



UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF KUSAKA KAMMA (WHOLESOME ACTION) IN THERAVADA BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

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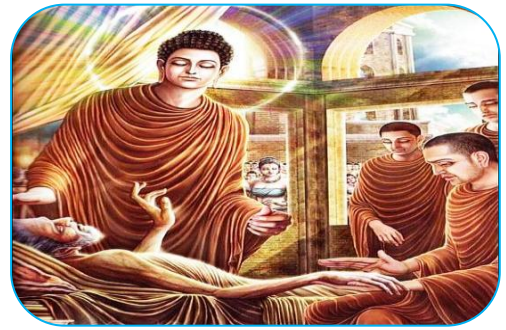
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ABSTRACT:

Human being always continues to act all the time, from birth to death along the walk of life. There is no space in action. It is called Kamma in Pali word in Theravada Buddhism. There are described three kinds of action. Action worked by body is called Kāya-kamma (bodily action), by word or speech Vacī-kamma (verbal action), and by mind Mano-kamma (mental action). These actions are associated with wholesome and unwholesome mind.

Cultivating wholesome action with good mind can cause peace and happiness at the present moment and brings wholesome result for the future. Similarly, generating unwholesome action with bad mind can cause unhappiness and agitation at the present moment and sows unwholesome result for the future. Human being has the capacity of knowing this law of nature, so can deserve the right of cultivating wholesome mind for his peace and happiness. This is the higher achievement of a person as being a human.



KEYWORDS : Kusala (wholesome), Akusala (unwholesome), Kamma (action)

INTRODUCTION :

Kusala is defined as 'kammically wholesome' or 'profitable', salutary, morally good, (skillful). Connotations of the term, according to Abhidhamma (Aṭṭhasālinī), are of good health, blameless, productive of favorable kamma-result, skillful. It should be noted that here excludes the meaning 'skillful', when the term is applied to wholesome actions.

The concept of Kusala:

Kusala belongs to a threefold division of all consciousness, as found in the Abhidhamma, into wholesome (*kusala*), unwholesome (*akusala*) and kammically neutral (*avyākata*), which is the first of the triads (*tika*) in the Abhidhamma schedule (*mātikā*). On this point, it is noted that the real cause of good, kusala-mūla, by meaning the 'wholesome roots' or 'roots of wholesome action', are greedlessness (*alobha*), hatelessness (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*; *mūla*). They are identical with *kusala-hetu.kamma-patha*: 'course of action', is particularly a name for the group of ten kinds of either unwholesome or wholesome actions.

It is defined as the ten wholesome courses of action (*kammapatha*). In psychological terms, 'kammically wholesome' are all those kammical volition (*kamma-cetanā*) and the consciousness and mental factors associated therewith, which are accompanied by wholesome roots (*mūla*), which are three roots of wholesome: greedlessness (*alobha*) and hatelessness (*adosa*), and in some cases also by

non-delusion (amoha: wisdom, understanding). Such states of consciousness are regarded as 'kammically wholesome' as they are causes of favourable kamma results and contain the seeds of a happy destiny.

From this explanation, two concepts should be noted: (1) it is volition that makes a state of consciousness, or an act, 'good' or 'bad'; (2) the moral criterion in Buddhism is the presence or absence of the wholesome or moral roots. The cause of good and bad action is connected with them. On the Buddhist ethical standpoint, it is main thing which evaluates the human life.

As the classification of Buddhist literature, the tenfold wholesome course of action (kusala-kamma-patha) are such as follow:

- Three bodily actions: avoidance of killing, stealing, unlawful sexual intercourse;
- Four verbal actions: avoidance of lying, slandering, rude speech, foolish babble; i.e. true, conciliatory, mild, and wise speech;
- Three mental actions: unselfishness, good-will, right views.
- On the contrary, the tenfold unwholesome courses of action (akusala-kamma-patha) are:
- Three bodily actions: killing, stealing, unlawful sexual intercourse;
- Four verbal actions: lying, slandering, rude speech, foolish babble;
- Three mental actions: covetousness, ill-will, evil views.

While unwholesome mental courses of action comprise only extreme forms of defiled thought: the greedy wish to appropriate others' property, the hateful thought of harming others, and harmful views, the wholesome mental root of action based on the actual understanding without extreme forms of thought: sharing, loving the other and leading to the peaceful world without conditional thought. Here, it need to understand the real purpose and the practice of wholesome action.

Understanding purpose and practice of Kusala: According to Buddhist perspective, kusala refers to wholesome actions or thoughts that lead to positive results and contribute to one's spiritual growth. It is considered one of the key principles of the Buddhist path towards enlightenment. The concept of kusala is essential in understanding the Buddhist philosophy and how individuals can lead a fulfilling and ethical life. In this essay, we will delve into the meaning of kusala, its significance in Buddhism, and how it can be applied in our daily lives.

To fully comprehend the concept of kusala, it is important to understand its roots. In Buddhism, kusala is derived from the Sanskrit word "kusala" which means skillful or beneficial. It is often paired with its opposite, akusala, which refers to unwholesome or harmful actions. Buddhism teaches that all actions, whether physical, verbal, or mental, have consequences, and kusala actions lead to positive outcomes while akusala actions bring about negative consequences.

This understanding forms the basis of the Buddhist concept of karma, where one's actions shape their present and future experiences. With this in mind, let us explore five questions that will help us gain a deeper understanding of kusala in Buddhism. Kusala is categorized into three main types: bodily (kayakusala), verbal (vacikusala), and mental (manokusala). These refer to actions or thoughts that are beneficial to self and others, such as generosity, compassion, and wisdom. Conversely, actions that harm oneself or others, such as greed, hatred, and ignorance, are considered akusala.

The practice of kusala leads to positive results and inner peace, which are essential for spiritual growth. It helps individuals cultivate wholesome qualities that lead to a happier and more fulfilling life. Kusala also helps one develop a clearer understanding of the mind and its inner workings, leading to a deeper understanding of the Buddhist teachings.

In Buddhism, intention or motivation is a crucial factor in determining the outcome of one's actions. A kusala action performed with a pure and selfless intention will lead to positive consequences, while the same action performed with as selfish or harmful intention may produce negative outcomes. Therefore, it's essential to cultivate pure intentions in all our actions.

The practice of kusala can be applied in various aspects of our daily lives, such as in our relationships, work, and communication. By being mindful of our thoughts and actions and choosing to act with compassion, generosity, and wisdom, we can create a more harmonious and peaceful environment for ourselves and others.

There is a connection between kusala and the ultimate goal of Buddhism, enlightenment. The ultimate goal of Buddhism is to attain enlightenment, and kusala plays a vital role in this journey. As we cultivate wholesome qualities and reduce unwholesome ones, we purify our mind, making it more receptive to the teachings and closer to achieving enlightenment.

According to this study of Kamma theory, every situation in which an individual finds himself is the result of his own deeds in this or a previous lifetime, and every intentional act he now performs will eventually bear its own fruit—good or bad—in this or a future lifetime. Thus present felicity, wealth, physical beauty, or social prestige may be explained as the karmic reward of past deeds of merit, and present suffering, poverty, ugliness, or lack of prestige may be attributed to past acts of demerit. In the same manner, present meritorious deeds may be expected to bring about rebirth in a happier station as a human being or as a deity in one of the heavens, and present demeritorious deeds may result in more suffering and in rebirth as an animal, a hungry ghost, or a being in one of the Buddhist hells. A mixture of meritorious and demeritorious acts will bear mixed karmic results.

Lessons studied by Kusala and Akusala : The more we understand the nature of Kusala and Akusala, the more we see how careful we must be of our acts, words and thoughts, and how responsible we are to our fellow beings. Living in the light of this knowledge, we learn certain lessons from the study.

Knowing that the nature of Kusala and Akusala is our great helper if we live by it, and that no harm can come to us if we work with it, knowing also that it blesses us just at the right time, we learn the grand lesson of patience, not to get excited, and that impatience is a check to progress. In suffering, we know that we are paying debts, and we learn, if we are wise, not to create more suffering for the future. In rejoicing, we are thankful for its sweetness; and learn, if we are wise, to be still better. Patience brings forth peace, success, happiness and security.

Moreover, the nature of Kusala and Akusala makes man stand on his own feet and rouses his self-confidence. Confidence strengthens, or rather deepens, our peace and happiness and makes us comfortable, courageous; wherever we go the Law is our protector.

As we in the past have caused ourselves to be what we now are, so by what we do now will our future be determined. A knowledge of this fact and that the glory of the future is limitless, gives us great self-reliance, and takes away that tendency to appeal for external help, which is really no help at all. 'Purity and impurity belong to oneself, no one can purify another' says the Buddha.

Naturally if we realize that the evil we do will return to strike us, we shall be very careful lest we do or say or think something that is not good, pure and true. Knowledge of Kusala and Akusala will restrain us from wrong-doing for others' sakes as well as for our own.

The more we make the kusala a part of our lives, the more power we gain, not only to direct our future, but to help our fellow beings more effectively. The practice of wholesome action (Kusala), when fully developed, will enable us to overcome evil and limitations, and destroy all the fetters that keep us from our goal, Nibbana.

Significance of kusala and akusala: Moreover, there are two terms have often been translated into the English language, without any qualification, as "good or wholesome" and "bad or unwholesome, (Punna and Papa)" respectively. It is important to note that these terms have specific meanings in the context of the Buddhist analysis of the nature of man's destiny in the universe. Punna and Papa are terms used exclusively in connection with the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth and kamma. Punna refers to the volitional impulses that produce a happy consequence to the individual agent of action in the samsaric process, while papa refers to exactly the opposite.

Within the Buddhist world view, samsaric existence in any form is thought to be associated with dukkha (unsatisfactoriness). The supreme goal is the cessation of becoming (bhavanirodha) that occurs with the perfection of knowledge and character or the elimination of all roots of evil (akusalamura). Therefore, all impulses leading to the prolongation of the process of becoming are to be abandoned without residue.

Both punna and papa (good and bad impulses that produce pleasant or unpleasant fruit in samsaric life) must necessarily be abandoned. This does not mean that the perfected saint transcends

the sphere of morality in the sense that he is free to act in any way he likes. The perfection of the Buddhist saint consists primarily in his perfection of moral character and his elimination of the roots of evil (akusalamula).

For example, the Buddha and his disciples were admired by their contemporaries for being endowed with noble kusala conduct. Perfected persons are represented in Buddhism as ethical models to be emulated by others. They are considered persons most eminently qualified to dispense moral guidance to others and to provide moral direction for the whole of humanity. By virtue of the moral perfection they have attained, they are spontaneously capable of conducting themselves in a right and blameless manner. They do not confront the moral struggles that one short of spiritual perfection is bound to confront for they feel no conflict between duty and inclination. It is said that a person who reaches this state' is psychologically incapable of falling into heedlessness and morally blameworthy practices. In the moral evaluation of persons, one who has attained Nibbana is judged to be the most praiseworthy person. A disciple who has confidence in the Buddha and who has as his ultimate aim the attainment of Nibbana, is described as a noble disciple (ariyasavaka).

In conclusion, the study of kusala and its contents in Buddhism encourages individuals to think and act in skillful and beneficial ways. It is the cornerstone of the Buddhist way of life and an essential aspect of spiritual growth. By understanding and practicing kusala in our daily lives, we can create a more harmonious and fulfilling existence for ourselves and others around us. As the Buddha said, "Do not overlook the importance of your actions; they are the ground on which you build your life." As a Buddhist it is a real wish for the ignorant world to understand action of wholesome and to eliminate action of unwholesome.

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