

Kamma

What is kamma?

During the time of the Buddha, there were sages who expressed different views regarding kamma. The Buddha analysed these views and classified them into two broad groups.



1. Uccedavadi view. (annihilationism) Teachings which declared that there was no life after death and there was no retribution for actions. They taught kamasukalikanuyogaya which is that emancipation could be achieved by giving maximum comfort to the body.

2. Saaswathavadi view (eternalism) Teachings which declared that there was life after death and everything happens as a result of kamma or past actions. They taught attakilamathanuyogaya namely that emancipation could be achieved by giving maximum discomfort to the body.

The Buddha rejected both these views. This note is a brief introduction to how the Buddha clearly explained the way kamma influences individuals. Kamma is not the cause of everything that we face, we should understand how five laws influence our lives, namely:

- 1 Uthu niyama. The influence of the changing seasons
2. Bija niyama. Laws governing biological processes
3. Citta niyama. The influence of thought
4. Kamma Niyama. The influence of past actions
5. Dhamma niyama. The influence of natural laws of nature



At the same time the Buddha taught that there were 4 topics which could not be resolved by thinking about them, namely:

1. Loka vishaya . The nature of the universe
- 2.Sathwa vishaya. The nature of life
3. Kamma vishaya. The nature of kamma
4. Buddha vishaya. The nature of the Buddha

The Buddha has shown that mental confusion can result from unnecessarily dwelling on these four subjects. Therefore, He refrained from teaching everything that He realised by achieving enlightenment. Understanding these topics for our purpose is sufficient.

The word Kammaya is derived from the root to do i.e. kara

Cetanahan bhikkawe kamman vadhami. Cethanithwa Kamman karoti kayena vacaya manasa

I declare that kamma is intension. Kamma results from thought, word and action.

It is clear therefore that thought processes are the causes of kamma. There are four kinds of kamma that decide the quality of the next birth, namely:

1. Garuka kamma. This type of kamma results in Stream Entrants being born in a good situation.
2. Asanna kamma. The next birth will be is in a situation appropriate to the thought process at the moment of death
3. Acinna kamma. The next birth is in a situation which is the result of habits and practices indulged in for a long time.
4. Kataththa kammaya. A birth situation which is the result of past kamma which had not been expended and surfaced at time of birth.



Next, there are there are four ways in which kamma produces results.

1. Janaka karmaya. A kamma that results in a new birth
2. Upasthambakha kamma. A kamma that develops the new life
3. Upapidaka kamma. A Kamma that results in numerous calamities
4. Upaghathaka kammaya. A kamma that results in a short life span.

Similarly, there are four time periods during which the results of a kamma may manifest

1. Dittadhammaweddaniya kammaya. A kamma that produces results in this life itself
2. Upapachchawedaniya kamma. A kamma that produces results in the very next life
3. Aparapariya kamma. A kamma that repeatedly produces results life after life
4. Ahosi kamma. A kamma that extinguishes without producing results

Kamma is classed into two broad groups.

1. Skillful (wholesome)
2. Un-skillful (un-wholesome)

Un-skillfull kamma are those thought processes based on craving, hatred and delusion which result in an individual prolonging in samsara.

They are of two kinds:

meritorious

de-meritorious



If any action we take either meritorious or de-meritorious is preceded by some kind of hope and anticipation, then such action results in prolongation of samsara. Therefore, they are considered un-skillful.

De-meritorious action results in birth in the lower realms and actions result in heavenly realms.



Skillful kamma are those that shorten samsara. What this means is to refrain from evil deeds and to engage in virtuous activity without any hope or expectation. In other words, to engage in beneficial activity with altruistic, faultless and non-deluded intention while

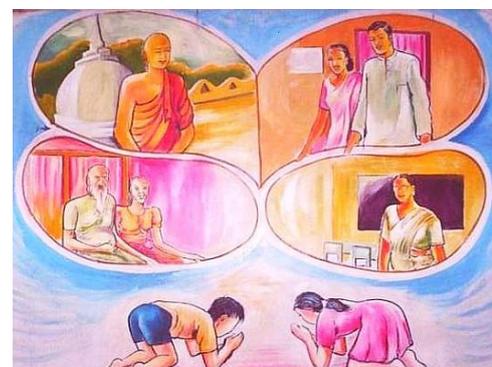
suppressing craving, hate and delusion.

This does not mean that meritorious deeds will not lead to good results. It is also possible that one may see the end of samsara before the effects of past actions are completed. Our aim should be to see the end of samsara and not wonder in samsara enjoying the benefits of our actions.

There are four ways in which the evil and actions lead to good results. And there are four ways in which evil and virtuous deeds do not lead to good results.

Four ways in which virtuous deeds do not lead to good results:

1. Being born in a bad situation
2. Being born with disabilities
3. Being born in a bad time period
4. When habituated to bad practices



Four ways by which evil deeds do not result in bad effects.

1. Being born in a good situation
2. Being born with exceptional sense organs
3. Being born in an upright time period
4. Being endowed with a brilliant intelligence

In this manner we can understand the workings of kamma. Let us therefore refrain from evil and endeavour to only engage in virtuous deeds.

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