
Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”
A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by Samdup Tsering



ལྷན་ཁྲིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅངས།

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Try to establish the right motivation by generating the wish to achieve full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. To fulfil that special wish think "I am receiving these teachings and I shall put them into practice".

The current topic is the four doors to create powerful karma. The 'door of field' has been finished. The next door is:

422.122.123.2: The Door Of Base¹

རྟོག་གི་སློབ་ཀྱིས་སློབས་ཆེ་བ།

This is the 'door of the person' or the person who creates karma.

Two Explanations Of The Door Of Base

The person who creates karma can also be a cause to determine the intensity of that karma. Any negative karma created by someone who has a vow or commitment, is more powerful than the same karma created by someone who has not taken such a vow or commitment. Conversely the positive karma created by a person with a vow, is more powerful than the same positive karma created by someone without a vow. The text explains that the determining factor for power of the karma is whether or not the person has taken vows.

In other textual explanations it is said "the negative karma created by a wise person is light but the negative karma created by a foolish person is heavy." According to this source whenever a wise person, (one who has knowledge of the law of cause and effect), creates negative karma, they will regret that karma because they know the consequences. Because of this regret they do not accumulate much negativity. Whereas someone without this knowledge will feel delight at the time of creating negative karma. They will not feel regret or moral guilt for that action later. Such lack of regret makes the negative actions more powerful.

Inspiring Ourselves To Take Vows And Commitments

By studying this we should feel more encouraged to take vows or precepts. Through taking precepts or vows, any

1 p 456 *Liberation...* The title used in this text is "Powerful because one has been a candidate for vows".

positive actions that are created become more powerful. Purification practices will also be more powerful. We should also try to remember the benefits of practising morality. As said in scriptures "For the cause of higher rebirth there is no other cause than morality."²

Even if we can not take vows or precepts for a lifetime, it is worthwhile to take the eight mahayana precepts by vowing not to kill or commit sexual conduct and so on. On the day of taking these eight mahayana precepts whatever positive action we do becomes more powerful. For the duration of those precepts, whether you are sitting, walking or sleeping, your virtue flourishes. On such precept days it is also good to purify negative actions committed in the past. In this way, although we cannot be sure what negative actions we have committed through ignorance, we can apply a purifying practice to purify such negativities.

A person who has a good knowledge of dharma has an opportunity to purify negativities regardless of when they were created. Simply by feeling regret for the negative actions half of the negativity is purified.

For further explanation of door of person who creates the action, you should refer to the main commentary.

422.122.123.3: The Door Of Thing Or Object³

དངོས་པོའི་སློབ་ཀྱིས་སློབས་ཆེ་བ།

The door of the object or thing means the action or karma becomes powerful because of the type of action which we do, that is the type of object or thing which is offered or given to others. For example in the practice of generosity, of the various objects of giving the giving of dharma is a more powerful positive action than the giving of material objects. Offering spiritual practice is a more powerful spiritual action than offering material objects.⁴

2 *Madhayamika-avatara* by Chandrakirti chapter two

3 p 458 *Liberation...* The title given in this text is "Powerful because of the things being done".

4 Geshe-la is making a subtle distinction here. There is a difference between 'giving' and 'offering'. The Tibetan word for giving is 'jin-pa' which Geshe-la defined on 16/5/89 as "The mental factor of the intention to give". This means to be

The Giving Of Different Objects Have Different Powers

When we engage in the practice of giving or charity we give material objects. To those in need of food we give food, to those in need of clothes we give clothes, to those in need of drink we give drink. These are acts of giving and are also acts of pleasing others. Giving material objects is one of the four means of gathering disciples as a bodhisattva practice⁵. Speaking in a delightful manner is also giving since it pleases other beings. Giving dharma is more beneficial. If we make offerings of material objects and of our spiritual practice, the latter accumulates more merit. As we study this topic we should try to develop more knowledge about this best form of spiritual practice. Giving dharma or offering spiritual practice are very powerful spiritual practices.

The most excellent thing we can offer is to put dharma into practice. Because when we practise dharma it naturally becomes an offering since it pleases all the noble and enlightened beings. Always focusing on spiritual practice helps to overcome the negativities within. One may have pride in one's knowledge or wealth. By sharing all the virtue we have created for the benefit of all living beings, we reduce miserliness, and also pride in our own virtue.

Many of us have the responsibility of leading others in meditation, dharma talks or discussions. It is important to always ensure that one's motivation is correct and to do one's best to share one's knowledge with other people. If someone asks a question and you feel confident to give an answer, then do so, not out of pride but with the motivation to help others.

If others address their questions in a negative way, then do not get angry nor lose your temper. Rather remember to maintain practice and give the best answer to the question. If you do not know the answer, then say "I do not know." In this way we should feel confident about giving talks and helping others to feel joy. Of all the

generous or the thought of generosity. The Tibetan word for 'offering' is 'chöd-pa' which Geshe-la defined on 6/11/90 as 'to please' or 'to delight the holy objects'. Therefore offering must please the objects to whom we offer whereas in giving there is not this entailment. The three objects that are normally included as the objects of giving are material offerings, dharma and protection. Of these the supreme is the giving of dharma. The objects that are normally included as objects of offering are surpassable (eg the two waters, flowers, incense, light, etc) and unsurpassable (eg the offering of one's practice). The supreme of these is the offering of one's practice. For a clear description of this distinction refer to Geshe-la's study group notes on *Ganden Lha Gya Ma* 3/5/88, *Madhyamika-avatara* 16/5/89 and *Lam Rim* 6/11/90

⁵ The four means of gathering disciples are: p 708 *Liberation...*

1. Giving material things
2. Speaking sweetly to the people drawn to you
3. Teaching the disciples the path of the holy dharma according to their intelligence thus bringing them to train in its stages.
4. Practise what you preach

things we can give or share with others, the best is to share knowledge of dharma which brings joy and peace to the mind.

If our motivation for teaching others is to force others to adopt our own view or philosophy, this will not benefit them. For example, if you are a Geshe you may have a fixed idea in your mind "This is the philosophy held by the Geshe" and be tempted to impose this belief when teaching others. Your intention is to force others to believe his view. Such a motivation is wrong and will not help others and is also negative for oneself to have such a view.

Performance Of Spiritual Practice

There is a difference between giving material objects and dharma. Also in the objects of offering there is a difference between offering material objects and offering spiritual practice. When offering one's own practice say "I offer this to my spiritual teacher", and imagine that this offering pleases and causes delight to my spiritual teacher. Then imagine offering material wealth and things to your teacher and other high beings. This causes uncontaminated bliss in their mind.

Even if you don't formally have such a motivation of giving, simply performing the practice itself is an offering, since it pleases the enlightened beings. Just as any good thing done by a child, brings joy to the parents, similarly any spiritual practice one does is a cause of delight and joy to all enlightened beings.

There is no rush to finish these topics since we shall both be living here for some time practising and teaching.

End of discourse

Exam questions:

Question 1: Why is harmony so important?

Student 1: Because it keeps an atmosphere of great benefit to a large number of people. Also our spiritual teachers will be happy and remain.

Geshe-la: You gave the essence of the answer.

Question 2: The different levels of happiness and their causes?

Student 2: There are three:

- Happiness of future lives.
- Happiness of liberation.
- Happiness of enlightenment.

Their causes are the motivation to achieve these states, then to practise the relevant paths.

Geshe-la: Could you refer to the *Lam Rim* to clarify the different levels of motivation to achieve those three levels of happiness?

Student 2: To achieve higher rebirth follow the path of karma and look at perfect human rebirth, death and impermanence, and the suffering of lower realms. Then

one works for the future life not just this one.

To achieve liberation one must follow the path of meditation on the twelve links of interdependent origination and obtain wisdom that overcomes the root cause of cyclic existence.

To achieve enlightenment one must follow the bodhisattva path.

Geshe-la: There is happiness in three levels from bottom to top:

1. level of happiness existing in higher rebirth
2. level of happiness existing in nirvana
3. level of happiness existing in full enlightenment

What is the highest form of happiness existing in the highest rebirths?

Student 1: To be born as a human with freedom and endowments to practice dharma.

Geshe-la: To retranslate: "higher status" refers to higher rebirth or higher existence. Which is the highest in higher status?

Student 3: The peak of cyclic existence.

Geshe-la: This level of existence called peak of cyclic existence is necessarily the highest because of the term "peak". Is it the highest in higher status?

Student 3: Yes, since it is concentration.

Geshe-la: Is the state of buddhahood a "high status"?

Student 3: Yes.

Geshe-la: Is buddha in cyclic existence?

Student 3: No.

Geshe-la: High status. The state of enlightenment as attained by Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is the highest of the high status. The supreme of all human beings is Guru Shakyamuni Buddha who is a human being. Therefore Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is of the highest status.

Question 7: The four seals.

- All compounded phenomena are impermanent
- All contaminated phenomena are suffering
- All phenomena are empty and selfless
- Nirvana is peace, i.e., nirvana which is the state beyond sorrow is peace

These four seals or views are accepted by all proponents of buddhist schools of tenets.

There are various ways of knowing the meaning of these four seals in depth. These four seals also indicate the four noble truths, the basic view of Buddhism, the path of Buddhism and the fruit or final result of the paths.

Geshe-la: How to differentiate between someone called as Buddhist and someone who is a proponent of the Buddhist school of tenets? That is, what is the

qualification to be called Buddhist? Is this the same as becoming a proponent of Buddhist tenets?

Buddhists may ask Christians "Do they regard Jesus Christ as a God? How is it feasible for Jesus Christ to be God if there is only one God?" There are similar issues to be discussed in Buddhism.

In short, in the teaching tonight we found the importance of maintaining one's own spiritual practice, which means to prevent negative thoughts and deeds. We always need to be mindful and remind ourselves of what spiritual practice is all about, which is to decrease negative thoughts and deeds, and to increase positive thoughts and deeds.

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.

The original typescript is prepared from Alan Molloy's original transcript, which has been checked against Damien Busby's notes. Adair Bunnett then checks the typescript against a tape recording, and edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.

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