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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཨོ ལྷོ་སྤྱོད་མཚོན་ཆ་འཁོར་ལོ།



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422.122.114: Karma Created Is Not Exhausted Or Does Not Disappear¹

ལས་བྱས་པ་རྒྱུད་མི་བྲལ།

This characteristic of karma indicates that the length of time in which the karma is created does not effect the karma. The karma does not simply disappear or vanish away because it was created in a very short time. Nor does it cease to exist or become exhausted simply because it has been a very long time since the creation of that karma. Any karma created by any living being can last for many aeons without any damage. However, when its time comes and all its necessary conditions come together, it is always ready for its result to ripen.

If the conditions to ripen the result of karma are not met, then the karma will not last merely for days or months or years but for aeons. Then, when the condition, e.g. a craving thought, arises, it will condition the karma to yield its result.

Karmic Imprints On One's Mindstream: Their Effects Upon One's Life

Although it is said that any karma or action created will produce its results when the conditions are present, this does not mean that there is nothing that can be done about karma after it has been created. Rather, if one does nothing then karma will produce its results. If the karma is positive and not destroyed by other conditions, then it will produce its result. If the karma is negative and not purified by the method to purify karma, i.e. the four remedial forces, then it will inevitably produce its result.

Relevance To One's Own Day To Day Life

From this aspect of karma one can also learn that day to day life is not something necessarily determined by immediate actions or karma created in this life. This is very relevant to one's daily practice, which is all about studying the matter of karma.

One Has In One's Mindstream Extremely Negative Karma

In general, being born as a human being on this Southern continent, we are in the position to create a very powerful karma which can produce a result even in this lifetime. Also, at the same time one must take into account all those karmas created in many other lifetimes which may or may not effect this life.

In reality it does not matter what we think of ourselves and how good we have been in this life. We think of ourself as a good person because in this life we cannot recall having created any extremely negative karma, but we do not know what negative karma was created in past lives. Perhaps even the animals we see can have in their mindstream the seeds of past created karma, which will yield the result of a better life. Despite not having committed any serious negative karma in this life and feeling bright about the future, there might be the imprint of an extremely negative karma about to fruit resulting in being thrown into a lower rebirth.

Some peoples' lives appear to be wonderful and successful. They are called successful and fortunate. Others face unending problems despite their hard work. They are called unfortunate.

"Luck," What Is It?

In this topic of karma we do not speak of "bad luck" or being "unlucky". Those situations are seen within the light of karma. One should feel very positive about creating a virtuous action even if it is small. If this virtuous action is maintained in the mindstream, even if it is small and if it is not destroyed by anger, then it will definitely produce its result, i.e. the result is guaranteed. Positive karma can be kept intact by dedicating positive actions to one's own enlightenment and to the long life of the gurus and by taking delight in the virtue created by ourselves and others. If one does not purify any negative actions, no matter how tiny they are, through the four remedial forces, sooner or later they will ripen their result upon oneself. Therefore, as soon as possible after creating a negative action it should be regretted and purified.

Geshe-la knows that we are all sincere in our dharma practice despite being very busy. Our time for the dharma practice is very small but still we make a tremendous effort. This inspires Geshe-la. The purpose of

¹Liberation.. p439 The title used in the text is "Karma once created will not disappear of its own accord."

our coming to teachings is to practise, which means to increase positive actions and to decrease negative actions both those consciously recollected and those accumulated in past lives.

Therefore one must try to purify negative karma. As an understanding of the subtlety of karma is developed, so an awareness that one might have an accumulation of very negative karmas develops. Therefore that negative karma must be purified.

Results Of Contemplating Karma: Tolerance Of Unhappiness, Strength In Collecting Virtue

It is a fact that not only did one decide to turn the mind to dharma, to study dharma and to find the time to actually learn about dharma but also Geshe-la himself found the opportunity to teach dharma. All these facts are the outcome of one's positive karma and the great accumulation of merit in the past. For this reason it is difficult to find the precise reasons why one ended up involved in the study of dharma. Similarly, Geshe-la finds it difficult to find the right vessel here to teach the dharma. In this society, which is very materialistic most people are after sensual pleasures. Most peoples' minds are completely neurotic and mad about pursuing indulgence in sensual pleasures. Therefore to practise dharma is a great opportunity for everyone of us.

The main foundation of our practice of dharma is faith in the law of cause and effect or karma. This faith is not something to be regarded as "out there" or something which one is trying to find. Rather one must try to cultivate and focus the mind inwardly and see that the study of the law of karma does really cultivate faith and conviction in karma. In the beginning there is no real acceptance that any form of unwanted experiences, suffering, loss or even a slight pain from any disease, are all the result of one's own past actions. However, when faith in the law of karma is generated very strongly and deeply, then every single event of daily life reminds us about the law of karma. When happiness or joy arises, there should be no pride in that, rather one should feel that this is the result of past positive actions. Since this feeling of happiness and joy is so pleasurable, we are encouraged to create the causes of it, so that we may always live in this enjoyment and happiness. Whereas when some unhappiness is experienced, if this also is seen to be the result of past negative actions, then the cause is being seen. If we have faith in karma, then we shall see that creating negative actions will result in pain whereas positive actions will result in happiness. The law of karma is fixed and unfailing in producing its specific result.

If karma is contemplated in this way, it gives us greater strength to tolerate suffering. This suffering, which is experienced, is a lesson not to repeat that same action again. It reminds us to regret past negative actions and to practise dharma more strongly. If deep faith in karma has been cultivated, then it is easier to engage in positive actions and we shall find ourselves busy in the creation

of positive actions. The outcome will be the quick development of positive qualities in the mind, calmness and happiness.

Why The General Aspects Of Karma Must Be Studied Prior To The Specific Aspects Of Karma

As a benefit of knowing the general explanation of the law of karma we generate some faith and conviction in the law of karma. We shall really want to practise the law of karma which in brief is the creation of positive karma and the abandonment of negative karma. However, negative and positive karma can be very complex. Knowing exactly what positive karma one needs to create and what negative karma one must abandon may be confusing.

Therefore, the next topic is the specific explanation, or "How to contemplate on karma in specific"² which concerns the ten virtuous and ten non-virtuous actions.

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

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² *Liberation.* p442 The title used in the text is 422.122.12: "Thinking about some of the specifics of cause and effect."