
miserable realms. What is this single practice? It is the discernment of what is virtuous. You must think, “Am being true? How am I spending the day and the night?”

In this way one must check one’s own attitude and state of mind, correcting ourselves continuously.

The next subdivision explains how to turn away from offensive conduct even while behaving like that. The teaching quotes from another sutra, *Chapter of the Truth Speaker*: “O King do not kill. Life is very dear to all beings. Hence, they want to maintain their lives for a long time. So, think not of killing, even in the depths of your mind.”

The main point in the sutra is that there is no living being that does not consider their own life to be precious, thus one must not take lives of other beings.

Reflecting on this quote, one must adopt the virtuous activity of intentionally refraining from taking the lives of other beings. Consciously decide to make a promise to not engage in the negative deed of killing, and not even generating the intention of killing in one’s mind. The first of the ten non-virtues is killing, likewise with the rest of the non-virtues one must not only refrain from actually engaging in them but also refrain from the mere intention of engaging in them as well.

Lama Tsong Khapa mentions the Kadampa master called **Kam-lung-ba**, who gave advice to **Pu-chung-wa**, saying how karma and its effects are most important. Even though this has been emphasized, some contemporary scholars do not value this as important and they do not listen and meditate on it. They disregard the advice of karma even though it is shown as being of great importance. **Kam-lung-ba** said that the practice of abiding by the law of karma seems to be the only practise that is difficult. **Pu-chung-wa** agreed. Geshe **Pu-chung-wa** the Kadampa master further mentioned that he turns his attention to the sutra of The Wise and the Foolish. This is a teaching by the Buddha in which the many details of karma have been explained. **Pu-chung-wa** said that he refers to this sutra often and it is his main source of looking into karma and abiding by karma.

Another Kadampa master Sha-ra-wa said that the Buddha indicated in all his teachings that when things aren’t going well for us, then that is not due to external causes or sources. The cause always lies within oneself; the effects of karma have been experienced. This is contrary to how we normally think. Whenever things go wrong for ourselves we are in the habit of finding the blame somewhere else externally. But whenever things go wrong, it is because we are experiencing the effects of karma.

Now we come to the second category, purifying negative karmas. Even though we may try to practise virtue and avoid negative karmas, we still find ourselves creating so many negative karmas. This is due to four main conditions, the four doorways of creating negative karmas. Firstly, having a lot of strong delusions in the mind. The second condition is having an unconscientious mind, the third is ignorance, and the fourth is disrespect. Due to these four conditions we are constantly engaged

in negative karmas. It is important that we do purification practises to overcome the negative karma we are engaged in.

There are particular remedies for naturally occurring negative karmas such as the ten non-virtues. We engage in negative karma because of the unconscientious mind. Most negative activities occur when the mind is not conscientious, when the mind is not controlling the three doors of body, speech and mind. Because we lack control of our body, speech and mind, this opens the doorway to create negative karmas.

We can see that this is true. When our mind is not conscientious then there is nothing to stop us in engaging in negative karmas on a physical level, such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct. Furthermore the negative karma of speech, such as lying, slander, gossip and harsh words, and also the negative karma of the mind - these can be easily engaged in when the mind is not conscientious, because we don’t have control of the mind.

The second point is that we have lots of delusions. We can see for ourselves how strong the delusions are in our mind. The third point is ignorance, not knowing the distinction between what is virtue and non-virtue, and not knowing that engaging in virtue will achieve a positive result. If one engages in negative karmas then one will experience the negative results. Not knowing that in itself is a fault that leads us to engaging in negative karma. The fourth factor is lack of respect. If one has disrespect towards the Buddhist teachings and the Buddha, then that becomes a way for us to create negative karmas.

If we find ourselves involuntarily creating negative karma, we shouldn’t ignore it. The negative karma will increase unless we adopt purification techniques. The Buddha taught how to purify specific breaches, such as the downfalls in relation to the vows we have taken. For naturally occurring negative karmas there are also the main techniques of purification by adopting the four opponent powers. This is within the teaching of the seven limb practice, where one of the limbs is confession.

Questions

Q1: When I hear news on the radio sometimes I get angry with it. Some people even yell at the TV. How does that come about? How can you be upset with an inanimate object?

A: When one gets upset, it doesn’t necessarily have to be in relation to an actual person. Whether it is towards a person or whether towards an inanimate object, it is the fact that we are getting upset or angry - the emotion is something we have to deal with. The emotion of anger arises when all the conditions are intact. The conditions are, first of all, that one has the delusion or particular emotion of anger within oneself and one has not abandoned it. Then the external causes are there to trigger the negative emotion within oneself.

If it is a TV or radio, then it has some sort of sound one does not agree with, a sound that we project as being negative. That projection is actually a projection of our mind where we are categorising it as not being good.

Even when there is some basis of it being not good, our mind exaggerates it because we don't see the reality of it. We exaggerate it to the point of completely labelling it as negative or bad. When all the conditions are there, then anger will arise regardless of what the object is. If one is very familiar or used to getting angry, then one could find any reason to be so.

Further question: Is that our karma getting back at us? Lots of people get angry with a telephone.

A: It is mainly due to one's own familiarity with that particular delusion. If one is very familiar with delusion or anger, then particular causes or circumstances would contribute to the delusion rising. I wouldn't particularly refer to you as being in this category. Generally speaking, if a particular delusion such as anger is strong in people's minds, then a very small incident will become a cause for anger to arise.

Likewise for someone who is very familiar with strong desire in their mind, even a very insignificant small instance would make desire arise in their mind. Some individuals may have particular delusions which are stronger or more prevalent than others. In your situation it seems like it may be just a momentary upset, maybe it is not such a big deal. Of course regardless of what others do, it is important that we check our own mind and deal with ourselves.

I often advise people who are living with others to be careful of what kind of state of mind they are in. If they are easily irritable then one should try to back-off a bit and be careful, because if you irritate them you would get the backlash yourself. And there are some who complain that someone else just hit them without any reason. Of course the main reason would be that they are upset, they are angry. So when someone is angry and upset there's no real logic; out of anger anything can be done, even irrational things.

Then there are those who out of anger would smash their own radio. An emotion such as anger will only bring loss for oneself, there is no benefit. The practical loss in smashing the radio is that you have just lost a radio.

Q2: Can we reach the unconscious mind through meditation?

A: You are referring to a state of mind which in Tibetan is called '**bag-nyal**'. That is a state of mind which is, for example, when you are meditating and focusing on your breath there are other thoughts in the mind which are not manifest, because your manifest conscious at that time would be just focusing on the breath. If one is very successful in just focusing on the breath, the other thoughts subside for a while.

What you are trying to get at is maybe what we call in Buddhist terms an imprint. When we have latent imprints in our mind we may not be conscious about the imprints. But because they are there from the past, then they would manifest at certain times. An imprint is a potency in our mind from a previous state of mind. When the actual state of mind subsides, there is something which is left as a residue of that, an imprint. That imprint is not active until certain conditions arise for it to

manifest again.

Further question: (And) the skills of applying the opponent powers?

A: Just as with your experiences of dreams, there being good and bad ones, similarly there is an indication of positive and negative imprints. Not all imprints are something that we have to overcome; there are also positive imprints within ourselves.

There is a distinction between seeds and imprints. For example, we have the seed of delusion, and then there is something more subtle called the imprints of the delusions. The explanation given earlier is leaning more towards explaining the seed. Even though a moment of anger has passed it leaves a potential which is like a seed. It is called a seed because it is similar to an external seedling. A plant may wither away and die, but the seed though not a plant yet, has the potential to bear fruit for another plant. The seed of delusion is similar to that. Given that the earlier moment of anger has passed, it leaves a potential to sprout again, for anger to arise again. For as long as we have the seed, then anger will arise. The opponent power of overcoming the seed of delusion is the realisation of emptiness. Meditating on emptiness becomes the antidote for overcoming/destroying the seed.

The imprint is more subtle. The seed is called an obscuration to liberation. It is a deluded obscuration. The imprint is called an obscuration to omniscience/ to becoming a buddha. Even when the seed is removed there may still be the imprint which causes distorted states of mind. The seed and the imprint have to be dealt with. Emptiness is the antidote.

The seed can be removed similarly to removing external seedlings. There is no beginning to that seedling because that comes from an earlier crop and that comes from an earlier crop; so you can't go back to trace the first seedling of all crops, you can't identify that. Yet there can be an end to a seedling when it is destroyed by fire for example, and the potential to sprout again is completely destroyed. Our internal delusions are similar to a seed in that it does not have a beginning. A deluded mind can always be traced back to a previous moment of delusion. Therefore there is no beginning to our deluded mind, but there can be an end to it. The opponent such as fire for the external seedling is similar to the opponent power of wisdom realising emptiness, that destroys the seed of delusion within oneself.

Q3: What is the difference between seed and imprint? Is it going deeper?

A: The wisdom realising emptiness overcomes the seed of delusion. However, the realisation of emptiness alone does not become powerful enough to overcome the imprints of the delusion. An arhat has overcome the seed of delusion. They will not experience delusions in their mind because there is no seed. But even an arhat may still have some obscuration which means they will not see the reality of things as they really are because they still have the imprint of delusions in their mind. This hinders them from being becoming an omniscient mind. That is why an

arhat is not a buddha, who has an omniscient mind.

To overcome the imprints of delusions, one has to combine the realisation of emptiness with accumulating more merit. This is called wisdom and method. Accumulating merit enhances the wisdom realising emptiness and they enhance each other in overcoming the imprints of delusions. Developing great loving compassion, developing the bodhicitta mind, is the best way to accumulate the most extensive merit.

An arhat and those following that hinayana path have the wisdom and the realisation of emptiness, but they lack great loving compassion and bodhicitta. So they are lacking one of the attributes to overcoming the imprints. A bodhisattva has both bodhicitta and the wisdom realising emptiness, so they have both the method and wisdom which serves to overcome the very subtle workings of the imprints. They slowly overcome the imprints on different levels, and follow the ten grounds, achieving the state of enlightenment. This is for a bodhisattva who is entering the bodhisattva path from the very beginning, for the bodhisattva who has not entered the lower vehicles yet. A bodhisattva beginning on the Mahayana path will overcome the seed of delusion on the seventh ground. The eighth, ninth and tenth grounds are where that bodhisattva is striving to overcome the imprint of the delusions.

Before we end the session, let us again spend a few minutes in meditation. This time focusing on the sound of the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni. Sit in an upright and relaxed position and bring our mind inward, distance it from external distractions and keep it completely focused on the sound of the mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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