
Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ལྷན་སྐྱོད་

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Cultivate the motivation of bodhicitta - one which wishes for the attainment of the complete state of Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

Right from the beginning of the practice we have to focus on our own state of mind. Because the whole aim of spiritual practice is to remove all negativities and to develop more positive and wholesome states of mind. Right at the beginning we are reminded to check our motivation, because by engaging in spiritual practice we are not trying to become rich, famous or a great scholar.

Not only do we make sure that our motivation is the correct one, but we must always be mindful of our thoughts and deeds throughout the duration of practice. In this way we learn that if we make effort we can be rid of negative habits of mind and deeds, and feel comfortable about transforming our mind and deeds into positive states.

The Four Forces Of Purification (cont.)

We are currently discussing the four purifying forces which are the remedies to negative actions and karmas. If after engaging in adopting virtuous actions and discarding non-virtuous actions, we happen to create negative actions we should apply the four purifying forces to purify that negativity.

Of these four purifying forces the first two - the force of regret and the force of remedy - were finished last week.

3. The Force Of Resolution Or Resolve

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The third purifying force is the force of resolution. Having purified or removed negativities from their root cause, one can resolve not to create any negative actions on a day-to-day basis. Such resolutions are promises made with specification to a length of time.

A part of the force of resolution is to affirm with full determination the intention to not commit any actions of killing other beings even at the cost of one's life for as long as one lives. This resolution must come from the heart with confidence and determination.

Is Breaking A Resolution A Lie?

His Holiness the Dalai Lama said:

It will not become a lie if one happens to

commit that non-virtuous action later.

The reason why it is not lying is that at the time of making the promise (of not killing any other being at the cost of one's life, for as long as one lives), there was no intention to cheat or deceive other beings. It was a whole hearted resolution, so if one ends up killing another being, the resolution or commitment one made does not become a lie. However there is a point for further discussion on this issue.

4. The Force Of Base

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The fourth purifying force is the force of base. This principally involves;

- taking refuge in the three jewels and,
- generating bodhicitta.

The Meaning Of Purification Of Negativities

By applying these four purifying forces any negativity can be purified, which means preventing of the main result of that negative karma from arising. There are three different ways in which the result of the negativities are purified or prevented:

- a. The negativities are permanently or completely purified in the sense that the result will never arise.
- b. The result of the negativities arises, but in a lesser form. For example the result of the negativities which one is supposed to experience in the next life as a great form of misery or suffering, arises in this life as a light headache, or some form of very light suffering or pain.
- c. Similarly the result of negativities arises but for a shorter period of time. The purification of negativities has the effect of not completely purifying the negativities but shortens the time for which one experiences their result.

Signs Of Success In Purification

It is said that there are some signs which will let us know if the purification of negativities has taken place. The main time where one can expect signs of purification is during dreams. The signs won't necessarily be in dreams, but any one of them occurring in dreams can be a sign of purification. For example dreaming of vomiting filthy

food, tasting milk or yoghurt, riding on an elephant or the sun or moon, the sun or moon dissolving into oneself or oneself dissolving into the sun or moon, or swallowing them, or seeing holy beings such as Bhikshus and Bhikshunis, one's spiritual teacher or images of holy beings, e.g. statues of Buddha. These are signs of purification for beginner or ordinary practitioners.

For the advanced practitioner there is the sign of advancing from lower path to higher path e.g. from the path of seeing to the path of meditation. That is, the advancement of the stages of their spiritual realisations is a sign of purification.

Three Factors Necessary For An Effective Purification Practice

1. When engaging in any form of purification practice, ensure that the motivation with which the practice is begun is bodhicitta.
2. During the time of the actual engagement in the practice maintain awareness of the emptiness of the three circles - that the subject who performs the action, the action itself and the object upon which the action is performed are all lacking inherent existence.
3. At the end always dedicate to attaining complete enlightenment.

If one's purification practice is qualified with all these three - the motivation of Bodhicitta at the beginning, remembering emptiness of the three circles in the middle and the dedication to full enlightenment at the end, it will be the most effective practice of purification.

This completes the teaching on the stages of the path shared by the small spiritual practitioner.

Summary Of Stages Of The Path Of The Small Scope

There are four main subjects of contemplation in the stages of the path of small being or small practitioner:

1. Death and impermanence.
2. Suffering of the three lower realms.
3. Taking refuge.
4. Making effort in the practice of the law of karma in terms of adopting the ten virtuous actions and avoiding the ten non-virtuous actions.

It is said that if as a result of following this practice, one's mind aspires to the goals of a future life, rather than the goals of this life, then one has begun the practice of the stages of the path shared by the practitioner of the small scope. Without the meditations on these four main subjects of the small scope our mind is always thinking of, or concerned with, affairs of this life and it does not seek the goal of future life at all. Or if it does, the goals of this life are the primary concern.

The purpose of following the stages of small scope path is to redirect our mental concerns for this life to the concerns of future lives.

The Four Things Which Make Us Go Beyond Dharma

Having transformed or broadened one's mental scope to seeking the goal of future life, then one follows the stages of the path shared by the medium practitioner or medium person as one's main practice. Regarding spiritual practice in general, Nagarjuna said:

There are four things which make one go beyond Dharma. They are:

1. Desire: For example killing a sheep because of a desire or craving for meat
2. Hatred
3. Ignorance: For example holding a view that animal sacrifice is the very best or ultimate offering to a god and so killing an animal. Ignorance has been the cause of that negativity.
4. Fear: For example engaging in any form of negative action on the order of some other person because you fear that person.

These four are to be remembered and to be purified and eliminated in order to prevent negativities.

Here we finish stages of the path shared by the path of small scope. Next is stages of the path shared by the path of medium scope.

Factors Determining The Degree Of Purification

Student 1: Did you say that by applying the four opponent powers the negative karma could be completely, permanently extinguished? I thought a perception of emptiness is necessary to do this?

Geshe-la: There we were referring to the specific karma of killing say, an animal. This can be purified by the four opponent powers which means that the main result of that karma will not be experienced. In the sense of that first type of purification it means that you will not experience the results of that karma. Purification does not mean that you will not create the act of killing again, and then have to suffer from that.

Student 1: If I purify all my negativities of body, speech and mind, all broken samayas, etc with the four opponent powers then I should no longer suffer.

Geshe-la: This is concerning purifying negative karmas accumulated up to now, but this does not mean that you will be purifying karmas you accumulate tomorrow.

If you purify you will not suffer and if you suffer this shows that you have not purified.

It is important to purify negativity before it starts producing its result. Once it starts producing its result e.g. a result lasting ten years, it is extremely difficult to purify. The fruition of karma is the actualisation of the impetus of that karma. Since the impetus of that karma has already started producing a result, it will be difficult to purify that karma.

It is like a seed which has the potential within to produce a sprout. The moment that seed starts to grow, that potential has been used, so we cannot bring it back. Therefore the negativities must be purified before starting their result.

Student 1: Of these three types of level of purification, what determines the level of purification occurring?

Geshe-la: The degree or level of negativities would decide that. If the negativity was very powerful, then if even a part of it is not purified, it will produce its result. If the negativity is very powerful the purifying forces must be more powerful. Even if you apply all four forces you will still experience a result in some form.

The remedy applied to the negativity to be purified should be more powerful than the negativity itself. For example in war to fully defeat an enemy your army must be more powerful than the army of the enemy . If the forces are equal in strength, then although you can damage the enemy and bring a lot of harm with weapons and machine guns, you cannot defeat the enemy. To achieve victory your force has to be stronger than the enemy. This also applies to the purifying forces necessary to bring about the purification of negativities.

In a lot of cases we purify negativities through our practice, but at the same time continuously create new negativities. So we cannot completely prevent the unwanted results, but because we completely apply the four opponent forces our negativities do not multiply.

We must realise that the negativities accumulated in past lives are enormous compared to the negativities created in this life. Therefore purifying negativities is like someone trying to pay off a past loan of one hundred thousand dollars by now borrowing one thousand dollars. Because the person has paid off all their past loan what they owe now is very small. Therefore there is no reason to feel bad about negativities created in this life as long as you engage in practices to purify past negativities.

This does not mean that creating minor negativities is acceptable. As was mentioned in the previous teachings, it is better to have never broken one's leg than to break it and then have it mended, since it will never be the same as it was before being broken. It is best to avoid negativities . Even though we may purify the negativities they will still have some effect, such as delayed spiritual attainments and so forth.

Obviously someone who has never had trouble with their legs can run faster and longer without any trouble. Whereas someone who has problems with their legs, and then had them fixed, will be much slower and cannot run as far or as fast. This is an example of how to practice dharma.

Geshe-la will now return the exam papers. He would like to thank you for your effort in the written test. It looks as though everybody has performed well except that the number of people completing the test has

dropped.

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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