



WE LIVE WITH DHAMMA KNOWLEDGE

# KAMMA IN THIS LIFE

*How it arises  
and gives its result*

Venerable Sayadaw  
Dr. Nandamālābhivamśa

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And gives its result***

**Sayadaw  
Dr. Nandamālābhivamṣa**

First printing: 2017

Number of copies: 500

Published by the Dhamma Sahāya Sāsana Centre - Institute for Dhamma Education (IDE) at Aung Chan Thar, Pyin-Oo-Lwin, Myanmar.

Printed by Full Colour, Mandalay, Myanmar.

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### **Note to readers**

*Kamma in this Life: How it arises and gives its result* is a compilation of Sayadaw Dr. Nandamālābhivamsa's lectures and Dhamma talks given throughout the years at several venues in Myanmar and abroad. Some talks had to be transcribed or translated first. This book is a follow-up to *Kamma at Death and Rebirth* which was published in 2016 by the German Abhidhamma Association. In acknowledgement of her help with the computer work and donation of writing materials, I thank Ms. Orchid.

*Vimalañāṇī, compiler*

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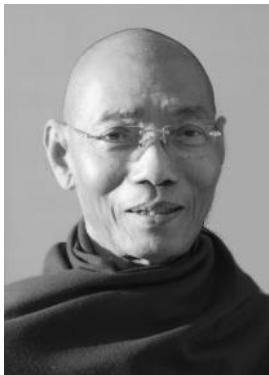
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## **Biography of Dr. Nandamālābhivamsa**



Sayadaw Dr. Nandamālābhivamsa, born in Sint-ku in the Union of Myanmar in 1940, began his education in a monastic school in Mandalay Division. He was ordained a novice at 10 by Sankin Sayadaw of the prestigious Vipassanā Monastery in Sagaing Hills.

At the age of 16, he had already passed the Dhammācariya (Dharma teacher) examination; and at 21 he had cleared the difficult Abhivamsa examination. He also furthered his education in Sri Lanka and India, obtaining higher degrees. His doctorate thesis was about Jainism in Buddhist literature.

Sayadaw Dr. Nandamāla is one of the founders of the well-reputed study-monastery Mahāsubodhayon in Sagaing Hills. In 2003 he founded Dhammadīpīlaya (Centre for Buddhist Studies) adjoining Mahāsubodhayon Monastery for foreigners keen to further their studies and practice. He also established the Institute of Dharma Education (IDE), a Buddhist learning centre in Pyin Oo Lwin. Since its opening in 2013, he has been holding courses for both local and overseas students. Another study centre Dhammadīpaya Centre was opened in 2015. Since 2016 courses have been given for monks and foreigners.

At the same time Sayadaw Dr. Nandamāla holds numerous responsibilities: among them, he is the rector of Sītagu International Buddhist Academy (Sagaing Hills). Also, after the opening of the International Theravāda Buddhist Missionary University (ITBMU) in 1995, he served as a visiting professor. Since 2005 he has been its Rector.

Sayadaw Dr. Nandamāla serves to promote and propagate the Buddha's teachings both in Myanmar and abroad. In 2003 he began teaching Abhidhamma in Europe, Malaysia and Singapore. Having given many Dhamma talks throughout the years in Myanmar, he is well-known to the public for his individual, lively and practical approach, using examples from daily life. He is also the author of numerous books in Myanmar, Pāli and English (see below).

### ***List of some publications in English***

- The 90 Years of Life of Daw Malayee (1975)
- The Exposition of True Meaning (Paramattha dīpanī)  
with Critical Introduction to the Text (Thesis for the  
degree of Master of Philosophy) (1996)
- Buddhism and Vegetarianism (1990)
- Fundamental Abhidhamma (1997)
- A Study of Jainism according to Buddhist Literature  
(Thesis for the degree of Ph.D.) (2004)
- How to Practise the Four Noble Truths

- Akusala: the Nature of Poison (2010)
- The Path to Happiness (2010)
- The Buddha's Advice to Rāhula and Rāhula's Life (2012)
- Eight and One (2013)
- The Exits of Mind (2013)
- Samatha and Vipassanā (2013)
- An Analysis of Feelling (Vedanā) (2013)
- A collection of Dhamma Talks 1 (2014)
- The Great Teacher: Collected Dhamma discourses (2015)
- Kamma at Death and Rebirth (2016)

Because of his excellent knowledge of the Buddha's teachings and his experience in teaching, in 1995 and 2000 he was conferred the titles of Aggamahāghanthavācakapandita (Senior Lecturer) and Aggamahāpandita respectively by the government of Myanmar.

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# **Introduction**

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Day in and day out we perform all kinds of actions non-stop through the three doors. So like a tree bearing fruit endlessly, we are accumulating a large amount of kamma. In addition there is an immense reserve of it due to our innumerable past lives. According to the Buddha, this is connected to the mental state of motivation (*cetanā*) – how through its stimulation a lot of kammas are collected. They cannot disappear or get lost. These acts we commit at one time or another will return to us as a consequence in the process of cause and effect. This is the law of action and reaction: if *this* exists, then *that* will come to exist<sup>1</sup>.

## **Reaping what is sown**

Hence according to the act carried out, the result corresponding to it will arise. Also a type of kamma will only give a result related to its type. Put in another way, having performed a kammic act, you will receive its result in a similar form or quality

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<sup>1</sup> *Imasmim sati idam hoti.*

in this life or another. An example regards the Buddha who was in Rājagaha at one time.

### *Flowers for a Pacceka Buddha*

During that period He was invited to Vesālī by its king to help solve the state's problems. For the journey to the border King Bimbisāra arranged to have the entire route decorated. On its part Vesālī also decorated its roads. (This took place even though the two states had political differences and kept well-guarded borders. You could not cross from one state to the other just like from Germany to the Netherlands.)

Great ceremonies were held during the trip. The Buddha explained that in a previous life, He had paid respect and offered flowers to a Pacceka Buddha, spreading the flowers all over the pavement of the tomb. Now flowers were spread all along the way for Him. This was due to His previous kusala kamma which was now bearing its result.

This is kamma niyama, or nature's characteristic where good begets good, and bad begets bad. There is never a case where good kamma gives a bad effect and vice-versa. The law of nature is never wrong.

## **Guaranteed repayment**

Though it is simply called "kamma", no two kammas are alike or have the same level of energy. So the capacity and quality of

one are unlike the other, shown by their differences in status, in function, in the time needed to mature, as well as the lifespan. The results they give also differ.

Thus out of these kammas in store, one is ever ready to produce its result. Having accumulated full power, it will give its result. There is no such thing as not having to experience its effect. Nor can we get rid of it so that it cannot produce its effect. As long as there is life in the body, it will continue to give its effect. Indeed the Buddha taught that any act of kamma based on greed, hatred and delusion (lobha, dosa and moha) can produce its result even in this present life, or the next, or for as long as saṃsāra remains<sup>2</sup>. Take the case of a butcher who for over 50 years had been slaughtering cows and selling the beef for a living.

#### *Kammic tit for tat*

One day after carrying out his usual routine, he returned to the house, telling his wife that all the meat had been sold, except for a cut that he was fond of. This portion he had saved for himself. Asking her to prepare the meal with the beef, he went off to have his bath at the river-side.

In his absence a close friend of his arrived at the house, asking, "Hey, isn't there any more beef left?"

"All have been sold. Only this piece left is for him to eat," replied the wife.

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<sup>2</sup> Nidāna Sutta, Aṅguttara Nikāya.

"Give it to me please. I really need to have it as a guest has turned up at my house," saying so, he seized the meat and went off with it.

By the time the butcher returned to the house, the wife was setting the table for the meal.

"Where's the beef?" he demanded.

"Oh, your friend dropped in. He said a guest had turned up in his house. Although I told him the meat was meant for you and couldn't be given to him, he took it away."

What did the butcher say next?

"I can't eat if there's no meat on the table," saying this, he grabbed a knife and went outside to the back of the house where the cows were kept. Taking hold of one, he forced open its mouth and sliced off its tongue. Returning to the house, he told his wife to cook it.

Just consider how cruel it was, with the cow bellowing in pain. It would surely die.

When the dish was ready, the butcher took a piece and placed it in his mouth. Immediately his own tongue was ripped off. For this man who had been killing cows for fifty years, this turned out to be the day dukkha came for him. Bellowing in pain just like the cow, he too faced imminent death. This was kamma's immediate repayment in kind for an extremely brutal deed.

He now had to face the consequence of the work he had been carrying out for years.

## **Kamma as your own property**

The Buddha also taught that we owe our existence here in this life to kamma, the producing cause. It decided whether we would be good-looking or ugly, have sharp eye-sight or some congenital defect like blindness. Through kamma we are unique: differing from one another in our lifespan, looks, intelligence, state of health, status and so on, even within the family. According to Commentary the diverse differences in society simply bear out what the Buddha taught about kamma, that is, kammasakkatā sammā ditṭhi. This is to say that the kamma we perform is our property. Whether that kamma is kusala or akusala, we have to receive its result. It is the only property that we can inherit. So it concerns the doer in whom it occurs and nobody else.

## **Need to study the subject**

Concerning what the Buddha taught about kamma, there is an immense amount, not only in the suttas but in Abhidhamma as well. What I am teaching at present is only a gist – just to give you some understanding of the subject. It is possible to speak in great detail and at great length about it.

Since kamma takes place in our mind and body, we should study and find out how it arises in the nāma-rūpa, where it collects, how it ripens and gives its result during our lifetime and in samsāra.

By studying and understanding His teachings on the subject, we can try to make an end of kamma. This is by, first of all, refraining from performing akusala kamma, and by doing only wholesome deeds. For those unwholesome kammas already committed, instead of regretting, we should find ways to avoid committing more. We do this by creating a lot of good kammas. Also by working to put an end to our mental defilements, in the end we can free ourselves from kamma. We obtain the cessation of kamma itself, that is, kammakkaya.

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## Buddhist kamma: unlike other “kammas”

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“What is actually the meaning of this kamma that Buddha taught in kammassakatā sammā ditṭhi?” you might ask. After all, it is a popular term among the religions in India. “Kamma” not only belongs to Buddhism and those who believe in it need not be Buddhists. Since other religions also use the word, those who study Indian religions get confused. Some mistakenly assume that the Buddha obtained it from Hinduism. It is important to distinguish the “kamma” of Buddhism from that of other religions. Even if the Buddha used the same term, the meaning is different.

### **Atta tied to kamma**

Other religions hold up the notion of a permanent entity or atta. It is this soul which performs good and bad kammic actions. Thus it is held in kamma’s bondage. Because kamma is binding it, it cannot be free from suffering but has to wander in saṃsāra. Atta can be freed from kamma if the person can remove its bondage. Doing so, he can attain liberation.

What makes Buddhism different from other religions is that the Buddha explained kamma without atta. This point is an important distinction as He rejects the notion of a soul or permanent entity. According to Him there is no “person” who acts. You might then ask, “If so, then who will receive the effect of kamma?” It is only phenomena which act and phenomena which receive. There is no doer who acts – no experiencer – only mental and material processes at work. In mental processes phenomena perform good and evil kamma. Therefore kamma-result appears in this process. In other religions it is the permanent self which performs and therefore it experiences the result. So the word is the same but the meaning is different. Thus we need to know its meaning. In Pāli “kamma” literally means “action”.

### **Searching for the cause (of an action)**

It is said in the Commentaries that if you were to throw a stone at a jackal, it will bite the stone, not the thrower. If the stone is thrown at a lion, it will come and bite you – not the stone. Stone is just the effect; more important is the thrower. If a doctor gives treatment, he will search for the cause of the disease, and not just treat the symptoms. The Buddha is the same like them, always searching for the cause.

So in Buddhism – unlike other religions – mere action alone is not kamma. Action appears because of motivation. Actions are so many: even while asleep you can still talk, move or even hit

someone near you. The cause to produce action is more important to understand. We can look at it this way: kamma is the cause of an action. Or it can be put in another way: kamma as action is the effect of the cause, that is, the motivation.

This action can be classified into three: mental, verbal and physical action. The first type is just in the mind. A verbal or physical action begins in the mind and then appears as speech or is performed by the body respectively.

## **Mind is foremost**

This is to say that verbal and physical actions occur with the mind. In Jainism they are thought to occur without the mind's involvement. Thus according to Buddhism, mental action starts it off. However action done without intention is not kamma. This is contrary to what Jains say. For example while walking on the road, we crush some insects unknowingly. No kamma is done unless we stepped on them deliberately. So of the three kinds of action, mental action is most important, being the cause of the other two actions.

Unlike other religions' kamma, the Buddha declared that kamma was motivation or stimulation (cetanā<sup>3</sup>). This mental state is kamma because it encourages us to think, speak and act. So

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<sup>3</sup> It is usually translated as "volition" though motivation or stimulation is more accurate.

through motivation there is action produced by the mouth and the body. Through it we perform all acts good and bad.

As for the third type, mano-kamma is just in the mind and is not put into action by the mouth or body. Some mental actions can be very powerful. Indeed, according to the Buddha, it is the most powerful since the mind creates everything. In samatha one can perform supernormal feats through mind power alone.

## **Kamma in thought**

Though cetanā was stated by Buddha to be kamma, there are other mental states associated with it which are considered also to be kamma. Note that where physical and verbal actions (kāya-kamma and vacī-kamma) are concerned, cetanā is the primary propelling force. However, at the time mano-kamma occurs, it is no longer motivation alone, there are other powerful mental states taking part. Though this mental action is not put into action by the mouth and body, it is still kamma. However, according to Abhidhamma, not all mental states (cetasikās) arising in the mind can be called mano-kamma – except for 21 including cetanā. Take covetousness or abhijjhā as a start.

Covetousness is an aspect of greed or lobha. It wants to own others' property. This is not simple craving as abhijjhā covets other people's possessions. Many people are attached to their property – that is simple craving. It cannot be called abhijjhā, which according to Buddhist text, is a mental action. So we

must understand that, following this definition, not all kinds of craving become mano-kamma – only the type which desires to own what belongs to others.

Then all kinds of hatred (byāpāda) are mentioned as mental actions. Byāpāda is the wish to hit or kill another or to wish ill of others: “It’s better that person dies” or “May she not be well off.” So any hatred arising becomes mano-kamma.

Another type of mental action is wrong view (miccha ditṭhi). What makes a view wrong? It is one that is devoid of the Dhamma, not according to the Dhamma, and which is its opposite. Three types are especially significant. One type rejects kamma-result by denying that effect exists<sup>4</sup>, for instance of performing dāna. Another type is the non-acceptance of both kamma and its result, good and bad<sup>5</sup>. Then the third is the view of causelessness<sup>6</sup>.

By arising in the mind these three akusala mental states become kamma.

## **On the good side of kamma**

Regarding the kusala aspect, there are the three counterparts of covetousness, hatred and wrong view: non-covetousness

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<sup>4</sup> Natthika ditṭhi.

<sup>5</sup> Akiriya ditṭhi.

<sup>6</sup> Ahetuka ditṭhi.

(anabhijjhā), non-hatred (abyāpāda) and right view (sammā ditṭhi).

Besides these there are the seven factors of enlightenment (bojjhaṅgas) and the eight factors of the Noble Path (maggaṅga). However, in other religions they are not regarded as kamma. Why did the Buddha consider them as kamma? It is because these factors can destroy kilesas or mental defilements, leading to the cessation of kamma. As very powerful kammas themselves, they never produce rebirth. Instead they lead to Nibbāna in making an end to kamma in saṃsāra. That is nature to nature: good nature if powerful enough removing the bad one.

You should note that these cetasikās associated with unwholesomeness are not kamma. The Buddha never taught that. Only when they are associated with bojjhaṅga and maggaṅga are they kamma. For example, not all kinds of pīti are kamma, only when it is a factor of enlightenment. This is to say these mental states can lead to Nibbāna only at the higher level.

Thus to have a better understanding of kamma, it is necessary to know about the workings of the mind where kamma originates.

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## **How kamma arises in the mind**

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The mind is so quick, working like a generator. According to Commentary, billions of minds arise and cease during one second due to the briefness of the mental moment. That is why we can watch TV, listen to music, eat and laugh all at the same time: like a juggler working first with two balls, then three, four and so on. Yet it is only one citta at a time.

For example we think that we see and hear at the same time but the disappearing eye consciousness gives the opportunity for hearing consciousness to arise. It is like lighting a candle: the darkness in disappearing allows light to appear.

So how then does kamma arise in the mind? If you would like to find out, you should be familiar with how the mind works. This has to do with the mental process (citta-vitthi): a fixed sequence of cittas which arise on the impact of an object on a sense-door.

Suppose a visible object comes into view at the eye-door. What happens then?

## **“Who’s knocking at the door?”**

To help you follow the process, let’s say that you are at home. Then a visitor arrives at your front door and knocks on it. Hearing the sound you go to open the door. On opening it, you see that there is a visitor. Seeing that he is your friend, you invite him in. Asking, “What brings you here?” you offer him a seat and some refreshments. After the conversation is over, the visitor goes off, saying goodbye. You then close the door. This visit is only process.

We have six doors in our body for “visitors” to come knock on them. Take the eye-door for example. When an object is reflected on the eye-base, 17 minds in a series start to work with it (making one process).

First we open the door with the five-door attending consciousness (*pañcadvārāvajjana*) which takes notice of the present visual object and then eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāna*) sees it. We receive the object-visitor with the receiving consciousness (*sampaṭicchana*), while the investigating consciousness (*santīraṇa*) makes an enquiry.

Next we determine what the object is with the determining consciousness (*voṭṭhabba*). After that we experience it with the dynamic consciousness (*javana*) which runs usually for seven times in a row. Then with the retentive consciousness (*tadārammaṇa*) – which is like an aftertaste of the experience – we take leave of the object.

Closing the door is when the passive mind (bhavaṅga citta<sup>7</sup>) arises as the object's lifespan has come to an end<sup>8</sup>. It lasted as long as the 17 mind moments which make up the eye-door process (for a very great object).

## Mind as generator

Contact with the outside through the sense-organs such as the eye is then followed by thought, that is, the mind-door process. This is because the initial (first stage) five-door process only perceives the object.

After that thinking occurs at the mind-door recalling what was seen. This is the second stage after the eye has seen the object. We need at least three consecutive mind-door processes<sup>9</sup> to realise what the object is (see table below).

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<sup>7</sup> It literally means factor of life (bhava = life + aṅga = cause, factor). It is usually translated as "life continuum".

<sup>8</sup> For an eye-door process with a very strong object: B1 – B2 – B3 – Pañcadvāravajjana – Cakkhu-viññāṇa – Sampaticchana – Santīraṇa – Votṭhabbana – Javana1 – Javana2 – ... – Javana7 – Tadārammaṇa1 – Tadārammaṇa2 – B – B – ... Here B is bhavaṅga.

<sup>9</sup> A mental process with a very great object: B – B – Manodvāravajjana – Javana1 – Javana2 – ... Javana7 – Tadārammaṇa1 – Tadārammaṇa2 – B .... In this case manodvāravajjana is the attending consciousness at the mind-door.

### ***Four stages in one act of seeing***

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Kind of process</i>	<i>What occurs</i>
One	Eye-door	Object appears at the eye-base
Two	Mind-door	Recalls the past object
Three	Mind-door	Names the object or catches the name
Four	Mind-door	Catches the meaning of or knows the object

Together with the eye-door process, this set of four stages refers to only one act of seeing with its 17 mind-moments, which is very brief indeed.

Let's say we catch sight of a book. By the time our attention is drawn to it, three bhavaṅgas would have passed by. After appearing at the eye-door, its lifespan is over after 17 mind-moments. Then another process appears in the eye (not the same one).

If we were to look at the book for five minutes, the act of looking is repeated over and over for that period. Mental process in sequence runs like a roll of film, one at a time, never simultaneously.

## **When kamma starts to accumulate**

A generator needs many rounds to get electricity. It is the same for the mind. Just one round will not be enough to tell us that it is a book that we are looking at because it is just initialisation. Only at the third mind-door process do we know that it is a book.

The process is the same for hearing sound. For one syllable, four stages are needed at the very least. Then the syllables are combined to get the full meaning. First the ear-door captures the sound. Then at the second stage the mind-door recalls the sound. Next, the mind-door catches the word at the third stage. Only at the fourth stage, do we realise the meaning<sup>10</sup>.

So we need a minimum of four mental processes to recognise that it is a book we see or that the sound that we hear is "dog". Stage Four is thus the decisive process when we realise what the object is or what it means.

Beginning at this point and from the fifth stage onwards greed, anger and delusion (lobha, dosa and moha) make their

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, somebody says "dog". (1) We hear the sound of it. (2) We recall it as a past sound. (3) At this point, we catch the word, and name it. (4) Only then do we know the meaning: that "dog" is an animal. If we do not know English or have not come across this word before, there is no recognition of that sound. In that case the mind will repeatedly ask what it is, searching for the meaning. Therefore there will be a delay in deciding. If we understand the word as soon as we hear it, there is no delay. This is because we have a record and a picture of a dog appears quickly.

appearance, saying: "I love/dislike that object." Thus this is where kamma starts to accumulate.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Where is kamma stored?**

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Where does kamma accumulate in us? Does it remain in the brain? Or is it kept in the heart? Is it stored in just one place? Some people think that it is in the brain because that is where the record is.

We must consider why kamma is not kept in the brain. You see, sound is stored in a record or tape. Should the disc be destroyed or damaged, all that sound would be gone. Similarly should we lose the brain, kamma will be lost. It is the same also when we die since the brain is matter. In certain cases we may be still alive but considered brain dead. Then if kamma is kept in the heart and should there be a heart transplant, the situation would not be good. Thus if kamma is recorded in such places, we will be lost.

It is not easy to explain how kamma accumulates as it cannot be seen, being without substance. But it can be known by knowledge. So where does it accumulate? It lies in the mental process. You may think that consciousness is momentary, arising then disappearing – never coming back again – to be followed by a new one. “So kamma then also disappears?” you ask. Consider candlelight. By extinguishing the flame, can we bring it back? No, it is gone for good, just like consciousness. So

if kamma is stored in the mind, then it is momentary also. Yet it does not disappear or get lost.

## Kamma is online

Mental process never remains, as the mind rises and falls non-stop<sup>11</sup>. In spite of that, there is no change, no shifting somewhere else: once done, kamma remains firmly established. Even so, it is not fixed or persisting. The energy, unit by unit, is passed on from one citta to another<sup>12</sup>. Once the preceding citta has ceased, it leaves behind to the following citta its kammic force. In turn it passes this energy to the third citta, and so on. Nowadays we would say that this is online for kamma to remain in the mental process.

Citta One does not become Citta Two. It is because Citta One has disappeared that Citta Two can appear. Though One and Two are related, Citta One does not turn into Two. With Citta One present, Two cannot come into being.

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<sup>11</sup> There are only two instances where the process is suspended: during attainment of mental cessation (nirodha samāpatti), accessible only to non-returners and arahants; and rebirth in the asañña satta plane of rūpāvacara brahmas.

<sup>12</sup> In Patthāna this is natthi, vigata, samanantara and anantara paccayo.

## **Immature fruit**

Just like fruits and seeds, there are both immature and mature kammic forces, according to the Buddha. As soon as the kammic force starts accumulating, it has yet to mature. Like the seed of an unripened fruit, it cannot sprout. Its energy remains latent in the mental process. With time it develops. How to understand that latency?

When we are young, we go to school to study. Starting from then, our knowledge is not lost. Instead it goes on developing though our brain does not get any bigger. Beginning with the ABC we learnt in primary school, its quality is not lost but remains. Or how else can we continue to progress up to university, to getting a doctorate? Each one of us has our unique quality which is different from the rest. Kamma is like that. It remains as a quality in our thought process, given our habitual tendencies.

For example let's say that we often get angry, sometimes with someone or something. This mental state (*cetanā*) becomes a kammic force, accumulating within us, lying latent. This becomes a habitual practice: the anger arising again and again. It turns into a tendency as angry thoughts appear repeatedly. Thus it increases in quality through repetition. With time the kammic force gets to mature with the help of other conditions.

## **Aeons to perfect pāramīs**

On the good side, look at the Bodhisatta in a past life as Sumedha. From the time He received the prophecy from Dīpañkara Buddha that he would become the Buddha one day, He began to fulfil His dāna pāramīs (perfections). Without keeping the “memory” alive, how could these pāramīs be able to accumulate for Him to become a Buddha eventually? These remained in the mental process as a kammic force, running with it, passing from one citta to the next in a countless succession of lives. They remained online from the hermit Sumedha to Gotama Buddha till the pāramīs were fulfilled. The power which had been accumulating all this while saw to the manifestation of the Buddha.

Consider yourself: without having gone through primary and middle school, you would not be able to understand and get through high-school education. Without middle and high-school studies, you would not be able to comprehend what is taught in university. So it is clear that what is acquired is not lost. In the same way kamma remains in your mental process. At the end of this life, it will recur in the next life. At death in the next life, it will continue in the third life. In a continuous relay, this process never disappears in saṃsāra.

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## Motivation is kamma

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The Buddha declared that cetanā was kamma<sup>13</sup>. Yet many people in Myanmar are mistaken about the meaning of cetanā. Thinking it is wholesome, many say, "I've the cetanā when it comes to doing merit," or "I speak with cetanā." But it is not good every time.

Myanmar people take this mental state to be only on the good side probably because on Dhamma occasions they often hear "Oh, with ardent cetanā this offering is presented." When cetanā is associated with kusala, then it is wholesome. With akusala it becomes unwholesome. By itself it cannot be said to be good or bad, isn't it?

Then when people talk about their good or bad kamma, many are probably unaware that it is cetanā they mean, as taught by the Buddha.

Cetanā has usually been translated as "volition". With my knowledge of English and with the help of a dictionary, I found that volition comes with a wish to do. However, cetanā is not about wishing. Rather, it is motivation or stimulation. It is better

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<sup>13</sup> Cetanāhaṁ bhikkave kammarā vadāmi. Nibbedha Bhagiya Sutta (or Nibbedhika Sutta in English), Aṅguttara Nikāya.

to follow the literal meaning, being closer to the sense of the word.

Why did the Buddha specify this mental state as kamma? When we are thinking about something, it is through cetanā's stimulation. In speaking, it is through cetanā's impulsion that we are able to do so.

As for our bodily actions, it is because of cetanā's motivation that we can do so. Verbal and physical action without intention is not kamma. Only intentional action carries kamma with it. For this reason cetanā is very important and its function should be understood.

## **Cetanā as manager and energiser**

Cetanā is one of the seven universal mental states<sup>14</sup> found in all cittas. These seven inseparables form the most basic (and weakest) core of the mind which can take a sense object. The function of this mental molecule is just bare awareness of the object.

The other associated cetasikas in this group are phassa which makes contact with the sense object; and feeling (vedanā) which experiences its sensation. Then there is perception (saññā) to mark it for future reference. With one-pointedness (ekaggatā) the mind has only one object. The faculty for mental

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<sup>14</sup> The universal aññasamāna cetasika (mental state common to others) associates with all cittas.

life (*jīvitindriya*) protects it, enabling the unit to continue. *Manasikāra* as attention keeps the mind directed to the object. So each mental state has a different function, though all work together in harmony as an 8-in-1 (including the citta).

As for *cetanā*, it plays a double role. Firstly it has the ability to assemble the others together. Nowadays we would compare it to an organiser or a manager who has to oversee his staff's work while carrying out his own task. By gathering the others together and through its encouragement, *cetanā* gets more work done. (For example, it pushes lobha to craving, dosa to anger and moha to confusion.)

Only then is there energy on the whole. This is due to *cetanā*'s other ability to energise and accumulate energy. It collects and builds up the energy of all the associated dhammas while building up its own power. This way it gets to become kamma when its power is full. Thus it is able to produce its result. In doing so, what happens? Thought or mano-kamma, speech (*vāci-kamma*) or bodily action (*kāya-kamma*) arises.

So, without *cetanā* to gather the others together, there is no energy. But once all are gathered together, the resulting force allows movement and action: mental, vocal and physical. This is kamma.

However, although kamma actually means action, it is not solely the act but rather the motivation behind it. In this way we have the idea to go for a 10-day *vipassanā* retreat. A thief has the idea to carry out a theft. Thus *cetanā* stimulates action. So the

cause is kamma and the deed is the effect. Who causes it? It is cetanā. That is why the Buddha declared it as kamma.

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## **Which cetanā? Which kamma?**

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Every day who is it who prompts us into thinking, planning, speaking and doing something? It is cetanā through its stimulation. By giving the push to the other mental states, their energy increases. Consequently they function better. Depending on this, merit and demerit arise. Should lobha, dosa or moha for instance take the lead then unwholesome kamma comes into being. If alobha, adosa or amoha is in control then good kamma arises.

So two kinds of kamma can be distinguished. Similarly, two types of cetanā can be identified depending on the kind of consciousness it associates with.

### **Nānākkhaṇika-cetanā and sahajāta-cetanā**

One type is nānākkhaṇika-cetanā<sup>15</sup>, that is, cetanā of a different period. The “different” refers to the moment when cetanā as kamma occurs which is different from the moment when kamma produces its result. The two moments are not the same

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<sup>15</sup> Nānā = different, khaṇa = period. So nānākkhaṇika means “of a different period”.

as the kamma-result appears at a different moment. Sometimes it can be right afterwards as in magga-phala: the first moment is magga; the second moment is phala (the effect). At other times it can be aeons apart. Let's say in samsara aeons ago we committed murder. The kamma follows us, causes sickness and even untimely death.

What if the effect is immediate? If akusala kamma were to give an instant result, people would be afraid of wrongdoing. As for wholesome deeds, suppose there is a donor whose meritorious dana can cause rebirth in the deity world. At the time of offering, he would no longer be human as he would have become a deity. That is if cetana were to give an instant result. It means that while you are observing sila, at that moment you get to become a deity right there and then.

So nannakkhanika-cetana or kamma gives its result at a different moment. It is this type of cetana which associates with kusala or akusala. As good and bad cetanas, they thus produce their effect once their power is completely built up. This is the kamma we mean when we talk about good and evil kamma being done. This is the type that launched us from the previous life to our present existence.

The other variety is the ordinary universal cetana found in every citta. Unlike nannakkhanika-cetana, it is not the one people refer to when they say, "Oh, it's all according to kamma." Arising together with its associated mental states, it gathers them together. With its power it stimulates them with energy, while carrying out its own task of accumulating power. Known as

sahajāta-cetanā or sahajāta-kamma<sup>16</sup>, it is not the type which produces something as a result as it is associated with the other normal cittas.

## Which cetanā is kamma?

Which cetanā did the Buddha mean in His discourses about kamma? When He declared that cetanā was kamma<sup>17</sup>, it was nānākkhaṇika-cetanā that He meant. In the suttas only the cetanā associated with kusala and akusala cittas is called kamma. Thus for example when the Buddha taught that kamma was one's own property or only inheritance, the kamma refers to nānākkhaṇika-kamma. Then if you were to look up Paṭicca Samuppāda at the section "Saṅkhāra paccayā viññāṇa," there saṅkhāra is nānākkhaṇika-kamma.

However in Paṭṭhāna of Abhidhamma, all cetanās are considered as kamma, regardless of their association with cittas – even with vipāka and kriya cittas. So, sahajāta-cetanā is included as well. Why this is so is because, being of the same kind, sahajāta-cetanā has the potential in ability to give a result too just like nānākkhaṇika-cetanā.

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<sup>16</sup> Saha = together, jāta =born; so sahajāta means "born together".

<sup>17</sup> Nibbedha Bhāgiya Sutta, Aṅguttara Nikāya.

## **Ever-fruiting cetanā tree**

So like a tree perpetually bearing fruit, we perform countless actions through thought, speech and the body. Like fruit with many seeds, our actions bear seeds of kamma. With the support of conditions, they can develop and sprout.

Where does the reproductive energy lie in a tree? It is found only in the fruit and seed. We get many different parts developing from the seed: such as the root, trunk, branch, leaf, flower and fruit. But the reproductive power does not lie in these parts except for the fruit and the seed.

Except for the dynamic mind (javanas), all the different cittas taking part in mental process (citta-vīthi) such as the five-door attending consciousness (pañcadvāravajjana), eye-consciousness (cakkhu-viññāṇa) and receiving consciousness (sampaṭicchana) can be likened to the various parts of a tree, that is, the leaves, roots, trunk, and so on. However the reproductive power is found only in the seed and not the other parts. Likewise, the reproductive kammic force gathers only in the cetanā of the javanas. The other cittas' cetanā lacks this kammic energy which can construct a new life. For instance the cetanā in pañcadvāravajjana or cakkhu-viññāṇa cannot accumulate power, being sahajāta-kamma.

According to Commentary<sup>18</sup> cetanā performs its accumulating function only when it associates with kusala and akusala cittas and not the other types, such as vipāka and kriya. Only then is

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<sup>18</sup> Aṭṭhasālinī.

it called kamma as it is able to build up energy fully. As kamma, it is able to produce its result, rebirth for example. Thus as cetanā with its strong thrust at the arising of the javanas – it is here that kamma comes to be formed.

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## The mind that decides our life

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Why does cetanā gather energy only with kusala and akusala cittas? Commentary gives no reason why. As javanas<sup>19</sup> are mostly wholesome and unwholesome, that is where kamma can accumulate.

Every time we see an object, thought process occurs. It is the same for hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, or thinking as objects invade us through the six doors. In the mental process that follows, bhavaṅga never works with any new object because it has its own already. Pañcadvārāvajjana as gate-opener is neither kamma nor its effect. Looking to see who the visitor is, cakkhu-viññāṇa is kamma-result. The receiving consciousness or sampaticchana is also the result of kusala and akusala, just like santīraṇa, the investigating consciousness. The determining consciousness or voṭṭhabba is neither kusala nor akusala and not kamma-result either. As it leaves, what citta comes to arise? It is javana (dynamic consciousness). In thought process that is a very important stage.

The cittas before it, that is pañcadvārāvajjana, cakkhu-viññāṇa and so on, run naturally according to conditions – nothing can

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<sup>19</sup> I usually call it “dynamic consciousness” or “energetic mind”.

be done about them. Only this dynamic consciousness experiences the object. Being energetic, unlike the rest, the javana citta also makes the final decision about the object: that it is beautiful, ugly, etc. If it finds something desirable, it says, "It's so nice. I want it."

## **Like lightning**

Capable of gaining power or momentum, javanas are unlike the other cittas. We can compare their surge of energy to a lightning bolt. The important point is not whether javanas are quicker than the rest. Slower or faster – it is all the same for cittas. According to Ledi Sayadaw, they are cittas which can gain a driving force or impetus with regard to the object.

Consider what happens when the eye sees something it likes. Attachment or desire surges up. This is the impulsion of lobha javanas. For an undesirable object, there is a sudden rise of hatred or loathing of dosa javanas. Depending on wise and unwise attention, wholesome or unwholesome energetic minds arise.

For example, on seeing a flower, a person might think, "What a lovely flower! I could wear it in my hair. It would look nice on the dining table too." This kind of thought is due to lobha javanas arising. For another person the thought will not be this way. Instead it is "How beautiful the flower is! I shall offer it at the altar to the Buddha." Considering this way shows the surge

of kusala javanas. The cetanās associated with them can produce their effect on gathering enough energy.

## **Root support**

So with unwise attention (ayoniso manasikāra) lobha javana can arise as greed, or dosa javana as hatred. Also in not knowing the nature of the object, there is the delusion of moha javana. The three roots of evil (greed, hatred and delusion) as well as the good roots of anti-greed, anti-hatred and anti-delusion, give great support because in their absence, energy cannot remain. This is to say that they are root conditions<sup>20</sup>. For such reasons kammic energy can build up only in kusala and akusala javanas.

However, it does not accumulate in vipāka and kriya javanas even though alobha, adosa and amoha are found in mahāvipāka and mahākriya cittas also. So cetanā cannot remain with kammic energy when it is associated with such cittas.

### *Are the roots different in vipāka and kriya cittas?*

The anti-greed, anti-hatred and anti-delusion in mahāvipāka and kriya cittas are unlike those of kusala and akusala javanas. Why is it so? Concerning mahāvipāka citta, this is because it is just the effect of mahākusala. So it cannot be active, being only a mirror image. According to Commentary, the mahāvipāka citta

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<sup>20</sup> Hetu paccayo. In Paṭṭhāna such a condition fortifies its conditioned state.

is quiet and passive. Like the reflection in the mirror, it cannot be changed. Even the cetanā associated with the citta's three wholesome roots cannot accumulate kammic energy.

Then let's consider the mahākusala citta. When it arises in us, it is mahākusala. When it arises in arahants it is referred to as mahākriya citta. Why can't cetanā accumulate kammic force in mahākriya-javana? Commentary compares this citta to a flowering tree whose root has been cut off. If so, can the flowers develop into fruit? No, they cannot anymore. (If the root is intact, they can.) In the same way within the arahants, the roots of lobha, dosa and moha have been cut off. Their mahākriya-javanas are like the flowers of a tree with severed roots. Therefore the cetanās of these cittas cannot gather kammic energy.

This is what I think as Commentary gives no explanation except that cetanā associated with kusala and akusala accumulates energy. In us we have the roots of good and evil in our mental process. Unlike arahants, kammic power accumulates within us in the ever-continuing stream of javanas.

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## How lying is accomplished

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The mouth and body are the cause of verbal and bodily actions respectively. The two act as doors for kamma to emerge. Thus kamma arises from bodily and vocal intimation<sup>21</sup>. When we act physically or speak intentionally, that is kāya kamma and vāci kamma<sup>22</sup>.

Though the mouth is included in the body, it is special. Even if lying by bodily movement is possible, it is done in particular by the mouth. Hence since lying is mostly by speech, it is counted as one medium apart from the body.

Though there are four types of unwholesome verbal action (see the footnote below), we shall discuss only that of telling untruths.

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<sup>21</sup> Kāya and vāci viññatti where viññatti means “signifying”.

<sup>22</sup> There are three types of akusala kāya kamma: killing (pāṇātipātā), stealing (adinnādāna) and unlawful sexual relations (kāmesumicchācārā). The four vāci kammas: telling lies (musāvādā), speech that breaks up a friendship (pisuṇavācā), using abusive language (pharusavācā) and senseless talk (samphappalāpā).

## A full act of kamma

It is through motivation that we lie. Let's say that craving arises in us and we tell a lie. So telling a lie (*musāvādā*) is a verbal action due to motivation. Therefore there are two phenomena: the first being motivation (*cetanā*), followed by a verbal action. As stated by the Buddha, it is motivation that is *vāci kamma*. Why this is so is that because of motivation, the verbal act of lying occurs.

Hence, according to Buddhism, it refers to the cause, not the effect. We need to see it this way: motivation is the cause; lying is the effect. If there is no motivation, lying does not occur.

Therefore *vāci kamma* (verbal action) refers to the cause. What if, despite the motivation to lie, the outcome does not take place? In that case it is not *vāci kamma*. You may be motivated to tell an untruth but you do not carry it out. With only the motivation without a lie spoken; this cannot be called *vāci kamma*. There is no full act of lying.

Only if the motivation produces an untruth – this is *vāci kamma*. Thus the motivation that leads to a lie is called *vāci kamma*. In the text this kamma is said to be *kamma-patha*<sup>23</sup> or kamma which is full fledged or grown.

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<sup>23</sup> Patha = the way or road. So *kamma-patha* = [put on] the way of kamma.

## **Two steps in lying**

Just at the moment of motivation, it can be called kamma. As it has still to produce a lie, it is not yet kamma-patha. So motivation is at one moment. Telling the lie is at another moment. We may have the motivation (which can be called kamma). But if the falsehood is not spoken, then it cannot be called kamma-patha.

Most people do not distinguish between kamma and full-grown kamma, only those who study the text such as Abhidhamma which clarifies the two. When motivation leads to telling a lie, it means kamma is running online as *musāvādā*.

## **It takes three steps not to lie**

The opposite action is to abstain from *musāvādā*. In this case it is kusala. Similarly, motivation arises first – not to tell a lie. To abstain from lying: just that absence of an act becomes kamma-patha. To refrain from lying is a verbal action which is kusala kamma. Yet no action is involved, just holding back speech. Since it involves the mouth it is called *vāci kamma*. This is because keeping silent is the act *not* to use the mouth.

Then the third stage is telling the truth, a wholesome kamma. At first the motivation not to lie is at one moment. Abstaining from speaking an untruth is at another. Then telling the truth is developed kusala kamma.

Thus motivation is the key as it leads to not just lying but all forms of misconduct. For instance when hatred arises, there is abusive speech. After that one wants to act physically: to hurt or kill.

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## **In causing death: who is guilty?**

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In 1991 on a visit to Malaysia, I was told by a lady that she felt remorse that on her account her mother had died in hospital. Her mother had asked for some water to drink. So the lady gave her a cup. Drinking from it, her mother choked. Unable to breathe, she died. The daughter felt responsible for causing her death.

So I asked her what her intention was then. She did not want her mother to die: her mind was pure.

Intention is more important than the act. If there is no motive to kill, then there is no guilt. The Buddha gave a clear analogy: if your hand is not injured, even if you use it to touch poison, it is not affected. The meaning is that if the mind is pure, although one brings about someone's death, one is blameless.

Following the lady's action, her mother's death occurred. But she had no wish to cause it. So there is no responsibility. In an unintentional act when there is no volition to kill, there is no kamma.

## **Killing as a full act of kamma**

The volition to kill is the first moment. After that the bodily act of taking a life becomes full-grown kamma (kamma-patha). However, in order that kamma accumulates in the killer-to-be, five factors must be fulfilled. First, there must be a living being. Second, the person knows that the victim is alive. Third, there must be the motivation to kill. Fourth, there is action taken to cause the victim's death. Fifth, death must ensue.

If these five conditions are complete, kamma accumulates within the person responsible. But if the victim does not die, then it is not a fully kammic action. For an unintentional act where there is no volition to cause death, it is not kamma. To check, the five points must be considered one by one: for example, the person is in a forest. He mistakes something (such as a bush) for a living being. So he tries to kill it. Hatred could even arise in him. Nonetheless it is not the physical act of pāṇātipātā kamma simply because the first factor is not there.

As for the second factor: though the being is alive, the person thinks it is not a sentient being. Even though he tries to destroy it, that is also not the physical act of killing. Thus for pāṇātipātā to occur, the five factors must be there.

## **Giving or obeying the order to kill**

If the full five factors are present, then there is kamma committed for the one who orders or incites a killing. The head

of state who sends the army to fight and kill may not be guilty in the eyes of the law. But according to natural law, he cannot be free of responsibility. In the case of euthanasia the patient asks for a suicide injection, not wanting to suffer any longer. If the doctor complies, then he is just as responsible as the patient. What if he gives the patient medicine to save his life, but it causes death instead? In this case the doctor is not at fault.

Then what about those who are just carrying out the order to kill? Consider the case of the king's executioner during the Buddha's lifetime.

#### *Tambadāṭhika the executioner*

For a period of fifty years he had been killing those sentenced to death by the king. Now in his old age he happened to meet Venerable Sāriputta. Seeing the monk gave Tambadāṭhika so much saddhā that he offered him the milk rice that he was going to eat. Later Venerable Sāriputta preached the Dhamma to him.

What was going on in Tambadāṭhika's mind then? Those who have killed would not usually be able to follow a Dhamma discourse. His mind was restless and uneasy with the thought, "I have already taken this particular course in my life."

At this point Venerable Sāriputta sized up the situation. He stopped his Dhamma talk to ask, "Dāyaka<sup>24</sup>, what are you thinking that makes you anxious?"

"For many years I've been putting people to death. Listening to the Dhamma is of no benefit to me."

The Venerable then asked, "Were those men executed because you wanted to?"

"No, it was the king who gave the order."

"In that case, if you had done so at someone's request, are you responsible?"

Hearing this, Tambadāṭhika felt as though a weight had been lifted from his chest. He thought with a sense of relief, "That's right. I executed those men because I was ordered to – not that I wanted it."

He presumed that there would be no guilt in killing at others' command. Actually, even at someone else's orders, the act of killing is blameworthy. Whether you kill on your own initiative or at others' request, it is still the same.

At this time, Venerable Sāriputta continued his discourse. Note that the Venerable did not say that there was no guilt. However, by his posing this question, the assumption of non-guilt arose in Tambadāṭhika's mind, calming it down. Now with a peaceful mind he could follow and grasp the Dhamma, so

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<sup>24</sup> Lay supporter.

much so that he gained *vipassanā sammā ditṭhi* (*saccānulomika sammā ditṭhi*)<sup>25</sup>.

## **Are meat-eaters guilty of pāṇātipātā?**

If someone was to eat fish and meat, is it considered *pāṇātipātā* or not? In Jainism, the meat-eater is thought to be just as responsible. This is to say that the slaughterer and the meat-eater have a fifty-fifty share in guilt. What is your opinion?

If you think that non-vegetarians are guilty of taking life, then we need to consider also the case of arms manufacturers. The weapons they produce enable others to commit murder. Yet nowadays only murderers face capital punishment, not those arms manufacturers. Are they just as liable or not as the killers? The law does not hold them responsible, unlike those who use their products to kill others. In that case, why then should non-vegetarians be held responsible for the death of fish and animals they consume?

Nonetheless we need to consider whether the mind is wholesome or not. If such people take the fish and meat to be just food to be eaten, then they should not be held responsible. In the case of those who rear animals to slaughter for their meat, then there is responsibility. Wanting to kill a living thing in order to eat it shows that the person is mentally impure. If he does so he is guilty of *pāṇātipātā*.

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<sup>25</sup> At his death he was reborn in the deity realm.

It is the same for those rich people who hunt as a sport. When I was young I was told that British officers used to shoot birds with rifles but they never ate them. It is no different for some vegetarians too: they do not eat meat but their shoes, bags or coats are made of leather, skin or fur.

So how is one to avoid being at fault? In the Buddha-Dhamma, it is only intentional killing that matters. Otherwise nobody can avoid being responsible. You see, when we are walking about, we are killing many insects. But we don't see; we don't know. Though we have no intention, death is happening. Intention – and the hatred of wanting to kill – is more important.

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## **Repetition gives results**

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Let's say that you want to recite "Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa" again and again till you are familiar with it. Having said it for the first time, you repeat it. You find that it is easier. At the third attempt, your reciting becomes even smoother. After many times, even if you were awokened from sleep and told to recite it, there would be no mistakes made.

This ability is due to repetition or āsevana<sup>26</sup>. So through repeated practice skill is gained. Whatever that is done or occurs only once will not amount to much – only if it is carried out many times until it is as though a crease has formed in a fabric. This "fold" in the mind shows ability has been acquired.

In the mental process it is āsevana paccayo<sup>27</sup> when similar cittas arise repeatedly, with the preceding citta passing on to the succeeding its energy. Without this transferring taking place, you would make no progress in memorising any text or learn a skill. You would not even be able to function normally in your daily or habitual activities. For instance in taking a meal

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<sup>26</sup> Ā = repeatedly, sevana = to depend on.

<sup>27</sup> It is a repeating condition for the arising of its conditioned state.

you would not remember the actual process of eating – that the spoonful of food goes into the mouth (and not the ear). This is because repetitive condition allows habits to form. Accordingly routine actions can be carried out without conscious effort.

With āsevana condition the energy and proficiency increase with each citta. Note that all the different types of consciousness taking part in the mental process – except for javana cittas – are not able to develop in power and proficiency through repetition. As normal cittas they arise only once to carry out their function. This is not the case with javanas, given that energy increases with each repetition of this dynamic consciousness.

Except for the last javana (J7), each of the other six javanas conditions its neighbour through the conditioning force of āsevana. Thus the succeeding citta's power becomes greater than that of the previous one. In order of increasing power, the javanas can be divided in three groups: the first group consisting of only J1; the second group comprising J2 to J6; and the third group with only J7.

## **Expiry date at the end of this life**

Being the first in the series J1 has limited power, as it is only just starting to gather energy. Why is this so? That is because it has no preceding citta with āsevana conditioning force. Its neighbour is votthabba (determining consciousness), a different type of citta. So J1 cannot be conditioned by the

power of āsevana. Thus it is unable to produce a new life. It can only give support in the present life. This is diṭṭha dhamma vedaniya (immediately effective) kamma, producing its effect in this life. As its energy is not enough, it cannot go beyond to the next life. At the end of this life, its kammic force expires as ahosi kamma, meaning that it cannot produce a result anymore – just like medicine that has expired. So, if J1 has no chance to mature within its time limit which is this life, it becomes expired kamma.

### **Waiting for conditions to sprout in the next life**

In ceasing, J1 passes its energy on to the second javana J2. The latter's energy is then transferred to J3. As a result J2 is stronger than J1, while J3 becomes more powerful than J2. In this way there is a passing on of energy by successive cittas. By the time it reaches J6, this javana is packed with power. Then this accumulated energy is piled on to the last dynamic mind in the series. In this way J7's cetanā gets the support from all the previous javanas. Its power is enough to produce rebirth at the end of this life.

However to give rebirth result, kamma is unable do it by itself. It is only possible when other supporting conditions come together. Only then the result takes place. Thus for J7, when does its result occur? Due to the kamma's high-level energy it happens in the next life – that is, the nearest possible life-existence – only if given the chance and with the help of

conditions. This subsequently effective kamma (upapajjavedaniya kamma) can be compared to trees waiting to bud at the start of spring: they “hide” in the frost, waiting for warmer days. Or it is like candidates in the waiting list for a job. With the help of conditions, this kamma “must” sprout in the next life. If there is no opportunity for it to give its result, then it becomes expired<sup>28</sup>. It does not go on to the third life.

Despite its accumulated power from the other javanas, being last in the sequence, it cannot act as āsevana conditioning state. What comes after J7? It can be the retentive consciousness (tadārammaṇa) or bhavaṅga – both of which are of a different nature. So J7 cannot pass on its force to it by means of repeating condition. On ceasing it can only leave behind its energy to the succeeding citta<sup>29</sup>.

## A hunter’s dog giving chase in saṃsāra

Then for the remaining javanas, as it is not possible to specify which citta is involved, we have to refer to them generally as the group of the five middle javanas. These are collectively termed as indefinitely effective kamma (aparāpariya vedaniya kamma), meaning that there is no time limit. Starting from the third life onwards, these kammas will continue to bear fruit for

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<sup>28</sup> With the exception of garuka kamma. Because of its great force, it has to produce its effect.

<sup>29</sup> This is by the usual means of anantara, samanantara, natthi and vigata paccayo for ordinary cittas.

as long as we remain in the cycle of rebirths. As long as there is a lifespan, they are waiting to sprout, some with the power to produce rebirth. Though they can be isolated, they cannot be avoided. Within this group which one has the greatest conditioning power? It is J6 as there is a stepwise increase in energy starting from J3. Its conditioning power exceeds that of J2, while the power of J4 is more than that of J3 and so on. Their conditioning forces will continue to give their effect in any lifetime starting from the third life.

So this is the longest-lived type of kamma. Venerable Buddhaghosa has compared it to a hunter's dog. Seeing a deer it gives chase. Should the deer stumble and fall, the dog will seize it. In the same way these kammas will keep tracking us through saṃsāra – even if we had committed a bad act hundreds of thousands of lives ago.

As for kusala kamma, an example would be the Bodhisatta in one lifetime as Sumedha. On meeting Dīpañkara Buddha, He obtained His prophecy that He would be the Buddha one day. From then on, Sumedha began accumulating pāramīs in a countless successions of lives until His last birth as Gotama.

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## **Friend or foe?**

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Kamma not only produces a new life as janaka (producing) kamma, there are yet three other types, each with a different (non-producing) function. Kamma's way is such that while it is giving its result during the course of life (pavatti), it will help by supporting those of the same nature as itself. Otherwise it will act to interfere or hinder by weakening, delaying, even by disrupting or giving trouble. Should its power develop to a great extent, it acts to cut off or destroy. So that is the nature of kamma during a lifetime.

Just consider our own selves: we are born as humans due to janaka kamma. It was also responsible for our faculties, such as the eyes. That is why some people even in their eighties do not need glasses, unlike some young children who do. Then as we grow up, our parents, their care, food, medicine, and so on are supportive (upathambhaka) kammas. The function of this kind of kamma is only to support janaka kamma's work. So once productive kamma has done its job, upathambhaka kamma takes charge to prevent any breakdown and to maintain our lifespan.

Then when we fall sick – needing treatment and medicine – it is obstructive kamma at work. Upapīlaka kamma's function is to

weaken, delay or even disrupt the other kammas' result. However its interference works both ways for kusala and akusala. When wholesome kamma is giving its result, akusala kamma enters to disturb, and vice-versa.

Should our illness turn out to be incurable, then it is due to destructive kamma (upaghātaka or upacchedaka kamma) when we die. This type destroys another kamma's result through interception, just like an anti-aircraft missile. According to Commentary it can also produce its own result after removing the other kamma's effect.

Why are there such occurrences? It is because people do both good and bad. So their kusala and akusala kammas are accumulating every day. Whenever there is an opportunity, a kamma when its energy is full enters to disrupt (or to help).

## **Plagued by misfortune**

Let's say there is a person who had been doing both good and bad deeds in his life. At his death, one of his kusala kammas had the chance to ripen so that he was reborn again as a human being. His akusala kammas said, "Ahh, that kusala kamma got there ahead of us." They then waited for an opportunity. Though good janaka kamma had him sent to the human world, his bad kammas lying in wait gave him trouble at every opportune moment they could find. Every now and then these obstructive kammas would cause illnesses to appear. Every now and then they would have him hospitalised. He

would find himself subject to unjust accusations. His belongings would get damaged, and so on. In this way his bad kammas caused him to experience all kinds of dukkha. Then one which was powerful enough to be destructive kamma ripened to bring his life to a premature close in an accident.

## **A lucky dog's life**

Suppose there was another person who had also been committing both good and bad. One akusala kamma had the opportunity to ripen first at the end of his life. He was reborn as a dog.

Seeing this, his kusala kammas said, "Oh, if we'd the chance, we would have sent him to the human or deity world. We were too late. His akusala kamma got there first. So he's now having a dog's life. But as best as we can, we'll look after him." So his good kammas had him sent to a rich man's mansion. There, this dog lived like a person, driven about in an expensive car. (I have heard that in some homes, the pet eats out of a gold dish, filled with exclusive dog-food.) Its standard of living was grander than many people's.

So although this person's akusala kamma was the first to give its result, his wholesome ones looked after him as supportive kamma.

However for stray dogs, their kamma would be of the akusala obstructive type. Also, their unwholesome kamma would be

acting as supportive kamma. This is because supporting can work either way (just like obstructive kamma): supporting to be better or worse. The first is wholesome, while the other is unwholesome. Akusala kamma is supported by unwholesomeness. One becomes happier and happier or one has more and more suffering. It is as though an enemy and a friend are always following behind. If the friend is stronger, there is support. Should the enemy be more powerful, death ensues.

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## **Seeing with kamma's reflection**

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Kamma produces its result or *vipāka*<sup>30</sup> at every suitable opportunity. This occurs twice: once, when life starts at conception, the time of *patisandhi*. The other is afterwards. Once life has been established, from then on till death, kamma will continue to give its results throughout the lifespan (*pavatti*). What are they? The eye-, ear-, nose-consciousness, and so on are the result of kamma. These *viññāṇa* cittas arise due to past kammas which have been accumulating and now have ripened<sup>31</sup>.

However it is not that these *viññāṇas* come to arise simply through kamma alone. Why they appear is due to a sense object coinciding with a base. Only then can they arise. At other times they are not able to. In this case you might wonder, "At such a time where have these *viññāṇas* gone?"

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<sup>30</sup> "Vi" means "dissimilar" (in nature). What is it referring to? Here it indicates the kusala and akusala dhammas which are of different natures. Then "pāka" means "the result" (of these sabhāvas which have ripened). In this case the term "vipāka" only indicates cetanā's result, that is, the *vipāka* citta's mental concommitants or *cetasikas*.

<sup>31</sup> *Dhammasaṅgāṇī*.

## **Where is eye-consciousness kept?**

In a lighter where is the flame kept? Try to find out yourself. When you do, you will know where eye-consciousness is hidden too. So where is the flame kept in a lighter? There is none. But due to the meeting together of right conditions, won't the flame appear? It will. We can say that the latency is there. And similarly for seeing, what are the conditions where eye-consciousness can occur? It is kamma which has created the sensitive eye (*cakkhu pasāda*). A visible object then comes to be reflected there. This takes the form of an impingement though ordinarily we are unaware of this striking action. The impact of the two is like switching on the light; or like the positive and negative ends of wires coming into contact with the sudden appearance of light.

So seeing consciousness comes into being when an external object impinges on the sensitive eye, as taught by the Buddha in several suttas. He never taught that seeing consciousness was continuously present, only that it appeared with the right conditions. According to Him, it is the result of kamma, though it can only happen with the contact between the object and the eye-base. Apart from this moment, it does not arise. This is the nature of kamma producing its result of *vipāka cittas* during *pavatti*. At the meeting of sense objects at their respective bases, due to the impact these resultants arise. However which is the main cause? It is only kamma.

The Buddha taught that these *vipāka cittas* are quiet and free of any activity. They can be compared to a reflection in the mirror.

The person's image there only moves if he was to move. Can an image make any movement on its own accord? No it cannot. Thus these *vipāka cittas* appear as kamma's reflections. So there can be no activity on their part. Their nature is only to reflect whatever action of kamma. This is how kamma gives its effect during a lifetime.

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## **6 drops of honey plus 1 drop of liquid iron**

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Consider the eye. We do not see (or hear, smell, taste, touch and think about) what is good or pleasant all the time. What we see is not only with liking. What is not good or pleasant is also perceived. What is eye-consciousness based on when it arises produced by akusala kamma? It appears on seeing an undesirable object or *aniṭṭhārāmmaṇa*<sup>32</sup>. The seeing is with dissatisfaction, unlike seeing something desirable with pleasure.

A good or desirable object is *itṭhārāmmaṇa*. On perceiving it, the seeing consciousness that arises is kusala's result. So there are two kinds of cakkhu-viññāna. It is the same way too for the ear in hearing a sweet or harsh sound, for the nose in smelling a fragrant or smelly odour, the tongue in tasting delicious or tasteless food, or the body in feeling a pleasant or unpleasant touch. For instance, when the leg knocks against something hard, isn't it painful? It is the most obvious type of unpleasant contact.

Try to observe what goes on in the various kinds of consciousness that appear throughout the day in your daily life:

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<sup>32</sup> An object which is not good and undesirable is called *aniṭṭha*, the opposite of *itṭha*, that is, desirable or good.

in seeing, smelling, tasting and so on. Anything unpleasant which is experienced is the result of akusala. What is pleasant is kusala's effect.

## **What you like I might not like**

When people like something, it is a desirable object. If they do not like it, it is not to be desired. Generally speaking, people usually consider something they like to be good, isn't it? At times though it is hard to designate what is *ittha* or *anittha* or to distinguish between what is "good" or "bad". What is undesirable to you may be desired by someone else.

Passing by a rotting carcass of a dog, people will hold their noses, then hawk and spit in disgust. On the other hand vultures will be delighted. Drawn by the carcass' powerful aroma, even from afar they will fly and alight on it. Then for those people who like durians, the fruit is *itthārāmmāna*, but not for those who dislike the fruit, finding the smell unpleasant.

So how to set any criteria? It is only by generalising and finding a general consensus of what many hold to be good or bad. For example, in seeing something which causes an unhappy feeling, we can say that the object is not good. If a happy feeling was to arise instead, then it can be considered a good thing. Except for mentally unsound people, such an object will be liked by the rest.

## **Six drops of honey plus one drop of liquid iron**

Now let's look at the result of akusala produced during a lifetime. Besides the eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue- and body-consciousness, there are the receiving consciousness (*sampaṭicchana*) and investigating consciousness (*santīraṇa*): the seven akusala *vipāka cittas*. What do they have in common?

In terms of *vedanā*, the indifferent feeling of *upekkhā* is mostly the case. However body-consciousness is accompanied by pain<sup>33</sup>, unlike the others with *upekkhā* (which is neither happy nor unhappy). For this reason this unwholesome resultant citta with painful feeling has been likened to a drop of molten iron. The remaining cittas accompanied by indifference are like drops of honey.

After adding this drop of liquid iron to the six drops of honey, the mixture is then poured onto the tongue. How would it feel? Would it be pleasant? Would the taste of honey be apparent? The drop of liquid iron among the six drops of honey is comparable to the body-consciousness accompanied by pain. The dukkha becomes overwhelming.

This is especially so in the case of hell-beings. For them there can be no interval of relief. Pain is all predominant.

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<sup>33</sup> Dukkha-sahagata kāya-viññāṇa.

## **Can hell-beings experience kusala's result?**

Normally only undesirable objects are experienced in the hell realm with the inhabitants screaming and groaning in pain and fear. However, during the Buddha's lifetime, Venerable Moggallāna would now and then visit hell, using his psychic power. His purpose was to give the beings there a chance to worship and pay respect to an arahant<sup>34</sup> as well as to listen to the Dhamma.

For these beings with enough suffering to make them scream, "Save me! Help me!" – what did Venerable Moggallāna do to let kusala arise in them? With his supernormal power he extinguished the hell-fire for a while. During that interval, making his form visible, he briefly preached the Dhamma to them. In that short period with the flames quenched, the hell-beings were relieved of their suffering, allowing them to behold him with reverence. This is *itthārāmmanā*. Another good object was the sound of the Venerable's discourse which they listened to.

So within this short time, *itthārāmmanas* were able to appear to them, these wholesome objects being the result of kusala.

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<sup>34</sup> *Samañānañca dassanam.*

## No equal treatment

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Take a group of devotees who are gathering together to offer Kathina robes and to listen to a Dhamma talk. You may wonder, "Would kamma give the same result for them for their collective meritorious deed?"

Can people share the same kamma-result? It cannot be identical for everyone because kamma ripens based on conditions and qualities which vary from person to person. Although it is a shared meritorious act, the cetanā cannot be alike. Conditions and qualities too cannot be the same. Therefore the effect as well cannot be the same.

Just consider those who commit killing. For their act of murder, they are sentenced to death or receive a life sentence. Yet the prison hangman who carries out the execution of these condemned murderers not only escapes punishment, he is given a promotion and a bonus by the authorities. It is the same act of taking a life but the effect is different. Why?

It is because conditions are not the same for everybody. Moreover there are still other factors at work so that kamma cannot produce its result for each and every person.

Depending on its supporting conditions kamma gives its effect. For someone who is supported by good conditions, akusala kamma is not able to produce its result. Also kusala kamma cannot take effect if bad conditions are prevailing for that person.

According to the Buddha, it is like putting a lump of salt in a cup of water<sup>35</sup>. It becomes too salty to be drunk. Should this lump be added to a lake or a river like the Ganges or Ayeryarwady, that salty taste would be lost.

In the same way some people's morals are not good. What's more, they do no meritorious deeds. Should they commit some minor wrongdoing, they will suffer a lot for it.

In contrast let's take someone of good moral conduct who is ever good-hearted. He has also been carrying out a lot of good deeds. Nonetheless, being a putthujjana, misdeeds are occasionally committed. Yet they seem to be of no consequence, disappearing completely.

So kamma-result differs from person to person. It is not that kamma shows favouritism. It is because there are other factors to give support.

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<sup>35</sup> Loṇakapalla Sutta (Aṅguttara Nikāya, Book of the Threes).

## **Worldly conditions**

If a poor man was to steal a fish from a fishmonger, he would get into trouble. If a rich man in a chauffeured-driven car was to do the same, he might even be given another one, as complimentary. Preference is given to the wealthy, not to the destitute. This is only the way of the world.

Isn't it usually the case (in certain places) that when there is money and influence, there is no need to face punishment by the law? The situation is usually different for someone who is rich and another who is poor, even though it is said that "all are equal under the law". The one without money gets imprisoned for a crime, probably not the other. For the latter, although the offence is the same, the matter is likely to blow over. Through bribery he can get away with it. So in the same way for someone with rank or power, there is often no retribution. Another person without these has more to bear in punishment.

Depending on how you look at it, you could call this injustice. Or you could say that this is a worldly situation. In such a case money (as well as influence and power) can be taken as a type of condition.

This is not to say that money – or the lack of it – makes a difference with kamma. Where kamma is concerned, it is rather whether there is the absence or not of qualities. For someone having such attributes, the consequence is less severe, unlike the one who has done no merit. Thus he gets to suffer a lot even for any minor misdeed. This is only natural.

The implication is that should one commit some akusala, to alleviate that bad kamma, one should then do a lot of merit.

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## **Quality makes a difference**

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In whatever good or bad that is performed, there is always level and degree, that is, the quality. When kusala or akusala is carried out, are the mental force and quality the same for everyone?

Whether it is offering dāna, observing sīla or practising meditation, a person's mental force and its quality are unlike another's. Consider the act of offering dāna. Before it happens, you have good thoughts about your offering. Even afterwards, kusala mind arises when you think about this dāna.

It would be different for another person with doubts and wrong ideas before and after the offering is done. Therefore as this wholesome act is surrounded by an unwholesome mind before and afterwards, the kammic potentiality is weakened. It is termed as inferior<sup>36</sup>.

In your case where no akusala mind surrounds the act of offering, it is superior<sup>37</sup> with only kusala mind arising with knowledge, that is, the three good roots of alobha, adosa and amoha are present. (If knowledge is not present, then the

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<sup>36</sup> Omaka kusala kamma.

<sup>37</sup> Tihetuka ukkataṭṭha

condition is two-rooted or dvihetuka.) Superior and inferior are distinguished thus by means of knowledge<sup>38</sup> and whether the wholesome act is surrounded by akusala cetanās or not.

As for akusala, take the example of a hungry boy who sees an apple. Craving arises and he steals it, thinking it is all right because of his hunger. Another boy in such a situation, knowing it is wrong, hesitates. But with a friend's encouragement, he takes it.

Thus there is a difference in the mental force and quality of these two boys' actions.

So even if the act of stealing or of offering dāna, keeping precepts or meditating is the same, the level and degree are not the same for everybody. This is to say that the quality varies. Although the act remains just as it is, kamma's quality is not the same. Isn't that right?

## **Different makes, different worlds**

Look at the consumer goods in use nowadays with their differences in quality. Yet the item's generic name – doesn't it remain the same? Take a radio for example. Which are the companies that manufacture radios? You look them up. "This one produces good-quality radios. That one makes poor-quality ones," you conclude. Whether the quality is good or bad, it is

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<sup>38</sup> When knowledge leads, the merit gained is called ñāṇa-sampayutta kusala. Without amoha, it is said to be ñāṇa-vipayutta.

not so that the one of an inferior make cannot be called a radio. It is still a radio, just like the one of high-quality.

In this way, depending on the quality of kamma, the result that is produced varies.

There is food for thought in this question: all beings belonging to apāya share the same rebirth consciousness (upekkhā santīraṇa) whether they are hell-beings, animals, petas or asuras. Do they also share the same suffering? And if not, why not?

The rebirth mind is common to all but what beings have to undergo in the various locations is not the same. In the plane of niraya, there is only extreme suffering without even a drop of happiness. Its inhabitants have the worse sort of existence. Animals are a little better off. The Buddha compared hell to a huge pit of red-hot coals<sup>39</sup>, while life in the animal kingdom was like being in a pit of excrement. By comparison petas and asuras are better off although He likened their situation to being in a very hot location with barely any shade, the rocky ground rough with sharp-edged stones.

Why do beings in hell have more suffering than the others? It is because the mental force used in performing akusala – along with the kammic quality – is not the same. The extreme kind of evil-doing results in hell. It also means that the quality of kamma is at its highest.

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<sup>39</sup> In Mahāśīhanāda Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya.

Also the result can be determined by seeing the degree of akusala. The higher the degree, the more drastic is the environment, like a fiery volcano. So depending on the degree, there is intensely hot, then hot and less hot environment in different levels of planes.

Thus the suffering is most intense in Avīci where there are no gaps between the inhabitants who are as closely packed as needles in their casing. That is why this lowest of hells is called Avīci. Also there are no spaces between the blazing fires which are continuously burning.

A less extreme type of akusala with a lower kammic quality brings its result in the animal world. Then a sort that is not so extreme brings about peta existence.

Likewise human and deity happiness are dissimilar due to the difference in quality even though there is the same rebirth consciousness. All vehicles with four wheels which can carry a small number of passengers are called cars. Yet given the different types and makes, are they all of the same value? No they are not. In this way this is like the dissimilarity between human and deity happiness.

How did the Buddha describe human existence? It is like finding yourself seated under an enormous tree providing good shade. "Oh, how cool it is here!" you say. Yet no matter how cool and shady, seated on the ground, you cannot avoid getting the sloping rays of the sun or the rain.

As for life in the deity world, the Buddha compared it to living in a well-furnished room with a big sofa and a bed with a mattress, secure from the wind and rain. Are these two situations alike? No, they are not the same. The difference is due to the quality of the act of kusala, such as dāna and sīla. The result given is thus different.

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## **Success and failure**

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Although kamma is the essential condition, we cannot just consider it by itself. We also need to look at the other conditions and the overall situation. Take it this way: a tree needs the supporting conditions of soil, water, light, heat and fertiliser, and so on if it is to grow. The kind of soil or a temperature that is too high or low, for example, will affect its growth. So many conditions are involved.

It is the same for kamma. No matter how good the kusala kamma, once it meets the adverse situation of vipatti<sup>40</sup>, it cannot do its task. Similarly akusala kamma -- however big -- in the condition of complete sampatti cannot function and bring about dukkha. This nature of kamma should be understood.

## **The plane of existence and the times**

A person could be born in a plane of existence that is not good: in hell, the animal kingdom, or in the realm of petas and asuras. Once he arrives at such a bad destination (gati vipatti), even though he has kusala kammas which would like to give their

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<sup>40</sup> Vipatti means failure, while sampatti is success.

result, they are not able to. At most they can only see to it that he gets enough to eat. They are unable to provide human or deity existence where life would not be degenerate and incomplete.

Then during bad times people are demoralised and likely to commit misconduct. During the dark period of kāla vipatti akusala kammas are usually performed. In such a period nobody is at peace or trouble-free. The Second World War was such a period when it was hard to obtain any merit or benefit. I was born in 1940 just before the war. Due to the bombing and disease-outbreaks, many innocent people died. Even in our village one whole family died. Many in the country died because of the plague, including some well-known scholars.

On the other hand the time during which people have the chance for good moral behaviour is kala sampatti. This is a period where progress is made in all fields, with the economy booming, improvement in education, and so on.

## **One's appearance**

Looks matter too – even for a dog. If it is cute-looking, people will say, "How pretty that dog is!" and give it food. That is called upadhi sampatti. As for upadhi vipatti: if it was a starving mongrel with sores, they are likely to throw a stone at it instead.

It is the same for a person. No matter how wealthy one is, with ugly looks, social acceptance is hard to come by. For instance, there is an account of a minister at one time in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) who had a rather ugly wife. On ceremonial occasions she would be mistaken for a house-slave. Nobody treated her with respect. Because of upadhi vipatti, no one thought she was a minister's wife.

With upadhi vipatti even a king's son would have no chance to succeed to the throne. In Ceylon there was once a prince who was keen on cock-fighting even at a young age. During one match his eye was damaged by a cock's spur. As a result he became blind in one eye. As he came of age, his mother (the queen) approached the king to ask if her son would be made the crown prince. What was the king's reply?

"The prince is handicapped. He can't become king. It has been quite a long while since there was a one-eyed king."

So kingship over Ceylon was not given to the prince. He was given a tiny island to rule over instead. If he had not lost an eye – if there had been no upadhi vipatti – he would have become a king for sure. Even if there had been kusala kamma to give its result, it could not because everything had gone wrong.

Then there was a general of dwarf-size who was extremely skilled in archery. Yet the king did not like him as an archer in his service, thinking that everyone would laugh to see an ugly dwarf as one of the king's personal archers. So the general had a good-looking fellow take his place, while he waited on this substitute-archer. If there was something that required his

service, he would do it discretely in place of his substitute – without being seen.

So even in securing an appointment, one's appearance carried weight, especially in the old days of slavery. It did not matter how lowly or poor one was. One's mother could be a slave-woman. But so long as one had good looks, rank and appointment could be had.

Thus kamma in producing its result is affected by conditions of sampatti and vipatti. It does not wholly rely on itself to do so.

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## **Can we avoid bad kamma-result?**

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As long as we are not free of avijjā's ignorance of the Truth, we can be said to be walking blindly along the road without a guide. At times we may be able to keep to the path and reach our destination. At other times we may not get there. In our journey through saṃsāra through ignorance as putthujjanas we do not know what should or should not be done. Thus what should be done we think should not be done. What should not be done we think should be done.

In this way we act following what we think: from time to time we happen to do merit; occasionally we do evil. These acts committed will bear fruit and return to us as a result. This is nature's law of action and reaction.

### **Having done what should not be done**

If misdeeds have been committed, such as killing, what is to be done? Do we give up in despair for the rest of our lives? We need not lose heart as the Buddha has shown a way to escape from bad kamma.

First we must be aware that what had been committed is not good: that any wrongdoing is not good. After all the Buddha had warned, "Don't do what is unwholesome. If you do, akusala kamma will give its unhappy and painful result."

With this realisation we should make a resolution either to ourselves, a teacher or a trusted friend. "I've already done wrong. Thinking about it makes me remorseful. Though I can get over the feeling, I cannot put things right as the deed has already been done. I'll never commit the wrongdoing again from now on. I'll only do what is meritorious."

We should keep to our resolve, making sure that the misdeed is not repeated. This is the solution. By abstaining from akusala, we keep performing what is kusala. Carrying out what is good, avoiding what is evil: if so we can surely free ourselves from this bad kamma troubling us. This does not mean that we destroy or cancel it out – which is impossible. It is just a method to escape from it.

It is not useful or necessary to become depressed thinking about what has been done. It is not something that can be corrected or changed. So we should think no more about it.

More important is to make sure that this kind of misdeed is no longer repeated in the future. This is the only way. Otherwise how could someone like Āngulimālā be able to become an arahant despite having killed so many people? By following this method of avoiding evil and cultivating good, kamma will be

isolated<sup>41</sup>, according to the Buddha. Because kilesas fertilise kamma, it will grow. If the mental defilements are removed, kamma ceases. But as long as they remain, so will kamma.

When I was living in America, at one time I gave a talk about how to be liberated from bad kamma. One layman said, "Venerable Sir, it seems as though you're encouraging wrong-doers in your discourse."

I replied, "This is only speaking realistically. Otherwise what's the use of the Dhamma? Demerit is usually what puthujjanas do. Having done so, if it's so that there is no escape route or solution, what will be the case? But of course there's a solution. This the Buddha pointed out in Saṅkhadhamma Sutta."

## **Don't surrender to kamma**

Thus kamma is not something that you give in to. Instead it can be modified. You can substitute what is bad with something good – akusala is got rid of using kusala. In coming to understand the nature of kamma and realising the results it gives, you will abstain from performing bad kamma. You will make the effort instead to do good. If so you can, if you wish, remain happily in saṃsāra.

However no longer wanting the dukkha of aging, sickness and death, you still continue to cultivate good, while making an

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<sup>41</sup> Kilesa nirodhe, kamma nirodho.

effort to understand what the Buddha taught about kamma. There will come a time when you can understand and discriminate between the two types of kamma in your life – the type to be avoided and that to be kept. Striving to perform wholesome kammas, you also strive in practice to remove kilesas. This is in order to liberate yourself eventually from all kammas good and bad. At the point when you are able to remove kilesas, kamma will no longer be able to give its result. This is when you have gained the happiness of Nibbāna.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Sabbadānam dhammadānam jināti**  
**(The gift of Dhamma excels all gifts)**

Five hundred copies of *Kamma in this Life* were printed for free distribution by Sayalay Vimalañāṇi.

May all beings share in the merits gained through this publication.

*Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!*