

Buddha Recalls His Past Lives | Karma's Origin

Buddha's Awakening

- Pali Canon, Mahjima Nikaya

"Unflagging persistence was aroused in me, and unmuddled mindfulness established. My body was calm & unaroused, my mind concentrated & single. Quite withdrawn from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful mental qualities, I entered & remained in the first jhana:

1. rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation.

With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, I entered & remained in the second jhana:

2. rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation — internal assurance.

With the fading of rapture I remained in **equanimity, mindful & alert, and physically sensitive of pleasure.** I entered & remained in the third jhana:

3. of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, one has a pleasant abiding.'

With the abandoning of pleasure & pain — as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress — I entered & remained in the fourth jhana:

4. purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain.

"When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of recollecting my past lives. I recollected my manifold past lives, i.e., one birth, two... five, ten... fifty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion: 'There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of

pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.' Thus I remembered my manifold past lives in their modes & details.

"This was the first knowledge I attained in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose — as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute.

"When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of the passing away & reappearance of beings. I saw — by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human — beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: 'These beings — who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech & mind, who reviled noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views — with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But these beings — who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views — with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.' Thus — by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human — I saw beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma.

"This was the second knowledge I attained in the second watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose — as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute.

“When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of the ending of the mental fermentations. I discerned, as it had come to be, that ‘This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress... These are fermentations... This is the origination of fermentations... This is the cessation of fermentations... This is the way leading to the cessation of fermentations.’ My heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, was released from the fermentation of sensuality, released from the fermentation of becoming, released from the fermentation of ignorance. With release, there was the knowledge, ‘Released.’ I discerned that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

“This was the third knowledge I attained in the third watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose — as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute.

“Now, brahman, if the thought should occur to you, ‘Perhaps Gotama the contemplative is even today not free of passion, not free of aversion, not free of delusion, which is why he resorts to isolated forest & wilderness dwellings,’ it should not be seen in that way. It’s through seeing two compelling reasons that I resort to isolated forest & wilderness dwellings: seeing a pleasant abiding for myself in the present, and feeling sympathy for future generations.”

ideas that lie in wait as potential, in storage. That storage consciousness contains all the past impressions of previous experiences (vasanas, “perfumings”), which form the seeds (bija) of future karmic action—an illusive force that creates displays that are in fact only fictions. That illusive force (maya) determines the world of difference (duality) that belongs to human nature, producing the erroneous notions of an I and a non-I. That illusion of duality is dissolved only by awakening which extinguishes the fuel of rebirth.

(The fuel of rebirth is the karmic wheel of craving and clinging caused by ignorance.)

Thich Nhat Hanh writes:

The source of our perception, our way of seeing, lies in our store consciousness (Alaya-vijnana). If ten people look at a cloud, there will be ten different perceptions of it. Whether it is perceived as a dog, a hammer, or a coat depends on our mind — our sadness, our memories, our anger. Our [karmic] perceptions carry with them all the errors of subjectivity.

— The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching, Parallax Press,

Alaya-vijnana | Buddhist concept

(Similiar to Akshic Record)

- Source: Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

Alaya-vijnana, (Sanskrit: “storehouse consciousness”) key concept of the Mahayana Buddhism.

Since this school maintains that no external reality exists, while retaining the position that knowledge, and therefore a knowable exists—it assumes that knowledge itself is the object of consciousness. It therefore postulates a higher storage consciousness, the final basis of the apparent individual.

The universe consists in an infinite number of possible

