

MN 135: Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta

The Lesser Analysis of Action

Translated by Suddhāso Bhikkhu

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Sāvatti, in Jeta's Grove, at Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. Then the brahmin student Subha, Todeyya's son, approached the Blessed One and conversed with him. When the appropriate polite conversation was finished, he sat to one side. When he was seated to one side, Subha said to the Blessed One:

“Sir Gotama¹, what is the cause of and reason for the appearance of inferiority and superiority among human beings? Sir Gotama, there are humans who are seen to have short lives, and those who are seen to have long lives. There are those who are seen to have many afflictions, and those who are seen to have few afflictions. There are those who are seen to be ugly, and those who are seen to be beautiful. There are those who are seen to have little influence, and those who are seen to have much influence. There are those who are seen to have little wealth, and those who are seen to have much wealth. There are those who are seen to be from low families, and those who are seen to be from high families. There are those who are seen to be foolish, and those who are seen to be wise. Sir Gotama, what is the cause of and reason for the appearance of inferiority and superiority among human beings?”

“Student, beings are the owners of their actions, heirs of their actions, born from their actions, bound to their actions, returners to their actions. Action is what divides beings into inferiority and superiority.”

“I do not understand the full meaning of the Blessed One's brief statement, which was made without giving an analysis of its full meaning. It would be good if Sir Gotama would teach me the Dhamma, such that I may understand the full meaning of the Blessed One's brief statement, which was made without giving an analysis of its full meaning.”

“Therefore, student, listen and carefully pay attention; I will speak.”

“Yes, sir,” the brahmin student Subha replied to the Blessed One. The Blessed One said this:

“Student, here some woman or man is a killer – cruel, bloody-handed, fond of violence, merciless towards living beings. Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will have a short life. Student, this is the path

1 From the way this discourse begins, we can conclude that Subha is not a follower of the Buddha, as he did not pay respects to the Buddha prior to taking a seat, and addressed the Buddha as *bho* (“sir” or “mister”) rather than *bhante* (“venerable”).

of practice which leads to having a short life – being a killer who is cruel, bloody-handed, fond of violence, and merciless towards living beings.

“Student, here some woman or man has abandoned killing, abstains from killing, has set down cudgel and blade, is conscientious, merciful, and compassionate towards all living beings. Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will have a long life. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to longevity – abandoning killing, abstaining from killing, setting down cudgel and blade, being conscientious, merciful, and compassionate towards all living beings.

“Student, here some woman or man assaults living beings with their hand, a stone, a cudgel, or a blade. Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will have many afflictions. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to having many afflictions – assaulting living beings with a hand, a stone, a cudgel, or a blade.

“Student, here some woman or man does not assault living beings with their hand, a stone, a cudgel, or a blade. Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will have few afflictions. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to having few afflictions – not assaulting living beings with a hand, a stone, a cudgel, or a blade.

“Student, here some woman or man is angry and irritable. Even when only a little [that is unpleasant] is said to them, they get upset, disturbed, annoyed, and resistant, and they manifest anger, hatred, and resentment. Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will be ugly. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to ugliness – being angry and irritable; getting upset, disturbed, annoyed, and resistant, and manifesting anger, hatred, and resentment, even when only a little [that is unpleasant] is said.

“Student, here some woman or man is not angry or irritable. Even when much [that is unpleasant] is said to them, they do not get upset, disturbed, annoyed, or resistant, and they do not manifest anger, hatred, or resentment. Because of that action which was

undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will be beautiful. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to beauty - not being angry or irritable; not getting upset, disturbed, annoyed, or resistant, and not manifesting anger, hatred, or resentment, even when much [that is unpleasant] is said.

“Student, here some woman or man is envious; they envy, resent, and are jealous of the possessions, honor, esteem, respect, veneration, and homage received by others. Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will have little influence. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to having little influence - being envious; envying, resenting, and being jealous of the possessions, honor, esteem, respect veneration,, and homage received by others.

“Student, here some woman or man is not envious; they do not envy, resent, or become jealous of the possessions, honor, esteem, respect, veneration, and homage received by others. Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will be very influential. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to being very influential - not being envious; not envying, resenting, or being jealous of the possessions, honor, esteem, respect, veneration, and homage received by others.

“Student, here some woman or man does not give food, drink, clothing, transportation, garlands, perfume, cosmetics, beds, abodes, or lanterns to contemplatives or priests. Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will be poor. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to poverty - not giving food, drink, clothing, transportation, garlands, perfume, cosmetics, beds, abodes, or lanterns to contemplatives or priests.

“Student, here some woman or man gives food, drink, clothing, transportation, garlands, perfume, cosmetics, beds, abodes, or lanterns to contemplatives or priests. Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world, if they return to existence as a

human, then wherever they are born they will be wealthy. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to wealth – giving food, drink, clothing, transportation, garlands, perfume, cosmetics, beds, abodes, or lanterns to contemplatives or priests.

“Student, here some woman or man is stubborn and arrogant. They do not venerate one who should be venerated. They do not rise up for one who should be risen up for. They do not give a seat to one who is worthy of a seat. They do not make way for one who should be made way for. They do not honor one who should be honored. They do not esteem one who should be esteemed. They do not respect one who should be respected. They do not give homage to one who should be given homage. Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will be in a low family. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to being in a low family – stubbornness and arrogance; not venerating one who should be venerated... not giving homage to one who should be given homage.

“Student, here some woman or man is not stubborn or arrogant. They venerate one who should be venerated... they give homage to one who should be given homage. Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will be in a high family. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to being in a high family – not being stubborn or arrogant; venerating one who should be venerated... giving homage to one who should be given homage.

“Student, here some woman or man does not approach a contemplative or priest and ask, 'Bhante, what is wholesome and what is unwholesome? What is blameworthy and what is blameless? What should be practiced and what should not be practiced? What actions will bring me long-lasting detriment and suffering, and what actions will bring me long-lasting benefit and happiness?' Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a state of deprivation, at a bad destination, in downfall, in hell, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will be foolish. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to foolishness – not approaching a contemplative or priest and asking, 'Bhante, what is wholesome... what actions will bring me long-lasting benefit and happiness?'

“Student, here some woman or man approaches a contemplative or priest and asks, 'Bhante, what is wholesome... what actions will bring me long-lasting benefit and happiness?' Because of that action which was undertaken and performed in that way, when that person is separated from their body after death, they will reappear in a good

destination, in a heavenly world. When that person is separated from their body after death, if they do not reappear in a good destination, in a heavenly world, if they return to existence as a human, then wherever they are born they will be very wise. Student, this is the path of practice which leads to great wisdom – approaching a contemplative or priest and asking, 'Bhante, what is wholesome... what actions will bring me long-lasting benefit and happiness?'

“In this way, student, the path of practice conducive to having a short life leads to having a short life; the path of practice conducive to longevity leads to longevity; the path of practice conducive to having many afflictions leads to having many afflictions; the path of practice conducive to having few afflictions leads to having few afflictions; the path of practice conducive to ugliness leads to ugliness; the path of practice conducive to beauty leads to beauty; the path of practice conducive to having little influence leads to having little influence; the path of practice conducive to having much influence leads to having much influence; the path of practice conducive to poverty leads to poverty; the path of practice conducive to wealth leads to wealth; the path of practice conducive to birth in a low family leads to birth in a low family; the path of practice conducive to birth in a high family leads to birth in a high family; the path of practice conducive to foolishness leads to foolishness; the path of practice conducive to great wisdom leads to great wisdom. Student, beings are the owners of their actions, heirs of their actions, born from their actions, bound to their actions, returners to their actions. Action is what divides beings into inferiority and superiority.”

When this was said, the brahmin student Subha said to the Blessed One, “Magnificent, Sir Gotama! Magnificent, Sir Gotama! Sir Gotama, it is as if one were to turn upright what had been inverted, or reveal what was hidden, or describe the path to one who was confused, or bring an oil-lamp into the darkness so that those with eyesight could see – in the same way the Dhamma has been shown by Sir Gotama using many methods. I go for refuge to Sir Gotama, and to the Dhamma, and to the monastic Saṅgha. From this day forward, may Sir Gotama remember me as a lay disciple who has gone for refuge for life.”