
Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”
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ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ཀྱི་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་

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Let us cultivate the bodhicitta motivation for listening to the teachings, which is the true aspiration to achieve state of complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

Of the various types of suffering existing in human realms, we discussed last week the suffering of being separated from desirable objects.

422.212.216: Suffering Of Meeting The Undesirable

མི་སྲུག་པ་དང་ཕྱད་པའི་སྲུག་བསྐྱེད།

The next type of suffering is the suffering of meeting the undesirable. This suffering may include: meeting with an enemy intent on harm; catching a painful disease; being engaged in some dispute or argument; having some penalty or punishment imposed by the law or by people in authority e.g. a king; or being the victim of theft or a burglary. Whenever we meet some adverse situation we naturally experience some suffering.

As we reflect upon this suffering, we should try to realise this is something we cannot avoid as long as we are born in cyclic existence, and the purpose of this reflection is to realise that samsara (or cyclic existence) is not a beautiful, pleasant place. Rather, once born in cyclic existence, suffering is inevitable. So to seek true happiness attachment to cyclic existence must be diminished. Such reflections on suffering help us to find its source, as well as overcoming the root of that suffering.

Benefits Of Reflecting On Suffering

As a result of this reflection on the suffering nature of cyclic existence, thoughts of leaving this cyclic existence are cultivated. So there is a good side to these reflections.

The experience of suffering in life can cause the loss of appetite for cyclic existence. The problems of daily life can be utilised to cultivate the aspiration to achieve liberation from cyclic existence, for instance by seeing how everything is unreliable, or subject to change. For example our relationship with a friend can change from being close in the morning, to one of hatred by the afternoon. It is difficult to endure such changes in a relationship, but experiences like this clearly confirm the uncertainty of cyclic existence.

These events also show that our life is controlled by karma or our own actions. Our current suffering is the result of our own negative actions in the past. Thus we are motivated to avoid negative actions, create positive actions and feel regret about negative actions created in the past, since the outcome of past undesirable actions will be something similar to the present undesirable events.

So when you experience suffering, try to think of the source of suffering, which is the noble truth of the source of suffering. Life is also subject to painful diseases. Confronted with such painful diseases try to realise the cause - not only the immediate cause but also the karmic cause - and try to develop more patience.

Shantideva said¹:

When facing some difficulties or hardships you should stop worrying about it.
If something can be done, then do it and then there is no point in worrying.
If nothing can be done then there is no point in worrying, and losing strength better put to enduring that hardship.
So there is something to learn from our experience of hardship.

Actual Suffering Encountered In Daily Life

The best thing which studying Dharma offers is the different way of viewing things. Because we are pursuing the study of Dharma, we must try to see our life situation through the perspective it provides, as much as possible. In this way Dharma can be very beneficial to our life, although not in the sense that it prevents misery and unwanted things in life. But when unwanted things do occur, we can try to understand them through the perspective of Dharma. As mentioned earlier it can help to see such events as a ripening of one's own karma. Whatever happens in our life is all a result of our own past actions. It is something which had to happen. Since it has ripened now, the good thing is that it cannot ripen again; we should generate a strong mind to accept that. This is a good time to apply the meditation on giving and taking, by imagining than no

1 Shantideva, *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, chapter 6, verse 10.

other being will have to undergo this suffering. It is important to apply our understanding of Dharma to real life situations.

Changing Our Way Of Thinking Can Reduce Suffering

We learn from the spiritual teachings that certain ways of thinking can be a cause of our suffering. However, other ways of thinking can eliminate our suffering. Of course the suffering of being separated from desirable objects does not occur without causes and conditions. Apart from the external factors, our own way of thinking is also responsible for bringing about that suffering.

The most obvious is that the mind is preoccupied with the desired object from which one is separated. It ponders endlessly on that object. As a result of that, the suffering of being separated is continuously sustained. So the cause of suffering is that the mind has not been shifted to another object.

If there is no effort to move the mind to another object, the suffering just continues, growing stronger and stronger, and it becomes harder to separate the mind from that object. Realising that the reason for still suffering from losing that friend is because the mind still is still thinking about them, the solution is obvious. The mind must be disciplined not to think of that friend; it should be directed elsewhere; and over a period of time the mind distances itself from the desired object thus overcoming the immediate problem. Then later, with increased stability one can resolve to overcome that problem completely.

So changing our way of thinking can be a very good way of eliminating problems.

Next Week Is Discussion

The compulsory subject for discussion is the Three Principal Paths - renunciation, bodhicitta and wisdom realising emptiness. Since these three are the essence of both the lam rim teachings and the entire teachings of Buddhism, it is important to have a broad knowledge. The best is to have gained some experience in each of these three, but if not, at least have some broad knowledge.

Each one of these three can be discussed in very great detail. Since this is not possible in the exam, choose one of the three to elaborate on in your answer, i.e. do more thorough study in one of these three.

Most of you have done the last study group test. Geshe-la admires this and would like to thank each of you not only for attending teachings and discussions, but also doing the test.

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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