

# Contemplation on Positive Actions

## from Taranatha's *Essence of Ambrosia*

"Obtaining a physical body in the higher realms and all happy states in cyclic existence arise from virtuous actions. Even the super-mundane states, the three types of enlightenment, arise from virtuous actions. I should, therefore, give up all harmful actions and cultivate all virtuous actions as much as possible. Although there are many types of virtuous actions that can be practiced, the gateway to all virtue is the pure conduct of the ten virtuous actions. Now that I have mentally given up the ten non-virtuous actions explained above, engendered the decision to modify my habits of body and speech and have put that intention into practice, I will make the commitment to continue in this fashion permanently.

In order to mentally give up the ten non-virtuous actions, I should understand that they are imperfections and that they cause problems. Knowing this will motivate me to get rid of them forever. On the basis of that, I will reverse habits of body and speech.

But if I engage in positive actions only sporadically or fail to engage in them during my leisure time, it is as if I am practicing them for profit. Then, even if the opportunity arises to practice them without effort, I will not.

By recalling my mental commitment to abandon harmful actions, I will prevent myself from starting down the wrong road in the first place. Therefore, mental abandonment alone is sufficient: The seven virtuous actions of body and speech are included in the three of mind.

Seeing non-virtuous actions as unethical is the basis of mental abandonment. Recognizing unethical actions for what they are is unconfused understanding on the relative level. This leads to the practice of the path of remedies and is the essence of moral conduct.

If the attitude of abandonment arises strongly several times, even if practice is interrupted by slumber, distraction and so forth, I will still recognize non-virtuous actions as mistakes and faults. Focusing on the conditions that awaken those tendencies, I will avoid and bind them. This process arises from the strength of the attitude [of abandonment], and that strength comes from the potency of the initial seed [seeing non-virtuous actions as unethical]. For that reason, the attitude of abandoning the ten non-virtuous actions together with its seed [awareness of the unethical nature of those actions] is the ten virtuous actions."

**Source: Taranatha, *Essence of Ambrosia: A Guide to Buddhist Contemplations*, p.35-36. Translated by Willa Baker.**