

Brahmajala Sutta (DN 1)

A) 18 speculative theories about the past

1) Eternal views (self and the world) on 4 grounds

→ 3 meditative^{^^^}, 1 logic/reason

^ 1st – meditator recalls past existences

^ 2nd – meditator recalls up to 10 periods of contraction and expansion

^ 3rd – meditator recalls up to 40 periods of contraction and expansion

2) Partly eternal and partly non-eternal views on 4 grounds

→ 3 meditative^{^^^}, 1 logic/reason*

^ 1st – at the time of contraction, beings are mostly reborn in the rupaloka world. When the world begins to expand, a Brahma world appears. One being from exhaustion of his life-span or of his merits, falls from the rupaloka and arises in the empty Brahma world.

– he thinks: “oh if only some other beings would come here!” and others from exhaustion of their life-span or of their merits, arises in the Brahma world.

– thus the first being thought that he is the Great Brahma that created the others and others thought that since he was there 1st, he must have created them.

– when these beings falls from that realm and arises in this world and through meditation recalls this. Creator → permanent, created → impermanent.

^ 2nd – certain devas called Corrupted by Pleasure. They spend excessive time on enjoyment so that their mindfulness are dissipated and fall from that realm and arises in the world.

– through meditation, he recalls this. Those who are not corrupted by pleasure → permanent, those who are → impermanent.

^ 3rd – certain devas called Corrupted in Mind (envy). Because of their corrupted minds they become weary in body and mind and fall from there.

– through meditation, he recalls this. Not corrupted → permanent, corrupted → impermanent.

* 4th – believe that the 5 senses → impermanent; consciousness/mind → permanent

3) Finite and infinite views (of the world) on 4 grounds

→ 3 meditative^{^^^}, 1 logic/reason*

^ 1st – the meditator perceives the world is finite and bounded by a circle.

^ 2nd – the meditator perceives the world as infinite and unbounded.

^ 3rd – the meditator perceives the world as finite up-and-down and infinite across.

* 4th – neither finite nor infinite

4) Skeptics on 4 grounds →

1. Preconceived view and lack of knowledge. Fear of deception/lying and that would be a hindrance to his spiritual progress.

2. Due to the lack of knowledge, by giving answers, one will cling to certain views and that would be a hindrance to him.

3. Fear of being thoroughly examined by skilful logical arguments.

4. Dull and Stupid – could not give answer

5) Chance Origination of self and the world on 2 grounds

→ 1 meditative[^], 1 logic/reason

^ Meditative – Those who came down from the world of Unconscious beings, by means of meditation, they recall their last existence and perceived self and world has arisen by chance.

B) 44 speculative theories about the future

1) Self with consciousness after death – 16

* they differed from each other in deciding whether the soul has 1. form or 2. not 3. has and has not form 4. neither has nor has form 5. is finite or 6. infinite 7. both finite and infinite 8. neither finite nor infinite 9. has one mode of consciousness 10. has various mode of consciousness 11. has limited consciousness 12. has infinite consciousness 13. is happy 14. miserable 15. both happy and miserable 16. neither happy nor miserable.

2) Self without consciousness after death – 8 (1st to 8th above)

3) Self with neither consciousness or unconsciousness after death – 8 (1st to 8th above)

4) Nihilistic views – 7

→ self is annihilated at the breaking-up of the body, 2nd to 7th refers to a soul experienced by meditative methods.^^

^only 1st form of annihilationism is materialistic.

^ 2nd to 7th - either take the form of the devas of the sensuous sphere (kamavacara) or take the forms in the various Brahma realms for the self. The assumption is that this survives the break-up of the physical body for a period of time, annihilation occurring at its cessation and similarly with the remaining 'selves'.

5) Proclaims Nibbana here and now for an existent being – 5

→ 1 materialist (indulgence in full 5 sensual pleasure), 1st- 4th jhanas

1st Jhana: thinking and pondering, delight and happiness born of detachment

2nd jhana: inner tranquility and oneness of mind, which is free from thinking and pondering and is born of concentration and accompanied by delight and joy.

3rd jhana: waning of delight, dwells in equanimity, mindfulness, joy

4th jhana: purified by equanimity and mindfulness.

C) These 62 views falls into one of these two categories: 55 eternal views and 7 nihilistic views.

Notes:

1. 1st sutta of the Digha Nikaya

2. Bhikkhu Bodhi who has translated the sutta with its commentaries observes that the fact that this is the 1st sutta is not a matter of chance or haphazard arrangement, but of deliberate design on the part of the Elders who compiled the canon and set it in its present form.

3. The goal of Buddhism can be attained only by removing ignorance. The insight that removes ignorance cannot be developed without a foundation in a wholesome view (samma ditthi).

4. From right view the other wholesome attainments in the path follow. In order to develop right view, wrong view must be eliminated.

5. The Buddha declared that these 62 views are based upon sensation, which is caused by contact and which leads to craving, and craving naturally leads to rebirth and suffering. The Buddha advised his disciples

BPFE 102 – Emergence of Buddhism and Basic Buddhist Teachings

not to follow those doctrines, as Nibbana cannot be attained by the contact of the mind with the 6 sense objects, which are impermanent.

6. One must go beyond mind in order to attain Nibbana.

7. He rejected all of the 62 views and also maintained that his own world view should not be held dogmatically as the absolute truth. Clinging to a view is a hindrance rather than a help to attain liberation.

8. One point to note is: The Buddha opens his discussion by expressing his very enlightened attitude towards criticism. Here we come across a distinctive mark of the Buddhist teaching namely an open-minded attitude towards all criticism.

9. It is important to note that the Brahmajala sutta is not constructing these theories imaginatively. It can be accepted as a realistic account of the actual state of affairs during the emergence of Buddhism.

10. Apannaka Sutta, MN 60: all theories contradict each other upon comparison.

11. 4 forms of speculations only (of all those that are said)

a) Dukkha is caused by oneself

b) Dukkha is caused by someone else

c) Dukkha is caused by both oneself and other

d) Dukkha is neither caused by oneself nor others

12. The sutta of the section on morality gives us a glimpse into certain social customs and practices, occupations and profession, games and sports, certain arts and sciences of ancient India.