BIRTH

In every society and every culture people pass some universal human stages of life which includes birth, childhood, puberty, marriage, adulthood, old stage and death. Some beliefs, rituals and ceremonies remain associated with these stages of life.

In the Rakkhain society all eligible couples expect child for their own satisfaction. The Rakkhain people also protect their generation. Rakkhain couple take babies after understanding with each other. In a particular period the Rakkhain women conceive and then male people take special care of the pregnant women.
During the child birth pregnant women are kept in an isolated room. Normally, the older women assist when pregnant women feel labour pain. She is advised to remember the name of Buddha. The attendant maintain all precautions for pregnant women. Sometimes the Rakkhain women follow the herbal doctor's advice for easy delivery. If a baby is born in a moon night they think he or she would be a great man in course of time. After delivery women follow food rituals. They take only simple food like rice, vegetables and spice mixed dry food while the pork meat, hilsha fish are restricted. Rakkhains think that it may be harmful for the baby. After passing of fifteen days, pork, chicken, duck are restricted for the mother. There is no restriction for the mother to provide breast to the newly born babies. Babies are always kept on the cradle. In the Rakkhain community women can worship after pregnancy. They do not bother for pollution. But after giving birth to baby mother is advised not to go far away from her house. Always she should keep contact with her newly born baby. If she keeps contact with her baby then devil can not harm the newly born baby. In the Rakkhain community, if any eligible couple fails to give birth to a child, in their belief, it means the curse on the family. Monk is informed after the birth of a baby. Vikku prayed for Buddha for happy and
prosperous life of the baby. Also he has to decide a good name for the newly born baby.

CEREMONY FOR BABY'S FIRST FOOD

When a baby reaches eating age a ceremonial performance is observed in the family which is called rice eating ceremony (thamoy). Parents invite the monk in their house. The Rakkhain people organize a simple rice eating ceremony. Firstly monk gives food by his hand into the baby's mouth. On this occasion monk prays to Buddha wishing joy and happiness for the baby.

EARBORING

Earboring of the Rakkhain baby is completed at an early age, but in some cases it is completed at the age of six to eight. Women earbore the baby by the indigenous method. First they take a simple needle and small pieces of thread and burn the needle and bore the ears and for the antiseptic purpose they use ashes. Normally, mother or aunt performs this earboring duty for
wearing ornaments. Rich people serve good food to the para (village) people during this ceremony.

**POLLUTION**

In the Rakkhain community there are some specific rituals in the period of puberty and pollution. After the age of fourteen any moment female youth face symptoms of puberty. When a girl becomes mature, firstly she informs her mother about her physical changes. Mother will convey this message to her father. In this case son and daughter will sleep in their specific rooms of the tong house. In Rakkhain community mature girl gets first preference for her accommodation. If required father will stay in the guest corner and sacrifice the master bed for his daughter. There is no binding during menstruation on prayer, or food cooking by the incumbent and normally she can move outside the house. There is no pollution binding on the farming activities during menstruation period.
FESTIVALS

The Rakkhain people are jovial. They spend a big amount of money for festival or social occasions. They follow their traditional religion and cultural ritual and practices during the festival period. Rakhains perform different ritual activities during crop plantation and harvesting time. During plantation time they follow symbolic Dragon's movement. The Rakhain people believe in dragon's supernatural power. They think that if they can please the Dragon, then it brings the good luck for them. Before starting any work they worship this Dragon.

a. Waso labray (ashari purnima)

The Rakkhain people observe Ashari purnima spontaneously in their community. They believe that Buddha came in his mother's womb in this full moonlit night. They give more importance to this festival. The virtuous people assemble in a temple for demonstrating their from belief in Buddha's ideologies and practices. The women prepare different kinds of cakes for the Vikku (monk). They abstain from eating meat or fish, or
killing any birds. They recite Tripitak. Men and women listen Tripitak with devotion. I have observed that during the time of worship, they smoke bidi in the temple. There is no restriction on smoking in the temple. The monk distributes different varieties of foods among the people. The community people show their deep respect for the monk. In this holy festival community people prepare good food. In the festivals the Rakkhain people serve tortoise, frog, fish, pork and wine to their guests.

b. Kasum phoeya (Buddha purnima)

This is a holy day for the Rakkhain people. They believe that on this day Buddha died. For that reason this festival is observed solemnly in the Rakkhain community. Rakkhain men and women worship ashshasta trees and Buddha's sculpture as they believe that Buddha sat for meditation under this Ashshasta tree. In this festival Rakkhain people distribute sweets, cakes among the community people. The Rakkhain people observe this festival with devotion during full moonlit night.
c. *Kattiving poya* (Cloth giving Ceremony)

In this ceremony the Rakkhain people present traditional cloth to the monk. The monk is a person who sacrifices his life for community service. Traditionally the community people bear all kinds of expenses for the monk. The people present yellow cloth to the monk. They believe that this sacrifice is a virtuous work for any Rakkhain people. So they arrange cloth giving ceremony in the temple during a particular time in the year.

d. *Waso poya* (Meditation Festival)

Rakkhain people believe that Buddha remained in a deep meditation for six to seven years. Many people stay full time in the temple for three month as a religious practice. from a particular full moonlit night to another full moonlit night for the attainment of success in meditation which was advised by Buddha. They sleep in the temple for getting Buddha's wishes. They do not go outside the temple. Even people fasten a big balloon in this full moonlit night outside the temple.
e. *Sraman* (Vikku ceremony)

An individual must be *vikku* one time in his life time. Any Rakhain people can be temporary *vikku* within the twenty years of age. Even a minor child may be a *vikku*. When parents intend to send their baby to the monk during a particular period for *vikku* practices he must have to stay in the temple with *vikku*, and he has to perform all kinds of religious ritual. During the period of *Sraman* they clean their hair and put on yellow clothes. When a man becomes *vikku* he must leave his house. The *vikku* has to stay in the temple premise but he can wander outside the premise for necessary works. Normally the *Vikku* is a vegetarian, but in some cases he may take pork meat, tortoise etc. Before twelve noon the *Vikku* has to complete his lunch.

The *Vikku* can not receive any salary from the community people, but he can take festivals money from the community people and may take food from them when it is brought for him. After taking this money and food he gives it to the destitute. He may work as a teacher in the *Kiang* (learning institution for religious matter) without any remuneration.
OLD AGE

In the Rakkhain community most of the old people are farmers. In the old age they can not move to their firming land. Morally they restrict their movement in the house and nearest para. Obviously old people are respected and they are being helped to get out of their house by the community people. Though they are old but they play the important role in the family for making decision. Old couple always avoid hard manual work. Old females take care of the babies in the family. They pass time by gossiping, praying and performing household works. Younger people think that they are their well-wisher. If they stay at home Buddha bless the family members.

Michagrroa (Funeral Rites)

After the death of any person, nearest relatives and well-wishers are informed by the kin groups. Traditionally, the Rakkhain people follow two systems on death rituals: a) a funeral rite, b) graveyard. Selection of the funeral place depends on departed person's nearest kin groups. The
Rakkhain community people maintain death ritual. The dead body is covered by white cloth, while perfume is spread in the preserving room of the dead body. The old men, women or any person who died on contagious or infectious disease, the dead body must be burnt. Local name of the funeral is *michagrroa*. The graveyard system is called (*mrifra*). When a *Vikku* dies the community people arrange *mmimgri poea* (funeral rites). This *mmimgri poea* is organized by all Rakkhain people of the area. Basic responsibility lies in *para* people where he served as a Monk in the temple.

**COMMON PEOPLE'S FUNERAL**

When common people die the nearest relatives have to arrange Mrifra (graveyard) or Michagrhoa (funeral rites) in the own family Mrifra place. It is believed by the Rakkhain people that crying or lamentation may be harmful for departed soul. Everybody should accept God's will. The dead body will be burnt or buried as soon as possible. The male dead body or female dead body must be placed to the Monk. And Monk prays for the peace of departed soul. Monk reads out incantation for deity for the
eternal peace of the departed soul. During the Monk's prayer the dead body is touched by his sons, daughters, and nearest relatives. If it is decided to burn the dead body then Rakkhain people pile dry wood near the pyre and decorate it accordingly. For the male dead body it is needed three tier fire-woods at the pyre. Also it is needed four tier fire-woods for burning female dead body. After completing funeral rituals nearest relatives set fire to the dead body firstly, then other people assist to burn the dead body properly. After finishing the Michagroroa ashes are covered by the clay. After funeral rites a bamboo is placed in the middle place of the burning spot, also a red flag is being flown top of the bamboo. Here it must be mentioned that before funeral rites rich people make special type of chariot for preserving dead body long time in indigenous way. They use local made wooden box and inside that box they place thin paper and hand made tobacco dust to preserve the dead body. By this preservation method they can preserve any dead body for a particular period. They place this wooden box near the house premise and tie it with trees or wooden pole. The rich people invite their nearest relatives and neighbouring well-wishers for attending funeral ceremony. They organize it in the full moon night or any moonlit week. The male or female person
can participate in this funeral ceremony. Even they arrange games, folk songs, good food for the invited funeral participants. Before sending the dead body to the pyre, all the male and female are divided into two groups. After dividing two groups they start to pull the well decorated chariot. If the women win in the pulling competition then they think that the dead body will go to the heaven. If men win in the pulling competition then the dead body, they believe, will go to hell. It is decided previously that women group will win in the chariot pulling competition, because everybody expects the heaven. It is restricted to cry before the dead body and Rakkhains ultimately believe that every one will get the Nibbana (permanent place of the universe).

THE MONK'S FUNERAL CEREMONY

The Monk is a respectable person in Rakkhain community. Every individual shows his regard to the Monk after his (Monk) death. A special type of funeral ceremony is observed for the Monks by all people of the community. The Rakkhain people arrange fuungri poea (Monk's funeral rites) in the temple premises. At that the time of death all the para
(village) people assemble in the cremation ground of the Monk. After the
dead of the Monk his dead body is preserved by indigenous method in the
temple area. *Para* people form a committee for Monk's funeral rites. The
committee members invite all the Monks of the Rakkhain community.
They collect subscription from each Rakkhain households. The funeral
committee members invite neighbouring para people, local Rakkhains,
local elites for attending this special funeral ceremony. They maintain all
sorts of funeral rituals like other common people. The Monk's dead body
is preserved in the well decorated chariot after *talchotrepoa* (pulling
competition). The dead body is placed at a particular point for cremation.
From a particular distance funeral ceremony participants through electric
and gunpowder device burn the dead body thus the dead body is fully
destroyed. If this is done the Rakkhain believe that the dead body has gone
to heaven.

The funeral ceremony for the Monk is expensive and for that reason most
of the people is different areas are follow *michagrhoa* (funeral rites)
system for their own temple's Monk where burning system is less costly,
so most of the Rakkhain people follow this system. In this system the
Monk is burnt by the fire-wood. All the para and neighbouring people attain the funeral rites. After burning the dead body ashes are preserved by the people. This is the belief of the common people that if they preserve it in the house and worship regularly then God will bestow favour of them.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF BUDDHISM

The Rakkhains of Belkata are Buddhist by religion. They follow the principles of Buddhism. Buddha discovered the four noble truths by his intuitive knowledge. In Buddhism the four noble truths lead to get the "Nibbana". Rakkhain Buddhist believe that the Nibbana is the devotion for completing a life cycle. In Nibbana there is no sorrow, happiness, heaven, hell and soul doctrine. All kinds of fulfilment end in Nibbana. Rakkhain Buddhists follow the following ways to get Nibbana:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pali</th>
<th>Rakkhain</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panchoshila</td>
<td>Gnaba - Thila</td>
<td>The oaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be abstaining from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1) Killing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2) Stealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3) Sexual misconduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4) Lying (not truth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5) Intoxication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashtamshila</td>
<td>Shepa Thila</td>
<td>6) Afternoon meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7) Amusement and entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8) Sleeping raised place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dashamshila</td>
<td>Sebathila</td>
<td>9) Using flowers, perfumes and other luxuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10) Avoid using gold, silver and other ornaments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

162
A Rakkhain man takes oath for shila (religious practice) during the full moonlit night in any lunar month or in every day life. In Buddhism any man or woman follows the shila to get nibbana. The men who are under oath will possess the holiness. Men and women who are holy can step up the activities leading to Nibbana. The shila is very important to build up moral character. The man who is free from temptation, exculpation, illusion is really holy. The shila is a main basic foundation for obtaining freeness.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTH

Buddha discovered the fourth noble truth by his intuitive knowledge. The great 'Dhamachastra' is the principle foundation of Buddha's teachings.

THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH

The first noble truth deals with Dukha the better word is rendered by 'Suffering' or 'sorrow' of life. du = difficult, kha = to endure. Dukha starts when one conceives in his/her mother's womb. When a kid or a baby takes
birth sorrow and suffering go along with his/her life cycle. There are four inevitable sufferings, these are:

- **Jati** All are subject to birth.
- **Jara** All are subject to decay
- **Vyadhi** All are subject to disease
- **Marana** Ultimately death through suffering

Buddha felt the suffering. Buddha realized the actual *Dukha* in the life cycle of all creatures.

**THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH**

The second noble truth is *smudhya*, the exact reason of *dukha*. Main obstacle of achieving Nibbana is *Smudya*. Thus ignorance, activities, craving attainment grasping and *kamma* are the causes of *Dukha*. Buddha always gave warning in the above. Elimination of *Smudhya* is the elimination of *Dukha*. The cause of *Dukha* neglects the *Smudhya*. 
THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH

The third noble truth is *Nirodha*, the noble goal of Buddhism. The Nirodha obviously remains up to one's life end. A human body is formed by four elements such as earth, water, air, temperature. When a man reach to the Nirodha he becomes free from all troubles. At the end of man's life there will be no existence of elements. At the end of life the holy man free from all kind of painful thoughts, troubles. Man will be neither unhappy nor sorrowful in the eternal peace. The absolute means of Nirodha is free from life wheel, heaven and hell.

THE FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH

The *Megha* (way of nirodha): This truth has to be realized by developing the noble eight fold path. The unique path is the only straight route to Nibbana.
It consists of the following eight holy duties:

1) Right understanding
2) Right thought
3) Right speech
4) Right action
5) Right livelihood
6) Right effort
7) Right mindfulness
8) Right concentration

1) *Samma ditthi* (Right understanding)

It is explained as the knowledge about the four noble truths. Ditthi is the power of observation with deep knowledge. A person is a combination of mind and matter. If a wise man can distinguish himself from the mind and matter he really understands the ditthi. He assumes that the mind is the reflection of thoughts and matter is the subject.
2. *Samma samkappa* (*Right thought*)

The man who has right knowledge he has clear thinking. The sense of right resolution or right aspirations is right thought.

3. *Samma vaca* (*Right speech*)

Right thought leads to right speech. The right speech should be realized as true speaking and refraining from falsehood, slandering, harsh word and frivolous talk.

4. *Samma* (*Right action*)

It deals with abstinence from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. The wrong deeds happen due to craving, anger and ignorance. Right action man can lead a holy life. He can subdue himself from evil activities.
5. *Samma ajiva* (Right livelihood)

Buddha advised his disciple to live with holiness. A good man can survive his life without wrong livelihood. Buddha also gave advice to refrain from jealousy, slaughtering animals and lying.

6. *Samman vayma* (Right effort)

Rakkhain Buddhists concentrate themselves in religious activities without thinking of other evil activities.

7. *Samma sati* (Right mindfulness)

The constant mindfulness is required for body, feelings and thoughts. Buddha said Samma sati is only the media of achieving Nibbana.

8. *Samma samadhi* (Right Concentration)

Right effort and right mindfulness lead to right concentration.
In brief the noble truth is only the way to get *nibbana*.

**WHEEL OF LIFE AND REBIRTH**

*Patica samuppada* (Life wheel) is the law of life wheel. The explanation of *patica samuppada* is recycling of a life wheel. The destruction is related with the creation and the creation is firmly related with the destruction. The *tanha* (craving) is main creator of life wheel movement. A man can never get *nibbana* until he stops the cycle of life wheel. The life wheel is linked with different sense of steps. The related steps of life wheel are as follows:

1. *Avijja* (ignorance)
2. *Samkhara* (activities)
3. *Vinnana* (rebirth - consciousness)
4. *Nama Rupa* (mind and matter)
5. *Salayadana* (six sense)
6. *Phassa* (contact)
7. *Vedanta* (feelings)
8. *Tanha* (cravings)
9. *Upadana* (attachment)
10. *Bhava* (action)
11. *Jati* (birth)
12. *Jara marana* (decay and death)

1. **Avijja** (Ignorance)

   The basic obstacle of realization about knowledge. *Avijja* prevents to distinguish mind and matter, so a man can not obtain the perfectness of creating and concluding.

2. **Samkhara** (Activities)

   Movement for obtaining sensuality from life.

3. **Vinnana** (Rebirth - Consciousness)

   This is the result of activities and formation of lives.
4. *Nama rupa* (Mind and Matter)

It is the character of creating mind and matter. Though the mind and matter is co-related but the character is different.

5. *Salayadana* (Six sense)

Extension of mind and matter. In this stage observing, listening, smelling, testing, feeling and understanding power is extended.

6. *Phassa* (Contact)

It causes due to *salayadna*. The expression of sense is expanded in this stage.

7. *Vedanta* (Feeling)

Every feeling comes from contact. It may be painful or delightful.
8. **Tanha** (Cravings)

   It comes from feeling.

9. **Upadana** (Decay and death)

   Extreme step of *upadana* is attachment. Physically achieves the matter due to craving.

10. **Bhava** (Action)

   Again starting of life.

11. **Jati** (Birth)

   Again compiled the figure with all matter.

12. **Jara marana** (Decay and death)

   Physical structure changes and becomes death.
WHEEL OF LIFE AND REBIRTH

Patica samuppada (life wheel) is the law of life wheel. The explanation of patica samuppada is recycling of a life wheel. The destruction is related with the creation and the creation is firmly related with the destruction. The tanha (craving) is main creator of life wheel movement. A man can never get Nibbana until he stops the cycle of life wheel. The life wheel is linked with different sense of steps. The related steps of life wheel are as follows:

1. Avijja (ignorance)
2. Samkhara (activities)
3. Vinnana (rebirth - consciousness)
4. Nama Rupa (mind and matter)
5. Salayadana (six sense)
6. Phassa (contact)
7. Vedanta (feelings)
8. Tanha (cravings)
9. Upadana (attachment)
10. Bhava (action)
11. Jati (birth)
12. Jara Marana (decay and death)
1. *Avijja* (Ignorance):

The basic obstacle of realization about knowledge. *Avijja* prevents to distinguish mind and matter, so a man can not obtain the perfectness of creating and concluding.

2. *Samkhara* (Activities)

Movement for obtaining sensuality from life.

3. *Vinnana* (Rebirth - Consciousness)

This is the result of activities and formation of lives.

4. *Nama Rupa* (Mind and Matter)

It is the character of creating mind and matter. Though the mind and matter is co-related but the character is different.
5. *Salayadana* (Six sense)

Extension of mind and matter. In this stage observing, listening, smelling, testing, feeling and understanding power is extended.

6. *Phassa* (Contact)

It causes due to salayadna. The expression of sense is expanded in this stage.

7. *Vedanta* (Feeling)

Every feeling comes from contact. It may be painful or delightful.

8. *Tanha* (Cravings)

It comes from feeling.
9. **Upadana** (Decay and death):

   Extreme step of upadana is attachment. Physically achieves the matter due to craving.

10. **Bhava** (Action)

    Again starting of life.

11. **Jati** (Birth)

    Again compiled the figure with all matter.

12. **Jara Marana** (Decay and death)

    Physical structure changes and becomes death.
WORSHIP IN THE HOUSE

Rakkhain people worship inside the house. Normally they worship three times daily. In every house there is Lord Buddha's sculpture. They set up a small type of sculpture of Buddha at the middle point of the house fence. They decorate this praying place and offer a plate of rice, banana, curry, milk to the sculpture of Buddha.

In the morning they start their first prayer to bronze made Buddha's sculpture. They ring peace bell and recite their own religious hymn. They decorate the altar of the Buddha's sculpture with various type of flowers.

In the mid day before taking their lunch they serve a small portion of curries and other Consumable things to Buddha's sculpture. This is their belief that if they serve this food to Buddha then Buddha will wish peace and happiness for that family.

In the evening they pray to Buddha's sculpture and also they ring the peace bell of happiness. At that time they use candle and that is called *fuandi*
prayer. In this fuandi prayer the other family members also attend with elder person. In the housing prayer they expect blessing from Buddha.

**TABOO**

Taboo is related to social life and more or less it practised by everybody. The meaning of taboo is prohibition from doing particular work which is contrary to customs. It has become a regular sense of believing or thinking without any logic. Many people believe that there is some supernatural powers behind any action, though there is no effective proof about it. According to belief, there are happening many occurrence which cannot be explained. Nobody can deny the action of unseen power whether the result is good or bad. The people of every society believe in this type of happening. The Rakkhain people also believe in such supernatural power which is mentioned in the following:

- In the journey, if a Rakkhain individual sees snake on the road and snake's head is in the eastern side of the road, his belief, his journey will be dangerous but if he sees the snake's head is in the southern or northern side of the road, he assumes, his journey will be fruitful.
• During any movement for good work if any Rakkhain individual sees dead body he assumes that his movement will bring some troubles.

• When a Rakkhain individual goes to perform any work and if he sees empty jar on the way, he assumes that his result will be negative.

• If any individual sees jar full of water on the way then he thinks that it's result will be positive.

• Pregnant women cannot move freely in the afternoon out side the home premise, because devil may destroy the unborn baby in her womb.

• After delivery Rakkhain women face restriction of taking fish, meat, vegetable. At that time they can eat rice with pepper, salt and dried spices. Then they can eat only pork meat. Boal fish, hilisha fish are forbidden for that women. They think if any woman eats these fish, she will loose her health.
• Babies are taken care of upto 12 years by the mother. Because they believe that within this period devil's eye may affect them. Any kinds of fever, diarrhoea, bad sleep are caused by devils. Women believe that if they worship taking a plate of rice, fish and flower then devils drive away and it does not do any harmful action to the baby.

• To get cure and relief from any disease Rakkhain people sacrifice goat, duck, chicken, fish, cake for the devils in the nearest jungle.

• They believe in the consequence of dreams. If they see sun or moon in a dream, their belief, it brings good luck to the couple. If they see snake, buffalo, lion in the dream, then the consequences may be bad.

• Before ploughing they sacrifice *bini* rice, flower, coconut to *pagrema* (head of the devils).

• For happiness they observe *Thambudegatha* (Special prayer) which is led by the monk. The monk also prays for lord Buddha for peacefulness life of the family members.