

# Purification, Ethics and Karma in Early Buddhist Discourse

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lecture 8

review

**3<sup>rd</sup> jhāna** description

... with the fading away as well of rapture, a monk abides in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, feeling pleasure *kāyena*, he enters upon and abides in the third absorption, on account of which noble ones announce: 'He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.'

He makes the pleasure divested of rapture drench, steep, fill, and pervade this *kāyaṃ*, so that there is no part of his whole *kāyassa* unpervaded by the pleasure divested of rapture ... That too is how a monk develops *kāyagatāsatiṃ*.

*Kāyagatasatisutta* MN III 92

## tetralemma

1. "is", *hoti*;
2. "is not", *na hoti*;
3. "is and is not", *hoti ca na ca hoti*;
4. "neither is nor is not", *n' eva hoti na na hoti*.

## karma

"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 over-  
 shoot 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

### **Discourse on the Simile of the [Grain] of Salt**

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.

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### **MĀ 12 – Discourse to Vappa**

(Parallel to the *Vappa-sutta*, AN 4.195/ AN II 196)

Suppose that a monk [in the past] gave rise to

- unwholesome bodily activities,
- unwholesome verbal activities
- unwholesome mental activities

... unwholesome activities based on ignorance, [but] that at a later  
 time he ceases unwholesome activities ...

Creating no new karma, and having abandoned old karma, he in this  
 very life attains the goal and, free from vexation, remains perma-  
 nently and unchangingly [in this condition] ...

... it is just like a shadow that exists in dependence on a tree. Suppose that someone comes with a sharp axe and chops down the tree at its root, cuts it into pieces; then breaks [each piece] into ten or a hundred fragments, burns them in a fire so that they become ash, which is then blown away by a strong wind, or carried away by water ...

on seeing a form with the eye ...

[on hearing a sound with] the ear ...

[on smelling an odor with] the nose ...

[on tasting a flavor with] the tongue ...

[on experiencing a touch with] the body ...

on cognizing a mental phenomenon with the mind,

he is neither pleased nor displeased; he remains equanimous and unaffected, with right mindfulness and right attentiveness.

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AN 4.195 has the following sequence:

- arahant and future existences
- six abidings
- simile of cutting up tree

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main point:

- arahant is beyond the influxes –

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**MĀ 13 – Discourse on [Tenets to be] Transcended**  
 (Parallel to the *Titthāyatanāni-sutta*, AN 3.61/ AN I 173)

1) ‘All that a person does is caused by what was done in previous lives.’

2) ‘All that a person does is caused and created by a supreme divine being.’

3) ‘All that a person does is without any cause or condition.’

if the view ... were true, then it would follow logically that all that one does or does not, takes place without desire, without effort ...

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main points:

three views

- karmic determinism
- almighty god
- denial of causality

instead:

four noble truths

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### **MĀ 14 – Discourse to Rāhula**

(Parallel to the *Ambalaṭṭhikārāhulovāda-sutta*, MN 61/ MN I 414)

water similes in MN 61:

- a) little water left in vessel (= 1<sup>st</sup> in MĀ)
- b) discarded water (= 2<sup>nd</sup> in MĀ)
- c) vessel upside down (= 4<sup>th</sup> in MĀ)
- d) empty vessel (≠, MĀ has instead vessel tipped over)

if the king's great elephant when going into battle ... uses everything  
 – then Rāhula, I say that ... there is no evil that the king's great elephant would not do

both versions recommend reflection:

bodily & verbal action

- before: not do if impure, do if pure
- while: stop if impure, continue if pure
- after: confess if impure, rejoice if pure

mental action

- before: not do if impure, do if pure
- while: stop if impure, continue if pure
- after: be ashamed/abandon if impure, rejoice if pure

purity is in both versions explained  
 as being wholesome and having pleasant results

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main points:

I. falsehood:

- 1) like little water left
- 2) like discarded water
- 3) like vessel tipped over
- 4) like vessel upside down (MĀ) / empty vessel (MN)
- 5) like reckless elephant

II. Mirror simile illustrates reflection on:

- a) bodily & verbal & mental action
- b) before & during & after