

Study Group - "Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand"

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ཀྱི་ལཱ་བྱེད་པའི་བཅའ་ཁྲིམས་

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It needs to be understood that the attaining of this human life is very difficult to obtain. Having the opportunity to contact the spiritual teachings is extremely fortunate and very difficult to attain. Meeting with a spiritual guide is also very rare. There is no better opportunity than this to take advantage of these positive conditions.

Soon this life and the opportunity which we now have will be gone. To ensure the same opportunity in future lives we must practise dharma. The practice of the law of cause and effect is the fundamental practice of dharma. Learning about and adopting the ten virtuous actions, and avoiding the ten non-virtuous actions, is the way to take the meaning of this life and secure a better future life.

The Ten Non Virtuous Actions

Atisha said "While with others always be mindful and check your verbal and bodily actions."¹

In practice this means that we should always observe and check that our actions are not one of the non-virtuous ones ie any of the three of body, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct or the four of speech, lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, and idle gossip. Whether each action is complete or not is determined by three main factors - thought, deed, and conclusion. Whether an action will be light or heavy is determined by these three factors being complete or incomplete. If we cannot avoid a non-virtuous act at least we can at least make it incomplete, so that it is light rather than heavy.

422.122.121.17: Idle Gossip

ངག་འཁྱུལ་།

1. Basis

The basis of committing idle gossip is said to be talking about any subject which has no purpose or meaning i.e. without any essence or connection to spiritual or dharma practice. There are exceptional circumstances. For example, you may be asked to send a message. Even though that message may have no purpose or meaning in terms of spiritual dharma, it is not necessarily considered as idle gossip because of the reason or circumstance.

2. Thought

Recognition: This must be correct.

Motivation: Is an intention to engage in idle gossip.

Delusion: Any of the three poisonous minds.

3. Deed

Is the effort of talking idle gossip.

4. Finalisation

It does not depend upon whether there is anyone to listen or not, rather it depends upon whether what is said is uttered without mindfulness. That is, just talking about anything which comes into the mind is idle gossip.

This subject of the ten non-virtuous acts is not separate from daily life. Rather it is most important that this subject is related to and integrated into daily life. Of the ten non-virtues idle gossip is regarded as a very minor one. However because we spend a lot of time engaged in it, idle gossip becomes the major cause for the accumulation of non-virtue within us. With idle gossip this life is rendered meaningless, and precious time is wasted. If instead of idle gossip that time was used for study, imagine how much progress could be made in whatever task one wishes to achieve.

The Non Virtuous Actions As A Source Of Problems

Killing

The non virtue of killing might be very rare but can still occur in certain cases.

Stealing

If one lives with someone, all the things become common property. But if either of the partners tries to hide certain things or keep certain financial arrangements secret then that will cause problems.

Sexual Misconduct

This causes great problems and eventually the breakup of that relationship.

Lies And Harsh Speech

These can damage families.

So we can see how the non-virtues we have discussed are the immediate cause of making our life unhappy and miserable. If we make an effort to practise avoiding them in our daily life, then it will improve. Thus the source of happiness for ourselves, for others and for the nation as a whole is avoiding non-virtuous actions.

Three Non-Virtuous Actions Of Mind

ཡིད་ཀྱི་མི་དགེ་བ་གསུམ།

¹Bodhisattvamaniavali, the Jewel Rosary Of An Awakening Warrior by Atisha

422.122.121.18: Covetousness

བརྗེབ་སེམས།

422.122.121.19: Harmful Thought

གཞོན་སེམས།

422.122.121.110: Wrong View

ལོག་ལྟ་བ།

The three non virtuous acts of mind are covetousness, harmful thought and wrong view

In relation to this Atisha said, "While one is by oneself, watch ones mind".

Atisha also said, "Of all the instructions observing one's thoughts is the supreme one. Of all friends, mindfulness and alertness are the supreme friends."

In the light of Atisha's advice we should try to understand that through observing our thoughts, what we are trying to find are the states of mind that are positive and negative. Negative states of mind are the cause of suffering. This internal suffering is more intense than outer causes of suffering. From personal experience we see that when our mind is in an unhappy or confused state, our enjoyment of the outer factors or health is lost. This shows the importance of maintaining a positive, sound and peaceful state of mind. As Atisha said, it is so important to observe one's thoughts and develop an understanding of one's state of mind.

End of discourse

The Meaning Of Faith

Geshe-la: What is the meaning of faith?

Student 1: Faith is a heartfelt conviction or certainty.

Geshe-la: A heartfelt conviction in what?

Student 1: In something virtuous.

Geshe-la: What is heartfelt conviction and how do you differentiate it from non heartfelt conviction?

Student 1: Conviction involving oneself and one's life.

Geshe-la: When a man and a woman fall in love with each other, do they have heartfelt faith in each other?

Student 1: No.

Geshe-la: The reason why they show each other love has a direct connection to their lives, if heartfelt conviction is a result of something being related to one's life.

Student 1: No, because it is not related to something virtuous.

Geshe-la: There is faith in the four noble truths or in the truth of suffering. If faith is defined in relation to the object being either virtuous or non virtuous then your definition is not valid since the object, the truth of suffering, is not necessarily virtuous. Your initial answer, the first reason to explain heartfelt faith or conviction is a faith related to something in your own life, e.g. a man and a woman.

Student 1: But they are non-virtuous, that is the object is

non-virtuous.

Geshe-la: Therefore if the faith in the truth of suffering and cause is faith, the truth of suffering and cause are virtuous, which in fact they are not. So restate your first answer.

Student 2: Heartfelt faith is that developed by one's own discriminating wisdom.

Geshe-la: Heartfelt equals non pretentious. That is, the way you express yourself is no different from the way you feel in your mind.

Faith is defined in the texts as a mental factor which serves as the basis for aspiration but it is in the aspect of one of these three types of faith:2

1. Faith which is a wishful state of mind

This is a faith which seeks to obtain or realise something. For example faith in the holy mind of Buddha or in the four noble truths.

2. Faith which is a wishful state of conviction

This is faith which believes or is a conviction. For example faith in the holy speech of Buddha.

3. Faith which is a wishful state of a pure state of mind

For example faith in the holy body of the Buddha.

Faith is the antidote to the unfaithful state of mind. Unless one has true faith in dharma, there will be no true interest or aspiration to practise. Faith is the basis for generating aspiration in the mind.

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2The Meaning Of Faith

དད་སེམས།

1. Faith Which Is A Wishful State Of Mind

དང་བའི་དད་སེམས།

2. Faith Which Is A Wishful State Of Conviction

ཡིད་ཆེས་པའི་དད་སེམས།

3. Faith Which Is A Wishful State Of A Pure State Of Mind

མངོན་འདོད་ཀྱི་དད་སེམས།

In Chandra Das these are:

1. Sincere faith

དང་བའི་དད་སེམས།

2. Trust, full confidence

ཡིད་ཆེས་པའི་དད་སེམས།

3. Unflagging devotion, unalterable belief

ཕྱིར་མི་ལྷོག་པའི་དད་སེམས།