

Sin (Paap)

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From The Mahabharata
Santi Parva, Section CLVIII
Translated by Sri Kisari Mohan Ganguli

Yudhishthira said: I desire, O bull of Bharata's race, to hear in detail the source from which sin proceeds and the foundation upon which it rests.

Bhishma said: Hear, O King, what the foundation is of sin. Covetousness alone is a great destroyer of merit and goodness. From covetousness proceeds sin. It is from this source that sin and irreligiousness flow, together with great misery. This covetousness is the spring of also all the cunning and hypocrisy in the world. It is covetousness that makes men commit sin. From covetousness proceeds wrath; from covetousness flows lust, and it is from covetousness that loss of judgment, deception, pride, arrogance, and malice, as also vindictiveness, loss of prosperity, loss of virtue, anxiety, and infamy spring. Miserliness, cupidity, desire for every kind of improper act, pride of birth, pride of learning, pride of beauty, pride of wealth, pitilessness for all creatures, malevolence towards all, mistrust in respect of all, insincerity towards all, appropriation of other people's wealth, ravishment of other people's wives, harshness of speech, anxiety, propensity to speak ill of others, violent craving for the indulgence of lust, gluttony, liability to premature death, violent propensity towards malice, irresistible liking for falsehood, unconquerable appetite for indulging in passions, insatiable desire for indulging in ear, evil-speaking, boastfulness, arrogance, non-doing of duties, rashness, and perpetration of every kind of evil act,- all these proceed from covetousness.

In life. men are unable, whether infants or youth or adults, to abandon covetousness. Such is the nature of covetousness that it never decays even with the decay of life. Like the ocean that can never be filled by the constant discharge of even immeasurable rivers of immeasurable depths, covetousness is incapable of being gratified by acquisitions to any extent.

The covetousness, however, which is never gratified by acquisitions and satisfied by the accomplishment of desires, that which is not known in its real nature by the gods, the Gandharvas, the Asuras, the great snakes, and, in fact, by all classes of beings, that irresistible passion, along with that folly which invites the heart to the unrealities of the world, should ever be conquered by a person of cleansed soul.

Pride, malice, slander, crookedness, and incapacity to hear other people's good, are vices, that are to be seen in persons of uncleansed soul under the domination of covetousness. Even persons of great learning who bear in their minds all the

Sin (Paap)

voluminous scriptures, and who are competent to dispel the doubts of others, show themselves in this respect to be of weak understanding and feel great misery in consequence of this passion. Covetous men are wedded to envy and anger. They are outside the pale of good behaviour. Of crooked hearts, the speeches they utter are sweet. They resemble, therefore, dark pits whose mouths are covered with grass. They attire themselves in the hypocritical cloak of religion. Of low minds, they rob the world, setting up (if need be) the standard of religion and virtue. Relying upon the strength of apparent reasons, they create diverse kinds of schisms in religion. Intent upon accomplishing the purposes of cupidity, they destroy the ways of righteousness.

When wicked-souled persons under the domination of covetousness apparently practise the duties of righteousness, the consequence that results is that the desecrations committed by them soon become current among men. Pride, anger, arrogance, insensibility, paroxysms of joy and sorrow, and self-importance, all these are to be seen in persons swayed by covetousness. Know that they who are always under the influence of covetousness are wicked.

From The Mahabharata
Anusasana Parva, Section LXI
Translated by Sri Kisari Mohan Ganguli

Sin of Abortion
(Sin of foeticide)

Addressing King Yudhishtira, Bhishma said:
There are no men more sinful than those upon whose food children look with wistfulness without being able to eat them duly. If within thy kingdom any learned Brahman languishes with hunger like any of those children, thou shalt then incur the **sin of foeticide**(abortion) for having allowed such an act.

From The Mahabharata
Santi Parva, Section CLXV
Translated by Sri Kisari Mohan Ganguli

Addressing King Yudhishtira, Bhishma said:
One guilty of **foeticide** (abortion) becomes cleansed if he dies of wounds received in battle fought for the sake of king (cow) and Brahmanas.
He may also be cleansed by casting his person on a blazing fire.

Sin (Paap)

From the Mahabharata
Santi Parva, Section XV
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There is no act that is wholly meritorious, nor any that is wholly wicked. Right or wrong, in all acts, something of both is seen.

Arjuna said: He that takes up a weapon and slays an armed foe advancing against him, does not incur the sin of killing a **foetus**, for it is the wrath of the advancing foe that provokes the wrath of the slayer.

There is no act that is wholly meritorious, nor any that is wholly wicked. Right or wrong, in all acts, something of both is seen. Subjecting animals to castration, their horns again are cut off. They are then made to bear weights, are tethered and chastised. In this world that is unsubstantial and rotten with abuses and rendered painful, O monarch, do thou practise the ancient customs of men, following the rules and analogies cited above. Perform sacrifices, give alms, protect thy subjects, and practise righteousness. Slay thy foes, O son of Kunti, and protect thy friends. Let no cheerlessness be thine, O king, while slaying foes. He that does it, O Bharata, does not incur the slightest sin.

From Manu Smriti (The Laws of Manu)

There is no sin in eating meat, in drinking spirituous liquor, and in carnal intercourse, for that is the natural way of created beings, but abstention brings great rewards. V.56

By subsisting on pure fruit and roots, and by eating food fit for ascetics, one does not gain so great a reward as by entirely avoiding the use of flesh. V.54

Confession of sin

The Mahabharata
Anusasana Parva, Section CLXII
Translated by Sri Kisari Mohan Ganguli

Addressing King Yudhishtira, Bhishma said:
The heart of the sinful man always proclaims the sins he has committed. Those men who have deliberately committed sins meet with destruction by seeking to conceal them from the good. Indeed, they that are confirmed sinners seek to

Sin (Paap)

conceal their sinful acts from others. Such persons think that their sins are witnessed by neither men nor the deities. The sinful man, overwhelmed by his sins, takes birth in a miserable order of being. The sins of such a man continually grow, even as the interests the usurer charges (on the loan he grants) increase from day to day.

If, having committed a sin, one seeks to have it covered by righteousness, that sin becomes destroyed and leads to righteousness instead of other sins. If a quantity of water be poured upon salt, the salt immediately dissolves away. Even so, when expiation is performed, sin dissolves away. For these reasons, one should never conceal a sin. Concealed, it is certain to increase. Having committed a sin, one should confess it in the presence of those that are good. They would destroy it immediately.

From The Mahabharata
Anusasana Parva, Section CXI
Translated by Sri Kisari Mohan Ganguli

Vrihaspati said:

That man who, having perpetrated sinful acts through stupefaction of mind, feels the pangs of repentance and sets his heart on contemplation (of the deity), has not to endure the consequences of his sins. One becomes freed from one's sins in proportion as one repents for them. If one having committed a sin, O king, proclaims it in the presence of Brahmanas (priests) conversant with duties, one becomes quickly cleansed from the obloquy arising from one's sin. Accordingly as one becomes cleansed therefrom fully or otherwise, like a snake freed from his diseased slough.

Karma

From The Bhagavad Gita
By Swami Shivananda, The Divine Life Society, Rishikesh

The Blessed Lord said:

Even if the most sinful person worships Me with devotion to none else, he should be regarded as righteous, for he has rightly resolved (for he has made the holy resolution to give up the evil ways of his life). - Gita, Ch,9,Verse 30.

Sin (Paap)

Soon he becomes righteous and attains to eternal peace; O Arjuna, know thou for certain that My devotee is never destroyed.

- Gita, Ch 9, Verse 31.

[Note: By abandoning the evil ways in his external life and by the force of his internal right resolution, he becomes righteous and attains to eternal peace].

Even if thou art the most sinful of all sinners, yet thou shalt verily cross all sins by the raft of knowledge. Gita, Ch,4, Verse 36

As the blazing fire reduces wood (fuel) to ashes, so does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes. Gita, Ch.4, Verse 37.

[Note: Just as the seeds that are roasted cannot germinate, so also the actions that are burnt by the fire of knowledge cannot bear fruits, i.e., cannot bring man to this world again for the enjoyment of the fruits of his actions. This is reducing actions to ashes. The actions lose their potency as they are burnt by the fire of knowledge. When the knowledge of the Self dawns, all actions with their results are burnt by the fire of that knowledge just as fuel is burnt by the fire.

When there is no agency-mentality (the idea "I do this") when there is no desire for the fruits, action is no action at all. It has lost its potency. The fire of knowledge can burn all actions except the prarabdha karma, or the result of past action which has brought this body into existence and which has thus already begun to bear fruits or produce effects.

According to some philosophers even the prarabdha karma is destroyed by the fire of knowledge. Sri Sankara says in his 'Aparokshanubhuti':
"In the passage 'His actions are destroyed when the Supreme is realised' the Veda expressly speaks of actions (karmas) in the plural, in order to signify the destruction of even the prarabdha."

There are three kinds of karmas or reaction to or fructification of past actions:

1. **Prarabdha**, so much of past actions as has given rise to the present birth.
2. **Sanchita**, the balance of past actions that will give rise to future births - the storehouse of accumulated actions
3. **Agami or Kriyamana**, acts being done in the present life. If by the knowledge of the Self only the Sanchita and Agami were destroyed and not Prarabdha, the dual number would have been used and not the plural.(Sanskrit language grammar

Sin (Paap)

has singular, dual and plural numbers).]

The Bible and sin

From The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi

Question: May we read the Bible?

Sri Ramana Maharshi: The Bible and the Gita are the same.

Question: The Bible teaches that man is born in sin.

Sri Ramana Maharshi: Man is sin. There is no feeling of being man in deep sleep. The body-thought brings out the idea of sin. The birth of thought itself is sin.

Question: The Bible says that the human soul may be lost.

Sri Ramana Maharshi: The 'I' thought is the ego and that is lost. The real 'I' is 'I am that I am'.

The doctrine of the Trinity was explained: God the Father is equivalent to Iswara, God the Son to the Guru, and God the Holy Ghost to the Atma (Self). Isvaro Gururatmeti Murti Bheda Vibhagina Vyomavad Vyapta Dehaya Dakshinamurtaye Namah, means that God appears to His devotees in the form of a Guru (Son of God) and points out to him the immanence of the Holy Spirit. That is to say, that God is spirit, that this Spirit is immanent everywhere and that the Self must be realised, which is the same as realising God.

For other articles from
The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi

Expiation of Sins

Eternal injunctions laid down for the expiation of sins

The five grave sins

For the benefit of Brahmanas and kine (Cows), and on occasions of transfusion of castes, even a Vaisya may take up weapons for his own safety. Drinking alcoholic

Sin (Paap)

liquors, killing a Brahmana, and the violation of the preceptor's bed, are sins that, if committed consciously, have no expiation. The only expiation laid down for them is death. The same may be said of stealing gold and the theft of a Brahmana's property. By drinking alcoholic liquors, by having congress with one with whom congress is prohibited, by mingling with a fallen person, and (a person of any of the other three orders) by having congress with a Brahmani (Brahmana woman), one becomes inevitably fallen. By mixing with a fallen person for one whole year in such matters as officiation in sacrifices and teaching sexual congress, one becomes fallen. One, however, does not become so by mixing with a fallen person in such matters as riding on the same vehicle, sitting on the same seat, and eating in the same line.

Excluding the five grave sins that have been mentioned above, all other sins have expiations provided for them. Expiating those sins according to the ordinances laid down for them, one should not again indulge in them. In the case of those who have been guilty of the first three of these five sins, (viz., drinking alcoholic liquors, killing a Brahmana, and violation of the preceptor's bed), there is no restriction for their (surviving) kinsmen about taking food and wearing ornaments, even if their funeral rites remain unperformed when they die. The surviving kinsmen should make no scruple about such things on such occasions. A virtuous man should, in the observance of his duties, discard his very friends and reverend seniors. In fact, until they perform expiation, they that are virtuous should not even talk with those sinners. A man that has acted sinfully destroys his sin by acting virtuously afterwards and by penances.

By calling a thief a thief, one incurs the sin of theft. By calling a person a thief who, however, is not a thief, one incurs a sin just double the sin of theft. The maiden who suffers her virginity to be deflowered incurs three-fourths of the sin of Brahmanicide (killing of Brahmana), while the man that deflowers her incurs a sin equal to a fourth part of that of Brahmanicide. By slandering Brahmanas or by striking them, one sinks in infamy for a hundred years. By killing a Brahmana one sinks into hell for a thousand years. No one, therefore, should speak ill of a Brahmana or slay him. If a person strikes a Brahmana with a weapon, he will have to live in hell for as many years as the grains of dust that are soaked by the blood flowing from the wounded. One guilty of foeticide (abortion) becomes cleansed if he dies of wounds received in battle fought for the sake of kine (cows) and Brahmanas. He may also be cleansed by casting his person on a blazing fire.

[Note: It should be noted that the word 'foeticide' used in such texts frequently means all sins that are regarded as equivalent to foeticide. Hence, killing a Brahmana is foeticide, etc.).

Sin (Paap)

A drinker of alcoholic liquors becomes cleansed by drinking hot alcohol. His body being burnt with that hot drink, he is cleansed through death in the other world. A Brahmana stained by such a sin obtains regions of felicity by such a course and not by any other. For violating the bed of a preceptor, the wicked-souled and sinful wretch becomes cleansed by the death that results from embracing a heated female figure of iron. Or, cutting off his organ and testicles and bearing them in his hands, he should go on in a straight course towards the southwest and then cast off his life. Or, by meeting with death for the sake of benefiting a Brahmana, he may wash off his sin. Or, after performing a horse-sacrifice or a cow-sacrifice or an Agnishtoma, he may regain esteem both here and hereafter. The slayer of a Brahmana should practice the vow of Brahmacharya (celibacy) for twelve years and devoting himself to penances, wander, holding in his hands the skull of the slain all the time and proclaiming his sin unto all. He should even adopt such a course, devoted to penances and leading the life of an ascetic.

Even such is the expiation provided for one who slays a woman quick with child, knowing her condition. The man who knowingly slays such a woman incurs double the sin that follows from Brahmanicide. A drinker of alcoholic liquor should live on frugal fare, practising Brahmacharya (celibacy) vows, and sleep on the bare ground, and perform, for more than three years the sacrifice next to the Agnishtoma. He should then make a present of a thousand kine (cows) with one bull (unto a good Brahmana). Doing all this, he should regain his purity. Having slain a Vaisya one should perform such a sacrifice for two years and make a present of a hundred kine with one bull. Having slain a Sudra, one should perform such a sacrifice for one year and make a present of a hundred kine with one bull. Having slain a dog or bear or camel, one should perform the same penance that is laid down for the slaughter of a Sudra. For slaying a cat, a chasa, a frog, a crow, a reptile, or a rat, it has been said, one incurs the sin of animal slaughter, O king!

Minor sins

I shall now tell thee of other kinds of expiations in their order. For all minor sins one should repent or practise some vow for one year. For congress with the wife of a Brahmana conversant with the Vedas, one should for three years practise the vow of Brahmacharya (celibacy), taking a little food at the fourth part of the day. For congress with any other woman (who is not one's wife), one should practise similar penance for two years. For taking delight in a woman's company by sitting with her on the same spot or on the same seat, one should live only on water for three days. By doing this he may cleanse himself of his sin. The same is laid down for one who befouls a blazing fire (by throwing impure things on it).

Adultery

Sin (Paap)

He who without adequate cause, casts off his sire or mother or preceptor, surely becomes fallen, O thou of Kuru's race, as the conclusion is of the scriptures. Only food and clothes should be given, as the injunction is, unto a wife guilty of adultery or one confined in a prison. Indeed, the vows that are laid down for a male person guilty of adultery should be caused to be observed by also a woman who is guilty of the same. That woman who abandoning a husband of a superior caste, has congress with a vile person (of a lower order), should be caused by the king to be devoured by dogs in a public place in the midst of a large concourse of spectators. A wise king should cause the male person committing adultery under such circumstances to be placed upon a heated bed of iron and then, placing faggots underneath, burn the sinner thereon. The same punishment, O king, is provided for the woman that is guilty of adultery.

The wicked sinner who does not perform expiation within a year of the commission of the sin incurs demerit that is double of what attaches to the original sin. One who associates with such a person for two years must wander over the earth, devoting himself to penances and living upon eleemosynary charity. One associated with a sinner for four years should adopt such a mode of life for five years.

If a younger brother weds before his elder brother, then the younger brother, the elder brother and the woman that is married, all three, in consequence of such wedding, become fallen. All of them should observe the vows prescribed for a person who has neglected his sacrificial fire, or practise the vow of Chandrayana for a month, or some other painful vow, for cleansing themselves of their sin. The younger brother, wedding, should give his wife unto his unmarried elder brother. Afterwards, having obtained the permission of the elder brother, the younger brother may take back his wife. By such means may all three be cleansed of their sin.

By slaying animals save a cow, the slayer is not stained. The learned know that man has dominion over all the lower animals. A sinner, holding in hand a yak-tail and an earthen pot, should go about, proclaiming his sin. He should every day beg of only seven families and live upon what may be thus obtained. By doing this for twelve days he may be cleansed of his sin. He who becomes unable to bear in his hand the yak-tail while practising this vow, should observe the vow of mendicancy (as stated above) for one whole year. Amongst men such expiation is the best. For those that are able to practise charity, the practise of charity has been laid down in all such cases. Those who have faith and virtue may cleanse themselves by giving away only one cow.

Sin (Paap)

One who eats or drinks the flesh, ordure, or urine, of a dog, a boar, a man, a cock, or a camel must have his investiture of the sacred thread re-performed. If a Soma-drinking Brahmana inhales the scent of alcohol from the mouth of one that has drunk it, he should drink warm water for three days, or warm milk for the same period. Or, drinking warm water for three days he should live for that period upon air alone. These are the eternal injunctions laid down for the expiation of sin, especially for a Brahmana who has committed these sins through ignorance and want of judgment.

Hari Om Tat Sat