

# Purification, Ethics and Karma in Early Buddhist Discourse

by Bhikkhu Anālayo

lecture 7

**review**

"I considered: 'I recall that when my father the Sakyan was occupied, while I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.

Could that be the path to enlightenment?' Then, following on that memory, came the realisation: 'That is indeed the path to enlightenment.'

I thought: 'Why am I afraid of a happiness that is separate from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states? I am not afraid of a happiness that is separate from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states!'"

(MN I 246 *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*, trsl. Bhikkhu Bodhi p. 340)

"This Dhamma does not lead to disenchantment ... but only to reappearance in the base of nothingness".

(MN I 165 *Ariyapariyesana-sutta*, trsl. Bhikkhu Bodhi p. 258)

MĀ 10	MN 2
1) seeing,	a) seeing ( <i>dassana</i> ) = 1 (in MĀ)
2) guarding,	b) restraining ( <i>saṃvara</i> ) = 2 (in MĀ)
3) avoiding,	c) using ( <i>paṭisevana</i> ) = 4 (in MĀ)
4) using,	d) enduring ( <i>adhivāsana</i> ) = 5 (in MĀ)
5) enduring,	e) avoiding ( <i>parivajjana</i> ) = 3 (in MĀ)
6) removing,	f) removing ( <i>vinodana</i> ) = 6 (in MĀ)
7) attending	g) developing ( <i>bhāvanā</i> ) = 7 (in MĀ)

- 1) see noble truths instead of empty speculation
- 2) guard the sense-doors
- 3) avoid what is dangerous and unsuitable
- 4) use things properly
- 5) endure various vicissitudes
- 6) remove what is unwholesome
- 7) attend to awakening factors

relation to the noble eightfold path:

- 1: right view
- 2: right effort
- 4: right livelihood
- 6: right intention
- 7: right mindfulness

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### **"karma"**

- stands for [ethically qualifiable] action
- and affirms moral responsibility

1) "If with a razor-sharp wheel one were to make this earth one single mass and heap of flesh, there would be no evil as a result of that, no evil would accrue.

If one were to go along the south bank of the Ganges killing ... there would be no evil as a result of that, no evil would accrue.

If one were to go along the north bank of the Ganges giving ... there would be no merit as a result of that, no merit would accrue."

(*Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, DN I 53, trsl. Walshe p. 94)

"There is no cause or condition for the defilement of beings, they are defiled without cause and condition. There is no cause or condition for the purification of beings, they are purified without cause or condition."

(*Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, DN I 53, trsl. Walshe p. 94)

"There is nothing given ... there is no fruit or result of good and bad deeds"

(*Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, DN I 55, trsl. Walshe p. 95)

- 2) "you have done evil actions in the past; exhaust them with the performance of piercing austerities. When you are here and now restrained in body, speech, and mind, that is doing no evil actions for the future. So by annihilating with asceticism past actions and by doing no fresh actions, there will be no consequence in the future. With no consequence in the future, there is the destruction of action ..."

(*Cūladukkhakkhanda-sutta*, MN I 94, trsl. Bhikkhu Bodhi p. 188)

- 3) "Some feelings arise here originating from bile disorders ... from phlegm disorders ... from wind disorders ... from an imbalance [of the three] ... produced by change of climate ... produced by careless behaviour ... caused by assault ... produced as the result of kamma [therefore] ascetics and brahmins who hold such a ... view as this 'whatever a person experiences, whether it be pleasant or painful or neither-pleasant-nor-painful, all that is caused by what was done in the past', they overshoot what one knows by oneself and they overshoot what is considered to be true in the world. Therefore I say that this is wrong on the part of those ascetics and brahmins".

(*Sīvaka-sutta*, SN IV 230, trsl. Bhikkhu Bodhi p. 1279)

- 4) "Monks, I reckon intention (*cetana*) to be karma. Having intended, one does deeds by body, speech and mind".

AN III 415

- 5) "Neither in the sky nor in the middle of the ocean, nor on entering a mountain cave, nor elsewhere is there a place on earth, standing on which one could escape [the fruit] of evil karma."

Dhp 127

6) "So, it seems, material form is not self, feeling is not self, perception is not self, formations are not self, consciousness is not self. What self, then, will actions done by the not-self affect?"

(*Mahāpuṇṇama-sutta*, MN III 19, trsl. Bhikkhu Bodhi p. 890)

7) "beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior"

(*Cūḷakammavibhaṅga-sutta*, MN III 203, trsl. Bhikkhu Bodhi p. 1053)

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## Chapter 2 – On Karma

### **MĀ 11 – Discourse on the Simile of the [Grain] of Salt**

(Parallel to the *Loṅkaphala-sutta*, AN 3.99 / AN I 249)

According to the actions a person does, he will experience the [exactly corresponding] result of those actions, then in that case there could be no practice of the holy life and no attainment of the end of *dukkha* ...

case 1)

When a person has not cultivated the body, has not cultivated virtue, has not cultivated the mind, has not cultivated wisdom, and his lifespan is very short. This is the case of a person who, having done unwholesome actions, must experience *dukkha* as their fruit by [being reborn in] hell as a result.

simile:

It is just as if a person were to drop an ounce of salt into a small amount of water, intending to make the water salty and undrinkable.

case 2)

When a person has cultivated the body, has cultivated virtue, has cultivated the mind, has cultivated wisdom, and his lifespan is very long. This is the case of a person who, having done an unwholesome action, must experience *dukkha* as its fruit by [experiencing] the result in this life

simile:

Suppose a person were to drop an ounce of salt into the water of the Ganges, intending to make the water salty and undrinkable.

other similes:

... It is just as when a person takes away another's goat ... The one who took the goat is perhaps a king or a king's minister, someone possessing much power. The owner of the goat is poor and powerless. Because of his lack of power, he can only ... with his palms placed together implore the other: "Sire! Please return the goat to me, or give me the price of the goat!"

... It is just as when a person steals another's goat and the owner of the goat takes it back by force ... [Here] the person who steals the goat is poor and powerless, while the owner of the goat is perhaps a king or a king's minister, someone possessing much power. Because of their power they can detain and arrest the thief, and take the goat back by force.

... It is just as when a person owes another person five coins and is arrested by the creditor ... This is the case when the debtor is poor and powerless. Because he is poor and powerless, when he owes another person five coins, he will be arrested by the creditor... for owing just one coin.

... It is just as when a person owes another person a hundred coins, yet is not arrested by the creditor, and would not be arrested by him even for owing a thousand or ten thousand coins ... This is the case when the debtor has property beyond measure and is extremely powerful, and because of that, despite owing another person a hun-

dred coins, is not arrested by the creditor, and would not be arrested by him even for owing a thousand or ten thousand coins.

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AN 3.99 has the similes in the following sequence:

- grain of salt
- debt of some/many coins
- stolen goat

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main point:

- result of karma depends on context –

Same deed can have different consequences,  
 just as grain of salt turns glass of water salty, but not river Ganges,  
 just as poor thief of goat is taken to task, but not rich thief of goat,  
 just as poor debtor is arrested for owing little, but not rich debtor,  
 even if he owes much.