Understanding Karma

Exploring the law of karma helps us understand why suffering and problems arise in our life, we can learn how to protect our self from future pain and build the foundation for a life of pure happiness.

This course is a preparation for Vajrasattva purification weekend retreat.

- October 14th - Introduction to Karma and purification

- October 21st - The powers of regret and promise

- October 28th - The powers of reliance and opponent force

- November 4th - Introduction to Vajrasattva practice

- Introduction to Karma and purification
- The powers of regret and promise
- The powers of reliance and the opponent force
- Introduction to Vajrasattva practice

Introduction to Karma and purification

Below are some key points that will go with you throghout the whole course. Feel free to return to the points you are making in this class in your other classes because it will create repetition

You don't need to talk about all these points(you can if you wish...)

Introduction - basic Buddhist view: Purification is done in order to liberate the self from the experiences that are the results of previous activities.

So we need to know something about

1. The self
2. About Karma
3. About purification

1. Who we are

- what is the self?
  - contaminated basis of imputation
  - uncontaminated basis of imputation
- our basic aspiration
- what are our real problems
  - what is suffering
  - what is happiness
- where do they come from
  - mind is the creator of everything

2. What is karma?

- what is the purpos of Buddha's teaching about karma?
- what is karma
  - what are the four characteristics of karma
- what misconception might people have with regards to karma

3. What is purification.

- What do we purify
  - negativities in our mind
  - where do these negativities come from?
- Why do we purify
- how do we purify
  - the four powers (you can introduce them briefly and in the next two classes we shall explore them in more depth)
    - reliance
    - regret
    - opponent force
    - promise

The powers of regret and promise

Briefly

- what is karma
- what are the four results of one actions
- what do we purify

How do we purify

The four powers

The two powers - regret and promise, as explained in the book The Bodhisattva Vow:

> The first opponent power, the power of reliance, purifies the potential for the environmental effect, and also functions to subdue negative karma in general.

> The fourth opponent power, the power of promise, purifies the potential for the effect that is a tendency similar to the cause, and also prevents us from repeating the action.

- The power of regret
  - Clarifying the difference between guilt and regret.
  - In Joyful Path (power of regret) Venerable Geshe-la says:
  - > We develop regret by remembering all the dangers of our negativity.

    this is practical but hard so need to approach this gently
  - > The stronger our regret, the stronger our restraint.

    This is an insight for the importance of regret
- The power of promise

- exploring the act of promising - what helps us keep a promise, what may be the reasons we break promises

From the dictionary

guilt (gɪlt) n

1. the fact or state of having done wrong or committed an offence
2. (Law) responsibility for a criminal or moral offence deserving punishment or a penalty
3. remorse or self-reproach caused by feeling that one is responsible for a wrong or offence
4. archaic sin or crime

From chatGPT

Regret is about wishing something had been different — an event, a choice, or an outcome.

Guilt is about feeling responsible for harm — it carries a moral or ethical weight.

For example:

- You might **regret** missing an opportunity to visit a friend before they moved away.
- You might feel **guilty** if you promised to visit but didn’t, and your absence caused them pain.

Re-stated

- Guilt is the emotional weight of feeling responsible for a moral wrong — “I have done harm.”
- Regret is the emotional reflection of wishing one had acted differently — “I wish I had not done that.”

So guilt carries moral judgment — the sense of having violated a value or duty. Regret carries emotional sadness — a yearning for what might have been.

These kind of insights can help us understand why people do not like guilt. But if we think about it guilt is not necessarily as "negative" as most people feel it to be.

It might be that our capacity for taking responsibility for incorrect moral behaviors is manipulated by others to make us behave in a particular way. This is of course problematic and make cause a lot of resentment.

Practicle take away

Explore how can these two forces be practiced:

- In meditation
- During our daily activities

The powers of reliance and the opponent force

Briefly

- what is karma
- what are the four results of one actions
- what do we purify - the four results

How do we purify

The four powers

- The power of reliance
- The power of opponent force

Introduction to Vajrasattva practice