
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་བཅུང་ས།

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Generate bodhicitta by thinking that for the sake of all sentient beings, I want to achieve the perfect state of buddhahood, which is free of all faults but possessing all excellent qualities. It is out of this motivation that we engage in study and practice of the Stages of the Path.

422.221.111.3: Third Root Delusion - Pride

ད་རྒྱུ་ལ།

We have been discussing the six root, or primary delusions. Having finished the first two, we go now to the third root delusion of pride and look at its definition, and the means to overcome it.

The Difference between Pride and Courage

Before going into any detail, we must discuss how what we call pride is different from courage or spirit. Often people confuse these two as being the same. Unless we know the difference between pride and courage, it is hard to see pride as a delusion, and therefore as something negative.

Courage is not the same as pride. The term courage means the ability, or confidence, to do things. For instance someone with courage will not have any nerves, or anything which discourages them from doing things. Without courage, for instance, if you had to give a lecture to a crowd, a lack of confidence/spirit/courage stops you from giving the lecture, even if you have all the necessary knowledge and skills. There is some type of fear stopping you from giving that lecture. Therefore people must have confidence and courage, otherwise they cannot make use of their qualities, knowledge and skills.

Pride, on the other hand, means looking down on other people with a feeling of superiority, because of one's qualities, wealth or physical outlook, or even having a pleasant voice. Pride is not something to be valued as it is a hindrance, or an obstacle.

The Faults of Pride

To overcome pride one must see all its faults. The whole purpose of the Buddha's teachings to others is to guide them to eliminate all their delusions, and negative states of mind. Thus, this teaching on pride should be related to one's own self. Using the teaching just to stimulate intellectual knowledge, and then to put others down accusingly saying 'You are arrogant!' only serves to increase our delusions, rather than to reduce them. Then the teachings will have no benefit to our life.

With strong pride in ourselves we won't make much

progress, since we shall feel 'I know everything!'. Thinking like this, then our attitude will always be one of belittling others. Also, due to pride we belittle others, thus creating more gaps between ourselves and others. They will not like it if your attitude is arrogant, even if they are your friends. Seeing others as very low and inferior makes for distance between yourself and others. Then you will not show any true love and compassion to others. Therefore pride is an obstacle to the generation of good heart to others. Needless to mention then, that pride is an obstruction to the attainment of the highest state of enlightenment.

Knowing the true purpose of studying dharma (which is to diminish all delusions), one's study of dharma and of meditation should be examined for the existence of pride. As said in sutra 'If we have pride, then there are no good results of practising dharma.' Even giving teachings to others through pride, will be of no benefit for the teacher, and it is very unlikely to benefit others in a true sense. It is like placing food in a filthy container. So pride is an obstacle to producing the bodhicitta mind, as well as an immediate cause of personal unhappiness.

Therefore, depending upon our own level and capacity, whatever we learn in the teachings, and whatever meditations we practise, we should aim at minimising the negative states of mind in ourselves. Then we shall gain true benefits from our learning, and as we make true progress in our practice, our negative states of mind become less and we shall see more peace and happiness within.

Pride can also bring unnecessary problems and disturbance to the mind. For example in a class if some students have strong pride in their performance, then not only can they be very competitive and negative towards others, but also if there is someone doing better than them in the class, they feel very upset and their mind cannot rest and relax. If it is very intense they can even become very quite madly obsessed.

Therefore you must ask yourself 'What is the value of generating pride in our achievements?' If we examine very carefully, with an understanding of what is meant by pride, (which is different from courage, spirit or confidence) then we can see how pride will serve as a source of mental restlessness, even if we succeed in our goal.

If attaining our goal becomes a source of more restlessness, is it worthwhile then to have it? Would it not be better to enjoy peace and happiness in the mind, and not worry about other things, like other peoples' opinions of our achievements.

Sustaining deep peace and happiness in our mind is what we are seeking throughout life, so knowing the difference between pride and courage is important. Pride is something very negative and serves as a cause of unhappiness but courage is a cause for accomplishing things, and is of benefit to all.

In our experience these two are mixed together so, in order to see all the faults of pride we must see pride as a mental factor which is completely different from courage. Since courage is very positive and completely different from pride, by separating them we shall not see courage as a part of pride, and thus believe there is anything positive in pride.

The Antidote to Pride

In order to overcome pride it is recommended that one should turn one's attention towards subjects with which one is unfamiliar. For example, studying the various divisions of all the objects of knowledge can help to overcome pride. It is said that to look for unknown subjects you do not have to look far away. If you look at your physical composites from the tip of your hair down to your toes, you see that your knowledge of its complex reality is very limited, and that you are very unfamiliar with it. Therefore this contemplation on subjects with which one is unfamiliar is a remedy to pride.

Questions and Answers

In the twelve links of interdependent origination the second link, karmic formations forms these contaminated aggregates.

Geshe-la: Concerning the truth of cessation and the truth of the path, is the truth of cessation a result, and is the truth of the path a cause?

Student: Yes

Geshe-la: Is it permanent?

Student: Yes

Geshe-la: If it is permanent, how can it be a result since it must rely on a cause?

Concerning the truth of cause of suffering and the truth of suffering, is there one example which can be both of them - since they are mutually exclusive?

Student: Yes.

Geshe-la: What?

Student: Any delusion.

Geshe-la: Are all delusions the truth of the cause and the truth of suffering? Are the delusions in continuum of a higher bodhisattva, the truth of the cause and the truth of suffering?

In terms of stages of spiritual development, it is only when a bodhisattva reaches the eighth level that a bodhisattva abandons all delusions, but before that they can have delusions in their continuum.

Even some ordinary beings can be born in a pure land, but is there truth of suffering in a pure land? A pure land is pure of something, of what is it pure?

Student: Is it possible to have delusions in your continuum, and still experience suffering?

Geshe-la: In other words the extent to which any delusions can influence us, depends upon our capacity to overpower or counteract those delusions. As the main cause of delusions is ignorance, which misconceives the ultimate mode of existence of all things, then in the case of a superior or arya being - who has direct perception of the ultimate truth of selflessness - that arya being has overpowered the delusions.

Although they may have some delusions and some ignorance it cannot influence their actions so arya beings do not face any result, or effect which results from the force of delusions e.g. birth and death by the force of karma and delusions. Rather it is said that when one reaches the state of an arya or superior being, even if you choose to live in cyclic existence for the benefit of others and take countless numbers of lives, these cycles of lives are not caused by karma and delusions but by the bodhisattva's love and compassion. In this cycle of birth and death this bodhisattva does not undergo suffering, unlike ordinary sentient beings.

When you definitely realise the ultimate truth of selflessness, this ignorance which has been controlling your destiny loses all its power, and control over you. It is like when a king's empire or kingdom is taken over by a some enemy. Even if the king is still alive, he has no power over the affairs of state. Similarly when we are deeply asleep all other consciousnesses become inactive, and can have no influence upon us. The deep sleep state overpowers all other states of consciousness.

In this way all types of delusions, or even all types of ignorance or self grasping, are not necessarily the truth of the cause of suffering. The truth of the cause of suffering refers mainly to the types of delusion and karma which are included in the twelve links - the twelve independent originations. Of these twelve links of independent origin, the truth of cause of suffering is mainly the first link - Ignorance. Of the twelve links - three are delusions - 1: Ignorance, 8: Craving, 9: Grasping. Two are karma - 2: Karmic Formations and 10: Existence. These five are not only the cause of suffering but are also suffering. Whereas the 4th link - Name and Form - is the truth of suffering but not the cause of suffering

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

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