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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



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The Benefits Of Bodhicitta

Try to think of this very unique form of human life which you have obtained now. With a perfect mind and body and all other favourable outer and inner conditions, you can fully practise Dharma, and use this life to best advantage.

So make an effort to generate bodhicitta - the altruistic mind of enlightenment - because there is no better opportunity than now to generate that state of mind. Not only is bodhicitta said to be essence of all Dharma teachings but it is the source of peace and happiness to all beings in the world.

The benefit of generating bodhicitta is that it can help us to overcome the source of all our problems, which arise from a self cherishing mind. We must realise that up to now the selfish mind has motivated or influenced all our actions. The result is being caught in an unending cycle of suffering. However because of this unique form of life there is the opportunity to generate bodhicitta in one's mental continuum, and so challenge this self cherishing mind.

Bodhicitta Is Generated From Renunciation

In order to generate bodhicitta - this precious mind of enlightenment which is said to be the entry door to the Mahayana path - one must generate its root cause, compassion towards all beings. Compassion arises through observing the suffering of other beings and then generating a wish for them to be free of that suffering.

Before we can generate compassion for others we must feel the same about ourselves. Therefore it is said that to generate compassion we must first generate renunciation, which is the wish to attain liberation for ourselves.

What prevents us from wanting to be free of suffering? It is attachment to samsara, the seeming beauty of cyclic existence. Without seeing the true nature of cyclic existence as the true source of unending suffering, there can be no genuine wish for liberation. In order to produce this aspiration for liberation from cyclic existence the faults of cyclic existence need to be known.

This is where we are up to in these Lam Rim teachings. Last year we reached the fifth of the six faults of cyclic existence.

The Fifth Fault Of Cyclic Existence - Rising And Falling Repeatedly

The fifth fault of cyclic existence is the fault of falling and rising over and over again. This is true in relation to our wealth, social position, friends and so on which are always subject to change. This fault can be summarised into four main points according to the Sutra:

1. Collection results in losing
2. Rising results in falling
3. Meeting results in separation
4. Birth results in death.

By realising this truth of impermanence the unreliability of cyclic existence can be observed, and thus attachment to objects within cyclic existence can be minimised. For example there might be a strong attachment to having a friend. The reason for this is because having observed the great pleasure this produces, we believe that this friend can permanently satisfy our mind.

In reality this feeling of pleasure is very impermanent and temporary. It can be gone as soon as that friend moves away, or some dispute arises. If we see that the friend, and the feeling of pleasure associated with meeting them are temporary, our degree of attachment to that friend and the associated (temporary) feelings of pleasure diminishes.

So seeing the faults or suffering nature of the phenomena of cyclic existence can help us to overcome attachment to them.

Attachment And Suffering

Whenever we see some disadvantages in things we immediately wish to be rid of them. For instance as soon as we see some fault or disadvantage in living with or befriending another person, the immediate thought is how to distance oneself from that person. Similarly, as a result of seeing the faults of cyclic existence, we naturally seek liberation from it.

As long as we are within cyclic existence, then all the faults discussed to date are unavoidable. The fault of being attached to wealth, friendship, fame or position is the main cause of suffering and sadness in life. When we lose wealth or friendship, it brings a great deal of

suffering to our mind; falling from a high to low social position brings great disappointment. The main reason for undergoing this suffering is because of attachment to these things. If we are not mentally attached to our friends, we shall not experience a great deal of suffering even if we lose them. In order to fully understand own experiences from this perspective, we must contemplate them at our own pace.

Consider the suffering that is experienced as a consequence of the breakdown of a relationship of many years. The intensity of this suffering is almost beyond control. Later, after separation, seeing one's former partner living very happily with someone else makes the experience even worse. That additional suffering confirms that the relationship was based on attachment, rather than true love and compassion. If it were true love and compassion there would be no reason to feel negative about seeing the former partner living happily after the separation.

Even though it is difficult to avoid attachment in our relationships with others, at least minimise it. Try to replace attachment with love and care for your friend. Then there is more mutual benefit while the relationship continues. Even if the relationship ceases, the friendship will still continue, with continuing benefit for each other.

Our financial position can also change. If we have a strong attachment to our wealth and possessions, we suffer more when we are reduced to poverty. The same applies to our social position. There is no guarantee that whatever the position that is attained will be long lasting.¹ Some people even find themselves in a high position but seeing its disadvantages, want to have a lower position. Then having attaining that lower position they are still unhappy because they are socially embarrassed. Why do you experience this dissatisfaction of being in a lower position? It is all because of attachment.

By using our own levels of understanding, together with our experiences, in our meditations, we can develop more realisations about the real truth of our day to day life experiences.

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.

¹These notes were prepared from two transcripts of the translation of the talk given by Ven. Geshe Doga. The text of these notes differs from the oral translation in that they seek to convey the essence of the teaching, and may also include variations made after discussion with the translator. This section in particular was rewritten after clarifying the meaning with the translator.

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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