

THE NEW  
AMERICAN CYCLOPÆDIA:

A

Popular Dictionary

OF

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE.

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the universe is a result of the morality of breathing beings, and destiny is the product of their merit and guilt. There is no indivisible absolute Brahma, as the germ of nature. The cardinal point of the rotations of the worlds lies in the lowest stations of the 4th Dhyāna, viz. : in the 2 heavens of the gods of great merits and of the unconscious, which form the line of demarcation between sin and sinlessness. Morality is the prime agent of that whirlwind which tosses the universe into being and not-being. The mode of its action is variously explained.—Beings migrate, because they are sinful, by having fallen through terrestrial nourishment into avarice, hatred, &c., in consequence of unatoned guilt in former lives. Buddhism makes no inquiry into the origin of individual entities. Sansāra (*san*, Lat. *simul*, *eri*, to go) or mundane life, is the fundamental evil, the ocean of existence with the 4 poisonous streams: birth, age, disease, and death, upon which we are tossed by the storm of passion; restless and without haven. Out of the Sansāra there is naught; on the one hand there is emptiness, and on the other Nirvāna, or beatific enfranchisement. In Sansāra there is no truth, no essence; all is deceit and fallacy. It is only constant in inconstancy; in it every form or determination breaks like a bubble. Birth leads to death, death to rebirth, youth to old age; beauty, health, wealth, vanish. All ages are beset by peculiar evils. Death is not the last of pains, for it leads to birth again. Sin degrades to a lower being or leads into hell. Even godliness does not exempt from rebirth or from relapse into a bad *Gati* (way) of rebirth.—With regard to ontology, and psychology, the philosophic schools of Buddhism are at variance, and especially concerning the notions of the soul, and of the Nirvāna. In some cases the soul of man may sink even below the 6 *Gatis* or ways of rebirth into the vegetable and mineral way; although this view is less supported by the more ancient texts, than by Brahminic or Thibetan legends. *Klesa* (*klisa*, to suffer or inflict pain), or the original sin in a former existence, is the fountain of all evil. Its conquest is the last aim of all life and effort. He who breaks its fetters, “breaks through the eggshell” and escapes the alternation of births. The *Klesa* awakens evil desires, which are chains to existence; this clinging to life impels us to a renewal of existence, and to further wandering after death; the love of life begets new life. Both this motive and the so-called destiny by morality have their root in the *Klesa*: the former acting as impulse or gravitation into corporeality, the latter, as the germ, leading to the realization of the former. With the death of the body the soul is not freed from its desires, but wanders by that *Gati*, which it deserves. All good and bad deeds are balanced against each other like credit and debit in a commercial account, and determine individual destiny, not providentially but in consequence of the endless chain of causes and effects. Only

a Buddha or an Archcha (*archa*, to worship) or saint can overlook and unravel the thousandfold knotted threads of the moral chain. Buddha said once to Ananda: “If a well-doer comes to hell, the merit of his present life is not yet matured, but the evil of a former. To be rewarded before such maturity would be tantamount to being paid before the appointed term.”—Freedom is obtained only after the escape from the bonds of desires, and from the power of our past deeds. Then only do we see, with a “divine eye,” our numberless births, risings and fallings, which are all due to our actions. The succession of the existences of a determinate being, is also a succession of souls, which are united by the law of moral causality, each one being the product of the guilt or merit of all its predecessors. When an individual dies, the body is broken, the soul is extinguished, leaving merely its deeds with their consequences, as a germ of a new individual. According to the germinating power, determined by the Karman (morality of actions), the result is an animal, or a man, or a demon, or a god. Identity of souls is thus replaced by their continuity, in the solution of the moral problem. Each soul inherits the fruits of the Karman and the office of liberating and purifying its predecessor. I ought, therefore, not to act well merely on behalf of my own selfish weal, but for the benefit of a new “I,” which is to follow after me. The Buddhist metempsychosis is, therefore, rather a metamorphosis of the soul. “A lamp is lighted from another; the lamps differ, the second only receiving the light from the first. So is it also in regard to souls.”—The final goal of Buddhist salvation is the uprooting of sin, by exhausting existence, by impeding its continuance; in short, by passing out of the Sansāra into the Nirvāna. The signification of the latter term is a prolific subject of discussion and speculation with the different philosophic schools and religious sects of Buddhist Asia. Its interpreters prefer vague definitions, from fear of offending sectarians. It means the highest enfranchisement; to theists, the absorption of individual life in God; to atheists in naught. The Thibetans translate it by *Mya-ngan-los-hdah-ba*, the condition of one freed from pain; eternal salvation, or freedom from transmigration. Its etyma are: *nir*, not; *van*, to blow, and arrow; its orthography is *Nirvāna*; its collateral is: *Nirvānamastaka*, liberation; *nirvāpa*, putting out, as a fire, &c. It is *Nibbāna* in Pali, *Niban* in Burmese, *Niruphan* in Siamese, *Ni-pan* in Chinese. Weighing all divergencies in its exegesis, it may be safely designated as the definitive enfranchisement from existence without a new birth, the cessation of all misery. It is the Beyond of the Sansāra, its contradiction; without space, time, or force. In the 3d council it was declared to be ineffable and indescribable. Life being the *summum malum*, its annihilation is the *summum bonum*. The common definition is “total annihilation of pains and of the *Skan-dhas* or attributes of existence.” But this