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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering



ལྷན་སྐྱོད་ཀྱི་ལམ་ལུགས་བཅུ་དཔལ་

12 September 1995

Ensure that you have a proper motivation to study and practise the lam rim.

To recapitulate the outline of the teachings so far, and explain future headings:

422.2: Training your mind in the stages of the path shared with the medium scope

This has two subheadings:

422.21: Developing thoughts of yearning for liberation

We have finished this section.

422.22 The nature of the path to liberation

In terms of the outline of the teachings we are at this heading which has two subheadings:

422.221: The true source of the stages by which a being enters cyclic existence

This is elaborated into three subheadings:

422.221.1: How delusions arise

This has four subheadings:

422.221.11: Identifying mental delusions

422.221.12: The stages in the development of delusions

422.221.13: The causes of delusions

422.221.14: The faults of delusions

422.221.2: How karmic actions are accumulated

422.221.3: How beings die and are reborn

422.222: The nature of the actual path leading to liberation

422.22: The Nature Of The Path Which Leads To Liberation¹

ཐུན་ལམ་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ལམ་ལུགས་བཅུ་དཔལ་

Having discussed over many evenings the general and specific topics on the shortcomings of cyclic existence, we come to realise that the nature of this existence is suffering. Regardless of where you are born, or what you obtain while in cyclic existence, you are subject to the nature of suffering. Once you come to realise how cyclic existence is pervaded by this suffering nature you will feel disgust or dissatisfaction with this existence. The result of this feeling of disgust, is that you will yearn for liberation or nirvana, and such a yearning is renunciation.

In terms of the four noble truths we must first recognise the truth of suffering very clearly. After recognising your suffering you will have a wish to be free from it. This is like a patient suffering from intolerable pain, but who only develops a strong wish to be free from that pain after recognising how terrible it is.

With the thought of being free from your suffering, you need to examine the causes of that suffering, since to be free from it (to achieve liberation) you must remove its cause. Therefore, after the first noble truth we must learn about the second noble truth, which is the noble truth of the cause of suffering.

Uncovering The True Nature Of Our Own Lives

To make real progress in our spiritual practice, we have to relate what we learn to our own life - our own reality. The purpose of our talk of samsara and its suffering nature is to arouse renunciation towards this cyclic existence.

We may have great knowledge of samsara, and the various sufferings existing there, but we won't have any dissatisfaction with our own life in cyclic existence, or fully appreciate our suffering, if we always relate the term 'cyclic existence' to outer things, and not to our own life. For without the recognition of the suffering nature of existence in our own life we cannot generate renunciation. Also if we do not truly appreciate the nature of suffering in our own life, we cannot know the suffering of other beings, and so we cannot truly extend compassion to them.

As we have discussed in the past, we have to see our own life and the body in which we live as samsara; as cyclic existence; as being a product of delusions. Our life is chained to this suffering existence because our own body is contaminated in the sense that it is the outcome of mental delusions, and throwing karma.

The Nature Of Our Own Reality

We have to be consistent with our spiritual practice, and cannot hope that it will always go very smoothly. The aim of our practice is to counteract mental delusions such as attachment, anger, and so on. Since we have had these delusions over countless lifetimes, they are very strong, and dominate our life and mind, so we have to make a concerted and very consistent effort to challenge them. Even if we challenge them one day, they will then arise again the next, because they have been in our minds for a long time, and it is hard to break their force. Whereas when we try to cultivate a virtuous frame of mind, it takes a great deal of effort, both to cultivate and maintain it, since virtue is not as strong as delusion.

Therefore to overcome the delusions, and achieve the spiritual goal of liberation, the most effective path is to first understand the reality of one's own life as much as possible. This is like

¹Page 508 *Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand*: Ascertaining the nature of the path leading to liberation”

someone in a dark room who has now walked outside, and can understand the outer reality very easily. Likewise if one understands the nature of suffering of cyclic existence in the context of one's own body, then no matter how much your body is admired by others, you see it as a samsaric body, subject to suffering. As long as you have this body there is no escape from suffering.

The more you understand the nature of your own body as being the nature of suffering, the less attachment you will have to it. Likewise understanding the shortcomings of your own wealth, friends and so forth will decrease your attachment to them. As a result of this you will naturally have the same outlook on the various things of the outside world, eg. other people's bodies and wealth, as they are no different from you, and also have the nature of suffering. Since they have so many shortcomings you will naturally have less attachment.

As mentioned earlier, we have had this attachment to our belongings, body and outer objects over a long period of time, so even though we theoretically understand how these objects have many faults and in real terms are not worth possessing, still there is attachment to them.

Antidotes to can be applied to whatever delusion currently dominates your mind. For example you can generate renunciation against attachment or compassion to remedy anger. It may seem difficult and indeed it may seem even artificial to apply such antidotes but these are very effective methods in gradually counteracting delusions.

There is no escape from suffering as long as we are bound to these contaminated aggregates, and there are the two main causes for us to possess them - karmic actions and mental delusions.

Of these two, delusion is the main source because it is due to the delusions that we create the karma to take a life which is bound to contaminated aggregates. It is said that without delusions, such as craving and grasping after things, the karmas which we accumulate are like a seed without the necessary condition of moisture. Without moisture it will never produce its result. It is the same with delusions. We say that we are born to a suffering existence because of karma, or as a result of accumulating the karma to be born there. But for karma to ripen its results, the necessary contributory conditions of delusions such as craving and grasping must be present.

Furthermore, it is said that unless we overcome these delusions we cannot prevent ourselves from creating more karma to be born in cyclic existence. We can purify all our negative karma by means of the four purifying forces². For example, at the end of the day, before going to bed, we may engage in a very powerful meditation practice to purify all the negative karma which we have created so far, (by the force of regret about creating those negative karmas and so forth) and then do something to accumulate some virtuous karma and then dedicate that karma purely. However since delusion is not uprooted it is possible that after purifying that karma we may create more karma! For example just before falling asleep we might generate some thought, and on the basis of that thought due to delusion, we may become angry and thus create karma. So from this point of view delusion is the main source of cyclic existence.

To overcome delusion we must get used to the practice of virtue. If we are very successful in doing this, then virtue will

arise very swiftly and spontaneously. Remember that delusions can arise very easily and continuously because of their strength and long term familiarity.

Therefore to make progress in our practice we must remind ourselves over and over again about virtue. Reciting Tara, Chenrezig or Buddha mantras is one means. Others are reciting prayers, or cultivating faith in the three jewels, or just thinking of various holy objects of visualisation. These are all ways of occupying the mind with virtuous thoughts. You can even drive a car while reciting mantras, which can also be a protection against being killed or involved in an accident. To get ourselves used to spiritual practice we must apply any means or method which can help us to think of virtue.

The worst difficulty, which we must all face, is death, and we have to prepare ourselves now to face that final problem. Since there is no other means which can protect us from death, our only protection is spiritual practice, and by taking refuge. We must get used to the thought of relying upon the Lord Buddha as our protector when facing a difficulty or hardship in life, and generate a strong faith in the Buddha who is our only protection. Who else could be our protector? Make a prayer to Buddha and request him to grant us blessings.

In this way we become used to thinking of Buddha whenever we face any hardships in life. If we do this now while our life is happy, and with a clear mind, and if we accustom ourselves to entrusting ourselves to Buddha, then at the last moment, when death comes it will be natural to think of Buddha. Although no one can see your visualised Buddha, for you it is real, and the blessings you receive are a real protection. So even if you have no natural inclination to lead your life according to the spiritual teachings, but at least if you cultivate faith in that practice, you will gain some positive impetus to continue in your practice, and through this make progress.

Geshe-la would like to thank you all for doing the last exam. He was very pleased with your answers.

Homework for next week: Memorise the four noble truths, the five aggregates and the six root delusions.

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 Bunnnett then checks the typescript against a tape recording, and edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.

© **Tara Institute**

² These are: Regret, base, antidote and promise.