
Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”
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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུང་ས།

28 March 1995

422.211.6: The Fault Of Lacking Friends¹

གྲོགས་མེད་པའི་ཉེས་པ།

Last week we stopped the teachings at the fault of lacking friends. The reality is that within cyclic existence you are alone. When you are born from your mother's womb you are born alone. When you suffer from any illness, that experience of pain must be tolerated alone. You cannot give part of it away. When you die, neither you nor anyone can stop it. No friend, no matter how close can save us from the frightening experience of death.

Despite this we are always seeking friends on whom we feel we can rely. There are rare examples of people who have a very good friend, and receive true benefit from that friendship. In most cases however, friendship brings both happiness and suffering to our life. If we examine most friendships over one month, we will find that it is fortunate if there are ten days of a sense of happiness arising from that friendship. The other days are a source of suffering to each other.

This instructs us to utilise our time on spiritual practice. The beginner may choose to read a variety of texts to give a broad understanding, or out of curiosity. However if your mind is quite stabilised with your own spiritual belief, then you should focus on the spiritual texts which present clearly, and without error, the complete path to enlightenment – such as the Lam Rim. By reading such texts, which cover the entire spiritual path, one gains much merit, and knowledge of the stages of the path becomes more solid, direct and focused. By reading such complete, deep and authentic Scriptures, one gains experience of the path.

The Preciousness Of Lam Rim Teachings

You should really try to realise the preciousness of the Lam Rim teachings for subduing your mind. The Lam Rim teaching is supreme and there is no other text which is as effective. Other texts may help you to increase your

intellect, learn new lists or terms, but they do not help you to subdue or calm the mind.

Given this very special benefit of Lam Rim teachings in calming the mind of sentient beings, you can see how fortunate you are to have these Lam Rim teachings flourish in this country. Not only are these teachings flourishing in this country but you are able to hear and study them. You are indeed very fortunate. Such opportunities clearly show that you have created some very special karmic cause in past lives.

Furthermore not only do you have this opportunity to study Lam Rim, but considering your very busy schedules, you give yourself some time to actually meditate and gain some experience of renunciation and bodhicitta. Even if these experiences are not fully cultivated, at least there is an effort to actualise renunciation or bodhicitta. That in itself is a very worthy cause.

Therefore whenever there is an opportunity it is best to seize it to study and practice Lam Rim. Lam Rim is not only beneficial in accomplishing long term goals. Even in the immediate sense if there is something which upsets your mind a great deal, then just opening a Lam Rim text, reading and meditating on it will help to overcome those problems in the mind, no matter how short the time you spend.

You have this great opportunity at hand. So use it! If, for example, you are thirsty and have the choice of clean or filthy water in front of you, you do not drink the filthy water. That is not skilful. Therefore realising your opportunity, and the preciousness of the Lam Rim, regard it as your main practice. It will be beneficial.

Even Having Friends, We Still Suffer Alone:

When we talk of the fault of lacking friends, it is too narrow to understand this in terms of merely finding a partner for a relationship. Some people have a husband or wife, but still suffer from loneliness despite the hundreds of people outside their house. This fault is inevitable as long as one is subject to cyclic existence. We are talking of something much deeper than just finding a partner. Shantideva said:-

¹Liberation.. p.485 The title used in the text is The Bane Of Having No One To Help You.

You are born alone,
you experience suffering alone,
when you die, you die alone
so what is the use of a friend?

In a broader sense we can relate this to the law of karma, and this is important, because it then inspires us to follow the spiritual path. When you undergo suffering you must experience it by yourself. You cannot take some of that suffering out and give it to another.

So this means you should not create negative karma at any cost - even for the sake of your friends or relatives. Because the consequences of such actions will fall upon you; you must experience them and you cannot hand them over to your friends. Similarly at the time of death we must die alone. We cannot take any of our friends or relatives with us. We are following our own black and white karma which always accompanies us. If we contemplate this properly, it will inspire us to follow the spiritual path, and become more self guided. It will arouse some courage in our minds.

Always try to relate the teachings to one's own life, to one's own continuum.

422.212: The Specific Sufferings Of Samsara

སྲི་སྲིའི་སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེལ་བསམ་པ།

Now, having finished the faults of cyclic existence in general, we move to the specific sufferings of cyclic existence under which we study the sufferings of each realm.

422.212.1: Thinking About The Sufferings In The Lower Realms

ངན་འགྲོའི་སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེལ་བསམ་པ།

Sufferings of the three lower realms which are literally the three bad migrations to the realms of hell, hungry ghost and animal realms.

422.212.2: Thinking About The Sufferings Of The Upper Realms

བདེ་འགྲོའི་སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེལ་བསམ་པ།

Sufferings of the three higher realms or the three happy migrations to the realms of human, demi-god and godly realms.

These six realms are called the six realms, but if we group the godly and demi-god realms together as the realm of gods we only have five realms instead of six.

The sufferings of the three lower realms have already been explained in detail in the lower scope. We shall not go over this again. Having contemplated all the various types of suffering in the lower realms one will certainly renounce them, because one certainly does not want to be

born there. We have learned that we can prevent falling into the three lower realms by eliminating non-virtuous actions, and adopting virtuous actions. Therefore we can be certain that by following virtuous practice, we close the door to the three lower realms.

Next we consider whether there is any suffering in any of the three higher realms. Even in the higher realms, there is no escape from suffering. This shows the nature of cyclic existence. There is always suffering. The text now shows the suffering of the three higher realms.

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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