
value at all. It is only the source of all our unwanted experiences, both now and in the future. Therefore when we think deeply, we realise that rather than being very attracted to this body and this life, we must become detached from them. This is the only way to be free.

Whereas if we are attracted to this body, not only do we experience unnecessary suffering in this life, but also, as a result of this attachment, we create causes for future suffering. It is because of attachment to this samsaric body that we collect a large number of these causes, and so continue this cycle of rebirth.

In a true sense this body is just a source of suffering, but in real life we, as ordinary beings, are attracted to it. Most of the things we do – eating and drinking, leading a very busy life, running here and there and so on – are because of attachment to our body. So we can see how in the context of this life we are enslaved by our body because of our attachment to it. Through this attachment we generate desire, which then serves as a motivation to create karma, resulting in suffering for ourselves and others. In fact, the main cause for us to take rebirth (or samsaric life) is karma and mental delusions, and the body we take in this life is the outcome of past karma and mental delusions.

How is this present life the outcome of karma accumulated in the past? This may be difficult to comprehend. It is very clear though, if we look at how the endless sufferings we experience in this life arise from our mental delusions and karma. This helps to support our understanding of why we have this life which has a suffering nature. It is very clear that this is all a result of the karma of our past lives.

Making Progress

The basis of making real progress in spiritual practice is realising the faults of attachment and then countering that desire. This is essential because all our negative actions and thoughts are caused by having some form of desire or attachment. It is due to the influence of desire or attachment that we generate other delusions, such as anger, jealousy, and pride. Recall the reasons for not becoming attracted to one's own body, and the importance of reducing attachment to it. On this same basis, one can reduce attachment to the attractive bodies of other people, and thereby reduce feelings of jealousy, anger, pride, which relate to other people's bodies. It is very natural to feel pride when seeing someone weaker, inferior or more ugly, or to feel competitive when seeing someone with more attractive qualities than we possess. Due to all these mental delusions that we generate in our minds, we create karmas which result in future suffering.

Therefore when we talk of performing a pure Dharma practice in terms of developing good heart to others, this cannot be generated unless we overcome negative feelings such as pride, anger, and jealousy. We have been studying this text on the lam rim not for days but for years! We must remind ourselves that the goal of this study is to bring some real progress to our lives. The aim of our study is not just to learn, which even a child does, but to integrate our studies into our life by softening our thoughts and deeds. We try our best to integrate what learn into our practice.

We must ask ourselves every night "Am I making progress?", and assess our own progress in our thoughts and daily actions. Are they habitually more positive than negative? By seeing these teachings in terms of our own practice, we see how far we have to go. In our practice we talk about cultivating compassion. But how strong is that degree of compassion? For most of us it is very weak when compared to the intensity of our attachment. When we see someone very sick and suffering greatly, we do not immediately feel genuine and strong compassion. We do not feel compassion for all the suffering we see around us. But look how quickly we develop attachment to attractive objects and bodies! It is almost a natural response, which shows how important it is to overcome attachment, and make even small progress in our spiritual path. If it is not overcome, or challenged, we can never achieve liberation.

Therefore we must understand that the reason we are pursuing these studies is to remind ourselves to practise Dharma, which is to overcome negative states of mind. It is also to maintain our motivation to practise Dharma; to try to realise that the best time for practising Dharma is now, while we have a sound mind and body with all the other favourable conditions we enjoy. By thinking like this, we realise how fortunate we are to have all these favourable conditions. We are not deprived of any of the necessary things to make progress. With this in mind, think that engaging in spiritual studies is like engaging in a battle with our own negative states of mind. If we lose one day, we must not give up. Do not become discouraged, try again the next day. With a consistent effort our positive tendencies will increase while our negative tendencies will decrease.

There is not much point in being concerned about for how long, or when, you practise. What is more important is to ensure that any practice – even for one minute – is a complete practice. A complete practice starts with the right motivation which is being focussed on the goal, or aim, of the practice. That is, you clearly recognise the aim of the practice. It is not enough merely to want something in order to achieve it, you must do something. This is the actual deed or actual practice. At the end, before closing the practice you must dedicate merit accumulated from that practice, to the goal for which you did the practice. It is said that even if the practice is very short, if it is done effectively, you can achieve a lot, because it is a complete practice.

Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.

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