CHAPTER V

LAW OF KAMMA FOR PEACE
5.0 The Law of Kamma and Santi (Peace)

One of the eminent teachings of Buddhasasana is Kamma. Most Buddhists believe in the Law of Kamma which in fact is the law of nature. Those who understand Kamma will be able to solve their own life problems. Having solved their own life problems, they then attain inner peace, which is, in fact, the only true peace. In order for us to solve our individual problems and find inner peace, it is essential to understand Kamma, which is irrevocably and directly concerned also with creating world peace.

In ancient times humankind was surrounded by darkness, they knew nothing of the things around them. When they saw nature going through its changes the wind blowing, the rains coming and going they could only surmise that someone was effecting these changes; things happened because someone was acting. There were gods of water, gods of fire, wind gods, sky gods and countless spirits inhabiting trees, mountains and shrines.

Happiness and misery, which are the common lot of all living beings, especially that of humanity, are not, from a Buddhist point of view, rewards or punishments assigned by a God to a soul that has done good or evil deeds. Buddhists believe in a natural law, called “cause and effect”, common to all worldly phenomena. They do not believe in an Almighty God and consequently such a natural law cannot be suspended by such a god or even by an all compassionate Buddha.

However, the teaching of the Buddha sought to change it. The Buddha observed that in putting all their faith in external powers, people were neglecting their own potential and responsibilities. He taught that people should begin to look at how things in nature function according to causes and conditions. If we know the causes and conditions of things we do not have to seek help from external agents, from gods. The Buddha’s teaching shifted the emphasis from clinging to an external controlling factor to understanding the workings of nature, causes and effects, and effectuating changes through human action.

According to the law of Kamma in the Sutta pitaka, in general, it can be stated that it is the natural law which deals with human actions, whereas social convention, or social law, is an entirely human creation, it is related to nature only since it is product of the natural human thought process.
In essence, with the law of *Kamma*, human beings receive the fruits of their actions according to the natural processes, whereas in social law, human beings take responsibility for their actions via a process established by themselves. Actually, the Lord Buddha vehemently criticized all that and took all pains to shift the centre from the worship of god to the real working of the theory of *Kamma*. He found that only lip allegiance was paid to the law of *Kamma*. He understood that the world exists through *Kamma* and the people live through *Kamma*.\(^1\) One is born again because of *Kamma* and the wheel of Samsāra goes on ceaselessly because of *Kamma*. Actual cause is *Kamma* and its fruition, which are interpedently related with each other\(^2\).

People in the world are "*Kammayonis*".\(^3\) Their personality, individuality, thoughts, actions, every thing of the present is the result of their *Kammas* done previously. Even after death, *Kamma* follows the man like the shadow. Different births; good or bad, all are regulated by the *Kammas*.\(^4\)

*Kamma* can be regarded a sum total of man’s actions in a previous birth. It is *Kamma* that determines the future destiny. *Kamma* will remain and will not leave until it results into suffering or enjoyment as the case may be in accordance with the bad or good actions. However, the Lord Buddha does not firmly assert that everything is due to the result of *Kamma*, because the law of *Kamma* is only one of the five natural laws (*Niyāma*) and it is one of the twenty-four conditions (*Paccaya*).\(^5\) Lord Buddha used the law of *Kamma* to develop his metaphysics. On the other hand, he gave the confidence to the individual to make his life better out of his own effort without any external support. Under the topic in point, *Kamma* provides the individual to interpret social differences from a broader perspective. It in return hints that one should be alert all the time because his actions major or minor bring him good as well as bad outcomes in course of time forcing him to be moralistic.

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\(^1\) Samyutta-Nikāya 1.654. "Kammunā Vattati Loka, Kammunā Vattatī Pajā"

\(^2\) Phra Dhammapitaka (P.A. Payutto), Good, Evil and Beyond Kamma in the Buddha’s Teaching, Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation Publications, Thailand, 1993, pp.1-5

\(^3\) Majjhima-Nikāya 1. 280. "Kammassakā, Māṇavā, Sattā Kammadāyādā Kammayonī, Kammabandhū, Kammapaṭisaraṇā. Kammam Śatte Vibhajati. Yadidam Hinappanitādātāti"

\(^4\) Milindapaṇha. 100. "Manussā Na Sabbe Samakā"

\(^5\) Visuddhimagga. 352.
Thus, it can be said that Kamma stands to be the root cause of all diversities as found amongst people of global community. This can be seen in the speech of the Lord Buddha that the world is directed by Kamma.\(^6\)

Especially, it is one of the five natural laws (Niyāmas), which operates in the sphere of morality and which determines rebirth of a particular plane of existence, occasioning the varied experiences of pain, pleasure, poverty, prosperity etc. Thus, the law of Kamma is intimately linked with the bondage (Bandhāna), as well as with the Deliverance (Nibbāna) in Buddhism.

The question is what is "Kamma"? Literally it means actions, something we do or perform. But according to the Buddhist philosophy, not all actions are designated karma; only those actions that are volitionally motivated are called Kamma.\(^7\)

Most Ven. P.A. Payutto analyzes from different perspectives the meaning of Kamma or deed following from the intention of the agent. A brief account of his analysis is given here under:\(^8\)

1. Kamma as Intention is that which instigates and directs all human actions. It is the agent or prompting in all human creation and destruction, it is the actual intention of Kamma, as Buddha said in the Aṅguttara-Nikāya that "Cetanāham Bhikkave Kammaṁ vadāni : Bhikkhu ! Intention, I say, is Kamma having willed, we create Kamma, through body speech and mind."\(^9\)

From this word we should expand our understanding of the meaning of "intention" in the context of Dhamma. In English, we use the word intention when we want to provide a link between internal thought and its resultant external action. For instance, we like to say 'I didn't intend to do it,' 'I did not mean to say it' or he did it intentionally.' But in , the meaning of Dhamma, all actions and speech, all thoughts, and the response of the mind to the various images received through eye, ear, nose, tongue and body, and recollected in the mind itself, without exception, contain elements of intention. Intention is thus the volitional or choosing of objects of awareness by the mind. It is the factor, which leads the human mind to turn towards, or be repelled from, various objects of awareness or mental concerns, or to

\(^6\) Saṅyutta-Nikāya 1. 654.
\(^9\) Aṅguttara-Nikāya 4, 63
proceed in any particular direction. It is the guide, the governor of how the mind responds to stimulate. It is the force that plans and organizes the movement of the mind, and ultimately it is that which determines the numerous states experienced by the mind.

In the working of Kamma, the most important feature is mind (Citta). All our words and deeds are coloured by the mind or consciousness we experience at such particular moments. As the At̄tasalini said, "When the mind is unguarded, bodily action is unguarded; speech also is unguarded; thought also is unguarded; when the mind is guarded; bodily action is guarded; speech also is guarded; and thought also is guarded."\(^\text{10}\) Volition is all important, our future depends on our present volition (Cetanā) and our present state depends on our past volition.

Automatically results come out whenever one performs Kamma. Even one little thought, although not particularly important, is nevertheless void of consequence. It will be at the least a "tiny speck" of Kamma, accumulating to become an agent for conditioning the qualities of internal mental activities as Lord Buddha said:

“All Kamma, whether good or evil, bears fruit. There is no Kamma, no matter how small, which is void of fruit.”\(^\text{11}\)

2. Karma as the Conditioning Factor; Expanding our perspective, we can see Kamma as a component within the whole life process, being the agents, which fashions the direction taken in life. According to the factor of condition in the Sutta Piṭaka, the lord Buddha says the condition Saṅkhāras. The word ‘Saṅkhāras”, in this context means the cumulative effects of the actions of a person, of body, mind and speech throughout his lifetime, as shown in the form of wishes and thoughts at the time of death. The meaning of the word “Saṅkhāras” is made evident from a sermon of the Lord Buddha on rebirth according to the Saṅkhāras, as recorded in Saṅkhārappatti Sutta in the Majjhima-Nikāya. Saṅkhāras or Saṅkhāras are a sum total of all the past cumulative desires and influences.

This is Kamma in the sense of “Saṅkhāras or Determinant as it appears in the wheel of Dependent origination, where it is described as the agent, who fashions the mind. It refers to the factors or qualities of mind which, with intention at the lead, shape the mind into good, evil or neutral

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\(^\text{10}\) At̄tasalini. 86; Narada, The Buddha and His Teachings, Malaysia : Buddhist Missionary Society, 1988, p.350.

\(^\text{11}\) Khuddaka-Nikāya 4. 390.
states, which in turn fashions the thought process and its manifestations through body and speech. In this context, *Kamma* could be defined simply as mental proliferation. Even in this definition we take intention as the essence, and thus we sometimes see *Sāṅkhāras* translated simply as intention.

3. **Kamma as Personal Responsibility**: *Kamma* in this sense refers to the manifestations of thoughts through speech and actions, that is, behaviour from an ethical perspective, either on a narrow, immediate level, or on a broader level including the past and the future. *Kamma* in this sense corresponds to the very broad general meaning given above. This is the meaning of *Kamma*. That is most often encountered in the scriptures, where it occurs as an inducement to responsible action and making of good *Kamma*, as in the Buddha say, “All his property, gain, hoarded wealth, silver and gold and his slaves, servants and skilled workman, he has to leave (in this world). He cannot take anything with him (after his death). But he the owner takes with him, his *Kamma* which pursues him like a shadow”. From this point of view, the *Dhammapada* repeats this idea in its own inimitable style. “By oneself evil is done, by oneself one suffers. By oneself evil undone, by oneself is one purified. Purity and impurity are personal responsibilities. No one else can make you pure.”

Again in the *Jātaka*, a birth-story of the Buddha, or of some prominent character among early Buddha, the *Sīrīkaḷakaṃ* state that, each man’s fortune and misfortune are his own work, not another’s. Neither fortune nor misfortunes can a man make for his brothers. And in the *Dhammasakh Jātaka* states “As he sows the seed, so he reaps the harvest or fruit”.

In The Buddhist teaching, the Buddha usually speaks of suffering (*Dukkha*) and the inequality in human society in his discourses and he attributes them to a person’s *Kamma* in this and the previous lives; according to the Buddha; each individual in responsible for the consequences of his own actions.

### 5.1 Kinds of Kamma

In respect of the cause of *Kamma* as found in the *Sutta Piṭaka*, the Lord Buddha avers that the Ignorance (*[Avijjā]*) or not knowing things as

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12 Saṃyutta-Nikāya 1.117-118.
13 Dhammapada. 165
14 Jātaka. 382
15 Jātaka. 353.
16Dīgha-Nikāya 3, 254,282;Aṅguttara-Nikāya 4, 8. “*Avijjā Paccaya Sāṅkhāra.*”
they truly are, is the chief cause of all *Kammas*. Dependent on ignorance arise activities, state the lord Buddha in the Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*). Associated with ignorance is the ally craving (*Taṅhā*), the other root of *Kamma*\(^{17}\). Evil actions are conditioned by these two causes.

All good deeds of a world-ling (*Putthujana*) though associated with the three wholesome roots of generosity (*Alobha*), goodwill (*Adosa*) and Knowledge (*Amoha*), are nevertheless regarded as *Kamma*, because the two roots of ignorance and craving are dormant in him.\(^{18}\) The moral types of *Supramundane* Path Consciousness (*Maggacitta*) are not regarded as *Kamma*, because they tend to eradicate the two root causes.

*Kamma* in the *Sutta Piṭaka*, in terms of its qualities or its roots, *Kamma* can be classified into three main categories. Those three categories of *Kamma* as accepted in the *Sutta Piṭaka* are given in different details below;

In terms of its qualities, or its roots, *Kamma* can be divided into two main types. They are\(^ {19}\)

1. *Kusala Kamma*: Action which is skillful of skillful action; specifically, actions which are born from the three *Kusalamūla* or roots of skill, which are non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion.

2. *Akusala Kamma*: Action which relates to unskillful, actions which are not good, or are evil; specifically, actions that are born from the *Akusalamūla*, the roots of unskillfulness, regarding greed, hatred and delusion.

According to the above, sometimes the terms "good" and "evil" are used to translate the *Pāli* "*Kusala*" and "*Akusala*". But we should also be aware of the fine points of distinction that exist between them and keep an open mind those differences when referring to specific instances concerning Buddhist ethical values. For example, detachment, being content with little, and renunciation are considered *Kusala*, but they are not necessarily good for most people; melancholy, attachment, and worry are *Akusala*, but they are not generally taken to be evil. Even greed, positively an *Akusala* state, may often be considered good by some, say, in business and politics. So

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\(^{17}\) *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* 3, 33. "*Lobhajāṇī Dosajāṇī Ceva Mohajāṇī Cāpi Viddasu...Duggatiyo Jahe Ti*".

\(^{18}\) *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* 1, 134.263, 264.

this covers an extensive area. This is the very reason of its applicability for the complex society at present.

The concepts of good and evil have something to do with social values, whereas Kusala and Akusala are more connected to the inner qualities of the mind. That is why non-judgmental terms like "wholesome" or "unwholesome" are more preferable. If "good" and "evil" are used, they should be used with due caution and alertness. Kusala and Akusala are mental qualities, which initially affect the conditions of the mind. From this source of actions, Kamma is performed through the body, the speech or the mind itself.

Therefore, wholesome (Kusala) or unwholesome (Akusala) actions are generally determined by the condition or the contents of the mind. This position correlates with other Buddhist teachings discussed above in bringing about peace. Kusala represents mental conditions that promote mental quality, and Akusala is such a way that which causes mental degeneration and brings down quality and efficiency of mind.

Here Kamma can be classified according to the paths or channels through which it occurs, of which there are three;

1. Kāyakamma: Action through the body (bodily Kamma)
2. Vācikamma: Action through the speech (verbal Kamma)
3. Manokamma: Action through the mind (mental Kamma)\(^\text{20}\)

5.1.1 Kāyakamma: there are three bodies:
1. Abstaining from killing or taking life, oppression and harassment; possessing kindness, compassion and helpfulness
2. Abstaining from filching, theft and exploitation; respecting the property right of others.
3. Abstaining from misconduct and violation of others loved or cherished ones, not abusing them, disgracing or dishonouring their families.

5.1.2 Vācikamma: There are four speeches
4. Abstaining from false speech, lying and deception; speaking only the truth, not intentionally saying things that stray from the truth, out of desire for personal gain.

\(^\text{20}\) Aṭṭhasālini. 266. "Cetanā Kāyakammaṇī nāma... Cetanā Vācikammaṇī Nāma Cetanā Manokam Maṇī Nāma.... Cittam Manokammadvāraṇī Nāma."
5. Abstaining from malicious speech inciting one person against another; speaking only words that are conciliatory and conductive to harmony.

6. Abstaining from coarse, vulgar or damaging speech; speaking only words that are polite and pleasant to the ear.

7. Abstaining from worthless or frivolous speech; speaking only words that are true, reasonable, useful and appropriate to the occasion.

5.1.3 Manokamma: There are three folds or mind

8. Not being greedy; not focusing only on taking; thinking of giving, of sacrifice; making the mind munificent.

9. Not thinking hateful and destructive thoughts or having a destructive attitude toward others; bearing good intentions toward others spreading goodwill and aiming for the common good.

10. Cultivating Right views (Sammādiṭṭhi); understanding the law of Kamma, that good actions bring good results and bad actions bring bad results; having a thorough grasp of the truth of life and the world; seeing the state of things according to causes and conditions.

So this is again related to, more or less, Pañcasila which we discussed above.

In the light of the above, the Lord Buddha narrates highlights of Kammas discussed before, three types of Kammas are namely; bodily, verbal and mental Kamma. It is mental Kamma which is considered the most important and far-reaching in its effects, as given in the Pāli that "Listen, Tapassi. Of these three types of Kamma as distinguished by me, I say that mental Kamma has the heaviest consequences for the committing of evil deeds, for the existence of evil deeds, not bodily or verbal Kamma."

As mentioned above, this is the channel to perform Kamma known in the technical term as "Kusalakammaphatha" which means wholesome course of action and "Akusalakammaphatha" meaning unwholesome course of action in Buddhism.

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21 Dhammapada. 1."Manopubbaṅgamā Dhammā Manoseṭṭhā Manomyā. Chāyāva Anapāyinī"

22 Majjhima-Nikāya 1, 373.
Another way of classifying Kamma is according to its results. In this classification, there are four categories of Kamma as depicted in Majjhima-Nikāya. They are given in details below:\(^2\):

1. Black Kamma and black result: This refers to bodily actions, verbal actions and mental actions, which seem to be harmful. Simple examples are killing, stealing, and sexual infidelity, lying and drinking intoxicants.

2. White Kamma and white result: These are bodily actions, verbal actions and mental actions which are not harmful, such as practicing in accordance with the ten bases for skilful action.

3. Black and white Kamma have black and white results: Bodily actions, verbal actions and mental actions which are partly harmful, partly not, such as the actions of people generally.

4. Neither black nor white Kamma and neither black nor white result: This is the intention to transcend three kinds regarding Kamma as mentioned above or specifically, developing the Seven Enlightenment Factors or the Noble Eight Fold Path.

Mental Kamma is considered to be the most significant because it is the origin of all other Kamma. Thought precedes action through body and speech. Verbal and bodily actions are therefore derived from mental Kamma. One of the most important factors of mental Kamma is Ditthi which includes beliefs, views, theories, and personal preference. Ditthi is that which colours individual behaviours, life experiences and social ideas with beliefs, opinions, or preference which are base, there follow the man occurring, speech and actions in accordance with those beliefs. If there is a wrong view, it follows that the consequent thinking, speech and actions will also tend to flow in a wrong direction. If there is a right view, the resultant thoughts, speech and actions will tend to flow in a proper and good direction. This applies not only to the personal level, but to the social level as well. For example, a society that maintains that material wealth is the most valuable and desirable goal in life would strive to attain material possessions, gauging progress, prestige and honour by abundance of these things. The lifestyle of such people and the direction such a society would assume one form. In contrast, a society and people that

\(^2\) Majjhima-Nikāya 1. 75.“Cattārīmāni Kammāni...Kammāni Kanhaṁ Kanhāviṇāṁ...Kammāni Sukkaṁ Sukkavipāka...Kammāni Kanhasukkaṁ Kanhasukkavipākaṁ...Kammāni Akanhaṁ Asukkaṁ Akanha Asukkavipākaṁ”
value peace and contentment of mind as its goal would have a correspondingly different lifestyle and direction.

There are many occasions where the Buddha described right view, wrong view, and their importance.

The fourth kind of Kamma results into exactly the opposite way. Rather than causing the accumulation of more Kamma, it leads to the cessation of Kamma. In effect this refers to the practices which lead to the Highest Goal of Buddhism, Enlightenment, such as the Noble Eight-Fold Path, also known as the Three-Fold Training (moral discipline, mental discipline and wisdom), or the Seven Factors of the Enlightenment (Sambojjhanga).

Sometimes this fourth kind of Kamma is widely spoken of as the intention to abandon the other three kinds of Kamma. Such intention is based on non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion.

“Monks, what is neither black nor white Kamma and neither black nor white result, which leads to the cessation of Kamma Within those three kinds of Kamma, the intention to abandon (those kinds of Kamma), this is called “neither black nor white Kamma and neither black nor white result”, which leads to the ending of Kamma.

Thus, it can be said that black Kamma is all unwholesome Kammas. White Kamma means all wholesome Kammas. Kamma both black and white with result both black and white means Kamma is wholesome and unwholesome Kamma in creation. And Kamma neither black nor white with result neither black nor white is Kamma of all Arhants (saints) in Buddhism, because their Kammas are not called Kamma but Kiriya only. The last kind of Kamma does not bring out the results in happiness and unhappiness in this world and the next world, because the Arhants are above of all Kamma according to all good and evil deeds.

5.2 Practical Objective of the Law of Kamma

As Kamma directly concerns what we do and how to do it, belief in the doctrine of Kamma can be of great help in the way we conduct ourselves and interact with others, as in our spiritual endeavor, in brief for peace. The teachings enable us to establish a clear moral understanding.

24 Digha-Nikāya 3, 251.
25 Majjhima-Nikāya 1, 57. “Cattārimāni Kammāni...Kammaṁ Kaṭṭhaṁ Kaṭṭhavinī...Kammaṁ Sukkāṁ Sukkavipāka...Kammaṁ Kaṭṭhasukkāṁ Kaṭṭhasukkavipākaṁ...Kammaṁ Akaṭṭhaṁ Aṣukkāṁ Aṣukkavipākaṁ”
based on reason and the principle of cause and effect. With confidence in the law of Kamma, one develops a more realistic and rational attitude towards life and its experiences and is inspired to rely on one’s ability to fulfil one’s own aspirations rather than resort to prayer for extraneous assistance and support.\textsuperscript{26}

The law of Kamma helps us to be more convinced of our own potential and responsibilities, both personal and social. It encourages us to do what is good and to refrain from what is evil or unwholesome. It teaches us to cultivate responsibility toward oneself by giving up bad habits and actions and responsibility toward others by showing them kindness and compassion. Kamma demonstrates that each and every one of us is endowed with potential for greater development. It is within our reach to create a better world, full of love and joy, or to destroy it with hatred and war. We have the choice before us. Understanding Kamma helps us to make the right choice, to make peace for oneself and for others.

Kamma truly puts us in control of our life. We can deal with our aspirations and plans and direct future course of action for our own good as well as for the good of the others. This means that we are our own masters and therefore under obligation to act with utmost care and responsibility.

Because, according to the doctrine of Kamma, people should be judged by their actions, not by social status, caste, or creed, the teaching on Kamma have contributed to the establishment of a universal ethical standard in which moral integrity become the norm and the measurement of a person’s worth. Kamma is that “which classifies beings into course and refines states,” says the Buddha. He further declares “Not by birth is one an outcast, not by birth is one a Brahmin. By action is one an outcast, by action is one a Brahmin”.

Belief on the doctrine of Kamma is also essential in the realization of Nibbāna. Man must first believe in his own potentialities and the possibility of their cultivation. Spiritual practise means that a person must strongly believe in self improvement, in removing from his or her mind all that is bad or negative and developing what is positive and good. Without such conviction, spiritual advancement is virtually impossible. Although Nibbāna is beyond Kamma, it is realized through the relinquishment of evil, Kamma, the cultivation of the good, and the purification of mind. Belief in Kamma may almost be regarded as the be-all and end-all of spiritual discipline.

\textsuperscript{26}Sunthorn Plamintr, \textit{Getting to know Buddhism}, 2002, pp.146-148
In reality, happiness succeeds suffering and suffering succeeds happiness. This is the truth of human life: happiness and suffering are experienced in succession. No one on earth performs only good or only bad actions. Usually our daily lives are made up of a mixture of both, and so we experience a mixture of both happiness and pain.

In regard to the three categories of Kamma mentioned above, we can conclude in the Buddha’s own words: "All beings are the owners of their Kamma, heirs of their Kamma. Their Kamma is the womb from which they have sprung; it is their friend, their refuge. Whatever Kamma they perform, whether good or evil, they will be the heirs thereof."

According to Buddhhasasana, existing in the cycle of suffering and conflict will never come to an end as long as craving, the root cause of bondage, is not eradicated. So, for a real, sustainable world peace to be possible, craving must come to an end, on an individual and societal basis. This craving can be uprooted only by following the Noble Eightfold Path, which is described as neither-black-nor-white Kamma. When all craving is eradicated, emancipation is accordingly won and the cycle of suffering and conflict is thereby broken. The extinction of mental suffering is realized in this very life through liberation, though physical suffering will last as long as the body lasts. But physical suffering, however strong it may be, will never overcome the mind of an Arahanta (one who has attained Nibbāna, complete liberation). All suffering is totally extinguished on the dissolution of the body and the Arahanta is at that very moment merged into the final release or Parinibbāna, a state beyond birth and death, beyond suffering and happiness in the worldly sense, even beyond the capacity of reason and language to express, a blissful state which justifies every effort for its attainment.

The workings of the Law of Karma are so intricate that it is not always possible to attribute a specific cause to a specific result. The Law of Kamma does provide answers to the mysterious problems of human differences, as far as the ability of our rational thinking can reach, but, as we have pointed out previously, the function of Kamma is very complicated and mysterious, and it is therefore not possible for all of its aspects to be fully comprehended. There are still some delicate problems which require very careful consideration.

There are indications that a person’s inner good qualities can be a condition in the fruition of demeritorious Kamma. It means that if an

27 Majjhima-Nikāya 1.135
individual who performs a slightly evil action possesses little or no virtues, that negative Kamma has enough power to send him to Hell. But if another individual who has enormous good qualities does the same evil deed, the power, efficacy of that deed in producing results is reduced, i.e., its power is strong enough only for bearing fruit in this present life and becomes exhausted, being not strong enough to lead to rebirth in Hell. The Buddha explained this difference with the simile of salt and water.

In the first case, the Buddha compared the person with less or no good qualities, who performs a slightly evil action! To a small cup of water into which a lump of salt is placed: the water quickly becomes salty and undrinkable. This is because the water in the cup is of small quantity. The second case, the person of very good quality who performs a slightly evil action, is compared to the water in the Ganges River into which a lump of salt is placed: the water is virtually unaffected by the salt.

Buddhasasana states that although evil Kamma will surely give results, it does not mean that one can do nothing about it. A person with evil Kamma can counteract that Kamma by improving themselves in the way of goodness. The more meritorious Kamma is accumulated, the stronger and better adapted one becomes for facing the results of one's previous evil actions. The intensity and the destructive power of unwholesome Kamma can be diluted only by wholesome Kamma, just as strong acid can be diluted with water. Thus, according to Buddhasasana, it is never too late to do well, and anyone who is guilty of wrong doing but turns towards goodness is always capable of attaining virtue.

The manifestation of the Law of Kamma consists, as we have seen, in an essential likeness between deed and result, cause and effect “as the cause, so the result.” Kamma in its moral sense is retribution, a moral law, the working of which cannot be escaped. It is only by its consequence that Kamma can be accounted as good, evil, both, or neither. The Pāli Canon’s classification of Kamma into black, white, black-and-white, and neither-black-nor-white Kamma is surely made according to its result. Kamma and its due consequences are therefore inseparable and knowledge of this is made possible only when it is studied in the way of a cause and effect relationship.

From the above, it can be seen that although the Buddha taught the Law of Kamma over 2500 years ago, it is still very relevant to the present day. The Dhamma, the teaching of the Buddha, is said to be “timeless”. The subject of Kamma conforms to modern knowledge. It is a belief that is extremely appropriate to people of the modern age. When the Law of
Kamma is studied and clearly understood, we see how individual behaviour has its effect on human society.

Though most people imagine that karma refers only to evil or unwholesome actions, the Buddha’s teaching that “all lenient beings are dependent on their Kamma”\(^{28}\) means the doer of evil begets evil, the doer of good begets good and one who harms begets harm, for Kamma arises out of the agent of action, just as rust arises from iron. If there is no agent, there is no Kamma.

Buddhasasana gives an opportunity for individuals to choose their own Kamma. The wise will choose to perform good or wholesome karma, while the fool will choose the opposite. It this case wisdom is very essential because only the wise can attain peace. In reality, we choose and therefore create our own Kamma. Although we cannot choose to create our previous Kamma, because it is past, our duty in this very lifetime is to expiate it. Further, we choose to create our present Kamma. Some people do not understand this, so they simply accept the way they are, rather than trying to better themselves.

\(^{28}\) Majjhima-Nikāya.1.648