

SOME  
PEOPLE WANT  
IT TO  
HAPPEN,  
SOME  
**WISH**  
IT WOULD  
HAPPEN,  
OTHERS  
**MAKE**  
IT HAPPEN.

# HOW KARMA WORKS

Verses from the first chapter of  
the Precious Garland (Ratnavali),  
by Arya Nagarjuna

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श्राद्धत्वाद्भजते धर्मं प्राज्ञत्वाद्भेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।

प्रज्ञा प्रधानं त्वनयोः श्रद्धा पूर्वगमास्य तु ॥ ५ ॥

śrāddhatvādbhajate dharmam prajñatvādvetti tattvataḥ  
prajñā pradhānam tvanayoḥ śraddhā pūrvagamāsyā tu (5)

Because of the confidence one has in it, one relies on a spiritual practice.  
And because of the wisdom one has acquired, one really knows what's what.  
Of these two, wisdom is the main thing and confidence is its prerequisite.

छन्दाद् द्वेषाद्भयान्मोहाद्यो धर्मं नातिवर्तते ।

स श्राद्ध इति विज्ञेयः श्रेयसो भाजनं परं ॥६॥

chandād dveṣādbhayanmohādyo dharmam nātivartate  
sa śrāddha iti vijñeyaḥ śreyaso bhājanam param (6)

One who does not transgress his spiritual practice voluntarily, or through anger, or fear, or delusion, that one is known to be truly confident, the highest vessel for bliss.

कायवाङ्मानसं कर्म सर्वं सम्यक्परीक्ष्य यः ।

परात्महितमाज्ञाय सदा कुर्यात्स पण्डितः ॥७॥

kāyavāṅmānasam karma sarvaṁ samyakparīkṣya yaḥ  
parātmahitamājñāya sadā kuryātsa paṇḍitaḥ (7)

He is truly a wise man who always acts having first correctly examined  
all actions of body, speech, and mind and having realized what is beneficial to  
himself and others.

अहिंसा चौर्यविरतिः परदारविवर्जनम् ।

मिथ्यापैशुन्यपारुष्याबद्धवादेशु संयमः ॥८॥

ahimsā cauryaviratiḥ paradāravivarjanam  
mithyāpaiśunyaaparūṣyābaddhavādeśu saṁyamah (8)

Not harming, refraining from theft, forsaking the wives of others, restraining oneself  
from false, slanderous, harsh, and loose speech. . .

लोभव्यापादनास्तिक्यदृष्टीनां परिवर्जनम् ।

एते कर्मपथाः शुक्ला दश कृष्णा विपर्ययात् ॥९॥

lobhavyāpādanāstikyadr̥ṣṭīnām parivarjanam  
ete karmapathāḥ śuklā daśa kṛṣṇā viparyayāt (9)

... turning away from greed, and malice, and nihilistic worldviews – these are the ten white paths of action. Otherwise they are dark.

अमद्यपानं स्वाजीवोऽविहिंसा दानमादरात् ।

पूज्यपूजा च मैत्री च धर्मश्चैष समासतः ॥१०॥

amadyapānaṁ svājīvo'vihimsā dānamādarāt  
pūjyapūjā ca maitrī ca dharmas̥caīṣa samāsataḥ (10)

A spiritual practice, in sum, consists of not drinking intoxicants, engaging in a proper livelihood, not hurting others, respectfully giving, honoring those worthy of honor, and loving-kindness.

शरीरतापनाद्धर्मः केवलान्नास्ति तेन हि ।

न परद्रोहविरतिर्न परेशामनुग्रहः ॥११॥

śarīratāpanāddharmāḥ kevalānnāsti tena hi  
na paradrohaviratirna pareśāmanugrahaḥ (11)

The simple mortification of the body is no spiritual practice. It doesn't benefit others and doesn't end the harming of others.

हिंसया जायतेऽल्पायुः बह्वाबाधो विहिंसया ।

चैर्येण भोगव्यसनी सशत्रुः पारदारिकः ॥१४॥

himsayā jāyate'lpāyauḥ bahvābādho vihimsayā  
cairyēṇa bhogavyasanī saśatruḥ pāradārikaḥ (14)

A short life is obtained through killing, and much suffering through hurting. One is unlucky with the goods of life through stealing. Having lots of enemies comes from adultery.

प्रत्याख्यानं मृषावादात् पैशुन्यान्मित्रभेदनम् ।

अप्रियश्रवणं रौक्ष्यादपर्थाद्दुर्भगं वचः ॥१५ ॥

pratyākhyānaṁ mṛṣāvādāt paiśunyaṅmitrabhedanam  
apriyaśravaṇaṁ raukṣyādapāṛthāddurbhagam vacaḥ (15)

From speaking falsely one will be repudiated; from divisive speech comes the splitting apart of friends. Having to hear disagreeable things arises from harsh speech, and because of meaningless speech your own words are disregarded.

मनोरथान् हन्त्यभिध्या व्यापादो भयदः स्मृतः ।

मिथ्यादृष्टिः कुदृष्टित्वं मद्यपानं मतिभ्रमः ॥१६ ॥

manorathān hantyaabhidhyā vyāpādo bhayadaḥ smṛtaḥ  
mithyādrṣṭiḥ kudṛṣṭitvaṁ madyapānaṁ matibhramaḥ (16)

Greed destroys what one wishes for, ill will is brought to mind as paranoia. Wrong views result in stupidity, and drinking brings about a befuddled mind.

अप्रदानेन दारिद्र्यं मिथ्याजीवेन वञ्चना ।

स्तम्भेन दुष्कुलीनत्वमल्पौजस्कत्वमीर्ष्या ॥१७ ॥

apradānena dāridryaṁ mithyājīvena vañcana  
stambhena duṣkulinatvamalpaujaskatvamīrṣyā (17)

Through not giving comes poverty, and one becomes the victim of fraud because of wrong livelihood. From being stuck up, one obtains a birth in degenerate family. Through envy, one is born with very little beauty.

क्रोधाद्दुर्वर्णता मौर्ख्यमप्रश्नेन विपश्चिताम् ।

फलमेतन्मनुष्यत्वे सर्वेभ्यः प्राक् च दुर्गतिः ॥१८ ॥

krodhāddurvarṇatā maurkhyamapraśnena vipaścitām  
phalametanmanuṣyatve sarvebhyaḥ prāk ca durgatiḥ (18)

A bad complexion comes from anger, and block-headedness from not going to the learned with one's inquiries. These are the karmic results for humans, but prior to all is a bad rebirth.

एषामकुशलखाणां विपाको यः प्रकीर्तितः ।

कुशलानां च सर्वेषां विपरीतः फलोदयः ॥१९॥

eṣāmakuśalākhyānāṃ vipāko yaḥ prakīrtitaḥ  
kuśalānāṃ ca sarveṣāṃ viparītaḥ phalodayaḥ (19)

The ripenings of these non-virtues are thus declared; their opposites are the fruits that arise from all the virtues.

लोभो द्वेषश्च मोहश्च तज्जं कर्मेति चाशुभम् ।

अलोभामोहाद्वेषश्च तज्जं कर्मेतरच्छुभम् ॥२०॥

lobho dveṣaśca mohaśca tajjaṃ karmeti cāśubham |  
alobhāmohādvēṣāśca tajjaṃ karmetaracchubham (20)

Desire, hatred, ignorance, and the actions they give rise to are not conducive to one's welfare. Non-desire, non-hatred, non-ignorance and the actions they give rise to are truly beneficial.

अशुभात्सर्वदुःखानि सर्वदुर्गतयस्तथा ।

शुभात्सुगतयः सर्वाः सर्वजन्मसुखानि च ॥२१॥

aśubhātsarvaduhkhāni sarvadurgatayastathā |  
śubhātsugatayaḥ sarvāḥ sarvajanmasukhāni ca (21)

All suffering and also all bad births come from what is non-virtuous.  
And all good births and all the pleasures of life come from what is virtuous.

नरकप्रेततिर्यग्भ्यो धर्मादस्माद्विमुच्यते ।

नृषु देवेषु चाप्नोति सुखश्रीराज्यविस्तरान् ॥२३॥

narakapretatiryagbhyo dharmādashmādvimucyate |  
nṛṣu deveṣu cāpnoti sukhaśrīrajyavistarān (23)

Because of one's spiritual practice one is freed from birth in hell, as a hungry ghost, or as an animal. Reborn as a human or pleasure being, one gains extensive happiness, fortune, and dominion.