
Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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༄ ལྷོ་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།

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422.122.11: How To Contemplate On Karma In General¹

སྤྱིར་བསམ་ཅུལ་དངོས།

The Four General Characteristics Of Karma:

422.122.111: Certainty Of Karma

ལས་ངེས་པའི་ཅུལ།

422.122.112: Karma Increases

ལས་འཕེལ་ཆེ་བ།

422.122.113: Not Meeting With Karma Which Is Not Created

ལས་མ་བྱས་པ་དང་མི་འཕྲད་པ།

422.122.114: Karma Created Is Not Exhausted Or Does Not Disappear

ལས་བྱས་པ་ཆུད་མི་བྲ་བ།

Four Determinations Pursuant To Contemplation Of The Four General Characteristics Of Karma

By contemplating each of these four characteristics there should follow four firm convictions:

1. Through contemplating the certainty of karma, the determination to establish positive virtue in one's actions should follow.
2. Through contemplating the increasing of karma, the determination TO NOT CREATE even a very tiny negative action but CREATE any positive action, no matter how tiny, should follow.
3. Through contemplating not meeting the outcome of karma which has not been created, the determination to apply the four forces of remedy to purify negativities should follow.

4. Through contemplating that karma after being created does not simply disappear of its own accord, the determination to see the importance of qualifying any virtuous action with the proper dedication should follow.

422.122.111: Certainty Of Karma²

ལས་ངེས་པའི་ཅུལ།

The certainty of karma shows the close link between the cause and its effect. According to Buddha, whatever karma is created, the result, which is similar to that cause, will automatically arise. The certainty of karma is that if any positive or virtuous action is created, the result will definitely be satisfactory. This is the certainty of karma. If the karma is non-virtuous, the result of that karma will definitely be something miserable. This understanding of the certainty should inspire the desire to create positive actions or karma, since everyone wishes for happiness and satisfaction. By contemplating this certainty of karma, there should be no doubt that, if a positive action is created, the desired result will be achieved.

Understanding Karma: The Root Of All Practice

It must be understood that one must be very cautious when creating any karma or actions. This is very important, since by being cautious, those karmas which result in suffering and misery, can be prevented. Also, one must be very aware of those negative karmas which have already been accumulated. If no action is taken against those accumulated negative karmas they will soon ripen their result, which will definitely be miserable. Also apart from experiencing that actual misery at the time of the ripening of that result, there is nothing which can be done to turn away that karma and misery.

The basic reason why it is necessary to develop faith in the law of karma is so that suffering can be minimised, and happiness can be increased. If this genuine faith in the law of cause and effect is cultivated, we shall be inspired to make every effort to create positive actions and remove any negative actions. From this point of

¹Liberation.. p433 The title used in the text is "Thinking about cause and effect in a truly general way."

²Liberation.. p433 The title used in the text is "How karma is fixed."

view, understanding and faith in karma, is what transforms our mind into dharma. This then transforms our deeds into dharma.

Alternatively lack of faith in karma is the reason why some are very absent minded about creating negative actions, and weak in confronting any unexpected situations and instability in life. This lack of faith in karma is due to a lack of understanding of karma. With a firm faith and a good understanding of karma, the whole of one's life can be seen in the light of that understanding. Normally, when unwanted situations happen in life, one not only loses patience, but also blames them on things outside oneself. In fact it is the karma (which is inside oneself), which should be blamed. This then changes how one views the situation, since that situation has now become one's own responsibility and therefore, can be better tolerated.

When honoured, immediately we become proud and excited. Whereas if by seeing that this good situation is all the result of positive karma, which we have created in the past, we shall be encouraged to create those same actions for the sake of our own future. Therefore, one's entire spiritual practice comes from understanding the law of karma. For example the practices of generosity, patience, etc., all arise from our understanding of the law of karma.

Certainty Of Karma: Generates Patience When Having Problems And Strength In Collecting Virtue

If this first characteristic of certainty is fully realised, then no one would ever be discouraged from practising right actions since it would become so fixed in the mind that the result of positive actions in any life is happiness. Any suffering, which is experienced in this life, is the result of negative actions created in the past (if not in this life then in past lives).

Understanding the certainty of karma prevents loss of faith in karma and the generation of wrong views on karma. For example, there are people who are always good and kind. They believe in God or the law of karma, and so always do right actions. Yet they are seen to be facing great difficulties and problems in life. A wrong view that there is no God or no truth in the law of karma could easily be generated in these circumstances. Consider this in more detail. What if without anticipation some "undeserved" major problems happened to oneself despite maintaining a faith in the Triple Gem, and as far back as one can remember one has never done any serious negative action and has always been kind? There is a danger that one's faith will be lost. It should be realised that these problems are the result of negative actions created in the past. Likewise there should be no doubt that positive situations are the outcome of accumulated positive actions.

Difficulties and problems as the result of negative actions are also influenced by accumulated positive actions. Without those past positive actions these problems would be far more serious and far bigger than now being

experienced. By tolerating these current problems, one is also relieving oneself of those negative karmas created in the past.

Therefore by always looking and judging situations from the point of view of karma we can generate:

- more patience in confronting problems and
- more strength to accumulate positive actions.

Story To Illustrate The Certainty Of Karma: Nyan-Pa Sang-Dan & The King Sergyel

During Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's time there was a monk called Nyan-pa Sang-dan³ (Sansk: "priyabhadra"). He had a very beautiful voice but physically was very unattractive. The cause for his pleasant voice but ugly body was that in one previous life he was employed by a King to construct a stupa or reliquary. Since it was very hard work he became very tired and complained to himself, "Why does the King want to construct such a big stupa? It seems that it will never finish." However, at the completion he felt good and regretted what he had said. With the wages from his labour he bought a bell made of silver and gold and offered this to the stupa.

Guru Shakyamuni Buddha told this story to King Sergyel who was visiting Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, because he wanted to arrest and execute Angulimala, who had murdered so many people out of a wrong view. Before sending his men to get Angulimala, the King thought that he should check with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. So the King on his elephant went to see Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. However, when the elephant heard the beautiful, melodious song of Nyan-pa Sang-dan, it stopped and sat down in the road. The King too became fascinated with that sound. When he met Guru Shakyamuni Buddha he told Guru Shakyamuni Buddha that his reason for being there was to capture Angulimala, but Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said, "You do not have to worry about him, as I have instructed him and he has reached the state of liberation, so it is not right to impose your law on him.

Then the King asked about the beautiful sound that he and his elephants had heard. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said, "That sound was the melodious voice of Nyan-pa Sang-dan." The King was very keen to see and admire that person, so he asked Guru Shakyamuni Buddha to meet him. Guru Shakyamuni Buddha said, "I am afraid that you will change your mind if you see him." And then Guru Shakyamuni Buddha told the story of Nyan-pa Sang-dan to the King and how in the past he had complained about constructing the stupa so his body was now ugly, but afterwards, by offering the bell, his voice was now very beautiful.

End of discourse

Debate On Emptiness

Geshe-la: Jeremy, does emptiness have colour?

³snyan-pa bzang-ldan

Student 1: No.
Geshe-la: Does emptiness have light?
Student 1: No.
Geshe-la: The sun and the electric light have light and are lacking inherent existence.
Student 1: The light lacks inherent existence but is not emptiness.
Geshe-la: If emptiness can not have colour or light, then why cannot it have light, since emptiness is lack of inherent existence? Emptiness does not have light because it is lack of inherent existence. Therefore, the reason why it is lack of inherent existence is also that such a thing should not have light?
Why does it not have light? For example, the sun lacks inherent existence.
Student 1: The sun is not an example of the lack of inherent existence.
Geshe-la: What other reasons are there for emptiness not having light? Note: whatever proof you give for your reason should maintain your assertion.
Subject = Emptiness
Assertion (predicate) = Emptiness does not have light
Reason = because emptiness is the lack of inherent existence
This reason is incomplete because there are many things which are lack of inherent existence but do have light, e.g. sun.
Student 2: Emptiness does not have light since it is not apprehensible by a form consciousness.
Geshe-la: Therefore any object which can be apprehended by a form consciousness can not have light.
Student 2: The reason why emptiness does not have light is because every object having light must be apprehensible by a form consciousness.
Student 2: Emptiness does not have light because it is only apprehensible by mental consciousness.
Geshe-la: What about the mind of a Buddha or the five different lights emanating from (that) mind. Does clear light have light?
Student 2: No.
Geshe-la: Why is it called clear light?
Student 2: It is called merely an absence of darkness.
Geshe-la: What is this darkness?
If there is no darkness, there can be no night or day.
Does the Person, the I, the You, have light?
You can have a flashlight.
Is there a problem saying, "I have light" when I have a flashlight which has light?
Student 2: Yes. It means my flashlight is me.
Geshe-la: If the light which shines on my body

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.

The original typescript is prepared from Alan Molloy's original transcript, which has been checked against Damien Busby's notes. Adair Bunnett then checks the typescript against a tape recording, and edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.

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