

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BUDDHIST AND MEDICAL EXPLANATIONS ON PRENATAL DEVELOPMENT

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Scientists have explained prenatal development with their scientific researches in medicine. As a philosophy, a religion Buddhism within its *suttas* has mentioned the form of prenatal development with some similarities and differences to the medical point of view. This study was conducted to comparatively investigate the views of streams Buddhism and Medicine on prenatal development. The objective of this study was to prove the significance of Buddhist teachings with scientific basis and to clarify the need of Buddhism for future scientific researches.

Buddhism primarily introduces four major types of births of beings and an embryo can only be seen in *andaja* (beings born from eggs) and *jalābuja* (beings born from placenta) beings. Human beings are considered *jalābuja* beings accordingly.

Mahātanhāsankhaya sutta indicates three main factors that should be completed for the origin of a particular embryo. To form an embryo, it is indeed a combination of types of *rūpakalāpa* (*paṭavi, āpo, tejō, vāyo, vaṇṇa, gandha, rasa, ojā*) and five types of *pasāda rūpa* (*cakku, sōta, ghāna, jivhā, kāya*). A *Rūpa* is based on another four factors such as *kamma, citta, utu* and *āhāra*. In addition, another three types of *rūpa kalāpa* such as *Kāya*

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Dasaka, *Vattu Dasaka* and *Bhāva Dasaka* involved in an embryo. However, when an embryo is formed without a *Bhāva Dasaka*, the new born would be a neutral one accordingly.

The *Indika sutta* in *Samyuttanikāya* clearly emphasizes Buddhist explanation on prenatal development. The embryo is formed first and it seems like an oil drop for one week period. Then the embryo gradually grows up to the form of *abbuda*. Then it grows up to the form of *Pēsī* which seems as a leaden drop and continuous for one week. The form of *Ghana* begins thereafter, and it seems like an egg.

When the embryo grows up to fifth week, five tiny spots can be distinguished. The head, hands, and legs are developed from those five tiny spots. Then the hair and nails begin to grow. Thereafter, the eyes, ears, nose and tongue are formed and the embryo completes the all *rūpa kalāpas* by the eleventh week. Since then, the embryo is developed more maturely until the delivery.

The medical explanation of prenatal development has been well established by clinical researches. Scientists identify three major stages of prenatal development such as Germinal Stage, Embryonic Stage and Fetal Stage. The first two weeks are considered as Germinal Stage and it starts with the conception of Sperm and Ovum and ends with implantation of uterus. The embryonic period proceeds from 2nd week to the end of 8th week. The major body organs are formed in embryonic stage. Then comes the Fetal Stage and it exists until the delivery of baby. At the fetal stage, all body organs develop maturely and baby gets ready for birth.

When compared the views of two streams, Buddhism and medicine on prenatal development, a lot of similarities can be seen there. The gradual

development of the baby has been identified by both streams. However, the medicine has only emphasized the biological development but Buddhism has indicated another complex procedure like the coming of *Gandhabba* into the embryo. Therefore, it is finally concluded that the both streams have identified similar biological development; Buddhism comes with complex teachings about psychological formation of the baby rather than medicine.

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