



PRACTICE VI

The Four Powers:

How to Get Rid of Your Old Bad Karma

*Answer Key, Class One*

1) Name the original source of the teaching on the four powers; give its author, and his dates. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**The original source of the teaching is a sutra by Lord Buddha himself (500 BC) called *The Teaching on the Four Practices*.**

ཚཱ་བཞི་བསྐྱེད་པའི་མདོ།

*chu shi tenpay do*

2) Name the four powers, following the order of the original source. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) The power of destruction.

སུན་འབྱིན་པའི་སྣོབ་ས།

*sunjinpai top*

b) The power of the antidote.

གཉེན་པོའི་སྣོབ་ས།

*nyenpoi top*

c) The power of stopping.

སླར་ལྲོག་པའི་སྣོབ་ས།

*larndokpai top*

d) The power of the foundation.

ཏེན་གྱི་སྒྲོབ་ས།

*ten gyi top*

3) *The Diamond-Cutter Sutra* is one of the most important sources used to prove that the four powers really can remove your old bad karma. What does it mean when this sutra says that you can remove even karma which is "committed and collected"?

**This phrase in the sutra refers to a kind of karma called "certain to lead to the experience of a result." This refers to very serious actions such as the five "immediate" deeds. The point is that, if purification can remove even these very serious karmas, then needless to say it can remove lesser karmas.**

4) How does Pabongka Rinpoche describe the karma of killing an insect, when this karma is left in the mind stream without purification for the length of 15 days?

**He says, since the power of karma doubles every 24 hours, then the unpurified karma of killing one insect becomes—within 15 days—equivalent to the karma of killing more than 16,000 insects, or "just about the karma of killing a human."**



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*Answer Key, Class Two*

1) The order of the actual practice of the four powers is not the same as the order in the original source. Which power comes first in the order of practice?

**The power of the foundation comes first, as noted by Je Tsongkapa, since it makes more sense first to "ground" ourselves for the practice of purification.**

2) What are the two practices included in the power of the foundation? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) Taking refuge in the Three Jewels.

སྐབས་འགྲོ

*kyamdro*

b) Developing the Wish for enlightenment, or bodhichitta

སེམས་བསྐྱེད།

*semkye*

3) Give two reasons for the word "foundation" in the name of the power of the foundation.

**When you fall down (here by committing a bad deed), you have to have some solid ground below you to prop yourself back up again. And the two practices just mentioned are the foundation of the entire Buddhist path. Secondly, our bad deeds are "founded" or "based" or committed against two separate parties: the Buddhas, and other unenlightened beings. Taking refuge makes up for our offense against the enlightened beings; developing the Wish for enlightenment does the same for the unenlightened beings.**

4) The Indian master Abhaya Karagupta, some 500 years before Buddhism reached Tibet, described why a very special form of the Wish for enlightenment is effective in the power of the foundation. Name this form of the Wish, and explain why it's effective. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and explain in English.)

**Master Abhaya Karagupta is referring to the "ultimate" Wish for enlightenment, which is actually just another name for the direct perception of emptiness. He quotes a number of sutras to prove that understanding emptiness removes immense amounts of negative deeds.**

དོན་དམ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད།

*dundam semkye*

5) How does Lord Buddha describe the future of anyone who has committed extremely bad deeds, but who begins to understand emptiness fairly well?

**He states, in *The Sutra in the Secrets of the Ones Gone Thus*: "I do not say, o Protector of Light, that such a person would ever go to the lower realms."**

6) What is the basic nature of the "power of destruction"?

**It is the intelligent regret of a well-educated Buddhist who clearly understands the ramifications of collecting even a very minor karma.**



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*Answer Key, Class Three*

1) Which is the most important of the four powers, and why?

**The most important of the four is the power of the antidote; and this is because the most effective antidote is understanding the emptiness of any given situation, and more particularly the emptiness of the "three spheres" of the bad deed we have committed. This understanding will liberate us from repeating any bad deeds, and eventually lead us to nirvana and enlightenment.**

2) What are the "three spheres" in the case where you have yelled back at your boss after he or she yelled at you? (Tibetan track name the three spheres in Tibetan, and then explain in English.)

**The three spheres are the "yeller" (me); the "yellee" (my boss); and the yelling itself. Each one is only a perception towards an empty screen forced upon me by my past karma.**

འཁོར་གསུམ།

*korsum*

3) List the six traditional forms of the power of the antidote. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) Study profound scriptures.

མདོ་སྡི་ཟབ་མོ་ལ་བརྟེན།

*dode sabmo la ten*

b) Take an intense interest in emptiness.

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད་ལ་མོས།

*tongpanyi la mu*

c) Recite secret mantras.

གསང་སྒྲགས་བཟླས་པ།

*sang-ngak depa*

d) Make images of holy beings.

སྐྱ་གཟུགས་བྱེད་པ།

*ku-suk chepa*

e) Make offerings to the Buddhas.

སངས་རྒྱས་ལ་མཚོད་པ།

*sanggye la chupa*

f) Keep the names of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

སངས་རྒྱས་དང་བྱང་སེམས་མཚན་འཛིན།

*sanggye dang jangsem tsen dzin*



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*Answer Key, Class Four*

1) Name an important source for the teaching on the power of stopping, and summarize what it says. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and summarize in English.)

**The source is *The Sutra of Kshitigarbha*, which states that giving up the act of taking life "destroys all the obstacles from the act of killing that you've carried in your mind for beginningless time."**

སའི་སྣོང་པོའི་མདོ།

*saiy nyingpoy do*

2) What does this source say would be a result of stopping in this particular way? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

**The result of giving up the taking of life would be that "you stop ever becoming sick, and your life becomes longer."**

ནད་མེད་ཅིང་ཚེ་རིང་བ།

*neme ching tse ringwa*

3) Je Tsongkapa advises us to "be like Katyayana," if we need to be, in following the practice of the power of stopping. Explain this reference.

**Katyayana was a disciple of Lord Buddha who saw emptiness directly and became an "arya" or realized being. In a past life, however, he was a butcher. He agreed to promise to stop taking life, but found that he could not do so all together; he compromised then, taking and keeping a vow not to kill living creatures at night, but continuing to kill them during the day.**



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*Answer Key, Class Five*

1) Name the four karmic results of a bad deed such as killing, and after each one mention which of the four powers is most important for removing it. (Tibetan track give the name of the karmic result in Tibetan, and the rest in English.)

- a) **Environmental result: food and medicine in your world have very little potency; removed mainly by power of the foundation.**

བདག་འབྲས།

*dak dre*

- b) **Similar experience: you have a short life or are often sick; removed mainly by power of destruction.**

སྟོང་བ་རྒྱ་མཐུག།

*nyongwa gyu tun*

- c) **Similar habit: in many future lives you enjoy killing; removed mainly by power of stopping.**

བྱེད་པ་རྒྱ་མཐུག།

*chepa gyu tun*

- d) **Rebirth result: serious killing leads to hell rebirth, medium killing leads to birth as a craving spirit, and lesser killing leads to birth as an animal; removed mainly by power of the antidote.**

ནམ་སྒྲིག།

*nammin*



2) Name four of the factors mentioned by the first Changkya Rinpoche (who lived 1642-1714 and who was a former life of Pabongka Rinpoche) and by Pabongka Rinpoche that determine the relative success of your attempts to purify yourself of your old bad karma.

- a) **Whether or not you use all four of the powers, or just some of them.**
- b) **Whether you perform the powers with fierce motivation or not.**
- c) **How long or how many times you repeat the four powers.**
- d) **How powerful spiritually the person doing the purification is.**

3) What example does this Rinpoche give to support the idea that we can "short-circuit" our bad karmas so that they fail to ever give their expected results?

**He gives the example of how wrong views and episodes of anger can prevent our *good* karmic seeds from ripening properly too.**

4) Relate the example of the water and salt.

**No one could drink a glass of water with a lot of salt in it, but it would be all right to drink from a large tank with the same amount of salt. A person who has a lot of good karmic seeds has a lesser chance of taking a lower rebirth from the same amount of bad karma that takes a lesser person to a lower rebirth.**