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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅངས།

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Try to generate the right motivation of wishing to gain full enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, and also to realise that we are studying and practising these teachings on lam rim for that purpose.

422.212.217: The Suffering Of Not Being Able To Find The Objects One Desires¹

འདོད་པའི་དངོས་བོ་བཅུལ་ཀྱང་མི་རྟེན་པའི་

སྐྱུག་བསྐྱུལ་བསམ་པ།

We are discussing the types of suffering which are associated with any life that is thrown (or produced) by the karma (or actions) of past lives and mental delusions. Even in this human world there are various and continuous types of suffering. Following on from the previous teachings on the types of suffering of the human world, we are up to the suffering of not being able, despite all efforts, to find desirable objects.

We are never fully satisfied with what we are doing, and achieving in our lives, regardless of whether we are rich or poor, of high or low status. As soon as one's desire is fulfilled, we see another that is yet to be fulfilled, and so our mind is never content.

In the hope of eliminating physical suffering, resulting from starvation, heat and cold, and to secure pleasure or happiness we try to find a suitable livelihood. Despite trying our best to find satisfaction and happiness, we are unable to be content with our achievements. Even where seemingly everything is in our favour, we find no satisfaction or inner peace. The cause of this unending misery and suffering is that our mind is deceived by the seeming beauty of this world, and its various objects. In reality those objects have the nature of suffering – they are not something that can fully satisfy the mind.

Therefore in the lam rim teachings we are taught to turn away from those objects, through knowing their faults

and shortcomings. The best way to content our own minds is to not become too attached to this life and its objects, and be content with our possessions and liberty. If we possess abundant food and so on, just enjoy them, and think of making offerings to holy objects, with deep faith, or give charity to those without. By doing this, there is no grasping at these objects, and then when we face death, there is nothing to be concerned about, and so we can die peacefully.

The Source Of Misery

Our mental approach to life is a very important factor in determining our daily experience. With a good spiritual understanding of your life, you will be happier, more contented and able to take full advantage of whatever you have. You will be able to use your possessions to bring happiness to your own life, and to others. Whereas without such an understanding of reality, even though you may have abundant possessions you cannot even make your own life stable and happy, let alone help others.

Basically when we talk of happiness we are referring to our own experiences, and so our happiness depends on our own mind, rather than on external factors. Therefore when we talk of the human suffering of not being able to find desirable objects, we are talking about a suffering which our own mind creates. This suffering is all brought about by the lack of contentment, and because of strong attachment to one thing after another.

From our own experience we can learn to recognise that when there is strong desire for something else, then you feel unhappy. Even if you have the best facilities life can provide, you fail to acknowledge the happiness all around you. So there is no end to our suffering until we calm our mind.

In the lam rim text there is a clear elaboration of how our human life can be wasted by this suffering of not finding desirable objects. Instead of calming our own mind, we have the attitude that we are the only one experiencing suffering, and no-one else is. For example, from a farmer's point of view, all business people are very rich with a comfortable and easy life. The business person, however, views the farmer's life as being more comfortable and pleasant. But in reality they are both

¹ Page 494 *Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand*. The title used in this text is Thinking About The Suffering Of Seeking The Things We Desire But Not Finding Them.

subject to their own particular suffering. The business person is ignorant of the difficulties of the farmer, and in the same way farmers have no understanding of the suffering, in particular the mental suffering, of the business person.

The learned master Aryadeva said in his text called *400 Verses*

Whether you are high or low, you are
the same in being subject to life's
miseries.

People in high status positions mainly undergo mental suffering, and people in low status positions mainly experience physical suffering. If we observe the suffering of the very rich people who have no shortage of the material necessities such as food and clothing, it is obvious that material necessities are not the main problem for them. Their problem is related to their confused and discontented mind. Whereas poor people's lives are overwhelmed, mainly by the physical suffering of not being able to find even the daily needs of life.

Generating Renunciation Towards Cyclic Existence

Leaders with responsibilities may feel that without these responsibilities, life as an ordinary citizen would be happier and more peaceful. The ordinary citizen looks up to see the power, prestige and privileges of the leaders and believes they are happy and content. But in fact both are subject to daily sufferings. Similarly some Sangha may think that being a Sangha is very difficult, compared to the freedom and happiness of the lay person. Even as a Sangha, if your mind is not calmed with less desire and more contentment, then you will not find extra peace and happiness in being Sangha. If you look at the lives of lay people they of course undergo continuous problems.

In regards to this His Holiness Kalsang Gyatso said:

All people, although different on
the surface (whether it be Sangha
or lay, male or female, types of
clothes worn, long or short hair)
are all the same in being equally
subject to suffering.

As we reflect upon the various types of suffering, we can clearly see that suffering pervades the existence of all people. This means that the very nature of our existence is suffering, which means that if we seek true happiness, we must look beyond this existence, because we cannot find lasting happiness within cyclic existence. Recognising the continuous suffering throughout our life, is realising the fault of cyclic existence. If, for instance, we cannot find a perfect friend, it is not the fault of the friend – it is the fault of cyclic existence.

With the development of this understanding of the faults of cyclic existence comes the aspiration to obtain liberation from samsara. Such a wish to escape cyclic existence is the mind of renunciation. With this true wish

to leave cyclic existence established in our mind, we should look for the source, or cause, of cyclic existence; and the root cause is ignorance of ultimate reality; and wisdom realising emptiness is the remedy for this ignorance. So we must make an effort to cultivate the wisdom of selflessness.

As we study how to cultivate this wisdom realising emptiness, we understand that we need to cultivate concentration, and this needs training. To be successful in training our mind in concentration, we need to practise the training in morality. Therefore we can see how reflecting on suffering arouses the sense of renunciation, and through this we are led to follow spiritual practice.

From this teaching on the types of suffering and their causes, we learn that we cannot blame outer factors for our suffering. Rather the blame lies in this samsaric existence. When we say samsara, or samsaric existence, it is important that we do not see it as a remote place or thing – rather it is the reality of our own life (including our mind) to which we are bound. It refers to the samsaric aggregates into which we are thrown by our own karma and delusions. Reflecting on suffering results in reflection on the causes of suffering, and this leads to how to overcome those causes.

The cause of this suffering, even in the human world, is being chained to this samsaric existence. As long as we are bound to cyclic existence there is suffering, and no escape. Meditating on suffering and its causes, is a positive, optimistic view of life, since we see there is hope of breaking free from the chains which bind us to this cyclic existence.

Next Tuesday is the anniversary of Buddha's birth, death and paranirvana so we shall hold a special puja.

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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