

## Past good

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“Having done good karma in the past” (*pubbe ca kata, puññatā*) is of the supreme blessings mentioned in **the Maṅgala Sutta** (Sn 2.4 = Khp 5). This phrase is grammatically a redundancy, since any karma is, in practical terms, “a past deed.” The idea here is clearly that of emphasis: the understanding that a karmic act (not all acts are karmic or intentional)—good or bad—is more than itself.

One good deed does not deserve another (this is self-limiting): a good deed often attracts even more good fruits; so, too, bad karma. Karma or intentional action, then, is a dynamic process of potentials and possibilities. For this reason alone, it is clear why doing good is definitely better than doing any bad at all.

## Bad

In early Buddhist teachings in morality, “bad” is an action—a thought, or such a thought expressed through speech or through deed—rooted and moved by greed (lust), hate or delusion. It should be noted that there is always some tinge of delusion in either greed or hate. Only the arhat has no delusion at all.

We feel “bad” doing bad—and rightly so we should—because it is not natural to do bad. It is against our nature to hurt or harm life (which is the most precious thing we have). It is not natural to be lazy (not to labour for our needs) and unjustly take what others have laboured for. It is not natural to deprive other of freedom—of the space for their person, of which sexual violence is the most brutal violation. It is not natural to live by lying because truth is the very basis of the value of life would then be questionable and undermined. It is most natural that we should keep our mind unclouded and bright since it is the source of all this wisdom that makes us human and gives us the potential to attain, even transcend, the divine—as shown by the Buddha.

## Good

Good is natural simply because we feel “good” doing it and feeling it. Doing good starts with avoiding the 5 basic kinds of bad just mentioned. Feeling good means to taste the truth and beauty of life. TRUTH is what is “beautifully true,” life and what supports life are of the greatest value to us: this is the spirit that guides all our good actions, and defines bad so that we abstain from bad.

BEAUTY is “truly beautiful” since it gives us vision and vitality: we can see what we really are, and understand what this truly can do for us. We are able to be human, cultivate divinity or godliness; even transcend the limits and limitations of our physical sense and mind—just as the Buddha has done.

## **Joy**

A simple way to reflect on these abstract but vital understanding of bad and good, truth and beauty, is to reflect on the good we have done in our life. Bad is only worth our memory so that we do not repeat them—as a lesson and warning signs. Good is worth recalling for the joy and energy that it imbues us with to do even greater things: to be more than what the I, me and mine limit; by selfless acts and joyful lives.

Even as I write this, I look back over 16 years of living with the suttas, researching, studying, translating and commenting on them almost daily. It seems the natural thing to do because it is a vision of truth and beauty. That is all there is really worth knowing, and all that we need to know—it brings us joy and wisdom.

## **No stopping good**

I can stop translating and writing commentaries on the suttas any time now, and still rest on my laurels of over 60 Sutta Discovery volumes and over 10,000 large pages. But these are not commercial translations—they are the records of my love affair with spirituality. It is a record of my personal cultivation and spiritual growth. Just to do it inspires me with truth and beauty. It is the most natural thing to do—just like breathing healthily the fresh air in the free space just outside of nirvana.

It is a joy of truth and beauty that you, too, can enjoy by joining me in this sutta journey. The journey starts right now and your life is better changed forever. Past good starts now

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