

BANDAR UTAMA BUDDHIST SOCIETY



Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta, MN 136

TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA

The
Middle Length
Discourses
of the
Buddha



A Translation of the
Majjhima Nikāya

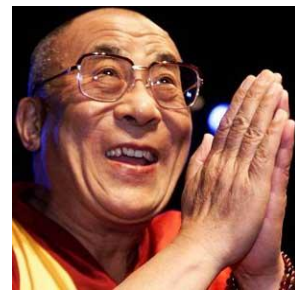


Translated by
Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli *and* Bhikkhu Bodhi

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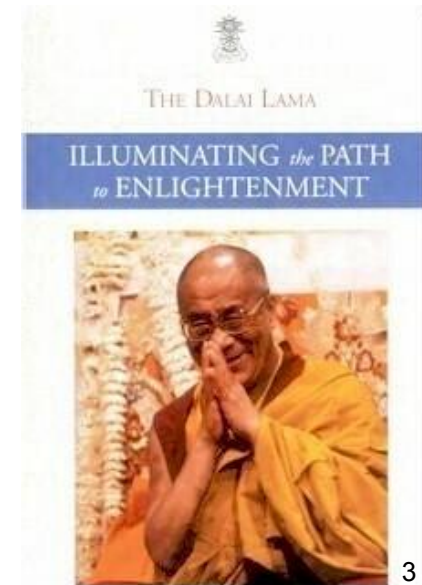


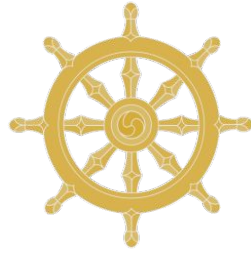
Four Reliances



- Rely not on the person but the words.
- Rely not on the words but on their meaning.
- Rely not on the provisional meaning but the definitive meaning of the word.
- Rely not on intellectual understanding of the definitive meaning, but on direct, non-conceptual experience of it.

Abhisamaya-alaṅkāra
Ornament of Clear Realizations





Background

This discourse shows some of the complexities of kamma and its results. Beginning with a strange view expressed by Potaliputta the wanderer and a confused answer given by the monk Samiddhi, the Buddha then gives his Great Exposition of Kamma which is based upon four "types" of people.



Karma by Time

Immediate

Future
Life

Next Life



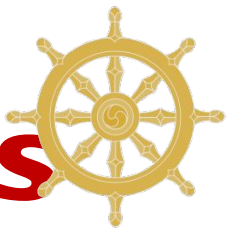
Beginning

- THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Rājagaha, in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary.
- Now on that occasion Ven. Samiddhi was living in a forest hut. Then the wanderer Potaliputta went to see him and exchanged greetings. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side and said to Ven. Samiddhi:

Para 1,2



Potaliputta's Questions

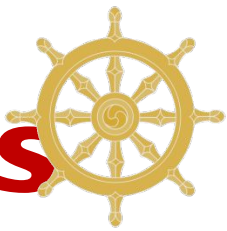


- "Friend Samiddhi, I heard and learned this from the recluse Gotama's own lips: 'Bodily action is vain, verbal action is vain, only mental action is real.'
- And: 'There is that attainment on entering which one does not feel anything at all.'"

Para 2



Potaliputta's Questions



- Samiddhi then asked Potaliputta not to misrepresent the Buddha.
- Potaliputta then asked Samiddhi, “having done an intentional action by way of body, speech, or mind, what does one feel?”
- “Samiddhi replied that one feels suffering.



Meeting the Buddha



- After Potaliputta had left, Ven Samiddhi went to Ven Ānanda and reported to him their entire conversation. Ven Ānanda then said the conversation should be told to the Buddha.
- Both then went to visit the Buddha where Ven Ānanda reported the conversation between Ven Samiddhi and Potaliputta.

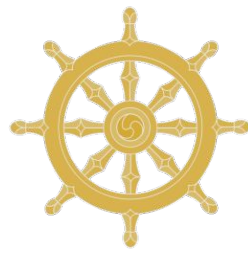
Para 3,4



Buddha's Reply

- The Buddha told Ven Ānanda that he did not recall ever having seen Potaliputta, so there can't be such a conversation. But the Buddha said Potaliputta's question should have been **analyzed** before being answered.
- Ven Udāyin then said perhaps Ven Samiddhi was referring to [the principle]: 'Whatever is felt is suffering.'

Para 5,6



Types of Feeling

- An intentional action by body, speech, or mind [whose result is] pleasant, one feels pleasure.
- An intentional action by body, speech, or mind [whose result is] painful, one feels pain.
- An intentional action by body, speech, or mind [whose result is] to be felt as neither-pain-nor-pleasure, one has neutral feelings.

Para 6



Types of Persons



Evil Doer goes to Hell



Evil Doer goes to Heaven



Good person goes to
Heaven



Good person goes to Hell



Evil Doer

- If one kills living beings, steals, engages in sexual misconduct, lie, speaks maliciously, speaks harshly, gossips; is covetous, has ill will, and holds wrong view, on dissolution of the body, after death, he is reborn in a **woeful state (hells)**.
- If one kills living beings...and holds wrong view, on dissolution of the body, after death, he is reborn in a **happy state (heavens)**.

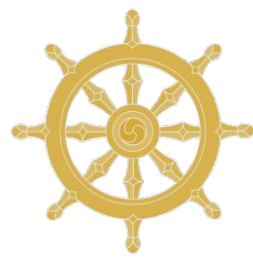
Para 8



Good Doer

- If one abstains from killing living beings, steals, engages in sexual misconduct, lie, speaks maliciously, speaks harshly, gossips; is covetous, has ill will, and holds wrong view, on dissolution of the body, after death, he is reborn in a **happy state (heavens)**.
-
- If one abstains from killing living beings... & holds right view, on dissolution of the body, after death, he is reborn in a **unhappy place**.

Para 8



Partial Truth

A mystic "sees" a vision of an evil-doer suffering in hell

This confirms what he had heard about moral causality

So he says, "evil-doers always go to hell,"

Dogma hardens – "Only this is true; anything else is wrong."

Para 9



Evil Doer in Hell

Buddha explains how one who attains psychic power due to high concentration sees a bad person after death being born in a woeful state. 'Indeed, there are evil actions, there is result of misconduct; for I saw a person here who killed living beings...and held wrong view, and I see that after death, he is reborn in a woeful state...even in hell.' He becomes dogmatic and insist 'Only this is true, anything else is wrong.'

Para 9





Evil Doer in Heaven



Buddha explains how one who attains psychic power due to high concentration sees a bad person after death being born in a happy state. 'Indeed, there are no evil actions, there is no result of misconduct; for I saw a person here who killed living beings...and held wrong view, and I see that after death, he is reborn in a happy state...even in heaven.' He becomes dogmatic and insist 'Only this is true, anything else is wrong.'

Para 10



Good Doer in Heaven

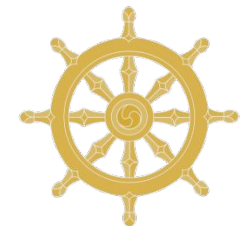


Buddha explains how one who attains psychic power due to high concentration sees a good person after death being born in a happy state. 'Indeed, there are good actions, there is a result of good conduct; for I saw a person who abstains from killing living beings...and held right view, and I see that after death, he is reborn in a happy state...even in heaven.' He becomes dogmatic and insist 'Only this is true, anything else is wrong.'

Para 11



Good Doer in Hell



Buddha explains how one who attains psychic power due to high concentration sees a good person after death being born in a unhappy state. 'Indeed, there are no good actions, there is no result of good conduct; for I saw a person who abstains from killing living beings...and held right view, and after death, he is reborn in a woeful state...even in hell.' He becomes dogmatic and insist 'Only this is true, anything else is wrong.'

Para 12



Buddha's Exposition



- Bad actions have bad results. After death will be reborn in a woeful state. **AGREE**
- Every bad person after death will definitely be reborn in a woeful state. **DISAGREE.**
- Those who know thus know rightly. **DISAGREE**
- This is true, all else not true. **DISAGREE**

Para 13



Buddha's Exposition

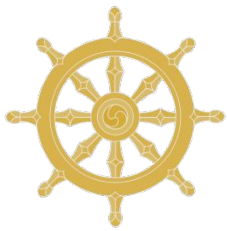


- No bad actions, no bad results. **DISAGREE**
- A bad person after death can be reborn in a happy state. **AGREE.**
- Every bad person will be reborn in a happy state. **DISAGREE**
- Only this is true, all else false. **DISAGREE**

Para 14



Buddha's Exposition



- Good actions, good results. Good person reborn in a happy state. **AGREE.**
- Every good person will be reborn in a happy state. **DISAGREE.**
- Those who know thus know rightly. **DISAGREE**
- This is true, all else not true. **DISAGREE**

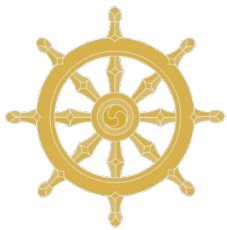


Buddha's Exposititon



- No good actions, no good results. **DISAGREE.**
- A good person can be reborn in woeful state. **AGREE.**
- Every good person will be reborn in a woeful state. **DISAGREE.**
- Those who know thus know rightly. This is true, all else not true. **DISAGREE**

Para 16



Evil Doer in Hell

The bad person is reborn in woeful state because either earlier he did an evil action to be felt as painful, or later he did an evil action to be felt as painful, or at the time of death he had wrong view. And since he has killed living beings... and held wrong view, he will experience the result of that either here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

Para 17



Evil Doer in Hell



Done a bad deed in past life



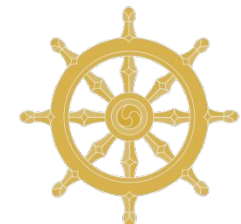
Done a bad deed in this life



Had a wrong view at time of
death



Evil Doer in Heaven



The bad person after death is reborn in a happy state because either earlier he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or later he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or at the time of death he had right view. Because of that he is reborn in a happy state. But since he has here killed living beings...and held wrong view, he will experience the result of that either here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

Para 18



Evil Doer in Heaven



Done a good deed in past life



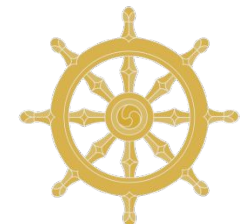
Done a good deed in this life at some stage



Had right view at time of death



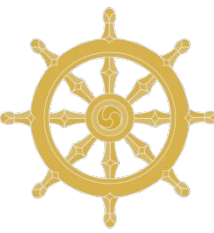
Good Doer in Heaven



The good person is reborn in a happy state because either earlier he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or later he did a good action to be felt as pleasant, or at the time of death he had right view. So after death, he is reborn in a happy state. And since he has here abstained from killing living beings...and held right view, he will experience the result of that either here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

Para 19

Good Doer in Heaven



Done a good deed in past
life



Done a good deed in this
life at some stage



Had right view at time of
death



Good Doer in Hell



The good person is reborn in a woeful state because either earlier he did an evil action to be felt as painful, or later he did an evil action to be felt as painful, or at the time of death he had wrong view. So after death, he is reborn in a woeful state. But since he has here abstained from killing living beings...and held right view, he will experience the result of that either here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.

Para 20



Good Doer in Hell



Done a bad deed in past life



Done a bad deed in this life
at some stage



Had wrong view at time of
death

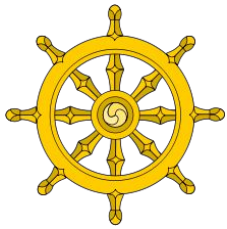


Four Types of Kamma



“Thus, Ānanda, there is action that is incapable [of good result] and appears incapable; there is action that is incapable [of good result] and appears capable; there is action that is capable [of good result] and appears capable; and there is action that is capable [of good result] and appears incapable.”

Four Types of Karma



Inoperative

• Appears Inoperative

Inoperative

• Appears Operative

Operative

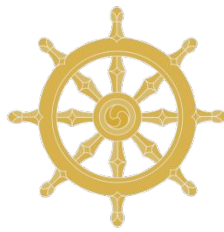
• Appears operative

Operative

• Appears inoperative



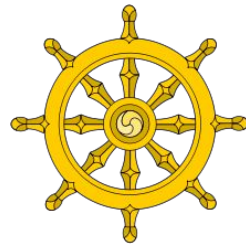
How Karma Works



The Buddha explains Kamma has notions of invariability – thus, "the evildoer goes to hell" is much too simple. Human minds are complex and comprise many kinds of kamma even in one lifetime, as some may influence the last moment when kamma is made prior death, which in turn is the basis for the next life.



Madyama Āgama

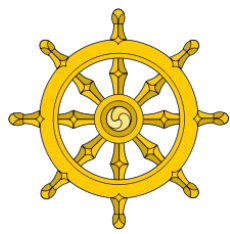


Four reasons for heavenly rebirth of a bad doer:

1. Already suffered the effects of his bad action in his present life, or
2. Effects are bound to ripen only after the rebirth, or
3. He did good deeds prior to bad conduct, or
4. He had right view at time of death



Kamma in Brief



**Bad
Action**

- has the potential or seed of unwholesome results

**Good
Action**

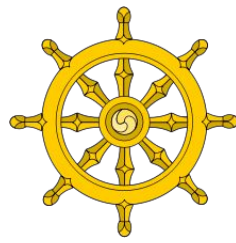
- has the potential or seed of wholesome results.



Buddhaghosa

‘Here there is no single or multiple result of any kind from a single cause, nor a single result from multiple causes, but only multiple results from multiple causes. ... For the Blessed One employs one representative cause and result when it is suitable for the sake of elegance in instruction and to suit the idiosyncrasies of those susceptible to being taught.’

Source: Visuddhimagga, The Path of Purification, trans. Bhikku Ñāṇamoli, BPS: Kandy, 1991, p.553



Conclusion

This is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Ānanda joyfully approved of the Blessed One's word.





Prayer on Four Sublime States



- ▣ **May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes,**
- ▣ **May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes .**
- ▣ **May all sentient beings never be separated from bliss and be without suffering,**
- ▣ **May all sentient beings be in equanimity, free of bias, attachment and anger.**

