


AN 3.99 PTS: A i 249 Thai 3,101

## Lonaphala Sutta: The Salt Crystal

translated from the Pali by

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**Translator's note:** For a discussion of this discourse in the general context of the Buddha's teaching on *kamma* (*karma*), see "[Kamma & the Ending of Kamma](#)" in *The Wings to Awakening*.

"Monks, for anyone who says, 'In whatever way a person makes kamma, that is how it is experienced,' there is no living of the holy life, there is no opportunity for the right ending of stress. But for anyone who says, 'When a person makes kamma to be felt in such & such a way, that is how its result is experienced,' there is the living of the holy life, there is the opportunity for the right ending of stress.

"There is the case where a trifling evil deed done by a certain individual takes him to hell. There is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by another individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in [contemplating] the body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.

"Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in [contemplating] the body, developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the immeasurable.<sup>[1]</sup> A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"Suppose that a man were to drop a salt crystal into a small amount of water in a cup. What do you think? Would the water in the cup become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink?"

"Yes, lord. Why is that? There being only a small amount of water in the cup, it would become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink."

"Now suppose that a man were to drop a salt crystal into the River Ganges. What do you think? Would the water in the River Ganges become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink?"

"No, lord. Why is that? There being a great mass of water in the River Ganges, it would not become salty because of the salt crystal or unfit to drink."

"In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil deed done by one individual [the first] takes him to hell; and there is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

'Now, a trifling evil act done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in the body, [2] undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind [i.e., painful feelings can invade the mind and stay there], undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil act done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.

'Now, a trifling evil act done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in the body,[3] developed in virtue, developed in mind [i.e., painful feelings cannot invade the mind and stay there], developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the immeasurable. A trifling evil act done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"There is the case where a certain person is thrown into jail for half a dollar (*kahapana*), is thrown into jail for a dollar, is thrown into jail for one hundred dollars. And there is the case where another person is not thrown into jail for half a dollar, is not thrown into jail for a dollar, is not thrown into jail for one hundred dollars. Now what sort of person is thrown into jail for half a dollar... for a dollar... for one hundred dollars? There is the case where a person is poor, of little wealth, of few possessions. This is the sort of person who is thrown into jail for half a dollar... for a dollar... for one hundred dollars. And what sort of person is not thrown into jail for half a dollar... for a dollar... for one hundred dollars? There is the case where a person is wealthy, with many belongings, many possessions. This is the sort of person who is not thrown into jail for half a dollar... for a dollar... for one hundred dollars.

"In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil deed done by one individual takes him to hell; and there is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in [contemplating] the body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.

"Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in [contemplating] the body, developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the

immeasurable. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"It's just as when a goat butcher is empowered to beat or bind or slay or treat as he likes a certain person who steals a goat, but is not empowered to beat or bind or slay or treat as he likes another person who steals a goat. Now, when what sort of person has stolen a goat is the goat butcher empowered to beat him or bind him or slay him or treat him as he likes? There is the case where a person is poor, of little wealth, of few possessions. This is the sort of person who, when he has stolen a goat, the goat butcher is empowered to beat or bind or slay or treat as he likes. And when what sort of person has stolen a goat is the goat butcher not empowered to beat him or bind him or slay him or treat him as he likes? There is the case where a person is wealthy, with many belongings, many possessions; a king or a king's minister. This is the sort of person who, when he has stolen a goat, the goat butcher is not empowered to beat or bind or slay or treat as he likes. All he can do is go with his hands clasped before his heart and beg: 'Please, dear sir, give me a goat or the price of a goat.'

"In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil deed done by one individual takes him to hell; and there is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in [contemplating] the body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.

"Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in [contemplating] the body, developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the immeasurable. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"Monks, for anyone who says, 'In whatever way a person makes kamma, that is how it is experienced,' there is no living of the holy life, there is no opportunity for the right ending of stress. But for anyone who says, 'When a person makes kamma to be felt in such & such a way, that is how its result is experienced,' there is the living of the holy life, there is the opportunity for the right ending of stress."

## Notes

1. Immeasurable concentration. See also [AN 3.65](#).
2. I.e., pleasant feelings can invade the mind and stay there — see [MN 36](#).
3. I.e., pleasant feelings cannot invade the mind and stay there.

See also: [MN 86](#); [MN 101](#); [AN 3.33](#); [AN 10.208](#).

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