
Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

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As usual please generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to achieve that aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

THE ACTUAL MEANING OF THE TEXT

2. THE ELABORATE EXPLANATION OF THE NEED TO GENERATE WISDOM

2.4. The function of realising emptiness

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

2.4.2.4. CONTEMPLATING THE RARITY OF THE PRECIOUS HUMAN REBIRTH

We have reached the part in the text that explains the rarity of one's precious human rebirth. It says that even though one has now taken a human rebirth, there are many obstructing conditions that can lead one astray and prevent progress and so forth. For example, the presence of many misleading teachers and many misleading tenets can easily generate distorted and afflicted wisdom, and even though one has a human rebirth there are many conditions that make Dharma practice extremely difficult and sometimes virtually impossible.

Therefore one should not allow oneself to be lulled into a false sense of comfort thinking, 'Oh, now I have a precious human rebirth and everything is going well, and even if it doesn't go well now I will just do better in the next life'. In fact it will be extremely difficult to find another precious human rebirth with all the good conducive conditions, such as qualified virtuous friend and so forth, in the future.

Searching for and gathering all the conducive conditions such as finding a pure virtuous teacher and finding the Dharma is extremely difficult, but one is actually in the presence of both of those conducive conditions now. They are extremely difficult to find. So making the mental excuse, 'Oh, even if I don't practise the Dharma purely this life, I can always do better in my next life' is an extremely misleading notion. In fact one can say that gathering these conditions again will probably not happen.

Finding freedom again is difficult [161cd]
And the coming of a buddha is extremely rare to find.

It is difficult to abandon the river of afflictions [162ab]
And weighted down by these one continually suffers.

'Finding freedom again is difficult' refers to the precious human rebirth that is endowed with the eight freedoms. It is extremely *difficult* to find this rebirth *again*. It is *extremely rare* to be reborn when a *buddha* has *come*. Even if one manages to do that, being reborn with a body

that has the freedoms necessary to practice the Dharma is even rarer.

The coming of a buddha is extremely rare and therefore to be reborn at a time when a buddha has come is even rarer. On top of that, to be reborn with the freedoms to practice the Dharma is rare, and to have to other conducive conditions to practice the Dharma is even harder to find. So it is an extremely rare occurrence to have a precious human rebirth.

If one does not rely properly on the virtuous friend that one has found now, and, following the instructions of that virtuous teacher, enter the path realising emptiness, then will be extremely difficult to extract oneself from the continuity the river of afflictions.

Without realising emptiness it is not possible to abandon the afflictions, because emptiness is the sole antidote. If one does not abandon the stream of afflictions then just as a river continues to flow one will be continuously weighed down by the different waves of suffering.

2.4.2.5. IT IS APPROPRIATE TO MOURN THE SUFFERING OF ONESELF AND OTHERS IS SAMBARA

Those that do not see their suffering [162cd]
Despite suffering to the extreme,

These, submerged in the river of suffering [163ab]
It is appropriate to mourn.

Compassion focuses on those who mistake suffering for happiness and who, despite extreme suffering do not see that they are suffering.

It is appropriate to mourn sentient beings who are in this situation. While meditating on sentient beings and their situation, one generates a feeling of grief for those suffering sentient beings, and that is an appropriate reaction. The Tibetan word conveys the unhappiness and grief that arises in the mind from this contemplation on the suffering of these sentient beings.

Who could not feel grief after watching sentient beings repeatedly go into a fire again and again, and who, even though they abide in extreme suffering, believe that they are happy, continually acting as if there is no old age and death for them?

*For example, some, after having washed repeatedly, [163cd]
Go into fire again and again.*

These two lines relate to sentient beings being lead astray by misleading teachers and misleading tenets. The words 'some after having washed repeatedly go into a fire again and again' relates to practitioners who believe that they can purify their negativity by washing in certain springs and rivers. Then they do other things such as sitting in rings of fire, believing it will lead to liberation, or they engage in other acts of self-mutilation and so forth, such as lying on a bed of nails, in the belief that these practices will lead to liberation. In actuality all that happens here is that further causes for suffering are generated. Even though there is the perception of happiness, all they have done is to generate further causes for samsara. Therefore these sentient beings become the object of one's compassion.

*Thus, even though abiding in extreme suffering, [164]
They make-believe that they are happy.
Thus those continually acting
As if without old age and death
Are first killed, [165ab]
And then the lower realms come without respite.*

There are those who, even though they abide in *extreme suffering*, mistake that suffering for samsaric happiness – they delude themselves into thinking that they lead a *happy* life, and behave as if they are already arhats who do not need to worry about experiencing the sufferings of *old age, sickness* and death; they believe that *old age, sickness and death* do not apply to them. *Continually acting* like an arhat who does not experience the sufferings of birth, aging, *old age and death, first* they experience death and then *the lower realms*.

An arhat is liberated from the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death and does not need to worry about them anymore, but sentient beings behave recklessly as if, like arhats, they have already abandoned these sufferings, and need not fear these sufferings anymore. They act as if they will live forever, believing that death will never come. But, through different adventitious conditions, death always comes. Then they experience the lower realms without respite.

That completes the explanation of the **focal object** of one's compassion.

The aspect of compassion

The aspect or the mode of apprehension of compassion is the wish for sentient beings to be free from those sufferings. The aspect of compassion is that one has an inability to be able to bear that sentient beings should experience these sufferings, and the wish that sentient beings be free from these sufferings. The aspect of love is a wish for sentient beings to experience happiness.

*Thus may I become someone from whose [165cd]
Clouds of merits a rain well borne*

*Accumulation of happiness pacifies those [166ab]
Tortured by the sufferings of fire.*

'*Thus may I* refers to a person who has reflected on sentient beings in the previously prescribed way, seeing them as being tortured by the sufferings of the fires of the lower realms and so forth. From one's *clouds of merits* may a *rain* of happiness flow down and *pacify* the *sufferings* of sentient beings.

This explains the aspect of compassion after having first focused on sentient beings who are tortured by the fire of the different sufferings. Then one generates the wish that from one's clouds of merits may a rain of well-borne accumulation of happiness (which refers to the different things that make sentient beings happy) fall and pacify their sufferings. May a rain of these accumulations of happiness (the different things that are necessary for a livelihood and so forth) be born from one's clouds of merits, and pacify the fires of the sufferings of sentient beings and establish them in happiness.

*May I, by respectfully building up the accumulation [166cd]
of merits
In the way without focus,*

May I, by respectfully building up the accumulation of merits, and by viewing the accumulation of merits as lacking *focus*, because of one's accumulation of wisdom... This is a reference to the accumulation of wisdom which does not apprehend the object of true grasping in any way.

By *building respectfully* and joyfully *the accumulation of merits* through the practices of generosity, morality and so forth in a vast and extensive manner, and by building up the accumulation of wisdom that lacks the object of true focus, may I be able to show emptiness to those who are destitute because of having the focus of true grasping.

*Be able to show emptiness to those [167]
Who are destitute because of having focus.*

May I be able to show emptiness to all sentient beings liberating them in such a way from cyclic existence.

In such a way *may I be able to show emptiness to all those* sentient beings who are destitute of the wisdom realising emptiness, *because of having* the *focus* of true grasping, and liberate sentient beings.

In such a way may I attain the state of omniscience to bring emptiness to all sentient beings.

A bodhisattva's practice of bodhicitta is the unification of the wisdom realising emptiness and great compassion. This is a reference to bodhicitta that unifies method and wisdom. Therefore one should likewise train in the bodhicitta that unifies compassion and emptiness and train in the path of the middle way.

Lama Tsong Khapa says that regardless of how much one meditates on renunciation and bodhicitta, for as long as one has not realised emptiness, one will not even attain liberation. Therefore one should train in the method of dependent arising. This is just another way of saying that one should train in the method of emptiness.

Gyaltsab Rinpoche says likewise that, without realising the view of the middle way, one will not even attain the state of liberation, and the state of an arhat. Therefore one should train in the path of dependent arising.

Therefore, seeing that samsaric perfections are empty of any essence just like the banana tree, one should give up samsaric perfections and rely on a Mahayana virtuous friend correctly in both in thought as well as in action. By training in the different methods for generating bodhicitta, which is the entrance to the Mahayana path, and by practising the supreme perfection of wisdom, one should accomplish one's own potential and the purpose of others.

The name of the ninth chapter is the chapter of the Perfection of Wisdom of the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.

Next week we will continue with the tenth chapter, just by going through the verses. There will be no exam unless you have a specific wish to have one. The tenth chapter doesn't deal with very complicated philosophical themes so it is very accessible to everybody. It should be advertised that it is also suitable for people who usually come only on the Wednesday and Monday night classes.

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