

Actions, their Consequences and Liberation (*Kamma, Vipāka and Vimutti*)

As the result of listening to the Buddha's message, the very first thing that a disciple understands is the effect of the Karmic force. Understanding the Karmic force is the first step of wisdom that the Buddha points out on the path of happiness. Kamma (Karma) or action, that Buddhism explains, means whatever we do physically, verbally or mentally with volition. Karma or action which consists with volition always creates a result (*Vipāka*). Therefore, every action which is related to the mind with volitions has a reaction. Every volitional action generates results in this life or in a future life. Whatever seeds we sow, we will have to reap the same type of crops. Karma theory is also of this nature. Here mind plays a main role. That's why Buddhism explains;

Mind is the for-runner. Mind is chief. Mind made are they. If someone speaks or acts with a wicked mind, suffering follows him, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox, because of the polluted mind. Furthermore, if someone speaks or acts with a pure mind, fruitful results follow him like a shadow.

Whatever we do with volitions in the present, its result (*Vipāka*) will come to us in the future. In this situation if we are clever to live in this moment with a pure mind, we can see the fruitful results in the next moment. That is why Buddhism advises us to keep our mind always pure, calm and quiet with generosity, virtue, loving kindness, compassion and wisdom.

There are four un conjecturable subjects in Buddhism. They are *Jhāna* (mind), *Buddha* (Buddha's enlightenment), *Loka* (world) and *Kamma* (actions). They can't be understood fully. He who conjectures about Kamma to the end would bring madness & vexation. However, the Buddha kindly advised us to reflect on the Karma and its results always as a man or a woman, lay person or monk for the wellbeing of people for understanding life.

'I am the owner of my 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.'

As much as we listen to what the Buddha taught, our wisdom gradually increases. The very first level of wisdom in Buddhism is the understanding of the Karmic Law (*Kammasakatā Sammāditthi*). Here we are knowledgeable about the actions, volitions and its results. Whatever we do with intention, we will receive the

same results. If someone does something physically, verbally or mentally, he or she receives the same results. If someone does something with an impure mind, he will receive the evil results because of the polluted mind. Also, if someone does something with a pure mind, he will have the fruitful results. This is an eternal law which no one controls.

Birth of beings is determined according to Karmic energy. It says in the Dhammapada;

*Gabbhameke uppajjanti nirayaṃ pāpakammino,
Saggaṃ sugatino yanti parinibbanti anāsavā.* (Dhammapada-Pāpavagga)

Some are born in the womb; the wicked are born in hell; the well-conducted go to blissful states; the stainless (undefiled ones) pass into Nibbana.

Buddhism points out the path how to overcome suffering and achieve ultimate happiness that no one can change. For the real happiness we have to understand three defilements which disturb our peace of mind. They are greed, anger and ignorance. Our real happiness as well as success depends on how far we have overcome these three defilements (negative thoughts) from our mind and how far we have developed positive thoughts like generosity, loving kindness and wisdom.

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 a universal law. It occurs as a cause and effect theory. It is not the 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 wisdom. Buddhism points out very clearly whether a Buddha appeared or not, this reality is forever in the world. If we are wise, we are clever to get the benefits by practicing Karmic theory in the correct way wisely. Here, knowing the Buddha's message of Karma is very important for our correct understanding.

One day a young house holder, *Subha* came to the Buddha and asked some questions. "***Lord Buddha; There is so much diversity 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 Buddha, what is the reason of these variations?***" Here the Buddha said that the reason for this difference is Karma, and Karma divides people as high and low. The Buddha has explained here how Karma affects our life, and how important it is.

According to Buddhism, understanding of the karmic law (*Kamassakatā Sammāditthi*) is very important on the path to liberation. Here we have a clear understanding about Karmic force. When we do

something with a wicked mind, we will have bad results because of the polluted mind. Similarly, if we do something with a pure mind, we will have the fruitful results because of the pure mind. If someone has this understanding, he or she always tries to avoid bad deeds and tries to do good as much as he or she can. We avoid doing bad deeds and do good deeds not only for the success in the next life but also for this life itself. With the understanding of Karmic law, we are able to understand the main reason that propels (or forces) our entire life. There are four kinds of Karmas (or Kamma) according to the Kamma Sutta.

- i. There are some Karmas (Actions) which are black with black consequences.
(*kaṇham kaṇhavipākaṃ*)
- ii. There are some Karmas which are white with white consequences - (*sukkaṃ sukkavipākaṃ*)
- iii. There are some Karmas which are black & white with black & white consequences.
(*kaṇhasukkaṃ kaṇha-sukka-vipākaṃ*)
- iv. There are some Karmas which are neither black nor white with neither black nor white consequences which conduce to the destruction of actions - (*akaṇhaasukkaṃ akaṇha-asukka-vipākaṃ*)

The black or evil Karmas, which we do with a wicked mind physically, verbally or mentally, produce black results. According to black Karmas, we are born in the four hells, and we have to suffer for a long time. White or wholesome Karmas we do with a pure mind as merits physically, verbally or mentally, cause white results. As the results of good karmas or merit, we can live in the heavenly realm for a long time with luxurious comforts. Further, as the results of Karmas that are black & white which produce black & white results, we are born in the human realm where we experience a mixture of good and bad results. When a person is enlightened, his Karmas are neither black nor white because it doesn't bring good or bad results. On the other hand, if a person does some karmas which cause to end the *Sansaric* existence, those are also Karmas which are neither black nor white. Buddhism always encourages us to do these kinds of actions.

At the beginning, we have to overcome evil which brings us suffering. In the second step, we have to do good as generosity, virtue and meditation. Having a lot of merits as practicing good helps us to live with a lot of facilities in a blissful life like human, heavenly or brahma realms. Even though we do good Karmas if we are ignorant, we are not away from the suffering of decay, death and rebirth in the Sansaric circle. That's why the Buddha always encourages us to do the Karmas which cause us to overcome the Sansaric journey.

To overcome the Kamma and its result the Buddha proclaims the path which is the Noble Eightfold Path. In the *Sammāditthi Sutta* (M.N.), the Buddha very clearly explains the importance of understanding the Noble Eightfold Path to overcome the Sansāric circle. In short, the Buddha concludes those eight steps into two which are the tranquility (*Samatha*) and the insight (*Vipassanā*) meditation in *Abhiññā Sutta* (AN). 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. If we can focus on impermanence with concentrated mind, arising and ceasing of five aggregates, this is the insight meditation which is unique only to Buddhism and it differs from that of all other religions and teachings. Both tranquility and insight meditations are very important for the purification of mind. If someone practices according to this message, he or she is able to get rid of all kinds of pain, sorrow and lamentation.

The Buddha explained two paths; the heavenly path and the path of liberation. First of all, the Buddha emphasized the importance of practicing good (or merits) 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 try to not to do evil and do good to get rid of hell. Why do we abstain from doing evil? Evil is a synonym for suffering. By doing evil we create suffering in our lives. It disturbs our success. That is why we should try to overcome evil. Also, while doing good, we generate positive thoughts which brings happiness and success to our lives. 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 practice benevolence towards 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 mean 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 cease, 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 (*Vedanā* -වේදනා), perception (*Saññā* -සංකද්දා), mental formations (*Sankhāra* -සංඛාර) and mind (*Viññāna* -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 remaining. 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 present) will not go to (the future) occurrence.** (*Ahutvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati*). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illuminates. **Suffering arises because of delusion that we think our experience was there before we experienced it, and also it remains after the experience.** If we are able to overcome this ignorance reflecting on impermanence of the five aggregates, we can gradually overcome suffering and defilements as well.

According to Buddhism, we can see an action or karma, also we can see a reaction or result (*Vipāka*), but there is no certain person who undergoes it. Every thought arises and ceases at the moment. The present thought ceases at the moment conditioning the next thought that arises in the next moment. First thought influences next thought, but first thought doesn't go to the 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 a long time ago, can affect this life. Nevertheless, we only have thoughts occurring 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 pure process depending on cause and effect (or the dependent origination). With this understanding, if someone can reflect on the three characteristics (*Tilakkhana*) of existence of all kinds of things mental and physical, he is able to overcome the *Sansaric* circle. Three characteristics are;

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| i. Impermanence | - (<i>Anicca</i>) අනිච්ච |
| ii. Dissatisfaction | - (<i>Dukkha</i>) දුක්ඛ |
| iii. Selflessness | - (<i>Anatta</i>) අනත්ත |

We should reflect again and again on these three characteristics of existence (*Tilakkhana* - ත්‍රිලක්ෂණ). As a result of practicing this world reality, we develop wisdom with the knowledge of impermanence. Reflecting on above three characteristics is the path to purity and the path to overcome suffering completely. As the result of practicing this path, we are able to live among the ordinary people like a lotus flower which is above the mud without touching any evil.

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