

## 6. All About karma

### Meditation on Four Characteristics of Karma

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Use a basic breathing meditation to quiet the mind.

Focus on your breath as it flows naturally in and out.

As you breathe out, let go of physical tension, mental dullness, disturbing thoughts. If you notice any object coming to mind other than the breath, let go and return your awareness to the flow of the breath

As you breathe in, visualize white light flowing in with your incoming breath.

Your mind should now be more calm and clear and ready to set the motivation for the meditation session.

Visualize in the space in front of you, Shakyamuni Buddha surrounded by infinite Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and all the Holy Gurus in the direct and indirect Lineage of the teachings. Filling the space around you visualise all sentient beings and recall how they have been kind numberless times as your mother and in other ways. Visualize the rays of light coming from the holy beings and flowing into oneself and into all mother sentient beings.

As the light absorbs into you and the sentient beings it purifies all negativity and obscurations and brings all realizations. Make a heartfelt request to be able to realize the essential point of the meditation for the purpose of being able to perfectly benefit all mother sentient beings.

Begin the meditation on the 4 characteristics of karma. The purpose of the meditation is to build up our understanding of karma, to recognize the power of karma and to develop enthusiasm to create even the smallest virtue and avoid the slightest non-virtue.

The first characteristic is that karma is definite:

Think how non-virtuous actions definitely bring unhappiness and virtuous actions definitely bring happiness.

Actions motivated by virtuous mental states such as loving kindness, generosity, faith, and wisdom are virtuous by nature and can only ripen in experiences of happiness.

Actions motivated by non-virtuous mental states such as anger, attachment, pride and ignorance are non-virtuous by nature can only ripen in suffering and unhappiness.

Bring to mind some of the virtuous and some of the non-virtuous actions you have created in the past and think about these in relation to this characteristic of karma being definite.

Next – karma is expandable or increases

Once the karma has been created and the imprint left on the consciousness, it will continue to increase in strength. This is true for both virtuous and non-virtuous karmic actions. So while the action may seem small and unimportant at the time of creating it, because of this

characteristic of increasing it can bring a strong result. Therefore it is important to be conscientious in creating even small virtuous actions and avoiding even the slightest non-virtue. Through purification it is possible to weaken the power of non-virtuous actions but without purification they will continue to increase.

Next – The result cannot be experienced unless you have created the cause.

There is no effect without a cause. Recall examples of happiness you have experienced in the past. While it may seem that external conditions brought about this happiness it would not have been possible to experience these unless you had created the cause. In the same way bring to mind some experiences of suffering or unhappiness that you have had in the past. It may seem that external conditions or other people were the cause of these experiences but consider how it would not have been possible to experience these unless you had created the cause.

This third characteristic means that we have control over our future. Reflect on the happiness and positive conditions you hope to experience in the future and how it is impossible to experience those unless you create the cause.

The fourth characteristic - Actions once created will never be lost.

The karmic seed is never lost no matter how long between the creation of the action and the experiencing of the result. When the appropriate conditions coincide, the results will be experienced – in this or some future lifetime.

Unless purified, whatever non-virtuous actions we have created will remain in our continuum until eventually they bring their result. Likewise whatever virtuous action we have created or will create will remain in our continuum until eventually they bring their result

By thinking on these 4 characteristics of karma, our understanding of the power of karma – both virtuous and non-virtuous - becomes clearer. Whatever understanding we have generated by reflecting in this way hold the mind single pointedly on this for as long as possible.

Conclude the meditation by recalling the Buddhas in front of you. Visualize that they absorb into the central Buddha, Shakyamuni. He absorbs into light and that light absorbs into you through the crown of your head. Feel you are one with the Buddha in the form of all-encompassing space. Concentrate on this for as long as possible

Dedicate the merit of this meditation. May this action become the cause of enlightenment so that you can perfectly lead all sentient beings into their enlightened state as quickly as possible.