



Monthly Guide



International Buddhist Meditation Center

March 2010

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Bodhi Tree Garden

"I am the owner of my karma .
 I inherit my karma.
 I am born of my karma.
 I am related to my karma.
 I live supported by my karma.
 Whatever karma I create, whether good or evil, that I
 shall inherit."
 The Buddha, Anguttara Nikaya V.57 - Upajjhatthana
 Sutta

The Earth surrounding our Bodhi Tree has been prepared for the Meditation and Altar space. All of the plants that were so generously donated last year will be transferred to beautifully decorated ceramic pots, and utilized on the Bodhi Tree Altar. If any one would like to donate ceramic or terracotta flower pots, large and small, IBMC will happily and gratefully accept them for the garden - and we **Thank You** for you continued support!

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, from 'Kindness, Clarity and Insight'

"Countless rebirths lie ahead, both good and bad. The effects of karma (actions) are inevitable, and in previous lifetimes we have accumulated negative karma which will inevitably have its fruition in this or future lives. Just as someone witnessed by police in a criminal act will eventually be caught and have to be accountable for the crime, so too must we face the consequences of faulty actions we have committed in the past, there is no way to be at ease; those actions are irreversible; we must eventually undergo their effects."

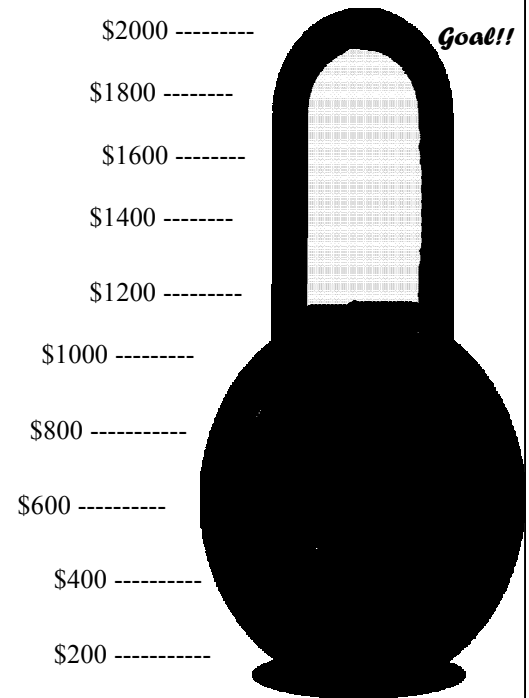
Watch your thoughts, for they become words.
 Watch your words, for they become actions.
 Watch your actions, for they become habits.
 Watch your habits, for they become character.
 Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.

Anonymous

"Karma is not something complicated or philosophical. Karma means watching your body, watching your mouth, and watching your mind. Trying to keep these three doors as pure as possible is the practice of karma."

Lama Thubten Yeshe, "The Bliss of Inner Fire"

As we continue to make progress on the renovations to the IBMC Bodhi Tree Garden, we realize that our goal to complete the renovations by the end of July 2010 can be met - with, of course, your continued support and assistance. Your financial, as well as your physical contributions, all go toward guaranteeing that our 40th anniversary celebration will be a great success. !



Funds collection meter

Karma

The Sanskrit word *Karma* (or *kamma* in Pali) literally means action. In Buddhism, karma mainly refers to one's personal actions. The Sanskrit word *Vipaka* refers to the fruit of the action, or result. Our largest obstacle to understanding or even believing in karma may be time. The 're-actions' or results of our actions sometimes show up with a time delay, and it becomes extremely difficult to tell which action caused which result. Actions performed or committed in a previous life may create results in this life, but who among us remembers his or her past lives? For ordinary humans, the mechanisms of karma can be intellectually understood to some extent, but rarely are they completely "seen".

The idea behind karma is not only found in Buddhism and Hinduism; it seems that the Bible certainly conveys the same essence:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A person reaps what he sows.
(Gal. 6:7)

All things whatsoever you would have men do to you, do even so to them: for this is the law of the prophets.
(Matthew 7:12)

Also the 'Golden Rule' of Confucianism makes a similar statement:

Tzu-kung asked, "Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" Confucius answered, "Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

From His Holiness the Dalai Lama's book Path to Bliss:

"Some people misunderstand the concept of karma. They take the Buddha's doctrine of the law of causality to mean that all is predetermined, that there is nothing that the individual can do. This is a total misunderstanding. The very term karma or action is a term of active force, which indicates that future events are within your own hands. Since action is a phenomenon that is committed by a person, a living being, it is within your own hands whether or not you engage in action."

A very good and succinct explanation by Ge-

she Tashi Tsering is found in his book, *The Buddha's Medicine for the Mind: Cultivating Wisdom and Compassion*:

"Intention is the most important of all mental events because it gives direction to the mind, determining whether we engage with virtuous, non-virtuous, or neutral objects. Just as iron is powerlessly drawn to a magnet, our minds are powerlessly drawn to the object of our intentions."

An intention is a mental action; it may be expressed through either physical or verbal actions. Thus, action, or karma, is of two types: The action of intention and the intended action. The action of intention is the thought or impulse to engage in a physical or verbal act. The intended action is the physical or verbal expression of our intention. Karma actually refers to the action of intention, but in general usage it includes the intended action and the seeds that are left in the mind as a result.

How do we accumulate karmic seeds? Every physical and verbal action is preceded by mental activity. Goodwill motivates a kind gesture; ill will motivates nasty words. Ill will is the intention to cause mental, emotional or physical harm. Thus, before and during a bad action, ill will is present in the mind. The presence of ill will before and during this act has an impact and influence on the mind, the result of which is that a certain potential is left behind. This potential is a karmic seed, a seed planted in the mind by physical, verbal or mental action. The strength or depth of this seed is determined by a number of factors, including the strength of our intention, whether we clearly understand what we are doing, whether we act on our intention, and whether the physical and verbal action is completed.

Seeds will remain in the mind until they ripen or are destroyed. Seeds left by negative mental events and actions can be destroyed by the four opponent or antidotal powers. The most important of these four powers are regret for the negative act and a firm resolve not to act that way again in the future. Seeds left by positive mental events and actions can be destroyed by anger. Even if we do not act on a negative intention, a karmic seed of diminished potency is still left in the mind. This incomplete seed is easier to remove. If it is not destroyed, a negative seed will eventually produce an unpleasant and negative effect, while a positive seed will produce a pleasant and positive effect. Karmic seeds do not go to waste even after one hundred eons. They will come to fruition when the time comes and the conditions assemble.

Actions motivated by the wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings, and dedicated to that end, have a special feature. The positive effects of such an act will be experienced many times over without

being exhausted. For this reason, virtue dedicated to complete enlightenment is likened to a magnificent tree that bears fruit every season without fail. Such virtues will bear fruit until Buddhahood is attained.

THE FOUR LAWS OF KARMA

1. **Results are similar to the cause.** Simply said, when I cause other people harm, I will harvest suffering myself. It is important to note here, that "positive" actions are defined as actions that have happiness as a result; "negative" actions are defined as actions that lead to suffering as a result.
2. **No results without a cause.** As is obvious within science, things do not just appear out of nothing.
3. **Once an action is done, the result is never lost.** Similarly as above, things do not just disappear into nothing.
4. **Karma expands.** Once we have an imprint of an action in the mind, it tends to be habit-forming. As is often said in wars for example, killing the first enemy is tough, but after a handful, one quickly loses count and it becomes "normal". Psychology often stresses a similar point when, explaining the actions of adults based on childhood experiences.

WHAT IS NEEDED FOR KARMA TO RIPEN

A previous action, or karmic potential.

Conditions, or the circumstances which must be available before a specific result can be possible.

A deluded mind. Without delusions in the mind, we will never experience the results of previous actions. This is what happens with Arhats and Buddhas - they purify their minds from delusions, so that they are then beyond the realm of Samsara.

WHAT DECIDES THE SEVERITY OF THE RESULTS

The severity of the results of our actions depends on various factors:

The intention or motivation: The intention is the most important aspect by far, as karma is mainly connected to the intention of the action, be it positive or negative.

The nature of the action: Gossiping is less severe than killing {unless the idle words of the gossip result in deadly consequences}

The actual deed: There is a difference between killing in self-defense or sadistically torturing someone to death.

The basis or object: It makes a difference whether the

life taken is a human or an ant, and this difference directly relates to intention.

Repetition: How often the action is repeated, which reinforces the habit and makes even killing feel less negative.

Doing the reverse: If we always behave negatively to others and never attempt any good deeds, consequences will be severe.

How we experience the results of actions does very much depend on our other actions in life. For example, we may experience the result of being hungry for a day as part of a cleansing fast, but there is a huge difference between our experience and that of a malnourished person in a hopeless situation.

THE FOUR POWERS OF PURIFICATION

When one wants to purify past negative karma, one has to do some action with the correct motivation.

1. Power of the Object: One should practice thinking of all sentient beings one may have hurt, then generate compassion for all sentient beings and take refuge.

2. Power of Regret: This should not be senseless guilt or self-recrimination. What is intended is an examination oneself and one's actions, coming ultimately to the recognition that past negative actions were very unwise.

3. Power of Promise: As a consequence of the above, one should promise not to repeat these negative actions. It is good if one can promise to avoid a specific negative behavior for a specific time, or at least promise to try to avoid it. Not being honest at this stage makes the practice useless or even harmful to oneself.

4. Power of Practice: Any positive action deriving from a good motivation can be used as practice. One can practice making prostrations, making offerings etc.

It often is explained that before one can plant, one first must clear the field by purging it of rocks and weeds, then planting seeds, giving water and fertilizer. Only by engaging in positive actions will a new harvest will grow.

"What fisherman looks for water in dry, dead riverbeds?

One who hopes for spiritual progress, but cultivates neither wisdom nor merit."

His Holiness the 7th Dalai Lama, from 'Songs of spiritual change'

March Events

10 AM - 108 Bows
10:30 AM - Meditation

11 AM - Sunday Dharma Talks

3/7 - Ven. Kusala Bhikshu
3/14 - Ven. Karuna Dharma
3/21 - Ven. Gunaratana Bhikku
3/28 - Ven. Havanpola Shanti

Meditation Times

Friday: 7:30 PM Zendo - led by Ven. Kusala

Sunday: 10:30 AM & 7:30 PM Zendo - led by Ven. Kusala

IBMC Classes

Mon. 7 PM - Tibetan Buddhism - Palmo
Chöling Nunnery - Bhikshuni Chitta Karuna

Wed. 7:30 PM - Everyday Buddhism - Zendo
Ven. Kusala Bhikshu

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http://palmoling.tripod.com

Prison Dharma, a column devoted IBMC's Prison Outreach Ministry.

URGENT NOTICE: IBMC is receiving over half of the Monthly Guides back from the prisons - if you have not been receiving your guides, or know someone who is not, please send us your correct address. **Please Include Institution Name And Your Correct Prison And Bed Number.** Any Guides coming back will be removed from the mailing list.

Greetings to the Students of Ven. Karuna Dharma.

As you may know by this time, this year we will begin to transition the Monthly Guide in to a quarterly Zine.

IBMC will continue to have a special section devoted to Ven. Karuna's faithful students on the "inside."

Please begin send your writings, letters, art and photos to be considered for inclusion in our new publication.

We welcome letters from your study groups, photos of your groups, family and friends, questions, comments, musings, observations, cartoons, jokes etc.

Please submit any ideas you might like to see in the Guide for the Prison Dharma section.

Please begin to write and send your ideas now!
Send all letters to IBMC, 928 S. New Hampshire Ave., Los Angeles CA. 90006:Marked: **"Attn. Monthly Guide"**

If you have family or friends send anything through email, please remind them to mark the subject line as "Monthly Guide"

See You Along The Path...

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