
Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

4 October 2005

As usual please generate a virtuous motivation.

2.4.2. MEDITATING ON GREAT COMPASSION TO ACHIEVE THE PURPOSE OF OTHERS (CONT)

2.4.2.2. THE FAULTS RELATING TO FUTURE LIVES

Last week we talked about the outline that dealt with contemplating the faults of samsara relating to this life¹. Now we come to the point of contemplating the faults of samsara relating to subsequent lifetimes.

Taking a higher rebirth from time to time, [156a]

This line relates to the fact that occasionally, through the conducive conditions of having met a virtuous teacher and having accumulated merits, one takes a higher rebirth. Through the ripening of one's merits, one experiences contaminated happiness in this higher rebirth.

*And having experienced plenty of happiness there [156bc]
One falls after death into the lower realms,*

Here, one should contemplate that the times where one experiences happiness in cyclic existence are very rare, as one only takes a higher rebirth occasionally. Also, the happiness that one experiences in that higher rebirth is very brief. Once the merits to experience such a rebirth have been exhausted, one falls into the lower realms. So one should contemplate that the present happiness, which is being experienced by using up one's merits, is very brief. After that, one is going to fall into the lower realms. Therefore one needs to contemplate what happens after this brief human life that one is presently experiencing. These lines are trying to direct one's attention to the future.

Contemplating these points - the briefness of the present human life, and the certainty of falling into the lower realms in the next life - should induce one to practise the path in order to counteract such a rebirth. By practising the path one can counteract the likelihood of rebirth in the lower realms in the next life.

Experiencing long and unceasing sufferings. [156d]

There are a multitude of precipices in samsaric existence, [157a]

There are a multitude of precipices in samsaric existence, because the accumulation of non-virtue abounds in cyclic existence. Therefore rebirths in the abysses of the hell realms are predominant in cyclic existence. That's the reason why we find that in cyclic existence the beings in the lower realms far outnumber beings in the higher realms. The reason for this is that the karma one

accumulates is primarily non-virtuous karma, which is the cause for the lower realms.

*Where it does not exist and is contradictory [157cd]
With the likes like this,*

What Shantideva is talking about is the wisdom realising selflessness, which does not exist in cyclic existence. Indeed it is contrary to a state in cyclic existence. Why has one taken rebirth in cyclic existence? It is because one has not realised selflessness. The realisation of selflessness is contrary to being in cyclic existence. Samsaric beings grasp at the true existence of a basis, path and result. For as long as there is grasping at the true existence of basis, path and result, then one will not realise selflessness. For as long as one has not realised selflessness, one will not be liberated. So, one has to realise the non-true existence of basis, path and result.

*Hence nothing like it exists in the world [157cd]
Additionally, [in Samsara] there is the inexhaustible
limitless*

Ocean of suffering without example. [158a]

Nothing like the wisdom realising selflessness exists in the world because samsaric beings grasp at true existence. In samsara, there is such a great ocean of suffering that it is impossible to find a single example to illustrate that suffering.

2.4.2.3. EVEN THOUGH ONE IS REBORN IN A HAPPY REALM THERE IS NO OPPORTUNITY FOR DHARMA PRACTICE

*Where thus it is weak [158bcd]
And one's life is short.
There are actions to live*

*And stay healthy; thirst and fatigue, [159]
Sleep and harm; likewise life passes by
Meaninglessly due to purposeless childish friends
and acquaintances -
The opportunity to think is extremely rare.*

This refers to the practice of virtue. Even if one is reborn in a higher state within this limitless ocean of suffering, it is very difficult to create any virtue, because as a samsaric being one's practise of virtue is weak. One's life is also short. That's easy to understand. Because one's life is so short, there is no opportunity for the practice of virtue.

In addition to having limited time in which to practise the Dharma, one needs to engage in actions to prolong one's life. But even if one lives a little bit longer, it is just a further opportunity to accumulate non-virtue.

All the activities that one engages in to prolong one's life, and live in good health without obstacles and so forth, take up a great amount of time. For example, the amount of time that is spent on cleaning and grooming one's body is vast. Some people stay in the bathroom for hours on a daily basis! I might for stay a half an hour having a shower and so forth. If one adds it all up, and looks at how much time in one's whole lifetime one spends in the bathroom, one realises what a great amount of time for the practice of Dharma and virtue is lost. For myself, while washing, having a shower and so forth, I recite mantras and meditate on bodhicitta and so forth, so that the time is not lost.

¹ Last week heading, 2.4.2.1. The faults relating to one's present life, was accidentally omitted.

Then there are also many other actions that one does to serve the body, such as clothing it, nourishing it and so forth. If one looks at all the time that is spent in supporting the body, it takes up a major part of one's life. Then there is also the time spent preventing the body from becoming sick; taking medicine and so forth. All of that adds up to virtually no opportunity to practise the Dharma, even though one is in the human realm.

Then the verses list thirst and fatigue, sleep and harm. In between looking after one's body, one becomes thirsty and hungry, which again makes it difficult to practise the Dharma. One finds it nearly impossible to practise the Dharma when one is thirsty or hungry, because the first thing on one's mind is to get something to eat or to drink.

People become tired and fatigued, which also makes it difficult or impossible to practise the Dharma. Rather than practise the Dharma the first thing one wants to do is to rest. Then there is sleep: while one sleeps, one doesn't practise the Dharma, and sleep takes up a major part of one's life.

Inner and outer harms also prevent one from practising the Dharma. Inner harm includes sicknesses and outer harm refers to being harmed by other human and non-human beings, which of course interferes with one's Dharma practice.

Not only does one not have time to practise the Dharma because of hunger, thirst, fatigue, sleep and harm, but what life time is left passes by meaninglessly, due to the influence of purposeless, non-virtuous, childish friends and acquaintances, who induce one to engage in all kinds of non-virtuous and meaningless activities. Thus time is wasted in accumulating non-virtue.

The opportunity to actually contemplate emptiness is extremely rare. Therefore, since emptiness is the method to become liberated from cyclic existence, one should endeavour to engage in listening, thinking and contemplation on the topic of emptiness.

2.4.2.4. CONTEMPLATING THE RARITY OF THE PRECIOUS HUMAN REBIRTH

*How can the method to overcome
Habituation with distraction possibly exist there?* [160ab]

Objection: I can meditate on emptiness while I have rebirth in a happy realm.

Response: One has been habituated to true-grasping and has engaged in limitless, different distractions since beginningless time. How could any method to overcome these different predispositions possibly exist? Essentially it's not possible. Even though it might be a happy rebirth, adverse conditions to meditating on emptiness still predominate. Conducive conditions to meditating on emptiness are exceedingly rare, even in a higher rebirth.

*Demons work there to throw one
Into the vast hells;* [160cd]

*There are many wrong paths,
And it is difficult to contradict doubt.* [161ab]

There are many obstacles even in a high rebirth. One is confronted by many inner and outer demons that work at throwing one down into the vast hells. There are many

misleading teachers who proclaim many different wrong paths. It is extremely difficult to contradict and clarify doubt. It is exceedingly difficult to find the inner and outer conditions in cyclic existence to generate wisdom, accumulate merit and find virtuous friends. One is now in this extremely fortunate situation, where one has found these conditions, and is free from many of these obstacles. If one does not practise the Dharma now, then it is extremely unlikely that one will be able to practise the Dharma later, when these conditions are not present. This is a reference to the precious human rebirth as the basis for the practice of the Dharma.

Next week is discussion night and after that you have the exam. On the first Tuesday after the exam, we will finish this chapter. Then we will continue with the tenth chapter on dedication. It is very useful to know how to dedicate one's merits. That will probably take us through to December. There are many verses, but we can just go through it as a word commentary.

I've heard good things: students who don't usually come to the Tuesday class attended the Seminar and they were very impressed not only with the depth of knowledge, but also the demeanour of the students - the way the questions were posed and the answers given in a very calm and nice manner. I am very happy with that.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
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Edited Version*

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