

Thesis Title: An analytical Study of “Rebirth” (Punabbhava) in Buddhism with
Special Reference to Ashin Ukkattha’s Interpretation

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Abstract

Buddhism is characterized as the theory of action or kamma (kammavāda or kiriyaavāda) which is one of the fundamental tenets of Buddhism that explains the truth of rebirth in Saṃsāra. Kamma and rebirth are related to as cause and effect according to Dependent Origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda). Kamma produces rebirth and rebirth leads to further kamma during the time of existence (pavatti). This thesis proposes an analytical study of rebirth (punabbhava) with special reference to Ashin Ukkattha’s interpretation in Myanmar (Burma). He was a Buddhist monk, a polyglot, who wrote a book named “Lu-thay Lu-pyit” (man-dies, man-becomes only), which presents a theory that deviates from the Buddha’s teachings and from Buddhist texts.

Ashin Ukkattha's new interpretation is an alternative approach to understand the concept of rebirth. Traditional Theravada Buddhism interprets that man will be reborn in five destinations or thirty one planes of existences whereas Ashin Ukkattha interprets man will be reborn as man only, nothing else is possible. This makes different explanations between Traditional Theravada Buddhism and Ashin Ukkattha, thereby making impacts on Myanmar Buddhist society in two ways: positive impact and negative impact.

As a positive impact, his teaching encourages the people of Myanmar to fight and remove fear, worry, bewilderment, expectation, superstition, and imaginary pictures concerning after life and to get rid of clinging (upādāna). As the negative impact, Ashin Ukkattha gives distorted explanation in the teaching of the Buddha dealing with rebirth in order to support his view of Lu-thay Lu-pyit. Consequently, the State Independent Vinayadhara Association excluded Ashin Ukkattha and his disciples from the circle of Theravada Buddhist in Myanmar.

