be, controlled.

Mention is made in *S. II.82* of “meritorious *sankhāras*. This may seem to be a contradiction in terms until the following text is read:

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu possesses faith . . . morality . . . learning . . . munificence . . . and insight. And he thinks thus: ‘Oh that I may be reborn among the wealthy *khattiyas* when the body breaks up after death.’ (And so) he assumes that thought; (then) his mode of life being thus, the *sustenance*s which are developed and practiced lead to that (particular) rebirth . . . (*M. III.99-100*).

The Buddha then continues in the same vein for several forms of existence that the bhikkhu may desire. Finally, however, the bhikkhu wishes for release through thought and insight (*cetovimutti*, *paññāvimutti*), which entails the extinction of the “influxes” (*āsavas*). Because of his success in this matter — due ultimately, it must be added, to his possession of the five previously mentioned *sankhāras* — “the bhikkhu is not reborn anywhere, he is reborn nowhere”.¹⁸)

Two points may be drawn from this text. The first is that there are *sankhāras* which can be a positive aid to release from rebirth. The second point is that the bare term “sustenance” is not by itself sufficient to translate *sankhāra*. The present writer would therefore suggest that “*volitional* sustenance” brings out better the meaning of the word. It is the will to do any action that has played a paramount role in Buddhism. That which sustains the body, for example, is the breath, because if the body was without this for even a short period of time it would die. Also, as can be seen from the bhikkhu’s ability to attain trance, the breath, although among ordinary lay-people it is a reflex action, is still under the control of the will since it can be stopped. And more clearly, deliberation, reflection, perception and feeling are manifestly bound up with the volitional part of the individual.

This volitional aspect of the *sankhāras* is particularly well brought out in the following text:

What, bhikkhus, are the *sankhāras*? They are, bhikkhus, these six groups of the will (*cetanā*): the intention concerning forms . . . sound . . . smell . . . taste . . . touch and mental states . . . From the arising of reaction (*phassa*) (there

18) *M. III.103*.

is) the arising of the *sankhāras*; and from the cessation of reaction (there is) the cessation of the *sankhāras*. The noble eightfold path is the way, the road to the cessation of the *sankhāras*, that is, right view, etc.. (S. III.60).

Finally, two further texts may be referred to in support of the suggestion that *sankhāra* should be translated — if at all — by “volitional sustenance”. In S. II.66 it is said:

That which one thinks (*ceteti*), bhikkhus, that which one determines (*pakappeti*), and that which obsesses one (*amuseti*), this is the condition for the continuance of consciousness.

In another context argument might be made concerning whether this text was extant before or after the formulation of the P-s. with twelve terms. Such a matter need not concern us at this time, however, since in either case the text still shows that *sankhāra* includes not only volition but also sustenance, for the text continues: “When there is this condition, then there is the *support* for consciousness.” And in S. III.96-97 two things are said concerning *sankhāra*. The first is that the “consideration” (*samanupassanā*) of the man who sees the body as *atta* (“self”) is a *sankhāra*. The man’s volitional activity, therefore, sustains him for as many rebirths as he holds this opinion. It is also stated that the *sankhāra* is born from craving (*taṇhā*). It is thus easy to consider how craving can give rise to a certain attitude of mind which entails the wish, i.e., the will or volitional act to obtain something, given in the first instance that the man possesses the delusion concerning the body, that it is a beautiful thing, which necessarily discolours his view of the material world.

Viññāṇa

As with *sankhāra*, *viññāṇa* is capable of more than one interpretation. One of these, which is supposed to be specifically concerned with the P-s., is given as follows:

And what, bhikkhus, is consciousness? There are, bhikkhus, these six groups of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind consciousness. (S. II.4).

However, the validity of this interpretation — in the context of the P-s. — may be disputed. Strictly speaking, this is the discriminating consciousness that is found described in various texts. As such it is a part of the already existing psycho-physical entity. It distinguishes

(*viñānāti*) happiness (*sukha*), dis-ease (*dukkha*) and lethargy (*aduk-khamasukha*); and if there is any difference between this and understanding (*paññā*), then it is that the latter should be developed and the former should be accurately known.¹⁹) On a more mundane level, so to speak, it further distinguishes different sorts of taste, such as sour, bitter, acidic, honey, alkaline and non-alkaline, salty and non-salty tastes.²⁰) It is, therefore, this consciousness which is meant in the following text:

From the arising of name-and-form (there is) the arising of consciousness; (but) from the cessation of name-and-form (there is) the cessation of consciousness (by means of the eightfold path). (*S. III.64*).

For the P-s. to make any sense, therefore, the *viññāṇa* which is the third unit should properly be *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*, “rebirth-consciousness”. And it is this consciousness which is referred to in the *Mahāni-dāna-sutta*, which deals with the P-s. with nine terms:

If, Ānanda, consciousness did not appear (*okkamissatha*) in the mother’s womb, would name-and-form arise in the mother’s womb?

No, sir.

If, Ānanda, when consciousness has appeared in the womb, it should (then) disappear, would name-and-form be born (*abhinibbattissatha*) in this condition (or “world”)?

No, sir.

(And) if, Ānanda, consciousness is cut off from a young person, either a young boy or young girl, would name-and-form exhibit increase, growth and full development?

No, sir.

Wherefore, Ānanda, this is the condition, this is the basis, this is the arising, this is the dependence of name-and-form. (*D. II.62*).

With reference to this rebirth conception of *viññāṇa* the heresy of Sāti must be looked at, since it may be of some help if we can see just exactly what his mistake was. When he was brought to the Buddha the latter asked him:

Is it true, Sāti, that you have produced such an evil theory, to wit: ‘Thus I understand the *Dhamma* taught by the *Bhagavan*, that *this* consciousness, and no other, runs on, returns again and again?’

Yes indeed, sir.

Sāti, what is consciousness?

That, sir, which speaks and feels, which experiences the fruits of good and bad *kamma* here and there.

19) See M. I.292-293.

20) See S. III.87.

From whom, you stupid man, do you know that I teach such a *Dhamma*? In many ways, you stupid man, I have said that consciousness is dependently arisen (*paṭiccasamuppannam*); without a condition there is no arising of consciousness. (*M. I.258*).

On the following pages it transpires that the consciousness which the Buddha is referring to is that which arises from the eye, ear, etc.²¹) Therefore, it could be suggested that he is contradicting Sāti on two points. The first is that there is no stable, transmigrating consciousness. The second is that consciousness is entirely dependent on the psycho-physical entity for its arising, and is called by the name of the particular sense-organ concerned. But the consciousness that Sāti seems to have been referring to is that which is found in the *Mahānidāna-sutta* quoted above. Therefore, the answer to his assumption is not the correct one. It is not that he believed in the existence of a rebirth-consciousness that was his mistake, but that he regarded it as an unchanging and permanent entity. To give the proper answer to Sāti's assertion reference can be made to an *Itivuttaka* text, which states that "consciousness is of the nature of fading away" (*viññāṇam virāgadhammam*).²²)

As a means of relating these two concepts of *viññāṇa*, the following text may be quoted:

A monkey goes about this five-doored hut,
It wanders around by (each) door,
Beating repeatedly against (them).
Stand, monkey, do not run away;
For you it is not to be as it formerly was;
By wisdom (*paññāya*) you are restrained,
You will not go into the future (again). (*Thag., vv. 125-126*).

The interpretation of this simile is quite straightforward. The monkey is consciousness, which is constantly related to the five sense organs of the eye, ear, etc.. But an enlightened person has control over this ordinarily capricious faculty, hence its former habits are curtailed, and it is checked from running forward into the future at the death of that person. We thus find in this text an intrinsic connection between rebirth-consciousness and the consciousness which discriminates the various phenomena in the material world. But this should not be regarded as a contradiction to that which has been previously stated, i.e.,

21) *M. I.259-260*.

22) *Itv.*, p. 69. See also *S. II.94-95*.

that the composer of *S. II.4* is wrong. The rebirth-consciousness that must be meant in the P-s., since it is prior to the psycho-physical entity, is nevertheless also found in the latter as a preparation for a new being, and its function is enhanced by its connection with that consciousness which is bound up with the sense organs.

The text given below, taken from the *Visuddhimagga*, 'explains' the process of rebirth:

Being bent by craving and thrown by the activities by way of continuity, it abandons the former basis like a man who crosses a conduit by hanging to a rope tied to a tree on the hither bank, and proceeds by the causes such as the object and so on, reaching or not reaching the latter basis set up by karma. And here the preceding consciousness is called decease because it passes away; the latter consciousness is called rebirth because it is connected with the beginning of another existence. *But the consciousness does not arrive here from a previous existence; nor does it appear from thence without a condition such as karma, activities, the bending onto the object and so on:*

The echo may be (taken) and such similes.

Because the series is continuous,

*There's no identity nor otherness.*²³⁾

The last line is further explained by noting that if all things remained the same there would, for example, be no such thing as curds from milk; and if things differed completely from each other, again there would be no curds.

Nāmarūpa

The more common translation for this term is "name-and-form"; and this may be kept for the additional reason that it is the more literal translation. However, explanations are needed concerning the rather enigmatic word *nāma*, "name".

Generally speaking, *nāma* involves the four incorporeal (*arūpa/arūpin*) *khandhas*, viz., perception (*saññā*), feeling (*vedanā*), *sankhāra* and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) — the fifth *khandha* being *rūpa*. But the definition given of this term within the context of the P-s. does not seem to allow this to be the case:

What, bhikkhus, is name-and-form? Feeling, perception, intention (*cetanā*), reaction (*phassa*) and attention (*manasikāra*), this is called name. There are the four elements, and on account of (*upādāya*) the four great elements (there is) form... (*S. II.3-4*).

²³⁾ Translated by Pe Maung Tin: *Path of Purity*, Vol. III, London, 1931, p. 664. Present writer's emphases.

It can be seen that *sankhāra* and consciousness are missing from this definition. But if the matter were pressed, it could be allowed that *cetanā* and *sankhāra* were synonyms if reference is made back to *S. III.60. 24*) And in *S.II.94 viññāṇa* and *mana* are also synonyms:

Bhikkhus, that which is called thought (*citta*), mind (*mana*), consciousness (*viññāna*), the unlearned lay-man is not disgusted with, is not apathetic towards, is not freed from.

The word *manasikāra* is made up of the locative form of *mana*, plus a word which comes from the verb *karoti*, thus giving the literal translation of this compound word as “production (or “application”) of the mind”. This, plus the more usual translation “attention”, both point to a man’s faculty of discrimination, which is the prime characteristic of *viññāṇa*.

Briefly, then, *nāma* can be taken as referring to the process of ideation within the individual.

The meaning of *rūpa*, “form”, is obvious. It is the body of the individual which is formed in the womb, and on which basis the six senses are founded.

Salāyatana

The definition of this term may be given thus:

What, bhikkhus, are the six sense organs? (They are) the eye-organ, the ear-organ, the nose-organ, the tongue-organ, the body-organ (and) the mind-organ. (*S. II.3*).

And those things that correspond to these six inner (*ajjhattika*) sense organs, i.e., those things that occur outside of them, but are related to them (*bāhirāni āyatanāni*) are the “sphere of forms” (*rūpāyatana*), the “sphere of sounds” (*sada-*), “... tastes” (*rasa-*), “... smell” (*ghanda-*), “... tangibles” (*phoṭṭhabba-*) and “... mental images” (*dhamma-*).

To state the obvious, within the twelvefold P-s. the *salāyatana* depend on name-and-form. But it would seem, from a text found in the *Mahā-taṇhāsankhaya-sutta* of the *Majjhima*, that these do not become active properly until a later stage in the life of the individual, sometime after parturition. First the child is breast-fed, and this is followed by the stage of playing children’s games:

24) See above, p. 43.

Then, bhikkhus, when the boy is growing up, his faculties (*indriyāna*) develop, and being endowed with, and possessed of the five strands of sense-desire, he finds pleasure through the material forms which are pleasing, enjoyable, pleasant, enticing, endowed with pleasantness, apt to arouse excitement, and (which) are perceived through the eye. (And likewise for) sounds perceived through the ear, ... smells perceived through the nose ... tastes perceived by the tongue ... tangibles perceived through the body ...

He, having seen material object(s) with the eye, becomes attached to (those) enticing object(s) of sight among material object(s), and is troubled by (those) non-enticing object(s) ... He lives not concentrating upon his body, and with an inferior mind, thus he does not understand the mind's deliverance through wisdom as they really are, by which his wicked and evil states of mind cease without remainder. Thus, possessing satisfaction and dissatisfaction, he experiences any kind of feeling, pleasant, painful or (neither), and he finds pleasure in feeling, welcomes (it), becomes attached (to it). (This being so) delight arises, and that which is delight in feeling is grasping. (Therefore, he is led on to becoming, birth and the rest.) (*M. I.266*).

And all this is said for the other sense organs, including mind.

The individual, therefore, does not create new *kamma* for himself until he reaches the stage when he can discriminate between what is pleasant and what is unpleasant, which is achieved through what is now the proper function of the six senses. This also, it should be added, necessarily entails the power of volition. Because he accepts all these at a rather shallow level, so to speak, the individual is thus led on to more rebirths, whose state depends on his previous actions, which are volitionally orientated towards the material world.

It is through his six senses, therefore, that the unlearned lay-man finds what he believes to be pleasure and delights, which he lusts for and craves after.²⁵⁾ Thus it can be seen that restraint with regard to these senses is of paramount importance.²⁶⁾

There are three things that can be said about each of the sense organs. The first is that happiness (*sukha*) and joy (*somanassa*), which sometimes arise because of them, lead to the enjoyment (*assādo*) of the particular sense organ concerned. This, therefore, gives the individual a false set of values, because the other point that can be made about them is that they are impermanent (*anicca*), of a changeful nature (*vipariṇāmadhamma*), and give distress or dis-ease (*dukkha*). This is known as the disadvantage or misery (*ādinava*) of the sense organs. If the individual does not properly understand the significance

25) See S. V.426 and A. II.10-12.

26) See M. I.180.

of this, he grieves for his loss. This is because of the desire and lust that have to do with the enjoyment he once knew. But by the destruction and removal of that desire and lust (*chandarāga*), he finds the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from each of the organs.²⁷⁾ However, this is not to be taken literally, in the first instance at least. While the enlightened being still lives he cannot escape possessing these various organs. What is meant is that, unlike the unlearned lay-man, he is no longer susceptible to the reactions and sensations which will still arise while he is not in a state of trance or deep concentration. But, recognising each reaction and sensation for what they really are, he does not take the matter any further by wishing to enhance the state, nor to escape from it. Once it is gone, it remains a thing of the past, and no more thought is given to it.

Phassa

The more usual translation for this term is “contact”, thus giving it an almost exclusively physical aspect. But that this is not the case can be seen, for example, by referring back to a text already quoted: *S. II.3-4*.²⁸⁾ In this text it is seen to be a mental state, and the appropriate translation “reaction” has been given to it. This translation suggests itself from the definition of the term given in the following text:

What, bhikkhus, is *phassa*? There are, bhikkhus, these six groups of *phassa*: eye-reaction (*cakkhusamphassa*), ear-reaction, nose-reaction, tongue-reaction, body-reaction and mind-reaction. (*S. II.3*).

“Impression” could be allowed as a further translation of the term, but only where it can be taken in a sense virtually synonymous with “reaction”. This is not to say that contact is excluded as a part of the meaning of the term. It is obvious that this must happen for there to be a reaction. But this must be accepted as only a subordinate meaning of the word — at least within the context of the P-s.

The matter of the translation and interpretation of *phassa* can give rise to a problem. In the P-s. it is stated that from the cessation of the *saḷāyatana* there is the cessation of *phassa*; and from the cessation of the latter there is the cessation of *vedanā* — “feeling” or “sensation”. Now, if *phassa* meant physical contact, exclusively, it is obvious that this could not cease until after death. And, as soon as there was a new

²⁷⁾ See *S. IV.7*.

²⁸⁾ See above, p. 47.

rebirth, it would begin again. Therefore, the individual would be in a situation from which there could be no escape. Physical contact cannot be stopped in this life, but the impressions or reactions to a particular object can be, or at least they can be controlled so that kammic feelings do not follow.

To further substantiate this point a text in the *Nidāna Saṃyutta* may be referred to. Here Sāriputta is being questioned by other wanderers about the Buddha's teaching concerning the arising of *dukkha*. Some recluses and brahmins, they say, who are believers in *kamma* (*kamma-vādā*), regard *dukkha* as being made by oneself (*sayamkata*), by another (*paramkata*), by both, or by neither. The last group believes that it arises fortuitously (*adhicca samuḥpanna*). Sāriputta answers:

It is said by the *Bhagavan*, friends, that *dukkha* is dependently arisen (*paṭiccasamuḥpannam*). Because of what (does it arise)? (It arises) because of reaction . . .

Thus, friends, those recluses and brahmins who believe in *kamma*, and who declare that *dukkha* is made by oneself, that (*dukkha*) depends on reaction. (And likewise for the other recluses and brahmins.) Thus, friends, those recluses . . . who declare that *dukkha* is made by oneself, it is not possible that they will experience (anything) without reaction. (And likewise for the others.) (*S. II.33-34*).

Here it can be seen that if the translation "contact" were used it would not properly bring out the meaning of *phassa* in this context; and, indeed, it would distort it. Using "reaction" it could be argued that it is the attitude of these recluses and brahmins to these several wrong views that is the reason for their living the life they do, which is diametrically opposite to the *Dhamma* of the Buddha. To say that *dukkha* is conditioned by mere contact with these views is manifestly incorrect, since Sāriputta is coming into contact with them by talking to these wanderers. No, it is because he has not *reacted* to these different doctrines in a favourable manner that he has no *dukkha*. And, on a more general view — see the first paragraph of the quotation — it is the reaction of mankind as a whole which, since those individuals are not trained in the *Dhamma* of the Buddha, leads to so-called pleasant and unpleasant feelings towards various stimuli.

Vedanā

Without argument or preamble, "feeling" or "sensation" may be used to translate this term. Of the two main definitions of *vedanā*, the first may be given as follows:

... There are, bhikkhus, these six groups of sensation: sensation which is born of eye-reaction (*cakkhusamphassajā*) ... ear-reaction ... nose-reaction ... tongue-reaction ... body-reaction ... mind-reaction ... (S. II.3).

The other definition divides the term into three parts:

Bhikkhus, there are these three sensations ... A happy sensation, a painful (*dukkha*) sensation, and a lethargic (*adukkhamasukha*) sensation. Bhikkhus, all happy sensations should be regarded as painful (*dukkhato*), painful sensations ... as impermanent (*aniccato*). When, bhikkhus, a happy sensation is seen by a bhikkhu to be painful (and also the other sensations), this bhikkhu is called a "properly seeing ariyan", he has cut off *tanhā*, destroyed the fetters, (and) by full and perfect understanding of pride, he has made an end of *dukkha*. (*Itv. p. 47*).

It is this definition which seems the most typical, and we shall remain with it for a while longer, particularly with reference to the so-called "lethargic sensations".

In the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* it is said of this sensation that it is "pleasant if it is understood, but painful if it is not understood", and further that "the bias of ignorance obsesses" it.²⁹) How is this to be explained? The answer would seem to be a simple one. The lethargic state of the unlearned lay-man — which is boredom — is unpleasant because it invariably comes about through a state of depression, and thus most, if not all things have no attraction for him. But it does not exist because of a certain understanding that things of this world have no ultimate value; rather it is conditioned, either directly or indirectly, by something else in this world which he regards as having an intrinsic value. An instance of this would be the man who is involuntarily separated from the woman he loves. While she is present the world is a beautiful place; but in her absence things lose their meaning. The state of boredom is also characterised by the feeling of neither wanting to do something, nor wanting to do nothing. This is always a painful dilemma. But, if such lethargic people only knew it, they are on the fringe of that which is experienced by the learned bhikkhu. The latter finds neither pleasure nor displeasure in anything in this world, because he sees things as they really are — by means of perfect knowledge — and, therefore, they are in no way desirable. Thus his attitude to them is completely neutral — as opposed to lethargic.

29) M. I.303.

Besides these two divisions of *vedanā*, there is another division which is twofold: mental (*cetasika*) sensation and bodily (*kāyika*) sensation. Of these two even an enlightened bhikkhu cannot rid himself of the latter, but he can control his reactions towards it.³⁰⁾ This bhikkhu has bias neither towards repugnance nor passion nor ignorance, since he knows, as they really are, all the various aspects of *vedanā*.

There is, however, another aspect of *vedanā* which may be briefly referred to. In the *Kūṭāgiri-sutta* of the *Majjhima* it is stated that certain happy, painful and lethargic sensations lead to the increase (*abhivaḍḍhanti*) of evil mental states (*akusalā dhammā*), and the diminishing (*parihāyanti*) of good mental states (*kusalā dhammā*). Therefore, the Buddha instructs the bhikkhus to give up (*pañahatha*) these particular sensations. But, on the other hand, certain other sensations, whether happy, painful or neutral, increase good mental states, and diminish bad mental states. It follows, therefore, that the bhikkhus should dwell having entered into (*upāsampajja*) these various sensations.³¹⁾

The obvious point to be made from the last paragraph is that sensations *as a whole* were not to be given up, but only those that caused a retrograde step on the road to enlightenment.

The main point now to be emphasised is the fact that only the first definition may be seen as being strictly relevant to the P-s. In this respect it can be understood what is meant by the statement: "from the cessation of reaction (there is) the cessation of sensation". What is being talked about here is the cessation of the six sensations resulting from the six reactions gained through the six senses. And what, more exactly, is meant in this case is that the bhikkhu, realising these sensations to be put the products of the mundane world, does not react to them in the way that the unlearned lay-man would; although, of course, except in a state of trance, he cannot but realise their existence.³²⁾

Tanhā

The problem in translating this word is not quite the same as in the case of *sankhāra*. With the latter it was a matter of trying to find an equivalent English term which incorporated several connotations. As

30) See S. IV.209.

31) M. I.475-477.

32) See S. IV.209.

regards *taṇhā*, however, the problem is to find a term which has the correct intensity. No doubt this could be achieved by means of a phrase-translation; but, since this would prove cumbersome, it is considered better to use the common translation of “craving”. However, it must be pointed out that this word carries more connotations in it in the following texts than it would ordinarily outside the bounds of Buddhist studies. No matter how far an individual goes in order to satiate this emotion he finds that he is attempting an impossible task.

With express reference to the P-s., *taṇhā* may be defined as follows:

... There are, bhikkhus, these six groups of craving: the craving for material forms, the craving for sounds ... for smells ... for tastes ... for tangible things ... for mental states. (*S. II.3*).

However, another common definition divides *taṇhā* into three: the craving for sensual pleasure (*kāmatāṇhā*), for becoming (*bhavataṇhā*) and for non-becoming (*vibhavataṇhā*).

In order to facilitate such an action as the destruction of craving, it is necessary for the true state of the world to be realised. This is achieved, for example, in section 103 of the *Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta*, by referring to the body in a derogatory manner. Here it is described as a boil (*gaṇḍa*), and craving is then termed the “root of the boil” (*gaṇḍamāla*). The bhikkhus are exhorted to “dig up” (*palikhatam*) this root. With such a description it is not difficult to imagine the success of the exhortation.

The idea of uprooting craving leads us to the comparison of this concept with a creeper (*māluva*), or some other plant.

For a man who lives carelessly,
 Craving grows as a creeper;
 He floats from existence to existence,
 Wishing for fruit, like a monkey in the forest.
 Him this contemptible craving,
 (Which) clings to the world, conquers;
 His griefs increase,
 As the *bīraṇa* grass increases.
 But he who this contemptible craving,
 (Which is) difficult to overcome, defeats,
 His griefs fall from him,
 As a drop of water from the lotus.
 This auspicious thing I say to you,
 As many as are assembled here,
 Dig up the root of craving,

As one who seeks the root of the bīraṇa grass.
 Let not Māra break you again and again,
 As the stream (breaks) a reed. (*Thag.*, vv. 399-402).

Another graphic synonym for *taṇhā* is that of the “seamstress” (*sīb-banī*). In the Book of the Sixes, section 62, some words of the Buddha are quoted, and the following interpretation is but one of several found in the section:

... impression is one extreme, friend, the arising of impression is the second extreme, the cessation of impression is the middle, and craving is the seamstress, for craving sews (the individual) to that very becoming through rebirth. (*A. III.399-400*).

Thus, two seemingly unrelated entities, a creeper and a seamstress, are brought together through the medium of analogy. Brought together in this way, they show the fundamental power of craving. This is its ability to bind. Beings are bound to *samsāra* because they virtually honour craving. Doing this, they are like a “captured hare” (*saso va bādhitō*) “attached to (craving’s) bonds and fetters” (*saṃyojanasangasattakā*).³³ To use another analogy, it is said that the man who has craving for a “companion” (*dutiyo*, lit. “second”) will for a long time be fettered to rebirth and becoming. But he who sees this “danger” (*ādinava*), and knows that craving is responsible for the arising of *dukkha*, he is freed from this evil, and goes about as a Wanderer (*paribbājaka*).³⁴

The root of craving is ignorance.³⁵ Therefore, the obvious corollary to this is that through knowledge craving ceases.³⁶ Thus, being expert in the seven parts of wisdom (*satta bojjhanga*)³⁷ and the four applications of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhānā*),³⁸ the ideal bhikkhu who has seen things as they really are gives up the wish to be reborn in a more materially wealthy state. And while he is in this world he does not wish to possess those things that belong to the more wealthy members of society. He remains content in the life he has chosen, studying the *Dhamma*, and having all attributes, such as calmness,

33) *Dhp.*, v. 342.

34) See *A.* II.10.

35) *Thag.*, v. 573.

36) See *Ud.*, p. 80.

37) *S.* V.86.

38) *S.* V.300.

concentration and the rest, which are essential for the proper carrying out of this study.

The two prime banes of mankind, ignorance and craving, must be destroyed if the individual is to begin his arduous task of attaining enlightenment. Through ignorance men crave for all manner of things; and the man who craves is so intent upon the fulfilment of his various ambitions that he has no awareness of the possibility that he is, in fact, deluded in his attitude towards the world. Strangely enough, there are times in some people's lives when even old-age may be desired, because of some reward or virtue that it is supposed to bring. ³⁹⁾ And death, also, can be a desired state for some, but not for any good reason from the Buddhist point of view. If we accept, therefore, the basic premise that there is such a phenomenon as rebirth, then it is rightly said that "craving produces the man". ⁴⁰⁾

Of a bhikkhu who has been successful in his quest, it is more correct to say that he has destroyed craving and its bond, rather than to say that he arises in this or that place. ⁴¹⁾ No basis can be found in him on which a new rebirth could be built. ⁴²⁾ In short, "The destruction of craving is *nibbāna*". ⁴³⁾

Upādāna

Again, as was the case with *taṇhā*, a translation can be given of this word, but the qualification must be added that the English word must connote more in this Buddhist context than elsewhere in English literature. Translations used are "grasping", "attachment" and "clinging", of which the first may be considered the best since it has a more dynamic connotation; and it has the added advantage of denoting both the act of taking the particular object and also of keeping it.

The *upādāna* which is found in the P-s. is defined as follows:

... Bhikkhus, there are these four graspings: the grasping of sense-desires... of views... of good works and rites... of the theory of the self... (*S. II.3*).

³⁹⁾ Cf. "Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be."

From the poem 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' by Robert Browning.

⁴⁰⁾ S. I.37.

⁴¹⁾ S. IV.399.

⁴²⁾ S. IV.391.

⁴³⁾ S. III.190.

As to the meaning of these four compounds, these are found in the *Dhammasaṅgani*. The grasping of sense-desires can be left as being virtually self-explanatory. Of the grasping of views, it is said:

There are no alms, no sacrifices, no oblation, there is no result nor fruit of good or evil deeds, there is not this world, nor another, there is no mother, there is no father, there are no beings spontaneously reborn, there are no perfect recluses and brahmins in this world who have right views, who declare, having experienced it for themselves, knowledge concerning this world and the next... (*Dhs.*, p. 212).

But if a comparison is made here with a text found in the *Visuddhimagga*, a momentary doubt may arise as to why this criticism should exist:

Mere suffering exists, no sufferer is found;
The deeds are, but no doer of the deed is there;
Nirvāna is, but not the man who enters it;
The path is, but no traveller on it is seen.⁴⁴⁾

Are not both quotations stating the same fundamental view? The answer must be that this is certainly not the case. The first quotation is a criticism of the Nihilist theory, which held a totally pessimistic view of the world. Such people were condemning the giving of alms and oblations, etc., but were not offering anything substantial to take their place. In their minds there was nothing for which a sacrifice should be made, and we are merely the sum of our parts. On the other hand, the Buddhist doctrine is neither pessimistic nor nihilistic; and the 'surface' meaning, so to speak, of the second quotation is not its real meaning. Furthermore, the major difference between the Nihilists and the Buddhists was that the latter offered a very definite goal to be attained, whereas the former would have said that even to seek for a way to change one's destiny was a deluded venture.

The grasping of good works and rites entailed the belief that a shallow observance of morality was enough to obtain a better rebirth. For their part, the Buddhists would say that all actions begin with the mind, and thus, if the right thought is not there, the deed holds little if any merit:

Mind foreruns (all evil) conditions, mind is chief, mind-made are they; if one speaks or acts with wicked mind, because of that, pain pursues him, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox.

44) Quoted in Nyanatiloka's *Buddhist Dictionary*, Colombo, 1956, p. 12 (s.v. *anattā*).

Mind foreruns (all good) conditions, mind is chief, mind-made are they; if one speaks or acts with pure mind, because of that, happiness follows him, even as the shadow that never leaves. 45)

The grasping of the theory of the self was the view that any one of the five *khandhas* was the self. The argument against this would be that each of these is impermanent, whereas the self or soul was, by definition, permanent, and not subject to decay and suffering.

In the *Aggivacchagotta-sutta* of the *Majjhima*, the Buddha tells Vacchagotta that any view concerning the world — whether it is eternal or not eternal, etc. — the identity or non-identity of the soul (*jīva*) and the body (*sarīra*), and the state of the *Tathāgata* after death,

does not lead to aversion, to passionlessness, to cessation, to tranquility, to higher wisdom, to enlightenment, to *nibbāna*. Considering this disadvantage, Vaccha, I have not resorted to these views at all... Therefore, the *Tathāgata*, for the destruction, dispassion, cessation, abandoning, renunciation and non-grasping (*anupādā*) of all (such) illusions, all disturbances of the mind (through passion), all predispositions of the mind to egotism and self-interest, is released, I say. (*M. I.486*).

And all this is equally true for the four *upādānas*. The grasping after these various things is the fuel for a man's continual becoming and rebirth, as the wood is the fuel for the fire. If the fire is not supplied with any more fuel it will go out (*nibbuta*, lit. "become cooled"); 46) and in the same way, a man who does not grasp will stop his rebirths, though he may continue in the world for a while, until the effects of all his previous *kamma* have run their course.

In keeping with some of the other terms in the P-s., *upādāna* can also be found closely connected with the six senses:

What, sir, is the reason, what is the condition by which some beings do not attain *nibbāna* here in this world? What is the reason... by which some beings do attain *nibbāna* here...? There are, lord of the devas, pleasant, enjoyable, agreeable, enticing, desirable and delightful material forms perceived by the eye. If a bhikkhu finds delight (in them), welcomes (them), is attached (to them), for him thus delighting... on account of that consciousness there is grasping. And a bhikkhu who is full of grasping (*sauṇḍāna*) does not attain *nibbāna*. (*S. IV.101-102*).

45) Dhṛ., vv. 1-2. Trans. by Narada Thera: *The Dhammapāda*, London, 1959, p. 15.

46) M. I.487.

It follows naturally that a bhikkhu who is “without grasping” (*anupādāna*) will attain *nibbāna*. And what has been said concerning the eye applies equally to the other five sense organs.

Another way in which grasping is said to arise is found in the *Sutta Nipāta*:

He who is not attached is not confused,
 He who is attached, grasps;
 Becoming here and becoming elsewhere
 He does not overcome the round of rebirths.
 Knowing this danger:
 Great fear is in attachments;
 Not being attached, he is without grasping,
 The mindful bhikkhu (thus becomes) a Wanderer. (*Sn.*, p. 142).

This is the message that is continually echoed throughout the whole Canon. To trust or be attached to — they come to the same thing in Buddhist thought — anything in this world is to begin on a completely false basis. The ideal bhikkhu, on the other hand, because he has no opinions on many mundane matters, grasps at nothing in this world. Because of this fact he is not worried by anything.⁴⁷⁾ It is a matter of complete indifference to him whether he is honoured or not, since his concern or delight (*ārāma*) lies only in the knowledge that grasping is destroyed.⁴⁸⁾ He knows that there is nothing in the world to which he can cling without being sinful (*vajjavā*). For by such grasping, becoming is the inevitable result.⁴⁹⁾

Bhava

The translation “rebirth” for this word may be regarded as being, if not incorrect, at least unfortunate with reference to the P-s. Its predominant connotation is that of “becoming”, but “existence”, although not chosen in this work, can be looked on as a possible translation. However, there is the point that the latter does seem to bear the added implication of durability, which the Buddha was always at pains to avoid. “Rebirth” is indeed connoted in this term, but it will be put to one side, because to use it would be to have two virtually synonymous terms following one another, i.e., *bhava* and *jāti*. The main point to

47) See S. IV.23.

48) See Itv., pp. 74-75.

49) See S. III.93-94.

stress is that all things are in a state of continual change, and this is best brought out by the word “becoming”.

This “becoming” can be regarded on two planes. On the one hand, there is that becoming which is evident to an enlightened person *within* the present life of the individual. This is a reference to the changes which are found not only in thought, but in the body and all other things. On the other hand, there is the becoming of the individual as “he” becomes in one life after the other. This, of course, makes it virtually equivalent to rebirth; but the difference between the two is that rebirth is contained within becoming, and it leads to one of the three general states: sensuous-becoming, corporeal-becoming and incorporeal-becoming. The first of these refers to becoming in the world of sense-desires (*kāmaloka*), which includes the various hells, animals, spirits (*petā*) and the human realm, plus the six lower deva-realms. Corporeal-becoming includes the states resultant of the four *jhānas*. Therefore, although the sense organs still exist, the various evils resulting from them are reduced. Finally, the incorporeal-world includes the four spheres (*āyatana*) above the four *jhānas*: “the sphere of the infinity of space” (*ākāśanañcāyatana*), “the sphere of the infinity of consciousness” (*viññāṇanañcāyatana*), “the sphere of nothingness” (*ākāñcaññāyatana*), and “the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception” (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*).

It must be remembered that becoming in all these worlds is dependent on *upādāna*. Therefore, even the last sphere is not equal, by any means, to the cessation of rebirth.⁵⁰⁾

So long as the individual is totally concerned with his own physical and mental existence, he is continually led on to becoming. Not only this, but his enjoyment, desire and craving for becoming — because he has not seen things as they really are, the arising, destruction, enjoyment and danger of becoming — keep him yoked to this “bond of becoming” (*bhavayoga*).⁵¹⁾

Those who have brought about the cessation of (renewed-)becoming, either through possessing “shame-and-fear” (*hiriottappa*),⁵²⁾ or through the giving up of the “seven bonds” (*sattasanga*),⁵³⁾ or by

50) See M. I.42.

51) A. II.10.

52) Itv., pp. 36-37.

53) Itv., pp. 93-94.

developing the “seven factors of enlightenment” (*sattabojjhangā*),⁵⁴ they arrive at either of the two *nibbāna*-elements:

These two *nibbāna*-elements are made known
 By such an one who possesses knowledge,
 And is not attached.
 One element belongs to this world here,
 With substratum remaining,
 (But) with the destruction of the leading to becoming,
 (That) without a substratum belongs to the future
 In which becomings cease absolutely.
 Those who know this un compounded constituent (*paḍaṃ*)
 Are released in mind,
 With the destruction of the leading to becoming.
 They, having attained the essence of the *Dhamma*,
 (And) delighting in destruction,
 Have given up all becomings. (*Itv.*, pp. 38-39).

Jāti; Jarāmaraṇa-Soka-paridevaduḅkhadomanassupāyāsa

The last two units may be dealt with in one section since neither has any real difficulties with regard to translation or interpretation.

The dependence of old-age-and-death on birth is at least one part of the P-s. which Western thought would have no difficulty in understanding. It is obvious to all that birth necessarily entails a subsequent death; though even this truism has to be emphasised to some lay-people in the Buddhist text. One calls to mind the story of Kisagotami who went to the Buddha with her dead child, and asked him if he would restore life to it. The Buddha told the woman to bring him a mustard seed from a house that had not known death, and this she sought to do. Her failure in this matter then brought home to her the fact that death is the lot of all mankind, and once it has come there is no escape from it. However, the *constant* existence of any of the other members of the following compound is not so obvious to those who think that they can find happiness in sense-pleasures, material gains and family relationships. This is brought out well in a text found in the *Udāna*. Here a woman, Visākhā by name, is in mourning for her recently dead granddaughter. Nevertheless, when asked she expresses the desire to have many children and grand-children. This said, it is then pointed out to her that, since among such a number there would be at least one death every day, she would be in mourning forever. The conclusion from this

54) Thig., p. 128.

is that even if only one thing is held as dear in the world, there would still be *dukkha*. But for those who hold nothing as dear (*piya*), there is no *dukkha*.⁵⁵)

Of all the terms that are the concern of this section, only the definition of *jāti*, “birth”, need be given; and then only to emphasise a point previously made with regard to *bhava*:

And what, bhikkhus, is birth? It is the birth of any beings among any class of beings, (their) origin, appearance, rebirth, the manifestation of the (five) aggregates, the attainment of the sense-organs. (*S. II.3*).

Birth, therefore, is the period from conception until parturition, and thus it may be seen that it is something within the concept of *bhava*. Whereas many years may separate two occurrences of the former, the latter is constantly occurring.

It was — and still is, of course — the intention of the Buddhists to show the stark reality of the material world. Everything in it is suffering (*dukkha*), impermanent (*anica*) and not-self (*anattā*), even though it may *seem* to have the nature of bliss. The possessing of a body brings about innumerable griefs, pains and afflictions. The Buddha always emphasised the obvious, but he did it in such a manner that the preconceived notions prevalent in his time were cast aside as being of no value for the gaining of enlightenment. In order to facilitate this task, either he or later tradition materialised, and even at times personified, the various evils that beset mankind. For example,

By death is the world *afflicted*,
 By old-age is it *escorted*,
 By the *arrow* of craving it is *pierced*,
 By wishes is it always *fumigated*.

The essence of this teaching is neither to crave for, nor to grasp after anything or anyone. There is no Justice in the world which smiles benevolently upon parent and child, man and wife, and allows the one to live for the sake of the other's happiness. There is only the automatic law of *kamma*, which brings to *all* the results of their past deeds. Neither the father can save the son, nor the wise-man the fool from the “power of death” (*maccurvasam*). Mourning the dead brings only greater grief for oneself. Therefore, one must see the dead as forever lost, and to understand from this that grief over a loved one's decease

⁵⁵) See Ud., p. 92.

serves no ultimate purpose. However, the very content of the last sentence means that this is asking the impossible. A loved one is, almost by definition, someone whose death would leave an intrinsic gap in one's life. Hence it is necessary to go further back than this, and to love no one, to trust in no one, depend on no one. This done, old-age and death, whether one's own or another's, are of no moment. And the very fact that one has attained this attitude of mind means that one has seen the world as it really is, and has drawn out the arrow of craving. ⁵⁶⁾

56) See, for example, Sn., vv. 574-593.