

Study Group - "Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་གྱོ་ལ་ལག་བཅངས།



3 August 1993

422.122.12: How To Contemplate Karma In Specific¹

སོ་སོར་ཕྱི་སྟེ་བསམ་པ།

This has three subdivisions:

422.122.121: Thinking About The Black Side Of Cause And Effect

ནག་པོའི་ལས་འབྲས་བསམ་པ།

422.122.122: Thinking About The White Side Of Cause And Effect

དཀར་པོའི་ལས་འབྲས་བསམ་པ།

422.122.123: Thinking About The Doors Which Unintentionally Lead To Powerful Karma

ཞར་ལ་སློབས་ལྡན་གྱི་ལས་ཀྱི་སྐྱོ་བསྐྱུས་ཏེ་བསྐྱེད་འབྱུང་།

Why Specific Explanation Follows The General

In the previous section "Contemplating Karma in General" firm understanding of karma is cultivated. Then faith and conviction in the law of karma is generated. As the topic of karma is very broad and very subtle in its deeper levels, there are specific explanations of karma given after this general explanation. The specific explanation of karma shows that the practice of karma is to:

- abandon the ten unwholesome actions and
- practise the ten wholesome actions in our daily life.

422.122.121: The Black Side Of Cause And Effect²

ནག་པོའི་ལས་འབྲས་བསམ་པ།

This has three subdivisions:

422.122.121.1: The Actual Black Karmic Process

¹Liberation...p442 The title used here in the text is "Thinking about some of the specifics of cause and effect."

²Liberation.. p442 The title used here in the text is "Thinking about the black side of cause and effect."

ནག་པོའི་ལས་ལམ་དངོས།

422.122.121.2: The Differences That Make For Heavy Or Light Karma

422.122.121.3: Teaching What Are The Results Of These Karmas

དེ་དག་གི་འབྲས་བུ་བསྐྱེད་པ།

Abandoning The 10 Non-Virtues: The Root Of All Spiritual Practice

It is said that preserving the morality of refraining from the ten unwholesome actions is the foundation practice for all practitioners. Without observing this morality of refraining from the ten unwholesome actions no-one can reach their spiritual goal. Even if we have not yet entered the spiritual path, this morality needs to be maintained in order to attain a higher form of rebirth as a human or godly being. This morality is the root cause for attaining higher status, which is the higher rebirths within cyclic existence. Whereas for those, who have already entered onto the path of the hearer or solitary realiser, in order to reach their goals must maintain this morality of restraint from the ten non-virtues. Similarly, bodhisattvas also need to observe this morality to achieve their goal, which is the complete enlightenment for all sentient beings.

Benefits Of The Practice Of Morality

Regardless of whether one is a celibate or lay person, practising morality or moral ethics is very essential, not only for one's own survival, peace and happiness but also for the sake of others. For this reason, in Buddhism, there is a great deal of emphasis on morality or non-harmfulness. In ancient India when Buddhism first flourished, it became very popular and gained a great deal of respect from most people in those days. In fact, everyone can appreciate or see the value of Buddha's teaching on non-harmfulness.

It is said that upon this basis of this teaching on morality, it makes sense to say the dharma is a source of peace and happiness in the world and for individual beings. No matter what sort of living being, whether animal or human, they cherish their own life more than anything else. In the face of a threat to one's life we becomes very scared. Even as small a creature as a tiny ant will react to

a threat to its life. Even to a sound it responds with fear. It cherishes its life. Consider attitudes towards peace, happiness and security in one's life. When no threat at all is perceived to one's life, there is no concern about receiving harm from others, that is when one relaxes, feeling secure and happy.

Therefore, the Buddha's teaching or dharma of non-harmfulness serves as the source of happiness and peace for all living beings.

In this way it is essential to know just how much one cherishes one's own life. One wishes for a peaceful, happy life, because one cherishes life. In this way one should also understand other beings. They also cherish their lives. Consider, for example, the life of an animal. When that animal lives in a very peaceful environment, it can conduct its affairs normally. But if it perceives some threat to its life, it cannot even enjoy the food in front of it and must turn around.

Therefore, to enjoy peace now and a future good life, and to benefit others, the practice of non-harmfulness is important.

Chandrakirti said:

There is no other cause of higher rebirth than the practice of morality.

Therefore one should practise morality for the sake of:

- one's present life
- one's future lives
- others

Relationships In This Life Improve By Understanding Karma

Learning about karma, or cause and effect, is a good way of developing common sense and a sense of discriminating wisdom. The advantage of developing this discriminating wisdom is that life becomes more stable, more honest and there is more knowledge about truth in this life, past lives and the future lives.

Therefore there are advantages in practising karma at all times, in this lifetime and all lifetimes.

The immediate benefits of practising karma are:

- one's relationships with others improve
- a good and clear sense of discrimination can be utilised in day to day life, since every occurrence in life is cause and effect. If one is aware of that causal link there will be no cause to have disharmony between friends.

Disharmony is the harming of other beings in the form of harmful speech, etc. Therefore, if one tries to prevent those actions, which are a cause of disharmony, then as a causal nature, disharmony will not happen. Since one's life is shared with others, we cannot always be the same person and act the same towards one another. At those times, when a friend acts abnormally, if one is aware of that, one should try to be more helpful to that friend. Whereas, if one shows impatience, then the relationship

will get worse, one's friend will get worse, thereby the friendship will become worse and beyond repair. The law of karma, one is basically about how to alter one's actions into a more skilful way in order to benefit oneself and others.

422.122.121.1: The Actual Black Karmic Process³

ནག་པོའི་ལས་ལམ་དངོས།

Recognising The Ten Unwholesome Actions

མི་དགེ་བ་བརྒྱ།

The actions which need to be abandoned are included in the ten unwholesome actions.

Three of Body: ལུས་ཀྱི་མི་དགེ་བ་གསུམ།

422.122.121.11: Killing

སྲོག་གཅོད་པ།

422.122.121.12: Stealing

མ་བྱིན་པར་ལེན་པ།

422.122.121.13: Sexual Misconduct

ལོག་གཡེམ།

Four of Speech: ངག་གི་མི་དགེ་བ་བཞི།

422.122.121.14: Lying

ཏཱཱ།

422.122.121.15: Divisive Speech

སྤྲ་མ།

422.122.121.16: Harsh Speech

ཚིག་རྩུབ།

422.122.121.17: Idle Gossip

ངག་འལ།

Three of Mind

³Liberation.. p442 The title used here in the text is "The actual black karmic process."

ཡིད་ཀྱི་མི་དགེ་བ་གསུམ།

422.122.121.18: Covetousness

བརྟན་བ་སེམས།

422.122.121.19: Harmful Thought

གནོད་སེམས།

422.122.121.110: Wrong View

ལོག་ལྟ་བ།

Firstly we must be able to confidently recognise the ten unwholesome actions in order to observe the practice of refraining from them, then later they can be studied in terms of their results, etc and then put into practice. It is this practice from which benefit and meaning are derived. The main purpose of studying and trying to recognise the ten unwholesome actions is so that we can practice abandoning the ten unwholesome actions. In this way some benefit can be drawn from one's own practice for one's own life.

The Four Components Of An Unwholesome Action:

Each of the ten unwholesome actions requires these four components in order to qualify as a complete action.

1: Basis གཞི་བ།

2: Thought བསམ་པ།

This has three subdivisions:

i. Recognition འདྲ་ཤེས།

ii. Intention ཀུན་སྡོང།

iii. Delusion ཉམ་མེད་ས་གསུམ།

3: Deed ལྷོར་བ།

4: Finalisation མཐར་ཐུགས།

In each of these ten unwholesome actions, all four of these components should be present for that action to be completed. For example, in killing, the basis is the qualification of the object to be killed or it is the basis of creating that action of killing. In the case of killing, the basis is some living being other than oneself.

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one has undertaken to kill anything that moves. For example, in war anything in front is just killed. Even though that person,(who is to be killed), is not recognised individually, it is still the action of killing.

Ordering Someone Else To Kill

Since the action path of killing is determined by these four components, if on behalf of oneself an order is given to any other being to kill , then one is still acquiring or creating that action of killing. Also the person, who is asked to do the job, acquires the same karma. In this way one is causing another being to create this negative action. For this reason it is said to be better if the action of killing is performed personally.

Sharing In The Karma Of Killing

The number of actions of killing does not so much depend upon the number of beings actually killed. For example, if one thousand people are engaged in the killing of one being, then, although only one being is killed, all those one thousand people complete the full action of killing.

422.122.121.12: Stealing

མ་བྱེན་པར་ལེན་པ།

1. Basis

Is something owned by, or belonging to, another being. "Belonging to another being" means those other beings who are financially separate from oneself. If any property or thing is shared or belongs to oneself and another person, then one has a share in it. Therefore, utilising or taking that object cannot fully be stealing, since the object is common property. In this case the basis (of stealing) is not qualified.

2. Thought:

Recognition

This must be unmistakable.

Motivation

The wish to attain that object.

Delusion

Is any of the three poisonous minds. Stealing from an enemy is usually from anger or hatred. Stealing because of attraction to an object is the delusion of attachment. To steal something in the belief that there is nothing wrong is the delusion of ignorance.

3. Deed

The actual deed of stealing can be very violent or peaceful. It does not require a burglary. For example, even receiving an allowance from someone else can be stealing.

4. Finalisation

Is when, after having obtained that object, the thought, "I have obtained or acquired that object" is generated.

422.122.121.13: Sexual Misconduct

ལོ་ག་གཡི་མ།

1. Basis

This is elaborated under time, path, place, object.

Time: The time when the woman is menstruating, or when the other sex has taken the vow, e.g. the single-day vow of the Nyung-Nä which has the same number of vows as the Mahayana Precepts.

Path: As a lay person anything other than the normal male and female sexual path is regarded as sexual misconduct. For example, engaging in sexual conduct with the mouth or anus.

Place: Any place near reliquaries, one's altar or one's guru.

Object: Unsuitable partners e.g. one's own parents, any other relative or any partner who "belongs to" or who is married to another.

These categories are all related to the basis of performing the action.

2. Thought

Recognition: Must be unmistakable.

Motivation: Is the desire to engage in that action.

Delusion: Any of the three poisonous minds.

3. Deed

Is the conjoining or contact of the two opposite sexes.

4. Finalisation

Is the experience of joy.

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and is capable of understanding the communication.

2. Thought:

Recognition: If one wants to lie to someone and to say that one has seen that object but in fact one has not seen that object then this is recognition. One should be very clear about what one is lying. Intentionally it must be very clear in one's mind just what one is going to lie about to that another person.

Motivation (Intention): This is simply the wish to lie.

Delusion: This can be any of the three poisonous minds.

3. Deed:

The actual deed can be either verbal or non verbal. The deed is the actual action which communicates about what one is intending to lie, to another person. The deed can be actually lying by speech with false words or in response to someone who asks "Have you seen some other being?", one can respond by saying, "I have seen that person", or by nodding the head, when in fact one has not seen that person. In this way the other person gets a false message.

4. Finalisation:

Is when another person fully hears or receives one's lie. That is, the conclusion of lying is when the other person fully receives the false message. Generally speaking, lying entails carrying or containing some meaning of the subject which is not true.

It is like the difference between the two divisions of truth - conventional and ultimate truth. Conventional or relative truth is the false truth. It is false because there is a difference between the way that truth appears to one's mind and how it is in reality. Similarly when lying, the words one's says to others are false, because what the words say and what really exists are different.

Exceptions To Lying:

Should we always be honest in our speech? This may depend upon the circumstances. In some circumstances it may be necessary to not restrict our actions to the ten virtuous actions. It may be wiser to break the rule of not lying, if one sees more purpose and benefit in so doing. The example given in the text is that one has witnessed someone running away to save their life. Afterwards on meeting the pursuer, it is not wise to immediately tell all to that pursuer. Rather it is best to distract them by bringing up some other subject, restricting talk to that other subject or by some other method.

422.122.121.15: Divisive Speech

ལྷ་མོ།

1. Base:

Can be either other beings who enjoy good relationships or alternatively beings who do not enjoy such good and harmonious relationships.

2. Thought:

Recognition: This should be unmistakable.

Motivation (Intention): In the case of those enjoying a good relationship it is the wish to divide those people or to cause

conflict. In those without such a good relationship it is to cause further division.

Delusion: Any of the three poisonous minds.

3. Deed:

Is the actual speech or action which causes deterioration in the relationship between good friends or makes other relationships worse.

To commit the non virtue of divisive speech there must be some intention to cause disharmony in the relationship between others. This relationship can be either healthy or non healthy. The usual deed that causes disharmony is talking. Since the intention must be to cause disharmony in that relationship it does not matter whether whatever is said is true or false, rather it depends upon the consequence causing conflict. For example, there are two people. The faulty action of the first person is witnessed. The observer goes to the second person and, out of an intention to divide them, states that the first person was seen to do such and such a wrong thing. That is divisive speech. Two people may have a bad relationship. If one goes and says something, which for certain reasons encourages one person to not have a relationship with the other person, then, whether the reasons are true or false, one's words are a cause to create further division between people. This is divisive speech.

4. Finalisation:

When the people concerned fully understand one's advice or speech.

End of discourse

Geshe-la has a few thank-you's to say. Geshela is very pleased that while he was away in New Zealand for one week, the program in the Centre had gone very smoothly as usual. He would like to thank us all for keeping the program going, and to thank anyone who puts effort into the Monday night meditations which are so successful. He admires those who give time to that. Also while he was away we sat the examination. This is also a very good way to develop your knowledge. Last Wednesday night, as he had wished, that was also fulfilled by meditation, discussion and teaching on the program. On Sunday was the seminar, which we all enjoyed. When he arrived back, everyone seemed happy from the look on their faces, and even those on the road looked at us, questioning why we were having so much fun. This is due to being open, kind and sharing with each other. He thanks us for making that effort. Such efforts indicate the development and growth of the Centre. He wants to see this always.

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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅངས།

7 September 1993

Geshe-la has some suggestions as to how to lead meditations. Principally a meditation must be led out of personal experience of the subject. This implies:

- a. familiarity with the subject and also
- b. meditation upon that subject.

Maybe it is not necessary to bring notes in order to lead a meditation, since what is brought to the meditation is not only what has been learnt from the text, but also through thorough study of the subject. When one then sits and concentrates upon the subject, the meditation can be completed without any notes. Leading the meditation therefore is just like doing the preparation meditation beforehand.

Achieving Happiness By Decreasing The Selfish Mind

In general it is said that we always need to observe our actions of body, speech and mind. This leads to the development of more self control. The most important actions to control are our thoughts, because they determine the other actions we complete, and thereby the consequences which we experience. It is the mind, or thought, which is behind all our other actions. Therefore, it is important to be able to discriminate between those states of mind which influence us to undertake both negative and positive actions.

The best moment to observe our state of mind is when we are in a very peaceful mood. When we are very distracted or busy, it is impossible to observe our own mind. Through observing the mindstream, we can see that it is the influence of our thoughts which drives one to undertake the various normal, day to day actions. This mind is very self centred. Our daily actions are done out of either fear of what might happen, or for some perceived advantage to oneself.

Through this very selfish way of thinking, we somehow distance ourselves from all others. Instead of helping them, even to those close to oneself, we cause even more harm and problems. As a result of this self centred attitude, we suffer loneliness and do not receive friendship or support from others. If we always adopt a selfish attitude and try to gain some advantage for ourselves, then there is no motivation to help others. If others also have this same attitude, then we receive no help from them.

It should be understood that our comfort and satisfaction in life depend upon others, and that we should not imagine we are living alone. Just as we wish for happiness and no suffering, so do all other beings. Our own happiness depends upon others - particularly those closely related to us. Therefore, to achieve happiness through a better future rebirth, and happiness in this immediate life, we must think of the needs of others. Those close to us are particularly important because in daily life they are the main reason for our unhappiness or problems.

This shows how important it is to include the needs of the other beings in our daily life as well as in our meditations. This is very different from the other selfish way of thinking. If the needs of others are respected, we develop good relationships with them, which in turn brings more happiness into our lives.

For these reasons the selfish mind should be subdued. This is the purpose for studying Lam Rim. Putting Lam Rim into practice has the potential to completely calm the mind through loving kindness for other beings.

The Purpose Of Studying Lam Rim Is To Develop The Good Heart

The reason for studying Lam Rim is to develop good heart in the mind. If good heart is developing then there will be more joy, peace and happiness in this life. It is characteristic of human beings to like those who show love and good heart towards them.

Shantideva:

Even your enemy will come to help you if you show friendliness and try to help them.

Benefiting others depends on having a good heart and loving kindness in the mind. We should practise showing loving kindness and friendliness even towards our enemies, rather than showing hatred, or attempting to defeat them. These outer enemies are not like anger and desire within oneself. Anger and desire within are the true enemies. They are what we should fight and subdue. We should not be careless about them or show friendliness to those enemies, otherwise we would be under their control.

In this way the self centred mind is a source of conflict and suffering for us. Such a mind makes it difficult for

others to actually show friendliness and offer help.

When one says, "Help others", this means to help all sentient beings - all living beings. Since such a thing does not seem feasible to the beginning practitioner, the very least that should be done is to try to help those closest to oneself - for example the members of the Study Group. We should all try to be very helpful to each other, whether it be sharing dharma knowledge or just sparing time to talk to each other. The objective is happiness in one's mind. This can be experienced by listening to dharma, or through the company of others. Experiencing this happiness is the purpose of life. As it is for ourselves, so it is for other beings, so we should try to help others to be happy.

Geshe-la is constantly encouraging us to show love and friendliness to others, just as parents never stop telling their children the same thing. He hopes that this will help us to make progress in this regard.

The Ten Non Virtuous Actions (continued)

Atisha said in his Thought Transformation,□

When I am amongst many others I must observe my speech and bodily action. When by myself observe my thoughts.

This advice means that when with others, we should observe our actions to make sure that they are not one of the three non-virtuous actions of body - killing, stealing or sexual misconduct; nor one of the four non-virtuous actions of speech - lying, divisive speech, harsh speech or idle gossip.

422.122.121.16: Harsh Speech

ཚོག་རྒྱུ་བ།

There are four characteristics which determine whether that action is complete or incomplete.

1. Basis

Is the object to which the speech is directed. Generally the base is an object to which one wishes to hurt or cause harm. Such a base object can be either animate, such as a living being, or inanimate (such as swearing at an inanimate object).

However it is said that in order to create the complete action of harsh speech, the base, which although in general can be either animate or inanimate, must be a living being. That living being must be able to understand one's speech and be hurt by it.

2. Thought

Recognition: Is directing one's speech to the specific object to whom one intended to use those words. This recognition must be correct. If one's speech is mistakenly directed to another, then recognition is incomplete. So recognition must be accurate for the action to be

complete.

Motivation: The wish to use abusive words or speech.

Delusion: Anyone of the three poisonous minds.

3. Deed

The actual deed is when the harsh speech is actually used. For example, degrading others by saying, "You have no sense of morality" or "You have no education." Or it can be by swearing at others. If one says, "You are blind", then it does not matter whether that is true or not, i.e. whether the person is in fact blind. Rather, it becomes harsh speech when the words can hurt the listener.

4. Finalisation

The other person fully understands the meaning of one's speech.

We should constantly be aware that we unnecessarily cause disharmony in our relationships with others and unnecessarily disturb their minds through the use of harsh speech. Harsh speech is one of the major causes of conflict in relationships. We do not usually use harsh speech to strangers, but are more likely to use it to those closest to us. In this way we cause conflict and lose friendships. We might think that what we are saying is very unimportant, but the listener may be very hurt and always remember that hurt. Even if they have a very bad memory, they can still remember a hurt administered by a friend. Then later, if there is conflict, they recollect the hurt and this makes the relationship worse.

Therefore to maintain relationships with others, we should look at the causes and conditions for bringing disharmony. The best way to develop relationships is to develop patience and tolerance whenever the cause of disharmony arises. On the other hand one should always create secure relationships by creating the causes and conditions that develop harmony.

End of discourse

Geshe-la: Question six from the exam paper, "How to integrate the study and practice of Dharma into my daily life?" The point here is to try to combine spiritual knowledge with daily activities. So one must look at a single day and what is done in that day. How are daily activities transformed into spiritual practice?

On waking up, remember that it is a fact that waking up shows that you are not dead. Immediately you will feel some joy. The reason why you are alive is because of the blessings of the refuge objects and your guru. So then you can remember the qualities of the refuge objects. Try to keep mindfulness of the dharma throughout the day.

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