Pāḷi Text on Kamma

[1]

There are these three sectarian views which, when considered, examined and thought about carefully by the wise, and taken to their logical conclusion, must lead to doing nothing. What three? (a) There are some ascetics and brahmins who teach that whatever pleasant, painful or neutral experiences a person has is all due to past kamma. (b) There are other who teach that whatever pleasant, painful or neutral experiences a person has is all due to God’s will. (c) And there are still other ascetics and brahmins who teach that whatever pleasant, painful or neutral experiences a person has is without cause. Now I went to these ascetics and brahmins and asked them if indeed they did teach this. When they confirmed that they did I said to them: “If this is so then if you kill, steal, sexually misbehave, lie, speak unskilfully and are full of craving and deluded views, then that must be due to your past kamma.” Those who fall back on past deeds as the cause of everything should have no desire to do good or avoid evil and in fact they should not even be able to make the effort. Because they do not know the real cause of good or evil actions they are muddle minded, they do not guard themselves, and thus even the term ‘ascetic’ could not be legitimately applied to them. This was my first legitimate refutation of those ascetics and brahmins who hold such a doctrine and view.

AN 3.62

[2] Moḷiyasīvaka said to the Lord: “Good Gotama, there are some ascetics and brahmins who teach that whatever pleasant, painful or neutral experiences a person has all that is all due to past kamma. What do you have to say about that?”

The Lord said: “Sīvaka, some feelings arise from disorders of the bile, and that this is so can be known by oneself, and it is a fact generally acknowledged by the world. Now when those ascetics and brahmins hold such a doctrine they go beyond what one can know by oneself and what is generally acknowledged by the world. Therefore, I say that they are wrong. Some feelings arise from disorders of phlegm, from disorders of wind, or from disorders in all three humors combined. Some are due to climatic changes, others are due to accidents and yet others are due to kamma. And that some feelings have such causes can be known by oneself and it is a fact generally acknowledged by the world. Therefore, I say that those ascetics and brahmins are wrong.”

S.IV,229

[3]

Not in the sky, not in the middle of the sea,   
not by entering mountain clefts   
is there that place on earth where standing   
one might be freed from evil kamma.

Dhp.127

[4] “If one were to say: ‘A person experiences kamma in precisely the same way that he created it’ and if this were so, then logically one could not live the spiritual life and there would be no way to make an end of suffering. But if one were to say: ‘When a person creates kamma that is to be experienced in a particular way, he experiences its result precisely in that,’ then living of the spiritual life would be possible and there would be a way to make an end of suffering.

For example, some person creates minor bad kamma and as a result he goes to purgatory, while some other person does exactly the same minor bad kamma and yet he experiences it in this life, leaving not even the slightest, let alone abundant residue. Why is it that this first person goes to purgatory? Because this person is undeveloped in body, virtuous behaviour, mind, and wisdom; he is limited and has a mean character, and he dwells in suffering. When such a person creates trifling bad kamma, it leads him to purgatory.

And what kind of person creates exactly the same minor bad kamma and yet it is to be experienced in this very life, without even a slightest let alone abundant residue? Here, some person is developed in body, virtuous behaviour, mind, and wisdom. He is unlimited and has a lofty character, and he dwells without measure. When such a person creates exactly the same minor bad kamma, it is to be experienced in this very life, without even the slightest residue let alone abundant residue. Suppose a man would drop a lump of salt into a small bowl of water. What do you think? Would that lump of salt make the small amount of water in the bowl salty and undrinkable?”

“Yes, Bhante, it would. And why? Because the water in the bowl is limited, thus that lump of salt would make it salty and undrinkable.”

“Now suppose a man were to drop a lump of salt into the Ganges River. What do you think? Would that lump of salt make the Ganges salty and undrinkable?”

“No, Bhante it would not. And why? Because the Ganges contains much water and thus that lump of salt would not make it salty and undrinkable.”

A.I,249

[5]

There are these four kinds of persons found existing in the world. What four? One heading from darkness to darkness, one heading from darkness to light, one heading from light to darkness, and one heading from light to light.

(a) And how is a person one heading from darkness to darkness? Let’s say some person has been reborn in a low family, a family of outcastes, hunters, bamboo workers, cartwrights, or ﬂower scavengers; a poor family where there is meagre food and drink and where even mere subsistence is a struggle, plus he is ugly, misshapen, constantly ill, short sighted, crippled, lame or paralyzed. He does not acquire the pleasant things of life easily. And further, he does wrong with body, speech, and mind. Having done so, with the breakup of the body after death, he is reborn into deprivation, a rough place, a bleak destination, even in purgatory.

(b) And how is a person one heading from darkness to light? Let’s say some person has been reborn in a low family with all the same disabilities and difficulties mentioned before. But he does good with body, speech, and mind. Having done so, with the breakup of the body after death, he is reborn in a good destination, even in a heavenly world.

(c) And how is a person one heading from light to darkness? Let’s say some person has been reborn in a high family, an affluent, noble, brahmin or householder family, one that is rich, with great wealth and property, plenty of gold, silver, treasures and other commodities, plus he is handsome, attractive, with an exceptionally beautiful complexion. He is one who gains the good things of life easily. But he does wrong with body, speech, and mind. Having done so, with the breakup of the body after death he is reborn into deprivation, a rough place, a bleak destination, even in purgatory.

(d) And finally, how is a person one heading from light to light? Let’s say some person has been reborn in a high family with all the same benefits and advantages. And he does good conduct of body, speech, and mind. Having done so, with the breakup of the body after death he is reborn in a good destination, even in a heavenly world. These are the four kinds of persons found existing in the world.

S.I,93

[6a]

Whoever covers the evil kamma he has done   
with good kamma   
illuminates this world   
like the moon when freed from a cloud.

Dhp.173

[6b]

There are six classes. What six? Here, someone of the dark (kaṇha) class produces a dark state. Someone of the dark class produces a light (sukka) state. Someone of the dark class produces Nirvana, which is neither dark nor light. Someone of the light class produces a dark state. Someone of the light class produces a light state. And finally, someone of the light class produces Nirvana, which is neither dark nor light.

(a) And how is it that someone of the dark class produces a dark state? Let’s say some person has been reborn in a low family, a family of outcastes, hunters, bamboo workers, cartwrights, or ﬂower scavengers; a poor family where there is meagre food and drink and mere existence is a struggle, plus he is ugly, misshapen, constantly ill, short sighted, crippled, lame or paralyzed. He does not acquire the pleasant things of life easily. He cannot get decent food, drink, clothing, vehicles, garlands, scents, and unguents, bedding, housing, and lighting. He does wrong with body, speech, and mind. Because of this at the breakup of the body after death he is reborn in the state of misery, in a bad destination, a lower world, perhaps even in hell. This is an example of someone of a dark class producing a dark state.

(b) And how is it that someone of the dark class produces a light state? Here some person has been reborn in a low family, with all the same disabilities and difficulties mentioned before. But he does good with body, speech, and mind. Having done so, with the breakup of the body after death, he is reborn in a good destination, even in a heavenly world. This is an example of someone of a dark class producing a light state.

(c) And how is it that someone of the dark class produces Nirvana which is neither dark nor light? Here, someone has been reborn in a low family... But then having shaved off his hair and beard, he puts on yellow robes and goes forth from the household life into homelessness. Having done this, he abandons the five hindrances, defilements of the mind, things that weaken wisdom; and with his mind well established in the four foundations of mindfulness, he correctly develops the seven factors of enlightenment and produces Nirvana which is neither dark nor light. This is an example of someone of the dark class produces Nirvana, which is neither dark nor light.

(d) And how is it that someone of the light class produces a dark state? Here some person has been reborn in a high family… But he does wrong with body, speech, and mind. Having done so, with the breakup of the body after death he is reborn in the state of misery, in a bad destination, a lower world, perhaps even in hell.

(e) And how is it that someone of the light class produces a light state? Here some person has been reborn in a high family… And he does good conduct of body, speech, and mind. Having done so, with the breakup of the body after death, he is reborn in a good destination, even in a heavenly world.

(f) And finally, how does someone of a light class produces Nirvana, which is neither dark nor light? Here some person has been reborn in a high family…Then having become a monk he abandons the five hindrances, and with his mind well established in the four foundations of mindfulness, he correctly develops the seven factors of enlightenment and produces Nirvana which is neither dark nor light. This is an example of someone of the dark class producing Nirvana, which is neither dark nor light.

A.III,384-87.

[**7**] And what is the result of kamma? I say that the result of kamma is threefold: that to be experienced in this life; that to be experienced in the next life; and that to be experienced on some subsequent occasion. This is called the result of kamma. A.III, 415

[**8**] There are these four kinds of persons found existing in the world. What four? The blameworthy, the mainly blameworthy, the slightly blameworthy and the blameless. (a) And how is a person blameworthy? Here, a person engages in blameworthy bodily, verbal and mental kamma. (b) And how is a person mostly blameworthy? Here, at person engages in bodily, verbal and mental kamma that is mainly blameworthy. (c) And how is a person slightly blameworthy? Here, a person engages in bodily verbal and mental kamma that is slightly blameworthy. (d) And how is a person blameless? Here, a person engages in blameless bodily, blameless verbal and blameless mental action. These are the four kinds of persons found existing in the world. A.II,136.

[**9**] There are these four kinds of kamma proclaimed by me after having realized them for myself with direct knowledge. What four? There is dark kamma with dark result; bright kamma with bright result; both dark-and-bright kamma with both dark-and-bright result; kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither-dark-nor-bright result, and there is kamma that leads to the destruction of kamma. These are the four kinds of kamma proclaimed by me after I realized them for myself with direct knowledge. A.II,2130.

[**10**] One who realizes the Threefold Knowledge is at peace, with renewed existence destroyed. Those with understanding know that such a one is comparable to Brahmā or Sakra. Sn.656.

[**11**] With mind focused and purified, cleansed and unblemished, pliant and free of defilements, malleable, stable, firm and imperturbable, one directs and inclines the mind towards the knowledge of previous existence. One remembers numerous previous lives; one, two, five ten, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand... One recalls: ‘This was my name, that was my clan, my caste was this, my food was that. I experienced these pleasant and painful situations and I lived for that long. Having passed away from there, I was reborn in another place where my name was this, my clan was that, and so on.’ Like this one remembers various past births, their conditions and details. It is just as if a man were to go from his village to another one, from that to yet another, and then return to his village. He might recall: ‘I came from my village to that other one where I did this, that and the other, and from there he went to another one, from there to yet another and then returned to my village.’ This is a fruit of the meditative life.

[**12**] Then with mind focused and purified... firm and imperturbable one directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the passing away and arising of beings. With the divine eye, purified and surpassing that of ordinary humans, one sees beings passing away and arising: low and high, advantaged and disadvantaged, to happy and unhappy destinations according to their kamma, and he knows: “Because of misconduct of body, speech or mind, or disparaging the Noble Ones, or having wrong view, these beings will suffer the kammic result of wrong view. At the breaking-up of the body after death they are reborn in a lower world, a bad destination, a state of suffering, even in purgatory. But those others because of good conduct of body, speech or mind, of praising the Noble Ones, and having right view and will reap the kammic result of right view. At the breaking-up of the body after death they are reborn in a good destination even in a heavenly world.” It is just as if there were a tall building overlooking a crossroads, and a man with good eyesight standing there might see people entering or leaving a house, walking down the street, or sitting at the crossroads. And he might think: “These people are entering a house, walking down the street and sitting at the crossroad.” This is a fruit of the meditative life. D.I,82

[**13**] There are some ascetics and brahmins are eternalists maintaining that the self and the world are eternal. On what grounds to they claim this? Sometimes, a certain ascetic or brahmin has by means of effort and exertion, application, earnestness and right attention, attained such a state of concentration that he can recall many of his... past lives, in all their conditions and details. And then he says: ‘The self and the world (must be) eternal, like a mountain peak, as firm as a post. Beings rush around, circulate, pass away and are reborn, and this continues eternally. And why do I say this? Because by means of my meditation I have recalled numerous former lives. That is how I know the self and the world are eternal’ D.I,13-14.

[**14**] It is intention (*cetanā*) that I call kamma. For having intended, one acts by body, speech, or mind. A.III, 415

[**15**] Mind precedes mental states, mind is their chief, they are all mind-made. If one speaks or acts with an evil mind, suffering follows that one as the wheel follows the ox. Mind precedes mental states, mind is their chief, they are all mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind happiness follows one like a shadow. Dhp.1,2

[**16**] It is to be expected that beings gravitate towards and unite (with those like themselves). Those who kill gravitate towards and unite with those who kill. Those who steal, who sexually misconduct themselves, lie, speak divisively, harshly, and indulge in idle chatter, gravitate towards and unite with those who act likewise. Those who abstain from killing, stealing, from sexual misconduct, from lying, from divisive speech, from harsh speech, and from idle chatter gravitate towards and unite with those who abstain likewise. S.II,167

[**17a**] Do not think lightly of evil, saying: ‘It will not come to me.’ A drop at a time is the water pot filled. Likewise, is the fool filled with evil. Do not think lightly of good, saying: ‘It will not come to me’. A drop at a time is the water pot filled. Likewise, is the wise one filled with good. Dhp.121

[**17b**] Whatever one thinks about and ruminates over often the mind gets a leaning in that way. If one frequently thinks about and ruminates over desire, ill-will or cruelty, thoughts of without desire, ill will and cruelty will be abandoned and the mind will lean towards desire, ill-will and cruelty. If one does not frequently think about and ruminates over thoughts of desire, ill will and cruelty, such thoughts will be abandoned and the mind will lean towards thoughts without desire, ill will and cruelty. M.I,115-16

[**18**] “There are some ascetics and brahmins who hold such a doctrine and view as this: ‘Anyone at all who kills, steals, sexually misconducts themselves or lies experiences pain and grief in this very life.’ But sometimes we see someone garlanded and adorned, bathed and groomed, with hair and beard trimmed, enjoying himself with women almost as if he were royalty. On asking: ‘What has this man done that he is enjoying such luxury and pleasure?’ the answer is given: ‘This man attacked the king’s enemy and killed him. The king was pleased with him and bestowed a reward upon him. That is why he is enjoying all these luxuries and pleasures.’ Then sometimes we see someone with his arms tightly bound behind his back with a strong rope and his head shaved, being paraded from street to street, from one square to another to the ominous sound of a drum, and then taken out through the south gate of the town and beheaded. On asking: ‘What has this man done?’ the answer is given: ‘This man is an enemy of the king and he killed a man or a woman. That is why the king, having had him arrested, imposed such a punishment upon him.’ What do you think, headman, have you ever seen or heard of such things?”

“I have Lord, and I will probably will hear of it again.”

“Therefore, headman, when those ascetics and brahmins say that whoever kills experiences pain and grief here and now, are they speaking accurately or falsely?”

“Falsely Lord.”

“And are those who prattle empty falsehood virtuous or immoral?”

“Immoral.”

“Are those who are immoral and of bad character practicing wrongly or rightly?”

“They are practicing wrongly.”

“Do those who are practising wrongly hold wrong view or right view?”

“Wrong view.”

“Is it wise to place confidence in those who hold wrong view?”

“No Lord, it is not.” S.IV,343

[**19**] When some ascetic or brahmin says: (a) ‘Indeed, there are evil actions and misconduct has a result,’ I agree with him. When he says: “I saw a person who killed, stole, misbehaved sexually, lied, used bad language, and who was greedy, full of ill-will and deluded views. And I saw that on the dissolution of the body after death, he was reborn into deprivation, a rough place, a bleak destination, even in purgatory.’ I also agree with him. But when he says: “Everyone who does such evil will have a bad rebirth” then I do not agree with him.

(b) When some ascetic or brahmin says: ‘Indeed, there is no such thing as evil and misconduct has no result,’ I do not agree with him. When he says: ‘I saw a person here who killed and did other evil and I saw that when he died he was reborn in a happy state, even in a heaven realm.’ I agree with him. But when he says: ‘Everyone who does such evil is reborn will have a good rebirth’ I do not agree with him.

(c) When some ascetic or brahmin says: ‘Indeed, there are good actions and good conduct has a result,’ I agree with him. When he says: ‘I saw a person who abstained from killing and other evil and I saw that when he died he was reborn in a happy state,’ I agree with him. But when he says: ‘Everyone who does good will have a good rebirth’ I do not agree with him.

(d) When some ascetic or brahmin says: ‘Indeed, there is no such thing as evil, and misconduct has no result” I do not agree with him. When he says: ‘I saw a person here who abstained from killing and other evil and I saw that when he died he was reborn in a bad state’ I agree with him. But when he says: ‘Everyone who abstains from evil is reborn in a bad state’ I do not agree with him.

(e) Why is this? Concerning the person who kills and does those other evils things and after death has a bad rebirth; either earlier he did an evil action to be felt as painful, or later he did an evil action to be felt as painful, or before he died he had deluded views. Because of that, when he dies he will have a bad rebirth. And since he killed and did those other evils things he will experience their result either here, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

(f) Concerning the person who kills and does those other evil things and after death has a good rebirth; either earlier he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or later he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or before he died he had clear views. But since he killed and did those other evil things he will experience their result either here, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

(g) Concerning the person who abstains from killing and those other evil things and after death has a good rebirth; either earlier he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or later he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or before he dies he had clear views. Because of that when he dies he will have a good rebirth. And since he abstained from killing and those other evil things he will experience their result either here, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

(h) Concerning the person who abstains from killing and those other evil things and after death has a bad rebirth; either earlier he did an evil action to be felt as unpleasant, or later he did an evil action to be felt as unpleasant, or at the time of death he had deluded views. Because of that when he dies he will have an unhappy rebirth. But since he abstained from killing and those other evils he will experience their result either here, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

(i) So, there is kamma that is incapable of good result and appears incapable; there is kamma that is incapable of good result but appears capable; there is kamma that is capable of good result and appears capable; and there is kamma that is capable of good result but appears incapable. M.III,214

[**20a**] Mahāli the Licchavi asked the Lord: “Sir, what is the cause, what is the reason for doing bad kamma?”

“Mahāli, greed, hatred and delusion, carless attention and a wrongly directed mind are the cause and reason for doing bad kamma.”

“Then what is the cause and reason for doing of good kamma?”

“Non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion, careful attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*) and a rightly directed mind (*sammāpaṇihita-citta*) are the causes and conditions for the doing of beautiful kamma. If these ten qualities did not exist in the world, unrighteous conduct, conduct contrary to Dhamma, and righteous conduct, conduct in harmony or in accordance with Dhamma, would not be seen. But because these ten qualities do exist in the world, unrighteous conduct, conduct contrary to the Dhamma, and righteous conduct, conduct in accordance or in harmony? with the Dhamma, are seen.” A.V,87

[**20b**] The Lord asked Cunda: “Whose purification rituals do you prefer?”

“Lord, I prefer the purification rituals taught by those brahmins from the west who carry water pots, wear garlands of water lilies, worship the sacred fire, and immerse themselves in water.”

“And how Cunda, do those brahmins teach their purification rituals?”

“They say: ‘Do this, good man. Wake up early and while still in bed touch the ground. If you can’t do that then touch fresh cow dung. If you can’t do that touch green grass. And if you can’t do that then worship fire or the sun or immerse yourself in water three times, including in the evening.’ These are the purification rituals they teach and these are the ones I prefer.”

“Well, the purification rituals of the Noble One’s training are quite different from the ones taught by those brahmins of the west.”

“And how Lord, is one purified according to Noble One’s training? “

“Cunda, impurity by body is threefold, and so is impurity by speech and impurity by mind.

(a) And how is impurity by body threefold? Concerning this, let’s say someone kills, is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. He steals the possessions and the property of others in the village or the forest. He misbehaves sexually, having sex with women protected by their parents, siblings or relations, protected by the Dhamma, with one already engaged, with married women, with women whose violation entails a penalty; or with those already pledged to another. In this way that impurity by body is threefold.

(b) And how is impurity by speech fourfold? Concerning this, let’s say someone lies. If he is summoned to a council or an assembly, a family meeting, a guild or to the court, and questioned as a witness and he is asked: ‘Tell what you know.’ Then, although not knowing he says he knows, or knowing he says he does not know. Although not seeing he says he saw and seeing he says he did not see. He deliberately lies for his own or for another’s advantage, or for some small gain. Let’s say he speaks divisively. Having heard something here, he repeats it there or having heard something there he repeats it here in order to create divisions between people. He is one who divides those who are united, a creator of divisions, one who likes making factions. He speaks harshly, uttering words that are rough, hard and hurtful, offensive, bordering on anger, unhelpful to concentration. He indulges in idle chatter, speaking at the wrong time, falsely, about useless matters, contrary to the Dhamma and training. In this way that impurity by speech is fourfold.

(c) And how is impurity by mind threefold? In this case, let’s say someone is full of longing for the wealth and property of others, always thinking: ‘If only what belongs to them belonged to me.’ He has a mind full of ill-will and hatred, always thinking: ‘May these beings be slain, slaughtered, cut off, destroyed, annihilated!’ He holds wrong view and has an incorrect perspective such as this: ‘Giving is useless, so is making offerings, there is no result of good and bad actions, this world does not exist nor is there a world beyond death. There is no mother, no father, there are no beings spontaneously born, in the whole world there are no genuine ascetics or brahmins conducting themselves properly or practicing properly, or who, having realized this world and the world beyond by their own direct knowledge, make them known to others.’ It is in this way that impurity by mind is threefold. These are the ten courses of negative kamma. If one engages in these ten, then despite waking up early and touching the ground from one’s bed, or performing any of those other purification rituals, one is nonetheless impure. And why? Because these ten courses of negative kamma are themselves impure and deﬁling. It is because people engage in these ten courses of unwholesome kamma that purgatory, the animal realm, the sphere of afflicted spirits, and other bad destinations are seen. A.V,263

[**21**] There are three accumulations: wrong with fixed result; good with fixed result; and (those which are) indeterminate. D.III,217

[**22**] The brahmin student Subha said to the Lord: “Master Gotama, what is the cause, what is the reason why some human beings are inferior and others superior? For people can be seen to be short-lived and long-lived, sickly and healthy, ugly and beautiful, weak and strong, poor and wealthy, low-born and high-born, stupid and intelligent. What is the cause and condition of this?”

Then the Lord said: “Student, beings are owners of their kamma, heirs of their kamma; they originate from their kamma, are bound to their kamma, have their kamma as their refuge. It is kamma that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior.”   
 “I do not understand the meaning of your answer, it is too brief and without detail. It would be good if you would teach me the Dhamma in detail so that I can understand your answer.”

“Then listen carefully student, pay attention and I shall speak. (a) Lets ay a man or woman kills, is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence and is merciless. Because of doing such action, on the breakup of the body after death, they are reborn in to deprivation, a rough place, a bleak destination, even in purgatory. And if he is not reborn in such a place but comes back as a human instead, then wherever he is reborn he will short-lived. This is the way that leads to short life, namely, killing, being murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence and merciless.

(b) Say a man or woman abstains from killing, lays the stick and sword aside and acts with care, kindness and compassion to all beings. Because of such actions, on the dissolution of the body after death they are reborn in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. And if he is not reborn in such a place but comes back as a human instead, then wherever he is reborn he is long-lived. This is the way that leads to long-life, namely, abstaining from killing, laying aside the stick and sword and acting with care, kindness and compassion towards all living beings.

[The discourse continues in the same manner. Injuring living beings leads either to a bad destination or rebirth as a chronically ill human; abstaining from injuring leads either to a good destination or rebirth as a healthy human; being angry and short-tempered leads either to a bad destination or rebirth as an ugly human; abstaining from anger and short-temperedness leads either to a good destination or rebirth as a physically attractive human; being envious and begrudging leads either to a bad destination or rebirth as a human without influence or significance; abstaining from envy and not being begrudging leads to rebirth as a human with influence; being mean and sharing nothing leads either to a bad destination or rebirth as a poor and deprived human; being generous leads either to a good destination or rebirth as a rich human; being proud and arrogant leads either to a bad destination or rebirth as a low caste or low class human; not being proud and arrogant leads either to a good destination or rebirth as a high caste or high class human; etc). M.III,202-06

[**23**] These two misrepresent the Tathāgata. Which two? One who takes a discourse of indirect meaning as one having direct meaning, and one who takes a discourse of direct meaning as one having indirect meaning. These are the two who misrepresent the Tathāgata. A.I,60

[**24**] This body is old kamma, to be seen as generated and fashioned by volition, as something to be felt. S.IV,132.

[**25**] The Lord said: “The uninstructed ordinary person feels pleasant, painful and neutral feelings and so does an instructed noble disciple. So what is the difference between them?” The monks replied: “Our Dhamma has its foundation in you Lord. Please explain this matter to us and having heard it we will remember it.”

“Monks, when an uninstructed ordinary person feels pain he weeps and wails, cries, beats his breast and becomes distraught. He feels two feelings, a physical one and a psychological one. He is like a man who is shot with one arrow who is then shot with a second arrow. But when an instructed noble disciple feels pain he does not weep and wail, cry, beat his breast and become distraught. He feels only one feeling, a physical one. He is like a man who is shot with one arrow but avoids being shot with a second arrow.” S.IV,208.

[**26**] There are four things that are imponderable. What four? The domain of the Buddhas, the domain of the *jhānas*,[[1]](#footnote-2) the result of kamma, and the origin of the world. One should not ponder over these four things, for trying to do so will result in either madness or frustration. A.II,80

[**27**] The lay woman Migasālā said to Ananda: “Ānanda, exactly how should this teaching of the Lord be understood where one who is celibate and one who is not celibate could both have exactly the same destination in their next life? My father Purāṇa was celibate, living apart from his wife, abstaining from sex, the village practice. When he died, the Lord said that he has attained the first stage of awakening, having become a once-returner[[2]](#footnote-3) and was reborn in a heaven realm. My paternal uncle Isidatta was not celibate and lived a happy married life. And yet when he died, the Lord said that he too had attained to the first stage of awakening and had been reborn in a heaven realm. How is it possible that one who is celibate should have the same rebirth as one who is not?”

“Sister, it is just as the Lord said.”

Later, Ānanda met the Lord and told him what Migasālā had asked. Then the Lord said: “Who is this lay woman Migasālā! Just a foolish, silly woman with a foolish woman’s intelligence! And who are they who claim to know who is superior and who inferior? There are these six types of persons in the world. What six?

(a) Let’s say there is a person who is mild, a good companion, one liked by his fellows. But he is not learned in the teachings, he has no understanding of them and no meditation attainment. Therefore, with the breakup of the body at death he goes to an unfavourable and undesirable place.

(b) Then let’s say there is a person who is mild, a good companion, one liked by his fellows. He is learned in the teachings, he has some understanding of them and has occasional meditation attainment.[[3]](#footnote-4) Therefore, with the breakup of the body at death he goes to a favourable, a desirable place. Now those who are judgmental will say: “This one has the same qualities as the other so why should one be superior and the other inferior?” Such a judgment will surely lead to their harm and suffering for a long time. Between these two persons the second surpasses and excels the other person. And why? Because the stream of the Dhamma carries him along (*imaṁ, hānanda, puggalaṁ  dhammasotaṃ nibbahatī*). But who can know this difference except the Tathāgata? Therefore, Ānanda, do not [try to] assess people or make an assessment of them. Those who do this only harm only themselves. I alone, or one like me, may do this about people.

(c) Then let’s say there is the person who is angry, conceited and occasionally greedy too. He is not learned in the teachings, he has no understanding of them and no meditation attainment. Therefore, with the breakup of the body at death he goes to an unfavourable, an undesirable place.

(d) Then there is the person who is angry, conceited and occasionally greedy too. But he is learned in the teachings, he has some understanding of them and occasional meditation attainment. Therefore, with the breakup of the body at death he goes to a favourable, a desirable place. Between these two the second surpasses and excels the other person. And why? Because the stream of the Dhamma carries him along. But who can know this difference except the Tathāgata? Therefore, Ānanda, do not [try to] assess people or make an assessment of them. Those who do this only harm only themselves. I alone, or one like me, may do this about people.

(e) Now let’s take the case of the person who is angry, conceited and now and then speaks roughly. He is not learned in the teachings, he has not understood them and he has no some meditation attainment. With the breakup of the body at death he is reborn in the state of misery, in a bad destination, a lower world, perhaps even in purgatory. (f) And finally let’s consider the person who is angry, conceited and now and then speaks roughly. But he has learned in the teachings, he has understood them and he has some meditation attainment. With the breakup of the body at death he goes to a favourable, a desirable place. Ānanda, those given to assessing will [try to] assess them: “This one has the same qualities as the other. Why should one be inferior and the other superior?” That judgment will certainly lead to their harm and suffering for a long time. Between these two, the second surpasses and excels the other person. And why? Because the stream of the Dhamma carries him along. But no one can know this difference except the Tathāgata. Therefore, Ānanda, do not [try to] assess people or make an assessment of them. Those who do this only harm only themselves. I alone, or one like me, may do this about people. Between them, Ānanda, the person in whom anger and conceit are found, and who from time to time engages in exchanges of words, but who has listened [to the teachings], become learned [in them], and penetrated [them] by view, and who attains temporary liberation, surpasses and excels the other person. For what reason? Because the stream of Dhamma carries him along. But who can know this difference except the Tathāgata? Therefore, Ānanda, do not [try to] assess people or make an assessment of them. Those who do this only harm only themselves. I alone, or one like me, may do this about people. Who, indeed, is the female lay follower Migasālā! Just a foolish, silly woman with a foolish woman’s intelligence! And who are they who claim to know who is superior and who inferior? A.III,347 ff

[**28a**] And for the sake of what benefit should a woman or a man, a householder or monk, often reflect like this: ‘I am the owner of my kamma, heirs of my kamma; I originate from my kamma, are bound to my kamma, have my kamma as my refuge. I will be the inheritor of whatever kamma, good or bad, that I do. People engage in misconduct by body, speech, and mind. But when one often reflects upon this theme such misconduct is either completely given up or at least diminished. A.II,73

[**28b**] (a) When intending to do an act with body, speech or mind, you should reflect like this: ‘Will this act disadvantage me, the other person, or both of us? Is it an unwholesome act likely to result in suffering?” If you conclude that it is then you should definitely not do it. But if on reflection you think: ‘This act I am about to do will not disadvantage me, the other, or both of us. It is a wholesome act likely to have a pleasant result’ then you should do it.

(b) While doing an act with body, speech or mind, you should reflect like this: ‘Will this act I am doing disadvantage me, the other, or both of us? Is it an unwholesome act having resulting in suffering?’ If you conclude that it is then you should definitely stop doing it. But if on reflection you think: ‘This act I am doing is not disadvantaging me, the others, or both of us. It is a wholesome act likely to have a pleasant result’ then you should keep doing it.

(c) After you have done an act with body, speech or mind, you should reflect like this: ‘Has this act I have done disadvantaged me, the other person, or of both of us? Is it an unwholesome act resulting in suffering?’ If you conclude that it is then you should confess it, acknowledge it, admit it to the Teacher or to a wise companion in the spiritual life. And having done this you should resolve to restrain yourself in the future. But if on reflection you think: ‘This act I have done did not disadvantage me, the other person or both of us. It is a wholesome act with a pleasant result’ then you should be happy and glad and continuing training in wholesome actions both day and night. M.I,415-8

[**29a**] A noble disciple reﬂects like this: ‘I am not the only one who is owner of my kamma, an heir of my kamma; who originates from his kamma, are bound to my kamma, has my kamma as my refuge, whose kamma is distinguished as inferior and superior.’ All beings are the same concerning kamma. As he often reﬂects on this theme, the path is generated. He pursues this path, develops it, and cultivates it. As he does so, the fetters are entirely abandoned and the underlying tendencies[[4]](#footnote-5) are uprooted. A.III,74

[**29b**] There are these five ways of removing any resentment that might arise towards someone. What five? One should develop loving-kindness for the person one resents. One should develop compassion towards them. One should develop equanimity toward them. One should just ignore the person and pay no attention to them. One should consider that beings own their kamma and think: ‘This person is the owner of his kamma, an heir of his kamma; who originates from his kamma, is bound to his kamma, has his kamma as his refuge, whose kamma distinguishes him as inferior and superior.’A.III,185

[**30a**] The origin of suffering is this: it is the craving that leads to renewed existence (*taṇhā ponobbhavikā*); accompanied by delight and lust; seeking delight here and there; that is to say; the craving for sensual pleasures the craving for existence and the craving for non-existence. S.V,421

[**30b**] By kamma the world goes on, by kamma people go on. Beings have kamma as their bond, as the linch-pin that keeps the turning wheel in place. Sn.654

[**30c**] There are these three causes for the origination of kamma. What three? Desire arises for things which in the past gave rise to desire and lust; desire arises for things which in the future might give rise to desire and lust; and desire arises for things which in the present give rise to desire and lust.

(a) And how does desire arise for things which in the past gave rise to desire and lust? One thinks about and ruminates over things in the past that gave rise to desire and lust. As one does so, more desire arises and when this desire springs up, one is fettered by those things. This mental infatuation is what I call the fetter. It is in this way that desire arises for things which in the past gave rise to desire and lust.

(b & c) And it is the same with things in the future might give rise to desire and lust and which in the present are giving rise to desire and lust. Then there are these three other causes for the origination of kamma. What three? Desire does not arise for things which in the past gave rise to desire and lust. Desire does not arise for things which in the future might give rise to desire and lust. Desire does not arise for things which in the present give rise to desire and lust. (d) And how does desire not arise for things which in the past gave rise to desire and lust? One understands what the result will be of having desire for things that in the past gave rise to desire and lust. Understanding this one does not do it. Not doing it the mind becomes dispassionate and seeing it with wisdom one sees that this is the way to avoid desire for things which in the past gave rise to desire and lust.

(e & f) And one does the same with things which in the future might give rise to desire and lust and things which in the present are giving rise to desire and lust. A.I,265

[**31**] There are four kinds of nutriment for the maintenance of beings that have come to be (i.e. already born), and the moving forward beings that are to be (i.e. about to be reborn). What four? Edible food both coarse and fine, contact, mental intention (*mano sañcetanā*) and consciousness. These four types of nutriment have craving as their source, craving as their origin, they are born of and produced by craving. M.I,261

[**32**] When the body is bereft of three things: vitality; heat; and consciousness; it is then thrown aside, discarded and left lying senseless like a log. Concerning one who is dead, having come to the end of his time, his bodily, verbal and mental activities have ceased and stopped, his vitality is exhausted, his heat has dissipated and his facilities have completely broken up. M.I,296

[**33**] When there is a coming together of three things the conception of the embryo in the womb takes place: the union of the mother and father; the mother’s fertility; and the presence of the being to be born. M.I,266

[**34**] “Just as a fire burns with fuel, cannot burn without fuel, so too, I say that rebirth happens for one who has fuel, not for one without fuel.”

“But good Gotama, when a flame is flung some distance by the wind, what do you say is its fuel then?”

“When a flame is flung some distance by the wind I say that it is fuelled by the wind, the wind is its fuel.”

“Well good Gotama, when a being has laid down the body but has not yet been reborn, what do you say is its fuel then?”

“When a being has laid down the body but not yet been reborn I say that it is fuelled by craving, craving is its fuel.” S.IV,399-400

[**35**] When it was said: “Kamma should be understood, the way leading to the cessation of kamma should be understood,” for what reason was this said?

(a) It is intention (*cetanā*) that I call kamma. For having intended, one acts by body, speech, or mind. (b) And what is the source and origin of kamma? Contact (*phassa*) is its source and origin. (c) And what is the diversity of kammna? There is kamma to be experienced in purgatory; there is kamma to be experienced in the animal realm; there is kamma to be experienced in the realm of afflicted spirits; there is kammna to be experienced in the human world; and there is kamma to be experienced in a heaven world. This is called the diversity of kamma. (d) And what is the result of kamma? I say that result of kamma is threefold, that to be experienced in this life, or in the next life, or on some subsequent occasion. This is called the result of kamma. (e) And what is the cessation of kamma? With the cessation of contact there is cessation of kamma.

(f) This Noble Eightfold Path is the way leading to the cessation of kamma, that is to say, Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. When a noble disciple thus understands kamma, its source, origin and diversity, its result, cessation and the way leading to its cessation, then he understands this penetrative spiritual life (*nibbedhika-brahmacariya*) is said to be the cessation of kamma. A.III, 415

[**36**]With clinging as the cause there is becoming, with becoming as the cause there is birth, with birth as the cause there is suffering, with suffering as the cause there is faith, with faith as the cause there is gladness, with gladness as the cause there is joy, with joy as the cause there is happiness, with happiness as the cause there is concentration, with concentration as the cause there is knowledge and vision of things as they are, with knowledge and vision of things as they are there is relinquishing, with relinquishing as the cause there is a fading of passions and with the fading of passions there is freedom. S.II,31-2

[**37a**] The old is destroyed and the new does not arise for those whose minds are disinterested in future existence, their seeds destroyed and with no more desire for growth. The wise are quenched like a lamp. Sn.235

[**37b**] There are these three causes for the origination of kamma. What three? Greed, hatred and delusion. Any kamma fashioned through, born of, caused by or originating in greed, hatred or delusion, ripens wherever the individual is reborn. Wherever that kamma ripens, it is there that one experiences its result, either in this life, in the next rebirth, or on some subsequent occasion. Suppose good seeds were planted in properly prepared ground in a good field and received sufficient rainfall. Because of all this those seeds would germinate, grow and mature. And it is the same for any kamma fashioned by either greed, hatred or delusion. There are these three other causes for the origination of kamma. What three? Non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion. Any such kamma is abandoned, when greed, hatred and delusion have vanished; it is cut off at the root, made like a palm tree stump, obliterated so that it is no more subject to future arising. Suppose a man were to take good seeds and burn them, reduce them to ashes, and winnow the ashes in the wind or tip them in a swift running river. In this way, those seeds would be cut off at the root, made like a palm tree stump, obliterated so that they are no more subject to future arising. These are the three causes for the origination of kamma. A.I,135

[**38**] “That noble disciple who is without longing or hatred, who is unconfused, with all-around awareness (*sampajāno*) and constant mindfulness (*patissato*), dwells pervading the four directions with a mind filled with love and compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Above, below, across and everywhere, to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with a mind filled with that love and compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity that is expansive, pervasive, immeasurable and utterly devoid of hatred or enmity. And he knows: ‘Previously, my mind was narrow and undeveloped but now it is immeasurable and well developed. No measurable kamma remains or lingers in it.’ Now what do you think monks? If from his childhood a young man were to develop freedom of the mind by either love or compassion, sympathetic joy or equanimity would he do any bad kamma?”

“No Lord.”

“And could suffering affect him if he did no bad kamma?”

“No Lord. For how could one who does no bad kamma suffer?”

“Therefore, a man or a woman should develop this liberation of the mind by love and compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. No man or woman can take their body with them when they die. The core of beings is the mind. The noble disciple knows: ‘Whatever bad kamma I did in the past with this deed-born body will have its results here.’ When the liberation of the mind by love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity has been developed in this way, it leads a wise person to non-returning,[[5]](#footnote-6) should he not reach a higher attainment.” A,V,299-300

[**39**] Unsurpassed is the Lord’s way of teaching the Dhamma concerning the four modes of rebirth. One descends into the mother’s womb unconsciously, stays there unconsciously, and leaves it unconsciously. Or one descends into the womb consciously, but stays there unconsciously, and leaves it unconsciously. Or one enters the womb consciously, stays there consciously but leaves it unconsciously. Or one enters the womb, stays there and leaves it consciously. D.III,103

[**40**] Mahānāma the Sakyan came to see the Lord and said: “Lord, this Kapilavatthu is rich and prosperous, crowded and congested, its highways and byways busy. In the evening when I enter the town after having visited you and the respected monks, I sometimes encounter an elephant or a horse, a chariot, a cart or a man, and my mindfulness which was focused on you, the Dhamma and the Sangha, becomes completely bewildered. And I think: ‘If I were to die at that time, where would I be reborn? What would be my rebirth’?”

The Lord replied: “Have no fear Mahānāma! Have no fear! Your death, your passing, will not be a bad one because your mind has been firmly established for a long time in faith and virtue, learning, generosity and wisdom. The body, which has form and is made of the four great elements, derived from one’s parents, sustained on rice and gruel and subject to change, will be worn away, disintegrate, fall apart and eaten by crows and vultures, hawks and dogs, jackals and other animals. But the mind which is firmly established for a long time in faith and virtue, learning, generosity and wisdom, will go upwards and to distinction S.V,369.

[**41**] And what is the diversity of kammna? There is kamma to be experienced in purgatory; there is kamma to be experienced in the animal realm; there is kamma to be experienced in the realm of afflicted spirits; there is kammna to be experienced in the human world; and there is kamma to be experienced in a heaven world. This is called the diversity of kamma. A.III, 415

[**42**] “How is it good Gotama; is the one who acts the same as the one who experiences the result of the act?”

“That is one extreme.”

“Then is the one who acts different from the one who experiences the result of the act?”

“That is another extreme. Without adhering to either of these extremes the Tathāgata teaches Dhamma by the middle.” S.I,7-6.

1. A profound spiritual state experienced through intensive meditation. The Buddha divided it into four stages, each one more refined than the one before it. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The second of the four stages leading to awakening. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. *Samaya vimutti*. This refers to states of mind sometimes attained during meditation, which have many of the characteristics of awakening but which soon fade. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. These underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) can be seen as a reformulation of the *āsavas*. Seven of them are mentioned at A.IV,9. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. The third of the four states leading to awakening. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)