

TO AWAKENING, PART 20

Can We End Reincarnation?

So far, we have discussed abundant evidence through different areas in scientific studies to show that there is indeed reincarnation and that cause and effect dominate reincarnation. In these studies, we have seen that intertwined relationships have made the human realm so embittering, not to mention the three evil paths of hells, ghosts, and animals. So, do we have any way to end this torment of birth and death?

Buddhism has the answer! Modern science has not yet advanced far enough to contemplate these questions. Our mentor, Master Chin Kung, said, "It is a pity that scientists nowadays do not study Buddhist sutras. If they had, science would have been more advanced today."

Natural and Spiritual, in One Meaningful Unity

Scientists should move toward the development of exploring Buddhism. This concept was advocated by Albert Einstein, the Father of Modern Physics. In an article called "Religion and Science," Einstein stated, "The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God and avoid dogmas and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual, as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description."

The phrase, "In a meaningful unity," is marvelous. Einstein spoke of the universe as one unity! He claimed that Buddhism is the religion as described and would be able to cope with modern scientific needs. Einstein won the Nobel Prize and became the Father of Modern Physics for his remarkable contributions. Decades ago, he had already pointed out that future scientific development would have to rely on Buddhism. So, can people transcend reincarnation? Only in Buddhism can we find the answer!

Manifested by the Heart in a "Ksana"

To understand why people reincarnate, we must first learn the root-cause of reincarnation. In this series, we have discussed many reasons for our samsara. The Buddha described to us: the root-cause of samsara is that we are deluded about the truth of life and the universe. Due to this delusion, we create karma; due to creating karma, we then suffer from reincarnation. This is what is described in the sutras as “the wheel of being deluded, making karma, and receiving retribution.” Reincarnation is an endless cycle like a wheel. The Buddha simply used three words—delusion, karma, and suffering—to describe the truth and the root-cause of this endless birth and death.

But we have to ask, since the root-cause is delusion, what are we deluded about? In Buddhist terminology, the delusion was categorized into three types: the delusion of view and cognition, the delusion of dust-sand, and the delusion of avidya. Among all, the most basic delusion is the wrong view of what Einstein referred to—we separate ourselves from the “one meaningful unity of the universe and all things.”

The truth of the universe is “one unity”—all things and all beings are one life community. If we are deluded about this point, we are ignorant, leading us to have attachment and discrimination. Once we have attachment and discrimination, we would differentiate ourselves from others, have thoughts of selfishness, often harm others to benefit ourselves, and thus create boundless evil karmas. Of course, these evil karmas will beget retribution, that’s why we suffer endless reincarnations. So the fundamental delusion is denying that the entire cosmos is “one life community.”

According to *Avatamsaka Sutra*, this one life community—the universe—is manifested by the heart and altered by consciousness. This “heart” is also called self-nature, noumenon, thusness, true heart, or Buddha-nature. The universe is manifested by the noumenon of the true heart, yet altered by the thoughts of our consciousness. When we give rise to good thoughts, good realms arise; when we bring forth bad thoughts, bad realms arise. Think about it, we would be amazed by how wondrous and powerful our “thoughts” are! So, how can we not be careful with our thoughts?

Since the universe is manifested by our thoughts, then how long does a universe and all things in it exist? People who practice meditation know that our thoughts are constantly changing and that each thought creates one universe. This implies that our self-nature creates and recreates the universe constantly. It is like when we enter a dark room, we can see the whole room clearly when we turn on the lights, but the entire room goes dark when we turn off the lights. Our thoughts are just like this, on and off, arising and ceasing in an extremely short time—too fast to be detected. This extremely short time is called “ksana” in Sanskrit. The *Heart Sutra* describes it as “non-arising,

non-ceasing.” In fact, it is not without arising and ceasing but the speed of the arising and ceasing is so fast—in a “ksana,” it makes what we see just like non-arising and non-ceasing. This is the truth of the universe and life!

Ending Reincarnation by Replacing All Attachments with One Attachment

Understanding the truth of life and the universe, we should be extremely cautious about our thoughts, because good thoughts create good realms for our life while bad thoughts render bad ones. Ultimately, we must practice to eliminate attachment and discrimination, keeping our minds as pure as possible. According to Master Chin Kung, when we completely eradicate attachments from our minds, we will then transcend the six realms. But it is impossible for us mortals to uproot our attachments due to our karmic habits being so deeply ingrained. Our constantly wandering thoughts are full of discrimination and attachment, causing us to submerge in this wheel of samsara.

Fortunately, the compassionate Buddha Shakyamuni came to our world to teach us the easiest way to transcend samsara by eradicating our attachments with the method of reciting Amitabha, using the attachment of reciting Amitabha to replace all other attachments. When we recite Amitabha with a magnanimous mind, regarding all beings and all things to be one life community as Einstein stated, the mighty Vows of Amitabha will inconceivably bless us to eliminate our karma. Best of all, Amitabha will escort us to His World of Ultimate Bliss at the end of our lifespan. Once we reach His pure land, we would then end reincarnation and become a Buddha soon after.

We have now completed this series about reincarnation, which helps us understand the suffering of reincarnation, furthermore enabling us to realize that the causality is so profound that it is neither something our mundane eyes can perceive nor our mundane minds can conceive. With this foundation in reincarnation, we will introduce to you “The Law of Causality” by Master Chin Kung in our next series, hoping that it helps people nowadays to give rise to respect and awareness towards cause and effect, and thus restrain their speech and action. And then, we will introduce to you the core doctrine of the Buddha's 49 years' teaching—Amitabha's Forty Eight Great Vows, to help us delve deeper into the theory and method of ending reincarnation, which also enables us to comprehend the most profound cause and effect—reciting Buddha's name being the cause and becoming a Buddha being the effect.

To encounter the opportunity to transcend samsara is extremely difficult and rare. The Sutra Opening Gatha describes, “The unsurpassed, subtle, wondrous, and infinitely

profound Dharma is rarely encountered even in hundreds of thousands of millions of kalpas. Now that we are able to hear, study, and uphold it, may we all fully realize the Tathagata's true meaning.”

We deeply thank Dr. Zhong Maosen (now known as Venerable Ding Hong) for compiling these scientific studies. With heartfelt gratitude, we pray that Venerable Ding Hong achieves his goal in his ten year retreat and comes back to lead us on this bodhi path. Please leave comments to help us improve. Any comments are welcomed. Thank you for your persistent support, see you soon on our next series of The Law of Causality.