



# Opening the Door to Dharma

## Part II of II: The Four Thoughts That Turn the Mind toward Dharma

H.H. the Sakya Trichen (the 41<sup>st</sup> Sakya Trizin)



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By the merit of this work, may His Holiness the Sakya Trichen enjoy perfect health and a very long life, and continue to turn the wheel of Dharma.

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**Part II of II: The Four Thoughts**  
**That Turn the Mind toward Dharma**

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# **Saṃsāra Is Full of Suffering**

We are born as human beings and, more important, we have all the necessary conditions, we are free from all unfavorable conditions, and we have met the precious Dharma. Therefore, we have a great opportunity to practice the Dharma. It is very important that we must practice diligently to accomplish results. Because the nature of mind is pure from the beginning it is never stained with obscurations. The nature of mind, which is our buddha nature, is within every sentient being. So, every sentient being has the opportunity to become a fully enlightened buddha. But at the moment we do not see this. Instead of seeing the true nature of the mind, we cling to a “self,” and due to this we have obscurations—the obscurations of defilement, obscurations of the phenomena, and all obscurations of the knowledge. As long as we have these obscurations, we are caught up in saṃsāra. And as long as we are in saṃsāra, no one is free from suffering.

## **I. The First Thought: Saṃsāra Is Full of Suffering**

Saṃsāra is divided into two parts: three lower realms and three

higher realms. There is much suffering in the lower realms, known as the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, and the animal realm.

The hell realm has many divisions. There are eight cold hells, eight hot hells, one neighboring hell, and one ephemeral hell. Altogether there are eighteen different kinds of hell realms. The beings in these hell realms are suffering. Their lifespan is extremely long and thus the kind of suffering they are experiencing is unimaginable. Now, in our human life, even just a tiny needle poking into one's body or tiny spark falling onto one's skin brings pain that we feel is unbearable. If we have to suffer in the hell realm, there is no end to this kind of unbearable pain. The chances of falling down to the hell realm are high because most people are indulging in negative deeds. By indulging in negative deeds, we bring about the result of falling down into these lower realms, especially the hell realm. Therefore, there is much suffering.

The second lower realm is the hungry ghost realm. Due to stinginess and desire, beings fall down to the hungry ghost realm. There are thirty-six different kinds of hungry ghosts, and these can be classified as three types: those with outer obscurations, those with inner obscurations, and those with obscurations of obscurations. Now, in our human life, if we do not eat for one day our hunger is unbearable! But in this realm,

the hungry ghosts are without a single drop of water to drink or a tiny grain to eat for years. Furthermore, they have ugly bodies, yet for the sake of food a hungry ghost has to drive his or her poor body like a noisy old horse cart in search of food. Even with great effort they cannot find food for months and years. Sometimes they find some very dirty food such as mucus, pus, or blood. However, since they are so stingy, they do not eat the foods they find, but instead hoard them. And when they do eat, the food cannot pass down their throats. Even if a hungry ghost manages to swallow, his or her stomach is huge: the food just disappears and, even worse, it causes more pain and suffering.

The third lower realm is the animal realm. Animals are divided into three categories in the animal realm: animals that are dwelling in the outer ocean, animals that are dwelling in between the continents, and animals that are scattered about on the land. There are countless numbers of animals that are dwelling in the outer ocean with different names, species, and so on. Generally speaking, animals are very ignorant; they do not know what is right and what is wrong. It is as though a huge rock is placed on each animal's head, and therefore animals have much suffering. Big animals eat tiny animals. Tiny animals eat big ones. In general, animals have to stay in very difficult, very dirty, and unsafe places with uncertain companions. They are fearful of meeting their enemies, other animals like themselves,

and human beings. Animals that are dwelling in the darkness between continents cannot even see their own limbs. They have to eat whatever comes to them regardless of whether it is edible or inedible. Animals that are scattered about on the land fight among themselves. And they are caught or trapped, tortured, or slaughtered. Animals are killed for their meat, skins, and bones. In summary, there are many different kinds of suffering in the animal realm.

### *The Three Kinds of Suffering*

Generally speaking, there are three different kinds of suffering: suffering of suffering, suffering of change, and suffering of conditioned phenomena.

Suffering of suffering refers to what we normally consider as suffering, such as physical pain and mental anxiety. This is mainly experienced in the lower realms—the hell realm, hungry ghost realm, and animal realm. Beings in the lower realms are constantly suffering; there is not a single moment of relaxing or respite from the suffering.

There are three higher realms—the human realm, demigod realm, and god realm. These realms mainly have suffering of change. Suffering of change refers to what we normally consider as pleasure and joy, but in reality, it is another kind of suffering.

If there is real pleasure, the more we indulge the more we feel joy. However, there is not. For example, a person who is staying in a very uncomfortable place feels hot and sweaty during the summers and cold and wet during the winters. If he or she goes to a home that has facilities so that the inhabitants feel cool during the summers and warm during the winters then, in the beginning, the person will feel very happy. If these conditions are a real cause of happiness, the longer a person stays in such a place, the happier he or she will become. However, this is not the case. If we have to stay there for a long time, after a while, we will become bored and feel the need to go to another place. We will want to go to other places to do different things. The same facility that causes pleasure is now causing suffering, and this indicates to us that this is not real pleasure—instead, it is another form of suffering. Therefore, it is called “the suffering of change.”

### *The Four Major Sufferings in the Human Realm*

Generally, in the human realm we have four major sufferings: suffering of birth, suffering of old age, suffering of sickness, and suffering of death.

Suffering of birth: When one was in one’s mother’s womb, the womb was very tight and had an odor. When one’s mother moved, one was pushed and pressed, and when one’s mother went to different places, it felt as though one was falling down

from a very high cliff; when one's mother ate different foods, hot or cold, one felt discomfort; and when one was born, there was difficulty in the act of birth.

Suffering of old age: When one becomes old, one's beautiful hair becomes white and one's face becomes wrinkled; one loses one's power and strength. One has to depend on others, even when getting up or sitting down. One loses one's voice, and cannot utter words properly. The mind also loses power, and one has no interest in doing anything. Whatever one says or does, it is quickly forgotten. Everything one does is wrong. Others might even criticize or disrespect one. Therefore, old age is a type of suffering.

Suffering of sickness: As we know, when one has sickness, one feels uncomfortable, and when the illness is serious, one feels how difficult it is to receive very intensive treatments. Whatever is eaten, one does not feel comfortable. Even if one can spend one's days feeling well, one cannot spend the nights well. Even if one can spend the nights well, one cannot spend the days well. Not only is one physically sick, but mentally there is also worry and anxiety.

Suffering of death: Next there is suffering of death. No one knows when death will strike us. Death can happen while one is working, before beginning one's work, or in between one's jobs.

At that time, no matter what rituals one does or what medicine one takes, there will be no effect. One has to leave this life alone, just like taking a strand of hair out of butter. All of one's possessions, including this very precious body that one has been with since conception and birth, have to be left behind. The suffering of death brings a lot of suffering.

When we talk about the human realm, we think that there is a mixture of suffering and happiness. But in reality, there is no real happiness. Even the feeling that we consider as happiness is in reality another form of suffering. So, therefore, it is all suffering.

The second higher realm is the demigod realm. Demigods are between gods and human beings, so they are called demigods. They are said to be residing inside Mount Sumeru. They are very jealous by nature because they are constantly competing with gods. Since their merit is never equal with the merit of the gods, they are always defeated. The male members are killed on the battlefield while the women suffer when they see what is happening by viewing the scene in a magical lake. Thus both men and women suffer a lot. Since they are constantly involved in the emotions of anger and jealousy, the result is that they later fall down into the lower realms and have to experience immense suffering there for a long time.

The third higher realm is the god realm. The saḥā world is divided into three realms: desire, form, and formless realms. There are many different kinds of god beings dwelling in these three realms. There are six different kinds of gods who are dwelling in the desire realm, called kāmadhātu. Then, the rūpadhātu, the form realm, has seventeen different kinds of gods. Next is the arūpadhātu, which means the formless realm, has four different levels of gods. So, there are many different levels of gods.

The god realm in the kāmadhātu, the desire realm, is very beautiful. The god-beings there have beautiful bodies, a beautiful life—everything is very beautiful. Furthermore, their lifespan is also very long. However, it is not permanent. One day, suddenly, signs of death appear, such as a god’s body becomes ugly, the god becomes restless or is no longer interested in sitting, his or her flower garlands become old, the body becomes dirty and sweaty, and so on.

These are the signs of death. Since the gods have clairvoyance, they knew where they are going to be reborn. Not only does the god suffer the signs of death, now he or she knows where rebirth will occur. Since all their life is spent indulging in enjoyments, they have forgotten to practice Dharma, so they are likely to fall down to the lower realms. This causes so much mental torture and suffering.

For the god beings dwelling in the form realm and the formless realm, they do not have such visible sufferings as we have, but no matter how high birds fly in the sky, eventually they will have to land on the ground. Similarly, when the strength of a god's contaminated virtues is exhausted, then they think they have reached actual liberation, but in actuality they have not reached liberation—they are still in saṃsāra. So, these kinds of wrong views arise within the god beings in those two realms, and due to this they again will fall down into the lower realms.

Therefore, the entire saṃsāra—whether we are in the lower realms or in the higher realms—is suffering. Of course, there are differences between the two; the lower realms have immense suffering while higher realms have less suffering, but otherwise they are still the same. Beings in the higher realms can still fall down into the lower realms, and so there is nothing that is definite—everything is changing, everything is suffering, and everything is moving. Therefore, it is not worthwhile to have attachment to saṃsāra. Saṃsāra as a whole, the complete cycle of existence, is nothing but suffering. Just like the nature of fire is to be hot, regardless of whether it is a small fire or a big fire, the nature of saṃsāra is suffering. So, all of saṃsāra, no matter where one is born, is nothing but suffering.

The third kind of suffering is called the conditioned nature of all phenomena, which means the feelings that we normally consider to

be indifferent. Our very existence itself is suffering and besides, there is never-ending works, there is no satisfaction of desire, there is no awareness of birth and death, and so on. There is no end of suffering and no matter how much work we do, no matter how hard we work, no matter where we go, there is no satisfaction. So, being attached to saṃsāra is like being a terminally ill patient, a person who is sentenced to life, or a person who has never reached their destination. No matter where we go, or to whom we are associated, what we enjoy, and what we do, it is all in the nature of suffering. So, therefore, we need to be free from suffering.

# **The Difficulty of Obtaining a Precious Human Birth with Prerequisites**

## **II. The Second Thought: The Difficulty of Obtaining a Precious Human Birth with Prerequisites**

To be free from suffering, we need to obtain enlightenment. Every sentient being has buddha nature, so every sentient being has the opportunity to become a fully enlightened buddha; however, only human life offers the best opportunity to accomplish this. Therefore, a precious human life is very difficult to obtain. When we realize that all beings in saṃsāra are suffering, and so in order to be free from such suffering, we need to practice the holy Dharma. To practice the Dharma, we need to obtain the precious human life, which is very difficult to obtain from many points of view: from the cause point of view, from the number point of view, from the nature point of view, and from the example point of view.

### *The Cause Point of View*

The first to be examined is the cause point of view. To obtain a

human life, we need to practice virtuous deeds. Without practicing virtuous deeds and by indulging in negative deeds, how can we obtain a precious human life? Since there are very few people who are practicing virtuous deeds and also it is very rare for people to do so, the result of obtaining a human life is also very rare. These virtuous deeds also are not ordinary virtuous deeds, but good moral conduct. It is very difficult to find someone who abstains from nonvirtuous deeds and has good discipline and good moral conduct.

### *The Number Point of View*

Although there are many human beings, when we compare with other animals, human beings are few in numbers. It is easy to count how many people are living in one country, but it is very difficult to count how many worms and insects exist, even in a small place. For example, in summertime, often we see the corpse of a dead animal covered with worms. This indicates there may be innumerable beings ready to enter from the bardo to the bodies of the worms. There are many, many beings who are dwelling in the bardo, because unless and until we have the necessary conditions to obtain a birth, the bardo beings will remain in the bardo. So, there are many bardo beings who are unable to obtain a body when compared to the number of human beings. As such, when compared with bardo beings and other beings, human beings are very few in number.

### *The Nature Point of View*

From the nature point of view, a human life that is endowed with the eighteen prerequisites is very rare. The eighteen prerequisites refer to being free from the eight unfavorable conditions and endowed with the ten right conditions. The eight unfavorable conditions refer to the eight places where there is no opportunity to practice Dharma. Four of these places are nonhuman realms while the other four are within the human realm.

#### **The Four Unfavorable Conditions That Are in the Nonhuman Realms**

- i. Hell realm: If one is born in the hell realm, there is immense, unbearable suffering. How can hell beings have the opportunity to practice Dharma? Therefore, the hell realm is an unfavorable place.
- ii. Hungry ghost realm: Beings in the hungry ghost realm have constant suffering of hunger and thirst. They have no opportunity to practice Dharma.
- iii. Animal realm: Animals are generally very ignorant; they do not know what is right and what is wrong. Even when the Dharma is explained to them, they cannot comprehend anything. So, there is no opportunity to practice Dharma there.

- iv. God realm: It is said in some teachings that all gods, although they have long lives and have the opportunity to practice Dharma, have been indulging in so much enjoyment that they do not bother and do not see the need to practice Dharma. There is one particular class of gods known as long-lived gods who dwell in rūpadhātu, and apart from the moments they are born or when they die, all their mental activities cease. They naturally have a type of meditation in which the mind is “frozen” in one state. If one is born there, there is no opportunity to practice Dharma.

These are the four unfavorable conditions for nonhumans; then, there are four unfavorable conditions within the human realm.

### **The Four Unfavorable Conditions That Are within the Human Realm**

- i. Barbarians: People in uncivilized lands such as those who are living in deep jungles, do not know what is right or wrong, and do not have the opportunity to receive the right instructions.
- ii. Those who have wrong views: Even when one has the opportunity to receive Dharma instructions, wrong views may be so deeply rooted for this group that no matter how much Dharma is explained, they do not change their ideas—they do not change their minds.

- iii. One is born in the time when a buddha has not appeared: The time when a buddha has appeared is called the “light eon,” conversely when a buddha has not appeared, is called the “dark eon.” There are many dark eons and very few light eons. If one is born in a dark eon, then there is no buddha. Since there is no buddha, there is no Dharma to practice. So that is the third unfavorable condition.
- iv. Those who are dumb, especially mentally dumb: They do not have the opportunity to understand or to comprehend Dharma.

These are the eight unfavorable conditions. If one is born in these eight conditions, one has no opportunity to practice Dharma. Therefore, they are called “eight unfavorable conditions.” Not only does one need to be free from the eight unfavorable conditions, but one needs to obtain the ten favorable conditions.

### **The Five Favorable Conditions Obtained from One’s Side**

- i. Born as a human being: As explained earlier, a precious human life is difficult to obtain.
- ii. One has to be born in a centrally located place: “Centrally located place” has two meanings, a geographically central

location and a central location where the Dharma is practiced and taught. A centrally located place in the geographical sense refers to Bodh Gaya, India, where all the thousand buddhas attained enlightenment. A centrally located place where the Dharma is known, refers to any place where there are the four types of buddha's followers. These four types of buddha's followers are fully ordained monks and nuns, and male and female lay followers. If a place has all these four types of followers, it is a centrally located place. So, one has to be born in the place that is a centrally located place.

- iii. One has to be born with sense organs: One requires sense organs so that one can receive Dharma instructions and comprehend them properly.
- iv. Have real faith in Dharma: One has to have real faith in Dharma, especially the Vinaya, which is the root of all Dharma. It is also rare to have real faith.
- v. One has not committed extreme actions: Extreme actions refer to the five heinous crimes: killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an arhat, creating blood in a buddha's body, and creating a schism among the sangha members. If one has committed any of these, then it is difficult to enter into the Dharma path.

## **The Five Favorable Conditions Obtained Externally**

- i. One has to be born when a buddha has appeared: The times when a buddha has appeared are called “light eons,” while the times when a buddha has not appeared are called “dark eons.” During this light eon, there will be a thousand buddhas, so it is called the “fortunate eon.” After this, there will be sixty dark eons and then there will be one light eon. After that, there will be ten thousand dark eons, and then one light eon. Next, there will three hundred dark eons, followed by one light eon. Within the ten thousand three hundred and sixty dark eons, there are only four light eons. Moreover, during the light eons, when the lifespan of human beings is increasing, buddha does not appear. So, most of the time, buddha does not appear. As such, it is extremely rare to be able to be born at the time when a buddha has appeared in this universe.
  
- ii. One has to be born during the time when not only has buddha appeared, but also buddha is giving teachings: Buddha does not give teachings unless he sees there are beings who are fortunate and are worthy of receiving the teachings, who can comprehend the profound teachings. When the present Buddha Shakyamuni first attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, he did

not teach. He said, “I have found the nectar-like teachings, but no one could comprehend them. Therefore, I am not going to teach.” Then, Lord Brahman offered a golden wheel with a thousand spokes and requested Buddha to turn the wheel of Dharma. So, it is very rare that a buddha turns the wheel of Dharma.

- iii. One has to be born when not only a buddha has appeared and has given teachings, but his teachings are still now a living tradition: Although the previous Buddhas have appeared, they had finished given their teachings. Furthermore, there are long gaps between one buddha and the next buddha.
- iv. One has to be born where there are followers of the living tradition: Being able to be born at a place where there are followers of the Dharma is also rare, because there are many heretics who do not believe in the teachings of Buddha.
- v. One has to be born with the opportunity to find the right livelihood for Dharma: Many people earn a living from others’ offerings by pleasing the donors. These are not genuine practitioners. In contrast, those who are genuine practitioners do not attempt to flatter others for donations. Many of these genuine practitioners are seriously practicing Dharma in secluded places, in caves and in deep jungles, and have difficulties to find the right livelihood. As we know,

the great Tibetan yogi Milarepa had great difficulties in finding food. So, it is difficult for real practitioners to find the right livelihood.

In this way, a human life that is endowed with all the eighteen prerequisites—free from the eight unfavorable places and with all the ten favorable conditions together—is extremely rare.

*The Great Benefit of This Human Birth*

Being born as a human being is very rare. Imagine that the whole universe is an ocean. There is a blind tortoise living deep in the ocean. Every one hundred years the tortoise will swim to the surface. Floating on the surface of the ocean is a golden yoke with a single hole. If the wind blows from the east, this yoke will float to the west, and if wind blows from the west, it will float to the east, and likewise, if the wind blows from the south, it will go north, and if the wind blows from the north, it will go south. Next, this tortoise swims upward, accidentally putting its neck through the hole of the golden yoke. It is almost impossible for all of these conditions to occur simultaneously. Similarly, the chance of obtaining a human life is even more difficult than for the tortoise to put its head through the hole in the golden yoke. This is just a metaphor for the chances of obtaining a human birth. It is not real.

The ocean is huge, vast, deep, and wide. Similarly, the opportunities to be born as a nonhuman being are vast, large, and many in number. The golden yoke has only one hole, so the opportunity to be born as a human being is very rare and very small. The tortoise comes to the surface of the ocean only once in every one hundred years, symbolizing that very few beings are creating the causes to be born as human beings. The blind tortoise symbolizes that the chances of those few who are practicing virtuous deeds to be born as human beings are also very weak, like a blind person. The golden yoke is floating over the ocean wherever the wind pushes it about—this symbolizes that even if a person has the conditions to be born as a human being, there are many obstacles. So, this example indicates that obtaining a precious human life is extremely rare.

Due to our own virtuous deeds, good fortune, and merit, this time we were born as human beings. Not only were we born as human beings, but we have all the eighteen prerequisites, which is extremely rare. So, when we have this precious human birth with prerequisites and favorable conditions, not only it is very rare, but is also of great benefit. It is far more precious than wish-fulfilling jewels. If we have a wish-fulfilling jewel, if we clean it, put it on a banner, and then pray to it, it can bestow us all material needs, such as food, cloth, shelter, medicine, etc. However, it will not bestow us with a higher rebirth, nirvana,

or enlightenment. But with this human body, whatever we want to accomplish, be it a higher rebirth or liberation, or even enlightenment, this is also possible. Therefore, it is far more precious to have a human birth than to find a wish-fulfilling jewel. So when we have such rare and precious opportunity that we could not afford to lose, we have to practice, we have to achieve the essence of this very precious opportunity—that is, to practice the Dharma.

# The Impermanence of Life

## III. The Third Thought: The Impermanence of Life

This human life is also not permanent. Due to our own fortune and merit, in this life we have everything that is needed to study the Dharma, but since everything is impermanent, so now we have to practice quickly. Thinking about impermanence has great benefit. We will be encouraged to renounce saṃsāra and give up strong attachment to our possessions. Thinking of impermanence will also speed up our endeavors and efforts. Thinking of impermanence will become the antidote for suffering. Thinking of impermanence will help us to realize emptiness.

First of all, thinking of impermanence will help us give up attachment, because we are going to lose everything sooner or later. So, with this reflection in mind, we will give up, and therefore will not have strong attachment to possessions. Thinking of impermanence will bring us to the moment when we realize the complete uncertainty of death. It will help us to first enter the Dharma path. In the meantime, it will speed up our path and at the end, that becomes real Dharma—Dharma that is

really for the sake of others, which is to help and benefit others. Otherwise, if we do not know or understand impermanence, even though we are wearing robes, we are still an ordinary layperson.

Reflecting on impermanence becomes the antidote for suffering, because when we realize everything is impermanent, then we are not even afraid of death, and thus other smaller sufferings will not affect us. Also, it helps to realize emptiness because all phenomena have no inherent existence. Everything is impermanent and everything is changing with the causes and conditions, because there is no real inherent existence. In this way, it helps to realize emptiness. To consider this, the teachings on impermanence have three parts.

### *Death Is Certain*

The first teaching is to think completely about the certainty of death. Through this precious human life, we have to practice Dharma very diligently and quickly. Everyone who is born has to die. When death suddenly approaches, only then do we begin to practice diligently, that will be too late. It is said about the four endings of all compound things: everyone who is born has to die; everyone who is gathered has to separate; everyone who accumulates wealth or possessions will exhaust their wealth; everyone, no matter how high he or she reaches, will fall down.<sup>[1]</sup> These are the four endings of compounded things.

### *The Time of Death Is Uncertain*

One thing that is 100 percent certain is that anyone who is born has to die, there is not a single doubt about it. Everyone will die, even the noble ones, although in reality they are free from death. The complete uncertainty of death is that there is no definite lifespan, so no one knows when death will strike us. The future of tomorrow or the next life—which one comes first? Nobody can determine. It is far more sensible to work on our next life's future rather than tomorrow's future, because we do not have a definite lifespan. There are many causes—external and internal causes of death, and there are very few causes to prolong life. Sometimes even things that are meant to prolong our life can cause death, such as wrong medicine, wrong food, and so on.

*Only Dharma Practice Can Help Us*

At the time of death, nothing can help us, no matter how rich one is, no matter how many friends and relatives one has, no matter how powerful one may be, no matter how clever one is, no matter how strong one is ... nothing can help one. The only thing that can help at that time is Dharma practice. The Dharma practice that one does will determine and change the route from falling down to the lower realms toward the higher realms, liberation, and enlightenment. Therefore, to practice Dharma is very, very important; therefore, practice without any delay.

Notes:

[1] In some texts, these four endings might be presented in a different order.

# The Law of Karma

## IV. The Fourth Thought: The Law of Karma

While we have the opportunity to be born as a human being and when we have all the leisure time to practice, our main practice is the law of karma. Buddha said that everything we experience is the projection of one's own karma. There are two types of projections: the illusory appearance and the karmic appearance. Illusory appearance means that there is no inherent existence in what we see, what we experience now in reality, but yet everyone will see the subject and object as duality. We are caught up in this net of duality. Karmic appearance is the phenomena that manifest as a result of the individual's karma and thus every individual will experience different appearances, such as some have long lives, some have short lives, some are wealthy, some are poor, some have more companions, and so on. So, it is said in the sūtra, when the time comes, the king dies, all his possessions and his companions will not follow, but wherever that person goes, the karma will follow just as a shadow will follow wherever we go.

Karma has three different kinds of deeds: nonvirtuous deeds, virtuous deeds, and indifferent deeds. Nonvirtuous deeds means, for example, that if the root of tree is poison, then everything that grows from the tree—leaves, flowers, and fruits—likewise is poisonous. Similarly, the deeds that rise from desire, anger, and ignorance are called “nonvirtuous deeds,” which are causes for suffering. If we analyze the ten nonvirtuous deeds, three are committed through the physical body, four are committed through speech, and three are committed through the mind.

### *Ten Nonvirtuous Deeds*

#### **The Three Nonvirtuous Deeds Committed through the Physical Body**

- i. Killing, either by oneself or by asking someone to slaughter or kill any living beings, from tiny insects up to human beings, through poison, fire, weapons, etc.
- ii. Stealing, either by oneself or through others, forcefully or quietly stealing things that do not belong to oneself, from precious things to insignificant things like string and needles. If one steals even the smallest, most worthless thing, is still stealing.
- iii. Sexual misconduct, that is, activities apart from with one’s life partner, or activities in the wrong time, in the wrong place, wrong passages, etc.

### **The Four Nonvirtuous Deeds Committed through Speech**

- iv. Telling lies: Saying anything that is not the truth, or untruths.
- v. Creating schism: Creating disharmony between individuals or groups, regardless of whether they are true or not.
- vi. Using harsh words: Just hearing such words creates pain to others.
- vii. Making idle talk: Talk that has no benefits, such as about war and so on, that intensifies and activates desire, anger, jealousy, etc. This kind of talk has no use and will create more harm.

### **The Three Negative Deeds Committed through the Mind**

- viii. Having greed: When one sees something nice that belongs to others, and one wants to use it for oneself.
- ix. Harboring hatred: When one is wishing someone to experience misfortune or bad things.
- x. Having wrong views: Having views such as not believing in the law of karma, not believing in the four noble truths, not believing in the Triple Gem, etc.

### *The Three Results from Committing Nonvirtuous Deeds*

The first result is to fall down to the lower realms. Depending on one's intentions and the amount of negative deeds committed,

if the negative deed is committed through anger alone, such as killing one's enemies out of anger, and the negative karma would grow if such negative deed has been committed many times, then one is most likely to fall down to the hell realms. If the negative deed is committed out of greed, such as killing animals for the sake of meat or for the skin, then most likely one will fall into the hungry ghost realm. If killing animals is committed out of ignorance, such as just for fun or for sport, then one is most likely to be born in the animal realm.

The second result is the result similar to its cause, which also has two different parts: the experience similar to its cause, and the action similar to its cause.

The experience similar to its cause: By killing, one will also have very unhealthy life and short lifespan, because one has shortened another being's life and created pain in them and thus one will have pain. Similarly, if one steals, then one will experience poverty; by telling lies, one will not hear the truth, etc.

The action similar to its cause: By indulging in negative deeds, a habit is formed so that even in a future life also, one will continue to enjoy such a deed. For example, if some people in their previous life committed killing animals, so in this life there is a tendency for them to kill animals. Therefore, they continue to create more similar deeds.

The third result is the result of ownership, which means the

negative karma will ripen as the outer aspect of the world where one is going to be born or dwell. For example, by committed killing, one will be born in very unhappy places, where there are extreme weather conditions and natural disasters, etc.

Therefore, nonvirtuous deeds are the cause of all sufferings. Those who really wish to be free from suffering must abstain from the nonvirtuous deeds.

### *Ten Virtuous Deeds*

If the root of a tree is medicine, then everything that grows from it—the leaves, flowers, and fruits—is also medicine. Similarly, deeds without attachment, without desire, without anger, and without ignorance are called virtuous deeds. There are ten virtuous deeds.

The ten virtuous deeds are categorized as three physical deeds, four deeds of speech, and three deeds of the mind. This is just the opposite of the ten nonvirtuous deeds, such as abstaining from killing, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from sexual misconduct, abstaining from lying, abstaining from schism, etc. So, in this way, one abstains from these.

### *The Three Results from Committing Virtuous Deeds*

By practicing the ten virtuous deeds, one will be born in the higher realms. If lots of virtuous deeds are committed, then one will be born in the god realm; if one commits a medium amount of virtuous deeds, then one will be born in the demigod realm;

if one generates smaller amounts of virtuous deeds, then one will be born in the human realm.

The result that is similar to the cause has two parts: the first part is by abstaining from killing, one will have a long and healthy life; by abstaining from stealing, one will have a wealthy life, and so on. Likewise, for the habit formed in one's previous life, if one did not indulge in negative deeds, then in this life there is also a natural tendency to abstain from killing, stealing, etc.

Then the result of having committed virtuous deeds will be ripened. One will be born or dwell in very beautiful places where there are no natural disasters.

### *Indifferent Deeds*

Indifferent deeds or neutral deeds are deeds that are neither virtuous nor nonvirtuous, such as walking, sitting, sleeping, etc. Since these actions do not produce any suffering, they are far better than nonvirtuous deeds, but since they do not produce any positive results, they are kind of useless. While everything is in the mind where the outcome depends on our motivation, so we can transform indifferent deeds to virtuous deeds. For example, when one is sleeping, one may think “May all beings attain the dharmakāya state”; when one rises, one may think “May all beings obtain the rūpakāya state,” etc. By doing these practices one can transform indifferent deeds into virtuous deeds.

## Conclusion

Yesterday we talked about refuge, which is very important, and is the root of Dharma, preliminary practice, and the foundation of all the vows, etc.

Today we discussed the four thoughts that turn the mind by beginning with the suffering of saṃsāra as the first thought. Saṃsāra as a whole, no matter where one is born, is all suffering.

Second, in order to be free from suffering, one needs to obtain a precious human life, which is endowed with the eighteen prerequisites, which is very difficult to obtain from many different views.

Third, as everything is impermanent, human life is also impermanent—one has to think of impermanence, one has to practice without any delay.

Fourth is the law of karma, the virtuous and nonvirtuous deeds—to abstain from nonvirtuous deeds and practice virtuous deeds.

When we receive the Vajrapāṇi and Vajrayoginī teachings,<sup>[2]</sup> these

four thoughts are very important. Before we begin our practice, it is very important to think about these four common foundations such as the suffering of saṃsāra, the difficulties of obtaining the precious human life, impermanence, and the law of karma. When we think of these, our practice will then become real Dharma, which will really help our mind. Otherwise, even if we recite prayers and mantras, we meditate and so on, most likely our practice is mixed with worldly life and worldly thoughts, which are not real Dharma.

As it is taught, “If you have attachment to this life, you are not a dharmic person.” So, with this thought, we conclude today's session.

Notes:

[2] This teaching is offered not only as the preliminary teaching for Vajrapāṇi and Vajrayoginī teachings, but is also appropriate for anyone who is entering the door of Dharma and embarking on the path.

-The End-





■ His Holiness the Sakya Trichen is revered as the forty-first throne holder of the Sakya lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Born in Tibet in 1945, His Holiness is from the noble Khön family, whose predecessors date to the early days of Tibetan history and established the Sakya order in the eleventh century. In his youth, His Holiness received intensive training in Buddhist philosophy, meditation, and ritual from eminent masters and scholars.

Widely regarded as an emanation of Mañjuśrī, His Holiness is the spiritual guide to many in the next generation of Buddhist teachers and practitioners, and has bestowed Sakya's core teaching cycle known as the Lamdre (the Path with the Result) in both eastern and western countries. His Holiness manifests profound wisdom and compassion, tirelessly working to establish monasteries, nunneries, and educational institutions and to impart the Buddha's teachings to countless students around the world.



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