

Reflecting on the characteristics of karma has **4 essential points**.

1. The certainty of the karma
2. The magnification of karma.
3. One does not experience anything that one has not created the cause for
4. The karma/action that has been committed will not perish on its own.

1. The Certainty of Karma

In essence, this point means positive acts bring positive results and negative acts bring negative results. Experiences and results arise from a compatible cause. If you plant corn, it will produce the result of corn and not produce the result of barley or wheat.

The certainty of the karma is felt by everyone, whether you are an ordinary person or a noble being like an Arhat. It is impossible for happiness to arise from a non virtuous karma and similarly, impossible for suffering to arise from the virtuous karma. Suppose oneself happens to be born in the hot hell realms and one is mentally and physically overwhelmed by the pain of heat and if within that experience, a single moment of cold wind blows, that relief of coolness is due to some positive karma (virtuous karma) previously committed.

Even when one has attained Arhatship, we see them as totally free from sufferings but they do experience hunger or they yawn and sometimes they physically fall and bruise themselves. This is due to not having completely purified all negative karma and hence, even at the high level of Arhatship, they have to experience such.

Let us consider more examples: Let's say a Arhat is cleaning the altar and suddenly a glass object there breaks causing the Arhat to be cut and he bleeds. Even though the Arhat can, through the power of meditating on emptiness is able to heal the wound, there is still slight discomfort experienced and this sensation is the result of a past negative act. This negative act was not committed during that lifetime as an Arhat but was done perhaps 100 years or lives before, when he was an ordinary person. It is possible that either he forgot to purify a particular negative karma or when he did purification, he only focused on a specific karma and didn't say, 'May I able to purify the entire negative karma committed' or he might have thought "Oh! This is very small karma -- never mind, after all by purifying heavy karmas, small karma can be purified". This is a misconception. Any karma no matter how small, if not purified, will produce a result that has to be experienced even when one achieves Arhatship.

Therefore, from here we learn that when we do prayers to purify negative karma (example when reciting Vajrasattva -OM VAJRASATTVA HUM) we need to say "May this recitation of the Vajrasattva mantra, be the complete cause to purify the entire negative karma committed. May it be the complete cause

to totally purify all karma.” This way, you will not leave out anything.

You therefore need to realize that when we speak, when we act physically, when we think, every single moment of the smallest action, is a creation of karma. Within 1 second, think of how many small karmic actions we create and it would mostly be non-virtuous because we are often angry, upset, agitated, hateful, jealous, cunning, destructive. Further, if you act in a fierce manner, in a very unpleasant manner, you cause others to become unpleasant.

You might think that no one can see my thoughts, so it is alright to hold negative thoughtsbut the truth is that in no way will you be free from the karma of that thought! Even if tomorrow morning you are destined to attain Arhatship, that attainment will not spare you from experiencing the result of the smallest negative karma created. As long as actions have come from your mind, speech or physical act...or when we say things like “go to hell” or “die man” (laughter)... karmic results will arise from these.

Consequently, happiness and suffering do not occur in the absence of a cause. Rather happiness & suffering in general comes from the virtue and non-virtuous karma respectively. Each particular happiness and each particular suffering arises from corresponding individual acts of karma. This is the non-deceptiveness of karma, of cause and effect.

Whatever experiences of happiness or suffering we encounter, it is not created by gods. It is the result of your own past karma - either virtue or non-virtue. In Buddhist teachings we don't

accept the idea of a creator being, someone “up there” or down there or any side, who creates sufferings and happiness for us. There's no such a creator of experiences other than the creation of karma/act which will bring about its compatible result. If one didn't create any positive karma, one will not experience any happiness. If one didn't create any negative karma, one will not experience any forms of sufferings. Therefore, whatever experience we have in our life, either unhappiness or happiness is totally due to our own past acts or karma. There's no outsider to be blamed.

All present actions we label as conditions in relation to past action e.g. if we kill an insect right this moment, it is a condition in relation to past acts of killing called a condition-cause. The moment after the killing, what we called “condition-cause” now turns into a karmic cause, an imprint/karmic seed in our consciousness.

In the example of a boy dying from drowning in a swimming pool. The pool is a condition of the boy's death and the cause is some past act of killing committed by the boy. The moment the boy swims and starts to drown, the act is a condition-cause and the next moment of terror, fear and negative emotion at drowning becomes the karmic cause for more future suffering.

If we don't have a clear understanding and conviction in karma, in cause and effect, then we are probably very shallow Buddhist practitioners; we called ourselves Buddhists but are not in fact, so.

Even we have refuge but we don't understand karma, we will be unable to fulfill the purpose of refuge.

The purpose of refuge is to guide and discipline us to live an ethical life, a virtuous life. If we don't make effort to study and understand karma and gain faith in it, we will not put it into practice. In such a case, even taking refuge becomes something in name only. It will not be able to actualize the actual purpose. But if we have total conviction and faith through knowing about karma and how it works, from that very day, we are matured Buddhists and from that day on, we have established the foundation, the root to attain ever lasting happiness and eradicate the root of all suffering. Otherwise, even if we take refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, even if we commission tons of pujas and recite prayers, it will not actualize liberation from samsara because our ignorance continues to commit new negative karma. Oneself is not awakened from ignorance to understand what is virtue and what is not virtue. As I mentioned earlier, taking refuge can save us once from the lower realms but will still throw us into the same circle of samsara. To cultivate a life abiding by the karma teachings, respecting the law of cause and effect means to engage only in virtuous acts and never engage in negative acts. It is not easy of course! However, there's no other solution/remedy or formula.

We say that Tantra is supreme and a quicker Path but without engaging in living according to the law of karma, doing virtue and avoiding negativity whole heartedly and full time, one will be unable to actualize the purpose of tantric practice because there would be no foundation. In Buddhism, we call a clear understanding of karma, the law of cause and effect, as a correct view and the understanding, contemplation and meditation on karma is well praised by all the past Buddhas as a foundation.

2. Magnification of karma

Immense happiness may arise from the smallest virtues and immense suffering may arise from the tiniest non virtue. This is karma committed gets magnified, increases.

During the Buddha's time, there was a very old man named Kimdag Pelke. He had a very big family with many children, grand children, great grand children who caused much noisy disturbance to Kimdag. People who have children, you know how it is! Especially being with children between the age of 2 - 6 years old ... after spending time with screaming children, it can cause you to gain the spontaneous realization of renunciation in worldly life... (Laughter)

It was such a mental torture that he decided to become a monk, as there was no peace at home. Upon arriving at the monastery, we requested to become a monk. Shariputra, one of Buddha's disciples who had clairvoyance, was the abbot but declined to accept Kimdag as a monk because of his age as well as the fact that Kimdag had no karma to become a monk.

The moment he heard this, he felt dejected and wanted to end his life by jumping into the river. The Buddha then appeared in front of him, manifesting as a stranger passing by and ask him what had happened. Buddha then explained that even an Arhat cannot see the most subtle of karma committed. Only an omniscient one, a Buddha can and that Kimdag did indeed have the karma to become a monk. This karma was a very subtle karma, created many lifetimes before when Kimdag was a fly. The Buddha explained that a long time ago, there was a stupa which

held relics within it. After a heavy rain, there formed a stream of water around the stupa which had cow-dung on it. Due to attachment to the cow-dung smell, the fly (who was Kimdag in that lifetime) landed onto the cow-dung floating on this stream flowing around the stupa. At that moment, a wind blew, causing the stream to flow clockwise around the stupa, carrying the fly along with it. At that moment, karma was committed by the fly which was sufficient cause for Kimdag to become a monk in present life. A very small act (of landing on cow-dung) magnified into the opportunity not only to be born as human but to become a monk.

This is very powerful tale which has a few points to it. Firstly, even the smallest karma will not be wasted and will bear fruit. We should not judge ourselves and other people because we don't know their karma. As long as we don't know their karma, we don't know their subtle karma.

Secondly, for us to understand even all aspects of our own karma (let alone others' karma) we need to achieve an omniscient mind.

Thirdly, since the smallest acts can magnify into great results, we have to be mindful of every single act of present, past and future acts and we need to perform purification practices constantly because many karmas can be committed in one second. It is unwise to think that just by doing 100 thousand recitations of Vajrasattva mantra, one can totally purify all negative karmas committed since beginningless lives.

Finally, when we do virtue, the result will be virtuous. Such as the fly - by just making one circumambulation of the relic stupa, even though his intention to land on the cow-dung was due to its attachment to its smell, he was able to obtain monk's life and proceeded to attain Arhatship in that life by doing a great deal of purification to overcome that attachment (which would have otherwise brought it to another rebirth in the lower realms).

It is possible for one to accumulate 2 types of karmas at the same time. However, know that creating virtuous karma does not necessarily mean that negative karma will be automatically purified. We also cannot assume that we will not accumulate negative karma while we are engaging in virtuous acts unless one's body, speech and mind is 100% in total engagement with the virtuous act and free from delusion. We can mistakenly tell ourselves that there's no creation of negative karma when we are meditating, chanting, because if we are not mindful, it is possible that while we are creating virtuous karma, we are simultaneously creating negative karma! This cautions us to be very mindful. We don't want to even create a slight negative karma. Karma increases.

This story of Kimdag Pelke serves as an encouragement to us: We have endless opportunities to create virtues. So we should tell ourselves, "No matter how cruel I am, I should put effort to engaging in virtues."

Some people are compelled to act in a negative way, for example, saying harsh words and liking to scold others, complain and criticize others, as if not talking negatively about others is like not having salt in their food and no dessert after meals (laughter). However, even if one has those tendencies, one still

shouldn't give up on doing virtuous action. One shouldn't think, "What is the purpose of turning prayer wheels because I am already so bad." If we think like this, we will give up our practice because we under estimate ourselves, we don't see our potential. Therefore, we should encourage ourselves by turning the prayer wheel. Then, even though we may still grumble about the faults of others while we turn the prayer wheel, whilst our speech is engaging in negativity, at least our body (by turning the prayer wheel) is accumulating virtue. Better than nothing, isn't it? Exactly like Kimdag - he received one small opportunity to create one virtuous karma. Who knows, the next virtuous act you commit could be the cause for you to actualize your Arhatship!

Therefore, we shouldn't be extreme and avoid taking any commitments simply because we cannot be perfect in doing virtue now. Some of us say, "Since I cannot be vegetarian, I should not take refuge at all because the refuge vow says not to harm others" – and thinking this, you give up totally. Instead, one should think - I will try my best even though I am not vegetarian but I will at least take refuge and from there, I will improve myself gradually. There is benefit from doing this.

Again, with the 5 lay vows: Some say "I cannot give up alcohol and since I cannot abide by the full 5 vows". With that, you give up the aspiration entirely. If you cannot handle the 4 vows, you should inspire to take at least 1 vow and there is a benefit from that. Some of you say, "Oh, I am already too old, so what is the purpose in practicing Dharma? Maybe it's better if I don't practice, after all, wherever I go I don't care... whatever rebirth I

take, I don't care". People totally give up practice thinking this way. We shouldn't be this way! Even if we have one moment before the moment of death, we should do whatever we can to practice and particularly, practice the karmic law of course and effect.

There are those who think, " I have already accumulated so much bad karma, I might as well carry on doing what I usually do". Or someone has stolen a big item and thinks, "I have already committed a major theft, so there's no different if I now steal a small object." The point is, even small negative actions need to be avoided. Otherwise as mentioned earlier, one will have to experience the karma and karma increases. The subtlest virtue or non virtue follow us like a shadow and produce great results, either of great happiness or great suffering. We need to strive to cultivate even the subtlest virtue and eliminate the subtlest non virtuous act.

3. One will not experience the effect of the action that you did not commit

If you did not create the cause to experience happiness or suffering, no way will you encounter the experience of the happiness or suffering. Whatever you experience now has come about due to your own actions and there is no basis to blame others. It is totally your own creation through your body, speech and mind from the past.

4. The action we have done (and the results to follow), will not perish on their own

Those who have done virtues or non virtues have created corresponding pleasant or unpleasant results to come and these will never be lost nor perish on their own. Sooner or later (but definitely), the result will be seen and experienced. If you happen to perform generosity of 1 single cent with the total mind of giving, it will never be lost. It will return with interest! This is because karma multiplies. Suppose one didn't get the opportunity to experience the result of giving 1 single cent within this life or it gets delayed for a hundred years, note that the interest accumulating on that will also be high. So after 100 years, someone might just put in front of you 1 zillion dollars and say "Go shopping!" (Laughter).

We shouldn't be surprised by anything we encounter because we have created the cause for it in the past. You might ask "When did I create the cause?" The point is that karma is subtle and you don't remember things moment by moment. You never remember. It could be the result of the 1 Malaysian cent you once donated a long time ago.

Let's say you suddenly fall ill. You've been exercising everyday for hours and consume only healthy organic food. You don't appreciate local vegetables, you have to take imported ones instead which you assume is better, giving all sorts of reasons. Yet suddenly, all aspects of your body is tortured by sickness. You are shocked. But if you understand the karmic law of cause and effect, why the shock and surprise?? Why be so scared? One has created the cause for sickness (by harming other

sentient beings) in the past and are now reaping the result. The way of handle it is to experience the result, apply Dharma to mentally transform the hardship into an opportunity for practice and purify negativities in a most effective way. This way, one is able to shrink the duration of suffering and lessen the pain. If one had the karma to be afflicted with a chronic disease for 20 years up to the end of one's life, by understanding the karmic law of cause and effect, you can start to transform your situation by thinking, "Don't be afraid, don't give up, never give up, never think, oh I must quickly end my suffering by taking a pill to end my life now", thinking and giving all the excuses that if one lives, it will bring suffering to family and friends. As long as you think about ending your life, it is a negative act. It is an intention to kill, and as serious as the intention to kill others.

Suppose you see a cat lying on the road, knocked down by a car. It is badly wounded by not dead yet, as its heart is beating. Out of compassion, you stop and bring it to the doctor with a hope of easing its pain. You then have the caring intention to spare the cat of more pain and you tell the vet, "I want to cease the pain of this cat, please doctor put the cat to sleep and end its life now". That request initiates the karma of killing. Never ever initiate killing, even out of compassionate intention.

There are cases where patients in a hospital are suffering greatly and beg for injections to end their live. If you are facing such a patient and instead of discouraging this act, you encourage the injection to be given, you are participating in the act of killing. Therefore, as a Buddhist practitioner, we cannot initiate an end to the life of a sentient being.

Today, just this morning, I got an SMS from Penang, from one of the center's member who has a dog with kidney failure. The dog owner cannot bear to see the dog in pain and told me, "Geshe-Ia, I've recited many Medicine Buddha mantra and put Medicine Buddha's picture on the head but the pain is not subsiding, so I would like to request doctor to give an injection and shorten the pain." My immediate reply was, "Oh! You cannot. Please carry on chanting Medicine Buddha mantra. You should pray for the dog to recover and pray to cure the pain. You pray that this dog can live long life totally cured. Even though it is due to compassion, just thinking to end a being's life is negative karma. You should also recite Vajrasattva mantra 21 times." Otherwise, it will result in your involvement in the karma of taking other's life.

Question from student: Geshe-la what about removing the life support from a person? Some people are actually dead but they use the machine to keep them alive. Should we encourage the doctor to remove it?

Geshe-la: It depends. If the person is in a coma but the body is still able to sustain itself, then we cannot take the step to stop life support systems. If it is 100% certain that all breath has stopped and person is clinically dead, then it may be alright to stop life support, although the best would be that even in such a circumstance, to leave the body for at least 3 days before stopping the machines.

Question from student: When a director of one of the centers in New Zealand suffered a very bad car accident, Lama Zopa Rinpoche advised that "If she has the karma and is beneficial, may she recover quickly, live in Bodhicitta and become enlightened. Otherwise, may she be born in the pure land". Why was it advised that way?

Geshe-Ia: It should be noted that Rinpoche said "Otherwise, may she be born in the pure land." Rinpoche didn't say "Otherwise may she depart to the next life". When we pray for somebody who might be facing death, first thing is that we have to pray for the person to live long, with the illness fully cured. However, if the karma of remain alive is really ending, we still will not pray to finish that karma now but instead, pray that "If the karma to live is at an end, then may this person be born in the pure land" (where the opportunity to study Dharma exists). This is so that one doesn't become another condition to end that life.

Even though there may be many cruel people destroying the peace of the world, as a Buddhist practitioner, you should never pray to end their life but rather to subdue their minds with Bodhicitta. You should never seek to end the lives of harmful people. Never pray like that. Instead, pray that they will gain compassion and Bodhicitta. When lama Zopa Rinpoche makes his dedications for world peace, he says , " May all the leaders of the world and all terrorists or whomever ...gain the Bodhicitta heart". So, like that.

The principal teaching of the ten paths of action

Given that you now understand the link between happiness and the underlying causes; between suffering and the underlying causes as explained above; that karma increases, that one will not meet with the results of actions that one has not done and that actions (and the results flowing from them) will not perish on their own, what sort of karma should one initially develop? What actions should one adopt and which should be avoided?

There are three ways to engage in good and bad conduct – physically, verbally and mentally. Generally speaking, most (not all) of our virtues and non-virtues committed through these three ways can be included in what is called the ten paths of action. These ten actions (the ten virtues and their negative counterparts, the ten non virtues) are the most gross/obvious forms of action. Shakyamuni Buddha taught that when we give up the ten non virtues, we simultaneously adopt the corresponding virtuous actions. Remember that when committing any action, there is the intentional karma aspect, as well as the aspect of the performance of the intention.

It is important to be aware that it is possible for non-virtuous intention/mind to be mixed together with positive action. Therefore, perform all good actions without a negative distracted mind.

Whether one is practicing the path of the small capability being, the middle capability being, the high/great capability being i.e.

the Vinayana practitioner, the solitary practitioner and the bodhisattva practitioner, all have to avoid the ten non-virtuous actions and practice the ten virtuous actions. Constantly be one guard and abide by ethical disciplines. There are some who have no sense of restraint and yet still claim to be a practitioner of the Mahayana. This is very dishonorable.

By means of these ten paths virtue, one has the potential to become the Buddha. Anyone who totally fails to create virtuous action but claims to be a Mahayana practitioner is a great hypocrite. Such a person deceives the world in the presence of all the bhagavan Buddhas. At the end of their lives, such people remain in a state of confusion and then fall into the lower realms.

Remember that these words and teachings are not about someone else, your neighbour, your enemies, your friends. They are about us. We have to think and check ourselves. We need to honestly inquire whether we are creating virtue or non-virtue. Whether we are doing the right or not. Whether we are ethical or not. From there, one understands more clearly and we are able to seriously contemplate on it, whereby one's mind starts to gain restraint and discipline and wisdom. Otherwise, at the time of dying, one will be in confusion - as if listening to 100 songs at the same time, not knowing which one to choose. Even though one might have attending many Dharma teachings and have so many Dharma imprints, because of we didn't live an ethical life and following the practice of the ten virtuous actions, one becomes totally lost. When one is lost, frustration arises, more delusions arise bringing about anger and attachment and these drive your mind into the lower realms. The actions or karma that one does which affect the realm of rebirth is known as throwing karma.

Now let's go through the karmic process involved in the ten non-virtuous actions.

1. Killing

What is killing? In order to accomplish the karma of killing it has to have 4 factors present - the basis/object, one's intention, the performance of the intention/action and the completion. "Basis" refers to the target object e.g. an animal to the hunter; the intention is the thought of ending the life of the object; the performance is the actual action of either holding knife or using a fist with the intention of ending that object's life. Completion is the moment life departs from that object/ being and one feels "Yes! Done!". Therefore, even if one does not have intention to kill in the manner of a hunter, even when we decide to kill out of our compassionate thought (like a pet who is in pain and dying), the intention to end life, is part of the karma of killing. So here, we see two attitudes behind the intention of end life - one is to hunt and the other is compassion. Yet, both are still killing because the performance of the intention to end life is done by you (hunter) or you ask doctor to put your pet to sleep. Both initiate death. At the end, when death comes to the object, you acknowledge, "Done!" By knowing that the object's life has ended on account of one's action, the completion of the karma arises.

2. Stealing

The basis of the stealing is in relation to anything that is owned by another person(s). As long as you want to take an object

belonging to others who regard the object as their possession without their permission, even one single penny or single grain of sand, stealing is committed. This includes things left unattended, like money on a table. Let's say a child is hungry and wants to buy some food and sees the father's wallet on the table, takes ten dollars, thinking that the father won't know. Then the money is used to buy food and the child eats the food and thinks, "yeah, I was able to get some money without my father knowing." And that moment, the karma of stealing is complete. Even though one may be the child of the parent, one has to ask. We sometimes assume that family possessions belong to everyone in the family. This is not so. Who knows, the father might be holding the view that every possession in the home is "mine". Thus, permission needs to be obtained.

As with food offerings on the altar - when you offer them, you tend to think they have become possessions of the Buddha? After the puja, we just help ourselves to the offerings. In fact, this is not proper. It becomes stealing and from the divine too! Therefore in the monasteries, what they do is to request permission from the prayer hall keeper or whoever is in charge, to take altar offerings, including tsog offering.

If there is no one put in charge, then with much care and respect, express in front of the holy objects (Buddha statue etc), "I request permission to take these offerings to either distribute to others or make charity with these". Otherwise, it is stealing. If permission is refused by the gompa caretaker, one should be careful to avoid negative thought arising, such as "How come they refused to grant permission? They are so greedy. They want to keep everything for themselves". We have to be very careful with that kind of thinking and grasping attitude.

Question: Geshe-Ia, is buying fake DVD a form of stealing?

Geshe-Ia: Yes, if without permission of say copyright owner. Even copying off such a DVD is "stealing".

Question: Let's say we offer the food to the Buddha in one's home altar. Then a young child, not knowing that it is an offering, takes the food and eat it. What about this?

Geshe-Ia: We have to teach our children. Also, we can gently guide them to purify the negative karma and ask them to express regret and seek forgiveness. It is good manners anyway. Although in such a case, it may not be a complete karma of stealing (with the 4 factors being present), it is still within the category of stealing.

Question: Geshe-Ia, let's say if we go to a monastery and take a photograph without asking permission. Can we do that?

Geshe-Ia: If there are no clear prohibitions stated against taking photos, then it is OK. But if there are rules against taking photos, then to take a photo without permission is stealing. So when you go to holy places and you wish to take some sand from there or bits of a tree as a blessed object, best to let the keeper of the place know, to avoid the karma of stealing.

Sexual Misconduct

There are four possible bases of sexual misconduct: Inappropriate partner, inappropriate body parts, inappropriate place, inappropriate time. Inappropriate partner – generally it relates to having a partner that is someone's husband or wife but there is also some connection with the country's law. It's not necessary have the husband-wife relationship registered but needs to be known by at least four person. In Indian communities, arranged marriages are common. First comes the formal engagement and only after some time, will marriage follow and for them, during the first night of marriage which the Indians call "sukarat" is the time when the couple are supposed to have sexual relations for the first time. Other than that, such relations are forbidden. Similarly with Chinese culture and Himalayan culture. But nowadays I'm not sure, which is perhaps why divorce rates have increased. Even though through effort you are going to be born as a human being but if your creation of karma is based on culture, then the karmic result, including the environmental result will be influenced by that i.e. Chinese people will mostly be reborn amongst Chinese in the next life and Indians will be born amongst Indians.

Generally, marriages in Eastern communities last longer than those in the West. It is quite common for people in the West to want more freedom and are willing to break off relationships as soon as they are not happy. This habit gives rise to being born again into a situation where relationships end easily. However, if you make effort to save your relationship, this will likewise result in a future life where your relationships will be more stable. The pain of a relationship failure is a mental torture.

That's why I avoid watching news, I don't read newspapers but I can see most people, mostly girls, choose to remain single because they are scared and find it difficult to build sufficient trust in a partner. Therefore, this is all not only to do with sexual misconduct but with sexual conduct as well.

Inappropriate body parts: The Vinaya Sutra describes using the anus, mouth, the area between the two thighs and the act of masturbation as committing sexual misconduct in relation to inappropriate body parts. This one is based mainly on the male.

As for females, there is also discussion in the Vinaya Sutra. It states that as long as a solid object enters into - the respectful term they use is "lotus", then sexual misconduct arises. We ought not feel shy to discuss these matters you know. Otherwise, if due to shyness, you fail to understand and you can end up breaking vows. So I decided that when talking about this topic, best not to feel shy but instead we have to be clear and shout it out. Sometimes, I don't have enough vocabulary, that is my problem. Vows are something that you have to point to straight away. Anyway, in Dharma term terms the female secret part is called "lotus". I saw the word in ordinary terms in a dictionary and it is "vagina". If a solid object enters the vagina for an inch or more and assimilates the drop (or achieves orgasm), for the female, it creates sexual misconduct due to the use of inappropriate body parts.

From here, it is very clear, regarding one of the student's questions raised regarding gays and lesbians, that such relations will give rise to sexual misconduct (mostly in relation to inappropriate body parts). This is not just my own comment. It is from the Lam Rim Chenmo and from the Buddha's Vinaya Sutra.

Question : Is being a prostitute an act of sexual misconduct?

Geshe-Ia : Straightforward answer is "yes, it is included in sexual misconduct because to be a prostitute is not an ethical life. Payment of money to have enjoyment with a prostitute is similarly, sexual misconduct. Even if one's spouse "allows" you to go to a prostitute.

If you want to have the most loving relationship, you must meditate on emptiness. That is the best solution. Because when we meditate on emptiness, we meditate on dependent arising which means that your happiness is interdependent with your husband and your husband's happiness is interdependent with you. Then one will not feel "I am bored with you", "Same face, same nose, same everything. I can't see any qualities". If you really want to see qualities, there are limitless qualities in the other person. When he is wrathful, you should think, "I think his mind is in much suffering to be this way. I should help him". Then you find a way to please him, to fulfill his wish. By doing so, due to the Buddha nature in all beings, he softens. But of course, this has to be practiced by both sides.

Further, if you want to see new things in your relationship, regard your wife as a dakini or your husband as a daka (female angel and male angel respectively).

As for inappropriate place, this refers to holy places, like pilgrimage places or an area in front of a holy object such as Buddha statues, stupa, scriptures, even if they are only thumb-nail size. Somebody asked me whether if they were on a pilgrimage holiday they could have sexual relations during that trip.

I answered that if you go for holiday pilgrimage to let's say Bodhgaya, from the time of your departure from here to Bodhgaya, it is up to you but upon arriving in Bodhgaya, NO. Inappropriate place. (laughter)

Inappropriate time: Night time is appropriate, day time is inappropriate. Other than that, inappropriate time includes the time when you're performing the 8 Mahayana precepts, day vows, Buddha holy days, a day in relation to someone you respect a great deal e.g. your Guru's birthday, your late father's death anniversary etc.

Due to the fact that desire is limitless, restraint from sexual relations could give rise to complaints by the husband or the wife such as "Even on holiday, one gets pleasure as a husband and a wife". I encounter people who complain that way. Whilst there is inappropriate time, there is also an appropriate time for things. Since you have come to practice dharma, you have to be understanding and not be too extreme. For example, you are a married woman but you want to do 6-7 months retreat and when your husband goes for another woman, you complain. Is it his fault or yours? Of course you have to do retreat but you also have the responsibility of being somebody's wife, and your spouse is not enlightened yet, so you have to give thought to all the surrounding circumstances before proceeding with your plans. Many relationship problems of dharma practitioners come from this sort of misunderstanding between spouses and partners.

From my own experience with people who approach me for advice, they relate many unbelievable relationship problems.

It's because of desire and sexual relations and because of not understanding each other. As long as you are already in a husband and wife relationship, you really have to think carefully and be considerate even when engaging into the dharma practices. If someone blames dharma, "You only have time for the Centre and not me", then it's not good. You become the cause for someone to create heavy negative karma by cursing dharma. Further, due to desire and frustration, your partner may seek other's company and then sexual misconduct will arise, more heavy karma. Therefore, one needs to be considerate.

Question: Is it alright to use one's bedroom to do one's prayer commitments.

Geshe-Ia: That's fine. As for holy objects like prayer texts, Buddha statues, those are better kept in other places rather than in the bedroom. Or else, it could become an inappropriate place. You can do your prayer commitments on the bed, if you're not engaging in sexual conduct. As long as you have other rooms available, you have to put the holy objects there. So inappropriate place; like holy places, monastery, of course cannot. If one only has one room, then key point to always maintain a mind of total respect to the holy objects, then it may be possible to have holy object there.

Lying

The eight bases of lying are things that are seen, that are heard, things that are distinguishable, things that one already recognize, and as well as four opposite of these four i.e. that not seen, that not heard, that not distinguished, that did not recognize. These are the bases for lying. Lying is complete when the listener or recipient of the lie comprehends the meaning in the manner which you intended. Or if you use sweet phrases in order to mislead the listener and the in the end, the listener is in fact misled the way you intended and you feel satisfied that achieved that result, the karma of lying is complete. So it can be very dangerous when we interpret dharma and say: "Recite 100,000 times of Vajrasattva mantra within the 15 days of Vesak but only the long mantra and not the short one". Although your intention may be good in wanting that person to generate much merit in reciting the long mantra, you have scared the person by manipulating Dharma and that can become lying as well.

Divisive speech refers to speech which causes people to split up in disharmony.

Harsh speech are offensive words and the listener must understand it in that manner.

Idle speech is all forms of speech that are worldly in nature and includes gossip.

Covetousness – wanting things that belong to others to be your own. For this to be a full fledged covetousness, five qualities are required.

- (i) Having a mind that is exceedingly attached to your own resource,
- (ii) Having a mind of attachment that wants to accumulate resources;
- (iii) Having a mind of longing to comprehending or experiencing the good things of others such as their wealth and so forth;
- (iv) Having an envious mind thinking that whatever is another's should be your own;
- (v) Having a mind that is unaware of the faults of covetousness.

Malice (or ill-will) consists of 5 aspects –

- (1) an attitude of hostility
- (2) not being patient by those doing harm to you
- (3) the resentful attitude based on the repeated inappropriate attention to your anger
- (4) a vengeful or cunning attitude which thinks how nice if my enemy were beaten or killed
- (5) the lack of regret about your malice and the lack of determination to be free of its faults.

Wrong view includes attitudes such as the karmic law of cause and effect as being true, denying that Four Noble truths are teachings of the Buddha.

Arising from these ten non-virtues, there are three resultant effects for each action: Fully matured result, results corresponding to the cause and environmental results.

Fully matured result: If any of the 10 non virtues are done with great intensity, the result is rebirth in the hell realms. If done with medium intensity rebirth as a hungry ghost will be the result and if done lightly, rebirth will be as an animal.

Results corresponding to the cause: The consequences of Karma for killing is that even you're reborn as a human, you still experience the effect of the non-virtuous action in the form of having a short life. For stealing, the results is that one will lack of resources and have financial problems. For sexual misconduct, the consequence is having an unruly spouse and unstable relationships and receiving partners. From lying, one will encounter many slanders against oneself. From the divisive speech, one will lose friendship. From harsh speech, one will often hear unpleasant words. From the idle speech, the result is that other won't listen to your words, even when you have something important to say. Some people speak in mind tones and people will just listen, so all this is due to the past. From covetousness, malice and wrong view, lost, harms and confusion respectively arise.

Sicknesses and any imbalance in physical elements are all due to the past karma of killing. Even minor illnesses like the flu is the result of the past karma of killing. Further results of killing are a short life span and many illnesses being experienced.

As for the result of stealing, you'll be poor, have few resources and the resources you have will be split with others. So in the case the rich husband or rich wife have to share half of his or her wealth, it is also a result of stealing.

Troubled relationship, contentious spouse and unruly helpers have as their cause, sexual misconduct.

The consequence of lying is that others will slander you and will cheat you.

As for the result of divisive speech, you will be surrounded by misunderstanding, quarrels and your family, workers and acquaintances will happen often. This stressful situation is due to the past divisive speech.

If you engage in offensive speech, you will frequently hear and receive harsh and unpleasant speech.

The result of senseless/ idle speech is that your words will not be respected nor understood by others and your self-confidence will be unstable.

As a result of covetousness, you will find very little satisfaction and even when having possessions, relationship and the like, you will find it very difficult to gain contentment.

The consequence of malice is that you will be drawn to things that will cause problems to yourself, you will harm others and others will harm you.

As for the result of wrong view, you will be constantly confuse, make dangerous and wrong decisions and be deceitful.

Environmental results from:

Killing: you will find that food, drink, medicine and fruits do not bring you the needed nourishment, you will have difficulty digesting food, they will induce illness, have short life, incur untimely death due to food, poisons, wrong medicines and even you are prescribed the appropriate medicine, it will not have effect.

Stealing: You will endure poverty and cannot obtain the resources you need. Even basic necessities like food will be hard to find or if obtained, will spoil easily.

Sexual misconduct: One living conditions will be filthy and be surrounded by many unclean things, smelly, uncomfortable situations. For example, some beggars need to search for things from rubbish bins or trash heaps just to find some food or needed items. This is due to the past karma of sexual misconduct. Sometimes, one will encounter situations where no much how much one cleans one's homes, toilet etc they continue to have a foul smell. Or, wherever you go, you will have to pass through areas which have urine smells or places which you visit you will find that there is no clean water or only surrounded by muddy waters. One who has urinary problems or prostate or uterus cancer, even these are due to past karma of sexual misconduct. By knowing this, we can do prevention and specific purification for these by applying the four opponent powers to purify/ overcome it.

When you purify karma, you need to apply the specific antidote/ purification method. If you only do general purification practice, it helps but not as effective. For some forms of negative karma, one should voice it out while doing the purification practices, then it will be more effective. About one week ago, while traveling, I felt I needed to go to the toilet but when I did, nothing happened. Then after coming out of the toilet, I again felt like I needed to go to the toilet. Finally, I had to get some medicine from the airport pharmacist which helped. Even that is due to past karma of sexual misconduct. Sometimes, we find our urine having strong odor. We say it is due to dehydration. The karmic cause is sexual misconduct. Of course, if you didn't drink enough water, you could have become dehydrated contributing to the odor but the innate cause is the past karma. I was thinking to myself, how fortunate that in this life I hold vows which totally restrict any sexual conduct, so the issue of sexual misconduct does not even arise. This only brings more happiness.

Question: What about victims who are involved in natural disaster is it due to karma?

Geshe-Ia: For anyone to experience natural disasters, it involves both individual karma and collective karma (experiencing the disaster with others). Environmental karma, causal karma, resultant karma, everything comes together in manner of a disaster. When this is experienced, the mind goes into shock. If someone dies with such intense fear, there is a danger of being born into the preta/ hungry ghost realm. I heard that in Myanmar, people hear crying, screaming, voices asking help, even though there is no one there.

Question: Are hell beings naked?

Geshe-Ia: A very cute question. It is said that most are without clothes, using hands to cover parts of their body.

Question: Is playing computer games where players kill each other something that creates the karma of killing?

Geshe-Ia: Yes. It creates karma of killing but is the incomplete karma of killing because of there being no base (no living object) but the intention of killing is there and there will be karmic consequence from this.

Question: Someone is asking about Shao Lin Monks and their martial arts.

Geshe-Ia: I'm not quite sure about it but I heard Shao Lin monks practice kungful the purpose of self-protection. Therefore, if someone came to harm, one would be able to use those skills to protect, not to look to hurt others. I think they practice chi-energy and some use the Tantric technique of using one's inner winds to drive the energy. By driving the energy, it activates the nerves, channels, chakras in every aspect of your body, then the body becomes very strong. They use the energy to move through the wind causing the attacker to fall. In Tantric techniques, one is the 6 Yogas of Naropa, which involves the yoga of floating such that the moment you use your energy, you can throw somebody far away.

Question: A doctor tried to save a kid by cutting child's leg, however, the child died from the operation. Did the doctor commit the karma of killing?

Geshe-Ia : The doctor does commit the karma of killing but it is incomplete karma because the intension is not there, though the action caused the killing. The doctor was confident that amputation was the cure but he was mistaken due to ignorance and also he did not realize that karma was occurring. In the scriptures, yogic deeds of virtuous action include the physical action of restraining from non-virtue after reflecting on the faults of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and so forth.

[Next we will see the role of karma in bringing about samsaric life and how to put an end to samsara cyclic existence.]