

Sattamakamma (Bojjhanga) Sutta

Action and Its Effect

(Kamma & Vipaka)

Kamma or action, that Buddhism explains, means whatever someone does physically, verbally or mentally with a conscious mind. *Kamma* always relates to its result (*Vipaka*). Every action which is related to the mind has a reaction. Just action isn't *kamma*. Here the intention is a very essential and important fact in the Karmic law. When we do activities physically, verbally or mentally as soon as thinking that is *Karma*. Also results come to us as its effects. According to Buddhism, *Kamma* occurs when we do it consciously with intention. That is why the Buddha asserts intention (mental formation) is *karma* which brings results (*Cetanaham Bhikkhave Kamma Vadami*). Whatever seeds we sow, we will receive the same type of crops. *Karma* theory is also of this nature. Whatever we do with intention in the present, its result (*Vipaka*) comes to us in the future. Karmic results come to us according to the nature of the action. Some results of *Karma* come in this life, and some come in future lives according to its strength. This is a process of mind and body as well as the universal law. It occurs as a cause and effect theory. It is not god's will or any other power. It is not even the Buddha's creation. It is only a Buddhist explanation and discovery by the Buddha's intelligence. Buddhism points out very clearly whether a Buddha appeared or not, this reality is forever in the world. If we are intelligent, we should be clever to get the benefits by practicing Karmic theory into the correct way wisely. Here, knowing the Buddha's message for *Karma* is very important for our correct understanding. Comprehension of Karmic law is the first step of wisdom which leads to get rid of suffering.

There are some phenomena (Mind, world, beings, the Buddha and *Karma*) that can't be thought up to end. *Karma* and its results is one of unthinkable to end. However, learning about *Karma* and its effects is one of the main doctrines in Buddhism. That is why the Buddha advised us to reflect on the *Karma* and its results always as a man or woman, lay person or monk.

"I am the owner of actions (Kamma), the inheritor, the origin, the relation and refuge of actions. Whatever actions I perform whether good or evil, I will be their inheritor. This must be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth."

One day a young person, **Subha** came to the Buddha and asked some questions. "Lord Buddha; There are many variations in the world. Some are unwise, some are wise, some are poor, some are rich, some are beautiful, some are ugly, some live long, some die early, some are in high cast, some are in low cast, some are healthy, some are unhealthy. Lord, what is reason of these variations? Here the Buddha explained that the reason for these differences is the Karma, and the Karma divides persons as high and low (*Kammam satte vibhajati yadidam hinappnitataya*). Karmic results follow us as a shadow in this life and from birth to birth as its power up to the final life until whenever we attain enlightenment. In this situation, the Buddha has explained here how Karma affects our life, and how important it is.

Understanding of karmic law (*Kammassakata Sammaditthi*) is the first step of spiritual path or wisdom. Here we have a clear understanding about Karmic force. When we do something with a wicked mind (bad intention), we will have the bad results which bring us suffering, pain and negative results because of the polluted mind. Similarly, if we do something with a pure mind (good intention), we will have fruitful results because of pure mind. If somebody has this understanding, he or she always tries to avoid bad deeds, tries to do good deeds as much as he or she can. We avoid bad deeds and do good deeds not only for the success of next birth but also for this life itself. With the understanding of Karmic law, we are able to know the main reason that propels our entire life.

The Buddha's message that leads to get rid of unsatisfactoriness and achieve real happiness is very clear. It is well expounded (*Svakkhato*), directly visible (*Sanditthiko*), immediately effective (*Akaliko*), calling one to come and see (*Ehipassiko*), leading onwards (*Opanaiko*), to be personally realized by the wise (*Paccattam Veditabbo Vinnuhi*). To achieve final bliss of liberation, we have to listen to the Buddha's message with good attention for our knowledge. At the very first level in Buddhism, the knowledge is very important. Buddhism compares knowledge as wealth (*Suta Dhanam*). To achieve all kinds of results such as intelligence that Buddhism teaches knowledge plays a major role. Knowledge only is not enough but reflecting on it again and again is also very important. Furthermore we have to practice it in our daily life as morality (*Seela*) and meditation (*Bhavana*) to see the results in our life.

The Buddha explained two paths; the heavenly path (*Sagga Magga*) and the path to liberation (*Mokkha Magga*) through his message. First of all, the Buddha emphasized the

importance of practicing good (or merit) that assures heavenly rebirths. The big challenge in front of us is the possibility of going to hell after death. Therefore the Buddha kindly pointed out how to overcome hell. We have to avoid doing evil and do good to escape from hell. Why do we abstain from doing evil? Evil is a synonym for suffering. By doing evil we create suffering in our life. It disturbs our success. That is why we should try to overcome evil. Also while doing good, we generate positive thoughts which bring happiness and success to our life. Practicing merit means generating happiness.

If we wish others discomfort and evil, as the results of these negative thoughts, same evil and discomfort come to us. On the other hand, when we always wish others' success and comfort, and do benevolence to others, the same results come to our life bringing happiness.

Although we see the results throughout our life according to karmic energy, it doesn't sound that we have a permanent soul or an everlasting mind. Buddhism explains that the Karma theory is also subject to impermanence. Our mind which controls our physical body always changes too. It has no permanent existence. Every thought arises and ceases at the moment with the conditions. When conditions are together, a thought arises. Also when those conditions go away, the thought ceases. The especial thing is that the mind or a thought doesn't arise alone. If a thought arises, other four things are with it. If we have any experience through our senses, five aggregates arise together. Five aggregates are forms (*Rupa*-රූප), feelings (*Vedana*-වේදනා), perception (*Sanna*-සන්ඤ්ඤා), mental formations (*Sankhara*-සංඛාර) and mind (*Vinnana*-විඤ්ඤාණ). These five aggregates arise together at the moment when the conditions are together, and they cease when the conditions separate instantly. These five things appear behind any kind of experiences in our life, but they are invisible, and have to be known with insight.

The nature of these five aggregates is arising and ceasing. At the moment of ceasing, everything ceases without leaving anything remained. The most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is impermanence. It is said in Buddhism; *Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) would not come to (the future) occurrence.* (අනුත්ථා සම්භූතං නුත්ථා න භවිස්සති). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illuminates.

According to Buddhism, we can see an action or karma, also we can see a reaction or result (*Vipaka*), but there is no certain person who undergoes. Every thought arises and ceases at the moment. However every thought ceases at the moment conditioning next thought which arises next moment. First thought influences to next thought, but first thought doesn't go to next thought. Our long *Sansaric* journey as well as this entire life exists in this way. According to conventional truth in Buddhism, we have a very long *Sansaric* process. Our previous actions, that we did very long time ago, can affect us in this life. Nevertheless, we have only a thought which occurs at the moment according to ultimate truth. This is the nature of the impermanence that Buddhism analyzes. This is the wonder of our life whether we like or not. This is the surprise of the life whether we know or not. This is the world truth that nobody controls. This is a non-self Karmic process. There is only a pure process depending on cause and effect (or the dependent origination).

There are four kinds of Karma.

- i. There are some Karmas that are black which consequence black results (*Kanham Kanhavipakam*).
- ii. There are some Karmas that are white or bright which consequence white results (*Sukkhham Sukkhavipakam*).
- iii. There are some Karmas that are black & white which consequence black & white results (*Kanhasukkhham Kanhasukkhavipakam*).
- iv. There are some Karmas that are neither black nor white which consequence neither black & white results (*Akanha Asukkhham Akanha Asukkhavipaka*).

The black or evil Karmas, which someone does with an impure mind physically, verbally or mentally, produce black results. According to black Karmas we are born in a hell among four hells, and we suffer for a long time. That is why the Buddha always advised us kindly not to do any evil as his first advice (*Sabba papassa akaranam*)

The white or wholesome Karmas those we do with a pure mind as merit physically, verbally or mentally, consequence is white results. As the result of good karma or merit, we can be born in the heavenly realms or brahma realms with luxurious comforts and can live for a long time. Here the Buddha encouraged us to do good deeds (*kusalassa upasampada*) as generosity, morality and meditation with pure mind. Beings who are born in heavenly realm don't need to earn their

essentials. According to their psychic energy that they accumulated in their previous lives as Karma, whatever they need appear in front of them. They have no problems that human beings have such as old age, illness and physical death.

Further, as the results of Karmas that are black & white which produce black & white results, we are born in human realm where we experience a mixture of good and bad results. Although they have black and white results, this life is beneficial to develop one's mind to the maximum level because a lot of difficulties can be seen in the human realm such as illness, old age and death. Among those challenges people who are intelligent and have enough courage can end suffering achieving enlightenment. That is why all Buddhas appear in the human realm. After someone developed his mind to the maximum level, he is honored by men even deities and Brahmas.

There are some other karmas which bring neither black nor bright results. These karmas result to overcome rebirth ending the sansaric journey. Here the Buddha has pointed out to practice the seven enlightenment factors. They are;

1. The enlightenment factor of mindfulness (*Sati Sambojjhangha*)
2. The enlightenment factor of discrimination of phenomena / Keen investigation
(*Dhammavicaya Sambojjhangha*)
3. The enlightenment factor of energy (*Viriya Sambojjhangha*)
4. The enlightenment factor of rapture (*Peeti Sambojjhangha*)
5. The enlightenment factor of tranquility (*Passaddhi Sambojjhangha*)
6. The enlightenment factor of concentration (*Samadhi Sambojjhangha*)
7. The enlightenment factor of equanimity (*Upekkha Sambojjhangha*)

These seven enlightenment factors directly cause to reduce defilements/ unwholesome thoughts. Beings go from birth to birth because of negative emotions which disturb peace of mind such as desire, anger and especially delusion. To cultivate the seven enlightenment factors, right mindfulness which is divided into four should be practiced. They are the contemplation of body, feelings, mind and mental formations. When someone practices mindfulness, the seven enlightenment factors gradually increase. Practicing mindfulness is the direct path to achieve

enlightenment overcoming suffering. The Buddha especially encouraged his disciples to do actions which consequence neither black nor white results.

At the very beginning, we have to overcome evil which brings us suffering. In the second step, we have to do good deeds such as generosity, virtue and meditation. Having a lot of merit as practicing good help us to live with a lot of facilities in human and heavenly realms. Conversely, Buddhism always encourages us to do the Karmas which cause us to overcome the Sansaric journey. Here we have to practice both the tranquility (*samatha*) and the insight (*vipassana*) meditation. The purpose of tranquility meditation is to keep focusing our mind in a particular wholesome thought such as breathing or loving kindness. When we practice our mind again and again using some kinds of meditation techniques, we can concentrate our mind for a long time without defilements such as desire or anger. As a result, we gain peace of mind and purification of mind that causes our happiness. With the concentrated mind, if we can focus on impermanence; arising and ceasing of five aggregates. The experience that we receive through six senses arises and ceases according to conditions at the moment. Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) would not come to (the future) occurrence. (අනුත්ථං සම්මතං භුත්වා න භවිස්සති). It means if we experience something now, it was not happened in the past in the same way like now. Also present experience doesn't go to the future in the same way. This is the insight meditation which is unique only to Buddhism and it differs from all other religions and teachings. Both tranquility and insight meditations are very important for the purification of mind. When we go on this path with the knowledge of impermanence, we acquire karmas which consequence neither black nor white results. If someone practices in accordance with this message, he or she is able to get rid of all kinds of pain, sorrow and lamentation. Ending suffering is the final destination of the enlightenment path.

May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well happy and peaceful!

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