

- 1 **Karma is certain** Virtue always results in happiness; non-virtue always results in unhappiness. All happiness, from a cool breeze in hell to the bliss of an arhat, arises from previous virtue. Happiness and misery do not arise without cause, or from causes discordant with result.
Resolve: "I must pursue virtue and abandon non-virtue."
- 2 **Karma shows great increase** Unless virtue is obstructed by anger, or non-virtue by opponent powers, karmic seeds increase in potency over time.
Resolve: "I must pursue even the smallest virtue and abandon even the smallest non-virtue."
- 3 **One cannot experience a result if one has not created the karma for it to happen.** Experience does not happen by chance, and we cannot experience results of karma created by another. *Resolve:* "I must practise the opponent powers."
- 4 **Once created, karmic seeds do not lose their potency** Maudgalyayana, renowned for psychic powers, was beaten to death by an angry mob, Buddha explained it was because he had argued with mother and wished her head to be beaten.
Resolve: to invoke sincere prayers and dedicate virtue.

The paths of black karma: the ten non-virtues (naturally negative deeds)

1 Taking the life of a sentient being (either through one's own action or by instructing another)

Object Any sentient being other than oneself, including a foetus that is clearly identified.

Motivation

- (i) *Unmistaken recognition of the object* Intending to kill someone but mistakenly killing another, this branch is not complete. Still heavy negative karma but is not the complete karma of killing.
- (ii) *Full intention to kill* Intending just to hurt somebody we beat them but as a result of our action they die. Our intention was not to kill, and so this branch is not complete. It is a negativity but not a throwing karma for rebirth in lower realms.
- (iii) *One of the three poisons* must be involved: desire, hatred, or ignorance.

Action Killing by force, poison, magic, mantras and so on, or by ordering another to kill for you.

Completion: victim dies as a result of our action, we know it and are pleased. Consummated by anger.

Occurrence: no killing occurs in hells as beings die there only with termination of karma. Humans of Northern Continent are gentle and, lacking any sense of "mine," they have none of the three mental non-virtues and do not kill. Killing can occur at all other levels of the desire realm.

Throwing result: birth in any of the lower realms, usually in the hells as this karma is so heavy.

Result similar to cause: (a) *instinctive tendency* to kill. Heavy because when we finally make it back up to the human realm we have a psychological tendency to repeat the action and again we fall back into the lower realms. (b) *result similar to the cause in terms of our experience:* we may have a short life, we may be murdered or die of illness or accident when very young.

Environmental result: birth in a dangerous place where landslides, floods, or other natural catastrophes threaten one's life, or a place where there is war, or where the medicine is not potent enough to cure one's sickness and so one dies through lacking the requirements for life.

2 Stealing: taking something of value that belongs to somebody else and is not voluntarily given.

Object Another's possession which you take for your own.

Motivation

- (i) *Unmistaken recognition* of the object. If we take something different from what we intended to steal, this branch is not complete. It is still a negative action but not the full action of stealing.
- (ii) *Full intention to steal.* Borrowing a book and forgetting to return it is not stealing, but if we think, "They have forgotten about it, I will keep it," this branch becomes complete.
- (iii) *One of the three poisons* must be involved. desire hatred, or ignorance.

Action Stealing by stealth, force, cheating, and so on, or ordering another person to steal for oneself.

Completion When you consider the stolen object to be yours. Consummated by desire.

Throwing result: rebirth in one of the three lower realms, more usually in the hells or as a preta.

Result similar to the cause: in future lives we will have a karmic tendency to steal and, in terms of our experience, we will lack objects of enjoyment or our own possessions will be stolen.

Environmental result: possessions being destroyed such as a farmer losing crop to rain or hail.

Occurrence: not in the hells or Northern Continent, but can occur in all other levels of desire realm.

3 Sexual misconduct

Object: sexual relations with:

- an *unsuitable subject*: an unwilling person; the partner of another; one under the guardianship of somebody else; a close relative; with oneself; a person of our own sex; or with an animal.
- *unsuitable organs* such as the mouth or anus.
- in an *unsuitable place* such as in the open or near a stupa or temple.
- at an *unsuitable time* such as when a woman is pregnant or nursing, or with someone who is living within a vow of celibacy. The main problem with most of these actions is excessive desire. Unsuitable times include when either partner has an illness that will be aggravated by sexual behaviour, or if we have a contagious illness that we know can infect the other person.

Motivation

- Unmistaken recognition* of the object. If our partner leads us to believe they are not connected with somebody else, this branch is not complete.
- Full intention* to engage in the action: if one is raped by a married person one does not commit the action of sexual misconduct.
- One of the three poisons must be involved: desire, anger, ignorance.

Action is the contact of your sex organ with the particular object that you use for gratification.

Completion of the act is experiencing the bliss of orgasm.

Occurrence: does not occur in the hells where sexual partners are not possessed, nor in the Northern Continent where if a man and a woman wish to have intercourse they go hand-in-hand to the base of a particular tree. If they are shaded they go ahead, if not, they go their own ways.

Throwing result is birth in the three lower realms, more usually in the hells or as a preta.

Result similar to the cause: in a future human birth one will have a karmic tendency to engage in sexual misconduct and, in terms of one's own experience, one's partner will be hostile or unfaithful.

Environmental result is that one will be born in a very dirty place.

4 Lying: meaningfully distorting the understanding of another.

Object: somebody other than oneself who can understand the meaning of one's words.

Motivation

- Unmistaken recognition* of the object.
- Full intention* to lie. We must know something correct and deliberately deceive somebody by telling them the opposite. If we do not know that we are saying something wrong then we are not lying.
- One of the three poisons* must be involved: attachment, anger, ignorance

Action can be done either verbally or by a physical gesture.

Completion of the act is when the person understands and believes our lie and their mind is deceived. Heaviest lie is to deceive others into thinking we have spiritual realisations. People develop trust and hope in us but we cause them to lose faith in Dharma. Consummated by any of the three poisons.

Occurrence: absent in hells and Northern Continent but present everywhere else in the desire realm.

Throwing result is rebirth in one of the three lower realms.

Result similar to the cause in terms of one's experience is that nobody will pay heed to our words and others will spread false stories about us. In terms of our behaviour we will be instinctive liars.

(iii) **Environmental result:** the place smells badly, people are corrupt and steal from us and cheat us.

5 Divisive speech: speaking with intention to alienate friends or to increase discord between enemies.

Object: either a harmonious group or enemies among whom we intend to prevent reconciliation.

Motivation

- Unmistaken recognition* of the object
- Full intention* to separate friends or prevent reconciliation between enemies.
- One of the three poisons* must be involved: attachment, anger, ignorance.

Completion of act: people involved understand the meaning of our words and a division occurs between them. Consummated by any of the three poisons.

Occurrence: absent in the hells because all hell beings are perpetually alienated from each other, there are no friendships. It is absent in the Northern Continent but present elsewhere in the desire realm.

Throwing result is birth in one of the three lower realms.

Result similar to cause in terms of experience: in future lives when born as a human we find it hard to make or maintain friendships. We will be lonely because people will not stay with us. And in terms of our behaviour, we have a habitual tendency to slander again.

Environmental result will be birth in a rocky and uncomfortable place with steep cliffs.

6 Harsh and abusive language: to speak harsh words that are understood by another. This includes using sarcasm, insult, ridicule and swearing. It can even include making a facial expression intending to hurt somebody else. Whether our words are true or false, it can still be harsh speech. For example, if somebody is in a wheel chair and we call them a cripple with the intention to hurt them, or if somebody is dirty and we call them a pig. It may be true and they are behaving like a pig, but it hurts them to say that. Verbal abuse is our commonest way of expressing anger.

Object: any sentient being who can be hurt by our words, or an inanimate object such as a thorn. It is heavy karma to abuse our parents or spiritual master.

Motivation

- (i) *Unmistaken recognition* of the object – if we mistake somebody at a distance to be our enemy and we shout abuse at them, this branch is not complete.
- (ii) *Full intention* to abuse. If our words are taken as abuse but not meant to be, it is not complete.
- (iii) *One of the three poisons* must be involved.

Action Speaking the words so that they are understood.

Completion: the person understands and is hurt by the words, and we feel satisfied.

Occurrence Harsh speech occurs in the hells where beings are constantly threatening and abusing each other, it is absent from the Northern Continent but present elsewhere in the desire realm.

Throwing result is birth in one of the three lower realms, usually in the hells.

Result similar to the cause is that we will be habitually abusive in future lives and, in terms of our experience, we will be criticised and abused by others.

Environmental result will be birth in a barren and dry place with thorns, sharp rocks, broken glass,
and many snakes, scorpions and evil people.

7 Idle gossip covers all afflicted speech. It is usually a light negative karma but because we indulge in it so frequently it becomes heavy. There are three varieties of idle speech:

- (i) *Perverse speech:* incanting black magic or diabolically praying for terrible things to happen.
- (ii) *Talking about ordinary things which are none of our business*, such as repeating gossip over the back fence. We hear gossip and we cannot wait to tell somebody else. We do not intend to hurt others, we just feel that we are the possessor of something of value that we must share with others.
- (iii) *Talking about things which are true, such as the Dharma, but explaining it to those who are not ready to understand* or have no respect or interest. Often when people ask questions they are not really interested in your answer, they simply want to get their fixed opinion across. If you try to explain Dharma their minds are like a brick wall. So it is idle gossip to continue explaining Dharma to them.

Seven other types of idle gossip

- (i) Bickering, speaking behind someone's back; argumentative, provocative talk.
- (ii) Reciting liturgies of other religions for no reason; repeating political or commercial slogans.
- (iii) Complaining, moaning, and grumbling.
- (iv) Joking, being silly, humming, sighing, whistling for no good reason.
- (v) Telling stories and gossiping about political leaders, celebrities, politics, war, crime, etc., when there is no way we can improve the situation and we are just being a busybody.
- (vi) Speaking like a drunk or mad person, talking nonsense, stupidly.
- (vii) Speech with respect to five wrong livelihoods – flattering, pressuring, bullying, threatening, bribing, boasting, pretension, hypocrite etc.

Object Something with no meaning, significance, or importance that you treat as if it were so.

Motivation

- (i) *Unmistaken recognition* of the object.
- (ii) *Full intention* to engage in idle gossip.
- (iii) *One of the three poisons* must be involved.

Action Unnecessarily gossiping, flattering, or mindlessly singing, whistling, or humming. The worst type of idle gossip is to disturb a person who is trying to meditate.

Completion of the act: expressing the idle gossip.

Occurrence Idle gossip is present in hells as lamentations and in Northern Continent as singing songs.

Results

Throwing result is birth in one of the lower realms, maybe as a parrot in a cage.

Result similar to the cause in terms of our experience is that there will be no power in our speech, people will not listen to us and we will be caught up in gossip.

Environmental result is that the seasons will be unbalanced, trees will fruit at the wrong time, and we will be in an overcrowded place.

The three non-virtues of mind are *karmic paths* and are afflictions but are not karmic actions because they give rise to a non-virtuous intention which itself is equivalent to karma.

8 Covetousness: not simple desire, it is longing to possess the property of another and the desire to acquire it in an improper manner. The four branches of mental karmas occur in one sequence of thought.

Object Any inner quality or outer possession of someone else.

Motivation

- (i) *Unmistaken recognition* of the object – we know exactly what it is that we wish to possess.
- (ii) The *full intention* to acquire the object in an improper manner. It is not simply, “Oh, that looks nice, I would like that,” it is a strong intention to obtain the object in a non-virtuous manner.
- (iii) Strong *attachment* is present. Covetousness overwhelms our mind with desire and leads us to the point of engaging in one of the non-virtuous actions of body or speech to obtain the object.

Action Five factors that make the action of covetousness complete:

- (i) *Exceptional desire* wanting the object for oneself.
- (ii) *Greed* wanting more than one already has.
- (iii) *Nosiness* such as in “What have you got, I want that too.”
- (iv) *Competitiveness*, vying to do better, greedily wanting others’ pleasure for yourself.
- (v) *Shameless intention* to acquire the object by any non-virtuous means.

Completion of the act: when obsession brings us to decision to engage in non-virtuous action to acquire object.

Occurrence absent in hells because there is nothing to covet; absent from Northern Continent but present elsewhere in the desire realm.

Results

Throwing result is rebirth in one of the three lower realms.

Result similar to the cause: with strong desires, one will start many projects but not complete any.

Environmental result: one has meagre crops and one’s wealth and possessions will deteriorate.

9 Malice is having hatred towards sentient beings and dwelling in a state of harmfulness towards them.

Object A sentient being you can hurt.

Motivation

- (i) *Unmistaken recognition* of the object.
- (ii) The *full intention* to physically or verbally inflict harm upon the person.
- (iii) Strong *anger* Not, “I hope something bad happens to you,” it is definite intention to inflict harm.

Action: strong intention to inflict harm accompanied by five factors which qualify it to be maliciousness:

- (i) *Deep hostility* grasping at a reason to hurt, such as resenting past harm done to you.
- (ii) *Inability to restrain the mind* from intending to inflict harm, unable to bear the thought of the harm done to you.
- (iii) *Grudge holding* from having dwelt again and again upon the reasons for being hostile.
- (iv) *A competitive attitude* seeing the enemy as a rival and seeking vengeance.
- (v) *Shamelessness*, intending to go ahead with the action with no sense of doing wrong.

Completion Occurs when we make final decision to harm another through physical or verbal action.

Occurrence: in the hells, where all beings hate each other. It is not present in the Northern Continent.

Throwing result is usually rebirth in the hells.

Result similar to cause in terms of experience: one instinctively feels guilty and paranoid of others.

Environmental result: crops fail, place of war, calamities, epidemics, dangerous animals and spirits.

10 Holding distorted views contrary to Dharma In particular, views denying reality of karmic cause and effect. Not just not understanding or not believing, it is antagonistic views stubbornly denying reality.

Object of wrong views is something true, such as the four noble truths, and denying its reality.

Motivation

- (i) *Unmistaken recognition* of the object – we understand what we are denying and have full comprehension of the meaning of our mistaken view, which we grasp as being true but it is not.
- (ii) *Full intention* to hold this view against reason and to undermine the presentation of the way things are. It is a competitive, antagonistic attitude.
- (iii) *The predominant affliction* associated with the motivation is closed-minded ignorance.

Action: thinking of ways in which to undermine and to deny reality. Includes:

- (i) *Blindness* from not knowing that something knowable is true.
- (ii) *Contentiousness* from a perverse sense of enjoying being negative.
- (iii) *Completely believing* the false view through incorrect reasons.

- (iv) Being totally mean in repudiating value of charity, love, Dharma practice, etc.
- (v) Headstrong attitude wanting to beat somebody; shamelessly being antagonistic.

Completion: final decision to deny the teachings by declaring them to be untrue and asserting the opposite. Just generating the intention to deny is the karma.

Occurrence not manifest in hells as karmic cause and effect are naturally apparent there.

Throwing result: usually rebirth in hells. Wrong view and hatred are most powerful destroyers of merit and virtue. Once you deny karmic cause and effect you engage in negative actions willingly and joyfully.

Result similar to cause in terms of one's experience: when trying to understand Dharma, you feel dull as if a pot were on your head. You naturally adhere to incorrect views and are constantly deceitful to others.

Environmental result: sources of precious and essential resources will deteriorate and disappear. Gold mines cease producing ore; springs dry up; environment is polluted; law and order disappear. No safe haven, no protection from falling to lower rebirths, no refuge, no guide to lead you away from afflictions.

Differences that make these actions heavy or light

- 1 By *nature*, the seven non-virtues of body and speech are heaviest from killing down to idle gossip. With mental non-virtue, the first is lightest and the last is the heaviest.
- 2 *Object:* heavy karma is created towards guru, bodhisattvas, sangha, and parents.
- 3 The stronger the *intention*, the stronger the karma. Killing maliciously and without compassion is much heavier than killing an animal out of kindness to put it out of its misery.
- 4 The more harm involved in the *action*, the stronger the karma. To kill by torture is much heavier.
- 5 The *frequency:* doing an action over and over again increases the heaviness.
- 6 Actions are heavier when no *opponent power:* taking precepts, creating virtue, cultivating remorse, shame, and embarrassment, suppressing afflictions through *samadhi*, meditating on emptiness.

The cause and effect of white karma The ten virtuous karmas are not merely refraining from the non-virtues, they also require the four branches to be complete:

- (i) Seeing the faults of the negative action, believing it is wrong and will bring unpleasant results.
- (ii) With a virtuous mind, intending to avoid that action and making an affirmative effort to not do it.
- (iii) Completing the virtue by actually refraining from doing the non-virtue.

Intentional karma is the motivational action, the mental factor of intention.

Operational karma is the intention occurring with the intended verbal or physical action.

Karma according to its nature

- (i) **Throwing karma** causes rebirth in upper or lower realms. One throwing karma may produce one or many rebirths; many throwing karmas combined can produce one or many rebirths.
- (ii) **Accomplishing karma** is the three links of craving, grasping, and existence. These nourish the karmic seed and make it ready to definitely bring about the karmically ripening result.
- (iii) **Completing karma** determines what one has or doesn't have once rebirth is taken. Both suffering and pleasure are due to completing karma.

3 The way karma ripens

- (i) **Karma that definitely ripens:** may ripen in this life, the very next life, or a life after that. When opponent powers are used against definite karma a weakened result ensues.
- (ii) **Indefinite karmas:** karmas intentionally done but not accumulated. May be purified by opponent powers or destroyed by anger, thus their result isn't definite to be experienced.

4 Karma according to the realm in which it throws its result

- (i) **Meritorious karma** throws a happy birth in the desire realm.
- (ii) **Non-meritorious karma** throws an unhappy birth – in the three lower realms.
- (iii) **Unwavering karma** throws birth in form or formless realm.

The order of ripening of different karmic propensities: Heaviest karmas ripen first (in a corresponding type of mind). If two karmas are of equal weight, the most recent will ripen first. If two karmas are equal in weight and time, the most habitual ripens first. If all three factors are the same, the karma that was created first ripens first.

Karmic causes of insanity are: causing others to become deranged by spells or concoctions; forcing others to take intoxicants or poisons against their will; frightening wild animals, setting forests on fire; throwing beings into a chasm; or any act that harms another's well-being.

Conditions that precipitate insanity are *fear*, such as seeing a ghost; *grief*, such as loss of a relative; *harm*, such as harm by a disturbing spirit; *physiological imbalance*: disturbance of wind, bile, phlegm.

Specific aspects of cause and effect in relation to eight favourable qualities for Dharma practice

- 1 **A long and healthy life** allows extensive practice of virtue and completion of accumulations of merit and wisdom. Its causes are refraining from killing or harming sentient beings, rescuing those to be killed, giving food, releasing prisoners, nursing the sick etc.
- 2 **A handsome body** attracts disciples and increases their faith. Causes are practising patience, light offerings, making and repairing statues, printing texts, offering clothing and ornaments to others.
- 3 **Born into a reputable family**: if you are of higher caste, people heed your advice concerning their welfare. Its causes are not being proud of education, social class, ethics, wisdom, retinue, and clothes; and having respect for worthy objects such as gurus and parents.
- 4 **Great wealth** enables you to attract many people by giving material support and then to ripen them with the Dharma. Its causes are making offerings to and repainting Buddha statues, giving to beggars, helping others even when not asked.
- 5 **Credibility of speech**: others believe you. Caused by abandoning the four non-virtues of speech.
- 6 **Power to influence others**: with a good reputation, whatever you say is accomplished quickly, exactly as you wished. Its causes are being respectful towards karmically potent beings – one's abbot, the Three Jewels, one's parents and elders; prayers to have good qualities, etc.
- 7 **A male body**, not afraid to teach before large crowds, less interferences to living in isolated places. Its causes are preferring a male rebirth, not desiring a female birth by seeing its drawbacks, not wishing to have a desirable female body, etc.
- 8 **Having strong body and mind** enables one to endure austerities, to have no regret or hesitation to fulfil the aims of self and others. Its causes are joyfully doing what others cannot do, helping and not hurting others, etc.

The four opponent powers

- 1 **Power of regret** for past non-virtues is the most important. The other powers follow sincere and strong regret. Regret opposes the completion branch and stops the result of similar behaviour. Sincere regret is based upon full understanding of cause and effect – as if one has eaten poison.
- 2 **Power of the basis** (reliance) is taking refuge in the Three Jewels and generating bodhicitta. This power opposes the object branch and stops the throwing result.
- 3 **Power of opposing actions** (remedy) is to perform virtues to counteract non-virtue. Opposes the action branch and stops the result similar to the cause in terms of one's experience. Examples are:
 - (i) *Reciting scriptures* such as the *Heart Sutra*: special power to purify, recommended by Buddha.
 - (ii) *Meditating on emptiness* is the strongest opponent as it severs the root of ignorance.
 - (iii) Reciting mantras; Vajrasattva, Chenrezig, Samayavajra. Signs of success include dreams of vomiting, drinking milk, eating yoghurt, seeing sun and moon, walking in sky, seeing a blazing fire, subduing a water buffalo, subduing a demonic person, seeing the sangha, riding on an elephant, climbing a mountain or a throne supported by lions, listening to Dharma teachings.
 - (iv) *Building statues*, painting images of Buddha, making tsas: especially purifies physical karma.
 - (v) *Making offerings* to Buddha images and stupas.
 - (vi) *Reciting names* of the thirty-five Buddhas of confession.
- 4 **Power of restraint** from repeating the non-virtues by making a promise, taking a vow, etc. When sincere, this power alone can purify negative karmas and afflictions. It opposes the motivation branch and stops the environmental result.

The way purification happens

- (i) Instead of a harsh rebirth resulting from a powerful non-virtue, a lighter one is experienced.
- (ii) One is born in a lower realm but does not experience the pain and suffering of that realm.
- (iii) Karma to be born in a lower realm ripens in this life as a headache etc.
- (iv) A long duration of suffering is reduced to a brief encounter with that suffering.
- (v) The power of a propensity is destroyed so that even if conditions are present it cannot ripen.
- (vi) The direct realisation of emptiness destroys karmic propensities from the root.