RENEWING THAI BUDDHIST BELIEF
IN KAMMA AND REBIRTH

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Introduction

In this paper, an attempt has been made to philosophically deal with the Theravada Buddhist concept of *Kamma* and Rebirth as believed and cherished by Thai people. The search for the proceeding of the Thai Buddhism believing in the doctrine of kamma and its collateral doctrine of rebirth can be somewhat easier understood by the approach of the Thai Buddhist scholars’ work in a particular period of time than that of the historical outcome of its mission. It has been said that the history of Buddhism is that of the Thai nation; it is true, for Buddhism has been apparently helping the Thai elites establishing the Thai country since the time of its arrival in the 4th century at Suwannabhumi, which is now known as Nakorn Pathom province sited in the central part of Thailand. Hence all kinds of the crisis inherited in the Thai citizen and nation can by no means be categorically separated from that of Buddhism and as such, they will be the real concern of Buddhist authority to reflect upon. At present, the process of modernization has had a significant impact on Thai society. The system of education is organized after a Western model. The philosophy of education is related to the economic and political set up. In theory, some Buddhist principles may be quoted, yet the essence is a pragmatism which corresponds to a capitalist society. The young generation is growing up in a confusing environment. Teenagers and children form today the majority of Thai population and they are, thus, the biggest target groups for consumerism. (Seri Phongphit, 1988, pp.3-29). Considering the religious aspect, in Thailand, Buddhism existed alongside Hinduism especially in the royal court where Hindu priests had a leading role in all royal ceremonies. Hinduism has less influence on the daily life of the ordinary people; overshadowed by Buddhism and popular belief. Nevertheless, Hindu elements exist in different ways in Buddhism itself. The interpretation of Buddhist doctrine, the emphasis on mythological stories, the application of these in Thai literature and the justification of the status of the kings are in one way or another related to Hindu concepts.

Amidst the rapid changes in Thai society today and the existing happenings in Buddhism, a small number of monks and laity try to reconsider and apply the Buddha-Dhamma to this changing society. The search for the middle path applicable to modern life has been continuous and constant in all classes on Thai society. It is generally acknowledged that the Most Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Phradhhammapidok or P.A. Payutto Bhikkhu’s interpretation of Buddha-Dhamma and way of life have inspired individuals and groups in various social sectors to rediscover the meaning of Buddhism and to search for appropriate means to apply it in their daily life and activities. Their main aim was to go back to the source: to follow the Buddha
's path. The Thai Buddhists today are confronting two important enemies, namely, materialism and superstition. The two factors are growing so strongly that traditional Buddhism, as it actually is, will not be able to become a real liberating force. It is found that the crisis and confusion of Buddhism with popular belief resulted from the people’s ignorance of the real Dhamma. Hence an education in the real Buddhism is needed.

Both Venerables are the authors of many publications, mostly in Thai, with some books and articles translated into English and other foreign languages. Some of their principal views especially the doctrine of kamma and rebirth, which serves as the renewing idea, will be brought into our discussion here.

1. The Development of the Concepts of Kamma and Rebirth in Early Theravada Buddhism

It should be brought into our notice that Theravada Buddhism differs from Early Buddhism in the sense that while the former covers all kinds of treatises ranged from the Tipitaka to its sub-commentaries and later concerned texts, which are the work of some prominent Buddhist scholars, say for example in Thailand and in some other Theravada Buddhist countries, the latter confines its reference to only Tipitaka. Therefore our discussion of kamma and rebirth here will be necessarily supported by the commentaries, such as 'the Path of Purification', written by Buddhaghosacariya of Cylon and so on.

1.1. The Doctrine of Karma and Rebirth in Buddhism

Strictly speaking, it is right to say that the doctrine of kamma and rebirth as based on Anattavada, Paticecasamupada and Vipassanabhavana is found peculiarly taught only in Buddhism, as it was completely enlightened by the Buddha at the night of his Enlightenment, (MN, I, 183). A more reliable fact is that the operation of karma had appeared in the Buddha's second knowledge called cutupapatanama at the time of his Enlightenment; it is said, with his pure, paranormal clairvoyant vision, he saw beings, noble or mean, happy or unhappy, dying and getting reborn in accordance with their karmas, (Ibid.).

In the Culakammavibhanga-Sutta, it is related that a young Brahmin Subha who was a Todeyya's son approached the Buddha and asked him for an explanation as to why among human beings some were short-lived, while others were long-lived, some were sickly, while others were healthy, some were ugly, while others were beautiful, some had little power, others were influential, some were poor, while others were rich, and some had little wisdom, while some possessed of insight. He further asked the Buddha of the reason and cause for the lowness and excellence which were seen among men despite their being human. The Buddha's reply was thus: "Being possessed of their own karmas, beings are heir to their karmas, karmas are their congenital cause, karmas are their kin, karmas are their refuge, it is karmas that devide beings in terms of lowness and excellence", (MN,III.202-203). Then when the
young Manava asked the Buddha to explain at length the cause of such differences, the latter did so in accordance with the law of cause and effect (karma). It may be put in a simple manner as follows:

The killing of living beings leads to a short life, the non-killing of living beings leads to a long life, the persecution of living beings leads to a sickly life, the non-persecution of living beings leads to healthy life; elasticity, anger and hatred lead to an ugly figure and bad complexion, the opposite ones lead to a beautiful figure, attractiveness and loveliness respectively; envy leads to powerlessness, non-envy leads to powerfulness; selfishness leads to poverty, alms giving, generosity lead to wealthiness; .... (MN,III,203-206).

Once the Buddha was asked by Queen Mallika, a very devout and wise lady, and well-versed in the Dharma, as to why in this world some women are not beautiful and are poor; why some women are not beautiful but rich; why some women are only beautiful but are poor; and why some women are both beautiful and rich. The Buddha's reply was:

Firstly, a certain woman becomes both deformed and poor because in the past, she was ill-tempered and stubborn, and she was no giver of charity to monks and others, she was jealous-minded and revengeful. Secondly, a certain woman just becomes deformed but she is wealthy, because in the past, she was only ill-tempered, but she was a giver of charity to all. Thirdly, a certain woman becomes beautiful or well-formed, but she was poor or needy, because in the past, though she was not ill-tempered, she was no giver of charity to monks and others. Forthly, a certain woman becomes both beautiful and rich, because in the past, she was not ill-tempered, was not stubborn, and she did give monks and others food, drink, clothing, vehicle, flowers, scent, ointment, bed, lodging and light, she was not jealous-minded either. (AN,II,202).

The above passage clearly shows that the doctrine of karma and the theory of rebirth which are interrelated can explain rationally the causes of inequalities in human life. The Buddha stated that the fruit of karma is one of the four unthinkable (acinteyya), that which transcends the limits of thinking and over which one should not ponder. (AN,II,90).

1.1.1 The Volition is Karma

The Anguttara-Nikaya defines karma as deeds or actions that are associated with the mental state of volition (cetana). (AN,III,63). All volitional actions involving mentality (soma), word (vaca) or body (kaya), are regarded as falling within the domain of karma, which is constituted by good, bad or neither good nor bad actions. According to Buddhism, karma without volition, namely, the
instinctive actions such as sneezing, respiration and so on, is not regarded as karma because it does not consist of a volitional consciousness, which is the most important factor in determining the nature of karma. Generally, the volitional karma always consists of either good or bad and such a karma does not vanish without producing its effect, as the Buddha quoting the words of ancient Rsis proclaims: "Those who do good receive good and those who do evil receive evil, what a man reaps accords with what he has sown," (SN.XI.1.10).

### 1.1.2 The Classification of Karma

In the Anguttara-Nikaya, (AN.II.230-231). The Buddha classified karma into four kinds corresponding to their nature and results: “Four kinds of karma, Monks, I have realized by my own wisdom and then made known to the world. They are black karma having black result, white karma having white result, both black and white karma having black-and-white result, and neither-black-nor-white karma having neither-black-nor-white result and leading to the cessation of karma”, (AN.II. 231).

The first means the action done by body, word and mind with ill-will, and it will make the doer take birth in a world dominated by ill-will. This is the plight of beings such as those in a hellish world. The second kind refers to the kind of karma which is not conducive to ill-will, and its results lead to only happiness. It indicates the life of beings who take place in the realm of Subhakārina. The third karma implies the action, some of which are spurred on by ill-will, whereas others are not. The doer of this karma is surrounded by both suffering and happiness. This signifies the life of human being, of some classes of celestial beings, and of some classes of hellish beings. The fourth category denotes the action that leads to the cessation of the first, the second and the third karma. The last one is mostly emphasized by the Buddha. The person who has attained the cessation of all karmas is called sabbākkammaṁkhetam-patto. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu remarks that the fourth type of karma is never discussed by westerners in their analysis of karma and rebirth.

In the Mahakammavibhanga-Sutta, the Buddha who foresaw that in the future some members of other sects may find out the Buddha’s great analysis of karmas, tells Ananda that there are four categories of karma, (MN.II.215), viz., (i) ‘Inoperative apparently inoperative’ (abhābbhaṁ abhābbhaṁ-bhasam), which means that an action that has little ethical significance is superseded by an action of greater ethical significance; (ii) ‘Inoperative apparently operative’ (abhābbhaṁ bhābbhaṁ-bhasam), refers to an action the effect of which is interrupted by another karma of the opposite character when one is on the point of death; (iii) ‘Operative apparently operative’ (abhābbhaṁ bhābbhaṁ-bhasam), which is an action of greater ethical significance which renders its result as has been accumulated and awaited; and (iv) ‘Operative apparently inoperative’ (abhābbhaṁ abhābbhaṁ-bhasam), which is an action cultivated on the point of death and is prevented by the past deed of greater ethical significance, (Papancasudani, p. 20).
The first three kinds of *karma* are in tune with the three kinds of *karma* mentioned in the *Anguttara-Nikaya*, (AN, I, 121), viz., that good actions bear good fruits, bad actions bear bad fruits, and actions partly good and partly bad bear fruits partly good and partly bad. The third type does not refer to the manner of individual acts, but rather to the series of acts which defines an individual life, because there is no such thing as a black-and-white *karma* or partly good and partly bad *karma*, but it is mentioned that a certain person accumulates acts of body, speech and thought that are both discordant and harmonious, (GS, I, 105).

The above classification of *karma* is made in accordance with their nature and results. But if *karma* is looked at from the point of view of the channels through which it is generated, it is classified into three kinds, namely, **bodily action**, **verbal action**, and **mental action**, (MN, I, 373). Each of them covers all four categories of the former classification, that is, *karma* performed through any of the three channels will be good or evil or both or neither. From the Buddhist viewpoint, even mental *karma* is wrong, and it is more important than the other two *karmas*, (AN, III, 414). It is further stated in the *Nikayas*, (AN, V, 264-266; DN, III, 214-215), that bad *karma* performed through body, speech and mind are called *ducarita* (evil conduct) or *akusala* (unwholesome state), which are of ten kinds divided into three groups, namely, (i) Threefold action of the body, namely, killing of the living beings, stealing, and sexual misconduct; (ii) fourfold action of the word, namely, false speech, backbiting, harsh speech, and frivolous talk; and (iii) threefold action of the mind, namely, covetousness, ill-will and wrong view. These ten are all called *akusalakammaphatha* (unwholesome cause of action). But on the contrary, the good deeds performed through the three channels are called *sucarita* (good conduct) or *kusala* (wholesome state), which are the opposite kinds of the above mentioned ten *karmas*. It is to be noted that the classification of *karma* into ten kinds is made in accordance with the moral point of view.

In the *Anguttara-Nikaya*, (AN, I, 136), a twofold classification of *karma* is mentioned, namely, **fruitful karma** and **barren karma**. The former refers to actions performed under the influence of covetousness, hatred and infatuation, which are regarded as the root-cause of *karmas* in order to bring about their results. The latter denotes actions performed without the influence of the three root-causes as mentioned before. These three root-causes are regarded as the root-cause of ignorance, which is itself the root-cause of *karma*. And as has been stated, man is born of *karma* or ignorance. From the standpoint of the fruitful and barren *karma*, the former is called *sasavakamma*, which bring about good and bad consequences, the latter is called *anasavakamma*, which is a kind of meditation on the Four Noble Truths, that lead to Arahatship and does not generate good or evil results. On the other hand, while *sasavakamma* will bestow the five *khandhas* in the future, the *anasavakamma* will eradicate the round of death and birth.

It is said in the *Samyutta-Nikaya*, (SN, IV, 132), that the eye and other sense organs are understood as old *karma* (*puranakamma*), but the action which one performs now is called new *kamma* (*navakamma*). Man's present situation derived
from old \textit{kamma}, but he remains free to make what he will of his present. The
Buddhists believe that man has every possibility to mould his own \textit{karma} and thereby
influence the direction of his life.

In connection with the old and new \textit{karma} as mentioned above, it is
necessary to mention about the two punishments of \textit{karma} (\textit{kammakarana}). Like the
old \textit{karma}, the new \textit{karma} too will have its result in this life (\textit{ditthadhammika}) or in
some future life (\textit{samparcayika}), (AN,1,48). Taking a robber for example, he is
captured by authorities and is tortured for his crime, by flogging him with whips,
cutting off his hands, feet, ears, nose and by torturing him with fire-garland, with the
flaming hand and with the flesh-hooking, and so on. This is called a wrong deed with
immediate retribution. Other acts born of body, word and thought will be rewarded
through appropriate rebirths. Likewise the fruit of a good deed may have both visible
and future results; for example, the result in this life of liberal almsgiver is that he
becomes dear to many and gains a great reputation, yet the results of his generosity
will come to full fruition only following his death when he is reborn in a heavenly
world.

1.2. \textbf{The Doctrine of Rebirth in Relation to Karma}

According to Buddhism, \textit{karma} in its \textit{cosmic aspect} is the natural law
(\textit{dhammata}), the law of conditionality (\textit{idappaccayata}) or of relativity (\textit{paccaya}),
which governs the whole universe. The law of \textit{karma} in its \textit{moral aspect} is concerned
with the theory of rebirth (\textit{punabbhava}), which is its corollary and proof. Rebirth is a
result of \textit{karma} (\textit{kamma-vipaka}). \textit{Karma} and \textit{vipaka} are inevitable concomitants. It
implies that according to Buddhism, one's present life cannot come out of nothing, but
it must be the outcome of the previous existence or the past \textit{karma}.

The Buddha, when asked by Ananda Thera as to what are the causes of rebirth,
replies that it is caused by the \textit{karmas} of their respective nature, that is, the \textit{karmas} of
sensual nature produce sensual planes; the \textit{karmas} of meditation-levels based on Form
produce the planes of Form; and the \textit{karmas} of the nature of meditation based on
Formlessness produce the planes of Formlessness. Therefore, \textit{karma} is comparable to
a field, consciousness (\textit{vimana}) to a seed, desire (\textit{tanha}) to the sap or life-force within
the seed. For, \textit{karma} or volition of beings hindered by ignorance and bound by desire,
takes place in sensual planes, material planes or immaterial planes. Thus there is
repeated rebirth, (AN,1,222-224). It is evident from the above discussion that
rebecoming is made possible through the combined functions of three conditions,
namely, \textit{karma}, desire and consciousness. It is consciousness that is reborn. As it is
said, it is the seed that will grow if planted in the soil of \textit{karma} and watered by desire
and if some external conditions are also present. The Buddha also comments that
through the entry of the consciousness of a departed person into a womb of a suitable
woman, the personality of a new individual is reborn,(DN. II. 62-63).

Dealing with the process of rebirth, the Buddha states that where there are
three conditions combined together, there a germ of human life is planted, that is,
mother's ovum, father's sperm and there is being-to-be born (gandhabba). According to Nyanatiloka Mahathera, the gandhabba (skt. gantavya) is none other than kamma-vega (karma-energy), which is sent forth by a dying individual at the moment of his death. He said:

The dying individual, with his whole being convulsively clinging to life, at the very moment of his death, sends forth karmic energies, which, like a flash of lightning hit at a new mother's womb ready for conception. Thus the so-called primary cell arises. (Nyanatiloka, 1964, pp.2-3).

It may be noted that Theravada Buddhism denies an indeterminate-state being existing between death and birth. This being the case, Piyadassi Thera maintains that gandhabba is simply a term for the rebirth-linking consciousness (patisandhi-vimmama) rather than for a discarnate spirit of any kind, (Piyadassi, 1972, p.20). It can really be said that human beings are born from karma, while parents merely provide them with a material layer. But this should not make us misunderstanding that parents do not have any merit at all, (AN, I, 161). Since they do much for children - they bring them up, nourish and introduce them to the world - they are teachers of old, worthy of offerings; they are Brahma, (AN, I, 131). It is, however, said that at the moment of conception karma conditions the initial consciousness or gandhabba which vitalizes the foetus, (Narada, 1980, p. 400).

1.3. Remarks on the Belief in Kamma and Rebirth

Although Buddhism attributes the law of karma as the chief among a variety of causes, it does not nonetheless assert that everything comes out from previous karma. The Buddhist doctrine of karma merely taught that there was a correlation between moral acts and their consequences, without implying any sort of fatalism. The Buddha once warned his disciples not to throw away their own efforts and responsibilities by assuming that whatever good or bad was experienced was all due to some previous karma, due to the creation of God or due to no cause. It is clear that the implications of the Buddhist doctrine of karma were the very opposite to kiriyavada, fatalism and materialism.

According to Buddhism, the volition or feeling or consciousness is the doer of karma and the receiver of the karma-result, but not all feelings are karma-born. As the Buddha told the wanderer Sivaka Moliya, there are certain experiences originating from bile, from phlegm, from wind, from the humours of the body, from changes of the seasons, from stress of untoward happenings (visama-pariharajani)∗, from sudden

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∗ F.L. Woodward gives its example as when one goes out hastily at night and it bitten by snakes. The Kindred Sayings, IV, 155, n. 4.
attacks from without (opakkamikani)," and also from ripeness of one's karmas which are considered as truth by the world, and if anybody were holding merely the karma-born theory, he would be regarded as going beyond what is personally known and what is considered truth in the world. Such a person would be considered by the Buddha as holding wrong view, (SN.IV.230-231).

Although in the Sutta-Nipata, (Sn. 666), it is declared that a man's karma is never lost, it comes back to harass him, but in the Culakammavibhanga-Sutta and Maha-kammavibhanga-Sutta, as mentioned earlier, it is possible to do good in order to dilute or dissolve the effects of evil. There is thus a second opportunity to turn over a new life. In fact, what has been done has been done, it cannot be undone, but it can be nullified by the counter-balancing force of good. In Buddhism, the intense force of good deeds, such as that of Arahantship, can uproot all the evil force in the mind. It can also neutralise the results of bad karma in the past such as in the case of Angulimala Thera, (MN, II.98-112).

Another thing is that, according to Buddhism, the result of karma ripens not only in accordance with the karma, but also with the character of the doer of the karma. The Anguttara-Nikaya shows that the same karma has been done, but its result varies in accordance with the character of the doer. A trifling evil deed done by a certain individual, who is generally careless in the culture of body, speech and thought, who had not developed insight, who is insignificant, and whose life is restricted and miserable, will drag him down to a hellish world, but the same deed done by another individual, who possessed the opposite characters, will work its result out entirely in this very life; and will not push him to the hellish world. It is just like a small amount of salt when put in a cup of water, will make it undrinkable, but it is not so when the same amount of salt is added to the water of the Ganges. Likewise, a poor man has to go to prison for a debt of a halfpenny, but a rich man, who owes the same amount, does not have to go to prison, (AN,I.250). It is, therefore, not surprising that in our practical experience we find that the wicked men do not always suffer for their deeds in this very life. This should not lead to the wrong assumption that "those who do good do not receive good but evil, that those who do evil do not receive evil but good, and that we reap what we have not sown." If this were the case, then the basic law of karma that "it is impossible that the fruit of a bad deed should be pleasant and leads to the heavenly world; and the fruit of a good deed should be unpleasant and leads to the hellish world" will be meaningless and implausible, (AN,I.27-38).

The wrong assumption stated above must be removed by considering the details of the way in which karma works its result out when the time comes as elucidated in the Mahakammavibhanga-Sutta (the discourse on the greater analysis of deeds), (MN,III.207-205). The Sutta suggests a reason that a murderer in some instances gets pleasant results and is reborn in a heavenly existence, in spite of his act

"For example, one is arrested as a robber or adulterer. The Milindapanha gives an example the wounding of the Buddha's foot by a splinter of rock. The word means 'chance external happenings'. The Kindred Saying, IV, 155, n.d.
of murder. This is because he has either sometimes in the past done good deeds, which have resulted in these experiences or at the time of his death, he has changed his own ways and has adopted the right view of life. This amounts to saying that the Buddha never accepts the view that everyone who kills and lies, and so on, will be reborn in hell and that everyone who refrains from the immoral acts will be reborn in heaven. According to him, indeed, some such individuals may even be reborn in heaven and in hell as well respectively because of their past deeds. In this Sutta, the Buddha further criticizes the limited knowledge possessed by others. The heavenly life enjoyed by one person after his misconduct should not be the basis for the conclusion that everyone, in spite of his misconduct, will be born in heaven after death. According to the Buddha, this calls for a different explanation. He maintains that this particular man must have had either good deed or bad deed in the past, or his right or wrong views at the time of his death. The Buddha proclaims himself to have the knowledge of the "operation of karma" superior to those who form generalisation on the basis of one or a few observations without examining a universal aspect of the case. It is accepted that in daily life an individual is capable of doing both good and bad deeds till his death, and on death he may be reborn in a heavenly world, if the result of his accumulated good karma is sufficient to supersede the result of his wrong action, or he may be reborn in an unpleasant existence if the effect of his bad deed supersedes the result of good karma. However, the accumulated deed will finally produce its fruit when the result of the deed which has superseded it has been exhausted.

Karma apart, if "one does not receive what one has done" it depends on the following four pairs of failure (vipatti) and accomplishment (sampatti), which affect the ripening of karma. The four kinds of failure (vipatti) are: (i) gati-vipatti (failure due to the place of birth), which means unfavourable environment, circumstances or career; (ii) upadhi-vipatti (failure due to defectiveness of body), which means the person is born deformed and has unfavourable personality and health; (iii) kala-vipatti (failure due to deficiency of time), which signifies the unfortunate time; and (iv) payoga-vipatti (failure due to lack of effort), which denotes the undertaking of undertaking or inadequate endeavor. As against this, there are four opposite factors favourable to the ripening of good karma called sampatti or accomplishment.

1.4. The Casual Law of Karma as the Uninterrupted Continuity of Man

In Buddhism the karma-doctrine is not only recognized as a part of the law of Paticcasamuppada, but also as one of the twenty-four paccayas. This amounts to saying that the karma-doctrine is closely related to, and is as important as the law of Paticcasamuppada. That is, the Paticcasamuppada describes all the karma-process and the karma-result in accordance with the Three Cycles (vatta), namely, "depending on defilements karma arises, and because of the karma the result (vipaka) is derived". In terms of the Four Noble Truths, karma is taken as the cause of suffering and its result is the suffering itself. The Paticcasamuppada has been seen in terms of cause and effect, in which there is no self to be taken as permanent.
The Buddha's proof of the non-existence of name and form (nama-rupa) or the five khandhas are essentially equivalent to his denial of the self or soul. For everything is dynamic being subject to the causal law, that is, everything is subject to change, and by changing it can persist. The persistence of a thing cannot be called permanence, but continuity; things exist through their continuity. The law of continuity is sometimes called the theory of momentariness (khantikavada), and also known as the theory of change (aniccavada). For instance, that our mind is changing every moment is difficult to comprehend, but in the case of body it seems to be more obvious than in the case of mind. Let us turn our attention to the problems of karma and rebirth in connection with the five khandhas or man. As has been seen, man is the combination of the ever-changing five khandhas and there is no permanent self in them. As long as his ignorance is not uprooted, he has to undergo the round of birth and death again and again. In this connection, arise two questions thus: "If a man is merely the combination of five khandhas in which there is no essential substance, who is and will be the doer of karma and the receiver of its result? At the end of this life, who dies and will be reborn?" These two questions were asked since the time of the Buddha till now. At first the Buddha points out to the questioner that the question is wrong, for, once we personalise the problem by asking, "who" meaning "what person or self is or will be the doer and recipient of the karma and its result," the confusion usually follows. The Buddha, being aware of these two questions, preached the doctrine of Anatta, which to be understood through the Doctrine of Patimokkha.

Considered from the point of view of the Anatta-doctrine, or "the teaching of the absence in the human being of a soul", it does not mean that the Buddha preached annihilationism. For, apart from the Anatta-doctrine, the Buddha also taught the theory of relation (paccaya), otherwise called the doctrine of Dependent Origination (Patimokkha), in which the doctrine of the transmitted force of the bodily, verbal and mental acts known as karma is contained. The karmic force is the link that preserves the identity of the agent through all countless changes in its process through samsara. When a man dies the khandhas of which he is constituted perish, but by the force of his karma a new set of khandhas instantly starts into existence, and a new being appears in another world, who though possessing different khandhas and a different form is in reality identical with the man just passed away because his karma is the same. The new life is neither the same since it has changed, nor totally different because it has the same stream of karmic energy; they are actually different but causally related by karma like an unbroken succession of different flames of the burning lamp and a mango-seed in a mango-tree grown out of another mango-seed, (Milinda, I, 40, 50-51).

The character of man is in reality the sum total of the subconscious propensities produced partly by the prenatal, partly by the current volitional activity, or karma. This amounts to saying that according to the Patimokkha or Paccayas, the psycho-physical personality (nama-rupa) on the one hand and the
volition or *karma* on the other serve as a dependent condition (*nissaya-paccaya*) to consciousness and *vice versa*.

The question to be considered is how the volition or *karma* renders its support to the continuity of man. In the *Samyutta-Nikaya*, volition is treated as a food that sustains man's life to take birth in the beginningless *samsara*, while the remaining three foods, namely, that of material food (*bhojana*), of contact (*phassa*) and of consciousness (*vinnana*), serves only as the food for the man who has already been born in a particular existence. It is said, the volition or *karma* plays a major role in the prolongation of samsaric existence of man, (SN,2,11). To the question how it can play such an important role, the reply is that it plays its role in accordance with the law of *Paticcasamuppada*. Like Buddhism, the *Rg Veda*, (Rg.,X,129), and the *Bhadaranyaka Upanisad*, (BU, IV, 4,5,6), also admit desire as the primal seed of the origination of all things. While a man with desire is subject to transmigration, another without desire unites with *Brahman*. According to the law of *karma* and *karmavipaka*, the Buddhists are convinced that no organic entity, physical or psychical, can come into existence without the preceding cause.

The Buddhist doctrine of rebirth (*punabbhava*) is a novel theory in so far as it speaks of re-becoming without a self-identical substance. It is significant to note that the English word "rebirth" is generally translated from the Pali word "*punabbhava". But in the actual meaning, the term "*bhava" should be rendered as 'becoming' or 'coming to be', as its root is derived from "*bhu". Thus "rebecoming" is the real meaning of "*punabbhava"", which describes the progression from existence to existence. According to the Buddhist doctrine of rebecoming, there could be continuity of individuality in various places of existence. Such a rebecoming is either in the Sentient Existence (*Kama-bhava*), the Form Existence (*rupabhava*) or the Formless Existence (*arupabhava*), (DN,II, 57).

There is, according to the Theravada Buddhism, no intermediate existence (*antarabhava*) apart from the above three planes of becoming. The doctrine of rebecoming refers to the law of change in the light of continuity of individuality, which meant a stream of consciousness (*vinnanasota*) or a stream of becoming (*bhavangasota*), consisting or karmic energy that renders the rebirth or rebecoming possible. Buddhism holds that the existence of life does not depend on its being perceived. Life exists in the state of perpetual flux or becoming. It is impermanent (*anicca*). Matter in Buddhism is a changeable thing (*ruppatiti rupam*), (SN,XXII,79). The material object arises and perishes every moment. It is momentary (*khanika*). The matter appears as relatively permanent due to the continuity of consciousness, kept following by the inherent force of *karma*. A being is so called because it is fast entangled with desire and attachment, which are concerned with the five *khandhas*. (SN,III,188) Both consciousness and matter, it is said, have the same type of existence, that is, instantaneous being. They are momentary. Both are neither being nor non-being; rather it is becoming (*bhava*), which keeps on moving according to the *Paticcasamuppada*.
2. The Thai Buddhist Vision for Renewing Kamma and Rebirth

As we have known already, the precisely above-mentioned explanation of kamma and rebirth is especially meant for the Early Theravada Buddhism supported by the arguments and evidences being taken from the Tipitaka and its popular commentaries rendered in the conservative manner. Now let us turn our attention to the renewing interpretation of kamma and rebirth by the two monks of wisdom in the contemporary age of Thai society from Buddhadasa Bhikkhu to Phradhammapidok (Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto).

2.1 Kamma and Rebirth according to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

Earlier in Thai history, all monks are to be seekers of truth according to the general principles of morality, concentration and the development of wisdom, totally called as the Three Trainings (atisikkha). As they are products of the various family backgrounds and they were given the opportunities to become the monastic members by teachers, local traditions, etc. Although the Pali Canon exists as a constant reference for monks, but they are often steeped in the commentaries, the needs and demands of the local folks. It is, therefore, easy for monks to become involved in predicting lottery ticketed numbers, conjuring magical cures, and blessing new businesses, cars, and air-planes. Aside from the activities already mentioned, monks in Thailand have been observed engaged in activities as various as the art of writing, composing poetry, curing drug addicts through herbal cures, and making the rubber stamps. Buddhadasa’s questioning of the scope of Buddhism and the status of certain commentators and commentators, including the well-known Buddhagosacariya, the 5th century commentator, who wrote the book of ‘the Path of Purification’, challenged many young minds engaged in the study of Buddhist doctrine.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s primary concerns compelled people to turn their attention to the freedom, or Nibbana. He moved the notions of kamma, heaven, and hell into the present. According to his teachings, there is no way that one should postpone the possibility of attaining enlightenment until the next life, and falling into hell or going to heaven is the direct result of proper actions performed from moment to moment.

In his famous book entitled ‘Two Kinds of Language’, he interpreted kamma into two meanings, namely everyday meaning and Dhamma meaning. According to him, the Dhamma meaning or language is eventually admitted as it is intended by the Buddha. The word Dhamma itself has two meanings, in everyday language, Dhamma means the actual books containing the scriptures, but in Dhamma language, it means the Enlightened One, as the Buddha said, ‘He who sees the Dhamma, sees the Enlightened One, and he who sees the Enlightened One, sees the Dhamma.’ The word ‘work’, taken as Dhamma language, refers to mind training (kammathana), that is the practice of Dhamma. The actual practice of Dhamma is the Work. Work or duty is Dhamma. But in everyday language, it means earning a living out of necessity.
In his opinion, the religion in everyday language is temples, monastery buildings, pagodas, yellow robes, and so on; the religion in Dhamma language is the Truth which can really serve man as a point of support. Regarding the relationship between all religions, he said, ‘Although someone may say there is Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, etc., when he has penetrated to the essential nature of his religion, he will regard all religions as being the same’. For him, Buddhism is identical to the main tenets of other religions; for all true religions seek to reduce self importance. Theistic religions teach the faithful to submit themselves to God. This obviously coincides with decreasing the significance of self and removing the causes that give rise to belief in egoism. (Right Approach to Dhamma, p. 13).

We come now to the word, ‘kamma’, in everyday language, kamma means ‘bad luck’ or punishment for sins committed by the ordinary person, but in Dhamma language it refers to action, i.e. bad action is called black kamma; good action white kamma; and there is another remarkable kind of kamma which is neither black nor white, a kamma that serves to neutralize the other two kinds. It consists to perceive non-selfhood (anatta), emptiness (sunnata) or that the self is done away with. He further points out that the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path is kamma neither black nor white, and it is the way to wipe out all kamma. According to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, kamma itself becomes its result, kamma is the result like the Madhyamika’s idea of samsara is nothing but Nirvana. He said, ‘doing good is good and it is not that doing good receives good’. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu equates Kamma or Dhamma with God. In everyday language, God is understood as a celestial being with various creative powers, but in Dhamma language, God is a profound hidden power, which is neither human being, nor celestial being, nor any other kind of being. It is Nature, for the law of nature is responsible for creation and for coming into existence of all things. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu considers the natural law or kamma or Dhamma to be God who can bequeath both meritorious and demeritorious to living beings:

The Natural Law is comprised of six qualifications which all people regard as the qualifications of God: The Creator, the Controller, the destroyer, Omnipotent, Omni-present, and Omniscient. We Buddhists have this natural Law as God. This is only God accepted by modern science. It creates both the positive and the negative. Because it is only the Natural Law. If he were a personal God, he would choose to create only the positive, (The A.B.C. of Buddhism, p.11).

Therefore, the law of karma as the first cause of the universe admits that everything which comes into existence must have a cause: "Because of this being, that arises, whenever this disappears, that also disappears, (MN.III.63).

Rebirth or birth in everyday language refers simply to physical birth from a mother’s body; in Dhamma language birth signifies a mental event arising out of ingratitude, craving, and clinging. The kind of birth that constitutes a problem for us is mental birth. The Buddha taught, ‘Birth is perpetual suffering.’ It is clearly meant the arising of the idea ‘I’. It refers not to physical birth from a mother of flesh and blood
but to mental birth from a mental mother, namely craving, ignorance, clinging. No matter what type of existence one is born into, it is nothing but suffering, because the word ‘birth’ refers here to attachment unaccompanied by awareness. If there arises in a person’s mind the idea ‘I am such-and-such’ and he is aware that this idea has arisen, that arising is not a birth. Thus the Buddha advised continual mindfulness. If there is awareness, there will be no suffering. Buddhadasa’s idea of birth is confined to the present moment with the belief that if the present is good, then the future will be good. As is obvious in his saying: “If we can master this kind of birth here and now we will also be able to master the birth that comes after physical death,” (HM, p.218). He encourages us to concern ourselves with the birth that follows physical death; instead encourages us to concern ourselves seriously with the birth that happens before physical death, the kind of birth that goes on while we are alive, which happens dozens of times every day.

Regarding the concepts of celestial world and woeful world, Buddhadasa interpreted them in the apparently present manner, i.e. ones can enter into it within the present moment, here and now itself, for which he thought it will come close to what the Buddha did teach. The woeful world normally known as the woeful states are of four. (i) Hell (naraka) in everyday language refers to a region under the earth, in Dhamma language it means anxiety which burns us just like a fire. Whenever anxiety afflicts us, burning us up like a fire, then we are really in hell; (ii) Birth as a beast (tiracchana) means in everyday language actual physical birth as a pig, a dog, or some other actual animal. In Dhamma language it has a different meaning. At any moment when one is stupid, just like a dumb animal, then at that moment one is born into the realm of beasts; (iii) Hungry ghost (peta) means in everyday language a creature supposed to have a tiny mouth and an enormous belly. He can never manage to eat enough and so is chronically hungry. But the hungry ghosts of Dhamma language are purely mental states. Ambition based on craving, worry based on craving-to be afflicted with these is to be born a hungry ghost; and (iv) Frightened ghosts (asuras) in everyday language means a kind of visible being, going around haunting and spooking, but is too afraid to show itself. In Dhamma language, it refers to fear in the mind of human being, to be afraid without good reason, to be excessively fearful, etc. Some people are afraid of doing good. Some are afraid that if they attain Nibbana, life would lose all its flavour, and would be unbearably dull. According to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, if we live and practise properly we avoid falling into the woeful states here and now, and we are certain not to fall into the woeful states supposed to follow death.

For Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, ‘heaven’ in everyday language means some wonderful, highly attractive celestial realm up above, where angels are there by the hundred. In Dhamma language ‘heaven’ refers first of all to infatuating sensual bliss of the highest order. This is the lower heaven, the heaven of sensuality. Higher up is the heaven called the Brahmaloka. This is absence of any object of sensuality. Comparing the two kinds of heaven with an example, it is as if a certain man with a hunger for sense objects had indulged and satiated himself and become thoroughly fed up with sense objects. He would then want only to remain quite empty, still,
untouched. In Buddhism, the *Paranimmitavasavatti* heaven being completely full of sensuality. The heavens of the Brahmaloka are devoid of disturbance from sensuality, though the ‘self’ is still there.

2.2 Kamma and Rebirth According to Phradhammapidok (Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto)

It is more likely less difficult to grasp Phradhammapidok’s exegesis of the Buddha’s doctrine of *kamma* and rebirth, for his invariably accepted contribution to Buddhism, the style of which is of a deeply critical analysis and systematically creative exposition, get along with the scriptural line of the Buddhist context. Having passed the Thai Sangha traditional education system of the highest Pali grade IX, equipped with the knowledge of language for material source and much more critical mind of his own gift, he based his investigation on the direct reference taken from only the Tipitaka, as his Royal Name deserved, with some more additional idea never-before discovered by others, say especially here, he moves the doctrine of *kamma* to meet with the social dimension in the contemporary world. Let us now consider his view on *kamma* and rebirth in comparison with the others’ views.

2.2.1 The Natural Law (*Niyama*) : At the outset of his explanation of *kamma*, Phradhammapidok relates *kamma* in the course of the law of nature or *niyama* in the Buddhist terminology, which is literally meant ‘certainty’ or ‘fixed way’, referring to the fact that specific determinants inevitable lead to corresponding results, in which both material and immaterial, are entirely subject to the direction of causes, and are inter-dependent. The five natural laws are thus: (i) The natural law pertaining to physical objects (*utumiya*), such as water, winds and rainfall, etc., (ii) the natural law pertaining to heredity (*bijaniya*), such as the seed and the fruit, (iii) the natural law pertaining to the workings of the mind (*cittaniya*), such as the process of cognition, etc., (iv) the natural law pertaining to human behaviour (*kammaniya*), i.e. the process of action and its results, especially referring to the working of intention or volition, and (v) the natural law governing the relationship and interdependence of all things (*Dhammaniya*): that is, the way all things arise, exist and then cease. It is said that the first four *niyama* are derived from the fifth one. The reason is that the Dhammaniya is not exhausted by this four-fold categorization. We should bear in our mind that Kammaniya is given as only one among five different laws reminding us that we should not immediately write all events off, pleasant or unpleasant, as the workings of *kamma*. *Kamma* is that force which directs society, or decides the values and lives within it. Although *Kamma* is simple one type of natural law, it is the most important one for human beings, because it is their particular responsibility. Human beings are the instigators of *kamma*, and *kamma* shapes the fortunes and conditions of their lives. Kammaniya is a strictly human responsibility. As for the other *niyama*, they are entirely the domain of nature, (*Good, Evil and Beyond* [GEB], pp. 1-4).

2.2.2 The Law of *kamma* and Social convention : Apart from the five kinds of natural law mentioned above, there is another kind of law which is
specifically man-made and is not directly concerned with nature. These are the codes of law fixed and agreed upon by society, consisting of social decrees, customs, laws and so on. They are the products of human thought and as such are related to kammantiyama, but they are not the same. In general we might state that the law of kamma is the natural law which deals with human actions; whereas Social Convention, or social law, is an entirely human creation. In essence, with the law of kamma, human beings receive the fruits of their actions according to the natural processes, whereas in social law, human beings take responsibility for their actions via a process established by themselves, (GEB, pp.5-6).

2.2.3 The Meaning and Values of Kamma: In the section on the meaning of kamma, he enlarges it into another three certain points of view, the details of which are worth mentioning here thus:

1. Kamma as intention. Essentially kamma is intention, which includes volition, will, choice and decision, or the energy which leads to action. Intention is that which instigates and directs all human actions.

2. Kamma as conditioning factor. Kamma as a component within the whole life process, being the agent which fashions the direction taken in life. This is kamma in its sense of 'sankhara', as it appears in the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, where it is described as the agent which fashions the mind.

3. Kamma as personal responsibility. It refers to the manifestations of thoughts through speech and actions, that is, behaviour from an ethical perspective, either on a narrow, immediate level, or on a broader level including the past and the future. This is the meaning of kamma which is most often encountered in the scriptures, where it occurs as an inducement to encourage responsible action and the making of good kamma.

4. Kamma as social activity or career. In this respect, Kamma is concerned with the perspective of social activity, in the light of work, labour or profession, such as farmer, artist, merchant, servant, etc.,’ (GEB, pp. 6-9)

2.2.4 The problem of the law of kamma and social convention: Phra-dhammapidok had analysed into the perennial question as we used to hear that, 'Good and evil' are human or social inventions. One action in one society, time or place, may be said to be good, but in another time and place may be said to be not good. One kind of action may be acceptable to one society, but not in another. Some religions teach that to kill animals for food is not bad, while others teach that to harm beings of any kind is never good. Some societies hold that a child should show respect to its elders and that to argue with them is bad manners, while other societies hold that respect is not dependent on age, and that all people should have the right to express their opinions.
In answering these questions, he said that to say that good and evil are matters of human preference and social decree is true to some extent. Even so, the good and evil of Social Conventions do not affect the workings of the law of kamma in any way, and should not be confused with it. According to him, good and evil as social conventions should be recognized as Social Convention. As for 'good and evil' or more correctly, kusala and akusala, as qualities of the law of kamma, these should be recognized as attributes of the law of kamma.

Phradhammapidok holds that the point of difference between this natural law and the social convention is intention. To clarify this point, he divides the conventions of society into two types: (i) Those which have no direct relationship to kusala and akusala as found in the kammaniyama, and (ii) those which are related to kusala and akusala. Their details should be brought into our discussion as follows:

1. The conventions which have no direct relationship to kusala and akusala. These are established by society for a specific social function, such as to enable people to live together harmoniously, and they take the form of accepted values or agreements. These kinds of conventions may take many forms, such as traditions, customs or laws. Good and evil in this respect are strictly matters of social convention. If a person disobeys these conventions and is punished by society, that is also a matter of social convention, not the law of kamma, for example, it might be social codes of dress, such as before entering a Buddhist monastery in Thailand it is appropriate to remove shoes and hat, whereas to enter a Christian church it is usually required to wear both, (Ibid, p.25). In other words, sometimes, these social conventions may overlap with the domain of the law of kamma, such as when one member of a society refuses to conform to one of its conventions. In so doing, that person will be acting on a certain intention. This intention is the first step in, and is therefore a concern of the law of kamma.

2. The conventions which are related to kusala and akusala in the kammaniyama. These conventions established by society which are either kusala or akusala in accordance with kammaniyama. The society may or may not make these regulations with a clear understanding of kusala and akusala. However, the process of kammaniyama continues along its natural course. It does not change along with those social conventions. For example, in one society it might be acceptable to imbibe intoxicants and addictive drugs. Extreme emotions may be encouraged, and the citizens may be incited to be ambitious and aggressive, so that society will prosper materially. Or it might be generally believed that to kill people of other societies is not blameworthy. He concluded that the ability to establish a social convention in conformity with the law of kamma would seem to be a sound gauge for determining the true extent of a society’s progress or civilization.

Finally, he summarizes the standards for good and evil, or good and bad kamma, both strictly according to the law of kamma and also in relation to social convention, both on an intrinsically moral level and on a socially prescribed one.
1. In terms of direct benefit or harm, by asking: Are these actions beneficial to life and the mind? Do they contribute to the quality of life? Do they cause *kusala* and *akusala* conditions to increase or wane?

2. In terms of beneficial or harmful consequences: Are they harmful or conducive of benefit to oneself?

3. In terms of benefit or harm to society: Are they harmful to others, or helpful to them?

4. In terms of conscience, the natural human reflexive capacity: Will that *kamma* be open to censure to oneself or not?

5. In terms of social standards: What is the position of actions in relation to those religious conventions, traditions and customs, including such social institutions as law and so on, which are based on wise reflection as opposed to those which are simply superstitious or mistaken beliefs, (Ibid., pp. 22-39).

2.2.5 The Fruition of *Kamma*: It is noticed that Phradhammapidok like Buddhadasa Bhikkhu considers and admits the result of *kamma* in this present living moment and in quite a realistic manner rather than in the after life. He therefore explains the *kamma-result* into two aspects:

1. Results of *kamma on different levels*. In mentioning this, his purpose is to clarify the problem of the relationship between the law of *kamma* and social convention. According to him, *kamma* can render *four* different levels of its fruition as follows:

   a. *The inner, mental level*: *Kamma* results in the mind itself, in the form of accumulated tendencies, both skilful and unskilful, and the quality of the mind.

   b. *The physical level*: The effect *kamma* has on character, mannerisms, bearing, behavioural tendencies. The results on this level are derived from the first level, and their fields of relevance overlap.

   c. *The level of life experiences*: It denotes how *kamma* affects the events of life, producing both desirable and undesirable experiences; specifically, such external events as prosperity and decline; failure and success; wealth, status, happiness and praise, and the many forms of loss which are their opposites. Together these are known as the worldly conditions (*lokadhamma*).

   d. *The social level*: It means the results of individual and collective *kamma* on society, leading to social prosperity or decline, harmony or discord. This also includes the effects resulting from man’s interaction with his environment, (Ibid., p. 39).
Phradhammapidok remarks that levels 1 and 2 refer to the results which affect mind and character, which are the fields in which the law of kamma is dominant. The third level is where the law of kamma and social convention meet, and it is at this point that confusion arises. The fourth level means kamma on the social level, which is his renewing point.

In his observation, people tend to look at the law of kamma and social convention as one and the same thing, interpreting “good actions bring good results” as meaning “good actions will make us rich”, or “good actions will earn a promotion”, which in some cases seems quite reasonable. But things do not always go that way. To say this is just like saying, “Plant mangoes and you’ll get a lot of money”, or “They planted apples, that’s why they’re hard up”. These things may be true, or may not be. But what can be said is that this kind of thinking jumps ahead of the facts a step or two. It is not entirely true. It may be sufficient to communicate on an everyday basis, but if you really want to speak the truth, you must analyse the pertinent factors more clearly.

2. The fruits of kamma on a long-term basis - Heaven and Hell. Phradhamma-pidok is like Buddhadasa Bhikkhu in criticizing the belief in heaven and hell that normally people tend to devote more interest to the results of kamma on the long-term basis. They are not interested in knowing the results of kamma in accordance with the law of nature, i.e. the actual nature of the mind, the seat of intention and the way intention affects life and the mind. On account of this obscurity and ignorance, when confronted with seemingly random or unexplainable events, they tend to be unable to see all the relevant determining factors. They then proceed to blame other things, rejecting the law of kamma.

He suggests that to work with the law of kamma in a skillful way, it is necessary to develop kusalachanda (desire to act skillfully) or Dhammachanda (desire for what is in accord with the Dhamma). For him, too much stress on rebirth into heaven and hell results in neglect of the good which should be aspired to the present. In addition to this, our original intention to encourage moral conscience at all times, including future lives, and an unshakable faith in the law of kamma, will result instead in an aspiration only for future results, which becomes a kind of greed. Good actions are performed for the sake of profit. Over-emphasis on future lives ignores the importance of kusalachanda and dhammachanda, which in turn becomes a denial of or even an insult to, the human ability to practise and develop truth and righteousness for their own sakes.

2.2.6 Kamma on the social level: Normally the Buddhist understood Kamma in quite conservative way in the sense that everyone has his own kamma. One’s own kamma cannot be shared by others and vice versa. But however, according to Phradhammapidok, kamma in this aspect moves outwards. That is in the practical terms human world is the world of intentional action, because human thinking is guided by intention. Our way of life, whether on the individual level or on the level of
societies, both small and large, is directed by intention and the thinking process. For example, the way that intention affects the society can be considered from the negative side of it. Intention on the negative side is that which is influenced by defilements. Here there are three kinds of defilements which play an important role in directing human behaviour, namely, (i) craving for personal gain (tanha), (ii) desire to dominate (mana), and (iii) clinging to views (ditthi), which are the active forms of greed, hatred and delusion. When people’s minds are ruled by the selfish desire for personal gain, aspiring to pleasures of the senses, their actions in society result in contention, deceit and exploitation, take for example the drug problem, the pollution, and the corruption, etc.

The enormous amount of natural resources on this planet, amassed over a period of hundreds of millions of years, have mostly been consumed by humanity in a period of only one or two hundred years. All of these problems stem from the problem of hatred or violence perpetuated under the power of what we call in Buddhism ‘aversion’ (dosa) and ‘desire or greed’ (lobha). Technology has become a tool of greed and hatred. Science, technology and the development of information and communications technology have been used to lull humanity into heedless consumption, dullness and intoxication in various forms, rather than for the development of the human being or quality of life. Greed and hatred, which are natural condition within the human mind, would be much easier to control, if it were not for the influence of (wrong) view, in other words, different ideologies and social values. Because by adhering to such view, it becomes kamma on a social scale, which is of far-reaching effect, extending over long periods of time. (P.A. Payutto, A Buddhist Solution, p.5). Greed and hatred are maintained and prolonged by the influence of ditthi, making them much harder to resolve. Human beings in the twentieth century have created much bad kamma, which is going to exert an influence on humanity of the twenty-first century. The citizens of the twenty-first century are going to have to deal with problems which are the legacy of the twentieth century. In order to help solve these problems and ensure that the twenty-first century will be a safe one, we must adapt our own actions and behaviour. If we can adapt our view as mentioned before, we will be able to solve these problems successfully. (Ibid., p.29).

According to Venerable Phradhammapidok, view or beliefs that have held control over modern human civilization and be grouped into three main perceptions:

1. The perception that mankind is separate from nature, that mankind must control or manipulate nature according to his desires.

2. The perception that fellow human beings are not ‘fellow human beings’. Rather than perceiving the common situations shared among all people, human beings have tended to focus on the differences between themselves.
3. The perception that happiness is dependent on an abundance of material possessions, that human beings will only find happiness through a wealth of material possessions with which to feed their desires.

The first perception is an attitude towards nature; the second perception is an attitude towards fellow human beings; the third perception is an understanding of the objective of life. Being held under the power of these three perceptions, their resulting actions become *kamma* on the social level. That is, the development of human society is guided by the *kamma*, or actions, of human beings blinded by these three views. Under the misdirection of these three wrong views, human beings have also developed the lifestyles that lead to the widespread of such life and social ills as drug abuses, violence, stress, mental illness, suicides, and AIDS. This is why the people of the twenty-first century are going to have to receive the fruits of our actions in the twentieth century. (Ibid., p. 9)

According to him, ethical systems in the modern world, such as restraint toward nature, religious tolerance and human rights, are reduced to an attempt to preserve or sustain the world, but they are merely a compromise. These must be supported by more positive ethical standards and a new way of thinking. Buddhism teaches that:

1. Human beings are one element within the whole natural system of cause and effect, in which all elements play a part. All actions within it should therefore be harmonious and beneficial to that system.

2. All beings, both human and animal, are co-dwellers within this system of natural laws. Buddhism encourages universal love, harmony, mutual help and unity.

3. The finest and noblest kind of life is that which is endowed with freedom, and this is true happiness. Over and above external freedom, which is related to the natural environs and the four necessities of life, and freedom from social harassment, the highest level of freedom is the inner level, which results from inner development, mental and intellectual maturity. This idea of freedom as explained by him is known as development (*bhavana*) and is appeared in the Tipitaka (A.III.106) as well.

According to him, when we speak of views, we are coming into the domain of religion, because religion is view. *For religion to be effective in addressing the problems of the world it must be based on good or right views, and must encourage the propagation of such views in the world in order to cultivate good kamma for the society.*
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