

Cultivating Ethical Behavior

How you engage in virtue and turn away from non virtue after you have reflected on karma and its effects in general and in detail

A General Explanation

From non virtue comes suffering;
How can I truly be free of this?
If is fitting that all times, day and night.
I think only of this.

- Shantideva

For the Sage has said that conviction
Is the root of all virtues,
And to constantly meditate on fruitional effects
Is the root of this conviction.

- Shantideva

Thus, having understood virtuous and non virtuous karma and their effects, do not leave it at just an understanding but meditate on it over and over, because this is a very difficult subject and difficult to acquire certainty about.

Have conviction in the teachings of the Tathagata, and then sustain your meditation on them. If you do not have this uncontrived certainty about this quality of truth in the buddhas teachings, then you will not gain certainty that will please the conqueror with regard to any of the teachings.

Some claim to have certainty about emptiness are uncertain about karma and its effects and do not value it. This is a mistaken understanding of emptiness.

Once you understand emptiness, you will see that it is the meaning of dependent-arising, and it will assist you in becoming certain about karma and its effects.

Develop certain knowledge of dependent-arising to gather with the causality of the 2 kinds of

karma, and examine your physical, verbal, and mental actions all day and all night. **From this you will put an end to miserable rebirths**

On the other hand, if you don't have a deep understanding of karma, and have a lax attitude with your physical, verbal, and mental actions you are throwing the door open to the miserable realms.

We need to act according to the Dharma. And examine our mind, to see if we are or are not.

If someone who knew how to examine our mind-stream were to do so, that person would soon find something that had gone quite far from the teachings -- like sending a ball of thread down a steep incline

-Dolungba

How you turn away from wrongdoing once you have reflected in this way is stated:

O king, do not kill.
Life is very dear to all beings.
Hence, they want to maintain their lives for a long time.
So think not of killing, even in the depths of your mind

- Chapter on the Truth Speaker

Apply this attitude of restraint toward the 10 non virtues as well as the misdeeds mentioned previously. Don't even let the motivating thoughts arise. Become accustomed to this attitude and use it frequently.

If you do not reject suffering in this way, you will experience suffering. No matter where you go, you will not be free from it.

It is not sensible to engage in actions that seem to give short term happiness but lead to suffering in the future. On the other hand, it is sensible to engage in actions that give you faultless happiness and delight when you experience the ripening effects.

In Particular, the way to purify through the 4 powers.

Though you make great effort not to be defiled by wrongdoing, faults may arise due to such things as carelessness and preponderance of afflictions. If this happens, you shouldn't disregard them without bring, so you must try to apply the remedy about which the buddha spoke.

Maitreya, if bodhisattvas, the great heroes, possess these 4 teachings, then they will overcome any sins that they have committed and accumulated. What are the four? They are the power of eradication; the power of applying remedies the power of turning away from faults; and the power of the foundation.

-Sutra giving the Four Teachings

1. The power of eradication

This power is great remorse for having done non virtuous actions since beginning less time. In order to feel this, it is necessary to meditate on the way in which you produce the 3 effects of actions -- fruitional and so forth. At the time of putting this into practice, do so by way of the 2 methods -- the confusion of sins in the Sutra of Golden Light, and the confession of sins by way of the 35 buddhas.

2. The power of applying remedies

This power has 6 sections:

1. **Dependence on the profound sutras** - includes such actions as receiving the oral transmission of sutras such as the prajnaparamita, retaining their meaning, and reading them.
2. **Interest in emptiness** - to comprehend the reality in which there is no self and which is luminously clear, and to have conviction that the mind is primordially clear
3. **Dependence on recitation** - to recite, according to the rituals, the special formulae such as the 100 syllable mantra of Vajrasattva. Repeat the recitations until you see signs that you have cleared away your sins.
4. **Dependence upon images** - to make images of the Buddha once you have acquired faith in him
5. **Dependence upon worship** - to make a variety of offerings to an image of the Buddha or to a stupa
6. **Dependence on names**- to hear the recitation of and retain the names of the buddhas and great conquerors children

The 6 are the remedies that occur in Santideva's Compendium of Trainings. There are many others.

3. The power of turning away from faults

This power is actually restraining yourself from the 10 non virtuous actions.

In *The Sun Essence Sutra*, the Buddha said that this restraint destroys all karma, afflictions, and obscurations of the teaching created physically, verbally, or mental by way of killing and the like.

This power eliminates bad actions that you have created, got others to create, and rejoiced in others creating. Confessions that lacks an attitude of whole hearted restraint becomes merely words. So having this conviction to not commit negative acts again is very important.

The development of this attitude depends on the first power.

4. The power of the foundation

This power is going for refuge to the three jewels and generating bodhichitta.

A complete remedy required all 4 powers to be present.

Sins are removed in several ways. Big suffering like birth in miserable realms could result in just a mere headache. Sins which you would have experienced for a long time become very short.

There is no certainty about how sins are removed, because it depends on how powerful the purification is.

These powers weaken the capacity of karma to bear fruit. Likewise, anger and the production of wrong views weaken the roots of virtue to give effects.

It makes it so there is no combination of conditions for maintaining the potency of the seeds deposited by karma, the time for being maintained has changed. Because of this, there is thorough eradication of the karma.

You have not found the remedy that destroys the seeds of the afflictions. Yet, you have weakened the karma with contrary conditions.

Even through other conditions do assemble, the karma does not fructify.

Even though you strive to accumulate virtuous karma, you must be careful to guard against anger and the causes that destroy this virtuous karma.

A person of sinful conduct -
Who has committed sins and not gained merit,
Who has parted from the teaching and attained its opposite-
Will fear death, like a weak boat breaking apart in a great river.

A person who has gained merit and has not committed sins,
And who has practiced the teaching of the holy ones' system,
Will never fear death,
Like a sturdy boat going across a river

-Collection of Indicative Verses

The unruly may speak at length on what is reasonable,
Yet they do not act accordingly.
Like herdsmen counting others' livestock,
They do not attain the fortune of virtuous practice.

Those who practice the teachings in accordance with their instructions
And eradicate attachment, hostility, and ignorance
Attain the fortune of virtuous practice,
Though they may speak of little of what is reasonable.

Though delighting in conscientiousness
And fearing unruliness,
Monks pull themselves from the miserable realms,
Like elephants pull themselves from the mud.

Through delighting in Consciousness
And wearing unruliness,
Monks shake off all sins
Like the wind shakes leaves from the trees.

-Collection of Indicative Verses

This being so, the proper view of dependent-arising and the causality of the two types of karma is the indispensable foundation for the practices of all the vehicles and the aims of all beings.

If you actually desire high status as a human or deity and liberation,
You must familiarize yourself with the correct view.
With wrong views even a person who acts well
Will have terrible fruitions in all lives.

- Nagarjuna Friendly Letter

You need to study the texts on these to develop and intense and enduring certainty. **Take this to be a goal of crucial importance**