

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

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## Benefits of Utilising the Bodhicitta Mind

Try to cultivate a correct motivation, which is bodhicitta - aspiring to attain buddhahood for the sake of all beings. It is because of this ultimate goal that we should sincerely think “I shall study and practise dharma.”

With this motivation we set the goal for our practice. In other words, we have some desired goal or wish that is to be fulfilled as a result of this practice.

The next thing is to realise that simply wishing for, or aiming at something is not enough. There must be some action to achieve that goal.

Here we are talking about the benefits of utilising the bodhicitta mind as a motivation behind all our actions. If done out of the bodhicitta mind, any action - sleeping, eating, walking - can result in bringing happiness and peace in our own life, and also do the same for others.

Of course possessing genuine bodhicitta is wonderful, but we all have within us a substitute - some degree of care, or concern, or feeling of loving kindness towards others. So when we talk of the benefits of bodhicitta, or of motivating all our actions with bodhicitta mind, we are really talking about our caring attitude towards other beings.

There is no more profound, or beneficial, spiritual practice (or meditation) than trying to infuse this caring attitude of bodhicitta throughout all our actions. If we do this, not only shall we make progress in our spiritual path, but we shall automatically progress in our ordinary, or mundane, life as well.

In terms of our spiritual progress, with the strong cultivation of the mind of bodhicitta then all other realisations will follow. We shall be more conscious and understanding of the law of karma (of cause and effect), and of living within that law. As a benefit of practising the law of karma, we shall naturally be transformed into a better, more honest person who will be admired by others. We shall be able to show tolerance or patience or sympathy or compassion whenever it is needed.

So there are a great number of benefits relating directly to our daily life, in terms of bringing harmony to our relationships with others. We know from our own experience that the enjoyment of a good life is sustained by harmony in the family, and with friends. With a very positive mind, then not only is our life happy, but whatever work we do is fruitful, with our actions being more certain of achieving their desired goals.

As said before the most essential part of our spiritual practice is cultivating the thought of caring for other

beings: the attitude of helping or benefiting others. With such a caring attitude towards others, we are naturally integrating dharma into our practice. For instance, without a genuine feeling of love towards a friend we shall behave thoughtlessly. However with this genuine feeling of love we shall be more mindful of our interactions with them. We shall be inspired to act in such a way that benefits them. This action of preventing harmfulness and benefiting others is a virtuous or wholesome action, which is what the practice of karma means. Practising karma doesn't just mean avoiding non-virtuous actions such as murder.

The most important thing which constantly reminds us to practise dharma, and which changes our way of thinking and performing actions is our mind, which is always with us. So it is very important that we always watch our mind, just as we watch other people before befriending them. What we learn from the teachings is that if we possess a very positive state of mind then that is a source for happiness for us, just as it is an advantage to have a sound and healthy body.

We can learn a lot by listening to dharma, but whether we gain any benefit all depends upon what we do with the teachings after we have heard them. Putting dharma into practice, means transforming our mind. Then because the mind is the source of all of life's actions, we are bringing more positive qualities to our mind and attitudes, which will automatically change our actions. If we have changed our way of thinking or our perception of others, since meeting dharma, then we can see a change in our actions. Even in such a trivial action as walking there will be more mindfulness. For example, before meeting dharma there is less mindfulness of where one walks, and so one might step on ants.

Having cultivated thoughts of concern for other beings in our actions, so we then have more understanding of other beings. We shall realise that even a tiny ant can, like us, experience pain and fear. If despite our effort we commit a negative action then we can feel some regret for that action, and recognise that it was wrong.

There is little point in listening or studying the teachings without trying to put them into practice. There are endless opportunities for practice in daily life. For instance at work, having concern for the welfare and well-being of others, we shall be more honest with our time and work. We shall understand that while we are there, we are being paid wages for our work, and if we are not fulfilling our job or responsibility then indirectly we are stealing, because we are accepting payment for

something which we have not done.

Similarly if we practise dharma sincerely then it will have no negative aspects in the eyes of other people. Because we have a caring attitude, and perform all our actions with this attitude, our actions of speech and body will all be wholesome and minimise the un-wholesome. The people around us, may not be Buddhist, or they may be unsure about following Buddhism, but by observing your wholesome behaviour which is a result of practising dharma, they will be convinced by the change in your attitude. So they will admire your practice, and dharma.

As soon as you make connection with the dharma and with meditation, you change the way you talk, your facial expressions and the way you act. These are universal virtues, so naturally you will be admired for what is actually the practice of dharma

The essence of practice comes down to mental attitude. With positive mental attitude one's behaviour becomes very mindful and very discriminating of every action, even to the right and wrong places to step on the ground.

When we consider this caring attitude as the heart of our spiritual practice, then we can see that this spiritual practice encompasses all our actions. By refraining from negative or non virtuous actions - even stepping on ants - not only are their lives saved, and harm prevented, but these actions are not the cause of bad consequences in the future, such as dying under the footsteps of others, or not receiving protection in life.

Try then, to integrate this mental attitude of good heart and loving kindness with all the actions which you perform in life.

Starting next week you will do six weeks of meditations then Guru Puja. Geshe-la advises that you meditate on the Twelve Links in addition to some discussion. Geshe-la recommends the Three Poisonous Minds - desire, hatred, ignorance - as the discussion topic. Focus upon identifying these three and finding the antidote for each one of them. Also recite Shantideva's *Bodhisattva Charyavatara* but unlike in the past where two groups took turns to read out the text and listen, everyone will recite the text together. This will make more time for discussion.

Divide the one and a half hour session into meditation, discussion and recitation. These seven weeknight sessions are part of the commitment for joining the study group so do your best to attend all of them, and during sessions try to be helpful and friendly and open to each other since the idea is to share knowledge. Everyone is doing these sessions to progress with their meditation and study of dharma.

Also doing the sessions in an atmosphere of friendship will make it very enjoyable. In this way, one can get to liberation without sacrificing the pleasures of samsara.

#### ***Edit methodology***

*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 Bunnett then compares her notes against the typed transcript and prepares this edited version.*

*Edited version checked by Alan Molloy*

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

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