

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

ཅུལ་ལམ་རིམ་རྣམས་གྲོལ་ལམ་གྱི་བཟང་པོ།



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Try to generate the bodhicitta motivation - wishing to attain the fully enlightened state of buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. Generate the thought that the purpose of listening to, and practising these stages of the path, or Lam Rim, is to achieve this goal of buddhahood.

422.222: The Actual Path which Leads to Liberation

ཐུན་པར་བསྐྱོད་པའི་ལམ་གྱི་རང་བཞིན་གཏན་ལ་དབབ་པ་དངོས།

We now begin the teachings on the actual path which leads to the state of liberation from cyclic existence. This is elaborated under two subdivisions.

As preparation for this teaching on the actual path to liberation, we have talked a lot about the cause and effect of cyclic existence from the point of view of the twelve links. So we have come to realise how, if we have not liberated ourselves from cyclic existence, there is no end to suffering. If we remain in cyclic existence we shall continuously create karmic actions, the result of which will ripen upon our own life, and there is no escape, or real freedom for us within this cyclic existence.

So we have to cultivate renunciation, which is the genuine wish to achieve liberation from cyclic existence. With such a wish we shall then seek the path to achieve that state of liberation. Therefore the teachings on the path to liberation are taught here.

Having decided to seek liberation, then we naturally consider the form of life which is best suited to attaining that state of liberation, and also the sort of path which would lead to that state.

These two actual subdivisions of the path to liberation are explained in terms of:

- What sort of life base or form is suitable to achieve liberation.
- What sort of path leads us to the state of liberation.

422.222.1: What Sort of Life Base is Suitable to Achieve Liberation

རྟོག་ཅི་ལྟ་བུ་ཞིག་གིས་འཁོར་བ་ལས་ལྷོག་པ།

The most important factor which inspires us to follow the path to liberation is renunciation, which is a genuine thought of leaving cyclic existence. Cultivating such a thought of renunciation means we have to see reasons for leaving cyclic existence. Therefore we are instructed to meditate on the faults and disadvantages of cyclic existence. One way of seeing cyclic existence is that it is very impermanent, and this can be recognised as a fault. Whether we talk in terms of the environment in which we live, or the sentient beings living in that environment,

they are all like the reflection of the sun and moon on water swept by the wind. It changes moment by moment.

Any wealth, happiness or pleasure to be found in cyclic existence is said to be like the shadow of a venomous snake's¹ head. It can only cover a very limited area, and to sit under it is very dangerous.

Therefore we can see the faults of cyclic existence, regardless of the level of cyclic existence in which we are born. Even if we are born in a very fortunate level of cyclic existence such as our own pleasant human life, we see with our own eyes how much suffering exists within this human world. In this way we see the faults of cyclic existence in terms of the uncertainty of everything - our life, our friends, our wealth.

As the text says, if we fully contemplate the faults of cyclic existence, we see this existence as being like a house on fire or a prison. We naturally do not want to go into a burning house as we know we would be burnt, and it could be suicidal. Likewise we do not want to go into prison, as that means losing our freedom.

In this way the thought of renunciation naturally arises, as we see all the faults of cyclic existence through meditation and contemplation. Generating this thought of renunciation is essential, as without it we cannot have the strong genuine wish to seek the path leading to the state of liberation.

When we truly feel some sense of disgust for cyclic existence, then we can generate renunciation. Influenced or motivated by renunciation, we then think of how to achieve liberation by asking ourselves “Are there any causes for this cyclic existence?” Knowing that cyclic existence cannot exist without causes and conditions, we investigate the true cause of cyclic existence. The two main causes of cyclic existence which we have discussed in the past are karmic actions, and mental afflictions or delusions. Of these the primary cause is mental delusions.

To know the form of life which is most suitable to achieve liberation, we must refer to the topic of precious human rebirth. It is said that to achieve liberation there is no life more suitable or fitting than this human life, possessing leisure and endowments as it does. So we must ask ourselves “Do we possess such a human life?” Recognising that we do possess such a life, then we know

¹ Editor: Refers generally to the shape of the hooded cobra found in India.

that we have the potential to achieve liberation, at least in terms of the form of life in which we are born.

If we talk about what form of life is suitable to achieve the state of buddhahood in one single lifetime, then it is none other than the precious human life which we possess at this moment.

Having found a suitable life base, what then is the actual path which will lead us to that state of liberation? It is none other than the three principal paths - renunciation, bodhicitta, and wisdom realising emptiness.

So not only have we achieved the form of life to achieve liberation, but at the same time we have met with the opportunity to study, and follow the right path to liberation.

As we contemplate the topic of dharma we should feel more positive, and inspired to practise dharma and make our life more meaningful and happy. If we look into our situation clearly, we are in a most fortunate situation because we have all the excellent living conditions around us. For us, achieving liberation, or our desired goal (which can be anything, even just living a happy life), is just a matter of correctly utilising the excellent conditions around us, or even just appreciating those conditions. We are so fortunate, especially if we compare our good living conditions with those of many others living in other parts of the world. There is also the physical health which we enjoy in our day-to-day life, and the inner condition of our mind - the amount of knowledge which we possess in our society compared to many others in the world.

If we look at our situation from the positive side, we have all the necessary conditions to achieve liberation. Even the goal of omniscience is right in front of us. Therefore it is important to realise that the best way which we can utilise this most favourable life situation is to practise dharma. It brings more peace and happiness to our life and eliminates, or minimises our suffering.

Whatever goes on in the outside world, if we have a clear knowledge of our real situation, we shall see that it is a very fortunate one, and then through dharma we can see how to bring more happiness. When we face difficult troubles we can see how to solve them, and minimise our problems. In this way we can lead a very steady life with happiness and peace.

Geshe-la learnt from his recent trip to India that a lot of people, even Westerners from countries like Switzerland or Germany, admired Australia. They would comment on the high standard of living here. There must be some reason for foreigners to feel this way. Just knowing all the good things we enjoy makes us wonderfully positive about where we are living.

Geshe-la also said that while he was in Sera Monastery he met two women who recently came from Tibet. One was a close friend of Geshe Doga's only sister, who is still in Tibet. The other was a very close neighbour. They came to talk to Geshe-la but could not stop crying for over fifteen minutes, which didn't leave much time for discussion. They described how they were treated by the Chinese in Tibet - how they were completely robbed of their freedom. At one stage they nearly starved to death

because no food was provided. At night they would go to the empty fields to seek leftover barley. The more they related the problems in Tibet, the more Geshe-la felt how lucky he was not to be caught in Tibet when the Chinese came.

There are so many people in other parts of the world who undergo so much suffering, starvation, torture and who lack freedom. You do not have to think much about this to feel so good about life in Australia. Even to have freedom is such a great gift. We have such freedom, and such a lot of opportunity to do whatever we like - study, meditate and receive teachings.

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

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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