
The Quick Path to Enlightenment

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Commentary by Venerable Geshe Lobsang Dorje

Translated by Sandup Tsering

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First, we will do a short breathing meditation. Make sure that you have a proper motivation for this meditation.

[Meditation]

Over the last couple of teachings, I have been discussing the Buddhist theory of karma and its result. The theory of karma revolves around the fact that all the happiness and suffering that we find in our life is the result of our own actions. From this, we understand that our experience of happiness and suffering is not created or caused by some external force.

In his *Concise Meaning of the Stages of the Path* Lama Tsongkhapa states that our experience of happiness and suffering is dependent on thinking about karma and its result, and then engaging in the proper practice of what to do and what not to do. This indicates that if we want to find happiness and avoid suffering, we need to believe in the law of karma in this life or in a future life, and understand the practices we need to do, and what not to do. Here Lama Tsongkhapa is talking about virtuous karma and non-virtuous karma.

To fully engage in this practice of karma we must develop faith in the law of karma. If we have a faith based on our knowledge about karma, then we will make every effort to accumulate virtue. We see the worthiness and benefit of even a very small virtue. And when it comes to avoiding non-virtue, then we see the merit in avoiding even tiny non-virtues.

So, what is virtuous karma? There are ten types of virtuous karma, corresponding to ten non-virtuous forms of karma that we must refrain from. So, when we talk about creating virtuous karma it means refraining from the ten non-virtuous karmas.

To refrain from non-virtuous karma, we must first see the benefits of refraining from those actions. For that, we must understand those ten non-virtues which basically cover all negative actions.

The ten non-virtues

We list all ten non-virtues in terms of our actions of body, speech and mind. There are three non-virtues of body, four of speech and three of mind.

The three non-virtues of body

The three non-virtues of body are killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.

1. The action of killing

If we look into the process of completing this act of killing, we find that there are four elements that constitute the non-virtue of killing.

a. There are *objects to be killed* and such objects have to be some being other than oneself as an object of killing, for example, a sheep.

b. Then there is *the thought process*. In that thought process there should be recognition of the specific object to be killed. So, there is an object and a thought.

If you want to kill sheep, then there must be a cognition of the particular animal to be killed. The thought process includes a motivation or intention to kill which can be any of those three poisonous states of mind or mental delusions.

Because of the delusion of hatred, we can decide to kill. Our motivation can also be desire or attachment to, for example, a sheep, because of a desire to consume meat or for its skin or wool. This motivation can also arise out of ignorance. For example, some belief systems consider sacrificing an animal to be virtuous.

c. The third part of the act of killing is the actual *action* of killing, where we directly engage in the action of killing. We might not directly engage in the act but employ someone else to commit that act of killing. But even then we are accumulating the karma for the act of killing.

d. *Completing* the action of killing is when the object, the animal to be killed, dies prior to one's death. That is the completion of the act of killing.

2. The non-virtue of stealing

The next non-virtue of body is stealing, which is taking something that has not been given. We can talk in terms of the *object* to be stolen and *recognise* the particular object to be stolen. Then there is *motivation*, which as before, can be any of those three poisonous states of mind. The *action* is actually taking the object and the *completion* is considering the object as one's own.

The object must be something that is owned by some other person and not offered to one. As with the action of killing you can directly engage in the action yourself, or through deception which is another form of stealing what belongs to others.

In an act of stealing, the owner has no wish to offer that thing to oneself. There may be situations where we borrow things, and deliberately keep them for long periods as a way of acquiring that object. You check whether that person remembers having loaned that thing, and if that person has forgotten about that, you have the sense of having obtained that object. In the case of stealing, the completion of stealing is when you have this thought of ownership, as you have managed to fully obtain the thing you have borrowed. That completes the act of stealing.

3. The non-virtue of sexual misconduct

The non-virtue of sexual misconduct is performing any sexual act against the wishes of the other person.

The four non-virtues of speech

There are four non-virtues of speech: lying, divisive speech, harsh speech and idle gossip.

1. Lying to others

Lying to others can be about something we know or something we do not know.

If you know something and tell another that you know nothing about it, then that is lying. When the listener realises that, in fact, you know what you say you do not know, that will be the completion of the act of lying.

Telling others that you know something when in fact you don't know is another form of lying. When the other person believes what you said, then that is also the completion of the act of lying.

2. Divisive speech

The motivation for divisive speech can be any of the three poisonous states of mind. The intention or motivation of divisive speech is to damage a close relationship with other people, and even with those you don't know well. This speech can be honest or dishonest, but the result is the same: you destroy your relationship with those close to you and put further distance between you and those who are not close to you. As an outcome, your divisive speech brings even more disagreement and disputes with others. That is divisive speech.

3. Harsh speech

Harsh speech refers to the comments we make to others. Regardless of the comments we make to others, whether true or not, honest or dishonest, they have the impact of upsetting, and hurting others. For example, if you make a comment about someone's physical disabilities or their physical features, with the result of hurting them or harming their mind, then your speech becomes harsh speech.

4. Idle gossip

The fourth non-virtue of speech is idle speech or gossip about others, where the only purpose is filling in time – it has no purpose. The motivation for indulging in idle speech or any of the other ten non-virtues can be any of the three poisonous states of mind. Of all the ten non-virtues, idle gossip seems to be a comparatively minor non-virtue, yet it is most dangerous because wasting our time in this way is also wasting our life.

The three non-virtues of mind

Now we move to the three non-virtues of mind. These are covetousness, harmful thought and wrong view.

1. Covetous thoughts

That is when we see something such as an attractive object and develop the thought of wishing to have that object. As our mind ponders the qualities of the desired object for a long period of time, we eventually develop a determination to possess that object. The development of this decisive thought of obtaining that object is the completion of mental act of covetousness.

2. Harmful thought

The motivation for harmful thoughts is any of the three poisonous states of mind. We want to harm others, wish the business of others to be damaged or wish others to fail in whatever they are trying to achieve. Not only that, but

through the influence of harmful thoughts we might be motivated to create harmful actions. The completion of the act of harmful thought is when the thought develops to the stage where you are absolutely sure about wanting to bring down the other person in some way.

3. Wrong view

This includes thoughts that there is no past life, or there is no future, or that the Three Jewels are not an object of refuge, or that there is no truth in the law of karma and results. The completion of the non-virtue of holding wrong views is when our wrong view reaches the stage when we are definite that our view is correct.

The ten virtues

The opposite to each of the ten non-virtues are the ten virtues such as the virtues of not killing, not stealing and so forth. The virtue of not killing, for example, doesn't necessarily mean not actually committing any act of killing. In order to create the virtue of not killing it is necessary to recognise the shortcomings of the act of killing. Through that, we develop the thought of refraining from killing. Therefore, the virtue of not killing is when we have developed a thought of respect for the life of other beings based on our knowledge of the shortcomings arising from the act of killing. If we have thought of refraining from killing to the point where we affirm the thought of not committing any act of killing we can accumulate the virtue of refraining from killing. We will leave the explanation of the ten virtues or ten non-virtues here.

In the last teaching, we explained how the life we have now reflects the result of our past karma. This is also the case for our future lives. What we go through in that life all depends on what sort of karma we have created. If karma is the source of what we experience in our current and future lives, we should understand that any non-virtues we have accumulated in the past can be purified. The text says that there are four purifying forces.

The four purifying forces

By applying the four purifying forces we can get rid of negative karma that we may have accumulated.

1. The first purifying force is the purifying force of *the base*. Here the base refers to depending on the refuge or noble objects. So, we cultivate faith in them and take refuge in them, and in that way, we purify our negativities.

2. The second force is the purifying force of *regret*, where we develop a sense of regret about any of the non-virtues we might have accumulated in this life and in many past lives. We regret having committed any of the non-virtues, and therefore negative karma. Developing such a sense of regret or repentance is considered to be purifying force.

3. The third force is the purifying force of the *antidote* or *remedy*. Having felt regret about whatever non-virtues one might have accumulated in the past, to purify them we engage in virtuous actions such as refraining from the ten non-virtuous actions and engaging in other virtuous practices such as meditation or recitation. These are called the purifying force of the antidote.

4. The fourth purifying force is the purifying force of *promise*. This means that you pledge not to commit such negativities again. Of the four purifying forces, the fourth is considered most important because with that pledge we will apply the other purifying forces.

We should think about negativities not just in terms of this current life where we have accumulated so many negativities that we can't even remember, but we can also assume that we have accumulated a great number of negativities in our past lives. Of course, we have no recollection of our activities in our past lives, but we can be sure we have committed them.

And we haven't just accumulated negativities in the immediate past life. We have gone through an infinite number of lifetime cycles, so imagine how many negativities we might have accumulated. Although we can't recall them now, we should assume that we have committed them and try to recognise the need to purify them, otherwise we will experience the inevitable result of each of them which will lead to unending suffering. Therefore, developing a sense of regret about having engaged in these negativities reinforces our pledge to not commit these negativities again.

It is said that if we engage in any purification practice, the effect will be greater if, after engaging in the practice, we imagine that we are purified and cleansed of those negativities. By engaging in purifying practices, engaging in them over and over again, we will wash away the negativities just like repeatedly washing a dirty cloth to remove all the stains and dirt.

If after engaging in this practice, we see ourselves as having been purified of negativities and try to feel the purity of our mind and body, it is said that imaging such purity has a great effect in terms of our ability to purify negativities.

This completes the teaching on the law of karma and its result.

So, we have finished the small stages of the path. Next week, I am going to start teaching on Shantideva's text *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, a different topic, because next week, our most venerable Geshe Doga will be teaching on Tuesday and he has decided to continue his teaching on lamrim which he started a few years back. He wants to continue with the teaching on the lamrim. He suggested teaching both on Tuesday and Wednesday night on lamrim – it doesn't look interesting for you – [laughter] even though we are on a different topic.

So, Geshe Doga advised me to begin teaching on Shantideva's text, from chapter one, *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. I will be teaching that from next week.

I want to thank you all for coming to the teaching and paying such good attention.

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