

The Buddha's Words on Kamma

Four Discourses of the Buddha
from the Majjhima Nikāya

by

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Preface

Kamma concerns everyone. We make it, a great deal of it, every day while we are awake. We decide whether or not to get up—kamma. (Good kamma if one gets up vigorously, bad kamma if slothfully or grudgingly.) Let's have a cup of tea, breakfast—maybe some greed is involved, so bad kamma. We sympathise with someone's sickness and give help—good kamma. We get flustered because the bus is late to take us to work—bad kamma. Once we're there perhaps we get impatient with someone, or angry with them, or threaten them—worse and worse kamma. But perhaps we are generous and kindly to someone there—excellent kamma. Work brings on dull mental states, then we shake ourselves out of that listlessness and resentment (bad kamma) and vigorously try to get back to mindfulness (good kamma).

In the crowded bus returning home someone stamps on one's foot, one curses—bad kamma—but after quick reflection one realises "Ah, no mindfulness" and this is good kamma. At home at last, one comforts the sick, then plays with the children and tells them some Jātaka stories—all good kamma. But then, tired and dull, one switches the radio (and/or television) on and, not listening to it, leaves it going as a sound to drown silence, then one eats too much and feels lethargic—bad kamma. But perhaps instead one pays respect to the Buddha-image, does some chanting and then meditates—all kinds of good kamma. When the body is tired one goes to sleep holding some meditation subject in mind—good kamma.

All these decisions, choices and desires are kammās made in the mind. More kamma is made when one talks after having decided. Still more kamma is added if after this one acts as well.

"Good" and "bad" kamma are distinguished by *the roots* of the actions. What is one's motivating force when one helps the sick? This is a case where there are various possibilities. Is it just because one wants rich Auntie's money when she dies, or out of genuine compassion? Obviously, in the latter case much better kamma is made. But there are examples where there is no doubt. One's toes are stamped on and one curses: this can never be good kamma simply because it is *rooted in hatred*. Or one gobbles down too much food—just *greed-rooted* kamma in this case. Again those dull or day-dream periods at work, not looking at things as they are at all, this is *rooted in delusion*. When any of the mentally defiled states of mind has arisen, when these three "roots of evil" are in control, then bad kamma is sure to be made.

Once it is made there is no way of erasing it or changing it and some day or other it will begin to fruit. The fruit of bad kamma is never happiness, as we can read in these discourses. It always comes up as pain, anguish, frustration, or the limitation of opportunities. Who wants them? Then make no more bad kamma! Everyone has laid in a stock already quite capable of giving rise to sufferings for lifetimes to come. There is no need to increase it.

Everyone wants happiness! But it too arises conditionally. Now a great producer of happiness is the making of good kamma. What is good about it? It is *rooted in non-greed* (generosity, renunciation), or in *non-hate* (loving kindness, compassion) or finally in *non-delusion* (wisdom, understanding). The sure way to gain happiness, then, is to make good kamma, as much as possible every day.

It is only people who make a real effort to grow in Dhamma (that is, to make good kamma), who have any chance to succeed in meditation on the path to final liberation. Whatever one's goal in this life—happiness here and now, a good rebirth in the future, or to end the whole birth and death process by attainment of Nibbāna, one cannot go wrong by making good kamma.

And what about those who do not believe in kamma and its fruits? They still make it whether they believe or not! And they get the fruits of the kamma they make, too. But the doing, not the believing, is the important thing.

*“Do good, get good,
do evil, get evil.”*

Majjhima Nikāya 57: The Dog-duty Ascetic (Kukkuravatika Sutta)

Introduction

There were some strange people around in the Buddha's days believing some strange things—but that is no different from our own days when people still believe the most odd off-balance ideas. In this sutta we meet some people who believed that by imitating animals they would be saved. Maybe they're still with us too!

Belief is often one thing, action another. While beliefs sometimes influence actions, for other people their beliefs are quite separate from what they do. But the Buddha says all intentional actions, whether thoughts, speech or bodily actions, however expressed, are *kamma* and lead the doer of them to experience a result sooner or later. In this sutta the Buddha classifies kamma into four groups:

- (i) dark with a dark result,
- (ii) bright with a bright result,
- (iii) dark and bright with a dark and bright result,
- (iv) neither dark nor bright with a neither dark nor bright result.

Dark (evil) kamma does not give a bright (happy) result, nor does bright (beneficial) kamma lead to dark (miserable) result. Kamma can be mixed, where an action is done with a variety of motives, some good, some evil. And that kind of kamma also exists which gives up attachment to and interest in the other three and so leads beyond the range of kamma.

The Sutta

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Koliyan country: there is a town of the Koliyans called Haliddavasana.

2. Then Puṇṇa, a son of the Koliyans and an ox-duty ascetic, and also Seniya a naked dog duty ascetic, went to the Blessed One, and Puṇṇa the ox duty ascetic paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side, while Seniya the naked dog-duty ascetic exchanged greetings with the Blessed One, and when the courteous and amiable talk was finished, he too sat down at one side curled up like a dog. When Puṇṇa the ox-duty ascetic sat down, he asked the Blessed One: "Venerable sir, this naked dog-duty ascetic Seniya does what is hard to do: he eats his food when it is thrown on the ground. That dog duty has long been taken up and practised by him. What will be his destination? What will be his future course?"¹

"Enough, Puṇṇa, let that be. Do not ask me that."

A second time... A third time Puṇṇa the ox-duty ascetic asked the Blessed One: "Venerable sir, this naked dog-duty ascetic Seniya does what is hard to do: he eats his food when it is thrown on the ground. That dog duty has long been taken up and practised by him. What will be his destination? What will be his future course?"

¹ Of births in saṃsāra, the wandering-on in birth and death.

“Well, Puṇṇa, since I certainly cannot persuade you when I say ‘Enough, Puṇṇa, let that be. Do not ask me that,’ I shall therefore answer you.

3. “Here, Puṇṇa, someone develops the dog duty fully and unstintingly, he develops the dog-habit fully and unstintingly, he develops the dog mind fully and unstintingly, he develops dog behaviour fully and unstintingly. Having done that, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of dogs. But if his view is such as this: ‘By this virtue or duty or asceticism or religious life I shall become a (great) god or some (lesser) god,’ that is wrong view in his case. Now there are two destinations for one with wrong view, I say: hell or the animal womb. So, Puṇṇa, if his dog duty is perfected, it will lead him to the company of dogs; if it is not, it will lead him to hell.”

4. When this was said, Seniya the naked dog-duty ascetic wept and shed tears. Then the Blessed One told Puṇṇa, son of the Koliyans and an ox-duty ascetic: “Puṇṇa, I could not persuade you when I said, ‘Enough Puṇṇa, let that be. Do not ask me that.’”

“Venerable sir, I am not weeping that the Blessed One has spoken thus. Still, this dog duty has long been taken up and practised by me. Venerable sir, there is this Puṇṇa, a son of the Koliyans and an ox duty ascetic: that ox duty has long been taken up and practised by him. What will be his destination? What will be his future course?”

“Enough, Seniya, let that be. Do not ask me that.” A second time... A third time Seniya the naked dog-duty ascetic asked the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, there is this Puṇṇa, a son of the Koliyans and an ox-duty ascetic; that ox duty has long been taken up and practised by him. What will be his destination? What will be his future course?”

“Well, Seniya, since I certainly cannot persuade you when I say ‘Enough, Seniya, let that be. Do not ask me that,’ I shall therefore answer you.”

5. “Here, Seniya, someone develops the ox duty fully and unstintingly, he develops the ox habit fully and unstintingly, he develops the ox mind fully and unstintingly, he develops the ox behaviour fully and unstintingly. Having done that, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of oxen. But if his view is such as this: ‘By this virtue or duty or asceticism or religious like I shall become a (great) god or some (lesser) god,’ that is wrong view in his case. Now there are two destinations for one with wrong view, I say: hell or the animal womb. So, Seniya, if his ox duty is perfected, it will lead him to the company of oxen; if it is not, it will lead him to hell.”

6. When this was said, Puṇṇa, a son of the Koliyans and an ox-duty ascetic, wept and shed tears. Then the Blessed One told Seniya, the naked dog duty ascetic: “Seniya, I could not persuade you when I said, ‘Enough, Seniya, let that be. Do not ask me that.’”

“Venerable sir, I am not weeping that the Blessed One has spoken thus. Still, this ox duty has long been taken up and practised by me. Venerable sir, I have confidence in the Blessed One thus: ‘The Blessed One is capable of teaching me the Dhamma in such a way that I may abandon this ox duty and that this naked dog-duty ascetic Seniya may abandon that dog duty.’”

7. “Then, Puṇṇa, listen and heed well what I shall say.”

“Yes, venerable sir,” he replied. The Blessed One said this:

8. “Puṇṇa, there are four kinds of kamma proclaimed by me after realisation myself with direct knowledge. What are the four? There is dark kamma with dark ripening, there is bright kamma with bright ripening, there is dark-and-bright kamma with dark-and-

bright ripening, and there is kamma that is not dark and not bright with neither-dark-nor-bright ripening that conduces to the exhaustion of kamma.

9. “What is dark kamma with dark ripening? Here someone produces a (kammic) bodily process (bound up) with affliction,² he produces a (kammic) verbal process (bound up) with affliction, he produces a (kammic) mental process (bound up) with affliction. By so doing, he reappears in a world with affliction. When that happens, afflicting contacts³ touch him. Being touched by these, he feels afflicting feelings entirely painful as in the case of beings in hell. Thus a being’s reappearance is due to a being: he reappears owing to the kmmas he has performed. When he has reappeared, contacts touch him. Thus I say are beings heirs of their kmmas. This is called dark kamma with dark ripening.

10. “And what is bright kamma with bright ripening? Here someone produces a (kammic) bodily process not (bound up) with affliction, he produces a (kammic) verbal process not (bound up) with affliction, he produces a (kammic) mental process not (bound up) with affliction. By doing so, he reappears in a world without affliction. When that happens, unafflicting contacts touch him. Being touched by these, he feels unafflicting feelings entirely pleasant as in the case of the Subhakiṇha, the gods of Refulgent Glory. Thus a being’s reappearance is due to a being: he reappears owing to the kmmas he has performed. When he has reappeared, contacts touch him. Thus I say are beings heirs of their kmmas. This is called bright kamma with bright ripening.

11. “What is dark-and-bright kamma with dark-and-bright ripening? Here someone produces a (kammic) bodily process both (bound up) with affliction and not (bound up) with affliction... verbal process... mental process both (bound up) with affliction and not (bound up) with affliction. By doing so, he reappears in a world both with and without affliction. When that happens, both afflicting and unafflicting contacts touch him. Being touched by these, he feels afflicting and unafflicting feelings with mingled pleasure and pain as in the case of human beings and some gods and some inhabitants of the states of deprivation. Thus a being’s reappearance is due to a being: he reappears owing to the kmmas he has performed. When he has reappeared, contacts touch him. Thus I say are beings heirs of their kmmas. This is called dark-and-bright kamma with dark-and-bright ripening.

12. “What is neither-dark-nor-bright kamma with neither-dark-nor-bright ripening that leads to the exhaustion of kamma? As to these (three kinds of kamma), any volition in abandoning the kind of kamma that is dark with dark ripening, any volition in abandoning the kind of kamma that is bright with bright ripening, and any volition in abandoning the kind of kamma that is dark-and bright with dark-and-bright ripening: this is called neither-dark-nor-bright kamma with neither-dark-nor-bright ripening.

“These are the four kinds of kamma proclaimed by me after realisation myself with direct knowledge.”

13. When this was said, Puṇṇa, a son of the Koliyans and an ox-duty ascetic, said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dhamma has been made clear in many ways by Master Gotama as though he were turning upright what had been overthrown, revealing the hidden, showing the way to one who is lost, holding up a lamp in the darkness for those with eyesight to see forms.

² A defiled kamma expressed through the body (speech, mind).

³ Painful “touches” through eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind.

14. "I go to Master Gotama for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of bhikkhus. From today let Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge for life."

15. But Seniya the naked dog-duty ascetic said: "Magnificent, Master Gotama!.. The Dhamma has been made clear... for those with eyesight to see forms.

16. "I go to Master Gotama for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of bhikkhus. I would receive the going forth under Master Gotama and the full admission."⁴

17. "Seniya, one who belonged formerly to another sect and wants the going forth and the full admission in this Dhamma and Discipline lives on probation for four months. At the end of the four months bhikkhus who are satisfied in their minds give him the going forth into homelessness and also the full admission to the bhikkhus' state. A difference in persons has become known to me in this (probation period)."

"Venerable sir, if those who belonged formerly to another sect and want the going forth and the full admission in this Dhamma and Discipline live on probation for four months and at the end of four months bhikkhus who are satisfied in their minds give them the going forth into homelessness and the full admission to the bhikkhus' state, I will live on probation for four years and at the end of the four years let bhikkhus who are satisfied in their minds give me the going forth into homelessness and the full admission to the bhikkhus' state."

18. Seniya the naked dog duty ascetic received the going forth under the Blessed One, and he received the full admission. And not long after his full admission, dwelling alone, withdrawn, diligent, ardent, and self-controlled, the venerable Seniya by realisation himself with direct knowledge here and now entered upon and abode in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness. He had direct knowledge thus: "Birth is exhausted, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more of this to come."

And the venerable Seniya became one of the arahats.

⁴ That is, the novice ordination and the full ordination as a bhikkhu or monk.

Majjhima Nikāya 135: The Shorter Exposition of Kamma (Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta)

Introduction

You want: long life, health, beauty, power, riches, high birth, wisdom? Or even some of these things? They do not appear by chance. It is not someone's luck that they are healthy, or another's lack of it that he is stupid. Though it may not be clear to us now, all such inequalities among human beings (and all sorts of beings) come about because of the kamma they have made individually. Each person reaps his own fruits. So if one is touched by short life, sickness, ugliness, insignificance, poverty, low birth or stupidity and one does not like these things, no need to just accept that that is the way it is. The future need not be like that provided that one makes the right kind of kamma now. Knowing what kamma to make and what not to make is the mark of a wise man. It is also the mark of one who is no longer drifting aimlessly but has some direction in life and some control over the sort of events that will occur.

The Sutta

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattḥī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park.

Then Subha the student (brahman), Todeyya's son, went to the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him, and when the courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side. When he had done so, Subha the student said to the Blessed One:

2. "Master Gotama, what is the reason, what is the condition, why inferiority and superiority are met with among human beings, among mankind? For one meets with short-lived and long-lived people, sick and healthy people, ugly and beautiful people, insignificant and influential people, poor and rich people, low-born and high-born people, stupid and wise people. What is the reason, what is the condition, why superiority and inferiority are met with among human beings, among mankind?"

3. "Student, beings are owners of kammās, heirs of kammās, they have kammās as their progenitor, kammās as their kin, kammās as their homing-place. It is kammās that differentiate beings according to inferiority and superiority."

4. "I do not understand the detailed meaning of Master Gotama's utterance spoken in brief without expounding the detailed meaning. It would be good if Master Gotama taught me the Dhamma so that I might understand the detailed meaning of Master Gotama's utterance spoken in brief without expounding the detailed meaning."

"Then listen, student, and heed well what I shall say."

"Even so, Master Gotama," Subha the student replied. The Blessed One said this:

5. "Here, student, some woman or man is a killer of living beings, murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Due to having performed and completed such kammās, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell. If, on the dissolution of the body, after death, instead of his reappearing in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy

destination, in perdition, in hell, he comes to the human state, he is short-lived wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to short life, that is to say, to be a killer of living beings, murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings.

6. "But here some woman or man, having abandoned the killing of living beings, abstains from killing living beings, lays aside the rod and lays aside the knife, is considerate and merciful and dwells compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. Due to having performed and completed such karmas, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, in the heavenly world. If, on the dissolution of the body, after death, instead of his reappearing in a happy destination, in the heavenly world, he comes to the human state, he is long-lived wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to long life, that is to say, to have abandoned the killing of living beings, to abstain from killing living beings, to lay aside the rod and lay aside the knife, to be considerate and merciful, and to dwell compassionate for the welfare of all living beings.

7. "Here, student, some woman or man is one who harms beings with his hands or with clods or with sticks or with knives. Due to having performed and completed such karmas, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation... If instead he comes to the human state, he is sickly wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to sickness, that is to say, to be one who harms beings with one's hands or with clods or with sticks or with knives.

8. "But here some woman or man is not one who harms beings with his hands, or with clods, or with sticks, or with knives. Due to having performed and completed such karmas, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination... If instead he comes to the human state, he is healthy wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to health, that is to say, not to be one who harms beings with his hands or with clods or with sticks or with knives.

9. "Here, student, some woman or man is angry, much given to rage; even when little is said, he is furious, angry, ill-disposed, resentful, he shows ill-temper, hate and surliness. Due to having performed and completed such karmas, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation... If instead he comes to the human state, he is ugly wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to ugliness, that is to say, to be furious, angry, ill-disposed, resentful, and to show ill-temper, hate and surliness.

10. "But here some woman or man is not angry or much given to rage; even when much is said, he is not furious, angry, ill-disposed, resentful, nor does he show ill-temper, hate or surliness. Due to having performed and completed such karmas, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination... If instead he comes to the human state, he is beautiful wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to beauty, that is to say, not to be angry or given to much rage; even when much is said, not to be furious, angry, ill-disposed or resentful, or to show ill-temper, hate or surliness.

11. "Here, student, some woman or man is envious; he envies, begrudges and harbours envy about others' gains, honour, veneration, respect, salutations and offerings. Due to having performed and completed such karmas, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation... If instead he comes to the human state, he is insignificant wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to insignificance, that is to say, to be envious, to envy, begrudge, and harbour envy about others' gain, honour, veneration, respect, salutations and offerings.

12. "But here some woman or man is not envious, he does not envy, begrudge or harbour envy about others' gain, honour, veneration, respect, salutations and offerings.

Due to having performed and completed such kammās, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination... If instead he comes to the human state, he is influential wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to influence, that is to say, not to be envious, not to envy, begrudge or harbour envy about others' gain, honour, veneration, respect, salutations and offerings.

13. "Here, student, some woman or man is not a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, garlands, perfumes, unguents, bed, roof and lighting to monks or brahmins. Due to having performed and completed such kamma, on the dissolution of the body, after death he reappears in a state of deprivation... If instead he comes to the human state, he is poor wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to poverty, that is to say, not to be a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, garlands, perfumes, unguents, bed, roof and lighting to monks and brahmins.

14. "But here some woman or man is a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, perfumes, unguents, bed, roof and lighting to monks and brahmins. Due to having performed and completed such kamma, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination... If instead he comes to the human state, he is rich wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to riches, that is to say, to be a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, garlands, perfumes, unguents, bed, roof and lighting to monks and brahmins.

15. "Here, student, some woman or man is obdurate and haughty; he does not pay homage to whom he should pay homage, or rise up for whom he should rise up, or give a seat to whom he should give a seat, or make way for whom he should make way, or worship him who should be worshipped, or respect him who should be respected, or revere him who should be revered, or honour him who should be honoured. Due to having performed and completed such kammās, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation... If instead he comes to the human state, he is low-born wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to low birth, that is to say, to be obdurate and haughty, not to pay homage to whom he should pay homage, nor rise up for..., nor give a seat to..., nor make way for..., nor worship..., nor respect..., nor revere..., nor honour him who should be honoured.

16. "But here some woman or man is not obdurate or haughty; he pays homage to whom he should pay homage, rises up for whom he should rise up, gives a seat to whom he should give a seat, makes way for whom he should make way, worships him who should be worshipped, respects him who should be respected, reveres him who should be revered, honours him who should be honoured. Due to having performed and completed such kammās, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination... If instead he comes to the human state, he is high-born wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to high birth, that is to say, not to be obdurate or haughty, to pay homage to whom he should pay homage, to rise up for..., to give a seat to..., to make way for..., to worship... respect... revere... honour him who should be honoured.

17. "Here, student, some woman or man when visiting a monk or brahmin, does not ask: 'What is wholesome, venerable sir? What is unwholesome? What is blameable? What is blameless? What should be cultivated? What should not be cultivated? What, by my doing it, will be long for my harm and suffering? Or what, by my doing it, will be long for my welfare and happiness?' Due to having performed and completed such kammās, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation... If instead he comes to the human state, he will be stupid wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to stupidity, that is to say, when visiting a monk or brahmin, not to ask: 'What is wholesome?.. Or what, by my doing it, will be long for my welfare and happiness?'

18. "But here some woman or man when visiting a monk or brahman, asks: 'What is wholesome, venerable sir?.. Or what, by my doing it, will be long for my welfare and happiness?' Due to having performed and completed such kammass, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination... If instead he comes to the human state, he is wise wherever he is reborn. This is the way that leads to wisdom, that is to say, when visiting a monk or brahman, to ask: 'What is wholesome, venerable sir?.. Or what, by my doing it, will be long for my welfare and happiness?'

19. "So, student, the way that leads to short life makes people short-lived, the way that leads to long life makes people long-lived; the way that leads to sickness makes people sick, the way that leads to health makes people healthy; the way that leads to ugliness makes people ugly, the way that leads to beauty makes people beautiful; the way that leads to insignificance makes people insignificant, the way that leads to influence makes people influential; the way that leads to poverty makes people poor, the way that leads to riches makes people rich; the way that leads to low birth makes people low-born, the way that leads to high birth makes people high-born; the way that leads to stupidity makes people stupid, the way that leads to wisdom makes people wise.

20. "Beings are owners of kammass, student, heirs of kammass, they have kammass as their progenitor, kammass as their kin, kammass as their homing-place. It is kammass that differentiate beings according to inferiority and superiority."

21. When this was said, Subha the student, Todeyya's son, said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dhamma has been made clear in many ways by Master Gotama, as though he were turning upright what had been overthrown, revealing the hidden, showing the way to one who is lost, holding up a lamp in the darkness for those with eyes to see forms.

22. "I go to Master Gotama for refuge, and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of bhikkhus. From today let Master Gotama accept me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge for life."

Majjhima Nikāya 136: The Great Exposition of Kamma (Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta)

Introduction

This celebrated sutta shows some of the complexities of kamma and its results. Beginning with a strange view expressed by a confused wanderer and a confused answer given by a bhikkhu, the Buddha then gives his Great Exposition of Kamma which is based upon four “types” of people:

1. the evil-doer who goes to hell (or some other low state of birth),
2. the evil-doer who goes to heaven,
3. the good man who goes to heaven, and
4. the good man who goes to hell (or other low birth).

The Buddha then shows how wrong views can arise from only partial understanding of truth. One can see the stages of this: (1) a mystic “sees” in vision an evil-doer suffering in hell, (2) this confirms what he had heard about moral causality, (3) so he says, “evil-doers always go to hell,” and (4) dogma hardens and becomes rigid when he says (with the dogmatists of all ages and places), “Only this is true; anything else is wrong.” The stages of this process are repeated for each of the four “persons,” after which the Buddha proceeds to analyse these views grounded in partial experience and points out which portions are true (because verifiable by trial and experience) and which are dogmatic superstructure which is unjustified. Finally, the Buddha explains his Great Exposition of Kamma in which he shows that notions of invariability like “the evildoer goes to hell” are much too simple. The minds of people are complex and they make many different kinds of kamma even in one lifetime, some of which may influence the last moment when kamma is made before death, which in turn is the basis for the next life.

The Sutta

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Rājagaha, in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels’ Feeding Place. Now on that occasion the venerable Samiddhi was living in a forest hut.

Then the wanderer Poṭaliputta, walking and wandering for exercise, came to the venerable Samiddhi and exchanged greetings with him, and when the courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side. When he had done so, he said to the venerable Samiddhi:

2. “I heard and learned this, friend Samiddhi, from the monk Gotama’s lips: ‘Bodily kammās are vain, verbal kammās are vain, only mental kammās are true.’ But there is actually that attainment having entered upon which nothing (of result of kammās) is felt at all.”

“Not so, friend Poṭaliputta, do not say thus, do not misrepresent the Blessed One; it is not good to misrepresent the Blessed One; the Blessed One would not say so: ‘Bodily kammās are vain, verbal kammās are vain, only mental kammās are true.’ And there is actually that attainment having entered upon which nothing (of result of kammās) is felt at all.”

“How long is it since you went forth, friend Samiddhi?”

“Not long, friend, three years.”

“There now, what shall we say to the elder bhikkhus, when the young bhikkhu fancies the Master is to be defended thus? After doing intentional kamma, friend Samiddhi, by way of body, speech or mind, what does one feel (of its result)?”

“After doing an intentional kamma, friend Poṭaliputta, by way of body, speech or mind, one feels suffering (as its result).”

Then neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the words of the venerable Samiddhi, the wanderer Poṭaliputta got up from his seat and went away.

3. Soon after the wanderer Poṭaliputta had gone, the venerable Samiddhi went to the venerable Ānanda and exchanged greetings with him, and when the courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side. When he had done so, he told the venerable Ānanda all his conversation with the wanderer Poṭaliputta.

When this was said, the venerable Ānanda told him: “Friend Samiddhi, this conversation should be told to the Blessed One. Come, let us go to the Blessed One, and having done so, let us tell him about this. As he answers, so we shall bear it in mind.”

“Even so, friend,” the venerable Samiddhi replied.

Then they went together to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, they sat down at one side. When they had done so, the venerable Ānanda told the Blessed One all the venerable Samiddhi’s conversation with the wanderer Poṭaliputta.

4. When this was said, the Blessed One told the venerable Ānanda:

“I do not even know the wanderer by sight, Ānanda. How could there have been such a conversation? The wanderer Poṭaliputta’s question ought to have been answered after analysing it, but this misguided man Samiddhi answered it without qualification.⁵

When this was said, the venerable Udāyin said to the Blessed One: “But, venerable sir, supposing when the venerable Samiddhi spoke, he was referring to this, namely, ‘Whatever is felt is suffering.’”⁶

5. Then the Blessed One addressed the venerable Ānanda: “See, Ānanda, how this misguided man Udāyin interferes. I knew, Ānanda, that this misguided man Udāyin would unreasonably interfere now. To begin with it was the three kinds of feeling that were asked about by the wanderer Poṭaliputta. If, when this misguided man Samiddhi was asked, he had answered the wanderer Poṭaliputta thus: ‘After doing an intentional kamma by way of body, speech and mind (whose result is) to be felt as pleasure, he feels pleasure; after doing an intentional kamma by way of body, speech and mind (whose result is) to be felt as pain, he feels pain; after doing an intentional kamma by way of body, speech and mind (whose result is) to be felt as neither-pain-nor-pleasure, he feels neither-pain-nor-pleasure’—by answering him thus, Ānanda, the misguided man Samiddhi would have given the wanderer Poṭaliputta the right answer. Besides, Ānanda, who are the foolish thoughtless wanderers of other sects that they will understand the Tathāgata’s Great Exposition of Kamma? (But) if you, Ānanda, would listen to the Tathāgata expounding the Great Exposition of Kamma (you might understand it).⁷

⁵ These are two of the four ways of answering a question, the other two being: replying with a counter-question, and “setting aside” the question, i.e., replying with silence.

⁶ This is a quotation from the Buddha’s words: see Saṃyutta Nikāya, Vedanā Saṃyutta, Rahogata-vagga Sutta 1.

⁷ This is an addition necessary for understanding this sentence.

“This is the time, Blessed One, this is the time, Sublime One, for the Blessed One to expound the Great Exposition of Kamma. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the bhikkhus will bear it in mind.”

“Then listen, Ānanda, and heed well what I shall say.”

“Even so, venerable sir,” the venerable Ānanda replied. The Blessed One said this:

6. “Ānanda, there are four kinds of persons existing in the world. What four?

(i) “Here some person kills living beings, takes what is not given, misconducts himself in sexual desires, speaks falsehood, speaks maliciously, speaks harshly, gossips, is covetous, is ill willed, and has wrong view.⁸ On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell.

(ii) “But here some person kills living beings... and has wrong view. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, in the heavenly world.

(iii) “Here some person abstains from killing living beings, from taking what is not given, from misconduct in sexual desires, from false speech, from malicious speech, from harsh speech, from gossip, he is not covetous, is not ill willed, and has right view.⁹ On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, in the heavenly world.

(iv) “But here some person abstains from killing living beings... and has right view. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell.

7. (i) “Here, Ānanda, in consequence of ardour, endeavour, devotion, diligence, and right attention, some monk or brahman attains such concentration of mind that, when his mind is concentrated, he sees with the heavenly eyesight, which is purified and surpasses the human, that some person kills living beings here, takes what is not given, misconducts himself in sexual desires, speaks falsehood, speaks maliciously, speaks harshly, gossips, is covetous, is ill willed, has wrong view. He sees that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he has reappeared in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell. He says: ‘It seems that there are evil kammās and that there is the result of misconduct; for I have seen that a person killed living beings here... had wrong view. I have seen that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he had reappeared in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell.’ He says: ‘It seems that one who kills living beings... has wrong view, will always, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell. Those who know thus know rightly; those who know otherwise are mistaken in their knowledge.’ So he obstinately misapprehends what he himself has known, seen and felt; insisting on that alone, he says: ‘Only this is true, anything else is wrong.’

8. (ii) “But here in consequence of ardour, endeavour, devotion, diligence and right attention, some monk or brahman attains such concentration of mind that, when his mind is concentrated, he sees with the heavenly eyesight, which is purified and surpasses the human, that some person kills living beings here... has wrong view. He sees that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he has reappeared in a happy destination, in the heavenly world. He says: ‘It seems there are no evil kammās, there is no result of misconduct. For I have seen that a person killed living beings here... had wrong view. I have seen that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he has reappeared in a happy

⁸ These are the ten unwholesome courses of kamma.

⁹ These are the ten wholesome courses of kamma.

destination, in the heavenly world.' He says: 'It seems that one who kills living beings... has wrong view will always, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, in the heavenly world. Those who know thus know rightly; those who know otherwise are mistaken in their knowledge.' So he obstinately misapprehends what he himself has known, seen and felt; insisting on that alone, he says: 'Only this is true, anything else is wrong.'

9. (iii) "Here in consequence of ardour, endeavour, devotion, diligence and right attention, some monk or brahman attains such concentration of mind that, when his mind is concentrated, he sees with the heavenly eyesight, which is purified and surpasses the human, that some person abstains from killing living beings here... has right view. He sees that, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he has reappeared in a happy destination, in the heavenly world. He says: 'It seems that there are good kammās, there is result of good conduct. For I have seen that a person abstained from killing living beings here... had right view. I saw that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he had reappeared in a happy destination, in the heavenly world.' He says: 'It seems that one who abstains from killing living beings... has right view will always, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, in the heavenly world. Those who know thus know rightly; those who know otherwise are mistaken in their knowledge.' So he obstinately misapprehends what he himself has known, seen and felt; insisting on that alone, he says: 'Only this is true; anything else is wrong.'

10. (iv) "But here in consequence of ardour, endeavour, devotion, diligence and right attention, some monk or brahman attains such concentration of mind that, when his mind is concentrated, he sees with the heavenly eyesight, which is purified and surpasses the human, that some person abstains from killing living beings here... has right view. He sees that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he has reappeared in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell. He says: 'It seems that there are no good kammās, there is no result of good conduct. For I have seen that a person abstained from killing here... had right view. I saw that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he had reappeared in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell.' He says: 'It seems that one who abstains from killing living beings... has right view, will always, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell. Those who know thus know rightly; those who know otherwise are mistaken in their knowledge.' So he obstinately misapprehends what he himself has known, seen and felt; insisting on that alone, he says: 'Only this is true; anything else is wrong.'

11. (i) "Now, Ānanda, when a monk or brahman says thus: 'It seems that there are evil kammās, there is the result of misconduct,' I concede that to him.

"When he says thus: 'For I have seen that some person killed living beings... had wrong view. I saw that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he had reappeared in states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell,' I concede that to him.

"When he says thus: 'It seems that one who kills living beings... has wrong view, will always, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell,' I do not concede that to him.

"When he says thus: 'Those who know thus know rightly; those who know otherwise are mistaken in their knowledge,' I do not concede that to him.

“When he obstinately misapprehends what he himself has known, seen and felt; and insisting on that alone, he says: ‘Only this is true; anything else is wrong,’ I do not concede that to him.

“Why is that? The Tathāgata’s knowledge of the Great Exposition of Kamma is different.

12. (ii) “Now when a monk or brahman says thus: ‘It seems that there are no evil kammās, there is no result of misconduct,’ I do not concede that to him.

“When he says thus: ‘For I have seen that a person killed living beings... had wrong view. I saw that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he had reappeared in a happy destination, in the heavenly world,’ I concede that to him.

“When he says thus: ‘It seems that one who kills living beings... has wrong view, will always, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, in the heavenly world,’ I do not concede that to him.

“When he says thus: ‘Those who know thus know rightly; those who know otherwise are mistaken in their knowledge,’ I do not concede that to him.

“When he obstinately misapprehends what he himself has known, seen and felt; and insisting on that alone, he says: ‘Only this is true; anything else is wrong,’ I do not concede that to him.

“Why is that? The Tathāgata’s knowledge of the Great Exposition of Kamma is different.

13. (iii) “Now when a monk or brahman says thus: ‘It seems that there are good kammās, there is a result of good conduct,’ I concede that to him.

“When he says thus: ‘For I have seen that a person abstained from killing living beings here... had right view. I saw that on the dissolution of the body after death, he had reappeared in a happy destination, in the heavenly world,’ I concede that to him.

“When he says: ‘It seems that one who abstains from killing living beings... has right view will always, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, in the heavenly world,’¹⁰ I do not concede that to him.

“When he says: ‘Those who know thus know rightly; those who know otherwise are mistaken in their knowledge,’ I do not concede that to him.

“When he obstinately misapprehends what he himself has known, seen, and felt; and insisting on that alone he says: ‘Only this is true: anything else is wrong,’ I do not concede that to him.

“Why is that? The Tathāgata’s knowledge of the Great Exposition of Kamma is different.

14. (iv) “Now when a monk or brahman says thus: ‘It seems that there are no good kammās, there is no result of good conduct,’ I do not concede that to him.

“When he says thus: “For I have seen that a person abstained from killing living beings here... had right view. I saw that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he had reappeared in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell,” I concede that to him.

¹⁰ This amounts to the belief in theistic religions where virtue and faith (=whatever is held to be right view) are supposed to guarantee salvation.

“When he says thus: ‘One who abstains from killing living beings... has right view will always, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell,’ I do not concede that to him.

“When he says thus: ‘Those who know thus know rightly; those who know otherwise are mistaken in their knowledge,’ I do not concede that to him.

“When he obstinately misapprehends what he himself has known, seen and felt; and insisting on that alone, he says: ‘Only this is true; anything else is wrong,’ I do not concede that to him.

“Why is that? The Tathāgata’s knowledge of the Great Exposition of Kamma is different.

The Great Exposition of Kamma

15. (i) “Now, Ānanda, there is the person who has killed living beings here... has had wrong view. And on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell.¹¹ But (perhaps) the evil kamma producing his suffering was done by him earlier, or the evil kamma producing his suffering was done by him later, or wrong view was undertaken and completed by him at the time of his death.¹² And that was why, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappeared in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell. But since he has killed living beings here... has had wrong view, he will feel the result of that here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

16. (ii) “Now there is the person who has killed living beings here... has had wrong view. And on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, in the heavenly world.¹³ But (perhaps) the good kamma producing his happiness was done by him earlier, or the good kamma producing his happiness was done by him later, or right view was undertaken and completed by him at the time of his death. And that was why, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappeared in a happy destination, in the heavenly world. But since he has killed living beings here... has had wrong view, he will feel the result of that here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.¹⁴

¹¹ Devadatta, for instance, who persuaded prince Ajātasattu to murder his father (who was a stream-winner), three times attempted to murder the Buddha and once succeeded in wounding him, and caused a schism in the Sangha; the last two actions are certain to lead to birth in hell.

¹² This series of three phrases appears to mean: *earlier*, either earlier in life before he undertook either the wholesome or unwholesome courses of kamma, or in some previous life; *later*, later in that very life, for even if a person does much evil kamma, usually he will also make some good kamma occasionally; *wrong view... time of his death*, this kind of wrong view will be of the type, “there is no kamma, no results of kamma, no evil, no results of evil,” and so on. The next birth actually depends on the object of the last moments of a dying person’s consciousness. At that time one should recollect all one’s good kamma: generosity, loving kindness, compassion, pure precepts and so on. Evil should not be thought of then though heavy evil kamma done previously may force itself into the mind and make recollection of one’s generosity and virtue in keeping the precepts difficult or impossible.

¹³ A good example of this is the story of “Coppertooth,” the public executioner who, after a career of murder as a bandit, then as the killer of his own bandit comrades and subsequently executioner of all criminals for fifty years, was taught by venerable Sāriputta Thera and his mind eased of the heavy weight of evil kamma so that he attained heavenly rebirth. See Dhammapada Commentary, ii, 203–209.

¹⁴ Though such a person attained a heavenly rebirth the evil kamma made will still mature sooner or later; he has not escaped its results.

17. (iii) “Now there is the person who has abstained from killing living beings here... has had right view. And on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a happy destination, in the heavenly world.¹⁵ But (perhaps) the good kamma producing his happiness was done by him earlier, or the good kamma producing his happiness was done by him later, or right view was undertaken and completed by him at the time of his death. And that was why, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappeared in a happy destination, in the heavenly world. But since he has abstained from killing living beings here... has had right view, he will feel the result of that here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

18. (iv) “Now there is the person who has abstained from killing living beings here... has had right view. And on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell.¹⁶ But (perhaps) the evil kamma producing his suffering was done by him earlier, or the evil kamma producing his suffering was done by him later, or wrong view was undertaken and completed by him at the time of his death. And that was why, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappeared in the states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell. But since he has abstained from killing living beings here... has had right view, he will feel the result of that here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.¹⁷

19. “So, Ānanda, there is kamma that is incapable (of good result) and appears incapable (of good result); there is kamma that is incapable (of good result) and appears capable (of good result); there is kamma that is capable (of good result) and appears capable (of good result); there is kamma that is capable (of good result) and appears incapable (of good result).”¹⁸

This is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Ānanda was satisfied and he rejoiced in the Blessed One’s words.

¹⁵ King Pasenadi of Kosala, for instance.

¹⁶ This was what happened to Queen Mallikā, wife of King Pasenadi, who had led a good life, generous, keeping the Five Precepts, and the Eight Precepts on Uposatha days and so on, but once she did evil, having sexual relations with a dog. This unconfessed evil weighed heavily on her mind and she remembered it when dying. As a result she spent seven days in hell. Her power of goodness from the doing of many good kammās then gave her rebirth in a heavenly world. See *Dhammapada Commentary*, iii, 119–123.

¹⁷ Though this virtuous and good person has obtained a low rebirth through the power of previously done evil kamma, still the good kamma made by him will mature sooner or later, when it gets a chance.

¹⁸ This final terse paragraph may have been clear to the venerable Ānanda Thera, or he may have asked for an explanation, as we require and find in the *Commentary*, which says:

i. A strong unwholesome kamma (incapable of good result), the result of which will come before the results of weaker unwholesome kammās.

ii. Wholesome kamma (which appears capable of good result) is followed by unwholesome death-proximate kamma which makes the former incapable of good result immediately.

iii. A strong wholesome kamma will mature even before much accumulated unwholesome kamma.

iv. Unwholesome kamma (which appears incapable of good result) is followed by wholesome death-proximate kamma which will mature first and is capable of good results.

Majjhima Nikāya 41: The Brahmans of Sala (Saleyyaka Sutta)

Introduction

The brahmans of this discourse, intelligent people, asked a question about the causality of rebirth—why is one reborn in the states of deprivation (the hells, animals, and ghosts) while others make it to the heaven worlds?

The Buddha then analyses what kind of kamma will take one to a low rebirth. You see any of your own actions here? Then you know what to do about it, for if one makes any of these ten courses of unwholesome kamma strong in oneself, a result can be expected at least “on the dissolution of the body, after death,” if not in this life.

The ten courses of wholesome kamma follow. They should be strengthened in oneself, repeated frequently so that they become habitual. If one recognises any of one’s own actions among them, then just guard against the conceit: “I am good.”

The last part of the sutta deals with the aspirations which one may have for rebirth at the time of death. Of course, one’s previously made kamma must be such that it will support such aspirations. A miser might aspire to riches but his kamma will give him poverty. If a person has kept the Uposatha and generally all the precepts and been generous and truthful as well, this is the passport to heavenly birth (from the gods of the Four Kings up to the gods that Wield Power over others’ Creations). Beyond this, it is necessary also to be proficient in jhāna and one will gain rebirth among the Brahmans (from the Divinity’s Retinue to the Very Fruitful gods) according to proficiency in this. For the next five Brahma-planes, the state of non-returning is required, while for the last four one must have gained the formless attainments. Finally, one may aspire to no rebirth: to arahatship, but of course the aspiration alone is not sufficient—practise and sufficient insight-wisdom are needed.

The Sutta

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was wandering in the Kosalan country with a large Sangha of bhikkhus, and eventually he arrived at a Kosalan brahman village called Sala.

2. The brahman householders of Sala heard: “A monk called Gotama, it seems, a son of the Sakyans who went forth from a Sakyan clan, has been wandering in the Kosalan country with a large Sangha of bhikkhus and has come to Sala. Now a good report of Master Gotama has been spread to this effect: ‘That Blessed One is such since he is arahat and Fully Enlightened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable teacher of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, enlightened, blessed. He describes this world with its gods, its Māras, and its (Brahma) Divinities, this generation with its monks and brahmans, with its kings and its people, which he has himself realised through direct knowledge. He teaches a Dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle and good in the end with (the right) meaning and phrasing, he affirms a holy life that is utterly perfect and pure.’ Now it is good to see such arahats.”

3. The brahman householders of Sala went to the Blessed One; and some paid homage to the Blessed One and sat down at one side; some exchanged greetings with him, and when the courteous and amiable talk was finished, sat down at one side; some raised hands palms together in salutation to the Blessed One and sat down at one side; some pronounced their name and clan in the Blessed One's presence and sat down at one side; some kept silence and sat down at one side.

4. When they were seated, they said to the Blessed One: "Master Gotama, what is the reason, what is the condition, why some beings here, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell; and what is the reason, what is the condition, why some beings here, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world?"

5. "Householders, it is by reason of conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, by reason of unrighteous conduct, that beings here on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. It is by reason of conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, by reason of righteous conduct, that some beings here on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world."

6. "We do not understand the detailed meaning of this utterance of Master Gotama's spoken in brief without expounding the detailed meaning. It would be good if Master Gotama taught us the Dhamma so that we might understand the detailed meaning of Master Gotama's utterance spoken in brief without expounding the detailed meaning."

"Then, householders, listen and heed well what I shall say."

"Yes, venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

7. "Householders, there are three kinds of bodily conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct. There are four kinds of verbal conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct. There are three kinds of mental conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct.

8. "And how are there three kinds of bodily conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct? Here someone is a killer of living beings: he is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, and merciless to all living beings. He is a taker of what is not given: he takes as a thief another's chattels and property in the village or in the forest. He is given over to misconduct in sexual desires: he has intercourse with such (women) as are protected by the mother, father, (mother and father), brother, sister, relatives, as have a husband, as entail a penalty, and also with those that are garlanded in token of betrothal. That is how there are three kinds of bodily conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct.

9. "And how are there four kinds of verbal conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct? Here someone speaks falsehood: when summoned to a court or to a meeting, or to his relatives' presence, or to his guild, or to the royal family's presence, and questioned as a witness thus, 'So, good man, tell what you know,' then, not knowing, he says 'I know,' or knowing, he says 'I do not know,' not seeing, he says 'I see,' or seeing, he says 'I do not see'; in full awareness he speaks falsehood for his own ends or for another's ends or for some trifling worldly end. He speaks maliciously: he is a repeater elsewhere of what is heard here for the purpose of causing division from these, or he is a repeater to these of what is heard elsewhere for the purpose of causing division from those, and he is thus a divider of the united, a creator of divisions, who enjoys discord, rejoices in

discord, delights in discord, he is a speaker of words that create discord. He speaks harshly: he utters such words as are rough, hard, hurtful to others, censorious of others, bordering on anger and un conducive to concentration. He is a gossip: as one who tells that which is unseasonable, that which is not fact, that which is not good, that which is not the Dhamma, that which is not the Discipline, and he speaks out of season speech not worth recording, which is unreasoned, indefinite, and unconnected with good. That is how there are four kinds of verbal conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct.

10. “And how are there three kinds of mental conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct? Here someone is covetous: he is a coveter of another’s chattels and property thus: ‘Oh, that what is another’s were mine!’ Or he has a mind of ill will, with the intention of a mind affected by hate thus: ‘May these beings be slain and slaughtered, may they be cut off, perish, or be annihilated!’ Or he has wrong view, distorted vision, thus: ‘There is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed, no fruit and ripening of good and bad kammās, no this world, no other world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously (born) beings,¹⁹ no good and virtuous monks and brahmins that have themselves realised by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world.’²⁰ That is how there are three kinds of mental conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, unrighteous conduct.

“So, householders, it is by reason of conduct not in accordance with the Dhamma, by reason of unrighteous conduct, that some beings here, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in states of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell.

11. “Householders, there are three kinds of bodily conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct. There are four kinds of verbal conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct. There are three kinds of mental conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

12. “And how are there three kinds of bodily conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct? Here someone, abandoning the killing of living beings, becomes one who abstains from killing living beings; with rod and weapon laid aside, gentle and kindly, he abides compassionate to all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he becomes one who abstains from taking what is not given; he does not take as a thief another’s chattels and property in the village or in the forest. Abandoning misconduct in sexual desires, he becomes one who abstains from misconduct in sexual desires: he does not have intercourse with such women as are protected by mother, father, (father and mother), brother, sister, relatives, as have a husband, as entail a penalty, and also those that are garlanded in token of betrothal. That is how there are three kinds of bodily conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

13. “And how are there four of verbal conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct? Here someone, abandoning false speech, becomes one who abstains from false speech: when summoned to a court or to a meeting or to his relatives’ presence or to his guild or to the royal family’s presence, and questioned as a witness thus, ‘So, good man, tell what you know,’ not knowing, he says ‘I do not know,’ or knowing, he says ‘I know,’ not seeing he says ‘I do not see,’ or seeing, he says ‘I see’; he does not in full

¹⁹ Beings who appear due to the force of past action (kamma) in some states of birth: all gods and divinities, ghosts, inhabitants of hells; see Majjhima Nikāya Sutta 12 (Mahā-sihanāda Sutta).

²⁰ For an explanation of these views held by some teachers in the Buddhist time, and which were a rejection of all moral values, see Ledi Sayādaw, *The Eightfold Path and its Factors Explained* (BPS Wheel No. 245/247).

awareness speak falsehood for his own ends or for another's ends or for some trifling worldly end. Abandoning malicious speech, he becomes one who abstains from malicious speech: as one who is neither a repeater elsewhere of what is heard here for the purpose of causing division from these, nor a repeater to these of what is heard elsewhere for the purpose of causing division from those, who is thus a reuniter of the divided, a promoter of friendships, enjoying concord, rejoicing in concord, delighting in concord, he becomes a speaker of words that promote concord. Abandoning harsh speech, he becomes one who abstains from harsh speech: he becomes a speaker of such words as are innocent, pleasing to the ear and lovable, as go to the heart, are civil, desired of many and dear to many. Abandoning gossip, he becomes one who abstains from gossip: as one who tells that which is seasonable, that which is factual, that which is good, that which is the Dhamma, that which is the Discipline, he speaks in season speech worth recording, which is reasoned, definite and connected with good. That is how there are four kinds of verbal conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

14. "And how are there three kinds of mental conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct? Here someone is not covetous: he is not a coveter of another's chattels and property thus: 'Oh, that what is another's were mine!' He has no mind of ill will, with the intention of a mind unaffected by hate thus: 'May these beings be free from enmity, affliction and anxiety, may they live happily!' He has right view, undistorted vision, thus: 'There is what is given and what is offered and what is sacrificed, and there is fruit and ripening of good and bad kammās, and there is this world and the other world and mother and father and spontaneously (born) beings, and good and virtuous monks and brahmins that have themselves realised by direct knowledge and declared this world and the other world.' That is how there are three kinds of mental conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

"So, householders, it is by reason of conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, by reason of righteous conduct, that some beings here, on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world.

15. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct, should wish: 'Oh, that on the dissolution of the body, after death, I might reappear in the company of the warrior-nobles of great property!' it is possible that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he may do so. Why is that? Because he observes conduct that is in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

16. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct, should wish: 'Oh, that on the dissolution of the body, after death, I might reappear in the company of the brahmins of great property!' it is possible...

17. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma,...'... I might reappear in the company of householders of great property!' it is possible...

18. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct, should wish: 'Oh, that on the dissolution of the body, after death, I might reappear in the company of the gods of the Four Kings!' it is possible that on the dissolution of the body, after death, he may do so. Why is that? Because he observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

19. ...of the gods of the Realm of the Thirty-three...²¹

²¹ The rendering of the various gods' names are based on the commentary to the *Hadaya-vibhaṅga* (in the *Vibhaṅga*, second book of the Abhidhamma: see *The Book of Analysis*, P.T.S. Translation Series).

20. ...of the gods that have Gone to Bliss...
21. ...of the Contented gods...
22. ...of the gods that Delight in Creating...
23. ...of the gods that Wield Power over others' Creations...
24. ...of the gods of Brahma's Retinue...
25. ...of the Radiant gods...
26. ...of the gods of Limited Radiance...
27. ...of the gods of Measureless Radiance...
28. ...of the gods of Streaming Radiance...
29. ...of the Glorious gods...
30. ...of the gods of Limited Glory...
31. ...of the gods of Measureless Glory...
32. ...of the gods of Refulgent Glory...
33. ...of the Very Fruitful gods...
34. ...of the gods Bathed in their own Prosperity...
35. ...of the Untormenting gods...
36. ...of the Fair-to-see gods...
37. ...of the Fair-seeing gods...
38. ...of the gods who are Junior to None...
39. ...of the gods of the base consisting of the infinity of space...
40. ...of the gods of the base consisting of the infinity of consciousness...
41. ...of the gods of the base consisting of nothingness...

42. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct, should wish: 'Oh, that on the dissolution of the body, after death, I might reappear in the company of the gods of the base consisting of neither-perception-nor-non-perception!' it is possible that, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he may do so. Why is that? Because he observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct.

43. "If a householder who observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct, should wish: 'Oh, that by realisation myself with direct knowledge, I may here and now enter upon and abide in the deliverance of the heart and the deliverance by wisdom that are taint-free with exhaustion of taints!' it is possible that, by realisation himself with direct knowledge, he may here and now enter upon and abide in the deliverance of the heart and the deliverance by wisdom that are taint-free with exhaustion of taints. Why is that? Because he observes conduct in accordance with the Dhamma, righteous conduct."

44. When this was said, the brahman householders of Sala said to the Blessed One:

"Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dhamma has been made clear in many ways by Master Gotama, as though he were turning upright what had

been overthrown, revealing the hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, holding up a lamp in the darkness for those with eyes to see forms.

45. "We go to Master Gotama for refuge, and to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha of bhikkhus. From today let Master Gotama accept us as followers who have gone to him for refuge for life."

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