

1-10

Kamma, kāraṇa Vagga

The Torture Chapter | A 2.1-2.10 = A 2.1.1.1-2.1.1.10

Theme: The significance of spiritual effort

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0 Teaching contexts

0.1 LOCATION OF THE SUTTAS

0.1.1 The Torture Chapter

0.1.1.1 The Kamma, kāraṇa Vagga, “the torture chapter,” comprises 10 suttas dealing with a wide range of topics related to *kamma* as volitional acts and their results [A 2.1-2.9], and as a ritual act [A 2.10]. It is located in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Numerical Collection, of the Tipiṭaka, as the opening section of its **Duka Nipāta**,¹ the Book of Twos (A 2).

0.1.1.2 The Chapter’s name—*kamma, kāraṇa vagga*—comes from its very first sutta, **the (Duka) Vajja Sutta** (A 2.1), the (Twos) Discourse on Faults [SD 51.1]. Sometimes, the Chapter is called **Vassūpanāyika Vagga**, the Chapter on the Rains-entry, after its very last sutta, **the (Duka) Vassūpanāyika Sutta**, the (Twos) Discourse on the Rains-entry [SD 51.10].

0.1.1.3 The Duka Nipāta (A 2) has a total of 4 sections: the first three are called “fifties” (*pañṇāsaka*), but the 4th and last is called *Peyyāla* (recursive cycles). The Kamma, kāraṇa Vagga is the 1st section of the 1st fifty (**Paṭhama Paṇṇāsaka**), but it has a total of 51 suttas.

Presumably, there are 50 suttas in each of the first 3 “fifties.” But the last sutta of the 3rd fifty is numbered 178, when it should be 150. We must conclude, then, that the numbering is only approximate, or that new titles were added until the Tipiṭaka was closed.

0.1.1.4 The Duka Nipāta’s 4th section is differently arranged and called *peyyāla*, as we have noted. This section comprises cycles of teachings highlighting individual aspects of a quality or teaching-set. For example, its first section (A 2.179-228)—**the Kodha Peyyāla**, the anger cycle—deals with various aspects of anger and related qualities.

Each sutta is often only a few lines long. This suggests some effort to give all the possible combinations of qualities in recursive cycles. Hence, this 4th section ends with A 2.748—meaning that it has over 560 suttas. This section clearly shows a later arrangement of the suttas before the Tipiṭaka was closed.

0.1.2 The Kamma, kāraṇa Vagga contents

0.1.2.1 The sutta numbering often perplexes and frustrates one who is new or unfamiliar with the Pali suttas. Historically, the oldest sutta-numbering—from which we get the **sutta reference**—is by the editors of the Pali Text Society (PTS), founded in 1881 in London, the United Kingdom. Its Aṅguttara Nikāya manuscript (Aṅguttara part 1—*eka, nipāta, duka, nipāta* and *tika, nipāta*)² was edited in 1885 by a

¹ *Nipāta*, lit “falling down (together),” here, meaning, a collection forming a section of a volume.

² Respectively, “the book of ones (monads),” “the book of twos (duads)” and “the book of threes (triads).”

certain Rev Richard Morris (ex-president of the Philological Society), an English philologist and Church of England priest.³

The Kamma,kāraṇa Vagga is found in this book, and we give preference to the PTS numbering (mainly for historical reasons), which is here given as **A 2.1.1-2.1.10**. Hence, “A 2.1.1” means “Aṅguttara Nikāya, Book of Twos, Chapter 1, Sutta 1,” and so on. Here, we follow a simpler sutta reference numbering as **A 2.1-2.10**, meaning, “Aṅguttara, Book of Twos, Suttas 1-10.” The last Sutta of the Book will thus be referred to A 1.247. Other ways of sutta numberings are given alongside the standard citation, in **bold**, given in the opening signature [0.1.2.2].

0.1.2.2 However, for convenience, a fuller sutta numbering is also given in the opening **signature**, that is, the few lines at the top right-hand corner at the start of each translation or essay, or at the start of an embedded sutta translation. The “signature”—more specifically, sutta signature or essay signature, as appropriate—contains the following: the full title; the sutta title translation and citation, or a sub-title (for an essay); the theme; and, often, the copyright date (which also denotes the completion of the work).

0.1.2.3 The contents of the Kamma,kāraṇa Vagga are as follows:

A 2.1.1 Kamma,karana Vagga

A 2.1.1.1	(A 2.1/2:47-49)	(Duka) Vajja Sutta	SD 51.1
A 2.1.1.2	(A 2.2/2:49)	(Duka) Padhāna Sutta	SD 51.2
A 2.1.1.3	(A 2.3/2:49)	(Duka) Tapanīya Sutta	SD 51.3a
[It 2.1.3	(It 30/24 f)	(Iti) Tapanīya Sutta]*	SD 51.3b
A 2.1.1.4	(A 2.4/2:49 f)	(Duka) Atapanīya Sutta	SD 51.4a
[It 2.1.4	(It 31/25 f)	(Iti) Atapanīya Sutta]*	SD 51.4b
A 2.1.1.5	(A 2.5/2:50)	(Duka) Upaññāta Sutta	SD 51.5
A 2.1.1.6	(A 2.6/2:50 f)	(Duka) Saṃyojana Sutta	SD 51.6
A 2.1.1.7	(A 2.7/2:51)	(Duka) Kaṇha Sutta	[SD 2.5(2a)]
A 2.1.1.8	(A 2.8/2:51)	(Duka) Sukka Sutta	[SD 2.5(2b)]
A 2.1.1.9	(A 2.9/2:51)	(Duka) Cariya Sutta = Hiri Ottappa Sutta	[SD 2.5(2c)]
A 2.1.1.10	(A 2.10/2:51)	(Duka) Vassūpanāyika Sutta	SD 51.10

[* Not part of the Kamma,kāraṇa Vagga.]

0.2 The sutta and their themes

0.2.1 KARMA. All the 10 suttas of the Kamma,kāraṇa Vagga (A 2.1-2.10) centre on the topic of karma (*kamma*), especially as volitional action, that is, deliberate acts through speech, body and mind. Only the last sutta takes karma in the sense of a ritual, that is, a monastic formal act (*kamma*). The suttas of the Vagga also clearly suggest some kind of pairing up, so that we have 5 pairs of suttas, except for **A 2.7-**

³ The curious intrusion of a non-Buddhist working on sacred Buddhist texts needs to be understood in its historical and sociological perspectives. Sri Lanka, from which most of the MSS of the early Buddhist texts were found, was part of the British empire (1802-1948). The British powers made use of various means to understand and subdue the natives in their countries, even introducing the discipline of anthropology (to learn how natives lived and behaved) for more effective domestication of them to British colonial rule. The editing, translating and teaching of “Buddhism” was often less a magnanimous interest in an exotic religion than as the presence of an imperial hand in the shaping of the native culture under the glorious British sun which never set (until now) over its empire.

2.9, which seem to form a triad, which then makes **A 2.10** a stand-alone sutta, with its unique theme of rains-entry.

0.2.2 STRIVING. The first text, **the (Duka) Vajja Sutta (A 2.1)** deals with 2 kinds of faults (*vajja*): (1) bad karma that fruits in this life, as painful tortures for a criminal (with all its gruesome details), and which brings one death, or (2) bad karma that fruits as future rebirths in suffering states. While A 2.1 deals with wrong effort or striving, the second text, **the (Duka) Padhāna Sutta (A 2.2)**, deals with 2 kinds of striving (*padhāna*), that is, a lay person's effort in the practice of giving and a renunciant's practice of renunciation.

0.2.3 TORMENT. The second pair of suttas—**A 2.3** and **A 2.4**—deal respectively with moral nature of karmic actions. According to **the (Duka) Tapanīya Sutta (A 2.3)**, our bad karma torments us. **The (Duka) Atapanīya Sutta (A 2.4)** states that our good karma does not, which is simply a straightforward reminder for us.

0.2.4 PROGRESS. The third pair of suttas—**A 2.5** and **A 2.6**—deal with spiritual progress or the lack of it. While **the (Duka) Upaṇṇāta Sutta (A 2.5)** deals with the Buddha's striving for the self-discovery of awakening, **the (Duka) Saṃyojana Sutta (A 2.6)** deals with the kinds of contemplation that hinder or help spiritual progress to self-awakening, highlighting the vitality of revulsion (*nibbidā*).

0.2.5 THE WORLD-PROTECTORS. The fourth pair of suttas—**A 2.7** and **A 2.8**—deal with the bases of moral conduct, that is, moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*). The former, **the (Duka) Kaṇha Sutta (A 2.7)** states that the lack of moral shame and moral fear constitute “darkness” (*kaṇha*), meaning a state of immorality and suffering. The latter, **the (Duka) Sukka Sutta (A 2.8)**, states that the active presence of moral shame and moral fear is “brightness” (*sukka*), meaning a state of moral goodness and happiness.

0.2.6 TWO SENSES OF KARMA

The fifth and last pair of suttas—**A 2.9** and **A 2.10**—deal with the two senses of the word, karma (*kamma*). **The (Duka) Cariya Sutta (A 2.9)** deals with karma as moral conduct, or, more specifically, as moral shame and moral fear, the bases for a good society; hence, the two qualities are called “the world protectors” (*loka,pāla*). This Sutta is, in fact, the most elaborate version of the preceding two suttas (A 2.7 & 2.8) [0.2.5].

The (Duka) Vassūpanāyika Sutta (A 2.10) actually deals with the Vinaya, or monastic discipline, especially that regarding the two kinds of entries into the rains-retreat. These two kinds of entries entail a monastic “act” (*kamma*), constituting rules that the monastics have to observe for a valid observance of the rains-retreat, by which they gain a year of seniority.

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