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Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies (PGIPBS) of
the University of Kelaniya

**A Critical Study of the Psychological, Ethical and
Social Bases of the Buddhist Theory of Karma**

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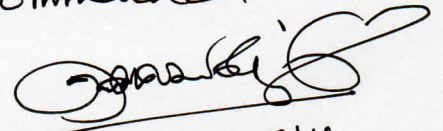
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Abstract

The goal of this study was to present significant analyses of the psychological, ethical and social bases of the Buddhist theory of karma based on the teachings in the *Pāli* canon and secondary sources. The objectives were to draw adequate conclusions if significant outcomes could be achieved for the benefit of the academia and readers of Buddhist literature in general.

After providing an introduction in Chapter 1, an overview of karma as described in religions and philosophies of Indian and other origins has been presented in Chapter 2, followed by a general overview of karma as described in the teachings of the Buddha in Chapter 3. As karma and the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* are very closely related, an effort has been made to see how karma is performed by human beings in this context, analysing the main causes of karma and the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, which are presented in Chapter 4. Different aspects of the psychological basis of karma are analysed in Chapter 5. The basis for any karma is moral and immoral consciousness, which is its psychological basis. Some illustrations from the *Vimānavatthu*, *Petavatthu*, some other books of the Pāli canon, and from the contemporary society stressing on the mental aspects or the psychological basis of karma and vipāka have been presented in Chapter 6. While the ethical basis of karma is covered in Chapter 7, the social basis of karma going beyond the ethical basis is covered in Chapter 8.

Conclusion of the study is presented in Chapter 9. One basic obvious outcome is that out of the three bases the most significant is the psychological basis, and that the main component of the ethical and social karma is also the psychological basis.