Chapter 14 The Varieties of Karma

b" Contemplating specific categories of karma

1" The principal teaching of the ten karmic paths

In chapter 13 we established four principles of how karma works:

1. happiness and suffering are invariably the respective results of virtuous and non-virtuous karma and there is never any inconsistency in this relationship;
2. karma increases, so that the results may be much greater than the cause;
3. you cannot meet results of karma you have not performed;
4. once karma is created it is never lost, until it yields its result or it is purified by applying the antidote.

"How can this knowledge be put into practice? Which actions need to be avoided and which need to be cultivated?"

The Buddha condensed all (most important—most powerful, most easily occur, bring heaviest results) actions into ten general categories. These he taught as the ten virtues to be cultivated and the ten non-virtues to be abandoned. If you have a basic understanding of these ten actions and their results, you can begin to practice.

All actions, whether positive or negative, are performed exclusively by the three doors of body, speech and mind. There is no other way to perform an action. In order to practice ethical conduct successfully, we need to recognise these ten, learn the details of their karmic consequences and then apply this knowledge in our daily lives.

The Buddha explained the opposite of these ten non-virtuous karmic paths as the ten virtues. If you are able to rid yourself of these ten harmful actions and replace those harmful deeds with positive behaviour, that positive karma will lead first to temporary good results within samsara and ultimately to the highest result of liberation from samsara. Practicing in that way will be enormously effective.

It is clear that the non-virtues of body and speech are dependent upon the mind. You need to take control of your physical and verbal actions. Because actions of body and speech always have the mind in the background begin by cultivating your knowledge and understanding.

As a spiritual practitioner, you must come to know which actions are harmful to yourself and to others, how cause and effect works and what the temporary and ultimate results of your actions will be. Once you understand how all of this works, you rely on wisdom and good judgment to take control of your physical, verbal and mental actions. That requires knowledge and much practice.

Although the detailed workings of karma may be difficult to grasp at the beginning and you may have to spend a long time studying these teachings on cause and effect, it is worthwhile to understand karma and its results. As your understanding deepens you will develop confidence to incorporate these teachings into your practice and life. This is extremely important because the whole Buddhist structure—from the beginning up to emancipation—is built upon this attitude of trust in the action of karma. Without that trust, you cannot reach the highest goal.

As ordinary human beings (with Small Scope), we begin with the **conventional right view.** This is the most important view to cultivate right now. Later, when you attain the path of the ārya beings—those who have gained insight into the ultimate right view—your understanding will be different. Now, you need to listen, study, analyse and understand karma. Once you begin to establish this understanding, you can begin to spend your life pursuing the goals of the Buddhist path and gradually your knowledge will become deeper and your practice will become easier. In this way, little by little, everything will come naturally. The teachings on karma and its results that follow are the foundation of that path.

Once you begin to understand this process of karma and you see the disadvantages of negative actions, you must put it into practice by trying to avoid what you now understand to be harmful. You must avoid the harmful actions themselves and resist even the mental temptation to perform them; you must reject even the inclination to engage in the negative side. This might take work and may not happen immediately.

Try not to mix any of the harmful forms of speech into your daily language. This is not something you can accomplish all at once because ordinarily your speech is completely mixed with negativity. But from this point on you gradually try to reduce your negative use of language until finally you achieve pure speech. It is the same way for physical action. You gradually reduce non-virtuous actions until finally your behaviour is not mixed with any negative deeds at all.

Your trust in the action of karma governs your mind and your mind has control over your actions of body and speech.

The practice here is to understand the motivation that lies behind your actions of body and speech and to make the effort to refrain from these ten non-virtuous karmas. Because the mind controls the body and speech, what is most important here is the mental aspect. If you have not built stability and confidence through learning and meditation—it will be difficult to gain control over your physical and verbal actions.

That is why it is important to study and then to practice meditation. Until you have built a solid meditation practice, choose a quiet place for meditating. When your mind has become strong you can be anywhere.

This is the foundation of the path because without pure ethical conduct there can be no inner spiritual development and none of the goals can be achieved.

The Buddha said "What are called the 'virtuous elements' are the basic root of all the perfections of devas and humans. They are the basic root of the enlightenment of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. They are the basic root of unsurpassed, perfectly complete enlightenment. What are these basic roots? They are the ten virtuous actions.

The foundation of all of higher results[1] is the practice of maintaining pure virtuous conduct. Without these ten virtues at the beginning, none of these results can be realised. It would be like trying to build a huge building without first laying down a foundation. You must work constantly to develop the mental resolve to consistently restrain your mind.

Without that strong mental resolution you will not have sufficient control over your body and speech. Uncontrolled behaviour means that you act under the influence of whatever external conditions you meet, without regard for future consequences. The strongest force is your own inner, mental determination. This determination is extremely powerful and far superior to being restrained by others. And it is something you have to generate by yourself.

You do need constantly to watch what you are doing in your own mind, quietly and peacefully. When talking to others you watch what you are saying. Watching your behaviour in this way, you keep your actions and motivations pure. That is the real practice of the Dharma. From that practice real, pure ethical conduct will follow and other good results will follow that.

Don't boast, show off or make stupid claims about studying, Dharma or Mahayana —falsely claiming attainments that you do not have. Such deception is a great lie and attracts considerable bad karma.

Even when you have studied much and know what you are doing, negative actions still frequently arise. It may be because you are not paying attention, or because your habits are too strong. Therefore, these teachings tell us that first you have to pay attention to what you are doing and then you have to bring your actions into harmony with what the teachings advise.

This practice starts with observing your motivation. All actions start there. It is the intention behind the action that drives the action; it is the intention that makes the karma negative or positive. Of course, the motivation is not always clear and sometimes you have a mixed motivation. You can have a profound understanding of virtuous and non-virtuous karma and still be motivated by fear or some other confusing affliction that leads you to act in negative way. This kind of confusion can lead even advanced practitioners into acting in a deceitful manner.

For real practitioners the real practice is:

- not blaming somebody else for your faults,
- not keeping an eye on someone else's poor qualities,
- not worrying about what other people are saying, or doing, or thinking.

Nobody knows what is going on in another person's mind. The important thing is what are you doing? What are you thinking? How are you dealing with the situation in

---

[1] The first goal is a higher rebirth within cyclic existence; this is the goal of the being of **small scope**. The second goal, the definite good, includes both emancipation from saṃsāra (the goal of the śrāvaka and the pratyekabuddha) and the complete enlightenment of buddhahood (the goal of the bodhisattva).
Once you obtain the definite good you can never lose it; you can never fall back into a lower rebirth. This achievement is definite and cannot be lost; in contrast, a higher rebirth is only a temporary achievement, because you have not eliminated the obscuring afflictions from the root.
The main cause of all of these results, whether temporary or definite, is ethical conduct. Ie, without ethical conduct there is no way to accomplish any of these goals.

front of you? Real practitioners are always watching what is going on in their own mind, watching how they react to the events they encounter every minute of the day. They are always protecting themselves from creating non-virtuous karma.

2" Establishing karma and its results

(a) Non-virtuous karma and its results

(i) The actual non-virtuous karmic paths

The Buddha, in his kind and skilful way, condensed all negative actions into ten in order to make the practice of ethics easier to understand. If you train yourself to keep away from these ten, other negative actions will naturally be avoided. In this sense the Buddha highlighted these ten as the most important.

These ten non-virtues are classified according to the three doors of body, speech and mind. There are **three physical non-virtues**: killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. There are **four non-virtues of speech**: lying, slander, harsh speech and senseless speech. And there are **three negative mental actions**: covetousness, malice and wrong view.

Tsongkhapa uses a different mode of classification from Asaṅga[2]. In this method the three middle categories—discrimination, motivation and obscuring affliction—are rolled into one category, **thought**. A new category is added, the **actual action**, which covers the effort of performing the action. So in this format of analysis there are four categories: *the basis, the thought, the actual action and the culmination of the action*. Tsongkhapa explains each of these four elements for each of the ten karmic paths.

Every action can be done in a way that makes its karma complete; ie, all four of the elements are fulfilled and the action is therefore performed in its heaviest form. On the other hand, one or more of the elements may be missing. To have a complete karma, the doer of the action must be alive and acting intentionally from the beginning of making preparations for the action right up through the culmination of the action.[3]

The three physical non-virtues

Killing

The basis

The basis of the action of killing must be another living sentient being—not yourself. From the Buddhist point of view, killing any sentient being, even the smallest insect, is an act of killing. If you kill yourself it is still negative karma, but it is not the complete karma of killing—because you will not be alive at the end.

The thought

Recall this second element subsumes three mental aspects of an action: the first is the **correct discrimination of the object**; the second is **the motivation**; and the third is the **obscuring affliction**.

For the karma of killing to be complete, at the time of the action the killer must have a correct perception of the object he or she is killing. In other words, the killer must kill the exact same being he intended to kill. There are four possibilities with respect to this correct or incorrect **discrimination**:[4]

(1) when the object is a sentient being, perceiving it to be a sentient being;
(2) when the object is a sentient being, perceiving it as not a sentient being;
(3) when the object is not a sentient being, perceiving it as not a sentient being;

---

[2] Asaṅga teaches these karmic paths in terms of five categories: basis, discrimination, state of mind, obscuring affliction and culmination. When we use this format to analyse a particular action, the basis is the object of the action; *discrimination* is the unmistaken perception or correct recognition of the object; *state of mind* is the thought, intention, or motivation that lies behind the action; *obscuring affliction* refers to which of the three poisons—desire, hostility, or ignorance—produced that thought; and finally there is the *culmination* of the action.

[3] We are dealing here with samsaric karma. This action is always impure; it is called polluted or **contaminated action**. (There is also uncontaminated karma—which is included in the fourth Noble Truth and leads to cessation of suffering.)
"Samsaric karma" or "contaminated karma" refers to the actions, intentions and volitional activities that are driven by ignorance, attachment, aversion and other defilements associated with cyclic existence (samsara).
Even when such action is virtuous, it is still contaminated or impure. All such action, virtuous or not, is motivated at the root level by one of the three poisons: desire, hostility, or ignorance.

[4] You can apply this pattern to all ten of the non-virtuous actions.

(4) when the object is not a sentient being, perceiving it to be a sentient being.

Of course, the first and third of these perceptions are correct and the other two are mistaken discriminations. In order to have the complete karma of killing, the perception of the object you are killing must be unmistaken in this sense.

Whether or not you need a correct perception of exactly whom you are killing depends on which of two types of **motivations** impel your action.

- If your motivation is to kill a particular being, you must in fact kill that being in order for the karma to be complete. You must kill the actual person or creature that you intended to kill. For example, if you mean to kill only the person named Devadatta, but by mistake you wind up killing Yajñadatta, that action is not a complete karma of killing, though it is still a serious non-virtuous action and will have unhappy results.
- In the second case, if you act out of a generalised desire to kill, without intending to kill any particular being, once you have taken the action of killing the karma will be complete. In this case you do not need a correct perception of whom you are killing. Your motivation is to kill someone and you succeed in carrying out that intention.

Of course, the main motivation of killing is wanting to kill. If you do not have the desire to kill—if you kill someone unintentionally—it will not be the complete karma of killing.

The third aspect of thought we need to analyse is which **affliction underlies the action**. Any one of the three poisons—desire, hostility, or ignorance—can be the underlying cause of killing. Other afflictions may arise at the time of the action, but one of these three will always be present.

The obscuring affliction refers to one of the three poisons while the motivation refers to the intention that directly motivates the action. *The motivation always arises from one of the three poisons, the three root afflictions.* One of these three is always the root of the motivation that finally sets the action in motion.

The actual action

In terms of the agent who performs the action, it does not matter whether you do it yourself or you cause someone else to do it—both of these constitute complete karma. Ie, if you have the motivation to kill and you cause somebody else to do the killing, that constitutes a complete karma of killing for you.

As for the nature of the action, it does not matter how the killing was carried out. Whether it was done by using a weapon, with poison—whatever means were involved, the karma will be complete.

The culmination of the action

The culmination of the action is accomplished when the victim dies because of the action of killing—it may be immediately or at a later time. If your particular victim dies seven months or even seven years after the action as a result of what you have done, you receive the complete karma of killing at the moment he or she finally dies.

If you die at the same time or before the victim, the karma will not be complete. Your action will also not be complete if you change your mind before he dies—ie if your motivating thoroughly and completely reverses before the victim dies. Of course, the action is still negative karma, but mitigated because the intention was reversed before the action was completed.

Stealing

The basis

The basis of stealing is an object that is owned by others—an object they consider to be their own, which they think of as "mine."

The thought

Discrimination. The perception at the time of stealing must be unmistaken. If you intend to steal a particular object that belongs to another, but you confuse it and steal a different object, then the karma will not be complete.

The *obscuring affliction* can be any of the three poisons: desire, hostility, or ignorance. Often people steal out of desire, but you can also steal out of hatred and in most situations ignorance is also at work.

The *motivation* is the intention to take something that belongs to someone else without permission. It involves the desire to possess an object for yourself, knowing that it belongs to another and knowing that it was not given to you.

The actual action

As with killing, the agent who steals may be yourself, or you can have an agent do it for you. The nature of the action can be to take away the object directly and forcefully, or you can do it surreptitiously.

Any use of deception to separate another person from his or her possessions is included in stealing. For example, you may borrow money from someone with no intention of returning it; that is also a form of stealing.

The purpose of stealing may be to help yourself, or to benefit someone else. It is also possible to steal because you want to harm the person you are stealing from. Any of these would constitute the complete karma of stealing.

The culmination of the action

Tsongkhapa says that the statement: "moving the object from one place to another is the completion of the action" is an illustration and is not all there is to the completion of the action. The true completion is the arising of the thought, "Now I have it!" in the mind of the thief. This also applies if an agent is doing the stealing. It could be stealing land—ie, where the property is not moved.

Sexual Misconduct

The basis

There are four types of inappropriate sexual acts: using an inappropriate partner, inappropriate parts of the body, inappropriate places and inappropriate times.

I note that many of the 'inappropriate acts' have become normal behaviour in modern times and the descriptions appear very old morality—not LGBTIQ+. The Buddha's words? Or Tsongkhapa's? I also note that 'rape', 'sexual assault', 'incest', 'child sexual abuse', 'Paedophilia' or 'bestiality' are not mentioned.

The thought

The actual action

The culmination of the action

Lay or ordained and existence of vows and level of vows complicates this.

Four mental non-virtues

Lying

The basis

In the analysis of lying there is, first of all, the direct object: the lie that you tell; then there is the indirect object: the person to whom you tell the lie.

A lie can be told with respect to eight types of objects of knowledge. The first four are: something that has been seen; something that has been heard; something that has been discerned by the nose, tongue, or body; and something that has been cognised by the mind. Then, a lie can be told with respect to the opposite of these four: something that has not been seen, heard, etc. In general, lying is a misrepresentation about one of these five sense objects or a mental object.

Affirmative lying: You may say about something that you did not see, "I saw that." You may say about something that you do not know, "I know that."

Then you can do the reverse, which is to say about something that you did see, "I didn't see it."

Then there is the person to whom you tell your lie. You cannot lie to yourself. The complete karma of lying requires another being to understand the meaning of the lie that you tell; that indirect object of your lying must understand what you are saying. If you lie to a dog, who cannot understand what you say, or to a piece of stone, that is not an actual lie.

The thought

The mental state behind the lie is analysed in terms of the three aspects. In terms of **discrimination**, lying is to alter or distort a perception. For example, you might take something that you had seen and say that you did not see it. You have the perception that you did see it, but you want to mislead someone, so you distort the facts about what you have perceived. You must first have the perception that you did see something and then you change that to say that you did not see it. Even if you actually did not see it but you believe that you saw it and then you lie about what you believe to be true, that too is a lie. It may not be a complete karma, but it is certainly a non-virtue, a part of lying.

The **obscuring affliction**, the root source of the action, is any one of the three poisons: desire, hostility, or ignorance. Here ignorance means a special kind of wrong view which holds, "I should lie about that. Although I know this to be true, I should say that it is not true." This is a kind of wrong reason or perverted view.

The **direct motivation** is wanting the tell a falsehood, wanting to misrepresent the truth, wanting to deceive another person.

The actual action

The actual act of lying can be done by saying words yourself, or by not saying anything when someone else says something you know to be untrue. It can also be done with the body, using a physical gesture to indicate something that is untrue. So in this system lying can occur without speech. And it makes no difference whether you lie for your own purposes or for someone else's benefit.

Disagreement. According to the Mahayana texts by Asaṅga, only three of the four non-virtues of speech—lying, slander and harsh speech—will be complete karmic paths whether you do them yourself or you cause someone else to do them. However, Vasubandhu's Treasury of Knowledge Auto-commentary says that for all four non-virtues of speech—lying, slander, harsh speech and senseless speech—the karma is complete even if you cause someone else to do it. According to the Vinaya system, for all of the four actions of speech, it is necessary to do them oneself for the *downfall* to be complete. This applies to ordained monks and nuns.

We need to make a distinction between the two different terms that are used here. A misdeed—some people translate this as sin—is a non-virtuous action, which is negative karma regardless of whether the person has taken a vow against performing it or not. A downfall is an action that might not be negative for a layperson who has not taken any vows, but is a negative action because it involves breaking a rule to which one is committed by means of a vow.

For those who have taken vows and then claim falsely extraordinary achievements —attained nirvana, realised the four noble truths. If you lie about such things, that is a major transgression. This is a much heavier type of negative karma than an ordinary lie. For those who have taken a vow this is a complete downfall.

The culmination of the action

The culmination of the action is when the listener understands what you are communicating. If the listener does not understand you, or is not listening to you, your statement will fall into the category of senseless speech. Slander and harsh speech are the same in this respect: the listener must understand your communication for the karma to be complete. If that listener does not understand you, your statement becomes senseless speech.

It is important to remember that lying does not require words; it can be a mere physical gesture, or even silence. For example, someone may say, "Oh, you are a great bodhisattva!" though in fact you are not. If you want that person to believe that, you can indicate it is true without saying anything, just by a slight physical gesture. That is lying.

You have to be careful about this, because it is easy for such lies to happen. You may say and do things all the time without watching your own mind, silently accepting others' statements when you know they are not true. If you are aware of this danger and you realise what you are doing, you can protect yourself from this kind of situation.

Slander

The basis

The object of slander is twofold: people who are harmonious with each other and those who are unfriendly, or not on good terms.

The thought

The discrimination and the obscuring affliction are the same as for lying. The obscuring affliction is any of the three poisons, desire, hostility, or ignorance. The perception should be unmistaken: if the people are friendly, you should perceive that they are; if they are not friendly, you should perceive that. The direct motivation is to foster division between people who are harmonious, desiring to make them unfriendly and to separate them. If they are unfriendly, the motivation is to prevent them from reconciling and to make them even more unfriendly. When you use speech to sow discord and damage the relationship between people, that is slander.

However, if you have some entirely different motivation—if there is no intention to cause division between people and what you say is true—then that speech will not be slander.

The actual action

The action is to make statements in order to create this discord and division. Whether what you say is true or false, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant to hear, does not matter. Whether you are acting for your own purposes or for the interests of others does not make any difference. If your purpose is to be divisive and sow discord, the speech is slander.

The culmination of the action

Even though the division might not actually happen, when your words are understood, the karma is complete. This is the way to think about it in your daily practice. It does not matter whether the people you are talking to become more unfriendly or not; merely by speaking divisive words you are performing a non-virtuous action, so you should make every effort to prevent that kind of speech.

This kind of divisive speech or slander is also a common problem among people. However, if you have some entirely different motivation—if there is no intention to cause division between people and what you say is true—then that speech will not be slander.

Harsh Speech

The basis

The object of harsh speech is a person whose heart and mind you want to hurt by saying painful words.

The thought

The discrimination and the obscuring affliction are the same as before. The obscuring affliction can be either desire, hostility, or ignorance; and the perception of what you are saying and who you are talking to should be unmistaken. The direct motivation is the desire to say harsh or abusive words.

The actual action

The actual action is to criticise another person, using hurtful and unpleasant language, in terms of their race or ancestry, physical faults, ethical behaviour, character or anything else. Whether the harsh words are true or not does not matter, nor does it matter whether the person you are abusing has the faults you impute to them or whether you are making up a lie; in either case, intentionally using hurtful language is harsh speech.

The culmination of the action

The action is complete when the meaning of the words you speak is understood by the person you are talking to.

The main thing is to recognise when such actions are arising in your mind and to block them before they occur. Try to avoid them as much as possible.

Senseless Speech

The basis

The object of senseless speech is meaningless or purposeless words.

There are seven different types of senseless speech described here.

1. The first is quarrelling, talking about someone's faults, arguing, or instigating fights.
2. The second is to recite or transmit prayers, mantras, or rituals from non-buddhist or brahmanical texts. Such speech does not have much virtuous purpose behind it. This category also includes reading books (or watching TV or movies) that only produce stronger afflictions; increasing desire or you become angry or jealous. This activity has no virtuous purpose. You are trying to keep your three doors pure. So, you should be careful about what you read. Certain books will only increase or intensify your obscuring emotions, so reading them is considered senseless.
3. The third type of senseless speech is to bewail your fate with mourning, wailing, or complaining about your circumstances. That has no benefit at all; it merely stimulates an inner emotional turmoil.
4. The fourth is playful words spoken only for laughter, for pleasure, for play, or for making a joke. When you gather together with friends and your conversation has no other purpose than to laugh or entertain each other, such use of words is senseless.
5. The fifth is gossiping and exchanging news about politics, kings, presidents, nations and so forth, with no other purpose than to pass along stories about what is going on. With this kind of idle gossip you pass around all kinds of useless news, from the coming and going of world leaders down to activities of the lowest thieves and criminals. It serves no purpose other than entertainment and passing the time.
6. Sixth is when you are drunk or intoxicated and you talk like a mad person.
7. The seventh is the speech you engage in when pursuing a wrong livelihood, using your speech to improperly receive money, food, clothes and so forth.

All four of these speech non-virtues (Lying, slander, harsh speech) are senseless speech of one kind or another. The first three are negative and therefore senseless.

Each of those first three types of negative speech has its own distinguishing characteristics and function, therefore it is singled out with its own name. The specific category of senseless speech is applied to all the other forms of purposeless verbal behaviour not included in the first three.

Together, these make up the four types of negative karma you can produce by speaking. Though many of the words you say may be pointless, still they have effects. Words can be very powerful, on both the virtuous and non-virtuous sides. Some forms of non-virtuous speech, such as lying and harsh speech, can be very painful to others. Sharp words can be like a weapon, leaving a painful wound in someone's mind for a long time. If you examine your life closely, you may find that you are constantly producing this kind of karma.

The thought

This one does not require someone to hear you. Even if no one hears you or understands you, even if you are talking to yourself, uttering senseless words constitutes this karma. All you need is a correct perception of what you want to say.

The obscuring affliction can be any of the three: desire, hostility, or ignorance. The direct motivation is the desire to speak frivolously or carelessly, to say whatever happens to come into your mind without any significant meaning or purpose.

The actual action

The actual action is to begin to speak these meaningless words.

The culmination of the action

The culmination of the action is when the speech is finished. Once you say the words, that is enough. There is no need for someone to hear or understand you; the karma is complete.

Every day you generate many words saying things that are not in themselves very harmful but can become heavy karma just by virtue of repetition.

Therefore, one important aspect of maintaining virtuous action is to become less talkative. When you speak you should be watching your motivation, aware of what you are saying and why you are saying it. *You should always be helpful in what you say and speak in a considerate, gentle manner.* If you use speech in that way, people will find you more reliable and trustworthy.

The object of this practice is to bring the three doors of body, speech and mind under the control of wisdom. We do this by placing mindfulness and introspective alertness as guards at each of these doors, watching what is coming in and what is going out. Simply by being careful we can eliminate many of the non-virtues that pass through the door of speech. Even silence can bring great benefits. You may find that life is just as enjoyable when you live it in a quiet way as it was when you got your pleasure from constant talking.

Three negative mental actions

Covetousness

The basis

The object of covetousness is the wealth or the property of others.

The thought

The discrimination is to recognise correctly the object you covet. The obscuring affliction is any of the three poisons. The direct motivation is the wish to possess the object you covet, the desire to make it your own.

The actual action

The actual action occurs when you move from the mere motivation of wishing to possess the object to the actual endeavour to acquire it.

The culmination of the action

You think about the object over and over. The culmination of the action takes place when you resolve that you will make that object your own. It is the thought, "I definitely want to have that thing for myself." In the beginning the thought is not really definite, but it gradually develops until you get to the point where you firmly resolve to have it for yourself. This is a purely mental resolution; there is no physical action necessary.

The thought of covetousness is a complete action when you make the decision that you definitely want to have that particular object.

All three of the mental non-virtues have five aspects that make them complete; they are incomplete if any of these five is lacking. The qualities that produce a complete karma of covetousness are as follows.

(1) You must have a very strong attachment to your own possessions.

(2) You must have an avaricious craving to accumulate wealth—never being satisfied with what you already have.
(3) You must have a mind that sees others' possessions as very fine and longs to enjoy those things. You are so attached to your own things, you want to accumulate more and more. Then you see what others have and you develop a strong need to experience the pleasure of those things.
(4) You must have a greedy mind, thinking that whatever pleasurable objects others have you need to have yourself.
(5) As the result of covetousness your mind is overcome by shamelessness and you are oblivious to the need of escaping from this fault. The covetous mind has no thought of shame; it does not recognise that this avaricious attitude is wrong, so it has no thought of turning away from it."

If all five of these qualities of mind are present, that covetous mind is perfect: it is fully developed and complete. If any of them is lacking, it is not a complete karma of covetousness.

Shopping, etc. If you go to places where you constantly see beautiful and desirable objects, you are feeding covetousness; you are inviting this kind of complete, perfect covetousness to arise in your mind. What you will buy in such places, I am not sure, but you will definitely bring back a bag full of covetousness. Therefore, the best protection is to keep your distance from desire-producing objects. You may find that it is not so urgent to go shopping and expose yourself to all sorts of attractive things. Keeping your distance from such places will help you to avoid this destructive state of mind.

What is the actual action for covetousness, when there is no physical or verbal action? It is just this process of going over and over your craving for the object until you make that decisive resolution, "I will have it." This resolution, when it includes the five qualities we just discussed, constitutes the actual action of covetousness.

If your motivation is to be beneficial to others—if it is out of compassion, love and mercy—such thoughts will not be covetousness.

If you do not recognise the covetous mind when it appears—if you do not appreciate its faults and consider it a target to fight against—then these kinds of thoughts will easily arise. Without the watchfulness of introspective awareness, such thoughts flow constantly like a river. Wherever you go, whomever you associate with—this kind of desire arises all the time. Therefore, you should avoid situations that cause these types of thoughts to arise. If you find yourself in such a situation, you should remain mindful. When you attracted to something that another person has (or an advertisement for it)—when you feel that greedy desire to have it for yourself—be prepared to apply an antidote to those thoughts.

Once you understand the faults of these non-virtuous thoughts, you will work to prevent them from arising. That is why you need to learn what covetousness is. You come to realise that covetousness only produces more suffering. Not only is there the long-term unhappy result that will ripen in the future; there is the immediate consequence that you get rich only in greediness and disappointment. These are important points for any practitioner to consider.

Malice

The basis and the thought

The basis, or object, as well as the discrimination and obscuring affliction of malice are the same as for harsh speech. The direct motivation is the desire to harm someone. You want to hurt them by some means: by hitting them, by saying hurtful words, by physically assaulting them, killing them, binding them with rope, or imprisoning them. You wish that they experience misfortune and financial ruin as the result of external causes, your own actions, or the actions of others.

The actual action

The actual action is the arising of the malicious wish that harm should come to another person. It is the mental process of indulging in this kind of thought as it develops, increases and becomes stronger.

The culmination of the action

The action is complete when you resolve to definitely go through with the action of beating, killing, or harming in some way. The way this mental process plays out is that the intention to harm increases more and more, until finally a definite decision to hurt dominates the mind: that is the completion of the karma of malice.

Five qualities must be present to constitute the complete karma of malice:

(1) You must have a mind of hatred that grasps firmly at a cause or reason why you want to do harm to a particular person. For example, if you feel that someone damaged you in the past, you may harbour an intense resentment toward and hold very firmly to what that person did as a reason why you should give harm in return.
(2) You must have a mind which cannot bear the harm that was done to you.
(3) You must have a mind of resentment, which comes from recollecting and repeatedly dwelling on the reasons for your anger. Over and over you tell yourself, "This person did this terrible thing to me." You meditate on the harms that you believe your enemy has done to you until this powerful thought of resentment arises.
(4) You must have a mind of vengeance with a thought such as, "It would be good if that person were beaten or killed." After you have meditated on the harm you believe someone has done to you, you finally feel the need to hit back, to repay the harm in some fashion.
(5) You must have a mind that is overcome with malice, oblivious to the disadvantages of such an attitude, without shame and uninterested in avoiding such faults. When you have no countervailing thought challenging your vengeful desire to harm your enemy—when you feel no regret, no shame, no hesitation or doubt; when you are completely under the power of that thought—that is the fifth and final element for complete and perfect malice.

Other than this complete form of malice, we have simple malice, general forms of this thought that do not fulfil all the above requirements. An example of simple malice is when you think, "This person has done harm to me or is doing harm to me" and, based on that, you decide to harm that person in return. *All such thoughts directed toward paying back harm that was done to you is simple malice*.

You can use these examples to examine the situations and keep a watch on your own motivation and attitude. When powerful malicious thoughts arise, you should observe how the process develops; then you will see how nothing but trouble results from dwelling on such harmful attitudes. Based on that understanding, you will be able to turn away from such harm. As soon as a small malicious thought arises—even though you could not prevent it from arising—in the back of your mind you will still have a feeling of shame, a regretful feeling that counteracts that negative intention. In one corner of your mind wisdom says, "This is wrong." With this small antidote, even though a malicious thought arises, it will not become complete karma.

Wrong View

The basis

The object of wrong view must be something that actually exists. The wrong view is to deny the existence of that object. This refers to such objects as karma, cause and effect, emancipation, samsara, the four noble truths and so forth. Wrong view is to deny these things, which in fact do exist.

The thought

The discrimination is to believe that it is correct to deny things that actually exist. The obscuring affliction is, as before, any of the three poisons. The direct motivation is wanting to deny the existence of the object.

The actual action

The actual action is to engage in that wrong view. This involves a process of contemplating and progressively cultivating that kind of thought until you actually hold that wrong view.

Wrong view is generally divided into four types: the denial of cause, result, agency and the existent object.

- Wrong view that denies cause is the view that there is no such thing as good or bad behaviour, wholesome and unwholesome karma.
- Wrong view that denies results is to believe that there is no fruition that arises from good and bad karma. The fruit of wholesome action is happiness and higher rebirth and the fruit of unwholesome action is suffering and lower rebirths. Wrong view is to believe that these results do not occur.
- Wrong view that denies agency is threefold.
  - The first is to deny the existence of the agents who plant and take hold of the seed. This is believing, for example, that a father and mother do not exist—that the ones who respectively plant and contain the physical seeds of a child do not exist.
  - The wrong view that denies the activity of going and coming is to believe that there are no past or future lives.

- The wrong view that denies the activity of birth is to believe that there is no miraculous birth. To say that sentient beings never have any form of miraculous birth is to deny the existence of the intermediate state or bardo. Beings are born into the intermediate state by means of miraculous birth, but this is not seen by people in our world, so some hold that the intermediate state does not exist.

• Wrong view that denies existent objects is to believe that arhats and so forth do not exist. This is to hold that there are no arhats, no āryas, no bodhisattvas, no buddhas, emancipation, or enlightenment.

These four types of wrong view produce powerful negative results. Therefore they are separated out from many other types of incorrect attitudes—with the name "wrong view."

The culmination of the action

The culmination of the action is when you definitely decide that this is the true nature of things. You cultivate this attitude of mind until you definitely believe and say that these things do not exist. When you make that definite determination that this is the way things are, that is the culmination of the karma of wrong view.

Five aspects constitute a complete, perfect, fully developed wrong view.

(1) You must have an ignorant mind that does not understand the way things actually are. You are confused and mistaken about the way in which the object of knowledge actually exists.

(2) You must have a mind that enjoys non-virtue, that delights in performing harmful actions.

(3) You must have a mind that continuously engages in wrong thinking as the result of concentrating on incorrect teachings. Such wrong thinking describes a faulty reasoning process that leads to accepting a wrong view. Wrong view is generally described as holding impure things as pure, holding impermanent things as permanent and holding selfless things as having an essential, unchanging self. The process of reasoning along incorrect lines that produces conviction in these mistaken ideas is the type of mind being described here.

(4) you must have what is called the completely degenerate mind, which denies the value of all virtuous actions, including generosity, making offerings and performing fire offerings. You hold that these spiritual practices have no benefit or no purpose. You even deny that "virtuous activity" itself exists. This is the low point of wrong view and obviously has the potential of destroying all positive efforts; for this reason it is called the "completely degenerate mind."

(5) the mind is overcome by this kind of wrong view, convinced and confident, without shame and uninterested in avoiding such faults. When you possess these five elements of wrong view, it is complete, perfect and fully developed. If any of these five are lacking, the karma is not complete.

There are many other forms of wrong view. The beliefs that are collected and called wrong view here—such as holding that phenomena are permanent, or holding that there is an unchanging eternal soul or self—are the most powerful forms of wrong view. They are views having the potential to cut the roots of virtue. Holding these sorts of erroneous attitudes is very conducive to performing non-virtuous, harmful actions. The logic of such beliefs leads to a sense of invulnerability—a sense that you can indulge in whatever actions you like without any consequences.

If you are under the influence of this strong materialist view, you will deny karmic cause and effect. This denial cuts the motivation to pursue virtuous activity and have your behaviour conform to the principles of karma. It leads you toward negative actions willingly, joyfully indulging in them to your heart's content. Because of this the beliefs specifically mentioned as constituting wrong view are very conducive to negative action. That is why these particular ideas are separated out from the many other incorrect attitudes and given the name "wrong view."

Two attitudes are taught to be the most powerful destroyers of merit and virtue: hatred and wrong view. Wrong view can incinerate all the merits you have already accumulated and insure that you will not create any more merits in the future.

The Concluding Motivation

We saw that all of the above ten negative actions can be initially motivated by any of the three root obscuring afflictions: **desire, hostility, or ignorance**. Now we look at what kind of thought is motivating the action during its concluding stage; what kind of motivation is active once the action is underway and as it is brought to conclusion.

For the non-virtues of **killing, harsh speech and malice**, the initial motivation may be any of the three poisons, but the concluding motivation is **hatred**. This means that

once the action has begun the intention is to hurt, harm, or destroy; this harming thought is always the motivation at the conclusion of the action. You can set out to kill with many motivations. You can kill out of wrong view—such as believing that killing is good—as when people make animal sacrifices as a form of worship. Other people believe that animals were created to be killed and used for the benefit and comfort of human beings; this is another form of wrong view. Those acts of killing are initiated by ignorance, but the conclusion of the action is motivated by the harmful attitude of hostility: the intention to destroy or take the life of the other being.

For **stealing, sexual misconduct and covetousness,** the initial motivation may be any of the three poisons, but they are always brought to completion by **desire**. We can imagine stealing from others because you hate them, or stealing something because you believe you have the right to take it. But at the concluding stage of the action, the intention is always to take the object away; this is a form of desire. It is the same for sexual misconduct and covetousness—those actions are ultimately dominated by desire.

For **lying, slander and senseless speech**, both the initiating motivation and the concluding thought can be any of the three poisons.

For **wrong view** the initiating motivation can be any of the three poisons, but the concluding thought is always wrong view itself.

The difference between **karma and karmic paths**.

Karma is intention: the intentional thought that is driving the action. For example, the karma of killing is the intention to take another's life. If the intention to kill is not present, you will not create the actual karma of killing. Karma is mainly internal; it is a mental act: wanting or intending to kill. In Buddhist psychology *intention* is a mental factor that is present at all times.

The **path of karma** means either the *cause* of an intention, or its *object*—its actualisation. The *seven non-virtues of body and speech are karma* because they are the intention to commit an action—for example, killing. They are also **karmic paths** because they are also the object of that intention: the path of action down which that intention travels. The karma of killing is the intention to kill; the karmic path is the object of that thought: the carrying out of killing. So the seven non-virtues of body and speech are both karma and karmic paths, both the intention and the object, or actualisation, of that intention.

The *three mental karmas—covetousness, malice and wrong view*—are only karmic paths, but they are not karma. These are karmic paths because they are the cause or the source from which an intention arises. Malice, for example, is not itself an intention, but is the underlying cause from which an intention arises. It is a karmic path because it is a cause of an intentional thought, but it is not karma because it is not itself an intention to act. The three non-virtues of mind are obscuring afflictions but they are not karma. An *obscuring affliction* is the mistaken thought that precedes and gives rise to an intention, which is karma. It is the cause, or source, or creator of karma, but it is not the karma itself.

(ii) Distinguishing heavy and light karma

(a') The heaviness and lightness of the ten karmic paths

Karma that is heavy because of the thought

Any action becomes heavier if it is performed under the influence of a powerful form of one of the three poisons. When you act out of intense desire, or intense hatred, that karma will be heavier. Conversely, if the underlying attitude is weak, the karma will be lighter.

Karma that is heavy because of the action

Here we will take killing as the paradigm example and the same type of analysis can be applied to the other non-virtuous deeds. The following types of actions will make the karma of killing heavier because of the manner in which it is performed:

1. If you kill with an attitude of joy or great satisfaction
2. If you praise an act of killing you have done yourself or caused others to participate in
3. If you do it with an attitude that is happy to see an act of killing, or if you plan the act for a long time "and make elaborate preparations for it
4. If you perform the action constantly or repeatedly, do it avidly and each time you kill numerous beings
5. If you purposely kill in an especially cruel or painful way

6. If you kill after forcing your victim to perform improper actions out of fear
7. Killing, while your victim is weak, suffering, or impoverished, or while the victim is moaning, or piteously reciting a laments.

Karma that is heavy because of the absence of an antidote

Although you perform negative activities, there are always antidotes available, countervailing activities you can engage in on a regular basis that will mitigate the strength of the karma. When such antidotes are completely absent, the karma becomes heavier.

Antidotes include:

- One-day ordination vows—eight precepts. Especially if on auspicious days—new moon, 8th, 14th, 15th of each month.
- Perform meritorious acts from time to time—giving gifts, making charitable donations; praising the buddhas, bodhisattvas and gurus; making prostration to the There Jewels; standing up when in the presence of a holy person or sacred object as a sign of respect; making a simple gesture of respect, such as pressing one's palms together; and feeling an attitude of veneration for holy objects.
- To feel ashamed and embarrassed about the negative actions you do; how the buddhas, bodhisattva will be unhappy about your actions. Especially when you are tempted to do something wrong, you begin to worry about it and think, "If I do this my wise spiritual friends will be displeased." You then turn away from non-virtue.
- An essential antidote to actions you have already committed is **strong remorse**. When you have done harmful actions, **regret** can reduce the weight of that karma.
- Through the practice of single-pointed concentration and the attainment of a high degree of meditative stabilisation, you can temporarily become free of worldly attachment. What is called the "mundane path" through which you strive to achieve levels of meditative stabilisation associated with the four concentrations and the four formless absorptions[5]. Attaining one of these higher meditative states temporarily subdues the obscuring afflictions associated with that level.
- The ultimate antidote to the afflictions is direct realisation of the truth of emptiness, or śunyatā. This antidote completely eliminates all obscuring afflictions from the root. All of the other antidotes we have mentioned are temporary. They cannot eliminate afflictions from the root, but they can subdue them for a time, lessen their frequency, force, or ability to instigate harmful actions. Once you attain the ārya stage by realising the true nature of self and of all phenomena, the afflictions will be removed from the root. Then there will no longer be any motivating causes to create negative karma.

---

[5] In Buddhism, the "Four Concentrations" and the "Four Formless Absorptions" are meditative states, part of the practice of Samatha (Tranquility) meditation. They are characterised by deep levels of mental concentration and absorption, leading to profound inner peace and altered states of consciousness, often used as preparatory practices for the development of insight (Vipassana) meditation.

Four Concentrations (Jhanas):

1. **First Jhana** : The practitioner experiences a sense of joy and happiness accompanied by focused attention on a chosen object of meditation. Discursive thought diminishes and the mind becomes one-pointed.
2. **Second Jhana**: In this state, the initial joy transforms into a more subtle sense of bliss or happiness. The mind remains concentrated on the chosen object, distractions are further reduced.
3. **Third Jhana**: The practitioner experiences equanimity, characterised by a sense of tranquility and mental balance. In this state, the grosser forms of joy and bliss have subsided.
4. **Fourth Jhana**: This is the deepest state of concentration, marked by intense equanimity and mindfulness. It is characterised by pure, unwavering concentration, devoid of any sensory or emotional distractions.

Four Formless Absorptions (Arupa Jhanas):

1. **The Sphere of Infinite Space**: The meditator experiences the dissolution of the perception of boundaries and limitations, leading to a boundless sense of space.
2. **The Sphere of Infinite Consciousness**: The awareness of space is transcended and the meditator becomes absorbed in an infinite, all-pervading consciousness.
3. **The Sphere of Nothingness**: The meditator's awareness goes beyond infinite consciousness and perceives a state of emptiness, devoid of sensory input or mental content.
4. **The Sphere of Neither-Perception-nor-Non-Perception**: This is the deepest of the formless absorptions. It is characterised by an extremely subtle level of consciousness, where neither perception nor non-perception is present. It is a state of profound mental stillness and absorption.

If you are unable to apply any of these methods at all, then you have no antidote. Without any antidote even small negative actions will become very heavy. We have the saying, "Even a heavy sin, when committed by a wise person, becomes light. Even a light sin, when committed by a fool, becomes heavy." This is because fools do not have the benefit of antidotes. Their non-virtue is left unpurified, without shame, regret, or any countervailing forces such as vows or meditative realisations. Their negativity becomes habitual and, left unimpeded, their negative karma accumulates in its most potent form, ready to ripen into terrible results in the future. Here we are being encouraged to "sin like the wise person," by taking advantage of the antidotes that can lighten the effects of these negative actions.

Karma that is heavy because of adhering to wrong views

The karma of killing will also be made heavier if it is based on perverted views, distorted concepts of spiritual practice leading you to believe that doing harm is actually beneficial.

Some who engage in these practices believe that there is no fault in slaughtering animals because they were all created by the Lord of Creation to be used for the comfort and pleasure of humans—dominion. Karma is made heavier when this kind of wrong view is held with a strong conviction based on what are believed to be valid reasons.

Karma that is heavy because of the object

The previous four ways in which karma becomes heavy had to do with the way the action was performed by the agent. Now we discuss the ways karma becomes heavy because of the object of the action.

According to our Buddhist precepts, animals from the largest elephant down to the smallest insect should not be harmed. Nevertheless, there is a distinction to be made in terms of the size of the body of the animal you kill. In general, if you kill an animal with a big body, you are creating heavier karma than killing a very small insect. Killing a human being will always be much heavier karma than killing another animal. This includes killing a human foetus still in the mother's womb, still in the process of developing a human body and mind.

Other types of killing that are extremely heavy because of the object are: killing your own father or mother; killing relatives such as your brother or sister; killing your own spiritual teacher; killing a dear friend; killing a "learner," someone who has entered the path of the Dharma but has not yet obtained arhatship; and killing a bodhisattva, an arhat, or a pratyekabuddha.

If you try to harm a buddha with a hostile motivation and in the process you draw blood, that too would be extremely heavy karma. In the scriptures this action is called "drawing blood from a buddha with the intent to do harm." In the Hinayana system, buddhas are said to have ordinary blood, but in the Mahayana the body of a buddha is only a manifestation, so no one can actually harm a buddha by shooting or cutting or hitting him. The intention to do harm to a buddha and acting on that intention, this is very heavy karma.

These are five ways in which the karma of killing is made heavier. Killing that is done in an opposite manner is killing that is lighter.

Objects that make the other nine karmic paths heavy

We have taken the karma of killing as the paradigm example. In general, the other nine non-virtuous actions are made heavier or lighter in similar ways. Because the objects of different types of actions differ, we now look at the way different objects affect the gravity of karma.

Stealing is heavy in terms of its object when you steal a large quantity, or when what you steal is very valuable, fine, or precious. Also, the karma of stealing is heavier when your action betrays the trust of someone who has confidence in you. It is heavier when you steal from people who are in difficult straits and have no protection—the poor, the hungry, or the sick. It is heavier if you steal from someone practicing the Buddhadharma, someone who has taken religious ordination, an arhat, a pratyekabuddha, the Sangha, or when you steal something belonging to a stupa.

Sexual misconduct is made heavier if you have sexual relations with those who are inappropriate objects. These include your mother or her relations and the wives of men who are your friends. Sexual conduct with those who "belong" to someone else is always a negative action and it is even heavier when the object is the mate of someone you are close to and who trusts you. Of course the karma will be heavy if you have sex with a fully ordained nun, a probationary nun, or a novice.

Lying is heavier when it is done with the desire to deceive others; or when you elaborate different points in your lie. It is heavier when you lie to your parents or other people you should respect, such as āryas, arhats, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas and buddhas. Lying to good people; worthy, wise, or spiritual people; or lying to your own dear friends is also heavier. Lying also becomes heavier when it leads to performing one of the three physical non-virtues: killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct.

Among all the forms of lying, the heaviest is telling a lie in order to create a schism in the Sangha. The heaviest form of this non-virtue is to intentionally cause such a schism by telling a lie—amongst the five most powerful negative karmas one can create.

Slander that is heavier when its object includes causing a division between people who have been friendly for a long time; dividing a spiritual teacher from his or her disciple, or causing trouble between two teachers; dividing two parents, or parents and their children; or using slander to cause a split in the Sangha. Slander is also heavier if it causes someone to commit one of the three heavy physical non-virtues: killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct.

Harsh speech is made heavier by many of the same objects as slander. It is heavier when the harsh words are spoken to parents and so forth, or to your spiritual teacher. It is heavier when you speak harsh words that are inaccurate, misrepresentations, or lies. It is, of course, possible to speak harsh words that are truthful, but the karma is heavier if what you say isn't even true. The karma is also heavier if you abuse, scold, ridicule, or rebuke someone directly to their face.

Types of **senseless speech** that are particularly heavy include gossiping about the strife or disagreements among people, about someone else's faults, or about the disputes of others. These are heavier because they are motivated by hatred, attachment, or jealousy on your part. Also in this category is reading the religious texts of non-Buddhists with attachment. This refers to books which have no real spiritual goal, but only serve to increase your own afflictions. Senseless speech is also heavier when it involves ridiculing, abusing, or using unkind or disrespectful language to your parents, relatives, or such figures as your spiritual teacher.

The forms of **covetousness** that are heavier because of the object include desiring things that belong to the Sangha, or directing greed toward religious objects; or, due to arrogance about your own good qualities, desiring to receive equal respect from kings, great masters and eminent spiritual practitioners.

Malice is heavier when it involves wanting to harm parents, relatives, spiritual teachers, those who have done nothing to you, or those who are poor, sick, suffering, or in any pitiable situation that should cause them to be the object of compassion. The karma is also heavier if the object is someone who has done you harm, but who has sincerely confessed the fault and apologised to you.

Wrong view that is heavy in terms of its object includes the nihilistic view that denies in every respect the basis of the Dharma teachings. This means denying everything, including the cause and effect of karma and the existence of positive, attainable goals on the path. It is also very heavy to deny that in the world there are arhats, those who have reached perfect realisation, or those who have entered the path of perfect realisation. Any form of wrong view that is the opposite of these is lighter karma.

Asaṅga presents six ways in which karma becomes heavy. These six apply to both negative and positive karma:

1. *Motivational force.* Karma is heavier when the action is driven by a very sharp, vivid, strong motivation. These are actions that are motivated by an intense form of one of the three poisons. Actions performed without such a powerful motivation are weaker.
   If the three poisons are totally absent, the action will be on the virtuous side. What makes a virtuous karma heavier is a powerful form of the opposite of attachment, the opposite of hatred, or the opposite of wrong view. This means non-attachment, loving compassion and right view or realisation. These are actually the antidotes to the three poisons and actions that are powerfully motivated by these will be weightier virtuous karma.
2. *Habituation*. Even when the motivation is not strong, karma will be heavier if it is done over a long period of time. When you become accustomed to an action because you do it regularly, repeatedly, for a long time—even when there is no intense motivation driving it—that karma can become very heavy.

3. *Nature*. The heaviness of the karma is influenced by the nature of the action. Taking the three karmas of body—killing, stealing and sexual misconduct—the first is the heaviest, the second is a little lighter and the third is lighter still. It is the same for the four actions of speech: the first is heaviest and they diminish in order. When it comes to the three mental karmas, the last, wrong view, is the heaviest, second is malice and the lightest is covetousness.
4. *Object*. As we have already discussed, karma can be heavier in terms of the object. Objects that make a non-virtuous or virtuous action heavier are objects such as the three jewels of refuge, the Saṅgha, or your spiritual teacher. Actions that benefit or harm such objects will be heavier.
5. *Single-mindedly adhering to unfavourable factors*. This means doing non-virtuous actions exclusively. If throughout the course of your lifetime all you do are non-virtuous actions, if you never do even one virtuous thing, then of course, the karma becomes quite heavy, even if the motivation was not strong.
6. *Clearing away unfavourable factors*. This means eliminating everything on the side of non-virtue. When you have freed yourself from attachment you will always perform virtuous. This will happen later, when you reach the āryan stage. Arhats and bodhisattvas at certain levels, no longer create negative karma. When you reach those levels you will always adhere to the side of virtue. Such beings, of course, create very heavy virtuous karma.

(b') An ancillary presentation of a selection of some of the heaviest karmas

This discussion looks at four factors: the object, or "field," of the action; the agent, or "actor," of the action; the material, or "substance," of the action; and the attitude behind the action.

(1') Powerful in terms of the field (or object)

Other beings are the field of our actions. Karma becomes more powerful when the action is directed toward a powerful field. Higher, more powerful fields are the Three Jewels, your own spiritual teacher, anyone who has high realisations and is working to lead others to happiness and your own parents. When your actions are directed toward such weighty objects—even when these actions are not motivated by an intense attitude and even when they bring about just a small amount of harm or benefit—the karma will become powerful because of the great potential of the field of the action.

> Even if you steal something insignificant from the Buddha, the Dharma, or the Sangha, the karma will become great. If you repay the Buddha or the Dharma an amount equivalent to what you stole from them, the action can be purified. However, if you steal from the Sangha there can be no purification without experiencing the result, because the field is so heavy.

To steal from the Dharma means to take something like an image of the Buddha, or to steal scriptures, or to take for yourself some substance that you intended to offer to the Three Jewels.

There is a distinction being made here between making an offering to the Buddha or the Dharma on one hand and making an offering to the Sangha on the other. Let's say you offer some food, or clothes, or a statue, to the Buddha or the Dharma. There is great benefit for you in the merits that you accumulate by making that offering, but there is no direct benefit to the Buddha or the Dharma, because they do not actually need the substances that you offer.

In contrast, offering food to the Sangha brings about two kinds of benefit: there is the benefit to you from making the offering and then there is the direct benefit to the monks and nuns when they make use of the things that you offer. Traditionally, Buddhist monks and nuns live a very simple life with few possessions, sometimes living only on what they receive as alms. Therefore, if you steal from the Sangha—if you take away the food they require to survive—that will produce a great obstacle to their Dharma practice and in that way you will actually be harming all sentient beings.

You have to be very careful about the way that you handle property belonging to the Sangha, especially items that are required to nourish and sustain the monks and nuns.

The sutra also teaches that once offerings, such as flowers, are dedicated to the Sangha, or to a particular monk or nun, laypeople should not make use of them, nor should they be given to a layperson for their use.

A Sangha is can be constituted by one single person who has attained the ārya stage. Among the various types of Sangha, an ārya who is a bodhisattva is an

exceptionally heavy field of action and virtues or non-virtues directed toward such a person will have much heavier results.

It is great negative karma to get angry at a bodhisattva and, turning your back with disrespect, to say, "I will not even look upon this vile person". It is even more extremely heavy negative karma to get angry and use unpleasant words to a bodhisattva who has entered the Mahayana path—that is, a bodhisattva who has not yet reached the ārya stage.

A bodhisattva has taken the bodhicitta vow, promising to lead all beings to enlightenment. When you interfere with an action that is being done with the motivation to benefit all sentient beings, even though it appears to be a small action, you are actually harming all those beings. Interfering with a bodhisattva is like obstructing the possibility of emancipation for numberless beings.

Since actions directed to these potent fields create such powerful karma, you should guard your behaviour with great care. Otherwise, what looks like an insignificant action can turn out to have huge negative consequences because of the power of the field. Conversely, you can create great merits and powerful positive karma by means of small acts of respect, praise and devotion when they are directed toward these powerful fields of merit.

Since you never know who is a bodhisattva the best policy is to treat everyone you encounter as if he or she is a bodhisattva. When you strive to do as much benefit as you possibly can for everyone you encounter and you make a serious effort to avoid doing harm to anyone, then it doesn't matter who is a bodhisattva and who is not. You will always be creating virtue and accumulating merits. If the person you are helping turns out to be a bodhisattva and the merits you gain are hugely increased, so much the better. But at least you will have confidence that your actions are not harming others and, in the long run, harming yourself.

(2') Powerful in terms of the actor (or agent)

Now we turn to the ways in which karma gains power in terms of the actor, the person who performs the action. The same activity performed by different actors can yield very different results. When a foolish, unskillful person performs a small negative action, it can lead that person right down to the hell realms, because he or she has no idea how to apply the appropriate antidote; without purification that karma will certainly ripen into unpleasant results. The skilful person, on the other hand, may create a heavy negative karma, but because he knows how to apply the antidote and purify the action, the results will turn out to be light.

There are five ways in which a small karma that should ripen as a light result in this life can be changed into the cause of a rebirth in hell:

- when the actor is very ignorant;
- when he or she has accumulated very little positive karma, or none at all;
- when he has committed powerful, heavy non-virtues;
- when he does not regret the actions or purify them with confession or other antidotes;
- when he or she does not perform virtuous actions as a countermeasure to the non-virtue.

For skilful people—those who are wise—negative actions become light, because they feel sincere regret for their non-virtues and they resolve that they will restrain those actions in the future. Instead of hiding their faults, they confess them in front of the Sangha in order to purify them and they perform many kinds of virtuous actions that are the natural antidotes to non-virtue.

Non-virtuous karma will be heavy for a person who boasts they are an expert in Dharma but carelessly disregards antidotes and knowingly engages in non-virtuous actions.

The merit of an ordained monk, nun or bodhisattva—ie, taken the prātimokṣa vows—is much, much greater than a lay person. Conversely, the consequences for non-virtue is considerably greater for a vow holder than a lay person. The more vows, stronger the merit or consequences. More vows also gives faster progress.

Regarding the practice of taking the one-day ordination vows. This is a very effective way to magnify the power of all the meritorious practices you do—a way to increase the ground that you cover in your practice. You can often find opportunities when you can take these vows and keep them purely for just one single day. During that day you remain alert and conscious that you are protecting those vows. You dedicate that time to your practice: to meditating, listening to teachings, doing prostrations, confessing and purifying past negative actions. Whatever other practices you do during the time that you are guarding your vows will be tremendously

empowered and the ground you cover on the path will be increased. Then, at the end of the day, you dedicate the merits of your practice to the benefit of all sentient beings. You always focus your goal on the benefit of others. In a sincere Mahayana practice you strive to attain enlightenment yourself in order to benefit others.

It is important to be honest with yourself about your own capabilities and your own situation. If you can take the prātimokṣa, bodhisattva and tantric vows and keep them purely, then with every action, every moment, you are creating great merits. Some people are ready and able to renounce the worldly life. They think, "Now, for the remainder of my life, I will only practice the Dharma. I will keep my vows purely. No matter what hardship I have to undergo, in my mind I will have the joy of knowing that what I am doing is right."

However, you need to ask yourself, "Am I ready to do this? Or is this still a distant destination, a goal I hope to reach someday?" You don't want to take high vows and make huge promises and then, after a little while, go on to break all the promises that you have taken. That will only bring you a huge mountain of negative karma.

If you are not yet ready for these lifelong vows you can begin with one-day ordination vows. You can think, "Most of my life is spent senselessly engaged in worldly concerns. But today I have the leisure to apply myself to virtuous practice. For this one day I will take these vows and keep them purely." You do this with a motivation to benefit all sentient beings. During that day you remain quiet, not making big plans or engaging in social activities, not mixing your mind with worldly thoughts. During this one day of serious practice you can create great, great merits. This is the kind of practice that can act as an antidote to the many negative karmas you create on a daily basis. This is the way to make the consequences of all your negative karma much lighter.

Making the vow has both advantages and disadvantages; it magnifies both positive and negative actions. Either way, once you have taken vows you must take care to keep your commitments purely.

(3') Powerful in terms of the substance (or material)

Also called the direct object of the action. For example, when you give charity the *field* is the person you give it to, the *actor* is the person who gives and the *substance* is the thing that you give. Using this example, what kind of substances make an action more powerful than other actions.

There are three kinds of substances that you can give as charity or offerings.

1. First there is the gift of material goods, such as food, clothes, or money. These are the types of things you might donate to poor people.
2. Second is the gift of the Dharma, meaning giving Dharma teachings.
3. Third is the gift of protection, saving another being from some form of threat or danger.

When it comes to giving something to other sentient beings, the giving of Dharma is superior to the gift of worldly goods. Giving food and shelter of course has great benefit in that it alleviates the temporary physical sufferings of people who are in need. In contrast, however, giving the proper teachings to the proper disciple has the benefit of removing all forms of mental and physical suffering forever; it leads to the achievement of the highest happiness.

There are many things you can offer the buddhas and bodhisattvas in order to please them: food, beautiful flowers, money and so forth. But what they find most pleasing is to see disciples practicing what they have been taught. The main goal of buddhas and bodhisattvas is to lead all beings to freedom from all misery. This is why practicing in accordance with the teachings of the buddhas is far superior to any material offering you can make.

The third form of giving is the giving of protection. On the worldly level, examples of this would be saving someone who has fallen into a river. But far superior to such forms of temporary protection is saving people from falling into the depths of misery in their future rebirths. This is the ultimate form of protection and you give it by leading people along the path of the Dharma.

(4') Powerful in terms of the attitude

The nature of your attitude while you are performing an action also has a major effect on the strength of that particular karma. As we have already seen, the thought that underlies an action makes a big difference. One bodhisattva offering one single flower to a stupa with an attitude of wanting to attain omniscience in order to benefit all sentient beings creates more merit that billions of offerings without the bodhicitta. Once you attain bodhicitta, all your actions—no matter how small and seemingly

insignificant—are spontaneously directed to the benefit of others and therefore become very powerful.

If you have sympathy for other sentient beings—if you are sincerely motivated by wanting to alleviate the suffering of all beings and not just to benefit yourself—then even one minute of meditating or five minutes of studying the scriptures can be actions of vast scope.

The difference in mental attitude—in the purpose people intend to achieve by making that offering—is what is significant. For the person who is acting for the greatest purpose, wanting to obtain enlightenment quickly for the benefit of all other beings, there is no way to measure the merits of those actions.

The meritorious strength of an action is affected by a number of distinctions in the attitude or purpose of an action. The goal that you seek can be a higher goal, a lower goal, or something in between. You may be seeking only your own benefit or you may be working for the benefit of others. Even within working for your own benefit there are many possibilities: you may be acting for complete emancipation or arhatship; you may only be seeking a high rebirth in your next life; you may only want peace and enjoyment during this life; or perhaps all you want is for other people to see you practicing nicely so that they will give you respect. There are many, many levels of motivations and goals. Each produces a different level of merit which is determined by the attitude that motivates the action. Mind.

An action done out of a vague state of mind will be weaker than an action motivated by the full force of the realisation of bodhicitta.

If the goal is the same and the strength of the thought is the same, there may be a difference in the length of time during which you perform the action. An action you do frequently or constantly will of course be more powerful than an action you perform just once.

These distinctions of motivation affect not only virtuous karma but non-virtuous actions as well. Even if you kill another person there can be great differences in the intention that lay behind that action. You can kill out of a very fierce raging hatred, or with a sincere intention to help someone. What we commonly think of as negative actions of body or speech can become virtuous if the intention is virtuous. Ditto, praiseworthy actions—such as prostrations—can become non-virtuous if one's intention is selfish. It all depends on the attitude. How wide or narrow is your mental scope? How strong or how weak? There are so many different types and levels of motivation. The important thing is to understand the ways in which your attitude affects the strength of a karma.

In general, the strength of a negative action will be determined by the intensity of the obscuring affliction that motivates it and by the duration of the action. Among afflictions, hatred is one of the most powerful thoughts; action taken with an intense attitude of ill will creates the most powerful negative karma. It plants the seed of unhappy results in the future and can destroy great amounts of merit that were created in the past. Hatred and anger are especially weighty when they are directed at someone who is working toward buddhahood by practicing the Dharma. You may be accumulating some new merits, but you cannot save what is destroyed by that moment of hatred. It is much more severe if the person is a bodhisattva—a benefactor to all sentient beings. Hate-filled action directed at such an exalted field as a bodhisattva has extraordinarily destructive power. Remember, you cannot identify a bodhisattva—so don't show hatred to anyone.

Whatever wholesome deeds,
Such as venerating the buddhas and generosity,
That have been amassed over a thousand eons
Will all be destroyed in one moment of anger.

Recap

We have been looking at the factors that make karma heavy or light. It is important to understand these things because situations like the ones described arise all the time. If you know the faults of non-virtuous actions you will be able to resist the constant impulses to engage in actions motivated by desire, attachment, anger and ignorance. That is a truly great practice. If you do not know the faults, or if you do not care, then you will give yourself up to whatever arises—as though your mind has fallen under the power of your own enemy.

It is so important to be able to discriminate between your enemy and your friend. Your true friend is inside—an inner attitude. It is your interest in helping others, loving

others; it is your determination not to harm others. This kind of attitude operates against the selfish or egoistic impulse to abuse others in order to advance what you believe are your own interests. With the attitude that puts others before yourself, you will always be careful about how your actions affect those around you; you become even more careful of others then you are of yourself.

This kind of attitude is the basis of noble action and it brings noble results. This is great practice.

You need to rely on the Buddha's knowledge because the relationships between cause and effect are beyond our present life's powers of perception. At the beginning, you have to place some trust in the teacher and in these teachings in order to establish a firm foundation of practice. As you progress—as you gradually remove impurities and afflictions of your mind and your knowledge advances—your understanding deepens, realisation dawns and you will be able to see connections between cause and effect that you cannot see now. You will eventually be able to know directly what kind of cause produces what kind of results in life after life. But in your ordinary condition, these things are difficult to perceive. You have to depend on trust.

What you need to watch out for is the attitude that declares, "I don't see it, so it must not be true. Therefore I needn't bother about karma." That dangerous attitude can block all progress on the path.

At the beginning you base your study of karma on the sutras, on the teachings of the Buddha. You need to trust in those teachings and act in accordance with them. That becomes the foundation of wholesome, virtuous practice. If you have in the back of your mind an understanding and trust in the cause and effect of karma, it will influence all your choices and lead you to focus your life on worthwhile goals.

(iii) A presentation of the results of karma

(a') Fruitional results

Just as a sprout is the main effect of a rice seed, fruitional results are the main results of the ripening of karmic seeds. When you perform an action—that is, when you create karma—it remains as a seed, a potential, or a propensity until it ripens into its result. When certain appropriate conditions are met, the karmic seed ripens into its main result. What it ripens into is the type of life into which you are born—this is the fruitional result of your action.

The distinction being made here is between this fruitional result—the type of rebirth you take and the variety of experiences you meet while you are within that form of life; those experiences are other types of results; discussed below.

Each of the ten non-virtuous karmic paths has three different levels of fruitional results: great, medium and small. The level of the result depends upon the degree of the affliction that motivated the original cause. As a result of the most powerful forms of non-virtuous actions, you will experience the result with the greatest degree of suffering, which is birth as a denizen of the hell realms. The intermediate result is birth as a hungry ghost. The smallest result is to be born as an animal. (Some texts have the animal/hungry ghost swapped for intermediate and small.)

(b') Results corresponding to the cause

Each of the ten karmic paths has a result corresponding to the cause. The corresponding result of **killing** is to have a short life, because the main suffering you inflict when you kill someone is to shorten their life. The corresponding result of **stealing** is to live in poverty. The corresponding result of **sexual misconduct** is to live with a very troublesome spouse. Or, since the main violation involved in sexual misconduct is to take for your own pleasure someone who belongs to another, the corresponding result is to have your own partner be unfaithful, loyal to someone else, or very difficult to get along with in some other way.

The corresponding result of **lying** is to be subject to slander. You will be defamed and have blame heaped upon you. The corresponding result of **slander**, or divisive speech, is to be divided from dear friends. The corresponding result of **harsh speech** is to hear unpleasant words spoken by others. The corresponding result of **senseless speech** is that other people do not listen to anything you say.

The corresponding result of the **three mental karmas—covetousness, malice and wrong view**—is to have attachment, hatred and ignorance, respectively, as your predominant emotions. For example, some people seem to be naturally angry—they are impatient with others and if one little thing goes wrong they immediately lose their temper. This type of personality is the corresponding result of previous hatred and

anger. Similarly, **stupidity**—an inability to understand the way things are—is a corresponding result of wrong view.

Other sutras state that each of the ten non-virtues has **two result**s that correspond to the cause. They say that even if you are born as a human, you will have a short life and suffer from many sicknesses as a result of **killing**. You can see how these results are similar to the cause. In killing someone you first injure them physically and then you cut off their life. The corresponding results are, therefore, to have many physical ailments and to have your life shortened.

The corresponding results of **stealing** are to be poor and whatever property you have must be shared with others—nothing is completely your own. The corresponding results of **sexual misconduct** are that your servants, the people you live with, or those who surround you, have bad character, are crude and untrustworthy. The second result is that your wife, husband, or partner will become a competitor or rival, so you will not have a compatible relationship.

The first corresponding result of **lying** is that other people denigrate and blame you. Secondly, you will always be deceived by others. The first corresponding result of **slander** is that those who surround you are not harmonious, but are constantly locked in disagreement. The second result is that the people around you are unreliable, dishonest, or evil. Slander is causing division and animosity between people. The natural, corresponding result of this kind of speech is to have the people around you be hostile and contentious with one another.

The corresponding results of **harsh speech** are that you constantly hear unpleasant words from others and what you say is naturally contentious and hurtful. People who are experiencing this karmic result are always being attacked and criticised. And even when they tries to speak nicely to others, their words sound argumentative and unpleasant, so no one wants to listen to them.

The first corresponding result of **senseless speech** is that your own words are not considered trustworthy. Even when you speak the truth, you are not considered reliable or worthy of respect. Secondly, you lack self-confidence and you are uncertain in your thoughts and deeds.

The corresponding results of **covetousness** are that you are naturally possessed by strong attachment and you never feel satisfied. Your greed and desire are so strong that no matter how much wealth you accumulate you never feel that you have enough.

The first corresponding result of **malice** is that you seek out what is not beneficial and you do not seek out what it is beneficial. This is the behaviour of the kind of person who places great value on silly or senseless concerns and the things such a person desires and seeks are useless or even harmful. The second result is that you habitually harm others, or others are always doing harm to you.

The corresponding results of **wrong view** are that you naturally adhere to an incorrect view and you are constantly deceitful to others.

This is the explanation we find in these two sutras. Tsongkhapa says that previous masters analysed these corresponding results into two types.

1. The first type consists of **results corresponding to the behaviour**. This means that in subsequent lives you continue to behave in the way you were accustomed to behave in past lives. For example, as a result of killing in the past you will continue to be violent and kill in subsequent lives. Another example would be someone who has plenty of food to eat, a nice house and fine clothes to wear, but still likes to steal other people's property. In both cases these people behave the way they do as a result of actions they habitually performed in a previous lifetime.
2. The second type consists of **results corresponding to the experience**. This means that you undergo an experience that corresponds to the experience you caused by your previous action. Most of the examples given above fall into this category, such as experiencing a shortened life as a result of having killed someone.

We begin to see how every action can have many different kinds of effects. Just as one small seed can produce a huge tree with a trunk, leaves, flowers and fruit, so one powerful action, such as killing, will produce many types of results. First there will be the fruitional result: rebirth in a suffering realm. After that, even if you are born as a human, you will meet the results that correspond to the cause: a short lifespan filled with all kinds of illness and pain.

If you learn and remember what the results of these non-virtues are and you trust that this process of cause and effect does take place, you will gain two beneficial effects.

1. The first benefit is that when you find yourself experiencing these negative results, you will not blame them on others. When you meet difficult circumstances you will accept them as a result of your own previous actions and you will not generate more negative karma by getting angry at others for causing your own problems. In fact, such negative circumstances can actually make you happy, because you know that those karmic causes have yielded their results and are now finished.
2. The second benefit is that you will not repeat the same negative actions in the future. Recognising that your problems were caused by the actions you performed in the past, you will make a serious effort from now on you to avoid repeating those actions so you will never have to experience these forms of suffering again.

(c') Environmental results

We now turn to results that manifest as your external, surrounding environment, your possessions and the like.

The following environmental results can be very specific to one individual's circumstances. For example, we may think of our own situation—living in this comfortable place and time—as being very fortunate. But within that generally favourable environment there are individuals who find themselves in miserable conditions. You may be living in a heavenly city, but somewhere in one corner of that thriving metropolis there may be someone whose living conditions are impoverished, repulsive, and dangerous, just as they are described above. Such are the individual, personal environmental results of negative actions.

The environmental result of **killing** is that the food, drink and medicine that should ordinarily sustain and prolong life prove weak and ineffective. Medicine has no power to cure and food is not nourishing, or difficult to digest. Instead of producing happiness and supporting life, such food makes you sick and shortens your life.

When you take rebirth in a new life, your karma projects a certain longevity or life span and death comes when that karma is exhausted. But you can also die from the exhaustion of the merits that are the karmic causes of the material necessities supporting life. When the merits that are the causes for finding food, shelter and medicine are exhausted, you die from a lack of material supports, even though your projected lifespan is not yet exhausted.

The environmental result of **stealing** is ?? (The examples given are for farming and talk about small, poor crops.)

The environmental effects of **sexual misconduct** are to be born in an unclean place. This is described as a place that is full of excrement and urine, that is littered with filth, mud and slime and stinks like a sewer. It would, of course, be very unpleasant to live in such a place, but impure sexual activity causes you to be born into just such an environment.

The environmental result of **lying** is that things do not turn out well for you, no matter what kind of work you do. You can think of lying as a form of cheating others and as a result of your own previous cheating, you encounter repeated failure in your efforts to make a livelihood. Whatever effort you undertake, it turns out badly. You will also meet disharmony with the people around you and the people you work with. People will cheat and deceive you and you will often find yourself in dangerous and frightening situations.

The environmental result of **slander** is to be born in a place that is unpleasant and difficult to move around in. The land is difficult to cross because it is broken up into small sections by rivers, roads and cliffs and there are extremes of altitude so that you constantly need to ascend or descend steep slopes. The land contains many dangers and reasons to be fearful. Because slander is the sowing of disharmony among people, the result is to be born into this kind of disagreeable environment.

The environmental result of **harsh speech** is to be born in a place like a garbage dump, where everything is broken, useless and thrown away. The place is without streams, waterfalls, lakes, or ponds. The land is very salty and barren. It is dry, rough, drab and dusty, without the verdant colours of healthy vegetation. In short, it is a horrible place, full of dangerous creatures and many causes to be afraid. We say that harsh speech is almost like a sharp weapon that stabs its victim. Therefore, the environmental result is to be born in this kind of harsh, rough environment, where you suffer many similar discomforts.

Senseless speech is fruitless talk. Its environmental result is of a similar nature: the place lacks any beautiful features such as parks, temple gardens, groves, woodlands,

lakes, or ponds. In fact it is quite the opposite: unpleasant, impure, barren, and full of many causes of fear.

Next the **mental negative actions**. **Covetousness** is wanting what you do not have, always craving more, always wanting better, and never being satisfied. The environmental result of this kind of greediness is to be born into the opposite of what you wanted. Scarcity or absence of all the types of things you craved and an abundance of the types of things you abhorred.

Since the action of **malice** is to harm others, the environmental result will be similar. You will be born in a place that suffers from epidemics and infectious diseases, where there are many people and animals who might harm you, and where there is social strife and war. There will be dangerous animals such as lions, tigers, poisonous snakes, scorpions, and poisonous spiders. You may also be threatened by yakṣas, thieves, and other evil beings.

The environmental results of **wrong view**. Here, wrong view refers to the particular nihilistic view that does not believe in karma and its results, that holds that virtuous and non-virtuous actions do not ripen into happy and suffering effects, that denies the existence of previous and subsequent lives, and claims there are no such things as buddhas, emancipation and a path leading to emancipation. Wrong view denies all of these with a firm confidence based on reasoning that is flawed.

Of course, wrong view is the view that holds on to the opposite of what is true, denying the possibility of spiritual emancipation. As a result of holding the view that all these elements of liberation will not exist or be available in your environment. There will not be any teachings; you will not meet any qualified teachers; and there will be no path that can lead you toward freedom and away from lower rebirths. There will be no protection from falling into the misery of lower rebirths, no refuge, no guide to lead you to reform from ignorance and the other afflictions, the root of all sufferings of cyclic existence.

These are the environmental results of the ten non-virtuous karmic paths. When you study and try to gain an understanding of karma, the important thing is to maintain an open mind. If you adhere to an absolutely materialistic attitude—if your mind is tightly closed to the spiritual possibilities mentioned here—then there is no chance to benefit from these teachings. If you are more open and willing to study the teachings of the Buddha, to expose yourself to the various explanations and reasons, then your understanding of this most profound area will deepen, and gradually the doubt and darkness in your mind will change into the light of understanding. If you approach the teachings on karma with an open mind and work with them as if you fully believed them, you will begin to experience the benefit of acting in accord with the Buddha's teachings; then your experience and deepening mental capacity will lead you in the right direction.

The basis of all progress on the path is first to listen and study and understand. Although you may not understand all the details immediately and not everything the Buddha taught will make sense to you right away, you can build a strong foundation based on a general understanding, and gradually the depth of your insight and confidence will grow.

(b) Virtuous karma and its results

We now turn to an examination of wholesome karma and its results. In general, we can take what we have learned about non-virtuous karma and reverse it, and that will give us a basic understanding of the ten virtuous karmic paths.

(i) Virtuous karma

The **three virtuous actions of the body** are the reverse of the non-virtuous actions of killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. However, merely not doing those things is not virtue. A piece of stone does not kill anyone, or steal or lie, but it has no virtue. Merely not doing an unwholesome action may be neutral karma, but virtuous action requires something more. First, you must see the faults of the negative action and you must believe it is wrong, and that it will bring unpleasant results. Then, with a virtuous mind—a mind that intentionally wants to avoid that harmful action—you make an affirmative effort to avoid doing it. You complete the virtuous action by actually refraining from doing the non-virtue, thereby shutting the door to the unwholesome karma. [This appears to me to be tempted to kill and deciding not to kill because you realise it is the wrong thing to do. The key words are 'refrain from killing'.]

The virtuous **actions of speech and the three mental actions** work in the same way. First, you must understand the faults of the particular non-virtuous action; then,

with a virtuous mind, you make an effort to refrain from the action; finally, you do refrain from the action. The above, which comes from Asaṅga's Levels of Yogic Deeds, is a brief summary of the principles involved in creating virtuous karma.

For a more detailed understanding we can apply the four elements that constitute a complete karma: the basis, the thought, the actual action, and the culmination of the action. We can take as our example the action of avoiding **killing**. The basis is other sentient beings, just as it is for the negative action of killing. The thought or motivation *is wanting to avoid that action because you recognise its faults*. The actual action, based on that motivation, is to restrain yourself from performing the action of killing. The culmination of the action is the bodily act of completely accomplishing the restraint of that action. For example, if you are in a situation with the possibility of killing another creature, but you clearly see the faults of that act, and with that motivation you concentrate on controlling your physical actions so that you avoid killing or harming that creature until that restraining action is complete—that constitutes a complete karma of avoiding killing. In the case of actual killing, the culmination of the action is when the victim finally dies, but here it is your own body that completes the action by refraining from killing.

That is the example of killing. Since we have already analysed the ten non-virtuous karmic paths in terms of the above four elements, rather than repeating that analysis for the virtuous actions, Tsongkhapa says that you can simply apply the example of killing to the other virtuous actions.

(ii) The results of virtuous karma

As with non-virtuous actions, there are three types of results of virtuous actions: the fruitional result, the result corresponding to the cause, and the environmental result. Again, the virtuous results are essentially the reverse of the non-virtuous results.

- The **fruitional result** is the main result of an action; it is the type of life into which you are born. There are three levels of fruitional results for each of the ten virtuous actions, depending on whether it was a great, medium, or small virtuous action. The result of a great virtuous action is to be born as a deva in one of the two upper realms of existence: the form or formless realm. As a result of intermediate virtuous karma you will be born as a desire realm deva. The fruitional result of small virtuous karma is to be born in a human life.[6]
- Tsongkhapa does not give a detailed explanation of the result corresponding to the cause or the **environmental result** of virtuous karma. He says that these are simply the opposite of the results of non-virtuous actions. We can take the corresponding results of **killing** as an example: it is to have a short life and to be killed yourself. For the virtuous karma of avoiding killing, the corresponding result is to have a long life, or to have your life protected by others. An example of this would be someone who found himself in deadly circumstances—such as a famine, an epidemic, or some other kind of disaster where people all around were dying—yet somehow managed to survive. His survival could be the corresponding result of the previous virtuous actions of avoiding killing or saving the lives of others.

Similarly, the corresponding result of stealing is to be destitute and always have difficulty acquiring necessary resources. For the virtuous action of avoiding stealing

---

[6] The beings of the form and formless realm experience no physical or mental pain or suffering. Because their afflictions are much more subtle than those of the desire realm, their mental life is much more peaceful. Compared to the experience of a desire realm being, life in the form and formless realms is a pure, blissful existence—it is almost like emancipation. In fact, however, it is only a temporary state of peace, because beings born into these realms are still subject to death, and eventually they will fall again into miserable lives.

In the desire realm there are six different levels of devas. These devas have a superior existence to humans: their life is more peaceful and much longer than humans; their environment is more pleasurable; and their bodies are more subtle. Still, they are of the desire realm, which means they are still subject to desire, especially sexual desire, and they engage in sexual activity. However, because they have subtle bodies that are not made of gross flesh and bone, their sexual activity is of a much more subtle nature than that of humans.

Why do we say that the human birth is the lowest of the three types of fruitional results? Of course, in one way human life is a high rebirth, much better than birth in one of the three suffering realms. Humans have relatively powerful intelligence and a capacity to achieve the highest possible spiritual goals. They have the ability to see cause and effect and to understand, through their own experience, the truth of suffering. But the human body is delicate and subject to so many kinds of pain and discomfort. It is an earthly, rough kind of body, full of impurities, with a short life span. It requires a great deal of attention to take care of the human body, and such concerns disturb one's peace of mind. It is in this sense that the human rebirth is inferior to the more subtle and more peaceful lives of the devas.

other's property, the corresponding result will be to naturally have wealth and material comfort, and to always find the necessities of life without difficulty.

As for environmental results, these too are the opposite of the results of non-virtuous actions. For example if result of non-virtuous action would be farmer whose fields yielded poor crops compared to those of his neighbours; a result of virtuous actions, that farmer's fields will yield unusually bountiful crops. In general, the environmental results of virtuous actions are that you will become wealthier and healthier, and all your material endeavours will produce excellent results.

The Sutra on the Ten Levels explains that practicing these ten virtuous actions can lead to even higher results, right up to complete buddhahood. It says that if you practice the ten virtues out of fear of taking another samsaric rebirth and you are not motivated by great compassion for other beings, and you rely on the teachings of others, then you will achieve the fruit of a śrāvaka. Those who practice for the sake of their own emancipation, who are not motivated by great compassion for others, and who meditate alone on the twelve links of dependent origination, on the cause and effect of karma, and on the four noble truths, will finally attain their own emancipation and victory over samsaric suffering in the fruit of a pratyekabuddha.7

The final example, there is the practitioner who has the Mahayana, or bodhisattva, motivation. This is the person has a broad mental scope, and sees beyond his or her own personal emancipation. Such a person recognises the misery of all sentient beings and sees that they are all equally in need of relief from suffering. These bodhisattvas feel the same fear for the future suffering of others that they feel for themselves. Based on this broad vision, they seek the emancipation of all beings and practice with the intention of placing all beings in the highest bliss of buddhahood. These are spiritual practitioners of great scope, motivated by great compassion practice with skilful means and put their compassion into action through all three doors of body, speech, and mind.

The difference between this Mahayana practice of the bodhisattva and the Hīnayana practice of the śrāvaka and the pratyekabuddha is the motivation. Bodhisattvas are motivated by the great wish to obtain the highest enlightenment for the benefit of all other living beings.8

Therefore, when we speak of the results of virtuous and non-virtuous karma, we need to remember that there are two different types of results and they exist on two different levels.

- There are those temporary results that manifest in happiness or suffering on the ordinary, samsaric level.
- Then there are the everlasting, highest results of attaining liberation and enlightenment.

---

7 What is the difference between the śrāvaka and the pratyekabuddha? The core of their practice is the same, but śrāvakas base their practice on listening to the teachings of others. Even in their last worldly life, during which they attain arhatship, or nirvana, they depend on special instructions from other teachers to complete their practice. The nature of pratyekabuddhas is that they like to be alone and they do not rely on outside teachers. In their last life, especially, they stay alone. Even if a buddha appears in the world, they will not leave their solitude to go listen to teachings. They remain in a solitary place, on their own, and through their own meditative effort they obtain emancipation.

8 Everything they do is dedicated to benefit others, not merely themselves. They practice with skilful methods and vow that they will never abandon even one being in cyclic existence. "Abandoning sentient beings" means giving up the effort to lead them to enlightenment; it is deciding that the job is too difficult and therefore thinking, "I will just obtain liberation from my own sake."
True bodhisattvas see that in order to be of maximum benefit to others, they must first attain their own buddhahood. Buddhahood is omniscience; it is wisdom that is perfect; it means understanding all cause and effect, knowing directly the exact needs and capabilities of every being. It means knowing precisely how best to lead others out of suffering to perfect peace. The Buddha knows exactly what will be most beneficial in every circumstance, and bodhisattvas strive diligently to attain that state so that they too can become the most effective helper possible. With this compassionate motivation, Mahayana practitioners focus on attaining the wisdom of buddhahood. It is for that purpose that they put into practice these ten virtues of body, speech, and mind. By training in the ten perfections they complete the ten levels of the bodhisattva and fully accomplish all the qualities of buddhahood.

In every case it is **the mind, the attitude, the motivation** that determines which goal will be achieved. It may be the goal of a śrāvaka, of a pratyekabuddha, or the ultimate goal of a bodhisattva; it all depends on the motivation.[9]

In the beginning we do not need many different, complicated practices. We just need to recognise and understand the activity of the three doors of body, speech, and mind.

Sometimes people think, "Observance of karma is just a small, unimportant practice. I want to do high practices." This way of thinking is wrong. **This practice is the perfect foundation**, and it leads to all beneficial results. It is based on these ten virtues that the fruit of buddhahood develops. This is the real, perfect teaching and the pure practice: to cultivate the correct motivation and to engage in virtuous actions. These teachings show clearly the unlimited results that can be achieved if you train your mind in the proper way.

Tsongkhapa says, "Having thoroughly understood the cause and effect of positive and negative karma, I will rely on properly practicing what is to be engaged in and what should be avoided." Achieving any goal on the path depends on properly taking up those actions that should be engaged in, and avoiding those that are harmful. The goal is to eliminate, as best you can, all non-virtuous karma, and to accumulate as much positive virtue as you can. This is done by:

- right study, by concentrating on the relationships of karma and its results until you develop a firm understanding
- cultivating that understanding until you reach a certainty that this is indeed the true path to happiness.

Once you have stabilised your confidence in the action of karma, you will be able to practice virtue without hesitating. That is why contemplating karma and its results is most important.

(c) A presentation of other classifications of karma

(i) The distinction between projecting and completing karma

There are two types of karma. One is called projecting, or throwing karma, and the other is called completing karma. The Tibetan term used for projecting karma brings to mind the action of planting seeds in the spring, when you throw your seeds onto the ground. This type of action throws, or casts, or projects the main seed that will eventually yield fruit as a particular type of rebirth in the future. It is the main, or material, cause of a particular rebirth.

For completing karma, although you plant seeds, for the final fruit to be produced, other supporting causes and conditions are necessary, such as moisture, warmth, and fertiliser. Those other conditions are analogous to what is known as completing karma or actualising karma.

Projecting karma determines the main result: whether you take birth as a human, an animal, a deva, and so forth. Then the completing karma fills in what kind of situations you will experience during that rebirth: whether your life will be pleasant or unpleasant, beautiful or ugly, long or short, and so forth. The projecting karma is the main cause that brings, for example, a human life, but the qualities of that human life will be determined by completing karma, and each of those qualities has its own individual karmic cause.

For **projecting karma**, virtuous action will always bring rebirth in a higher realm and non-virtue will always bring rebirth in a lower realm. But for **completing karma** there is not such a clear correspondence. Positive completing karma does not necessarily ripen in a higher rebirth and negative completing karma does not necessarily ripen in a lower rebirth. Negative completing karma can bring its unpleasant results in a higher rebirth, such as a human life. The nature of that birth as a human was determined by virtuous projecting karma, but the details that determine whether it will be a pleasant or unpleasant human existence are produced by many different completing karmas. For example, you may obtain a human rebirth but have a short life, or your life may be filled with miserable conditions, or you may meet numerous disasters.

Similarly, rebirth as an animal is considered a suffering rebirth and is the result of non-virtuous projecting karma. But some animals end up with conditions that make

---

[9] If all your actions are governed by the Mahayana motivation, then even the practice of these ten virtuous actions becomes the practice of accomplishing the ten perfections and achieving the ten stages of the bodhisattva path. When these are perfected you have reached the highest goal, buddhahood. So there is nothing that is not included in this practice.

their life quite happy and peaceful. A common example is our own pets. The karma that brought them to an animal rebirth was negative projecting karma. But during that life they are well fed and well looked after; they have a cozy place to sleep, the best food is delivered to them without any effort, and even when they get sick their owner spends a lot of money to take them to a highly trained doctor. In fact, some pets are treated better than many humans. Their bad rebirth is the result of non-virtuous projecting karma but the fortunate circumstances in that life are due to virtuous completing karma.

This is what it means when we say that there is no certainty regarding the results of completing karma. It does not mean that negative karma can produce good results. It means that negative completing karma can produce unhappy results in a good rebirth, and vice versa. Therefore, there are four possibilities to the interrelationship between these two types of karma:

(1) both the projecting karma and the completing karma are non-virtuous. — both karmas are negative, they produce the very worst kind of life in the hell realms. In that situation there is no experience that results from virtuous karma, no mixing of positive and negative results.

(2) both the projecting karma and the completing karma are virtuous — the result is rebirth as a deva in the upper realms—not as a desire realm deva but as a deva of the form or formless realms. All experiences in that life are results of virtuous karma. During that life, from birth until death, they will not experience any results of negative karma.

(3) the projecting karma is virtuous, but the completing karma is non-virtuous — virtuous projecting karma brings birth as a human or a deva in the desire realm, but some amount of negative completing karma brings various forms of discomfort and unhappiness in that life. The amount of negative completing karma will determine the level of suffering experienced within that higher realm. Some humans seem to live extremely happy lives, never facing serious adversity, "sickness, or pain, while others experience a human life that is a ceaseless ordeal of misery.

(4) the projecting karma is non-virtuous, but the completing karma is virtuous — projecting causes of a life in one of the lower realms. You can be born as an animal or a hungry ghost, but still live a relatively comfortable life. Even some beings in the hell realms experience mixed results, from time to time finding a little relief as a result of virtuous completing karma.

There are many different degrees of these combinations.

This discussion causes certain questions to arise. Projecting karma is the main seed of a life, but does one karma bring about only one life, or can it bring about many lives? Or is it the case that many different karmas have to come together to bring about one life? There are different views on these questions. The understanding of the lower philosophical schools is expressed in Vasubandhu's Treasury of Knowledge, and the Mahayana system is stated by Asaṅga in his Compendium of Knowledge.

The Treasury of Knowledge (from lower philosophy school) says, "By one karma one birth is projected. The karmas that complete that existence are many." That means that one projecting karma will project only one life, but many completing karmas can produce the various conditions of that life. Also, according to that system, many karmas together cannot project one single life. Therefore, each individual action of negative karma such as killing will bring another life in the lower realms. Or, if a person repeats an action many times, one powerful instance of the action may become the projecting karma, and the rest of the actions may become the completing karma.

In contrast, the Mahayana system says

> There is karma in which one action projects one body. There is karma in which one action projects many bodies. There is karma in which many actions project one body. There is karma in which many actions project many bodies.[10]

[10] What the Compendium of Knowledge is saying here is that one large, powerful action can become the cause of a succession of many rebirths in the future. It is also possible for a collection of smaller karmas to become cumulative and, acting like one big karma, they can project one single rebirth. This might happen in the case of some habitual action that you performed regularly; although each action was not very powerful by itself, by repeating the action with the same motivation over and over again, the karmic potential accumulates and finally produces the same result as one big powerful karma. In that way many karmas together can result in one life.

Of course, we always have to remember that the exact details of the evolution of karmic cause and effect are extremely subtle and difficult to comprehend. At this point in our spiritual development we cannot know in exact detail how karma works, but these teachings give us the general picture and the basis upon which we can build our understanding.

(ii) Karma whose result will definitely or not definitely be experienced

> Karma whose result you definitely will experience is that which is done intentionally and accumulated. Karma whose result you will not definitely experience is that which is intentionally done but not accumulated.

This raises the question: "What is the difference between karma that is done and karma that is accumulated?"

> What is karma that is done? It is that which you have given thought to or, after having considered, you actually carry out by body or speech.

First there is the thought; you start by thinking about doing an action. Take killing for example. First you think about killing a person and you concentrate your mind on that possibility. Then, after thinking about it, you actually carry out the action with your body. For physical or verbal karma, the action must be consciously performed by the body or speech to be done.

Accumulated karma is all actions **not** included in the following ten types. These actions do not accumulate:

(1) what is done in a dream;
(2) what is done unknowingly;
(3) what is done unconsciously;
(4) what is done neither with intensity nor continuously;
(5) what is done erroneously;
(6) what is done forgetfully;
(7) what is done unwillingly;
(8) actions which are by nature ethically neutral;
(9) those that have been cleared away through regret;
(10) those that have been cleared away by means of an antidote.

All other karma not included in these ten types is accumulated karma.

The Compendium of Determinations by Asaṅga points to the four possible combinations of karma done and karma accumulated. Once again we take killing as an example.

(1) **Karma that is done but not accumulated.** Killing that is (1) done but not accumulated is killing done unwittingly, without knowing you are doing it. We can say that in this case you are ignorant of what you are doing. In this present discussion, ignorance simply means doing something that you are unaware of or oblivious about.[11]

Other types of killing that are done but not accumulated include: killing done in a dream; killing that is done unintentionally; killing that is done unwillingly because you are forced to do it by someone else; killing that is done only one time and after which you you feel great regret about; and killing whose karmic force has been weakened because you see the fault of the action and therefore vow, "I will never do that again." Karma is also not accumulated if, before it yields its result, you attain the state of freedom from attachment by means of the mundane path.[12]

When karma is done but not accumulated it means that the karma will not be effective; the seed will not yield fruit because it is weakened or destroyed, and there will "be no results or only very minor results. In general, **karma that is**

---

[11] The ignorance being spoken of here is not the same ignorance we are speaking about when discussing wrong view. The ignorance of wrong view is not merely a case of not knowing something, but of actually holding some contradictory, harmful view.

[12] (See footnote 5 and page 19). This attainment, though it only temporarily suppresses and does not eliminate the afflictions from the root, weakens the karmic seed so that it does not bear fruit. Finally, there is no accumulation if, by means of the supermundane path, you attain the ārya level with its direct realisation of the truth of emptiness. This realisation completely destroys those karmic seeds from the root.

accumulated is karma done with mental attention, with concentration, with strong motivation, or action done repeatedly. The actions listed here lack that level of attention; they are therefore a lighter form of karma and their results will be much lighter.

(2) **karma that is accumulated but not done**. An example of this would if you contemplated killing someone for a long time, planning the best way to do it. You fulfil all the mental requirements of the act: you have a correct perception of whom you plan to kill, you have a definite intention to kill him, and you make a plan of how you will do it. However, in the end you do not kill that being. In that case, the karma is accumulated but the action is not done. The karmic consequences of this situation will be heavier than the previous case where the karma is done but not accumulated.

(3) **karma is both done and accumulated**. This is any "act of killing other than the previous two situations. This is the case in which you have the motivation to kill, you have the correct perception of whom you plan to kill, and finally, you go through with the action.

(4) **karma of killing is neither done nor accumulated**. This is any act not included in the previous three possibilities [i.e., any act, whether virtuous or non-virtuous, other than an act of killing].

We have used the example of killing to illustrate these four possible combinations, and you can apply this analysis of how karma is done and accumulated to the seven non-virtuous actions from killing through to senseless speech.

For mental actions. The three mental karmas are different from the seven physical ones in a few aspects. The second combination, karma that is accumulated but not done, does not apply to the three mental karmas of covetousness, malice, and wrong view. In the case of physical and verbal actions there is first a mental component and then a physical or verbal action; karma is accumulated by completing the mental component of intending, perceiving, and planning the action, and then the action is done by the body. But the last three are purely mental actions: they are done at the "same time they are accumulated. The mental process that causes an action to be accumulated is the very doing of these mental actions.

It is also the case that for mental actions, in the category of karma that is done but not accumulated, there is no such thing as a mental action that is done unintentionally, or done unwillingly because you are forced to do it by someone else.

In terms of time, there are three divisions of karma whose result is certain to be experienced.

(1) **karma to be experienced in the current life**; in this case the karma is experienced in the same life as the one in which the karma was performed. This is the most powerful. But it raises a question: if the result of the most powerful karma —let's say killing your parents or an arhat—will be experienced in this very life, does that mean that in the future you will not fall into lower rebirths? No. The point is that this karma is so powerful that its results start in this very life. The main result will still be experienced in the future: being born in a lower rebirth and experiencing great misery. For these most powerful actions the consequences start in the very life in which they are performed, in the form of various misfortunes, sickness, pain, and all kinds of difficulties.

(2) **karma to be experienced after rebirth**; this karma will be experienced in the very next life. This karma that is not as powerful, so its results do not start until you are reborn.

(3) **karma to be experienced in subsequent existences**; this is referring to karma that will be experienced in some life subsequent to the next one. This is weaker still. Its result will ripen further in the future, in the second rebirth after this one, or at any time in the far distant future, even many thousands of lives later.

The point here is that for heavier actions the results will be experienced earlier. In this way stronger karma tends to push the weaker out to a later "maturation.

Asaṅga, in the Levels of Yogic Deeds, specifies eight types of karma powerful enough to be experienced in the current life:

1. The first type are actions that are done primarily out of **attachment or concern for your own body, your material wealth** or for your own existence, for life itself. These are actions that are motivated by a strong attachment to this present existence, are focused on remaining in this life and on making this life as

comfortable as possible. The results of powerful non-virtuous karma done with this motivation will be experienced in this life.

2. **Virtuous actions** or thoughts which are not focused on such worldly concerns as your own body, wealth, or preserving your own life, can also be experienced in this life. Of course, any such activity done for the benefit of others will be virtuous karma, and powerful virtuous karma will yield its results quickly.
3. In the same way, non-virtues done with a strong attitude of **malice** toward other beings will begin to ripen in this life.
4. V**irtuous actions** done with your mind focused on **compassion**, or a strong wish to help other beings, will of course be great virtue, and when they are powerful they will yield their fruition in this life.
5. When the object of an **attitude of strong ill will** is the Three Jewels, your own spiritual teacher, or "some other holy being, such strong negative karma will yield its results in this life.
6. Similarly, powerful actions performed with an **attitude of deep faith**, admiration, or devotion toward these holy objects will also yield results in this life.
7. When the object is one's own parents, or spiritual teacher, or some other source of benefit to you, and you perform a powerful action out of **malice**, or with no thought of repaying their kindness, such strong negative karma will ripen in this life.
8. When you act toward these **sources of benefit with an attitude** that remembers their kindness and seeks to repay them for the benefit they have given you, and when this virtuous karma is done with a powerful thought, that too will ripen in this life.

These are a few examples of actions which are so powerful that their results will start in this very life. We can see from this list that one of the **most important factors that determines the strength of an action is the object or field of the action**. The Treasury of Knowledge says:

> The results of beneficial or harmful actions done to any of these will be experienced "immediately: those who have just arisen from the "absorption of cessation," or from the meditative states called Measureless Love or Free of Afflictions, or from the path of seeing, or from the fruit of arhatship.[13]

Later the Treasury of Knowledge describes the fields that are most powerful for making offerings:

> The field is particularly superior due to their realm of rebirth, their level of suffering, due to being a benefactor or due to excellent qualities. The supreme gift is from one who is liberated to one who is liberated; or a gift from a bodhisattva; or the eighth.

[13] This is a list of high meditative states, and when you do benefit or harm to a meditator who has just arisen from one of these states the action becomes very powerful and the results ripen in that very life. From the perspective of negative karma, these are dangerous areas. But if you want to create great merits, these are among the most powerful fields of virtuous actions.

> Even though they are not āryas, offerings made to one's father and mother, to a sick person, to a Dharma teacher, to a bodhisattva in his last life are without measure.[14]

These verses give us an idea of which types of objects produce the most powerful karma, and those most powerful karmic seeds will begin to yield their results in the very life in which the action was performed.

Karma to be experienced in the next life refers to actions that are not as powerful as the ones we have just discussed. And karma to be experienced in subsequent existences refers to actions that are weaker still. These three categories of karma give us a sense of the certainty or uncertainty of experiencing the result of a particular action in terms of the time-frame in which it will yield its results.

Now we look at the **order of ripening** of the many different karmic seeds that reside in an individual's mental continuum. During one lifetime a person creates so many different karmas. How can one experience all those results, and which ones will ripen first and which ones later?

(1) The karma that is the heaviest will ripen first.
(2) If two karmas are of equal weight, whichever karma was created nearest to the time of death will be the first to ripen.
(3) If that is also the same, whichever karma is more habitual will ripen first.
(4) If that is also the same, whichever karma was created first will ripen first.

To illustrate how the priority of karma is determined, Kadampa Geshe Potowa gave the example of a group of people waiting for a small ferryboat to cross a river near Lhasa. Who will go first? If there is powerful government official in the crowd, he will go first. If they are all equal in status, the person with whom the boatman has the most familiarity will go first. If the customers are all equally familiar to him, then the one who arrived first will go first.

2' Contemplating karma and its results in detail

We now begin to focus on particular points in detail, and on ways in which we can make our practice more effective.

By practicing the ten virtuous actions and avoiding the ten non-virtues you can certainly attain a happy rebirth in your next lifetime. However, our goal is to obtain the perfect realisation of buddhahood, and to accomplish this it is not enough merely being born in a comfortable rebirth. You need a special kind of life that gathers together all the conditions and qualities that are required to accomplish that goal. When you possess that special type of life, you are able to make progress on the path to buddhahood in a more skilful and more powerful way; you are able to cover the ground more quickly. Therefore, you should strive to achieve the special qualities of this kind of life.

Actually, when you look at the life that we have right now, we already possess most of the attributes of a "fully qualified" body and mind, which means we have all we need to attain enlightenment. But even if you cannot achieve perfect enlightenment in this life, at least you can create the causes to be born with all the conditions that will enable you to quickly achieve that ultimate goal in the future. If you don't accomplish at least this much during your current life, all the effort and merits you have

---

[14] Although they are not āryans, offerings made to your own father and mother are extremely powerful because in your worldly life they have been the most beneficial; they produced you, they nourished you, and they worked to provide you with every benefit they could. This is the nature of parenthood, and this applies not only to humans; even animals have this way of taking care of their offspring. Therefore, on the mundane level, your parents are the highest field of benefit, and you should always honour them, show them respect, and do beneficial things for them. This will create great merit. If you harm them, of course, it produces powerful negative karma.

Also in this list are people who are sick. Those who are suffering from any painful condition—whether it is sickness, hunger, or severe cold—are powerful fields for performing virtuous actions such as giving charity. And those who teach the Dharma, especially your own spiritual teacher, are always a powerful field for either positive or negative karma.

Last on this list is the bodhisattva, especially the bodhisattva who is in his or her last life before obtaining buddhahood. The merits of doing benefit—or the negative consequences of doing harm—to such a being are beyond measure.

accumulated may be wasted, and it may be a very long time before you are able to continue on the path.

The truth is, even if you abandoned all samsaric pleasure and spent this whole life working single-mindedly toward buddhahood, it would still be very difficult to attain enlightenment in this very life. Some can do it, but it is difficult because there are so many obstacles. Even for practitioners who spend ninety-nine percent of their time focused on that goal, it is still very difficult. And here you are, spending perhaps one percent of your time on your practice. This excellent human life has such great power, but if you do not use it properly you will not reach your ultimate goal in this lifetime. But what you certainly can achieve in this lifetime is to assemble the very best possible conditions for practice in your next rebirth. That is a situation where, from the earliest age, you will have authentic spiritual teachings, deep faith, and all the necessary outer and inner conditions to pursue the path to its highest end.

Some say, "It is selfish to practice Dharma just to attain a high samsaric life in the future." But it is not selfish to practice virtue in order to attain a good rebirth if your final goal is enlightenment for the benefit all sentient beings. To achieve that final purpose there are many steps along the way. In fact, one of the most beneficial things you can do with this current life is to secure a still better situation for practice in your next rebirth. You can do this by creating the causes to be born with those conditions that are most conducive to completing the path quickly. Any kind of virtuous practice with that motivation is pure Dharma practice, pure Mahayana practice. That is why Tsongkhapa advises us here to strive to achieve the most highly qualified human life—because it will give us the capacity to attain perfect enlightenment quickly and efficiently.

a" The qualities of the eight fruitions

Such an excellent human life is characterised by eight "special qualities of fruition." In this section we discuss the nature of these special qualities and how they function to benefit our practice. Then we consider the beneficial effects of having each of these qualities. Finally, we look at the causes that will enable us to obtain them.

You can summarise the essence of these eight qualities of fruition in the following way.[15]

b" The effects of the eight fruitions

When you have certain qualities you can achieve certain results. All of these eight qualities have their own individual functions, and when you understand what these functions are, you will understand why you should aspire to obtain them.

15

1. **An excellent lifespan.** Possessing an excellent lifespan means being able to remain in this perfect human rebirth for a long and healthy life. You obtain a long life because of your previous virtuous karma, such as protecting the lives of others and not killing other beings.
2. **An excellent physical appearance**. This means having an appealing physical form: an attractive complexion, shape, and general physical nature. Your organs and limbs are complete, well-formed, and the parts of your body are well-proportioned. These are the qualities which we call "beautiful" or "attractive." When you have a pleasant physical appearance people tend to like you, and this makes it easier to accomplish any goal, including making friends, finding a proper teacher, and securing a good environment in which to practice.

   If you are a teacher, your physical appearance can be even more important, because it helps you to attract students. If you are disfigured or very unpleasant to look at, nobody will want to listen to your teachings. When you have an attractive appearance, people just naturally want to meet you and talk to you. We all know people who make you feel happy as soon as you meet them; you immediately like them and you want to have more contact with them. This attractive quality can be quite an asset when you are working to benefit others.
3. **An excellent lineage**. An excellent lineage or caste originally referred to birth among the higher castes in India. It may not be so important in our time and place, but throughout history, in most of the world, noble birth has been a great advantage in any endeavour. Today, in this country, everyone may have a chance to overcome the obstacles of their birth, but there are still some benefits to being born into a family with a good reputation and high status.
4. **Excellent power**. Thos means having sufficient wealth so that you do not need to worry about your livelihood. Some people are born with wealth, while others spend their whole life constantly struggling just for food and clothing. Along with having an abundance of resources, excellent power includes being surrounded by many helpers, such as family, friends, followers, and supporters.
5. **Trustworthy words**. This means being a person whose word is trusted, who is honoured and respected in all situations. When your words are considered trustworthy, people listen to you, follow you, and rely on what you say. You become a source of reliable information, and when questions are raised others point to you and say, "Because he said so." You become suitable to act as a witness in judicial proceedings and are sought after as an arbiter of disputes because both sides trust you.

   There are also people who have the opposite quality. They say whatever is convenient or self-serving, so that after a while nobody believes anything they say. But when your words are reliable, people naturally want to hear what you have to say, and they feel they can depend on it.
6. **Renowned as being powerful**. This is the quality of being famous for displaying outstanding qualities, such as being indefatigable in practicing generosity. People with this quality are not seeking fame, but are motivated by a fearless determination to benefit others. Their virtuous attributes just naturally become the object of respect, honour, and renown among other people.
7. **Being a male**. Less important now and certainly less the case in Australia. In the past, women had few rights and needed 'protection'. Women now have more 'freedom'.

   This item does not mean that a woman cannot attain buddhahood. It does not mean that women lack buddha-nature. It simply reflects the reality that at the time of the Buddha there were many restrictions on women that kept them from the spiritual life. That is why the Buddha first established an order of bhikṣus or monks, and for a long time he did not give any bhikṣuṇī or nun's vows.
8. **Possessing strength**. Because of the power of previous karma, you are naturally hale and hearty and content. You encounter few external sources of harm, very little sickness, and you radiate a joyous enthusiasm for life. You are not depressed, neurotic, or constantly bothered by petty things. Even when you find yourself in circumstances of great hardship, your mind is still peaceful, joyful, and enthusiastic. This is "a kind of vitality, inner strength, and optimism that comes from a great accumulation of previous merit.

You can summarise these eight effects as follows.[16] It mainly means using those attributes to work for/help other sentient beings achieve enlightenment. The quality of an excellent life span means you have the opportunity to practice virtue and accumulate merits for a long time. The quality of having an excellent physical appearance means you can inspire others to follow the path to enlightenment. The quality of an excellent lineage means people are more likely to follow your instructions and avoid transgressing your advice. The quality of excellent power means you have wealth and resources to help those in need. The quality of having trustworthy words means bringing beings to the teachings and mature them on the spiritual path. The quality of being renowned as powerful means having a reputation for benefiting and giving assistance to those in need. The quality of being a male means being having a

---

16

1. **An excellent lifespan**. A long life gives you the opportunity to practice virtue and accumulate merits for a long time. Human life is especially powerful because it enables you to work not only for your own benefit, but you can also do many things to benefit others. To obtain buddhahood requires so many causes and such a vast accumulation of merits that it is only by practicing over the course of a very long life span that you can accumulate all of this positive potential.
2. **An excellent physical appearance**. Practicing to attain the Mahayana goal of buddhahood means practicing the six perfections not only for yourself, but to help others and lead them to ultimate emancipation. Those beings who have not yet ripened you try to ripen; those who are already ripened you try to free from various obstacles; even arhats—those who are already freed from cyclic existence—you must lead to the Mahayana goal of perfect buddhahood. This is the practice of a bodhisattva.
   Striving for an excellent physical appearance does not mean desiring a beautiful body out of attachment. The purpose of having an attractive form is to inspire others to follow the path to enlightenment. If you want to benefit many sentient beings, you first have to have contact with them. This attribute functions to make your Mahayana practice more extensive, meaningful, and efficient. It is not easy to gather disciples, and to inspire them to make such deep changes in the their lives. Therefore, among the practices of the bodhisattva are the four means of assembling disciples.
   a. give others basic material aid, such as food, clothing, and shelter. This brings people to you and establishes a relationship.
   b. say pleasing words, and the most pleasing words anyone can hear are instructions that bring them freedom from all their problems.
   c. act in accordance with the purpose of the disciples. That is giving them what they truly need to progress on the path, teaching what is appropriate to their capacity, and presenting the path in a way that is meaningful and helpful.
   d. live in accordance with the meaning of the Dharma. Bodhisattvas must behave in accordance with the advice they are giving to others; their words and behaviour have to be consistent.

   At the beginning people do not find it easy to embark on the path. Therefore, it is very helpful for the teacher to present an attractive appearance that brings disciples forward, engages their interest, and gives them the opportunity to follow and listen to the Dharma.
3. **An excellent lineage.** When you have high status people are more likely to follow your instructions, listen to your commands, and avoid transgressing your advice. It is always useful in gaining the respect and authority to lead others.
4. **Excellent power.** The first of the bodhisattva's four means of assembling disciples is to give material assistance. In order to do this you need to have sufficient resources. If you are born with wealth you can help those who are in financial need. You can help provide material assistance they require.
5. **Trustworthy words**. The function of speaking trustworthy words is to bring beings to the teachings and to ripen them. You do this by using pleasant speech, which means, first of all, avoiding speech that is unpleasant or deceives others. It means always trying to be helpful and make others happy. Beyond that, pleasant speech means giving voice to these teachings, and doing so in a form that is always appropriate to the level of your audience and agreeable for them to hear.
   Furthermore, to be a speaker of trustworthy words means that your own aims are the same as those of your disciples, that you sincerely believe what you say, and you behave in accordance with your own advice. It is excellent qualities such as these that enable you to gather sentient beings and mature them on the spiritual path.
6. **Renowned as being powerful**. This is not just any kind of fame. It means having a reputation for benefiting and giving assistance to others in need. When you are renowned for being indefatigable in helping others, you gain widespread respect, people admire you, listen to what you have to say, and they want to repay your kindness.
7. **Being a male.** By being born a male you have the appearance of control and entitlement. Being born as a man is a more solid situation for a spiritual practice.
8. **Possessing physical and mental strength**. When you have the excellent quality of strength you will not be easily upset or physically hurt. You will not be discouraged by whatever hardships you encounter, but will retain a brave, joyful enthusiasm for achieving the goals of yourself and others. Because you are stable in your enthusiasm and energy, you are able to attain the power of realisation, and this leads quickly to the attainment of all the supernatural powers.

form that may be more likely to attract followers. The quality of possessing physical and mental strength means having resilience and perseverance to see things through.

c" The causes of the eight fruitions

What are the causes that led you to this life and you can do in this life to achieve a life like it or better.

1. **An excellent lifespan**. The cause for attaining a long life is not harming other beings, and cultivating the strong conviction: "I will not do harm to anyone." This attitude of non-harming should be based on a clear understanding of the suffering that results from hurting others. The result of harming others and shortening their lives is to have your own life shortened, to be killed, or to suffer from serious illness. Seeing those disadvantages, and trusting in the cause and effect of karma, you make a decision to avoid that kind of negative action. The following stanzas sketch out some of the causes of a long, healthy life:

    By rescuing beings who are about to be slaughtered,
    By benefiting others by giving life in such ways,
    By turning away from harming any living creature,
    You will attain a long life.

    By caring for the seriously ill,
    By giving them medicine as a healer,
    By refraining from harming creatures with stones or sticks,
    You will be free from illness.

    The practice of charity and generosity has the power to produce a healthy life in which you will have the strength to pursue the path. By giving to the poor, giving food, clothing, housing, and medicine, and by generally serving the needy, you create the causes for a long, healthy, and comfortable life. Some of these results may ripen in this life; most will be experienced in future lives.
2. **An excellent physical appearance**. The cause of excellent appearance is offering light in the form of butter lamps and so forth, as well as offering fresh new clothes. Such offerings can be made to the Three Jewels, or to those in need. Concerning this practice, there is the following stanza:

    By not resorting to anger,
    And giving ornaments, you will have an excellent body.
    The result of avoiding jealousy,
    Is said to be good fortune.

    The cause of having an unhealthy, uncomfortable, unreliable body is indulgence in hatred and anger toward others. You acquire an excellent and useful body in the future by avoiding harmful thoughts and actions now. When you see someone else who has a healthy, attractive body, instead of feeling jealous you should admire that person and rejoice that they are enjoying the happy results of their previous virtuous actions. Such positive thoughts will bring you, too, a fortunate life in the future.
3. **An excellent lineage.** The cause of being born into an excellent lineage is to subdue your own pride, to show reverence for spiritual teachers, and to treat all beings with the same respect that a servant might show his master. In fact, it is the practice of buddhas and bodhisattvas to always hold others as more important than themselves. They always consider their own welfare as less important and make their highest goal benefiting others. With that attitude you will finally become the benefactor of all living beings.

    Those who think that they are better than everyone else, who try to climb to the top over the backs of others, may gain some temporary advantage, but in the long run that approach will not bring them honourable status or pleasant results. We should recall from an earlier section of the Lamrim Chenmo that there is a type of respect that a disciple shows his or her teacher that is called "the attitude like a dog." Dogs never make a pretence to being higher than their master, and they have a way of showing respect with how they hold their body. You should keep that kind of humility in mind when you are with your spiritual guides. By conquering pride you should cultivate respect for everyone, just as if you were their servant.

4. **Excellent power**. The cause of having abundant resources is to give to those who are needy whatever they require to have a decent life. You should give food, clothing, and all forms of charity to those who request it, as well as to those who do not ask but are nevertheless in need.

   Here, the field in which you plant the seeds of your virtuous actions is those who are suffering from poverty, sickness, and helplessness. With a virtuous attitude you help them by giving whatever they may need. When you plant good seeds in a field of merit like that, the result is that in the future you naturally obtain the resources you need without any difficulty.

   We also speak of the higher field of merit, which includes your own parents, your spiritual teacher, and the Three Jewels of refuge. Taking these as the objects of your offerings and devotion will also bring great results in the future.

5. **Trustworthy words**. The cause of having your words trusted is to avoid the four non-virtues of speech: lying, slander, harsh speech, and senseless speech. When you speak to others, watch your motivation; watch what you are saying and how you are saying it. If you are aware of your speech, you will recognise when you are about to deceive someone and you can change direction. But if you know you are about to say something that is not true and you still say it, you are planting a fresh seed of future problems. In one way, these practices are easy to do; you only need to develop awareness of how you are using your faculty of speech. Once you begin to pay attention to your speech, you may find that you are talking unnecessarily, talking senselessly, or using deceitful words. The point is to be aware of these four kinds of non-virtuous speech and make an effort to reduce them as much as you can.

   When you fail to guard your speech, you can do a lot of harm and create a lot of negative karma. Events can erupt unexpectedly that make you mad, or frightened, and suddenly you say something that may be totally untrue, or creates a great deal of pain in someone's mind. The pain of hearing harsh words can be even sharper than physical pain, to the point where it can even make people sick.

   Sakya Pandita says in his Treasury of Good Advice (Sa skya'i Legs bshad):

   > If you don't control your flat tongue,
   > It will make trouble for your round head.

   In other words, watch what you say. When you catch yourself about to use harmful words think, "I shouldn't say this. If I say this, it will hurt the other person." Always remaining aware of your speech in this way will produce great results, and in the future you will be born with the excellence of trustworthy speech.

6. **Renowned as being powerful**. The cause of attaining fame for your good deeds and generosity is to make aspirational prayers to attain the full array of virtuous qualities in the future. This means that whenever you worship or make offerings to your parents, the Three Jewels, śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, preceptors, or teachers, you dedicate those merits with the wish that you will achieve a life in the future with all the qualities you need to attain enlightenment for the benefit of other beings. By making this kind of aspirational prayer you will gain renown for your virtuous deeds.

7. **Being a male**. The causes of being born male are said to be: appreciating the qualities of being a man; not liking female qualities and seeing birth as a woman as having faults; turning away from the desire to be born with a female body because you see it as faulty; and rescuing those who are going to be castrated. Of course, many animals are castrated, especially on farms, and this is a completely negative karma that will create tremendous obstacles to being born as a male in future lives.

8. **Possessing physical and mental strength**. The causes of having irrepressible strength and determination are: solving problems which no one else is capable of resolving; helping others when you have something to contribute to a common endeavour; and giving others food and drink. In other words, this quality of strength results from doing things that are beneficial to others, especially when you have something unique to contribute. With this attribute you will be able to endure all obstacles on the path to achieving your goal.

These are the eight special qualities of the fruitions that constitute the most advantageous type of life for attaining the goal of buddhahood. With these attributes you encounter few obstacles on the path. From birth, you naturally possess all the

internal and external necessities, so you don't need to spend time and energy struggling to obtain the supports you need to practice. You are well prepared for the journey to enlightenment, and all the physical and mental requirements come to you with ease. If you do not attain enlightenment in the present life, this is the kind of life you should have in your next rebirth. Of course, assembling all these wonderful qualities requires an extraordinary accumulation of virtuous karma.

The Three Causes of Superlative Results

In creating these eight causes there are three aspects to your actions which can make the results superlative.

Pure Attitude

Pure Attitude with Respect to oneself

There are two types of pure attitude with respect to oneself.

1. **Not hoping for fruition** which means that whenever you perform a virtuous activity, you dedicate the roots of that virtuous action toward attaining the highest goal of buddhahood. This means that you are not acting out of worldly concerns, such as desire for material comfort, sensual pleasure, or a good reputation. Whatever virtue you do is dedicated toward enlightenment for the benefit of others, not for the sake of some samsaric result.
2. **Intense sincerity** which means that you perform these actions from the depths of your heart. When you understand the cause and effect relationship, you know the kind of beneficial results you are trying to achieve. This makes your motivation very sincere and your determination very intense; your virtuous actions really come from deep in the heart.

Pure Attitude with Respect to others

There are also two types of pure attitude with respect to others.

1. When you see others practicing the Dharma, you avoid feeling jealous of those whose practice is more advanced than your own, avoid competitiveness toward those who are equal to you, and avoid any feeling of contempt toward those who are inferior. Whenever you see others engaging in the practice of the Dharma, you **should rejoice in their virtue and admire their efforts**.

   Restraining such negative feelings as jealousy and the like is not easy. These emotions arise out of habit, and they grow out of egotistic thought. When you see someone better than yourself, there is a natural tendency to feel jealous. When someone is on roughly the same level as you are, you feel a certain competitiveness. And contempt easily arises for those who are inferior to you in some respect. But if you want your virtuous actions to be pure and powerful, you need to **replace those obscuring attitudes with a feeling of joyful admiration**. Remember that those other people are doing exactly what you yourself are striving to do.
2. The second type of pure attitude with respect to others is to **apply analytical wisdom**. If you cannot generate a spontaneous feeling of admiration and sincerely rejoice in the merits of others, then you should apply some analytical thought. Ask yourself, "What is the meaning of virtuous action? What are its effects and what are its benefits?" Look at the virtuous actions of the other person. Examine the thoughts arising in your own mind in response to what you see. You have to bring your wisdom to bear on these things. In order to change your spontaneous attitude of jealousy, competitiveness, or disdain, you have to apply your analytical wisdom over and over.

   It is very important to do this practice. Because it is through the repeated application of discriminating wisdom that you will be able to transform your negative emotions into sincere admiration and joy in the virtuous practice of others. Eventually, natural, spontaneous admiration will arise. **Rejoicing in the virtues of others is one of the best ways to increase your own merits**. Tsongkhapa said in his Spiritual Biography: My Destiny Fulfilled "For assembling a vast collection of merits with a small amount of effort, rejoicing in virtues is said to be best."

Pure Application

Pure application with respect to oneself means **practicing virtue over a long period of time, uninterruptedly, intensively, and from the heart**. Your practice should not be occasional, or just for a short while. It will not help you very much to practice virtues like crazy one day and then forget about it the next.

Pure application with respect to others means to encourage and help people who are not engaged in virtuous practice, or to encourage those who have not yet taken any religious vows to take them up. For those who are already living virtuously, or have already taken some level of vows, you should praise their activities so that they take pleasure in them. Your praise will cause them to continue their practice without losing enthusiasm or giving up. The strength of their practice will increase, and since that increase in their meritorious actions is caused by you, your merits will also increase.

Praising the virtue of others and encouraging them in their practice is a very effective way to create merits for yourself and others.

The same kind of activity, when directed toward negative actions, can also increase negative karma. **When you see someone else harming or killing another being**, if you admire and encourage them you will be causing them to rejoice in those actions and increase their commitment to such harmful deeds. This will create more negative karma for both them and yourself.

Pure Field

The pure field is not a separate item, but **refers to the fact that the pure attitude and pure application yield many excellent fruit**, and in that way they are just like a very productive field.

Making This Life Meaningful

Āryaśūra said of the person who obtains a human rebirth but does not make good use of it:

> He is like a merchant who travels to the land of jewels
> But returns to his home empty-handed.
> If you don't follow the path of the ten virtuous actions,
> You will not obtain such a life again.

The human life we have obtained is so precious; it is as if we had landed on an island filled with precious jewels. We must not waste this opportunity and leave here empty-handed. Even if you cannot achieve the highest enlightenment during this lifetime, you should at least strive to arrive at the time of death with a joyful heart, confident that you have put into practice, to the best of your ability, the teachings that lead in the direction of true happiness. Then, as you prepare to die, you will think, "Now there is nothing I have to worry about. I have done all I could do, and now I am well prepared for the future." Your Dharma practice should leave you with that much confidence. You have made your life meaningful. Like leaving the land of jewels carrying a rich treasure, that kind of satisfaction is the spiritual wealth that you want to take from this life.

The world, the country, the time in which we live right now are all filled with an amazing variety of teachings that have been left here by previous buddhas and bodhisattvas. And as humans with keen intelligence we have the capacity to find those practices that are just right for ourselves, to understand them, to engage in them, and to realise the wisdom they reveal.

We stand in the middle of this land filled with the jewels of the holy Dharma. But these jewels cannot be outside somewhere, waiting to be collected; the holy Dharma has to be within yourself. The causes of misery, the afflictions that obstruct realisation of the truth, are inside, within each individual. To incorporate the wealth of this life, you must take the Dharma in, like a powerful medicine, and make it part of yourself. Understand it, practice it, realise it, and those realisations will lead to a powerful faith and confidence that you have used this lifetime to its fullest potential.

We have been talking about karma and its results, and we have seen how our future depends entirely on the actions that we take now. If you cannot attain enlightenment in this life, you must at least situate yourself so that you will be able to continue to practice in the future. You want to begin with a strong start, and then build upon the foundation of this excellent current rebirth. You want your next life to have even better conditions, with all the inner and outer qualities that will assist you to quickly reach your ultimate goal. There is no contradiction in trying to create the causes to be born with all these excellent qualities in your next life. You are not seeking to be healthy, wealthy, powerful, and have high status merely for your own gratification. **The motivation is purely to benefit others by attaining enlightenment yourself as quickly as possible**. The point is to build the perfect conditions for practice, so that you can reach the highest goal and truly be of benefit to others. That is the pure Mahayana practice, the practice of the bodhisattva.

From "Instant Karma"

• Karma is the law of cause and effect. The four general aspects are: results reflect the causes, positive karma brings only positive results, negative karma brings only negative results; karma increases; there can be no results without causes; every action brings a definite result.

• If you ever want to check if you really believe in karma, it's very simple. Just ask yourself this: do you put the needs of other beings before your own?

• The same act may have very different effects depending on intention, object, subject and substance of the action.

• you can't control what other people think of you. The ideas you have about yourself are your ideas. They have their ideas arising from their own karmas which compels them to see everything, including you, the way they do. You can't control their reality. You can only control your own.

• I am already fulfilled, I already possess the true causes of happiness. If I achieve this goal or that aspiration, how wonderful! But it is not necessary to the inner peace which I already enjoy. That is how to think about goals. Without attachment.

• The less attachment you have to outcomes, the more likely they are to happen. It is when you crave things and grasp most tightly that you drive them away.

• Not everyone has the karma to accept karma.

• Karmic effects reflect karmic causes.

• You can only get positive effects from positive causes and similarly negative effects from negative causes. I explained how karma increases. How even small causes will have effects, but you should never expect effects without causes.

• Four factors that give karma its power. Its weight. How depending on subject, object, action and intention, all these will affect the result.

• Karma is complex. In any one moment we are not creating only one karmic cause, or experiencing only one karma to ripen. Each one of us has created limitless karmic causes, for both positive and negative effects, to ripen. All we need is for certain causes to meet with certain conditions and—We experience the effects.

• If you ever find yourself wondering if an action is positive or negative, just ask yourself: "What if everybody else did this too? Would the world be a happier place or not?"

• A positive action can greatly reduce our experience of a negative effect. Karma is dynamic.

• What happens when the conditions are there for a negative effect to occur? Perhaps for something very damaging, even life-changing. But do something positive just before that karma ripens. Virtue has ten times the power of non-virtue. The impact of that virtuous act of generosity will be to lessen the experience of negative karma. We may still have a harmful experience, but reduced. More bearable.

• One of the most important things we can do with our precious, human lives is to purify our karma.

• "We think too much about "me." "Myself." "I." How I have been hurt by others. Why it's unfair that my actions haven't been rewarded. All the problems facing me.

• "When we practice bodhichitta we deliberately train our minds to focus on the wellbeing of others. Not just their temporary happiness, but their permanent wellbeing and freedom. And not only some beings we happen to know, but all living beings—ourselves included, of course. By self-consciously thinking bigger, by deliberately widening the circle of our attention and compassion, we open our minds. We let in the light. We create the possibility of freedom. "The truth is that when we focus our attention on helping others, we are also helping ourselves. The idea that their wellbeing is somehow separate from ours is like an illusion because we are all interconnected. When we learn to think this way, and loosen the grip of "self" versus "other" our actions are those of enlightened self-interest." He smiled. "We become wisely selfish."

• When compassion-based bodhichitta becomes our real motivator, we are propelled by the most powerful virtuous karma there is.

• Bodhichitta, Is the ultimate manifestation of our pure, great love and pure, great compassion. You might say it is our true nature.

• The strength of karma is affected by several factors. Intention being one. There is no more powerful intention than wishing for the enlightenment of every living being. Have you ever come across a more ambitious idea? A more altruistic purpose?

- Object is another factor. There is no greater object than every sentient being in universal space. We are not focusing on only a few beings to whom we are partial. Bring these two factors together, What you have is the most powerful karmic purifier ever conceived. The most powerful force to propel your own happiness, both now and in the future.
- "May my every action of body, speech, and mind today be a cause for me to become enlightened, so that I may help all other beings attain this same state."
- "May this act of generosity be a cause for me to become enlightened, so that I may help all other beings attain this same state."
- Going to the toilet, having a shower, washing the dishes or the car—"may this act of purification, and so on." Every drink you have or meal you eat, "may this nourishment." We need to be mindful for opportunities. Keep recollecting."
- Karma was often likened to a seed. If it was to germinate it required soil, moisture and heat: conditions.
- At any one moment each one of us has a multiplicity of different karmas, like seeds in a vast storehouse, which may germinate. The way we behave sets up the conditions for which of those seeds, positive or negative, develop.
- A karmic seed which germinates and grows when it comes into contact with certain conditions—soil, moisture, warmth. It is not only about the karmic cause. It also implies conditions. There are many factors at play.
- Reality is a subjective experience! It's the creation of our minds. And it's important to recognise that this is where karma operates. Not outside of us. There is no celestial mainframe which allocates happy experiences to this person and misery to that one.
- Look at the big picture. The panoramic view. Karma is eternal. Don't get too caught up worrying about the speed with which causes ripen. A human lifetime is like a flash of lightning in the night sky. A waterfall rushing down the mountainside. Of course, it usually takes time for causes to meet with conditions to ripen. There is an interval between sowing and reaping.
- Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumoured by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it. — The Buddha (5th century BCE)