Chapter Three

ĀHĀRA AND SPECIFIC TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA

The truth of man and his life as well as the problems of pain and happiness of man was realized by Lord Buddha and enlightened at Bodhi tree more than 2500 years ago.

After seeing with His own eyes the acute pains of old age, sickness, and death in the world, in addition to His contemplative nature and boundless compassion, Siddhartha Gotama discarded the material pleasures of a Royal palace. The young prince Siddhartha decided to leave his fatherland to wander forth in search of Truth and Peace for humankind. After six long years with practice of all forms of severe austerities, He got strong experience for the new way to liberation. He decided to follow an independent course, avoiding the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. The former retards one’s spiritual progress, and the latter weakens one's intellect. The new way, which he himself discovered, was the middle path, Majjhima Patipadā. Following the middle path, Siddhartha restored his health with the milky rice offered by a young woman called Sujātā. It is said that the balance of the physical and mental state after abandoning austere life has helped Him to stabilize morale so that He could enter deep meditation and enlighten soon. This also asserts that edible food also plays the important role in the process of the enlightenment and emancipation. Indeed, after having the milk rice Siddhartha sat cross-legged under the big Bodhi-tree in the jungle near
Uruvelā, called Bodh Gayā in the modern Indian state of Bihar. He decided not to rise from his meditation until he gained wisdom and found the exact answer to the question of dealing with sufferings in life. During the forty-nine days and nights, Siddhartha Gotama enlightened the truth of life and the universe, of suffering and the way ending it. The doctrinal core that Lord Buddha has discovered is Dependent Origination (paṭiccasamuppāda,) the Four Noble Truths, the Three Characteristics (Tilakkhana) found in the Pāli Nikāya. These teachings awakened and estimated to human beings’ views, to ascetics and Brahmins’ views who are speculators about the past (the future and present), having fixed views about the past (the future and present), put forward views in sixty two different ways, that is merely the feeling of those who do not know and see, the worry and vacillation of those immersed in craving.116

As discussed, āhāra (food) that is a simple word that hinged practically on the entire specific teaching of the Buddha. After the Buddha’s great enlightenment, these teachings have been propagated to all human beings who are living in pain, tied by craving and grasping, by birth, old age and death. His goal is to help them realize the truth of man and world in order to tend to the goal of liberation of suffering.

This chapter focuses mainly on the Buddha’s teaching on food as presented in the Pāli Nikāya. The teaching on āhāra pervades all other teachings of the Buddha. It found embodied in the earliest and most authenticated formulations and classifications of the Buddhist doctrines such as Dependent Origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda,) the Four Noble Truths (Cattāriyasaccāni,) and three characteristics (Tilakkhana,) Intentional action (Kamma,) Rebirth or Again existence, (Punabhava)

116 D. 1, 41.
and Five Aggregates (*Pañcakkhandha.*) The nature and truth of āhāra will be found through these doctrines.

3.1. Āhāra and Dependent Origination

The dependent origination (*paticcasamuppāda*) is as a foundation of all the Buddha's teachings. This important doctrine can be seen through the following words of the Buddha, "Whoever sees conditioned genesis sees *dhamma*, whoever sees *dhamma*, sees conditioned genesis: *Yo paticcasamuppādam passati so dhammam passati, yo dhammam passati so paticcasamuppādam passati.*"\(^{117}\)

The term 'paticcasamuppāda' is derived from two component parts 'paticca' means 'dependent' and 'samuppāda' means 'origination.' 'Dependent' indicates the combination of the conditions, since states in the process of occurring exist in dependence on the combining of their conditions: it shows that they are not eternal. 'Origination' indicates the arising of the states, since these occur when their conditions combine, and it shows how to prevent annihilation. Thus Dependent Origination: since any given states are produced without interrupting the cause-fruit continuity of any given combination of conditions, the whole expression Dependent Origination represents the middle way (*majjhima patipadā*).

How is Dependent Origination taught?

Herein, firstly it is the states beginning with 'ignorance' that should be understood as 'Law of Dependent Origination or Causal Law'.\(^{118}\) Secondly it is the states beginning with 'ageing-and-death' that should be understood as 'Dependently-originated States or Things as having causally happened'.\(^{119}\) The states that are conditions should be understood as the Dependent Origination. The states generated by such and such

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\(^{117}\) M. I, 236.
\(^{118}\) S. II, 2.
conditions are Dependently-originated States.¹²º It is to be known by the Blessed One’s word. For it is precisely those states which are conditions, that with the synonyms beginning with ‘reality,’ have been called ‘dependent origination’ by the Blessed One when teaching the Dependent Origination in the *sutta* on the Teaching of the Dependent Origination. And Dependently-originated States that is ‘conditioned by rebirth is decay-and-death - whether, there be an arising of *Tathāgatas*, or whether there be no such arising, this nature of things just stands, this causal status, this causal orderliness, the relatedness of this or that. Concerning that the *Tathāgata* is fully enlightened, that He fully understands. Fully enlightened, fully understanding He declares it, sets it forth, manifests, explains; makes it plain, saying “behold”! Conditioned by rebirth is decay - and - death, conditioned by becoming is rebirth ... conditioned by ignorance are activities. Whether, there be an arising of *Tathāgatas*, or whether there be no such arising, this nature of things just stands. ...”¹²¹

Consequently, it should be understood that Dependent Origination has the characteristic of being the conditions for the states beginning with ageing-and-death. Its function is to continue the process of suffering. It is manifested as the wrong path.¹²² Some scholars have often thought that, the doctrine of Dependent Origination has one fixed formula that is the twelve and starting from “ignorance” (*avijjā.*) Some others have usually confused and ignored because of its diversified and complicated meaning. In reality, the doctrine of Dependent Origination presented in Suttapiṭaka with the different forms, not only twelve links, but also eight, ten, five,

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¹²¹ S. 11, 25.
¹²² *The Path of Purification*, ibid., p. 593.
twenty-three,\textsuperscript{123} etc., in dependence on the places where the Buddha felt necessary to present it, āhāra with four kinds is one of different forms of this vital doctrine taught by the Buddha.

Dependent origination that is taught with different ways by Lord Buddha can be recapitulated in fourfold, namely, (i) from the beginning up to the end,\textsuperscript{124} (ii) from the middle, up to the end,\textsuperscript{125} (iii) from the end up to the beginning\textsuperscript{126} and (iv) from the middle down to the beginning.\textsuperscript{127} Here āhāra that is in the fourth way is described in another form of dependent origination from the middle down to the beginning found thus:

"There are these four sustenances, brethren, for the maintenance of beings that have come to birth or for the forwarding of them that seek to become. Which are the four? Material food, coarse or fine, secondly, contact, thirdly, volition, fourthly, consciousness. These four are the sustenances for the maintenance of beings that have come to birth, or for the forwarding of those that seek to become.

And of these four, brethren, what is the base, whence is the uprising? How are they produced? What causes them? Craving is their base, from craving is their uprising, craving produces them, causes them to be. What is the base, whence is the uprising of craving? What produced it? What causes it to be? Feeling is its base, its uprising, produces it, causes it to be. And contact is the base, the uprising, the producer, the cause of feeling, sense of contact, name-and-shape of sense, consciousness of name-and-shape, activities of consciousness, and ignorance of activities. Such verily, brethren, is this: 'conditioned by ignorance are activities, conditioned by activities is consciousness,' and

\textsuperscript{123} Dependent Origination in Eight Elements taught in D. II, 56-57; Ten Elements in D. II, 32-33; Five Elements in S. II, 72; Twenty-Three Elements in S. II, 31-32.
\textsuperscript{124} M. I, 261.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 266.
\textsuperscript{126} Op. cit.
\textsuperscript{127} The Path of Purification, p. 600.
so on. Such is the uprising of the entire mass of ill. But from the utter fading away and ceasing of ignorance the ceasing of activities, from the ceasing of these the ceasing of consciousness, and so on. Such is the craving of this entire mass of ill." \(^{128}\)

According to Lord Buddha’s teachings on āhāra, the origin of the four nutriments is traced to craving (taṇhā,) and the conditioned arising is pursued further back, in terms of the dependent origination. But while, in the usual formula of the dependent origination, it is clinging (or grasping, upādāna) that is conditioned by craving, here, in this *sutta*, nutriment (āhāra) takes the place of clinging. So it also does in the *Mahā Tanhāsankhaya Sutta* (M. I, sutta No. 38,) while the *Cūla-Sīhanāda Sutta* (M. I, sutta No. 11) has here the *fourfold division* of clinging, \(^{129}\) with, otherwise, the same wording as the present *sutta*. Both Pāli words, āhāra (nutriment) and upādāna (clinging) have originally the same meaning of “taking up,” “seizing,” and both are also used to signify the fuel of a fire or a lamp (see SN 22.88.)

Several of the *Samyutta* texts on conditioned origination bring in another kind of causal relation, that of four kinds of ‘food’ (āhāra.) Only the first kind of food is food in the literal sense of what creatures eat. The second is ‘contact’ (*phassa* ‘stimulus’.) The third is volition of the mind. The fourth is consciousness. Through these beings persist and are enabled to be produced (to be reborn). The source, the origination, of these four foods, however, is desire. From this, we are led through the sequence desire, experience and the rest down to ignorance.

Another text\(^{130}\) elucidates the four foods. Ordinary food is connected with the passion of the five senses. Contact (stimulus) is

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\(^{128}\) S. II, 11 (Tran. by Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, *The Book of The Kindred Sayings*, part II, PTS, pp. 8-9.)

\(^{129}\) The four divisions of grasping: the grasping of sense-pleasure, the grasping of view, the grasping of rule and custom, and the grasping of the theory of self.

\(^{130}\) S. II, 99.
connected with experience. Volition of the mind is volition, wishing, aspiring for something. (e.g. to be out of extreme danger and pain). It is connected with desire. Consciousness-food is described as experience through the sentient body, the later being specially connected with consciousness. When ordinary food is fully understood passion is understood. When contact is fully understood experience is fully understood. When volition of mind is fully understood the three desires (presumably for pleasure, existence or non-existence) are fully understood. When consciousness-food is fully understood the sentient body is fully understood.

Further,\(^ {131}\) if there is passion, delight, craving as to solid food, then consciousness finds a resting place and grows there. Then there is descent of name-and-shape (into the womb), and as a result there is growth of activities. Where there is growth of activities (samskāra) there in the future is renewed becoming and rebirth. Where in the future is renewed becoming and rebirth (punarbhava), then there is in the future decay-and-death, grief, affliction, despair and all kinds of unhappiness. It is exactly the same if there are passion, pleasure, desire for the other three kinds: Consciousness will find a resting place and grows the same results. From this, the chain of Dependent and conditioned origin can be made in the following sequence and their opposites:

Due to lust for four foods, consciousness is firmly placed.
Due to consciousness, name-and-shape arises.
Due to name-and-shape, formations arise.
Due to formations, becoming and rebirth are renewed.
Due to becoming and rebirth are renewed, decay and death arise.
Due to decay and death, grief, affliction, despair arises.

\(^ {131}\) Ibid., 101.
Because lust for four foods is ceased, consciousness is ceased.
Because consciousness is ceased, name-and-shape is ceased.
Because name-and-shape is ceased, formations are ceased.
Because formations are ceased, becoming and rebirth are ceased.
Because becoming and rebirth are ceased, decay and death are ceased.
Because decay and death is ceased, grief, despair are ceased.

The conditioned Nature of food is described in *Moliyaphagguna Sutta* thus: “Who eats? The consciousness-food? Asked one of the monks when the Buddha had spoken of ‘beings’ persisting and being reborn through the four foods. ‘Not a sound (proper) question,’ replied the Master, ‘I do not say ‘eats’ … If you were to ask “of what’ is the consciousness-food that would be a sound question. The consciousness-food is the condition for the future production of rebirth.” In the same way the Buddha explains that it is not sound to ask who touches, who desires, and so on. One may ask, however, through what condition there is touch (contact, stimulus) or desire.

Although in the stereotyped formula of Dependent Origination, ignorance is shown as the first condition which is not traced any further, ‘for the origin of ignorance is not discernible’ (*purimā koti na paññāyati avijjāya,*) and it cannot be said, “There was a time when ignorance was not” (*ito pubbe avijjā nāhosi.*) Still it was definitely stated by the Buddha that ignorance, too, is conditioned and sustained by the five hindrances. Then follows a chain of Dependent and Conditioned origins, not unlike the *paṭiccasamuppāda,* but links are here shown as sustenances or nutriments (*āhāra*) in the following sequence: ignorance is not apparent, so that one may say: Ignorance (*avijjā,*) five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇāṇī,*) three wrong ways of practice (*tīṇi duccaritānī,*) lack of mindfulness and self-composure (*indriyāsāṃvara,*) lack of thorough work

of mind (asatāsampajañña), distracted attention (ayonisomanasikāra), lack of trust (assaddha), not listening to true dhamma (asaddhammassavana) not following after the very man (asappurisasaṃsevā). Such is the nutriment of ignorance and thus its fulfillment (evam etissā avijjāya āhāro hoti, evaṁca pāripūri.) But their opposites lead to deliverance through knowledge (vijjāvimutti) in the following sequence of sustenances: following a worthy man (sappurisasaṃsevā), listening to true dhamma (saddhammassavana), confidence (saddha), careful attention (yonisomanasikā), mindfulness with self-control (sati-sampajañña), restraint of the senses (indriyasamvara), the three right ways of conduct (tīni sucaritāni), the four methods of mindfulness (cattāro satipaṭṭhānā) the seven factors of wisdom (satta bojjhāgā) deliverance through knowledge.\(^{134}\)

The above citations showed the five hindrances (pañca nīvaranāni) are food for ignorance and three evil ways of conduct (tīni duccaritāni) are food for the five hindrances; the seven limbs of wisdom (satta bojjhāgā) are food for release by knowledge “vijjāvimuttiyā” and the four arsing of mindfulness (cattāro satipaṭṭhānā) are food for the seven limbs of wisdom.

Again, āhāra bears the meaning of paccaya taught by Lord Buddha who spoke of food for the five hindrances and for the seven limbs of wisdom. Here, due to the unsystematic attention (ayonisomanasikārabahuḥikāra) to the alluring features of things (subhanimitta,) these things are called food for the arising of sensual lust (kāmacchanda.) The repulsive feature of things (paṭighanimitta) are called food for the arising of malevolence (byāpāda.) Regret, dressiness, languor, surfeit after meals, torpidity of mind (arati tandi, vijambhitā, bhattasammada, cetaso līnatta), are food for the arising of

\(^{133}\) A. V., 113.
\(^{134}\) Ibid., 115.
sloth and torpor (*thinamiddha*). Non-tranquillity of mind (*cetaso avn̄pasama*) is food for the arising of excitement and flurry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*). Things, which are based on doubt and wavering, are food for the growth of perplexity (*vicikicchā*). In other words, alluring features of things … and unsystematic attention or wrong thought are two conditions (*paccay*) of foods for the arising and growth of the five hindrances. However, if there is a systematic attention, the repulsive feature of things, a heart released by goodwill, the element of putting forth effort, tranquility of mind, things good and things bad will not be foods for the five hindrances.

As regards the seven elements of wisdom (*bijjhahga*) which lead to enlightenment, it is said that the things which are based on these various limbs, when systematically attended to (*yonisomanasikārabahuliṅkāra*), form also the nutriment of these seven elements of insight-wisdom, viz., things based on the limb of wisdom that is mindfulness. These things are called food for the arising of mindfulness. Things good and bad, things blameworthy and things not blameworthy, things mean and things exalted, things that are constituent parts of darkness and light are foods for the arising of the limb of wisdom which is Norm-investigation. The element of putting forth effort, the element of exertion, the element of striving are food for the arising of energy. Things based on the limb of wisdom that is zest are foods for the arising of zest. Tranquility of body and there is tranquility of mind are food for the arising of tranquility. Sights, calm, and bewilder not are food for the arising of concentration. Things based on the limb of wisdom that is equanimity are food for the arising of the limb of wisdom, is equanimity. In other words, systematic attention is food for the limbs of wisdom.\(^\text{136}\)

Similarly, “energy and exertion are food for getting wealth. Finery and adornment are food for beauty. Seasonable action is food for health.\(^\text{136}\)

\(^{135}\) S. V, 102.
\(^{136}\) Ibid. 103-104.
A lovely friendship is food for virtue. Restraint of the sense-faculties is food for the Brahma-life. Not quarrelling is food for friendship. Repetition is food for much knowledge. Lending an ear and asking questions are foods for wisdom. Study and examination are foods for teachings. Right faring is food for the heaven worlds."137

Āhāra is not only a material phenomenon, but as an active process it is a condition (āhāra-paccaya) of support of two kinds: the relation of edible food to the body and the relation of immaterial supports to co-existing states of mind and body. It is this nutritive support in the psychological field, which forms the basis of the doctrine of karma and the teachings connected therewith. Food (āhāra) is frequently synonymous with causal condition, e.g., "from the arising of food comes the arising of body; from the ceasing of food is the ceasing of body; and the way leading to the ceasing of the body is the Noble Eightfold Path: āhāra-samudayā rūpa-samudayo, āhāranirodhā rūpanirodho; ayam eva ariyo atṭhaṅkiko maggo rūpanirodhaṃ."138 Here, food of the body has been substituted for the usual conflict of existence (dukkha), its origin (samudaya,) its cessation (nirodha) and the path thereto (magga.) And gain, consciousness and its cause (pañcabīja-jātāni viññāṇam sāhāram datṭhabbham) are to be considered as the five sorts of seed, which require both the soil of the four stations of consciousness (viññāṇatthiti) and the water of lust (nandirāga) in order to grow and increase.139 Similarly, merit is called the food, i.e., the cause of happiness (sukhassāhāra).140

The above suttas have pointed out āhāra is paccaya - condition. For the four foods, edible food (kabaliṅkārāhāra) is the cause of inseparable matter (aviniḥbhogarūpa) - the four great essentials: earth, water, fire,

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137 A.V, 136, Īṭṭhadhammasutta No.3 (73).
138 S. III, 59.
139 Ibid., 54.
140 A. III, 51.
and air elements and four derivatives – colour, smell, taste, and nutritive essence – are known as avinibbhogarūpa because they are always bound together and are present in all material objects from the simplest to the most complex. The other types of material phenomena may be present or not, and are thus regarded as separable.\textsuperscript{141} And contact (phassāhāra) is the base, the uprising, the producer, the cause of feeling (phassāhara paccayā vedanā); Volition (manosaṅcetanāhāra) is the condition of rebirth consciousness (paṭisandhiviññāna); and consciousness-food (viññānāhāra) is the condition of the body and mind (viññānāhāra paccayā nāmarūpaṃ.)

In reality, the doctrine of dependent origination is difficult to realize. It is hard because it repels all worldly desires, annuls any notion of ‘I am’, advocates all things are conditioned, while thought and deed of a human is opposite. By this opposite a human being always gets grief, affliction, and despair. Hence, Lord Buddha has made use of various ways to present it (truth of life) and āhāra in meaning of condition or cause, is one of the ways used lively by the Enlightened One while spreading the dependent origination. It can be said that through āhāra, man can understand easily about law of dependent origination, the truth of suffering and origin of suffering and the way leading to the cessation of suffering. This will be done next.

3.2. Āhāra and the Four Noble Truths

The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta\textsuperscript{142} - Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion is the Buddha’s first discourse, delivered shortly after his Awakening to the group of five monks with whom he had practiced the austerities in the forest for many years. The sutta contains the essential teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

\textsuperscript{142} S. V, 56.
The First Noble Truth is suffering, *dukkha*. Why did the Buddha call pain a Noble Truth? What is so noble about suffering? About this, Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh explained: “The fact is that, thanks to suffering, you have a chance to cultivate your understanding and your compassion. Without suffering there is no way you could learn to be compassionate. This is why suffering is noble. You should not allow suffering to overwhelm you, but if you must know how to look deeply into suffering and learn from it, then you have the wisdom of understanding and compassion. He also describes ‘suffering’ in terms of violence, discrimination, hate, jealousy, anger, craving, especially ignorance. Out of ignorance we do many things that make us and other suffering.”

The Second Noble Truth is the root cause of suffering. Ignorance or craving is the root cause that leads to the suffering. The Third Noble Truth is the cessation of suffering, which means the birth of well-being. When a practitioner looks deeply into suffering and discovers its roots and understands its nature, then suddenly the Fourth Noble Truth reveals itself: the path leading to the cessation of suffering. The presence of happiness and the cessation of suffering are possible with practice of the noble path. One cannot see the noble path leading to the cessation of ill-being unless they understand ill-being and its nature.

Lord Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths to point out the truth of suffering that is encircling human life of both the rich and the poor. This truth can be found through *āhāra* that nourishes and maintains man’s life all the time.

It is said that the repetitive monotony of the process of nutrition kept going by the urge to preserve life. This is enough to reveal the *dukkha*-nature of life, the tiresomeness of the tedious round of eating and being

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144 Ibid.
hungry again. Hence, a medieval Jewish sage was moved to say, “I am fed up with being hungry again and again, and I hunger after final satiety.” This is the suffering inherent in the very function of eating, though mostly hidden by the habituation to this most elementary feature of routine life. The concrete suffering and pain involved in the search for food and its acquisition is obvious enough to all. This misery was, is and will be life’s constant companion. There is the mute suffering in the animal world where “devouring each other is the law” (and man joining in it by even rearing animals for food.) We also know of primitive man’s fight for pasture land (basically the same as modern man’s wars for “world markets”.) One also knows of the pangs of hunger among the poor, and of starving children the world over. Though the resources for feeding humanity have grown considerably in our days, man still has not controlled famine, even where it would be in his power to do so; and all progress in the field of food-production threatens to be dwarfed by the rapid growth of world population. This problem looms large on the horizon of present-day humanity and may well become desperate if the disparity between available food and increasing population reaches a critical point. Should that critical point be reached, one does not know what dire consequences may follow from that situation, unless a united humankind can solve the problem by concerted action and peaceful means. Hence, also for mankind’s future, what the Dhamma teachers of old times said remains true: that the search for food (āhāra-pariyetthi) is an ever-present source of suffering (vattamāna dukkha.) As such it can stir man’s sense of urgency (saīvega) when he considers, in the light of “nutriment,” man’s own nature, his incessant needs and his situation in the world. This contemplation of the dukkha-aspect of āhāra leads us to a formulation of the Four Noble Truths in terms of food, as taught by Buddha:
"There might be, your reverences. When, your reverences, a disciple of the ariyans comprehends sustenance\textsuperscript{145} and comprehends the uprising of sustenance and comprehends the stopping of sustenance and comprehends the course leading to the stopping of sustenance, to this extent also, your reverences, does a disciple of the ariyans come to be of perfect view ... who has come into this true dhamma...

And what, your reverences, is sustenance, what the uprising of sustenance, what the stopping of sustenance, what the course leading to the stopping of sustenance? Your reverences, there are these four (kinds of) sustenance for the stability of creatures who have come to be or for the assistance of those who are seeking to be. What are the four? Material food, coarse or fine; (sense-) impingement is the second; volition is the third; consciousness is the fourth.

From the uprising of craving is the uprising of sustenance, from the stopping of craving is the stopping of sustenance. The course leading to the stopping of sustenance is the ariyan eightfold way itself, that is to say: perfect view, perfect thought, perfect speech, perfect action, perfect way of living, perfect endeavour, perfect mindfulness, perfect concentration. When a disciple of the ariyans comprehends sustenance thus, comprehends the uprising of sustenance thus, comprehends the stopping of sustenance thus, comprehends the course leading to the stopping of sustenance thus, he, having got rid of all addiction to attachment, having dispelled addiction to shunning, having abolished addiction to the latent view 'I am,' having got rid of ignorance, having made knowledge arise, is here-now end-maker of anguish. To this extent, also, your reverences, does a disciple of the ariyan come to be of perfect...\textsuperscript{145} Āhāra, sustenance or nutrimrnt, is a condition, paccaya, that brings, āharati, its own fruit.
view, one whose view is upright, one who is possessed of unwavering confidence in dhamma, one who has come into this true dhamma.\(^{146}\)

From the above teaching, four kinds of sustenance (food) of life stand for the first truth of Ill; the craving for the four nutriments is the origin of Ill, the second Truth; the stopping of that craving is the cessation of the continued process of grasping for material and mental food, which is the end of Ill, the third Truth; and the Noble Eightfold Path is the way to that cessation.

The Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta (Discourse on Right View) taught by venerable Sāriputta. He explained the teaching of the Buddha accessible to those beings, whose minds do not want to accept the idea of suffering as the basis of life. Hence, according to the sutta, the teaching on food, the cause of food, the stopping of food, and the course leading to the stopping of food is a different mode of the Four Noble Truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. In this way, it can be said that this sutta has revealed a different regard about life. This is to say, the word ‘nutriment or food’ (āhāra) is in the meaning of ‘suffering’ (dukkha,) and instead of saying ‘birth is suffering,’ it can also be said that ‘birth is nutriment or food.’ Hence, all the word ‘suffering’ in the Four Noble Truths can be replaced by ‘food or sustenance’ such as:

The Four Noble Truths: (Cattāriyasaccāni)

The suffering (dukkha): birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering, association with the unpleasant is suffering, dissociation from the pleasant is suffering, not to get what one desires is suffering. In brief, the five aggregates of attachment are suffering. The origin of suffering (dukkhasamudaya): craving is the root of suffering leading to rebirth. The

\(^{146}\) M. I, 48 (The Collection of the Middle Sayings, vol. I, PTS, p. 59-60.)
cessation of suffering (dukkhanirodha): the complete cessation of craving. The way leading to the cessation of suffering (dukkhanirodhagāmini): the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of suffering.

* A new formula of the Four Noble Truths can be: *

The sustenance (āhāra): birth is sustenance, aging is sustenance, sickness is sustenance, death is sustenance, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are sustenances, association with the unpleasant is sustenance, dissociation from the pleasant is sustenance, not to get what one desires is sustenance. In brief, the five aggregates of attachment are sustenance. The origin of sustenance (āhārasamudaya): craving is the root of food leading to rebirth. The cessation of sustenance (āhāranirodha): the complete cessation of craving is the cessation of the continued process of grasping for material and mental food. The way leading to the cessation of sustenance (āhāranirodhagāmini): the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of sustenance.

According to the Discourse on Right View, Sāriputta Thera asserts that all thoughts that associate to “I,” “mine,” and “myself” are addiction to attachment (rāgānusayam), addiction to aversion (paṭighānusayam), and addiction to the latent view “I am” (dīthimānusayam.) The operation of attachment, aversion, and of the latent view “I am” is that of ignorance and craving elements. Ignorance means a person’s wrong view and thought supposing that existing thing has its own self; it also means self-thought of a man. Therefore, studying self-thought is the main task of studying suffering and happiness of men, and of the search for truth of man and the world. It is self-thought which makes up the essence and value of things and causes grasping leading to troubles. The method of the cessation of the self-thought for an end of suffering, which is taught in
the Discourse on Right View, is the full understanding of sustenance as explained by Sāriputta Thera in this "sutta."

According to Puttamamsupama Sutta,\(^{147}\) one must contemplate on his food as just as they contemplate on their own son’s flesh (see more ‘the meaning of kabaliṅkarāhāra’ in fourth chapter.) By this way, he is able to eradicate the thirst for the taste (rasataṅhā) of nutriment. Let us consider the nutriment from the point of view of the Four Noble Truths. According to Buddhism, nutriment is a material thing and it pertains to the Aggregate of Matter (Rūpakkhandha.) The Aggregate of Matter is a sort of suffering. Therefore, the nutriment is subject to suffering (Dukkha.) It is one that should be discerned correctly (parinānneyya.) It is not a phenomenon that is to be eradicated. The thirst for the taste of nutriment (rasataṅhā) is the cause of suffering (dukkhasamudaya.) It should be eradicated (pahatabba.) The cessation of the thirst for the taste of nutriment is the cessation of suffering (Dukkhanirodha.) It should be attained (Sacchikatabba.) The contemplating nutriment correctly for the perception of repulsiveness in nutriment is the way leading to the cessation of suffering (Dukkha nirodha gamini patipada.) It is one that should be developed (Bhavetabba.) According to Buddhism, the cessation of suffering is the most important. It can be attained only through the eradication of the Thirst (tanhā.) Therefore, one must attempt to uproot the Thirst for taste of nutriment to attain the cessation of suffering. It is Nibbāna, which is the goal of the Noble Practice. One may be a vegetarian or non-vegetarian, according to his wish. The only attempt one must make is to remove the Thirst for the taste of nutriment, what he consumes every day.

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\(^{147}\) S. II, 98.
In short, life is suffering because one has been immoderate in food, he who lives looking for pleasures only, his senses and wishes or intentions that are uncontrolled feed his consciousness with the toxins such as greed, hatred, suspicion, and pride. Ignorance or craving is the cause of the suffering that makes him grasp that there is an eternal self and all things are unchanging; therefore he sinks always into the ocean of suffering. He can free from his own suffering whenever he realizes all things are no-self, impermanence, and suffering.

3.3. Āhāra and Tilakkhaṇa

The term Lakkhaṇa, in Pāli, is rendered as characteristic, sign or mark. First of all, what is a characteristic and what is not? A characteristic is something that is necessarily connected with something else. Because a characteristic is necessarily connected with something, it can tell us about the nature of that thing. For instance, heat is a characteristic of fire but not of water. Heat is a characteristic of fire because it is always and invariably connected with fire, whereas whether or not water is hot depends on external factors—an electric stove, the heat of the sun, and so forth. But the heat of fire is natural to fire. It is in this sense that the Buddha uses the term “characteristic” to refer to facts about the nature of existence that are always connected with existence or always found in existence.

Tilakkhaṇa means three characteristics of existence are known as: anicca, dukkha, and anattā (impermanence or change, suffering or unsatisfactoriness, and not-self or insubstantiality.) The doctrine of three characteristics of existence is repeated in many suttas that can be presented as follows:¹⁴⁸

-Bodies, feelings perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are impermanent, ill, and without the self both in the past and in the

¹⁴⁸ S. III, 19-22; IV, 1-3.
future not to speak of the present. In doing so, one cares not for a body, feeling, perception, activities, and consciousness that are past, is not in love with a body, feeling ... and for the present body, feeling ... consciousness seeks to be repelled by them, seeks dispassion for them, seeks the ceasing of them.

- Bodies ... consciousness are impermanent, ill, and without the self. In seeing so, one is repelled by them. Being repelled by them he lusts not for them, not lusting he is set free, for life in these conditions there is no hereafter.

- Body ... consciousness are impermanent, ill, and void of the self. What is impermanent, that is suffering. What is suffering, that is void of the self. What is void of the self, that are not mine, I am not them, they are not myself.

- Body ... consciousness are impermanent, ill, and void of the self. That which is the cause that which is the condition of the arising of the body ... consciousness that also is impermanent, ill, and without the self. How can a body ... consciousness which are compounded of the impermanent, ill, and void of the self come to be permanent, ease, and the self? In seeing so, one is repelled by them, for life in these conditions there is no hereafter.

- The six internal sense organs and the six external objects\(^1\) are impermanent. What is impermanent, that is ill. What is ill, that is void of the self. What is without self that is not mine, I am not it, it is not myself. In doing so, one is repelled by it, he lusts not for it. Not lusting, he is set free, for life in these conditions there is no hereafter.

- What is the satisfaction, the misery of the six senses and six objects, and what is the way of escape from them? The ease and pleasure that

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\(^1\) Six senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Six objects: shape, sound, scent, savour, tangible, and mind-states.
arise due to the six senses and six objects that are their satisfactions. They are impermanent, ill, and instable, that are their miseries. The restraint of desire and lust and renouncing of desire and lust which are in the six senses and six objects that are the ways of escape from them. Not so long, one does not understand as they really are, the satisfactions of this sixfold internal sphere of sense and sixfold sphere of object as such, their miseries as such, the ways of escape from them as such - so long he is not free from suffering.

From the above teachings, if one looks deeply into these characteristics, he can see that things are changing and conditions. Looking deeply into nonself, one sees that the existence of every single thing is possible only because of the existence of everything else that is the cause and condition for its existence. Nothing has separate existence or a separate self. Everything has to be conditioned with everything else. This feature of things helps one to see that the one in the all and the all in the one.\textsuperscript{150} It is not useful to see impermanence, illness and nonself as merely philosophy and it is useful to nourish one’s insight into them all day long, one will suffer less, enjoy much more love. It is necessary to understand these characteristics in order to appreciate fully what are there.

It is said that any teaching that does not bear these characteristics cannot be said to be a teaching of the Buddha. They explain the features of all things in order to reveal them as they are. These three characteristics are always present in or connected with the existence of men who were and are being nourished by the nutriments, “all beings persist through food. All beings persist through conditions: \textit{sabbe sattā āhāraṭṭhitikā. Sabbe sattā sānkhāraṭṭhitikā}.\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{151} D. III. 211.
The laws of nutriment govern both biological and mental life, and this fact was expressed by the Buddha when speaking of four kinds of nutriment: edible food, sense-impressions, volitions, and consciousness. It is hunger that stands behind the entire process of nutrition. Craving \((tanēhā)\) always stimulates the process of the assimilation of food. In the process of eating and digesting, what was external becomes absorbed in the internal; what was foreign matter becomes "one's own" and is identified with one's personality or self. And this applies as well to mental nourishment. The mind also feeds on "external" material: on sense impressions and variegated experiences; on the contents of the storehouse of knowledge accumulated by the race; and on the precipitate derived from all these sources. Also our memories, when they become objects of the mind, are as "external" to the present thought-moment as the ideas read in a book. What cannot be absorbed by the system is discarded, and thus, in the body as well as in the mind, there is a constant process of grasping and rejecting, assimilating and dissimilating, identifying with oneself and alienating. We know how much people can be changed (for better or worse) by ideas they have absorbed and which finally have absorbed and consumed them.\(^{152}\)

From the above description, these laws governing nutriment both physical and mental are indeed sufficient to convince a thoughtful observer how illusory the conception of an abiding self or soul \((anattā)\) or substance is. This alone should be enough to vindicate the \(anattā\) doctrine; the Buddha's deeply revolutionizing teaching of Not-self.

In some religions, a soul is a permanent, unchanging, absolute entity behind the changing phenomenal world. A human being has such a soul or self either created by God or emanating from a divine source. The Not-

\(^{152}\) *The Four Nutriments of Life*, ibid., p. 2.
self doctrine is the natural result of analyzing of the four nutriments, the Five Aggregates and Dependent Origination. It implies the absence of a self. Buddhism is unique in the history of human thought in denying the existence of a self. According to the Buddha, the idea of self is an imaginary, false belief which produces harmful thoughts of ‘me,’ ‘mine,’ selfish desires hatred, pride and all defilements. It is the source of all troubles in the world. Through craving and ignorance, man has the idea of an eternal self. Through such false ideas, man continues being nourished and maintained and renewed by the four nutriments.

Contemplating carefully on this body, we grasp that it was, is, and being nourished by the countless food taken from the environment. There is the environment or food, there is this body and vice versa. Thus, this body is conditioned by the food, it is not self.

Considering the four nutriments, Paul Dahlke says: "neither a metaphysical 'I' - identity (pure spirit, pure subject, according to the soul-theory of the religion) nor a mere physical process (pure body, pure object, according to scientific materialism), but a nutrimental process and as such it is neither something which is in and by, itself nor something caused by another, but something that is maintaining itself: and all these so-called higher faculties of thinking and feeling are different forms of eating, of maintaining oneself".¹⁵³

But in addition to the vindication of the anatta doctrine, nutriment is likewise a convincing teacher of the two other characteristics of life, Impermanence and suffering.¹⁵⁴

Impermanence, or change (anicca) is the very root of the nutritive process which cries for constant replenishment of the food consumed. The bottomless gaping hole has to be filled again and again as long as the being

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¹⁵³ Ibid.
¹⁵⁴ Ibid.
lives. And it is not different with man’s mental hunger that craves for change and variety. Impermanence is truth as natural law of operation of all things, whether man likes it or not, he must be subject to it. Whenever the four nutriments have craving as its source and its origin and whenever craving has not been eliminated, hunger for material and mental food is constantly operated more and more because impermanence is coming. This is to say, man fears for impermanence, it will take away what he has gotten for a long time, and this is operation of craving, of suffering.

As mentioned, the repetitive monotony of the process of nutrition kept going by the urge to preserve life. This is enough to reveal the dukkha-nature of life, the tiresomeness of the tedious round of eating and being hungry again. This is the reason why a medieval Jewish sage was moved to say, “I am fed up with being hungry again and again, and I hunger after final satiety.”

As a result of understanding of the three characteristics, man learns to develop renunciation, or detachment. If one understands that his existence of is that of the constituents of four foods, both he and foods are impermanent, ill, and without self, he can eliminate attachment to the four āhāras. If one understands thus, he can realize the satisfaction, the misery of the four foods, and the way of escape from them.

In short, all activities (saṅkhārā) that refer to searching of foods are aniccā, all activities that refer to searching of food are dukkhā, and all things are foods for nourishment and maintenance of human life are anattā.

3.4. Āhāra and Kamma and Rebirth
3.4.1. Āhāra and Kamma

It can be said that the theory of kamma or karma plays a very important part in Buddhism. It is the central point to grasp in the
teachings of the Buddha, and one needs to understand it firmly before one can practice the Noble Eightfold Path. Right understanding of kamma urges the individual to understand moral causation, which the understanding of wholesome actions (kusala kamma) which bring good results, they are meritorious and lead to happiness here and hereafter. Unwholesome actions (akusala kamma) which give rise to evil consequences, they are demeritorious and lead to pain and ill-being here and hereafter.\(^\text{156}\)

Kamma literally means action. Any action one performs with pure intention is called wholesome kamma. If the intention is impure, then it is called unwholesome kamma. Kamma, therefore, is not merely the affair of external or visual deeds, but it is the motive or volition involves in thinking, speaking, or doing. Any deed devoid of will or intention cannot properly be called kamma. Hence, moral or immoral kamma is threefold action. Any action one perform with volition through body, speech, and mind is called kamma. Whether kamma is wholesome or unwholesome is dependent on the state of mind at the moment of the action.\(^\text{157}\)

When kamma is understood as volition, the extreme importance of internal control of the mind is acutely underscored. If the will is controlled, the actions which are directed from the mind will also be controlled. That understanding of volition and act does not, in any way, represent a departure from the more general understanding of kamma as a process of cause and effect. Just as the results of one act give rise to conditions of another, so the consequences of one's state of mind give rise to the manifest expression of

that state of mind through the agencies of the body, speech, and thought. Therefore, in a very important sense, the condition of one’s mind, whether or not that condition is influenced through ignorance by passion, hatred, directly determines the quality of an ensuing act.

In many early Buddhist texts, the Buddha defined *kamma* as *cetanā* - mental volition, in order to stress emphatically the psychological importance of *kamma*: “O monks, it volition (*cetanā*) that I call *kamma*. Having willed, one acts through body, speech and thought: *catanāhaṁ bhikkhave kammaṁ vadāmī; cetayītvā kammaṁ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā.*”

Therefore, it can be said that *cetanā* is the central point that the Buddhist theory of *kamma* or cause and effect is established.

The term *cetanā* contains the Buddhist ethics, epistemology and psychology in its widest sense; it denotes the dominant cognitive function in mentation. The different aspects of meaning embodied in the term have been rendered variously as will, volition, intention, motivation, stimulus, disposition, determination, effort, choice, resolve, mental construction and formative tendency. In its more specific technical signification, however, *cetanā*, unless otherwise qualified, refers only to the self-centered, goal-directed and result-oriented volitional disposition which impels the worldly individual (*puthujjana*.) This *cetanā* is altogether absent in the liberated individual (*ariya*) who is free from the obsessions ‘this is mine’ (*etam mama,* this am I,’ (*eso ham asmi*) and ‘this is myself’ (*eso me attā,* who has no self-advancing goal to aspire to and who has no result to crave after. As for the disciple of the Buddha who is set on the path leading to total liberation, the later exegetical works describe his *cetanā* as one that

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158 In Samyutta Nikāya II, 5: There is a causal relationship between ignorance (*avijjā*) and volitional activity such that “whenever there is ignorance, there is a tendency for volitional acts to come into being as the result of ignorance” with ignorance dispelled, there is a cassation of volitional activities (*avijjāya kho sati sankāra hoti, avijjāpaccaya sankhāra.*)

159 A. III, 295.
conduces only to the elimination of rebirth and the cessation of all self-centred action.\(^{160}\)

The Buddha's teaching on the *cetāna* pervades all other teachings in *Pāli Nikāya* such as Personality (*nāma-rūpa*), the five aggregates of grasping (*pañcupādānakkhanda*), the four nutriments (*cattāro āhāra*), causality (*pañiccassamuppāda*) and the theory of action (*kamma*).\(^{161}\)

It is observed that of all the four types of *āhāras*, the most important is the food, which is "will of mind" (*manosañcetananāhāra*.) It is mental volition, without which no thought becomes active or alive. It is the equivalent of *karma*, and hence it feeds rebirth.\(^{162}\) In other words, the *will* figures prominently among the four *āhāras*, which nourish and sustain the physical and psychic life of beings (*kabaliṅkāro āhāro ... phasso dutiyo manosāñcetanaṁ tatiyo viññāṇam catuttham ime kho ... cattāro āhāraṁ bhūtānam vā sattānam thitiyasambheṣīnām vā anuggahāya.*)\(^{163}\)

The mere taking of food in material form is not sufficient for sustaining life. Material food can only meet some of the bare physical needs of life. Even the physical wants, distinct from the physical needs, are altogether explained by some other psychic factor. This is none other than *mansañcetanā*, namely, the ceaseless self-serving volitive effort of mind. Mental volition is the primary determinant of verbal and bodily volition also. To understand mental volition is to understand the craving for sense gratification, for life and for death\(^{164}\) (*manosañcetanāya ... āhāre pariññāte tisso taṇhā pariññātā honti.*)\(^{165}\) The four *āhāras* are inter-related. Material food keeps the will alive by providing it with the physical basis in personality. Sensory stimulation (*phassāhāra*) provides

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161 Ibid., p. 87.
163 S. II, 11-12.
164 *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, op. cit.
165 S. II, 100.
the will with the opportunity and ground for its operation. The will finds its psychic base in the ideational activity of the mind (viññāṇa-āhāra).

When saying that “volitional thought feeds and conditions the three states of existence,” only karmically wholesome and unwholesome volition, subject to the taints (sāsava-kusala-akusala) is spoken of. When saying that “consciousness feeds and conditions mind-and-body at rebirth,” only rebirth-consciousness (paṭīsandhi-viññāṇa) is meant. But in general application these four are called “nutriments” because they carry or feed the mental processes associated with these nutriments, and the corporeal processes produced by them (tam-sampayutta-tamsamutthāna-dhammānam āhāranto).  

Volitional thought fulfils the function of nourishing, by accumulating (karma; āyūhamāno) and the danger in the food volitional thought is the accumulation of karma and rebirth. A good or bad rebirth depends upon good or bad kamma. It is, of course, that no one wants to get bad rebirth. In order to get good rebirth, Venerable Sāriputta taught that the balancing of these nutriments can provide the conditions for waking up in this life and to create the karmic conditions for good rebirth. The types of food man is drawn to himself in this life is caused by the karmic pattern man has laid down in his past lives, and the types of food he enjoys in this life can create the karmic causes for his future lives. For example, if one loves eating one type of food such as Indian or Italian food and then, if his attachment to such food was very strong, in his next life he may be drawn to Indian or Italian parents.

166 The Four Nutriments of Life, ibid., pp. 25-27.
167 This information is found in the web: www.bdcublessings.one.net.au.
3.4.2. Āhāra and Rebirth

First of all, rebirth (in Sanskrit, *punarāvṛtti*, in Pāli *punappunam jāti*,) also called transmigration and reincarnation, is the belief common to all Buddhist traditions that birth and death occur in successive cycles driven by ignorance (*avidyā*, or *avijjā,* desire, and hatred. The cycle of rebirth, termed *Samāra*, is beginningless and ongoing, and it is determined by the moral quality of a person’s thoughts and *Kamma* (action.) The effects of good moral actions lead to wholesome rebirths (birth as gods, demigods, and human beings;) and the effects of bad moral actions lead to unwholesome rebirths (animal, ghosts, and hell beings.)

According to Lord Buddha, all beings except the *Arahants* are subject to rebirth (*punabbhava*).

The idea of rebirth upheld in Hinduism and Jainism is the existence of an eternal and substantial self or soul (*ātman* in Hinduism and *Jīva* in Jainism) that transmigrates from life to life. Buddhism, fundamental to its understanding of rebirth is *samāra, which is forever in flux,* impermanent or changing, and no self.

From the rebirth doctrine of Buddhism, there is a conundrum brought out: how does Buddhism resolve the problems of the continuity of karma between one life and the next, if there is no absolute self? Answering for the above conundrum, the early Buddhist schools in India offered a variety of responses, the *Pudgalavāda* proposed the inexpressible personal entity (*pudgala*) that traveled from life to life; the *Sarvāstivāda*, posited the existence of an ethereal entity (*gandharva*)

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169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
composed of subtle forms of the five aggregates that passed through an intermediate state (antarābhava) between death and the next birth.\(^{173}\)

However, not all schools accepted such ideas. The Theravāda denied the existence of an intermediate state and argued instead for the existence of an inactive mode of deep consciousness (bhavaṅga) that forms a causal link (pratisandhi, paṭisandhi in Pāli,) between one life and the next. In this view, the first moment of consciousness in a new birth is simply the direct conditioned effect of the final moment of consciousness of immediately previous existence.\(^{174}\) This idea leading to a complete answer to the difficult question of rebirth in light of the cardinal teaching of “no-self” is to be located in\(^{175}\) the Dependent Origination or causality as mentioned (see above). The self, therefore, is not to be understood as essential, independent entity moving from one life to the next, but rather as a manifestation of a complex of causes and conditions, both mental and physical,\(^{176}\) themselves interdependent and continually in flux.\(^{177}\)

From the above discussion, it is noticed that the existence of human and world is that of kamma and rebirth, of samsāra (cycle of birth and death.) However, its operation is always supported and sustained by four types of foods as taught by Lord Buddha as follows:

“Monks, these four (forms of) nutriment are for the maintenance of creatures that have come to be or for the assistance of those seeking birth. What are the four? Material nutriment, whether coarse or fine, sensory impingement is the second, mental striving is the third, consciousness is the fourth. And of these four (forms of) nutriment,
monks, what is the provenance, what the source, what the birth, what the origin? These four (forms of) nutriment, monks, have craving as provenance, craving as source, craving as birth, craving as origin. And, monks, what is the provenance of this craving, what the source, what the birth, what the origin? Feeling is the provenance of craving, feeling is the source of craving, feeling is the birth of craving, and feeling is the origin of craving ... And what, monks, is the provenance of consciousness? The *karma*-formations are the provenance ... the source ... the birth ... the *karma*-formations are the origin of Consciousness. So it is, monks, that conditioned by ignorance are the *karma*-informations; conditioned by the *karma*-informations is consciousness; conditioned by consciousness is psycho-physicality ... conditioned by birth, aging and dying, grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair come into being. Such is the arising of this entire mass of anguish.\(^{178}\)

The statement in the *Mahāpaññāsankhayasutta* above that the four nutriments have craving as their source, should be understood to mean that cravings in a former life are the source of the nutriments; or, in other words, of the (present) individual (*attābhāva*) from (the moment of) rebirth (i.e., conception) onwards. How? At the moment of rebirth, there is present “nutritive essence” (*ojā*) that has originated within the corporeality arisen by way of seven units of corporeal continua (*sattā-santati*) (see more details in chapter IV,) in the case of beings with complete sense faculties; or in the case of other beings, with the appropriate reduction of the continua. This “nutritive essence” constitutes the karmically acquired nutriment “edible food” (*upādiṇṇaka kabalīṅkārāḥāra*) that has (past) craving as its source. The sense-impression and volition associated with the rebirth-consciousness, as well

\(^{178}\) M. I, sutta No. 38.
as that consciousness itself - these are the karmically acquired nutriments
sense impression, volitional thought, and consciousness which have
 craving as their source. This so far refers to the nutriments arising at
rebirth and having as their source the craving in a former life. The same
applies also to the nutriments arising later, at the first moment of
bhavaṅga, and so forth.¹⁷⁹

But because the Exalted One not only knows the source of the
nutriments which is craving, but also the latter’s source which is feeling,
and so forth; therefore the discourse continues “And this craving, O
monks, what is its source...?” showing by this method the samsāric cycle
(vatta) and (implicitly) the stopping of that cycle (vivatta).

Here, however, the exposition is given under the aspect of the past,
and accordingly the cycle of kamma and kamma result has been described
in terms of past (existence). How? This (present) individual is conceived
(as a product of) the four nutriments.

Among the factors of the Dependent Origination given here, craving
(taṅhā) is the generative kamma (janaka-kamma) for this (present)
individual. “Feeling, sense-impression, sixfold sense-base, mind-and-
body, and consciousness” are the factors present in the individual (of the
past) that performs that (past) kamma; they have been mentioned here for
indicating this latter fact.

Thus the individual (of the present and the past) has been indicated here
in two places (i.e., by mentioning the nutriments and by mentioning feeling,
etc.;) and in two places the generative kamma of that (past and present
individual) has been indicated, (namely, by mentioning craving and by
mentioning ignorance and kamma-formations.) In such a way, two things
have been shown here in brief, kamma and kamma result; and in doing so,

¹⁷⁹ The Four Nutriments of Life, p. 43.
the exposition has been given under the aspect of the past, and accordingly
the samsāric cycle has been described here in terms of past (existence).\footnote{Ibid., p. 44.}

In Hinduism, along with the development of ideas about the
deceased merging part by part into the natural cosmos is the notion that
food has a central role to play. "This whole world is in fact food and the
eater of food," says the \textit{Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad}, and in the \textit{Maitrī
Upaniṣad}, "this indeed is the highest form of self, namely food, for this
Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2003, p. 232.} Based on the evidences of the senses,
mfare of the \textit{Upaniṣads} observe that food is probably at the
core of the transformations involved in rebirth, for creatures come into
being from seed as a form of food, "by food alone they live, and then into
it also they go at the end.\footnote{Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, Vol. I, p. 281.}

In Buddhism, out of the four nutriments, consciousness is the most
subtle food, which is the rebirth-linking consciousness, the food which at
the moment of conception feeds mind-and-body in the new life.\footnote{BAU 1.4.6: etāvad vā idam sarvam annam caivānādās ca; MU 6.11: param vā etad āmāno rūpam
yad annam, annamayo hy avam prāṇah.} However, the conception of an embryo in a womb takes place through the
union of three things, lack of one of three it can not take place; in other
words, the round of existence or rebirth takes place through the
conjunction of three things, "when there is the union of the mother and
father, and it is the mother's season, and the being to be reborn is present,
through place through the union of these three things the conception of an
embryo in a womb takes place. The mother then carries the embryo in her
womb for nine or ten months with much anxiety, as a heavy
burden...Then when the child is born, she nourishes it with her own blood; for the mother's breast-milk is called blood...”

The above teaching shows that food is understood as an instrument of continuity, and consciousness (viññāna) is understood as the cause, or the food, of the appearance of rebirth in the future.

Now, following that teaching let us take a deeper look into child's physical body; we can understand what rebirth is or is rebirth samsāra, which is forever in flux, changing and no self?

That physical body comes from a fetus made up by the spermatozoon and semen. These spermatozoon and semen were created by the essence of food coming from many conditions in nature which includes the existence of the Sun about 150 million kilometers away from here. That baby has been brought up also by food, etc. it exists out of the intention of a person, and changes all the time. How can that body be regarded as his own self?

Similarly, analyzing the mental factors: the nutriment contact, nutriment volitional thought, and nutriment consciousness are seen as not the 'I,' the “mine,) or the “myself”.

Again, after child's faculties mature, if he has no good education, then his lust for the four nutriments continues operating and producing future renewed existence. For this, Lord Buddha points out that with lust for the four nutriments, there is rebirth; if there is no lust for the four nutriments, there is no rebirth, no sorrow, anguish, and despair. In fact, the four nutriments themselves do not cause kamma and rebirth, birth, aging, and death in the world, it is the very lust and grasping for them that causes it. In other words, craving and grasping - this is the very nutriment for rebirth and suffering. Here, it is noted that the problem of no rebirth - this is

184 M. I, 266.
185 Dāna: Giving and Getting in Pali Buddhism, ibid., p. 134.
186 The Concept of Personality revealed through the Pañcanikāya, pp. 155-165.
187 S. II, 101 (The Connected Discourses of the Buddha, pp. 590-601.)
not to say the four nutriments or the five aggregates or man are permanent, this is to say all of which are operation of the law of causes and effects or causality or Dependent Origination, there is also birth and death but the complete absence of craving, lust, hatred, and of delusion. Further, if one lives as the slave of craving and without controlling for the material and mental foods even one hour or one minute only, he will himself be immediately subject to rebirth in such a short time. Thus, rebirth happens not only after death but also can happen here and now, as soon as man eats, touches, acts, and thinks, or as soon as his body, speech, and mind are operating. From now the search for the nutriments grasped from outside for rebirth turns to the search for the nutriments for enlightenment factors by way of serenity and insight, or of the discipline of the bodily volitional information, the verbal volitional information, and the mental volitional information. Such a way of training will eliminate foods poisoned at every level: less wisdom, emotional imbalance, sensational slaves, and material craving.

In short, Lord Buddha showed the operation of the four kinds of nutriments is that of kamma and rebirth, of the twelve causes, of suffering. This is the operation of conditions in which the four nutriments not only conditions for the maintenance of beings that have already come to be but also for conditions for the assistance of those about to come to be.

3.5. Āhāra and Five Aggregates

In many suttas, Lord Buddha taught man is pañcakkhandha\(^\text{188}\) (the five aggregates: form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness,) if looked deeply all those aggregates are conditioned, impermanent, non-self. Man or five aggregates are also nourished and maintained by the four kinds of food.

Lord Buddha taught:

\(^{188}\) S. III, 66-68.
“See you, Sāriputta, that ‘this has come to be’? ‘This has come to be,’
lord - thus by right insight he sees, as it really is; and seeing it in this
way he practises revulsion from it, and that it may fade away and cease.
He sees by right insight continual become from a certain sustenance
(food,) and seeing that in this way as it really is, he practises revulsion
from continual becoming from sustenance, and that it may fade away
and cease. From the ceasing of a certain sustenance that which has
come to be is liable to cease - so he sees by right insight as it really is.
And seeing that in this way, he practises revulsion from that which is
liable to cease, and that it may fade away and cease.”

According to the Commentators, the phrase “this has come to be
(bhūtam idan 'ti)” refers to the five aggregates. The Buddha advised his
disciples to practise revulsion from continual becoming from sustenance,
and that it may fade away and cease.

Edible food (kabaliṅkārāhāra) is the sole condition to nourish and
sustain physical body of human, without edible food, body aggregate
(form) cannot exist. However, it is not easy to understand edible food as
one often thinks. Because he can understands it whenever he understand
the operation of edible food or the four foods.

Lord Buddha taught:

“And what, brethren, is body? It is the four great elements, and
that form which is derived from the four great elements. That,

189 S. II, 47.
190 The Four Nutriments of Life, p. 53.
191 Herein, as regarded “earth element”, etc., the meaning of element is the meaning of individual
essence, the meaning of individual essence is the meaning of voidness, the meaning of voidness is
the meaning of not-a-living-being. So it is just earth in the sense of individual sense, voidness, and
not-a-living-being that is the element; hence it is earth element. So too in the case of water element,
and the rest. The earth element is the element that is the foothold for the consascent material states.
Likewise the water element is the element of their cohesion; the fire element is the element of their
ripening; and the air element is the element of their conveyance and distension’ (Paramatthamaññūśā. 345). To avoid confusion, it might be mentioned here that in ‘physical’ earth, fire, water,
and air, it would be held that all four elements are present in each equally, but that in ‘physical’
brethren, is called body. From the arising of food comes the arising of body: from the ceasing of food is the ceasing of body: and the way going to the ceasing of body is this Ariyan Eightfold Path, to wit: right view ... right concentration."

The above quotation shows that body aggregate is a physical body of a person which is a compound of the four great elements (water, fire, earth, and air). It is brought up by food. If food ceases, body ceases to exist. But food is not an entity, it is conditioned by the presence of the Earth, the Sun, etc., this means by the whole physical world which says the existence of body is the existence of this whole world. According to Dependent Origination, this whole world is the meaning of becoming (bhava or tibhava) element which is conditioned by the operation of ignorance, of activities, of consciousness, etc. So, the arising and the ceasing of body aggregate is the arising and the ceasing of each aggregate or each element of Dependent Origination.  

Similarly, the operation of nutriment contact, of nutriment volitional thought, and of nutriment consciousness, is that of feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. Through the Ariyan Eightfold Path, one comes to disgust at the four foods and five aggregates, due to this disgust, he detaches from them. This is the operation of the four foods and five aggregates ruled by right insight, which leads to the end of suffering.

In order to fully understand the four foods and the five aggregates, let us listen to the word of Buddhaghosa as follows:

-One who sees internal materiality as foul (ugly) fully-understands nutriment consisting of physical nutriment. He abandons the

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192 S. III, 61 (The Book of The Kindred Sayings, part III, PTS, p. 55.)
193 The concept of Personality revealed through the Pañcanikāya, p. 176.
194 The Path of Purification, ibid., pp. 545-546.
perversion [of perceiving] beauty in the foul (ugly,) he crosses the flood of sense-desire, he is loose from the bond of sense-desire, he becomes canker-free as regards the canker of sense-desire, he breaks the bodily tie of covetousness. He does not cling with sense-desire clinging.
-One who sees feeling as pain fully-understands nutriment consisting of contact. He crosses the flood of becoming. He is loose from the bond of becoming. He becomes canker-free as regards the canker of becoming. He breaks the bodily tie off ill will. He does not cling with rites-and-ritual clinging.
-One who sees perception and formations as not-self fully-understands nutriment consisting of mental volition. He abandons the perversion of perceiving self in the non-self. He crosses the flood of views. He is loose from the bond of views. He breaks the bodily tie of interpretations (insistence) that ‘this is truth’. He does not cling with self-theory clinging.
-One who sees consciousness as impermanent fully-understands nutriment consisting of consciousness. He abandons the perversion of perceiving permanence in the impermanent. He crosses the flood of ignorance. He is loose from the bond of ignorance. He becomes canker-free as regards the canker of ignorance. He breaks the bodily tie of holding to rites and rituals. He does not (cling with false) view clinging.

Human beings, from the old past time until now, are constantly suffering though they always wish happiness to themselves and free from anguish. It is because they have grasped the wrong views (*micchaditthi*) for themselves and life. They have thought that man is a permanent entity or self and world is unchanging, further they believe there is a super divine to help them stop their pain and evils, they do not believe in themselves any more. It can be said that all the erroneous views, which
are regarded as food or nutrition, have nourished and sustained human beings. Owing to the presence of wrong views, there are that of *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha*, conflict, и harm, etc. и these toxins that are the very various types of food have continued causing the problems to this world. Āhāra is regarded as a thorny problem, these specific teachings are solutions for reviewing it. Examining āhāra with specific teachings is to understand the value of Life and Universe, of suffering and happiness that can be found through āhāras. This is examined in details in the next chapter.