

On Dzogchen and Karma

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Usually people think that dzogchen, the great perfection, just means spacing out in some non-conceptual way like you are on dope, mouth open and eyes staring. Actually, dzogchen means to be liberated. The great perfection is what liberates you. What is going to liberate us? Purifying negativity and accumulating merit will liberate us. If you really practice those two, that is your dzogchen. But do we really practice those two, in *any* way—according to sutra, tantra, or great perfection? No. Why not? Because we haven't really understood the teachings on karma. We haven't brought those into our hearts, so we haven't really turned toward the dharma. We are sort of half facing the dharma and half facing samsara. Your body is maybe pointed toward the dharma, like you are standing facing toward the east, but your head is turned around still looking at samsara like a hungry ghost, looking to the west.

You will never practice dzogchen that way! You will never really do any dharma, sutra or tantra, in an effective way if you are just practicing like that. Why? Because you are still hungry for the causes of your own suffering. You say, "No, I am not that stupid! I don't want to gobble up poison! I don't want to make my own suffering!" Hahaha! Your mouth says that, but look at your own actions—every day you are creating negativity, every day you are eating the poison that you made yourself, and every day you are experiencing the suffering that results from that. We have big mouths but small actions. We have smart mouths but are stupid in what we do.

Why do we continue to be stupid? Because we haven't understood karma. Everyone thinks, "Karma, the law of cause and result—sure, I've heard that teaching. I know that teaching." Really? Then why do you continue to act as though karma doesn't exist? Why do you continue to show with your body, speech, and mind that actually you haven't brought one word of those teachings into your heart?

To understand karma, we have to be willing to look at our own place, our own experience. We have to be willing to look at our own suffering. Until you look at your own suffering, you will never look for the cause of your suffering. But if you are willing to turn your face to your suffering, you will be afraid of it. Then you will look at what its cause is. When you see its cause, then you will be afraid of that cause. Then you won't go there—you won't go chasing the cause of your suffering. You will want to learn how to give it up instead. You will really have interest in that, sincerely! Gradually, you won't just want to learn about how to give it up and talk about it with your mouth, but you will actually put it into practice. You will not only want to give up

the cause of your suffering, you will want to make sure that your suffering doesn't come back. That means you will want to learn about confession, and do purification practices. That means you will do dharma in a heartfelt way. Why? Because finally you will have a real reason to practice, to put everything into your practice. That is how practice will work. Slowly, you will be able to rid yourself of your suffering and the causes of your suffering.

Not only will you have interest in avoiding the causes of negativity and purifying your existing negativity, but you will have more and more interest in doing the opposite—doing positive things. Where it used to be that you would just about pee your pants being so excited about your opportunities to create non-virtue, slowly you will lose your desire to create the causes of suffering, and want to do what is positive instead. Slowly you will change your habits, one by one, piece by piece, until everything is positive. What is the result of that? We will become liberated. Nobody can say there is some dzogchen higher than that!

We have all heard the teachings on the causes of hell realm rebirth, the causes of all six realms' sufferings, so we can't say that we don't know what those causes are. Lots of people have some kind of understanding of what causes those sufferings. But we don't give up those causes. Still we think that it is so wonderful to create them, as if they were the most precious things! We don't want to do confession or practice—we don't want to go there! We know what confession is, but we don't want to do it. Is it because we are against it? Do we hate it? No, nothing that heavy. Instead, it is just that we are busy or lazy. Busy with what? Usually with the opposite of practice—with indulging our five poisons and passions. It looks like the poisons and passions must be wonderful, the way we love them! We love them more than ourselves.

We are like the opium smokers in my country, slowly killing themselves, or like the drunkards or gun lovers. Some people love guns, and focus on getting guns, having the best gun, being the best shot—then one of those guns ends up killing them. Maybe they even stole it to get it, they wanted that gun so much. Then that gun kills them or kills their friend, or causes some other kind of tragedy. We look at them and say, "How stupid, willing to pay hundreds of dollars for what killed them!" We think, "How much more stupid, being willing to steal what killed them!" Actually, we are the same. Think about that. Liars, cheaters, thieves, murderers—nobody trusts them. Then how come we trust ourselves?

All the things that bring negative results, we still think are positive. That really shows we are not paying attention! We don't even need to die to experience the negative results of our actions—lots of people end up in jail, or sick, or suffering in other ways in this life because of their recent negativity. Smokers and drinkers make themselves sick; thieves end up in jail; people taking lots of drugs or just always chasing sex or money will drive themselves crazy or even kill themselves. We do so many

things to destroy ourselves, and they are all on our own head. Still we ignore the truth that each cause will bring its result.

Our willingness and even eagerness to destroy ourselves with our negativity proves that we have not really understood the implications of the law of karma. We haven't thought deeply about it, that is why our negative habits remain unchanged. That is why we are still turned toward samsara, still infatuated with its pleasures, still believing its lies. We will never practice any dharma sincerely while we keep the truth of karma at a distance—forget about the highest dharma, which is dzogchen! We need to go there, go deeply into the truth of the undeniable connection between cause and effect, if we want to practice any level of pure teachings. So please, everybody, it's time to face yourself, to face your own situation, it's time to stop thinking that you are already so smart and instead look directly at what you are doing with your body, speech, and mind. If you want to really practice, you have to start by looking at your own brain. Does that mean seeing how pretty you are? No. Sentient beings, we don't have pretty brains. We are full of the yucky five poisons. That is what we have to be willing to see. Otherwise, I don't think any Hinayana or Mahayana will be happening, forget about dzogchen! Everybody try, okay? Try to stop cheating yourself.

Tashi delek!

-Gyatral