AN 3.100 — Loṇakapalla Sutta (A Salt Crystal)

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Text

99. Loṇakapalla Sutta (A Salt Crystal) “Bhikkhus, when you hear the following statement being made:

‘In whatever way a person commits an action, in accordance to that, he will experience its results.’

“You must consider, Bhikkhus, that if this was truly the case, then there would not be any possibility to live the Holy Life, since there is no apparent method to end all suffering.

“However, Bhikkhus, if on the other hand, a person says:

‘With whatever intentions a man commits an action, in accordance to that, he will experience its results.’

“Then, Bhikkhus, it becomes possible to live the Holy Life, for it would mean that there surely is a clear method, a well-defined Path to end all suffering.

“Bhikkhus, take for example, a certain individual who commits a trifling wrong or evil action, which would then pull him to a rebirth in hell.

“Meanwhile, Bhikkhus, another person committing a trifling wrong or evil action of the same nature and magnitude, however, would hardly experience any negative consequences or terrible effects as its result, within this very life, let alone face any significant consequences in future lives.

“Now, what kind of a person, Bhikkhus, on committing a trifling wrong or evil action, would end up being pulled into hell, as a consequence of it?

“This, Bhikkhus, would be someone who does not live with virtue, being thus non-virtuous in his behavior, uncontrolled and unrestrained in his bodily actions, in his mental activities, and therefore one who lacks wisdom. Thus, being unrestrained and empty of any true consideration either for oneself or others, remaining mean-hearted and without any virtue in his heart, he is one who lacks integrity, hence constantly abides in suffering already,

even while still alive in this body.

“It is such a person, Bhikkhus, who on committing a trifling evil or wrong action, would get pulled into a rebirth in hell, as a consequence.

“And what kind of a person, Bhikkhus, after committing a trifling evil or wrong action of the same nature and magnitude, however, would hardly experience any negative consequences or terrible effects as its result within this very life, let alone face any significant consequences in future lives?

“This, Bhikkhus, would be someone who lives with virtuous behavior, who is controlled in his bodily actions, in his mental activities, and possesses wisdom. Being thus restrained, considerate towards oneself and others, and with an immeasurable character, he is one who constantly abides in happiness.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, by committing a trifling evil or wrong action of the same nature, such a person would hardly experience any negative effects in this very life, let alone face any significant consequences because of it, in the future.

“Bhikkhus, suppose a man would put a large piece of salt crystal into a small cup of water. Now, would that cup of water become saturated with the salt crystal and its saltiness, rendering it undrinkable?

“Yes, Bhante,” those Bhikkhus replied.

“And what is the reason?”

“It is because, Bhante, the little water that is in the cup would be completely saturated with the salt crystal that dissolved in it.”

“And what if, Bhikkhus, a man was to put that same piece of salt crystal into the River Ganges. Would the water in the River Ganges be similarly saturated with the salt crystal, rendering it undrinkable?”

“No, Bhante!”

“And why is that the case?”

“It is because, Bhante, due to its size and the great mass of water it contains, the River Ganges would not be saturated at all with that salt crystal, and therefore not be rendered undrinkable.”

“In the same manner, Bhikkhus, a certain individual who commits a trifling wrong or evil action, would be pulled to a rebirth in hell.

“Meanwhile, Bhikkhus, another person committing a trifling wrong or evil action of the same nature and magnitude, however, would hardly experience any negative

consequences or terrible effects as its result within this very life, let alone face any significant consequences in future lives.

“Here Bhikkhus, what kind of a person, on committing a trifling wrong or evil action, would end up being pulled into hell, as a consequence of it?

“This, Bhikkhus, would be someone who does not live with virtue, being non-virtuous in his behavior, uncontrolled and unrestrained in his bodily actions, in his mental activities, and therefore one who lacks wisdom. Thus, being unrestrained and empty of any true consideration either for oneself or others, remaining mean-hearted and without any virtue in his heart, he is one who lacks integrity, hence constantly abides in suffering already, even while still alive in this body.

“It is such a person, Bhikkhus, who on committing a trifling evil or wrong action, would get pulled into a rebirth in hell, as a consequence.

“And what kind of a person, Bhikkhus, after committing a trifling evil or wrong action of the same nature and magnitude, however, would hardly experience any negative consequences or terrible effects as its result within this very life, let alone face any significant consequences in future lives?

“This, Bhikkhus, would be someone who lives with virtuous behavior, who is controlled in his bodily actions, in his mental activities, and possesses wisdom. Being thus restrained, considerate towards oneself and others, and with an immeasurable character, he is one who constantly abides in happiness.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, by committing a trifling evil or wrong action of the same nature, such a person would hardly experience any negative effects in this very life, let alone face any significant consequences because of it, in the future.

“Suppose, Bhikkhus that a certain person would go to jail for stealing half a coin, a single coin, or even a hundred coins. Meanwhile, Bhikkhus, someone else would not go to jail for stealing half a coin, a coin, or even a hundred coins.

“And what kind of a person, Bhikkhus, would go to jail for stealing half a coin, a coin, or a hundred coins?

“Here, Bhikkhus, a certain person is poor, clumsy, unimaginative, and unable to do anything with little resources: this kind of person would go to jail for stealing half a coin, a coin, or a hundred coins.

“And what kind of a person, Bhikkhus, would not go to jail for stealing half a coin, a coin, or even a hundred coins?

“Here, Bhikkhus, a certain person is wealthy, smart, and very resourceful: this kind of a person would not go to jail for stealing half a coin, a coin, or even a hundred coins.

“In the same manner, Bhikkhus, a certain individual who commits a trifling wrong or evil action, would then be pulled to a rebirth into hell.

“Meanwhile, Bhikkhus, another person committing a trifling wrong or evil action of the same nature and magnitude, however, would hardly experience any negative consequences or terrible effects as its result within this very life, let alone face any significant consequences in future lives.

“Here, Bhikkhus, what kind of a person, on committing a trifling wrong or evil action, would end up being pulled into hell, as a consequence of it?

“This, Bhikkhus, would be someone who does not live with virtue, being non-virtuous in his behavior, uncontrolled and unrestrained in his bodily actions, in his mental activities, and therefore one who lacks wisdom. Thus, being unrestrained and empty of any true consideration either for oneself or others, remaining mean-hearted and without any virtue in his heart, he is one who lacks integrity, hence constantly abides in suffering already, even while still alive in this body.

“It is such a person then, Bhikkhus, who on committing a trifling evil or wrong action, would get pulled into a rebirth in hell, as a consequence.

“And what kind of a person, Bhikkhus, after committing a trifling evil or wrong action of the same nature and magnitude, however, would hardly experience any negative consequences or terrible effects as its result within this very life, let alone face any significant consequences in future lives?

“This again, Bhikkhus, would be someone who lives with virtuous behavior, who is controlled in his bodily actions, in his mental activities, and possesses wisdom. Being thus restrained, considerate towards oneself and others, and with an immeasurable character, he is one who constantly abides in happiness.

“It is for this reason, Bhikkhus, that by committing a trifling evil action of the same nature, such a person would hardly experience any negative effects in this very life, let alone face any significant consequences because of it, in the future.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, when you hear the following statement being made:

‘In whatever way a person commits an action, in accordance to that, he will experience its results.’

“You must consider, Bhikkhus, that if this was truly the case, then there would not be any possibility to live the Holy Life, since there is no apparent method to end all suffering.

“However, Bhikkhus, if on the other hand, a person says:

‘With whatever intentions a man commits an action, in accordance to that, he will experience its results.’

“Then, Bhikkhus, it becomes possible to live the Holy Life, for it would mean that there surely is a clear method, a well-defined Path to end all suffering.