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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འཇིགས་རིམ་རྣམས་གྲོལ་ལག་བཅུངས།



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Try to cultivate the best possible motivation which is bodhicitta. Think that listening to this lam rim is to follow the teaching in daily practice, in order to achieve the full state of enlightenment for the sake of all beings.

Most of us have some understanding of the bodhicitta mind, as we have heard a lot about the teachings on bodhicitta, but understanding alone is not enough. We have to blend our understanding with our own daily practice to cultivate bodhicitta mind, because the purpose of cultivating this bodhicitta mind is to calm our mind. That purpose cannot be achieved just by learning about bodhicitta, but has to be cultivated in the mind through making an effort in our practice.

In our spiritual practice we are challenging a destructive force within us, so therefore it is very important to first of all clearly recognise that enemy, which is the opposite of bodhicitta. The enemy is the self cherishing attitude. In order to recognise it as the enemy to be overcome, we have to know all its faults, and the disadvantages of having that attitude in our mind.

Therefore we have to investigate, and compare the advantages and disadvantages of the bodhicitta mind, and its opposite, the self cherishing attitude. We may not have genuine bodhicitta, but we do have a substitute - the good heart, or loving kindness towards other beings. So in cultivating this bodhicitta mind we have to see the advantages of cultivating this good heart as much as possible, and in as many ways as possible. We also have to see the disadvantages of the self cherishing mind in as many ways as possible.

We should try to see these advantages and disadvantages in the context of the short term and long term benefits to this immediate life, and to life in future in terms of benefits to other beings. As we think on the consequences of having these two types of attitude or mind within us, we see clearly that this self cherishing attitude is the root of all our problems, even immediate ones like the unhappiness, restlessness, and dissatisfaction in the mind.

If we investigate this self cherishing mind very closely, we see that as long as we do not challenge it and allow it sit within us without bringing any harm to it, then there is no end to our problems. We shall not find lasting peace and happiness. On the other hand if we think of the bodhicitta mind, or show good heart to others, it has the immediate effect of enhancing the peace and happiness within our mind. Whenever we generate that

mind, our experience becomes very peaceful, and enjoyable. Cultivating such a mind is the source of ensuring happiness and a better rebirth in the future. So at all times it is important to see the bodhicitta mind as a source of happiness for ourselves, and others.

As we follow the spiritual path we have to constantly remind ourselves of its purpose. The goal of the spiritual path is calming and controlling the mind, so one has to be very clear about why our mind needs to be controlled. Whose responsibility is it to control the mind? It is the responsibility of each human being.

What is the means of controlling the mind? It is the dharma or spiritual practice. It is in dharma practice that we learn about our mind, and about the negativities within our mind which we call delusions, or afflictive emotions. Whenever these afflictive emotions occupy our mind, we feel very disturbed and lose all inner peace and comfort.

The advantage of practising dharma is that we can always be very aware of our mind, and through this awareness we can see that even if we cannot stop delusions arising, we can recognise them when they do arise. Then we are not completely overpowered by them. By retaining some mindfulness and alertness we can, to some extent, minimise their detrimental influence on us.

In general, the basic or most important factor in achieving any goal in our life, is the soundness of our mind and body. Without that soundness we cannot achieve even our own purpose, let alone helping others. Therefore it is essential to have a very clear and sound mind when we engage in spiritual practice to try to develop positive qualities and minimise the negativities in our own mind. We do this not only to bring some peace and satisfaction within our mind, but also to achieve whatever goal we are pursuing, whether for our own or others' benefit.

Generating strong self determination within our mind makes us a very strong person, in the sense that outer circumstances have less influence on our daily experience. So much so, that with a strong determination within ourselves, we can even give our life to pursue a goal.

We are focussing on this, just to remind you that the purpose of learning dharma is to practise it. Our approach should be such that the more we learn, and the more we feel positive about dharma, the more we develop faith in it. This does not mean blind acceptance. It is said that it is natural that if we sincerely put into

practise what we learn, we see benefits of dharma. Because we see the benefits of dharma, as we learn more, our faith will increase, and our motivation becomes stronger.

The fact that we are so vulnerable to outer circumstances in life shows our inner weakness. We can overcome that weakness by cultivating strong faith in dharma, a faith based on daily practice. Then you will be able to endure, or even be prepared to endure difficulty, and hardship, and not be readily affected by the various outer events that you face in daily life.

The sign of progress in practising dharma is identifying some kind of object of trust within one's own mind. Because it is said that if we have to identify the dharma then it has to be a quality within oneself: like dharma as a refuge, as an unfailing protection which will prevent us from falling over a cliff. So we have to see that kind of protection within oneself. As said before, following dharma practice properly means that we always have the motivation that we hear or study dharma in order to put it into practice. Practice means that after hearing or studying the dharma, we have to contemplate its meaning. Then when we gain a valid understanding of what we have heard or studied, we have to then sit or meditate on it.

Our practice becomes very fulfilling if we integrate these three things - hearing, thinking and meditating - together in such a way that one automatically leads to another. For example the more we hear, the more there is to contemplate, and the more we contemplate, we see the more there is to meditate upon. So in this way what we have found in our practice becomes deeply ingrained in the mind and is a valid truth and not a superficial experience.

What is most important is that as we follow the practice we have to see it as a true means of eliminating the suffering and problems in our life. Because dharma is something like a protection, a very trusting guide, which we have to see within oneself. It does not matter where we live or what we do: sleeping, walking, sitting, whether we are alone or with others, there is always some sense of protection, of being secure and free.

To find the protection of dharma within oneself is very reliable and lasting. We cannot find such a means of protection outwardly. If we examine our own daily experience, where we always tend to seek or rely on outer circumstances for happiness, we find there is no control over our own experience. Outer objects are like a rainbow that can change very quickly. It is like someone who is always fond of and wants to be close to his or her friends. Whenever he is surrounded by them he feels happy and in a good mood. As soon as they are gone he feels very sad. He cannot find lasting and reliable outer objects of happiness.

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

The initial transcript is prepared from Alan Molloy's notes. These are checked with Damien Busby's notes by Alan Molloy and any differences noted.

Adair Bunnnett then compares her notes against the typed transcript and prepares this edited version.

Edited version checked by Alan Molloy

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