
form a circle where each one connects to the next, illustrating how they lead to being reborn into cyclic existence.

The way the three poisons or delusions serve as causes to be reborn in cyclic existence over and over again is clearly explained in the teachings on the twelve interdependent links. The first link is the link of ignorance, which is explained as the main cause that initiates the actions that propel one into cyclic existence. This primordial ignorance referred to as the first of the twelve interdependent links will be explained further in the text, but in brief it relates to the grasping at the self, or the 'I'. When we consider how we create karma because of grasping at the 'I', we will notice that because of a strong grasping at the self or 'I', one naturally relates to things that are favourable to the 'I' and then attachment arises, while aversion and anger arise towards those situations or objects that are not favourable to the 'I'. That is how as a result of initially grasping at the self or the 'I', one develops attachment to some objects and anger or aversion to others, and thus create the actions which follow.

As states of mind These three delusions are called 'wrong consciousnesses'. I have previously explained this in detail. It is relatively easier to understand ignorance as a wrong consciousness but it is not so clear with attachment and anger. The mind of attachment perceives an object as being appealing based on an appealing attribute of the object. Likewise the mind of anger perceives an object as being unappealing and thus develops a dislike for the object. The anger is naturally based on unappealing attributes of the object. So the question arises 'how can it be a 'wrong consciousness' if it actually perceives attributes of the object?'

So, does attachment perceive the object as appealing?

Students: Yes.

Does it perceive the appealing attribute of the object?

Students: Yes.

So you all agree that there is an appealing attribute of the object, and attachment perceives that attribute as appealing. If that is the case, then attachment could not be a wrong consciousness as it perceives an attribute that exists upon the object! A correctly perceiving consciousness is a consciousness that perceives something just as it exists, right? So what is the conclusion?

Student: The attachment consciousness embellishes the thought of the attribute, making it more attractive and then grasps at that appearance.

If that is the case then attachment is actually perceiving an exaggerated form, which is embellished by the mistaken inappropriate attention. If that is what the object of attachment is, then we would have to say that it does not exist.

Student: It does exist but as a projection.

The conclusion needs to be that attachment does not perceive the actual appealing attributes of the object but rather only the exaggerated appealing attributes. For attachment to be a wrong consciousness, it has to perceive an object that does not exist. As the object of

attachment is the exaggerated appealing attributes which are merely superimposed by an inappropriate attention; then in fact it does not exist. Thus one has to conclude that attachment does not perceive the appealing attributes, but rather perceives something extra. If attachment were to actually perceive the appealing attributes that do exist, then the attachment could not be considered as a wrong consciousness.

It is the same with anger. If we were to ask 'are there unappealing attributes in the object of anger?', then the answer is 'Yes there are'. Does anger perceive that? No, rather anger only perceives the exaggerated unappealing aspects that are superimposed by the inappropriate attention. What appears as an object of anger actually does not exist, and thus anger is a wrong consciousness. So, the conclusion is that attachment does not perceive the appealing attributes of the object. What does it perceive? It perceives the exaggerated qualities that are superimposed by inappropriate attention; and that does not exist, does it?

When we get an inkling of why the teachings describe delusions as a wrong consciousness, then we can go further into the subtler implications of that. As every delusion is a wrong consciousness, then one may inquire, what is the inappropriate attention that superimposes qualities or faults upon the object? It actually comes down to the grasping at the self.

All delusions are initiated by the inappropriate attention that is grasping at the self or 'I'. With that understanding, ignorance can be understood as a wrong consciousness that grasps at inherent existence. What we need to note is that ignorance here does not refer to the general meaning of ignorance, but rather specifically to the ignorance that is a complete opposite of the wisdom realising selflessness i.e. the ignorance which perceives an inherently existent self.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary further explains that virtue encompasses non-desire, non-hatred and non-ignorance and the actions that they generate. Here *actions* specifically refers physical actions and verbal actions. As Gyaltsab explains, the physical and verbal actions that are initiated by non-desire, non-hatred and non-ignorance are called virtuous actions.

One needs to also take note of the subtle implications of non-desire, non-hatred and non-ignorance. If we were to take non-desire in the general sense then there could be many different 'non-desire' states of mind, which are not necessarily virtuous. We need to understand that virtuous non-desire refers here to the optimum active state of non-desire, which is either, at best a state where all desire has been completely abandoned, or a state of mind that serves as an antidote to desire. Likewise non-hatred and non-ignorance refer to either the optimum state of mind that has completely abandoned hatred or ignorance or to a state of mind that serves as an antidote to hatred or ignorance.

These three states of mind, non-desire, non-hatred and non-ignorance, and the physical and verbal actions initiated by those minds are definitely virtuous. If we understand that the state of mind of non-desire is a mind that has abandoned desire or a state of mind that serves

as an opponent or antidote for overcoming desire, then we have understand the specific meaning of non-desire.

We can relate these teachings to the techniques for overcoming desire, hatred and ignorance. For instance, a state of mind that is in meditation focussing on the faults of desire, is actually a state of non-desire, which actively serves as an antidote for overcoming desire. Likewise with hatred, where meditating on compassion is said to be an antidote for overcoming hatred or anger. Thus a mind that is completely immersed in compassion is a state of mind that directly opposes, and thus serves as an antidote to, anger. Non-ignorance is a state of mind meditating on selflessness or emptiness, thus opposing ignorance. We need to understand that non-desire particularly refers to a state of mind that opposes desire, and that non-hatred and non-ignorance refer to states of mind that specifically opposes or serve as an antidote to overcome those particular negativities. We can then relate that understanding to our personal practice.

Virtuous and non-virtuous effects

The next verse refers to the effects of virtue and non-virtue:

21. *From the non-virtues come all sufferings
And likewise all bad transmigrations,
From virtues, all happy transmigrations
And the pleasures of all lives.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains that, as a result of non-virtuous actions, one experiences suffering in all the higher and lower rebirths of cyclic existence. As we have identified earlier, non-virtue is defined as that which has the potential to bring about a result of suffering. This verse is explaining very clearly that all suffering in both the higher and lower realms is a result of non-virtue. Thus the suffering that we experience is none other than the result of a previous non-virtue; there is no being or entity that causes us unnecessary suffering, other than one's own non-virtuous karma. Put simply all the suffering that we experience is caused by our own non-virtue.

Then Gyalsab further explains that just as all suffering in the fortunate and unfortunate births is caused by non-virtue, so too all the suffering of the ripened results in the unfortunate realms is also caused by non-virtue.

In relation to the third line, *from virtues, all happy transmigrations*, Gyalsab Je's commentary explains that one experiences the ripening result of a fortunate happy transmigration as a result of virtuous karma. As the commentary further explains, all beings here on Earth, or in any other existence, experience happiness as a result of virtue they have created. By reflecting on the nature of karma, and how non-virtue creates all suffering and virtue creates all happiness, one needs to resolve to always, at every cost, avoid creating the causes for the suffering experienced in the unfortunate realms, or to experience any other kind of suffering. This means completely ceasing to engage in non-virtue, and to acquire the causes to experience happiness in all the fortunate realms.

1.1.2. The modes of practice

Having explained the particular cause of suffering, which is non-virtue, and the cause for happiness, which is virtue, the question arises, 'how does one actually engage in practice to avoid suffering and achieve happiness?' So the teaching goes on to explain the actual modes of practice. These points are not too obscure or difficult to understand. It is really just a matter of putting them into practice on a personal level.

The verse from the root text relating to this heading is:

22. *Desisting from all non-virtues
And always engaging in virtues
With body, speech and mind –
These are called the three forms of practice.*

As Gyalsab Je's commentary explains, by reflecting again and again on the cause and effect sequence of karma, one resolves to avoid all non-virtues created through mind, body and speech, and to create virtue as the cause for happiness. As explained here, these karmas are created by one's body, speech and mind. We create karma through our thoughts, which lead us to create karma through our physical actions and our speech. There is no other way to create karma than in these three ways.

As explained here, one resolves to intentionally avoid creating non-virtue through one's body, speech and mind, and to engage in creating virtue through one's body, speech and mind. This is the point where we need to reflect on the cause and effect sequence of karma again and again. As was explained earlier, it is necessary to reflect in this way over and over again in order to gain insight and a deeper understanding. If we reflect just occasionally, it won't have a strong effect on our mind. In order to bring about an absolute belief in the infallibility of karma, we need to reflect on it again and again. Without doing so, there is no way that one will enter the path that pleases the Buddha.

To get any benefit from the explanation here we must definitely pay great attention to these points and not take them lightly. The more we reflect on the infallibility of karma, the stronger the conviction in that infallibility will be, which will naturally encourage us to voluntarily take every opportunity to create virtue, and to at all costs try to avoid creating non-virtue.

Contemplating the infallibility of karma means contemplating how virtue is always a cause for happiness. If one were to experience unhappiness as a result of creating virtue, karma would not be infallible — it would be false because the cause does not correspond with the effect. Likewise if one were to create non-virtue and experience happiness as a result, then again karma would not be infallible, because the cause and effect do not correspond. Being infallible means that a cause always brings about its corresponding effect. There is never a time when you could create negative karma and experience happiness as a result, or create virtue and experience unhappiness and suffering as a result.

Thus the infallibility of karma needs to be understood as the certainty that virtue is always a cause for experiencing happiness, and that non-virtue is always a cause to experience unhappiness and suffering.

Contemplating this again and again one will (as mentioned earlier) develop that strong conviction in one's mind. The result will be a voluntary and natural inclination to create virtue. And if we do create non-virtue, the mind will have the intention of wanting to take the next opportunity to purify any negative karma that one has created. By feeling 'what I have done was not right, and was an inappropriate action, so I must definitely try to purify that' there will be a sense of unease until one purifies that negative karma. Here one also needs to incorporate and apply an understanding of the four characteristics of karma, the certainty and the increase of karma and so forth.

As the commentary has explained, besides reflecting and contemplating on karma, the actual practice is to voluntarily engage in avoiding non-virtuous mental thoughts, non-virtuous physical actions and non-virtuous verbal speech. So one then adopts virtuous thoughts, virtuous physical actions and virtuous speech, which then become the actual practice. We can safely say that through abiding by these instructions one is living in accordance with the Dharma. What we also need to be able to specifically identify is that of the three modes of action, the mind is the primary one, because physical and verbal actions follow from intentions that are first generated in our mind. That is quite clear.

Thoughts in our mind determine whether any physical action is positive or negative. As the teachings have rightly instructed, the supreme instruction is to always restrain one's mind, and then there will be a natural restraint on one's physical and verbal actions. To take a particular instance, we notice for ourselves that when we generate thoughts it is in relation to physical actions or verbal actions. We consciously think 'I'm going to do this action', 'I'm going to carry this through with physical actions' or 'I am going to say certain things'. The first thing we do is to generate a thought.

Having noticed that we have these thoughts that initiate physical and verbal actions, we can then apply that to our understanding of the mental factor called *intention*, which is defined as karma. We have explained how to understand and apply that definition to all three levels of mental, physical and verbal karma. To take a virtuous action, for example, when we are thinking about doing prostrations, our thought is accompanied by the mental factor called 'intention'. This mental factor of intention occurs simultaneously with every thought, and involuntarily influences us to do either positive or negative things. With the example of virtue, the mental factor which influences us to engage in virtue is called 'mental karma.' While we are engaged in the physical activity of doing prostrations we also have the mental factor of intention, which is the actual 'physical karma.' So when we talk about creating physical karma, the mental intention at that time is the creation of physical karma. Likewise with speech; when one utters words, the mental factor of intention at that time would be 'verbal karma.' This is how karma is to be understood as being a mental intention, which is an involuntary motivating factor that initiates thoughts at the time of physical or verbal actions.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary then goes on to relate this to applying the sixteen dharmas that were referred to earlier, which consist of the thirteen that need to be abandoned and the three that need to be adopted. Reflecting on the sixteen dharmas, and then refraining from engaging in inappropriate or non-virtuous actions is referred to as engaging in the Dharma through the three doorways of body, speech and mind. With respect to physical actions this refers to the actions of abandoning killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. It is not just a matter of not engaging in these actions, but to also refrain from the motivation to engage in those actions i.e. intentionally avoid having the motivation to kill, steal and or engage in sexual misconduct. When one can practise on the level of avoiding even the motivation to do these negative actions, then one is appropriately applying the practice of the Dharma.

1.1.3. The fruits of practice

The sequence of the text is really wonderful. Having described the actual practice itself, the fruits of those practices are presented in the next six lines.

23. *Through these practices one is freed from becoming
A hell being, hungry ghost, or animal.
Reborn as a human or god one gains
Extensive happiness, fortune, and dominion*
24. *Through the concentrations, immeasurables,
and formlessnesses,
One experiences the bliss of Brahma and so
forth.*

As Gyaltsab's commentary explains, *through* engaging in *these practices* of the sixteen dharmas, the result is that one will be free from being reborn as a *hell being* or as an *animal* or as a *hungry ghost*. Through being free from being born in these states, one will experience the *extensive happiness* of the fortunate realms such as being reborn in the human realm as, for example, a universal monarch or king, and then having the excellence of great *fortune and dominion* in that state.

As mentioned in the teachings, if one has practised according to these explanations, then there will be no regrets at the time of death. In fact there would be a great sense of joy in knowing that one will be free, and will not have to experience the suffering of the unfortunate realms. Thus, as explained in the teaching, the results of having engaged in this practice there will be no regrets at the end of this life and there will be a sense of great joy in one's mind. We know of people who peacefully and joyfully pass on to the next life, without having any sense of regret or fear of being reborn in unfortunate realms. As mentioned previously, the immediate result of engaging in the practices of, for example, the ten virtues, would be to be free from the causes to be reborn in the lower realms. The happiness to be experienced in the human realms would be to be reborn with great dominion, which refers (as Gyaltsab's commentary explains) to being reborn as a universal monarch or king, and thus experiencing the great excellences entailed in that.

Gyaltsab Je further explains that through further practice of avoiding the ten non-virtues, such as meditating on the four *concentrations* or the four *immeasurables* and

formlessnesses, one will obtain *the bliss of Brahma and so forth*, which refers to the higher and better quality results of engaging in these practices.

To be more specific, the small benefit of engaging in these practices is to be reborn as a human being in the desire realm, the middling is to be reborn in the desire god realm and the most excellent and highest benefit is to be reborn in the form and formless realms as a god, such as Brahma and so forth.

We can all relate to these as being great results. The question is whether we want to have these results for ourselves. Since we have to die and have to be reborn, what would we choose for our future life? To be born in the lower realms or to have a higher rebirth? What would we naturally want? At this time we have the power to choose whether we want to go into a lower rebirth or a higher rebirth. As the great lamas of the past have mentioned, and as teachings emphasise, our situation right now is where we have the choice. It is a matter of choosing the most appropriate results for ourselves and then engaging in the practices to achieve that. Having the choice means that we have all of the appropriate conditions, we have all of the physical potential, and mentally we have all of the appropriate conditions and potential to choose the results we want.

1.2. Summation

The two lines relating to the summary read:

*24. Thus in brief are the practices
For high status and their fruits.*

As explained earlier, there are thirteen practices to be abandoned and three practices to be adopted. This explains the sixteen dharmas as well as their results.

2. CAUSE AND EFFECT OF DEFINITE GOODNESS

We can leave this for our next session.

What we have covered so far is the cause and effect of high status. It is really important that we reflect upon the meaning of the presentation, so that we can derive personal instructions on the practices to apply in our daily lives. That is the real reason for studying—otherwise there is not much purpose. Since we wish to experience the results of a high status, and we understand the causes of high status, we can safely say that we will all go to the high status in the next life if we practice according to the teachings. That would be great!

I often feel that dying as a human and being reborn again as a human is in itself a great thing, because at least it is not going downward. To be more specific, to die as an Australian human and then be reborn as an Australian dog would not be so desirable would it? Some people might have seen a recent TV program showing a dog that seemed to talk like a human. Even while watching TV we can see a lot about the effects of karma.

I personally would like to make the choice to go to a higher rebirth. I am not sure if it will turn out to be successful or not, but at least I am making an attempt. We all have the opportunity and good conditions, which is good. Our life now is constantly diminishing, and day by day we get nearer to our next life. That is a fact. We can safely assume, except for maybe Anthony or Zoe and

some other young ones here, that none of us will be here after fifty years; for those of us over thirty, the chances of being here are very slim. Those who will be here in fifty years might remember this occasion! That will be in 2060, right? If you are still alive then, you will be quite an old person and you might remember what I am saying to you now.

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