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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ཀྱི་ལོ་ལོ་བཅའ་བུ་བཅུ་དཔལ་

26 July 1994

Make sure you have the right frame of mind or motivation.

The Four Wheels Of The Supreme Vehicle

Having completed the eight ripened qualities and the seven qualities of higher status or higher rebirth, we can now talk about the four other qualities known as the four wheels of the supreme vehicle.

The four qualities known as the four wheels of supreme vehicle are:

1. living in a place suitable for virtuous practice,
2. having the perfect teacher,
3. delightedly engaging in the practice of virtuous actions through the three doors of body, speech and mind,
4. having a great store of merit from the past.

1. Living In A Place Suitable For Virtuous Practice

The first supreme wheel is living in a suitable place.

The Samadhi (or Calm Abiding) teachings say that such a place has the necessary conditions to enhance one's meditation practice.¹ The ideal place for meditation has few hindrances and is quiet and peaceful. Staying at a monastic area is a cause to find such a suitable place for meditation in the future.

2. Having The Perfect Teacher

The second supreme wheel is having a perfect master or holy being.

The *Ornament of Sutra* by Maitreya states that the qualifications of a perfect teacher or holy being include:²

- Having a great knowledge of scriptures. Because we

¹Liberation.. p649 There are generally five characteristics of a place suitable for developing samadhi or mental quiescence. As described in *An Ornament To The Sutras*

Any place where the wise practise has excellent provisions, is a wholesome place, is a healthy location, has noble friends at hand and has facilities to satisfy the yogi.

²Liberation.. p272 There are ten qualities stated "Rely on a spiritual friend who is subdued, pacified, most pacified, who has more qualities than you, perseverance, a wealth of scripture, realisation of suchness, who is a skilled speaker, has love, and has given up disappointment (in the disciple's performance."

must rely upon the teachers to acquire knowledge, the teacher must have more knowledge than us, otherwise they cannot help us to develop..

- Having knowledge of the path to liberation, and also realisation of the Four Noble Truths and the two truths, (which refers to the penetrative wisdom realising the ultimate truth).
- Being skilled in teaching others.
- Love of others is indispensable to the perfect teacher, since this refers to the motivation of the teacher. It is important that the teacher's motivation is always one of compassion or bodhicitta.
- Another qualification is to not be easily discouraged in the face of difficulty, or fatigue.
- Finally qualities are that the perfect teacher should always display joyful effort and have tolerance in the face of difficulty.

These qualities of a perfect teacher or holy being are mentioned in Maitreya's "Ornament of Sutra". However the Abidharma gives the literal meaning of the term noble being. There a noble being is described as someone who is always engaged in virtue or wholesome behaviour.

3. Delightedly Engaging In Virtue With Body Speech And Mind

The third supreme wheel can be fulfilled if we engage in the study and practice of Lam Rim which is the stages of the path to enlightenment.

4. Having A Great Store Of Merit From The Past

Having a store of merit from the past is important because it provides support and assistance to our spiritual practice. We may possess the other three wheels, but without this fourth wheel of accumulated merit, we shall experience harm and obstacles to our practice. It is harder to harm someone who has assistance, than someone who has no help or assistance from others.

We should realise the importance of these four qualities and try to create their causes. We always dedicate our virtue by generating a prayer to meet with such a perfect teacher as Lama Tsong Khapa.

Further Explanations Of The Qualities Allowing Dharma Practice

Early in the teachings we discussed the eighteen qualities of the human life qualified with leisure and endowment. It is said that those eighteen qualities of leisure and endowment are essential to successfully complete the three stages of the path (the lower, middle and great scopes).

Whereas the seven qualities of high status or higher rebirth are essential in order to achieve the state of liberation.

The four wheels of the supreme vehicle are essential to have to achieve the state of all-knowing, which is Buddhahood.

The eight ripened qualities are important to achieve *both* the state of liberation and the state of all-knowing or Buddhahood. The text also specifically mentions that even having five of the eight ripened qualities is a very powerful factor for quickly achieving the state of liberation.

The Causes For The Eight Ripened Qualities

To create the cause for any of the eight ripened qualities we should include three qualities in any practice in which we engage. These three are:

- pure thought or motivation,
- pure deed,
- pure field.

1. Pure Thought

It is important to have pure thought to create the cause of any of the eight ripened qualities. There are two subdivisions:

- a. Pure thought in respect of oneself. Whatever virtuous practice one engages in should be completed wholeheartedly and voluntarily by oneself. Any virtue which is created as a cause for the ripened qualities should be dedicated to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment for the sake of all beings, without thought of personal reward.
- b. Pure thought in respect of others. When you see your superiors engaged in virtuous practice, you should not be jealous. Towards your equals you should not be competitive, and you should not belittle the practice of those lower than yourself. Rather you should admire and rejoice in their practice, and wish to achieve the same. If what they are doing is impossible for you to practise now, you can make a wish to be able to do those same actions in the future.

It is the same as how a father would feel if his son found a valuable treasure. Not only would the father feel positive and happy on his son's behalf, but he might also receive a share of that treasure. In the same way by

rejoicing in merit of any other being, we also receive a share of their merit as a benefit.

The reason why we use the term "pure" to describe thought, deed, and field is to indicate that these actions are free of any stain in terms of thought or motivation, and to imply a positive result from our actions.

2. Pure Deed

Pure deed has two subdivisions:

- Pure deed which directly depends on self,
 - Pure deed which depends upon others.
- a. Pure deed which directly depends on self means to have a consistent practice. The practice may be small, but over a whole lifetime the small deeds will become a great practice. Pure deed also means to maintain faith in, and avoid all opponent forces to one's practice.
 - b. Pure deed which depends upon others means helping others to engage in practice. If there is a request to grant vows, then if one is qualified one gives the vow. If another asks for help with the practice they should always receive that help. Another pure deed in respect of others is praising and admiring their virtuous acts.

3. Pure Field

Although the third, pure field, is mentioned as a separate category, the text does not give any further explanation of this other than that the explanations given of pure thought and deed implying pure field. We can understand from this if our practice has pure thought and pure deeds the result will be the result of a good field which can produce a great harvest in terms of quantity and quality. Through practice of pure thought and pure deed we ensure an excellent outcome in terms of quantity and quality.

End of discourse

How Anger Destroys Virtue³

Student 1: If one moment of negative thought towards one's guru or teacher destroys thousands of aeons of virtuous karma, can those thousands of aeons of positive karma be brought back by means of purification by the four opponent powers?

Geshe-la: Whatever damage that is done to the virtues by that moment of anger cannot be repaired. It is like the example of a broken bone in a leg. It heals, but will never be exactly the same as it was before being broken. Shantideva said:⁴

Whatever wholesome deeds,
such as venerating the Buddhas, and generosity,

³Compassion in Tibetan Buddhism by Jeffrey Hopkins pp 209 to 216. This is a translation of Lama Tsong Khapa's classic explanation of these difficult points. This was also extensively explained in Geshe-la's commentary to the *Madhyamika-Avatarata* on 26/9/89.

⁴ *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* by Shantideva chapter 6 verse 1.

that has been amassed over one thousand aeons will all be destroyed in one moment of anger."

Here the reference is to a bodhisattva of a lower level generating one moment of anger towards a bodhisattva of a higher level, so a large amount of virtuous merit that has been created in the past is destroyed.

For an ordinary person, one who is not a bodhisattva, generating anger to a bodhisattva, the amount of virtue or merit that is destroyed is even far more than that. A bodhisattva on the path of accumulation generating anger but who later purified the negativity fully will still have their entry into the next path, the path of preparation, delayed.

Through the four purifying means the negative effects of anger are purified and this prevents any negative result arising from that anger. On the positive side this does not mean that you completely restore the same amount of merit that was destroyed, nor is there any new quantity of positive karma created to replace that which has been lost. Of course that previous virtuous karma has been destroyed in the sense that you can no longer reap the result of that merit.

How Is Karma Destroyed?

Student: How is the karma destroyed?

Geshe-la: It is destroyed in the sense of preventing its result from ripening.

There is a debate about whether, when anger is generated, it completely destroys virtue from its roots. There is no debate however that anger prevents the ripening cause or main cause of virtue from occurring. But in terms of the second result of a virtuous act, the result similar to cause in terms of habit, anger may prevent the main result, but not prevent these secondary results arising. So it can be argued that anger does not destroy the root virtue completely.

When we create virtue, we should treasure it and not treat accumulated virtues lightly. Treating them in that way is like giving money to children who then lavishly spend it as soon as possible. Rather we should always dedicate virtue to the ultimate state of buddhahood. If we join our practice of virtue with force of bodhicitta then, as said in Shantideva's text, that virtue will remain as long as that final goal of bodhicitta is achieved. This is buddhahood. Because of the danger of virtue being destroyed by anger it is important to always dedicate it.

You cannot understand meaning of anger destroying virtue in the same way as we understand wisdom realising emptiness which destroys self grasping of true existence - the misconception of the "I". This wisdom realising emptiness completely opposes the self grasping. In this way conception of true existence can be uprooted from its root and removed from the mind. Whereas anger destroying virtue, means that anger delays the result of that virtue, or reduces its quantity,

but does not uproot it completely.

We do not say that anger is remedy to virtue. Whereas we say wisdom realising emptiness is the remedy to self grasping since it directly opposes self grasping. The meaning of wisdom realising emptiness destroying self grasping is to uproot that self grasping.

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.

© **Tara Institute**