

Kamma in Context: The Mahakammavibhangasutta and the Culakammavibhangasutta

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The Buddha's teaching on kamma has an important place in the doctrinal foundations of Buddhism. The nature of its moral efficacy is essential to Buddhist philosophy and practice. Unfortunately, attempted analyses of the kamma doctrine itself seem doomed to failure. This 'failure' consists in failing to establish a model of kamma by which its workings can be understood in a clear and comprehensive manner.

This failure is a result of attempting to abstract a philosophical doctrine from a context rich in dialectical form and soteriological significance. The Buddha's doctrine on kamma has metaphysical implications, but these must be understood through textual analysis that takes into account the context of the Buddha's discourses. Culture, language, myth, social life and religious rivalries all play a part in the composition of the text, both with regard to what is said and to how it is said.

The Buddha's discourses in the Pali Canon need to be contextualized as discourses, conversations in which he was in dialogue with his interlocutors: religious and lay inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. An important element of dialogue is that each part of it happens as a response to something preceding it. It does not happen in isolation. The Buddha's discourses need to be read bearing in mind that he is responding to the world-views and life-accounts of others.

As well as the individual dialogic processes in different discourses, equally important is the broader context of the Buddha's situation. During the Buddha's time, the contemporary distinctions made between 'religious' and 'secular' were barely formed. There are no words in Sanskrit or Pali that can be translated uncontentiously as 'religious' and 'secular'. There were notions of a 'way' (mārga), of 'traditions' (sampradāya) and of 'teachings' or 'truth' (dharma), but not distinction between the secular and the religious. What is nowadays called 'religion' was woven into the fabric of life. The Buddha's discourses thus most often involve interaction with people who have some sort of religious life.

At the time of the Buddha, Indian religious life was split between what can be called orthodox and heterodox traditions. The orthodox tradition, Brahmanism, favoured the household life; caste, family, social responsibilities, status, wealth and prestige were all important preoccupations. Sacrifice was the quintessential religious act for Brahmanism, although dissenting voices can be heard in the texts that question this emphasis. The ritual was purported to have powerful cosmographic significance and was, on the whole, a demonstration of the power and position that Brahmins, the priestly class of the tradition,

commanded within society.

The heterodox traditions developed in the forests and on the plains of ancient India. The Sāmaṇa traditions, which spawned both Buddhism and Jainism, favoured the homeless, wandering life, the cutting of family ties and annulling of social responsibilities, the inhabiting of forests and plains and living a life devoted to religious practice. These practices often took the form of religious austerities (tapas), yoga and/or meditation. Such a life was pursued in order to obtain truth, knowledge and salvation. The Sāmaṇa traditions encompassed both those who supported the orthodox texts of the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas, as well as those, Buddhists and Jains, who rejected such teachings.¹

The Buddha's expositions on kamma were a response to the already existent forms of that doctrine as set forth in the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads. The ideas of 'perennial movement' (saṃsāra), and an endless cycle of death and rebirth governed by kamma were circulating in Indian religious philosophies which pre-date Buddhism.² However, the Buddha's kamma doctrine has significant and crucial differences to the older models of kamma. These differences are essentially contained within a soteriology circumscribed by ethics.

The crux of the Buddha's reformulation of kamma was to establish the importance of individual ethical responsibility. Each person's volitions, desires, will and intentions became pivotal in the cause-effect chain. Stressing the importance of human agency had huge ramifications. By emphasising individual responsibility the Buddha changed the metaphysical significance of kamma.

The Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta and Mahākammammavibhaṅga Sutta illustrate these important aspects of the Buddha's teaching on kamma.³ These suttas, which are found in the Majjhima Nikāya of the Pali Canon, form a part of the fundamental teachings on kamma of the Theravāda school of Buddhism. Each sutta is set within a narrative context, the aim of which is to respond to pre-existing notions of kamma.

In the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta the Buddha dialogues with a Brahman student who would have held his own views on kamma as described in Brahmanic religious philosophy. Using the Brahmanic ideas as his starting point and with the use of dialectical argument, the Buddha subtly shifts the meaning of kamma to establish an ethical dimension with soteriological significance.

The Mahākammammavibhaṅga Sutta is the Buddha's response to notions of the kamma process as perceived by, again, Brahmans, but also Sāmaṇas. Metaphysical aspects of the doctrine are revealed in this sutta, which has a more sophisticated philosophical context. The Buddha takes up the views of his religious contemporaries on kamma and establishes the

errors of their apparent insights.

With any exegesis of ancient scriptures there are problems with accuracy. These are certainly apparent in the study of Pali literature, the origins of which date back some 2,500 years. The Buddhist tradition appears to have been an oral tradition for approximately 4 – 500 years following the death of the Buddha. This presents a particular set of problems regarding issues of authentication. Similarly, transliteration and translation of Pali into European languages, which has only been done on a large scale in the last hundred years or so, is far from straightforward. Bearing in mind these problems, the texts will be regarded as the closest it is possible to get to the authentic word of the Buddha.⁴

Cūlakammavibanga Sutta

Kamma and Causation in the Vedas

Subha, the brahman student in conversation with the Buddha in the Cūlakammavibanga Sutta, comes from a prestigious brahman family; he is the son of Todeyya, the brahman priest of king Pasenadi, the king of Kosala.⁵ A king's brahman priest would be one of the most influential and knowledgeable brahmans in the district, and, as family and kinship were of the utmost importance in ancient India, Subha himself would have been an important figure. At the beginning of the Cūlakammavibanga Sutta Subha puts a question to the Buddha:

‘Now, good Gotama, what is the cause, what is the reason that lowness and excellence are to be seen among human beings while they are in human form? For, good Gotama, human beings of short life-span are to be seen and those of long life-span; those of many and those of few illnesses; those who are ugly, those who are beautiful; those who are of little account, those of great account; those who are poor, those who are wealthy; those who are of lowly families, those of high families; those who are weak in wisdom, those who are full of wisdom. Now what, good Gotama, is the cause, what is the reason that lowness and excellence are to be seen among human beings while they are in human form?’⁶

For a brahman student to be asking this question of the Buddha is interesting, for, within the tradition of the Vedas, which the brahman student would be studying, there are a variety of answers to these questions. The answers lie, in part, within the context of sacrificial rites. Furthermore, the answers contain within them the brahmanic idea of karman, ritual activity.

Subha is asking about causality, particularly about causes that bring about worldly benefits. Passages of texts in the Vedic corpus that imply an understanding of the causal process are discordant and thus problematic. This is hardly surprising. Each phase of literary composition in the Vedic tradition was not cohesive. The composition of the Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads, which comprise Vedic literature, each span hundreds of years and a variety of authors. Inconsistencies and contradictions are found within various parts of individual texts, and there are many discrepancies between texts. With regard to an understanding of causality there are shifting emphases within different genres of the tradition, oscillating between theological causation, primacy of the ritual action of the sacrifice and the causal nature of human action. An almost continuous insistence on divine figureheads is intricately mixed with intimations of the causal nature of deeds and sacrificial activity, as expressed even in the early works such as this Ṛg Vedic passage:

‘Unite with the fathers, with Yama, with the rewards of your sacrifices and good deeds, in the highest heaven.’⁷

This Ṛg Veda poem is a funeral hymn, and this union with the fathers and Yama comes at death as a remuneration of one’s activities during life.

The period of the Buddha’s lifetime in India was the time in which the Brāhmaṇa literature of the Vedas was at its most influential within orthodox Brahmanism. Philosophical and theistic ideas ‘were almost overlooked and emphasis was laid on merely the rigorous, ritualistic sacrifices.’⁸ The sacrificial ritual became sacrosanct. The Vedic ritual had, in the Brāhmaṇas, developed into a highly complex set of sacrifices that had implicit cosmographic meaning. The ritual was believed to have two important outcomes, one worldly, the other soteriological. The sacrificial ritual, the act of death and destruction, was purported to force access to the other world, the transcendent.⁹ As a consequence of a ‘cosmic balance’ underlying the nature of things, this action resulted in bestowing the opposite of death and destruction; life, health and prosperity onto the sacrificer. Secondly, the contact with the transcendent had implications for future transmigrations. If a lifetime of sacrifice was lived out correctly and dutifully it could result in post-existence union with Brahmā. This was attained by methodical performance of the highly detailed and specific procedures of the sacrifice. The ritual activity of the sacrifice is called karman, from the Sanskrit verbal root kṛ- to do. Karman is the ‘doing’ of the sacrificial ritual.

The problem of causation that haunts all Vedic literature, and is evident in this genre, is the exact nature of the relationship between ritual action/karman and an omniscient being/Brahmā. The understanding of this problem is exacerbated by the fact that very little is actually known about Vedic karman. In an article on Vedānta theology, Francis Clooney

argues that it is not possible to hold to both a kamma theory and a theology of an omniscient creator.¹⁰ Clooney argues that if God/Brahman is the cosmogenic source and origin of the universe, he must be responsible for all things including Man's actions, ergo Man cannot be responsible for his own actions. Lack of individual responsibility renders any notion of human causation pointless. A theory of the causal nature of human action cannot exist alongside a theology that posits a God as the origin of all things. Clooney concludes that the Vedic scriptures force 'this uncomfortable position of balancing human responsibility and divine power'. The Vedic tradition is thus left with two problems. Firstly the role of an omniscient being in authorising what constitutes correct ritual action/karman and, secondly, the role of that being in rewarding or punishing the outcome of correct or incorrect ritual action/karman.

With this in mind, let us return to Subha's question to the Buddha in the the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta, regarding the causal nature of the world. Subha asks the Buddha to explain the cause of life's circumstances. Given the Vedic use of the idea of karman, the Buddha's reply would have had a particular potency for Subha:

'Kamma is one's own, brahman youth; beings are heirs to kamma, kamma are matrix, kamma are kin, kamma are arbiters. Kamma divides beings, that is to say by lowness and excellence.'¹¹

It must have appeared to Subha, from this statement, that the Buddha was following Vedic revelation, that karman, ritual activity, had significant causal implications. Speculating on Subha's knowledge of Veda and dhamma, it seems quite plausible to assume that, up until this moment, he would have been aware of a notion of karman only within the sacrificial context. For the Buddha to be commenting on karman could well have intrigued him. By starting his dialogue with this reference to kamma, the Buddha appears to acquiesce.

The Dialectical Method

Using the language of his interlocutors seems to have been a regular approach of the Buddha. With great subtlety and skill, he would appear to replicate the conceptual framework of his interlocutor, while shifting meanings by which he would procure them a path to the Dhamma. As Rhys Davids comments on the Buddha's skill in dialectics: 'Gotama put himself as far as possible in the mental position of the questioner. He attacks none of his [the interlocutor's] cherished convictions. He accepts as the starting point of his own exposition the desirability of the act or condition prized by his opponent'.¹² In the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta, it appears that the Buddha is doing just this. It seems likely that the Buddha would have known a substantial amount about the tradition of the Vedas.¹³ He

puts himself in the mental position of Subha by starting off his exposition with a premise with which Subha is familiar: kamma is a causal agent. This is a proposition that Subha would presumably find acceptable, if intriguing. The Buddha starts from this accepted proposition, then goes on to move Subha away from his Vedic understanding to a Dhammic position. As the Buddha goes on to explain in full, it becomes clear that he is using the term 'kamma' not in the sense of ritual activity but in a quite different way. He is shifting the meaning of 'kamma' and, in doing so, undermining the idea that kamma is ritual action, and that ritual action is a primal causal agent. He is redefining kamma in a number of ways: he is redefining the action which is implied by kamma, broadening out the concept from ritual action to include other activity;¹⁴ he is redefining the causal basis of kamma by making a subtle shift in meaning from action to individual intention, to a self-determined psychological process; and he is adding an ethical dimension to the kamma process. The sutta is full of this kind of subtlety. There is a great richness and depth to be found in the emerging dynamic between Subha's intellectual presuppositions, the Buddha's response to that, and the principles of Dhamma within the Buddha's response.

Understanding the inherent subtlety of the Buddha's message has quite far-reaching implications with regard to the abstraction of Dhamma from the text. Take for example Subha's questions. Taken out of context these questions could seem to be, and have been interpreted as positing delimited truths of the kamma process. For example, Jayatilleke describes the pith of the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta as follows:

'(1) a person who kills living creatures ... tends to be short lived, while a person who refrains from killing living creatures ... tends to be long lived, (2) a person who harms creatures ... tends to be sickly, while a person who refrains from harming creatures ... tends to be healthy, (3) a person who is angry and irritable ... tends to be ugly, while a person who is not so, tends to be beautiful.'¹⁵

Payutto goes on in a similar vein:

'A woman or man has a jealous mind. When others receive awards, honour and respect, he or she is ill at ease and angry. At death, on account of that kamma ... that person goes to a woeful bourn, the nether worlds, to hell. Or, if not reborn in hell, but as a human being, he or she will be one of little influence. ... A woman or man is one who harbours no jealousy. At death, on account of that kamma ... that person goes to a good bourn, to a heaven realm. Or, if not reborn in heaven, but as a human being, he or she will be powerful and influential.'¹⁶

The remaining text interpreted in terms of categorical statements is as follows: a person who does not practise giving is reborn poor, a person who is a giver is reborn wealthy; a person

who is proud is reborn into a low family, a person who is not proud is born into a high family; a person who neither questions nor visits the wise will be reborn of little intelligence, a person who seeks out and questions the wise will be reborn intelligent.

These ‘categorical statements’ of the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta each represent an answer to an aspect of Subha’s question. The question that Subha puts to the Buddha was quite particular and reveals perhaps more about Subha than about the Buddha’s Dhamma. It reveals a certain preoccupation of the Vedas, that of the acquisition of worldly benefits.

There is one other recorded encounter between Subha and the Buddha in the Majjhima Nikāya. Here also, Subha extols the benefits of the householder’s life. According to Jayatilleke, Subha’s expressed view is reminiscent of Brahman ritualists known as Pūrvamīmāṃsās. The Pūrvamīmāṃsās valued three aims in life, which are expressed by Subha in the Sutta, dharma, here meaning the practice of ceremonial religion, artha, the pursuit of wealth, and kāma, the pursuit of worldly pleasures.¹⁷

The pursuit of wealth and the pursuit of worldly pleasures appear to have been pivotal religious axioms for Subha. Thus Subha asks about lowness and excellence which manifests in beings, about shortness and length of life, levels of health, levels of beauty, status, wealth, caste, birth and levels of wisdom, because these are essential to his vedic lore.

The Buddha’s response to Subha’s questions is again an example of his accepting as his starting point the desirability of the condition prized by his opponent. The Buddha has responded to every aspect of Subha’s question in the way he does because Subha asked the question in the way he does. The ‘categorical statements’ represent the Buddha’s response to Subha’s concern with worldly pursuits. The Buddha talks in terms of wealth, beauty, status etc. because he accepts that as the context for the debate. In this way the statements can be viewed not as a general teaching with widespread doctrinal significance, but as a response to a brahman student who has asked a particular question about the nature of causality set within the context of his own religious paradigm. These are the issues that Subha, as a brahman student, is concerned with. The Buddha uses Subha’s language as a form of dialectics by which he would lead him from his own accepted premises to, for want of a better word, a ‘Buddhist’ conclusion. Taking each aspect of Subha’s question the Buddha presented it back to him within a framework of intention and ethics. The cause of beauty, wealth, good health, a good and happy worldly life, according to the Buddha, is the moral quality of one’s individual behaviour. And the antecedent of one’s moral behaviour is the moral nature of one’s mind. This is the real point the Buddha is making. The basis of morality is found within the quality of behaviour and mind. Hence this is the point to be abstracted from the text, not what is, or is not, the cause of ugliness, poverty or foolishness. Causal moral basis is founded on the quality of the individual. This has soteriological

implications. It establishes a foundation of individual moral volition for the path to salvation.

Kamma and Individual Volition

The Buddha's reinterpretation of kamma as intention is stated quite categorically elsewhere in the Canon when he says: 'it is intention, monks, that I call kamma.'¹⁸ It is not so much action itself that has causal moral potency, but the state of mind from which the action is produced. Sangharakshita puts well the relationship between action and mind in Buddhist philosophy:

'Deeds condense out of thought just as water condenses out of air. They are thought made manifest, and proclaim from the housetops of action only what has already been committed in the silent and secret chambers of the heart. One who commits an act of immorality thereby declares that he is not free from unwholesome states of mind.'¹⁹

The Buddha hints at this psychological nature of agency in the Cūḷakammavibāṅga Sutta. He makes reference to intention within his descriptions of actions. For example, with reference to the act of killing he describes the protagonist as 'one who is cruel, bloody-handed, intent on injuring and killing, and without mercy to living creatures'. This is also evident in the manner in which the Buddha refers to one who is angry:

'... here some woman or man is wrathful; turbulent on being spoken to even about a trifle, he takes offence, gets angry, disagrees, resists, and evinces anger, hatred and resentment.'²⁰

Here it is not simply physical action that the Buddha describes, but behaviour born out of a particular state of mind. Also, some of the causes of worldly benefits (or the lack of them) he posits are themselves psychological: wrath, jealousy, pride, lack of mercy. In these cases it is not the action born out of the wrath or the jealousy that is the cause of the outcome, but the psychological state itself.

This emphasis on individual volition is soteriological as it posits the moral status of the mind as the basis of the path to salvation. An ethically pure state of mind is causally related to the Buddhist notion of wisdom, thus the Buddhist path to wisdom is made manifest by performance of kusala – 'ethically wholesome' – kamma.

Although a germinal idea in the Ṛg Veda, the notion of self-determined causation was not an idea which carried much weight in the Vedic tradition. However, the Vedic tradition did share some of the psychological metaphors apparent in Pali literature.

Use of Metaphor

Both traditions appear to share not just literal but also psychological interpretations of cosmology and the cycle of death and rebirth. Suggestions of a metaphorical or psychological ‘rebirth’ rather than an actual physical death and rebirth raise further questions concerning the understanding of the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta as an expression of categorical statements of doctrine.

It does appear in both the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta and Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta that the Buddha is talking about actual physical death and rebirth in his description of the processes:

‘Because of that deed, accomplished thus, firmly held thus, he, at the breaking up of the body after dying arises in the sorrowful ways, the bad bourn, the Downfall, Niraya Hell. But if, at the breaking up of the body after dying he does not arise in the sorrowful ways, the bad bourn, the Downfall, Niraya Hell, but comes to human status ...’²¹

However, both Brahmanic and Buddhist literature make innumerable references to a notion of metaphorical death and rebirth. Within the Vedic sacrificial ritual, death became a metaphor, both in the sense that the sacrificer was not himself sacrificed, but also in the sense that the sacrifice was seen as a death and a ‘rebirth’ for the sacrificer. The Sathapata Brāhmiṇa says:

‘Indeed man is born three times. First he is born from his mother and father. Then that one who sacrifices, when the sacrifice is disposed (upa - /nam) to him, he is born a second time. And then when he dies, and they place him on the fire, when he arises from that he is born a third time.’²²

Also, the study of early Buddhist cosmology reveals a distinct flavour of psychological metaphor. These metaphorical interpretations sit happily in the texts alongside more literal interpretations. Thus ‘rebirth’ can refer either to actual physical death and rebirth into a loka, a world or realm, or it can refer to a ‘rebirth’ of consciousness. Gethin notes of the Abhidhamma analysis of consciousness, ‘from one perspective we are born, live and die over a period of eighty years; from another we are born, live and die in every moment.’²³

Gombrich has recently raised a question concerning the use of metaphor and literalism in ancient India. He questions whether the modern distinction that is made between the metaphorical and the literal was apparent in ancient India:

‘We may ask, for example, whether the Buddha literally believed in the existence of gods or heavens. But is it sure that he would have understood what we mean by ‘literally’? G.ER. Lloyd has shown that one of the foundations of science is the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical, and that it was Aristotle who first insisted on this ... (Then) whether a description of a psychological state, a microcosm, is to be taken as literally applicable to the macrocosm or only metaphorically so may be a very hard question to answer.’²⁴

One further question Gombrich’s analysis raises is this – if the distinction between the metaphorical and literal was absent, does that imply that everything has an implicit metaphorical sense? If language was imbued with implicit metaphor, as indeed Derrida would argue of all language,²⁵ it is possible that every mention of death and rebirth in the suttas reached beyond a purely literal interpretation.

Kamma, Death and Long Life

As well as these implications for the death of an individual these are also some interesting considerations in the text with regard to the killing inherent in the sacrifice. The Buddha’s dialogue with Subha on killing is interesting considering the Vedic emphasis on hiṃsa. The focus on ahiṃsa, non-harm to all beings, in Buddhist ethics was a definitive move away from the killing inherent in Brahmanism. This move away from hiṃsa was also being made in other Samaṇa traditions. The Upaniṣad literature, for example, is often critical of Vedic ritual and emphasises the internalisation of the meaning and symbolism of sacrifice, rather than its literal enactment.²⁶

The Buddha’s first remarks in his expanded explanation of kamma challenge the Vedic idea that a life of sacrifice accrues benefits and excellence for oneself and one’s family. The Buddha makes it clear that intentionally killing living beings leads not to the good, but to something that is problematic for a brahman, that is, shortness of life:

‘Brahman youth, here some woman or man is one that makes onslaught on creatures, is cruel, bloody-handed, intent on injuring and killing, and without mercy to living creatures. Because of that kamma, accomplished thus, firmly held thus, he, at the breaking up of the body after dying arises in the sorrowful ways, the bad bourn, the Downfall, Niraya Hell. But if, at the breaking up of the body after dying he does not arise in the sorrowful ways, the bad bourn, the Downfall, Niraya Hell, but comes to human status, then wherever he is born (in

the new existence) he is of a short life-span.²⁷

Long life-span was much sought after by the composers of the Veda. In the Ṛg Veda, passages of text extol the gods to grant long life-span to one and all:

‘ ... wiping away the footprint of death, stretching farther your own lengthening span of life, become pure and clean and worthy of sacrifice, swollen with offspring and wealth. These who are alive have now parted from those who are dead. Our invitation to the gods has become auspicious today. We have gone forward to dance and laugh, stretching farther our own lengthening span of life. ... Climb on to old age, choosing a long life-span, and follow in regular succession, as many as you are. May Tvaṣṭṛ who presides over good births be persuaded to give you a long life-span to live.’²⁸

Further, for the Brāhmaṇas, the sacrificer was encumbered with a notion that only through a long life span would he be able to complete his training of a life of sacrifice that would ultimately, at death, lead to a positive fate:

‘Those who depart before the age of 20 they become attached to the world of the days and nights; those who (depart) above 20 and below 40 (become attached) to that (world of) the fortnight; those who (depart) above 40 and below 60 (become attached) to that (world of) the months; those who (depart) above 60 and below 80 (become attached) to that (world of) the seasons; those who depart above 80 and below 100 (become attached) to that (world of) the year. Now only that one who lives 100 years or more indeed attains the immortal state.’²⁹

Brahmans attached great importance to long life. Living a long life enabled them to attain their goal. Hence the Buddha’s statement that killing leads to shortness of life is really, in these circumstances, quite radical. The Buddha’s statement pulls the carpet from under the feet of this Brahmanic notion. He does not actually say (although it is made clear elsewhere) that killing is unethical, but rather that killing leads to shortness of life, which undermines the consistency of Brahmanic practice. The Buddha is therefore implying that if you perform sacrifice, i.e. if you kill living beings, you will not live a long life, therefore you will not be able to attain the goal of your life of sacrifice which, according to Brahmanic lore, you only attain if you live a long life. Sacrifice, therefore, is counter-productive to its own goals.

Overall, the contents of the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta address a variety of religiously significant aspects of Subha’s world account. The contents of the sutta have been viewed as delimiting truths which describe the kamma process, but to view the contents of the sutta in this way misses the subtleties inherent in the Buddha’s conversation with Subha. Through contextualizing the dialogue we meet with a rich and intricate meaning which is abandoned by a dry and categorical decontextualizing. Whilst the text presents the metaphysical

principle that good action leads to good result, it certainly also seems clear that there is far more meaning behind the Buddha's dialectics with Subha than can be presented in a summary of the simple statements of the text.

The Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta

Philosophy and Religion

This sutta is addressed to a group of the Buddha's disciples. The Buddha appears to be presenting a 'great analysis of kamma'³⁰ but, in actual fact, says so little about the nature and relationships of kamma that it has been a matter of debate as to which part of the sutta actually constitutes the 'great analysis of kamma'.³¹ What the Buddha does say about kamma appears to be more a criticism of the views of his contemporaries than a propagation of his own views.

The sutta is largely a critique of other Samaṇa-brāhmaṇā. According to the Pali-English dictionary the compound Samaṇa-brāhmaṇā translates as 'leaders in religious life'.³² The compound refers to the Buddha's religious contemporaries, teachers from other religious traditions. Among Buddhism, Jainism, other Samaṇa traditions and the tradition of the Vedas, there was a common heritage of ideas, religious practices and lifestyle. The 'homeless life' of the Buddhist adept as described in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta was a pre-Buddhist phenomenon, as were the ideas of meditation jhānas, saṃsāra and kamma.

Religious wanderers from different traditions would converse, discuss and argue various points of metaphysics and practice. With such a common heritage of ideas and practices it became important to establish the nuances of difference. The Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta is an example of this. Here again, kamma is portrayed as soteriologically significant, but this time other philosophical aspects of the doctrine are included.

Most early Indian philosophies originated within religious traditions. Thus philosophy is often caught up with concerns about salvation. Differentiating between contemporary understandings of 'philosophy' and classical Indian systems of thought (darśanas), Matilal comments:

'For each darśana, it is commonly argued, has a practical end in view, namely ultimate freedom from dukkha, and to that extent the discipline called darśana is saturated with soteriology and religious fervour, while 'philosophy' as an academic discipline is devoted to a pure pursuit of knowledge through analysis of concepts, meaning etc.'³³

Many problems with modern interpretations of kamma have resulted from a failure to see

that philosophical elements of the doctrine are bound up with religion and soteriology. While the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta can be established as predominantly of soteriological significance, the Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta presents a more interesting example of the interplay between religious methodology and philosophy.

The Initial Conversation between Samiddhi and Potaliputta

Contextualizing the sutta requires a reinterpretation of the sutta's introduction to the discussion on kamma. The sutta begins with a conversation between one of the Buddha's disciples and a religious wanderer, Potaliputta. Potaliputta is referred to as a paribbājaka, a word of quite similar meaning to 'Samaṇa'. Paribbājakas were also religious wanderers, but more the disciples of teachers than themselves prolocutors. Samiddhi, the Buddha's disciple, and Potaliputta have a short exchange, with Potaliputta asking two questions of Samiddhi. On the response to his first question, Potaliputta responds with what appears to be sarcasm. On the response to his second question, Potaliputta gets up from his seat and walks off without a word. It is this second question which is crucial. The Buddha begins his exposition as a result of hearing about the conversation between the two, and particularly in response to the answer to this question. Potaliputta's second question was:

'Reverend Samiddhi, when one has intentionally done a deed by body, speech or thought, what does one experience?'³⁴

Samiddhi's response is:

Friend Potaliputta, when one has intentionally performed a deed of body, speech or mind, one experiences dukkha.³⁵

It has been suggested that Samiddhi had misunderstood Potaliputta's question, that Samiddhi understood sañcetanikaṃ kammaṃ (intentional action) as unskilful intentional action.³⁶ In this case Samiddhi's response that one experiences dukkha (pain) is appropriate. But I think such a misunderstanding is unlikely. It seems more likely here that dukkha should be understood not in its narrow sense as 'pain', but in its broader sense. The Pali-English Dictionary lists two general applications of dukkha: (1) as simple sensation (pain), and (2) as complex state (suffering).³⁷ If the second application of dukkha is applied to Samiddhi's statement, it changes the meaning of his response substantially. Also, as a corollary of this, we discover a new motivation for the Buddha to give his 'great analysis of kamma'.

Translated according to the Pali-English Dictionary's second application of dukkha,

Samiddhi's statement now reads: 'When one has intentionally performed a deed of body, speech, or mind, one experiences suffering'. As the Pali-English Dictionary says, the conceptualisation of dukkha as suffering is complex. Dukkha as suffering, as unsatisfactoriness, as dis-ease, has an important meaning in Buddhism. The world as we experience it, the saṃsāra, is fundamentally characterised by dukkha. Dukkha is enumerated as the first noble truth, a primary truth about the world, that the world is suffering, or 'anguish', as Horner translates it.³⁸

In suggesting that volitional action results in dukkha Samiddhi was expressing a truth of the dhamma as he understood it to be proclaimed by his teacher: that volitional action results in suffering. And speaking thus, he was not wrong; this is a proposition of the Dhamma. However, in this particular instance, it was not the most appropriate response. In the Saṃyutta Nikāya, the Buddha himself says that all that is felt is suffering.³⁹ In that instance the Buddha is talking 'with reference to the suffering inherent in all formations by reason of their impermanence', which at that time, in the context of that sutta, was the most appropriate response. However, in the situation ensuing in the Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta this particular response was not the most appropriate, as can be seen in the following comment of the Buddha:

'The question of the wanderer Potaliputta was given a one-sided answer by the foolish man Samiddhi (although) it needed a discriminating explanation.'⁴⁰

The Buddha illustrates here the nature of exposition on Dhamma; he does not say Samiddhi is wrong, but neither is he right, he has simply failed to understand the most appropriate response on this occasion. The Buddha then explains that Potaliputta was asking about the nature of feelings (vedana), rather than the nature of Buddhist metaphysics, and should have been responded to thus:

'When, friend Potaliputta, one has intentionally done a deed by body, speech or thought for experiencing pleasure ... pain ... neither pain nor pleasure, he experiences pleasure, pain, neither pain nor pleasure respectively.'⁴¹

In the very next sentence, the Buddha then declares that he will proclaim his great analysis of kamma. It is as if he is motivated to do this as a response to the conversation between Samiddhi and Potaliputta. Thus it seems that the Buddha is so inclined because of this 'one-sided' explanation Samiddhi gave of the consequences of kamma, sañcetanikaṃ kammaṃ. Understood in this way, it appears that the Buddha is firstly attempting to instil in his disciples a way to respond to other wanderers on the issue of kamma. Secondly, also embodied in the text is a critique of other teachers and their ideas on kamma. The next sentence of the sutta is:

‘And moreover, Ānanda, there are foolish and inexperienced wanderers who are members of other sects who would find out about the Tathāgata’s great analysis of deeds if you Ānanda would listen while the Tathāgata is classifying the great analysis of deeds.’⁴²

As well as commenting on Samiddhi’s response to Potaliputta the Buddha is giving an exposition which will effect his own disciples understanding of kamma and enable them to engage more successfully with their opposing contemporaries

The Buddha then starts his ‘analysis’. He begins by stating that there are four types of persons existing in the world: (1) Those who live unethical lives and are reborn in unhappy destinies. (2) Those who live unethical lives but are reborn in happy destinies. (3) Those who live ethical lives but are reborn in unhappy destinies. (4) Those who live ethical lives and are reborn in happy destinies.

If taken at face value this statement of the Buddha’s is false – according to Buddhist world-accounts there are not these four types of people – but it has occurred to other Samaṇa-brāhmaṇā that there are. The four sets the Buddha outlines encompass the range of possible views on kamma. Underlying the four propositions are two basic views: either there is moral causation or there is no moral causation. Elsewhere in the Pali Canon other religious teachers are reported as propagating the view that there is no moral causation,⁴³ and, as was seen earlier, the Vedic tradition propagated the view, in a somewhat convoluted form, that there was causation as a result of certain action. The Buddha starts with all the possibilities, hence including the cherished conviction of his opponents, which on this occasion would be one of the four possibilities.

Religious Insight

The Buddha then makes reference to the process by which the knowledge or vision of these persons is attained by Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa:

‘where some recluse or brahman, as a result of ardour, as a result of striving, as a result of application, as a result of diligence, as a result of right mental work, attains such concentration of mind that while the mind is concentrated he sees with the purified deva-like vision surpassing that of men.’⁴⁴

This passage is the first point in the sutta where purely ‘religious’ content can be established. The notion of ‘religious insight’ is problematic philosophically but axiomatic within most

religious traditions. Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa attained to a religious vision, or insight, as a result of practice. Application, often in the form of yoga or meditation, resulted in these sorts of experience. These experiences were largely insights by which ‘truths’ concerning the nature of existence, such as kamma, were revealed. Variously called ‘insights’, ‘powers’, or ‘visions’ these experiences were a pan-Indian religious phenomena. Both the Ṛg Veda and Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtra mention ‘magical powers’ which can be attained as a result of the sort of religious practice engaged in by the Samaṇa and Brahman traditions.⁴⁵

Religious knowledge or ‘vision’ of kamma – ‘beings arising and passing away ... as kamma directs them’ – was indicated as a result of practice both within and outside of the Buddhist fold.⁴⁶ According to the Sāmaññaphala Sutta this sort of vision arose for the Buddhist adept as a result of the perfection of meditation (jhāna) coupled with the perfection of ethics. Although there was a common stock of meditation techniques, the idea that ethics are causally related to the attainment of religious insight is a purely Buddhist phenomenon. Ethics are so integral to the Buddhist path that it seems highly unlikely the Buddha would describe religious practice that denies a basis of ethics as establishing true religious insight.

However, the Buddha’s approach to other practitioners was not one of provocation and disparagement. According to the Buddha it is important not to belittle others by praising one’s own level of religious attainment.⁴⁷ This is an indication of his view of and relationship to other practitioners. Throughout the Pali Canon the Buddha is seen in conversation with Samaṇa-brāhmaṇā and paribbājakas, and these conversations are not substantially different from his dialogues with his own bhikkhus. For example the Cūḷasaccaka Sutta, a conversation between a Jaina and the Buddha, can be contrasted with the Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta, a narrative concerning one of the Buddha’s disciples.⁴⁸ In both these suttas, the interlocutors hold views disparate to those of the Buddha. In each sutta the Buddha corrects these views again using the dialectical method with Saccaka the Jaina, but seeming to admonish his own disciple whilst reminding him of the teachings. The difference between the two suttas is nominal. The Buddha is essentially engaging in the same process of exposition.

Samaṇa-brāhmaṇā and paribbājakas appear to have engaged in forms of religion that bore certain similarities to the path proposed by the Buddha. Evidence of this is clear in the Sandaka Sutta in which Ānanda, the Buddha’s companion and one of his chief disciples, addresses a group of paribbājakas.⁴⁹ In this sutta Ānanda makes a passing reference to the four levels of meditative absorption, and appears to take it as read that the paribbājakas are not only familiar with this nomenclature but also share the value judgement made by Ānanda that these states are of great importance in religious life. Further to this, the Ariyapariyesana Sutta tells the story of the Buddha’s time with other Samaṇa teachers, prior to his Awakening, in which they taught him meditation.⁵⁰

As a result of their practices, Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa and paribbājakas appear to have experienced religious visions. The vision of kamma described in the Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta achieved by the Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa occurs: ‘dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkantamānusakena’, ‘with exalted pure vision surpassing that of men’. The metaphorical sense of this ‘pure vision’ (often translated as ‘the divine eye’), which is not translatable, is that it is a supernormal experience of ‘seeing’ or knowing which is directly born out of religious practice. In the Sāmaññaphala Sutta the phrase is used to describe the vision of kamma revealed to the Buddhist adept as a result of his practice.⁵¹ In the Sāmaññaphala Sutta this vision is achieved at a level of religious insight close to the experience of Awakening. Thus the use of the same phrase in the Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta seems to suggest that the Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa reap religious experience as a result of their practice. Their level of spiritual attainment is close to but not synonymous with the experience of Awakening. The Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa have fallen short because they have failed to appreciate that wisdom – being a continuous experience of insight – as causally related to ethics. The Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa practice some, but not all, of the conditions out of which the path is made manifest.⁵² The failure of the Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa is in part due to their opting for a theory of knowledge bound by theism:

‘In the Upaniṣads one’s knowledge and vision is not, in the final analysis, due to one’s efforts but to the grace or intervention of Ātman or God. The emergence of this knowledge is conceived as something inexplicable and mysterious. This character warrants it being called a kind of mystical knowledge. But in the Buddhist account the mental concentration (samādhi) which is a product of training and effort, is a causal factor (upaniṣā) in the production of this knowledge.’⁵³

Both within Buddhist and Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa metaphysics there are certain epistemological problems with this idea of religious insight by means of which the kamma process is revealed. These are problems of validity; that kamma can be ‘seen’ in a religious vision cannot be validated by empirical research, reason or perception except by those practitioners who experience the vision. Those practitioners who can experience this knowledge or vision are the minority rather than the majority of practitioners; only 60 out of 500 of the Buddha’s disciples had the ability to perceive this sort of vision concerning kamma.⁵⁴ Jayatilleke argues that Buddhism is a form of empiricism,⁵⁵ and, while it is true that these insights are derived from sense-experience, they are derived only from a certain sort of sense-experience resulting from the labours of religious practice. Thus it is not empiricism per se; on a purely philosophical level it cannot be empirically validated. The validity of the insights can only be established philosophically a priori.

Kamma is the moral aspect of the Buddhist law of paṭiccasamuppāda, conditioned co-production, which posits that all things arise in dependence on conditions. The metaphysical principle of kamma, that moral actions have consequences, is a function of this paṭiccasamuppāda. In contrast to kamma, Paṭiccasamuppāda itself, the arising of things dependent on conditions, is not a notion that can only be established a priori. Here science is not outside the bounds of Buddhist metaphysics, but accords with the idea of paṭiccasamuppāda. Scientific validation usually involves a process by which conditions for the occurrence of an event are established. For example, the application of heat to water is the condition that causes water to boil. Generally, the process of conditionality is visible and can be validated empirically. But the kammic/moral aspect can only be inferred from an application of the general principle.

Philosophical Analysis

The remaining sections of the text introduce a more purely philosophical notion of kamma. However, as this takes the form of a philosophical analysis of religious insights, it is an example of the interweaving of philosophy and religion. The Buddha takes the religious insights of the Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa and analyses them according to the general metaphysical principle of kamma; good action leads to good result, bad action leads to bad result.

The Buddha accepts that the paths followed by the Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa will enable them to have some (limited) insights. What he takes issue with, however, is the level of insight achieved; they are limited, they do not encompass the entire (complex) nature of moral conditionality, they are not the whole story as far as the Buddha is concerned, and thus to extrapolate from them and form conclusions about the nature of causality is problematic.

The Buddha addresses the inferences the Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa make from these insights. Although he accepts their experiences of (limited) insights he allows them none of their inferences, even when their inferences accord with the metaphysical principle. Two of the insights are such that inferences that accord with the principle can be drawn from them: ‘Everyone who is restrained from making onslaught on creatures, is restrained from taking what has not been given ... is of right view, at the breaking up of the body after dying arises in a good bourn, a heaven world,⁵⁶ and, ‘Everyone who makes onslaught on creatures, takes what has not been given ... and is of false view, at the breaking up of the body after dying arises in the sorrowful ways, a bad bourn, the Downfall, Niraya Hell.’⁵⁷ To these statements the Buddha says ‘I do not allow (him) that.’⁵⁸ It is only in the final passages of the sutta that the Buddha says why he does not allow such inferences.

The Buddha says most about kamma in the final paragraphs of the sutta. It is these final sections which Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi call ‘the great analysis of kamma’.

While it may be true to say that this section of the sutta is the most philosophically relevant, it is important to understand this section within the context of the rest of the sutta, and to see it as a response to the expositions of the Samāṇa-brāhmaṇa. This is supported by the fact that rather than presenting his own descriptive analysis, the Buddha instead focuses on revealing why the previous inferences may well be spurious.

The Buddha says:

Now there is the person who has abstained from killing living beings here ... has had right view. And on the dissolution of the body, after death, [he] reappears in a happy destination, even in the heavenly world. But (perhaps) the good kamma producing his happiness was done by him earlier, or the good kamma producing his happiness was done by him later, or a right view was undertaken and completed by him at the time of his death. And that was why on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappeared in a happy destination, in a heavenly world. But since he has abstained from killing living beings here ... has had right view, he will feel the result of that here and now, or in his next rebirth, or in some subsequent existence.⁵⁹

There are three other passages such as this one commenting on the other sorts of people, those who do ethically wholesome action and are reborn into hellish destinies, those who do ethically unwholesome action and are reborn into heavenly realms and those who practise ethically wholesome action and are reborn into hellish worlds. A crucial point about kamma is being made here. Rebirth in heaven will always result from good deeds, and hell will always be the outcome of unwholesome deeds; however, some kammically weighty deeds are not always the most apparent (such as thoughts, for example). If the fruit does not appear to match the deed it is because of events which either happened in another time or place or are not immediately apparent. This is the key message: do not be fooled by your own (limited) knowledge of events; do not let that undermine trust in the metaphysical principle, which is continually at work, although sometimes (perhaps often) not apparent.

In the final paragraph the Buddha says:

‘Thus, Ānanda, there is action that is incapable (of good result) and appears incapable; there is action that is incapable (of good result) and appears capable; there is action that is capable (of good result) and appears capable; and there is action that is capable (of good result) and appears incapable.’⁶⁰

In this and the previous passages there are statements which explain why the classification into four types of people mentioned earlier in the sutta is erroneous. There appear to be the

four types of persons because the Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa have only limited 'vision' of the process and assume that the instances they saw were the result of a simple, linear causal process, ($x = y$). But the nature of Buddhist causality is multiple. There are no single causes for single fruits. Kamma is one aspect of an interweaving web of causal factors. Kamma is taught as singular causality not because that is its metaphysical nature, but because it is taught as a soteriology. Buddhaghosa comments on this aspect of Buddhist causality:

'Here there is no single or multiple fruit of any kind from a single cause, nor a single fruit from multiple causes, but only multiple fruit from multiple causes. ... For the Blessed One employs one representative cause and fruit when it is suitable for the sake of elegance in instruction and to suit the idiosyncrasies of those susceptible to being taught.'⁶¹

Buddhaghosa not only states here the nature of causation which the Buddha is describing in the Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta but he also adds weight to the notion of a soteriological structure in the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha teaches kamma as the simple statement: good actions lead to good consequences, bad actions lead to bad consequences, in order to communicate something that can easily be translated into practice. This demonstrates the essential relationship between the metaphysics and soteriology of the Buddha's expositions on kamma. The metaphysics are saturated with soteriology because teaching a path which leads ultimately to salvation and liberation is the Buddha's primary objective. Given this, metaphysics must be subsumed within soteriology. In the Cūlakammavibhaṅga Sutta the Buddha is concerned with presenting a soteriological strategy in place of Subha's preoccupations with worldly acquisitions. This requires a particular descriptive methodology by which specific examples of the relationship between ethics, intention and causality can be established. In the Mahākammvibhaṅga Sutta, with a more sophisticated audience, the Buddha is concerned to demonstrate the rudimentary metaphysics of kamma. Nevertheless, in this context too, kamma continues to have soteriological significance as it acts to engender clearer understanding in his disciples. There is also soteriological intent behind the critique of other teachers' views on kamma, the intention always being to lead people to Awakening, rather than engaging in polemics or rhetoric for their own sake.

The overall impression left by the Mahākammāvibh'ṅga Sutta is a continuous, although indirect, upholding of the general principle of kamma interposed with conjectures of the ungraspability of its true nature. All the suggestions that the Buddha examines, all the views of the Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa that he does and does not accept, again and again end in the same conclusion: actions have consequences, good actions lead to good result, bad actions to bad result, but an understanding of the process must be left for the vision that arises out of insight. The Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta, as I have argued, is an expression of metaphysics

contained within soteriology.

Conclusion

The Buddha's discourses on kamma are not a homogeneous entity. They represent a composite response to social and cultural factors that were the context of the Buddha's time, and include dialogues in which he responds to world-views and life-accounts of his interlocutors. As such the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta and Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta should be understood within their socio-historical setting. This is how they must be viewed, rather than as monolithic homilies. The Buddha interacts with Subha and responds to his intellectual presuppositions, as well as the kamma theories of the Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa. In doing this he continually reinvents the notion of kamma: it is not ritual action; it is not singular or linear; its primary concern is the domain of individual ethical responsibility.

Overall, the Buddha's teachings on kamma are an attempt to establish subtle soteriological shifts within existent notions of the cycle of saṃsāra, death and rebirth, affected by kamma. The Buddha took kamma out of the 'dream world' of the Brāhmaṇas and the philosophical world of the Upaniṣads to emphasise its underlying moral efficacy. Kamma is not simply, or even most importantly, a description of the nature of existence, but a principle with prescriptive force. It is this prescriptive aspect of it which best illustrates its importance. It is a principle which one takes as the foundation of one's ethical practice. This principle must be taken a priori as the basis from which to establish the Buddhist path to salvation. One of the paradoxical results of belief in and subsequent practice of the principle taken on faith is an experiential religious 'vision' in which the universal application and existence of the process is revealed.

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1. It is out of the Sāmaṇa traditions that supported orthodox teachings that the Upaniṣads developed. These texts are a composite genre, which establish simultaneously a continuation of and a development away from the ritual and sacrificial notions contained within the more archaic texts of Brahmanism.
2. See Tull 1989, Flood 1996:85–6 and Collins 1982:29–30.
3. Majjhima Nikāya, the Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha, trans. I.B. Horner, Pali Text Society, London, 1959, ii 135 and 136.
4. See Gombrich 1996:8–12 for a discussion on the recent debates concerning the authenticity of the Pali scriptures.
5. Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya op.cit., ii, p.248 note.
6. Ibid, pp.248–9.
7. Ṛg Veda, An Anthology; One Hundred and Eight Hymns, trans. W.Doniger O’Flaherty, Penguin Books Ltd, London 1981,10.14.8.
8. Sharma 1960:18.
9. Heesterman as cited in Tull 1990:72.
10. Clooney 1989:530–48. Although Advaita Vedantā, on which Clooney comments, is a philosophical system that evolved much later than the period in question, his comments do have some bearing on the more ancient Vedic notions of causation. The Advaita theory of kamma does appear to have been influenced by Buddhism, but Clooney’s argument concerning the problem of divine versus human causation is nevertheless relevant.
11. Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta, op.cit. ii p.249.
12. Rhys Davids, as cited in Gombrich 1996:17.
13. Throughout the Pali Canon discourses, the Buddha is often found in conversation with followers of the tradition of the Vedas. A prominent feature of these conversations is the Buddha’s use of this dialectical method on issues of Vedic philosophy. See for example, The Long Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya, trans. Maurice Walshe, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 1995: Kūṭadanta Sutta (no 5), Tevijja Sutta (no 13), Sigālaka Sutta (no 31).
14. A broadening out of the range of activity to be included under the notion of kamma was also being brought out in the early Upaniṣads.
15. Jayatilleke 1963:462.
16. Payutto 1993:57–8.

17. Jayatilleke 1963:172 and 180.
18. Anguttara Nikāya 6.6.63.
19. Sangharakshita, A Survey of Buddhism, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham, 2001, p.168.
20. Cūḷakammavibhaṅga op.cit, p.251.
21. ibid., pp.249–50.
22. Sathapata Brāhmaṇa as cited in Tull 1993:114.
23. Gethin 1997, 195.
24. Gombrich 1996:89–90.
- 25 . See Derrida The White Mythology 1982:207–72.
26. Olivelle intro. to Upaniṣads 1996:xli. Although pervading the Brāhmaṇas Tull notes a discomfort evident in some Vedic literature on the focus on hiṃsa. Tull 1989:110.
27. Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta, op.cit., pp.249–50.
28. Ṛg Veda op.cit., 10.18.2–6 also see 10.14.14: also 52 and 44.
29. Sathapata Brāhmaṇa as cited in Tull 1993:73.
30. Mahākammavibhaṅga can be translated as ‘great analysis of kamma’. Cūḷakammavibhaṅga can be translated as ‘lesser analysis of kamma’.
31. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli 1993 and Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995 both suggest that only the final few paragraphs of the sutta mark the ‘great analysis of kamma’.
32. Rhys Davids and Stede (eds.) 1921:141.
33. Matilal 1986:70. Matilal was commenting on Indian systems of thought circa. 100 to 1400 CE, but these were systems of thought which developed out of the ancient Indian traditions so, if anything, what he says is more rather than less relevant to the earlier texts.
34. Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta, op.cit. p. 255.
35. ‘Sañcetanikaṃ āvuso Potaliputta kammaṃ katvā kāyena vācāya manasā dukkhaṃ so vediyatīti.’ Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta, ii 207
36. Jayatilleke 1963:285.
37. Rhys Davids and Stede (eds.) 1921:159–160.
38. Mahākammavibhaṅga, op.cit. p.255.
39. Saṃyutta Nikāya 36:11 iv.216 as cited in Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995:1340, note.
40. Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta op.cit, p.255.
41. ibid., p.256.
42. ibid., p.256.

43. See for example *Dīgha Nikāya* i 52, 55 and 58.
44. *Mahākammavibhaṅga* op.cit. p. 257.
45. Flood 1996:75ff. The majority of the ‘powers’ which Patañjali mentions are equivalent to those resulting from the practice on the Buddhist path, and are relevant to the discussion of kamma. These include: knowledge of the past and the future, knowledge of past lives, and foreknowledge of one’s own death.
46. *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya* op.cit. p.107.
47. In the *Sappurisa Sutta* the Buddha distinguishes between the qualities of a good man and a bad man: ‘...a bad man, by allaying initial thought and discursive thought, with the mind subjectively tranquillised and fixed on one point, enters on and abides in the second meditation which is devoid of initial thought and discursive thought, is born of concentration and is rapturous and joyful ... enters on and abides in the third meditation ... the fourth meditation ... He exalts himself for that attainment of the fourth meditation, disparaging others. ... But a good man reflects thus ... (He) neither exalts himself on account of that attainment of the fourth meditation nor disparages others.’ *Sappurisasutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, op.cit., pp.92–3.
48. *Cūḷasaccaka Sutta* op.cit. i, 227–37 and *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, op.cit. i, 256–71, (pp.280–90 and pp.311–24).
49. *Sandaka Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya*. op.cit., i, pp.192–202.
50. *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya* op.cit. pp.203–19.
51. *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya*, op.cit. p.107.
52. The Buddha’s threefold way, *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*: ethics, meditation and wisdom, is a fundamental Buddhist doctrine which has been abstracted from the Pali Canon and taught as a schema of Buddhist practice. The idea behind the threefold way is that there is a causal relationship between *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. According to Buddhist metaphysics ‘wisdom becomes brighter with conduct’ due to this causal relationship. (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* op.cit., 1.102). Also, according to Buddhist scriptures, this wisdom contains within it religious insights by which the process of kamma is revealed.
53. Jayatilleke 1963:420.
54. *Samyutta Nikāya* i191 as cited in Jayatilleke 1963:438.
55. Jayatilleke 1963:463.
56. *Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta*, op.cit. p.259.
57. *Ibid*, 258.

58. *ibid*, 259–60.

59. Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, Wisdom Publications, Boston 1993. ii 214-5,

60. Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta Majjhima Nikāya ii, 215, trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995:1065.

61. Visuddhimagga, *The Path of Purification*, trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, 1991, p.553.