

2017_05_07_3_Karma_LMC.mp4

4 Thoughts: we both create and experience karma

sangha [00:00:04] reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer

[00:02:42] The third of our contemplations of the Four Thoughts... has to do with the interdependence... between our actions, actions of speech, actions of the mind, thoughts and attitudes and various things which we intentionally imagine or unintentionally build opinions and judgments and so on. ... So actions of the body, actions of the speech and actions of the mind. And this third one has to do with the interdependence of these three... body, speech and mind. And taken on the whole... the body, speech and mind and the actions of body, speech and mind, are the way in which we both create karma and experience it. ...

[00:04:50] Now in one sense... one could take this as simply a small variation on... the teaching that what you sow is what you reap. It is a kind of common... concept in most spiritual traditions. But in the context of Buddhism. 'what you sow is what you reap' has a not so subtle distinction... from what those words normally mean. And that distinction is essentially that there are no boundaries... on either the creation of karma, in other words, the creation of thoughts and speech and actions. No boundaries on the creation of these things and no boundaries on their potential... or actual manifestation.

[00:06:47] More *explicitly*... it is said, all actions of body, speech and mind... bear some result. And that result could happen instantly. Like, for example, if I punch you in the nose, you may punch me back immediately. On the other hand, you may hold a grudge for that action. And you may do things in the future, which are the result of that action. And I may do things in response to what you did without even knowing what your response was based upon. Kind of like, if you throw a large stone in a pond, it will create a number of ripples and waves. And after you can no longer see those waves, there are still forces going on under the water as a result of having thrown that stone in the pond. They just become more subtle. Some of our actions bear a quick result. And in a sense, disappear completely. The action itself!

[00:08:56] And some of our actions bear long term results. And now, is where we say 'without a boundary'. The result could happen at *any* time in the future. No way to predict, no way to know what the outcome would be. You don't have to look long to realize that... you will not be able to see how the various connected pieces fit together. But the philosophical underpinning, the conceptual underpinning, in the Buddhist tradition is... that they *do* all fit together. In such a thoroughgoing way, that some say... any action, no matter how small or big, bears a result. Though some of them may take *eons* and longer to bear their result.

[00:10:33] So now we come to an uncomfortable... aspect of this. The Buddha himself, in numerous places, is quoted as saying something to the effect... it is *impossible* to understand the workings of karma... unless you are an enlightened being. On the other hand, the fact that you do *not* understand it, does not mean that you are not subject to it. And therefore, we see... pretty much the whole system of ethics inside of Buddhism. Karma is not bound by time and space. We cannot know the outcomes of all of our actions of body, speech and mind. Therefore, be careful... of everything you do and say. ...

[00:12:18] Because.... an example comes to mind. In the many galaxies in our known universe... there are, fairly regularly, by our normal standards, cataclysmic events... that are so big, they are almost immeasurable. These are just science things. And their effect, in almost every instance, occurred in an almost unfathomable past. In other words, they didn't happen recently. But now we see them after many thousands of years, millennia, millions of years, we see the result. In the same way... karma works. Remaining invisible for a very long time, like those cataclysmic events, or like those waves in the pond. ...

[00:14:30] Thus, another teaching of the Buddha runs like this... in a kind of, I think, shocking statement. The *majority* of the karma that we experience, in any given life... is actually the result of our actions of body, speech and mind in previous lives. So the *majority* of our experiences of ripening karma occur... from actions in previous lives. Mathematically, it makes sense. If we are experiencing the results of previous lives, they certainly must add up to more than this current one by itself. ...

[00:15:58] Now, the reason that I find it interesting to... put this on a dish and serve it to you, [laughs] is that for the curious individual... this is a *fascinating* proposition. We can no longer draw straight lines between our normal habits of seeing and deciding what caused what in our experience. You stole my money, so therefore I can't go to the movies or I can't buy this or that. Or you decided you didn't like me and left me and therefore X, Y, Z, whatever it is. If we look at this closely, any conclusion that we might be inclined to draw, by definition, can't hold water. So that teaching all by itself, contemplated carefully and looked at... can radically change our relationship with all of our experience. Our experience is driven then by things that originated way before we were born in this life.

[00:17:48] Now, it's not a requirement, in fact, I would say that it's a requirement *not* to believe in this. If you believe in this, you are placing another obstacle in front of yourself for some future point. On the other hand, if you *imagine*... that the great majority of your own experiences, in this moment, in this life, however you want to frame it... originated *before* this life. It's an interesting contemplation to sit down and practice shamatha and just have that relationship without any conversation. Just note that the feelings and the perceptions and the things that arise while you're sitting still... did not, contrary to our ordinary understanding, arise from much at all that has happened recently.

[00:19:06] There's also a benefit to this. If you look at karma in this way, it's easy to build a sense of equanimity in relationship to all other beings. Because we're all kind of in the same boat when it comes to this particular proposition. So suddenly it can become kind of ludicrous to hold judgments against others. We have no idea what came to them, when it started, where it will end. And so everyone's relationship to us becomes like a teaching relationship. We have an opportunity to see our own experience arise by virtue of our relationships with others. We do *not* have an opportunity to ever know where that came from. ... Okay, I think that's about 500 times too much. Let's have a session of shamatha again, 20 minutes or so.

[00:20:36] *period of meditation*
sangha [00:34:31] *dedicating the merit*