

You get served what you deserve

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Introduction

“Cetana haṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadami Cetayitva kammaṃ karoti, kayena, vacaya, manasa” “It is intention that I call kamma, by intention one performs kamma through body, word or mind.”

“Ubi Societas, ibi jus, where there is a community, there is law.” In Aristotle's Politics suggests that any community, regardless of size, generates its own individual system of law. When people gather and form a community, there will definitely be rules and mutual agreements between them which are known as laws. In Buddhism we also have the rules that the Buddha showed us to practice, sila for laypeople and patimokkha for monks. These training rules are mostly found in the Vinaya Sutta.

Humans are social creatures

Humans are social creatures; humans always establish relationships between one another. In establishing social relations, it is necessary to have a mutual agreement that regulates what is allowed and what is prohibited. That mutual agreement is called law. Since the Stone Age, these rules have existed in primitive human groups. The rules simply regulate who is in charge of being a tribal chief, who is in charge of hunting, who is in charge of gather herb or fruit, what the group should do if someone is sick, disaster, and so on. The more advanced and complex the social group, the more complex the rules needed. Until the historical era when humans began to inscribe writing, these rules developed into written law. Relics of the rule of law found by archaeologists such as Ma'at in ancient Egypt in 3000 BC, the code of Ur-Namu in Sumeria in 2200 BC, Babylonian law by King Hammurabi in 1760 BC, while for Thailand itself the history of the written legal system can be found around the 13th century in the Sukhothai era, one of which is an inscription built by King Ramkhamhaeng.

In modern social life as it is today, the rule of law is the basis that regulates the behavior of society in the life of the nation and state. The system of rules which a particular country or community recognizes as regulating the actions of its members and which it may enforce by the imposition of penalties. Every country has its own rule of law that must be

respected by other countries. Within a country, each region may also have its own rule of law known as regional regulations which may differ from one region to another even though they are still within the same country. This rule of law is also dynamic, changing from one era to another.

In addition to the laws of a country, there are also laws in religious life. Religious law is explicitly based on religious precepts. Examples include the Jewish Halakha and Islamic Sharia-both of which translate as the “path to follow”. Christian canon law also survives in some church communities. Meanwhile, in the view of Buddhism itself there is no Buddhist text that explicitly lays out laws pertaining to followers of the religion. We are more familiar with the concept of *sīla* for upasaka or upasika and patimokha for monks. The concept of *sīla* is often translated as 'morality', it can refer to virtues. Buddhism emphasizes more on the way of conduct. How to behave well that brings benefits to a person and avoid bad behavior that brings bad consequences in the future.

The rule of law in one country may differ from the rule of law in another country, as well as the rules of one religion may differ from the rules of another religion. For example, in the case of lottery sales rules, in Thailand, the official lottery can be traded as long as it is in accordance with the provisions of the applicable laws, but in Indonesia lotteries are illegal to be traded. The same goes for religious rules, for example in terms of food, certain meats can be consumed by their followers but in other religions the meat is forbidden to consume.

Buddhism teaches about the law of kamma or karma in Sanskrit, is the law of moral causation. All of our volitional thoughts, words, and deeds create an energy that brings about effects and that process is called karma. The important point here is that Karma Niyama is a kind of natural law like gravity that operates without having to be directed by a divine intelligence. In Buddhism, karma is not a cosmic criminal justice system, and no supernatural force or God is directing it to reward the good and punish the wicked. Karma is, rather, a natural tendency for good (*kusala*) actions to create beneficial effects, and bad (*akusala*) actions to create harmful or painful effects.

Just as the law penalizes those who are found guilty of violating it, so too does the law of karma bear the fruit of consequences for the perpetrators. If we look at the condition of this world, we will see that there are billions of people with billions of different conditions. Some are born physically and mentally healthy, some are born with physical and mental disabilities. Some are born into wealthy families, while others are born into poor and deprived families. Some are born in harmonious families; some are born in broken home

families. Some are born with talent and intelligence; some have difficulty reading. Some are born beautiful, some are ugly. Some are healthy and long-lived; some are sickly and short-lived. Some baby has parents that provided all the equipment, such as clothes, milk, toy, bed, room, and so on. But there are also babies who have parents that provided cardboard and plastic bags, that poor unwanted baby is put in the box and thrown away. Why does this happen to a newborn baby who has not done anything in this life? Buddhism answers this phenomenon with the concept of the law of karma.

Some people might ask, in the case of a newborn baby, it hasn't done anything in this life, why should it have to bear its karma? The previous birth was another being, not the baby, the baby doesn't remember anything, doesn't know anything, why should the baby suffer for the actions of another being? The baby doesn't deserve it. To answer this question with an analogy, there was once a man, who going to come home from a night bar, he had drunk quite a lot of alcohol and he had also taken drugs, he was so intoxicated, he didn't know what he was doing. He drove home in a car and got into a terrible accident that caused the death of another person, he himself was unconscious for several weeks. A few weeks later when he woke up in the hospital, he was visited by the police to question him about the accident on that fateful night. Due to the impact of the accident and drugs, this person had amnesia and had no recollection of the incident. When the police asked him about the incident, he had no recollection of it at all. The question is, will this person be free from the consequences of his actions? If enough evidence is found, such as the testimony of witnesses, friends, night bar guards, pedestrians, as well as other evidence such as CCTV footage in the car, on the highway, blood tests during the accident that prove alcohol and drug content, and other supporting evidence, the police will carry out the detention process and will be brought to court for his actions that caused the death of another person. No matter if he remembers or not, he will still receive the consequences. Such is the analogy of bad karma that will follow even if one does not remember of his actions.

The same thing happens with good karma, a baby may be born with all the privileges. A baby born to a wealthy family will have a lot of wealth from the moment it is born, while there are people out there who work hard all their lives until they die who may not have the same wealth as this newborn baby. To answer this question with an analogy, once upon a time there was a little boy who was given a piggy bank by his parents. This little boy was very happy, since then when he got pocket money from his parents, he did not spend all of

it, and he put the rest in the piggy bank. He put coins and notes from his allowance. After a long time, the piggy bank was finally full and he opened it. The question is whether the money that belongs to him only the money that he remembers putting in? Of course not, all the money in the child's piggy bank belongs to him, regardless of whether he remembers when he put it in, how much he put into it. The child may no longer remember specifically on what date he put in that money, but the piggy bank still belongs to him, and the money in it belongs to him.

The same question was asked by Brahmin Subha, Todeyya's son. Once upon a time he went to the Blessed one and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and amiable talk was finished, he sat down at one side and asked the Blessed One: “Master Gotama, what is the cause and condition why human beings are seen to be inferior and superior? For people are seen to be short-lived and long-lived, sickly and healthy, ugly and beautiful, uninfluential and influential, poor and wealthy, low born and high born, stupid and wise. What is the cause and condition, Master Gotama, why human beings are seen to be inferior and superior?” Then Buddha answered: “Brahmin, beings are owners of their actions (karma), heirs of their actions, they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior.”

A Roman philosopher, Marcus Tullius Cicero in his book “De Oratore” (55 BC) wrote “Ut sementem feceris, Ita Metes meaning you will reap what you sow” reminding people of the consequences of their respective actions. Every bad action will bring consequences to the perpetrator, whether directly from legal sanctions or from community sanctions. Like the recent incident where a public figure spoke harshly to a beverage vendor. Although there is no legal sanction, he is still inseparable from social sanctions, where many people criticize him so that he is finally forced to resign from his position.

What Cicero wrote had also been said by the Buddha five hundred years earlier. In the Isayo Samuddaka Sutta which tells about the feud between Ashura and the gods, where there is a hermit who lives by the sea. Seeing the feud, the hermit who was worried about his safety and his residence went to Sambara, the leader of the Ashura group to ask for protection. However, Sambara destroyed the hermit's dwelling until finally the hermit cursed him with the following verse.

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| Yādisaṃ vapate bājāṃ | whatever seed that is sown |
| tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ | that is the fruit reaped therefrom |

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| kalyàõa kàrà kalyàõaÿ | good comes to the good doer |
| papa kàrà ca pàpakaÿ | bad comes to the bad doer |
| pavuttaÿ tàta te bājaÿ | by you, the seed is sown |
| phalaÿ paccanubhossasiti | so the fruit you will taste |

The difference between the rule of law and the law of karma

1. Territory where the law applies. the rule of law is only binding in certain agreed countries or regions, while the law of karma applies everywhere on earth without any boundaries.

2. The period of time in which the law is valid, the rule of law is only valid for a certain period of time according to the needs of the community at that time. When the law is no longer in accordance with the times, the rule of law will change, either revoked or revised. While the law of karma applies throughout the ages, it will not change.

3. Time limitation, in the rule of law there is usually a time limit within which an offense can be prosecuted or not. After passing a certain period of time, the offense can no longer be prosecuted. While the law of karma applies forever without any expiration period until the fruit of karma ripens and bear's fruit.

4. Law enforcement, in law enforcement relies on a series of procedures from many parties, starting from investigation, arrest, prosecution, and court. All of these processes are inseparable from the subjectivity of the officers. Although ideally the law is enforced objectively, in practice there is a possibility of subjective elements from the officers. While karma has no subjectivity at all, it will be applied as fairly as possible without discrimination. There are cases around the world where innocent people are arrested and sentenced while guilty people are not. Not with the law of karma, it will never get it wrong, the perpetrator will receive back according to what he did.

5. Prosecution will end if the convicted person dies. In the case when a criminal offender dies, then all prosecutions against him will be abolished. But this is not the case with law of karma, even if the creature has died, the unfruitful karma will still follow until the next life.

Similarities between the rule of law and the law of karma

1. The rule of law and the law of karma are both instruments to remind people to control their actions in accordance with the applicable rules that bring security to the

community. Without rules, everyone will act as they please, ultimately bringing great harm to the community.

2. The rule of law and the law of karma both emphasize intent in determining the severity of punishment for an action. In criminal law it is known as “mens rea” (evil intent) and in the law of karma it is known as “cetana.” For example, in a case that causes the death of someone, it will be examined whether the perpetrator murder with premeditation, murder spontaneously, murder in self-defense, murder due to negligence, murder due to be forced, or murder because he is carrying out his duties. Even though the same thing causes the death of another person, if the intention is different therefore the weight of the punishment is different.

3. The rule of law and the law of karma both apply to everyone regardless of whether someone knows it or not, believes it or not. In the rule of law, there is also the principle of presumption, where everyone is considered to know the applicable laws. There is also the principle of ignorant, which means ignorance of the law excuses not. Similarly with the law of karma, it does not matter whether a person knows about the law of karma or not, believes in it or not, every action will definitely produce its own karma.

4. The rule of law and the law of karma both have rules that apply to certain groups only. For example, there is a rule that a state official is not allowed to accept gifts allegedly because of his position, but this rule does not apply to civilians. Similarly, in the law of karma, there are different training rules for devotees, novices, monks, or nuns.

5. The rule of law and the law of karma both apply to the doer only. As Buddha said, “sabbe satta kammassaka”, all beings have their own karma, accompanied by their own volitional actions. Only the mental, verbal, and physical volitional actions of beings always accompany them in this as well as in future existences. This explains that each person is responsible for his own actions, he reaps the fruits of his own actions, he cannot be punished for the actions of others. Even if he experiences unpleasant conditions due to the actions of others, in the concept of kamma, it is merely the result of his own actions in the past. You get served what you deserve.

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