

Kamma in Theravada Buddhism

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Introduction

I would like to express my idea about Kamma or action in Theravada Buddhism. I would tell something to you which motivated me to do this important object. When I studied in Buddhist faculty, Mahachulalongkornrajavidya University, I heard some lecturer talk about Kamma in Buddhism. If Kamma is not real teaching, Buddhism would be vanished from this world. Today I will prove Kamma is a real Buddhist Teaching to maintain one of the most Teachings in the world today.

This paper has two sections. One is about Kamma in Suttanaya or discourse mode. Another is Abhidhammanaya or Philosophical mode. Both of modes have you to understand Kamma clearly more than before.

People, who understand Sommuti-Sacca or conventional truth, should study Kamma in Suttantana. But people, who understand Paramattha-sacca or absolute truth, should study Kamma in Abhidhammanaya.

In this paper, I would like to discuss Sommti-Sacca or conventional truth, to make readers to comprehend mundane phenomena. Later, I would like to discuss Paramattha-sacca or absolute truth to make readers to comprehend extra-mundane phenomena.

I hope the readers would have good things in their minds after reading this paper. Thank You.

Content

Kamma in Sommutisacca, Conventional Truth

1. Dittadhamma-vedaneyakamma.
2. Upapajja-vedaneyakamma.
3. Aparapariya-vedaneyakamma.
4. Ahosi-kamma
5. Janaka-kamma.
6. Upatthambha-kamma.
7. Upapilaka-kamma
8. Upaghataka-kamma.
9. Garu-kamma.
10. Bahula-kamma or acinna-kamma.
11. Asanna-kamma.
12. Katatta-kamma or katattavapana-kamma.

Kamma in Paramatthasacca, Absolute Truth

1. Akusala-kamma.
2. Kusala-kamma.
3. Rupavacarakusala-kamma.
4. Arupavacarakusala-kamma.

Conclusion

The Buddha explained Kamma or action in Sammuti-sacca or conventional truth for people to understand Buddhism in daily life. People who understand action in daily lives, they could have confidence in Buddhist teachings. Finally, they could adjust themselves to come up with their action. First, I will give you explanation Sammuti-sacca, conventional truth and Paramattha-sacca abstract later.

Somuti-sacca means conventional truth which people use in daily life. However, Paramattha is absolute truth which people use when they do meditation. This second Sacca is the foundation of first sacca. For a comparison, somuti-sacca is like a wave, Paramattha-sacca is like an ocean.

The Buddha focused somuti-sacca in Vinaya-Pitaka, and Suttanta-Pitaka. But he focused paramattha-sacca in Abhidhamma-Pitaka. The Buddha explained the first twelve kamma by somuti-sacca. And he explained the rest of kamma by paramattha-sacca.

The first four kamma is Dhitthadhamma-vedaneyakamma: kamma to be experienced here and now; immediately effective kamma. Upapajja-vedhaneyakamma: kamma to be experienced on rebirth; kamma ripening in the next life. Aparapara-vedhaneya-kamma: kamma to be experienced some subsequent lives; indefinitely effective kamma. Ahosi-kamma: lapsed or defunct kamma¹.

1. Dhitthadhammamma-vedaneyakamma: kamma to be experienced here and now; immediately effective kamma. This kamma gives fruit in this life. People who commit this kamma get fruit within 7 days. This kamma originates in first thought moment by thought moment order or Javana-niyama. The first thought moment produces fruit in this life in 7 days. This is called Paripakka-Ditthadhammavedaneyakamma. The poor people named mahaduggata, who gave offerings to the Buddha named Kassapa, become rich within 7 days is the example of good kamma. Rev. Devadatta went to hell after committing bad strong action to separate the order of Sangha in the Buddha's time is the example of bad kamma. If Dhitthadhamma-vedaneyakamma does not produce fruit within 7 days, it produces fruit within this life without exception. This is called Apripakka-Ditthadhamma-vedaneyakamma.

2. Upapajja-vedaneyakamm: kamma to be experienced on rebirth; kamma ripening in the next life. This kamma gives fruit in the next life. People who commit this kamma get fruit when they are on rebirth. This kamma originates in seventh thought-moment by thought-moment order or Javana-niyama. This kamma gives fruit on rebirth and after rebirth consequently. Weighty kamma: antariya-kamma, and permanent wrong view: Niyatamicchaditthi, originate in this seventh thought-moment.

3. Aparapara-vedaneyakamma: kamma to be experienced in some subsequent lives; indefinitely effective kamma. This kamma gives fruit after next lives. People who commit this kamma get fruit when they are on rebirth. This kamma originates in second thought-moment through sixth thought-moment by thought-moment order or Javana-niyama. This kamma gives fruit on rebirth and after rebirth.

4. Ahosi-kamma: lapsed or defunct kamma. This kamma gives fruit after first three kamma gives fruit already. This kamma does not originate in the seven of thought-moment by thought-moment order or Javana-niyama.

All first four kamma are called Paka-kala which is classification according to the time of ripening or taking effect. Paka-kala is managed by thought-moment order

¹ Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P. A. Payutto), Dictionary of Buddhism, (Bangkok:Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya,2008), p 249

or Javana-niyama. There are 7 thought-moments in thought-process. The first thought-moment gives fruit in this life. It means Ditthadhamma-vedaneyakamma. The seventh thought- moment gives fruit in the next life. It means Uppajja-vedaneyakamma. The second thought-moment through sixth thought-moment gives fruit after next life. It means aparapariya-vedaneyakamma. No any thought-moment is for Ahosi-kamma.

The second four Kamma is janaka-kamma: productive kamma, reproductive kamma. Upadhambhaka-kamma: supportive kamma; consolidating kamma. Upapilaka-Kamma: obstructive kamma; frustrating kamma. Upaghataka-kamma: destructive kamma; supplanting kamma.²

1. Janaka-kamma: productive kamma; reproductive kamma. This kamma originates in Akusala-citta: immoral consciousness and Lukiya-kusala-citta: mundane moral consciousness. Akusala-citta is divided into three factors. They are Lobhula-citta: consciousness rooted in greed, Dosamula-citta: consciousness rooted in hatred, and Mohamula-citta: consciousness rooted in delusion. LukiyaKusala-citta is divided into three factors. They are Mahakusala-citta: moral consciousness, Rupavacarakusala-citta: form-sphere moral consciousness, and Arupavacarakusala-citta: formless-sphere moral consciousness.

Janaka-kamma sends human who commit bad thing with Akusala-citta to reborn in hell, the animal kingdom, realm of hungry ghosts, and host of demons. Human who commit bad thing with Dosamula-citta, go to reborn in hell. Human who commit bad thing with Mohamula-citta, go to reborn in the animal kingdom. Human who commit bad thing with Lobhamula-citta, go to reborn in realm of hungry ghosts or host of demons.

Janaka-kamma sends human who commit good thing with Lokiyakusala-citta to reborn in the world of man, the heavenly world, and the brahma world. Human who commit good thing with Mahakusala-citta, go to reborn in the world of man or the heavenly world. Human who commit good thing with Rupavacarakusala-citta or Arupavacara-citta go to reborn in the Brahma world.

2. Upatthambhaka-kamma: supportive kamma; consolidating kamma. This kamma originates in Akusala-citta: immoral consciousness, and Mahakusala-citta: moral consciousness. This kamma supports any kamma to produce their fruits. Good kamma supports good kamma, Bad kamma supports bad kamma. There are two times to support: First time is when human take conception to reborn in the next lives. Second time is when human is life.

3. Upapilaka-kamma: obstructive kamma; frustrating kamma. This kamma originates in Akusala-citta: immoral consciousness, and Mahakusala-citta: moral consciousness. This kamma obstructs opposite kamma to produce their actions. Good kamma obstructs bad Kamma. Bad kamma obstructs good kamma. There are two times to obstruct: First time is when human take conception to reborn in the next lives. Second time is when human is life.

4. Upaghataka-kamma: destructive kamma; supplanting kamma. This kamma originates in Akusala-citt: immoral consciousness and lukiya-lokuttara-citta: mundane-extra consciousness. This kamma originates both in conception time and after conception time.

All second four kamma originates in conception and after conception. Conception time is very important time. Human who are going to die should think

² Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P. A. Payutto), Dictionary of Buddhism, (Bangkok:Mahachualalongkornrajavidyalaya,2008) p249

only good thing. Good thing sends human to reborn in Sughati-Bhumi: Happy state. On the opposite side, human who think bad thing, go to Dugati -Bhumi: State of unhappiness.

The third four kamma is Garu-Kamma: weighty kamma. Bahula-kamma or Acinna-kamma: habitual kamma. Asanna-kamma: death threshold kamma; proximate kamma. Katatta-kamma or Katattavapana-kamma: reverse kamma; casual act³.

1. Garu-kamma: weighty kamma. This kamma is Niyatamicchadhitti: permanent wrong view, Anantariya-kamma: weighty kamma, and Mahaggata-kusalakamma: great gone to. Niyatamicchadhitti originates in Lobhamula-citta. Anantariya-Kamma originates in Dosamula-citta. Mahaggata-kamma originates in Rupavacara-kusalacitta: form-sphere moral consciousness and Arupavacara-kusalacittacitta: formless-sphere moral consciousness.

2. Bahula-kamma or acinna-kamma: habitual kamma. This kamma means something which doing repeatedly. This kamma makes human to recall again. For human who do good thing they are happy. For human who do bad thing they are unhappy. This kamma originates in Akusala-citta, and Mahakusala-citta.

3. Asanna-kamma: death-threshold-kamma. This kamma means something which human think or do when they are going to die. If they are thinking good thing, they are going to Sugati: happy state. If they are thinking bad thing, they are going to Dugati: state of unhappiness. This kamma originates in Akusala-citta, and Mahakusala-citta.

4. Katatta-kamma or katattavapana-kamma: reverse kamma; casual act. This kamma means something which human act with no proper volition.

No need to mention about that.

All twelve kamma I mentioned above is conventional explanation. Most of them appear in Suttantapitaka. They are called kamma in Suttantanaya or conventional truth. People can use and apply to manipulate in daily life.

The first four kamma is dominated by thought-moment. First thought-moment is effective in this life. Seventh thought-moment is effective in next life. Second thought-moment through sixth thought-moment is effective after next life.

The second four kamma is dominated by operation of citta. Conception is effective by Janaka-kamma. The life after conception is effective by Uptthampaka-kamma, Upapilaka-kamma, Upaghataka-kamma; and Ahosi-kamma.

The third four kamma is dominated by different volition. Garu-kamma is effective by strong volition, Bahula-kamma or acinna-kamma is effective by medium volition, Asanna-kamma is effective by weak volition and Kattata-kamma or Katattavapana-kamma is effective by no proper volition.

Kamma in Paramatthasacca, Abstract truth

Paramatthasacca means something which is immutable, aviparitadhamma. There are two types of Paramatthasacca. First one is Sabhavasacca, something which is the true phenomena of ordinary people. Second one is Ariyasacca, something which is the true phenomena of noble people. The Buddha preached Paramatthasacca in Abhidhammapitaka.

Kamma which the Buddha delivered in Abhidhamma is divided into four categories. They are Akusalakamma: unwholesome volition, Kamavacarakusalakam

³ Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P. A. Payutto), Dictionary of Buddhism, (Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 2008) p250.

ma: sentience wholesome volition, Rupavacarakusalakamma: form sphere volition, Arupavacarakusalakamma: formless sphere volition.

1. Akusalakamma means volition come up with Asobhanacetika: bad mental properties. This kamma is classified in to three sections. They are kayakamma: bodily action, vacikamma verbal action, and manokamma mental action. Three of them produce citta to become Akusala-citta. This Akusala-citta is divided into three parts. They are Lobhamula-citta, Dosamula-citta, and Mohamula-citta.

Lobhamula-citta bring about Kamesumicchacara: sexual misconduct, Abhijja: covetousness; avarice; Micchaditthi: false view; wrong view, Adinnadana: taking what is not given; stealing, Musavada: false speech, Pisunavaca: tale –bearing; malicious speech, and Samphappalapa: frivolous talk; vain talk; gossip. This Lobhamula-citta have human to see, hear, smell, taste, touch bad objects and think about bad thing in this life. After this life they are going to reborn in world of hungry ghost or demons.

Dosammula-citta bring about Panatipata: killing, Pharusavaca: harsh speech, pyapada: ill will, Adinnadana: stealing, Musavada: false speech, Pisunavaca: malicious speech, and Samphappalapa: Frivolous talk. This Dosamula-citta have human to see, hear, smell, taste, touch bad objects and think about bad thing in this life. After this life they are going to reborn in hell. Mohamula-citta does not bring about any bad thing directly, but exit when Lobhamula-citta and Dosamula-citta take place. This Mohamula-citta have human to see, hear, smell, taste, touch bad objects and think about bad thing in this life. After this life they are going to reborn in animal world.

Akusalakamma is for people who were born in kamavacara-bhumi. Sometime this kamma is the cause of kusalakamma.

2. Kamavacarakusalakamma: sentience wholesome volition comes up with sobhanacetika: good mental properties. This kamma is classified into three sections. They are kayakamma: bodily action, vacikamma: verbal volition, and manokamma: mental action. Three of them produce citta to become kusala-citta. This kusala-citta is called mahakusala-citta due to make people to accumulate more merit. This mahakusala-citta has ten important factors. They are divided into three groups. Group one is sammakammanta: right action, samma-ajiva: right livelihood. Group two is sammavaca: right speech, samma-ajiva: right livelihood. Group three is alobha: non-greed, adosa: non hatred, and amoha: non delusion.

Sammakammanta and samma-ajiva produce panatipata- veramanee: abstention from killing, adinnadana-veramanee: to abstain from stealing, and kamesumicchacara-veramanee: to abstain from sexual misconduct.

Sammavaca and sammaajiva produce musavada-veramanee: abstention from false speech, pisunavacaya-veramanee: abstention from tale-bearing, pharusavacaya-veramanee: abstention from harsh speech, samphappalapa-veramanee: abstention from vain talk or gossip.

Alobha produce anabhijja: non covetousness. Adosa produce abyapada: non-ill will. Amoha produce sammaditthi: right view.

Kamavacarakusalakamma is for people who were born in kamavacarabhumi: the sensuous plane of existence. In this existence people are able to make donation, to preserve precepts, and cultivate minds. However, people in this existence do anything to get sensual pleasures. This kamma is considered to be a basic fundamental of doing good thing for higher existence. Sometime this kamma is the cause of akusalakamma.

Rupavacarakusalakamma: form sphere volition. This kamma originate in rupavacara-citta: form sphere mind. This citta is for people who finished

concentration meditation. The important factor of this citta is five absorptions. They are pathamajhana: first absorption, second absorption, third absorption, fourth absorption, and fifth absorption.

There are five factors of absorptions. They are vitakka: initial

Application, vicara: sustained application, piti: joy, suka: happiness, and ekaggata: one-pointedness. First absorption got all five factors. Second absorption got four factors except initial application. Third absorption got three factors except initial application and sustained application. Fourth absorption got two factors except initial and sustained application, and joy. Fifth absorption got two factors except initial and sustained application, joy, and happiness.

When vitakka takes place in one mind, people contemplate in one object. When vicara takes place in one mind, people understand in one object. When piti takes place in one mind, people joy in one object. When suka takes place in one mind, people is happy in one object. When ekakkhata takes place in one mind, people concentrate in one object.

This rupavacarakusalakamma send human to reborn in Brahma world. The Brahma world means existence which hindrance can not be dominated. When human come up with absorption, they are born in Brahma world even they are alive. This means their mind becomes Brahma mind, but their body is human body.

Arupavacar-kusalakamm: Formless sphere volition. This kamma originates in Arupvacara-citta: Formless sphere mind. This citta is for people who got absorption and disgust absorption. They think absorption is gross and unstable. Therefore, they do more meditation to get subtle and stable phenomena. This phenomenon is Arupavacara-jhana: Formless sphere absorption. This absorption has four important factors. They are Akasanancayatana-jhana: sphere of infinity of Space, Vinyanan cayatana-jhana: sphere of infinity of Consciousness, akincanyayatana-jhana: sphere of infinity of Nothingness, and Nevasanyanasanyayatana-jhana: sphere of infinity of Neither Perception or Non-Perception.

Yogavacaro: one who get absorption, who get akasanancayatana-jhan, focus in infinity of space. Yogavacaro: one who get absorption, who get vinyancayatana-jhana, focus in awareness of consciousness. Yogavacaro: one who get absorption, focus in subtle of nothingness. Yogavacaro: one who get absorption, focus in unstable of perception.

All of four absorptions have different objects. The akasanancayatana-jhana has space to contemplate. The vinyancayatana-jhana has consciousness to contemplate. The akincanyayatana-jhana has nothingness to contemplate. The nevasanyanasanyayatana-jhana has perception to contemplate. This Arupavacar-jhana is depended on rupajhana due to the rule. People must eliminate the object of the fifth rupavacara-jhana and contemplate all objects of arupavacara-jhana.

All kamma take place when consciousness arises in the repulsive way. Kamma become fruition after taking repulsive action. The fruition must be kept in sub-consciousness forever. This fruition makes the rule for human who are born in any existence. Therefore, everything human doing are in their minds all the times. They happen when they get motivation to arouse. This is the wonderful rule of kamma in Buddhism.

In conclusion, people who are experienced in Suttanta or discourse should study kamma in suttantanaya. However, people who are experienced in Abhidhamma should study kamma in Abhidhammanaya. Both of Suttantanaya and Abhidhammanaya are benefit for all people who are interesting in searching Buddhist teachings.

Furthermore, Suttannaya is good for concentration meditation; Abhidhammanaya is good for insight meditation.

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