

Right Action and Karma

Right Actions

Body

Refrain from taking the life of any being
Refrain from taking what is not freely given
Refrain from inappropriate sexual conduct

Speech

Refrain from lying
Refrain from divisive speech
Refrain from using harsh words
Refrain from idle talk (gossip)

Mind

Refrain from coveting other's possessions
and positions (greed)
Refrain from resenting the good fortune of others
(hatred/jealousy)
Refrain from holding a closed mind about things
one doesn't fully understand (ignorance/delusion)

Intentional Action [kamma (Skt: karma)]

Pali Canon Pali Canon — MN 61

Reflecting on one's actions
(The Buddha teaches his young son)

[The Buddha:] "What do you think, Rahula: What is a mirror for?"

[Rahula:] "For reflection, sir."

[The Buddha:] "In the same way, Rahula, bodily acts, verbal acts, and mental acts are to be done with repeated reflection.

"Whenever you want to perform a bodily act, you should reflect on it: 'This bodily act I want to perform — would it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily act, with painful consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it would lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it would be an unskillful bodily act with painful consequences, painful results, then any bodily act of that sort is absolutely unfit for you to do. But if on reflection

you know that it would not cause affliction... it would be a skillful bodily action with happy consequences, happy results, then any bodily act of that sort is fit for you to do.

"While you are performing a bodily act, you should reflect on it: 'This bodily act I am doing — is it leading to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily act, with painful consequences, painful results?' If, on reflection, you know that it is leading to self-affliction, to affliction of others, or both... you should give it up. But if on reflection you know that it is not... you may continue with it.

"Having performed a bodily act, you should reflect on it... If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful bodily act with painful consequences, painful results, then you should confess it, reveal it, lay it open to the Teacher or to a knowledgeable companion in the holy life. Having confessed it... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction... it was a skillful bodily action with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed and joyful, training day and night in skillful mental qualities.

...[similarly for verbal and mental acts]...

"Rahula, all the brahmins and contemplatives in the course of the past who purified their bodily acts, verbal acts, and mental acts, did it through repeated reflection on their bodily acts, verbal acts, and mental acts in just this way.

"All the brahmins and contemplatives in the course of the future... All the brahmins and contemplatives at present who purify their bodily acts, verbal acts, and mental acts, do it through repeated reflection on their bodily acts, verbal acts, and mental acts in just this way.

"Therefore, Rahula, you should train yourself: 'I will purify my bodily acts through repeated reflection. I will purify my verbal acts through repeated reflection. I will purify my

mental acts through repeated reflection.’ Thus you should train yourself.”

Five pleasant things to be gained by acting skillfully
Pali Canon — AN 5.43

“These five things are welcome, agreeable, pleasant, and hard to obtain in the world. Which five? Long life... beauty... pleasure... status... rebirth in heaven... Now, I tell you, these five things are not to be obtained by reason of prayers or wishes. If they were to be obtained by reason of prayers or wishes, who here would lack them? It’s not fitting for those who desires long life to pray for it or to delight in doing so. Instead, one who desires long life should follow the path of practice leading to long life (actions). In so doing, one will attain long life, either human or divine...(Same instruction for beauty, pleasure, status, and rebirth in heaven).

The most noble kamma of all: the ending of kamma
Pali Canon — AN 4.235

“These four types of kamma have been directly realized, verified, & made known by me. Which four? There is kamma that is dark with dark result. There is kamma that is bright with bright result. There is kamma that is dark & bright with dark & bright result. There is kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of kamma.

“And what is kamma that is dark with dark result?
There is the case where a certain person fabricates an injurious bodily fabrication, fabricates an injurious verbal fabrication, fabricates an injurious mental fabrication. Having fabricated an injurious bodily fabrication, having fabricated an injurious verbal fabrication, having fabricated an injurious mental fabrication, he rearises in an injurious world. On rearising in an injurious world, he is there touched by injurious contacts. Touched by injurious contacts, he experiences feelings that are exclusively painful, like those of the beings in hell. This is called kamma that is dark with dark result.

“And what is kamma that is bright with bright result?
There is the case where a certain person fabricates a non-injurious bodily fabrication... a non-injurious verbal fabrication... a non-injurious mental fabrication... He rearises in a non-injurious world... There he is touched

by non-injurious contacts... He experiences feelings that are exclusively pleasant, like those of the Ever-radiant Devas. This is called kamma that is bright with bright result.

“And what is kamma that is dark & bright with dark & bright result? There is the case where a certain person fabricates a bodily fabrication that is injurious & non-injurious... a verbal fabrication that is injurious & non-injurious... a mental fabrication that is injurious & non-injurious... He rearises in an injurious & non-injurious world... There he is touched by injurious & non-injurious contacts... He experiences injurious & non-injurious feelings, pleasure mingled with pain, like those of human beings, some devas, and some beings in the lower realms. This is called kamma that is dark & bright with dark & bright result.

“And what is kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of kamma? right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is called kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of kamma.”