

**Identity and Continuity of ‘Personality’ of Selfless Being:  
A Study of the Concept of *Bhavaṅga-citta* in Theravāda Buddhism**

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Abstract of the Thesis Entitled

**Identity and Continuity of ‘Personality’ of Selfless Being:  
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Submitted by

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This study explores the concept of *bhavaṅga* in Theravāda Buddhism. Three interpretations of *bhavaṅga* have been taken up for discussion. One is as found in the *Netti* that *bhavaṅga* designates each link of twelve factors of dependent co-arising in the context of *āsava*, which together produce *bhava*. Psychological and cosmological interpretations of *bhava* have been studied. From the psychological point of view, *bhava* is ‘becoming’ in the sense of continuity of *saṃsāric* life due to the clinging to “self-view”. *Saṃsāric* life is described as the effectiveness of factors of dependent co-arising operating together in a manner of arising, disappearing and continuing which is endowed with suffering. So, when *bhava* and the other factors of dependent co-arising cease, *saṃsāra* ceases, which implies that “*nibbāna* is the cessation of *bhava*” (SN SN II 117).

From the cosmological point of view, *bhava* is discussed in the context of rebirth in the three localities of sensuality, form and formlessness. While in the *suttas*, the factor *bhava* is threefold – sensuality, form and formlessness, in the *abhidhamma* and other subsequent Pāli texts, it is twofold – *kamma-bhava* (action-becoming) and *upapatti-bhava* (rebirth-becoming). *Kamma-bhava* is further explained with *saṅkhārā* (conditioning forces) and *upapatti-bhava* with *viññāṇa* (consciousness) which is identified with *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* (rebirth-



consciousness). When rebirth-consciousness ceases upon birth, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness takes place and continues with its object *kamma*. In this regard, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is discussed in the contexts of rebirth, deep sleep, deep meditative trance and the cognitive process. With all these references, the second interpretation of *bhavaṅga* is shown.

The third interpretation occurs in the commentaries that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is luminous and pure, it is a natural consciousness and all beings pass away with this state of consciousness. Kalupahana (1995) and Reat (1977) think that the commentarial understanding of *bhavaṅga* is comparable with the *upaniṣadic* “self” because this “self” is pure by nature. However, in Buddhist teachings any consciousness whatsoever is impermanent, subject to suffering and not-self. In his regard, natural consciousness is interpreted as an enlightened person’s consciousness which is naturally pure in the sense of being unconditioned by defilement. And, the luminosity of consciousness is described with *mano* (mind) in the context of *jhāna* states, which is luminous due to the absence of minor defilements (*upakkilesa*). This *mano* is the door relating to mental activity that is the intermediary moment between the activity of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and *mano*. So, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is not luminous because it is itself affected by *āsava*. In this regard, different functions of *mano*, *citta* and *viññāṇa* have been studied.

When *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is present in the mother’s womb, the life faculty takes place together with the heart of a being. This heart-base has the characteristic of being the support for the mind-element and mind-consciousness-element. Therefore, it is said that though consciousness has a single characteristic, it has two aspects: six sensory consciousness, and resultant consciousness (*bhavaṅga*). This study argues that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness ceases or is arrested at the moment of enlightenment. So, the object of a living Arahāt’s *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is not *kamma*, but *nibbāna*. (495)

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the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
at The University of Hong Kong

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*To*  
*My Late Mother Juti Bala Barua*  
*and*  
*Father Joysen Barua*

## **Declaration**

I declare that the thesis and the research work thereof represents my own work, except where due acknowledgment is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

Signed.....

Dipen Barua

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## Abbreviations

Note 1: In this dissertation, the Pāli quotations of the *Sutta Pitaka* and the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, post-canonical texts and their commentaries are from the Pāli Text Society (PTS) editions. The Pāli quotations of the *Nettipakaraṇa* Commentary and the *Visuddhimagga* Commentary are from the Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) editions. The Pāli quotations of the sub-commentaries are also from the VRI editions. The VRI editions are based on the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana editions published by VRI based at Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri, India.

Note 2: All translations from primary sources (the Pāli Canon, post-canonical texts and their commentaries) are mine unless otherwise stated. When I translate Pāli passages into English, I often consult available English translations (details see the Bibliography).

AN	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
AN-a	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā (Manorathapūraṇi)</i>
AN-ṭ	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya-ṭīkā</i>
AU	<i>Aitareya Upaniṣad</i>
Abhidh-s	<i>Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha</i>
Abhivn-ṭ	<i>Abhidhammatthavibhāvanī-ṭīkā</i>
Asl	<i>Atthasālinī (Dhammasaṅgaṇi-aṭṭhakathā)</i>
BU	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</i>
CU	<i>Chāndogyo Upaniṣad</i>
DN	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
DN-a	<i>Dīgha Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā (Sumaṅgalavilāsini)</i>
DN-ṭ	<i>Dīgha Nikāya-ṭīkā</i>
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
Dhp-a	<i>Dhammapada- aṭṭhakathā</i>
Dhs	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇi</i>
Dhs-a	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇi-aṭṭhakathā (Atthasālinī)</i>
Iti	<i>Itivuttaka</i>
Iti-a	<i>Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā</i>
KN	<i>Khuddaka Nikāya</i>

Kv	<i>Kathāvatthu</i>
Kv-a	<i>Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Mil	<i>Milindapañha</i>
MN	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
MN-a	<i>Majjhima Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā (Papañcasūdanī)</i>
MN-ṭ	<i>Majjhimanikāya-ṭīkā</i>
Netti	<i>Nettipakarṇa</i>
Netti-a	<i>Nettipakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Nidd I	<i>Mahāniddesa</i>
Nidd I-a	<i>Mahāniddesa-aṭṭhakathā (Saddhammapajjotikā)</i>
Nidd II	<i>Cullaniddesa</i>
Nidd II-a	<i>Cullaniddesa-aṭṭhakathā (Saddhammapajjotikā)</i>
Paṭis	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i>
Paṭis-a	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga-aṭṭhakathā (Saddhammapakāsinī)</i>
Paṭṭh	<i>Paṭṭhāna</i>
PED	Pali-English Dictionary
Peṭ	<i>Peṭakopadesa</i>
PTS	Pali Text Society
SED	Sanskrit-English Dictionary
SN	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya</i>
SN-a	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā (Sāratthappakāsinī)</i>
SN-ṭ	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya-ṭīkā</i>
Skt	Sanskrit
Sn	<i>Sutta-nipāta</i>
TU	<i>Taittirīya Upaniṣad</i>
Th	<i>Theragāthā</i>
Thī	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
Vibh	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>
Vibh-a	<i>Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā (Sammohavinodanī)</i>
Vim	<i>Vimuttimagga</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>
Vism-a	<i>Visuddhimagga-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Vism-mṭ	<i>Visuddhimagga-mahāṭīkā</i>
VRI	Vipassana Research Institute
Vol	Volume

# Chapter 1—Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction to the Study

The exact characterization of *bhavaṅga* (becoming-constituent/ factor of becoming) in Theravāda Buddhist tradition is not yet settled. The tradition provides three considerable interpretations of *bhavaṅga*. One is found in the two post-canonical texts, the *Peṭakopadesa* (Pet) and the *Nettipakaraṇa* (Netti).<sup>1</sup> In both the texts, *bhavaṅga* is used to represent each link of all the twelve factors of dependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), namely, ignorance (*avijjā*), conditioning forces (*saṅkhārā*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*), six-fold sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), becoming (*bhava*), birth (*jāti*), aging and death (*jarā-maraṇa*). According to the Netti, “when these factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*) occur conjointly, it is becoming (*bhava*). It becomes a footing for the life-cycle” (Netti 29).<sup>2</sup>

In the Netti, moreover, *bhavaṅga* occurs in relation to *saṅkhārā* and *āyatana* (sense base). It is said that when knowledge (*vijjā*) arises due to the five faculties, namely, faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—, there is cessation of ignorance. With the cessation of ignorance, there is the cessation of *saṅkhārā*. With the cessation of *saṅkhārā*, there is the cessation of consciousness, and so forth. In this case, *saṅkhārā* are free from outflow (*āsava*) and they are not factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgā*) (Netti 64).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, when *saṅkhārā* are affected by outflow, they are factors of becoming (Netti 65).<sup>4</sup> A similar description is found in the case of *āyatana*: when *āyatana* is free from outflow, it is not a factor

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<sup>1</sup>The reference to the term *bhavaṅga* is found in the *Paṭṭhāna* (Paṭṭh) of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. Wijesekera provides canonical reference to *bhavaṅga* in AN (II 79) of the *Sutta Piṭaka* (Wijesekera 1976, 348–50). This study will also examine these references in great detail.

<sup>2</sup> 10–11: *imāni bhavaṅgāni yadā samaggāni nibbattāni bhavanti so bhavo, taṃ saṃsārassa padaṭṭhānam.*

<sup>3</sup> 11–12: *yeva asekhāni pañcendriyāni saṅkhārapariyāpannāni. ye saṅkhārā anāsavā no ca bhavaṅgā.*

<sup>4</sup> 21–22: *ye saṅkhārā sāsavā bhavaṅgā.*

of becoming (Netti 64)<sup>5</sup> and when *āyatana* is affected by outflow, it is a factor of becoming (*bhavaṅga*) (Netti 65).<sup>6</sup> In this context, one can see that all factors of dependent co-arising are associated with *āsava*, which together lead one to further becoming/rebirth in the life-cycle. In this regard, *bhavaṅga* is not consciousness as discussed in the *Paṭṭhāna* (Paṭṭh), the *Milindapañha* (Mil), the *Visuddhimagga* (Vism), etc., but it seems to refer to each link of dependent co-arising, from ignorance to aging-death, and it is considered as a factor of becoming (*bhava*).

The second interpretation of *bhavaṅga* is as consciousness and is found in the Paṭṭh (I 159), the Mil (299),<sup>7</sup> the Vism (458, 460, etc.) and the commentaries (AN-a I 59, MN-a II 136, etc.). According to the Vism, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness streams throughout one's life-process from birth to death, and, being the result of *kamma*, it continues throughout countless lives, until the attainment of final *nibbāna*. A passage from the Vism, for example, reads:

“After passing away yet rebirth again, and after rebirth there is again becoming-constituent.” Thus the consciousness-continuity of beings uninterruptedly continues through a succession of modes of becoming, destiny, persistence, abode, and likewise proceeds forward. But when one attains Arahathship here, it ceases with the cessation of his passing away-consciousness (Vism 460).<sup>8</sup>

The third interpretation of *bhavaṅga* appears in the MN and AN Commentaries. According to this interpretation, *bhavaṅga* is luminous consciousness because it is without defilements such as *rāga* (attachment): “luminous means bright and pure. Consciousness means consciousness of becoming-constituent” (AN-a I 60).<sup>9</sup> The MN Commentary, moreover, says that *bhavaṅga* is the natural consciousness (*pakati-citta*)<sup>10</sup> and all beings pass away with this state of

<sup>5</sup> 31–32: *āyatanaṃ anāsavaṃ, no ca bhavaṅgaṃ*.

<sup>6</sup> 24–25: *āyatanaṃ sāsavaṃ bhavaṅgaṃ*.

<sup>7</sup> In the Paṭṭh and the Mil, the term *bhavaṅga* occurs independently in the contexts of rebirth and the perceptual process, and in the Mil, also in the contexts of deep sleep, and deep meditative trance.

<sup>8</sup> 16–20: *cutito pana puna paṭisandhi, paṭisandhito puna bhavaṅgan ti evaṃ bhavaṅgaṭṭhitinivāsesu saṃsaramānānaṃ sattānaṃ avicchinnaṃ cittasantānaṃ pavattati yeva. yo pan'ettha arahattaṃ pāpunāti, tassa cuticitte niruddhe niruddham eva hoti ti*

<sup>9</sup> 9–10: *pabhassaran ti paṇḍaraṃ parisuddhaṃ. cittaṃ ti bhavaṅgacittaṃ*.

<sup>10</sup> Kalupahana translates *pakati-citta* as “the original or primordial consciousness” (Kalupahana 1995, 88).

consciousness (MN-a I 141).<sup>11</sup> The SN Commentary states that all Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Noble disciples (Arahats) pass away understanding the truth of suffering, without *bhavaṅga*, having no consequences (SN-a I 224).<sup>12</sup>

Contemporary scholars such as Sarachchandra (1994), Rupert Gethin (2005) and Peter Harvey (2004) have studied *bhavaṅga* in connection with the above last two interpretations as found in the *abhidhammic* texts, the Mil, the Vism, and the commentaries. They neither show how the *bhavaṅga* is related to each factor of dependent co-arising nor how it functions as a factor for *bhava* as given in the Netti. The characterization of *bhavaṅga* in the Netti is quite different from that which is presented in the Paṭṭh, the Mil, the Vism and the commentaries. Therefore, this study is an attempt to show the different interpretations of *bhavaṅga* and their developments as found in the canonical and post-canonical texts and the commentaries. Let us now see how *bhavaṅga* is presented in the Pāli texts and why a study on it is indeed important in scholarship on Buddhism.

## 1.2 Background and Importance of the Study

In the present Pali Text Society (PTS) and Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) editions of the first four *Nikāyas* (DN, MN, SN, AN) of the Pāli Canon, the term *bhavaṅga* is not found. But Wijesekera claims *bhavaṅga* occurs in the *Dutiya-agga Sutta* of AN. According to the present PTS and VRI editions of the AN, the *sutta* is:

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<sup>11</sup> 35–36: *sabbasattā hi pakaticittena bhavaṅgacitten' eva kālaṃ karonti.*

<sup>12</sup> 7–19: *catuttha-jjhānā vuṭṭhahitvā samanantarā Bhagavā parinibbāyī ti, ettha jhāna-samanantaram paccavekkhaṇa-samanantaran ti, dve samanantarāni. catuttha-jjhānā vuṭṭhāya bhav'aṅgaṃ otiṇṇassa tatth'eva parinibbānaṃ jhāna-samanantaram nāma, catuttha-jjhānā vuṭṭhahitvā puna jhān'aṅgāni paccavekkhitvā bhav'aṅgaṃ otiṇṇassa tatth'eva parinibbānaṃ paccavekkhaṇa-samanantaram nāma. imāni dve pi samanantarān'eva. bhagavā pana jhānaṃ samāpajjitvā jhānā vuṭṭhāya jhān'aṅgāni paccavekkhitvā, bhav'aṅgacittena abyākatena dukkha-saccena parinibbāyī. ye hi keci buddhā vā pacceka-buddhā vā ariya-sāvaka vā, antamaso kuntha-kipillikaṃ upādāya, sabbe pi bhav'aṅgacitten'eva abyākatena dukkha-saccena kālaṃ karonti.*



*cattār'imāni bhikkhave aggāni. katamāni cattāri? rūpaggam, vedanaggam, saññaggam, bhavaggam* (AN II 79, 4-5; VRI IV 47-48, 39-01).

Monks! these are four things that are foremost. What are these four things? The foremost of form, the foremost of feeling, the foremost of perception, the foremost of becoming.

Wijesekera says that in the first PTS edition of the AN, the *Dutiya-aggā Sutta* was called the *Dutiya-aṅga Sutta* and the term *bhavagga* was *bhavaṅga*, but the editors of the second PTS edition rejected the term *aṅga* and replaced it with *agga*, i.e., *bhavagga* in order to follow the commentarial interpretation. The AN Commentary uses the term *bhavagga* and defines it as the “culmination point of becoming” which is the conditional state of personality or selfhood (*attabhāva*) that has to be eradicated to attain arahatship (AN-a III 107).<sup>13</sup> According to Wijesekera, the term *agga* with *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, and *bhava* does not reflect proper doctrinal meaning. Instead, he reads *rūpaṅgam*, *vedanaṅgam*, *saññaṅgam*, and *bhavaṅgam* to mean the five aggregates: form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), conditioning forces (*saṅkhārā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). He relates *bhavaṅgam* with *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*. However, if Wijesekera’s assertion is accepted, the question arises as to whether the existing notion of *bhavaṅga* has undergone various modifications in successive ages of early Buddhist history. On the other hand, if the commentarial interpretation is considered, then Wijesekera and the AN editors’ interpretations of the *Dutiya-aggā Sutta*/the *Dutiya-aṅga Sutta* are again divergent. Therefore, it is an important area of study to investigate the origin and usage of the term *bhavaṅga* and to understand why the commentator thought *bhavagga* is more suitable than *bhavaṅga* in the context of the *Dutiya-aggā Sutta* in the AN.

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<sup>13</sup>18-19: *bhavaggaṃ ti ettha pana yasmim attabhāve thito arahattaṃ pāpuṇāti, etaṃ bhavaggaṃ nāmā ti.*

In the Paṭṭh<sup>14</sup>, *bhavaṅga* occurs mainly in the sections on *anantara-paccaya* (proximity-condition) and *samanantara-paccaya* (contiguity-condition).<sup>15</sup> The two passages containing *bhavaṅga* are mentioned for reference:

The state associated with pleasant feeling is related to the state associated with neither painful nor pleasant feeling by proximity condition. Death-consciousness associated with pleasant feeling is related to rebirth-consciousness associated with neither painful nor pleasant feeling by proximity condition. Becoming-constituent associated with pleasant feeling is related to advertence by proximity condition (Paṭṭh III 324).<sup>16</sup>

Preceding resultant indeterminate and functional indeterminate aggregates are related to succeeding resultant indeterminate and functional indeterminate aggregates by proximity condition. Becoming-constituent is conditioned for advertence...by proximity condition (Paṭṭh II 159).<sup>17</sup>

In the above passages, *bhavaṅga* is followed by *āvajjana* (advertence)<sup>18</sup> without further description. However, it is noted that the first passage signifies the continuity of consciousness in the process of death-birth, whereas no other state intervenes between previous and next lives, which means there is no gap or interval between death and rebirth. In this discussion, in the first passage, upon rebirth, *bhavaṅga* signifies a condition for immediate *āvajjana*. In the second passage, with *bhavaṅga*, it is understood that consciousness and its objects, which have just ceased are themselves conditioning states for the consciousness and its objects, which arise immediately afterwards with no gap existing in between.

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<sup>14</sup> The Paṭṭh is the last book of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* that deals with the 22 triplets and 100 couplets of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* (Dhs) with reference to the 24 conditions.

<sup>15</sup> According to Karunadasa, these two conditions are identical—a fact that is also recognized in the Commentarial texts (Karunadasa 2010, 267–68).

<sup>16</sup> 27–31: *sukhāya vedanāya sampayutto dhammo adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya sampayuttassa dhammassa anantarapaccayena paccayo. sukhāya vedanāya sampayuttaṃ cuticittaṃ adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya sampayuttassa upapatticittassa anantarapaccayena paccayo. sukhāya vedanāya sampayuttaṃ bhavaṅgaṃ āvajjanāya anantarapaccayena paccayo.*

<sup>17</sup> 21–27: *purimā purimā vipākābyākatā kiriyābyākatā khandhā pacchimānaṃ pacchimānaṃ vipākābyākatānaṃ kiriyābyākatānaṃ khandhānaṃ anantarapaccayena paccayo. bhavaṅgaṃ āvajjanāya...anantarapaccayena paccayo.*

<sup>18</sup> There are five-door advertences (*pañca-dvāra-āvajjana*), namely, the eye-door, ear-door, nose-door, tongue-door, and body-door.

I have already mentioned that the interpretation of *bhavaṅga* as a factor of *bhava* in association with the twelve links of dependent co-arising in the context of *āsava*, is found in the *Netti*.<sup>19</sup>

In the *Mil*<sup>20</sup>, *bhavaṅga* is found in the section of “Supinapañho” (the Question on Dreams) in Book IV in a dialogue between the king Milinda and the Thera Nāgasena. In this conversation, Nāgasena says that in two conditions, consciousness/mind (*citta*) is inactive or does not function though the body is there. These two conditions are: (1) when a person is in deep sleep, and (2) when a person has entered into a deep meditative trance (*nirodhasamāpatti*) (*Mil* 300).<sup>21</sup> In the context of deep sleep, Nāgasena says that when a man enters into deep sleep, his consciousness/mind goes into *bhavaṅga*:

O King! One who dreams, does not dream while sleeping, nor even while being awake. But (one) dreams when (one’s mind) is in the interval between being drowsy, and has not yet gone into *bhavaṅga*. O King! When a man descends from the state of being drowsy, his mind enters into *bhavaṅga*. That mind which has entered into *bhavaṅga* does not function. Non-active mind does not know pleasure and displeasure (*Mil* 299).<sup>22</sup>

It is evident that in the context of deep sleep, *bhavaṅga* is not broadly defined as carrying *karmic* effects or functions as a form of continuity of consciousness as discussed in the *Vism*

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<sup>19</sup> Norman says, the *Netti* was composed in the second century BC in India (Norman 1983, 108). Hardy thinks it was composed “about or shortly after the beginning of our era” (*Nettipakarana* Translator’s Introduction 1977, xiii). Regarding the *Netti*, Norman says it is a rewritten version of the *Peṭ* because the content of both the texts are very similar (Norman 1983, 109–10). Hinüber agrees on this point, but he says “this has never been thoroughly checked” (Hinüber 1996, 81).

<sup>20</sup> Tradition says, the book was composed in the middle of the second century BC as the king Milinda ruled during that time. But Norman differs in his opinion and claims that the text was translated into Pāli from a Sanskrit or Prakrit original in North India around the beginning of the Christian era. He further assumes that the present form of the *Mil* was completed by the fifth century AD. He cites the sentence *Milindapañhānaṃ pucchāvissajjānā samattā* (the answers to Milinda’s questions are concluded, *Mil* 89, 17) from the *Mil*, and says the original portion of the book ends there. Within that portion, there are many insertions in the doctrine (Norman 1983, 110–11). Hinüber cites Fussman (1993, 66), who also thinks that the “original *Milindapañha* was much shorter and written in a language different from Pāli, perhaps Gāndhārī, a north western Middle Indic” (Hinüber 1996, 83).

<sup>21</sup> 3–6: *dvinnam, mahārāja sante pi sarīre cittaṃ appavattaṃ hoti: middhasamārūhassa bhavaṅgagatassa sante pi sarīre cittaṃ appavattaṃ hoti, nirodhasamāpannessa santepi sarīre cittaṃ appavattaṃ hoti.*

<sup>22</sup> 11–17: *yo so mahārāja supinaṃ passati na so niddāyanta passati nāpi jāgaranta passata, api ca okkante middhe asampatte bhavaṅge eth’antare supinaṃ passati. middhasamārūhassa mahārāja cittaṃ bhavaṅgagataṃ hoti, bhavaṅgagataṃ cittaṃ nappavattati, appavattaṃ cittaṃ sukhadukkhāṃ na-ppajānāti.*

and subsequent Pāli texts. In the Mil, *bhavaṅga* is only used with reference to the questions about the states of dream and deep sleep.

In the Vism, Buddhaghosa discusses *bhavaṅga*-consciousness with its object *kamma* that accounts for both moral responsibility and one's continuity in *samsāra*:

When the rebirth consciousness has ceased, then depending upon whatever kind of rebirth consciousness it may be, being the result of *kamma*, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness occurs, whose object is also the same [*kamma*]; and the same kind of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness continues together with its object. As long as no other kind of consciousness arises to interrupt the continuity, it continues endlessly like the stream of a river, in periods of dreamless sleep, etc. (Vism 458).<sup>23</sup>

In the Vism, the cognitive process is explained as being twofold: process-consciousness (*vīthi-citta*) and process-free (*vīthi-mutta*) consciousness. Process consciousness refers to the active condition of the mind when it occurs in a cognitive process dependent on the six sense bases - the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and the mind, and their respective objects. Process-free consciousness refers to the passive condition of the mind, which has different functions: (1) *bhavaṅga*, (2) *cuti-citta* (death consciousness), and (3) *paṭisandhi-citta* (rebirth consciousness) (Vism 460).<sup>24</sup>

In the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* (Dhs) Commentary, *bhavaṅga* occurs as similar to a sleeping man (Dhs-a 271),<sup>25</sup> or like a spider sitting at the centre of a web (Dhs-a 279),<sup>26</sup> or children engaged in playing on the street, and the interruption of the continuity of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is the arising of the cognitive process (Dhs-a 280).<sup>27</sup> It was already mentioned

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<sup>23</sup> 2–8: *paṭisandhiviññāṇe pana niruddhe, taṃ taṃ paṭisandhiviññāṇam-anubandhamānaṃ tassa tass' eva kammaṃ vipākabhūtaṃ tasmīññeva ārammaṇe tādisam eva bhavaṅgaviññāṇam nāma pavattati. puna pi tādisan ti evaṃ asati, santānavinivattake aññasmim cittuppāde, nadīsotaṃ viya, supinaṃ apassato niddokkamanakālādīsu aparimāṇasankhyampi pavattatiyevāti.*

<sup>24</sup> According to Karunadasa, the last two types of consciousness, *cuti-citta* and *paṭisandhi-citta*, are “considered as two species of the *bhavaṅga* consciousness” (Karunadasa 2007, 3).

<sup>25</sup> 23–24: *purisassa ambarukkhamaṇe niddāyanakālo viya bhavaṅgasamaṅgikālo.*

<sup>26</sup> 12–13: *majjhe nipannamakkaṭako viya cittaṃ.*

<sup>27</sup> 29–33: *dāraṅgaṇaṃ antaravīthiyaṃ kīlāntānaṃ nisinnakālo viya vīthicittappavatti daṭṭhabbā...taṃ ārammaṇaṃ gahetvā kiriyamanodhātuya bhavaṅgassa āvaṭṭitakālo.*

that in the AN Commentary *bhavaṅga* is identified as *pabhassara-citta* which always remains pure but is defiled by outside defilements such as lust (*rāga*) (AN-a I 60).

The above discussion on *bhavaṅga* occurs in the AN, the Paṭṭh, the Peṭ, the Netti, the Mil and the Vism, and the commentaries. Now it is clear that in different periods of the composition of the Pāli texts, *bhavaṅga* was understood and interpreted differently. One difference is that the Netti interprets *bhavaṅga* as each factor of dependent co-arising in the context of *āśava*, and considers it as a factor of becoming (*bhava*). But the AN Commentary considers *bhavaṅga* as consciousness, which is luminous and pure, and which remains in an individual throughout existence. In this regard, the aforesaid interpretation shows an excessive scepticism about the interpretations of *bhavaṅga* in the canonical and post-canonical texts and their commentaries. I think many scattered references on *bhavaṅga* are considered to be different interpretations. Therefore, this study undertakes to show these expositions of *bhavaṅga* throughout the compilation of various layers of the texts.

### 1.3 Literature Review

Studies conducted on *bhavaṅga* demonstrate that scholars in Buddhist Studies have analysed the subject from different perspectives. Considering scholars' work in this section, I intend to divide the literature review into three parts. The first part will review the works on *bhava* and *bhavaṅga*. Jayatilleke (1949), Wijesekera (1994), and Keith (1923) argue that *bhavaṅga* refers to both *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*, which can be brought under the single concept of *bhava*. The second part will review the studies on the origin of *bhavaṅga*. The third part will review the studies on the characteristic of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness. *Bhavaṅga* in association with *ālaya-viññāna* (storehouse consciousness), theory of the unconscious, and luminous mind will also be reviewed in this portion.

### 1.3.1 Studies Related to *Bhava* and *Bhavaṅga*

I have referred to Jayatilleke (1949), Keith (1923), Wijesekera (1976), and Collins (1982), who have discussed *bhavaṅga* as it appears in association with *bhava* in AN II 79 which embraces both *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*, and whose function confirms the individual's continuity. Keith has suggested that both *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* can be brought under the single concept of *bhava*. According to Jayatilleke, "*bhava* seems to embrace both *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*" (1949, 216). Jayatilleke defines these two concepts to show the individual's continuity in the following manner:

[T]he nature of one's volitional activities depends [on] the nature of that part of the Consciousness in the 'world-beyond' (paraloke patiṭṭhitam) in which the impressions of these persist though in a state of flux and which survives physical death and helps in the formation of a new personality (*ibid.*, 216).

Though Wijesekera makes no reference to Jayatilleke's work, he seems to explain the occurrence of *bhava* in the same way as Jayatilleke. Wijesekera says:

[S]aṅkhāra and viññāṇa are rooted deeper in the flux of *bhava* or saṃsāric continuity, and they are in some sense the cause for that continuity. This is seen in the two famous postulates of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formulas, namely, *Saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇam, viññāṇa-paccayā nāmarūpam*'. Thus we must understand the two terms *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* as occurring in the *pañcupādānakkhandha* analysis in the narrow sense of those dispositions and acts of consciousness which manifest themselves only so long as the body and mind are together (Wijesekera 1994, 88).

Wijesekera further contends that both the terms in the AN seem to be grouped under a single term *bhava* (*ibid.*, 88). Besides, he adds that the term *aṅga* can be used as a synonym for *khandha*, and all the five aggregates (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) can be called *aṅgas* (Wijesekera 1976, 350). A similar interpretation is given by Collins:

[T]here are the constituents of body, perception, feeling, and existence or becoming (*bhavaṅgam*). Clearly here the generic term *bhava* is being used in place of the fourth and fifth *khandhā*, mental formations and consciousness, taken together (Collins 1982, 238–39).

In this connection, Wijesekera thinks:

[Both] *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* are the two most crucial "links" in the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* series which are immediately involved in bringing about the continuity of saṃsāric 'becoming' by making rebirth possible. This is why the Abhidhamma introduced the

terms *kamma-bhava* and *uppatti-bhava* for these two ‘links’, where ‘kamma’ indicates the continuing efficiency of the *saṅkhārā* from the previous life and *uppatti* implies the next birth or the first appearance of *viññāṇa* in the next existence (Wijesekera 1976, 351).

The above scholars’ interpretations are crucial and insightful in this study. However, none has clarified some important points about *bhava* and *bhavaṅga*. The first point is that except the citation they made from AN II 79 to *bhavaṅga*, no further reference related to the doctrine was shown from the *suttas*. It is also observed that except the *Dutiya-agga Sutta* or the *Dutiya-aṅga Sutta* of AN, no other *sutta* in the first four *Nikāyas* contain the term *bhavaṅga*. Therefore, their interpretation of the term is insufficient. Again, if the fact that the term *bhavaṅga* occurs in AN II 79 is accepted, the text does not provide any explanation, therefore, the occurrence of *bhavaṅga* in the AN is not clear. The second point is that the above-mentioned scholars have said *bhava* comprises *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*, but only a few clarifications were given on how *bhava* is integrated with *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*.

The third point is noteworthy, because Buddhist thinkers introduced the term *viññāṇa* and *citta* with the term *bhavaṅga* in the context of the continuity of a person throughout existence. This interpretation is broadly discussed in the *Vism* and the commentaries. Thus, these various interpretations will be examined at great length throughout this study with an intention to show a juxtaposition of the notions of *bhava* and *bhavaṅga*. However, I also agree that *bhavaṅga* plays a key role in *bhava*. Therefore, now I intend to review the studies on the interpretations of *bhava*.

Joanna Jurewicz (2005) interprets *bhava* and all other factors of dependent co-arising with reference to their Vedic counterparts. As she says, in the Vedic formulation, the last three factors – becoming (*bhava*), birth (*jāti*), and aging and death (*jarā-maraṇa*) – refer to the activity of a beings’ rebirth that represents the continuity of craving “guarantee[ing] the coming

into existence (*bhava*) of the creation” (Jurewicz 2005, 178). With examples taken from the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* (AU) she shows some similarities that exist between the last three factors of dependent co-arising and the Vedic cosmology (*ibid.*, 178). But Davids (1937) says that the word *bhava* rarely occurs in the earlier *Upaniṣads*, yet it is frequently used in the Pāli *suttas* (Davids 1937, 51). Similarly, Dasgupta (1991) says that the term is not found in the earlier *Upaniṣads* and is only used in Pāli literature for the first time as a philosophical expression.

In the SN translation, Bodhi (2009) interprets *bhava* as “existence” in the context of Buddhist cosmology:

*Bhava* is concrete sentient existence in one of the three realms of existence posited by Buddhist cosmology, a span of life beginning with conception and ending in death. In the formula of dependent origination it is understood to mean both (i) the active side of life that produces rebirth into a particular mode of sentient existence, in other words rebirth-producing kamma; and (ii) the mode of sentient existence that results from such activity (Bodhi 2000, 52–53).

Thus, Bodhi thinks that *bhava* means concrete existence in the three realms. Ñāṇavira (2003), however, interprets *bhava* as the existence of the illusory subject notion “I”, with the cessation of which, there is cessation of *bhava*, which is “cessation of becoming” (*bhavanirodho*) for an Arahant. I would like to argue that Ñāṇavira’s interpretation of *bhava* is very exclusive, because rather than showing the cosmic objects and phenomena, he directly points out that *bhava* refers to the existence of “self” or “I” which is *attavāda* due to clinging (*upādāna*) (Ñāṇavira 2003, 21 & 97). It seems this idea is presented in the doctrine of dependent co-arising: *bhava* exists because of the clinging-condition; birth exists because of the *bhava*-condition (SN II 1). In this sense, clinging refers to holding a belief in “self” with regard to the five aggregates. This interpretation can be traced from the *Pañcavaggiya Sutta* of the SN that the clinging to “self” in any of the five aggregates is the fundamental basis for the cause of suffering (*dukkha*) (SN III 66–68).



With regard to holding a belief in self (*atta-vāda-upādāna*), Padmasiri (1992) interprets *bhava* as the false conception of personality. He describes this concept as the belief in personality which includes psychical and mental processes, and is assumed to exist as an entity that continues even after death. He says that worldly people (*puthujjana*) retreat into a self-seeking nature, and take refuge in self-indulgence. In this expression of self-instinct, worldly people hold a false concept of personality (*atta-vāda-upādāna*), and this “implies a belief in the existence of a permanent entity, a persisting ego” (Padmasiri 1992, 119-20, & 140).

Similar to Padmasiri, Somaratne (2016) interprets *bhava* as “‘self-continuity’, meaning continuity as ‘self’ or this present I,” and for *bhava-diṭṭhi* as “self-continuity view” (Somaratne 2016, 123). Somaratne describes that this ‘self’-continuity is conditioned by clinging (*upādāna*) as the process of developing our initial perceptual experience into the notion of “I, my and mine” that stems from clinging to the five aggregates (*ibid.*, 126).

From the above interpretations of *bhava*, it seems that there are two dimensions of *bhava* in the Pāli Canon: cosmological and psychological. These two dimensions are briefly pointed out by Thanissaro in his “*The Paradox of Becoming*” (2008). According to Thanissaro,

[B]ecoming [*bhava*] acts as a transition point between two contexts in the stream of conditions leading to suffering. It is conditioned by such purely psychological factors as craving and clinging, and yet it provides the locus for processes that occur both on the psychological and cosmological level: birth, aging, illness, and death (Thanissaro, 2008, 14).

This study will discuss the cosmological and psychological dimensions of *bhava*. Regarding the cosmological aspect, *bhava* will be interpreted as “rebirth” in the triple localities of sensuality, form and formlessness. It will be pointed out that the cosmological level of *bhava* is more prevalent in the *Abhidhamma* and subsequent Pāli texts. The psychological dimension of *bhava* is also important in this study. In this regard, I will adopt the interpretations given by Ñāṇavira, Padmasiri and Somaratne: the “illusory subject notion ‘I’”, “false conception of

personality” and “continuity of self” respectively. Their interpretations will be adopted to show the connection between *bhava* and *bhavaṅga*. In this context, *bhava* will be interpreted as the continuity of *saṃsāric* life due to the clinging to “self-view” with regard to the five aggregates. This interpretation will be drawn out from the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of DN. In this *Sutta*, the Buddha emphatically states that after the attainment of enlightenment, his body remained until the final *nibbāna*, having being cut off from the net of becoming (*ucchinna-bhava-nettiko bhikkhave tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati*, DN I 46, 9–10). From this excerpt, it is fair to say that the meaning of *bhava* characterizes “becoming” in the sense of continuity of *saṃsāric* life. Here, the term *ucchinna-bhava-nettiko* implies non-continuity of the belief in “self”. In that sense, cutting of the net of *bhava* means precisely the complete eradication of the *saṃsāric* existence, therefore, there is no continuity by way of rebirth in future. It will be shown that in the process of continuity the conditioning factors *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* play a major role which can be discussed under the single notion of *bhava*.

In the *suttas*, e.g., the *Pañcavaggiya Sutta* of the SN, it is said that the Buddha’s teaching is centred on the five aggregates of each individual, which are subject to three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and not-self. So, one who experiences repulsion towards the five aggregates, he or she becomes detached from clinging (*upādāna*) to the five aggregates through which the person is liberated (SN III 66–68). As far as the Buddha’s teaching is concerned, these characteristics are implied in the principle of dependent co-arising to show the continuity and the cessation of continuity of a “person-hood” in the five aggregates. When there is the cessation of clinging to “self-view” there is cessation of suffering. Therefore, in the texts, *saṃsāric* suffering is briefly described as caused by the five clinging-aggregates (*pañcupādānakkhandhā pi dukkhā*, SN V 421, 24).

### 1.3.2 Studies on the Origin of *Bhavaṅga*-consciousness

The scholarly studies on the origin of the term *bhavaṅga* are various. Sarachchandra (1994, 75) thinks that “the term *bhavaṅga* first appears in the Milinda Pañha without, apparently, any antecedent history in the Pali canon itself” (Sarachchandra 1994, 75). He thinks that *bhavaṅga* was borrowed from the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, which was originally used in the sense of a link in dependent co-arising, and that it was later borrowed in the Mil (*ibid.*, 79). In support of his argument, he referred to a passage from the *Abhidharmakośakārikā*:

*kleśāt kleśaḥ kriyā caiva tato vastu tataḥ punaḥ vastu kleśās ca jāyante bhavāṅgānām ayam nayaḥ* (3. 27) (Sarachchandra, 1994, 79, see footnote 15).

From the defilement, there is a making of defilement. And, from that [follows] the object. Furthermore, object and defilement are produced from *bhavaṅga*. This is the principle [theory].

However, if the above assertion is accepted, it would be an inadequate study on the historical background of *bhavaṅga* and its origin without showing its historical development. This is so because Vasubandhu, the author of the *Abhidharmakośakārikā*, has mentioned in the *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* that *bhāvaṅga-vijñāna* is a doctrine of *Tāmraparṇīyanikāya*:

In the sūtras of the *Tāmraparṇīyanikāya*, this consciousness is called limb-of-existence consciousness (*bhāvaṅgavijñāna*); in the sūtras of the *Mahāsāṃghikanikāya*, root consciousness (*mūlavijñāna*); and the *Mahīśāsakanikāya* call it the aggregate lasting until the end of saṃsāra (*āsamsārikaskandha*) (Pruden, trans. 1987, 67).

According to Schmithausen, the *Tāmraparṇīyanikāya* is a sect of the Vibhajyavādins, known to be of Sri Lankan lineage, and who have developed the doctrine of *bhavaṅga*, which is a forerunner of *ālaya-vijñāna* (Schmithausen 1987, 7–8).

It was already mentioned that Sarachchandra’s view has been countered thoughtfully by Wijesekera. According to Wijesekera, *bhavaṅga* is an integral part of early Buddhist doctrine found in the *Dutiya-aṅga Sutta* of the AN (II 79), but the second PTS edition of AN has accepted the term *bhavagga* instead of *bhavaṅga* to follow the AN Commentary (Wijesekera 1976, 350). Wijesekera states that the editors rejected the suffix *aṅga* from the

words *rūpaṅgaṃ*, *vedanaṅgaṃ*, *saññaṅgaṃ*, and *bhavaṅgaṃ*, and reprinted the text with *agga*, as: *rūpaggam* (the foremost of form), *vedanaggam* (the foremost of feeling), *saññaggam* (the foremost of perception), and *bhavaggam* (the foremost of becoming) respectively (AN II 79). He says that in the first PTS edition of the AN, the passage appears with the words: *rūpaṅgaṃ*, *vedanaṅgaṃ*, *saññaṅgaṃ*, *bhavaṅgaṃ*, and for that edition, editors had used five Sinhalese manuscripts, and one Burmese manuscript of the text, and also a Sinhalese manuscript of the commentary. However, both the present PTS and VRI editions (VRI edition is a reviewed version of the Sixth Council held in Burma) contain the passage with *agga: rūpaggam*, *vedanaggam*, *saññaggam*, and *bhavaggam*. The occurrence of *bhavaṅga* in the AN has also been mentioned by Keith (1923, 194, see footnote 1) and Jayatilleke (1949, 216). Though Jayatilleke does not mention the origin of *bhavaṅga*, it seems that he discusses *bhavaṅga* with *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* earlier than Wijesekera. Three of them state that *bhavaṅga* refers to *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* which are followed by *rūpa*, *vedanā* and *saññā* in the five aggregates.

Some more scholars have also contributed their studies on the origin and development of *bhavaṅga*. In this chapter, I have already referred to Karunadasa (2007), Gethin (2005), and Cousins (2005). Apart from them, some other scholars such as Bodhi and Karunaratna have also offered their thoughts on *bhavaṅga* in the AN translation (2012, 1597–98, see footnote 46), and in the entry on “Bhavaṅga” in the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* Vol III (1999, 17–20) respectively. Most of them have shown that *bhavaṅga* first appears in the Paṭṭh and is fully described in the Vism and the commentaries. But only a few references have been given on how *bhavaṅga* is presented in the Paṭṭh. The present study will delineate in detail that *bhavaṅga* appears in the Paṭṭh in the context of rebirth from this life to the next, and in that of perceptual process of cognition, which arises immediately with no gap in between the preceding and succeeding *dhammas*.

Among the above mentioned-scholars, Cousins’s studies on the origin of *bhavaṅga* are exceptional. He is perhaps the first to bring up the issue with Vasubandhu’s reference to the *bhavāṅga-vijñāna* which was attributed to the Tāmraparnīya-nikāya. Cousins provides a background to the doctrines of *bhavaṅga* and *ālaya-vijñāna* by referring to Vasubandhu and some other Vijñānavādin writers in the introduction to “The Patthāna and the Development... (2005)”. He posits that Vasubandhu’s reference to *bhavāṅga-vijñāna* is less known due to the lack of sufficient sources. In another work, Cousins examines with precision the school of Tāmraparnīya, a Sri Lankan Buddhist sect. In this work, he also discusses some doctrines related to Tāmraparnīya and other early Buddhist schools. In a passing remark, he refers to *bhavaṅga*-consciousness by reflecting that though this doctrine is explicitly ascribed to Tāmraparnīyas, in general some related versions of this doctrine were probably inherited by other Vibhajyavādin schools such as the Sthaviras and the Mahīsāsakas (Cousins 2001, 13). In a passing remark, Cousins has also referred to *bhavaṅga* as it occurs in the Netti. He supposes that the concept of *bhavaṅga* as the links of dependent co-arising is as old as its use in the Sarvāstivāda and Mahāyānist literature (Cousins 2005, 52–54). However, except making such statement, Cousins does not provide sufficient explanation for the same.

Chandarātana (2011) has referred to Cousins’ above-mentioned work for showing the doctrinal development of consciousness in Tāmraparnīya. He also agrees with Cousins that *bhavaṅga* is as old as its use in Sarvāstivāda. However, he has not shown how and why *bhavaṅga* occurs in the Netti. With a doctrinal insight into *bhavaṅga*, earlier I have shown that *bhavaṅga* appears as factors of becoming (*bhava*). But, in the Vism and the commentaries, *bhavaṅga* occurs in a non-rigid sense in association with *citta* or *viññāṇa*, i.e., *bhavaṅga-citta* or *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa*.

It was said that the *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* of Vasubandhu refers to the *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as a doctrine of Tāmraparṇīyanikāya (Pruden, trans. 1987, 67). In this regard, like Cousins, Chandaratana examines “Tāmraparṇi” or “Tambaṇṇi” in Pāli, and says it was used as another name for Sri Lanka, and the Buddhist sect to which the doctrine *bhavaṅga* has been attributed is most likely the Theravādins in Sri Lanka. Chandaratana moreover says that Vasubandhu in the *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* has referred to the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* to justify his acceptance of *ālaya-vijñāna* (2011, 217–18). He also cites several sources to show *bhavaṅga* as a doctrine of the Sthaviravāda school. According to Warder, the Sthaviravāda school developed in western and southern India and eventually in Ceylon. In other words, Warder considers “the ‘Mahāvihāravāsins’ in Ceylon to be the original Sthaviravāda of the First Schism, as opposed to the Vātsīputrīyas, Sarvāstivādins and others can be upheld” (2004, 283). In this regard, Chandaratana, with the help of Dhammajoti, cites references from the Chinese sources (CBETA, T31, no. 158, p. 386, b7-18), and says, Ācārya Asabhāva, author of the Commentary to the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* refers to *bhavaṅga* as a doctrine of the Sthaviravādins. Ācārya Kui Ji, the commentator of the *Vijñāpatimātratāsiddhi*, also thinks *bhavaṅga* is the doctrine of Sthaviravādins (Chandaratana 2011, 218, also see footnote 25: CBETA, T43, no. 1831, p. 635, b18-c8). Taking all these references as evidence, Chandaratana thinks that the “doctrine of *bhavaṅga* existed among the Sri Lankan Theravādins long before the arrival of Ācārya Buddhaghosa” (2011, 218). However, at this point, an important statement made by Kalupahana is noteworthy. According to Kalupahana, it is difficult to show when *bhavaṅga*, which is a very familiar doctrine in the *Vism* and the *abhidhamma* commentaries, developed:

Whether this theory [*bhavaṅga*-consciousness] was part and parcel of the Sthaviravāda tradition in Ceylon before Buddhaghosa is a question which may not be satisfactorily answered, because, ... the source material necessary for deciding this question is irretrievably lost. But we know that a similar theory, namely of *ālaya-vijñāna* was very popular with the Yogācārins from a very early date (Kalupahana 1970, 171)

From the above discussion, however, two important points are worth noting. Firstly, *bhavaṅga*, designated as the factor of dependent co-arising in the context of *āsava* as found in the *Netti*, is similar to the description in the *Abhidharmakośakārikā* (3.27). Here the reference to *bhavaṅga* in the *Netti* is different because it does not occur in association with *citta* or *viññāṇa*, and does not convey the continuity of cognizance; rather, in these texts, the term *bhavaṅga* is employed in the context of *āsava*. Chandaratana speaks of the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* as existing among Sri Lankan Theravadins long before the arrival of Buddhaghosa. In this regard, if the occurrence of *bhavaṅga* in the *Peṭ* and the *Netti* is considered, it is possible to claim that the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* as a factor of dependent co-arising developed among the Buddhist school(s) in India much earlier. According to Norman (1983, 110) and Hinüber (1996, 81), both the texts were composed in North India and later they were introduced in Ceylon. Secondly, Chandaratana thinks that Vasubandhu in the *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* has referred to the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* as a doctrine of the Sri Lankan Theravādins to justify his acceptance of *ālaya-vijñāna*. In this elucidation, *bhavaṅga* is understood as consciousness, and refers to the continuity of cognizance. This explanation of *bhavaṅga* is not present in the *Peṭ* and the *Netti*, not even in the *suttas*.

After clarifying the above two distinct interpretations, it is now possible to say that there exists a big difference between *bhavaṅga* in the *Peṭ* and the *Netti* and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in subsequent texts, such as the *Vism*. While the former designates the factors of dependent co-arising in the context *āsava*, the latter refers to a particular kind of consciousness itself. Thus, the present study will investigate from a historical perspective the doctrinal development and various interpretations of *bhavaṅga* in the Theravāda tradition.

### 1.3.3 Studies on the Characteristic of *Bhavaṅga*-consciousness

After reviewing the works on the origin of the term *bhavaṅga* it is now reasonable to assess the studies conducted on the characteristic of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness. I have already mentioned that in the *Netti*, *bhavaṅga* designates each link of dependent co-arising. *Bhavaṅga* as consciousness first occurs in the *Paṭṭh* and it is further found in the *Mil*, the *Vism* and the commentaries. *Bhavaṅga*-consciousness is extensively elaborated in the *Vism* with two aspects of consciousness: process-consciousness and process-free consciousness. The second one is presented with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, *cuti-citta* and *paṭisandhi-citta*. Among them, *cuti-citta* functions at the last moment of a dying person and is followed by the *paṭisandhi-citta*. At that moment, when the *paṭisandhi-citta* has arisen and fallen away upon rebirth, it is immediately followed by *bhavaṅga*-consciousness. This *bhavaṅga*-consciousness performs the function of preserving the continuity of an individual existence (*Vism* 460).

Karunadasa (2007), Cousins (2005), and Gethin (2005) have done studies on process-consciousness and process-free consciousness as presented in the *Vism*, the commentaries, and the *Abhidh-s*. Therefore, leaving their works aside for a later discussion, let us, for now refer to other characteristics of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness.

It has already been mentioned that Vasubandhu's *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* contains a reference to *bhavāṅga-vijñāna* as a doctrine of Tāmraparṇīyanikāya. Schmithausen says that *bhavāṅga-vijñāna* is a forerunner of *ālaya-vijñāna* (Schmithausen 1987,7–8). Wimalagnana (2013) has also referred to *bhavāṅga-vijñāna* as a doctrine of Tāmraparṇīyanikāya and that both *bhavaṅga* and *ālaya-vijñāna* are pure and luminous:

Latent and natural condition of the mind represents *bhavaṅga-citta*. At this stage, it is free from moral impurities and it is a luminous. With reference to those points, *ālaya-vijñāna* also appears to be similar to *bhavaṅga-citta*. Term 'ālaya-vijñāna' represents pure state of the mind and its nature is calm and tranquil like a calm ocean. It is only,



the *ālaya-vijñāna* of *tathāgatās* that preserves its pristine purity (Wimalagnana 2013, 125).

Taking an example from the Dhs-a 279, Harvey states that *bhavaṅga* is like a spider sleeping at the centre of its web:

[B]*havaṅga* clearly has features in common with the *ālaya-vijñāna* of the Mahāyāna Yogācāra school, for this is also a form of discernment [consciousness], as an underlying mental continuum, which is literally a ‘home’ (a natural resting place) or ‘roosting place’. *Bhavaṅga citta* is also the natural, unencumbered state of *citta*, for Kvu. [*Kathāvatthu*] 615 calls the *citta* of the very last moment of a person’s life – i.e. *bhavaṅga-citta* in the form of ‘falling away’ *citta* (Para.A.7) – the ‘natural (*pakati-*)’ *citta* (Harvey 2004, 161–62).

The interpretation of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as the luminous mind bearing similarities to *ālaya-vijñāna* is criticised by Bodhi. Bodhi points out two problems: (1) *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and the corresponding notion of the cognitive process were not found in the *Nikāyas*, though it is crucial in the *Abhidhamma* commentaries, and (2) the explanation of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as the luminous as found in the commentary is problematic because it suggests that –

luminosity is intrinsic to the mind itself, and not to a particular type of mental event. Moreover, if the *bhavaṅga* is luminous, it should remain so; it becomes incoherent to speak of it being defiled by the *javanas* (Bodhi 2012, 1597–98).

Gethin says that the commentarial interpretation raises more questions than it answers. He reasons thus: when beings are reborn due to *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, it is always unwholesome resultant consciousness, then “how can it be said to be defiled in name only and not truly defiled? In what sense is it pure, clear or radiant?” (Gethin 2005, 175). Though Gethin raises questions, he himself has not given any answers to them. A latest work on *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is done by Smith (2020). He provides a philosophical analysis of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness from two perspectives: (1) genealogical and reconstructive, and (2) systematic. Though Smith’s explanation of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is quite similar to that of Gethin, he has tried to give an interpretation of luminosity of the mind in two ways:

The first is that it is in virtue of the luminosity of the conscious mind that knowledge is possible. The conscious mind illuminates that which is not known such that it can become known. This notion of luminosity is metaphorical. Secondly, luminosity functions as a literal description of the mind purified of adventitious mental defilements and rarefied concentration. This is the result of a process of purification whereby one cultivates proficiency in a series of contemplative exercises focused on honing the mind's capacity for skillful attention. By redirecting the mind towards its own functions and developing the capacity for detachment and calm, the defilements eventually drop away resulting in a quality of luminosity to arise in the mind (Smith 2020, 463).

According to Smith, the luminous nature of the mind is related to the realization of *nibbāna*, which Buddhagosa identified with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as found in the commentaries. However, he highlights the tensions embedded in the characteristics of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and luminous mind raised by Bodhi in his translated AN volume, which has already been mentioned.

Anālayo (2017) extensively examines these issues taking reference from the *Nikāyas* and *Āgamas*. He shows that the AN passages are also found in the *Śāriputrābhidharma* (T 1548 at T XXVIII 697b18), an *Abhidhamma* text representing the Dharmaguptaka tradition (Anālayo 2017, 35). He quotes a passage from the *Śāriputrābhidharma*:

The mind is by nature pure; it is defiled by adventitious defilements. Because of being unlearned, a worldlying is unable to know and see it as it really is and does not cultivate the mind. Because of being learned, a noble disciple is able to know and see it as it really is and cultivates the mind (Anālayo 2017, 35).

About the above discussion, Kalupahana (1995) says that when *bhavaṅga* is understood as the luminous in the context of consciousness-continuity throughout *saṃsāric* existence, it is not “much different from the notion of a transmigrating soul or self posited by the non-Buddhist schools in India” (Kalupahana 1995, 88). Kalupahana concludes by saying that it further develops the metaphysical theory of *bhavaṅga* as *ālaya-vijñāna*, which is also “the culmination of the absolutist trend that gradually emerged in the Mahāyāna tradition” (*ibid.*, 91). When I examine the aforesaid scholars' assertions, it is evident that Wimalagnana and Harvey's interpretations are inadequate because they do not show the historical context of the doctrine

*bhavaṅga*. We can also notice that Bodhi, except for showing the problems, does not provide any further clarification. The same is applicable for Gethin and Kalupahana. Though Smith has taken a further step to justify the luminous mind and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, there is less textual support, particularly from the commentaries.

Gethin cites Louis de La Vallee, who suggests that *bhavaṅga* bears certain similarities to *ālaya-vijñāna* (Gethin 2005, 173). With regard to these two concepts, Sarachchandra shows similarities between *bhavaṅga-citta* and *ālaya-vijñāna* in great detail (1994, 88–96). Gethin, on the other hand, comments on the assimilation of these two concepts. Yet Gethin agrees:

It is not entirely unreasonable to suggest that both conceptions ultimately derive from a common source or at least a common way of thinking about the problem of psychological continuity in Buddhist thought...It surely must be the case that these two concepts are to be understood as having a certain affinity and that they belong to the same complex of ideas within the history of Buddhist thought (Gethin 2005, 173 & 175).

At this juncture, an important point is noteworthy. Gethin thinks that while scholars in general have shown some similarities between *bhavaṅga* and *ālaya-vijñāna*, contemporary scholars in Theravāda Buddhism try to understand these similarities in relation to the theory of the unconscious of modern psychology. He thinks that though to some extent, explanations of *ālaya-vijñāna* can be attributed to the theory of the unconscious, this idea of the unconscious is not necessary in order to understand *bhavaṅga* (Gethin 2005, 173). In this context, Gethin defines *bhavaṅga* in the following manner:

Existing discussions of *bhavaṅga* largely confine themselves to the way *bhavaṅga* functions in the Abhidhamma theory of the process of consciousness (*citta-vīthi*). It is pointed out how *bhavaṅga* is the state in which the mind is said to rest when no active consciousness process is occurring: thus *bhavaṅga* is one's state of mind when nothing appears to be going on, such as when one is in a state of deep dreamless sleep, and also momentarily between each active consciousness process (Gethin 2005, 159).

Keith (1923, 194), Davids (1936, 406) and Sarachchandra (1994, 75) have discussed *bhavaṅga* either as the sub-conscious or the unconscious. About the function of *bhavaṅga* as the sub-conscious, Keith offers the following description:

The *bhavaṅga*, or stream of being, is a conception barely known in the Abhidhamma, and there not explained, but it evidently has already here, the sense of a continuum which is not conscious, but from which consciousness emerges, and which may therefore be reckoned as sub-conscious (Keith 1923, 194).

About the above passage, Collins says that the use of the term “unconscious” as a translation of *bhavaṅga* is a loose translation, and “subconscious” is an even looser one (Collins 1982, 243). Though Padmasiri has not referred to the works of the above-mentioned scholars, he also thinks “it is not wise to use terms like unconscious and subconscious indiscriminately to translate the word *bhavaṅga*” (Padmasiri 1992, 52). However, Padmasiri accepts the unconscious in Buddhism by referring to the following assertion of Nyanatiloka:

Herein, since time immemorial, all impressions and experiences are, as it were, stored up, or better said, are function, but concealed as such to full consciousness, from where however they occasionally emerge as subconscious phenomena and approach the threshold of full consciousness, or crossing it become fully conscious. This so-called ‘subconscious life-stream’ or undercurrent of life is that by which might be explained the faculty of memory, paranormal psychic phenomena, mental and physical growth, karma and rebirth, etc. (Nyanatiloka 1980,70).

According to Padmasiri, the above clarification on *bhavaṅga* “has been likened to a kind of dynamic unconscious in the Freudian sense” (Padmasiri 1992, 52). Among scholars, Wijesekera is exceptional as he equates *bhavaṅga* with the Freudian Unconscious. He says that Freud’s idea of the human psyche consisting of the *id* inheres in everyone in the somatic and psychological symptoms. This *id* is an accumulation of the psychical forces which maintain all the conscious and unconscious nature of the human psyche. Later, Freud developed a theory with regard to mental life giving it the name “ego”. This ego is a part of *id*, which has undergone development due to the influence of external objects. According to Wijesekera, it is the agency that occurs as a result of the relationship between sensory perception and dynamic action. He further traces Freud’s *id* concept connecting to the unconscious with a suggestion that the “ego” is closely associated with consciousness. Wijesekera says that Freud’s theory of the unconscious is similar to *bhavaṅga*, which stands for *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* in the five aggregates. He further builds the argument referring to *saṅkhārā*, a necessary condition for

*viññāna* in the twelve links of dependent co-arising which, according to him, appears in the empirical state of mind as similar to “ego” or the “empirical agent” as presented in the Freudian theory of the unconscious (Wijesekera 1979, 63 & 66).

Gethin and Harris disagree with the above interpretations. Gethin says that the interpretation of *bhavaṅga* as the “unconscious” or “unconsciousness” is not only confusing, but also problematic and unhelpful (Gethin 2005, 159–60). Harris thinks that “it would be a great mistake to take *bhavaṅga* to be equivalent to a permanent subconscious state as understood by contemporary Western psychological theory” (Harris 1991, 159).

After reviewing the above scholars’ works on *bhavaṅga* in association with the theory of the unconscious, two different issues have been observed. Gethin says that some functions of the *ālaya-vijñāna* can be attributed to the theory of the unconscious. Further, while some scholars such as Poussin (1926) have shown certain similarities between *bhavaṅga* and *ālaya-vijñāna*, contemporary scholars in Theravāda Buddhism such as Sarachchandra (1994) take these similarities into account and interpret *bhavaṅga* to be the unconscious. If this is true, then it can be said that the argument that *bhavaṅga* is the unconscious is quite related to the commentarial interpretation, because in the commentary, *bhavaṅga* is interpreted as a “home” preserving its pristine purity, which is quite similar to *ālaya-vijñāna*. On the other hand, Wijesekera compares *bhavaṅga* and Freud’s theory of the unconscious. In this context, Collins’s observation is noteworthy:

The modern comparison between *bhavaṅga* and the psychoanalytic unconscious must be developed as part of what one might call ‘speculative’ or ‘creative’ Buddhist philosophy, rather than by historical scholarship (Collins 1982, 244).

By reviewing the above secondary sources and presenting the scope of research, the present study pays tribute to scholars, who have made thoughtful contribution to the concept of

*bhavaṅga*. However, within their studies on *bhavaṅga*, similarities and differences, have been discerned.

The literature review has been presented in three sections. In the third section, some specific directions for considering *bhavaṅga* in connection with *ālaya-vijñāna* and the modern theory of the unconscious, have been presented. It seems that scholars such as Sarachchandra (1994) interpret *bhavaṅga* without caring much about its historical background. Here it is shown clearly that *bhavaṅga* in connection with *ālaya-vijñāna* and the theory of the unconscious, is disarranged and unsystematic, and is devoid of any attempt to show its historical background. On the other hand, while dealing with the first two sections with *bhava* and *bhavaṅga*, and the origin of *bhavaṅga*, it can be noticed that *bhavaṅga* in the early history of Buddhist thought, particularly in the *Netti*, was used in the context of *āsava*, as factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*). To me, this area of study is also more thoughtful. In short, the present study is devoted to the understanding of *bhavaṅga* in association with *bhava* as discussed in the *Netti*, and with *citta*, i.e., *bhavaṅga-citta* reviewed in the second and third sections of this literature review. Hence, a comprehensive study is essential to answer the research questions that follow.

#### 1.3.4 Research Questions

- 1) What is *bhavaṅga*? How to interpret the occurrence of *bhavaṅga* in the AN and the Paṭṭh of the Pāli Canon?
- 2) What do the doctrinal interpretations of *bhava* and *bhavaṅga* imply, when the *Netti* correlates *bhavaṅga* with each of the twelve links of dependent co-arising in the context of *āsava*?
- 3) How does *bhavaṅga* relate to the factors of *saṅkhārā* (conditioning forces) and *viññāṇa* (consciousness)?

- 4) How to interrelate *bhavaṅga*-consciousness with deep sleep, deep meditative trance, luminous mind, and the cognitive process?
- 5) Has the *bhavaṅga*-consciousness passed through the successive stages of alterations of Buddhist thought throughout the period of the composition of the Pāli texts?
- 6) Can the divergent interpretations of the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* among post-canonical texts such as the *Netti*, the *Vism* and the commentaries be discerned as minor or significant contrasts?

Answers to the above questions will provide much insight into the exact characterization of *bhavaṅga* in the Theravāda tradition. Hence, in the present work, *bhavaṅga* has been studied for a sound understanding of its nature, function and development.

## 1.4 Methodology and Sources

The focus of this study is on the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* and its diverse interpretations in Theravāda Buddhism. With regard to Theravāda Buddhism, Abeynayake says:

Theravāda is nothing but the continuation of original Buddhism with innovations necessitated by the historical and doctrinal circumstances. The claim that there is no other Buddhist tradition which is closer to original Buddhism than Theravāda is justified (Abeynayake 2009, 90).

The Buddhist teachings, according to the Theravāda tradition, are contained in the Pāli Canon that exists today. Regarding the Pāli Canon, Harvey says:

It is the most complete extant early canon, and contains some of the earliest material. Most of its teachings are in fact the common property of all Buddhist schools, being simply the teachings which the Theravādins preserved from the early common stock (Harvey 1990, 3).

The Pāli Canon is organized into three divisions: the *Vinaya Piṭaka* (basket of discipline), the *Sutta Piṭaka* (basket of the discourses), and the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* (basket of Abhidhamma or treatises of systematic scholastic exposition). Though the Pāli Canon is the textual authority in Theravāda Buddhism, it includes some very early material, as also material

accepted/incorporated centuries after the Buddha's great demise. In this regard, Pande says that the entire Pāli Canon was written down in Sri Lanka in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, and the *Nikāyas* would go back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. He asserts that the growth of the *Nikāyas* can be dated between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC (Pande 1999, 16 & 43). Therefore, Gombrich's statement on the compilation of the Pāli Canon over centuries is worth noting: "it is not surprising that misunderstanding or diverse interpretations arose in the process" (Gombrich 2006, xii). Hence, this study aspires to inquire into the emergence of the concept of *bhavaṅga*, its various interpretations and development in the Pāli Canon, the post-canonical texts and their commentaries, which were composed over a long period of time. Special emphasis will be given on the post-canonical texts: the *Peṭ*, the *Netti*, the *Mil* and the *Vism*. The Burmese tradition considers the *Peṭ*, the *Netti* and the *Mil* as canonical texts which is placed in the KN of the *Sutta Piṭaka* (Ñāṇamoli 1977, xii). In this study, I will regard them as post-canonical texts.

The study takes the *Sutta* and the *Abhidhamma Piṭakas*, post-canonical texts such as the *Peṭ*, the *Netti*, the *Mil*, the *Vism*, and their commentaries into account as the primary sources. The *Sutta Piṭaka* is divided into five sections: DN, MN, SN, AN, and KN. The first four *Nikāyas* and some books of the KN, i.e., Sn, Paṭis, are of immense value. Among the seven books – the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, the *Vibhaṅga*, the *Puggalapaññatti*, the *Yamaka*, the *Kathāvatthu*, and the *Paṭṭhāna* – of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, the *Paṭṭhāna* will be given high value. To strengthen this study, the *Abhidh-s*, a manual of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* has been studied as a primary source. *Vinaya* texts will not be consulted because they do not contain much about *bhavaṅga*. Some *Upaniṣads* such as the *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, and the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* will be consulted occasionally as primary sources.



This study also takes into account the previous scholars' works as secondary sources and draws from their insights in the appropriate contexts. The secondary sources include the English translation of the Pāli version of the *Sutta Piṭaka* and the post-canonical texts, this study has referred to the excellent translations by Bodhi, Ñāṇamoli, Walshe, and others. As for the Pāli literature, the PTS editions have been consulted. To verify some doctrinal issues, the VRI edition of Pāli literature has also been consulted.

In today's existing Pāli Canon, *bhavaṅga* is found in the Paṭṭh of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. However, no detailed explanation is given in modern scholarship as to why *bhavaṅga* occurs in the *Paṭṭh*. Scholars have mostly studied *bhavaṅga* as presented in the *Vism* and the Pāli commentaries. Yet no comprehensive study has been conducted on *bhavaṅga* as it occurs in the *Peṭ* and the *Netti*. Therefore, this study mainly focuses on this subject and will show diverse interpretations of *bhavaṅga* in the post-canonical texts.

This study of *bhavaṅga* is divided into two parts: Part One and Part Two, apart from the Introduction (Chapter One) and Conclusion (Chapter Six). In Part One, the two concepts of *bhava* and *bhavaṅga* are examined. In Part Two, consciousness and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness are discussed. These two separate parts are valid, because in the *Peṭ* and the *Netti*, *bhavaṅga* is not designated as consciousness, rather it is a factor of *bhava*, which is a proximate cause for *samsāra*. In the *Paṭṭh* and the *Mil*, *bhavaṅga* is designated as consciousness, which is fully described with process-consciousness and process free-consciousness in the *Vism* and the commentaries.

#### **1.4.1 Study Contained in Part One**

Part One of this study comprises two chapters, i.e., Chapters Two and Three. Chapter Two will discuss the canonical reference to *bhava* and *bhavaṅga* (AN II 79). According to Jayatilleke,

Keith, Wijesekera, and Collins, *bhavaṅga* can be defined with the help of the single notion of *bhava*, which embraces both *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*, the function of which confirms one's continuity. Except providing reference, they have not described how *bhavaṅga* and *bhava* are interrelated. The concept of *bhava* will be examined in great detail with references from the *Nikāyas*. Furthermore, *bhava* will be analysed by drawing references from the non-canonical texts, such as the *Peṭ* and the *Netti*. All these will be discussed in Chapter Three.

*Bhava* will be scrutinized at two levels: psychological and cosmological. For the cosmological aspect, *bhava* will be discussed with the concept of rebirth in the three localities of sensuality, form and formlessness. For the psychological aspect, *bhava* will be discussed as the flow of an unbroken and continuous stream like the stream of a river. In this respect, I will interpret *bhava* as the continuity of *saṃsāric* life due to clinging to the “self-view” because of which a person is trapped in *saṃsāric* suffering until the attainment of *nibbāna*. In this connection, the phrase *bhava-nirodho nibbānaṃ* (*nibbāna* is the cessation of becoming) (SN II 117, 14) will be discussed by showing that the “cessation of becoming” is the same as the cessation of the clinging to belief in the “self” with regard to the five aggregates. In this regard, *bhava* will be discussed in relation with *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*, which together confirm the continuity of an individual in *saṃsāra*. This continuity is centred on the belief in “self” existing because of *āsaava*. In this connection, *bhavaṅga* will be discussed as the continuity of consciousness. This continuity of consciousness is also affected by *āsaava* throughout *saṃsāric* existence. In this regard, I will translate *bhavaṅga* as the “becoming-constituent,” and *bhavaṅga-citta* as “consciousness of becoming-constituent”. Throughout this study, I will also delineate the meaning of *bhava* as “becoming,” in alliance with the continuity of *saṃsāric* life.

### 1.4.1.1 Adopting the Meaning of *Bhavaṅga-citta* as “Consciousness of Becoming-Constituent”

This study will follow the meaning of *bhavaṅga-citta* as “consciousness of becoming-constituent”. Let us briefly discuss other available interpretations and why the meaning “consciousness of becoming-constituent” has been adopted in this study. The PED defines the term *bhavaṅga* with the help of two terms: *bhava* and *aṅga*.<sup>28</sup> The term *bhava*, a masculine noun, means: “‘becoming,’ (form of) rebirth, (state of) existence, a ‘life’” (PED 11).<sup>29</sup> The term *aṅga*, a neuter noun, means “a constituent part of the body, a limb, member,” etc. And, the meaning of *bhavaṅga* is “the constituents or the condition of becoming” (*ibid.*, 11). The PED also provides alternative meanings, such as:

[C]onstituent of becoming, function of being, functional state of subconsciousness, i. e. subliminal consciousness or subconscious life—continuum, the vital continuum in the absence of any process [of mind, or attention] (*ibid.*, 555).

Karunadasa suggests the meaning of *bhavaṅga* as “constituent of becoming” (Karunadasa 2007, 1). Harvey differs in his opinion. He cites Davids’ suggestion in an editorial note to B.C. Law’s *The Debates Commentary* (239), which states that *bhavaṅga* derives from *bhavaṅgaya*, meaning “becomingness”. Harvey says that this derivation is not favoured in the DN Commentary (I 195) because in this Commentary, *bhavaṅga* is presented “between perceptual cycles” as “accomplishing the function of being the characteristic factor (*aṅga*-) of arising (*uppatti*)—becoming.” Harvey uses the meaning “latent life-continuum” for *bhavaṅga*, and for *bhavaṅga-citta*, “latent life-continuum discernment” (2004, 160–61, also see foot note 4 in Chapter 10).<sup>30</sup> Yet the present study adheres to the interpretation of *bhavaṅga* as “becoming-

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<sup>28</sup>About the term *aṅga* in *bhavaṅga*, Nyanaponika says: “the word *aṅga* in the compound *bhavaṅga* is usually explained in the Commentaries by *kāraṇa*, “cause”, accordingly, the entire term would mean literally “cause (or condition) of (continued) existence”. But we would suggest that *aṅga* may here have the alternative meaning of “link” as well, and consequently, *bhavaṅga* would signify “link of existence” (1998, 141, see footnote 63).

<sup>29</sup>The PED further describes *bhava* with three states of existence as: “*kāma*, *rūpa*, *arūpa* or sensual existence, *deva*—corporeal, & formless existence” (PED 554).

<sup>30</sup>Harvey has shown various meanings from the commentaries and scholars’ works. Among scholars, Jayatilleke interprets what? as “dynamic unconscious” (1975, 226), whereas Sarachchandra uses the term “unconscious” (1994, 75). Nāṇamoli uses the term “life-continuum” (2010, 24).

constituent/factor of becoming,” and for the term *bhavaṅga-citta*, the meaning “consciousness of becoming-constituent” is used. This interpretation is adopted from Karunadasa’s understanding of *bhavaṅga* as “constituent of becoming” (Karunadasa 2007, 1).

#### 1.4.2 Study Contained in Part Two

Part Two comprises two chapters: Chapter Four and Chapter Five. Chapter Four will discuss two aspects of consciousness: (1) consciousness as “surviving factor”, and (2) sensory consciousness. The first aspect of consciousness as “surviving factor” will be discussed with the terms *viññāṇa*, *citta*, *gandhabba*, *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*, and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness. In this connection, *saṅkhārā*, consciousness, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and their related doctrines, such as *kamma*, consciousness-seed (*viññāṇam bījaṃ*), and craving will be discussed in the context of death-birth. According to Jayatilleke, both “stream of becoming” (*bhava-sota*) found in SN I 15 & V 128, and “stream of consciousness” (*viññāṇa-sota*) found in DN III 105 are the earliest notions of *bhavaṅga* (Jayatilleke 1949, 216). These doctrinal issues will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Five will undertake a discussion of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as it occurs in the Paṭṭh, the Mil, the Vism and the commentaries. *Bhavaṅga* will be discussed in the contexts of deep sleep, deep meditative trance, luminous mind, and the theory of the cognitive process. Scholars such as Harvey (2004), Sarachchandra (1994) and Wijesekera (1979) have discussed *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in connection with the theory of the unconscious and *ālaya-vijñāna*. This study will discuss these views in the passing wherever applicable.

Apart from the aforesaid studies, this study will occasionally identify the materials in the texts and the contexts in which certain doctrinal development occurs with regard to the concept of *bhavaṅga*.

## 1.5 Chapter Outline

This study is undertaken to examine *bhavaṅga* based on the Pāli Canon, post-canonical texts and their commentaries. Besides the Introduction (Chapter One) and Conclusion (Chapter Six), this study comprises four chapters.

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the study on the concept of *bhavaṅga*. It will discuss different interpretations of *bhavaṅga* and their functions, background and importance of the study, the scope of research, literature review, methodology and sources.

Chapter 2: This chapter discusses the conceptual analysis of *bhava* and *bhavaṅga* from the *Suttas*. *Bhava* will be discussed in its two aspects: psychological and cosmological. The basis of consciousness in the context of rebirth will be discussed with *bhava*. It will be shown that *bhava* has an intrinsic relation with *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*, which together produce an individual's *saṃsāric* continuity.

Chapter 3: This chapter discusses how *bhavaṅga* functions as a factor of becoming (*bhava*) as explained in the *Peṭ* and the *Netti*. A large portion of this chapter will be devoted to describe the doctrine of dependent co-arising in relation with *āsava*. *Bhavaṅga* will also be described in relation with *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* that when *saṅkhāra* and *dhammāyatana* are free from *āsava*, they are not factors of becoming (*bhavaṅga*), and when *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* are affected by *āsava*, they are factors of becoming.

Chapter 4: This chapter discusses *saṅkhārā*, consciousness, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, and the process of death-birth. *Saṅkhārā* will be discussed in analogous terms with *kamma*, which is a condition for consciousness. It will be said that this consciousness is not merely a mental function as “sensory consciousness,” but it also has a significant role in rebirth. It will be suggested that the concept of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness was developed to justify the doctrine of

rebirth, and to explain how a man, subsequently after birth, survives in *saṃsāra* without accepting a permanent entity.

Chapter 5: This chapter discusses the concept of *bhavaṅga* based on the Paṭṭh, the Mil, the Vism and the commentaries in the context of consciousness continuity during deep sleep and deep meditative trance. *Bhavaṅga* will also be discussed in the contexts of the luminous mind and the theory of cognitive process. It will be shown that though consciousness has a single characteristic, its functions are mainly sevenfold: (1) *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as “surviving factor,” and (2–7) six kinds of sensory consciousness.

Chapter 6: Taking into account all the discussion from the above chapters, this chapter will present the conclusions of the study.

**Part One: *Bhava* and *Bhavaṅga***

## Chapter 2–The Conceptual Analysis of *Bhava* and *Bhavaṅga*

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at presenting the conceptual analysis of *bhava* and *bhavaṅga*. *Bhavaṅga* is not a central doctrine in the *suttas*, where sufficient reference to *bhavaṅga* is not found. Nonetheless, a detailed analysis of *bhava* and *bhavaṅga* is necessary in this study from the *sutta* perspective, because, with a view to showing the *samsāric* continuity, the *Netti* shows *bhavaṅga* in association with *bhava*. According to the *Netti*, each factor in the twelve links of dependent co-arising, namely, ignorance, conditioning forces, consciousness, mentality-materiality, six-fold sense bases, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, becoming, birth, and aging-death, is known as a factor of becoming (*bhavaṅga*). And when these twelve factors occur conjointly there is the production of *bhava*. And this *bhava* is a proximate cause for the life-cycle (*Netti* 29).<sup>1</sup> In the light of this account of *bhava*, the related term *punabbhava* (further becoming/rebirth) will also be discussed as a subtheme, because in the *Netti*, in a causal relation, *punabbhava* is described in association with conditioning forces (*sankhārā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in the context of rebirth:

Conditioning forces have the characteristic of causing further becoming/rebirth. It is the footing cause for consciousness. Consciousness has the characteristic of coming into origination/rebirth (*Netti* 28).<sup>2</sup>

Another important discussion on *bhava* and *bhavaṅga* is found among modern scholars. According to Jayatilleke (1949), Keith (1923), Wijesekera (1976, 1979 & 1994), and Collins (1982), *bhavaṅga* is an early Buddhist doctrine that occurs in the *Dutiya-aṅga Sutta* (*Dutiya-aggā Sutta*) of AN (II 79). These scholars have shown an intrinsic relationship between *bhava* and *bhavaṅga* in the *Dutiya-aṅga Sutta*. For example, Keith says, “[i]n AN.ii.79 *bhava*

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<sup>1</sup>10–11: *imāni bhavaṅgāni yadā samaggāni nibbattāni bhavanti, so bhavo. taṃ samsārassa padaṭṭhānaṃ.*

<sup>2</sup>20–21: *punabbhavavirohaṇalakkhaṇā sankhārā. taṃ viññāṇassa padaṭṭhānaṃ. opapaccayika nibbatti lakkhaṇaṃ viññāṇaṃ.*



appears with the other three aggregates, matter, feeling, ideation, covering perhaps consciousness and the dispositions” (Keith 1923, 194). Jayatilleke says, “*bhava* seems to embrace both *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa*” which are proximate causes for the individual’s continuity (Jayatilleke 1949, 216).

From the post-canonical text and scholars’ interpretation of *bhavaṅga*, it is understood how *bhava* and *bhavaṅga* are intrinsically related in *saṃsāric* continuity. Therefore, in this chapter/study, *bhava* and its function will be examined in order to suggest further possibilities in the interpretation of *bhavaṅga* in subsequent chapters. It will be pointed out that there are two dimensions of *bhava* in the Pāli Canon: (1) psychological and (2) cosmological. For the psychological aspect, *bhava* will be interpreted as the continuity of the flux of *saṃsāric* life which persists due to the clinging to the five aggregates of *rūpa* (form), *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhārā* (conditioning forces), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness). For the cosmological aspect, *bhava* will be interpreted in the context of rebirth in relation to the Buddhist cosmological system comprising *kāma* (sensuality), *rūpa* (form) and *arūpa* (formlessness).

In conclusion, it will be shown that the *bhavaṅga*, which was used in AN II 79 and the *Netti*, does not yet convey the characteristic of *bhavaṅga* as consciousness found in the *Paṭṭh*, the *Mil*, the *Vism* and the commentaries. However, one can still interpret *bhavaṅga* to show the *saṃsāric* continuity in relation with *bhava*, *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*. This relationship will be discussed from the *Peṭ* and the *Netti* in the next chapter. This chapter undertakes the discussion on *bhava*, *bhavaṅga* and the basis of the continuity of *viññāṇa*. It begins with a discussion on *bhavaṅga* from the *Dutiya-aṅga Sutta* (*Dutiya-agga Sutta*) of the AN.

## 2.2 Sutta Reference to *Bhavaṅga*

In the current edition of the *Dutiya-agga Sutta* of the AN, the term *bhavaṅga* is not found. Instead, the term *bhavagga* occurs with the three foremost things: foremost of form (*rūpaggam*), the foremost of feeling (*vedanaggam*), the foremost of perception (*saññaggam*), and the foremost of becoming (*bhavaggam*) (AN II 79). The AN Commentary defines *bhavagga* as the culmination point of personality, which has to be eradicated for the attainment of Arahantship (AN-a III 107).<sup>3</sup> Wijesekera finds the contradiction in the *Dutiya-agga Sutta* with its commentarial interpretation. As discussed in the previous chapter, according to Wijesekera, initially the *Dutiya-agga Sutta* was the *Dutiya-aṅga Sutta* and the term was not *bhavagga*, but *bhavaṅga*. He says, the second PTS edition of the AN has let loose its conjecture to present *bhavagga* instead of *bhavaṅga* to follow the AN Commentary (Wijesekera 1976, 350). Wijesekera states that the editors rejected the term *aṅga* from the terms *rūpaṅgam*, *vedanaṅgam*, *saññaṅgam*, *bhavaṅgam*, and reprinted the words with *agga*, as: *rūpaggam*, *vedanaggam*, *saññaggam*, *bhavaggam* (AN II 79). He gives the reason: “the cataloguing of *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, *vimutti*, and *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *bhava*, together as – *aggas* has no parallels anywhere else in the Canon, although the separate employment of *saññagga* (D.I.185) and *bhavagga* (S.III.83) are attestable” (Wijesekera 1976, 350).

Wijesekera made the above elucidation to reject Sarachchandra’s claim that the appearance of *bhavaṅga* in the AN is a wrong reading. Sarachchandra’s had argued:

The occurrence of the word *bhavaṅga* in the Aṅguttara Nikāya [AN II 79] is evidently a wrong reading, for the commentary reads and explains the word as *bhavagga*. The Nikayas are familiar with the words *bhava* and *bhavasota*, which give expression to the Buddhist philosophy of flux, of life considered as a flowing stream, never the same for any two consecutive moments (Sarachchandra 1994, 75).

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<sup>3</sup>18–19: *bhavagganti ettha pana yasmim attabhāve t̥hito arahattam pāpuṇāti, etaṃ bhavaggam nāmā ti.*

Padmasiri had also argued along similar lines:

The *bhavanga* theory is not a central doctrine of the Nikāyas. This idea was not thought by the Buddha at all. It is hardly even mentioned until the *Milinda Pañha* and was developed by later expositors of the Abhidhamma, like Anuruddha and Buddhaghosa” (Padmasiri 1992, 49).

Keith (1923, 194, see footnote 1), Jayatilleke (1949, 216), and Collins (1982, 238–39) however, are of the same opinion as Wijesekera. All of them state that the *bhavaṅga* is an early Buddhist doctrine that occurs in the AN. They relate *bhavaṅga* with *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*. Keith has further suggested that both *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* can be brought under the single concept of *bhava* (Keith 1923, 194). Similarly, Jayatilleke says “*bhava* seems to embrace both *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa*” (1949, 216). He defines these two concepts to show the individual’s continuity, in the following manner:

[T]he nature of one’s volitional activities depends on the nature of that part of the consciousness in the ‘world-beyond’ (*paralokepatiṭṭhitam*) in which the impressions of these persist though in a state of flux and which survives physical death and helps in the formation of a new personality (*ibid.*, 216).

Like Jayatilleke, Wijesekera also explains the occurrence of *bhava* in AN II 79 in the following manner:

[S]*añkhāra* and *viññāṇa* are rooted deeper in the flux of *bhava* or saṃsāric continuity, and they are in some sense the cause for that continuity. This is seen in the two famous postulates of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formulas, namely, *Sañkhārapaccayā viññāṇam*, *viññāṇa-paccayā nāmarūpam*. Thus we must understand the two terms *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* as occurring in the *pañcupādānakkhandha* analysis in the narrow sense of those dispositions and acts of consciousness which manifest themselves only so long as the body and mind are together (Wijesekera 1994, 88).

Wijesekera further contends that both terms in the AN seem to be grouped under a single term *bhava* (*ibid.*, 88). Besides, he adds that the term *aṅga* can be used as a synonym for *khandha*, and all the five aggregates (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) can be called *aṅgas* (Wijesekera 1976, 350). A similar interpretation is given by Collins:

[T]here are the constituents of body, perception, feeling, existence or becoming (*bhavaṅgam*). Clearly here the generic term *bhava* is being used in place of the fourth and fifth *khandhā*, mental formations and consciousness, taken together (Collins 1982, 238–39).

In this regard, Wijesekera thinks:

[Both] *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* are the two most crucial “links” in the Paṭiccasamuppāda series which are immediately involved in bringing about the *continuity* of saṃsāric ‘becoming’ by making rebirth possible. This is why the Abhidhamma introduced the terms *kamma-bhava* and *uppatti-bhava* for these two ‘links’, where ‘kamma’ indicates the continuing efficiency of the *saṅkhārā* from the previous life and *uppatti* implies the next birth or the first appearance of *viññāṇa* in the next existence (Wijesekera 1976, 351–52).

The above scholars’ interpretations are crucial and insightful. However, none has clarified the important points about how *bhavaṅga* and *bhava* are related. Also, another point is that, except *Dutiya-aṅga Sutta*, no further reference related to the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* was shown from the *suttas*. Though their interpretation of the term is insufficient, their argument that *bhava* comprises *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* is important for further clarification because the idea of *bhavaṅga* occurs in the *Netti* which is similar to the above scholars’ elucidation. I will discuss this issue in the next chapter. Now let me clarify the meaning of *bhavagga* from the *Dutiya-agga Sutta* of the AN (current PTS edition) and its commentarial interpretation.

### 2.2.1 Understanding the Terms *Bhava* and *Bhavagga* in association with *Attabhāva*

It was said that in the current PTS edition of the AN, *bhavagga* is used instead of *bhavaṅga*. In the AN Commentary, the term *bhavagga* is defined as the culmination point of becoming which is the conditional state of personality or selfhood (*attabhāva*) which has to be eradicated to attain Arahantship (AN-a III 107).<sup>4</sup> But, scholars such as Davids explain the term *attabhāva* as “life-span” in which one attains the Arahantship (Davids 1937, 53). It seems that Davids renders the meaning of *attabhāva* in relation to *arūpa-bhava* (becoming of formless), as equal to *bhavagga*, which is the highest existence in the Buddhist understanding of threefold cosmology—sensuality, form, and formlessness. Among these three realms, existence at the level of formlessness is considered the highest, in which one

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<sup>4</sup>18–19: *bhavagganti ettha pana yasmim attabhāve t̥hito arahattaṃ pāpuṇāti, etaṃ bhavaggaṃ nāmā ti.*



enjoys an extensive life-span, and becomes an Arahāt from *arūpa-bhava*.<sup>5</sup> It seems the aforesaid explanations more or less signify the worldly realms in Buddhist cosmology.

However, the above-mentioned commentarial usage of the pinnacle point of *attabhāva*, which is implied in the definition of the term *bhavagga*, differs from the scholars' elucidation. I understand the commentarial meaning of *bhavagga* to be the culmination point of the notion of "personality," which remains in a spiritually matured person at subtle level and which can also be called the underlying tendency of conceit (*māna-anusaya*), through eradication of which one attains Arahātship. In that sense, the doctrinal meanings of *bhava* and *bhavagga* have to be comprehended in connection with the notion of *attabhāva*, rather than in the sense of "life-span" or life in higher and lower existences. As *attabhāva* plays a vital role in the context of *bhava*, it is essential to understand the term from a doctrinal viewpoint. In the *Vism*, the term is explained as "personality" or belief in "self":

Personality or self-hood (*attabhāva*) is called the physical body. Or, it is indeed the five aggregates. Because it comes merely as a concept depending on it [the five aggregates] (*Vism* 310).<sup>6</sup>

Since the above passage refers to the notion of personality as the meaning of *attabhāva*, from the assessment of the *suttas*, I can say that the term *attabhāva* is more or less a synonym for

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<sup>5</sup> Davids' understanding of the term *bhavagga* is also reflected in other scholars' interpretations. For example, Malalasekera interprets *bhavagga* as "the highest point of existence (among the gods, e.g., Vibh [aṅga]. 426: Mīl [indapaṇha]. 132), but, more often, to the highest point in the universe as opposed to Avīci, the lowest" (Malalasekera 1998, 368).

<sup>6</sup>27–28: *attabhāvo vuccati sarīraṃ. khandhapañcakam eva vā, tam upādāya paññattimattasambhavato.* Ñānamoli translates the aforementioned sentences, as: "Personality (*attabhāva*) is what the physical body is called; or it is just the pentad of aggregates, since it is actually only a concept derived from that pentad of aggregates." He, moreover, refers to the *Vism*-mḥ 298's explanation, as: "Here when the aggregates are not fully understood, there is naming (*abhidhāna*) of them and of the consciousness of them as self (*attā*), that is to say, the physical body or alternatively the five aggregates. 'Derived from': apprehending, gripping, making a support. 'Since it is actually a mere concept': because of presence (*sabbhāvato*) as a mere concept in what is called a being, though in the highest sense the 'being' is non-existent" (Ñānamoli 2010, 305).

*sakkāya* in the sense of personality with regard to the five aggregates,<sup>7</sup> and one has to eradicate *attabhāva* to attain enlightenment. For example, in the *Gomaya-piṇḍupama Sutta* of the SN, the Buddha is said to have taught his disciples that living a spiritual life (*brahmacariyavāsa*) for the complete cessation of suffering is not meaningful in the case of a person who assumes the existence of personality (*attabhāva-paṭilābha*) as permanent, eternal, and not subject to change with respect to the five aggregates. Conversely, one who does not assume the existence of personality (*attabhāva-paṭilābho natthi*) as permanent, eternal, and not subject to change, his living of a spiritual life is meaningful, and he can eliminate the whole mass of suffering (SN III 144). In this context, the term *attabhāva* embodies a belief in “self” which leads to the origination of personality (*sakkāya-samudaya-gāminī-paṭipadā*) and that personality leads to the origination of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya-gāminī*) (SN III 44).

The above discussion about the terms *bhavagga* and *attabhāva* demonstrates that the conceptual meaning of *bhava* has to be understood in the context of clinging to the personality-belief with regard to the five aggregates. In this regard, it is being argued here that the statement “*nibbāna* is the cessation of becoming” (*bhava-nirodho nibbānaṃ*, SN II 117, 14) means the complete termination of holding a belief in the “self” which means there is no more clinging to any of the five aggregates. So, in this connection, the doctrine of *bhava* also needs to be discussed together with the continuity of belief in the “self”. Now let us discuss the concept of *bhava* from the Pāli Canon.

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<sup>7</sup>In the *suttas*, the term *attabhāva* is also used simply to mean the “body”. For example, the *Pahārāda Sutta* of the AN (IV 200), *attabhāva* is employed in a simile with the concept of the great ocean which is the abode of great beings with one hundred *yojanas* long, two hundred *yojanas* long, etc. (*santi mahāsamudde yojanasatikā pi attabhāvā dviyojanasatikā pi attabhāvā, tiyojanasatikā pi attabhāvā catuyojanasatikā pi attabhāvā pañcayojanasatikā pi attabhāvā*, AN IV 200, 10–13).

## 2.3 Canonical Reference to *Bhava*

The term *bhava* is a masculine noun derived from the root  $\sqrt{bhū}$ , meaning “to be” or “to become.”<sup>8</sup> *Bhava* is used in compounds to point out different defilements, e.g., *bhava-āsava* (outflow of becoming) (DN II 81; SN V 189), *bhava-ogha* (flood of becoming) (DN III 230; SN V 59), *bhava-yoga* (bond of becoming) (DN III 230; SN V 59), *bhava-samyojana* (fetter of becoming) (MN I 477, 522; SN III 161), and *bhava-rāga-anusaya* (latent tendency of desire of becoming) (DN III 255; AN IV 7), etc. *Bhava* is also understood as the greeting runs in the *Mahā Govinda Sutta* of the DN: “May the Venerable Jotipāla be well!” (DN II 231).<sup>9</sup> It was already shown that, in the *Dutiya-agga Sutta* of the AN, in the context of the four foremost things—*rūpaggam* (the foremost of form), *vedanaggam* (the foremost of feelings), *saññaggam* (the foremost of perceptions), and *bhavaggam* (the foremost of becoming) – *bhava* is used with the foremost state, i.e., *bhavagga* (AN II 79). Malalasekera interprets the term *bhavagga* as “the highest point of existence (among the gods, e.g., Vibh. 426: Mil. 132), but, more often, to the highest point in the universe as opposed to Avīci, the lowest” (Malalasekera 1998, 368). According to Dhammajoti, it is the “existence-peak,” which is equal to the “sphere of neither-ideation-nor-nonideation” (Dhammajoti 2015, 374). The SED gives the meaning as “the farthest end of the world” (SED 749).

The term *bhava* also occurs as one of the conditioning factors of dependent co-arising: “because of the clinging-condition, *bhava* exists; because of the *bhava*-condition, birth exists” (SN II 1).<sup>10</sup> However, one can see the different characterizations of this *bhava* in the Pāli Canon. In the *suttas*, the conditioning factor of *bhava* is threefold: “Monks! these

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<sup>8</sup> With regard to the root  $\sqrt{bhū}$ , the PED gives several meanings of the word: as a verb “to become” (555), as a noun “creature,” and as a feminine noun “the earth” (*bhūmi*) (PED 563).

<sup>9</sup> 28: *bhavam atthu bhavantaṃ jotipālaṃ māṇavaṃ*.

<sup>10</sup> 20–21: *upādānapaccayā bhavo; bhavapaccayā jāti*.

are three *bhavas*: sensual-*bhava*, form-*bhava*, formless-*bhava*. Monks! this is called *bhava* (SN II 3).<sup>11</sup> But in the *abhidhamma*, the factor *bhava* is two kinds: “*bhava* is two-fold: there is action-*bhava*, there is rebirth-*bhava*” (Vibh 137).<sup>12</sup> With this interpretation, the Paṭiṣ extensively interprets the doctrine of dependent co-arising in the context of rebirth in three periods of time – past, present, and future (Paṭiṣ I 52). This interpretation also occurs in the *Vism* (580–81) and commentaries (SN-a II 14). About *bhava*, moreover, the *Bhava Sutta* of the AN says, when *kamma*, consciousness and craving are conditioned, a being’s consciousness becomes present in the triple elements of inferior, middle, and superior which, according to the AN Commentary, correspond to the sensory element (*kāma-dhātu*), form element (*rūpa-dhātu*), and formless element (*arūpa-dhātu*) respectively (AN-a II 334). Then there is the origination of further becoming or rebirth in future (*punabbhavābhiniḅbatti*). In this way, there is *bhava* (AN I 223–24).

In the Pāli Canon, it seems *bhava* is presented in two aspects: psychological and cosmological. As it was said, for the psychological aspect, *bhava* will be interpreted as the continuity of the flux of *samsāric* life which persists due to the clinging to the five aggregates of form, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness. For the cosmological aspect, *bhava* will be explained in the context of rebirth in relation to the Buddhist cosmological system of *kāma* (sensuality), *rūpa* (form) and *arūpa* (formlessness). Though *bhava* occurs in different contexts in the Pāli Canon, it is observed that contemporary scholars, such as Bodhi (2005) and Jurewicz (2005) deal with *bhava* as it occurs in the doctrine of dependent co-arising. However, they have provided different interpretations of *bhava* which will be discussed in the following section.

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<sup>11</sup> 10–12: *tayome bhikkhave, bhavā: kāmabhavo, rūpabhavo, arūpabhavo. ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave bhavo.*

<sup>12</sup> 1–2: *bhavo duvidhena: atthi kammabhavo, atthi upapattibhavo.*



## 2.4 Scholars' Different Interpretations of *Bhava*

Contemporary scholars often discuss “becoming,” “being,” and “existence” in connection with the Buddhist term *bhava* as it occurs in the doctrine of dependent co-arising: “because of the clinging-condition, *bhava* exists; because of the *bhava*-condition, birth exists” (SN II 1). However, they express different opinions. Bodhi (2000, 52) renders “existence” as the meaning of *bhava*, because for him “being” implies a metaphysical speculation. Harvey (2016, 59) prefers the meaning “being” but without a metaphysical association. Thanissaro (2008, 7) says “becoming” is more appropriate as a meaning for *bhava*, because “being” primarily signifies the metaphysical absolute. With the meaning “existence,” moreover, Bodhi emphasizes *bhava* as “rebirth” and “the cycle of existence,” and *punabbhava* as the “renewal of being in the future,” which represents the beginning of a fresh life (Bodhi 2015, 45). But, for the doctrinal connotation of *bhava*, the PED explains it as the following: “‘becoming,’ (form of) rebirth, (state of) existence, a ‘life.’ There are 3 states of existence conventionally enum [enumerated] as *kāma*, *rūpa*, *arūpa* or sensual existence, *deva* – corporeal, & formless existence” (PED 554). In the SED, it is said, for lexicographers, the word *bhava* is identical with *samsāra*, the world or worldly existence (SED 2003, 749). Moreover, in this dictionary, it is said, *bhava* is identical with *bhāva* which means “coming into existence, birth, production, origin” (ibid., 748). However, the PED says that *bhāva* is a Vedic term (558). In the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, the meaning of the term *bhāva* is rendered as “a state [of mind]” in respect to social status, e.g., *samaṇa-bhāva* (recluseship), or *eki-bhāva* (loneliness). *Bhava* as *bhāva* is not an important subject in our study.

Dauids says, the literal meaning of *bhava* is “becoming,” which is “a truer translation than ‘being’.” Dauids also thinks that the rendition of *bhava* as “rebirth” is contrary because it does not convey the true meaning (Dauids 2005, vii). This study uses “becoming” as a

translation for *bhava* with the hope of showing how “becoming,” “being,” and “existence” carry divergent metaphysical and ontological meanings, particularly in Indian philosophical thought.

Jurewicz interprets *bhava* and all other factors of dependent co-arising with reference to their Vedic counterparts. According to Jurewicz, the last three factors –*bhava*, *jāti*, and *jarā-maraṇa* – refer to the activity of beings’ rebirth that represents the continuity of craving “guarantee[ing] the coming into existence (*bhava*) of the creation” (Jurewicz 2005, 178). With examples from the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* (AU),<sup>13</sup> she shows some similarities that exist between the last three factors in Buddhist doctrine and the Vedic cosmology. She says that in the AU, three modes of birth of the *ātman* in human beings take place “inside a woman at the moment of conception, during the physical birth, and at death (AU 2). Thus, the *ātman* exists in the world before its birth and its death: its *bhava* precedes its *jāti* and *jarāmaraṇa*” (*ibid.*, 178). Although Jurewicz tries to show these similarities between Buddhism and Brahmanism, she says that she is fully aware that in the specific contexts of Vedic cosmology and the Buddha’s teaching of dependent co-arising, these concepts display a range of distinct meanings (*ibid.*, 169). However, about *bhava*, she says, as interpreted by later Buddhists, that the term in the context of dependent co-arising refers to a similar term in connection with Brahmanism:

Describing the existence of the *ātman* in the form of an embryo inside the womb, AU several times uses the causative form of the verb  $\sqrt{bhū}$  in order to denote that his life is supported by his mother. It is not impossible that the term *bhava* in the Buddha’s chain refers to this very image. The possible references to this part of AU could be confirmed by another, later Buddhist interpretation of the *pratītyasamutpāda*, according to which these three links describe the existence that follows the existence described in links 3-9 (*viññāna-upādāna*). (*ibid.*, 178)

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<sup>13</sup> Olivelle identifies AU as a pre-Buddhist prose text dated to the sixth to fifth centuries B.C.E. (Olivelle 1998, 12–13).

While Jurewicz sketchily traces the antiquity of the concept of conditioning factor *bhava* from the root  $\sqrt{bhū}$ , relative to verb *bhavati* (becomes), from its earlier appearance in the AU in the sense of a person's attaining new conditions in "rebirth," according to Davids, the verb *bhavati* is rarely used in the *Piṭakas* in connection with "rebirth". For Davids, the meaning of *bhavati* or *bhavissati* is no other than "is" or "will be". Though Davids has not explicitly explained the term for rebirth in the *suttas*, Davids attributes the meaning *uppajjati* (arises) to "renewal life" (Davids 1937, 72). However, the meaning of *uppajjati* as "renewal life" is also debatable when we reflect on the principle of dependent co-arising: "when this is [present], that is [present], with the arising of this, that arises; when this is not [present], that is not [present], with the cessation of this, that ceases" (MN III 63).<sup>14</sup> Here, the verb *uppajjati* does not indicate rebirth, rather it signifies the arising phenomena that occur from moment to moment.

In the opinion of Davids, the word *bhava* rarely occurs in the earlier *Upaniṣads*, but it is frequently used in the Pāli *suttas* (Davids 1937, 51). Similarly, Dasgupta says the term is not found in the earlier *Upaniṣads* and it is only used in the Pāli literature for the first time as a philosophical expression. But, like Jurewicz, Dasgupta shows some comparable features between the concept of *bhava* in the *Upaniṣads* and that in Buddhism. As stated by Dasgupta, according to Buddhism, with the condition of grasping to things arises desire, which is called *upādāna* (clinging). This clinging to things is dependent upon craving (*taṇhā*); so when there is *upādāna* there must be *taṇhā*. According to Dasgupta, this is similar to what is said in the *Upaniṣads*: "whatever one betakes himself to, so does he work (*Yatkratur bhavati tat karma kurute*, B'rh [Bṛihadaranyaka] IV, iv. 5)... Whatever one desires so does he betake himself

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<sup>14</sup>26–28: *imasmimṃ sati, idaṃ hoti; imass' uppādā idaṃ uppajjati; imasmimṃ asati, idaṃ na hoti; imassa nirodhā idhaṃ nirujjhati.*

to (*sayathākāmo bhavati tat kratu bhavati*)” (Dasgupta 1991, 187). Dasgupta further notes that neither the word *upādāna* nor *trṣṇā* (*taṇhā* in Pāli) is found in the earlier *Upaniṣads*, but the same notions are expressed through the words *kratu* and *kāma*. Dasgupta accepts Candrakīrti’s interpretation of *bhava* as *karma* (*punar bhava janakam karma*) in the *Mādhyamika Vṛtti*, and says *bhava* means *karma*, which, according to Dasgupta, is better than the meaning “existence” (*ibid.*, 187).

Bodhi, however, translates *bhava* as “existence” in the translation of SN (Bodhi 2000, 52). But, in the earlier revised translation of MN, he interpreted the meaning of *bhava* as “being”. Yet, in the SN translation, Bodhi was not convinced with “being,” because, for him, the English word “being” more likely suggests “Being” as the “absolute object of philosophical speculation” and that which “does not sufficiently convey the sense of concreteness intrinsic to *bhava*” (Bodhi 2005, 450). Furthermore, seeking an alternative term to use in his SN translation, Bodhi had initially tried the word “becoming,” and later decided to return to “existence” used in his earlier translations elsewhere. Although Bodhi interprets the term *bhava* as “existence,” he qualifies his position in the following manner:

*Bhava*, however, is not “existence” in the sense of the most universal ontological category, that which is shared by everything from the dishes in the kitchen sink to the numbers in a mathematical equation. Existence in the latter sense is covered by the verb *atthi* and the abstract noun *atthitā*. *Bhava* is concrete sentient existence in one of the three realms of existence posited by Buddhist cosmology, a span of life beginning with conception and ending in death. In the formula of dependent origination it is understood to mean both (i) the active side of life that produces rebirth into a particular mode of sentient existence, in other words rebirth-producing kamma; and (ii) the mode of sentient existence that results from such activity. (Bodhi 2000, 52–53)

Bodhi cites the commentarial and sub-commentarial explanations of the *Kaccānagotta Sutta* of SN (II 16-17), and defines *bhava* as “existence,” but not “being”. He gives reasons for this that the Buddha referred to this experiencing world depending upon a duality *atthitā* and

*natthitā*, which are the idea of existence or “eternalism” (*sassata*), and the idea of non-existence or “annihilationism” (*uccheda*) respectively. The Buddha is said to have taught that one who sees the origin and cessation of this world with right insight does not fall into the trap of this duality. Bodhi clarifies that in order to explain the terms *atthitā* and *natthitā*, if we take the commentarial and sub-commentarial explanations as “existence” and “non-existence,” it would be misleading on the basis of metaphysical assumptions. Instead, Bodhi interprets *atthitā* and *natthitā* as “the idea of existence” and “the idea of non-existence” respectively. Bodhi further says, unfortunately this *atthitā* and *bhava* both had to be rendered as “existence” though they are derived from different verbal roots. He says: “while *atthita* is the notion of existence in the abstract, *bhava* is concrete individual existence in one or another of the three realms” (Bodhi 2005, 450). However, Harvey does not prefer the meaning “existence” which is derived from the verb *atthi*, to exist. He says that the term *bhava* is from the verb *bhavati*, meaning “is”, or in shortened form, *hoti*.<sup>15</sup> In this connection, though he acknowledges “becoming” as a valid interpretation, he prefers “being” except for the fact of metaphysical association (Harvey 2016, 59).

Thanissaro chooses “becoming” as more appropriate for *bhava* than “being” or “existence” (Thanissaro 2008, 7). He defends his position on the basis of two reasons:

First, *bhava* is not “Being” in the sense of a primary metaphysical absolute. Instead it is a part of on-going, dynamic process, something produced repeatedly in a complex network of cause and effect – what Sn [*Suttanipāta*] calls the “stream” of *bhava*.

Second, becoming [*bhava*] acts as a transition point between two contexts in the stream of conditions leading to suffering. It is conditioned by such purely psychological factors as craving and clinging, and yet it provides the locus for processes that occur both on the psychological and cosmological level: birth, aging, illness, and death. (*ibid.*, 14)

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<sup>15</sup> Davids also says that *bhava*, whose literal meaning is “becoming,” can be rendered from the verb *hoti*, but not *atthi* (Davids 2005, x).

Comparing Bodhi and Thanissaro’s clarifications with regard to the rendition of *bhava*, it should be noted here that while Bodhi justifies his position, Thanissaro, except describing “Being” as the metaphysical absolute, has not explained why “existence” is not appropriate for *bhava*.

Ñāṇavīra Thera, however, prefers to translate *bhava* as “being” or “existence”: “*Bhava* is to be translated as ‘being’ (or ‘existence’)” (Ñāṇavīra 2003, 97). According to him, *bhava* as “being” involves the existence of the illusory subject notion “I”, and with the cessation of this “I” there is cessation of *bhava*, which is *bhavanirodha* (cessation of becoming) for an Arahāt. He defines the term in the following manner: it is *bhava* for him who takes what appears in him as his “self,” “so as long as it goes on he continues to be a ‘self’, at least in his own eyes.” Ñāṇavīra understands the notion of *bhava* as the continuation of belief in “self” by differentiating a worldly person (*puthujjana*) and an Arahāt:

The *puthujjana* knows that people are born and die; and since he thinks ‘my self exists’ so he also thinks ‘my self was born’ and ‘my self will die’. The *puthujjana* sees a ‘self’ to whom the words birth and death apply. In contrast to the *puthujjana*, the arahāt has altogether got rid of *asmimāna* (not to speak of *attavāda*), and does not even think ‘I am’. This is *bhavanirodha*, cessation of being. And since he does not think ‘I am’ he also does not think ‘I was born’ or ‘I shall die’. In other words, he sees no ‘self’ or even ‘I’ for the words birth and death to apply to. (*ibid.*, 21)

Ñāṇavīra’s interpretation of *bhava* is worth noting, because rather than dealing with time or the dynamic processes of cosmic objects and phenomena, he directly points out that *bhava* refers to holding a belief in the “self” which is *attavāda* or *upādāna* (clinging).

With regard to holding a belief in the “self” (*atta-vāda-upādāna*), Padmasiri gives another explanation of the false conception of personality from which *bhava-taṇhā* (craving for becoming) occurs. He describes this concept as the belief in personality which includes psychological and mental processes, and is assumed to exist as a permanent entity that continues

even after death. According to him, in day-to-day life, worldly people retreat into a self-seeking nature, and take refuge in self-indulgence. In this nature, worldly people hold a false concept of personality. And, this self-instinct can be clearly described as *bhava-taṇhā* (the craving for personal immortality) in Buddhism, which “implies a belief in the existence of a permanent entity, a persisting ego” (Padmasiri 1992, 119–20 & 140).

Padmasiri, on the other hand, gives two kinds of interpretation of *vibhava-taṇhā* (the craving for self-annihilation). First, it represents the existence of a self-identity with the psychical and mental processes that will be annihilated at death, and those who hold this view give paramount importance to the present life. Second, those, who suffer from loathing and revulsion of the body, resort to self-inflicted tortures and suicide to avoid their sufferings. But this kind of behaviour does not spring from a desire for success in the present life, it springs from dislike and repugnance of the body. In this context, Padmasiri says that the former form of *vibhava-taṇhā* is connected with sensual desire (*kāma-rāga*), and the latter occurs from the root of hatred (*dosa*) (*ibid.*, 140).

As for the doctrinal meanings of *bhava* and *vibhava*, Somaratne gives a new interpretation. Similar to *bhava* and *vibhava* discussed above, his interpretation is analogous with Padmasiri’s. But Somaratne adopts a new explanation for the term *bhava* as “‘self-continuity’, meaning continuity as self or this present I,” and *vibhava* as “‘self-discontinuity’, meaning discontinuity as self or as the present I.” Furthermore, he says *bhava-taṇhā* is “craving for self-continuity,” and *vibhava-taṇhā* is “craving for self-discontinuity”, and *bhava-diṭṭhi* is “self-continuity view” and *vibhava-diṭṭhi* is “self-discontinuity view” (Somaratne 2016, 123).

Somaratne explains that self-continuity is conditioned by clinging (*upādāna*), which is the process of developing our initial perceptual experience into the notion of “I, my and mine” that stems from clinging to the five aggregates. With regard to the concept of *bhava*, Somaratne describes the clinging to the five aggregates as self-continuity, or the conceit of “I”, which is also stated in the principle of dependent co-arising as “with clinging as condition, self-continuity is”, *upādāna-paccayābhavo*” (*ibid.*, 126).

### 2.4.1 *Punabbhava*

The *suttas* contain sufficient evidence to show that the Buddha and his disciples did talk explicitly about *punabbhava* (further-becoming/rebirth): “Friend! the origination of further becoming is produced because of delighting in this and that part of beings [the clinging aggregates] who are hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving” (MN I 294).<sup>16</sup> Also, the Buddha describes his attainment of *nibbāna* with the phrase that “there is now no further becoming” (*na-tthi dāni punabbhava ti*, MN I 167, 29). This phrase can clearly be understood from the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of DN in which the Buddha describes his attainment of enlightenment as the cutting off of the net of becoming (*ucchinna-bhava-netti*),<sup>17</sup> and that he remained as a Thus Gone (Tathāgata) or Awakened One until the dissolution of his body:

The body of the Tathāgata stands with the cutting off of the net of becoming. As long as the body remains, human beings and deities will see him. But with the disintegration of the body and the exhaustion of life-span, human beings and deities will see him no more. Just as with the cutting of the stalk of a bunch of mangoes, all

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<sup>16</sup> 18–20: *avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ kho āvuso sattānaṃ taṅhāsaññojanānaṃ tatrataṭṭhābhinandanā evaṃ āyatim punabbhavaābhiniḅbatti hotīti*.

<sup>17</sup>About *bhava-netti*, Hardy provides an extensive elaboration. He says, *netti* is used in a bahubhīhi, for example, *netticchinna bhikkhuno* (Ud 46; Iti 94) whose usual meaning is ‘rope,’ or ‘cord’. But the doctrinal meaning of *bhava-netti* is a synonym of *taṅhā* which leads a person to *saṃsāric* existence:

Bhava-netti (e.g. Dh.S.1059, 1139, 1230) is the leading to existence as well as that by which this leading is effected, with *taṅhā*. For *taṅhā* leads men to existence, and by *taṅhā* they are led to it as cows (are led) by a cord bound about their necks wherever they are wanted (Asl.p.364). Thus *bhavanetti* is used as a synonym of *taṅhā*”. (Hardy 1995, vii)



the mangoes connected to the stalk follow with it; in the same way, the body of the Tathāgata stands with the cutting off of the net of becoming.<sup>18</sup>

From the above statement it can be said that the Buddha continued with his life-span with no more becoming or further becoming (*natthidāni punabbhavo*, SN II 171, 2) until his great demise.

However, one of the major difficulties in Pāli canonical studies is to explain the concrete meaning of the term *punabbhava*. Most scholars, who follow the Pāli tradition, think *punabbhava* in the *suttas* means “rebirth” or “renewed existence”. Yet, among scholars, one can find diverse interpretations. For example, Nyanatiloka says, “in the *suttas*, the terms for rebirth are chiefly *punabbhava*, ‘renewed existence’, and *abhinibbatti* ‘arising’; or both combined as *punabbhavābhinibbatti*” (Nyanatiloka 1980, 263). Kalupahana (1976, 32) and Bodhi (2005, 45) also interpret *punabbhava* as “rebirth” which indicates the successive lives that are linked together forming the beginning of a new life. In this connection, Bodhi says that the factor *bhava* in dependent co-arising represents “rebirth” in the three realms:

In the formula of dependent origination, “existence” signifies both the planes of rebirth and the types of kamma that produce rebirth into those planes [sensuality, form, and formlessness]. (Bodhi 2005, 446)

But, Somaratne somewhat disagrees with the above interpretations, and says that while the meaning of *bhava* is “‘self-continuity’, meaning continuity as self or this present I,” *punabbhava* is the succession of self-continuity: “Self-continuity conduces to progression of self-continuity, *punabbhava*” (Somaratne 2016, 135). About the translation of *punabbhava*, Somaratne highlights an important point: “*puna-bbhava* is the progression of self-continuity

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<sup>18</sup>9–16: *ucchinna-bhava-nettiko, ..., tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. yāvassa kāyo ṭhassati, tāva naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā. kāyassa bhedaṃ uddhaṃ jīvitapariyādānā na naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā. seyyathāpi, ... ,amba-piṇḍiyā vaṇṭacchinnāya yāni kānici ambāni vaṇṭapaṭibaddhāni, sabbāni tāni tad-anvayāni bhavanti – evam eva kho, ..., ucchinna-bhava-nettiko tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati.*

and it seems the translation of this word as rebirth or ‘coming back’, *puna-r-eti*, (Sn 99) will not convey its doctrinal meaning” (*ibid.*, 139, footnote 52).

After analysing the scholars’ interpretations, I argue here that though the interpretation of *bhava* and *punabbhava* as “rebirth” or “renewed existence” do not misrepresent the fundamental tenet of Theravāda Buddhism, it is necessary to understand them within the framework of the goal of soteriological purpose of the Buddha’s teaching.

In the *suttas*, the term *bhava* and *punabbhava* occur in different contexts, therefore, they may not be an explanation only for “renewed existence” or “rebirth” after death, but can also be continuity of *samsāric* existence which is unsatisfactoriness of life endured from moment to moment. This continuity of *samsāric* existence has to be understood as being afflicted by *bhava*, clinging, craving, etc., because enlightenment is also understood as the “cessation becoming” (*bhava-nirodha*). Besides, if we accept the fact that one can attain enlightenment in this very life by eliminating the net of *bhava*, then *bhava* and *punabbhava* are primarily of a psychological process. This is so because when the Buddha attained enlightenment through destruction of the net of *bhava*, immediately *punabbhava* was also eliminated in him. Therefore, the Buddha emphatically expounded to his disciples that after the attainment of enlightenment, the Buddha’s body continued without the net of *bhava* (DN I 46). On the basis of this example, it is fair to say that the *sutta* meaning of *punabbhava* may not only be “rebirth” or “renewed existence” after death, it is also “further becoming” which implies no more continuation of *samsāric* life for a living Arahāt. Thus, I say that the meaning of *punabbhava* may not be rebirth in strict sense, it is also the defiling tendencies of the mind, the eradication of which, there is no further continuation of *samsāric* suffering in this very life. With regard to the concepts of *bhava* and *punabbhava*, it is also important to note that the Buddha explained the human predicament as a viciously circular process

consisting of *bhava*, craving, etc. As a result, the Buddha discovered in his own experience that there is a possibility of overcoming the conditioning factor of *bhava*. In that sense, overcoming *bhava* means precisely the complete cessation of suffering which is also known as the cessation of *bhava*. Now we would investigate this issue by focusing on the *suttas*.

In the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the cause of suffering is described as follows: “it is this craving which leads to further-becoming accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight in this and that” (SN V 421).<sup>19</sup> Here, it is significant that the Buddha ends the description of his enlightenment with the following expression: “there is now no further becoming” (*natthidāni punabbhavo*, SN V 423, 11). Both the aforesaid statements show that *bhava* and *punabbhava* are due to craving which is the cause of suffering. In this regard, this suffering is briefly described as caused by the five clinging-aggregates (*pañcupādānakkhandhā pi dukkhā*, SN V 421, 24). This assertion clearly demonstrates what is considered suffering, its cause and its cessation within the five aggregates. Therefore, in Buddhist teachings, I understand that the five aggregates are crucial components to understand *bhava* and *punabbhava*. In the following portion, the five aggregates are discussed by examining the *suttas*.

In the *Pañcavaggīya Sutta* of the SN, it is evident that the Buddha’s teaching is centred on the five aggregates of each individual, which are subject to the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and not-self:

Monks! form is not-self. If form were the self, then this form would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible [to say] with regard to form: “Let my form be thus, let my form be not thus.” And, monks! since form is not-self, therefore that form

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<sup>19</sup> 26–27: *yāyaṃ taṇhā ponobhavikā nandi rāgasahagatā tatra tatrābhinandinī*.

leads to affliction, and it is not possible [to say] with regard to form: “Let my form be thus, let my form be not thus” (SN III 66).<sup>20</sup>

The above passage is equally applicable to the other four aggregates: feeling, perception, conditioning forces and consciousness. In this respect, the Buddha also describes the other two characteristics as the five aggregates are impermanent and subject to suffering. And one, who experiences repulsion towards the five aggregates, becomes detached from clinging (*upādāna*), which in turn leads to his/her liberation (SN III 66–68). As far as the Buddha’s teaching is concerned, these characteristics are implied in the principle of dependent co-arising. Therefore, it is understood that any worldly persons, who are unskilled in the doctrines of the Buddha, regard the body or any part of the five aggregates as “self”. When the worldly persons consider their body as “self,” they are pleased with their body and think that it belongs to them. Hence, their physical body becomes the object of the individual’s attention and captivates all their interest. This is a primary concern in Buddhist teachings, where all kinds of craving flourish and lead to suffering in the life series.

The worldly persons, driven by self-interest, pursue sensual pleasures. This interest is not merely a mental edifice, rather it is nurtured by a deeper affective process which arises due to sensual desires. As a result, uninstructed people cling to the belief in “self”, which is conditioned by craving. When clinging is a condition in conceptualizing the five aggregates as “self,” the continued persistence of “self” prevails. Due to craving, the worldly persons also look after “self”-maintenance and “self”-contentment. So long as this “self”-maintenance and contentment remain, the affective processes continue to manifest in them. This process of succession of individuality can be called *bhava* in the psychological perspective. Hence, the

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<sup>20</sup>27–33: *rūpaṃ bhikkhave anattā. rūpañ ca hidaṃ bhikkhave attā abhaviṣṣa nayidaṃ rūpaṃ ābādhāya saṃvatteyya. labbheṭṭha ca rūpe evaṃ me rūpaṃ hotu evaṃ me rūpaṃ mā aho sīti. yasmā ca kho bhikkhave rūpaṃ anattā tasmā rūpaṃ ābādhāya saṃvattati. na ca labbhati rūpe evaṃ me rūpaṃ hotu evaṃ me rūpaṃ mā aho sīti.*

argument here is that *bhava* and *punabbhava* relate to the psychological features of *samsāric* continuity which form personality-belief (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) regarding the body. As the personality belief continues, it drives on *jāti* (birth) as the successive contingency. And finally, a person remains in the state of unsatisfactoriness. As the process of self-continuity leads to unsatisfactoriness, the factor *bhava* functions as part of an on-going process which continually produces a complex psychological net of inter-dependency in the psycho-physical existence of an individual. In this sense, though it may not be a more precise translation for *bhava*, the present study would prefer the term “becoming,” as this word has an equivalence, rather than the words “being” or “existence”.

#### 2.4.2 “Becoming,” “Being,” and “Existence”

In the above discussion of *bhava*, it can be noticed that scholars often mixed up the notions of “becoming,” “being,” and “existence” with *bhava*. As there exists an ambiguity, it is important to discuss the distinct interpretations of “becoming”, “being”, and “existence” which are central topics in Indian philosophy.

In Vedic thought, e.g., in the BU, a text mainly focusing on *Ātman* (Soul), the notion of “being” (*sat*)<sup>21</sup> is often discussed as the “Absolute”-ness (*Brahman*) which is beyond all temporal manifestations. In the BU, the “Absolute”-ness is discussed as “imperishable” or “immutable” (*akṣara*) which is not coarse, not finite, not short, not long, not adhesive, unchanging, everlasting, without fear, and whosoever departs from this world without

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<sup>21</sup> Arapura has done an extensive study on *sat* or “being”. He says “the word [*sat*] itself is the present participle of the root *as*, to be. There is another root, *bhū*, with the same meaning, which also yields a variety of nouns and participles, none of which, however, can be translated as “Being” with a capital B, as befits the need of ontology. *Bhūta* at most means a being; and *bhāva* means becoming or coming to be, or, even, the way something is” (Arapura 1986, 05).

knowing this *akṣara*, he/she will be in a miserable world, and whoever knows this, is a Brāhmaṇa, the knower of Brahman (BU, “Eighth Brāhmaṇa,” 9–10).

According to Nakamura (1964, 77), this “Absolute” is generally known as “being”, and this metaphysical principle as the “Absolute” was not laid down in early Buddhist teachings. In Buddhism, only the principle of dependent co-arising is eternal, whether the Buddha has appeared or has not appeared. But, this eternal law of dependent co-arising is stated in relation to the changing qualities (SN II 25–26). These qualities can be defined with respect to three temporal characteristics, i.e., impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and not-self (*anatta*). Therefore, one can say that though in Indian thought of different schools, and especially in the *Upaniṣad*, the idea of “being” receives the central consideration, in Buddhist teachings, the concept of “becoming” is more relevant with respect to the three-fold characteristics. These characteristics relate to the arising (*uppāda*), passing away (*vaya*), and continuation or change of what endures (*thitassa aññathatta*).<sup>22</sup> In the AN, these three characteristics are called *saṅkhatalakkhaṇāni* (characteristics of conditioned things) (AN I 152).

These three characteristics are also explained in the older *Upaniṣads* like the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (III 1).<sup>23</sup> These three characteristics are also found in the *Tattvārthādhigama Sūtra* of Jainism, as the following: “it is called being or substance which

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<sup>22</sup>According to Karunadasa, these three characteristics are the central doctrines on the basis of which the doctrine of momentariness has been developed among Buddhist schools. He has presented an analysis based on the *suttas* that these characteristics are employed to mean “all cognizable objects on the empirical level, which are brought about by causes and conditions. But, later in the *Abhidhamma*, they have been applied not in the sense of “composite things” but to the elementary *dharmas* that alone have ontological ultimacy” (Karunadasa 2003, 127).

<sup>23</sup>Jayatilleke says that *upaniṣadic* thought impacted Buddhism. He places the rise of Buddhism somewhat close to the period of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (Jayatilleke 2010, 65). However, Glasenapp says that the principal notions of *upaniṣadic* wisdom are different from those of Buddhism because *Upaniṣadic* concepts such as “Ātman and Brahman do not appear anywhere in the Buddhist texts” (Glasenapp 1995, 4).

is characterized by arising, passing away and continuation without changing its nature” (*utpādayayadhrauvyayuktam sat*) (The *Tattvārthādhigama Sūtra*, V. 29). According to Matilal, in Jainism, these characteristics take place in the case of each event, each occurring or changing state, each of which embodies origin, passing away, and continuity (Matilal 2001, 101). Nakamura states that the idea of “becoming” is little discussed in Jainism (Nakamura 1964, 78). However, Matilal cites Siddhasena Divākara’s *Sammati-tarka-prakarana* (Chapter 1, verse 12), and gives an insight into “being” (*sat*) and its becoming nature as “to become” which can be referred to as the “substance exist” and “modification exist” respectively. Matilal says, “being” is substance, and the modification is being’s becoming nature which explains how everything originates, decays, and continues. So, in that sense, “being” refers to substance which is identified with the notion of “it is” or “it exists”, meaning everything exists endowed with the threefold characteristics of arising, passing away and continuation. Therefore, in Jainism, “being” is the notion of substance which cannot be explained without its becoming attitude. Moreover, Matilal refers to Kundakunda’s *Pravacanasāra* (Chapter 2, verse 8) and says, “Kundakunda observes that a substance has both natures: from the standpoint of one ‘one-nature’ it is being (*sat*, unchanging), and from another standpoint it has triple characters, origin, decay and continuity” (Matilal 2001, 100). In this context, in Jainism, “being” is what signifies the reality, and combined with “being”, there is being’s becoming nature as being subject to origin, decay and continuation. However, though both Jainism and Buddhism have close connection they differ fundamentally because Buddhists “altogether deny the substantive view of the world and the soul. They propound the theory of flux which alone holds good in the psycho-physical world” (Upadhyaya 1971, 93).

Vārṣyāyani, a philosopher of language in ancient India around the 5th century BC, described the phenomenal world with the six-fold attributes i.e., appearing (*jāyate*), existing (*astī*), changing (*vardhate*), increasing (*vipariṇamate*), decreasing (*apakṣiyate*), and getting extinct (*vinaśyati*), which are known as the “modification of being” (*bhāvavikāra*) (Nakamura 1964, 602, footnote 19). The theory of *bhāvavikāra* shows how, as a consequence of descending into the womb of a mother, the “soul” passes through various states such as birth, existence, growth, change, decay and death (Bansat-Boudon and Tripathi 2011, 75). The six *bhāvavikāras* are presented in order to show the fundamental idea of “becoming”. However, Nakamura cites Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* (BS I. 1. 2), and says Vārṣyāyani’s theory was refuted by Śaṅkara as meaningless. Śaṅkara maintained only the three-fold characteristic, i.e., arising, passing away, and continuation in the aspect of “being” which also acts as the becoming attitude of the “Soul” (Nakamura 1964, 78).<sup>24</sup>

It has been mentioned that this three-fold characteristic is referred to as the phenomenal becoming (AN I 152). Nakamura mentions the *Madhyamaka-kārikā* (XV.5) and its Commentary (XIII. 3, 5; XV. 8) by Candrakīrti, and says that in the Sarvāstivāda school of Buddhist thought, a four-fold characteristic is presented by adding the fourth condition, i.e., *jarā* or decay, which was interpreted as “changing to other form” (*anyathā-bhāva*, *anyathātva*). Thus, in the Sarvāstivāda tradition, there are the four-fold characteristics, namely, arising, continuation, passing away, and decaying. But this theory was not accepted by all Buddhist schools of thought (Nakamura 1964, 78). Karunadasa cites the *Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya* (II 77), and says that the Vaibhāsika school of Buddhist thought also increased the

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<sup>24</sup>Also see Nakamura, *A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy* Part Two, 2004, 619. About these three characteristics, Swami Vireswarananda notes: “In the definition given by the Sutra, the origin, sustenance and dissolution are characteristic of the world and as such are in no way related to Brahman, which is eternal and changeless; yet these indicate Brahman, which is imagined to be the cause of the world, just as an imagined snake indicates the rope when we say, “that which is the snake is the rope.”” (Vireswarananda 1936, 25)



number of characteristics to four as “*jāti* or *utpāda* (origination), *sthiti* (presence or duration), *jaratā* (decay or modification), and *anityatā* or *vyaya* (impermanence or dissolution)” (Karunadasa 2003, 130). In this context, Kalupahana says that the Sautrāntikas differ from all other Buddhist schools because they accept two moments only, namely, *utpāda* (arising) and *vyaya* (passing away), and reject the other moment that is *thiti-kṣaṇa* (static-moment) (Kalupahana 1991, 484).

With reference to “being,” Indian thought, particularly the *Upaniṣads*, emphasize the characteristic of “being” or “Absolute” as everlasting and eternal. Thus in the *Upaniṣads*, the reality is described as the state of “being” or eternal substance, *Brahman*. In that sense, “being” refers to the birth of a soul which is known to be the stage of existence and its manifestation is the stage of arising, existing, changing, continuation, etc. And, whoever knows the “Absolute” or “being”, he is a Brāhmaṇa, the knower of Brahman which is the final goal of Brahmanism.

On the other hand, in Buddhist teachings, particularly in the *suttas*, there is not any discussion of “Absolute” reality as eternal and everlasting. Rather it is said, there is nothing permanent (*nicca*), everlasting (*dhuva*), eternal (*sassata*), not subject to change (*avipariṇāmā dhamma*) (MN I 138). At this point, the theoretical standpoint of Buddhism, particularly the teachings in the *suttas*, is significantly different from that of Brahmanism. Buddhism does not recognize the “self” as a metaphysical entity. So, the discussion on the relationship between the “universal self” (*brahman*) and the “individual self” (*ātman*) is meaningless (Hirakawa 1990,15). In this regard, the principal notions of *Upaniṣadic* wisdom are different from those in Buddhism because the *Upaniṣadic* concepts “Ātman and Brahman do not appear anywhere in the Buddhist texts” (Glasenapp 1995, 4). However, it does not mean that the Buddhists

necessarily deny the existence of a reflexive self. They only refuse to recognize any permanent entity as “self”. In this context, the teachings that occur in the *suttas* are to be seen in comparison with Vedic thought of which one of the distinguishing features is to avoid metaphysical reality, and to reveal spiritual life (*brahmacarya*). This point is similarly observed by Wijesekera:

[A]ll conditioned things or processes are transient or impermanent. This is not given as the result of metaphysical inquiry, or of any mystical intuition, but as a straightforward judgement to be arrived at by investigation and analysis. It is founded on unbiased thought and has a purely empirical basis (Wijesekera 1982, 2).

In this regard, it can be discerned that though in both traditions, the characteristics of arising, passing away, and continuation are discussed, their respective goals are different. Buddhist *nibbāna* is defined as *bhava-nirodha* (*nibbāna* is cessation of becoming) which is to be known as the cessation of continuation of a belief in the “self”. But, in the *Upaniṣads*, “being” or “absolute” is the final realization while the becoming nature “to become” is the activity of empirical world. In the *Upaniṣads*, “being” and being nature as “to become” are combined as “it is” (*atthi*, the noun form of which is *atthitā* in Pāli) which reveals the eternal “being,” the substance. Therefore, this study prefers to render the meaning “becoming” for *bhava*, rather than “being” and “existence”. In this context, Wijesekera’s assertion is worth noting:

According to the Buddha, there is no “being,” but only a ceaseless “becoming” (*bhava*). Every thing is the product of antecedent causes, and, therefore, of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppanna*). These causes themselves are not everlasting and static, but simply antecedent aspects of the same ceaseless becoming. Thus we may conceive everything as the result of a concatenation of dynamic processes (*saṅkkhāra*) and, therefore, everything created or formed is only created or formed through these processes and not by any agency outside its own nature (Wijesekera 1982, 2).

I said that Buddhists necessarily deny the existence of self. Here one more point needs to be added. Though Buddhism talks about the existence of one’s “self”, it should be noted that this

“self” is always associated with the individual’s own five aggregates. In Buddhist teachings, this “self” is characterised by belief in a false “self” that falls into the speculative extreme of eternalism (*sassatavāda*). This speculative view is described as a foolish teaching (*kevalo paripūro bāladhammo*, MN I 138, 9). This is so because, though ordinary people deliberate that there is a “self” as permanent entity, from the Buddha’s teaching it can be discerned that there is no “self” to be found. Therefore, the distinction between the term *bhava*, according to Williams (1974, 59) and Walshe (1995, 37) as the “cycle of existence” or “rebirth” after death is not relevant for the pursuit of the highest goal in Buddhism. As the condition of *bhava* is basically determined by the desire and craving of an individual, we are to speak of a reality following the principle of dependent co-arising that the realization of the utmost goal, *Nibbāna*, is to cut off the continuity of holding a belief in the “self”, or the becoming nature of individuality which is perfectly known as the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*).

We have already observed that many scholars such as Williams (1974, 59), Bodhi (2005, 451) and Walshe (1995, 37) have interpreted *bhava* as the “cycle of existence” and “rebirth”. From this point of view, the idea of “being” or “existence” is considered as primary, and the idea of “becoming” is secondary. In this interpretation, the meanings “being” and “existence” are more or less equivalent because they begin with the conception of birth from the mother’s womb, and their nature evolves through passing away and continuation as an individual. This suggests the cycle of an individual as “birth-death-birth”. But, from a doctrinal view point the meaning of *bhava* is the continuity of *samsāric* life due to the clinging to the five aggregates, “becoming” is considered primary and “being” or “existence” is secondary. We have observed that according to the principle of dependent co-arising, suffering is defined as “the mass of aggregates” (*dukkha-khandhā*) (SN II 2) for which twelve factors are conditioned. Again, in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* of the

SN, it is said in brief that the five aggregates of clinging are sufferings (*pañcupādānakkhandhā pi dukkhā*, SN V 421, 24). Here the general agreement is that it is not the birth and death in three localities of life-existence which is suffering, but holding a belief in the existence of a “self” in the five aggregates is the central basis of suffering (SN III 66–68). Therefore, the factor *upādāna* (clinging) in the principle of dependent co-arising refers to holding a belief in “self” or “I” which is the proximate condition for *bhava* and *punabbhava*. As it is said that when one abides by lust, then the five aggregates affected by clinging; and due to craving it brings further becoming (*punabbhava*) (MN III 188). As a result, suffering continues as the stream of a river:

Just as a river flowing down from the mountains, going far with a swift current, carrying along with it, so that there is not a moment, an instant, a second that will stand, but instead it goes on, rushes, and flows onward, as like, brahmins, human life is like a river flowing down from the mountains. It is limited and trifling; it has much suffering, much despairs. One should wisely understand this. One should do what is skilful and lead the spiritual life. For one who is born there is no escape from death (AN IV 137).<sup>25</sup>

The above passage appears to be a supplementary explanation for understanding suffering, which arises from moment to moment due to the conditioning factors of dependent co-arising. When one moment ceases another moment arises and passes away, and the process continues without interruption. This process is known as being of the nature of impermanence, suffering and not-self. Therefore, for a living Arahant, it can be called only “the five aggregates” (*pañcakkhandā*), because all sufferings have ceased through the complete termination of the “self”-view. With regard to this, it is not surprising to mention that, while the Buddhist teaching asks one to relinquish the belief in an immortal “self,” it has instead presented a new physiology or analysis of body and consciousness.

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<sup>25</sup>18–23: *nadī pabbateyyā dūraṅgamā sīghasotā hārahārīnī, natthi so khaṇo vā layo vā muhutto vā, yaṃ sā āramati, atha kho sā gacchat’ eva vattat’ eva sandat’ eva, evam eva kho brāhmaṇā nadīpabbateyyupamaṃ jīvitam manussānaṃ parittaṃ lahukaṃ bahudukkhaṃ bahūpāyasaṃ, mantāya boddhabbaṃ. kattabbaṃ kusalaṃ caritabbaṃ brahmacariyaṃ. natthi jātassa amaraṇaṃ.*

It is also worth mentioning that the Buddha offers a different interpretation of the eternal substance. The previously accepted views in the *Upaniṣad* with regard to “being” and its’ becoming nature do not comply with Buddhist teaching. Thus, though the Buddha has used the notion of change as arising, passing, and continuation like it is found in other strands of Indian spiritual thought, he gave new meaning to those words which do not relate to the permanent substance “being”. From this discussion, it is apparent that the Buddha’s teaching is aimed at understanding the nature of momentariness.<sup>26</sup>

In our discussion here, though *bhava* is rendered as “becoming,” a crucial point should be noted. It should be noted that Bodhi has clarified *bhava* with the notion of *atthitā* (existence) by discerning *atthitā* as existence in an abstract sense, and *bhava* as the concrete individual existence in one of the three realms. To clarify this matter here we are to show a reference made by Nakamura. According to him, in classical Indian languages, there was no word which corresponds to the term “to become”. Although the verbal root  $\sqrt{bhū}$  for *bhava* and *bhāva* connotes the meaning “to become,” this word actually implies the meaning “to exist”. In Indian language, specifically in daily conversation, “to become” is one form of “to exist”. So, for the word *bhāva* both “being born” or “existing” is understood as “to become” and “to be born”. Hence, the Indians kept the expressions *anyathā bhavati* or *anayathā-bhāva* (being otherwise) in order to refer to the meanings “to become” or “to change”. Thus, for them, “all the things of this world are changing and moving” is not an expression of the

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<sup>26</sup> According to Karunadasa, the doctrine of momentariness was not peculiar to the *suttas*. It was developed later within the books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* and afterwards it was further developed in the Pāli commentaries and subsequent Buddhist texts (Karunadasa 2003, 126). According to him, in the *suttas* the notion of change is not presented “either as a doctrine of momentariness or as a formulated theory of moments...What we get in the Pali Suttas is not a doctrine of momentariness but the doctrine of impermanence, the transitory nature of all phenomena” (Karunadasa 2003, 120).

changing aspect of existence but is the expression of “a static and unchanging state” (Nakamura 1964, 76).

I also do not think much discussion and painstaking analysis are required to prove the differences. Suffice to say that the verbs “to become” and “to exist” are emphatically not synonymous. Though they express the notion of “substance,” the notion of “being” should be understood in relation to the verb “to exist”. And the verb “to become” should be understood with “existence” in a modified form of “to become”. In this sense, it is possible to say that this “existence” in another way implies “becoming.” Therefore, though we cannot see the differences in the root of *bhava*, when the meaning is extended further there is significant difference. So, the rendition of *bhava* in any Western language has to be understood contextually. Thus, it may be argued that most of the translators were influenced by certain ideas about Indian thought, rather than questioning these ideas. Therefore, it is not difficult to see that scholars translate the word *bhava* in accordance with the philosophical analysis, and render its meaning as “state” or “existence” or “being” in relation to the “cycle of birth” or “rebirth”. Thus, the translation of *bhava* could confuse us with the notion of “being” and “existence” whether it is metaphysical or empirical. Hence, one must apply oneself to dispel this kind of confusion in order to convey the proper and concrete meaning of *bhava*. Here, therefore, the word “becoming” is used to translate the word *bhava* in relation to the continuity of flux of *samsāric* life which implies the continuity of belief in the “self”. This idea seems to be presented in the doctrine of dependent co-arising that because of clinging-condition, there is *bhava*; because of *bhava*-condition, there is birth, etc.

Nevertheless, this study will examine the meanings of *bhava* and *punabbhava* as the “cycle of existence” and “rebirth” in the cosmological sense later in this chapter. This

analysis will be provided with an examination of a few significant passages from the *sutta*, the *abhidhamma* and their commentarial interpretations in order to be able to deduce the different doctrinal meanings given to the words *bhava* and *punabbhava*.

## 2.5 Psychological Dimension of *Bhava*

From the psychological point of view, *bhava* is understood as the continuity of the flux of *samsāric* life which persists due to the clinging to the five aggregates. According to the principle of dependent co-arising, because of the clinging-condition, there arises *bhava*. Because of *bhava*-condition, there arises birth. Because of birth-condition, there arises old-age and death (SN II 1). In this sense, clinging refers to the holding of belief in a “self” with regard to the five aggregates. In the *Pañcavaggiya Sutta* of the SN, about clinging it is evidently said that clinging to “self” in any of the five aggregates is the fundamental basis for the cause of suffering (*dukkha*) (SN III 66–68). As a result, the doctrine of dependent co-arising, which consists of twelve factors, has to be understood with respect to the five clinging aggregates. Because in the dependent co-arising, suffering is defined as “the mass of aggregates” (*dukkha-khandhā*) (SN II 2) for which twelve factors are conditioned. Again, it is said that the five aggregates of clinging are sufferings (*pañcupādānakkhandhā pi dukkhā*, SN V 421, 24). In this context, when one condition of dependent co-arising has ceased, all other conditions also cease immediately. Here, suffering has ceased means that the clinging to the five aggregates is completely destroyed. Therefore, it is to be acknowledged that for a living Arahant, though the five aggregates endure until the dissolution of the body, due to the cessation of clinging, the factor *bhava* also ceases. This state of realization is known to be *nibbāna*: “*nibbāna* is the cessation of becoming” (*bhava-nirodho nibbānaṃ*, SN II 117, 14). Therefore, in this context, *bhava* and *punabbhava* are more relevant in the field of the psychological than the cosmological.

Earlier, I have mentioned that the Buddha has continued his life span with the “net of becoming being cut off (*ucchinna-bhava-nettiko*), which means no further becoming (*natthidāni punabbhavo*, SN II 171, 2) has occurred in him until the dissolution of his body (DN I 46). Moreover, the Buddha has pronounced his attainment of *nibbāna* as “the craving of becoming being cut off” (*ucchinnā bhava-taṇhā*, DN II 90, 26) or “the net of becoming being destroyed” (*khīṇā bhava-netti*, *ibid.*, 26). Here the reference to the cutting of the net of *bhava* suggests a dynamic inter-preference of the term in the *suttas*. It is because with *bhava* and destruction of *āsava* that the highest spiritual stage known as Arahathood is defined in the first four *Nikāyas*—the DN, MN, SN and AN.

He is called a monk who is an arahat, whose outflows are destroyed, who has lived the holy life, done what had to be done, put down the burden, reached the highest goal, completely destroyed the fetter of becoming, is fully liberated through right knowledge (SN III 161).<sup>27</sup>

In the above paragraph, Arahathood is defined through the destruction of outflow (*āsava*) and fetter of becoming (*bhava-saṃyojana*). This definition can be identical with that of *bhava-nirodha*, the attainment of *nibbāna*. In the AN, one can also find the definition of an Arahata as one who has gone beyond becoming (*bhavassa pāraḡuṃ*, AN II 9,32). In the *Paṭhamalokadhamma Sutta* of the AN, the Arahata is similarly described in the following manner:

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<sup>27</sup>12–15: *bhikkhu arahamaṃ khīṇāsava vusitavā katakaraṇīyo ohitabhāro anuppattasadattho parikkhīṇa-bhavasamyojano sammadaññā vimutto ti*. This passage is found throughout the *Nikāyas*, as: SN I 71; V 145, 236, 273, 302,326, 327; DN III 83, 132; MN I 477, 522, II 41, III 4, 30, 81; AN I 144, III 376, IV 362, 370. This passage is the standard definition of arahata which is also found in many *suttas*. However, in several *suttas*, e.g., the *Pavāraṇā Sutta* of the SN (I 191), Arahathood is defined as the eradication of fetter and bond (*saññojana-bandhana-chidā*) together. Also, Arahathood is sometimes defined through the cutting off of craving, eradication of fetter, and by utterly breaking conceit (*acchechi taṇhaṃ vāvattayi samyojanaṃ sammā mānābhisamayā antam akāsi dukkhassāti*, AN II 165, 14–15) and all fetters (*sabba-saññojana*, AN III 346 & 354). Some other phrases are also used to define an Arahata without pronouncing the extinguishment of outflows and fetter of becoming. For example, in the *Ajjhatta-anicca Sutta*, the *Ajjhatta-dukkha Sutta*, and the *Ajjhatta-anatta Sutta* of the SN, it is said: “He knows birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, done what had to be done, there is nothing more for the present state (*itthatta*) [of becoming]” (SN IV 1–3). Notably, in this passage although *āsava* and *bhava* were not mentioned, they are understood to have been removed, otherwise the state of Arahathood could not be realized.



“Having known the dustless, sorrowless state; he understands correctly and has gone beyond becoming” (AN IV 157).<sup>28</sup>

The above expressions with regard to *bhava* do not refer to birth and death in the cosmological sense, rather they show the experience of a living Arahāt who has realized *nibbāna* through the cessation of *bhava*. The term *pāragū* (gone beyond) which is applied in the context of *bhava* occurred in the context of *jāti-maraṇa* (birth and death) which was rendered in accordance with the doctrine of dependent co-arising. For example, it is said, a monk, having conquered both lust and aversion, had gone to the far shore of becoming, also birth and death (*bhavatha jātimaraṇassa pāragā ti*, SN IV 71, 24). This expression similarly appeared in the *Itivuttaka* (*Iti*, 41).<sup>29</sup> In this text, the term *pāragū* appeared with the term *jarā* (decaying) as *jarāya pāraguṃ* (*ibid.*, 33, 1). Here, it is to be understood that an Arahāt, having terminated clinging to the five aggregates, goes to the far shore of birth and death. In this sense, birth and death are evidently psychological. However, with regard to the phrase *bhavassa pāragū*, the *Dhammapada* Commentary, speak about rebirth in three realms – sensuality, form and formlessness – where life is involved in falling-off and dying (*Dhp-a* IV 63).<sup>30</sup>

### 2.5.1 *Bhava* as It Appears in the Doctrine of the Four Noble Truths

The cause of suffering, which is the Second Noble Truth, known as craving (*taṇhā*) is divided into three kinds: craving for sensuality (*kāma-taṇhā*), craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*),

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<sup>28</sup>13–14: *padañca ñatvā virajaṃ asokaṃ sammappajānāti bhavassa pāragū ti*.

<sup>29</sup>3: *bhavātha jātimaraṇassa pāragā ti*.

<sup>30</sup>5–9: *bhavassa pāragū ti evaṃ sante tividhassāpi bhavassa abhiññāpariññāpahānabhāvanāsacchikiriyavasena pāragato hutvā khandhadhātuāyatanādibhede sabbasankhate vimuttamānaso viharanto puna jātijarāmarāṇāni na upagacchatī ti attho*.

and craving for non-becoming (*vibhava-taṇhā*). In the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*<sup>31</sup> of the SN, these three kinds of craving are linked to the five aggregates of an individual; because of that, in brief, it is said that the five-clinging-aggregates are sufferings (*saṅkhittena pañcupādānakhandhā pi dukkhā*, SN V 421, 23–24). In this backdrop, the origin of suffering is defined as the following:

It is craving which leads to further becoming, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight now here and there, that is, craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for moving away from becoming (SN V 421).<sup>32</sup>

It is important to discuss how this passage was formed in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. In the above passage, the term *taṇhā* is exposed as the factor that leads to further becoming (*punabbhava*), which is always accompanied with *nandi-rāga* (desire and lust). This means that wherever there is *taṇhā*, there is *nandi-rāga*. Thus, desire and lust are always associated with the six sense bases:

There are forms cognizable by the eye, that are agreeable, enjoyable, attracting, sensually nurturing, tantalizing – and a monk who delights in them, cheers them, and remains holding to them delight arises. As he delights in them, cheers them, and remains holding to them, delight arises. With the arising of delight, there is the arising of suffering (SN IV 37).<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, when other sense objects – sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and mental phenomena are cognizable by the sense organs ear, nose, tongue, body and mind respectively, and one delights in, cheers, and holds on to desirable, pleasing, and attractive objects, delight arises. With the arising of delight, there is the arising of suffering. Reversely, with the cessation of delight, there is the cessation of suffering (SN IV 37).

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<sup>31</sup> This *Sutta*, according to Sujato, is the first among other teachings of the Buddha (Sujato 2012, 37). Though the Theravāda tradition holds that this is likely to be the first *Sutta* taught by the Buddha himself, scholars such as Lambert Schmithausen (1981, 202) and Johannes Bronkhorst (1993, 85), argue that this *Sutta* has undergone changes over the years. Schmithausen goes as far as to say that the present form of the *Sutta* “probably belongs to a period at least more than one hundred year later than the Buddha’s Nirvāṇa” (Schmithausen 1981, 202).

<sup>32</sup> 26–28: *yāyaṃ taṇhā ponobhavikā nandi rāgasahagatā tatra tatrābhinandinī. seyyathīdaṃ: kāmataṇhā bhava-taṇhā vibhavataṇhā.*

<sup>33</sup> 24–28: *santi kho...cakkhuviññeyyā rūpā iṭṭhā kantā manāpā piyarūpā kāmūpasamhitā rajanīyā. tañce bhikkhu abhinandati abhivadati ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati. tassa taṃ abhinandato abhivadato ajjhosāya tiṭṭhato uppajjati nandi.nandisamudayā dukkhasamudayo.* Also see SN IV 60 & MN III 267–68.

Here it should be noted that the above discussion represents a formula of the Four Noble Truths based on six sense bases and their objects, that is, the first two truths – suffering and its cause correlated with the six sense bases, and the remaining two truths – cessation and the path tie in with the abandoning of delight in the six sense bases and their objects. This analysis has a correlation with the compressed statement of the principle of dependent co-arising which is usually explained in twelve links in the *Mahā-taṇhāsankhaya Sutta* of the MN (I 256–70). In this setting, *taṇhā* is explained how suffering arises and ceases in relation to the five aggregates. This can be seen from the *Samādhi Bhāvanā Sutta* and the *Paṭisallāna Sutta* of the SN in which the arising and cessation phenomena are explained with reference to the five aggregates (SN III 13–15). In both the *Suttas*, it is said that when one seeks delight (*nandi*) in the five aggregates, cheers, and remains holding on to them, there delight arises. Delight in the five aggregates is clinging, and with this clinging as a condition, *bhava* takes place; with *bhava* as a condition, birth take place; with birth as a condition, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, and despair take place—such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. Following the reverse order, when one does not seek delight (*nandi*) in the five aggregates, does not cheer in it, and does not hold on to them, delight in the five aggregates ceases, and with the cessation of delight, comes cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, comes cessation of becoming; with the cessation of becoming ?? Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

From the above discussion, it is understood that in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the arising of *taṇhā* is linked to the five aggregates. As *taṇhā* is cherished through the five aggregates, the threefold craving – *kāma*, *bhava*, *vibhava* – also need to be understood in relation to the five aggregates which will be examined in the following section.

### 2.5.1.1 The Doctrinal Interpretation of *Kāma*, *Bhava*, and *Vibhava*

It was shown that the Buddha expounded on suffering and the cause of suffering in terms of craving, which carries forward the life-cycle. Therefore, from the time when the first sermon was delivered, the Buddha expounded on the whole human unsatisfactoriness, its origin and its cessation over and over again, drawing attention to the three kinds of cravings--*kāma*, *bhava* and *vibhava*.

Earlier in this study, it was elucidated that seeking constant gratification in our six senses is the craving for sensuality (*kāma-taṇhā*). Now, we should consider what the term *kāma* refers to. The term *kāma* usually signifies desire, a factor that leads us to suffering. Nyanatiloka has discussed the notion of *kāma* as twofold: (1) subjective sensuality which is sense desire as *kāma-chanda*, *kāma-rāga*, *kāma-taṇhā*, *kāma-āsava*, etc., and (2) objective sensuality consisting of the five sense-objects mostly called *kāma-guṇa* (cords of sensuality) (Nyanatiloka, 1988, 143). These twofold *kāma* are known as *kilesa-kāma* and *vatthu-kāma* as primarily documented in the *Mahā-niddesa* (Nidd I 1)<sup>34</sup> of the KN.<sup>35</sup> In this text, the *kilesa-kāma* refers to the mental defilement of subjectivity, and the *vatthu-kāma* refers to the object-base of sensuality. According to the PED (229), and Nyanatiloka (1988, 144), they were discussed for the first time in the *Mahā-niddesa* and thereafter frequently in the commentaries.

In the *suttas*, gratification in the six senses is one of the dynamic features which distinguish the enlightened from the unenlightened ones. This scrutiny can be clearly seen in

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<sup>34</sup>10–11: *kāmaṃ kāmayamānassā ti. kāma ti uddānato dve kāma, vatthukāmā ca kilesakāmā ca.*

<sup>35</sup> According to Oliver Abeynayake, the *Mahā-niddesa* is a commentarial work which deals with the sixteen *suttas* of the *Aṭṭhaka Vagga* in the Sn (Abeynayake, 1984, 156).

the following passage from the *Assādapariyesana Sutta* of the SN which sums up the gratification in the six sense bases:

Monks! As long as I did not directly understand these six internal sense bases as they really are the gratification as gratification, the danger as danger, and the distraction as distraction, I did not claim to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world.... But when I directly understood these six internal sense bases as they really are..., then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world (SN IV 9).<sup>36</sup>

Upon analyzing the aforementioned passage, one could say that it is not the sense bases which themselves constitute suffering, rather it is the gratification in association with the sense bases and their objects that is the key factor for suffering. This gratification can be known as the persistence of craving (*taṇhā*) or desire and lust (*nandi-rāga*) that leads a person to the process of pursuit of sense-pleasure. When this process of pursuit is present, the person clings to things, which is similarly discussed in the *Mahānidāna Sutta* of the DN, as the following:

Depending on craving, seeking exists; depending on seeking, acquisition exists; depending on acquisition, ascertainment exists; depending on ascertainment, desire and lust exists; depending on desire and lust, attachment exists, depending on attachment, appropriation exists; depending on appropriation, avarice exists; depending on avarice, defensiveness exists; depending on defensiveness, guarding of defensiveness exists; depending on guarding of defensiveness, there arises the taking up of the stick, sword, quarrels, disputes, arguments, strife, abuse, lying and various evil unwholesome conditions (DN II 58-59).<sup>37</sup>

In dependent co-arising, craving is a necessary condition for clinging (*upādāna*), and this clinging is a necessary condition for becoming (*bhava*). Here it should be understood that clinging and becoming are always present with craving. Besides, this clinging refers to a

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<sup>36</sup>26–29: *yāva kīvañcāhaṃ bhikkhave imesaṃ channaṃ ajjhakkānaṃ āyatanānaṃ assādaṃ ca assādato ādīnaṃ ca ādīnato nissaraṇaṃ ca nissaraṇato yathābhūtaṃ nābhaññāsiṃ. neva tāvāhaṃ...anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddhoti paccaññāsiṃ. yato ca kho'haṃ bhikkhave imesaṃ channaṃ ajjhakkānaṃ āyatanānaṃ evaṃ assādañca assādato ādīnañca ādīnavato nissaraṇañca nissaraṇato yathābhūtaṃ abhaññāsiṃ, athāhaṃ...anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddhoti paccaññāsiṃ.*

<sup>37</sup>31–03: *tanhaṃ paṭicca pariyesanā, pariyesanaṃ paṭicca lābho, lābhaṃ paṭicca vinicchayo, vinicchayaṃ paṭicca chandarāgo, chanda-rāgaṃ paṭicca ajjhosānaṃ, ajjhosānaṃ paṭicca pariggaho, pariggahaṃ paṭicca macchariyaṃ, macchariyaṃ paṭicca ārakkho, ārakkhādhikaraṇaṃ daṇḍādāna-satthādāna-kalaha-viggaha-vivāda-tuvaṃtuva-pesuñña-musāvādā aneke pāpakā akusalā dhammā sambhavanti.*

deeper flow and when a man clings to sense-desire, his propensity for sense-desire instantly manifests and drives the life force onwards. This deeper intuitive potency designates becoming (*bhava*) which ceases (*bhava-nirodha*) with the attainment of *nibbāna*.

The above portion discussed concisely the notion of *kāma-taṇhā*. Now, I intend to discuss the cravings *bhava* and *vibhava*. To me, these two cravings are psychological in nature because these are the mode of human beings who are involved in a conscious intent that is either to continue (*bhava*) or to discontinue (*vibhava*) in the life series.

The present study renders the meaning of *vibhava* as “away from *bhava*” or “separation from *bhava*”, or “departure from *bhava*”. Though it is close to a negation or a negative sense such as “don’t want to be”, from the assessment of the Buddha’s teaching, this term often occurs with *taṇhā* and *diṭṭhi*, and those who possess *vibhava* still fall into the trap of life cycle. Earlier, it was mentioned that *bhava* and *vibhava* are the psychological natures of a person: whether to continue or to discontinue. Now this issue will be discussed further.

In the *Sabhiya Sutta* of the Sn, it is said that one can only stop the *punabbhava* by abandoning *bhava* and *vibhava* (Sn 95).<sup>38</sup> Earlier, it was shown that *punabbhava* is due to craving or gratification in the six sense bases and the five aggregates. In this context, *bhava* and *vibhava* are more likely to refer to craving. On the basis of this reference, it is fair to say that these two kinds of craving always accompany each other in the attitude of a person. About this nature, Somaratne says:

In life, there is both craving for self-continuity [*bhava-taṇhā*] and craving for self-discontinuity [*vibhava-taṇhā*]. This craving for self-continuity is structurally necessary for the present mode of self-continuity to remain. Craving for self-discontinuity is structurally necessary for change of the mode of self-continuity to

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<sup>38</sup> 4-5: *bhavañ ca vipappahāya, vusitavā khiṇapunabbhavo.*



occur. These two cravings are always in conflict. One tends towards stability, the other tends towards change (Somaratne 2016, 134).

After analysing the aforementioned passage, it is quite apparent that *bhava* and *vibhava* are two sides of the same coin. However, it should be noted that they are the contrasting attitudes of a person who is bound to craving.

Now, let us discuss the concept of *vibhava*. Our initial inquiry is to find out whether *vibhava* is equivalent to *uccheda* (annihilation). In this section, in order to investigate whether *vibhava* and *uccheda* are similar, one needs to understand *vibhava* contextually. Before dealing with this topic, let me define the term *uccheda*. According to the PED, *uccheda* (*ud+chid*) means breaking up, disintegration, perishing, etc. (PED 145).<sup>39</sup> In the text, it is said that the contemporary recluses and brahmins were of the opinion that the Buddha teaches annihilation: “the recluse Gotama describes the annihilation (*uccheda*), the destruction (*vināsa*), and the separation from becoming (*vibhava*) of an existing personality” (MN I 140).<sup>40</sup> In reply to such a wrong interpretation, the Buddha said he simply teaches the cause of suffering and the cessation of suffering (*dukkhañc’ eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodham*, *ibid.*, 14–15). From the aforementioned passage, we may say that *vibhava* has a kind of abstract essence to indicate the notion of *uccheda*.

However, an issue arises with the verb *vibhavissati* (will become extinct), which though has connection with the notion of *vibhava*, it seems it is used to mean the extinction of *bhava* with regard to the five aggregates in the *Udāna Sutta* of the SN. According to the *Sutta*, uninstructed persons cannot cut off the lower fetters due to not really understanding the

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<sup>39</sup>The SED gives the meaning as “cutting off or out; extirpation, destruction; cutting short, putting an end to; excision” (SED 173)

<sup>40</sup> 9–10: *samaṇo gotamo, sato sattassa ucchedaṃ vināsaṃ vibhavaṃ paññāpetīti.*

extinction of the five aggregates: “He does not understand that form will become extinct (*rūpaṃ vibhavissati*), feeling will become extinct, perception will become extinct, volitional formations will become extinct, consciousness will become extinct” (SN III 56).<sup>41</sup> Conversely, instructed noble disciples can cut off the lower fetters by “really understanding that the form will become extinct, feeling will become extinct, perception will become extinct, volitional formations will become extinct, consciousness will become extinct” (*ibid.* 57).<sup>42</sup> In this regard, the *Sutta* has presented the principle of dependent co-arising, that is, through the extinction (*vibhavā*) of form, feeling, perception, and volitional formations, consciousness will become extinct. Following this exertion, the *Sutta* says that a monk thus resolves: “It might not be, it might not be for me; it will not be, it will not be for me” (*no cassa no ca me siyā na bhavissati na me bhavissatīti na me bhavissatīti, ibid., 57, 32–33*).<sup>43</sup>

From the above passage, does the term *vibhavissati* refer to the notion of *uccheda* in the sense that the five aggregates will become extinct at death? To answer this question, let us first discuss the commentarial and sub-commentarial interpretation of *vibhavissati*. The commentary reads *vibhavissati* as *bhijjissati: rūpaṃ vibhavissatīti rūpaṃ bhijjissati* (SN-a II 275, 19). The sub-commentary reads this sentence, as: *vibhavissatīti vinassissati. vibhavo hi vināso. tenāha “bhijjissatī”ti* (SN-t, *Khandhavagga-ṭīkā* VRI 13, 32). Bodhi refers to the sub-commentarial explanation, and reads *rupaṃ bhijjassati* (form will break up) as same as *rūpaṃ vināssissati* [Spk-pt: *vināssissati*] (form will perish) (Bodhi 2000, 1063, see footnote 76). However, in the sub-commentary to the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of the DN, the term *vināsa* is defined with relation to *uccheda* as *nirudaya vināso yeva ucchedo* and *nirantaravasena*,

<sup>41</sup>31–34: *rūpaṃ vibhavissatīti yathābhūtaṃ na pajānāti. vedanā vibhavissatīti. saññā vibhavissatīti. saṃkhārā vibhavissantīti. viññāṇaṃ vibhavissatīti yathābhūtaṃ na pajānāti.*

<sup>42</sup>15–17: *rūpaṃ vibhavissatīti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. vedanā. saññā. saṃkhārā. viññāṇaṃ vibhavissatīti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.*

<sup>43</sup>18–21: *so rūpassa vibhavā vedanāya vibhavā saññāya vibhavā saṃkhārānaṃ vibhavā viññāṇassa vibhavā evaṃ kho bhikkhu no cassaṃ, no ca me siyā, na bhavissati, na me bhavissati, na me bhavissatīti.*



*nirudayavasena*      *vā*      *visesena*      *nāso*      *vināso*      (DN-ṭ,  
*Sīlakkhandhavaggaabhinavaṭṭikā:Ucchedavādavaṇṇanā* VRI 213, 26). About the  
commentarial interpretation, Bodhi says:

The commentators seem to understand “extermination” [*vināsa*] here as the incessant momentary cessation of the aggregates, but I believe the verb refers to the final cessation of the aggregates with the attainment of the *anupādisesanibbānadhātu*. This meaning harmonizes better with the opening formula, and also seems supported by Th [Thera *Gāthā*] 715cd: *saṅkhārāvibhavissanti, tatthakāparidevanā*, “formations (only) will be exterminated, so what lamentation can there be over that” (Bodhi 2000, 1063, see footnote 76).

After the above analysis, I would like to argue that the verb *vibhavissati* does not refer to the notion of *vibhava* in association with *uccheda* or *vināsa*. While the abstract noun *vibhava* is used to convey the “idea of *uccheda*”, it seems that the verb *vibhavissati* is only used to mean the extinction of *bhava*. Bodhi believes this *vibhavissati* is implied to mean the final dissolution of the body of an Arahāt into *parinibbāna: anupādisesa-nibbāna-dhātu*. However, it seems to us that this verb has not been used in that context, rather it is employed to mean the complete cessation of *bhava* through which a person attains Arahātship. It is likely to be so, because the *Udāna Sutta*, in which the verb is used, employs the cessation principle of dependent co-arising as through the extinction (*vibhavā*) of form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, consciousness become extinct. And, an instructed noble disciple resolves in this way: “It might not be, it might not be for me; it will not be, it will not be for me”. In our understanding, here it does not suggest the complete extinction of the five aggregates at the great demise of an Arahāt, rather it refers to the complete eradication of “I” with regard to the five aggregates. The Buddha’s teaching mainly emphasizes how to end suffering by terminating the belief in “self”. And, this is the key point presented with the principle of dependent co-arising in the *Udāna Sutta*. My assertion is also justified with the content of the *Udāna Sutta* that it mostly refers to the notion of the “self”, that is, how an

uninstructed person and an instructed noble disciple understand the five aggregates in different ways.

At this stage, I would also like to add one more point. In the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of the DN, when the doctrine of annihilation is described, the verb *vibhavissati* is not used right after the verb *vinassati*: *kāyassa bheda ucchijjati vinassati na hoti parammaraṇā*. However, in the same *Sutta*, it is seen that *vibhava* is used right after the term *vināsa* (*itth' eke sato sattassa ucchedaṃ vināsaṃ vibhavaṃ paññāpen ti*, DN I 35,4–5). Analysing the aforesaid two sentences, it can be noticed that the second sentence was pronounced by the recluses and brahmins who were of the opinion that the Buddha imparts the teaching of annihilation. In reply, however, the Buddha said that their understanding was a mistaken one. On the other hand, the first sentence (*kāyassa bheda ucchijjati vinassati na hoti parammaraṇā*) was uttered by the Buddha and occasionally by his disciples to say that some teacher holds such a doctrine and view that everything is annihilated and destroyed at death. Here, the implication is that the verb *vibhavissati* has not been used with reference to the notion of *uccheda* or *vināsa*. Also, it implies that the terms *uccheda* and *vināsa* specifically used in the doctrine of the *Ucchedavādins*, who profess the teaching of *uccheda*, the doctrine of annihilation, which signifies “annihilation based on the existence of a self” (*sattassa ca atthibhavagāhahetuko ucchedavādo*, DN-ṭ, *Sīlakkhandhavaggaabhinavaṭṭikā: Ucchedavādavaṇṇanā* VRI 213, 20).

In the above portion of this section, the verb *vibhavissati* has been reviewed and it has been concluded that it was not applied with reference to the notion of *uccheda*. The term *vibhava* has a potentiality to be used very closely as a synonym of *uccheda*. However, we suggest that *vibhava* has to be understood contextually when it appears with *taṇhā*, i.e., *vibhava-taṇhā*, and with *diṭṭhi*, i.e., *vibhava-diṭṭhi*. In the commentary, *vibhava-diṭṭhi* is

defined as parallel to *uccheda-diṭṭhi* (*vibhavadiṭṭī ti ucchedadiṭṭhi*, MN-a II 10, 34). In this context, the commentary says *diṭṭhi* and *taṇhā* have the condition of existing together (*taṇhādiṭṭhivasena, ibid.*, 35). Though this fact is acceptable, for the sake of a clear understating, *vibhava-diṭṭhi* should be linked with the “view” of the Ucchedavādins. And, *vibhava-taṇhā* is understood in a larger context that is the attitude of a person, referring to the craving for discontinuity, because it depends upon the behaviour of an individual. Of course, this craving arises with a false conception of the “self”. However, it seems that this conception of the “self” and the Uccedavādin’s view of the “self” are different. The first idea of a “self” is a false conception by destroying which a person can escape suffering when he is humiliated, horrified and disgusted with life, and the second idea is a concrete “dogmatic view” that there is a “self” but it is annihilated at death.

Now, let us turn to the term *vibhava*. The DN Commentary defines the term *vibhava* as “departure from the state of attitude” (*vibhavanti bhāvavigamaṃ*, DN-a I 193), which, in the sub-commentary, signifies the person’s outward way of behaving towards others (*sabhāvāpagamaṃ*) (DN-t, *Sīlakkhandhavaggaabhinavaṭṭikā:Ucchedavādavaṇṇanā* VRI 61, 35). Earlier, it was said that an unenlightened person enjoys sense-pleasure due to craving. When this attitude continues, his tendency towards continuity (*bhava*) continues. Again, when objects of his ambition cannot be achieved due to certain difficulties, he becomes aggressive. When this aggressiveness is excessively inflated, the person’s behaviour moves on to dissatisfaction. When this dissatisfaction reaches an extreme point, his attitude turns into a mode of discontinuity. Thus, he starts moving in the opposite direction. At this point the person wants to disrupt continuity (*bhava*) and changes his attitude towards an attempt to destroy his own self. The Sub-commentary defines this position as an attitude of complete destruction by way of not coming into existence any further (*nirudayavināsavasena*

*ucchijjati*) (DN-t, *Sīlakkhandhavaggaabhinavaṭṭikā: Ucchedavādavaṇṇanā* VRI 61, 36–37).

About the notion of *vibhava*, in the *Diṭṭhigata Sutta* of the Iti, it is said:

When some are humiliated, horrified and disgusted with becoming (*bhava*), they relish non-becoming (*vibhava*). As soon as this self, at the breaking-up of the body, after death, perishes and is destroyed, and does not exist after death, it is peaceful, that is excellence, that is reality (Iti 43–44).<sup>44</sup>

Scholars in the Pāli tradition, such as Anālayo, moreover, defines this attitude as:

[*V*] *ibhava-taṇhā* could be understood to comprise craving for annihilation in a materialist as well as a spiritual sense, ranging from the wish to destroy the physical body by suicide to the aspiration for leaving behind the sense of selfhood through a mystic merger with an ultimate reality (Anālayo 2009, 561).

Somaratne, furthermore, elucidates this subject:

Depending on the shock of unhappiness we are experiencing, we even wish to make a total end to this self-continuity [*bhava*] right now, going to the extent of committing suicide. As in reality there is no self, we look for the cutting off of a not-self, with the assumption that it is really the cutting off of self. In this way, we look for a false self-discontinuity, a false cutting off, cutting off of something that is unreal. This is what is called self-discontinuity [*vibhava*], and it is a total deception. Such self-discontinuity cannot be the end of suffering but, in fact, it is a furthering of suffering. Why? Underneath our craving for self-discontinuity lies our craving for self-continuity, says the Buddha (Somaratne 2016, 128).

Now it is understood how the nature of *vibhava-taṇhā* manifests: repulsion arises and along with it arises the desire to destroy one's "own-self", which is triggered by the state of dislike or frustration regarding repulsive objects. But one has to understand that when a person changes the inclination for destroying his/her own-self, his tendency again turns into *bhava-taṇhā*. Therefore, it is understood that *taṇhā* accompanies a person until the attainment of *nibbāna*. In this context, in the *suttas*, *taṇhā* is analysed with the help of three factors: the craving for sensuality (*kāma-taṇhā*); the craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*) which is an attitude of self-preservation; and the craving for moving away from becoming (*vibhava-taṇhā*) which is an attitude of self-destruction.

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<sup>44</sup> 20–03: *bhaveneva kho paneke aṭṭiyamānā harāyamāsā jigucchamānā vibhavaṃ abhinandanti. yato kira bho ayaṃ attao kāyassa bhedā param-maraṇā ucchijjati vinassati na hoti param-maraṇā, etaṃ santam etaṃ paṇītam etaṃ yathāvan-tī.*

Now, let me discuss the *vibhava-dit̥ṭhi* in relation to the *uccheda-dit̥ṭhi*. The *Brahmajāla Sutta* has classified seven kinds of view in association with the *uccheda-dit̥ṭhi* (DN I 34–36). In every view, it is said that the “self” is annihilated and destroyed with the breakup of the body, and after death nothing becomes (*kāyassa bheda ucchijjati vinassati na hoti parammaraṇā*, DN I 35, 2–3). The Sub-commentary explains this view as the following: “beings are just like leaves of a tree, which fall [from a tree] and are never linked further” (*sattāti yathā paṇḍupalāso bandhanā pavutto puna napaṭisandhīyati*, DN-t, *Sīlakkhandhavaggaabhinavaṭṭikā: Ucchedavādavaṇṇanā* VRI 61, 40–41), therefore, one who adopts this view, is greedy for sensual pleasure (*kāma sukhābhirattatāyapi gaṇhātī*) in this very life. From the passage of the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* of the DN, one aspect of this view can be discerned:

There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no other world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no good and right-thinking recluses and brahmins in the world who have themselves realised by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world. A person is a composite of four primary elements. When he dies, the earth returns to external earth. Water returns to the external water. Fire returns to the external fire. Air returns to the external air. The faculties scatter into space. Men with the bed as the fifth, carry the corpse. Its funeral orations last only as far as the charnel ground. The bones become white. The offerings end with ashes. Giving a gift is taught by fools. When anyone asserts the doctrine that there is giving, it is just nothing, false babble. Fools and the wise are alike annihilated and destroyed with the breakup of the body; after death nothing exists (DN I 55).<sup>45</sup>

With the above discussion, I would like to explore how the rendition of *vibhava-dit̥ṭhi* and the “view” of the Ucchedavādins run parallel to each other. However, it has to be understood that

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<sup>45</sup> 15–31: “n’atthi...dinnaṃ. natthi yiṭṭhaṃ. n’atthi hutāṃ. n’atthi sukaṭa-dukkatānaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāko, n’atthi ayaṃ loko n’atthi paro loko, n’atthi mātā n’atthi pitā, n’atthi sattā-opapātikā, n’atthi loke samaṇa-brāhmaṇā sammaggatā sammā-paṭipannā ye imaṅ ca lokaṃ paraṅ ca lokaṃ sayāṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedenti. cātum-mahābhūṭiko ayaṃ puriso, yadā kālaṃ karoti paṭhavī paṭhavi-kāyaṃ anupeti anupagacchati, āpo āpo-kāyaṃ anupeti anupagacchati, tejo tejo-kāyaṃ anupeti anupagacchati, vāyo vāyo-kāyaṃ anupeti anupagacchati, ākāsaṃ induyāni saṃkamanti. āsandipaṅcamā purisā mataṃ ādāya gacchanti, yāva ālahanā padāni paññāpentī, kāpotakāni aṭṭhīni bhavanti, bhasmantā hutiyo. dattu-paññattaṃ yad idaṃ dānaṃ, tesāṃ tucchaṃ musā vilāpo ye keci atthika-vādaṃ vadanti. bāle ca paṇḍite ca kāyassa bheda ucchijjanti vinassanti, na honti parammaraṇā ti.”

one who holds such a view is still subject to suffering due to the fact that he/she still has *taṇhā*. Perhaps, from the perspective of Buddhist teaching, the most logical saying is that *taṇhā* is the key factor for holding any kind of view such as *sassata-diṭṭhi* and *uccheda-diṭṭhi*. Therefore, the notion of *vibhava* is understood with the co-existing factor of *taṇhā* and *diṭṭhi* which leads a person to suffer in the life cycle. This issue is comprehensively illuminated in the *Pañcattaya Sutta* of the MN:

Those worthy recluses and brahmins who describe the annihilation, destruction, and separation from becoming of an existing identity, because of fear of their personality and repulsion for their personality, simply keep running and circling around their same personality. Just as a dog that is bound by a leash tied to a firm post or pillar keeps on running and revolving around that same post or pillar. So too, these worthy recluses and brahmins, because of fear of personality and repulsion for personality, keep running and circling around the same personality (MN II 232–33).<sup>46</sup>

By making the above statement, the Buddha teaches that liberation from suffering is achieved through the cessation of clinging (*upādāna*) which signifies that holding a belief in personality has ceased in the five aggregates. This fact is elucidated in the following section.

Now, against the great emphasis that is laid on *bhava* in the context of psychological dimension, one can ask why *bhava* should be given preference over the existential notion, especially when *bhava* is presented as a twofold notion, i.e., the *kamma*-becoming (*kamma-bhava*) or the karmically active aspect of becoming, and the resultant-becoming (*upapatti-bhava*) or the karmically passive aspect of becoming, by means of the concept of rebirth in the *abhidhamma*, the *Paṭis*, the *Vism*, and the commentaries. This issue will be discussed with the cosmological dimension of *bhava* in the following section.

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<sup>46</sup> 21–04: *ye kho te bhonto samaṇabrāhmaṇā sato sattassa ucchedaṃ vināsaṃ vibhavaṃ paññāpentī, te sakkāyabhayā sakkāyaparijegucchā, sakkāyaññeva anuparidhāvanti anuparivattanti. seyyathā pi nāma sā gaddulabaddho daḷhe thambhe vā khīle vā upanibaddho tam eva thambhaṃ vā khīlaṃ vā anuparidhāvanti anuparivattati, - evam ev’ime bhonto samaṇabrāhmaṇā sakkāyabhayā sakkāyaparijegucchā sakkāyañ ñeva anuparidhāvanti anuparivattanti.*

## 2.6 Cosmological Dimension of *Bhava*

It was said that in the Pāli literature, *bhava* has been presented in two dimensions: psychological and cosmological. So far in the above sections of this chapter, I have discussed the psychological aspect of *bhava*. Now, my discussion turns to the cosmological dimension. In the *suttas*, one can find cosmological accounts to illustrate the future birth of departed people that the Buddha famously mentioned in his teaching. For example, in the *Janavasabha Sutta* of the DN, there is evidence that the Buddha occasionally discussed cosmology where people who are yet to reach enlightenment appear by way of rebirth. How rebirth occurs, or what the conditions are that lead a person to leave one life and enter another life is an important inquiry in this study. This issue will be discussed in the subsequent chapters. In this section, the intention is only to show how the cosmological division has been presented with the concept of *bhava*.

It was already mentioned that to explain the principle *bhava-paccayā jāti* of dependent co-arising, the three kinds of *bhava* – sensuality (*kāma*), form (*rūpa*), formlessness (*arūpa*) – are mentioned in the *suttas*, i.e., the *Vibhaṅga Sutta* of the SN (II 3). But, in the *abhidhamma* texts, i.e., the *Vibh*, two kinds of *bhava* – action (*kamma*) and rebirth (*upapatti*) – are used (*Vibh* 137). In the *Paṭis*, these two *bhavas* are extensively discussed with their functions with regard to the concept of rebirth (*Paṭis* I 52). In the *Vism*, Buddhaghosa further particularized the *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava* broadly (*Vism* 580–81). This explanation is also reflected in the commentaries to the *suttas*, e.g., the *Sāratthappakāsinī*, the Commentary to the SN (SN-a II 14). Here it is noted that, for the explanation of *bhava-paccayā jāti*, two different conceptual analyses are found in the *suttas* and the *abhidhamma*. The *abhidhammic* analysis is further discussed in the *Paṭis*, which was moreover elaborated in the *Vism* and the commentaries in the context of the process of rebirth. Using the

commentarial explanation, most of the scholars in the Theravāda tradition such as Bodhi (1984, 12 & 2000, 518-20), Nyanatiloka (1980, 142-44), and Mathieu Boisvert (1995, 110) describe the twelve factors of dependent co-arising with reference to the *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava* showing three existences: sensuality, form, and formlessness. According to them, these three tiers represent *saṃsāra*, the cycle of existence, into which rebirth takes place. It is now understood that many scholars comprehensively relied on the commentarial explanation to expound on the *sutta* materials, and the former represent a modification of the *sutta* teachings. In the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, it is also said, “bhava is development through action (*kammabhava*), and in so far as action leads to reaction (*vipāka*) growth is also a kind of birth and rebirth (*upatti-bhava*)” (Zeyst 1999, 11). More on this will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four with the concept of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the idea of rebirth is a central doctrine in Buddhist teachings and until the final deliverance, a person dies, but is reborn according to his or her *karmic* consequence. And, this birth and death is a cyclic existence and is called *saṃsāra*. This *saṃsāra* is divided into threefold worlds known as the world of sensuality (*kāma-loka*), the world of form (*rūpa-loka*), and the world of formlessness (*arūpa-loka*). The Theravāda Buddhist tradition has shown the cosmological domain with these three layers of the world system (Walshe 1995, 37–38). The use of the word *loka* (world) is, however, twofold: (1) the entire cosmos, and (2) the world of the individual, which consists of the five clinging aggregates (SN IV 52).

The aforementioned three layers are also identical with the terms *kāma-dhātu* (sensuality-element), *rūpa-dhātu* (form-element), and *arūpa-dhātu* (formlessness-element). These three terms also correspond to *kāma-bhava*, *rūpa-bhava*, and *arūpa-bhava*



respectively. Somaratne has already been mentioned, he compared these three realms with the *jhāna* scheme that a practitioner passes through the spiritual experience. If we juxtapose this spiritual attainment with the three layers of cosmology, one can easily infer that the Buddhist cosmology is taken metaphorically in a way of looking at a person's spiritual progress towards the achievement of *nibbāna*. Hirakawa similarly says:

It combined religious practice with Buddhist ideas of rebirth and the three realms (desire, form, and formless) into which a person might be reborn. Doctrines were thus arrived at that would accommodate those people who could not realize enlightenment during their current lifetimes. (Hirakawa 1990, 58)

Now it is clear that though in the Pāli Canon the cosmological dimension is mentioned, the aforesaid three layers of cosmology developed gradually. According to Gombrich, these three layers of cosmology were only fully developed in Buddhaghosa's *Vism* and in the commentaries to the Pāli Canon. Gombrich also says a similar and more elaborate cosmological dimension is found in the third chapter of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*. These three tiers of cosmology are spatial and temporal dimensions where one is unhappy, therefore, people are encouraged to escape from these domains by achieving *nibbāna* (Gombrich 1975, 132 & 133).

In the three tiers of *bhava*, there are thirty-one realms consisting of the fourfold realms of woe: hells, the world of demons, of hungry ghosts, and of animals, and the fifth one is the human realm; above these are the six heavens known as *kāma-loka*; above these are the sixteen heavens of the world of form (*rūpa-loka*), and above these again the four states of the world of formlessness (*arūpa-loka*) (Walshe 1995, 38). However, if Gombrich's assertion is considered, we can say that many of these states in the three layers were later inventions in the Theravāda Buddhist understanding of cosmology. Again, it is important to note that in the *suttas* there is an elaboration of the vastness of cosmic spaces containing countless worlds:

As far as suns and moons revolve, and light up the quarters shedding their brightness, so far extends the thousandfold world system. In that thousandfold world system, there are a thousand moons, a thousand suns, a thousand of Sinerus king of mountains, a thousand Jambudīpas, ...a thousand four great oceans, a thousand four great kings, a thousand of heavenly worlds... This is the thousandfold times of a thousandfold minor world-system... (AN I 227–28).<sup>47</sup>

We mentioned Gombrich who states that the Theravāda Buddhist cosmology was fully developed later in the *Vism* and the commentary. Walshe has listed the thirty-one planes showing the three layers: *kāma*, *rūpa*, and *arūpa* worlds. In the *suttas*, though there is no mention of these thirty-one planes in order, there is evidence of several specific planes in which one appears by way of having rebirth. For example, in the *Giṇṇakāvasatha Sutta* of the SN, the Buddha is said to have described, on the basis of the level of remaining fetters, the future destination (rebirth) of a nun named Nandā who is a non-returner after passing away and born in a world from where she will attain *nibbāna*, a male lay follower named Sudatta who is once-returner coming back to this world only one more time, and will have an end to suffering, and a lay female follower named Sujāta who is a stream-enterer no longer bound to the lower world and his destination is *nibbāna* (SN V 356–67). In the *Janavasabha Sutta* of the DN (II 200), Buddha had declared the future destinations of numerous people of Kāsi and Kosala, Vajji and Malla, Nādikā, etc. on the basis of their level of remaining fetters. It is worth noting that the Buddha declared the future destinations of those who had obtained at least one spiritual stage. After analysing the *suttas*, it seems that the texts have given a very clear account of rebirth of people who passed away. However, one interesting point is that the Buddha declared the future destinations of the departed people with the degree of their remaining fetters. It will be seen that the Theravāda tradition has employed traditional list of

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<sup>47</sup>28–03: *yāvata... candimasuriyā pariharanti disā 'bhanti virocānā tāva sahasadhā loko. tasmim sahasam candānam sahasam suriyānam sahasam Sinerupabbatarājānam sahasam Jambudīpānam..., cattāri mahāsamuddasahasāni cattāri mahārājasahasāni sahasam cātummahārājikānam sahasam tāvatimsānam... ayam vuccat' Ānanda sahasā cūlanikā lokadhātu...*

ten fetters to describe the spiritual progress of a person (Barua, 2018). With these ten fetters one can discuss the three tiers of human spiritual life by dividing it into three spheres: *kāma*, *rūpa* and *arūpa*. Here, if this fact is accepted, it is clear that *bhava* has two aspects: psychological and cosmological. However, one point is noted that the words *bhava* and *punabbhava* have not been employed in the context of rebirth in the *suttas* referred to above.

It is shown in the above discussion that the psychological dimension of *bhava* is more prominent in the *suttas*. This psychological dimension is described as the continuity of the flux of *saṃsāric* life due to the clinging to the five aggregates. This clinging chains a person in various temporary states of mind in human existence. Thus, it is important to emphasize on the concept of *bhava* as continuity due to the clinging to the five aggregates. In this context, when a person clings to the five aggregates he holds a belief in the “self”, therefore he continues onward with the possibility of making progress in *saṃsāric* life and suffers until the attainment of enlightenment.

### **2.6.1 *Bhava* and *Saṃsāra*, without a Discoverable Beginning: How and Why?**

In the above section, the term *saṃsāra* was frequently referred to in association with *bhava*. Now, what the term *saṃsāra* means will be delineated. Does the Buddha employ the term *saṃsāra* to signify suffering in accordance with the repetitive cycle of “birth-death-birth” in the threefold localities: sensuality, form, and formlessness? Or, is the Buddha referring to the effectiveness of dependent co-arising that all conditional factors are operating together like an ever-revolving wheel in a manner of arising, disappearing and continuing which is endowed with suffering in each individual until the attainment of *nibbāna*? Before dealing with these questions, let us discuss how contemporary scholars in Buddhist studies define *saṃsāra*.

Damien Keown says, the term *samsāra* refers to the cycle of repeated birth and death that a person undergoes until the attainment of *nibbāna*. Keown says, in all Indian religions, though the cycle of birth and death is significantly discussed, the word *samsāra* does not appear in the Vedas (Keown 2003, 248). In the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, the term *samsāra* is used in association with *bhava*, and the *samsāracakka* and *bhvacakka* (the wheel of becoming) are said to be identical. In this context, in the *Encyclopaedia*, the notions of *bhava* and *samsāra* are described as the following: “the early Buddhists conceived becoming (*bhava*, *samsāra*) to be of unknown beginning and end (*anamatagg’ yam bhikkhave samsāropubbākoṭi napaññāyati*: S. II, pp. 178 ff.)” (Karunaratna 1999, 12). Walshe says *samsāra* and *bhava* signify Buddhist cosmology which is divided into the three worlds (*loka*) of *kāma*, *rūpa*, and *arūpa*, in which beings are born and die until enlightenment (Walshe 1995, 19–53 & 37). In the “Introduction” to the MN translation, Bodhi provides a comprehensive definition of *samsāra*:

The whole situation becomes multiplied further to dimensions beyond calculation when we take into account the Buddha’s disclosure of the fact of rebirth. All beings in whom ignorance and craving remain present wander on in the cycle of repeated existence, *samsāra*, in which each turn brings them the suffering of new birth, ageing, illness, and death. All states of existence within *samsāra*, being necessarily transitory and subject to change, are incapable of providing lasting security. Life in any world is unstable, it is swept away, it has no shelter and protector, nothing of its own (Bodhi 2009, 27).

From the above discussion, it seems that *samsāra* refers to a substantial world system in which sentient beings are reborn, and not being subject to rebirth is liberation. This idea of *samsāra* is explained by Boyd: “Pāli Suttas and commentary tradition speak of Nirvana not only as a transcendent realm but as an experiential state within samsara” (Boyd 1980, 29). In this respect, Boyd concludes that “[t]he arahant who penetrates *dhamma* comes to know samsara, this visible world, as it really is. Such attainment is Nirvana” (*ibid.*, 41). However, I

do not agree with this position entirely. It seems to me that in the *suttas* the term *saṃsāra* refers to the effectiveness of dependent co-arising that all conditional factors are revolving together, its beginning point is undiscoverable and inconceivable. In this context, I intend to argue that our entire psycho-physical organism is in perpetual flux like an ever-revolving wheel which is running onward that does not distract even for a moment. This dynamic process can be known as *saṃsāra* which is revolving from one thought moment to another thought moment in the present and this present is ever slipping forward. In this context, I intend to discuss *bhava* as the continuity of *saṃsāric* life due to the clinging to the five aggregates of each individual which passes from one moment to the next without any entity. And, this “continuity of *saṃsāric* life” arises because of the hindrance of ignorance and fetter of craving which keeps a person in suffering for a long time. Therefore, it is understood that when *bhava* ceases, *saṃsāra* also ceases in an arahat. It implies that a person becomes enlightened not within *saṃsāra*, but through shattering *saṃsāra*. In this way, when a person becomes arahat, for him *saṃsāra* is no longer applicable. Here, not applicable means that the conditional factors of dependent co-arising which are conducive to the rising of suffering are not present in an arahat. Let me justify this understanding from the *suttas*.

About *saṃsāra*, in the *Koṭṭigāma Sutta* of the SN, the Buddha is said to have taught: “Monks! Because of not comprehending and not penetrating the Four Noble Truths, I and you have roamed and wandered in this long course [of *saṃsāra*]” (SN V 431).<sup>48</sup> Here, it seems that the Buddha referred to the suffering that he and his disciples had experienced due to various conditional factors before the attainment of enlightenment. When they came to

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<sup>48</sup>18–21: *catunnaṃ bhikkhave ariyasaccānaṃ ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evam idaṃ dīghaṃ maddhānaṃ sandhāvitaṃ saṃsaritaṃ mamañceva tumhākañca.*

understand through insight knowledge, they gave up all unwholesome thoughts and became arahat.

Earlier, in the *Vibhaṅga Sutta* of the SN (II 2–4), it was seen that ignorance means not knowing the Four Noble Truths, which is similarly applicable to not knowing the five aggregates as recorded in the *Avijjā Sutta* of the SN (III 162–63). It was also seen that ignorance remains in a person as long as the “self-view” remains. In the *Purisagati Sutta* of the AN, it is said that a non-returner cannot realize the highest peaceful stage, the arahatship, due to having three underlying tendencies (*anusaya*): becoming (*bhava*), conceit (*māna*), and ignorance (*avijjā*) (AN IV 70). From this *Sutta* exposition, it is important to understand that the “I”-notion or “self-view” co-exists with craving (*taṇhā*) because of which a person endures and suffers. As a result, in the *suttas*, *saṃsāra* is always explained in terms of ignorance and craving. For example, in the *Anamatagga-saṃyojana* of the SN, it is said:

Monks! This *saṃsāra* is without discoverable beginning (*anamatagga*), a beginning point is not discerned. [Being hindered by] hindrance of ignorance and [fettered by] fetter of craving, sentient beings are wandering and roaming on (SN II 178).<sup>49</sup>

The above passage significantly suggests that ignorance and craving are the reasons why a person continues to roam and wander forward. In this regard, Davids and Stede say: “*taṇhā* binds a man to the chain of *Saṃsāra*, of being reborn & dying again & again until Arahantship or Nibbāna is attained” (PED, 330).

The aforementioned Pāli term *anamatagga* is used as a compound with *saṃsāra* to indicate that *saṃsāra* is “without beginning”. Sasaki has done a comprehensive study on this term from an etymological point of view and has shown a distinction between the terms *anādikāla* (beginningless), a Mahāyānist expression, and *anamatagga* in the Pāli *Sutta-s*

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<sup>49</sup>8–10: *anamataggoyam bhikkhave saṃsāro pubbakoṭi na paññāyati avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhāsaṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsarataṃ.*

(Sasaki 1986, 19). Sasaki says, the Pāli term *anamatagga*, literally means “the complete cessation of the beginning”. So with *samsāra*, it signifies that *samsāra* cannot become an object of thinking beyond that it is the beginning point (*ibid.*, 18). Bodhi has given the meaning as “without discoverable beginning”, and says the phrase *anamatagga* is uncertain, the idea conveys “that the first point of the round of rebirths cannot be discerned” (Bodhi 2000, 528). Bodhi, moreover, says that the phrase with *samsāra* refers to “the Buddha’s teaching of liberation against its cosmic background by underscoring the immeasurable mass of suffering we have experienced while wandering from life to life in unbounded time, ‘hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving’” (*ibid.*).

Although the above interpretation is traditionally accepted in Theravāda Buddhism, it seems to me that the term *samsāra* does not signify the threefold localities as a cycle in which beings take rebirth again and again, where the first point of rebirth is not discernible. It rather signifies the function of dependent co-arising, and how the twelve conditional factors are revolving in a way that they pass from one moment to the next and are the cause for suffering. In this process, when a man dies, although his physical body is dissolved, the flux of the consciousness streams on to a new life since ignorance and craving remain. This ignorance and craving feed the karmic force which also plays a central role in the becoming of a person. Here the succeeding new life is the result of the preceding conditional factors, that represent the continuity of character in an ever-changing process. This whole process has to be understood in the light of the teaching of dependent co-arising. So, in this process things arise and disappear through an enduring process. This process is a complex net whose first point is undiscoverable and inconceivable. Because all the factors in dependent co-arising are mutually inter-dependent, therefore, it is not possible to discern any first beginning. In this context, we would like to say that birth in the other localities is dependent

upon various conditions. So, when the preceding conditions are not available, there is no birth. One can also describe the whole universe by this system of dependent co-arising. In the *Mahānidāna Sutta* of the DN, the Buddha is said to have taught the following:

Do not say that, Ānanda, do not say that! This dependent co-arising is profound and appears profound. It is because of not understanding, not penetrating this doctrine that generations have become like a tangled ball of string, like matted with a blight, like coarse grass, unable to go beyond states of woe, the bad destinations, the *saṃsāra* (DN II 55).<sup>50</sup>

In this setting, when a person knows the conditional phenomena, he realises how dependent co-arising from ignorance (*avijjā*) to old-age and death (*jarāmaraṇa*) are conjoined to each other. That is why, the term *anamataṅga* could have been used to define *saṃsāra* which implies the complete impossibility of locating a first beginning point. As dependent co-arising occupies an important place in the Buddha's teaching, I understand *saṃsāra* as the revolving of dependent co-arising that depends upon various conditions, and suffering arises and continues in a person until his attainment of *nibbāna*. For conditional factors of *saṃsāra*, the Buddha has pointed out two necessary conditions: ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). By referring to these conditions, the Buddha pointed out that due to ignorance a person does not understand the Four Noble Truths and dependent co-arising; due to not understanding and penetrating the Four Noble Truths and dependent co-arising, he remains in suffering. On account of not putting an end to the conditioning factors, a person is reborn again and again, and suffers until his attainment of *nibbāna*. Here, this represents the endless series of dependent co-arising relationship, where the beginning point is not discernible. It was seen that ignorance and craving have been discussed as necessary conditioning factors for *saṃsāric* suffering. In the *Avijjā Sutta*, and the *Taṇhā Sutta* of the AN, therefore, the Buddha is said to have taught that the beginning points of ignorance and craving are not discernible:

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<sup>50</sup>12–17: *mā h'evaṃ Ānanda avaca, mā h'evaṃ Ānanda avaca. gambhīro cāyaṃ Ānanda paṭiccasamuppādo gambhīrāvabhāso ca. etassa Ānanda dhammassa ananubodhā appaṭivedhā evaṃ ayaṃ pajā tantākulaka-jātā gulāguṇḍika-jātā muñja-babbaja-bhūtā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ saṃsāraṃ nātivattati.*



Monks! No first beginning of ignorance is discernible, “before which there was no ignorance, and after which it came to be.” Monks! It is still said like this that “ignorance has its specific condition” (AN V 113).<sup>51</sup>

Monks! No first beginning of craving for becoming is discernible, “before which there was no craving for becoming, and after which it came to be.” Monks! It is still said like this that “craving for becoming has its specific condition” (AN V 116).<sup>52</sup>

From the above passages, it is clear that each conditioning factor of dependent co-arising links with the notion of *samsāra*, and due to not understanding this, a person does not understand the Four Noble Truths for which his suffering endures for a long time. Not understanding the Four Noble Truths also means not understanding the *dhamma*, dependent co-arising. In the *Vism*, this issue is further illuminated, as:

“With ignorance as condition, determinations is; with determinations as condition, consciousness is,” in this way, there is no end to the succession of cause with fruit. Thus, the wheel of becoming (*bhavacakka*) with its twelve factors, revolving with the linking of cause and effect, is established as having “no known beginning” (*Vism* 577).<sup>53</sup>

For *samsāra*, it may be added that due to the lack of proper understanding of the Four Noble Truths, and the five aggregates, there arises the false notion of “self”. And, due to not understanding this false “self”, one is bound in *samsāric* suffering. However, through insight knowledge, when this “self” is understood, a person attains liberation. In the texts, it is seen that suffering and its cessation are always defined through dependent co-arising. The cessation of one factor in the setting of twelve factors leads to the cessation of all other factors. From this discussion, it is clear that when *bhava* ceases, all other factors cease, which signifies that *samsāra* is no longer applicable to an arahat. Therefore, I say that whoever attains arahatship, has demolished *samsāra*.

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<sup>51</sup>2–5: *purimā bhikkhave koṭi na paññāyati avijjāya ‘ito pubbe avijjā nāhosi, atha pacchā sambhavī’ti. evañ c’etaṃ bhikkhave vuccati. atha ca pana paññāyati ‘idappaccayā avijjā’ti.*

<sup>52</sup>16–19: *purimā bhikkhave koṭi na paññāyati bhavataṇhāya ‘ito pubbe bhavataṇhā nāhosi, atha pacchā sambhavī’ti, evañ c’etaṃ bhikkhave vuccati. atha ca pana paññāyati ‘idappaccayā bhavataṇhā’ti.*

<sup>53</sup>18–21: *avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇan ti evañ hetuphalaparamparāya pariyoṣānaṃ n’atthi. tasmā taṃ hetuphalasambandhavasena pavattam dvādasaṅgaṃ bhavacakkaṃ aviditādī ti siddhaṃ hoti.*

## 2.7 The Exegesis of *Bhava* and Consciousness

It was said that in the Pāli literature *bhava* has been presented in two dimensions: psychological and cosmological. So far in the above sections of this chapter, I have discussed two dimensions of *bhava*. At this point, however, it is important to discuss the *Bhava Sutta* of the AN (I 223), because this *Sutta* consists of three connotations of *bhava* which are deceptively simple, yet they are profound teachings of the Buddha. According to the *Sutta*, there are three *bhavas*: *kāma* (sensuality), *rūpa* (form) and *arūpa* (formlessness). The reference to these three *bhavas* is also found in the analysis of dependent co-arising in the *Vibhaṅga Sutta* of the SN, which I have already discussed in the chapter. It was said that these three *bhavas* are identical with sensual element (*kāma-dhātu*), form element (*rūpa-dhātu*) and formless element (*arūpa-dhātu*),<sup>54</sup> which also correspond to sensual desire (*kāma-rāga*), form desire (*rūpa-rāga*) and formless desire (*arūpa-rāga*) respectively. Now, let us discuss how these three *bhavas* have been explained with *kamma*, consciousness and craving in the *Bhava Sutta* of the AN. According to the *Bhava Sutta*, once Ānanda approaches the Buddha and asks him:

‘Becoming, becoming,’ to what extent, Bhante! is there becoming? (AN I 223).<sup>55</sup>

The Buddha:

Ānanda! if there were no *kamma* ripening in sensory element... form element...formless element... would sensual becoming...form becoming...formless becoming be discerned? (*ibid.*)<sup>56</sup>

Ānanda replies: “No, Bhante”. With regard to Ānanda’s question, the Buddha moreover says:

*Kamma* is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. For beings obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving, consciousness establishes in an inferior element...consciousness establishes in a middle element...consciousness

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<sup>54</sup> In this context, Bodhi (2012, 310) translates the term *dhātu* either as “sphere” or “realm”. Thanissaro ([www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org)) translates the term as “property”. Their translations seem to more or less refer to the metaphorical sense that signifies the three levels of universe in the Theravāda understanding of cosmology. In contrast to them, we translate the term *dhātu* as “element” in preference to the psychosocial aspect.

<sup>55</sup> 16–17: *bhavo bhavo ti bhante vuccati. kittāvātā nu kho bhante bhavo hotī ti?*

<sup>56</sup> 18–34: *kāmadhātuvepakkañ ca Ānanda, ... rūpadhātuvepakkañ ca... arūpadhātuvepakkañ ca kammaṃ nābhavissa api nu kho kāmabhavo...rūpabhavo... arūpabhavo paññāyethā ti?*

establishes in a superior element. Thus, there is the process of further becoming in future. It is in this way, Ānanda, there is becoming (*ibid.*, 223–24).<sup>57</sup>

In the commentary, the above mentioned inferior element (*hīna-dhātu*), middle element (*majjhima-dhātu*), and superior element (*pañīta-dhātu*) correspond to the sensory element (*kāma-dhātu*), form element (*rūpa-dhātu*), and formless element (*arūpa-dhātu*) respectively (AN-a II 334).<sup>58</sup> However, an interesting point is that the above-passage declare ignorance and craving as the key factors that make consciousness present in any of the three elements, which can be mentioned as a determined group for *punabbhava*. Earlier, we have seen that craving is accompanied by *nandi-rāga* (desire and lust) which furthers *punabbhava* in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*.

Ignorance is defined as the root cause of all unwholesome things: “whatever unwholesome things are there, they are all due to ignorance” (*ye keci akusalā dhammā sabbe te avijjāmūlakā*, SN II 263, 5–6). The *Vibhaṅga Sutta* of the SN explains that not knowing the Four Noble Truths is called ignorance (SN II 2-4).<sup>59</sup> This explanation similarly applies to the five aggregates in the *Avijjā Sutta* of the SN (III 162–63). In this *Sutta*, it is said that ignorance is the basic cause of *samsāric* suffering.<sup>60</sup> Here, it can be interpreted that due to lack of proper understanding of the Four Noble Truths, and the five aggregates, there arises

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<sup>57</sup>19–06: *kammaṃ khettaṃ viññānaṃ bijaṃ tanhā sineho avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ tanhāsamyojanānaṃ hīnāya dhātuyā viññānaṃ patiṭṭhitam...majjhimāya dhātuyā viññānaṃ patiṭṭhitam....pañītāya dhātuyā viññānaṃ patiṭṭhitam. evaṃ āyati punabbhavābhiniḥḥatti hoti. evaṃ kho ānanda, bhavo hotī ti.*

<sup>58</sup>26–29: *hīnāya dhātuyā ti kāmādhātuyā...majjhimāya dhātuyā ti rūpadhātuyā. pañītāya dhātuyā ti arūpadhātuyā.*

<sup>59</sup>11–14: *yaṃ kho bhikkhave dukkhe aññānaṃ dukkhasamudaye aññānaṃ dukkhanirodhe aññānaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya aññānaṃ. ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave avijjā.*

<sup>60</sup> In the *abhidhamma* and traditional lists of ten *samyojanas* (fetter), ignorance is placed at the end. The Theravāda tradition uses the traditional list of ten fetters to describe the Four Noble Persons in the process of the attainment of final liberation. Hence, it is said that liberation is through the cutting of the ten fetters. However, the question is raised, if ignorance is not knowing the ‘I’ or the Four Noble Truths, why was it then placed at the end? In one of my studies, I have studied the issue and shown that a stream-enterer has removed a grosser level of ignorance, but he still needs to eliminate ignorance while passing through the stages of once-returning, and non-returning until the attainment of the stage of arahatship. Therefore, ignorance is placed at the end of both the lists of fetters. Considering the traditional list of ten fetters, I suggested that ignorance is not a *samyojana*, rather an *anusaya* (underlying tendency) (For details, see Barua 2018, 158–61).

the false belief in “self” with regard to the five aggregates. And, lack of proper understanding of the five aggregates causes bondage, therefore, liberation is also said to be freedom from the belief in “self” in the five aggregates. I have seen that suffering and its cessation have been defined through the causal condition based on the doctrine of dependent co-arising. The cessation of one factor in the setting of twelve factors leads to the cessation of all other factors. Therefore, as long as the “self-view” persists, craving remains, and with the cessation of the “self-view,” craving also ceases. Here, this craving is to be known as the supportive vitality for the further continuation of the “self”. In this connection, it seems that the presence of “consciousness” has an underlying relationship with the notion of “self-view”. This subject will be discussed in Chapter Four. In the following section, we shall only see how the presence of “consciousness” is discussed in the *suttas*.

### 2.7.1 The Basis for the Presence of Consciousness

In the *Bhava Sutta*, it was seen that *kamma*, consciousness and craving have an intrinsic relation to *punabbhava*. In that *Sutta*, it is said that craving is the moisture which causes the presence of consciousness in any of the three elements. In this connection, let us explore the supportive basis for the presence of consciousness with the four kinds of food.

Four kinds of food (*āhāra*) have been mentioned for the sustenance of beings already born, and for the support of beings persistently seeking to become. These four kinds of food are: edible food (*kabalīnkāra*), contact (*phassa*), mental volition (*manosañcetanā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) (SN II 101).<sup>61</sup> Before proceeding with this subject, it is important to distinguish that the above statement is only applicable to those who are yet to achieve enlightenment. For the living enlightened ones, though they need to consume nutrition to

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<sup>61</sup>3–4: *bhūtānaṃ vā sattānaṃ t̥hitiyā sambhavesīnaṃ vā anuggahāya*.

survive until the dissolution of the body, many qualities of those foods are not present in them due to the complete elimination of craving.<sup>62</sup> Because, craving is considered to be the supportive basis for the presence of consciousness. First let us discuss how consciousness is present, being dependent upon lust (*rāga*), delight (*nandi*), and craving. According to the *Atthirāga Sutta*:

When there is lust, delight, and craving in the foods of edible food... contact... mental volition... consciousness..., consciousness becomes present and sustains. Where consciousness is present, name-form comes forward. Where name-form comes forward, there is progress of volitional formations. Where there is progress of volitional formations, there is a succession of further becoming. Where there is a succession of further becoming, there is succession of birth, aging, and death. Where there is succession of birth, aging, and death, there is the company of sorrow, distress and despair... (SN II 101).<sup>63</sup>

Following the reverse approach, when there is no lust, delight, and craving in the foods of edible substance, contact, mental volition, and consciousness, succession of further becoming does not occur, and there is no occurrence of succeeding birth, aging, and death.

The SN Commentary interprets the aforementioned passage as the process of rebirth through *kammic* consequences. In this context, due to the presence of craving, “consciousness” (*viññāṇa*) is established and increases, and results in an alignment of mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*). And, when there is this alignment of mentality-materiality, there is the growth of conditioning forces (*saṃkhārā*). Again, these “conditioning forces” are the key factor for rebirth in the future (SN-a II 114).<sup>64</sup> Bodhi also interprets the

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<sup>62</sup> In the *Chantu Sutta* of SN (I 60-61), it is said that monks (living arahats) who have put an end to suffering, consume alms and use lodgings without wishes (*anicchā*).

<sup>63</sup>5–19: *kabalīkāre...phase...,manosañcetanāya...viññāṇaṃ..., āhāre atthi rāgo atthi nandi atthi taṇhā patiṭṭhitam tattha viññāṇaṃ virūlhaṃ. yattha patiṭṭhitam viññāṇaṃ virūlhaṃ. atthi tattha nāmarūpassa avakkanti. yattha atthi nāmarūpassa avakkanti atthi tattha saṃkhārānaṃ vuddhi. yattha atthi saṃkhārānaṃ vuddhi atthi tattha āyatim punabbhavābhiniḍḍanti. yattha atthi āyatim punabbavābhiniḍḍanti atthi tattha āyatim jātijarāmarāṇaṃ. yattha atthi āyatim jātijarāmarāṇaṃ, sasokaṃ...*

<sup>64</sup>3–10: *patiṭṭhitam tattha viññāṇaṃ virūlhan ti, kammaṃ javāpetvā paṭisandhi-ākaḍḍhana-samatthatāya patiṭṭhitāñ c’eva virūlha ca. yathā ti tebhūmaka-vaṭṭe bhumbaṃ. sabbattha vā purima-purima-pade etaṃ bhumbaṃ. atthi tattha saṃkhārānaṃ vuddhī ti, idaṃ imasmiṃ vipāka-vaṭṭe ṭhitassa āgati-vaṭṭa-hetuke saṃkhāre*

aforementioned passage and translates the term *patiṭṭhitam* as “becomes established” and *virūḷham* as “comes to growth” (Bodhi 2000, 600). Thanissaro gives a similar meaning and translates them as “land there” and “increases” respectively.<sup>65</sup> Thanissaro refers to the *Nibbedhika Sutta* of the AN (III 410-17) and says that the notion of *kamma* is of three types which arises right here and now, and later. He interprets “the right here and now” as either this very moment or in this very lifetime, and “later” would mean later in this life time or in the next lifetime (Thanissaro 2008, 33).

Following the principle of dependent co-arising, it is to be understood that when lust, delight, and craving are present, consciousness is present, and due to other factors, this “consciousness” sustains. In this connection, I render the meaning of *patiṭṭhitam* as “becomes present” and *virūḷham* as “sustain,” because lust, delight, and craving would mean that there is condition for something that leads to the presence of consciousness and there is suffering, and the cessation of it denotes the cessation of suffering. This conclusion can also be inferred from the passage of the *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* of the MN. According to the *Sutta*, through the complete destruction, utter diminishing, cessation, letting go, abandoning of craving, the Buddha awakened to full enlightenment (MN I 6).<sup>66</sup> So, the cessation of craving is equally known as the cessation of “consciousness” which is also identical with the cessation of *bhava*. Here, it seems that the Buddha is not elucidating the theory of rebirth as to how “rebirth” occurs after death; rather he is mainly emphasizing the conditional factors that depend upon various conditions, how suffering arises, and through the cessation of those factors how suffering ceases. It is because, in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* of the MN, we find

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*sandhāya vuttam. yattha atthi āyatim punabbhav’ābhinibbattī ti yasmim ṭhāne āyatim punabbhav’ābhinibbatti atthi.*

<sup>65</sup> Thanissaro, “Atthi Raga Sutta: Where There is Passion,” [www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org).

<sup>66</sup> 20–23: *tasmātiha bhikkhave Tathāgato sabbaso taṅhānaṃ khayā virāgā nirodhā cāgā paṭinissaggā anuttaram sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho ti vadāmiti.*

the reference that when other recluses and brahmins wrongly misinterpreted the Buddha’s teaching, in reply the Buddha proclaimed, he was simply teaching the cause and cessation of suffering (*dukkhañ ‘c’ eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodham*, MN I 140, 14–15). Moreover, in the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta* of the MN, it is said that when a monk named Sāti misinterpreted the Buddha’s teaching that it is the same “consciousness” which is wandering on, then the Buddha rebuked Sāti and said “consciousness” is present co-dependently when other conditional factors are present. So, “without condition, becoming of consciousness is not” (*aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavo ti*, MN I 259, 4–5). Here, it suggests that we cannot emphasise on consciousness only, rather it is important to know how consciousness is present. In this context, I say that craving is the necessary condition for the presence of consciousness, and the presence of consciousness is the necessary condition for the presence of craving.

From the above discussion, I argue that the aforementioned “consciousness” has an intrinsic relationship with the “self-view”, which is not present in an enlightened one because he has completely eliminated the supportive basis for that consciousness. This supportive basis is known as lust or craving. This point can be clarified by referring to the passage of the *Udāna Sutta* in of the SN:

Monk! If a monk abandons lust for the form element, then with the abandonment of lust the support is cut off, and there is no basis for [the presence of] consciousness. If a monk abandons lust for the feeling element... for the perception element . . . for the volitional formations element . . . for the consciousness element, with the abandonment of lust the support is cut off, and there is no basis for [the presence of] consciousness (SN III 58).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>13–21: *rūpadhātuyā ce bhikkhu bhikkhuno rāgo pahīno hoti rāgassa pahānā vocchijjatārammaṇaṃ patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa na hoti. vedanādhātuyā ce bhikkhu bhikkhuno rāgo pahīno hoti...saññādhātuyā...saṃkhārādhātuyā...viññādhātuyā ce bhikkhu bhikkhuno rāgo pahīno hoti. rāgassa pahānā vocchijjatārammaṇaṃ patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa na hoti.*

In the same *Sutta*, it is said that when this consciousness is no longer present because of abandoning lust for the five aggregates, it is liberated. By being liberated, it becomes steady; by being steady, it is contented; by being contented, it is not agitated. Being not agitated, the monk is totally unbound and attains *nibbāna* (*ibid.*).<sup>68</sup> This point is illuminated in the *Dutiya-sikkhattaya Sutta* of the AN, as the following:

One is freed by the destruction of craving,  
through the cessation of consciousness;  
Liberation of the mind is [like] extinguishment of a lamp (AN I 236).<sup>69</sup>

The above discussion signifies that craving or lust is the support for the presence of consciousness. Now, if this fact is accepted, it is logical to say that however the doctrines are described with regard to *bhava*, *punabbhava* and *saṃsāra*, all have an underlying relationship with craving. Therefore, in the absence of craving, *bhava*, *punabbhava* or *saṃsāra* are not present, and in the absence of *bhava*, *punabbhava* or *saṃsāra*, craving is not present in an enlightened one. Here the truth is thus, craving, consciousness (*viññāṇa*), *bhava* or *saṃsāra* cease at the time of the attainment of *nibbāna*. Therefore, one cannot say that consciousness comes from the foods such as craving, and craving comes from consciousness, rather we can say consciousness is present as being dependent upon craving, and craving is present, being dependent upon consciousness.

But a question arises with the aforementioned “consciousness”. If the fact of rebirth is accepted, there is no doubt that due to the presence of craving, this “consciousness” is present and it is linked to the following birth. It seems that this “consciousness” has an intrinsic connection with *bhava*, because *nibbāna* is described through the cessation of *bhava*, and also through the cessation of consciousness. Earlier, I have delineated the meaning of *bhava*

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<sup>68</sup>22–25: *tad appatīṭṭhitam viññāṇam avirūlham anabhisankhāraṇca vimuttam. vimuttattā ṭhitam. ṭhitattā santusitam. santusitattā na paritassati. aparitassam paccattam yeva parinibbāyati.*

<sup>69</sup>16–17: *viññāṇassa nirodhena taṇhākkhayavimuttino/ pajjotass’eva nibbāṇam vimokkho hoti cetaso ti.*



as the continuity of *samsāric* life due to clinging to the “self” with regard to the five aggregates. If this fact is considered, it is also possible to say that consciousness and the clinging to “self” have an underlying relationship. This subject is one of the key inquiries in this study which will be discussed with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in Chapter Four.

## 2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have clarified some of the deeper insights of Buddhist teachings into the condition of human suffering. Scholars in the Pāli tradition give the meaning of *bhava* as either “becoming”, “being”, “existence” “rebirth” or “the cycle of existence”. And *punabbhava* is defined as the “renewal of being in the future”, which represents the beginning of a new life. Though this explanation is well accepted on account of the basic rendition of rebirth in the Theravāda tradition, I have offered two different explanations of *bhava* – psychological and cosmological – from the perspective of early Buddhist teachings.

I acknowledge the *sutta*’s exposition that there is the possibility of continuity in the future by way of being reborn in different planes. When we reckon with the term *bhava* from the psychological perspective and understand that when one clings to any of the five aggregates as “self” his existence continues. This “self” is due to clinging to the five aggregates, conditioned by craving. Therefore, *nibbāna* is described as: “*nibbāna* is cessation of *bhava*” which is equal to the complete elimination of the continuation of a belief in “self”. I cited a passage from the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of the DN that the Buddha, being cut off from the net of *bhava*, continued his life span until the dissolution of his five aggregates. In this context, the Tathāgatha did not have “self-view” and craving although his five aggregates remained.

I have discussed that the Buddhist cosmological system in relation to *bhava* was presented metaphorically on the basis of spiritual progress. In this regard, it was said that in the *suttas* the factor *bhava* of dependent co-arising is divided into three kinds: sensuality (*kāma*), form (*rūpa*), and formlessness (*arūpa*). But this classification in the *abhidhamma*, the *Paṭiṣ*, the *Vism*, and the commentaries is two kinds: action becoming (*kamma-bhava*), and rebirth becoming (*upapatti-bhava*). These two kinds of *bhava* have been extensively discussed in the *Paṭiṣ* in the context of the twelve factors of dependent co-arising, covering three lives pertaining to the past, present, and future. Scholars rigidly take this exposition to explain the *sutta*. This shows that, to explain the *suttas*, *abhidhammic* and commentarial understating are being implied. Hence, it is quite logical to conclude that Buddhist thinkers interpret the term *bhava* and *punabbhava* with reference to the concept of rebirth. But it is important to understand that the whole process of rebirth is like a mechanism which is based on the theory of dependent co-arising in which various conditions are involved. That is why, it is difficult to find any specific word in the *suttas* that directly corresponds to the term “rebirth”.

From the psychological point of view, *bhava* and *punabbhava* are interpreted as ever-changing processes, which run from moment to moment without any gap in between. In this regard, the preceding condition is *bhava* for the succeeding moment which can be described as *punabbhava*, which together imply the continuation of the belief in “self”. And, the cosmological idea of *bhava* is more apparent with the *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava* in the *abhidhamma*, the *Paṭiṣ*, the *Vism*, and the commentaries.

The consciousness which is traditionally known to be “rebirth consciousness” is said to be a form of psycho-physical organism involved with conditioning forces (*saṅkhārā*) in *saṃsāra*. In this understanding, *saṃsāra* was defined as an ever-revolving process. And the

*saṃsāric* suffering is described due to the sustainability of consciousness which is involved with craving as a cause for the succession of further becoming/rebirth (*viññāṇe virūlḥe āyatim punabbhavābhiniḥbatti hoti*, SN II 65, 18). Here, the cause of further becoming/rebirth is dependent upon the food of consciousness (*viññāhāro āyatim punabbhavābhiniḥbattiyā paccayo*, SN II 13, 14–15), and it is the consciousness which depends upon various conditionings and streams forward (*cittam assa vidhāvati*, SN I 37, 18, 23 & 38,4). However, this consciousness is understood to be of the nature of impermanence, suffering and not-self with three characteristics of arising (*uppāda*), passing away (*vaya*), and continuation or change of what endures (*thitassa aññathatta*) (AN I 152).

I understand that the aforesaid consciousness is not present in a living arahat, because to sustain this consciousness, foods which are known as craving, contact, etc. are no more present in an arahat (SN III 58). When those conditions are not present, there is no sustainability of consciousness (*aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavo ti*, MN I 259, 4–5). Therefore, life after death is dependent upon the conditional factors at the last thought-moment of the dying person. In this regard, which is traditionally known to be the “*saṃsāric* consciousness” streams to a successive life. This subject will be discussed with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in Chapter Four with the principle of dependent co-arising.

As already pointed out, Jayatileke, Keith, Wijesekera, and Collins, by referring to the AN II 79 mention of *bhavaṅga*, said that *bhava* has an intrinsic relation with *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* because they are rooted in the flux of *bhava* as *saṃsāric* continuity. In this chapter, I discussed their interpretations broadly and analysed *bhava* as continuity of *saṃsāric* life with *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* in relation with *saṃsāric* existence. The following chapter undertakes to illuminate the relationship of *bhava*, *bhavaṅga*, *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* with the postulation of dependent co-arising formula as presented in the Peṭ and the Netti.

## Chapter 3–The Analysis of *Bhavaṅga* in the *Peṭakopadesa* and the *Nettipakaraṇa*

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed *bhava*, *bhavaṅga*, and the basis of presence of consciousness in the triple existence of sensuality, form and formlessness from the perspective of *sutta*. This chapter undertakes to discuss *bhavaṅga* from the *Peṭ* and the *Netti*. In the *Netti*, *bhavaṅga* is designated as a “factor” of each item of the twelve links of the doctrine of dependent co-arising. It is said that when these factors (*bhavaṅgāni*) –from ignorance to old-age and death – occur conjointly, then *bhava* is produced. And this *bhava* becomes a proximate cause for *saṃsāra* (*Netti* 29).<sup>1</sup>

In the *Netti*, *bhavaṅga* is further explained according to the two basic formulae to describe the enlightened and unenlightened ones. For instance, it is said that when there are *saṅkhārā* without outflows (*āsava*), they are not factors of becoming: “conditioning forces that are free from outflows are not factors of becoming” (*Netti* 64).<sup>2</sup> And when there are *saṅkhārā* with outflows, they are factors of becoming: “conditioning forces that are affected by outflows are factors of becoming” (*Netti* 65).<sup>3</sup> A similar explanation is also found about *āyatana* (base), as the following: when the base is free from outflow, it is not a factor of becoming (*Netti* 64),<sup>4</sup> and when the base is affected by outflow, it is a factor of becoming (*Netti* 65).<sup>5</sup> It is seen that in the *Peṭ* the term *bhavaṅga* occurs once with the term *otarāṇa* (*bhavaṅgotarāṇa*, *Peṭ* 98, 26) in the same sense as found in the *Netti*. Cousins refers to the

<sup>1</sup> 10–11: *imāni bhavaṅgāni yadā samaggāni nibbattāni bhavanti so bhavo, taṃ saṃsārassa padaṭṭhānaṃ.*

<sup>2</sup> 12: *saṅkhārā anāsavā no ca bhavaṅgā.*

<sup>3</sup> 24–25: *saṅkhārā sāsavā bhavaṅgā*

<sup>4</sup> 31–32: *āyatanaṃ anāsavaṃ, no ca bhavaṅgaṃ.*

<sup>5</sup> 24–25: *āyatanaṃ sāsavaṃ bhavaṅgaṃ.*

occurrence of *bhavaṅga* in the Netti and assumes that it is the original meaning of the term *bhavaṅga* from which “the use to designate a type of consciousness is derived” (2005, 54).

This chapter will examine *bhavaṅga* from the Peṭ, the Netti, and the Netti Commentary. As it was mentioned, in the Netti, *bhavaṅga* designates each link in dependent co-arising as a factor and when all these factors occur conjointly, then there is the individual’s *saṃsāric* continuity. With this reference, I will occasionally examine *saṅkhārā* and its functions because with the conditioning factors *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*, *saṃsāric* continuity is explained. A detailed analysis of *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* will be presented in the next chapter.

In this chapter, two dimensions of *bhava* will be discussed: one is a conditioning factor of *bhava* and the other is *bhava* itself. When we closely look at the passage “when these factors of becoming occur conjointly, it is becoming. It becomes a footing for the life-cycle” (*imāni bhavaṅgāni yadā samaggāni nibbattāni bhavanti so bhavo, taṃ saṃsārassa padaṭṭhānaṃ*, Netti 29), it is discerned that *bhava* (*bhava-paccayā jāti*), which is one of the twelve factors, is also the supporting condition for *bhava* which is a proximate cause for the life-cycle. In this context, I will examine the similarities and differences between the conditioning factor of *bhava* (*bhavaṅga*) and *bhava*. In this part, twofold *bhava* (*kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava*) will be discussed with the notion of *bhavaṅga*, because the Netti Commentary explains *bhavaṅga* in relation to *upapatti-bhava*: “the factors of becoming means the factors of rebirth-becoming” (*bhavaṅgānīti upapattibhavassa aṅgāni*, Netti-a VRI 77, 36). This portion will suggest that *viññāṇa* in general, and *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* (rebirth consciousness) in particular, have an intrinsic relation with *bhavaṅga*, which plays a key role in the process of rebirth.

This chapter will arrive at the conclusion that, in the *Peṭ* and the *Netti*, *bhavaṅga* occurs in the context of *āsava*, and it is not present when a person attains enlightenment. In this context, it will be shown that the *Netti* similarly discusses the attainment of enlightenment as the eradication of “self-view” which was discussed extensively in the previous chapter. Yet, I will conclude that the notion of *bhavaṅga* as widely found in the *Vism* and the commentaries as the mental stream in the context of continuity of cognizance has not been discussed in the *Netti* and the *Peṭ*. However, there is a possibility of interpreting *bhavaṅga* as a mental stream by referring to the relationship between *bhava*, *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* which are proximate causes for the individual’s *saṃsāric* continuity. Together with all these explanations, the composition dates of the *Peṭ* and the *Netti* will also be discussed. In conclusion, it will be remarked that modern scholarship has not paid much attention to understanding the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* in the *Netti*, in spite of the fact that it is an important text for understanding *bhavaṅga* in relation with dependent co-arising.

### **3.2 The Occurrence of *Bhavaṅga* in the *Peṭakopadesa* and the *Nettipakaraṇa***

The term *bhavaṅga* in the *Netti* is used in the sense of a factor (*aṅga*); it refers to each factor of dependent co-arising whose characteristic is to produce becoming (*bhava*). In the *Peṭ*, it is also used in the same sense. About this notion of *bhavaṅga*, Cousins writes: “In fact it seems quite plain that this is the original meaning of the term, from which the use to designate a type of consciousness is derived” (2005, 54). In Chapter Five, we will show that in the *Paṭṭh*, the *Vism*, and the commentaries, *bhavaṅga* occurs as the “resultant consciousness” in the sense of consciousness continuity, and stands for the process of rebirth and the perceptual process of ordinary perception. About the usage of the term *bhavaṅga* in the *Paṭṭh*, Ñāṇamoli, in his translated volume *Netti*, says that the meaning of the word *bhavaṅga* has not been clearly elucidated in the *Paṭṭh*, not even in any *Piṭaka* commentaries. He says that the term

*bhavaṅga* was taken by Buddhaghosha and others from the Paṭṭh to describe the continuity of cognizance. Though there was no discussion on the occurrence of the term *bhavaṅga* in the Netti, even in his translated Peṭ volume, Ñāṇamoli briefly outlines the usage and meaning of *bhavaṅga* in the Netti as it “is not quite the same, perhaps, and seems to be the more simple one that each item (from ‘ignorance’ down as far as ‘assumption’) in the formula of Dependent Arising is to be considered as a ‘factor of being’ (itself a member of the formula)” (Ñāṇamoli 1977, 49, see footnote 165/1). He, moreover, refers to the Netti Commentary, and says: “the defilements are ‘factors of being’” (*ibid.*, 49, see footnote 165/1). Therefore, in this study, it is proper to clarify the issue of *bhavaṅga* in the Peṭ and the Netti. Before dealing with this topic, let me first discuss the composition dates of the two texts because it is important to discern how the concept of *bhavaṅga* has been expanded in the Pāli Buddhist texts in connection with the development of Buddhist thought throughout the period of the compilation of the Pāli texts.

### 3.2.1 The Composition Dates of the *Peṭakopadesa* and the *Nettipakarāṇa*

The Peṭ and the Netti<sup>6</sup> (also called the *Netti-gandha* (Hardy 1995, VII)) are ascribed to the author Kaccāna or Mahākaccāna.<sup>7</sup> Both texts are considered to be works of similar content (Zacchrtti 2002, 76). The closing sentence of the Netti says that Mahākaccāna expounded the Netti in front of the Buddha, and the Buddha accepted his presentation as valid. Moreover, it was also recited in the First Council (Netti 193).<sup>8</sup> However, scholars in Buddhist studies do not accept this narrative. Ñāṇamoli says that both the Peṭ and the Netti along with the Mil are

<sup>6</sup>According to Bond, though the Peṭ is closely related to the Netti in terms of its method of interpretation, the Netti is the “most significant work which presents a Buddhist understanding of the problem and process of interpretation” (Bond 1980, 16).

<sup>7</sup>Warder says that certain traditions think *Mahākaccāyana* was associated with the composition of the *Abhidhamma* (Warder 2004, 303). Norman thinks it cannot be the Kaccāna who was identified as the Buddha’s disciple by the commentator Dhammapāla because it was composed sometime after the completion of the Canon (1983, 108).

<sup>8</sup>1–2: *ettāvatā samattā Nettiyā āyasmatā Mahākaccāyanena bhāsītā Bhagavatā anumoditā mūlasaṅgītiyaṃ saṅgītā ti.*

included in the Burmese version of the Pāli Canon, but they remain outside the Pāli Canon in other, such as Ceylonese Theravāda versions of the Pāli Canon (Ñāṇamoli 1977, xii). Hinüber says there was probably a third text called *Peṭaka* which is similar to the Peṭ because Buddhaghosa quotes a passage from the *Peṭaka*. However, this passage is not found in the present Peṭ. Norman (1983, 109) and Ñāṇamoli (*Vism*, trans. 2010, 135 & Peṭ, trans. 1964, 400) also confirm that this passage is not available in the Peṭ. In the *Vism*, the passage is:

*samādhī kāmaccchandassa paṭipakkho, pīti vyāpādassa, vitakko thīnamiddhassa, sukhaṃ uddhacca-kukkuccassa, vicāro vicikicchāyāti Peṭake vuttam* (*Vism* 141,11–13, also found in the *Dhs-a* 165, 30–32).

“Concentration is opposed to desire and lust, happiness to ill will, applied thought to sloth and torpor, bliss to restlessness and worry, and sustained thought to uncertainty,” accordingly it is said in the *Peṭaka*.

Hinüber (1996, 82) says the *Peṭaka* was ascribed to Mahākātyāyana (Pāli: *Mahākaccāyana*), who is “Pi-lē” in Chinese, and Kumārajīva (5th century AD) has mentioned this text in his translation of Nāgārjuna’s *Mahāprajñāpāramitā śāstra*. Cousins believes this text belongs to the Mahīmsāsaka school which was originally the main counterpart of Theravāda. Cousins hypothesizes that this *Peṭaka* “may or may not be the work known to us as *Peṭakopadesa*” (2005, 53).

Bond says, in view of the doctrinal interpretation, “the *Peṭakopadesa* has always existed somewhat in the shadow of the *Netti*” (1980, 16). Hardy thinks “the Peṭ. seems to presuppose the *Netti*,” and the date of both the texts are uncertain. But for the *Netti*, he limits the date between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, that is, between the age of Buddhaghosa and the age of the later canonical Pāli texts (Hardy 1995, xix–xx). However, Norman thinks that the Peṭ is older than the *Netti* and the date of the Peṭ is 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (1983, 108). Karunadasa thinks both the Peṭ and the *Netti* are between the post-canonical and the pre-commentarial period, which can be included in the *abhidhamma* tradition (Karunadasa 2010, 2).



About the *Netti*, Cousins says that some of the earlier works of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* influenced the *Netti*, therefore “it may be appropriate to think of the second century B.C. for the work in its present form” (2005, 54). According to Ñāṇamoli, the present *Netti* is a more polished version of the original text, which was later “rectified and fixed by Ācariya Dhammapala in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.C., with its commentary by him” (1964, xi).<sup>9</sup> Norman says that neither text is a continuation of the other, rather the *Netti* is a rewritten version of the *Peṭ* because the commentator Dhammapāla<sup>10</sup> has given superiority to the *Netti* by writing a commentary on it, while there is no commentary on the *Peṭ*.<sup>11</sup> He further observes that in the *Netti* there occurs the *Āryā* metre which implies that at least these portions “of the text were composed in North India at some time prior to the introduction of the text into Ceylon” (1983, 110).<sup>12</sup> In this regard, Hinüber thinks that the *Peṭ* was also composed in North India because verses with *Āryā* metre are present in both the *Peṭ* and the *Netti* (1996, 81). In this regard, Bond elucidates: “the *Netti* and the *Peṭakopadesa* both present essentially the same

<sup>9</sup> In this regard, Ñāṇamoli states: “There is no evidence of when, or where, it was composed, though it is assumed to have come to Ceylon from India between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.C. and it is older than the works of Acariya Buddhaghosa since he quotes from it” (Ñāṇamoli 1977, x).

<sup>10</sup>Warder in his article “Some Problems of the Later Pali Literature” has extensively discussed about Dhammapāla. About the commentator of the *Netti* in a passage he argues, “the *Netti Aṭṭhakathā* is ascribed in its colophon to the Dhammapāla of Badaratittha. Now there is a *Ṭīkā* on this work, also ascribed to a Dhammapala. Is it likely that a Theravādin commentator would write a sub-commentary on his own commentary? Most probably not, and this fact would seem to confirm the distinction made in the *Sāsanavamsa* between the two Dhammapālas, the commentator and the sub-commentator,” (Warder 1981, 201-02).

<sup>11</sup> Bond also confirms that “no commentary exists for the *Peṭakopadesa*” (Bond 1980, 16).

<sup>12</sup> In his article “The Origins of the *āryā* Metre,” Norman says, the *āryā* metre is very common in Jaina Prakrit texts but the Buddhists used it only in the non-canonical Pāli texts such as the *Netti* (1-5) which are regarded as being of North Indian origin or authorship. But this metre fell into disuse after the “emigration” of Pāli texts from India to Ceylon, yet it was widely used by the Jainas as they remained in North India (2008, 20 & 31). About the adoption of *āryā* metre in Pāli, Norman states:

The Buddhist adopted the *āryā* metre just before they closed their canon and took it to Ceylon. They had not had sufficient experience of the metre before they left for it to have become part of their literary tradition, and they consequently made no further use of it, with the exception of the texts mentioned above (§5.6) [such as the *Netti*] (2008, 35).

There is an inscription found in the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, dating to the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, which traces that the Tāmraparṇīya monks from Ceylon went to places in India such as Kashmir and Gandhāra to propagate Buddhism. Epigraphia Indica contains that: “the shrine is further stated to have been dedicated to the fraternities of Ceylonese monks who had converted Kasmira (Kashmir), Gaudhāra, China, Chilāta (=Skt. Kirāta), Tosali, Avaramta (=Skt. Aparānta), Vaṃga (i.e., Bengal), Vanavāsi (i.e., North Kanara), Yavana (?), Damila(?), .lāra and the Isle of Tambaparmṇi (i.e., Ceylon)” (Epigraphia Indica Vol XX 1983, 7). Here, it can be claimed that monks who went to Kashmir from Ceylon might have brought the *Netti* with them from North India to Ceylon.

method of interpretation,” (1980, 16). We also agree that there is doctrinal proximity between the Peṭ and the Netti. We shall now try to clarify which tradition the Peṭ and the Netti belong to.

### 3.2.1.1 Are the *Peṭakopadesa* and the *Nettipakaraṇa* Theravāda Texts?

Hinüber has proffered a hypothesis that the “Netti and Peṭ intruded from outside into the Theravāda as handbooks to understand and to explain the Suttantas” (1996, 82). He has made this assertion by referring to Bechert (1955/1957, 352 sq.)<sup>13</sup>, who thinks that the Peṭ, like the Mil, was placed into the Theravāda tradition from outside (*ibid.*, 81).<sup>14</sup> But Bond thinks that “the *Netti* seems to represent a time when Theravāda Buddhism had become an established orthodoxy,” (1980, 26). About the Netti, Bond further remarks: “the *Netti* and its method defend the orthodox beliefs of Theravāda Buddhism and reject all other interpretations” (1980, 26). In this regard, though Norman does not refer to both texts as being introduced from outside Theravāda, his thought is similar to that of Hinüber. Norman thinks that both texts were composed to interpret the *suttas* in the following manner:

It seems clear that early in the history of Buddhism a need was felt for guidance on how to interpret *suttas*, so that those *bhikkhus* who wished to teach and explain the *Dhamma* to their followers might be able to do so. The result of this need was the production of two works [the Peṭ and the Netti] which are in effect treatises upon hermeneutics, offering instructions for analysing, construing, investigating, and identifying common themes in the *Dhamma*, so that anyone wishing to interpret could derive from the texts a correct understating of the meaning of the *Dhamma* (Norman 1983, 108).

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<sup>13</sup>Bechert, H., “Zur Geschichte der buddhistischen Sekten in Indien und Ceylon,” *La Nouvelle Cli* 7-9 (Melanges C. Courtois et W. Marçais), 311–60.

<sup>14</sup>Zacchetti has compared chapter 6 of the Peṭ and *Yin chi ru jin* T 603, and says that “the YCRJ [*Yin chi ru jin*] is the only Chinese (partial) translation of the *Peṭakopadesa* so far identified” (2002, 92). The *Yin chi ru jin* is a Chinese version of Buddhist scriptures translated into Chinese by An Shigao, the earliest translator of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese, active since 148 A.D., during the later Han Dynasty. Zacchetti says the *Yin chi ru jin* was written on “the aggregates, the constituents and the sense-fields,” and “the sixth chapter of the *Peṭakopadesa* and the YCRJ [*Yin chi ru jin*] are two versions of the very same text...” (2002, 75 & 76). Zacchetti, moreover, says, “apart from a few minor variants, the two texts, the YCRJ [*Yin chi ru jin*] and the *Peṭakopadesa*, share the same reading” (2002, 79).

Bond further clarifies that both are Theravādins' texts presenting their thought on the interpretation of the *Tipiṭaka* showing the notion of the gradual path to *nibbāna*. Both texts, according to Bond, were compiled to shape the understanding of the *Dhamma* by presenting two distinctive viewpoints: (1) the case of the renouncers, and (2) that of the householders. He further says that these two viewpoints concern the people who are without and with defilements respectively and that the second viewpoint reflects the *samsāric* suffering of persons due to their unwholesome actions with defilements which lead them from life to life (Bond 1993, 31–35). Referring to the aforesaid discussion, I align my viewpoint with that of Hinüber who hypothesizes that the “Nett and Peṭ intruded from outside into the Theravāda as handbooks to understand and to explain the Suttantas” (Hinüber 1996, 82). Following this approach regarding the content of the Netti, in this study, the usage of *bhavaṅga* will be shown from two viewpoints: for the person who has eliminated all defilements there is no *bhavaṅga*, and for the person who has not eliminated defilements there is *bhavaṅga*. Let us now discuss the notion of *bhavaṅga* in the context of the doctrine of dependent co-arising.

### 3.3 Understanding *Bhavaṅga* in the *Peṭakopadesa* and the *Nettipakaraṇa*

I have briefly discussed the usage of *bhavaṅga* in the context of *saṅkhārā* and *āyatana* with *āsava* and without *āsava* in the Peṭ and the Netti. Now I wish to provide a detailed analysis. In the Peṭ, the term *bhavaṅga* occurs only once in the section of *otaraṇa* (ways of entry) of Chapter 5, Hāravibhanga-pancamabhūmi [Hāravibhaṅga-pañcamabhūmi] as: *dvidhā ca bhavaṅga-otaraṇaṃ kammaṃ* (the action is a way of entry to the factor of becoming in two ways, Peṭ 98, 26). The discussion in the section Hāravibhaṅga-pañcamabhūmi is found with regard to the six things (*chasa dhammesu otāretabbaṃ*): (1) the aggregates (*khandā*), (2) the elements (*dhātu*), (3) the bases (*āyatana*), (4) the faculties (*indriya*), (5) the truths (*sacca*), and (6) dependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). And the term *bhavaṅga* occurs with

respect to the first thing: the aggregates. There are five aggregates: *rūpa* (form), *vedanā* (perception), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhārā* (conditioning forces), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness). Among them, *bhavaṅga* is associated with regard to *saṅkhārā*. Many references to *bhavaṅga* are found in the twelfth section Hāravibhaṅga<sup>15</sup> under the chapter Paṭiniddesavāra of the Netti which is closer to the use of *bhavaṅga* in the Peṭ. About the connection between the doctrine in the Peṭ and the Netti, Arabinda, the editor of the Peṭ, thinks the same: “some of the Chapters, viz: Sāsanapaṭṭhāna, Hāravibhaṅga [Hāravibhaṅga], and Hārasampāta, being common to both. The same line of thought, the same outlook of the author can be observed in both the *Peṭaka* and the *Netti*.” (1982, iii)

It was said that the term *bhavaṅga* once occurs together with *otarāṇa* in Chapter 5 Hāravibhaṅga-pañcamabhūmi of the Peṭ. As it is an important aspect of the present discussion, before dealing with *bhavaṅga* in the Peṭ, we need to understand the term *otarāṇa* and the sense in which it is employed in the two texts.

The term *otarāṇa* is derived from the verb *otarati* (*ava* + √*tar*), meaning “to cross down into”. The literal meaning of *otarāṇa* is “descending,” “entering,” or “way of entry”. There is less discussion about the term *otarāṇa* in the commentary. However, few scholars present their thoughts on the term. Of them, Sujato renders the meaning as “fit in” (2012, 122). On this term, Cousins’ explanation is noteworthy:

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<sup>15</sup>According to Ñāṇamoli, the term *hāra* is peculiar in both the Peṭ and the Netti, which derives from √*har*, means “to carry” or “to convey” (1977, xxxv). Vanhaelemeersch has shown the differences between the *hāras* and the *nayas* in the Netti. He says the text itself does not define both terms though in its introductory verses it says “*hāra* relates to the wording of a text (*byañjana*), *naya* to its referent (*attha*).” Vanhaelemeersch further says: “this cannot be taken for a definition of *hāra* and *naya* for the Netti immediately adds that two of the three *naya* investigate the wording of the text instead of its referent” (2000, 315). With regard to the term *hāra*, Bond provides a comprehensive analysis and concludes:

[H]ārā interpret the logic of the suttas by providing an understanding of the basic presuppositions and intentions of the *dhmma*. These *hārā* also reveal how the Buddha applied various teachings to various types of persons. The primary function of the *hārā*, however, is to identify the essential ideas within various kinds of suttas. Having identified the type of sutta and its application to persons the interpreter would employ these categories to penetrate to the essence of the sutta by correlating the sutta’s phraseology with the central concepts of the *dhmma* (Bond 1993, 41).

This is an unusual expression; it is best interpreted in the light of the Peṭakopadesa tradition where *otaraṇā* is one of the sixteen *hāras* [modes of conveying].<sup>16</sup> It may there be taken as a particular method of exegesis which links a given discourse into the teaching as a whole by means of one of the general categories of the teaching. The Peṭakopadesa in fact specifies six possibilities: aggregates, elements, spheres, faculties, truths, dependent origination. Any of these can be used to analyse the content of a discourse and their use will automatically place it in its context in the teaching as a whole (Cousins 2005, 97–98).

Ñāṇamoli says:

‘Ways of Entry (*otaraṇa*): by this, or here, ideas contained in the Thread are made ways of entry (*otārīyanti*), are used for giving appropriate ingress (*anuppavesīyanti*) in the instances of Dependent Arising and the rest, thus they are ways of entry.’ This Mode show by what Ways-In the ‘movement’ of Entry to the Truths demanded by Mode 3 is made (Ñāṇamoli 1977, xl).

### 3.3.1 *Bhavaṅga-otaraṇa* in the *Peṭakopadesa*

As it was already mentioned, in the Peṭ, *bhavaṅga* occurs only once with the term *otaraṇa* as the following: *dvidhā ca bhavaṅgotaraṇaṃ kammaṃ* (and the action is a way of entry into the factor of becoming in two ways, Peṭ 98, 26). Here, evidently, though it is a very significant reference, no clear explanation about *bhavaṅga* can be found. Therefore, let us look at how the commentarial literature interprets it. In this chapter (see 3.2.1.1), it was mentioned that there is no commentary to the Peṭ. On that account, I propose to see the explanation of *bhavaṅgotaraṇa* in the texts composed to comment on the *Netti*. The *Netti* Commentary does not explain the term *bhavaṅgotaraṇa* either. However, little about *bhavaṅgotaraṇa* is found in the sub-commentary to the *Netti*. This text explains *bhavaṅgotaraṇa* in the context of consciousness at the moment of final *nibbāna*, as: “it should be seen, having entered into *bhavaṅga*, it is completely ceases. Herein, it is said, the consciousness of final *nibbāna* ceases with the entry into *bhavaṅga*” (*Netti-ṭīkā* VRI 79).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Bond says, the term *hāra* has some basis in the *Netti*. About the *Otaraṇa-hāra*, he says “[t]he twelfth *hāra*, which is basic to the *Netti*’s method, is called *Otaraṇa-hāra*. Thus, the name of this *hāra* comes from the same root as the word *avatara*” (1980, 28, see note 9).

<sup>17</sup> 40–41: *bhavaṅgaṃ otarivā parinibbāyatoti ettha parinibbānacittameva bha[va]ṅgotaraṇabhāvena vuttanti daṭṭhabbaṃ*.

The sub-commentary's explanation conforms to the interpretation of *bhavaṅga* as mental stream documented in the Vism and the commentaries. But from the perspective of the Peṭ, it seems that *bhavaṅgotaraṇa* occurs in the Peṭ in view of a similar idea found in the Netti, that is, to describe *saṅkhārā* in two ways: (1) there are *saṅkhārā* with *āsava* which are factors for becoming, and (2) there are *saṅkhārā* without *āsava* which are not factors for becoming. Before dealing with this topic, let us first examine some interpretations of the term *bhavaṅgotaraṇa* with internal reference to the Peṭ. For this, we can refer to passages from the Hāravibhaṅga-pañcamabhumi of the Peṭ:

Therein, among the five aggregates, the feeling aggregate is the footing for lust, hatred and delusion. Therein, [exists] threefold feeling. Of them, the pleasant feeling has the approach with joy, the painful feeling has the approach with displeasure, and the neither-painful-nor-pleasant has the approach with equanimity. Again, whatever is felt therein [among threefold feeling] this is the truth of suffering (Peṭ 98).<sup>18</sup>

[Now as to] the conditioning forces-aggregate among the aggregates. Therein, a body occurs for one [due to acting] negligently. And that [negligent action] is included among conditioning forces, and the action is a way of entry to the *factor of becoming* (*bhavaṅgotaraṇam*) in two ways. And, threefold conditioning forces are: meritorious conditioning forces, demeritorious conditioning forces, imperturbable conditioning forces (Peṭ 98–99).<sup>19</sup>

[These threefold conditioning forces] are a root-cause for all kinds of lust [within the aggregates], [they are] not free for the lust, and likewise the determinative acts of hate. And, [one] who intends, it is not without lust. And, contrary one who intends without lust, there is no determinative act (Peṭ 99).<sup>20</sup>

Just as a hot thunderbolt falling on a log or a tree or elsewhere splits and burns it, this lustful intention intents and acts determinatively. As a cold thunderbolt neither splits nor burns it, so lust-free intention neither intents nor acts determinatively (Peṭ 99).<sup>21</sup>

Let us now examine *bhavaṅga* from the above passages. The term *bhavaṅga* with *otaraṇa* (*bhavaṅgotaraṇa*, Peṭ 98, 26) is loosely used in the Peṭ and the meaning is indiscernible,

<sup>18</sup> 18–23: *tattha pañcannaṃ khandhānaṃ vedanākkhandho rāgadosamohānaṃ padaṭṭhānaṃ. tattha tisso vedanāyo. tassa sukhāya vedanāya somanasso savicāro; dukkhāya vedanāya domanasso savicāro; adukkha-masukhāya vedanāya upekkho savicāro. yaṃ puna tattha vedayitaṃ idaṃ dukkhasaccaṃ.*

<sup>19</sup> 24–1: *khandhesu saṅkhārakkhandho. tattha kayo pamattaṃ sa upavattati, tañ ca saṅkhāragato dvidhā ca bhavaṅgotaraṇaṃ kammaṃ, tīṇi ca saṅkhārāni puññābhisaṅkhārā vā apuññā vā āneñjāvā.*

<sup>20</sup> 2–4: *hetu sabbasārāgassa no vītarāgassa, dosassa abhisāṅkhārāni ca avītarāgo ceteti ca pakappeti ca. vītarāgo pana ceteti ca no abhisāṅkharo ti.*

<sup>21</sup> 4–8: *yaṃ uṇhaṃ vajiraṃ kaṭṭhe vā rukkhe vā aññattha vā patantaṃ bhindati ca ḍahati ca, evaṃ sarāgo cetanā ceteti ca abhisāṅkharoti ca, yathā sa taṃ<sup>21</sup>vajiraṃ na bhindati na ca ḍahati; evaṃ vītarāgacetanā ceteti, na ca abhisāṅkharo ti.*

therefore it becomes difficult to understand as to which meaning is conveyed. In fact, it is difficult to understand, in this important sentence *dvidhā ca bhavaṅgotaraṇaṃ kammaṃ* (and the action is a way of entry into the factor of becoming in two ways), what “two ways” are meant. To understand this correctly, it is important to discuss the interpretation of *bhavaṅga* in the *Netti* because in this text *bhavaṅga* is employed in the context of *saṅkhārā* associated with *āsava*, as: (1) *saṅkhārā anāsavā no ca bhavaṅgā* (conditioning forces that are free from outflows are not factors of becoming, *Netti* 64, 12), and (2) *saṅkhārā sāsavā bhavaṅgā* (conditioning forces that are affected by outflows are factors of becoming, *Netti* 65, 21–22). For this conclusion, I refer to Ñāṇamoli who also thinks the same:

“Factors of being” refers to the members of the formula of dependent arising (cf. *Netti* p. 29). The term *bhavaṅgotaraṇa* here seems to have a different meaning to that given to it by the Commentaries in connexion with their “*citta-vīthi*”. “Action” is a “way of entry” to the “factors of being” (i.e. members of the D.A. [Dependent Arising] formula) because it is classable in this way under “determinations” (the 2<sup>nd</sup> member of the formula) (Ñāṇamoli 1964, 133, see note. 368/2).

### 3.3.2 *Bhavaṅga* with *Saṅkhārā* and *Āyatana* associating with *Āsava* and without *Āsava* in the *Nettipakaraṇa*

In the previous section, we have referred to a striking analogy between *bhavaṅga* and *saṅkhārā* in the *Netti*. Let us now discuss how they are presented in the *Netti*. In this text, we will also discuss the analogy between *bhavaṅga* and *dhamma-āyatana* which is presented in the same line of *bhavaṅga* and *saṅkhārā* in association with out-flows (*āsava*) and without out-flows (*anāsava*).

In the *Netti*, the interdependent relationship between *bhavaṅga*, *saṅkhārā* and *dhamma-āyatana* is found in Chapter 12, *Otaraṇa-hāra*. The chapter conveys ways of entry (*oataraṇā*) to the truths via dependent co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), the aggregates

(*khandā*), the faculties (*indriya*), the elements (*dhātu*),<sup>22</sup> and the bases (*āyatana*).<sup>23</sup> The chapter begins with the description of freedom from three elements (*kāma*, *rūpa* and *arūpa-dhātu*-s). Freedom from these three elements means being released in every way—“above” and “below”—from the triple elements of existence. In the *Bhava Sutta* of the AN (I 223), these elements are mentioned as inferior (*hīna*), middle (*majjhima*), and superior (*paṇīta*), which, according to the AN Commentary, are the sensory element (*kāma-dhātu*), form element (*rūpa-dhātu*), and formless element (*arūpa-dhātu*) respectively (AN-a II 334).<sup>24</sup>

In the *Netti*, it is said that freedom from these three elements can be achieved with the rise of knowledge (*vijjā*) within the faculties, as, when knowledge arises in the faculties, there is cessation of ignorance. With the cessation of ignorance, there is cessation of conditioning forces, and so forth. With this reverse order of dependent co-arising, the cessation of the whole mass of suffering has been discussed (*Netti* 63–64). In this context, Kalupahana’s contention about these triple existences and knowledge is worth noting:

It becomes very clear from the early discourses that the Buddha was not very sympathetic to ontological speculations regarding ‘Being’ or ‘Thing-in-Itself’. Historical understanding of ‘being’ or ‘existence’ (*bhava*) was of extreme importance for him. For this reason, the best form of knowledge was “knowledge of things as they have come to be’ (*yathābhūtañāṇa*), not ‘knowledge of things as they are’ isolated from the background. Knowledge of things as they have come to be would involve the past as well as present events conditioned by the past (Kalupahana 1981, 122).

In Chapter 12, *Otarāṇa-hāra* of the *Netti*, however, the rise of knowledge (*vijjā*) is discussed within the faculties. Here, two categories of five faculties have been discussed. They are (1)

<sup>22</sup>Several elements are the eye, form, eye-consciousness, ear, sound, ear-consciousness, nose, odour, nose-consciousness, tongue, flavour, tongue consciousness, body, tangible, body-consciousness, mind, idea, and mind-consciousness (*Netti* 51).

<sup>23</sup>About the Chapter 12 “*Otarāṇa-hāra*,” Bond says “the twelfth *hāra*, *Otarāṇa-hāra*, specifies five ideas which are essential to the Dhamma: dependent origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*), faculties (*indriya*), categories (*khandā*), elements (*dhātu*), and bases (*āyatana*). Other concepts, however, which are not specifically enumerated are seen from the exemplification of the method to be a part of this formulation of the Dhamma. For example, *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* are not specifically mentioned but were implied by the fourth Noble Truth. Thus, they are shown to be concepts which can provide points of contact between the wording of a passage and the true Dhamma.” (Bond 1980, 20)

<sup>24</sup>26–29: *hīnāya dhātuyā ti kāmādhātuyā...majjhimāya dhātuyā ti rūpadhātuyā. paṇītāya dhātuyā ti arūpadhātuyā.*



the five faculties having form (*pañca rūpāni indriyāni*, Netti 69, 21), and the five formless faculties (*pañca arūpāni indriyāni*, Netti 69, 22). Ñāṇamoli says, the five faculties having form are: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body; and the five formless faculties are: faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and understanding (Ñāṇamoli 1964, 98, note 389/1). Apart from these faculties, mind faculty is also discerned in the Netti. The Netti says, five faculties having form are the footing for craving while the mind faculty is the footing for ignorance (Netti 47).<sup>25</sup>

In the Netti, it has been shown that with the rise of knowledge within the five faculties, there is cessation of ignorance. But, it is not mentioned what these five faculties are. Here it seems that these five faculties are the faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. When knowledge arises with regard to these five faculties, there is cessation of ignorance. With cessation of ignorance there is cessation of conditioning forces, and so forth. In this way, there is cessation of all the mass of suffering in the five aggregates. The text further goes on to say that the five faculties are included in *saṅkhārā* and when these *saṅkhārā* are free from *āsava*, there are no factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*). Again, these *saṅkhārā* are comprised of the idea-element (*dhamma-dhātu*). This idea-element is included in the idea-base (*dhammāyatana*) or object of the mind. Again, when the idea-base is free from *āsava*, no factor of becoming (*bhavaṅga*) occurs. What was said in the forgoing discussion can be made clear with the following passages from the section Otaṛaṇa-hāra of the Netti:

“Above” is the form-element and the formless element. “Below” is the sensual-desire element. In all ways released: this is the perfect [arahat]’s freedom in the triple element (Netti 63).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> 25–26: *tattha taṅhāya pañcindriyāni rūpāni padaṭṭhānaṃ avijjāya manindriyaṃ padaṭṭhānaṃ*. In the Indriya-Sacca-Niddeso (the Faculties and Truths) of the *Vism*, one can find the twenty-two kinds of faculties, namely, eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, femininity, masculinity, life, pleasure, pain, joy, grief, equanimity, faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, understanding, I-shall-come-to-know-the-unknown, final knowledge, and final-knower (*cakkhu, sota, ghāna, jivha, kaya, mano, itthi, purisa, jīvita, sukha, dukkha, somanassa, domanassa, upekkha, saddhā, vīriya, sati, samādhi, paññā, anaññātaññassāmīti, añña, aññātāva*) (Vism 491, see 4–8).

<sup>26</sup> 23–25: *uddhan ti rūpadhātu ca arūpadhātu ca. adho ti kāmādhātu. sabbadhi vippamutto ti te-dhātuke ayam asekkhāvimutti*.

These same are the perfect [arahat]’s five faculties. This is the way of entry by faculties (Netti 63).<sup>27</sup>

Those same perfect [arahat]’s five faculties are knowledge (Netti 63).<sup>28</sup>

With the arising of knowledge [in the five faculties], [there is] cessation of ignorance; with the cessation of ignorance, [there is] cessation of conditioning forces; with the cessation of conditioning forces, [there is] cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness, [there is] cessation of name-and-form; with the cessation of name-and-form, [there is] cessation of the six-fold base; with the cessation of the six-fold base, [there is] cessation of contact; with the cessation of contact, [there is] cessation of feeling; with the cessation of feeling, [there is] cessation of craving; with the cessation of craving, [there is] cessation of clinging; with the cessation of clinging, [there is] cessation of becoming; with the cessation of becoming, [there is] cessation of birth; with the cessation of birth, ageing and death cease, and [also] sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; that is how there is a cessation to this whole aggregate of suffering. This is the way of entry by dependent co-arising (Netti 63–64).<sup>29</sup>

These same perfect [arahat]’s five faculties are comprised within the three aggregates: the virtue aggregate, the concentration aggregate, the understanding aggregate. This is the way of entry by the aggregates (Netti 64).<sup>30</sup>

These same perfect [arahat]’s five faculties are included in conditioning forces. These conditioning forces are free from out-flows and *are not factors of becoming*. These conditioning forces are comprised within the idea-element. This is the way of entry by the elements (Netti 64).<sup>31</sup>

That idea-element is included in the idea-base. This base is free from out-flows and is *not a factor of becoming* (Netti 64).<sup>32</sup>

Not seeing at all that “I am this”; this is the eradication of the personality-belief. That is the trainee’s freedom. That itself is the trainee’s five faculties. This is the way of entry by the faculties (Netti 64).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> 26–27: *tāni yeva asekkhāni pañcindriyāni, ayaṃ indriyehi otaraṇā.*

<sup>28</sup> 28: *tāni yeva asekkhāni pañcindriyāni vijjā.*

<sup>29</sup> 29–6: *vijjuppādā avijjānirodho .avijjānirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇa-nirodho, viññāṇanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho, nāmarūpanirodhā saḷāyatananirodho, saḷāyatananirodhā phassanirodho, phassanirodhā vedanānirodho, vedanānirodhā taṇhānirodho, taṇhānirodhā upādānanirodho, upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho, bhavanirodhā jātinirodho, jātinirodhā jarāmaraṇaṃsokaparidevadukkhā-domanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti. evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodha hoti. ayaṃ paṭiccasamuppādehi otaraṇā*

<sup>30</sup> 7–10: *tāni yeva asekkhāni pañcindriyāni tīhi khandhehi saṃgahitāni: sīlakkhandhena samādhikkhandhena paññākkhandhena. ayaṃ khandhehi otaraṇā.*

<sup>31</sup> 11–14: *tāni yeva asekkhāni pañcindriyāni saṅkhārapariyāpannāni. ye saṅkhārā anāsavā, no ca bhavaṅgā, te saṅkhārā dhammadhātusaṅgahitā. ayaṃ dhātūhi otaraṇā.*

<sup>32</sup> 15–17: *sā dhammadhātu dhammāyatanapariyāpannā. yaṃ āyatanaṃ anāsavaṃ, no ca bhavaṅgaṃ. ayaṃ āyatanehi otaraṇā.*

<sup>33</sup> 18–21: *ayaṃ ahasmī ti anānupassī ti ayaṃ sakkāyadīṭṭhiyā samugghāto, sā sekkhāvimutti, tāni yeva sekkhāni pañcindriyāni. ayaṃ indriyehi otaraṇā.*

Those same trainee's five faculties are knowledge. With the arising of knowledge [in the five faculties], [there is] cessation of ignorance; with the cessation of ignorance, [there is] cessation of conditioning forces...like this the whole dependent co-arising [exists]. This is the way of entry by dependent arising (Netti 64).<sup>34</sup>

That same knowledge is the understanding aggregate. This is the way of entry by the aggregates (Netti 64).<sup>35</sup>

That same knowledge is included in conditioning forces. These conditioning forces are free from out-flows and are *not factors of becoming*. These conditioning forces are comprised within the idea-element. This is the way of entry by the elements (Netti 64).<sup>36</sup>

That idea-element is included in the idea-base which is free from out-flows and is *not a factor of becoming*. This is the way of entry by the bases (Netti 64).<sup>37</sup>

It is one freed by means of the trainee's freedom and the perfect [arahat]'s freedom who has crossed the flood not crossed before, for non-further-becoming (Netti 64).<sup>38</sup>

Let us now analyse the above passages to understand the notion of *bhavaṅga* in the context of *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana*. In the Netti, *bhavaṅga* is described with two methods. First, it is said when one gets rid of all outflows (*āsava*) in *saṅkhārā*, there are no factors of becoming: *saṅkhārā anāsavā no ca bhavaṅgā* (conditioning forces that free from outflows are not factors of becoming, Netti 64, 12). And, when one has not yet got rid of all outflows in *saṅkhārā*, there are factors of becoming: *saṅkhārā sāsavā bhavaṅgā* (conditioning forces that are affected by outflows are factors of becoming, Netti 65, 21–22). The same elucidation is applicable in the case of *dhammāyatana*, as: *āyatanaṃ anāsavaṃ, no ca bhavaṅgaṃ* (base is free from out-flows and not a factor of becoming), and *āyatanaṃ sāsavaṃ, ca bhavaṅgaṃ* (base is affected by outflows and a factor of becoming).

<sup>34</sup> 22–25: *tāni yeva sekkhāni pañcendriyāni vijjā. vijjuppādā avijjānirodho, avijjānirodhā saṅkhāra-nirodho...evaṃ sabbopaṭiccasamuppādo. ayaṃ paṭiccasamuppādehi otaraṇā.*

<sup>35</sup> 26–27: *sāyevavijjāpaññākkhandho. ayaṃkhandhehiotaraṇā.*

<sup>36</sup> 28–30: *sā yeva vijjā saṅkhārapariyāpannā. ye saṅkhārā anāsavā, no ca bhavaṅgā, te saṅkhārā dhammadhātu saṅgahitā. ayaṃ dhātūhi otaraṇā.*

<sup>37</sup> 31–33: *sā dhammadhātu dhammāyatanapariyāpannā. yaṃ āyatanaṃ anāsavaṃ, no ca bhavaṅgaṃ, ayaṃ āyatanehi otaraṇā.*

<sup>38</sup> 34–35: *sekkhāya ca vimuttiyā asekkhāya ca vimuttiyā vimutto udatāri oghaṃ atinṇapubbaṃ apunabbhavāya.*

In the above passages, it was clarified that the five faculties are included in *saṅkhārā*. It was delineated that these five faculties are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. These five faculties are the footing for craving. And, the *dhammāyatana* is included in the mind-faculty, which is the footing for ignorance. In this understanding, *āsava* refers to all cravings and ignorance and when these cravings and ignorance are no more, *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* do not function as factors of becoming. It seems that this definition is applicable for the perfect (*asekha*) one, the arahat.

The aforesaid discussion leads us to conclude that in both the texts, the Peṭ and the Netti, the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* occurs in the context of factors (*aṅga*) that refer to *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* (object of mind) with *āsava* in the five aggregates. They are equally identical with the factors of dependent co-arising. In that sense, *bhavaṅga* refers to each factor of twelve factors of dependent co-arising and when all factors operate together there is becoming (*bhava*). This *bhava* is identical with *samsāra*, the birth-cycle. In this context, the factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*) are employed to describe the unenlightened person and the enlightened person. And, when an unenlightened person possesses *āsava* with regard to the six faculties – the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and the mind – he is subject to becoming in *samsāra*. On the contrary, an enlightened person, not having *āsava* with regard to the six faculties, is not subject to becoming in *samsāra*. To clarify this deliberation, we need to look at the following passages from the Netti:

Unenlightened person with <i>āsava</i> and becoming	Enlightened person without <i>āsava</i> and not becoming
<p><i>tattha yā rattassa vedanā ayaṃ sukhā vedanā, yā sammūlhasa vedanā ayaṃ adukkhamasukhā vedanā. imā vedanā vedanākkhandho. ayaṃ khandhehi otaraṇā. tattha sukhā vedinā dve indriyāni: sukhaṅdriyaṃ somanassindriyaṃ ca. adukkhamasukhā vedanā upekkhindriyaṃ.</i></p>	<p><i>taṃ yeva taṇhāpahānaṃ samatho. so samatho dve indriyāni: satindriyaṃ samādhindriyaṃ ca. ayaṃ indriyehi otaraṇā. so yeva samatho samādhikkhandho. ayaṃ khandhehi otaraṇā (Netti 68, 25–29).</i> That same abandoning of craving is</p>

<p><i>ayam indriyehi otaraṇā</i> (Netti 65, 14–20). Therein, any feeling which is lustful, is pleasant feeling. Any feeling which is infatuated, is neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. These feelings belong to the feeling aggregate. This is the way of entry by the aggregate. Therein, pleasant feeling has twofold faculties: the pleasure faculty and the joy faculty. The neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is the equanimity faculty. This is the way of entry by the faculties.</p> <p><i>tāni yeva indriyāni saṅkhārapariyāpannāni. ye saṅkhārā sāsava bhavaṅgā, te saṅkhārā dhammadhātu-saṅgahitā. ayaṃ dhātūhi otaraṇā. sā dhammadhātu dhammāyatana-pariyāpannā. yaṃ āyatanaṃ sāsavaṃ bhavaṅgaṃ. ayaṃ āyatanehi otaraṇā</i> (Netti 65, 21–26).</p> <p>Those same faculties are included in conditioning forces. These conditioning forces that are affected by outflows and are <i>factors of becoming</i>. Those conditioning forces are comprised within the idea-element. This is the way of entry by the elements. This idea-element is included in the idea-base. Whatever base is affected by outflows and <i>a factor of becoming</i>. This is the way of entry by the bases.</p>	<p>tranquillity. This tranquillity is two faculties: the mindfulness faculty and the concentration faculty. This is the way of entry by the faculties. That same tranquillity is the concentration aggregate. This is the way of entry by the aggregate.</p> <p><i>so yeva samatho saṅkhārapariyāpanno. ye saṅkhārā anāsava, no ca bhavaṅgā, te saṅkhārā dhammadhātu saṅgahitā. ayaṃ dhātūhi otaraṇā</i> (Netti 68, 30–32).</p> <p>That same tranquillity is included in conditioning forces. Those conditioning forces that are free from outflows and <i>not factors of becoming</i>. The conditioning forces are comprised within the idea-element. This is the way of entry by the elements.</p> <p><i>sā dhammadhātu dhammāyatana-pariyāpannā. yaṃ āyatanaṃ anāsavaṃ, no ca bhavaṅgaṃ, ayaṃ āyatanehi otaraṇā</i> (Netti 68, 33–35).</p> <p>That idea-element is included in the idea-base, whatever base is free from outflows and is <i>not a factor of becoming</i>. This is the way of entry by bases.</p>
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The above passages clearly represent the description of an unenlightened person with *āsava* and an enlightened person without *āsava* in the five aggregates. However, in the above passages two diverse interpretations can be drawn out from the term *āsava*. Here *āsava* can be interpreted as craving (*taṇhā*) and view (*diṭṭhi*).<sup>39</sup> And the feeling is identified with lust and

<sup>39</sup>*Āsava* is an important doctrine in the Buddhist teaching. The literal meaning of it is “out-flow”. In the *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha*, it is said the word *āsava* “denotes both pus oozing from an abscess and intoxicants which have been fermented for a long time” (Bodhi 1999, 265). Dhammajoti defines the term:

Both the AKB [*Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya*] and the *Avatāra* give three etymologies for *āsava*: (i) they keep (*āsavanti*) beings in the three spheres of existence; (ii) they cause beings to flow around (*āsravanti*) between the highest state of existence (*bhavāgra*) and the lowest, the Avici hell; (iii) they incessantly discharge (*kṣar*) inexhaustible impurities through the six wound-like entrances –the six sense faculties – of beings (*ṣadbhir āyatanavraṇāih*) (Dhammajoti 2015, 368).

infatuation. This feeling is supported by craving within the faculties of the body, ear, nose, etc. For views, it is volition which is *saṅkhārā* and on account of these, a person is confused due to ignorance.<sup>40</sup> As it was said, all those same faculties are also included in *saṅkhārā*, again these *saṅkhārā* are comprised of the idea-element (*dhamma-dhātu*). This idea-element is included in the idea-base (*dhammāyatana*) or the object of the mind. When *āsava* is associated with *saṅkhārā*, *dhamma-dhātu*, and *dhammāyatana*, there arises the notion of personality-belief (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) (Netti 64, 18–21). It is with *saṅkhārā* as condition, that there is consciousness; with consciousness as condition, there is mentality-materiality, and so forth. In this way, there is all the mass of suffering. And by the arising of suffering, here is understood *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* that are affected by *āsava*. Thus, they are factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*). In reverse order, the cessation of suffering is understood when *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* are free from *āsava* and they are not factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*).

*Saṅkhārā* that are free from *āsava* and are not factors of becoming are understood as liberation. And, when a person is liberated he does not put an “I” or “mine” with regard to five aggregates, and also forms (*rūpa*) or sounds (*sadda*) or odours (*gandha*) or flavours (*rasa*) or tangibles (*phoṭṭhabba*) or ideas (*dhamma*). The person has exhausted lust, hate and delusion in him/herself. The Netti says, the liberated person does not even take for granted that “there is not” (*atthiti pi na upeti*), that “there is and there is not” (*n’atthi ti pi na upeti*),

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In the *suttas*, three kinds of *āsava*-s are mentioned (DN II 81; AN I 165). In the *abhidhamma*, e.g., the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, the list of *āsava* is four : *kāmāsava*, *bhavāsava*, *diṭṭhāsava* and *avijjāsava* (Dhs 195,9). In the *abhidhamma* period, *diṭṭhi-āsava* was added to make it four.

<sup>40</sup> In Sn, it is said “views” are the products of a person’s dispositions (*saṅkhatā*) or of intentions (*pakappitā*) (Sn 788-90). About the correlation between *diṭṭhi* and *saṅkhārā*, Kalupahana in his article “The philosophy of history in early Buddhism” says, “Human dispositions [*saṅkhatā*] or intentions [*pakappitā*] are, for the most part, determined by excessive attachment (*rāga*) or aversion (*dosa*) or confusion (*moha*), while some are not so determined. Views, whether they might be right (*sammā*) or wrong (*micchā*), are therefore evaluative in character. The evaluative character of views regarding the past, which is the result of their determination in terms of dispositions, may also become a necessary character because, in the formulation of views regarding the past, there is a need to fill in gaps for which evidence is not forthcoming from the reservoir of experience.” (Kalupahana 1981,119).

and that “there neither is nor is not” (*nev’atthi no n’atthī ti pi na upeti*). Then the person is considered profound (*gambhīro*), immeasurable (*appameyyo*), incalculable (*asamkheyyo*), quenched (*nibbuto*) because of complete exhaustion of lust, hate, and delusion in the form (*rūpa*). Also, he is liberated in the complete exhaustion of other aggregates – feeling, perception, determinations, and consciousness (Netti 66).

As far as consciousness is concerned, the Netti further says that he is liberated in the complete exhaustion of consciousness owing to exhaustion, fading, ceasing, giving up, and relinquishing. Having such consciousness though a Perfect One (*Tathāgato*) stands and walks he does not take for granted that there is a Perfect One; and he does not take for granted that “there is not,” “there is and there is not,” and “there neither is nor is not”. He sees “no self” here and beyond in the six external bases. And, he sees “no self” in between here and beyond in the ideas (*dhamma*) aroused by contact (Netti 66–67).

From the aforesaid discussion, it is now clear that the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* is neither confined merely to its technical sense as it was used in the Paṭṭh, nor does it refer to one’s continuity as presented in association with *citta* in the Vism. In the Peṭ and the Netti, *bhavaṅga* rather represents factors (*aṅga*) of dependent co-arising which together produce *bhava*, the *saṃsāra*. In this sense, all *aṅgas* are associated with *āsava*; because of having *āsava* in the five aggregates, one remains in *saṃsāra*. With the cessation of *āsava* there is also the cessation of all factors of dependent co-arising, which means cessation of *bhava*, the *saṃsāra*. Therefore, there is no doubt that there is intrinsic relation between *bhavaṅga* and *bhava*. And, this *bhava* is understood as the continuity of *saṃsāric* life due to the clinging to the five aggregates, and the complete eradication of the continuity of *saṃsāric* life is known as the state of *nibbāna*. This description can also be traced from the section “Oturaṇa-hāra” of the Netti. The section starts with a stanza from the Ud (74) in which liberation is known as

release in every way – “above” and “below” – from *saṃsāric* existence by eliminating the notion of “I” or “self” in the five aggregates:

Above, below, in every way released  
Seeing not at all that “I am this”;  
Thus released, he has crossed the flood  
Not crossed before; for the sake of no further becoming [re-birth] (Netti 63).<sup>41</sup>

In the Netti, “above” refers to the form element (*rūpa dhātu*) and the formless element (*arūpa dhātu*), and “below” refers to the sensual-desire element (*kāma dhātu*) (Netti 63, 23–24). These three elements are also known as *kāma bhava*, *rūpa bhava* and *arūpa bhava*. However, the interesting point from the above stanza is that the freedom from these triple elements is described through the destruction of the notion of “I” or “I am this” (*ahasmī*). In the previous chapter, we saw that the whole *saṃsāric* suffering is centred on this notion of “I” or “self”. The section “Otaṛaṇa-hāra” in the Netti also says about this “I”, as all defilements are associated with the belief in an “I”. The Netti also discusses this “I” with the principle of dependent co-arising. As the Netti delineates, “not seeing at all that “I am this” (*ayam ahasmī ti anānupassī ti*, Netti 64, 18), there is the eradication of the “personality-belief”: “this is the eradication of the personality-belief” (*ayam sakkāya diṭṭhiyā samugghāto*, Netti 64, 18–19). And with the eradication of “I” there is *nibbāna*. In this connection, the personality-belief can only be eradicated through the arising of true knowledge (*vijjā*)<sup>42</sup> possessed of wisdom. With this arising of true knowledge there is cessation of ignorance; with the cessation of ignorance,

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<sup>41</sup> 19–22: *uddham adho sabbadhi vippamutto/ ayam ahasmī ti anānupassī/ evaṃ vimutto udatāri oghaṃ/ atinṇa-pubbaṃ apunabbhavāyā ti*.

<sup>42</sup> *Vijjā* means “true knowledge” which refers to the understanding of the five aggregates as they really are (*yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*). In the *Avijjā Vagga* of SN (III170–77), the Buddha describes the *vijjā* and *avijjā* (ignorance or non-knowledge) as it is his *avijjā* if he does not understand the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, determinations, and consciousness) as subject to its arising (*samudaya*), its vanishing (*vaya*), its gratification (*assāda*), its danger (*ādīnava*) and its escape (*nissaraṇa*) as they really are. On the other hand, it is his *vijjā* who understands the five aggregates as subject to its arising, its vanishing, its gratification, its danger and its escape as they really are. In this context, one can also refer to the “true knowledge” as of the proper understanding of the Four Noble Truths. In this regard, Norman says, *vijjā* is the starting point for destruction of the whole chain of the dependent co-arising, and therefore, “the destruction of *avijjā* by *vijjā* would... lead to *nibbāna*, which was release (*mokkha*) from *saṃsāra*” (2008, 126). He further goes on to say that “since the method of destruction depends upon knowing how to do it, the starting point for destruction must be knowledge (*vijjā*). It therefore follows that the starting point of *saṃsāra* must be *avijjā*” (*ibid.*, 126, see note 2).



there is cessation of conditioning forces; with the cessation of conditioning forces, there is cessation of consciousness , etc. (Netti 63).<sup>43</sup>

### 3.4 *Bhavaṅga* Designates Factors of Dependent Co-arising in the *Nettipakarāṇa*

I have already discussed *bhavaṅga* with *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* in the Netti. In this connection, I have also briefly discussed the five aggregates, the six senses, the element, and dependent co-arising. It was shown that when *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* are affected by *āsava*, there are factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*), and when they are free from *āsava*, there are no factors of becoming. With this understanding, it was shown that the unenlightened persons, who possess *āsava* with regard to the faculties of the body, nose, etc., are becoming and suffering, and for the enlightened ones, who are not afflicted with *āsava* in the faculties of the body, nose, etc., there is no becoming and suffering. With this interpretation, I have referred to freedom from the triple existences through the destruction of the notion of “I” in the five aggregates. In this connection, I have discussed that as long as a person holds this belief he possesses ignorance and craving as the cause of deluded actions which are responsible for continued birth. Thus, we understand that suffering arises when ignorance resulting into craving leads to clinging and the consequent condition of becoming (*bhava*). It was said that the final release from the condition of continuity in *saṃsāra* is only possible when true knowledge arises. Then there is the cessation of ignorance. With this discussion we have shown that *bhavaṅga* designates each factor of dependent co-arising and when all twelve factors (*bhavaṅgāni*) occur conjointly, becoming (*bhava*) takes place. And this becoming is the footing for *saṃsāra*. Let me now discuss this from the Netti. Before that, it is

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<sup>43</sup> 28–30: *vijjuppādā avijjānirodho, avijjānirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho*.

important to review scholars' views about the occurrence of *bhavaṅga* as the factor of dependent co-arising in the *Netti*.

In the first chapter (see 2.1), we referred to Sarachchandra who claims that “the term *bhavaṅga* first appears in the *Milinda Pañha* without, apparently, any antecedent history in the Pali canon itself” (1994, 75). He further asserts that the term *bhavaṅga*, “borrowed from the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, originally meant a link in the Causal Chain or *pratītyasamutpāda*” (1994, 79). However, Cousins refers to the occurrence of *bhavaṅga* in the *Netti* and says *bhavaṅga* “is as old as its use in Sarvāstivādin and Mahāyānist literature” (2005, 54). The composition date of the *Netti* has already been discussed in this chapter (see 3.2.1), and it has been said that it was composed in north India and later brought to Sri Lanka. In this regard, I referred to Hinüber who thinks that both “*Netti* and *Peṭ* intruded from outside into the Theravāda as handbooks to understand and to explain the *Suttantas*” (1996, 82). But Bond thinks the *Netti* and its method defend the orthodox beliefs of Theravāda Buddhism and reject all other interpretations (1980, 26). Citing all these scholars' views, it was understood that though there are different opinions about the *Netti*, the text was composed to interpret the *suttas* showing the notion of the gradual path to *nibbāna*. With this interpretation, we have noted that in the *Netti*, *bhavaṅga* designates the factor (*aṅga*) of dependent co-arising. I will now discuss this aspect in the following sections. In this regard, a few passages containing *bhavaṅga* as the factor of dependent co-arising in the *Padatṭhāna-hāra* of the *Netti* are referred to:

Improper attention has the characteristic of directing attention to gratification. Its footing [proximate cause] is ignorance. Ignorance has the characteristic of creating confusion about truth. It is the footing [proximate cause] for conditioning forces. Conditioning forces have the characteristic of developing further becoming/rebirth. It is the footing [proximate cause] for consciousness. Consciousness has the characteristic of causing birth by opening the way to reappearance/origination. It is the footing [proximate cause] for mentality-materiality. Mentality-materiality has the

characteristic of conjoining the mental-body and the material-body. It is the footing [proximate cause] for the six-fold base (Netti 28).<sup>44</sup>

The six-fold base has the characteristic of determining the six faculties. It is the footing [proximate cause] for contact. Contact has the characteristic of congregation of eye, forms, and consciousness. It is the footing [proximate cause] for feeling. Feeling has the characteristic of desired and undesired pleasing to [objects and the senses]. It is the footing [proximate cause] for craving. Craving has the characteristic of getting attached to. It is the footing [proximate cause] for clinging. Clinging has [the characteristic of] the way of reappearance/origination (Netti 28).<sup>45</sup>

It is the footing [proximate cause] for becoming. Becoming has the characteristic of causing actual coming into becoming [existence] to the mental-body and the material-body (Netti 28).<sup>46</sup>

It is the footing [proximate cause] for birth. Birth has the characteristic of manifestation of becoming [existence] with regard to the aggregates. It is the footing [proximate cause] for ageing. Ageing has the characteristic of ripening the substratum of existence. It is the footing [proximate cause] for death. Death has the characteristic of breaking of the life-faculty. It is the footing [proximate cause] for sorrow. Sorrow causes endeavouring. It is the footing [proximate cause] for lamentation. Lamentation causes constant crying out [lamenting]. It is the footing [proximate cause] for pain. Pain is oppression of the body. It is the footing [proximate cause] for grief. Grief is oppression of cognizance. It is the footing [proximate cause] for despair. Despair causes putting down (Netti 28–29).<sup>47</sup>

It is the footing [proximate cause] for becoming (Netti 29).<sup>48</sup>

When these factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*) occur conjointly, [then] it [is] becoming. It becomes a footing [proximate cause] for the life cycle (Netti 29).<sup>49</sup>

The path has the characteristic of leading out [of *samsāra*]. It is the footing [proximate cause] for cessation (Netti 29).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> 21–26: *assādāmanasikāralakkhaṇo ayonisomanasikāro. tassa avijjā padaṭṭhānaṃ. sacca-sammohanalakkhaṇā avijjā. taṃ saṃkhārānaṃ padaṭṭhānaṃ. punabbhavavirohaṇa-lakkhaṇā saṃkhārā. taṃ viññāṇassa padaṭṭhānaṃ. opapaccayikanibbattilakkhaṇaṃ viññāṇaṃ. taṃ nāmarūpassa padaṭṭhānaṃ. nāmakāyarūpakāyasamghātalakkhaṇaṃ nāmarūpaṃ. taṃ chaḷāyatanassa padaṭṭhānaṃ.*

<sup>45</sup> 27–32: *indriyavavatthānalakkhaṇaṃ chaḷāyatanam. taṃ phassaṃ padaṭṭhānaṃ. cakkhurūpaviññāṇa-sannipātalakkhaṇo phasso, taṃ vedanāya padaṭṭhānaṃ. iṭṭhāniṭṭhānubhavanalakkhaṇā vedanā. taṃ taṇhāya padaṭṭhānaṃ. ajjhosaṇalakkhaṇā taṇhā. taṃ upādānaṃ padaṭṭhānaṃ. opapaccayikaṃ upādānaṃ*

<sup>46</sup> 32–33: *taṃ bhavassa padaṭṭhānaṃ. nāmakāya rūpakāya sambhavanalakkhaṇo bhavo.*

<sup>47</sup> 33–9: *taṃ jātiyā padaṭṭhānaṃ. khandhapātubhavanalakkhaṇā jāti. taṃ jarāya padaṭṭhānaṃ. upadhiparipāka-lakkhaṇā jarā. taṃ maraṇassa padaṭṭhānaṃ. jīvitindriyupacchedalakkhaṇaṃ maraṇaṃ. taṃ sokassa padaṭṭhānaṃ. ussukkakāraṇo soko. taṃ paridevassa padaṭṭhānaṃ. lālapakāraṇoparidevo. taṃ dukkhassa padaṭṭhānaṃ. kāyasampīlanaṃ dukkhaṃ. taṃ domanassassa padaṭṭhānaṃ. cittasampīlanaṃ domanassaṃ, taṃ upāyāsassa padaṭṭhānaṃ. odhana-kāraṇo upāyāso.*

<sup>48</sup> 9: *taṃ bhavassa padaṭṭhānaṃ.*

<sup>49</sup> 10–11: *imāni bhavaṅgāni yadā samaggāni nibbattāni bhavanti so bhavo. taṃ samsārassa padaṭṭhānaṃ.*

<sup>50</sup> 11–12: *niyyānikalakkhaṇo maggo. taṃ nirodhassa padaṭṭhānaṃ.*

The above passages contain the doctrine of dependent co-arising in the *Netti*. Here this doctrine has been presented with two methods: (1) footing (*padaṭṭhāna*), and (2) characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*). *Padaṭṭhāna* is used in the sense of proximate cause and *lakkhaṇa* is used to show the characteristic of each factor. Regarding *padaṭṭhāna*, Ñāṇamoli confirms that it is not available in the *suttas*, but it is an implicit teaching of dependent co-arising in the *Netti*. He provides the literal meaning of the term as “term-stand” (Ñāṇamoli 1977, xxviii). Vanhaelemeersch says, the term *padaṭṭhāna* is used in the sense of searching for “that which makes something possible.” He further clarifies, the *Netti* explains this term “by analysing the twelve-membered chain of dependent origination: member one of the chain is the “footing” of member two as two is to three, and so on” (2000, 324). About this term in the *Netti*, Bond says, “*padaṭṭhāna* appears in some instances to indicate simply an interdependence between two terms rather than a relation of cause and effect” (1980, 21). For *lakkhaṇa*, Bond says, “*lakkhaṇa* means a characteristic or distinguishing mark which identifies the person or thing, for example, the thirty-two distinctive marks of the Buddha. Thus, the point of this mode is to establish the connections between terms which share a common characteristic” (Bond 1980, 21).

It seems the description of dependent co-arising in the *Netti* represents *kamma* and rebirth in the life-cycle (*samsāra*). Because after the presentation of the twelve links of dependent co-arising, it was shown that all these links are the foothold for becoming (*bhava*). This becoming is carried out when all links occur conjointly. In the above passages, however, the important point is that all links of dependent co-arising are mentioned as factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*), and when these factors of becoming operate together, there is *bhava*. And this *bhava* is a proximate cause for *samsāra*. Here, it is clear that each link of dependent co-arising represents an *aṅga* for *bhava*. With this presentation, it is also quite clear that the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* is associated with the concept of *samsāra* in the context of the birth-

death-birth cycle, which signifies the human existence. A similar view is upheld by Isshi Yamada:

The twelve *aṅgas* are not so much causal chains, in which the cause precedes to the effect in rigid succession, but the factors of human existence which are interdependent upon each other simultaneously in a structural cross-section of human life (Yamada 1980, 271).

In this section, we will further analyse this assertion from the Netti Commentary. Before that, I would like to show similar interpretation of dependent co-arising of the Netti as it is found in the Vism in the following sub-section. Here this reference is important because with this presentation the doctrinal meaning of factor (*aṅga*) has been discerned in the Vism. It will be shown that the Vism interpretation of *bhavaṅga* and my contention about *bhavaṅga* in the context of *samsāra* in the Netti are identical.

### **3.4.1 Similar Interpretation of *Bhavaṅga* as the Factor of Dependent Co-arising in the *Nettipakaraṇa* and the *Visuddhimagga***

In the section “Paṭiccasamuppādakathā” (The Definition of Dependent Co-arising) of the Paññābhūminiddeśa (The Soil of Understanding) of the Vism, the doctrine of dependent co-arising has been analysed in various ways. One analysis is with the terms *padaṭṭhāna* (footing) and *lakkhaṇa* (characteristic). This dependent co-arising of the Vism is quite similar with the Netti presentation of dependent co-arising. In the Netti, the analysis of dependent co-arising was shown with two methods: (1) footing (*padaṭṭhāna*), and (2) characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*). This presentation is contained in the Vism in great detail. However, the important point is that after the presentation in the Vism it is said that all the links of dependent co-arising designate a “factor” (*aṅga*) and all these factors operate together and constitute the condition for rebirth in the wheel of becoming (*bhavacakkha*). As it is important to understand the term *aṅga* in the Vism, we will discuss this subject in detail. Before that, let us discuss dependent co-arising with *padaṭṭhāna* and *lakkhaṇa* in the Vism:

As to character (*lakkhana*), etc.: as to the characteristics of ignorance, etc., such as, ignorance has the characteristic of unknowing [the truths]. Its function is to confuse [the truths]. It is manifested as obscuring. Its footing [proximate cause] is out-flows. Conditioning forces have the characteristic of determining. Their function is to accumulate. They are manifested as volition. Their footing is ignorance. Consciousness has the characteristic of cognizing. Its function is to go forth. It manifests itself as rebirth-linking. Its footing is determination; or its footing is the physical-basis-cum-object. Mentality has the characteristic of bending. Its function is to associate. It is manifested as inseparability of its components. Its footing is consciousness. Materiality has the characteristic of being molested. Its function is to be dispersed. It is manifested as indeterminate. Its footing is consciousness. The six-fold base has the characteristic of stimulating. Its function is to see, and so on. It is manifested as the state of physical basis and door. Its footing is mentality-materiality. Contact has the characteristic of touching. Its function is impingement. It manifests itself as coincidence. Its footing is the six-fold base. Feeling has the characteristic of experiencing. Its function is to exploit the stimulus of the objective field. It is manifested as pleasure and pain. Its footing is contact. Craving has the characteristic of being a cause. Its function is to delight. It is manifested as insatiability. Its footing is feeling. Clinging has the characteristic of seizing. Its function is not to release. It is manifested as a strong form of craving and as view. Its footing is craving. Becoming has the characteristic of being *kamma* and *kamma*-result. Its function is to make and to become. It is manifested as profitable, unprofitable, and indeterminate. Its footing is clinging. The characteristic of birth, etc., should be understood as stated in the description of the truths. Here this is how the exposition should be understood, also distinct “as to character, etc.” (Vism 528).<sup>51</sup>

The above presentation of dependent co-arising has been shown in the two methods of *padaṭṭāna* and *lakkhaṇa* as found in the *Netti*. After that presentation, in the *Vism*, subsequently all links beginning with ignorance, conditioning forces, consciousness, mentality-materiality have been briefly discussed. Upon discussion, the text defines the term *aṅga* by elaborating that all links of dependent co-arising are called “factors” (*aṅga*-s) which

<sup>51</sup>9-31: *lakkhaṇāditoti avijjādīnaṃ lakkhaṇādito. seyyathidaṃ: aññāṇalakkhaṇā avijjā, sammohana-rasā, chādanapaccupaṭṭhānā, āsavapadaṭṭhānā. abhisankharaṇalakkhaṇā saṅkhārā, āyūhanarasā, cetanāpaccupaṭṭhānā, avijjāpadaṭṭhānā. vijānanalakkhaṇaṃ viññānaṃ, pubbaṅgamarasaṃ, paṭisandhipaccupaṭṭhānaṃ, saṅkhārapadaṭṭhānaṃ, vatthārammaṇapadaṭṭhānaṃ vā. ṇamanalakkhaṇaṃ nāmaṃ, sampayogarasam, avinibbhogapaccupaṭṭhānaṃ, viññānapadaṭṭhānaṃ. ruppanalakkhaṇaṃ rūpaṃ, vikiranarasam, abyākata-paccupaṭṭhānaṃ, viññānapadaṭṭhānaṃ. āyatanalakkhaṇaṃ saḷāyatanaṃ, dassanādirasaṃ, vatthudvārabhāva-paccupaṭṭhānaṃ, nāmarūpapadaṭṭhānaṃ. phusanalakkhaṇo phasso, saṅghaṭṭanaraso, saṅgatipaccupaṭṭhāno, saḷāyatana-padaṭṭhāno. anubhāvanalakkhaṇā vedanā, visayasasambhogarasā, sukhadukkhapaccupaṭṭhānā, phassapadaṭṭhānā. hetulakkhaṇā taṇhā, abhinandanarasā, atittabhāvapaccupaṭṭhānā, vedanāpadaṭṭhānā. gahaṇalakkhaṇaṃ upādānaṃ, amuñcanarasam, taṇhādāhataḍḍhi-paccupaṭṭhānaṃ, taṇhāpadaṭṭhānaṃ. kamma-kammaphalalakkhaṇo bhavo, bhāvanā-bhavanaraso, kusalākusalābyākata-paccupaṭṭhāno, upādāna-padaṭṭhāno. jāti-ādīnaṃ lakkhaṇādīni saccaniddese vuttanayen’ eva veditabbāni. evamettha lakkhaṇāditopi viññātabbo vinicchayo.*

together produce the wheel of becoming (*bhavacakka*), the *saṃsāra*. In the following section, this subject will be discussed with reference to the *Vism*.

### 3.4.2 Defining *Aṅga* to Understand the *Bhavacakka* in the *Visuddhimagga*

In the *Netti*, *bhavaṅga* designates the twelve factors of dependent co-arising. When all these factors occur conjointly, it is *bhava* and this *bhava* is the footing for *saṃsāra*. It reflects that with the term *aṅga*, the twelve links of dependent co-arising have been summarized in one formula to indicate that all factors operate together. A similar interpretation is presented in the *Vism* by defining the term *aṅga* as:

As to defining the factors (*aṅgā*): sorrow, etc., are stated here for the purpose of showing the continuity of the wheel of becoming (*bhavacakka*). They are produced for the fool who is afflicted by ageing and death. Accordingly, it is said: “Monks! the untaught worldly person on suffering due to painful bodily feeling, sorrows, grieves and laments, beating his breast, he weeps and becomes devastated.” And as long as these go on, ignorance occurs, again with ignorance as condition, conditioning forces occur. Together with them “the wheel of becoming” exists. That is why the factors (*aṅgā*) of dependent co-arising should be understood as twelve by taking those [that is, sorrow, etc.,] along with ageing-and-death. Here this is how the exposition of all factors should be understood, also differentiate. Thus, this is how is summarized in one way (*Vism* 529).<sup>52</sup>

In the above discussion, it was shown that there exists a similar interpretation of dependent co-arising in the *Netti* and in the *Vism*. And, with the second passage from the *Vism*, I have also shown the meaning of *aṅga* which refers to each link of dependent co-arising. With the above explanation, it was also understood that all the factors (*aṅgā*) of dependent co-arising together produce *bhavacakka*. Here the important point is that all factors of dependent co-arising are conditions which together produce *bhavacakka*, the *saṃsāra*. In the previous chapter (see 2.6.1), it was said that one remains in *saṃsāra* due to not understanding the Four Noble Truths. In this context, not understanding the Four Noble Truths means not

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<sup>52</sup>21–31: *aṅgānañca vavatthānāti sokādayo c’ ettha bhavacakkassa avicchedadassanattham vuttā, jarāmarāṇa-bbhāhatassa hi bālassa te sambhavanti. yathāha: – assutavā, bhikkhave, puthujjano kāyikāya dukkhāya vedanāya phuttho samāno socati kilamati paridevati urattāḷim kandati sammohamāpajjati’ ti. yāva ca tesam pavatti, tāva avijjāyāti punapi avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārāti sambandhameva hoti bhavacakkam, tasmā tesam jarāmarāṇen’ eva ekasaṅkhepaṃ katvā dvādas’ eva paṭiccasamuppādaṅgānīti veditabbāni. evamettha aṅgānaṃ vavatthānatopi viññātabbo vinicchayo. ayaṃ tav’ etta saṅkhepakathā.*

understanding the *dhamma*, the doctrine of dependent co-arising. Hence, a person remains in the wheel of becoming (*bhavacakka*). This wheel of becoming revolves with the twelve factors (*aṅgas*) of dependent co-arising whose beginning is unknown. In the *Vism*, this issue is illuminated in the following manner:

“With ignorance as condition, conditioning forces are; with conditioning forces as condition, consciousness is,” in this way, there is no end to the succession of cause with fruit. Thus, the wheel of becoming (*bhavacakka*) with its twelve factors, revolving with the linking of cause and effect, is established as having “no known beginning” (*Vism* 577).<sup>53</sup>

In the aforementioned passages, I have shown the similar interpretation of dependent co-arising in the *Netti* and the *Vism*. With the second passage from the *Vism*, the term *bhavaṅgāni* which occurred in the *Netti* as the factors of dependent co-arising has been defined in the *Vism*. Now it is quite clear that all the factors (*aṅgas*) of dependent co-arising together produce *bhavacakka* or the *samsāra*. Here, it seems that, before composing *Vism*, Buddhaghosa was familiar with the content of the *Netti*, though he has not mentioned it in his *Vism*.

It has already been said that *bhavaṅga* has diverse meanings representing different notions. From the above passages it is clear that *bhavaṅga* designates each links of dependent co-arising. Another idea is found in the *Vism* and other subsequent Pāli texts that *bhavaṅga* is a type of consciousness which is used to explain the continuity of cognizance. Citing the above occurrence of *bhavaṅga* in the *Netti*, Ñāṇamoli made a suggestion which also supports my interpretation of *bhavaṅga* in the *Netti*. According to Ñāṇamoli, “Its [*bhavaṅga*] meaning here is not quite the same, perhaps, and seems to be the more simple one that each item (from ‘ignorance’ down as far as ‘assumption’) in the formula of Dependent Arising is to be considered as a ‘factor of being’ (itself a member of the formula)” (Ñāṇamoli 1977, 49, note

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<sup>53</sup>18–21: *avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññānanti evaṃ hetuphalaparam-parāya pariyoṣānaṃ natthi. tasmā taṃ hetuphalasambandhavasena pavattaṃ dvādasaṅgaṃ bhavacakkaṃ aviditādīti siddhaṃ hoti.*



165/1). I consider this suggestion to be undeniable for *bhavaṅga* in the *Netti*, as also in the *Vism*. This, however, only provides a meaning to the term *bhavaṅga*. But when I analyse the above passages, one point is discerned that the presentation explains how suffering arises and how suffering ceases in *saṃsāra*. Passages in both the *Netti* and the *Vism* also delineate *saṃsāra* (*bhavacakka*) in which beings suffer again and again by being reborn until the attainment of *nibbāna*. Let us discuss more on this subject from the *Netti* Commentary.

### 3.4.3 Defining *Aṅga* as *Kilesa* of *Bhava* in the Context of *Upapatti-bhava* in the *Nettipakaraṇa* Commentary

According to the *Netti* Commentary, all the links of dependent co-arising represent defilements<sup>54</sup> as the factors for becoming (*kilesā bhavassa aṅgāni*, *Netti*-a VRI 47, 36). These factors for becoming are the conditions and factors for *bhava* (*bhavassa aṅgāni bhavasāṅkhātāni ca aṅgāni*, *Netti*-a VRI 47, 35–36), and all these conditional factors of *bhava* are factors that revolve due to the result of one’s actions (*kamma vipāka vaṭṭam bhavasāṅkhātāni aṅgāni*, *Netti*-a VRI 47, 36–37). And, this *bhava* is the footing for *saṃsāra* (*bhavo saṃsārassa padaṭṭhāna*, *Netti*-a VRI 47, 40–41) and therein the person, because of having defilements, takes birth again and again (*tassa purima purima jāti nipphannaṃ kilesādi vaṭṭam kāraṇanti āha*, *Netti*-a VRI 47, 40). Therefore, the *Netti* Commentary also describes all the factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgā*) that are identical with the factors of rebirth-becoming (*upapatti-bhava*) as: “the factors of becoming mean the factors for rebirth-becoming” (*bhavaṅgānīti upapattibhavassa aṅgāni*, *Netti*-a VRI 77, 36). In the commentary, this *upapatti-bhava* is associated with *upādhi* (substratum [of rebirth]) which occurs due to

<sup>54</sup> In the *Kilesa Saṃyutta* of SN, defilements are associated with regard to the six sense bases, six sense objects, six sense base-consciousness (*viññāna*), contact at six sense bases (*samphassa*), feeling born of contact at the six sense bases (*samphassajāyavedanā*), perception of six sense objects (*saññā*), intentions involving six sense objects (*sañcetanā*), craving for six sense objects (*taṇhā*), the earth, water, heat, air, space, and consciousness element (*dhātu*), and the five aggregates (*khandha*). These defilements constitute the obstacle for the noble path, and through detachment from these one reaches from one sphere to another in the triple existence. Further abandoning spheres one reaches *nibbāna* (SN III 232).

*upādāna* (clinging) to the five aggregates. Again, the commentary says, this *upādhi* is *attabhāva* (person-hood) which is responsible for the individual's continuity in *samsāra*: “the characteristic of origination is the rebirth-aggregate. Substratum [of rebirth] is self-hood” (*opapaccayikanti upapattikkhandha nibbattakaṃ. upadhīti attabhāvo*, *Netti-a VRI 47*, 32–33). I have interpreted this self-hood as an ever-progressing desire which traps a person in *samsāric* existence until the attainment of enlightenment.

### 3.4.4 Interdependent Relationship Between *Bhavaṅga* and *Bhavas* in the *Nettipakaraṇa*

I have shown that *bhavaṅga* designated a factor of each link of dependent co-arising. It was said that when all factors (*bhavaṅgā*) of dependent co-arising occur conjointly, then it is *bhava* and this *bhava* is the proximate cause for the life-cycle. However, when I carefully analyse the dependent co-arising in the *Netti* a discrepancy is delineated in the presentation with regard to *bhava*. In the passages containing dependent co-arising, I find two notions of *bhava*. First one comes right after the factor “clinging” (*upādāna*), as:

*opapaccayikaṃ upādānaṃ. taṃ bhavassa padaṭṭhānaṃ. nāmakāya rūpakāya-sambhavanalakkhaṇo bhavo. taṃ jātiyā padaṭṭhānaṃ* (*Netti 28–29,27–1*).

Clinging has [the characteristic of] the way of reappearance. It is the footing [proximate cause] for becoming. Becoming has the characteristic of giving actual coming into becoming [existence] to the name-body and the form-body. It is the footing [proximate cause] for birth.

The second one comes towards the end of the passage, as:

*imāni bhavaṅgāni yadā samaggāni nibbattāni bhavanti so bhavo. taṃ samsārassa padaṭṭhānaṃ* (*Netti 29,10–11*).

When these factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*) occur conjointly, it is becoming (*bhava*). It becomes a footing [proximate cause] for the life cycle.

Here it is significant to note that the term *bhava* has been used in two senses. First, it comes right after the *upādāna* as an obstruction to spiritual progress. This *bhava* indicates the comprehensive notion of *upādāna* with regard to the five aggregates. In the previous chapter, it was shown that this interpretation of *bhava* as the continuity of *samsāric* life is due to the clinging to the five aggregates which is the fundamental basis for the cause of suffering

(*dukkha*) (SN III 66–68). And, when this continuity of *samsāric* life is completely destroyed, then that state is known as *nibbāna*: “*nibbāna* is the cessation of becoming” (*bhavanirodhā nibbānam*, SN II 117, 25–26), which implies the experience of a living arahat. In this setting, it was said that the doctrine of dependent co-arising has to be explained with regard to how sufferings arise and how they cease. Because the Buddha’s concern was mainly spiritual development centring around the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*). In this regard, *bhava* was described as one’s mode of life which is conditioned by one’s mental and physical activities. Second, in the above passage it was said that when all factors, including *bhava* which is followed by *upādāna*, occur conjointly, then it is *bhava* and this *bhava* is the proximate cause for *samsāra*. As it is also an important aspect of our inquiry, it is now discussed in the following sections.

In the previous chapter, I have shown two different expositions of the factor *bhava* (*bhava-paccayā jāti*) in the *suttas* and the *abhidhamma*, the Paṭis, the Vism and the commentaries. In the *suttas*, *bhava* is explained as being threefold: *kāma*, *rūpa*, and *arūpa*. In the *abhidhamma* and other subsequent texts, *bhava* is explained as being twofold: *kamma* and *upapatti*. Now it is important to discuss about *bhava* as explained in the *Netti*, which occurs conjointly through all the factors of dependent co-arising. It seems that the interpretation of dependent co-arising in the *Netti* is explained in three phases: past-present-future. And, the *bhava* which occurs conjointly is interpreted in the context of rebirth as when a worldly person dies, his/her physical organism gets dissolved but that person still continues to a new life-form, since ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) which feed the *karmic* forces have not been eliminated. In this context, *bhava* and *punabbhava* can be contextually interpreted as rebirth. Therefore, *punabbhava* is employed right after the factor *saṅkhārā* in the *Netti*. This *saṅkhārā* can be explained as *karmic* forces as the characteristic of developing rebirth (*punabbhava*) for which ignorance is the footing cause. And *saṅkhārā* is the footing for

consciousness (*tam saṃkhārānaṃ padaṭṭhānaṃ. punabbhava virohaṇalakkhaṇā saṃkhārā*, Netti 28, 19–20). And, this *punabbhava* is a proximate cause for consciousness which is the flux of psychological streams on to form a new life. In this regard, the doctrine of dependent co-arising was discussed with the reverse sequence of the twelve factors. This presentation became a specific style in the *abhidhamma* texts such as the Vibh (Vol II, 2–4). It seems that the *abhidhammic* presentation is followed in the Netti because this text is especially concerned with the analysis of each factor and the relationship between factors and the establishment of a consciousness. The aforesaid assertion is discussed by mentioning the doctrine of dependent co-arising from the Netti:

Past	Improper attention has the characteristic of directing to gratification. Its footing is ignorance. Ignorance has the characteristic of creating confusion about truth. It is the footing for conditioning forces. Conditioning forces have the characteristic of developing further becoming/rebirth ( <i>punabbhava</i> ). It is the footing for consciousness ( <i>viññāṇa</i> ). Consciousness has the characteristic of taking rebirth by way to origination ( <i>opapaccayikanibbattilakkhaṇaṃ viññāṇaṃ</i> ). It is the footing for mentality-materiality (Netti 28)
Present	Mentality-materiality has the characteristic of conjoining the mental-body and the material-body. It is the footing for the six-fold base. The six-fold base has the characteristic of determining the six faculties. It is the footing for contact. Contact has the characteristic of congregation of eye, forms, and consciousness. It is the footing for feeling. Feeling has the characteristic of being experienced with the [objects] pleasing to [the senses] and the ones that are unpleasing to [the senses]. It is the footing for craving. Craving has the characteristic of attaching to. It is the footing [proximate cause] for clinging. Clinging has [the characteristic of] the way of reappearance. It is the footing for becoming. Becoming has the characteristic of giving actual coming into becoming [existence] to the mental-body and the material-body. It is the footing for birth. Birth has the characteristic of manifestation of becoming [existence] to the aggregates. It is the footing for ageing. Ageing has the characteristic of ripening the substratum of existence. It is the footing for death. Death has the characteristic of breaking of the life-faculty. It is the footing for sorrow. Sorrow causes endeavouring. It is the footing for lamentation. Lamentation causes constant crying out [lamenting]. It is the footing for pain. Pain is the

	oppression of body. It is the footing for grief. Grief is the oppression of cognizance. It is the footing for despair. Despair causes putting down (Netti 28–29).
Future	It is the footing for becoming. When these factors of becoming ( <i>bhavaṅgāni</i> ) occur conjointly, [then] it [is] becoming ( <i>bhava</i> ). It becomes a footing for the life-cycle (Netti 29).
Cessation of Suffering	The path has the characteristic of leading out [of <i>saṃsāra</i> ]. It is the footing for cessation (Netti 29).

From the above explanation, it is to be understood that ignorance (*avijjā*) conditions the conditioning forces which are also known as “karmic formations” and are the accumulation of the *karmic* force of past life. The conditions of *avijjā* and *saṅkhārā* bring into effect the next condition “consciousness” (*viññāṇa*). In the rebirth concept, it is to be understood that this “consciousness” is more than the mental function; it can be technically called *saṃvattanika-viññāṇa* “consciousness that evolves (into next life)”, which has also come to be identified with *citta*.<sup>55</sup> Again with this consciousness (*viññāṇa*), mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*) and the six faculties (*saḷāyatana*) are important elements, as, through them cognition takes place with the mind, sense-organs, and sense-objects. When these elements come into “contact” (*phassa*), there is “feeling” (*vedanā*) which brings the mental action of craving (*taṇhā*) and this craving results into “clinging” (*upādāna*). In this cyclic process, “becoming” (*bhava*) is understood as the result of *kamma* which is also known as “*kamma*-becoming” (*kamma-bhava*). Again, in the rebirth process it is the *kammic* force which determines the next life in *saṃsāra*. In this system, a person takes “birth” (*jāti*) and suffers from “old-age-death” (*jarāmaraṇa*) in *saṃsāra*.

In the above passages, I discuss consciousness as that which survives death and which has the characteristic of taking birth in another existence. The Netti Commentary supports

<sup>55</sup> Wijesekera has studied *viññāṇa* in great detail in his article “Vedic Gandharva and Pali Gandhabba”. He says, *saṃvattanika-viññāṇa* is understood as *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* in the scholastic period. It is also known as the *saṃsāric-viññāṇa* which is “no other than the ‘stream of consciousness’ (*viññāṇasota*) extending into the both worlds, called also *bhava-sota* or ‘stream of becoming’ implying constant change” (1994, 199).

this interpretation, as the characteristic of rebirth by the way of origination is the intrinsic nature of arising by performing rebirth-becoming (Netti-a VRI 47).<sup>56</sup> This consciousness can also be understood as the rebirth consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) which function at conception causing the continuation from one life to another life. In this context, *bhava* can be interpreted in connection with the *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* in accordance with the *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava* to particularize *saṃsāra*. A similar presentation can also be found in the Paṭis as the following:

<p>The rebirth-linking consciousness in the context of <i>kamma-bhava</i> from past life to present life.</p>	<p>In the preceding <i>kamma</i>-becoming, [there is] delusion which is ignorance, [there is] accumulation which is conditioning forces, [there is] desire which is craving, [there is] going forwards which is clinging, [there is] volition which is becoming; thus these five ideas in preceding <i>kamma</i>-becoming are conditions for rebirth-linking here [in the present life]. Here [in the present life] is rebirth-linking which is consciousness, coming to be [in the womb] which is mentality-materiality, [there is then] sensitivity which is base, [there is] the touched which is contact, [there is] the felt which is feeling; thus these five ideas in rebirth-becoming (<i>upapatti-bhava</i>) here, have their conditions in action (<i>kamma</i>) done in the past (<i>Paṭis</i> I 52).<sup>57</sup></p>
<p>The birth-linking consciousness in the context of <i>upapatti-bhava</i> from present life to future life.</p>	<p>Here [in the present life] with the maturing of the bases [there is] delusion which is ignorance, [there is] accumulation which is conditioning forces, [there is] desire which is craving, [there is] going forwards which is clinging, [there is] volition which is becoming; thus these five ideas in <i>kamma</i>-becoming are conditions for rebirth-linking in the future. In the future [there is] rebirth-linking which is consciousness, [there is] coming to be [in the womb] which is mentality-materiality, [there is] sensitivity which is base, [there is] the touched which is contact, [there is] the felt which is feeling; thus these five ideas in rebirth-becoming (<i>upapatti-bhava</i>) in the future have their conditions in action (<i>kamma</i>) done here [in the present life] (<i>Paṭis</i> I 52).<sup>58</sup></p>

<sup>56</sup> 30: *opapaccayikanibbattilakkhaṇanti upapattibhava bhāvena nibbattana sabhāvaṃ.*

<sup>57</sup> 19–25: *purimakammabhavasmiṃ moho avijjā, āyūhanā saṅkhārā, nikanti taṅhā, upagamanam upādānam, cetanā bhavo; ime pañca dhammā purimakammabhavasmiṃ idha paṭisandhiyā paccayā. idha paṭisandhi viññāṇam, okkanti nāmarūpaṃ, pasādo āyatanaṃ, phutṭho phasso, vedayitaṃ vedanā; ime pañca dhammā idhupapattibhavasmiṃ pure katassa kammaṃ paccayā.*

<sup>58</sup> 25–32: *idha paripakkattā āyatanānam moho avijjā, āyūhanā saṅkhārā, nikanti taṅhā, upagamanam upādānam, cetanā bhavo; ime pañca dhammā idha kammabhavasmiṃ āyatim paṭisandhiyā paccayā. āyatim paṭisandhi*

It is evident from the above discussion that the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* in the Peṭ and the Netti has been construed in relation to the concept of *saṅkhārā* as an implicit doctrine. In this connection, *bhavaṅga* designates each link of dependent co-arising in uprising phenomena in the context of *saṃsāric* existence, and that when all the factors of dependent co-arising occur conjointly, then it is *bhava*, and this *bhava* is the proximate cause for *saṃsāra*. However, in the Netti, it is not only associated with the fundamental Buddhist teaching of dependent co-arising, but also it occurs in relation with *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* as the following: there are conditioning forces that are free from outflows and are not factors of becoming (*saṃkhārā anāsava no ca bhavaṅgā*), and there are conditioning forces that are affected by outflows and they are factors of becoming (*saṃkhārā sāsava bhavaṅgā*). It is said that when *saṅkhārā* are within the idea-element (*dhamma-dhātu*), then this idea-element is included in the idea-base (*dhammāyatana*). In this context, there is idea-base which is affected by *āsava* and is *bhavaṅga* (*āyatanaṃ sāsavaṃ, ca bhavaṅgaṃ*). And, there is idea-base which is free from *āsava* and is not a factor of becoming (*āyatanaṃ anāsavaṃ, no ca bhavaṅgaṃ*). In this presentation, the Netti describes freedom from the triple realms (*kāma*, *rūpa*, and *arūpa*) with the complete destruction of “I” as: “not seeing at all that ‘I am this’”. This is the eradication of the personality-belief (*ayaṃ ahasmīti anānupassīti ayaṃ sakkāyadiṭṭhiyā samugghāto*, Netti 64, 18–19).

In the above discussion, the crux of the subject seems to lie in some basic facts about the concept of rebirth. It is found after a thorough examination that the notion of *bhavaṅga* is ultimately rooted in the dependent co-arising doctrine in the subtlest and strongest desire of man for personal identification with “personality” or “I” which courses throughout *saṃsāric* life. This “I”-ness, indeed, is found to be the very root of *saṃsāric* suffering. That is why one

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*viññāṇaṃ, okkanti nāmarūpaṃ, pasādo āyatanaṃ, phutṭho phasso, vedayitaṃ vedanā. ime pañca dhammā āyatitaṃ upapattibhavaṣmiṃ idha katassa kammaṣa paccayā.*

is asked to destroy this “I” for attaining the state of *nibbāna*. As long as a person holds a belief in “I” or “self,” he remains in *samsāra* by way of getting rebirth in different existences. Furthermore, *saṅkhārā* as *karmic* forces, which are generated by ignorance (*avijjā*), lead to rebirth. In this context, *viññāṇa*, which is conditioned by the preceding *saṅkhārā*, plays a key role in rebirth formation. And this *viññāṇa* can be understood as “stream of consciousness” (*viññāṇa-sota*, DN III 105) or “stream of becoming” (*bhava-sota*, SN I 15 & IV 128) which is later substituted by the term “rebirth consciousness” (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) in the course of the development of Buddhist thought. It seems that Wijesekera has given a similar clarification: “this *samsāric viññāṇa* is no other than the ‘stream of consciousness’ (*viññāṇasota*) extending into both worlds called also *bhavasota* or ‘stream of becoming’ implying constant change” (1994, 199). Wijesekera further remarks that this stream of consciousness at MN II 262 is “called technically *saṃvattanikaviññāṇa* or ‘the consciousness that evolves (into the next life)’ for which in the scholastic period the term *paṭisandhi-viññāṇā* was substituted (PTS Dict[ionary]., s.v.)” (1994, 199)

### 3.4.5 The Correlation between *Bhavaṅga*, *Bhava*, and *Saṅkhārā* in the *Nettipakaraṇa*

In the above discussion, I have shown the correlation between *bhavaṅga*, *bhava*, and *saṅkhārā*. The correlation between *bhavaṅga* and *bhava* was shown in dependent co-arising. *Bhavaṅga* was clarified as being each factor of dependent co-arising, and when all factors of dependent co-arising occur conjointly, then it is *bhava* and this *bhava* is the proximate cause for *samsāra*. Showing this correlation, I investigated the theory of the dependent co-arising with threefold existence which divided the twelve factors (*aṅgas*) into the past (1 & 2), present (3-10) and future (11 & 12). According to this theory, the factor “ignorance” is the proximate cause for *saṅkhārā*, also known as *kamma*-formations. The “*kamma*-formations” are the proximate cause of the past life for bringing forth the fruition of the present life. The



factor “consciousness” is thus brought into existence at the first moment of conception in the mother’s womb. In this way, it was shown that the twelve factors became strongly imbued with the idea of rebirth and the *kamma* theory. This theory was understood as the strictly interdependent causal relationship of all factors along with the flow of *saṃsāra*. In this regard, the condition precedes the result. The twelve factors (*bhavaṅgā*) involved are taken to explain the order of the interdependent relationship between one’s past, present and future lives (Vism 579–81).

Now, I come to the important aspect of *saṅkhārā* and *bhavaṅga*. In the *Netti*, two types of *saṅkhārā* were shown. First, *saṅkhārā anāsavā no ca bhavaṅgā*, and second, *saṅkhārā sāsavā bhavaṅgā*. Following the principle of dependent co-arising, now I wish to put forward the suggestion that these *bhavaṅgā* are intrinsically related with *saṅkhārā*. It was understood that when *saṅkhārā* are affected by *āsava* there is continuity of *viññāṇa* (*saṃsāric viññāṇa*) which means that there is the function of factors (*bhavaṅgā*), and when *āsavas* are not present in *saṅkhārā* there is no continuity of *viññāṇa* (*saṃsāric viññāṇa*), which means that there is no function of factors. I am inclined to think that this claim is more appropriate when I take the *Abhidhammic* interpretation of *bhava* as being twofold—*kamma* and *upapatti*, in the process of continuity of *viññāṇa* (*viññāṇa-sota*) by means of rebirth in *saṃsāra*. This explanation is clearly mentioned in the *Netti* that “improper attention has the characteristic of directing attention to gratification. Its proximate cause is ignorance (*avijjā*). Ignorance has the characteristic of creating confusion about truth. It is the proximate cause for conditioning forces (*saṅkhārā*). Conditioning forces have the characteristic of developing further becoming/rebirth (*punabbhava*). It is the proximate cause for consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Consciousness has the characteristic of causing birth (*Netti* 28). Again, the *Netti* describes, “with the arising of true knowledge (*vijjā*) there is cessation of ignorance; with the cessation of ignorance, cessation of conditioning forces; with the cessation of conditioning forces,

cessation of consciousness (Netti 63.),<sup>59</sup> etc. Let me further discuss this theory with the scholars' views.

In the introduction to this chapter, we referred to Keith (1923, 194, footnote 1), Jayatilleke (1949, 216), and Wijesekera (1994, 88), who suggest that the term *bhavaṅga* can be related to *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* together. They, moreover, said that these two concepts can be brought under the single term *bhava*. Here I take Wijesekera's assertion as an example:

[S]*aṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* are rooted deeper in the flux of *bhava* or *saṃsāric* continuity, and they are in some sense the cause for that continuity. This is seen in the two famous postulates of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formulas, namely, '*Saṅkhārapaccayāviññāṇam, viññāṇa-paccayānāmarūpam*'. Thus, we must understand the two terms *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* as occurring in the *pañcupādānakkhandha* analysis in the narrow sense of those dispositions and acts of consciousness which manifest themselves only so long as the body and mind are together. But they have a deeper significance in the formula of dependent origination. It is their *saṃsāric* aspects that receive emphasis in that context. That is why the formula says: '*Viññāṇa-paccayānāmarūpam*', that *nāmarūpa* arises depending on *viññāṇa*, and hence in a passage in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* [II 79] both *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* seem to be grouped under the term *bhava* which means 'becoming' or continuity of the flux of *saṃsāric* life (Wijesekera 1994, 88).

In agreement with Wijesekera's interpretation of the passage it is important to point out that *bhavaṅga* here is deeply rooted in the two factors, namely *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*. Therefore, I propose to discuss the relationship between *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* in the context of rebirth. As both the factors *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* play a vital role in the process of continuity, for the sake of better understanding I will discuss them together in the next chapter. The term *viññāṇa* with the term *mano*, and *citta* will also be discussed in the next chapter.

### 3.5 Conclusion

While elucidating the term *bhavaṅga* in the Peṭ and the Netti, we found few references to *bhavaṅga* in the Netti under the same setting of the Peṭ. One reference is that *bhavaṅga*

<sup>59</sup> 28–30: *vijjuppādā avijjānirodho, avijjānirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho*.

designates all twelve links of dependent co-arising as factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*). When all these factors occur conjointly, then it is *bhava*. And this *bhava* is the proximate cause for the life-cycle.

Another reference to *bhavaṅga* is associated with *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana*. It is said that when *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* are affected by *āsava*, they are factors of becoming, and when they are free from *āsava*, they are not factors of becoming. In this regard, I discussed that *āsava* manifests in three forms, i.e., *kāma*, *bhava*, and *diṭṭhi*, due to *avijjā*, that is, not knowing the truth with regard to the five aggregates. It was said that not knowing the truths gives rise to the “personality-view” (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). As the Buddhist analysis of suffering and its cessation is elucidated based on the formula of dependent co-arising, it was shown that the cessation of a factor in the series leads to the cessation of all other factors. Hence, liberation is understood as getting rid of the “personality-view” or the idea that “this is mine” in the five aggregates. In the light of this approach, it was said that the enlightened one has completely destroyed *āsava* with regard to *saṅkhārā* and other aggregates so that for him there are no factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgā*). In this context, it seems that *bhavaṅga* is closely analogous to *āsava*. Ñāṇamoli also says the same: “the defilements are ‘factors of being’ [*bhavaṅgā*]” (Ñāṇamoli 1977, 49, see footnote 165/1). When *bhavaṅga* represents each link of dependent co-arising, all twelve factors can be identified with *āsava*. Norman also provides a similar interpretation: “we believe that the *āsavas* are to be identified with any one link of the twelvefold *paṭicca-samuppāda*, then the most likely candidate for identification would be the *saṅkhāras*...It is to be noted that the cause of *āsavas* is *avijjā* (M I 55), which is also the cause of the *saṅkhāras*” (Norman 2008, 133).

By means of the mutual relationship between *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*, it was shown that when *saṅkhārā* are influenced by *āsava*, they are factors of becoming (*saṅkhārā sāsavā bhavaṅgā*). And, when *saṅkhārā* are not influenced by *āsava*, they are not factors of becoming (*saṅkhārā anāsavā no ca bhavaṅgā*). These positive and negative modes of description signify the *saṃsāric* suffering and the cessation of suffering. Briefly speaking, I may say that in view of my explanation the first scheme of *saṅkhārā sāsavā bhavaṅgā* refers to unenlightened persons, and the second scheme of *saṅkhārā anāsavā no ca bhavaṅgā* refers to enlightened persons. With this understanding, I suggest that *bhavaṅga* has an intrinsic relationship with *saṅkhārā* as the proximate cause for *viññāṇa* (*saṃsāric viññāṇa*), which plays a major role in rebirth. And the cessation of this *viññāṇa* is *nibbāna*. This doctrinal proximity can be traced from the *Dutiya-sikkhattaya Sutta* of the AN: “one is freed by the destruction of craving, through the *cessation of consciousness*; liberation of the mind is extinguishment of a lamp (AN I 236).<sup>60</sup>

I suggest that the factors of becoming (*bhavaṅga*) seek to combine with the function of *bhava* along with the method of continuity of a person in a cyclic process in different existences. In this respect, my view is aligned with that of Keith (1923), Jayatilleke (1949), and Wijesekera (1994), who suggest that *bhavaṅga* is deeply rooted in the factors *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*. These two factors can be analysed under the single concept of *bhava*, that is, a continuous flux of *saṃsāric* life. This notion of *bhavaṅga* can be subsumed with the early Buddhist doctrines of “stream of consciousness” (*viññāṇa-sota*, DN III 105) or “stream of becoming” (*bhava-sota*, SN I 15 & V 128), which can be regarded as the surviving factor at death and which streams from this existence to another existence. This *viññāṇa* is intrinsically related to *bhava*. And this *bhava* has the nature of impermanence (*anicca*),

<sup>60</sup> 16–17: *viññāṇassa nirodhena taṇhakkhaya vimuttino/ pajjotasseva nibbānaṃ vimokkho hoti cetasoti*.

suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anāṭṭa*) which form a continuously changing “stream” (*sota*) until the attainment of *nibbāna*.

Referring to the Netti Commentary, I have shown that factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgāni*) are identical with rebirth-becoming (*upapatti-bhava*): factors of becoming mean factors of rebirth-becoming (*bhavaṅgānīti upapattibhavassa aṅgāni*, Netti-a VRI 77, 36). Considering all these textual evidence, I suggest that *bhavaṅga* is rooted in the formula of dependent co-arising in the form of *āsava* associated with the “personality-view,” and was introduced to describe the continuity of a person by means of rebirth in accordance with *upapatti-bhava*. In this understanding, it is believed that *bhavaṅga* embraced *sāṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* which are deeply rooted in the *samsāric* continuity. In the following chapter, I shall discuss this *samsāric* continuity by analysing the functions of *sāṅkhārā*, consciousness, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, and rebirth with the principle of dependent co-arising.

Finally, I conclude my analysis of *bhavaṅga* by commenting that in spite of the Netti being an important text for the purpose of understanding *bhavaṅga*, scholars in Buddhist Studies have not paid much attention to the content of the Netti to elaborate the different interpretations of *bhavaṅga* in Buddhist studies.

## Part Two: Consciousness and *Bhavaṅga*-consciousness

## Chapter 4—*Saṅkhārā*, Consciousness, *Bhavaṅga*-Consciousness, and Death-Birth

### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have analysed *bhavaṅga* in the context of *āśava* as it is found in the Peṭ and the Netti. Firstly, *bhavaṅga* was analysed with regard to the twelve links of dependent co-arising by saying that all the twelve links are called “factors” and when these factors occur conjointly, then there is *bhava*, and this *bhava* is the proximate cause for *saṃsāra*. Secondly, *bhavaṅga* was analysed with *saṅkhārā* (conditioning forces) and *āyatana* (base) and it was said that when *saṅkhārā* and *āyatana* are not free from *āśava*, they are factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgā*), and when they are free from *āśava*, they are not factors of becoming (*no bhavaṅgā*).

Taking the reference from the Netti, in the previous chapter, *bhava*, which occurs conjointly due to the factors of becoming, was interpreted in the context of rebirth as when a worldly person dies, his/her physical organism gets dissolved but that person still continues to a new life-form since ignorance and craving feed the *kamma*. In this context, the factor *saṅkhārā* was briefly discussed with *kamma* which plays a significant role for consciousness to establish in different existences.

As *saṅkhārā* have the characteristic of developing rebirth, in this chapter, I intend to discuss how *saṅkhārā*-condition brings effect for consciousness. This consciousness is not a mere mental function as “sensory consciousness” arises depending upon six sense bases and their objects, rather, it is the “stream of consciousness” (*viññāṇā-sota*) a continuously changing stream and not-self that flows throughout *saṃsāra*. In association with this consciousness, I will discuss how *bhavaṅga*-consciousness functions in the process of death-

birth. I will hypothesize that Buddhist thinkers primarily introduced *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in accordance with the stream of consciousness that occurs in the *Suttas* to justify the theory of rebirth, and to explain how, subsequently after birth, a man survives in *saṃsāra*.

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part I will discuss consciousness in its two aspects. One aspect of consciousness is the “surviving factor” which is “stream of consciousness” flowing throughout the *saṃsāric* life. Another aspect of consciousness is “cognition” which refers to “sensory consciousness” that occurs depending on sense bases and sense objects. The second aspect of consciousness as “sensory consciousness” together with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness will be discussed in the next chapter. This chapter will mainly discuss how consciousness as the “surviving factor” courses in *saṃsāra*. During this discussion, I will occasionally analyse *saṃvattanika-viññāṇa*, the consciousness that evolves into the next life (MN II 262), stream of consciousness which extends into this and next worlds (*idha-loke patiṭṭhitaṅ ca para-loke patiṭṭhitaṅ ca*, DN III 105, 17), stream of becoming (*bhava-sota*, SN I 15 & IV 128), *gandhabba* (DN II 251), and being (*satta*, SN III 190).

In Part II, I will discuss *saṅkhārā* and its functions from the *Suttas* with their commentarial explanation. Relevant contents of the *Netti* and the *Vism* will also be referred to as supporting materials. It will be delineated that for consciousness (both “surviving factor” and “sensory consciousness”) *saṅkhārā* is an essential cause for which consciousness prolongs. So, as long as *saṅkhārā* are not free from *āsava*, consciousness as “surviving factor” streams from existence to existence. In this respect, *saṅkhārā* will be discussed as *kammic forces* associated with “personality traits”, the result of which confirms the establishment of being’s consciousness in different realms. In this connection, I will also discuss “consciousness seed” (*viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ*) with the concept of continuity (*santati*) that



“consciousness seed” means “consciousness affected by *āsava*” because of which continuity takes place.

In Part III, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and continuity will be discussed with the process of death-birth. I will show how *bhavaṅga*-consciousness affected by *āsava* functions as the “surviving factor” throughout *saṃsāric* existence. In this connection, *cuti-citta* (death consciousness) and *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* (rebirth consciousness) with their object *kamma* will be discussed as the species of *bhavaṅga-citta*. It will be said that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as “surviving factor” is dependent on *saṅkhārā*, it is rooted in latent ignorance and craving, and continues the cycle of *saṃsāra*. It will be discussed that the function of *saṅkhārā* is to accumulate *kamma* for the purpose of rebirth, and the function of consciousness is to go forward. And, in the process of death-birth, consciousness as “surviving factor” functions as re-linking (*paṭisandhi*), which precedes mentality-materiality at conception. So, since mentality-materiality and consciousness are combined, there is the state of surviving factor “*bhavaṅga*” in human beings. Here, my presentation is strictly based on causality without recourse to any metaphysical entity. Part of this chapter is mainly based on the Paṭi, and the Vism. Relevant content from the commentaries and the Abhidh-s will be discussed to support my discussion.

In the next chapter, human *bhavaṅga*-consciousness together with “sensory consciousness” will be discussed for understanding the *saṃsāric* existence and human psychology. The next chapter will be based on the Paṭṭh, the Mil, the Vism, the commentarial literature, and the Abhidh-s.

## Part-I

### 4.2 The Significant Role of Consciousness

Consciousness has a broad implication in Buddhist teachings; it plays a significant role in existential life. According to Kalupahana, in the Buddhist context, the term *viññāṇa* (Skt: *vijñāna*) comes closer to the concept of consciousness.<sup>1</sup> Yet, he shows that the terms *citta* (thought) and *mano* (mind) with regard to the concept of consciousness because they are occasionally used as synonyms in the Pāli Canon (Kalupahana 1995, 73). The following description is found: “that which is called *citta* and *mano* and *viññāṇa* by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another” (SN II 95).<sup>2</sup> Three kinds of deliberation are found with regard to *viññāṇa*, *citta* and *mano* in the *suttas*. It is said that *viññāṇa*<sup>3</sup> refers to consciousness because it cognizes (*vijānātītikho... tasmā viññāṇan ti vuccati*, SN III 87; MN I 292, 25–26),<sup>4</sup> while *citta* refers to thinking (*cittaṃ cintetha (cinteyyātha)*, SN V 418,15–16), and *mano* to the faculty of the mind and its object is the mental objects: “dependent on the

<sup>1</sup>In the *abhidhamma*, consciousness is discussed in different ways, as: “consciousness, mind, heart, that which is clear, ideation as the realm of mind, the faculty of mind, consciousness (intellection), the aggregate of consciousness, the element of ideation (representative)-consciousness” (*cittaṃ mano mānasam hadayaṃ paṇḍaraṃ mano manāyatanaṃ manindriyaṃ viññāṇaṃ viññāṇakkhandho tajjā manoviññāṇadhātu*, Dhs 10, 12–14; Vibh 144, 20–22). This is also found in the Iti Commentary (II 22–23). Referring to the Dhs-a (140–41), Pieris says that there is specific meaning to each of the above mentioned terms. Therefore, Pieris says “they may not have been regarded as ‘synonyms’ in the strict sense” (Pieris 2004, 25).

<sup>2</sup> 1–4: *yaṃ ca kho etaṃ vuccati cittaṃ iti pi mano iti pi viññāṇaṃ iti pi. taṃ rattiyā ca divasassa ca aññadeva uppajjati aññaṃ nirujjhati*. Similar deliberation occurs in the DN, as: *evañ pi te mano, ittham pi te mano, iti pi te cittaṃ ti*, DN III 103, 23–24).

<sup>3</sup>The PED contains a long entry about the term *viññāṇa*, as: *viññāṇa* is a “a mental quality as a constituent of individuality, the bearer of (individual) life, life —force (as extending also over rebirths), principle of conscious life, general consciousness (as function of mind and matter), regenerative force, animation, mind as transmigrant, as transforming (according to individual kamma) one individual life (after death) into the next...In this (fundamental) application it may be characterized as the sensory and perceptive activity commonly expressed by “mind.” It is difficult to give any one word for v.[*viññāṇa*], because there is much difference between the old Buddhist and our modern points of view, and there is a varying use of the term in the Canon itself. In what may be a very old Sutta S ii.95 v. [*viññāṇa*] is given as a synonym of *citta* (q. v.) and *mano* (q. v.), in opposition to *kāya* used to mean body. This simpler uneccelesiastical, unscholastic popular meaning is met with in other suttas. E. g. the body (*kāya*) is when animated called sa-*viññāṇaka* (q. v. and cp. *viññāṇatta*). Again, v. [*viññāṇa*] was supposed, at the body’s death, to pass over into another body (S i.122; iii.124) and so find a support or platform (*paṭiṭṭhā*)...Ecclesiastical scholastic dogmatic considers v. under the categories of (a) *khandha*; (b) *dhātu*; (c) *patīcasamuppāda*; (d) *āhāra*; (e) *kāya*. (a) V. [*viññāṇa*] as fifth of the five *khandhas* (q. v.) is never properly described or defined” (PED 686).

<sup>4</sup> According to the *Khajjanīya Sutta* of the SN, *viññāṇa* cognizes eight flavors: sour (*ambila*), bitter (*tittaka*), pungent (*kaṭuka*), sweet (*madhuraka*), sharp (*khārika*), mild (*akārika*), salty (*loṇika*), and bland (*alonika*) (SN III 87). In another context, the *Mahāvedalla Sutta* of the MN says *viññāṇa* cognizes three things: pleasant (*sukha*), painful (*dukkha*), and neither-painful-nor-pleasant (*adukkham-asukham*) (MN I 292).

mind and mind-objects, arises mind-consciousness”( *manañ-c’ āvuso paṭiccadhamme ca uppajjati manoviññāṇaṃ*, MN I 112, 8–9). In the *Vism*, it is said that these three terms are one in meaning (*viññāṇaṃ, cittaṃ, mano ti atthato ekaṃ*, *Vism* 452, 26–27). Yet, the *Netti* Commentary says that these three terms are not just synonyms in the strict sense, but they have to be understood as dependent on one another for their definition or explanation (*Netti-a* VRI 60).<sup>5</sup> Modern scholarship<sup>6</sup> has shown considerable differences between these three terms with regard to their meanings and functions. Wijesekera shows the differences:

*Mano* is employed generally in the sense of the instrument of thinking, that which cogitates, and, sometimes in the sense of that which purposes and intends. *Citta* has more or less the sense of ‘heart’ (*hadaya*), the seat of feeling, and refers to the affective aspect of mind as experiencing. *Viññāṇa*, usually taken as cognitive consciousness, has also a deeper connotation than the other two, and in certain contexts indicates the psychic factor which is the cause for the rebirth of an individual after death. One may say that these particular shades of meaning are typical of these three terms in the early Dialogues. There is no doubt that they all indicate some aspect of the inner, immaterial or subjective nature of man and as such they are all included in the Buddhist concept of Mind, using that English word in a general sense (Wijesekera 1994, 87).<sup>7</sup>

From the above discussion, it is clear that though *citta*, *mano* and *viññāṇa* are occasionally used as synonyms, in the *suttas* as well as in the modern scholars’ explanations, differences have been discerned in their respective meanings.

<sup>5</sup> 5: *pariyāyavacananiddhāraṇena vevacanaḥāraṃ vibhajitvā dassetuṃ “cittaṃ mano viññāṇa”*.

<sup>6</sup> Modern scholarship about *viññāṇa*, *citta*, and *mano* can be seen in the noteworthy works of Johansson’s “Citta, Mano, Vinnana – A Psychosemantic Investigation” (1965), Wijesekera’s “The Buddhist Concept of Mind,” in *Buddhist and Vedic Studies* (1994), Somaratne’s “Citta, Manas & Viññāṇa: Aspects of Mind as Presented in Early Buddhist Discourses” (2005), and Sugunasiri’s “Triune Mind in Buddhism: A Textual Exploration” (2014).

<sup>7</sup> Apart from Wijesekera, many scholars in Buddhist Studies have studied the different deliberations of *citta*, *mano* and *viññāṇa* with their meaning and functions. Here, Ñāṇamoli’s assertion is important:

*Viññāṇa* (rendered by “consciousness”) is, loosely, more or less a synonym for *mano* and *citta*; technically, it is bare cognition considered apart from feeling, perception or formations. *Mano* (rendered by “mind”), when used technically, is confined to the sixth internal base for contact (Ch. XV). *Citta* (rendered by “mind” and “consciousness” or “[manner of] consciousness”), when used technically, refers to a momentary type-situation considered as *viññāṇa* in relation to the tone of its concomitant feeling, perception and formations. Possibly, a better rendering would have been “cognizance” throughout. It carries a flavour of its etymological relative, *cetanā* (“volition”). *Ceto* (another etymological relative, rendered by “heart”—i.e. “seat of the emotions,”—“will” or “mind”), when used loosely is very near to *citta*; but technically it is restricted to one or two such expressions as *ceto-vimutti* (“mind-deliverance” or “heart-deliverance”) (Ñāṇamoli 2010, 456).

However, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) has been given a great value in the *suttas*. For example, according to the *Mahāvedalla Sutta* of the MN, consciousness is an essential factor for our life without which a body is no other than an inanimate object like a senseless stick of log: “Friend, when this body is bereft of the three states—vitality, heat, and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) – then it lies discarded and forsaken like a senseless piece of log” (MN I 296).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, according to the *Mahānidāna Sutta* of the MN, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) enters the mother’s womb at the time of conception and develops there,<sup>9</sup> and consciousness (*citta*) runs the body (*cittam assa vidhāvati*, SN I 37, 18, 23 & 38,4) at the time of death and further courses in *samsāra*.<sup>10</sup> Now it is clear that consciousness plays a vital role in our existential life. However, an important point to be noted is that the terms *viññāṇa* and *citta* are identical in their functions at the moment of conception, because it was said that *viññāṇa* enters the mother’s womb, and *citta* runs upon death to the next existence. In this sense, two concepts are identical. However, in terms of understanding the nature of consciousness, one could still see a problem in the *suttas*. The following section undertakes to show this problem.

#### 4.2.1 The Problem of Understanding Consciousness

The significant role of consciousness in our existential life was discussed in the above section. It was said that consciousness enters the mother’s womb at the time of conception and when the life span ends, it streams to another *samsāric* life. In this way, an individual courses in *samsāra* and suffers until the attainment of *Nibbāna*. Yet, there is a complexity

<sup>8</sup>9–11: *yadā kho āvuso imaṃ kāyaṃ tayo dhammā jahanti: āyu usmā ca viññāṇaṃ, athāyaṃ kāyo ujjhito avakkhitto seti yathā kaṭṭhaṃ acetanan ti.*

<sup>9</sup> In a discussion, the Buddha is said to have taught Ānanda that “if consciousness were not to come into the mother’s womb, would mentality-materiality develop there [in the womb]? “No Bhante.” “or if, having entered the mother’s womb, consciousness were to depart, would mentality-materiality come to be produced? in this life?” “No Bhante.” (DN II 63, 2–10: “*viññāṇaṃ va hi ānanda mātu kucchismiṃ na okkamissatha, api nu kho nāma-rūpaṃ mātu kucchismiṃ samuccissathāti*”? ‘no h’etaṃ bhante.’ ‘*viññāṇaṃ va hi ānanda mātu kucchim okkamivā vokkamissatha, api nu kho nāma-rūpaṃ itthattāya abhinibbattissathāti*”? ‘no h’etaṃ bhante’).

<sup>10</sup> In the *Dutiya-janeti Sutta* of the SN, it is said, “craving produces a person; one’s consciousness (*citta*) is what runs around; a being rushes toward the life-cycle; he is not freed from suffering” (SN I 37, 23–24: *taṇhā janeti purisaṃ/ cittamassa vidhāvati/ satto samsāraṃ āpādi/ dukkhā na parimuccatī ti.*)

involved in understanding consciousness – how does it function in life and stream from one life to another? Let us discuss these issues from the content of the *Mahātanhāsankhaya Sutta* of the MN.

Some of the Buddha’s disciples pointed out that a monk named Sāti who held the view that the “same consciousness” runs along and wanders, and transmigrates from birth to birth: “this same consciousness that runs and wanders through the life-cycle, not another” (MN I 256).<sup>11</sup> Here it should be discerned that Sāti had the view that consciousness itself is a kind of substance that transmigrates as a “permanent entity” without undergoing any change. Rebuking Sāti, however, the Buddha taught that consciousness always arises depending upon particular conditions based on duality. Duality refers to the arising of consciousness, which does not arise alone, but depends on arising phenomenon that possesses a set of motion with regard to the sense bases and their objects. In the *Mahātanhāsankhaya Sutta*, the Buddha therefore taught that “consciousness is to arise dependently, apart from conditions there is no arising of consciousness” (*ibid.*, 256–57).<sup>12</sup> What does it mean to arise dependently?

Dependent arising in the context of consciousness is understood as the conditionality of consciousness that is dependent on the sense bases and sense objects. There are six sense bases: the eye (*cakkhu*), ear (*sota*), nose (*ghāna*), tongue (*jivhā*), body (*kāya*), and the mind (*mano*). There are six sense objects: forms (*rūpa*), sounds (*sadda*), smells (*gandha*), flavours (*rasa*), tangibles (*phoṭṭabba*), and phenomena or mental objects (*dhamma*). In conditional relations, the sense-base eye is the subject as the visual organ and its object is the eye-cum-visible objects, i.e., forms. So, when consciousness arises as dependent on the eye and forms, it is reckoned as eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*). Similarly, when consciousness arises

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<sup>11</sup> 25–26: *yathā tad-ev’ idaṃ viññāṇaṃ sandhāvati saṃsarati, anaññan ti.*

<sup>12</sup> 31–02: *paṭiccasamuppannaṃ viññāṇaṃ...aññatra paccayā na-tthi viññāṇassa sambhavo ti.*

as dependent on the ear and sounds, it is reckoned as ear-consciousness (*sota-viññāṇa*); when consciousness arises as dependent on the nose and smells, it is reckoned as nose-consciousness (*ghāna-viññāṇa*); when consciousness arises as dependent on the tongue and flavours, it is reckoned as tongue-consciousness (*jivhā-viññāṇa*); when consciousness arises as dependent on body and tangibles, it is reckoned as body-consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*); and when consciousness arises as dependent on the mind and phenomena or mind-objects, it is reckoned as mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*). Hence, it is understood that the arising of consciousness is reckoned by conditionality between sense bases and their objects like the friction of two sticks producing fire.

The arising of consciousness is compared to the arising of fire which occurs as dependent on various conditions such as dry wood, and here it is to be classified that when “fire burns dependent on cow-dung, it is classified as a cow-dung fire” (MN I 259),<sup>13</sup> etc. In the same way, when consciousness arises as dependent on the eye and form, it is reckoned as eye-consciousness, etc. (*ibid.*, 260). Here, this causal relationship of consciousness should, therefore, be understood as not a representative of an immutable or eternal self, rather it is not-self as presented in Buddhist teachings.

However, after a careful examination of the above, it seems that the Buddha mainly emphasizes the consciousness that arises dependent on the sense bases and sense objects. Since there is no precise answer to Sāti’s mis-understanding of consciousness as a “permanent entity” no conclusion can be drawn as to what kind of consciousness dependent on what conditions stream from one life to another life. But towards the end of the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta*, the Buddha introduced the term *gandhabba* which is present at the time of conception. We shall come to this point later in this chapter. After a careful

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<sup>13</sup> 29–30: *gomayaṅ ca paṭicca aggi jalati, gomayaggit’ eva saṅkham gacchati.*

analysis, it seems that there are two aspects of consciousness: (1) sensory consciousness that arises as dependent on six sense bases and their respective objects, and (2) consciousness as “surviving factor” in the form of *gandhabba*, which is present at the time of conception. It seems that, in the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta*, the Buddha mostly talked about sensory consciousness, which arises as dependent on sense bases and sense objects. Let me now clarify these two aspects of consciousness in the following section.

#### 4.2.2 Two Aspects of Consciousness

It has been pointed out in the above section that there are two aspects of consciousness: (1) sensory consciousness, and (2) consciousness as “surviving factor”. Sensory consciousness together with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness will be discussed in the next chapter. Throughout this chapter, I intend to discuss consciousness as “surviving factor” and the basis on which this consciousness streams on from one existence to another existence.

In the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta*, there are passages containing discussion about how a being is born. It is said that to be born as a human being requires not only the intercourse between parents, but also mother should be in her season, and also a *gandhabba* should be present. When these three conditions, namely (1) parents’ intercourse, (2) mother’s season, and (3) the presence of *gandhabba* are met, there is the descent of the embryo (MN I 266).<sup>14</sup> Then the mother shelters the embryo in her womb for nine or ten months and then she gives birth to a child who possesses the five aggregates. I have also shown a similar presentation in the *Mahānidāna Sutta* of the MN that consciousness (*viññāṇa*) enters the mother’s womb at the time of conception and develops there (DN II 63). In this connection, it was said that consciousness (*citta*) runs upon death and streams in *saṃsāra* (SN I 37). In the context of

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<sup>14</sup> 3–6: *yato ca kho bhikkhave mātāpitaro sannipatitā honti, mātā ca utunī hoti, gandhabbo ca paccupaṭṭhito hoti, evaṃ tiṇṇaṃ sannipātā gabbhassāvakkanti hoti.*

mental intentionality and rebirth, moreover, the *Saṅkhāruppatti Sutta* of the MN recounts the following: when a monk, possessing faith, virtue, learning, generosity and wisdom, thinks that upon the break-up of the body, after death, he may reappear in the company of affluent *khattiyas*, “he sets his *citta* on that, fixes his *citta* on it, and develops that *citta*. These aspirations of him, when developed and cultivated, lead to his reappearance (rebirth) there” (MN III 99–100).<sup>15</sup>

Showing the above textual evidence, it is now clear that there are two aspects of consciousness in human existence. One aspect refers to “sensory consciousness” which is of six kinds based on the six sense bases and sense objects. Another aspect of consciousness is the “surviving factor” which streams in *samsāra* based on various conditions. Let me now discuss the nature of consciousness as “surviving factor” in the following section.

#### 4.2.3 *Viññāṇa*, *Citta*, and *Gandhabba* are Not “Self”

Three different connotations of the “surviving factor” with three terms, namely *viññāṇa*, *citta*, and *gandhabba*, have been shown in the previous section. It was said that the terms *viññāṇa* and *citta* are identical in the context of rebirth. In this connection, it is necessary to discuss the concept of *gandhabba*, because *gandhabba*, like *viññāṇa*, descends into the mother’s womb at the time of conception. Davids (1936, 250) thinks *gandhabba* is the “self” or “man” which descends into the mother’s womb at the time of conception. As *viññāṇa*, *citta* and *gandhabba* occur in the context of rebirth, it is important to discuss them together to show whether they represent the “self” or “man” as a permanent and ever-lasting entity. It will be shown that these three terms do not represent a substantial agent in Buddhist

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<sup>15</sup> 26–03: *so taṃ cittaṃ dahati, taṃ cittaṃ adhiṭṭhāti, taṃ cittaṃ bhāveti; tassa te saṅkhārā ca viharo c’evaṃ bhāvitā bahulikatā tatr’ ūpapattiyā saṃvattanti.*



teachings. Before dealing with this topic, in the light of the Buddhist account of reference, let me first examine the concept of *gandhabba*.

It was already said that, according to the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta*, *gandhabba* enters the mother’s womb at the moment of conception. The term *gandhabba* also occurs in the same sense in the *Assalāyana Sutta* of the MN (II 157). Yet, no clear explanation is given about *gandhabba* in both the *Suttas*. However, the *Mahāgovinda Sutta* of the DN II 251 identifies *gandhabba* as *deva* in the very lowest realm. According to the MN Commentary, *gandhabba* is a certain being (*satta*) about to enter the womb, which is driven on by the mechanism of *kamma*. The MN Commentary clarifies that this being is not someone standing nearby and watching the future parents having intercourse, rather it is a being driven by *kamma* who takes birth on that occasion.<sup>16</sup>

Gunaratna discusses *gandhabba* with– *gantabba*, related to the verb *gacchati* (goes) which means “one who has to go”. According to Gunaratna, the literal meaning of *gandhabba* is “a stranger” or “one come from afar,” “who has died elsewhere, and have no reference to the parental factor” (Gunaratna 1980, 36).

However, scholars have different understandings of *gandhabba*. While Gunaratna (1980, 36) thinks that *gandhabba* is “the mental content of the terminal thought of a dying person, which results in that psychically important *paṭisandhi viññāṇa* or re-linking consciousness which, combining with the parental sperm and ovum, helps to form the embryo” Davids thinks in accordance with traditional belief that it is the “soul” or “self”:

I believe, in the Piṭakas, about man’s rebirth on earth as the result of parentage *plus* the intervention of a ‘spirit’ called *gandharva* (Pali: *gandhabba*). In this tradition, is

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<sup>16</sup> MN-a II 310, 25–28: *gandhabbo ti tatrūpagasatto. paccupaṭṭhito hotī ti na mātāpitūnaṃ sannipātaṃ olokayamāno samīpe thito paccupaṭṭhito nāma hoti, kammayanta-yantito pana eko satto tasmim okāse nibbattanako hotī ti ayam ettha adhippāyo.*

such it was, I see the advent of the soul, self or man, encased in the invisible ‘subtle body’ of Indian belief, into the mother in the fifth month of foetal life (Davids 1936, 250).<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to Davids’ assertion, Upadhyaya says:

[I]t may be noted that the *gandhabba* of the Majjhima Nikaya is said to enter the womb at the very moment of coitus and does not wait till the fifth month of foetal life, which goes against the identification of *gandhabba* and the self” (Upadhyaya 1971, 374, note 3).

Wijesekera has extensively studied *gandhabba* (Skt. *gandharva*) in both Pāli and Vedic traditions, and rejected Davids’ interpretation saying that “it is dangerous to call this Buddhist *gandhabba* a ‘soul, self or man’” (Wijesekera 1994, 202). According to Wijesekera, the Buddha only used the term *gandhabba* to denote the particular state of *saṃsāric* consciousness. This consciousness is known as the *saṃsāric-viññāṇa*, which is, according to Wijesekera, “no other than the ‘stream of consciousness’ (*viññāṇasota* [*viññāṇāsota*]) extending into the both worlds, called also *bhava-sota* or ‘stream of becoming’ implying constant change” (*ibid.*, 199). Bodhi also accepts Wijesekera’s exposition and further analyses *gandhabba* as it is “the stream of consciousness, conceived more animistically as coming over from the previous existence and bringing along its total accumulation of kammic tendencies and personality traits” (Bodhi 2009, 1234, note 411). As we have seen that Davids refers to *gandhabba* as the soul or self, it is now important to discuss how soul is defined in the *suttas*.

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<sup>17</sup> Keith has similarly presented thought on the term *gandhabba*:

“Popular ideas attributed birth to the co-operation with the parents of an entity, the Gandharva, representing in some vague way the soul which was to be born. Acting on this doctrine the Sammitiyas and Pubbaseliyas held that after death there was an intermediate state before rebirth, a view with which we may connect the opinion of both the Pubba- and Apara-seliyas that the embryo was immediately provided with a full sense apparatus. The Sarvāstivādins adhered to the view as regards all those to be reborn in the worlds of desire and matter as contrasted with those to be reborn in the world of non-matter, a distinction suggesting that the intermediate being must be treated as quasi-material, with a transporting (*ātivāhika*) body, analogous to the subtle body of the Sāṃkhya. The Vaiḥāṣikikas seem to have accepted the intermediate being, supporting the view by the consideration that it is not always possible for the suitable rebirth to be obtained immediately on death.

On the other hand the idea is rejected by the Mahāsāṅghikas, the Ekavyavahārikas, Lokottaravādins, and Kukkuṭikas, and the *Milindapañha* clearly has no belief in any body to transport the consciousness from one destiny to another” (Keith 1923, 207–08).

I have referred to Sāti who held the view that the “same consciousness” runs along and wanders, and transmigrates from birth to birth, not another. When Sāti was asked by the Buddha to describe this consciousness he said it “is that which speaks and feels and experiences the result of good and bad actions here and there” (MN I 258).<sup>18</sup> Sāti’s answer is identical with one of the six views presented in the *Sabbāsava Sutta* of the MN which discusses “self” as a permanent entity, everlasting, eternal, and not subject to change and enduring as long as eternity (MN I 8).<sup>19</sup> This interpretation of “self” is similarly found in the Vedic tradition. According to the BU, the “self” is a “great being, endless, unlimited consisting of nothing but consciousness” (BU II 4.12; 87).<sup>20</sup> About BU’s description of “self”, Radhakrishnan says:

At the moment of death the person in the eye, i.e. *pṛāna*, departs. So one ceases to perceive forms. The dying man becomes single. The principle of intelligence (*viññāna*) after having absorbed all the functions of consciousness proceeds to continue in a new life (Radhakrishnan 1953, 270).

Wijesekera has differentiated between *viññāna* as found as “surviving factor” in the *suttas* and in the *Upaniṣads*:

The difference between this *śaṃsāric viññāna* and the Upaniṣadic *viññānātman* that was held to be the ‘survivor’ according to the doctrine of reincarnation is only too clear, for, in the *Upaniṣads* the term *ātman* expressly denotes a metaphysical substrate that is permanent and unchanging [*Brhad. Up.* 3.5.1, 9.26; *Chānd. Up.* 8.1.5.7.1-3, etc]<sup>21</sup> whereas in early Buddhism the surviving *viññāna* is identical with *bhava* implying the very opposite nature of impermanence (*anicca*), and evolution (*vipariṇāma*) [AN I 258; II 177], being, as remarked above, pictured as a continuously changing ‘stream’ (*sota*); it is, in fact, clearly asserted that it is wrong to view this *viññāna* as an *ātman* (*attato*, S, III.4) in the metaphysical sense accepted in the *upaniṣads* and rejected in early Buddhism (Wijesekera 1994, 199–200).

From the above elucidation, it is clear that consciousness (*viññāna*) has not been discerned as the “immortal self” in Buddhist teachings. However, one may notice a tendency to identify

<sup>18</sup>16–17: *yvāyaṃ...vado vedeyyo tatra tatra kalyāṇapāpakānaṃ kammānaṃ vipākaṃ paṭisaṃvedetī ti.*

<sup>19</sup>23–27: *yo me ayaṃ attā vado vedeyyo tatra tatra kalyāṇapāpakānaṃ kammānaṃ vipākaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti, so kho pana me ayaṃ attā nicco dhuvo sassato avipariṇāmadhammo sassatisamaṃ tath’eva ṭhassatī’ti.*

<sup>20</sup>22–23: *idam mahad bhūtam anatam apāram vijñānaghana eva.*

<sup>21</sup> In the *suttas*, the belief in a permanent, everlasting and eternal “self” falls into the speculative extreme of eternalism which is described as a foolish teaching (*kevalo paripūro bāladhammo*, MN I 138,9).

consciousness as “self” in the reflexive sense because consciousness is subtle and cannot be touched and seen. Yet, the Buddha said it is not a permanent entity representing the “self”. This can be drawn out from the *Pañcavaggiya Sutta* of the SN that form, feeling, perception, conditioning forces, and consciousness of the five aggregates are not self. As consciousness is not-self (*viññāṇaṃ anatta*), it is also impermanent, subject to suffering and change (SN III 67–68). Therefore, in Buddhist teaching, *viññāṇa* (“surviving factor” and “sensory consciousness”) should be understood as something that arises as dependent upon various conditions.

Pieris has studied consciousness (*citta*) denoting the “self” in the reflexive sense in the Pāli Canon and its commentaries. His focus was on the three notions of *citta*, *attā* and *attabhāva*. According to him, the term *attā* is used instead of *citta* in the Canon. As examples, he provides some terms from the *Nikāyas*: *bhāvitattena*, *attā-danta*, *saññāt’attā*, and *samāhit’atto*. He says that in the *Petavattu* and the *Theragātha* Commentaries, commentator Dhammapāla made an explicit statement and replaced *attā* with *citta*, as: *bhāvitattena*>*bhāvita-cittena* (Pv-a 139), *attā-danta*>*damita-citta* (Pv-a 265), *saññāt’attā*>*saññata-cittā* (Va-a 265, Pv-a 98), and *samāhit’atto*>*samāhita-citto* (Thag-a I 48). He has deeply studied the notion of *attā* in this context and is of the opinion that *attā* in this context should be understood in the reflexive sense, and not in the metaphysical sense. He concludes:

*Citta*...serves as that which defines the human personality. This *citta* may be described as the noetically oriented consciousness (*mano-centred viññāṇa*) constituting a changing series of thought-moments (*santāna*), which could, therefore, never be mistaken for a permanent immutable soul (*attā* as denied in the *anatta* doctrine), but coincides with the empirical self (or *attā* in the reflexive sense). Hence, it is not so much the notion of *citta* as that of the *attabhāva* which carries with it the danger of a personality-belief” (Pieris 2004, 36).

#### 4.2.4 What is Born?

It was said that the idea of a “self,” as a “permanent entity” is rejected in Buddhist teaching in the context of rebirth. If this fact is accepted, then how does rebirth occur? I intend to address this question. I will discuss what is born, rather than who is born because the Buddha never taught “who” in the sense of “man” or “self”, but the exposition is rather about what is born.

We noted the commentarial explanation of the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta* which denotes *gandhabba* as a certain being (*satta*) that is about to enter the womb, which is driven on by the mechanism of *kamma*. What is this being (*satta*)? A being is described as a process of attachment to craving in the *Satta Sutta* of the SN, as:

Any desire, passion, delight, craving for form...for feeling...for perception...for determinations...for consciousness, when it clings there, is tied up there, then a being is spoken of (SN III 190).<sup>22</sup>

*Satta* is understood as not “self”; it is just a process of attachment due to desire, passion, delight, and craving. This process of attachment due to desire, etc. cause for further becoming/rebirth in *samsāra*. In the *Vajirā Sutta* of the SN, Bhikkhuni Vajira says, the assumption of *satta* as a “person” or “self” is a wrong view, rather *satta* is just a “heap of conditioning forces” (*sankhārapuñja*), where no person is found (SN I 135).<sup>23</sup> The term *satta* is further explained in the conventional sense as when an assemblage of parts take place, a “chariot” comes to be. Similarly when the five aggregates are present, *satta* is discerned (*ibid.*).<sup>24</sup> *Satta* is also described in response to wanderer Vacchagotta’s inquiry about rebirth in the *Kutuhalasālā Sutta* of the SN:

“Vaccha! I designate the arising/rebirth (*uppatti*) of one with clinging/fuel, and not of one without clinging/fuel. Just as a fire burns with fuel and not without fuel, even so I designate the arising/rebirth of one who has clinging and not of one without clinging. Vaccha! when a flame is being swept on by the wind and goes some distance, I call it

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<sup>22</sup>3–7: *rūpe kho...yo chando yo rāgo yā nandi yā taṇhā tatra satto tatra visatto tasmā satto ti vuccati. vedanāya...saññāya...saṃkhāresu...viññāṇe...*

<sup>23</sup>18–19: *kinnu satto ti paccesi, māra diṭṭhigataṃ nu te/ suddhasaṅkhārapuñjo yaṃ, nayidha sattūpalabbhati.*

<sup>24</sup>20–21: *yathā hi aṅgasambhārā, hoti saddo rato iti/ evaṃ khandhesu santesu, hoti satto ti sammuti.*

as wind-fuel, at that time, the wind is its fuel. Vaccha, when a being (*satta*) sets this body aside and is not yet arisen/re-born in another body, I call it as craving-fuel, at that time, craving is its fuel” (SN IV 399–400).<sup>25</sup>

From the above passages, *satta* does not represent a form of “self”; it is just craving-fuel (*taṇhā-upādāna*) which is driven by *kamma*, is dependent upon various conditions, and is to be born on a certain occasion. However, it is important to understand that the craving-fuel generates birth and continues in every moment of our existential life and moves forward what is subject to becoming (*bhava*). Therefore, it is noted that the “cessation of craving” is equal to the “cessation of suffering” which is known as the end of *saṃsāra*. In this sense, *satta* is closely associated with *viññāṇa* that depends on craving as a condition, and moves forward in different existences. Let us now discuss how this *viññāṇa*, dependent upon craving and *kamma*, streams in *saṃsāra*.

#### 4.3 The Reciprocal Relation Between *Kamma*, Craving and Consciousness

We briefly discussed how consciousness as the “surviving factor”, dependent on *kamma* and craving, streams on in *saṃsāra*. Let us now clarify this matter further.

The following is said about *kamma* in the Sn: “by *kamma* the world revolves, by *kamma* people roll on. Beings (*satta*) are bound together in *kamma*, like a linchpin holding the rolling chariot-wheel” (Sn 123).<sup>26</sup> In the same text, the result of *kamma* is described through dependent co-arising (*ibid.*).<sup>27</sup> According to the *Samṣappaniya Pariyāya Sutta* of the AN, beings are responsible for their *kamma*, they are the heirs of their *kamma*, *kamma* as their origin, relative and refuge. Whatever *kamma* they do, be it good or bad, they become its

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<sup>25</sup> 16–08: *sa upādānassa khvāhaṃ vaccha uppattiṃ paññāpemi no anupādānassa. seyyathāpi vaccha aghi sa-upādāno jalati no anupādāno. evam eva khvāhaṃ vaccha sa-upādānassa uppattiṃ paññāpemi no anupādānassā ti. yasmim̄ kho vaccha samaye acci vātena khittā duram pi gacchati. tam ahaṃ vātupādānaṃ vadāmi vāto hissa vaccha tasmim̄ samaye upādānaṃ hotī ti. yasmim̄ kho vaccha samaye imaṃ ca kāyaṃ nikkhipati satto ca aññataraṃ kāyaṃ anuppanno hoti. tam ahaṃ taṇhūpādānaṃ vadāmi. taṇhā hissa vaccha tasmim̄ samaye upādānaṃ hotī ti.*

<sup>26</sup>3–4: *kammānā vattati loko, kammanā vattati pajā/ kammanibandhanā sattā rathassāṇiva yāyato.*

<sup>27</sup>1–2: *evam etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ kammaṃ passanti paṇḍitā/ paṭiccasamuppādadasā kammavipākakovidā.*

heirs (AN V 288).<sup>28</sup> Regarding *kamma* in the context of one’s destiny in *saṃsāra*, moreover, the *Tatiya-jane Sutta* of the SN says: “craving engenders a being (*satta*), one’s consciousness (*citta*) is what streams upon *saṃsāra*, and the *kamma* determines one’s destiny” (SN I 38).<sup>29</sup> Thus, it is understood that *saṃsāric* continuity is dependent upon three main things: *kamma*, *citta* and craving. Now, the relationship between these three ideas will be discussed.

According to the *Bhava Sutta* of the AN, when Ānanda asked the Buddha about *bhava*, the Buddha replied to him that due to *kamma*, consciousness and craving, a being’s consciousness becomes present in the triple existence of *bhava*:

*Kamma* is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. For beings obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving their consciousness is to become present in an inferior element... middle element... superior element. Thus there is the process of further becoming [rebirth] in succeeding. It is in this way, Ānanda, there is becoming (AN I 223–24).<sup>30</sup>

From the above passage, inferior, middle and superior elements are comparable with the terms *kāma-rāga* (desire for sensuality), *rūpa-rāga* (desire for form) and *arūpa-rāga* (desire for formlessness), or *kāma-bhava* (sensuality-becoming), *rūpa-bhava* (form-becoming) and *arūpa-bhava* (formless-becoming) respectively. Scholars have different interpretations of these three elements. While Somaratne summarizes these three elements with the *jhāna* framework from the perspective of psychological aspect (Barua 2018, xv), Bodhi renders these triple existence in the context of *saṃsāra* in cyclic process (Bodhi 2012, 1661, note 504). Also, according to Walshe, *bhava* in this context signifies *saṃsāra*, which is divided as threefold, the world (*loka*) of *kāma*, *rūpa*, and *arūpa*, in which beings are born and die until the attainment of enlightenment (Walshe 1995, 19–53 & 37). In Chapter Two, we have

<sup>28</sup>26–28: *kammassakā...sattā kammadāyādā kammayoni kammabandhu kammaṭṭisaraṇā, yaṃ kammaṃ karonti kalyāṇaṃ vā pāpakaṃ vā, tassa dāyadā bhavanti.*

<sup>29</sup>4–5: *taṇhā janeti purisaṃ, cittaṃ assa vidhāvati/ satto saṃsāram āpādi, kammaṃ tassa parāyaṇan-ti.*

<sup>30</sup>19–06: *kammaṃ khettaṃ viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ taṇhā sineho avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ taṇhāsāmyojanānaṃ hīnāya dhātuyā... majjhimāya dhātuyā... pañītāya dhātuyā... viññāṇaṃ patiṭṭhitaṃ. evaṃ āyatim punabbhavābhiniḥḥatti hoti. evaṃ kho ānanda, bhavo hotī ti.*

extensively discussed *bhava* and *saṃsāra* (see 2.6.1). Here, we shall discuss the above passage in the context of rebirth. Regarding the passage, though I am in agreement with Somaratne’s assertion, for the purpose of discussing consciousness as the “surviving factor” in the context of rebirth, I take the above passage as a model.

From the passage, I take *kamma* in relation with *saṅkhārā* because *saṅkhārā* is identical with *kamma*, as the factor presented in the causal process of dependent co-arising. We shall discuss this analogy in the following section 4.3. If this analogy is accepted, it is proper to say that *saṅkhārā*, consciousness and craving play an intrinsic role in producing rebirth. The relationship between *saṅkhārā*, consciousness and craving can be put in previous life, which together produces the present life. In this regard, the consciousness which is said to form mentality-materiality is itself the result of the preceding state known as *saṅkhārā* (*kamma*) which in turn is caused by ignorance. Therefore, it is properly said that: “Monks! this body is not yours, nor does it belong to others. Monks! it is old *kamma*, should be regarded as generated and fashioned about by volition, as something to be felt” (SN II 64–65).<sup>31</sup> The commentarial explanation of this passage is that this body is not actually old *kamma*, but it is produced by old *kamma* in terms of its condition (SN-a II 19). And, this old *kamma* leads consciousness to be established in present/future life. Let me now further discuss how this consciousness dependent on other conditions streamed to present life. For this, I refer to the content of the *Atthirāga Sutta* of the SN.

According to the *Atthirāga Sutta*, there are four kinds of nutriment (*āhāra*) for the sustenance of beings. The four kinds of nutriment are: edible substance (*kabalīṅkāra*),

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<sup>31</sup> 34–02: *nāyaṃ bhikkhave kāyo tumhākaṃ nā pi aññesaṃ. purāṇaṃ idaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ abhisaṅkhataṃ abhisañcetaṃ vedayitaṃ datṭhabbaṃ.*



contact (*phassa*), mental volition (*manosañcetanā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) (SN II 101).

It is said:

When there is lust, delight, and craving in the foods of edible substance... contact.... mental volition... consciousness..., there consciousness becomes present and sustains. Where consciousness is present, mentality-materiality comes forward. Where mentality-materiality comes forward, there is progress of volitional formations (*kamma*). Where there is progress of volitional formations (*kamma*), there is a succession of further becoming (re-birth). Where there is a succession of further becoming (re-birth), there is succession of birth, aging, and death. Where there is succession of birth, aging, and death, there is the companionship of sorrow, distress and despair... (SN II 101).<sup>32</sup>

After a careful analysis of the above passage, an important point is discerned that consciousness itself is a nutriment for consciousness: “Monks! if there is lust, delight, craving for the nutriments [edible substance, contact, mental volition, consciousness], there consciousness becomes present and sustains (*patiṭṭhitam tattha viññāṇam virūlham*). From the passage, two aspects of consciousness become clear. One aspect is the six sensory consciousness. Another aspect is consciousness as “surviving factor”. The SN Commentary explains this consciousness in the process of death-birth by saying that as nutriment this consciousness nourishes mentality-materiality at the moment of rebirth linking (*viññāṇāhāro paṭisandhi-nāmarūpaṃ āharatī ti*, SN-a II 26, 3–4). Similar presentation is also found in the Vism: “consciousness as food nourishes mentality-materiality at the moment of rebirth-linking” (*viññāṇāhāro paṭisandhikkhaṇe nāmarūpaṃ āharati*, Vism 341, 11).

The SN Commentary interprets the aforementioned passage as the process of rebirth through *kammic* consequences. It is said that because of the presence of craving, “consciousness” is established in present life and increases, and results in an alignment of mentality-materiality . And, when there is this alignment of mentality-materiality, there is the

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<sup>32</sup>5–19: *kabalikāre...phase...,manosañcetanāya...viññāṇam..., āhāre atthi rāgo atthi nandi atthi taṇhā patiṭṭhitam tattha viññāṇam virūlham. yattha patiṭṭhitam viññāṇam virūlham. atthi tattha nāmarūpassa avakkanti. yattha atthi nāmarūpassa avakkanti atthi tattha saṃkhārānaṃ vuddhi. yattha atthi saṃkhārānaṃ vuddhi atthi tattha āyatim punabbhavābhiniḍḍanti. yattha atthi āyatim punabbavābhiniḍḍanti atthi tattha āyatim jātijarāmaranaṃ. yattha atthi āyatim jātijarāmaranaṃ, sasokaṃ...*

growth of *saṃkhārā*. Again, these *saṃkhārā* are the key factors for rebirth in the future (SN-a II 114).<sup>33</sup> Now it is seen that *saṃkhārā* play a vital role for the establishment of consciousness. Here *saṃkhārā* are identical with *kamma* which originates through three causes: greed, hatred, and delusion (AN I 134). Again, it is said that the result of *kamma* is of three types: one to be experienced here and now (*diṭṭhe vā dhamme*), or later (*upajjevā*) in this life time or future, or that which arises later (*apare vā pariyāye*) (AN III 415). Now we can note that consciousness has a basis for its sustenance. And, the basis is understood as lust or craving. This point can be clarified from the *Udāna Sutta* of the SN:

Monk! If a monk abandons lust for the form element, then with the abandonment of lust the support is cut off, and there is no basis for (the presence of) consciousness. If a monk abandons lust for the feeling element... for the perception element . . . for the volitional formations element . . . for the consciousness element, with the abandonment of lust the support is cut off, and there is no basis for (the presence of) consciousness (SN III 58).<sup>34</sup>

According to the *Udāna Sutta* of the SN, when this consciousness (as ‘surviving factor’) is no longer present because of abandoning lust for the five aggregates, it is released. By being released, it becomes still; by being still, it is contented; by being contented, it is not agitated. Not being agitated, the person is totally unbound and attains *nibbāna* (*ibid.*).<sup>35</sup> The aforesaid discussion signifies that lust or craving is the support for the presence of consciousness. But a question arises with the aforementioned “consciousness”. If the fact of rebirth is accepted, there is no doubt that due to the presence of craving, this “consciousness” is present and it streams to the following birth. It seems that this “consciousness” has an intrinsic connection with *bhava*, because *Nibbāna* is described as the cessation of *bhava* (*bhavanirodha nibbānaṃ*

<sup>33</sup>3–10: *patiṭṭhitam tattha viññānaṃ virūlhan ti, kammaṃ javāpetvā paṭisandhi-ākaḍḍhana-samatthatāya patiṭṭhitāñ c’eva virūlha ca. yathā ti tebhūmaka-vaṭṭe bhummaṃ. sabbattha vā purima-purima-pade etaṃ bhummaṃ. atthi tattha saṃkhārānaṃ vuddhī ti, idaṃ imasmiṃ vipāka-vaṭṭe ṭhitassa āgati-vaṭṭa-hetuke saṃkhāre sandhāya vuttam. yathā atthi āyatim punabbhav’ābhiniḍḍattī ti yasmim ṭhāne āyatim punabbhav’ābhiniḍḍattī atthi.*

<sup>34</sup>13–21: *rūpadhātuyā ce bhikkhu bhikkhuno rāgo pahīno hoti rāgassa pahānā vocchijjatārammaṇaṃ patiṭṭhā viññānaṃ na hoti. vedanādhātuyā ce bhikkhu bhikkhuno rāgo pahīno hoti...saññādhātuyā...saṃkhārādhātuyā...viññānaḍḍhātuyā ce bhikkhu bhikkhuno rāgo pahīno hoti. rāgassa pahānā vocchijjatārammaṇaṃ patiṭṭhā viññānaṃ na hoti.*

<sup>35</sup>22–25: *tad appatiṭṭhitam viññānaṃ avirūlhaṃ anabhisāṅkhārāñca vimuttaṃ. vimuttattā ṭhitam. ṭhitattā santusitaṃ. santusitattā na paritassati. aparitassaṃ paccattaṃ yeva parinibbāyati.*

SN II 117, 25–26), and also as the cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇassa nirodhena taṇhākkhaya vimuttino*, AN I 236, 16). However, the question arises about the Perfect One’s consciousness. Can the Perfect One’s consciousness be called as the “surviving factor” which sustains based on various conditions of craving, etc.?

According to the *Netti*, when a person is liberated through the complete cessation of consciousness, he might be described as the “Perfect One” as standing or walking (*tathāgataṃ tiṭṭhataṃ caraṃ*). He does not take for granted that ‘there is a Perfect One’; ‘there is not’; ‘there is and there is not’; ‘there neither is nor is not’; but rather he comes to be considered profound, immeasurable, incalculable, and quenched, because of the extinction of lust, hate and delusion. He sees no “self” with regard to his body (*Netti* 67, 1–6). The text further says that the following questions regarding the consciousness, including the other aggregates, of the Perfect One, are unanswerable, as: “[is] a Perfect One consciousness? is unanswerable. Does a Perfect One possess consciousness? is unanswerable; [is] a Perfect One in consciousness? is unanswerable” (*Netti* 178).<sup>36</sup> Moreover, according to the *Chantu Sutta* of the SN (I 60–61), monks (living arahats) who have put an end to their suffering, consume alms and use lodgings without wishes (*anicchā*). So, it is important to note that for the enlightened ones, though they need to consume nutrition to survive until the dissolution of the body, the quality of four kinds of nutriment are not applicable, due to complete elimination of craving. In this regard, the terms *Tathāgata*, and *Arahats* have to be understood as merely a conventional linguistic symbols denoting the five aggregates which are devoid of “I”. Therefore, the *Nandamāṇava pucchā* of the Sn perfectly says that there are munis or

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<sup>36</sup> 7–10: *viññāṇam tathāgato ti avissajjaniyaṃ. viññāṇavā tathāgato to avissajjaniyaṃ. viññāṇe tathāgato ti avissajjaniyaṃ*

arahats like the Tathāgata who speak not by view, not by learning, not by knowledge, instead, they live, being free from affliction and desire and without wishes (Sn 207–08).<sup>37</sup>

## Part-II

### 4.4 “Because of *Saṅkhārā*-Condition, There is Consciousness”

In the previous section, *kamma* was described as one of the important factors for determining the destiny of consciousness in *saṃsāra*. It was said that *kamma* and *saṅkhāra* are analogous,. In this part, I will now clarify this matter to show how *kamma* denoting as *saṅkhārā* is an important factor for *saṃsāric* continuity.

The relationship between *kamma* and *saṅkhāra* can be seen in the *Kukkuravatiya Sutta* of the MN. According to this *Sutta*, *kamma* and its result are fourfold: (1) dark action with dark result, (2) bright action with bright result, (3) dark-and-bright action with dark-and-bright result, (4) neither-dark-nor-bright action with neither-dark-nor-bright result. It is seen that with all these four kinds of *kamma*, *saṅkhārā* are involved:

What is the action that is dark with dark result? Here someone performs a harmful bodily formation, a harmful verbal formation, a harmful mental formation. Having performed a harmful bodily formation, a harmful verbal formation, a harmful mental formation, he reappears in a harmful world (MN I 389).<sup>38</sup>

Referring to the above passage, it is to be noted that the destiny of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is determined by *saṅkhārā* or *kamma* in *saṃsāra*. As it is said in the *Parivīmaṃsana Sutta* of the SN:

Monks! if a person immersed in ignorance, he determines a meritorious volition formation, his consciousness goes on to meritorious. If he determines a demeritorious

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<sup>37</sup>19–02: “*na diṭṭhiyā na sutiyā na ñānena/ munīdha nanda kusalā vadanti, visenikatvā anighā nirāsā/ caranti ye, te munayo ti brūmi*” (Verse 1078).

<sup>38</sup>27–33:*katamañ ca... kammaṃ kaṇhaṃ kaṇhavipākam: idha...ekacco sabyāpajjhaṃ kāyasāṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti sabyāpajjhaṃ vacīsāṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti sabyāpajjhaṃ manosāṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti. so sabyāpajjhaṃ kāyasāṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharitvā sabyāpajjhaṃ vacīsāṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharitvā sabyāpajjhaṃ mano saṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharitvā sabyāpajjhaṃ lokaṃ upapajjati.*

volition formation, his consciousness goes on to demeritorious. If he determines an imperturbable formation, his consciousness goes on to the imperturbable (SN II 82).<sup>39</sup>

Conversely, it is said when ignorance is abandoned, knowledge arises; from the fading of ignorance and the arising of knowledge, a person neither determines meritorious volitional formation, nor demeritorious volitional formation, nor imperturbable volition formation. Neither determining nor willing, he does not cling to anything in the world. Not clinging, he is not agitated. Being unagitated, he is totally unbound right within and attains *Nibbāna*. Now it is clear that consciousness itself acquires merit, demerit, and imperturbability, and *saṅkhārā* determine the destiny of consciousness in different states of existence accordingly. In this regard, *saṅkhārā* as *kamma* play a major role for the continuation of consciousness. The Commentary to the *Parivīmaṃsana Sutta* also explains the *saṃsāra* by describing *saṅkhārā* as a proximate cause for consciousness. The Commentary defines a meritorious volitional formation as being of thirteen kinds: volitions of the eight wholesome consciousness of the sense realm, and the five wholesome consciousness of the form realm. A demeritorious volitional formation is described in terms of twelve kinds of volition with regard to the twelve unwholesome consciousness. An imperturbable volitional formation is described with four kinds of volitions with regard to the four wholesome consciousness of the formless realm (SN-a II 78).<sup>40</sup>

*Saṅkhārā* was discussed in association with consciousness in the previous chapter. It was said that when *saṅkhārā* are free from *āsava*, they are not factors of becoming (*no*

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<sup>39</sup>9–13: *avijjāgato yaṃ bhikkhave purisapuggalo puññaṃ ce saṅkhāraṃ abhisankharoti. puññopagaṃ hoti viññānaṃ. apuññaṃ ce saṅkhāraṃ abhisankharoti. apuññopagaṃ hoti viññānaṃ. āneñjaṃ ce saṅkhāraṃ abhisankharoti. āneñjūpagaṃ hoti viññānaṃ.*

<sup>40</sup>1–11: *puññaṃ ce saṅkhāraṇ ti, terasa-cetanā-bhedaṃ puññābhisankhāraṃ. abhisankharoti ti pakaroti. puññūpagaṃ hoti viññānaṇ ti, kamma-viññānaṃ kamma-puññaṇa upagataṃ sampayuttaṃ hoti, vipāka-viññānaṃ vipāka-puññaṇa. apuññaṃ ce saṅkhāraṇ ti, dvādasā-cetanā-bhedaṃ apuññābhisankhāraṃ abhisankharoti. āneñjaṃ ce saṅkhāraṇ ti, catucetanā-bhedaṃ āñjābhisankhāraṃ. āneñjūpagaṃ hoti viññānaṇ ti, kamm'āneñjānaṃ kamma-viññānaṃ, vipāk'āneñjānaṃ vipāka-viññānaṃ upagataṃ hoti. ettha ca tividhassa kamm'ābhisankhārassa gahitattā dvādasā-padiko paccay'ākāro gahito va hoti. ettāvataṃ vaṭṭaṃ dassitaṃ.*

*bhavaṅgā*), and when *saṅkhārā* are not free from *āsava*, they are factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgā*). With this reference, it was discerned that *saṅkhārā* have the characteristic of developing rebirth/further becoming (*punabbhava*), which is the proximate cause for consciousness. And consciousness has the characteristic of causing the mentality-materiality as a result of the preceding state known as *saṅkhārā*. It was said that in the light of this ever-evolving process, consciousness streams on due to the sustainability of consciousness with *saṅkhārā* as a cause for the succession of further becoming/rebirth (SN II 65).<sup>41</sup> Here, the cause of the succession of becoming/rebirth is dependent upon the nutriment of consciousness (SN II 13)<sup>42</sup>, and it is the consciousness which depends upon various conditionings, that streams forward (SN I 37 & 38). The aforementioned whole process is understood with the help of the principle of dependent co-arising. In this regard, it is necessary to discuss *saṅkhārā* to understand the function of “consciousness” in the context of rebirth. Before dealing with this topic, let us analyse *saṅkhārā* in great detail in the following section. It will be shown that *saṅkhārā* and *kamma* are identical and determine the destiny of consciousness.

*Saṅkhārā* is placed within the five aggregates – form, feeling, perception, *saṅkhārā*, and consciousness– which is followed by consciousness. Again, *saṅkhārā* is one of the twelve factors of dependent co-arising which is also followed by consciousness: “because of *saṅkhārā*-condition, there is consciousness”. In the following section, it is to be shown that there are many *saṅkhāras* in the Pāli Canon. But, we shall mainly discuss *saṅkhārā* as it occurs within the framework of dependent co-arising and the five clinging aggregates. Before dealing with this topic, let us discuss the occurrence of *saṅkhārā* and its functions in the Pāli Canon in great detail.

<sup>41</sup> 18: *viññāṇe virūlḥe āyatim punabbhavābhiniḥḥatti hoti.*

<sup>42</sup> 14–15: *viññāṇāhāro āyatim punabbhavābhiniḥḥattiyā paccayo*

*Saṅkhārā* (*saṃskāra* in Skt.), as mentioned in the PED 736, is one of the most difficult terms in Buddhist philosophy. It is derived from the prefix *saṃ* (together) + the verb *karoti* ( $\sqrt{kr}$ , to make), meaning “making together”. *Saṅkhārā* signify both active and passive modes, that is, they are things that put together and they are also put together. Scholars in Buddhist Studies have occasionally discussed both modes of *saṅkhārā*. Norman discusses both versions of *saṅkhārā* with *āśava* in the context of rebirth in association with Jainism:

In the individual there was the passive version of the *saṅkhāras*, the “formed factors”, as one of the group of *khandhas*. This idea of the active *saṅkhāras* as the karmic formations, and then the passive formed *saṅkhāras* as part of the individual, would not be inconsistent with the idea of *āśava* in Jainism as the process by which *kamma* flowed into the soul (Norman 2008, 133).

According to Yamada, it is “in which [*saṅkhārā*] the blending of the subjective–objective view of the world, which is characteristic to Buddhist thought” (1980, 286). Bodhi broadly discusses both active and passive modes of *saṅkhārā* in his translation of the SN. He says “*saṅkhāras* are both things [active and passive modes] which put together, construct, and compound other things, and the things that are put together, constructed, and compounded” (2000, 45). Taking examples from the SN, Bodhi moreover shows the usage of *saṅkhārā* in five major doctrinal contexts which are discussed briefly in the following section. Among them, the first two categories of *saṅkhārā* will be given importance.

(1) *Saṅkhārā*, the fourth of the five aggregates, is defined as the six classes of volitions (*cha cetanākāyā*, SN III 60) regarding the six sense objects. According to Bodhi, this aspect of *saṅkhārā* covers a broader domain than *saṅkhārā* as the second factor of dependent co-arising. Bodhi writes that this aspect comprises “all instances of volition and not only those that are kammically active. In the Abhidhamma Piṭaka and the commentaries the *saṅkhārakkhandha* further serves as an umbrella category for classifying all mental concomitants of consciousness apart from feeling and perception” (Bodhi 2000, 45).

- (2) *San̄khārā* as the second factor in dependent co-arising is synonymous with *kamma*. This factor represents kammically active volitions and is responsible for rebirth in conjunction with ignorance and craving.
- (3) In this category, Bodhi thinks of *san̄khārā* in the broader sense that is taken from its passive derivation denoting conditioned things which arise from a combination of conditions. In this sense, all five aggregates, including the fourth *san̄khārā*, are *san̄khāras* (SN III 132), as are all external objects and situations (SN II 191). Bodhi further observes that “this notion of *san̄khārā* serves as the cornerstone of a philosophical vision which sees the entire universe as constituted of conditioned phenomena. What is particularly emphasized about *san̄khāras* in this sense is their impermanence. Recognition of their impermanence brings insight into the unreliable nature of all mundane felicity and inspires a sense of urgency directed towards liberation from *samsāra*” (Bodhi 2000, 46).
- (4) A threefold *san̄khārā* is mentioned in connection with the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling. They are (1) the bodily determination (*kāyasān̄khāra*), (2) the verbal determination (*vacīsān̄khāra*), and (3) the mental determination (*cittasān̄khāra*) (SN IV 293). Here, bodily determination refers to in-breathing (*assāsa*) and out-breathing (*passāsa*), verbal determination refers to thought (*vitakka*) and examination (*vicāra*), and mental determination is perception (*saññā*) and feeling (*vedanā*).
- (5) *Padhānasān̄khārā* (conditioning-forces of striving), an expression occurs in the formula for the four *iddhipāda*-s (supernormal power) as the bases for spiritual power. In the *Chanda Sutta* of the SN, it is explained in the context of overcoming unwholesome tendencies and establishing what is wholesome (SN V268). Bodhi speaks of *padhānasān̄khārā*, as: “the expression signifies energy (*virīya*) and not



volition (*cetanā*), the qualifier shows that these formations occur in an active rather than a passive mode” (Bodhi 2000, 46).

Apart from the above mentioned *saṅkhārā*, *saṅkhārā* also occur in conjunction with several terms in different contexts, such as, *āyu-saṅkhārā* (vital conditioning-forces, SN II 266 & V 262), *jīvita-saṅkhārā* (life-force conditioning-forces, SN V 152), and *bhava-saṅkhāra* (becoming conditioning-force, AN V 88). Also, *saṅkhārā* occur in relation to the five different types of non-returns with reference to “with exertion” (*asaṅkhāra*) and “without exertion” (*asaṅkhāra*) (SN V 201).

The list of *saṅkhārā* is diverse in the Paññābhūmi Niddesa of the Vism. The two main lists are: (1) *saṅkhārā* with *avijjā* as condition, and (2) other *saṅkhārā* that occur in the Canon. The first category is again divided into six types: merit (*puññābhi-saṅkhārā*), demerit (*apuññābhi-saṅkhārā*), and the imperturbable (*aneñjābhi-saṅkhārā*), the bodily, the verbal, and the mental. The second category consists of four types: (a) the conditioning-force consisting of the formed (*saṅkhata-saṅkhāra*), which refer to all states that are conditioned, (b) the conditioning-force consisting of the *kamma*-formed (*abhisāṅkhata-saṅkhāra*), which produce the material and immaterial states of the three spheres, (c) the conditioning-force consisting of the act of *kamma*-forming (*abhisāṅkharaṇaka-saṅkhāra*) which refer to wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) volition (*cetanā*) of the three spheres, and (d) the conditioning-force consisting of momentum (*payogābhi-saṅkhāra*), which refer to bodily and mental energy (*kāyika cetasikaṃ pana viriyaṃ*) (Vism 526–27). However, all these *saṅkhārā* are absent in the state of *nibbāna*. Therefore, *nibbāna* is known as the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*), which means that no active and passive modes of *saṅkhārā* are present any more. In this regard, the Buddha is said to have taught about *saṅkhārā* in the *Mahāsudassana Sutta* of the DN, as: “Ānanda! *saṅkhārā* are impermanent, they are unstable,

they are unreliable. Ānanda! It is enough to become disillusioned, dispassionate, and freed from them” (DN II 198).<sup>43</sup> The Buddha also said: “impermanent indeed are all *saṅkhārā*, subject to rise and fall. Having risen, they cease; their cessation is happiness [Nibbāna]” (*ibid.*, 199).<sup>44</sup>

After a considerable discussion about the usage of *saṅkhārā*, now I come to my discussion. As I said *saṅkhārā* would be given immense value as it occurs within the framework of dependent co-arising and the five clinging aggregates. I will discuss these *saṅkhāra*-s as the proximate cause for consciousness to show how they are conditions as the ever-changing process that goes on producing birth in different states. For that, let me first show the textual evidence.

Within the framework of dependent co-arising, the *Vibhaṅga Sutta* of the SN defines *saṅkhārā*:

Monks! And what are conditioning forces? These three are conditioning forces: bodily conditioning force, verbal conditioning force, mental conditioning force. They are called conditioning forces (SN II 4).<sup>45</sup>

Within the framework of the five aggregates, the *Upādāna Parivata Sutta* of the SN defines *saṅkhārā*:

Monks! And what are conditioning forces? These are of six kinds: volition (*cetanā*) with regard to form, volition with regard to sound, volition with regard to smell, volition with regard to taste, volition with regard to tactile object, and volition with regard to idea. These are called conditioning forces. With the arising of contact there is the arising of conditioning forces. With the cessation of contact there is the cessation of conditioning forces. Just this Noble Eightfold Path is the way leading to the cessation of conditioning forces. This is, right view. . . right concentration... (SN III 60).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> 20–23: *aniccā kho ānanda saṅkhārā, ... addhuvā kho ānanda saṅkhārā, ... anassāsikā kho ānanda saṅkhārā, yāvañ c'idaṃ ānanda alam eva sabbasaṅkhāresu nibbindituṃ, alaṃ virajjituṃ, alaṃ vimuccituṃ.*

<sup>44</sup> 6–7: ‘*aniccā vata saṅkhārā uppādavaya-dhammino/uppajjitvā nirujjhanti, tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho ti.*’

<sup>45</sup> 8–10: *katame ca bhikkhave saṅkhārā? tayo me bhikkhave saṅkhārā: kāyasaṅkhāro vacīsaṅkhāro cittasaṅkhāro. ime vuccanti bhikkhave saṅkhārā.*

<sup>46</sup> 25–32: *katamā ca bhikkhave, saṅkhārā? chayime bhikkhave cetanākāyā: rūpasañcetanā saddasañcetanā gandhasañcetanā rasasañcetanā phoṭṭhabbasañcetanā dhammasañcetanā ime vuccanti bhikkhave saṅkhārā.*

In the context of the five aggregates, the *Khajjanīya Sutta* of the SN moreover defines *saṅkhārā*:

Monks! And why do you call them conditioning forces? They construct the conditioned, thus they are called conditioning forces. What is the conditioned that they construct? They construct conditioned form as form-hood, they construct conditioned feeling as feeling-hood, they construct conditioned perception as perception-hood, they construct conditioned conditioning forces as conditioning force-hood, they construct conditioned consciousness as consciousness-hood. Monks! they construct the conditioned, they are called conditioning forces (SN III 87).<sup>47</sup>

From the above passages, two connotations of *saṅkhārā* have been discerned. First, it is directly defined in terms of *cetanā* (volition) that effectively determines experienced reality. Second, it is with *atta* in respect to all aggregates that a person sees “self-hood” as possessed of aggregates which is permanent (*nicca*). In this regard, Yamada’s clarification about *saṅkhārā* is worth noting. He renders the meaning of *saṅkhārā* as “making” that involves physical and mental spheres. He further distinguishes the nature of *saṅkhārā* within the five aggregates, and within dependent co-arising. As for *saṅkhārā* within the five aggregates, he says:

In physical sphere, ‘what is made’ comes to destruction, involving ‘change’. Thus it means ‘becoming’ and ‘phenomenal existence.’ ‘Sabbe saṅkhāra anicca’ and ‘sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā’ are the examples of this usage. ‘Making’ involves mental action, hence it means ‘purposive intention’ and ‘volition’. The fourth factor in the Five Aggregates is used in this sense. Also in the case of ‘All saṃskāras are of nature of delusion’ (sarva-saṃskārās ca mṛśāmoṣa-dharmāṇaḥ, the Buddha’s words quoted in the *Prasannapadā*, pp.41, 5& 237, 8), the term means ‘mental formation’ (Yamada 1980, 286, see note 30).

Regarding *saṅkhārā* within dependent co-arising, he says:

In the Paṭiccasamuppāda formula ‘saṅkhāra’ is understood as the aggregates of mental conditions which induce karmic effect. In the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* (Vol. III, p.415) saṅkhāra is almost equal to kamma. In the Abhidharma understanding of the

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*phassasamudayā saṃkhārasamudayo. phassanirodhā saṃkhāranirodho. ayam eva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṃkhāranirodhagāminī paṭipadā. seyyathidaṃ sammādiṭṭhi...sammāsaṃkappo...*

<sup>47</sup>8–16: *kiñca bhikkhave saṃkhāre vadetha. saṃkhatam abhisamkharontīti bhikkhave tasmā saṃkhārā ti vuccanti. kiñca saṃkhatam abhisamkharonti: rūpam rūpattāya saṃkhatam abhisamkharonti. vedanam vedanattāya saṃkhatam abhisamkharonti. saññaṃ saññattāya saṃkhatam abhisamkharonti. saṃkhāre saṃkhārattāya saṃkhatam abhisamkharonti. viññānaṃ viññānattāya saṃkhatam abhisamkharonti. saṃkhatam abhisamkharontīti kho bhikkhave tasmā saṃkhārā ti vuccanti.*

Paṭiccasamuppāda, ‘saṅkhāra’ become a purposive mental state which under the law of Karma brings about the inception of Paṭisandhi-viññāṇa or the first mental life in a newly conceived individual (*ibid.*, 286, see note 30)

I have discussed *saṅkhārā* in many ways in the above passages. In one of the above passages, *saṅkhārā* were described as they themselves construct conditioned (*saṅkhata*), therefore they are called *saṅkhārā*. According to the AN, the conditioned consists of three characteristics: “an arising is discernible, a passing away is discernible, its otherness or changeability while persisting is discernible. These are the three characteristics of conditioned things that describe the conditioned (*saṅkhata*)” (AN I 152).<sup>48</sup> However, *saṅkhārā* exists only when ignorance exists, and *saṅkhārā* do not exist when ignorance does not exist. By this way, *saṅkhārā* have ignorance as their condition. This delineation can be discerned from the *Parivīmaṃsana Sutta* of the SN: “conditioning forces have ignorance as their cause, ignorance as their origination; ignorance as what brings them into becoming. When ignorance exists, conditioning forces exist; when ignorance does not exist, conditioning forces do not exist” (SN II 81–82).<sup>49</sup> From the aforesaid discussion, it is clear that *saṅkhārā* play a vital role in *saṃsāric* continuity. Therefore, I would like to discuss more about *saṅkhāra* with two connotations (*cetanā* and *atta*) in the following section. Subsequently, we shall see how these two connotations contribute immensely to the process of rebirth.

#### 4.4.1 *Saṅkhārā, Cetanā and Atta*

Two connotations concerning *saṅkhārā* were discussed. The first connotation comes in the *Upādāna Parivata Sutta* of the SN in which *saṅkhārā* is directly defined in terms of *cetanā*.

<sup>48</sup> 8–10: *uppādo paññāyati vayo paññāyati ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati. imāni kho bhikkhave tīni saṅkhatassa saṅkhatalakkaṇāni ti.*

These three characteristics are important doctrines in their nature because with them there is the discussion of conditioned things and without them there is the discussion of unconditioned *nibbāna*: “Monks! These are three characteristics of unconditioned things that describe the unconditioned [*nibbāna*]: What three? An arising is not discernible, a passing away is not discernible, its otherness or changeability while persisting is not discernible. These are the three characteristics of unconditioned things that describe the unconditioned” (AN I 152).

(11–16: *tīṇ’imāni bhikkhave asaṅkhatassa asaṅkhatalakkaṇāni. katamāni tīni? na uppādo paññāyati na vayo paññāyati na ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati. imāni kho bhikkhave tīni asaṅkhatassa saṅkhatalakkaṇāni ti.*)

<sup>49</sup> 33–01: *saṅkhārā avijjānidānā avijjāsamudayā avijjājātikā avijjāpabhavā. avijjāya sati saṅkhārā honti. avijjāya asati saṅkhārā na hontī ti.*

According to Karunaratne, *cetanā* means “thinking in relation to action”. Karunaratne elaborates more on *cetanā*, as:

Cetanā is not passive and reactive and creative. It stimulates and arouses persistent activity. It binds the individual to a specific pattern of conduct consistent with its general direction. It sustains activity of the mind until it seeks and obtains the fulfilment of its purpose. In its drive towards a specific objective it also arranges and affects all other associated mental factors. It provides the motive force to the life of the individual in his perennial quest for the achievement of his self-serving ends. (Karunaratne 1995, 56)

Here, *cetanā* is centred on the sensory perception, which is sustained by feeding on sense objects of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactical objects, and mental objects. The basic fuel for sustaining *cetanā* is provided by *phassa* (contact) between the sense bases and the sense objects. And *vedanā* (feeling), which is one of the five aggregates, according to the doctrine of dependent co-arising, is the result of *phassa*. Therefore, it is said sensory stimulation brings about the enforcement of volitions (*cetanā*) with the arising of *phassa*: “with the arising of contact there is the arising of volitional formations. With the cessation of contact, there is the cessation of volitional formations” (SN III 60).<sup>50</sup> From the passage, the arising of *cetanā* is itself arise of *kamma* which shapes future birth. Bodhi’s explanation is worth noting for understanding the discussion. According to Bodhi, “not only does volition influence the objective content of the experience, but it also shapes the psychophysical organism within which it has arisen and, via its role as *kamma*, shapes the future configurations of the five aggregates to be produced by *kamma*” (Bodhi 2000, 1071, see note 112).

Buddhaghosa discusses the function of *cetanā* with *saṅkhārā* in the Paññābhūminiddeśa of the Vism, as: “any kind of volition is called ‘becoming,’ and the accumulations associated therewith are named “‘formations’” (Vism 580).<sup>51</sup> Buddhaghosa further says that in *cetanā* there is attachment which is craving and they together perform

<sup>50</sup> 28–30: *phassasamudayā saṅkhārasamudaya. phassanirodhā saṅkhāranirodho.*

<sup>51</sup> 3–4: *yā kāci vā pana cetanā bhava, sampayuttā āyūhanā saṅkhārā nāma.*

*kamma*. There is also embracing as the form of clinging which is a condition for *kamma*-becoming (*kamma-bhava*).

Karunaratne has discussed the analogy between *cetanā* and *saṅkhārā*. According to Karunaratne, *saṅkhārā* are equal to *cetanā* which collectively refers to “will” associated with the sense bases and sense objects. He also says that in the five aggregates, the aggregate *saṅkhārā* is *cetanā* that conditions the form and quality of the other aggregates. As he says, this *cetanā* is the “determinant of the incessant birth, decay and death of the self-centered personality of the man of the world” (Karunaratne 1995, 49).

Now it can be concluded that *atta* refers to “the self-centred personality of man”, which is encumbered by wrong view due to clinging. I have shown in a passage above that the form conditioned by *saṅkhārā* is called form-hood (*rūpatta*), feeling is called feeling-hood (*vedanatta*), etc. (SN III 87). Here this notion of “self-hood” is due to clinging. Because of clinging, a person sees the five aggregates permanent in the impermanent which is the ground for “self-hood”. Therefore, a person sees form as self, or self as possessed of form, or form in self or self in form. Likewise, with feeling, perception, *saṅkhārā*, and consciousness, “self-hood” should be understood. According to Karunaratne, this aspect of self-view is denoted by *saññā* in the five aggregates. He says, here are two factors “volitional” and “ideational” that come together. And these two factors mutually condition the direction and development of the personality (Karunaratne 1995, 50). Therefore, one can say that when a person with wrong-view performs any kind of action it leads him to harm and suffering:

When a person has wrong view...whatever bodily actions he instigates and undertakes in accordance with that view, verbal actions he instigates and undertakes in accordance with that view, and mental actions he instigates and undertakes in accordance with that view, and whatever his volition, yearning, inclination, and

volitional activities, all the things lead to what is disagreeable, unpleasing, unprofitable, and to harm and suffering (AN V 212).<sup>52</sup>

It is now clear that the function of *saṅkhārā* with *cetanā* is greatly rooted in the notion of personality-view. By virtue of this personality-view, a person clings to the objects of sensory stimulation and as long as a person possesses this clinging, he continues and suffers in *saṃsāra*. Hence, detachment from these can come about only through non-clinging. Non-clinging is understood as non-activity of *cetanā*. That is why, according to the *Parivīmaṃsana Sutta* of the SN, *nibbāna* comes about only upon the complete cessation of volitional activity of the mind:

From the fading away of ignorance and the arising of true knowledge, he does not fabricate a meritorious volitional formation, or a demeritorious volitional formation, or an imperturbable volitional formation. Neither fabricating nor willing, he does not cling to anything in the world. Not clinging, he is not agitated. Not being agitated, he is totally unbound right within [attains *nibbāna*] (SN II 82).<sup>53</sup>

From the above passage, *avijjā* becomes co-extensive with the operation of *cetanā*. This *cetanā* is conditioned (*saṅkhata*) with the function of *saṅkhārā* which refers to conditioned existence (*saṅkhata dhamma*). On the other hand, *nibbāna* is identical with unconditioned *dhamma*, a state consisting of tranquillity which is not conditioned (*asaṅkhata*). In this regard, *cetanā* is identical with *kamma* which greatly contributes to the continuity of personality in *saṃsāric* existence. Let me now discuss *cetanā* and *kamma* in the context of *saṅkhārā* which is the proximate cause for consciousness.

The Buddha is said to have taught the following about *kamma* in the *Nibbedhika Sutta* of the AN: “Monks! It is intention/volition that I call action.” (*cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*, AN III 415, 7). Here the passage conveys that by intending, one does

<sup>52</sup>25–29: *micchādiṭṭhikassa... yañ ca vacīkammaṃ yathādiṭṭhisamattaṃ samādinnaṃ yañ ca manokammaṃ yathādiṭṭhisamattaṃ samādinnaṃ yā ca cetanā yā ca patthanā yo ca pañidhi ye ca saṅkhārā sabbe te dhammā anīṭṭhāya akantāya amanāpāya ahitāya dukkhāya saṃvattanti.*

<sup>53</sup> 14–20: *avijjā pahīṇā hoti vijjā uppannā. so avijjāvirāgā vijjūppādā-n-eva puññābhisāṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti. na apuññābhisāṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti. na āneñjābhisāṅkhāraṃ abhisāṅkharoti. anabhisāṅkharonto anabhisāñcetayanto na kiñci loke upādiyati. anupādiyam na paritassati. aparitassam paccattaññeva parinibbāyati.*

*kamma* through body, speech and mind. And, this *kamma* itself is diverse in terms of its result that is to be experienced in hell, animal realm, human world, deva world, etc. In the *Nibbedhika Sutta*, it is also said that the origination and source of *kamma* is contact (*phassa bhikkhave kammānaṃ nidānaṃ bhavo*, AN III 415, 10). And, there is cessation of *kamma* when there is cessation of *phassa* (*phassanirodho bhikkhave kammanirodho*, AN III 415, 21). Furthermore, the result of *kamma* is threefold as it is to be experienced here and now (*diṭṭhe vā dhamme*), or later (*upajjevā*) in this life time or future (*apare vā pariyāye*) (AN III 415).

*Cetanā* is also explained with *kamma* in the Dhs Commentary, as the following: it cannot be said that volition is anything other than *kamma* (*ayaṃ nāma cetanā kammaṃ na hotī ti na vattabbā*, Dhs-a 87,31-32). However, two kinds of *cetanā* can be discerned in the AN Commentary: (1) self-centered *cetanā*, and (2) *cetanā* as a factor of enlightenment (*maggacetanā*). I can relate the above discussion with the self-centred *cetanā* which is identical with *kamma*. And, later *cetanā* conveys the special meaning which is not associated with *kamma* (AN-a III 213).<sup>54</sup> Here, this *cetanā* is not identical with the definition of *cetanā* (*cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*); it is only applicable for enlightened persons. In this understanding, self-centred *cetanā* refers to conditioned thing whereas the *cetanā* of an enlightened person is free from such consequences (*khināsavassa...cetanā avipākadhammataṃ āpajjanti*, AN-a III 146, 18-22).

From the above discussion, we may recall that *cetanā* is identical with *kamma* in the *Nibbedhika Sutta* of the AN. Again, the origination of *kamma* is shown in contact (*phassa*)—a fact, which is equally applicable for *cetanā*. Conversely, when there is the cessation of contact, there is the cessation of *kamma*, meaning that there is cessation of *cetanā* as well. In this context, it is worth noting that due to equivalence between *cetanā* and *saṅkhārā*, it also

<sup>54</sup>10-11: *pahānāya yā cetanā ti ettha vivaṭṭahāmini maggacetanā veditabbā; sā hi kammakkhayāya samvatta ti.*



follows that the path leading to cessation of *kamma* is identical with the path leading to the cessation of *saṅkhārā*. And, the path leading to cessation of *cetanā*, *kamma* and *saṅkhārā* are identical with the Noble Eightfold Path in the *Nibbedhika Sutta*.

Now it is understood that *saṅkhārā*, *cetanā* and *kamma* collectively denote the same thing. With this understanding, I subsume *cetanā* and *kamma* under the one notion of *saṅkhārā*. In the following section, I will discuss *saṅkhārā* which act as a proximate cause for *viññāṇa*.

#### 4.5 The Role of *Saṅkhārā* on the Occasion of Rebirth

Two two aspects of consciousness – consciousness as “surviving factor” and as sensory consciousness – have been clarified in the discussion. It was said that when the body dies, consciousness (surviving factor) streams into *saṃsāra*. In this regard, when the body died in a previous life, *saṅkhārā*, as a result of ignorance, became the proximate condition for consciousness for continuation to this life. In the *Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya Sutta* of the MN, therefore, it is said that “consciousness” is present co-dependently when other conditional factors are present. So, “without condition, becoming of consciousness is not” (*aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavoti*, MN I 259, 4-5). Here, it suggests that we cannot emphasise on consciousness only, rather it is important to know how consciousness is present. In this context, *saṅkhārā* is the necessary condition for consciousness to sustain consciousness as “surviving factor”. What is then the nature of *saṅkhārā*? I understand that this *saṅkhārā* act as an active process and is identical with *kamma*, which determines the destiny of the consciousness in a different existence. And, this active process of *saṅkhārā* is associated with “personality traits” also known as “identity-view” due to *kamma* done by “wrong view”. This wrong view exists because of ignorance which is rooted in two kinds of assumption: (1) view assumption, and (2) personality-belief assumption (*avijjā dve*

*upādānāni: diṭṭhupādānañ ca attavādānañ ca*, Netti 41, 21-22). Therefore, when *āsava* is associated with *saṅkhārā*, there is the notion of personality-belief (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). In the *suttas*, it is mentioned that the cause of *āsava* is ignorance (M I 55), and ignorance is also the cause of *saṅkhārā* in the doctrine of dependent co-arising. In this regard, the cessation of *āsava* leads to the cessation of ignorance, and the cessation of ignorance leads to the cessation of *saṅkhāra*.

I now argue that the aforementioned *saṅkhārā* have an intrinsic relationship with the notion of “personality traits” or “identities”. These “personality traits” should be understood in terms of the umbrella concept of *saṅkhārā*, instead of as an eternal or ever-lasting entity. These “personality traits” together with consciousness streamed from the previous life to the present life. Here, the supportive basis for consciousness is known as lust or craving. This fact was already clarified by referring to the *Udāna Sutta* of the SN. According to the *Udāna Sutta*, when there is no lust and craving in the five aggregates, there is no supportive basis for consciousness. So, consciousness is not present in an enlightened one because of abandoning lust for the five aggregates.

The above discussion signifies that lust or craving is the support for the presence of consciousness. Now, if this fact is accepted, it is logical to say that whichever doctrine is described with regard to rebirth and *saṃsāra*, all have an underlying relationship with craving. Therefore, in the absence of craving, there is no becoming or *saṃsāra* for the enlightened one; on the other hand, in the absence of becoming or *saṃsāra*, there is no craving in him/her. Thus, craving, consciousness, *saṃsāra* cease at the time of the attainment of *Nibbāna*. But, a question arises with the aforementioned “consciousness”. If the fact of rebirth is accepted, there is no doubt that due to the presence of craving, this “consciousness” is present and it is linked to the following birth. In this context, this “consciousness” has an

intrinsic connection with *saṅkhārā*, the “personality traits” in the form of the notion of “I”. Thus, consciousness has a close relation with *bhava* (continuity of the flux of *saṃsāric* life) because *Nibbāna* is described as the cessation of *bhava*, and also the cessation of consciousness. I have already delineated the meaning of *bhava* as being a continuity of flux of *saṃsāric* life due to the clinging to a sense of “I” (*attavāda-upādāna*) in the five aggregates. If this fact is accepted, it is also possible to say that consciousness and the clinging to “I” have an underlying relationship.

Here it is important to note that the interpretation of the factor *bhava* of dependent co-arising is different in the *suttas* and the *abhidhamma*. In the *suttas*, the factor *bhava* is threefold: “Monks! these are three becomings: sensual-becoming, form-becoming formless becoming. Monks! this is called becoming (SN II 3; 42, etc.). But in the *abhidhamma*, the factor *bhava* is two kinds: “becoming is two-fold: there is action-becoming, there is rebirth-becoming” (Vibh 137). With this interpretation, the the *abhidhamma*, the Paṭis, and other subsequent Pāli texts interpret the doctrine of dependent co-arising in the context of rebirth in three periods of time – past, present, and future –which represent the *saṃsāric* existence in a cyclic process. Here, *saṅkhārā* is the active process combining with *kamma-bhava* and conditions for *viññāṇa*. According to the Paṭis, this *viññāṇa* is known as “rebirth-linking consciousness” (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*). When all the aforesaid five *dhammas* are conditioned for rebirth-linking consciousness, there is the presence of consciousness, then there is precipitation in the womb, the result of which is mentality-materiality in present life. *Upapatti-bhava* is the result of *kamma-bhava* referring to rebirth/continuity (Paṭis I 52). Therefore, I believe that becoming (*bhava*) is postulated with the self-subsistent “I”. And, when there is *saṅkhārā* (*kamma*), consciousness finds a steady point and develops from moment to moment. Wherever consciousness finds a steady point and develops, there is the footing for mentality and materiality in next life. Again, wherever there is the footing for

mentality and materiality, there is the maturing of *saṅkhārā*. Wherever there is the maturing of *saṅkhārā*, there is further becoming/rebirth in future. Wherever there is further becoming/rebirth in future, there is future birth, aging and death. In this regard, continuity in *saṃsāra* is dynamic, emphasizing how *bhava* develops through ignorance and *saṅkhārā*. Here I recall the passages from the *Netti*: *saṃkhārā anāsavā no ca bhavaṅgā* (conditioning forces that are free from outflows and are not factors of becoming), and *saṃkhārā sāsavā bhavaṅgā* (conditioning forces that are affected by outflows and are factors of becoming). In this regard, *saṅkhārā* are understood as they act as active process accumulated by *kamma*, as the second factor of dependent co-arising, which is the proximate cause for consciousness to continue in *saṃsāra*. In this context, *āsava* is defilement of greed, hatred, and delusion through eradication of which (*arahaṃ khīṇāsavo vusito*, SN III 161, 13) a person attains *Nibbāna*. In this regard, Kalupahana’s exposition is worth noting:

The conception of causation as well as causal uniformity enabled the Buddha to explain the past, present and future events and their relationships without resorting to a notion of substance (*ātaman*). It is a radical theory of no-soul or no-substance (*anatta*), not a relative theory presented in the background of an ultimate framework or an absolutely real self (*ātman*, *Brahman*). Nirvāṇa or freedom, which was understood in an absolute sense during the pre-buddhist period, therefore, turns out to be primarily a *freedom from* attachment (*rāga*), aversion (*dosa*), and confusion (*moha*). It is not a state that transcends causation, but accounted for in the statement of causation, where the negative aspect is stated as : “When this does not exist, that does not come to be’ on the cessation of this, that ceases’ (SN II 1). In short, it is a mere pacification of disposition tendencies (*saṅkhārasamatha*, M I 167) (Kalupahana 1981, 124).

#### 4.5.1 Consciousness Seed (*Viññāṇaṃ Bījaṃ*) and Continuity

*Saṅkhārā*, due to the presence of *āsava*, is a condition for the continuity of consciousness in the life-cycle. Thus, continuity takes place in future. So, wherever there is the continuity of consciousness there is the continuity of “personality-traits” from birth to death, and from one life to another life. In the *Netti* Commentary, the *upapatti-bhava* which refers to the rebirth-becoming is associated with *upādhi* (substratum of rebirth) occurring due to clinging with respect to the five aggregates. The Commentary goes on to say that this *upādhi* is *attabhāva*

(person-hood) which is responsible for the individual's continuity in *samsāra*: “the characteristic of reappearance is the rebirth-aggregate. Substratum [of rebirth] is self-hood” (Netti-a VRI 47).<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it is understood that consciousness becomes an important connecting factor between two lives. How can we explain this continuity from this life to another life without referring to any permanent substance?

Let me first recall a passage from the above discussion. In section 4.3, I have referred to the *Bhava Sutta* of the AN, which discusses the process of further becoming/rebirth (*punabbhava*) in the triple existence. For further becoming/rebirth, *kamma* is the field, consciousness the seed (*viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ*), and craving the moisture. For beings obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving, consciousness becomes present in inferior, middle and superior elements (AN I 223–24). It seems that the *Sutta* denotes the continuity of a person in *samsāra*. In the previous sections, I have extensively discussed *saṅkhārā* as *kamma*, which is a proximate cause for consciousness. Now I intend to discuss how continuity takes place in *samsāra* based on the *Bhava Sutta*. In this connection, I will discuss consciousness seed (*viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ*) with regard to continuity. Before dealing with this topic, it is necessary to discuss the seed (*bīja*).

In the context of consciousness together with its nutriment, five kinds of seed have been mentioned in the *Bīja Sutta* of the SN. The five kinds of seed are root-seed (*mūla-bīja*), stem-seed (*khandha-bīja*), joint-seed (*elū-bīja*), cutting-seed (*agga-bīja*), and germ-seed (*bīja-bīja*). It is said when these seeds are unbroken, unspoilt, undamaged by wind and sun, fertile, securely planted, and there is earth and water, these seeds will come to growth, increase and expand. Similarly, consciousness comes to growth here and is established as it finds sustenance. The basis for the sustenance of consciousness was discussed with desire.

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<sup>55</sup> 32–33: *opapaccayikanti upapattikkhandha nibbattakaṃ. upadhīti attabhāvo.*

Here it seems that consciousness is metaphorically explained with the concept of seed (*bīja*) which sustains on the basis of desire. And, *kamma/saṅkhārā* together with desire determines the establishment of consciousness seed in different existences. In this way, there is continuity in *saṃsāra*. Again, if one can discuss continuity with the help of the concept of consciousness alone, then why is the concept of “consciousness seed” important? Let me now discuss the meaning of consciousness seed with reference to the issue of continuity in *saṃsāra* from the *Netti*.

Consciousness seed is defined with *āsava*, following the causal condition that when consciousness is affected by *āsava* there is the “consciousness seed”. Here “consciousness seed” is intrinsically associated with *āsava* which means that consciousness seed itself is *āsava*. In the *Netti*, the explanation for consciousness seed is given as the following:

The meaning of continuity [is] the meaning of non-interruption; the meaning of fruit [is] the meaning of arising; the meaning of further becoming [rebirth] [is] the meaning of relinking; the meaning of obsession [is] the meaning of obstruction; the meaning of underlying tendency [is] the meaning of non-eradication; the meaning of ignorance [is] the meaning of non-penetration; the meaning of not fully understood [is] the meaning of consciousness seed (*viññāṇassa bījattho*) (*Netti* 79).<sup>56</sup>

Wherever [there is] non-interruption there is continuity; wherever [there is] continuity there is arising; wherever [there is] arising there is fruit, wherever [there is] fruit there is relinking; wherever [there is] relinking there is further becoming [rebirth]; wherever [there is] further becoming [rebirth] there is obstruction, wherever [there is] obstruction there is obsession; wherever [there is] obsession there is non-eradication; wherever [there is] non-eradication there is underlying tendency; wherever [there is] underlying tendency there is non-penetration; wherever [there is] non-penetration there is ignorance; wherever [there is] ignorance there is not fully understood consciousness affected by outflows, wherever [there is] not fully understood consciousness affected by outflows there is the meaning of seed (*Netti* 79–80).<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> 27–30: *avūpacchedattho santati-attho, nibbatti-attho phalattho, paṭisandhi-attho puna-bbhavaattho, sampalibodhattho pariyuṭṭhānattho, asamugghāttho anusayattho, asampaṭivedhattho avijjattho, apariññātattho viññāṇassa bījattho*

<sup>57</sup> 31–08: *yattha avūpacchedo tattha santati, yattha santati tattha nibbatti, yattha nibbatti tattha phalaṃ, yattha phalaṃ tattha paṭisandhi, yattha paṭisandhi tattha punabbhavo, yattha punabbhava tattha palibodho, yattha palibodho tattha pariyuṭṭhānaṃ, yattha pariyuṭṭhānaṃ tattha asamugghāto. yattha asamugghāto tattha anusayo, yattha anusayo tattha asampaṭivedho, yattha asampaṭivedho tattha avijjā, yattha avijjā tattha sāsavaṃ viññāṇaṃ apariññātaṃ, yattha sāsavaṃ viññāṇaṃ apariññātaṃ tattha bījattho.*

With seed two kinds of ideas have been generated in the *Netti*, namely, (1) a cause (*hetu*) and (2) a condition (*paccaya*). The characteristic of a cause does not share in common, while the characteristic of a

Consciousness seed is described in the context of continuity in *saṃsāra* in the above passages. Towards the end of the first passage, the meaning of consciousness seed can be identified. And, towards the end of the second passage, the meaning of consciousness seed affected by *āsava* can be identified. From the aforesaid discussion, consciousness seed is understood in association with *āsava* which is continuously present with the underlying state of consciousness. In this regard, in the *Netti*, I see the relationship with *saṅkhārā* and consciousness that when *saṅkhārā* are affected by *āsava*, they are becoming (*bhavaṅgā*), and when consciousness is affected by *āsava*, there is continuity. Here, both descriptions refer to *saṃsāric* continuity. And, this *saṃsāric* continuity takes place because of *āsava*. So, *saṃsāra* is understood through cause and condition, for it is said: with ignorance as condition, conditioning forces exist; with conditioning forces as condition, consciousness exists; etc. But, in the context of rebirth, the conditioning forces act as *kammic forces* which spring forth as the destiny of consciousness seed in future birth. In this way, *saṃsāra* continues. And, in this stream of continuity there is neither any permanent entity nor otherness. All are causally arisen things based on dependent co-arising. The aforesaid discussion can be well understood with a simile found in the *Vism*:

And, here with a stream of continuity [there is] neither oneness [identity] nor otherness. If there were absolute oneness [identity] in a stream of continuity, there would be no forming of curd from milk. And, also if there were absolute otherness, the curd would not be derived from the milk. So too with all causally arisen things. And, if that were so there would be an end to all worldly usage, and this is hardly desirable. Hence, here neither absolute oneness [identity] nor absolute otherness should be assumed (*Vism* 554).<sup>58</sup>

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condition shares in common. About this, Ñānamoli says, the distinction between *hetu* and *paccaya* and their definitions are peculiar in the *Netti* (1977, 110, see note 452/1), because the distinctions between a *hetu* and a *paccaya* are shown as the following: “for the occurrence of a [seed] sprout the seed is not shared in common [with the sprout] while earth and water are common to both [seed and sprout]; for while the earth and the water are each a condition for the sprout, still individual essence is its cause; or in the same way that milk left in a pot is curd, and yet there is no simultaneous condition concurrence of milk and curd, so too there is no simultaneous concurrence of the cause and the condition” (*Netti* 78-79, 31-06: *aṅkurassa nibbattiyā bījaṃ asādhāraṇaṃ, pathavī āpo ca sādāraṇā. aṅkurassa hi pathavī āpo ca paccayo sabhāvo hetu. yathā vā pana ghaṭe duddham pakkhittam dadhi bhavati, na c’atthi ekakālasamavadhānaṃ duddhassa ca dadhissa ca. evamevaṃ natthi ekakālasamavadhānaṃ hetussa ca paccayassa ca*).

<sup>58</sup>32-38: *ettha ca santānabandhaton’atthiekatānā pi nānatā. yadi hi santānabandhe satī ekantam ekatā bhaveyya, na khīrato dadhi sambhūtaṃ siyā, athā pi ekantanānatā bhaveyya, na khīrassādhiṇo dadhi siyā; esa*

#### 4.5.2 Seed and *Bhavaṅga*

In the above section, consciousness seed was discussed. It was shown that when consciousness is affected by *āsava* there is the consciousness seed. It seems that this consciousness refers to the third factor of dependent co-arising which is responsible for rebirth. Poussin also thinks the same. Poussin understands this consciousness as *bhavaṅga* as analogous with the consciousness seed which is not supported by any permanent substance but an internal force. Poussin’s understanding of the factor consciousness as *bhavaṅga* in the context of seed is quoted by Collins:

[It is consciousness, which] on account of its permeating [all the other parts] and its persistence, receives *par excellence* the name of *bhavaṅga*, chief part of existence. It is the seed and the marrow, as much from the physical point of view as the psychological, of all that development which constitutes an existence (*ātmabhāva*), a ‘share’ of life between a conception and a death – a development which is not supported by any permanent principle (soul), but which is nevertheless organic, vitalist, governed by an internal force (Collins 1982, 239).

The seed has also been given immense value in other Buddhist schools as they discuss the seed with *kammic* effects. Gethin discusses this subject in *The Foundation of Buddhism*. According to Gethin, Theravādins introduced the concept of *bhavaṅga* in accordance with the Sautrāntikas’s *bīja* theory. As he says, *kamma* plants seeds that bear fruits either in this life or in lives to come. Among the Buddhist schools, the Sautrāntikas discuss the concept of seed broadly by criticising “possession” (*prāpti*), and “non-possession” (*aprāpti*) of the Sarvāstivāda *Abhidhamma*. “Possession” refers to an unenlightened person’s desire as unwholesome experience at three times—past, present, and future. There is also “non-possession” for an unenlightened person which is defined as certain kinds of wholesome *dhammas* associated with the higher stages of meditation. It is said that both “possession” and

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*nayo sabbahetusamuppannesu. evañ ca sati sabbalokavohāralopo siyā, so ca aniṭṭho. tasmā ettha na ekantam ekatā vā nānatā vā upagantabbāti.*



“non-possession” have to be destroyed by the practice of the path. Gethin says, Sautrāntikas rejected the Sarvāstivādins’ ideas of “possession” and “non-possession”, and instead of a theory of “possession”, they proposed the images of seed and “perfuming”. In this regard, Gethin says:

When I perform an action motivated by greed, it plants a ‘seed’ in the series of dharmas that is my mind. Such a seed is not a thing in itself – a dharma – but merely the modification or ‘perfuming’ of the subsequent flow of dharma consequent upon the action. In the course of time this modification matures and issues in a particular result, in the same way as a seed does not produce its fruit immediately, but only after the ‘modifications’ of the shoot, stem, leaf, and flower (Gethin 1998, 222).

The Sautrāntikas further suggested that there are two kinds of seed: (1) seeds are planted by our skilful and unskilful deeds, and (2) certain seeds that subsist in the mental continuum of beings from time immemorial. In this connection, Gethin brings the Yogācārin’s “store consciousness” (*ālaya-vijñāna*) and the notion of “the embryo of the Buddha” (*tathāgata-garbha*) or Buddha-nature as the precursors of the Sautrāntikas’s *bīja* theory. Gethin says, the Theravādin Ābhidharmikas encountered the same problem and as a solution they introduced the concept of *bhavaṅga*. Finally, Gethin concludes, “instead of referring the continuity of personality traits and habitual tendencies to a continuously present (but still always changing) underlying state of mind, which the Sautrāntikas and later the Yogācārin’s tended to do, the Theravādins refer to a continually intervening state of mind” (Gethin 1998, 222–23).

### Part–III

#### **4.6 *Bhavaṅga*-consciousness, Rebirth and Continuity**

In this chapter I have discussed two aspects of consciousness: (1) consciousness as “surviving factor”, and (2) consciousness as sensory consciousness that arises dependently based on the six sense bases and their objects. Throughout this chapter, the first aspect of consciousness as “surviving factor” has been discussed with the terms *viññāṇa*, *citta*, and *gandhabba*. Of them, *viññāṇa* and *citta* are identical in the context of rebirth. *Gandhabba* was also identified as

consciousness. In the context of the process of rebirth, it was said that various conditions are involved, including *saṅkhārā*, consciousness, craving. In this regard, the issue of continuity was deliberated with reference to consciousness seed (*viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ*).

I now come to the discussion on *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in the context of rebirth. *Bhavaṅga*-consciousness and *bhavaṅga* are used as synonyms in the *Vism* and the commentaries. There is also the occurrence of the term *bhavaṅga-mano*. I will come to this discussion in the next chapter. The prime intention of this section is to discuss the function of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in the context of death-birth. To me, in the history of the development of Buddhist thought, *bhavaṅga* came to exist in association with *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*. For this discussion, I will follow two aspects. The first aspect is related to the doctrine of dependent co-arising that the factors of *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* together refer to *bhavaṅga*. In this context, I will apply the famous theory of the doctrine of dependent co-arising that “because of *saṅkhārā*-condition, there is consciousness; because of consciousness-condition, there is mentality-materiality”. And, the second aspect is that upon birth when mentality-materiality is formed, there are five clinging aggregates where *saṅkhārā* and consciousness again manifest themselves. In this regard, again both *saṅkhāra* and consciousness together subsume to *bhavaṅga*. And, it is in this area of discussion that I will draw *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in association with *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava*. For this, the commentarial interpretation of the *Netti* about *bhavaṅga* is referred to as: *bhavaṅgānīti upapattibhavassa aṅgāni* (the factors of becoming mean factors of rebirth becoming, *Netti*-a VRI 77). Here, the factors of becoming are directly referred to as *saṅkhāra*, consciousness and other factors of dependent co-arising. According to the *Netti* Commentary, this *upapatti-bhava* associated with *upādhi* is known as *attabhāva* (personhood) which is responsible for the individual’s continuity in *saṃsāra* (*opapaccayikanti upapattikkhandhanibbattaṃ. upadhīti attabhāvo*, *Netti*-a VRI 47, 32–33). In this connection,

I will refer to *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as intrinsically integrated with *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* (rebirth consciousness). So, when there is rebirth consciousness, there is precipitation, which is mentality-materiality (*paṭisandhi viññāṇam, okkanti nāmarūpaṃ, Paṭis I 52, 22–23*). Further, I will suggest that Buddhist thinkers designate the term *bhavaṅga* as a particular type of consciousness itself, which Buddhaghosa explicitly discusses in the *Vism* to show human existence with two aspects of consciousness--process consciousness (*vīthi-citta*) and process-free (*vīthi-mutta*) consciousness, and the continuity of a person throughout *samsāric* existence. In this section, the discussion on *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is limited in the context of rebirth. In the next chapter, *bhavaṅga-citta* will be discussed with both process consciousness (*vīthi-citta*) and process-free (*vīthi-mutta*) consciousness. Let us now discuss *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in association with *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* in the context of rebirth.

#### 4.6.1 *Paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* and *Bhavaṅga*-consciousness

*Paṭisandhi* is a peculiar term used with *viññāṇa* or *citta* in the Pāli Canon. There is the term *appatisandhi* used in the sense of cut off or severing in the *suttas*, such as the *Sunakkhatta Sutta* of the MN II 255, and in the Kv (109) of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. The term *paṭisandhi* is found in the sense of denoting the moment of conception (*paṭisandhikkhana*) in the Paṭṭh. The term *paṭisandhi* also occurs in the context of rebirth to show the *samsāric* continuity in the *Netti* (*Netti* 80). *Paṭisandhi* as *viññāṇa* (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) first occurs in association with *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava* in the *Paṭis* (I 52).

Kapila Abhayawansa broadly discusses *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* as “rebirth consciousness” and refutes Buddhādāsa’s interpretation of *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* as “self”. Buddhādāsa thinks: “The kind of rebirth consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) which is a ‘self’ does not appear in the language of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Therefore, the word ‘consciousness’ (*viññāṇa*) in dependent origination is taken to refer to the six kinds of consciousness which

arise with sense contact” (Buddhadasa 1992, 12). Buddhadāsa argues that the *paṭisandhiviññāṇa* is Buddhaghosa’s creation in the *Vism* covering dependent co-arising in three life spans – past, present, and future. Buddhadāsa says Buddhaghosa developed the concept of the factor *viññāṇa* in the doctrine of dependent co-arising as *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* and introduced the concept of “soul” in Buddhist teachings. Abhayawansa rejects Buddhadāsa’s assertion and says that “the term *paṭisandhiviññāṇa* was used by him [Buddhaghosa] in accordance with early buddhist discourses” (Abhayawansa 2009, 444). Abhayawansa goes on to say that “the Buddha was the first to introduce *paṭisandhiviññāṇa* not only to his doctrine of *paṭiccasamuppāda* but also to the psychology in the history of religion,” (*ibid.*, 444 –45). For his argument, he refers to the passages from the *Bhava Sutta* of the AN. In my knowledge, there is no single occurrence of *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* in the *suttas*. In the above section 4.3, however, I have referred to consciousness seed (*viññāṇāṃ bījaṃ*) and consciousness food (*viññāṇāhāra*) from the *Bhava Sutta* of the AN, and the *Atthirāga Sutta* of the SN respectively. The AN and SN Commentaries explain the “consciousness seed” and “consciousness food” in the context of rebirth by saying that consciousness nourishes mentality-materiality at the moment of rebirth linking (*paṭisandhikkhane*). It seems, Abhayawansa takes the commentarial explanation of *paṭisandhi* and relates it with the content of the *Bhava Sutta* of the AN. Therefore, he says that *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* was introduced by the Buddha himself. Theravāda Buddhist thinkers such as Ledi Sayādaw also thinks the same. He says, in the *Bhava Sutta*’s *kammaṃ khettaṃ viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ tanhā sineho*, “kamma is the mental nutriment of volition, rebirth-consciousness is the nutriment of consciousness, which provides the seed for a new existence at rebirth, leading to a new material aggregate, i.e., the body” (Sayādaw1900, 26, trans. Oo). I said *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*

first occurs in the Paṭis (I 52). From this evidence, it is clear that *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* is not the creation of Buddhaghosa, rather it was developed during the compilation of the Paṭis.<sup>59</sup>

The PED gives the meaning of *paṭisandhi* as “reunion (of vital principle with a body), reincarnation, metempsychosis” (PED 446–47). Ñāṇamoli criticises PED’s meaning of *paṭisandhi* as saying that “PED’s article is inadequate, and also misleading with its unfortunate choice of ‘metempsychosis’ (besides overlooking the only Sutta ref. *M.* iii, 230, which has a different, non-technical, meaning)” (Ñāṇamoli 1977, 112, see note 458/1). Ñāṇamoli provides the meaning of *paṭisandhi* (*citta*) together with *cuti-citta* based on the commentarial explanation. According to him:

[W]hile *cuti-citta* is used for the last cognizance of a dying person, *paṭisandhi-citta* is used for the first cognizance upon rebirth, which follows immediately upon – ‘links up with’ – the death-cognizance. There is thus unbroken continuity without any ‘thing’—consciousness or anything else – having anypermanency. Only the ‘momentum’ of *kamma* is communicated or ‘passed on’ by the dying cognizance to the relinking cognizance in virtue of ignorance and craving (*ibid.*, 112).

Yamada understands *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* in accordance with the *abhidhammic* understanding of dependent co-arising which, according to him, is a “Chain of Causation” starting with *avijjā*. Yamada says that in the *abhidhammic* understanding, “*avijjā* is taken [to mean] more than the mode of human existence of ‘being ignorant,’ but it is the ‘ignorance’ as the cause from which human misery originate” (Yamada 1980, 271–72). In this connection, about *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* Yamada says “In the Abhidharma understanding of the Paṭiccasamuppāda, ‘saṅkhāra’ became a purposive mental state which under the law of Karma brings about the inception of Paṭisandhi-viññāṇa or the first mental life in a newly conceived individual” (*ibid.*, 286, see note 30). However, Wijesekera identifies *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* with *saṃvattanika-viññāṇa* in MN II 262. According to him, “*saṃvattanikaviññāṇa*

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<sup>59</sup> In my MPhil studies, I have broadly discussed the composition dates of the Paṭis. Reviewing the scholars’ opinions and doctrinal settings in both the Niddesa and the Paṭis, I said both the Niddesa and the Paṭis are later *abhidhammic* texts (see more in Barua 2018, 138–43).

or ‘the consciousness that evolves (into the next life)’ for which in the scholastic period the term *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* was substituted (PTS Dict[ionary].,s.v.)” (1994, 199). Wijesekera further describes *saṃvattanika-viññāṇa* with *samsāric viññāṇa* which is identical with *viññāṇa-sota* (DN III 105), also *bhava-sota* (SN I 15 & V 128) that implies constant change (*ibid.*). According to Jayatilleke, and Wijesekera, both *bhava-sota*, and *viññāṇa-sota* are the earliest notion of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness (Jayatilleke 1949, 216 & Wijesekera 1994, 105). We shall come to this point in the next chapter. Here, I intend to discuss the relationship between *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in the context of rebirth only. Before dealing with this topic, the usage of *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* in the Paṭis is discussed:

In a becoming-as-action before [previous life] there is delusion, which is ignorance; there is accumulation, which are conditioning forces; there is attachment, which is craving; there is adoption, which is clinging; there is volition, which is becoming; thus these five ideas in becoming-as-action before [previous life] are conditions for rebirth-linking there. There [in previous life] there is rebirth-liking, which is consciousness; there is precipitation [in the womb] which is mentality-materiality; there is sensitivity, which is base; there is touch, which is contact; there is what is felt, which is feeling; thus these five ideas in becoming-as-rebirth they have their conditions in action (*kamma*) done in the past [in previous life] (Paṭis I 52).<sup>60</sup>

Here [in the present life] with the maturing of the bases there is delusion, which is ignorance; there is accumulation, which are conditioning forces; there is attachment, which is craving; there is adoption, which is clinging; there is volition, which is becoming; thus these five ideas in becoming-as-action before [in present life] are conditions for rebirth-linking in the future. In the future there is rebirth-liking, which is consciousness; there is precipitation [in the womb], which is mentality-materiality; there is sensitivity, which is base; there is touch, which is contact; there is what is felt, which is feeling; thus these five ideas in becoming-as-rebirth in the future have their conditions in action (*kamma*) done here [in the present life] (Paṭis I 52).<sup>61</sup>

Hence, he knows, sees, recognizes, penetrates, the four generalizations [of past cause, present result, present cause, future result], the three periods of time, and the dependent origination with three modes, doing so in these twenty modes [with five modes in each generalization]. In regard to this, knowledge is that being known and

<sup>60</sup>19–25: *purima-kammabhavasmiṃmoho avijjā, āyūhanā saṅkhārā, nikanti taṅhā, upagamaṇaṃ upādānaṃ, cetanābhavo. ime pañcadhammā purimakammabhavasmiṃ idha paṭisandhiyā paccayā. idha paṭisandhi viññāṇaṃ, okkanti nāmarūpaṃ, pasādo āyatanāṃ, phuṭṭhophasso, vedayitaṃ vedanā. Ime pañcadhammā idhupapattibhavasmiṃ purekatassa kamma paccayā*

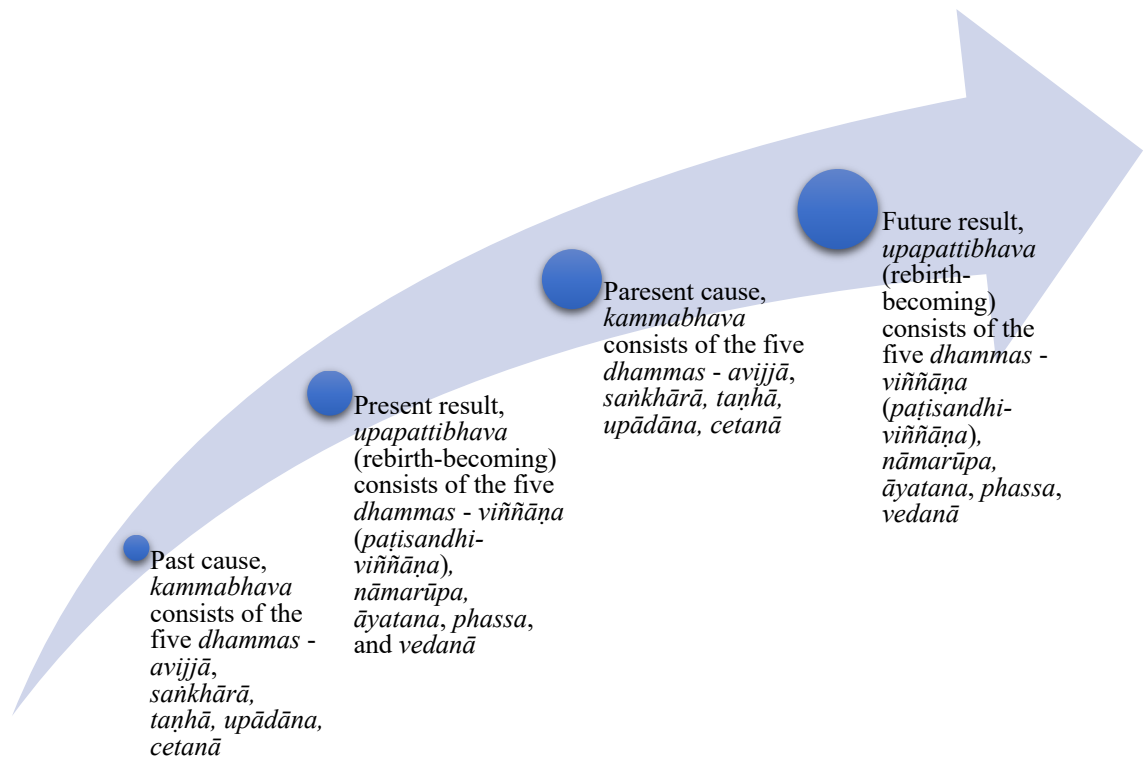
<sup>61</sup>25–32: *idha paripakkattā āyatanāna ṃmoho avijjā, āyūhanā saṅkhārā, nikanti taṅhā upagamaṇaṃ upādānaṃ, cetanā bhavo. ime pañcadhammā idha kammabhavasmiṃ āyatiṃ paṭisandhiyā paccayā. yatiṃ paṭisandhi viññāṇaṃ, okkanti nāmarūpaṃ, pasādo āyatanāṃ, phuṭṭho phasso, vedayitaṃ vedanā. ime pañcadhammā āyatiṃ upapattibhavasmiṃ idha katassa kamma paccayā*

understanding is that the act of understanding. Because of that, it is said: “understanding of wrapping round of conditions is knowledge of the real nature of ideas” (Paṭis I 52).<sup>62</sup>

Form the above passages, previous *kamma bhava* consists of the five *dhammas* – *avijjā*, *saṅkhārā*, *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, and *cetanā*. All these five *dhammas* are conditions for consciousness, which is known as *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*. When *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* is present, there is precipitation in the womb, the result of which is mentality-materiality in present life. *Upapattibhava* which is known as rebirth-becoming consists of the five *dhammas* – *viññāṇa*, *nāmarūpa*, *āyatana*, *phassa*, and *vedanā*. In the present life, there is again *kammabhava* consisting of the five *dhammas* – *avijjā*, *saṅkhārā*, *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, and *cetanā* which are conditions for consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) at the moment of future conception. Future birth (*upapattibhava*) again consists of the five *dhammas* – *viññāṇa*, *nāmarūpa*, *āyatana*, *phassa*, and *vedanā* in the future. In this way, there are four generalizations of the past cause, present result, present cause, future result; three periods of time (past, present, and future), and twenty *dhammas* in four generalizations. Let us see this discussion through a diagram:

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<sup>62</sup> 32–36: *iti ime catusaṅkhepe tayo addhe vīsatiyā ākārehi tisandhim paṭiccasamuppādaṃ jānāti passati aññāti paṭivijjhati. tañ ñātaṭṭhena ñāṇaṃ, pajānanaṭṭhena paññā; tena vuccati – ‘paccayapariggahe paññā dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇaṃ’*



**Analysis:** The above diagram shows the continuity of a being by means of rebirth in *saṃsāric* existence. Here the presentation should be understood on the basis of the doctrine of dependent co-arising or cause and effect. In this context, there are several important things to note, such as the following:

- 3 modes of time – past>present>future
- 4 modes of cause and effect/result–past cause>present result ... present cause>future result
- 2 kinds of *bhava* with four modes of cause and effect – *kamma* (past cause)>*upapatti* (present result/rebirth)...*kamma* (present cause)>*upapatti* (future result>rebirth)
- 20 *dhammas* – 5 past cause>*avijjā*, *saṅkhārā*, *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, *cetanā*  
     5 present result>*viññāṇa*, *nāmarūpa*, *āyatana*, *phassa*, *vedanā*  
     5 present cause>*avijjā*, *saṅkhārā*, *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, *cetanā*  
     5 future result>*viññāṇa*, *nāmarūpa*, *āyatana*, *phassa*, *vedanā*



The above-mentioned 20 *dhammas* are shown with the twelve links of dependent co-arising, as: *avijjā, saṅkhārā, viññāṇa, nāmarūpa, (saḷa-)āyatana, phassa, vedanā, taṇhā, upādāna, cetanā, bhava (upapatti-bhava)*. Here, *cetanā* is identical with *bhava* in the Paṭis (I 52), also in the Vism, as: “any kind of volition is called ‘becoming’” (*yā kāci vā pana cetanā bhava*, Vism 580, 3). This *cetanā* refers to *kamma*, thus it is known as *kamma-bhava*. In this regard, the entire doctrine of dependent co-arising is subsumed with *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava*.

From the above discussion, an important point is to be noted that the third factor *viññāṇa* is identical with *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* at the moment of conception. In the Abhidh-s, it is said, *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* functions at conception and it “occurs only once in any individual existence, at the moment of rebirth” (Bodhi 1999, 122). The Vism has shown the function of *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* with an example, as:

Just as eye-consciousness is there immediately following on mind element,  
Which does not come from that [mind element], yet without, not immediately to be  
arisen,  
So too, in rebirth-linking, consciousness continuity takes place.  
The prior consciousness breaks up, the subsequent is born from that.  
They have no interval between, nor they have gap,  
While nil whatever passes over, still rebirth-linking comes about (Vism 604).<sup>63</sup>

Here, *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* is a resultant consciousness (*vipāka-viññāṇa*), which, according to the Vism, is of nineteen kinds (*ekūna vīsatiyā vipāka viññāṇa*, Vism 460, 15). These nineteen kinds of *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* are discussed with regard to rebirth in the sensual-sphere, form-sphere, and formless-sphere (Vism 457–58). An example is that when through the influence of the wholesome fine-material realm and the immaterial realm, beings are born in the fine-material and immaterial kinds of becoming, then the nine kinds of fine material and

<sup>63</sup>4–9: *yath’ eva cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ manodhātu anantaraṃ,  
na c’ eva āgataṃ nā pi na nibbattaṃ anantaraṃ.  
tath’ eva paṭisandhimhi vattate cittasantati,  
purimaṃ bhijjate cittaṃ, pacchimaṃ jāyate tato.  
tesaṃ antarikā n’atthi vīci tesaṃ na vijjati,  
na cito gacchati kiñci paṭisandhi ca jāyatī ti.*

immaterial resultant occur as rebirth-linking (Vism 457).<sup>64</sup> These nineteen kinds of *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* are named with four modes in the Abhidh-s, as: rebirth-linking in the woeful place (*apāya paṭisandhi*), rebirth-linking in the sensuous blissful plane (*kāma sugati paṭisandhi*), rebirth-linking in the fine-material realm (*rūpāvacara paṭisandhi*), and rebirth-linking in the immaterial realm (*arūpavacara paṭisandhi*) (Bodhi 1999, 194). However, the question arises: when *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* ceases upon birth, then what type of consciousness continues throughout the life span until the arising of *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* at conception again? It seems the composer of the Paṭis did not pay attention to this. But later Buddhist thinkers were concerned over this matter to a great extent. Therefore, one can see the concept of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness after *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* to show the uninterrupted continuity in *saṃsāra*. This matter is discussed from the Vism.

In the Vism, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is defined as a mental stream continuing throughout one's life-process from birth to death, and as the continuation of a being throughout countless lives, being the results of *kamma*, until the attainment of final *Nibbāna*. A passage from the Vism, for example, reads:

“After passing away yet rebirth again, and after rebirth there is again *bhavaṅga*.” Thus the consciousness-continuity of beings uninterruptedly continues through a succession of modes of becoming, destiny, persistence, abode, likewise proceeds forward. But when one attains Arahathship here, it ceases with the cessation of his passing away-consciousness (Vism 460).<sup>65</sup>

With regard to rebirth, moreover, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is shown as the following:

When the rebirth consciousness has ceased, then following upon whatever kind of rebirth consciousness it may be, being the result of *kamma*, occur as consciousness of becoming-constituent [whose] object is also the same [*kamma*]; and again same kind [of *bhavaṅga* continues together with its object]. As long as no other kind of

<sup>64</sup> 29–32: *yadā rūpāvacarārūpāvacarakusalānubhāvena rūpārūpabhavesu nibbattanti, tadā nesaṃ maraṇakāle paccupaṭṭhitam kamma-kammanimittameva ārammaṇam katvā nava rūpārūpāvacaravipākāni paṭisandhivasena pavattanti.*

<sup>65</sup> 16–20: *cutito pana puna paṭisandhi, paṭisandhito puna bhavaṅgan ti evaṃ bhavagatiṭhitinivāsesu saṃsaramānānaṃ sattānaṃ avicchinnaṃ cittasantānaṃ pavattati yeva. yo pan'ettha arahattaṃ pāpuṇāti, tassa cuticitte niruddhe niruddham eva hotī ti*

consciousness arises to interrupt the continuity, it proceeds occurring endlessly like the stream of a river, in periods of dreamless sleep, etc (Vism 458).<sup>66</sup>

In the above passages, three types of consciousness: *cuti*, *paṭisandhi* and *bhavaṅga* are found.

It is said when *cuti-citta*, the last thought of a dying person, ceases, *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* arises and when *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* ceases at the moment of birth, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness takes place. And, this *bhavaṅga*-consciousness flows continuously. This way, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness occurs endlessly like the stream of a river, even in periods of dreamless sleep.

In the Abhidh-s, these three consciousness are described as the same type of consciousness, albeit performing three different functions:

[I]n any single life it is the same type of consciousness that performs the three functions of rebirth-linking [*paṭisandhi*], life-continuum [*bhavaṅga*], and death [*cuti*]. At the moment of conception this type of consciousness arises linking the new existence to the old one; throughout the course of life this same type of consciousness arises countless times as the passive flow of the *bhavaṅga*, maintaining the continuity of existence; and at death this same type of consciousness again occurs as the passing away from the old existence (Bodhi 1999, 125–26).

From the above passage, it is clear that *cuti*, *paṭisandhi*, *bhavaṅga* are the same type of consciousness performing three functions. But, Karunadasa says *cuti-citta* and *paṭisandhi viññāṇa* are the species of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness because “when the term *bhavaṅga* is used in [...] wider sense, death-consciousness [*cuti-citta*] and rebirth-linking consciousness [*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*] are considered as two species of the *bhavaṅga* consciousness” (Karunadasa 2007, 3). Here, it seems *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is more discernable than other two types of consciousness. However, the question arises: if they are the same type of consciousness, then what is their object? Because, it was already discussed that consciousness cannot arise without an object. Let me now discuss the object of *cuti*, *paṭisandhi*, and *bhavaṅga*.

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<sup>66</sup>2–8: *paṭisandhiviññāṇe pana niruddhe, taṃ taṃ paṭisandhiviññāṇam-anubandhamānaṃ tassa tass’ eva kammaṣṣa vipākabhūtaṃ tasmim̐ yeva ārammaṇe tādisam̐ eva bhavaṅgaviññāṇam̐ nāma pavattati. puna pi tādisan̐ ti evaṃ asati, santānavinivattake aññasim̐ cittuppāde, nadīsotaṃ viya, supinaṃ apassato niddokkamanakālādīsū aparimāṇasaṅkhyam̐ pi pavattati*

#### 4.6.1.1 *Kamma* as Object

In this chapter, the concept of *kamma*, its origin and cessation with the concept of *saṅkhārā* was extensively discussed. It was said that the factor *viññāṇa* is identical with *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* at the moment of conception. In the *Vism*, *kamma* is discussed as the object of *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*.<sup>67</sup> This same *kamma* is also the object of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness (*Vism* 458). If this evidence is considered, one can say that *bhavaṅga* always persists throughout numerous lives with its own object *kamma*. What is then the object of *cuti-citta*? Karunadasa says, *cuti-citta* is the last consciousness to occur in any single life and its object is also *kamma* (2007, 2). A similar interpretation is also discerned in the *Abhidh-s*: “the rebirth consciousness, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, and the falling consciousness (*cavana*) in one birth are similar and have one object” (Bodhi 1999, 199).<sup>68</sup> Here, *cavana* is defined as falling, which is identical with death consciousness (*cavanattā cutīti vuccati*, *Vism* 460, 13). In this context, *kamma* seems to be given immense value for *saṃsāric* continuity. Hence, it is understood that as long as *kamma* operates, the chain of rebirth continues (*Vism* 602).<sup>69</sup> The death of a body, therefore, does not imply a gap or break in an existential life, rather it is understood as an event in the continuous stream of existence. So, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is understood as flowing on even during deep sleep with its own object *kamma*. Hence, the present life is a continuity of previous life, and present *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is continuing

<sup>67</sup> Different variations of *kamma* have been discussed in association with *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* in the *Vism*. One variation is discussed with fourfold classification of *kamma*, as: productive (*janaka*), consolidating (*upatthambhaka*), frustrating (*upapīlaka*), and supplanting (*upaghātakan*). In the *Vism* translation volume, in a footnote, Nāṇamoli says “‘productive’ *kamma* is what produces resultant continuity by providing rebirth-linking and so on. ‘Consolidating’ *kamma* prolongs the occurrence of the continuity of pleasure or pain, or the endurance of materiality. ‘Frustrating’ *kamma* slowly diminishes the endurance of pleasure or pain when they occur. It cuts off the result of other *kamma* without giving any result of its own. ‘Supplanting’ *kamma*, however, cuts off weak *kamma* and makes its own result arise. This is their difference” (*Vism-mhṭ* 771)” (Nāṇamoli 2010, 625, see footnote 4). Each of the aforementioned *kamma*-s is different in terms of its results. See more in *Vism* 60–02).

<sup>68</sup> 21–22: *paṭisandhi bhavaṅgañ ca tathā cavanamānasam ekam eva tath’ ev’ ekavisayañ c’ekajātiyam*.

<sup>69</sup> “Results (*kamma*-results) proceed from *kamma*, result has *kamma* for its origin, further becoming springs from *kamma*, this is how the world goes round (*Vism* 602, 20–21: *kammā vipākā vattanti vipāko kammāsambhavo, kammā punabbhavo hoti: evaṃ loko pavattatīti*).

with *kamma* from previous numerous lives. However, it is noted that in the process of continuity there is rise and fall at every moment. So, when the process of continuity is disrupted by rise and fall, the characteristic of impermanence becomes apparent in its true nature, when there is impermanence, there is suffering, and there is also the not-self (Vism 640).

*Kamma* has already been discussed with *saṅkhārā* generated by ignorance and the consequent craving or desire. This is what I have been discussing in this chapter: a being is reborn for an inconceivable length of time owing to the concealing of *kamma* generated by ignorance and craving. Therefore, to understand *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, we cannot miss the fact of dependent co-arising that *saṅkhārā* and consciousness are the conditions for *samsāric* continuity. So, I understand that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is affected by *āsava* and carries the “personality traits” until the attainment of *Nibbāna*. The *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, therefore, is understood based on causality: that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, its origin, function, and cessation are strictly based on causality. In this way, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is not any entity in a metaphysical sense. This matter has already been discussed by showing the stream of continuity and it is said that there is neither any permanent entity nor otherness in the continuity. This continuity is only a process through the formula of dependent co-arising. And in this process, no “identity view” is found. This matter is also discussed in the Vism:

“Because of ignorance-condition, conditioning forces are; because of conditioning forces-condition, consciousness is.” Just like a seed’s reaching the state of a tree through the state of the shoot, etc. The cutting off of continuity is called “method of oneness [identity]” One who sees this rightly abandons the annihilation view by understanding the unbrokenness of the continuity that occurs through the relationship of cause and fruit. And one who sees it wrongly clings to the eternity view by apprehending identity [oneness] in the non-interruption of the continuity that occurs through the linking of cause and fruit (Vism 585).<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> 3–9: *avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇan ti evaṃ bijassa ankurādi-bhāvena rukkha bhāvappatti viya, santānānupacchedo ekattanayo nāma. yaṃ sammā passanto hetuphalasambandhena santānassa anupacchedāvabodhato ucchedadiṭṭhiṃ pajahati; micchā passanto hetuphalasambandhena pavattamānassa santānānupacchedassa ekattagahaṇato sassatadiṭṭhiṃ upādiyati.*

In the above passage, continuity is described fully based on causality. Therefore, for the sustainability of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, I strictly follow the Buddha's assertion that *samsāric* continuity is due to the sustainability of consciousness which involves craving as a cause for the succession of further becoming/re-birth (*viññāṇe virūlḥe āyatim punabbhavābhinibbatti hoti*, SN II 65, 18). Here, the cause of the succession of further becoming/rebirth is dependent upon the food of consciousness (*viññāṇāhāro āyatim punabbhavābhinibbattiyā paccayo*, SN II 13, 14–15), and it is this consciousness which depends upon various conditionings streaming forward (*cittam assa vidhāvati*, SN I 37, 18, 23 & 38,4). So, in a strict sense, “without condition, becoming of consciousness is not” (*aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavo ti*, MN I 259, 4–5).

However, an important point to be noted is that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is not a type of consciousness arising dependently upon six sense bases and their objects. It is understood as a “surviving factor” in accordance with *bhava-sota*, *viññāṇa-sota*, or *samsāric viññāṇa*. And, this *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is no longer present when a person attains enlightenment. However, a discrepancy can be seen with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in the commentaries. This discrepancy will be briefly shown in the following section. A detailed analysis will be presented in the next chapter.

#### 4.6.1.2 Discrepancy with *Bhavaṅga*-consciousness

*Bhavaṅga*-consciousness was discussed in association with *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* in the above section. It was understood in accordance with *bhava-sota*, *viññāṇa-sota*, and *samsāric viññāṇa*. In this regard, I said that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is affected by *āsava* and it is not present when a person attains enlightenment. However, diverse views with regard to

*bhavaṅga*-consciousness is found in the MN and AN Commentaries. The AN Commentary describes *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as luminous consciousness because it is without defilements (*nirupakkilesatāya*) (AN-a I 60). The MN Commentary, moreover, says that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is the natural consciousness (*pakati-citta*) and all beings pass away with this state of consciousness (MN-a I 141). The DN and SN Commentaries also state that all Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Noble disciples (Arahats) have the *bhavaṅga* consciousness and pass away understanding the truth about suffering, without *bhavaṅga-citta*, even compared to an ant, having consequences, no seeds for rebirth (SN-a I 224) (see more Chapter 1, section 1.1). In this context, Kalupahana says that when *bhavaṅga* consciousness came to be understood as natural consciousness (*pakati-citta*), it is “not much different from the notion of a transmigrating soul or self posited by the non-Buddhist schools in India” (Kalupahana 1995, 88). A similar interpretation is presented by Reat, as: “[...] *pabhassara-citta* is an example in the early texts of a concept compatible with the *Upanisadic ātman*. Though the idea is not developed in the *Pāli* texts, it became important in Mahayana in the form of “Buddha-nature” or “*Tathāgata-garbha*”, which is indistinguishable from *ātman*” (Reat 1977, 182). However, if *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is understood as an ever-lasting and unchangeable *Upanisadic ātman*, entire Buddhist teachings related to *bhavaṅga* consciousness that I have discussed above are subject to question. I will come to this point in the next chapter in greater detail. Here, I intend to discuss how *bhavaṅga*-consciousness functions in the process of death-birth.

#### 4.6.1.3 *Bhavaṅga*-consciousness in the Process of Death-Birth

I have already said that the death of a body does not imply a gap or break in an existential life; it is an event in the continuous stream of existence. So, our present life is a continuous process of previous life. How does then this continuous process take place? The process of continuity was discussed with the concepts of death-consciousness, rebirth-consciousness and

*bhavaṅga*-consciousness in the previous section. It was said that when *cuti-citta*, the last consciousness of a dying person, has ceased at the moment of passing away, *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* arises, and when *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* ceases upon conception, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness takes place. And, this *bhavaṅga*-consciousness flows on endlessly like the stream of a river. It was also said that these three (*cuti*, *paṭisandhi* and *bhavaṅga*) are the same type of consciousness but they perform three different functions.

Death (*maraṇa*) is described as the interruption of the life faculty (*jīvitindriyassaupaccedo*) in a single existence. It is also said that in a single existence death takes place momentarily and is known as the momentary dissolution of formations (Vism 229).<sup>71</sup> Ñāṇamoli mentions three kinds of death in the introduction of the Vism translation volume:

[D]eath as cutting off, momentary death, and conventional death. Death as cutting off belongs to those whose cankers are exhausted (and are Arahants). Momentary death is that of each consciousness of the cognitive series beginning with life-continuum consciousness [*bhavaṅga*-consciousness], which arise each immediately on the cessation of the one preceding. Conventional death is that of all (so-called) living beings (Ñāṇamoli 2010, xliii).

The occurrence of death is different; it is mainly of two kinds: (1) timely death (*kālamaraṇa*), and (2) untimely death (*akālamaraṇa*). Timely death comes with the exhaustion of merit (*puññakkhayena*) or with the exhaustion of a life span (*āyukkayena*), or both (*ubhayakkhayena*). And, untimely death comes about through *kamma* that interrupts *kamma* (*kammupacchedaka-kammabasena*) (Vism 229). The aforementioned description of death is presented with four kinds in the section “Cutipaṭisandhikkama” (the Process of Death-Rebirth) of the Abhidh-s: (1) through the expiration of the life-span, (2) through the expiration of the *kammic* forces, (3) through the expiration of both (1&2), and (4) through the

<sup>71</sup>8-9: *saṅkhārānaṃ khaṇabhangasankhātāṃ khaṇikamaraṇaṃ*.



intervention of a destructive *kamma*. But these fourfold death is not applicable for the Arahants as they have terminated *samsāric* suffering.

I have already mentioned that death does not imply a gap in an existential life. So, according to Buddhist teachings, upon death, one's destiny is determined by the power of *kamma*, which is threefold: *kamma*, *kammanimitta* (sign of *kamma*) and *gatinimitta* (sign of destiny) (Vism 458 & Bodhi 1999, 221). In this regard, when a person is about to die according to circumstances any of the aforesaid objects through any of the six sense doors appears and begins to function in the new life. The *Vibhaṅga* Commentary explains these three objects with various examples. It says that *kamma* refers to the wholesome and unwholesome actions accumulated in the past, *kammanimitta* refers to form or object which appears at death bed, and *gatinimitta* refers to a symbol of state which is to be experienced in the immediately following existence. For the *kammanimitta*, the Commentary gives a simile with Gopakasīvalī who performed a wholesome act by building a shrine at Tālapitṭhika Vihāra. At the moment of his passing away this object appeared at his death bed, and upon death he was born in heaven. For the *gatinimitta*, the Commentary says a sign or an object of the kind of next existence appears while a person is dying and upon death he will be born in that particular existence. For example, if a man is to be born in hell, the sign may be the shape of a large metal pot used for cooking over a fire. If he is to be born as a human being, the sign may be mother's womb. If he is to be born in heaven he sees heavenly objects such as heavenly trees, heavenly chariots, etc. (Vibh-a 155–56).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>35–33: *saṅkhepato paṭisandhiyā tīṇi ārammaṇāni honti: kammaṃ, kammanimittaṃ, gatinimittan ti. tattha kammaṃ nāma āyūhitā kusalākusalacetanā. kammanimittaṃ nāma yaṃ vatthum ārammaṇaṃ katvā kammaṃ āyūhati. tattha atīte kappakoṭisatasahassamatthakasmim pi kamme kate tasmim khaṇe kammaṃ vā kammanimittaṃ vā āgantvā upaṭṭhāti. tatr'idaṃ kammanimittassa upaṭṭhāne vatthu: Gopakasīvalī kira nāma Tālapitṭhikavihāre cetiyaṃ kāresi. tassa maraṇamañce nīpannassa cetiyaṃ upaṭṭhāsi. so tad'eva nimittaṃ gaṇhitvā kālamkatvā devaloke nibbatti [...] gatinimittaṃ nāma nibbattanaka-okāse eko vaṇṇo upaṭṭhāti. tattha niraye upaṭṭhahante lohakumbhi-sadiso hutvā upaṭṭhāti. manussaloke upaṭṭhahante mātukucchi kambalayāna-sadisā hutvā upaṭṭhāti. devaloke upaṭṭhahante kapparukkha-vimāna-sayanādīni upaṭṭhahanti. evaṃ kammaṃ kammanimittaṃ gatinimittan ti saṅkhepato paṭisandhiyā tīṇi ārammaṇāni honti.*

Consciousness is described as being of 89 kinds in Theravāda Abhidhamma teachings. These 89 kinds of consciousness are defined with four categories in the *Vism*: (1) 21 kinds of wholesome consciousness, (2) 12 kinds of unwholesome consciousness, (3) 36 kinds of resultant consciousness, and (4) 20 kinds of functional consciousness (*Vism* 457).<sup>73</sup> According to the *Vism*, all the 89 kinds of consciousness occur in 14 modes, as the following: (1) rebirth-linking (*paṭisandhi*), (1) constituent-becoming (*bhavaṅga*), (3) adverting (*āvajjana*), (4) seeing (*dassana*), (5) hearing (*savana*), (6) smelling (*ghāyana*), (7) tasting (*sāyana*), (8) touching (*phusana*), (9) receiving (*sampañicchana*), (10) investigating (*santīraṇa*), (11) determining (*voṭṭhapana*), (12) impulsion (*javana*), (13) registration (*tadārammaṇa*), and (14) death (*cuti*).<sup>74</sup>

With the above 14 modes of consciousness the whole human existence is described. The process of death-birth is also described with the 14 modes of consciousness. It is said that at the moment of death, when there is the end of registration (*tadārammaṇa*), *bhavaṅga*-consciousness resumes its occurrence. And when the resumed occurrence of the *bhavaṅga* is again interrupted, adverting, seeing, hearing, etc. occur again, and when the conditions exist, the conscious continuity repeats its occurrence as adverting, seeing, hearing, etc. So, according to the law of consciousness, it occurs again and again, until the *bhavaṅga* of one becoming is exhausted (*ekasmiṃ bhavaṅgassa parikkhaya*). The last *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in one life is called death (*cuti*) because of falling (*cavanatta*) from that life. After death, there is birth again, and after birth there is again *bhavaṅga*. Thus, the conscious continuity of beings continues uninterruptedly through a succession of modes of becoming, destiny, persistence, abode, and likewise proceeds forward. But when one attains Arahathship

<sup>73</sup>16–18: *ekavīsati kusalāni dvādasākusalāni chattiṃsa vipākāni vīsati kiriyāni ti sabbāni pi ekūnanavutiviññāṇāni honti.*

<sup>74</sup>19–21: *yāni paṭisandhi-bhavaṅg'-āvajjana-dassana-savana-ghāyana-sāyana-phusana-sampañicchana-santīraṇa-voṭṭhabbana-javana-tadārammaṇa-cutivasena cuddasahiākārehipavattanti.*

here, it ceases with the cessation of his passing away-consciousness (Vism 460). A similar interpretation about death-birth is also presented in the Abhidh-s (Bodhi 1999, 227).<sup>75</sup> Detailed explanation about the aforesaid *āvajjana, dassana...tadārammaṇa* (3-13) together with *bhavaṅga* consciousness in the context of cognitive process will be discussed in the next chapter. Let us now discuss the role of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in the process of death-birth from the Vism (457-58) with the help of a chart.

#### **14 Modes of Consciousness at the Process of Death-Birth-Death-Birth**

<i>bhavaṅga</i> with its object <i>kamma</i> / continuity	Previous–present life (death-birth)	<i>cuti</i> (death) <i>paṭisandhi</i> (rebirth-linking) <i>bhavaṅga</i> (constituent-becoming)		
	Present life: process thought	<i>Bhavaṅga</i> consciousness: (a) <i>aṭṭabhavaṅga</i> (b) <i>bhavaṅga calana</i> (c) <i>bhavaṅga</i> <i>upacceda</i>	Six sensory consciousness: eye, nose, ear, tongue, body, mind	<i>āvajjana</i> ( <i>pañca-dvāra-āvajjana</i> five-door-adverting) <i>dassana</i> (seeing) <i>savanna</i> (hearing) <i>ghāyana</i> (smelling) <i>sāyana</i> (tasting) <i>phusana</i> (touching) <i>sampaṭicchana</i> (receiving) <i>santīraṇa</i> (investigating) <i>voṭṭhapana</i> (determining) <i>javana</i> (impulsion) <i>tadārammaṇa</i> (registration)

<sup>75</sup> Gunaratna lists the dying thought-process in order: “1. *bhavaṅga aṭṭa* (past unconsciousness), 2. *bhavaṅga calana* (vibration of the *bhavaṅga*), 3. *bhavaṅga upaccheda* (arrest of the *bhavaṅga*), 4. *manodvārāvajjana* (advertence through mind-door), 5. *maraṇasaññā javana citta* (death proximate javana impulses or terminal javana thought-moments), 6. *tadālamana* (registration of the experience), 7. *cuti citta* (death consciousness), 8. *paṭisandhi viññāna* (re-linking consciousness or rebirth consciousness occurring in the subsequent life) (Gunaratna 1980, 41).

Present- future life (death-birth)		<i>cuti</i> (death) <i>paṭisandhi</i> (rebirth-linking) <i>bhavaṅga</i> (constituent-becoming)
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The above chart is made on the basis of the presentation of 14 modes of consciousness in the Vism 457–58. In the chart, *saṃsāric* continuity is shown at three temporal stages of existence: past, present, and future. In past life, three modes of consciousness were shown with *cuti*, *paṭisandhi* and *bhavaṅga* at death-birth. In the present life, there is again *bhavaṅga* which functions in three modes: *atītabhavaṅga*, *bhavaṅga calana*, *bhavaṅga upacceda*. With these three *bhavaṅga* modes, 11 consciousness from *āvajjana* (*pañca-dvāra-āvajjana*) to *tadārammaṇa* imply the thought process in current life. In the Dhs Commentary, *tadārammaṇa* is also called *mūla-bhavaṅga* because of its similarity with *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* (Dhs-a 270). In the present life again there is the occurrence of *cuti-citta*, which is the last thought of life followed by *paṭisandhi*. Again there is future birth followed by *bhavaṅga*. *Paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* which has already been explained as the third factor of dependent co-arising is understood as the idea of first consciousness at conception which links the new life. When *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* ceases upon conception, *bhavaṅga* consciousness takes place and continues. However, the question arises, upon conception, when *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* ceases and *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa* takes place and continues, then what is the base of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness? When conception of a being takes place in the mother’s womb, where does *bhavaṅga*-consciousness sustain? It seems that the base of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is the heart-basis (*hadaya-vatthu*) of the being. Why? Because, when a being is born, he has “life faculty” (*jīvitindriya*) due to previous *kamma*, generated by *saṅkhārā*. And, this life faculty has the characteristic of maintaining matter (*rūpa*). As there is *bhavaṅga*-consciousness present in a being in the mother’s womb, it is in this life faculty together with the heart where *bhavaṅga*-consciousness sustains. And, this heart-basis has the characteristic of being the

support for the mind-element and mind-consciousness-element (Vism 447).<sup>76</sup> Therefore, it is said *bhavaṅga* consciousness is supported by the heart-base in sensual realm and form realm. But it is “baseless” in the formless realm. (Bodhi 1999, 223). About the role of consciousness in the process of death-birth, Gethin’s explanation is worth noting:

The object of the death consciousness [*cuti-citta*] processes may be either a sense-object (past or present), or *citta* and *cetasika* (past), or a concept; the process may thus occur either at one of the sense-doors or at the mind-door. Having reached the stage of *javana*, either by way of one of the sense-doors or just the mind-door, five moments of *javana* will occur, followed in certain circumstances by two moments of *tadārammana*. Immediately after this is the last consciousness moment of the life-time in question; this is a final moment of the old *bhavaṅga*, and it receives the technical name of a “falling away” or “death consciousness” (*cuti-citta*). It is important to note that this final moment of *bhavaṅga* takes as its object precisely the same object it has always taken throughout life. However, the last *bhavaṅga* of one life is immediately followed by the first *bhavaṅga* of the next life; this first moment of *bhavaṅga* is called “relinking” or “rebirth consciousness” (*paṭisandhi-citta*) and, being directly conditioned by the last *javana* consciousness of the previous life, it takes as its object the very same object as those – that is, an object that is different from the object of the old *bhavaṅga*. Thus the new *bhavaṅga* is a *vipāka* corresponding in nature and kind to the last active consciousness of the previous life, with which it shares the same object. The *paṭisandhi* is followed by further occurrences of the new *bhavaṅga* until some consciousness process eventually takes place (Gethin 2005, 166).

Now the role of *bhavaṅga* in the process of death-birth is clear. However, it should be noted that though *bhavaṅga*-consciousness streams from previous life, it is different in its nature and quality in the new life due to *kamma/saṅkhārā*. But the question arises, if *bhavaṅga*-consciousness flows in a different existence, then what is the difference between human *bhavaṅga* and other beings’ *bhavaṅga*? If a person had an animal life in previous life, or an animal had a human life in previous life, why does a man not suddenly behave as an animal and why does an animal not suddenly behave as a human being? Let us address these questions in the following section.

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<sup>76</sup> 27–28: *manodhātu-manoviññāṇadhatūnaṃnissaya-lakkhaṇaṃhadayavatthu*.

#### 4.6.1.4 Difference between *Bhavaṅga*-consciousness in Human Beings and in Other Beings

It is said that when *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* ceases *bhavaṅga*-consciousness takes place and continues throughout existence. It seems that as human beings our *bhavaṅga* consciousness was firmly stable as human *bhavaṅga* with our personality traits and behaviour at the moment of our birth. And, other beings' *bhavaṅgas* are firmly stable with their personality traits and behaviour at their conception. Therefore, we do not suddenly behave like animals such as dog, and dogs do not suddenly behave like human beings. Why is this so? It is so, because at the time of conception, *saṅkhārā* as *kamma* confirm the destiny of consciousness in a different existence. As *bhavaṅga* is effected by previous dying thoughts, *kamma*, *kamma-nimitta* and *gati-nimitta*, ethically present *bhavaṅga* is the result of previous *kamma*. However, the previous life's object of *bhavaṅga* and current life's object of *bhavaṅga* are not the same; they exist dependently. This principle is applicable for all beings in the triple existence of sensuality, form, and formless. If this principle is applied, it is understood that the birth of all beings is the result of their previous *kamma*, which confirm their existence with their personality traits in their way of life style. Again, in future birth their *bhavaṅga* consciousness would be different by the power of *kamma*. This matter is discussed from the *Vism*.

Let us first recall the 89 kinds of consciousness: (1) 21 kinds of wholesome consciousness, (2) 12 kinds of unwholesome consciousness, (3) 36 kinds of resultant consciousness, and (4) 20 kinds of functional consciousness. According to the *Vism*, when through the influence of the eight kinds of wholesome consciousness beings come to be born among deities and human beings, then the eight kinds of sense-realm resultant consciousness with root-cause occur, and also the resultant mind-consciousness-element without root-cause associated with equanimity, which is the weak wholesome result with two root-causes in

those who enter the state of eunuchs (*paṇḍaka*), etc., occurs among human beings. Then nine kinds of resultant consciousness occur as *paṭisandhi*, and they do so taking as their object whichever among the *kamma*, *kamma-nimitta*, or *gati-nimitta* appeared at the time of dying.

When, through the influence of the wholesome consciousness of the fine-material realm and the immaterial realm, beings are reborn in the fine-material and immaterial kinds of becoming respectively, then the nine kinds of fine material and immaterial resultant occur as *paṭisandhi*, and they do so, taking as their object only the *kamma-nimitta* that has appeared at the time of dying.

When, through the influence of the unwholesome consciousness, beings are born in a state of woe, then the one kind of unwholesome resultant mind-consciousness element without root-cause occurs as *paṭisandhi*, and it does so by taking as its object whichever among the *kamma*, *kamma-nimitta*, or *gati-nimitta* appeared at the time of dying (Vism 457–58).<sup>77</sup>

Now I come to the conclusion that upon the ceasing of *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* at the moment of our conception our human *bhavaṅga*-consciousness takes place with personality traits within our mentality-materiality by the power of *saṅkhārā*. Since then, our *saṅkhārā* matures day by day through our body, speech and mind activities. So, as long as our mind is not free from *āsava*, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, dependent upon various conditions, continues throughout *saṃsāric* existence. In this context, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness can be called as

<sup>77</sup> 22–36: *yadā hi aṭṭhannaṃ kāmāvacarakusalānaṃ ānubhāvena devamanussesu sattā nibbattanti, tadā nesaṃ maraṇakāle paccupaṭṭhitaṃ kamma-kammanimitta-gatinimittānaṃ aññataraṃ ārammaṇaṃ katvā aṭṭhasahetuka-kāmāvacaravipākāni manussesu paṇḍakādibhāvaṃ āpajjamānānaṃ dubbaladvihetuka-kusalavipākaupekkhā-sahagatā hetukavipākamanoviññāṇa-dhātu cā ti paṭisandhivasena nava vipākacittāni pavattanti. yadā rūpa-vacarārūpāvacarakusalānubhāvena rūpārūpabhavesu nibbattanti, tadā nesaṃ maraṇakāle paccupaṭṭhitaṃ kamma-nimittameva ārammaṇaṃ katvā nava rūpārūpāvacara-vipākāni paṭisandhivasena pavattanti. yadā pana akusalānubhāvena apāye nibbattanti, tadā nesaṃ maraṇakāle paccupaṭṭhitaṃ kamma-kammanimitta-gati-nimittānaṃ aññataraṃ ārammaṇaṃ katvā ekā akusalavipākā-hetukamanoviññādhātu paṭisandhivasena pavattatī.*

“surviving factor” or stream of consciousness, which is dependent on *saṅkhārā* rooted in latent ignorance and craving, and sustains in *saṃsāra*. In this regard, following the principle of dependent co-arising, I conclude thus: the function of *saṅkhārā* is to accumulate *kamma* for the purpose of rebirth, and the function of consciousness is to go forward. And, in the process of birth, consciousness functions as re-linking, which precedes mentality-materiality at conception. So, since consciousness joins with mentality-materiality, there is the state of surviving factor “*bhavaṅga*” in human beings. In this sense, there is a difference between *bhavaṅga* in human beings and *bhavaṅga* in other beings. In the next chapter, we will discuss human *bhavaṅga*-consciousness together with the “six sensory consciousness” to understand human psychology and *saṃsāric* existence.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed *saṅkhārā*, consciousness, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, and death-birth. This chapter was divided into three parts. In Part I, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) was discussed with its two aspects: (1) consciousness as “surviving factor,” and (2) sensory consciousness that arises depending on six sense bases and their objects. The first aspect of consciousness as “surviving factor” was analysed with the terms *viññāṇa*, *citta*, *gandhabba*, *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*, and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness.

It was said that *viññāṇa* and *citta* are identical in the context of rebirth. In this regard, the term *gandhabba* was defined as *saṃsāric-viññāṇa*, which is “stream of consciousness” (*viññāṇa-sota*) extending into both previous and present lives. *Gandhabba* was further discussed with *satta* (being). *Satta* was elucidated as a “person” in conventional sense which was singled out with the “heap of conditioning forces” (*saṅkhāra-puñja*). In this connection, the notion of “self” was discussed in both Buddhist and Vedic traditions. It was said that “self” as a permanent entity has not received any consideration in early Buddhist teachings.



In Part II, both active and passive modes of *saṅkhārā* were discussed signifying the factor *saṅkhārā* in dependent co-arising; it was said that it denotes the effect of *kamma* which confirms the consciousness's destiny in different existences. In this process, craving is the fuel for consciousness. It was said that beings are born again and again in different existences because of their *kamma*. So, as long as *kammic* forces operate, the cycle of birth continues.

The issue of continuity was discussed with reference to the “consciousness seed” (*viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ*). The meaning of “consciousness seed” was rendered as “consciousness affected by *āsava*.” So, no meaning of seed can be discerned when consciousness is not affected by *āsava*. In this connection, it was said that both *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* are affected by *āsava*, therefore *samsāric* continuity takes place. And, in this continuity process the “personality traits” or “identities” together with consciousness continues from existence to existence.

It was said when craving is not present, there is no basis for consciousness to survive. So, *samsāric* consciousness is no longer present in an enlightened person because he has eliminated craving. Therefore, an enlightened person is described as one “who is freed by the destruction of craving, through the cessation of consciousness” (AN I 236). In this regard, with the *Netti* reference, about the issue of the Perfect One's consciousness is resolved by saying that when a person is liberated through the complete cessation of consciousness (*samsāric* consciousness) he is described as the “Perfect One” standing or walking. He sees no “self” or “I” with regard to any of his/her five aggregates. Then he comes to be considered profound, immeasurable, and incalculable because of the extinction of lust, hatred, and delusion.

Following the above interpretation, in Part III, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness was discussed as a “surviving factor” in accordance with *bhava-sota*, *viññāṇa-sota*, or *saṃsāric viññāṇa*. And, this *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is affected by *āsava* and no longer present when a person attains enlightenment because there is no function of *kamma* in the enlightened one. Therefore, it is clear that with the cessation of its object *kamma*, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness also ceases. I have drawn this interpretation from the Paṭis that “with the cessation of *kamma*, there is the cessation of consciousness” (*kammanordhā viññāṇanirodho*, Paṭis I 57, 9).<sup>78</sup> However, a discrepancy was shown with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness that in the commentaries, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is still present in enlightened persons and in them, it ceases at the moment of their final *nibbāna*. In the commentaries, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is also understood as pure and splendid consciousness in its original nature. With this reference, Kalupahana (1995, 88) and Reat (1977, 182) think that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is compatible with the *Upanisadic ātman*. Yet, I commented that if *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is described as an ever-lasting and unchangeable *Upanisadic ātman*, the entire Buddhist teachings related to *bhavaṅga*-consciousness that I have discussed in this chapter are subject to question.

In the understanding of *bhavaṅga* as “surviving factor” in accordance with *bhava-sota*, I said that when death consciousness (*cuti-citta*), the last thought of a dying person, ceases, birth consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) arises. When birth consciousness ceases upon birth, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness takes place and flows endlessly like the stream of a river. In this way, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness continues throughout *saṃsāric* existence. It was said, *cuti-citta* and *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* are the species of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, and

<sup>78</sup> In the context of the cessation of consciousness, the Paṭis moreover says that, with the cessation of ignorance, craving, mentality-materiality, there is the cessation of consciousness, etc. (Paṭis I 57, 6–12: *avijjānirodhā viññāṇa-nirodhoti... taṇhānirodhā viññāṇanirodhoti...kammanirodhā viññāṇa-nirodhoti...nāmarūpanirodhā viññāṇanirodhoti paccaya nirodhaṭṭhena viññāṇakkhandhassa vayaṃ passata*).

*kamma* is their object. It was said that the third factor *viññāṇa* of dependent co-arising was defined as the *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* in the Paṭis in the context of re-birth. In this regard, *kamma-bhava* (*kamma*-becoming) consists of the five *dhammas* – *avijjā*, *sankhārā*, *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, and *cetanā* (*bhava*), and that *upapatti-bhava* (rebirth-becoming) consists of the five *dhammas*—*viññāṇa*, *nāmarūpa*, *āyatana*, *phassa*, and *vedanā* were discussed. In this way, all twelve links of dependent co-arising was shown in the Paṭis with *kamma-bhava* and *upapatti-bhava*.

It was also said that *bhavaṅga* of human beings and that of other beings are different and it is firmly stable at the moment of conception in a single life by force of the individual's *kamma*, sign of *kamma* or destiny of *kamma*. Therefore, a man suddenly does not behave like an animal, and an animal does not behave like a man.

The above interpretation of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and its related doctrines was understood as the “consciousness continuity” (*cittasantati*) (Vism 604). So, wherever there is continuity, there is relinking in future becoming/rebirth, and in the stream of continuity there is neither permanent entity nor otherness. This continuity is a process through the principle of dependent co-arising. This process of continuity was further understood with the help of the following three signs: “all states of becoming/continuity are impermanent, suffering and subject to change” (*sabbe bhavā aniccā dukkhā vipariṇāmadhammā*, AN II 177, 7). *Viññāṇa* also falls under these three signs, as: “the consciousness is impermanent, suffering and subject to change” (*viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariṇāma dhammaṃ*, SN III 28, 15–16; Paṭis II 109, 30–31). Here, “the subject to change” (*vipariṇāma dhammā*) is the “evolving nature” of consciousness followed by the same formula of impermanence, suffering and the nature of not-self. So, the freedom/escape for consciousness (*viññāṇassa nissaraṇaṃ*) is

understood through the abandoning of greed and desire (SN III 28; Paṭis II 109).<sup>79</sup> In this regard, any *viññāṇa* whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near are impermanent, subject to suffering and not-self (SN III 68).<sup>80</sup>

Therefore, it is quite legitimate to conclude that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness has the characteristic of “evolving nature”. This nature is the process of “becoming,” or “continuity” whereas the being/person can be called *bhūta*, or ‘the become,’ not “becomer”. Thus, in the Sn, becoming/continuity is described as: “becoming is conditioned by clinging and “the become” [person] goes down into suffering. To him that is born, there is death. This is the arising of suffering” (Sn 145, verse. 742).<sup>81</sup> So, in this process, there is no permanent substance but an ever-evolving process denoting the stream of becoming. It is similarly rendered by Ñāṇajīvako:

In the oldest Buddhist texts of *Abhidhamma* (about phenomena), the central conception of phenomenological analysis (*vibhajjavāda*) was concentrated on the idea of a ‘stream of existence’ (*bhavaṅga-sota*), or, in a free translation, emergence of fluctuating articulation... Thus the core of the Abhidhamma conception of the ‘stream of existence’ consists in its theory of momentariness (*khaṇikavāda*)... where the ‘stream of consciousness’ or ‘stream of thinking’ (Ñāṇajīvako 2012, 247).

In the following chapter, I will discuss *bhavaṅga*-consciousness together with six sensory consciousness to understand the *samsāric* existence and human psychology. The chapter will be based on the Pāli *Abhidhammic* literature, the *Vism*, the commentaries, and the *Abhidh-s*.

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<sup>79</sup>32–34: *yo viññāṇasmin chandarāgavinayo chandarāgappahānaṃ, idaṃ viññāṇassa nissaraṇaṃ.*

<sup>80</sup>15–19: *yaṃ kiñci viññāṇaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhataṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā pañītaṃ vā. yaṃ dūre santike vā sabbaṃ viññāṇaṃ netaṃ mama, neso ham asmi, na meso attāti evamevaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ.*

<sup>81</sup> *upādānaṃ paccayā bhavo bhuto dukkhaṃ nigacchati/ jātassa maraṇaṃ hoti phaso dukkhassa sambhavo.*

## Chapter–5: *Bhavaṅga-Consciousness in the Paṭṭhāna, the Milindapañha, the Visuddhimagga and the Commentaries*

### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed two aspects of consciousness (*viññāṇa*)—(1) consciousness as “surviving factor” and (2) sensory consciousness arising dependently, based on the six sense bases and their objects. In that chapter, the first aspect of consciousness as “surviving factor” has been discussed with the terms *viññāṇa*, *citta*, *gandhabba*, *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*, and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in the context of rebirth and its related doctrines from previous life to present life (death-birth). This chapter undertakes to discuss *bhavaṅga*-consciousness together with sensory consciousness since the conception of a human being until the attainment of *nibbāna* in present life (birth–*nibbāna*). The discussion of this chapter is limited to the consciousness of worldly persons. However, the nature of an enlightened person’s consciousness will be discussed occasionally.

This chapter will discuss *bhavaṅga* as it occurs in the Paṭṭh, the Mil, the Vism, and the commentaries. This chapter is divided into three parts. In Part I, it will be shown that *bhavaṅga* in the Paṭṭh occurs followed by *āvajjana* (advertence), mostly in the sections on *anantara* and *samanantara* conditions in two contexts: (1) in the context of rebirth, and (2) as a perceptual process in the context of ordinary psychological perception. In the Mil, it further occurs in the context of deep sleep and deep meditative trance, for example, when a man is in deep sleep his consciousness/mind goes into *bhavaṅga*. *Bhavaṅga* with the terms *viññāṇa*, *citta*, and *mano* is extensively found in the Vism and the commentaries in the context of the mental stream with its object *kamma* which continues throughout the life-cycle. It will be said that the concept of *bhavaṅga* was developed to address the issue of consciousness continuity in *saṃsāra* without any gap in between the preceding and succeeding *dhammas*. It was developed in two major

contexts: (1) to show rebirth, and (2) to show the perceptual process in ordinary psychological perception.

In the *suttas*, though we can find discussion on rebirth, some important issues have not been addressed. For example, in the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta* of the MN, it is said that there is the descent of the embryo when the following three things exist: (1) parents' intercourse, (2) mother's season, and (3) presence of *gandhabba* (*saṃsāric*-consciousness). Then the mother shelters the embryo in her womb for nine or ten months and subsequently gives birth to a child. If this period is carefully examined, the question for us would be: until the child is born, what was its condition of cognitive process? About this period, there is also less discussion in the *suttas* because they mainly describe the six sensory consciousness of an individual after the child is born. According to the *Vism*, when a being's faculties have become capable of apprehending an object, there comes about a disturbance in the continuity of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, thus the cognitive process takes place (*Vism* 458). The *Vism*-mahāṭikā says that the capability of apprehending the sense bases and their objects develops gradually after the being's birth. In this context, one's sense doors apprehend an object when his or her senses become matured (*Vism*-mṭ VRI II 55). It is true that there is consciousness in the fetus which has not been clearly described in the texts. Moreover, in deep sleep, when sensory consciousness is not in active or functioning, then how does a man survive? When a person is in a deep state of meditative trance (*nirodha-samāpatti*) wherein the vital bodily functions are suspended, how does he survive? It seems that later Buddhist thinkers thought a great deal about all these issues. Therefore, an extensive interpretation of consciousness was needed to address all these complications. These issues will be addressed in Part I.

Part II will discuss *bhavaṅga*-consciousness together with sensory consciousness to address the entire human existence from the point of view of two aspects of consciousness:

*vīthi-citta* (process consciousness) and process-free (*vīthi-mutta*) consciousness. As it will be pointed out that one can describe *bhavaṅga*-consciousness until the attainment of *nibbāna* because the object of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness which is *kamma* ceases at the moment of attainment of enlightenment. In this regard, our explanation of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is to address only *samsāric* existence. According to the *Vism*, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness completely ceases with the cessation of an Arahāt's passing away-consciousness (*Vism* 460). However, the question arises about the object of an Arahāt's *bhavaṅga*-consciousness. Is it the *kamma* that the Arahāt had before his enlightenment? What is then the difference between an Arahāt and an ordinary individual? An attempt will be made to address all these questions in this chapter.

Scholars such as Wijesekera (1979), Nyanatiloka (1980) and Padmasiri (1992) discuss *bhavaṅga* by relating it to the modern unconscious. Wijesekera particularly discusses it with the Freudian theory of the unconscious. We will entirely avoid this subject and instead stick to *bhavaṅga* to discuss *samsāric* existence. In this regard, I propose that it is important to address *samsāric* existence of an individual with *bhavaṅga*, rather than the psychology of an individual from the perspective of modern theory of the unconscious, because the purpose of the two traditions are different.

A hypothesis will be presented that though consciousness is one or has a single characteristic, its functions are mainly sevenfold: (1) *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, and (2–7) six sensory consciousness. We have already discussed that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness itself is affected by *āsava* in *samsāric* continuity. However, if one accepts the commentarial interpretation of *bhavaṅga* as pure consciousness (*pabhassarā citta*) existing in all beings throughout *samsāric* existence, there is another aspect of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness which is reflected in the commentaries only. According to the commentaries, *bhavaṅga* is not truly

defiled by *āsava*, it is pure but defiled by outside defilements such as *rāga* (desire). This chapter is based on the Pāli *abhidhammic* literature, the *Vism*, and the commentaries.

## Part I

### **5.2 *Bhavaṅga* in the Context of *Anantara* and *Samanantara* Conditions in the *Paṭṭhāna***

The *Paṭṭh* is the last book in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* that deals with the 22 triplets (*tikas*) and 100 couplets (*dukas*) of the *Dhs* with reference to the 24 conditions (*paccayas*). In the *Paṭṭh*, the term *bhavaṅga* occurs without being associated with *viññāṇa/citta*, i.e., *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa* mostly in the sections of *anantara-paccaya* (proximity–condition) and *samanantara-paccaya* (contiguity–condition). According to Karunadasa, these two conditions are identical as recognized in the commentarial texts, which “describe the temporal relationship between mental states that arise one after the other” (Karunadasa 2010, 267–68). Several scholars such as Davids (1913), Karunadasa (2007) and Gethin (2005) have shown that in the Buddhist history, *bhavaṅga* first appears in the *Paṭṭh* and was subsequently developed in the *Mil*, the *Vism* and the commentaries. But they have shown a few references to *bhavaṅga* in the *Paṭṭh*. Before dealing with their clarifications of *bhavaṅga*, let us first discuss the occurrence of *bhavaṅga* in the *Paṭṭh*.

Though it is difficult to get a concrete meaning of *bhavaṅga* and its usage in the *Paṭṭh*, it seems that *bhavaṅga* in this text was used in the context of continuity with regard to rebirth and with regard to ordinary psychological perception through proximity and contiguity conditions. To elaborate the aforesaid postulation, a few passages containing *bhavaṅga* in the *anantara* and *samanantara* conditions are quoted below:

The state accompanied by pleasure is conditioned for the state accompanied by equanimity by proximity condition. Death–consciousness accompanied by pleasure is



conditioned for rebirth-consciousness accompanied by equanimity by proximity condition. Becoming-constituent (*bhavaṅga*) accompanied by pleasure is conditioned for advertence by proximity condition. Body-consciousness accompanied by pleasure is conditioned for resultant mind-element by proximity condition. Resultant mind-consciousness element accompanied by pleasure is conditioned for functional mind-consciousness element by proximity condition. Becoming-constituent (*bhavaṅga*) accompanied by pleasure is conditioned for constituent-becoming (*bhavaṅga*) accompanied by equanimity by proximity condition (Paṭṭh III 324).<sup>1</sup>

The state accompanied by pleasure is related to the state accompanied by equanimity by proximity condition. Death-consciousness accompanied by rapture is related to rebirth-consciousness accompanied by equanimity by proximity condition. Becoming-constituent (*bhavaṅga*) accompanied by rapture is related to advertence by proximity condition. Resultant mind-consciousness element accompanied by rapture is related to functional mind consciousness element by proximity condition. Becoming-constituent (*bhavaṅga*) accompanied by rapture is related to constituent-becoming (*bhavaṅga*) accompanied by equanimity by proximity condition (Paṭṭh III 333).<sup>2</sup>

From the above passages, it is clear that *bhavaṅga* has been broadly discussed in the Paṭṭh. It has been pointed out that *bhavaṅga* in the Paṭṭh mostly occurs in the sections of *anantara* and *samanantara* conditions in the context of the continuity of consciousness in the process of death-birth, where no other state intervenes between previous life and next life. This means that there is no gap or interval (*antara*) between death and rebirth. This is the idea presented by the very same name in the conditions of *anantara* and *samanantara*. With this presentation, the above passages signify immediate rebirth from previous to next life. In this process, when death-consciousness ceases, rebirth-consciousness takes place immediately thereafter. Here, it is to be understood that this process happens through the law of dependent co-arising. In this process, consciousness and its objects which have just ceased in previous life, have become the conditioning states for the consciousness and its objects in next life.

<sup>1</sup> 27–31: *sukhasahagato dhammo upekkhāsahagatassa dhammassa anantarapaccayena paccayo. sukhasahagataṃ cuticittaṃ upekkhāsahagatassa upapatticittassa anantara-paccayena paccayo. sukhasahagataṃ bhavaṅgaṃ āvajjanāya anantara-paccayena paccayo. sukhasahagataṃ kāyaviññāṇaṃ vipākamanodhātuyā anantara-paccayena paccayo. sukhasahagatā vipākamanoviññāṇadhātu kiriyamano-viññāṇadhātuyā anantarapaccayena paccayo. sukhasahagataṃ bhavaṅgaṃ upekkhā-sahagatassa bhavaṅgassa anantarapaccayena paccayo.*

<sup>2</sup> 9, etc.: *pīṭisahagato dhammo upekkhāsahagatassa dhammassa anantarapaccayena paccayo. pīṭisahagataṃ cuticittaṃ upekkhāsahagatassa upapatticittassa anantarapaccayena paccayo. pīṭisahagataṃ bhavaṅgaṃ āvajjanāya anantarapaccayena paccayo. pīṭisahagatā vipākamanoviññāṇadhātu kiriyamanoviññāṇadhātuyā anantara-paccayena paccayo. pīṭisahagataṃ bhavaṅgaṃ upekkhāsahagatassa bhavaṅgassa anantarapaccayena paccayo.*

In the previous chapter (see 4.6), we have discussed that beings are born due to *kamma*. It was said that when a being passes away (death-consciousness ceases), rebirth-consciousness arises immediately. And in this process, the stream of *bhavaṅga* occurs immediately after rebirth-consciousness, and at the time of conception, when *bhavaṅga* takes place, a being continues in *saṃsāra* on account of *kamma*. In the previous chapter, we saw that *kamma* is the object of death, rebirth and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness. So, in this process when *bhavaṅga* takes place, its objects also become apparent. And in the context of *bhavaṅga*, the mental objects are supported by *kamma*-born materialities.

Also, in the current life, *bhavaṅga* continues in every thought process. In this process, consciousness and its objects which have just ceased are conditioning states for the consciousness and its objects which arise immediately afterwards. Here, the conditional relation highlights two things. One is the preceding and another is the succeeding mental states. In this process, there is no intervening gap. According to the *Paṭṭhānapakarāṇa-anuṭṭikā*, the succeeding is the preceding unit of consciousness which itself serves as the condition and gives rise to the succeeding one in such a way that the latter is the result of the former. And this process takes place strictly following the law of consciousness or consciousness continuity (*Paṭṭhānapakarāṇa-anuṭṭikā* VRI 125).<sup>3</sup> About this process, Karunadasa says:

If the proximity and contiguity conditions ensure the occurrence of consciousness in a linear sequence, this also means that two or more units of consciousness do not arise at one and the same time by way of juxtaposition (Karunadasa 2010, 268).

In the above discussion, it was said that in the *anantara* and *samanantara* conditions, the conditional relation highlights two things: one is the preceding, and another is the succeeding

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<sup>3</sup>37–38: *anurūpacittuppādanasamatthatā cittaniyamahetutā, tatha anantaruppādanasamatthatā ca saṅghānābhāvato suṭṭhuraṃ nirantaruppādanasamatthatā ca cittaniyamahetuviseso daṭṭhabbo.*

mental state with no intervening gap. Let us now discuss these two conditional relations to understand *bhavaṅga* in the context of ordinary perception of thought process in the Paṭṭh:

Preceding resultant indeterminate and functional indeterminate aggregates are related to succeeding resultant indeterminate and functional indeterminate aggregates by proximity condition. Becoming-constituent is conditioned for advertence...by proximity condition (Paṭṭh II 159).<sup>4</sup>

Becoming-constituent (*bhavaṅga*) associated with pleasant feeling is conditioned for becoming-constituent (*bhavaṅga*) associated with neither painful nor pleasant feeling by proximity condition (Paṭṭh III 324–25).<sup>5</sup>

From the above passages, it is clear that consciousness and its objects which have just ceased are themselves conditioning states for the consciousness and its objects which arise immediately afterwards with no gap in between. Wijesekera thinks that in this process, *bhavaṅga* is used in a technical sense which is “a distinct role in the analysis of the perceptual process” (Wijesekera 1967, 349). Wijesekera further comments:

The contexts also show without a shadow of doubt that attention (*āvajjana*) arises following *bhavaṅga* by way of a particular mode of conditionality, an idea that is distinctly characteristic of the description of the perceptual process in the later Abhidhamma literature such as the Visuddhimagga [458] and Atthasālinī [557 & 558] (Wijesekera 1967, 349).

About the usage of the term *bhavaṅga* in the Paṭṭh, moreover, Gethin says:

[A]ccording to the principles of the twenty-four conditions (*paccaya*) as elaborated in the *Paṭṭhāna*, the *bhavaṅga* state of mind must be understood as conditioning in various ways a being’s every response to the world around him or her. Although passive in so far as it is a *vipāka*, the *bhavaṅga* mind, like all *dhammas* and assemblages of *dhammas* by way of certain of the twenty-four conditionals relations. There is a sense then in which the *bhavaṅga* can be seen as a deeper level of the mind that acts on our conscious mind. Ordinary waking experience is thus presented in the Abhidhamma as a kind of dialogue between one’s essential nature (*bhavaṅga*) and various external stimuli (Gethin 2005, 172).

The above scholars’ elucidations are worth noting to understand *bhavaṅga* in the Paṭṭh.

However, from their assertion, no clear interpretation of *bhavaṅga* in the Paṭṭh can be drawn

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<sup>4</sup> 21–27: *purimā purimā vipākābyākatā kiriyābyākatā khandhā pacchimānaṃ pacchimānaṃ vipākābyākatānaṃ kiriyābyākatānaṃ khandhānaṃ anantarapaccayena paccayo. bhavaṅgaṃ āvajjanāya...anantarapaccayena paccayo.*

<sup>5</sup> 33–35: *sukhāya vedanāya sampayuttaṃ bhavaṅgaṃ adukkhamasukhāya vedanāya sampayuttassa bhavaṅgassa anantarapaccayena paccayo.*

out. This is so because in their discussion, there is less explanation about the sense in which *bhavaṅga* is used in the Paṭṭh. I have said that *bhavaṅga* in the Paṭṭh occurs mostly in the *anantara* and *samanantara* conditions. From my point of view, through these two conditions, the concept of *bhavaṅga* is employed to render the meaning of continuity in the process of death-birth and in the perceptual process which signify no intervening gap between preceding and succeeding conditions. Though the aforementioned scholars claim that *bhavaṅga* is fully described by Buddhaghosa in the Vism, from the above Paṭṭh passages it is understood that *bhavaṅga* takes place in the context of the continuity through the process of death-birth and through the process of perceptuality. It seems that this idea is further elaborated by Buddhaghosa to explain the continuity of consciousness in the Vism, as:

“After passing away yet rebirth again, and after rebirth there is again becoming-constituent (*bhavaṅga*).” Thus the consciousness-continuity of beings continues uninterruptedly through a succession of modes of becoming, destiny, persistence, abode, and likewise proceeds forward (Vism 460).<sup>6</sup>

The above passage shows the function of *bhavaṅga* in the context of continuity in the process of death-birth as shown in the Paṭṭh. However, it is noted that in the Paṭṭh the term *upapatticitta* is used instead of *paṭisandhi*. In the previous chapter (see 4.6.1), *paṭisandhi* was identified with the factor *viññāṇa* in dependent co-arising. Here, it seems that the later Buddhist thinkers developed *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* and replaced it with *upapatticitta* in the context of rebirth.

As it was said, *bhavaṅga* mostly occurs in the *anantara* and *samanantara* conditions of the Paṭṭh the relation of which highlights two things: one is the preceding and another is the succeeding mental state with no intervening gap. Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw has extensively discussed *bhavaṅga* from the Paṭṭh. Within the *anantara* and *samanantara* conditions, Sayadaw shows the following five types of proximity for the *bhavaṅga*:

<sup>6</sup> 16–18: *cutito pana puna paṭisandhi, paṭisandhito puna bhavaṅgan ti evaṃ bhavagatiṭhitinivāsesu saṃsaramānānaṃ sattānaṃ avicchinnaṃ cittasantānaṃ pavattati yeva.*

- 1) After the birth-linking mental aggregates the bhavaṅga mental aggregates arise. This bhavaṅga mind-moment is the first bhavaṅga mind moment (*pathama-bhavaṅga*) in a life. The preceding mind-moment for this bhavaṅga is the birth-linking mind-moment. These preceding birth-linking mental aggregates are the proximity condition (*anantara-paccaya*) for the succeeding first bhavaṅga mind-moment.
- 2) Some bhavaṅgas arise after another bhavaṅga. In this case the preceding bhavaṅga mental aggregates are the proximity condition (*anantara-paccaya*) for the succeeding bhavaṅga mental aggregates.
- 3) Some bhavaṅgas arise after a determining mind-moment (*voṭṭhabbana*). The preceding determining mental aggregates are the proximity condition (*anantara-paccaya*) for the succeeding bhavaṅga mental aggregates.
- 4) Some bhavaṅgas arise after an impulsion (*javana*) mind-moment. The preceding impulsion mental aggregates are the proximity condition (*anantara-paccaya*) for the succeeding bhavaṅga mental aggregates. [Usually, sense-sphere impulsions arise seven times in a mental process. If there is bhavaṅga after the seventh impulsion, then that seventh impulsion is the proximity condition (*anantara-paccaya*) for the succeeding bhavaṅga. Occasionally, sense-sphere impulsions arise five times in the death-proximate mental process, reflecting impulsion mental process (*paccavakkhaṇa-vīthi*) etc. In this case the fifth impulsion is the proximity condition (*anantara-paccaya*) for the succeeding bhavaṅga. After a jhāna attainment mental process, there are uncountable jhāna impulsions. The last jhāna impulsion is the proximity condition (*anantara-paccaya*) for succeeding the bhavaṅga.]
- 5) Some bhavaṅgas arise after a registration (*tadārammaṇa*) mind-moment. The preceding registration mental aggregates are the proximity condition (*anantara-paccaya*) for the succeeding bhavaṅga mental aggregates (Sayadaw 2013, 53).

I understand the above interpretation of *bhavaṅga* in the context of the stream of existence (*bhavaṅga-sota*) based on the doctrine of conditionality which is presented in the *anantara* and *samanantara*. According to Karunadasa, the aforesaid doctrine of conditionality presupposes the momentariness of mental phenomena. Karunadasa particularly pointed out the *anantara* and *samanantara* conditions in the context of momentariness, as the following:

The four conditions by way of proximity (*anantara*), immediate contiguity (*samanantara*), absence (*natti*) and disappearance (*vigata*) clearly imply that the apparently continuous stream of consciousness in the final analysis a succession of momentary cognitive acts (Karunadasa 2010, 239).

Karunadasa has done a systematic study on the doctrine of momentariness and has shown that this doctrine was initially developed in the *Kathāvattu*, the *Yamaka* and the *Mahāniddeśa* (*ibid.*, 238). A detailed analysis about the doctrine of momentariness is beyond the scope of this study. Yet, we can briefly summarize Karunadasa's assertion about the doctrine of momentariness.

According to him, this doctrine was not peculiar to the *suttas*. It was developed later in the books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* and afterwards it was developed further in the Pāli commentaries and subsequent Buddhist texts. He says that in the *suttas*, the notion of change is not presented either as a doctrine of momentariness or as a formulated theory of the moment: “what we get in the Pāli *suttas* is not a doctrine of momentariness but the doctrine of impermanence, the transitory nature of all phenomena” (*ibid.*, 235). Karunadasa refers to the Paṭiṣ Commentary and points out three moments: the moment of origination (*uppādakkhaṇa*), the moment of duration (*thitikkhaṇa*), and the moment of dissolution (*bhaṅgakkhaṇa*): “these are the three moments recognized in the commentarial version of the doctrine of momentariness” (*ibid.*, 239). Following the manner of the principle of the doctrine of momentariness, it seems *bhavaṅga* is developed in the context of the stream of becoming. Ñāṇajīvako also thinks the same:

In the oldest Buddhist texts of *Abhidhamma* (about phenomena), the central conception of phenomenological analysis (*vibhajjavāda*) was concentrated on the idea of a ‘stream of existence’ (*bhavaṅga-sota*), or, in a free translation, emergence of fluctuating articulation... Thus the core of the *Abhidhamma* conception of the ‘stream of existence’ consists in its theory of momentariness (*khaṇikavāda*)... where the ‘stream of consciousness’ or ‘stream of thinking’ (Ñāṇajīvako 2012, 247).

The above discussion has analysed *bhavaṅga* in the Paṭṭh. In Chapter Three, we analysed *bhavaṅga* with two references in the Peṭ and the Netti. One reference is that *bhavaṅga* designates all factors of dependent co-arising. It was said that when all these factors of dependent co-arising occur conjointly, then it is *bhava*, and this *bhava* is the proximate cause for *saṃsāra*. The second reference is that *bhavaṅga* is associated with *saṅkhārā* and *āyatana*: when *saṅkhārā* and *āyatana* are affected by *āsava*, they are factors of becoming, and when *saṅkhārā* and *āyatana* are free from *āsava*, they are not factors of becoming. Clarifying both these references of *bhavaṅga*, we discussed the interpretation of *bhavaṅga* as a factor for becoming in association with dependent co-arising and the five aggregates in the context of *āsava*. In this context, *bhavaṅga* mostly refers to each factor of dependent co-arising which is

to be considered as a “factor of becoming”. Referring to this usage of *bhavaṅga* in the *Netti*, Cousins narrates that the original meaning of the term *bhavaṅga* is quite plain: “from which the use to designate a type of consciousness is derived” (Cousins 2005, 54). However, referring to the usage of *bhavaṅga* in the *Paṭṭh*, it seems that *bhavaṅga* has already been used in the *Paṭṭh* in the context of the continuity of consciousness. This idea has been extensively developed in the subsequent Pāli texts such as the *Mil*, the *Vism*, and the commentaries. In Chapter Three, we discussed the usage of *bhavaṅga* in the *Peṭ* and the *Netti*. Though in these texts, the presentation of *bhavaṅga* is different from that in the *Paṭṭh*, the *Mil*, the *Vism* and the commentaries, it seems that all these texts denote *bhavaṅga* to show continuity in *saṃsāra*. In the *Peṭ* and the *Netti*, this continuity is presented with all the factors of dependent co-arising. In the *Paṭṭh*, this continuity broadly takes place with the conditional relations of *anantara* and *samanantara*. In this connection, I claim that *bhavaṅga* denotes *saṃsāric* continuity which is described with consciousness itself in later Pāli texts, such as the *Mil* and the *Vism*. In this regard, *bhavaṅga* is understood as a type of consciousness. Let us now discuss *bhavaṅga* in the *Mil*.

### **5.3 *Bhavaṅga* in the *Milindapañha***

The previous section has discussed *bhavaṅga* as a resultant consciousness in the *Paṭṭh* in the context of continuity within the *anantara* and *samanantara* conditions showing that there is no intervening gap in preceding and succeeding *dhammas*. In this section, *bhavaṅga* will be discussed in the contexts of deep sleep and deep state of meditative trance (*nirodha-samāpatti*) in the *Mil*. Scholars in Buddhist Studies such as Sarachchandra have discussed the usage of *bhavaṅga* in the *Mil*, particularly in the context of deep sleep. About the occurrence of the term in the *Mil*, Sarachchandra says that the term *bhavaṅga* appeared in Buddhist history for the first time in the *Mil*. It was then subsequently developed in later Pāli texts (1994, 75). But,

Karunadasa says the term first appears in the Paṭṭh as a resultant consciousness and then in the Mil (2010, 138). In this regard, Collins briefly discusses the origin of the term *bhavaṅga*:

The details of the concept of *bhavaṅga* are found in the commentarial literature, the *Milinda Pañha*, *Visuddhimagga*, and the twelfth century ‘Summary of *Abhidhamma*’ (*Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha*); there is a bare mention of some of the terms of its use in the theory of perception and cognition, in what appears to be its final form, in the earlier *Abhidhamma* work, the *Paṭṭhāna* (Collins 1982, 238).

In the previous section, we discussed *bhavaṅga* in the Paṭṭh, and this section discusses *bhavaṅga* in the Mil. Wijesekera has written a short article about *bhavaṅga* entitled “Canonical Reference to Bhavaṅga”. The article refutes Sarachchandra’s claim and says that *bhavaṅga* is an early Buddhist doctrine found in AN II 70, and also in the Paṭṭh. In Chapters One and Two, Wijesekera’s contention was discussed in great detail.

Now I analyse some of Sarachchandra’s interpretations about *bhavaṅga* in the Mil. According to Sarachchandra, the term *bhavaṅga* was borrowed in the Mil from the Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma*, and that the term originally meant “a link in the Causal Chain or *pratītyasamutpāda*” (Sarachchandra 1994, 79). In support of his argument, he refers to a passage from the *Abhidharmakośakārikā*:

*klesāt kleśaḥ kriyā caiva tato vastu tataḥ punaḥ vastu kleśās ca jāyante bhavāṅgānām ayam nayaḥ* (3.27) (Sarachchandra 1994, 79, see footnote 15).

From defilement, there is the making of [further] defilement. And, from that [follows] the object. Furthermore, object and defilement are produced from *bhavaṅga*. This is the principle [theory]

Sarachchandra further states:

The twelve factors, beginning with *avidyā*, *saṃskāra*, and *vijñāna*, were called the twelve factors of becoming (*dvādaśabhavāṅgāni*), in the sense of *bhavasya aṅgāni*. They were primarily psychological, that is, they described the origin of the microcosm and transferred the explanation to the macrocosm, as was the habit with Indian thought. The twelve *bhavāṅga* are described as flowing on, unbroken, from eternity, in a continuous stream, like the flow of a river, and we saw earlier that Buddhaghosa used the same image to describe the unbroken flow of unconscious life within the individual mind (*ibid.*, 79–80).



In Chapter Three, I have shown that *bhavaṅga* designating a factor of dependent co-arising is not a doctrine of Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma* alone, but is also found in the *Netti* (see more in Chapter Three). In Chapter One, I referred to Chandaratana who says that the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* existed among Sri Lankan Theravadins long before the arrival of Buddhaghosa. In this regard, citing all possible references, I said that the concept of *bhavaṅga* designating the factors of dependent co-arising and consciousness developed among the Buddhist school(s) in India much earlier. In this connection, let us discuss *bhavaṅga* in the *Mil*.

Tradition says that the *Mil* was composed in the middle of the second century BC as the King Milinda ruled during that time. But Norman differs in his opinion and claims that the text was translated into Pāli from a Sanskrit or Prakrit original in North India about the beginning of the Christian era. He further assumes that the present form of the *Mil* was completed by the fifth century AD. He cites the sentence *Milindapañhānaṃ pucchāvissajjānā samattā* (the answers to the Milinda's questions are concluded, *Mil* 89, 17) from the *Mil*, and says that the original portion of the book ended there. Moreover, he says that within that portion, there are many insertions of the doctrine of a later period (Norman 1983, 110–11). Hinuber cites Fussman (1993, 66) who also thinks that the “original *Milindapañha* was much shorter and written in a language different from Pāli, perhaps Gāndhārī, a north western Middle Indic” (Hinuber 1996, 83). Chandaratana also speaks of two strata in the *Mil*. Citing Guang Xing's article “Introduction to the *Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra*” (2008), Chandaratana further says that the *Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra* is shorter than the current *Mil* which corresponds to the original or old stratum of the text. If the aforementioned scholars' elucidation is considered, one can see that the reference to *bhavaṅga* in the *Mil* is not found in the original portion, but in the later portion of the text. Chandaratana assumes that *bhavaṅga* in the later portion of the *Mil* was probably inserted by the Sri Lankan Theravadins (Chandratana 2011, 217). Now the occurrence of *bhavaṅga* in the *Mil* is discussed in the following section.

### 5.3.1 *Bhavaṅga* in the Context of Deep Sleep

*Bhavaṅga* occurs in the section “Supinapañho” (the Question on Dreams) of the Mil in a dialogue between the King Milinda and the Thera Nāgasena in two contexts: (1) in deep sleep, and (2) in deep meditative trance (*nirodha-samāpatti*). In this section, the first context of deep sleep will be discussed. The second context will be discussed in the subsequent section.

It is important to note that Nāgasena was answering all questions asked by King Milinda who was a non-Buddhist during the time of their conversation. Therefore, King Milinda might have asked the questions which had not been addressed earlier in Buddhist history, but addressed in non-Buddhist texts such as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. We will come to this point later in this section (see 5.3.3). One of the questions is about the condition of a person during deep sleep. In a conversation, when Milinda asked regarding the dream state, Nāgasena described the condition of sleep of a man by saying that when a man enters into deep sleep, his consciousness/mind (*citta*) enters into *bhavaṅga*.

Nāgasena describes three stages of sleep. Firstly, people fall asleep when their body is weak and they are unable to do anything. This is known as the beginning of sleep. Secondly, following the first stage, when a person still possesses his scattered thoughts, it is the middle stage of sleep which is described as light sleep, also called a monkey’s sleep. Finally, when a person’s mind has entered into *bhavaṅga* that is the end of sleep, also known as deep dreamless sleep. With regard to dream, Nāgasena further says that when a person is in the middle stage of sleep (monkey’s sleep), there is the occurrence of dream, and when a person dreams a dream he is neither awake nor asleep. He dreams when his sleep has become light, yet he is not fully conscious. It is in that interval that dreams are dreamt: “That is called a dream, a state that becomes portent in the focus of the mind” (*supinaṃ nāma, yaṃ cittassa āpātham upagacchati*, Mil 298, 4-5).

About the nature of dream, Nāgasena, moreover, says that people see in dreams both pleasant or peaceful and evil or terrible things which they have either seen or done before, or not seen or done before. In a simile, he says that when the mind is not active or not in function dreams are dreamt just as in darkness and gloom; where there is no light, no shadow will fall even on the most burnished mirror. In this regard, the AN Commentary says that consciousness/mind in dream is like in a monkey's sleep because it is quick to change. And in dream, consciousness is associated either with wholesome (*kusala*), unwholesome (*akusala*) or undeclared (*abyākata*), because it is repeatedly moving out from *bhavaṅga* (AN-a III 317–18).<sup>7</sup> It is to be noted that the AN Commentary explains this idea while commenting on the *Mahāsupina Sutta* (AN III 240–43) which contains the five great dreams that appeared to the Buddha before his enlightenment.

In the context of deep sleep, Nāgasena says that when a man is in deep sleep his consciousness/mind enters into *bhavaṅga*. And consciousness/mind which enters into *bhavaṅga* does not function, and a non-functioning consciousness/mind neither knows the pleasant nor the evil. To clarify the aforementioned discussion, a passage from the *Supinapañho* section of the *Mil* is referred to below:

O King! One who dreams, does not dream while sleeping, nor even while being awake. But (one) dreams when (one's mind) is in the interval between being drowsy, and has not yet gone into *bhavaṅga*. O King! When a man descends from the state of being drowsy, his mind enters into *bhavaṅga*. That mind which has entered into *bhavaṅga* does not function. Non-active mind does not know pleasure and displeasure (*Mil* 299).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>19–03: *kapimiddhapareto ti makkaṭaniddāya yutto; yathā hi makkaṭassa niddā lahuparivattā hoti, evaṃ yā niddā punappuna kusalādicittavokiṇṇattā lahuparivattā yassā pavattiyam punappunam bhavaṅgato uttaranam hoti, tāya yutto supinam passati. tenāyam supino kusalo pi hoti akusalo pi abyākato pi. tattha supinante cetiyavandana-dhammassavana-dhammadesanādīni karontassa kusalo, pāṇātipātādīni karontassa akusalo, dvīhi antehi mutto āvajjanatadārammaṅkhaṇe abyākato ti veditabbo.*

<sup>8</sup>11–17: *yo so mahārāja supinam passati na so niddāyanto passati nāpi jāgaranto passata, api ca okkante middhe asampatte bhavaṅge etth'antare supinam passati. middhasamārūḥassa mahārāja cittaṃ bhavaṅgataṃ hoti, bhavaṅgataṃ cittaṃ nappavattati, appavattaṃ cittaṃ sukhadukkham na-ppajānāti.*

From the above passage, it is evident that *bhavaṅga* occurs in the context of consciousness of a person in that when the person is in deep dreamless sleep. his mind enters into *bhavaṅga*. Let us now discuss the second reference to *bhavaṅga* in the context of *nirodha-samāpatti* in the following section.

### 5.3.2 *Bhavaṅga* in the Context of *Nirodha-samāpatti*

*Nirodha-samāpatti* is identical with the meditative state *saññāvedayita-nirodha* (the cessation of perception and feeling) (Pieris 2004, 123; Somaratne 2006, 742). According to the *Mahāvedalla Sutta* of the MN, one who has entered into the state of *saññāvedayita-nirodha*, his bodily formations, verbal formation, and mental formations have ceased and subsided, but his vitality is not exhausted, his heat has not been dissipated, and his faculties become exceptionally clear (MN I 296).<sup>9</sup>

In the previous chapter (see 4.2.2), we analysed two aspects of consciousness in the *suttas*: (1) consciousness as “surviving factor,” and (2) sensory consciousness. From the above discussion, it seems that when a person is in deep sleep or in deep meditative trance his six sensory consciousness are not functioning, yet his consciousness (surviving factor) continues. If his consciousness (surviving factor) is not functioning, it has to be understood that the person is no other than a dead person. In the previous chapter (see 4.2), we referred to the *Mahāvedalla Sutta* of the MN which says that our present body is bereft of the three states—vitality (*āyu*), heat (*usmā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Without these three things a person is like a senseless piece of log (MN I 296). When the content of the *Mahāvedalla Sutta* is examined, it seems that in a deep meditative trance a person’s bodily formations, verbal formation, and

<sup>9</sup>17–23: *saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpanno, tassa pi kāyasāṅkhārā niruddhā paṭippassaddhā, vacīsāṅkhārā niruddhā paṭippassaddhā, cittasāṅkhārā niruddhā paṭippassaddhā, āyu aparikkhīṇo, usmā avūpasantā, indriyāni vipasannāni. yvāyaṃ āvuso mato kālakato yo cāyaṃ bhikkhu saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ samāpanno, idaṃ tesam nānākaraṇan ti.*

mental formations cease (*kāyasāṅkhārā...vacīsaṅkhārā... cittasaṅkhārā niruddhā*), yet his consciousness (surviving factor) by *kammic* forces which are known to be conditioning forces (*saṅkhārā*) functions as a form of continuity of consciousness. In this context, mental formations cease (*cittasaṅkhārā niruddhā*) may mean the cessation of perception (*saññā*) and feeling (*vedanā*), not the cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). This is what is also said by Bodhi:

A triad of *saṅkhāras* is mentioned in connection with the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling: the bodily formation, the verbal formation, and the mental formation ([SN] IV 293, 7–28). The first is in-and-out breathing (because breath is bound up with the body); the second, thought and examination (because by thinking one formulates the ideas one expresses by speech); the third, perception and feeling (because these things are bound up with the mind). Two of these terms—the bodily formation and the mental formation—are also included in the expanded instructions on the mindfulness of breathing ([SN] V 311,21-22; 312 &5).

In the text, therefore, it is said that the body is bereft of the three states—vitality (*āyu*), heat (*usmā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) (MN I 296). Here, for our purposes, consciousness does not refer to the six sensory consciousness; it is the surviving factor with its own object of *kamma*. It seems that Nāgasena has singled out *bhavaṅga* with this consciousness (surviving factor) which is no other than the continuity of consciousness. However, the Vism contains that after passing into meditative trance, there is “neither perception nor non-perception” (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana*), there is no *citta* in cessation (*acittako hoti, nirodham phusati*, Vism 707, 34–35). Now this matter is examined.

Collins thinks that there is no *citta* means that there is no *bhavaṅga*-consciousness either. I will differ from this view in this section. According to Collins:

[I]n the case of the meditative attainment of ‘cessation’, personal identity is carried by the body, and not by the identity of a continuing level of mind or consciousness...in which the *bhavaṅga* must be included” (Collins 1982, 257 & 246).

Collins further says: “it is the material life-faculty which continues to exist during cessation” (*ibid.*, 230). Here, Collins takes the position of the Kvu. The Kvu (VIII 10, pare 6–7) says that

when a person is in *nirodha-samapatti* his vital power (*jīvitindriya*) is still present but it cannot be called immaterial. In a footnote, translators of the Kvu, Aung and Davids state: “Nirodha, literally cessation (viz., of consciousness): the utmost result of Jhāna abstraction. Everything mental (immaterial) is suspended for a time” (Aung and Davids 1915, 227). It is because there is no support of mental volitions (*saṅkhārā*) as a proximate cause for consciousness. According to the Kvu, if there is *saṅkhārā* the person cannot be in *nirodha-samapatti* (*no nirodhasamāpanno ti*, Kvu 396, 31). Harvey has analysed the passages from the Kvu and says that according to the Kvu, “neither *citta* nor wisdom exist in cessation” (Harvey 1995, 164). He further refers to the Dhs Commentary and says that in cessation *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is also “cessed” (*niruddha*) (*ibid.*, 164). Here, Harvey’s assertion seems inadequate, because it seems the Dhs Commentary refers to mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*) which has ceased. In this regard, *mano* is *bhavaṅga-citta* (*tatta mano ti bhavaṅgacittaṃ, taṃ niruddham pi āvajjanacittassa paccayo...* Dhs-a 283, 21–22). Though *mano* refers to *bhavaṅga*, one can make a distinction in terms of their functions. Here, it seems *mano* does not imply the entire function of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, because the Iti Commentary says that *mano* refers to the external stimulus of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as it is the noetic opening “door” (*dvāra*) to the outside world that is an act of advertence (*āvajjana*) (Iti-a I 101).<sup>10</sup> Here the truth is that though *mano* refers to *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, it is the noetic opening “door” (*dvāra*) which should be understood as *bhavaṅga-mano* that becomes the door by advertence (*āvajjana*). Hence, I understand that it is the state of *mano* which is *kiriya-manoviññāṇa-dhātu* (functional mind-consciousness element) that ceases in deep meditative trance (Dhs-a 283). In other words, it is the mind, whose function is to direct towards visible objects that cease, but not the whole phenomenon of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness. The forgoing discussion is also applicable for a

<sup>10</sup> 9–11: *mano-ti pana kiñcāpi sabbaṃ viññāṇaṃ vuccati, tathā-pi dvārabhāvassa idhādhippetattā dvārabhūtaṃ sāvajjanaṃ bhavaṅgaṃ veditabbaṃ.*

person in the state of deep sleep: in deep sleep the mind ceases, yet the phenomenon of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness continues. Therefore, it is understood that the core function of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness refers to *viññāṇa* (surviving factor) which stands for the continuity of consciousness. Thus, I say that in *nirodha-samapatti*, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness still continues in a person. Let us further examine in the following section in what sense the concept of cessation is used.

### 5.3.2.1 What Does It Mean by “No Consciousness” Upon Attaining the “Base of Neither Perception nor Non-perception”?

In the light of the above discussion, I intend to further discuss the concept of cessation in this section. In the Paññābhāvanānisamsa Niddesa of the Vism, in a certain context, Buddhaghosa says that when a person has attained the base of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*), he then attains the base of neither perception nor non-perception (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana*). Then, in that base after one or two turns of consciousness/mind have passed, he becomes without consciousness/mind, he achieves cessation (*ath’ ekaṃ vā dve vā cittavāre atikkamitvā acittako hoti*, Vism 707, 34). Regarding this passage, Collins says that here “no consciousness” refers to the non-functioning of the mind, including that of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness:

A monk in cessation is ‘without mind’; when he enters it his ‘mental continuity is suspended’. It is only possible to attain the state in a sphere with all five *khandhā*, ‘because of absence of physical basis’ in spheres without body...it is the ‘material life-faculty- which continues during cessation, while ‘immaterial phenomena’, in which the *bhavaṅga* must be included, are suspended (Collins 1982, 246).

However, Collins refers to the Vism Commentary (Vism-a 904) which explains that “there is no death during cessation because death takes place by means of the final *bhavaṅga*” (*ibid.*, 246). Yet, he goes on to say that there is non-existence of *bhavaṅga* in cessation which cannot be ignored:

Personal continuity spanning a period of cessation, then, is guaranteed by the continued existence of the body, or rather the material life-faculty, and not by the continued

occurrence of *bhavaṅga*-moments. Certainly the state of cessation is a very rare occurrence, and for practical purposes in every other sphere of psychology *bhavaṅga* can be regarded as the crucial factor in continuity. For theoretical purposes, however, the non-existence of *bhavaṅga* in cessation cannot be ignored (*ibid.*, 246).

In the above passage, Collins describes the state of no *citta* as one where there is no function of *citta* (mind) at all, including the function of *bhavaṅga*. From my point of view, no *citta* in the state of *nirodha-samāpatti* can be interpreted in two ways: (1) no *citta* is equal to no function of any sensory consciousness including the mind consciousness, and (2) no *citta* is equal to the cessation of consciousness. With regard to the first interpretation, I have already clarified that there is no function of mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāṇa*) which refers to the external stimulus of *bhavaṅga* as it is the noetic opening (*dvāra*) to the outside world. For the second interpretation, no *citta* could be equal to *nibbāna* which means that there is “the cessation of consciousness”. This interpretation is applicable for the enlightened person. In this regard, upon attaining the state of neither perception nor non-perception, the monk further makes efforts to achieve *nibbāna*. Finally, he achieves *nibbāna* through the cessation of consciousness which is equal to the destruction of craving (one is freed by the destruction of craving, through the cessation of consciousness/*viññāṇassa nirodhena taṇhākkhayavimuttino*, AN I 236, 16). Let me now justify my contention as to why “*acittaka*” may mean cessation of consciousness, or *nibbāna*.

In the passage of the *Vism*, the term *acittaka* is used in the context of cessation (*nirodha*). It is said that upon attaining the two bases of meditative state – nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception – the person (monk) couples together the states of serenity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassana*). He is then directed to successive cessation of consciousness. The aforementioned discussion means that after attaining the bases of nothingness and neither perception nor non-perception, a monk does not remain in the same stage, he makes effort by coupling together *samatha* and *vipassāna* meditations through which



he destroys all *āsavas* and achieves *nibbāna*. Here the meaning of “*acittaka*” in the cessation firmly refers to the cessation of *citta/viññāna* which is the cessation of “becoming” or “continuity of *samsāric* life”. Let us discuss more about this subject from the *sutta* point of view.

The *Sunakkhatta Sutta* (MN II 252–61), which is devoted solely to the significance of liberation from worldly material things to *nibbāna* says that a person, by cutting off desire and lust associated with all the senses, reaches worldly material things (*lokāmisā*). When he understands worldly material things, he escapes from there and reaches the state of imperturbableness (*āneñja*). Again, relinquishing the state of imperturbableness, he reaches the base of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*). Further relinquishing the base of nothingness, he reaches the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). Upon achieving this state, the monk does not remain there; rather, by detaching from the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, he attains *nibbāna*. In this *Sutta*, except *nibbāna*, all other bases—the worldly material things, the imperturbableness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception—are themselves defined as fetters (*samyojana*). That is why the monk does not remain at the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, rather he makes efforts to achieve cessation of becoming.

It seems that in the *Vism*, no *citta* in *nirodha-samāpatti* refers to the cessation of consciousness because the monk upon attaining the state of neither perception nor non-perception escapes the state and couples the *samatha* and *vipassana* meditations. This implies that the monk strives to achieve *nibbāna*. Considering all these clarifications, I claim that “*acittaka*” refers to the cessation of consciousness which is no other than the cessation of consciousness. About this interpretation, Harvey also thinks the same, which he discusses in his book under the sub-section “The Roles of *Bhavaṅga*”. Harvey, however, says:

The early texts, then, are not without some ambiguity on the issue of whether any kind of *citta* is present in cessation. It is not surprising, then, that the different schools had different opinions on this matter. Bareau reports that the Sarvāstivādin Vaibhāṣikas denied any *citta* in cessation, while it was accepted by Sautrāntikas, Dārstāntikas, the Vibhajyavādins—who are almost identical to the Theravādins—and even by the Theravādins themselves (Harvey 1995,164–65).

In the context of cessation, it is also possible to say that there is the non-existence of *bhavaṅga* which is equal to the cessation of *saṃsāric* consciousness. Here the meaning is that the continuity of consciousness or *bhavaṅga* is arrested at the moment of enlightenment. In this regard, though an Arahat is still alive his consciousness is inexplicable because he does not hold an “I” with regard to his five aggregates. However, the Vism and the commentaries say that there is still *bhavaṅga* in an enlightened person and this *bhavaṅga* ceases with his death-consciousness. I will come to this point in this chapter.

In this section, no *citta* in cessation is interpreted in two contexts. First, when a monk is in deep meditative state his six sensory consciousness are not active or not functioning, yet his *bhavaṅga* continues by *kammic* forces. Second, no *citta* in *nirodha-samāpatti* refers to the cessation of consciousness which is identical with the cessation of becoming or continuity of *saṃsāric* life.

I now intend to discuss more about the condition of consciousness during deep sleep, because scholars like Sarachchandra and Harris think that Nāgasena borrowed the *Upaniṣadic* conception of deep sleep to explain the Buddhist understanding of consciousness. Here, Harris carried out the idea of Sarachchandra as he broadly referred to Sarachchandra’s understanding of *bhavaṅga* in the Mil.

### 5.3.3 Did Nāgasena Smuggle the Explanation of *Bhavaṅga* in the Context of Deep Sleep from Non-Buddhist Thought?

As I have mentioned, Sarachchandra and Harris think that Nāgasena imitated the *Upaniṣadic* explanation for the state of deep sleep in the context of *bhavaṅga*. From my point of view, it is not necessary to refer to non-Buddhist thought to provide an answer about the condition of a person's consciousness when he is in deep sleep. Before providing my clarification about the condition of consciousness during deep sleep, let me first refer to Sarachchandra and Harris's interpretation. Sarachchandra contends:

When Nāgasena says the mind goes to *bhavaṅga* during sleep, he is smuggling in disguise the old discarded *vijñāna* of the non-Buddhist thought. Perhaps already by his time the word must have acquired this specialised meaning, and could be conveniently used to mean anoetic consciousness as distinguished from the *vijñāna* that was regarded by the Buddha as generic. In *bhavaṅgagata* Nāgasena coined an expression analogous to that of the Vedānta philosophy, and meant that the mind went in deep sleep into its original state, into the cause of existence, into a potential condition in other words (Sarachchandra 1994, 80).

Harris says:

In fact *bhavaṅga* shows a strong functional correspondence to the *Upaniṣadic* soul (*ātman*) in that it is undisturbed in deep, dreamless sleep, yet it differs in that it ceases to exist when cognition arises. Under most conditions, when *bhavaṅga* is cut off by a stimulus which leads to cognition, processes take place which result in the generation of future acts (Harris 1991, 162).

To explain deep sleep in accordance with the *Upaniṣadic* interpretation, Sarachchandra cited passages from BU (2.1.16 & 17).<sup>11</sup> According to the BU, in sleep, consciousness/mind (conscious spirit – *vijñānamayah puruṣaḥ*) goes into a dormant or potential state and lies in the heart which is the lotus-shaped lump of flesh (Mādhavānanda 1950, 611–12). Moreover, Sarachchandra cites the *Brahma Śūtra* (3.2.7–9) which says that in sleep, consciousness resides

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<sup>11</sup>*Sa hovācājātaśatrur yatraiṣa etat supto 'bhūt ya eṣa vijñānamayah puruṣa kvaiṣa tadābhūt kuta eta āgād iti. Tad a na mene Gārgyah.*

*Sa hovācājātaśatrur yannaiṣa etad supto 'bhūd ya eṣa vijñānamayah puruṣas tad eṣām prānānām vijñānena ādāya ya eṣo 'ntar hṛdaya ākāśas tasmīn chete. Tāni yadā grhṇātyatha h'aitat puruṣaḥ svapiti nāma, tad grhīta eva prāno bhavati, grhīta vāg, grhītaṃ cakṣur grhītaṃ śrotraṃ grhītaṃ manaḥ* (Sarachchandra 1994, 78; footnote 10, *italic is mine*).

within the self, the Brahman (Sarachchandra 1994, 79). In this connection, Harris cites a passage from CU (VI.8.1) saying that “when a man sleeps he becomes one with that which is, Somya; he has gone into his own self.”<sup>12</sup> Harris, however, concludes that “*bhavaṅga* clearly becomes a device to protect Buddhist notions of moral and psychic continuity, while at the same time the soul theory of the *Upaniṣad* is rejected” (*ibid.*, 162).

From the above explanation, the CU says that in sleep a man’s consciousness itself is Brahman, the true nature of the soul. The BU defines this true nature of consciousness as the original state, pure and free by nature. And the state of sleep is “analogous to the state of absorption in Brahma” (Sarachchandra 1994, 79). It is because a person does not experience any sense of fatigue, sorrow and joy in sleep. And when he wakes up, he regains consciousness of the world outside, which causes sorrow and joy. In this regard, the self becomes the light:

When he sleeps, he takes away the material of this all-embracing world (the waking state), himself puts the body aside and himself builds it up (a sleep body); he sleeps by his own brightness, by his own light. In this state the man [soul] becomes light (BU IV 3.9; 199).<sup>13</sup>

Here, it seems that Sarachchandra and Harris have relied on the *Upaniṣads* to trace the Buddhist understanding of consciousness during deep sleep from the non-Buddhist idea of consciousness which is the “soul”. In the previous chapter (see 4.2.3), I have clarified from the BU that the soul (*puruṣaḥ*) is a “great being, endless, unlimited consisting of nothing but consciousness” (BU II 4.12). This statement represents the great “self” in BU: “this is the great not-born ‘self’ which is the consciousness in vitalities” (BU IV 4.22). Here Sarachchandra and Harris’ explanation about the state of consciousness during deep sleep is compatible with that of the *Upaniṣadic* consciousness (soul).

<sup>12</sup> *yatraitat puruṣaḥ svapiti nāma satā saumya tadā sampanno bhavati; svam apīto bhavati* (cited by Harris 1991, 158).

<sup>13</sup> 7–14: *sa [puruṣaḥ] yatra prasvapiti asya lokasya sarvāvato mātrām apādāya svayaṃ vihatya svayaṃ nirmāya svena bhāsā svena jyotiṣā prasvapiti. atrāyaṃ puruṣaḥ svayaṃ jyotir bhavati.*

In the previous chapter (see 4.2.2), I have identified two aspects of consciousness in the *suttas*: (1) consciousness as the “surviving factor,” and (2) sensory consciousness. In this regard, it was said that the Buddha has mostly described the six sensory consciousness. Yet, throughout my discussion I have clearly shown consciousness as the “surviving factor” which is “not-self” or “soul” but “continuity of consciousness” in *saṃsāric* existence reflected even in the *suttas*. If this Buddhist explanation of consciousness is considered, it is not necessary to explain the issue in terms of the *Upaniṣadic* description of the condition of a person during deep sleep as Nāgasena has done. Here, Nāgasena just explained consciousness as the “surviving factor” or “continuity of consciousness,” that is, as *bhavaṅga*. It seems that Nāgasena was familiar with the term *bhavaṅga* as it was developed in the Paṭṭh before his times. And this explanation of *bhavaṅga* has been further elaborated in the *Vism* as the continuity of consciousness:

“After passing away yet birth again, and after birth there is again becoming-constituent (*bhavaṅga*).” Thus, the conscious continuity of beings continues uninterruptedly through a succession of modes of becoming, destiny, persistence, abode, and likewise proceeds forward. But when one attains Arahathship here, it ceases with the cessation of his passing-away consciousness (*Vism* 460).

The foregoing passage contains that one’s *bhavaṅga* continues throughout existence in *saṃsāra* until the attainment of final *nibbāna*. But I said that *bhavaṅga* is subject to cessation at the moment of enlightenment because of the cessation of *kamma* in an enlightened person. Now I will examine this subject with the question as to why Buddhaghosa interprets *bhavaṅga* as subject to cessation with the cessation of an Arahath’s death consciousness. Since an Arahath has eliminated all *āsavas*, does he experience death (*cuti*) anymore? If the fact of Arahath’s death consciousness is accepted, what is the object of that death consciousness? If *kamma* is the object of death consciousness, then what is the difference between an Arahath and an ordinary individual? All these questions will be addressed with reference to the *Vism* in the following section.

## 5.4 *Bhavaṅga* in the *Visuddhimagga*

The Vism was composed in the early part of the fifth century AD by Buddhaghosa (Ñāṇamoli 2010, xxxii). According to Ñāṇamoli, the Vism is a systematic exposition on the Pāli Canon and is a compilation of the whole of Buddhist teachings in a single text which “quotes freely from the Paṭisambhidāmagga” (*ibid.*, xlvi). Kalupahana thinks that the Vism contains “some metaphysical speculations, such as those of the Sarvāstivādins, the Sautrāntikas, and even the Yogācārins” (Kalupahana 1994, 207–08). On account of the existence of another similar text, the Vim, written by Upatissa in the first or second century AD, Ñāṇamoli says that the Vim was available to Buddhaghosa at the time of the composition of the Vism (Ñāṇamoli 2010, xiv). Chandaratana has done a comprehensive study of the doctrine of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and cognitive process in the Vim and the Vism. Chandaratna says that the illustration which is used in the Vim to explain the cognitive process (*citta-vīthi*) connecting with *bhavaṅga* is similar in some respect to the illustration used in the Vism. Therefore, Chandaratna concludes that the Sri Lankan Elders were familiar with not only the doctrine of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness but also the doctrine of the cognitive process long before the arrival of Buddhaghosa in Sri Lanka (Chandaratana 2011, 218 & 224). Considering the aforesaid speculation, I think that many doctrinal issues of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and cognitive process are similar in the Vim and the Vism. But, in this study, only the Vism will be consulted for understanding *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and its related doctrines.

In the Vism, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is given high value in the context of an individual’s existence in *saṃsāra*. It is said that a being’s *bhavaṅga*-consciousness continues until the attainment of final *nibbāna*. Here, it is important to note that in the Vism and other subsequent Pāli texts, the term *bhavaṅga* is frequently used with the terms *mano*, *citta*, and *viññāṇa*, i.e., *bhavaṅga-mano*, *bhavaṅga-citta*, and *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa*. All these connotations

have not been found in any of the previous texts such as the Paṭṭh, the Peṭ, the Netti, and the Mil, but found in the Vism. However, one can show the distinction in terms of their function in the Vism. Therefore, before dealing with *bhavaṅga* in the Vism and the subsequent Pāli texts, I intend to clarify the concepts of *bhavaṅga-mano*, *bhavaṅga-citta*, and *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa* in the following section.

#### 5.4.1 Different Functions of *Bhavaṅga-mano*, *Bhavaṅga-citta*, and *Bhavaṅga-viññāṇa*

The previous chapter (see 4.2) has shown that though the terms *mano*, *citta*, and *viññāṇa* are occasionally used as synonyms, they have significant differences in terms of their function. *Viññāṇa* refers to consciousness because it cognizes (SN III 87; MN I 292), *citta* refers to thinking (SN V 418), and *mano* to the faculty of the mind and its object is *dhamma* (MN I 112). I also referred to the Netti Commentary to understand the differences. According to the Netti Commentary, *mano*, *citta*, and *viññāṇa* are not just synonyms in a strict sense, but they have to be understood as dependent on one another for their definition or explanation (Netti-a VRI 60).<sup>14</sup> In this regard, the following contention of Wijesekera was also referred to:

*Mano* is employed generally in the sense of the instrument of thinking, that which cogitates, and, sometimes in the sense of that which purposes and intends. *Citta* has more or less the sense of ‘heart’ (*hadaya*), the seat of feeling, and refers to the affective aspect of mind as experiencing. *Viññāṇa*, usually taken as cognitive consciousness, has also a deeper connotation than the other two, and in certain contexts indicates the psychic factor which is the cause for the rebirth of an individual after death. One may say that these particular shades of meaning are typical of these three terms in the early Dialogues. There is no doubt that they all indicate some aspect of the inner, immaterial or subjective nature of man and as such they are all included in the Buddhist concept of Mind, using that English word in a general sense (Wijesekera 1994, 87).

Moreover, referring to the *Mahānidāna Sutta* of the MN, it was said that *viññāṇa* enters the mother’s womb at the time of the conception and develops there. It was further said that the *citta* departs (*cittaṃ assa vidhāvati*, SN I 37, 18, 23 & 38, 4) from the body at the time of death and courses in *saṃsāra* depending upon different conditions. With this reference, the terms

<sup>14</sup> 5: *pariyāyavacananiddhāraṇena vevacanaḥāraṃ vibhajitvā dassetuṃ “cittaṃ mano viññāṇa.”*

*viññāṇa* and *citta* were elucidated in the following way: they are identical in their functions in the context of rebirth. In this connection, let me now discuss the different functions of *bhavaṅga* with *mano*, *citta*, and *viññāṇa*.

I understand that *bhavaṅga-citta* and *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa* are similar in terms of their function. But *bhavaṅga-mano* is not same as *bhavaṅga-citta* and *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa*. *Bhavaṅga-mano* simply refers to the “consciousness” relating to only mental activity, that is, the intermediary moment between the activity of *bhavaṅga* and *mano*. It is similarly expressed in the *Vism*, and the *Vism-mahāṭikā*. According to the *Vism*, one part of consciousness is the *bhavaṅga-mano* as the door of arising which is only the mental data-base (*Vism* 483).<sup>15</sup> According to the *Vism-mahāṭikā*, *bhavaṅga-mano* occurs twice in vibration. It is only when there has been the occurrence of *bhavaṅga* in a state of vibration that there is the arising of advertent, not otherwise. Taking it thus as the reason for advertent, what is called “*bhavaṅga-mano*” is a door of arising (*Vism-mhṭ VRI II 72*).<sup>16</sup> And this door of arising is not common to other five doors of eyes, ears, etc. Therefore, it is understood that *mano* is the noetic awaking of *bhavaṅga* only, not strictly co-extensive with *bhavaṅga-citta* or *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa*. The *Iti Commentary* also says the same thing:

Though *mano* is declared to be the whole of consciousness, yet, since what is meant here is that it is the “door,” it (*mano*) should be understood as *bhavaṅga*, which has become the door by advertence (*Iti-a 101*).<sup>17</sup>

I have already said that in the *Dhs-a*, *mano* refers to an aspect of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, which ceases in the *nirodha-samāpatti*. In this context, *mano* signifies *kiriya-manoviññāṇa-dhātu* (functional mind-consciousness-element) which ceases in deep meditative trance (*Dhs-*

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<sup>15</sup>4–6: *chaṭṭhassa pana bhavanganabasaṅkhāto manāyatane kadeso va uppattidvāraṃ asādhāraṇam eva ca dhammāyatanaṃ ārammaṇaṃ ti.*

<sup>16</sup>30–33: *bhavaṅgamanasaṅkhātoti dvikkhattuṃ calitvā pavattabhavaṅgamanasaṅkhāto. calanavasena bhavaṅga-ppavattiyā satī eva āvajjanuppatti, na aññatthāti āvajjanassāpi kāraṇabhūtaṃ katvā vuttamā “bhavaṅgamanasaṅkhāto...pe... uppattidvāra” nti.*

<sup>17</sup> 9–11: *mano-ti pana kiñcāpi sabbaṃ viññāṇaṃ vuccati, tathā-pi dvārabhāvassa idhādhippetattā dvārabhūtaṃ sāvajjanaṃ bhavaṅgaṃ veditabbaṃ.*



a 283). But in *nirodha-samāpatti*, the phenomenon of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness remains and continues (see 5.3.2). In this respect, the core function of *bhavaṅga-citta* refers to *viññāṇa* which stands for the continuity of consciousness. Thus, *bhavaṅga-citta* and *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa* have to be understood in one umbrella concept of *citta-santati* (consciousness continuity). It is similarly expressed by Pieris:

Semantically, *mano* is the most precise, while *viññāṇa* is the most elastic and elusive of the three [*mano*, *viññāṇa*, and *citta*]. *Mano* denotes the ‘noetic awakening’ of the *bhavaṅga* or the subliminal consciousness, in response to an external stimulus (*bāhirāyatana*); or, more precisely, it is the noetic ‘opening’ (*dvāra*) to the outside world, i.e., an act of advertence (*avajjana*). *Viññāṇa* would normally stand for the general undifferentiated (i.e., anoetic or ‘ontic’) consciousness sometimes coinciding with subliminal continuum (or *bhavaṅga*); it can also frequently mean apperception or full noesis...[*Citta*] is employed as a comprehensive term for the entire complex of consciousness (i.e., *viññāṇa* in the ‘ontic’ sense) together with its potential or actual noetic centre (i.e., *mano*) (Peiris 2004, 26).

Pieris further goes on to say that –

[a]llied to the concept of *bhavaṅga-citta* is that of *santāna* (series or continuity), which is also a term that is often yoked with *citta*. Thus, the thought-moments or *cittāni*, which *serially* constitute the whole complex of *viññāṇa*, can be brought under the single concept of *citta* (*ibid.*, 28).

From the above discussion, it is understood that *bhavaṅga-mano*, *bhavaṅga-citta*, and *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa* are not the same thing, though they can be synonymous. While *bhavaṅga-mano* is understood in the context of the noetic opening “door” by advertence (*āvajjana*), *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa* or *bhavaṅga-citta* is understood in the context of consciousness continuity throughout *saṃsāric* existence. I now intend to discuss *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa/citta* in the context of *saṃsāric* continuity from the Vism. In the Vism, *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa/citta* has been singled out with the term *bhavaṅga* only in the context of *saṃsāric* continuity, which means that *bhavaṅga* is identical with consciousness itself. Now *bhavaṅga* is discussed in the context of *saṃsāric* continuity.

### 5.4.2 *Bhavaṅga* and *Samsāra*

I have already discussed that *bhavaṅga* is used as a resultant consciousness in the contexts of death-birth, and ordinary perceptual process in the Paṭṭh, and in the contexts of deep sleep and deep state of meditative trance in the Mil. In this connection, *bhavaṅga* is broadly elaborated in the Vism and subsequent Pāli texts. In the Vism, *bhavaṅga* is extensively elaborated as the continuity of consciousness that flows on in *samsāra* until the attainment of final *nibbāna*. For example:

“After passing away yet rebirth again, and after rebirth there is again becoming-constituent (*bhavaṅga*).” Thus the consciousness-continuity of beings uninterruptedly continues through a succession of modes of becoming, destiny, persistence, abode, and likewise proceeds forward. But when one attains Arahatsip here, it ceases with the cessation of his passing away-consciousness (Vism 460).<sup>18</sup>

When the rebirth consciousness has ceased, then depending upon whatever kind of rebirth consciousness it may be, being the result of *kamma*, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness occurs, whose object is also the same [*kamma*]; and the same kind of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness continues together with its object. As long as no other kind of consciousness arises to interrupt the continuity, it continues endlessly like the stream of a river, in periods of dreamless sleep, etc. (Vism 458).<sup>19</sup>

The above passages contain doctrines of *cuti-citta*, *paṭisandhi-citta*, *bhavaṅga*, *kamma*, *samsāra* and *nibbāna*. It is said that after passing away (*cuti*), there is rebirth (*paṭisandhi*), after rebirth there is *bhavaṅga* again. And, this *bhavaṅga* continues throughout *samsāra* with its object *kamma* which remains until the death consciousness of an Arahāt. In the previous chapter (see 4.6), *cuti-citta*, *paṭisandhi-citta*, *bhavaṅga-citta*, and *kamma* have been discussed in the context of rebirth. In the Vism, Buddhaghosa elaborates *bhavaṅga* to explain the process of rebirth between two moments in the stream of a person’s passing from one birth to another. Here the preceding moment (*cuti-citta*) and the succeeding one (*paṭisandhi-citta*) signify an

<sup>18</sup> 16–20: *cutito pana puna paṭisandhi, paṭisandhito puna bhavaṅgan ti evaṃ bhavaḡaṭiḡhitinivāsesu samsaramānānaṃ sattānaṃ avicchinnaṃ cittasantiānaṃ pavattati yeva. yo pan’ettha arahattaṃ pāpuṅāti, tassa cuticitte niruddhe niruddham eva hoti ti.*

<sup>19</sup> 2–8: *paṭisandhiviññāṇe pana niruddhe, taṃ taṃ paṭisandhiviññāṇam-anubandhamānaṃ tassa tass’ eva kammaṃ vipākabhūtaṃ tasmīññeva ārammaṇe tādisam eva bhavaṅgaviññāṇaṃ nāma pavattati. puna pi tādisan ti evaṃ asati, santānavinivattake aññasmim cittuppāde, nadīsotaṃ viya, supinaṃ apassato niddokkamanakālādīsu aparimāṇasaṅkhyampi pavattatiyevāti.*

unbroken continuity of consciousness. This continuity is said to continue until the final attainment of *nibbāna*. It is said that *bhavaṅga* ceases forever with death consciousness of an Arahāt, as it ceases forever without giving rise to another *paṭisandhi-citta*.

However, the following questions arise: does an Arahāt experience death-consciousness since he has eliminated all *āśava* at the moment of his enlightenment? Does *bhavaṅga* not cease or is not arrested at the moment of enlightenment? If *bhavaṅga* still continues with its object *kamma*, then what is the difference between an enlightened person and an ordinary individual? All these questions will be addressed with regard to two interpretations of *saṃsāra*. It will be pointed out that the description of *saṃsāra* in the *Vism* has deviated from the interpretation in the *suttas*. And, in the context of the *Vism* interpretation of *saṃsāra*, the concept of *bhavaṅga* is more relevant.

#### **5.4.2.1 *Bhavaṅga* and Two Interpretations of *Saṃsāra***

This section will show two interpretations of *saṃsāra* as reflected in the *suttas*, and in the *abhidhamma*, particularly in the *Vism*. It will be said that with the second interpretation of *saṃsāra*, the explanation of *bhavaṅga* is more relevant to show the continuity of a person in *saṃsāra*, because the second interpretation of *saṃsāra* signifies suffering in accordance with the repetition of the cycle of “birth-death-birth” in the threefold localities of sensuality, form, and formlessness.

In Chapter Two (see 2.6.1), I have elaborated these two interpretations of *saṃsāra*. It was said that *saṃsāra* is the effectiveness of dependent co-arising when all conditional factors are operating together like an ever-revolving wheel in a manner of arising, disappearing and continuing which is endowed with suffering in each individual until the attainment of enlightenment. In this context, *saṃsāra* is our entire psycho-physical organism which is in

perpetual flux like an ever-revolving wheel which is running onward and does not distract even for a moment. This dynamic process is revolving in one thought moment in the present and this present is ever slipping forward. In this regard, I discussed *samsāra* with becoming (*bhava*) which is the continuity of the *samsāric* life due to the clinging to “self” with regard to any of the five aggregates which passes from one moment to the next without any entity. And this clinging to “self” arises because of the hindrance of ignorance and fetter of craving which keeps a person in suffering for a long time. Therefore, it was said that when *bhava* and other factors of dependent co-arising cease, *samsāra* also ceases in an Arahāt. It implies that a person becomes enlightened not within *samsāra*, rather through the shattering of *samsāra*. In this way, when a person becomes Arahāt, for him *samsāra* is no longer applicable. Here, not applicable means that the conditional factors of dependent co-arising which are conducive to the rise of suffering are not present in an Arahāt.

However, it seems that the above interpretation of *samsāra* is somehow modified in the *abhidhamma* period, and in the *Vism*. In this text, *samsāra* signifies suffering in accordance with the repetition of the cycle of “birth-death-birth” in the threefold localities of sensuality, form, and formlessness. Modern scholars such as Keown (2003, 248), and Walshe (1995, 19-53 & 37) take this reference into account and interpret the entire Buddhist teachings accordingly. For example, Walshe says that *samsāra* signifies the Buddhist cosmology which is divided into the threefold world (*loka*) of *kāma*, *rūpa*, and *arūpa*, in which beings are born and die until the attainment of *nibbāna* (Walshe 1995, 19-53 & 37).

The above interpretation represents the Theravādin understanding of *samsāra* which refers to a substantial world system in which sentient beings are reborn, and not being subject to rebirth is liberation. This idea of *samsāra* is explained by Boyd: “Pāli Suttas and commentary tradition speak of Nirvana not only as a transcendent realm but as an experiential state within

samsara” (Boyd 1980, 29). In this respect, Boyd concludes his view that “the arahant who penetrates *dhamma* comes to know samsara, this visible world, as it really is. Such attainment is Nirvana” (*ibid.*, 41). However, I claim that this interpretation of *saṃsāra* as a world system is fully reflected in the Vism. It is similarly stated by Gombrich that though in the Pāli Canon, the cosmological dimension is mentioned, the three layers of cosmology was fully developed in the Vism and in the Commentaries to the Pāli Canon. This interpretation of *saṃsāra* is also found in the third chapter of Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* (Gombrich 1975, 132).

Clarifying the two interpretations of *saṃsāra*, I understand *bhavaṅga* consciousness with regard to the first interpretation of *saṃsāra*: the fact that *bhavaṅga* ceases or is arrested at the moment of enlightenment and that there is no further continuation of *bhavaṅga* for an Arahant. In this context, *bhavaṅga* is associated with *āsava* which continues with its own object *kamma*. In this regard, a living enlightened person’s consciousness is not answerable because there is no supportive basis such as craving to sustain *saṃsāric* consciousness. Thus, an Arahant’s consciousness is unconditioned or not bound by any conditional *dhammas*. But with the second interpretation of *saṃsāra*, *bhavaṅga* still continues for an Arahant and it ceases with his *cuti-citta*. In this regard, *bhavaṅga* might have been arrested at the moment of enlightenment, yet continues in him until the attainment of final *nibbāna*. I assume that in this period, an enlightened person’s consciousness (*bhavaṅga*) is pure, and not afflicted by *āsava*. This idea might have also been discussed in the Paṭi (I 80) as the behaviour of consciousness which is naturally pure.

### **5.5 *Bhavaṅga*, Arahant’s *Bhavaṅga* and Naturally Pure Consciousness**

In the previous section, it was said that *bhavaṅga* is affected by *āsava* and it is arrested at the moment of enlightenment. In this regard, we were unable to explain whether an Arahant still possesses *bhavaṅga* or not. However, according to the Vism, an Arahant still possesses

*bhavaṅga* which ceases completely at the moment of his *cuti*-consciousness. What is then the object of an Arahāt's *bhavaṅga* and *cuti-citta*? I have already clarified that there is no function of dependent co-arising for an Arahāt because he has eliminated suffering and the cause of suffering. And, when there is no operation of dependent co-arising, there is also the cessation of *kamma*. When *kamma* ceases, *bhavaṅga* and *cuti-citta* are also subject to cessation, because without its object *kamma*, they cannot sustain. In this regard, an Arahāt's consciousness is unconditioned and unafflicted by any conditional *dhammas*. With this understanding, I interpret that the object of an Arahāt's consciousness is *nibbāna*.<sup>20</sup> And the nature of an

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<sup>20</sup> Rewata Dhamma disregards this view. According to him, the object of the Buddha or Arahāt's *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is not *nibbāna*. Particularly, he describes the object of the Buddha's *cuti-citta*. He says that the object of the parinibbānic *cuti-citta* must be the same sign of destiny that the Buddha had when he was born in this human world. He says that the Buddha's (when he was born as a Bodhisattva) *paṭisandhi-citta* was conditioned by his previous life's *cuti-citta* whose sign of destiny was the human world, "therefore, the object of parinibbānic decease citta must also be the same sign of destiny" (Dhamma 2004, 124). He concludes: "at the end the parinibbānic decease citta arise and cease forever. There is no moment, no instant during which the *nibbāna* object arises" (*ibid.*, 124). However, the question arises: if the Buddha's *cuti-citta* has the sign of destiny of the human world, there should be human destiny in future. It is understood that the Buddha and Arahāt will not be born anymore. Even the Buddha has left the question about the destiny of an enlightened one unanswered. In this regard, their *bhavaṅga-citta* is arrested at the moment of their enlightenment. So, it is not possible to explain that the object of the Buddha's *bhavaṅga* and *cuti-citta* is other than *nibbāna*. Yet, I mention Dhamma's argument:

Some teachers have said that the object of Buddha's decease citta was *Nibbāna*. In support of this they cite a passage from the Parinibbāna Sutta: "Anejo santimārabhha, yaṃ kālamakarī muni." The translation of this being: "the Buddha who is free from lust for the sake of *Nibbāna*, thus awaits the time of Parinibbāna" (DN II 128). However, these teachers do not give attention to the Parittārammana-tika in the Dhammasangani. This explains that the 23 sense-sphere resultant cittas, the five-door advertent citta and the smiling citta always have sensuous objects. The Abhidhamma teaching makes no exceptions. The Buddha's parinibbāna decease citta is the same as his birth citta, i.e. the first citta of the eight great resultant sense-sphere cittas. This sensuous resultant citta cannot take *Nibbāna* as its object. When the Buddha took rebirth into the human world, the object of his rebirth citta was the sign of destiny of the human world. Therefore, the object of parinibbānic decease citta must also be the same sign of destiny. The decease citta (i.e. the final citta in a life term) apprehends the same object that was taken by the rebirth citta and *bhavaṅga* citta of the existence that is about to

Furthermore, the passage from the Mahāparinibbāna sutta means that being about to enter into parinibbāna, the Buddha was looking for *nibbāna*. Therefore, the commentary to that sutta did not say "santiṃ ārammaṇaṃ katvā", meaning "Nibbāna having been made an object". Instead it says "santimarabbhāti anupādisesaṃ nibbānaṃ ārabhha (for the sake of) paṭicca (depends upon) sandhāya (concerning)", meaning "looking for *nibbāna* without residue remaining". Anupādisesa *nibbāna* (meaning *nibbāna* without residue remaining (DN-a II 186)) is experienced by Arahants and Buddhas after death. However, the Theragāthā commentary (389) says "santimarabbhāti santiṃ anupādisesaṃ nibbānaṃ ārammaṇaṃ katvā", meaning "had been the object of the *nibbāna* without residue remaining". This seems contrary to the commentary of Mahāparinibbāna sutta. However, if it means that prior to the parinibbānic decease process the Buddha had been living with the object of *nibbāna* and then there is no disagreement between the two commentaries. Of course, prior to the parinibbānic decease citta, the Buddha enters into the jhānic attainments, reviews the jhānic factors and then ceases immediately. In this case, prior to the parinibbānic decease, the *kaṣiṇa* concepts appear in his mind. These are the objects of the jhānic attainments. Also the jhānic factors, which are the object of the reviewing process, appear in

Arahat's consciousness is pure in the sense of being unconditioned because it is unbecome (*abhūtam*), unborn (*ajātam*), and unmade (*akataṃ*) due to the elimination of "self-view". This understanding is formed on the basis of the following passage from the Paṭiṣ:

'It [consciousness] behaves without greed' this is a behaviour of consciousness, 'it behaves without hate'..., 'it behaves without delusion'..., 'it behaves without conceit'..., 'it behaves without view'..., 'it behaves without restlessness'..., 'it behaves without uncertainty'..., 'it behaves without underlying tendency'..., 'it behaves dissociated from greed'..., 'it behaves dissociated from hate'... 'it behaves dissociated from delusion'..., 'it behaves dissociated from conceit'..., 'it behaves dissociated from view'..., 'it behaves dissociated from restlessness'..., 'it behaves dissociated from uncertainty'..., 'it behaves dissociated from underlying tendency'..., 'it behaves dissociated from wholesome actions'... 'it behaves dissociated from unwholesome actions'..., 'it behaves dissociated from reprehensible actions'..., 'it behaves dissociated from irreprehensible actions'..., 'it behaves dissociated from dark actions'... 'it behaves dissociated from bright actions'... 'it behaves dissociated from pleasure-yielding actions'..., 'it behaves dissociated from pain-yielding actions'..., 'it behaves dissociated from actions resulting in pleasure'..., 'it behaves dissociated from actions resulting in pain'..., 'it behaves towards what is cognized'..., such is the behaviour of consciousness... This *consciousness is naturally pure* in the sense of being devoid of defilement (Paṭiṣ I 80).<sup>21</sup>

It seems that the above passage interprets the consciousness of an enlightened person as naturally pure in the sense of being unconditioned due to the absence of defilement. However, in the commentaries, a naturally pure consciousness is explained with the help of *bhavaṅga* which is a pure and natural consciousness (*pakati-citta*) which remains in an individual

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him. At the end the parinibbānic decess citta arise and cease forever. There is no moment, no instant during which the nibbāna object arises.

Thus, one must understand that, prior to the attainment of the jhānic state, the Buddha may or may not live with Nibbāna. However, by looking forward to the Nibbānic state, not at the moment of decess, Nibbāna is not the object of the Parinibbānic decess citta. Instead, the object is the sign of destiny of this last life in Saṃsāra, which was the object of rebirth citta (Dhamma 2004, 124–25).

<sup>21</sup>2–25: 'nīrāgā caratīti' viññāṇacariyā. 'nidosā caratīti'..., 'nimohā caratīti'..., 'nimānā caratīti'..., 'nidiṭṭhi caratīti'..., 'ni-uddhaccā caratīti'..., 'nivicikicchā caratīti'..., 'nānusayā caratīti'..., 'rāgavippayuttā caratīti'..., 'dosavippayuttā caratīti'..., 'mohavippayuttā caratīti'..., 'mānavippayuttā caratīti'..., 'diṭṭhivippayuttā caratīti'..., 'uddhaccavippayuttā caratīti'..., 'vicikicchāvippayuttā caratīti'..., 'anusayavippayuttā caratīti'..., 'kusalehi kammehi sampayuttā caratīti'..., 'akusalehi kammehi vippayuttā caratīti'... 'sāvajjehi kammehi vippayuttā caratīti'..., 'anavajjehi kammehi sampayuttā caratīti'..., 'kaṇhehi kammehi vippayuttā caratīti'..., 'sukkehi kammehi sampayuttā caratīti'..., 'sukhudrayehi kammehi sampayuttā caratīti'..., 'dukkhudrayehi kammehi vippayuttā caratīti'..., 'sukhavipākehi kammehi sampayuttā caratīti'..., 'dukkhavipākehi kammehi vippayuttā caratīti'..., 'viññāte caratīti'..., 'viññāṇassa evarūpā cariyā hotīti'..., 'pakatiparisuddhaṃ idaṃ cittam nikkilesaṭṭhenāti'....

throughout existence. Even, a person is born with this pure mind but it is afflicted by incoming defilements. This matter is discussed from the commentaries in the following section.

### 5.5.1 Luminous Consciousness and *Bhavaṅga*

In the commentaries, *bhavaṅga* is described as luminous (*pabhassara*) consciousness which is naturally pure (*pakati-citta*) because it is without defilements (*nirupakkilesatāya*) but it is impure due to the incoming defilements. For example, in the AN-a, it is said: “luminous means bright and pure. Consciousness means consciousness of becoming-constituent” (*pabhassaranti paṇḍaram parisuddham. cittanti bhavaṅgacittam*, AN-a I 60, 9–10). The MN Commentary, moreover, says that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is the natural consciousness (*pakati-citta*) and all beings pass away with this state of consciousness (*sabbasattā hi pakaticittena bhavaṅgacitten’ eva kālaṃ karonti*, MN-a I 141, 35–36). The DN and SN Commentaries state that all Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Noble disciples (Arahats) pass away after understanding the truth about suffering, without the *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, having no consequences (*abyākatena*), and no seeds for rebirth (SN-a I 224).<sup>22</sup> Let me now examine the aforesaid discussion with the *suttas*, commentaries, and scholars’ interpretations.

The AN Commentary explains the luminous mind (*pabhassara citta*) as *bhavaṅga*-consciousness while commenting on the *Pabhassara Vagga* of the AN. In the *Pabhassara Vagga*, the luminous mind is:

Monks! luminous is this consciousness/mind. And, it is afflicted by adventitious minor defilements. The uninstructed worldly person does not understand this as it really is; therefore, I say that for the uninstructed worldly person there is no development of the consciousness/mind (AN I 10).<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand:

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<sup>22</sup> 16–19: *ye hi keci Buddhā vā Pacceka-buddhā vā ariya-sāvaka vā, antamaso kuntha-kipillikaṃ upādāya, sabbe pi bhav’ aṅgacitten’ eva abyākatena dukkha-saccena kālaṃ karonti.*

<sup>23</sup> 11–14: *pabhassaram idaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ tañ ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭham. taṃ assutavā puthujjano yathābhūtaṃ nappanājāti. tasmā assutavato puthujjanassa citta-bhāvanā n’atthī ti vadāmī ti.*



Monks! luminous is this consciousness/mind, and it is freed from adventitious minor defilements. The instructed noble disciple understands this as it really is; therefore, I say that for the instructed noble disciple there is development of the consciousness/mind (AN I 10).<sup>24</sup>

Here, the *Pabhassara Vagga* is referring to two kinds of person: (1) an uninstructed worldly person, and (2) an instructed noble disciple. In this context, it refers to the individual's consciousness/mind which is luminous but defiled by adventitious minor defilements (*upakkilesa*). And, when a noble disciple understands this condition of consciousness/mind he cultivates and develops the mind for the sake of attaining *nibbāna*.

In the above two passages, *citta* is identified as *pabhassara* which is afflicted by adventitious minor defilements (*āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭham*). What does *pabhassara* refer to and what are the minor defilements? Let us now address this question from the *Upakkilesa Sutta* of the AN (III 16) and the *Kilesasamyutta* of the SN. From the *Kilesasamyutta*, desire and lust (*chanda-rāga*) for the six sense bases, six sense objects, six sensory consciousness, six sense bases-contact, feeling, perception, intentions, craving, the six elements, and the five aggregates is a minor defilement (*upakkilesa*) of the mind (*citta*). When with regard to all these cases, the mental minor-defilement is abandoned, then the mind (*citta*) is inclined to renunciation by direct knowledge. About the *Kilesasamyutta*, Bodhi says “although the title of the chapter has *kilesa*, which I render “defilement,” the body of the text uses *upakkilesa*, which I render ‘corruption’” (Bodhi 2000, 1100, note 273). Bodhi renders *upakkilesa* (corruption) as “a corruption because it does not allow that mind to arise,” (*ibid.*).

According to the *Upakkilesa Sutta*, however, minor defilements (*upakkilesa*) are of five kinds: sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill will (*vyāpāda*), torpor and drowsiness (*thīnamiddha*),

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<sup>24</sup>15–18: *pabhassaram idaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ tañ ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi vippamuttaṃ. taṃ sutavā ariyasāvako yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. tasmā sutavato ariyasāvakassa cittaḥāvanā atth īti vadāmī ti.*

restlessness and remorse (*uddhaccakukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*). These five minor defilements are also known as the five hindrances (*pañca-nivaraṇa*). In the *Sunakkhatta Sutta* of the MN (II 252-61), these defilements constitute the obstacle for the noble path, and detachment from that makes one reach ever-higher spheres in the context of *jhāna* states. Abandoning spheres in this manner, one reaches *nibbāna* through the destruction of *āsava*. The aforesaid five hindrances refer to the psychological disposition of a meditator who is still in the *jhāna* states, where he cuts off all these defilements at the root. Finally, cutting off all *āsavas*, the person attains *nibbāna*. In the *Upakkilesa Sutta* (AN III 16) and the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* of the DN (I 76), it is similarly said that when these five hindrances are abandoned, his *citta*/mind becomes luminous (*pabhassara*), pliable (*mudu*), workable (*kammaniya*), and pliant (*pabhaṅgu*). When this *citta*/mind becomes luminous etc., it is properly concentrated for the destruction of *āsava*. In the *Mahāvedalla Sutta* of the MN, moreover, it is said that when a monk enters into the state of the cessation of perception and feeling, when his bodily formations, verbal formations and mental formations cease and subside, his faculties become exceptionally clear (*indriyāni vipphasannāni*, MN I 296,16-17). In this regard, the mind faculty (*mano*) becomes clear. Here, *mano* seems to be identical with *pabhassara-citta*. No *Sutta* says that this state of achievement is the ultimate stage; rather to achieve the ultimate goal he has to eliminate *āsava* completely. Therefore, *pabhassara-citta* is not free from *āsava*, and the noble disciple further practices to destroy *āsava* for the sake of attaining *nibbāna*. In this context, *pabhassara-citta* is not *viññāṇa*; it refers to the *mano* (mind). And this *mano* is undefiled due to the absence of the *upakkilesas* and it loses its radiance or luminosity when polluted by defilements. In this regard, *pabhassara-citta* is used in the context of *jhāna* states. After passing the fourth *jhāna*, the *mano* is regarded as luminous, wherein the person, while cognizing a mind object with the mind, does not grasp its signs and features (*manasā dhammaṃ viññāya na nimittaggāhī hoti nānubyañjanaggāhī*, MN I 223, 21-22). However, there are controversial

interpretations of *pabhassara-citta* in the commentaries and in the works of modern scholars. This matter is discussed in the following section.

### 5.5.2 *Pabhassara-citta, Pakati-citta and Bhavaṅga-citta: A Controversy*

In the above section, the *pabhassara-citta* is referred to *mano*, not the core function of *viññāṇa/citta*. In this regard, *citta* is a synonym of *mano*, which becomes luminous due to the absence of the minor defilements (*upakkilesa*): desire and lust, sensual desire, ill will, torpor and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. Though the *citta/mano* is luminous, it was understood that the core function of *citta/viññāṇa* is not luminous in the sense of the absence of *āsava*. The AN Commentary explains that this *pabhassara-citta* is identical with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and it is pure and is not afflicted by defilements (AN-a I 60). The MN Commentary says that this *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is the natural consciousness (*pakati-citta*) and all beings pass away with this state of consciousness (MN-a I 141). However, one can find a different interpretation of defilements in the *suttas* and the commentaries. While in the *suttas*, *upakkilesa*-s refer to desire and lust, and sensual desire, ill will, torpor and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, and doubt, in the commentaries *upakkilesa*-s refer to *rāga* (lust), etc., i.e., greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) which arise at the moment of *javana* (AN-a I 60).<sup>25</sup>

To clarify the above interpretation, the commentary uses an illustration between *bhavaṅga* and defilements with well-behaved parents, or preceptor and teacher, and their children or pupils. The commentary says that well-behaved and virtuous parents, or preceptor and teacher get to be criticized and accused for their undisciplined and ill-behaved children or pupils: “They do not punish, train, instruct, or exhort their own children or pupils.” Well-

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<sup>25</sup> 16–19: *gantukehī ti asahajātehi, pacchā javanakkhaṇe uppajjanakehi. upakkilesehī ti rāgādīhi. upakkiliṭṭhaṃ ti upakkiliṭṭhaṃ nāmā ti vuccati.*

behaved parents, or preceptor and teacher are like *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, while the allegation against the parents because of their children or on the preceptor and teacher for their pupils is like the naturally pure *bhavaṅga*-consciousness being defiled at the *javana* moment by adventitious defilements that arise in the states of mind associated with greed, etc., which afflict it (AN-a I 60–61).<sup>26</sup>

Referring to the commentarial interpretation, scholars in Buddhist Studies such as Kalupahana (1995, 88) and Reat (1977, 182) think that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is compatible with the *Upaniṣadic ātman* because this *ātman* is pure by nature. Reat, moreover, goes on to say that:

[i]n *Atthasālini* p. 140, Buddhaghosa compares *bhavaṅga* with the *pabhasara-citta* “luminous mind” of *Anguttara* I, p.10: “*Pabhasara-citta* is stained by foreign (*āguntaka*) defilements”. Buddhaghosa explains that *citta* is impure (*akusala*) because it “issues” (from *bhavaṅga*), though it is in essence pure because it is nonetheless of *bhavaṅga*, “as a tributary of the Ganges is like the Ganges” (and different from it). This *pabhasara-citta* is an example in the early texts of a concept compatible with the *Upaniṣadic ātman*. Though the idea is not developed in the Pāli texts, it become important in Mahayana in the form of “Buddha-nature” or “*Tathāgata-garbha*” which is indistinguishable from *ātman* (Reat 1977, 182, footnote 41).

Reat’s understanding of *bhavaṅga* is identical with the concept of the *Upaniṣadic ātman*. It seems that Reat, without clarifying the Buddhist understanding of *viññāṇa*, simply says that “self” and “Brahman” refer to disturbed *bhavaṅga* (an unenlightened one’s *bhavaṅga*) and undisturbed *bhavaṅga* (an enlightened one’s *bhavaṅga*) (*ibid.*, 183). In the section 5.3.3 of this chapter, we have already distinguished between the Buddhist and *Upaniṣadic* understanding of consciousness. It was said that in the *Upaniṣad*, “self” is the “great being, endless, unlimited consisting of nothing but consciousness” (BU II 4.12). This statement represents the great

<sup>26</sup>20–02: *yathā hi sīlavantā vā ācārasampannā mātāpitaro vā ācariyupajjhāyā vā dussīlānaṃ durācārānaṃ avattasampannānaṃ puttānañ c’eva antevāsika-saddhivihārikānañ ca vasena attano putte vā antevāsika-saddhivihārike vā na tajjenti na sikkhāpentī na ovaḍanti nānusāsanti ti avaṇṇaṃ akittim labhanti, evaṃ sampadam idaṃ veditaḅbaṃ. ācārasampannā mātāpitaro viya hi ācariyupajjhāyā viya ca bhavaṅgacittam daṭṭhabbaṃ. puttādīnaṃ vasena tesam akittilābho viya javanakkhaṇe rajjana-dussana-muyhanasabhāvānaṃ lobhasahagatādīnaṃ cittānaṃ vasena uppannehi āgantukehi upakkilesehi pakatiparisuddham pi bhavaṅgacittam upakkiliṭṭhaṃ nāma hotī ti.*

“self” or “consciousness” in BU: “this is the great not born ‘self’ which is the consciousness in vitalities” (BU IV 4.22). In this regard, it was said the Buddha has mostly described the sensory consciousness. Yet, throughout my discussion I have clearly shown the consciousness as “surviving factor” which is “not-self” or “soul” but “continuity of consciousness” in *saṃsāric* existence reflected even in the *suttas*. This continuity of consciousness is compatible with *bhavaṅga* and it is affected by *āśava* throughout *saṃsāric* existence. And this *bhavaṅga* is subject to cessation/arrested at the moment of enlightenment because of the cessation of *kamma* in an enlightened person. However, if I consider that *bhavaṅga* still continues in an enlightened person until his demise, it should be understood that it is not affected by *āśava*.

Bodhi and Thanissaro have given their observation on the *pabhassara-citta* and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness from early Buddhist point of view. Thanissaro says in the *Pabhassara Vagga* of the AN that the Buddha is said to have taught that the instructed noble disciple sees *pabhassara* mind which is a prerequisite for developing the mind. He questions the commentarial interpretation and says that if the commentary explains *pabhassara-citta* as *bhavaṅga*-consciousness then “what would it mean to develop the *bhavaṅga-citta*?” Thanissaro makes the following statement:

The luminous mind is the mind that the meditator is trying to develop. To perceive its luminosity means understanding that defilements such as greed, aversion, or delusion are not intrinsic to its nature, are not a necessary part of awareness. Without this understanding, it would be impossible to practice. With this understanding, however, one can make an effort to cut away existing defilements, leaving the mind in the stage that MN 24 calls “purity in terms of mind.” This would correspond to the luminous level of concentration described in the standard simile for the fourth jhana: “And furthermore, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain – as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress – he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. Just as if a man were sitting covered from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not extend; even so, the monk sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness.” From this state it is possible to develop the discernment that not only cuts away existing defilements but also uproots any potential for them to ever arise again. Only in the stages of Awakening that follow

on those acts of discernment would “consciousness without feature” be realized (Thanissaro, “Pabhassara Sutta: Luminous,” [www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org)).

About the commentarial interpretation, Bodhi points out the following problem: if *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is the luminous then its explanation is problematic because it suggests that –

[L]uminosity is intrinsic to the mind itself, and not to a particular type of mental event. Moreover, if the *bhavaṅga* is luminous, it should always remain so; it becomes incoherent to speak of it being defiled by the *jāvanas* (Bodhi 2012, 1598, foot note 46).

Gethin says that the commentarial interpretation raises more questions than it answers. He reasons that when beings are reborn due to *bhavaṅga*-consciousness it is always unwholesome resultant, then “how can it be said to be defiled in name only and not truly defiled? In what sense is it pure, clear or radiant?” (Gethin 2005, 175). Though Gethin has raised the questions, he has not given any answers to them. Warder (1996) thinks that that *citta* is pure by nature is the view of Ekabhoḥārika. Warder explains:

[E]xcept that the latter school seems to have exaggerated it by describing thought as inaccessible to defilement. It may throw light on the Mahāsaṃghika view, if the latter held that consciousness or thought is pure, amoral or indeterminate but all other mental *dhammas* (*cetasikas*) are either good or bad (Ñāṇamoli 2009, xxvii).

Anālayo has also examined these issues taking reference from the *Nikāyas* and *Āgamas*. He shows that the AN passages are also found in the *Śāriputrābhidharma* (T 1548 at T XXVIII 697b18), an *Abhidhamma* text representing the Dharmaguptaka tradition (Anālayo 2017, 35). Anālayo further says that the idea of luminous mind is similarly upheld by the Mahāsaṃghikas and the Vibhajyavādins. It is also found in later texts, such as the *Ratanagotravibhāga*, and the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*. He moreover says that in the *Ratanagotravibhāga*, the luminous condition of the mind is a quality of the Bodhisattvas (*ibid.*, 37). Harvey, on the other hand, says that the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* equates the luminous mind with *ālaya-vijñāna* (storehouse-consciousness) of Yogācāra thought, and that “this is a similar concept to that of the Theravādin *bhavaṅga citta*, being part of a system which also includes conception (*manas*) and the six forms of sense-discernments [consciousness]” (Harvey 1995, 176). In this regard, Kalupahana says that when

*bhavaṅga* is understood as the luminous, it is not “much different from the notion of a transmigrating soul or self posited by the non-Buddhist schools in India” (Kalupahana 1995, 88). Kalupahana concludes by saying that it further develops the metaphysical theory of *bhavaṅga* as *ālaya-vijñāna* which is also “the culmination of the absolutist trend that gradually emerged in the Mahāyāna tradition” (*ibid.*, 91). Keeping aside all these interpretations, I keep my discussion limited to the Pāli texts in this study.

From the above elucidation, it is understood that scholars in the Pāli tradition have found the commentarial interpretation of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as identical with *pabhassara-citta* problematic. In this regard, I intend to address Gethin’s questions. The questions are: when beings are reborn due to *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, it is always unwholesome resultant, then “how can it be said to be defiled in name only and not truly defiled? In what sense is it pure, clear or radiant?” (Gethin 2005, 175). I have said that though Gethin raises questions, he does not give any answers to them. In this study, an attempt is made to address the problem in two ways.

Firstly, taking references from the *Kilesasaṃyutta* of the SN and the *Upakkilesa Sutta* of the AN, I have said that in the AN passages *citta* (mind) is luminous but it is afflicted by minor defilements/corruptions (*upakkilesa*) of desire and lust, and sensual desire, ill will, torpor and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. It seems that the *Suttas* do not say that *pabhassara-citta* is the core function of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) which is free from *āsava*. In this context, I understand that *pabhassara-citta* is not *viññāṇa* or the core function of *citta*; it only refers to *mano* (mind). And this *mano* is undefiled due to the absence of *upakkilesas* in the state of the fourth *jhāna* but it loses its radiance or luminosity when defiled by the minor defilements. In this regard, *pabhassara-citta* might have used in the context of *jhāna* states in that after passing the fourth *jhāna*, the *mano* is regarded as pure, wherein the person, though

cognizing a mind object with the mind, does not grasp its signs and features (*manasā dhammaṃ viññāya na nimittaggāhī hoti nānubyañjanaggāhī*, MN I 223, 21–22).

Secondly, in the commentaries, this *pabhassara-citta* is identified with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, which is pure and natural because it is free from the defilements of *rāga*, *dosa* and *moha*. In this context, the commentary takes it as a co-extensive notion of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, which is always pure throughout *saṃsāric* existence.

After analysing the *sutta* and commentarial interpretations, it seems that the *bhavaṅga-citta/pabhassara-citta* does not represent the entire function of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness; it simply refers to *bhavaṅga-mano* which is the “consciousness” relating to only mental activity that constitutes the intermediary moment between the activity of *bhavaṅga* and *mano*. It acts as the door of arising which is only the mental data-base. In this sense, *bhavaṅga-citta/mano* is the noetic awaking of *bhavaṅga* only, more precisely, it is the noetic awaking “door” (*dvāra*) to the outside world, i.e., an act of advertence (*āvajjana*), and is not strictly co-extensive with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness. Here the *mano* is *citta* and it should be understood in the sense of the noetically active mind dwelling on objects. In this respect, the core function of *bhavaṅga-citta* refers to *viññāṇa*, which stands for the continuity of consciousness with full noesis and is always affected by *āsava*. With this understating, I state that *pabhassara-citta* does not refer to the entire function of *bhavaṅga-citta*, rather it refers to *bhavaṅga-citta* in the sense of *bhavaṅga-mano*. In this regard, the purity of *bhavaṅga-citta/mano-viññāṇa* does not mean the quality of being “unconditioned” by nature, rather it refers to the core function of *bhavaṅga-citta* which is conditioned by conditional *dhammas*, *āsava*. In *saṃsāric* existence, when a person attains the final state of spiritual evolution, *bhavaṅga-citta*, consisting of the “self-view” or “identities”, is arrested or it ceases to function in any form. In this sense, in the ultimate state of spiritual evaluation, *citta* (*bhavaṅga-citta*) behaves as naturally pure (*pakati-parisuddha*)



with its own nature due to the absence of defilement. Here, the state of the absence of defilement is understood as being “unconditioned”. This is what I understand about the naturally pure consciousness, which is also shown in the Paṭi I 80 about which I have already discussed in the section 5.5 of this chapter. In this connection, now I briefly discuss how modern scholars interpret *bhavaṅga* as being un-conscious or sub-conscious.

## 5.6 Is *Bhavaṅga* Unconscious?

Throughout this chapter, I have maintained *bhavaṅga* as being a consciousness with its object *kamma* in the context of consciousness continuity (*citta-santati*) in *saṃsāric* existence. In the previous chapter, I have shown two aspects of consciousness in the *suttas*: (1) consciousness as “surviving factor,” and (2) sensory consciousness. Consciousness as the “surviving factor” was discussed with the concept of *bhava-sota*, *viññāṇa-sota*, and *saṃsāric-viññāṇa*. This consciousness was related with *bhavaṅga* which is affected by *āśava* and continues on in *saṃsāric* existence. In this continuity there is neither a permanent entity nor otherness; it is a process with the formula of dependent co-arising.

Several scholars such as Davids (1936, 406), Sarachchandra (1994, 75) and Keith (1923, 194) have interpreted *bhavaṅga* as being either the sub-conscious or the unconscious which is compatible with the modern theory of the unconscious. In the introduction to this chapter, I have mentioned that I will entirely skip the discussion on *bhavaṅga* as unconscious or sub-conscious because it is a different aspect of the study. Yet, I briefly intend to discuss why and at which point modern scholars interpret *bhavaṅga* as the unconscious or sub-unconscious. With regard to *bhavaṅga* as the sub-conscious, Keith says:

The *bhavaṅga*, or stream of being, is a conception barely known in the Abhidhamma, and there not explained, but it evidently has already here, the sense of a continuum which is not conscious, but from which consciousness emerges, and which may therefore be reckoned as sub-conscious (Keith 1923,194).

Regarding the above passage, Collins says that the use of the term “unconscious” as a translation of *bhavaṅga* is a loose translation, and “subconscious” is an even looser translation. Moreover, Collins thinks: “the term might be thought to include interpretation as well as simple word-translation, serious difficulties arise” (Collins 1999, 243). Padmasiri also thinks: “it is not wise to use terms like unconscious and subconscious indiscriminately to translate the word *bhavaṅga*” (Padmasiri 1992, 52). However, Padmasiri accepts the unconscious in Buddhist teachings by referring to Nyanatiloka’s assertion:

Herein, since time immemorial, all impressions and experiences are, as it were, stored up, or better said, are function, but concealed as such to full consciousness, from where however they occasionally emerge as subconscious phenomena and approach the threshold of full consciousness, or crossing it become fully conscious. This so-called ‘subconscious life-stream’ or undercurrent of life is that by which might be explained the faculty of memory, paranormal psychic phenomena, mental and physical growth, karma and rebirth, etc. (Nyanatiloka 1980,70).

According to Padmasiri, the above clarification on *bhavaṅga* “has been likened to a kind of dynamic unconscious in the Freudian sense” (Padmasiri 1992, 52). In this regard, Wijesekera equates *bhavaṅga* with the Freudian Unconscious. He says that Freud’s idea of the human psyche consists of *id* as inhering in everyone in the somatic and psychological symptom. This *id* is an accumulation of the psychological forces which maintain all the conscious and unconscious natures of the human psyche. Later, Freud developed a theory with regard to mental life giving a name called “ego”. This concept is a part of *id* which has undergone development due to the influence of the external world. According to Wijesekera, it is the agency that occurs as a result of the relation between sensory perception and dynamic action. He further traces Freud’s *id* concept connected to the unconscious with a suggestion that the “ego” is closely associated with consciousness. Wijesekera says that Freud’s theory of the unconscious is similar to *bhavaṅga* which stands for *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* in the five aggregates. He further builds his argument by presenting the notion of *saṅkhārā*, a proximate condition for *viññāṇa* in the twelve factors of dependent co-arising which appears in the empirical state of mind as similar to “ego”

or the “empirical agent” as presented in Freud’s theory of the unconscious (Wijesekera 1979, 66).<sup>27</sup> In this context, Collins’s observation is worth noting:

The modern comparison between *bhavaṅga* and the psychoanalytic unconscious must be developed as part of what one might call ‘speculative’ or ‘creative’ Buddhist philosophy, rather than by historical scholarship (Collins 1999, 244).

Gethin, however, gives a convincing clarification that the expression of “unconscious” or “unconsciousness” for *bhavaṅga* is unhelpful. Gethin says: “if *bhavaṅga* is to be understood as “unconsciousness”, it must be as a specific kind of unconsciousness.” In a tentative way, Gethin says that the term “unconscious” would ordinarily be used merely for an individual who is “asleep (whether dreaming or not), who is in coma, who has fainted, or who has been ‘knocked unconscious’, etc.” (Gethin 2005, 159). In this connection, though Gethin does not refer to Freud’s concept as being similar to the concept of *bhavaṅga*, he presents the interpretation of *bhavaṅga* as “unconscious” in relation to certain specific modern psychoanalytic theories which, according to him, are not only confusing but also problematic (*ibid.*, 160). I agree with Gethin’s clarification. Therefore, I briefly intend to clarify at which point modern scholars relate *bhavaṅga* with the unconscious.

Gethin cites Louis de La Vallee (Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: La siddhi de Hiuan-Tsang 1926, I, 178–9, 196), who suggests that *bhavaṅga* bears certain similarities to the *ālaya-vijñāna* of the Mahāyāna Yogācāra school (Gethin 2005, 173). With regard to these two concepts, Sarachchandra shows similarities between *bhavaṅga-citta* and *ālaya-vijñāna* in great detail (1994, 88–96). However, Gethin comments on the assimilation of these two concepts of *bhavaṅga* and the unconscious. Yet Gethin agrees:

It is not entirely unreasonable to suggest that both conceptions ultimately derive from a common source or at least a common way of thinking about the problem of psychological continuity in Buddhist thought...It surely must be the case that these two

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<sup>27</sup> Padmasiri has done a comprehensive study on Buddhist and Freudian Psychology. Chapter III of his book provides an analysis of the unconscious in Freud and early Buddhism (Padmasiri 1978, 34–75).

concepts are to be understood as having a certain affinity and that they belong to the same complex of ideas within the history of Buddhist thought (Gethin 2005, 173 & 175).

Gethin also thinks that though to some extent, the description of *ālaya-vijñāna* can be attributed to the theory of the unconscious, to understand *bhavaṅga*, this idea of unconscious is not necessary (Gethin 2005, 173). In this context, Gethin defines *bhavaṅga* in the following manner:

Existing discussions of *bhavaṅga* largely confine themselves to the way *bhavaṅga* functions in the Abhidhamma theory of the process of consciousness (*citta-vīthi*). It is pointed out how *bhavaṅga* is the state in which the mind is said to rest when no active consciousness process is occurring: thus *bhavaṅga* is one's state of mind when nothing appears to be going on, such as when one is in a state of deep dreamless sleep, and also momentarily between each active consciousness process (Gethin 2005, 159).

After discussing the above scholars' interpretations of *bhavaṅga* in relation to the theory of the unconscious, one important point has been observed. Gethin says that some functions of *ālaya-vijñāna* can be attributed to this theory. When scholars such as Poussin (1926) have shown certain similarities between *bhavaṅga* and *ālaya-vijñāna*, contemporary scholars in Buddhist Studies such as Sarachchandra (1994) take these similarities to show that *bhavaṅga* is comparable with the unconscious. If this fact is considered, one can say that the opinion that *bhavaṅga* is comparable to the unconscious is quite related to the commentarial interpretation, because, in the commentary (AN-a I 60), *bhavaṅga* is also interpreted as a "home"<sup>28</sup> preserving its pristine purity which is quite similar to *ālaya-vijñāna*.<sup>29</sup> In this regard, modern scholars interpret *bhavaṅga* as the unconscious in accordance with *ālaya-vijñāna* which is mostly reflected in the commentaries. Hence, I recall Collins's observation:

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<sup>28</sup> In the Dhs Commentary, *bhavaṅga* is explained as a spider sitting at the center of a web (*majjhe nipannamakkaṭako viya cittaṃ*, Dhs-a 279, 12–13).

<sup>29</sup> In this regard, Harvey cites *bhavaṅga* as a spider sleeping at the centre of its web, and says:

[B]*bhavaṅga* clearly has features in common with the *ālaya-vijñāna* of the Mahāyāna Yogācāra school, for this is also a form of discernment [consciousness], as an underlying mental continuum, which is literally a 'home' (a natural resting place) or 'roosting place'. *Bhavaṅga citta* is also the natural, unencumbered state of *citta*, for Kvu. [*Kathāvatthu*] 615 calls the *citta* of the very last moment of a person's life – i.e. *bhavaṅga-citta* in the form of 'falling away' *citta* (Para.A.7) – the 'natural (*pakati*-)' *citta* (Harvey 2004, 161–62).

The modern comparison between *bhavaṅga* and the psychoanalytic unconscious must be developed as part of what one might call ‘speculative’ or ‘creative’ Buddhist philosophy, rather than by historical scholarship (Collins 1999, 244).

## **Part II**

### **5.7 *Bhavaṅga* and the Theory of the Cognitive Process**

This part shows the theory of the cognitive process which is closely connected with *bhavaṅga* in the *Vism*, the commentaries, and the *abhidhammic* literature. Several studies have been conducted on *bhavaṅga* in connection with the theory of the cognitive process.<sup>30</sup> Yet, I intend to discuss the relation between *bhavaṅga* and the theory of cognition in the *abhidhammic* literature. Before dealing with this topic, let me clarify that the *citta* (consciousness) is explained as being quite equivalent to *mano* and *viññāṇa* in the *abhidhamma*.

#### **5.7.1 *Citta* in the *Abhidhamma* Literature**

In the *abhidhamma* literature, *citta* is one of the four *paramattha dhammas* (ultimate reality), which are *citta* (consciousness), *cetasika* (mental factors), *rūpa* (matter), and *nibbāna* (Abhidh-  
s, Bodhi 2010, 25). With regard to the five aggregates, it is the *citta* (or *viññāṇa*) that stands out for being the fundamental factor, while the other three (*vedanā*, *saññā*, and *saṅkhārā*) are called *cetasika* (mental factors) which are of 52 kinds pertaining to *citta* (*ibid.*, 79).<sup>31</sup> According to Theravāda *abhidhamma* literature, though *citta* is one, its functions are of 89/121 kinds (*ibid.*, 28).<sup>32</sup> And the aggregate *rūpa* is of 28 kinds (*ibid.*, 236 & 262).<sup>33</sup> In the category of

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<sup>30</sup> For example, Karunadasa’s “The Abhidhamma Version of the Cognitive Process” (2007), and “Aspects of Buddhist Psychology – A Study Based on the Pali *Suttas* and the Abhidhamma” (2008), Gunaratna’s “Rebirth Explained” (1980), Dhamma’s *Process of Consciousness and Matter* (2004), Chandaratana’s PhD dissertation “Divergent Doctrinal Interpretations on the Nature of Mind and Matter in Theravāda Abhidhamma: A Study Mainly Based on the Pāli and Sinhala Buddhist Exegetical Literature” (2011) are worth noting regarding the theory of cognitive process in Theravāda *abhidhamma* Buddhism.

<sup>31</sup> The 52 mental factors are: 7 universals, 6 occasionals, 14 unwholesome factors (4 unwholesome universals and 10 unwholesome occasionals), 25 beautiful factors (19 beautiful universals, 3 abstinences, 2 illimitables, and 1 non-delusion).

<sup>32</sup> The 89 or 121 *citta*-s are: 12 unwholesome, 18 rootless, 24 sense-sphere beautiful, 15 fine-material-sphere, 12 immaterial-sphere, and 8 or 40 supramundane.

<sup>33</sup> The 28 kinds of matter are twofold: (1) 18 concretely produced matter, namely, earth, water, fire, air, eye, ear,

*paramattha-dhamma*, *citta*, *cetasika*, and *rūpa* are understood as *saṅkhata* (conditioned), and *nibbāna* is understood as *asaṅkhāta* (unconditioned) (*ibid.*, 260).

The term *citta* is derived from the verbal root *citi*, ‘to know’. In the Abhivn, *citta* is defined in three ways: as the agent (*kattusādhana*), as the instrument (*karaṇasādhana*), and as the activity or mode of operation (*bhāvasādhana*). As the agent, *citta* is elucidated as that which cognizes an object, i.e., visible form, etc. (Abhivn 8).<sup>34</sup> As the instrument, *citta* is that by which the associated mental *dhammas* cognize the object (*ibid.*, 8).<sup>35</sup> As an activity, *citta* is itself the process of cognizing the object (*ibid.*, 8).<sup>36</sup> Regarding the third definition, Bodhi says:

[C]itta is fundamentally an activity or process of cognizing or knowing an object. It is not an agent or instrument possessing actual being in itself apart from the activity of cognizing. The definitions in terms of agent and instrument are proposed to refute the wrong view of those who hold that a permanent self or ego is the agent and instrument of cognition. The Buddhist thinkers point out, by means of these definitions, that it is not a self that performs that the act of cognition, but *citta* or consciousness. This *citta* is nothing other than the act of cognizing, and that act is necessarily impermanent, marked by rise and fall (Bodhi 1999, 27).<sup>37</sup>

From the above passage, it is noted that *citta* has not been identified as a substantial agent or “self”; it is “not-self”, a mere function depending on conditional relations. Though the above statement is used for the *citta*, it is also applicable for *viññāṇa*. In the previous chapter (see 4.2), I have already discussed *citta*, *viññāṇa* and *mano* and their functions. About *citta*, Pieris thinks that “*citta*... serves as that which defines the human personality. This *citta* may be described as the noetically oriented consciousness (*mano-centred viññāṇa*) constituting a

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nose, tongue, body, visible form, sound, smell, taste, femininity, masculinity, heart-base, life faculty, nutriment; and (2) 10 non-concrete matter, namely, space, bodily intimation, vocal intimation, lightness, malleability, wieldiness, production, continuity, decay, impermanence.

<sup>34</sup>3–4: *cinteṭi ti cittaṃ. ārammaṇaṃ vijānāti ti attho. yathāha “visayavijānana-lakkhaṇaṃ cittaṃ.*

<sup>35</sup>7–8: *cintentī vā etena karaṇabhūtena sampayuttadhammā ti cittaṃ.*

<sup>36</sup> 9: *cintanamattam cittaṃ.*

<sup>37</sup> About the third definition, Karunadasa says, “It is the third definition that is valid from an ultimate point of view (*nippariyāyato*)” (Karunadasa 2008, 7). Regarding the three definitions, he moreover says, “For, strictly speaking, consciousness is neither that which cognizes (agent), nor that through which cognition takes place (instrument), but is only the process of cognizing an object. Consciousness is a mere occurrence due to conditions” (*ibid.*,7).

changing series of thought-moments (*santāna*), which could, therefore, never be mistaken for a permanent immutable soul (*attā* as denied in the *anatta* doctrine), but coincides with the empirical self (or *attā* in the reflexive sense)” (Pieris 2004, 36). In this connection, the theory of “not-self” is briefly discussed with regard to *citta/viññāṇa* from the early Buddhist teachings.

### 5.7.2 *Citta* is not a Substantial Agent

In the *Pañcavaggiya Sutta* of the SN, in a discussion about the not-self (*anattā*) with regard to the five aggregates – form, feeling, perception, conditioning forces, consciousness – the consciousness, including the other four aggregates, is explained as “not-self” (*viññāṇam anattā*). As the consciousness is not-self, it is also impermanent, subject to suffering and change (SN III 67–68).

The aforesaid consciousness is not an isolated phenomenon; it is an aggregate existing in combination with the other four aggregates: form, feeling, perception, and conditioning forces. Consciousness cannot be separated from these four aggregates. With regard to this, in the *Upaya Sutta* of the SN, the Buddha is said to have taught that it is impossible if someone says:

I will describe apart from form, apart from feeling, apart from perception, apart from determinations, a coming, and a going of consciousness, its passing away or arising, or its presence, sustenance and expansion, or its proliferation (SN III 53).<sup>38</sup>

Now it is clear that any specific consciousness cannot be separated from the other four aggregates. But it is distinguishable by a description of its various functions in the cognitive process of psychological experience. Yet, nowhere is consciousness defined as a permanent entity behind the cognitive process. What is then the cognitive process? Let me discuss in the following section.

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<sup>38</sup> 10–13: *aham aññatra rūpā aññatra vedanāya aññatra saññāya aññatra saṃkhārehi viññāṇassa āgatim vā gatim vā cutim vā upapattim vā vuddhim vā virūḷhim vā vepullam vā paññāpessāmīti.*

### 5.7.3 Understanding the Cognitive Process

The cognitive process is understood as not a mere immediate result of contact between sense bases and their objects; instead, it is the result of continuum of event that occurs by contact between sense bases and their objects. This is a process that begins from a sensory contact and gradually leads to the comprehension of the object. This whole process is interpreted as the mental event which is also called the “fixed order of consciousness” (*citta-niyāma*, Vism 460, 10), or a natural order of the consciousness due to the conditional relations. When consciousness arises by the cognizance of objects in the sense bases or the mind base, they do not appear as separate, but rather “as phases in a series of discrete cognitive events leading one to the other in a regular and uniform order” (Bodhi 1999, 151).

It was said that the emergence of consciousness and human experience is shown by presenting conditional relations. But the vital part of this experience is to be known as perception in the *suttas*. Ñāṇamoli is of a similar opinion. He says that though the Vibh and the Paṭṭh contain allusions to the doctrine of the cognitive process, it is elaborated based on the *Suttas* (Ñāṇamoli 2010, 231–32). For example, in the *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta* of the MN, the perceptual process is explained as the following:

Dependent on the eye and visible form, arises eye-consciousness. The meeting of these three is contact. With contact as condition, there is feeling. What one feels about, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one reflects about. What one reflects about, that one comes to be obsessed with. That which one is obsessed with as the source, perceptions and notions assail him with respect to past, the future, and the present forms cognizable through the eye (MN I 111–12).<sup>39</sup>

The above assertion is repeated with respect to the other sense bases, ear, nose, tongue, body, and the mind. Here, it is understood that the sense bases and their objects play a vital role in

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<sup>39</sup> 35–04: *cakkhuñ c' āvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, yaṃ vedeti, taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti, yaṃ papañceti tatonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti atītānāgatapaccuppannesu cakkhuvīññeyyesu rūpesu.*



conditioning perceptual consciousness in the cognitive process. In this regard, the cognitive process in connection with *bhavaṅga* in the *Abhidhamma* literature is discussed.

### 5.7.3.1 The Cognitive Process and *Bhavaṅga*

In the Pāli *abhidhammic* literature, the whole gamut of cognitive process is presented as two streams of consciousness: process-consciousness (*vīthi-citta*)<sup>40</sup> and process-free (*vīthi-mutta*) consciousness.<sup>41</sup> Though functions of these two principles are discussed separately, they are reciprocally generated from some basic orders. These orders are to be observed as the psychological experience of (1) an enduring process which does not qualify a permanent substance as an “agent”, and (2) the whole psychological activity is a continuum of mental stream in individual life experience (Vism 460). These orders are understood as the core principle of Buddhist perceptual experience which is conditioned by every immediately succeeding and preceding event in the activity of the mind. This system is more comprehensible when the whole range of the cognitive process is explained in detail by two flows of consciousness: *vīthi-citta* and *vīthi-mutta citta*.

*Vīthi-citta* refers to the active condition of the mind when it occurs in a cognitive process. *Vīthi-mutta citta* refers to the passive condition of the mind. *Vīthi-mutta citta* is further presented with three different functions: (1) *cuti-citta*, (2) *paṭisandhi-citta*, and (3) *bhavaṅga-citta*. Among these three types of consciousness, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is closely connected to the cognitive process in the active condition of the mind. In this regard, Karunadasa says

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<sup>40</sup> The term *vīthi* literally means “street” (Bodhi 2007, 151). It also means “a pathway” or “a process”. (Karunadasa 2007, 1).

<sup>41</sup> In “Abhidhamma Doctrines–II: The Cognitive Process (*Cittavīthi*)” (212–83) of his PhD dissertation, Chandaratana examines the history of cognitive process in Theravāda teachings. He refers to Sarachchandra who thinks that the *abhidhamma* theory of perception was first developed by Buddhaghosa in the Vism (Sarachchandra 1994, 49). Chandaratana disagrees with Sarachchandra’s view and says that the theory of cognitive process existed before the arrival of Buddhaghosa in Sri Lanka. It has been observed that, to discuss the theory of cognitive process, Chandaratana mostly relies on Karunadasa’s understanding of the theory of cognitive process which is presented as of two kinds: (1) with the doctrine of *khana* (momentariness), and (2) with the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* (Karunadasa 2010, 138, cited by Chandaratana 2011, 214).

that *cuti* and *paṭisandhi* are the species of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness. He gives the reason: “when the term *bhavaṅga* is used in [...] wider sense, death-consciousness and rebirth-linking consciousness are considered as two species of the *bhavaṅga* consciousness” (Karunadasa 2007, 3). In this connection, let me now clarify the concepts of *vīthi-citta* and *vīthi-mutta citta*.

*Vīthi-citta* refers to the active condition of consciousness, because its activity possesses a set of motion with regard to the sense bases and their objects. In the previous chapter (see 4.2.1), I have discussed that consciousness is named after the sense faculties, not after the sense object of faculties, i.e., eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and the mind. Each is also known as a “door” (*dvāra*), namely the eye-door, ear-door, nose-door, tongue-door, body-door, and the mind-door, because they are known as media through which objects enter the range of the mind in the cognitive process (Bodhi 1999, 150–51). In correspondence to these six doors of cognition, six cognitive processes are identified. Out of the six doors, the first five are collectively called the “five-door-process” (*pañca-dvāra-vīthi*) because they are based on the physical sense bases. On the other hand, the sixth one which is the mind-door in the order is called the “mind-door-process” (*mano-dvāra-vīthi*). The essential conditions of the *vīthi-citta* in the cognitive process are of the following five types which occur through each of the doors:

### **The five-door process**

- (a) for an eye-door process (*cakkhuvāravīthi*) – (1) eye-sensitivity (*cakkhuppasāda*), (2) visible object (*rūpārammaṇa*), (3) light (*āloka*), (4) attention (*manasikāra*);
- (b) for an ear-door process (*sotadvāravīthi*) – (1) ear-sensitivity (*sotappasāda*), (2) sound (*saddārammaṇa*), (3) space (*ākāsa*), (4) attention;
- (c) for a nose-door process (*ghānavāravīthi*) – (1) nose-sensitivity (*ghānappasāda*), (2) smell (*gandhārammaṇa*), (3) air element (*vayodhātu*), (4) attention;
- (d) for a tongue-door process (*jivhādvāravīthi*) – (1) tongue-sensitivity (*jivhāppasāda*), (2) taste (*rasārammaṇa*), (3) water element (*āpodhātu*), (4) attention;

(e) for a body-door process (*kāyadvāravīthi*) – (1) body-sensitivity (*kāyappasāda*), (2) tangible object (*phoṭṭhabbārammaṇa*), (3) earth element (*paṭhavīdhātu*), (4) attention;

### **The mind-door process**

(f) for a mind-door process (*manodvāravīthi*)– (1) the heart-base (*hadayavatthu*), (2) mental object (*dhammārammaṇa*), (3) the *bhavaṅga*, (4) attention (Bodhi 1999, 151–52).

From the above discussion, one can observe that among the six cognitive processes, the five-door process may occur in succession to one another, and the mind-door process may occur independently. The mind-door process is a channel through which *bhavaṅga* emerges. Sometimes, these two processes are called the “mixed door-processes” (*missaka-dvāra-vīthi*) because they involve both a physical sense-door and the mind-door. Meanwhile, the processes that appear at the mind-door are called “bare mind-door processes” (*suddha-mano-dvāravīthi*) because they occur from *bhavaṅga* alone without the activity of a physical sense base (*ibid.*, 152). But, in the light of the activity of the mixed door-processes in the cognitive process, the theory of cognition is closely connected with *bhavaṅga*. Here, it is also noticed that though *bhavaṅga* is discussed separately as a *vīthi-mutta* or the passive condition of the mind, it has a proximate connection with the *vīthi-citta* or the active condition of the mind in the cognitive process. Therefore, at this point it is useful to note that the description of the *vīthi-citta* and the mixed door-process consciousness are highly complex. This complicated cognitive process was developed in the *abhidhamma* texts, and elaborated in detail in the *Vism*, and the commentaries to the *abhidhamma*. But, in this discussion the above interpretation was mostly taken from the account of the *Abhidha-s*. In this connection, let me now discuss about *vīthi-mutta citta*.

It was mentioned that the *vīthi-mutta citta* performs three different functions: *cuti*, *paṭisandhi*, and *bhavaṅga*. I have already discussed the first two consciousness – *cuti* and *paṭisandhi* – discussed under the notion of *bhavaṅga*. In this arrangement, *bhavaṅga* can be classified as being twofold: (1) as a continuity of consciousness of individual life from birth to death which is a duration of whole life, and (2) as *cuti-citta* and *paṭisandhi-citta*. The second classification was already discussed in Chapter 4 (see 4.6). It was said that the *cuti-citta* which is the last consciousness of a dying individual and its object (Vism 457–58) are the last cognitive process of that individual. The *paṭisandhi-citta* is clarified as the first consciousness to occur at the moment of rebirth which also has the same object as that of the dying individual. When the *paṭisandhi-citta* ceases, it is immediately followed by *bhavaṅga*-consciousness which functions as a continuity of individuals in the form of consciousness continuity from birth to death in the birth-cycle. In this manner, *bhavaṅga* causes the continuity of a person until the attainment of *nibbāna*. According to the Pāli tradition, the *bhavaṅga*-consciousness ensures the continuity of life not only during a single existence but also in the next lives. A passage from the Abhidha-s states:

At the end of life, having become the death consciousness [*cuti-citta*] in the form of passing away, it then ceases. Thereafter, the rebirth-linking [*paṭisandhi-citta*] and the others continue to occur, revolving in due sequence like the wheel of a cart until one attains Nibbāna (Bodhi 1999, 228).

In the Vism, therefore, it is said:

When the birth consciousness has ceased, following upon that birth consciousness, being the result of a particular *kamma*, streams forward as consciousness of becoming-constituent [whose] object is also the same [*kamma*]; and again same kind [of consciousness together with its object streams]. As long as there is no other kind of consciousness arising to interrupt the continuity, it proceeds occurring endlessly like the stream of a river, even in periods of dreamless sleep (Vism 458).

With the above evidence, I have discussed *bhavaṅga* in the contexts of death-birth, deep sleep, deep meditative trance, and luminous mind. Now *bhavaṅga* will be discussed in connection with the cognitive process from the Vism:

With the *bhavaṅga* continuity occurring thus, when the beings' faculties have become capable of apprehending an object, then, when a visible dictum has come into the eye's focus, there is impinging dependent upon the eye-sensitivity due to the visible dictum. Thereupon, owing to the impact's influence [impact of sense object entering a sense door], there comes to be the vibration of *bhavaṅga*. Then, when the *bhavaṅga* has ceased, the functional mind-element arises making that same visible form its object, as it were, cutting off the *bhavaṅga* and accomplishing the function of adverting. So too in the case of the ear door and so on (Vism 458).<sup>42</sup>

When an object of anyone of the six kinds has come into focus in the mind door, after the vibration of the *bhavaṅga*, the functional mind-consciousness-element without root cause arises accompanied by equanimity, as it were, cutting off the *bhavaṅga* and accomplishing the function of adverting (*ibid.*, 458).<sup>43</sup>

From the above passages, the capability of apprehending the sense bases and their objects develop gradually. In this regard, though the Vism has not clarified the gradual development, the Vism-mahāṭīkā says that this development takes place after the beings' birth. In this context, one's sense doors do not apprehend any object until the senses are matured (Vism-mṭ VRI II 55).<sup>44</sup>

Considering the above discussion, it is understood that the process of cognition does not begin immediately after conception, but it begins when a person's sense becomes matured. So, the process of cognition is presented when the continuous flow of *bhavaṅga* begins to vibrate due to the impact of the sense objects entering a sense door. In this context, the flow of *bhavaṅga* is called past-*bhavaṅga* (*atīta-bhavaṅga*), and when “*bhavaṅga* begins to vibrate due to the impact of the sense objects entering a sense door” it is called the vibration of *bhavaṅga* (*bhavaṅga-calana*), which is followed by *bhavaṅga-upacceda* (*bhavaṅga-arrest*)

<sup>42</sup>10–16: *evaṃ pavatte pana bhavaṅgasantāne, yadā sattānaṃ indriyāni ārammaṇagahaṇakkhamāni honti, tadā cakkhuss' āpāthagate rūpe rūpaṃ paṭicca cakkhupasādassa ghaṭṭanā hoti, tato ghaṭṭanānubhāvena bhavaṅgacalanam hoti. atha niruddhe bhavaṅge tad-eva rūpaṃ ārammaṇam katvā bhavaṅgam vicchindamānā viya, āvajjanakiccaṃ sādhayamānā kiriyamanodhātu uppajjati. sotadvārādīsupi eseva nayo.*

<sup>43</sup>17–21: *manodvāre pana chabbidhe pi ārammaṇe āpāthagate bhavaṅgacalanānantaram bhavaṅgam vicchindamānā viya āvajjanakiccaṃ sādhayamānā ahetukakiriyamanoviññādhātu uppajjati upekkhāsahagatāti evaṃ dvinnam kiriyaviññāṇānam āvajjanavasena pavatti veditabbā.*

<sup>44</sup>25–27: *ārammaṇagahaṇakkhamānī rūpādiārammaṇam gahetuṃ samatthāni. mātukucchigatakāle viya hi bahinikkhantakālepi na tāva indriyāni sakiccakāni honti, anukkamena pana visadabhāvaṃ pattakāle eva sakiccakāni honti. tenevāha “idha paripakkattā āyatanāna'nti.*

because the flow of *bhavaṅga* gets interrupted. Here, neither *bhavaṅga-calana* nor *bhavaṅga-upacceda* are part of the cognitive process, they just pave the way for its occurrence. It is after the *bhavaṅga-upacceda* that there arises the five-door adverting (*pañca-dvāra-āvajjana*) consciousness because at this stage it adverts attention to the object at the sense-door. This is the beginning of the stream of *vīthi-citta*. The next stage is represented by one of the five kinds of sense-consciousness. In this order, the next is followed by the three kinds of consciousness performing the functions of receiving (*sampañicchana*), investigating (*santīraṇa*), and determining (*votthapana*). According to the Vism, it is through these three successive stages that the objects come to be gradually comprehended by the functions of the mind (Vism 458). After the stage of *votthapana*, there is *javana* (running swiftly) which consists of a series of seven kinds of *citta*.<sup>45</sup> *Javana* is followed by the final stage called *tadārammaṇa* (registration or having that object) in a full process of cognition. *Tadārammaṇa* is exercised for two mind-moments immediately after *javana* (Bodhi 1999, 124). According to the Dhs-a, *tadāramma* takes as its object, the object that has been apprehended by the *javana* (*javanena gahitaṃ ārammaṇaṃ tassa gahitattā tadārammaṇaṃ ti ca*, Dhs-a 270, 17–18). The Dhs-a also says that *tadāramma* can be called *mūla-bhavaṅga* because of its similarity to *paṭisandhi-citta* (*paṭisandhicittasadisattā mūlabhavaṅga ti*, Dhs-a 270, 16). It also represents the last state in a perceptual process before it falls back into the continuity of *bhavaṅga*.

<sup>45</sup> Gunaratna says, *javana* derives from the verb *javati* which means “to run,” also “to impel or incite”. He describes *javana*:

*Javana* is the only stage where man is relatively free to think and to decide. There is the element of choice in this important thought moment, and it has the power to affect one’s future according to the nature of the volition. If the sense-object that entered the mind had been rightly comprehended (*yoniso manasikāra*), free from the impurities of lust, hatred and delusion, harmonious results will follow. If it had been wrongly comprehended (*ayoniso manasikāra*), disharmonious results will follow” (Gunaratna 1980, 23).

Bodhi says, *javana* is a technical term which literally means “running swiftly”. Regarding the cognitive process, Bodhi says: “[*javana*] consists of a series of *cittas* (normally seven, all identical in kind) which “run swiftly” over the object in the act of apprehending it. The *javana* stage is the most important from an ethical standpoint, for it is at this point that wholesome or unwholesome *cittas* originate” (Bodhi 1999, 124).

The above discussion represents the entire cognitive process beginning with past-*bhavaṅga* and ending with *tadārammaṇa*. The entire process takes place with seventeen thought-moments:

1. *atīta-bhavaṅga* (past-*bhavaṅga*)
2. *bhavaṅga-calana* (vibration of *bhavaṅga*)
3. *bhavaṅga-upaccheda* (arrest of *bhavaṅga*)
4. *pañca-dvāra-āvajjana* (five-door advertence)
5. *pañca-viññāṇa* (fivefold consciousness)
6. *sampaññāna* (reception)
7. *sanīraṇa* (investigation)
8. *voṭṭhapaṇa* (decision)
- 9 – 15. *javana* (impulsion)
- 16 & 17. *tadārammaṇa* (registration of the experience)

About the above seventeen thought-moments, Gunaratna writes:

It must not be forgotten that these seemingly long 17 thought-moments constitute just one single thought-process, which takes place within an infinitesimally small fraction of time. The progress of this process varies with the intensity of the stimulus. If the intensity is very great (*atimahanta*), the complete process takes place. If it is great (*mahanta*), the 16th and 17th moments of registration do not occur. If it is small (*paritta*) or very small (*atiparitta*), the process works functionally only, without full cognition (Gunaratna 1980, 24).

In the *Dhs-a*, the aforesaid discussion is shown with the simile of a mango—when a certain man is sleeping at the root of a mango tree and a ripe mango falls from the stalk to the ground, grazing his ear, he is awakened by the sound. He opens his eyes and looks, then he stretches out his hand, takes the mango, squeezes it, and smells it. He then eats the mango, swallows it, appreciating its taste, and then he goes back to sleep (*Dhs-a* 271–72). This simile is further illustrated in the *Abhidh-s* as:

[T]he time of the man’s sleeping at the foot of the mango tree is like the time when the *bhavaṅga* is occurring. The instant of the ripe mango falling from its stalk and grazing his ear is like the instant of the object striking one of the sense organs, for instance, the eye. The time of awaking through the sound is like that of the five-door advertent consciousness turning towards the object. The time of the man’s opening his eyes and looking is like eye-consciousness accomplishing its function of seeing. The time of

stretching out his hand and taking the mango is like that of the receiving consciousness receiving the object. The time of squeezing the fruit is like that of the investigating consciousness investigating the object. The time of smelling the mango is like that of the determining consciousness determining the object. The time of eating the mango is like that of javana experiencing the flavour of the object. The swallowing of the fruit while appreciating its taste is like the registration consciousness taking the same object as the javana phase. And the man's going back to sleep is like the subsidence back into the bhavaṅga (Bodhi 1999, 158).

Taking the above Dhs-a simile, Davids moreover clarifies the 17 thought-moments in the following manner:

A man lies asleep with covered head beneath a mango tree (stream of unconsciousness life or *bhavanga*). A wind stirs the branches (preceding *citta* 1 and vibrating *bhavanga*, 2, 3). This causes a mango to fall by him (arrest or disruption of unconscious life). The man is wakened by the falling fruit (adverting, 4). He uncovers his head (sense-impression of fruit, 5), picks up the fruit (receiving, 6). Inspects it (investigating, 7), determines what it is (determining, 8), eats it (full perception, 9–15), swallows the last morsels (registering, 16, 17), re-covers his head and sleeps again (subsidence into *bhavanga*) (Davids 1936, 407).

Let me present the above clarification with a table for better understanding of the cognitive process with 17 thought-moments:

A man lies asleep with covered head beneath a mango tree	stream of unconsciousness life or <i>bhavanga</i>	<i>bhavaṅga</i>
A wind stirs the branches	preceding <i>citta</i> 1 and vibrating <i>bhavanga</i> , 2	1. <i>atīta-bhavaṅga</i> 2. <i>bhavaṅga-calana</i>
This causes a mango to fall by him	arrest or disruption of unconscious life	3. <i>bhavaṅga-upaccheda</i>
The man is woken by the falling fruit	adverting	4. <i>pañca-dvāra-āvajjana</i>
He uncovers his head	sense-impression of fruit	5. <i>pañca-viññāṇa</i>
picks up the fruit	receiving	6. <i>sampañcāna</i>
inspects it	investigating	7. <i>santīraṇa</i>



determines what it is	determining	8. <i>votthapana</i>
eats it	full perception	9–15. <i>javana</i>
swallows the last morsels	registering	16–17. <i>tadārammana</i>
covers his head and sleeps again	subsidence into <i>bhavaṅga</i>	<i>bhavaṅga</i>

The simile of the mango is given in the *abhidhamma* literature to illustrate the cognitive process of 17 thought-moments occurring at the sense-doors.<sup>46</sup> Karunadasa further clarifies these 17 thought-moments with one matter-moment from the *Vism* and the *Vibh-a*.<sup>47</sup> He says:

[S]eventeen mind-moments are exactly equal to the duration of one matter-moment because the mind is said to change rapidly and break up more quickly than matter. Accordingly a matter-moment which arises simultaneously with a mind-moment perishes together with the seventeenth mind-moment in a given series. Therefore when it is said that a complete cognitive process lasts for seventeen mind-moments it does also mean that a complete cognitive process lasts for one matter-moment (Karunadasa 2007, 8–9).

<sup>46</sup> Another example is given by Ledi Sayadaw with the simile of a moon. With this simile he shows the cognitive process of unenlightened and enlightened persons:

When we look at the moon, the image of the moon appears simultaneously at the eye-base and the heart-base. The sense object, which is the image of the moon, rudely invades the eye-base with terrific force. It is like the sparking when the steel hammer strikes the flint in a lighter. The image of the moon makes its impact there, like a bolt of lightning. Eye-consciousness arises in the eye at that instant. Similarly, the terrific impression of the image of the moon appears at the heart-base, and mind-consciousness is stirred up with dazzling intensity. It is not unlike the lightning that flashes in rain clouds. When consciousness arises, subconsciousness disappears [*bhavaṅga*]. Eye-consciousness taking place at the eye-base, and the flashes of mind-consciousness reacting to the contact at the heart-base, thereby complete the function of receiving the impression of the moon. This goes on for as long as the contact between the eye and the moon lasts. When the viewer turns away, all those units of consciousness disappear. The ignorant person thinks that he or she sees the moon. However, it is only the occurrence of flashes of consciousness in the eye and the mind that take place. Personality view clings to a delusive “I” based on the occurrence of consciousness.

Just as darkness reasserts itself when a flash of lighting disappears, consciousness ceases and subconsciousness reasserts itself at the heart-base the moment the moon gets out of the eye. The “not seeing” is noticed by the average deluded person who thinks, “I don’t see the moon now.” Personality view makes him or her think so, of course. For had there been a “person” who had seen the moon earlier, that person should have died along with the cessation of “seeing.” This is the delusion dominating an ignorant person.

The Noble Ones, being possessed of right view, see the truth as it is. As contact occurs between the eye and the moon, transient moments of consciousness occur that cognize the material object called the moon. This transient consciousness occurs with dazzling flashes inside the body, like flashes of lightning. These conscious moments are as fleeting as flashes of lightning in their disappearance too. This is how the undeluded ones see it (Sayadaw 1900, 43–44).

<sup>47</sup>*Vibh-a* 25: *rūpaṃ garu-pariṇāmaṃ dandhanirodhaṃ; arūpaṃ lahupariṇāmaṃ khippanirodhaṃ* (also see *Vism* 613). *Vibh-a* 25: *rūpe dharante yeva soḷasa cittāni uppajjitvā nirujjhanti. taṃ pana sattarasamena cittena saddhiṃ nirujjhati.*

However, it has to be understood that each mind-moment consists of three sub-moments: arising (*uppāda*), presence (*thiti*), and dissolution (*bhanga*). Within a mind-moment, a *citta* arises, stays and performs its momentary functions, then it dissolves, and conditions the succeeding *citta*. In this way, the flow of *citta* continues like the water in the stream of river. In this regard, in the context of the five sense door process and the mind door process, each mind-moment in the cognitive process presented with the sixfold presentation of objects. They are: (1) very great (*atimahanta*), (2) great (*mahanta*), (3) slight (*paritta*), (4) very slight (*atiparitta*), (5) clear (*vibhūta*), (6) obscure (*avibhūta*). Among them, at the five sense-door process, there are fourfold presentation of objects – (1) very great, (2) great, (3) slight, (4) very slight; and at the mind door, there are twofold presentation of objects – (5) clear, (6) obscure. Below the six fold presentations of object is presented with mind-moments and three sub-moments (arising, presence, and dissolution) through diagrams:

### Abbreviations

=	<i>uppāda-thiti-bhanga</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>sampaṭiccana</i>
<i>tī</i>	<i>atīta-bhavaṅga</i>	<i>ṇa</i>	<i>santīraṇa</i>
<i>na</i>	<i>bhavaṅga-calana</i>	<i>vo</i>	<i>votthapana</i>
<i>da</i>	<i>bhavaṅga-upaccheda</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>javana</i>
<i>pa</i>	<i>pañca-dvāra-āvajjana</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>tadārambana</i>
<i>vi</i>	<i>pañca-viññāṇa</i>	<i>bha</i>	<i>bhavaṅga</i>

### Cognitive Process (grades of sense-door processes)

#### 1. Very great (*atimahanta*)

1.

*bha tī na da pa vi sa ṇa vo ja ja ja ja ja ja ja ta ta bha*  
 = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = =



**Note:** In this cognitive process the object arises simultaneously with the arising of *atīta-bhavaṅga*. This process has a duration of seventeen thought-moments.

## 2. Great (*mahanta*)

2.

*bha tī tī na da pa vi sa ṇa vo ja ja ja ja ja ja ja bha bha*  
 =

**Note:** In this cognitive process the object arises with the two thought-moments of *atīta-bhavaṅga*. In this process, there is no arising of *tadārambana*. In that case, at the end of the *javanas*, there is the flow of *bhavaṅga*.

3.

*bha tī tī tī na da pa vi sa ṇa vo ja ja ja ja ja ja ja bha*  
 =

**Note:** In this cognitive process, the object arises with the three thought-moments of *atīta-bhavaṅga*. After three *atīta-bhavaṅgas*, remaining fourteen *cittas* ending with the last *javana* arise. In that case, at the end of the *javanas*, there is the flow of *bhavaṅga*.

## 3. Slight (*paritta*)

4.

*bha tī tī tī tī na da pa vi sa ṇa vo vo vo bha bha bha bha bha*  
 =

**Note:** In this cognitive process, the object arises with the four thought-moments of *atīta-bhavaṅga*. After the four *atīta-bhavaṅgas*, the cognitive process continues until the end of the *votthapana*. In that case, at the end of the *votthapana*, there is the flow of *bhavaṅga*.

5.

*bha tī tī tī tī tī na da pa vi sa ṇa vo vo vo bha bha bha bha*  
 =



6.

*bha tī tī tī tī tī tī na da pa vi sa ṇa vo vo vo bha bha bha*  
= =

7.

*bha tī tī tī tī tī tī tī na da pa vi sa ṇa vo vo vo bha bha*  
= =

8.

*bha tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī na da pa vi sa ṇa vo vo vo bha*  
= =

9.

*bha tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī na da pa vi sa ṇa vo vo bha*  
= =

**Note:** In the above diagrams, there are slight objects with 4 to 9 *atīta-bhavaṅgas* that pass initially. Depending on the number of *atīta-bhavaṅgas*, six types of process take place with slight object.

**4. Very slight (*atiparitta*)**

10.

*bha tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī na na bha bha bha bha bha bha*  
= =

11.

*bha tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī na na bha bha bha bha bha*  
= =

12.

*bha tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī na na bha bha bha bha*  
= =

13.

*bha tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī na na bha bha bha*  
= =

14.

*bha tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī na na bha bha*  
= =

15.



*bha tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī tī na na bha*  
 = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = =

**Note:** In the above diagrams, there are very slight objects with 4 to 15 *atīta-bhavaṅgas* that pass initially. Depending on the number of *atīta-bhavaṅgas*, six types of process take place with very slight object.

**Note:** All the above diagrams have been prepared based on the table 4.2 of the Abhidh-s (Bodhi 1999, 161).

**Cognitive Process (grades of mind-door processes)**

There are two kinds of mind-door processes with twofold presentation of objects: clear (*vibhūta*), and obscure (*avibhūta*).

**1. Clear (*vibhūta*)**

*bha na da vo ja ja ja ja ja ja ta ta bha*  
 = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = =

**Note:** In this cognitive process with a clear (*vibhūta*) object when the object enters the avenue of the mind-door, the *bhavaṅga-calana* mind-moment takes place followed by the *bhavaṅga-upaccheda*. Then a mind-door *votthapana* turns to the object, followed by seven *javanas* and two of *tadārammana* after which the cognitive process subsides into *bhavaṅga*.

**2. Obscure (*avibhūta*).**

*bha na da vo ja ja ja ja ja ja bha*  
 = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = = =

**Note:** In this cognitive process with an obscure (*avibhūta*) object when the object enters the avenue of the mind-door, the *bhavaṅga-calana* mind-moment takes place followed by the *bhavaṅga-upaccheda*. Then a mind-door *votthapana* turns to the object, followed by seven *javanas* after which the cognitive process subsides into the *bhavaṅga*. In this process, the two moments of *tadārammana* do not occur.



Through the above diagrams, the five sense-door process and the mind-door process have been presented with the sixfold presentation of objects. Among them, the fourfold presentation of objects (very great, great, slight, and very slight) have been discussed with regard to the five sense-door process, and the twofold presentation of objects (clear, and obscure) have been discussed with regard to the mind door process. From the above diagrams, the cognitive processes are various with the sixfold presentation of objects, as: when it is very great the complete cognitive process fully takes place. When it is great, the 16th and 17th moments of registration do not occur. When it is small or very small, the cognitive process works functionally.

### **5.8 Can *Bhavaṅga* be Called the “Seventh Consciousness”?**

In the previous section, while discussing the cognitive process, I have explicated six sensory consciousness, namely, eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, and mind-consciousness. In the context of the cognitive process, I discussed these six consciousness based on the conditionality that is dependent on the sense bases or faculties and their objects. In the previous section, it was said that the capability of apprehending the sense objects develop gradually. In this regard, the *Vism-māhāṭīkā* says that this development takes place after the beings’ senses become matured. So, one’s sense doors do not apprehend objects until the person’s senses become matured (*Vism-mṅ VRI II 55*). If this elucidation is considered, then the question arises about the consciousness of a being since conception till the time its senses become matured. In this context, I understand that it is *bhavaṅga* which continues with its object *kamma*. If this fact is accepted, can it be called the “seventh consciousness” which is different from the six sensory consciousness? Before addressing this question, let me first identify the base of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness.

### 5.8.1 The Base of *Bhavaṅga*

I have already discussed that sense perception refers to the six cognitive faculties—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and the mind. These are also called doors (*dvāra*) because through them the consciousness and its concomitants in a cognitive process gain access to the objects that enter into the avenue of senses. However, an important aspect is that among the six faculties the first five differ from the sixth one which is the mind. While the first five faculties are themselves physical bases (*vatthu*) of corresponding consciousness, the mind has not been clearly classified as a physical base of mind-consciousness, rather it is the *rūpa* (matter) as mentioned in the Paṭṭh:

Depending on this matter, mind-element and mind-consciousness element arise, that matter is conditioned for the mind-element and mind-consciousness element and their associated states by dependent condition (Paṭṭh I 4).<sup>48</sup>

Nārada, translator of the Paṭṭh, interprets the above-mentioned matter as the “heart” (*hadaya*) which is the base of mind-consciousness (Nārada 2010,6). Karunadasa says that the idea that the heart is the base of mind-consciousness is a Theravādin interpretation which is not accepted by the Sarvāstivāda school. The Sarvāstivāda school says: “the immediately preceding consciousness is the base of the immediately succeeding one” (Karunadasa 2008, 10). Karunadasa also provides the view of the Mahāsāṃghikas, as: “It says that consciousness penetrates the entire physical body and depending on its object (*viṣaya*) and support (*āśraya*=sense organ) it can contract or expand. The subtle (*sūkṣma*) mind-consciousness (*manovijñāna*) resides in the entire body which constitutes its support” (*ibid.*,11). If the aforementioned Theravādin interpretation is considered, then what is the base of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness? When the conception of a being takes place in the mother’s womb, where does *bhavaṅga*-consciousness sustain? These questions are addressed in the following section.

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<sup>48</sup> 7–11: *yaṃ rūpaṃ nissāya manodhātu ca manoviññādhātu ca vattanti, taṃ rūpaṃ manodhātuyā ca manoviññādhātuyā ca taṃsampayuttakānañca dhammānaṃ nissayapaccayena paccayo.*

Analysing the Vism, it seems that the base of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is the heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*) of the being. Why? Because when a being is conceived, he has “life faculty” (*jīvitindriya*) due to previous *kamma* generated by *saṅkhārā*. And this life faculty has the characteristic of maintaining matter (*rūpa*). As there is *bhavaṅga*-consciousness present in a being in the mother’s womb, then the life faculty takes place together with the heart where *bhavaṅga*-consciousness sustains. This heart-base has the characteristic of being the support for the mind-element and mind-consciousness-element. Nārada also says the same:

At the moment of conception, mentality and materiality are mutually related to one another by conscence condition [*sahajātapaccaya*]. Here the mental aggregates at the moment of conception, i.e. 15 rebirth consciousnesses and 35 mental factors, and heart-base are both conditioning and conditioned states in the five aggregate existences. This means that when the mental aggregates are the conditioning states, heart-base is the conditioned state and vice versa (Nārada 2010, xx).

The heart-base is to be found as dependent on the blood inside the heart which is assisted by the primaries that are earth-ness, water-ness, fire-ness, and air-ness. It is consolidated by temperature, consciousness, and nutriment. And, it is maintained by life faculty (Vism 447).<sup>49</sup> In the Abhidh-s, it is further said that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is supported by the heart-base in the sensual realm and form realm. But it is “baseless” in the formless realm. (Bodhi 1999, 223). Ledi Sayadaw also says the same thing:

When a person is asleep, the mind is in a state of subconsciousness (*bhavaṅga*). This very subtle state of mind is always present in a living being, hovering around the heart-base like clear water oozing from a spring. It is an inert state of mind below the threshold of consciousness. So it cannot motivate the sense organs to function, either in bodily, verbal, or mental action. It cannot advert to mental objects. The heart-base is an offshoot of the four primary elements. Its vitality and health depend totally on the vitality and health of materiality, because the four primary elements are themselves dependent on the nutriment of the body. Subconsciousness persists as long as the heart-base lasts. When the heart-base ceases, subconsciousness also ceases (Sayadaw, trans. by Oo 1900, 43).

<sup>49</sup>27–34: *manodhātu-manoviññādhātūnaṃ nissayalakkhaṇaṃ hadayavatthu, tāsāṃ yeva dhātūnaṃ ādhāraṇarasāṃ, ubbahanapaccupaṭṭhānaṃ. hadayassa anto kāyagatā-satikathāyaṃ vuttappakāraṃ lohitaṃ nissāya sandhāraṇādikiccehi bhūtehi katūpakāraṃ, utucittāhārehi upatthambhiyamānaṃ, āyunā anupāliyamānaṃ, manodhātu-manoviññādhātūnañ c’eva taṃ-sampayuttadhammānañ ca vatthubhāvaṃ sādheyamānaṃ tiṭṭhati.*



With regard to the heart-base and the heart, however, Karunadasa has made a distinction:

The heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*) is not absolutely identical with the heart as such. Like the sense-organs, it is a subtle and delicate species of matter and located inside the heart (*hadayabbhantare*). Like the sense-organs, it also comes into being through the action of *kamma*. But in one important aspect, it differs from the sense organs. Unlike the sense organs, it is not a faculty (*indriya*) (Karunadasa 2008, 12).

### 5.8.2 Two Aspects of Consciousness

From the above discussion, it is understood that there are two aspects of consciousness. In the previous chapter (see 4.2.2), I have broadly discussed these two aspects of consciousness: (1) consciousness as “surviving factor”, and (2) six sensory consciousness. I have related consciousness as the “surviving factor” with the terms *viññāṇa*, *citta*, *gandhabba*, *paṭisandhiviññāṇa*, and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in the context of rebirth. In the previous sections, I have shown that the base of *bhavaṅga* is the heart-base. And, when a being is conceived, he possesses “life faculty” (*jīvitindriya*)<sup>50</sup> due to previous *kamma* generated by *saṅkhārā*. And this life faculty has the characteristic of maintaining matter (*rūpa*). As *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is present in a being in the mother’s womb, the life faculty takes place together with the heart where *bhavaṅga*-consciousness sustains. This heart-base has the characteristic of being the support for the mind-element and mind-consciousness-element. In this regard, I said that the cognitive process of a person develops gradually when his/her senses become matured. If this fact is considered, it is clear that there are two aspects of consciousness. One aspect is *bhavaṅga* as “surviving factor” and the other aspect is six sensory consciousness. In this regard, the first aspect which is *bhavaṅga* can be called the “seventh consciousness”. If anyone objects that it cannot be called the “seventh consciousness”, it can be said that one cannot deny the two aspects of consciousness in Buddhist teachings. This interpretation is also supported by the

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<sup>50</sup> *Jīvitindriya* is one of the seven universal mental factors (*cetasika*). It is two kinds: (1) the mental, which vitalizes the associated mental states, and (2) the physical, which vitalizes material phenomena. Here, the mental life faculty alone is regarded as a *cetasika* which has “the characteristic of maintaining the associated mental states, the functions of making them occur, manifestation as the establishing of their presence, and its proximate cause is the mental states to be maintained” (Bodhi 1999, 81).

commentaries. According to the Dhs-a, one aspect of consciousness is thinking of an object, and the other aspect is its variegation which is the resultant consciousness:

‘Consciousness’ is that which cognizes an object. Or, in as much as this word ‘consciousness’ is common to all states or classes of consciousness, that which is known as worldly, wholesome, unwholesome, or the great functional, is termed ‘consciousness,’ because it arranges itself in a series of continuity by way of apperception in a process of *javana*-thought. And the resultant consciousness is also termed by *kamma* and the defilements (Dhs-a 63).<sup>51</sup>

From the above passage, though *citta* has a single characteristic, it divides itself into two main aspects: (1) consciousness is thinking of objects, and (2) resultant consciousness. I have already discussed that *bhavaṅga* is a “resultant consciousness” whose object is *kamma*. In the Pāli *Abhidhamma*, however, there are different types of consciousness. These types are 89 or 121. These *cittas* are classified based on the four planes of existence, namely, *kāma*, *rūpa*, *arūpa*, and *lokuttara*. These four planes of existence are of two kinds: conditioned existence, and unconditioned existence. While *kāma*, *rūpa*, and *arūpa* relate to conditioned existence, *lokuttara* leads to the realization of the unconditioned experience, *nibbāna*. The aforesaid 89 or 121 consciousness can be classified based on two aspects of consciousness: *bhavaṅga* and six sensory consciousness. In this regard, *bhavaṅga* is sustained based on *kamma*. So, an enlightened one’s consciousness is *abyākata* (indeterminate) because it is supported by neither *kamma* nor the results of *kamma*. Therefore, when a person attains enlightenment, his *bhavaṅga* ceases or is arrested and it is not supported by *kamma* or the results of *kamma*. Thus, an enlightened one’s consciousness is indeterminate and unanswerable.

## 5.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed *bhavaṅga*-consciousness from the *abhidhamma* literature, the Mil, the Vism and the commentaries in the contexts of rebirth, deep sleep, deep meditative trance, luminous mind, and the theory of cognitive process.

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<sup>51</sup> 31–35: *cittan ti ārammaṇaṃ cintetī ti cittaṃ vijānātī ti attho. yasmā vā cittan ti sabbacittasādhāraṇo esa saddo tasmā yad ettha lokiyakusalākusalamahākiriyaiccittaṃ taṃ javanavīthivasena attano santānaṃ cinoṭī ti cittaṃ. vipākaṃ kammakilesehi cittaṃ ti cittaṃ.*

This chapter was divided into two parts. In Part I, various references to *bhavaṅga* as found in the Paṭṭh, the Mil, the Vism, and the commentaries have been discussed. *Bhavaṅga* in the Paṭṭh occurs as “resultant consciousness” mostly in the sections of *anantara* and *samanantara* conditions in the contexts of (1) rebirth, and (2) perceptual process of ordinary psychological perception.

*Bhavaṅga* is used in the contexts of deep sleep and deep meditative trance (*nirodha-samāpatti*) in the Mil. In the context of deep sleep, Sarachchandra (1994, 80) and Harris (1991, 162) think that Nāgasena imitated the explanation of the *Upaniṣadic* interpretation of deep sleep with the context of *bhavaṅga*. Their claims were refuted by saying that it is not necessary to investigate non-Buddhist thought to provide an answer about the condition of a person’s consciousness when he is in deep sleep. Nāgasena used the term *bhavaṅga* as consciousness continuity which he was familiar with as it existed before his times.

In the context of deep meditative trance, Collins’ view was revised. According to Collins, in deep meditative trance there is no function of *citta* at all, including that of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness (Collins 1982, 257 & 246). I have discussed *citta* in deep meditative trance in two ways: (1) no *citta* is equal to no function of sensory consciousness including mind consciousness, and (2) no *citta* is equal to cessation of consciousness. For the first, it was said that in deep meditative trance there is no function of *mano* which refers to the external stimulus of *bhavaṅga* as it is the noetic opening (*dvāra*) to the outside world. It was said that when a monk is in deep meditative state his six sensory consciousness are not active at all, yet his *bhavaṅga*-consciousness continues due to *kamma*. With the reference to the commentary (Dhs-a 283), it was said that *bhavaṅga-mano* signifies *kiriya-manoviññāṇa-dhātu* (functional mind-consciousness-element) which ceases in deep meditative trance. So, in *nirodha-samāpatti*, the phenomenon of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness remains and continues. For the second case, it was

said that upon achieving meditative trance, the person makes effort by coupling together *samatha* and *vipassāna* meditations through which he destroys all *āsavas* and achieves *nibbāna*.

In the *Vism*, different functions of *bhavaṅga* with *mano*, *citta*, and *viññāṇa* have been discussed. It was said that *bhavaṅga-citta* and *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa* are similar in terms of their function. But *bhavaṅga-mano* is not same as *bhavaṅga-citta/bhavaṅga-viññāṇa*. *Bhavaṅga-mano* simply refers to the “consciousness” relating to only mental activity that is the intermediary moment between the activity of *bhavaṅga* and *mano*. *Bhavaṅga-mano* is one part of consciousness as the door of arising which is only the mental data-base. Here, *mano* is the noetic awaking of *bhavaṅga* only, not strictly co-extensive with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness.

It was said that *bhavaṅga* itself is affected by *āsava* in the context of *samsāric* existence and this *bhavaṅga* ceases or is arrested at the moment of enlightenment. In this regard, it is not possible to explain whether an Arahāt still possesses *bhavaṅga* with its object *kamma*. However, according to the *Vism*, an Arahāt still has *bhavaṅga*, which ceases completely at the moment of his passing-away consciousness. I have clarified that there is no function of dependent co-arising for an Arahāt because he has eliminated suffering and the cause of suffering. And when there is no operation of dependent co-arising, there is also the cessation of *kamma*. So, when *kamma* ceases, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and *cuti-citta* are also subject to cessation. In this regard, an Arahāt’s consciousness is unconditioned and unafflicted by any conditional *dhammas*. With this understating, I interpreted that the object of an Arahāt’s consciousness is *nibbāna*, and the nature of an Arahāt’s consciousness is pure in the sense of being unconditioned.

In the commentaries, *bhavaṅga* is explained as luminous (*pabhassara*) consciousness which is naturally pure and remains in each individual in *saṃsāric* existence. I said that luminous consciousness refers to *bhavaṅga-mano*, not the core function of *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa/citta*. In this regard, *citta* is a synonym of *mano* which becomes luminous due to the absence of the minor defilements (*upakkilesa*): desire and lust, sensual desire, ill will, torpor and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. Though the *citta/mano* is luminous, the core function of *citta/viññāṇa* is not luminous in the sense of the absence of *āsava*.

Kalupahana (1995, 88) and Reat (1977, 182) think that *bhavaṅga* is compatible with the *Upaniṣadic ātman* because this *ātman* is pure by nature. Throughout this study, I have clearly shown consciousness as “surviving factor” which is “not-self” or “soul” but “continuity of consciousness” in *saṃsāric* existence. This continuity of consciousness is compatible with *bhavaṅga* and it is affected by *āsava* throughout *saṃsāric* existence.

In Part II, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness was discussed together with six sensory consciousness to address the entire human existence with two aspects of consciousness: *vīthi-citta* (process consciousness) and process-free (*vīthi-mutta*) consciousness. I have pointed out that we can describe *bhavaṅga*-consciousness until the attainment of *nibbāna*.

Wijesekera (1979) and Padmasiri (1992) discuss *bhavaṅga*, relating it with Freudian theory of the unconscious. I briefly discussed this subject and proposed that it is important to address the *saṃsāric* existence with *bhavaṅga*, rather human psychology from the perspective of modern unconscious theory because the purpose of the two traditions are different.

I have discussed the sense perception that refers to the six cognitive faculties—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and the mind. These are also called doors (*dvāra*) because through

them the consciousness and its concomitants in a cognitive process gain access to the objects that enter into the avenue of senses. I discussed an important aspect that among the six faculties the first five differ from the sixth, the mind. While the first five faculties are themselves physical bases (*vatthu*) of corresponding consciousness, the mind has not been clearly classified as a physical base of the mind. It is said that it is *rūpa* (matter) which is heart (*hadaya*), the base of mind. In this connection, the base of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is also the heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*). It was said that when a being is conceived, he has “life faculty” (*jīvitindriya*) due to previous *kamma* generated by *saṅkhārā*. And this life faculty has the characteristic of maintaining matter (*rūpa*). As there is *bhavaṅga*-consciousness present in a being in the mother’s womb, then the life faculty takes place together with the heart where *bhavaṅga*-consciousness sustains. And this heart-base has the characteristic of being the support for the mind-element and mind-consciousness-element.

It was said that though *citta/viññāṇa* has a single characteristic, it is divided into two aspects: (1) consciousness is thinking of objects, and (2) resultant consciousness. Here, *bhavaṅga* is understood as a “resultant consciousness” which is sustained based on *kamma*. So, an enlightened one’s consciousness is *abyākata* (indeterminate) because it is supported by neither *kamma* nor the results of *kamma*. Therefore, when a person attains enlightenment, his *bhavaṅga* ceases or is arrested and it is not supported by *kamma* or the results of *kamma*. Thus, the enlightened one’s consciousness is indeterminate.

It was said that though consciousness is one or has a single characteristic, its functions are mainly sevenfold: six sensory consciousness, and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as “surviving factor”. In this context, I hypothesized that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness can be called the “seventh consciousness”.

## Chapter 6–Conclusion

The concept of *bhavaṅga* is an important doctrine in Theravāda Buddhism. The *Vism* (460), which contains Theravāda Buddhist doctrines, defines *bhavaṅga* as a consciousness streaming throughout one’s life-process from birth to death. Being the result of *kamma*, it is the continuation of an individual throughout countless lives till the attainment of final *nibbāna*. According to the *Vism*, there is neither any permanent entity nor otherness in the continuity of an individual. All are causally arisen things based on dependent co-arising (*Vism* 554). However, the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* was not expounded in the *suttas* that have come to us through the current PTS and VRI editions of the Pāli Canon. Therefore, most of the scholars such as Karunadasa (2017) and Gethin (2005) discuss *bhavaṅga* starting from the Paṭṭh of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, the *Mil*, the *Vism* and other subsequent Pāli texts. Among these texts, *bhavaṅga* is understood as consciousness, i.e., *bhavaṅga*-consciousness.

To a great extent, however, this study has shown that the term *bhavaṅga* occurs in the post-canonical texts such as the *Peṭ* and the *Netti* and it represents all the factors of dependent co-arising in the context of *āsava*, which together produce *bhava* as a proximate cause for *saṃsāra*. Showing the *Netti* elucidation of *bhavaṅga*, it was mentioned that in spite of the *Netti* being an important text for the purpose of understanding different interpretations of *bhavaṅga*, scholars in Buddhist Studies have not paid much attention to the content of the *Netti*. My inquiry was therefore not only limited to *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, but I have also discussed the notion of *bhavaṅga* and *bhava* taking references from the *Nikāyas*, the *Peṭ* and the *Netti*.

Through an understanding of the concept of *bhava*, I was able to gain deeper insights into Buddhist teachings on the condition of *saṃsāric* continuity. In this regard, I began my study of the concept of *bhava* and *bhavaṅga* because scholars such as Jayatileke (1949), Keith

(1923), Wijesekera (1976 & 1994), and Collins (1982) have suggested that *bhavaṅga* is an early Buddhist doctrine that occurs with respect to *bhava* in the *Dutiya-aṅga Sutta* of the AN (II 79). And this *bhava* embraces the conditioning forces (*saṅkhārā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) because they are together rooted in the flux of *bhava* as *samsāric* continuity.

For the origination of the doctrine of *bhavaṅga*, I cited Wijesekera (1976) who refuted Sarachchandra's claim that the term *bhavaṅga* first appears in the Mil, that it was borrowed from the Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma*, and that it originally meant a link in dependent co-arising (Sarachchandra 1994, 75 & 79). Wijesekera showed that *bhavaṅga* occurs in the Paṭṭh (I 159, 160, etc.) of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, composed much earlier than the Mil, and also in the *Dutiya-aṅga Sutta* of the AN (II 79), a canonical text of the *Sutta Piṭaka* (Wijesekera 1976, 348–50). However, it was shown that in the current PTS and VRI editions of the AN, the *Sutta*'s name is *Dutiya-agga*, not *Dutiya-aṅga*. In this *Sutta*, the term *bhavagga* is used as one of the four foremost things: the foremost of form (*rūpaggam*), the foremost of feeling (*vedanaggam*), the foremost of perception (*saññaggam*), the foremost of becoming (*bhavaggam*) (AN II 79). The AN Commentary defines *bhavagga* as the culmination point of personality which has to be eradicated for achieving Arahathship (AN-a III 107). Wijesekera found a contradiction in the *Dutiya-agga Sutta* with its commentarial explanation by saying that “the cataloguing of *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, *vimutti*, and *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *bhava*, together as – *aggas* has no parallels anywhere else in the Canon, although the separate employment of *saññagga* (D.I.185) and *bhavagga* (S.III.83) are attestable” (Wijesekera 1976, 350). According to Wijesekera, it is the second PTS edition's editors who rejected the term *aṅga* from the passage *rūpaṅgam*, *vedanaṅgam*, *saññaṅgam*, *bhavaṅgam*, and reprinted the text with *agga-rūpaggam*, *vedanaggam*, *saññaggam*, *bhavaggam*, in order to follow the AN Commentary (Wijesekera 1976, 350).



Keith (1923) and Jayatilleke (1949) also think like Wijesekera that *bhavaṅga* is an early Buddhist doctrine that occurs in the AN. They relate *bhavaṅga* with *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* which can be brought under the single concept of *bhava* (Keith 1923, 194; Jayatilleke 1949, 216). I found the aforesaid scholars' interpretations crucial and insightful though no reference to the doctrine of *bhavaṅga* is found in the *suttas*. However, an intrinsic relation between *bhavaṅga* and *bhava* are found in the *Netti*. With a view to showing the *saṃsāric* continuity, the *Netti* says that *bhavaṅga* represents each link of the twelve factors of dependent co-arising, and when all these factors occur conjointly, then *bhava* is produced. This *bhava* is a proximate cause for *saṃsāra* (*Netti* 29). In the light of the account of *bhava*, with reference to the *Netti*, the related term *punabbhava* was also discussed, because in a causal relation, *punabbhava* is described in association with *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* in the context of rebirth, as the following: “*saṅkhārā* have the characteristic of developing further becoming/rebirth. This is the footing for *viññāṇa*. *Viññāṇa* has the characteristic of origination by way of rebirth” (*Netti* 28).

Showing the above important references, I have studied the concept of *bhavaṅga* in two parts: Part I and Part II, apart from the Introduction (Chapter One) and the Conclusion (Chapter Six). Part I, which consists of Chapters Two and Three, discusses *bhava* and *bhavaṅga*, and Part II, which consists of Chapters Four and Five, discusses consciousness and *bhavaṅga*-consciousness.

The conceptual analysis of *bhava*, *bhavaṅga* and the basis of consciousness has been discussed taking references in Chapter Two. I have offered two different explanations of *bhava*: psychological and cosmological. From the psychological point of view, *bhava* is the continuity of *saṃsāric* life due to the clinging to “self-view” in respect to any of the five aggregates. This “self-view” is due to the clinging to the five aggregates, conditioned by craving. This idea is presented in the doctrine of dependent co-arising: “because of craving-condition, there arises

clinging; because of clinging-condition, there arises *bhava* (SN II 1). Therefore, it seems that in the texts, *nibbāna* is described as the cessation of *bhava* (*bhava-nirodho nibbānaṃ*, SN II 117, 14), which is equal to the complete elimination of clinging to “self”. As a support of this argument, I referred to the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of the DN which says that the Buddha, being cut off the net of *bhava*, continued his life span until the dissolution of his five aggregates (DN I 46). In this context, the Tathāgatha did not have “self-view” although his five aggregates remained. In this regard, *bhava* and its sub-theme *punabbhava* have been discussed as ever-changing processes, which run from moment to moment without any gap in between. In this process, the preceding condition is *bhava* for the succeeding moment, which can be described as *punabbhava*, which together imply the continuation of belief in the “self”.

From the cosmological point of view, *bhava* was described with the Buddhist cosmological system which was developed metaphorically on the basis of spiritual progress. This interpretation was drawn from the *sutta* and the *abhidhamma* exposition of the factor *bhava* of dependent co-arising. In the *suttas*, the factor *bhava* is divided into three kinds: sensuality (*kāma*), form (*rūpa*), and formlessness (*arūpa*). In the *abhidhamma* and other subsequent Pāli texts such as the *Paṭiṣ*, the *Vism*, and the commentaries, the factor *bhava* is of two kinds: action-becoming (*kamma-bhava*), and rebirth-becoming (*upapatti-bhava*). These two kinds of *bhava* have been extensively discussed in the *Paṭiṣ*, the *Vism* and the commentaries in the context of the twelve factors of dependent co-arising, covering three lives pertaining to the past, present, and future. Scholars rigidly take this exposition to explain the *suttas*, which shows that, to explain the *suttas*, *abhidhammic* and commentarial understating are being implied. Hence, it was said that Buddhist thinkers interpret the term *bhava* and *punabbhava* with the help of *abhidhammic* and commentarial understanding which is rebirth after death. But I argue that the whole process of rebirth is like a mechanism which is based on

the theory of dependent co-arising in which the twelve conditioning factors of dependent co-arising are involved. That is why, I argued that it is difficult to find any specific word in the *suttas* that directly corresponds with the term “rebirth”.

The basis of consciousness in the context of sensuality, form and formless *bhavas* was discussed with the “consciousness-continuity” which is involved with the conditioning forces (*saṅkhārā*). With this understanding, I have defined *bhava* and *saṃsāra* as an ever-revolving process. And the *saṃsāric* suffering is described due to the sustainability of consciousness which is involved with craving as a cause for rebirth (SN II 65). Here, the cause of rebirth is dependent upon the food of consciousness (*viññāhāro āyatim punabbhavābhiniḍattiyā paccayo*, SN II 13, 14–15). It was said that when consciousness finds a steady point due to the food of craving, and depends upon various conditionings, it streams into the life-cycle (*cittam assa vidhāvati*, SN I 37, 18, 23 & 38,4). This consciousness was explained as being of the nature of impermanence, suffering and not-self and as having three characteristics of arising, passing away, and continuation or change of what endures (AN I 152).

The aforesaid consciousness was identified with the stream of consciousness which is identical with *saṃsāric*-consciousness. This consciousness is not present in a living arahat, because to sustain this consciousness, foods of craving, contact, etc. are no more present in an arahat (SN III 58). When those conditions are not present, there is no sustainability of consciousness (*aññatra paccayā natthi viññāṇassa sambhavo ti*, MN I 259, 4–5). Therefore, it was said that rebirth after death is dependent upon the conditional factors at the last thought-moment of the dying person. In this regard, *saṃsāric*-consciousness was identified with *bhavaṅga*-consciousness.

In Chapter Three, *bhavaṅga* was further elaborated with two references from the Peṭ and the Netti. One reference is that *bhavaṅga* designates each link of twelve factors of dependent co-arising. It is said that when all the twelve factors of dependent co-arising occur conjointly, *bhava* is produced, and this *bhava* is the proximate cause for *saṃsāra*. Another reference to *bhavaṅga* was discussed with *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* (idea-base): when *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* are affected by *āsava*, they are factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgā*), and when they are free from *āsava*, they are not factors of becoming. In this regard, *āsava* was clarified with *kāma*, *bhava*, and *diṭṭhi* due to *avijjā*, that is, not knowing the truth regarding the five aggregates. Not knowing the truth gives rise to the notion of “personality-view” (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) or “self-view”. In this context, liberation was described as getting rid of the notion of “personality-view” or the sense of “this is mine” in the five aggregates. In this sense, the enlightened one has completely destroyed *āsava* with regard to *saṅkhārā* and *dhammāyatana* so that for him there are no factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgā*). Therefore, it was said that *bhavaṅga*, which represents all factors of dependent co-arising is intrinsically associated with *āsava*. In support of this argument, I referred to Norman who also thinks the same: “we believe that the *āsavas* are to be identified with any one link of the twelvefold *paṭicca-samuppāda*, then the most likely candidate for identification would be the *saṅkhāras*... It is to be noted that the cause of *āsavas* is *avijjā* (M I 55), which is also the cause of the *saṅkhāras*” (Norman 2008, 133).

By means of the mutual relationship between *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*, it was said that when *saṅkhārā* are affected by *āsava*, they are factors of becoming. And when *saṅkhārā* are not affected by *āsava*, they are not factors of becoming. These two modes of description indicate *saṃsāric* suffering and the cessation of suffering respectively. With this understanding, I suggested that *bhavaṅga* as a factor of *bhava* has an intrinsic relationship with *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* (*saṃsāric*-consciousness), which together play a major role in rebirth.

And the cessation of these conditioning factors is understood as *nibbāna*. This doctrinal proximity is traced from the *Dutiya-sikkhattaya Sutta* of the AN: “one is freed by the destruction of craving, through the cessation of consciousness” (AN I 236).

*Bhavaṅga* in relation with *bhava* was discussed in the context of *samsāric* continuity in a cyclic process in different existences. In this respect, I agreed with Jayatileke (1949), Keith (1923), and Wijesekera (1976 & 1994) who have suggested that *bhavaṅga* can be interpreted with factors *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* in the process of rebirth. This interpretation of *bhavaṅga* is related with the early Buddhist doctrine of “stream of consciousness” (*viññāṇa-sota*, DN III 105) which can be regarded as the “surviving factor” at death and which streams from one existence to the next. And this “surviving factor” has the characteristic of arising, passing away, and continuation, also impermanent, subject to suffering, and not-self; it is a continuously changing “stream” (*sota*).

Referring to the Netti Commentary, it was also said that the factors of becoming (*bhavaṅgā*) are identical with rebirth-becoming (*upapatti-bhava*): “factors of becoming means factors of rebirth-becoming” (Netti-a VRI 77). Considering all this textual evidence, I suggested that *bhavaṅga* is rooted in the formula of dependent co-arising associated with *āsava* and “personality-belief”, and was introduced to describe the continuity of a person by means of rebirth. With this understanding, I believe that *bhavaṅga* embraces *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*, which are deeply rooted in *samsāric* continuity. This idea lies in the growing Buddhist thought in the *abhidhamma* and commentaries which is rooted in the early *suttas*.

In this connection, in Chapter Four, I discussed *samsāric* continuity by analysing the functions of *saṅkhārā*, consciousness, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, and death-birth. I have shown two aspects of consciousness: (1) consciousness as “surviving factor” which is known as

consciousness-continuity, and (2) sensory consciousness arising dependently based on sense bases and their objects. In this regard, consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and consciousness (*citta*) are said to be identical because both terms are used in the context of rebirth. In this analogy, *gandhabba*, which is present at the moment of conception, was discussed in relation with *saṃsāric*-consciousness. *Gandhabba* was further studied with *satta* (being). *Satta* was elucidated as “person” in the conventional sense which is subsumed with the “heap of *saṅkhārā*” (*saṅkhāra-puñja*). In this connection, the notion of “self” was discussed in both Buddhist and Vedic traditions. It was said that “self” as a permanent entity has not been mentioned in Buddhist teachings. The Buddhist concept of rebirth is presented with various processes of *saṅkhārā* or *kamma*, consciousness seed (*viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ*), craving and ignorance.

*Saṅkhārā* was elucidated with active and passive versions. The factor *saṅkhārā* in dependent co-arising has been discussed with *kamma*, which confirms the consciousness destiny in different existence. In this process, craving is the fuel for consciousness and beings are born again and again in different existences because of their *kamma*.

Continuity was discussed through the concept of consciousness seed (*viññāṇaṃ bījaṃ*), the meaning of which was understood as “consciousness affected by *āsava*.” So, no “consciousness seed” can be discerned when consciousness is not affected by *āsava*. And when both *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* are affected by *āsava*, *saṃsāric* continuity takes place. Thus, I suggested that *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa* are intrinsically related in the continuity process. In this process, the “personality traits” continues along with *viññāṇa* from existence to existence.

When craving is not present within the five aggregates, there is no basis for consciousness to survive. So *saṃsāric*-consciousness is no longer present in an enlightened

person because he has eliminated craving. Therefore, an enlightened person is described as one “who is freed by the destruction of craving, through the cessation of consciousness” (AN I 236). With the Netti reference, it was said that when a person is liberated through the complete cessation of consciousness, he is described as an enlightened one standing or walking. He sees no “self” with regard to his five aggregates. Thus, consciousness of an enlightened one is inexplicable.

The concept of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness was discussed in the context of rebirth in this chapter. *Bhavaṅga*-consciousness was understood as a “surviving factor” in accordance with the doctrine of stream of consciousness (*viññāṇa-sota*). So, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is affected by *āsava* and is no longer present/is arrested when a person attains enlightenment because there is no *kamma* acts as object of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness in an enlightened one. Therefore, it is understood that with the cessation of its object *kamma*, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is subject to cessation. This doctrinal proximity was traced from the Paṭis: “with the cessation of *kamma*, there is the cessation of consciousness” (Paṭis I 57)

With the understanding of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as a “surviving factor”, it was said that when death consciousness (*cuti-citta*), the last thought of a dying person, ceases, rebirth consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) arises. When rebirth consciousness ceases, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness takes place and flows endlessly. In this way, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness continues throughout *samsāric* existence. It was said that *cuti-citta* and *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* are species of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, and the object of all these three forms of consciousness is *kamma*. In this regard, the third factor consciousness of dependent co-arising was defined as *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*.

In Chapter Five, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness was discussed from the Paṭṭh, the Mil, the Vism and the commentaries in the contexts of rebirth, deep sleep, deep meditative trance, luminous mind, and the theory of cognitive process. In the Paṭṭh, *bhavaṅga* is understood as “resultant consciousness” in the sections of *anantara* and *samanantara* conditions in the contexts of (1) rebirth, and (2) perceptual process of ordinary sense perception. In these two contexts, *bhavaṅga* is presented with regard to the continuity of consciousness which signifies no gap between the previous life and the next life, and the preceding and succeeding *dhammas*.

In the Mil, *bhavaṅga* occurs in the contexts of deep sleep and deep meditative trance (*nirodha-samāpatti*). Sarachchandra (1994, 80) and Harris (1991, 162) assert that Nāgasena imitated the explanation of *upaniṣadic* interpretation of deep sleep with the true nature of *ātman*. They said, instead of accepting *ātman*, Nāgasena uses the term *bhavaṅga* and says that when a person is in deep sleep his mind enters into *bhavaṅga*. Their claim was reviewed by saying that it is not necessary to refer to non-Buddhist thought to provide an answer about the condition of a person’s consciousness when he is in deep sleep. Nāgasena used the concept of *bhavaṅga* in the context of continuity of consciousness because he was familiar with *bhavaṅga* as it had been developed before his time.

The *upaniṣads* such as the CU contain that in deep sleep a man’s consciousness itself is Brahman, the true nature of *ātman*. The BU defines this true nature of consciousness as the original state, pure and free by nature. And, the state of sleep is equal to the state of absorption in Brahman. It was said that such an interpretation is not found in the Buddhist teachings.

In the context of *nirodha-samāpatti*, Collins’s view was revised. According to Collins, there is no function of *citta* at all, including *bhavaṅga*-consciousness, in *nirodha-samāpatti* (Collins 1982, 257 & 246). I have interpreted *citta* in the context of *nirodha-samāpatti* in two ways: (1) no *citta* is equal to the non-function of any sensory consciousness, including mind



consciousness, and (2) no *citta* is equal to the cessation of consciousness. For the first reference, I take *citta* as a synonym of *mano*, so in *nirodha-samāpatti* there is no function of *mano* which refers to the external stimulus of *bhavaṅga*, which can be called *bhavaṅga-mano*, as it is the noetic opening door (*dvāra*) to the outside world. So, when a monk is in *nirodha-samāpatti* his sensory consciousness, including mind-consciousness, are not functioning at all, because in *nirodha-samāpatti*, the fact that the mental formations cease (*cittasaṅkhārā niruddhā*) may mean the cessation of perception (*saññā*) and feeling (*vedanā*), not the cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). So, it was said that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness continues with its object *kamma* in *nirodha-samāpatti*. With the reference in the Dhs Commentary (Dhs-a 283), I said that *bhavaṅga-mano* refers to *kiriya-manoviññāṇa-dhātu* (functional mind-consciousness element), which ceases in *nirodha-samāpatti*. Hence, in *nirodha-samāpatti*, the phenomenon of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness remains and continues. For the second reference, it was said that upon achieving *nirodha-samāpatti*, the person gives his effort by coupling *samatha* and *vipassāna* meditations through which he destroys all *āsavas* and achieves *nibbāna*. And this state of *nibbāna* is known as the cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

I have discussed different functions of *bhavaṅga* with *mano*, *citta*, and *viññāṇa* in the *Vism*. *Bhavaṅga-citta* and *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa* can be identical in terms of their function, but *bhavaṅga-mano* is not same as *bhavaṅga-citta* and *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa*. *Bhavaṅga-mano* simply refers to the “consciousness” relating to mental activity only that is the intermediary moment between the activity of *bhavaṅga* and *mano*. *Bhavaṅga-mano* is one aspect of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as the door of arising which is only the mental data base. It was understood that *mano* is the noetic awaking of *bhavaṅga* only, not strictly co-extensive with *bhavaṅga-citta/viññāṇa*.

*Bhavaṅga* is affected by *āsava* in the context of *samsāric* existence and it ceases or is arrested at the moment of enlightenment. In this regard, it is not possible to explain whether an Arahāt still possesses *bhavaṅga*-consciousness or not. However, according to the *Vism*, an Arahāt still possesses *bhavaṅga*, which ceases completely only with his death-consciousness (*cuti-citta*). I raised several questions with regard to this: does an Arahāt experience *cuti-citta* since he has eliminated all *āsava* at the moment of his enlightenment? If one still accepts the fact that an Arahāt experiences *cuti-citta*, what is then the object of the Arahāt's *cuti-citta* and *bhavaṅga-citta*? It was discussed that the principle of dependent co-arising is not applicable for an Arahāt because he has eliminated suffering and the cause of suffering. And when there is no operation of dependent co-arising, there is also the cessation of *kamma* in him. In this context, when *kamma* ceases, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and *cuti-citta* are also subject to cessation, because without their object *kamma*, they cannot sustain. In this regard, an Arahāt's consciousness is unconditioned and not afflicted by any conditional *dhammas*. With this understating, I interpreted that the object of an Arahāt's consciousness is *nibbāna*, and the nature of a living Arahāt's consciousness is pure in the sense of being unconditioned because it is unbecome (*abhūta*), unborn (*ajāta*), and unmade (*akata*) of "self-view" due to the complete elimination of "self". In this context, I reviewed Rewata's view which states that the object of the Buddha or Arahāt's *citta* is not *nibbāna*. Particularly, he describes the object of the Buddha's *cuti-citta*. According to Rewata, the object of the *parinibbānic cuti-citta* must be the same sign of destiny which was human world that the Buddha had when he was born. And at the moment of *parinibbāna*, the Buddha's *cuti-citta* arises with the sign of destiny which then ceases forever (Dhamma 2004, 124).

I have explicated the commentarial interpretation of *bhavaṅga* (AN-a I 60) as luminous (*pabhassara*) consciousness which is naturally pure and remains in each individual throughout *samsāric* existence (MN-a I 141). Though it may not be well accepted among scholars, my

view is that luminous consciousness refers to *bhavaṅga-mano*, not the core function of *bhavaṅga-citta*. In this regard, *citta* is a synonym of *mano* which becomes luminous due to the absence of the minor defilements (*upakkilesa*): desire and lust, sensual desire, ill will, torpor and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. According to Bodhi, these defilements can be rendered as “corruption”. For Bodhi, the term *kilesa* can be translated as “defilement,” and the translation for the term *upakkilesa* is “corruption” which does not allow the mind to arise (Bodhi 2000, 1100, note 273). In this sense, the *citta* is luminous means that the mind (*mano*) is luminous. So, the core function of *citta/viññāṇa* is not luminous in the sense of the absence of *āsava*. It was said that the luminous consciousness is used in the context of *jhāna* states in that after passing the fourth *jhāna*, the *mano* is regarded as luminous, wherein the person, though cognizing a mind object with the mind, does not grasp its signs and features. When this *citta*/mind becomes luminous, it is properly concentrated for the destruction of *āsava*. Thus, the noble disciple practices further for the destruction of *āsava* for the sake of attaining *nibbāna*. In this sense, it seems to me that the *Abhidhammikas* bring the terms *viññāṇa* and *mano* under single concept of *citta*. This idea is later presented in the commentaries. Hence, commentators might have brought the function of mind (*mano*) under the concept of *citta*.

Referring to the commentarial interpretation of *bhavaṅga*-consciousness as luminous, Kalupahana (1995, 88) and Reat (1977, 182) think that *bhavaṅga* is compatible with the *upaniṣadic ātman* because this *ātman* is pure by nature. Throughout this study, it was clearly shown that consciousness as the “surviving factor” is not “self” or “soul” but the “continuity of consciousness”. This continuity of consciousness is compatible with *bhavaṅga* which is not “self,” and it is affected by *āsava* throughout *saṃsāric* existence. In this regard, I traced the elucidation found in the SN and the Paṭi: any consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near are impermanent, subject to suffering, and not-self (SN III 68; Paṭi I 53).

I further discussed *bhavaṅga*-consciousness together with six sensory consciousness to address *saṃsāric* existence through the two aspects of consciousness: process consciousness and process-free consciousness. It was pointed out that one can describe these two aspects of consciousness until the attainment of enlightenment. In this regard, my understanding of *bhavaṅga* and sense perception was to address the *saṃsāric* existence only.

Sense perception was discussed with regard to the six faculties – the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and the mind. Among these six faculties the first five differ from the sixth, the mind, because the first five faculties are themselves the physical bases (*vatthu*) of corresponding consciousness, and the heart (*hadaya*) is the base of mind-consciousness. In this connection, the heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*) is also the base of *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa*. It was said that when a being takes birth, he/she has “life faculty” (*jīvitindriya*). This life faculty has the characteristic of maintaining matter (*rūpa*). As *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is present in a being in the mother’s womb, the life faculty takes place together with the heart where *bhavaṅga*-consciousness sustains. And this heart-base has the characteristic of being the support for the mind-element and mind-consciousness-element. In this regard, *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is supported by the heart-base only in the realms of sensuality and form, and it is “baseless” in the formless realm.

It was said that though *citta* has a single characteristic, its aspects are twofold: (1) consciousness thinking of objects, and (2) the resultant consciousness (*bhavaṅga*) which is unintentional with its object of *kamma*. In this regard, *bhavaṅga* sustains on the basis of *kamma*. So, an enlightened one’s consciousness is *abyākata* (indeterminate *dhamma*), because it is supported by neither *kamma* nor the results of *kamma*. Therefore, when a person attains enlightenment, his *bhavaṅga* is arrested and is no longer bound by *kamma* or the results of

*kamma*, but it is supported by unconditioned *nibbāna*. Thus, an enlightened one's consciousness is indeterminate.

It was said that though consciousness is one or has a single characteristic, it functions mainly in a sevenfold manner: six sensory consciousness, and *bhavaṅga* consciousness as the “surviving factor”. In this context, I hypothesized that *bhavaṅga* can be called the “seventh consciousness”.

After a thorough study of the concept of *bhavaṅga*, I proposed two interpretations of *saṃsāra* in the *suttas* and in the *abhidhammic* literature, particularly in the *Vism*. To me, the explanation of *bhavaṅga* is more relevant in the context of the second interpretation of *saṃsāra* which signifies suffering in accordance with the repetition of “birth-death-birth” in the threefold existence of sensuality, form, and formlessness. For the first interpretation of *saṃsāra*, with reference to the *sutta*, I said that *saṃsāra* is the effectiveness of all the factors of dependent co-arising which are operating together like an ever-revolving wheel in a manner of arising, disappearing and continuing which subjects every individual to suffering until the attainment of *nibbāna*. In this regard, *saṃsāra* is known as the continuity of the existence of “self” due to the clinging to the aggregates which passes from one moment to the next. This continuity of the existence of “self” is because of the hindrance of ignorance and the fetter of craving which keeps a person in suffering for a long time. Therefore, it is understood that when *bhava* and other factors of dependent co-arising cease, *saṃsāra* also ceases in an Arahāt. It implies that a person becomes enlightened not within *saṃsāra*, but through the shattering of *saṃsāra*. In this way, when a person becomes an Arahāt, for him, *saṃsāra* is no longer applicable, which means that the conditional factors of dependent co-arising which are conducive to the production of suffering are not present in an Arahāt.

The above interpretation of *saṃsāra* somehow got modified in the *abhidhamma* period, particularly in the *Vism* and the commentaries. In these texts, *saṃsāra* signifies suffering in accordance with the repetition of “birth-death-birth” in the threefold localities of sensuality, form, and formlessness. Scholars such as Keown (2003), Walshe (1995) and Bodhi (2009) follow this reference and interpret the entire Buddhist teachings accordingly. This interpretation represents the Theravādin understanding of *saṃsāra* which refers to a substantial world domain in which sentient beings are reborn, whereas not being subject to rebirth is liberation.

Clarifying the two interpretations of *saṃsāra*, I understand that a detailed elaboration of a kind of consciousness like *bhavaṅga* was needed to explain *saṃsāra* without accepting any permanent entity like the “*ātman*”. In this sense, the *Vism* fully describes *bhavaṅga* as “consciousness continuity” without accepting the existence of a permanent substance (*Vism* 460).

Based on the above discussion, I provided three considerable interpretations of *bhavaṅga* in the Buddhist teachings. One is found in the two post-canonical texts, the *Peṭ* and the *Netti*. In these texts, *bhavaṅga* represents all the links of dependent co-arising as factors for becoming (*bhavaṅgā*) which together produce *bhava* as a proximate cause for *saṃsāra*. In this context, the factors of becoming are identical with *āśava* which leads one to remain in *saṃsāric* existence.

The second interpretation comes with respect to *citta/viññāṇa* in the *Paṭṭh*, the *Mil*, the *Vism*, and the commentaries. In this regard, the *Vism* defines *bhavaṅga* as a particular type of consciousness continuing throughout one’s life-process from birth to death. Being the result of

*kamma*, it is the continuation of a being throughout countless lives until the attainment of *nibbāna*.

The third interpretation comes in the commentaries that *bhavaṅga*-consciousness is luminous because it is devoid of defilements like lust, hatred and delusion, which is a natural consciousness (*pakati-citta*) and all beings pass away with this state of consciousness.

Throughout this study, I have maintained that *bhavaṅga* is a consciousness with *kamma* as its object. However, several scholars such as Davids (1936), Sarachchandra (1994) and Keith (1923) have interpreted *bhavaṅga* either as the sub-conscious or the unconscious. Wijesekera (1979) and Padmasiri (1992) have discussed *bhavaṅga* relating it to the Freudian theory of the unconscious. I briefly discussed the aforesaid subject and proposed that from the Buddhist perspective, it is important to address the issue of *saṃsāric* existence with *bhavaṅga*, rather than human psychology by matching it with the modern theory of the unconscious, because the purpose of the two traditions are different.

I agreed with Gethin's exposition on the above subject matter. Gethin says that using the expression "unconscious" or "unconsciousness" for *bhavaṅga* is unhelpful. In this connection, I referred to Gethin's citation of Louis de La Vallee who had suggested that *bhavaṅga* bears certain similarities with *ālaya-vijñāna* of the Mahāyāna Yogācāra school (Gethin 2005, 173). Sarachchandra also showed similarities between these two concepts in great detail (1994, 88–96). In this regard, Gethin thinks that though to some extent, the explanation of *ālaya-vijñāna* can be attributed to the theory of the unconscious, to understand *bhavaṅga*, the idea of the unconscious is not necessary (Gethin 2005, 173). After discussing the above scholars' interpretation of *bhavaṅga* in association with the theory of the unconscious, I have made an observation. Gethin says that some functions of *ālaya-vijñāna*

can be attributed to the theory of the unconscious, and when scholars such as Louis de La Vallee (1926) have shown certain similarities between *bhavaṅga* and *ālaya-vijñāna*, contemporary scholars might have taken these similarities and shown how the concept of *bhavaṅga* is related to the theory of the unconscious. In this context, I propose that the doctrine related to *bhavaṅga* as the unconscious is quite related to the commentarial interpretation, because in the commentary (AN-a I 60), *bhavaṅga* is interpreted as a “home” preserving pristine purity. This idea is quite similar to *ālaya-vijñāna*. In this regard, it seems that modern scholars interpret *bhavaṅga* as the unconscious in accordance with *ālaya-vijñāna* which is mostly reflected in the commentaries. Hence, I propose a fresh study that can be done on the modern comparison between *bhavaṅga*, *ālaya-vijñāna* and the psychoanalytic unconscious, and this study can be called innovative Buddhist psychology.

With the above suggestion, I hope that this study has charted the concept of *bhavaṅga* and its development in the Pāli Canon, post-canonical texts, and their commentaries. This study has shed substantial light on the historical and interpretative concerns of the Buddhist doctrine *bhavaṅga*. I also hope that this work makes a contribution with respect to Theravāda Buddhist philosophy. It is further hoped that my humble efforts in this study would inspire other scholars in the Pāli tradition to do research in the area of consciousness and doctrinal development in Theravāda Buddhist teachings.



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