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

A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga

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Generate the bodhicitta motivation by thinking that the teachings, which you receive and put into practice, are for the attainment of the state of Buddhahood, for the sake of all sentient beings.

Benefits of the Bodhicitta Motivation

We should always think of the benefits and preciousness of generating bodhicitta - this altruistic mind of enlightenment - for it is the essence of all the spiritual instructions, or teachings. The more we know about the benefits of this bodhicitta mind, the more we shall cherish this altruistic feeling towards others. And the more we cultivate this altruism, or loving kindness towards others, the more our self-cherishing mind will diminish. Then, as our self-cherishing mind diminishes, we shall find more happiness in our mind, and able to extend our help to other beings, instead of hurting them. Realising the benefits of this bodhicitta mind, try to motivate all actions with this bodhicitta, whether the action be listening to dharma, or giving the dharma teachings to others. In fact, because the mind precedes all actions, any action motivated by a bodhicitta mind will be the source of benefit, joy and happiness for all living beings. This is the essence of the Buddha's teachings and it ensures that our actions will become a Mahayana practice. Needless to say, it is all in our own hands, so we have to be very careful about the thoughts which lead our actions.

Obtaining Benefit from Dharma Practice

Each individual must practice dharma to obtain any benefit from it, because just simply learning about dharma will not bring any more happiness, or benefit to our life. The practice of dharma means overcoming or counteracting the self-cherishing mind. This mind is like an inner enemy, and it is the source of all our problems. The more self-cherishing there is within us, the more problems there are in our life. On examination when we complain 'I am not feeling well.' 'This is going wrong!' 'That is going wrong!', all these problems generally derive from the self-cherishing mind, which brings us all our past, present and future problems.

We are born as a human being, but if this precious human rebirth is marred by the overwhelming experience of physical and mental suffering, then what is the use of it? What is the use of wealth and the friends

we possess? What use is this life if there is no happiness in the mind, and no happiness in sound physical health? The real meaning of life is having such happiness in both the mind and body. We can see that our efforts in finding food, clothing, shelter and a good name are not enough, because they do not secure that happiness which we seek in life. So we must not only learn about dharma, but we must also put it into practice so that we can minimise this self-cherishing mind. When we do this, we can see the benefit within this life, and at the same time we are actually practising dharma. It is said that if we follow the practice of dharma then all the other comforts of life will come about. It is like when a horse is galloping. Without the intention on the part of the horse, a cloud of dust will rise behind it. It is just natural. In the same way if we generate faith in the dharma, then the more time we spend in dharma, the more this faith will increase. But this faith will not increase if we do not make an effort to practise dharma. If only our knowledge of dharma increases, then despite spending large amounts of time with dharma, as time goes by we develop more doubt in our mind which is very incorrect.

If we practise dharma in this life, then whatever practice with which we are familiar in this life will have the same influence in future lives. Just as in this present life, people have different tendencies because of their state of being in previous lives. Some have tendency of strong desire; others of patience towards things. Therefore try to realise that even the effort which we make in studying, is for the purpose of putting it into practise, and the purpose of that is to make progress in dharma.

Loneliness Arises from Self Cherishing

Consider the problem of loneliness, and a situation where you are separated from a friend. In such a case your feeling of being rejected by your friend is also very strong. That is because the feeling of wanting that friend is very strong. Why do you have this thought of wanting something? The cause is self cherishing.

HH the Dalai Lama said 'Human intelligence is a great mechanism.' This means that if we use our intelligence constructively, we shall create a particularly beneficial thing. At the same time however, if we misuse it, then great destruction can be the result. We are not like animals with limited intelligence or scope, and thus a

limited potential. As human beings we all have this human intelligence, and discriminating mind. What is most important is utilising it in the most beneficial or constructive way.

The Potential of Our Human Mind

Whenever we face a situation, our response to that situation depends upon how we use our human mind. If our response to various situations uses negative and destructive ways, then we bring more loss to ourselves and others. That is misusing the human mind.

Think of how often we misuse our human mind in our daily life. For instance if there are others with whom we have a close relationship - parents, close relatives, close friends - and they use harsh words. How should we respond? In general what is our immediate response? Of course when we forget our practice, our normal response is to retaliate. We even give thought as to how best to retaliate. This kind of thought process is misusing the human mind, and responding with an angry face, with abuse, and with harsh speech does not show any patience.

Think of how the human mind or intelligence is misused, and how, as a result of this, a small war leads to a bigger one. In response to a rifle being fired, there are missiles or very explosive bombs. The result of all this is more destruction and suffering in the world.

Think of how our moods change in our day-to-day life. One moment we are happy, and the next very unhappy. This change, and all the suffering which comes in life, all derive mainly from our own actions and thoughts. If in our daily life and dealings with others, there is more dharma, then it means we shall be more tolerant to others - even to those who hate us. Then the conduct of our actions is very wholesome and positive. The natural result of this is that we find ourselves in harmony in our relationships with others who will be more friendly, and who will admire us.

It is very easy to identify the difference between a kind mind or person, and an ill-minded or evil-minded person. With a kind mind not only will you always be grateful to those who have been helpful, but you will also want to show your gratitude, by extending more help to them than they extended to you. Also with a kind mind, you will have more tolerance to any harm or unhappiness that is caused by others.

As no-one is perfect, this practice of tolerance is very important if we want a lasting relationship with others, and more mutual benefits in a relationship. Without a kind mind, when someone causes you a loss then you want to them to experience an even greater loss. Then if someone lends you \$100, then let alone returning the \$100, or even giving them \$200 or \$300 back, you completely forget about their offering. This mind needs to be changed. We must change our mind from negative to positive; from non-virtuous to virtuous. After all, spiritual practice is to cultivate positive states of mind

such as loving kindness - something which is respected in the world. For an individual that is the true practice, and it is a source of joy for ourselves and all other beings.

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

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