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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ཀྱི་ལཱ་ལག་བཅངས།

25 July 1995

We should try to generate the right motivation by wishing to attain the state of Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings; and for this purpose to motivate ourself to listen to dharma and to engage in the process of transforming our own mind and that of all other sentient beings.

The Importance Of The Mind

We should try to see the spiritual teachings as the means of transforming into virtue our actions of the three doors of body, speech and mind. Your own body, mind and speech are the three things which always accompany you; you are never separated from them, and you should see them as a friend. Then, just as an outer friend has an influence on you, and just as it is an advantage to have such a friend, so too will these three doors be of advantage if they are virtuous.

We are discussing the relationship between yourself and the three doors. The mind predominates over the other two doors, and in fact it predominates over you. It is said that if the mind which predominates over you and your actions is a good friend, then naturally you will also enjoy a good state of being.

In our daily life the reason we experience unhappiness is because of negativity in the mind. Because the mind always accompanies you it is more important to establish a good relationship and harmony with your own mind, than to establish a good relationship with outer things.

Finding The True Source Of Happiness And Suffering

The spiritual teachings talk of the true source of happiness and suffering. In order to recognise that true source, we must rely upon these teachings, and cultivate a true wisdom.

The normal view of the cause or source of happiness and suffering is usually seen to be some outer or external object. Any pain, pleasure, happiness or suffering which we experience is believed to depend on those external factors. When we view things in this way we find ourselves in a very unhelpful situation, because our happiness, or suffering, is determined by some external force over which we have no control.

Indeed under circumstances where there is suffering because of some external cause, you may feel that there

is no relief from this misery until that external situation is changed. In fact some people spend their entire life experiencing this kind of misery. From these spiritual teachings we learn that apart from the normal ideal of finding happiness, and eliminating suffering, by reference to the outside world, our mind can also be the cause of suffering and happiness. We see that within us there is some factor in our own mind, which can create happiness or eliminate suffering.

Therefore we understand that the true cause of happiness and suffering is within and not without. This knowledge provides us with a different path to happiness. Finding happiness and solving problems occurs within the context of our own mind.

When we realise that happiness and suffering are not always determined by external factors but by our own mind, we have the knowledge to do something about it, independently of any outer factors.

So our normal view with its emphasis on outer things being the source of our pain and pleasure needs to be changed. We can do that by realising that what one experiences is the effect of one's own mind. In this way we see within our own mind these qualities or factors which will bring happiness. Therefore practising the teaching means to sustain, and develop, those qualities by the practice of mindfulness and alertness towards our own mindstream.

Develop Courage, Overcome Self Doubt!

To achieve any goal it is better to develop inner determination and courage than to rely upon favourable outer factors. For example if you enjoy very good health you can accomplish more things. Similarly if we cultivate a positive state of mind, and if we ensure that it is clear, then this is a tremendous force to encourage us to accomplish our aims and objectives. Because of this driving force generated within you can feel very positive about yourself, and so accomplish more.

If, on the other hand, we let our mind become discouraged, and put ourselves down for whatever reason the mind dictates, we turn ourselves into a very incapable person. We reduce ourselves to incompetence, even to the point of being separated from the rest of society. It is as a result of our own mind, that we experience these very negative feelings about ourselves.

When Separation Occurs In Relationships

We should remind ourselves of this instruction from Shantideva¹: Since we are born alone, and must die alone and no one else can take the share of our misery, what is the use of having friends?

When we are separated from a close friend we experience a great deal of misery. But if we understand our life from the point of view of the this teaching from Shantideva we shall feel encouraged to think "Why should I have to suffer? My misery is not going to encourage my departed friend to show mercy on me. Why should I undergo suffering when my departed friend is not suffering, and is indeed happy?" These are practical ways to integrate Shantideva's teachings whenever we find ourselves in such situations.

Apart from the above points if we think of ourselves in the situation of being separated from, or being deserted by a friend, there is still no certainty about your relationship, and none about the one your friend has now established with another. There is no certainty about who will suffer (or lose) more from the separation in the long run.

It is possible that as a result of this separation your life will be better in the future, and your friend may face more difficulties. With this perspective, even if you see your friend living with someone else, you will not be too upset, or unhappy with that.

The most important thing is to practise virtue under all circumstances. You cannot create non-virtues to salvage your relationship, because the result of such non-virtuous action will fall upon you. Even if the friend leaves they do not take away the result of your non-virtuous action, which you must experience.

Our main practice, therefore is to always control the uncontrolled mind; to know whether the object in the mind is something positive or negative, and depending upon this, making an effort.

As a spiritual practitioner one should wish for something more than just material necessities - food, clothing, etc. With such a wish luxurious living conditions are not important, because that is not the main goal of one's life. Rather, when the main goal of life is something higher, and there is some progress in attaining that, there is naturally less craving for material comfort and more tolerance to any immediate discomfort. For example if we look at some workers who have unclean working conditions. For them it is not the uniform they wear which is very dirty, or the dirt on their body. That does not matter much to them because their aim is not to

maintain a very clean body and wear clean clothes. Rather their aim is to make money and that goal is being satisfied. Similarly if we follow the dharma, or spiritual teachings, our goal in life has to be to transcend material goals.

The completion prayers we recited from the Four Mandalas to Cittamani Tara sadhana were composed by HH Dalai Lama's late Junior tutor, Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang, who was a manifestation of Heruka.

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.

© **Tara Institute**

¹ *Bodhisattva Charyavatara* chapter 7, verse 32. Another translation of this is:

At birth I was born alone and at death too I shall die alone;
as this pain cannot be shared by others, what use are
obstacle making friends?