

Difference Between Merit And Purification

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Student: What is merit? The prayer that we say before the teachings, we purify and create merit, what exactly is merit?

Rinpoche: That is good karma. All good actions are merit. How is it said in the dictionary?

Student: What I was wondering was how do Puja prayers purify hindrance and accumulate merit.

Rinpoche: Well, by doing different practices you create different causes and different results. For example, each one of the seven limb practices has different results as the practices are different. But the whole thing is merit. We need to accumulate them by performing various positive actions leading to different results. Non-virtuous action does not create positive cause. It does not create merit because it has a suffering result. Merit is always accompanied with positive result. For instance, by hearing prayers and words clearly in one's mind, even without performing the actual practices, one creates merit. Why? Because that plants the seed in one's mind, it plants the seed for life after life. In later life, when one meets the teachings, one will understand the teachings easily. Whatever the subject one hears before it will be much easier. One learns it without much difficulty and that is also merit. That is a positive result. That plants a seed in one's mind. Even that is merit, a positive cause. If it is a positive cause, it is merit.

Student: What is the difference between creating merits and making purification?

Rinpoche: In fact it is not opposite, there is not much difference. When you create merit you purify and when you purify you create merit.

Student: It is exactly the same? Or is it different?

Rinpoche: It is called by different function, different action. When you perform prostration whilst visualizing the Buddha it purifies and create merits. There is no such thing as this is purification but not creating merit or that is creating merit but not purification. One action has different functions. Prostration purifies delusions, negativities of body, speech, and mind. This called purifying practice. As it creates positive karma which brings a positive result such as enlightenment and a happy rebirth in the future life, we call it creating merit.