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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འདྲེན་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅུང་སྟེ།



17 December 1996

Try to cultivate the proper motivation by thinking that the reason we are here is to cultivate the full state of enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. We are listening to the teachings in order to fully control our mind, so that we can achieve that spiritual goal.

The Unique Opportunity this Life Gives to Us

When we generate such a motivation to achieve the highest possible spiritual goal, we are not wishing for something which we have no potential to achieve. In fact if we check ourselves, we see that both mentally and physically we do have the full potential to achieve the highest possible goal of full enlightenment.

As far as our physical potential goes, the main factor is possessing a form of life having leisure and endowments. If we check then we find that our current life does possess both of these qualities. With regard to our mental potential we have a clear sense of discrimination as to what is right and wrong. As well as this sense of discrimination, we also have the faith and aspiration to follow the spiritual path. So there is no better opportunity than now to create the cause to achieve this highest enlightenment.

What is the use of being born human if we pass up this opportunity, and instead bring misery to ourselves and others? Not taking advantage of the potential of this unique form of life which we now possess, and wasting time with a strong attachment to the trivial affairs of this life is, as Shantideva said, the worst form of ignorance, and the worst form of self delusion. So we should utilise this life, and make it meaningful by engaging in the practice of transforming our mind. If we do not make some progress while we have this opportunity, then there is no hope of making any spiritual progress once this opportunity is gone.

The Spiritual Path as Inner Development

On the spiritual path, inner development is at least as important as outer or material development. To be really inspired by these spiritual teachings, we must see the benefits of making progress within ourselves. To experience greater mental stability, and take a broader view of things means cultivating a more positive mental attitude, and a lasting peaceful state of mind.

As spiritual practitioners we are not content with the commonly held idea that material objects can provide all the happiness and pleasure which we need in life, because these outer things can also become a source of restlessness. Rather we see that it is the inner cause of

happiness which is indispensable to bringing stability to our life.

Material development must be supported by spiritual development. By relying on just the outer living conditions such as friends, wealth and so forth, then we can see that there is no end to problems. Even material success does not reduce problems. Some millionaires think that they have everything, but feel they have nothing. They have friends, reputation, money and so on but they feel empty, and that there is no fulfilment. This is because they have found everything in the outside world, except anything to rely upon. On the other hand some ordinary working people of modest material wealth can live a life of great contentment.

So we can see there are great benefits in developing the inner knowledge of knowing that although friends, money and so on can give some security to life, their nature is impermanent. If you are aware that this is their very nature, then it is not a very great shock when undesirable circumstances occur, as for example when a friend leaves you, or you lose your business. Understanding this gives you some support and the strength to accept such things when they happen. Whereas without that understanding we are totally vulnerable to those outer conditions of friends, wealth etc. Then we are always subject to change because of the changes in our outer living conditions, and these are out of our control since their nature is to change.

So developing wealth is not just in terms of outer objects, but also includes inner wealth. This inner wealth is the knowledge that not only do outer objects change, but so do we, and death is definite - although the time of death is indefinite. This knowledge generates strong faith, and through this knowledge we shall cultivate a different mental attitude and way of thinking.

At the moment we have this opportunity to learn and practise dharma, which if we wish, can save us from falling into lower rebirths. Also, if we wish, it can lead us to a state of permanent liberation from cyclic existence. Furthermore this dharma can lead us to the state of buddhahood, which is free of all faults and possessing all excellent qualities.

We have the opportunity to hear, study and understand this holy dharma. However seeing any result depends upon our practice, and it is the fruit of this practise which is the most important thing for us, rather than the learning process, or the knowledge. Otherwise we are no different from someone who has gained a high certificate

from college. More important than the knowledge gained in study is the outcome, which is utilising that knowledge to secure one's life. If you see a very highly qualified person spending all their time smoking and drinking then people will say "What a waste of those qualifications." So it is very important to very seriously consider practising what we have learned.

As we have heard over and over again this practice is thought transformation, and it brings positive internal development. We have to always watch our mind, and through this develop knowledge about it. Is the mind we generate useful, meaningful, beneficial and positive, or is it negative, destructive and harmful to our own life and that of others? It is best to use our own experience to identify the difference between the positive and beneficial, and the negative harmful states of mind. This might mean for example being able to identify the impact of a particular state of mind upon one's thoughts, feelings and actions.

If we do these investigations of the mind continuously, then eventually we gain discriminating wisdom. Through that, we then understand how when a certain state of mind arises, it will then influence us to do particular actions, which will lead to further results. In this way we can see in our own mind, the causal link between a positive state of mind and its results, which is a cause of happiness to all. We can also see that negative states of mind result in harmful actions for all.

Our basic human nature is to avoid suffering and seek happiness. The most effective means to bring about this basic goal of human nature is by controlling our own mind. Through this control we can find true mental peace and happiness. This is then reflected in our attitudes to other people, and so we become a good human being who is content in their own peaceful happy life, and very much admired by others. So in this way we see how the positive qualities in our mind can be seen to be the source of joy and peace in our lives, and as something that we can share with others.

It is appropriate to describe the inner quality which we cultivate through spiritual practice as an inner jewel, a true friend, protector and refuge in the sense that this inner quality is the source of all the peace and joy which we seek in life. It provides the strength to combat any hindrance in life, including any negative or very disturbing thoughts. This inner quality is a jewel that can fulfil all one's wishes; it is a friend, protector and refuge because it can be fully trusted and it leads one into the right future direction, or destiny. It always directs us onto the spiritual path, or path of dharma. Whatever spiritual practice that you choose to do, the focus of that practice is nothing other than your own mind. In other words, the practice you do must come from within your own mind.

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

© **Tara Institute**