



Karma & The 12 Links

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Editor's Note

“Karma” is a much used and abused word. Everyone seems to have their own understanding of it and uses this word to suit their own purposes – and often – without any semblance to its true meaning as taught by the one who revealed its essence, the Buddha.

This book is therefore an essential read on this cornerstone topic of Buddhist philosophy. The teachings here are extracted from the Dharma study course led by Geshe Tenzin Zopa, the engaging, knowledgeable and straight-talking Resident Teacher at Losang Dragpa Centre.

Karma and the 12 Links of Interdependent Origination unveils how the law of cause and effect operates and worms its way into every facet of our existence, life after life. At the same time, it offers us emancipation by providing the method to attain liberation from the confusion, dissatisfaction and unhappiness in our lives. It presents the time-space-mind continuum and places our present and future squarely within our hands and our control.

No more misinformation about “karma”. No more excuses. No time to lose. Immerse yourself into Karma and the 12 Links.

The merits of this book are dedicated to the long life and accomplished wishes of HH Dalai Lama, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Khenrinpoche Lhudrup Rigtsel and our Geshe Tenzin Zopa, who have remained with us to guide us, to counsel us, to encourage us, when the Masters of old have long left us wandering in spiritual blindness. These Teachers have remained to dispel the miseries of our world. Such is their kindness to us all.

Huei

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Karma

Karma

Karma is one of the core teachings of the Buddha, the essence of all His 84, 000 teachings. Living life in accordance with the karma teachings is a supreme ethic which should be preserved and practiced by all living beings who wish to experience happiness and not suffering. Therefore, we need to study, cultivate and apply these karma teachings into our daily life with single pointed mindfulness to all our actions of body, speech and mind. Only then there is the possibility of liberation. Otherwise there will be no end to the constant circling, suffering existence in samsara.

We have already seen* how important, how beneficial and what great advantage it is to be Buddhist. By taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha with full conviction and faith, one will definitely be protected by the Triple Gem from falling into the lower realms, such as the animal realm, hungry ghost realm and hell realms. Our coming journey to the next life is definite. It is also definite that by taking refuge under Buddha, Dharma, Sangha one will definitely be protected from taking coming rebirth into the lower realms.

Benefits of Refuge Vows

Whilst taking refuge brings great benefit, we have to ask ourselves "Does this refuge taking, does this protection received from the refuge vows remain in us forever life after life, until enlightenment or not?" The answer is NO!

The duration of the refuge protection is for this life only. The survival of the refuge vows from the time they are taken is only up to the point of death and that's it! When we take rebirth the next life, we have to take refuge again. Otherwise, one does not have refuge in that life. Thus, whilst it is definite that refuge vows will protect us from falling into lower realms in the coming life, is there any guarantee that refuge vows will help us and protect us from danger and falling into lower realms in the lives after that? Or for the next hundred rebirths, one hundred thousand rebirths, is there any guarantee? The answer is NO GUARANTEE!

*Refer to previous teachings in publication *"Buddha Nature and Preliminary Prayers and Their Explanations by Geshe Tenzin Zopa"* (GTZ1)

How to gain the complete guarantee of not falling into the lower realms

You might ask, “ Who will be the guarantor for us to completely cease going into the lower realms?” The guarantor is yourself! Not someone else and not from the outside.

But how do we qualify to be such a guarantor, to gain the ability to be such a guarantor in every lifetime up to enlightenment? The answer is, remain in the ethic of abiding by the karma teachings. Live an ethical life. Practice and live being mindful of karma, of cause and effect.

By living a life creating virtuous karma, one will be able to enjoy positive results including higher rebirth, up to enlightenment. If we don't practice accumulating good actions, good karma, one will constantly accumulate negative actions and negative karma will produce suffering results. Therefore, the main guarantor to secure us from falling into the lower realms is ourselves, living with the ethic of cultivating good actions, good karma. Otherwise, even Buddha cannot save us.

Even if at the time of our death, Buddha appears in front of you, he cannot save you from falling into the lower realms. Even if one hundred thousand sanghas surround you, praying for you, trying to help you to control your mind, infuse your mind with blessings, you will not be able to avoid falling into lower realms IF you have not lived an ethical life, accumulating good karma. You can see from here how important karma is.

Creation and results of karma

So now, we need to know how karma is created. It is created through 3 bases, i.e. the base of physical form, speech and the mind and actions in relation to them. Through the actions of body, speech and mind, we set into motion 3 types of resulting karma – namely, virtue, non-virtue and unfluctuating/ neutral karma.

In terms of karma committed through physical action, performing a virtuous act brings positive results. Non-virtue created in physical form will bring the result of suffering. Some actions of the body (e.g. that based on involuntary body action) could give rise to neutral or unfluctuating results.

The carrying out of actions through body, speech and mind are often discussed in terms of the 10 virtues (and their 10 opposites i.e. the 10 non-virtues). The 3 virtues in relation to body actions are avoiding killing, avoiding stealing and avoiding sexual misconduct. Great merit is accumulated through these virtues.

Whenever one does an action which does not involve the action of killing, stealing or sexual misconduct but likewise, does not consciously preserve the ethic and precept mind of “I will not perform the action of killing, I will not perform the action of stealing, I will not perform the action of sexual misconduct” – then performing any action in this state is an unfluctuating action, which neither brings happiness nor suffering.

It is the same for verbal speech. The 4 virtues in relation to speech are - not lying, not engaging in divisive speech, not engaging into harsh speech and not engaging in idle gossip. Engaging in such will bring happiness, related to the action of speech. Conversely, lying, slander, expressing harsh words and idle gossip will accumulate negative causes and will bring suffering results. Speech which is neither of these two will accumulate unfluctuating karma.

Next the mind. The 3 virtues in relation to the mind are - avoiding covetousness, avoiding malicious thoughts and avoiding wrong view. Covetousness (in Tibetan called 'narpsen') arises due to attachment; malicious thoughts/ill-will (in Tibetan called 'nersen'), is the start of anger (examples of wrong view are given as denying cause and effect etc).

Therefore, preserving and engaging in 10 virtuous actions creates merit; not abandoning the 10 non virtuous actions brings suffering; and engaging in actions which are neither of these two result in unfluctuating karma. There are zillions and zillions of karmic action committed through our body action, our speech and our thoughts. Whenever non virtuous actions are done, they had to be introduced by the afflicted mind, i.e. the 3 root poisons of ignorance, hatred and attachment plus 20 secondary afflictive emotions, which will accumulate the karma of non virtue and bring suffering results.

Same thing with virtue - there are numberless actions through body, speech and mind inspired by respect, unconditional true

love, compassion, bodhicitta, by a mind understanding emptiness. By the force of these, the mind expresses itself and performs actions through speech and body-actions, in the aspect of the forgiving mind, then mind engaged in the six perfections practices, the compassionate mind. Virtuous acts which will accumulate virtuous actions and which will bring happiness result.

This is how our body, speech and mind bring about the 3 types of karma that can bring about the 3 types of results – happiness, suffering or neutral.

Two manifestations of Karma

There are two aspects when we talk about the creation of karma – one is when the intention '(sen-bey-leh' - intentional karma) to perform an act arises and the other is when the act is being carried out (karma of performance of the intention).

Let us take the example of coming to class. Just the intention to attend class itself is creating karma; the intention itself is an action. The intention which says “Go to class to learn about karma, so that I can be able to preserve the ethic of good karma, so that I can liberate myself from suffering” - this is intentional virtuous karma. Just by thinking that way, in that one single moment, one already created positive karma. Then, having created that intention, you start to take your bag, search for the car-keys, get into the car and drive for an hour or two to come to the Centre. Upon returning home, you think “Yes! I did it! I went to class, I learned about karma theory, so that I can be able to live ethically from tomorrow onwards perfectly!” All those momentary movements of body, speech and mind are the carrying out or performance of the intention karma.

How do we actualize the fruit of karma?

How to gather the complete set of karmic causes in order to actualise or obtain the fruit or results? Obviously, we are aiming to achieve the fruits or results of happiness – if we create causes for suffering-fruits or fruits that are neither happiness nor suffering (neutral), what a waste of time that would be!

One needs to be aware that complete karmic results come when actions are carried out with 4 factors are present. First is the object; second is intention (which itself has 3 aspects of recognition, motivation and delusion); third is the intended action and the fourth is the completion (the intended result). Now let us see how the 4 factors operate - in the actions of body, of speech and of mind - to give rise to full karmic results.

Completion of karma with the 4 factors - through the actions of the body (killing, tealing and sexual misconduct).

Let's take the action of killing and how the 4 factors of object, intention, action and completion help to actualize the karma of killing. For first factor is the object in the act of killing. The object should be a living being, for example, fish in the fish tank in the restaurant or maybe a prawn or a crab.

Killing

Let's suppose you are in the restaurant. Firstly, you created the karma of intention to kill when you called up friend and said, "Hi, let's go for wonderful seafood dinner!" "Yes. Of course" "O yes in Bangsar" You decided to eat seafood, you chose the restaurant and you thought well about a particular delicious dish? That intention itself is intentional karma.

Next this intentional karma will bring you the RESULT of the carrying out the action of the intentional karma, which in turn will produce further results. You drive fast because you're hungry and all the seafood dishes are appearing right in front of your eyes. Fish rolling in the hot oil, being fried with sambal around it and your saliva is activated but at the same time you cannot find any tissue! (laughter). Finally, you get to the restaurant and point to the waiter the exact fish or prawn that you want to eat. That fish or prawn is the object!

Now the second factor of intention (which has 3 aspects of recognition, motivation and delusion). Let's start with the aspect of recognition. At the restaurant fish-tank, you think, "Yes! THIS particular fish looks meaty and healthy. It will be good for my health. Good protein! Anyway, the doctor said don't eat red meat... ". Your recognition of the object (to kill) actualized at that moment.

Then comes motivation - "Yes that is the fish to aim for and hopefully it will be cooked exactly the way I like it and if not, I will return the dish and choose another fish to cook the way I like it". Here, we are already at the stage of motivation. Third aspect of delusion - "If I eat this fish, it will bring lots of protein and I will be healthy and live a longer life". That is the delusion (of ignorance and attachment). That is the misconception. So, these 3 aspects of recognition, motivation and delusion) always come together, whether we are aware of them or not. Together they actualise the second factor called intention.

Now the third factor - the action (here, of killing). The moment the cook cuts off the head of the fish or puts it into hot oil, that is the moment you perform the action of killing. You are actualizing the third factor of performing the action, even though somebody else cuts up the fish because it was your decision to choose that fish, eat that fish, cook that fish.

Finally the dish finally comes onto your table. The moment you taste it, you express joy "Exactly! Exactly what I wanted". You thanked the waiter 100 times for the excellent dish and after that, you even offer 'ang pao' for the cook! (laughter) "Wonderful. Next time you should cook fish exactly like this for me.." You then feel full, satisfied and think that you have had a good meal and go home for a good sleep. That sense of accomplishment and satisfaction is the moment you perform the completion, the final act in relation to killing. So here, one performs the complete set of fruitful causes for the karma/action of killing a living being.

Eating meat through transformation

Every individual should try to be vegetarian or if not, at least rely on a form of divine help for example, by reciting mantras like "OM AH BIRA KHE CHARA HUM" 7 times and then blow onto the meat. Even if we want to do purification practices for eating meat, we may not be able to purify it perfectly because to apply the 4 opponent powers practice, the 4th power requires us not to repeat the action again. That means you can never eat the seafood again! Thus, purification will be difficult to achieve. So, I think everybody should try one's best and at least have the full conviction in the mantra in helping the animal whose meat we have consumed.

There is also another method – transformation through the power of your mind, of compassion, you generate the bodhicitta mind and you regard yourself as the bodhisattva, thinking that you did not intentionally kill the animal but you knew the karma of that fish was death and that if not you, then somebody else would have eaten it, therefore to strongly think that the fish had created the generosity of physical form to the bodhisattva and from there, through the power of your bodhicitta mind, create and dedicate a great amount of that generosity (by the fish) or whatever was eaten. By doing so, you now influence the karma of the fish because you provided the condition to create karma in the mental continuum of that fish. There is now the opportunity to bring higher rebirth for it through your strong dedication for that animal never to be born a fish again, to encounter such a cruel sad situation. Pray that the fish will obtain the precious human rebirth and practice the law and effect and able to gain enlightenment. In this way, even though eating one is eating the meat of that animal, you can bring benefit to it . There are some practitioners who, even though they don't like to eat meat, purposely taste a bit of meat to do this kind of transformation practice. But one cannot taste the meat which one intends to kill. Through tasting the meat with the stable mind of bodhicitta, through that little portion of meat being consumed by the bodhisattva or the arya being who then performs the mind transformation action, it will generate the great merit for that animal to be reborn in higher rebirth such as human and to meet dharma. Such are some practices.

Best thing is not to eat meat with attachment! Not to eat meat with anger nor eat meat with ignorant mind. To eat meat with attachment means thinking “Just for the purpose of satisfaction of my taste, I must take this life and eat this meat”.

Thus, if one does eat meat, to at least think, “Without choice in having this rebirth, this precious human rebirth, through the force of karma, through the force of my existence, in order to sustain the inner elements, to facilitate their existing in balance to preserve my physical form for the purpose of a greater benefit (to live to serve many more beings)” - only for that purpose, you can choose the meat to consume (which remember, cannot be intentionally killed for you to consume).

Suppose somebody invites you for dinner and when you arrive, they have already prepared food for you, which includes meat. In such a case, with bodhicitta motivation, you will benefit more by eating that meal. Ideally, any meat eaten should have been killed more than a day ago. That is one way to be sure that the meat was not from an animal which was killed for you. In tantric practice, consumption of meat involves transforming the meat into nectar in addition to prayers and that way, the animal that was killed can derive benefit. Again such meat cannot be intentionally slaughtered for you. Did you watch the movie on 'Cheh Kung' the monk? Long time ago in China, this monk though appearing to be drunken and crazy, had his own way of wisdom thinking – he used to eat meat, especially chicken meat and he was heavily criticized “... you are a monk and yet you are

eating chicken ..” At first he answered “You think I don’t have a mouth? That I don’t have stomach? You are a lay person and you have a mouth and you have stomach. I also have a mouth and a stomach. You mean a lay person can do anything you like and a monk cannot?” Then he proceeded to show how he ate the chicken meat - he would take a bite from the chicken meat and throw away the bones but from that bone, a live chicken would emerge. He threw more bones and more live chickens came out. So if you can do that, you know that means you can do anything you like! (laughter).

As with the killing example above, it’s the same thing for the remaining non virtues committed by the body i.e. stealing and sexual misconduct and all the rest of the 10 non virtuous actions. In order to complete the full action or karma, you need these four factors to be present namely the object; intention (and its 3 aspects as recognition, motivation + delusion); action and the intended result.

Stealing

In the case of stealing, the object may be this microphone. Next the intention – you think “Yes! This is the particular object that I want to steal”. Then the motivation, “I steal this so that I can use for my personal recording. I can’t afford to buy, so I need to steal it i.e. delusion and all sorts of excuses such as I’m stealing so that others can benefit from its use. All excuses are the delusions. Following that, the action itself arises the moment I grab the microphone and run away with it. In the final completion, the result I intended (to get the microphone for myself)

- the moment I get into my room, I straight away use the microphone to record Hindi songs, instead of using it to benefit others. Then I say to myself, "I have done it!" That is the moment you accomplish the act of stealing.

Sexual Misconduct

The object that is taken should be regarded by the owner as its possession. If the owner doesn't care if you take it away or not, then it is not stealing. Otherwise if you go on pilgrimage you take little bit of the stones or dust from a holy place, it could also become stealing. You need to check carefully all these 4 factors when engaging in any action. If somebody comes LDC and takes one small stone from the LDC garden, as LDC does not hold or grasp that one stone as LDC's possession, then taking that stone wouldn't be termed stealing.

For the non-virtue of sexual misconduct - The object is the unsuitable partner; the intention being the recognition of the particular person that you targetted, the motivation to perform the sexual misconduct; the delusion being all the excuses born out of the afflictions. The action is the actual performance of the sexual misconduct itself. Then the final completion is the satisfaction derived from this.

Completion of karma with the 4 factors – through action of speech (lying, divisive speech, harsh speech and idle speech/gossip).

The karma of **lying** works the same way. The object is a person. The person to whom I telling a lie about and the person to whom I tell the lie to, are both the objects. Then comes intention. First the recognition, "Yes I need to use false words to mislead you about her". Next, the motivation is to deceive the person to whom you are speaking to. Next is the delusion of joy when the lie is told (and believed!) Some people are so habituated to lying that the moment they get the chance to lie, they enjoy the feeling it brings. Similarly, some people are accustomed to scolding people. When they scold, they feel good as if they achieved something worthwhile. Others enjoy gossiping about people. If they don't get the chance to gossip, they feel life is bland! Boring!

The third factor in relation to lying is the action to saying the false words. Next, the person to whom the lie was told to, gets your meaning and believes your lie. You said she didn't come to class last week, when in fact she did. You made the listener believe or at least feel confused about whether that person attended class or not. The listener then says or thinks "Ah! I think she didn't come" and that confirms that your lie has worked. At that point, you have accumulated the full set of factors for the karma of lying.

Divisive speech : Let us say there are two persons, you and your friend who are very caring of each other and I want to come in between the two of you to spoil your relationship. I do it by saying words like, “Your friend is pretending to be very nice to you but she says all the nasty things about you behind your back”. Divisive speech could also use different methods such as creating misunderstanding and jealousy, for example “ I think you are good but she is much better than you”. Although using words of praise towards the listener, you are creating jealousy within the listener towards her friend, just for the sake of causing them to split up. That kind of action is called divisive speech. For that, the objects are the two persons targeted to be split; the intention (the recognition is the two persons, the motivation is to cause the split and delusion are all the afflicted reasons you have to cause harm to these two persons’ relationship); the action is the use of words to carry out the splitting; the final completion is the moment the split occurs.

Harsh speech : A person in an angry mood wants to vent by scolding someone. That person decides that the first person to come in through the door will get the scolding. So that “first-person” is the object; intention (recognition is yes, I will scold this person; motivation is ‘I want to vent by scolding somebody; delusion are all the excuses for acting this way); the action is verbalizing all the negative things; the final completion is a sense of satisfaction that you have given someone a scolding.

Idle speech/gossip: The object of your idle speech could be anyone, including your dharma brother, your dharma sister or even your Guru or maybe Buddha, or maybe hungry ghost or spirit. You know, sometimes some of you talk a lot about spirits. If you keep doing that, there is a danger of becoming one. So let's take the object as the spirit. The intention (recognition of "That spirit that I saw yesterday, in between the two flowers"; motivation that "If I talk about the spirit to somebody else, the spirit might be scared of me and go away"; delusion is thinking that "if I talk about the spirit, the spirit will not trouble me or I might get some help"); action is talking about non Dharma things like spirits; the final completion is that you feel like some kind of relief in having spoken about spirits. Your friend might have said "Don't worry, the spirit has already gone". You feel relieved, mistakenly thinking, "Luckily I talked about the spirit. Otherwise it would always stay in my mind and always stay in my house!". So that is the complete karma in relation to one set of idle gossip.

Therefore, idle speech can arise in many situations. Even with regards to conversations with your dharma brother and sister, the moment you talk about anything to do with this only this life's purpose, for fulfilling your mental comfort, or just to say something; or saying something to extract appreciation or gratitude or even speaking about the good qualities of someone or something but without any Dharma intention, not even the bare minimum of speaking for the purpose of future life – all this is idle speech/gossip. All such speech is negative karma. Of course if you talk about the faults about your dharma brothers and sisters it is totally wrong. It's much worse.

Completion of karma with the four factors – through actions of mind – covetousness, malicious thought, wrong view)

Covetousness or "Napsen" in Tibetan. You see someone driving a very nice car and at that very moment, you yearn to have that car; you cling to the thought of getting that car. Even when we go window-shopping, there is a danger of getting into this problem. Covetousness is the moment you see a beautiful dress and think, "Oh how nice if I can get this particular dress and that other dress which that shopper has bought .. " the moment your mind attaches to the dresses inside the glass display in the shopping centre, thinking they might already be bought by someone, that is covetousness! It is part of attachment. In the end, you only choose one dress to buy but you have already accumulated numerous covetous karma, all of which are negative.

The beautiful flowers which you admire in your friend's garden, thinking, how nice if I all these flowers were mine and in my garden in my house covetousness! There are hundred people at a friend's party. How nice if all of them become my friends instead, covetousness! During Chinese New year, "I must try to get those hanging decorations that are in my relative's house" - the moment you grasp to have it within your circle, your compound, your worldly mandala, all are covetousness! You see?

Holy objects are not spared. You go to the store to buy a statue from a dharma shop, like in Nepal, hundreds of statues shops and thangka shops. People buy such items and you think, "How beautiful! How nice if I can have that statues and thangka

which that person has bought in my altar room!! His water bowls are so nice to have on my altar!" Attachment! Karma! And if those objects belong to someone, Covetousness!

"The state of Buddhahood. How much I will enjoy it there as that is a marvelous place. I want to go there as soon as possible for this purpose alone and for myself to enjoy. Covetousness! You see now?!

Covetousness is part of attachment. The karma of attachment brings the result of (discontentment) suffering. That is why the understanding of karma (especially subtle karma) is said to be infinitely more difficult to gain than the understanding of emptiness. Don't you think this statement shocking? Understanding karma is far more difficult than understanding emptiness and requires far more effort than that needed to comprehend emptiness!

Emptiness can be realized by even Hearers and Solitary Realizers. Even the Hearer from the small scope who achieve path of seeing can realize emptiness but to understand the subtleties of karma is so difficult. Even highly realized beings, Arhats, or Hearers even highly realized solitary realizer arhat or the 10th bhumi bodhisattvas, those who reached the final stage of the path, cannot see fully the subtleties of karma. Let's say a highly realized practitioner has arrived at the level where he will attain Buddhahood the next morning, even such a person cannot understand the subtleties of karma.

Yet we use the word karma very freely. We say "This is my karma"; "All the bad things happening to me is due to my bad

karma” but who knows it could be due to your good karma (in giving you chance to attain realizations)!? Who knows?! “All the good things happening to me is because I created so much merit and that’s why I am so rich and influential..” ... who knows – sometimes wealth and influence brings trouble and could be a result of your bad karma!?! We simply use the term “Karma” too freely. Someone falls down - oh karma! Someone gets sick at Tara retreat, bad karma ripened! Who knows it could be your good karma?! We cannot judge and make assumptions about karma just like that. The moment our business declines, we cannot eat food, have no mood for parties, we feel ourself in such bad shape. You think “My bad karma seems to be ripening everyday. My all bad luck is coming at once” - who knows it could be your good karma ripening because due to this, you were introduced to dharma! That requires good karma, so one cannot reply on mere appearances and overly simple labelling. Therefore to use “This is your karma .. ” is a very heavy statement. You are acting as if you are a Buddha, judging other's karma. You are making assumptions! We cannot simply use karma as an excuse. I see many of us use karma like an excuse. “Somehow, I don’t have karmic affinity with this person” - how do you know that? Do you know it because you are becoming a Buddha who has clairvoyance or are you already a Buddha !? “I don't have karma with this centre. Only today my karma with this centre has ripened and I am here” - who knows, your not coming to this Centre was purely due to your laziness! Your laziness created new karma and not necessarily because your past karma stopped you from coming! Like that.

The point here is - **the subtlest karma can only be known by Buddha**, no one else! We are able to understand gross karma but not subtle karma. How does subtle karma function? How does it influence our day to day life? For this, only the Buddha knows!

Therefore it is so important that we first have full understanding of karma and then refuge and then many things will make sense. At least 50% of the time, one could think in terms of the blessings of Buddha. If something goes wrong, think "Oh, it could be blessings of the Buddha." If something goes well. ... "Oh, it could be blessings of the Buddha." This thinking will comfort you and at the same time, will bring good energy because you have at least voiced out Buddha's name once, so naturally this will bring out some positive energy and the moment you strike good energy, your health starts to improve, your business will start to fall into place, etc. That's how it works. That also creates karma again.

To tackle and transform covetousness karma, the best thing is to do the opposite i.e. instead of focusing on grasping onto things for oneself, make an offering of that object. This can be done mentally. Say 'Om Ah Hum! Om Ah Hum!' and mentally offer it all to the Buddhas and all sentient beings who wish them. Wherever you go, whenever you go to shopping malls or buying groceries, "Om Ah Hum, Om Ah Hum". Merit is gained from doing this. Therefore as I intend to achieve enlightenment to benefit all beings, I want to accumulate merits! Om Ah Hum, Om Ah Hum! OFFER! Mentally perform the offering this way.

That is why you have to use Om Ah Hum, to purify the offerings. If you don't use Om Ah Hum, there is the danger of ordinariness and covetousness.

Offerings actualized and mentally performed. I personally like to use the term, visualization. I differentiate between visualization and imagination. Many of the dictionaries and some texts use the terms as if they are the same. But I disagree. Visualization is real, imagination not necessary real! When you visualize Tara entering your crown, Tara is really entering through your crown. If you imagine Tara entering into your crown, then it may not happen. This is my interpretation.

The point I want to make here is that make offerings by understanding emptiness. Let's say you are mentally offering a dress. First of all, the dress does not exist independently there but arises in a dependent manner. Offer through the understanding of emptiness. In fact, through understanding of emptiness, the entire universe can be brought into your palm to be offered to the Buddha. Through visualization and an understanding of emptiness (the absence of independent existence), every single offering can be performed.

Malicious thought (or ill-will) is part of anger. It can arise this way - You go to shopping center and soon you complain - I don't like what I see in this shop and why is it that this year, the fashions are all so ugly? I already went to hundred shops yet I still cannot find the things that I like. They should bring better quality stuff. And this is Malaysia too. My goodness things should at least be better than Thailand. How come the

shopping centers here are smaller than Thailand how come?
Endless complaints. All these bring about so much frustration!

Frustration has the gene of anger/hatred. You created the negative karma of anger by being frustrated. The result is suffering. You go out and complaints pop up in your mind – everything is not good, restaurants are not good, the food served there are also the object of your negative mind, "I thought the restaurant would always serve food of the same quality, so why is the food tonight so bad?" Malicious thought! You create the karma of malicious thought and unhappiness comes. Having malicious thought, ill will and a complaining-mind brings unhappiness, similarly, if you resolve to be a person who never complains (or complain less), it will make you a person who appreciates everything! That karma of understanding how cause and effect works will make you a better and happier person. A wonderful person! You will be loved by everybody. Since malicious thought is so damaging, do the opposite of complaining, appreciate the positive aspects of things! Whatever complaints you have about the entire world, including malicious thoughts about terrorists, is also negative karma. Cannot! Rather, we should pray for them to change their minds into compassion-minds and minds with respect for others. That is why HH Dalai Lama and Khabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche always advise and say, " May bodhicitta arise in the hearts of all the leaders of the world, in all the leaders in all countries ". Bodhicitta is the real antidote, the real cure for malicious thoughts rather than complain about how can they destroy the world and destroy peace and create a war – these are all complaints. Therefore, when reading newspapers or

watching the news, be careful about your mind and whether malicious thoughts arise. Malicious thoughts and covetous thoughts can easily arise through these.

Next, we discuss wrong view. Now here, I would like to have a broader explanation. Traditionally, the texts explain wrong view as not believing in cause and effect, having the belief that there is no rebirth, that there is no Four Noble Truths, wrong view that there is no two truths (conventional truth and ultimate truth), that there are no causes of suffering and no suffering, no path no cessation. These are the wrong views which Buddhist scriptures describe.

I would like to expand it further to say that wrong view includes not believing in the conventional aspect in things as well. If we don't believe in the conventional aspect of things, we are also saying that there is no good and no bad, no right and wrong and hence ethics are irrelevant. This is wrong view. Sometimes, we Buddhists say, "Since you are a non believer in Buddhism, you are holding the wrong view". We have to be careful. In today's life, you cannot say that just because non Buddhists don't believe in the Four Noble Truths, means they are holding wrong view. "You don't believe in Buddha so you will go to hell!" You cannot say that. Instead, we should explain well and nicely what is meant by wrong view and right view. That would be better.

What results in completed karma and its consequences

When discussing the completion of karma, there are two aspects to consider i.e. the causal stage and the accumulation stage. There are three types of “completion of karma” – (1) karma where both the causal and accumulation stages are present (2) karma where the accumulation stage is present but not the causal stage (3) karma where the causal stage is present but not the accumulation stage.

- (1) karma where both causal stage and accumulation stage are present: This refers to karma where all the 4 factors of object, intention, action and final completion (result intended are achieved. This is fully completed karma which will bear fruit.
- (2) karma that is accumulated but not caused: This is where the object, intention and action are present but the final completion/the result intended does not happen. In the example of killing - I managed to spear the fish to kill the fish which I spotted but suddenly I got a heart attack. Before the consciousness of the fish left its body i.e. before the fish actually died, I died before the fish died. In that situation, the final completion/intended result didn't happen because for the karma of killing to arise, the object/target has to die before oneself. In every killing, the mind of the target-being has to leave the body before the killer dies. If the killer dies first, then the final completion/result didn't happen and thus karma of killing is incomplete.

- (3) karma which is caused but not accumulated: The fact or result of death (in the example of killing) arises but there was no specific object, intention or mindful action on your part to cause that death. This is karma which was caused (i.e. death happened) but not accumulated (the first 3 factors were not present). This one occurs frequently because each day, we are very busy walking up and down the street unknowingly killing many insects beneath our feet. Even the act of cleaning causes many ants to be killed. You had no intention to kill ants but suddenly while washing the mop, you discovered one ant is killed! O! My Buddha! (Laughter) So one ant is gone. In that situation, yes, the death of the ant arose but there was no object, intention nor deliberate action to kill. Why no action? Because completed karma requires performance with intention.

Now we know all sorts of different karma can be accumulated. It accumulates in complete ways, incomplete ways.

The results/consequences of completed karma: There are 3 types of results - 'fully matured results'; "results corresponding to its cause"; "environmental result".

What is the meaning of "fully matured result"? It is based on the principle of definite karma, certain karma which has all the 4 complete factors (object, intention, action and intended result). If we have accumulated that kind of karma such as killing, the fully matured result is birth in the hell realms. Same with all the 10 non virtuous actions and all the numberless non virtuous actions. As long as you accomplish them with the 4 factors present, it will bring about the fully matured result.

Amongst the 10 non-virtues (i.e. 3 of body, 4 of speech and 3 of mind) in relation to the non-virtues committed by the body, the heaviest negative karma is killing, second is stealing, third one is sexual misconduct. In relation to speech karma, lying is heaviest, then divisive speech, harsh speech and gossip. But the karma committed by mind, covetousness is least heavy, then followed by malicious thought and wrong view is heaviest. Wrong view brings about all negative actions in the most complete, fruitful way.

The next question is, will the result of definite/fully completed karma of killing of being born in the lower realm such as the hell realm be the only result experienced? NO! The person performing the completed karma of killing has to experience the second type of result called "result corresponding to its cause" .

Due to one's act of killing in the past, whichever realm one is born in, there is the strong tendency to kill again and experience being killed and living in constant danger. This is the result corresponding to the cause. I am not insulting any body. It is a fact. So we need to look into ourselves. If we are into such kind of actions, we need to avoid it and purify such actions. Your habits and interests can change.

At the same time, the third result i.e. the environmental result must also be experienced, that also has to be experienced. The environmental karma from killing will place you in a situation where your best friends and closest ones will support you in your tendency to kill and you will be born in a place harm comes easily and help and medicines scarce. Very obvious!

The explanation of the 3 types of results can be applied to virtuous karma as well. As for the fully matured result of avoiding the 10 non-virtues result in your gaining the optimum human rebirth, having full senses and on top of that, you meet your Guru, have kindly dharma brothers and sisters. You have access to dharma materials, dharma centers and you receive unmistakable, complete teachings. When you need guidance, you find yourself provided with different aspects of teachings, such as commentaries, initiations and oral transmissions. That experience is the fully matured result of your virtuous karma.

The result corresponding to this cause means you live virtuously, without the Guru having to remind you to preserve virtuous actions or do practices. You are naturally inspired to come to dharma class and your happiness to do virtue keeps you feeling like you are floating in the space with enjoyment, never

getting tired. The more Dharma you hear, the more you want to hear. The more you practice, the more you want to practice and you don't feel like going home but are still happy when you are back at home. On the way home, you recite "Om Mani Padme Hum ..." constantly with a mind thinking how fortunate and wonderful it is to be able to practice dharma. You admire the Guru, admire the Buddhas, admire yourself, and admire everybody! You reach home and the moment you see your spouse and children, you smile and feel you have experienced the best day. Even in the shower the mantra "Om Mani Padme Hum" continues coming out from you. You feel so fortunate, even a shower makes you feel blissful. Like that. You have no complaints of the water being too hot or too cold – as for hot water, of course you need to adjust properly, otherwise you'll get burned! (laughter). If the water is too cold, you might get the flu, so take care, karma again.

The moment you go to bed, you think "My day was really wonderful. Even if I die now, I have no regrets!" You experience good dreams. Next morning when you get up, you feel that due to the blessings of the Gurus, due to blessings of the Buddhas, due to blessings of your past lives who accumulated good karma for you, you are still alive! Again thinking of dharma.

You then go to the office, thinking about sentient beings, about creating merits etc. All these show that you are experiencing the positive result corresponding to a virtuous cause. That's why there is no need to seek predictions! Whether from the Mirror Lady or whomever or even ask Geshela for an observation please! Sometimes, people go to mediums to seek predictions (I am not a medium ya? (Laughter)) to check "What is my past

life?" There is no need to go to such persons to find this out. Just look at yourself now, who you are. Seeing what kind of opportunities you have, how virtuous you are. Look at yourself - if you are a good person now, for sure your past life has been virtuous. If you are cunning in nature, it also shows how you have been in past lives. Similarly, there is no need to seek predictions on what kind of rebirth you will take. Look at your present actions right now and you will know the results to come from that. There is no point in saying "Tomorrow I will do dharma, tomorrow I will accumulate all the virtues". Don't wait for tomorrow. You are not sure of tomorrow. Maybe before tomorrow, you're gone! Gone to the next life!

Right now, observe what you are doing. If you are doing a good job, performing Dharma with pure body speech and mind, your next rebirth is 100% going to be good. A higher rebirth. Very good.

Next comes, environmental result. Easy access to a Dharma centre is one of them. You come to Guru puja, "ching chang ching chang" (the sound of cymbals and bell ringing during the puja) and whether you understand the puja verses or not, the sound of the chanting is so nice! Please don't go to the pub! You only get all the negative energy from smoke. Don't go there, come here. Sometimes, the home gives rise to screaming matches between husband and wife and children. Instead, just spend one and a half hours here at a Dharma centre, enjoy the peaceful moments, enjoy the environmental result. We should put some effort to enjoy the environmental results we have earned. It does not matter if you don't understand all the puja texts. One day you will understand; create the cause to

understand by making the effort to attend. If you don't create the cause, you will never get the result of being able comprehend, you see? You think – “Oh I don't like rituals”. How do you know its ritual? For you, it might be ritual but for others might not be a ritual. Besides, maybe there is nothing wrong with it being a ritual. Even if you are a philosopher, you could be totally wrong, holding all the wrong views. At least for the sincere person performing the ritual, he may not have much philosophy but at least he performs it for the benefit of other beings. Your philosophy can be totally upside down. Isn't it? I am not saying this particularly to you but generally, this kind of thinking can arise, isn't it? People give excuses that they don't like rituals and thus don't attend pujas. It's up to you. If you don't like ritual, you can still perform the puja as your meditation. Why would it bother you if somebody “ching chang, ching chang” at the same time? I am sure you will enjoy the atmosphere here rather than going to the pub. I am sure 100%, 100% sure, or 99 % sure. We have to create the opportunity to be 100% sure of gaining happiness.

A Dharma centre is one form of good environmental result. We should all take some responsibility to provide this for others. Make sure you don't hurt people, make sure you don't look contemptuously at people or say and think cunning thoughts. Instead, admire and rejoice at people coming to the Centre rather than going to negative places. No one should judge anyone. We cannot do this! Let everyone enjoy the good environmental result.

When setting up the an altar, it is necessary to make it as attractive as possible as an offering to the Buddha and to inspire

people viewing the altar to admire the Buddha. You know, if out of 100% of viewers, 99% of them are scared to look at the image of let's say, Guru Padmasambava, it would be better to bring that Padmasambava image into the room. But that is not the case here. People admire the image of Guru Padmasambava, even declaring how handsome the image is. Like this, we should help to enable whoever comes to before the altar, to feel the positive environmental result of good karma.

I am not only talking about this dharma centre, as long as you are keeping Buddhas and holy objects in your house, as long as you regard yourself a Buddhist, whoever appears in front of you or at the place where you are, you should create that place as one of peace, gentleness, calmness, happiness, friendship, love and respect. It is not the work of only one or two persons. Everybody has a role to play in this. Then it fulfills the purpose of LAM RIM, fulfills the purpose of what it means to do dharma and fulfills the purpose of what Buddha Shakyamuni really wants for us! Since you have already attained the fully matured result in the form of having the precious human rebirth and experiencing the result correspondent to its cause (being virtuous), you should now enhance it to progress on the Path to be in an even better position to help others! After all, the purpose of Mahayanic practice, is in relation to others and not to oneself only. It has everything to do with others but if you cannot relate to others, what is the purpose of cultivating bodhicitta? Reciting bodhicitta prayers? What is the purpose of conjoining bodhicitta and refuge prayer together and recite in the Four Immeasurable prayer? If not, you might as well remove the lines in relation to others and only recite the refuge prayer!

Our lives, our practice requires us to interact with people and other beings. As long as you hurt other beings, you have failed. So we should always remember to enhance the positive environmental result.

No need to be depressed about completed karma – blame it on past life’s actions and ignorance

Having understood how completed/definite karma comes about and how we cause it, we should not be depressed or blame ourselves and get upset about who we are now. To do so is a misconception and misconception itself is negative! It will cause more negative karma to arise. That is why ignorance itself is negative. Normally we think ignorance produces negative karma, forgetting that ignorance in itself is negative.

Looking down on yourself, discouraging yourself, seeing only all the unhappy aspects of yourself and your life, these are all negative! Instead, you should feel proud of who you are – but here, we need to clarify the word “proud” – not proud in the sense of arrogance but rather recognizing we have qualities and having the courage to improve them – whether in our job, our relationships, serving dharma center, serving your parents, serving your children, serving yourself, everything within you. You first must build courage within yourself.

When things go wrong, there is a reason and there is no point in blaming yourself. If you must cast blame, then blame it on deeds done in your past life. No point blaming yourself now! This is a very important point. It sounds simple but nevertheless important - if you blame yourself now, you will bring negative

energy and instantly create negative karma right this moment! You generate negative energy and you block and close off all good opportunities because you cannot see any way out, because you feel down. This is the tyranny of depression. It brings instant failure. Instead, have courage and admire who you are. If you do this, what will happen? Immediately, it will uplift your mind and bring up good energy. It will open closed avenues to opportunities. In the simple example of a job, some people feel sad, "I can't get a job. I try many ways but cannot seem to get a job". I look at them, with their faces very moody, such that even their talking tones are flat! Anyone looking at a person would think, "I don't think this person can work! He might wreck the project if I let him handle it. How can I risk giving such a person the job?" Of course, the employer would want confident and lively. No one would choose to hire someone who looks depressed and has a low opinion of himself, isn't it?!

So if you go to job interview with such kind of poor appearance and low energy, surely the employer would cancel you out! Rather, even if you do not have much knowledge, you can have the confidence in yourself. That way, you open the door for opportunity and create the karma to succeed in that very moment. Karma is very powerful, you know. Karma is inextricably linked to mind and the mind is so powerful, hence karma is mind and thus equally powerful. If you have strong positive karma, i.e. merit, you can influence people much more. Some people have very strong negative karma that they can hurt people badly. Even cursing others non stop is very dangerous because if you have a lot of negative karma and your mind is very negative, one word of cursing others can destroy others lives and bring suffering results to you on account of it!

Be very, very careful. Never curse others. "May his car be smashed and wrecked!" Just the words expressed from the depth of your heart with anger could well contribute towards its happening! This is the power of your negative karma, power of your mind. Remember, consequences then follow.

Therefore, blame your past life deeds done in ignorance. Don't blame yourself now. Appreciate yourself and resolve to be better. But if you must blame someone, blame it on your past life or the past 10 lives and think "I have to be good to my present and future lifetime" - this will teach you acceptance, forgiveness and tolerance.

When you accept you have a problem, that in itself initiates the cause to solve that problem. How will that come about? You need to purify the past karma that has given rise to the problem. You should help yourself now. Don't feel down. Don't feel lost. If you know the purification practice called the Four Opponent Powers are, that is a great benefit to you; likewise the benefit from reciting the Varjasattva Mantra of "Om Varjasattva Hum". At this very moment, instead of feeling down, recite more and make it heartfelt. Sometimes, we need to remove hindrances to our Dharma practices and efforts. For this, you recite the Lion Faced Dakini Mantra "Ah Ka Sa Ma Ra/Tsa Sha Da Ra/Sa Ma Ra Ya Phat" and there, you would roll the mala beads outwards which is the mudra of dispelling hindrances. If that is not enough, chase the hindrances away with, "ta ta ta" (its not a party sound), it has a meaning. When you feel down, clap even louder. Clap 3 times, and you might even laugh. We

do that in the Monastery, when the Monks pray for others they do it like this. In Sera Jey they strike 9 rounds, very "kiasu" (laughter). Amongst the 4 Gelug monasteries in South India, once a year, all the best philosopher-debaters will come together and about 500 people from each University will be gathered together. When the debaters challenge each other, if anyone cannot answer, the crowd will tease by shouting "Che Che Che" and if it is nine rounds of this is chanted, the crowd will recognize that the debater being supported is from Sera Jey. Otherwise everyone is wearing the same red robes and one cannot differentiate who is who from the group. (Laughter)

Collective karma and karma that is not purified

Whatever suffering, sickness and problems we have are due to our past karma. If the suffering is experienced in a group or within the same family, it is due to collective karma committed by the people in that group, in the past. Therefore, feeling down, feeling depressed does not help, rather you should try to first understand how karma works and accept that it is the result of past karma and then take steps to deal with it to overcome this low feeling. If one experiences more suffering, there is need for more purification. You ask the question, "I do all good deeds including charity, so why did my business fail? I pray to Tara and still I cannot get a job after 3 months of searching although the prediction said that I would get a job in a month". You should blame your karma, not the prediction. Predictions might also include having to do certain practices and pujas. If you do not do that, you will not create good causes and never purify the karma, so how are you to get the job? However, if even after performing Medicine Buddha Puja one doesn't get the job, then

there is a deeper reason for that. If the karmic cause is created and ripens before you start the purification practice or puja, then you must go through the experience. Timing is relevant. So you cannot really fault the prayers and pujas.

Depression comes about when you ask too many “Why?” It is better to say “I created the karma in the past and I should now purify” . Not tomorrow, now. This is because you would not have experienced the result unless you had created the cause for it before. You will not experience the result of suffering if you have not created the cause of suffering; you will not experience the result of happiness if you have not created the cause of happiness and the negative karma you have created will definitely bear fruit unless you make effort to erase it; similarly, if even a small virtuous action such as offering one single candle to the Buddha has the potential to bring happiness but if after offering of the candle in front of Tara, you throw a tantrum, you will destroy whatever merit you have created by offering the candle. In that situation, you alone are the one who erased the positive karmic cause. Killing one ant while mopping the floor has the potential to bring unhappiness or a suffering result, unless you perform the necessary purification practice. Otherwise you will definitely experience the result. Virtuous karma is definite to bring happiness and negative karma is also definite to bring unhappiness. So the question is whether you want to erase a karmic cause or enhance the conditions.

I will give you one example, Parpa gung jung - he was an Arhat, free from samsara but not yet enlightened. When he became Arhat, he had a huge store of merit but when he went out to beg for food, he was not able to get any alms. He became so hungry, he ate mud and in the end, he died because he could not digest it. This is the result of past karma. Due his understanding of emptiness and purification of the self grasping mind, he was able to obtain liberation, obtain Arhatship but due to miserliness in his past life, he experienced this terrible end. He had purified a lot of negative karma but the stain of that miserliness karma was not totally purified and because of that, he had to experience the karma, even though he had achieved Arhatship. Until karma is purified, it has to be experienced.

During Buddhas' time, Kimdag Pelke was an old man with a large family of many children and grandchildren. He was constantly disturbed by the noises coming from his grandchildren. I have seen fathers who are 80 over years old grumbling that they are the servants of their sons or daughters. When you don't think of dharma, you feel you are a servant to your children. From the moment they are born, you had to wipe them clean. And every night you are disturbed by the crying of the baby and for 1 year 2 years, you don't get proper sleep. Those with young children know about this. In fact, when I was a baby I was like that. I would cry and scream. Give me a sweet, waah I would cry; give me chillies, waah, I continued to cry. Only when I got cow dung in my mouth, would I be happy (Laughter). In the mountain village, it happens like this. The children like to roll about on the ground which has cow dung everywhere. It becomes something familiar. So if you give them

food, they'll scream; if you give them sweets, they will also scream but if you put cow dung in their mouths, they are pacified. (laughter)

Let us take another example of the difficulties than can arise in families: Your son is already 30 yrs old. You have educated him; as you had to earn money to feed and educate him, you didn't have time to eat proper meals. Now he is grown up, yet he still asks money from Mama and Papa and when you try to advise him he stares at you. Then he gets married and you are proud to be a grandmother or grandfather but unless he takes care of his children, you will also be involved. I have seen in some families where the grandparents are in a worse situation than the maid. Early in the morning, they have to wash things and mop the floor because they are dependent on the children for pocket-money. Then they get scolded because often, husbands and wives tend to listen to their spouses rather than their parents.

Coming back to the story of Kimdag, the old man during Buddha's time who was so disturbed by his grandchildren that he decided to run away to become a monk. He thought that by becoming a Monk he would have peace. However, when he went to the Monastery where Shariputra was, he was asked to leave. Shariputra said, "You are an old man. To be a monk, you have to learn many things. So you have to be young to do this. Also I see no karma in you to be a monk." Kimdag was so sad at this that he almost jumped off the cliff to end his life. At that moment, his karma ripened and Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in front of him saying "Yes you do have the karma to be a monk". Only Buddha is able to see subtle karma. Shariputra was an Arhat but was not able to see the subtle karma of Kimdag.

Buddha then related Kimdag's past life aeons ago where the karma to become a monk was created. Buddha explained, "In your past life, you were a fly and you happened to be near a stupa that contained relics. Around the stupa was rain water carrying some bits of cow dung and you as a fly and attached to the smell of cow-dung, you landed on the dung that was floating around the stupa. A strong wind came from the eastern side, causing the flow of water carrying the dung to circumambulate the stupa once. That circumambulation created sufficient cause for you Kimdag, to become a monk". Even though Kimdag in that life as a fly was motivated by attachment to the cow-dung (and attachment is the cause for suffering) the power of the holy object helped him purify the karma and create meritorious causes to become a monk. Only the Bodhgaya Stupa and the relics of the Mahasiddha, are the 2 potent holy objects that can help to purify your karma. Otherwise you need to put in a great deal of your own effort to purify your karma. Just by merely seeing, touching, remembering the reflection, even dreaming about the Relics will purify eons of negative karma and create immense merits. Other than these two, you need to apply the purification practice of the Four Opponent Powers by your own efforts.

Another person named Kinpakepo used to criticise and curse people such that when he obtained Arhatship, he manifested pain. When a lama gets cancer and so forth, we call it manifestation of pain but in fact they are experiencing the result of past karma but if one is smart, one will use such difficult conditions as Tong Len practice (exchanging of self for others i.e. taking on the suffering of others and giving all of one's merits to others) as a very powerful practice to attain enlightenment.

There is another story about Kinpakepo. Due to past karma, his village was burned and during the fire, he was able to escape to the ocean. As he had the collective karma to be burned, he died from burns despite being in the water. Therefore you cannot escape from your karma unless you apply the Four Opponent Powers.

Nagarjuna, was referred to as the second Buddha, a great being. In one of Nagarjuna's past lives, he happened to cut the grass before the summer retreat (normally before the summer retreat, monks cannot step on the grass nor dig the earth because a lot of beings might be killed). During this grass-cutting, he accidentally cut off one of the ant's neck and later, due to that karma, Nagarjuna died by having his neck cut off. In Nepal there is a place called Tango, there is a head stuck on the floor. In fact it is Nagarjuna's head. And that is the result of the karma of unintentionally cutting the ant's head.

If you want to landscape your garden and you want to enjoy bigger house you have to be mindful. You cannot use chemicals or sprays on ants or insects. You do that because you feel that your life is more important than theirs. It is part of attachment to self. You cannot use Om Ah Hum for any killing or taking of life. That is why you can only eat meat that has already been killed but not killed for you.

In the case of war, the Minister and General are the ones to order the killing, whereas the soldier performs the actual killing. However, the moment the soldier kills somebody, the Minister and the General acquire the karma of killing, equal to

the soldier. This is collective karma. It is also environmental karma from the past for a person to be the Defense Minister or the General and placed in a situation where killing again has to be done, creating more and more negative karma.

If you want to keep ants away, use repellants rather than killing poisons. It is also important to keep the house clean so that it will not attract ants. And if the ants are already there, you should consider them as part of your family and treat them well. And the best method to deal with the ants (to create the cause for them to cease being a nuisance in the long term) is to offer them sugar and honey. If the ants are on your pillow, put sugar on the pillow. I know it works. I saw and experienced that.

Let me tell you a story. When I was serving Rinpoche in Kopan in the old Gompa, there would normally be no ants. However, one week before Rinpoche arrives, somehow all the ants will come. I tried numerous ways to make them go away but nothing worked. When Rinpoche arrives, he is so happy to see ants. He will be very careful not to step or sit on them and he will ask me to bring sugar mixed with flour, butter and sugar, as this mixture smells very nice.

I have a small house in Sera Jey. There are so many plants there, its like a jungle. There are spiders, cockroaches, rats, ants and I have the bad habit leaving my Milo drink around. Then I decided to use Rinpoche's method, i.e. instead of chasing the bugs away, I put some sugar out for them. Depending on your tolerance level, you can decide to use how much you want.

If you want the ants to stay for one week, put more sugar; if you want them to stay only for 1 day, then give less sugar. Sometimes they bite you and when they do, you visualize that they are kissing you. Don't be bothered, the more bothered you are, the more fuss they will make. [In the end, the karma to be troubled by bugs finishes and they are no where to be seen].

Therefore, you can purify any type of karma even right now. How? By using the Four Opponent Powers, i.e. the powers of reliance, remedy, repentance and promise to refrain from the misdeed.

Reliance on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha: If you have a statue that contains relics or at least a statue that contains the Four Dharmakaya Relics Mantra (all consecrated statues contain this mantra), this also represents the power of refuge or power of reliance. If you do not have any of these, then have the Buddha in your mind or your Guru in your mind, which will be the same as having the objects of Refuge enabling you to carry out the power of reliance.

Remedy: This second Opponent Power is overcoming misdeeds through applying the remedy or the antidote. These would include any recitation of a Buddha's mantra or meditation on Lam Rim or visualization of Varjasattva. These practices are antidotes to overcome misdeeds, negative karma and the best antidote is meditation on emptiness.

Repentance/regret: The power of repentance is the third opponent power and is the feeling of regret (i.e. recognizing one's mistakes and the disadvantages of mistaken action). If you

can remember one incident of negative karma committed and use that as a force of regretting all past negative karma, it is very powerful.

Refraining or not repeating the misdeeds is the fourth opponent power. With strong will and determination made in front of the Buddha, I resolve to make sure that I will not commit any of such negative karma. Even at the cost of my life, I will never repeat such a negative karma in the future.

If you apply these Four Opponent Powers, the heaviest of karmas like committing the 5 heinous crimes of killing a Buddha or bodhisattva, killing your father and mother, causing a split amongst Sangha etc, there is not a single karma that cannot be purified. You can eradicate all sufferings right now. As long as you do pure Dharma i.e. to overcome afflictions and benefit others, including making light offerings, flower offerings, offering social welfare services, taking care of your parents and taking care of yourself with proper (bodhicitta) motivation, you can be liberated from entire suffering of samsara. And if you want have more detail you can refer to any of these books, Sutra Zanglung, Doeygyen, Togjoejyapa, Dulwalung, and Abidharmakosha.

I rejoice in your patience in listening to this talk but I think it is worthwhile. This subject is important, more important than emptiness, more important than tantra, more important than bodhicitta but remember this teaching on karma is within the category of Initial Scope teachings and we are in the Great Scope teachings of the Mahayana, which is also built on these

teachings. By analyzing our views, we can see whether we are in the great scope, middle scope or initial scope viewpoint.

You need to reflect on the lessons learned here so that it will plant a very strong imprint in your minds, from the depth of your heart and that will bring benefit to you. The whole purpose is for you to reflect on karma at least once; if possible many times.

As a point on how to listen to Dharma talks what I do before I go for lectures is that I will go to do some research beforehand on the subject. If you have the text, you read the text and if there is no text, you can start to think about the topic. Whether your thoughts accord with the teachings or not does not matter. The process of thinking the subject through logically is valuable. Then when you are in the class, listen attentively and don't jump to conclusions before the teacher has finished explaining the subject. When you go home, compare your earlier views on the topic with what you have learned in class. Check which one makes sense, which one is contradictory and which one is relevant or not. If you have the text go through it at least 3 times and reflect on the lecture at least twice. At first you might not understand it all but after the second or third time, you will and once you think it makes sense, you can then accept it and act on it. You need to go through the subject 3 times so that your understanding will become stable. Otherwise, it will not stay in your subconscious mind to be able to assist you to cope with the pressures of your daily life.

The Characteristic of Karma

In order to actualize this very session as a cause of liberation, it is necessary for us to set the right motivation. Therefore, please generate the inspiration to make this session as a cause to actualize the 2 types of merits - the merits of method & merit of wisdom, in order to eradicate the 2 types of obscurations ,the obscuration to the liberation/nirvana and the obscuration to enlightenment. We aspire to attain full enlightenment in order to benefit the numberless beings. For that purpose, I am going to listen to dharma, I am going to contemplate on the meaning and apply it into my daily life, in order to establish strong imprints of virtue. And pray to actualize realizations within this very short period, so that I am able to benefit numberless beings in a very short duration of time.

First, one needs to rely on a qualified guru/spiritual friend with total conviction and faith and put effort to please the holy mind by applying the advice of dharma, which lessens our suffering and brings about happiness - from temporary happiness up to the lasting bliss of enlightenment. By devoting sincerely and whole heartedly to actualize all the qualities of Guru Buddha, one should then seriously get into the practices advised by the guru Buddha through Dharma actions of body, speech and mind. This is especially so since we have gained this precious human rebirth which is ornamented by the 8 freedoms and 10 endowments.

Practice immediately, right now, by understanding the Buddha's teaching death and impermanence. Reflect how death is certain but the time of death is uncertain. From this, one can see the insecurity of one's next rebirth if one lives a life under the control of delusions (ignorance, anger and attachment). It is for this reason that one goes for refuge in the Triple Gem to gain guidance to be free from delusions.

When one reflects more deeply on the self, we find that every single existence of our self is in the manner of **action or karma** and within this, there is positive karma and negative karma.

It is not enough to only avoid negative karma but also accumulate positive karma. This is because by avoiding negative karma, one may be protected from falling into the lower realms in the next life but one will still remain in samsara within the bondage of this cyclic suffering existence. By knowing this, one is encouraged to study, contemplate and live an ethical life and do virtues thereby preventing any suffering. So therefore we have to learn about the karma.

We begin by discussing the meaning of 2 lines (from the text "Foundation of All Good Qualities") composed by Lama Tsongkapa which state, "after the death, just like a shadow follows the body, the result of black & white karma follow". The destination we are heading for after death is totally dependent on the positive or negative karma we have accumulated. The explanations given here are based on the Lam Rim Chenmo (the Great Lam Rim), one of the greatest works of Lama Tsongkhapa.