

4. KARMA: THE RELATIONSHIP OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

First of all, Patrul Rinpoche pays homage to his root guru by describing his qualities:

*Abandoning nonvirtue and taking up virtuous actions, following the
teachings on cause and effect,
His conduct in accord with the ascent of the vehicles,
His perfectly pure view with no trace of clinging,
At the feet of my peerless guru, I bow down.*

Patrul Rinpoche's root guru, Jigme Gyalwai Nyugu, had achieved the view of the Great Perfection and held in his mindstream the view that is greater than the sky. Nevertheless, his behavior conformed to that of the lower vehicle. He held to the vows of the relationship of cause and effect, even in the most minor of matters. He abandoned minor nonvirtue and adopted minor virtue, so he did not violate the law of cause and effect in even the smallest way.

The lowest practices are found in the vehicle of gods and humans. To practice this vehicle you must be concerned with even the smallest actions. We need not mention the vehicles of the sravakas or pratyekabuddhas; even to practice the worldly vehicle of gods and humans, you must follow the law of cause and effect, and have confidence in it, down to the most subtle actions.

Jigme Gyalwai Nyugu's view was as vast as the sky, yet he practiced the lowest vehicle. With the view of Great Perfection in his mindstream he nonetheless followed the conduct of the vehicle of gods and humans, sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and so on. All practitioners should follow his example of moving from the lower to the higher vehicles.

Guru Rinpoche has stated, "My view is more vast than the sky, but my conduct is as fine as the smallest grain of sand." We should not abandon the most subtle teachings on karma, the law of cause and effect. Following this advice, the gurus of the past also held the view that was greater than the sky, but followed the conduct prescribed by the teachings on cause and effect.

Maintaining the view of the Great Perfection, which is beyond adopting and abandoning, these lamas did not behave accordingly. Those who maintain this view can act however they wish, like madmen, but the conduct which corresponds to their view should be practiced secretly, in an

isolated place.

Among the types of action, there are positive actions to be adopted and negative actions to be abandoned. All suffering and happiness results from our actions. I will first teach on the actions to be avoided. Generally, all who practice Dharma understand that nonvirtuous actions should be avoided. However, many practitioners do not recognize which actions are negative; they confuse negative and positive actions, thinking the negative to be positive, and then adopting rather than abandoning that action.

Only Buddha can see the subtle workings of cause and effect. Since others cannot see this, Buddha taught it in the sutras. We think that nonvirtuous action should be avoided, but fail to recognize what is nonvirtue; confused in our thinking, we consider nonvirtue to be virtue. In this way, many people adopt negative actions, so here I will teach on what are negative actions, and what are the results of those actions.

The causes for birth in the higher or lower realms of samsara are the positive and negative actions we have ourselves accumulated. Virtue, also referred to as merit, leads to birth in the three upper realms. Virtue can be either deluded or non-deluded. The virtue that leads to birth in the upper realms is deluded virtue. Birth in the three lower realms results from the accumulation of nonvirtue, which we can call deluded nonvirtuous action.

Where we are born in the six realms depends on our karma. Birth in the lower realms results from negative actions, and birth in the upper realms from positive actions. No one born in the upper realms will have negative karma. Negative karma leads only to birth in the lower realms. One whose karma is wholly positive will never be born in the lower realms. Therefore, samsara results from karma alone.

Some non-Buddhist texts teach that sentient beings and the world were created by someone, who also decides to send us to the upper or lower realms, and whose actions are beyond karma. Buddhists recognize no entity that can create beings and the world. There is no other creator than one's own karma. The creation of the world and beings depends on virtue or nonvirtue created by our minds. This is explained in both the higher and lower vehicles of Buddhism.

Our lives are not the result of chance. Someone who accumulates only virtue will not mistakenly be born in the lower realms, and someone

who accumulates only nonvirtue will not, by good fortune, be born in the higher realms. We must consider and investigate why some people are both in higher realms and others in lower realms. Birth in higher or lower realms always depends upon the accumulation of virtue or nonvirtue. By analyzing in this way, we gain confidence that there is no other creator than our virtuous or nonvirtuous minds. After gaining such confidence, we will at all times know what to adopt or to avoid. We must accumulate virtue in whatever way we can, and always guard against nonvirtue. Without any intention to take life, we accumulate nonvirtue even by walking, inadvertently crushing many sentient beings under our feet.

Since being born in samsara we have constantly accumulated nonvirtue. In the form and formless realms we face nothing other than delusion and afflictive emotions, but we do not accumulate negativity. In the realm of desire, however, we accumulate nonvirtue while eating, walking, talking, in fact at all times. Sometimes we also accumulate virtue. Among the virtuous actions, arousing bodhicitta – a high level of compassion – even only briefly, will eliminate all the negativity accumulated up to the present. The power of virtue is stronger than the power of negativity. Even if we have accumulated nonvirtuous actions for a long time, virtue accumulated on a single occasion can lead to birth in the higher realms. Nonvirtue is gathered all the time, whether with the motivation to do so or unknowingly, but by endeavoring at virtue both kinds of negative karma can be eliminated. Thus, we should constantly strive to accumulate virtue.

THE TEN NEGATIVE ACTIONS TO BE AVOIDED

First are the three negative actions of the body: taking life, taking what is not given, and sexual misconduct. The four negative actions of speech are lying, divisive speech, harsh words, and idle talk. The three negative mental acts are covetousness, wishing harm to others, and wrong views. These are not negative actions only for those who have taken vows, but also for ordinary individuals. The intensity of the nonvirtue is more severe for those who have taken vows, however. For those with vows, the intensity of both nonvirtue and virtue is greater. Because of this, a fully ordained monk who cuts green grass accumulates negativity equal to that of an ordinary person killing an animal. For ordinary people who have not taken vows, cutting grass is not a negative action. This classification of nonvirtues into ten is only a rough approximation. In fact, the true list of nonvirtues would be uncountable.

TAKING LIFE

Cutting off the life force of another, whether human, animal, or any other, with the motivation of killing, constitutes the negative action of taking life. Motivation means knowingly to decide to kill a sentient being. This raises the intensity of the nonvirtue. Killing accidentally, with no intention to take a life, is also a negative act, but is not as severe.

A soldier who kills an enemy during a battle is an example of killing with hatred. Killing a wild animal because of wanting meat or desiring to wear its skin is an example of killing out of attachment. Killing without understanding the cause and effect of virtue or nonvirtue, like certain heretics who have the confusion of believing it is virtuous to kill, is killing out of ignorance.

Three motivations for taking life can be identified: with hatred, with desire, and with ignorance. No matter which of these three poisons is the motivation for killing, the intensity of nonvirtue may be the same. Killing by ignorance may bring less negativity because the nonvirtue is unknowingly taken to be virtuous. If those who know what is virtue and what is nonvirtue act negatively, the intensity of negative karma is probably greater than for those who commit nonvirtue out of ignorance. In any case, killing is done as a result of these three poisons.

The example given here for killing out of hatred is a warrior killing an enemy with anger. When we kill an animal for the sake of its meat or skin, this is not killing out of hatred, but out of desire and attachment. Those who do not understand the cause and effect relationship kill others without knowing this is nonvirtue. Animals, for example, kill others without understanding cause and effect. This is called killing out of ignorance. Some non-Buddhists believe that killing others is virtuous, and may perform many ritual sacrifices. This is also killing out of ignorance because nonvirtue has been confused for virtue.

Among the kinds of killing, the three of killing one's father or mother, or killing an arhat, are called acts with immediate retribution because they lead to immediate rebirth in the Hell of Ceaseless Torment.

These three are not simply killing, but are in the category of acts with immediate consequences. After death, people who have killed their parents or an arhat do not experience the intermediate state of the bardo, but fall directly into the Hell of Ceaseless Torment. Whatever virtue they have accumulated before their act of killing, this nonvirtue is stronger so it ripens first, sending them immediately to hell. This is the case if the killing was

undertaken deliberately, with the motivation to kill.

Nowadays some people do not think that they have committed the nonvirtue of taking life if they did not kill with their own hands.

In some families where the killing of animals for food is done by servants, people may think they have not committed the nonvirtue of killing. Novice monks, lay practitioners, and ordinary people have this kind of motivation. For example, if our house is infested with bedbugs, we will not kill them ourselves, but will call an exterminator. This is not correct thinking. Even those who do not kill by their own hands are stained by the nonvirtue of taking life. The nonvirtue is equal whether one kills oneself, or asks another to do the killing.

Generally, everyone, whether king or subject, monk or ordinary person, has accumulated the nonvirtue of killing uncountable numbers of small insects by stepping on them. We do not intentionally take their lives but they are killed due to our actions. The intensity of the nonvirtue is less than killing with intention, but nevertheless we have accumulated nonvirtue.

Even worse than this, lamas, monks, and lay practitioners are invited by their patrons to perform different rituals, and on these occasions the sponsors will offer blood and meat by killing animals. This tradition was especially common in Tibet, but these days it has spread all over the world.

Patrul Rinpoche says that the lamas and monks of his time had no compassion or regret for the animals that had been killed, but were only interested in the blood and meat, and ate it eagerly. They only thought about the good food their benefactors were providing, not that the animal had been slaughtered for their sake and was now suffering in the intermediate state, or perhaps entering into the trials of the next life. They did not consider whether they could free the animal from its misery.

Keeping the animal's torment in mind and reciting some mantras, practicing the transference of consciousness or saying prayers, could form a connection between the lama and the animal that would free it from its pain. The law of cause and effect is unfailing and the power of mantra inconceivable. In this way they could help the animals, and not simply have a meal of flesh and blood. Many lamas and lay practitioners do not act with such compassion and merely enjoy their delicious meat, without considering the animal's suffering. The nonvirtue stains the lamas and the benefactors equally.

Nonvirtue is not something than can be divided like a piece of meat. If

we have ten kilograms of meat and give it all to one person, he will have ten kilograms, but if we divide it among ten people, each will have one kilogram of meat. Nonvirtue is not like that; the weight of the nonvirtue falls equally on all. If ten people kill an animal together each of the ten accumulates the same nonvirtue, and the negative karma is the same as though each person had killed an animal on his own. We do not understand these things. The sponsors sincerely believe that if they invite a lama and offer him meat, they will earn merit; they cannot imagine that they will be stained by the nonvirtuous act of killing. In the same way, we all accumulate negativity without understanding it to be so. Recognizing this, when we want to offer a meal to a lama or lay practitioner, we do not have to offer flesh and blood. In this way we will be accumulating merit rather than nonvirtue.

When important people and officials travel, wherever they go countless animals are killed for their meals and receptions. Moreover, these people do not travel alone but with an entourage. Nor do great lamas travel alone; they always take along many attendants. Since none of them can remain without food, many animals must be killed to feed them. One or two sheep or goats are not enough. In this way, everyone – not only the lamas and the high officials – shares equally in the nonvirtue. However many animals were killed, that amount of nonvirtue stains each person. Many people accumulate the weight of nonvirtue at the same time.

Wealthy people also kill many animals. No matter how many animals they may own, most are killed, and only a very few are allowed to die a natural death, or are killed by other animals. If the masters think that the nonvirtue only affects the servant who killed the animal, they are wrong. In Tibet, wealth was determined by the number of sheep and goats that a family had. When the animals reached old age, they were killed one after another. Someone with even one thousand goats or sheep would eventually kill them all. The amount of killing could not be measured. Patrul Rinpoche goes on to explain:

Not only that, but during the summer these sheep and cattle themselves kill uncountable insects, flies, ants, fish and frogs, first of all while eating grass, or by crushing them with their hooves, or by covering them with dung and urine and so on. This negativity also comes to the owner.

If someone cares for an old or weak animal that no one else is looking after or that another person might slaughter if it is not purchased, it seems that the negative karma of that animal does not go to its owner since he or

she is caring for the animal from a sense of compassion and not for personal gain or benefit. Dharma books say that such animals' lives should be saved, and that feeding them is a virtuous act, so the nonvirtue does not accrue to the owner.

Compared to horses, cattle and other livestock, sheep in particular are sources of inexhaustible negativity. They eat snakes, frogs, baby birds, and all kinds of other tiny creatures. During the summer, at shearing time, all of the insects living on their backs are killed, at least a hundred thousand. In the winter, when the lambs are born, at least half of them are immediately killed.

The ewes as well are used for their milk and to produce lambs until the moment they can do so no longer. When they are too old, they are all slaughtered for the sake of their meat and skins. As for the rams, whether castrated or not, they are all killed, without exception. When the sheep are infested with lice, millions are killed at one time on the back of each one.

Therefore, someone who owns a hundred or so sheep is certain of at least one rebirth in hell.

Patrul Rinpoche himself taught this, and various types of cause and effect of actions are also explained in the sutras of the Buddha and the commentaries of the scholars. Considering this teaching, it is certain that Tibetan owners of goats and sheep will be reborn at least once in the hell realms. Sheep therefore are a source of negativity. "The owner" does not mean only the head of the family, but should be understood to include all family members.

When a young woman is being married, uncountable sheep are slaughtered for the dowry, when she is sent off, when she is received and so on. Any time she returns to her home, more creatures are killed. On occasions when her friends and family invite her, if they serve any food other than meat she is displeased and the deceitful woman eats as though she can't move her jaws. But if a fat sheep is butchered and big pieces of breast meat and entrails are placed before her, the red-faced demoness sits down, takes out her small knife and eats with great pleasure, smacking her lips.

The next day, she returns home loaded down with bloody meat, just like a hunter. Even worse than a hunter, since she never comes home empty-handed.

Children as well kill innumerable creatures while they play, whether they are aware of it or not. By simply beating the earth with an ox whip or a willow wand as they walk along during the summer, they cause countless numbers of insects to die.

People in Tibet only enjoyed eating meat, and by their expressions indicated that they were not satisfied with other food although they pretended to be. They would eat as much meat as they wanted. Human beings kill animals from childhood and have become highly skilled in killing so we are like meat-eating demons. We are even worse than demons because while they do not kill their kind parents, we kill the animals who give us milk equal to what our parents gave us.

In fact, all of us humans pass our lives doing nothing but taking lives, like demons. Considering that we kill our cows in order to enjoy their flesh and blood after they have spent their lives kindly feeding and sustaining us with their milk just like our parents do, we are worse than any ogre.

The act of taking life is completed by the four elements of a negative action: 1) knowing that the object to be killed is a living being, 2) generating the intention to kill it, 3) actually carrying out the killing, 4) the death of the being. The nonvirtue is heaviest when all four of these conditions are fulfilled. If one is missing, the negativity is less. If two are missing, the negativity is lighter yet, and if three are missing, it becomes even less.

When a hunter kills a wild animal he first sees the stag, musk deer or other prey and identifies it without any doubt as an animal. This completes the first condition: knowing that the object to be killed is a living being. If the hunter intends to kill one animal, suppose a deer, but by mistake kills another, for example a rabbit, this will not fulfill the first condition. Only if he kills the creature that he initially intended to kill is the first condition complete. The second condition is the desire to kill that particular animal. The third is when the bullet, knife, arrow or any other weapon actually strikes the animal at a vital point. Fourth, the animal's vital functions cease and its body is separated from its mind.

If we want to kill an enemy, we are not killing just anyone. Initially, we must identify without mistake the enemy, the person who harmed us. This is called knowing that the object to be killed is a living being. If we want to kill our enemy, but kill someone else by mistake, this condition would not be fulfilled. Next, the motivation of hatred, attachment or ignorance – for example, killing an animal for its skin or meat is taking life due to

attachment; killing an animal for a religious sacrifice, thinking it virtuous, is taking life out of ignorance – completes the second condition: generating the intention to take the life. After that, whether we are killing an animal or a human, action must be taken, either with a weapon or through black magic. Taking the action completes the third condition. Finally, if the mind of the animal or human enemy is actually separated from his body, then the fourth condition is complete.

If we complete the first three conditions: identifying the victim, having the motivation to kill, and taking action to kill, but do not succeed in separating the mind of the victim from its body, the fourth condition is not fulfilled. When this fourth condition is also complete, this is the heaviest nonvirtue. For example, if a novice monk kills a human with all four conditions complete, he has broken his vows. If the four conditions are not complete he has not broken his vows but has accumulated nonvirtue. The fewer the conditions that are complete, the less serious is the nonvirtue.

As another example, suppose someone wants to slaughter a sheep that he owns. First the master of the house tells a servant or a butcher that he must slay a sheep. The *ground* is that he knows a sheep is a living being. When he identifies the particular sheep to be slaughtered he has developed the *intention* to kill.

The one who will do the butchering grabs a noose and then seizes whichever sheep is to be slaughtered next, throws its body upon the ground, binds its legs with a cord of braided leather, and ties closed its mouth with a rope, thereby bringing about its death. This is the *method* adopted for the killing.

At this time, the creature's life is cut off with intense suffering and pain as its inhalation and exhalations cease, its eyes cloud over with tears streaming down, and its corpse is dragged into the house. This is called the *final blocking of the life force*.

Immediately, the skin is removed with a knife, the flesh quivering as though the animal were still alive because its all-pervading energy has not had time to depart. Straightaway it is placed on the hearth to be roasted in the fire, cooked and eaten.

If you think about it, we are not different from any ruthless carnivore.

Immediately after the sheep is killed and skinned, its flesh is still seen to quiver, with the all-pervading energy (*khyab byed kyi rlung*). Generally

bodies like ours have five root energies (*rlung*): the energy of breathing, the energy of speaking, the pervading energy of muscular motion, the energy of digestion and assimilation, and the energy of excretion. The all-pervading energy is spread throughout the entire body. The animal's flesh continues to quiver after death because of this energy. The animal seems to be still alive, because this energy has not been separated from the body. This quivering flesh is put into the fire and cooked. It looks like a live animal is being eaten, like the person eating it is a carnivorous beast. In this case, there is no difference between a carnivorous animal and a human.

If someone wants to kill a particular sheep and asks his servant to do so, but the servant does not, this completes two of the above conditions: identifying the victim and having the motivation to take its life. Although the negativity is not equal to that of completing all four conditions, the stain of the nonvirtue remains, like a reflection in a mirror. Some people believe that only those who actually take the action of killing are accumulating nonvirtue, while those who give the order to kill are not stained by the negativity. A family may not want to do the work of killing, or think that if they do not physically carry out the act themselves they will not accumulate the nonvirtue. Thus, they ask someone else to do the killing for them.

Keeping this example in mind, we know that large restaurants kill hundreds of animals daily. The restaurant owner may think that since he is buying meat from the store or is asking his employees to kill the animals, he cannot be stained by nonvirtue. Thinking like this, one who owns a restaurant nevertheless kills thousands of animals. If the owner is a non-Buddhist who doesn't know about nonvirtue, it is one thing, but if he is a Buddhist with an understanding of virtue and nonvirtue, owning a restaurant is quite difficult. The Buddhist thinks that he is not stained by the activity because he is not taking the action himself. With an understanding of the above teaching, the owner and all the workers or whoever was involved in the killing accumulate an equal amount of nonvirtue. It is not that the owner avoids the nonvirtue by not killing the animal directly.

Not only those who kill or who order the killing, but also those who rejoice in the killing all accumulate equal nonvirtue. For example, if someone owns a restaurant and his friend rejoices that the restaurant is successful, the friend as well accumulates nonvirtue. All three: the butcher, the owner, and the one who rejoices, are equally stained by the nonvirtue of killing. If a hundred people kill one animal, the nonvirtue is not divided among them; they each accumulate equal negativity for killing the animal.

The nonvirtue is not divided into one hundred parts. This means that someone wants to eat meat should kill the animals himself. This way, the nonvirtue will not stain anyone else. Someone who wants to eat meat and asks others to kill the animal for him causes many other people to be stained by the nonvirtue.

The Treasury of Knowledge¹ says, “In warfare and similar occasions, all who are involved are considered to have carried out acts of war and the like...” If a thousand soldiers set out to fight a war, each of the soldiers has the same motivation to kill their enemy. They intend to kill their enemies as soon as they encounter them. Even if the thousand soldiers kill only one enemy, and he was killed by a single soldier, all the thousand soldiers accumulate the same nonvirtue of killing a human being.

Some exceptions do exist, however. If a soldier with no desire to kill anyone is forced to fight by his leader – with no way of escaping – and a fellow soldier kills an enemy, he will probably not accumulate the nonvirtue of killing. He did not go to war with an intention to kill; he had no control over whether to go to war or not. He should have the intention that if he encounters an enemy he does not want to kill him, even at the cost of his own life. In this case he will not be stained by the nonvirtue of killing.

If a novice monk goes to fight in a war with the intention of killing, and a fellow soldier kills an enemy, the monk’s vows will be broken.

TAKING WHAT IS NOT GIVEN

Taking the property of others when it has not been freely given constitutes taking what is not given. This nonvirtue is classified into three types: taking by force, taking by stealth, and taking by deceit. The nonvirtue is the same in each case; there is no greater or lesser.

Taking by force

This refers to a powerful individual who forcefully seizes the property of others with no legal right to do so. It includes forcefully capturing someone’s property by means of many soldiers or police. People sometimes think that taking someone’s property by force is not the same as taking what is not given, but in fact it is the same.

1

Abhidharmakosa (Skt); mngon pa mdzod (Tib)

Taking by stealth

This is taking something secretly, without the knowledge of the owner, as by a burglar for example.

Taking by deceit

Taking the property of another through lying, as may happen in a business transaction, or by using false weights and measures or other methods of cheating, is taking by deceit.

People think there is nothing wrong, in business or other situations, with deceiving others or cheating them to obtain their property, as long as no overt theft is involved. Actually, whatever we gain by dishonesty is the same as outright stealing. At present, even lamas and lay practitioners see nothing harmful or wrong in engaging in business. They may spend their lives at it, feeling proud of their skill. Some even have shops, restaurants and so on within their monasteries. They claim that this is for the sake of Dharma. In fact, for the sake of Dharma they must avoid nonvirtue and adopt virtue. The Buddha and his followers never taught that deceiving others is Dharma.

These days about half of all tulkus and lamas are conducting business without thinking this is a nonvirtuous activity. They have no time for study, contemplation or meditation because their body, speech and mind are totally involved in their business and profit-making activities. Although they say they are working for the Dharma, in fact what they are doing is always deceiving other people. They do not consider that they are committing nonvirtue, nor do other ignorant people. Simple people may think that these lamas and their attendants are very skilful, and have an even higher opinion of them.

Actually, nothing wastes the mind more than engaging in business, because the minds of business people are always wandering into thoughts about their profit-making activities. Constantly involved in their business activities, they have little time or interest in studying or practicing to purify their obscurations. Whatever they do, whether it is study, practice or retreat, they are distracted by business concerns. People can only think about one thing at a time. In this case the lama's mind is on his business interests.

Because of pondering over his accounts until he falls asleep at night, the roots of faith, renunciation and compassion are cut. He is constantly under the influence of external deluded thought.

Jetsun Mila once travelled to a monastery where he lay down to

sleep in front of the door of a monk's room. All night, as the monk was resting in his bed, his mind was occupied with calculating how much he would get from selling the meat of a cow that was to be slaughtered the next day.

"For the head I'll earn this much, the shoulder blade will bring in this much, the hindquarters I can sell for that amount." He calculated everything, inside and out, except for the tail. For the entire night, he didn't sleep at all, but planned how he would make his profit.

As soon as he awoke, he said his prayers and offered tormas. The Jetsun was still asleep outside the door. Sarcastically, the monk derided him. "You claim to be a Dharma practitioner! Don't you have any prayers or mantras to recite? Are you still sleeping?"

The Jetsun replied, "Usually I don't sleep so late, but I didn't sleep at all last night because I was thinking about how to sell a cow of mine that is going to be butchered. So I slept too long this morning." Thus he exposed the monk's hidden fault.

This is not an imaginary story. Patrul Rinpoche took it from the biography of Jetsun Milarepa. Nowadays we need not talk only about monks. Many who sit on high thrones also think this way, and that is why Patrul Rinpoche says there is nothing worse than business, which spoils our minds. While conducting business, we commit many negative actions: the nonvirtue of stealing, lying, slander, harsh words, ill will, idle talk, and taking life. Only sexual misconduct and wrong views are not involved in business. Business brings about heavy nonvirtue; we engage in eight of the ten nonvirtuous acts. Some people may think that taking life is worse than doing business; this may not be correct.

At present as well those engaged in business think only of their financial calculations day and night and are completely lost in delusion. At the time of death they will still be deluded.

Not only that, when engaged in business, even if the goods for sale are no good, the dealer must praise them in all kinds of ways. Saying that someone already offered such and such an amount and was refused, or that it was bought for some amount of money, they tell nothing but lies.

If they want to buy something that two others are haggling over, they slanderously provoke disagreement. They speak dismissively of their competitors' goods, claiming the quality is bad. With harsh words, they quarrel over debts. They demand outrageous and unreasonable

prices, or bargain for things they have no intention of buying. All this is idle talk.

They fancy the property of others, and covetously try to acquire it. Desiring the defeat of others, they wish them harm. Those who trade in livestock kill. Other than wrong views and sexual misconduct, doing business directly involves all of the ten nonvirtues.

When the business does not succeed, both they and the other party waste their resources and everything goes wrong. They suffer, the other side suffers, and in the end they may go hungry or even die. If there is some success, no matter how much money is made, it is never enough. Even with the riches of the God of Wealth, they are still driven by the pleasure they take in dirty business deals.

Always distracted by business alone, they exhaust their human life, and at the time of death, they beat their breasts as this millstone drags them down to the depths of the lower realms. Nothing corrupts like business, the cause for evil deeds to flourish.

All the time thinking with cunning about how to deceive other people, they might as well be examining a knife, an awl or a needle for the sharpest tool. Constantly engrossed in nasty thoughts, they turn their backs on the bodhisattva mind of helping others, and their nonvirtue grows endlessly.

The nonvirtue of taking what is not given also has four components, just as earlier. If these four are not complete, the result of the nonvirtue is less. Even those who merely assist someone who hunts or steals in the most minor way are equally guilty for the negativity of taking life or taking that which was not given. Anyone who helps a hunter or thief accumulates nonvirtue equal to theirs because they fail to understand what nonvirtue is. From now on we must understand nonvirtue and avoid it.

Patrul Rinpoche is not speaking on his own; he is teaching according to the words of the Buddha, the sutras, and the commentaries of the scholars, the shastras. This advice is unfailing. We must behave correctly and with the utmost care according to his advice. This completes the teaching on the second nonvirtuous action.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

This rule applies to householders. Those who have the vows of novice monks must avoid all kinds of sexual acts. Householders enjoy acts of sexual misconduct more than the sexual act itself. The nature of sexual misconduct

itself is nonvirtue, so it should be avoided by householders. This is a way of avoiding misconduct for those who have no vows. If we consider Tibet, in the past the Dharma King Songsten Gampo made a law that the ten divine rules and sixteen correct human laws should be followed by all Tibetans.

Vows can be classified into two types: one for the lay practitioner and one for the novice monk. The vows against sexual misconduct must be adopted and followed by lay practitioners. If they don't, their lay vows will be broken. This law was particularly made for lay practitioners. Generally, anyone who does not abide by these rules is nonvirtuous. If sexual misconduct is committed by someone who has taken vows or is trying to follow this rule, the negative karma is greater than for those who have no vows. This is because such a person has both broken vows and committed sexual misconduct. Because of Songsten Gampo's law, the negative karma of Tibetans who commit sexual misconduct is greater than that of others.

If someone who has taken novice or other vows engages in sexual activity with someone who has not taken any vows, the negative karma is accumulated equally by both. Breaking the vows of others is the greatest type of sexual misconduct. Even worldly people have rules regarding sexual misconduct, considering it nonvirtuous. A person who has taken the vows of a novice or fully ordained monk should not engage in any sexual act. In particular, according to the vows of both Sutrayana and Mantrayana, a sangha member who loses his semen is also guilty of sexual misconduct.

The most serious sexual misconduct is leading others to break their vows. Other prohibitions refer to acts committed with particular persons, or in certain places and circumstances. These include masturbation, sexual relations with someone who is married or committed to another, or in daylight – even with one's own partner – during a retreat, with someone who is sick, pregnant, in mourning, menstruating, or still recovering from delivery of a child. Sexual relations in a place where physical representations of the Three Jewels are present, with one's parents or other family members, with a young child, and oral and anal sex are also prohibited.

TELLING LIES

Lies are classified into three types: ordinary lies, serious lies, and untrue claims by monks and lamas about special qualities they do not possess. Generally, any untrue statement told for the purpose of deceiving others is considered telling a lie. These are ordinary lies.

Serious lies are telling people that positive action brings no benefit and

negative action brings no harm, that there is no happiness in pure realms and no suffering in the lower realms, and that the Buddha has no positive qualities. These lies are mainly told to those who are practicing Dharma in order to deceive them. They are considered serious lies because there are no lies greater than these. This kind of lie brings about increased suffering.

The third type of lie is also told with the intention of deceiving others. Some lamas tell lies that go beyond the domain of the mundane, saying they have attained the bodhisattva levels when they have not, or that they have accomplished a certain path when they have not. On the level of the noble ones, there are ten stages and five paths that are ways to describe the qualities of the noble ones, qualities that are beyond those of ordinary human beings. Claiming to have achieved these supermundane levels constitutes making untrue claims.

Someone who states that he has superknowledge when he does not is committing the same nonvirtue. All claims to spiritual accomplishment that one does not possess, when knowingly made to deceive people, are similar deceitful claims. In another situation, a person could sincerely believe he has attained a certain level or accomplishment when in fact he has not. Telling other people about these qualities with no intention to deceive them is not considered this type of nonvirtue, as it is unlike someone who knowingly lies about his or her accomplishments in the Dharma.

Nowadays, imposters may achieve success and power more quickly than true masters. Lamas with qualities borne of experience in the Dharma, who are diligent in benefiting others through their activities, are becoming less effective. People have more faith in imposters than in true lamas. People's minds are easily influenced, both our own minds and those of others. We must always be careful about maintaining our mindfulness, introspection, and conscientiousness. Nothing is easier than being deluded. Our minds change without our even noticing it.

Generally, individuals with confident faith in the Dharma have stable minds which are difficult to change, but the minds of those without confident faith can easily be fooled, both by others and by themselves. We need strong confident faith that cannot be shaken even by ghosts or other means; faith that is so stable that if the Buddha himself came in person to try to change this faith, it would not waver.

Some well-known "lamas" or "yogis" are especially interested in deceiving others through all kinds of fraud. It is much easier to deceive others when one has a high status, like those with the title of lama, yogi or

scholar. They lie by saying that they have seen the deities in person and have made offerings to them. When others believe this, the charlatans are taken as equal to the Buddha and followed. Some claim to have seen and punished evil spirits so that people believe in their magic and powers, and think they don't need any other lamas. In reality they see neither deities nor ghosts, and neither make offerings nor punish them. They lie solely for the purpose of deceit. This constitutes the third type of lying.

Be careful of believing blindly those who tell such tales. When you first meet someone who claims to be a lama, a yogi, or especially learned, do not believe them easily and do not offer them your wealth. If they are charlatans who are deceiving you, both you and your property will be lost. Make offerings only to those you know very well, to simple monks. You may see someone as an ordinary monk or nun, but no difference can be found between his or her inner and outer behavior. Such a person appears to be very humble, and has no intention to fool others. You should depend upon this kind of teacher, both for this life and the next.

While ordinary people can attain a small level of clairvoyance, it will only be intermittent and not always correct. Even practitioners of Bon and other non-Buddhists have deluded clairvoyance. They need not be noble aryas or rise above the mundane level. These powers can be found on worldly paths as well. Some kinds of foreknowledge are accurate and some are not. When someone accurately foretells a small event, others may believe he can predict the future in larger ways. People will become lost when he is mistaken.

Nonvirtue may actually appear to be more valid than virtue because of the habitual tendency to nonvirtue. Someone who achieves mundane powers like clairvoyance and so forth may be deceived by worldly gods and spirits. His apparent power and accomplishment may be only to deceive others.

Only those who have attained the level of an arya, a noble one, can actually attain the power of undeluded supercognition. If it is truly an undeluded power of foreknowledge, it will never be mistaken. Do not believe the deluded predictions of those who are not bodhisattvas, even if they have no intention to deceive others. Their prophecies may be accurate or inaccurate; they are not consistent.

DIVISIVE SPEECH

There are two types of divisive speech, that which is openly spoken and

that which is spoken only in secret. Generally, divisive speech refers to a situation where two people are close friends, and a third person, with a negative intention, wants to break apart their friendship.

Divisive speech which is openly spoken

Often people who have some power attempt to create disharmony between others by telling one person that another has said or done something negative behind his or her back. Both people are present and the one who is seeking to divide them goes on to report just what the other did, perhaps even asking if he is still acting as before, as if nothing had happened. Here we have a powerful person, with a negative intention, who is openly trying to create disharmony between others. He tells two people that one of them has acted badly toward the other in secret and then pretends he is trying to bring them together again.

Divisive speech which is spoken only in secret

In this case one person tries to sow discord between two close friends by going to see one of them secretly, and saying that his friend, for whom he cares so deeply, has said something terrible about him.

Thus, open divisive speech refers to a situation where someone goes before two close friends and openly says that one has denigrated the other. Secret divisive speech is when someone goes to one of the friends and says that the other is doing something to harm him, thereby ruining the friendship.

Creating discord between ordinary people is, in general, a grave nonvirtue. However, if two people are close friends and one is engaged in negative actions while the other sincerely practices virtue, separating them is not at all bad. The positive intention makes it a virtuous act. Nonvirtue results if we aim to cause discord between two people with whom we are in conflict, or if we simply want to destroy the friendship of people toward whom our feelings are neutral.

The most serious type of divisive speech occurs when someone causes disharmony among sangha members. This is more nonvirtuous even than killing one's father or mother. The absolute worst case is creating a split between a teacher of the Secret Mantrayana and his or her disciples, or among vajra brothers and sisters. This is one of the strongest ways that the Mantrayana samaya vows can be broken and so is an extremely grave act of nonvirtue.

HARSH SPEECH

Harsh speech is making unkind remarks about the unpleasant physical qualities of another person, whether male or female, calling them one-eyed, deaf, blind, and so on, in other words pointing out the defects of others. Speech that brings harm and suffering to others is harsh speech. Sweet or gentle speech is that which is helpful to others or makes them happy. Openly pointing out someone's mistakes, or ugly or unpleasant aspects of his or her physical body, is not saying something untrue, but it does bring harm and suffering to others. Therefore, it is considered in the category of harsh words.

Sometimes when a guru is giving instructions, he or she may point out the disciple's faults or mistakes. This is not considered harsh speech, because it is for the purpose of instruction. In other cases, if we speak about other people's mistakes for no reason, we are harming them. Anytime our words bring unhappiness or discomfort, even if we are speaking sweetly, these are harsh words.

The worst form of harsh words is to speak offensively in front of a teacher, a spiritual friend or a holy being. In the company of such people, we should always speak only pleasantly. Great nonvirtue results from speaking harshly or making them unhappy. If we criticize others when with our teachers, this will make them uncomfortable and is therefore always considered harsh words. It is the most serious type of harsh speech.

IDLE TALK

Idle or worthless talk means talking without any purpose. It also refers to any kind of speech that one thinks is Dharma when it really is not, for example brahmins reciting rituals with the idea that they are practicing Dharma. Knowingly discussing nonvirtue is automatically idle talk. This also occurs when – with attachment – men gather and talk about sex or sing songs of sexual desire, or – with hatred – get together and talk about fighting, robbery and other crimes for no reason.

On the other hand, if – like a bodhisattva – someone engages in idle talk in order to benefit others, to relieve intense suffering and so on, this does not fall into the category of idle talk. For example, when someone has been suffering from an illness for a long time, discussing warfare and other useless topics is not idle talk if it serves to temporarily alleviate their misery. Otherwise, lacking any positive purpose, if you talk about things like fighting and war with hatred and attachment, this is definitely idle talk.

In the same way, enjoying a song or watching some kind of entertainment is not worthless when done in order to benefit the performer economically. If some poor people are trying to entertain a crowd, as with beggars who have trained monkeys, and you enjoy their performance without attachment, this is not nonvirtue, and is a kind of bodhisattva behavior.

The nonvirtue of harsh words and idle talk may be equal. Disturbing other people's prayers or recitation practice by distracting them with a lot of pointless gossip is especially nonvirtuous since it obstructs the accumulation of merit. This is the gravest negativity of idle talk. Even without meaning to disturb someone's practice or meditation, you are keeping them from accumulating merit and this is a serious nonvirtue. When practicing your own recitations, the power is greater if you recite without engaging in any other speech.

Idle talk appears to arise naturally and spontaneously, but if we analyze carefully, we find it is frequently motivated by attachment or hatred. The seriousness of the negativity is in proportion to the degree of afflictive emotion created in one's own mind or in the minds of others. All conversation that involves lying, divisive speech, and harsh words is in fact idle talk when motivated by hatred or attachment.

We may feel this idle talk is not nonvirtuous because no intention to harm others is involved. This is incorrect, however. Singing and general chatter seem to be innocuous because they contain no lies, or words of hatred, viciousness or unkindness. But if we examine this seriously, talking about warfare engenders hatred; discussing sex arouses attachment and desire between men and women. To the degree that we engage in idle talk, that much hatred and attachment arise in our minds. These afflictive emotions come both to those who talk and to those who listen, and the nonvirtue grows.

Arousing hatred and attachment in two people is worse than arousing it only in one, and arousing it in three is worse than that. The greater the amount of afflictive emotion we bring forth, the more serious is the nonvirtue. In this world, singers and dancers can arouse great attachment in several thousand people at one time. They thus accumulate great nonvirtue.

If you mix your periods of prayer or recitation with worthless talk, this will prevent them from engendering positive results, regardless of how long you spend. When actually practicing, avoid other talk. If you are chanting the prayer of Reciting the Names of Manjushri and stop halfway through to talk to someone, the benefit declines. The text says there will be no result,

but some small merit may be accumulated. On the other hand, chanting the entire prayer from beginning to end without any break brings great results.

When reciting deity mantras, the most excellent practice is to avoid mixing any talk from the beginning of the accumulation to the end, and maintaining silence during the session breaks. Even if we cannot maintain complete silence during the breaks, we must not talk during the practice session. Reciting mantras in this way has great power and benefit.

The Secret Essence Tantra teaches that there are ten mistakes to be avoided during recitation.² Not a single human word should be mixed with recitations. In the section describing the visualization and recitation of the hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva, the text teaches to avoid all other speech. Most people maintain such discipline for that section alone, but actually this rule should be followed for all practices. Here Patrul Rinpoche teaches this in the section on Vajrasattva, but no matter what mantra you are accumulating – the Mani mantra, the Vajra Guru mantra or any other – you should follow this rule. Thereby you will receive greater blessing power and strength, and will reach accomplishment quickly.

The negativity of idle speech is especially serious when this kind of talk is circulating among a gathered assembly of sangha members. A single person can thus spoil the merit of the entire group as well as wasting the meritorious actions of the sponsors. Patrul Rinpoche actually observed this kind of improper behavior.

When monks or lay practitioners go to perform rituals in villages or individual households, the ritual includes three sections: preparation, main part and conclusion. The preparation phase contains refuge, arousing bodhicitta and purification through making confession. The main part is generating deities, and the essence of the main part is recitation. At this point in the ceremony, people who want to go out before finishing the section generally leave without thinking, not remembering to maintain the rules. If they happen to meet someone, they immediately begin a conversation

2 According to the “Luminous Essence,” (Osel Nyingpo), Lama Mipham’s commentary on the Secret Essence Tantra, these ten are: 1) reciting too loudly, 2) reciting too silently, 3) reciting too quickly, 4) reciting too slowly, 5) talking to others while reciting, 6) having a mind that is distracted, 7) changing the sound of the syllables to make up some other sound, 8) adding extra sounds to the syllables, 9) not knowing the distinctions and so not being able to say the sounds correctly according to how the syllables appear, 10) not knowing the origin of the sounds of the syllables, in other words not knowing from where in the mouth the different sounds of the mantra should originate.

without a second thought. The most important section of the main part is mantra recitation, but most people talk during this time, as though it were a talking break. This happens during Mantrayana practice because there is no proper understanding of the Mantrayana.

Benefactors may sponsor rituals even though they lack sufficient resources for food and clothing. They also make offerings to the monks. This would be most excellent if all the monks had pure vows and kept them perfectly. When a sponsor offers food and clothing to some monks, the monks should sincerely pray and dedicate the merit to benefit the sponsors. It is said that when Buddha Shakyamuni was alive and disciples offered him food during the morning, he always prayed and dedicated the merit to them. If lamas and monks simply accept the offerings without prayer and dedication, no merit accrues to the benefactor.

Making offerings during ritual ceremonies is considered to be more beneficial than making offerings at other times because rituals include perfect practice of the generation and completion stages, and perfect recitation of the essence mantra. The practice is more perfect than at other times. By making offerings at that time the sponsors can accumulate great merit; the greatest merit is accumulated by making offerings to the lama during empowerments and great accomplishment practices, *drubchen*.³

The greatest merit comes from making offerings to the three fields of accumulation: a highly qualified master; our most kind parents and those who have cared for us, for example by teaching us; and those who are suffering greatly, like people stricken with long and serious illnesses, animals, and so on. Simply one person giving something to another person does not result in any merit. A person who is perfectly engaged in the ritual of generating the deity is considered a qualified practitioner who can bring forth great merit for the patrons. If the deity is not properly generated, there is no way to accumulate merit and the benefactor's wealth is simply wasted.

In the noble land of India, generally only those who had either of the two qualities of accomplishment, the supreme and common siddhis, and who lacked all defects had a right to receive donations made to the sangha. Such was the Buddha's rule. The basic rule is that one should have reached the level of the noble ones. When a practitioner with this qualification receives donations, benefit accrues to the donor and the recipient accrues no negativity. For such practitioners, the donation is like their own wealth,

3 A complex ritual practice comprising many days and involving large numbers of monks and nuns.

so there is no stain of negativity and the sponsor also benefits. Someone lacking this quality has no right to accept offerings, and if he or she does so negativity is accumulated.

These days, some people learn to recite one or two tantric rituals and then use whatever “black offerings” they receive. I am not saying this to insult other people; it is as Patrul Rinpoche has taught. Even Patrul Rinpoche was not speaking on his own, but was following the teachings of the Buddha and earlier scholars. We are not only thinking of people in rural areas; monasteries themselves generally teach how to beat the drum, roll the cymbals, and play the ritual trumpet. Monks learn how to make *tormas*⁴ and so on.

While the heart essence of sadhana practice is generation and completion stage, teaching this in monasteries is very rare. Large monasteries provide a month of training in advance of drubchen, but all that is taught is what I just mentioned: how to beat the drum and the like, not how to generate the deities.

The generation stage includes three aspects of samadhi, and taking the vows of individual liberation has four aspects. Then come the three practices of purification, completion and ripening. No one is teaching these. Nor is there teaching during the completion stage of the practices of the upper wind (*rlung*) and the lower essential drop (*tigle*). Proper understanding and proper practice of these aspects is crucial during sadhana practice. The offering of union and liberation comes next, after which is receiving blessings – from the deities, from the secret part of the female consort, and from the enemy who has the ten-fold guilt. These are the inner phases. Without these aspects, only receiving a rotten torma on the head, and some liquid on the tongue does not evoke the blessings of the sadhana, nor is it mentioned in the tantric texts.

The skills mentioned above of beating drums and so on comprise the outer phases, and the tantras nowhere state that negativity is accumulated from getting these details incorrect. The tantras mention that the drum and other instruments should be played, but not precisely how. This tradition has come down from the knowledge-holders.

The inner parts are what should be learned but they are not taught. Monks and nuns learn to read ritual texts, but not the essential aspects of the generation and completion stages. Without these crucial inner qualities, the practitioners are simply enjoying whatever black donations they receive.

4 A ritual object, often modeled from flour and butter.

In a ten-day sadhana, from the beginning of the first day until the very end, everything, even every cup of tea comes from the donors .

Anyone who wants to accept donations in relation with a Mantrayana ritual must first receive the empowerment. People often think that empowerment is received when the ritual vase is placed on their heads, but actually it is not. To receive perfect empowerment, six factors – two causes and four conditions – must all be fulfilled.⁵ Without completing these six, the empowerment has not been received and they should not perform the ritual. After completing a perfect empowerment, samaya vows are received. The samaya must be observed purely, otherwise we become samaya breakers, and are even worse than before receiving the empowerment. One who has broken samaya is not allowed to practice Mantrayana rituals.

Someone who takes the vows of individual liberation and then becomes physically involved with another is universally considered a vow-breaker. But in the case of receiving empowerment, no one thinks about whether samaya is broken or not. If we really reflect on this, sometimes we receive an empowerment today and break the samaya tomorrow; we regress to the condition we were in before we received the empowerment and had not even received the samaya. We don't think about this at all. The lama giving the empowerment is the same, thinking: "Because I received this empowerment in my youth, I can bestow it now."

In fact, no one knows whether he or she really received the perfect empowerment before, and even if he did receive a complete and perfect empowerment at that time, in the intervening years, he may have broken the samayas and reverted to the state he was in before receiving the empowerment. When people like this give empowerment to others, the practitioners in the ceremony will not receive the empowerment since the

5 According to the "Luminous Essence," the two root causes are the following: the "similar root cause," which means that the wisdom vajra nature is already present in the mindstream of the disciple because it is the inseparability of purity and equality fully manifesting; and the "simultaneous cause," referring to the substances used to confer the particular empowerment. The four contributing circumstances are: 1) the causal contributing circumstance, that the disciple is qualified by faith, perseverance and fearlessness; 2) the dominant contributing circumstance, referring to qualifications of the vajra master; 3) contributing cause of visualization, the meditative stabilization on the part of the vajra master that is required for the consecration of the empowerment substances; and 4) the immediately preceding contributing cause, which has to do with conferring the empowerments in the proper order.

master didn't receive it in the first place.

Because of this, there are many doubts about whether perfect empowerments are received or not. In any case, Mantrayana teaches that to receive donations we must have empowerment, must have kept our samaya purely, and must have actually accomplished the generation and completion stages. The texts don't comment at all about preparing tormas or playing musical instruments perfectly. Unless the generation and completion stages are perfectly accomplished, the length of the master's retreat or meditation practice makes no difference. People think a rainbow appearing in the sky is a good sign; but it is only an outer sign. Actual signs come from within, and are the inner signs of accomplishment. People should not believe in outer signs.

Mantrayana practice requires understanding the generation and completion stages. There is a vast difference, like the difference between the sky and the earth, between those who understand and perfectly practice generation and completion stage, and those who do not. One who wants to learn the Mantrayana must mainly learn about these stages, and how to complete the requirements of the mantra recitation. Recitation of mantra is the heart essence of Mantrayana. We cannot consider simply repeating the sound of the mantra to be a true recitation. All the factors must be perfectly understood.

One who practices the Mantrayana carelessly accumulates the heaviest load of negativity. Better not to practice at all than carry out rituals in that way; no merit results, but only a high level of negativity. A higher practice would be to recite the Mani and Vajra Guru mantras with sincere faith in Chenrezig and Guru Rinpoche. Patrul Rinpoche cautions:

Using these black offerings is like eating a pill of burning iron. Only those who have the bronze jaws of the union of development and completion stage can eat them. Ordinary people without this quality who consume them will be burned and their merit destroyed.

A donor's offerings are like iron pills, and to melt them one needs the iron cauldron of the union of development and completion. Otherwise one who consumes them will be burned. "Burned" doesn't mean being burned in this life, but in the hell realms. If we have accumulated merit in our mindstreams, then whatever we seek, such as the paths and levels of a bodhisattva, will be easily completed. Depending on the degree of our negativity, the merit in our mindstream will be destroyed. For those with a high level of negativity, the practice of development and completion stage

cannot mature, and the pith instructions of the Dzogchen path will not be experienced.

Therefore, in order to practice Dzogchen we must visualize Vajrasattva and recite his mantra to purify our negative actions. With the support of the mandala we have to gather great merit. This will prevent nonconductive conditions from arising and will bring forth positive conditions. With these two conditions we are considered perfectly fit to practice, and can automatically attain the wisdom of accomplishment.

The more offerings we consume, the more negativity we accrue; if we receive a hundred rupees, we will accumulate a hundred rupees worth of negativity; if we receive a thousand rupees, we will accumulate a thousand rupees worth of negativity. The more offerings we accept, the greater will be the weight of our negativity. As negativity piles up in our mindstream, we cannot develop our practice of generation and completion phase or our experience of Dzogchen; our previous mind of renunciation and even our faith in the Dharma will diminish until finally it is completely gone. We can see lamas who receive huge donations and whose mindstreams become more rigid and more proud, while their faith in the Dharma declines. Sometimes they even complain about their root guru. I have seen this situation myself. This means that the merit in the mindstream has been lost.

If we read the biographies of many past lamas, we see that the most excellent ones dissolve into rainbow light body. Not only that, some shrink to the size of a forearm from fingertip to elbow, and others leave relic pills or even indestructible relics in the ashes of their cremation fires. In some cases an umbrella of five-colored rainbow light appears in the sky. These are all signs of the practices of the Great Perfection. Sometimes I joke that today's lamas are not of this quality. Worldly people say that one can only identify the purity of gold and lamas after they have been burned in a fire. We cannot say that such signs never appear, but the signs are not clear. Probably this results from receiving black offerings. Even high level lamas can be stained by accepting offerings.

In the biography of Tertön Migyur Dorje, Karma Chagme Rinpoche writes that he tried to see where the tertön was – whether in a pure realm or not. He found Migyur Dorje in the bardo because he had been unable to complete the benefit to beings from all the offerings he had received during his lifetime. This prevented him from going to the pure realms. This occurred even though throughout his life, Tertön Migyur Dorje had always sent the best offerings he received to Chagme Rinpoche. After Migyur

Dorje's death, therefore, Chagme Rinpoche performed different kinds of ceremonies to purify the negativity that stained Migyur Dorje because he had received these offerings. Following these rituals, Chagme Rinpoche discovered that Migyur Dorje had gone to the pure realm of Zangdog Palri. This is all explained in Migyur Dorje's biography composed by Chagme Rinpoche.

That such a great treasure revealer who had been prophesied by Guru Rinpoche was also stained by receiving offerings was probably a display designed as a teaching for other beings. It is difficult to say that high lamas with qualities greater than Tertön Migyur Dorje would not be stained by offerings, but it is definitely true that all lamas whose qualities are less than his would be stained. Therefore, it is taught that:

*Black donations are a razor to the lifeforce;
If you take too many, they will cut the artery of liberation.*

We are not pointing out the faults of others if we think about ourselves. When we stay in retreat we are not always happy about the food, the room, and so on. We look for places where the food and accommodations are better. This kind of retreatant is not unknown. If we are really thinking about the Dharma, we should choose an ordinary place where the food is not abundant; then we will be less stained. The better your facilities the more you will be stained. This is how we should think if our Dharma practice is to be genuine. Otherwise retreat is just another case of using the Dharma to obtain food and a place to stay.

Patrül Rinpoche is not giving this advice on his own, and it is not hard to understand. Therefore, I am really not saying this just to point out the mistakes of others. You who are listening need not think that I am only scolding. Simply look into your own minds to see whether you are such a practitioner or not. No one can hide this. If your motivation is as described you should feel embarrassed, but even if you do not have such a poor motivation, you must make sure these faults do not develop.

Patrül Rinpoche goes on to state that one who carries out a Mantrayana ritual perfectly is as rare as a daytime star.

Not even having mastered the two phases of meditation, some people may know the words of the ritual ceremony but fail to recite them properly. Even worse, as soon as they reach the mantra recitation – the most crucial part – they begin to chat, constantly gossiping about irrelevant matters covered with attachment and hatred. This is a

disaster for themselves and others. Monks and lamas must give up such chatter and concentrate on reciting mantras without talking. This is a crucial point.

Even many of those who stay in retreat for years cannot explain the generation and completion phases, but simply reciting the teachings of the Buddha can bring many benefits. Read with great faith and devotion. You may not clearly understand about the generation and completion phases, but some benefit will result. Acting in this way, while the merit might not be great, no negativity will accrue. When we read the Prajnaparamita text for someone who is ill, we can see that the sick person is benefited. This is simply due to the merit of reading the text. In the same way, if we read a Mantrayana text clearly, the reading itself is beneficial to some degree.

Within any Mantrayana ritual, however, the mantra recitation is the most important; at that time, the door of the treasure of speech is open. I myself remember that when I was very young and going to perform rituals in the villages, I tried to read the texts clearly and strongly, but when reaching the recitation of the mantra I would think it was the time to drink tea, talk and rest. By acting like this, everything is ruined: ourselves, the other monks, the benefactors, and all the rest. The donors' money is the most important; without enough for their own food, they worked hard to collect the donation money. Mantrayana rituals do bring more benefit than reading a sutra when performed with complete understanding of generation and completion phases, and all other aspects of the ritual. Mantra recitation especially should be carried out purely, without mixing it with any ordinary talk.

COVETOUSNESS

The eighth nonvirtue is covetousness, meaning desirous thoughts, however slight, about other people's property. Thinking over and over again that we would be happy to acquire the belongings of others, we imagine we have them and consider how we might acquire them.

Covetousness is craving other people's valuable or special possessions. Some people may even believe that these possessions are their own and try to acquire them. First they imagine that the property is theirs and then they ponder how to actually get it. Any desire to obtain the property and possessions of other people qualifies as covetousness.

Even being attached to our own property is a nonvirtue, but desiring

the possessions of another is a greater nonvirtue whether or not we really act to obtain them. We should not be attached to our own property. In the desire realm this is considered the afflictive emotion of attachment, and the nonvirtue of covetousness. From both points of view, it is negativity. Covetousness and attachment are quite similar in nature, and are both characterized as attachment among the three poisons.

In general, strong hatred is the cause of the result most unpleasant to the mind – the hell realms – and destroys all the roots of merit. In comparison, desire, covetousness and attachment may seem pleasant, despite being strongly nonvirtuous. However, these thoughts represent a negative habitual pattern because when we die we become attached to something pleasant that we see, leading to strong suffering. This was explained in the teaching on the sixteen neighboring hell realms. Most of the suffering in these realms results from attachment. Similarly, attachment is the root cause of our connection to the six realms of samsara.

Attachment is therefore considered a strong nonvirtue. We must free ourselves from attachment, both to our own property and to that of others. This will free us from falling into the sixteen neighboring hell realms and from the six realms of samsara.

ILL WILL

Ill will, the ninth nonvirtue, is the wish to harm others. It results from both hatred and anger, as well as from being unhappy at other people's success, wishing that they were not comfortable, not happy, and had no talent. We feel unhappy if other people, especially people we are competing with, achieve success. If they become unhappy, lose their resources, suffer in some way, become ill, are harmed by evil spirits, or face any other kind of unpleasantness and we immediately rejoice in their misfortune, this is called ill will. In short, ill will means wishing misfortune on others.

WRONG VIEWS

The tenth nonvirtue is holding wrong views, such as denying cause and effect of actions, or believing in the philosophy of eternalism or nihilism. The law of cause and effect definitely functions; it cannot be dispelled even by the Buddha. Due to ignorance we may deny cause and effect, the view of nihilism. Eternalism – thinking of impermanence as permanence – is also a wrong view. Certain non-Buddhists hold the belief in an existent self and a creator of the world, the “almighty.”

Holding on to any extreme belief is a wrong view. For example, some believe accumulating merit brings no benefit. People may not only think this themselves; they may also teach this view to others. Another wrong belief is thinking that nonvirtue carries no negativity. We teach that there is benefit in virtue and that suffering results from nonvirtue. In some cases, we believe it, but at other times we do not pay much attention to whether we are accumulating virtue and nonvirtue, and therefore accumulate nonvirtue.

This is the effect of not having an irreversible belief in virtue and nonvirtue, and in the relationship of cause and effect. Sometimes we think that acting virtuously or nonvirtuously causes neither benefit nor harm. We see people who always commit nonvirtuous acts becoming rich, living long lives, enjoying high status, fame and so on, so we doubt that nonvirtue is a fault.

This wrong thinking may sometimes randomly arise in our minds. Because of this, we sometimes accumulate merit and at other times pay no attention to taking up virtue and avoiding nonvirtue. All this is a result of lacking pure and irreversible confidence. For example, we know clearly and have total confidence that we will be burned and will suffer if we jump into a fire; therefore we are always careful around fires. We will never leap into a fire.

We lack this kind of confidence about merit and nonvirtue; when we are happy we accumulate merit, and when we are unhappy we accumulate negativity. We avoid negative action when we are happy, but not when we are unhappy, perhaps thinking that other people commit nonvirtuous actions and are happy, so why should we care. We think that if we also act wrongly there will be no harm, all because we do not have a deep confidence in cause and effect. As I said before, if we have profound confidence in cause and effect, we will never depart from it. Nevertheless, we may also harbor wrong views. We may not have as strong wrong views as those who cling to the belief in either nihilism or eternalism, but, whether greater or lesser, we can still have wrong views.

The views of eternalism or nihilism include all the various views of the heretics. They can be divided into three hundred and sixty false views or sixty-two wrong views, but they all fall into the two categories of eternalism or nihilism.

We call these wrong views because people holding these ideas cannot depart from the two extremes of “is” and “is not.” In particular, followers

of the Middle Way philosophy assert that non-Buddhists are all proponents of wrong views, and that all of these views fall into these two categories. Middle Way philosophy does not fall into any of these extremes of “is” and “is not.”

Not only non-Buddhists, but even one Buddhist school, the Vatsiputriya, believes in a permanent self, which is a wrong view. Likewise, sravakas and pratekyabuddhas believe in the self of phenomena. Compared to Middle Way philosophy, this is also a wrong view, a view of permanence, of eternalism. The view of the Prajnaparamita is truly beyond limits, but except for this philosophy, other Buddhist schools might fall into one or the other extreme.

Among all ten nonvirtues, holding wrong views that refuse to accept the cause and effect of karma is the most serious. When we talk about wrong views, this is what we are mainly focusing on. People who do not believe in cause and effect cannot practice the Dharma. Holding wrong views is one of the eight conditions that prevents Dharma practice.

Concerning the views of the eternalists, some believe in a permanent self and an eternally existing creator of the world, such as Shiva or Vishnu. The non-Buddhist school of Samkya believes in an eternal and all-powerful great being who is the creator of the world. This is the view of eternalism, and the proponents accept the law of cause and effect, and past and future lives.

The nihilists do not accept cause and effect of karma, believing that all phenomena are self-arisen without causes and conditions. They do not accept past and future lives, the possibility of liberation, or omniscience. Nihilists accept some forms of cause and effect, such as that a sprout comes from a seed, but not the cause and effect of karma. The text of the Black Shiva⁶ states:

*The sun rising, water flowing downward,
The roundness of peas, thorns being pointed,
And the beauty of a peacock's tail
Were created by no one; they just naturally came about.*

If we really consider that idea, it is quite foolish. Think of the rising of the sun, for example. Without causes and conditions, without depending on other factors, the sun could not rise. If it did not depend on any causes and conditions, the sun should be in the sky all the time, and should always

6 *Wangchug Nagpo*, a non-Buddhist text.

rise in the same place. This is not true: the sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening. Were there no causes and conditions, how would these differences occur? Thus, the rising of the sun in the sky depends on causes and conditions.

Water flowing downhill depends on causes and conditions. Water never flows upward, and it could but for causes and conditions. Think of fire, which always blazes upward. If not for causes and conditions, fire could blaze downward, as water flows down. Both water flowing downward and fire blazing upward depend on causes and conditions. The round shape of peas also depends on certain causes and conditions. If this were not the case, all fruit and vegetables should have the same form, yet they are not all round. Having different causes and conditions, they do not all become round. Thorns are the same; they depend on causes and conditions for their shape. Otherwise all shapes would be the same. We can say the same about the colors of a peacock's tail. If specific causes and conditions were not required, all birds should have feathers like the peacock.

The thinking of the nihilists is as foolish as the thinking of an uneducated old farmer, who did not study philosophy or other topics of thought. The farmer thinks that saying something depends on other causes and conditions means that it was made by some person. However, all causes and conditions do not require the hand of a person to create them. Humans are not the only causes and conditions. The farmer thinks that if no one painted the beautiful colors of the peacock's tail, this means there is no dependency on causes and conditions. The nihilists believe these examples to disprove the workings of causes and conditions.

They argue that when the sun rises in the east, no one is making it rise; and when water runs downhill, no one is driving it down. All peas are round, but no one rolled them to be so. No one painted the many-colored eyes on a peacock's tail. These things result from their own nature. Likewise, everything in the world, however it appears, whether pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad, arises from its own nature. There is no past karma, and no past and future lives.

The pleasure of the rich and misery of the poor do not simply arise without causes and conditions. These situations occur because of the coming together and completion of other causes and conditions. The rich have more pleasure because the causes and conditions for pleasure have come together and been completed. The poor experience greater suffering because the causes and conditions for suffering have come together and been

completed. The wealthy are not miserable because for them the causes and conditions for misery have not been completed. The poor do not experience ease and comfort because the causes and conditions for these states have not been completed. Some experience joy and some experience torment; both occur when the causes and conditions are complete. Different people have different experiences. If this did not depend on causes and conditions, everyone should experience the same happiness as the rich person. Experience would be the same for all. The rich should be as unhappy as the poor since causes and conditions would not be needed for suffering to come about. Without the operation of causes and conditions, everyone's experience should be the same. In reality, all experiences of happiness and suffering depend upon whether the causes and conditions for these states of mind have been fulfilled.

This does not happen by itself. Nihilists may believe in this way, but they are mistaken. Nihilists do not believe in past karma, or past and future lives, but reality is not like that. Our mindstream is continuous from the past until the present, but nihilists think that our minds suddenly entered into the wombs of our mothers. Denying past and future lives, they believe that on death this mind simply vanishes like water on a hot stone. Buddhists do not believe this, and even some non-Buddhists with the view of eternalism disagree with this proposition.

Holding these teachings to be true, and following them, or even if not doing that, just naturally doubting the words of the Buddha, the advice of your lama and the commentaries of the scholars, or thinking they are not true and doubting or criticizing them, constitutes the nonvirtue of holding wrong views. Among all the ten nonvirtuous actions, killing and wrong views are the most serious.

Actually, all of the ten nonvirtues are serious, and all can lead to a fall into the great torment of the hell realms. But among all of these ten, killing and wrong views are the most serious. As some past lamas have said,

*There is no action worse than taking the life of another;
Harboring wrong views is the heaviest among the ten nonvirtuous acts.*

Liberation and omniscience will never arise in the minds of those who hold wrong views. All decline in merit is caused by wrong views. Therefore, it is the heaviest among the ten nonvirtues. Taking the life of another directly harms body and mind, and is the other most serious nonvirtue.

CONCLUSION

From this point on, Patrul Rinpoche teaches on the nonvirtue of taking the life of another. Every being is afraid of dying, except the hell beings. Beings in both the hot and cold hell realms always long to die; they constantly wish to pass on, out of these realms. No other beings crave death, however. Everybody thinks nothing is more important than his or her life.

Even the hungry ghosts don't want to die. When they are starved for food and drink, they will desperately try to find something. With our own eyes we can see how animals fear death. Out of ignorance, they may not understand that they are going to be killed, and fail to escape. Nonetheless, they are afraid to die. Humans, demi-gods, and gods are all equally afraid. Because they attach the greatest importance to their lives, when we kill these beings, we are gravely harming others, causing extreme torment. Thus, taking life is the greatest nonvirtue.

If we kill one animal, we must repay the life five hundred times. Even if we kill an animal underfoot while walking, we must repay that life. Whether we kill knowingly or unknowingly, we must repay five hundred times. If I kill an insect now, in future lives other beings will kill me. Not dying a natural death, but being killed by others is the repayment for taking life. Worldly people act in the same way. When someone kills another, either that person or someone else will be killed. This is called the repayment for the life, and is the same principle.

In this life, if we kill while walking or sitting, sometime in a future life, we will die by being killed by others, not only once, but five hundred times. The Sutra of the Dharma of Clear Recollection says: "Even if one kills only a single sentient being, the repayment is five hundred lives. Even if one kills only a single sentient being, one must spend an intermediate eon in hell."

Even worse than that is to take some meritorious work, like constructing a representation of the Three Jewels, as an excuse for committing nonvirtuous actions like killing.

These days some people think that for the sake of the Three Jewels they can take the lives of many animals. When we build a monastery, for example, many animals must die in order to feed and pay the workers. Later, animals are killed to feed the many monks. This still constitutes the nonvirtue of killing, and is said to be even worse than other killing. Patrul Rinpoche did not make this up. He is speaking according to the teaching of Padampa Sangye: "Building a support for the Three Jewels while causing harm and suffering, you are casting your next life to the wind."

A support for the Three Jewels means representations of body, speech and mind. Harm and suffering refer to nonvirtue and unhappiness. In the course of building representations of the Three Jewels, we commit a lot of nonvirtue and make others suffer, so that we are honoring the Three Jewels through nonvirtue and pain. No thought is given to the next life; this is kept to the side. Not being concerned for the next life, and not taking care for the suffering and happiness of the next life is called “casting the next life to the wind.”

Some don't consider these actions as at all negative, being foolishly convinced that it is purely virtue. Equally mistaken is the belief that you are carrying out a virtuous act by butchering animals and offering their flesh and blood to lamas invited to your home, or to a gathering of monks. When this occurs, everyone – both the patron and the lamas – is stained by the nonvirtue. Neither benefactor nor monks can escape the karma of taking the animals' lives. The nonvirtue is equal for everyone.

If one hundred people kill a single animal, all accumulate the same nonvirtue even though there may be some difference in the heaviness of the nonvirtue. Therefore, when we invite a lama or sangha member for a meal, we shouldn't slaughter an animal. When we take a life for this reason, the nonvirtue accumulated outweighs the virtue because it affects everyone: the sponsor, the lamas, and the monks. The donor is making an impure offering, and those who accept it are eating impure food. Any virtuous result is overshadowed by the negative one.

The lives and Dharma activities of the lamas are also harmed. This is certain. Unless you have the power to guide the consciousness to the realms of great bliss, you must avoid the negative karma of taking life.

If someone sponsors a long life ceremony or other ritual to bring a positive result for another person, or a prayer for one who has passed away, or to liberate a consciousness, and kills many animals to feed the lamas and monks on flesh and blood, the nonvirtue outweighs the virtue and neither the living nor the dead will benefit. We must be aware of this. If we don't believe Patrul Rinpoche, there is nothing to do, but if we have confidence in his teachings, they are quite understandable, not like teachings on conventional and absolute truth. His advice is very straightforward.

Some people think that since others offer meat to lamas during a ritual, there is nothing wrong with it, and that without meat the meal won't be sufficient. They feel meat must be served. We must decide whether we

believe those who say we should serve flesh and blood on these occasions, or those who, like Patrul Rinpoche and other high lamas, say that we must not. People who insist we must serve meat have no positive qualities at all, while those who say we must not are qualified scholars and accomplished masters. Dharma practitioners like ourselves should follow the advice of those who are learned and accomplished. In this way we will attain the same qualities for ourselves.

If we follow someone who is foolish and uneducated, we will also become foolish and will never achieve enlightenment. We must keep this in mind. If we think that because one monastery is acting in a certain way we must do the same, this is like being tied by the same rope, so that if one falls down all the others will too. As this example indicates, if we imitate others we may fall into the hell realms along with them, and this will not help purify negativity. We must follow those who are unmistakable.

The only people who can eat flesh and blood without accumulating nonvirtue are those with the power to restore life, those who have reached the state equal with the Dharmakaya of all phenomena, and who see phenomena as illusory and dreamlike. Such people have experienced that no phenomena has any true nature as an entity. Qualified individuals who have attained this level of experience are beyond killing and not killing, and will not be stained by the nonvirtue of taking life.

As an external quality, such an accomplished one has the ability to kill and revive. He or she can kill an animal and eat the flesh without being stained by any negativity. He or she can also benefit the animal as well. In the biography of Tilopa we can read how Tilopa killed and ate fish, and then liberated their consciousnesses. This kind of example can be found. Such siddhas can benefit other beings immensely. If someone has this quality, he or she must not avoid killing, but must act in this way.

There is one Mantrayana practice called union and another called liberation. Someone who is an enemy of the Three Jewels and of the master, a samaya breaker with ten negative characteristics, should be liberated by means of killing. If the killing is carried out with three qualities complete,⁷ it is not like the murder of an ordinary being; otherwise no kind of killing should be done.

⁷ Having “the three qualities complete” relates to the three kinds of satisfaction. First, the being should be liberated into a pure realm; thus, he is satisfied. Secondly, the being’s life force and qualities should be taken by the yogi performing the liberation; thus, the yogi is satisfied. Finally, the flesh and blood should be offered to the protectors, satisfying them.

Patrul Rinpoche continues:

Holding wrong views for even an instant destroys all your vows, and you separate yourself from the community of Buddhist followers. Your body no longer has the support of the eight freedoms.

The highest vows are those of the Mantrayana, and the lowest are the vows of refuge. Those who arouse wrong views for even a moment violate them all. This is one result of the serious negativity of holding wrong views. Those who have such negative views are not considered followers of the Buddha. Their bodies are no longer considered to have the eight freedoms complete since holding wrong views is one of the contrary conditions, along with being born in the hells, as a hungry ghost, an animal, a long-lived god, or a barbarian; being born where there is no Buddha; or being born deaf and mute.

From the time your mind holds wrong views, even the virtue that you do does not lead to liberation, and the negative actions that you commit are no longer objects of confession.

If one has wrong views in his or her mindstream, no matter what merit is accumulated, it will not lead to liberation and omniscience. Generally, whatever strong negativity one has committed can be purified by confession, but in the case of one with wrong views, no matter what confession is made, it cannot be purified. One who is confessing negative actions must not have wrong views. If wrong views are held in the mind, negativity cannot be purified.

From our infancy to the present, we have committed inconceivable nonvirtue without any intention, by eating, walking and so on. Carefully considering even one twenty-four hour period, during the entire day we are committing nonvirtue; for not a single moment are we committing virtue. This kind of unintentional negativity, however, can be purified through confession. That is why we must continuously recite the Confession of Misdeeds from the Triskandhaka Sutra.

Diligence with the four supports⁸ in reciting Jowo Atisha's Confession for Death and the Stainless Confession Tantra, and visualizing Vajrasattva and reciting the hundred-syllable mantra, enables us to purify at one time

8 The four supports are: 1) the support of the visualization of Vajrasattva or another object of confession; 2) the support of regret for past nonvirtue; 3) the support of the resolution not to commit such nonvirtue again; 4) the support of the applied antidote, meaning any virtuous activity, such as the practice of a Vajrasattva sadhana.

all the negativity we have accumulated up to the present. We are confessing and purifying so that we become stainless.

If we confess with the four supports at the time of death, our nonvirtue up to that moment can be purified. Having cleansed our negativity, only our merits are left. Through the power of that merit, we can be born in upper realms and not in lower realms. We must confess whatever innumerable nonvirtues we have committed. If we focus on our lifetime, we can purify all that we have done; if we focus on one day, we can purify what we have done on that day. In this way, we must maintain diligence in our confession practice.

One who remains in the view of Dzogpa Chenpo, on the other hand, has no need of the four supports. With the Dzogchen view everything is complete, and the power of the view itself purifies all negativity. This is also true for bodhicitta. When bodhicitta is aroused in our mindstream all negativity is purified, and thus the four supports are not needed. In all other cases, whatever meritorious act we do requires the four supports. Without these supports, negativity cannot be purified. The four supports are absolutely crucial for purifying negativity.

Purifying negative actions can be done by any virtuous action. Reciting the Vajrasattva mantra is not necessary, but the four supports should be complete. Those who lack confidence in the law of cause and effect, however, cannot purify their negativity no matter what they do. Otherwise all negative actions, including the five sins of immediate retribution such as killing one's parents, killing an arhat, maliciously taking blood from the Buddha's body, and so on, can be purified.

THE EFFECTS OF THE TEN NONVIRTUOUS ACTIONS

Each nonvirtuous action has four kinds of karmic result: the fully ripened result, the result similar to the cause, the predominant effect, and the proliferating effect.

THE FULLY RIPENED RESULT

Whichever of the ten nonvirtues is committed under the influence of hatred, the result will be birth in the hell realms. Whichever is committed under the influence of attachment, the result will be birth in the hungry ghost realm. Whichever is committed due to

ignorance, the result will be birth in the animal realm. Once born in these lower realms, beings undergo the misery particular to each of them.

Beings in the hell realm suffer from heat and cold, in the hungry ghost realm from hunger and thirst, and in the animal realm from being exploited by others. The result ripens according to the intensity of the motivation of hatred, attachment or ignorance. The difference also depends on the length of time. The longer the negative action was carried out, the stronger will be the result. This is true for both negative and positive actions. If we compare the merit of prostrations, the merit of those who do prostrations continuously is greater than the merit of someone who does prostrations only once a month.

With an intense degree of motivation, the negative actions of killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct lead to birth in the hell realms. Even with a more moderate intention, continuing the action without a break for a long time increases the severity of the effect. For example, someone who kills one animal every day accumulates strong negativity, resulting in birth in the hell realms. If the motivation and length of time are moderate, birth will occur in the hungry ghost realm; if they are weak, in the animal realm.

These results are all explained in the sutras of the Buddha, and the commentaries, the shastras of the scholars. If we practice Dharma continuously once a day every day without a break, even if the effort is not so strong, the effect is greater than practicing with great diligence for twenty-four hours or even practicing for an entire month with great effort. The same is true for negative actions as well.

The fully ripened effect of negative action is birth in one of the three lower realms with the body and suffering of the beings of these realms.

THE RESULT SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE

There are two kinds of results that are similar to the cause: actions similar to the cause and experiences similar to the cause.

Even after escaping from the lower realms that are the fully ripened result, the experience at the time a human body is attained corresponds to the different kinds of suffering of the lower realms.

As a result of serious negativity, beings are born in hell realms. After the negativity has been decreased in the lower realms, there will be birth in the human realm, but even at that time the beings continue to

experience similar suffering, such as illness, poverty and others. This is called experience similar to the cause. Another kind of effect similar to the cause occurs within the hell realms. Beings in the hells experience different kinds of torment; their life spans and types of suffering differ, both in length and intensity. Such variable suffering also comes within the category of experience similar to the cause.

Even human beings, while possessing similar bodies, have different experiences. Some have many illnesses; some are always healthy. Some have long lives; some life spans are short. Different kinds of suffering and happiness are experienced. This all falls within the category of experience similar to the cause.

ACTIONS SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE

Those who killed in the past will again enjoy killing, and as a result will be born in hell realms. Hell beings kill each other. After escaping from that realm to the human realm, they will still feel inclined to kill. Those who stole in the past will again enjoy stealing, and will be born in hungry ghost realms as a result. After escaping to the human realm, they will still steal.

Some people enjoy killing insects from their childhood. Such pleasure corresponds to similar acts performed in previous lives. From earliest childhood people differ in their enjoyments, driven by different habitual patterns. Some children like to kill, and some to steal; others enjoy neither killing nor stealing. These patterns are all caused by corresponding habits from the past. Children who enjoy performing virtuous actions did this previously. They are continuations of past actions.

We can understand the actions of our previous lives by looking at how we act in the present, and by examining our present actions, we can anticipate where and how we will spend our next lives. We need not consult those with clairvoyance or experts at divination for any prophecy. If you enjoy killing animals or stealing, you engaged in these actions in a past life. If you suffer from many serious diseases, have a short life full of unpleasant and unwanted encounters, this is the continuity of birth in a hell realm. You can guess that your previous life was in a hell realm. Likewise, by considering our present actions, we can determine where we will go in our next lives. For one who is committing nonvirtue, no divination is needed; the only place to go is to the hell realms. The situation is the same for animals. The wolf's and falcon's instinct to kill, and the mouse's instinct to steal, all result from their former actions. They are an effect similar to, and caused by, their

past habits.

EXPERIENCES SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE

One who takes life is born in a hell realm and suffers there. Later, after escaping from the hell realms he or she may be born in the human realm, but continue to suffer as in hell. This is called the experience similar to the cause. In the same way, experiences similar to the cause take these two forms for each of the negative actions.

Experience similar to the cause of taking life

Some people experience sickness from the moment of birth until their death; others die while young. These are examples of experience similar to the cause.

The result of previous killing is to have a short life with a lot of illness. Sometimes a newborn baby dies the moment of its birth as the result of killing in a past life. For many lifetimes, they may die just after being born.

These are experiences that result from killing during previous lives. The experience of death occurs not only once, but many times.

There are people who reach adulthood but from early childhood suffer one illness after another until they die, again as the result of having killed and injured others in past lives.

Such poor health is the result of past actions. Because during their time in the hell realms they did not exhaust the effects of their earlier killing and abusing animals and others, they contract various diseases.

Without thinking of many ways to get treatment, they would be better off confessing their past negativity and feeling remorse. The antidote for their negative karma is endeavoring to accumulate merit and abandon negativity.

Someone who falls ill immediately seeks some kind of cure, consulting doctors, offering prayers, investing money and so on, but these actions may not help much. What will help is recognizing that the suffering of these diseases is a result of previous negative actions. Remorse and confessing past nonvirtue and dedicating all present virtue for the sake of others will help bring about recovery.

Experience similar to the cause of stealing

The karmic effect of taking what was not given in a past life is to suffer from poverty in a future one. This is the experience similar to the cause of stealing. Thieves are born into the hungry ghost realm; after escaping they will be born into poverty in the human realm. Even if they acquire a small amount of wealth, they will have no chance to enjoy it; their property will be forcefully taken by a thief or an enemy and will become common property or the property of the enemy. With only a few possessions, they will have many enemies. Although they may believe certain property to be theirs, they have no way of knowing who will ultimately own it; they have no clear right to its use. This all results from prior acts of theft.

Those suffering in poverty should accumulate a tiny flame of merit rather than endeavoring in mountains of effort to gather riches.

People in poor conditions strive for affluence through business, agriculture and the like, but gathering a small flicker of merit would serve them better. Worldly efforts will not bring riches; to gather lasting wealth, one must accumulate merit. Without the merit that results from past openheartedness, there is no capacity to achieve prosperity in this life regardless of the effort made. Having the ability to use and gather possessions and property in the present requires that the merit of generosity was gathered in previous lives. Acquiring wealth and using it both result from previously accumulated merit. If this is lacking, wealth will not come. Or, one might have some property, but no opportunity to use it.

Thieves may get millions of rupees at one time. If they stole this much continually, they could not store it in the whole earth. They could steal for an entire lifetime and still die of starvation. They do not benefit from the wealth garnered by theft. Likewise, we can see that those who live from business or from offerings do not in the end benefit from this.

The profit of some business people could equal the riches of Vaisravana, the god of wealth, but they do not become that affluent. Lamas, monks and lay practitioners perform rituals for their patrons. High lamas may sometimes receive hundreds of thousands of rupees; even unimportant monks earn more than ordinary people, but this money does not help them. They do not become wealthy, and they cannot accumulate wealth. We can see this for ourselves. On the other hand, those who have acquired the merit of generosity easily achieve prosperity, and never lack money their entire lives. This is all the fruit of merit. Someone who is seeking affluence should strive in offerings to the Three Jewels and to the poor.

The effects of karma ripen quickly on this earth, unlike in other worlds. Efforts made in the early part of our lives bring results later in the same life, not only in the next life. Therefore, amass merit when you are young and it will ripen in the later part of your life. If you accumulate great merit one year, during the next you may become wealthy. The Abhisamayalankara Sutra says that even those who have not attained the arya level – for example, your parents, Dharma teachers, and people undergoing severe suffering – are strong fields for accumulating merit.

Needless to say, the unsurpassable offering field consists of the Three Jewels and those who attain the arya level, the bodhisattvas. However, your parents have been most kind, benefiting you greatly, and are thus the field of kindness. Those suffering from long-term illnesses are another important field; because of their intense misery they constitute the field of suffering. Individuals who teach the Dharma are also extremely benevolent, and along with bodhisattvas who are living their final lives in this world, they constitute the field of qualities.

Accumulating great merit comes from making offering to these three fields: the field of qualities – the buddhas and bodhisattvas who attain the arya level; the field of kindness – our parents who gave us our bodies, along with our Dharma teachers; and the field of suffering – such as those tormented by a long-term illness. Offering water tormas to the hell beings and hungry ghosts is also making offerings to the field of suffering. Offering to these three fields of merit brings immediate results. Other than these fields, no mention is made of such great merit. Among these fields, the most important are the buddhas and bodhisattvas. If we meet them and make offerings to them, the result begins ripening in this life and continues for innumerable lives.

Those who resort to theft, deceit, or other ways of taking what is not given in hopes of acquiring wealth, experience just the opposite result. They will be unable to escape from the hungry ghost realm for many kalpas. At the end of this life as well, it will affect them, bringing poverty and a more and more unpleasant situation.

Early in their lives, they appear to be rich, but some become quite impoverished in the end. The karma begins to ripen in this very life, and in the next life they suffer greatly in the hungry ghost realm. Even those who have some property will have no power to use it. Because of miserliness some people, no matter what possessions they have, feel poor and think they have nothing. This attitude grows and grows. They cannot make offerings

to the Three Jewels, cannot be generous to other beings, and cannot even enjoy their wealth themselves. This all results from miserliness. Their possessions bring about nonvirtue. Unable to use their wealth, the hungry ghosts appear to be protecting their treasure. Their perceptions are also affected. A hungry ghost may see a fruit tree, but be unable to enjoy the fruit because he or she perceives the tree to be protected by persons holding weapons.

Some people may appear as though wealthy, but if you examine well, they cannot use this wealth for the Dharma – the source of happiness and well-being in the present and future lives – and even cannot use this to support their livelihood, for food and clothing, and so on. Therefore they are worse off than the poor.

Look at how the affluent actually use their wealth. Are they using it for the Dharma, which will enhance their future? Even without seeking to benefit future lives, are they using it for their present livelihood, which at least benefits this life? If not, those who cannot make offerings to the Three Jewels, cannot be generous with the poor and cannot use their wealth themselves, are poorer than the poverty stricken. They are already like hungry ghosts. Their wealth is the effect of impure past generosity.

This completes the discussion of karmic effect of taking what is not given.

Experience similar to the cause of sexual misconduct

The experience that results from sexual misconduct motivated by desire is having a spouse who is unattractive, of an immoral character, or who acts like an enemy.

As already explained, the result of not upholding the rules for householders and engaging in sexual misconduct is birth in the hell and hungry ghost realms. After escaping from these realms, the experience similar to the cause is as Patrul Rinpoche described. We can see some couples who constantly fight, quarrel and harbor resentment against each other, problems that all result from sexual misconduct during previous lives. Each thinks that the other has bad habits. Actually the cause is both bad habits and karmic causes from the past.

They should not hate each other but should recognize that this experience results from the ripening of previous karma; understanding this, they should develop mental patience.

Such couples accuse each other of having bad habits, but never consider that this results from past negative actions. Abandoning blame and understanding past karma, they should instead confess their past negativity. Lord Padampa Sangye advised:

*Oh people of Tingri, do not quarrel and do not fight!
Married life is impermanent, just like a crowd gathered in a
marketplace.*

Whether a couple can stay together for a long time or only for a few days is uncertain. Married couples are like people from a big city suddenly meeting in a market place. They should not quarrel, fight or hold past mistakes against one another. They should live together happily, lovingly and comfortably during the short time they are together.

One of Lama Shabkar Rangdrol's songs says:

*Enemies are like our parents from past lives;
In this life don't react in the same way.
They will not remain long and will also die.
Fortunate one, do not be angry at them.*

Our spouses and our enemies are all our parents from past lives. They have treated us with great kindness many times. No matter how much our partners quarrel with us, or how seriously our enemies harm us, although they would like to live for a long time, they do not have that chance. Whoever they are, they will die sooner or later. During this short time, we must avoid causing one another harm. We should get along and practice Dharma. Both people we like and those we dislike are interdependent. Whatever happiness and misery we experience, it is all the ripening of our past karma. We should not continue to act in the same way, gathering enemies. We must especially confess and regret our past negative actions.

Experience similar to the cause of lying

Because of telling lies, we are criticized and deceived by others. There are two ripening results. If we lied during our past life, we will be born in the lower realms, and even after escaping and being born in a human realm, we will be criticized and deceived. These are both results similar to the cause. We may believe someone is harming us now, but this is really the effect of our past negative actions. It appears that we are hurt by our enemies, but in fact it is only past karmic results.

If you are falsely accused or criticized now, this results from lying in the past. Rather than becoming angry, quarrelling and insulting those who speak this way, remember that this is the kindness of lessening my negative karma and strive to rejoice.

Without making confession with the four supports, negativity will never disappear; it will ripen sooner or later, even after many kalpas, when the causes and conditions come about. When the results of positive or negative actions are experienced, their power decreases. Therefore, we should realize that the actions of those who are criticizing us are decreasing the effects of our past negativity so we will not face these problems in the future, and we should be happy about this.

Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa taught:

An enemy who repays our kindness with ingratitude supports our efforts to gain spiritual power.

The speech of someone who criticizes us without reason whips up our virtue.

He is the lama who destroys our attachment and desire.

Look at his kindness that cannot be repaid!

The difficulties caused by our enemies lead many of us to meet the Dharma. Such harm also improves the practice of those who are already practicing. Not seeking to get back at our enemies, practicing patience carries great merit. No other efforts equal this, and we accumulate immeasurable merit that aids the practice of Dzogpa Chenpo and Mahamudra. In this way our enemies do us no harm. With a positive attitude such as this, you will understand how they improve our practice. The false criticism of others increases our past accumulated merit, just as whipping a horse increases its speed. This criticism is the teacher who shows us how to destroy our worldly attachment. We call "lama" someone who helps us avoid desire and attachment to samsara. In this way, our enemies are our teachers.

The kindness of our kind root guru is greater than the kindness of Lord Buddha. We cannot possibly repay this, and neither can we repay the kindness of our enemies. By boosting our detachment from the world they support our Dharma practice, so if we consider this correctly, we cannot repay their kindness. This is how to understand.

Experience similar to the cause of divisive speech

Divisive speech is that which separates friends, and its ripening result is

birth in the lower realms. Difficulties will be faced even if born in the human realm because of the effect being similar to the cause. People guilty of divisive speech in the past will live in situations where those around them will disagree with each other and will always argue. Kings, ministers, leaders, and great lamas, as well as important householders, have many attendants. The result of divisive speech is that these people will not get along and will be jealous toward one another. Whatever orders are given, they will not listen, but will disagree.

This doesn't concern only those in high positions; even paid servants in ordinary households fail to listen to simple instructions, and must be ordered to their task two or three times. High lamas as well as lay people become angry at that point and begin speaking harshly. The servants then work without interest and very slowly. They fail to report that the work has been completed and are always ill-tempered.

The lama or the master of the house is only reaping the ripening fruits of earlier divisive speech. Regretting and confessing past negativity is better than thinking that our assistants are not listening to us and are merely undisciplined. We should always seek to reconcile ourselves with others and to bring together those who are at odds, while always avoiding divisive speech.

Experience similar to the cause of harsh words

The result of speaking harsh words is birth in a lower realm and hearing only harsh words even if born a human. Whatever we say always leads to arguments, even if we are trying to speak nicely.

Negativity brings forth innumerable kinds of results, and negativity accumulated early in one life can ripen later in the same life. The ripening effect may not be completed, however, and birth and suffering in a lower realm can occur in the next life. Perceived effects may result not only from negativity in the past; it can also come from actions in the present life.

In general, the result of negativity is not as definite as sowing a seed in the ground. When a seed is planted, the tree will grow and the fruit develop continuously, but the effects of accumulated karma are not continuous in that way. While the negative action vanishes the same moment it is completed, the karmic result never simply vanishes, but will ripen sooner or later. This is unfailing.

The Vaibhashika school of Buddhist philosophy teaches that the continuity of the unfailing element is uncompounded. The Chittamatra

school considers this to be the alaya, the “all-ground” consciousness. According to the Madhyamaka school, which denies the existence of uncompounded phenomena and the alaya, karma has no birth, and is therefore unfailing.

In any event, accumulated karma may ripen in this life, the next, or in a future life. Whatever unwanted experiences occur are all the result of past negative actions. Harsh words are the heaviest nonvirtue among the negative actions of speech. Worldly people agree that while words are not arrows or swords, they can tear the mind to pieces. We cannot see words with our eyes, cannot touch them with our hands, or taste them with our tongue, but words can make not only the body, but also the mind miserable.

A knife can harm the body, but not the mind. Words are therefore more powerful; we must understand their great strength, both for good and evil. Nothing in this world can help or harm as much as words. Learn to speak only pleasant words. Speaking harsh words injures the minds of others and incites them to immediate anger, therefore carrying the heaviest negativity. In particular, if you utter even a single negative word to a bodhisattva, or even someone with positive qualities or your Dharma friends, you will not be able to escape the lower realms for many lifetimes. This means we must always be careful not to use harsh words.

A long time ago a brahmin named Kapila called the monks of Buddha Kasyapa many nasty names such as “horse-head” and “ox-head.” He was born and remained for kalpas without end as a fish-like sea monster with eighteen heads, and it is said that even on being released, he went to hell. Likewise, one nun called another a bitch, and was then born as a bitch herself five hundred times. Stories like this are common.

We must believe Lord Buddha’s teachings and avoid unpleasant language. Speaking badly does not bring us food, clothing or other possessions. We may feel that if we address our subordinates or friends harshly they will listen to us, but this is only a conceptual idea. If you really think about it, even their attention will not fulfill your wishes forever. Unkind words bring unhappiness to both your mind and the minds of others. If you never talk to people rudely, no one will run off with your property. We should encounter everyone gently, even evildoers who killed our parents. By addressing them kindly, their faces will change, and immediately both our mind and theirs will become more pleasant.

Most particularly, since you can never know who might be an arya or

a bodhisattva, you should respect everyone.

Holy beings and bodhisattvas appear to their disciples in ordinary forms, never extraordinary. We cannot recognize who is a holy being or a bodhisattva and who is not. Making unkind remarks to family members creates a distance that will never be breached, and we learn from Patrul Rinpoche's examples that harsh words lead to birth in the animal realm, and then later in the hell realms. Therefore, always speak pleasantly to everyone, thinking, "Perhaps this person has more or better qualities than I do and deserves my respect." Recounting and praising other people's good qualities always benefits us and never harms.

These days some lamas, from the core of their hearts, do not like to prostrate before others, thinking that bowing down to others may be negative. Prostrations may in fact sometimes harm the object of prostration but never the one who makes the prostration. He or she may accumulate merit, and in any event will not accumulate any negativity. The Vinaya Sutra counts the Sangha as an appropriate object of prostration. Paying homage through prostration to more than three fully ordained or novice monks, who constitute the field of the Sangha, brings about considerable merit. On the other hand, it is inappropriate for the field of Sangha to prostrate to an ordinary individual since an ordinary person is unable to take such homage.

When someone with great qualities prostrates to a person with lesser qualities, the one who is the object of the prostrations may accumulate negativity, and their merits may decrease. The person who makes the prostration will not be harmed, however, and his or her qualities will never diminish. A highly qualified person can receive the homage of others without any resultant negativity. These days there are those who, due to their own pride, do not want to prostrate even to their own guru, behaving as though the lama would then be stained by obscurity. In general, less qualified individuals cannot sit in a higher position in the row, meaning closer to the shrine, than those with greater qualities.

The main point is that we should always praise others, whether or not they are highly qualified. As Karma Chagme Rinpoche wrote in his aspiration prayer to be born in Sukhavati:

*Greater than the sin of killing all sentient beings of the three worlds
Is deprecating those who are bodhisattvas.
I beg pardon for great sins committed without reason.*

We cannot really recognize who is a bodhisattva and who is not since

they have no specific characteristics, and we lack clairvoyance. Bodhisattvas appear in the world to benefit beings as ordinary individuals. By speaking unkindly or rudely to anyone who might possibly be a bodhisattva, we could accumulate more negativity than if we had killed all the beings in the three worlds.

The effect similar to the cause of idle talk

The effect similar to the cause of idle talk is that your words will carry no weight and you will lack self-confidence.

Those with the habit of idle talk in a past life will continue in this life, and their words will carry little power. With no confidence in themselves, they will be unable to speak publicly. This results from idle talk. When Patrul Rinpoche says that their words carry no weight, he means that others will not believe them even if they are telling the truth.

The effect similar to the cause of covetousness

The result of covetousness is that your wishes will not be fulfilled and you will automatically face the circumstances you least desire.

The effect similar to the cause of wishing harm to others

As a result of wishing harm to others, you not only live in constant fear but also suffer considerable difficulties.

The effect similar to the cause of wrong views

The result of harboring wrong views is that you continue holding negative beliefs. You will be deceived and your mind disturbed and panic-stricken.

The karmic effect of wrong views is to continue to maintain such incorrect attitudes during the present life so that the most pure view will not enter your mind. Others will deceive you, and your mind will be unsettled.

THE CONDITIONING EFFECT

This effect ripens as the place where we live.

Taking life leads to birth in unpleasant places with deep and eroded ravines, frightening precipices and the like that endanger one's life force. Taking what is not given results in birth in regions where the crops are decimated by frost and hailstorms, the fruit trees are

barren, and which are stricken by famine. Sexual misconduct leads to birth in filthy places full of excrement, muddy swamps and other unpleasant areas.

Lying brings on the unpleasantness of unstable finances, an unstable mind, and frightening conditions. Engaging in divisive speech results in a life in regions that are difficult to traverse, because of steep ravines and narrow, impassable gorges. Harsh words lead to birth in an unpleasant area full of rocks and pebbles, thorns and so on. Because of idle talk, one is born in a place where there is no harvest even when crops are sown, and where the weather is unpredictable.

The effect of covetousness is birth where the harvest is no good, and where misery is rampant because of the negative place and evil time. One who wishes harm to others will be born in a frightening place that is full of many dangers. Harboring wrong views leads to birth into poverty, with neither protectors nor relatives.

THE PROLIFERATING EFFECT

The fruit of whatever kind of human negativity is done will increase greatly and result in the endless continuity of the suffering of life and birth. Again and again people repeat and increase their negative actions so that they dwell in samsara for time without end.

We must confess immediately whatever negative actions we commit. If we commit a nonvirtuous act today, we must confess today; by waiting until tomorrow the negativity will increase. The length of time that elapses before confession increases the negativity. This is called the proliferating effect. The suffering that results from the nonvirtue will also increase endlessly, so one will cycle through samsara forever. Fully ordained monks or novices should confess every fifteen days. This confession will cleanse any negativity that can be totally purified. Those that cannot be purified will be “blessed” so they cannot increase further. Therefore, confess negative actions as soon as possible.

Broken Mantrayana samayas can be purified and repaired if they are confessed within a day, a month or a year. In the most serious situation, confession must occur within three years. If this does not happen, the breach can no longer be purified or repaired within that lifetime and the result must be faced. Carrying out virtuous activities can decrease the degree of negativity, but the person can no longer practice Mantrayana because he or she cannot take the samaya vows. The Mantrayana texts explain this well, so it is crucial that all breaches of samaya should be confessed immediately.

Some people may believe that even if they have broken samaya with one lama, they have not broken their samayas with another lama. This is absolutely not true. The gurus may be different, but the mind stream is the same so that if one samaya is broken, all samayas are spontaneously broken. If someone receives empowerment, reading transmission and pith instructions from one lama and then breaks samaya and fails to confess within three years, the samaya is gone from his or her mind stream for that entire life. The idea that samaya has been broken with one lama only, and not with others is incorrect. This cannot happen. Vows and samayas cannot arise in such a person's mind stream at all.

For a proper confession, one must recite the hundred-syllable Vajrasattva mantra at least twenty-one times a day. This can purify the broken samaya; even if it cannot be fully purified, the negativity may not increase. Up to this point the negative actions and their results have been taught.

VIRTUOUS ACTIONS TO BE ADOPTED

The second topic covers the positive and pleasant aspects of the ten virtuous actions. Generally, understanding the defects of the ten nonvirtues and taking vows not to commit these actions constitute the ten virtuous actions. Taking the lives of others is nonvirtue, and vowing not to take the lives of others is virtue. We must first understand the negativity of taking life. Comprehending that, we swear not to take lives any longer. Without a formal commitment, simply refraining from killing animals does not qualify as taking a vow. Lacking the commitment, no merit is accumulated.

The same is true for taking what is not given and the other nonvirtues. Understanding their negativity and vowing to completely abandon them are the ten virtues. The commitment need not be made in front of a lama; you can take a vow at any time and in any place. You can promise not to kill for a certain period of time, in a particular place, or a specific animal, such as chickens or fish, and not to eat their flesh. This is also considered a positive and virtuous action.

When a vow is taken before a lama or a khenpo, more shame results from engaging in the negative action again, but one can nevertheless take a vow on one's own. The commitment is the important factor, whether the vow is taken by oneself, in front of a lama, or in front of representations of the Buddha's body, speech and mind. Vows made before a lama or the Three Jewels bring forth greater merit and are more powerful.

We may decide at one time not to kill a particular animal, or not to eat a certain kind of meat, but unless a formal commitment is made this may not lead to the accumulation of merit. That is why vows are necessary. For example, we do not eat human flesh, and we do not kill humans, but we do not accumulate merit from this. If we did specifically vow never to kill a human being, we would also accumulate merit. Without the commitment that comes from taking a vow, it is neither a virtue nor a sin. Some of us do not eat certain animals. If we make a formal commitment to avoid their flesh, we can accumulate merit from that as well. Otherwise, the action remains completely neutral.

A householder who cannot promise to never kill animals can take vows for particular time periods, such as the first Tibetan month, which is considered the Buddha's month since at that time Lord Buddha displayed various miracles in order to tame the heretics. The fourth month, called Sagadawa, is also considered a holy month. These months have been blessed by Buddha Shakyamuni. Vows can also be made every new moon, a day blessed by Buddha Shakyamuni, or every full moon, a day blessed by Amitabha. A vow not to take life can be made for a year, a month or a day, and for that time period great merit can be accumulated. Even a vow taken for part of the day brings forth merit.

Long ago, a butcher took a vow in front of the noble Katayana in the village where he lived. His promise was not to kill animals during the night, but only in the daytime. After he died, he was born in an ephemeral hell, where during the day he suffered in a burning iron house. Every night he spent happily and comfortably in a palace in the company of four goddesses. Therefore, abandon the ten negative actions and adopt the antidote of the ten virtuous actions.

The three positive actions of body

We must commit to abandoning the ten negative actions and to adopting the ten virtues, such as saving lives, which is the antidote for taking lives. Generosity is the antidote for taking what is not given. These actions purify and act as antidotes to the negative actions.

In particular, we should save those animals who are about to pass away, and relieve their suffering. This is one of the virtues of body. We must abandon taking what is not given and adopt generosity. This is the second virtue of the body. The third is to abandon sexual misconduct and take vows.

The four positive actions of speech

The first virtue of speech is to abandon telling lies and to speak the truth. The second is to abandon divisive speech and to seek to bring together those who are antagonistic. Avoiding harsh words and always speaking pleasantly is the third virtue of speech. The fourth is to give up idle talk and always be diligent in recitation.

The three positive actions of mind

Abandoning covetousness and seriously practicing the dedication of whatever merit we have accumulated through our wealth, our body and our mind throughout the three times is the first virtue of mind. To avoid wishing harm to others and to always make aspirations to help them is the second mental virtue.

Avoiding wrong views and endeavoring in methods to make the supreme view arise in our minds is the third virtue of mind. We should not fail to believe in the relationship of cause and effect, and should adopt the supreme worldly view of accepting this relationship. Abandoning the views of eternalism and nihilism, we should adopt the supreme non-elaborate view of Madhyamaka, Mahamudra and Dzogpa Chenpo, which are all beyond the four limits.⁹

THE EFFECTS OF VIRTUE

The ripening effect of the above ten virtuous actions is that you will be born in one of the three higher realms. As a result of the action that is similar to the cause, you will happily practice virtue throughout all of your future lives and will thereby further increase your merit.

The experience that corresponds to the cause of abandoning killing is to live a long life with few illnesses. The experience that corresponds to the cause of abandoning theft is to have considerable property without facing enemies or thieves. The experience that corresponds to the cause of abandoning sexual misconduct is that to have a good-looking spouse and few rivals for his or her attention.

One who gives up telling lies is loved and praised by others; casting away divisive speech brings forth the respect of friends and attendants; by avoiding harsh words, only pleasing speech will be heard; and the words of those who abandon idle talk will be taken seriously.

9 Existence, nonexistence, both and neither.

Abandoning covetousness results in attaining what one wishes; abandoning the desire to harm others frees one from harm, and abandoning wrong views enhances the development of the supreme view.

The conditioning effect will ripen in terms of the place. Freed from the results of nonvirtue, one is born in places with all the beneficial circumstances.

The proliferating effect is that the effect of one's positive actions will multiply, so that uninterrupted good fortune is experienced.

Increased merit means an increase in the length of time that the merit remains. The time period of a bodhisattva's merit increases because of developing bodhicitta and dedicating merit. Without developing bodhicitta at the beginning and dedicating the merit at the end, the merit may be dispersed before coming to fruition.

REVEALING EVERYTHING TO BE THE NATURE OF KARMA

All experiences and appearances, with no exception, are caused by karma – the cause and effect of action. Whatever suffering and happiness we experience, whether great or small, the cause is karma.

From the height of samsara to the lowest hell realm, the experiences of individual happiness and suffering – in all their inconceivable variety – result only from individual past positive and negative actions. The Sutra of One Hundred Actions states:

*The happiness and suffering of beings
Results from their actions, says the Buddha.
The many different kinds of actions
Lead to the different kinds of beings
Wandering to different kinds of dwelling places.
How vast is the net of karma!*

The different kinds of actions of beings are vast in number. All the negative actions are different, as are all the various accumulations of virtue. As a result, beings experience inconceivably varied situations of happiness and suffering. Considering humans, for example, although the human body is the same, many different circumstances of well-being and misery are experienced. Some people have short lives and others long; some are

rich and others poor; some suffer and others live in comfort. All these experiences result from different kinds of karmic action.

The places where beings live also differ, giving rise to different kinds of misery and happiness. This samsaric net, from which we cannot escape, is caused by karma.

Nothing of the strength, power, wealth or property we enjoy at present will follow us at death. We will take only the positive and negative actions we have gathered throughout our lives. They are the causes that lead us to birth in higher or lower realms.

No samsaric efforts are accomplished spontaneously; they are carried out by various actions. Considerable negativity goes into acquiring strength, power, wealth or property, but we cannot take these with us when we die. Despite the energy and struggle our accomplishments require, we will be accompanied only by our accumulated negative and positive karma. The power of this karma propels us into the higher or lower realms. The Sutra of Advice to the King says:

*O King, when the time to leave approaches
Neither your possessions, your household, nor your friends can follow.
But wherever beings come from and wherever they go
Their karma follows them like their shadow.*

At the difficult time of death, nothing material that you have goes with you, but the karmic effects of your actions will follow you like a shadow throughout all future births. Although the different results of your virtuous and nonvirtuous actions are not always seen immediately, no karma ever disappears. Individuals experience the results of their actions whenever the necessary causes and conditions meet together.

From the Sutra of a Hundred Actions:

*The actions of beings are never lost
Even after a hundred kalpas.
When the conditions are met and the time has come
The fruit will fully ripen.*

The Treasure of Precious Qualities also says:

*When the eagle soars up into the highest sky
The shadow may not be seen for a while,
But a link remains between bird and shadow.
Our actions are the same.*

When the conditions come together, the effects are clearly seen.

The action disappears, but the karma never disappears. The result will ripen later. If we think about a seed and its sprout, the sprout only develops after the seed has disappeared. In the same way, an action finishes and then the result ripens. The effect is not immediately apparent. Unless the action disappears, the karmic effect cannot appear, but while the action vanishes on completion, the karmic result never disappears.

When a bird flying in the sky reaches the heights of space, its shadow seems to disappear, but it is not really nonexistent; when the bird finally lands, the shadow is there, black and clear. In the same way, even though the karma created by virtue and nonvirtue may not manifest immediately, there is no way that it will not finally descend upon you.

More than that, even the buddhas and arhats who have abandoned the obscuration of afflictive emotion must accept their karma, so what is there to say about ordinary people?

Buddhahood is the elimination of all afflictive emotions and negative actions. It is also the elimination of the obscuration of concepts. Arhats have eliminated even the most minute afflictive emotions, and therefore never accumulate any new negativity after attaining this level. Nevertheless, they will manifest the results of negative karma they previously accumulated as ordinary individuals. Even Buddha Shakyamuni, after his enlightenment, showed the result of negative karma accumulated when he was an ordinary being. This is explained in the Buddhist sutras.

Since those who have eliminated both the obscuration of afflictive emotion and the obscuration of concepts must face the results of earlier karmic actions, clearly those who have not eliminated either of these must experience the ripening of their karma. For the sake of benefiting the beings to be tamed, the Buddha demonstrates how he experiences karma.

According to Mahayana philosophy, those who have attained buddhahood never experience unpleasant circumstances. The sutras explain that when the Buddha experiences difficulties, this is only the relative truth, shown for the sake of training and educating beings in the unfailing nature of the karmic effect. In ultimate truth, after attaining buddhahood, the Buddha never faced any kind of negative result.

The Hinayana teaches that while no new negativity can be accumulated after buddhahood is attained, the Buddha must still face the result of

previously accumulated negativity just as an ordinary individual does. The same is true for arhats. Following the attainment of these levels, rebirth in samsara will no longer result from negative karma, even though the effect of previously accumulated negativity must still be experienced. Patrul Rinpoche relates the following story:

On one occasion, the army of Virudhaka, king of Sravasti, attacked the city of the Shakyas and killed eighty thousand inhabitants. At the same time, the Bhagawan suffered from a headache, and when his attendants asked why, he explained: "In the past, those Shakyas were fishermen who killed and ate a great many fish. One night they caught two large fish but they didn't kill them right away. As the fish were lying on the ground, parched and withered and writhing in pain, they thought, 'These people are killing us, even though we did nothing to harm them. In the future, may we kill them without their doing us any harm.'

"The karmic result of this is that the two large fish were born as King Virudhaka and his minister Matropakara. The other fish that were killed became the soldiers of these two. Today they swept the Shakyas away. At that time, I was born a child of one of the fishermen, and when I saw those two big fish writhing in unbearable agony on the dry ground where they were trapped, I laughed. Because of that I have a headache. Had I not achieved the qualities of Dharma that I have, I would have been killed by these nobly born ones."

Shakyamuni attained buddhahood, overcame all his impurities and accumulated all positive qualities, but nonetheless, even such a supreme being as he suffered. This is one story in which Buddha demonstrated an experience that resulted from previously accumulated negativity. Other examples follow:

In the same way, the Bhagavan's foot was once pierced by a splinter of acacia wood as the karmic result of his having killed the Black Spearman during an earlier life when he was a bodhisattva.

Likewise, Arya Maudgalyayana, who had the greatest magical powers of the Buddha's Sravaka disciples, was killed by Parivrajika heretics due to the power of past karma. From time to time, Arya Shariputra and Maudgalyayana the Great would travel to the realms of the hell beings, the hungry ghosts and others to benefit the beings there.

One day when they went to the hell realm they saw the heretic teacher Purnakasyapa who had been born in hell and was experiencing uncountable miseries. He spoke to them, saying, "Holy beings, when

the two of you return to the human realm, tell my disciples that their teacher Punyakasyapa has been born in hell. Tell them that the Parivrajika way is not a virtuous practice, but the way of the Shakyas is virtuous. Our tradition is mistaken; they should abandon it and follow the sons of the Shakyas.

“In particular, whenever they make an offering to the stupa constructed of my bones a rain of molten metal showers down upon me and thus they shouldn’t do this anymore.”

When the two excellent ones returned to the human world, Shariputra arrived first and went to give the heretics the message but the karma hadn’t ripened and the heretics didn’t listen. When Maudgalyayana arrived, he asked Shariputra whether or not he had delivered Purnakasyapa’s message. He replied that he had told them but they didn’t respond at all. Maudgalyayana said, “Since they didn’t listen to you, I’ll tell them,” and he left.

When he gave the message, the heretics became enraged. “It’s not enough that he insults us, but he’s heaping scorn on our teacher as well. Destroy him!” Then they viciously thrashed Maudgalyayana. Crushing him like a reed, they left him lying there.

Up until that moment, the Parivrajika heretics could not possibly have beaten up Maudgalyayana. Not even the three worlds assembled together could have harmed even a single hair on his head, but right then he was overwhelmed by the results of his past actions. “I couldn’t even remember how to get away, much less practice any magic,” he explained. With no extraordinary qualities, he took on the nature of an ordinary person.

Shariputra wrapped him in his robes and carried him to the Jetavana Grove. Exclaiming, “I can’t even hear about a friend’s death. How could I possibly watch it?” he instantly passed on to nirvana along with a number of other arhats. Immediately after that, Maudgalyayana passed away.

Also, there was once in Kashmir a monk named Ravati who had attained clairvoyance and other magical powers. He had many students. One day when he was dying his monk robes saffron in a dense forest, a householder who lived nearby came along looking for a calf that had strayed.

Hearing a weeping sound coming from the woods, he went in and saw the monk making a fire. “What are you doing?” he asked. “Dying my robes,” answered the monk. The householder opened the lid of the

dying pot to check and saw meat inside. The monk himself looked and also saw meat.

The householder took him before the king and said, "He stole my calf. You must punish him." The king hurled him into a pit.

Some days later, the cow herself found the calf and the householder asked that the monk be freed. The king was distracted, however, and after six months the monk had still not been released, so some of the monk's disciples who had attained miraculous powers flew through the sky and landed before the king. "This monk is completely innocent. Please set him free," they said.

The king felt great remorse when he went to release the monk and saw how worn down he had become. "I delayed too long, and have accumulated great negativity," he said.

"There is no mistake," answered the monk. "I myself am the cause."

The king asked, "What negativity did you commit?"

"In a past life I was born as a thief," said the monk. "At that time, I once stole a calf. When the owner was chasing me, I left the animal near a pratyekabuddha who was resting in equipose in a grove of trees and ran away. He was thrown into a pit for six days. As a result of the ripening of that karma, I have experienced the suffering of many rebirths in the lower realms. In this life as well I have known misery, and this was the last of it."

Similarly, the son of the Indian king, Surabhibhadra, was given a seamless brocade robe by his mother. "I won't wear it now," he said, "but I will wear it when I become king."

"You will never become king. After a king dies, his son succeeds him to become king, but your father has the same life force as the teacher Nagarjuna. Until he grows old, your father won't pass away, and since Nagarjuna has power over his own life force, his time to pass away will never come. That's why so many of your older brothers have died without becoming king," she explained.

The son asked how he could succeed, and the mother answered. "The teacher Nagarjuna is a bodhisattva, and if you beg him for his head, he will give it to you. There is no other way."

The son went before Nagarjuna and asked for his head. "Cut it

off and take it away,” he said. The boy took up a sword but no matter how he struck at the teacher’s neck, it was as though he were striking through space and he didn’t cut anything.

Then Nagarjuna spoke again. “Five hundred lifetimes ago I completely purified the ripening karma of using weapons. Therefore, weapons cannot harm me. But I have not purified the ripening karma of killing an insect when I was cutting kusa grass. If you slash me with kusa grass I will be cut.”

Gathering some kusa grass, the boy struck him, and his head fell to the ground.

*Now I am leaving for the Land of Great Bliss
In the future I will reenter this very body.*

Speaking thus, Nagarjuna passed into peace.

These final words of Nagarjuna came from the sky. He also said that he would teach the vast and profound teachings of Madhyamaka. Legend has it that Nagarjuna’s body and head took the form of stones located on two hills in Nagarajunakhoda in South India. The hills are separated by a great distance, but according to Khenpo Zhenga Rinpoche, people say that the hills are drawing closer every year.

In this way, whether or not one has attained the level of an arya, when the time and the conditions come together, the result of karma must be experienced. Whatever positive or negative karma has been accumulated, its ripening will be experienced. Either negativity is decreased or purified through regret and confession, or its karmic effect must be faced. Once a karmic cause has entered the mindstream, unless it is purified, it must be experienced.

If even noble individuals such as this must experience the ripening of their karma, what can be said about people such as ourselves who have accumulated uncountable negative actions during our beginningless wanderings through the realms of samsara, and who continue even now to accumulate such negativity? When will we ever be free from this cycle?

Since even liberation from the lower realms is difficult, we must at all times carefully avoid even the slightest misdeed, and carry out even the slightest virtuous act. Without being that conscientious, every instant of negativity will lead to remaining in the lower realms for many kalpas. Do not underestimate the power of even the tiniest

nonvirtue.

Thus, we should not neglect even the smallest virtue, but must accumulate all virtue, from the smallest to the greatest. Generally, the weight of negativity does not depend on outer appearances of large or small, but on the inner negative intention. Even a small moment of negativity in the mind can result in remaining in the lower realms for many kalpas. We are only talking about negative thinking. Minor negative thoughts can create a huge negative effect. Outer appearances of body and speech do not matter. The inner intention is the important factor.

The “Way of the Bodhisattva” teaches that a moment of negative thought or wrong view about a bodhisattva can lead to many kalpas in the lower realms. Negative thoughts easily arise in our minds. From a moment of negative thought we might experience terrible misery for many kalpas. Regardless of the apparent size of the negativity of body and speech, the crucial factor in determining the seriousness of the negativity is the mental attitude. The seriousness of the ripened result depends upon the degree of negativity, but we shouldn’t be careless about committing even a small negative action. Shantideva wrote:

*If evil deeds committed in a single moment
Become a kalpa in the deepest hell,
That evil gathered since beginningless samsara,
Without doubt, will keep me from the happy realms.*

Some people may think that if they acted badly for only a short time, it may not cause much harm. This is not the case. As we have seen, even a moment of negativity can lead to kalpas in the hell realms. Since we have accumulated negativity from beginningless time, how can we expect to be born in the god or human realms? Our karma can ripen and lead to suffering in this or any future life. Negativity can never lead to happiness. We must always be careful not to engage in any kind of negative act. In the Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish, Buddha taught:

*Do not belittle even small misdeeds
Thinking they can do no harm;
Even the tiniest of sparks
Can set fire to a mountainous heap of straw.*

Do not neglect any negative action, no matter how small, because this could become the tiny flame that consumes a mountain of grass. In the same way, do not think that even a small virtue carried out for a short time

cannot have a major effect, and do not neglect such positive actions. They could lead to great results. Do not think that making a small offering carries only small merit. Small merits can give huge and vast results, and may ripen for a long time.

Patrul Rinpoche gives the following example:

In a past life, King Mandhatri was a poor man. One day, clutching a fistful of beans in his hand, he went to look for a bride. On the way he met Buddha Ksantisarana who was travelling to the village. Greatly moved by devotion, he tossed the beans to the Buddha; four fell into his begging bowl and two touched his heart.

The ripening of this act was birth as a universal monarch of the Jambu continent. The fruition of the four beans that had fallen into the begging bowl was that he remained as ruler of the four continents for eighty thousand years. The effect of one of the two beans that touched the heart was that he was the leader of the four great kings for another eighty thousand years; because of the other he was ruler of the Heaven of the Thirty-three equal to Indra for a period of thirty-seven Indras.

Moreover, it is said that the fruition of simply visualizing the Buddha and tossing a flower into the sky is ruling with Indra and becoming a universal monarch for a period so long it is difficult to comprehend.

A small handful of beans offered with pure motivation and faith to the Buddha, the field of qualities, resulted in huge and uncountable merit. If we make full prostrations in the correct manner, the result of that merit can be compared to the number of dust motes covered by the prostrating body. Even offering a single flower carries immense merit.

The power of merit is generally stronger than the power of negativity, so that with a small virtuous action we can purify all the negativity we have accumulated up to the present. This can result in pleasant circumstances over the course of many lifetimes. We are usually accumulating negativity while walking, standing, sitting or lying down. Examining this situation, it would seem that we can never escape from the lower realms, but in fact even a small act of virtue can purify all of this negative karma and lead to a long period of inconceivable happiness.

The virtue might seem to be negligible, like offering a flower or a few beans, but the result can be quite large.

The Sutra of the Wise and Foolish states:

*Do not belittle even the smallest virtue
Thinking it carries no benefit.
A large vessel is filled
By gathering drops of water.*

And from the Treasure of Precious Qualities:

*From a seed no larger than a mustard grain
Grows a tree the size of a banyan
That in one year puts out branches a league in length;
Even more do the forms of virtue and nonvirtue develop.*

The seed of the tree called the banyan is smaller than a mustard seed, but this tree grows so fast that in one year's time its branches spread out one league. Yet it is said that even this example does not describe the proliferation of the fruits of virtue and nonvirtue.

In the same way, even the most subtle violation of the precepts leads to great evil. One time in the past, the naga king Elapatra came before the Buddha in the form of a universal monarch.

The Buddha said, "Wasn't the harm you did to the doctrine of Kasyapa enough? Do you want to damage my doctrine as well? Listen to the Dharma in your own form!"

"Many beings would harm me; in my own form I have no power," he answered. The Buddha put him under the protection of Vajrapani, and he transformed into a huge serpent, many miles long. On his head a large banyan tree was growing and crushing him with its weight, while the roots were crawling with insects, causing great torment.

The Buddha was asked the reason for this and he answered, "In the past he was a monk who followed the doctrine of Kasyapa. Once, when on a path, his robe was caught in a large banyan tree, and becoming enraged he broke his vows and cut down the tree. This is the resulting suffering."

Thus, for all actions, both virtuous and nonvirtuous, whether the karma is good or bad, heavy or light, the main point is the intent and motivation. For example, if the roots of a great tree are medicinal, its leaves and trunk will also be medicinal; if its roots are poisonous, its leaves and trunk will also be poisonous. It is not possible for medicinal leaves and trunk to grow from a poisonous root. If an intention develops from attachment or aggression, the thought is

impure, and even if the action appears to be virtuous it actually becomes nonvirtuous. If the thought is pure, even if the appearance is nonvirtuous, it is essentially virtue.

The Treasure of Precious Qualities teaches:

*If the root is medicinal, the sprout will be medicinal;
If the root is poisonous, what need to speak of the sprout?
What makes the difference is the virtue or nonvirtue of the
intention;
It does not follow from the form or size of the virtue or nonvirtue.*

Merit and demerit depend on the motivation, not upon the body and speech. As an outer appearance, if the body and speech appear to be acting in a negative way, but if the motivation is sincere, this can turn into merit. The same is true for demerit. With a pure motivation, even if the action involves killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, or lying and the like, these become meritorious.

At the same time, if one is creating the appearance of making prostrations or offerings, while the actual motivation is tainted with hatred, attachment or ignorance, it becomes a non-meritorious action. The actions of body and speech only follow the mind's intention. With no selfish intention at all, with a pure motivation of bodhicitta and compassion from the very core of the heart, bodhisattvas may sometimes commit all seven nonvirtues of body and speech. In this case, it leads to merit, not demerit. As examples, Patrul Rinpoche relates the stories of the sea captain Great Compassion, who killed the Black Spearman, and the young brahmin boy Lover of Stars who, breaking his vows of chastity, married a young brahmin girl.

In the past our teacher, the Buddha, was born as the sea captain Great Compassion, who on one occasion was crossing the ocean with five hundred merchants. On the way, an evil pirate notorious as the Black Spearman appeared, ready to kill all five hundred merchants. Realizing with his wisdom mind that the five hundred were all non-returning bodhisattvas, the captain thought, "If they are all killed by one man, he will burn in hell for countless kalpas. What a pity! If I kill him, he won't have to go to hell but I will, so I have no choice."

With great courage he killed the pirate and gathered such merit that would have otherwise taken seventy thousand kalpas to perfect. Even though the appearance was nonvirtue since the bodhisattva was actually killing someone, in fact it was virtue because there was

not the slightest personal benefit. The five hundred merchants were immediately saved, and in the long term it saved the pirate from the suffering of hell, so the action became a virtuous one.

Most people, when seeing a butcher or hunter killing an animal, feel anger toward the butcher and compassion for the animal. The one who dies is an innocent animal, and may sometimes be the manifestation of a bodhisattva. The animal is repaying its past karma, and in that way lessening its future suffering. Therefore, we should generate compassion toward the butcher, since he will be experiencing suffering in the future. In fact, we must generate compassion toward both of them.

The young brahmin Lover of Stars had lived chastely in the forest for many years. Once, when he went into the village to beg for alms, a young brahmin girl became so attracted to him that she was on the point of death. Out of compassion he took her as a wife, and thereby perfected forty thousand kalpas of merit.

In such a way, taking life and abandoning chastity are permitted for such individuals, while these actions are not allowed for anyone who is motivated by the self-interest of the three afflictive emotions of attachment, anger or stupidity. A bodhisattva of great courage who has not the slightest trace of self-interest may likewise steal the possessions and property of the rich and miserly, and on their behalf offer them to the Three Jewels, or to the humble and poor.

Telling lies is permitted in order to protect the lives of beings who are on the point of death, to protect the wealth of the Three Jewels and so on, but never to deceive others or to serve one's own purposes.

As for sowing discord, in a situation where a virtuous person and an evildoer are friends, if the one who acts negatively is stronger than the one who performs virtue and could therefore lead him or her onto the path of evil, divisive speech is permitted in order to separate them. It is not allowed to break apart those who are by nature suited to one another.

Harsh words could be used as a powerful method to lead to the Dharma the class of individuals who cannot be tamed by gentler means, or as oral instructions to get at the listener's hidden faults. Lord Atisha says:

*The superior teacher is one who attacks your hidden faults;
The superior instruction is one aimed directly at those faults.*

On the other hand, harsh words are not allowed simply to attack a hated adversary.

Idle talk is allowed as a useful way to introduce the Dharma to those who are fond of conversation and could not otherwise be brought into the spiritual life. It is not permitted if it becomes a means of distracting oneself or others.

The three negative actions of mind, however, are never authorized since it is not possible for a virtuous intention to transform them; once an evil thought is born, it leads to something nonvirtuous.

In short, what makes an action good or bad is nothing other than the mind. Even uncompleted actions of body and speech frequently bring about a powerful effect depending on the virtue or nonvirtue of the mind. Examine your mind at all times. If your mind is virtuous, rejoice and train so that the virtue increases.

If your mind is not virtuous, immediately confess. Generate the thought, “Despite all the Dharma that I have heard, even now such negative thoughts are born. How embarrassing! From now on I must work hard to make sure no such thoughts arise.”

Whenever you are about to carry out some virtuous act, begin by carefully examining your motivation. If the motivation is good, continue your activity. If the intention is competitiveness, hypocrisy, a desire for recognition, or the like, forcefully change it and hold on to enlightened mind. If you cannot do this, it is better to abandon the so-called virtue.

Once long ago a group of many patrons were coming to visit Geshe Ben. He very nicely arranged different kinds of offerings in front of the three supports to practice.¹⁰ But when he checked his motivation, he found that he had acted to look good in the eyes of his patrons.

Because of this, Geshe Ben’s offering was not a pure one. Since no benefit accrues from making an impure offering, whether or not such an offering is made does not matter. Geshe Ben checked his own motivation and discovered that it was impure.

Since his motivation was not pure, he scattered a handful of dust over the shrine objects. “Monk, just stay as you are and don’t pretend,” he scolded himself.

The first offering that he made was simply to impress his patrons. As an antidote to this improper motivation, he scattered a handful of dust

to make his shrine offerings appear dirty. He thought that however the patrons would react did not matter; he no longer cared whether the patrons would respect him or not, or whether the patrons would make an offering to him or not. The reason he scattered the dust was to overcome his wrong motivation. In general, making shrine offerings dirty is a negative action, but since he was acting to rectify his earlier impure motivation, this act of scattering dust led to the accumulation of great merit.

When Padampa Sangye learned of this, he said, "In all of Tibet there is no offering superior to the handful of dust thrown by Ben, the Victorious One."

At the time of Padampa Sangye there were probably many people making extensive offerings in Tibet, but they may not have been pure. That is why he praises the sincere offering made by Geshe Ben. If the motivation is not pure, nothing that is offered – be it gold, silver or other jewels – will become a pure offering. In this case, because the handful of dust was the antidote to an impure motivation, it became a supreme offering.

The main purpose of making offerings to the Three Jewels is to cut through our negative motivation, to generate positive thoughts in our mindstreams, and to gather the accumulation of merits. Patrul Rinpoche later explains how even placing one's shoes on top of a tsa-tsa¹¹ can accumulate merit. With an impure motivation, even offering an umbrella made of precious metals and ornamented with jewels brings forth not the slightest benefit.

Generally, offerings are made only to benefit oneself. For the buddhas all phenomenal appearances are pure enlightened bodies and wisdoms. The concepts of purity and impurity, attractiveness or repulsiveness do not arise in their wisdom minds. Therefore, a buddha can see that both shoes and gold are manifestations of pure enlightened bodies and wisdoms. All worldly substances, including both dust and gold, are pure in the wisdom minds of the buddhas, so anything offered can become a pure offering. There is no difference for the buddhas whether dust or gold is offered.

If precious substances are offered with an improper motivation, the offering is demeritorious. With a pure motivation, if nothing else is available, even a handful of dust can be a pure offering. The important factor is the motivation of the individual who is making the offering; the buddhas see no difference between gold and dust. Therefore, we must always examine our

11 A small molded stupa, Buddha, or other figure that is often made up of various sacred substances.

motivation when accumulating merit through actions of our body, speech and mind.

From our point of view, the motivation should be pure; from the buddhas' point of view, everything is pure from the very beginning. We make offerings in order to accumulate merit for ourselves. If we fail to make offerings to the buddhas they will not starve. Motivation is the crucial factor leading to accumulation of merit; therefore we must constantly examine our motivation, and correct it if we recognize any faults. If we examine ourselves in this way and find that our motivation is impure, we must stop these so-called meritorious acts.

If our mind is engaged in any nonvirtue, we must recognize this at once, immediately confess and vow not to allow it to happen again. At best, we must eliminate our negative actions immediately, and if not we must decrease them day by day and year by year. We must increase our merits more and more. The accumulation of merit has no limit, just as there is no limit to the amount of water in the ocean. The wise are never satisfied with their accumulation of merit. We must accumulate as much merit as we can.

However, while our minds should not be too familiar with nonvirtue, on the level of ordinary individuals, it is not possible to completely halt the arising of negative conceptualization. If we examine the thoughts that arise during the span of one day, most are negative. Negative thoughts are extremely numerous. We must check ourselves constantly, trying to eliminate such thoughts and keep them from arising in our minds.

On another occasion, Geshe Ben was staying in the home of some patrons. When they left the room he thought, "Right now, I have no tea leaves. I should steal a little so I can brew tea when I get back to my retreat." As soon as he put his hand into the sack of tea, his mindfulness took hold and he called the patrons, saying, "Look at what I'm doing! Cut off my hand!"

Sometimes even a supreme person like Geshe Ben experiences the arising of bad thoughts. Patrul Rinpoche is not disparaging him. For ordinary people, negative thinking returns again and again. By examining and checking ourselves, we must root it out.

Normally, ordinary people do not examine their minds for negative thoughts, and even if they recognize some, will hide them from others. As an exceptional person, Geshe Ben did not hide his negative state of mind, and even told other people about it. We should all act like this. What we usually do however, is to proudly boast about any meritorious qualities we

might possess, while hiding anything negative that might occur, pretending that nothing of the sort exists. Someone like this is not a supreme Dharma practitioner, but is the worst type of practitioner. This is why Patrul Rinpoche gives us these examples.

Lord Atisha once said:

“Since I took the pratimoksha vows of individual liberation, I haven’t been stained by even the most subtle fault. One or two errors have occurred in practicing the bodhicitta vows. Since following the Secret Mantra Vajrayana, I have committed this fault and that, but I have not remained with faults or downfalls for even a single day.”

Since the pratimoksha vows depend upon body and speech, they are easy to keep, and Jowo Atisha did not violate them at all. People generally think that pratimoksha vows are difficult to keep, but this is not so. We can readily see for ourselves whether or not we are breaking these vows.

The bodhicitta vows and the Mantrayana vows depend upon mind, and are therefore easily broken. We cannot always recognize the kinds of thoughts that are arising, and even Lord Atisha sometimes broke these vows. He repaired these transgressions on the spot, however, never letting a single day go by with a broken vow left unconfessed.

If he broke a vow in the morning, he would confess in the morning; if he broke his vows in the afternoon he would confess the same afternoon; and if he transgressed in the evening, he confessed the same evening. He never slept a night with a stain on his conscience. If we also repent and confess immediately in this way, our negativity will be easy to control. As for Lord Atisha, even if a negative thought arose while he was walking along the road, he immediately made a mandala offering and purified it.

Since any kind of meritorious action can become the antidote to any demerit, making a mandala offering is also an antidote for the nonvirtue of negative thoughts. In the same way, we can prostrate or recite the hundred-syllable mantra. Whatever positive action we undertake can become the antidote to our earlier negativity. For this to occur, the complete four supports are needed. Without these supports, the meritorious action will not become an antidote to the negativity.

As explained earlier, if there arises in our mind the pure realization of the Great Perfection view, the Mahamudra view or the Madhyamaka view, negativity will immediately be purified. There is no need of other supports for this. In the same way, if the pure thought of bodhicitta arises in our mind,

negativity will be purified, and the four supports are not necessary. Except in these two situations, the four supports are always required. Without the supports, the positive actions can accumulate merit, but cannot become the antidote to negativity. Without an antidote, the negativity will eventually, sooner or later, cause suffering. When all meritorious activities become antidotes to negativity, negativity will be eradicated. Only merit will remain, so that only happiness will result in this life and the next. This is why it is so important to always carry out confession practice.

Once, an offering of yoghurt was made during an assembly of many geshes at Pemayulgyal. Geshe Ben was seated halfway down the line. Those seated at the beginning of the line received large portions of yoghurt. "That looks like excellent yoghurt, but I may not get my share," he thought. Immediately, he took hold of his mindfulness and thought, "You greedy yoghurt drinker!" He turned his bowl over, and when the man serving the yoghurt came and offered him some, he refused, saying, "This evil mind has already taken his."

Although his mere wish for an equal share with the other monks was not at all nonvirtuous, he refused it solely because of his selfish desire to receive some of the delicious yoghurt. In the same way, by examining your mind stream at all times and in all circumstances, and adopting virtue while avoiding nonvirtue, your mind will mature and will always be positive.

We must examine our minds over and over again in just this way, and at one point, without effort, every thought will become positive. From then on, whatever action we do with body and speech will be meritorious. Everything we say to others, even if it is slang, lies, divisive speech or whatever, is meritorious as long as the mind is meritorious. The same will be true for all of the negative actions of body, such as taking life, taking what is not given and sexual misconduct.

At the beginning, we have to constantly observe our minds and abandon all negative thought while adopting all positive thought. We will reach a stage where almost all thoughts will be meritorious, with only very few negative thoughts arising. After becoming habituated to this, automatically only meritorious thoughts will arise.

We must learn which thoughts are meritorious and which are negative; otherwise it is very difficult to identify and understand. For this reason, we must listen to and contemplate the Dharma, so that we can adopt all that is positive and avoid all that is negative. When in this way only positive

thoughts arise, the mind has become serviceable or easy to control. At that time, all actions of body and speech become meritorious.

Long ago lived a brahmin called Ravi who always observed his mind. Any time a negative thought arose, he put aside one black pebble; when a positive thought arose, he put aside a white pebble. At first, only black pebbles piled up, and he began actively striving to abandon the generation of evil concepts. After a while, the black and the white became equal, and finally there were only white pebbles.

In this way, at all times and in all situations, maintain your mindfulness and conscientiousness and develop the antidote of virtue. You must keep yourself unpolluted by even the most subtle nonvirtue.

Even if in this lifetime you do not commit any negative actions, you cannot conceive of the karma you have accumulated in beginningless samsara, nor of the inconceivable effects to be experienced as a result.

Thus, there are those who are virtuous in this life and who train in emptiness, but who have karma lying dormant that in the future would lead to rebirth in the lower realms. Due to the actual power of the antidote they are applying, it ripens in this life, also causing suffering.

Some people think that they have not committed any nonvirtue during this life; some do not recognize what negative actions are; some neglect to consider the negative actions of their past lives. Actually, our nonvirtue has been accumulating from time without beginning.

Sometimes people may spend their lives engaged in virtuous actions, but nevertheless continuously experience many kinds of suffering from disease and other causes. Others have the view of Dzogchen, Mahamudra or Madhyamaka, and practice remaining in the view, but also suffer in many ways. This happens because causes for future suffering are contained within their mindstreams. If in this life they failed to accumulate merit or to remain in the view, they would definitely fall into the lower realms in their next lives, but this great suffering is averted by their virtuous activities.

Nevertheless, such excellent practitioners must still suffer in more subtle ways in this life, by experiencing headaches and other illnesses and so on. This suffering eliminates the severe torments of the lower realms they would otherwise experience in future lives. Ultimately, their present difficulties result in their never having to take rebirth in lower realms. This is one reason why even practitioners of pure Dharma may suffer in this life.

Breaking the samayas of the Mantrayana is another potential cause for considerable suffering in this life. Sometimes individuals who practice seriously and go into strict retreat may experience serious difficulties, but on the contrary have no problems if they break the retreat. This is an indication of obstacles to Dharma practice. Such obstacles must be faced and not avoided by discontinuing practice or retreat.

The Diamond Cutter Sutra teaches:

A bodhisattva practicing the transcendent wisdom will be tormented, greatly tormented, by the ripening in this life of karmic actions that would otherwise lead to suffering in the future.

There are also people who mainly engage in negative actions in this life but who experience the immediate ripening of small virtue that otherwise should ripen only in the future. Since their strong negative action will lead them to the lower realms, any positive karma ripens immediately. They have a taste in this life of minor happiness like that of the upper realms – a small amount of wealth, relatively good health and so on. However, their generally negative activities will keep them from the actual comfort of the upper realms.

Seeing these things, some people may doubt the workings of cause and effect, wondering, “Why is someone who is only acting badly experiencing happiness and well-being while I am leading a virtuous life, but still suffer? Maybe there is no cause and effect resulting from virtuous or nonvirtuous action.” They are quite mistaken.

A person might have previously created a small amount of positive karma that could lead to birth in the upper realms, but in this life act only nonvirtuously. The present ripening of their positive karma will close the door to birth in upper realms. Immediately after death, they will fall into lower realms, unable to escape for many kalpas. Cause and effect of actions is still functioning; we should never doubt the workings of cause and effect. Patrul Rinpoche recounts the following story as an example:

In the past, in the kingdom of Aparantaka there occurred a rain of jewels lasting seven days. Next it rained clothes and then grain. Finally came a rain of earth that buried everything; everyone died and was born in the hell realms.

In short, if the negativity is strong and the small positive virtues ripen in this life, the door to future happiness will be closed. In the same way, if our virtuous actions are strong, minor suffering may ripen in this life, closing

the door to future misery. We will not need to be born in lower realms in the next life. This is all a result of karma, cause and effect.

Thus, when virtuous people face difficulties and nonvirtuous people experience happiness, this is all a result of the ripening of previous karma. The effect of your present virtue or nonvirtue, whatever it is, will ripen either in the next life or in some future life. It is important to always develop confidence in this key point of cause and effect, and to know what to adopt and what to avoid.

It is not certain when the merit we accumulate in this life will ripen: in this life, the next life or a future life. The opposite is also true. We must seriously abandon the mistaken idea that the cause and effect of actions is not functioning even though nonvirtuous people may experience happiness in this life, and the virtuous may live in misery. Confidence in the relationship of cause and effect is crucial.

Even without denying cause and effect, people lack irreversible confidence in its workings. When we suffer, we must engage in virtuous actions which will help eliminate the suffering, and avoid nonvirtuous actions. Instead of this, people consult astrologers, ask for divinations and perform various rituals. This is because they do not have true confidence in the law of cause and effect. If they did, they would know that whatever misery they undergo all results from their negative actions.

With complete confidence, we must confess our negativity in order to eliminate the negative karma. Likewise, since the result of virtue is happiness, we must practice virtue. Seeking out other methods exhibits a lack of faith in the law of cause and effect. A person with irreversible faith will always adopt even the smallest virtue and avoid even the smallest nonvirtue. This is the result of their confidence in the relationship of cause and effect.

Patrul Rinpoche continues:

While claiming to be practicing the Dharma with a high view, do not ignore cause and effect.

We may think that our view accords with the Great Perfection, Mahamudra or Madhyamaka. This view is actually beyond the law of cause and effect, and if our actions are based upon it, we will destroy ourselves and others, even our disciples. We should not act according to the view, but practice the view in equipoise as vast as the sky, beyond concepts of virtue and nonvirtue, existence and nonexistence. During post-meditation, we

must uphold our confidence in cause and effect, adopting even small virtues and avoiding small negativity.

Actually acting according to the view and neglecting virtue and nonvirtue, the law of cause and effect, is called action following after the view. Such a person is looked down upon by others. The Great Orgyen said:

O great king, the view is the most important aspect of my Secret Mantra teaching. But your conduct should not fall in the direction of the view. If it does, you will be moving toward the demonic view that says that virtue is empty and nonvirtue is also empty. At the same time, your view should not fall in the direction of your conduct. If it does, you will be caught in concepts of materialism and characteristics, and will never be freed.

Among the three of view, meditation and conduct, view is the most important, but the three should be practiced separately. When engaged in conduct, do not follow the view. When practicing the view, do not follow the conduct. View that follows conduct is overtaken by characteristics or limits. Practicing the view means remaining in sky-like equipoise, beyond adopting and abandoning. Practicing conduct means maintaining awareness of the smallest positive and negative actions, adopting and abandoning them as appropriate.

At the time of equipoise, you are resting in the state of wisdom beyond mind. At the time of post-meditation, you are in the state of dualistic mind, and experience happiness and misery of all kinds. Happiness depends upon adopting all virtuous actions and avoiding all nonvirtuous actions. The opposite behavior brings only misery.

Only when dualistic mind completely vanishes into space can the practice of adopting or abandoning be dropped. Any action that is undertaken then is meritorious. Not the slightest happiness nor suffering is experienced because these depend upon the dualistic mind and it has dissolved into openness. Without dualistic mind, there is no basis for either suffering or happiness. This is achieved on reaching the state of a noble bodhisattva on the eight, ninth or tenth level. By this stage, the eight consciousnesses have transformed into wisdom, and dualistic mind appears neither during equipoise nor during post-meditation. Even negativity will bring about no ripening effect.

In general, however, until one goes beyond the seventh bodhisattva level, dualistic mind continues functioning during post-meditation, even though

not during equipoise. Thus, we must engage in the practice of adopting and avoiding, because the mind experiences misery and happiness.

Guru Rinpoche also said:

*Thus, the view is higher than the sky,
But karma, cause and effect are finer than flour.*

Guru Rinpoche is saying that although his view is equal to the space of the nature of reality, the dharmadhatu, during post-meditation he is careful about the most subtle cause and effect of actions, about adopting and avoiding. This is the same as I have explained above.

The degree of attention we continue to pay to cause and effect must accord with the degree to which we have actually realized the view of the nature of reality. Generally, when the vast view is finally realized, faith, renunciation and bodhicitta automatically come about. The power of the view brings forth all positive qualities.

Compassion and bodhicitta arise by themselves when emptiness is realized. You see your root guru as Buddha so that your belief and trust increase without effort. You naturally adopt and avoid even the most subtle aspects of cause and effect. When this happens within your mindstream, your practices are supreme. On the other hand, if your faith, bodhicitta and compassion diminish while you are practicing the view, and your anger and self-concern grow, your practice of view, meditation and conduct is faulty and not supreme.

Shantideva teaches in the Ninth Chapter of the “Way of the Bodhisattva” that as a result of realizing the supreme view, all the eight worldly concerns will decrease, while faith, bodhicitta and compassion arise effortlessly. Nagarjuna also explains that when you understand that from the beginning there is no birth you will effortlessly have great compassion for those who remain in samsara. The realization of emptiness brings about natural compassion. The essence of emptiness is compassion just as the essence of the sesame seed is oil. When we grind the sesame, the oil is automatically revealed. Likewise, the true nature of reality is such that compassion automatically arises on the realization of emptiness.

Someone once asked Padampa Sangye: “If one has realized emptiness, and then engages in a negative action, will one be harmed or not?”

Padampa Sangye replied that it would be absurd for one who had realized emptiness to carry out any negative action. When emptiness

is realized, compassion arises simultaneously.

Those who have realized emptiness never accumulate negativity. Why ask whether they are harmed or not? Individuals who have attained compassion never harm any sentient beings. Those who have realized emptiness have great faith in the law of cause and effect so they never engage in nonvirtue.

Therefore, if you want to practice the most perfect Dharma, you must follow the law of cause and effect in what to adopt and what to avoid. View and conduct must be practiced inseparably.

The measure of whether the teachings on karma, cause and effect have in this way been developed within your mindstream is the example of Jetsun Milarepa. Once the Jetsun's students asked him, "Jetsun-la, your actions and behavior, whatever we observe, are beyond the mental scope of ordinary people. Precious Jetsun, weren't you from the very beginning an incarnation of either Vajradhara, or Lord Buddha or a bodhisattva?"

The Jetsun replied, "That you think I am an incarnation of Vajradhara, Lord Buddha, or a bodhisattva shows your faith in me, but there is no more mistaken view about the Dharma. At first, using black magic and hailstorms, I accumulated the negativity of a great evil doer. After realizing there was no way I would not be born in hell, I practiced single-pointedly and with great diligence. Due to the key points of the profound methods of Secret Mantra, exceptional qualities have developed in my mind stream.

"If you lack the capacity to wholeheartedly go into Dharma, it is because you have not developed conviction regarding the law of karma, cause and effect. If confidence in cause and effect is born deep within the heart, any ordinary person can achieve diligence such as mine. After that such positive qualities will arise in your mindstreams that people will think you are also an incarnation of Vajradhara, Lord Buddha, or a bodhisattva."

Because of his confidence in cause and effect, Milarepa was utterly certain that he would be born in hell as a result of the evil actions he had accumulated in his youth. Based upon this, he practiced Dharma from the bottom of his heart. It would be difficult to find anywhere in either India or Tibet a liberation story of diligence such as his.

Therefore, engender total confidence and utter conviction in these key points of karma, cause and effect. At all times and on

all occasions, as much as you are able, carry out virtuous actions, including even the slightest, and embrace them with the point of view of the three excellences. Vow that even at the cost of your life you will never commit the slightest nonvirtue.

When you rise from your bed, do not jump up suddenly like livestock bolting from their pen. Remain in bed and relax your mind. Turning it inward, thoroughly examine your behavior. If you committed any negative action in last night's dreams, repent and confess. If you engaged in virtue, rejoice and meditate; dedicate the merit to the well-being of all sentient beings.

Generate the intention: "Today, so that all the infinite sentient beings may achieve the level of perfect buddhahood, I will accomplish whatever virtuous action I can and I will avoid as much negativity as possible."

Again, at night, when you go to bed, do not fall asleep mindlessly, but gently relax and devote yourself to introspection: "What in essence did I do today?" Consider what virtuous actions you may have accomplished. If you have done something positive, rejoice and dedicate the merit so that all sentient beings will attain the level of buddhahood. If you committed some negative action, think, "How terrible I am! Today I have harmed myself." Cultivate regret. Confess wholeheartedly and vow not to act in such a way again.

At all times and on all occasions be mindful and conscientious not to fixate on the solidity of all the appearances of the outer world and the beings that are the inner contents. Train your mind to recognize all phenomena as the play of magical illusion, lacking true existence.

Making your mind flexible by always keeping your stream of consciousness on the virtuous and straightforward path is the essential purpose and result of the practice to this point – the four thoughts that change the mind. If you act in this way, the strength of whatever virtue you carry out will connect with the three supreme methods. As it is said:

*A virtuous person is like a medicinal plant;
Whoever relies on him or her becomes completely victorious.
An evildoer is like a poisonous plant;
Whoever relies on him or her is completely destroyed.*

With the right state of mind, you have the ability to direct anyone connected with you toward the Dharma. The great force of virtue of

yourself and others will increase continuously. During none of your future lives will you ever fall back into negative rebirths in the lower realms. Specifically, you will achieve the body of a human being or a god. Any place a person holding this Dharma abides will be blessed with merit and good fortune, and will always be under the protection of the gods.

I have already explained that because we lack strong faith in the Dharma, we sometimes act in a positive way and sometimes in a negative way. We are not strongly engaged in meritorious action, and do not fear nonvirtue. The Secret Mantra teaching has many methods for purifying nonvirtue; any kind of nonvirtue can be purified. This means that Secret Mantra practice is extremely powerful. With the three excellences, whatever virtue you have carried out in a single day can become a cause of enlightenment and increases merit until enlightenment is attained. The power of mind is so strong that it can help others enormously.

If you are practicing Dharma purely, the gods and protectors will always take care of you. You needn't perform special practices for the protectors. Authentic practitioners are in the company of the protectors like a body and its shadow. The protectors do not offer protection because of offerings of chang or tea. If they refused protection because such offerings were not made, they would not be the real Dharma protectors. Whether or not we request them, the protectors automatically care for all pure practitioners.

I know the many kinds of cause and effect, but my confidence is weak.

I have listened to a lot of teaching, but do not practice.

May I and sentient beings prone to bad behavior like myself

Be blessed to mingle our minds with the Dharma.

We know about many different kinds of cause and effect, but this is only intellectual knowledge and we lack confidence. We listen to many Dharma teachings without practicing what we have heard. These are our faults. The essence of Dharma is confidence and practice.

Patrul Rinpoche says that he is full of defects and that people like him do not mingle their minds with the Dharma. He prays that he and others be blessed to do so.