

The Great Exposition of Action (Majjhima Nikāya no. 136)

I. *The four situations*

1. One person violates the moral principles.

This person is reborn in a bad destination. (the expected result)

2. One person violate the moral principles.

This person is reborn in a good destination. (contrary to expectation)

3. One person observes moral principles.

This person is reborn in a good destination. (the expected result)

4. One person observes moral principles.

This person is reborn in a bad destination. (contrary to expectation)

II. *The Inferences of Outside Ascetics and Brahmins*

1. An ascetic or brahmin with the divine eye sees Situation 1 and concludes: “(i) There is evil kamma, there is result of evil conduct. (ii) For I saw one who transgresses moral principles reborn in a bad destination. (iii) All who violate moral principles are reborn in hell. (iv) This alone is the right view.” (v) He obstinately adheres to his conclusion.

2. An ascetic or brahmin with the divine eye sees Situation 2 and concludes: “(i) There is no evil kamma, there is no result of evil conduct. (ii) For I saw one who transgresses moral principles reborn in a good destination. (iii) All who violate moral principles are reborn in a good destination. (iv) This alone is the right view.” (v) He obstinately adheres to his conclusion.

3. An ascetic or brahmin with the divine eye sees Situation 3 and concludes: “(i) There is good kamma, there is result of good conduct. (ii) For I saw one who observed moral principles reborn in a good destination. (iii) All who observe moral principles are reborn in a good destination. (iv) This alone is the right view.” (v) He obstinately adheres to his conclusion.

4. An ascetic or brahmin with the divine eye sees Situation 4 and concludes: “(i) There is no good kamma, there is no result of good conduct. (ii) For I saw one who observed moral principles reborn in a bad destination. (iii) All who observe moral principles are reborn in a bad destination. (iv) This alone is the right view.” (v) He obstinately adheres to his conclusion.

III. *The Buddha’s Assessment of these Four Inferences*

1. (i) He *agrees* that there is evil kamma and result of misconduct. (ii) He *agrees* the ascetic saw the situation he described. (iii) He *denies* the conclusion: “All who violate moral principles are reborn in a bad destination.” (iv) He *denies* that this is right view. (v) He *rejects* adhering to this and insisting it is invariably true.

2. (i) He *disagrees* that there is no evil kamma and no result of misconduct. (ii) He *agrees* the ascetic saw the situation he described. (iii) He *denies* the conclusion: “All who violate moral principles are reborn in a good destination.” (iv) He *denies* that this is right view. (v) He *rejects* adhering to this and insisting it is invariably true.

3. (i) He *agrees* that there is good kamma and result of good conduct. (ii) He *agrees* the ascetic saw the situation he described. (iii) He *denies* the conclusion: “All who observe moral principles are reborn in a good destination.” (iv) He *denies* that this is right view. (v) He *rejects* adhering to this and insisting it is invariably true.

4. (i) He *disagrees* that there is no good kamma and no result of good conduct. (ii) He *agrees* the ascetic saw the situation he described. (iii) He *denies* the conclusion: “All who observe moral principles are reborn in a bad destination.” (iv) He *denies* that this is right view. (v) He *rejects* adhering to this and insisting it is invariably true.

IV. *The Tathāgata’s Great Exposition of Kamma*

1. One violates moral principles and is reborn in a bad destination: [one may have been reborn in the bad destination because of one’s moral transgression], or one might have been reborn in the bad destination because of an earlier bad deed, or a later bad deed, or because one adopts a wrong view at the time of death. But the moral transgression will ripen and produce suffering either in this very life, or in the next existence, or in some subsequent existence.

2. One violates moral principles and is reborn in a good destination: one might have been reborn in the bad destination because of an earlier good deed [prior to the bad deeds], or a later good deed, or because one adopts a right view at the time of death. But the moral transgression will ripen and produce suffering either in this very life, or in the next existence, or in some subsequent existence.

3. One observes moral principles and is reborn in a good destination: [one may have been reborn in the good destination because of one’s good conduct], or one might have been reborn in the good destination because of an earlier good deed, or a later good deed, or because one adopts a right view at the time of death. But the good conduct will ripen and produce happiness either in this very life, or in the next existence, or in some subsequent existence.

4. One observes moral principles and is reborn in a bad destination: one might have been reborn in the bad destination because of an earlier bad deed [prior to the good deed], or a later bad deed, or because one adopts a wrong view at the time of death. But the good conduct will ripen and produce happiness either in this very life, or in the next existence, or in some subsequent existence.

V. *The Four Kinds of Kamma*

1. *Kamma that is incapable and appears incapable*: (i) bad kamma is incapable of producing a good rebirth, and it appears incapable of producing a good rebirth (the case when the

evil-doer is seen to be reborn in a bad destination); (ii) good kamma is incapable of producing a bad rebirth, and it appears incapable of producing a bad rebirth (the case when the doer of good is seen to be reborn in a good destination).

2. *Kamma that is incapable and appears capable*: (i) bad kamma is incapable of producing a good rebirth, yet when a good kamma overtakes it, the bad kamma appears capable of producing a good rebirth (the case when the evil-doer is seen to be reborn in a good destination); (ii) good kamma is incapable of producing a bad rebirth, yet when a bad kamma overtakes it, the good kamma appears capable of producing a bad rebirth (the case when the doer of good is seen to be reborn in a bad destination).

3. *Kamma that is capable and appears capable*: (i) bad kamma is capable of producing a bad rebirth, and it appears capable of producing a bad rebirth (this is the case when the evil-doer is seen to be reborn in a bad destination); (ii) good kamma is capable of producing a good rebirth, and it appears capable of producing a good rebirth (this is the case when the doer of good is seen to be reborn in a good destination).

4. *Kamma that is capable and appears incapable*: (i) bad kamma is capable of producing a bad rebirth, but when it is overtaken by a good kamma, it appears incapable of producing a bad rebirth (the case when the evil-doer is seen to be reborn in a good destination); (ii) good kamma is capable of producing a good rebirth, but when it is overtaken by a bad kamma, it appears incapable of producing a good rebirth (the case when the doer of good is seen to be reborn in a bad destination).