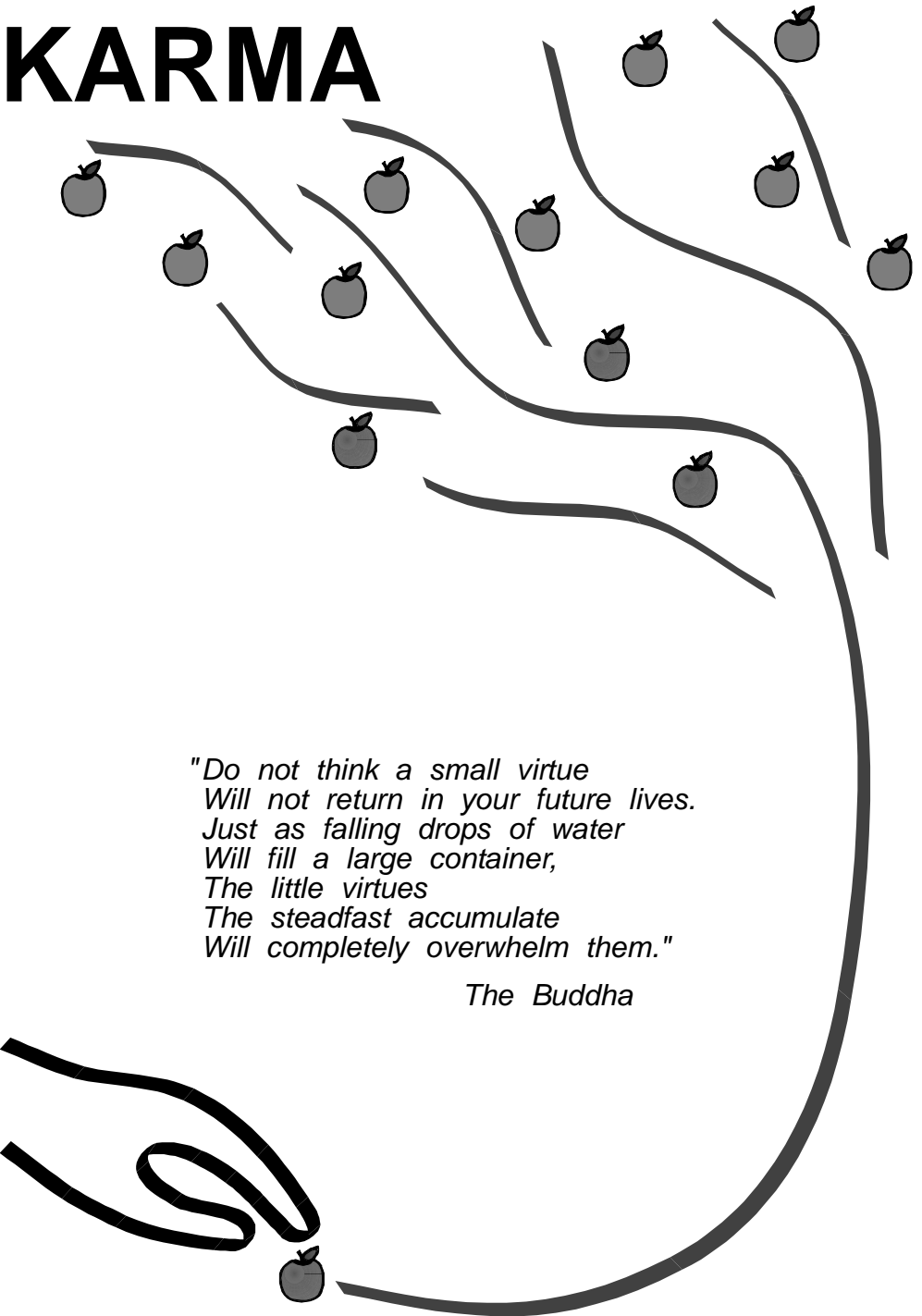


KARMA



*"Do not think a small virtue
Will not return in your future lives.
Just as falling drops of water
Will fill a large container,
The little virtues
The steadfast accumulate
Will completely overwhelm them."*

The Buddha

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LIBERATION IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

A Lam Rim Discourse by Pabongka Rinpoche

Pabongka Rinpoche quoted from Tsongkapa, that great Dharmaraja:

You have no assurance that you will not go
To the lower realms after death....

After this short introduction, he restated the headings already covered, and reviewed the first subsection of the heading ‘Teaching the Means for Happiness in Your Next Rebirth.’ This first subsection deals with taking refuge. He then briefly taught how to pursue this practice:

When people give oral discourses there are separate headings for contemplating the sufferings of the lower realms and for taking refuge. However, when one is taking a ‘practical teaching,’ one must meditate on a combination of these two headings, as explained below.

This is how it is done. After you petition [the visualisation of] your guru above the crown of your head, he emanates from his heart a complete refuge visualisation, for example the merit field, and this stands before you in space. Then, think deeply about the individual sufferings of each of the hells and the sufferings of animals and hungry ghosts; as you become terrified of each lower realm, take refuge. This is the integration. An illustration: if in this world a petty criminal gets the support of an influential official, it sets the criminal’s mind at rest and he thinks, ‘I cannot do much by myself, but I have the backing of a great official.’ That is why he sought his support. Similarly, if you are terrified of the lower realms you will want to take refuge and take confidence from the thought: ‘I have come under the protection of the Three Jewels, a refuge that won’t prove deceptive.’

If you are taking refuge a number of times, it is enough to repeat the beginning of the preparatory rites. However, in this section of the Lam-rim you should combine three Lam-rim meditation topics together, although it is still all right to repeat only ‘I take refuge in the guru, the tutelary deities, and the Three Jewels’ a number of times. Let us take the section on thinking about the suffering of the Hell of Continual Resurrection as an example. The three meditation topics would go as follows.

First, once you have insight into being reborn in this hell, you think how it would be impossible to endure it. At this point you will have the thought: ‘I have not now been reborn there.’

The second meditation topic comes in at this point. Think that though you have not taken rebirth in this hell now, you have accumulated very powerful karma to be born there; this karma has not declined [in strength] and you will not be able to purify it before you die. And as you cannot purify it you are certain to be born there. This should terrify you.

Then comes the third meditation topic. You think: ‘The refuge to protect me from this lower realm should have immeasurable numbers of good qualities - omniscience, love, ability and so forth. How lucky I am to have found such a refuge!’ And then take refuge.

Follow the same process for the other lower realms.

After giving three excellent versions of the teachings on taking refuge - an elaborate version, a medium length and a short version - Rinpoche continued.

DEVELOPING BELIEVING FAITH IN THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT - THE ROOT OF ALL HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

Because you have taken refuge in the Three Jewels you can be sure that you have prevented one or two rebirths in the lower realms, but not that you will be free of the lower realms forever.

If you want to be confident of never again going to the lower realms you must try to follow the advice that goes with taking refuge. Here is an illustration of what happens when you do not. When a criminal seeks the protection of an influential official, the official may tell him: ‘From now on, you should do this and not do that.’ If the criminal does not listen and instead only commits more crimes, there is no way that even that official can protect him: the criminal will again run foul of the law.

Similarly, if we do not keep the advice that accompanies taking refuge, there is nothing the Three Jewels can do for us. This is why our Teacher taught that Dharma is the one true refuge to protect us from the lower realms. Dharma itself is the act of modifying our behaviour according to the law of cause and effect.

If you do not develop believing faith in the law of cause and effect you will only want to practise a little virtue and to abandon a little non-virtue. As long as you do not properly modify your actions according to the law of cause and effect, you could still go to hell, despite being well-versed in the three baskets or being a great adept and yogi. Once Guru Avadhutipa looked back at Atisha while they were crossing a bridge, and said: ‘Until you abandon grasping at a self and while you still place little value on the law of cause and effect [always] remember that scholar so-

and-so and yogi such-and-such were reborn in hell.’ They say that even great Ra the translator had to spend a few moments in hell.

A yogi in the Yamantaka tantra was reborn as an evil hungry ghost that physically resembled this tutelary deity; the ghost travelled from India to Tibet. Great Atisha said, ‘If it remains here, Tibet will be harmed,’ so he dedicated ritual cakes to the ghost and made it go away.

Devadatta knew a great deal of Dharma, but this did not help him, as he was reborn in the Even Hotter Hell. A brahmin named Chanakya had achieved visions of Yamantaka and had killed many people through his paranormal powers. They say he was reborn in the Hell Without Respite.

If you do not keep to the law of cause and effect, doing a tantric retreat will not be of any help. A yogi in the Yamantaka tantra from Lower Paenpo was also reborn as a hungry ghost, taking the form of the tutelary deity. Some of his fellow practitioners were performing a burnt offering for the dead; this yogi went to it to beg for food.

Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche told how an elder of Vikramashila Monastery was reborn as a hungry ghost with a deformed hand.

So, if you are unable to modify your behaviour out of a belief in the law of cause and effect, being a scholar or adept will be of no help at all. And it is said: ‘Karma ripens in inconceivable ways - even lords of love are born as animals.’ In other words, they say that even mahatma Bodhisattvas have taken rebirth in the lower realms when they ignored the law of cause and effect. This is why setting one’s motivation is the start of all meditations, why the optimum human rebirth is the start of the Lam-rim, and why the law of cause and effect is the start of putting the Dharma into practice. The law of cause and effect has even been called ‘the correct view for worldly people.’ Here ‘worldly people’ is taken to mean ordinary beings; the whole phrase means that ordinary beings should, above all, act according to these laws. A great many people these days pretend to esteem the view highly, but you must first develop believing faith in the law of cause and effect and then modify your behaviour accordingly. If you do not do this you may mumble your recitations and pretend you are recalling the Dharma, or work hard at imitating meditative absorption and pretend that this is meditating on the view, but these are just signs that you do not know what ‘Dharma’ entails.

Some people commit sins all day and night and even order others, servants and pupils, to carry out many sinful actions all over the place. These people may go through the motions of getting up early and going to bed late after doing their recitations, but this is the wrong way to go about a practice.

So you must think about the law of cause and effect in order to develop this believing faith in it. There are three sections here: (1) thinking about cause and effect in general; (2) thinking about the specifics; (3) after thinking about these things, the way to modify your actions.

THINKING ABOUT CAUSE AND EFFECT IN GENERAL

This has two subsections: (1) thinking about cause and effect in a truly general way; and (2) thinking about some specific points.

THINKING ABOUT CAUSE AND EFFECT IN A TRULY GENERAL WAY

This has four subheadings: (1) how karma is fixed; (2) karma shows great increase; (3) one does not meet with something if one has not created the karma for it to happen; (4) karma once created will not disappear of its own accord. The Bhagavan himself spoke of karma in these four ways, so they are most vital.

HOW KARMA IS FIXED

The Transmission of the Vinaya says: ‘Whatever karma is created will bring a corresponding result.’ In other words, the result of some virtuous action - the cause - can only be happiness; this cause does not bring suffering. The result of some non-virtuous action - the cause - can only be suffering; this cause does not bring happiness. This is the fixed [aspect] of cause and effect. For example, it is fixed that from the seed of a hot-tasting plant comes hot-tasting fruit. From the seed of a bitter plant comes bitter fruit; from a sweet plant’s seed, sweet fruit. Now is the time that we create karmic causes so we must exercise care, for it is impossible to put things right once the cause has produced its results.

When we get sick, for instance, having rituals performed may sometimes not help; the ritual and the illness go their individual ways. If you plant the seed of a hot-tasting plant, chili for example, and then once it has started to grow you plant grapes and peaches, say, around the chili as a way of making it turn sweet, the plants will only grow as individuals [and not have the effect you want].

Cause and effect is extremely subtle, because any cause one accumulates will bring its corresponding result. The monk Priyabhadra had an extremely ugly body and an extremely sweet voice. Both of these were caused by the following. In a past life he had been born a coolie when a certain king was building a huge stupa. The stupa was so enormous that he said, ‘Why are they building this stupa so big? It will

never get finished.’ Later, when the stupa was completed, he offered it a bell to expiate what he had said.

While Atisha was in Tibet a Tibetan man was unconcerned when he committed some trivial sin in front of him. This proved too much for Atisha who said, ‘Alas, you should not be so brazen. Cause and effect is subtle! Cause and effect is deep!’.

Once a monk spilt some grease over a cushion used by the Sangha in public ceremonies. In his next life he was reborn as a man with a black back.

Another time, when a monk was dyeing his robes, they turned into pieces of calf’s flesh; he was accused of stealing a calf and had to spend six months in prison. This was said to be the result of the following. In a past life he had accused an innocent Pratyekabuddha of stealing a calf. The Pratyekabuddha was thrown into the king’s prison for six days.

Sagama, mother of Mrgaradhara, a minister of the city of Shravasti, had thirty-two sons, all wrestlers. Another minister of King Prasenajit caused them to fall out of favour; the king had all the sons put to death and the pile of their heads taken to their mother. This resulted from thirty-two thieves in the past stealing a bull and killing it. Sagama herself had been the thieves’ landlady when they killed the bull.

Kyabje Pabongka told these stories in more detail.

This is how karma is fixed.

KARMA SHOWS GREAT INCREASE

Internal causes produce much greater effects than external causes. Even so, here is an example of an external cause and its results: a great tree grows from but a single tiny peach stone, and every year the tree yields hundreds of thousands of things - leaves and fruit. Though this is a big increase, internal causes yield even bigger results.

When the Bhagavan visited the city of Nyagrodhika, a woman gave him a handful of sweetmeats made of sesame, called ‘ladus.’ The Buddha predicted that in a future life the woman would be reborn as a Buddha called Susvasti. Her husband irreverently said, ‘Please don’t say such a thing just because she offered you some food, Buddha.’ The Buddha gave the illustration of the seed of the pipal tree, which is only the size of a mustard-seed, yet from it grows such a huge tree that it’s shadow falls over five hundred chariots, placed so that they do not touch each other. Buddha then said that small karmic actions have great results. And so, the husband came to believe.

Once a monk told some people, ‘Your voice is like a dog’s bark,’ or ‘like a frog’s croak,’ or ‘like a monkey’s chatter.’ That monk had to take five hundred corresponding rebirths for each insult.

In China, a man once wrote, ‘Scholars these days are like snakes,’ so his book was called *The Snake Simile Treatise*. This author’s body later became racked with pain; his legs and arm shrank into his body, which turned into a snake’s. A snake’s head then worked its way out of a crack in his head. In that rebirth the author was actually transformed into a snake.

In India, five hundred fishermen once caught a huge fish-like animal with eighteen heads. The Buddha said this was the result of the following. The animal had once been Manavagaura, and his mother had encouraged him to say to members of the Sangha, ‘You are like a dog,’ and so on. But when the Bhagavan arrived to give this pronouncement on the causes for the creature’s karma he was criticised by Tirthikas who said, ‘Gautama the holy man is fond of vulgar spectacles.’ I have already told you this in greater detail in the preparatory rites section.

These things arose from trivial insults - not from, say, killing a man and making off with his horse. Before the nun Utpalavarna became ordained she had two sons. One of them was drowned, the other was eaten by a wolf. Her husband was killed by a snake. Her parents and their household perished in a fire. She then married a priest. While she was giving birth to a son her husband got drunk with another man. He then came home, killed her son and made her eat its flesh. She ran away and came upon another householder whose wife had died. The householder took Utpala as his wife but he, too, died and she was buried alive with his corpse, as was the local custom. A grave-robber dug her up and she became his wife. Later the king killed this husband [who was also] a bandit chief; she was yet again buried with the corpse. It is said that she underwent these miseries as a result of the following. In a former rebirth, Utpala had been a king’s chief concubine. She had killed the queen’s son but sworn many oaths denying it.

There are very many such stories. Cause and effect is even subtler and more obscure than emptiness: Shravaka and Pratyekabuddha Arhats can understand and teach the subtle details of emptiness but the subtleties of cause and effect come under the jurisdiction of Buddhas alone and one must assess it solely through their authentic pronouncements. This law, in fact, is so subtle that one should avoid even the smallest sin. From *The Sayings of the Buddha*:

Do not think a small sin
Will not return in your future lives.
Just as falling drops of water

Will fill a large container,
The little sins
A churl accumulates
Will completely overwhelm him.

A trivial virtue will also grow into a good result. The universal emperor Mabhvata ruled over the four continents, celestial realms and all. They say this was the result of his having thrown a handful of lentils [as an offering to] Buddha Vipashyin. Four of the lentils landed in Vipashyin's begging bowl and one stuck to his crown protrusion.

Once, while Buddha was still alive, there was a brahmin named Survanavasu. Gold coins would come out of his hands. There was an inexhaustible supply of coins, said to be a result from a past life when he had been a timber merchant, when he had once received a gold coin in payment for some wood and offered it, dropped in a clay pot full of water, to Buddha Kashyapa.

Kanakavatsa was an Elder of the Sangha. At the time of his birth seven golden elephants appeared spontaneously in his family's treasure-vaults. All the elephants' droppings and urine were gold, so Kanakavatsa was well provided for. Seven times King Ajatashatru had the elephants stolen, but this did not succeed because the elephants would sink into the ground [and return to their owner]. This was said to have been the result of a past life when Kanakavatsa had restored and gilded a clay statue of Buddha Kanakamuni's elephant mount.

When the nun Shukla was born from her mother's womb she was already wearing clothes of fine linen. When she was ordained, the clothes were transformed into robes. These are said to have been results from a past life when she had been a beggar, and she and her husband had had only one garment between them and had to take turns going outside. Yet they offered this garment to Buddha Kanakamuni, though it could have meant their deaths. The act ripened into a tangible result for both of them in that very life: the king and his concubines gave them clothes.

One must not belittle the practice of even small virtues. From *The Sayings of the Buddha*:

Do not think a small virtue
Will not return in your future lives.
Just as falling drops of water
Will fill a large container,
The little virtues
The steadfast accumulate
Will completely overwhelm them.

These two sections on how karma is fixed and on how it increases make one decide that one should definitely practise virtue and abandon sin, and that one should practise even the smallest virtue and abandon even the smallest sin.

ONE DOES NOT MEET WITH SOMETHING IF ONE HAS NOT CREATED THE KARMA FOR IT TO HAPPEN

When there is a war or other conflict, some people claim, 'I had no talisman against weapons, yet when people fired many guns I came to no harm.' You might take this to be something amazing, but it is a case of their not meeting with something for which they had not created the karma.

Some people are at first unscathed by weapons but later get killed. Some will say, 'Their talisman must have weakened,' but this indicates that they do not understand cause and effect. It was nothing of the sort: initially these people had not met with [a situation created by their] karma. Later on, they did. When one does not meet with [a situation created by one's] karma, one will not die, despite being burnt in a fire. Once the householder Agnibhu was burnt in a fire together with his mother's corpse, but he did not die and later gained arhatship. Ajatashatru stole [Kanakavatsa's] golden elephants seven times but he derived no benefit, because the elephants sank into the ground each time.

King Udayana's concubine Shyamavati had achieved the results of a Never Returner [and so could fly]. Her retinue of five hundred ladies had seen the truth [that is, gained the path of seeing]. Yet when Akala the brahmin set fire to her apartments, [because in a previous life they had burnt down a brahmin's hut] they could only fly a small distance away. Shyamavati said, 'Who rules us but our own karma, that we ourselves created and accumulated?' They all dived into the fire like moths into a flame and were burned. There was also a woman servant named Kubjottara, who had not achieved any magic powers [but did not share this karma]. She escaped from the fire by fleeing into a ditch full of water.

When Virudhaka waged war against the Shakyas, all seventy-seven thousand of them were Stream Enterers, but this did not save them from being killed. A few who had not created the appropriate karma fled far away and escaped, while the great name of Shakya was brought low.

The city of Ravana was buried under a rain of earth. The king, his ministers and subjects were all buried, but two ministers escaped.

These are some of the examples of people not meeting with something because of not possessing the karma for it.

KARMA ONCE CREATED WILL NOT DISAPPEAR OF ITS OWN ACCORD

As a sutra tells us:

The karma of embodied beings
Does not vanish over hundreds of aeons.
If the prerequisites and the time are right,
Karma will ripen to results.

Karma does not grow stale after a long time, nor does it lessen, become non-existent, and so on. It will sooner or later ripen into a result, as in the story of Arya Vibhudatta, who had achieved arhatship yet could not obtain alms, or if he did, the alms would vanish for some reason. His dying words were, ‘The soup of ashes.’ Then he left his body.

The householder Shrijata had in his mind-stream so few and such small root virtues to contribute to his liberation that an Arhat [Shariputra] could not see them. He had received these root merits in the following way. Shrijata had taken rebirth as a fly in a past life. He had followed the scent of a dry animal-dropping in a drain, had landed on it, and by accident had circumambulated a stupa when the dropping was swept away by some water.

A pig was once chased around a stupa by a dog; it was reborn as a god after its death.

When King Virudhaka was persecuting the Shakyas, the Bhagavan Buddha himself had, to common appearances, a back ailment. Once, in a past life as a child, a number of fishermen had caught two huge fish to eat and he had rejoiced over this. The back ailment was the result. The story goes that Virudhaka himself was burnt to death in a fire, despite living completely surrounded by water.

The Buddha predicted that a Jain named Duhkhitaka would die from ill-digested food. The Jain went on a fast, but died anyway from undigested water and sugar cane.

Nagarjuna had gained knowledge of immortality, but in a past life he had sliced through an ant’s neck while cutting grass, and because of that karma he died by losing his head.

The Shravaka Maudgalyayana was the best at working miracles, yet some priests, whose heads were shaven, except for the small lank of hair at the crown, managed to beat him with their staffs. Maudgalyayana’s whole body resembled a bent bulrush. ‘His flesh and bones were beaten to a pulp.’ Shariputra asked him why he had not shown them his miraculous powers. Maudgalyayana replied that

he had been completely under the power of his karma; how could he create a miracle if he was not even able to bluff his way out? In a past life he had said something insulting to his mother; the karma had not disappeared of its own, and this was the result.

As for the results of evil karma, if you cannot purify the evil karma itself through the four powers of confession and restraint, it will not let you go, even in your last life [as a Bodhisattva]. As *The Sutra on the Wise and Foolish*, *The One Hundred Verses from the Sutras*, *The One Hundred Life-stories*, *The Transmission of the Vinaya*, and so forth tell, after you have accumulated either a sin or a virtue, the result will not disappear. It is impossible for the karma to become non-existent, which is why they say you must modify your actions even on the subtlest level.

The next two sections are a discussion of sin and a contemplation of techniques to ensure that your virtue will not be destroyed by anger. In any case you must decide to modify your behaviour properly according to the law of cause and effect. The above four headings were mainly to promote faith in cause and effect. When you want to modify your behaviour according to cause and effect because of your faith, you should think about the ten-fold path of karma - a rough overall scheme describing virtue and sin - because this makes the task of modifying your behaviour easier. From *Engaging in the Middle Way*:

Apart from ethics, there is no cause
Of high rebirth or definite excellence:
[Not] for ordinary beings, [for the Shravakas]
Produced by enlightened speech,
For beings certain to gain
Enlightenment by themselves,
Or for Children of the Victors.

In other words, the ten-fold path of karma is the foundation of high rebirths for people who have entered the path; it is the foundation for the sort of enlightenment enjoyed by people inclined towards being Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas; and it is the foundation for the supreme, full enlightenment of Bodhisattvas. It is therefore vital for ordinary beings initially, in this Small Scope section, to keep the ethics of modifying their behaviour according to the black and white sides of cause and effect.

THINKING ABOUT SOME OF THE SPECIFICS OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

This has three sections: (1) thinking about the black side of cause and effect; (2) thinking about the white side of cause and effect; (3) teaching about the doors that unintentionally lead to powerful karma.

THINKING ABOUT THE BLACK SIDE OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

This itself has three sections: (1) the actual black karmic process; (2) the differences that make for heavy or light karma; (3) teaching what the results of these karmas are.

THE ACTUAL BLACK KARMIC PROCESS

If the law of cause and effect is so important even on a very subtle level, what then is the basis for modifying one's behaviour? *The Treasury of Metaphysics* tells us:

The ten-fold process of karma,
Be it black, be it white,
Was taught to serve
As an overall summary of karma.

This says that virtue or non-virtue can be summarised under ten types. Even the ordained, not just ordinary lay people, must modify their behaviour. That is why Longdoel Lama Rinpoche was so punctilious about letting people know about any of the ten non-virtues he had committed - in fact, he would draw attention to them.

Engaging in the Deeds of Bodhisattvas says:

Though you think you want to avoid suffering,
You actually hasten on to suffering.
You may want happiness
But through benightedness
You destroy happiness like an enemy.

In other words, we may desire happiness but we don't understand how to create virtue, the cause for our having happiness. We may not want suffering but we don't understand that we must abandon sin, the cause of suffering. So, we defeat happiness - the very thing we want - as if it were our enemy. We modify our behaviour the wrong way round.

Some people who think at a low level might feel, ‘I do not know what the ten non-virtues are.’ But if we can learn twenty or thirty songs it is impossible that we cannot know the ten non-virtues after hearing about them. We will go to the lower realms not because we don’t know the Dharma or haven’t studied it, but because we know the Dharma but do not put it into practice. It is vital to put Dharma into practice.

The ten non-virtues, the things to abandon, are:

Karma of the body has three aspects,
That of speech has four, and mind, three.
Expiate each of these ten non-virtues.

In other words, *killing, taking things not given to you, and sexual misconduct* are the three non-virtues of body. *Lying, divisive speech, insulting words, and idle gossip* are the four of speech. The three of mind are *covetousness, harmful intent, and wrong views*.

Each of these non-virtues has four components: the *basis, intention, deed, and final step*.

KILLING

The basis of killing involves another being, quite distinct from oneself, that is to be killed - a sheep for example. The *intention* itself has three parts: the *recognition, motive, and delusion*. Here, *recognition* is to recognise unmistakably that a thing is what it is. The *motive* is wanting to kill. The *delusion* is any of the three delusions. An example of killing out of hostility would be getting angry at, say, an enemy and striking him with a weapon. An example of killing out of attachment is killing a sheep because one is attached to its meat, hide, and so forth. An instance of killing out of benighted ignorance is the killing of a sentient being by a Tirthika or any such person to make an offering of its meat and blood, with the thought or claim that this is not a misdeed. The *deed* is carrying out the killing using poison, one of the five types of weapons, or whatever else may be used. *Killing* need not be something obvious like stabbing with a knife: it could also be done through black magic, mantras, and so forth. The *final step* is the other being’s death.

When there is a full set of all these, the karmic process of killing has been completed. Ordering someone else to do the killing is no different from doing it yourself. *A Treasury of Metaphysics* says: ‘It is all one for armies and so forth: all of them have equally done the deed.’ That is, if eight people kill a sheep, each of them does not receive a *share* of the sin: each one receives the *full* sin of killing a

sheep. When a general sends out many soldiers to the slaughter and a thousand men are killed, each soldier commits the sin of killing as many men as an individual soldier is capable of doing; the general, however, gets the full sin of killing all one thousand men.

We may set a good example here in the Central Province, but everywhere in Tibet I believe ordained people are making others slaughter cattle for them, claiming, 'They are our serfs.' But the slaughterer and the person who made him do it each commits the sin of taking a life. If the monk had done the killing with his own hands, only one person would have committed the sin. How much better if he had not asked the other person to assist and had instead done the killing himself - the other person would not have acquired the additional sin. We may think that we do not acquire the sin of actually killing a living being but we *do* because it is also a great sin to make others kill for us.

Once, some monks and novices herded a goat, a sheep, and a bull into a pen. When the animals were about to be slaughtered, the goat said to the other two: 'They want to kill us.'

'But they take refuge every day,' said the bull. 'They fold their hands together, shut their eyes and say, "May all sentient beings have happiness and its cause." They will not kill us!'

'They are disciples of the Buddha,' the sheep said. 'When they embarked on the teachings, they promised to keep the advice that goes with taking refuge. The main advice is not to harm sentient beings. Surely they will not harm us!'

The animals talked among themselves a great deal. Then, early that morning the lay butcher went to the monks' home. The animals saw him and listened.

'I'm busy today,' the butcher said with some heat. 'Could you ask somebody else to help you?'

'I've run out of things for lunch,' one monk insisted. 'Help me out by butchering these three today.'

The butcher had to promise to do it.

The three animals heard that they were certain to die. The two who had said this would not happen were crying helplessly. Just then, the monk came, telling the beads on his rosary, taking refuge, and reciting *om mani padme hum*; he had come to see if the goat, sheep, and bull were fat enough.

The three said that it was not right for monks to kill sentient beings, or to get others to do so. 'It would be best if we were not killed. If we die, monk, you yourself will be killing us.'

The monk did nothing. The butcher returned and bound the legs of the three animals with a rope. He knocked the bull unconscious with a mallet, thrust a sharp

sword into the goat's and sheep's ribs up to the hilt, and used sharp hooks to cut their main blood vessels. Thus the animals went through inconceivable suffering. The bull cried out in a pathetic voice: 'Hear me, all the Buddhas of the ten directions. I have evil tidings. The monks of this land are only pale reflections of monks, for they have sentient beings killed - sentient beings who were once their mothers.' The victory standard of the Dharma was lowered, and the standard of the demons raised on high; all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were saddened.

This was the dialogue between the monk, goat, sheep, and bull - and all for the sake of lunch for a few monks! *A Clear Mirror* gives a longer version.

Such things detract from the teachings; it is vital to avoid killing living beings. My own guru, my refuge and protector, was especially good at making others repent and give up killing other beings. And when I went to Kham I was able to put an end to the mass slaughtering of animals that Sog Tsaendaen and other monasteries used to carry out to raise funds. I thought this was the best thing I could do in this life for the Dharma.

TAKING WHAT IS NOT GIVEN

The basis is another person's possession. The intention is made up of three parts: the *recognition* should be unmistakable; the *motive* is wanting to take the thing because it will not be given to you; the *delusion* is one of the three poisons. An example of anger would be stealing property from an enemy. An example of attachment is being attracted to someone else's property and stealing it through subterfuge. An example of benighted ignorance is the tradition among non-Buddhists that 'When a brahmin's fortunes decline, we claim it is Dharma for him to steal.' In other words, they do not count it as a misdeed.

The *deed* need not be skulking around at night, for example. Taking what is not given could be an ordained person's abuse of charity, an official's meting out of an undeserved punishment, the sort of practice of generosity that gives away a penny in the hope of receiving a pound, and so on. When a monk breaks the monastic rules he is made to do prostrations and the like; the point of doing these is so that none of the above misdeeds will occur.

To sum up: you want to obtain a particular piece of property, even though the other person does not want to part with it. You obtain it through various deceitful means, making that person powerless to withhold it from you. Not only are we in great danger of committing this sort of theft but we are also thieves if we do any of the following. We could let someone have another person's property or possessions, even if these are worth only a few *zho*. Or we could be lent something,

and much later take possession when its owner has forgotten about it. Or we could think, 'Wouldn't it be good if he has forgotten,' and find out that he has.

The *final step* comes when you think you have received the thing - you are then a thief. If you are a novice, it is tantamount to breaking a major vow; if a fully ordained monk, you break a major vow.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

For lay people the *basis* is: any wrong orifice, or, all orifices except the vagina; any wrong time, such as when the woman is pregnant or during one-day vows; at any improper place, such as before one's guru or near a stupa; any wrong partner, such as one's own mother [or father].

For ordained people, all sexual activity becomes sexual misconduct.

The *recognition* is: one must be in no doubt that the act is sexual misconduct; but when you break a major monk's vow of celibacy, they say it does not matter if you are mistaken or not.

The *delusion* is one of the three poisons. The *motive* is wanting to be perverse. The *deed* is the two organs coming into contact, and so forth. The *final step* is completed when one experiences orgasm.

LYING

One can lie about eight things: (1) something one has seen with one's eye-consciousness, heard with one's ear-consciousness, or sensed with one's nose, tongue, or body-consciousnesses individually; (2) something one has seen with one's eye-consciousness, etc., collectively; (3) something one has not seen with one's eye-consciousness, etc., individually; (4) something one has not seen with one's eye-consciousness, etc., collectively; (5) something one has experienced with one's mental consciousness; (6) something one has not experienced with one's mental consciousness; (7) something one knows; (8) something one does not know.

You must be speaking to a being that is going to understand what you are saying in human speech. The components of the *intention* are as follows. The *recognition* is recognising that you are, for example, saying you did not see something, when you in fact did. The *motive* is wanting to say such a thing. The *delusion* is one of the three poisons.

The *deed* is speaking lying words, or lying by some movement of your head without saying anything, for example. The *final step* is when the other person understands what you mean.

It would not be right, however, to give an honest answer if some potential killers ask you, ‘Where has our victim gone?’ However, those who still have some misgivings over this must do the following. When asked, ‘Did the man go this way?’ You should say something irrelevant to throw them off, like: ‘I’m going round to see what’s-his-name tonight.’

DIVISIVE SPEECH

The *basis* can be either people who get along, or those who do not. The *recognition* should be unmistakable; the *motive* is wanting to cause division; the *delusion* is one of the three poisons. The *deed* is as follows. You wish to divide people who get along, or not to effect a reconciliation between those who do not; it makes no difference if your divisive speech is the truth or lies. Some people consider doing these things to be a good quality, but they are not. Divisive speech causes great harm and so can’t be right.

The *final step* is when people understand the meaning of your words. Even so, the karma is still not complete if the divisive words you say have the opposite effect. The karma is not that of divisive speech if your words do not divide people - people not getting along with each other, and so forth - because the words were not understood.

INSULTING WORDS

The *basis* of insulting words could be either a sentient being that serves as the basis for development of harmful intentions, or an inanimate object such as a thorn.

The *recognition* should be unmistakable. The *delusion* is one of the three poisons. The *motive* is wanting to say such words. The deed is speaking about faults in another person’s ethics, race, body, and so on. You could tell the truth or lies; for example, you could say, ‘You’re blind’ to either a blind person or to someone not blind. When you talk about faults in the other person’s ethics, race, body, and so forth, even if you say it pleasantly, you have committed the misdeed of insulting words if the other person’s feelings are hurt.

The *final step* is when the meaning of the words is understood. The words must be understood; the karmic process is therefore incomplete if you say them to inanimate objects.

IDLE GOSSIP

The *basis* is something frivolous. The *recognition* is recognising that the thing you want to talk about is frivolous. The subject of idle gossip may or may not be a

famous king; anything can serve as the actual basis of the idle gossip. The motive is wanting to talk. The *delusion* is one of the three poisons. The *deed* is talking about the king, the army, or whatever.

These days we monks discuss many things when a large group of us gets together in the monastery grounds: the government, China, India, and so on. This is idle gossip. Idle gossip is the least of the ten non-virtues, but it is the best way to waste our human lives. The evil of idle gossip bedevils public [religious] ceremonies and monks continually get together in their rooms and spend their lunchtime making too much conversation. Atisha said: ‘When in company, check your speech; when alone, check your mind.’ In other words, you must be careful even if you have only one friend.

Stories and discussions on non-Buddhist treatises are idle gossip.

Although you can get other people to do six of the non-virtues of body and speech for you, except for sexual misconduct, you yourself are also involved in the karmic process.

COVETOUSNESS

The *basis* is another’s property or possessions. Suppose you go to the market, see an attractive piece of merchandise and think, ‘If only I had that!’ and are almost sick with desire.

The *recognition* is recognising the particular object serving as the basis of your covetousness as being that particular object.

The *motive*, *deed*, and *final step* must be assumed to be functions of the one thought. The *motive* is thinking, ‘If only this or that valuable thing were mine. The *delusion* is one of the three poisons. The *deed* is when the thought becomes stronger: ‘I will make it mine.’ The *final step* is when the thought becomes stronger still and you decide that you will employ some means of making the valuable object your own.

You can even covet your own possessions.

When we go to the markets in Lhasa, for example, we develop covetousness hundreds of thousands of times, because anything we do there we do without remembrance. We should apply the antidote to covetousness and think how these illusory goods are without essence.

HARMFUL INTENT

The *basis*, *delusions*, and so on, of harmful intentions are the same as those of insulting words. The *motive* is either wanting to inflict harm by, for example, beating and killing the basis of the harmful intentions, or wishing things like,

‘Wouldn’t it be good if that other person were ruined.’ The *deed* is putting more effort [into the thought]. The *final step* is deciding [to harm that person].

We perform the tantric activities of peace, increase, power, and wrath; if we do not do these with stable, good motives or solely for the sake of sentient beings, there is a danger that they can become forms of covetousness, harmful intent, and so on. We must therefore be careful.

WRONG VIEWS

The *basis* must be something that exists: cause and effect, the four truths, the Three Jewels, and so on. A wrong view is to view these things as non-existent; denying these things, for example, is saying they do not exist.

The Tirthika Rshi Akshipada lusted after his own daughter and wanted to sleep with her, so he composed *The Hundred Thousand Verses* in which he claimed that there were no other rebirths than this one. Other examples are the sixteen evil, fabricated, wrong views, and so forth.

The *recognition* is like the other nine forms of recognition except that one does not recognise that the thing being denied is in fact true. The *deed* is the intention to deny the thing serving as the basis. The *final step* is to decide that it does not exist.

There is little chance that we would actually [hold wrong views], but there is a danger that we could be swayed into doing so by bad company, that is, people with only small amounts of merit.

Now that we can identify these ten properly, it is vital that we scrupulously avoid doing them.

THE DIFFERENCES THAT MAKE FOR HEAVY OR LIGHT KARMA

There are six of these:

HEAVY BY NATURE

The seven karmic actions of body and speech range from the heaviest first, killing, to the lightest last of all. The reason is that the order reflects the amount of suffering that other beings will have. An illustration: no matter how different we may be from each other, none of us cherishes our possessions as much as we do our lives. Killing therefore causes more suffering to another person than taking something not given. However, with the three non-virtues of the mind, the lightest is first and the heaviest last of all.

HEAVY BECAUSE OF THE INTENTION

When the intention is due to a very strong delusion but the non-virtue, using insulting words, for example, is by nature light, as when one says ‘You mangy old dog’ out of very great anger, this act then becomes heavy.

HEAVY BECAUSE OF THE DEED

An example of this is killing sadistically. Also, killing an elephant, for example, is a heavier sin than killing an insect.

Killing animals with huge bodies or with great physical strength is a bigger sin because they experience greater suffering. In some lands they burn live frogs, poultry, and insects; these acts are heavy both because of their nature and because of the deeds themselves.

HEAVY BECAUSE OF THE BASIS

It is a heavy sin, for example, to cast dirty looks at karmically potent beings such as one’s guru, ordination master, Bodhisattvas, members of the Sangha, parents, and so forth.

HEAVY BECAUSE OF ALWAYS BEING DONE

Idle gossip, for example, is heavy because one is always doing it.

HEAVY BECAUSE NO ANTIDOTE HAS BEEN APPLIED

The sins in the mind-stream of a person who never performs a single virtue are extremely heavy.

There are one-to-six types of heaviness [in any action]. Two examples of types of heaviness are: casting a dirty look at a Bodhisattva when one is very angry, or killing an animal sadistically. Singing and dancing out of great attachment is an example of only one type of heaviness. All six types of heaviness are present if a butcher, say, who always sins and never does anything virtuous, gets very angry with his parents and kills them sadistically.

No matter how light our sins may be, we are always adding to their heaviness.

TEACHING WHAT THE RESULTS OF THESE KARMAS ARE

There are three types: ripened results, results congruent with the cause, and environmental results.

When one commits any of the ten non-virtues, one has to undergo four results instead of three, because results congruent with the cause are subdivided into two types: experiences congruent with the cause, and action congruent with the cause.

Great non-virtues will lead to rebirth in hell; medium non-virtues to rebirth as a hungry ghost; small ones to rebirth as an animal. Let us take killing as an example. The ripened result could be rebirth in hell. Later one gets free of the hells and is reborn as a human being, but one's life is short, with much sickness: the experiences congruent with the cause. One may also have liked killing ever since childhood: the action congruent with the cause. The environmental results occur in the environment: food, drink, medicine, and so on, have little power. After we have been born in hell and lived with our bodies indistinguishable from the fires there, we could then be born as a human being who likes to kill. Our killing perpetuates this process and we are again thrown into the lower realms. The most disheartening results of all are the actions congruent with the cause; that is why they say we must work hard at the means to prevent actions congruent with non-virtuous causes from occurring, and to promote the actions congruent with virtuous causes.

Now, we will deal with the other non-virtues - taking things not given, and so on - in their order. Experiences congruent with the cause are: [for stealing] you will lack possessions, or have to share them with others; [for sexual misconduct] you will be unable to keep your followers, servants, or spouses; [for lying] others will not believe you; [for divisive speech] you will have few friends, be without followers, servants, and so forth; [for insulting words] others will speak ill of you; [for idle gossip] your words will carry little weight because others will think little of what you say; [for covetousness] you will not achieve your aims; [for harmful intent] your surroundings will be terrifying; and [for wrong views] you will be blind to the right view.

Some sinners have long lives in which all goes well for them; some Dharma practitioners have illness, short lives, and so on. There are many causes for this: the causes for these effects lie in past lives. When something undesirable happens to us in this rebirth, we think that other more immediate circumstances are responsible, but this is not so. Normally these things are created by karma from past lives.

Actions congruent with the cause are as follows. In this life there are those who, since childhood, have liked stealing things; this comes from their having taken things not given to them in past lives. There are children skilled at making other children steal; such children like to indulge in stealing. Other actions congruent with the cause are analogous and easy to understand. The actions congruent with

the causes of covetousness, harmful intent and wrong views are an increase in attachment, hostility, and benightedness.

The environmental conditions due to taking things not given are: few crops and fruit; bitter frosts, hails, and so on; little milk or curds etc. [Due to sexual misconduct] you have to live in places that are muddy or filthy, for example; [due to lying] there will be many cheats about; [from divisive speech] you will have to live in places where the ground is uneven; [from insulting words] you will be born in a place where there are many tree-stumps and brambles; [due to idle gossip] the crops will fail and it will rain at the wrong times; [due to covetousness] all your pleasures will be overshadowed; [due to harmful intent] there will be much war, sickness, and famine; [due to wrong views] your sources of water and precious things will dry up.

So, if you have studied and know what happens through the results of non-virtue and yet still indulge in them knowingly, it is like jumping off a cliff with your eyes wide open.

The ground was once quite good; now it is no good at all, it has become infertile, and so on. Karma did this. Earlier in this fortunate aeon the ground was magnificent but it has gradually declined, and is now eroded with gullies and ravines.

THINKING ABOUT THE WHITE SIDE OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

This has two sections: (1) teaching the actual white karmic process; (2) teaching its results.

TEACHING THE ACTUAL WHITE KARMIC PROCESS

Merely refraining from committing the ten non-virtues will not complete the white karmic process. The complete process is assumed to be: identifying the ten non-virtues, refraining from doing them after seeing their drawbacks, and then having the thought of abandoning them, the ultimate form of restraint. The virtue of not killing, for example, has four parts: the basis, intention, deed, and final step. Take the white karmic action of not killing a sheep. The sheep is the *basis* of the karma. You see the drawbacks of killing the sheep and want not to kill it, thinking, 'It would not be right.' This is the *motive*. When this thought becomes even stronger and you see that killing the sheep would be a misdeed, you try to entirely refrain from killing it; this attempt is the *deed* of the white karma of foregoing killing the sheep. The karmic process is complete when you are quite definite that you will not kill it: you see the drawbacks of killing the sheep and think you will completely

refrain from killing it - this is [equivalent to] a karmic action of the body. This is the *final step* to the white karma of not killing a sheep.

When you are going to steal something not given, for example, the *motive* for not taking it would be the thought: 'This valuable thing is the basis for my suffering and degradation; this evil action will be the cause of my going to the lower realms, so to do it would not be right.' The *deed* is your attempt to give up this karmic action. The karmic process is complete when you are quite definite about abandoning [the deed]. Apply the same principles to the other non-virtues, such as sexual misconduct.

TEACHING ITS RESULTS

This has three sections.

THE RIPENED RESULT

You take rebirth as a god of the higher realms [that is, in the Form and Formless Realms] because of highly virtuous karma; as a Desire Realm god owing to medium virtuous karma; and as a human being owing to small virtuous karma.

RESULTS CONGRUENT WITH THE CAUSE

There are two types of these. *Experiences congruent with the cause are*: long life, great wealth, harmony with your spouse, people heeding what you say, harmony with your friends, and so on.

Examples of *actions congruent with the cause* appear in some people - reincarnations of saints, for example - who right from birth develop renunciation and compassion on their own.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

These are easy to understand: they are the opposites of the above environmental results for the ten non-virtues - food, drink, medicine with great power, and so on.

TEACHING ABOUT THE DOORS THAT UNINTENTIONALLY LEAD TO POWERFUL KARMA

This has four sections.

POWERFUL OWING TO THE FIELD

Generosity becomes more and more powerful when practised towards ordinary people, one's parents, practitioners of virtue, lay or ordained Bodhisattvas, Buddhas, and one's gurus respectively. It is a much greater sin to give a Bodhisattva a scornful look than to throw all the sentient beings of the three realms into prison and pluck out their eyes. It is more beneficial to fold one's hands out of faith as a sign of respect for a Bodhisattva than to release all those sentient beings from prison and give them eyes. Similarly, if a monk kills an animal, he breaks only a minor vow. If he kills a human being, he breaks a major vow.

POWERFUL BECAUSE ONE HAD BEEN A CANDIDATE FOR VOWS

A sutra says one's virtue is more extensive if one has taken vows than if one has not. And the same holds for non-virtues: it is a heavier sin for someone ordained to commit a trivial misdeed than for a lay person to indulge in the ten non-virtues. This is why it is so heavy when people who hold bodhichitta and tantric vows commit misdeeds. Some might claim, 'It is a great sin to take vows,' and avoid them, but this need not be so. From *Engaging in the Middle Way*: 'There is no cause for high rebirth other than ethics.' That is, in order to gain a human rebirth in a future life you must definitely take and keep vows. If you do not, and merely practise generosity, say, you may be reborn as an animal, a naga, for instance.

If you take a vow you will receive virtue continuously. And if you take an unvirtuous vow you will continuously receive non-virtue: a butcher and a woman who serves alcohol are examples of people who have taken unvirtuous vows and their sins will continually increase, even while they are sleeping or relaxing.

Two people may live together, and one of them may have taken a vow not to kill while the other has not. Both of them may equally not kill the whole time, but the person without the vows does not receive the virtue that comes from abandoning killing, whereas the virtue of the person with the vow will increase every day. Similarly, people with lay, novice, or full ordination vows may not make any special effort to create root virtues but at the very least they still see an increase in five, thirty-six, or two hundred and fifty-three types of virtue respectively, even when they sleep. And this applies to an incalculable degree, more than for any of the above, for people holding the bodhichitta vow. As *Engaging in the Deeds of Bodhisattvas* says:

Thereafter, even in their sleep,
Or in unguarded moments,

Their merit will have much power.
Much merit comes to them continually
And will become as enormous as space itself

People with tantric vows see one hundred thousand times more increase than even this. Thus, someone who has not taken any vows does not create these special root virtues; contrast this with someone holding vows who every day sees an increase in virtue and so profits greatly. The narrow-minded should therefore not have wrong views: even lay people must be encouraged to take one-day vows, one-day fasting vows, and bodhichitta vows.

There are two types of prohibitions: natural and declared prohibitions. Prohibitions of the first type are assumed to be as follows. One of their features is their cause: one's actual motives are non-virtuous ones. Another feature is their nature: their natures are sinful and they embody non-virtue. Yet another feature is their result: a part of their nature is that they are capable of ripening into an unpleasant result. No matter whether someone has taken vows or not, if these basics are present that person will generate a prohibited sin.

The second, the declared prohibition, is any karmic action or [resulting] obscuration that goes against a ruling made by the Buddha. They are assumed to be as follows. One of their features is the cause: one's actual motives are virtuous or neutral thoughts. Their nature is another feature: they embody a neutral nature. Another feature is their result: part of their nature is that they are not capable of ripening into unpleasant results.

If you break a minor vow and the cause, that is your motivation, is linked to something non-virtuous - thoughts of ignoring your vows, and the like - you will then commit a sin and break a minor vow: that is a natural prohibition and a declared prohibition. If you break the minor vow with a neutral motive, you break the minor vow by going against a ruling of the Buddha but you do not commit the sin - the natural prohibition. If a monk kills an animal he commits a sin - the natural prohibition of killing an animal - and breaks a minor vow - the declared prohibition, for killing an animal is a minor transgression of the monk's vow.

Such sins and broken minor vows may have the same nature but they are still restricted to being separate things. No matter how much one applies some antidote, such as the four powers, to the broken [minor] vow, and although one may be able to completely purify the sin having the same nature, doing this still does not properly restore the broken [minor] vow that has the same nature as the sin. Also, even though one may properly restore the broken [minor] vow, if one does not expiate the sin through the four powers one has still not purified it.

One takes pratimoksha vows from one's abbot, ordination master, and members of the Sangha; one must therefore restore these vows in the presence of monks or members of the Sangha. Misdeeds against the bodhichitta vows must be confessed and purified before one's gurus, the Victorious Ones, and their Children; misdeeds against tantric vows must be confessed and purified in the presence of the set of deities of the particular mandala.

It is much more beneficial to hold, at least, Mahayana one-day vows when creating great root virtues by, for example, making offerings or building up our [merit] collection.

POWERFUL BECAUSE OF THE THINGS BEING DONE

Generosity with Dharma is better than generosity with material things; offering one's practice is better than offering material things; and so forth.

POWERFUL BECAUSE OF THE INTENTION

If in conjunction with bodhichitta one makes a single prayer to Tara or offers a single butter lamp, one's virtue will become very powerful, even more than offering one hundred thousand butter lamps without bodhichitta.

These headings teach the things you must in general avoid - non-virtue - and the things you must practise - virtue.

If you are to become skilled at doing a practice you must know how to build up a huge amount of virtue without much trouble and how to reduce your non-virtue. If a monk, for example, performs, the preparatory rites once in conjunction with bodhichitta thoughts, it is powerful in all four ways owing to the field, his having been a candidate for vows, the thing being done, and the intention.

There is also a difference between *throwing* and *completing* karma. Throwing karma is either virtue that [causes] one to be born in the upper realms, or non-virtue that [causes] one to be born in the lower realms. Completing karma is not as fixed: one can have virtuous throwing karma and the completing karma be either virtuous or non-virtuous. Or the throwing karma can be non-virtuous and the completing karma either virtuous or non-virtuous. So there are four possibilities.

For a happy human rebirth, for example, rebirth as a universal emperor, both types of karma must be virtuous. A human rebirth marred by unpleasantness and hardship, rebirth as a beggar, for example, is a case of virtuous throwing karma and non-virtuous completing karma. Rebirth in hell is an example of non-virtuous throwing and completing karma. And examples of non-virtuous throwing karma

and virtuous completing karma are being the horse or mule of the Dalai Lama or Panchen Lama, or being their pet dogs.

A single karmic action can throw one into many bodies in succession, for example, insulting someone once with the words ‘You’re like a frog’ can result in taking five hundred rebirths as a frog; or many karmic actions can result in one taking a single body; and so on.

There are other types of karma: karma one is obliged to undergo, karma one is not obliged to undergo, karma one has accumulated through some action, actions done that accumulated no karma, karma that one accumulated without doing anything.

The results of karma that one is certain to undergo can occur in three different time periods. With tangible results: owing to some special motive or merit field one experiences the results during the same life that the karma was accumulated. With karma to be undergone after rebirth, one experiences the results of a karmic action in the next rebirth. With karma to be undergone in a number of rebirths’ time, one undergoes the results of a karmic action in the rebirth after next or in subsequent rebirths. You should refer to such works as [Tsongkapa’s] *Great or Medium Stages of the Path* to understand these in more detail.

THINKING ABOUT SOME OF THE SPECIFICS

We should therefore fear the results of non-virtue and keep the ethics of abandoning the ten non-virtues. If we practise the ten virtues properly we will not fall into the lower realms, and instead achieve a rebirth as a human being or god. Yet this alone is insufficient for us to achieve liberation and omniscience. If we could gain the special high rebirth that has the eight ripened qualities, however, we could cover more ground on the path than would otherwise be possible. We must therefore achieve such a rebirth with these eight ripened qualities. Great Tsongkapa said:

You will not cover much ground
Until you achieve a rebirth
With all the characteristics
For practising the supreme path.
Train yourself to have causes
For them all.

There are three headings here: (1) the ripened qualities; (2) their functions; (3) the causes to achieve them.

THE RIPENED QUALITIES

There are eight of these qualities: long life; a handsome body; high family; great wealth; trustworthy speech; great power and fame; being a male; being strong in mind and body. In this world, good fruits in a field come from good seed.

Make no mistake: our wealth, the fact that we have such a sound high rebirth, and so on, similarly all come from karmic actions in our past lives. And merely having the fruits of this year's harvest is not much help; one must make an effort to plant the seed for next year's. Similarly, it is not helpful to have no curiosity about one's future rebirths, or to think about them and then get terrified. One will get nothing at all if one simply achieves the cause for an ordinary high rebirth; one must achieve the cause to obtain a special type of rebirth suitable for the practice of Dharma. Even more, one must have the eight ripened qualities - long life, a handsome body, and so forth.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE RIPENED QUALITIES

The first of these eight qualities [long life] will allow you to progress in the Dharma because you can spend a lot of time creating root virtues for your own and for others' sakes.

Because of the second [a handsome body], you will attract disciples merely through your looks. Atisha was an example of this.

The third [a high family] will make others pay proper heed to your orders.

The fourth is great wealth. Because you will have great resources and a large retinue, you will firstly attract sentient beings through your material possessions, then you will ripen them with Dharma. So this quality gives great impetus to your work for others' sakes.

The fifth [trustworthy speech] enables others to apprehend the truth [emptiness].

The sixth [great power and fame] makes others follow your orders quickly and not disobey them, as if they were the king's command.

The seventh [being a male] means that you will not be afraid in a crowd and that when you live in deserted places you will have few hindrances in practising Dharma, and so on.

The eighth [being strong of mind and body] has these functions. You need a strong body to practise great austerities as Milarepa did; you can then practise Dharma during adversity. With a strong mind you will not despair, no matter what may be involved in benefiting yourself and others - you will always be most happy to do whatever necessary. You will gain powerful conceptualising [wisdom] and this will act as cause for your rapidly gaining clairvoyant Powers.

THE CAUSES FOR ACHIEVING THESE RIPENED QUALITIES

Although it is good for Dharma practitioners to receive these eight, you may wonder, 'Will I receive them?' You definitely will; it is like farmers planting seed in spring knowing that they will get the fruit in autumn. If in this rebirth we create the cause for our receiving the eight ripened qualities and make pure prayers that carry over into future lives, we will get these eight as a result in future lives. This is because results happen when a full set of causes has been assembled.

Let us go through the eight qualities. The causes for the first, long life, are giving up killing or harmful intention towards sentient beings; saving a life; sparing the life and ending the suffering of, for example, minnows whose pond is drying up; giving food; relieving a monk of heavy work; giving medicine to the sick or nursing them; and so on.

The main cause for having a handsome body is practising patience. However, there are other causes: offering bright butter-lamps to images; erecting new objects to represent the enlightened body, speech and mind; restoring these objects when they fall into disrepair; renewing their gilt and decorations; providing them with new cloth coverings; giving other people new clothes and jewellery; and so on.

One cause for being born into a high family is not having an inflated opinion of yourself - no matter whether you are a lay person or ordained - or of your good qualities, race, ethics, wisdom, retinue, clothes, etc. Other causes are acting with humility and abandoning all pride or feelings of superiority; and showing great respect to karmically potent beings such as your guru, ordination master, abbot, and members of the Sangha. Ordained people should respect anyone more learned or older than themselves. Scholars must also accept the service or prostrations that the young pay them out of respect for the learning in their mind-streams; and when a young man is about to receive monk's vows, he should be treated as an equal. It may be the custom to pay respect to practitioners or to the reincarnations of lamas, but you should do things like respecting scholars and the old; such things must be done as properly as they were in Buddha's time.

The Tibetan government, the Government of the Tushita Palace, uses the sixteen unsullied laws of gods and humans that contain many extremely important things: the young should respect the old; one should esteem people with good qualities or people who have been most kind to oneself, for example, one's parents; one should help people brought low by sickness or poverty; and so on. If these are followed it will help the general happiness of the land. A story is told in *The Transmission of the Vinaya* of four animal friends who respected each other according to their ages. Because of these animals' ethical behaviour, the people of Kashi [near Benares] enjoyed great happiness. These four friends were animals,

and yet this is what happened when the younger animals respected the older ones; need I say that we practitioners of Dharma, ordained people, and so on, should also do the same - it will bring even greater happiness!

The causes for being wealthy are presenting the symbols of enlightened body, speech and mind with new coverings or repainting them; giving clothes, food, drink, jewellery, and so on to people asking for them; helping people who do not ask for help; and making offerings or practising generosity as much as you can to people with good qualities or to those tormented by suffering.

Causes for having trustworthy speech are being punctilious in one's speech and taking pains to abandon non-virtue.

The causes for having great power are: being respectful and making offerings to karmically potent beings such as one's abbot, ordination master, the Three Jewels, one's parents, people older than oneself, and so on; making prayers to receive these various qualities; and so on.

Causes for being born a male are preferring the male rebirth; not liking the female state because one can see enough drawbacks to repudiate such a state and feel it is not good to take such a rebirth; stopping oneself from wishing to have a desirable female body. Another cause is to invoke the names of great Bodhisattvas, as in the verse:

I pay respect and homage
To Jnanaguru, Prabhaketu, Pranidhanamati,
Shantindriya, and Manjushri.

Other causes are not speaking ill of people censuring one, saving beings from being castrated; and so on.

The causes for being strong of mind and body are performing chores that others are too busy to do, or are physically, mentally or otherwise incapable of doing; helping others; not beating or whipping others; giving others food and drink; and so on.

If you make prayers that your rebirth with these eight ripened qualities may also become an instrument of virtue, you could become like Atisha or the Dharmarajas of old. If you don't make these noble prayers your rebirth could be non-virtuous: though you obtain a physical state that has the eight ripened qualities, you might become a great force working for non-virtue - a king of some remote region, for example. it is therefore vital to make strong prayers for this not to happen, so that one may not have such a non-virtuous rebirth.

Although the Dharma teachings on impermanence are important first, last, and in the meantime, the fundamental practice in this section of the Small Scope is that of modifying one's behaviour according to the laws of cause and effect.

AFTER THINKING ABOUT THESE THINGS, THE WAY TO MODIFY YOUR ACTIONS

This is in two parts: (1) the general teaching; (2) in particular, how to purify oneself with the four powers.

THE GENERAL TEACHING

During your meditations you should repeatedly think over the discussions on virtue and sin. In between sessions you should vigilantly and scrupulously modify your behaviour. Geshe Baen Gung-gyael used to count up his virtuous actions and his sins [at the end of each day] with white and black pebbles; he then modified his behaviour accordingly. You must do the same.

From *Engaging in the Deeds of Bodhisattvas*:

How right for me to think diligently
All the time, both day and night:
'From non-virtue comes suffering; how, then,
To be free of non-virtue?' ...
The Muni said that belief
Is the root of all things virtuous.
The root of belief has always been
Meditation on [karmic] ripening effects.

In other words when you come to know the white and black sides of cause and effect, you will always cultivate vigilance and scrupulousness. When you are in danger of taking a life, of lying, or whatever, you will immediately draw the line.

If you purify yourself of your small sins, expiate yourself of them and refrain from doing them again, then, as we find in Nagarjuna's *Letter*:

Whoever was once reckless,
May later become scrupulous;
They are then as comely
As the cloudless moon,
Just like Nanda, Angulimala,
Ajatashatru and Shankara.

I have already discussed this verse in the preparatory rites section. Nanda was dominated by lust, Angulimala killed nine hundred and ninety-nine men, Ajatashatru killed his father who was a Non-returner, and Shankara killed his own mother, yet they purified these sins. Your previously accumulated sins will also be purified, so it is vital to combine expiation of these sins with refraining from repeating them.

To sum up, in this Small Scope section you should place high value on the law of cause and effect by putting the main points into practice. Even great Atisha made himself skilled at doing this.

Once in Paenpo there was a man who used to recite *The Seal of Pangkong* and a man who had pawned a copy of *The Thousand Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*. Immediately after their deaths Yama's minions led them under the ground and brought them into his presence. The second man lied, but to no avail: he was shown Yama's mirror. The mirror revealed who had sold the sutra, who had bought it, the lentils the man had bought with the proceeds and even the child who picked up the lentils when they were spilt. The man was thrown into a giant cauldron. The man who used to recite *The Seal of Pangkong* took refuge and so returned from the dead. Geshe Potowa told him: 'Tell your story to others!'

You might think, 'In my next rebirth the sins I've accumulated will not harm me because my abbot, ordination master, and so forth, don't know about them.' But *The King of Single-pointed Concentrations Sutra* says:

The stars, moon and all, may fall,
The earth, its mountains, its cities may perish,
Space itself may be transformed into something else,
But you [Buddha] will not speak words untrue.

In other words, Buddha's discussion of the law of cause and effect is the truth and will never deceive.

Not even the smallest virtue or sin will disappear of its own accord; you should therefore modify your behaviour properly. Even so, because of your excessive familiarity with every small sin since beginningless time, you have been tarnished by them and should therefore expiate and refrain from these sins by using the four opponent powers.

IN PARTICULAR, HOW TO PURIFY ONESELF WITH THE FOUR POWERS

Although I have already covered this in the above section on the preparatory rites, it is so important that I shall go over these same headings again.

The first is the *power of repudiation*; this means having strong regret for one's sins of the past. This is the most important of the four powers, for if one has it the others will follow of their own accord. This power is the result of having faith in cause and effect.

The *power of applying all antidotes*, as I have already told you, has six types, all of which were mentioned in Shantideva's *Compendium of Instruction*. All the same, any virtuous practice done to purify the sin becomes an example of this power.

The *power of refraining from the misdeed* involves firmly resolving to refrain from it and thinking, 'Even at the cost of my life, from now on I will not do it again.' It will be difficult at first to be able to abandon all your misdeeds for good, but there will be some things that you can abandon from the root. For the things that you cannot abandon in this way you should cultivate a resolve to refrain from doing them; think, 'I will *not* do them today,' and repeat this every day.

The *power of the basis* is taking refuge and developing bodhichitta. This is the point of having these two prayers at the beginning of meditations on Vajrasattva and recitations of his mantra or of *The Confession of Transgressions*, and so on.

We have accumulated every sort of sin since beginningless time; our collection of sins is like the treasure-ward of a king. Even so, as I have already mentioned in the preparatory rites section, if we vigorously expiate them by means of the four powers, and refrain from repeating them, we will be able to purify even karma whose consequences we would otherwise be certain to undergo. It is best to do this using *Akashagarbha's Confession*, *The Confession of Transgressions*, combined with full prostrations; or *Suvarnabhasottama's Confession Sutra*, as discussed in the volume of miscellaneous works in *Tsongkapa's Collected Works*; and the like.

They say that the process of purification is most effective if, at the conclusion of the expiation, one feels each and every sin has been purified and if one visualises unfocussed emptiness as much as one can.

It is not helpful to be either indifferent to one's sins or to remain afraid of them. It is vital that we beginners expiate them and that we do so vigorously for a long time, until the signs that we have purified ourselves mentioned in *The Spell of Kandakari* appear repeatedly. As I said, ordinary monks will purify sins by attending public ceremonies or debating practice, by pursuing their studies and contemplations, and even by participating in a series of debating tournaments between the various houses of their college - if such things are done with the aim of accumulating merit and as a self-purification. The actions would then build up their accumulations. Analysing the contents of the scriptures is also a form of analytic meditation: 'meditation' need not mean retiring to some cave with our

bodies set in a certain posture. However, if we study merely as an intellectual exercise, or to defeat others in debate, this is not Dharma.

When we debate, we should not take it as merely siding against the person being examined; we should take it as a sign that we also have to take sides against our own mind-streams. This means that we who are ordained could be practising Dharma the whole time; if we think in this way, these things will become Dharma, and we don't necessarily need to go off on our own or do anything else to become Dharma practitioners. On the other hand, worldly people must direct some special effort towards the Dharma. However, the ten virtues are a particularly difficult practice for lay people.

My own precious guru said, 'The parts of the Lam-Rim to follow, the Medium Scope and so on, are an extension of the practices related to the law of cause and effect.'

Here is how to take up this practice. Abandon what little sins you can. When about to kill a louse, for example, even as your fingernail is poised over it, abandon the action with the thought, 'It would not be right.' When you intend to tell a lie, remember to hold your tongue. You must gradually build up your practice of virtue.

Some people think that committing trivial sins does no harm, for sins can readily be expiated. But there is an enormous difference between not committing a sin in the first place and expiating it after it has been committed: as great a difference as between not breaking a leg and mending it after it has been broken. In other words, one distances oneself from gaining the higher stages on the path, even though one need not experience the ripening effects of the sins if one purifies them by refraining from them and by strenuous expiation; so one still circles [in samsara] for aeons. Sinning, therefore, does great damage.

This ends the discussion. In the past you regarded this life as paramount, and had no yearning at all for a good rebirth. Now you have studied Dharma about the optimum human rebirth, impermanence, the sufferings of the lower realms, taking refuge, and cause and effect. If you now feel, 'I must work only for my future rebirths,' yearn for good rebirths only, and lose interest in this life's trivia, you have developed your first type of realisation into the Small Scope of the Lam-rim. Even if you develop this you must still meditate repeatedly, as Je Tsongkapa said: 'You must still stabilise this; you should still work hard and train yourself, despite already having this [realisation].' This is why I have worked towards your developing the first type of realisation into the Lam-rim during this teaching.

Then Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche taught this material at medium length. Next he taught how to pursue the practice.

First perform the preparatory rites. Then petition your guru, visualised sitting above the crown of your head. Then think over the generalities and particulars of cause and effect as laid out in the headings. Modifying your behaviour, however, is a practice you should do all the time; it need not therefore be pursued as a meditation topic.

Between sessions, you must repeatedly refer to discussions that teach about cause and effect: *The Sutra on the Wise and Foolish*, *The One Hundred Verses on Karma*, *The One Hundred Life-stories*, *The Sutra On Having Much Remembrance*, the set of four texts that make up *The Transmission of the Vinaya*, and so on, for I have given you only a short teaching on this.



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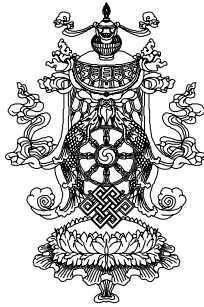
Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand"
A Concise Discourse on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment

Pabongka Rinpoche

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This book is recommended for further reading on all aspects of the Lam Rim.



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