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بِوَسِيْلَةِ سُنَّتِيْ اِسْلَامِيٍّ اِنْبَاءًا رَاجِيًّا مِلِّيًّا

KARMA AND *QADĀ'* AND *QADAR*:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

BY

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the requirements for the degree of Master of
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ABSTRACT

The concept of Karma in Buddhism and *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar* in Islam are all centred on man's will, action and freedom. Buddhism and Islam both advocate man's freedom and reject the idea of fatalism and determinism. The Buddhists believe in Karma whereas Muslims believe in *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar*. The phenomena seem similar but the interpretations differ. This study attempts to make a comparative evaluation between Karma in Buddhism and *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar* in Islam. This can help Muslims understand Buddhism and assist the Muslims in the engineering of a better social rapport between these two religious communities. From the study, several findings may be drawn; both religions affirm that man is granted with free will, the concept of Karma in Buddhism and *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar* in Islam provokes human being to strive harder in order to be better human beings and responsible for their deeds, and both religions agree that human's action is based on intention which occurs through three ways; mental, verbal and physical. In terms of differences, the concept of Karma strongly rejects the intervention of god because the Buddhists believe that everything in this world is governed by the law of Karma. In Islam, on the other hand, the concept of *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar* is related to Allah's Divine Will. All events in life which include life span, provision, time and place of birth and death, and all actions exist within the scope of the Divine Will. Therefore, the Buddhists believe that Karma is the cause of human existence in this world. On the other hand, Islam regards human beings as the creations of Allah, the Almighty, and the main purpose of their existence is only to serve Allah and obey His commands. Thus, human beings are regarded as vicegerents of Allah and they are to carry out a serious *amanāh* (trust) of Allah.

ملخص البحث

يتمحور مفهوم "الكرامة" في البوذية والقضاء والقدر في الإسلام حول إرادة الإنسان وفعله وحريته. فالإسلام والبوذية على السواء يؤيدان حرية الإنسان ويرفضان فكرة الحتمية والجبرية. ويؤمن البوذيون بالكرامة بينما يؤمن المسلمون بالقضاء والقدر. وتبدو هذه الظاهرة متقاربة، ولكن تفسيرها متباين. وتحاول هذه الدراسة أن تضع تقييماً مقارناً بين الكرامة في البوذية والقضاء والقدر في الإسلام. وستعمل هذه الدراسة على مساعدة المسلمين لمعرفة البوذية، ومعيئة لهم على توطيد الألفة، وتحسين العلاقة الاجتماعية لهاتين الديانتين. ومن نتائج هذه الدراسة أنها توصلت إلى أن الديانتين يؤكدان على أن الإنسان مكرماً بالإرادة الحرة. وإن فكرة الكرامة في البوذية والقضاء والقدر في الإسلام كلتاهما تحثان الإنسان على أن يكافح، ويجاهد في الحياة من أجل أن يكون إنساناً أفضلأً وعلى أن يكون مسؤولاً عن أفعاله. والديانتان متفقتان على قيام أفعال الإنسان على النية سواء كانت ذهنية أو شفهية أو بدنية. ومن حيث الخلافات نرى فكرة الكرامة تنكر بشدة تدخل الإله في أفعال الإنسان؛ لأن البوذي يعتقد بأن كل شئ في الكون خاضع لقانون الطبيعة أي الكرامة. وفي المقابل نجد في الإسلام مفهوم القضاء والقدر مرتبطاً بالإرادة الإلهية. وكل الأحداث في الحياة- التي تتضمن أجل الإنسان ورزقه وساعة ولادته ووفاته ومكانهما- وكل أعماله واقعة تحت دائرة الإرادة الإلهية. فالبوذيون يعتقدون بأن الكرامة هي السبب في وجود الإنسان في هذا العالم بينما يعتبر الإسلام الإنسان على أنه من خلق الله سبحانه وتعالى. والهدف الاسمي من وجوده ليس إلا طاعته والامتثال لأوامره. وبالتالي يعتبر الناس خلفاء الله مؤدين أمانة الله الجسيمة والخطيرة.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Uşul al-Dīn and Comparative Religion).

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Revealed Knowledge and Human
Sciences

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Hajah Idahwati @ 'Irdina Nur'aidah binti Haji Idris

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Karma and Qada' and Qadar: A Comparative Study

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**Dedicated to my beloved parents,
my loving husband, my lovely children, and
friends, who always inspire me to achieve success.**

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TRANSLITERATION

Table of the system of transliteration of Arabic words and names used by the International Islamic University Malaysia.

b	=	ب	z	=	ز	f	=	ف
t	=	ت	s	=	س	q	=	ق
th	=	ث	sh	=	ش	k	=	ك
j	=	ج	ṣ	=	ص	l	=	ل
ḥ	=	ح	ḍ	=	ض	m	=	م
kh	=	خ	ṭ	=	ط	n	=	ن
d	=	د	ẓ	=	ظ	h	=	ه
dh	=	ذ	‘	=	ع	w	=	و
r	=	ر	gh	=	غ	y	=	ي

Short: a = اَ ; i = اِ ; u = اُ

Long: ā = آ ; ī = إ ; ū = أ

Diphthong: ay = آي ; aw = أَوْ

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The questions regarding Karma in Buddhism and the concepts of *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar* in Islam are considered among the most difficult topics in metaphysics and religion. The main issues inside these two concepts are all centered on man's will, action and freedom. Some of them advocate man's freedom, and whatever he does he does by his free will. Some of them deny this freedom and think what happens is considered as a free action or it is a pre-arranged or a result of a certain cause or chain of causes.

In fact, the question of Karma has occupied scholars in both the West and the East. One Western theory is that when a man is born, his life is like a sheet of blank paper. His life then develops as a result of his surroundings and the forces acting on it .i.e. parents, friends, society, and the dominant culture and so on.¹ Buddhism, however, teaches the eternity of life. This means that a man is not born as blank pages, but pages on which countless impressions have already been made. Death is considered as much a part of living as sleep is part of the process of living. Therefore, Karma is the accumulation of effects from the good and bad causes that man brings with him from his former life, as well as from the good and bad causes he has made in his lifetime, which shapes his future. Hence, Karma is created by intentional actions or willful deeds which occur in three forms: thoughts, words and actions which are derived from mind consciousness.²

¹ "What is Karma," <<http://www.sgi-usa.org/buddhism/faqs/karma.html>> (accessed 24 February, 2007).

² Krishna K. Murthy, *A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms and Terminology*, (Delhi: Sundee Prakshan, 1991). 43

From the Islamic point of view, the questions of *al-Qadā'* and *al-Qadar* have been adequately dealt with in the Holy Qur'ān. Muslims regard that everything that happens in this universe falls into one of these two categories:

- a) The things that Allah does and no one else has any power of intervention, e.g. the falling of rain, the growth of vegetation, life and death, health and illness.
- b) The actions done by human beings that involve their will power. These actions are a consequence of their efforts and their choice by the power that has been bestowed upon them by Allah.³

These are called *al-Qadā'* and *al-Qadar* in Islam. In the *al-Qadā'* and *al-Qadar* equilibrium, Almighty Allah has full and exact knowledge of the universe and all its contents. As for human beings, they are not completely masters of their fate. Allah gives human a great freedom but limited power including the freedom of choice. That autonomy, however, is subjected to each individual being accountable for his or her deeds.

The Buddhists believe in the Law of Karma which is responsive to man's actions and deeds. The concept of Karma, therefore, seems to be central to how human existence is understood in Buddhism because Karma is the cause of human existence in this world. On the other hand, from Islamic perspective, human beings do not exist accidentally or naturally like what Buddhists claim in Karma. Human beings are created by Almighty God – Allah - and the main purpose of their existence is only to serve Allah and obey His commands. Moreover, human beings are regarded as vicegerents of Allah to carry out a serious *amanāh* (trust) of Allah.

³ Suhaib Hasan. *Faith in Predestination*, (Saudi Arabia: Darussalām Publishers & Distributors, 1996). 4-5.

From this point of view, this study will attempt to discuss and analyze the concept of Karma by studying the definition, origin, principles and its significance to the Buddhist personality and worldview. These will then be compared to *al-Qadā'* and *al-Qadar* of Islam. It is hoped that this study will add to Muslims' further understanding of Buddhism.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Buddhists understand Karma as a natural law. There is no higher instance, no divine intervention, and no gods that steer man's destiny, but only the law of Karma itself, which works on a global time frame. Therefore, good deeds have happy consequences; bad acts have unhappy consequences, either in this life or future lives.⁴

In Islam, the concepts of *al-Qadā'* and *al-Qadar* indicate that man must seek harmony with Allah's rules of human nature and consciously submit to His will. *Al-Qadā'* and *al-Qadar* as conceived by Islam, does not take away human freedom of choice and action. Man has real ability and freewill for choice and action. However, in spite of his freedom, he is still under the control of Allah and within His knowledge. Allah will judge him according to the freedom and responsibility that He gave. It is for this reason, human's freedom is limited, and nevertheless it does exist. It is considered as the deciding factor for human responsibility and consequently for the eternal rewards and punishments.⁵

Therefore, Muslims believe in *al-Qadā'* and *al-Qadar* whereas Buddhists believe in Karma. Although the phenomena seem similar but the interpretations differ. Muslims believe in Allah as the Creator while Buddhists do not believe in God.

⁴ "Karma and Rebirth," < <http://www.thebigview.com/buddhism/karma.html>> (accessed 4 December, 2006).

⁵ "Questions regarding *Qada'* and *Qadar*," <<http://www.islamonline.net/english/introducingislam/Belief/Destiny.shtml>> (accessed 18 December, 2006).

However these two different concepts have a similar perception, to believe and practice Karma is not to be a fatalist. In Islam, the notion is similar. The concept of *al-Qadā'* and *al-Qadar* does not teach a Muslim to be a fatalist as well.

However, there are still a few questions that can be raised such as how could the Law of Karma be justified without believing in One God, the Creator? What is the worth Karma if it means merely the cause and effect without rewards and punishments? How does man know his duties and rights? If everything goes according to Karma, whose commandments should be followed or ignored? All those questions will be discussed and analyzed in this study. Since Karma is an important element in Buddhism, it is appropriate to understand Karma correctly in the context of Muslim-Buddhist relationship. Furthermore, this study tends to evaluate and compare Karma in the light of Islamic concept of freewill, *al-Qadā'* and *al-Qadar*. Especially those who are in the field of Comparative Religion, it is necessary to study Karma in Buddhism in order to provide a basis for a meaningful dialogue between Muslims and Buddhists in an atmosphere of understanding and mutual respect for each other.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this study are:

- To study the meaning of Karma in Buddhism.
- To study the meaning of *al-Qadā'* and *al-Qadar* in Islam.
- To give an Islamic evaluation of Karma.
- To highlight dialogue points on Karma and *al-Qadā'* and *al-Qadar*.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study attempts to make a comparative evaluation between Karma in Buddhism and *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar* in Islam. This can help the Muslims understand Buddhism and assist the Muslims in the engineering of a better social rapport between these two religious communities.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This comparative study will focus on Karma as one of the important doctrines in Buddhism and *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar* as one of the Articles of Faith in Islam. These two concepts play important roles in determining the worldview and value system of the Buddhists and Muslims. The scope of this research is limited to Karma in Buddhism and *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar* in Islam, and their relations to human free will.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions will be used as guidelines in the preparation of this study.

1. What is the definition of Karma in Buddhism?
2. What is the definition of *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar* in Islam?
3. What are the different understandings of Karma among Buddhist scholars?
4. What are the different understandings of *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar* among Muslim scholars?
5. How does Islam understand Karma in the context of *al-Qaḍā'* and *al-Qadar*?

1.6 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The research methodology of this work will be a historical and textual analysis. For the historical perspective, this study will rely on sources from the library such as book, journals, research papers and other publications.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher has looked at several studies and books related to this topic, but it was found that no study of comparative approach has been made. There are many books written on Buddhism in general either by Buddhists, Western or Muslim scholars. There are also a number of books written on Karma but barely makes evaluation from Islamic perspective.

In order to understand Buddhism and Karma, several books which are written by Buddhist scholars will be relied upon. One of them is Ven.Narada's book entitled *Buddhism in a Nutshell*.⁶ He discusses the life of the Buddha and his teaching including Karma in a simple way so that non-Buddhists will understand Buddhism better. Sri Dhamananda's *What Buddhists Believe*⁷, is considered as an essential book to refer to in order to study Buddhism. This book has been reedited to 4th edition. He explains Karma as one of the basic doctrines in Buddhism by giving a clear definition of Karma and highlighting the misconceptions regarding Karma.

*Fundamentals of Buddhism*⁸ by Peter D. Santina aims to provide a positive influence upon present and future generations. He affirms that the ideas of Karma and

⁶ Narada Thera, *Buddhism in a Nutshell*, (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society,2000).

⁷ Sri Dhammananda. *What Buddhists Believe*,(Kuala Lumpur, Buddhist Missionary Society, repr.1982, 1964).

⁸ Peter D.Santina, *Fundamentals of Buddhism*, Buddha Dharma Education Association, <<http://www.buddhatnet.net>> (accessed 10 October, 2006).

rebirth are closely inter-related. His definition of Karma helps to understand clearly the doctrine of Karma.

The relationship of the universe to Karma is discussed as well in detail in Hirakawa Akira's *History of Indian Buddhism: From Sakyamuni to Mahayana*⁹, along with a summary of the origins of the idea of Karma and its various sects.

*The Doctrine of Karma: Its Origin and Development in Brāhmanical, Buddhist and Jaina Traditions*¹⁰ by Yuvraj Krishnan is also an interesting book. This book provides a clear picture about Karma, right from the first section, where three very different interpretations of Karma are clearly outlined. After the survey of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain thought on the idea, an overview of metaphysical and moral issues and problems, and the solutions are offered. Topics include determinism and freedom, evil, and social implications.

*What the Buddha Taught*¹¹ by Walpola Rahula drawn on the actual spoken words of the Buddha gives a lucid and accurate account of the fundamental principles of Buddhist doctrine. It provides a clear and direct explanation of Buddhism's essential teachings, including the Four Noble Truths, the Buddhist attitude of mind, the Noble Eightfold Path, meditation and mental development, and what the Buddha taught and the world today.

As for western books, several books will be relied upon. One of them is *Philosophy of the Buddha*¹² by Christopher W. Gowans. What distinguishes this book is its critical philosophical approach. The researcher intends to give readers a philosophical introduction and to reflect on what the Buddha can teach people today.

⁹ Hirakawa Akira, *History of Indian Buddhism: From Sakyamuni to Mahayana*, (India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998).

¹⁰ Yuvraj Krishnan, *The Doctrine of Karma: Its origin and Development in Brāhmanical, Buddhist and Jaina Tradition*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publisher Private Limited, 1997).

¹¹ Rahula Walpola, *What the Buddha Taught*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001).

¹² Christopher W Gowans, *Philosophy of the Buddha*, (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2003).

In this book, the doctrines of Karma and rebirth appear to presuppose a self. He makes a distinction between substance-selves and process-selves which have no independent reality, though they do have a dependant reality.

*Buddhism A Very Short Introduction*¹³ by Damien Keown is also an informative book. It introduces the teaching of the Buddha and the integration of Buddhism into daily life. It also provides an informative response to the frequently asked questions about Buddhism such as what are the distinctive features of Buddhism, what do words such as Karma and Nirvana means and so on.

*Buddhism: It's Essence and Development*¹⁴ by Edward Conze also provides many significant aspects of Buddhism, its core teachings and development. It is concise yet sufficiently informative in breadth.

From Muslim scholars, Imran N. Hosein's *Islam and Buddhism in the Modern World*¹⁵ is considered an interesting book. Among others, he clarifies Buddhism starting with its sources, basic teachings, philosophies (including Karma), philosophical schools and religious school in Buddhism. He concludes his book by comparing Islam and Buddhism in the field of scriptural, ethical and philosophy of life.

*Karma and Islam*¹⁶ by Harun Yahya is also a good source to be referred to. His comparative approach creates a clear picture in understanding Karma in Hindu perspective. He clarifies the concept of Karma by explaining the relation between Karma and rebirth, and the concept of fate in the Karma belief system and in the Holy Qur'ān.

¹³ Damien Keown, *Buddhism A Very Short Introduction*, (New York University Press, 2000).

¹⁴ Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

¹⁵ Imran N Hosein, *Islam and Buddhism in the Modern World*, (New York: Masjid Dār al-Qurān, 2001).

¹⁶ Harun Yahya, *Karma and Islam*, (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 2003).

The Doctoral dissertation *Madrasat Haynāyānā al-Būziyyah wa mauqif al-Islām minha*,¹⁷ written by Afwaruddīn ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib is chosen as it discusses Karma as Buddhists see it, the meaning of absolute destiny, and the various laws that govern this concept. He also mentions what some Buddhist scholars had to say on the subject.

In order to compare and evaluate Buddhist’ Karma from Islamic perspective, several references will be relied on. For instance, *Syifa al-‘Ālīl fi Masāili al- Qaḍa’ wa al-Qadar wa al-Ḥikmah wa al-Ta’līl* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah.¹⁸ This book discusses the most important reasons for understanding and believing *al-Qaḍa’* and *al-Qadar*. The author points out the problems concerning the understanding of this concept, and discusses in general the different levels of fate, destiny, actions and choices. He mentions the different views of those who have studied fate extensively, such as the *al-Qadariyyah* and the *Sunni* scholars. He also illustrates the debates and refutation of falsehoods regarding this matter.

‘Umar Sulaiman al-Ashqar’s, *al-Qaḍa’ wa al-Qadar*¹⁹ shows that belief in *al-Qaḍa’* and *al-Qadar* is compulsory, citing the history, definition and basis for this. He proceeds to show the relationship between people’s actions and their destiny, given the limited vision of the human mind when it comes to fate. He also sets aside a portion of his book especially for the detail clarification of different views regarding fate, mentioning several benefits of the belief in it.

Haslina Ibrahim in her MA dissertation, *Free Will and Predestination; a Comparative Study of the Views of Abu Al-Hassan Al-Ash‘ari and Muhammad*

¹⁷ ‘Afwar al-Dīn ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib, *Madrasat Haynāyānā al-Būziyyah wa Mauqif al-Islām minha*. (Ph.D.dissertation, Jāmi‘at al-Azhār, 1995)

¹⁸ Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, *Syifa al-‘Ālīl fi Masāili al- Qaḍa wa al-Qadar wa al-Ḥikmah wa al-Ta’līl*, (Beyrut: Dār Kutub ‘Ilmiyah, 1996).

¹⁹ ‘Umar Sulaiman Al-Asyqar, *Al-Qaḍa wa al-Qadar*, (Jordan: Dār al-Nafais, 1995).

‘Abduh²⁰, evaluates the relationship between reason and revelation with respect to the issues of freewill and predestination as attempted by Al-Ash‘ari and Muhammad ‘Abduh. She examines and determines the viability of their methodology of thinking, in terms of adapting it to the present Islamic situation.

Furthermore, *Fate in Islam* by Şaleh al-Şaleh points out how the *Salafi’s* (Righteous Predecessors) guidance in understanding *al-Qaḍa’* and *al-Qadar* was based on *al-Qurān* and *al-Sunnah*.

Hasan al-‘Anani’s *Freedom and Responsibility In Quranic Perspective*²¹, is another interesting book by Muslim Scholars. He discusses how to develop the freedom of a strong will and character based on *al-Qurān* and *al-Sunnah* avoiding fate as an excuse to avoid responsibility.

More books and readings will be relied on as work progresses on this study. Internet sources and important inter-faith dialogue proceedings will also be resorted to for current concerns.

²⁰ Haslina Ibrahim, *Free Will and Predestination: A Comparative Study of the Views of Abu A-Hassan Al-Ash‘ari and Muhammad ‘Abduh*, (MA Dissertation, International Islamic University Malaysia, 1997).

²¹ Hasan Al-‘Anani, *Freedom and Responsibility in Qur’anic Perspective*, (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1990).

CHAPTER TWO

KARMA IN BUDDHISM

Buddhism²² is one of the major religions of the world. Buddhism was founded around 2,500 years ago by Siddhartha Gautama, hereafter referred to as "the Buddha".²³ This section will discuss the basic teachings in Buddhism, and then will be followed by the definitions of Karma (in Sanskrit is *Kamma*),²⁴ the different views regarding Karma and finally the influence of Karma in the Buddhists life. However, to understand Karma, it is necessary first to understand the Buddhist concept of man.

2.1 THE CONCEPT OF MAN IN BUDDHISM

The Buddhist concept of man is only centered on man's nature. The question of how human exist is not priority question to be answered because it is regarded as unanswerable (*avyataka*). As John Hick says:

There are ten unanswerable (*avyataka*) questions; the world is eternal, the world is not eternal, the world is (spatially) infinite, the world is not (spatially) infinite, the soul is identical with the body, the soul is not

²² Some scholars define Buddhism as a philosophy rather than a religion. One of their arguments for Buddhism as philosophy is that Buddhism does not have doctrines in the same sense as other religions; the Buddha himself taught that a person should accept a teaching only if one's own experience verifies it and it is praised by the wise. See "Buddhism as philosophy", <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_philosophy> (accessed 10 March, 2007) In fact, most of Buddhist scholars define Buddhism as a way of life, a philosophy, a psychology and a way of thinking, see Dorothy Figen, "Is Buddhism a Religion?" <<http://www.buddhismtoday.com/english/buddha/Teachings/007-is.htm>>, (accessed 10 March, 2007). Sri Dhammananda explains that Buddhism is all about the Buddha's teachings which contains practical wisdom that cannot be limited to theory or to philosophy because philosophy deals mainly with knowledge but it is not concerned with translating the knowledge into daily practice, and then he concludes by defining Buddhism as a Noble Truth. See Sri Dhamananda, 51 – 53 and 124. In other references, Buddhism is defined by various names such as a Sectarian Religion, Civilizational Religion, and Cultural Religion. For details see Joseph M.Kitagawa and Mark D.Cummings (ed.), *Buddhism and Asian History* (New York:MacMillan Publishing Company,1989), 6 – 15.

²³ Alex Kennedy, *The Buddhist Vision: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Buddhism*, (London:Hutchinson Publishing Group), 15, and see Sri Dhammananda, 3 – 12.

²⁴ Karma is a Sanskrit word and in Pali language it is called *Kamma*. The term Karma in Sanskrit will be used throughout this work unless in quotations.

identical with the body, a perfectly enlightened being (*tathagata*) exists after death, a perfectly enlightened being does not exist after death, a perfectly enlightened being both exists and does not exist after death, a perfectly enlightened being neither exists nor does not exist after death.²⁵

Moreover, with regards to the creation of human being, Buddhism believes that creation is a cycle, which has no starting and no ending. It is part of the wheel of suffering to which human beings are attached through rebirth.²⁶ As explained by K. Krishna Murthy:

Buddhism has no conception of “creation” in the Western sense of a coming into existence from non-existence (*ex-nihilo*). All existence is a beginning-less and endless process of “becoming” subject to the law of causality, but as all “*dhammas*” are mind created, the state of becoming depends on the mental development of the entity. All entities are “creatures” but are also “creators” of themselves and of their environment, to a greater or lesser extent according to their mental development. As beings progress in mental power, so have they greater freedom to create as they will and the purer (more enlightened) the mind, the nearer the approach to the ideality of pure form.²⁷

Therefore, the question of origin of human is not a priority matter because *dukkha* (suffering) is the foremost problem that needs to be solved. To aid understanding of the truth of *dukkha* (suffering) and its relation to Karma, it is necessary to analyze what are the factors that make up a person in Buddhist’s perspective. Moreover, an understanding of the inner nature of human and the functioning of human’s mind forms the basis of Buddhist philosophy and practice; as the first verse of the *Dhammapada* states:

All things are preceded by the mind, led by the mind, created by the mind.²⁸

²⁵ John Hick, *The Buddha's 'Undetermined Questions' and the Religions*, <<http://www.johnhick.org.uk/article8.html>> (accessed 21 August, 2007).

²⁶ The discussion on rebirth will be in the next section.

²⁷ K. Krishna Murthy as quoted in Prasert Yenprasit, *The Concept of Man in Theravada Buddhism and Islam: A Comparative Study*, (MA Thesis, International Islamic University Malaysia, 2004), 26.

²⁸ Chapter 1, Verse No.1, *The Dhammapada : the Buddha's path to wisdom*, translated from *Pāli* by Acharya Buddhārakkhita, (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist publication society Kandy Sri Lanka, 1985), <<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/dp01.htm>>.

In Buddhism, there are five *khandas*²⁹(in Sanskrit is *skhandas* which means five aggregates) which are considered as the five factors that make up a person.³⁰ These five *khandas* (aggregates) are the main reference in the Buddha's elaboration on *dukkha* (suffering). As stated by Bhikkhu Bodhi:

Since all four truths revolve around suffering, understanding the five aggregates is essential for understanding the Four Noble Truths as a whole".³¹

The five factors are also known as *upādāna-khandha* (groups of grasping) which go together to make up a 'person'.³² They are; *rūpa* (body or material existence), *vedanā* (feeling or sensation), *sannā* (perception), *sankhāra* (in Sanskrit is *samskāra* which means mental formation or intention), and *vinnana* (in Sanskrit is *viññāna* which means consciousness).³³The first *khandas* (aggregates) is *rūpa* which literally means form or shape³⁴ or the material aspect of existence³⁵. In other words, *rūpa* means matter which embraces external and internal matter. Externally, *rūpa* is the physical world. Internally, *rūpa* includes the material body and the physical sense organs.³⁶ The second factor is *vedanā* which means feeling, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.³⁷ It is the first of the four immaterial *khandas*, and it is also translated as sensation.³⁸ The third factor is *sannā* means perception, cognition,

²⁹ The five *upādāna-khandas* is also known as the five 'groups of grasping'. See Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism Teachings: history and practice*, (UK:Cambridge University Press, 1990), 49.

³⁰ Peter Harvey, Peter Harvey, 'Buddhist Visions of the Human Predicament and its Resolution' in *Buddhism*, edited by Peter Harvey, (London and New York: Continuum, 2001),77.

³¹ Bhikkhu Bodhi , *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*. (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 840, <<http://www.buddhanet.net/>> (accessed 3 January, 2007).

³² Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism Teachings: history and practices*, 49.

³³ Piyasilo, *The Buddha's Teachings: A Study of Comparative Buddhism in Truth, Tradition, and Transformation*, (Petaling Jaya:Mandala Trading, 1987), 85.

³⁴ William Montgomery McGovern, *A Manual Buddhist Philosophy*,(San Fransisco: Chinese Materials Center, repr. 1977, 2002), 1: 84.

³⁵ Peter Harvey, *Buddhism*, 77.

³⁶ See "Wikipedia," <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skandha>> (accessed 20 March, 2007).

³⁷ Peter Harvey, *Buddhism*, 77

³⁸ William Montgomery McGovern, 1:85

recognition, interpretation, including misinterpretation of sensory of mental object.³⁹ Its function is to register whether an object is recognized or not. The fourth factor is *sankhāra* which means mental formations which includes intentional or volitional actions.⁴⁰ The fifth and the last factor is *vinnana* that means consciousness. It refers to the basic awareness of an object.⁴¹

Among these five factors, the first factor belongs to the material, and the others belong to the mental realm. *Rūpa* (form or matter) arises from experientially irreducible physical or physiological phenomena. While *rūpa* (form or matter) in terms of an external object (such as sound) and its associated sense organ (such as the ear) – gives rise to *vinnana* (consciousness). Finally, from the contact of *rūpa* (form or matter) and *vinnana* (consciousness) arise the three mental aggregates of *vedanā* (feeling or sensation), *sannā* (perception or cognition) and *sankhāra* (mental formations).⁴²

Therefore, these five *khandas* (aggregates) are very important for the basis of understanding the function of the human mind. Once the understanding is gained, then the human life experience i.e. *dukkha* (suffering) can be well understood. Moreover, from the philosophical and psychological standpoint, *dukkha* (suffering) is in fact what Buddhism would term as the five *khandas* (aggregates), because they are considered as the five aspects of causal conditions that manifest as the human form.⁴³ Therefore, the classification of human personality into five aggregates is to prove that they are all impermanent and changing constantly. The five aggregates are mental activities and the Buddha's teachings give more attention to resolve mental problems rather than

³⁹ Peter Harvey, *Buddhism*, 77

⁴⁰ This fourth factor is associated with Karma since it dealing with intention and action. See William Montgomery McGovern, 1: 86.

⁴¹ Peter Harvey, *Buddhism*, 77.

⁴² See Skandha "Wikipedia," <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skandha>> (accessed 20 March, 2007) and see S.Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, (London: Unwin Hyman Limited, repr. 1923, 1989),1: 402

⁴³ Jeffrey Po.