

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

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ལྷན་པོའི་རྣམ་གྲོལ་ལག་བཅུངས།

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As usual try to generate the appropriate motivation of bodhicitta.

422.122.2: The Specifics About The Law Of Karma¹

ལས་འབྲས་བུ་བྱ་བ་ཏུ་བསམ་པ།

This has three subdivisions:

422.122.21: The Ripened Qualities

རྣམ་སྐྱོན་གྱི་ཡོན་ཏན།

422.122.22: Their Functions

དེའི་བྱེད་ལས།

422.122.23: The Causes To Achieve Them

དེའི་རྒྱ་བསྐྱབ་པ།

We are now up to the second main heading: The Specifics about the Law of Karma.

So far we have learnt that if we practise the morality of abandoning the ten non-virtuous actions we can obtain a higher status rebirth, which is in any of the higher realms. The form of life in higher realms is not necessarily suitable for successfully practising dharma. In order to practise dharma fully, a special higher rebirth, which is qualified by the eight ripening qualities, is required. Sometimes it is said to be qualified by the seven qualities of higher status² or the four vehicles (or wheels) of the supreme vehicle³. Regarding this Lama Tsong Khapa said:

In future unless one obtains the fully qualified form of life to engage in the supreme path, then one cannot be fully successful on the stages of the path.

Under the heading of The Specifics of Karma the text shows the causes which will help us to achieve those special qualities

¹"Liberation.." p460 The title used in the text is " Thinking about some of the specifics"

²Joyful path of good fortune" p 131 "These seven advantages are:

nobility, great beauty, great resources, great power, great wisdom, good health and long life. Of these great wisdom is the most precious because it enables us to discriminate what is to be practised and what is to be abandoned and thus to follow correct spiritual paths."

³Liberation.. p313 The four wheels of the supreme vehicle refer to the right physical rebirth for the four classes of tantra.

which are necessary for a future good rebirth, and which will be qualified for the practice of dharma.

422.122.21: The Eight Ripening Qualities⁴

རྣམ་སྐྱོན་གྱི་ཡོན་ཏན།

Their Order Of Presentation

A special form of happy rebirth is that which is qualified with the eight ripening qualities. The Lam Rim text:

- describes the eight ripening qualities;
- explains the benefits or functions of those qualities, and then
- the causes to obtain those eight qualities.

The reason why the text explains the eight qualities in this order, with the cause being explained after the result, is because knowing the benefits of those results might help to generate a strong wish to obtain those qualities. From this develops a strong motivation to create the causes. For this reason it is important to see the result, then to see whether there is the wish to obtain that result.

Generating The Motivation To Obtain The Eight Ripening Results

We should regard this human life as a ripened result of karma. Enjoying a long life span is one of the ripening qualities. The benefit of this ripening quality of long life span is the longer opportunity to practise dharma. Therefore a strong motivation is generated to create the causes, not only for a good rebirth as a human being, but also for good conditions in that human life e.g. a long life span. In this way we try to generate a motivation to create the cause to achieve those qualities.

Although we have these eight ripening qualities at the moment and enjoy the benefit of possessing those qualities, we must also think of the significance of having these qualities in future lifetimes. To achieve these same qualities in the future we must make an effort now to create the necessary causes.

One can also think "It is not that I am frightened of lower rebirth and so I create the cause for higher rebirth. Rather through fear of lower rebirth, I need to make an effort to create the cause for a better rebirth, which is the form of life fully suitable to practise dharma". In this way we ask "What is this very special rebirth that is fully suitable to practise dharma?" It is the one qualified by eight ripening qualities.

⁴Liberation..p460 The title used in the text is "The ripened qualities".

Identifying The Ripened Qualities

These are the eight ripening qualities:

1. Excellent quality of life span.

ཚོ་རིང་ག།

2. Excellent quality of colour.

གཟུགས་བཟང་ག།

3. Excellent quality of race.

རིགས་མཐོ་ག།

4. Excellent quality of wealth.

དབང་ལྷུག་ཆེ་ག།

5. Excellent quality of speech.

ཚིག་བརྩན་པ།

6. Excellent quality of power.

དབང་ཆེ་བར་གྲགས་པ།

7. Excellent quality of being male.

སྐྱེས་པ་ཉིད་ཡིན་པ།

8. Excellent quality of healthy mind and body.

ལྷན་སེམས་སྟོབས་དང་ལྡན་པ་རྣམས།

Some of you might question why is "being male" included in this list of eight ripening qualities. Just because this is said here, is no reason to imply that Buddhism is prejudiced in matters of sexual gender, or that Lord Buddha was prejudiced towards women. In *The Heart Sutra* he mentions both men and woman. The text includes male and female by saying "son and daughter". Why then is "being male" said here? The reason is if you have to undertake a very secluded practice in an isolated place, then through being male there is less threat to one's life and especially less harm to the practice of morality. Mainly "being male" is in reference to this context.

Generally speaking, both men and women have a strong pride in their own gender. There are always some unnecessary conflicts because of this gender difference. If we look at the actual biology, and basic interests and concerns, some differences do exist. On the basis of these differences it is natural for men and women to have different views. What is most important, is that we do not take these gender differences to heart, and allow them to interfere with our closest relationships. It is more important to focus upon what we have in common, and on caring and helping each other. This minimises the importance of such differences.

1. Excellent Quality Of Life Span

ཚོ་རིང་ག།

In the past lives we have created the karmic cause to live a certain length of life. This is the life span that one is supposed to live in this current life. The length of life that we enjoy depends on the previous life leading up to this one. The meaning of excellent life span is to live to the end of the life span caused by the karma of the previous life.

Its benefit is to allow the practice of dharma, and work for the welfare of oneself and others, for a longer period of time. It is said that if we have a very short life, then any other qualities we may possess are not of much use. It is likened to putting ornaments on an animal which is on its way to be killed. There is no value in having those qualities.

2. Excellent Quality Of Colour Or Look

གཟུགས་བཟང་ག།

This means that physically one is attractive otherwise one becomes an object to be abused or put down by other people.

3. Excellent Quality Of Race Or Caste

རིགས་མཐོ་ག།

This quality has some relevance to ancient times in India. The Lord Buddha was born into a very high caste of his times. Because he belonged to such a high caste it was very much easier to attract more people and gain respect from others. In ancient India belonging to a lower caste family, whose profession was sweeper or cobbler, meant seclusion from other castes. Many of these social evils are now banned in India but it was not too long ago. Geshela recalled that in Varanasi some of the local people were not allowed in certain shops or buses. Indian leaders such as Jawarhal Nehru and Indira Gandhi did a lot to change these things. The late Indira Gandhi's mother was the first high caste lady to eat a meal from a very low caste family.

There was a time when, for the sake of maintaining caste, a father who found his son was about to marry a lower caste girl, would murder the girl before anyone found out. Such murders happened because the caste system was highly respected.

So you can clearly see the point that while such a practice exists, it is an advantage to be born in a higher caste since there is much more freedom to do what one wants.

4. Excellent Quality Of Wealth Or Resources

དབང་ལྷུག་ཆེ་ག།

Resources, wealth or even having a large number of friends can also be a further cause to gather or attract other people. Through this wealth and other resources it is possible that we can gather many others to follow us.