
Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”
A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga
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10 May 1994

We generate the motivation of bodhicitta wishing for the state of Buddhahood for the sake of all beings. With this motivation we listen to the teachings and put them into practice.

We have now finished the four doors of powerful karma which are:

- Door of field
- Door of life basis
- Door of things
- Door of intention

Other Divisions Of Karma

The next topic in the study of karma is to know the difference between propelling and completing karma.

The Difference Between Propelling And Completing Karma¹

The propelling karma for a happy rebirth (such as a human), must be virtuous whereas the propelling karma for any unhappy rebirth (such as an animal) is non-virtuous. Any of the happy rebirths, such as the human life, is the result of propelling karma. Propelling karma is that karma which is the main cause for the life form. For the human form of life, the karma which propels that life has to be virtuous.

Completing karma is the cause which determines the conditions in which that life is completed. If a human life is full of happiness and virtue, both the propelling and the completing karma for that life are virtuous. In the case of a hell being, both the propelling and completing karma are non virtuous.

The Results Of Propelling And Completing Karma

There is also the example of a human form of life which is a result of being propelled by a virtuous karma, but being completed by non virtuous karma. For example there are human beings who experience suffering throughout their lifetimes. Some animals' lives are the result propelled by non virtuous karma but completed by virtuous karma. This explains why all human beings

do not experience the same things in life. Simply being human, does not necessarily mean we shall have a happy life. It all depends upon the various karmas we created in the past. Because of past observance of morality we are born as human beings. There are many human beings who starve and live in poverty. This is the result of not practising generosity in the past. On the other hand there are many animals, who enjoy a very easy, comfortable life in the present. Their animal rebirth is the result of non virtuous, immoral actions in past. Because they practised generosity in the past they may now experience a very easy, comfortable life.

In this way the topic of karma can be very complex. Although it is not asserted by the Abhidharma according to Asanga, it is said, according to Vasubhandu that:

"A single propelling karma can result in many number of bodies or forms of life."

In the meditation Alan gave the example of the result of harsh speech by calling someone else a monkey. That harsh speech can result in five hundred lifetimes of lower rebirth. It is hard to imagine how a single karma can produce that number of results.

Developing Faith In Law Of Cause And Effect

If everything is cause and effect, then this shows that the fact that we are now human beings, proves that in previous lives we have practised morality. This current human life which we now enjoy is the result of that cause. As humans we have suitable and sufficient material conditions. This obviously shows that in our previous life we not only practised morality but also generosity. We must try to identify the causes of our human rebirth and the causes of suitable life conditions from the point of view of the law of cause and effect, or karma. In this way we develop faith in the law of karma.

We develop faith in karma by first knowing at a broad level, that the things which we experience in life happen because of cause and effect. We first become convinced at this gross level that everything is created by cause and effect. Later our knowledge becomes deeper through understanding the abstract happenings, which also occur because of karma, (or cause and effect).

Having recognised that because of past virtuous actions,

¹Liberation.. p459 The translation used on this page is "throwing and completing karma." Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Tradition by Geshe Loden p367 is another reference.

we enjoy this happy rebirth and good conditions, we should then think "My future lives depend on my actions now".

Therefore we must consider what we need to do to ensure a better rebirth and good conditions in those future lives

Further Divisions Of Karma

There are further divisions in the study of the law of karma.

Definite And Indefinite Karma²

Karma can also be divided into two:

1. Definite karma, which will definitely be experienced.
2. Indefinite karma, where it is not definite whether the karma will be experienced.

Accumulated And Done Karma³

Karma can be divided in terms of:

1. Karma which is done and accumulated
2. Karma which is done but not accumulated
3. Karma which is not done but is accumulated
4. Karma which is neither done nor accumulated.

Whether the karma will be definite or indefinite depends on this further classification. Definite karmas are those which are done and accumulated. Indefinite karmas refer to those which are done or accumulated but not both.

To distinguish definite and indefinite in simple language we take the example of any type of definite karma. Provided that this definite karma is virtuous, and it is not subsequently destroyed by the force of anger, it will definitely produce its results. That is, it will definitely meet all the conditions for it to ripen. For example if you have created the definite karma to eat a tasty meal, then it is guaranteed you will enjoy that tasty meal. A non virtuous definite karma, if not purified by some purification method, will definitely ripen by meeting the immediate conditions for that karma to ripen.

In short, definite karma is that karma which is done as well as accumulated. Indefinite karma is that karma which is either accumulated or done, but not both.

The difference between karma which is done and accumulated is to do with motivation and actual performance of that action. Consider for example the action of killing another human. If, in that action,

someone has the motivation to kill a person, and actually performs that action, the type of karma which is created is both done and accumulated.

However if the person commits the action, as a result of orders from another person, and not through their own will or intention, the type of karma created is done by not accumulated.

But if the person had the motivation to murder that person but the actual performance of that action did not happen, the type of karma created is accumulated but not done.

End of discourse

Next week is the teaching break, and there is a discussion group night. The week after is the written exam. The only aim of that written test is to develop our understanding of this teaching and to provide an opportunity to review all our study. Even those who do not write the exam must also make an effort to review their study and do preparation for the test.

The compulsory question is naming the six perfections and the six opposites to the six perfections. These opposites are:

generosity miserliness

Therefore when we practise generosity we overcome miserliness which is the opposite of generosity.

morality immorality

patience anger

effort laziness

concentration distraction

wisdom ignorance

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

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²Liberation.. p459 Here the text mentions karma one is obliged to undergo and karma one is not obliged to undergo. These are probably the same as definite and indefinite karma. *Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Tradition* by Geshe Loden p368 is another reference.

³Liberation.. p459 Here the text only briefly mentions this topic as; karma one has accumulated through some actions, actions done that accumulate no karma, karma that one accumulated without doing anything.