

July 2012

I would like to start a series of emails. I have given this as a series of talks over the years. This will be the first time I will try to get it down on paper. I would like to thank Geoff who is the editor of these emails and gives valuable input. I don't think I would be able to do these without his help. Thanks Geoff!

Also if these emails give rise to any questions for anyone, or are confusing in any way, please feel free to call me.

These emails will try to cover karma: what it is; inherited karma; karma we make; things that don't help, and things that do help. Karma is very misunderstood, not often talked about, and not something people are generally aware of. I have found in my own spiritual training, and through talking to others, how important it is in our existence. I have a few stories to tell that help with the understanding of karma. Also I will go over my own experience of it.

I would also like to say that karma is a vast and profound area. There are many dimensions and layers to it. I feel that in my knowledge of it I have only scratched the surface. It is always hard to explain something so deep, but since I have found it so important and helpful, I'm going to keep trying.

I would like to start off with something that Rev Master Jiyu-Kennett wrote which includes an explanation of how karma works. Then I would like to tell a short story so that we have a practical example of what is being talked about.

In the following explanation from Rev Master Jiyu, one can see that she uses the terms the Buddha Nature, the Buddha Essence, and the Cosmic Buddha. One should note that these all refer to the same "thing", which she subsequently referred to as "The Eternal" or "The Unborn" or "That Which Is". And for those who are not Buddhist one could equally use terms that are familiar to one's own religion. Here's her explanation:

"What people usually think of as their "self", "soul", or "spirit" is actually an impermanent combination of several components. Some components, such as the ego, the sense of self, the body image, and the like are personal and individual but are continually changing and do not survive death. Another component, the Buddha Nature, because it is one with the Buddha Essence of the Universe, is unchanging and eternal and yet, for the very same reason, is neither personal nor individual. A third type of component is what is known as karma; this is the spiritual force set in motion by all volitional actions, whether good or ill. When we speak of a person's karma, we refer to the sum total of all such forces currently remaining effective which he or she has produced in this lifetime or has acquired at the time of conception from other beings

which have left it unfulfilled at the times of their deaths. Positive volitional acts produce positive karma, sometimes called merit, which has positive effects on the lives of beings. This positive karma, already being at peace by its very nature, is at one with the infinite Sea of Merit of the Cosmic Buddha upon the death of the individual and thus provides no basis for an immortal soul. Negative karma, if not exhausted or purified in this lifetime, continues on after death and conditions the conception of a new being who will have the opportunity to allow it to run its course or to purify it, thus setting it to rest. Once its force is spent, negative karma ceases to exist, hence it, too, cannot produce an immortal and individual soul. The karma produced in this life and the karma inherited from other beings are not of different types: they both act in the same way and are indistinguishable. Thus, in Buddhism, there really is no such thing as an individual and immortal soul;"

And now here is a story I have been telling for years. I might have read it somewhere or I might just know of it, I forget exactly.

In Germany in the middle of the 1930s there was this Jewish couple with three children. The Nazis were getting pretty powerful. The father had a brother in Canada. Given the worrying situation in Germany, the brother said to them that they were welcome to bring the family to Canada where he could help them re-settle. The couple thought about this plan, but concluded that the Nazis were just a bunch of hoodlums who would not last long in power. They made the decision to stay in Germany. To make a long story short, the family were rounded up, taken to a concentration camp, and gassed. The couple hated themselves for the decision they had made. Right up to the time of death they were consumed by this self-hatred and by guilt.

This guilt and hate for oneself (themselves) is the kind of karma that is reborn in another being, a being such as ourselves. We inherit all kinds of karma (the above is just one example). The reason we inherit it, is so that it can be converted. This karma can manifest in us in many ways. One can be totally consumed by it, or it can come up in waves, or in other ways. Many people have different mood swings or different emotions that come up - these are usually the residue of some kind of inherited karma.

I have found for myself, and I know many others who have also found, that this pained karma needs to meet, and be washed by, the Love of the Eternal. Meditation and spiritual training bring forth this Love and help to allow this meeting and washing to take place. This is what works, this is what enables the conversion to take place. In this way we can allow our life to be the means by which this pain and confusion from the past (karma) can finally meet the Love it so longs for. When we do this and turn to this true source of Unconditional Love that we yearn for we can finally find peace.

I have also tried many other things that have not worked. In the next email we will go over some of the things that do not work.

Take Care
Rev Basil